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**What Is Design?**  
An empirical investigation into conceptions of design  
in the community of design stakeholders

**PAUL HILTON MICKLETHWAITE**

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield

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## **Abstract**

This thesis describes a project investigating conceptions of design in the community of design stakeholders. A 'democratization of design' is identified, in terms of a widened mode of design engagement. The origins of the project are located in the accompanying observation that 'design means different things to different people'.

The project has three aims: (i) to establish the contemporary UK context for the social study of design; (ii) to expand upon the identified theme of the democratization of design; and (iii) to empirically investigate conceptions of design in the community of design stakeholders. The first two aims are fulfilled through a review and discussion of existing secondary sources. The third aim is fulfilled by primary research, in the form of an empirical interview study conducted with design stakeholder informants.

The interview study embodies an interpretative phenomenological theoretical perspective, and employs qualitative research method. A theoretical sample of 31 interview informants was drawn from five design stakeholder groups: Business; Designers; Education; Promotion; Users. Conceptions of design within the collected interview data are investigated through a template analysis.

An analysis of collected interview data is presented in the form of an holistic map or 'template' of the data organized by thematic discussion of 'design'. These empirical findings are presented and discussed narratively and graphically. A total of 41 interrelating 'conceptions of design' are identified.

Empirical findings are synthesized with the response to aims (i) and (ii). This generates two main final research outcomes: firstly, a degree of informant scepticism and ambivalence is apparent towards the heightened political, cultural and economic profile for design; secondly, the democratization of design is seen as a worthy ideal, but one which is difficult to realize. In conclusion, a number of further implications of the project are also discussed.

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## ***Thesis Guide***

<b>Part I</b> Framework	<b>Chapter 1</b> Introduction  <b>Chapter 2</b> Literature Review  <b>Chapter 3</b> Key Issues
<b>Part II</b> Empirical Method	<b>Chapter 4</b> Method  <b>Chapter 5</b> Assessment of Analytical Method
<b>Part III</b> Empirical Findings	<b>Chapter 6</b> Template Overview  <b>Chapter 7</b> Template Presentation – design and the designed object  <b>Chapter 8</b> Template Presentation – design as an activity  <b>Chapter 9</b> Template Presentation – design and the designer  <b>Chapter 10</b> Template Presentation – design and specific context
<b>Part IV</b> Resolution	<b>Chapter 11</b> Discussion of Template Meta-issues  <b>Chapter 12</b> Reprise of Framework Issues  <b>Chapter 13</b> Further Implications

### ***Publication arising from the project***

Conceptions of design in the community of design stakeholders. In: Scrivener, S. A. R., Ball, L. J. & Woodcock, A. ed. (2000) CoDesigning 2000: Adjunct proceedings. Coventry: Coventry University. ISBN 0 905949 93 5. pp.93-98.

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# **Chapter 1 : Introduction**

## ***1.0 Introduction***

This introductory chapter describes the origins and context of the project presented in this thesis. Specific aims and objectives are stated, along with discussion of the original contribution to knowledge made.

## ***1.1 Origins of the project***

### ***1.1.1 The new design study***

Design history, it is proposed, shall be the name of a comparatively new intellectual discipline, the purpose of which is to explain design as a social and historical phenomenon.  
Walker (1989:1)

The new discipline of "design history", proposed by Walker, is to be clearly distinguished from the traditional discipline of "the history of design". The history of design is typified for Walker by Pevsner's hagiographic accounts of an exclusive canon of designated seminal designers (Pevsner 1936, rev. 1975). Design history, in contrast, embraces multiple histories of design, in recognition of the fact that the historical study of design can never supply us with "a single, homogenous account upon which we can all agree." (Walker 1989:2) The traditional discipline of the history of design is thus "the object of study of the [new] discipline design history." (Walker 1989:1) Multiple specific 'histories of design', considered as parallel accounts originating in differing perspectives, are thus the co-occurring products of the proposed new pluralistic discipline of design history.

The recognition of multiple valid histories of design, as accounts originating in a plurality of differing perspectives, may be seen as a consequence of the opening up

of the study of design, through a contextualization of design in terms of specific cultural and social milieus (Whiteley 1995). The term "design studies" is proposed, to refer to "the plural histories and myriad activities, approaches, and methodologies that involve human-made products and images." (Whiteley 1995:40) Whiteley here notes a shift in design history, away from the approach embodied in Pevsner, towards cultural studies. This is a shift which

has moved us far away from any presumed disinterested and isolated study of objects to an examination of objects as part of their wider social and cultural context.  
Whiteley (1995:41)

This differs qualitatively from previous localized miniatures of design in context, in which "cursory references to the social context are like the weeds and gravel around a stuffed fish in a glass case" (Forty 1986:8). In this sense, the study of design is now "spread [...] across the whole rich but uneven terrain of cultural studies." (Whiteley 1995:41) The study of design, in this move towards cultural studies, has thus come to include a consideration of "the entire range of a society's arts, beliefs, institutions and communicative practices" (Grossberg, Nelson & Treichler 1992:4) as they relate to design. This new mode of design study reflects, in fact, an acceptance that

the fate of design does not lie entirely within the framework of design culture [...] It lies within the framework of culture as a whole  
Buchanan (1998:3)

Design as an object of study has come to be seen to embody, or at least directly relate to, the values of its wider milieu, rather than simply those of its isolated originators (Whiteley 1993:158). The values denoted in the idea that design is "value laden" (Dormer 1990:11), and even 'values made visible' (Cooper & Press 1995), are thus the values of a specific cultural and societal milieu.

### *1.1.2 New Design Council, new design values*

Recognition that design is inherently linked to the values of a relevant wider context, is evident beyond the confines of the study of design.

The shift towards a greater cultural contextualization in the consideration of design, evident in a new mode of design study, is located temporally by Margolin & Buchanan (1995) in the design discourse of the 1980s and 1990s. A transition in design values has been identified during this period, centred around a revision of the 'design decade' of the 1980s.

The design values manifested during the 1980s have been re-evaluated negatively, as ones of "skin deep commercialism" (Sudjic 1993:34) and "style-over-substance" (Jones 1991:20). These superficial design values are, however, simply seen as indicative of the dominant values of the surrounding economic and cultural context to which they related. The 1980s have been characterized as the decade of "Me plc" (Peter York's Eighties 1996:17'30), and the design values which emerged during this period are now seen to correlate with a wider mood of economic acquisitiveness. The demise of the design boom of the 1980s signified the need for a subsequent reappraisal of those design values, reflecting changing economic and social imperatives (Whiteley 1993). The repositioning of the UK Design Council in the 1990s was prompted by just such a reappraisal.

The Design Council continues to maintain the principle that design is essential to competitiveness, yet its approach to implementing this principle has changed, in response to the changing economic context in which it operates (Dumas 1996). A previous emphasis on the promotion of 'good design', and the use of appropriate external design expertise, has been replaced by an emphasis on an inclusive and integrated exploitation of design as a strategic resource. Previously, emphasis was placed exclusively on the 'seen' design activities performed by professional designers. Now, 'unseen' or 'silent' design activities, "which typically relate to the design of the broad fit of product, process, and context", are recognized as the key to

effective differentiation (Dumas 1996:13). The redefined focus of the new Design Council is based on a contention that

design is not just about beautifully conceived and crafted products, it is about the process of turning ideas into reality.  
(Dumas 1996:14)

This transformative process is seen as the domain of a wide range of participants, in acknowledgement that

Design is too important to be left to designers alone.  
(Dumas 1996:13)

The new Design Council thus places primary emphasis on illuminating the 'hidden' design performed by non-designers (Walton 1996). This emphasis derives from a conception of design as a process involving an enlarging range of participants, expressed elsewhere in the notions of Participatory Design (www) and Co-Design (Scrivener, Ball & Woodcock 2000).

#### *1.1.3 Keynote theme: a democratization of design*

The shift towards a new contextualizing study of design, denoted by the label 'design studies', is seen as a movement away from Modernist modes of design thinking and engagement. (Langdon & Cross 1984; Margolin & Buchanan 1995) For early, Modernist design writers, "the object or artifact attracted central attention" (Margolin & Buchanan 1995:xi). The Modernists' obsession with the object, to the apparent exclusion of other surrounding issues, did in fact serve a wider project of anticipated social improvement through design. The 'good design' debate thus "revolved around issues of how the form of objects could enhance the quality of life." (Margolin & Buchanan 1995:xi) Implementation of this project, however, involved a dogmatic imposition of received standards of what constituted 'good design'. The Modernist design project was thus essentially one of dictatorship.

The Modernist model of design engagement has, however, been superseded by a mutual and inclusive mode of design engagement, incorporating a new respect for plurality of perspective on design issues. This change may be seen as a paradigmatic shift, in terms of an apparently schismatic break with the intellectual tradition of Modernism in design. The change in perspective described is, however, more usefully seen in developmental terms, as rather a denial of the exclusivity inherent in Modernist design thinking. (Margolin & Buchanan 1995) The transition to a post-Modernist mode of design thinking is thus characterized by an inclusive response to the existence of multiple perspectives on design issues.

A consequence of the wider engagement with design issues noted, is that responsibility for these design issues is now seen to be shared among a wider community of participating design stakeholders (Participatory Design n.d.; Dumas 1996; Scrivener, Ball & Woodcock 2000). The stakeholder concept derives from economics, but has been extended to refer to "a person with an interest or involvement in something, such as a business concern or the society in which they live." (Cassell Concise Dictionary 1998:1436) The notion of a design stakeholder is used here to denote anyone with a direct interest in design as a socially contextualized activity. The community of design stakeholders is an abstraction, denoting the social body comprised by the aggregation of all such design stakeholders. An acceptance of the view that design is an influence permeating throughout society, embodied in the statement that design is "values made visible" cited above, means that in effect all members of a society should be considered as design stakeholders. An interest in and responsibility for design may not therefore be considered the preserve of select groups, legislating for the rest of society.

One outcome of a newly inclusive mode of design engagement is the emergence of an inclusive design discourse. The design discourse is defined here in general terms,

as comprising the totality of ways in which design is thought about and verbally discussed by design stakeholders. (Krippendorff 1994) The opening up of an inclusive, rather than exclusive, design discourse is thus indicative of a widening design engagement and participation (Liddament 1996; Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin 1998).

A contextual theme is thus identified, of the democratization of design. This democratization may be considered in two forms: design practice, and design discourse. This thesis addresses the democratization of the discourse, rather than the practice of design. It thus focuses on the multiple perspectives and perceptions which emerge around design as it is thought about and discussed. (Margolin and Buchanan 1995) As a methodological consequence, all voices from within the design stakeholder community must be included, if the affirmations of a mode of democratized design engagement are to be upheld.

#### *1.1.4 A navigation among differing perspectives*

The consequence of a democratized mode of design engagement, manifest in a newly inclusive design discourse, is a plurality of perspective exhibited among involved stakeholders. It is thus observed that

The word design means many things to many people.  
Morrison & Twyford (1994:18)

Design, moreover, means *different* things to *different* people.

Emphasis has been placed thus far on an apparent shift towards a contextualization of design in terms of specific cultural and social milieus. Design, as such, is investigated as a cultural and social phenomenon. The keynote theme of the democratization of design further emphasizes an enlarging engagement with design within the community of design stakeholders. This has resulted in the emergence of

an inclusive design discourse, comprising multiple perspectives. In turn, a call has been made for the integration of these competing perspectives, not through the development of a single unified view, but through a process of navigation:

The challenge that faces us today is not to search again for a universal language that will unite all stakeholders but instead to consider how we might navigate among the different ways of reflecting on design so that we can bring them into relation with each other as we seek [...] "systemic integration."  
Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin (1998:1)

This identification of the need for a navigation within design arises at a point at which "both the discipline of design and its concomitant discourse are still in their early stages of development" (Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin 1998:1). As a result, the acknowledgement and implementation of this exercise in navigation are seen as crucial in defining the nature of the new discipline of design.<sup>1</sup>

Design may therefore be regarded and investigated in terms of the perspectives of the participants in its discourse. These participants are characterized as the community of design stakeholders, just discussed. In the present project, this community is comprised of five stakeholder groups: Business; Designers; Education; Promotion; Users. These groups are derived from a collation of design stakeholder groups cited in other sources investigating the community of design stakeholders, and together may be considered to constitute a pragmatic profile of that community.<sup>2</sup>

The phrase 'the social study of design' is thus used to refer to an investigation into design as it is manifest in a specific cultural and social milieu, and as it is understood by participants in the community of design stakeholders which reside in that context.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the researcher's reading of Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin's (1998) justification here. They refer the reader to Buchanan's notion of "systemic integration", in Buchanan (1998).

<sup>2</sup> See Section 4.5 for a justification and development of this classification.

### *1.1.5 Context of the project*

The opening up of an inclusive design discourse is currently manifest on a widening scale in the UK. Firstly, a continuing explosion in design related mass-media entertainment and discussion, in both television and print media, attests to an evident engagement with design at a mass-cultural level. Secondly, current political emphasis on design as a source of economic competitive advantage and regeneration, incorporates an inclusive promotion of design to all sectors of the economy. Both these manifestations, one cultural, one economic and political, are cited in support of the identification of a dominant theme within the UK, of a democratization of design. The bounds of this contemporary UK context, as investigated in this project, are in need of clarification, however.

The repositioning of the UK Design Council, discussed above, was initiated in 1994 (Woodham 1999). The implementation of the redefinition of the Design Council's role is, however, ongoing (Summers 2000). The reconsideration of the economic and political attitude to design, inherent in the agenda of the new Design Council, has, moreover, subsequently explicitly informed the stated economic policy of the 1997-elected UK Government. As a consequence, an emphasis on design is a key component in the current economic policy in the UK. Coinciding with this shift in the economic and political attitude to design is a trend beginning in the mid-1990s for television programmes seeking to make design as a topic accessible to a mass audience (Lloyd 2000b). The continuing influence of these developments, originating in the mid-1990s, constitutes the contemporary UK context for the study of design as it is investigated here.

## **1.2 Aims and objectives**

### **1.2.0 Overview**

The origins and context of the current project given above provide the basis for the following statement of specific aims and associated objectives. Aims 1 and 2 establish a framework for the formulation of an empirical study investigating conceptions of design among the community of design stakeholders in Aim 3.

#### **1.2.1 Aim 1**

##### **Aim 1:**

Establish the contemporary UK context for the social study of design.

##### **Objective 1:**

Survey specific (i) political, (ii) economic, and (iii) cultural aspects of design's current prominence in the UK.

##### **Method:**

Literature review.

**Figure 1.1 Aim 1**

The contemporary UK context, as it is investigated in this project, is defined above as commencing with a series of developments which took place in the mid-1990s.

Similarly, the notion of the social study of design has been discussed in terms of the perspectives of members of the community of design stakeholders. The specific aspects of design's current prominence in the UK surveyed are: (i) the incorporation of design in current government policy and rhetoric; (ii) discussion of design's economic role in the UK; and (iii) design's wider cultural prominence, specifically in terms of the explicit treatment of design as a topic by television, and the use of explicit textual reference to design in print advertising.

### *1.2.2 Aim 2*

**Aim 2:**  
Expand upon the identified theme of the democratization of design.

**Objective 2:**  
Review of literature and previous studies relevant to the theme of the democratization of design.

**Method:**  
Literature review.

**Figure 1.2 Aim 2**

The democratization of design has been identified above as the keynote theme of this project. The identification of this theme serves to encapsulate the emergence of a new mode of inclusive design engagement, within the community of design stakeholders. The several strands of this theme are drawn together in a structured consideration of relevant sources.

### *1.2.3 Aim 3*

**Aim 3:**  
Investigate the range of perspective around design across the community of design stakeholders.

**Objective 3:**  
Investigate conceptions of design within a sample of design stakeholders, around the general research question: 'what is design?'.

**Method:**  
Empirical interview study.

**Figure 1.3 Aim 3**

A response to the emergence of an inclusive design discourse is that 'design means different things to different people' (see above). The ultimate outcome of the exploration of the theme of the democratization of design, in fulfilment of Aim 2, is the identification of a need for a navigation between the multiple perspectives which characterize this democratization. An empirical study is thus formulated to investigate the range of perspective around design which may be identified across the

community of design stakeholders. This range of perspective is investigated in terms of conceptions of 'design' itself, generated by investigation of the general research question: 'what is design?'. The presentation and discussion of these conceptions of design serves, moreover, as an attempt at a navigation exercise of the type advocated.

### **1.3 Original contribution to knowledge**

In this section, a suggestion is made as to how the project described in the thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge (University of Huddersfield 1998).<sup>3</sup>

#### *1.3.1 Mapping the conceptual field of design enquiry: an aid to navigation*

The empirical study investigates the observation that 'design means different things to different people'. This issue is implicit in the contemporary design discourse, and in much of the contemporary design literature reviewed in this thesis, yet has not been investigated directly. In particular, studies investigating problematic communication between collaborating design stakeholders make reference to contrasting conceptualizing frameworks, without specifically addressing those frameworks. The present study can be seen to address this failure.

The study provides a preliminary mapping of the field of design discourse, as this is considered to be constituted of conceptions of 'design' itself. No previous studies directly attempting this within the field of design have been identified by the researcher. Phenomenographic studies have investigated conceptions of various phenomena within identified social contexts, but a phenomenographic investigation of conceptions of 'design' has yet to be conducted.<sup>4</sup> Previous studies have investigated design *attitudes* in the community of design stakeholders, rather than

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<sup>3</sup> The suggestions made in this section relate directly to the statement of further project outcomes presented in Chapter 13; the sequence of four headings used in this section reflects the four main headings used in Chapter 13.

conceptions and understandings of design as such (Farr 1955; Bracewell 1987; JIDPO 1989; Design Council unpublished).<sup>5</sup> Investigations into the use of metaphor in the narrow context of the design studio come closest to an empirical investigation of conceptualizing frameworks around design (Coyne, Snodgrass & Martin 1994). Finally, a methodological, if not a topic-related, precedent is found in McKeone & O'Brien's (1996) investigation of attitudes to poetry within a wider community of stakeholders.

The findings of the interview study therefore constitute an historical record of how design is conceptualized at the present time, across the included cross-section of the design stakeholder community. The current context in which the empirical study is conducted makes the presentation of these findings timely, in that the current prominence of design in the UK suggests that an investigation of conceptions of design is of significant contemporary interest and relevance.

The primary research conducted in the project therefore provides a sampled reflection of the present situation within the design discourse. This allows for a navigation between differing design stakeholder perspectives to take place, in that stakeholders now have an empirically-based tool with which to explore the varieties of meaning around design which are implicit in the statement that 'design means different things to different people'.

The empirical method used in this project may also be usefully applied to the improvement of design collaborations, by allowing a navigation to take place between the differing design stakeholder views present in a specific collaborative design scenario.

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<sup>4</sup> See Section 4.4.2 for a brief discussion of phenomenography.

<sup>5</sup> The participant sampling in these studies is discussed in Section 4.5.3.

## **1.4 Statement of researcher perspective**

it is the duty of a scholar [...] to make clear the standpoint from which he or she may be offering opinion or discoursing upon the content, value and authorship of primary and secondary source material.  
Archer (1995:8-9)

The current project focuses on, and is conducted in, the field of design, of which the researcher has no prior direct experience or knowledge. This unfamiliarity is considered to be a positive aspect of the project, however, in that the perspective the researcher brings to the investigation is therefore less likely to be influenced by specific prior assumptions and expectations around design. Non-designer status is particularly appropriate for conducting an empirical interview study investigating conceptions of design among a varied sample of design stakeholders, in which the researcher is required to be sensitive to all possible views towards design. Equally, knowledge and skills in social research, developed outside of the field of design, may be applied with a 'fresh eye' by the researcher to this particular area of enquiry. While complete researcher neutrality towards design is, of course, impossible, the negative effects of researcher preconception are nevertheless likely to be minimized when there has been no previous professional experience in the field.

### **1.4.1 Research into design: integrating design and social research**

Frayling (1993) has cited three types of academic research in the field of art and design:

- research *into* art and design
- research *through* art and design
- research *for* art and design

The first of these, research *into* art and design, describes the present project.

Research *into* art and design is distinguished from the other two research types in two ways. First, it occupies a position outside the confines of art and design practice. As a consequence, it is not necessary to be a designer, or engaged in design, in the conventional sense, to conduct research *into* design. Second, research *into* art and design makes use of investigative paradigms and methodologies associated with other, non-design disciplines. In the present case, design is the object of study, yet the investigative methodology is taken from the social sciences.

Archer (1995) offers the alternative “research *about* practice” (emphasis added). Archer’s phrase illustrates that the outcomes of research either ‘*into*’ or ‘*about*’ design, while not being directly articulated in terms of design practice, in contrast to the other two research types given, do nevertheless impact on design practice, by adding to the understanding of ‘design’ as an area of practice and study.

The interview study at the centre of this project applies social research method to an enquiry focusing on, and conducted in the field of, design. This project therefore integrates the two areas, design and social science, through an empirical and social study of design.

## ***1.5 Organization of the thesis***

Part I constitutes the framework chapters of the thesis, comprising this introductory chapter, a literature review addressing Aims 1 and 2 given above (Chapter 2), and a restatement and discussion of key project issues (Chapter 3). Chapter 3 effectively recapitulates Chapters 1 and 2 in brief, and summarizes the framework argument of the thesis.

Part II describes the empirical method employed in the interview study fulfilling Aim 3. The formulation and administration of the interview study are described in Chapter 4.

An exercise undertaken to assess the data analysis method used in the interview study is described in Chapter 5.

Part III presents the findings of the interview study, in terms of a qualitative template analysis of interview data. The analytical template is introduced in Chapter 6, examined in detail in Chapters 7 to 10, and reviewed and summarized in Chapter 11.

Part IV constitutes a resolution of the project. Chapter 12 contains a synthesis and discussion of the findings of the empirical study, in the context of the earlier framework chapters (Part I). Chapter 13 contains a final statement of research outcomes and conclusions, including suggestions for future work.

## **1.6 Summary**

Chapter 1 establishes this project as an example of non-practice-based research *into* design. The origins of the project are described, and a keynote theme of the democratization of design is established. A link is made between the focus of the current project and wider contemporary and contextual issues around design. Three project aims are stated, along with the specific objectives and methods by which they are to be addressed. Suggestions as to the original contribution to knowledge made by the project are given. A review and discussion of relevant literature is presented next in Chapter 2.

## **Chapter 2 : Literature Review**

### **2.0 *Introduction***

This chapter reviews and discusses relevant literature. Section 2.1 establishes the contemporary UK context for the social study of design. Section 2.2 interprets that context in terms of the identified theme of the democratization of design.

### **2.1 *Design: the contemporary UK context***

#### **2.1.0 Overview**

This section seeks to fulfill Aim 1 of the project (Figure 1.1), by establishing the contemporary UK context for the social study of design

##### **2.1.1 *The economics of design: design and the UK economy***

The turnover of UK design consultancies was estimated to have a value of just over £3 billion in 1995 (Sentance & Clarke 1997).<sup>6</sup> This figure constitutes income generated by the provision of chargeable design services to clients. As such, it represents an economically visible and quantifiable contribution made by design to the UK economy. This figure for the direct contribution made by the recognized design sector to the UK economy through the procurement of external design services, does not, however, account for the actual total economic impact of all design activity. Such an assessment of the total value of design activity in the UK is complicated by several factors (DCMS 1999:38):

- design consultancies are engaged in much non-design activity
- much of its value is hidden within the value of other industries

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<sup>6</sup> DCMS (2001:5:01) estimates total fee income of UK design consultancies as £4.8 billion for 1999. See next footnote.

- within companies, the design function cannot be consistently bounded, and different sectors or even organizations within sectors have their own definitions of design
- definitive statistics are not collected

The direct contribution of the design sector to the UK economy, identified by Sentance & Clarke (1997) above, is thus augmented by additional, economically invisible design activity. In-house design activity performed within the organization itself is an intangible aspect of investment, and therefore not readily quantifiable (Sentance & Clarke 1997). Design activity not acknowledged as such, so-called 'silent' design (Gorb & Dumas 1987), while not appearing in available statistics, is nevertheless a significant constituent of design's overall economic contribution.

The actual contribution made by design to the UK economy is, therefore, difficult to state with accuracy (Sentance & Clarke 1997:5; DCMS 1998:38). An estimate has nevertheless been made, accounting for both economically visible and economically invisible design activity:

Across the British economy as a whole, total design and related activity is estimated to total over £12bn (at 1995 prices), employing around 300,000 people. This is 1.8% of UK Gross Domestic Product and 1.2% of total employment.

Sentance & Clarke (1997:3)

On this estimate, design makes a significant contribution to the UK economy, in terms of both economic value and employment.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> All cited Government sources (e.g., Design Council 1998c; DCMS 1998), with the exception of DCMS (2001), quote this estimate. DCMS (2001:5:01) gives significantly larger figures here, of £26.7bn and 1 million people respectively. A warning is included in this later document, however, that direct comparison between apparently equivalent figures appearing in DCMS (1998) and DCMS (2001) is "largely inappropriate", due to inconsistency in the data sources used by the two documents (DCMS 2001:00:05). The earlier figures are therefore used throughout this chapter, as these relate to the period of conception of the current project.

## 2.1.2 *The politics of design*

### Introduction: the state we're in

The malaise experienced by the UK economy in the 1990s has been documented.

The UK suffered a longer and deeper recession than the other major developed economies in the early 1990s.  
DTI (1997:5)

The accepted measure of a country's economic competitiveness is its productivity, expressed as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (Gordon Humphreys & Shaw-Taylor 1994a; DTI 1999). A comparison of 1998 figures for the national economies included in OECD statistics is shown in Figure 2.1.

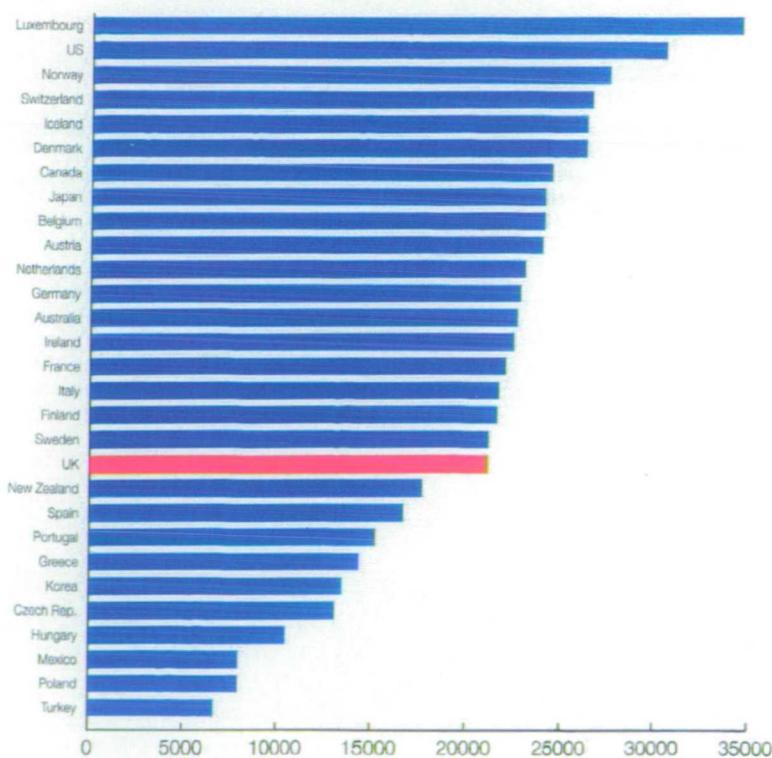


Figure 2.1 GDP per head in 1998 (US dollars, purchasing power parity)<sup>8</sup>

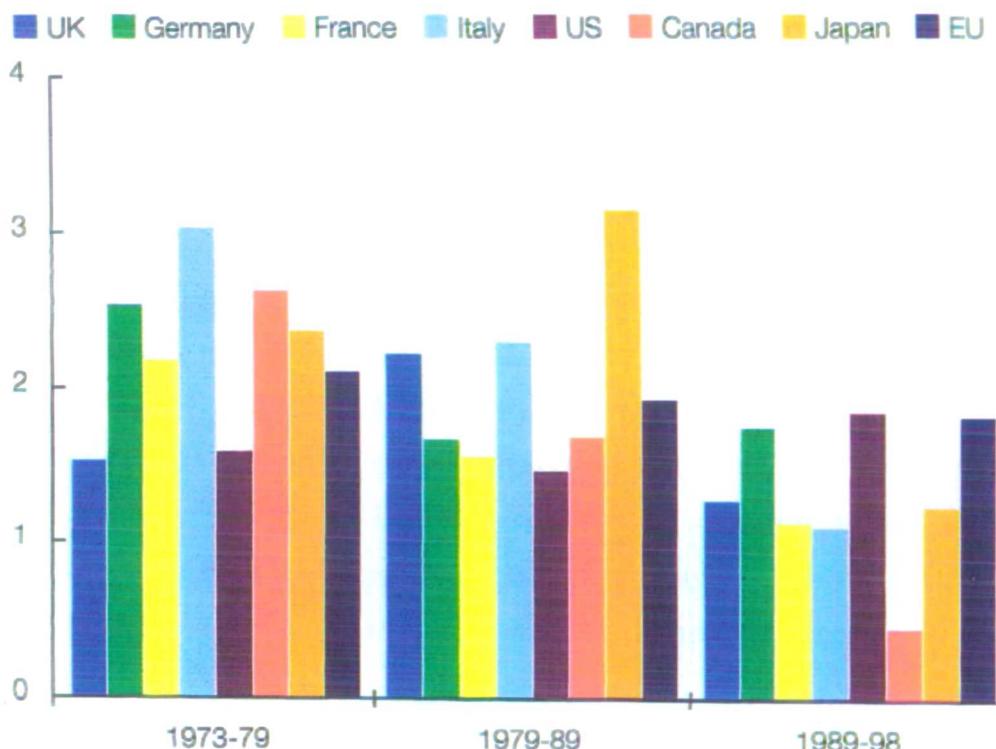
On these 1998 figures, the UK lies 19<sup>th</sup> of the 29 nations ranked by GDP per capita.

The DTI source states, in relation to these figures: "the UK's GDP per head is around

<sup>8</sup> DTI (1999:52).

the European Union average but still 18 per cent below the average for the G7<sup>9</sup> (DTI 1999:52).<sup>9</sup>

The relative performance of the UK has also been tracked over time (Figure 2.2).



**Figure 2.2 Growth of GDP per head (per cent per annum)<sup>10</sup>**

In terms of comparative growth, Figure 2.2 shows that the UK's position declined in the period covered by the 1990s.

The figures given indicate the UK's relative economic performance over the recent period. These figures indicate more than economic prosperity, however. A positive correlation has been identified between the economic measures used to compile global competitiveness rankings, and other non-economic indicators of quality of life (Gordon Humphreys & Shaw-Taylor 1994a:35). As the DTI source states: "this

<sup>9</sup> The most recent figures available from the source used by the DTI place the UK 15th in a ranking of the same nations for the period 1997 by unadjusted GDP per capita (OECD 2000).

<sup>10</sup> DTI (1999:52).

measure [GDP per head] is usually taken as the best indicator of living standards."

(DTI 1999:52) The UK's low economic performance ranking therefore relates directly to general quality of life.

#### The response

The UK's recent low ranking in the global competitiveness league has acted as catalyst for a new wave of efforts intended to stimulate sustained economic recovery. The primary contemporary political response to the economic situation described is contained in a recent statement by the Prime Minister:

I believe it is time to show a fresh face to the world and reshape Britain as one of the 21st century's most forward-thinking and modern nations. I challenge companies to demonstrate that the UK can lead the world by creating products and services that exemplify our strengths in innovation, creativity and design.

Design Council (1998a:2)

This response has two components: (i) a proposed renewal of the UK's international identity, and (ii) an emphasis on exploitation of the economic potential of creative industrial activities. These two components of a planned recovery are considered in turn.

#### (Re)Designing national identity

Woodham (1999) attests to "the high profile accorded design at the outset of Tony Blair's New Labour government" (245). This high political profile for design is, moreover, evident in a wider scheme for "the re-presentation internationally of a modern Britain characterized by high standards of design and a wealth of creative activity." (246) This wider intention is discussed most comprehensively in Leonard's (1997) blueprint for a renewal of British national identity. Leonard applies the principle of brand identity to the nation, emphasizing the need for a coherent, unified national identity as an economic imperative for Britain. Such a national identity is envisaged in the form of a consistent image, based on contemporary industrial strengths, developed and maintained nationally, and projected internationally. The areas of industrial strength identified by Leonard to act as the basis for a

regeneration of national image are “creative industries like music, design and architecture” (13). A faith in these creative industries has provenance for Leonard in the idea of Britain as an historically “creative island” (52).

The ‘rebranding’ of a national identity, so discussed, directly links national creative and design capability to notions of national identity, and improved international economic competitiveness. The link between design and national identity has been made elsewhere (for example, Vickers 1991; Woodham 1997). Similarly, the exploitation of design as a means of promoting a national identity within international trade has been noted, with particular regard to the Italian reconstruction of a national identity through its designed manufactured goods (Sparke 1986:144-145). The similar attributed effects of a contemporary exploitation of design in the UK are various:

The key role of design in promoting a view of Britain as modern and innovative helps promote the export of a wide range of goods and services, as well as encouraging inward investment and tourism.  
DCMS (1998:39)

#### Design, the creative industries and the creative economy

Political emphasis has been placed on fostering a specific national identity, resting in significant part on the exploitation of the economic potential of industrial activities designated as ‘creative industries’ (Design Council 1998b). These industries comprise the ‘creative economy’.

A governmental White Paper presented the notion of the knowledge driven economy as the core element in national economic strategy.

Our success depends on how well we exploit our most valuable assets: our knowledge, skills, and creativity. These are the key to designing high-value goods and services and advanced business practices. They are at the heart of a modern, knowledge driven economy.  
DTI (1998a:foreword)

While the principles contained in this notion of knowledge-based competitiveness are applicable across all industrial sectors, specific emphasis has been placed on those sectors, containing the designated creative industries, which together comprise the 'creative economy'. The creative industries are identified as

those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.

DCMS (1998:3)

There is, moreover, a strong confidence expressed in the UK's capabilities in these sectors. The combined contribution of these sectors to the UK economy has been recently estimated at £50 billion, accompanied by a projection that they will be "the fastest-growing source of new jobs between now and 2006." (Design Council 1998c:3) In the same source, the Prime Minister is quoted as similarly attesting to "the importance of the creative economy which is now worth more than one million people and growing more than twice as fast as the economy as a whole." (25)

Specifically, several key sectors are identified for inclusion in the categorization 'the creative industries':

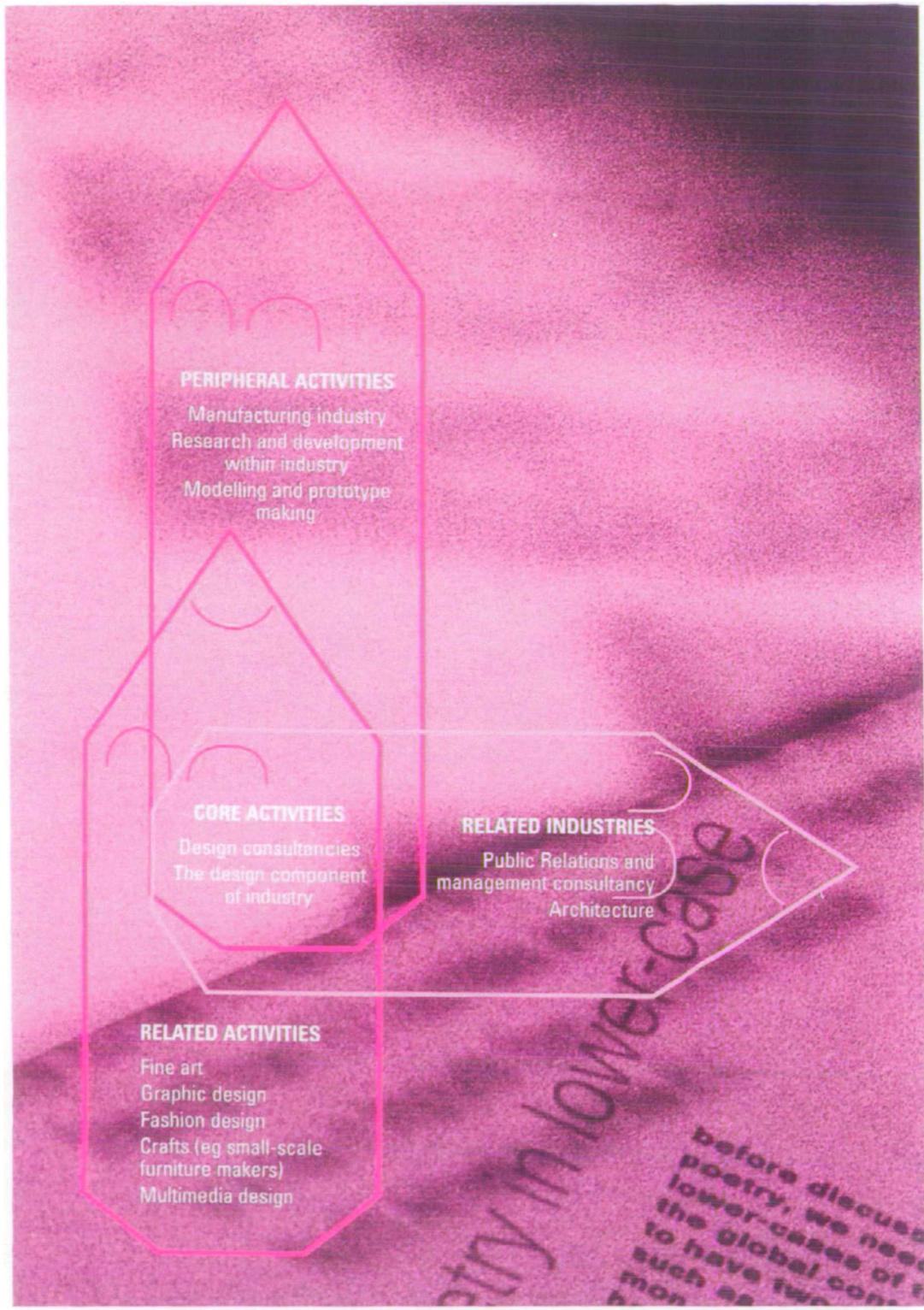
- advertising
- architecture
- the arts and antiques market
- crafts
- **design**
- designer fashion
- film
- interactive leisure software
- music
- the performing arts
- publishing
- software
- television and radio

**Figure 2.3 The creative industries<sup>11</sup>**

The activities included in the 'design' sector as it appears here are indicated in Figure 2.4.

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<sup>11</sup> DCMS (1998:3). Emphasis of 'design' added. The same sectors are preserved in DCMS (2001).



**Figure 2.4 Activities included in the 'design' sector of the creative industries<sup>12</sup>**

The turnover of design consultancies has been estimated by Sentance & Clarke (1997) at just over £3 billion in 1995. The remaining areas included in the design

<sup>12</sup> DCMS (1998:35). The classifications shown here are expanded slightly in DCMS (2001).

sector as it is presented in Figure 2.4, may be thought to relate to the wider estimate made of the value of “total design and related activity”, also made by Sentance & Clarke (1997).<sup>13</sup>

Further evidence of specific emphasis on the design sector of the creative industries is provided by Trapp (1999). In evaluating the content of the White Paper considered above (DTI 1998a), Trapp proclaims it as “wonderful news for everybody involved in design and related activities.” (1998:4) Similarly, a recent internationally-targeted exhibition was promoted as a celebration of apparent strength in the creative industries as a whole, including design in particular.

powerhouse::uk celebrates britain's creative industries [...] [and] illustrates how britain leads the world in design

british designers [...] are universally recognised as global pace setters.  
DTI (1998b)

A report recently published by the Design Council (Design Council 1999), in emphasizing the importance placed on design in the context of the new creative economy, repeats this confidence in an indigenous UK capability in these areas:

UK businesses are well placed [...] to exploit our world class reputation for creativity, innovation and design.  
(3)

Thus, in conclusion, design is seen as a key component in the development of the creative economy.

### *2.1.3 The business of design*

#### Introduction

In addition to the recent politicizing of design on a macroeconomic scale discussed above, design has been acknowledged as a primary route to improved competitiveness at the microeconomic level of the individual enterprise. In particular, there is a substantial literature promoting the better incorporation of design into

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<sup>13</sup> Section 2.1.1.

manufacturing and product development (for example Rothwell, Gardiner & Schott 1983; Roy & Potter with Rothwell & Gardiner 1990; Lorenz 1990; Pugh 1991; Rassam 1995; DTI 1995; Ohtani, Duke & Ohtani 1997; Thackara 1997). This literature embodies the fundamental premise that non-price factors are the most important source of competitive advantage, and these are dependent on the successful exploitation of design (Rassam 1995:30; Ohtani, Duke & Ohtani 1997:55). Additionally, 'design excellence' has been discussed as a route to adding value (Booth 1997), for example through its contribution to Porter's value chain (Borja de Mozota 1998).

Significantly, the UK's relative international uncompetitiveness, noted above, has been attributed to a general commitment to a misplaced policy of cost-leadership, in contrast to a commitment to design excellence exhibited by more competitive nations, and by the most competitive UK companies. (Roy & Potter with Rothwell & Gardiner 1990; Booth 1997) Consequently, significant recent efforts have been made to promote design to UK industry.

#### Promoting design

The Design Council is independent of Government and run as an autonomous, non-profit making public body. It is funded through a grant from the Department of Trade and Industry.  
Design Council (n.d.)

The current stated purpose of the Design Council is:

To inspire the best use of design by the UK, in the world context, to improve prosperity and well-being.  
Design Council (n.d.)

This definition of purpose has a recent provenance, commensurate with that of the political emphasis on design already discussed above (Dumas 1996). It is, moreover, part of "the drive to improve Britain's competitive position within the global economy through design." (14) This wider economic goal is the context for the formulation of the notion of the "new business of design". (Design Council 1999:6) This "enlarged

concept of design" is perhaps best articulated in the contention that "[d]esign has moved upstream into the core of business" (Design Council 1999:6). Design, in this self-consciously 'enlarged' sense, is thus being promoted as a general panacea for business. The Design Council is involved in high profile contemporary initiatives which incorporate a promotion of this sense of design to business (for example, Design Council 1998a, 1999).

The Design Council works in extensive partnership with its governmental sponsor, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). In addition, the DTI complements the Design Council's promotion of design as a strategic resource, with a specific focus on design in manufacturing and new product development. Several reports provide recommendations for best practice in incorporating design into manufacture (for example, DTI 1995, n.d. a, b, c, d).

#### 2.1.4 Caveat

Evidence has been presented indicating design's prominent position in contemporary economic and political discussion. Yet, consideration of some of the evidence presented here, under headings relating to the economics and politics of design, suggests that there is some confusion at this level over what 'design' actually denotes in this context.

As has been discussed above, the actual contribution made by design to the UK economy is difficult to state with any accuracy.<sup>14</sup> One complicating factor is an initial difficulty in setting the bounds of what counts as 'design' in this context.

[W]ithin companies, the design function cannot be consistently bounded, and different sectors or even organisations within sectors have their own definitions of design (italics added)  
DCMS (1998:38)

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<sup>14</sup> Section 2.1.1.

If 'design' can not be consistently identified between either sectors or organizations, any attempt to quantify its value is destined to be problematic.

Similarly, the categorization of the creative industries given above (Figure 2.3), initially appears somewhat anomalous, in that 'design' and 'designer fashion' appear as distinct sectors. Further breakdowns are given for each of the identified creative industry sectors, showing their constituent areas of activity. Each sector is thus shown as comprising 'core activities'; 'related activities'; 'peripheral activities'; and 'related industries'. (DCMS 1998) The constituent areas of the design sector are shown in Figure 2.4 above. Consideration of the profiles given for each sector, in these terms, reveals that as a body these profiles exhibit a considerable degree of overlap in their inclusion of specific areas of activity. Thus, particular activities may be assigned to several creative industry sectors. In discussing the designated bounds of the 'design' creative industries sector, the DCMS source explicitly refers to "design activities that are covered elsewhere in this report – in fashion, crafts, architecture, software or computer games" (37). Elsewhere, reference is made to "the flexible and diverse nature of the sector", and "the diverse nature of activities with which designers are involved" (39), further indicating, given the official provenance of this source, an acknowledgement at government level of the ambiguous nature of 'design' in terms of economic classification.

Some confusion is therefore evident as to the identification of 'design' as a distinct economic activity, and its location within the economic classification of the creative industries. This confusion is acknowledged as the consequence of complexity in the composition of the design sector itself. In the same DCMS source (1998:40), a number of "points of consideration" are offered towards the future growth of the 'design' creative industries sector, two of which are given below:

- how to retain the strong image of the design industry in the face of diversification of design consultancy services
- the differing roles of various Government departments and agencies in "sponsoring" the industry

The first of these points reiterates the growing diversity of the design sector already discussed. The second point indicates a further concern with the provision for the support of 'design' at governmental level. Consideration of the prominent role of the Design Council in promoting the 'new business of design',<sup>15</sup> indicates that provision for the support of design is sponsored by government but largely fulfilled outside of government. The Design Council takes a leading role in its partnership with the DTI. 'Design' the creative industry appears within government, however, under the remit of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, as has been shown above. Together, these facts indicate a certain arbitrariness in the location of 'design' in government. Further evidence on this point is provided by a consideration of how 'design' is located politically and economically at the national level by other countries.

Forrest et al (1990) provide a survey of national governmental policies on design around the industrialized world. While the authors themselves offer no conclusions from this survey, it is evident that the national contexts they consider exhibit widely differing degrees of co-ordinated governmental provision for the support of design. Thus, countries in the Asian pacific rim and Scandinavia were in general found to exhibit a strong tendency to promote design at governmental level. The situation in Western Europe and North America was found to be much more varied, however. Thus, while France and the UK were found to support design at governmental level, other leading economies such as the USA, West Germany and Italy were not. Clearly, no consensus was found in the provision of state promotion of design.

A degree of confusion is therefore apparent in the evidence cited, as to what 'design' denotes in an economic context, and where responsibility for it resides at the governmental level. This confusion is seen to derive from a more basic failure to adequately define what design *is*. Thus, while 'design' is clearly held to be important politically and economically (Thackara (1997) notes its prominence in European policy on regeneration and competitiveness), there is little clarity as what is actually meant by the term.

### *2.1.5 Design and popular culture*

#### Introduction

It is cited above<sup>16</sup> that

the fate of design does not lie entirely within the framework of design culture [...] It lies within the framework of culture as a whole  
Buchanan (1998:3)

As such, design has come to be seen to directly relate to a wider milieu. Aspects of design's relation to popular culture in the contemporary UK context are considered here.

Design's contemporary political and economic high profile is paralleled by an equivalent profile in popular culture (Rich 1999). Design's wider cultural profile is discussed here, in terms of two clear manifestations of cultural interest in design: (i) explicit treatment of design as a topic by the popular media, specifically television; and (ii) the use of explicit textual reference to 'design' in print advertising.

#### Design on television

Springer (1991) and Lloyd (2000ab) both recognize the inherent artificiality of the treatment of design by television. Both are concerned with examining how design, and designing, respectively, are constructed and represented by the medium. Springer writes that in addressing "how design practice and history was constructed

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<sup>15</sup> Section 2.1.3.1.

and propagated for a broader [television] audience," he is effectively considering "the issue of how design is structured for public consumption". (Springer 1991:abstract)

The wider influence of television's treatment of design is also emphasized:

Such broadcasts undoubtably [sic] influence and set the agenda of how people think about the subject and is the most accessible medium to assert its profile in the public eye.  
(Springer 1991:abstract)

Springer (1991) addresses the treatment of design on UK 'mainstream' television during the 1980s, locating the emergence of design as a suitable topic for that medium in this period, and making significant claims about the way in which design was presented on TV at that time. Two contrasting approaches are identified, broadly characterizable as social and ahistorical treatments of design, respectively. For Springer, these modes of televisual engagement with design parallel trends in the academic treatment of design discussed earlier in this thesis.<sup>17</sup> Thus, while one strand of programmes (the 'social') sought to societally contextualize design, in the manner of design history, another strand (the 'ahistorical') persisted in isolating design from it's context, in the manner of a 'history of design' approach.

Lloyd (2000ab) reprises Springer's earlier focus, addressing explicit treatment of design on UK television in the 1990s. Lloyd (2000b) identifies a general trend in this period, "towards television programmes containing a collaborative design process." (99) Three specific programme types are identified: populist treatments of design in the domestic environment; documentary treatments of major design projects; and documentary treatments "telling the [...] design stories" of smaller-scale projects (Lloyd 2000a:271). In focusing specifically on the last of these three programme types, Lloyd examines the representation of the design process on UK television in

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<sup>16</sup> Section 1.1.1.

<sup>17</sup> Chapter 1.

the 1990s.<sup>18</sup> The general trend identified by Lloyd is thus for a treatment of designing by television in this period, in contrast with Springer's earlier discussion of the medium's treatment of *design*. The process of designing is, further, politically and societally contextualized in these programmes in the manner of design history.

Echoing Springer's (Springer 1991) previous emphasis on the wider societal impact of television's treatment of design, Rich (1999) comments on the proliferation of popular design-themed programmes discussed by Lloyd (2000ab).

Home decoration TV shows are the most important thing to happen to British design in the past ten years.  
Rich (1999:13)

While questioning the validity of the content of the programmes he discusses, Rich nevertheless states that "these shows are popularizing the practice of thinking about the design *process*" [emphasis added]. The overall effect is thus a positive one, of "the elevation of design to the forefront of the nation's collective mind."

Despite its recent provenance, a shift is therefore evident in UK television's explicit treatment of design. In the 1990s, the vestiges of a 'history of design' approach on television, focusing on design objects, appear to have been superseded by a focus on designing as a process, in the manner of a 'design history' approach. This shift is consistent with that noted in the previous chapter in relation to academic treatment of design.<sup>19</sup> It also testifies to a greater degree of involvement of the television audience in the discourse constituted through the medium's presentation of design. Rather than simply being presented with an educative discussion of 'classic' design icons, the television audience is now not only granted access to the process of design, but is actively included in that process, in terms of actual and viewing participation. As Rich (1999) notes, the effect of these programmes is to encourage not just an

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<sup>18</sup> Specifically, Lloyd considers the *Designs on Your...* (1998abc) series. That series has since been reprised (*Better by Design* 2000abcdef), reinforcing the point made here.

informed consumption of design, but an active participation *in* design. The field of design engagement is thus seen to be widened by the treatment of design on television.

#### 'Design' in print advertising

Leiss, Kline & Jhally (1988) have written that "advertising is a communications activity through which social change is mediated – and wherein such change can be witnessed." (144) Put simply, it may be said that advertising is an index of shifting societal attitudes and values. In the present case, a trend is identified for a use of the term 'design' as a textual anchor in contemporary print advertising.

Fiske (1990) discusses Barthes' use of the term 'anchorage', "to describe the function of words used as captions for photographs." (110) Words, in this context, counter the inherent ambiguity of images, and thereby act to fix, or at least narrow down, the meaning of a photograph. This notion of anchoring images through use of text has been applied to examples of print advertising (Griffiths 1996). In the present case, a trend for the use of the word 'design' to anchor images in mainstream print advertising is cited as additional evidence of the mass-cultural currency of design. Television's explicit and conscious treatment of design is noteworthy in indicating a significant degree of cultural engagement with design as a subject (see above). Similarly, the use of 'design' (and its associate terms 'designed' and 'designer') as textual anchor in print advertising indicates that design as a term is considered to be sufficiently culturally-known for that anchorage to be effective. Examples of print advertisements exhibiting this trend are reproduced in Appendix 1.

#### **2.1.6 Conclusion: a common theme**

A recent estimate of the contribution of design to the UK economy indicates the significance of the design sector in terms of both Gross Domestic Product and

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<sup>19</sup> Section 1.1.1.

employment (Sentance & Clarke 1997).<sup>20</sup> The significance of the contribution made by the design sector to the UK economy, as one of the designated 'creative industries', is predicted to increase with the projected expansion of the 'creative economy' (Design Council 1998c). The design sector is thus promoted as a key contributor to visions of national regeneration.

Design is also recognized as a source of improved competitiveness at the microeconomic level of the individual enterprise. This recognition is symbiotic with the promotion of design at the macroeconomic scale of the national economy. Improved national economic competitiveness is a manifestation of a translation up to the macroeconomic scale of improved microeconomic competitiveness.

It is the internal competitiveness in a nation which raises the external average. Gordon Humphreys & Shaw-Taylor (1994b:20)

There is thus an intrinsic link between design's parallel contemporary economic and political profiles.

The contemporary cultural currency of design, evidence of which is cited in terms of television and print advertising, coincides with design's profile in political and economic terms.

A common theme may thus be identified, in terms of a significant contemporary profile for design across various areas of interest. The present climate is thus highly conducive to the social study of design. The contemporary manifestations of interest in design identified are additionally cited as expressions of a further common phenomena, characterized as the 'democratization of design'. This keynote theme considers design's political, economic and cultural profile in unison, and is considered in Section 2.2.

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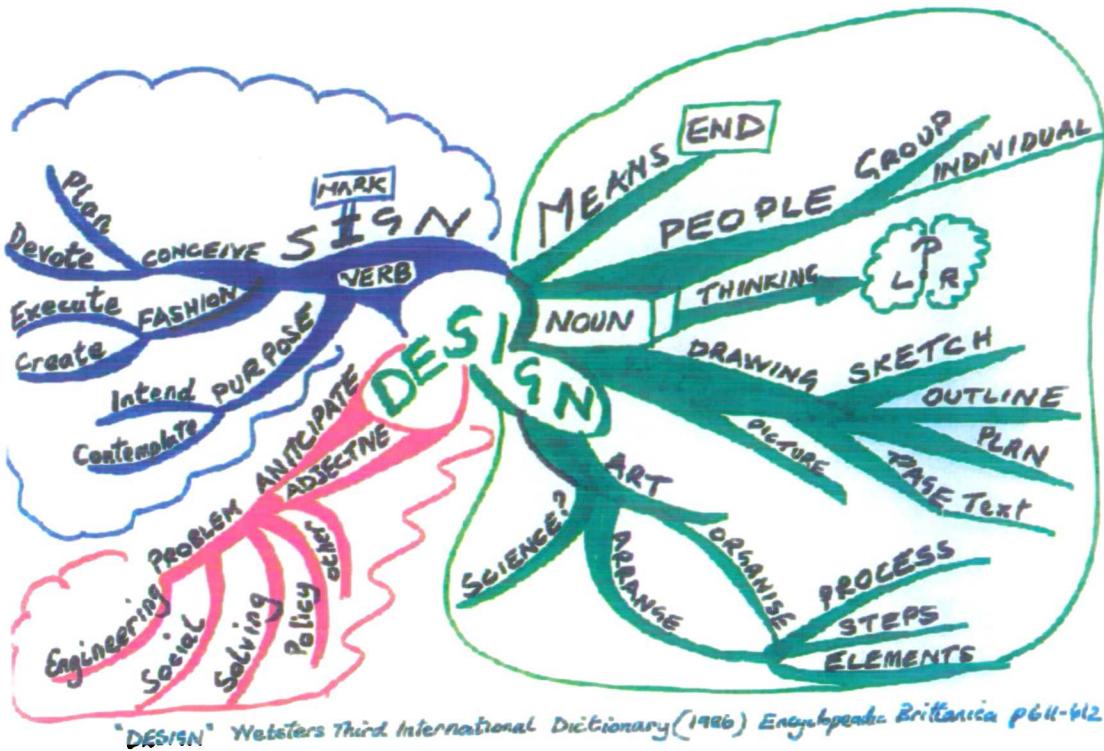
<sup>20</sup> Section 2.1.1.

### Defining design

It has been shown that a degree of confusion is evident as to what is meant by the term 'design', both politically and economically.<sup>21</sup> This confusion applies not just to the isolation of design as an economic and political entity, but to definition of the term itself. In making their estimate of the total contribution of design to the UK economy, Sentance & Clarke (1997) provide a fairly succinct but comprehensive review of efforts to define design by authors of varying affiliations (5-6). The outcome of this review is inconclusive. One source cited by Sentance & Clarke (1997) cites "29 different definitions drawn from studies over the last thirty year [sic]." (5) The authors go on to discuss several prominent attempts to synthesize the variety in proposed definitions of design indicated by their first source. Other sources provide similar surveys of the variety of ways in which 'design' has been defined and unpacked as a concept (Morrison & Twyford 1994; Cooper & Press 1995). A personal diagrammatic representation of the field of meanings and definitions ascribed to design in a single dictionary, reproduced in Figure 2.5, represents one attempt at mapping this multiplicity.

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<sup>21</sup> Section 2.1.4.



**Figure 2.5 'Design' mind map<sup>22</sup>**

In discussing the development of design as a field of academic study, Dilnot (1984a) has referred to "a fundamental ambiguity that the concept of design possesses" (233), manifest in a situation in which design

has acquired several different, often seemingly contradictory, meanings and associations  
(Dilnot 1984a:233)

Writing in relation to the same issue, of defining the object of design study, Walker (1989) has stated that

there is not yet a consensus concerning the meaning and scope of the term/concept 'design'  
(22)

Finally, Thackara (1997) has written more recently that

Design [...] is one of those words which means different things in different contexts; despite decades of discussion, nobody has yet come up with a commonly accepted definition.  
(32)

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<sup>22</sup> Lloyd-Owen (unpublished); used with author's permission.

This notion is inherent in the observation cited previously that design means different things to different people'.<sup>23</sup> It appears that design remains a richly ambiguous concept. The prominence of design in the contemporary UK context, evidence of which has been collected and discussed here, is thus predicated on a continuing ambiguity around what the term actually means.

## **2.2 *The democratization of design***

### **2.2.0 *Introduction***

This section interprets the contemporary profile of design in the UK, in terms of the theme of a widened, democratized mode of design engagement, as discussed by Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin (1998):

In recent years we have seen a wider engagement than ever before with issues related to the character of design as well as to its methods. We have also recognized that those engaged with these issues are not only designers but many others as well – empirical researchers, critics, historians, theorists, and the general public.

(1)

The contemporary profile of design, established in the preceding section, is interpreted in relation to this theme of design as a field of widened engagement, fulfilling Aim 2 of the project (Figure 1.2).

### **2.2.1 *Discourse and practice***

A democratization may be seen in both (i) the practice, and (ii) the discourse of design.

A widening engagement with design *practice* is evident in the increasing involvement of the user in design activity. The term 'codesigning' has been used here.

the 'co' in CoDesigning is intended to convey multiple meanings. It covers for example collaborative, cooperative, concurrent, user centred, participatory,

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<sup>23</sup> Section 1.1.4.

socio-technical and community design. In other words, any development where design as a group process is explored.  
CoDesigning (n.d.)

The involvement of the user in codesigning may be identified at three levels, ranging from semantic interpretation in the act of consumption, through to active user participation in the design process itself (Figure 2.6).

<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Interpretive:</b> determination of product meaning by the user in consumption
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Participatory (passive):</b> focus on the user in the design process
<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Participatory (active):</b> direct user involvement in the design process

**Figure 2.6 Levels of user involvement in design**

The determination of product meaning by the user during consumption, rather than by the designer, is the focus of product semantics (Krippendorff & Butter 1989). Sudjic (1985) similarly examines the appeal of 'cult objects' in terms of codifications and interpretations of meaning within specific cultural contexts. The basic contention of this approach is that product meaning is culturally defined, and rests with the fluid interpretations of products made by users in the act of consumption.

Beyond the cultural interpretation of designed objects in consumption, the user may also be actively involved in the productive process of design itself. Patnaik & Becker (1999) discuss the incorporation of user needs into the design process through the employment of a user-centred design approach. Thus, user observation studies may be employed to identify user needs more successfully than is possible through a simple reliance on users' articulations of their perceived needs and requirements. Within such an approach, user needs are placed at the centre of the design activity, but users themselves remain essentially passive subjects to be discussed and studied.

The user may, however, be included as an active participant in the design process itself. This is the approach adopted in 'participatory design'.

Participatory Design (PD) is an approach to the assessment, design, and development of technological and organizational systems that places a premium on the active involvement of workplace practitioners (usually potential or current users of the system) in design and decision-making processes.

Participatory Design (n.d.)

Here, the user becomes a fully participating member of the design team itself, potentially allowing an even more direct input of user needs into the design activity.

The widening participation in design practice noted is, moreover, accompanied by a greater inclusivity in the *discourse* of design (Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin 1998).

A practical definition of design discourse was offered previously:<sup>24</sup>

The design discourse is defined here in general terms, as comprising the totality of ways in which design is thought about and verbally discussed by design stakeholders.

The widening involvement of design stakeholders in the design activity itself brings with it a more inclusive discourse between these stakeholders. Design as a community concern requires effective communication between members of that community (Coyne & Snodgrass 1993:172-173). The democratization of the discourse of design is characterized by a recognition of, and commitment to, multiple perspectives and perceptions around design as it is discussed and thought about. (Margolin and Buchanan, 1995) In this way, there is a clear relation between the opening up of the practice and the discussion of design.

This thesis specifically addresses the discourse, rather than the practice, of design among design stakeholders. It is not possible to focus on the discourse of design, however, without simultaneously relating to design practice, as a result of the link

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<sup>24</sup> Section 1.1.3

between design practice and design discourse. Specific implications of the outcomes of this project for design practice are therefore discussed later in the thesis.<sup>25</sup>

### 2.2.2 *The discourse of design*

#### Overview: communicating from a shared position

Dormer (1990) discusses a scenario in which design stakeholders share a common position.

All supportive relationships must possess shared values. If the manufacturer is to make a profit, if the designer is to earn a fee, and if the consumer's self esteem is to be raised, then everybody must share a language. There have to be agreements about what looks good, about what materials are to be valued and why they are valued; there has to be a shared view of what is worth aspiring towards, and how aspirations can be reinforced with material goods. These agreements are present in the conventions of taste, class and fashion that characterize a culture at any given point of its history.

(10)

Swann (1995) describes an apparently realised version of this model, in which a unified national design culture is seen to derive from "a sharing and group acceptance of ideas and attitudes" (10). The paradigm of consensual inter-stakeholder relations is discussed in a more specific context by Dumas (1996):

In an ideal world, the process of design and product development would permeate the whole organization with functional specialties like marketing, finance, R&D, strategy, and so on coming together naturally, speaking a common language and pulling in the same direction toward a shared goal.

(11-12)

Further sources discuss a necessary or desirable empathy between design-oriented producer and design-sophisticated consumer (McCracken 1986:77; Bloch 1995).

Dilnot (1984b) articulates the essential consensual nature of this view of inter-stakeholder relations when he discusses

our explicit, sharable and imperfect understanding as to what design *is* and what design *does*.

(101)

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<sup>25</sup> Chapter 13.

Other sources, however, are critical of the view that design stakeholders communicate from a shared position of the kind described. Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin (1998) maintain that a consensus of the type described, characterized by a single shared outlook and mutual perspective, is unattainable. The grounds for this denial of a design consensus are the inherent multiplicity of the contemporary discourse of design, as conducted within the observed wider engagement with design and the discussion of design issues. Elsewhere, Buchanan (1985) has stated that "design is a debate among opposing views" (95). The opening up of an inclusive design discourse is thus a means of allowing this debate to be conducted to a fuller extent.

Having acknowledged this wider participation in design conversations, discussions, and debates, we must recognize that there is no shared language among all those stakeholders who have an interest in how design is understood and practiced [sic] in contemporary culture.  
Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin (1998:1)

The pluralism inherent in the new mode of design engagement requires a more realistic account of inter-stakeholder communication than one based on a model scenario of perfectly-shared perspectives and conceptualizations. The rejection of the notion of absolute consensus also entails that the idea of a shared language, as expressive of the possession of identical world views, must also be abandoned. The notion of a consensus in design, manifest in a homogeneity of taste and value, may in this context be considered a historically and intellectually retrograde step back to Modernist dogma.

The next section considers studies specifically addressing this issue, as manifest in the verbal communications between design stakeholders within the collaborative design scenario.

### Studies of communication in design collaboration

Sonnenwald (1996) defines a current field of research:<sup>26</sup>

Increasingly design teams include participants from different disciplines, organizations and cultures [...] These participants come to the design situation with pre-existing patterns of work activities, specialized work languages, and different expectations and perceptions of quality and success, and different organizational constraints and priorities. Design participants need to explore and integrate these differences.  
(279)

Herein is a call for effective inter-stakeholder collaboration, attained in significant part through successful communication. This section considers studies seeking to elucidate the communication which takes place between participants in design collaboration.

Sonnenwald (1996) identifies specific communicative roles adopted by individuals participating in design collaboration to support the success of that collaboration. These generic roles are potentially transferable between individual participants in the course of a collaboration. The array of roles available to a given participant is, however, determined by personal background and experience. Bucciarelli (1988) discusses the differing individual 'object worlds' of design participants, each "with its own dialect, system of symbols, metaphors and models, instruments and craft sensibilities." (163) These 'object worlds' are defined by professional background and training. Differing conceptualizing frameworks are therefore identified within design collaboration, primarily at the level of functional specialism.

Bruce & Docherty (1993) investigate client-designer collaboration in terms of the nature of the relationship established between the two. Effective collaboration, signified by "quality design solutions" (415), is characterized by a long-term client-designer relationship. A number of determining factors for the evolution of such a

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<sup>26</sup> Yair & Press (2000:467-468) identify this area of interest in terms of "verbal discourse and negotiative design".

relationship are identified. Primary among these factors is effective knowledge and information transfer, resulting from “understanding each others’ language”. This factor is discussed in the context of a personal relationship between agents characterized by “personal ‘chemistry’”, and “mutual trust and respect”. Understanding each others’ language is thus the sublimation of a “deep and meaningful” mutual understanding (422), which is in turn predicated on a strong interpersonal relationship between participating stakeholders.

Erol, Tomes & Armstrong (1999) investigate the “communication gap” between designers and technologists in the packaging industry. Specific barriers to effective inter-stakeholder communication in this case are found to be (i) “the stereotypical images that designers and technologists perceive of each other”, and (ii) “the difficulty in establishing a common language to facilitate this communication”. The consequences of poor communication are identified as “mistrust and an unwillingness to understand the processes employed by each side.” (1) Ineffective inter-stakeholder communication is thus discussed as a consequence of a lack of mutual understanding and involvement. The first step to remedying this scenario is “establishing common ground to build on” (5), and “shifting the stereotypes” attached to each group by the other (9). Here the involvement of an intermediary, capable of conducting a translation between “manufacturers talk” and “designers talk”, is discussed (9). This indicates the perceived difficulty of “finding a language which is understood to have the same meaning for both sides.” (10) Bruce & Docherty (1993) similarly discuss the replacement of a direct relationship between client and designer, through the intermediary involvement of “someone who can speak a ‘business language’ and who can also manage the design project.” (418)

Tomes, Oates & Armstrong (1998), in contrast, investigate directly the client-designer communication process. The design process, as mutually conducted by these two

agents, is viewed overall as “a process of translation from the verbal to the visual” (131), from a verbally expressed brief to the final visual design outcome. As such, this process involves “the achievement of an agreed translation from the verbal to the visual.” (136) This is clearly problematic, in that no “determinate and public dictionary” exists for this purpose (136). Instead, the client and designer (the “negotiators” here) must “search for commonalities in their respective personal understandings of the translatability of the verbal and the visual” (136). This is achieved through the inter-personal generation of a “store of mutual understanding”, in the form of “the designer and client’s private dictionary of translation between the verbal and the visual” (141) A potential hindrance is identified here in the extent to which designers’ self-concept gives them a “view of themselves as uneasy in verbal culture” (142), with the effect that they “regard the verbal culture of their clients as alien to their own, predominantly visual practice.” (141) The value of long-term client-designer relationships, identified by Bruce & Docherty (1993), lies in their enabling such cultural barriers to be overcome.

Yair, Press & Tomes (1999) similarly focus on the verbal-visual “negotiative dialogue” which takes place between designer and manufacturer. In this case, the barriers to communication “created by functional specialism and culture” are overcome through “the communal language [of] the crafts-based dialogue” (385). This dialogue is “centred on the object and articulated through parallel verbal articulation and practical demonstration” (384).<sup>27</sup>

Olsen (1994) investigates specific instances of inter-disciplinary conflict resolution between design and other functional specialisms. Conflicts within the design function’s relationships with research and development (R&D), marketing and

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<sup>27</sup> In a later paper, Yair & Press (2000) survey studies investigating the role of verbal discourse within “a negotiative design situation” (467).

manufacturing are ascribed to differing expectations, deriving from contrasting perceptions of the roles contained in those relationships. These entrenched perceptions, and the conflicts they engender, are overcome through a renegotiation of the inter-stakeholder relationships, resulting in greater mutual understanding and empathy. This clearly correlates with the overcoming of functional stereotypes and functional cultural differences, and emphasizes mutual understanding as the basis of effective inter-stakeholder collaboration and communication.

Oates, Tomes & Armstrong (1997) discuss design as “the outcome of extended negotiations between designer and client.” (2) These negotiations are, moreover, “expressed as differences of opinion [which] stem from variable conceptions of the role and possibilities of design” itself (2). The development of a “mutually trusting relationship between client and designer [...] depends on the resolution of these differences in design expectations.” (2) The negotiation involved in design is thus identified as relating to basic conceptions of the purpose and goals of the design activity itself. Oates, Tomes & Armstrong (1997) observe that in their study “each party had their own intentions for the design” in terms of desired design outcomes (11). As such, their research investigated “each party’s assumptions about design” itself (3), in terms not just of what design produces and does, but of what it is.

Shaw (1997:abstract) notes an identification of “the ability to effectively adopt the perspectives of others” in studies of collaboration in product development. Yet, as he also notes, “communication at an interpersonal level across disciplinary boundaries has also been recognized as problematic.” For Shaw, the problematic nature of this communication is “deeply rooted in divergent beliefs and experiences that remain unaddressed in the course of normal work”, specifically: “divergent and unshared metaphorical structuring in the ways disciplinary professionals conceptualise about their work.” Communicative difficulties are ascribed to contrasting conceptualizations

of the product development process, and the roles fulfilled within it, by different team members. This is manifested literally in the speaking of different languages, in the form of mutually unintelligible specialist vocabularies. Yet these specialist vocabularies are simply the symptoms of differences in "taken-for-granted beliefs and tacit assumptions about goals, methods, and the nature of working." (Shaw 1998) These assumptions include the adherence to disciplinary and functional stereotypes already identified in relation to other studies. Shaw (1997; 1998) thus investigates the construction of shared understanding in terms of the metaphors by which different groups understand their work, as a means of addressing the origin of the communicative difficulties identified. The immediate consequence of the "divergent and unshared metaphorical structuring" identified, is to act as a barrier to effective collaboration, "leading to situations of mistrust and perceptions of conflict." (Shaw 1998) Yet as Shaw (1998) states: "The goal is not to eliminate disagreement within groups, but to make disagreements more constructive", through "mutual understanding and negotiation".

To summarize this section, recent empirical research into inter-stakeholder communication is predicated on the contention that optimum design outcomes are achieved by effective collaboration between involved stakeholders, operating in long-term relationships. Effective collaboration is, in turn, found to be dependent on successful inter-stakeholder communication, based on mutual understanding and empathy. Mutual understanding involves the overcoming of (i) functional cultural barriers, and (ii) the lack of a shared language. Successful communication is not achieved through the development of a shared language in an absolute sense. Rather, an iterative interplay between participants generates a mutual understanding, in the form of a 'mixed economy' comprised of a combination of their hitherto discrete understandings. Successful inter-stakeholder communication is characterized in terms of a negotiation between differing outlooks and expectations, relating to

fundamental aspects of the nature of the activity being performed. These differing outlooks are, finally, presented as the product of contrasting conceptualizing frameworks regarding work performance and outcomes.

#### Studies of metaphor in design

Studies discussed in the previous section investigate inter-stakeholder communication in design collaboration. The general conclusion reached by these sources is that problematic communication is the result of a failure to reconcile differing conceptualizing frameworks. In design collaboration, the relevant conceptualizing frameworks are those around 'design' itself. The mechanisms of interactions involving differing conceptualizing frameworks in design have been extensively addressed, as has been shown. Attention is generally not paid, however, to directly investigating these referred-to conceptualizing frameworks around 'design'.

Coyne, Snodgrass & Martin (1994) do, however, investigate the use of metaphor in designing. Designing is seen as a practice of "metaphor play", and the metaphors used by designers while designing in a studio environment are considered empirically identifiable. The authors introduce the concept of a "metaphoric orientation", as a particular mode of engaging with a design problem in terms of an inclination towards use of a particular type or set of metaphors (116). A *romantic* metaphoric orientation, for example, is based on notions of "subjectivity, the importance of the individual, imagination, and emotion". *Objectivist* metaphors, conversely, "trade in objectivity, detachment, logic and analysis. The metaphor is of design as a logical procedure" (116-117). In both these cases, the particular metaphoric orientation is manifest in the way the design task and its outcome are conceived of, expressed and conducted by the designer.

Coyne, Snodgrass & Martin (1994) identify several hierarchical levels of metaphor in design (Figure 2.7). The metaphors used by designers in designing (Level 1), already

discussed, are not metaphors of ‘design’ itself. They rather constitute a specific metaphoric orientation (Level 2), which is then seen as the manifestation of a particular metaphor of design and designing (Level 3). Finally, to view designing as itself a practice of “metaphor play” is itself an overarching metaphoric understanding of designing (Level 4).

<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Design as metaphor play, between:</b>
<b>Level 3</b>	<b>metaphors of design, which are manifested in:</b>
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>specific metaphoric orientations, comprising groups of:</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	<b>specific metaphors used in designing.</b>

**Figure 2.7 Levels of metaphor in design<sup>28</sup>**

The specific metaphors used in designing, being expressive of particular metaphoric orientations, are therefore seen to relate directly to higher-order metaphors of ‘design’ itself.

In a later paper, Coyne & Snodgrass (1995) discuss metaphorical understandings of design as “models”. These ‘models of design’ effectively determine “problem regimes” and the search for design solutions. (31) Difficulties encountered in communication and understanding across domains of design discourse and practice, as discussed in the previous section, are thus the consequence of the adoption of differing metaphorical “models” of design and associated problem regimes (32). Addressing difficulties in communication and understanding across domains of design discourse and practice therefore becomes a matter of analyzing the use of *metaphors of design*.

Particular metaphors become entrenched within a discipline, or domain of discourse [with the consequence that] [i]t is very difficult to understand advocates operating with a different set of metaphors than our own. (32)

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<sup>28</sup> After Coyne, Snodgrass & Martin (1994).

The problem-setting inherent in each metaphoric orientation means that the advocate of one metaphoric orientation will have a different perception of a design problem to the advocate of an alternative metaphoric orientation.

[P]roblems recognized within a particular metaphor are created through use of the metaphor.  
(33)

Communicative difficulties of the type under discussion are thus reinforced by advocacy of competing metaphor-based problem regimes. The key to resolving these communicative difficulties thus resides in addressing the use of metaphors of design among collaborating stakeholders. Specifically, Coyne & Snodgrass (1995) advocate the particular metaphoric orientation which embodies a metaphoric understanding of designing as metaphor play, discussed above (Level 4 in Figure 2.7). In this way, differing metaphors of design are seen as complementary rather than competitive.

In conclusion, this section presents sources discussing the use of metaphor in designing. Metaphor use in designing is expressed in its highest form in the notion of 'metaphor play'. Metaphor play accords with the notion developed in the previous section: that successful inter-stakeholder communication in design requires a process of negotiation between competing conceptualizing frameworks.

#### A case of problematic design collaboration

Differences in perspective concerning design, between the various actors in the collaborative design scenario, were specifically evident in the Channel Four television programme Designs on Your ... Loo (Designs on Your ... 1998b). The conflict between designers and marketing manager, which characterized the collaboration, was presented not only in terms of contrasting goals and values, but in terms of conceptions of design itself. Thus, one of the designers observes

There seems to be a confusion between what [the marketing manager] calls 'design', and what we [the designers] call 'design'.  
(10'50)

This confusion is seen to persist, as the production manager later asks the designers

Where do you find the difference between 'gimmicky', and 'design'?  
(31'00)

Thus, while the conflict apparent in this case is profoundly related to differing perspectives on the nature of a successful outcome from the collaboration, a key aspect of this lies in conflicting conceptions of 'design' itself.

#### Conclusion: from consensus to accommodation

A view of design as a practice of "metaphor play" has been discussed (Coyne, Snodgrass & Martin 1994; Coyne & Snodgrass 1995). A major implication of this view is that it "points to design as a diverse and richly collaborative activity." As applied to the issue of inter-agent communication, this *pluralist* metaphor of design entails a communication process characterized by interpretation and dialogue. Design method then becomes "a dialogue through which appropriate metaphors emerge." (Coyne, Snodgrass & Martin 1994:122) Unquestioned and unstinting advocacy of the problem regime of, for example, the 'rationalistic' metaphor of design, by one participant within a collaborative design scenario, may contrast with an equally unquestioned and unstinting advocacy of the problem regime of the 'romantic' metaphor of design by another participant in that same scenario. These disparate problem regimes are, in this situation, likely to generate competing demands of the collaboration and, as already indicated above, difficulties in mutual communication and understanding. The situation requires, not an attempt to universalize the metaphor-based problem regimes held by those within the scenario, but adoption of the pluralistic, post-rationalistic metaphor of designing as metaphor play. 'Rationalistic' and 'romantic' metaphors of design now become simply two possible orientations which may be adopted within an activity of metaphor play.

Coyne & Snodgrass (1995) relate this analysis of the use of metaphor in designing to a wider debate. They identify the origin of this pluralistic view of design as metaphor

play in the “incredulity towards metanarratives” contained in the postmodernist stance of Lyotard (46). A consequence of this position, as they discuss it, is an advocacy of a plurality of legitimate perspective and resulting discourse within the design collaboration scenario.

Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin (1998) apply this pluralistic principle beyond the design studio and the task-based design collaboration. They address the “discourse which embodies the different ways that practitioners and the public alike think about design.” (1) Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin (1998) can thus be seen as widening the perceived boundaries of the pluralistic design discourse, to include “all those stakeholders who have an interest in how design is understood and practiced in contemporary culture.” (1) Within this context, they uphold the commitment to pluralism over universality:

The challenge that faces us today is not to search again for a universal language that will unite all stakeholders but instead to consider how we might navigate among the different ways of reflecting on design so that we can bring them into relation with each other as we seek [...] “systemic integration.” Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin (1998:1)

There is a clear provenance for this position on the possibility of a shared language, in philosophy. Liddament (1996) makes the connection between the *ad hoc* development of a shared design language, and the account of language use and the development of communicative systems found in Wittgenstein (1953, 1968).

Wittgenstein rejects the view that language is a form of calculus, with a propositional form and content available to all language speakers equally. The use of natural language, the language of everyday communication, is instead comparable to a game, in which meaning is determined not by reference to dictionary definitions, but by the characteristics and norms of usage. Thus, there is no sense of single or absolute meaning in this view of language. For Wittgenstein here, meaning is negotiated in the public arena of language use. Language is, therefore, the product of the verbal interactions of the community of its users. In this sense language is

inherently shared, otherwise it ceases to be public and meaningful, and becomes simply a private construction incommunicable to others. Insofar as the verbal interactions of a community of language users persists, so the development of meanings within that language continues to evolve. To attempt to impose a definitional calculus on natural language is to struggle in vain against its inherent nature. There is, therefore, a philosophical precedent for the account of the notion of a shared language given by Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin (1998) above.

This discussion of a "systemic integration" of differing perspectives, found in Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin (1998), is paralleled by Checkland & Holwell's (1998) discussion of accommodation in human activity systems. Checkland & Holwell argue that, in human activity systems, a consensus, in which conflicting participant interests are seen to be fully resolved, is only occasionally achieved. Rather, reaching an "accommodation" between contrasting perspectives on specific designated "problem situations" is more often a more feasible alternative. (13-14)

Krippendorff (1994) reiterates this point in relation to the community of design stakeholders.

The design community is constituted as a network of diverse stakeholders [...] nor need they share the same knowledge, interests or values. Their network is held together as long as processes of design and talk of designs, of designers, and of designing continue. Communication, not commonality, keeps the design discourse "alive."  
(142-3)

This directly contradicts the earlier quote, taken from Dormer (1990), that such a sharing of values and interests *is* required between design stakeholders. The progression from the Dormer's position to that of Krippendorff here represents a shift in adherence, from a notion of consensus to one of accommodation.

Section 2.1.6 discussed some of the consequences of the fact that 'design' is an ambiguous term and concept. The appropriate response to this situation, in the light of the immediately foregoing discussion, is not to seek to define design. As Thackara (1997) writes, "[t]he search for a universal definition of design is probably a waste of time." (32) It is "a waste of time" for the reasons proposed above in discussion of Wittgenstein's account of natural language use.

### 2.2.3 *Conclusion*

The widened, democratized mode of design engagement discussed by Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin (1998), has been investigated empirically in studies focusing on the communication which takes place between collaborating design stakeholders. This communication has been consistently found to be problematic, an outcome which is attributed to the existence and application of differing conceptualizing frameworks around design. These conceptualizing frameworks have been shown to relate to conceptions of design itself.

A central element of the theme of a democratized engagement with design, is a recurring concern with what 'design' is considered to be, and how it is used as a term. This issue relates to the notion of the definition of design. Section 2.1.6 shows that various responses to the challenge to define the scope of 'design' have been made, their variety demonstrating that there is no real consensus on this issue, as it is discussed in the literature. Thus, as design opens up as a field of inclusive practice and discourse, a concern is evident with the concept 'design' itself. The general conclusion drawn is that the notion of a universal concept of design is now seen to be invalid. Rather, what is sought is a navigation and accommodation between the multiple meanings and perspectives which exist around design.

## **2.3 Summary**

Section 2.1 fulfils Aim 1 of the project, by establishing the contemporary UK context for the social study of design. The contemporary profile of design in the UK is described. Design is prominent in contemporary political and economic discussion. This politicizing of design has a corollary in evidence of a wider cultural interest in design. This composite profile for design is, however, predicated on continuing uncertainty over what design actually is. Design remains an inherently ambiguous concept.

Section 2.2 combines these several strands of design's contemporary profile, in terms of a keynote theme of the democratization of design. In this section, the contemporary profile of design in the UK, established in Section 2.1, is interpreted in terms of a theme of a widened, democratized mode of design engagement. The central issue within this theme is found to be conceptions of design itself, insofar as the discourse of design is now recognized as a field of interplay between multiple conceptions of design.

The next chapter recapitulates the key issues to emerge from Chapters 1 and 2, and moves towards the formulation of an empirical interview study, investigating conceptualizations of design within the community of design stakeholders.

## **Chapter 3 : Key Issues**

### **3.0 *Introduction***

This chapter presents a brief restatement of key points raised and developed in Chapters 1 and 2. The opportunity presented for further investigation in the current project is then stated. This leads directly to the formulation of an empirical interview study, described in subsequent chapters.

### **3.1 *Restatement of key points***

The argument constituted by the preceding chapters of the thesis may be restated in five key points.

#### **3.1.1 *The contemporary profile of design***

A contemporary UK context for the project is defined, originating in a set of key trends in design, emergent in the mid-1990s. The project context is characterized by a significant profile for design, discussed in three areas:

- *Political*: indicated by the repositioning and increased influence of the 'new' Design Council, and the incorporation of design into government policy and rhetoric.
- *Economic*: indicated by an emphasis on design as a strategic resource, and thus as a source of competitive advantage at both the macroeconomic level of the national economy, and the microeconomic level of the individual enterprise.

- *Cultural*: indicated by a trend towards television programmes seeking to make design as a topic accessible to a mass audience, and by explicit use of 'design' as a culturally recognized concept in print advertising.

### *3.1.2 The democratization of design*

The contemporary profile of design is interpreted in terms of the theme: 'the democratization of design'. A democratization of design is evident in an emergent mode of widened, inclusive design engagement among the community of design stakeholders. The stakeholder concept is shown to derive from economics, but is applied here in the form of the notion of a design stakeholder, used to denote anyone with a direct interest in design as a socially contextualized activity. This in effect includes all members of society.

### *3.1.3 Design discourse and design practice*

The democratization of design is evident in terms of both the practice and the discourse of design. Practice and discourse are shown to be symbiotically linked in this way, insofar as more inclusive design practice necessitates an accompanying inclusive design discourse. Thus, while this project constitutes an investigation into the discourse of design, it thereby relates directly to the practice of design.

### *3.1.4 Ambiguity of 'design'*

Within the democratization of design, the concept 'design' itself is found to be ambiguous, a situation summarized in the observation that 'design means different things to different people'. This ambiguity over what is denoted by the term 'design' is, moreover, found to be the dominant underlying issue in the general contemporary design discourse.

### **3.1.5 Accommodation of multiple perspectives**

The ambiguity of ‘design’ is manifest in problematic communication between collaborating design stakeholders. Problematic communication is found to result from a failure to reconcile differing conceptualizing frameworks held by participants around ‘design’. Successful communication is in this case based on an empathic engagement with the perspectives of other collaborating stakeholders. This is manifest, not in the reaching of a *consensus*, expressed in the form of a shared language, but in an *accommodation* of perspectives, attained through a successful *navigation* between differing views. In this way, difference is preserved and integrated rather than eradicated in pursuit of a single universal perspective. The underlying issue in design stakeholder communication is thus considered to be that of the accommodation of notions of differing conceptions of design itself.

## **3.2 The opportunity presented**

It is argued that the current UK context is ripe for the social study of design.<sup>29</sup> Examination of the theme of the democratization of design has further shown that such a social study of design may usefully focus on the investigation of conceptualizations of design itself. An investigation is therefore conceived, into conceptualizations of design across the range of design stakeholders included in the democratized discourse of design. This empirical study may be seen as an attempt at a navigation between differing perspectives, manifest in conceptualizations of design, of the kind advocated in the preceding discussion. This navigational exercise has two phases: (i) a preliminary identification of the conceptualizations around design articulated by study participants; followed by (ii) the presentation, exploration and discussion of identified conceptualizations.

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<sup>29</sup> Section 2.1, *passim*.

The democratization of the discourse of design is characterized by a recognition of, and commitment to, multiple perspectives and perceptions around design as it is discussed and thought about. (Margolin and Buchanan 1995) A methodological consequence of this is the necessary inclusion of all voices within the design stakeholder community. An empirical study is therefore proposed, investigating conceptions of design held among a sample of the wider design stakeholder community. This study extends the range of participation in a previous empirical study of design metaphors (Coyne, Snodgrass & Martin 1994), reflecting the inclusive sampling strategies used in previous empirical studies of design *attitudes* (Farr 1955; Bracewell 1987; JIDPO 1989; Design Council unpublished). In this regard, it applies the inclusivity in participant selection exhibited by McKeone & O'Brien (1996). In particular, the user is included as a participant design stakeholder group. Increasing involvement of the user in design activity is identified as a key feature of the democratization of design.<sup>30</sup> This user involvement relates to both the practice and the discourse of design. Any study addressing the community of design stakeholders as a whole should therefore include the user. The categorization of the 'user' is understood to include the 'consumer' also in this context.<sup>31</sup>

### **3.3 Summary**

This chapter restates the key issues raised in the opening two chapters, and indicates the opportunity presented for further investigation in the current project. The empirical interview study formulated in response to this opportunity is described from Chapter 4 onwards.

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<sup>30</sup> Section 2.2.1.

<sup>31</sup> See Section 4.5.4 for a definition of design stakeholder groups used in this study.

## **Chapter 4 : Empirical Method**

### ***4.0 Introduction: approaching the interview study***

Probably the most practical way of understanding what design means is to acknowledge what people know it to be, including the context in which the word is used.

Morrison & Twyford (1994:1)

The multiplicity of perspective identified within the theme of the democratization of design, introduced and discussed in previous chapters, is here applied to the formulation of an empirical interview study. The focus of this study is on the various perspectives on design evident among the community of design stakeholders. A methodological precept in McKeone & O'Brien's (1996) investigation of attitudes to poetry, is that "poetry was taken to be whatever people considered it to be" (8).<sup>32</sup> This precept is applied here to the investigation of design, such that design is taken to be whatever participants in the empirical study consider it to be. The epistemological basis and methodological implications of this precept are examined in this chapter, accompanied by a detailed description of specific aspects of method.

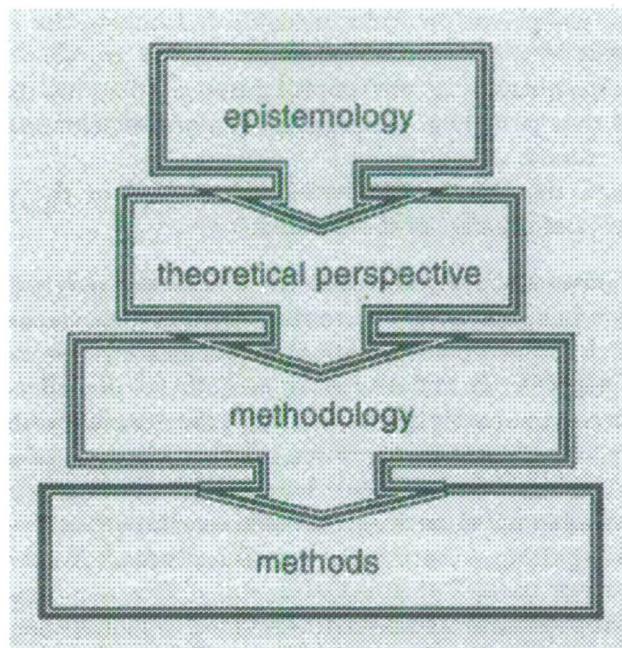
### ***4.1 The four elements of the research process***

Any social research study makes inevitable reference to research traditions in the area. The theoretical assumptions made by a study are manifest in its methodology. The credibility and status of research findings are, moreover, determined by a consistency between theoretical assumptions made and methods used (Crotty 1998:40-41). The researcher should therefore articulate a stance in relation to issues of acquisition of knowledge and the ascription of meaning. Such a move constitutes a statement of the theoretical bases upon which a research enquiry is built, and as such contributes to establishing the overall credibility of the enquiry.

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<sup>32</sup> Section 4.5.3.

Crotty (1998) identifies four elements in the social research process (Figure 4.1).



**Figure 4.1 The four elements of the research process<sup>33</sup>**

A description of these elements in the case of a specific research enquiry should address the questions likely to be posed of it by its audience. In doing so, the researcher offers a justification of a specific nexus of theoretical assumptions and methodological selections.

## **4.2 Epistemology**

Epistemology refers to "how we know what we know." (Crotty 1998:8) The epistemological position of an enquiry therefore underpins a particular approach taken to the acquisition of knowledge. Epistemologies differ according to how they regard the location of notions of meaning and truth, within the relation that exists between a human subject and the world.

This study maintains a *constructionist* epistemology, such that the meaning human agents make of their world is held to be contingent on human practice and social context. Meaning is thus constructed by us in relation to the intentional relation between ourselves and phenomena in the world. This is to deny an *objectivist* epistemology, which maintains that phenomena have their own inherent meaning, which simply awaits discovery by human enquiry. Equally, constructionism denies the view of a *subjectivist* epistemology, that meaning is imposed by the subject independent of the world. Constructionist epistemology is thus *relativist*, in that personal ascriptions of meaning to a phenomenon are contingent on both the perceptual constraints of a culture, and also of an individual's position within that culture. Constructionism is not as relativist as subjectivism, however, in that there are constraints on legitimate ascriptions of meaning which are external to the individual. Constructionism can thus be thought to occupy the middle ground between objectivist and subjectivism as an epistemology. (Crotty 1998)

### **4.3 Theoretical perspective**

The stance taken on the nature of knowledge, in the form of an epistemology, clearly impacts on the view of the human world taken by the researcher. More specifically, it impacts on how the researcher may go about acquiring knowledge. Such a view of the human world is contained in a 'theoretical perspective', which articulates the assumptions made in an enquiry's pursuit of knowledge. (Crotty 1998:7)

#### *4.3.1 Positivism and interpretivism*

An objectivist epistemology entails a *positivist* theoretical perspective, according to which knowledge acquisition and research becomes a process of the discovery of absolute truth as it resides in the world. Positivism makes use of the intellectual models of knowledge acquisition of the physical sciences, such that revealed

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<sup>33</sup> Crotty (1998:4)

knowledge is considered objective and scientifically provable. Positivist research therefore focuses on investigated phenomena as entities which are inherently meaningful independent of human perception. (Crotty 1998; Kolakowski 1972)

The present study, in contrast, adopts a relativistic, constructionist view of meaning. As such, it takes a theoretical stance committed to "understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live in it." (Schwandt 1994:118) This stance is absolutely opposed to a positivist approach to research. A non-positivist rejects the pursuit of objective knowledge and truth as if independent of human sense-making. Instead, it is maintained that the meanings ascribed to phenomena are inescapably relative and bound to a particular perspective. Adoption of a non-positivist theoretical perspective embodies a commitment to "the pluralistic and plastic character of reality". (Schwandt 1994:125) The non-positivist theoretical perspective taken here may be further described as *interpretivist*, in that it is concerned with "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world." (Crotty 1998:67)

#### **4.3.2 Interpretivism: symbolic interactionism and phenomenology**

The interpretivism of this study relates to both symbolic interactionist interpretivism and phenomenology.

##### **Symbolic interactionism**

A symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective emphasizes the culturally-bound and socially-negotiated nature of the ascription and development of meaning. One of the basic principles of symbolic interactionism is an assumption that "meanings are modified through an interpretative process which involves self-reflective individuals symbolically interacting with one another." (Denzin 1995:43) Individual ascriptions of meaning are thus socially constrained, and the product of a wider cultural negotiation of legitimacy.

A methodological consequence of adopting a symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective is that "the actor's view of actions, objects, and society has to be studied seriously. The situation must be seen as the actor sees it, the meanings of objects and acts must be determined in terms of the actor's meanings" (Psathas, quoted by Crotty 1998:75). For the researcher, this requires an empathic engagement with the actor's perspective: "The role of the actor in the situation would have to be taken by the observer in order to see the social world from his perspective." Symbolic interactionism is thus characterized as absolutely accepting of the picture of the world provided by our current perceptions, while insisting on the socially and culturally bound nature of those perceptions.

### Phenomenology

Phenomenology, in the form originally expressed by Husserl, offers an alternative interpretivist theoretical position to that of symbolic interactionism. The concern of a symbolic interactionist position is with perceptions of the world as they are mediated through a cultural lens. Husserlian phenomenology, in contrast, seeks to go beyond the current picture, and access an experience unmediated by any cultural lens. As such, Husserlian phenomenology is essentially critical of, and in its analysis actively seeks to remove, cultural influences on individual sense-making of the world. (Moran 2000)

Crotty (1996) distinguishes traditional "mainstream" Husserlian phenomenology from what he characterizes as 'new' phenomenology. This 'new' phenomenology returns to the empathic engagement with the perspective of actors in the world of symbolic interactionism. 'New' phenomenology, of which Crotty is critical, is therefore concerned with just the subjective and everyday experiences which Husserlian phenomenology seeks to go beyond. 'New' phenomenology nevertheless seems to accord with that described by Giorgi (1995), who articulates a philosophical and

methodological basis for the psychological investigation of the meanings that individuals ascribe to aspects of their lived experience in the world.

A middle position between Husserlian and 'new' phenomenology is occupied by Merleau-Ponty (Moran 2000). Merleau-Ponty rejects the possibility of Husserl's insistence on an absolute suspension of all aspects of the cultural lens through which we view the world. Rather, we can only get as far as an embodied "pre-reflective awareness" (419), rather than a full Husserlian "transcendental consciousness" (408). For Merleau-Ponty, while the cultural lens may be suspended, a deeper perceptual embodied lens can not. The pre-reflective awareness which is the deepest we can reach can, moreover, "never be uncovered simply by reflection" (419).

In conclusion, 'new' phenomenology invokes the empathic engagement with the actor's perspective which is central to a symbolic interactionist position. This allows engagement in "an exploration, via personal experiences, of prevailing cultural understandings." (Crotty 1998:83) The criticism of cultural perceptual frameworks, inherent in Husserlian phenomenology, is quite deliberately suspended in 'new' phenomenology.

As indicated previously, the present study seeks to identify and describe the potential multiplicity of ways in which participants in the study make sense of 'design'. As such, it is concerned with the 'what is' of 'new' phenomenology, rather than the 'what might be' of Husserlian phenomenology (Crotty 1996:7). Equally, the study acknowledges the influence of the cultural frame established by the contemporary context in which this study is conducted.<sup>34</sup> As a consequence, the theoretical perspective taken here can be seen as an amalgam of identified elements in

symbolic interactionist and ‘new’ phenomenological theoretical perspectives. This is in keeping with the concern of the current thesis to consider design, not as it *might* be understood, in an abstract sense, nor as it *should* be understood, in a prescriptive sense, but rather as it *is* understood, in a pragmatic sense, by identified stakeholders.

#### 4.3.3 *Bracketing*

Empathic engagement with the perspective of the research participant is identified above as a crucial feature of this study’s theoretical perspective, and is contained in the Husserlian notion of ‘bracketing’ (Moran 2000). The phenomenological researcher therefore seeks to suspend (‘bracket’) his/her own personal constructions of meaning around an investigated phenomenon, in order to access research participants’ constructions of meaning (Crotty 1996).

The principle of bracketing applies throughout the research process, at the stages of study design, data collection and analysis, and discussion. Provision for bracketing in an enquiry is contained in the notion of phenomenological reduction, through which the researcher seeks to experience the phenomenon under scrutiny as a phenomenon, unmediated as far as possible by personal bias. Complete researcher neutrality is, of course, impossible, and unconscious cultural bias of some kind is inescapable. Nevertheless, efforts can be made to minimize this effect.

Hycner (1985) advocates a statement of researcher perspective towards the phenomenon under scrutiny. This step, undertaken prior to data analysis, takes the form of a listing of known relevant presuppositions held by the researcher, accessed through both personal reflection and dialogue with the researcher’s supervisory team.

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<sup>34</sup> Chapter 2.

The present study incorporates one main methodological assumption:

- A commitment is to be maintained to investigate 'design' in the broadest sense, as whatever it is taken to be. All notions of legitimate or appropriate use of the term are suspended.

The researcher's attempt to fulfill this precept is discussed later in Chapter 6.<sup>35</sup>

## **4.4 Methodology**

For Crotty (1998), methodology is the first of the four aspects of a research enquiry to be formulated. The formulation of a methodology constitutes a strategic response to the research question or interest being investigated. Crotty (1998) goes further in suggesting that "every piece of research is unique and calls for a unique methodology." (13-14) The methodology used in the present study is articulated below, in terms of points of similarity and difference with several different conventional methodological approaches.

The research interest of the present study is to identify and describe the potential multiplicity of ways in which participants make sense of 'design'. The outcome of this enquiry constitutes a map of the various ways in which design is understood and conceived of within the participant sample. The methodological strategy used to achieve this outcome is consistent with the epistemology and theoretical perspective already given.

### *4.4.1 Grounded theory*

For Crotty (1998:78), grounded theory derives from the symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective. Grounded theory is defined simply as "the discovery of theory from data" (Glaser & Strauss 1967:1). As such, it incorporates a research perspective which is explicitly and exclusively 'grounded' in the perspectives of participants as

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<sup>35</sup> Section 6.2.

they appear in collected data. Grounded theory then seeks to provide a prescriptive explanation of phenomena, in terms of theory derived from such a grounded consideration of the data. In the present case, it is the 'groundedness' of grounded theory that is embraced, rather than the subsequent drive for prescriptive theoretical explanation. The present study seeks only to describe, rather than explain, identified perceptions.

#### *4.4.2 Phenomenography*

Phenomenography is a research method which was largely developed, and has been primarily applied, in education and learning research contexts. (Marton 1986)

Phenomenographic method has, nevertheless, been additionally applied in non-education research. (Theman 1983; Wenestam 1984)

Phenomenography is a research method for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them. Marton (1986:31)

This definition expresses two central ideas in phenomenography: (i) the object of research is human experience; (ii) phenomenography addresses and describes the qualitatively different ways in which specific phenomena in the world are experienced.<sup>36</sup> Phenomenography is thus consistent with the general purpose of the present enquiry, in surveying the ways in which 'design' as a phenomenon is conceived of within the participant sample. Phenomenography similarly focuses on the intentional relation between experiencing subject and investigated phenomena, thus walking the same constructionist line between objectivist and subjectivist epistemologies identified above.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Phenomenography should not be confused with phenomenology which, as discussed above (Section 4.3), relates to theoretical perspective rather than methodology.

Phenomenography does, however, derive from a phenomenological theoretical perspective.

<sup>37</sup> Section 4.3.

Phenomenography rejects the ascription of specific perspectives to individuals as isolated agents, instead focusing on the composite cultural picture embodied in a symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective. As such, 'conceptions' of phenomena are generated from multiple points within a dataset, rather than being tied to specific utterances of participants. (Marton 1986) This study is similarly primarily concerned with a cultural rather than individual picture.

#### *4.4.3 Discourse analysis*

Discourse analysis considers the mechanisms by which social texts, including conversations, construct and represent social worlds (Potter & Wetherell 1987). As such, discourse analysis is concerned to contextualize the social text within surrounding social and political concerns, and to map the relations between elements of the text and these exogenous concerns. Discourse analysis has a research interest in going beyond the surface signification of a text, to examine deeper aspects of cultural signification.

In the present case, this would entail an exploration of the linguistic mechanisms by which conceptions of design are represented and constructed by participants, and consciously relating these to wider cultural issues. The present study is, however, primarily concerned with mapping the conceptions of design within the designated social texts of research interviews. The findings of the study are then contextualized in relation to wider issues (Part IV), but this is not the internal logic of the data analysis itself.

Discourse analysis, additionally, regards research interviews in a "novel manner":

Interviews are conceptualized as an arena for identifying and exploring participants interpretative practices rather than an instrument for accessing a veridical account of something that happened elsewhere, or a set of attitudes and beliefs  
Potter (1996:134-5)

The discourse analyst is therefore sceptical of accessing the “attitudes and beliefs” of interview informants, which fact makes the approach unsuitable in the present case.

#### *4.4.4 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)*

The theoretical perspective of the present study is characterized as an amalgam of identified elements in symbolic interactionist and ‘new’ phenomenological theoretical perspectives.<sup>38</sup> This composite theoretical perspective is realized methodologically in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers & Osborn 1997).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is based on a commitment to actors’ socially-bound sense-making of their world. IPA, further, assumes a direct link between speech report and cognition, such that in investigating, for example, interview data the researcher is considered able to access meanings held by participants in relation to the discussed phenomena. In this regard, IPA is self-consciously distinct from discourse analysis, which treats, for example, interview texts culturally, and is sceptical of a consideration of signified cognitions. This interest in underlying cognitions is shared by IPA and the present enquiry.

#### *4.4.5 Summary*

The table below indicates significant points of similarity and difference between the methodology used in this study and the several conventional methodological approaches just discussed.

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<sup>38</sup> Section 4.3.2.

Methodology	Similarities	Differences
Grounded Theory	'Groundedness' in collected data	No attempt made at subsequent theorizing or explanation
Phenomenography	Focus on phenomena as they are experienced by participants	Method of data analysis
	Interest in group rather than individual perspective	
Discourse analysis		Focus on the data in itself, rather than as reflective of wider cultural significations or attitudes and beliefs
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	Focus on phenomena as they are experienced by participants	
	Assumed correlation between speech report and cognition	

**Figure 4.2 Summary of methodology**

## 4.5 *Method: participant selection*

### 4.5.1 Generalizability and non-positivist research

Within a positivist theoretical research perspective, a key determinant in participant selection is the anticipated generalizability of research findings, expressed in the notion of external validity. External validity derives from the selection and use of a study sample, as a representative model of the wider target population addressed by the study (Henry 1990). Evaluation of the wider significance of the findings of non-positivist studies in terms of the requirements of external validity and representative sampling is, however, 'inappropriate' (Strauss & Corbin 1990:189). This inappropriateness derives from "the incompatibility between classical conceptions of external validity and fundamental aspects of the qualitative [sic] approach" (Ward Schofield 1989:202). The quantification inherent in external validity is abandoned:

The purpose of qualitative [sic] research is to form a map of the relevant characteristics of the population rather than a mirror of the numbers of people with those characteristics.  
NCSR (n.d.)

Crotty (1998:41) reminds us that this is an issue of theoretical perspective (positivist or non-positivist) rather than method (quantitative and/or qualitative). Nevertheless, the principle applies here.

Addressing the wider applicability of findings generated by non-positivist research is given by Murphy et al (1998) as one aspect of assessing the 'relevance' of a study. The reader is referred to a discussion of this aspect of the present study below.

#### 4.5.2 *Sampling strategy*

The rejection in non-positivist research of a concern with statistical representativeness of findings has clear implications for participant selection. Specifically, the notion of probability sampling, manifest in a statistically representative sample of a defined target population, is replaced by that of purposive or purposeful sampling. (Robson 1993; Patton 1990)

in order to provide robust explanations from which wider inferences can be drawn and to generate conceptual frameworks applicable to the broader population, it is essential that qualitative samples are selected purposively to encompass the range and diversity present in the target population.  
NCSR (n.d.)

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term *purposeful* sampling.  
Patton (1990:169)

This stage of a phenomenographic study involves

selecting a theoretical sample of subjects to cover the group according to a predetermined plan in order to maximise the variation in critical respects.  
Marton & Booth (1997:134)

This is not the 'theoretical sampling' of a grounded theory approach, in which the study sample is constructed as an enquiry progresses, specific sampling decisions being informed by the requirements of an emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967). In a grounded theory approach, sampling decisions in advance of data collection are restricted to the selection of an appropriate starting point for data collection.

Purposive sampling, in contrast, determines the parameters of a whole study sample in advance.

The sampling strategy given by Marton & Booth (1997) is similar to Robson's (1993) description of "dimensional" sampling, in which:

The various dimensions thought to be of importance [...] are incorporated into the sampling procedure in such a way that at least one representative of every possible combination of these factors or dimensions is included.  
Robson (1993:141)

Patton (1990:172) describes a "maximum variation sampling" strategy, which "aims at capturing and describing the central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant [...] variation." This incorporates a respect for heterogeneity in participant selection, manifest in "purposefully picking a wide range of variation on dimensions of interest" (182).

Reed, Procter & Murray (1996), after Miles & Huberman (1994), describe the implementation of a dimensional sampling strategy through the construction of a sample matrix. "Matrix sampling" requires the development of appropriate selection criteria, in line with the requirements of the study aims, followed by the generation of a sample matrix, showing required individual participant profiles, according to which actual participants can be selected. As Reed, Procter & Murray (1996) state, matrix sampling introduces a systematic approach to purposive sample selection. The present study sample is generated using this matrix technique.

#### *4.5.3 Design stakeholder groups*

The community of design stakeholders is represented variously in the participant selection of identified previous relevant studies (Farr 1955; Bracewell 1987; JIDPO 1989; Design Council unpublished). There is no absolute consistency in the participant groups specified by these studies. While the Design Council survey

(Design Council unpublished) appears most comprehensive in its coverage, it omits the designer. In addition, all the studies cited here omit the user.

Guidance in identifying suitable participant groups for the present study is provided in two sources: (i) the notion of a 'design constituency', derived from McKeone & O'Brien (1996); and (ii) Krippendorff's (1994) characterization of 'the design community'.

McKeone & O'Brien (1996), in investigating attitudes to poetry, characterize their sample as a 'poetry constituency', consisting of all those with a specialist interest in poetry, augmented by the inclusion of 'the public' as an additional group.<sup>39</sup> This can be translated into the notion of a 'design constituency', comprised of similarly defined groups with a specialist interest in design, but with the inclusion of 'the public' as a legitimate member group within the design constituency itself, rather than as an add-on. This inclusion of the design user in his/her own right is a key feature of the present study.<sup>40</sup> In this case, the 'design constituency' comprises

- Disseminators of design;
- Design organizations;
- Design pedagogy;
- Designers;
- The public.

Krippendorff (1994:142) describes 'the design community' as "a network of diverse stakeholders", among which he identifies five key groups:

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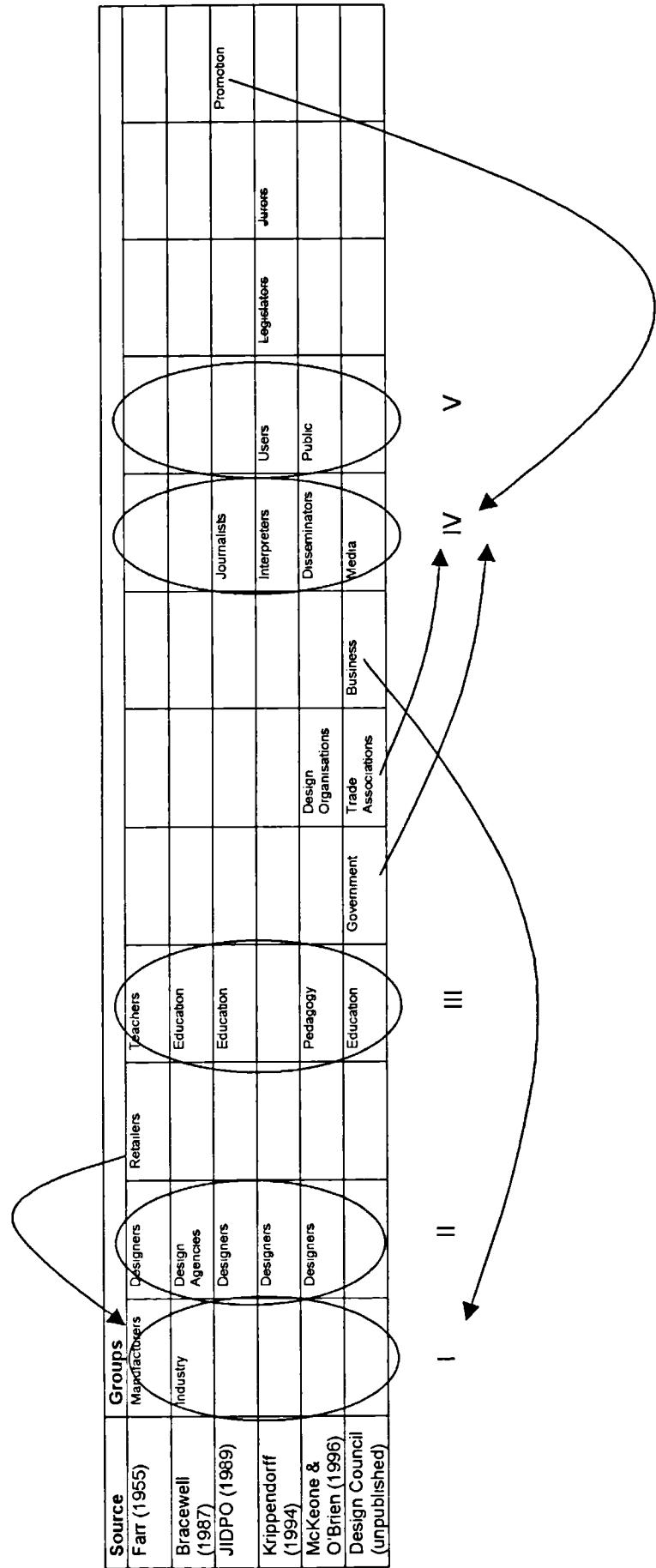
<sup>39</sup> While McKeone & O'Brien (1996) is unrelated to the field of design, its approach to participant selection may be usefully translated to the present study.

<sup>40</sup> Section 3.2.

- *Designers/core practitioners*, who invent ideas for intervening in the human interfaces with artifacts;
- *Interpreters*, who talk or write about design and offer journalistic or scholarly accounts of design accomplishments, people, ideas, histories and trends;
- *Jurors*, who decide which products to produce, exhibit, advertise or talk of;
- *Legislators*, who seek to institute design standards - whether to uphold certain qualities, certify members or adjudicate ethical conduct;
- *Knowledgeable users*, not just consumers or end-users, but all those "lay" persons who claim a stake in the manifestations of design.

Krippendorff's taxonomy of the design community, with its assignation of specialist definitions to each of the identified design stakeholder groups, complements the notion of the design constituency, developed from McKeone & O'Brien (1996) above. An interesting addition is the characterization of the 'jurors', with whom lies the responsibility for production and promotion of designed products. A crucial omission is however apparent in the neglect of explicit mention of design educators in Krippendorff's taxonomy.

The design stakeholder groups identified in these cited sources are shown in Figure 4.3.



- Non-specific groups (e.g., Farr (1955) cites 'other' without offering further definition) are not included
- Strikeout font denotes groups not included in the present study

**Figure 4.3 Design stakeholder groups in cited sources**

Generic group clusters are circled. Most of the 'outlier' groups falling outside the circled cluster groupings in Figure 4.3 can be integrated into these clusters, as shown. Figure 4.4 condenses Figure 4.3 into a simple table.

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Stakeholder groups included</b>
I	Manufacturers; Industry; Retailers; Business
II	Designers
III	Teachers; Education; Pedagogy
IV	Journalists; Interpreters; Disseminators; Media; Promotion; Design Organisations; Trade Associations; Government
V	Users; Public

**Figure 4.4 Design stakeholder group clusters<sup>41</sup>**

Two of the groups cited in Figure 4.3 are excluded from the group clustering in Figure 4.4.<sup>42</sup> These two groups, 'jurors' and 'legislators', both cited in Krippendorff (1994), are too ambiguously defined there to be useful here. The generic clusters identified in Figure 4.4 are therefore used as the basis for the formulation and definition of informant groups to be used in the present study.

#### **4.5.4 Stakeholder groups used in this study**

The stakeholder groups used in the current study represent one possible structuring of the community of design stakeholders. Five informant groups are included in the current study, deriving from a collation of design stakeholder groups cited in other sources (see Section 4.5.3).

Group I	Business
Group II	Designer
Group III	Education
Group IV	Promotion
Group V	User

**Figure 4.5 Design stakeholder groups used in this study<sup>43</sup>**

<sup>41</sup> Repeated groups are included only once.

<sup>42</sup> Indicated by strikeout font in Figure 4.2.

<sup>43</sup> Group numbering shown here correlates with cluster numbering in Figure 4.3.

### Business (Group I)

Includes (i) manufacturers and managers with responsibility for design in a non-design business, who are not themselves active as designers, and (ii) retailers.

### Designer (Group II)

Professional design practitioners, across different working environments and specialisms. Includes in-house and staff designers employed by an organization, those employed by design consultancies and agencies, and independent freelance designers.

### Education (Group III)

Those involved full-time in design education at Further and Higher Educational levels.

### Promotion (Group IV)

Those who support, represent and promote design in various ways. Includes (i) governmental and affiliate agencies with a responsibility for design promotion, (ii) professional design bodies, (iii) design media.

### User (Group V)

Those with no professional involvement in design. Defined by non-eligibility for any of the other defined design stakeholder groups.

#### *4.5.5 Provisional sample profile*

A provisional sample profile was generated prior to the commencement of data collection, to which suitable informants could be matched. According to a theoretical sampling strategy, relevant sampling dimensions were identified for each informant

group from its group definition. These dimensions were then used to generate the informant subgroups indicated in Figure 4.6.

Lucas (1998) identifies a typical range of 15 to 20 interview participants in phenomenographic studies. More generally, NCSR (n.d.) states that: "Qualitative samples for studies using in-depth interviews generally range in size from 20 to 50 participants".<sup>44</sup> A provisional target sample of around 30 interview participants was therefore considered appropriate for this study. This figure also balances two crucial competing factors: (i) adequate coverage of the five participant groups identified, and (ii) allowance for a substantial depth of data analysis (see Section 4.7). The provisional sample actually included 36 participants (Figure 4.6).<sup>45</sup>

<b>Group</b>	<b>Subgroup</b>
Business (6)	Business-Production (4)
	Business-Retail (2)
Designer (10)	Designer-Freelance (3)
	Designer-Agency (4)
	Designer-Staff (3)
Education (6)	Education-Further (3)
	Education-Higher (3)
Promotion (8)	Promotion-Design (3)
	Promotion-General (3)
	Promotion-Media (2)
User (6)	<sup>46</sup>

**Figure 4.6 Provisional sample profile<sup>47</sup>**

The distribution of participant numbers across the five groups is a consequence of the purposive sampling strategy used in this study. Rather than being an index of

<sup>44</sup> The difference in numbers here may be attributed to the highly detailed level of analysis typically undertaken in phenomenographic studies.

<sup>45</sup> The actual sample was somewhat smaller (see Section 4.5.6).

<sup>46</sup> The User group was sampled according to basic dimensions of participant age and gender. Gunter & Furnham (1992) describe ways in which the consumer base may be divided up for the purposes of consumer research, according to varying degrees of sophistication. The simplest of these use basic demographic data to generate sampling dimensions. A requirement for simplicity in the present case, necessitated by the small User group sample, dictates the use of age and gender as appropriate sampling dimensions here.

<sup>47</sup> Numbers shown in brackets indicate the number of participants in each group.

relative group importance, the number of participants per group indicates the relative complexity of the group profile.

In addition to the sampling dimensions reflected in group profiles in Figure 4.6, a further significant dimension for this study was that of design area. Design as a professional field is commonly seen as comprising of a variety of disciplinary areas. Cooper & Press (1995) discuss several taxonomies of design disciplines found in other sources. The simplest of these identifies three design areas: Product design (objects); Environmental design (places); and Information design (communications) (Gorb 1988; Potter 1989). A consideration of design area in these terms is applicable to the Business, Designer and Education groups as they appear in Figure 4.6, as these groups can be expected to have a domain specific professional design interest. The Promotion group informants are concerned with design in general, and thus are not usefully categorized by specific design area. Similarly, users, having no professional involvement in design, are not linked to particular design areas. Design area was therefore considered a relevant additional consideration in selection for the Business, Designer and Education groups in the study. The provisional sample was left 'open' in regard to design area, and filled discretionarily in the course of the recruitment of the actual sample. The main disciplinary affiliation of informants in these groups is indicated in the expanded actual sample profile given in Appendix 2.

#### *4.5.6 Actual sample*

Interview informants fulfilling the individual profiles given in the provisional sample matrix (Figure 4.6) were recruited through a number of routes.

- (i) Contacts of members of staff at the host institution (18/31 = 58%)
- (ii) 'Cold call' of identified appropriate individuals or organizations (8/31 = 26%)

(iii) Snowball sampling ( $5/31 = 16\%$ )<sup>48</sup>

Initial contact, introducing the research project in general terms, and making a formal request for a research interview, was made via either email, letter or telephone. The preferred mode of contact was in the order given, though the medium of approach was often dictated by the contact details made available to the researcher. The text of an example introductory letter sent to a potential informant is reproduced in Appendix 3. Participation was encouraged by stipulating that the outcomes of the interview study would be made available to all participants, and an assurance of informant anonymity in the study.<sup>49</sup> In cases where initial contact was made by telephone, a request for an interview was made then. In cases of written first contact, follow-up contact was then made by telephone to pursue the request for an interview further, in the course of which some further discussion of the project was usual.

Some difficulties were encountered in recruiting suitable participants to fulfill all the informant profiles in the provisional sample matrix, as a result of which the actual informant sample (Figure 4.7) does not fully reflect the provisional sample. There are thus a number of missing unfilled profiles in the actual sample, relative to the provisional sample, in the Business-Retail (1), Promotion-General (1), and User (3) groups. The actual informant sample size was thus 31.

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<sup>48</sup> Snowball sampling occurred when informants identified further potential informants to the researcher (Robson 1993:142). Recommendations of this kind were only pursued where they clearly fitted into the provisional sample profile.

<sup>49</sup> Section 4.6.5.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Subgroup</b>
Business (5)	Business-Production (4)
	Business-Retail (1)
Designer (10)	Designer-Freelance (3)
	Designer-Agency (4)
	Designer-Staff (3)
Education (6)	Education-Further (2)
	Education-Higher (4)
Promotion (7)	Promotion-Design (3)
	Promotion-General (2)
	Promotion-Media (2)
User (3)	-

**Figure 4.7 Actual sample profile<sup>50</sup>**

#### Gender

Informant gender was not considered explicitly as a sampling dimension in this study, as other dimensions were considered to be more significant in addressing the study's aims. The exception to this rule was the Users group, in which gender was employed as a primary sampling dimension (see Figure 4.6). The gender make-up of the actual sample is thus entirely a product of the informant recruitment procedure described above, in which no explicit attention was paid to the gender of potential informants. Stanley (1990:9) discusses possible implications of a male researcher interviewing and evaluating the experience of female informants. 'Masculinist' research culture is also discussed by Morgan (1981). In the present case, however, the research focus on 'design' in the abstract is felt by the (male) researcher to be significantly removed from the direct effects of such gender issues. The total actual sample of 31 informants comprised 20 males (64.5%) and 11 females (35.5%).

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<sup>50</sup> Numbers in brackets indicate the number of informants in each group. An expanded version of this table is given in Appendix 2.

## **4.6 Method: data collection**

### *4.6.1 The unstructured interview*

The method of data collection used in the present study is the individual qualitative interview. Specifically, an 'unstructured', 'informant' or 'non-directive' mode of interviewing is used (Robson 1993:231). Use of this form of interview is directed by a requirement for rich accounts of informant perspective. (Rubin & Rubin 1995:6) The contention is that:

to understand other persons' constructions of reality we would do well to ask them [...] and to ask them in a way that they can tell us in their terms [...] and in a depth which addresses the rich context that is the substance of their meanings  
Jones (1985a:46)

Or more generally:

understanding is achieved by encouraging people to describe their worlds in their own terms.  
Rubin & Rubin (1995:2)

This commitment to the interview informant's perspective defines the relationship between informant and interviewer:

In this relationship, the respondent can be perceived as the expert on the subject and should therefore be allowed maximum opportunity to tell his or her own story.  
Smith (1995:12)

The interviewing technique used in the present study is derived from descriptions of interviewing in phenomenographic enquiry. Marton (1986) advocates the use of "questions that are as open-ended as possible in order to let the subjects choose the dimensions of the question they want to answer" (42), such that "most questions follow from what the subject says" (Marton 1994:unpaginated). In short:

This type of interview should not have too many questions made up in advance, and nor should there be too many details determined in advance.  
Marton (1994:unpaginated)

The mechanisms of this form of interviewing are thus loose, with much resting on the skill of the interviewer.<sup>51</sup> Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe (1991), however, warn against the completely unfocused non-directive interview, in which "the interviewee talks freely without interruption or intervention," producing "poor data which is difficult to interpret" (75). Thus, while use of a rigorous or highly-structured interview schedule is clearly inappropriate here, some form of interviewer direction is required to ensure the exchange remains within the scope of the research question. The administration of the interviews in this study is described in Section 4.6.3.

#### *4.6.2 Pilot interviews*

A short series of five interviews was conducted within the host institution, prior to the main study. These interviews were exploratory in content, and open in format, and were undertaken with academics from five design disciplines: architecture; creative imaging; interior design; surface pattern design; transport design. The primary purpose of this pilot exercise was to familiarize the researcher with the general administration and specific mechanisms of the open 'design' interview, as used in the main study. The content of these interviews was not used subsequently.

#### *4.6.3 Conducting the interviews*

The mechanisms of the open interview method used in this study are necessarily loose.<sup>52</sup> Interview content and direction were determined in the course of the researcher-informant exchange. Nevertheless, specific aspects of the interviews as they were conducted may be discussed.<sup>53</sup>

##### Initiating the exchange

Formulation of an interview schedule was inappropriate, due to the flexibility required of the interviewer to initiate and sustain an informant-led exchange. Nevertheless, a

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<sup>51</sup> Hence the researcher conducted a number of pilot interviews prior to the main data collection (Section 4.6.2).

<sup>52</sup> See Section 4.6.1.

<sup>53</sup> An outline of the interview administration procedure is given in Appendix 4.

departure point for discussion was clearly necessary to initiate the exchange. Such a departure point should not direct discussion, but rather be neutral enough to allow interviewees to determine the direction of the interview, in terms of the aspects of the topic ('design') most significant or meaningful to them. Three alternatives were used:

- asking the informant to introduce his/her professional background;
- asking the informant to discuss their current professional role;
- asking the informant to discuss the role of the organization for which they fulfill their present role.

The most appropriate question was selected for use in each specific interview. The questions are all considered equivalent for the purposes of the study, in that each fulfills equally the following functions:

- put the informant at ease, by giving him/her the dominant role in this first part of the exchange;
- establish immediately the power relationship sought in the interview, i.e. that of an informant-centred exchange;
- establish the content of the interview as the personal experience and perspective of the informant;
- provide the researcher with suitable subsequent avenues for exploration in the body of the interview, based on the informant's own experience and expertise.

#### Sustaining the exchange

Sustained grounded data elicitation was attained by the use of neutral prompts and further questioning.

Verbal prompts were used to encourage further informant contribution on a topic, in the form of, for example, questions seeking clarification, or probing deeper

discussion (Marton 1994). Equivalent non-verbal prompts include bodily gestures such as nods and hand movements, and murmurs of assent or query. The use of silence was also a valuable tool in eliciting further response, notably in cases where the informant was clearly formulating a response prior to replying (Smith 1995:17).

In further questioning, the interviewer strove to maintain a focus on the topic generated within the interview itself, referring to wider issues and themes only as they arose naturally within the exchange. Clearly, this is an intuitive practice, reliant on an interview approach which is at once sympathetic to the discussion underway, and self-analytical enough to judge that questions and interventions are legitimately grounded in the exchange thus far. The introduction of new topics unprompted by previous discussion was avoided. Interviews were instead sustained by a number of questioning tactics:

- asking informants to expand on a given view using prompts (discussed above);
- asking informants to give examples;
- asking informants to return to an area mentioned previously but not explored in depth;
- asking informants to return to an area mentioned previously in the light of subsequent discussion;
- asking informants to relate their own views and experiences to wider related issues;
- use of the deliberately naïve question.

Generally, the ideal of a phenomenological self-interrogation of the informant's articulated position by the informant themselves was aspired to (Crotty 1996:170).

The most direct means in which the interviewer may initiate this is in raising apparent inconsistencies or contradictions within an informant's discussion.

#### Closing the exchange

A final prompt inviting the informant to address any issues not covered in the interview proved to be a valuable device for eliciting data which would not otherwise have been made available. In some cases this kick-started the exchange in further directions, significantly adding to the amount of data collected, while in others it allowed the informant to consolidate or further develop issues already addressed.

#### Interview situation

The majority of the interviews (27/31 = 87%) were conducted in person, 26 of these at the informant's place of work.<sup>54</sup> This was intended to ensure that the informant was comfortable in the interview situation (Smith 1995:16). In several cases, it was not possible to maintain privacy during the interview, one consequence of which was the involvement in the interview of persons additional to the nominal informant. This involvement was not viewed as compromising the interview, however, in that it often acted as a spur to further informant contribution.

The remaining interviews (4/31 = 13%) were conducted by telephone, where the informant expressed that preference. The mechanisms of telephone interviewing are described as being slightly different to those of personal interviewing. (Robson 1993:241) In the present study, little discernible difference was evident between interviews administered in person and those administered by telephone, with the exception that the telephone interviews tended to be of briefer duration.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Interview 30 was conducted in the researcher's office at the host institution.

<sup>55</sup> Interview duration across the study was typically slightly under 45 minutes.

### Interview dynamic

Massarik (1981) identifies several interview types, based on the dynamic between interviewer and interviewee and their respective roles in the interview. The interviews in this study correlate with the description of the 'rapport' interview.

While the interaction is quite well-bounded, some positive interpersonal 'vibrations' are in evidence. A significant measure of mutual trust and exists, and, though the objectives are quite focused and delimited, small-talk, casual banter and interpersonal activity not centred exclusively on interview content prevails.

Massarik (1981:202)

The role of the interviewer in this type of interview is described thus:

In the rapport interview the interviewer emerges as *Human-Being-in-a-Role*, not denying his/her humanity and acknowledging the humanity of the interviewee, while still focusing essentially on subject-matter and on specific replies.

Massarik (1981:205)

This describes the level of subject focus and personal interaction evident in the interviews conducted in this study. Personal interaction was evident in, for example, use of humour by informants and researcher.

Gewirtz & Ozga (1994) discuss effects noted in interviewing informants who have more power than the researcher ('researching up') and less power than the researcher ('researching down') respectively.<sup>56</sup> In this study, a 'researching up' scenario was most common. Informants were generally comfortable with the interview situation, and assured enough to provide a rich source of verbal data. Occasionally, this assurance led to the researcher being either treated as an audience or mildly patronized, as discussed by King (1994). Much depended on the extent to which a rapport was successfully established with the informant. When a rapport was quickly established, the interview was 'easier', in terms of providing rich data on the research topic, than when a rapport was occasionally less forthcoming. Apparently rehearsed or platitudinous responses were, finally, treated as grounds for

further informant elaboration. In a 'researching down' scenario, informants are less comfortable with the interview situation, and lack the assurance exhibited by informants when 'researching up'. Only one interview exhibited effects noted by Gewirtz & Ozga (1994) in 'researching down': Informant 31 exhibited a general inhibition, and lack of expansiveness even after prompting. The significant factor here was felt to be the informant's status as a member of the User group (see below).

### User interviews

[D]esign tends to become invisible and absorbed into the less thinking part of our daily existence.  
Attfield & Kirkham (1989:1)

A potential difficulty was anticipated by the researcher, deriving from a concern that User group informants may be unable to spontaneously articulate perspectives on design to the same extent as informants in other participant groups. Each of the other informant groups has a specific professional interest in design, and informants will therefore be accustomed to discussing and articulating a perspective on that topic. A specific interview method was therefore developed for the users in the study.

Zaltman & Coulter (1995:40) describe a consumer research tool in which participants "are instructed to take photographs and/or collect pictures [...] that indicate what the topic means to them." This task is followed up by a personal interview, in which researcher and participant together explore the selections made, in terms of the designated topic. This method was used with the Users in the present study, though not in the precisely detailed form prescribed by Zaltman & Coulter. The benefit of this method is that it ensures that "participants come to the interview with a particular agenda or story they want to tell" (40). Thus, in the present case, the expressed concern over possible informant reticence on the topic 'design' is overcome by the use of extra informant-selected stimuli.

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<sup>56</sup> Power may be interpreted here as an amalgam of age, hierarchical, professional and

Instructions delivered to participants prior to interview asked them "to collect images that illustrate what 'design' means to you personally".<sup>57</sup> Participants were provided with a single use ('disposable') camera for this purpose. Mention of 'design' in this instruction to participants provides a focus for the subsequent interview which is consistent with the treatment of other groups in the study, individuals in all of which were made aware of the research interest in 'design' prior to interview. Zaltman & Coulter also emphasize the preparedness of participants towards the interview topic as being very important.

User interviews were conducted according to the same principles that guided the other interviews conducted in the study. In this case, however, the device of asking participants to collect images for discussion prior to the interview provided a specific stimulus to the exchange not used with informants in other participant groups.<sup>58</sup>

#### *4.6.4 Audio recording*

All interviews were recorded using a standard compact portable C90 audio cassette recorder and an external compact flat omni-directional microphone. In the case of telephone interviews, a direct recording was made from the telephone handset. Smith (1995) describes the primary advantages of tape recording in terms of (i) providing a fuller record of an interview than would otherwise be available, and (ii) liberating the interviewer from the distraction of manual note taking during the interview. For Smith, these advantages outweigh the potential for intimidation of the informant constituted by the act of recording. In the present case, use of a discreet small external microphone placed between the interviewer and informant, allowing concealment of the main recording equipment, reduced the potential for intimidation.

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educational factors.

<sup>57</sup> The participant task instruction is reproduced in Appendix 5.

<sup>58</sup> Further critical discussion of the specific method used here is given below (Section 4.8.2).

A number of informants made reference to the microphone for illustrative purposes in the course of the interview, suggesting a general ease with this aspect of the interview situation.

In all cases, informant consent was sought prior to recording. Prior to making a request for recording consent, the interviewer endeavoured to establish a comfortable and relaxed rapport with the informant. Informants were also reassured of the anonymity of their contribution to the study. In addition, the researcher promised each informant a copy of the transcript produced for their interview.<sup>59</sup> Recording consent was granted on these terms in all cases, allowing full transcripts to be produced of every interview.<sup>60</sup>

## **4.7 Method: data analysis**

### **4.7.1 Aim of the analysis**

The analytical outcome sought from this study is an overall account of conceptions of design articulated in the data by interview informants. Conceptions of design are therefore in the first instance identified and considered independently of any ascription to particular informants. Ascription of specific perspectives to specific informant groups may, however, also be discussed where significant. Similarly, specific inter-group comparisons may be made, but only where they appear significant from an examination of the data.

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<sup>59</sup> Informants were then invited to comment on the transcript. The outcome of this exercise is discussed in Section 4.8.1.

<sup>60</sup> Equipment failure affected the recording of one interview to such an extent that it was unusable. This interview was therefore substituted in the study with a replacement interview with a 'new' informant.

#### 4.7.2 *Summary of the data analysis procedure*

The data analysis procedure derives in general from Smith (1995), additionally incorporating specific points from Hycner (1985), Crabtree & Miller (1992), and King (1998). The primary 'raw' data were the set of interview audio recordings.

1. Textual transcription of audio recordings
2. Critical reading and annotation of transcripts
3. Template analysis
4. Interpretive transcript summaries
5. Presentation and discussion of findings

**Figure 4.8 Data analysis procedure**

#### 4.7.3 *Textual transcription of audio recordings*

Textual transcription of the audio-recording of an interview effectively constitutes the first stage of post-interview analysis (Kvale 1995:189-190). Accordingly, the level and detail of transcription are determined by the overall purposes and requirements of the analysis (Powney & Watts 1987; Kvale 1995; O'Connell & Kowal 1995).

The *level* of transcription refers to the extent to which the verbal content of an audio-recording is fully transcribed. The presence of data apparently redundant to the research interest may seem to obviate the necessity for full transcription. Such 'redundant' data may, however, become relevant as data analysis progresses, if only in supporting analysis of primary relevant passages. (Svensson & Theman 1983) The production of full transcripts of audio-recordings therefore provides a guarantee of full data coverage in analysis. All recorded verbal data is therefore included in the transcripts, except where an informant explicitly requested otherwise.<sup>61</sup>

The *detail* of transcription is the extent to which non-verbal content is included in the transcription. O'Connell & Kowal (1995) describe the different kinds of non-verbal

data which may potentially be included in a textual transcript. The detail of transcription used in this study, determined by the overall purposes and requirements of the analysis, is contained in the transcription conventions given in Appendix 6.

Transcript files were imported into the QSR NUD\*IST (v.4) computer qualitative data analysis package, and then exported and printed out as 'reports'.<sup>62</sup> This had the effect of reformatting the transcripts to include line numbering. These line numbered document files were then considered to be the final transcripts for subsequent analysis.

#### *4.7.4 Critical reading and annotation of transcripts*

The researcher's engagement with the interview data during transcription, while detailed, did not relate directly to the research interest in conceptions of design. Thus, transcription was followed by a critical reading of a printed copy of each transcript. This critical reading was accompanied by an annotation of the individual transcript copy in pencil, with the purpose of identifying sections of text relevant to the research interest in conceptions of design. All sections of text identified as relevant were highlighted and commented upon, in the form of "memos" of "interpretive insights" (Crabtree & Miller 1992:103).<sup>63</sup> The output of this critical reading was a set of heavily highlighted and annotated transcripts.<sup>64</sup>

#### *4.7.5 Template analysis*

##### Introduction to template analysis

The primary aim of data analysis in the present study, as stated above, is to identify, and subsequently describe, the potential multiplicity of ways in which participants in

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<sup>61</sup> This briefly affected only one transcript (T20).

<sup>62</sup> See below for a detailed description of how NUD\*IST was used in this project.

<sup>63</sup> NUD\*IST (v.4) contains a document annotation facility. The process described here could thus equally be performed within that package on-screen. The researcher simply preferred the traditional hands-on hard copy approach in the present case.

<sup>64</sup> Example reproduced in Appendix 7.

the study make sense of the phenomenon 'design'. The dataset is thus explored as a whole, with the purpose of identifying articulations of conceptions of the phenomenon under investigation ('design'), and then sorting these articulations according to the methods of template analysis. This constitutes an exercise in open coding, in which all codes used are generated from contact with the dataset itself, rather than formulated prior to contact with the data (Miles & Huberman 1994:58). Template analysis (Crabtree & Miller 1992; King 1998) is a specific data analysis method based on open coding.

King (1998) identifies the essence of template analysis as "that the researcher produces a list of codes ('template') representing themes identified in their textual data." (1) The template organizes codes hierarchically to produce a map of the data in terms of its relevance to the stated research interest. Codes are derived directly from the data, and so the template which collates those codes is grounded firmly in the data. In the present case, the codes therefore relate to/constitute conceptions of design identified in the data.

King (1998) identifies the generic suitability of template analysis for social enquiry taking a non-realist, phenomenological theoretical perspective. Additionally, template analysis allows a degree of flexibility in the precise form of analytical procedure used: "the technique is more flexible [...] permitting researchers to tailor it to match their own requirements." (King 1998:2) Template analysis is thus highly suited to enquiries conducted from an interpretivist theoretical perspective, in which a suitable analytical procedure is to be formulated in direct response to the specific nature of the data, and the specific requirements of its analysis. Hence its suitability here.

### Template analysis and NUD\*IST

In the present case, a template analysis of the interview data was conducted using the QSR NUD\*IST (v.4) qualitative data analysis computer package.<sup>65</sup> The annotations made to the interview transcripts in the course of the critical readings, were used as the basis for a coding of the transcript document files in NUD\*IST.

King (1998) discusses the relative merits of computer and hand coding in a template analysis. Mechanical expedients contained in qualitative data analysis packages give computer coding clear advantages over hand coding, in terms of greater searching efficiency within a dataset, and easier code revision. This advantage is particularly valuable in large-scale projects, as King (1998) advises: "the more data one has, and/or the more complex the template, the more worthwhile it is to use a computer package" (125). The present study generated around 2 megabytes of textual interview transcript data, which could in turn be expected to generate a large and complex analytical template. Computer-based coding was therefore considered an essential expedient in the present case.

In addition to efficient and flexible data coding, NUD\*IST simultaneously allows a structuring of analytical codes used, in the form of an hierarchical 'index system', the output of which is a 'tree' representation of codes ('nodes'), which equates directly with King's (1998) description of a 'template'.

NUD\*IST is thus ideally suited to a large-scale template analysis such as the one performed in this study.

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<sup>65</sup> "QSR NUD\*IST is a computer package designed to aid users in handling Non-numerical and Unstructured Data in qualitative analysis, by supporting processes of coding data in an Index System, Searching text for patterns of coding and Theorizing about the data." (Richards 1998:10)

### Simultaneous data coding and template generation

King (1998) discusses the formulation of an initial template, which is then used in the coding of transcripts.

Once an initial template is constructed, the researcher must work systematically through the full set of transcripts, identifying sections of text which are relevant to the project's aims, and marking them with one or more appropriate code(s) from the initial template.

King (1998:10)

The coding exercise performed in the present case was essentially different to that described by King in this regard. In accordance with the commitment to open coding, in which all analytical codes are to be grounded in, and not formulated prior to, the data, no initial guiding template was used. As a result, the coding exercise here was one of progressively coding the transcript files in NUD\*IST, from the annotated paper copies of the transcripts. In coding the transcript files, the researcher simultaneously constructed a template of the analytical codes used, in NUD\*IST. The coding process was thus reflexive, in that it incorporated the ongoing revision of the template, *in situ*, during the coding process, in direct response to the data. The template thus underwent continuous revision during this initial coding exercise. This revision was performed using the four means identified by King (1998:125-127): insert new code; delete code; change scope of code; change higher-order classification of code.<sup>66</sup>

An initial data template had already been generated from a consideration of 3 of the interview transcripts, in the analysis assessment exercise described in Chapter 5.<sup>67</sup> That template was therefore used as the foundation for the main data template, generated from a consideration of *all* the transcripts in the study.

Following the initial coding of the transcripts, the resulting template, generated in parallel with initial data coding, was somewhat lacking in clarity and focus. The

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<sup>66</sup> Miles & Huberman (1994:62) offer similar advice relating to the revision of coding systems.

<sup>67</sup> Reproduced in Figures 5.5a and 5.5b.

template was therefore reorganized to respond more directly to the explicit research interest of the project in conceptions of design. This template restructuring necessitated a second 'coding' of the data within the new coding system, though in effect this simply involved the redistribution of existing coding within the revised template, rather than any additional coding of hitherto uncoded data.

On completion of the coding of the full set of transcripts in NUD\*IST, and revision of the template of analytical codes thereby generated, the resulting template could be considered the 'final' template for the purposes of the present analysis. The notion of finality here is discussed by King (1998), who argues that a template may be considered final when all sections of text relevant to the research interest are coded with sufficient detail and understanding (127). Alternatively, a point of finality is reached when further engagement with the data, from the point of view of the stated research interest, necessitates no further revision to the template. In fact, template revision continued during the generation of its presentation in Part III of this thesis. The final version of the template was thus only arrived at with the completion of all data analysis and presentation. 'Final' thus equates with 'sufficient for the purposes of the current study', rather than denoting an absolute sense of completeness (14). The final template generated in the present analysis, as just indicated, provides the basis for the presentation and discussion of findings in Part III.<sup>68</sup>

#### *4.7.6 Interpretive transcript summaries*

Following the critical reading and annotation of an individual transcript, and its subsequent coding in NUD\*IST, a brief interpretive summary of the transcript was generated.<sup>69</sup> The value of the interpretive summary lies in its seeking to preserve an

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<sup>68</sup> Procedural versions of the template, preceding its final version, are reproduced in Appendix 12.

<sup>69</sup> This was done for each individual transcript immediately following its entry into NUD\*IST, with the exception of those transcripts used in the validity exercise, in which case the summary was generated following the face to face meeting in that exercise.

overall sense of the individual informant's account, as contained in the individual transcript.<sup>70</sup> Hycner (1985) advocates "listening to the interview for a sense of the whole" as a first stage of deep engagement with the data (281). Similarly, Lucas (1998) generated "individual profiles" for each interview transcript in her study, as a means of aiding researcher familiarization with the individual case prior to more detailed analysis. In the present study, a brief interpretive account of each informant's articulated perspective in relation to 'design' was generated. This summary typically comprised around 300 words, inclusive of key illustrative quotes. The interpretive summary was not intended to act as a systematic record of the *content* of an interview. Rather, the summary was intended to act as a summation of the researcher's own personal characterization of an individual informant's perspective towards 'design', as manifest in the interview transcript. The interpretive summary would therefore act as an aid to the researcher in preserving a sense of the individual informant's overall perspective during subsequent detailed examination of the data.<sup>71</sup>

#### *4.7.7 Presentation and discussion of findings*

An analytical template, consisting of grounded codes and a set of transcripts coded according to this template, is generated. Analysis does not end with, or reside in, a comprehensive coding of the data using this template, however. The process described thus far simply reorganizes the data in terms of the final template, ready for the researcher to then make an analytical interpretation. (Crabtree & Miller 1992:106; King 1998:130) This is the crucial stage of data analysis, in which findings are generated and conclusions developed.

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<sup>70</sup> The generation of such summaries, and their incorporation into the presentation of data findings, was a key recommendation of the exercise described in Chapter 5 (see Section 5.4.4).

<sup>71</sup> Example reproduced in Appendix 8.

King (1998:18-19) identifies three common approaches to the presentation and discussion of findings in template analysis, each with a distinct focus.

- (i) a set of individual case studies, incorporating discussion of differences and similarities between cases;
- (ii) an account structured around the main themes identified, illustrated by examples from throughout the dataset;
- (iii) a thematic presentation of findings, using a different case study to illustrate each theme.

The second of these approaches is consistent with a primary analytical interest in conceptions of design identified within a dataset of interviews taken as a whole.<sup>72</sup> Smith (1995:24) similarly suggests “presentation of the typology of responses that emerged during the analysis [...] using the [template] or index of themes as the basis for an account of the participants’ responses.”

The template constitutes an hierarchical map of the data, organized to show identified conceptions of design. The template is then used as the basis for subsequent presentation and discussion of the data. Presentation of coded data takes the form of a narrative account, incorporating quotes from the data accompanied by a linking commentary (King 1998). Conceptions of design are thus presented as they appear in the template, which is in turn generated from, and grounded in, the data.

Data presentation, in the form of an examination of the final template, constitutes Part III (Chapters 6 to 10). Further discussion of the data findings is given in Part IV.

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<sup>72</sup> Section 4.7.1.

## **4.8 Assessing the interview study**

### **4.8.0 Introduction: assessing qualitative research**

Murphy et al (1998) survey approaches to assessing qualitative research. This survey concludes with five principles for the assessment of the *validity* of research findings, and guidance for an assessment of the *relevance* of those findings. The five principles for assessing research *validity* are:

- Clear exposition of data collection method;
- Clear exposition of process of data analysis;
- Reflexivity;
- Attention to negative cases;
- Fair dealing.

These five principles relating to research validity are amended slightly as given below, and applied to the present study.

- Thick description of all stages of the enquiry;
- Explicit self-reflexivity by the researcher;
- Attention to negative cases;
- Independent check on the analytical method used.

The first two of the principles given by Murphy et al (1998), clear exposition of data collection and data analysis, are combined into a wider concern with 'thick description' throughout the research process. Attention is paid to 'fair dealing', defined as the lack of any researcher "partisanship" towards participant data (Murphy et al 1998:192), in the form of an exercise devised to provide an independent check on the analytical method used by the researcher. These revised principles for the

assessment of research validity are discussed in turn below, along with an assessment of the study's *relevance*.

#### **4.8.1 Assessing the present study**

##### **Thick description**

Thick description of all stages of an enquiry underpins Murphy et al's (1998) validity principles, and in the present case is applied to:

- Study design;
- Data collection;
- Data analysis;
- Researcher reflexivity (discussed separately below).

The purpose of thick description is to provide sufficient information to enable an independent assessment of a study's validity by the reader. Lincoln & Guba (1985) expand on this point with regard to the wider applicability of a study's findings. In this case, an assessment of the applicability of specific findings beyond the confines of a particular study is the responsibility not of the author, but of those who subsequently come to the study. It is thus incumbent on the researcher to "provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (316). An absolute "index of transferability" is not required. The researcher, however, has the "responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgements possible on the part of potential appliers" (316). The same principle applies to the assessment of the validity of the study as a whole. The ideal is that the reader should be able to mentally reconstruct and evaluate a study as it was conducted. Specific examples of thick description are evident throughout this chapter, and additionally in references to further documentation in appendices.

### Researcher reflexivity

Reflexivity is defined as “sensitivity to the ways in which the researcher’s presence in the research setting has contributed to the data collected and their own *a priori* assumptions have shaped the data analysis.” (Murphy et al 1998:188) In the present case, reflexive measures include:

- Pilot interviews;
- Bracketing;
- Method summaries;
- Attention to interviewer performance.

These measures relate to (i) researcher interview skill, and self-monitoring of performance as interviewer; and (ii) researcher ‘objectivity’ in terms of the stated research interest. Additional evidence of reflexivity is the critical attention given to various aspects of the administration of the interviews.<sup>73</sup>

The conducting of pilot interviews (Section 4.6.2), and implementation of bracketing (Section 4.3.3) have already been discussed. A method summary is a brief account generated on the completion of an interview, commenting on “the nature of the interaction” (Jones 1985b:58), and focusing on procedural and methodological issues rather than content.<sup>74</sup> The accumulating set of method summaries also contributed directly to ongoing self-monitoring of the researcher’s performance during data collection. Finally, data coding and template generation in NUD\*IST included attention to the researcher’s performance as an interviewer, manifest in the creation of a ‘free node’ containing data coded for this purpose. This includes evidence, both positive and negative, of the researcher’s performance as interviewer.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Section 4.6.

<sup>74</sup> Example reproduced in Appendix 9.

<sup>75</sup> Evidence collected at this node is examined in Section 4.8.2.

### Attention to negative cases

Due attention to "negative evidence" is cited by Murphy et al (1998:191) as an important factor in assessing qualitative research. Deriving from a mistrust of apparently neatly-patterned data, this is characterized as

the conscientious search for and presentation of cases that are inconsistent with the emerging analysis  
Murphy et al (1998:190)

In the presentation and discussion of data which follows in Part III, such "deviant cases" (Murphy et al 1998:190) are given full attention. The individual examinations of template nodes in Chapters 6 to 10 are rarely totally unified in terms of equivalent discussion of a theme by varied informants. The inconsistency identified is, in fact, a manifestation of the richness in understandings of 'design' actively sought in this study through a theoretical sampling strategy, as advocated by Murphy et al (1998).<sup>76</sup>

Attention to negative cases also applies to the consideration given to other studies.

New research should cumulatively relate to existing research, and thus be assessed according to

the extent to which the researchers have built upon previous knowledge in their work and their success in connecting their findings with previous knowledge.  
Murphy et al (1998:192)

This clearly contributes to the notion of relevance, examined below. In the present case, the theoretical sample used is clearly derived from previous studies and sources.<sup>77</sup> The presentation of data findings in previous cited studies (Farr 1955; Bracewell 1987; JIDPO 1989; Design Council unpublished), however, precludes direct comparison with those of this study.

### Assessment of analytical method

A specific measure recommended by Murphy et al (1998) is the inclusion of some form of additional exercise assessing the analytical *method* used in a study. An

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<sup>76</sup> Section 4.5.2.

exercise is described in Chapter 5, which was devised to assess an analytical method proposed for use in the empirical study as it was applied to a sample of the interview data. The outcome of that exercise was the identification of suggested amendments to the proposed analytical process (Section 5.4). The analytical process described in this chapter is an amended version of that used in the assessment exercise, incorporating the revisions suggested in Chapter 5.

Member checking is a further measure, proposed as a check on the outcomes of an analysis, but rejected by Murphy et al (1998). The principle mode of member checking is a validation of research outcomes by participants. Several difficulties are identified in considering this as a validation exercise, deriving from the impossibility of constancy or "isomorphism between informant and researcher perceptions." (180) An underlying assumption of non-positivist research is one of the applicability of multiple valid perspectives,<sup>78</sup> a principle which applies equally to the analysis of data. As Murphy et al (1998) state, member checking can never validate an analysis, it simply yields more data. A form of member checking was undertaken in this study, in that a copy of each completed interview transcript was delivered to the appropriate informant, as promised in the original interview, accompanied by an invitation for informant comment.<sup>79</sup> The response obtained from informants either (i) expressed satisfaction with the transcription received (3 responses), or (ii) suggested some minor revisions which generally clarified rather than altered the sense, and so were accepted (3 responses). The value of this exercise to the researcher was minimal.

#### Relevance

Murphy et al (1998) discuss relevance in terms of "whether research adds anything to what we already know about a topic." (194) This relates directly to the 'original

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<sup>77</sup> Section 4.5.3.

<sup>78</sup> See Section 4.3.

<sup>79</sup> This device was used as an incentive to informant participation.

contribution to existing knowledge' proviso of the PhD, discussed in Chapter 1.<sup>80</sup> Murphy et al (1998) identify empirical generalizability and theoretical inference as the central concerns in assessing relevance. Empirical generalizability is dealt with above, in discussing thick description, where it is argued that this resides in the judgement of the reader rather than the researcher. Theoretical inference applies the principle of transferability to other cases to a consideration of *theoretical*, rather than empirical, propositions. (196) The absence of the drive to either theorize or explain the findings in the present study, noted in discussing methodology above,<sup>81</sup> however removes the possibility of making theoretical inferences in this case.

#### 4.8.2 *Weaknesses in the study*

Limitations of the interview study are discussed in terms of aspects of its design and implementation.

##### Participant selection

It is noted that the provisional sample size of 36 participants falls within the range advocated for this type of interview study.<sup>82</sup> That the actual obtained sample of 31 participants was somewhat less than that sought constitutes a weakness in the implementation of the study. As noted, difficulties were encountered in recruiting suitable participants to successfully fill all the informant profiles in the provisional sample matrix.<sup>83</sup> In particular, difficulties were encountered with recruited Users, in that in 3 cases an initial agreement to participate using the camera data collection method did not result in a final interview. In any future use of this method, this issue of non-completion must be addressed.

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<sup>80</sup> Section 1.3.

<sup>81</sup> Section 4.4.

<sup>82</sup> Section 4.5.5.

<sup>83</sup> Section 4.5.6.

Minor inconsistencies in method of approach and recruitment of the actual sample have been discussed,<sup>84</sup> but these are not considered particularly significant.

Objections may be raised to the somewhat arbitrary make-up of the actual sample in terms of design area and gender, yet it is emphasized that these were secondary sampling considerations in this study, and data are not analyzed according to them.

#### Data collection

Data collection in this type of 'open' interview study is highly dependent on interviewer performance. As already noted, interviewer performance was monitored throughout data collection by ongoing generation of method summaries, and included in data analysis through coding of relevant data in a dedicated 'free node' in NUD\*IST. This analysis shows an improvement in interviewer performance as the study progresses, confirming the researcher's own view of sensitive interviewing as a skill-based ability. Early interviews contained instances of mildly directing or poorly-phrased questioning which had disappeared by later interviews. This fact is perhaps an inevitable consequence of the researcher's relative inexperience as an interviewer prior to this study.<sup>85</sup> In the data analysis which follows, therefore,<sup>86</sup> the possible effect of interviewer contribution on informant data was always considered.

The output of the disposable cameras provided to Users in the study was criticized. In several instances, especially of outdoor nighttime photography, developed photographs were 'spoiled', and compromised the collection of rich informant data in the interview. Nevertheless, this device was generally successful in providing a stimulus to User interviews which would otherwise have been lacking.

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<sup>84</sup> Section 4.5.6.

<sup>85</sup> The pilot interviews were intended to highlight any excesses in this regard.

<sup>86</sup> Part III.

As has been noted, recording failure resulted in complete data loss in one early interview (Interview 3 as conducted). Subsequent interviews were therefore recorded using superior equipment.

Minor inconsistencies in interview situation have been discussed,<sup>87</sup> but these are not considered particularly significant here.

#### **4.9 Summary**

This chapter describes the epistemological and methodological precepts of the interview study, along with specific aspects of method. Subsequent chapters in Part III present the outcomes of the study. Chapter 5 describes an exercise conducted to assess the analytical method used in the empirical study.

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<sup>87</sup> Section 4.6.3.

## **Chapter 5 : Assessment of analytical process**

### **5.0 *Introduction***

This chapter describes and reviews an exercise designed to assess the analytical method to be used in the empirical study. The exercise involved a preliminary template analysis of a sample of interview transcripts generated during the study. A review of this preliminary analysis provides useful guidance for the execution of the full analysis to be performed on the body of transcripts as a whole.

### **5.1 *Rationale***

The purpose of the exercise was to provide an opportunity to assess the analytical method to be used in the analysis of the interview study data. Interpretive analysis of qualitative data, as is undertaken here, is necessarily pluralistic and to some degree subjective.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, steps can be taken by a researcher to give confidence that the analytical method employed in a study was sufficiently unbiased and rigorous to support claims for the validity of findings generated.<sup>89</sup> The inclusion of an exercise such as the one described here is advocated by Murphy et al (1998), as positively contributing to the overall validity of research findings.

In the present case, parallel template analyses were performed on a sample set of interview transcripts by (i) the researcher,<sup>90</sup> and (ii) a suitably qualified and experienced second analyst with no stake in the current project.<sup>91</sup> The researcher and second analyst each independently completed a template analysis of the sample

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<sup>88</sup> Section 4.8.1.

<sup>89</sup> Section 4.8.0.

<sup>90</sup> The researcher is identified here as PM.

<sup>91</sup> The second analyst (identified here as AR) occupied a full-time research post at the host institution specializing in qualitative research, and had previous experience of using template analysis on interview transcript data.

transcripts. These parallel analyses, and the analytical templates generated, were then compared by the participants in the exercise.

A desirable outcome for the exercise was sought in terms of a general agreement and consistency between the template analyses performed by the researcher and second analyst. The exercise addressed the process of template construction used by the two analysts. An assessment was not, however, to be based on the extent to which the independent analyses performed by researcher and second analyst are seen to duplicate one another. Such an outcome would be manifest in the generation of identical templates by the two analysts. Absolute agreement of this kind is unlikely, however, given the non-positivist assumption being made, namely that data analysis is itself subject to a principle of acceptance of multiple valid researcher perspectives.<sup>92</sup> Instead, the outcome sought is akin to that described by King (1994):

The aim was to assess the validity of the approach we were taking by seeing whether independent experts with different perspectives would identify *the same kind of factors* as ourselves.  
(20, italics added)

King is here discussing the desired outcome of a preliminary exercise, undertaken to assess the qualitative template analysis, similar to that being described in this chapter.

Absolute duplication in the generation of analytical templates by the two analysts is thus deemed unrealistic. Support for claims of analytical validity is instead sought in terms of the extent to which the templates generated "identify the same kind of factors" (*ibid.*). The present exercise was not, therefore, formulated as an assessment of some form of inter-rater reliability, such as might be appropriate when dealing with data gathered in a non-interpretivist (positivist) enquiry.<sup>93</sup> Rather, the

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<sup>92</sup> This point is discussed in the previous chapter (Section 4.8.1).

<sup>93</sup> For a discussion of the inappropriateness of reliability as a criterion for assessing interpretive research, see Murphy et al (1998:170-171).

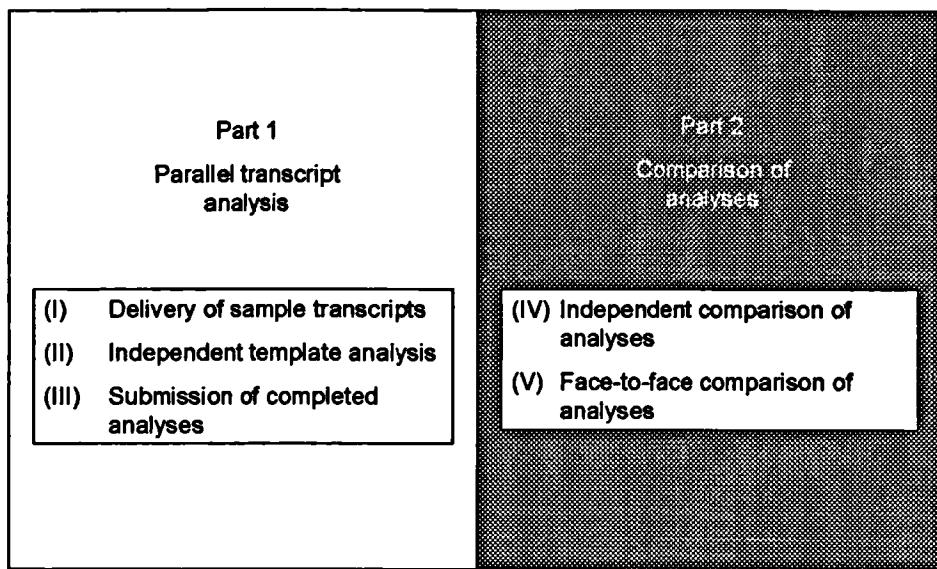
exercise provided an opportunity for an interrogation of the analytical method used by the researcher, in comparison with that of a second independent analyst. Points of difference between the two analyses were to be expected in this comparison. Nevertheless, the researcher was required to address and evaluate these points of difference, with a view to identifying potential difficulties relating to the transfer of the analytical method used here to a subsequent analysis of the full set of interview study transcripts in later chapters.

#### **5.1.1 *Rejected alternative method***

The exercise described seeks to assess the process of template generation undertaken by the researcher. An alternative means of doing this was considered, in the form of a *post hoc* assessment of the extent to which the analytical output (template) is justified in terms of the analytical input (interview transcript data). Such an assessment might be fulfilled in the present case by the second analyst retrospectively matching the template codes generated by the researcher to locations in the transcripts. A close match between the second analyst's *post hoc* coding of the data using the researcher's template codes, and the coding of the transcripts made by the researcher in initially generating those codes, might then be considered as an indication that the researcher's template analysis is justified in relation to the data. However, the precedent in King (1994) cited above led to a preference for a generative, rather than *post hoc*, assessment of analytical method in the present case.

### **5.2 *The exercise***

The validation exercise took its outline form from King (1994), and was conducted in two parts. The steps in the completion of the exercise are shown in Figure 5.1.



**Figure 5.1 Stages in the completion of the template analysis assessment exercise.**

### 5.2.1 *Transcript selection*

A sample of transcripts from the interview study was selected by the researcher for use in the exercise. The two concerns in making this selection were (i) that the volume of data be manageable within the constraints of this exercise, and (ii) that there be some degree of variation of informant group representation in the transcripts used.

An initial selection of 5 transcripts was made, as shown in Figure 5.2. This selection had the advantage of containing one transcript from each of the five informant groups used in the study, thereby in principle allowing the degree of variation in informant perspective sought. In each case, the transcript selected was that of the first interview conducted in the informant group. This additionally ensured that transcripts were included of interviews from throughout the period of data collection, as can be seen from Figure 5.2.

Transcript <sup>94</sup>	Group
T01	Education
T05	Designer
T06	Business
T22	Promotion
T30	User

**Figure 5.2 Template analysis assessment exercise: initial transcript selection**

The five transcripts indicated in Figure 5.2 were formatted to include line numbering, and distributed to the two analysts.<sup>95</sup> The total volume of data contained in the five transcripts, however, amounted to almost 45,000 words. This proved unmanageable in the context of this exercise, as it quickly emerged that coverage of all five transcripts would involve a sacrifice in the level of detail contained in the analyses. A decision was therefore made by the researcher, in consultation with the second analyst, to include the first three transcripts only (T01, T05, T06) in the analysis. This revised selection yielded a more manageable volume of data, of just over 27,000 words. The loss of variation in informant group representation entailed by this revision was considered acceptable, due to the primary importance of a detailed engagement with the data in the analyses.<sup>96</sup>

### 5.2.2 Part 1

In the first part of the exercise, the researcher and second analyst independently performed a template analysis on the given interview transcripts, according to a formulated task instruction.<sup>97</sup> Both analysts produced a template, containing codes representative of conceptions of design identified in the provided data. Copies of these templates were then exchanged by the two analysts, and an additional copy of

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<sup>94</sup> The individual transcripts produced in this study are denoted by 'Tx', where 'x' is the chronological position of an individual interview in the full sequence of interviews as they were conducted. Thus, 'T01' denotes the transcript of the first interview to be conducted, 'T02' that of the second, and so on.

<sup>95</sup> Transcript files were imported into QSR NUD\*IST v.4 computer qualitative data analysis package, and then exported and printed out as 'reports'. This had the effect of reformatting the transcripts to include line numbering.

<sup>96</sup> This decision was supported in the meeting by NK (17).

each submitted to a third participant, who subsequently participated in Part 2 of the exercise.<sup>98</sup>

### 5.2.3 *Part 2*

In the second part of the exercise, the separate analyses performed in Part 1 were compared. This comparison was first performed independently, by all three participants in the exercise: the researcher, the second analyst, and the third participant. A meeting was then convened, in which the two analyses were comparatively discussed face-to-face by the three participants. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for an interrogation of the researcher's analysis of the sample transcripts. The three participants had equally-empowered roles in this discussion, though the focus was on the researcher's analysis, and the researcher's subsequent ability to justify and interrogate that analysis in response to comment and criticism from the other two participants. The discussion was audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher, and the transcription forms the basis of the discussion of the results of the exercise which follows.<sup>99</sup>

## 5.3 *Results and discussion*

### 5.3.0 *Analysts' templates*

The templates produced by the two analysts in this exercise are reproduced below.

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<sup>97</sup> Reproduced in Appendix 10.

<sup>98</sup> This third participant (identified here as NK) was a supervisor of the researcher on the current project, with direct previous experience of this kind of template analysis validation exercise (see King 1994). The involvement of this third party was intended to aid the comparative discussion of the parallel analyses.

<sup>99</sup> The transcript is reproduced in Appendix 11. All page numbers indicated in brackets in the subsequent text refer to this transcript, unless otherwise indicated. The same transcription conventions were used for this transcription as were used in the transcription of the informant interviews (see Appendix 6). Speakers are identified by their given initials, however.

1. Design as a family of disciplinary activities
2. Design as an ethically-informed activity
3. Good design
4. Design as a field of wider participation (The design user/consumer)
5. Design as a field of debate and difference
6. Design as culturally defined
7. Design as a specialist ability
8. Design as a creative activity
9. Design as a rational process
10. Design as a competitive asset
11. Design as an educational institution
12. Design as an organizational function
13. Design as a collaborative/group activity
14. Design as communication
15. Design as resolution

**Figure 5.3 Researcher's template (Template R1): header codes (1 level)**

1. Design as a family of disciplinary activities (01:665-666, 697)
  - Extended family (01:39)
  - Nuclear family (01:571-574, 767-771)
  - Youth of design (01:156-157)
  - Engineering and design
    - Differentiated (01:4, 17-36)
    - Design in engineering (01:688-697)
  - Design and art
    - Similar (01:369-380; 05:203-204)
      - Design as art (01:377-379; 05:297-298; 690)
      - Designer and artist (05:697-700)
    - Different
      - Design and fine art (01:380-387)
      - Design as commercial art (05:145-155, 207-208)
      - Design as speaking for itself (05:11-12)
      - Not good enough (05:195-203)
      - Resentment (05:208-211)
  - Design and craft (01:700-705, 775-790)

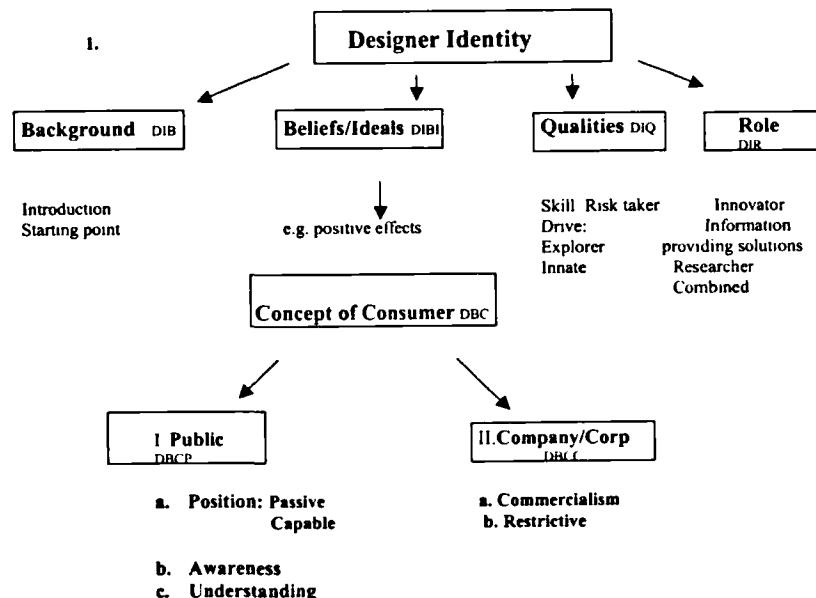
**Figure 5.4 Researcher's template (Template R1): fully expanded header code (5 levels)<sup>100</sup>**

<sup>100</sup> Each of the header codes shown in Figure 5.3 expands similarly in the full version of the template.

- Initial template**  
**T1:01 T2:05 T3:06**  
**Identity**
1. Background
    - Reasons for choice- necessity:(needed to make a living) [T1 48-54/62-65]
  2. Belief/Idealism- I want to do good for people: [T1:36-7](naively)
    - Positive effect:[T2:693, 706-708]
    - Wanting to influence [T2:692]
    - Because you believe in it [T2:126]
- Role of the designer:**
- Professionals training experience- knowledge and information of the topic [T1:]
  - Innovator [T2: 110-111] pushing forward [T2: 589,590, T3:251-55]
  - Understand the client [T:501], the values, the culture [T3 479-489] the market place [T3:479-89], planner, Research [T3: 123,572,-586 ]
  - Conquer new things [T2:607] Explorer [T2:264]

- Qualities of a designer:**
- The right attitude: 80% attitude (desire, drive) 20% skill [T2:522]
  - Innate[T2.517]
  - Risk-taker [T2:]
  - **[Position of tutor: neutrality- long-term viewpoint T: ]**

**Figure 5.5 Second analyst's template (Template A): section**



**Figure 5.6 Second analyst's template (Template A): section ('tree' structure)**

Designer identity
Background
Beliefs/ideals
Qualities
Role
Design outcomes
Aims/priorities
Good
Bad/negative
Qualities of designer
Good
Bad/negative
External influences: economic
Good
Bad/negative
Perception of consumer
Relationship with consumer
What is design?
Type of process
Cultural differences
Economics/competitiveness
Professional diversity
Language
Dilemmas

**Figure 5.7 Second analyst's template (Template A): header codes<sup>101</sup>**

### 5.3.1 Accessibility of the researcher's template

The templates produced by the two analysts in the exercise are clearly contrasting in terms of structure, layout and size (Figures 5.3 to 5.7). The researcher's template (Template R1) displays a much greater amount of detail than the second analyst's template (Template A), and contains many more specific references to locations in the interview transcripts. This greater detail was, however, perceived as potentially problematic, in that the sheer volume of detail given obscures the clarity and organization of the template.

NK: I don't think there's much that isn't somewhere in what you've got, but I think some things can get lost in what you've got  
(1)

AR: It's very good, because you've itemized it all. But it's, as you say, it's clustering.

PM: Yeah, it doesn't really leap out from the page, does it, what I'm trying to get at?  
(13)

The coverage of the data exhibited in the template was therefore felt to compromise its intelligibility. This inaccessibility of the template became evident in the course of the discussion, to the clear extent that the researcher was hampered by an inability to easily navigate within the template in seeking to justify positions taken in the analysis. Thus, while the researcher protests that "it wasn't just a case of going through the transcripts and trying to code everything" (1), it is nevertheless clear that too much detail was included in the template, a fact later acknowledged by the researcher: "It's almost as if I've given every single bit of text a separate code, at the moment" (12). To aid clarity, a suggestion was made to introduce "a higher still order of abstraction" to Template R1, in the form of a further top level of coding (NK:8), thereby improving the intelligibility of the template at its highest level. Additionally, it was suggested that greater parsimony be applied to the rest of the template, reducing the overall number of discrete codes, and focusing on those which are necessary for an exposition of the data.

PM: I think it's about accessibility, really, of my template. Because it isn't that accessible. There's a lot in there, and the key things don't come out easily.

NK: Yeah, I think that's right. I think - both in terms of you thinking through what's key, and that might mean changing some of the coding levels, and so on, to make some things more prominent.  
(17)

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<sup>101</sup> The presentation of header codes given here was generated by the researcher from the second analyst's actual template documentation, sections of which are reproduced in Figures 5.5 and 5.6.

The researcher responds to this point by stating that further refinement and clarification of the template as it stands would produce the more focused and accessible version desired.

And this is kind of a first attempt, which, if I can now return to it, I can see how certain things can be combined, and wrapped-up, perhaps.  
(PM:12)

we both agree that I've got far too much depth and detail here at the moment, but once we start to abstract that a little more, we seem to agree on what I've got in here.

(PM:14)

AR instructively advocates a balance between the two approaches exemplified by Templates R1 and A.

PM: Did you feel that I went into perhaps too much depth and detail in the coding?

AR: No actually. I was quite impressed. I think it's like what NK was saying, I think if you're looking at 36 [sic] other scripts, you could double this, couldn't you?

PM: Easily.

AR: Easily. And I'm perhaps guilty of being a bit too broad. But it's finding that fine line inbetween the two, really, I think you need.  
(12)

While reference is made to the wider analysis undertaken in the following chapters of this thesis, the principle of maintaining a balance between the two approaches exemplified in the two templates may still be applied here. The criticism made of the researcher's template here is thus not fatal.

The layout of the researcher's template was also discussed as contributing to its general inaccessibility. The second analyst supplemented Template A with a diagrammatic illustration of how the codes identified there interrelate.<sup>102</sup> This 'tree' representation of the template codes was preferred, in the discussion, to the rigidly linear vertical listing of codes used in Template R1.

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<sup>102</sup> Figure 5.6 shows a section of this.

NK: But also thinking about how to show it, and the reader needs an overall map, which couldn't have all those levels of everything in, because it would need a wall. But we could have a two or three level overall map - particularly if you go to something like I was suggesting, of a more condensed top level, you could then show top level, that level, and then selected of the next level, with little key quotes, and then you could have – I prefer that layout [AR tree template] to the way you've done it, for actually working with, or for showing to a reader.

(17)

The suggestion is made here that improving the presentation of Template R1 in this way would further improve its accessibility to the reader. On this point, it was noted that QSR NUD\*IST v.4 computer qualitative data analysis package allows a structured presentation of the kind used by the second analyst, and that the use of this software in the subsequent main analysis would address this issue of inaccessible template structuring and presentation. (17)

### 5.3.2 *Degree of abstraction in the researcher's analysis*

Template R1 contrasts clearly with Template A in the abstraction of its header codes. Template R1 dominantly uses a 'design as...' header code format, in contrast to the less uniform header codes used in Template A. This is, however, identified as potentially problematic by NK:

PM's is much more narrowly-focused around that particular question [AR: Yeah], and I think there's an issue of how comfortable are you that you haven't been overly steered by your *a priori* beliefs and expectations ... it's very focused on, at least at the higher levels, on the conceptualizations.

(1)

To which the researcher responds:

I agree, my template is quite abstracted at the higher level, but I would also say that I built my template up from the bottom as well, and it was just a case of - the final reorganisation of the template, that was the point at which..

(1)

NK appears to support this claim, in stating: "I think there's not much problem finding pretty similar coding [in Templates R1 and A] at the lower levels" (3). This echoes the researcher's earlier claim that although the two templates are "organized entirely differently", the data is still recognizable in Template A (2). This indicates that the

abstraction evident in the header codes is not representative of consciously *a priori* decisions, beyond what appears to be a more deliberate adherence to the task instruction than was practised by the second analyst. The more formulaic definition of header codes in Template R1 is a reflection of a deliberate focus by the researcher on the task instruction for this exercise (see Appendix 10). This task instruction was formulated in response to the research interest of the interview study to which this exercise relates, in ‘conceptions of design’. The ‘design as...’ header code format used was devised in response to this research interest.

### 5.3.3 Structuring the codes

While the degree of abstraction evident in Template R1 is not seen to be *per se* problematic, there was some discussion of the structuring of identified codes within the template. Specifically, concern was expressed that some conceptualizations used by informants in the data are not clearly represented in the template.

But things like ‘role of the designer’, or what are the qualities of a designer? Do you think that that gets included in the way you’ve done it? I can see it in, say this one on ‘special ability’, that’s probably the most – ‘design training’ and ‘experience’ and so on, what it is to be a designer, not just what is design.  
(NK:3)

Here, the relationship between design and the designer is cited as not being prominently presented in its own right in the template. Similarly, it was argued that the discussion of ‘good design’ in the data could be more comprehensively accounted for in the template through a more prominent incorporation of ‘bad design’ within the same code. NK advises “perhaps looking a little harder at what they’re saying about bad design, taking that out of all the places it’s coming up” (5). A third theme which Template R1 was felt not to display prominently was the relationship between design, the designer and the consumer. While AR comments apropos of this point: “Actually, you’ve got it all in there, haven’t you?” (13), the fact remains that

what was identified by AR and NK as a key theme in the data was not prominently displayed in Template R1.

At issue here is the more effective prioritisation in the template of what are considered to be key themes in the data.

I think we sort of agree that AR hasn't found things which are drastically important and you've missed. But we've made, this thing about the bad design, and perhaps being clear about what you're saying about design and designers, and not taking that relationship for granted.  
(NK:8)

Adherence to a position which maintains the validity of multiple valid analytical perspectives, as stated above, clearly allows such points of difference between different analyses. Furthermore, template analysis allows the multiple coding of data, such that individual text segments may appear several times within a template, insofar as they are relevant for inclusion in different template codes (2). This further enforces the point that no single interpretation of a segment of data may be considered absolute. In the present case, there is a further possible influence at work:

AR: Will that [difference between Templates R1 and A] also be due to the fact we're from totally different disciplines, as well?

NK: Well, I suspect that's quite likely, isn't it?  
(1)

There are, therefore, several mitigating responses to the criticisms made here of Template R1. These criticisms do, however, act as a reminder of the necessity of being able to justify the prioritisation of aspects of the data within the template.

#### *5.3.4 Researcher's loss of an overall sense of the individual account*

A further identified manifestation of the abstraction evident in Template R1 is the apparent loss of a holistic sense of the individual accounts in the analysis. As NK initially states of Template R1 in relation to Template A: "you get less of a sense of the context, in a way, I think" (1). Certainly, NK and AR are, throughout the

discussion, more likely to highlight tensions and apparent contradictions within transcripts, at the personal level of the individual informant, as in AR's examination of 'dilemmas' as a header code in Template A. In discussing this header code, AR articulates the distinction between the depersonalized and personalized approaches in stating "I psychologized it, didn't I?" (13). A difference in analytical viewpoint is evident here, perhaps deriving from the acknowledged differences in disciplinary background of the participants.<sup>103</sup>

NK discusses a universal dilemma for the analyst here, between abstracting themes from the data, and maintaining a link with their context in the data.

Because obviously one of the things that happens when you do this sort of thing, is that we pull apart the individual accounts, and it may be that actually using some examples in a more holistic way, to show some of the differences of position..  
(9)

The contention made in the discussion is that the researcher in this case erred too far towards the former approach, and in so doing lost a sense of the individual's unified perspective. To compensate, NK suggests a generation by the researcher of interpretive summaries of individual transcripts, in the form of "encapsulated stor[ies]".

Not going through it very systematically. ... saying: This is what my impression of this is, this is what the core of this person is saying, and this is how it hangs together.  
(9)

This step is suggested to the researcher as an expedient to preserve a sense of the individual perspective of informants in the data analysis, and as such can be seen to form a bridge between the abstracted and personalized analytical viewpoints adopted by the researcher and AR respectively here.

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<sup>103</sup> The researcher's background in philosophy contrasts with the more specific backgrounds of AR and NK, both in psychology.

## **5.4 Conclusions**

It has been stated above that the purpose of this exercise was not to seek a duplication of analysis by the researcher and second analyst, but rather to allow an interrogation of the researcher's analysis by all three participants, and particularly by the researcher himself. King (1994:20) describes identification of "the same kind of factors" in parallel analyses, as a desirable outcome in this type of exercise. The researcher expressed confidence of this kind in the transcribed discussion, in stating that 'his' data was recognizable in Template A, generated by the second analyst (2). Differences between the two analyses were to be expected, as has already been discussed above. These differences can be considered acceptable, if the researcher's position is capable of justification when contrasted with an alternative position. Nevertheless, discussion of the results of the exercise suggests a number of lessons to carry forward into the main analysis to be undertaken on the full set of interview transcripts. Five such lessons are identified below.<sup>104</sup>

### **5.4.1 Presentation of the template**

The inaccessibility of the researcher's template was clearly seen as problematic in this exercise. As a result, while the coverage of the data was satisfactory, its presentation in the template was not. Consequently, greater selectivity and focus is required in the researcher's engagement with the data during data analysis. Greater parsimony was advocated in template construction. This is especially pertinent given the volume of data generated and in need of analysis in the empirical study as a whole. It was stated above that further refinement and clarification of the template as it stands would produce the more focused and accessible version desired. NK, similarly, states that this task of rationalization becomes more straightforward as an analysis progresses.

NK: Yeah. This is, obviously, based on three cases. Of course you will get even more, as you come up with more. But, what you'll also get is things which appear once in one transcript, and you think: 'is this really adding anything?' So it becomes easier to be selective, as you read through it.  
(14)

The overabundance of detail present in Template R1 is thus not a serious concern. It may, in fact, be argued that the level of detail included in Template R1 provides valuable preparation for the formulation of a more accessible, final version. Nevertheless, a revision of Template R1 was undertaken by the researcher following the completion of the exercise, as a means of demonstrating the advocated principle of template rationalization.<sup>105</sup> Use of QSR NUD\*IST v.4 computer qualitative data analysis package in the main analysis will, furthermore, address the need identified in this exercise for a non-linear format of template structuring and presentation.

#### *5.4.2 Level of abstraction*

An issue to emerge in this exercise was the extent to which the researcher's template was organized according to *a priori* expectations or criteria. It has been acknowledged that header codes were devised in response to the research interest as it was expressed in the task instruction. The researcher maintains that this is defensible in the context of the wider project, the focus of which is on an identification and exposition of conceptions of design, as long as the analysis is grounded in the data, and any abstractions used may be clearly derived from the data.

#### *5.4.3 Prioritization of data within the template*

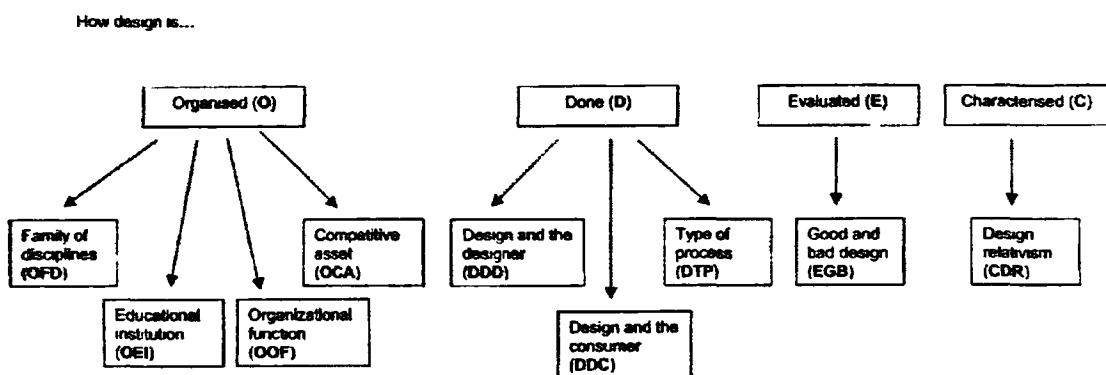
A further issue to arise was the identification by the second analyst and third participant of apparently 'missing' codes in the researcher's template. As discussed above, it was argued that a number of themes: 'the design-designer relation'; 'good-bad design'; 'the consumer'; and also 'diversity'; were not presented prominently

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<sup>104</sup> Conclusions are presented in the order in which they respond to the preceding discussion of results. Section 5.4.1 responds to section 4.4.1, 5.4.2 to 4.4.2, and so on. This does not apply to section 5.4.5.

<sup>105</sup> This revised template (Template R2) is reproduced in Figures 5.8 and 5.9 below.

enough in Template R1. A degree of interpretive license must be granted in such a situation, in line with the precepts of non-positivist research being adhered to in the present case (see above). However, a definite need was identified in the case of the researcher's template for a greater prioritization of key themes, supported by a cogent justification of the prioritizations made. The 'missing' codes identified by NK and AR in the exercise thus inform the revision of Template R1, the output of which is the revised Template R2, reproduced below in Figures 5.8 and 5.9.<sup>106</sup>



**Figure 5.8 Researcher's revised template (Template R2): 'tree' structure (2 levels)**

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<sup>106</sup> Only the two highest levels of codes are shown here. The full template extends to six levels of coding.

How design is...
Organised (O)
Design as family of disciplinary activities (OFA)
Design as educational institution (OEI)
Design as organizational function (OOF)
Design as competitive asset (OCA)
Done (D)
Design and the designer (DDD)
Design and the consumer (DDC)
Type of process (DTP)
Evaluated (E)
Good and bad design (EGB)
Characterised (C)
Design as field of debate and difference/design relativism (CDR)

**Figure 5.9 Researcher's revised template (Template R2): header codes (2 levels)**

#### *5.4.4 Preserving the individual informant's perspective*

The abstracted, depersonalized analytical strategy employed by the researcher was contrasted with the more contextualized approach adopted by the second analyst. It was concluded that a balance between the two positions would be desirable. To preserve an overall sense of the individual informant's account, as contained in an individual transcript, the generation of interpretive summaries of individual transcripts was recommended, as an aid to data analysis. This recommendation is taken up, and the generation of such interpretive transcript summaries incorporated into the main data analysis procedure (see Chapter 4).

#### *5.4.5 The consumer in the main analysis*

Concern was expressed by the second analyst and third participant regarding the integration of the researcher's consumer informant group into the main data analysis (18).<sup>107</sup> It was felt that data from this group may be lost within the analytical strategy proposed by the researcher, of producing a single large template covering all data from the five informant groups collectively. Concessions are made in data collection,

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<sup>107</sup> The 'consumer' group discussed here was renamed as the 'User' group in the main study.

in response to a concern that consumers, lacking a professional engagement with 'design', may be unable to provide rich data on the subject.<sup>108</sup> A consequent danger is identified at the stage of data analysis, at which point the consumers' voice may not be heard above that of other more articulate informants: "you might miss out on things which are actually quite interesting about what the consumer is saying" (NK:18). Thus NK concludes: "I don't think it's too much of a problem, if you feel that there's more to be gained by analysing the consumer ones separately", even suggesting the possibility of devoting a separate chapter to the purpose (18). As NK notes, this is an empirical question, and could only be determined as the main analysis progresses. In actual fact, such a step was unnecessary, and User group data is included in the single template presented and discussed in subsequent chapters. Nevertheless, the researcher was made aware of the necessity to be sensitive to the voice of the consumer in the main data analysis, to ensure that User perspective was not simply submerged within that of other more articulate informant groups. In practice, this entailed maintaining sensitivity in data analysis to the perhaps less sophisticated perspectives presented in the User interviews, and respecting these views as having equal validity as those given by more eloquent informants in other groups. The views of User-informants are, therefore, represented in the final data template.

## **5.5 *Summary***

This chapter describes and reviews an exercise designed to address the general rigour of an analytical method, proposed for use in the empirical study, as it was applied to a sample of interview data by the researcher. Specifically, this exercise sought to provide an opportunity to assess the analytical method used by the researcher in analyzing a sample of interview transcripts, in comparison with a parallel analysis performed by a second analyst. While the outcome of the exercise

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<sup>108</sup> Section 4.6.3.

was a general satisfaction with the analytical method used by the researcher, a number of required improvements were identified, prior to the researcher undertaking the main analysis of the full set of interview study transcripts using this method. In brief these were: revise Template R1, demonstrating an implementation of points discussed above; generate interpretive individual transcript summaries; be particularly sensitive in the treatment of User group data.

# **Chapter 6 : Template Overview**

## **6.0 *Introduction***

Empirical findings from the interview study are now presented in Part III, through an examination of the final analytical template. In this chapter, a brief overview of the template is given, prior to its detailed examination in Chapters 7 to 10.

## **6.1 *The final template***

### **6.1.1 *Template description***

The final analytical template is reproduced in full. Figure 6.1 displays the template as a simple vertical numbered list of nodes, node numbering indicating the relative location ('node address') of each particular node within the template. Figure 6.2 gives a more diagrammatic 'tree' representation of the template, showing the progressively more refined levels of coding used.

The final template contains 41 separate data nodes, organized at four levels of coding, and comprising 4 first-order nodes, 15 second-order nodes, 19 third-order nodes, and three fourth-order nodes. The use of a fourth level of coding was only necessary in the case of one third-order node, the complexity of which demanded a further level of refinement in its coding.<sup>109</sup> Some nodes are empty of coding, as indicated in Figures 6.1 and 6.2, and therefore serve only an organizational function within the template.

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<sup>109</sup> See node (2 2 1) and its three 'child' nodes.

The four first-order nodes and their accompanying 'child' nodes comprise four distinct node 'families' in the template.<sup>110</sup> Each node family constitutes a fundamental generic mode of discussing 'design'. 'Design' is discussed: (1) in relation to a designed object; (2) as an activity; (3) in relation to the designer; (4) as relating to a specific context. These four families of informant perspective are of differing size and complexity.

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<sup>110</sup> The 'family' metaphor is employed in NUD\*IST to describe the relations between nodes in the index system (template) structure; hence 'child' and 'parent' nodes.

- (1) Of object
  - (1 1) Function-aesthetics
  - (1 2) Semantics
  - (1 3) Design value
- (2) Activity
  - (2 1) Single discipline
    - (2 1 1) Domains
    - (2 1 2) Generalism
  - (2 2) Commercial
    - (2 2 1) Accountability
      - (2 2 1 1) Client
      - (2 2 1 2) Consumer
      - (2 2 1 3) Communication
    - (2 2 2) Competitive strategy
    - (2 2 3) Profit
  - (2 3) Creative
    - (2 3 1) Process
    - (2 3 2) Making
    - (2 3 3) Original outcome
  - (2 4) Manageable process
    - (2 4 1) Codification
    - (2 4 2) The organization
- (3) Of designer
  - (3 1) Vocation
  - (3 2) Motivation
  - (3 3) Development
  - (3 4) Group
  - (3 5) Profession
    - (3 5 1) Ownership
    - (3 5 2) Consumer
    - (3 5 3) Responsibility
  - (3 6) Stereotypes
- (4) Contextual
  - (4 1) Currently fashionable
    - (4 1 1) Politicization
    - (4 1 2) 'Designer' label
    - (4 1 3) Awareness
    - (4 1 4) Multiple meanings
  - (4 2) Culturally linked
    - (4 2 1) Change
    - (4 2 2) Evaluation

**Figure 6.1 Final data template (linear format)<sup>111</sup>**

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<sup>111</sup> 'Empty' nodes containing no coding are shown in engraved font.

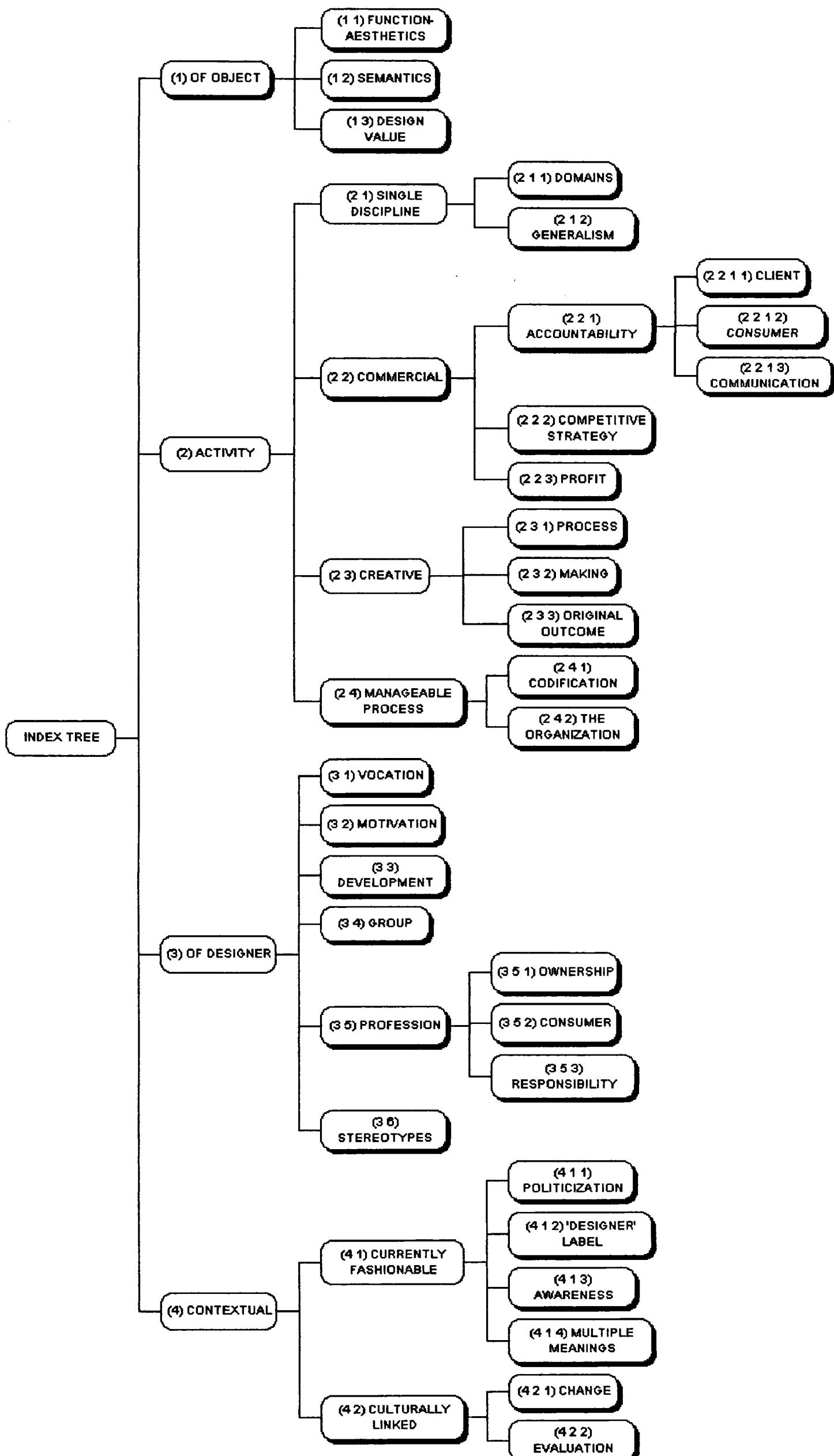


Figure 6.2 Final data template (tree format)<sup>112</sup>

<sup>112</sup> 'Empty' nodes containing no coding are shown without shadow.

### *6.1.2 Development of the template*

The final data template, shown in Figures 6.1 and 6.2, was developed initially from a template generated in the analysis assessment exercise described in Chapter 5.<sup>113</sup> As indicated previously, template generation was ongoing during data coding, with the consequence that the template underwent continuous procedural revision, using the four means identified by King (1998).<sup>114</sup> Revision of the template also progressed in a number of ‘quantum leaps’, in which the entire template was reorganized to better respond to the research interest of the project. Thus, at key points, the template was ‘tightened up’ and refocused to ensure that data coding adequately served the purposes of the study. The periodic need for these significant wholesale template revisions is a consequence of the open coding approach taking in this study, whereby the analytical template is generated simultaneously with data coding. The evolution of the data template from its initial form, generated in the analysis assessment exercise, to its final form, reproduced above is thus marked by a number of key staging posts, marking significant points of revision. These are discussed in turn below.<sup>115</sup>

While the main data template was initially based on a prior template generated in a previous analysis assessment exercise, this prior template was not adopted verbatim. A decision was made to restrict coding in the main data template to 3 levels where possible, as the use of further levels of coding would make adequate template exposition impossible in the context of this thesis. The prior template was therefore imported into NUD\*IST at its highest 3 levels only, with all coding below this level incorporated into its appropriate ‘parent’ node. At this point, the introduced template

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<sup>113</sup> Template R2, reproduced in Figures 5.5a and 5.5b.

<sup>114</sup> Section 4.7.5 Template analysis.

<sup>115</sup> Procedural versions of the template, showing its status at each of these points, are reproduced in Appendix 12.

had 4 highest-order nodes, relating to: how design is organized; how design is done; how design is evaluated; and how design is characterized.<sup>116</sup>

The imported template on which the main data template was initially based was generated from a consideration of only 3 of the interview transcripts to be included in the main data analysis. Inevitably, initial attempts to preserve the structure of this template in the subsequent coding of further transcripts, with the purpose of ensuring continuity in data analysis, quickly proved too constrictive for an adequate representation of the ‘added’ data. The initial template, which up to that point had been merely developed rather than significantly revised, was therefore soon in need of structural alteration to fully accommodate the added data with that included initially from the 3 original transcripts. The most significant change made to the template at this point was an expansion of the number of first-order nodes from 4 to 11, achieved through the deletion of the redundant first-order nodes ‘how design is organized’ and ‘how design is done’, and the promotion up one level of all their respective ‘child’ nodes. In addition, the ‘design as a creative activity’ node was promoted, along with its ‘child’ nodes, from the third level of coding to become a first-order node in its own right. ‘Design and the object’, introduced subsequently to the adoption of Template R2, is similarly promoted to the first coding level.<sup>117</sup> These changes served to ‘unpack’ and broaden the template, and ease the process of data coding.

Similar deficiencies in the template, in terms of a lack of focus and accessibility in response to the data, became apparent for a second time, following completion of initial data coding. The template was therefore reorganized to respond more directly to the explicit research interest of the project in conceptions of design. The final form of the template, as manifest in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 above, emerged in recognizable

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<sup>116</sup> See Template R2, reproduced to 3 levels, in Appendix 12.1. Template R2 is reproduced to 2 levels in Figures 5.5a and 5.5b.

form following this reorganization. The first apparent difference between this version of the template and the one that it supersedes is a reduction in the number of data nodes used. A number of nodes were deleted and their constituent coding incorporated into other nodes, the overall effect of which is a 'tightening up' of the template through a combination of overlapping nodes and an incorporation of minor nodes containing little coding into larger nodes. Several nodes were also renamed at this point, to better reflect their content. Most significantly, however, a new highest-order level of nodes were introduced, reflecting the reorganization of all existing nodes into four generic node 'families'. This served to clarify the template at the first level of coding, and make its overall structure more coherent. These new 'supernodes' are the four first-order nodes appearing in the final data template.<sup>118</sup> This version of the template was subsequently further revised during the write-up of the template which appears in Chapters 7 to 10, during which close engagement with the template revealed possible improvements and refinements to its internal unity. Again, this revision was performed using the four means identified by King (1998).

The final significant stage of template revision constituted a final 'tidying up' of the template, primarily to address the anomalous existence of 'single child' nodes.<sup>119</sup> These nodes were either deleted, and their constituent coding incorporated into higher-order (typically 'parent') nodes, or moved to another more suitable location in the template.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> This revised version of the template is reproduced in Appendix 12.2.

<sup>118</sup> This revised version of the template is reproduced in Appendix 12.3.

<sup>119</sup> A 'single child' node is one which does not share its 'parent' node with any other node(s).

<sup>120</sup> This revised version of the template is the final data template reproduced in this chapter.

## **6.2 *Template presentation***

The analytical template is examined in four sections, corresponding to the four highest-order nodes and their respective ‘families’ of subnodes, appearing as separate devoted chapters.<sup>121</sup> Within each chapter, each constituent ‘child’ node is presented separately in the form of a narrative account of the data coded at the node, incorporating quotes from the data accompanied by a linking commentary. Nodes that are empty of coding can clearly not be presented in this way, and so do not appear in the following template presentation.

The presentation of individual nodes conforms to a standard format, adhering to the principles given in Figure 6.3.

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<sup>121</sup> Chapters 7 to 10.

- The presentation of each node begins with a 'mini-tree' diagram showing where it appears in the template. The node names used in these diagrams are expanded versions of the condensed node names used in the presentation of the full template.
- The 'mini-tree' node diagram is followed by a brief node summary appearing in a text box, constituting the researcher's summary of the interpretation of informant data presented at that node.
- Informant group membership is discussed only where significant from an examination of the data. Group membership is indicated in the identification of the speaker for each quote.<sup>122</sup>
- Subheadings used for clarity of presentation do not constitute further nodes.
- Inter-relation between nodes is indicated where significant, usually in footnotes.
- The correlation between the amount of data coded at a node and the length of its presentation is not always exact. Thus, more complex nodes may require more detailed presentation than others of similar size.
- The linking commentary accompanying direct quotes from informants always relates directly to the surrounding informant quotes, and should not be considered as being necessarily applicable or valid outside of that specific context. Similarly, node summaries, appearing in text boxes, should be read as distillations of informant perspective examined at a particular node. **Linking commentary and node summaries should not be read as necessarily explicitly reflective of the views of the researcher, but in the context of a representation of informant perspective.** Researcher interpretation of informant perspective is presented later, in Part IV of the thesis (Chapters 11 and 12).

**Figure 6.3 Principles of node presentation**

The final principle given in Figure 6.3 requires further comment. A clear distinction can not be made in this context between informant perspective, as apparently manifest in presented quotes, and the researcher's interpretation of that perspective. In selecting and presenting informant quotes, the researcher is inescapably providing the reader with an interpretation of the 'raw' data. The linking commentary appearing between informant quotes can, similarly, never be neutral. Nevertheless, a researcher must strive to ensure that any bias arising from his/her presentation of

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<sup>122</sup> Informant group membership was a secondary consideration in data analysis (see Section 4.7.1).

data is minimized. The researcher therefore seeks to suspend or 'bracket' any relevant personal perspectives in order to more fully access informants' perspectives.<sup>123</sup> In the present case, the statement of researcher perspective already given<sup>124</sup> indicates that the profile of the researcher as a non-designer is likely to minimize possible bias in this particular study. In addition, the research process, from data collection through to data presentation and analysis, was informed by a consciousness of the potentially damaging impact of any researcher bias. Thus, while complete researcher neutrality is impossible, the potential for undue bias is considered minimal in the present case.

Each of the following four chapters consists of the individual presentation of all 'child' nodes belonging to the highest-order 'parent' node featured in that chapter. This is followed by a concluding collective summary of all the nodes appearing in the chapter, which is itself briefly summarized in a text box.

In Part IV, empirical findings are synthesized with the argument of the earlier framework chapters appearing in Part I, and key aspects of the template to emerge from its detailed examination are discussed further.

### **6.3 Summary**

In this chapter, the final data template is reproduced in full. In addition, principles for the detailed presentation of the template in the next four chapters are given.

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<sup>123</sup> Section 4.3.3.

<sup>124</sup> Section 1.4.

# Chapter 7 : Template Presentation – design and the designed object

## 7.0 *Introduction*

This chapter examines the first of the four highest-order nodes in the analytical template in full, including all its 'child' nodes, as reproduced below. An overall summary of these nodes is given at the end of the chapter.

- (1) Design as of an object
  - (1 1) Function and aesthetics
  - (1 2) Design semantics
  - (1 3) Design value of the object

Figure 7.1 Node (1) including all 'child' nodes

## 7.1 *Of object*

### (1) Design as of an object

Design is considered at a basic level as relating to a designed 'object' (the thing that is designed), though that object need not have physical form. Design is seen in various senses as an aspect of this 'object'.

#### The types of things which are designed

The most immediately apparent way in which design is discussed in the informant sample is in relating to a designed 'object' of some kind. The assertion is made that design is ubiquitous in the human-made world.

"you walk out through your front door, and everything's designed, everything."  
(Designer-Agency 05:317-8)

"every single item, building, whatever, has all been designed by somebody."  
(User 32:887-8)

A classification of types of things which are designed is given:

"Things', well the things are communication, product, and environment, I would say, and people keep trying to stick other bits on the back of this, but I think they just make it too unclear."<sup>125</sup>  
(Promotion-General 28:465-7)

<sup>125</sup> This is a common categorization in the design literature; see Section 4.5.5.

While product and communication design here refer directly to physical 'objects' or entities, the design of an environment clearly becomes slightly more abstracted than attending solely to the physical form of the design output. Similarly, "process design", cited elsewhere in the dataset, indicates an application of design to the process of an item's manufacture (Education-Higher 07:304), as well as to the item itself. Discussion of what is perceived to be 'designed' in this way focuses in one case on the virtual domain represented by electronic media:

"I'm not sure if the consumer yet understands that things like computer games or whatever are actually designed."  
(Design-Staff 15:332-4)

Here, the lack of a tangible product, in the sense of a physical object, is considered problematic for the ascription of the adjective 'designed', and requires an acceptance that "a bit of design" can exist without having a physical form (Design-Staff 15:287).

Even where a physical designed object is present, it may be seen as part of a designed 'experience' which includes intangible elements:

"the sound of a brand, the smell of a brand, the touch of a brand, are all things that we are gonna have to design in."  
(Design-Agency 12:19-21)

### Aspects of an object

One informant in the User group focuses on the aspects of an 'object' which relate to its 'design'. Design is seen in terms of the decorative features of a building ("all the different designs over the door and the windows" (User 31:201-8)), a sense in which 'designs' are synonymous with "characteristics" (User 31:196). As a consequence, buildings lacking in such decoration are seen as lacking in design: "the bottom is quite an old look, got all your designs and everything, and then the top is quite new looking, and there's no design whatsoever, just plain buildings" (User 31:221-4).

A building also has 'a design', however, in the sense of an overall form and structure (User 31:423).

Design is, finally, seen as the activity through which buildings are formed or "designed" (User 31:760). In this sense, there are apparently degrees of designed-ness: "They tend to be the most designed buildings, is where pubs have moved into and taken over, and they see it like they can work the interior around" (User 31:500-2). Here, 'most designed' appears to indicate a degree of change and modification, as well as of decoration.

Wider discussion of the aspects of an object's design is, however, dominated by a dualistic distinction between function and aesthetics, as examined at node (1 1).

## 7.2 *Function-aesthetics*

### (1) Design as of an object     (1 1) Function and aesthetics

Functionality and aesthetics are presented as two essentially symbiotic, but discernibly distinct, aspects of a design. The relation between the two in specific cases may vary according to their relative primacy. Contrasting design approaches are identified, which emphasize either one of these aspects over (and potentially at the expense of) the other.

A prevalent distinction made across the dataset is expressed succinctly by one informant:

"When it comes to design, there are two things which immediately come to mind: function and aesthetic."  
(User 30:888-9)

These two aspects of an object, its functionality and its aesthetics, are seen as the major constituent elements of its design.<sup>126</sup> The distinction is given in more basic terms as the difference between (i) what an object does, and how well it works, and (ii) the way it looks and feels (e.g., Business-Production 06; Business-Production 11; Designer-Agency

16; Promotion-General 29). The aesthetic (and thus non-functional, within this framework) aspect of a building's design, specifically, is also expressed in wider experiential terms:

"it has got to be satisfying to those who use it, visually, as well as be comfortable when they're sat in it and doing whatever they have to do in it, or walking through it, or looking at pictures in it, whatever that function of the building might be."

(Designer-Agency 16:183-7)

"they have to be a fantastic place to be, they have to be a - lift the spirits, be a place that's exciting to go, a place you feel spiritually better off when you are in the building"

(Designer-Agency 19:347-9)

"you also need to look at the qualitative side of it - is there great space, does it make you feel happy or sad, do you feel elated in the building, or do you feel depressed in the building."

(Designer-Agency 19:353-6)

The two aspects of a design, its function and aesthetics, are seen as essentially linked, and the task of the designer then becomes to integrate them successfully in a design outcome.

"you can never separate those parts away from each other, and design is the process of linking them all together and finding a balance that is successful."

(Business-Production 11:38-40)

Or, more succinctly:

"designers are essentially trying to marry the human and the technical perspectives."

(Education-Higher 01:97-8)

The extent to which this "balancing act" (Business-Production 11:49) is achievable by an individual designer, or whether it involves expertise in professionally disparate functional and aesthetic design domains, relates to the issue of design generalism.<sup>127</sup>

The relative primacy of the functional and aesthetic aspects of a design is seen to differ, however, between cases. Thus, while the two are essentially linked, cases are discussed in which one assumes greater importance than the other.

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<sup>126</sup> This distinction relates directly to the one made between (i) design as an adjunct to art, and (ii) design as an adjunct to engineering, at node (2 1 1).

## Function over form

A number of scenarios are discussed in which functional considerations are the primary factors in a design. A functionalist design ethos is expressed in these terms:

"This is a – what has this gotta do? It's gotta radiate. [...] and for what it has to do, and for how it has to function, I thought it wasn't a bad attempt to fulfill the task. What can you do with a radiator?"  
(User 30:304-9)

Here, functional considerations are seen to override any conscious aesthetic input, expressed in what is perceived to be the bottom line, repeated elsewhere in the same account: "What can you do with a radiator?".

A distinction in perspective is evident here between design areas. In industrial and engineering design domains, as discussed by informants, aesthetic factors are seen as less significant:

"it doesn't matter what our perception of the object is: it's got a job, and it does it quite well."  
(Education-Higher 08:62-4)

"And they'd criticise you and say: 'Well, [...] I'd like it if it looked a bit smoother there, or a bit,' and in engineering terms, you say: 'Well, it works.'"  
(Business-Production 20:409-12)

The aesthetic aspect of a designed object is thus seen as being determined by primary functional considerations.

"I think we design products that work, first and foremost [...] our form evolves from the way we think about what the product has to do, rather than it being driven the other way."  
(Business-Production 11:232-44)

The "aesthetic content" of a product (Education-Higher 07:29) may also be determined by process factors and decisions made in manufacture, bluntly summed up as: "That's how it's made, that's why it looks like that." (Education-Higher 07:111)

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<sup>127</sup> See node (2 1 2).

A total inattention to form, however, and an exclusive focus on function, of course risks the generation of a design output which may be functional, but is perceived to be ugly or otherwise aesthetically deficient (User 32). In such cases, the balance between functional and aesthetic considerations, discussed above, has clearly not been achieved.

### **Form over function**

The converse of a primary focus on functional factors in design is, of course, a similarly primary focus on aesthetic factors. The possibility of isolating the aesthetic aspect of a design from its functional aspect for purposes of evaluation is maintained in the assessment of a car design on purely aesthetic grounds:

“There are other competitions where that vehicle will be judged on its drive, and they were judging its aesthetic beauty.”  
(Promotion-Design 23:85-6)

Here, performance criteria have no impact on an evaluation of what is aesthetically ‘good’ design.

An aesthetic design ethos is identified which directly opposes the functionalist approach just examined.

“I think Alessi and Philippe Starck are designing products that engage the emotion, and certainly possess a distinctly stronger stylistic and artistic element, and fashion element.”  
(Business-Production 11:234-6)

The relation between form and function expressed by this informant previously in a quote above (Business-Production 11:232-44) is altered here. Another informant comments similarly on Starck:

“I think what he does do is, he kind of pricks your emotion and makes you fall in love with something, whether it works or not, which is great, and his, some of his Thomson televisions, they’re all over the shop, they’re great fun.”  
(Designer-Freelance 21:117-20)

Design, on this view, becomes divorced from any significant functional evaluation.

"Whether it works or not, I don't give a damn. It's there, and it looks good, it's a piece – basically, I think the juicer, particularly, is just a piece of sculpture, which is fabulous."  
(Business-Retail 26:462-4)

Functionality (if not function *per se*) in design is here considered secondary to form.

This almost amounts to a perceived rejection of functional considerations in the designed artefact. An inattention to functionality, manifest to the extent that objects do not and are not required to function effectively, is not seen as problematic in these cases.<sup>128</sup> It is, however, at odds with the notion of a "balancing act" of functional and aesthetic design concerns advocated above (Business-Production 11:49).<sup>129</sup>

### 7.3 *Design semantics*

(1) Design as of an object  
    (1 2) Design semantics

A designed object participates in a communication of social meaning through its symbolic value. This meaning derives from both the designer and the consumer.

Beyond a concern with their functional and aesthetic aspects,<sup>130</sup> designed objects are also seen as communicators of social meaning.<sup>131</sup> An interest in this aspect of design is expressed by one informant as:

"looking at what the product communicates, in a sort of symbolic sense, as well as what it does in a performance sense."  
(Education-Higher 07:418-20)

Here, the symbolic aspect of a design is dissociated from its functional aspects, such that what it *communicates* is dissociated from what it *does*.

Several examples of symbolic communication by design are given:

"we had an image, on an early version of [bank], where we had a series of V's [outlines on table] for the structure, pointed down, and they thought that was,

<sup>128</sup> The opposing view is taken by another informant: "something which doesn't function to the best effect, and is made for aesthetics and not function, is already badly designed" (User 30:346-7).

<sup>129</sup> The evaluation of design is examined in detail at node (4 2 2).

<sup>130</sup> Examined at node (1 1).

<sup>131</sup> See discussion of product semantics (Section 2.2.1).

the feng shui of that was money running off down the hill and into the harbour and away, and the bank would go bankrupt.”  
(Designer-Agency 19:248-52)

One vivid example describes another bank:

“Look what it does to the human psyche - it says: ‘We are all powerful mammon, and we are taking over the world’ (laughs). It’s the modern cathedral to money. [...] in saying that: ‘We are here, and you are an ant, crawling at our service’ (laughs).”  
(User 30:179-84)

In contrast, the effect can be one of anthropomorphism:

“But I had to get that one ‘cause it looked really cute. Especially the design of the building, the way it just looks like a building with a big hat on, to me. ‘Cause the roofing, it looks really sweet the way it’s rounded round, and it’s all black. It looks like it’s got a little brim, that’s why it reminds me of a hat.”  
(User 31:918-22)

The symbolic aspect of design relates to the notion of iconicity, used by one informant to signify the way in which an ‘iconic’ design “becomes something more than the intrinsic value of itself”, despite a perceived lack of aesthetic beauty (Designer-Agency 16:284-5). Elsewhere, however, symbolism, in the form of possession of the native national character of its place of production, is seen as part of the “aesthetic content” of a design. (Education-Higher 07:17)

The notion of symbolic communication taking place in the case of a particular design infers the involvement of both a communicator and ‘communicatee’. The communicator in this case is the designer, and the act of communication through design is seen by one informant as core in the design activity:

“I thought I’d start the ball rolling by saying: ‘Okay, so what message do you want this product to give off? What do you want it to say? Thinking about what it’s gonna look like, what message do you want it to give?’ I thought, for me that was the simplest possible question. That was the most stripped-down, stripping the whole design thing down to the absolute bare minimum, just saying: ‘Think about messages. Think about what is it you want this thing to tell your customers?’”  
(Education-Higher 01:887-94)

Here, the designer consciously considers the semantic content of the product. This notion is developed elsewhere in terms of the designer “communicat[ing] the thought

in the end products" (Designer-Freelance 21:360), where 'the thought' here denotes the conceptual basis of the product.

The notion of designer intention here, of the designer consciously manipulating the semantic content of a product, is manifest in the use of design styles for explicit communication to the consumer.

"why are prawn cocktail crisps always pink? Well it's not because they look nice in pink, it's because people now understand that pink means prawn cocktail"  
(Designer-Agency 12:490-2)

Interestingly, and in contrast to an association of semantic content with aesthetics, the specific use of colour here is seen as a functional factor. Symbolic communication in design is thus seen as both an aesthetic and functional issue within the data.

Focus on the designer as the active communicator in design is complemented by consideration of the significance of semantics in the consumption of the designed object. The act of purchase and ownership is seen to have symbolic content: "you're making a statement by the kettle you buy" (Promotion-Design 23:300). This statement relates to the personal identity of the individual consumer:

"it says something about someone: 'I am - I'm hip, I'm trendy, I know what's what, I know what's in.'  
(Business-Retail 26:456-8)

"it's part of your image, and part of your, how you want people to perceive you: 'This is the sort of taste I've got.' 'This is me, basically,' really, i'n't it?"  
(User 32:558-60)

The symbolism of product design, on these terms of contribution to self image, is seen by one informant as the source of product differentiation by the consumer (Promotion-Media 24). In this sense, product design is appropriated by the consumer for

semantic purposes which may or may not coincide with the semantic intentions of the designer.<sup>132</sup>

## 7.4 Design value

### (1) Design as of an object

#### (1 3) Design value of the object

Designed artefacts have an inherent non-monetary 'design value', based on the extent to which they provide a perceived genuine benefit. This design value is not seen as necessarily synonymous with monetary value or financial expense.

"a designer is not employed, in my view, to make something look pretty [...] They're there to add value."  
(Designer-Agency 12:117-9)

'Value' is used here in the economic sense of 'value added', measurable in monetary terms. Designed artefacts are, however, also spoken of as having an inherent non-monetary 'design value'.

"every recent design-build project we've been involved in, when we've been (inaud) to the contractor, as the designer, we have found that the building's ended up as a cheaper version, and, as such, cheaper in design terms. The value has been de-valued."  
(Designer-Agency 16:461-5)

"things look like they do for a reason, they have meaning, and then they get devalued, because they get produced incorrectly, badly, cheaply, with no understanding."  
(Promotion-Media 24:355-8)

Design value, in this sense, is determined by the extent to which product realization is faithful to the designer's original vision, contained in the initial design.

Design value also applies to the extent to which a product provides a genuine benefit, or satisfaction of a genuine need. When this is perceived not to be the case, the reaction is

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<sup>132</sup> Discussion of the semantic aspect of the consumption of design relates to discussion of the 'designer' label at node (4 1 2).

"Well, yeah, they're quite seductive little gadgets, but the world is no better off, people owning these things are no better off for having them. Their lives are slightly more stylish, but they are all ephemeral objects. They're all things we could actually do without."

(Education-Higher 01:103-7)

Design is here differentiated from 'style', the latter understood in the sense of "the very superficial side of 'what things look like'" (Promotion-Media 24:251). Genuine design value, in contrast, is provided when design is "used to improve things, whether it be to improve the feeling of space, or functionality, or whatever." (Designer-Agency 12:485-6)

There is debate in the data as to whether "good design costs money" (Designer-Agency 16:390-1), that is: more so than bad design. For some this is not the case:

"there's always this illusion that good architecture costs a lot of money. It doesn't. You can get a decent piece of architecture for the same amount of money as a crap piece of architecture"

(Designer-Agency 19:413-5)

Good design is thus not synonymous with expensive design. However, while "opulence doesn't necessarily produce good design" (Designer-Agency 16:412-3), good design does cost money in the sense of value for money:

"I think, on the other hand, you do have to pay for good design. I think good design costs money. I don't think it costs a lot of money - I'm not talking about extravagance here, I'm talking about VALUE for money, and I think if you want something which is of VALUE, you've got to be prepared to pay that bit more for it."

(Designer-Agency 16:389-94)

Good design therefore costs money in that all design, good and bad, costs money.

This last informant does, however, gravitate more to the view that design value requires a base level of financial input.

## 7.5 Summary

Design relates to a designed 'object'. Discussion of an object's design focuses on (i) function and aesthetics, and (ii) design semantics. In addition, a designed artefact has a 'design value', based on provision of benefit.

- Design is considered at a basic level as relating to a designed 'object' (the thing that is designed), though that object need not have physical form. Design is seen in various senses as an aspect of this 'object'.
- Functionality and aesthetics are presented as two essentially symbiotic, but discernibly distinct, aspects of a design. The relation between the two in specific cases may vary according to their relative primacy. Contrasting design approaches are identified, which emphasize either one of these aspects over (and potentially at the expense of) the other.
- A designed object participates in a communication of social meaning through its symbolic value. This meaning derives from both the designer and the consumer, such that the semantic intentions of the designer may not coincide with the appropriation of product design for semantic purposes by the consumer.
- Designed artefacts have an inherent non-monetary 'design value', based on the extent to which they provide a perceived genuine benefit. This design value is not seen as necessarily synonymous with monetary value or financial expense.

## **Chapter 8 : Template Presentation – design as an activity**

### **8.0 Introduction**

This chapter examines the second of the four highest-order nodes in the analytical template in full, including all its 'child' nodes, as reproduced below. An overall summary of these nodes is given at the end of the chapter.

- (2) Design as an activity
  - (2 1) Design as a single discipline
    - (2 1 1) Design domains
    - (2 1 2) Design generalism
  - (2 2) Design as a commercial activity
    - (2 2 1) Designer accountability
      - (2 2 1 1) Accountability to the client
      - (2 2 1 2) Designing for the consumer
      - (2 2 1 3) Communicating to others
    - (2 2 2) Design as a competitive strategy
    - (2 2 3) Designing for profit
  - (2 3) Design as a creative activity
    - (2 3 1) Creativity and design process
    - (2 3 2) Designing and making
    - (2 3 3) Originality of design outcome
  - (2 4) Design as a manageable process
    - (2 4 1) Codifying design
    - (2 4 2) Design and the organization

Figure 8.1 Node (2) including all 'child' nodes.<sup>133</sup>

### **8.1 Design domains**

- (2) Design as an activity
  - (2 1) Design as a single discipline
    - (2 1 1) Design domains

Design is seen as a complex rather than homogenous discipline, comprised of distinct domains. A general dichotomy is identified between (i) design allied to art, and (ii) design allied to technology and engineering. Conflicting understandings as to the nature and practice of design are manifest between the two sides of this divide. The erosion of barriers between design domains introduces the possibility of design generalism.

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<sup>133</sup> 'Empty' nodes containing no coding are shown in engraved font.

Design is seen as a complex rather than homogenous discipline, comprised of distinct domains. This is evident in an expansion in the range of design areas recognized by two professional design bodies represented by informants in the study (Promotion-Design 23; Promotion-Design 25):

"It covers all design disciplines, and they increase as design stretches out and reaches into new areas, so it includes website design, multi-media digital stuff, and who knows what tomorrow."

(Promotion-Design 25:5-8)

Comprehensive lists of specific design domains are not offered by informants, beyond a cursory indication of the range involved: "the whole of the design industry, from engineering through to architecture and fashion and all of those things" (Promotion-Media 22:422-3), or specific comparisons (e.g., between product and industrial design (Education-Higher 08)). Rather, the basis on which disciplinary distinctions are commonly made is discussed, in terms of a general dichotomy between (i) design allied to art, and (ii) design allied to technology and engineering. This distinction is particularly discussed in an educational context:

"We have two main strands in design here. We have people who do applied art in their work (inaud), and we have people doing design for industry, industrial design."

(Education-Higher 01:766-8)

The several other informants recognizing this distinction regard it contrastingly. One expresses a preference for "design being in an art and design environment [...] rather than an engineering environment" (Education-Higher 08:344-5), while nevertheless recognizing that the latter is equally "appropriate" (380). A second informant perceives a general bias in this direction, such that "the design industry [...] are predominantly art school trained design personnel, as opposed to engineering trained design personnel" (Promotion-General 29:190-3), which has negative implications for this informant in terms of a general neglect of the latter. This educational dichotomy is, further, seen as generally unhelpful:

"If you look at the terminology for the activity [design] within the educational process, it is either confused with being art and design courses, or design and technology courses. That very much splits it down the middle, so nobody actually knows what design is. It's an add-on to art, and it's very creative, or it's a prelude to technology, and therefore it's very mechanical. And it doesn't give design a credibility, even at the starting point in education by saying: the study is design, these are lessons in design, not art and design, and not design and technology."

(Promotion-Design 27:288-97)<sup>134</sup>

The factionalism hinted at is manifest in contrasting ideas of what 'design' signifies in different domains.

"Well it is interesting that, for instance, 'design' in engineering has a completely different meaning from 'design' in design (laughs)."

(Education-Higher 01:688-9)

The informant here is from an industrial design background, which may specifically constitute the design domain referred to. Another informant, this time from an engineering design background, similarly identifies contrasting design understandings in two different domains:

"If you're art school trained, then you think design is all about aesthetics. If you're trained as a graduate engineer, then you think that design is all about function: electronics, mechanical, electrical, whatever."

(Promotion-General 29:258-61)<sup>135</sup>

Professional background is thus a key consideration in evaluating any statement of design perspective.<sup>136</sup>

A situation of particular disciplinary affiliations, along the lines indicated, is thus accompanied by clear differences in view, and "fundamental difference[s] in understanding" (Education-Higher 01:803) around the nature and practice of design.<sup>137</sup> The possibility of traversing these barriers as an individual is discussed guardedly by one informant, in terms of personal empathy with the perspective of others.

<sup>134</sup> The statement that "nobody actually knows what design is" relates directly to discussion of the ambiguity and multiplicity of meaning of 'design' examined at node (4 1 4).

<sup>135</sup> The distinction between function and aesthetics is examined at node (1 1).

<sup>136</sup> Design and craft are similarly differentiated as distinct domains of practice at node (2 3 2).

<sup>137</sup> One informant speaks of a "design community", while emphasizing that such a conglomeration does not have "a single unified voice" (Promotion-Media 22:145-6).

"Of course, I would always believe, colleagues that I agree with would always believe, that WE are open minded, we have a sense of what THOSE people are about - why can't they understand what we're about? And no doubt they would say the same (laughing)."  
(Education-Higher 01:770-4)

The informant is thus wary of thinking empathy entirely possible in this context:

"You think you know, or you think you're being sympathetic and sensitive and all the rest. But actually, you're still missing the point."  
(Education-Higher 01:802-4)

Nevertheless, the possibility of designers working across disciplinary boundaries is discussed in positive terms. Informants observe a "blurring" (Designer-Agency 12:89) and "merging" (Promotion-Design 27:120) of barriers between design disciplines, opening up the increasing possibility of the individual designer practicing across several design domains (e.g., "crossing the boundary between graphics and product" design (Business-Production 09:276)).<sup>138</sup> This apparent widening of design practice is seen as the consequence of both a reduction in the need for domain-specific skills due to the availability of increasingly sophisticated technology in design tools (Designer-Agency 12), and greater pressure from clients for multi-disciplinary design expertise (Promotion-Design 27). This last notion of design generalism, in terms of a capability in several disciplines, is, however, rejected by one informant. While recognising the non-domain-specific nature of clients' demands, and that "the walls are coming down between disciplines" (Promotion-Design 25:20), this informant maintains that this is actually evident in cross-disciplinary collaboration, rather than individual design generalism.

"So I wouldn't use the word 'generalist', I would say that they're working across disciplines and in partnership. I'd find some other way of putting that."  
(Promotion-Design 25: 57-9)

According to this view, barriers between design domains are thus still applicable to individual designer capability, but surmountable through inter-domain collaboration.

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<sup>138</sup> Design and advertising (Designer-Agency 12; Promotion-Design 23), and design and fine art (Education-Further 02; Education-Further 04), are similarly discussed as becoming convergent.

The possibility of true design generalism, in the sense of a transferable personal capability and method, is however discussed in some depth across the data, as examined at node (2 1 2).

## 8.2 *Design generalism*

- (2) Design as an activity
  - (2 1) Design as a single discipline
  - (2 1 2) Design generalism**

Design generalism is discussed with differing degrees of emphasis on the implications of domain specific factors. In general, true generalism, in the sense of equal professional capability across multiple disciplines, is thought beyond the individual designer. A generalist design service is in this case provided through designer collaboration, and the combination of design specialisms.

Informant discussion of design generalism can be seen to focus on the extent to which domain specific skills and knowledge inhibit capability across multiple disciplines. Where domain specific factors are not thought prohibitive, design generalism is considered possible, and the individual designer may have a generalist capability. Conversely, where domain specific factors are thought prohibitive, true generalism is considered unfeasible.

The basis of a generalism in design activity is presented in the form of discussion of a common, transferable design process. This core process, applicable across design domains, is described in a number of ways. A common accountability to a client and client brief is seen as the defining factor by some informants:<sup>139</sup>

“I think the same thing applies. It’s like: there’ll be a client, there’ll be a product, there’ll be a market. Or there’ll be a client, no product and a market. The same thing. You have a problem, or an opportunity. You match the needs of the client to the market.”  
(Education-Further 04:318-21)

“I think the process is the same, whatever it is. I think you just, you always work, away from a brief, and thinking of the site, thinking about cost, programme, design, all at the same time.”  
(Designer-Agency 19:47-9)

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<sup>139</sup> Examined in detail at node (2 2 1 1).

The need to adapt when moving between disciplines is seen by one informant as no greater than the need to adapt to the requirements of any particular brief (Designer-Freelance 13:167). A design approach is therefore advocated which focuses primarily on a particular formulation of client needs, expressed in a brief:

"basically what we're interested in first and foremost is: 'What is the client's issue? What is it that they're looking for a solution to?'"  
(Designer-Agency 05:561-3)

Beyond accountability to the client, the actual nature of a common design process is examined. References to the development of a design "eye" (Education-Higher 14:71-3), and use of a common "shaping process" (Promotion-General 28:469-72), are complemented by the notion of a conceptual design ability which transcends domain specific issues.

"the more I see what architects are doing, they're doing exactly the same as what good designers are doing [...] and it's just the mediums they're using. The mediums and the vocabulary which they're using, and the things that they focus on are different, but that's all"  
(Education-Higher 08:164-9)

Similarly,

"My own thinking is that there's a philosophical and intellectual approach to a designer, which means that they should be able to work, from a creative point of view, in many areas of design."  
(Promotion-Design 27:148-51)

In the latter case, this common approach is seen in terms of "the practice of identifying and solving problems" (145-6). Domain specific factors are still significant, however, relating to the "craft-based activities" (Promotion-Design 27:153) and ability to work in specific mediums and materials (Education-Higher 08) which constitute having a design specialism. It is these domain specific capabilities, complementing a generalist design capability, however that is conceived, which prevent designers from being "Leonardos" (Promotion-Design 27:154), that is: equally capable across disciplines.<sup>140</sup> One informant's experience in employing design consultants appears to support this view.

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<sup>140</sup> This distinction between conceptual and medium-based design abilities is examined in more detail at node (2 3 1).

"The difficulty is that [...] they're designing paper clips one day, calculators the next day, cups the next day, telephones the next day. Some of the product areas are so radically different, that they could never hope to get a massive expertise in them."

(Business-Production 06:249-53)

Interestingly, the designers themselves in this case are presented as thinking they *could* successfully operate in all these areas. A difference in perception clearly existed in this case as it is discussed by the informant, between the scepticism of the project manager (the informant here) and the apparent confidence of the designers regarding their generalist capability.

There is strong advocacy of the designer-as-generalist position elsewhere in the data, particularly in one informant's claim to be "media neutral" as a designer (Designer-Agency 05:564) within a focus on the client brief:

"the media, the resulting media is driven by what the solution is to the client's issue. You just choose the most appropriate solution."

(Designer-Agency 05:568-70)

This informant takes the notion of design generalism to its conclusion:

"I think if you get a creative person, and say to them: 'Today I want you to design some step ladders. You did a brochure yesterday, but today I want you to look at some step ladders for me.' If they've got that right, if they're made of the right stuff, they'll do an awesome job on it, whatever it is that you put in front of them."

(Designer-Agency 05:571-6)

"We are designers. What do - do you want a radiator? What do you want?"  
(amused)."

(Designer-Agency 05:651-2)

The informant also acknowledges, however, that his bold vision of design generalism may not be shared by the client, who retains a preconception that a designer's portfolio indicates the type of work for which he/she may be employable:

"Designers? Oh, what kind of design? Are you a exhibition designer, a broadcast designer, a graphic designer, a.."

(Designer-Agency 05:648-9)

Recognition of the designer as a generalist is not perceived to be currently forthcoming from the client.

A tension is therefore evident here. An emphasis on domain specific constraints is attributed to the client, of which Informant 06 just quoted above may be counted one in this context. Conversely, a faith in the primacy of creativity and the ability of the creative designer to overcome those constraints, thereby fulfilling the identified 'Leonardo' type, is held by designers themselves. A desire to work across disciplines is identified as a definite motivation for a designer:

"I think it's typical of designers, they always want to work in an area that they haven't worked in before, or that they have always wanted to work in but the world hasn't given them the work."  
(Designer-Freelance 21:36-9)

As this quote implies, however, the fulfillment of this desire is dependent upon other (notably, client) factors.

Not all designers within the sample support the 'generalist' view, however. The value of having individual specialisms, which can then be combined in response to a brief, is cited:

"[to] use a surface pattern influenced person to do giftwrap makes good sense, and to do a person with a card design background to do cards makes good sense, but they need associates in their teams that can do different things, like packaging, and like product design, like retail display and merchandising"  
(Business-Production 09:262-7)

"for a quality result [...] you need people working on different areas."  
(Education-Higher 14:118-20)

Specialism is seen to derive from the specific nature of a designer's training and experience (Designer-Agency 16), with the consequence that effective design generalism is considered attainable by some informants only through the collaboration of specialisms. Thus, while the design offer made to the client may be generalist, or appear so, it is in fact comprised of the combination of individual specialisms. This is demonstrated clearly in the account of one informant:

"Quite honestly, we're just a multi-discipline design agency, who will look at anything."  
(Designer-Freelance 13:158-9)

"corporate ID: 'I'm an interior designer'; a website: 'I'm an interior designer'. You just don't do it. You're a designer, first and foremost, and I'm tranna build up that backing in here that we can deal with everything. If it was just me on my own I couldn't do it, I'd have to say: 'No,' and just specialise. But now I just want the backing of more people, like I say, [name], so that we can tackle just about everything."

(Designer-Freelance 13:529-35)

In this case, while the client may approach or 'employ' one designer, the work may be done by one or more of that designer's associates. Generalism is here simply a professional façade employed to gain work that would not otherwise be obtainable.

"So I don't try and restrict myself to interior design. If somebody says – like, one of my ex-colleagues said: 'I need some mousemats doing.' 'Yeah, fine.' Do it. You just say: 'Yeah.' [...] But I don't design a mousemat. I'll get a graphic designer to do it. But in front of the client, yes, I have to give that perception: that I will, that I am capable of doing it and have done it millions of times before."

(Designer-Freelance 10:65-91)<sup>141</sup>

Nevertheless, specialization is also seen negatively, specifically by two informants working in design support and promotion.

"it used to be that a designer was a designer; now you're a packaging designer, or you're a digital designer, or products - there's too much specialization for me."

(Promotion-Media 22:309-11)

The negative connotation around specialization here is that it engenders disciplinary insularity, with designers uninterested in events and issues beyond their specific professional domain, which ignorance may in turn prove to be professionally harmful. Disciplinary insularity is seen as a particular danger in design education, such that design graduates are effectively handicapped professionally by an exclusive focus on a narrow design area.

"You've got the brand new 21 year olds coming out, and they go: 'I want to be a website designer.' Because that's what they've done for three years. You've got a product designer who wants to just do trains. Because the only way they could get through their course was to kind of specialize."

(Promotion-Design 23:425-9)

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<sup>141</sup> Emphasis on collaboration rather than individual generalism relates to discussion of design as a group activity, examined at node (3 4).

Here, a fear is expressed that the demands made of the designer in the workplace will require a generalism which he/she does not possess and, moreover, is incapable of gaining. A similar position is articulated elsewhere, in the identification of “a mismatch between how design is being taught in colleges and universities, in disciplines, in the UK, and how the clients that they hope to work for perceive design and what it does.” (Promotion-Design 25:27-30) A generalist client requirement is not adequately served by a narrowly specialist design service. The advocated appropriate response here, however, is the collaboration between specialisms just discussed, rather than personal design generalism.<sup>142</sup>

### ***8.3 Design as a commercial activity***

(2) Design as an activity

(2 2) Design as a commercial activity.

Design is recognized as an overtly commercial activity. This commerciality is seen as problematic, however, particularly in relation to notions of creativity and the preservation of non-commercial design ideals.

Design is discussed variously as a business, a business sector, and an industry.

Design is thus recognized as an overtly commercial activity. This is unequivocally asserted by one informant:

“Design is not fine art, it is always in a context, and that context is always commercial. [...] design is a naked commercial activity.”  
(Promotion-Design 25:203-9)

The value of design, on this view, must be appreciated “within a commercial structure” (Promotion-Design 27:259-60). This involves an evaluation of design in purely commercial terms:

“I suppose that’s where we start getting onto a some sort of bottom line of how things convert between design and commerce.”  
(Business-Production 09:325-7)

Nevertheless, design is also essentially creative, such that creativity is seen as “the thing that makes design different from a lot of other businesses.” (Promotion-Media 22:45-6)

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<sup>142</sup> This point is also discussed in the conclusion of the examination of node (2 1 1).

Commercial evaluation of design as a business is therefore a case of commercially accounting for this creativity:

"this is a business take on a creative process, so we're actually translating it into numbers"  
(Promotion-Media 22:119-20)

The need for a conversion or translation of design's value into economic terms suggests that such a commercial evaluation is to some extent secondary, and that any primary evaluation would perhaps be made in terms of creativity. Certainly, two competing evaluative frameworks are identified, in terms of (i) artistic value and (ii) suitability as a commercial product (Business-Production 09). The relation between creative and commercial evaluations of design may therefore be problematic.

A combination of creative and commercial motivations is seen as necessary for the individual designer.

"Design is, for most, it's going to be some sort of commercial role, isn't it? It's gonna be related to commerce, one way or another."  
(Promotion-General 28:550-2)

This combination of creative and commercial aspects in the designer is indicated by use of the title "commercial artist" for a designer (Designer-Freelance 21; Promotion-Media 22).

However, this combination is not always in evidence:

"I just don't think that students make enough – students, when they're graduating, have got the balance of this creativity versus commerciality"  
(Promotion-General 28:552-4)

This lack of commercial focus is particularly evident in the case of a design student who fails to relate her practice as a creative craftsman to a professional role  
(Education-Further 04).

The commercialism of design is clearly a not unproblematic concept for the informants, particularly so when design is considered in relation to the notion of consumerism. Concerns about commercialism as the driving force behind design are expressed most forcefully by a design educator:

"One of my issues, for me, way, way, way back, with the whole business of art and design, was: did I see it as some kind of heavily commercial thing? Oh, issues about manipulation, issues about advertising, issues about the whole consumer thing. How did I use that? How would I want to use that? Did I want to see art and design, and design, particularly in other contexts - did I want to have a sort of utopian ideal of design used as a way to enhance and improve environments, learning opportunities, and so on?"  
(Education-Further 02:209-16)

A consumer-driven approach to design is here seen as potentially compromising non-commercial design ideals.<sup>143</sup> The same concern is shared by a second educator, who argues that an emphasis on consumerism results in designers' attention being focused on areas of the market which require it less than others, with the effect that "what we're doing is endlessly recycling products that were arguably perfectly okay."  
(Education-Higher 01:163-5) The ideal scenario is thus one in which design is applied to those areas which need it most.

"the sort of thing we do here, we're still perhaps in the Raymond Loewy territory in some respects, in that we ARE looking for new opportunities, and we're working with people who haven't used design before, and the products are, could carry a lot of improvement."  
(Education-Higher 01:624-8)

Commercialism is therefore seen as an essential but not unproblematic consideration in design.

## 8.4 *Designer accountability*

- (2) Design as an activity
  - (2 2) Design as a commercial activity
    - (2 2 1) Designer accountability

Informant discussion of accountability in design focuses on the question of *who* the designer is designing for. The designer may design primarily for him/herself, or for others. While being a commercial necessity, accountability to others, manifest in the design brief, imposes constraints on the designer which may be considered problematic.

<sup>143</sup> But not necessarily so: "some of the design that is consumer-driven is of still very good quality, and I think we're still producing some bloody shit-hot designs. Let's not - we shouldn't undervalue that." (Education-Further 02:543-6)

## Designing for others

Discussion of the notion of accountability in the data focuses on the question of who the designer is designing for (Education-Further 02).<sup>144</sup>

In the first instance, the aspiring designer may see design as a self-satisfying activity.

"they'll also be saying to us, as a lot do: 'I want to do art and design,' which means: 'I want to do what I want to do. I don't want to do what you want me to do.'" (Education-Further 02:784-7)

As a basic principle, however, designer accountability is about the designer looking beyond an entirely personal perspective, to "designing things which are not about themselves." (Education-Higher 08:332-33) The necessity for such accountability is, at root, commercial.

"It would seem to me to be an abnegation of my responsibility, in either sense, if (a) I said to a designer, or a would-be designer: 'You're not answerable to anybody. It doesn't matter. You can go in there and play and do your own thing, and they'll beat a path to your door.' Because they sure as hell won't."

(Education-Further 02:801-6)

It is thus incumbent on the designer to actively consider for whom he/she is designing, i.e., his/her "market" (Education-Further 02:195). Similarly:

"designers have to meet other people's requirements and understanding, they have to match their skills and creativity. So they answer a problem on behalf of someone else, and match it to a particular market."

(Education-Further 04:249-51)

This active consideration of requirements other than the designer's own is contained in the notions of transparency and accessibility, such that design and its outcomes are directly available to and comprehensible by others beyond the actual designer (Education-Higher 08; Designer-Freelance 21). Adherence to specifications in a design brief ensures that "their [designers'] art becomes more of a designed object. It's kind of like finishing it off, in a way, or making it make sense." (Designer-Staff 15:372-3) Design that 'makes sense' is intelligible to the consumer and, crucially, therefore saleable.

The basic premise behind the notion of designer accountability is thus that

"There's no point being creative and only wanting to please yourself, there's no point."  
(Education-Further 04:302-3)

Accountability, manifest in (i) the issue of who sets the design brief (Education-Further 04), and (ii) the need for justification and explanation of the designer's response to that brief (Designer-Agency 19), is seen as what differentiates design from fine art, and the designer from the artist.

Interestingly, the position presented thus far is linked almost exclusively to informants from design education. Accountability is a more difficult issue for designers in the data, however. One designer response is resigned acceptance:

"you can get very upset, and I did, trust me. I was like: 'Oh. This is - I don't wanna be a designer anymore,' got very disillusioned with it, to be honest with you. But then you learn just to be a bit more detached about it and, not to care less, but to take it less personal."  
(Designer-Freelance 10:339-43)

Professional necessity here overrides the personal preferences and ideals of the designer. This acceptance of the yoke of client or employee opinion is not shared by all designers in the data, some of whom unashamedly maintain a more selfish design agenda. One informant recalls his own youthful attitude:

"I found myself backtracking from this stool, as it were, saying: 'Oh, graphic design. That's marketing. That's - marketing by definition is manipulation. It's a dirty word. I don't want to know about that. Thank you very much. Bugger off.'"  
(Education-Further 02:601-4)

Such an explicit rejection of accountability is tempered elsewhere in the data, however. In response to the direct question 'who do you feel you're designing for?', one designer relies:

"We used to just design for selectors at [company B], which was infuriating [...] But now we design for the customer, for the actual [company B] shopper, because.. firstly, I suppose we design for ourselves, we do do things that we really like"  
(Designer-Staff 15:216-23)

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<sup>144</sup> The parallel question of *why* the designer designs is examined separately at node (3 2).

The migration in perspective within this quote is from an 'infuriating' answerability to a client-employer (as accepted by Informant 10 above), to a more personal motivation and apparent lack of clear answerability. This latter position is to some extent shared by an architect in the informant sample:

"There's no point in trying to second guess, trying to design something around what you think other people are going to think about. You've just got to do what you think's right. Whether people like it or not is not important, really. As long as the people you do it for like it."

(Designer-Agency 19:368-71)

The designer is not here designing solely for him/herself, evident in the recognition of the client, yet primary personal accountability is seen as the pragmatic response to the recognition that "you can only satisfy most of the people most of the time" (Designer-Agency 19:364-5). The idea of designing for oneself is, however, seen to persist in an affection for the title "industrial artist" by the hypothetical designer who, while rejecting the total lack of accountability evident in the "prima donna artist", nevertheless "probably considers himself to be an artist of sorts." (Promotion-Design 27:178-84)<sup>145</sup> Similarly, the phrases "artistic integrity" (Business-Production 09:333) and "artistic license" (Designer-Freelance 13:275) are used unapologetically in the data in relation to designers, rather than artists.

It is clear, therefore, that personal satisfaction remains a primary concern for the designer.

"the creative side of an architect is important, therefore he has to get some stimulus and satisfaction out of the exercise he is doing"

(Designer-Agency 16:174-6)

Similarly, the designer seeks reward beyond the recognition of those to whom he/she is directly accountable.

"it's the recognition of their peers that drives designers and creative teams, more, I think, than the recognition of the punter."

(Promotion-Design 23:242-4)

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<sup>145</sup> Use of the 'commercial artist' title is discussed at node (2 2).

“you can't blame an architect – for goodness' sake, he wants to make a name for himself, for one thing – so you can't blame him for making a bold statement”  
(User 30:219-21)

Personal recognition by other designers, and a wider audience, respectively, are seen as important motivations for the designer.

### Constraints: the design brief

Inherent in the notion of accountability is the idea of constraints on design and the designer. The degree of freedom allowed the designer is contained in the design brief.

A design brief, in the form of a project specification to which the designer must work, allows the designer “to begin with the end in mind” (Education-Further 04:73). On one view, the existence of a brief is seen positively, in that it offers clear guidelines to which the designer must work.

“so much easier for me to have a brief, and to know that there's a client, there's a brief, the challenge is meeting it. To have no brief, the emptiness of that, and never knowing if it was right, never feeling that you came to a finish on it. Where at least with a client and a job, either the money's run out or the time's run out.”

(Education-Further 04:511-16)

The informant here identifies the twin constraints of the time and money available to the designer in responding to a brief. Financial constraint is manifest in the existence of a budget:

“First thing you've gotta do is put a fee structure together. [...] you've got to say: 'Well, what am I gonna give the client for that money?’”  
(Designer-Freelance 10:149-52)

A budget immediately limits the possibilities available to the designer. Equally, the imposition of a deadline provides a similar focus:

“there are some briefs that I set that are not about client and market, but much more about experimentation, composition, or whatever, and those ones floor the students [...] because it's so open. That floors them, but, if they've got just two or three days on a brief like that, that's fine, it's long enough, and it gives them - they know it's going to come to an end, because it's never ending you can always change it, can't you?”  
(Education-Further 04:620-7)

The informant is here describing a brief set in an artificial educational context, but the presence of a deadline has a similarly galvanizing effect in normal professional circumstances:

"you do your first idea that comes into your head, generally, or maybe the second, but you don't sit around for days going: 'her-hum,' (agonising). [...] You find that pressure forces you into an idea."  
(Designer-Freelance 10:177-82)

"a website doesn't take six months, it takes six days, sort of thing. We need to get it in, out, get the cash in, and get onto another one: in and out, you know [strikes table while speaking]."  
(Designer-Freelance 13:302-5)

The pressure imposed by tight working deadlines is also seen negatively, however, in that it restricts the potential for exploration within the design activity, and thus limits the design outcome.<sup>146</sup>

"If I have to say to you: 'Right, this is consumer driven [...] Zip along, cos this is the only time we've bloody got mate,' you're not gonna have the time in there to look at the no man's land, and look at the other things that are going on, in that weird gloaming out there. You're not gonna be able to think to yourself: 'What do I mean by lad culture?' We short term, we cliché. We have to."  
(Education-Further 02:985-92)

The most likely outcome of such 'shortcutting' (Education-Further 02) is "knee jerk" design:

"So, what normally happens, I would say, in the average design job [...] they get a good designer, good flair, to give it their first best guess, and that's it, job done, because they'll have two weeks to do it in. And there's no time to do anything that is more profound than a quick knee jerk scribble."  
(Designer-Freelance 21:395-400)

The existence of a budget and a deadline are thus seen as constraining factors on design. Equally, the existence of a design brief (with its associated constraints) of any kind may itself be resented.

"All designers dream of just an open brief, just: 'There's a, there's a space, fill it.'"  
(Designer-Agency 05:31-2)

A tension is identified here, "between commercialism and being up our own arse, if you like: just doing it for ourselves." (Designer-Agency 05:155-6) This tension is not necessarily resolved in the favour of the client or the brief:

"you have to explain: 'What's going on here?' 'What's the underlying strategy? Or message?' And, to be honest, there's part of me that'd just like to say: 'Oh, fuck off. If you can't see it, don't..' (amused)." (Designer-Agency 05:208-11)

The whole idea of accountability is clearly seen as problematic here. This resentment is perhaps fuelled by an awareness of the disappointment and frustration arising from situations in which "the constraints take over" (Designer-Staff 18:371-2). In such situations the designer is left with a feeling of defeat:

"some of the things you don't really want to put your name to, because the constraints won, and the design came a poor second (amused)." (Designer-Freelance 21:299-301)

Further specific aspects of accountability discussed in the data are examined separately in the template.<sup>147</sup> <sup>148</sup>

## **8.5 Accountability to the client**

- (2) Design as an activity
  - (2 2) Design as a commercial activity
    - (2 2 1) Designer accountability
      - (2 2 1 1) Accountability to the client

The designer's accountability to the client sponsor of the design activity is established by the informants. This relationship has clear negative aspects for the designer, however. The designer's response to these negative aspects may vary, from resigned acceptance to negotiation to rejection.

### **Nature of designer-client accountability**

The client is recognized as crucial to the practice of design:

"the client's absolutely critical. He's - without clients there's no architecture." (Designer-Agency 19:222-3)<sup>149</sup>

The primary accountability of the designer is therefore in this direction, in that the designer is answerable to (Education-Further 02), and working for (Designer-Agency 19), the client. For one informant, the defining aspect of design in specific contrast to art lies in the initiating influence of a client:

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<sup>146</sup> See discussion of design and creativity at node (2 3 1).

<sup>147</sup> Nodes (2 2 1 1), (2 2 1 2), (2 2 1 3).

<sup>148</sup> Discussion of design as a creative activity at node (2 3) may be seen as the converse of the discussion of constraints here.

"I think there is quite a difference between the two activities, and I think that difference is from who is instigating the activity. [...] the difference being that an art activity is very much instigated by the individual, whereas a design activity is quite often instigated by a client, or a need within their commercial sector."

(Promotion-Design 27:161-8)

The client is thus clearly seen here as the dominant figure in the design activity.<sup>150</sup>

The role of the designer in serving the client is seen in basic terms as one of problem solving (Education-Further 04).

"basically what we're interested in first and foremost is: 'What is the client's issue? What is it that they're looking for a solution to?' And then we'll deliver a creative solution."

(Designer-Agency 05:561-3)

This problem solution is carried out within the context of the client's specific market.

"It's like: there'll be a client, there'll be a product, there'll be a market. Or there'll be a client, no product and a market. The same thing. You have a problem, or an opportunity. You match the needs of the client to the market." (Education-Further 04:318-21)

"I see the students in a centre of (inaud) with the client and the market, and the student, or the designer, matches the client's needs to the market. That is three. Yes, it has to be."

(Education-Further 04:641-3)

The designer here has the pivotal role of integrating the client's needs with an intended market. As such, the designer must be able to develop an intimate professional relationship with the client.

"We have to understand the company that we're working for. We need to understand their core values and make sure that we don't deliver a message that is in any way detracting from those."

(Designer-Agency 05:245-8)

The client is thus key, as the effective sponsor of the design activity.

### Negative aspects of designer-client accountability

Designer accountability to a client has clear negative aspects for the designers in the informant sample. A number of client factors are seen as limiting the creative scope

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<sup>149</sup> Here, as elsewhere in this data presentation, architecture and design are considered to be equivalent activities by the researcher.

<sup>150</sup> Elsewhere, the issue of who the designer is designing for is more open; node (2 2 1).

available to the designer. The consequence of working with a client who knows exactly what he/she wants, and is not prepared to deviate from that initial perception, is that the design outcome is effectively prescribed by the client brief, and the designer's design input is greatly reduced.

"So a lot of the design is done, because you find nowadays, those people that are gonna pay you to do design, right, are corporates, and they have got a corporate ID for their interiors. So a lot of the design is done, a lot of it's just space planning, working out components, I'm very sad to say"  
(Designer-Freelance 10:168-72)

Equally, a high degree of prescription implies a specific level of client expectancy that the designer may find it difficult to satisfy.

"what happens when you do commercial work is you have constraints heaped upon you, and customer expectation thrown at you: a disappointed client who envisaged something. [...] with commercial stuff you, you're really under pressure."  
(Designer-Freelance 21:275-82)

In the rare situation that the designer is allowed a greater degree of creative input, the client is seen as inherently conservative and reactionary, with the effect that the initial vision of the designer must then be compromised. Thus, in discussing a more 'creative' design proposal presented to a client, the same designer as was quoted above comments:

10: Now to me it's not that forward thinking, to be honest with you, but to them it is, because you've gotta remember a lot of people that you design for are middle-aged businessmen.

R: So would they accept that, or would they want it watered down?

10: Oh, God, watered down by a long way.  
(Designer-Freelance 10:243-9)<sup>151</sup>

Caution shown by the client towards design is seen as financially motivated:

"we have got customers that are very staid, and they may be staid because they haven't got a huge budget to work with, and they don't want anything too frightening."  
(Designer-Staff 18:147-9)

A degree of understanding of the client perspective here is shown by the designer previously quoted:

"At the end of the day, you're spending somebody's money, and I'm sure if somebody come and take ten quid out of your wallet, you wouldn't be very happy, and then sort of wittered it away and you got nothing to show for it"  
(Designer-Freelance 10:279-82)

Client conservatism is thus seen here as a manifestation of commercial caution. A more unforgiving view is taken elsewhere, however:

"So if he's a good client, who's interested in architecture and design and wants something terrific, then that's great. If he's a really miserable client, doesn't want anything other than a cheap box - can be a pretty soul destroying experience. [...] all the time you're fighting a philistine, when you're trying to produce something that's half decent."  
(Designer-Agency 19:406-13)

The charge of philistinism here applies to the client's emphasis on financial considerations to the detriment of design considerations. The same financial emphasis is identified by a second architect on the part of the contractors who are effectively his design clients:

"they're tranna cut corners. And that worries me greatly, because you end up with a very, very crude - the finesse goes out of design. They don't see the necessity for it at all [...] They just see it in: 'What's the cheapest - there must be better ways and cheaper ways of building this.'"  
(Designer-Agency 16:453-8)<sup>152</sup>

The client, unsurprisingly, is identified as taking the converse view: "the clients see architects as being wasteful of their money." (Designer-Agency 16:387-8) An apparent impasse is therefore in evidence, deriving from differing professional agendas.

Frustration is similarly expressed by designers at the apparent whimsicality of client decisions on proposed designs.

"Somebody likes it because it's: 'Yeah but I liked this flower in the bottom corner,' rather than the real reason behind it, and you think you lose a £50,000 contract on somebody who's just said: 'Yeah, but I like that flower in the corner,' - it's a bit annoying at times, really."  
(Designer-Freelance 13:331-5)

Here, a successful outcome from the designer-client collaboration is seen by this designer to depend on a subjective and unreasoned personal preference.

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<sup>151</sup> Two speakers are identified here: '10' denotes the informant; 'R' denotes the researcher (see transcription conventions in Appendix 6).

<sup>152</sup> 'Tranna' represents the speaker's conflation of 'trying to'.

"what might be a fantastic idea, that you think is absolutely brilliant, the best idea in the world, [...] and if it's one person who's got crap taste, the whole - it depends on the person."  
(Designer-Staff 17:708-11)

The previous charge of philistinism recurs implicitly here, reinforcing the opinion that empowerment of the client in the designer-client relationship is dangerous in the absence of sufficient design acumen to be able to engage competently in design decisions.

In the discussion of designer accountability to the client presented thus far, the designer has been consciously aware of the influences at work through this relationship. Thus, while client accountability may be seen negatively, the mechanisms at work are readily apparent to the designer. A more insidious scenario transpires when the negative effects of client accountability are not apparent to the designer; when, for example, the designer becomes drawn into a commercialist agenda which he/she might otherwise consider unacceptable:

"the thing I've found is it's very easy to get sucked into the ethos of the organisation you're in. So that, if you're working for a company that's actually engaged in pushing out very large quantities of disposable crap, because you're making a living there, it's paying for your summer holidays and your mortgage and everything, and because everyone lines up for this thing, you know, everyone thinks it's a good thing because it's their business, it's very easy to get sucked into that"

(Education-Higher 01:78-85)

Here, the designer perhaps empathizes with client perspective too much, in that the element of criticism present in the designer's relationship with the client, as discussed above, is lost. This assimilative designer response to negative aspects of accountability to a client is exceptional in the data, however. The general designer response is more robust, as examined below.

### **Designer response to negative aspects of accountability**

The designer's accountability to a client is established by the informants, yet this relationship has clear negative aspects for the designer. The response of designers to these negative aspects varies considerably within the data.<sup>153</sup>

The first response may be characterized as pragmatic acceptance:

"I'd like a client that has got a million pounds to spend, and doesn't really - as long as it's a nice interior, it'd be fine. But I don't have that. So you've gotta be grateful for what you get."  
(Designer-Freelance 10:408-10)

Similarly, when asked if a client would typically value her constructive input as a designer, another informant states:

"Well they do listen to you to an extent, but they tend to know what they want in their heads, and that's it. And you tend not to want to really rock the boat."  
(Designer-Staff 17:111-3)

The degree of resignation evident here has not come easy in either case, leading the first informant to admit

"to be honest with you, I'm a very commercial designer, unfortunately. It would be nice to - purely because of my clients: very practical designer. [...] if you'd have told me what I was designing when I was at college, I'd have said: 'No'. I had principles back then, and they've just gone right out of the window."  
(Designer-Freelance 10:162-8)

Other designers in the sample are clearly less inclined to simply accept such a loss of professional autonomy. Rather, a partnership is envisaged, in which designer and client work together to jointly develop a best solution for the client's problem. Thus, in the case of a website commission:

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<sup>153</sup> Discussion examined here also relates to the discussion of general (i.e., not client specific) accountability examined at node (2 2 1).

"this is kind of what I'm trying to get at, I suppose, as well, is: you can take the information that a client gives you, and you can, and if you were a website builder you can build them a website, right? But what the architect would do, and what a real website DESIGNER should do, is question whether that is the right information, understand the client, understand the client company's values, and understand the marketplace, and then help him to decide what is the most appropriate information to go on the site."

(Designer-Agency 05:496-503)

This is an interactive process, in which the designer critically engages with the client in order to deliver an appropriate design outcome. Significantly, this may involve the designer working with the client to revise the client's perception of what he/she actually needs, rather than simply delivering what the client merely thinks he/she needs.

"And that's – normally the best way round, they can identify the problem, and then give us the problem to solve, rather than give us a solution that they haven't really thought through."

(Designer-Agency 19:229-32)

Here, the client allows the designer to address the client's issue fully on the client's behalf. As it is noted, this requires a certain degree of courage and faith in the designer on the part of the client (Promotion-Design 23). This may not always transpire, however, in which case a more limited level of interaction and negotiation is attainable. The designer, in this case, considers him/herself to be leading the client in this relationship:

"I think we as designers [...] have to put to the client things that they aren't ready for, always, and try to open their minds to it."

(Education-Further 04:523-5)

"they have an interest in design, but they don't generally understand things like that, we try and start them off with that process"

(Designer-Staff 18:84-6)

"But we're quite good at persuading them, as well, if we think it's really right for them, then, yeah, we try and persuade them into it."

(Designer-Staff 18:324-6)

In this way, the designer seeks to push the barriers of what the client considers acceptable in design terms. As one designer puts it:

"Or you can look at it: well you CAN have creative input, the clever thing is to get it in without the client (amused).. to get it through to the client that it's gonna look good, that's your clever thing"  
(Designer-Freelance 10:272-5)

A form of creative input by stealth seems to be advocated here.<sup>154</sup> Yet, as one informant warns:

"I think that clients can be encouraged, but you need to offer them the opportunity to see the differences, and they need, it needs to be presented in a way that they don't feel they're being stitched up."  
(Education-Further 04:559-61)

The extent to which negotiation can take place with the client may, however, be limited. As one designer states, not all clients will allow the same degree of leeway (Designer-Staff 18). Client selection may thus become a significant issue. One architect describes his own privileged position of being able to reject unsuitable potential clients on this point:

"That means some jobs you wouldn't take on, because you couldn't do a decent job."  
(Designer-Agency 19)

A second architect describes a situation in which the constraints under which he was required to work were, for him, professionally intolerable

"I think there comes a point where you say: 'No, I don't want to do that,' and I have done that in the past. [...] I remember one job that we were working on here, when I was a relatively young architect, and I went in to see [name], and said: '[name], you're gonna have to take me off this job, I just can't hack it on this job, I've nothing to give, and it's soul destroying'"  
(Designer-Agency 16:343-52)

The key expression used here, 'soul destroying', is that used by another architect in a previous quote,<sup>155</sup> suggesting that submission to client constraints is commonly a deeply felt issue for designers.

A final response to client accountability is one of simple toleration. This differs from the 'resigned acceptance' response identified above, in that here a clear distinction is

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<sup>154</sup> One feels the informant was about to say: "the clever thing is to get it in without the client noticing".

<sup>155</sup> "If he's a really miserable client, doesn't want anything other than a cheap box - can be a pretty soul destroying experience." (Designer-Agency 19:407-9)

made between commercial work done for clients, and the non-commercial work which is the designer's true interest.

"there are a lot of designers here, who work here, if I'm honest, not to do the work that we do for clients, but which is our bread and butter stuff. We do that work so that we can use the money to do our own thing. [...] they're more interested in being involved in that self-expression side of things than doing the work for clients."

(Designer-Agency 05:164-72)

Crucially, commercial work done in fulfillment of client requirements is here seen as a necessary evil, in that it allows the designer to pursue more personally rewarding but less profitable projects.

"And those are going on all the time, and they fill in all the little gaps between the commercial work. But they are driven from here [indicates chest/heart], rather than driven by the client. We tell them what we want to do, and as you can understand, that's a very attractive thing for a designer to do. [...] So it might not be commercially rewarding, but it's very emotionally rewarding."

(Designer-Freelance 21:267-74)

The location of power in the designer-client relationship is clearly shifted here towards the designer. Nevertheless, emotional reward and financial reward are perceived to be incompatible within a single project. In accepting payment for a design which is then to be taken out of his hands and commercialized, one designer makes an uneasy pact:

"Pay me the certain amount of money, then you can do whatever you like. As long as I know that I created that to the best of my ability - and then you ruin it, in my eyes – you can do it."

(Business-Production 09:363-5)

Commercial accountability to the client-employer is here accepted grudgingly, but this is perhaps the common response of most of the designers in the data.

## **8.6 Designing for the consumer**

(2) Design as an activity

(2 2) Design as a commercial activity

(2 2 1) Designer accountability

**(2 2 1 2) Designing for the consumer**

It is recognized that the designer is designing ultimately for the consumer. The designer is therefore required to assess, interpret and satisfy consumer needs. This is potentially problematic where designer and consumer preference differ, in which case the designer may seek to influence consumer perspective.

Accountability to a market, identified as one general aspect of designer accountability<sup>156</sup>, is embodied in the specific notion of designing for the consumer who comprises that market.<sup>157</sup> In its basic form, this simply entails “taking [...] note of what consumers and customers actually want” (Promotion-Design 25:280), though the idea of a “consumer-driven” design approach is seen as potentially problematic by one informant (Education-Further 02:1060).<sup>158</sup>

An ultimate accountability to the consumer is suggested by descriptions of positive consumer response as the final arbiter of success for a designer:

“if you stand in Habitat or Heals, and you look at a beautiful glass, and the person next to you just goes: ‘Gosh, isn’t that lovely?’, that’s all the designer needs to know: ‘Isn’t that lovely?’”  
(Promotion-Design 23:280-3)

A response of this kind is seen as the designer’s reward:

“I think that we recognise that simply people are saying: ‘Yes, we think you’ve done your job reasonably well.’ Well that’s - what more can we ask?”  
(Business-Production 11:224-6)

In this case, the valuing of consumer response apparent here is related to a general empathy with the consumer, which is perhaps in turn based on the explicit recognition that the producer is, under a different guise, also a consumer:

“if there’s a skill in being a designer, that’s the skill: it’s being able to be both”  
(Business-Production 11:292-4)

The designer’s simultaneous status as a consumer can thus be exploited to give greater weight to claims of wider applicability for his/her designs.

“having singularity of mind, to say: we believe this is right because we believe that consumers will want it; not because the market research has told us so -

<sup>156</sup> Node (2 2 1).

<sup>157</sup> The terms ‘user’, ‘consumer’ and ‘customer’ are all used by informants. ‘Consumer’ alone is used by the researcher for consistency.

<sup>158</sup> The same informant expresses similar concern over commercially-driven design; node (2 2), (Education-Further 02:209-16).

because, inevitably, market research can get to tell you whatever you like - but because we have a belief, and when we use it we think it's right, and we're all consumers, and when other people use it they think it's right too." (Business-Production 11:305-10)

This 'we are you' attitude to consumer focused design is embodied in a self-perception as a consumer champion in this case, "fighting for what we believe is important for the consumer" (Business-Production 11:299-300). This identification and satisfaction of consumer need is cited by several informants, such that the designer effectively becomes an advocate acting on behalf of the consumer:

"If you assume that designers are here to interpret that which will satisfy consumers in the future.." (Education-Higher 01:291-2)

"that's one of the ideas of craft, is interpreting vague customer requirements into something that can be made."<sup>159</sup> (Education-Higher 07:371-3)

The designer thus assesses current consumer need and interprets it to create a satisfying tangible design outcome. This of course requires an ability to accurately perceive what the consumer need actually is:

"You couldn't be a designer, selling to a public, of clothes or whatever, unless you had some sort of, you were on a wavelength, really, I think. That might not be your own particular wavelength, but you've got to be able to tune in to what people are needing or wanting, to be able to be successful, I think." (Education-Higher 14:236-40)

Here, the designer-as-consumer model discussed by Informant 11 above is modified to take into account the possibility that the designer is not personally representative of consumers generally. This recognition, of differing designer and consumer preference, is evident elsewhere:

"we do a research panel - we know categorically that the stuff we as designers like, maybe one out of the ten women panel will like." (Designer-Staff 15:139-41)

"I think as designers we think differently, still, to the mainstream customer" (Designer-Staff 15:414-5)

This raises the issue of the designer designing against personal preference. For example, in the context of corporatewear, one informant describes designing

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<sup>159</sup> Craft and design are synonymous here for this informant; the quoted extract continues: "Yeah, craftspeople design things often, all the time." (Education-Higher 07:373)

uniforms despite the fact that for her personally “[t]he whole concept of careerwear [...] is a bit abhorrent.” (Designer-Staff 18:208-9) One response to this disparity between consumer and designer preference is to seek to align the former with the latter.<sup>160</sup>

“We - not education, not trying to educate people, but trying to open their eyes to new things, different things, I think is important.”  
(Designer-Agency 19:390-2)

The informant here prefers the notion of consumer guidance rather than consumer education, what another designer describes as “letting people become a bit more aware of things” in design terms (Designer-Staff 15:458) This second designer is, however, less reluctant to use the word ‘education’:

“if you think cleverly enough about it, this area of design is the mainstream way of educating people, and it’s awful to say some people need educating in design, do you know what I mean? Sort of feeding design to the public and the masses”  
(Designer-Staff 15:104-7)

This notion of ‘feeding design to the masses’ betrays an unequivocal perception of where the power rests in the designer’s relationship with the consumer, a perception which becomes more explicit:

“sometimes we could do something that we feel IS really cutting edge, and it takes off, and you think: ‘Oh, wow – they’re not as boring or ignorant as we think they are,’ and sort of surprise yourself.”  
(Designer-Staff 15:146-9)

The consumer is here regarded with a certain degree of condescension, and is clearly seen as the beneficiary of the designer’s superior design sensibility. Elsewhere, however, a more self-consciously respectful attitude to the consumer is in evidence:

“It’s more, recognising that you don’t have to treat the end user as somebody who’s not gonna be able to cope. There always seems to be this kind of just preconception that the people that you deliver it to aren’t going to be able to untangle and understand this thing as easily as you can. Well, that’s a bit, that’s a bit rude.”  
(Designer-Agency 05:284-9)

Far from seeking to educate the consumer, the designer in this case seeks to challenge and entertain:

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<sup>160</sup> A similar proselytizing response is evident when faced with negative aspects of

**"we have a tendency, here, to want people to explore. We like the idea that our work is about exploration"**  
(Designer-Agency 05:263-4)

**"people like a challenge, people like to be, they like stuff that intrigues and teases"**  
(Designer-Agency 05:290-2)

This contrasts quite clearly with a conception of designer-as-educator. Nevertheless, faith in the sophistication of the consumer's response to 'challenging' design of this kind is tempered elsewhere by scepticism:

**"I think some really high powered design, it's above people's heads: the really clever witty advertising campaigns are quite often above people's heads."**  
(Designer-Staff 15:22-4)

Respect for the consumer is evident, elsewhere, in a conception of the designer as a form of mediator, supporting the consumer in making his/her own decisions as a consumer of design.

**"there's a lot of things in life where the consumer has to make decisions where they're badly supported, and I think designers could, actually, offer better resources, what you could almost call learning resources, that enable consumers to REALLY make a decision."**  
(Education-Higher 01:251-4)

Here, the designer becomes the intermediary between producer and consumer. The designer is, however, simultaneously responsible for satisfying the individual (Education-Higher 01; Promotion-Design 25).

**"you have to accept that the choice system, and the delivery system, are between the consumer and the designer."**  
(Education-Higher 01:283-5)

The designer thus has a form of contract with the consumer, within which he/she is obliged to address and satisfy specific individual consumer needs.<sup>161</sup>

## **8.7 Communicating to others**

- (2) Design as an activity**
  - (2 2) Design as a commercial activity**
    - (2 2 1) Designer accountability**
    - (2 2 1 3) Communicating to others**

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accountability to a client, at node (2 2 1 1).

<sup>161</sup> More direct consumer involvement in designing is examined at node (3 5 2).

Design is a discursive, as well as a performative, activity. The designer is therefore required to be able to communicate effectively about his/her design to others. This is often problematic, due to the non-verbal orientation of many designers, and the inherent ambiguity of language. Use of a 'language of design' merely excludes the non-designer.

A key theme in informant discussion of designer accountability to others is that of communication. Design, it is argued, is not self-explanatory:

"It's not good enough to say your work will speak for you, it's not good enough"  
(Education-Further 04:601-2)

The designer is, in addition, expected to be able to communicate effectively about his/her design to others:

"it's not widely understood that design is a discursive activity. And the biggest problem we have, particularly with young undergraduate students, is their ability to discuss, their ability to explain and describe and engage with their work at a theoretical level."  
(Education-Higher 01:805-9)

The ability to discuss design verbally, and successfully present and describe it to others in these terms, is here seen as essential evidence of the designer's personal engagement with his/her design. As indicated in the quote above, this is seen as problematic for many designers:

"A lot of designers are introspective, quiet people [...] They require help, that's why they've gone to college. It's not just about becoming a better designer. It's learning how to articulate and communicate your ideas"  
(Promotion-Design 23:496-9)

The ability to critically engage with design in this way is thus distinct from the actual performative process of doing design, a fact illustrated by an example from design education:

"Now, what I was very careful to do, with a lot of those kids then, was to make sure that the written work, the supporting studies, the evaluative stuff, the critical stuff, followed rather than led [...] in other words, they didn't have to do anything that was too demanding of them in terms of critical faculties and other means: written work, or whatever, discussion - until they felt comfortable perhaps, it sounds a bit daft this, with the process."  
(Education-Further 02:139-48)

Critical engagement of course requires something to critically engage with, hence the initial primacy of the performative aspect of design.<sup>162</sup>

The primary purpose of a designer being able to verbally present and discuss his/her design is, therefore, one of justification, of selling the design to others, either literally or metaphorically (Designer-Freelance 10; Designer-Freelance 13). The language in which the designer attempts to do this may be itself problematic, however. One informant describes a scenario in which communication between designer and non-designer proved difficult due to ambiguity in the language being used (Education-Higher 01). In this case, the communicative difficulties encountered are specifically ascribed to the designer using "the language of design" (Education-Higher 01:833-4), with which the non-designer is unfamiliar. This view is supported elsewhere:

"It's pure language, because designers tend to use 'another language', [...] to dress up what they're saying, to be more important, and to be very, very linked to what they do. Design is no exception."  
(Promotion-Design 23:275-80)

'The language of design' here becomes a language of exclusion of the non-designer. It is, however, possible for the designer to discuss design in non-specialist terms (Promotion-Design 23). Indeed, it is argued that the language used by the designer can and should reflect the level of understanding of his/her audience (Promotion-General 28). 'The language of design' is thus only suitable for communication between those conversant with it, which is primarily designers.

"I think it's okay for designers to use language amongst themselves. They might be very wary of using it with other people."  
(Education-Higher 01:875-6)

Here, the effectiveness of verbal communication of any kind between designers and non-designers is questioned. The ambiguities inherent in language are in fact considered insurmountable in this context, with the consequence that visual communication is the preferred alternative:

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<sup>162</sup> Design practice which is entirely uncritical, in this sense, is seen as inadequate by the

"A lesson I learned was: never try and use language, never describe using words. Other people live on words, but we will always do better with things and drawings and so on."  
(Education-Higher 01:864-7)

This preference for visual rather than verbal modes of communication is noted as a reflection of designers' general visual orientation:

"we all see things visually, and can think visually, think in pictures, communicate with pictures, and that's the sort of people we are. So everything you see is lots of pictures and lots of drawings and models and things, very few words"  
(Designer-Agency 19:102-6)

The effects of the inherent ambiguity of language are thus compounded by designers' general non-linguistic orientation.

An anomalous position is adopted by one informant, however, for whom the ambiguity detected in language use around design, examined above, is not considered problematic. The significance of establishing a shared mode of communication in design collaboration is acknowledged by the informant:

"quite what happens there in terms of their finding a common language that works, has to be an issue, I guess"  
(Education-Higher 07:408-10)

Nevertheless, the specific ambiguity of the word 'design' itself is not seen as a barrier to communication here.

"You can't nail language down generally, I don't think. People use it how they'll use it and ... I don't even know if it matters very much to people that do it. [...] So, I guess, so long as in those internal organisational inter-personal interactions, that you know what you mean, whether it's the word 'design' or something else doesn't matter a jot really."  
(Education-Higher 07:433-43)

Communication here becomes a matter of personal interaction and negotiation, achievable without recourse to non-verbal expression.

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same informant: (Education-Further 02:985-92); see node (2 2 1).

## **8.8 Design as a competitive strategy**

(2) Design as an activity

(2 2) Design as a commercial activity

**(2 2 2) Design as a competitive strategy**

Design is identified as a strategic resource which allows a company to be commercially competitive beyond simple leadership on price. An overall design orientation extends to cover the way a company both functions and presents itself to the consumer, contained in the notion of branding.

Design is identified as an ingredient of commercial success:

"it's true, I think, that design is one of the things that you need if you're gonna be a successful business. WITH design you can go a long way"  
(Education-Higher 01:619-21)

The implication of the speaker's emphasis (in uppercase) here is that without design, success will prove elusive. This is "design as a commercial tool" (Promotion-Design 25:78), having a visible positive effect on a company's financial performance (Business-Production 06; Promotion-Design 23). An unequivocal statement of design's contribution in a specific case is given by one informant:

"But yes, definitely, product design in the broadest sense has been responsible for the success of the business"  
(Business-Production 11:57-9)

In basic terms, informants speak of businesses being design-led:

"if I believe our managing director, he cites design as being the leading edge of our business."  
(Business-Production 09:213-4)

"that's our strength at [company A], is our design excellence."  
(Designer-Staff 18:78-9)

At a more detailed level, design is discussed in terms of its overall impact on product development and manufacture:

"Design is about improving things, it's about improving functionality, improving speed to market, improving the way it looks, improving its cost of production, improving profitability."  
(Designer-Agency 12:427-30)

Design is here seen as the driver behind improved business performance and competitiveness, giving it a central role in

"general business development, business strategy, where there tends to be some sort of design or marketing element to, the key element to the route they're taking when they're actually stitching together the shape of the business over the next two to five year period."

(Promotion-General 28:22-6)

Design is thus recognized as a company-wide resource, which in the ideal case permeates throughout the company's structure and various functions.

"the various qualities of design are just right the way through the company, aren't they? The branding, new product development, IPR, all that stuff, understanding the quality of the product and what you're selling, understanding the customer - it's just right the way through the core of that company, isn't it?"

(Promotion-General 28:231-5.)

Interestingly, the company being described here is actually represented by another informant in the sample, who confirms the perception of his organization just given.

"in a sense we also spread our design and our innovation right through the business, to include the way we market, the way we sell, the way we advertise. It's all encompassing in that sense."

(Business-Production 11:50-3)

An overall design orientation is here seen to extend into the way a company presents itself to the consumer, in terms of branding:

"Now that's brand – that's not unusual, that's just branding, and that's driving the power of your brand"

(Business-Production 11:53-4)

Brand here applies to the creation and presentation of a recognisable corporate identity, manifest in the product itself, such that the product embodies the brand (Designer-Freelance 21).

This notion that the brand is all important, and that it is through this means that design gains its commercial value, is proposed elsewhere:

"So, there are potential links there, are thought provoking, that brand, corporate identity design, product design: is it all, in the end, about some notion of branding?"

(Education-Higher 07:500-2)

Successful design, on these terms, is that which supports the brand.

"people like Motorola, for example, have a global design policy, and you have to be able to understand and focus on the issues that are important, that continue to propagate the brand values of that company"  
(Designer-Freelance 21:348-51)

In this sense, design becomes akin to marketing (Business-Production 06).

Design is apparently not universally accepted as a means to competitive advantage, however.

"it would be nice if British industry appreciated design rather better"  
(Promotion-Media 22:447-8)

"It's not totally black, but there is, there's a high element locally of real cynicism about the value of design-related issues, particularly."  
(Promotion-General 28:81-2)

Design is seen in this sense, not as a permanent resource capable of making an ongoing contribution, but as an occasional fix, to be called on only when absolutely necessary.

"We just don't have the mentality that we should be continually reinventing and redesigning things that we've got."  
(Designer-Agency 12:314-6)

Even in the special circumstances when it is recognized that design is needed, any acceptance of this fact is seen as grudging:

"it's: 'Okay, I need some of this design stuff,' although they probably don't call it design, 'I don't want it, but I've got to have it,' if you see what I mean."  
(Promotion-General 28:174-6)

It is perhaps significant that design must here be referred to by another name. In fact, the same informant, involved in the delivery of general business and design advice, confesses:

"I don't particularly use the word 'design'. I don't talk about 'design', it's usually 'a project'."  
(Promotion-General 28:410-2)

'Design' is therefore an unspoken term between this design advisor and his clients here, even when it is design that is being discussed.

Design is therefore often perceived by the client as an add-on, as a means of adding value at the end of the product development process:

"at some point you fetch the industrial design consultant in, and they make it look nice."  
(Education-Higher 07:60-2)

This attitude is seen as a reflection of a more general view of "design as an expense rather than an investment" (Designer-Freelance 21:390-1). The view within the informant sample, however, is that design is the route to product differentiation beyond simple leadership on price (Promotion-Design 25).

"at the end of the day only one brand can be the cheapest, and the rest have to add value through design."  
(Designer-Agency 12:7-8)

One example of this actually occurring is described by one informant:

"So there's a feeling that it's not worth being in that market, it's just too frantic, too desperate, and that Apple got where they were, not by trying to compete with other low cost producers, but by producing something that was actually quite unique as a functional product. [...] Industrial design was a good tool for them, when they wished just to point out that: 'We are a unique company, with a unique product.'"  
(Education-Higher 01:467-74)

The converse competitive route is to seek to compete on price. This is seen as a perilous commercial choice, however, to which investment in design is preferred.

"if we didn't do something, we would have got to the stage where we would have had to discount price, in order to retain our market share, and you're on a slippery slope - the 'doom loop', they call it."  
(Business-Production 06:85-7)

## 8.9 *Designing for profit*

- (2) Design as an activity
  - (2 2) Design as a commercial activity
    - (2 2 3) Designing for profit

The need to make money is an imperative consideration in design. This may lead to an unashamedly commercialist design agenda. Profitability and design value need not be mutually exclusive, however, but this largely depends on a consumer willingness to pay a premium price.

### A commercialist design agenda

The need to make money is identified as an imperative consideration by informants in the data. This applies both at a personal level, with the individual designer:

**"That's where a lot of people get stopped in the art one, they go: 'Actually I can't make money at that,' and they go off to commercial design."**  
(Business-Production 09:345-7)

and at the corporate level, with the company:

**"At the end of the day we're a financially driven business like anyone else, and so we have to focus and concentrate on what makes us the most money to support all the people we've got working for us. So that's where we'll concentrate first and foremost."**  
(Business-Production 11:261-5)

The demands of the commercial context in which design must subsist ("the cruel hard commercial world" (Business-Production 06:415) as one informant calls it) can reduce design to a simple matter of economics.

**"Does the design actually fulfill its function, is it at the right price, and is it gonna sell?"**  
(Business-Production 06:415-6)

**"Inevitably, at the end of the day you come down to the nitty gritty of a design on a piece of paper, on a computer, and what it will cost and what profit you'll earn on it."**  
(Business-Production 11:296-8)

Design agenda thus becomes informed by unashamed commercialism, expressed in such statements as

**"I want the most amount of people to buy this in the world who can"**  
(Business-Production 09:453-4)

For the designer, this commercialist perspective translates into a primary concern in designing only what will sell and therefore be profitable.

**"What's the point in making something no-one's gonna buy?"**  
(Education-Higher 01:190)

**"you can go off at a tangent and design the most fabulous thing, but if it doesn't actually work in the market place, then there's no point in doing it."**  
(Designer-Staff 18:341-3)

An absolute imperative to be profitable<sup>163</sup> thus acts as a constraint on acceptable levels of innovation and attendant commercial risk in design.

**"if you go too far, too radical, you know, your gut feeling is that you ain't gonna get a sale from it"**  
(Business-Production 06:155-6)

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<sup>163</sup> One informant replaces the notion of profit with that of 'gain', to additionally cover cases in which the relation to profit is indirect: "what if you did something to do with design that reduced absenteeism within an organisation? [...] it might relate to profit, but it's a soft thing, so I use 'gain' rather than 'profit'". (Promotion-General 28:487-90)

Where the implications of a commercial failure of this kind are severe, it is understandable for the designer-producer to show caution, to the extent of a willingness to produce derivative “me too’ products” (Business-Production 06:225).

Such bald statements of commercialist design intent, while generally accepted, do nevertheless sit slightly uneasily with some designers in the dataset:

“I’m probably not the arty party designer I wish I was, that I thought I was, but I’m working, and your perceptions change when you’ve gotta pay bills (laughs). It’s what - you can be an arty designer and poor, or you can sell out, I suppose, for the want of a better word. [...] But you’ve gotta work.”  
(Designer-Freelance 10:292-6)

Tacit acceptance of the accusation of ‘selling out’, raised above, is shared by another designer (Designer-Staff 15).

### **Profit and design value**

Concern is expressed at the effect of a design agenda emphasizing profitability over design value.<sup>164</sup> A situation is described in which profitability overrides any concern with intrinsic product value:

“you could argue that all that design has done is kept the company going, kept people in their jobs, and produced more plastic (inaud) crap, basically.”  
(Education-Higher 01:107-9)

In such cases,

“the question is not: ‘Is it good design,’ it’s: ‘Does it sell?’”  
(Education-Further 02:588)

Design value is seen as secondary to immediate consumer appeal here. Consumer interest is not actually served by this “hard-nosed ‘If it don’t sell, don’t do it,’” (Education-Further 02:532) design approach, however, as this primarily serves the commercial interest of the producer, who therefore lacks the motivation to innovate as he/she is able to survive through a non-innovating sales-driven policy (Promotion-Design 23).

The converse approach is to give primacy to design:

"I think if you pursue the money, or pursue the business side of design, then your design goes to pot. But if you stay true to, if you just focus on doing that pure design, then it just seems to be that you get rewarded (amused)." (Designer-Agency 05:132-5)

While it may be optimistic to assume that commercial reward will always accompany design integrity of this kind, design value and profitability need apparently not be considered mutually exclusive:

"I still see many products around that are not very good and can be improved, that we can effectively and productively apply our approach to, and hopefully make some money at."

(Business-Production 11:265-7)

While the designer is not selflessly designing for the general good here, profitability is linked to the provision of a superior design outcome:

"general good should equate to being able to earn a profit because it's better than someone else's product."

(Business-Production 11:339-41)

Elsewhere, however, profitability and design value, in a purer sense of faithfulness to the designer's personal design integrity, are discussed as being apparently mutually exclusive:

"there's two kinds of design, and unfortunately I suppose we sit on the fence a bit, because we do commercial work that pays the bills and gives us the money to do speculative things that don't pay the bills."

(Designer-Freelance 21:224-7)

Finally, then, the balance achieved between design value and profit is seen as a result of which is seen as the driving factor.

"if the cost is absolutely critical, then [...] the design might go lower. [...] If the design's more critical, often the cost might go up a bit"

(Designer-Agency 19:210-4)

Where design drives cost, rather than vice versa, profitability is therefore seen to depend ultimately on a consumer willingness to pay a premium price for a better designed product; that "[p]eople will be prepared to pay for the luxury that design appears to be" (Designer-Freelance 21:588-9) in that case.

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<sup>164</sup> Design value is examined at node (1 3).

## **8.10 Creativity and design process**

(2) Design as an activity

(2 3) Design as a creative activity

**(2 3 1) Creativity and design process**

Designing is a creative activity. Creativity is primarily evident in the thoughtfulness of conceptual design, rather than in the process and performance of developmental design. Creative working is encouraged in design education and is manifest in design practice.

A dichotomy is identified in characterizations of designing:<sup>165</sup>

"It's an add-on to art, and it's very creative, or it's a prelude to technology, and therefore it's very mechanical."

(Promotion-Design 27:292-4)

Here, the creative aspect of designing is examined.<sup>166</sup>

### **Thought versus process**

"arguably, anything that is about creating something that didn't exist before, that requires some original thought, is design."

(Education-Higher 01:697-9)

Design is identified as "a way of thinking" (Education-Higher 08:243; Promotion-Media 22:59), manifest in the designer being essentially concerned with "creating ideas" (Designer-Freelance 13:426). This conception of design as creative thought is contrasted with design process: "the visual, form-handling, drawing, making, side of things" (Education-Higher 01:401-2). Thought and process thus become separate elements in designing:

"My own thinking is that there's a philosophical and intellectual approach to a designer, which means that they should be able to work, from a creative point of view, in many areas of design."

(Promotion-Design 27:148-51)

"Creativity" is here synonymous with "the intellectual activity of design and a philosophical activity of design" (Promotion-Design 27:455-6), and is differentiated from "implementation" and "abilities and craft" successively (Promotion-Design 27:152; 420).<sup>167</sup> The ratio between these is given in percentage terms: "it's 95% hard slog and 5% flair and creativity" (Designer-Agency 16:251-2); "10% of it: creativity, or even less; and 90%: can

<sup>165</sup> See examination of node (2 1 1).

<sup>166</sup> The converse 'mechanical' view of designing is examined at node (2 4 1).

you implement it?" (Promotion-Design 27:506-7). The integration of these two aspects is perhaps what is meant by the statement: "design is the marriage of art and science" (Designer-Agency 12:487-8).

The successful combination of creative thought and design process is not always in evidence, however. Where the former is lacking, the result is design practice that is "shallow" (Education-Higher 08:214):

"they're acting like designers, but they're not being designers. It is taking on the actions of, and it's somebody who's said: 'This is what designers do, so if you do that you're a designer.'" (Education-Higher 08:374-7)

Avoidance of a charge of shallow design practice of this kind depends on a refusal to design to formula:

"every site is different, every client is different, every brief is different. You have to design for that particular moment. [...] everything we look at completely afresh, as much as we can. So, we don't just have a theme that we just apply to everything, we just try and attack each particular project in turn."

(Designer-Agency 19:35-42)

Thoughtful design thus creatively addresses each design scenario on its merits, within the continuum of past experience.

### **Conceptual and developmental design**

The "softer side" of design (Promotion-General 28:376), discussed above in terms of creativity, is seen as "esoteric" (Promotion-General 28:379) in contrast to the apparently more pragmatic processes of implementation and realization. Conceptual design is here contrasted with developmental design:

"the knowledge that I'd built up was more [...] the design concept, 'What we need to do is do this,' and then I pass it over to an architect who will draw up my ideas" (Designer-Freelance 13:75-8)

The "actual sparks" of conceptual design "come from only a few people" (Designer-Agency 19:84). A description of what this entails provides little further illumination:

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<sup>167</sup> One informant introduces a further level of abstraction, in a conception of design as "the

"I'm quicker than anybody else coming up with an idea, because you analyse it quicker, instantly feel the way something should go. Whereas other people would spend months analysing and not come up with anything."  
(Designer-Agency 19:90-3)

Creative conceptual design ability, here described as a "feel", therefore remains something apparently mysterious.

The validity of a clear separation of conceptual design and developmental design is questioned by description elsewhere of continuous designer involvement.

"for me, a real design isn't finished until you've finished it, 'til it's handed over to the client [...]. Because the detail has to be an intrinsic part of the overall concept. You can't just produce an overall concept, and then hand it to a guy and say: 'There you go,'"  
(Designer-Agency 16:473-7)

"you haven't finished designing until the job's delivered and the client's received it"  
(Designer-Agency 05:51-2)

For one informant, this attention to the physical realization of a concept differentiates design from invention: a designer trades in more than mere "ideas" (Promotion-General 28:609). For another informant, conceptual design and developmental design are distinguished as separate phases, but all uncertainty is removed prior to the developmental stage:

"you will have tested out, at the concept stage, a lot of the feasibility of many of the things you're looking at, so when you come to detail it you don't have any doubts that this may or may not work, you've discovered and checked whether it works or not."  
(Promotion-General 29:106-9)

Concept, in the sense of 'idea', clearly applies here only at the very earliest stage of thinking about a possible design. 'Design' itself refers to much more than the initial idea, expressed in a conception of

"design as the process of getting from ideas to something that actually gets produced and marketed"  
(Education-Higher 07:30-1)

Design as a formally recognized process thus includes a continuum of activity from the creation of an initial concept through to its realization in a produced object.

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thinking behind the thinking" (Promotion-Design 25:354).

## Working creatively

An informant discusses admissions policy for higher design education:

"we constantly look for students who have come, have got some kind of creative, fine art sort of background, rather than people with a rational, technical background."

(Education-Higher 01:375-7)

A required creative orientation in the would-be professional designer is consistent with the metaphors which are consistently used in the dataset to characterize design working. Designers are seen as preferring a non-linear approach to working:

"I don't wanna go in there with a kind of linear approach. I want to be able to go in and zigzag, or I need to, I wanna go up the odd cul-de-sac."

(Education-Further 02:1085-7)

Designers "don't always operate in [...] straight lines" (Education-Further 02:324), but are able to approach a design scenario holistically:

"we certainly have a way of being able to come at things from a series of differing views, and able sometimes then to unravel some kind of, either a pathway, or an outcome, or a product or whatever. But it's an ability, I think, to some extent, to synthesize"

(Education-Further 02:1072-5)

Design is also a physically and intellectually dynamic activity:

"when we're doing it, we're not actually static for hours at a time either, are we? Do you know? We're testing - if we're sitting ourselves, if we're brainstorming, we're moving around, we're trying this, we're trying that."

(Education-Further 02:442 5)

Design, in the educational context discussed thus far, is based on principles of experimentation and exploration:

"the idea of the opportunity to actually play with materials, and do things which have no, seemingly no immediate outcome, because they're enjoyable, and you can rejoice and delight in forms and things like that, just to do it, just for that's sake, I think is the culture of art schools."

(Education-Higher 08:363-7)

The scenario described should not be expected to prevail outside an educational context, however:

"one of the great things about college is that it's probably the only opportunity most designers will get to be truly creative, and to truly explore and develop what the real potential of design might be"

(Promotion-General 28:541-4)

The creative principles discussed above are not altogether abandoned in design practice, however. One designer repeatedly uses a metaphor of pushing against boundaries and constraints:

"And, aspiration-wise, for the kind of design that we do, we just want to keep pushing. We believe that an integral part of design is being innovative. It would be too easy to stand still"  
(Designer-Agency 05:110-2)

Innovation is similarly identified elsewhere as the desired outcome of design (Promotion-General 28). Design practice is thus seen to embrace the creative spirit evident in the educational context.

"We challenge everything, I think that's the way we work [...]. We question. We never take anything for granted. Never take 'yes' for an answer. You're always probing and trying to get the best out of everything."  
(Designer-Agency 19:161-4)

The virtue of addressing each design scenario on its particular merits, identified above, is realized through an attempted return to first principles:

"It's a sort of process of slam-dunking your brain in the bin, really. Trying to forget all preconceptions, and actually go back to what the hell it is you're trying to do."  
(Designer-Freelance 21:72-4)

A key element in the attempt to identify the core aspect of a design problem, beyond that recognized by existing solutions, is the allowance to be able to incubate a response, in order to avoid the shallowness of "knee jerk design" (Designer-Freelance 21:353):

"don't pick up the pen for at least two days, three days, possibly two weeks. Talk, think, and get right under the skin of what the hell it is. It's a sort of lining yourself up before you fire"  
(Designer-Freelance 21:355-8)

Exercising creativity requires, finally, a degree of temporal freedom. Where this is lacking, design is likely to be inhibited by constraints.<sup>168</sup> The emphasis on incubation here is perhaps linked to the notion of 'the thinking behind the thinking' quoted above, in that this phase of reflective preparation is seen as preliminary to designing proper in the formal, recognized design process.

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<sup>168</sup> See discussion of constraints on design at node (2 2 1).

Manifestation of creativity in the design outcome is examined separately at node (2 3 3).

## **8.11 Designing and making**

- (2) Design as an activity
  - (2 3) Design as a creative activity
    - (2 3 2) Designing and making

The role of making in designing is explored in terms of the relation between design and craft processes. Craft production, with its emphasis on technique, is distinguished from designing for manufacture. Concern over a similar preoccupation with technique is also apparent in discussion of the computer as a design tool.

### **Design and craft**

A distinction is made in the dataset between conceptual design and developmental design, as distinct activities.<sup>169</sup> Initial conceptual design may be performed separately from subsequent phases of implementation and realization, and is effectively done 'in the head':

"I think you've gotta see it [a design] here [indicates head] before you communicate it in whatever form you chose to communicate it."  
(Designer-Agency 16:363-4)

This form of design is "ideas based" (Education-Further 04:17) rather than "technique based" (Education-Further 04:276), in that it is done, in a sense, prior to the manipulation of the precise medium through which it is to be realized.

This form of 'in the head' design contrasts with what amounts to design-by-doing:

"I know if I'm designing something, the end of the pen, something comes out of the end of the pen: it actually happens at the end of the pen. It doesn't happen up here in the head, and then you say: 'Right, I understand that snapshot of that, and now I'll draw it.'"  
(Education-Higher 08:265-8)

Here, designing is seen as a simultaneously mental and physical act, in which the medium in which design is taking place actually informs the process.

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<sup>169</sup> See node (2 3 1).

"There's something going on there which is to do with the medium you're using"  
(Education-Higher 08:271-2)

Elsewhere in the same informant account, primacy is placed on "designing through materials, allowing materials to speak" (Education-Higher 08:142-3). On this view, the designer effectively becomes a designer-maker, concerned absolutely with the physical process of designing, within which is embodied the accompanying mental process.

The perceived virtue of this hands-on approach to designing is that, in those circumstances where it is appropriate, it apparently brings with it a greater level of designer understanding of the eventual design outcome.

"To understand garments you really need to make them and put them together, whereas you can have the theory of how to print, in printed textiles, without physically having done it, in the same way."  
(Education-Higher 14:353-5)

Where this understanding is lacking, through a neglect of physical process, the effect is one of 'shortcutting' that will eventually prove problematic:

"We get drawings that look tasty, we get bits of artwork that look impressive. I don't know always that the kid's got the underlying stuff to be able to continue"  
(Education-Further 02:840-3)

"if we shortcut too much, if it's too superficial, we don't give the person the opportunity to internalize that, and to understand that."  
(Education-Further 02:867-8)

What is being discussed here is the understanding gained through the craft development process, of "learning to use and negotiate the right kind of things, to hone something." (Education-Further 02:649-50) Doubt is raised, however, as to whether the production of an object using craft skills constitutes a design activity.

"is it designed? I'm not sure that it is. I think it's grasped from somewhere, and made, beautifully, and it's the making which makes.. There is plenty of examples outside here, we've got someone's work outside here, where I think you'd be hard pushed to say these were the result of some, of a designer. They're the result of a very clever maker, but I would argue that they're not designed, in that sense."  
(Education-Higher 08:194-200)

Craft-based production is here viewed as emphasizing technique to the extent that it constitutes “a preoccupation with making” (Education-Higher 08:186-7), at the expense of wider design considerations.

“I tend to equate design with: process, looking at something outside of the actual object itself, and the consequence of looking at those things results in an object. Rather than starting from the object.”  
(Education-Higher 08:191-4)

Design and craft are seen as distinct activities here:

“one [craft] is about designing through materials, one [design] is about designing through an analysis of the user experience”  
(Education-Higher 08:176-8)

“[D]esigning products around use, rather than what’s been historically the norm”

(Business-Production 06:363-4) is a design ethos shared elsewhere in the data.

Design, in distinction from craft, is characterized by an elevation above focusing on the object itself as an archetypal form to be realized with greater or lesser degrees of variation. The concern in design is to eradicate much of what characterizes craft production:

“the perception of craft is almost the antithesis of what the perception of industrial designed objects, mass manufactured, are: the idea of you design out every flaw. But actually with craft you rejoice in the flaws [...] so there's a direct link between the object and the maker.”  
(Education-Higher 08:111-21)

Design, on this view, therefore depersonalizes the process of production.

For other informants, craft and design represent fundamentally the same process, it is simply that design adapts the craft approach for performance on a larger and more mechanized scale.

“craftspeople design things often, all the time. And I suppose what organisations do is take apart things that they do as one person [...] and the craftsman, gets separated out somewhere in an organisation. [...] Although there's, perhaps, more than one person involved, it's not in one person's head. It's still happening, that the product is designed with the process in mind, to some extent”  
(Education-Higher 07:373-82)

The development process is thus dissociated from the individual, and becomes a more technologically sophisticated activity.

"the craft evolution process is clearly part of design, and you could argue that, actually, that's what design is, it's just that these days it's a lot faster, because we've developed tools for speeding it up. Draw things ten times rather than make them ten times, so that immediately gets you there a year earlier."  
(Education-Higher 01:700-2)

In the first part of this quote, design process is seen as a more sophisticated embodiment of the craft evolution process. In the second part of the quote, however, a dissociation from making, in favour of drawing, is observed which is significant in the present context. For Informant 08, quoted extensively above, there is a substantive difference between designing which is based on making and designing which is based on merely drawing. This, in fact, is what distinguishes design from craft. It would thus be disingenuous, in his view, to regard industrial design process and craft production as equivalent activities. It is still incumbent on the designer, however, to address manufacturability as a primary design concern (Promotion-General 28; Promotion-General 29).<sup>170</sup>

Finally, on the issue of designing, making and industrial manufacture, the process of industrial manufacture must itself be designed:

"I think of process design, designing what the manufacturing process is like, is as much design as designing the THING."  
(Education-Higher 07:304-5)

In designing the manufacturing process, the designer is additionally also designing the object which is the output of that process:

"they are design decisions to me, about the process, and they're inter-related with what comes out the other end."  
(Education-Higher 07:307-9)

Considerations of manufacture are thus a significant element in product design.

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<sup>170</sup> See node (2 3 1) for informant discussion of the argument that conceptual design should include attention to physical realization in a product.

## Digital design

Informants discuss augmenting traditional design skills and abilities with modern technology, through use of the computer in designing (Education-Further 02; Education-Higher 14).

The computer is seen, in the first instance, as simply a design tool.

"the computer's allowed for students to explore more things, because it can be done more quickly, and make easy changes. I think the students who can draw and illustrate to a high degree of skill without the computer tend to be the ones who do it best on the computer, so I think it's purely a tool, but I think it's a very useful one"  
(Education-Higher 14:99-104)

On this view, the computer is the modern equivalent to more traditional design tools.

"some people seem to be born with a pencil, or these days a mouse, in their hand"  
(Designer-Agency 12:187-8)

Skill in using technology in designing thus complements creativity: "It's using the Mac [...] But he's also creative in his mind, as well" (Designer-Freelance 13:429-30). Problems arise when the tool becomes more valued than creativity in using it.

"people thought that the Mac designed, and they didn't realise that it was a tool."  
(Designer-Agency 05:440-1)

"I think that sometimes the use of the computer can give the illusion that you can do everything"  
(Education-Higher 14:116-8)

The computer has as a consequence, in the words of one informant, "changed the way people design" (Promotion-Media 22:213). This is seen as problematic in that it offers a shortcut through the creative design process, with negative results.

"The problem with sitting there with a computer in front of you is that, because your mind is being taken up with the mechanism of making the computer do what you want it to do, is that you're not thinking creatively anymore, you're thinking of how to master the computer and get it to do what you want it to do."  
(Promotion-Design 23:448-52)

The preoccupation identified here is equivalent to the preoccupation with making identified in the case of craft processes above, with the consequence that technique overrides creativity. The result is uninspired design:

"I just think there's always something really nice about a hand done piece of artwork, and a lot of this computer illustration and design work looks really flat and boring, and not like a person's done it, it's like the computer's pumped it out, even though there's a person putting information in there."  
(Designer-Staff 17:870-4)

A backlash is therefore in evidence against computer-originated design, both in terms of the quality of the outcome, and actual performance of the design process.

"Because it's almost like: 'Well, anybody could go and press a button on a computer'"  
(Designer-Staff 17:892-3)

## ***8.12 Originality of design outcome***

- (2) Design as an activity
  - (2 3) Design as a creative activity
    - (2 3 3) Originality of design outcome

The manifestation of creativity in the design outcome is examined in terms of the notion of originality. Originality, if not uniqueness, is seen as the goal of the designer. Originality and innovation are seen as deriving from creative design process.

### **Originality and uniqueness**

Originality of outcome is seen as a key aspect of designing.

"arguably, anything that is about creating something that didn't exist before [...] is design."  
(Education-Higher 01:697-9)

"we have an understanding design's a creative activity, and that our aim is to produce something, if not unique, something which is going somewhere nobody had thought of."  
(Education-Higher 01:390-2)

Reservation as to whether the designer is or should be concerned with generating a unique, rather than merely original, outcome derives from a comparison with the truly unique and individual output of the artist. Elsewhere, however, the unique outcome is identified as an appropriate goal for the designer:

"The Sagrada Familia is just like - it is unique, and when it's finished.. What is there? There is nothing else in the world like it. Now that, in my mind is, that's what architects should be doing, and that's what designers should be doing"  
(Designer-Agency 05:745-8)

A case is discussed in which just such a creatively unique design outcome, in the form of an award-winning television advertisement, was also commercially successful:

"The creatives are thrilled, because they've [...] managed to get something that looks like 'a piece of art' onto people's screens. And the Guinness man has seen his sales shoot through the roof. So there's a direct correlation"  
(Promotion-Design 23:139-42)

The word 'art' is deliberately used here, suggesting a designer affiliation with the artist. Commercial pressures may also prompt copycat design, however: the antithesis of a unique or even original outcome.

"we will produce, if we have to, 'me too' products, if one of our competitors has come up with a fantastic idea that's worth pursuing."  
(Business-Production 06:555-7)

In general, however, originality in design outcome is advocated by the informants.

Use of surprise by the designer is discussed in this context:

"[...] a mixture, the right balance between the expected and the unexpected.' So you grab people with the expected, and then you introduce them to something which was unexpected, and they go: 'Ooh!', or not. The hook."  
(Education-Higher 08:291-4)

Here the informant is talking about songwriting, but for him this is a form of designing. The principle here is one of designing archetypes which do "something slightly different" (Education-Higher 08:303-4) and "familiar things, just with a twist" (Business-Production 09:446). The intention is clearly to provoke a reaction, by making a deliberate design statement.

"there's a difference between just giving me a roof over my head and producing a building that people say: 'That's interesting, I like that, that's different from what I expected to see.'"  
(Designer-Agency 16:258-61)

A stronger form of this view is that the strength of the reaction is apparently more important than whether it is positive or negative.

"I talk to some people and they hate Gaudi, but I love the fact that they know his work. Do you know what I mean? (amused). Hate 'im or love 'im, they know it."

(Designer-Agency 05:738-40)

The preference here is for design, specifically architecture, which forces a reaction other than passive acceptance (Designer-Agency 16; User 30).

### Originality and creative process

"if there is art in what you do, art has to be in the result, rather than in the process and the thing you do along the way."

(Education-Higher 01:381-3)

Originality of outcome is separated from self-absorption in the design process.

"the aim of a designer is not self-expression. The result often is, but the aim is never, should never be"

(Education-Higher 08:314-6)

A design outcome is, nevertheless, the product of a specific design process, and the nature of the outcome is influenced by the nature of the process. Thus, an original outcome results from a creative design process:

"people say that the percentage of creative, creativity within a design is relatively small [...]. Whatever that percentage is, it's got to be there, for me. That's what makes it stand out from any, just a utilitarian building."

(Designer-Agency 16:250-4)

"the company who is producing ORIGINAL designs, starting from scratch [...] were the only ones that were producing really original work."

(Education-Higher 01:417-20)

Conversely, a design approach which is deliberately reliant on a consideration of existing solutions limits the scope for innovation (Education-Further 02).

"it's too easy to sit back and just accept that if you do this piece of direct mail in this way you get a two point something percent reply. Well, fine, but it's just, then you're just gonna work to that formula and have the same old crap falling through your letterbox forever"

(Designer-Agency 05:353-7)

Innovation requires not working to formula in this way.

"there's a lot of stuff on the market which just falls outside of any kind of normal concept of what, how things should be done, and they're very successful."

(Education-Higher 08:486-8)

"it is more than just a sort of science, I don't think you can just go through a series of logical steps and come up with something that's fantastic. You might do, but I think it's more likely that it's some sort of sidewinders that come in and actually give you the inspiration to move it on a bit."  
(Designer-Agency 19:296-300)

Originality is therefore seen as an offshoot of creative design process. One informant discusses the concept of 'brilliance' in the design outcome, but is apparently unable to provide any description of how such an outcome comes about.

"I think brilliance comes in different ways, but it just evolves from the process, somehow. I'm not quite sure how it works, to be honest."  
(Designer-Agency 19:72-4)

Similarly, this generation of an ideal outcome is something

"[w]hich I don't think can be done pragmatically, that's just something you do as part of the process, but - by trying to create something that's special."  
(Designer-Agency 19:349-51)

Creative design process is thus the basis of design originality.

### **8.13 Design as a manageable process**

**(2) Design as an activity**

**(2 4) Design as a manageable process**

Design is a business process to be managed like any other.

In an organizational context, design is seen as a business process to be managed.

"Seeing design, innovation, product development as a process just like any other process you manage."  
(Education-Higher 07:11-13)

Design is here equated as a process with product development. This view is then elaborated by stating that design permeates throughout the product development process, rather than being synonymous with it. Elsewhere, product design is seen as occupying "the central two or three" business processes in product development  
(Promotion-General 29:41-2). Design does not therefore account for the whole of the wider product development process, on this view, though financially it is most significant.

"design does not represent most of the processes, although it undoubtedly accounts for most of the financial cost."  
(Promotion-General 29:42-4)

The concerns in managing design are those of managing any business process:

"doing it quicker, doing it with less quality problems, doing it cheaper, managing resources to make the design process work more efficiently, effectively"  
(Education-Higher 07:42-4)

Design is thus a business process to be managed like any other.

### **8.14 Codifying design**

(2) Design as an activity

(2 4) Design as a manageable process  
(2 4 1) Codifying design

The idea of having a code or formula for doing design offers the prospect of efficient management of the design process, but denies the essential creative nature of designing.

A dichotomy is identified in characterizations of designing:<sup>171</sup>

"It's an add-on to art, and it's very creative, or it's a prelude to technology, and therefore it's very mechanical."  
(Promotion-Design 27:292-4)

Here, the 'mechanical' nature of designing is examined in terms of discussion of codifying design.<sup>172</sup>

The idea of having a code for doing design is seductive in that it offers the prospect of efficient management of the design process.

"If you've got a code, you've got a system, if you've got a set of rules, then you've got a managing of the design process [...] and, as long as you stick to the code, you're home and dry."  
(Education-Higher 01:693-7)

The idea of codification, however, denies the creative nature of designing,

"And if you're saying: 'Oh no, we'll codify all that', you're saying: 'Well, actually, you aren't a designer.'"  
(Education-Higher 01:342-4)

The sacrifice of creativity implicit in codification is seen as incompatible with designing, as an essentially creative activity.

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<sup>171</sup> See examination of node (2 1 1).

<sup>172</sup> The converse 'creative' view of designing is examined at node (2 3 1).

The idea of a code for designing, in terms of a systematically applied "formula", is therefore softened, and replaced by the idea of a commonly applied "approach" (Designer-Agency 19:152; 141). Thus, while the design process can be broken down into distinct steps "on a sort of experimental, scientific basis" (Designer-Agency 19:277), in practice these steps overlap and interchange considerably according to the specific requirements of a project.

The essentially creative nature of designing may nevertheless benefit from some form of effective management. For one informant, this is a matter of balancing the irrational, creative aspect of designing with a need for rational management and guidance.

"It's rational in the sense that there's a process involved with it, but of course it involves irrational things. But I think actually the better designer you are, the more you understand that you are being irrational, and that's fine, 'cause you can then place your irrationality in some kind of context and some kind of process."

(Education-Higher 08:258-64)

Another informant places creativity in designing in a decision making framework.

"If you think of design as being decision making, essentially at every stage in design you are coming to a point where you have to make a decision [...] So you give yourself the options, give yourself an understanding of the options, and then you make the decision. Giving yourself the options, of course, is a creative process, but making the decision is the thing - in the end, it's the only thing that counts."

(Education-Higher 01:244-50)

Creativity is bounded here by an essentially rationalist design ethos.

The final autonomy of the individual designer is upheld by one design manager, however.

"When they're actually working, I don't think there is any management process you can use, that would be worth implementing."

(Business-Production 09:4-5)

Management of the design process is thus considered only applicable in terms of some degree of self-management by the designer while he/she is designing.

## **8.15 Design and the organization**

(2) Design as an activity

(2 4) Design as a manageable process

**(2 4 2) Design and the organization**

An effective in-house organizational design capability is dependent on an appropriate organizational structure and working culture. In-house design capability may be augmented by external bought-in design expertise.

One informant describes how the organization effectively performs the role of the individual designer-craftsperson on a larger scale.<sup>173</sup> Others discuss the management of design and the designer by the organization.

A design-led competitive strategy is accompanied by an organizational structure based around the designer.

“Everybody else then is backing the designer and their ideas, whether it’s commercial or technical, in getting it to store”  
(Business-Production 09:216-8)

Equally, when design is a lower organizational priority the designer is likely to be more marginalized, to the extent that design may even be done by non-specialists (Business-Production 06).<sup>174</sup>

An organizational structure appropriate for a full exploitation of design is one which allows creativity to flourish.

“that’s the real skill, is keeping your organisation creative, and the way you structure your organisation creative, so that you capitalise upon what you do.”  
(Business-Production 11:118-20)

While a creative environment of this kind has a physical aspect,

“the thing about designers is they like big open spaces [...] [t]hey don’t need the air conditioning and the louvred partitions and, you know, eugh - everything that we hate about offices and people in sweaty suits.”  
(Designer-Freelance 21:162-6)

it is much more about organizational culture and ways of working:

<sup>173</sup> (Education-Higher 07:373-82); see node (2 3 2).

<sup>174</sup> The issue of professional ‘ownership’ of designing is examined at node (3 5 1).

"[company A], I think people would say, has always had a strong innovation and creativity culture, and that's simply about the way you engender thought, and the way you engender responsibility and willingness to challenge, in every single person who works in the business."  
(Business-Production 11:1126-30)

A preference is expressed for performing design in-house within the organization:

"It's only on exceptions where you should, a company should go externally." (Business-Production 06:261-2). An in-house design capability is seen as depending on an "infrastructure in terms of design within the company." (Business-Production 06:366-7) Where this infrastructure is lacking, or in other exceptional circumstances such as excessive volume of work, design expertise may be bought-in from outside the organization (Business-Production 06; Business-Production 09). The cost of employing external designers may be considerable, however, both in terms of financial outlay (Business-Production 06), and a loss of control and potential development of expertise in the project (Business-Production 11).

There is a converse perception that an in-house organizational environment is not conducive to the performance of design.

"people always presume that a corporate organisation can not have a robust creative department, because it's inherently gonna be flawed because it's in-house."  
(Promotion-Design 23:95-8)

This perception is based on a view that designing itself, as an essentially creative activity, is necessarily non-institutionalized: "It sure as hell isn't corporate." (Education-Further 02:750). This negative perception of in-house, in comparison to external, design is not supported by the experience of the manufacturers in the dataset, however, as has just been examined.

## **8.16 Summary**

Design is an activity. This activity is seen as complex, rather than homogenous, comprising various domains. Design is overtly commercial, which fact has significant implications for the designer. Design is also an essentially creative activity. The effective management of this creativity is seen as potentially problematic.

- Design is seen as a complex rather than homogenous discipline, comprised of distinct domains. A general dichotomy is identified between (i) design allied to art, and (ii) design allied to technology and engineering. Conflicting understandings as to the nature and practice of design are manifest between the two sides of this divide. The erosion of barriers between design domains introduces the possibility of design generalism.
- Design generalism is discussed with differing degrees of emphasis on the implications of domain specific factors. In general, true generalism, in the sense of equal professional capability across multiple disciplines, is thought beyond the individual designer. A generalist design service is in this case provided through designer collaboration, and the combination of design specialisms.
- Design is recognized as an overtly commercial activity. This commerciality is seen as problematic, however, particularly in relation to notions of creativity and the preservation of non-commercial design ideals.
- Informant discussion of accountability in design focuses on the question of *who* the designer is designing for. The designer may design primarily for him/herself, or for others. While being a commercial necessity, accountability to others, manifest in the design brief, imposes constraints on the designer which may be considered problematic.

- The designer's accountability to the client sponsor of the design activity is established by the informants. This relationship has clear negative aspects for the designer, however. The designer's response to these negative aspects may vary, from resigned acceptance to negotiation to rejection.
- It is recognized that the designer is designing ultimately for the consumer. The designer is therefore required to assess, interpret and satisfy consumer needs. This is potentially problematic where designer and consumer preference differ, in which case the designer may seek to influence consumer perspective.
- Design is a discursive, as well as a performative, activity. The designer is therefore required to be able to communicate effectively about his/her design to others. This is often problematic, due to the non-verbal orientation of many designers, and the inherent ambiguity of language. Use of a 'language of design' merely excludes the non-designer.
- Design is identified as a strategic resource which allows a company to be commercially competitive beyond simple leadership on price. An overall design orientation extends to cover the way a company both functions and presents itself to the consumer, contained in the notion of branding.
- The need to make money is an imperative consideration in design. This may lead to an unashamedly commercialist design agenda. Profitability and design value need not be mutually exclusive, however, but this largely depends on a consumer willingness to pay a premium price.

- Designing is a creative activity. Creativity is primarily evident in the thoughtfulness of conceptual design, rather than in the process and performance of developmental design. Creative working is encouraged in design education and is manifest in design practice.
- The role of making in designing is explored in terms of the relation between design and craft processes. Craft production, with its emphasis on technique, is distinguished from designing for manufacture. Concern over a similar preoccupation with technique is also apparent in discussion of the computer as a design tool.
- The manifestation of creativity in the design outcome is examined in terms of the notion of originality. Originality, if not uniqueness, is seen as the goal of the designer. Originality and innovation are seen as deriving from creative design process.
- Design is a business process to be managed like any other.
- The idea of having a code or formula for doing design offers the prospect of efficient management of the design process, but denies the essential creative nature of designing.
- An effective in-house organizational design capability is dependent on an appropriate organizational structure and working culture. In-house design capability may be augmented by external bought-in design expertise.

# **Chapter 9 : Template Presentation – design and the designer**

## **9.0 Introduction**

This chapter examines the third of the four highest-order nodes in the analytical template in full, including all its 'child' nodes, as reproduced below. An overall summary of these nodes is given at the end of the chapter.

- (3) Design and the designer
  - (3 1) Design as a vocation
  - (3 2) Designer motivation
  - (3 3) Development of the designer
  - (3 4) Design as a group activity
  - (3 5) Design as a profession
    - (3 5 1) Professional ownership of designing
    - (3 5 2) Consumer involvement in design
    - (3 5 3) Designer responsibility
  - (3 6) Stereotypes of the designer

**Figure 9.1 Node (3) including all 'child' nodes**

## **9.1 Design as a vocation**

- (3) Design and the designer
  - (3 1) Design as a vocation

A strong sense of designer vocation is expressed.

A strong personal urge to be a designer is expressed by informants.

"I wanted to be a fashion designer since I was eight years old"  
(Designer-Staff 17:542-3)

"always having wanted to be a designer since Christ knows when: the age of four or five"  
(Promotion-Design 27:587-8)

This early motivation carries through into an insistence that a designer would not be professionally or personally happy doing anything else.

"I would miss it, I can't see myself doing anything else, I really can't."  
(Designer-Staff 17:821-2)

"I can't see myself stepping away from design, not at all. [...] it's just me, it's just my personality, it's the way I've always been."  
(Designer-Staff 17:856-61)

A personal destiny as a designer extends to an apparently "genetic" predisposition according to one informant:

"I think that what we have, either by some weird genetic thing or whatever, in us, that says to us: 'You are going to be an art and design person'"  
(Education-Further 02:1069-71)

This informant does, however, previously offer a somewhat divergent view of the designer's possible route into design. A predisposition towards design may, it is argued, arise through default, specifically among those

"who are attracted to the area because they are not quite fitting in with the mainstream. You do attract very often the lame ducks, as it were"  
(Education-Further 02:87-90)

A characterization of designers as potential 'lame ducks', underachieving in other areas, casts a rather different light on possible reasons for entry into design to that of previous informant quotes. The implication here is that designers may be attracted to design because they are less capable in other 'mainstream' areas.

Nevertheless, and however it may be chosen, design remains a professional "first love" (Designer-Staff 18:460), to which the designer is apparently ever faithful:

"because of my background, I'm a designer, it's totally imbued in me because of what I've done. I've been involved in design since I did design A-level at school, right the way through until now"  
(Promotion-General 28:168-71)

"[designers] just keep going, nobody ever retires, they just keep going until they drop dead."  
(Designer-Agency 19:336-7)

## 9.2 *Designer motivation*

### (3) Design and the designer     (3 2) Designer motivation

The issue of designer motivation focuses on the question of *what* the designer is designing for. Designer motivation may be expressed in apparently altruistic terms, yet the primary motivation is a more selfish pursuit of personal designer satisfaction and fulfillment.

One informant identifies a need for the designer to assess his/her personal motivation in designing,

"this notion of: 'Who am I designing for? What do I want what I'm designing to do?'"  
(Education-Further 02:607-8)

The first of these issues, of designer accountability, is examined separately.<sup>175</sup> The second issue, of the end to which the designer is designing, is informed by personal priorities not relating primarily to design. It is thus incumbent on the designer to interrogate his/her more general motivations:

"Where do I want to go? What are my principles? What do I hold dear? What is influencing me?"  
(Education-Further 02:1012-3)

The common primary motivation expressed by designers in the data is a provision of wider societal benefit through their design.

"you should walk out through your front door and the world should be a beautiful place."  
(Designer-Agency 05:342-4)

The designer has the ability to positively contribute to this ideal.

"[Designers] think a bit more about the world around them. Rather than just living in it, they actually want to influence it."  
(Designer-Agency 05:696-8)

"They're all hoping that something that they produce is going to have a positive effect on the world around them."  
(Designer-Agency 05:704-6)

A primary articulated designer motivation is thus altruistic.

"One of the things that a lot of young people coming into design think, is that: 'I'm gonna be a designer because I want to do good for people. I want to give people good things that will help them in their lives.'"  
(Education-Higher 01:61-4)

Less grandly, the designer may seek simply to "make people happy" through his/her design (Designer-Staff 15.50).

The designer is thus apparently concerned to ensure that everyone benefits from his/her design, not just the designer him/herself (Designer-Staff 15).

Such apparent selflessness is not universal, however. For one informant already quoted, altruism was a secondary motivation for entering into design:

"it [design] seemed to be something I could do where you could do some good. But that wasn't the starting point. The starting point was that I needed to make a living"  
(Education-Higher 01:51-3)

Here, the decision to become a designer was in the first instance pragmatic, based on needing to make a living, albeit combined with some degree of idealism.

Financial reward is, however, generally seen as a secondary motivation for designers in the data.

"we're back to this 'rather than being motivated by the money,' and the passion driving the.."  
(Designer-Agency 05:340-1)

'Passion' is cited by other informants as a primary motivating factor in designing (Business-Production 11; Designer-Freelance 13). Similarly, the designer may be emotionally driven (Designer-Freelance 21), and "buzzed" and "excited" by design (Designer-Staff 18 533: 534) This enthusiasm may become almost overwhelming:

"When I go in there they know that I'm a designer, I'm not an accountant. I'm talking in absolute riddles sometimes, 'cause I'm that excited about this project, and it's a case of: 'Get your head together [name], and sort it out.'"  
(Designer-Freelance 13:559-62)

In these circumstances, the personal financial aspect of designing is relegated in the mind of the designer. Design, it seems, is its own reward:

"It's all about design. We're only in it for design. If we were only – if we weren't designing, if we weren't making these buildings, we wouldn't be here. we'd be somewhere else making buildings."  
(Designer-Agency 19:179-82)

The designers quoted here are not driven primarily by prospects of financial reward, but by a desire for personal fulfillment. The primary designer motivation is thus selfish, in the sense that the main reason for designing is a pursuit of personal

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<sup>175</sup> Node (2 2 1)

satisfaction.<sup>176</sup> A faith is nevertheless expressed that commercial reward will accompany the designer's faithfulness to his/her passion, suggesting that while financial reward may be a secondary motivation, it may not be forgotten.<sup>177</sup>

### **9.3 Development of the designer**

(3) Design and the designer

#### **(3 3) Development of the designer**

A developable skills-based design capability is distinguished from an innate general aptitude for designing. Development as a designer comes with experiential learning, and is closely linked to personal development of the individual.

##### **Innate design capability**

One informant speaks of a "natural talent" for design (Designer-Agency 12:374), manifest in an apparently inherent aptitude:

"Some people have a natural eye, some people seem to be born with a pencil, or these days a mouse, in their hand, and know instinctively what looks right, what looks good."

(Designer-Agency 12:187-9)

Design is therefore seen as an essentially innate ability.

"There's a lot of people that really don't have the ability, there's a lot of people probably do"

(Business-Production 09:626-7)

"I don't know whether there's a formula for training people to design buildings. I'm not so sure there is. It's something you can do or you can't."

(Designer-Agency 19:122-4)

This innate design capability is distinct from a possession of specific design skills which, in contrast, can be developed in the individual designer.

"We look for people with a minimum of 80% the right attitude and ability, and 20% the right skill [...] if you've got somebody with 80% the right attitude, you can teach them the skill. [...] But you can't do it the other way round. You can't take somebody with 80% skill, 20% that - and teach them how to design. You can't do that."

(Designer-Agency 05:522-39)

A distinction is therefore made between a skills-based development of design capability, and an apparently innate general aptitude for designing.<sup>178 179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Designers' vocational attraction to design is examined at node (3 1).

## Developing the design capability

Development as a designer comes with experience.

"I think our designers learn to do what they do, it's over a long period of time, by experience"  
(Education-Higher 01:305-6)

"With design it seems to be that the broader your experience, the quicker you spot yourself making a mistake, but also the faster you get to an answer for the brief you're given."  
(Business-Production 09:303-6)

Experiential design learning is "a guided process of learning by making mistakes"

(Education-Higher 01:333):

"it's only through experience, through trial and error of knowing what works and what doesn't, that you begin to become a true craftsman."  
(Designer-Agency 12:189-91)

The development of design capability through experience is here seen as akin to the process of learning a craft, a crucial element of which is practice over time. The development process of a designer is thus one of personal experimentation, rather than acquired mastery of a given formula.

"I think each designer has to some extent develop their own design process for them, through trying different ways and then finding the things that suit you."  
(Education-Higher 14:367-70)

The designer is thus very much an active participant in his/her own development (Education-Further 02; Education-Further 04). This may include getting some things 'out of the system' as a designer, particularly in terms of any early tendencies to unconstrained creativity (Designer-Staff 17). The development process is seen as ongoing, however, to the extent of career-long continuous professional development for the designer (Designer-Agency 16). The logical consequence of this ongoing professional development, argued for by one architect, is the superiority of the mature designer:

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<sup>177</sup> Informant discussion of designer accountability, examined elsewhere at node (2 2 1), would suggest that financial reward does not always faithfully follow design integrity.

<sup>178</sup> This distinction reflects that made between creative conceptual design and developmental design at node (2 3 1), with the suggestion that the latter can be developed.

<sup>179</sup> It is perhaps significant that the view that the ability to design is to some extent innate is expressed exclusively by designers themselves here, as such a view may serve to protect the

"you work from this experience you've got, and almost it's the older you are the better designer you are, tend to be. Most of the best architects are in their 50s and 60s, rather than their 20s and 30s, because it just takes that long to go through the process, and know what to do"  
(Designer-Agency 19:326-30)

The development process described is clearly post-educational, in the sense that it takes place subsequent to the usual period of formal design tuition.

"I suspect you've got to learn on the job. But I think that it needs to made clear to students that that learning process has got to take place, or you'll never be an adequate designer"  
(Promotion-General 28:592-4)

"one can't expect students, design students, to come out and be oven ready. They're not gonna come out and be able to practise immediately"  
(Promotion-Design 27:327-9)

To be even an 'adequate' designer requires a long-term development process beyond the confines of formal design education. The observation is made by one informant that a formal design education may not even be necessary prior to this professional development in employment:<sup>180</sup>

"how many people there have not done a design education. Very interesting. More and more people are getting involved in design, coming through from admin and using the Macs, or PCs."  
(Education-Further 04:730-3)<sup>181</sup>

### Personal development

In parallel to the specific development of design capability, the personal development of the designer is also seen as significant.

An educator speaks of the confidence students develop through an attainment of design outcomes (Education-Further 02). Development as a designer is here accompanied by personal development as an individual.

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professional interests of designers by justifying their status over non-designers. Professional ownership of designing is examined at node (3 5 1).

<sup>180</sup> Design being done by 'non-designers' is examined at node (3 5 1).

<sup>181</sup> The apparent dangers attendant on a more widespread use of computer-based design tools are discussed at node (2 3 2).

"you see something happen, when they suddenly see a piece of work that leads them from being a child to a young potential designer, and you just see the scales fall, and you see that kid blossom."  
(Education-Further 02:334-7)

Becoming a better designer is intimately related to a process of self-realisation for the individual student, on this view. The design educator is thus not concerned only with delivering skills-based design knowledge to the student, but equally with the general personal development of the student as an individual.

"Part of them moving, not only into adulthood, but moving into a sense of their own, moving into their own skin, I suppose, their own identity, is to let them have some space, let them explore it."  
(Education-Further 02:402-5)

A process of "growing, expanding and developing" (Education-Further 02:455) therefore takes place for the student, in terms of much more than his/her design capability.

The link between design capability and general personal development is discussed elsewhere in the data. A designer describes how the link is exploited within his agency through an office exchange policy:

"the designers kind of grow, from meeting the other people in the other offices, and through the cultural exchange, and when they go back to their respective offices, they design in a, their design's taken on a new twist, it's got a new injection of something"  
(Designer-Agency 05:407-11)

Similarly, a design manager discusses a scheme devised for his employees, to "influence them as designers. Not influence their product, just influence their minds"  
(Business-Production 09:117-8).

Development of design capability and more general personal development are seen to go hand in hand. One educator indicates that a distinction may be made here between specific, skills-based 'training', and broader 'education' (Education-Further 04). While training gives the designer specific skills and abilities, education in a more general sense develops the student as an individual, not just as a designer, which, as has just been argued, may in turn also improve design capability.

## 9.4 Design as a group activity

(3) Design and the designer

### (3 4) Design as a group activity

The value of the design team is recognized above that of the individual designer working alone. Design may also be a co-operative multi-disciplinary activity, in which case the designer nevertheless remains the dominant figure in the collaboration.

"design is like many things, these days, it's a team thing."  
(Promotion-Design 25:237)

Designing is recognized as a group activity, rather than being done by an individual in isolation. This is seen as being equally true of 'name' designers:

"the big designers: they might be the name, but they don't actually do the work. It's the people underneath them who are actually the talented ones."  
(Designer-Staff 17:505-7)

"You can't have some hugely fantastic star designer beavering away on their own"  
(Promotion-Design 25:237-8)

The output of the best-known designers is thus actually a product of their design teams, dispelling the notion of a 'master' designer who is individually responsible for the entire output of his/her studio. In the first of the two quotes given above, the informant's personal experience of working under such a 'name' designer, recounted elsewhere in her account, appears to inform the perspective given here.

Where design *is* done by an individual in isolation, the consequent lack of feedback and criticism from others is considered to be a fundamental weakness (Promotion-Design 23). The value of teamworking, compared to individual working, in designing lies in the scope for designers "feeding off each other":

"I think if I was by myself I would get completely staid, do you know what I mean? You get stuck in a rut. But when you've got other people around you, bringing in new ideas and hitting – you hit ideas off each other"  
(Designer-Staff 17:644-7)

Implicit in teamworking is an exchange of ideas which can not take place for the individual working alone (Designer-Agency 05). This interaction derives simply from the presence of multiple individual perspectives:

"We all bring something completely different, just because we're all different people, and we all have different influences"  
(Designer-Staff 18:467-9)

The interaction of individual perspectives and influences nevertheless coalesces into a coherent design output.

"It's almost as if the designers that we have all brought something to the party [...] and when you combine all those individuals and the way they work, together, you must come out with this almost generic [company A] thing. Each of them bring a, I suppose, an ingredient to the recipe."  
(Designer-Agency 05:98-102)

The metaphor of each designer contributing an ingredient to the overall design recipe in team designing of this kind indicates the contrast with a single designer working alone.

Further to the argument for design teamworking already presented, a combination of different specialisms may also be a pragmatic necessity, born of the unfeasibility of absolute generalism in the individual designer (Business-Production 09; Designer-Freelance 13).<sup>182</sup> 'The best' or 'good' design is "a team effort";

"I think all the best designs, certainly in terms of buildings, which is what I know, then it's a team effort. If you get a good team, and they work together, and they all bring something to the table, then you end up with a good job, at the end of the day"  
(Designer-Agency 16:157-61)

"for me, good design requires input from a number of disciplines, and if that works as a team, if the team gels, you end up with good design"  
(Designer-Agency 16:538-40)

The design team is seen here as multi-disciplinary, with each specialism able to contribute its own expertise to the process.

"I would say that what we'd like to have is each product being explored at each stage by each and every person, so a technical person, a commercial person, a design manager, and designer should all be adding a creative spin to that"  
(Business-Production 09:17-20)

Multi-disciplinarity clearly extends beyond the confines of design specialisms, to include truly cross-functional collaboration. One informant takes this principle a stage

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<sup>182</sup> The notion of design generalism is examined at node (2 1 2).

further in discussing “inter-organisational design” (Education-Higher 07:16), in which design collaboration is dislocated between organisations.

Design is thus seen as a co-operative activity, in which skills of negotiation (Education-Further 02), discussion (Designer-Freelance 10; Designer-Freelance 13), and dialogue (Designer-Agency 16) become paramount.<sup>183</sup> The designer must thus be able to do more than simply design.

“Communicating, convincing, lobbying people, convincing planning authorities, is a lot of what architects’ jobs are about, rather than just doing design.”

(Designer-Agency 19:448-50)

While design is a multi-disciplinary team activity, the designer is nevertheless perceived as the head of that team, in terms of constituting its directing influence and fulfilling a liaising function between the various participants (Designer-Agency 16; Designer-Agency 19).

## **9.5 Design as a profession**

(3) Design and the designer

(3 5) Design as a profession

Despite efforts to professionalize design, design is not yet fully recognized as a profession in its own right.

Professionalism is discussed as an important accompaniment to the creative skills of the designer, “because without the transferable skills of time management and everything else, they’re stuffed.” (Education-Further 04:301-2).<sup>184</sup>

One informant represents a body dedicated to “[m]aintaining professional standards” within design (Promotion-Design 27:57):

<sup>183</sup> The communicative abilities required of the designer are examined at node (2 2 1 3).

<sup>184</sup> Professionalism is discussed as a synonym for ‘effectiveness’, as a framework for evaluating good and bad design, at node (4 2 2).

"We are the professional body, we award chartered status, so we assess members for entry, and following entry we provide them with various services such as training, communications services to assist them in continuing their work as professional designers."

(Promotion-Design 27:17-20)

The position given here contains an identification of design as "a profession in its own right" (Promotion-Design 27:175), and an intention to grant the designer a recognized professional status, thereby

"aiming at this pinnacle of professionalism, to try and place designers on a par with doctors, lawyers, architects"

(Promotion-Design 27:208-9)

Professional qualifications, in the form of a design degree, are seen as helpful here (Education-Higher 01). Nevertheless, doubt is expressed that parity has yet been achieved with other professions.

"designers - who have never really achieved professionalism in a commercial sense, or commercial respect for their professionalism, it's always been an uphill struggle"

(Promotion-Design 27:221-4)

"designer' itself is not, I think, is not valid as a professional term within the marketplace"

(Promotion-Design 27:246-7)

Design is thus "still very much a Cinderella profession" (Promotion-Design 27:177), and the notion of professionalism in design considered unequal to that in more formally recognized occupations.

## **9.6 Professional ownership of designing**

**(3) Design and the designer**

**(3 5) Design as a profession**

**(3 5 1) Professional ownership of designing**

The professional designer does not have a monopoly on designing. Professional design standards are likely to exceed those of the non-designer, however. A strong sense of ownership of design and designing by the professional design community is in evidence.

A professionalization of design, examined elsewhere,<sup>185</sup> does not grant the professional designer a monopoly on designing.

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<sup>185</sup> See node (3 5).

"design is part of our everyday life. Everybody is a designer. Everybody is a designer. [...] you think about how you design your garden, how you design your kitchen, how you design yourself with the clothes that you go out and buy and choose to wear, and you're making design choices all the time."  
(Designer-Agency 12:463-72)

Design may therefore be done by people who are 'non-designers' in a professional sense and who are, moreover, unaware that they are actually designing. This 'silent' designing<sup>186</sup> is thus unconscious, done by people who do not consider themselves to be engaged in designing: "they're not, perhaps, thinking on that necessarily as making, actively making design decisions." (Education-Higher 07:253-4) Non-designers are thus engaged in a form of designing-by-default. The virtue of the professional designer lies in making designing a conscious activity.

"that's what design professionals are. They are making conscious decisions about the way they design a door handle on a door, or the way they put a colour on a wall."

(Designer-Agency 12:482-4)

The general argument is made that a professional designer will perform to a higher standard than a non-designer, as a consequence of his/her professional status.

"it doesn't matter what profession you're in - whether you're a joiner, a decorator, a builder, a car mechanic, or a designer - the devil is in the detail, as they say, and any professional in any walk of life will do something far better than a layperson."

(Designer-Agency 12:151-4)

Rejection of this principle in the case of design is seen as significant by one designer.

"maybe the problem that we have is that things aren't always designed by designers."

(Designer-Agency 05:433-4)

Several examples are cited in support of this view. The distinction between the designer and non-designer is examined by the same informant in terms of the difference between the architect and the builder.

"I've decided I want the most fantastic house, and so what I do is, I go to a builder, and I commission a builder to build me a house, right? Now where's the architect in that? There isn't one, right? And, obviously, I'm gonna get - I just don't believe that the house that I would have built would be half as beautiful and half as well thought, the functionality as well thought out, and as well designed, as it would be if I'd gone to an architect."

(Designer-Agency 05:476-82)

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<sup>186</sup> The notion of 'silent design' is discussed in Section 2.1.1.

Equally, attention to functionality alone does not itself constitute designing.

"the problem is, there are lots of people out there who know how to build the functionality into a website, know how to build a site, but they are not designers."

(Designer-Agency 05:470-2)

The "problem" identified becomes worse when even functional capability is absent, demonstrated by the widespread use of computer-based design tools.<sup>187</sup>

"everybody was picking a Mac up, regardless of whether they were a designer or not. And just because it was convenient, and they could get this flyer out, they decided that meant they were a designer, and it meant the world was full o' crap."

(Designer-Agency 05:445-8)

A superior design outcome is seen to clearly derive from the use of a professional designer. This superiority of professional design is evident in terms of its increased effectiveness.<sup>188</sup>

"So if it's a brochure that's trying to communicate a particular message, then a professional designer should be able to do that in a more effective way than somebody who isn't trained."

(Designer-Agency 12:122-5)

This informant observes the same "commoditization of design" (Designer-Agency 12:90), in terms of non-designers increasingly engaging in designing through use of computer-based design tools, discussed above. Unlike in the preceding quote from Informant 12, however, this wider engagement with designing is seen here as having a positive effect in actively raising the general base standard of design and appreciation of design. A recognition remains, however, that professional design standards are likely to exceed those of the non-designer.

"So if they start designing their own packaging, for instance, their own labels for their own products - again that's fine, but if they only sell half as much as a label designed by a professional, that's the acid test as to whether a design professional is worth paying the extra money for."

(Designer-Agency 12:135-9)

The greater design expertise of the professional designer is therefore defended in the context of a general 'commoditization' of designing.

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<sup>187</sup> The apparent dangers attendant on a widespread use of computer-based design tools are discussed at node (2 3 2).

Several informants representing the professional design community are in various ways protective of an ownership of design and designing. The role of one represented design organization is given as

"to represent, promote, nurture, and generally protect the idea of, GREAT design and advertising, and hold up as exemplar what is good about advertising and design."

(Promotion-Design 23:4-7)

This protective attitude to design is unashamedly elitist:

"I think, ultimately, maintaining the purity of what the INDUSTRY recognises as great advertising and great design, is still what's important"

(Promotion-Design 23:240-2)

This assurance that the professional design community should uphold 'expert' design standards is manifest in one designer placing his own evaluation above that of the client:

"you haven't finished designing until the job's delivered and the client's received it, and said: 'That's fucking amazing.' Or rather until YOU'VE received it and said: 'That's amazing.'"

(Designer-Agency 05:51-3)

A general arrogance on the part of the designer is identified by one informant.

"I think if designers stopped being as aloof as they tend to come across at times - as being the only people who are able to make decisions and provide solutions - I think it would probably help."

(Promotion-Design 27:252-4)

While proclaiming "there's nothing one should be arrogant about in design", this informant nevertheless goes on to acknowledge: "I'm incredibly arrogant about design, and I think it's a failing in designers." (Promotion-Design 27:309-10; 589-91) This apparent designer arrogance may clearly relate to the notion of 'purity' in design standards expressed above.

Another informant, conversely, identifies a lack of confidence in designers:

"I don't think designers have enough confidence in themselves as members of society with something to say and do."

(Promotion-Media 22:526-7)

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<sup>188</sup> The notion of design effectiveness is examined at node (4 2 2).

This observation is clearly at odds with general opinion in the data, however, as examined above. It is nevertheless perhaps significant in suggesting a fragility in the designer over-confidence manifest in an identified arrogance.

## 9.7 *Consumer involvement in design*

- (3) Design and the designer
  - (3 5) Design as a profession
    - (3 5 2) Consumer involvement in design

Product customization allows the consumer to make only limited design choices. Active consumer involvement in designing is, rather, achieved through collaboration with the designer, who remains the dominant partner.

In designing for the consumer, the designer effectively acts as the consumer's 'design advocate'.<sup>189</sup> Consumer involvement in design may be more active than this relationship suggests, however.

Informant perspective on product customization is clear.

"the mass-customization stuff is, from what I know, hyped, and applicable to a few types of product and a few types of customization, but actually it's offering an illusion of choice. It's still choice from options [...] the customer chooses the product."

(Education-Higher 07:152-6)

Customization is seen in terms of choosing from prescribed options, rather than actually designing.

"The consumer's only designing within a very tight framework of choices, in any examples I've ever seen of that. So the consumer - and very often those choices are what you might call performance choices, rather than fundamental design choices."

(Education-Higher 01:208-11)

"the individual consumer, at the point where the product's available on sale, can only choose between a range of options. I think it's good that they can, but I don't think that's design, and I think that when people give you an interactive computer terminal and say: 'Hey, design your own car!', they're actually undervaluing design."

(Education-Higher 01:233-8)

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<sup>189</sup> See node (2 2 1 2).

What the consumer lacks here is “real in-depth knowledge to be able to make those [design] decisions.” (Education-Higher 01:239-40) A more active role for the consumer in designing, in terms of the consumer effectively becoming his/her own designer, is thus problematic (Education-Higher 07).<sup>190</sup>

Consumer empowerment in designing may thus be seen in very limited terms:

“I don’t see many cases where customers really can drive design, except by saying: ‘My inside leg measurement’s this. Can you please make me a bike frame or a pair of jeans to suit.’”  
(Education-Higher 07:156-8)

More direct consumer involvement in designing as it is performed by the designer is seen as feasible, however, but in particular terms. This involvement may be at the initial stage:

“I can only presume that the consumer has been researched, investigated, talked to, talked with, before the briefing”  
(Education-Further 04:611-2)

Elsewhere, designers discuss consulting and interviewing users as the first step in researching a new design (Designer-Staff 17; Designer-Staff 18). Equally, consumers may be involved in giving feedback on designs in progress (Business-Production 09; Designer-Staff 15). Consumers are in this way more involved in the design process, “cooperatively” (Promotion-General 29:126) or in “partnership” with the designer-manufacturer (Business-Production 20:737). The designer still retains dominant status in the designer-consumer relationship, however, and is apparently careful not to cede ground to the consumer in the actual process of designing.

## 9.8 *Designer responsibility*

- (3) Design and the designer
  - (3 5) Design as a profession
    - (3 5 3) Designer responsibility

The designer is ultimately responsible for his/her design.

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<sup>190</sup> Professional ‘ownership’ of designing is examined at node (3 5 1).

The designer is held responsible for his/her design. In the case of architecture, this sense of responsibility is exacerbated by the scale and longevity of the built design outcome.

"you're creating something, which has got to stand there for a good number of years, as well. You can't easily throw it away. It's not like a canvas that, if you're unhappy with it you can throw it away and destroy it and start again. You can't do that with buildings."

(Designer-Agency 16:202-6)

The designer is, in addition, also held responsible for the wider impact which his/her design may have.

"Everything that you design has a consequence, and sometimes you need to think about that."

(User 32:793-5)

In this case, the designer is considered to have a moral responsibility, exaggerated by the influence of his/her design. Elsewhere, "the individual conscience" of the designer is invoked as a check on moral responsibility in design (Promotion-Design 25:248). A warning is given in this case, however, that the status of the designer should not be inflated on this issue.

"I think some designers do get off too much on the, their role as moral arbiters [...] I don't think design has a special role."

(Promotion-Design 25:232-6)

It is thus seen as inappropriate to ascribe the role of moral guardian to the designer. Another informant goes further, in apparently rejecting any wider notion of designer obligation:

"I think, when we're teaching designers, if we have somebody who wishes to design something totally irresponsible, in my viewpoint, or my colleagues' viewpoint, nevertheless, we could only say: 'Well, the only real standpoint we could have here is that we hope they'll do it as well as they possibly can.' Because we don't have the right to dictate to somebody else what your moral or cultural framework ought to be."

(Education-Higher 01:140-6)

Such a libertarian attitude to designer responsibility is in direct conflict with the belief that the designer has a definite moral burden, identified by Informant 32.

Ultimately, it can nevertheless be said that the responsibility for bad design is seen to rest with the designer.

"the only reason for anything to be poorly designed is because the guy, the guy or girl, whoever designed it, designed it badly. There's no other reason."  
(Designer-Agency 05:335-7)

"There's no excuse for things which are badly proportioned, or crudely done [...]. It doesn't cost a lot, that. That costs thought and a good eye"  
(Designer-Agency 16:440-2)

The design itself, at least, is thus the sole responsibility of the designer.

## 9.9 *Stereotypes of the designer*

(3) Design and the designer

(3 6) *Stereotypes of the designer*

Stereotypical perceptions of the designer are disabused. Nevertheless, designers are themselves implicated in perpetuating stereotypes which persist around their profession.

A vocational attraction to designing informs a strong informant sense of personal identity as a designer.<sup>191</sup> Wider stereotypical perceptions of the designer are also discussed in the data.

A designer identifies a phenomenon of the newly-fashionable, creative and commercial "hot spot", "full of designers after work with their mobile phone, backpacks, getting down with a pint of Caffreys, kind of thing." (Designer-Freelance 21:172; 184-6)

Fashion design as an occupation is elsewhere seen thus:

"if someone's daughter says they're going to college to study fashion, they will probably assume that they want to go to Paris and design glamorous things for Vivienne Westwood, and probably end up taking drugs and consorting with undesirables."  
(Education-Higher 01:568-71)

One clothing designer in the informant sample is quick to disabuse any notion of glamour in her profession, however:

"That's what annoys me, more than anything, about people who think that: 'Oh, yeah. Oh, you're a designer. Oh, fabulous,' and you think: 'No it's not fabulous,' it's hard work, there's a lot of paperwork, it's not jet setting all over the world, and people have got this idea that you're this person who does these fabulous things, and it's not the case. It's really, really hard work. It's like a nine to five job, only you're doing something that's a little bit more creative during the day."

(Designer-Staff 17:453-60)

A deliberate attempt to de-glamorize design here betrays a dissatisfaction with what is considered to be a common perception of design and the designer. An interior designer describes a similar frustration:

"to a lot of clients, a designer's [...] the tarty person that they see on "Home Front", painting walls, and you've gotta change that perception, and it's very difficult sometimes, 'cause they think you're just there and 'We'll change a few curtains and that's it, buddy' (laughs)."

(Designer-Freelance 10:96-100)

Here, a simplistic client perception of what the designer actually does has a negative influence on the designer-client relationship. Misunderstanding of this kind may then translate into a mistrust of the designer:

"you know the image, the caricature that people had of the arrogant architect"

(Designer-Agency 16:145-6)

"a lot of people are intimidated by designers, and they do think we're stupid and strange and weird and take drugs and things like that (laughs)."

(Designer-Staff 17:343-5)

Informant 17 does, however, apparently play along with this stereotype to some extent, at least in terms of personal dress.

"I think in the design department we tend to get away with a little bit more, because they expect us to be weird: 'Oh they're weird, they wear weird things.'"

(Designer-Staff 17:326-8)

Similarly, the reaction to a designer failing to conform to this stereotype: "you just think: 'Are you a designer? You just look normal!'" (Designer-Staff 17:436), suggests some indulgence in this perception of the designer as 'weird'. The designer's concern here, expressed in terms of conforming to a corporate dress code, is a loss of personal identity.

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<sup>191</sup> See node (3 1).

18: [...] you completely lose your own identity, from having to wear something.

R: And is that very important to you?

18: Oh, it is, isn't it? To every designer it is, isn't it? 'Cause it's your expression, of what you're wearing.

(Designer-Staff 18:256-61)<sup>192</sup>

The expression of individuality in this way is clearly important to these designers.

"I think that's part of being a designer, isn't it? You want to be different, you don't want to be the same as everybody else. [...] I think you tend to be more adventurous being a designer. You don't like playing it safe. I think you like trying something a little bit different when it comes to clothing, and you're more open minded, I would say, when it comes to clothing."

(Designer-Staff 17:354-60)

This emphasis placed on the issue of dress is perhaps significant in indicating a more general reluctance to conform. One informant discusses the inherent individualism and perversity of design students:

"it always makes me smile in college when you've got things like student associations getting off the ground, but you can never get art and design students to join them because they just, whatever you did, they'll go the other bloody way anyway (amused)."

(Education-Further 02:731-5)

A perception of designers as 'strange' or 'weird' is therefore perhaps justified to some extent. One informant accuses designers of 'playing up to' the popular stereotype (Promotion-Design 27), which would seem to be illustrated by Informant 17 above. This stereotype may even be a part of the prospective designer's motivation, according to this perspective: "you're thinking: 'What they're trying to achieve is this stardom'" (Promotion-Design 27:610-11). Designers are therefore themselves to some extent implicated in perpetuating the stereotypes which persist around their profession.

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<sup>192</sup> Two speakers are identified here: '18' denotes the informant; 'R' denotes the researcher (see transcription conventions in Appendix 6).

## 9.10 Summary

Design is discussed in relation to the designer. The designer's personal relationship with designing is discussed in terms of vocation, motivation and personal development as a designer. Design is more successful when performed as a group activity, however. Discussion of design as a profession focuses on issues of ownership of designing, the role of the consumer in designing, and designer responsibility. Stereotypes of the designer are also examined.

- A strong sense of designer vocation is expressed.
- The issue of designer motivation focuses on the question of *what* the designer is designing for. Designer motivation may be expressed in apparently altruistic terms, yet the primary motivation is a more selfish pursuit of personal designer satisfaction and fulfillment.
- A developable skills-based design capability is distinguished from an innate general aptitude for designing. Development as a designer comes with experiential learning, and is closely linked to personal development of the individual.
- The value of the design team is recognized above that of the individual designer working alone. Design may also be a co-operative multi-disciplinary activity, in which case the designer nevertheless remains the dominant figure in the collaboration.
- Despite efforts to professionalize design, design is not yet fully recognized as a profession in its own right.
- The professional designer does not have a monopoly on designing. Professional design standards are likely to exceed those of the non-designer, however. A

strong sense of ownership of design and designing by the professional design community is in evidence.

- Product customization allows the consumer to make only limited design choices.  
Active consumer involvement in designing is, rather, achieved through collaboration with the designer, who remains the dominant partner.
- The designer is ultimately responsible for his/her design.
- Stereotypical perceptions of the designer are disabused. Nevertheless, designers are themselves implicated in perpetuating stereotypes which persist around their profession.

# **Chapter 10 : Template Presentation – design and specific context**

## **10.0 Introduction**

This chapter examines the fourth of the four highest-order nodes in the analytical template in full, including all its 'child' nodes, as reproduced below. An overall summary of these nodes is given at the end of the chapter.

- (4) Design as of a specific context
  - (4 1) Design as currently fashionable
    - (4 1 1) Politicization of design
    - (4 1 2) The 'designer' label
    - (4 1 3) Design awareness
    - (4 1 4) Multiple meanings of 'design'
  - (4 2) Design as culturally linked
    - (4 2 1) Design and cultural change
    - (4 2 2) Evaluation of design

**Figure 10.1 Node (4) including all 'child' nodes**

## **10.1 Politicization of design**

- (4) Design as of a specific context
  - (4 1) Design as currently fashionable
    - (4 1 1) Politicization of design

The economic value of design is politically recognized and promoted. There is some scepticism, however, as to the inherent long-term value of this interest.

A political recognition of the economic value of design is identified.

"design, of course, is, and the contribution it can make to commercial success is, never better understood or accepted worldwide. Governments and businesses now know that it's gonna be the thing that makes the difference." (Promotion-Design 25:79-82)

Government therefore takes an active role in promoting design in economic terms.

"the Government has to stimulate awareness of what design can do in terms of adding value to the bottom line"  
(Designer-Agency 12:338-40)

A wider aim of the promotion of design is "fostering UK design and perception by people in the UK, and other places, about UK design" (Promotion-Media 22:494-6).

Design has thus gained a higher political profile than was previously the case.

"it's become a bit political fashionable, but it's not done design any harm. It's very nice to be favoured by politicians and to be used."  
(Promotion-Media 22:430-2)

This political emphasis is closely related to a heightened wider interest in design

(Education-Higher 01),<sup>193</sup> though their relative precedence is difficult to establish.

"I'm not sure which came first, are you with me? I'm not sure whether the Government sensed that the general public were interested in design and proud of British design, so they thought: 'We could get some major brownie points if we show an interest.' Or whether it came the other way round: the Government showed an interest, and then the general public got swamped by reports in the press about the value of the creative industries"  
(Designer-Agency 05:665-71)

There is some scepticism as to the sincerity and long-term value of recent political attempts to promote design, however. One informant sees them as "show business":

"they are not bad, but they're show business. I don't say it's a bad venture at all - I think it's laudable, but it's not the only way to do it"  
(Promotion-Media 22:509-11)

Another informant questions the permanence of current political interest:

"I just think the whole industry is trying to make the most of government backing for all of this, as are we. While you've got the Government banging on about how great our design is, God, get out there and make hay [...]. Now it's our time in the sun, but it won't be forever, it'll be something else soon. So I think we just have to be aware of that, not get too swept along with the importance of it all."  
(Promotion-Design 23:594-601)

There is thus a suspicion that design may simply be a "political football" (Promotion-General 28:338), and Informant 28 in fact already detects a relative cooling of interest in design politically.

"We should be worried, though, that, at the moment, from what I've seen, there is less emphasis on the undervalued specialisms. Things like design. And although a lot of the words are used: innovation, R&D, technology, IT, export; design is the one that tends to fall and not be used in the conversations."

(Promotion-General 28:444-9)

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<sup>193</sup> See node (4 1 3).

There are also those for whom the political interest in design has been flawed from the outset.

"There's always a lot of bullshit attached to design. People saying: 'Design or die'. Or when I think about the sort of stuff the Design Council have been saying for years, I'm always a little bit cynical about that, the Design Council in particular. I dunno, I can't help thinking it's a rather bankrupt organisation. It was set up with a brief, it did a certain amount to promote design, but whether it actually ever achieved anything.."

(Education-Higher 01:631-7)

Similarly, recent efforts aimed at promoting design to industry are dismissed:

"Massaging egos, isn't it, really? That's what it's about. It's not gonna sell you any more products (laughs)."

(Business-Production 06:400-1)

"I don't think, therefore, that the Millennium Products' management has perhaps understood how to communicate their message into the manufacturing industry which could use it."

(Promotion-General 29:237-40)

"They come up with little books of sayings about design from the PM, and all that stuff. They're all great. But I don't think it helps their cause, and it doesn't help mine."

(Promotion-General 28:454-6)

Response to recent political interest in design and its promotion is therefore ambivalent, with an underlying scepticism as to its inherent long-term value.

## 10.2 *The 'designer' label*

(4) Design as of a specific context

(4 1) Design as currently fashionable

(4 1 2) The 'designer' label

Design has in one sense become synonymous with 'style' and notions of fashionable consumption, manifest in the 'designer' label. This usage is considered as devaluing design.

Concern is expressed at what is identified as a specific corruption of 'design' as a term in contemporary usage. Design, it seems, has become synonymous with 'style':

"consumers are actually purchasing 'design', sold quite a lot of times for the wrong reason as a bastardised version of design [...] are they buying design, or are they buying style and fashion. A lot of the time they're buying style and fashion"

(Promotion-Design 27:448-52)

"Styling has become the thing that actually is now a word instead of design. We style all sorts of things, and a lot of style is actually shite. It's shoddy, it's sham, it's not about anything other than styling."  
(Education-Further 02:639-42)

Design has in this sense become devalued as a term, typified by use of the adjective 'designer'.

"designer this.' 'designer that,' is to do with branding and labelling – it's not to do with designing [...] as soon as you slap the word 'designer' in front of it you can charge more. And it's perceived value: it probably has no more design input than anything else."  
(Promotion-Design 27:274-9)

The 'designer' label is thus seen as an essentially misappropriated linguistic invention, deriving not from design but from notions of fashionable consumption.<sup>194</sup>

"it's like the word 'designer', which means: trendy, fashionable, slick, chic, whatever. [...] it's become into the language very, very strongly, as something that's to do with aspiration."  
(Promotion-Media 24:254-8)

'Design' thus becomes a means of acquiring "prestige" and "exclusivity" (Business-Retail 26:7; 53) through consumption of 'designer' goods:

"it says something about someone: 'I am - I'm hip, I'm trendy, I know what's what, I know what's in.' And that's all it's saying."  
(Business-Retail 26:456-8)

There is clearly some informant resentment at this appropriation of 'design' as a term.

"We need to ask ourselves what we mean by it [design]. Do we just mean a label? Do we just mean - is it a shorthand? Or do we mean something more?"  
(Education-Further 02:697-9)

Concern over an apparently prevalent conception of design-as-style therefore derives from a fear that this may "devalue" design in common understanding (Education-Higher 08:253).<sup>195</sup>

### 10.3 Design awareness

- (4) Design as of a specific context
  - (4 1) Design as currently fashionable
    - (4 1 3) Design awareness

<sup>194</sup> Use of 'designer' as a label, discussed here, is distinguished from specific 'designer labels' in the form of brands. Branding is examined explicitly at node (2 2 2).

<sup>195</sup> The specific perceived abuse of 'design' examined here relates to a general ambiguity examined at node (4 1 4).

A heightened general contemporary interest in design is identified. Design awareness, fuelled by design-oriented television programmes, is distinguished from design understanding. There is some scepticism that current interest in design will last.

### Contemporary interest in design

One informant identifies a high current level of academic interest in researching design (Promotion-Media 24). This academic interest may be seen as a reflection of design's general contemporary profile.

"I think there's more happening in design. It's definitely more recognisable as an activity, there's no doubting that, even if one just goes as far as, what is it: Rodney [sic] Llewellyn Bowen, or whatever it is - whether one dismisses him or not, to people that is a design activity. So there's definitely more design activity, it's more recognisable"

(Promotion-Design 27:430-6)

"design has become fashionable in the way that fashion has become a way of selling newspapers. It's something that the public want."

(Promotion-Media 24:203-5)

Design-oriented television programmes are simply the most obvious manifestation of a heightened general level of public and media interest in design.

"In the newspaper arena, design is news a bit like fashion, when it's glamorous, it's decorative, it's exciting in that sort of way. It's actually design as entertainment"

(Promotion-Media 24:195-7)

An interest in design is also apparent in patterns of consumption.

"The Dyson: it's a vacuum cleaner, but people are intrigued by the design of it, and the colour of it, and the - it looked so unlike any other vacuum cleaner, and people responded to that, they really did."

(Promotion-Design 23:294-7)

"IKEA, instead of selling itself on the fact that actually the stuff is dirt cheap, which is actually really what IKEA is about, it sells itself on a sort of design, and on the kind of social ticket."

(Promotion-Media 24:236-9)

Design sells, it seems.<sup>196</sup> Equally, a high level of interest is identified in the design which promotes consumption: "we do feel that the public awareness and interest in advertising design is huge at the moment" (Promotion-Design 23:228-9).

<sup>196</sup> One informant remains sceptical on this point: "you may have high and lofty notions, but at the end of the day what probably sells is a much more base instinct." (Business-Production 11:210-12)

## Awareness

A recent increase in the general level of design awareness is identified in the data.

"there does seem to be over the past couple years, I think, there's been more of a general public awareness, if you like, of design."

(Designer-Agency 05:661-3)

"obviously there's a much more heightened awareness and understanding of what the hell it [design] is all about, and it's not just: 'Oh, I like that, I'll buy it.'"

(Designer-Freelance 21:568-70)

The role of design-oriented television programmes is apparently central here.

"Perhaps those programmes and others like them have helped people to, are helping people to come to the same opinion as me: that there is, that you should be aware of design, and conscious of the fact that things don't need to look like they look."

(Designer-Agency 05:680-3)

"I think the television programmes, the makeover programmes, that people pan, have actually done a fantastic job, and are making people aware of it [design]"

(Promotion-Design 25:168-70)

Response to design's recent appearances on television is not wholly positive,

however. The treatment of design is seen in some cases as lacking in depth.

"I still think it's entertainment, and I don't have a problem with it being entertainment. I prefer it to be more serious."

(Promotion-Design 27:578-80)

An identified consequence of this perceived shallowness of treatment is a failure to engender genuine understanding, rather than simple awareness, of design (Promotion-Design 25). Nevertheless, for this informant and several others, there is a recognition that any coverage of design of this kind will have some likely positive effect.

"even though I absolutely detest these things, a lot of the programmes on TV at the moment that sell themselves as being design make my toes curl, but at least it's still pushing a bit of the message. It's going to have, ultimately, a positive effect."

(Promotion-General 28:263-7)

"It's a catalyst for a bit of a debate amongst people who would otherwise be oblivious to it, and that's fantastic. So there's no way I'd knock it. But it's not a particularly good representation of design as I would understand it from within manufacturing, but I don't care, 'cause I think it's a good thing."

(Promotion-General 28:285-9)

In this sense, all publicity is good publicity in terms of a promotion of wider design awareness.

## **Understanding**

Design awareness is no guarantee of a deeper understanding of design, however.

"people never really have understood what design is about. They're terribly vague about it. They know that there are all sorts of things get designed, from buildings to nuclear power stations to pencil sharpeners, but they don't really have a sense how that's come about."

(Education-Higher 01:558-62)

The present is however seen as constituting a high-point in this regard.

"I think in some respects it's never been a better time for someone to be a designer, because what you do probably IS widely understood."

(Education-Higher 01:604-6)

The heightened general contemporary interest in design is therefore apparently matched by a parallel improvement in the general level of understanding of design. A familiar case is again cited as having a positive effect:

"James Dyson must have made a difference, 'cause so many people have been exposed to that as an example of something that looks a bit different and seems to work well. That, somehow comes about by something referred to or called 'design'."

(Education-Higher 07:456-60)

The design awareness prompted in part by the Dyson case and television coverage of design is seen as bringing with it some deeper understanding of the role of design in shaping consumer products.

A conscious effort to improve the level of public understanding of design further is in evidence in the data.

"So we're trying to really make.. help people to understand as early as we can, what we're trying to do, what design is, the power of design."

(Business-Production 11:356-7)

This proselytizing mission is commonly expressed in terms of a presentation and acceptance of an apparently definitive understanding of design.

"getting design available and accessible in its true form to the general public."

(Business-Production 11:326-7)

"make people think a bit harder about what design actually is, and so there's increased understanding of what design really means, and how design really works."

(Promotion-Media 24:270-2)

"to actually involve end users of design, to say to them: 'This is what design is about, and here is an understanding of it.'"  
(Promotion-Design 27:256-7)

The particular version of design advocated in each case is, of course, slightly different, but all are united in opposing a conception of design as being merely synonymous with 'style'.<sup>197</sup>

A focus is placed on early design education, in this context. A general lack of design understanding is ascribed to design's invisibility in early education: "we must grow up understanding and appreciating great design" (Designer-Agency 12:378-9).

### Transience

As noted above, wider interest in design is identified as a recent phenomenon.

"The whole design thing started to rear its head at the end of the '80s"  
(Promotion-Media 24:327-8)

A designer observes wider contemporary interest in design as the latest manifestation of an apparently recurring but nevertheless transient phenomenon.

"I think that people's ideas, tastes and psyche changes by the month [...], and people could discard ANY interest in design within a three month period, and say: 'No, no. We're not really interested in it.'"  
(Designer-Freelance 21:606-10)

The pragmatic conclusion is thus that: "we can only say that, for now, there is an interest in design" (Designer-Freelance 21:614-5). An educator similarly observes:

"the fact that the market for industrial design is very good at the moment, doesn't mean it'll continue to be so in ten years time."  
(Education-Higher 01:608-10)

There is thus some scepticism that current interest in design will last.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> A conception of design-as-style is discussed at node (4 1 2).

<sup>198</sup> This scepticism mirrors that expressed above at node (4 1 1) over the permanence of political interest in design.

## **10.4 Multiple meanings of 'design'**

(4) Design as of a specific context

(4 1) Design as currently fashionable

(4 1 4) Multiple meanings of 'design'

'Design' is identified as an ambiguous term, resulting from its widespread and indiscriminate use. An attempt at a definition of 'design' is, however, seen as inappropriate.

### **Ambiguity**

"people have this, they use this word 'design', and it means so many different things to so many people"  
(Designer-Agency 12:424-5)

'Design' is identified as an ambiguous term, the meaning of which changes according to the perspective and professional affiliation of the individual.<sup>199</sup> This specific ambiguity is seen as a manifestation of a general ambiguity in language:

"essentially what you're talking about is language meaning different things to different people."  
(Education-Higher 01:840-2)

Nevertheless, the specific ambiguity around the term 'design' is particularly problematic for the informants.

The potential danger arising from ambiguity over 'design' is non-understanding.

"I think the trouble with the word 'design' is that it's been overused and under-understood, misunderstood"  
(Education-Higher 08:239-41)

Response to the suggestion that use of 'design' has become more democratic is negative.

"I don't think it has become democratic in its usage, actually. I think people are imprisoned by its usage, because they no longer understand what 'design' or 'designer' means."  
(Education-Higher 01:552-4)

The same informant asserts that 'design' has become "almost invisible as a term" as a consequence (Education-Higher 01:528-9). Overuse of 'design' as a term, identified by

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<sup>199</sup> The influence of design domain on understandings of design is examined at node (2 1 1).

Informant 08 above, is seen in stronger terms as “abuse” here, but the response is one of resignation:

“I think that you’ll always have a language being abused. Anyone who gets upset about it is not doing themselves any good, because you’ll never stop it.”  
(Education-Higher 01:533-5)

Thus, while widespread and indiscriminate use of the terms ‘design’ and ‘designer’ is “kind of irritating” (Education-Higher 01:536), for this informant there is little that can be done about it. One informant actually sees designers exploiting this situation to their professional advantage:

“they’re quite happy to have the flexibility of: ‘Well, whatever it means is, that’s what I want it to mean at a particular point in time’”  
(Promotion-Design 27:303-5)<sup>200</sup>

Reaction elsewhere to the apparent abuse of ‘design’ is, however, more robust, as examined below.

### Definition

Rejection of the term ‘design’ is seen as one response to a situation in which it has become, alternately, “invisible” (Education-Higher 01:528), “clichéd” (Education-Further 02:680), and “bastardized” (Promotion-Design 27:248). Certainly, the term itself is considered problematic; it therefore seems attractive to simply abandon it.

“maybe it’s jargon and language that’s part of the problem, using that word ‘design’ is maybe not the right word”  
(Designer-Agency 12:440-1)

Substitution of ‘the right word’ here yields the apparent promise of a removal of the ambiguity around ‘design’. This view is not commonly held, however. In response to the question “Do you think, perhaps, we need a new word for a designer?”, another informant answers:

“I suppose one would argue immediately: ‘Yes’, but I think on reflection I would probably tend to say ‘No’. I think what we actually need to do is to protect the term, gain a respect for the terminology and the word itself, so that people don’t actually abuse it - or when it is abused, people understand that that’s not what design is about.”  
(Promotion-Design 27:269-73)

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<sup>200</sup> A similar form of possible professional self-protection by designers, in terms of an ‘ownership’ of designing, is discussed at node (3 5 1).

Rather than cede the term 'design' to its abusers, the informant here advocates its protection and consolidation. Such an effort is seen as doomed, however, in a previous quote above (Education-Higher 01:533-5).

The issue of definition is generally seen as problematic in the data. Striving for a definition is seen as an inappropriate response to the identified ambiguity of the term 'design'.

"it might be actually too rigid. It might be too clear cut, and if something's very clear cut it can be very dangerous. [...] You have to allow some interpretation" (Education-Higher 01:748-51)

Some degree of ambiguity is seen as an important aspect of design, which any attempt at definition would eradicate.

"I think it's very useful, to TRY and define it. I don't know if it's - I don't know how achievable that is. Part of me is not even sure if I would want somebody to define it."

(Designer-Agency 05:688-90)

Definition is seen as an academic exercise:

"everybody uses 'design' in the way that applies to themselves. [...] But it's not very useful having arguments about exactly what it applies to."

(Promotion-General 29:317-9)

An informant describes how even the Research Director of a Government-sponsored design body refuses to define design (Promotion-General 28). This informant goes on to describe how, when advising commercial clients, he uses his own pragmatic 'definition' of design, but this is loose enough to adapt to the specific needs and requirements of each client. It is thus not a definition in the true sense:

"maybe my definition wouldn't fit so neatly with what other people might do, but I keep returning to it, and it still works for me with the job that I'm doing."

(Promotion-General 28:498-500)

The criteria for what is design are not fixed, hence any attempt to define design is seen as inherently flawed.

## **10.5 Design as culturally linked**

(4) Design as of a specific context

**(4 2) Design as culturally linked**

Design is reflective of its social, historical and regional culture of production. This is manifest in specific cultural influences on the designer.

### **Design and cultures of production**

One informant distinguishes between design as a process and "design in its position in the world' design" (Education-Higher 01:682-3). Design is conceived in the latter sense as a culturally-informed phenomenon.

"for me architecture has got to be about people, as well, it's to do with people, it's to do with the way we live, work, relate, congregate for whatever purpose"  
(Designer-Agency 16:237-9)

"I'm personally interested in the sort of, what, anthropological side of design, about how design evolves, and what design tells us about ourselves"  
(Promotion-Media 24:39-41)

Design is seen here as reflective of its social culture of production, and as a form of historical cultural index.

"I think architecture almost reflects it's time. If it's good architecture, if it's relevant architecture, it reflects the time we are in"  
(Designer-Agency 16:381-3)

This notion of historical relevance therefore enables us to access remote cultures through a consideration of their design.

"I think that you can look at every aspect of the past, not just in products, but in anything, and say: 'What are the design aspects of that? How did the world move forward? How did it redesign itself? What were the things that came out of that? So you can, again, show people all the time that design is part of our everyday life."  
(Designer-Agency 12:458-63)

An illustration of design acting as a wider societal index is given:

"There's a whole 'nother style that comes out during a recession, that's sort of going for safety, going for comfort, going for the familiar."  
(Designer-Freelance 21:599-601)

In contrast, design may deliberately seek to be ahistorical:

"we have a preconception that design should be about something, should end up with something which is contemporary looking, and when it doesn't: is it design? Well, yeah 'course it is. I've designed things which are designed not to look contemporary."  
(Education-Higher 08:224-8)

In this case, the link between design style and culture of production is made more complex.<sup>201</sup>

The observation is made that mass-consumption requires that a product be "socially acceptable as a design concept." (Designer-Staff 15:468-9) Another informant describes the transience of general consumer demand for specific design styles (Business-Retail 26). These two observations express a common idea of a consensus on appropriate or preferred design style, which underpins the notion examined here of design as a cultural indicator.<sup>202</sup> Design is only significant as an index, in the way discussed, if it expresses identifiable cultural norms.

### Regional design cultures

Design is also seen as reflective of regional cultural difference: "There's such different specific flavours within Europe, for example." (Designer-Freelance 21:476-7)  
American design is cited as an illustration of this link:

"everything they do is far too fat, and that goes across the board from the design of the remote control or a mouse, through to the director's chair. Everything's a little bit too fat and sassy. [...] Maybe it's a kind of reflection of the cultural obesity of the nation."  
(Designer-Freelance 21:528-33)

This tendency for indigenous design is countered by the idea of internationalism in design style (Promotion-Media 22), but the principle of specific cultural relevance is upheld: "Maybe it's a case of: we'd all be speaking the same language, but with different accents." (Designer-Freelance 21:538-9)

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<sup>201</sup> The attempt to be non-contemporary through deliberately 'retro' design styling is itself a significant historical cultural indicator.

<sup>202</sup> The notion of consensus in design evaluations is examined at node (4 2 2).

### **Influence on the designer**

The influence of culture on design is of course an abstraction deriving from the influence of culture on the designer him/herself. Cultural factors "will inform the design process, because, again we don't operate in a vacuum" (Education-Further 02:968-9).<sup>203</sup> The designer can thus not avoid being influenced by everyday cultural experience.

"it comes from everywhere: every day life, clothes you wear, music you listen to, all that sort of stuff really."  
(Designer-Freelance 13:268-70)

"getting stimulated by things that are around, in the press, clothing, whatever"  
(Designer-Staff 15:98-9)

This influence is not merely passive, however. The designer is considered to have a responsibility to be aware of cultural change, and to subsequently feed that awareness into his/her designing.

"styles and moods change all the time, so designers have to keep up to speed with what the latest trends are [...] And so you continually have to learn and reinvent yourself."  
(Designer-Agency 12:191-8)

This informant is very much concerned with "design[ing] for today" (Designer-Agency 12:394), embodying the concern with historical 'relevance' in designing contained in a quote given above.<sup>204</sup>

## **10.6 Design and cultural change**

- (4) Design as of a specific context
  - (4 2) Design as culturally linked
    - (4 2 1) Design and cultural change

The designer has the capability to effect significant social change, both good and bad.

Design is seen as a powerful agent of social change.

"design has an influence on everybody's life. [...] Everything that you design has a consequence"  
(User 32:792-4)

<sup>203</sup> This 'vacuum' metaphor is also used by Informant 14.

<sup>204</sup> (Designer-Agency 16:381-3).

The designer is therefore in a privileged position to influence society.

"I think the fashion designer has to be like other commentators, in a way, on social change. Has to be ahead of what's happening, or on the crest of what's happening at the very least."  
(Education-Higher 14:417-20)

The designer is both a commentator on, and effector of, change here.

Ideally, of course, design is used as a force for doing good and providing benefit to society.

"I suppose that good design will be where the designer can actually create something from nothing, where that's an opportunity which hadn't existed before the designer arrived. [...] But, essentially, you could argue that the designer has moved the state of the art forward genuinely, and people are better off."

(Education-Higher 01:118-24)

"you're looking at the good of the world and society, culture, whatever, in your own little view of it, and tranna make it good, and out of that will come products."

(Business-Production 09:501-3)

One designer describes the development of a "design mentality to make things better" (Designer-Agency 12:436-7). Design is not in itself inherently positive, however.

"you can't assume that design is good. One of the things that a lot of young people coming into design think, is that: 'I'm gonna be a designer because I want to do good for people. I want to give people good things that will help them in their lives.' And there's no argument, there's no reason to believe that that is what most designers do."

(Education-Higher 01:61-6)

Design is thus a neutral tool through which the designer may do "[a]s much harm as good" (Education-Higher 01:71). There is thus no guarantee that design will have a positive effect.

## **10.7 Evaluation of design**

- (4) Design as of a specific context**
  - (4 2) Design as culturally linked**
    - (4 2 2) Evaluation of design**

A distinction is made between functional and aesthetic grounds for evaluating design. While objective evaluation may be possible in purely functional terms, aesthetic evaluation of design is much more subjective. Consensus in subjective evaluation of design is discussed, but is seen as inapplicable in absolute terms. Design effectiveness, measured against the satisfaction of initial stated objectives, is suggested as an alternative evaluative framework.

For one informant, the notion of good design is apparently unproblematic:

"We are a charitable organisation, to represent, promote, nurture, and generally protect the idea of, GREAT design and advertising, and hold up as exemplar what is good about advertising and design."  
(Promotion-Design 23:4-7)

The issue of how design may be evaluated is, however, discussed in some depth in the data. As one informant asks:

"what are criteria of good and bad design?"  
(User 30:192)

### **Function versus aesthetics**

A distinction is made on this issue, between functional and aesthetic grounds for evaluation.<sup>205</sup> Functionally-good design can be objectively determined, while the issue of what constitutes aesthetically-good design is much more open to interpretation.

"Function is easily answered: does the blooming thing work, as it should, and what is its purpose? When you come to aesthetics, you're in a minefield."  
(User 30:889-91)

In aesthetics terms, therefore, "there are no rights and wrongs" (User 30:44-5).

This distinction between functional and aesthetic design evaluation is made elsewhere in the data. An informant refers to "a good technical design, engineering solution to how to make car brakes work better, or whatever." (Education-Higher 07:33-5)

Design here represents "a convergence on the optimal solution" (Education-Higher 07:240-1);

<sup>205</sup> The relative precedence of functional and aesthetic criteria in evaluating design is discussed at node (1 1).

"the engineering design-is-solving-technical-problems, 'What's the perfect clothes peg?' sort of design."  
(Education-Higher 07:475-7)

Design is seen in these terms as abiding to standards of right and wrong. Beyond functional design considerations, however, evaluation is much less clear cut:

"the interest for me in the, looking at aesthetic content of products, is that, in a way, there's so much more scope, much more open to grabs: it could always have been otherwise."  
(Education-Higher 07:237-9)

There are thus multiple possible aesthetic design outcomes, none of which is intrinsically superior to the rest.

"For various reasons, it could always have been very different, and it won't go wrong, it'll just end up different. It's not better or worse, it's just different."  
(Education-Higher 07:250-2)

Notions of right-wrong, better-worse are inappropriate here, in that absolute judgements of aesthetic design content are considered unsupportable. A design educator similarly argues for the equivalence of alternative design outcomes:

"seeing that and getting the kids to recognise that all of those outcomes have some sort of value, and not, it's not that one's better, it's that they've all got some intrinsic quality"  
(Education-Further 02:77-80)

The user already quoted above concludes with the assertion:

"there is no answer to this question 'What is good and bad design?', for God's sake. Except in the functional field. Aesthetics is aesthetics. And what is fashionable, you've got to accept is fashionable. What is good to you, is good to you."  
(User 30:956-60)

For this informant, personal taste of this kind is apparently inscrutable:

"it's a nicely-designed thing, but don't ask me why it's well-designed. I don't know! (laughs)"  
(User 30:842-3)

"Again, don't ask me why I like it, and why I think it's bad design. Maybe it isn't bad design. But like music, if it doesn't please the ear, at the end of the day.."  
(User 30:149-51)

The analogy made with personal taste in music here indicates the apparent difficulty in proclaiming aesthetic value in objective terms.

Others concur with the view of the subjectivity of aesthetic preference in design.

"a lot of it's personal, or – the way that design comes across."  
(Designer-Freelance 13:141-2)

Nevertheless, the possibility of a consensus in subjective response is upheld by some informants.

"There are actually things around that, you can speak to anybody, and the general consensus will be: 'That is ugly,'"  
(Designer-Agency 05:327-8)

A shared aesthetic judgement is thus apparently possible:

"everybody could look at the thing and just - the decision was made: it was a beautiful design."  
(Promotion-Design 23:71-2)

Others are less convinced of the possibility of such universal satisfaction, however.

"I think you can only satisfy most of the people most of the time, I don't think you could do – [a design] can't work for everybody."  
(Designer-Agency 19:364-6)

Despite such reservations on the part of some informants, a desire for objective aesthetic design standards which transcend the vagaries of taste is in evidence in the data.

"is there a thesis which says that design goes deeper, that we have something in our psyche which responds to things of a particular type throughout the ages, throughout time?"  
(User 30:898-900)

One architect seems to respond positively to this question:

"I think if you look at most really good buildings, whatever age they were built in, whatever materials they were built in, you think: 'That looks right, feels right.'"  
(Designer-Agency 16:444-7)

Similarly, another informant discusses the possibility of "consumers hav[ing] more courage of their convictions and knowing what is good or bad, not just what they like and don't" in design terms (Promotion-Media 22:548-50), as if objective standards of good design do in fact exist. As above, Informant 19 resists such claims for universality in aesthetic design evaluations: "There's no objective watermark. It has to be done on a personal basis." (Designer-Agency 19:428-9) On this more sceptical view, aesthetic judgements, even those which appear consensual, are transient.

"You ask the public what is good and bad design. Look, say, you get their answer, and you sort of get an average, a norm, and you tell the designers, this. Now that's gonna change, tomorrow, next week, next century. A fact of life."

(User 30:892-5)

The final or ultimate design, embodied in researcher-informant discussion in the idea of the 'perfect kettle', is thus a fantasy:

"I think there's no such thing, is there? It's like this year's perfect kettle. Because there's always new technology, social changes."

(Promotion-Design 23:386-8)

Both aesthetics and function are identified as changeable here. Consensual design evaluation is thus seen as credible within a specific context, but not in absolute terms.

### **Effectiveness**

A framework for evaluating good and bad design is provided by one informant:

"the kind of professional practice framework, of whether the designer has significantly improved the product or the situation, whatever the terms of reference are"

(Education-Higher 01:94-6)

This framework embodies the notion of effectiveness: of design meeting some stated objectives.

"it was good design, because it was powerful, it was effective, it hit where it had to go"

(Education-Further 04:663-4)

"We don't talk about good design or bad design, we talk about effective design - design that delivers what it was set out to achieve"

(Promotion-Design 25:197-9)

Effectiveness can, moreover, be measured against the satisfaction of initial design aims.

"in every type of design you can measure its effectiveness. And it depends, it depends what you set out to do, and that's the only way you can measure effectiveness. It's retrospective"

(Promotion-Design 25:256-9)

One informant discusses 'professional' rather than effective design, in the same terms:

"it did everything that it was supposed to do, and therefore it's professional design."

(Promotion-Design 27:478-9)

An example of effective-professional design in these terms is advertising that 'works', i.e., generates more sales (Promotion-Design 23).

Effective design is thus about more than aesthetics.

"it's okay making something look great, but if it doesn't achieve its objective, then it's not good design."  
(Designer-Agency 12:127-8)

Effectiveness and professionalism are, on these terms, simply a measure of how well specified goals are met. The significance of those goals is a separate issue, however, such that effective-professional design may actually be insignificant if the objectives are not meaningful (Promotion-Design 25).

## 10.8 Summary

Design is seen as a contextual phenomenon, linked to a specific context of production and consumption. Design's current fashionable status is examined at both a surface level (political and cultural interest) and at a deeper level (levels of understanding and varieties of meaning). Design both influences, and is influenced by, its surrounding culture. Evaluation of design is thus subject to change.

- The economic value of design is politically recognized and promoted. There is some scepticism, however, as to the inherent long-term value of this interest.
- Design has in one sense become synonymous with 'style' and notions of fashionable consumption, manifest in the 'designer' label. This usage is considered as devaluing design.
- A heightened general contemporary interest in design is identified. Design awareness, fuelled by design-oriented television programmes, is distinguished from design understanding. There is some scepticism that current interest in design will last.

- 'Design' is identified as an ambiguous term, resulting from its widespread and indiscriminate use. An attempt at a definition of 'design' is, however, seen as inappropriate.
- Design is reflective of its social, historical and regional culture of production. This is manifest in specific cultural influences on the designer.
- The designer has the capability to effect significant social change, both good and bad.
- A distinction is made between functional and aesthetic grounds for evaluating design. While objective evaluation may be possible in purely functional terms, aesthetic evaluation of design is much more subjective. Consensus in subjective evaluation of design is discussed, but is seen as inapplicable in absolute terms. Design effectiveness, measured against the satisfaction of initial stated objectives, is suggested as an alternative evaluative framework.

## **Chapter 11 : Discussion of Template Meta-issues**

### ***11.0 Introduction***

This chapter identifies and discusses three recurring template 'meta-issues', additional to the specific data node discussions presented in Part III: (i) design, the designer and the consumer; (ii) design, art and creativity; and (iii) design, branding and marketing. These meta-issues have been generated by the researcher as 'deep' themes running through the informant discussion organized at the data template, not readily apparent in the examination of the template presented thus far.

The generation of these 'meta-issues' constitutes a further stage of interpretive data analysis by the researcher. The data template as it is presented in Part III was interrogated further, in order to highlight any overarching themes in the informant discussion which simultaneously inform several individual data nodes yet do not themselves appear individually. By integrating connected data nodes from throughout the template in this way, this further stage of interpretive analysis augments that presented previously, by looking beyond the template's immediate organizational structure. For each such 'meta-issue', the individual data nodes it integrates are indicated on a reproduction of the full data template. An awareness of the 'meta-issues' thereby generated provides a deeper understanding of the template than is attained solely from the preceding examination focusing on individual data nodes.

## 11.1 Design, the designer and the consumer

### 11.1.1 Design and the designer

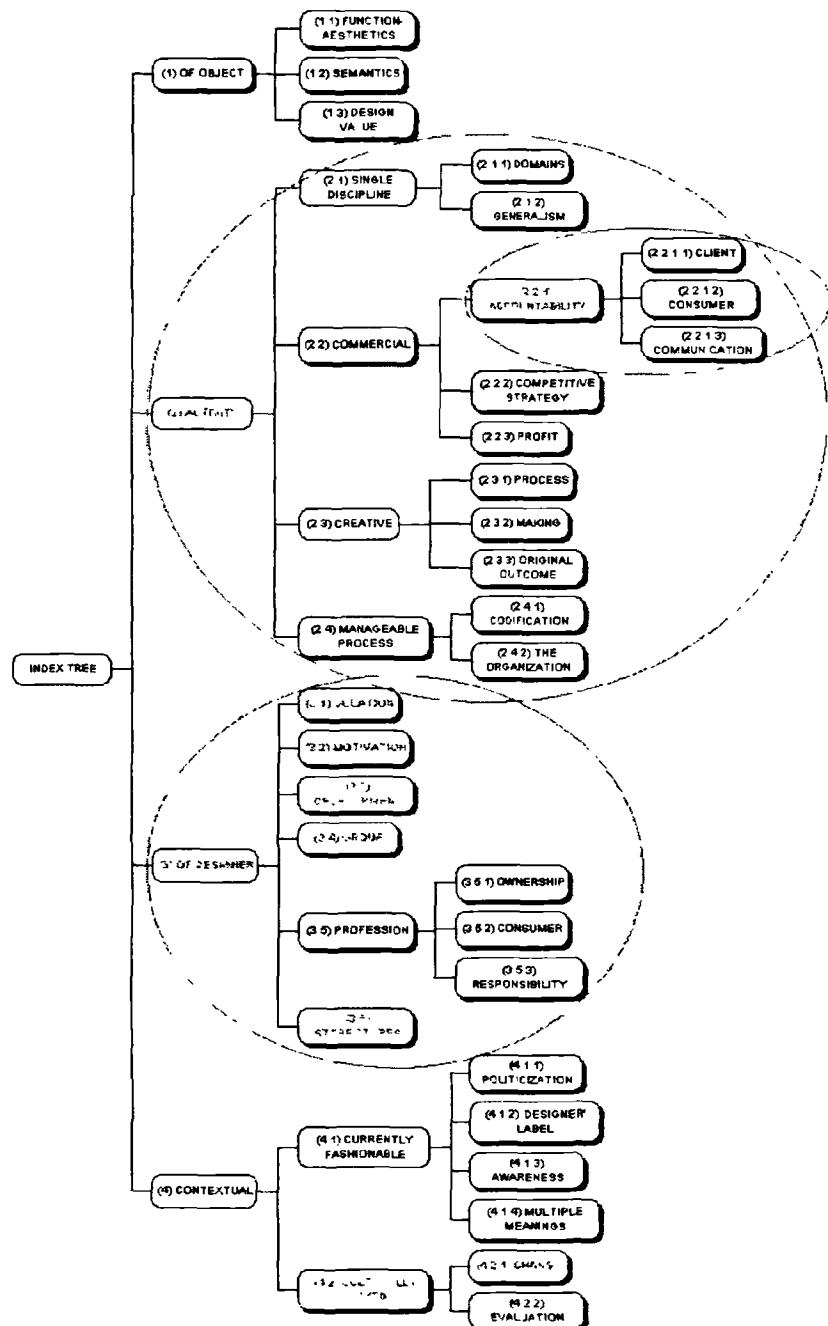


Figure 11.1 Data nodes integrated at the meta-issue 'Design and the designer'<sup>206</sup>

<sup>206</sup> 'Empty' nodes containing no coding are shown without shadow; nodes explicitly cited in the discussion here are shown in red; node families cited here are circled in red.

The third of the four 'families' of data nodes constituting the final data template collates informant discussion of design where this discussion is conducted with direct reference to the designer.<sup>207</sup> The figure of the designer is also present in discussion appearing elsewhere in the template, where the link made between design and the designer is less direct but nevertheless still significant. In this section, informant discussion of design also making reference to the designer is brought together for consideration from throughout the template.

A summary of the third node 'family', containing informant discussion of design in direct relation to the designer, is reproduced from Chapter 9:

Design is discussed in relation to the designer. The designer's personal relationship with designing is discussed in terms of vocation, motivation and personal development as a designer. Design is more successful when performed as a group activity, however. Discussion of design as a profession focuses on issues of ownership of designing, the role of the consumer in designing, and designer responsibility. Stereotypes of the designer are also examined.

Several of the data nodes included in this summary focus on the designer, rather than on design *per se*. Informant discussion of design as a vocation, designer motivation, and stereotypes of the designer,<sup>208</sup> in particular, focus primarily on the designer as an individual, rather than on design itself. In the case of other nodes included in this summary, discussion of design and the designer is much more interlinked, however, such that discussion of one makes essential reference to the other. Thus, discussion of the development of the designer focuses on the extent to which designing is a developable skills-based capability and/or an innate aptitude.<sup>209</sup> Similarly, discussion of design as a co-operative activity performed best by a team makes inevitable reference to the participants in such co-operation.<sup>210</sup>

<sup>207</sup> See node (3) 'Design and the designer' and all its 'child' nodes (Chapter 9).

<sup>208</sup> Nodes (3 1), (3 2) and (3 6) respectively.

<sup>209</sup> Node (3 3).

<sup>210</sup> Node (3 4).

Informant discussion collected at the second and largest node 'family' in the template relates to how design is done, and as such involves discussion of the designer as the agent who designs.<sup>211</sup> The issue of designer accountability is particularly prominent in this discussion, based around a consideration of who the designer is designing for, and how this then influences the designer.<sup>212</sup>

Elsewhere in the template, design is seen to be reflective of specific social, historical and regional cultures of production.<sup>213</sup> This reflection is seen as the result of specific cultural influences on the designer him/herself. The relationship between designer and surrounding culture is seen as symbiotic, however, such that the designer is in turn seen as having the capability to effect change in his/her surrounding cultural environment.<sup>214</sup>

It is therefore apparent that informant discussion of design throughout the data template often makes direct reference to the figure of the designer.

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<sup>211</sup> See node (2) 'Design as an activity' and all its 'child' nodes (Chapter 8).

<sup>212</sup> See node (2 2 1) and all its 'child' nodes.

<sup>213</sup> Node (4 2) 'Design as culturally linked'.

<sup>214</sup> Node (4 2 1).

### 11.1.2 Professional 'ownership' of design

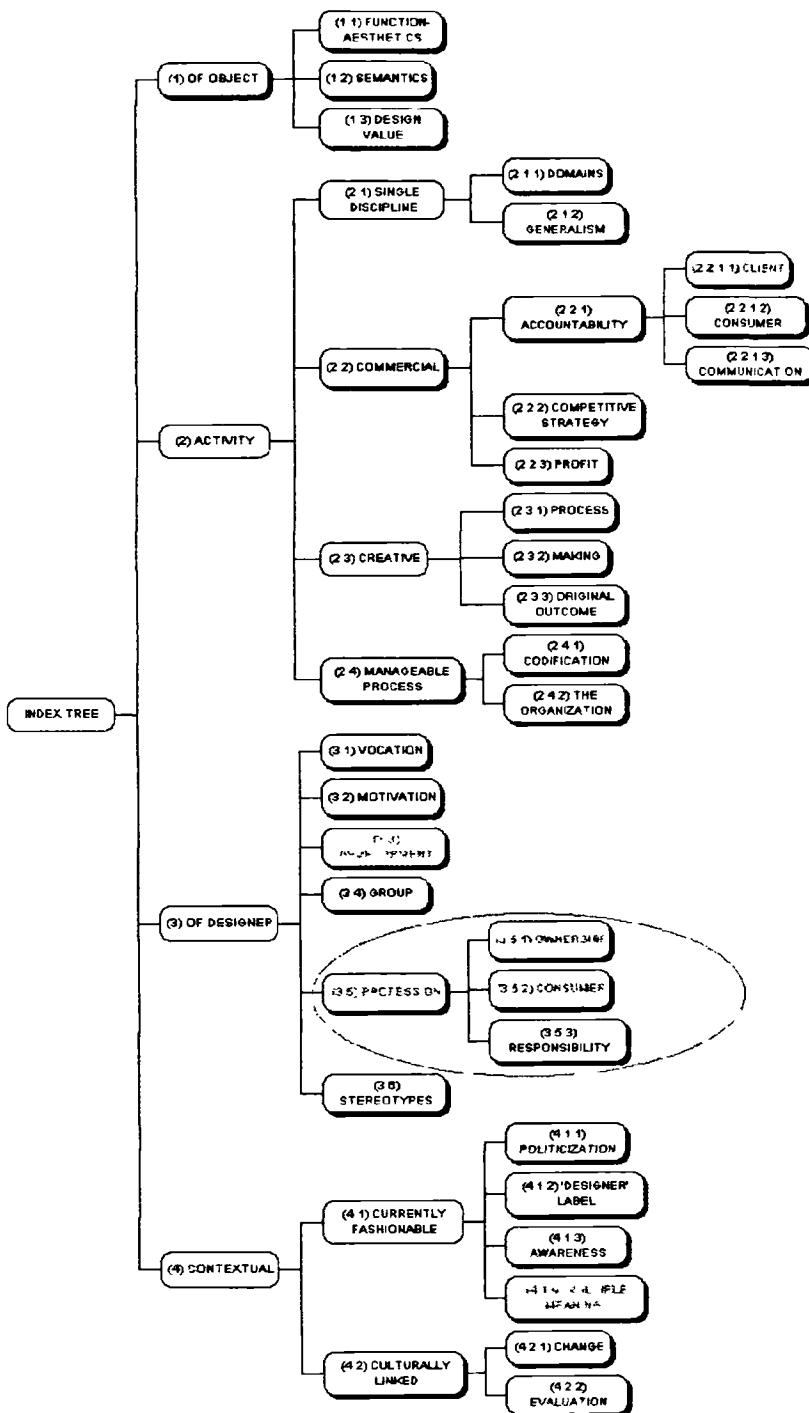


Figure 11.2 Data nodes integrated at the meta-issue 'Professional 'ownership' of design'<sup>215</sup>

<sup>215</sup> 'Empty' nodes containing no coding are shown without shadow; nodes explicitly cited in the discussion here are shown in red; node families cited here are circled in red.

While an essential connection is made in the informant discussion between design and the recognized 'designer' who designs, a parallel discussion is also conducted throughout the template, focusing on the issue of the role of the non-designer in design and designing. This issue is explicitly presented at node (3 5) and its 'child' nodes, in which a strong sense of designer 'ownership' of designing is in evidence. In one sense an apparently democratic view of designing is taken:

"design is part of our everyday life. Everybody is a designer. Everybody is a designer. [...] you think about how you design your garden, how you design your kitchen, how you design yourself with the clothes that you go out and buy and choose to wear, and you're making design choices all the time."  
(Designer-Agency 12:463-72)

Yet for most informants the role of the recognized professional designer is paramount.

"maybe the problem that we have is that things aren't always designed by designers."  
(Designer-Agency 05:433-4)

The greater design expertise of the professional designer is therefore defended in the face of a general 'commoditization' of designing.<sup>216</sup>

Any such professional 'ownership' of designing is not absolute, however, illustrated by the lack of professional recognition for design identified at node (3 5), and summed up in an acknowledgement that

"designer' itself is not, I think, is not valid as a professional term within the marketplace"  
(Promotion-Design 27:246-7)

This lack of recognition is clearly an issue for the designers in the data, and is manifest in discussion of the designer-client relationship. While designers uphold their accountability to the client as the sponsor of the design activity, this relationship has clearly perceived negative aspects for the designer, which stem in part from a lack of professional respect for the designer.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Node (3 5 1) 'Professional ownership of designing'.

<sup>217</sup> Node (2 2 1 1).

A designer tendency to professional self-protection may therefore be detected at various points in the template. In the informant discussion of the development of the designer, the quoted designers distinguish a developable skills-based design capability from an innate general aptitude for designing.<sup>218</sup> Design is thereby presented as the exclusive domain of those in possession of this gift, and in the process the designer is provided with a justification for a differentiated status from the non-designer. A similar motivation may inform an insistence that active consumer involvement in designing is only achieved through collaboration with the designer, who remains the dominant force in any such partnership.<sup>219</sup> This leaning towards self-protection of a status as a recognized 'designer' is explicitly manifest in an unashamedly elitist attitude to design standards.

"I think, ultimately, maintaining the purity of what the INDUSTRY recognises as great advertising and great design, is still what's important"  
(Promotion-Design 23:240-2)

Nevertheless, the standard informant response to the ambiguity of 'design', which is seen to have resulted from its widespread and indiscriminate use, is to reject attempts at a definition of 'design' as inappropriate.<sup>220</sup> This rejection of any definition of 'design' is reflective of a recognition of a necessary and desirable multiplicity of meaning around the term. Herein, perhaps, lies an implicit admission that design is not the exclusive domain of the recognized 'designer', but may equally be engaged with by the non-designer.

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<sup>218</sup> Node (3 3).

<sup>219</sup> Node (3 5 2). The design consumer is considered separately in the next section.

<sup>220</sup> Node (4 1 4).

### 11.1.3 The designer and the consumer

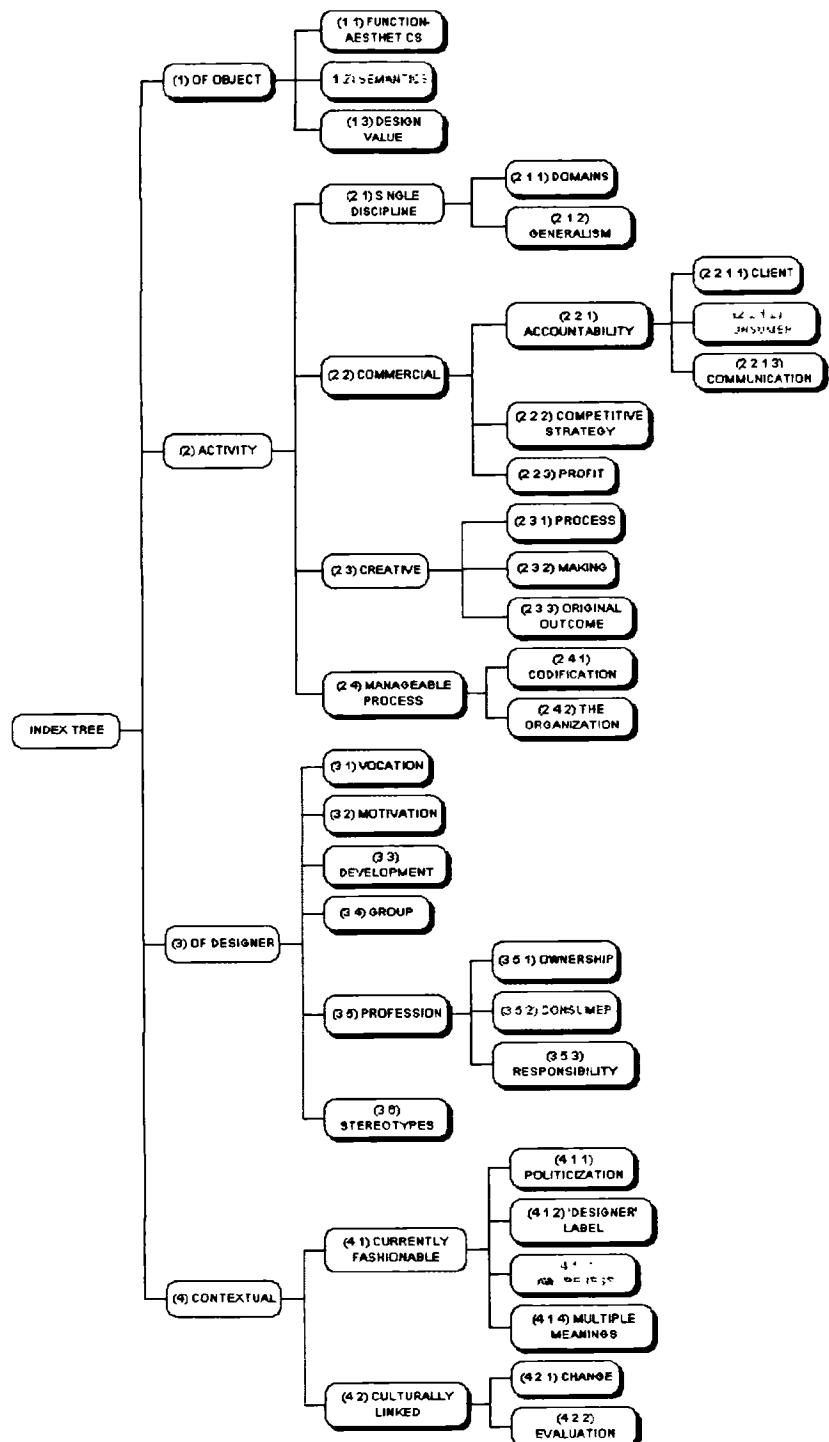


Figure 11.3 Data nodes integrated at the meta-issue 'The designer and the consumer'<sup>221</sup>

<sup>221</sup> 'Empty' nodes containing no coding are shown without shadow; nodes explicitly cited in the discussion here are shown in red.

Informant discussion of the non-designer focuses primarily on the consumer, particularly in terms of the designer-consumer relationship.<sup>222</sup> Consumer involvement in design is explicitly discussed at node (3 5 2). Active consumer involvement in designing is seen by informants as achievable only through collaboration with the recognized designer, who remains the dominant force in any such partnership.

"I don't see many cases where customers really can drive design, except by saying: 'My inside leg measurement's this. Can you please make me a bike frame or a pair of jeans to suit.'"  
(Education-Higher 07:156-8)

Nevertheless, it is recognized in the data that the designer is designing ultimately *for* the consumer.<sup>223</sup> The designer is therefore required to assess, interpret and satisfy consumer needs. Difficulties arise, however, when designer and consumer preferences differ, in which case the designer may seek to influence consumer perspective to align it with his/her own. Accountability to the consumer is therefore seen as a sometimes problematic issue for the designer in terms of the location of power in the designer-consumer relationship. The situation described is one in which, as one designer states:

"I think as designers we think differently, still, to the mainstream customer"  
(Designer-Staff 15:414-5)

As a consequence, informants identify conflict between the two parties as to the eventual outcome of design, and the question of whose preferences should ultimately be satisfied. Some informants advocate an 'education' of the consumer in this context, thereby seeking to align consumer preference with that of the designer. Elsewhere in the template, a recent increase in the general level of design awareness among non-designers is identified, apparently catalyzed by the popularity of design-as-entertainment.<sup>224</sup> A distinction is made, however, between consumer awareness of design and consumer understanding of design, with the former being seen as no guarantee of the latter. Thus in the present case, a heightened general

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<sup>222</sup> The terms 'user', 'consumer' and 'customer' are all used by informants. 'Consumer' alone is used by the researcher for consistency.

<sup>223</sup> Node (2 2 1 2).

contemporary interest in design is not seen as indicative of a parallel increase in general levels of understanding of design among consumers.

It is apparent that informants seek to ascribe dominance in the designer-consumer relationship to the designer. One area in which this is unlikely to be possible, however, is the negotiation of meaning which takes place in design semantics.<sup>225</sup> It is recognized in the informant discussion that his meaning derives from both the designer and the consumer. There are thus no guarantees that the semantic intentions of the designer will coincide with the appropriation of product design for semantic purposes by the consumer. This is illustrated by an example given by one designer:

"we had an image, on an early version of [bank], where we had a series of V's [outlines on table] for the structure, pointed down, and they thought that was, the feng shui of that was money running off down the hill and into the harbour and away, and the bank would go bankrupt."

(Designer-Agency 19:248-52)

The designer therefore experiences a loss of control in such situations, and consequently the consumer becomes more empowered in the designer-consumer relationship.

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<sup>224</sup> Node (4 1 3) 'Design awareness'.

<sup>225</sup> Node (1 2).

#### 11.1.4 The consumer as informant

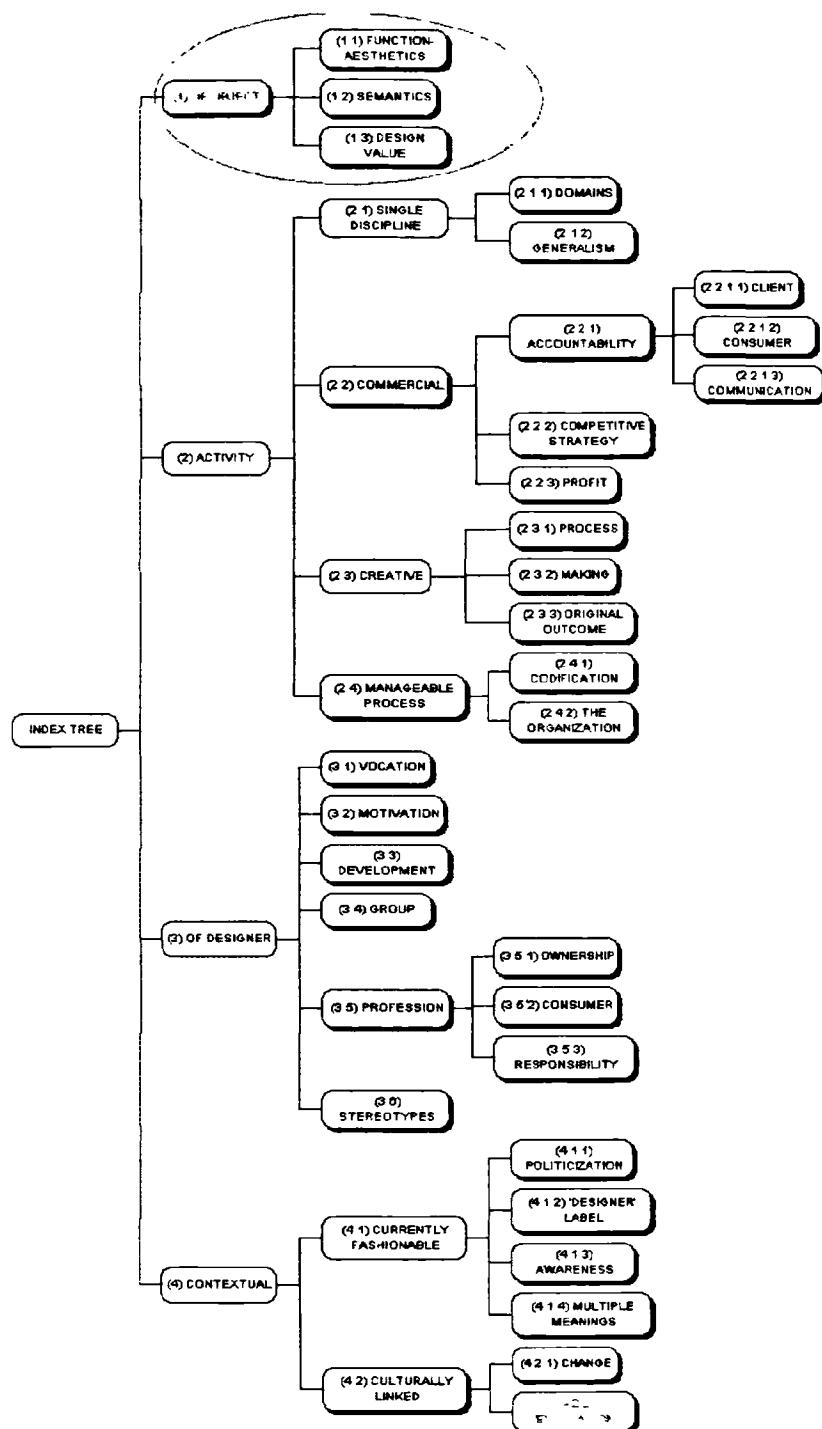


Figure 11.4 Data nodes integrated at the meta-issue 'The consumer as informant'<sup>226</sup>

<sup>226</sup> 'Empty' nodes containing no coding are shown without shadow; nodes explicitly cited in the discussion here are shown in red; node families cited here are circled in red.

Informant discussion of the design consumer in the data template is considered in the preceding section. A related issue is considered here, in terms of the appearance in the template of the design consumer as a research participant in the interview study. The 'User' informant group was included to provide user-consumer perspective on the research interest in conceptions of design. As previously indicated, concern that users may be unable to spontaneously articulate perspectives on design to the same extent as informants in other participant groups led to the formulation of a specific interview method.<sup>227</sup> The concern felt by the researcher was expressed in the data by one informant's scepticism over the depth of general consumer engagement with design.

"I don't think consumers, general consumers, if you don't have a designy training, general consumers would not analyse it like that. They'd say: 'I like that,' they don't realise the reasons why they like it, the fact that it's answering all their criterion [...] it's answered that, yet they've not had to think all that through all the time to get there."

(Designer-Staff 15:570-7)

This view was nevertheless directly contradicted by another informant:

"obviously there's a much more heightened awareness and understanding of what the hell it [design] is all about, and it's not just: 'Oh, I like that, I'll buy it.'" (Designer-Freelance 21:568-70)

The interviews conducted with consumers in the study lend support to both views. In one case, the interview essentially amounted to a discussion of the informant's personal preference and taste, with the informant apparently unable to relate such observations to 'design'.<sup>228</sup> In the other two consumer interviews conducted, however, an explicit engagement with design, of the type lacking in that other consumer interview, was in evidence.<sup>229</sup>

Concern was similarly expressed in the analytical method assessment exercise, described in Chapter 5, that User group data might be 'lost' if incorporated into a single data template containing informant discussion from the full set of interviews. A

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<sup>227</sup> Section 4.6.3.

possible danger was identified, that the consumers' voice may not be heard above that of other more articulate informants. It was concluded that this was an empirical issue, to be addressed as the template analysis progressed.<sup>230</sup>

The distribution of coded data across the template, taking into account informant group membership, is shown in a table reproduced in Appendix 13. This table shows the make-up of the coding at each data node, in terms of the volume of data coded at that node from interviews conducted with each informant group. It is thus possible, from an examination of this table, to identify tendencies in the areas of discussion in the template favoured by each of the five informant groups. A consideration of the blank cells in this table, indicating where an informant group as a whole failed to discuss a particular issue represented by a template node, reveals a clear pattern in the consumers' discussion. A significant number of blank cells must be expected in the case of the User group, due to the relatively small number of interviews conducted in this group<sup>231</sup> and, consequently, the relatively small volume of data coded from those informants.<sup>232</sup> Nevertheless, consumer discussion is clearly clustered around two points in the template: the 'Design as of an object' node and its 'child' nodes,<sup>233</sup> and the 'Evaluation of design' node.<sup>234</sup> Put simply, consumer discussion of design focused primarily on (i) the design of an object, and (ii) good and bad design. In contrast, the distribution of coded data from each of the other four informant groups across the template was much more even. Representation of consumer-informant discussion in the final template therefore shows a limited engagement with design in comparison with other informant groups.

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<sup>228</sup> Interview 31.

<sup>229</sup> Interviews 30 and 32.

<sup>230</sup> Section 5.4.5.

<sup>231</sup> See Figure 4.7. 'Actual sample profile'.

<sup>232</sup> The table referred to here shows the volume of data coded from informants in each of the five informant groups.

<sup>233</sup> Node (1).

<sup>234</sup> Node (4 2 2).

The concern that the consumers' voice would not be heard in the template is, however, not realized. Further examination of the group-template distribution table shows a significant number of citations in the template presentation which constitutes Part III of the thesis.

#### *11.1.5 Conclusion: a designer ownership of design*

Informant discussion of design throughout the data template often makes direct reference to the figure of the designer, suggesting an essential link between design and the agent who designs. Designer-informants, in particular, are protective of their status as such in the face of an encroachment upon their professional domain by non-designers, a phenomenon characterized as a commoditization or democratization of design. The design consumer is represented in negative terms, as the subservient participant in the designer-consumer relationship. This negative view of the consumer is apparently supported by the limited scope of consumer-informant discussion of design in the template.

## 11.2 Design, art and creativity

### 11.2.1 Design and creativity

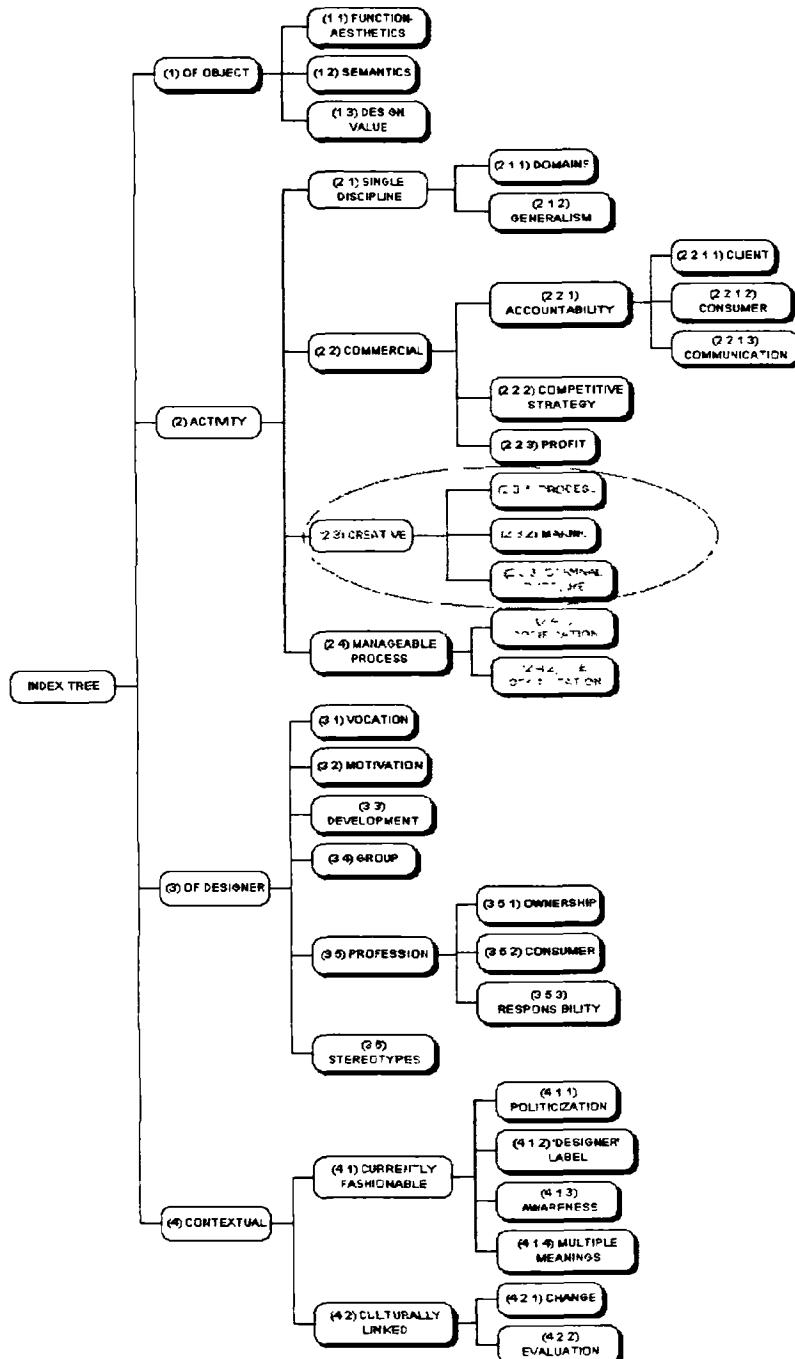


Figure 11.5 Data nodes integrated at the meta-issue 'Design and creativity'<sup>235</sup>

<sup>235</sup> 'Empty' nodes containing no coding are shown without shadow; nodes explicitly cited in the discussion here are shown in red; node families cited here are circled in red.

A second-order node and its family of 'child' nodes deals explicitly with design as a creative activity.<sup>236</sup> In what is considered by the researcher to be a key quote, it is asserted that

"arguably, anything that is about creating something that didn't exist before, that requires some original thought, is design."  
(Education-Higher 01:697-9)

Design is thus seen as a process of creation, stemming from originality of thought. Within the discussion of creativity and design process which this quote introduces<sup>237</sup>, creativity is seen as being primarily evident in the thoughtfulness of conceptual design, rather than in the process and performance of developmental design. Design thus becomes a primary intellectual activity, distinct from subsequent physical processes. At this point, one informant introduces the idea of design as "the thinking behind the thinking" (Promotion-Design 25:354). This concept, although left unexpanded in the data, is linked in the preceding data presentation to an emphasis on incubation in designing, as a phase of reflective preparation undertaken preliminary to designing proper in the formal, recognized design process.

Discussion of designing as a pre-performative intellectual activity is developed further in discussion of the role of making in designing, a discussion conducted specifically in terms of the relation between design and craft processes.<sup>238</sup> In the previously examined node, ideas-based design is distinguished from technique-based design, or design-by-doing. Similarly, here, craft production, with its emphasis on technique, is distinguished from designing, which is crucially seen as serving subsequent processes of production and manufacture. Designing is thus consciously divorced as an activity from the processes by which the designed object is actually produced.

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<sup>236</sup> See nodes (2 3 1), (2 3 2) and (2 3 3); the parent node (2 3) is itself empty of data coding.

<sup>237</sup> Node (2 3 1).

<sup>238</sup> Node (2 3 2).

Digital design, done using a computer, is also discussed as a case of technique-based design. Concern is expressed that such a preoccupation with technique serves to inhibit the creative aspect of designing.

"The problem with sitting there with a computer in front of you is that, because your mind is being taken up with the mechanism of making the computer do what you want it to do, is that you're not thinking creatively anymore, you're thinking of how to master the computer and get it to do what you want it to do."

(Promotion-Design 23:448-52)

A lack of creativity in designing, such as that demonstrated in this case, is, moreover, directly linked to a lack of originality in design outcome.<sup>239</sup> Originality, if not uniqueness, of design outcome is seen by informants as the goal of the designer.

"we have an understanding design's a creative activity, and that our aim is to produce something, if not unique, something which is going somewhere nobody had thought of."

(Education-Higher 01:390-2)

An apparent designer affiliation with the artist is in evidence here, particularly in an expressed preference for design which provokes a reaction other than passive acceptance from its audience. Informants are careful to delineate the relationship between design and art here, however.

"if there is art in what you do, art has to be in the result, rather than in the process and the thing you do along the way."

(Education-Higher 01:381-3)

Thus, while originality is seen as an offshoot of creative design process, the designer is dissociated from the working methods of the artist, just as he/she is dissociated from the processes of craft production.

Design is thus seen as an essentially creative activity. The effective management of this creativity is seen as potentially problematic, however. The idea of having a code or formula for doing design offers the prospect of efficient management of the design process, but denies the essential creative nature of designing.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Node (2 3 3).

<sup>240</sup> Node (2 4 1).

"And if you're saying: 'Oh no, we'll codify all that', you're saying: 'Well, actually, you aren't a designer.'"  
(Education-Higher 01:342-4)

Nevertheless, the creative aspect of designing must be effectively managed. A tension is therefore evident, between the essentially creative nature of designing and the need to manage that creativity to serve a purpose other than mere self-expression of the individual. This is a particularly pertinent issue in the organization, where a culture of creativity must be nurtured.<sup>241</sup>

"that's the real skill, is keeping your organisation creative, and the way you structure your organisation creative, so that you capitalise upon what you do."  
(Business-Production 11:118-20)

In terms of working method, the designer is unequivocally not seen in the data as an artist, as has been demonstrated. Apparent overlap in the informant discussion between the designer and the artist is in evidence elsewhere in the template, however.

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<sup>241</sup> Node (2 4 2).

### 11.2.2 Design and art

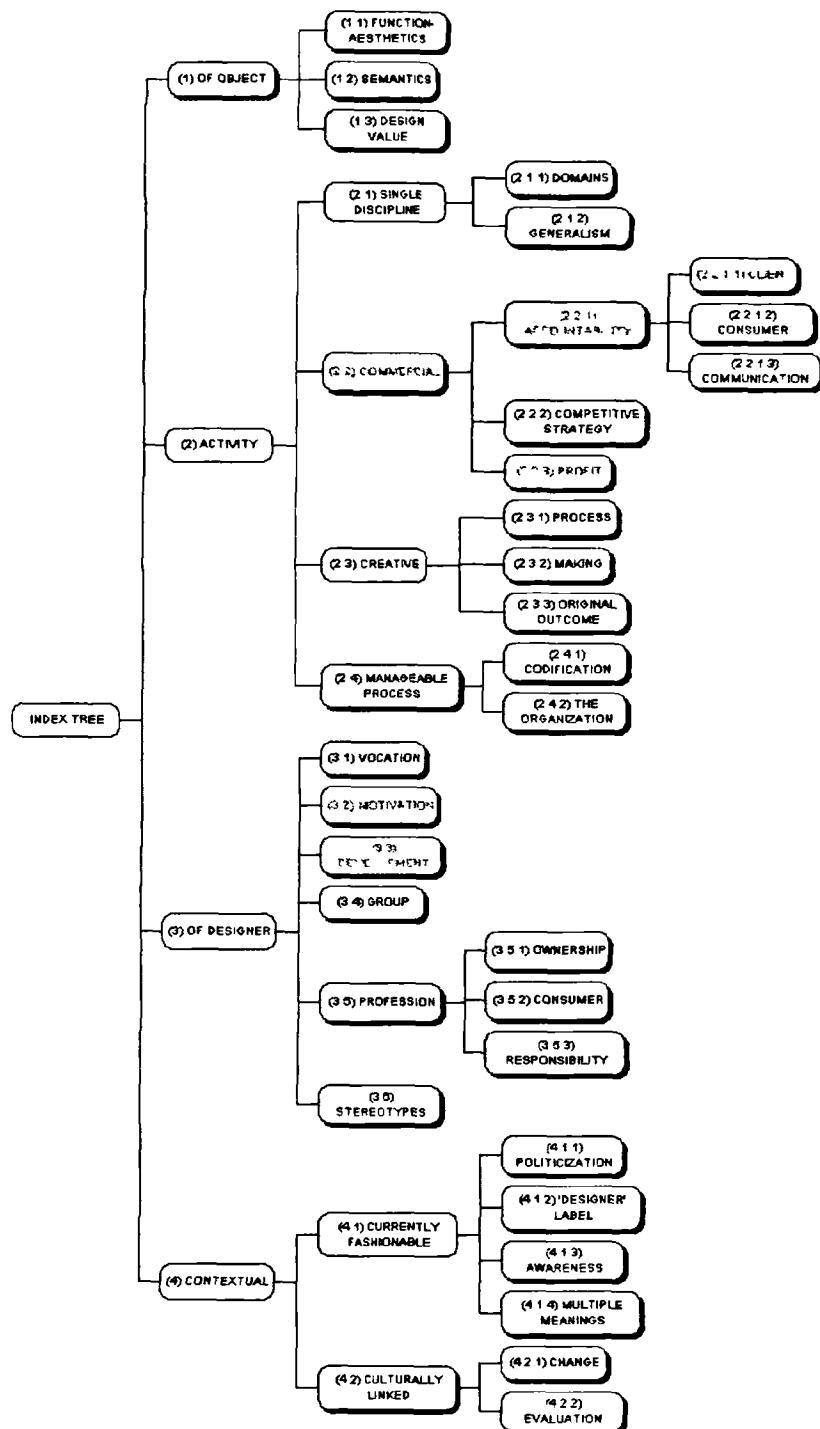


Figure 11.6 Data nodes integrated at the meta-issue 'Design and art'<sup>242</sup>

<sup>242</sup> 'Empty' nodes containing no coding are shown without shadow; nodes explicitly cited in the discussion here are shown in red.

Design is recognized as an overtly commercial activity. This commerciality is seen as problematic, however, in relation to notions of creativity and the preservation of non-commercial design ideals.<sup>243</sup> It is unequivocally asserted:

"Design is not fine art, it is always in a context, and that context is always commercial. [...] design is a naked commercial activity."

(Promotion-Design 25:203-9)

Nevertheless, design's essentially creative nature, examined above, is seen as "the thing that makes design different from a lot of other businesses." (Promotion-Media 22:45-6)

Balancing creative and commercial considerations is thus seen by informants as a problematic issue for many designers. This issue comes to the fore in discussion of designer accountability, and the question of *who* the designer is designing for.<sup>244</sup> As noted previously, informants from design education see accountability to someone other than the designer him/herself as what crucially differentiates design from fine art, and the designer from the artist. Designer informants, however, are uneasy in ceding their artistic credentials and pretensions, evident in their unapologetic use of 'art' and its associated terms in discussing themselves and their work. The tension identified for the designer, between prioritizing creative and commercial considerations, is manifest in discussion of the design brief containing specific constraints on design and the designer. This tension is not necessarily always fully resolved.

"you have to explain: 'What's going on here?' 'What's the underlying strategy? Or message?' And, to be honest, there's part of me that'd just like to say: 'Oh, fuck off. If you can't see it, don't..'" (amused).

(Designer-Agency 05:208-11)

The same designer asserts that

"All designers dream of just an open brief, just: 'There's a, there's a space, fill it.'"

(Designer-Agency 05:31-2)

The designer here clearly craves the freedom of the artist, and the artistic licence to pursue a personal agenda in designing.

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<sup>243</sup> Node (2 2).

<sup>244</sup> Node (2 2 1).

The unease felt by designers with accountability as a general notion is made more specific in the case of an accountability to a client.<sup>245</sup> While it may be acknowledged that

"the client's absolutely critical. He's - without clients there's no architecture." (Designer-Agency 19:222-3)<sup>246</sup>

the designer-client relationship is far from unproblematic. In particular, a high degree of client prescription is seen as having a negative effect on design, by constraining the creative input of the designer. Client conservatism is seen as financially motivated, which prioritization of financial considerations over design considerations provokes a charge of 'philistinism' from designers in the data. Designers' response to negative aspects of accountability to a client varies, from resigned acceptance to negotiation to rejection. This last response, although not the most common of those given, certainly betrays the artistic temperament of those informants who do cite it as being their own reaction.

The dominance of the profit motive in design is recognized elsewhere in the template, but at this other node a commercialist design agenda is embraced by informants as an imperative, rather than criticized as a negative influence.<sup>247</sup>

Informant discussion of designer motivation focuses on the question of *what* the designer is designing for.<sup>248</sup> While designer motivation may be expressed in apparently altruistic terms by designers themselves, the primary motivation appears to be a more selfish pursuit of personal designer satisfaction and fulfillment. Thus, while it may be true of designers that

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<sup>245</sup> Node (2 2 1 1).

<sup>246</sup> Here, as elsewhere in this data presentation, architecture and design are considered to be equivalent activities by the researcher.

<sup>247</sup> Node (2 2 3) 'Designing for profit'.

<sup>248</sup> Node (3 2).

"They're all hoping that something that they produce is going to have a positive effect on the world around them."  
(Designer-Agency 05:704-6)

the real underlying motivation is more selfish:

"It's all about design. We're only in it for design. If we were only – if we weren't designing, if we weren't making these buildings, we wouldn't be here, we'd be somewhere else making buildings."  
(Designer-Agency 19:179-82)

The designer here sounds very much like an artist; substituting 'art' for 'design' in this quote would provide a convincing statement of artistic integrity and vocation. The link between design and art in the template is never more vivid than in this informant statement.

A final way in which designer and artist are linked in the data is in informant discussion of the development of the designer.<sup>249</sup> In this discussion, quoted designers distinguish a developable skills-based design capability from an innate general aptitude for designing. Design is therefore seen as a gift.

"I don't know whether there's a formula for training people to design buildings. I'm not so sure there is. It's something you can do or you can't."  
(Designer-Agency 19:122-4)

The ability to design is nevertheless apparently capable of development over time, through a process of experiential learning. Development as a designer is, moreover, closely linked to personal development as an individual. To the extent that design is considered to be a gift, however, it coincides with conceptions of the artistic gift.

"Some people have a natural eye, some people seem to be born with a pencil, or these days a mouse, in their hand, and know instinctively what looks right, what looks good."  
(Designer-Agency 12:187-9)

Design and art are closely linked here.

#### *11.2.3 Conclusion: the designer as frustrated artist*

Design is seen as an essentially creative activity in the data, yet not directly equatable with art. Designing is, rather, located at the interface between creative

freedom and commercial constraint, embodied in the notion of designer accountability. The designer does, however, find this notion of accountability problematic. The designer is motivated similarly to, and aspires to the freedom of, the artist. Thus, while it is recognized that design as a practice is not akin to art, the designer does typically appear in the data as a frustrated artist.

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<sup>249</sup> Node (3 3).

### 11.3 Design, branding and marketing

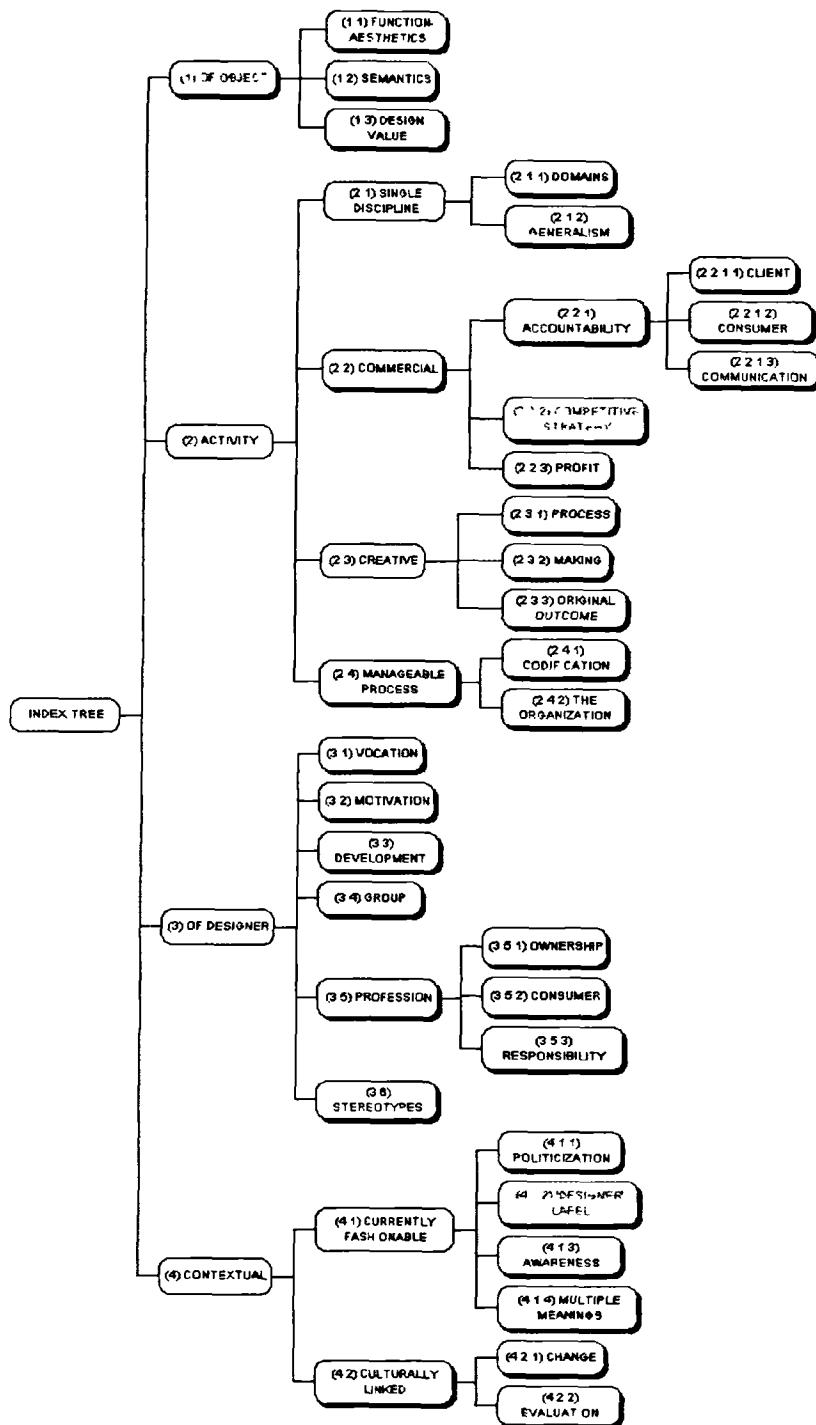


Figure 11.7 Data nodes integrated at the meta-issue 'Design, branding and marketing'<sup>250</sup>

<sup>250</sup> 'Empty' nodes containing no coding are shown without shadow; nodes explicitly cited in the discussion here are shown in red.

In the discussion of design as relating to a designed object (the thing that is designed), it is indicated that this ‘object’ need not have physical form, but may be intangible as in, for example, a brand.<sup>251</sup> This is certainly the case for one quoted designer:

“the sound of a brand, the smell of a brand, the touch of a brand, are all things that we are gonna have to design in.”  
(Design-Agency 12:19-21)

For this informant, the designer designs an ‘experience’, rather than just an object as such.

Branding is discussed directly in a node focusing on design as a competitive strategy.<sup>252</sup> Design is identified as a strategic resource which allows a company to be commercially competitive. In particular, an overall design orientation is seen to extend to cover the way a company both functions and presents itself to the consumer, all contained in the notion of branding.

“So, there are potential links there, are thought provoking, that brand, corporate identity design, product design: is it all, in the end, about some notion of branding?”  
(Education-Higher 07:500-2)

Here, the question is raised as to the relationship between design and this notion of all-encompassing branding, and the extent to which design is ultimately akin to marketing.

One area in which design *is* considered as being effectively akin to marketing is that of the ‘designer’ label.<sup>253</sup> The prevalence of the ‘designer’ label is seen as a specific manifestation of notions of fashionable consumption, and a conception of design-as-style.

“designer this.’ ‘designer that,’ is to do with branding and labelling – it’s not to do with designing [...] as soon as you slap the word ‘designer’ in front of it you

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<sup>251</sup> Node (1).

<sup>252</sup> Node (2 2 2).

<sup>253</sup> Node (4 1 2).

can charge more. And it's perceived value: it probably has no more design input than anything else."

(Promotion-Design 27:274-9)

This usage of the term 'designer' is clearly considered by informants to devalue design. Nevertheless, in the popular consciousness, the 'designer' label represents a prevalent conception of design.

#### *11.3.1 Conclusion: design as marketing*

Within an identification of design as a strategic resource which allows a company to be commercially competitive, an overall design orientation is manifest in terms of marketing and, specifically, branding. Design, in this sense, thus becomes essentially a marketing activity.

### **11.4 Summary**

This chapter identifies and discusses three 'meta-issues' underlying the specific data node discussions presented in Part III: (i) design, the designer and the consumer; (ii) design, art and creativity; and (iii) design, branding and marketing. These meta-issues may be summarized respectively as follows, in terms of: (i) a designer ownership of design; (ii) the designer as frustrated artist; and (iii) design as marketing.

The next chapter concludes discussion of the data template, by analyzing where informant discussion reprises issues raised previously in the framework chapters of the thesis.

## **Chapter 12 : Reprise of Framework Issues**

### **12.0 *Introduction***

The project aim and objective addressed by the interview study are reproduced below from Chapter 1.

**Aim 3:**

Investigate the range of perspective around design across the community of design stakeholders.

**Objective 3:**

Investigate conceptions of design within a sample of design stakeholders, around the general research question: 'what is design?'.

An empirical data analysis of informant discussion of design in the interview study was presented in Part III (Chapters 7 to 10), in the form of a detailed examination of the final data template. A surface examination of the template, including discussion of its immediate structure and form, was given in the preceding template overview (Chapter 6). An identification and discussion of recurring 'meta-issues' underlying the specific data node discussions presented in Part III was given in Chapter 11.

In this chapter, a final discussion of the data template is given, in which specific interview study findings are synthesized with discussion of the same issues in earlier framework chapters of the thesis (Chapters 1, 2 and 3). Informant discussion is thus considered here which reprises issues raised previously in Part I.<sup>254 255</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> The two main subheadings used in this chapter relate directly to the two main sections in the literature review in Chapter 2.

<sup>255</sup> All informant quotes given in this chapter and the next are reproduced from Part III. Similarly, all quotes from other published sources are reproduced from Part I.

## **12.1 The contemporary UK design context: informant scepticism**

### **12.1.1 The politicization of design: rhetoric and inaction**

It has been noted that a recent wave of political efforts intended to stimulate sustained economic recovery in the UK has focused strongly on design as one of the favoured 'creative industries'.<sup>256</sup> The resultant current political profile of design is discussed sceptically in the informant discussion, however.<sup>257</sup> While the virtue of granting political attention to design is not questioned, there is considerable informant scepticism as to both the sincerity and long-term value of recent political attempts to promote design. The Millennium Products initiative, in particular, is described as "show business" (Promotion-Media 22:509) and "[m]assaging egos" (Business-Production 06:400). Design is perceived as being a "political football" by one informant (Promotion-General 28:338), an observation which expresses a general suspicion, not only that recent political efforts to promote design are perhaps insincere and of questionable value, but also that the present political vogue for design will not endure. Significantly, one informant directly involved in the Government-supported delivery of design advice to the small business sector already detects a cooling in the recent political interest in design.

"We should be worried, though, that, at the moment, from what I've seen, there is less emphasis on the undervalued specialisms. Things like design. And although a lot of the words are used: innovation, R&D, technology, IT, export; design is the one that tends to fall and not be used in the conversations."

(Promotion-General 28:444-9)

The purposeful recent political rhetoric around design, examined previously, is therefore somewhat at odds with general informant opinion as to the value and permanence of specific initiatives and efforts within this contemporary politicization of design. What was proclaimed as "wonderful news for everybody involved in design

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<sup>256</sup> Section 2.1.2 The politics of design.

and related activities" (Trapp 1998:4) is thus seen rather more sceptically by the informants in this study. While certainly agreeing with the political rhetoric around design examined previously in this thesis, the common informant opinion is that this rhetoric has not been matched by subsequent commitment and productive action.

#### *12.1.2 The popular profile of design: awareness without understanding*

The current popular cultural profile of design was examined previously in terms of the explicit treatment of design by television and textual reference to 'design' in print advertising.<sup>258</sup> This popular cultural profile is, moreover, reflected in the keynote theme of a general democratization of design, characterized as a widened, democratized mode of design engagement.<sup>259</sup> A key aspect of this opening up of design is the greater participation of the design consumer. The popular profile of design is discussed by informants in these terms, by considering the depth of contemporary consumer engagement with design.

Design-oriented television programmes are cited by informants as the most obvious manifestation of a heightened general level of public and media interest in design.<sup>260</sup>

"there does seem to be over the past couple years, I think, there's been more of a general public awareness, if you like, of design."  
(Designer-Agency 05:661-3)

This supports the observation of "the elevation of design to the forefront of the nation's collective mind." (Rich 1999a:13)

The role of television is apparently a central factor in this development.

"I think the television programmes, the makeover programmes, that people pan, have actually done a fantastic job, and are making people aware of it [design]"  
(Promotion-Design 25:168-70)

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<sup>257</sup> Node (4 1 1) 'Politicization of design' (Chapter 10).

<sup>258</sup> Section 2.1.5 Design and popular culture.

<sup>259</sup> Section 2.2 The democratization of design.

<sup>260</sup> Node (4 1 3) 'Design awareness' (Chapter 10).

This view certainly supports the statement cited earlier, in relation to design-oriented television programmes, that

Such broadcasts undoubtably [sic] influence and set the agenda of how people think about the subject [design] and is the most accessible medium to assert its profile in the public eye.  
(Springer 1991:abstract)

Another informant states: "we do feel that the public awareness and interest in advertising design is huge at the moment" (Promotion-Design 23:228-9); thus identifying the second strand of design's popular profile examined in Chapter 2.<sup>261</sup>

Consumer design awareness is, however, distinguished from design understanding, such that greater design awareness is not considered a guarantee of a deeper understanding of design. Television is seen as particularly culpable here, in disseminating a shallow consideration of design. Nevertheless, in the present situation increased awareness of design has apparently also brought greater understanding of design.

"I think in some respects it's never been a better time for someone to be a designer, because what you do probably IS widely understood."  
(Education-Higher 01:604-6)

There is, however, also considerable informant scepticism that the current interest in (and, by implication, understanding of) design will last.

A specific corruption of 'design' as a term in contemporary usage is identified by informants in terms of an apparent synonymy with 'style'.<sup>262</sup> Informant reaction to this phenomenon is unequivocal: it is "a bastardized version of design" (Promotion-Design 27:449). Design is in this sense seen to have become "devalue[d]" as a term (Education-Higher 08:253), typified by use of the 'designer' label. It is nevertheless recognized that such a conception of design-as-style is prevalent among consumers, such that 'design' has become strongly associated with notions of fashionable consumption.

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<sup>261</sup> Section 2.1.5 Design and popular culture.

Informant discussion of contemporary consumer engagement with design is thus ambivalent. The concern expressed over the prevalence of the 'designer' label and an accompanying conception of design-as-style indicates that awareness of design does not guarantee an understanding of design on the terms of the design-oriented informant. Equally, although an increase in consumer design awareness is seen as being accompanied by an increase in general understanding of design, informant opinion remains sceptical that this is a situation which will persist. Informant attitude towards consumer involvement in designing is perhaps significant here, in that the potential for active consumer participation of this kind is regarded as both contingently and necessarily limited.<sup>263</sup>

"I don't see many cases where customers really can drive design, except by saying: 'My inside leg measurement's this. Can you please make me a bike frame or a pair of jeans to suit.'"  
(Education-Higher 07:156-8)

That the designer is apparently unwilling to cede ground to the consumer in the actual process of designing suggests that consumer understanding of design can never match that of the designer, in the opinion of the informants. This view is somewhat at odds with that identified by the researcher previously, that the field of design engagement and participation *is* seen to be effectively widened by the treatment of design on television.<sup>264</sup>

Informant discussion of the design consumer therefore provides an illuminating, and somewhat sceptical, perspective on the current popular cultural profile of design examined earlier in this thesis. The fact of a raised profile for design is seen in positive terms, yet this reaction is accompanied by reservations as to the actual content and implications of this profile. A mismatch is detected between 'design' as it

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<sup>262</sup> Node (4 1 2) 'The 'designer' label' (Chapter 10).

<sup>263</sup> Node (3 5 2) 'Consumer involvement in design' (Chapter 9).

<sup>264</sup> Section 2.1.5 Design and popular culture.

appears in the public consciousness, and design as it is understood by professional informant opinion. The observed raising of the cultural profile of design, discussed previously in Chapter 2, is thus seen by these informants as to a large extent compromising their professional understanding of what design actually is. Greater consumer design awareness thus carries a cost, on these terms. One informant response to this situation is to seek to improve public understanding of design, through a dissemination of design in its "true form" (Business-Production 11:326-7); to

"make people think a bit harder about *what design actually is*, and so there's increased understanding of *what design really means*, and *how design really works*." [italics added]  
(Promotion-Media 24:270-2)

This quote clearly betrays the view that 'design' as it is currently held in the public consciousness is removed from professional understandings of design in the community of design stakeholders.<sup>265</sup>

#### *12.1.3 Design and competitiveness: limited acceptance of the 'design message'*

It has been noted previously that recent politicizing of design on a macroeconomic scale has been accompanied by recognition of design as a primary route to improved competitiveness at the microeconomic level of the individual enterprise.<sup>266</sup>

Specifically, a design-led competitive strategy is discussed as a preferable alternative to a policy of cost-leadership. Informant discussion similarly identifies design as a strategic resource which allows a company to be commercially competitive beyond simple leadership on price.<sup>267</sup> This is succinctly expressed by one informant designer:

"at the end of the day only one brand can be the cheapest, and the rest have to add value through design."  
(Designer-Agency 12:7-8)

Informants provide several testaments to the value of this strategy. For example,

"But yes, definitely, product design in the broadest sense has been responsible for the success of the business"  
(Business-Production 11:57-9)

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<sup>265</sup> Consumer engagement with design is discussed in greater depth as one of the key meta-issues to emerge from the researcher's consideration of the data template (Chapter 11).

<sup>266</sup> Section 2.1.3 The business of design.

<sup>267</sup> Node (2 2 2) 'Design as a competitive strategy' (Chapter 8).

A design orientation is also seen in wider terms of design permeating throughout a company's structure and various functions, manifest in the notion of holistic branding.

Design is not universally accepted as a means to competitive advantage, however. A scepticism towards the use of design is apparently evident in some companies encountered by informants. A view of design as an add-on, of "design as an expense rather than an investment" (Designer-Freelance 21:390-1) thus persists, according to the informants. The contention that "[d]esign has moved upstream into the core of business" (Design Council 1999b:6), is thus not universally accurate. Discussion of the benefits of a design-led competitive strategy in cited sources<sup>268</sup> is similarly not universally supported by informant evidence. It was observed previously that the UK's relative lack of international competitiveness has been attributed to a general commitment to a policy of cost-leadership rather than of design excellence. The experience of these informants appears to support this observation. This suggests that efforts made to promote design in these terms, detailed previously<sup>269</sup>, have yet to meet with widespread recognition. The stated purpose of the Design Council,

To inspire the best use of design by the UK, in the world context, to improve prosperity and well-being.  
Design Council (n.d.)

would appear to be similarly as yet unmet. This may raise the question of a possible reappraisal of the present approach to delivering the 'design message', as discussed here, to the intransigent businesses who could benefit most from it.

The crucial role of the consumer in making a design-led strategy viable for the producer is discussed by one informant. Where design, rather than cost, is the producer's primary emphasis, profitability is seen to depend on a consumer willingness to pay a premium price for a better-designed product. In the words of the

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<sup>268</sup> Section 2.1.3 The business of design.

informant, profitability demands that “[p]eople will be prepared to pay for the *luxury* that design appears to be” (Designer-Freelance 21:588-9) (italics added).<sup>270</sup> Use of the word ‘luxury’ here, to describe the apparent appeal of design to the consumer, suggests that design is seen to some extent by the consumer as a non-essential add-on within the product offer. The consumer therefore appears to share the producer attitude to design noted in terms of viewing design as an expense rather than an essential. Consumer engagement with design is discussed in greater depth as one of the key meta-issues to emerge from the researcher’s consideration of the data template.<sup>271</sup> The point is nevertheless made here that the consumer must match any producer investment in design for a design-led producer strategy to be competitive.

#### ***12.1.4 Conclusion: informant scepticism and ambivalence***

Where informant discussion reprises issues raised in earlier sections of the thesis relating to the contemporary UK context of design, some scepticism and ambivalence is in evidence. While acknowledging the intentions and principles contained in sources previously discussed, those intentions and principles do not necessarily apply in the real world occupied by the informants. Thus, the heightened political, cultural and economic profile for design discussed previously is acknowledged, yet the extent to which this is seen in wholly positive terms is limited.

## ***12.2 The democratization of design: a difficult ideal***

#### ***12.2.1 Design generalism: collaboration between individuals***

The common conclusion drawn in informant discussion of the possibility of design generalism is that professional capability across multiple design disciplines is beyond the individual designer. A generalist design capability is effectively provided, instead,

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<sup>269</sup> Section 2.1.3 The business of design.

<sup>270</sup> Node (2 2 3) ‘Designing for profit’ (Chapter 8).

<sup>271</sup> Chapter 12.

through designer collaboration and a combination of individual designers' specialisms.<sup>272</sup>

"So I wouldn't use the word 'generalist', I would say that they're working across disciplines and in partnership. I'd find some other way of putting that." (Promotion-Design 25:57-9)

The general informant view is, moreover, that design is preferably a group activity.<sup>273</sup>

'The best' or 'good' design is "a team effort":

"I think all the best designs, certainly in terms of buildings, which is what I know, then it's a team effort. If you get a good team, and they work together, and they all bring something to the table, then you end up with a good job, at the end of the day" (Designer-Agency 16:157-61)

"for me, good design requires input from a number of disciplines, and if that works as a team, if the team gels, you end up with good design"

(Designer-Agency 16:538-40)

This accords with the general contention of sources discussing recent empirical research into inter-stakeholder communication in design, namely that optimum design outcomes are achieved by an effective collaboration between involved stakeholders, preferably operating in long-term relationships.<sup>274</sup> Successful collaboration within the design team is not guaranteed, according to informant opinion here, but is dependant on how well the team 'work together', and the extent to which it 'gels'. Effective collaboration was, in those sources discussed previously, found to be dependent on successful inter-stakeholder communication, informant discussion of which is examined next.

### *12.2.2 Communicating about design: rejection of a 'shared language'*

Designing is seen by informants as having a necessary discursive and communicative aspect, such that the designer is required to be able to communicate effectively about his/her design to others.<sup>275</sup> This discursive requirement of the designer is, however, seen as problematic by informants. This is found to be

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<sup>272</sup> Node (2 1 1) 'Design domains', and node (2 1 2) 'Design generalism' (Chapter 8).

<sup>273</sup> Node (3 4) 'Design as a group activity' (Chapter 9).

<sup>274</sup> Section 2.2.2 The discourse of design.

<sup>275</sup> Node (2 2 1 3) 'Communicating about design' (Chapter 8).

particularly the case in communication between designer and non-designer, in which communicative difficulties are encountered due to the designer using a “language of design” (Education-Higher 01:833-4), with which the non-designer is unfamiliar.

“It’s pure language, because designers tend to use ‘another language’, [...] to dress up what they’re saying, to be more important, and to be very, very linked to what they do. Design is no exception.”  
(Promotion-Design 23:275-80)

Use of the ‘language of design’ is therefore seen to exclude the non-designer.

“I think it’s okay for designers to use language amongst themselves. They might be very wary of using it with other people.”  
(Education-Higher 01:875-6)

This informant’s response to this situation of failed communication between designer and non-designer is to avoid using words altogether.

“A lesson I learned was: never try and use language, never describe using words. Other people live on words, but we will always do better with things and drawings and so on.”  
(Education-Higher 01:864-7)

Another informant, however, discusses the possibility of establishing a shared mode of communication in design collaboration in the form of “a common language” (Education-Higher 07:409). Communication, on this view, becomes a matter of personal interaction and negotiation, resulting in “a common language that works” (Education-Higher 07:409).

The earlier discussion of recent relevant empirical research similarly concluded that a barrier to successful communication in design collaboration was the lack of a shared language.<sup>276</sup> Successful communication is not to be achieved through the development of a shared language in an absolute sense, however. Rather, successful inter-stakeholder communication is achieved through a negotiation between the differing outlooks and expectations of collaborating individuals. The generation of a ‘shared language’ is thus negotiative and specific to a particular situation. This position accords with that expressed by Informant 07 above, who

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<sup>276</sup> Section 2.2.2 The discourse of design.

similarly argues that “finding a common language that works” (Education-Higher 07:409) is a matter of personal interaction and negotiation.

Differences in perspective between design stakeholders are therefore acknowledged, but considered surmountable through the means discussed. A quote previously cited supports this view:

The design community is constituted as a network of diverse stakeholders [...] nor need they share the same knowledge, interests or values. Their network is held together as long as processes of design and talk of designs, of designers, and of designing continue. Communication, not commonality, keeps the design discourse "alive."

Krippendorff (1994:142-3)

The notion of a consensus here, manifest in an absolute shared language, is seen as unrealistic. Instead, an accommodation may be sought between essentially diverse design stakeholder positions.<sup>277</sup>

#### *12.2.3 Domain specific understandings of design*

Informant discussion of design domains identifies a general dichotomy between (i) design allied to art, and (ii) design allied to technology and engineering.<sup>278</sup> The two sides of this divide are, moreover, associated with conflicting understandings of the nature and practice of design itself.

“If you’re art school trained, then you think design is all about aesthetics. If you’re trained as a graduate engineer, then you think that design is all about function: electronics, mechanical, electrical, whatever.”  
(Promotion-General 29:258-61)

Earlier discussion of recent relevant empirical research identified functional cultural barriers as an inhibitor of successful communication in design collaboration.<sup>279</sup> The overcoming of such barriers between, for example, representatives of design and marketing functions was seen as a factor in establishing empathy within collaborating

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<sup>277</sup> Section 2.2.2 The discourse of design.

<sup>278</sup> Node (2 1 1) ‘Design domains’ (Chapter 8).

<sup>279</sup> Section 2.2.2 The discourse of design.

design teams. The possibility of traversing these barriers as an individual is discussed guardedly by one informant in the study:

"Of course, I would always believe, colleagues that I agree with would always believe, that WE are open minded, we have a sense of what THOSE people are about - why can't they understand what we're about? And no doubt they would say the same (laughing)." (Education-Higher 01:770-4)<sup>280</sup>

Other informants are more encouraging on this point, however, in discussing the possibility of designers working across disciplinary boundaries. Informant discussion of design generalism, examined above, however, concludes that professional capability across multiple design disciplines is beyond the individual designer, and that a generalist design capability may only be provided through designer collaboration and a combination of individual designers' specialisms.<sup>281</sup> This suggests that, for most informants, professional design capability and understanding is largely domain specific, and that, as a consequence, design collaboration is facilitated by an accommodation of these differing understandings in a particular instance.

#### **12.2.4 *The essential ambiguity of 'design'***

'Design' is identified by informants as an essentially ambiguous term.<sup>282</sup>

"people have this, they use this word 'design', and it means so many different things to so many people" (Designer-Agency 12:424-5)

This informant view relates directly to the central research interest of this project, and mirrors an earlier quote which was instrumental in the formulation of that interest:<sup>283</sup>

The word design means many things to many people.  
Morrison & Twyford (1994:18)

This observation was taken earlier to be a manifestation of a democratization of design, in terms of "a wider engagement than ever before with issues related to the

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<sup>280</sup> This is the same informant who's response to communication difficulties between designer and non-designer, cited above, is one of resigned acceptance.

<sup>281</sup> Node (2 1 2) 'Design generalism' (Chapter 8).

character of design as well as to its methods." (Buchanan, Doordan & Margolin 1998:1) <sup>284</sup> Informant opinion sees this wider engagement with 'design' in less positive terms, however.

"I think the trouble with the word 'design' is that it's been overused and under-understood, misunderstood"  
(Education-Higher 08:239-41)

Response to the suggestion that use of 'design' has become more democratic is, therefore, negative.

"I don't think it has become democratic in its usage, actually. I think people are imprisoned by its usage, because they no longer understand what 'design' or 'designer' means."  
(Education-Higher 01:552-4)

Informant response to this situation, of the abuse of 'design', is either one of resignation or a more robust desire to see it rectified. The issue of a definition of 'design' is seen as deeply problematic, however, in that some degree of ambiguity is seen as an important aspect of design which any attempt at definition would eradicate.

"I think it's very useful, to TRY and define it. I don't know if it's - I don't know how achievable that is. Part of me is not even sure if I would want somebody to define it."  
(Designer-Agency 05:688-90)

The issue of attempting to define 'design' was discussed earlier.<sup>285</sup> All such attempts are seen in cited sources as inherently flawed, however, due to what one commentator refers to as "a fundamental ambiguity that the concept of design possesses" (Dilnot 1984b:233). It has more recently been stated that

Design [...] is one of those words which means different things in different contexts; despite decades of discussion, nobody has yet come up with a commonly accepted definition.  
Thackara (1997:32)

Defining 'design' is thus seen, ultimately, as a purely academic exercise, by both informants and cited sources alike.

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<sup>282</sup> Node (4 1 4) 'Multiple meanings of 'design'' (Chapter 10); node (2 1 1) 'Design domains' (Chapter 8).

<sup>283</sup> Section 1.1.4 A navigation among differing perspectives.

<sup>284</sup> Section 2.2.2 The discourse of design (*passim*).

"everybody uses 'design' in the way that applies to themselves. [...] But it's not very useful having arguments about exactly what it applies to."  
(Promotion-General 29:317-9)

The question 'what is design?' can not therefore be answered easily or absolutely, except by recourse to an empirical investigation such as the one described here. The data template presented and discussed in this and preceding chapters constitutes the findings of an empirical investigation into this question 'what is design?'. The conclusion drawn must therefore be that 'design' is a term with richly varied meanings, as illustrated by the data template and this subsequent discussion. It is, in fact, argued previously by the researcher that the current prominence of design in the contemporary UK context is predicated on a continuing ambiguity around what the term actually means. 'Design', therefore, *cannot* be neatly defined. This fact is illustrated by a comparison of the discussion of design at the data template with dictionary definitions of 'design'.

#### *12.2.5 The data template and dictionary definitions of 'design'*

A personal diagrammatic representation of the field of meanings and definitions ascribed to design in one dictionary is reproduced in Figure 2.5. Consideration of a different dictionary source here provides a precise overview of definitions of the term (OED 1994).

Design is understood as both a noun (a design) and a verb (to design). Two dominant senses are ascribed to design as a noun: (i) a plan in art, (ii) a mental plan. The first sense describes the drawing phase preceding the subsequent making of objects in the visual arts. The second sense applies the concept of 'design as a plan' more generally, and includes general notions of purpose and intention.

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<sup>285</sup> Section 2.1.6 Conclusion: a common theme.

The dominant sense of ‘design as a mental plan’ identified in the OED is: “a plan or scheme conceived in the mind and intended for subsequent execution; the preliminary conception of an idea that is to be carried into effect by action [...].” This is accompanied by additional “weaker” senses: a purpose/intention; the thing aimed at; the realization of the plan; and, pejoratively, scheming. Current meanings deriving from ‘design as a plan in art’ similarly include not just a preliminary artistic sketch, but also both the artistic features of the artwork itself, and artistic practice.

Design as a verb has three dominant senses: (i) to mark out, nominate or designate, (ii) to plan or intend, (iii) to physically sketch or render. Sense (ii) here clearly relates to ‘design as a mental plan’ above. Similarly, sense (iii) here relates to the artistic origin of design already discussed. Sense (i), however, derives separately.

A summary of essential concepts of design contained in dictionaries has been given elsewhere, as shown in Figure 12.1.

- 1) a mental plan or schema
- 2) the result of such a plan
- 3) a physical blueprint or schema
- 4) contrivance from a preconceived plan, exhibiting evidence of preceding planning
- 5) scheming (pejorative)
- 6) the combination of elements that make up an artefact, the idea as executed (the design of ...)
- 7) an activity/discipline

Figure 12.1 Concepts of design contained in dictionaries<sup>286</sup>

The overview of dictionary definitions of design just presented may be compared with the final empirical data template generated in this project.<sup>287</sup> Such a comparison reveals little direct correspondence between ‘design’ as it appears in dictionaries and

<sup>286</sup> Adapted from Morrison & Twyford (1994:16).

<sup>287</sup> The examination, presented here, of definitions of design in specific sources was ‘post-empirical’, in that it was conducted following the completion of empirical data analysis. An

'design; as it is discussed by the informants in this study. The conceptions of design contained in the data template are clearly much more varied and wider in scope than those presented in the preceding section. This richness in the informant discussion is taken as evidence of both the futility of attempts to absolutely define design, already discussed, and of the variety of understandings and usages of the term 'design' within the informant sample.

#### *12.2.6 Conclusion: democratization as a difficult ideal*

Where informant discussion reprises issues raised in earlier sections of the thesis relating to the keynote theme of the democratization of design, there is general accordance between the two discussions. The conclusions drawn from a survey of cited sources in previous chapters are adhered to in the informant discussion. Specifically, the possibility and desirability of defining design is rejected in both cases in favour of an acceptance of the essential ambiguity of the term, and an accommodation of differing perspectives advocated in preference to a removal of difference through semantic reductionism.

Informant support for the democratization of design is, however, compromised by the underlying 'meta-issue' of designer ownership of design and designing, identified in the previous chapter.<sup>288</sup> The designer-informants and others are unwilling to cede their apparent authority in matters of design to the non-designer, particularly the consumer. Thus, while the design community may adhere to the notion of democratization, it apparently finds it a difficult ideal to realize.

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earlier examination and presentation of 'standard' definitions of design was avoided, as this may have influenced empirical data collection and analysis.

<sup>288</sup> Section 11.1.5.

### **12.3 Summary**

This chapter synthesizes key empirical findings from the data template with previous discussion in earlier framework chapters of the thesis. Specifically, informant discussion is related to the two sections of the earlier literature review, presented in Chapter 2. A degree of informant scepticism and ambivalence is apparent towards the heightened political, cultural and economic profile for design discussed in Section 2.1. Similarly, the democratization of design introduced and discussed in Section 2.2 is seen as a worthy ideal, but one which is difficult to realize.

In the following closing chapter, the final implications of the current project are considered, in terms of the wider significance of the empirical project and its findings.

## **Chapter 13 : Further Implications**

### ***13.0 Introduction***

In this closing chapter, further implications of the current project are presented, highlighting the significance of the empirical project and its findings.<sup>289</sup> This discussion of further implications does not constitute an ‘action plan’ of recommendations detailing how the work contained in the current project might be taken further. Suggestions for further work therefore follow this discussion.

### ***13.1 Mapping the conceptual field of design enquiry***

#### ***13.1.1 The template as an aid to navigation***

The presented research and findings provide a historical record of conceptions of ‘design’ within the participating sample of the community of design stakeholders. As such, this research constitutes a mapping of the richness and ambiguity of meanings inherent in the previously cited observation that ‘design means different things to different people’.<sup>290</sup>

This empirically-grounded mapping of meanings of ‘design’ contributes to the contemporary design discourse by illuminating the richness of its central concept. Evidence has been presented of the contemporary profile of design.<sup>291</sup> This research examines, in an empirically-grounded way, how ‘design’ is understood within this context. The observation that ‘design means different things to different people’ is clearly confirmed by the findings of the current project. More valuably, this research illuminates the differences in meaning contained in this observation. The outcome of

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<sup>289</sup> The statement of further project outcomes presented here is used directly in the discussion in Chapter 1 of the suggested original contribution to knowledge made by the project.

<sup>290</sup> Section 1.1.4.

<sup>291</sup> Chapter 2.

the primary research conducted here, the final data template, therefore enables the design stakeholder community to consider 'design' more objectively, with less implicit subjectivity than would otherwise be the case.

The outcomes of the current project are not exhaustive, however. 'Design', like any other term with lively currency, is open to constant change and innovation in its usage. The findings of this research, represented by the final data template, should not therefore be treated as a new empirically-grounded set of dictionary definitions of 'design'. It was concluded above that any attempt to define 'design' absolutely is flawed, and that ambiguity is an inherent aspect of the term.<sup>292</sup> The current research findings should not therefore be viewed as a new set of prescriptive and putative definitions of design. The final data template should, rather, be viewed as an aid to navigation between these differing perspectives.

### *13.1.2 Examples I: navigating oppositions revealed by the template*

The value of the data template as an aid to navigation, in the sense described, is illustrated by a consideration of 'oppositions' evident between specific template nodes. For example, a dichotomy is identified between 'creative' and 'mechanical' conceptualizations of designing.<sup>293</sup>

"It's an add-on to art, and it's very creative, or it's a prelude to technology, and therefore it's very mechanical."  
(Promotion-Design 27:292-4)

These two conceptions of design are seen by informants as competing against each other, in that while having a 'code' for designing offers the prospect of efficient management of the design process, it denies the essential creative nature of designing. In highlighting and examining this dichotomy, the template analysis conducted here allows a more objective overview to be taken of the 'opposition'

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<sup>292</sup> Sections 12.2.4 & 12.2.5.

<sup>293</sup> Examined at nodes (2 3 1) and (2 4 1) respectively.

which this dichotomy embodies. An informed navigation is therefore now possible between two essentially opposing views.

Several other areas of the data template are problematized in the informant discussion. For example, while design is recognized as an overtly commercial activity, this commerciality is seen as problematic in relation to notions of creativity and the preservation of non-commercial design ideals.<sup>294</sup> Similarly, the issue of the designer's accountability to others, although recognized as a commercial necessity, is seen as imposing unwelcome constraints on the designer.<sup>295</sup> In highlighting these areas of contentiousness for the informants, the template allows an informed consideration of these tensions by the reader of the template.

### *13.1.3 Examples II: aiding design collaboration*

Inter-stakeholder communication in design collaborations is often problematic, due to the differing conceptualizing frameworks around design held by the participants. Improved design collaboration is, however, attainable through a process of navigation between, and integration of, these differing views.<sup>296</sup>

The empirical study described in this thesis constitutes an aid to navigation between the differing perspectives on 'design' held within the participating sample of design stakeholders. This is achieved through: (i) a preliminary identification of the conceptualizations around design articulated by study participants; and (ii) the presentation, exploration and discussion of these identified conceptualizations.<sup>297</sup>

The exercise of empirically investigating and presenting conceptions of design is of additional value, in that it has the potential to enable a better understanding of more

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<sup>294</sup> Section 8.3.

<sup>295</sup> Section 8.4.

<sup>296</sup> Section 2.2.2.

specific instances of problematic design collaboration. The Designs on Your ... Loo case is one such example.<sup>298</sup> Another instance of problematic design collaboration is discussed by an informant in the interview study. In this second example, the informant describes his experience as the designer working within a development team.<sup>299</sup>

"I thought I'd start the ball rolling by saying: 'Okay, so what message do you want this product to give off? What do you want it to say? [...]' I thought, for me that was the simplest possible question. That was the most stripped-down, stripping the whole design thing down to the absolute bare minimum, just saying: 'Think about messages. Think about what is it you want this thing to tell your customers?'"

(Education-Higher 01)

This apparently most basic approach to design was, however, rebuffed by the other collaborators:

"but really it proved absolutely impossible. I repeated my question several times, I stuck with it for about ten minutes, and could I get anyone to say that it should be technically excellent, it should be reliable, it should be strong, anything?"

(Education-Higher 01)

The answer to this last rhetorical question is clearly 'no', and the informant goes on to describe his ultimate response to the situation in which he found himself:

"I think I learned not to expect too much: just, in the end, show them the things."

(Education-Higher 01)

Here is a situation in which collaborating design stakeholders are clearly operating with differing conceptions of design. The informant-designer sees design in terms of messages and communication. The other members of the development team, however, see design in terms of processes and materials of product construction, summed up in the reported response to the designer's question 'what is it you want this thing to tell your customers?':

"Well, I thought we could injection mould it."

(Education-Higher 01)

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<sup>297</sup> Part III.

<sup>298</sup> Section 2.2.2.

<sup>299</sup> The informant's full description of this example, extracts from which are given here, is reproduced in full in Appendix 14.

This conflict in conceptions of design, and the breakdown in communication it generates, leads to an unsuccessful collaboration, as demonstrated by the informant's ultimate resignation quoted above.

Within the data template, design is seen as being more successful when performed as a group activity. Design is therefore seen as a co-operative activity, in which skills of negotiation, discussion and dialogue are thus paramount.<sup>300</sup> The generation of a diagrammatic template of conceptions of design in a particular collaborative design scenario would be of considerable value, in exposing the origins of the communicative difficulties highlighted in the examples just given. Such an exercise would also be commensurate with the concept of 'metaphor play' in design, advocated in an earlier discussion.<sup>301</sup> The contention here is that successful inter-stakeholder communication in design requires a process of negotiation between competing conceptions of 'design' itself. A collective awareness and examination of the conceptions of design held by participants in a collaborative scenario enables an empathic understanding to emerge, in which all perspectives are recognized and integrated. This integration may then lead to improved communication and outcomes for the collaboration.

#### *13.1.4 Conclusion*

The examples presented serve to illustrate how the template analysis conducted here allows a more objective overview to be taken of the range of conceptions of design in evidence within the informant sample. This facilitates an accommodation between opposing views which the framework chapters of this thesis argue is the desired outcome of a contemporary consideration of design. An extension of the mapping exercise which the template analysis constitutes would extend the range of

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<sup>300</sup> Node (3 4).

<sup>301</sup> Section 2.2.2.

this more objective overview. Suggestions for further work which would facilitate this are presented below.

## 13.2 Cumulative research

One of the identified goals of the qualitative researcher is “cumulative research”:

It can therefore be argued that one of the criteria by which qualitative research should be judged is the extent to which the researchers have built upon previous knowledge in their work and their success in connecting their findings with previous knowledge.

Murphy et al (1998:192)

Successful integration of present research and previous work is contrasted with an isolationist approach, manifest in

[t]he tendency for qualitative researchers to limit themselves to ‘one-off’ studies, which are “conceived and executed in magnificent isolation”  
Murphy et al (1998:192)

The presented research and findings provide a historical record of conceptions of ‘design’ within the participating sample of the community of design stakeholders. This empirical study’s relation to earlier studies has already been discussed. It was concluded, however, that the present findings can not be directly compared with those presented in other cited studies.<sup>302</sup>

Bracewell (1987) presents his project, investigating attitudes to design in education and industry, as a reprise of a much earlier study (Holme 1934). This commitment to cumulative research is carried through in the suggestion that a ten year reprise be made of Bracewell’s own study (Bracewell 1987), thus allowing further tracking of any changes in attitudes over time. In the present case, it has been stated that ‘design’ is a term with lively currency, and as such open to constant innovation in its usage. A future reprise of this study would allow an assessment of these changes over time. In addition, an expansion of the coverage of the informant sample used in

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<sup>302</sup> Section 4.8.1.

this study would give a more exhaustive account of meanings of 'design' than that provided here.

### **13.3 *Suggestions for further work***

The preceding discussion of further implications of the current project informs the following suggestions for further work.

#### *13.3.1 Develop the scope of the current study*

The empirical investigation method used here could usefully be applied to other design stakeholders not yet included. This would potentially add to the richness and coverage of the template of conceptions of design generated in this study, by introducing the perspectives of any neglected groups. The sampling strategy employed in informant selection was unavoidably selective. A larger and more inclusive informant sample would generate a data template with greater coverage of perspective across the community of design stakeholders.

#### *13.3.2 Develop the depth of the current study*

The empirical investigation method used here could be applied more specifically to particular groups of design stakeholders. This would give a richer picture of, for example, consumer understandings of 'design' than is provided here. The selectivity of the dimensional sampling strategy employed in informant selection here inevitably necessitated a compromise between the breadth and the depth of the coverage of the community of design stakeholders. Any particular interest in the perspectives of specific stakeholder groups could therefore lead to use of a more narrowly-focused informant sample.

#### *13.3.3 Reprise the current study in the future*

The value of 'cumulative' research is argued above. A future reprise of the current empirical study would allow an assessment to be made of changes in the currency

and use of the term ‘design’ over time. This would be especially valuable considering the contention that ‘design’ is a term with lively currency open to constant innovation in its usage

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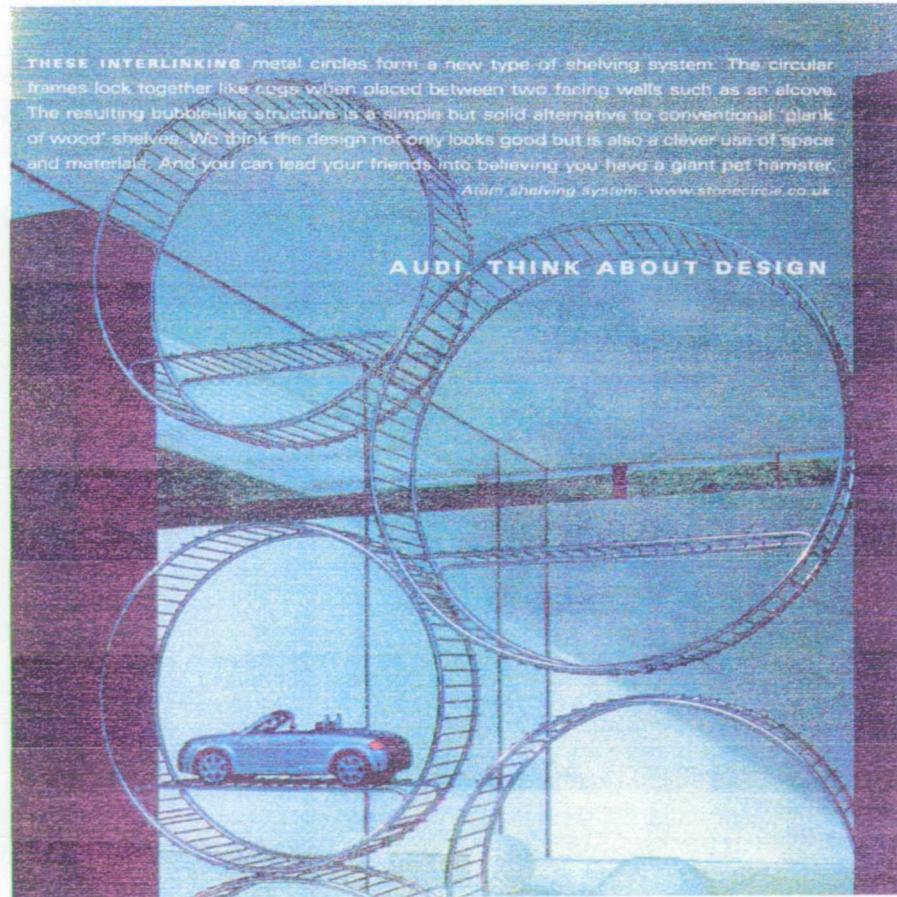
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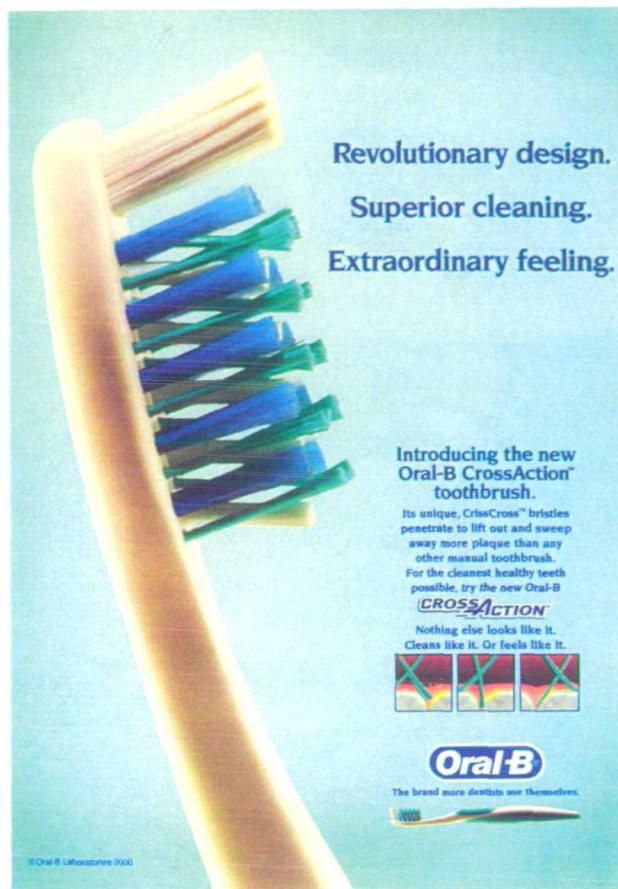
## Appendices

### **Appendix 1: Use of 'design' as textual anchor in print advertising (Section 2.1.5.2)**

Examples of contemporary print advertisements using 'design' (and its associate terms 'designed' and 'designer') for textual anchorage are given here. The use of 'design' and its derivative terms in these examples is cited merely as evidence that design is considered to be sufficiently culturally-known for the intended textual anchorage to be effective. No further analysis of the example advertisements is given here. All advertisements appeared in cited sources between February 2000 and May 2001.



Audi (Daily Mail, 2 September 2000)



Oral-B (The Times Magazine, 20 February 2000)

Design original  
Dual band  
Voice dialling  
Picture messaging  
Xpress-on™ covers

[www.nokia.com](http://www.nokia.com)



**NOKIA**  
CONNECTING PEOPLE

Nokia (Times Magazine, 1 July 2000)



THE NEW MEN'S COLOGNE FOR MEN FROM NINO CERRUTI CERRUTI IMAGE

Cerruti (FHM, March 2000)

## Good value Swedish design isn't always flat-packed.

Conventional wisdom suggests that high quality comes at a high price. We disagree. Take the Saab 9-5 Saloon for example. An executive luxury car that not only has a high performance turbocharged engine, but also gives you automatic climate control, Saab Active Head Restraints and 16" alloy wheels as standard. And as if that wasn't enough, it even comes ready assembled.

[www.saab.co.uk](http://www.saab.co.uk)

Saab (The Mail on Sunday, 27 May 2001)

## **Appendix 2: Actual sample profile (expanded) (Section 4.5.6)**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Subgroup</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Design area</b>	<b>Role/profile</b>
Business (5)	Business-Production (4)	06	Environmental products	Head of Marketing, bathroom fittings manufacturer
		09	2D	Regional Office Manager, greetings card manufacturer
		11	3D	Head of R&D, domestic appliance manufacturer
		20	Engineering	Engineering Manager, electrical motor manufacturer
	Business-Retail (1)	26	Product	Buyer/Manager, houseware shop
		X		
Designer (10)	Designer-Freelance (3)	10	Interior	Design Consultant
		13	General	Design Consultant
		21	3D	Design Consultant
	Designer-Agency (4)	05	2D/New media	UK MD, design consultancy
		12	Branding	Chairman, brand consultancy
		16	Architecture	Partner, architectural agency
		19	Architecture	Partner, architectural agency
	Designer-Staff (3)	15	2D	Regional Head of Design, greetings card manufacturer
		17	Fashion	Staff Designer, corporate clothing manufacturer
		18	Textiles	Staff Designer, corporate clothing manufacturer
Education (6)	Education-Further (2)	02	General	Curriculum Co-ordinator
		04	2D	Lecturer
	Education-Higher (4)	01	3D	Lecturer
		07	Process	Lecturer
		08	Product	Course/Subject Leader
		14	Fashion	Course Leader
Promotion (7)	Promotion-Design (3)	23	N/a	Education & Training Director, professional design association
		25		Chief Executive, professional design association
		27		Acting Director, professional design association
	Promotion-General (2)	28	N/a	Design Counsellor, regional business advisory service
		29	Product development	Conference Organizer
	Promotion-Media (2)	X		
		22	N/a	Editor, design journal
User (3)	N/a	24	N/a	Editor (design), national newspaper
		31	N/a	10-19 age group
		32		20-29 age group
		X		30-39 age group
		X		40-49 age group
		X		50-59 age group
		30		60-69 age group

X  
N/a  
No.

unfilled profiles  
not applicable  
interview number (in chronological sequence)

In cases in which informants could be placed in several design areas, the primary stated area of interest and/or practice was used to provide a fit with the most appropriate sample profile.

***Appendix 3: Text of example introductory letter sent to potential informant (Section 4.5.6)***

Dear \_\_\_,

My name is Paul Micklethwaite, a researcher working towards a PhD in design at the University of Huddersfield.

I'm looking at communication and collaboration between different people involved in design, from designer to manufacturer to educator to consumer, and to what extent this is based on sharing language, ideas or values about design.

I'm conducting a series of one-off individual interviews with all those just mentioned.

I'm writing to ask if you would agree to be interviewed as part of this study. An interview would be informal and open in format, and would be arranged entirely at your convenience.

The outcome of the study will document how design is perceived and conceived of across the range of design stakeholders. This will be of interest to anyone who takes design seriously. It will also be made available to all participants.

I will telephone you in the coming week (of \_\_) to hopefully discuss this matter further.

The exact format of this introduction was adaptable to each specific case.

***Appendix 4: Interview administration procedure (Section  
4.6.3)***

- introduce self
- give background to interview: my project
- restate subject of interview: design
- describe style of interview
- give assurance of data confidentiality
- explain how data will be used
- enquire as to informant questions or concerns
- seek permission to record

[interview]

- enquire as to follow-up interest

The above procedure was followed in all informant interviews.

## **Appendix 5: Task instruction given to User-informants**

### **(Section 4.6.3)**

#### **Collecting images about 'design'**

I'd like you to collect images that illustrate what 'design' means to you personally.

You might take **photographs** using the single use camera provided. You might select **pictures** from magazines, newspapers or anywhere else. You might collect a combination of **photographs and pictures**.

I'd like you to think about the images (photographs and pictures) you collect, and what they say about 'design'.

If you use the camera provided, I'd like you to return it to me by post for developing. A prepared envelope is enclosed for the purpose. Upon receiving your camera, I will then develop your film and return your photographs to you by post.

#### **The interview**

Once you've collected all your images, and received back your developed photographs from me, I'll get in touch to arrange a time when we can discuss them in an interview. This interview might last about half an hour, and will be very informal. I'm just interested to hear you talk about the images you have collected.

I'd like you to have all your pictures and photographs with you in the interview.

## **Appendix 6: Transcription conventions (Section 4.7.3)**

### *Level of transcription and notation*

The level of detail of transcription employed is intended to give a coherent rendering of speakers' sense while preserving reading ease. Speech is presented grammatically, and symbols are used in conventional ways. Specific notation is explained below.

R:	Researcher identifier
01:	Informant identifier (number relates to chronological interview sequence)
UPPERCASE	Emphasis <sup>303</sup>
..	Trailing off
...	Pause
-	Change of conversational direction in mid-sentence
(laughs)	Descriptive comment (heard on tape)
(inaud)	Inaudible speech
[points to poster]	'Editorial' comment (not apparent from tape)
[X]	Obscure/unimportant reference
/	Mechanical break in recording

The following is *not* transcribed:

- fumbling for words or insignificant repetition of words
- repetitious and insignificant verbal ticks, such as: 'you know', 'kind of', 'I mean'
- non-significant verbal encouragements used by the interviewer, such as: 'Right', 'Yeah', 'Sure'

### *Organization and identification*

Transcriptions are organized by alternating conversational turn, with the speaker identified at the start of each turn: the researcher by the initial 'R', an informant by the relevant interview number, e.g., '17'. Brief interruptions of a turn by another speaker are included in square brackets. Where additional speakers contribute to an interview, they are identified by the interview number and an alphabetical suffix, e.g., '17a', '17b', unless they appear as a designated informant elsewhere in the study, in which case they are identified by their informant number, e.g., 01.

### *Descriptive comment*

Descriptive comment is given in normal brackets, where it clarifies the speaker's sense.

- paralinguistic comment indicates how something was said, e.g., '(laughing)', '(unsure)'.
- a special case of paralinguistic comment is speech made in character, indicated by single speech marks, as in the example: 'to which he said: 'Well, I don't know.'
- extralinguistic comment indicates the use of non-verbal expression such as gestures or a laugh.<sup>304</sup>
- inaudible or unidentifiable speech on the recording is indicated by: '(inaud)'. Such passages of missing data were generally brief in the recordings in the present

<sup>303</sup> Acronyms such as 'CAD' appear in uppercase, but these should not be read as emphasised unless specifically stated.

<sup>304</sup> For a discussion of paralinguistic and extralinguistic data, see O'Connell & Kowal (1995:94).

study, and comprised either one, or occasionally a few words. Clearly, a confident identification of the sense of specific text passages containing any such missing data may be directly affected, and so caution was exercised in including such passages in data analysis. In one case (T26), passages of inaudible data were longer, in which case they are briefly summarized from memory, where possible, by a short phrase. In some cases, a 'best guess' of what was said may be given in brackets. This is also treated with caution during data analysis.

#### *'Editorial' comment*

'Editorial' comment is given in square brackets, e.g., '[shows design sketches]', where it clarifies the sense of the verbal data. In User-informant interviews, photographs referred to in the discussion are indicated by an identifying label, e.g., '[Boots]'.

#### *Sensitive references*

Informants were given an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity at the time of interview. The researcher has sought to protect an informant's anonymity and confidentiality in transcription, while seeking to preserve the sense of the data. A distinction is invoked between references applying to two domains: (i) private, and so considered sensitive; and (ii) public, and so considered non-sensitive. All sensitive references, in the form of proper nouns, relating to an informant's personal history or current professional status and links, are therefore removed. All other non-sensitive, i.e., those considered to be in the public domain, are retained.<sup>305</sup>

Sensitive proper nouns are replaced by common nouns, e.g., '[name]' (of a person), '[city]', '[organization]', '[company]'.

Where a replaced proper noun relates to the informant personally, the identifier 'A' is added. Thus, '[organization A]' denotes an informant's own organization, '[company A]' denotes an informant's own company, '[publication A]' denotes a publication produced by an informant's organization or company, and so on.

Where a recurrence of a replaced proper noun in an interview is significant, an identifier other than 'A' is added. 'Y' is most often used for this purpose, but 'B' is used where there is some affiliation with the informant, e.g., to denote a parent company. An added identifier always denotes the same referent within an individual transcript, but not between transcripts.

[X] is occasionally used as a non-specific replacement, where the exact nature of the reference is not relevant.

Sections of text not transcribed for reasons of confidentiality are replaced by [removed confidential data].

Specific notation used to replace sensitive data is summarized below.

[company] [organization]	Named company/organization
[company A]	Informant's own company
[company B]	Parent company of [company A]
[company Y]	Recurring named company
[name]	Named individual
[X]	Non-specific replacement

<sup>305</sup> Removal of sensitive references results in some loss of specific content in the data, but is necessary in meeting the researcher's commitment to informants over anonymity and confidentiality.

## Appendix 7: Example annotated transcript: interview 21

### (Section 4.7.4)

Q.S.R. MUD.IST Power version, revision 4.0.  
Licensor: Paul Micklethwaite.

PROJECT: PhD, User paul micklethwaite, 10:20 am, Feb 21, 2001.

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\* ON-LINE DOCUMENT: T21  
\*\*\* Document Header:  
\* No Header

\*\*\* Retrieval for this document: 644 units out of 644, = 100%

\*\* Text units 1-644:

R: To begin with, could you just tell me a bit about your professional background?

21: I graduated in industrial design from [university] in 1986, and then went to work for a manufacturing company, [company], for 18 months, sort of learning my craft as it were, before going to work in consultancy for a couple of years. I worked for a company called [company], initially, then the recession hit, and I went freelance, wherever the demand was, which was an interesting experience. That, due to the recession, led me to work on Spanish projects, because Spain was enjoying a big boom back then, in the lead-up to the 1992 Olympics and all of that, and spent a year working in [city]. Returned to [city], worked for [company], [company], again, [company], [company], and established [company A] in 1994, working from within an architectural practice. [name] was the director of the interiors part of that practice back then, so in '97 she and I decided to establish a joint venture, which was the [company A] that we are now, although we have just recently incorporated. So the focus of the work that we do here has changed from when I set up [company A], which was primarily doing electronic equipment and quite technical stuff. We now do more sculptural, more emotional work, and the projects that on the industrial design side we get involved in are primarily objects for specification in architectural environments. So it'll be seating, lighting, tables, (inaud) furniture, that kind of thing.

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7  
+ his /

say, say,

R: So what brought about that shift in the kind of work that you're doing?

21: An emotional tie, because [name]'s my partner on and off the pitch, and also it's terribly difficult to establish an industrial design practice doing high tech projects, at the kind of level that one would want to, if you don't have 12 seats of Pro/ENGINEER, and a portfolio that reads like the Argos catalogue. Whereas there's far more acceptance for small companies doing high profile projects in the furniture stroke architectural specifier market. [So it was partly driven by necessity, and also it was an area - I think it's typical of designers, they always want to work in an area that they haven't worked in before, or that they have always wanted to work in but the world hasn't given them the work.] So what we did was - literally, there was nothing in the folio to back-up our grand claims of being able to do this. We spent rather a lot of time, and a hell of a lot of money, designing concepts for people, saying: 'You do this. We really like your stuff. We specify it on the interiors side. But there's this gaping hole in what you do, and here are three solutions,' and they invariably said: 'I like solution A,' or: 'I like solution C,' and from a pretty picture, and a concept, and a gash model, came commissions, but it took a good old year of scratching at the door before that happened.

R: So how did you find working in different areas, from the technical work you've been describing, to the more emotional, sculptural kind of work? Did you have to change?

21: Yes, [there was a real rite of passage], and I had to rethink completely the way I looked at things. I'd always been fanatical about how things go together. In fact, having spent a couple of years in manufacture, and cussed and cursed people who'd throw pretty pictures at you that you couldn't engineer, I - it took me 15 years to (learn) that (laughs). So now, all I'm interested is in what sounds very kind

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the position is now (the new design side)

infusing + craft

shift in work type

lighter v. demanding /  
results

d/he basking in work n  
secondaries

- now  
- desired

dangerous approach/attitude

getting back to authentic side 1, 2?  
a return

*unselfishness don't have pleasure?*

of flamboyant: it's the grand gesture.] Things like - for example, this lamp here, is actually part of a system, this was a prototype for [company], an Italian manufacturer, and it can be used to form, you can have a table suspended off it, or you can put a series of them and put a screen between them, it needn't be a light at all. That kind of thing. This table is one of ours as well, and it - a trestle that flips three ways, to give you three different heights. The hardest thing of all, it seems, to do, is create something that's incredibly simple, and yet not been done before. That's the Holy Grail.

*violent  
religion*

*brain as  
strength*

R: So how do you approach trying to achieve that? Do you have a...?

21: A methodology? (laughs) It's a sort of process of glam-dunking your brain in the hip, really. Trying to forget all preconceptions, and actually go back to what the hell it is you're trying to do. So, I'll show you this - a door handle that I just recently did, that no-one's done before, and you may assume that no-one's done it before, because it seems perfectly logical. Instead of the handle coming out of the door and then turning right, why not just have the handle come out of (inward)? So it's that, going back to: 'What the hell's this thing supposed to do?' But there's also this need to keep things within the realm of what is familiar and what is accessible. Because the other thing that we like to think that we do here, is design things that are new, that people can buy into and understand. As opposed to, for example, there's this, the CxO/Peugeot Award the other night, Hector Serrano's lamp, which was this - I don't know if you saw it, it's a balloon full of salt with a light bulb in the middle of it. It didn't give out enough light to really perform any function, it wasn't especially decorative, and it sat there like a kind of limp testicle. And I'm sure that in raw art terms that's fine, but I don't think that apart from the prize money Hector's going to make a fortune from that. And, unfortunately, like it or not, industrial design is a commercial art, and you've got to balance what sells and what fulfills your artistic aspirations. And if you want to go off and be a one-off sculptor, that's fine, because if you don't sell any, that's all you are left with, is the one-off prototype that you make in the first place.] Philippe Starck's way of doing this, now this is the cunning thing, is he, for example, a classic example would be the Lord Yo chair, which he did for Driade, which is a plastic chair outside a million Milanese cafes, and it is almost a verbatim rip-off of a Lloyd Loom chair circa 1920, but made in plastic. And so much of his work is a kind of reiteration with new materials of old designs. But that's not to pooh-pooh what he does, because actually it's fantastic, but it means that people go: 'Oh, that's dead new. Look at that, pink plastic.' But actually their mind has this, what I call a kind of mind's eye blueprint of what a chair is, and this fits in within that, therefore it's totally accessible and everyone goes: 'Oh yeah, I like Philippe Starck. Wow, man,' and they buy it.

R: It's interesting you bring up Starck, because he's often cited as being someone that represents perhaps the more artistic end of, certainly product design. Do you feel that he always pulls off the balance between utility and the artistic attractiveness of his products?

21: Well, if you've ever tried squeezing a lemon on a Juicy Salif you'll know that's not strictly so: you get it all over you, basically. I think what he does do is, [he kind of pricks your emotion and makes you fall in love with something, whether it works or not, which is great, and his, some of his Thomson televisions, they're all over the shop, they're great fun.] At the minute, my man of the moment must be Ron Arad, I think. For example, his Victoria and Albert chair is a stroke of genius, because, again, it's like nothing else. You can't say: 'Oh yeah, but that's just like a '70s throwback.' Because so much design of the minute is in a kind of retrospective lilt, which is so, so dull, and you go along to these endless degree shows of sci-fi '60s and early '70s fling-down, and you just think: 'Yeah, yeah. Fine. Very nice little history of design, class, but let's push forward now.' So I think that Starck is a little bit too accessible, in some respects, and I'm beginning to find his interiors just do the same old thing again and again and again. But that, I suppose, you could call, is his

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66 *simpler + original*  
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70 'methodology': of star paradigm  
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the familiar*  
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116 *design to create, not to function*  
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128 *too accessible, no longer a  
huge approach*  
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*) critical of repetition, yet praises reiteration/recapitulation (\*line break)*

trademark, and if he didn't do things that you recognised from somewhere else then you wouldn't recognise it as a starch.

R: It's interesting, as well, that your location here, you're very close to [museum].

21: No, no, no. They're very close to us (laughs). No, actually you're right. It's partly architecture driven, really. We love old warehouse architecture, and there are very few places where you can get this kind of studio. One is here, and the other is up in [area]. So that's why we're here, we were just in the right place at the right time.

R: So is it relevant that you happen to be near to [museum], do you think?

21: Yes, it is. I think that it helps to be in a zone that is recognised as a 'design zone,' and, for example, at the end of the road there's a repro house that does all our drawings and reprographics, and so you just phone and someone comes and collects the prints and is back with them half an hour later, and you've got [museum]. And you've got places to take clients on the riverfront at lunchtime. It's got a real buzz to it now, and especially on a Friday evening, it's heaving. So it's a good, fun area.

R: I'm interested in how this came about, this scenario that you've described, where it's kind of a little design zone, as you said.

21: It always has happened. In fact, the trouble with this area now is it's getting out of the reach of designers. It's got too expensive. So unless you are already here, new leases and new property is gonna be too expensive. It happened - there was a regeneration of [area], and the thing about designers is they like big open spaces, they don't need suspended ceilings and raised floors, they're not that sort of company. They don't need the air conditioning and the louvered partitions and, you know, such - everything that we hate about offices and people in sweaty suits. So when [area], which was predominantly a kind of warehousy, functional area - they moved [area] down south of the river.] Then that became... I suppose it must have been in the '70s, I might be wrong. That then became a new development area. It was slow to pick up, and you could have bought a house there for probably £50,000 or something, which nowadays would be worth £1 million. Designers moved in there, it was a real hot spot, there were lots of designer-makers. [area] was a place where young creative people would be doing their [chang] and selling it to the public, and it had a kind of Boho feel to it. And the final nail in the coffin was driven in last year, when Marks & Spencers opened a store in the middle of it, and basically all the little guys have been priced out, and it's all Diesel, and Prada, and Doctor Martens. So that happened, then everyone shifted east, and they all went to [area], and that area. Again, old warehouses that were no longer being used, and cheap property, really cheap, but we're talking not attractive areas, back then. In the late '80s and early '90s there were like tumbleweeds rolling down the street on a Saturday, because there was nothing there - really miserable. [And now, on the corner of every street in [area] is a full-on cyber bar, full of designers after work with their mobile phone, backpacks, getting down with a pint of Caffrey's, kind of thing.] So that then went wacky on price. This area, invented by [name] - he realised that people would walk across the bridge, and you see all these tourists coming from [area], they walk across the bridge, look around and go: 'Oh.' and turn round and go back again. So he kind of created: 'Well, within this vista, you can go along the waterfront.' The company he set up went bankrupt. It's a classic thing, it seems to happen again and again, and I'm surprised anyone ever bothers to invest in these things. But [area], they were virtually saying: 'Come and rent part of this office block, and we'll pay you to do it,' and now the rents in [area], after the initial development company had gone bankrupt, you will be paying top whack over there, and it is the financial (inaud). Here, same thing happened, and eight years ago this area was not nice, it was still [area], it was rough as nuts: 'If we get broken into one more time we'll think about moving,' kind of thing. Now, it's - all of the flats are yuppie flats full of bankers from across the road, and out of the

131 a commercial requirement?  
132 - overrides point d. concerns

a design zone

the dr. studio/workpace  
- functional  
- symbolic

a dfers lifestyle, around  
the work

- mothers of the broad size

yippification following the  
design zone effect

*positive*

underground car parks crawl Mercedes, BMW, whatever, at the weekend. So, designers did move in, and there are a few architectural practices here. [company] are just across the street. There are some designers around the corner, architects who work for (inaud), whose name escapes me at the minute. [company], around the corner: they're a graphics consultancy who pretty much swept the board at the "Design Week" Awards last year on graphics. There aren't that many, but there's a few, and then of course there's [museum]. But if you head south, you get the other side of the tracks, we like to say the wrong side of the tracks (inaud), then it gets more Boho, and actually quite fun and edgy, down [street], which used to be kind of antique markets, and again in the last five years that's gone spare. But you've got a lot of the top interior designers and architectural practices. [company] have just moved in down there, who do a lot of architectural work for [company]. The - total mental block - the guy who designed [nightclub], he's now got a studio down here. [And it is another of these areas where you get designer-makers, with a little place, opening the doors up, and people go and buy their lights and chairs and stuff.]

R: So would you say it's quite a migratory kind of phenomenon, how these little design ghettos, if you like...? *here to somewhere*

*whining*

21: Yeah, because.. [well there's two kinds of design, and unfortunately I suppose we sit on the fence a bit, because we do commercial work that pays the bills and gives us the money to do speculative things that don't pay the bills. Design of a door handle, that I (inaud) a couple of years ago, has been extremely well received, it's been featured in numerous magazines, and I think we made £250 for it, and it took me three months to develop.] And most of the people doing that kind of work, only do that kind of work, and find themselves living in [area], sharing a flat with cockroaches, and certainly until very recently, (inaud), who must be making a mint from all his wonderful furniture, was in a house in the [area], went round to visit it once, it was a very rough little area. [But again, what happens is they go to the [area], and then it gets -because it's full of bright, intellectual, fun people, people think: 'Oh, this is real Boho, this is nice, 'cause I can go out, and I go to the pub and it's full of intelligent people having interesting conversations.' So you get the slightly bohemian city guy, and he moves there, and the prices start going up, and then they get priced out, so they move east and east and east.] So [area] used to be a rough as nuts area, and that's now - people who bought there three years ago have probably tripled their money. But, unfortunately, again, it'll push the designers somewhere else. They'll all have to move to [area], somewhere further.

R: Do you think a permanence would be a good thing, if the migration was to end, if people, say, for example, you were to remain here? Would that necessarily be a good thing, do you think?

21: I think it would be a very good thing if we stay here. For example, there are companies who are established in [area]. My first studio was in [area], and then we looked around at - having rent, subtlety part of the studio from someone else - we looked around [area], and it was unfeasibly expensive. But anyone who's IN there, finds themselves in a much nicer area than other people have to work.

R: You described there how there are two kinds of design work - the work that you do for a client that pays the bills, and then the work that is not necessarily commissioned, such as the door handle. I'd be interested to hear how you approach those different kinds of work. Do you use a common approach, or...?

21: No, completely different. Because a lot of the work that we do that doesn't pay the bills, but fulfills the emotional aspirations. we do either on a small advance against royalties, or we do it completely speculatively: we take the concept to people. And those are going on all the time, and they fill in all the little gaps between the commercial work. But they are driven from here (indicates chest/heart), rather than driven by the client. We tell them what we want to do, and as you can understand, that's a very attractive thing for a designer to do. In fact, doing that for a year when we set up was such a blessed

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*the genuine (unethical) article*

*remastered?*

*commercial v speculative*

*the party*

*d/our migration phenomenon*

+ 171, 173, 210

*emotional work*

*origin of the work, looks of intent*

relief, because you're not answering to a client. So it might not be commercially rewarding, but it's very emotionally rewarding. Whereas, what happens when you do commercial work is you have constraints heaped upon you, and customer expectation thrown at you: a disappointed client who envisaged something. They don't envisage anything if you turn up with a design and say: 'Hi, here's my latest sketch book of ideas.' Which do you wanna buy? If you fly to Milan with your sketch book, they go: 'I like that one, and I like that one, and I like that one.' And then you go and work them up. You're always your own boss. Whereas with commercial stuff you, you're really under pressure.

R: You need the work 'constraint' there, in relation to the commercial work. Do you think that the work that you do speculatively is in some way 'better'? Would you be happy saying that it's 'better' design work than the stuff that's done for clients?

21: I think that's a very dangerous statement, isn't it? Because, it's all relevant. It all depends on to whom you want to shout that. The whole issue of publication of work is an interesting one. A lot of people try to get their work into all the design magazines, the 'Blueprint's, and 'Design Week's, and 'Abitare's, and 'Domus's and stuff, which is great, and it's good for company morale, and it's: 'Oh yeah, we're really kicking. We're doing well.' But what you really want, is to be putting commercial work in the "FT" and "The Sunday Times", and getting known to the broad buying public. The work that we do for [company], for example, we do a lot of work with them, is quite often very dear, very hard-edged, and some of the things you don't really want to put your name to, because the constraints you, and the design came a poor second (amused). What's nice is occasionally you get a bit of a triumph where design wins out, and that worked quite well with a chiropody offer which we did for [store] last year (inaud). where we were given 40 square metres and £6,000 per store, to create an environment in which you could practise chiropody, and we managed to come up with a solution that was both elegant and appropriate and cheap and effective, and all these different things, so..

R: So those situations in which, as you say, design wins out - why does design win out in those situations?

21: Normally it's just luck, I think. But there's sometimes some serious political maneuvering to be done. You're always - a bone of contention, working in these environments, but if you're working in a retail project.. For example, if you've got the brand manager, who has their particular thing they want to boost - so it might be - for example, we did a mobile phone display for [store], a couple of years ago - interestingly enough, since then everyone's ripped it off, including [company] - where they just said: 'Well, we're [store], we give impartial advice, let's set it up so you can compare one with the other,' but we've got the brand manager saying: 'I know [store] is this calm, quiet, straight-faced, earnest face, but I want my thing to stick out, and sell more.' So they're saying: 'Go crazy. Use lots of colour.' Then you've got the directorship saying: 'That might be good for selling mobile phones, but it's not good for the overall brand. So we can't promote one object to the detriment of all the others.' And if every brand manager working within a store, perhaps promoting health and beauty, or some other - pharmacy, or photographic - said: 'Oh, we're the biggest, brightest, funkiest thing in here.' then you end up with a cacophony, and you've lost the [store] brand. So we are always fighting this battle, between helping the brand and helping the brand manager, and we are always the enemy.

R: Do you personally, do you have an interest in that side of things, the brand strategy?

21: Yes, very much so. It's terribly important. We're just doing a project at the moment, where [store] went with one design company, who will remain nameless, who are a very good design company, but they are prone to do, rather than stop and think about the brand issues, and they after 9 months were taken off the job, and we came in, because we could understand the brand and fight for it.

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R: Is that kind of awareness a vital element of the modern designer's armoury, if you like?

21: Yeah, I think it has to be, particularly now that the main players in any market, people like Motorola, for example, have a global design policy, and you have to be able to understand and focus on the issues that are important, that continue to propagate the brand values of that company, not just go off and... There's a tendency, for design education in the UK, and also some of the companies that work within it, to do perfectly good knee jerk design, which is: 'I'm gonna style a mobile phone.' and the one thing that I think I've learnt, particularly over the last three years, is: don't pick up the pen for at least two days, three days, possibly two weeks. Talk, think, and get right under the skin of what the hell it is. It's a sort of lining yourself up before you fire, and it's that thought process that's - actually now you can see people graduating from the RCA, demonstrating the ability not only to think, but to communicate the thought in the end products, and there it's the quality and intelligence that backs it up.

R: So do you think you can teach or consciously develop that intelligence, would you say?

21: Definitely. In fact there's a guy called [name], who runs one of the modules at the RCA at the moment, who invited me along to a crit the other night, that was utterly fascinating, because there were virtually no designs there. There were just a series of extremely profound thoughts and visions about how you view the world and the objects that we interact with within it. Some spectacular things. For example, a guy designed - he didn't even show us a picture of it, he just told us about it - he said: 'How about, you're lying in bed, and you need a reading light. What if that reading light was the shape of a Toblerone projecting from the wall, and you could put your book in the open position on top of it, and the weight of the book switches the light off, and it was saving the page you were at, and then you lift it off and the light comes on and you read your book.' Things like that just - and it doesn't matter how you manifest it as an object, the idea was there. Thinking about it sounds really crass: the poetry of interacting with objects, trying to make them more than just like the remote control of the telly, a bit more emotive and...]

R: So how do you go about building in, if you like, that kind of room, that kind of space, into the typical design brief from a client?

21: It doesn't really happen. We've so rarely been put in a situation where they say: 'Well, you know, give it a couple of weeks.' There are, certainly in the UK, there are scarcely any good clients, practically none. [company] is a good client. But, by and large, we see design as an expense rather than an investment, because it's terribly hard to show on the ledger what its contribution was. The DTI keeps spouting important information about the value of design in terms of investment, and they say it's one of the highest yield investments that's (inaud). But, it's very hard for them to back it up with specifics. So, what normally happens, I would say, in the average design job - say, a company's commissioned to design a kettle - they get a good designer, good flair, to give it their first best guess, and that's it, job done, because they'll have two weeks to do it in. And there's no time to do anything that is more profound than a quick knee jerk scribble. Occasionally, something - have you ever been out shopping for a kettle? (R: No, not personally.) Next time, if you ever have the misery of wandering around the shops, keep an eye open, and see if you can spot one kettle that you think: 'Oh, that's nice.' There is one that's half decent, by Godum, but every other one is just minging. And we live in this sea of total nonsense, all consumer products, domestic products are hideous. So that's why, another reason for moving away from all of that side of things, because basically there's nothing for me here, there's nothing [touched me, it's all: buy it, bin it, buy it, bin it]. A load of rubbish. Things that I'm gonna live with for 10, 15 years, hand with.

R: But, did you not see a challenge there?

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21: The challenge would be to find a manufacturer prepared to venture that kind of.. I don't think they exist. There are companies making things at a level of preciousness. British hi-fi has a little bit of that. I think, but there are very few of them, they don't normally have much money, because they don't sell much, because they're not very commercial.

R: So would you - for example, Philips, who perhaps do make an effort in that regard. Would you..?

21: That's a good point, yes. Philips have changed quite a bit. I find Philips has a bit too much styling. It's like Alessi went electric, and I think Alessi's a bit too kind of, disposable concept. I wish Philips could tone it all down a bit, stop doing random dingles on things. [But it's much better than the predecessor, who had a totally incohesive design ethic. I think that there was no sense of: 'Oh, that's a Philips product.' Whereas at least now there is a Philips-ness to it.] Though the big fat cow shaped toasters are a bit - you'll like it as much as you'll like a catchy little europop single when you're on holiday in Magaluf. You'll play it for at least two weeks and then you'll be sick of the sight of it.

R: I'd like to return to something you said initially: your work in Spain. You've also said there are no good clients in the UK. How did your experience in Spain compare to your experience here?

21: Oh, when I was working in Spain I was working for a company called [company], and I was working specifically on the high speed rail link between [city] and [city]. It was therefore working for (inaud) huge organisation. But for the most part Spain is lots of little family businesses, and there are some extremely successful furniture companies, for example, particularly on the Mediterranean coast between Barcelona and Valencia. But it's a very hard country to make a living in industrial design. There are notable exceptions who are doing terribly well, but they're normally working in Italy as well as in Spain; [company], [company] and a few others.. [company]. But Spain has a cottage industry even in graphics, which is normally much bigger business. The interesting thing about Spain is they're terribly individualistic, which is good in one sense and bad in another. So you go to a meeting, and there are eight people round the table, and each of these, normally men, will hold eight different opinions, not because that's what they believe, but because it would be an affront to them to agree with you. They're extremely nice people and frustrating in equal measure, so I think they're victims of their own individuality.

R: So as a designer walking into that kind of situation, did you find that helpful or unhelpful?

21: Their indecisiveness? Extremely unhelpful (amused). But in the end, what happens is you run out of time, and then decisions get made. All they knew was Juan Carlos was going to catch the train on a certain day at a certain time, and that drove most of the decisions through. But if there hadn't been a deadline.. In fact, the idea of Spanish people working to a deadline is quite an interesting concept, the mañana principle still exists, and it's not just folklore (amused). It was like the bloody A-team working the night before the stations opened - people running around like blue-arsed wotsits.

R: Do you think it makes sense to talk of indigenous cultures around design?

21: Definitely, yes. There's such different specific flavours within Europe, for example. The Scandinavians will never break away from their love of wood and natural things, and they have an ecological policy that goes with it, an entirely sustainable industrial policy. And then you've got the Spanish, who are obsessed with polished aluminium and leather, and love sculptural forms, maybe that's a throwback to Miro and Gaudi. Then you've got the Italians, who - for example, in Britain, we normally buy one set of furniture when we get married, then we embarrass our children with our antimacassars later on in life - in Italy they say that the average couple change all the furniture in

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their house four times in their lifetime, so that's why Italy is the furniture hub, for Europe. But - and then you've got, part of the reason why the Italians have this immense design history is that, due to the wealth of the Catholic church, from an early age they would go to the church full of beautiful sculptural things, that were the result of extremely wealthy patrons from the church. You go to an English church and there's nothing in there, there's the signs of the cross (inaud), and we're not a particularly religious nation, at that. So you're not brought up with this constant bombardment of cultural intake. Then you've got the Germans, who seem to be absolutely obsessed with geometry and primary colours, and a German will wear a jacket, go for a colour not found in nature, and if anyone were an island culture, I think Germans are. I think they're the only nation in Europe still wearing moustaches, which is fascinating, very nice to see. Then you've got the French, design most peculiar - there's something really quirky, and it's a sort of Citroen Ami type bizarre understanding of shape, and I suppose the only person who seems to be doing stuff that has a direct cultural relevance would be Philippe Starck, that seems to span a broad spectrum. Then you've got, I suppose, [company], which is a French furniture company that's more of an international style. They're based down in Lyon, which is a bit more central Europe, and a bit less peripheral.

R: So do you think there truly can be an international design style, as you suggest?

21: But it's got to be in terms of fashion's become more internationalised, and the cross-fertilisation of ideas is now more across the board, because of internet and television and satellite television. But, now an interesting example: [name] just gone to work at Motorola. America, because it's such a self-sufficient nation, is trailing behind the UK and the rest of Europe in design terms by a long chalk, because there is no need, there's no need to compete. Domestically, they're a very conservative consumer. So this guy, when he wanted to pick his phone, working for Motorola, he picked a European one, because everything in the States is like a brick. Way back when, you'd have a nasty old chunky Motorola (inaud). You buy a washing machine in the States and it looks like something from the '70s, it's a top-loading.. I think they call such products 'brown goods', and we call them 'white goods', because they've still got these sort of creamy, beige - if they hang on to them long enough they'll probably come back into fashion, probably. And their car styling: everyone agrees Americans can't style cars for toffees. And everything they do is far too fat, and that goes across the board from the design of the remote control or a mouse, through to the director's chair. Everything's a little bit too fat and sassy. It has to be lighter, a little bit more lean. Maybe it's a kind of reflection of the cultural obesity of the nation.

R: I'm interested, in relation to this background notion of globalisation, relating that to the idea of design style.

21: Maybe it's a case of: we'd all be speaking the same language, but with different accents. So there is a cultural relevance, in certain things. For example, if you - we're not about to join in with it, but in Dubai you see a lot of retail using pink and purple. Not gonna join in with that, sorry, we're gonna hope.. (amused) You just drive up the Edgware Road, which is basically Arabic nations, it's like being in Lebanon or something, Beirut or something, and the colours and materials they use in the shops are fascinatingly different to what we expect. There must be a level of globalisation of things like mobile phones. Certainly, furniture is.. and fashion. I think furniture's getting stapled to the shirt, the coat-tails of fashion, which is a shame, because I think it's got to be less ephemeral than that. Furniture, you wear for a year, and then there's a different length of trouser cut, and a different width of flare, or a length of collar, whereas a piece of furniture, you're gonna be looking at in hopefully five, six, seven years time. But when you get magazines like "Wallpaper", with an international distribution, international contribution, lots of people writing for it from all over the world, that's bound to propagate an international sense of what is style, and

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certainly the names like Marc Newson, Ross Lovegrove, and Philippe Starck: they're all doing stuff that seems to be (inaud).

R: It's interesting you mention the magazine there, "Wallpaper". Do you think the kind of mechanisms that surround design, through which it's promoted, do you think that they play an important role in the issues we've been discussing, of internationalism?

21: Yeah. It's interesting to think which came first: the demand for the magazine, or the magazine, the manifestation of the publicity that surrounds design. And that's gotta be both happening at the same time. They've all got to be good news for design, because obviously there's a much more heightened awareness and understanding of what the hell it is all about, and it's not just: 'Oh, I like that, I'll buy it.' People say: 'Yeah, but it's not the Martin Van Severen chair that I wanted, and I'm gonna pop round to (inaud) and pick it up later on.' They - it's bound to be at the hub of the globalisation, because all of these magazines can only make their money by BEING international. "Wallpaper"'s one of those magazines, if you speak to any designer they go: 'Oh, "Wallpaper", load of crap.' But they all buy it, they all read it.

R: Do you think, as well, there's perhaps a dichotomy there, between the people who read "Wallpaper", and then, like you say, the designers, who may be dismissive of it, but are still interested?

21: There must be some people who read it and love it to pieces, and sit there going: 'We're not worthy.' And what IS good is it makes people feel that it is worth holding out for what they want. In fashion terms, it's saying: 'No, I'm not gonna buy three pairs of trousers this year, I'm gonna go to Prada and buy one pair of shoes, because they are just too special.' People will be prepared to pay for the luxury that design appears to be. [But then I suppose we should moderate that with: maybe that's a reflection on the comparatively good times that we are going through at the moment, and it'll be a luxury that'll be brushed aside like last time, back in 1990 to '92 - you'd say: 'What do you say to an architect with a full-time job? Two Big Macs, large fries and a diet coke.' Because it was, 'Oh, we can't afford that,' and literally the most successful names were shutting up shop, left right and centre. It's a boom and bust industry, so we have to squirrel away our savings for the bad times that will inevitably come.] And that's gonna hit the consumer, and that's gonna hit the way things are designed, the style of things. There's a whole 'nother style that comes out during a recession, that's sort of going for safety, going for comfort, going for the familiar.

R: But do you not perhaps think that through, for example, "Wallpaper", the consumer will become permanently emmersed with design?

21: I think that people's ideas, tastes and psyche changes by the month, and we don't notice ourselves doing it. And I think that it is only as relevant as probably within a three month period, and people could discard ANY interest in design within a three month period, and say: 'No, no. We're not really interested in it.' A bit like, if you don't own a car, you're not very interested in cars, really. And then you buy a car, and then suddenly you start noticing cars. I've heard it's the same with children, my time will come (laughs). So I think that the life circumstances completely alter us, so we can only say that, for now, there is an interest in design, but.. People lose interest in pop music, which is a shame.

R: But do you not think people maintain an interest in, for example, pop music - they just move on to a different form?

21: No, they normally hang on to what they knew. You get these bearded folk listening to The Grateful Dead till you've got them in their box, because you couldn't get them to listen to anything modern. So, no, they don't move on. They move on to whatever their peer group's moved on to, which is probably country and western or something.

R: I don't think I have any more questions. Is there anything you feel

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would be interesting to discuss that we've not really explored? 628  
21: Give me a pointer, a direction. 629  
R: Well, just in terms of your.. 630  
21: Take on design? 631  
R: As a designer, yeah, your perspective on design issues. 632  
21: Well, yeah. In terms of opinions, [I think that one thing everyone 633  
should try to do is innovate and not replicate, and not be fashionable. 634  
Avoid at all costs doing what is the style of the moment now.] 635

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## **Appendix 8: Interpretive transcript summary: interview 21**

### **(Section 4.7.6)**

The informant discusses design in terms of a number of oppositions: technical-emotional; commercial-speculative; knee jerk-thoughtful. From origins designing "technical stuff", the informant is now interested in "more sculptural, more emotional work" (20-1). This is expressed in unashamed terms of preciousness:

"So now, all I'm interested is in what sounds very kind of flamboyant: it's the grand gesture."  
(59-60)

To some extent, functionality is seen as secondary to the expressiveness of an object; design may therefore be admired "whether it works or not" (118), and the concept is more important than its manifestation (366-82). This is, however, tempered with a recognition of a need for accessibility in design (80-107), and a simple need for it to make money:

"And, unfortunately, like it or not, industrial design is a commercial art, and you've got to balance what sells and what fulfils your artistic aspirations."  
(91-3)

Commissioned commercial work is differentiated from speculative work: "we do commercial work that pays the bills and gives us the money to do speculative things that don't pay the bills" (225-6), and it is the latter which coincides with fulfilling the emotional aspirations of the designer (264-5). Commissioned/commercial work is much more constrained, and thus unrewarding, with the typical consequence that "the constraints won, and the design came a poor second" (300-1). The obverse, where "design wins out", happens only "occasionally" (301-2). Commercial design is also seen as knee jerk, rather than considered, because of the constraints. The luxury of incubating and reflecting as a designer, of "lining yourself up before you fire" (357-8), is lost, so that "there's no time to do anything that is more profound than a quick knee jerk scribble" (399-400), with suitably disastrous results (401-7).

The informant also seems preoccupied with the contemporary fashionable image of the designer, and the cachet of association with that image. He clearly feels that the designer has been hijacked by trendseekers for their own ends, and both resents this (171-5; 183-6; 209-11; 235-41), and feels that it will not last:

"and people could discard ANY interest in design within a three month period, and say: 'No, no. We're not really interested in it.' [...] so we can only say that, for now, there is an interest in design"  
(608-15)

**Appendix 9: Interview method summary: interview 21 (Section  
4.8.1)**

I was very apprehensive going into this: feeling ill and rough, not having done an interview for a while. But it went v. well. I was v. sympathetic and got the balance just right between saying not enough and too much. My questions were neutral, and grounded in what the informant had given me in the interview (see how this holds after aural pass). Some v. rich data here re my interest. All in all, a success.

The dress code issue is resolved: dress to fit the occasion, and err on the side of underdressing (this guy was barefoot).

returning after aural pass:

there is a mass of apparent surface contradictions and inconsistencies here. This appears to be literally given off the top of the head, and as a consequence a consistent position is difficult to detect. Should I be worried about this?

The researcher's positive impression of this interview, evident here, was later confirmed by the informant in a telephone conversation with the researcher following the informant's reading of the interview transcript.

## **Appendix 10: Assessment exercise task instruction (Section 5.2.2)**

### **The interviews**

Attached are five interview transcript files. The interviews were not conducted according to a determined interview schedule. Instead, an open interview format was used, in which the direction of the exchange was determined by the dynamic created by interviewer and informant. As a consequence, the transcripts are very individual. They are, however, connected by a common research interest in informants' articulations of conceptions of design.

### **Task instruction**

I would like you to perform a template analysis on the provided transcripts. The purpose of your template analysis should be to locate *conceptions of design* as they appear in the data. A conception of design is defined here as: a formulation of *what design is*. A possible example of a conception of design might be expressed as a template code: 'Design as a process'. Within this code would appear all articulations in the data which contain or indicate a *conception of design as a process*.

The attached transcript files are ready to import into QSR NUD\*IST v.4 computer qualitative data analysis package. Alternatively, you may wish to perform your template analysis by hand, in which case simply print out the transcript files prior to performing your analysis.

Please analyze the transcripts in the order: (1) T1; (2) T5; (3) T6; (4) T22; (5) T30.

Please submit copies of all materials relating to your completed analysis (final template, coded transcripts etcetera) to myself and \_\_\_, retaining your originals. You will similarly receive a copy of materials relating to a separate template analysis, performed on the same set of transcripts by myself. You are asked to then privately compare the two analyses, considering points of difference between them.

Finally, you are asked to comparatively discuss the two analyses in a face-to-face meeting with myself, moderated by \_\_\_. The purpose of this meeting is to allow an evaluation of the level of agreement between the two template analyses performed on the sample transcripts. This, in turn, will allow some comment on the validity of my template analysis technique.

## ***Appendix 11: Assessment exercise discussion transcript***

### **(Section 5.2.3)**

NK: Do you want to start by reminding me.. what were the instructions you gave to AR? What was she told that she was supposed to be doing?

PM: Well, the instruction was to identify conceptions of design in the data. I've actually got a copy here: 'locate conceptions of design as they appear in the data.'

NK: Yeah, okay, right. Just leave that about. Just for, again for clarity, could you tell me a little bit more about who these three people are?

PM: Right. Well there are three transcripts. The first one is a design educator, an industrial design lecturer at a university. The second one works for a design consultancy, design agency, in Huddersfield. He's the Managing Director.

NK: And what exactly does a design agency do?

PM: Basically, they do external work for clients. Designing websites, corporate identities, things like this.

NK: Right, okay.

PM: So they're actually an independent agency, that are contracted to do design jobs for client companies. And the third interviewee is the Marketing Manager of a sanitary ware manufacturer, making baths etcetera. And they're a very large industrial manufacturer.

NK: Right, okay, fine. Okay, well, it may help if I just, to start with – obviously I don't need to do much talking really, it's more looking at what you two have or haven't to say. The clear difference in the way that you approached this and the way it's set out, which I commented on before, is – PM's is much more narrowly-focused around that particular question [AR: Yeah], and I think there's an issue of how comfortable are you that you haven't been overly steered by your *a priori* beliefs and expectations [PM: Right]. Whereas AR's is the opposite way round, and looks very bottom-up and organic, and as a result is perhaps messier and less focused, but perhaps capturing things which – I don't think there's much that isn't somewhere in what you've got, but I think some things can get lost in what you've got, and you get less of a sense of the context, in a way, I think. And it's very focused on, at least at the higher levels, on the conceptualisations.

AR: Will that also be due to the fact we're from totally different disciplines, as well?

NK: Well, I suspect that's quite likely, isn't it?

PM: What I would just say to that, is that I was very conscious of the research question in the front of my mind as I was going through, so it wasn't just a case of going through the transcripts and trying to code everything. I was very much aware of what my research interest was. There are sections of text that I've just not included in the analysis, which may be interesting, but are really not relevant to my investigation into conceptions of design. And I agree, my template is quite abstracted at the higher level, but I would also say that I built my template up from the bottom as well, and it was just a case of - the final reorganisation of the template, that was the point at which..

AR: Yeah. I said that I couldn't get that far. I told you that. It would be a very basic level. Partly because there was a time factor, and partly perhaps I wasn't still quite sure exactly how you wanted me to do it. But I noticed there's a lot of overlap.

NK: Yeah, a lot of overlap between that section, and one of your main codes. There's – 'resolution'. So, even some of the more – some of these are obvious things, in a sense: you'd get them if you asked anyone. But some of them are not, like 'design as resolution'. But you've got that as well: 'solution to client issues', 'rational', 'creative', 'specialist'. Did you, PM, did you – looking through that, did you think: 'This looks like my data?'

PM: I could recognise my data, definitely. It was organised entirely differently to the way I had organised it. But I actually went through, looking at AR's codes, and tried to match them to my codes, and quite often that could be done quite easily. It's just that you'd them gathered them together into different groups, as it were. There were a couple of cases where you'd coded something differently, interpreted it differently to what I had, but that didn't happen very often.

NK: Do you think you can find an example?

PM: There's an example on the first page, where AR has this heading 'role of the designer', and within that the idea that the designer should be an explorer. Now, I interpreted that particular section of text as being exploration on the part of the design audience, not the actual designer. Should we go to the script? So, it's line 264 of the second transcript.

AR: What I also found, actually, going through, is that you could actually interpret certain pieces of script in three – you could put it into three or four different categories, and I thought, with the template, there was that allowance to do that.

PM: Yeah. If we just, if we go to that example, what he says is: 'We like the idea that our work is about exploration, and people taking time'. [hiatus] Now, me, I interpreted that as being it's the audience that takes time in looking at the design. You interpret it as being it's the actual designer him or herself.

AR: I think that's because he identified it as 'our work'.

PM: Yeah. I think, as you say, they're equally valid really, both interpretations, there.

NK: Yeah, I read that as, in the way that AR read it.

AR: Because I felt, all the designers, the thing that they had in common is that they were delivering something to the customer. So therefore, they were doing the work, really. They were delivering it. So that's why I interpreted it as, their role was their..

PM: For me, that interpretation..

NK: It says, where it goes on: 'and if the text is just there, then it's, if it's full on in your face, then there's no - perhaps there would be a tendency for people to read that' – clearly, the 'people' there is the reader. So perhaps, yeah, the people before is the same. So, maybe you're right on that.

PM: Because this respondent, as well, does have a theme of respecting the user [AR: Yeah]. For me, that..

AR: That perception of the client was very different from the first one, wasn't it?

NK: Unless they dare to try and set themselves up as a designer, in which case they are beneath contempt (amused), they shouldn't be allowed near it. I liked the bit in this about reclaiming the Mac: take it away from all those wretched people, give it back to designers. Funny how Macs..

AR: It sort of mixed messages, doesn't it?

PM: Definitely. So there, I've contextualised that little piece of text within the wider transcript.

AR: Could you say it's sort of a dual thing, then. Exploring with the client, very much that.

PM: Yeah. As you say, that particular text could appear at two places in the template, one in terms of how the designer works, approaches the work; secondly: how it's then perceived by the customer, consumer.

NK: I think there's not much problem finding pretty similar coding at the lower levels. But things like 'role of the designer', or what are the qualities of a designer? Do you think that that gets included in the way you've done it? I can see it in, say this one on 'special ability', that's probably the most - 'design training' and 'experience' and so on, what it is to be a designer, not just what is design.

PM: Well I think, as well, that particular sections' covered by my code number 8: 'design as a creative activity'. Because it's there that I discuss designer as innovator, pushing forward, conquering, exploring, all these ideas.

NK: But there's also, and I'm not sure – one of the things that struck me in the two transcripts I've read properly - I have every reason to expect it's there in the other, flicking through it, although maybe not as much. But one of the things that struck me is that that they both constantly describe what design means to them in comparison to some other conceptualisation of design, implicit or explicit. So, for example, although you've got (inaud) about the designer as innovative and creative and so on, you've also got, say in the second one, what these other so-called designers do, which is copying, and it's not innovative. Have you properly incorporated that 'design as..', even though they're not approving it, they're saying: 'no, design is..', well, let's see if we can find some nice quotes here. The one I see you did pick out, which I thought was a particularly - it was like a core quote on that one, about the architect and the builder [7].

AR: Are you just picking out the commonalities, rather than showing the wide breadth of design? Because obviously there were differences in concepts, and I didn't know how to categorise that, and I just put down 'diversity', as a sort of.. which I felt was important, because what one called bad, the other felt was good. And then they approached it in a totally different way. Whereas one, like the first guy, first transcript, you got the feeling that he wanted to get away from commercialism and all that sort of thing, and it was a problem. Whereas the other guy, the other person thought it was a challenge, and that it was a problem, but he approached it differently. But then that's coming from a psychological perspective (laughs). And there were differences in concepts, as a result of where they were coming from.

PM: Yeah, yeah. I would agree there, that - different interpretations of what good design is, that's definitely what I'm after.

AR: I thought bad design was quite interesting, as well.

PM: How they described bad design?

AR: Yeah. And perhaps in some way include that. I didn't put it down very well, but I'd've liked to have put the diversity within that.

NK: You could have code 3 as being 'good and bad design'. Is it this one I was thinking of: 'But I read recently, somebody had said that - they weren't involved, it's another agency - and they'd said, basically, they weren't interested in innovation, because that's not where the money is. And it's interesting - I think it was an advertising agency, to be fair, so it's, I think everybody is aware that advertising agencies are more obsessed by the money and the budget than anything else.' [05:119-124] Now you haven't coded that, but that seems to me to be something that's talking about some sorts of design, if you can call advertising design, which I think this guy would. It's not (inaud) design.

PM: Well I think he would.

NK: Well. He said it's not proper design..

PM: Well, because he does specify it is an advertising agency. He doesn't, he gives us that information, which I think, for him, means that he's separating what they do from what he does.

NK: Right, okay. But have you captured this notion that then, that it's not design because it's not derivative (sic)?

PM: ... within that code 'design as a creative activity' [8] I do discuss the constraints.

NK: Yeah, but here you've got this thing: 'I think if you pursue the money, or pursue the business side of design, then your design goes to pot.' So it's still design. But it's just [PM: Less..] bad design, because it's business driven.

PM: I think I do discuss that in terms of design integrity, if you like, the designer's motivation: not driven by money, but driven by their own design sensibilities. [2]

NK: But there's also an issue – I think that would be worth, perhaps, coding in 3 as well, because it's not just about the designer, it's about the design: 'your design goes to pot', not just you as a person that's corrupted, but the actual design is corrupted. I think there's an implication of that in there.

AR: I haven't gone through all these individually, but do you include that in 'design as a field of debate and difference'? Is that where you're capturing some of these?

PM: Not so much in terms of good and bad, no.

NK: It struck me that, certainly that those first two, talk about good and bad design without any real prompting. We had a long discussion about that, but that didn't really seem to be a problem. They wanted – here, a nice bit where he's going on about 'bad' means 'bland', badly-designed buses and [05:329]... Yeah, so we might want to look at – there's two things there, isn't there? There's looking at including bad design in that code [3], and perhaps looking a little harder at what they're saying about bad design, taking that out of all the places it's coming up, even under where it says 'motivation' and so on. Because that might be quite useful in comparisons between the groups, and also in the thing you're doing with the consumers. But there's also this thing about what they're saying about design, or what they're saying about designers, that's perhaps..

PM: I kind of shied away from having codes: 'designer', because my interest is in conceptions of design. So I did very much – I was aware, as I said before, of trying to focus it in those terms.

AR: Do you not think that it also, the qualities of the designer actually affect what design is?

PM: The qualities of the designer?

AR: Yeah. Concepts of a designer.

NK: These first two are both idealistic, in a sense, and they seem to, by and large, push a notion that the designer needs the right qualities for good design. so if the designer is too business-led, the design will go to pot. But that doesn't necessarily follow, does it? Actually there can be things that are the products of – somebody could have the view, elsewhere in your transcripts, that mechanistic, uncreative processes can sometimes produce creative products.

PM: Well, the first interviewee, he actually says that within engineering they try and codify design. He questions whether you can do that, but he implies that within an engineering context that suits them. 'Design' in engineering is different to 'design' in design, that's the phrase he uses.

NK: It's worth making sure that you're integrating things about the designer-design relationship.

PM: I have this - in my code 2, 'design as an ethically-informed activity', I've got this idea of design as value neutral, and it's actually the designer, or the designer's situation, that dictates whether or not you have good or bad..

NK: That's an interesting one, actually. That's from number 1 [T01], which I thought was really interesting. I think there's a – you coded it there, and he also, later on, explicitly says about it being relative, doesn't he? Which you've not coded there, but maybe you've included somewhere else.

PM: Which lines do you mean there?

...

NK: I thought it was in this one, where he talks directly about design being relative, good design being relative.

PM: And that it might change over time?

NK: Yeah. And he talks about all the different countries: Italy, and blah, blah, blah. Anyway, the point was that I think there's a kind of tension in this one. Oh yeah. 140: 'So there's a question of responsibility there, upon the designer, do you think?' 'I don't know. I think, when we're teaching designers, if we have somebody who wishes to design something totally irresponsible,' blah, blah, blah, 'we don't have the right to dictate to somebody else what your moral or cultural framework ought to be. It could be we might be wrong, and that is particularly dangerous ... we have to give them some freedom to make their own mistakes.' So I think there's a message about: from different perspectives, what's good and so on is different. But I think that there's also a strong twinge of, or tone of moral absolutism in this one, as well, about design. And it also linked into some wider political social views, which, scribbling here I've put: romantic, with a capital R, i.e., in the sense of: ephemeral is bad, lasting is good, and he never challenges that.

PM: For him that's an objective criterion.

NK: Yeah. So, which lasting things are good is relative, okay, but they have to be lasting to be good. And, modern life is rubbish.

PM: But I think the point he's making, because he's very critical..

NK: Art, disposable, ephemeral: these are all bad things about the world [PM: Yeah], and so those bits of design that tap into those are, that support those are bad. So I think he's got quite a clear idea of a certain kind of quality of design that make it almost intrinsically good or bad, despite knowing the, and rehearsing the arguments about relativism. And although it's less articulated, I think it's sort of there in this one as well [T05]. it's quite interesting they use the word 'crap'. I think they both use the word 'crap', and it seems to mean quite - I don't now if it's the Gerald Ratner word, permeated it, but I get this feeling that it's an essential quality, it's not just a dismissive comment, like 'crap design'. We know what it is, and for this one it's more to do with being driven by budgets and so on, and being bland, and 'bland' is an absolute.

PM: I think, for the second one, his agenda, if you like, is very much: he wants to be an artist. Even though he might deny it, I think it's a case of protesting too much. Because..

NK: There's all sorts of vacillating around the art-design relationship.

PM: And at one point [05:297] he does actually slip and call himself, call what they do, art, I think.

NK: What's this 'publication x' that he keeps on about?

PM: Well that's a publication that they produced in-house, as a way of their designers just express what they couldn't do in the corporate work. And they now actually use that as a marketing tool, to show people what they can do, if given free rein. And they do a new edition every couple of years or so. It's a very high production value document, poster-size book, with very sort of off-the-wall imagery that they wouldn't necessarily do for a client. But it's a way that they can show the world what they can do.

NK: That seemed really, really central to his values about design, didn't it? He kept coming back to it as encapsulating..

PM: That is all about self expression. Because he does say that the designers are given a totally open brief with that publication. So in that sense, are they designing there, or are they actually being artists? And he doesn't seem to see that, in fact, most people would say that they're being artists. So, he uses the phrase 'commercial art' as well, I think.

NK: And the first one talks about that, doesn't he? He says we're more alike, in some ways we're more like art than we're like some of these other industrial things, but we're quite different from fine artists. So there's a lot of shifting again there (inaud). Does the third one talk about that sort of thing at all?

PM: He doesn't. The third one is very, very focused on design as being very production-driven. For him, his criteria of good design are: does it work, does it sell, does it make money? [AR: Functional]. Yeah.

NK: The first one, he's very, he quotes with approval this thing about if it doesn't sell it's rubbish, and then, actually he doesn't mean that at all.

AR: He contradicts himself, I felt [PM: Yeah], the first one. That's because of his dilemmas.

PM: He's definitely ambivalent, because he then says but we're still proud when our students get a job producing disposable crap, or that's what he implies. So although he's got personal qualms about it..

NK: But he does actually say: it's got to sell to be worthwhile. I suppose, first and foremost it's got to meet the underlying criteria, of being something that's a genuine – genuine novelty is important to him, isn't it?

PM: Satisfying a genuine need, I think that's the key to it.

NK: Genuine need, and it's something new, it's not just rehashing something else. And that need is not a fashion need. So only some needs matter. We may well say: 'I really need a mobile phone that I can use in the bath,' but he'd say: 'No, you don't.' Anyway. Once it's met that, then it also has to sell, and that's what makes it not art, I guess.

PM: He does have this idea of finality, where - he talks about the toaster and the steam iron all the time. As far as he's concerned, we've reached the ultimate of what they can be. [NK: Toaster heaven.] So we should move on. So he's got this very definite idea of progress.

...

NK: Just going back to your overall template. I think we sort of agree that AR hasn't found things which are drastically important and you've missed. But we've made, this thing about the bad design, and perhaps being clear about what you're saying about design and designers, and not taking that relationship for granted. I wondered whether, thinking about what you're actually gonna do with it. You've got how many interviews?

PM: 36.

NK: Yeah. It's quite a lot. It's on the high side, really. And you've got how many different groups? Five or six?

PM: Five different groups.

NK: So I think that's justification for trying to be quite focused. I wondered if this can be reduced any further, or if the distinctions here are so basic that you'll lose – could there be another level, for example? It seems to me that things like 'design as a family of disciplinary activities', or 'design as an educational institution', 'design as an organisational function', are about a different sort of thing than design as creative, or specialist, or rational.

PM: They're about classification, you would say?

NK: Yeah (no).

AR: Are you saying incorporate that in with the 'creativity' and 'specialist'? Because, you've got a lot of design and art quotes there, haven't you?

PM: Yeah. That's something that perhaps would be lost. Because the 'design and creativity' aspect very much relates to the 'design and art' code, as well.

NK: Yeah. No I don't think you should lose those as separate codes. But I'm just wondering if it would be of any use to have a higher still order of abstraction, just in terms of working with the amount of data you've got. There are several things here about what kind of process is design? And it's 'a specialist ability', it's 'a creative ability' or not, it's 'a rational process', it's 'communication', it's 'resolution'. Those things all seem to me to be about what KIND of process, so I'll give them a 'p'. What (inaud) it is is what kind of process? But then you've got things about, how is design as a human activity organised? Maybe 'ethically-informed' is a process thing. Yeah, maybe it is, because it's about.. So it's: 'family of disciplines', it's 'competitive', it's 'as an educational institution', 'organisational function', 'collaborative/group activity'. So that'll be, how it's kind of organised and structured [indicated by 'o']. So that leaves: 'good design', 'field of debate and difference', because that's not really about how it's organised, 'culturally defined', and I think the 'organisational function' one isn't actually about how it is organised. In a sense, those ones are about, well 'good design/bad design' seems to me to probably be a thing in itself. I don't think it can be separated any further.

PM: Because that's how we evaluate design, and the output [indicated by 'evaluate'].

NK: But, then there's these three that – 'a field of debate and difference'..

PM: Is that how we contextualise and sort of intellectualise it, then? And make sense of it, if you like?

NK: Sort of, isn't it? Yeah. Or it's also, perhaps it's about what we do with it. It's certainly more active.

PM: Presumably that's the core one for my interest. Because what I'm interested in is how design means different things. And in this code we're saying that design itself is a field of debate and difference.

AR: That's where you've got some of your 'crap results' and 'bad design'.

NK: 'design as an organisational function'. There's not a lot there, is there?

PM: That is how design appears within the organisation.

NK: It could be something that helps 'understood', isn't it?

PM: Because it's a question of where we put it, if you like.

NK: Helped to be understood in relation to culture. ... Right, anyway, that's only a suggestion [higher order codes]. But if you do that, you then have four kind of very broad codes. You don't have to work with them very much, but it might just – my main concern about what you've done, in terms of you using it, is: how many codes have you got.. (whistles), times 36 interviews? I think there's a danger of really getting lost, even though you've been quite focused here. So I think anything that helps to keep it even more focused, without losing too much detail. The other thing was: how you go about – I don't know how many codes you've got. You've probably got - some of these have got about twenty within it, some have only got four, five. If you've got ten per, an average of ten, that's 150. Say a thousand words about each one (laughs). 100 words about each one, you've still got, what would that be: 15,000 words (laughs). Eeugh!

PM: So it's a question of going back and reinterrogating the data and just trying to..

NK: Well, I think it is getting to the one's that, getting to the codes that do the job of showing the similarities and differences. You mustn't get driven too much by just looking for the differences, because it's worth pointing out the similarities, and we found some of them there in terms of motivation, despite some quite different perspectives. And that's one of the things I thought that might be helpful in doing that, and would also solve another issue, is: it might be useful to produce summaries of each one, an encapsulated story. 'This is what this person, this is what I..'. Not going through it very systematically. Having done the (inaud), saying: This is what my impression of this is, this is what the core of this person is saying, and this is how it hangs together. Because obviously one of the things that happens when you do this sort of thing, is that we pull apart the individual accounts, and it may be that actually using some examples in a more holistic way, to show some of the differences of position.. But also it might help you to pick out within that sort of condensed account, key themes and quotes. And I'd certainly pick out – I think in many of them you can pick out a couple of key quotes that seem to really encapsulate.. Oh, I like this: 'tee hee' I put here – 'unfortunately, most professional advisors aren't like your doctor or your lawyer. They are not dispassionate people.' [T01:261-263] It made me laugh to think of doctors as dispassionate, objective people who we can trust. Oh yeah? In this bit here, about people who seem to be very similar, but actually have fundamental differences in understanding. He's talking about teaching, isn't he: 'applied art' and 'people doing design for industry'? Yeah and there's someone saying: 'How can this be good work, because it's not very well made?' That seemed like one big, quite an important, although it could easily get overlooked, point, about what he's saying. Which, in a sense, which addresses your research questions: that very closely related people could be actually having a different kind of language, in a sense, or a different understanding of the language [5].

PM: Or operating with different agendas of what is to be valued.

NK: But it could easily - that's the sort of thing where, you wouldn't, that could easily be overlooked if you just got them to check a list of key 'what's important to you', they'd probably say very similar things. But actually you're saying that when it comes to it, we're really essentially concerned about something rather different. Then obviously something about the ephemeral. So keeping people in jobs and companies going isn't an adequate purpose for design. It's nothing to do with what design should be about. If it can achieve that, all well and good, and he's quite happy that his graduates get jobs. But that's if you're working on a different agenda again. It's about we're effective as an institution, I think. Because I think we feel the same, when people get jobs sometimes that we don't necessarily approve of, but we think that's still good. That seemed really central on that one. There was a couple – there's one I've particularly drawn out in this one [T05]. Where is it? Oh yeah, the bit about the house. I think if you were summarising that person in half a page, that point I think would have to be there, to me.

PM: But do you think it's maybe a bit dangerous trying to condense everything into half a page?

NK: It depends what you're gonna do with it. I don't suggest you use it as your main analysis, at all. What I suggest is that – what I'm concerned about is something I've criticized myself for in the past: is losing – it's not just that for the people these themes are emerging, they are emerging in certain constellations within one person, and perhaps not others, perhaps not even in the same group. And I think it's healthy to have a sense, just for yourself, of: what were the central points that this interview was making? The way I would use it, then - and I'd include in that one or two key quotes – but the way I'd use it then is to help you when you're prioritising the main themes that have emerged, that you think are most important in distinguishing, to then get back to individual accounts, and use some of those as case examples. Because otherwise, with 36 or so of them, you'll lose track. I don't suggest you do it in a very systematic way at all. I think you should just kind of go back and read through it again one more time, and just write, okay, bang down: what's really going on here? Not as a public document. It might be in your appendix, as part of your audit trail, bit not as a kind of public document of your analysis. But as like a kind of a memo. But it's a way of grabbing hold of the individual account. And I'm not uninfluenced by the fact that I think certainly CH's background research is more in biographical narrative interviews, and she often goes on about qualitative studies that don't keep a sense of the individual's life, but just amalgamate across people. Now that's not what you're doing. You're not doing biographical studies. That's fine. You're not gonna get criticised for that. And I think you should do something that presents some cases anyway. But all I'm saying is that doing that would also probably meet with one of your examiners' approval, which is always worth bearing in mind. You shouldn't do it if there's no other reason, but I think there's good reason to try to pull out some cases that are illustrative of the way the themes actually occur in what people are saying. And also, if you do that you can point out some of the points that we both said we're struck by, in terms of the contradictions. That was really quite strong, wasn't it? The sense of contradiction that goes on. [PM: Within individuals? Yeah.] Now a discourse analyst could just say that they're using different discursive constructions and tricks to achieve different effects in the interview. But I think you could argue back against that, in saying that, although there are apparent self-contradictions, in a sense they're consistent with a particular kind of ambivalence about design. In other words: they make sense, don't they? You can see why the educator is on the one hand saying: different cultures see design in different ways; generations see it differently; we can't (inaud). And on the other hand saying: ephemeral is crap and lasting is good. Although you'd say logically they're – pursue the logic of that, there's an inconsistency. But actually, it makes sense. It has a coherence to it, that we respect different, and as good [tape changeover] / We were saying, you can see the consistency about, on the one hand that there's educational values about a kind of relativism, which is really phrased in terms of kind of respecting other people's perspectives. But on the other hand, there's certain core things that are important about what you do. And you see the same with us. (inaud): we'd all be pretty relativist in our psychology. But in reality I would see some things in students' work as being almost of core importance, like originality and ability to think critically. Whereas if you're following a pure interpretivist position: why? Why bother with (inaud), when you're being really clever at plagiarising? Why not reward people for rehashing what's been done before? This sort of thing. But, there's a quote, I can't remember where it's from, it might be Rorty, that no-one actually lives as a relativist. Because you're steered by things that are (inaud). [NK leaves room]

AR: To a certain extent, isn't that what designing is: conflict? Isn't that what creativity is: conflict? Out of conflict comes creativity and originality. I don't know. I don't know the theory behind it.

PM: I suppose you could say that. But I think, the conflict that I picked up on was this creativity being countered by these other external constraints. So that, if you're just creative, unaccountably to anything, then you're an artist. But, because you have to answer, or give lip-service to answering these other influences, that's what makes you a designer. It's the (inaud) between design and just pure self expression.

AR: But if you're a designer, that means you have to meet the client's needs. It can't just be for the self expression.

PM: Exactly, yeah. It's that relationship, isn't it, really? Between that personal desire to just do your own thing, and realising, or acknowledging that you can't do that. And it's kind of – the informants seem to be struggling with that dilemma, don't they, really, do you think?

AR: Yeah. I do. That's why I looked at a literal list of dilemmas. In one sense you could have put it down as relationships within design, perhaps.

PM: It's almost kind of a schizophrenic scenario, really. It's as if they know what they should be saying, especially the second one: he knows the line that he should be giving me, but every now and again, from out of that pops his real beliefs. When he's talking about Gaudi, who is – sure he built his constructions to stand, but they're absolutely beyond what you could call satisfying a need, really, a functional need. And he admires Gaudi more than anyone else. But yet he denies that what they do is 'eye candy'. Whereas, personally, I think that's a bit of a contradiction. ... Did you feel that I went into perhaps too much depth and detail in the coding?

AR: No actually. I was quite impressed. I think it's like what NK was saying, I think if you're looking at 36 other scripts, you could double this, couldn't you?

PM: Easily.

AR: Easily. And I'm perhaps guilty of being a bit too broad. But it's finding that fine line inbetween the two, really, I think you need.

PM: I think what I would say: this is my first attempt. As I said to you, I completed this within, I gave myself the same time as I gave you. So I didn't have a head start or anything. And this is kind of a first attempt, which, if I can now return to it, I can see how certain things can be combined, and wrapped-up, perhaps. It's almost as if I've given every single bit of text a separate code, at the moment.

AR: Yeah, that's what it – I felt that, as well. Whereas I started off from a breadth: I looked at what were the main themes, really, and then I would have liked to have gone back and perhaps, or you could've, dissected that more. That's why I said there was a lot of overlapping. I found it hard to know where to actually put certain codes, like for instance you gave one of 'the explorer', and there was a few things: I think specifically with 'language', and I ended up sort of putting it, when I did my diagram, some sort of funny box across, on the figurative template that I gave you. Because I wasn't sure whether it was something that should be looked at on its own. Although I think you put it a lot onto 'debate and difference', isn't it? 'Meaning'.

PM: I did do, yeah. I kind of decided that the most important feature about the discussion of language was the fact that it does betray different meanings and conceptualisations.

AR: I wonder whether you could put like a broad label, code, of perhaps 'diversity', and then sub-categorise that into 'cultural differences', 'language differences'.

PM: Or 'contrasts', 'tensions', maybe. ... Yeah, so it definitely just needs a bit of condensing and refining.

AR: I think, perhaps what NK's suggesting: if you're doing like half a page of summing-up, that actually might help you to condense your codes, as well: what's the main gist, what's the main thrust behind? And I think that might bring out..

PM: I suppose I'm a bit wary, in that I'm trying not to compare person A to person B, really.

AR: No, but it's what they're saying, is what.. and what their main arguments are.

PM: Yeah, that could be useful, yeah.

AR: Actually, there was one thing that I was surprised that they didn't actually talk an awful lot about - and maybe that comes under, means the same thing, and that is: they talked a lot about creativity, but there wasn't an awful lot about originality. I don't know whether that comes out in the other scripts.

PM: They talked about 'innovation', didn't they? And it's a question of how you interpret innovation. And 'experimentation' came out, as well. 'Self expression'.

AR: But that's sort of like 'moving forward', 'pushing on'.

PM: They didn't actually use the word 'originality' very much. They did use 'creative', a lot. That's interesting, isn't it? Because you..

AR: I got that, because I thought that was what 'design' meant.

PM: Because maybe you can be creative, without necessarily being original. It depends who's judging originality, in relation to what.

AR: Where is it you put the bit about – because I thought it was really quite important (inaud), was how they perceived the consumer, and their relationship with the consumer. I know you put it in somewhere - oh, number 4.

PM: Yes. I know you prioritised this.

AR: You put it under 'good design', did you? Oh, no, sorry I've got the wrong..

PM: So that is all about the user being involved in design, what their role is. [4]

AR: Actually, you've got it all in there, haven't you?

PM: But I think you kind of, like you say..

AR: I psychologised it, didn't I?

PM: In terms of the relationship between the designer and the consumer. Whereas I perhaps looked at it in a bit more abstract.

AR: I didn't have time to write it in, but the third one, his different approach was actually more functional. ... I think I just used a more broad approach there. Because again - isn't it? It's very good, because you've itemized it all. But it's, as you say, it's clustering.

PM: Yeah, it doesn't really leap out from the page, does it, what I'm trying to get at?

AR: Because for me there was quite a contrast especially between the first transcript and the second transcript. Almost as if it was his goal to actually protect the client, to a certain extent, to protect the people from all this useless crap.

PM: Sort of like a moral guardian, or something.

AR: Yeah. Whereas the second one had much more of a, he saw the consumer.. and there was two types of consumer, as well. There was like the organisation, and also the actual individual public.

PM: I think that's a very interesting thing.

AR: And I think that maybe it might be if you just simply break it down under that.

PM: Here I used 'the design user/consumer'. I was struggling which one to use there, which word. And I think that, by distinguishing client from end consumer might be useful.

AR: I did it on the diagram, I think I put public and corporate.

PM: You did do, yeah.

AR: On the picture one. That's when I was trying to think of it, things a bit more abstract. Whereas, in the second transcript, he had very strong (inaud) views about the company, and that it was something he had to fight against, and struggle with. But with the public, there was again - it's a different form of relationship. They were quite capable of unraveling complex designs. Whereas you got the impression from the first one that the client didn't have any - he was very much dictated to by what was delivered to him: a passive public. I'm sure that, to a certain extent, your conception of how you see the consumer, must ultimately affect what you perceive design is. [NK returns]

PM: I think that's a key point really, yeah. That brings out a lot of other things we've been talking about.

NK: Right, okay. So any other..

AR: I was just sharing that, how I felt what really stuck out for me in the whole thing was the perception of the consumer and public.

PM: I think more generally, as well, we've just been saying that we both agree that I've got far too much depth and detail here at the moment, but once we start to abstract that a little more, we seem to agree on what I've got in here.

NK: Yeah. This is, obviously, based on three cases. Of course you will get even more, as you come up with more. But, what you'll also get is things which appear once in one transcript, and you think: 'is this really adding anything?' So it becomes easier to be selective, as you read through it.

PM: I guess I was afraid of discarding anything, really, in case it was to become relevant.

AR: Just out of interest, I was quite interested how you, what you meant by 'nuclear family' and 'extended family' [1].

PM: Right, yeah.

AR: I was trying to find that.

PM: Essentially, it's how people discuss design in relation to other activities. And I think in the first one he talks about 'photography and graphic design and stuff', he uses that expression, as if they're somehow similar activities. So the 'extended family' and 'nuclear family' is really how close design is related to these other things. So for example, talking earlier about advertising, that could be the 'extended family': design and advertising. Whereas the 'nuclear family' could be 'design and art', 'design and craft'. That's what I was trying to get at there.

AR: Because I noticed that the quote you underlined was about fashion, I think.

PM: Was that the 'nuclear family'?

AR: Yeah, the 'nuclear family'.

PM: He says: 'In fact ... fashion is a branch of industrial design ...it is a kind of industrial design'. [01:571-574]

NK: And then he caught himself, didn't he?

PM: Yeah: 'I'm not trying to claim ownership'. So really, there I was just trying to get a handle on what people put under this design umbrella, if you like - the professional activity, of what is design.

NK: And, again, it's important to spot what they don't put in. It's in the second one, isn't it, where – they both do this: the second one's (inaud) the website, with people who aren't designers making it, but they're not – but, clearly, in a sense, saying that's not designed, capital 'd'. Although in a literal sense it is. It is - it didn't just fall there. Somebody designed it, but he clearly distinguishes between design done by designers, proper people, and things that have been designed by someone, but are not design. And there's kind of some of that in the first one, as well, but it's a bit different, because he's a bit more interested in consumer-generated design, although he's also cautious about how far it can go.

PM: He talks about supporting the consumer in making the design decisions that they can. But he's quite clear that they can't make many legitimate design decisions, because they aren't, as you say, designers.

NK: Did any of them talk about sort of "Changing Rooms" and "Home Front", and all this sort of stuff?

PM: They did do. I think I may have brought it up, actually.

AR: In the second one, wasn't it? Because he said: I laugh at it.

PM: Definitely the second one.

NK: It would be an interesting separate study, to stop people in the precinct centre and say: 'Name me a designer.' I suspect, three or four years ago, you'd probably get many people, they'd think of fashion, I think he's right in that. And if you said: 'Think of something other than fashion', they'd struggle at all. Now, I think you'd have a very large number who would say 'Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen', or that mad woman – what's her name? Sarah something, isn't it? Who always makes hideous things. (redundant data). But people, Llewelyn-Bowen, don't talk about design as a thing. And that's what people are gonna come across, not (inaud) that matter to THESE people. I'm wondering how aware they are of..

PM: Well he does discuss here, in the second transcript, he said: "Do you enjoy them?" I laugh at them' [05:657]. But he then says: well, they've actually added to the public awareness of design. So he recognises that they have had an effect .

NK: I think it is an argument which I think you certainly ought to make, that the kind of thing you're doing is particularly timely. That there's a kind of an unusual moment in the history of design, in a sense. But which also..

AR: Is it having an effect on industry? [NK: Which also has a..] Public awareness?

PM: That comes up in the third one here, actually. Because – we, again, discuss a different TV programme, and he says that it doesn't actually affect his business, as such. He doesn't think it's gonna have a concrete long term effect.

AR: Someone's not interested in the name of a toilet. I remember that one.

PM: In the first transcript as well, we talk about the currency of the term 'design', as a concept. And again he contradicts himself, because firstly he says: well, people understand industrial design better than they did previously, but then he seems to be saying, as well, that, in fact, the abuse of the term means that they don't understand it. So he recognises that 'design' is in the public arena, but in terms of actually what he would think of as being proper understanding, there isn't any.

NK: Yeah. Badging he goes on about a lot, and mobile phones – he has a good rant about mobile phones, doesn't he?

AR: There's a general raised expectation, because there's this raised awareness: people expecting more from design, as a result of that. I don't know.

PM: Well, in the first case, he would argue that the things that he says he saw in the jewellers as being ephemeral, cheap, worthless, for most people that's what design means? DesignER.

NK: It means having something that says something about your taste, and your credibility, or your spending power, in some cases. But he also says: 'I've got this type of thing and not some other type of thing. I've got a so-and-so phone, the tune designed by some rave DJ.' But it is about the surface, and the appearance, and the message of the thing, and not the functionality of things, that I think is the kind of public awareness of design that he's talking about.

PM: I think you're right. And he claims not to be upset by that, but he does – I get the impression, reading between the lines, he's very annoyed, because it kind of devalues his role as this, we were talking about - he feels there's a moral element to design.

NK: Oh, I don't think you have to read much between lines. I think it's pretty clear. You can support that argument with quotes: why did he go on so long about certain things? ... What else do you want to...? What else would be useful to talk about?

PM: I think something that AR did, that I didn't do clearly, was: you made this attempt to show the inter-relation between the different codes graphically, rather than I just did it as one big list. I think that's quite useful, as well, in just making it clearer how the codes might inter-relate. Because we said that a few bits of text could appear four or five times. It would be good to actually illustrate that. [NK: Yeah.] I think it's about accessibility, really, of my template. Because it isn't that accessible. There's a lot in there, and the key things don't come out easily.

NK: Yeah, I think that's right. I think - both in terms of you thinking through what's key, and that might mean changing some of the coding levels, and so on, to make some things more prominent. But also thinking about how to show it, and the reader needs an overall map, which couldn't have all those levels of everything in, because it would need a wall. But we could have a two or three level overall map - particularly if you go to something like I was suggesting, of a more condensed top level, you could then show top level, that level, and then selected of the next level, with little key quotes, and then you could have – I prefer that layout [AR tree template] to the way you've done it, for actually working with, or for showing to a reader. And you could do that in full detail for each one, without 15 pages of appendices, which they can or can not look at, as the will takes them.

PM: Something I would say, as well, that I would have used NUD\*IST, but because of time constraints etcetera I didn't. and NUD\*IST does allow you to do this kind of tree structure, so that presentationally it is much clearer. You can scroll through, can't you?

NK: I think that's probably the biggest job, isn't it, now? Is condensing and prioritising. As well as adding new things that come in.. [PM: Discarding things.] Yeah. And always bearing in mind what you want to be doing with it.

AR: Can I just ask you? You know the transcripts that you gave us? Was there a particular method, was there a reason why you gave those particular three scripts?

PM: Well, initially we had five, didn't we? Because I've got five different groups within my respondent sample, we chose one from each, and we chose the first one to be completed from each, just because we thought, because it was the first one, that's the one where perhaps there might be difficulties, or – we just felt it would..

AR: So they come under categories of type of sample?

NK: So there was an educator, what's the design agency person?

PM: So we settled on three, because five was just too many for this purpose.

NK: That's right, far too much.

PM: So the first one is the educator, design educator..

AR: Yes, I wrote that down, from what you've just said now. But I just wondered if there was a particular rationale, that was all, and whether they come under a certain type of sample, that you – you've got five categories of sample.

PM: Well, the five groups are – those are three of them: educator; designer; manufacturer. The fourth one is actually the consumer, themselves. And the fifth one is people who are called 'design support'. Now these are people who actually work in design trade associations, journalists – quite a loose collection of people, but who all actually work to support the cause of design, if you like.

NK :The Design Council.

PM: Yeah.

AR: So how do you fit the consumer in that?

PM: Well, the consumer's in their own separate group. So – what do you mean, there?

NK: Are you intending that this template will embrace your consumer responses as well?

AR: I just wonder whether it would be very different, from – their approach?

PM: The strategy I've got at the moment is that I'll construct one big template, that included everyone. We thought, perhaps, I could do a template for each of the five groups, and then compare the templates. But my primary interest is not in comparing Group A with Group B, but with actually accessing the full range of perspective from within the sample as a whole.

NK: I think that's absolutely right, certainly for the four professional groups. And I think, in a sense, it has to be an empirical question. We did talk about this before, and there are clear advantages to being able to use the same thing for all five. But, as AR suggests, you might find the consumer – have you done any of the actual interviews yet?

PM: Yeah. Actually, the fifth transcript, that we didn't include here, was actually one from the consumer group. So it would've been useful to have included that one, just to see within this exercise whether..

NK: Was your feeling that it was comparable, or..

PM: I think there isn't the depth there of engagement with the issues. Which is perhaps as you would expect, in that these people, that we've discussed today, are all people professionally involved with design. The consumer – I think he actually made the comment that: this is something I've not really thought about, deeply. So, you would perhaps expect it to be not quite as..

NK: I don't think it's too much of a problem, if you feel that there's more to be gained by analysing the consumer ones separately. If the main message of comparison is: they really haven't thought about this before, whereas these people have, then you're gonna find it hard to find things to say about the consumers in relation to all these, I suspect. And you might miss out on things which are actually quite interesting about what the consumer is saying, even at a rather unreflective – the methodology's different, so, there's a lot of difference – they were given disposable cameras to take pictures of things, to act as stimuli [to AR].

PM: It's interesting that the consumers have – I've given them the instruction to take photos of 'design', discuss 'design'. For them, they immediately interpret that to be 'good design', they can't conceptualise 'design' without that 'good' in front, or 'bad' in front. But when I try to get

them to discuss 'design', they always come back to: 'well, I think this is good because..' So that's a different level of engagement, I think, to what we've got here.

NK: The other thing: you've got to think about how it's gonna be structured in writing it up. And, as we said, if we do some sums about how little you can say about each code, without generating a huge wad of stuff. And it may be just, if it makes sense to have a separate consumer chapter, then, it makes sense to do it in a fairly discrete manner, that responds to this, but isn't - be part of it.

PM: As AR was saying, as well, for her a key element of these three scripts was the relationship with the consumer. So, again, that part of this analysis could be shifted into that separate..

NK: What does the third one have to say about the consumer?

PM: Well, there's a bit of a contradiction there, because on the one hand he says that design value is what the consumer picks up on in differentiating between high-, low- and mid-level bathroom suites. But later he says that: we're the Ford or Vauxhall of the industry, and we're basically into mass production, and consumers DON'T pick up on design cues. So, he contradicts himself there, at different stages.

AR: He's more interested in what they're gonna buy. His relationship with them - will you buy in certain ranges, isn't it?

NK: This is an interesting thing, then, if you're saying that latter point about it, is that there's certainly some kind of theme of being pretty sceptical about what the consumer is able to, how they are able to judge.

PM: He himself says: we're in a fashion industry. Which seems – he acknowledges that that might sound strange to someone, they make bathrooms.

AR: It's interesting, as you were talking – there's almost a dependency, as well, on the consumer, so he's not too derogatory about them. Whereas the first guy isn't, because he's detached from them.

NK: There's an issue of who their own consumer is. So, the educator may be pretty dismissive about, not dismissive but <sup>306</sup> unconfident about the ability of the general mass of consumers to tell what good design is, and so on, and to make design choices. But the consumers for him, really, are his students, who he's rather different about. Similarly, the second one talks quite confidently about his consumers in terms of people who commission him, that actually they will allow you to do more imaginative things, if you approach them in the right way, talking about his publication x and so on. Whereas, when he's talking about the general public, it's (inaud). I think that that's quite an important issue, actually: who is the consumer to them? And there is a difference between their consumer: the person who is consuming what they design, or what they teach about design, or what they think about design, and consumers of design generally, who they generally think are pretty low on the ladder of understanding about what they do.

PM: That's what you [AR] really picked up on, isn't it?

...

NK: Has that been useful do you think? [close] / <327>

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<sup>306</sup> AR: He's not affected by the consumer, is he?

## **Appendix 12: Procedural versions of the data template**

### **(Section 6.1.2)**

*Appendix 12.1: Procedural Template 1: following entry of revised Template R2 into NUD\*IST*

#### **(1) How design is organized**

- (1 1) Design as a family of disciplinary activities
  - (1 1 1) Engineering and design
  - (1 1 2) Design and art
  - (1 1 3) Design and craft
- (1 2) Design as an educational institution
  - (1 2 1) Teaching and design practice
  - (1 2 2) Research and design practice
- (1 3) Design as an organizational function
  - (1 3 1) Design provision
  - (1 3 2) Design and marketing
- (1 4) Design as a competitive asset
  - (1 4 1) Beyond lowest cost producer
  - (1 4 2) Currency of the concept
  - (1 4 3) Politicizing/promoting design

#### **(2) How design is done**

- (2 1) Design and the designer
  - (2 1 1) Design as an ethically informed activity
  - (2 1 2) Designer motivation
  - (2 1 3) Design as personal specialist ability/ownership of design
- (2 2) Design and the consumer
  - (2 2 1) Involving the consumer
  - (2 2 2) Public awareness of design
- (2 3) Type of process
  - (2 3 1) Design as a creative activity
  - (2 3 2) Design as a rational process
  - (2 3 3) Design as a collaborative/group activity
  - (2 3 4) Mechanisms involved (how to design)

#### **(3) How design is evaluated**

- (3 1) Improvement
- (3 2) Economic
- (3 3) Relative
- (3 4) Personal
- (3 5) Negative
- (3 6) Reaction

#### **(4) How design is characterized**

- (4 1) The language around design
- (4 2) Definition and meaning

## *Appendix 12.2: Procedural Template 2*

- (1) Design as a family of disciplines
  - (1 1) Design and engineering
  - (1 2) Design and art
  - (1 3) Design and craft
  - (1 4) Design and marketing
  - (1 5) Types of design discipline
    - (1 1 5 1) Fashion design
- (2) Design as education institution
  - (2 1) Design teaching
  - (2 2) Design research
- (3) Design provision in the organization
- (4) Design as competitive asset
  - (4 1) Design and value
  - (4 2) Politicization of design
  - (4 3) Branding
- (5) The designer
  - (5 1) Designer motivation
  - (5 2) Design as specialist ability
    - (5 2 1) Development of design ability
    - (5 2 2) Transferability of design ability
  - (5 3) Stereotypes of the designer
- (6) The consumer
  - (6 1) Consumer involvement in design
  - (6 2) Public awareness of design
- (7) Design as an activity
  - (7 1) Design as a rational process
  - (7 2) Design as a group activity
  - (7 3) Mechanisms (how to design)
    - (7 3 1) Language use
- (8) Design and creativity
  - (8 1) Creativity in designing
  - (8 2) Creativity and the design outcome
  - (8 3) Constraints on designing
- (9) How design is evaluated
  - (9 1) Relativism of design evaluation
  - (9 2) Criteria
    - (9 2 1) Improvement
    - (9 2 2) Economic
    - (9 2 3) Getting a reaction
    - (9 2 4) Effectiveness
    - (9 2 5) Negative terms/bad design
- (10) Design and the object
- (11) Design as a field of debate and difference
  - (11 1) In designing
  - (11 2) The design discourse

### *Appendix 12.3: Procedural Template 3*

- (1) Design as of an object
  - (1 1) Function and aesthetics
  - (1 2) Design semantics
  - (1 3) Design value
- (2) Design as an activity
  - (2 1) Design as a single discipline
    - (2 1 1) Design domains
    - (2 1 2) Design generalism
  - (2 2) Design as a commercial activity
    - (2 2 1) Designer accountability
      - (2 2 1 1) Accountability to the client
      - (2 2 1 2) Designing for the consumer
      - (2 2 1 3) Communicating to others
    - (2 2 2) Design as a competitive strategy
    - (2 2 3) Designing for profit
  - (2 3) Design as a creative activity
    - (2 3 1) Creativity and design process
      - (2 3 1 1) Designing and making
    - (2 3 2) Originality of design outcome
  - (2 4) Design as a manageable process
    - (2 4 1) Codifying design
    - (2 4 2) Design and the organization
- (3) Design as of a designer
  - (3 1) Design as a vocation
    - (3 1 1) Designer motivation
  - (3 2) Development of the designer
  - (3 3) Design as a group activity
    - (3 3 1) The design consumer
  - (3 4) Design as a profession
    - (3 4 1) Professional ownership of designing
    - (3 4 2) Designer responsibility
  - (3 5) Stereotypes of the designer
- (4) Design as of a specific context
  - (4 1) design as currently fashionable
    - (4 1 1) Politicization of design
    - (4 1 2) The 'designer' label
    - (4 1 3) Design awareness
    - (4 1 4) Ambiguity of 'design'
  - (4 2) Design as culturally linked
    - (4 2 1) Design and cultural change
    - (4 2 2) Evaluation of design
      - (4 2 2 1) Effectiveness

**Appendix 13: Distribution of data coding across the final template by informant group (Section 11.1.4)**

Node	Group											Total	
	I		II		III		IV		V				
	N	TU	N	TU	N	TU	N	TU	N	TU	C		
(1) Of object			3	18	1	8	1	3	3	22	7	51	
(1 1) Function-aesthetics	4	41	4	34	3	37	2	46	2	18	3	176	
(1 2) Semantics	1	3	6	25	2	19	2	10	3	33	3	90	
(1 3) Design value	2	24	3	33	2	17	2	15	1	8		97	
(2) Activity													
(2 1) Single discipline													
(2 1 1) Domains	1	20	3	38	5	81	5	113				252	
(2 1 2) Generalism	4	73	7	154	4	78	5	70				375	
(2 2) Commercial	1	10	1	6	3	44	4	36				96	
(2 2 1) Accountability	2	24	9	171	4	92	2	16	1	3	1	306	
(2 2 1 1) Client	2	24	8	329	3	42	4	24				419	
(2 2 1 2) Consumer	2	35	5	91	4	36	2	14	1	6		182	
(2 2 1 3) Communication	1	6	3	32	5	73	3	33				144	
(2 2 2) Competitive strategy	4	66	3	30	2	25	4	78				213	
(2 2 3) Profit	4	59	8	67	2	36	2	17				179	
(2 3) Creative													
(2 3 1) Process	1	6	6	123	4	67	5	66	1	10		272	
(2 3 2) Making	2	16	9	66	6	174	3	20				276	
(2 3 3) Original outcome	2	8	6	83	3	41	1	11	2	20	1	163	
(2 4) Manageable process					2	27	3	13				40	
(2 4 1) Codification	2	10	1	34	2	31	1	4				79	
(2 4 2) The organization	3	70	3	11	2	9	1	4				94	
(3) Of designer													
(3 1) Vocation			3	34	2	11	2	9				54	
(3 2) Motivation	1	2	7	86	3	28	1	3				119	
(3 3) Development	1	16	7	109	4	111	2	15				251	
(3 4) Group	3	31	7	118	4	19	3	18				186	
(3 5) Profession					2	14	1	22				36	
(3 5 1) Ownership	1	4	4	116	3	27	4	38	1	4		190	
(3 5 2) Consumer	2	9	3	12	4	50	1	6				77	
(3 5 3) Responsibility					2	24	1	7	1	8	1	12	
(3 6) Stereotypes					5	87	2	16	2	21		124	
(4) Contextual													
(4 1) Currently fashionable													
(4 1 1) Politicization	1	3	3	24	1	15	5	76				118	
(4 1 2) 'Designer' label	1	27	1	3	3	23	2	27				80	
(4 1 3) Awareness	4	28	4	43	3	39	6	123				233	
(4 1 4) Multiple meanings	1	5	2	12	3	62	4	79				158	
(4 2) Culturally linked	1	4	6	98	4	29	3	21				152	
(4 2 1) Change	1	4	2	22	2	28	1	13	1	3	1	70	
(4 2 2) Evaluation					6	44	6	56	4	81	2	62	
Total	5	628	10	2177	6	1472	7	1153	3	201	25	5646	

**Table key:**

Engrave = 'empty' nodes containing no coding

Node	Group										Total	
	I		II		III		IV		V			
	N	TU	N	TU	N	TU	N	TU	N	TU		
(1) Of object			3	18	1	8	1	3	3	22	7	51

Number of Group II transcripts containing data coded at node (1)

Number of text units in Group II transcripts coded at node (1)

Number of citations in template presentation (Part III) of Group V data coded at node (1)

Total number of text units coded at node (1)

Total	5	628	10	2177	6	1472	7	1153	3	201	25	5646
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Total number of Group I transcripts

Total number of coded text units in all Group I transcripts

Total number of citations in template presentation (Part III) of coded Group V data

Total number of coded text units in all transcripts

## **Appendix 14: Extract from interview transcript T01 (Section 13.2.2)**

01: [...] I remember a client saying to me: 'You often use words that I think I know the meaning of, but then I realise you mean something entirely different.' Which was quite interesting. We had a very frustrating discussion with the same client, where - it was a large group, there was a lecturer from your own university there, actually, an electronics person, and a teaching company associate from [university], who'd done this project, and a marketing manager, a technical manager and so on from the company, electronics products, and I was working as their designer. So the electronics people presented this proposal they had for this new product, and so it was obviously in my mind: 'So what are we gonna do with it? What's my job here?' And I thought I'd start the ball rolling by saying: 'Okay, so what message do you want this product to give off? What do you want it to say? Thinking about what it's gonna look like, what message do you want it to give?' I thought, for me that was the simplest possible question. That was the most stripped-down, stripping the whole design thing down to the absolute bare minimum, just saying: 'Think about messages. Think about what is it you want this thing to tell your customers?' And people, didn't look fazed, they just sort of thought about it a bit, and one of them said: 'Well, I thought we could injection mould it.' (laughs) Now, actually, maybe - I think he probably, in a way he was saying that an injection moulded product gave a better message than a tinplate product. But we'd already been down that road. And I was trying to be - but really it proved absolutely impossible. I repeated my question several times, I stuck with it for about ten minutes, and could I get anyone to say that it should be technically excellent, it should be reliable, it should be strong, anything? And yet it was actually a product where there were lots of messages you would want to give off. It was a highly technical product for a very specialist market, and I think there were quite a lot of messages they could be looking at, and valuing there. So, it was really interesting, and I think I learned not to expect too much: just, in the end, show them the things.

## **Appendix 15: Published poster paper based on the project**

The paper reproduced below was presented at CoDesigning 2000, held at Coventry University, UK, and published as: Micklethwaite, P. (2000) Conceptions of Design in the Community of Design Stakeholders. In: Scrivener, S. A. R., Ball, L. J. & Woodcock, A. ed. CoDesigning 2000: Adjunct proceedings. Coventry: Coventry University. ISBN 0 905949 93 5.

### Conceptions of Design in the Community of Design Stakeholders

#### **1 Introduction**

This paper describes the progress of an empirical study investigating conceptions of design among the community of design stakeholders.

A contextual theme of the democratization of design is introduced. This theme determines the study's methodological starting point: the contention that design is a community concern, with the consequence that each member of that community has an equally legitimate design role and stakeholding.

The study seeks to explore the full range of perspective on design within the community of design stakeholders. This is achieved through an investigation of conceptions of design among a sample of design stakeholders, representative of five key groups: designers; production and retail; support and promotion; educators; and consumers. Preliminary findings are presented from early data collection and analysis, with some discussion of the significance of the outcomes of the study.

#### **2 Contextual theme: the democratization of design**

A change in perspective is evident in the academic design discourse. The modernist preoccupation with the project of 'good design' is superseded by a plurality of perspective and mutual engagement in design issues. (Margolin and Buchanan, 1995) This latter observation is articulated in the statement in publicity for the present conference, that "design is being viewed, studied and developed as a collective, collaborative, even community concern." This theme is characterised here as the 'democratization of design'. Two central and closely linked strands of the democratization of design are considered here: responsibility and discourse.

A first consequence of the theme of the democratization of design is that responsibility in design matters is shared among all design stakeholders. This is a contention which clearly accords with the keynote of this conference, just identified, of design as a community concern. Shared, community responsibility of this kind may be seen in a wider engagement with design and its attendant issues. A growing realization of design's importance is reflected in a greater willingness to engage in the discussion of design. This is in turn manifest in the opening up of an inclusive rather than exclusive design discourse. (Liddament, 1996; Buchanan, Doordan and Margolin, 1998)

The design discourse is considered here as the terms in which design is thought about and discussed, and the opening up of this discourse on a widening cultural scale is manifest in at least two ways. First, in a continuing explosion in the mass media profile for design, currently manifested most clearly in design-related mass entertainment and discussion, in both television and print media. Second, in a heightened contemporary political interest in design, expressed most blatantly in rhetoric around the creative industries and design's role in economic and cultural regeneration. (e.g., DCMS, 1998) Both these observations, one cultural, one political, may, it is argued here, be seen to support the identification of the dominant theme of the democratization of design.

The contextual theme of the democratization of design may be interpreted in two ways: in terms of practice, and discourse. Democratization of the practice of design is sure to be dealt with elsewhere. This paper addresses democratization of the discourse, rather than the practice of design, a theme characterized by a recognition of and commitment to multiple perspectives and perceptions around design as it is discussed and thought about. (Margolin and Buchanan, 1995) As a methodological consequence, all voices must be included in any contextually-aware study of the design community. This community is characterized here as the community of design stakeholders, comprised of all those with a stakeholding interest in design.

### 3 The community of design stakeholders

The design stakeholder groups used in the current study are derived from a consideration of groups used in previous studies (Farr, 1955; Bracewell, 1987; McKeone and O'Brien, 1996), and Krippendorff's (1994) taxonomy of groups in a network of design stakeholders. Of particular interest is the characterization of the community of design stakeholders as a 'design constituency', derived from McKeone and O'Brien (1996). A common oversight of these studies, rectified in the coverage of the present study, is a failure to grant the design consumer parity with other design stakeholder groups.

The groups used in the current study are given below:

*Designers (Group A).* This group includes all those with a professional involvement in design practice (not education), irrespective of working environment or specialism. Thus includes in-house and staff designers employed by an organization, those employed by design consultancies and agencies, and independent freelance designers.

*Production and retail (Group B).* While the designer may be responsible for designing a product, system or service, its realization and distribution to the consumer is the responsibility of other parties. This group therefore includes manufacturing and retail concerns who act to produce and deliver the designer's work to the consumer. These are the sponsors and disseminators of design.

*Support and promotion (Group C).* The mechanism by which design is transmitted to the consumer relies on parties with a less tangible, but equally significant role. These support, represent and promote design, and include such apparently disparate agents as government departments and agencies, design trade associations, business and design advisory bodies, advertising, and the media.

*Educators (Group D).* This group includes those engaged in design pedagogy in Further and Higher Education (FE and HE).

*Consumers (Group E).* The consumer of design is often an acknowledged but shadowy figure in design discourse. The prevalence of the consumer society, and the argued role of design within it, dictate that all members of that society are *ipso facto* design consumers. In these broad terms, this stakeholder group consists of every individual in a specified context. In the present study, however, the design consumer is characterized by non-inclusion in any other stakeholder group.

It is acknowledged that the groups given above are not uncontroversial. It is suggested here that this is inevitably so. This taxonomy is, however, used as an aid to the theoretical sampling strategy of this study. The purpose of such a sampling strategy is to cover the range of perspective within the community under scrutiny, through selection of participants according to relevant sampling dimensions. (Robson, 1993) In the present study, membership of the groups given above is the key sampling dimension. In this regard, inclusion of the consumer as a dedicated design stakeholder group is a key methodological recognition of the indicated theme of the democratization of design, and its core contention that design is a field of widening interest and participation.

## **4 Empirical study**

This paper describes an empirical study undertaken to identify conceptions of design among the full range of design stakeholders. The observed theme of the democratization of design provides great scope for communication and collaboration among design stakeholders. As a first step, this study seeks to address fundamental perspectives on what design is, prompted by the observation that 'design means different things to different people'.<sup>307</sup>

### **4.1 Method**

The study is conceptually grounded in phenomenographic research method: "Phenomenography is a research method for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them." (Marton, 1986, p.31) Phenomenography is therefore a research method used to phenomenologically investigate conceptions of a phenomenon as it is conceptualized and understood by research participants. Here, the phenomenon under investigation is design. The purpose of the study is thus to identify, present and discuss the qualitatively different ways in which people conceptualize design.

Data is collected through a series of individual depth interviews, with a 'theoretical' sample of participants, selected as representative of the variation of perspective within the five groups identified above. (Marton and Booth, 1997, p.124)

Qualitative data are analyzed using a template analysis technique (King, 1998), the outcome of which is a template or hierarchical map of aspects of the data relevant to the identification of conceptions of design. This template is then edited to formulate these conceptions of design. Finally, the overall structure represented by the relationships between identified conceptions of design is represented graphically in the form of an "outcome space". (Barnard, McCosker and Gerber, 1999) During this phase, of data analysis, the method used in this study ceases technically to be phenomenographic, in that the artificial structures necessarily imposed by a phenomenographic analysis of conceptions of design, are abandoned as too constraining. At this point, the method becomes akin to Crotty's (1998) characterization of 'new' phenomenology. Participants' conceptions of design are rendered faithfully in the analysis in the terms in which they are given, rather than being viewed as one step removed from supposed deeper, hidden conceptions.

### **4.2 Preliminary findings**

A procedural template, constructed from preliminary analysis of early interviews, shows elements of the data potentially combinable into complete conceptions of design. The template is then used to develop these conceptions of design (CoDs). Two such example CoDs are given:

CoD1: *Design as creative activity*, comprising notions of: design as distinct from, e.g., engineering; design in relation to art; design in relation to originality of thought; design as concerned with outcome rather than process; design in terms of creation from nothing.

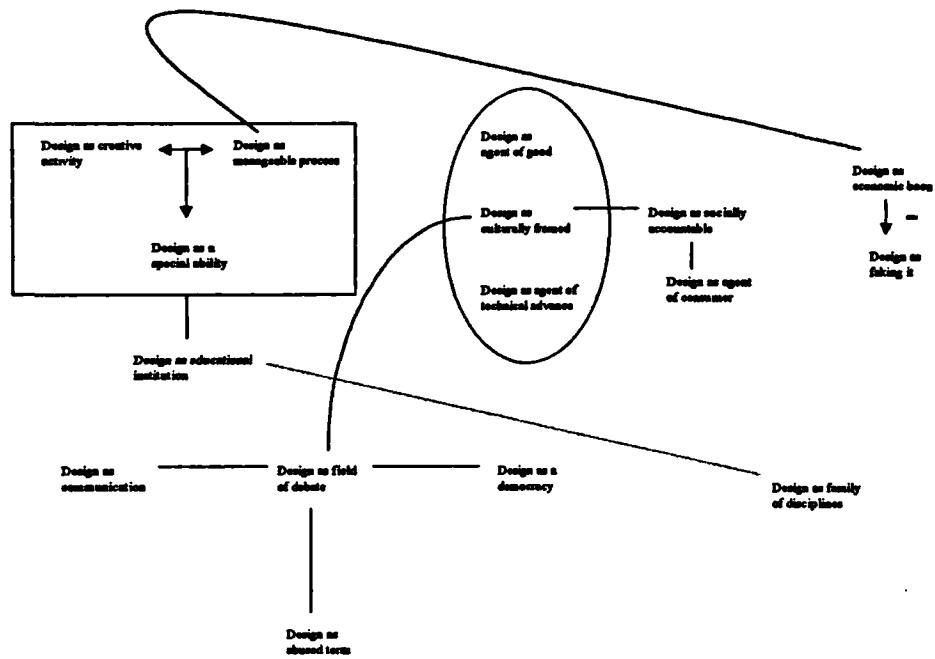
CoD2: *Design as manageable process*, comprising notions of: design as decision making; design, rationality and codification; design and technical competence; systems of design 'rules'.

Each CoD, as indicated, is comprised of a nexus of related notions, all contributing to the holistic conception of which they comprise a part. This composite conception then appears in the graphical representation of the conceptual territory covered by the data that is mapped out in the outcome space. The outcome space of

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<sup>307</sup> Remark made at the closing plenary session of the EAD III conference, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 1999.

conceptions of design is constructed through the presentation of CoDs in structural relation to each other. (see Figure 1)



**Figure 1: Preliminary outcome space.**

Figure 1 is a preliminary outcome space showing the conceptions of design generated from early data collection and analysis. In addition to showing the CoDs themselves, structural relations between CoDs are shown, such that conceptual links between conceptions of design located in the data are clearly demonstrated.

The two CoDs identified previously (Design as creative activity (CoD1), and Design as manageable process (CoD2)), are shown in the top left of the outcome space. (see Figure 1) A link is indicated between these two conceptions of design, along with a further mutual connection with a third CoD: Design as a special ability. This triad forms a self-contained conceptual microsystem, which is in turn connected to other parts of the outcome space. Similarly, a central conceptual microsystem is shown containing a further three CoDs: Design as culturally framed, Design as agent of good, Design as agent of technical advance. The dominant conception in this central triad is Design as culturally framed, in that the other two conceptions identified are inherently qualified by this observation of the cultural framing of design. The same could, of course, be said of all our conceptions of design, in the sense that all human thought and action is inescapably bound by cultural factors and constraints. The outcome space simply shows the links made in the data, and thus the connections made by the study participants.

The outcome space illustrates the holistic research perspective taken, in terms of an accommodation of findings within a wider relational system. Thus, the two CoDs identified previously, expressing design's conceptually contrasting creative and rationalizable aspects respectively, are accommodated structurally within a single conceptual map. The macrosystem of conceptions of design constituted by the outcome space may then be presented as a record of what design means to the sample of study participants as a community of design stakeholders.

## 5 Discussion

Findings presented here are preliminary, and based on an early analysis of the first interviews to be completed. These findings are, however, indicative of the anticipated nature of the study's final outcomes and their presentation.

The issue of the wider applicability of the research outcomes of this study is worthy of consideration here. The wider applicability of findings in qualitative research is evaluated in terms other than the criterion of generalizability which appears in positivist/quantitative research, otherwise expressed as external validity. (Ward Schofield, 1989) In non-positivist/qualitative research, emphasis is on the variety of perspective which resides in "the collective mind", rather than a concern with specific ascriptions to individuals. (Marton, 1981) Findings are thus applicable on a wider scale, according to "the extent that the [sample] group represents the variation of individuals in a wider population". (Marton and Booth, 1997, p.124) In the present case, therefore, comparisons are not made between participant groups, of the form 'Group A believes x, while Group B believes y'. Rather, a single outcome space is produced, constituting a holistic map of the ways in which design is conceptualised among the study sample.

It is anticipated that final findings will provide a record, at the time of completion of the study, of the ways in which design is understood among the community of design stakeholders as represented in the study sample. This constitutes a response to the cited, but rarely researched, observation that design means different things to different people. The findings will also be significant in relation to the codesigning theme being discussed at this conference, a central notion of which is the contention that design be "viewed, studied and developed as a collective, collaborative, even community concern." The present study may be thought to occupy a position one step removed from more specific enquiries into particular sections of that collective endeavour. In addressing the research question: what does design mean to members of the design stakeholding community, the present study can be thought to inform considerations of various aspects of design, as they are located within this stakeholding community.

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