

Preface

Nowadays, the term Design is more extensively used than ever before with reference to a ‘galaxy’ of meanings or better, to use the words of Peter Lunenfeld, to the *Design Cluster*.¹ In this very broad context, design research (for or with or through design) has acquired increasingly defined value with time: describing practices, identifying methods, establishing invariants or perfecting tools are activities which have expressed the numerous approaches to this discipline.

The problems, environments, methods, tools and case histories presented in this publication describe a specific area of the *Design Cluster*, part of which is still undefined like a foggy cloud, which is extremely interesting because it is transversal to the thematic-applicative areas in which we are used to subdivide the discipline. *AdvanceDesign* has never been told, read or theorized but it is a consolidated practice in product design. Born in the car sector and then extended to other production domains it is undoubtedly linked to the future dimension of design but also to its specific innovation methods. If the initial phases of the process of innovation are internationally recognized as fundamental in this historic moment through the emerging of themes regarding the Front End of Innovation, then we are deeply convinced that the area of Design, our discipline, has a lot to say. Creating *AdvanceDesign* means radically innovating but also innovating through unexplored routes through the involvement of users or imagining plausible and unexpected scenarios.

AdvanceDesign, Envisioning product and process form is the name of a research group that between 2009 and 2012 worked first on this theme and then produced this publication. A name that has an identity-related value and that encapsulates the research team’s intentions in the claim.

¹ In the preface of the publication by Brenda Laurel on Design Research, Lanfield poetically compares the current extent of the disciplinary area of design to that which for an astronomer is a combination of galaxies, or a *cluster*. P. Lanfield, *The Design Cluster*, preface to Design Research, Brenda Laurel ed. MIT Press Cambridge Massachusetts 2003, pp.10–15.

Envisioning: imagining, visualizing and drawing are activities that are closely linked to design action. The type of design know-how is characterized by visual knowledge that distinguishes it from other forms of know-how.

Product and process: the new complexities of the product, its new qualities and the ways they are expressed and perceived, but also their social, economic and environmental impacts lead us not only to consider the product but also the process that generates it, as the design subject.

Form: form not for its own ends, but as the image of transformations; form as the capacity to visualize future possibilities and render them tangible; form as an integral part of the innovation process.

AdvanceDesign is not just highly developed design, but also design which anticipates, which sees before others. The analytical context in which this research is placed is made of a combination of two faces: on one side, the various theoretic approaches, methods and tools that characterize it and, on the other, the forms assumed in the various fields of application narrated with the spirit of *reflective practice*.² Some of us who, right from the start, decided to devote themselves to the historical and theoretic reading of the phenomenon of *AdvanceDesign* produced brief documents, presentations and sometimes interpretative schemes, and subjected their reflections to the group, looking for a reading key that could be shared. These contributions were gradually formalized and form the first part of the publication where the context in which this research was born is clarified, along with the definitions, the historical dimension, tools and approaches that have characterized *AdvanceDesign*. The second part of the publication contains a series of contributions that look at specific environments in which *AdvanceDesign* has found fertile ground. From cars to electrical appliances and lighting design, from business networks to technology parks and the creative development of innovative materials: different roads to explore the dynamics between research and design.

In the ambivalence of the meaning of *AdvanceDesign* the two souls of this discipline are expressed. On one hand, a hard nucleus linked to the tangible dimension, where design is a technical environment focused on the development of the product and on production materials and technologies. On the other hand, a soft, more ethereal essence, linked to intangibility, where design becomes the encoder of social, cultural and emotional needs and produces new forms and meanings through the creative dimension.

This collection of essays aims to trace the contours for *AdvanceDesign*, identifying the ingredients and invariants that have emerged from the historical reading and, at the same time, generates a series of openings towards emerging research themes.

² Shön D.A., *The reflective practitioner*, Basic Book, New York, 1983. Trad it. *Il professionista riflessivo*, Dedalo, Bari, 1993.

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