

Introduction

The term “agency” has various connotations in design, two of which highlight themes within the articles featured in this issue of *Design Issues*. A “design agency,” for example, commonly refers to a specific organizational form of design—that is a company, consultancy, firm, or business. Depending on how it is legally registered (for example, whether as a public or private company, or a non- or for profit), an agency can entail particular duties and have specific rights. This is conspicuous in architectural agencies, which are associated with a registered or licensed architect and have consequent legal, insurance, and public accountabilities as well as fee scales and tax rules. Design remains relatively less codified than some other professions, and its forms and duties can be more diverse. Professional identities of design were multiple and contested in the United States, as told in the article by Leah Armstrong, prior to the establishment in 1944 of the Society of Industrial Design (SID). Less codified than other professions, design also takes many organizational forms beyond that of a design agency. Notably, several further articles in this issue argue for the expansion of design within organizations including corporations and governments.

Agency also has a more general meaning, namely as action to produce a particular effect. As a form of action, design manifests in many ways. Design forms—within the articles here—include clothes and products, postage stamps and board games, stories and services, strategy and policies. Authors also attend to the effects of these designs. Postage stamps, for example, represent national cultural heritage, and board games can impart political messages. The expanse of design actions and effects becomes apparent when reading across the articles. While laws circumscribe architectural action in specific ways, anyone can deploy design—in many forms and in diverse organizations—for profit, for cultural, for political, or for other purposes. Alongside their study of various forms and qualities of design, the authors articulate the agency of design within organizations, within wider society, and within societal change. Particularly with the expansion of design within the higher echelons of corporations and governments, evident in several of the articles, we might be prompted to think further about the accountability—and responsibility—of design today.

In her article, Armstrong traces the historical emergence of industrial design as a profession in tandem with a burgeoning consumer culture and “new nationalism” in the inter- and post-war

United States. Specifically, she investigates how the 1930 New York World's Fair propelled a particular idea and identity of design through popular consumer magazines. She details an instance of collaboration between the Fair's Publicity Office and *Vogue*, in which an article featured proposals for future fashion by nine prominent, male industrial designers. The proposals of these "Designing Men" manifested particular ideas of progress, namely design as mastery over modern industrial production and invention. Armstrong elucidates how their portrayal of design—as masterful, rational, technical, and corporate—contrasted with that of fashion design, was cast and diminished as a feminine, amateur field. Tension between the fields endured when the 1944 SID Code of Conduct officially excluded fashion designers, and that tension continues today, for example, in museum collections that exhibit strongly-gendered distinctions. Thus, her history of design professionalization is also one of its patriarchal effects.

In another national historical context, Inbal Ben-Asher Gitler and Einat Lachover study the depiction of women on Israeli postage stamps appearing between 1948 and 2020. In addition, and a relevant historical precedent to Helena Trippé's elucidation of design roles in government, Gitler and Lachover point out design members of the national committee commissioning and approving the stamps. They analyze three series of stamps in terms of wider cultural phenomena including the "second wave" of Israeli feminism, nationalist activism, and popular culture. Their study also reveals absences, including the relative lack of cultural and religious minorities. In addition to the choices of female subject, age, and setting and framing of the subject depicted, they analyze design techniques ranging from the photographic to the hand-drawn, line, color and mood, script, and fonts. They articulate design decisions as cultural, manifesting particular qualities of character and gender within a "hegemonic Zionist-Israeli narrative." Gitler and Lachover disclose design as replete with socio-political agency.

The political agency of design is expounded in Diana Garvin's article titled "Militarizing Monopoly." Hers is a history of how the board game was mobilized during World War II by three different nations, allies, and enemies. Tracing the invention of Monopoly in the US as a pedagogical tool, Garvin elucidates how the two original sets of rules embodied contrasting political-economic logics. One set of rules for game play rewarded collective wealth generation and implicitly warned against the concentration of land in the hands of a few, while a second set of rules enforced a zero-sum logic, in which individuals win by monopolizing wealth and crushing opponents. The latter logic prevailed in the game copy-right as purchased by Parker Brothers in 1935, thereafter licensed in the UK and then in Italy. Garvin, detailing the adaptations to the language and design of the game in the different national contexts,

makes a forceful argument that redesign exceeded mere translation. The acquisition and domination of particular properties, which signified capitalism through nomenclature and graphics in one context were, in Italy, designed to promote dictatorship and militarization as the fascist regime invaded East Africa.

Situated in business contexts, the next three articles in this *Design Issues* also elucidate the capacity of design to act in terms of expanded reach and influence. To theorize service design and “customer experience” beyond merely material aspects, the article by Youngsoo Lee and Miso Kim develop a concept of “storytelling.” They draw inspiration from two sources, namely Aristotle’s *Poetics* and Joseph Campbell’s *Hero’s Journey*, which is also applied in novels, films, and game design. Service storytelling is framed in terms of two aspects. First, they discuss the notion of causes in terms of four components influencing the service: material, efficient, end, and formal. An example of a formal cause, which refers to the genre or character of the story, might be a guiding principle of “care” that would then be considered throughout the whole service design. Second, they articulate a model of synthesis to integrate multiple causes into the sequences and cycles of a service. Their concept of storytelling also accounts for other’s agency, for example, as customers gain skills to personalize and feel enabled to advocate the service to others. Thus designed, a service story unfolds and endures within extended customer experiences and influences their ideas and (inter)actions.

The title of the article by Andy Dong, Maaike Kleinsmann, and Dirk Snelders captures their argument: “The Design of Firms: Part 2 – Competitive Advantage” (Part 1 was published in the previous issue of *Design Issues*). They argue companies need to integrate design beyond the typical product level, in which focus is merely on the features and qualities of a current or next product. Instead, they argue for design upstream in decision-making processes and upwards in the organizational hierarchy. To develop strategy and tools for management and firm-level problems, they argue for design “prototyping a business model.” Underpinning their argument is a company’s “competitive advantage” in the marketplace, which requires more than mere product design. “Superior design,” they articulate, is the outcome of a composite calculation of costs and benefits and “heterogenous asset bases” at multiple levels. This means strategic design not only at product level but also at firm level, in which creativity is involved regarding the overall product portfolio, organizational structure, resource distribution, and routines. Zara’s “fast fashion,” they argue, is about more than clothes; it’s about the seasonal release of limited product along with shipping and distribution systems. Beyond the sphere of action typical in product and even strategic design, this constitutes design of the firm itself.

A related argument in Guilherme Fowler A. Monteiro's article concerns the use of design in business strategy. Articulating four general areas of interest in design within management research, Montiero seeks a more profound and theoretically-grounded relation between the fields. Toward this end, he queries the meaning of strategy and strategy problems in relation to design. He determines that a design-based view of strategy is suitable to address particular types of problems, such as those requiring firms to rethink their positioning or business model. This is due to the nature of "wicked" problems, which are characterized by uncertainty and surprises. The future of human mobility in urban space is not a matter of traditional problem-solving, it requires creativity, iterative prototyping, and the co-evolution of problems and solutions. To the latter point, he articulates elements and steps in creative problem-framing. However, with the caveat that a framework is necessary but not sufficient for company success, he further elaborates aspects of the "internal and external consistency" required in a strategic and "superior design framework." A design "meta-capability" that is rare and hard to imitate, Montiero concludes, can enable firms to sustain their "competitive advantage."

Several relevant threads across these articles are brought together in the final article of this issue. The article by Helena Polati Trippe (and her extensive references) outlines the area of "design for policy" with reference to Sabine Junginger's expansive notion of "policymaking as designing." Trippe's justification for the expansion of design parallels Montiero's, though for purposes other than market competition. Namely, design is formulated as an approach to "wicked" problems, and she argues for design in problem-framing upstream within policy processes and upwards in organizational hierarchies. Trippe then hones in to service design as a type of design that can bridge between other types, including those upstream (such as, "design thinking" with civil servants) and downstream (such as, "co-creation" with citizens). A bridge is needed, she argues, at a particular stage in policymaking that involves decisions about the type and mix of "policy instruments" through which policy is enacted. Positioning policy instruments as an "object" of design, she articulates design within the "meso level" of government. Thus, she argues service design can increase the efficiency and public legitimacy of policy.

Bruce Brown
Richard Buchanan
Carl DiSalvo
Dennis Doordan
Kipum Lee
Ramia Mazé