

COLLABORATIVE VISUALIZATION WORKSHOP: ENGAGING PEOPLE, PERSPECTIVES, AND VALUES.

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During this workshop participants will gain experience through doing collaborative visualization in a team to articulate values and perspectives, and connect facts, thoughts and ideas. They will develop a shared understanding of how their own personal values connect to a design process and the larger social, economic and environmental contexts in which design decisions are made.

INTRODUCTION

Shifts in society, technology, and our environment are causing changes in the world today that are difficult to anticipate. The challenges we face are complex, ambiguous, and interrelated. According to John Thackara, author of “In the Bubble: Designing in a Complex World”, “Complex systems are shaped by all the people who use them, and in this new era of collaborative innovation, designers are having to evolve from being the individual authors of objects, or buildings, to being the facilitators of change among large groups of people.” Systems level challenges like these require approaches to solutions that can integrate multiple perspectives and values.

COLLABORATION, TOOLS & VALUES

Today, design practices are shifting in response to an awareness that in order to find problems and develop meaningful, innovative solutions designers must work in cross-functional, cross-disciplinary teams. Thackara notes, “We have to learn new ways to collaborate and do projects. We have to enhance the ability of all citizens to engage in meaningful dialogue about their environment and context, and foster new relationships between the people who make things and the people who use them.”

Human-centered collaboration allows the designer to navigate through a challenge with co-creators. When people are involved from the beginning of the design process, they not only develop shared understandings of the challenges they face, but also an appreciation for and an understanding of the multiple perspectives and values of those involved. The broad notion of designerly tools provides a lens through which to view cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Design educator Elizabeth Sanders says, “when we make tools together, we can see a participatory design language that encourages everyday people to explore

and express their thoughts and feelings about their experiences (past, present and future). This language gives opportunities to construct early and rough prototypes of dreams.”

Whether engaging challenges at the level of society and culture, a complex organization, or an individual in a community, participatory design principles can facilitate engaging a diverse range of people, perspectives, and values. This range provides a wealth of knowledge and expertise from various people and disciplines, depending on the context of the challenge.

The UK’s Design Council calls this approach “Transformation by Design,” which “uses the design process as a means to enable a wide range of disciplines and stakeholders to collaborate. It develops solutions that are practical and desirable. It is an approach that places the individual at the heart of new solutions, and builds the capacity to innovate into organizations and institutions.”

WORKSHOP CONTENT

In order to navigate through complex challenges, designers must facilitate the development of shared understandings between co-creators. Through the use of tools, such as structured and collaborative visualization, different values and perspectives can be made visible and their relationships can be made tangible. Thackara believes that “...tools can help groups foster complex interactions and design the context of innovation and learning.” This type of learning by doing allows individuals to work across disciplines, visually connecting facts, thoughts and ideas, while reflecting-in-action about the decisions that are being made. Groups learn to manage complexity by adopting a systems-level perspective, and using collaborative visualization to help make fuzzy situations clear, and clear ideas tangible.

During this workshop, the facilitators will engage participants in a series of activities that will enable them to “learn by doing.” Participants will gain experience through doing collaborative visualization in a team to connect facts, thoughts and ideas. They will develop a shared understanding of how their own personal values connect to a design process and the larger social, economic and environmental contexts in which design decisions are made. Further, participants will gain an

appreciation for facilitating a group as it articulates and negotiates multiple values and perspectives.

By identifying which values each individual brings to the design process, teams can collectively shape how they view and develop a problem space to work within. Participants will learn to make sense of their values within a larger framework, and to connect to the context in which designing will take place.

This proposal is for a full day (6 hour) session.

BACKGROUND

At the Indiana University Herron School of Art and Design, we believe that designers must apply design insights, knowledge and skills in ways that address today’s challenging contexts. We advocate designing as a collaborative process for identifying root problems and facilitating meaningful solutions to complex issues. At both the graduate and undergraduate levels, we engage in collaborative, interdisciplinary, community-oriented projects. Students, faculty, community partners, organizations and institutions are invited to co-create meaningful solutions to complex challenges.