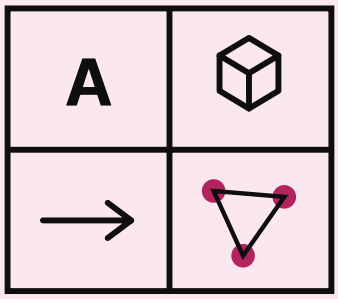
Model

Four orders of design

Four broad areas where design acts: symbolic and visual communication, material objects, activities and services, and complex systems or environments.



In Spanish
Las cuatro áreas del diseño

Origin
Buchanan (1992)

What problem it addresses

It helps you see that a problem can be approached as a message, an object, a service or a system, and choose where to start.

Components

Signs
Symbolic and visual communication.

Things
Material objects.

Actions
Activities and organized services.

Systems
Complex environments for living, working, playing and learning.

They are not boxes
They are flexible positions: you can move from one to another to reframe the problem.

How it works

1 

Locate which area you are looking at the problem from.

2 

Switch and look at it from another.

3 

Reframe what changes in the problem and in the solution.

Applications in design

Use it like this

When defining a challenge, go through all four areas so you don't take for granted what kind of solution is needed.

Avoid

Reading them as a ranking in which systems are worth more than objects.

Don't fall for it

A good service still needs good objects and good messages: the areas combine.

Connections

Used in

- Design thinking
- Service design
- Industrial design
- Systemic design

Related to

- Design studies
- Wicked problems

Authors and works

1992	**Richard Buchanan**	Described these four areas in his article on wicked problems, as positions from which to rethink a problem.

Sources

Original sources

- Buchanan, R. (1992). Wicked problems in design thinking. Design Issues, 8(2), 5–21. View source (https://doi.org/10.2307/1511637)

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