How to avoid throwing the baby out with the bath water: An ironic perspective on design thinking

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Abstract

Design thinking has, arguably, become a fad or hype discourse. From the *Harvard Business Review* (Brown, 2008), to *Business Week* (Adler, 2006), and the *Financial Times* (Thornhill, 2006), articles have featured design thinking as the way to accomplish significant innovation in our complex global economy. An ironic perspective is, in our view, the best way to embrace such hyperbolae with some reality. Design thinking is an interesting phenomenon, and there are many good arguments for the need for more design thinking in organizations, but the hype is problematic because it inevitably simplifies the situation and leads to a backlash. Our ambition in this paper is to give both a more nuanced and a critical view of the hype of design thinking, Our message is ironic and paradoxical: Design thinking both is and is not something new, depending on the perspective. Also, the hype situation creates a risk that the important discourse will be forgotten once the rally is over and a new hype discourse enters the scene. However, this is not only a danger, because, as we claim, a post-hype situation also creates some advantages.

Introduction

A hype – hyperbolae or exaggeration in rhetorical expression – exists as talk intended to inspire the listener to embrace the characteristics of the phenomenon espoused by the speaker (Ramiller, 2006). It signifies the linguistic manifestation of a fad or fashion, "the production and consumption of temporarily intensive management discourses, and the organizational changes induced by and associated with this discourse" (Benders & Van Veen, 2001), a concept frequently discussed in the management literature, particularly in reference to the quality movement that began in the late 1980s and lost prominence (through never really disappearing) early in the new millennium. Ways of defining whether a particular phenomenon has reached the status of "a fad" include claims in the academic literature, counts of citations in the practitioner media, or analysis of the rhetorical structure of the discourse (cf., Abrahamson, 1991; Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999; Kieser, 1997; Jackson, 2001; Swan, 2004).

We suggest that the current level of discourse on design thinking has reached the level of hype for a number of reasons, including: the large number of articles about design thinking in the management literature - specifically weekly magazines and practitioner oriented academic literature, the tendency to refer to newly published material rather than academic classics, and the co-authoring by practitioners and academics. Finally, and perhaps the most relevant indication, are the claims made in the hype discourse itself, which frequently include the admonition, "This is not a fad". The claim in the hype is most often "to save the world" of business, whereby the fad is presented as a universal tool for business development. "Try this and it will solve your problems" is the rhetoric, quite similar to the advertisements for anti-aging and the natural-medicine descriptions of what can be cured by different roots and herbs. The irony is that this is not true because such universal tools or medicines do not exist: the claim is over-exaggerated. However, the irony is that it is not totally false either; it is just over-exaggerated and not nuanced enough.

An ironic perspective, such as we use in this paper, allows us to move away from binary views of true or false such as, "design thinking is/is not a fad," and "a fad is/is not good" to a view where we hold multiple perspectives in play simultaneously. This allows for a critical examination of the multiple dimensions of a complex situation and a way of incorporating the consequences. That multiple realities exist – in interpretation of events, in perception of identity, and in ways of speaking – is not doubted, but irony is a platform that allows these realities to be held together, even as they are different (Rorty, 1989).

In this paper we highlight the multiple perspectives of interpretation resulting from an ironic perspective of the hype "design thinking". We want to show how earlier research in the area is more or less systematically ignored, giving the reader of the hype articles in the business press and academic journals an impression that design thinking is a new phenomena, which is not true. At the same time it *is* true that it is a new phenomena, as a hype discourse with claims of being a universal tool for problem solving and innovation. Instead of building further on the hype discourse, we suggest a paradoxical interpretation, where the roots and the newness are both acknowledged. Our purpose is to use an ironic perspective to provide fresh insights for the academic discourse, embracing both critical scrutinizing and acknowledging positive perspectives.

We first discuss hyperbolae in rhetoric, and how the concept of "a hype" or fad discourse applies to design thinking in management. Second, we sketch a description of design thinking, looking at it from the perspective of 50 years of academic research and how it has developed and turned into the current hype. Then we turn to our ironic perspective, starting with a section about irony as such, followed by an interpretation of the hype design thinking from an ironic perspective. We conclude with our summary reflections.

What Does It Mean to be a Fad or Hype in an Academic Field?

Management fads (or fashions) and the publicity that surrounds them are nothing new. Whether we take for granted the premises of "scientific management" or point to them as a legacy to be discarded, we seldom think about the intense excitement and debate that

surrounded Fredrick Taylor's "revolutionary" ideas at the beginning of the twentieth century. We do not know whether the practices of scientific management would have been more or less successful without the surrounding hype discourse, but we do know that "backlash" and critique propelled the discourse from scientific management into the area of human relations. Today we may be at a similar crossroads with the hype surrounding the concept and practice of design thinking.

Academic research into the management fashions, or the particular practices that business managers choose to use, and later discard in favor of others, has been made from a number of perspectives, including institutional theory (Abrahamson, 1991), strategy (Mintzberg, 1981), and cultural theory (Czarniawska & Sevon, 1996). Regardless of the practice "in fashion", the process of becoming fashionable starts with the rhetoric of managers or consultants and is transmitted via rhetoric (Collins, 2000; Hucyznski, 1992; Jackson, 2001; Kieser, 1997). Core actors use exaggeration as a technique to inspire, persuade, and gain commitment for an innovation. Such discourse provides a "defensive shell" that enables the innovation to survive the forces of opposition, and keeps the attention of the collective focused on the innovation. Paradoxically, however, the elements that make a fad attractive and popular, also contribute to its short life (Miller, Hartwick, & Le Breton-Millerc, 2004).

When does such rhetoric reach the status of a "hype discourse"? Research in media hype suggests that key events trigger coverage across different media, leading to self-reinforcing processes -- "a spiral of social amplification" – through new twists on the same theme (Vasterman, 2005). The public expression of the discourse in academic articles as well as business magazines, seminars, and on the web all contribute to creating a rhetoric in the fringe of academia that has academic status but a popular message. But reading and knowing do not necessarily lead to action, so without new, "breakthrough" examples, there is gradual decline in coverage and interest while new ideas and new messages vie for attention as the next fad to reach hype status. However, key concepts and practices are not always lost; some may remain, either decoupled from the original concepts and coupled to notions of other concepts (Benders, van den Bergm, & van

Bijsterveld, 1998), or as approaches of value to specific contexts and enterprises (Miller, et al., 2004).

An Overview of the Development of the Current Discourses of Design Thinking in Design and Business/Management

In this section we review the development of design thinking as it has evolved in design, as "the way designers think as they work", and in management, as "method for innovation and creating value."

Design thinking as a design discourse

The academic discourse of design thinking is about 50 years old. In 1961, Herbert Simon argued for the creation of "sciences of the artificial," saying that design differs not only from natural sciences (with its search for eternal and general laws) but also from both the humanities (that make us cultivated and sensitive) and social sciences (whose role is to have a critical eye on what happens in society). Design -- as a more general way of expressing engineering -- creates what has never been before, and the synthesis or creation of these new artifacts should help humanity in that the new artifacts should be how things "ought to be" so as to attain goals and to function better than before (Simon 1996, Ch.1). Two dimensions in the practice of design are therefore important: the normative dimension and the creative dimension. This, he argued, also gives new epistemological foundations for the research in design, and the need for a formal "science of design." In the first edition Simon sets out a series of propositions, thereby placing himself in a rational mode, though he talked about the bounded rationality. Thinking about design seemed to be within the (bounded) rationality paradigm. In the second and third edition he developed his perspective on what design means and how to characterise it, and by the third edition (Simon, 1996) recognized changes in cognitive psychology and limits to rationality. He was concerned with complexity within the development of computer science, and the logic of design as centered on methods of finding alternatives. He also took a more humanistic turn when he described a common core of knowledge that can be shared by members if all cultures and the importance of design in defining our relation to the inner and outer environments that define our living space. He

concuded that, “in large part, the proper study of mankind is the science of design, not only as the professional component of a technical education but as a core disipline for every liberally educated person.” (1996, p.138)

Simon can be regarded as interesting from many perspectives: He discussed the role of creating (or sythesising) as opposite to analysing (the concern of social science) and the normative dimension that according to him underly all design activities. Simon had a great intellect and he was probably the first person to unravel “design” in a systematic way. On the other hand his systematic way demanded that problems should be well formed and defined as a process. As Hans Berliner (2001) noted in a tribute, “… he always said that it was important for science to make predictions as they galvanized the field toward certain important goals. …To him it was important to push the ball along, and just how scientific it was, could be left for future appraisals.”

In “The reflective practitioner” Schön (1983) pointed out the limitations of the technical rationality framework that Simon represents. Schön considered the rationalistic model as incomplete and instead tried to “stand the model on its head” and search for “an epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic intuitive processes which some pratitioners bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflct” (p.49).

According to Schön, professionals apply very general principles, or standardized knowledge, to concrete problems. The concept of “application” acknowledges the transition between professional knowledge and demands of real-world practice, leading to concepts such as knowing-in-practice, knowing-in-action, reflecting-in action, and reflecting-in-practice. Schön favoured “reflection-in-action” - a mental activity that professionals use in their own practice. To articulate such refelctions one must use words to describe a kind of knowing, and a change of knowing that was probably not originally represented in words at all. Practical examples include a baseball pitcher “finding the groove,” jazz musicians playing, or children trying to balance blocks.

> In a practitioner's reflective conversation with a siituation that he treats as unique and ncertain, he functions as an agent/experient. Through his transaction with the situtaion, he shapes it and makes himeslf a part of it. Hence, the sense he makes of the situation must include his own contribution to it. Yet he recognizes that the sitation, having a life of its own, disctinct from his intentions, may foil his projects and reveal new meanings. (Schön, 1983, p.163)

If you watch at a practitioner in action, he acts like an artist, responding to the specfic situation at hand in a holistic way; he is able to take the information, create different ways of intervention and looking at it in different ways without "disrupting the flow of inquiry". There is also a basic structure to the pattern of a practitioner's inquiry: he must construct an understanding of the situation as he finds it, and because he finds it problematic, he must first reframe it. Unless you start to reframe it and reframe again when you get to a sticking point, you are not reflecting *in action*. So framing and reframing a problem was central to Schön's understanding of design practice (or the architects and psychoanlysts that he used as empirical exmples).

Another point that Schön made is that practitioners also reflect on their own inquiry and that is how they develop their competence. Through their reflection on their own (past) practice practitioners integrate their knowledge and extend their competence to frame and reframe their (future) problems. Practitioners thus become researchers in their own practice, something he called "reflective research". So design work – or design thinking – in itself becomes a sort of research process. Schön distinguished between four types of reflective research:

1. Frame analysis. When a practitioner becomes aware of his frames, he also becomes aware of the possibility of alternative ways of framing the reality of practice. Such awareness helps the practitioner understand the competences he would need, and the kind of person he would become, if he framed his role in a particular way.
2. Repertoire-building research. The practitioner accumulates and describes examples in ways useful to reflection-in-action. The exact nature of the exemples varies from

profession to profession, but in general include the starting situation, the actions taken, the evolution of inquiry, and results achieved.

3. Research on fundamental methods of inquiry and overarching theories. Such research can be either discovering how processes of recognition and restructuring work by examining episodes of practice, or research on fundamental theories as "action science" (p319), and is carried out by researchers within the context of action and practitioners who engage in systematic reflection. Its development requires new ways of integrating reflective research and practice.
4. Research on the process of reflection-in-action. Here the researcher must learn an art of experiment in which reflection-in-action plays a central part.

Simon and Schön presented two different paradigms for design research, but as Dorst (1997) suggested in his Ph.D. thesis comparing the two, they have complimentary strengths, and both are necessary to present as foundations an overview of the full range of activities in design. Schön's work forms the conceptual foundation for subsequent research on the thinking or taken-for-granted reflective processes that designers use as they go about the process of designing.

Bryan Lawson (1980/2004) and Peter Rowe (1987) both took a more practical and less philosophical view of designers-at-work. Lawson's "How designers think" is regarded as a classic in design thinking, and has been updated several times since it first appeared in 1980. As an architect discussing the design process as practice, he blurred the line between architects and designers in many ways. His aim was to "demystify" the design process, to create a model of designing, and accordingly he discussed how designers moved between problems and solutions during the design process, and the types and styles of thinking that can be grouped as "design thinking."

> Designing is far too complex a phenomenon to be describable by a simple diagram… A model of design thinking must be able to allow for all this richness and variation. … We have groups of activities and skills that are all needed are commonly found in successful design. They are 'formulating', 'moving', 'representing', 'evaluating' and 'reflecting'.

> Through all this somehow designers seem to be able to negotiate their way to a comfortable, or at least satisfactory, understanding of both the problem and the solution and to give their clients and users a least workable and occasionally beautiful and imaginative designs. (Lawson, 2006, Ch.16.)

Rowe (1987) also was concerned with the internal situational logic and decision-making processes of designers-in-action and related theoretical dimensions. He created a general portrait of design thinking from empirical cases of designers at work, where he observed and then interviewed designers to reconstruct the sequences of steps, moves, and other logical procedures of their protocols. From this emerged a picture of the give-and-take of problem-solving in the real world, the contextual nature of decision-making, and the realization that there is no such thing as <u>the</u> design process as a step-by-step technique. For Rowe, "design thinking" was an umbrella term or shorthand for the individual and contextual processes of designers-in-action on a daily basis.

Much other scholarly work contributes to understanding the concept and practices of "design thinking." Research by two respected scholars, Nigel Cross and Richard Buchanan, provides examples of ways in which the concept of "design thinking' has been described and used to provoke discussion on design. Nigel Cross (1982; 2001; 2006), is concerned with "designerly ways of knowing" as a paradigm (*sic*) useful for design research and design education. For Cross, unravelling the mystery of "design ability" is necessary for a "proper study of mankind", an agenda that signals Cross' acceptance of Simon's agenda.

Richard Buchanan (1992) took a somewhat different approach, acknowledging both Simon and Dewey (1934/1980) before turning to design thinking for insights into "design as a new liberal art of technological culture." He looked for places of intervention shared by all designers, places where one discovers the dimensions of design thinking by a reconsideration of problems and solutions. According to Buchanan, the problems of design are indeterminate or "wicked," (Rittel & Webber, 1973), leading to his thesis on

design thinking. "The subject matter of design is potentially universal in scope, because the process of design thinking may be applied to any experience. But, in the process application, the designer must discover or invent, a particular subject out of the problems and issues of specific circumstances …. Design is fundamentally concerned with the particular, and *there is no science of the particular."* For Buchannan, design thinking is not described through fixed categories, but rather through *placements*, as boundaries that shape and constrain meaning, but are not rigidly fixed and determinate. Placements are the tools of design thinking, and sources of new ideas and possibilities when applied to problems in concrete circumstances. Other theorists have made their own interpretation, for example as knowledge work (Rylander, 2009) or as cognitive processes (Stemmfle & Badke-Schaub, 2002), each contributing to a scholarly, grounded description of design thinking that may further advance our knowledge of the field.

The basis of design thinking can be summarized as follows: Simon wanted to bring design into a *scientific discourse*, rather than an artistic one. Schön was concerned with practice and wanted to make an *epistemology of practice*. Lawson and Rowe were concerned with the actions of practice, what designers did and why, so they were focused on the *design process*. Though they all use the concept of "how designers think" or "design thinking" none of these foundational academics are working from a cognitive perspective where they study the thinking as such, but rather *use it as a more metaphorical phrase for patterns of reflection and action*. Later theorists, using Cross and Buchanan as examples, focus on the particular problem-solving processes of designers in concrete circumstances, and develop their own framework for "design thinking," and similar work continues in academe. Just as there is no single way to describe designers-in-action using their own "design thinking", a single, unified theory of "design thinking" does not exist.

Design thinking as a management discourse

After the millennium a discourse of "design thinking" sprouted in a management context, both within business media like Business Week (Adler, 2006), Fast Company (Dziersk, 2006), the Financial Times (Thornhill, 2006), and in the professional journals like the

Harvard Business Review (Brown, 2008) and the Design Management Review (cf., Alexis, 2006; Clark & Smith, 2008). "Design thinking" also moved into the business education discourse as a necessity for management students through articles in BizEd (Bisoux, 2007) and the Academy of Management Learning and Education (Dunne & Martin, 2006). There have also been a number of influential books, such as those by Tim Brown (2009), Tom Kelley (2001, 2005), and Roger Martin (2009), all of which straddle the professional and academic literatures. References to design within the management scholarly literature are essentially nonexistent until 2007, and then focused on topics of design and strategy (cf., special issue of Journal of Business Strategy, 2007, vol.28, iss.4), design and innovation (cf., Beckman & Berry, 2007; Journal of Business Strategy, 2009, vol.30 iss.2/3), followed by articles on topics such as design in relation to organizational learning, human resources development, and leadership. With few exceptions, the "story line" of these articles start with examples of design thinking in specific companies, that is, the same examples as used in the business media. This pattern suggests that the character of the discourse is a hype or an area that is more widely spread in the professional area than rooted in academic studies.

We can trace the growth of the area from articles and books written by principals from design consultancies, such as IDEO (Brown, 2009; Kelley, 2001, 2005), where a common anecdote is that Tim Brown used the expression "design thinking" as a way of explaining to managers what he and other designers do, and how this is different from "management – or analytical – thinking (Matt, 2009, Dec). These texts describe processes within design companies, emphasizing teams composed of individuals with different disciplinary backgrounds (e.g., anthropology, psychology, and engineering in addition to product designers.) The discourse spills into the business press though interviews and "sound bites" with design consultancy principals, then connects with academics working in the area of design management (cf., Lockwood, 2009), and promotion of "managing as designing" within the field of management (cf., Boland & Collopy, 2004; Martin, 2009). One consistent theme in the discourse is the need to "train managers as designers" so that they will have the necessary "design thinking" skills for business success. In this way the agenda of the management-focused discourse turns to

defining the specific of design thinking skills, how and when each should be used, and documenting how business success follows.

Ironies of Design Thinking

We begin with a short description of what is meant by an ironic perspective and then outline how we use perspective to explore, and then dissolve the hype of design thinking.

An ironic perspective – a short introduction

Irony is a trope that does not tell a story about reality, but deliberately tells many stories at the same time. The characteristic feature is that irony does not (only) tell what is literally said, but the inverse, or something else again. Irony, therefore, relies on paradoxes and ambiguities, which grow like weeds in the modern project, refusing the analytic trellis of pure reason and strict logic.

Irony belongs to one of the "master" tropes of interest in the organizational field (together with metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche) (Manning, 1979). *Trope* is the Greek word for "figure", which literally means "turn or twist", and different tropes are therefore systematic ways in which we turn and twist our language when making texts. With its roots in the Greece ancient academy, the study of tropes, including irony, has thrived within philosophy (Rorty, 1989), literature, and linguistics (Muecke, 1970). In organization theory the tropes of metaphor has been extensively used, while the trope of irony has been a rather tiny stream. However, recently it has gained some interest as a postmodern critical stance (Alvesson, 1995; Brandser, 2005; (Hoyle & Wallace, 2008); Oswick, Keenoy, & Grant, 2002; Sköldberg, 2005).

Irony is often confused with being negative or even false, as the opposite of what should be, implying something "unreal" or even something that should be left out when doing "proper" academic descriptions of the "real" world. However, because human beings inhabit the real world, it embraces ambiguities and paradoxes. Therefore, an ironic perspective on reality might be more real than plain text.

Irony can be seen as opposite to plain text, and is closely linked to humour. Linguists frequently regard humour as a sub-area of irony, while philosophers may talk about irony as a critical stance (Johansson & Woodilla, 2005). Most scholarly work about humour/irony notices that the taken for granted view of humour is separated from *serious talk*. It is done in such a way that *serious discourse* is designated as the most respectable, and humour as a deviance, as something less serious. However, as Mulkay concludes, the case can also be regarded as the opposite:

> The serious mode is seriously defective. Its fundamental presupposition appears to be wrong and to be inconsistent with the demonstration of social multiplicity that its very use has made possible. … When we employ the serious mode, although we may accept that the world is diverse and complex in many respects, we assume that behind its superficial disarray there is a single, coherent, and organized reality. This epistemological defect and simplification of the serious language poses difficulties and dangers that we can escape by using humour. (Mulkay, 1988)

Here we use the characteristic of irony that it embraces multiple perspectives without favouring one of them – something that differs from critical theories in Marxist or neo-Marxist traditions and from the ideals of modernism, where statements primarily should be false or true. Irony, through embracing multiplicity, is sometimes claimed to be *the* postmodern critical stance. Irony *happens* in "the unsaid, the unheard, and the unseen," and involves not only the making of meaning, but also "the construction of a sense of an evaluative attitude displayed by the text toward what is said and not said" (Hutcheon, 1994).

An ironic perspective accordingly allows us to move from a binary view such as (a) design thinking is/is not a fad and (b) a fad is/is not good to hold multiple perspectives in play simultaneously, and critically examine all facets of the complex situation.

An ironic analysis of design thinking

What is design thinking? From articles in the business press it seems to be the saviour of most problems: it is a way to solve problems both for the global corporation and an

entrepreneurial start-up. It is a new tool brought by fresh gurus and consultants to use with many types of problems, especially the wicked hard-to-define problems that engulf our age. The range of situations or areas where design thinking can solve problems seems infinite, including: strategy, innovation, branding, and customer relations, thus replacing tools created in the "age of production", such as TQM, BPR, Kaizen, Empowerment, and so on.

From a critical academic perspective, such a notion of design thinking becomes the opposite, a fad or balloon that will deflate into nothing when the fad era is over. There is nothing as pathetic as the great fad of yesterday. If design thinking is constructed as *the* universal tool for managerial success, it will certainly be buried in the cemetery of old fads that no one wants to be associated with anymore. While we are critical of the fad discourse of design thinking, we also believe it is worth a better fate than a meteoritic rise and fall. Instead we prefer to unravel new meanings from the bipolar construction of universal tool and critical horror, deconstructing and turning design thinking into something more nuanced.

An ironic perspective, we claim, allows us to pass between this Scylla and Carbides trap of binary thinking of either/or and instead to be critical without going totally against what is said and thereby throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Looking at the phenomena from an ironic perspective, where multiple dimensions can be taken into account, also allows us to discuss apparently paradoxical statements. We have chosen to explore the hype of design thinking from the following four ironic angles:

Design thinking is (not) something special – or the notion that there is both a baby and dirty bathwater that need to be separated.

As mentioned above, design thinking is often presented in the professional journals and books about design thinking as the cure-all medicine for managerial problems, especially in strategy and innovation where it is presented as the key to business success.

> …the global management paradigm is clearly shifting from left to right brain thinking. The new management mantra of the 21st century is breakthrough innovation via creative-design thinking. (Nussbaum, 2006)

> According a 2003 report by the Danish Design Center, increasing design activity such as design-related employee training boosted a company's revenue on average by 40% more than other companies over a five-year period. (Wong, 2006)

> The upshot, says (Roger) Martin, is nothing less than the emergence of the design economy -- the successor to the information economy, and, before it, the service and manufacturing economies. And that shift, he argues, has profound implications for every business leader and manager among us: "Businesspeople don't just need to understand designers better -- they need to become designers."… Design's powerful impact on business strategy will require a whole new way of thinking. (Breen, 2007)

These are influential sources, and the great promises and resulting expectations are not to be taken lightly. Of course, if all the promises are taken literally, they are bound to fail. However, it is not necessary to interpret the promises as false or true, but as exaggerations of something worthwhile and maybe applicable in part or to a different degree than promised. The irony is that you must recognize and "accept" the exaggerated promises and accept that they are not possible in order to come to something that is possible.

Of course "design thinking" is something special – even if it isn't it to the degree promised in the fad/hype. However, *what* is special is not really clear. The concept is surrounded by fog, and the question is what emerges from the fog when it dissipates. If you read the stream of design thinking grounded in IDEO (Brown, 2009; Kelley 2001, 2005), you find that one of the cornerstones is multidisciplinary teamwork and how to help the team become creative and innovative through using a designer's methods. If, on

the other hand, you read Martin (2009) you find that design thinking is primarily about using both the left and right sides of the brain.

From an academic theory-building perspective, it is not necessary to have a consensus framework for design thinking. However, when it is taken for granted that "design thinking" has a specific meaning and that it is – or should be – the same for everyone, then an academic problem arises. The false consensus that seems to sweep into the concept of "design thinking" in its managerial discourse is like a fog that surrounds the baby, and makes it impossible to see the shape "in the bathtub." We know that something of value is present despite the rival claims, and we would like to be able to see it without the fog of the hype.

Design and management are (not) two different worlds – or how to handle the dichotomy problem

Design and management are often said to belong to different worlds. Design is part of the art world where intuition and emotions are central, and management is part of the rational and analytical world. That is a perception shared by many practitioners as well as academics. But is this really the case? When talking about entrepreneurship, which many management scholars regard as the core of business, studies show that emotions and intuition are essential qualities or attributes (Johanisson, Feldt, & Westerlund, 2004). There are also phrases in colloquial speech like "a nose for business" and "business at your finger-tips" that indicate that rationality is not sufficient for starting a business. And an artist will need business as soon as he or she stops creating solely for his or her own pleasure. Design and management cannot be two totally different worlds.

How then to make sense of the separated, "two worlds" of design and management? Johansson & Woodilla (2005) claim that a paradoxical view of reality is necessary in order to understand the organizational world properly. In the situation of designers and managers, we need to both acknowledge and look away from the differences simultaneously. Acknowledging differences is necessary for a realistic anchoring, ignoring them is necessary to avoid being trapped by negative perceptions, a claim similar to the one made about gender differences by Johansson (1998) in her feminist

article. This paradoxical – or ironic – view is necessary to handle the situation in way that provides possibilities for both realism and change.

It might seem difficult to handle a paradoxical view of organizational situations. However, Johansson (1998) noticed in her ethnographic study of workers that most of them seemed to have no problem with *treating* paradoxes. In our own contact with students in the Masters in Business and Design at the University of Gothenburg, we noticed that students trained first in management and those trained first in design had a tendency to categorize each other, yet did not want to be categorized themselves. As their teachers, we needed to recognize the individual student's foundational discipline, especially when examining them, but simultaneously appreciate that the "management student" had a flair for design, and the design student was keenly interested in management, thus expecting strength in these areas also in the examination. The solution is not to avoid categorizations, but to see beyond them, to see (away) from them, or "see" and "not see" at the same time, that is, having an ironic perspective on the difference. Such a perspective allows us handle the flux that is part of most change processes.

We do (not) know much about what happens when design thinking meets management.

The encounter between the practical and professional worlds of design and management are interesting in many ways. We know from different investigations that many things happen and that there are sometimes – but not always – very positive results (DesignCouncil, 2004, 2005; Hertenstein, Platt, & Veryzer, 2005; Johansson, 2006a, 2006b). However we do not know very much about what really creates such results and from what theoretical perspectives they should be constructed.

Unfortunately, we cannot rely on much of what is said in the new hype for future research, because much of what is said is based on the quick-sand of popularized activities rather than foundational knowledge that could be used to build other research projects. Some are practitioners' own reports and reflections (for example, Brown, 2008; Kelley, 2001; Neumeier, 2008) about the successful outcomes of the process – something that is interesting to read and can inspire practitioners, but cannot be a foundation for

future research. Other contributions are made by those who certainly could claim academic credential (for example, Lockwood, 2009; Martin 2009) but choose to start with a popularized version before creating an original scholarly foundation, something that is necessary for other researchers.

The ironic distance between the hype and the designerly discourse.

If you glance quickly at the "design thinking" discourse in or directed at management you might expect the hype to be an application of the research field existing within the design field, in other words, a transformation of "design thinking" into the management context. The hype discourse could be an application and popularization of the 50-year-old field of research. This is not really what it is. And yet, this is of course what it is – at least if you consider the discourse in more general terms.

The problem is the separation of the two discourses. Within "the hype discourse" there are few references to any of the foundational works done within "the designerly discourse" of "design thinking". If you look at the list of references in the hype discourse it is almost as if the field started after the millennium, not 50 years ago. This is very problematic not only for ethical reasons and giving credit to those they must have given them inspiration in one way or another. It is even more problematic for the "discipline of design thinking" and its future development as a serious research field that straddles design and management in an interesting way.

The reason why it is so problematic is that for an academic standpoint or argument to be solid, it needs to be anchored in earlier knowledge and arguments. This is foundational for all research, including the designerly discourse about design thinking, where Schön begins by grounding his argument in relation to Simon,and later positions himself in a neo-Simon foundation. However, much to our surprise, there are few references from the fad managerial discourse to the 50 years of ongoing designerly discourse. It is clearly necessary for each academic author to be clear about his or her philosophical grounding and decide *what* concepts to build upon, rather than citing one or two others at making, a

compromise that would only be a hodgepodge. The implicit compromise makes the situation a hodgepodge of philosophies and concepts.

Summary reflections

In this paper we have tried to capture the ironic character of the current hype discourse of design thinking. We have also explored some differences and similarities between the hype discourse of design thinking and the older discourse academically anchored in design and architecture - the one that the fad discourse took off from, flying under its own wings into the management discourse. Currently the fad of design thinking is thriving within the management discourse - but what about the future?

Different future scenarios for design thinking are possible. In a darker scene, the hype enjoys a short period of popularity, with design consultants joining management teams to solve problems with their methods, but these methods are soon co-opted and used by management consultants who have always been skillful at incorporating methods from other fields in academia. This means that the designer tools will survive but the designers themselves may be left outside the management world. This is the scenario we label as "throwing the baby out with the bathwater" because it means that the management world's way of thinking rather than the design world will be the dominant paradigm.

We can also paint a more rosy future where academics and practitioners cooperate in exploring in what different ways design thinking can thrive within the managerial world. Here, some interventions lead by skilful design consultants are successful, although in a more limited way than the hype promised. The experience prompts managers to reflect on the process and to continue conversations about design thinking with designers and academic researchers long after the design thinking hype fades and is replaced by a long-lasting discourse that is imperious to subsequent hypes with different messages.

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