Authorship / co-authorship and design management

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Introduction

The research plan presented below aims to contribute to the development of a model employed by certain lecturers in Design at the University of Aveiro, already informally approved, in an attempt to bring consistency to the philosophy and practice of the teaching provided to students at the University (Fig.1).

We would argue that its apparent simplicity calls into question certain of the basic themes of the discipline, for example, the limitations, fields of action, models, methods and principal thought processes of design (Manzini, Maldonado, Margolin, Pizzocaro., 2002 and Martegani, & Montenegro, 2000)1. As Fig. 1 shows, we start from the assumption that design, as a process and an outcome, has its origin in the interaction between authorship, plan and technologies. Our area of research is situated on the line linking authorship to the plan, the base from which we will attempt to demonstrate the influence and shaping exerted by the former on the latter. In our opinion, authorship should not be claimed solely by designers, since we consider that it incorporates a variety of contributions of differing degrees of influence, such as those provided by the contracting companies and organisations, markets, rank-and-file employees, target groups, the specific limitations of the project and by other contexts.
Our combined experience of over ten years as a consultants to the Portuguese Design Centre working with some tens of companies, and a similar length of time teaching and reflecting on a range of matters in the various *curricula* for the teaching of the discipline of design, leads us to the view that a proper articulation between the work of designers and the objectives of companies and organisations is fundamental in ensuring that projects have effective outcomes. We would not conceal the fact that our perspective on the whole of this area, and our concern with the success of design, is more from the standpoint of companies and organisations than from that of designers.
We believe that one of the failings, or rather, problems that most hinders the execution of projects stems from a certain disconnection between these two groups of key participants, even when they come together in joint initiatives, paradoxical as that may seem at the moment.

In view of the importance of employing dynamic tools to foster the competitiveness of companies and organisations in general, and of Portuguese ones in particular (Cooper, Bruce, Vazquez, 1997, Peters, 1989, Watson, 1975, Keeley, 2001, Brito, Martins, Monitor Company, 1994, Department of Industry and Energy, 1995) 2 with design naturally featuring strongly amongst them, we believe it is crucial to move from a scenario of virtually "two warring tribes" towards one of mutual co-operation and understanding. Even if this is something of an exaggeration, the fact is that even today, in Portugal and elsewhere, business people are suspicious of the work of designers (principally as a result of ignorance of the profession, of how designers work, and of the objectives that can be achieved through design), while designers feel that the corporate world provides far from ideal conditions for practising the profession.
If we recognise in designers, and help to teach future designers, a specific set of skills and thinking processes, we must not fail to draw attention to the fact that they are practised in a complex scenario of companies, organisations and contexts which differ widely from one another, and which legitimise the profession and supply its *raison d'être*.
Our proposed approach to the issues that we will be examining in greater depth starts with investigation of the underlying reasons and an attempt to construct models for interactive participation by the various parties, beginning with raising of issues, moving on to their clarification and development, and concluding with the detection and validation of the most appropriate models. In doing so, we will need to analyse the most significant expressions of planning variability (organisations and contexts) of various types of intervention by designers and the interactions arising from these processes.
In relation to the reference model that we mentioned at the beginning we will begin by examining the meaning of authorship in the context of plans/briefs (Fig.2).
From the point of view of methodology, and in order that we may attempt to achieve the stated objectives, we propose that authorship should be replaced by co-authorship, signifying by this term the importance we attribute to partnerships rather than individual, relatively isolated contributions, even where temporarily united by a common purpose. This is not simply a prosaic question of terminology, but reflects a profound belief that, in conceptual and operational terms, this designation (co-authorship) is the most accurate one to describe the

design project. Naturally, we will be reflecting on the orthodoxy structuring the discipline that dates back to its emergence (in its modern form), and on the present-day proponents of this type of thinking. We will also be analysing the concept of authorship (author – creator – work), and the conditions surrounding poetics in design, distinguishing it from aesthetics, since we share the view that the latter is of a philosophical and speculative nature, while poetics has above all a programmatic and operative purpose (Pareyson, 1997).3

In due course, we will raise the issues about the quantity and quality of "inspiration" which plans and contexts incorporate into the *poetics* in design (Chaves, 2001)4. We will attempt to discuss this matter, as far as possible, outside the fields closest to the discipline, such as the fine arts, not because we believe in a radical separation in processes, methods and even some outcomes, but because the conduct of research focused on the discipline seems to us to be a beneficial process. It is true that the vast majority of design departments were born under the wing of the fine arts and architecture, with all the consequences that that had on the definition of the discipline. We will argue for a greater mutual independence of these subjects, which will inevitably mean a stronger identity for design, both from the cultural and social point of view, and from the academic perspective.

We want to study authorship from the perspective of innovation, either alone or in teams, close to artistic innovation, made to operate in the aesthetic and symbolic configuration of artefacts (Bonsiepe, 1999)5 (while not, of course, overlooking the treatment of practical functions) as the central expression of the profession. We will highlight the areas where the processes of these disciplines touch and commonly result in ambiguities that hamper the contributions of participants and occasionally (in exceptional circumstances) give rise to contributions of real excellence directed at market niches or segments that are particularly susceptible to these types of contribution. We regard it as fundamental to understand the process of creation in design, and the role of the creator(s), and to highlight the intrinsic differences from those of other related disciplines (Munari, 1979) 6 Thus, creativity along aesthetic lines, being a fulcral concern of design and forming part of the practice and culture of other disciplines, should be interpreted in a particular way, given its importance to the plan and contexts of the activity. Above all, it should not be used to virtually justify the difficulties or the rejection of understanding in co-operative working that continues to characterise the behaviour of designers and companies and organisations. Although it could be argued that this state of affairs is changing, our view is that much more could be done in this area to encourage organisations to regard design as a key operational and thinking tool, and for designers to develop a professional empathy and to create the most appropriate climate for working with such target groups.

We take the view that one of the most important means of improving this state of affairs is the conceptual and operational institutionalisation of co-authorship arrangements, defined as the interaction of two agents (two categories) acting in the context of a problem that offers many possibilities for sharing because, on the one hand, there is the strategic thinking which has shaped it so that the most appropriate creative solution can be selected, and on the other hand, there is an ideal definition of the successful solution.

In pursuing this assumption, it will be important to understand how a partnership of this nature is established and developed, the vulnerabilities to which it is susceptible, and the nature and characteristics of good practice, that is to say, the key points in the process, the form and content of communication, evaluation standards, and ways of evaluating co-operative working. It will also be essential for companies to be able to share some of the technology, thought processes and actions of design, (Graham-Rowe, 2001) 7 so that they make the most effective contribution to the processes, from the incorporation of these concerns at the time of strategy definition to the initiation, execution and validation of the development of the corporate product.

It is vital that companies are not kept at arm's length and that they do not shy away from matters to do with poetics or from issues arising from what has come to be known as "aesthetics management" (Simonson $ Schmitt, 1997) 8. For that to happen, however (in addition to the changes that organisations themselves will have to come to terms with), it is essential that designers find, and put into practice, methods of communicating intentions, (Brown, 2001) 9 strategic thinking, and tactical and operational options that will form part of the asset base of corporate competitiveness.

This research proposal will compare the situation both in Portugal and internationally, because although we recognise the particular nature of designing and working with design in Portugal, we believe that the work will be enriched by the opportunity to study a range of experiences, opinions, culture and practices reflecting different identities.

We will also consider the importance of contexts (social, economic, political, cultural, technological, and the context of competition) as part of the planning variability mentioned earlier and how they are interpreted by organisations and designers when these participants come together to initiate and carry out a project.

Concepts first tests through a project

These concepts and the research methodology is being tested through the opportunity of a program with the Portuguese Design Center underway since last August in which we are coordinating the work of thirty consultants (designers and other professionals) with a similar number of companies and institutions (town halls, tourist regions). The essential aim of this program is the evaluation of design management in these organizations and then, the election of good practices that can serve of example to many other companies and institutions. The focus of the study is the interaction between plan (brief) and authorship and an instrument has been devised to undertake the data collection. This instrument the diagnosis/audit intends to obtain such a clear as possible picture on the way as the companies and the institutions understand the discipline and manage it at the strategic, tactical and operational levels. It is a questionnaire that allows both quantitative and qualitative evaluation from the proposed paradigms. The diagnosis was applied in organizations that were trying to have dialogue partners close to the decision centres and the process was revealed in about eighteen sessions of one day, over a

three month period. We are currently analysing all the information and preparing jointly with the companies and involved institutions, action for improvement where weak performances has (Fig.4).

We hope the methodology used can provide reflections for the organizations and the designers and enable them to work with the results to illustrate how in a co-authorship and projects partnership development can be more effective.

Conclusions:

The following issues are aspects arising from the data collected and reflection on theory to date:
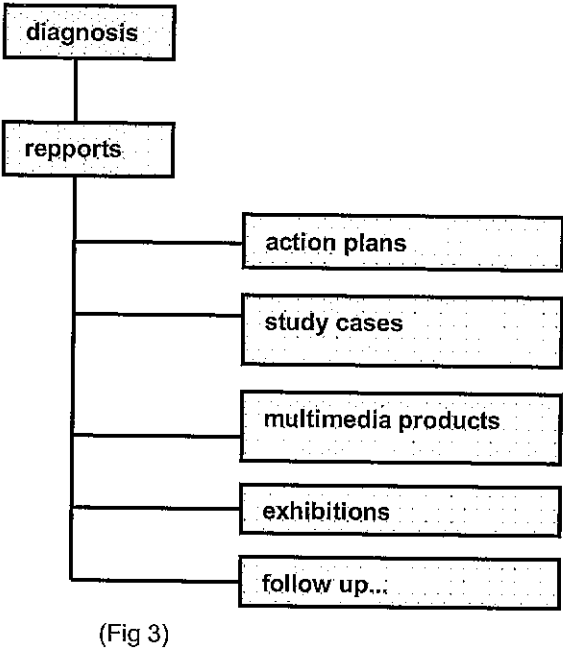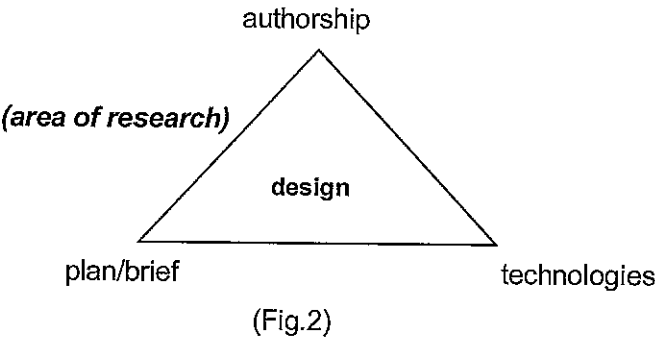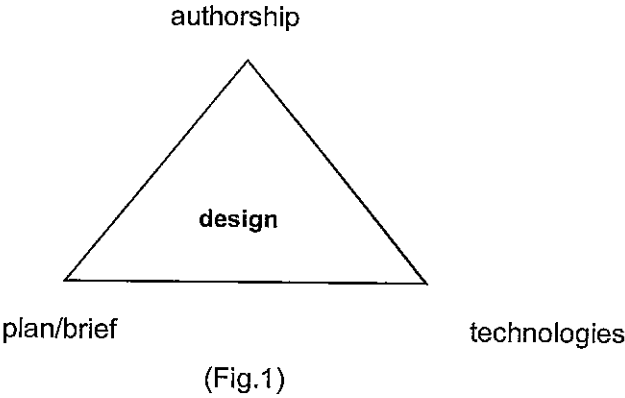
- *process of cultural integration between the design and the organizations is essential to reach the best results in projects development,*

- integration should be simultaneous; this means that the need of a pedagogic effort of the design is recognized to *achieve better results in the companies and,*

- designers should have a wide knowledge of the company cultures and contexts,

- specific areas of the design that companies have great difficulty with (for instance subjects related to the aesthetics and the symbolic) should be discussed and explained better by the project participants at the onset of a project, been identified and using strong points/good practice for the construction of design management case studies (Fig 3).

The best company design relationships/performances will be transformed in multimedia products of the good practices in design management.

The questionnaire is too detailed to be reported here. However using the issues discussed earlier in the paper we list some of the subjects that seems us crucial in the relationship among the designers (authors) and the organizations and on which we already have a great *amount of information that is currently under analysis.* The program does not end until in April of 2003 release and at development phases, has to be rethought in way that simplifies the visibility of the designers options and the transparency of the different organizational contexts,

- the contribution of the different discipline participants in the projects should be understood, this requires both formal and informal interventions to inform and ensure the skills specification the methodologies and partnership of a common work,

- dissemination of the design idea in the organizations should be a project concern of the first designers in the companies and institutions and should have the concern of "winning" new voices even by other disciplines that recognize what the disciple provide to the organizations,

- adequate timing for discussion and reflection between designers and organizations gives credit to the discipline and it allows it to contribute at the highest levels of decision making in the companies and institutions,

- some of the contents and subjects covered by typical design diagnoses and audits should be rethought to the light of issues we have identified in this work,

- project follow-up of these diagnoses and audits should have in attention all the practices that transform the responsibilities in design into co-authorships in the project.

Table of figures

authorship

design

plan/brief   technologies

(Fig.1)

authorship

(area of research)

design

plan/brief   technologies

(Fig.2)

diagnosis

repports

action plans

study cases

multimedia products

exhibitions

follow up...

(Fig 3)

companies/institutions	designers
- integration of design as a value structuring the culture and practice of organisations – the long-hand of reasons - the formal and organisational difference of the integration of design – establishing the ideal place for design in organisations - design's involvement in the decision points that contribute to the formulation and establishment of key strategic levels – participation of designers at key moments in these matters - models for the clear perception, by the company as a whole, of the opportunities for design to contribute to the development of a social entity with its own identity, image and ability to communicate that differentiate it from its direct and indirect competitors - communication and teaching models for a partial understanding, by the company as a whole, of certain technologies, processes, methods and solutions used in design to configure the corporate product at all levels - preparation, with design involved, of the reflection process leading to the creation of the project initiation information – analysis and specification of business opportunities - inventorying, with design involved, of all the data required for initiating the project - discussion on the type of brief to prepare - development of and reflection about the brief, with the involvement of the contracted designers/teams - research and analysis – reinforcing research tools specific to design – design/organisations partnerships to specify the appropriate types of studies - consolidation of the brief – implications for participants - design specification – editing partnerships – distribution to sales, production, advertising, distribution, marketing teams - establishment of informal/institutionalised project teams - development of various types of tests for use at different times and with different target groups - training of teams in the generation of new ideas and evaluation of the outcomes of conceptual design - monitoring and discussion/reflection on models, maquettes, prototypes and pre-series - drawing teams for manufacture (moulds, tools, etc) - models and tools for evaluating design activity in organisations	- models for interpreting the design for the contracting organisation that are easily communicable to it, in terms of reality, identity, communication and image - joint creation of the design standard that best suits the company - models for the "construction" of strategic observation of and reflection on the organisation by design - models for discussion about the place and contribution of design in the company - models for interactive development and/or creative discussion of the brief - development/agreement for interdisciplinary discussion in project teams - models for consolidating the brief and preparing project specifications - communication of the project and its place in the company's strategy to key target groups - design research and analysis – observing and interpreting market signals – development of resources for research inspired by and centred on design competence – explanation of the results and how to incorporate them into the corporate product - models/agreements for generating new ideas, new concepts – conceptual design working with other disciplines - development of new types of tests from the design perspective, for use with different target groups - evaluation of results – incorporation of these resources into the company's policies and strategies.

(Fig. 4)

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