

Design as a problem and design as a solution for sustainability

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- The role of industrial design has been essential in the development of industrial production from its roots to the latest developments
- For this reason, designers are considered as part of the problem of sustainability
- Designers should reverse this situation by becoming part of the solution

The points of this presentation

- **Why** should designers look at different perspective, focusing on social problems;
- **What** are designers supposed to do in the new system; and
- **How** are designers supposed to work in the new context

- 25 years ago, Papanek urged the discipline of design to find new directions, beyond the traditional market driven logic
- Recent contributions call for a new engagement of designers in social issues, even beyond the polarised logics proposed by Papanek



Why? An obscure future???

Sustainability

- Developing countries are importing a high resource intensive socio-economic model
- Risk of planetary crisis
- 90% reduction
- New lifestyles

Globalisation

- Opening of new markets
- Job relocation
- Labour force exploited in developing countries
- High unemployment rates in former industrialised countries
- More social inequalities
- Crisis of welfare

- While production is becoming globalised, needs are still LOCAL
- The competitive advantage for companies is often in LOCAL and highly individualised solutions

- Business focus shifts from product quality to life quality
- It invest the area of social interaction and market interest expands to public services

Market or social-driven initiatives? Beyond Papanek

- Market-driven initiatives are expanding to cover social services, thus taking over the space made available by the shrinking of public intervention on social problems
- to what extent the traditional market driven approach can generate high quality social services?

The traditional market logic is too expensive

Needs

- Entertainment
- Quick food preparation
- Transportation

- Love

Offering

- TV programs
- Frozen ready-made food
- Cars

- Dating sites

Lost opportunity/skills

- Opportunities for social interaction
- Cooking
- Walking/cycling (physical exercise)

- A chance to try...

DISABLING SOLUTIONS

COSTS:

- More services (economic transactions)
- Lower capability to solve everyday problems (knowledge)
- Reduced social interaction (social cohesion)





- the revision of the market-driven logic must start from the definition of social quality
- Social quality is about
 - Being active (activating people)
 - Participating (support the development of community-based initiatives)



Is it possible to support social innovation?

- Social innovation is already happening as a result of spontaneous initiatives
 - Food production (urban farming, solidarity purchasing groups)
 - Transport (car sharing)
 - Energy (local networks/windmills)
 - Trade (LETS, Banks)
- Can design (and business companies) support those initiatives?

WHAT does this implies for business companies /designers?

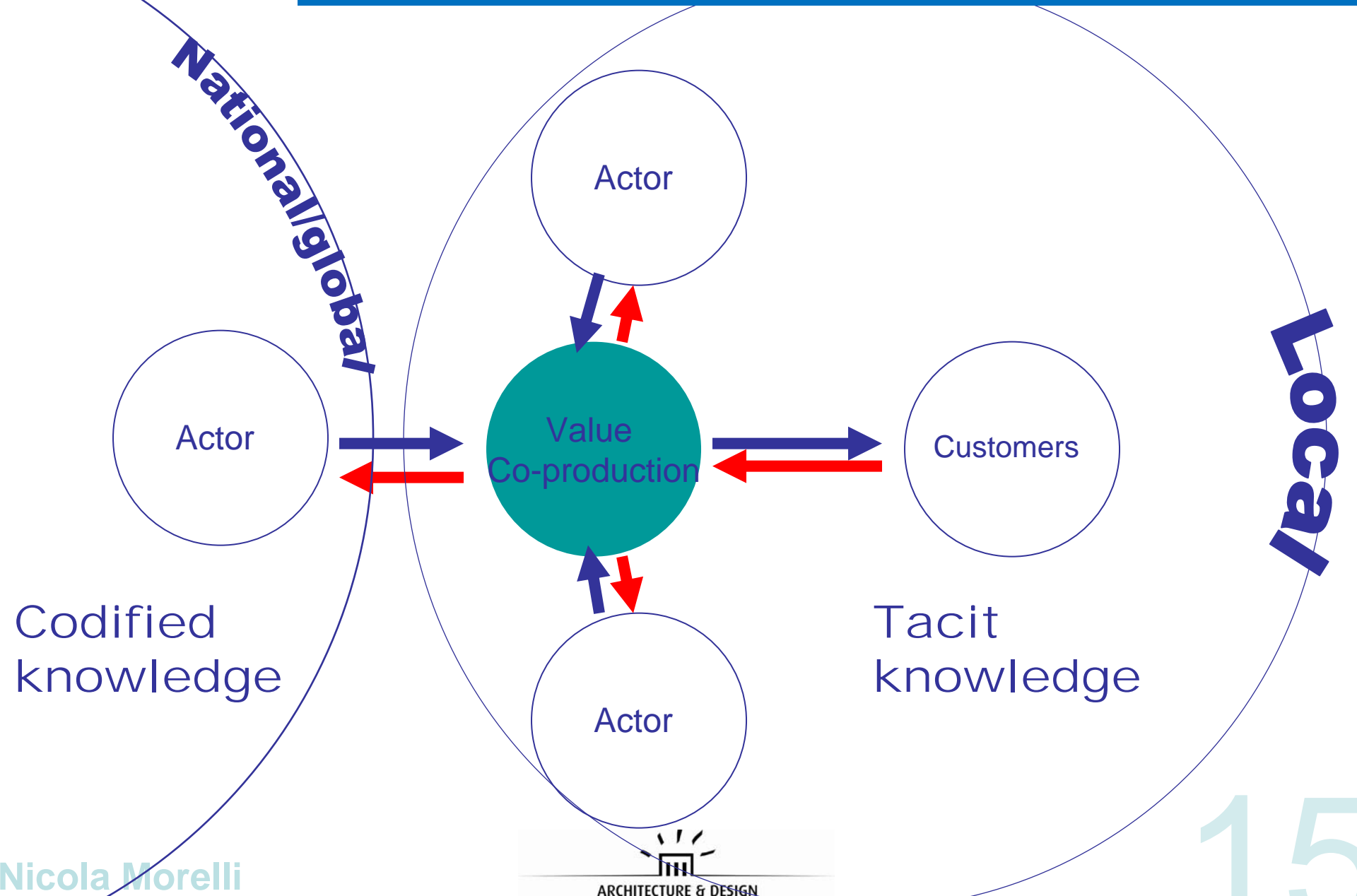
- By going towards local initiatives, companies are activating networks of local actors, in order to "enable" them to generate their own (highly individualised) solutions.
- Companies are not trading products, but knowledge
- If properly organised business companies can apply criteria borrowed from industrial production to local and highly individualised solutions:

Criteria for industrialisation of social innovation

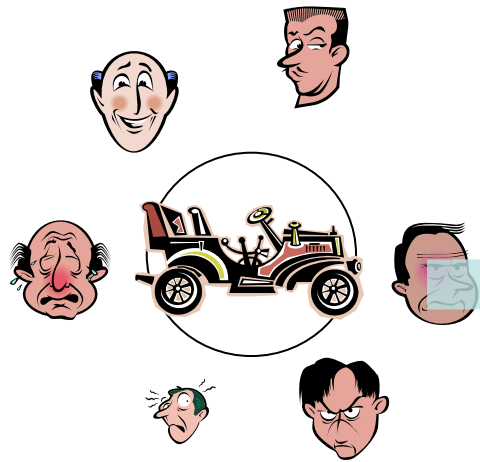
- **Reproducibility** a solution should be totally or partly replicable in different local contexts
- **Subdivision of labour (modularisation)** tasks and roles in a production system must be divided in modules based on clearly defined knowledge/skills
- **Codification of knowledge:** Knowledge should be communicated among different actors, although *sticky* (uncodifiable) knowledge should also be supported



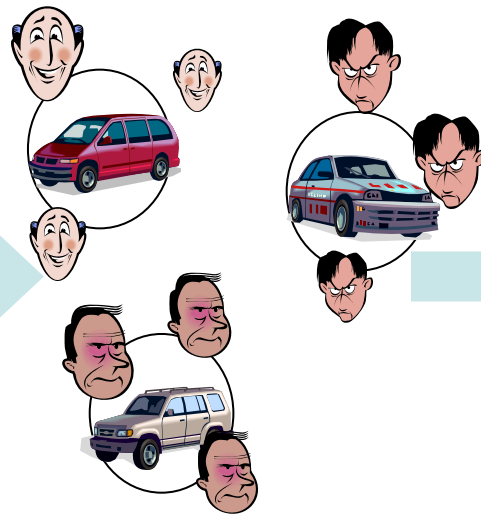
The new industrial context:



Mass production



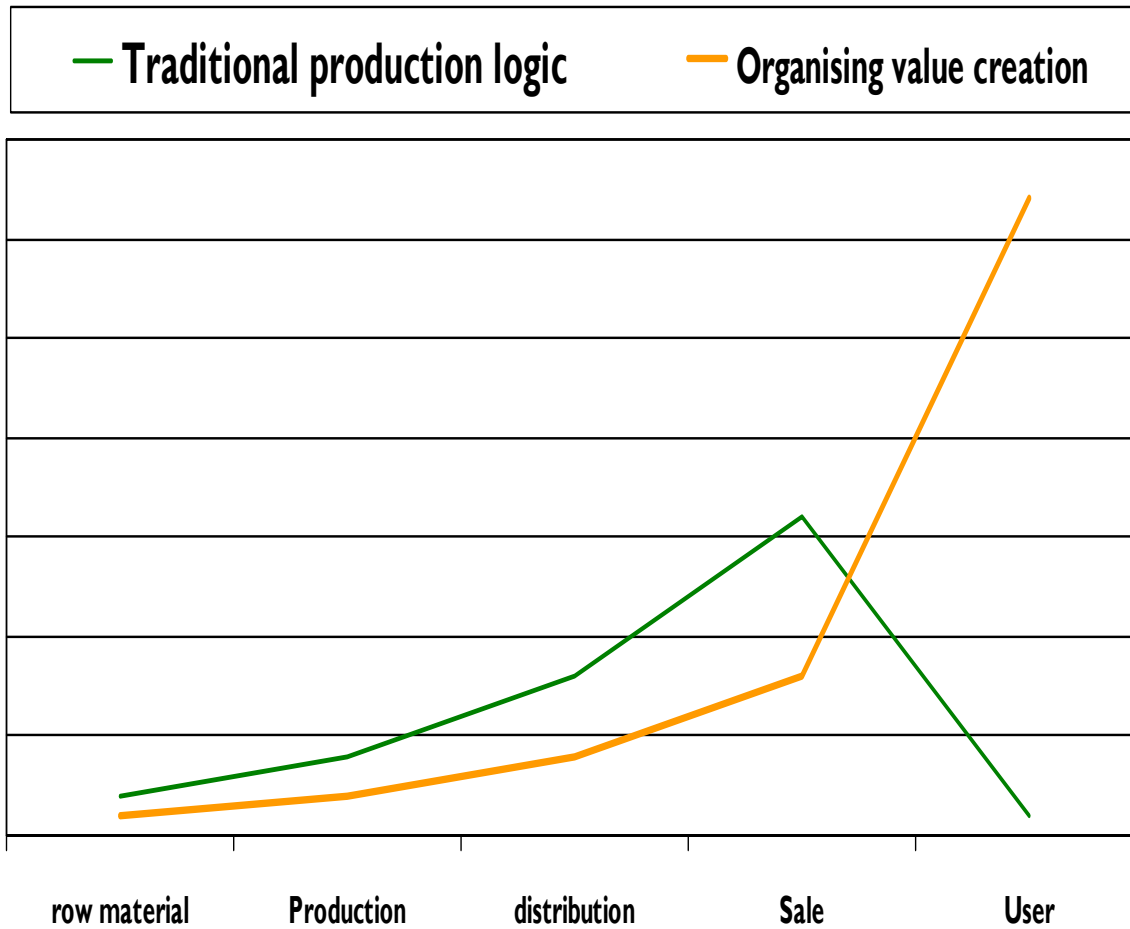
Mass customization



Highly customised solutions



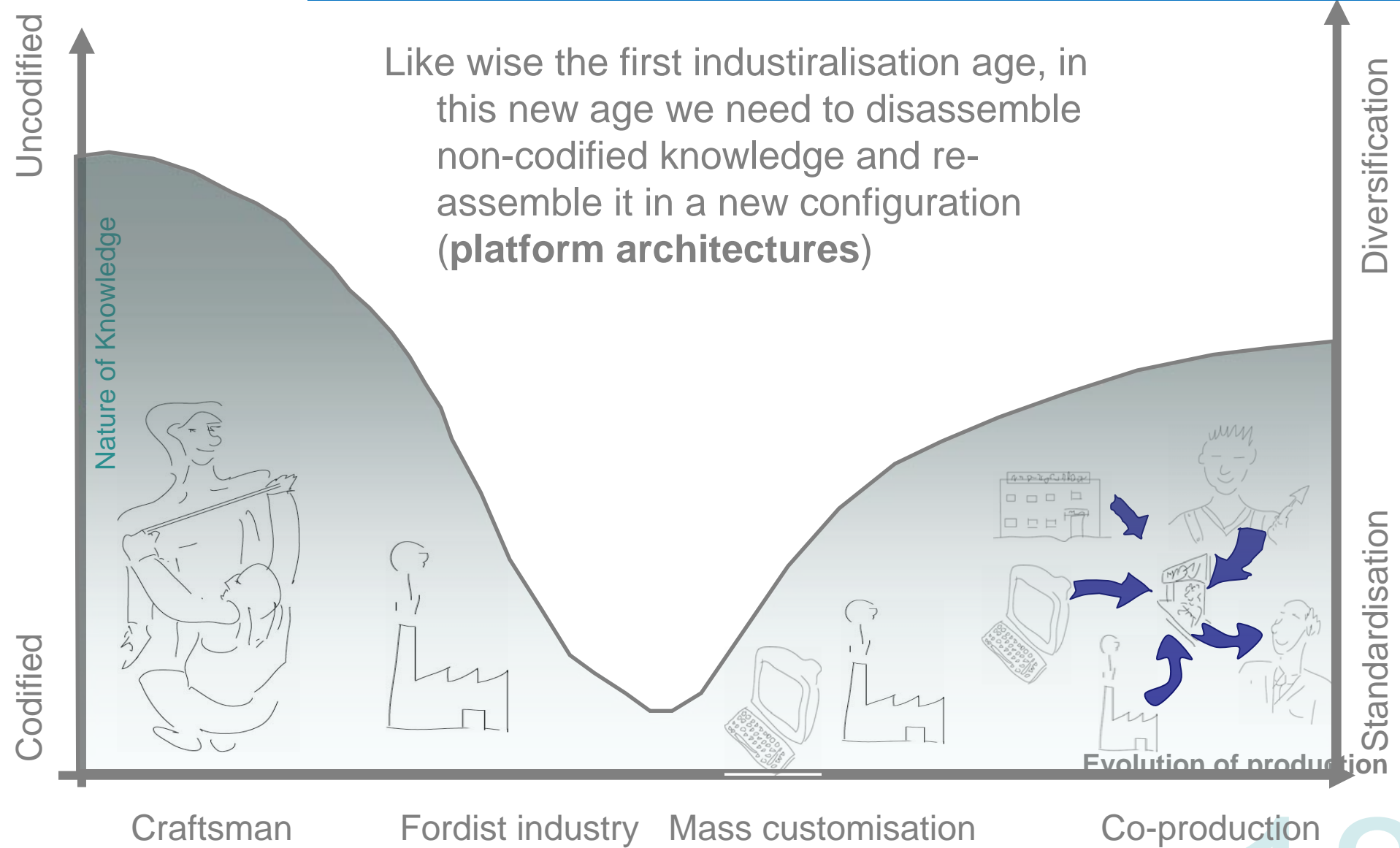
The new industrial context: Organising value creation



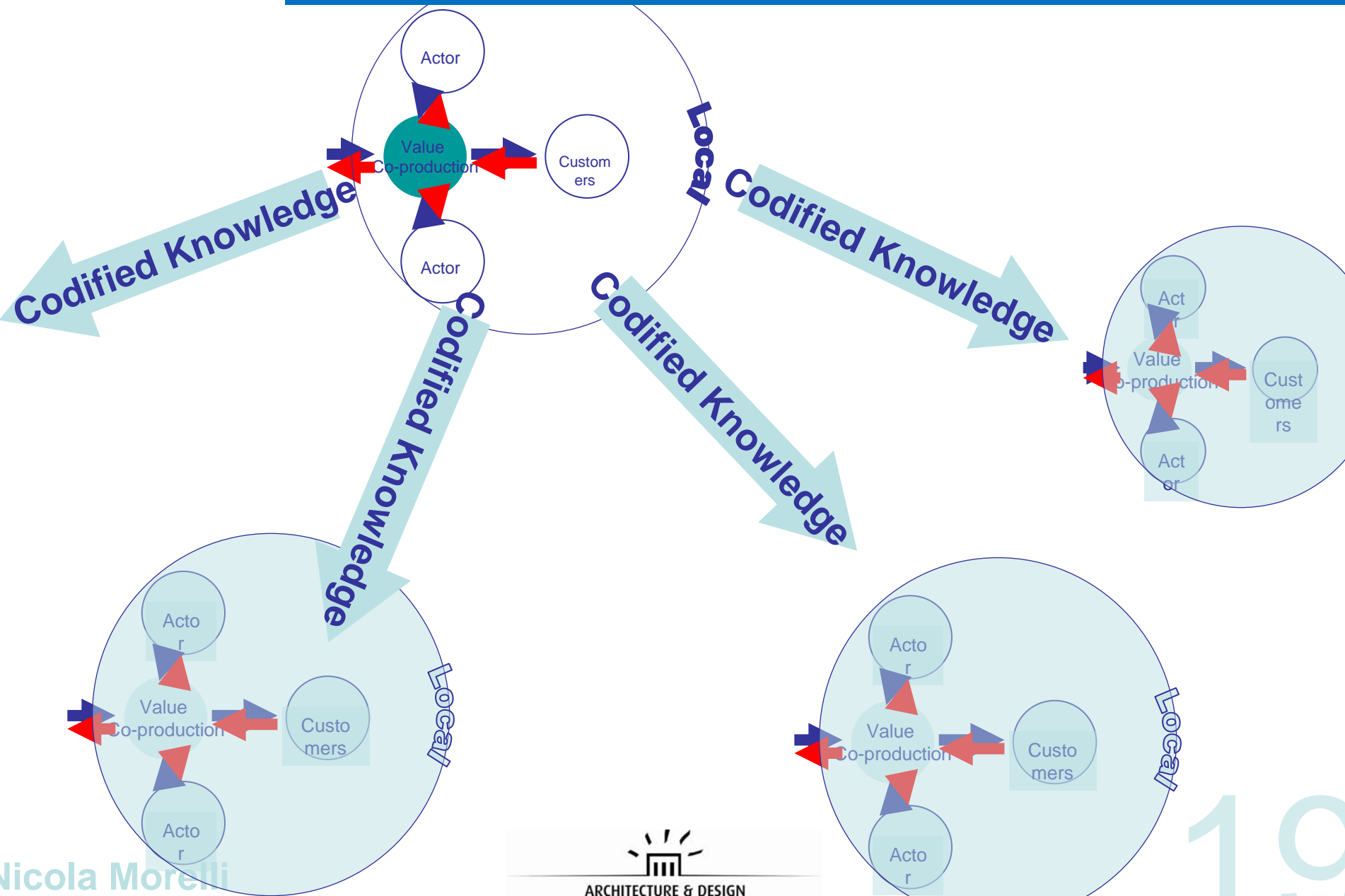
Industries have a new social role, from producers to value organisers, from finite solutions, to *semi-finished platforms*

The new industrial context: Back to craftsmanship?

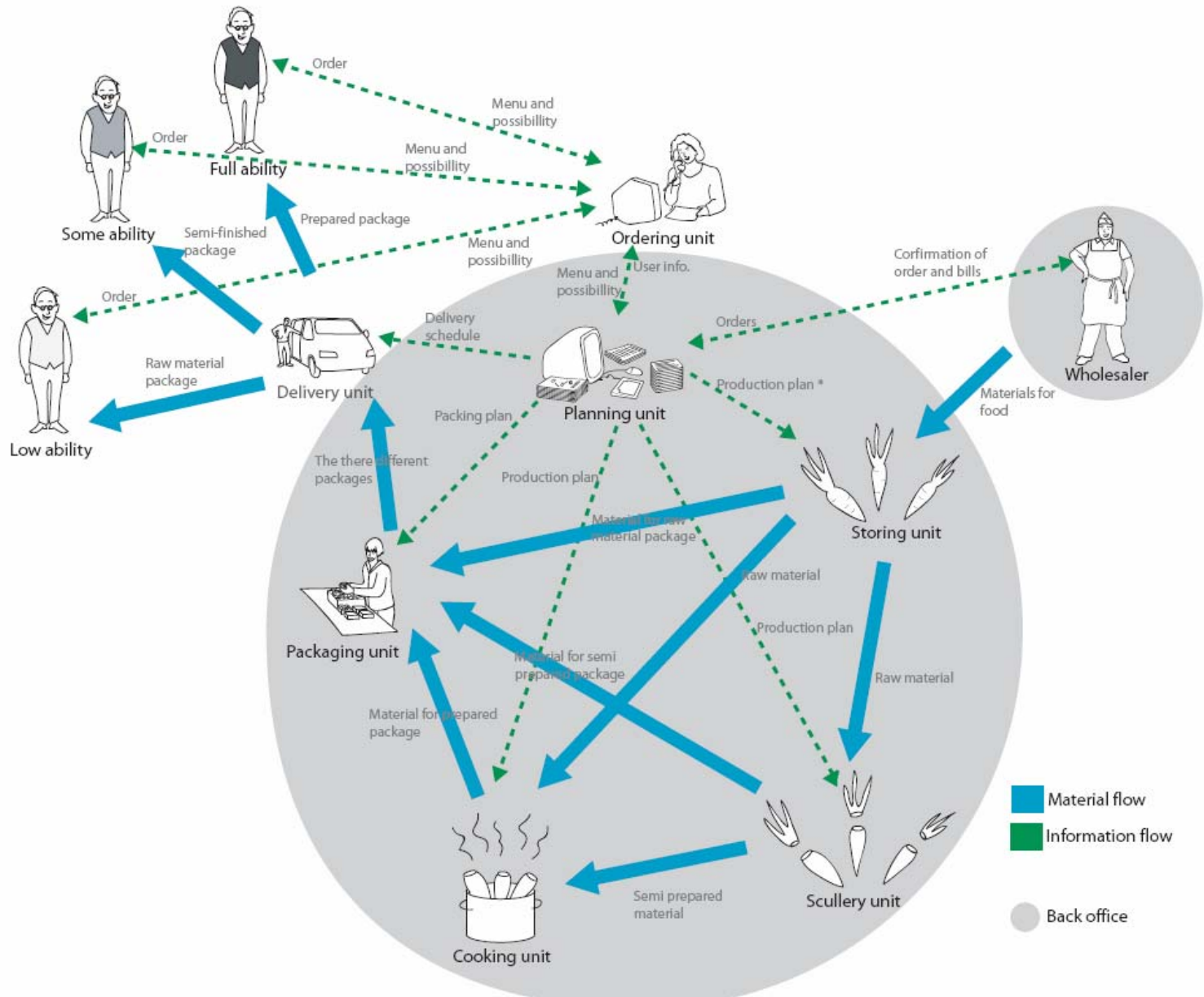
Like wise the first industrialisation age, in this new age we need to disassemble non-codified knowledge and re-assemble it in a new configuration (**platform architectures**)



The new industrial context: economies of scope



Example: Delight Assist



The new industrial context: New clients for designers

designers should consider new referents for their activities, which are active at the local context

- local institutions (banks, libraries, hospitals and local administrations),
- associations,
- cooperative groups and
- individual customers



- The question of sustainability moves industrial focus from global to local and highly individualised solutions
- Furthermore it implies a new role for business companies and for designers, from producers to *facilitators* of social innovation
- In order to be part of the solutions, designers have to work on the local level, using their culture, inherited by a century of collaboration with industrial production, to “industrialise” social innovation, highly individualised and localised solutions



Thank you

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