Strategizing Design Management from within: an Emergent Dynamic

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Résumé :

Cet article identifie la dynamique d'émergence d'une stratégie de design management intégré par la compréhension du processus de développement d'une activité de design nouvelle au sein d'une organisation traditionnelle, dont la création ne fait pas partie de ses activité clés. Nous tentons de comprendre comment de nouvelles pratiques créatives peuvent se développer et trouver une place dans une organisation de distribution. Complémentairement, avec le concept de stratégie émergente, nous essayons d'identifier comment, dans une logique d'apprentissage et temporelle, les différents niveaux de management d'une entreprise initient le management stratégique de cette nouvelle activité de design en interne et comment ils apprennent à la coordonner avec les pratiques historiques pour créer de la valeur. Nous avons adopté une recherche qualitative à travers une étude de cas empirique. Les résultats montrent un processus souterrain en 5 étapes et les initiatives de management à plusieurs niveaux menant (ou pas) à un management stratégique du design intégré.

Mots-clés : Design Management ; Conception de la stratégie ; Etude de cas ; Grande entreprise

Abstract :

This article identifies the emergent dynamics of Strategic Design Management initiation through the understanding of the underground development process of an in-house design activity within a non design-oriented firm. Through the notion of underground practices, we try to understand how new design practices can raise under the radars of the company. Complementarily, with the concept of emergent strategy-making -or strategizing, we try to identify how, in a learning dimension, the different levels of management of a company initiate Strategic Design Management and learn to coordinate these new practices with the historical ones. We adopted a qualitative design research through an empirical case-study. The results show a 5-steps underground process and the multilevel-management initiatives leading to Strategic Design Management.

Key words : Design Management ; Conception de la stratégie ; Etude de cas ; Grande entreprise

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INTRODUCTION

The current context of intensive innovation encourages managers to better coordinate all the resources and processes of the company to support the creation and development of new ideas (Cohendet et al, 2016). Creative activities face opposing dilemmas or pressures (Lampel et al., 2000), tensions (Tschang 2007), paradoxes (Andriopoulos, 2003, DeFillippi et al. , 2007) and opposing logic (Caves, 2000). Moreover, by seeking to internalize creative skills (Andriopoulos, 2001), more and more organizations, all sectors combined, are facing organizational paradox. Thus, more and more, creative and innovative practices tend to develop with an underground approach among organizations (Criscuolo et al, 2014). Stemming from internal autonomous initiatives (Mirabeau & Maguire, 2013), those practices give birth to emergent strategies (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). This research project focuses on the strategy-making process and practice (Burgelman et al, 2018) that leads to Strategic Design Management and more specifically, on the process and dynamic perspective of an in-house design function emergence.

In a longitudinal perspective (Ericson et al, 2015), we explore "pathways" by which Strategic Design Management may be initiated through an emergent process. This empirical study offers an understanding of the nine years' underground development history of a design activity that tends to lead to an emergent form of Strategic Design Management within a non-design oriented firm.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. DESIGN SPREADS WITHIN NON CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

More and more companies and consulting firms are seeking to internalize creative competence by creating an integrated design function, adopting design thinking, or acquiring design firms (Lockwood & Thomas 2008). This interest in design from practitioners is

reasoning with the growing interest among academics. Indeed, since the 60s, scholars tend to open the "black box" behind the buzzword "design" by looking at how designers think and work. Thus, the Design Methods movement has paved the way by bringing a different perspective to design activities in terms of creation of artifacts (Simon, 1969), production of meanings (Krippendorff, 2006) and meaningful innovation (Verganti, 2009). But beyond the "what", tangible and intangible "built" by designers, researchers were interested in the "how". And design began to be presented no longer as a result but as a way to achieve results. Thus Design activities are also decrypted as a way of thinking (Schön, 1983; Cross, 2011), a way of knowing (Cross, 2006) but also a creative problem-solving activity (Buchanan, 1992). But Design activities as for all creative activities face structural difficulties within organizations such as dilemmas or opposing pressures (Lampel, Lant and Shamsie, 2000), tensions (Tschang, 2007), paradoxes (DeFillippi, Grabher and Hones, 2007) and opposing logics (Caves, 2000). Indeed, in the case of an integrated design function, the place of design in the organization is decisive to better use its creative resources and achieve the firm's objectives (Borja de Mozota, 2003).

> *"Senior management must consider very carefully the special features of design works and design departments. It is then necessary to decide how best to structure such departments and how they may work with and relate to other parts of the company."* *(Oakley, 2011 [1984]: p.74).*

As early as 1984, Oakley's pioneering work focused on companies' interest in structuring and organizing design activities within organizations. But while a growing part of organizations tends to see design as a new internal practice and function (Lockwood & Papke, 2018), they are numerous to fail in turning the strategic potential of design into a realized competitive advantage, often by "mismanaging" in-house design competencies (Kotler & Rath, 1984). Organizations seem to struggle in learning the appropriate way to manage this creative competence as a strategic asset. Indeed, many companies are not well prepared for internal change and are often locked into historical structures and systems that make value creation complicated for new and emergent practices and activities, including design (Meyer, 2011). Creation of an in-house design function is not limited to integrating design competences but requires *"the adoption of design methods and practices, roles, structures and processes and environment"* (Meyer, 2011: p.194). The way design and creative resources are coordinated within the organization (Paris, 2013) is decisive to achieve the efficiency and innovation imperatives of the firm (Abecassis & Benghozi, 2012). The work of Borja de Mozota (2018;

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2003) goes in this direction by revealing the importance of a planned design management strategy in a company and not left to chance, to successfully integrate and unleash its value creation. In 2009, Borja from Mozota & Kim made a call to the Design Management research community to focus their efforts on the strategic management of design in organizations. Today, the literature in thin about the processes and practices allowing to set up a strategic management of design in an organization to allow it to go beyond the "supposed" strategic potential of design integrated within an organization. We question the ability of organizations to formulate and implement an adequate design strategy, especially for organizations whose design is a newly integrated activity and which is not yet one of its key activities. How do these companies do it and why does it not seem so obvious to transform the strategic potential of integrated design into a realized competitive advantage?

1.2. STRATEGIZING & EMERGENT DYNAMICS

The enlightening works of Burgelman (1983) and Mintzberg (1978) paved the way for a strategy process research used to understand where the strategies come from and to determine the pathways by which they are developed. Mintzberg & Waters (1985) distinguish two main categories of strategies: deliberate strategies and emergent strategies. While a deliberate strategy is the result of planned and organized intentions from the top management, an emergent strategy is constituted over time without being intentionally formulated or planned by this top management (ibid). Since Pettigrew (1992)'s call for a greater understanding of organizational phenomenon with a more temporal and dynamic perspective, process research has been of great interest in recent years, among diverse management areas (Langley, 1999; Langley et al., 2013) and specifically applied to the understanding of strategy process (Burgelman et al, 2018, Elbanna, 2006).

Defined by Mintzberg & Waters' empirical work (1985: 257) as *"patterns or consistencies realized despite, or in the absence of, intentions"*, *emergent strategies* put the organization in a *social learning process* (Burgelman, 1988). Emergent strategies may be shaped with a more or less "pure" form (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985), initiated by (1) *logical incrementalism*, initiating strategy through experimentation and learning (Quinn, 1980); (2) *political process* that result in interest group's negotiation for political status, resources or influences (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003; Narayanand and Fahey, 1992); and (3) by *organizational structure and systems* such as resources allocation influencing strategy making (Burgelman, 1983, 1991).

As demonstrated by Mirabeau and Maguire (2014), these emergent strategies can be generated from autonomous initiatives. Described as underground (Criscuolo et al, 2014), these internal and unsanctioned initiatives bring out new practices that develop, informally, micro-level processes under the radars of the firm and its Top Management (Friesl & Larty, 2013). Some succeed in initiating real change in the organization by gaining legitimacy and official recognition from Top Management; others are ephemeral (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) and fail to get sustainably embedded within the organization. The literature highlights general mechanisms and principles constituting emergent strategies as mentioned above (political issues, incrementalism, legitimacy, etc.) but few studies illustrate emergent strategies which fail to emerge in the organization. This issue is related to the one identified in the design management literature and the difficulty encountered by managers in bringing out a successful design management strategy.

2. RESEARCH QUESTION

With this study we expect to better understand the dynamic of emergence of a design management strategy, the practices of the actors and the processes that initiate and develop these future strategies. We hope to identify the difficulties encountered by the managers and the points of tension involved in this process of emergence (or non-emergence) of a strategic design management. This paper contributes to the Design Management field and more specifically to the discussion initiated on the strategic management of design. In addition, even if this is not our initial objective, this study may provide a new empirical case illustrating the processes and practices that make strategy and especially emergent ones. To contribute to this emerging research topic, we ask two questions: *1. Which steps constitute the development process of a design activity within a non-design oriented firm? 2. How and when is initiated the strategic management and articulation of this nascent design activity with the rest of the organization?*

3. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To explore the full complexity of this phenomenon, we adopted a qualitative design research through an empirical case study (Dumez, 2016). This research paper is embedded within the

process research view (Pettigrew, 1992; Langley, 1999) and in the case study heritage (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003; Dumez, 2016).

3.1. CASE SELECTION & CONTEXT

This empirical study focuses on the case of a big player in the retail industry, one of the world's leading retailer. In 2009, Top Management of the company decided to recruit a Design Director to develop an in-house design competence leading to a 40 people design department to these days. Gradually, the design department has expended and diversified by developing different design expertises structured into five areas of design application presented below: (1) *Trends & CMF* (colors, materials & finishes) is an expertise that tends to detect macro-societal insights and styles or uses' trends that inspire and influence the design of functional and emotional attributes of artifacts (i.e., product, space, etc.); (2) *branding and visual identity* are made by graphic designers that deals with the creation and development of all visual representation of the firm on a variety of media whose main objective is to ensure visual consistency (3); *product design* is a creative design process that shapes everyday objects to allow the company to differentiate from competitors with an exclusive offer, (4) *packaging design* is a creative and technical activity that develops the shape and graphics of product packaging; and (5) *retail design* creates physical spaces (including furniture and signage) such as stores or other specific areas (shop in shop, restaurant area, etc.).

This case is relevant to our study because the company, as a mass retailer, is structured and organized to exploit two main activities that are purchase-resale at large scale and logistics. This company was not thought and organized to develop in-house creativity at its beginning. There is no historical design process or any kind of creation activity. The branded-products, for instance, were not designed internally but purchased from suppliers. Moreover, the logic of designing a product internally, the creative process of starting from a blank page, without knowing what the product will look like at the end is an opposite logic to those historically in place in the company that resides to buy already designed products from suppliers. Furthermore, without a clear roadmap development from Top Management regarding to Design, the former Design Director got in a situation of autonomy to develop this design activity. He developed this activity by importing creative practices, methods, and cultures that are specific to the design profession and that are new and unfamiliar to a traditional retailer whose core business is purchasing/selling and logistics. Thus, the development of this creative

activity came to face the historical processes and routines of the company. About nine years after, the company still faces difficulties in integrating this creative activity that remains marginal within the organization and in coordinating it with its traditional core activities to generate value.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION

We conducted a case study (Dumez, 2016) by adopting a historical approach (Ericson et al, 2015; Vaara and Lamberg, 2016). We are part of the process studies heritage (Langley, 1999, Langley & Tsoukas, 2010).

We collected three primary data sets covering nine years of this design department's life (from 2009 to 2018) by conducting individual interviews, ethnographic data collection through a participant-observation and finally the collection of corporate documents.

Individual interviews

First, we conducted 24 opened interviews from 50 to 90 minutes with actors who had experienced the evolution of this design activity: we collected personal perceptions, opinions, and narratives of each actor about the design function's emergence. More specifically we asked each participant to describe through a chronological narrative his arrival within the organization, in the design department, the design activity through projects and mission description, relations to other entities of the company, their evolution over time and finally the significant events they have been able to notify. This led to a nine-year longitudinal, and descriptive understanding of the dynamic phenomenon studied. The interviews were conducted between September 2017 and March 2019 (during the access to the field by one of the authors), and have made it possible to reconstruct the history of this design activity since 2009. Among the people interviewed we count the 2 design directors who succeeded each other during this study, the 6 design managers who are attached to them, as well as 10 designers who have enough seniority to reconstruct passages of the development of this in-house design department. Finally, we interviewed 5 employees outside this design entity, working directly or indirectly for several years with the design teams to bring us a different perspective. Finally, we were able to interview the Top Manager that hold Design in his portfolio of activities, but his experience with the design activity dates back only a year ago.

Corporate documents

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Second, we collected archival documents such as strategic directives, organizational charts, project dashboards, mission statements and job descriptions, media used for presenting design entity within the organization or formalized outputs of past projects, allowing us to triangulate interviews and to corroborate the established chronology since 2009.

Participant-observation

Third, we led a participant-observation (David, 2000) for one year and a half. One of the authors is entirely part of this design department (4 days a week) during his Phd thesis, by providing insights in Design Management to the Design Management Board and by advising and working with the Design Director to implement design management tools. Due to this "operational" mission and "raison d'être" within the field according to the others actors, one of the authors has the privilege to be fully immerge within the field and can easily observe and take part in special management meetings, project life cycle, and informal talks. Furthermore, the author can observe the daily life of the five design teams due to the configuration of the open space. This integration within the fields allowed us to discover the daily practices of managers and stakeholders about design management.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

The data processing is based on three main stages:

(1) First, we adopted a descriptive narrative strategy (Langley, 1999), in order to provide a detailed story from heterogeneous, multiple and raw data, and take a contextualized perspective from our unique case study. We started by building the events' chronology related to the evolution of the design department. To understand the organizational phenomenon studied in all its richness and complexity, we have written a thick description. Due to a confidential agreement, the full description of the case is not joined in detail to the paper, but the findings suggested in the following section should allow you to feel the research field as if you were there.

(2) Second, to analyze the nonlinear dynamic perspective of the organizational process studied, we used visual mapping and temporal bracket strategies to structure the descriptive narrative into five periods described within the findings section.

(3) Finally, we used temporal brackets as a basis for our illustrative framework of the emergent Strategic Design Management. We identified actions and situations at different

organizational levels, reflecting where and how Design Management has been initiated within the organization.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

The findings are organized in two parts, one for each of the two sub-questions guiding this research: *1. Which steps constitute the development process of a design activity within a non-design oriented firm? 2. How and when is initiated the management and articulation of this nascent design activity with the rest of the organization?*

4.1. A 5-STEPS UNDERGROUND PROCESS

Five major steps characterizing the underground process of the design function's emergence and development within the organization were identified: (1) launching the activity, (2) building the structure, (3) operational and credibility construction phase, (4) demonstrating the value of design and finally (5) the beginnings of a transition to a strategic role. Figure 1 illustrates the visual mapping analysis, followed by a more detailed description.
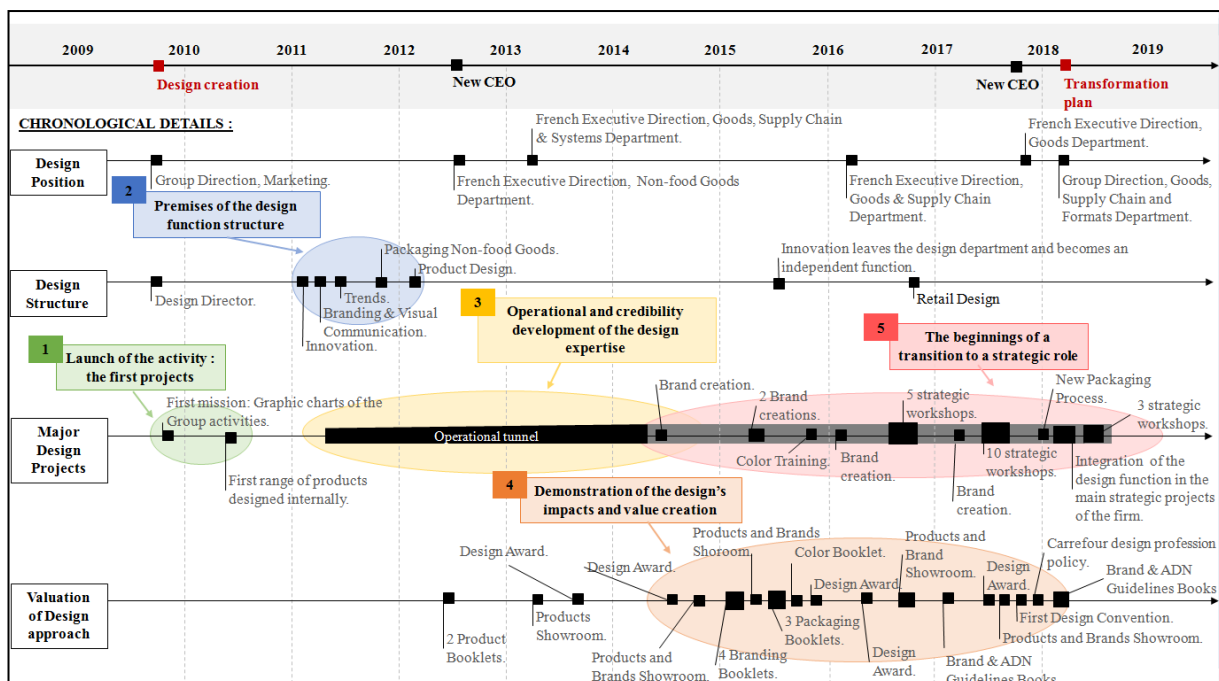
Figure 1. Visual Mapping illustrating major steps of the design function's integration process

(1) Launch of the activity: Creating alliances beyond official borders

The design department was created in 2009, at the initiative of the former CEO and Marketing Director. They recruited a Design Director that was recognized for his experience in integration and management of design function in organizations that he has developed in several companies where design has been elevated to a strategic level. His first mission was to ensure the visual consistency of the firm. After being part of the Marketing department, the design director developed the design activity beyond the official and limited scope entrusted to him. Very quickly, he began to create relationships with frontline managers throughout the organization.

> *"I started to make contact with some actors in the Non-Food Department, and they asked me if I could help them. And then after others came to see me saying, incidentally, it surprised me every time, the way they asked me 'I was told what you did for this category of products, and I was recommended to come to see you because I was told you could help me.'"*–Design Director

Collaborations then developed spontaneously and informally, without the official mission of the hierarchy, by recommendations and desires of the different stakeholders of the firm. Especially front-line managers saw in in-house design practices a way to explore a new way of working, generating new relevant outcomes, that comes to consolidate historical operating.

> *"I started taking a trainee and started developing graphics and products in a rather empirical almost chaotic way, I was going to say. It was a product manager I met who was telling me - I wish we could work on it (not officially) and then we'll see »*-Design Director.

But the Design Director lacked resources to meet internal demand. The development and implementation of these new projects allowed the Design Director to obtain the agreement of the CEO to develop the design activity by starting to recruit profiles of designers that differ from the original mission.

(2) Premises of the design department structure: Hiring and practicing before structuring

To support and increase this mission and perimeter's expansion within the organization, he recruited different profiles of designers from multiples disciplines. This embryonic team will crystallize the structure and actions of the design department. Alongside the integration of these new skills, the design department integrated a domain that was already present in

another entity of the group, non-food packaging. Packaging is a historical activity for the company that concerns all packs of products sold under the name of the group's brand. This team is partly composed of business profiles, which deal with the management of the packaging development chain whose creative part is subcontracted to external design agencies. The packaging manager started then to recruit packaging designers to integrate creative skills that will be complementary with the business skills of the historical team. After this phase of relative expansion and structuring of the design function, a new CEO takes the helm of the company and launched a major internal transformation plan. Design leaves its place within the Group Marketing Direction and is attached to the French Executive Management, within the operational department of non-food goods.

(3) Operational and credibility development of the design expertise: being useful to core-business stakeholders

The gain in the credibility of the disciplines was done by a relational work of the actors in order to make understand their expertise and make them want to collaborate on projects. We note that the first projects were operational and demonstrated the ability of designers to deliver concrete results related to the core business. It was mainly a desire of the Design Director, to enter into the business activity of the company by the projects and not by formal and official governance. And thus, demonstrate their ability to deliver concrete results, by their work on the field with the other stakeholders. At the micro-level, the strong relation with frontline managers allowed the designers to be part of existing processes and demonstrate how they can be useful. Recruitment progressively began, and the teams formally structured themselves.

> *"The first challenge for design was to show the added value of the discipline through our know-how. It was necessary to have the design competence recognized internally as a true expertise. »*-Design Manager

> *"There was a whole phase like that at the beginning, and we were a bit of the pioneers, we gleaned the projects by giving desire, explaining a lot, a lot of pedagogy. (...) Project after project, we had gained credibility and gradually legitimacy."*-Design Manager

(4) Demonstrating the design's impacts and value creation: highlighting the "underground"

This fourth phase is just as structuring as the previous one in the process of implementing design in the organization and played a significant role in the influence that design can have on the organization whatever its position or its governance. We observed that individuals were also led by an active strategy of promoting value creation by design. Through the formalization of design processes and design trainings' booklets, products and brands' showroom. Finally, the tangibility of the artifacts created and the Design Awards, received in national and international competitions, have further strengthened this strategy. Therefore, by proving their added value by an operational aptitude and the communication efforts provided internally, designers gained the necessary legitimacy within the company that leads them to play an increasingly strategic role.

*(5) The beginnings of a transition to a strategic role: Don't miss the step*

Based on their operational proof and vast micro-level network, designers have taken a very proactive approach to position themselves on more strategic issues. They gradually managed to convince stakeholders to go back to the decision-making process and demonstrate their ability to lead projects from the strategic thinking to their exploitation and implementation. This transition to a more strategic role is also illustrated by the new Top management's decision to position the design function at the group level and thus give it higher governance over all the design activities that can be carried out within the Group. But, some tensions, due to that new "official" design strategy, appeared within the organization, including political, budgets, and resource allocation. Some stakeholders tend to highlight the illegitimacy of design function on such large and strategic perimeter, that does not officially belong to them. Furthermore, the nascent context of the Organization's transformation plan, exacerbated by the Design Director voluntary retirement, is challenging what belongs and not belongs to this department perimeter.

> *"Before we would call on us as a last "choice" or when they had a problem, we were asked our opinion, but then they did what they wanted."*-Design Manager

> *"At the end of this day of workshop, he saw that we were able to bring more than a graphic element, that we could help him in its reflection on its brands structure."*-Design Manager

4.2. DESIGN MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION: A TEMPORAL AND MULTILEVEL MANAGEMENT EMERGENCE

Once we were able to retrace the overall development process of this new design activity we sought to identify all the initiatives of management and articulation of the nascent design entity with the rest of the organization at different managerial levels of the company. Figure 2 illustrates these initiatives structured by two axes. (1) A temporal perspective based on the five steps identified in previous findings about the design activity development process and (2) a multi-level approach by focusing on Top/Middle/Front-line managers' actions.
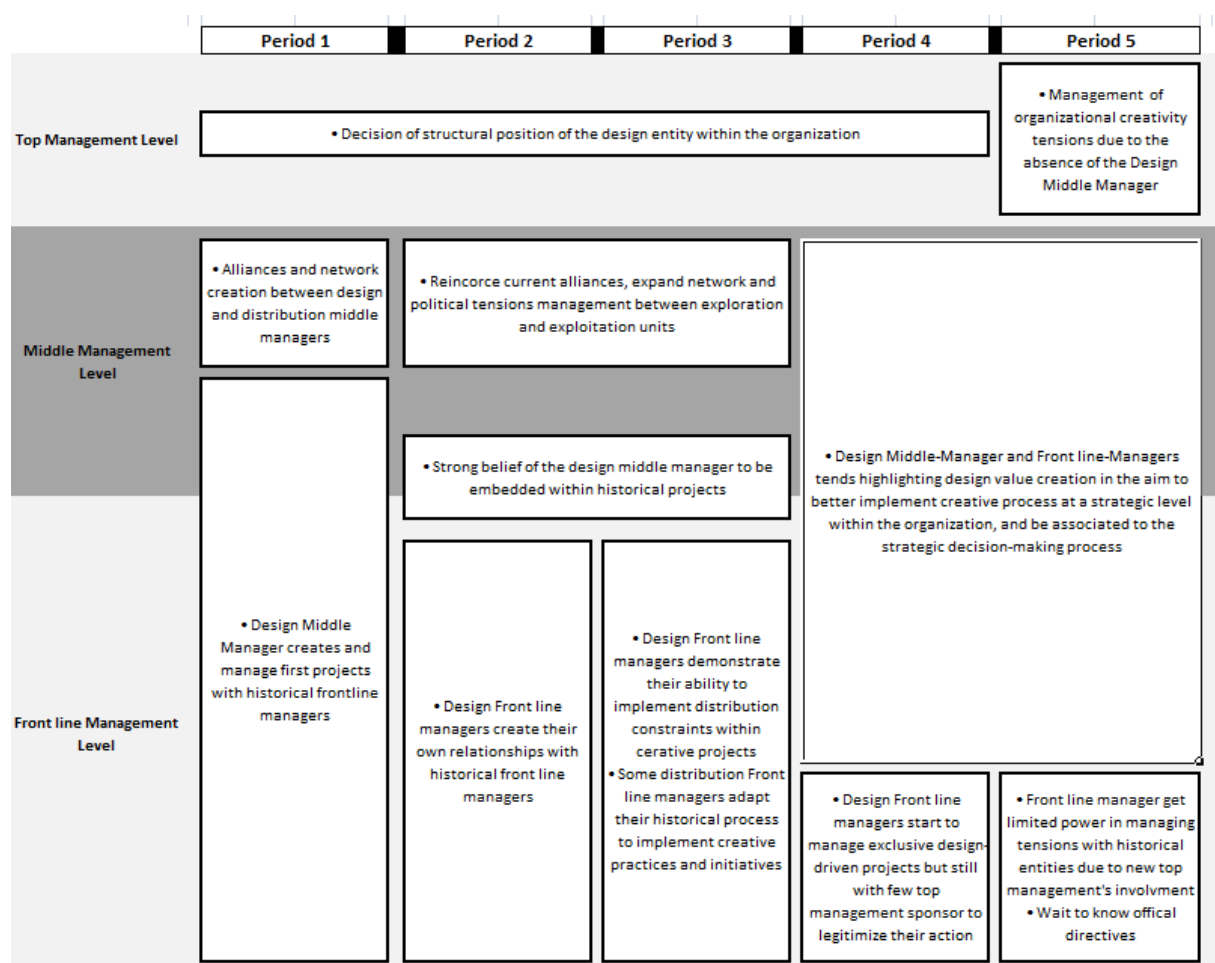
Figure 2. Illustrative framework of Design Management Initiatives

4.2.1. Top Management

We notice first of all that the main initiative, if not the only, operated by the top management, concerns the decision to position and structure the design entity within the organization. Indeed from the outset, it seems that the choice was to develop an independent entity

(although attached to different major directions of the company) and isolated from the rest of the organization and in particular to historical operations. During the last transformation plan of the company and following the retirement of the former director of design, the top management questioned the structural isolation and the possibility of dispatching and integrating the design activities in the various entities in charge of distribution processes for better agility and efficiency. Finally, the choice was to maintain isolated the design entity.

4.2.2. Middle Management

In the absence of a Top down deliberate strategy, the Design Director got the initiatives to suggest new routines to start to manage and coordinate design and historical processes. Through networking, he sought to build relationships and begin to meet design and distribution processes unofficially. During the development of the design activity, middle managers' stakes lay in the management of the tensions between the different activities. Indeed by responding to contrary logic, the coordination of these processes and routines was not so obvious. In particular, concerning the scope of action of each activity, the issues of legitimacy, governance. We see that progressively, a robust political work was made by the Design Director to legitimize and try to establish clear governance by obtaining (or not) the agreement of the tops managers to officially embed the design actions regarding to historical operations. And so do so that it is no longer dependent on the goodwill of particular historical middle managers.

4.2.3. Front-line Management

An articulation of the practices and processes of design and distribution has been operated by the front-line managers directly in the projects. This was done very agile, each project, with different interlocutors with different articulations. In the beginning, they were the Design Managers who sought to adapt their practices to those of distribution ones, to enter the historical processes. Then, when they began to gain legitimacy and were able to demonstrate their value creation, it was the distribution managers who sought to adapt their historical process to bring design practices into their area of activity. Progressively, Design Managers have sought to become a little more independent regarding to distribution managers by developing 100% design projects. But these projects realized by design teams got difficulties to be successfully and officially implemented and renowned at the all organization scale due to the thin weight of official and supported strategy within the organization. A difficulty to

exist in some way, if design practices and processes are not grafted to historical and legitimate distribution entities and processes, to the historical strategy.

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research is to understand globally the emergent dynamic of strategic Design Management initiation through the understanding of the underground development process of an in-house design activity within a non design-oriented firm. To explore this broad topic, we focused our work around two sub-questions that structured our main findings. As a result, our research contributes to two fields of research: on the one hand our first result, by identifying the five stages of the process of integration and development of a in-house design activity within a retail organization allows us to feed the engaged academic discussions on *underground activity emergence and strategy-making process & practice, with the specificity of an unplanned creative strategy.* On the other hand, our second result, which captures the initiatives at the origin of a form of management of creativity and especially Design activity, comes to dialogue with the *Design Management* literature. It is around these two research issues, and consequently, around the two related questions asked in this research paper, that we propose to initiate three main discussion points.

5.1. EMERGENT PROCESS OF STRATEGIC DESIGN MANAGEMENT

As mentioned by Borja de Mozota 2003, the case study allows us to confirm that the implementation of an in-house design activity does not necessarily correspond to a top-down logic following a mandate established by senior executives. Indeed, we see here that it follows an emergent dynamic at the initiative of front-line managers and middle managers. This bottom-up logic takes root mainly directly in projects with front line managers who perform a tailor-made articulation of the design activity with its various points of contact and anchoring within the organization. Our longitudinal study of this specific case allows us to reveal that the initiative of isolating the creative activity within a single entity regarding to the rest of the organization was decided by the top management, but all the actions allowing to organize and to strategize design activity followed a bottom-up dynamic almost end-to-end. This emergent strategy initiated by the front-line managers and middle managers allowed us to identify a different sequencing of the organization's experience in the management of design and thus contribute to a process perspective to the Strategic Design Management field and especially to

the structural and organizational issues revealed by Meyer (2011). Thus, we suggest in discussion a 3-stages emergent process of organizational creativity formation : (1) *a proactive articula*tion (or *push*) of creative and historical activities guided by design front-line/middle managers by seeking to adapt their own practices to better be grafted to distribution processes and routines; (2) *a reactive articulation* (or *pull*) initiated by distribution managers demanding/soliciting design practices punctually and adapting their historical processes to adopt new way of working to better achieve their objectives; (3) *a process articulation* where design and distribution managers, mutually, define a new way of organizing and coordinating their activities at the scale of the organization in a more frequent manner. But the study highlights the consequences of the lack of top-down initiatives from senior executives. Indeed, despite underground efforts from operational and middle managers to better coordinate creative practices with the traditional ones, this way to manage Design would not be sustainable. Indeed, we notice that without the official mandate coming to formalize and anchor the new process established in the organization, the processual articulation of design activities remain ephemeral and get difficulties to ultimately emerge without the appropriate support from Top Management.

5.2. THE "KNITTING" OF A MICRO-LEVEL INTERFACE AS A GATEWAY TO THE EXISTING ORGANIZATION

In line with Criscuolo et al (2014) "going underground" is the pathway by which individuals decide to borrow to develop new projects or practices, here a design activity, within a large organization, especially when these new activities lack official and formal organizational support and planned strategy. In our case, we posit that organic development of this design activity has been through a process of networking and an operational strategy with the creation of very fine links to manage multiple points of tension with a micro-level interface. Thus, we note a whole craft work to the existing organization that has been operated point by point. This transplant is played at the scale of practices rather than at the top management level. But what we notice here is that individuals have taken some degree of autonomy in how to develop in an underground way this new design activity not only because they want it individually, but also, because of the lack of vision about the development of this new activity by top managers, leaving them enough freedom to seize this autonomy.

Nevertheless, by remaining on a knitting strategy at the micro level, there is a fragility and dependence regarding Top Management. If the transplant work is long, meticulous, the challenge by the top management, which represents the institution, can be done very quickly. Indeed, here, this work of knitting (in a very "processing" way) finds its limit in the absence of institutionalization which would make sustainable the design activity and the organic organization built at the micro level. This case perfectly illustrates the need to work on the complementarity between processual (especially emergent) and institutional logics, all too often put in opposition. The search for a form of hybrid development of organizations and strategies would make it possible to benefit from both approaches without one being able to destroy the other, but the one reinforcing the other and reciprocally.

5.3. STRUCTURAL INSTABILITY OF DESIGN MANAGEMENT: STAYING AUTONOMOUS WHILE ENROLLING IN THE ORGANIZATION

Through our case, we discover the history of a design entity that from its creation was "separated" from the historical process and therefore set up as an isolated activity. The top management has, therefore, initially designed it in a structural model. But the rest of the story shows that from the one hand design managers try to get out of this structural model by integrating historical processes and by adapting their activities to spread design practices within the organization. On the other hand this "visceral" or "defensive" reflex to maintain the design entity isolated from the rest of the organization to retain sufficient autonomy not to distort its creative activity, and not be drowned in the middle of distribution processes and routines. This tension of structural instability of the design entity has, to our knowledge, not been evoked through current literature and is maybe a key factor in understanding to which extent the ambiguous position of a design entity that tries to keep its autonomy while trying to mesh with the rest of the organization get the difficulty to exist within this distribution company. The difficulty to find a form of stability that allows the activity to grow without being questioned, which prevents it from sustainable emergence over the long term.

CONCLUSION

This research paper aimed to better understand the emergent dynamics of Strategic Design Management initiation through the understanding of the underground development process of an in-house design activity within a non-design-oriented firm. We analyzed the nine years'

history of a French mass retailer that internalized design activities within its organization historically structured and organized to distribute, not to create. This historical reconceptualization allowed us to identify five steps that constitute the underground and emergent process of development of a design entity within a non design-oriented organization. Also, the results revealed where and when multi-level management initiatives take place in strategizing and organizing design within an organization that never faced this challenge before. These results allow us to engage the discussion within an emerging research stream focusing on a process and dynamic perspective of Design Management. Thus, we suggest an alternative process to understand better how by the succession of autonomous (1) *proactive,* (2) *reactive* and (3) *process* articulation's initiatives an organization experiences design. Finally, we open our discussion by introducing the *structural instability of organizational creativity* whose issue may reside in the interplay between sufficient autonomy and appropriate integration of design activities regarding to historical systems. We hope this study and its insights will contribute to open the black box of the emergent pathways leading to Strategic Design Management.

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