

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

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THE MANAGEMENT OF DESIGN AS A TOOL FOR CULTURAL CHANGE LEADING TO SUSTAINABILITY

A case study in the Industrial Company of Pernambuco, Brazil.

Abstract

The theme of sustainability has entered the agenda for discussions on design in a rather peculiar way, by being considered an important agent for changes in the habits of society's production and consumption. Attributing such a responsibility to it is fundamentally related to the intimate relationship which it has with material culture.

Concern for the organizational culture, as a way of potentializing satisfactory results around sustainability, is justified to the extent that what it makes evident is the relationship between the binomial: consumption versus market and the result of bewildering progress. Furthermore in world discussions on the theme, what are pointed out as problematic situations are the polluting processes of production which equally degrade human life and are associated with the logic of the indiscriminate consumption of industrialised goods by society.

Nevertheless, as Kiss (2005) affirms, there is a need to have a suitable methodology for managing design which makes it possible to raise the company's awareness of the use of this tool and thus foster a sufficient opening for innovation. Therefore we believe that objective and subjective relations, such as those wrought by design, may be adequately dealt with in the entrepreneurial environment.

As part of the result obtained in a master's research study which is being undertaken on the Post-Graduate Programme in Design at Universidade Federal de Pernambuco – Brazil, this paper has the objective of analysing the management of design as a tool which is capable of working on cultural changes in consumer product industries and their respective markets by means of a strategy centred on the parameters of sustainability, which may be: environmental, social and economic. As to sustainable development, Thouvenot (in Kazazian, 2006, p. 8) conceives this as being "that which conciliates economic growth, preservation of the environment and improvements in social conditions".

In general terms, the management of design must be positioned in a strategic way which is cohesive and structured within the organization, since it is charged with coordinating the actions of design which occur in and for the company. Therefore, it is believed that it will have the elements needed to influence the organization's culture, by grasping design tools that seek to raise the awareness of and potentialize the parameters of sustainability vis-à-vis production processes, the market and consumers (MARTINS, 2004 and TEIXEIRA, 2005).

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In seeking evidence that may corroborate this affirmation, the case study methodology proposed by Yin (2002) is illustrated with the case of the Industrial Glass Company, Brazil (Companhia Industrial de Vidros, Brasil - CIV - in Portuguese) - as the unit of analysis.

The CIV has been active in the glass market since 1958, initially in glass packaging for food and pharmaceutical products and, later, as from 2000, in the sector of domestic utilities for classes C and D (CAVALCANTI, 2006, p. 8-9-10). The strategy of differentiation of products using design only began in 2003, with the insertion of the tool aiming at the domestic utilities line. In this period, the challenge for design was concentrated on aggregating value to CIV products, allying the technology (*Individual Seccion*¹) to the needs and wants of its consumers.

The resulting route taken provoked organizational changes which were instituted in such a way as to facilitate and potentialize the reach of this tool within and without the environment of the organization, thus pointing towards cultural changes in the development of products.

The results of this analysis indicate that, the greater the stimuli of the design strategies for the inventive capacity of the organization, such as prodding it into breaking organizational and technological paradigms, the greater will be the changes brought about in the organizational culture. The latter have been shown to be consistent and perceived, also by the environment external to the company. These are indices that the management of design, in its strategic form and considering the social, economic and environmental parameters, may become an important tool for cultural changes centred on sustainability.

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¹ Technology which pre-supposes that all products conform to superior finishing or if they do not, they are withdrawn from the line of production.

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