Chapter 20

Evolutionary change of organisations and its flourishment over the design paradigms

Kun-Pyo Lee

The nature of paradigm shift

It is tempting to consider change within design paradigms as a discreet and defined movement, where one paradigm is set aside as another is taken up. But change is constant. What we identify as a paradigm is not a unified, cohesive structure but a series of inter-dependent facets: tools and techniques, methods and media, communication structures, social factors, economic conditions, and more.

Each of these elements experiences its own growth and development—as though each is a ball bearing whose rotation allows a larger bearing to move. The trends accumulate, the movements combine and the paradigm shifts.

Across it all, there are two major forces at work driving this change: technology and culture. Again, these are not entirely separate factors, but they exist in symbiosis—where technical innovation shapes our social and economic development, while the shifting cultural environment creates the demand for new tools and approaches. And just as these two forces have shaped eras of human development, they have produced a succession of design paradigms.

Design through the ages

We can chart these paradigm shifts through the ages of human civilisation, from pre-industrial society to the industrial revolution, into the digital age and finally with the post-digital age emerging today.

Before the advent of heavy industrial technology, to design was to make by hand. This was crafting, turning clay into crockery or wood into furniture—creating artefacts out of raw materials.

With the industrial revolution of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, this process of handmaking was disrupted by the ingenuity of machines. Design turned from crafting into drawing—plans, drafts, and blueprints. The designer's role was not construction but instruction. Manufacture moved from the workshop into the factory.

With another revolution came the next paradigm shift. Digital technologies ushered in an age of AutoCAD and Photoshop. Alongside these design tools, we developed new design techniques—design thinking and user-centred design.

	Designer	Methods	Question	Work	Education	Users
	craftsman	inherited skills	how	solo	over the shoulder	without/ neighbour
	stylist	drawing	how	in-house	studio	to/mass
	midwife	UCD D-thinking	what	consultancy	interactive workshop	for/with segmented
	enabler	empowering	why	networked collectives	online/virtual	by/crowd

Figure 20.1
Technological forces driving paradigm shifts.
Source: **Diagram by the author.**

Today, we are in the midst of another shift. Artificial intelligence and big data are replacing some of those core competencies of the digital age. Where does this leave the designer? If we are leaving behind those tools and techniques, what will our role be in the future? We are only just beginning to find that out.

Methods, motivations, and outcomes

To understand what today's paradigm means for designers, we can look to how the role has evolved from paradigm to paradigm in the past—their tools and training, their methods, and their output.

The craftsmen used their hands, practising a skill passed from generation to generation. It was a solo craft, learned at the elbow of the previous generation—an apprentice watching the master. And the result was an object made for someone living locally.

Moving into the industrial age, the designer became a stylist—drawing or painting plans for others to execute in factories. They worked as part of large in-house teams, using methods developed in a studio. This process produced a mass-manufactured product for an increasingly global market. For both the craftsman and the stylist, the challenge was centred on how: how to create, how to draw.

The digital age then cast the designer as midwife. The computer and the Post-it replaced the brush, while user-centred design and design thinking replaced drawing. Working in design consultancies, employing skills developed in interactive workshops, designers created artefacts for tightly defined market segments. The central challenge of the role also moved on—from how to create to what to create.

Now, in our post-digital era, the role of design is that of enabler. Designers use a network to empower the crowd, harnessing design skills learned through online or virtual experiences. Today, the challenge is not how or what to create but why.

While the craftsman worked to create a complete, finished object, today's designers increasingly create something resembling the idea of a 'non-finito' product. Italian for 'incomplete', this intentionally unfinished product fosters the creativity of the end user's experience. Instead of crafting something to be handed over, to design is to enable creation.

For instance, if you look at Netflix today, you'll see something different to what your neighbour, your spouse or anyone else sees. The interface has been created to allow the user—via data processed by algorithms—to design their own version of the application. As the streaming service's communications director said, there are "33 million versions of Netflix" (Carr, 2013). It is not the complete design but a product that facilitates each user in creating their own experience.

Organisational development and K-pop

This evolution in the way we work is not limited to the individual. The shifting methods, tools and outputs of our paradigm are all mirrored by the changing nature of collaboration—in the structure of our relationships and the models of leadership.

At the start, organisation was minimal—a solo effort or that of a very small team. As teams grew, organisations adopted rigid hierarchies to provide a clear framework of leadership. This changed with the matrix approach, in which the 'team' is a temporary construct for a specific task or project. Today's organisations are looser still, with fluid structures bound by shared purpose rather than formal links.

This has dramatically altered the function of the leader. In the craftsperson model, a leader offered guidance and direction—as a parent to a child. Within the strictures of hierarchy, the leader was a general commanding his soldiers. Then, as the structure dissolved into collaborative working, the leader became more of a mentor and colleague.

Now the leader facilitates a community. Within this conceptual organisation, they do not dictate action but inspire it. Which means it can be argued that K-pop megastars BTS offer a prime example of modern leadership. While 'pop' groups have always been defined by their 'popularity', this modern model of mass fandom is different. Their community, known as the ARMY (Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth) is not a planned organisation; its membership is not up to BTS. It is not homogenous or structured but a constantly evolving, fluid community.

But the power of this fandom has given BTS greater celebrity and a potent platform. The ARMY will take on social and political causes, mobilising through a range of social media campaigns—from sabotaging a Donald Trump rally and

	Designer	Tools	Process	Discipline	Value
	objects	hands	no process	no discipline	possessable/ physical
	appearance	brush	trial & error	art	pleasurable/ emotional
	experience	computer Post-it	prescriptive/ iterative	multi-discipline	usable/ cognitive
	ecosystem	network	incomplete	trans-discipline	plattformable/ social, ecological

Figure 20.2
Cultural forces driving paradigm shifts.
Source: **Diagram by the author.**

blocking a police surveillance app to adopting wildlife and raising funds for chari-ties. These activities were not directed or even suggested by BTS but are deemed to reflect the band's values and are hence done in the band's name.

What it means to flourish

In this environment of inspired collaboration and fluid structure, what does flour-ishment mean today? Traditionally, success is measured on a straight line: more is better. More output, more productivity, more money. Organisations and individu-als seek out the shortest possible distance between the resources invested and the product produced. But this quantitative mindset is not sustainable.

Now, we are beginning to recognise that flourishing does not always mean more. Our model has pushed beyond that idea. Instead, our perception of 'good' can mean good enough.

In Korea, there is an expression—소확행—which translates to "small but certain happiness". This reflects a focus on self-fulfilment without grand ambition for the unobtainable. As Daniel Kahneman and Nobel Laureate Angus Deaton suggested in their research, an individual's life evaluation will increase along with their income. But beyond a threshold of around $75,000 a year, further increases in income do not offer the same lift in emotional or 'hedonic' well-being (2010, p. 16489).

But what about the organisation? How does it flourish? This is the question for the designer in today's paradigm. The organisations are out there among the billions of stars—constellations to be linked, communities waiting to be nurtured, formed and reformed via the medium of those non-finito products. This is the future of the designer: one who enables ever-fluid organisations to foster their creativity and sustainable flourishment.

Reference list

Carr, D. (2013) 'Giving viewers what they want', *New York Times*. Available at: www.nytimes.com/2013/02/25/business/media/for-house-of-cards-using-big-data-to-guarantee-its-popularity.html (Accessed: 23 March 2023).

Kahneman, D. and Deaton, A. (2010) 'High income improves evaluation of life but not emotional well-being', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107(38), pp. 16489–16493. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1011492107 (Accessed: 21 September 2010).