

**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL  
AESTHETIC PERSPECTIVE**

**PLANEJAMENTO ESTRATÉGICO PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL E A  
PERSPECTIVA DA ESTÉTICA ORGANIZACIONAL**

**PLANEAMIENTO ESTRATÉGICO PARA EL DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE Y LA PERSPECTIVA DE LA  
ESTÉTICA ORGANIZACIONAL**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to provide an aesthetic approach to verify the contribution of organizational aesthetics in strategic management for sustainable development. In order to accomplish this objective, a systematic literature review was conducted with a qualitative approach. The results show that organizational aesthetics may contribute to the competitiveness, effectiveness and creativity of the organizations, stimulate knowledge acquisition by reinforcing and improving the best relation between employees and the company's goals, made possible through aesthetics interventions in the workplace. Thus, focusing on improving the perceived quality of workplace, stimulating creativity, innovation, and seeking a more balanced relationship between stakeholders and natural environment.

**Keywords:** Strategic management; Sustainable development; Organizational aesthetics.

## RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo proporcionar uma abordagem estética para verificar a contribuição da estética organizacional na gestão estratégica para o desenvolvimento sustentável. A fim de alcançar este objetivo, uma revisão sistemática da literatura foi realizada, com abordagem qualitativa. Os resultados mostram que a estética organizacional contribui para a competitividade, eficácia e criatividade das organizações, estimulando a aquisição de conhecimentos, reforçando e melhorando a relação entre os empregados e os objetivos da empresa, possibilitada por intervenções estéticas no local de trabalho. Assim, com foco na melhoria da qualidade percebida do local de trabalho, estimula a criatividade, a inovação e a busca por uma relação mais equilibrada entre os *stakeholders* e o ambiente natural.

**Palavras-chave:** Administração estratégica; Desenvolvimento sustentável; Estética Organizacional.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene el objetivo de proporcionar un abordaje estético para verificar la contribución de la estética organizacional en la gestión estratégica para el desarrollo sostenible. Para alcanzar este objetivo, una revisión sistemática de la literatura fue realizada, con abordaje cualitativo. Los resultados muestran que la estética organizacional contribuye para la competitividad, eficacia y creatividad de las organizaciones, estimulando la adquisición de conocimientos, reforzando y mejorando la relación entre los empleados y los objetivos de la empresa, posibilitada por intervenciones estéticas en el local de trabajo. Entonces, con foco en mejorar la calidad percibida del local de trabajo, estimula la creatividad, la innovación y la búsqueda por una relación más equilibrada entre los *stakeholders* e el ambiente natural.

**Palabras-clave:** Administración estratégica; Desarrollo sostenible; Estética Organizacional.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development has figured prominently on the international agenda for more than a quarter of a century (SACHS, 2014). This concept and its key underlying parameters gained greater attention and gradually became more prominent with the confirmation that human influence on the climate system is evident and it is growing, with impacts observed across all continents and oceans (LEOMBRUNI, 2015; ZHANG *et al.*, 2015). Many of the global environmental changes observed since the 1950s are unprecedented over decades to millennium (IPCC, 2014). Interactions between environments and societies are the basis for economic activities. Therefore, the stability of these dynamic is indispensable for human development (GABITOV *et al.*, 2014; BLOK *et al.*, 2015; SHRIVASTAVA, 2011; STOJANOVIC; FARMER, 2013).

In this regard, sustainable development provides a holistic view of the world in which society integrates "three dimensions of well-being: economic, social and environmental [...] between them occur complex synergies and mutual influence relationships" (CORNESCU; ADAM, 2014, p.13). The overall line of thought, built on the close relationship between the proper functioning of ecosystems, the future of the economy, the development of states, and especially, the future well-being of humanity, was materialized in 1987 with the publication of the Brundtland Report, called *Our Common Future*, by the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (UNITED NATIONS, 1987).

The Brundtland Report promoted the most commonly accepted definition of sustainable development, conceptualizing it as "a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UNITED NATIONS, 1987, p.16). Currently, it is believed that sustainability is a global phenomenon, being broadly used by organizations in its daily activity (RODRIGUEZ; BONILLA, 2007; BILAN, 2013).

Imperative issues surrounding the management of the looming global environmental crisis (e.g. climate change and land-use change) demands the identification of causality links that will be essential to enable real change in individual and collective behavior in firms. The suggestion proposed here would be "focusing on internal spaces of the human mind and emotions [...] internal focus includes gaining deeper sensory awareness  
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of nature, gaining emotional experience of nature and understanding the connections between external environment and internal psychological and identity formation process" (SHRIVASTAVA, 2011, p.631).

An aesthetic approach becomes relevant to understand the tacit knowledge facing the sustainability of production systems, supported by fundamental human senses. According to Strati (2007, p.2), organizational aesthetic refers to "a form of human knowledge yielded by the perceptive faculties of hearing, sight, touch and taste and by the capacity for aesthetic judgment". Aesthetics' judgment allows us to assess whether something is pleasant or not (STRATI, 2007). Discussions about aesthetic in organizations are developed by researchers since the 1980s (TAYLOR; HANSEN, 2005) with different approaches, as it can be observed in Table 1.

Table 1– Main approaches and debates on organizational aesthetics

Year	Authors	Organizational Aesthetic approach
1986	Duke	The author used the aesthetic perspective to argue that leadership brings meaning to the relationships between individuals and organizations / communities / nations.
1986	Brady	The author suggested that an aesthetic perspective extends the ethics <i>of knowing what area, knowing how and understanding the ethical problems as rules</i> , because of the epistemological stance of aesthetic practice.
1989	Sandelands and Buckner	The authors conducted research on the work feelings promoted by aesthetic experience.
1993	Chua and Degeling	The authors refer to aesthetic to critically evaluate management actions.
1995	Strati	The author studied the organization theory by suggesting that an aesthetic approach provides a new way to define what an organization is.
1996	Strati	The author emphasized aesthetics as an important form of organizational knowledge.
1996	White	The author reinforced the relevance of an aesthetic approach to organizations and provided an insight into the beauty as a constitutive element of organizations.
1996	Ramírez	The author suggested that future researchers on organizational aesthetics should address the aesthetic experience of organizational life.
1996	Ottensmeyer	The author argued that there is already a reference to organizations in terms of beauty and art, but this topic still has to be discussed academically.
1996	Gagliardi	The author alleges that organizations are full of artifacts perceived by the senses, which means that organizations are full of sensory and aesthetic knowledge.
1996	Guillet de Monthoux	The author suggested that the theory of art can add to the academic understanding of strategy.
1997	Dean,	The authors argued that an aesthetic perspective addresses issues and

	Ottensmeyer, & Ramirez	problems which are not instrumental or ethical, and that the aesthetic experience of people in organizations is important because people are attracted to the things they see as beautiful and are repelled by those things seeing as ugly.
1997	Schmitt and Simonson	The authors discussed how to use managers' skills in manipulating the aesthetics of marketing.
1999	Dobson	The author alleges that aesthetics is becoming the most important aspect of organizations, being essential to the understanding of organizations and organizational activity in the twenty-first century.
2000	Feldman	The author extended the discussion about organizational policy to include domination through aesthetic forms.
2000	Denzin	The author discusses how the aesthetics of writing articles matter if we want to change the world.
2002	Taylor, Fisher and Dufresne	The authors explain how aesthetic issues of management are important to learning.
2003	Witz, Warhurst and Nickson	The authors expanded the concept of emotional work with an aesthetic conception of work.
2007	Strati	The author contributes to studies of organizational learning through extending the understanding of knowledge and discussing the importance of perceptions, feelings, desires, thoughts and senses of the human body as coauthors of knowledge.
2008	Kenny	"Whether related to beauty, ugliness or ambivalence, such aesthetics of organisation <sup>1</sup> is about a feeling of being bound; connected to something beyond ourselves" (p.376).
2011	Wasserman and Frenkel	"organizational aesthetics (OA) is often presented as a <i>sensory map</i> <sup>2</sup> through which organizations' members and visitors intuitively sense what the organization is all about, what its main values are, and who the organization sees as the ideal worker" (p.503).
2013	Taylor	Organizational aesthetics refers to the possibility of living the life in the organizational environment, creating the possibility of interaction, dialogue and cooperation among employees, having as a backdrop their way of being, knowledge and practical abilities.

Source: Adapted and updated from Schiavo (2010).

Considering that organizational aesthetics represent a new way of behaving in the organization, focusing on the experiences and interactions among employees, organizational aesthetics requires a new form of management with a special attention and care to daily life in the organization, resulting in beauty organizations focused on the interaction among the employees (TAYLOR, 2013). In this regard, Taylor and Hansen (2005) understand organizational aesthetics as a criterion for judgment and connection. The first (criterion for judgment) refers to the use of aesthetics to make decisions on issues related to goods and services in the organization; the second (connection) refers to the experiences lived by the employees during the development of works, creating shared meanings among them.

1This quotation is in British English, according to the original format of publication.

2This highlight in italicis present in the original format of publication.

According to Warren (2008), organizational aesthetics emerge from the sensitive experiences and perceptions lived by the employees in the organizational environment, so if stimulated correctly, aesthetics can conduct to a more creative, innovative and proactive organizational environment. Among the benefits of the correct use of esthetic labor, Tsauro and Tang (2013, p.19) state that organizational aesthetics has the potential to contribute to the “enhancement of organizational performance and corporate image, and customer attraction”. In this regard, Wasserman and Frenkel (2011, p. 503) alleges that “if manipulated successfully by the organization, this feature of OA<sup>3</sup> makes it a powerful mode of control over the organization’s identity in the eyes of its clients, competitors, and workers, as well as over the workers’ own self-identity”.

Strati (2010) highlights the relation between the workplace and its artifacts and the daily life of individuals in the organization, stressing the influence of organizational aesthetics. In the same sense, Wasserman and Frenkel (2011, p.503) allege that organizational aesthetics is “much more than simply beautifying the workplace; rather, it is deeply imbued with issues of politics and power directed toward clients, workers, managers, and visitors to the organization”. Accordingly, organizational aesthetics represents an important tool for competition among organizations in the future, once it creates a better relation between the employees and the organization’s workplace, reinforcing the organization’s goals and vision into the employees’ minds. This relation creates a more efficient and creative environment, inducing a competitive advantage among companies in the future.

The fast pace of technological innovation, the continuous global migration towards new economic powers, the recent financial crisis, the progressive deterioration of natural capital and the complex choreography of the biosphere, are some of the global issues that represent the greatest challenges faced by organizations today (PIKETTY, 2014). Often, the existence of such challenges demonstrate that economic, political and demographic factors are large objects of unexpected changes, fostering the emergence of opportunities, forming a propitious environment for paradigm changes (ZACCAI, 2012; HJERPE; LINNÉR, 2009). For this reason, "it is essential that organizations respond to these challenges with creative, eco-

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<sup>3</sup> According to the author, OA is the acronym to organizational aesthetics.

efficient and eco-effective innovations helping in conserving and improving natural, social and financial resources" (SHRIVASTAVA; STATLER, 2012, p. 4).

Organizational creativity used as a guiding parameter of the strategic management of organizations inserted in the current world system "is the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a social complex system" (WOODMAN; SAWYER; GRIFFIN, 1993, p 293). Lozano (2014, p. 205) argues that

creativity helps to break through the knowledge barrier of current reductionist mental models, while learning helps to consolidate and institutionalize the new mental models [...]. Eventually, these mental models would need to be questioned by future creative thinkers in a continuous process; hence, solving today's problems with tomorrow's ideas, and ensuring progress towards more sustainable societies.

Therefore, the need to implement profound changes in the way organizations apply strategic planning in their management models, occur in parallel with the inevitability of adaptation to the new requirements of global markets, following its transition to a more acute evaluation of human and intellectual capital

strategic management decisions have always been complex, but now they are even more so, since companies are assessed not only on the financial outcome of their decisions but also on the ways in which their companies measure up to a broader set of societal expectations (WADDOCK; GRAVES, 1997, p.4).

Strategic planning in its classical conception, relates to the long-term goals, strategies and actions affecting the organization as a whole, through the analysis of the internal and external environment in which it operates. Additionally, "a growing number of project based organizations have started identifying sustainability issues as a key factor for company success" (ZHANG; WU; SHEN, 2015, p. 421).

Therefore, managers concerned with the competitiveness of their firms are abandoning traditional approaches to strategy, as they search for new practices that give guidance in a turbulent environment (HAMEL; PRAHALAD, 1994). Organizations are nowadays challenged to act in scenarios of uncertainty and frequent changes, implicating greater flexibility and resilience, as they are exposed to surroundings in constant change and unstable performing conditions, pointing to a new model of management, in which the individual performance and its interaction with the management ambiance become

essential. In ambiances where knowledge is particularly valuable, executives must coordinate the basic principles of administration: tasks, structures, people, technology and environment effectively assuring a sustainable permanence on the market and becoming more competitive.

It is precisely in this area that Taylor and Hansen (2005) consider that organizational aesthetics may be integrated into a new form of management, contributing to new perspectives of administration, such as decision criterion and connection. In the matter of criterion for decision, the authors indicate that in some cases aesthetic is used in decisions regarding to companies' products or services, in a personal way or extended to the organization (TAYLOR; HANSEN, 2005). Otherwise, aesthetic as a connection relates to the professionals living experiences because their practices implement the building of conclusions shared among them, and consequently with the organization.

Organizational aestheticizing points to a new form of management, contributing to new operational perspectives, in the appearance of changes that may reflect competitive strategies. This new form of management allows articulating new organizational strategies, involving actions and dimensions that reach the companies' goals. Mintzberg, Ahstrand and Lampel (2010) recognize the complexity of strategic formulation: a complex ambiance, ambiguous, arbitrary, an intuitive vision and increasing learning, oriented towards individual perception and social interaction, besides cooperation and conflict in all activity areas of the organization.

Within this ambiance, organizational aesthetics is looking for new and more solid management strategies, once it was created to achieve certain purposes – only with the people's involvement and their social interaction to determine the organization objectives and subsequently rationality of the organizational plan will be possible. Reasoning requires diversity in the organizational ambiance, based upon a pro-active interrelation between the individual and the collective, regarding ethical values as important, "[...] based upon the individual we're trying to build an organization capable of effecting their mixed yearnings on a basis of proximity and compatible values" (SERVA, 1997, p. 38). It is "an act of thinking that reveals intelligent perceptions from events, in a specific situation" (MANNHEIM, 1962, p. 62), and suggests that such actions may enable a personal life oriented by independent



judgement, giving to aesthetic the possibility of helping the organization to deal with risks and challenges presented by the market, workers, consumers and public demands to preserve the environment for the present and future generations.

Given the above, the main objective of this paper is to answer the following question: what is the contribution of organizational aesthetics in strategic management for sustainable development?

## 2 METHODS

This is a qualitative study that seeks a better understanding of the recent scientific publications on the role of organizational aesthetics in strategic management in the context of sustainable development. To this end, a systematic search of the pertinent literature was taken.

The use of a systematic literature review aims to search for the scientific literature of thematic designation in order to organize a range of publications, interventions and scientific information, as well as to identify texts, perform critical analyses and synthesize relevant studies. In order to conduct systematic literature reviews, there is a need to synthesize the produced knowledge and separate relevant from irrelevant findings on a given subject.

A systematic literature review of the selected theoretical and empirical records contributed to the development of the state-of-the-art, enabling to identify and gather evidence on the main topic of this research. For this purpose, the authors defined eight strategic steps.

The first step regards the theme identification, research question formulation and keywords choice - for such review, the following question arises: What is the contribution of organizational aesthetics in strategic management for sustainable development? In order to conduct this work, the authors chose the following keywords: Sustainable Development, Strategic Management, and Organizational Aesthetics. An idiomatic translation of each word pointed out that the corresponding results to the *Sustainable Development* did not present variations. As a product of *Strategic Management* idiomatic translation, the following

variation was found: *management strategy*. In reference to the idiomatic translation for *Organizational Aesthetics*, subsequent variations were generated: *Organizational aesthetics*; *Organizational aesthetic*; *Organizational aesthetics*; *Organizational esthetic*; *Organizational aesthetic*; *Organizational aesthetics*; and *Organizational esthetic*.

The second step concerns the identification and justification of the databases and the applied filters - three databases were used to conduct this study: Scopus, Web of Science (WoS) and Science Direct. These databases were chosen for their relevance to Academia. Scopus database has 55 million records, more than 21 million shares with a thousand of publishers, the largest source of abstracts and academic citations (ELSEVIER, 2015). The WoS is part of Thomson Reuters and currently supports 15 different databases, with an approximate number of 2.6 million publications (THOMSON REUTERS, 2015). The last database, Science Direct, has 1/4 of the World's scientific and technical content and has nearly 2,500 periodicals, over 30,000 books and an approximate value of 13 million and 400 thousand items (ELSEVIER, 2015a).

The filters applied to the systematic search in order to conduct the methodological approach of this paper were: a) first, the most relevant areas for research; b) secondly, by a period of five years, from 2010 to 2015. Table 2 shows the number of publications for each keyword in the study.

Table 2 – Keywords results

KEYWORDS	SCOPUS	WEB OF SCIENCE	SCIENCE DIRECT
Sustainable Development	103.213	38.118	54.983
Strategic Management	6.647	3.625	16.992
Organizational Aesthetics	57	20	19

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2015).

Table 3 shows the publications related to the keywords combination. The dashes mean that no results were found in the database.

Table 3 - Results of the keywords combination

KEYWORDS	SCOPUS	WEB OF SCIENCE	SCIENCE DIRECT
Sustainable Development + Strategic	189	88	6

Management			
Strategic Management + Organizational Aesthetics	-	-	1
Sustainable Development + Organizational Aesthetics	1	-	2

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2015).

Finally, the authors sought the intersection of the three keywords combination in the three databases: Strategic Management, Sustainable Development, and Organizational Aesthetics, which did not present any publication.

Regarding the areas of knowledge available in the Scopus database, the most relevant regarding our criteria were: Business management and accounting; social sciences; arts and humanities; environmental science; agricultural and biological sciences; economics, econometrics and finance; energy; earth and planetary sciences; multidisciplinary and energy.

In the Web of Science database, the most important areas were: Business economics; urban studies; science technology and other topics; public administration; environmental sciences ecology; strategic management; agriculture; public environmental occupation health, biodiversity conservation; water resources; freshwater marine biology; arts and humanities; social issues; food science technology; international relations; oceanography; energy fuels; government law; geography; forestry; fisheries; and cultural studies.

In the Science Direct database the applied areas were: Environmental Sciences ecology; business economics; public administration; energy fuels; water resources; social sciences; government law; science technology and other topics; geography; forestry; fisheries; food science technology; oceanography; cultural studies; aesthetic; art; organization; organizational; business employee; energy; environmental; business; management; knowledge; strategic; market; technology; innovation; organization; organizational; strategic management; company; strategy; sustainable development; sustainability; soil; urban; CO<sub>2</sub> emission; land and social.

Filters referring to the period of the publications were also incorporated into the methodological process of this paper, covering records from the year 2009 to July 2015, which was the month this research was accomplished.

The third step relates to the bibliometric analysis and establishment of inclusion and exclusion criteria of the results obtained from the previously applied filters. Thus, the authors selected the ten most relevant publications according to the databases used, which takes into account such indexes: the Source Normalized Impact per Paper (SNIP) and the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR). Therefore, their main objectives are the quality and reputation of the journal, also considering the papers with greater contextual citations impact.

In the fourth step - identification of selected and pre-selected papers - the papers were identified in the systematic literature search. The pre-selection of papers was made in the earlier steps of this research, following the criteria defined by the researchers, which should seek the complete publications identified by the search strategy to confirm their suitability and adherence to the scope of the research.

Thus, the fifth stage relates to the presentation of the results from 76 selected papers for theoretical support and evaluation of each selected paper, its development and the results found to the next step - the data collection. The data collection - sixth step - was based on each selected paper and compared with each systematic review, having as its guiding feature, the particular research question made at the beginning of the search process.

The seventh step - data synthesis - aims to summarize the data collected from the research providing an estimation of the effectiveness of the research applied. Finally, the eighth step is evidence presentation - besides promoting the upgrade of the researchers on recent publications in the study area. It also refers to the end of the systematic literature review, through the development of considerations on the *state of the art* of the theme researched, and based on the analysis of the nine selected papers (Table 4).

Table 4 – Total number of articles selected after analysis of duplication, triplication and quadruplicity in the databases

Keywords	Number of papers	Number of papers
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	analyzed for the data collection	excluded due to duplications, triplications and quadruplicities
Sustainable Development	35	03
Strategic Management	10	02
Organizational Aesthetics	27	04
Sustainable Development + Strategic Management	03	-
Strategic Management + Organizational Aesthetic	-	-
Sustainable Development + Organizational Aesthetic	1	-
Sustainable Development + Strategic Management + Organizational Aesthetic	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>09</b>

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2015).

The literature review identified and gathered evidence on the main subject of research in theoretical and empirical papers, as well as their contribution to the development of the *state of the art* theme.

To enhance the evidence collection and to give greater theoretical support to the research, a bibliographic literature review was made. In order to do that, the researchers added books, other papers and authors cited by the papers selected in bibliometric process, identified as relevant to the theme. Additionally, the authors used the discourse analysis technique to compile the data collected, focusing on the meanings of the texts.

### 3 PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

The content analysis of the seven selected records refers to the end of the systematic literature review, through the development of considerations on the *state of the art* of the researched topics based on the keywords: *Organizational Aesthetics*; *Strategic Management* and *Sustainable Development*.

#### 3.1 ORGANIZATIONAL AESTHETICS

Table 5 shows the articles selected for their relevance to the academia, using the keyword *Organizational Aesthetics* as the main topic, in order to answer the research question proposed in this paper.

Table 5 - Selected publications to the article composition having as keywords *Organizational Aesthetics*

DATABASE	YEAR	TITLE	SOURCE	CITED
Web of Science	2011	Organizational Aesthetics: Caught Between Identity Regulation and Culture Jamming	Wasserman, V.; Frenkel, M. <i>Organization Science</i> , 22, 503-521.	36
Scopus	2013	The Psychic Life of White: Power and Space Kathleen Connellan	Connellan, K. <i>Organization Studies</i> , 34, 1529-1549.	6
Scopus	2013	The burden of esthetic labor on front-line employees in hospitality industry	Tsaur, S.H. & Tang, W.H. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 35, 19-27.	8
Web of Science	2015	Breaching or disturbing the peace? Organizational aesthetic encounters for informed and enlivened management learning experiences	Mack, K. <i>Management Learning</i> , 46, 156-174.	2

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2015).

The aesthetic approach aims at understanding relevant variables in the organization and their behavior, recognizing individuals and their primary experience to contemporary management.

Aesthetics can be seen with objectivity and subjectivity, and both interact to understand the organizational experiences and focus on the perception of workers about an object or phenomenon under a supplementary perspective, assisting in the understanding of the company's daily routine (LEAL, 2007).

In Hermann's view (2005, p. 38), the aesthetics of knowledge and reality applies to all areas and it is spread between people and society, according to the author. Categories like appearance, mobility, variety, unfathomability are transformed into categories for the understanding of reality in general, developed by the modern world, being the epistemological aestheticization (man living) the backdrop of several other plans and dimensions, such as organizational plans.

The analysis of variables through organizational cosmetic lenses allows an investigation beyond the cognitive or logical-rational horizon. According to Gherardi (2005, p.14), "in everyday organizational life, work, learning, innovation, communication, negotiation, conflict of goals, their interpretation and history, are present in work practices as part of human existence".

According to Antonello and Godoy (2007, p.12), "learning is based on focused practices predominantly in practice as activity and its role in the learning process". As proposed by Strati (2007), organizational aesthetics associates productive relations with aesthetics, taking as its premise the uniqueness of perception of each individual and their importance within the organization. Strati (2007, p.11) explains that organizational aesthetics

refers to a form of human knowledge and specifically the knowledge provided by the perceptive faculties of hearing, sight, touch, smell and taste, and the ability to make an aesthetic judgment. The latter allows us to evaluate whether something is pleasant or not, it corresponds to our personal taste, if it "involves"<sup>4</sup> us or leaves us indifferent, or even if in disgust.

Connellan (2013), in his article entitled *The Psychic Life of White: power and space*, based on Foucault's theories of power and organizational aesthetics, seeks to show that people become attached to an institutionalization of space. The author gives visual examples of five main areas of organization: Church; State; Prisons; Hospitals; and Universities to discuss ways in which the whiteness transcends the limits of temporal color and enters the psyche as a power agent in control of spaces and subjects, and posits that white is more than just a color in the design and it is suitable for organizations to spread sameness in public spaces. The author intended to show that white is more than simply a color but in fact, a force appropriated by the institutions to keep synchronization, by means of the cosmetic lens.

In Foucault's perspective (2001, p. 10), "every society controls and selects what can be said at one time, who can say it and in what circumstances, as a means to filter or eliminate hazards and possible subversions which may possibly appear". Poli and Hazan (2013) state that, in Foucault's view, every message has steps involving the selection and choices establishing limits, licenses, concessions or prohibitions of social behavior, as it is accepted and rejected, what can or should be considered important or not at a time in a given historical and cultural context. Still:

One must not forget that, by the expression of acting and thinking, man deeply and directly affects social life. The human being, to externalize his behavior (whether free or conditioned to circumstances and cultures) and live experiences, reflects the world and simultaneously reinvents it (POLI; HAZAN, 2013, p 397-398).

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<sup>4</sup>This highlight is present in the original format of publication.

Aesthetic theory can be used as a method to uncover hidden ironies, the silence within the silenced, the forged realities, and yet, that aesthetics are also ontological and epistemological in what refers to the experience of the individual who gives expression to his aesthetic, which is then interpreted (CLAIR, 1998).

Collaborating, Wood Jr. and Csillag (2001, p. 41) state that "organizational artifacts" are the most visible elements of organizational culture, but the most difficult to decipher. The aesthetic perception is a privileged mean to decipher the meaning of artifacts, revealing values of the organizational culture.

Organizational culture refers to the habits and beliefs established by norms, values, attitudes and expectations shared by all individuals in the organization, institutionalizing the existent way of thinking and acting. It is people's perceptions of the organization and it reflects the dominant thinking of the organization, conditioning management workers, thus guiding their behavior in day-to-day to achieve the objectives proposed by the organization.

According to the spatial theory of Lefebvre (2008, p. 31), organizational culture refers to the right of individuals and groups, formed by themselves, "to appear on all networks and circuits of communication, information, changes". Regardless of professional interventions (designers and managers in this case), it depends exclusively on the quality that is part of the essence of the social: centrality. Therefore, the social only exists if there is a center, "without a meeting of all that can be born in space and it is produced without a current or possible meeting of all the 'objects'<sup>5</sup> and 'subjects'<sup>6</sup>" (LEFEBVRE, 2008, p. 32).

Mack (2015), in *Breaching or disturbing the peace? Organizational encounters, aesthetics are informed and enlivened management learning experiences* showed that students, as aesthetically tuned producers and assets of *organizational aesthetics* are therefore knowable in the context of management learning, disturbing at times the information and encouraging their learning experiences. From a practical point of view, these types of aesthetic encounters may violate the *learning management* bringing trouble from time to time.

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To Strati (2007), the aesthetic knowledge is closely related to *tacit knowledge*, as bodily practices associated with corporeality and the lived experience, giving rise to aesthetic judgments. Corroborating, Warren (2008) discusses the aesthetic immersion in a materiality entanglement, directions and trials, evoked through the *holistic* embodied meaning.

As part of organizational aesthetics, one can see more than just how much the organization can have as a theoretical managerial approach, but what it can do and provide for the organization as a knowledge source, focusing on the organizational learning, regarding: the conduction of management, the abstract matters, sensitive issues of human feelings and their actions in the dynamics of organizations. Thus, enabling new practices of strategic management, generating a greater dynamic developed within the organizations, allowing practices and therefore the development of higher quality, efficiency and organizational effectiveness.

### 3.2 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Table 6 shows the relevant articles to answer the question posed in this survey for the keyword *strategic management*.

Table 6 - Selected publications for the article composition having strategic management as keyword

D.BASE	YEAR	TITLE	SOURCE	CITED
Scopus	1999	Complexity Theory and Organization Science	Anderson, P.H. <i>Organization Science</i> , 10, 216-232.	1858
Web of Science	2013	ISO 26000 and the Standardization of Strategic Management Processes for Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility	Hahn, R. <i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i> , 22, 442–455	41

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2015).

When acting in complex and dynamic environments, organizations need to map out and achieve goals; for this, it is necessary to link the ability that organizations have to define an effective strategy with actions from the effective understanding of the organizational infrastructure (back office), the stakeholders involved and the external environment (front office) in which it operates.

Developing strategies is not an easy task; Anderson (1999) in *Complexity, theory and science organization* proposes to analyze which are the new developments in the methodology of strategic management area in the last decade. In it, the most important aspects cover the following areas: strategic resource location, organization structure, leadership, entrepreneurship and organizational propose; methods and techniques for evaluating and understanding competitive, technological, social and political environments; planning processes, and strategic decision processes.

Such aforementioned angles feature a contemporary approach to strategic management, and they are part of a complex organization, defined by Anderson (1999, p.216) as "a set of interdependent parts, which together make up the whole that is interconnected with some larger environment".

For decades, the main objectives of organizations were focused on the development of strategies to gain competitive advantages in the market faster than their competitors. New directions for the strategic planning of organizations involve a combination of institutional and technological factors. Anderson (1999) concludes that new models and standards, in the implementation of strategic planning in corporations, paved the way for the use of more sophisticated analytical tools, thanks to the melding of the science of complexity and organization theory. A new theoretical wave was generated, focusing on managing strategic change and organizations, and how managers lead and influence the never ending journey of adaptation (ANDERSON, 1999).

To ensure the effectiveness of organizational strategies, it is necessary to have managers able to manage them. Hahn (2013), in *The standardization of strategic management processes for sustainability and corporate social responsibility*, addresses the specificities of the ISO 26000 standard, examining its contribution to the strategic management process in different types of organizations.

Business and organizations do not operate in a vacuum. Their relationship to the society and environment in which they operate is a critical factor in their ability to continue to operate effectively. It is also increasingly being used as a measure of their overall performance (ISO 26000, 2010).

Prepared in order to guide all types of organizations in accordance with the premises of social responsibility, ISO 26000 contributes directly to promote sustainable  
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development. Many companies lack a strategic approach to corporate sustainability and social responsibility. Thus, the reasoned strategic planning in ISO 26000 would promote improvements in operational efficiency. "Such guidance is important since there is still no consistent understanding of what corporate sustainability and social responsibility encompass" (HAHN, 2013, p.442). Ioannou and Serafeim (2014 p.5) elucidate the theme of corporate responsibility stating that:

In recent years, growing social (e.g., poverty, deteriorating social equality and corruption) and environmental (e.g., climate change, water usage and waste) global challenges have generated pressures on companies to adopt a more systematic treatment of sustainability reporting by disclosing how they are utilizing, developing (or depleting) and, more generally, affecting human capital and natural resources.

Hahn (2013) defines corporate responsibility simply as "enterprises that sacrifice profits in the social interest". The perception and reality of an organization's performance on social responsibility can influence, among other things: its competitive advantage; reputation; ability to attract and retain workers or members; customers; users; maintaining employee morale, commitment and productivity; the investors' point of view, owners, donors, sponsors and the financial community. Moreover, the improvement of its relationship with other companies, governments, the media, suppliers, peers, customers and the community it serves.

The promoted analysis shows that the ISO 26000 standards do not cover in depth a range of strategic planning, but contribute to the development of internal and external analysis of the organizational environment, promoting the starting point to standardize the implementation of more sustainable strategies, especially when

sustainable development is about integrating the goals of a high quality of life, health and prosperity with social justice and maintaining the earth's capacity to support life in all its diversity. These social, economic and environmental goals are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Sustainable development can be treated as a way of expressing the broader expectations of society as a whole (ISO 26000, 2010, p.4).

Given the diverse range of global challenges, such as environmental conservation, rich/poor gap, health issues, democratization, global ethics, populations and resources, among others, there is little doubt about growing public awareness concerning the respect for human rights and labor practices, and parallel to that, an increasing complexity in

management processes. Organizations are being called upon to take responsibility for the ways their operations affect societies and the natural environment. They are also being asked to apply sustainability principles to the ways in which they conduct their business (D'AMATO; HENDERSON; FLORENCE, 2009). Thus, Hahn (2013, p.2) states: the standard aims at providing guidance, "on ways to integrate socially responsible behavior into organization", "and thereby help maximize the organizations contribution to sustainable development".

The author concludes that a foundational document as ISO 26000 is an extremely important step in improving the performance of organizational sustainability, since the standard provides a basis especially for companies with no previous experience dealing with Corporative Sustainable Social Responsibility (CSSR) in depth. Corporate responsibility or sustainability is therefore a prominent feature of business and society literature, addressing topics of business ethics, corporate social performance, global corporate citizenship, and stakeholder management (D'AMATO; HENDERSON; FLORENCE, 2009).

### 3.3 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Table 7 shows the relevant articles to answer the question posed in this research related to the keyword *sustainable development*.

Table 7 - Publications on the term *sustainable development*

D.BASE	YEAR	TITLE	SOURCE	CITED
Web of Science	2013	Sustainable Development of a Company: building of new level relationship with the consumers of XXI century	Bilan, Y. <i>Business and Sustainable Development</i> , 15, 687-701.	9
Science Direct	2010	Innovation studies and sustainability transitions: The allure of the multi-level perspective and its challenges	Smith, A., Voß, J.P & Gri, J. <i>Research Policy</i> , 39, 435–448.	540
Science Direct	2010	Ecosystem services: From eye-opening metaphor to complexity blinder	Norgaard, R.B. <i>Ecological Economics</i> , 69, 1219-1227.	557

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2015).

Today, it is necessary to rethink the contemporary Man in relation to his behavior, his attitudes towards the planet and to the others. Especially when, according to Poli and Hazan (2013, p. 393),

It is shown up a moment of crisis, rupture, paradigms break, that challenges man to seek solutions to problems that for centuries he tried to ignore. The continuous and incessant encroachment of natural resources in an excessive way and the

adoption of social exclusion policies and exacerbated commodification eventually emerge in order to put in crisis the very ideology of modernity.

Bilan (2013), on *Sustainable Development of the Company: building new level of relationship with the consumers of XXI century*, discusses the concept of sustainable development and how it has become widely known in the modern globalized world. However, the essence of this adage is still profuse among legal, corporative and governmental entities.

Bilan (2013) showed that the concept of sustainable development expands continuously, and the business world feels the influence of the change in the consciousness of modern consumers and it has to be ready to accompany such changes, in order to meet their expectations.

Transnational companies, in different parts of the world, are taking into account the concept of sustainable development with a focus, not only on its financial results but also on overlooking its ethical, social, environmental and economic position in society. Bilan (2013) argues that it is no longer enough to focus on compliance with such liability rules, new challenges would be connected with the formation of a new category of consumer. Those new consumers have a

high level of education and free access to information, resulting in high consumer awareness, which in its turn results in higher expectations from business itself, its behavior, products, services, etc. The modern consumers expect companies to protect their life, health and ensure their safety; they also expect that sustainable patterns of production and consumption shall be implemented (BILAN, 2013, p.688).

The implementation of strategies for sustainable development could benefit both businesses and society. The main benefits to the community would include the resolution of social problems (e.g. persistent poverty and growing inequalities), the increase of local economic growth and the consequent prosperity of citizens, also valuing environmental protection and a more efficient use of resources. Companies, in turn, shape a more positive aesthetic aspect, connoting the identity of business more clearly, creating a sustainable corporate culture, reducing their risks, becoming more competitive. In addition, "the global world is sensitive on initial conditions in which a small change at one place may lead to large changes in others. Thus, we can assume that the concept of sustainable development is also

seen as some sort of philosophical issue which influences the state of mind of all the parties involved in" (BILAN, 2013, p.692).

The promises of a *green innovation*, arising from innovative technological capabilities, store the most recent outlook for resources that may be used to mitigate and prevent environmental and social collapse. Smith, Voß & Gri (2010, p.436), in their article *Innovation studies and sustainability transitions: the allure of the multi-level perspective and its challenges* suggest that "more recently, ideas about ecological modernization handsome how innovation can redirect production towards environmental goals, and decouple economic growth from environmental degradation".

Nevertheless, the idea of innovation coupled with sustainability can be extended to approach several functional structures and different social systems. The concern for sustainable development tends to require a broadening of perspectives on technological innovation, especially when the sense of urgency about the demands for more sustainable patterns of life proliferates worldwide. From a business point of view, "innovation studies have much more to offer those interested in ensuring new products, processes and services to improve human wellbeing without detriment to environmental life support systems" (SMITH; VOß; GRI, 2010, p.436). The challenge for innovation no longer falls exclusively on the economic potential of the nations and organizations worldwide, but also upon social changes induced by innovative activity and such consequences for environmental and social sustainability.

Studies that address the environmentally oriented innovation remain focused on products and services changes in their individualities and peculiarities. A focus set on *greener* innovation systems can produce a greater range of more eco-efficient products and services (BLOK *et al.*, 2015; GEELS *et al.*, 2015). Such improvements are still relative and would imply the occurrence of changes in the social way of life and in the establishment of alternative social practices, promoting a new relationship between individual and society, and between people and nature.

Norgaard (2010), in *Ecosystem services: From eye-opening metaphor to complexity blinder*, translates clearly the delusion of economic growth and the essence of environmental sustainability, diminishing the coexistence of man and his existence in the Revista Eletrônica de Estratégia & Negócios, Florianópolis, v.9, n.2, mai./ago. 2016.

environmental sphere by using the metaphor "[...] the nature of the stock of fixed capital that can sustain a limited flow of ecosystem services" endlessly re-creating scarcity (NORGAARD, 2010, p.1226). The failure of establishing a symbiotic relationship with nature leads to the depletion of the resources it provided; thus, economic services became a paradigm for thinking about development and environment and for designing environmental management programs. The current search for innovative approaches to the reduction of environmental degradation transformed them in a *central framework scientifically assessing ecosystem change*.

The greatest difficulties lie in the establishment of a real change in the current global dynamics, especially when there are strong interests that benefit from the status quo which do not want society to dwell on how the dominance of market thinking has transformed society in ways that do not benefit everyone. The author concludes explaining that

the metaphor of nature as a stock that provides a flow of services is insufficient to face the difficulties we are in or the task ahead. Indeed, combined with the mistaken presumption that we can analyze a global problem within a partial equilibrium economic framework and reach a new economy project-by-project without major institutional change, the simplicity of the stock flow framework blinds us to the complexity of human predicament (NORGAARD, 2010, p.1226).

Sustainability, in its pool of conceptual basis, is a distributional issue, a question of ethics for environmental justice.

#### **4 CONCLUSIONS**

Studies concerning sustainability need to be adapted to the local level of countries in order to find more efficient solutions to different problems happening in different scales worldwide. It is also urgent the need to conserve natural capital for future generations. In this regard, sustainability in its conceptual multiplicity can provide a broad, mobile and evolutionary interpretation, with a sense of partnership between the contemporary organizations.

Questioning what should and can be the role of businesses in society leads to the development of changes within the organizational environment, and businesses leadership is a catalyst for this change. Organizational development in the context of sustainability

implies a focus on the underlying narratives, the guiding values and the collaborative capacity that will inspire, enable, maintain and renew processes of shared value creation of the organizations.

In the contemporary way of managing, where the participation of the individual becomes paramount, organizational aesthetics is needed, helping management to seek explicit sensory perceptions through aesthetics. This approach allows a greater understanding of tacit organizational knowledge so that changes can reflect in the organizational strategies and competitive advantages, in the routine practices of more sustainable companies.

The organizational aesthetic is anchored on a critical differential view allowing to act and analyze a reality led by organizations and individuals ruling ecological and biophysical systems by the dominant strength operated in different fields: technological, political, cultural and economic. In this context, organizations are the object of large and unexpected changes and contribute to the emergence of opportunities in an increasingly competitive market. In order to survive those changes, self-renovation becomes necessary, opening to employees and teams the possibility of leading as entrepreneurs, using their skills, adaptation capacity and flexible practices, towards new opportunities and new innovation procedures, becoming a resilient organization, flexible and easily adjusted to the approaching market alterations.

In a global vision, the future of organizations depends on their employees, as they are the main agents of the entire organizational process, and success implicates a management ruled by the individual to attend those changes, creating better conditions to maximize results. Accordingly, it is extremely relevant to have a management with a systemic look at the actual and future world, to invest in the intellectual capital, because it embraces all the cycle of the organizational life.

Therefore, executives must use new tools turned to their intellectual capital, operating management in search for new perspectives shaped by behavior, skills and attitude, emphasizing teamwork and individual development, essential to future progress, under the lights of organizational aesthetics.



Organizational aesthetics implicates essentially an ambiance favorable to better performance, mediating relevant competencies, through the subjective rationality in the organizational planning, creative and innovative awakening, in a differential ambiance permitted by the workplace. This concerns the way on how individuals perceive the ambiance in which they work and their social relations. Aesthetic landscaping generates diversified and better forms of management and organization, relating to the complexity and sensibility in the corporative context when the generation of new knowledge is well supported, as well as potential creativity, quality and efficiency improvement, focused on integration and organizational connections.

Organizational aestheticizing allows connections between the individuals and the organization they belong to, constituted in a differential dimension in the whole organization, searching for greatness and balance in the existing social relations, to obtain a better performance and orientations to succeed.

In a near future, organizations that fail to invest in its intellectual capital will tend to fail, because companies exploring proactivity are growing in a dominant way, based on the potential of its centralized procedures, advancing in technology, structure and in the individual, reaching a high level of success in a global competitive ambiance, rapidly changing. In this regard, organizational aesthetics may contribute to the competitiveness, effectiveness and creativity of the organizations, stimulating knowledge acquisition by reinforcing and improving the best relation between employees and the company's goals, enabled by aesthetics interventions in the workplace.

In this context, management under the lights of organizational aesthetic is essential, nowadays as well as in the future, in order to let organizations enlarge their acting horizons, allowing a differential look in their way of managing and introducing new perspectives of acting. Therefore, it promotes a competitive differential, a broader set of social expectations and a larger socioeconomic development, reflected in organizational and differential strategies, competitive in the companies' routine practices in a sustainable way. In the end, sustainability assumes an important role in the organizations, and as a consequence, in its strategic planning, searching for opportunities to improve performances and amplify its

competitive advantage, based on its relation with the environment and its social responsibility, simultaneously relating to the economic development.

Developing and integrating a detailed vision of sustainability in long term strategic planning in order to create lasting value and generating credibility is a common challenge to all kinds of organizations. The use of new management strategies, such as organizational aesthetics, could help organizations to cope with the risks and challenges of the market, and of workers, consumers and public demands for protecting the environment for present and future generations.

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