

# Learning from hermits how to realize reduction and deceleration in our society

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper we discuss how hermits lifestyle distinguish from the history and nowadays. The technology evolution causes in some certain situation the process of becoming unconsciously a hermit. The characteristics of these processes and possible solutions are discussed in this paper. The aspects of reduction and deceleration play a key role. In the end some (art)examples proves the increasing demand of reduction and deceleration in our society and urban environment. The paper also points out that the lifestyle of hermits can help to enhance our social and urban environment.

## Keywords

Art urban design society social media architecture relaxing reduction acceleration deceleration

## 1. Hermits in our digital Age

Hermits have got a very strong religious based background. Paul of Thebes was one of the first christian hermits in the 3rd century. They used to live spatial and social separated. Hermitages, caves, the desert or the forest were their chosen home. They lived associated with the nature and not against it. In contrast to their social oriented lifestyle, which was mostly characterized by a solitary lifestyle. Their motivation was mostly religion driven. In some cases it was not only based on their religious motivation. Also misanthropy and / or refusing the social rules might be a further motivation. Working on a life task is sometimes important, too. For instance, the hermit Fred K. Prieberg, a music and art history scientist, sacrificed his life for a task. He explored and investigated the music mechanism of the German 3rd Reich in an impressive detail. He wrote over 10.000 pages! Avoiding distraction is one of his big argument why he chose to become an hermit.

Nowadays hermits can live spatial separated, but they can still connected with the society. Internet and the digital communication infrastructure make this possible. Today hermits can live separated in three areas:

- spatial oriented
- real-world society oriented
- virtual-world society oriented

Today the life can be very anonymous in big cities. For this reason, it is possible to be an hermit even if he or she is spatial embedded in the society. It is also possible to live alone in a forest and being connected with the virtual-world society. So living alone - far away from human places - do not make you to an hermit anymore. The religious-based motivation of actual hermits is less important. Breaking with social rules and norms are big motivations.

## 2. Society-based splitting

To become an hermit can be a conscious or an unconscious decision. If the human decides this by himself, than it is not a big problem. The only problem is that the nature and the countryside is already well populated. The hermit will often meet people and the nature will not provide enough food for surviving.

To become unconsciously an hermit is a big problem. A human does not feel good if anything negative happens with him, and he has not got any influence on it. That lead to social conflicts by force. Actually, this splitting emerged already in our society. The characteristics of this evolution are:

- age-based
- knowledge-based

The age-based splitting is just temporarily. We distinguish between Digital Native and Digital Immigrants. Digital Native are all person, who are born after 1980. This Digital Native Generation grew up with digital and interactive media. Digital Immigrants are older and the digital media is not for everyone familiar. Some of the Digital Immigrants understand the mechanism of mobile and internet technology, others are completely lost in this world. For instance, a lot of elderly people around 60s have still big problems to understand the communication mechanism between computer (automate) and human. For instance, buying a train ticket at an automate or just withdraw money from a cash machine is a problem for them. For people, who did not deal with this change successfully, are lost in this world. This new world is strange, and they do not take a part in the society. With the increasing importance of communication technology in our daily life, the elderly people become more an more isolated. They become social hermits. This is might be evolve to a bigger problem in societies with an increasing average age. Under this conditions the younger generations have to communicate more with the older generations.

From knowledge-based view the “digital divide” or also called “digital gap” phenomena plays an important role. The digital divide effect describes the knowledge gaps between society. These gaps are caused by an uneven distribution of communication technology. For instance, Africa has got a bad infrastructure compared to the Western culture. The amount of knowledge is increasing fast in the Western culture, but in Africa it is not so fast. Now Africa has still got economic problems and the new knowledge gap is increasing. It seems that Africa will never be able to compete with the western culture. It makes it more possible that they will stay in the poorness state for a long time.

But also in our society we run into a knowledge gap problem. Children with a better education are able to use the potential of internet better than not so well educated children.

This gap will become bigger in the future. It puts the ones to suffer in a more bad situation than before. After certain time they only do the none appreciate jobs or they will be unemployed. That unpleasant circumstances lead to conflicts. They become hermits in a knowledge-based society because of their lack of knowledge.

### 3. Hypothesis

For minimizing this problem of social splitting and avoiding the phenomena of becoming unconsciously an hermit, I purpose a fixed infrastructure of Reduction and Deceleration in our design processes.

**Reduction** in our daily life routines and reduction of information perception can provide a good condition. This condition makes it easier for us to put the focus on the important activities. Reduction minimizes also the feeling of exhausting. People, who are forced with a information overflow, will be more exhausted than people with less information. The other advantages of reduction is, that inexperienced people will find the appropriate information faster. The learning process and the happiness of the human will benefit from it. This is important for minimizing the gap between well educated and less educated people. One disadvantages of reduction and filtering is the quality. Maybe the filters remove too much information and the people will miss something important. Filtering can also misused as a political tool like censorship. A solution for missing information could be the prioritization of information. Thereby this prioritization level is influenced by personal interests, local-based information, and general information. The user can switch seamlessly between the different prioritization levels.

**Deceleration** is the other important point in my hypothesis. Deceleration has got also a connection to reduction. Less (cognitive) information decelerate our perception of the environment. It lead to a more quite and slower feeling. This feeling and environment is very important after a very productive time. After being productive the mind and the body worked at and maybe over the limit. Stress is caused by an overload on mind work or time-critical tasks. The human mind needs time to get calm and slow down again. If the environment does not provide the infrastructure for relaxing people will suffer of long term stress. Especially nowadays, the job requirements are more and more based on mind work. That includes research, learning and combining activities. This creative activities can be very satisfying, but also very exhausting for our personal welfare. Our mind needs time for relaxing after finishing a creative work. The urban design and architecture have got the best tools for realize a suitable environment for this. The other advantage of deceleration is the slowness of development. Especially the well educated people will benefit from this development. Their knowledge will increase slower but with more quality. Less-educated people are able to sew on the well-educated people again.

The result of including reduction and deceleration in our daily life and in the design process will minimize the knowledge gap between the societies. That brings the societies much closer and avoids conflicts and misunderstanding. The whole balance of the society and the welfare of the every person will benefit from it.

Hermits reached this level of creating an sub-system. Their sub-system has their own time rules and work conditions. Artists, Experience Designer ,and Architects should be inspired of the

hermit's lifestyle. The increasing demand of spending time in the nature (e. g. Summer Alps tourism) shows that there is a desire of relaxing in our society.

## 4. Artworks and examples

In this paper I will introduce three artworks, which inspires the idea of reduction and deceleration.

### 4.1 Urban Camouflage Movement



The Urban Camouflage Movement tries to become invisible in an urban environment. They create a costume, which looks for instance like a garbage bag. Then they lie down on very crowded places and observe the activities around them. The people do not recognize them and continue their normal behavior. The same approach works in hardware stores or other stores. It is quite interesting to observe the acceleration of a society from another (timeless) system. This observation can give an impression what we can change.

### 4.2 Social Bit's Newsleak

The aim of Newsleak is to create an exchange between the real and the virtual world. Press a button on a pink box in the urban environment to instantly receive a printed summary of the latest news from around the world, news from your current location, news of internet cultures, events, trends and social media. Newsleak makes it possible to get information from a society, which you are not attending. It filters and reduces the amount of news for the people. It delivers a small piece of information, which does not exhaust the people.



- [4] Fred K. Prieberg, Online, last call on June 10th , <http://www.fred-prieberg.de/>
- [5] Kulturzeit: Fred K. Prieberg, Online, last call on June 10<sup>th</sup>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9G2vX4CTsc>
- [6] Wikipedia- Digital Divide, Online, last call on June 10<sup>th</sup>, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital\\_Divide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_Divide)
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### 4.3 Web 2.0 Suicide Machine

The website suicideMachine.com provides a tool for deleting all your web 2.0 accounts. It is a tool for jumping back into the real world and leaving the virtual world. It makes it from a technical view very easy to leave the virtual world. The very interesting point on this kind of work is the aspect of acceleration and deceleration. It uses both characteristics at the same time. It accelerates the deleting process of the social media accounts, but it also decreases the amount of information perception in the same time and in the future. This circumstance leads to a deceleration, so the benefit of an accelerated activity is deceleration. The suicideMachine.com shows that deceleration and acceleration is not a contradiction

## 5. Conclusion

In the end we can see the abstract lifestyle of an hermit is nothing bad. We can learn from them how to improve our environment. Deceleration and Reduction play key roles in this domain. Using these two principles in our design process can reduce the social splitting. The (art)works also prove that there is a desire of reducing data and feeling the deceleration. In the future we should analyze more under which conditions stress appears in urban environments. Which enhancements can be done in our already existing relaxing environments (e. g. parks).

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