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CALL FOR PAPERS

Design Thinking (DT), Challenges and Perspectives in a Changing Economic World

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The advent of tomorrow's world is marked by the emergence of complex and urgent challenges in various fields, such as climate change (IPCC, 2021) and the over-exploitation and depletion of natural resources (WWF, 2022). These challenges are amplified by the rapid acceleration of technology (Gartner, 2023), leading to profound structural changes in society (OECD, 2023). It is necessary to adopt new, innovative, and creative approaches, call for divergent thinking and seek sustainable, inclusive solutions. In this context, DT is emerging as a promising methodology to meet these imperatives (Brown, 2008).

Conceptualized by Brown (2008), DT is an approach that places people at the heart of any innovation process, emphasizing empathy, collaboration, and experimentation to find innovative solutions. By integrating analytical thinking and creativity, this methodology plays a critical role in the economy by fostering economic value creation for companies and stimulating entrepreneurship and innovation (Kelly & Kelly, 2013). By combining a in-depth understanding of user needs with innovative design approaches, DT offers opportunities to rethink business models, create more competitive products and services, and contribute to sustainable economic growth. Numerous applications have been developed and adapted to different sectors, goods, and services, both commercial and non-commercial, in various countries, from the North to the South. Where are we fifteen years later? The aim of this issue is to evaluate the evolution of this concept and its various applications and adjustments to solve the complex problems affecting our society, by exploring its different dimensions from two complementary angles: the perspective of technical process engineering and that of management and administration.

The concept of DT can hardly be described as new, since it has its origins in the 1960s, with the pioneering work of figures such as Herbert Simon (1969), exploring the notion of "design science," and John Chris Jones (1970), highlighting the importance of creativity in problem-solving. It was in the 1990s that Tim Brown, CEO of the design firm IDEO, widely popularized this approach, spreading its precepts throughout the world of business and organizations (Brown, 2008; Cross, 2011).

In an environment where the digitization and digital transformation of companies are progressing rapidly, necessitating a thorough overhaul of its processes and services, DT is positioning itself as an essential foundation for leading this transformation in a human-centered way. Initially driven by the rise of digital technologies, this approach is distinguished by its commitment to empathy, iteration, and collaboration (Bender, 2020).

However, successful integration of these technologies requires a DT-based approach. Placing the end-user at the heart of the process becomes imperative. In a study on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on recruitment at Techni France, DT emerges as an essential enabler by offering a perspective where AI improves and optimizes processes while placing humans at the center of the approach (Fraij and Laszlo, 2021).

The relevance of DT was also evident during the COVID-19 global health crisis in 2020, which created a number of complex challenges for industrial players, who were suddenly confronted with market disruptions and an uncertain future. In this context, a DT-based approach has enabled companies to navigate unpredictable environments and adapt to rapid change. This tool is therefore essential for organizations striving for resilience and long-term prosperity (Cankurtaran & Beverland, 2020).

From the view point of government institutions facing the innovation imperative, experimental initiatives based on the DT method have been launched with the aim of reassessing policy issues and designing and then evaluating new approaches (Lallemand, 2018). As a result, DT is becoming increasingly integrated into public policy, materialized by the multiplication of innovation labs within the public sector (PSI labs). These entities, often in close collaboration with administrations, embody the notion of "policy labs" and promote DT as a framework for public innovation (Williamson, 2015b), with the aim of fostering sustainable territorial development by focusing on human and environmental dimensions, while taking local needs and ecological challenges into consideration.

Although DT is not a panacea, it offers a powerful and adaptable methodological framework for exploring innovative solutions to future challenges (Kimbell, 2011). As a result, its innovation potential is spreading rapidly to fields such as management, education, healthcare, sustainable development, and artificial intelligence.

However, despite its growing adoption and popularity in various sectors, as evidenced by the increase in publications (Berendsen et al., 2020), training courses (IDEO, 2019), and conferences dedicated to this approach (Kolko, 2015), the initial enthusiasm for DT has been tempered by the emergence of other methodologies such as Agile or Lean Startup, which have gained traction in recent years, diverting attention away from this approach.

Thematic Focus

Contributions are welcome in one or more of the following areas:

Axis 1: Interdisciplinary exploration of DT: Processes, economic impacts and sectoral adaptation

- Specific analytical thinking and creativity processes used in the context of DT.
- Difference between DT and traditional problem-solving approaches.

- Contribution of the DT to innovation and the creation of adaptive solutions.
- Challenges and obstacles encountered in the application of DT in different organizational contexts.
- Adaptability of the DT to the specific needs of different industries or sectors.
- Impact of DT on value creation in companies.
- DT is a method for improving the efficiency of economic processes, such as production, distribution and consumption.
- The role of DT to designing innovative and sustainable business models.
- The contribution of the DT in the design of products and services that meet the economic needs of consumers while being socially and environmentally sustainable.
- The economic implications of integrating DT into companies' product and service development processes.
- DT is a means of stimulating entrepreneurship and economic innovation in disadvantaged regions or communities.
- DT is a method of solving complex economic problems, such as access to financial services or reducing economic inequality.
- Challenges and opportunities for economists to integrate DT into their research and analysis methods.
- Application of DT principles to the design of economic policies and sustainable development programmes.

Axis 2: DT and the resilience of organizations to contemporary challenges

- DT is an effective approach to address complex problems associated with contemporary societal challenges (such as climate change, resource depletion, etc.) by promoting a creative and holistic approach
- The different dimensions of DT, how these dimensions interact in the innovation process, particularly with regard to solving complex problems?
- DT-specific mechanisms and approaches have been successfully used to help companies adapt to major market disruptions and an uncertain future.
- How can DT contribute to improving organizational performance and operational efficiency, fostering a culture of innovation and adaptability?
- What role can DT play in promoting the long-term resilience and prosperity of organizations, especially in a landscape of rapid change and increasing complexity?
- How can DT *practices and principles* be adjusted and adapted to effectively meet the specific needs of different industries and organizations, while maximizing their relevance and applicability?
- What are the main challenges and obstacles to the widespread adoption of DT in different organizational and social contexts, and what strategies can be considered to overcome them?
- What are the best practices for effectively integrating DT into the organizational culture and promoting its adoption at scale, taking into account the specificities and constraints of each organization?

Axis 3: Human-Centered Digital Transformation: DT as a Lever for Innovation and Business Management

- To what extent can DT serve as a critical foundation to guide the digital transformation of companies?
- How has the constant evolution of digital technologies impacted human resources practices and strategies, and how can DT contribute to cope with emerging challenges and requirements in this field?
- What are the main changes brought about by artificial intelligence in the business world (human resources, marketing, logistics... etc.) and how can DT be used to effectively integrate these technologies?
- What are the potential challenges and barriers to the successful integration of artificial intelligence into businesses, and how can the DT help proactively identify and overcome these challenges?

- What are the best practices and exemplary case studies demonstrating the effectiveness of DT as a catalyst for successful business transformation in the age of artificial intelligence?
- What are the tangible and intangible benefits for organizations that adopt a DT-based approach to their innovation strategy, particularly in terms of operational efficiency, employee satisfaction, and overall business performance?

Axis 4: DT as a driver of public policy transformation

- What are the potential impacts and benefits of integrating DT into public policies, particularly in terms of reassessing policy issues and creating new innovative approaches?
- How do public sector innovation labs, as catalysts for DT adoption, contribute to transforming public policy and promoting innovation in the public sector?
- To what extent can DT contribute to fostering sustainable territorial development by focusing on human and environmental dimensions, while considering local needs and ecological challenges in the formulation of public policies?
- What are the challenges and barriers to the effective adoption and implementation of DT in the public policy development process, and what strategies can be considered to overcome them?
- What are the relevant evaluation criteria and performance measures to assess the effectiveness and impact of DT in public policy innovation and sustainable territorial development?
- How can the principles of DT be adapted and applied appropriately to meet the specific needs of territories, while promoting an inclusive and participatory approach?
- What are the lessons learned from past experiences and best practices in the use of DT in public policy, and how can these lessons be used to inform future public innovation initiatives?

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Publication calendar

- July 2024: Dissemination of the call for papers
- October 1st, 2024: Receipt of abstracts from potential authors
- 15th May 2025: Submission of texts by authors
- June 30th, 2025: Evaluations sent to authors
- 1st December 2025: Sending of the texts corrected by the authors
- First half of 2026: Publication of the journals