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**FROM HUMANS TO HUMANS:
INNOVATION AT
THE SERVICE OF USE**

**Bodily well-being and
the culture of sitting**

Doctoral dissertation

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THESES

Upon examining chairs of different ages it is apparent how little the general look, structure and ergonomics of seating furniture have changed despite the enormous shifts in the mode and intensity of their usage and in our everyday lifestyle. Thus, a modern chair does not necessarily offer much more than its thousand-year-old counterpart. It is a question how this age-old structure can function today and why it did not follow changes in use more closely.

The issues surrounding seating are not isolated, individual problems anymore, but form a complex, intricately interlaced network-like system, the impact and scale of which exceeds itself.

It is not sufficient anymore to approach sitting from an ergonomic perspective. A paradigm shift is needed, taking into consideration its cultural, historical and lifestyle aspects.

Due to the deep cultural and historical embeddedness of sitting, the designer's room for manoeuvre is severely limited as revolutionary solutions very seldomly prove successful and gain currency. Therefore, solutions that fit into the current system taking into consideration the context and cultural aspects of sitting and result in good all-around everyday usability can be more effective.

Although the limits of ergonomics are now clearly visible, even its known possibilities are not fully exploited; proven, functional solutions are not widely employed.

The modernist tradition of searching for new forms of artistic expression has now culminated in a contemporary tendency to seek novelty and idiosyncrasy without content. Material and technological innovation are thus tools in a 'sculptural fascination' to achieve ever new styles instead of serving to improve usability and user experience. This raises the question of the hierarchy between means and ends.

In my opinion, there is a need to find a middle way which avoids self-serving impulses to seek formalistic beauty or innovation for its own sake, but which still yields likeable furniture designs with their own character that also provide higher levels of usability and comfort.
