

On Managing Innovative Design Projects
Methodologically:
The Case of Framing

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My aim

To consider the management of innovative design projects

- 1: Some background
- 2: A proposal to improve this management by better articulating the methods for innovative design
- 3: An illustration
to make precise the design step of framing

(My) background in philosophy

Interest in the “designerly way” hypothesis that design is a separate, *sui generis*, practice

- design as a separate problem-solving approach, different to scientific and political problem-solving
- the evaluation of design projects is still problematic (in academia and business)

(My) philosophical motivation

Find precise and descriptive characterisations of methods for innovative design,

- for understanding design and evaluating design projects

Find those precise and descriptive characterisation with designers and design researchers

- taking into account their increased autonomy

The autonomy of innovative designers

The stakeholders in design projects:

- Users
- Clients
- Managers

The autonomy of innovative designers



“A lot of times, people don’t know what they want until you show it to them.”

“We get the wrong [design] briefs.”

- Marco Steinberg

Finnish Innovation Fund (SITRA)



The critique of innovative designers

The stakeholders in design projects:

- Users **are too conservative**
- Clients **provide ill-structured, wicked, paradoxical problems**
- Managers **kill innovation**

The responses by innovative designers

The stakeholders in design projects:

- Users: designers now *propose* to users what they want
- Clients: designers have tools to *reformulate* client problems
- Managers: ??

The negative relation to managers

Managers block innovation by

- the pre-set targets (project management)
- the fixed time-frames (return-on-investment)

But no alternative management is given

Designers describe how innovative design methods do proceed
and just declare that innovative design thinking works

Part 2:

Improve the management of innovative design by
better articulating design methods

The argument against management: Philips Design

The first steps in an innovative design trajectory

A project about light projection on ceilings for waking-up experiences

The outcome:

a projector,
which was not a
commercial success



The argument against management: Philips Design

The first steps in an innovative design trajectory

If this is managed as a project with pre-fixed targets, and return on investment criteria, the project is finished and ready to be abandoned

Yet...



The argument against management: Philips Design

The next steps in the trajectory

exploring what else can be done with projection on ceilings

New idea:

improve the resolution
of CT and MR devices
in hospitals

which is a commercial
success



The argument against management: Philips Design

Innovative design follows unpredictable trajectories in a matrix

	horizon 3	horizon 2	horizon 1
communicate value	aspirational promise	concept car	specific campaigns
develop value	innovation debate (probes)	collaborative innovation	incremental innovation
identify value	social cultural trends & narratives	future focused persona research	people & market research

- Pre-fixed targets and fixed time periods are not criteria

A management response that accepts the argument

What are the criteria for a good trajectory through the matrix?

	horizon 3	horizon 2	horizon 1
communicate value	aspirational promise	concept car	specific campaigns
develop value	innovation debate (probes)	collaborative innovation	incremental innovation
identify value	social cultural trends & narratives	future focused persona research	people & market research

- What is the output of each step?
- What are criteria to evaluate whether a step is done well?

A management response that accepts the argument

Give SMART descriptions of the different steps defined in methods for innovative design

Specific: specify the methodological goals of the steps

Measurable: define clear success criteria for these goals

Assignable: specific the skills of the responsible designers

Realistic: fix success rates of the steps

Time-related: fix time and resources needed for the steps

SMART management of innovation at Philips Design

Give SMART descriptions of the matrix

Manage innovative design with these SMART descriptions

	horizon 3	horizon 2	horizon 1
communicate value	aspirational promise	concept car	specific campaigns
develop value	innovation debate (probes)	collaborative innovation	incremental innovation
identify value	social cultural trends & narratives	future focused persona research	people & market research



Part 3:

An illustration:

To make precise the design step of framing

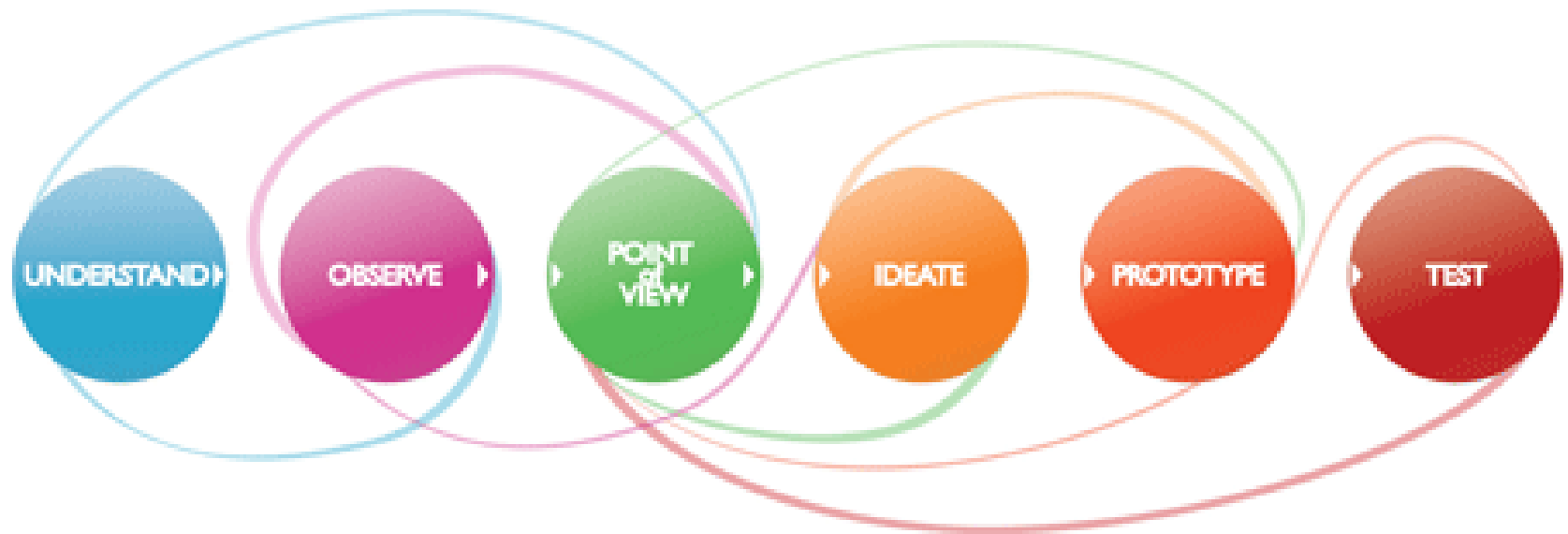
The critique of innovative designers

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Framing design tasks

The Stanford-Potsdam D.School design method:

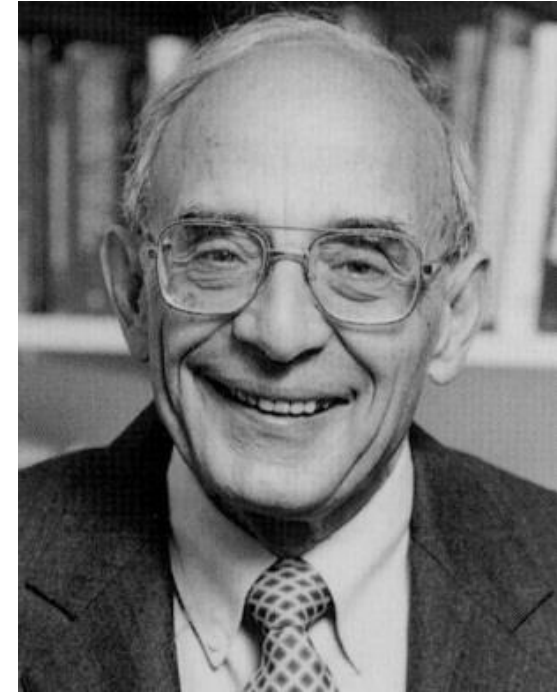


Framing and reframing design tasks

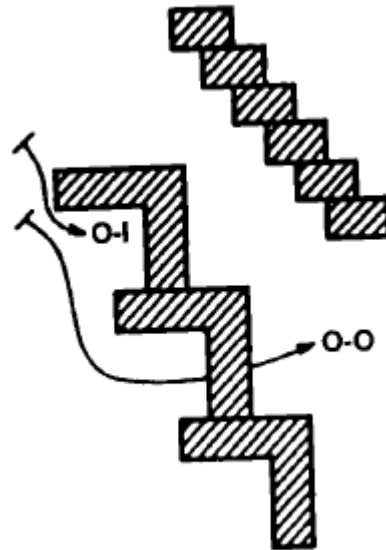
Frame a design task:

- set its boundaries
- select particular elements for attention
- impose coherence that guides design moves

(Donald Schön)



The layout of a
primary school
building:



Toward a SMART descriptions of framing

Specific: specify the methodological goals of the steps

Measurable: define clear success criteria for these goals

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Toward a SMART descriptions of framing

Specific: specify the methodological goals of the steps

Measurable: define clear success criteria for these goals

Assignable: specific the skills of the responsible designers

Realistic: fix success rates of the steps

Time-related: fix time and resources needed for the steps

Toward a SMART descriptions of framing

Specific: find a reformulation of the problem that:

Measurable: 1: enables finding solutions to the problem

2: that realise values of the client

Framing a problem of Sydney police

Problem:

Restore public order and safety in the Kings Cross entertainment area in Sydney

- 30.000 young people visiting clubs and bars, ending up drunk, fighting and attracting theft and drug crimes
- more police, bouncers, etc., does not work anymore



Framing a problem of Sydney police

Problem analysis (by Designing out Crime):

The problem formulation implies taking the youngsters as potential criminals and suggests more strict law enforcement.

See Kings Cross as a permanent riot area



An alternative framing

Reformulate the problem as one of entertainment:

See the task as one concerning non-criminals who want to have a good time, who need guidance and management:

See Kings Cross as a huge festival area



An alternative framing

Solution: use crowd control to keep Kings Cross customers happy:

- no bouncers but friendly hosts that can help
- information displays with the main attractions
- lounge areas for overheated people to relax
- little events to entertain those who are waiting
-

Quite smart and attractive:

- ❖ giving ample new directions for finding solutions
- ❖ Yet, in this case Sydney police was not that pleased ...

An alternative framing

Solution: use crowd control to keep Kings Cross customers happy:

- no bouncers but friendly hosts that can help
- information displays with the main attractions
- lounge areas for overheated people to relax
- little events to entertain those who are waiting
-

Criteria:

- ❖ giving ample new directions for finding solutions
- ❖ that realise the values of the client

Toward a SMART descriptions of framing

Specific: find a reformulation of the problem that:

Measurable: 1: enables finding solutions to the problem

2: that realise values of the client

From a management point of view additional criteria could be added

Conclusion

In innovative design, designers reject management because pre-set targets and return-on-investment criteria of managers block innovation

When accepting this argument, management could evaluate and guide through the steps discerned in the methods for innovative design

This requires work to spell out the goals of steps in innovative design in, e.g., a SMART manner

Conclusion

This articulation of design methods can be done.

My illustration: a SMART description of the step of framing

Specific: find a reformulation of the problem that:

Measurable: 1: enables finding solutions to the problem

2: that realise values of the client

3: ...