

# How can *{co-design (games)}* support evidence mobilisation?

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Session focus: (1) How can *{co-design (games)}* support knowledge mobilisation? (2) How can *{co-design (games)}* be applied across sectoral and disciplinary contexts? (3) How can we improve and integrate tools and technologies to better mobilise evidence for action? and (4) How can we work together to take the next steps for the field?

5 min pitch brief: (1) Overview of *{co-design (games)}* (2) Settings *{co-design (games)}* is used in and (3) How *{co-design (games)}* is applied to mobilise evidence to address a crisis?

The short answer to the last question is “co-design games provide an accessible sense-making process for people of all backgrounds to convert multiple forms of complex evidence into personal knowledge. Co-design games also give people the agency to see how they might act on this knowledge.” But a brief critical overview to justify how and why...

## An overview of co-design

*“...collective creativity as it is applied across the whole span of a design process...  
...the creativity of designers and people not trained in design working together in  
the design development process...”*

Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders & Pieter Jan Stappers (2008)  
Co-creation and the new landscapes of design,  
CoDesign, 4:1, 5-18, DOI: [10.1080/15710880701875068](https://doi.org/10.1080/15710880701875068)



For an overview, we need to start with Co-design and break this down a bit. I'm sure everyone has heard of or even used codesign .... Or think they may have.

# Design thinking



## Design Thinking: Past, Present and Possible Futures

Ulla Johansson-Sköldberg, Jill Woodilla and Mehves Çetinkaya

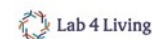
This paper takes a critical look at the design thinking discourse, one that has different meanings depending on its context. Within the managerial realm, design thinking has been described as *the* best way to be creative and innovate, while within the design realm, design thinking may be partly ignored and taken for granted, despite a long history of academic development and debate. In the design area, we find five different discourses of 'designerly thinking', or ways to describe what designers do in practice, that have distinctly different epistemological roots. These different discourses do not stand in competition with each other but could be developed in parallel. We also observe that the management discourse has three distinct origins, but in general has a more superficial and popular character and is less academically anchored than the designerly one. Also, the management design thinking discourse seldom refers to designerly thinking and thereby hinders cumulative knowledge construction. We suggest further research to link the discourses.

### The Nature of the Two Discourses: Designerly Thinking and Design Thinking

A simple way of discussing the discourse of design thinking is as two distinct discourses:

- One we call 'designerly thinking'. This refers to the academic construction of the professional designer's practice (practical skills and competence) and theoretical reflections around how to interpret and characterize this non-verbal competence of the designers. Designerly thinking links theory and practice from a design perspective, and is accordingly rooted in the academic field of design.
- The other discourse is 'design thinking'. We reserve this term for the discourse where design practice and competence are used beyond the design context (including art and architecture), for and with people without a scholarly background in design, particularly in management. 'Design thinking' then becomes a simplified version of 'designerly thinking' or a way of describing a designer's methods that is integrated into an academic or practical management discourse.

Johansson-Sköldberg, U., Woodilla, J. and Çetinkaya, M., 2013. **Design thinking: past, present and possible futures.** *Creativity and innovation management*, 22(2), pp.121-146.

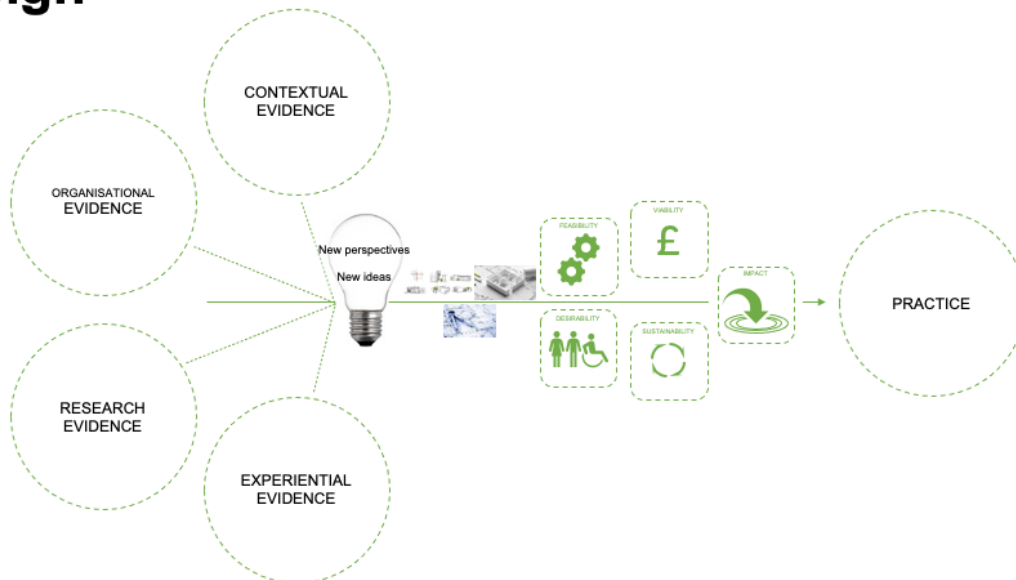


The term design thinking has spread into many different arenas, much like codesign. Images like this (top left), broadly describing what a design thinking process is, are probably familiar.

When methods, approaches and tools are taken across disciplinary boundaries, they inherently evolve in different directions. And this is not a bad thing. However, I'd suggest it is wise to periodically critically examine such evolutionary paths to see (and understand) what has changed, why – and whether any core or essential elements have been lost or eroded along the way.

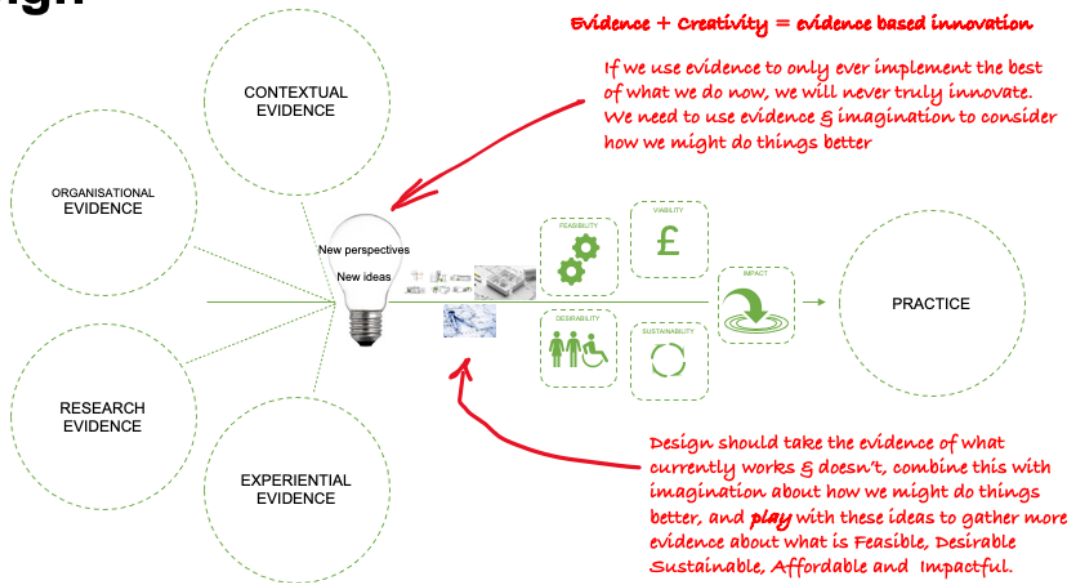
Johansson-Sköldberg and colleagues do a great job of this in their review about Design Thinking. Broadly speaking Design Thinking is found in 2 dominant academic discourses; Design and Business Management. The authors found there was a superficiality and an almost populist nature to the Business/management discourse; it was less anchored in academic research and empirical evidence. The discourse in the Design discipline was much older, and anchored on observational studies, interviews of what designers did; of designerly practice at all levels from Design students to 'elite' design professionals. They note the subsequent application of design thinking in the business domain is a simplified form of designerly thinking. More rigorous and complex forms of design thinking are founded on design skills and competencies as part of the thinking practices and processes. So what is design?

# Design



A central feature of design practise is in the application of a variety of prototyping and visualisation methods, that act as a way for a designer to combine and try out different strands of often competing (even conflicting) evidence – synthesising this evidence - and as a way of working out how to optimally meet a real world need, within constraints of competing (even conflicting) requirements.

# Design

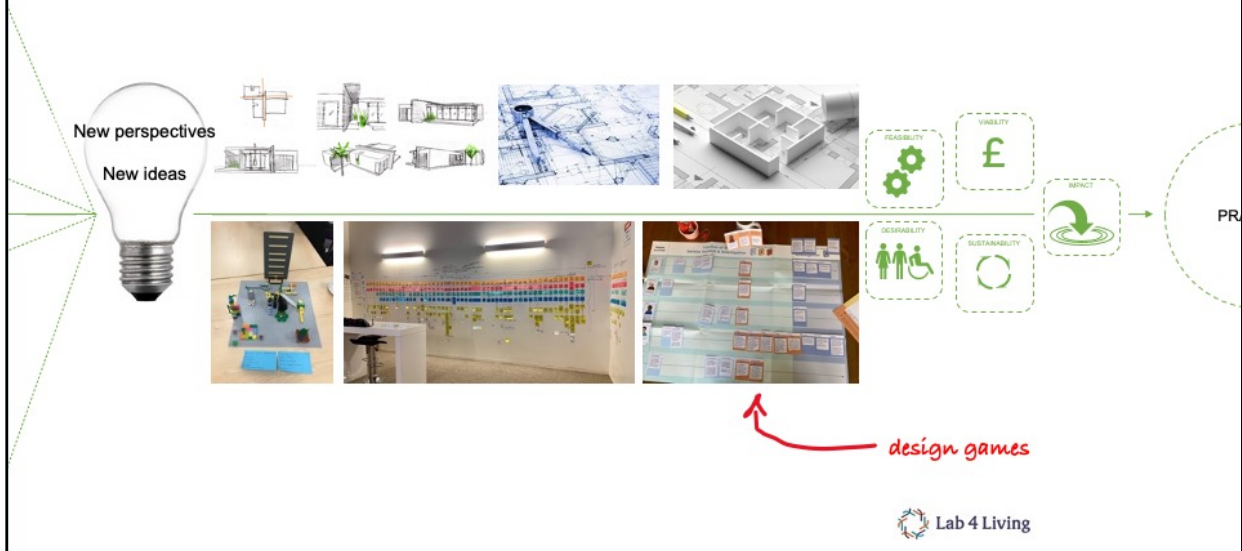


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But lets just also remember – for design its not all just about evidence and how it is applied. If it was, we would never create anything new. Its also about imagination - how evidence can be applied in **new** ways.

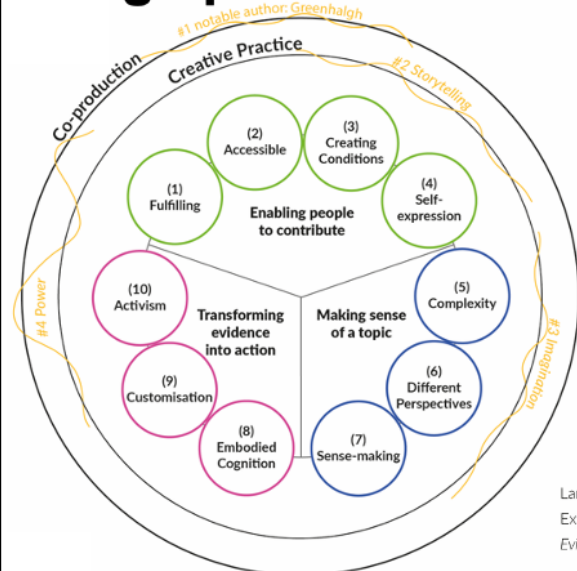
It has to be based on evidence of what we know now – but through imagination, apply this to new (better) ways of doing things

# Design practices



The design practices (of which design games are one example) are one of the key things missing from the application of Design Thinking processes when they move into new domains. And these practices are key to this notion of 'playing' with evidence, and to combining evidence with imagination. It is not design processes or design thinking but Design Practices that are fundamental to how design mobilises knowledge.

# Design practices in co-design



Langley, J; Partridge, R; Law, R; Williams, L; Burton, C; Hall, B; Hiscock, J; Morrison, V; Lemmey, A; Cooney, J; Lovell-Smith, C; Gallanders, J; Williams, N.  
**'Playing' with Evidence; combining creative co-design methods with realist evidence synthesis.**  
 Design4Health, Amsterdam, July 2020, Vol 2, page 96



Langley, J., Kayes, N., Gwilt, I., Snelgrove-Clarke, E., Smith, S., & Craig, C. (2022).  
 Exploring the value and role of creative practices in research co-production,  
*Evidence & Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1332/174426421X16478821515272>



In the context of co-design, these design practices play similar roles and functions as when designers apply them in terms of exploring evidence, ideas and the constraints of real contexts and users.

However, they take on additional roles/functions in the way they bring people together, build relationships, and support communication across various boundaries.

On a micro or personal scale, these games help individuals or small groups to 'play' with evidence and make sense of it in the context of their own experiences – so the evidence is mobilised into knowledge at this individual – small group scale. Within a co-design process, people can then be supported to apply this knowledge in new and novel ways.

# Co-design games



Come and have a go...



I have brought two of these games with me for you to try out. I selected these two because of their differences. The first was pre-COVID and a face-to-face game for small groups of 3-4 people. It was developed and made in the space of 24 hrs. It came organically from our design practice. Me and my design team initially developed the cards from a long list of If...Then statements as our way of trying to help us make sense of them. This spurred us to use the game with our co-design partners for the same reason. These games took 10 minutes to play. And there were 3-4 different ways it could be played.

The second game was a much more deliberate and elaborate approach, to a far more complex project. Complex in terms of the evidence and in terms of the co-design partners involved. It was a deeply emotive issues with some very entrenched, oppositional views. It was developed during COVID and sent out via post to each individual co-design partner. Some completed it on their own, others with colleagues, or even family members. It was a few days later that they all came together online for the first codesign meeting.



## **Settings co-design (games) have been used in**

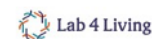
### **Applications:**

commercial, research, community based ... products, services, information....

### **Sectors:**

environment, health services & products, social care, food & food security,  
justice & penal services, welfare ...

### **Co-design games...?**



In terms of settings where co-design has been applied...

Co-design games have been applied in a wide range of settings but typically to enable co-design partners to reflect on their own experiences and bring these to a co-design process.

What I have done is to use co-design games differently; to bring evidence to co-design partners and enable them to make sense of it in the context of their own experiences and so bring a richer body of knowledge to subsequent co-design processes, that is based on both personal, lived experience evidence and research evidence.

# Co-design (games) applied to mobilise evidence in a crisis



This is relatively new... and perhaps this is one of the things that can be considered here today.