

# Design Management & Strategic Design: Cross Perspectives

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## ABSTRACT

The field of design has broadened its scope of activity in recent years, starting with a vision focused on the design of objects for a broader perspective. New terminology is being used and concepts are stamped, often without adequate consideration of its limits. This article seeks to define conceptually two current issues in the scope of Design and Management, but are often confused: Strategic Design and Design Management and propose new thinking about these two new areas within this field of knowledge.

*Keywords:* Strategic Design, Design Management, Project, Design Culture.

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## INTRODUCTION

Design Management and Strategic Design are two approaches often related to design culture. The starting point of this paper is to reflect on what is this culture in order to foster a better understanding of these two terms. We assume that there are many design cultures. A culture represents something alive, in constant transformation. However, we believe that there are common elements to all design cultures. Therefore, we question what are the similarities and differences between these two design approaches.

For Geertz (1978, p.12) "our ideas, values, action, even our emotions, are, like the nervous system itself, cultural products". Symbols created in a culture are largely present even before we were born, which does not mean that they are immutable or static. For many authors (SIMON, 1969), language, as a system composed of signs, is the most cultural hence artificial of human artifacts. Culture, in this research, will be understood as a set of values that characterize a social group, guided by meanings and purposes. A culture is formed by the values of those who constitute it and by it are constituted. The word culture maintains in the notion of artificiality a close connection with design. All culture is man-made, as every design is based on the idea of artificial creation. Consequently, one can say that a design culture is a culture of culture.

## 1. DESIGN CULTURE

Design culture can be characterized by at least five components. These components are not elements that exist per se, but they are extremely related with one another in a relationship that can only be understood as a whole.

Culture involves a particular form of thought, as well as a language that often allows expressing and constructing this thought. Perhaps the most basic and the most important aspect of this perspective is the project, a word that is regularly used as a synonym for design. Despite the limits of this association, a project should not be only seen as a temporary arrangement to some demand of society, but as a procedural element in the creation of future worlds. Several activities and cultures develop projects, but in Design, project assumes a centrality that perhaps are not present in other cultures. Consequently, any design culture will have in a project its centrality. In this way, we reach the first element that characterizes any design culture, which is the capacity to create, imagine future worlds, and project oneself in time. Buchanan (2015), trying to define what would define design thought, says that it necessarily goes by an imagination that makes a reality possible and that releases itself from analytical thinking details.

The construction of future worlds is necessarily associated with a decision-making process often based on risk. A risk is seen as something positive and even necessary for the construction of future worlds. In this sense, risk does not only mean working our intuitions, which are little controlled and necessary to the creative process but also being able to more or less control it. Control is often associated with technical rationality, while risk is often found in artistic dimension. Schön (2000) associated the artistic dimension present in any design with the concept of reflective practice. The actors involved in a design practice experiment, take risks and face surprises -unexpected elements - that influence them to reflect on the action itself, which leads to other experiments and actions.

However, a division between technical rationality and art is problematic, especially if we consider art and technology as two possible and related lenses to understand the artificiality of culture, in this case, design culture. In art, the technique is essential to express ecology and is probably unrealizable without an artistic dimension. In other words, a separation between art and technology can lead to a false paradox that does not concern a holistic understanding of what design culture is. The idea of risk in design is closely linked to a "what if" idea, which is present in design reasoning – and assumes several paths are built and then decision-making strategies are sought to decide which paths to follow (or return to). These strategies

are based on concepts such as simulation, modeling, and testing. A mistake in decision-making is seen as something positive, a process of constant learning.

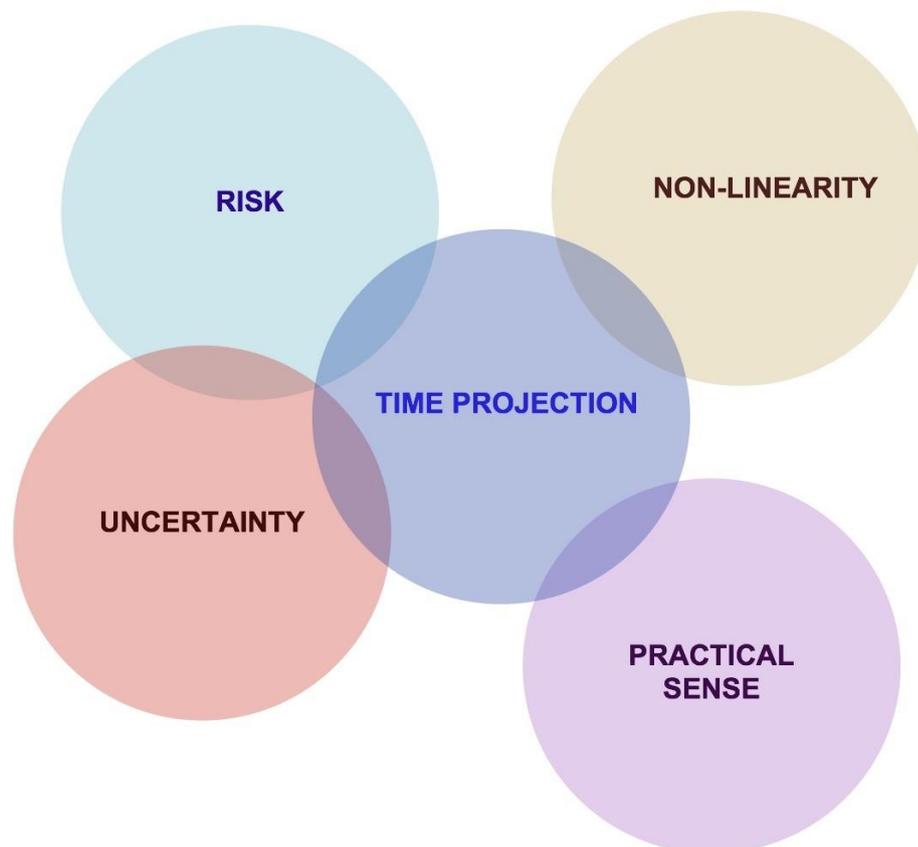
A third element present, to a greater or lesser degree, in any design culture is uncertainty. Uncertainty is closely linked to risk. If we know for sure what future world we are creating, there is no more risk and our way of thinking impoverishes. Uncertainty is linked to our inability to construct models that consider all variables of a still non-existent world.

To build future worlds, take risk and face uncertainty are part of a process that involves constant critical reflection among the various actors involved. Simon (1969)'s original idea of a design process that transforms an existing reality "A" into a desired situation "B" is probably the most successful and most criticized representation of this way of thinking inherent to any human being. The existing situation would be a problematic situation to be solved. However, several authors (DORST, 2003; BUCHANAN, 2007) have shown how difficult it is to think of the design problem as something that "exists a priori" because it is in fact built during the process. A reductionist view of a design problem sees it as something well defined, as a demand. However, as already discussed (SCHÖN, 2000), this type of problems is rare and least important. In most cases, problems are poorly defined and poorly structured, as they could be called wicked problems (RITTEL and WEBER, 1973; BUCHANAN, 1992) or tricky problems. A design problem, therefore, should not be understood only as someone's demand, but as an issue, a doubt, an aspiration, a desire for some change. The problem does not need and most often does not point to a solution, in the traditional problem-solving logic. This does not mean, on the other hand, that the design culture does not seek solutions. As can be seen in these arguments, Simon's simple and wonderful definition  $A \Rightarrow B$  is much more complex than a superficial reading could perceive.

The fourth aspect that characterizes design culture is how to transform or build future worlds in design that not follow clear and steady paths. The idea of building doors and paths that do not exist at the beginning of any design process, the non-existence of optimal but satisfactory solutions, as well as being a process in constant transformation, lead to a type of reasoning that many will define as non-linear. Non-linearity refers not only to not following well-defined project paths or steps but it is related to an open process where several paths can be worked simultaneously, in a critical and reflective practice that deviates us from a single path. Designers make decisions, take risks, and dialogue with the various actors and with the project in a process of constant learning. Criticism and reflection lead them to revise and develop new alternatives; it is difficult to imagine that these processes follow perfect and well-organized trails. Rather, disorder and error are the essences of design cultures.

Manzini (2017, p. 45) defines design's way of being as a result of three human gifts: critical sense, creativity, and practical sense, which could be associated with design culture. If the first two have already been addressed at the beginning of this paper, the third - but not least important - still demands deliberation. Practicality is related to the idea of making things happen. It is in the interest of any design culture to make tangible changes in society, and those changes are related to the value associated with these transformations. Zurlo (2010) addresses the concept of seeing or make see. The ability to see something that modifies an existing situation is part of the design culture. It is closely linked to other themes widely discussed in design research as a representation of something that does not yet exist, a simulation, a model. Designers creatively imagine things and see something that will endure criticism, which will lead to new movements in a virtuous cycle.

Figure 1 shows a synthesis of the elements worked on in this paper and that are part of design culture. These elements do not exhaust all the aspects that make up this culture, but they serve as a guide for our study on Design Management and Strategic Design.



**Figure 1. Five elements of design culture.**

Designer's role (be it fuzzy or specific) and their articulation within organizations has changed substantially, and it may be related to the construction of strategies. Design management within organizations can lead to business success or failure. In recent years managers have realized the need to manage design, and designers have realized the importance of taking place in strategic corporate definitions. The focus of this paper will examine two concepts of different but close designs: the concept of design management and the concept of strategic design.

## 2. DESIGN MANAGEMENT

The discussion about the relationship between design practice and corporate management goes back to the assimilation of design into the massive industrialization process in the early 20th century. Nonetheless, the use of the term design management appeared in England in the 1960s with an interface between design firms and their clients (Mozota, 2003). Concerned about bringing the emerging world from design to the context of organizations, design management becomes a bridge between two apparently different realities but with an increasingly representative interface in the last decades.

Even the expression "design management", if decomposed, requires a clear understanding of the word 'management'. A recurring Business definition is "process of planning, organization, and control of scarce resources to reach pre-established objectives". Design management could initially be understood as the management of processes related to design activities within an organizational context.

One of the main authors on the subject, Mozota (2003) assumes that design management has two well defined and, in a certain way, complementary purposes: foster managers and designers training on administration and design areas, and develop design integration methods in the corporate environment. In the first objective, the main challenge concerns to change and perhaps to equalize different mental models - typical of their fields - for a deeper understanding and awareness about process management and project development.

Perhaps this is one of the main challenges of bringing together management and design within organizations: the presence of mental models regarding innovation processes that are different among designers and managers. Liedtka (2010) discusses if management and design are reconcilable within organizations and their structures, highlighting the apparently incompatible reasoning differences. Managers are based on analytical, logical and objective thinking, grounded on precise, quantifiable economic assumptions. Designers rely on "human experience, forever messy, which is always confused, as its decision driver and sees

true and objectivity as an illusion" (Liedtka, 2010, p.8). Those are worldviews that assume different grounds.

The second goal is to identify and propose ways that allow the design culture to influence (to some extent) the corporate environment. It is clear that without establishing a clear and fluid communication between managers and designers a wide influence will not be successful.

Gorb (1990), responsible for creating the Department of Design Management of the London Business School, points out that design management is intended to show the role of Design within organizations, allowing their domains not to be restricted to products development but also to identify and propose solutions to organization's managerial problems. Along the same lines, Hetzel (1995) extends the concept of design management explaining that its scope englobes the management of the creative process within organizations, as well as managing the company according to design principles. Best (2006) suggests that design is intrinsically linked to companies in a way that both managers (who are trained to be analytical) and designers (who have the ability to design and be creative as distinctive competencies) can together create value to society.

Mozota (2003) compares design and management and proposes a convergence model between the areas, coined Designence, based on a managerial and a strategic perspective. In the managerial space, the principle is to search for management concepts and resources that will improve design within the company (organizational performance, brand-identity-strategy decisions). In the strategic domain, the principle is the reverse, to seek improving management from design knowledge, such as process redesign, creativity, and idea management. Design can influence business and strategic aspects of an organization by the development of design projects and by taking part in managerial decisions.

Design Management Institute, an organization that has promoted discussion and research in design management since the 1970s, defines it as the area which "encompasses the ongoing processes, business decisions, and strategies that enable innovation and create effectively-designed products, services, communications, environments, and brands that enhance our quality of life and provide organizational success". More clearly, design management seeks to associate design, innovation, technology, management, and customers to build competitive advantages through economic, socio-cultural and environmental factors. The ultimate goal is to foster the role of design within organizations in order to increase collaboration and synergy between design and business, increasing its effectiveness.

Mozota points out that design management decisions can happen in three levels, much as in the business field: operational, tactical, and strategic design. Operational design is related to building the organization's supply and ways to distinguish it from the competition.

Functional design is linked to a search for design efforts management, which would include administration of design strategy and their inter-relations with areas such as marketing, communication, and innovation; in other words, it involves all fundamental decisions for design operation and allows that strategic decisions are effectively implemented. Finally, design strategic management aims to help define the organization's supply strategies – from market and trend reading, identifying its core competencies, to turning the company's business strategy visible, contributing to management process' innovation. In the three levels presented, design can be identified from its usual participation in product development (operational), shifting to design process management and construction of an appropriate environment to innovation processes (tactical), culminating with an active design participation in construction, diffusion and implementation of corporate strategies as a whole (strategic).

Design management is fundamentally a leading position on projects, requiring a capacity for an explanation, inspiration, persuasion, and demonstration of how design can positively contribute to an organization in different ways (Best, 2006).

Best understands design management as a process that is divided into three phases: management of the design strategy, of the design process and of its implementation. At first, identifying and creating conditions in which design projects can be developed is the premise. In the same way, design management has the challenge of disseminating design thinking in organizational strategy, identifying opportunities, interpreting customer needs, and showing how design can contribute to the company as a whole. In design process management, the focus is on the ability to represent organizational strategy from design as well as on leadership competencies involved in this process. Finally, in the implementation stage, the focus is on project process and execution, such as the establishment of guidelines and manuals that will help the development of future projects.

### 3. STRATEGIC DESIGN

As it was seen, the concept of Design Management came from an organizational perspective, it seeks to manage the competencies that design can bring to them. In this paper, we try to establish a parallel between the concept of Design Management and the concept of Strategic Design. While Design Management proposes ways to insert and manage design resources in

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organizations, Strategic Design sees design as the architect agent of organizational strategies. These are "cross perspectives" involving the same topic: the role of design strategies in organizations.

Several authors have been working with Strategic Design. Lockwood (2010, p. 84) states that design strategy sets direction and roadmap, and design thinking is more involved in the front-end innovation process. Although the author splits what he calls design thinking from design strategy, he proposes that the two ways of seeing design will lead to what might be characterized as an organization guided by a "design spirit". Lockwood's design spirit is similar what we call design culture. In the same paper (p.82), Lockwood points out that design is now seen as a form of knowledge realized by thinking and doing, giving forms to ideas, a way of doing things. In this sense, the five elements that are part of an identified design culture would be the guides for building strategies to a design-guided organization.

Zurlo (2006, p. 13), quoting the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, states design as:

A creative activity whose goal is to establish the multiform quality of a system object, process, service throughout the entire lifecycle. Moreover, design is the central factor for innovatively humanizing technology and a crucial factor of economic and cultural change.

Following, Zurlo seeks to define the concept of strategy. For Zurlo, strategy can mean several things like vision, perspective or foresight. An approximation between design culture and company culture is part of the design history. According to the author, Design Management dealt with this relationship by seeking to build bridges between the two cultures with the precise objective of mediating an effective and constructive relationship.

The concept of strategic design parts from the notion aforementioned that nowadays a designer does not design artifacts that "only" solve functional problems, but he seeks to systemically project the entire value chain. The term system-product is usually assigned to the thorough notion of this value chain. For Cautela and Zurlo (2006), product-system involves the projection of the product itself, of services, of communication and of experience. It is an interface system through which the company offers itself in society and shapes its own strategy. Zurlo broadens the concept:

The innovation proposed by the strategic design vision, through the dynamics that perceive marketing, increase the product use value, including brand identity, with variable forms of service added to the product and the customer, until integrate it completely with the utility

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system, set to which it generates direct "relationship value" between company and consumer (Zurlo , 2006, p. 142).

Capra (1997)'s idea of an autopoietic system helps to understand the current concept of system in strategic design, which originated in the Polytechnic Milan. In this text, Capra describes living organic biological systems to explain the concept of an autopoietic system. The idea of living systems will be perceived to think of organizational systems or even the concept of a product system other than a value chain, which could be associated with a linear view of how things are organized. In this sense, the concept of product-service-system will only be adequate when we imagine a whole, formed by networks of dynamic and changeable relationships. The product-service system is something that must be designed by the actors involved with a view to affect or work on the interface between the company and the society, as Zurlo defines.

The concept originally proposed by Verganti (2009) of design-driven innovation is also a very important concept in the field of strategic design. Design-driven innovation creates new meanings and desires. This creation necessarily involves a projectual way of thinking. In Verganti's line of reasoning, two essential points are required: in the first place to revive project culture as the main design competence, and, secondly, to place that competence in the center of organizations' strategic decisions.

By putting project culture at the center of organizational decision-making, or at least bringing the idea of designing the whole product-system, strategic design needs to seek references and foundations in other areas of professional performance already used to companies and organizations' decision-making processes. It will have to bring together project competencies, personnel, and methods from areas such as management, marketing, and communication, just to name three major areas.

According to Celaschi:

With the idea of design-driven, we understand that rather than individualizing a product innovation process in which design contribution is set at the company strategy level, at the apex, and aware that the governable quality of design in process and in product are today the characteristics that most influence a company gain success and consumer satisfaction; therefore we can and should influence them in the explicit way of governance of the innovation process. (Celaschi, 2007, p.16)

Once the idea of designing products in isolation is discarded, coordinated project actions lead by designers are gaining importance. When we talk about designers we are referring to the design team, which includes everyone who works in the strategic design project

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development regardless of their professional degree. Designers cease to be someone who only provides answers to design problems they are normally engaged in, and proceed to investigate, characterize and construct the problem itself and reposition it in agreement with other decision-making sectors in the organizations. A designer or a design team work side by side in defining services and other intangible elements not present in the traditional concept of product design. In a world where more than 70 percent of the developed countries economies come from the service sector, it is easy to understand the importance design assumes following such proposition (Saco & Gonçalves, 2008).

The strategic designer's area of action will thus involve issues such as organization identity, construction of meanings that can be associated with products, construction of experiences and interfaces between product-services and users, territories development, and cooperation network development, among others. Communication ceases to be something to be thought after project development and becomes part of the design process, becoming more important than the product itself. Design professionals already, to a certain extent, worked with all of these aspects. The difference proposed by the concept of strategic design lies in the fact that this action is thought strategically and coordinated within a system. The projection of the product-system will be a way of provoking a global strategy for the organization.

Here we return to the discussion about design as a problem-solving process. For Manzini (2018, pp. 48-49) "we can also speak of design moving away from this problem-oriented approach, and focusing on a definition that emphasizes the role of culture and, hence, language and meaning." Manzini goes on to say that "problem-solving and meaning production are not different ways of saying the same thing: they coexist...". Celaschi (2007, p.21) poses the design problem in three different moments. First, it seeks to identify visions or directions for innovation in what he has defined as problem-finding. Then it is design's responsibility to characterize this problem and its sub-problems in this intricate dynamics of the contemporary commodity. Celaschi defines this second moment as problem-setting. Finally, design is responsible to imagine and construct solutions, respecting objectives, time, and available resources. The idea of finding the problem, characterizing it and solving it demonstrate the procedural character that is valued to the concept of strategic design. Dorst (2003), who do not work with strategic design, support a perspective that shares points in common with Celaschi. For him, it is quite difficult to conceive the idea of a problem to be solved because, as aforementioned, due to design problems wicked characteristic (RITTEL and WEBER, 1973; BUCHANAN, 1992), it can only be understood through co-evolving a

problem assuming a problem-solution pair. It means that the design problem does not exist at the beginning of the process, or rather, it is poorly defined and open. The only way to find it will be from rehearsing alternatives. It is a dynamic relation, a system of connected elements in constant movement that evolves organically. Some ideas will survive; others will cease to exist. As we evolve, all actors change. This vision of evolution in the creative process is quite evident to designers when designing. To imagine that the design problem is something open and changeable (co-evolution) and to recognize this as a quality means to open up a privileged space for design to assume a strategic dimension, related to another key design concept of meta-project.

By placing design culture as a competency in service of organizational strategies, strategic design also sought to define design process models that favor the design of product-systems. These models will often assume the concept of a meta-project. For Celaschi meta-project is "an articulated and analytical program, subdivided into phases, times, and economic and human resources necessary in each phase, which will constitute a 'general regulatory plan' of the innovation process" (2007, p.40).

Without necessarily abandoning Celaschi's initial vision of meta-project as a "project of the project", we could think of meta-project as a space for reflection, for questioning. In this sense, Schön (2000), describing what would be a reflective professional, affirms that they should first question what would be thought before designing something. Schön also proposed the idea of a dialogue between the designer and his project. More recently, Manzini (2017) retakes the idea of dialogue platforms, which stimulates the participation of the various actors in this process. Thus, meta-project can be seen as a platform for questioning and reflecting on what should be designed. This is only possible from the moment we accept that the design problem itself is something that must be constructed; it does not exist "a priori". The generative, nonlinear, open and abductive aspect of design culture manifests itself strongly by accepting meta-project as something dynamic. When repositioning a design problem posit by a briefing, for example, a designer interferes with the definitions of what may or may not be important to the organization. A designer leaves the closed position of their product development department and suggests changes in what they should and could do. Researchers who are engaged in thinking about the concept of Strategic Design are constantly debating the idea of repositioning the initial briefing. For Meroni (2008, p. 37), "the definition of a problem, and hence a design brief, is not a neutral act. A strategic designer works in the opposite direction of the traditional brief. The so-called counter-brief practice is, actually, a way of reshape the tasks he receives".

A third structuring concept of a strategic design culture is related to scenario construction, which has its origin in Business, more precisely in strategic planning. From planning, it has inherited the idea of working with critical uncertainties that underpin future worlds. In strategic planning, we try to imagine the possible and uncertain worlds - scenarios -, and for each of these worlds, a project will be realized. If one of these futures happens, the organization will have a ready-to-implement project in hand. The idea of control, of a search for greater security and effectiveness against uncertainty, is what supports the concept of strategic planning scenarios.

Authors of design research (MANZINI, JEGOU, 2006) adopt this concept, as the construction of future worlds and uncertainties are two concepts rooted in any design culture. In strategic design, they are essential elements, taking advantage of typical skills of design culture as risk-based reflection and uncertain to build scenarios of the future. Scenario, as a "stage" where many actors can act, is a way of learning from the future, which Van Der Heidjen (2009) defines as "memories of the future". This expression refers to the process of learning from events not yet lived, the memory of something that has not yet happened. If we recall the initial definition of strategy proposed by Zurlo as the construction of visions, one observes a proximity to the concept of scenarios. Visions would be understood as the positioning of designers in a particular direction. The project is guided by an uncertain but possible effort. The idea of learning from the future is linked to changes in the mental model and reinforces the earlier concept of meta-project as a lifelong learning process. The construction of scenarios is often associated with the construction of narratives, which is worked by Zurlo and Cautela (2014) as "a form of knowledge or a representation of the world that can translate into actions, perceptions, understandings and actions" (p.24).

#### 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The difficulty of determining the limits that set apart two terms that comes from the corporate world and are increasingly used in the design is understandable. What differentiates design management from a design practice considered strategic? Table 1 seeks to synthesize these limits. Every management process, regardless of the area we are dealing with, aims to increase the productivity of scarce resources (economic, structural, human, temporal) in order to increase the generated value, i.e that is relevant to an organization and bring significant contributions to its survival and competitiveness. Design management seeks to establish ways in which supply creation and development processes occur efficiently (high productivity) and effectively (generate significant results for the company)

It is a process management view within an organizational context, aiming to be optimized, continually improved and helping corporate objectives to be achieved. Design management thus seeks to manage a value to be added to the organization. Strategic design has as premise how relevant extended design activities can contribute to the competitiveness of companies, mainly generating superior value from practices that produce innovation.

**Table 1**

***Design Management and Strategic Design according to five elements of a design culture.***

	Design Management	Strategic Design
Project thinking	It is perceived as a value to be added to the organization.	It is perceived as a creative, critical process, aiming to build a future that (still) does not exist.
Decision-making process and risk	Diagnostics and prognostics	Learning
Uncertainty	Search for data, more control	Scenarios are built, less control
Linearity	More linear	Not linear
Practical sense	Yes	Yes

How to reach these goals necessarily goes through a creative work that brings together the technical and the artistic dimension inherent to designing, in a process of building possible futures. Design activity stops being restricted to a stage within the product development process and becomes disseminated overall the organization, giving rise to a design culture (or design-driven orientation). Its contribution is not only methodological, as one might imagine, but it changes the perspective of how to understand contexts in which organizations are inserted and, from that, translate needs and desires, often latent and unknown to the customer, in an innovative and distinguished offer.

Any design can be associated with a decision-making process, as can be seen throughout this paper. In design management diagnostic and prognostics often support this process. In strategic design, decision-making is based on learning cycles. Alternative strategies are simulated, and in a reflective critical process, they lead to other alternatives, which bring more learning. In these

cycles, a risk is something inherent to the process. In strategic design processes, critical thinking is permanent.

Very close to the concept of risk comes uncertainty. Both design management and strategic design will work with uncertainty as part of a process to formulate organizational strategies. Uncertainty is a central element in strategy building. In design management, we seek to identify ways to be better prepared for a "confrontation". In other words, as we accept the world's complexity and its resulting uncertainties, an idea of control is essential for management. This control does not seek to reduce the creativity or the required design freedom. Control is oriented to a strategic planning that accepts the dynamism of organizations. In strategic design, uncertainty will also be a central topic and will work to a large extent by building future scenarios. However, these scenarios are perceived as ways to predict pathways, directions to where a strategic design project may further go. Scenarios are built. They serve as a platform for a project and as a medium that fosters dialogue among various actors involved in strategic design.

A possible perspective to address this issue is, when comparing strategic design to design management, attribute to the former a reflective, systemic and non-linear role within organizations, and to the second only an operational role in a linear logic of performance. It is reasonable to understand that strategic design, apart from reviewing methodological aspects of the design process, contributes to promoting design culture within companies, either through a more active participation in supply construction or through influencing organizations. However, design management role assumes a strategic importance not only in the development and diffusion of organizational strategies but also in serving as a link between two extremely different mental models: manager and designer. As mentioned before, it is design management that allows designers to overcome their biases and fully understand administrative processes, including enabling them to redesign them if necessary (a good example of this is the importance that design has been gaining in the area of services, not only in physical evidence of a service but also in the construction and management of service processes through development of blueprints and storyboards). On the other hand, design culture, which is distant to a manager's training and practice, becomes part design management practices. Therefore, it is not a question of opposition between the two concepts, but mainly of complementarity.

Both design management and strategic design have as their goal to transform existing situations. Hence, the two concepts have a practical sense. As seen, their way of doing things may be diverse, but design management and strategic design will have on their horizon the fulfillment of answers to society's needs in general and organizations in particular.

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This paper aims to clarify and establish significant differences between two conceptual premises that have been confused within the design area as well as in corporate environments. The five points used to analyze design management and strategic design do not exhaust what might characterize design culture. Future research will be able to deepen this topic. To set limits and build a clearer understanding is relevant in order to establish an unambiguous conceptual basis for different audiences that have (or could have) interface with design. It should be noted that the focus design has been gaining in recent years, whether among professionals or academics, is unprecedented. The reason for this interest arises from the business world need to develop solutions that are increasingly innovative and that contribute to improving business performance and people's life quality. Verganti (2008) points out that scientific production about design function in business environment has grown and the actual area of design management, which was virtually devoid of scientific research, is replaced by a more solid theoretical base in recent years. While the scientific production in design management is consolidated, strategic design, an important concept that has been explored in this paper, requires a greater number of studies that allow to explore and to propose how design practice could be disseminated in organizations, bringing together the development of creative, sustainable and relevant solutions to society in general.

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