

Designing Flexible Curricula

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Designing Flexible Curricula

Change as a constant

Obstacles to flexibility

Process of curricular change

Objectives versus tactics

Types of content knowledge

Pedagogical assumptions

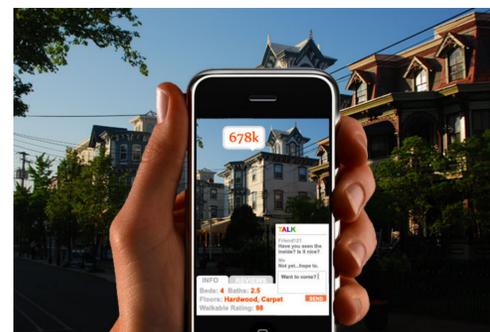
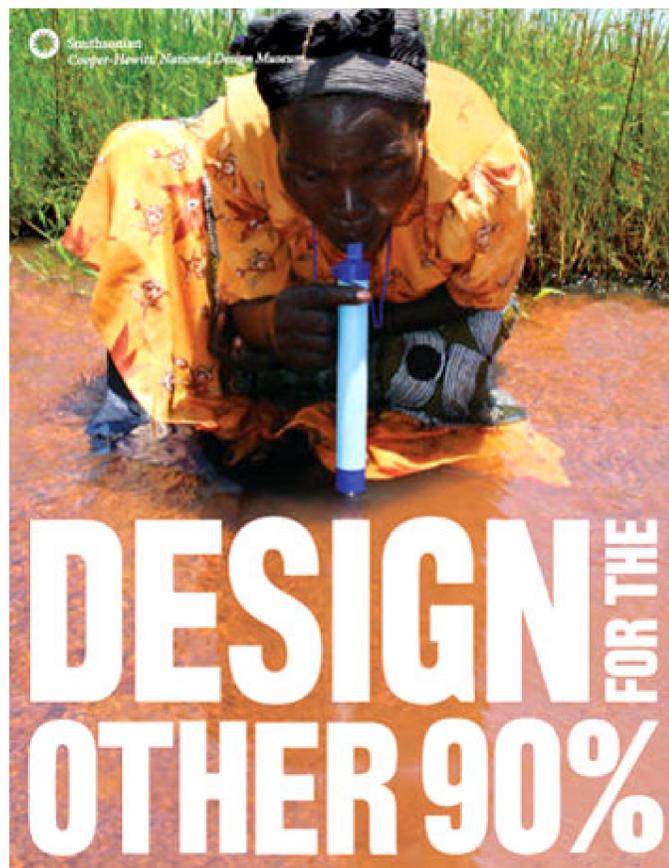
Flexible frameworks

Change as a constant in design:

- ***Increasing complexity*** in the scale of contemporary problems
- ***Escalating demand*** for interdisciplinary collaboration
- ***Accelerating pace*** of technological evolution
- ***Growing participation*** by users in the development of content and form
- ***Expanding accountability*** for predicting the outcomes of design action

Designing Flexible Curricula / Education in a climate of constant change

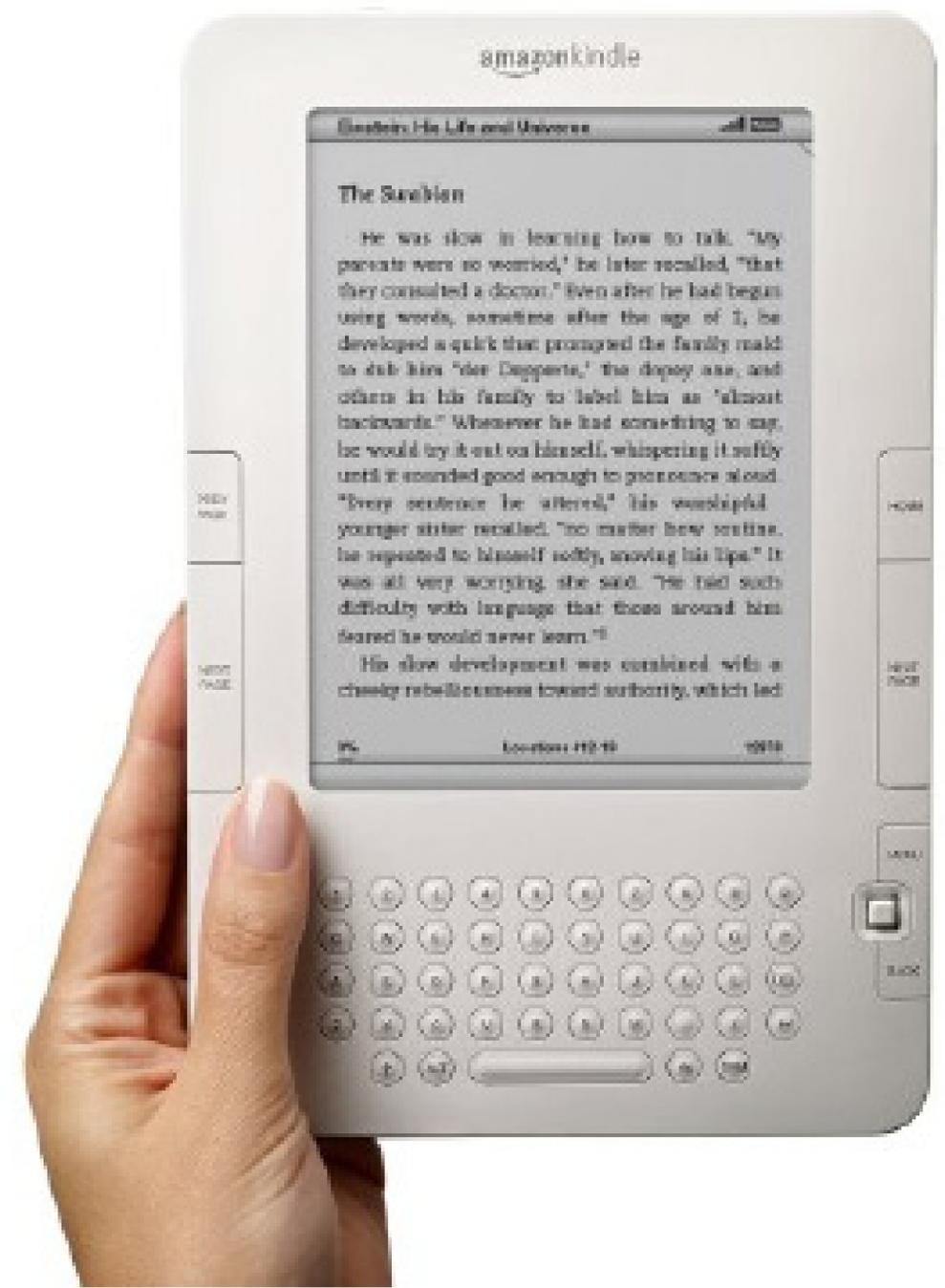
- **Escalating demand for interdisciplinary collaboration**



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- **Accelerating pace of technological evolution**

email	1976
world wide web	1991
google search	1997
iPod	2001
augmented reality	2008

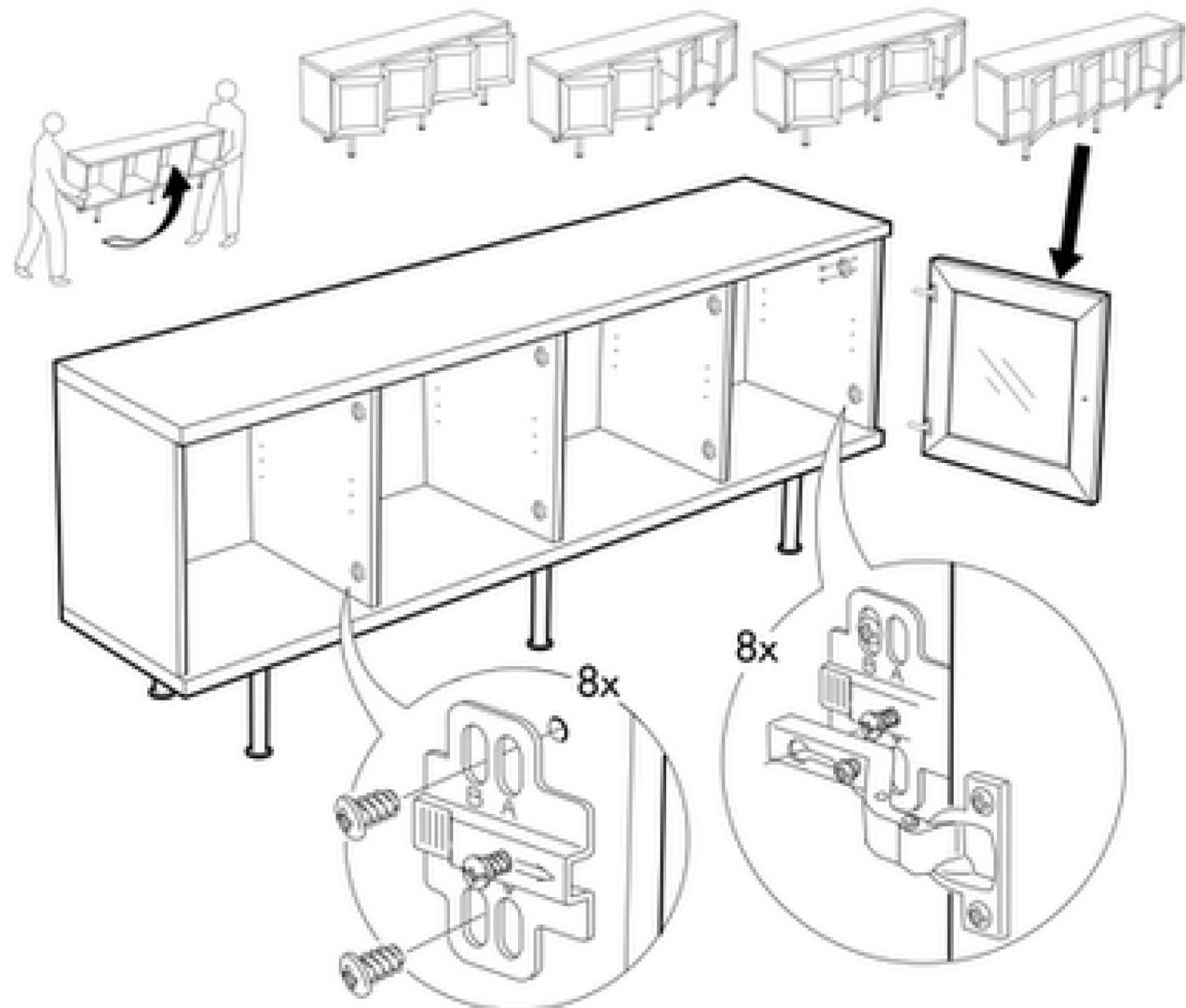


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- **Growing participation by users in the development of content and form**



The car for people who don't want one.



- ***Expanding accountability for predicting the outcomes of design action***

81%

Design professionals say research is integral to their practice and that they engage in it regularly

69%

College design department chairs say it is required of faculty and critical to the mission of the institution

70%

Design professionals don't use students in research that is important to their practices

80%

Professionals, faculty, and students cited *sustainability* as the most important area for design research, yet they ranked *systems theory* at the bottom of all possible topics

Obstacles to flexibility:

- **Slow academic approval processes / rapidly shifting profession**
- **Decreasing budgets / expanding enrollments**
- **Curriculum-by-accrual strategies**
- **Marketing incentives for increasing curricular specialization**
- **Cult-of-personality teaching / lack of real consensus on content**
- **Faculty specialization and ownership of courses**
- **Overly rigid adherence to traditional scheduling and staffing**
- **Misperceptions of curricular mandates**

Obstacles to flexibility

Usually result in:

Overly prescriptive curricula or a free-for-all with no accountability to common objectives and outcomes

Declining program relevance under a constantly changing context

Faculty frustration in no opportunities for innovation and too much to teach in too little time

Reduced effectiveness in arguing for change with administration

When what we really want:

Curricula that are customizable and broadly supported by faculty

Curricula that are agile, continually responsive, and anticipatory of change

Curricula that are open to individual contributions and manageable in scope and scale

Convincing rationales for change that respect institutional context / resources

Process of curricular change

Projection →	Planning →	Delivery →	Assessment
analysis of strategic environment, both professional and institutional	collective activity of the faculty in authoring a curricular plan	implementation of a plan across a specific period of time	critical evaluation of outcomes with respect to projections, plans, and delivery
national benchmarks consultation/peers advice/professionals trend analysis institutional priorities	mission, goals, objectives learning outcomes measures/evidence resource assessment management structure implementation strategy	admissions criteria content knowledge curricular structure pedagogical frameworks faculty assignments	student evaluations exit interviews alumni surveys accreditation reviews employer feedback

Scales at which curriculum is built

Mission:	the big vision
Goals:	the 3-5 year priorities for the program
Objectives:	what students should know and be able to do, stated in terms of observable, measurable behaviors
Learning outcomes:	how good is good enough and by when it should be achieved
Measures/evidence:	illustrates the achievement of outcomes
Strategies:	courses and pedagogies through which students achieve outcomes
Tactics:	projects and lessons

Scales at which curriculum is built

Mission: the big vision

Goals: the 3-5 year priorities for the program

Objectives: what students should know and be able to do, stated in terms of observable, measurable behaviors

Learning outcomes: how good is good enough and by when it should be achieved

Measures/evidence: illustrates the achievement of outcomes

Strategies: courses and pedagogies through which students achieve outcomes

Tactics: projects and lessons

For example...

Mission: To prepare undergraduates for entry to the profession of graphic design.

Goal: To transition over the next two years from strategies that focus on the design of discrete objects to systems-level thinking that situates design between people and what they want to do in diverse contexts.

For example...

Objective:

Students will **frame** design investigations and **critique** solutions in terms that address the social, cultural and technological aspects of context and the physical and cognitive behaviors of people.

Learning outcome:

By the sophomore year, **all** students will be able to **identify and describe relevant relationships** among objects, people, and settings.

Measure/evidence:

Students in GD 201 will construct concept **maps** and develop semester **projects** within specific territories of the map.

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Write a course objective, learning outcome, and description of evidence for one of the following:

A typography course that anticipates the next iteration of mobile technology after the iPad.

A foundation studio course that prepares students to frame problems.

A studio course based on the design of tools and systems for collaboration.

Objective:

Learning outcome:

Measures:

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Choose a course from your current curriculum and distribute its content under the following categories:

Things seen, heard, read, or otherwise encountered:

Skills, theories, and concepts:

Understanding:

Choose a course from your current curriculum and distribute its content under the following categories:

Things seen, heard, read, or otherwise encountered:

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Skills, theories, and concepts:

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Understanding:

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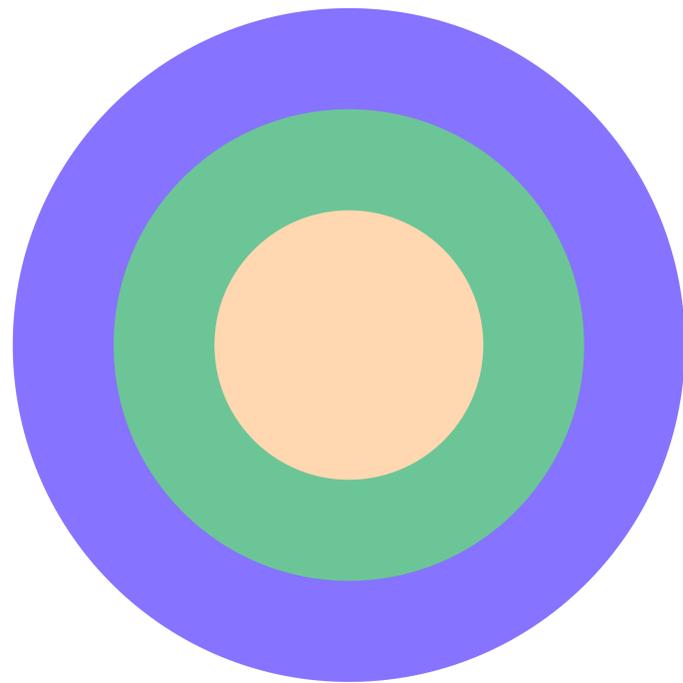
- E** **EXPLAIN**
- I** **INTERPRET**
- A** **APPLY**
- P** **PERSPECTIVE**
- K** **KNOW WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW**

Things seen, heard, read, or otherwise encountered:

Skills, theories, and concepts:

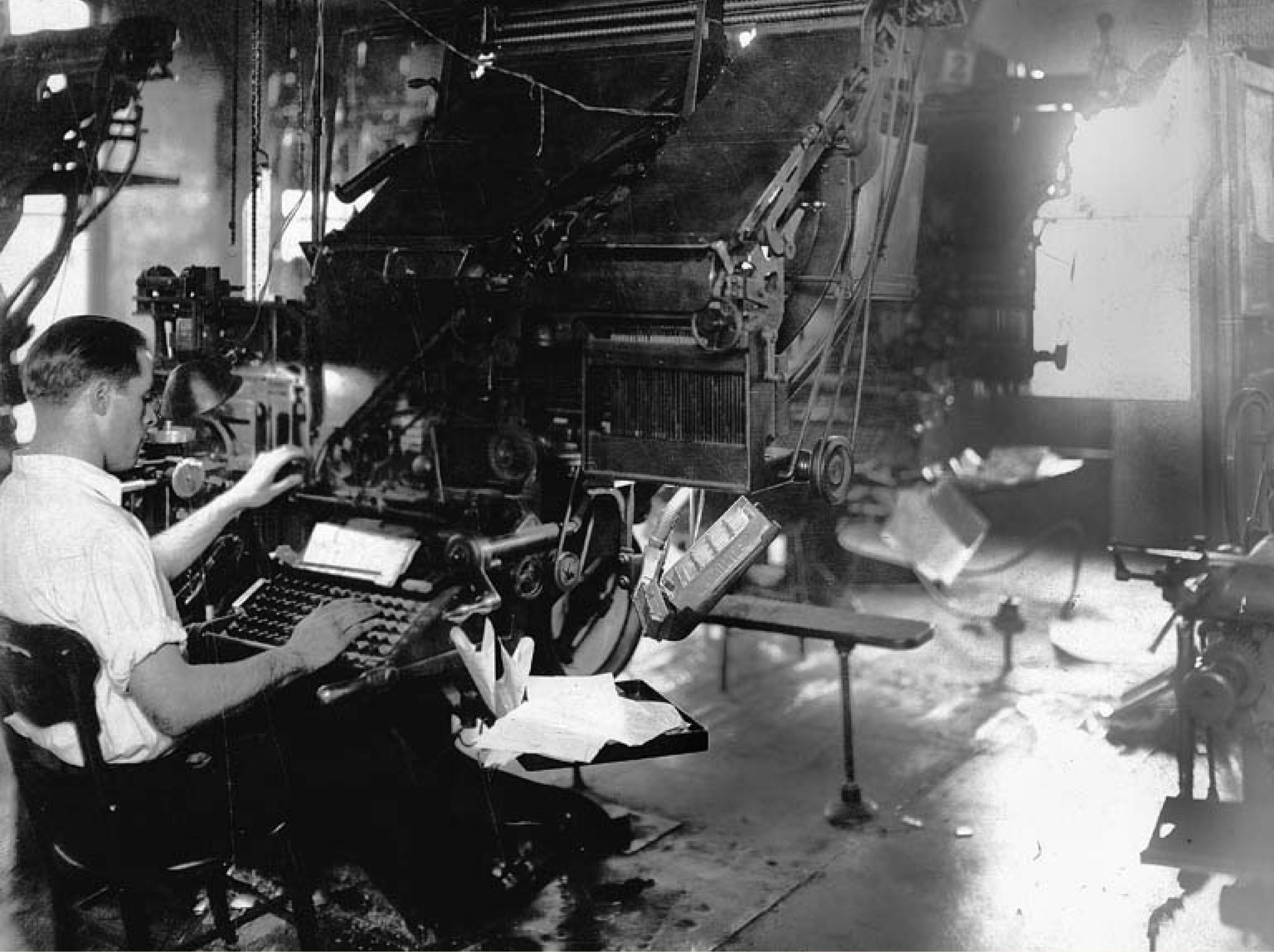
Understanding:

Types of content knowledge

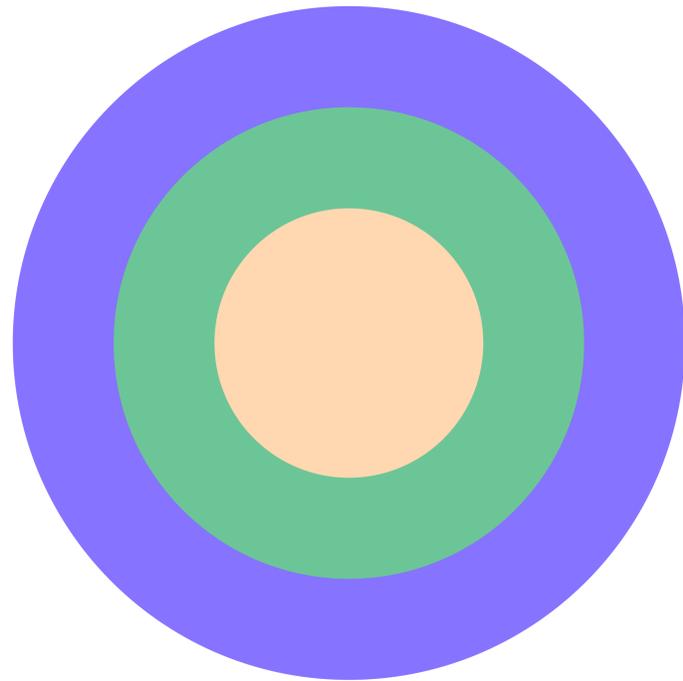


Things to be familiar with/to have seen, heard, read, etc.
Temporary relevance

Understanding by Design, Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe



Types of content knowledge:



Things to be familiar with/to have seen, heard, read, etc.
Temporary relevance

Theories, concepts, and skills
More stable but subject to change

JACQUES
DERRIDÀ

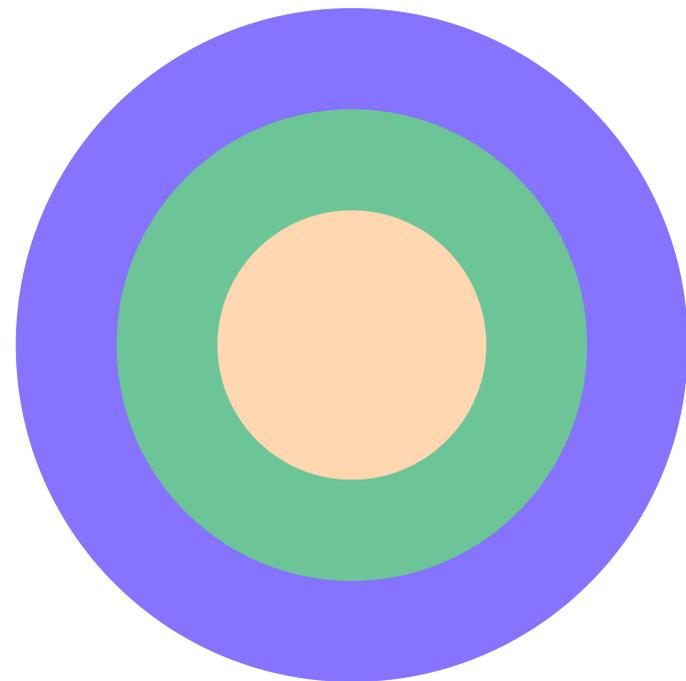
OF GRAMMATOLOGY



Translated by
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

CORRECTED EDITION

Types of content knowledge:



Things to be familiar with/to have seen, heard, read, etc.
Temporary relevance

Theories, concepts, and skills
More stable but subject to change

Enduring understanding
At the core of the discipline, stable

Metacognition

Empathy

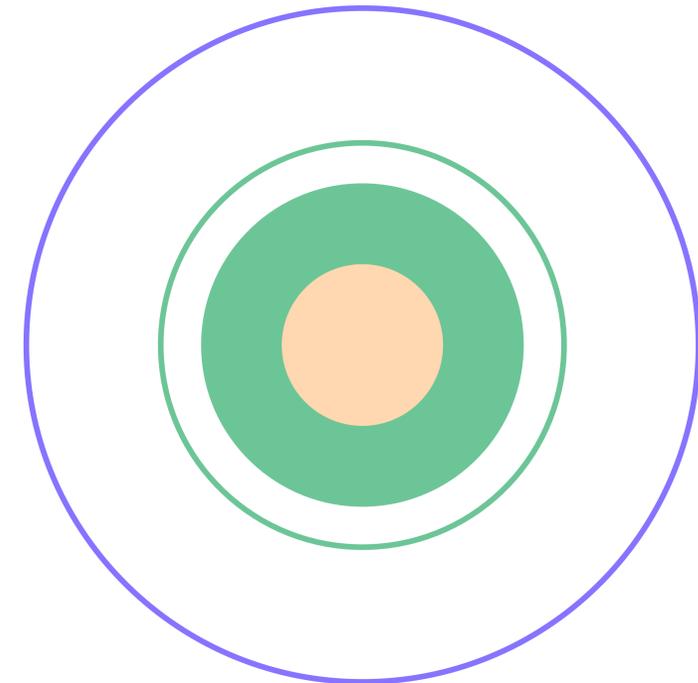
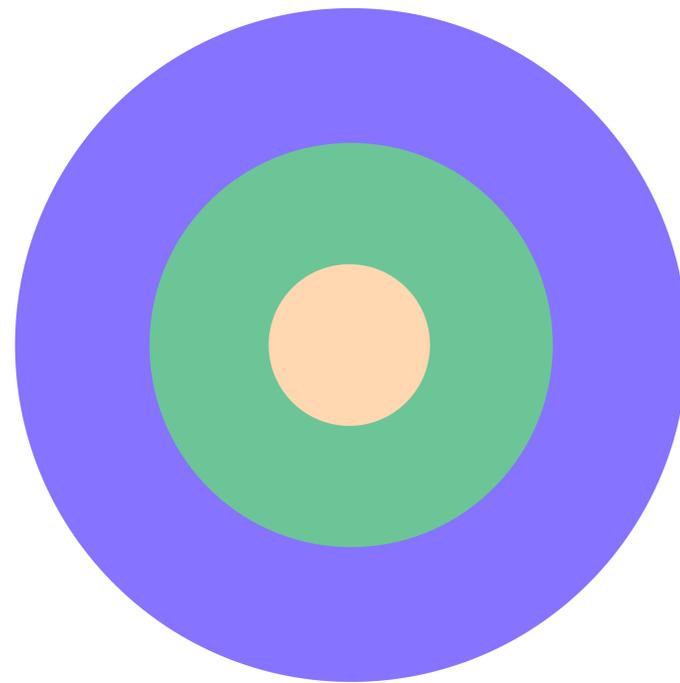
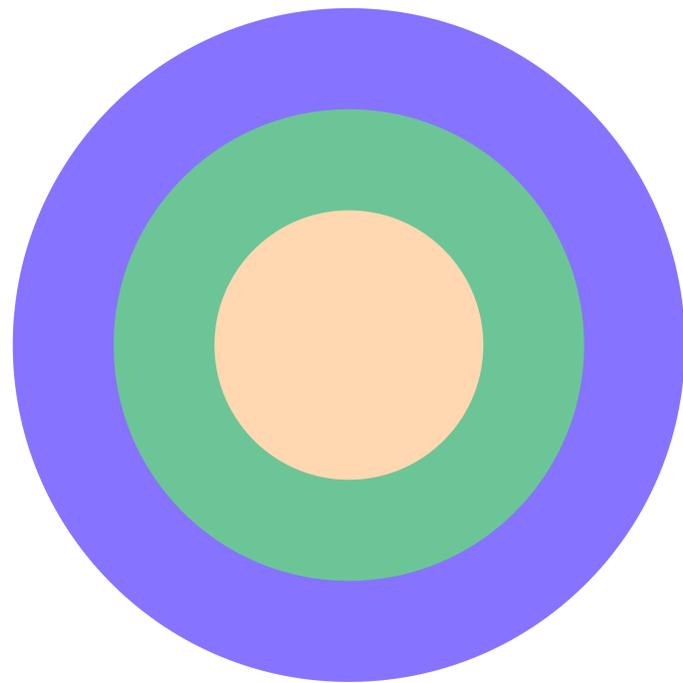
Holding a perspective

Application

Interpretation

▲ **Explanation**

Types of content knowledge:



Increasing pressure to teach facts and skills, robbing time from content that is likely to endure

Many facts and skills decline in relevance after graduation and over a professional career

We can spend our time...

teaching all the tools and functions of CS5

or how to make choices among various technologies and how to learn software

teaching students how to make a website

or about the nature of interaction and networked systems

teaching about famous designers/objects

or about perspectives, precedence, context, and what we can learn from history

teaching what makes a good logo

or about designing a service culture for organizations and companies

teaching how to make social cause posters

or how to move people from not being ready to know to being ready to take action and to publicly advocate for a position

Approach A

Buckets for content
Scaffold from simple to complex
Individual faculty define projects

Graphic Design I
Graphic Design II
Graphic Design III

Typography I
Typography II
Typography III

Approach A

Buckets for content
Scaffold from simple to complex
Individual faculty define projects

Graphic Design I
Graphic Design II
Graphic Design III

Typography I
Typography II
Typography III

Approach B

Courses defined by products or segments of practice
Courses defined by skills or tools

Publication Design
Exhibition Design
Web Design

Photoshop
InDesign
Flash

Types of design practice

Advertising design
Book design
Branding
Broadcast design
Corporate collateral
Direct mail/marketing
Exhibition design
Experience design
Game design
Icon/symbol design
Information design/mapping
Interaction design
Interface design
Logo and identity design

Magazine design
Mobile/small screen design
Motion graphics/title design
Newspaper design
Package design
Poster design
Retail/catalog design
Service design
Signage design/wayfinding
Social design/public service
Textbook/educational design
Typeface design
Universal design
Web design

Formats are not enduring understanding

If we build curricula around formats, we are likely to find ourselves unable to respond quickly to changing conditions, when new formats replace old or when the scope of the problem expands.

And if we tie the teaching of form to decontextualized exercises, we risk being only about abstract principles that are later challenged by shifting media contexts and by the growing need for things that are social as well as visual.

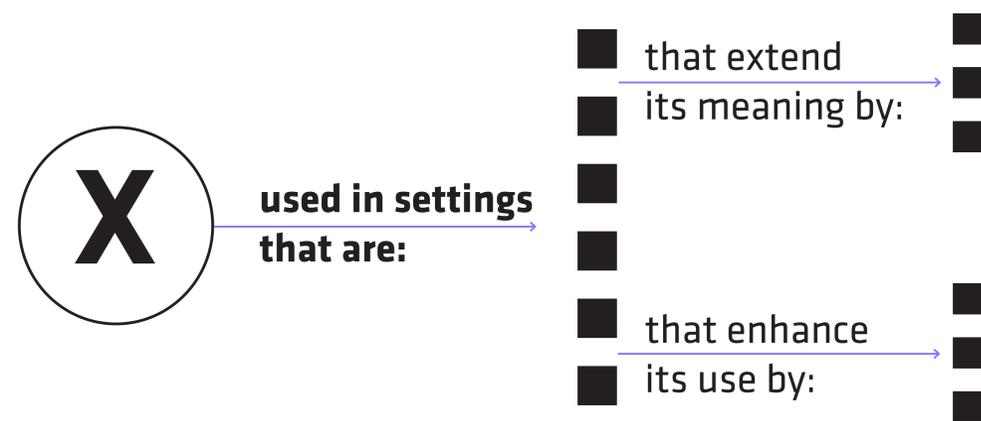
What is enduring is that:

Design is a **mediation** between people and the relationships or activities they hope to accomplish in their interactions with their environments.

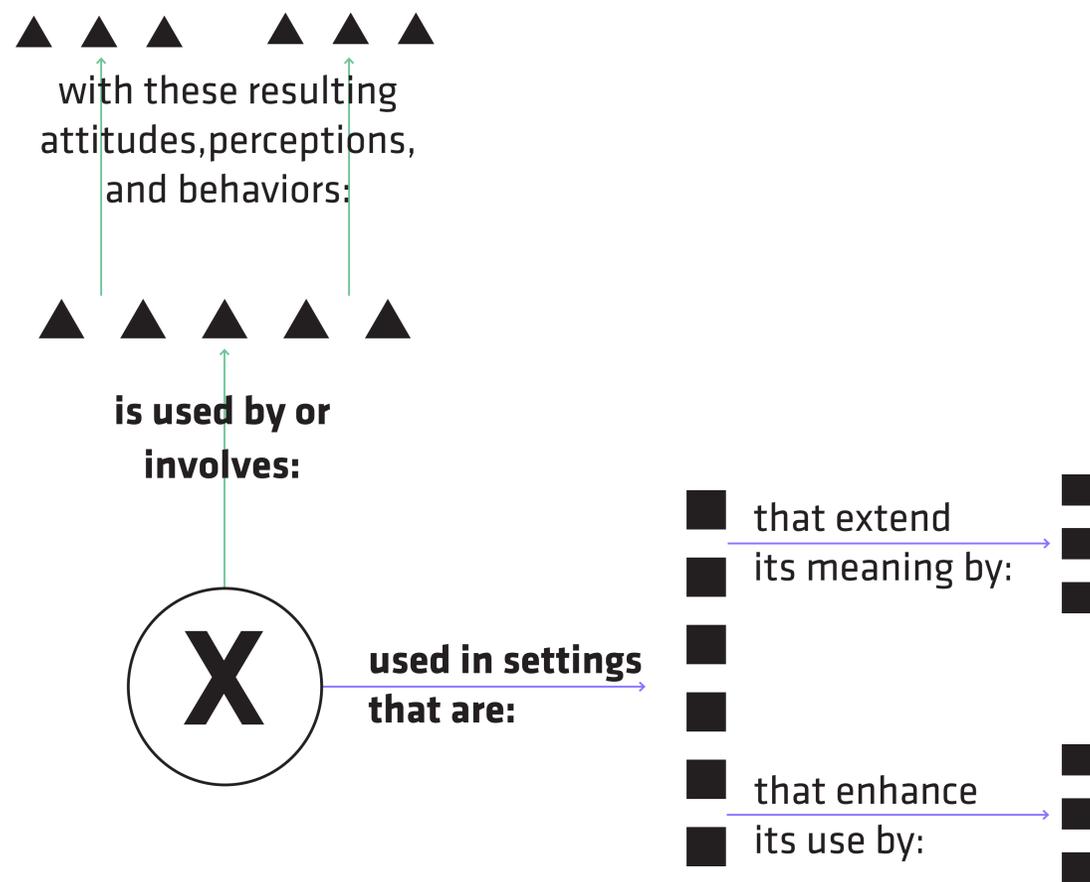
Design will be judged in its **goodness of fit between form and context**, and while the specific elements and qualities of that context (and form) will change, the general aspects of context are describable and always present.

The role and character of design mediation can be viewed at **various scales** and from different **points of entry** to larger systems.

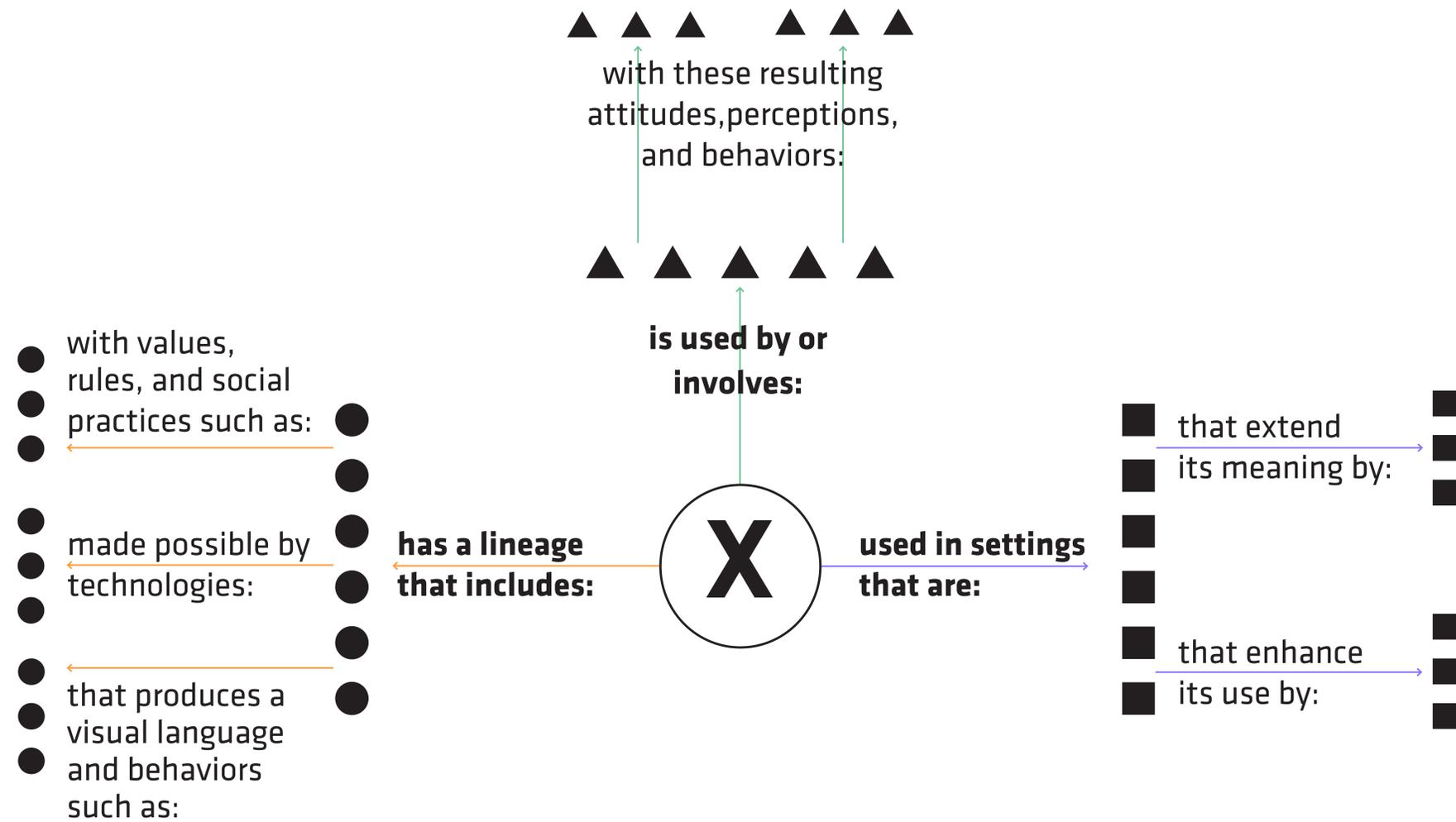
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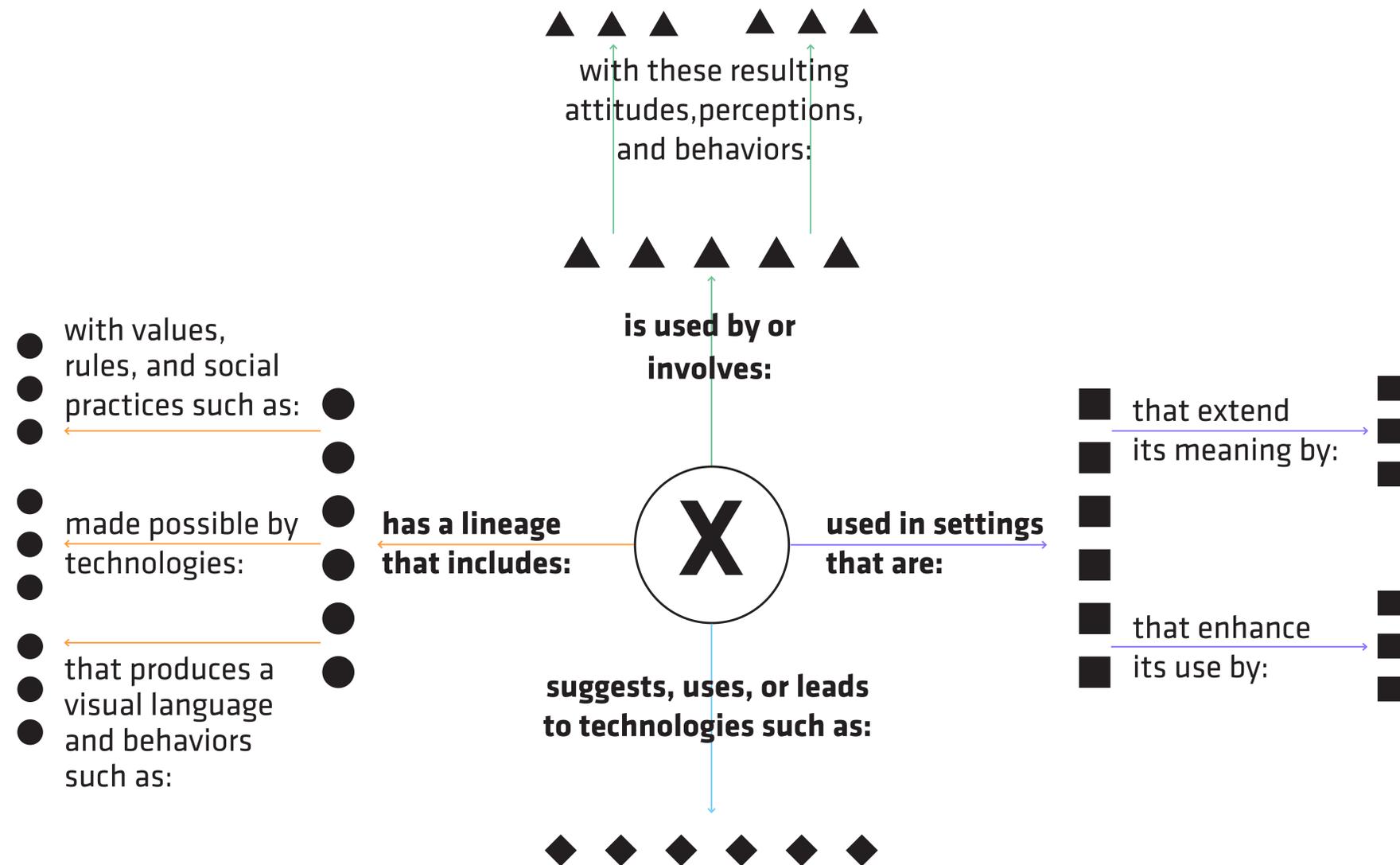
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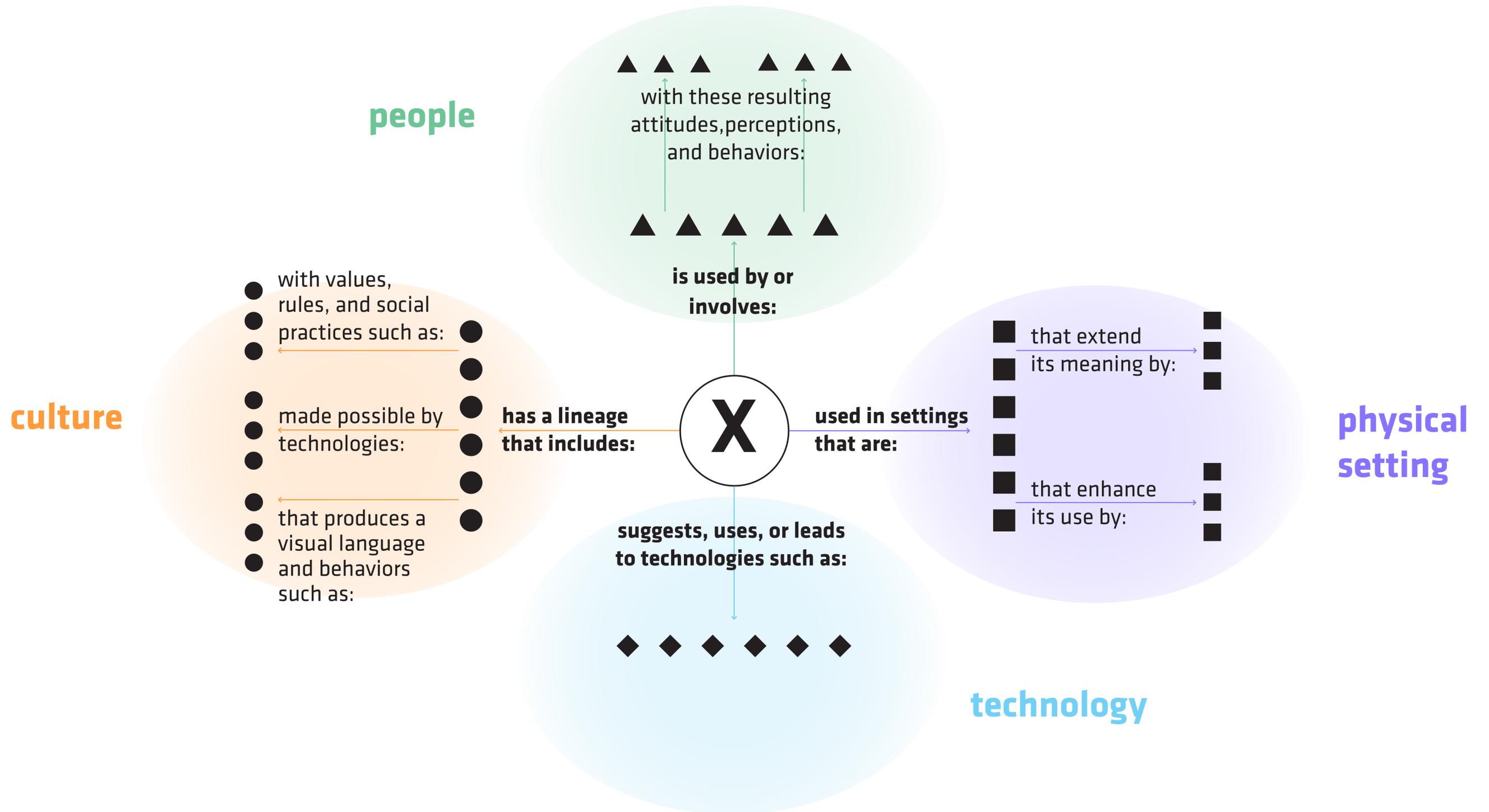
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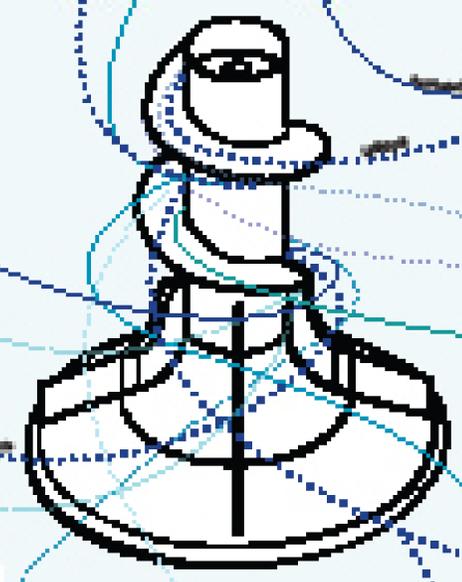
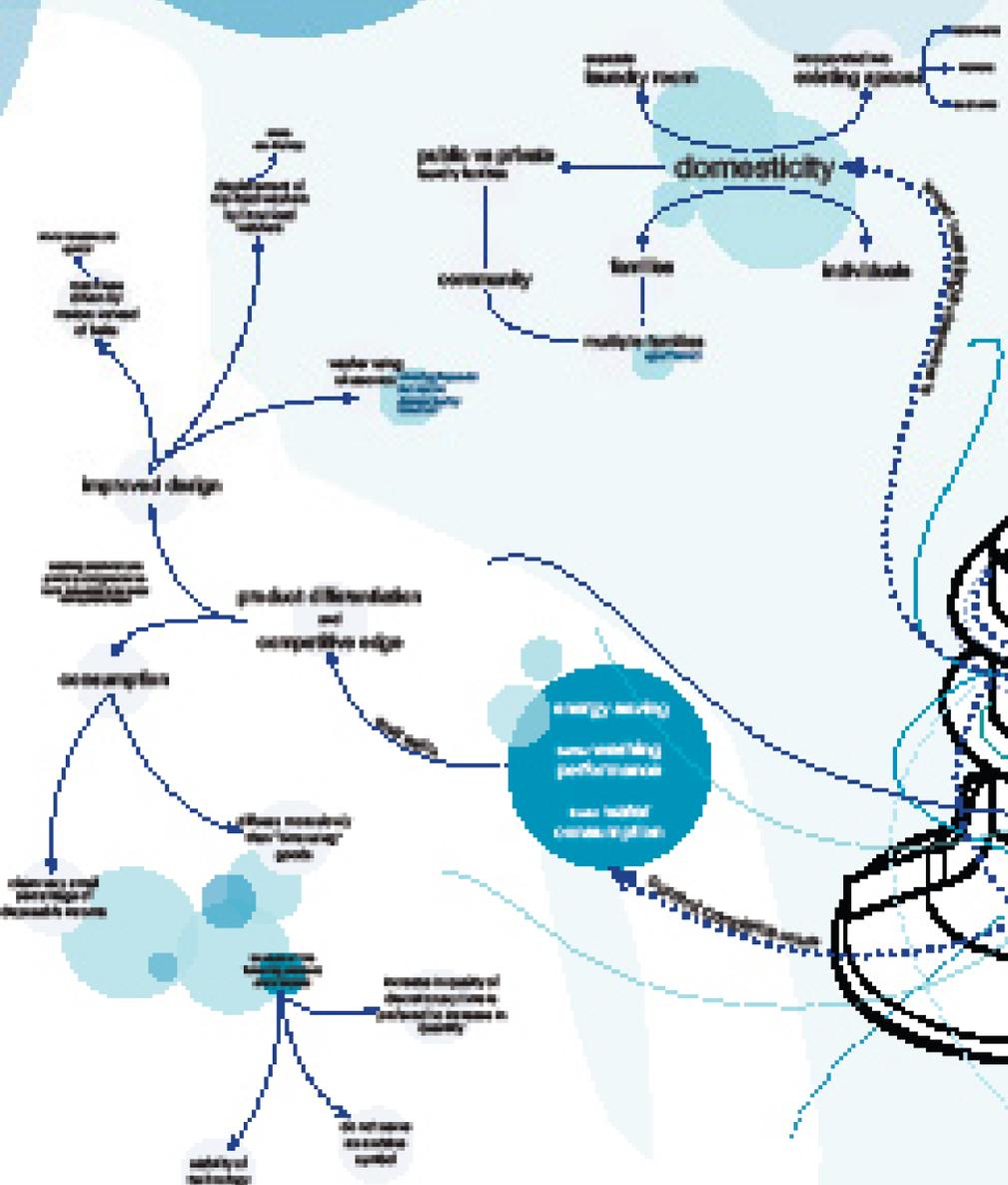


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the home washing machine revealed

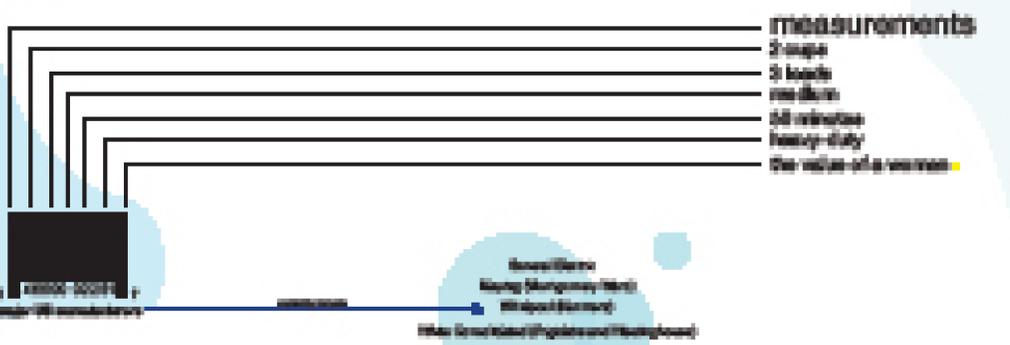
"A person who takes laundry to a friend to put through the mangle system and hangs the clothes for dry cleaning."



How do I design a washing machine for a better washing experience?

PROBLEMS

1. too clothes
2. too hot water
3. too long cycle
4. too much noise
5. too much vibration
6. too much energy
7. too much water
8. too much detergent
9. too much soap
10. too much suds
11. too much lint
12. too much odor
13. too much mold
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deus ex machina

cleanliness is next to godliness



Pedagogical assumptions:

- **Students learn best under a simple-complex progression of ideas**
- **A formal language must be mastered before students can address complex situated problems**
- **All students need to be doing the same thing at the same time**
- **Desk crits are the best way to use studio time**
- **All students benefit from all-class critiques**

Flexible frameworks suggest that...

Important content may not require its own course

Instruction need not be 16 weeks in length

Faculty may not work with all of the students all of the time

Different students may achieve the same curricular outcomes through different curricular paths

Flexible curricular structures

Thematic structures and curricular logic vs. rigid requirements and cafeterias of courses

Pedagogies that support large class sizes / challenges to longstanding assumptions about teaching studio

Special topics offerings determined against goal-driven criteria

Common courses among programs

Thematic structures:

Sophomore / Object

Technological system

timeline

Cultural system

poster

Cognitive/social system (people)

product instructions

Physical system (setting)

experience map

Junior / System

Technological system

website (interactive system)

Cultural system

identity program (branding system)

Cognitive/social system (people)

publication (reading system)

Physical system (setting)

signage (wayfinding system)

Senior / Interacting systems

Technological system

networking/collaboration

Cultural system

advocacy

Cognitive/social system (people)

learning

Physical system (setting)

physical interaction

Thematic structures / typography:

~~letter > word > sentence > paragraph > page > publication~~

print-based, reflective of drawn comping methods, inconsistent with knowledge demands placed on students by current technologies, and usually scaffolded in typography I, II, and III

relational systems:

- formal systems
- descriptive systems
- technological systems
- language systems
- reading systems

Teaching larger studios:

Getting rid of desk crits

Getting rid of all-class critiques

Getting rid of all students doing the same thing at the same time

Structuring class time around common goals and needs

Reducing the risk in group work

Making good use of technology

Asking for presentations of learning outcomes, not projects

Special topics:

Allows quick response to opportunities and imperatives in the context

Guided by earlier decision-making about objectives

Can be targeted to specific student groups based on skills and needs

Takes advantage of unique faculty profiles or one-time staffing and expands overall faculty expertise

Suggests providing space within the curriculum that allows students to meet requirements through the special topics offerings - advised electives

Common courses:

Extend the teaching resources / eliminate wasteful redundancies

Provide interdisciplinary experiences for students and faculty

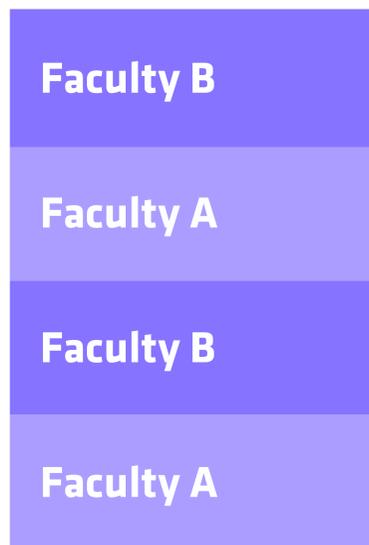
Introduces flexibility in scheduling

Flexible faculty assignments

Section 1



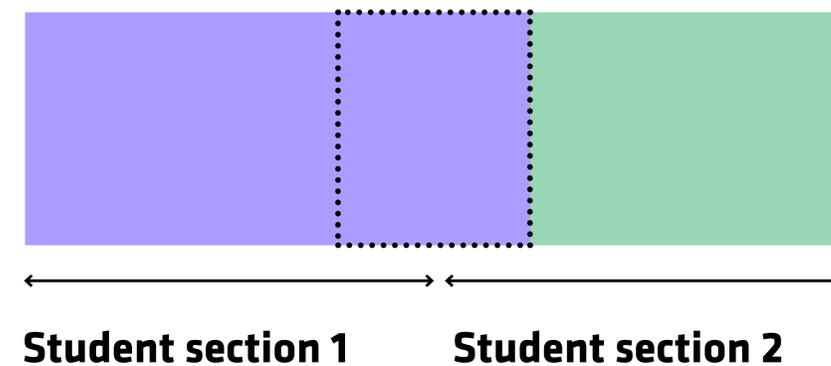
Section 2



- Half the faculty preparation**
- Twice the faculty expertise**
- Identical instruction for each section**

Faculty 1 assignment

Faculty 2

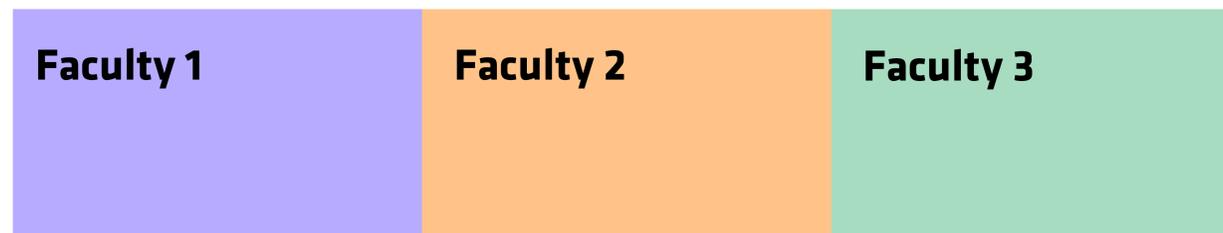


- Combines two sections; two disciplines; or two student levels**
- Two types of instruction taught to different class sizes**
- Two different levels of faculty commitment**

Flexible faculty assignments

Modules:

Students take three of three



Modules:

Students take two of three

Time slot A



Time slot B



Time for discussion...