

# **Conception process and organization coordination in design-based industries : new structures and strategies**

**Pierre-Jean Benghozi, September 2003**

## ***Abstract :***

The question of property right is a powerful symptom of transformations innovation and technical mutations entail : evolution of products, production processes, distribution and consumption means, new actors, competitive structure of the market, concentration and diversification, regulation and control... Innovation and conception become more and more collaborative and less and less mosaic (simply combining competencies). It was already the case in cultural industry. But this phenomenon has been strengthened and widened to others sectors. Usually creative industries are defined as industries of entertainment and art, specifically dedicated to producing disks, movies, books, cultural services and so on. Nowadays, this a very narrow view as it is easily observed that traditional industrial sectors are using, more and more frequently, creative inputs in their production. In particular, most industries rely on design for the conception of their new products. Such phenomenon highlights specific questions risen by the emergent importance of the design.

Firstly, it changes the way production processes and industrial organizations are structured in culture-related sectors. Producers innovation strategies strengthen technical possibilities, for they try to minimize their risks privileging repetition of success or steady patterns. New distribution systems involve new economic systems : new markets , new public segmentation, new products, new timing. Enlarging traditional means for consuming creation-based productions, copyright values grows and implies, thereby, a new labor division and the irruption of new actors in the creation process. These new collaborators are hardly located in the production process : according to the cases, their contribution can be conceived as a technical benefit (paid as a salary) or as a creative contribution (remunerated by property right or neighbor right). Therefore no labor organization is unanimously accepted and shared, as one can see in cultural industry (movie e.g.). In such a context, each production can represent a particular arrangement and gives place for negotiation to determine precisely the nature and the origin of the creative contribution.

Yet, growing importance of property right in design-based industries forces public authorities to change their conception and their definition of creative worlds, formulating new policies and establishing new enforcement policies. Complexity of design production results from the bursting of the creative productions and the diversity of marketing and conception contexts. New dependencies take place between various sectors (multiplication of alliances, vertical and horizontal diversifications, interconnections between markets formerly disconnected) and harmonization of the different legal systems becomes therefore very important. When different industrial sectors draw nearer to one another, vocabularies, notions, concepts and judicial systems juxtapose themselves but consistency is not granted.

In the paper, we shall characterize the articulation between, on the one hand, the creative conception of the product handled by the designers and, on the other hand, the strategic perspective, the technological and the production process handled by engineers and entrepreneurs in the industrial firms. More precisely, we shall demonstrate that different types of structures are at stake, from a large autonomy of the designers to their complete integration within the industrial organization of the firm. In each possible structure, the degree of creativity and the symbolic and esthetic content of the goods are different, the ability of artists and designers to influence the demand and to carry on a specific esthetic viewpoint as well.

As a consequence, one can observe contrasting evolutions of the structure and organization of design activity : increasing independance of the designers' agencies *vs.* tendency to make designers more anonymous and substituable, keeping the labour market very open and flexible.