

Art, Design, Branding, Research: The Design Professions in Transition

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Ilpo Koskinen,

Prof., Ph.D, School of Design, University of Art and Design Helsinki,

Hämeentie 135 C, 00560 Helsinki, ikoskine@uiah.fi / <http://www.uiah.fi/~ikoskine/>

Abstract

While the design occupations, with few exceptions like Denmark and Finland, have traditionally based their work on fairly exclusive clientele, sources of inspiration in modern art, and they have been situated outside the traditional mainstream of power in education and economy alike, the situation has been changing over the years. Although design has by no means been among the most successful of new, post-war professions, its importance has grown: design has become practically ubiquitous at least in urban societies and media, and design schools have increasingly been getting into prestigious activities like research. The reasons for the change are many, ranging from the growth of cultural economy in general to changes in the marketplace, organization of work in society, media and the art world(s). This paper describes some of the main forms of professional and institutional action taken by these occupations in the midst of these changes. It analyzes four main strategies, art, design, branding and research, relates these to national political agendas in Europe, and studies in detail the development of industrial design in Finland, a design-intensive country if any.

Key words:

Design, industrial design, professions, occupations, policy

1. Intro

In modern sense of the term, design is a fairly new professional field.

Architecture notwithstanding, other design professions have a history that goes back only few decades. Still, design has achieved a measure of success in its less than 100 years of existence. From a professional standpoint, design has achieved something like a semi-professional status, if we follow Wilensky's model of professionalization (Wilensky 1964). Although in the main, designers have little professional control over their work, and in this, resemble engineering, design has achieved a university status, conduct academic research, have several professional organizations on both national and global levels, and are a part of the industrial landscape of early 21st century.

Sociological theories of professions are plentiful, but can be grouped into a few main categories. Functionalist theories (see Goode 1957) stress how professions use esoteric knowledge and perform important work in society. Since people who own esoteric knowledge cannot be controlled by outsiders, the society grants professions a high degree of autonomy and self-control, and is ready to pay for this by granting the profession means to control entry into the profession (and high levels of compensation). In exchange, the society gets a high level of service. In contrast to this view, monopolistic theories (Freidson 1970; Larson 1977) point out how professions seek to control entry into lucrative work by the rhetoric of benevolence to maximize their control over valued areas of work.

What comes to design, there theories face a few difficulties. As mentioned, designers are aspiring professions rather than in full control of their work. It is also hard to see what is the greater good designers provide for society – despite claims for

making everyday life more aesthetically pleasing, which is a contested proposal. The functionalist theories have difficulties, but monopolistic theories fare badly too: with the exception of two specific environments, design schools and design offices, designers are seldom in control of their work. Even in these two restricted environments, designers are to a large extent at the mercy of other, more powerful players, like the government and the clients. Any theory that aims to shed light on design needs to pay attention to not just their rhetoric, but also to the structure of design, its historical development, and its place at the face of other occupations and professions.

This paper relies on Andrew Abbott's theory of the system of professions (Abbott 1988) to make sense of a few forms of action currently taking place in design. In brief, Abbott aligns with the monopolistic theories in seeing professional action mainly as a struggle to secure control over lucrative, high-paid work; he talks about "jurisdiction" over work. However, Abbott also pays attention to two external realities that shape the fate of these claims: workplace realities and other professions. Even the mightiest professions may be vulnerable at the workplace, in which their members have to negotiate local deals with other occupations and professions. Similarly, when new forms of work open in society because of technological and organizational reasons, several occupations make claims about it. This mostly happens by increasing abstraction by adapting new technologies, theories, conceptual frameworks, that not only help in work, but also legitimize claims to jurisdiction. Abbott stresses the importance of technology and organizations (government included) in opening jurisdictions, but his list is not exclusive.

The rest of this paper focuses on the ways in which the design profession create abstractions for their work, and how they use these more abstract

understandings make claims for jurisdiction. When reading this paper, it is important to note that design consists of several subdisciplines that face different professional, workplace, and organizational realities. Also, it is important to keep in mind that I am specifically focusing on designers who are trained in art and design universities. As Julier (2000) has correctly noted, this is a narrow definition of design; only a few percent of all design is in the hands of art and design school alumni. However, this restriction provides an opportunity to focus on a fairly well-defined part of the design world.

2. Professional Strategies in Design

Like engineering, the design professions are not full professions, if we compare them to the two prototypes of professions, medicine and law. The design professions are not powerful enough to define their own destiny. Instead, adoption to changing circumstances is crucial for them. Adaptation mainly takes place through increasing abstraction: professions create increasingly complex systems of knowledge to better cope with their work and to make claims for jurisdiction. This applies to all aspects of professional knowledge systems, diagnosis, inference, and treatment alike. However, too much abstraction may make a profession vulnerable: if a profession gets too abstract in its claims, other professions may be able to perform better, and thus grow their jurisdiction.

Several social processes drive the process of abstraction. As Abbott has noted, technology and organizations both provide new opportunities for designers, shaping them in many ways, as we shall see later in this talk. However, at least three other things significantly shape design:

1. *Political economy*. Governments direct economy in many ways, and some of affect design either directly or indirectly. In particular, training has increased in many countries. More students enter design education, and design education is also developing into universities from their vocational and college-level origins.
2. *Consumer society*. The market for design has grown over the last four decades significantly. Gans (1983) has linked this development to increasingly educated (upper) middle classes that form the primary market for designer goods. However, several other aspects of consumer society also shape design: the importance of brands; the luxury goods industry; and an appreciation of hand crafted, personal products (notes already by Simmel 1990: 454-7).
3. *Media*. Media has become increasingly important in design. In particular, it shapes how laymen and students understand design, and in its part directs the market. For designers, it provides arguments for jurisdictional claims. (Picture 1). Media includes film and TV, newspapers, weeklies and monthlies, but also museums and academic writing about design.

However, design is but a small part of modern society and its educational system. As society changes, new opportunities provided by these developments are seized by several professions as well. Competition from neighboring professions has always been a part of design's lot. In design, the best example has been architecture, with its claim that other forms of design are reducible to architecture. However, with its new claims for jurisdiction, designers face other types of competing claims today, including those made by software engineers, sociologists, business economists,

marketing professions, and so forth. They are also entering the art world, facing competition from professional artists.



Picture 1. Design in Media: Left: Intramuros, a booklet marketing design in Paris. Right, up: two design districts, Helsinki and TriBeCa. Right, down: Tokyo Design Week and Chelsea Art district.

Of course, designers participate actively in society, and bring about changes in our environment through their work. They make interpretations of not only objects and technology, but also of human beings and society, and fuse these interpretations in their work. When one thinks design as reflexive agency, one begins to see professional strategies as interpretations and statements made by humans, rather than just reactions to things in environment. Some designers and design professions stress an artistic strategy, framing design in terms that come from the art world, solving problems with artistic techniques, and framing the claims for jurisdiction artistically. Some designers, in contrast, build on other types of strategies. Many designers

distance themselves from art and artistic imagery, and orient to technology or the market instead.

Thus, the design professions have developed a variety of strategies to deal with changes in their environment. Some of these strategies are defensive, some proactive. Some are targeted at other design specialties, while others are targeted outside design. Regardless of the audience of the claims, they lead to different claims for jurisdiction and different definitions of the discipline and its function. The main arena for what can be called the internal for jurisdiction claims are the universities, while some claims are targeted at more varied external arenas.

3. Craft and Technology as Professional Strategies

The first strategy links design to tradition. The link between design and craft has a long history that goes back to the Arts and Crafts movement and its precursors in Scandinavia. Ideologists and entrepreneurs like William Morris aside, the main institution promoting this vision has been art and design schools. Design schools around the world have adopted the Bauhaus model for education, stressing teaching craft skills in an art school context, thus giving a strong basis for design.

Out of design professions, this strategy mainly characterizes areas like leather works, glass blowing, and to an extent, ceramics, although ceramists have increasingly adopted other strategies. Teaching takes place in studios, next to burners, ovens, and chemicals, and is tutored by a master who typically has learned his craft first from older masters, and through experience. Even at the university level, there is little if any teaching in chemistry or physics; theoretical training is in the history of

the trade and to an extent, in art history. There is little if any worry for users, or to consumers, not to mention economics.

However, this strategy also goes deeper. A recent study maps the situation in one of the leading Northern European design schools, Danish Design School (Brandt 2007). Pressured by the Danish government, this college-level school, with an exceptionally strong alumni, is in the process of transforming into a university. In practice, the school has to transform in five years from a 4-year college stressing skills of the hand into a 5-year university offering a BA and an MA degrees and, if successful in this transformation, a doctoral program later. Similar transformations are taking place in many design colleges around the globe including places like Toronto and the Netherlands. As Brandt shows in her study, the main obstacle for the change is the teaching core that stresses craft skills, maintaining that a good designer above all has to have a thorough knowledge of materials and handicraft techniques. Traditional craft skills are a conservative strategy in this policy.

The irony of the tactic is that although this strategy leads to stellar design successes once in a while, it also leads to massive failure rates. Despite its record, Danish Design School remains a small college of about 700 students that is largely isolated from Copenhagen universities. Its graduates face high unemployment (in 40% range), and earnings are comparable to art schools rather than universities. In essence, the craft strategy has failed. Industry and society increasingly requires mastery of technology and symbols rather than skills of the hand that are taught at lower levels of the educational system. What graduates of an elite school like DDS can expect is a life as a high-end craftsman who have to compete on a limited market of elite customers who are only occasionally willing to pay the high price of handicraft.

However, there are design specialties that have been able to bypass this problem. While traditional design disciplines have, in an ecological metaphor, been behaving like polar bears, specializing in developing sophisticated skills for surviving in a limited ecological niche, few other specialties have chosen a raccoon strategy, feeding on all kinds of food sources.

These exceptions, building on the art school tradition, come from the more technological end of design. In particular, two specialties of design, industrial design and media design, and to a lesser extent, graphic design, have taken an intensively technological track. As the importance of information technology has increased in manufacturing and media, these disciplines have gained work from their eagerness to rebuild their work process with technology. For example, current practice in industrial design is largely built around computers; in a typical studio, one sees less and less traditional model making and power tools, and more and more computers and CAM machinery (Picture 2). Most parts of the work process have become technological, leading to deskilling of traditional laborers, who have been replaced by computer technicians. This strategy has not raised industrial designers to the par with engineers, but an ability to work with computer-related skills has made industrial designers an increasingly independent partner in current engineering practice. Professionally, this strategy has been a success; a former subordinate profession has been able to gain a degree of independence from its previous master, engineering.

Although these technological subdisciplines of design have not been major successes in society when compare to, say, the social sciences, not to mention the most spectacular professional success story of the latter part of the century, computer science, the technological strategy has been tremendously successful in the design field. The design historian Anna Valtonen (2007) attributes the reasons for the success

of this strategy for mastery of new terminology, which communication with engineering becomes possible, and partly for a conscious process orientation which, though increasingly detaching design from handicraft, has also increased the flexibility of the profession. Compared to polar bear-like ceramists, industrial designers have been raccoons, able to take any kind of work in the changing industrial environment.



Picture 2. The two worlds of (industrial design), traditional workshops (left) and information technology (right).

However, when one looks at society beyond the immediate work context of designers, the picture is not that clear. In particular, design has become a sign itself: things are sold for their design. Media in particular celebrate craftspersons, not faceless industrial designers. For the survival of the profession, media creates an environment in which incoming students expect to get training in craft (and also art) rather than just technical aspects of design. The public also constructs its idea of design from media, creating consumers for craft products with an artistic lining. Still, this is a limited market that rewards a few star-quality designers rather than hordes of

designers. In this sense, the technological strategy has proved to be more successful, even though it is not glorified in media.

4. Art as Abstraction

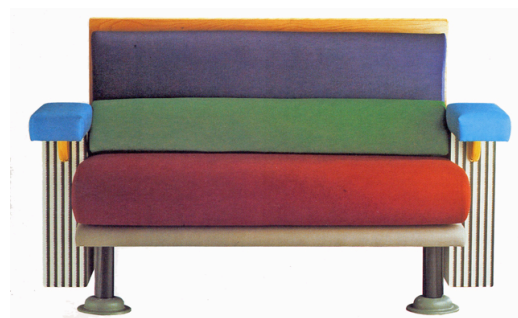
A variation of the previous strategy builds on increasing the influence of art in design, and basing the claims to jurisdiction on artistic qualities of design. The design historian Penny Sparke attributes this strategy to Italians in particular.

While Germany sells design in the name of science, Italy in the name of art, Scandinavia in the name of craft and the USA in the name of business, all these national images of design were necessary strategies in the highly competitive markets of the immediate post war years. The role of the designer was to help develop a marketing strategy, which would give his product a special place in that market. (Sparke, quoted in Woodham, p. 177)

Of course, this opinion is on the track, but not completely right in its details. Artistic thinking has exerted a powerful influence on design in many countries. National romanticism was an early, but key influence on design in many countries, including Scandinavia, Germany and England, as the well-known example of Arts and Crafts movement shows. In places like Finland, the reasons may have been political, related to the birth of the nation state, but even when there was no such political basis, as in Britain, this tactic did link design to folk culture. In 20th century, the main influence on design has been modernism and functionalism, with its sleek, simple, and often elegant lines. In particular in Scandinavia and Germany, modernism

has become almost a self-evident foundation for design. Although modernism was typically a stylistic reaction to national romanticism and Art Deco, it has occasionally even gained political dimensions, as in Barcelona under Franco's regime, when modern, Scandinavian look became a sign of political freedom (Narotsky 2000).

However, Sparke is right in stressing how Italian design in particular has been based on art, utilizing the country's rich artistic heritage for a variety of purposes. It has been in Italy in particular in which practically all forms of modern art, ranging from cubism, surrealism, dada, expressionism, pop art, and conceptual art have found their way into design. As Picture 3 suggests, many forms of avantgarde in the arts have found their way to design. In this picture, there are references to Asian art (Sotsass), cubism through Piet Mondrian (Ritjveld), and pop art (De Lucchi).



Picture 3. Designers as Artists. Left: Giant Ceramic Sculptures by Ettore Sottsass, 1967. Picture from Sparke 1988: 188. Right: Gerrit Rietveld's interior for the Schröder House in Utrecht, 1924, and Michele De Lucchi's Lido sofa, 1982.

In terms of the design professions, at least three traditional design disciplines have increasingly chosen this path. These are glass and ceramics design, furniture design and interior decoration, and also fashion design. The reasons for this choice probably lie in economy. With few exceptions, most European countries have lost their glass and ceramic industries over the last three decades. What has remained is a strong artistic heritage and an increasingly wealthy customer basis willing to buy individual pieces of ceramics and glassware (and, to a lesser extent, products from blacksmiths). Similarly, fashion design has chosen a strongly artistic position.

In terms of professional theory, art is one strategy of abstraction. Art does offer a complex, esoteric, open ended, flexible and abstract discourse about objects. Even a research effort is taking place in particular in Britain, in which several art schools offer an opportunity to do a “practice-based” doctorate. The outcome of this effort is still, least to say, uncertain, but this is not my point. The point is that reliance to an artistic strategy has a social basis in both economy, and in the design world. As Gans (1983) has observed, there is a massive, increasingly sophisticated audience for new types of goods. Media glorifies artistic qualities of design, reducing a complex phenomenon increasingly to individual creativity. Also, other harbingers of taste like museum curators participate in isolating design from its practical and socio-economic foundations. In schools, this has been a simple and effective strategy for craftspeople in marketing their vision of design to students in contrast to the seiren songs of technologically and business-wise smart industrial and graphic designers. Finally, industry plays a role promoting this process, as Kicherer notes when writing about Adriano Olivetti:

He gradually gathered together a group of talented people including painters,

graphic designers and poets, intentionally looking for people involved in the latest ideas in art and design with a large network of contacts which could be beneficial for the company. Through freelance contracts, he was able to get these people to work together without taking them away from the art scene. This procedure consequently proved to be an important instrument for bringing the contemporary cultural trend actively into the company and enabling the company itself to make a contribution. One of the early central figures was Renato Zveteremisch who Adriano appointed as manager of the new department. He had many contacts and brought people like Schawinsky, Persico, Nizzoli, Munari, Veronesi and others into contact with Olivetti. (Kicherer 1990: 17, 25).

The good news, of course, is that the artistic tactic does give work for at least a handful of designers. If one looks at how design trade has developed in a town like Helsinki, one notices a significant growth since early 1960s (see Koskinen 2005). Also, art is well funded in welfare societies that do grant artistic prices, salaries, and pensions for not just artists, but also designers. In art and design schools, this strategy certainly provides a foothold in trying to define jurisdiction. It helps in recruiting less conceptual and theoretical students, who populate design schools. The bad news of course are many as well. Obviously, being artistic is a self-defeating strategy in the academic life in which ambiguity and terms like intuition are not respected. In terms of market, the artistic strategy has not been particularly successful: students from beaux art academies are not doing well. Marco Mundelius' (2006) recent study of artists in Berlin shows just how difficult this strategy is. Depending on age, 60% - 80% of Berlin-based artists earn less than 11.000 Euros annually. Also, media

attention and stories about companies like Olivetti cannot hide the fact that in industry, being an artist is not appreciated. And Angela McRobbie's subtitle for her book *British Fashion Design* was subtitled as "Rag Trade or Image Industry?" As Richard Edwards (1979: 146) noted, companies seek to raise minimal acceptable performance, not star performance, which is difficult to avoid in the artistic strategy. Still, for a few designers, this strategy is rewarding, and for the profession as a whole, it brings media attention and indirectly increases chances of recruiting students.

5. Branding and Strategy

In many ways, the artistic strategy is a natural outgrowth of the craft strategy. However, in current design, there exists also evidence of two other professional strategies. As Abbott (1988) notes, one major thing that opens jurisdictions is organizational: it is major organizations, including governments that create new work, and run previously important lines of work down. For designers, these changes are felt in three partly interdependent strands.

The first new subspecialty in design is usually called design management. Its main focus is on issues related to corporate identity and branding. As Molotch (2003: 205ff) puts the matter, as products get increasingly interchangeable, companies try to push their products to the public mind by linking them to a few easy-to-remember signs usually called brands. For designers, branding has meant many types of work, starting from product graphics in packages and ending with consulting the management of corporate identity issues. This field has achieved a degree of professionalization. The first steps in defining a new field probably took place in the 1970s and 1980s through several books, first published at London School of

Economics, and then in the United States, with the establishment of Design Management Institute (DMI) in Boston in **. Design Management Journal was established at DMI in 1989. Although Britain is probably still the leading center of design management thinking largely through an active research group in Manchester, there have been several academic programs specializing on the commercial aspects of design in various countries. For example, there was a program at the University of Westminster, and there is a program at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. Also, there are several joint programs. In Helsinki, the University of Art and Design has cooperated with Helsinki University of Technology and Helsinki School of Economics since 1995 (and even before that there was a MA course called “design leadership”). Similar programs exist in several places, including Stockholm and Paris, in which INSEAD cooperates with the Art Center of Pasadena, one of the leading design universities in the world.

The second subspecialty called strategic design is growing from within design management. Strategic design focuses on management of design in large corporations; it can best be interpreted as a response to the failure of design management to produce a better position for the design professions in global economy. As several industries and companies have become global, their design offices have been growing and diversifying as well. All car manufacturers have design studios that employ hundreds of designers, many of whom have training in art and design. A similar situation exists in global companies in consumer electronics and white goods, and with companies like IKEA creating a world market for furniture, increasingly in furniture and home décor (Valtonen 2007). For instance, Sony and Nokia currently employ over 300 designers both. Such scale introduces problems that clearly cannot be answered through traditional techniques and understandings of the

profession. Designers have to find ways to fit into organizational and technological environments beyond their control, find new ways to manage professional and creative work, learn to manage new (group) work methods and technologies like managing intercultural team work through computerized systems.

Few smaller companies have built in-house design offices – mostly to avoid commitments to design in slow economic conditions. Instead, they buy design services from design offices, providing offices an opportunity to sell their strategic expertise in building and managing product portfolios and building tools for competition through design.

Possibly, there is a third strand in the branding area too. In want of a better term, let us call it cultural design. With increasingly global economy, the problem is not just corporate identity or managing something familiar better. They can also develop new kinds of skills in response to emerging problems. Knowledge of ergonomics, CAD/CAM technologies, or materials is not enough when one designs for a different culture or for a fashion-conscious market in which variation is more important than technology. When the success of a product is dependent on customers' sensibilities, designers not only face managerial problems, but also have to learn to deal with marketing and producing something that builds on changing tastes and new cultures. In sociologues, designers are agents in reflexive economy (Urry and Lash 1994), developing methods of understanding the customer through ethnographic means, storyboards, "probes," and market research.

Although design management in particular has achieved a measure of success, its ups and downs also tell about its problems. Offices in London specializing on design management grew to hundreds of people in the 1980s by mostly focusing on company identity, packaging and advertising and by offering their services to global

customers. However, a good deal of this business was lost in the recession of the 1990s, and these companies went into bust. Designers' foothold in management issues proved to be weak when compared to management consulting and accounting that again reign in the management area. In contrast, it is too early to evaluate how the different design community responses to emerging forms of economy have fared on the marketplace. It is obvious that designers' claim to jurisdiction is on even weaker grounds when they make claims about strategic management than on design management; in the latter area, they can clearly do useful work in actual design tasks, providing at least some "hard" evidence of their usefulness for business.

More important is the question of abstraction. From a professional standpoint, these developments can be seen as strategies of abstraction. If designers produce forms of knowledge that help them to not just find new work, but also build complex processes (like corporate identity programs), and situate their skills better into the strategically important areas of businesses (strategic design), this strategy has clearly been a professional success. Managerial skills, of course, are abstract, and hugely different from what traditional design schools have been teaching.

The main problem in these trends is competition and weak starting point. The management field is lucrative, but simultaneously difficult because there are other players. Although marketing has been a marginal discipline in business schools, it has been a part of standard business practice far longer than design. Marketing in particular has a strong professional position to make claims for branding and through it, design management. It is also important to note that with the exception of a few London-based offices in the 1980s, design management has remained a small specialty in design. Also, this ideology goes against many things in the art and craft ethos that have not lost their position in art and design schools: for people who see

themselves as craftsmen or artists, management may be a lucrative, but also a banal occupation, which is crassly commercial, and too far removed from the realities of craft to be useful. The constituency for management in art and design schools is small to begin with: students mostly come from technologically oriented areas like industrial design, who have a natural interest in management.

6. *Research: Against Art, with Political Economy*

The final major current professional strategy in design builds on a yet another mode of action, research. Research has a long and complicated history in design. Perhaps the best known proponent of giving design a scientific foundation through research is Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, Germany, but similar attempt at connecting design to science have also taken place in the United States – the best-known example is ergonomics, introduced by Henry Dreyfuss – and the design methods movement in London in the sixties (a dense description is in Woodham 1997: 177-181). In particular, industrial designers have been in the forefront in this effort. For them, research has provided legitimation for an identity that differs from the artistic and crafts ethos. In addition to ergonomics, designers have been teaching electronics, aerodynamics (in car design), and a variety of other engineering skills rather than the natural sciences. Through ergonomics, and in interaction with software engineering, a new specialty, interaction design, has been developed. Its research basis, if any, lies in cognitive and hedonic psychology, ethnomethodology, and participatory design, with a close affinity to action research.

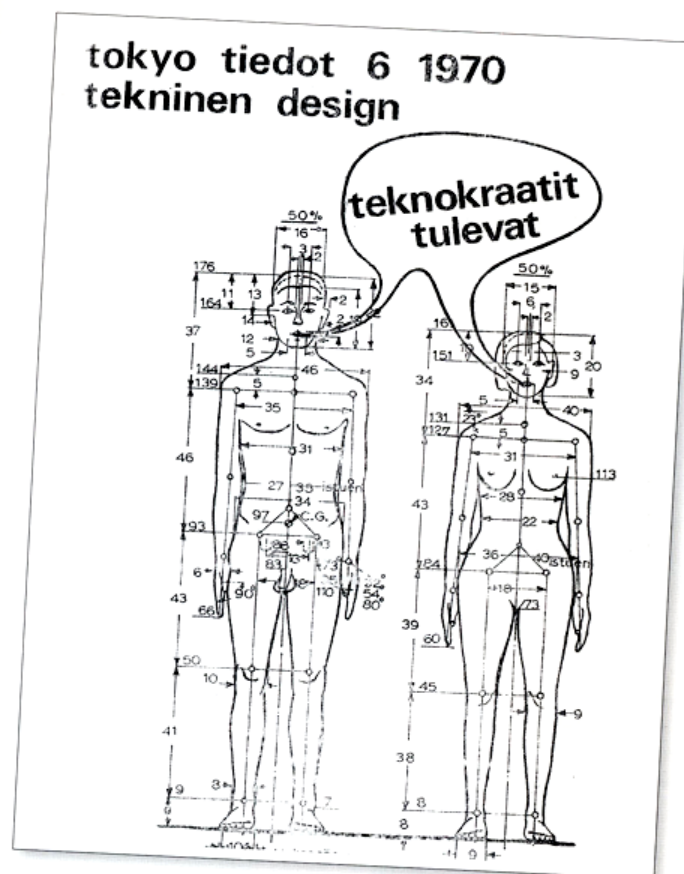
Recently, research in design has been growing for external reasons as well. Changes in consumption and globalization mean that it is difficult for designers to

rely on their own gut feelings anymore. When technology has become more complex, research is needed to get skills for meaningful dialogue with engineers. Problems in traditional engineering style work have made “user” research a necessary component of design: when it is too expensive to build prototypes, user research is a good alternative in ruling out alternative designs. As businesses “outsource” R&D, engineering and design universities have been eager to get into this business. Finally, as design education has expanded, leading design schools increasingly face competition. As design education grows, leading schools have to create new forms of understanding and new forms of knowledge to profile themselves against vocational schools and colleges. In this process, design schools have to an extent become “proactive,” pushing change in design rather than just following it. Design is becoming a new university discipline, not merely a occupation. Leaders in this field have been companies like PARC, Intel, IDEO, and schools like UIAH and RCA with engineering schools like Dutch technical universities and KAIST in Korea.

Research is a complex form of action that builds on many trends in society. Designers have responded to growing business orientation, growing organizations, and difficult-to-foresee consumer tastes; complex technologies; changes in research in related fields like software engineering and information systems; and to general interest in design through historical research that explains design to outsiders. Above all, recent research efforts in design have taken place on par with political economy. Several countries have created research programs, ranging from “Cool Britannia” to national design research programs in several smaller, mostly European countries, including all main Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, but also countries like South Africa, South Korea, and New Zealand. Among smaller countries, Finland has perhaps been the global leader in this respect. Here we have a clear difference

between larger and small countries. In small countries, the research community has been able to shape policy to a significant extent; in larger countries, policy process is probably more outside the hands of researchers. All the same, design has been shaped in conjunction with political decision-makers and the captains of industry.

Compared to other strategies, research naturally is the most efficient way of increasing abstraction. Research does produce increasingly complex patterns of thought that, when fed back into practice, help to diversify practice and make it more nuanced. In a sense, research makes the reflexive cycle between doing and thinking quicker and more systematic than traditional methods in the design world. It also brings a degree of legitimacy in universities and government.



25 The cover of the student union leaflet introducing the studies of technical design to the other students of the school.

Picture 4. UIAH Student Union Tokyo's perception of what introducing ergonomics means to industrial design. The bubble reads: "Technocrats are coming". 1970. Source: Valtonen 2007: 121.

However, research in art schools has never been an easy sell. Research as such has positive consequences for design. It creates new work and new roles, improves funding, makes designers more attractive partners for researchers, and in the long term, helps designers to master new discourses that help in expanding their jurisdiction. The problem is of course not new: it is encountered in other professions too, including medicine and law. Laymen – and both students and administrators are laymen – appreciate the front line professionals who do the dirty work of the profession. The profession tends to appreciate the upper echelons of the profession: professors, owners of large companies, managers (Abbott 1981). In increasingly turning design into a sign, media in particular is building on the laymen image of design, linking best design not just to the skills of the hand and artistic vision, but also to youth. In this environment, in which the “front line” of design is glorified, research does not do fine. It is difficult to comprehend. It does not produce beautiful, dramatic pictures suitable for publications. It takes time to understand. Also, art schools are a marginal context far removed from the mainstream of the research world. As research is by and large still in the margins of the design world, research remains a subordinate profession in design, providing contents to teach for designers. A good deal of new forms of research ally themselves with the technological end of design, and with (software) engineering; these audiences are more receptive to research, but in interaction with them, design research tends to get a marginal place.

7. Conclusions

When we look at design as a part of the system of professions (Abbott 1988), we see several things typical to design. First of all, we see a field that has grown from humble beginnings into a mid-sized semi-profession in roughly 50 last years. Secondly, we see several paths subprofessions have taken. While craft designers have always formed the core of design, recent changes have made industrial design the main design discipline. Third, we can observe several reasons for these changes. They are related to political economy, globalization, changes in the professional field, and changes in some of the key institutions of design.

This paper has not tried to provide a description of the design professions, nor an explanation of these changes. Instead, I have focused on four prevailing definitions of design, calling these definitions strategies. There are four main strategies at the moment going on in the design world. These strategies are designers' ways to deal with changes in society and the university system. For example, the first two strategies are based on tradition, but also respond to changes in demand and in universities. In particular, as Gans (1983) has noted, consumers are more educated than they used to be, providing a market for craft and art. In art and design universities, art provides a means to claim jurisdiction against more technological disciplines like industrial design that builds its future on branding, technology, and increasingly, research. These strategies, in turn, direct more technical subprofessions into the core of globalization. (Table 1).

These strategies bring designers into contact with other professions. In particular, when designers make claims about expertise on branding and research, they also face opposition by other, powerful professions, including management and

older research disciplines. For the design professions as a whole, these strategies mean diversification and, possibly in the long run, also a breakdown in two main strands, one focusing on craft and art, another focusing on technological and business concerns through research. They also prepare designers for different professional tracks. Industrial designers in particular seem to have found a successful strategy: in contrast to other design disciplines, it has been flexible, adopting new technologies, new organizational forms, and research, opening new niches of work. The craft and art strategies lead designers away from the mainstream economy, possibly facing the same path as glass and ceramics industries that have largely disappeared from Europe.

Strategy	Background in society	Consequences of the Strategy	Strategy in the System of Professions
<i>Craft:</i> traditional design disciplines	Growth of high-end consumer society, media, technology	Gradual decline in traditional occupation; more industrial areas have benefited	Twofold: craft strategy leads to niche markets valorized by media, but more versatile professions are eating their way into crafts. Technical subprofessions are expanding and allying with engineering.
<i>IT:</i> Media and industrial design			
<i>Artistic:</i> traditional disciplines, fashion	Growth of high-end consumer society, media	Like crafts, but a few stars are doing fine.	Entering the art world brings media attention and is valorized in society, but art is a marginal field in which most designers are doing badly.
<i>Business orientation:</i> mostly industrial design	Growth of mass consumerism; growth of organizations	New specialties enter design.	New specialties get into competition with the “management professions”
<i>Research:</i> mostly industrial and media design	Political economy gov’t research programs, and profiling of top design schools in terms of research	Research becomes a career option. Hi-tech specialties like industrial and media design benefit.	New kinds of work and allies in engineering and science, but opposition from traditional design disciplines and media.

Table 1. The Strategies of Design by their background, consequences and place in the system of professions

There are focal points in which the strategies pursued by designers may have far-reaching implications. For example, the current Finnish government is combining universities into bigger units. In this context, design universities have to choose either an artistic, or a technological strategy stressing technology, business, and research. Depending on which one they choose, their institutional path will differ. A similar, though less dramatic situation exists in Denmark, in which the leading design school, Danish School of Design, has to create a research profile, or face a downgrading into a college-level institution. When institutions like design schools are pushed into hard choices, the path they choose may lead to disintegration.

This paper has not tried to compare design in different countries in any degree of detail. I have deliberately glossed over national differences. Still, I hope to have shown that with relatively simple sociological tools one can shed light on a fascinating field of social action, describe its tendencies, and seek explanations for them.

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