PhD in Design
VIGNETTES

PhD in Design - VIGNETTES

Pieter Jan Stappers
Annemiek G. C. van Boeijen
Delft University of Technology

Francesca Mattioli
Politecnico di Milano

This document is based on the analysis of PhD theses keywords, as documented in:
DoCS4Design Report

Mattioli, F., Figoli, F.A., and Stappers, P.J. (2024) Connecting the PhD in Design: How PhDs Label Their Thesis Research, in Proceedings of Learn X Design 2023: Futures of Design Education.

Elena

? ?

EA
Politecnico

Visualisations and social issues. A study on information visualisations circulating on social media platforms.

Context	Object	Approach	Values
Social media platforms, information disorders, information visualisations	strategies for chart designers	Mixed methods	reliability, literacy
Information design	Information and communication technologies	Internet studies	one extra?
DesignType	Technology	Theory	one extra?

The purpose of the research is to investigate the **role that information visualisation plays in the circulation of information disorders during social issues**.

The study aims to identify and analyse the most **common characteristics and strategies** employed following the information disorders approach.

Upon conclusion, the research will provide **strategies** that can serve chart designers (intendes as **those designing information visualisations**, e.g. data journalists) to detect, diagnose, and mitigate the issue.
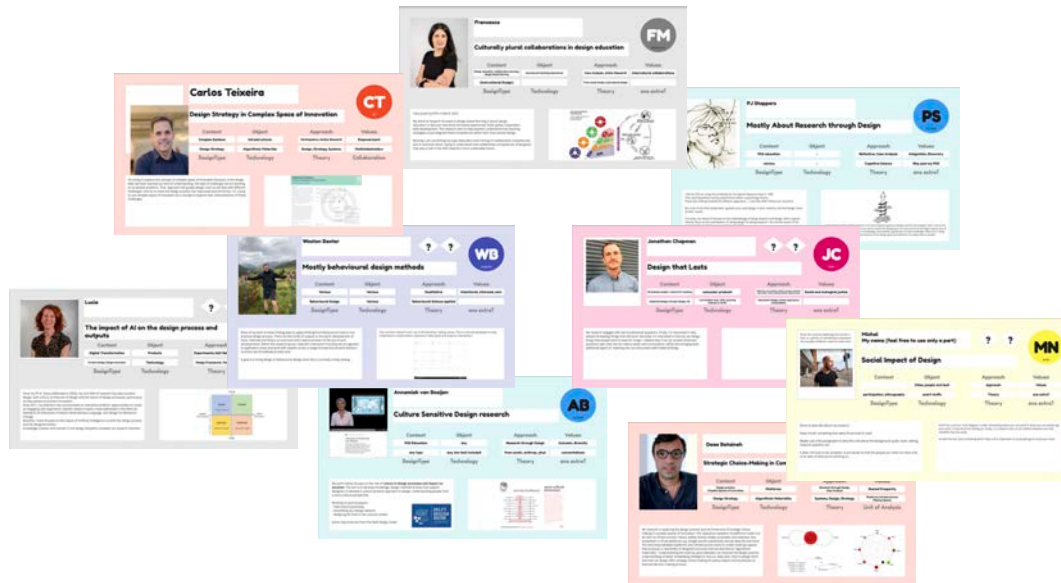
Let me introduce my project...

It's good to have a network of peers, but when PhD candidates meet, in courses, symposia, or workshops, they don't find it easy to quickly describe what their work is about. First descriptions are typically very much about the topic of the research, or the funding agency, and new PhD candidate hesitate to find words about their approach, values, or methods.

In this template we ask 7+1 topics about which to add a word or two on a 'vignette' to introduce yourself, and for each topic there is not an abstract definition, but a low-threshold cloud of answers given before.

We compiled the word clouds and instructions on the basis of an analysis of the keywords attached to 350+ PhD in Design Theses. These were words which the authors thought helpful in describing their work. The word clouds define the categories through examples of the way these may be defined. In several workshops we used the vignettes to let people introduce their work to each other and to visitors and teachers. Using the word clouds as suggestions was preferred, because many of us are hesitant to fill in 'correct' answers on questions like 'which approach or method do you use', and there is not a single agreed-on set of words.

Use these vignettes as a template for inviting participants to your PhD event to quickly and easily introduce themselves. We have used this format at several occasions, and it is easy and helpful.

Design your Vignette Template

There is not a single prescribed 'look and feel' for the vignettes. You may want to let the vignette to fit the visual identity of the event for which you use it (an internal course, a networking meeting, etc). Here are the tips on how much space to give in the formats

The personal identity fields

Have room for a personal visual (icon, photo) and name, and the title and a short description of their project. Keep these spaces small. PhD candidates tend to put long texts and titles there to 'justify' their projects, but long texts are not helpful. Even formal project titles contain many distracting words. The examples here don't show affiliation, roles in the event, or degrees. You may consider adding fields, or just a signal color if these differences are helpful to make explicit in your event.

A space for images

Make this as large as the project description. Some will leave it empty, some will put in a diagram some just a visual to emphasize the topic of their research.

Eight descriptors

We chose these descriptors on the basis of the main clusters of keywords used by PhD candidates to characterize their PhD thesis. Each of the descriptors highlights an aspect of sector, values, methods etc. In our experience, most people have difficulty with coming up with some short words to describe these aspects of their work. In part this is because there are no shared definitions or classifications. For that reason the instruction does not contain a formal definition. Rather, we suggest possible types of answers with the wordclouds. These help to lower the threshold.

Lead by Example

Just as the wordclouds lead the participants by showing examples of possible answers, you can show examples of vignettes, maybe your own.

When we organized a training event, we had the instructors pave the way for participants by sharing their own vignettes. In this example, all vignettes were created on a shared digital whiteboard, so everyone could see how the others formulated theirs. This preparation already led to some networking activities from the participants.

Your template here

Show your own template here, or even better, show some examples.

How to fill in your Vignette

Hello! You received an empty vignette template. These vignettes are meant so we can quickly introduce ourselves to eachother, for instance when we are networking, or together in a session.

In the vignettes we share some information about ourselves and our projects. Feel free to choose your own form, to leave parts blank, or emphasize one thing or the other. The vignettes are meant to be playful, informal, advertisements of 'what you want to talk about'.

Name, picture, and project
Feel free to put a photograph, or just a funny image, and your full name or only part of it. It's not a formal identity card.
Regarding your project title and description, try to keep that short and emphasize the main focus. Usually the formal project information is too long, and when introducing yourself you just want to highlight two or three terms.
There's also room to include a visual about your project: a key diagram, or a picture from fieldwork, or maybe the prototype you are building.

Eight descriptors
There are eight fields where you can say something about, e.g., the methods you (intend to) use, or the sector where your project is. Use these fields to draw attention to things you may want to learn about from others, or on which you expect to find interesting peers. Don't feel obliged to use 'the correct words'. For each term we provide a wordcloud of 'answers given before' from the keywords that were attached to earlier PhD theses. You don't have to choose one of these, just be inspired.

Context

Is your research about a specific product, situation, or occuring in a sector or domain?
For example, if you work on a funded project in healthcare.

Object

Many design research projects often have impact goals, resulting in concrete solution proposals focused around a product category as a desired outcome..

Approach

PhD students in design (and related fields like architecture) express the need for guidance in research methods; design research builds on diverse traditions from

Values

Some design research often is explicitly human-centered or technology-oriented.
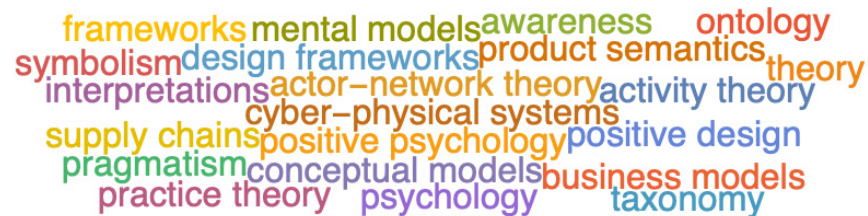
Type of Design

Many research projects consider particular (emerging) design practices, such as service design, and participate with or develop methods for those practices..

social innovation art naval design fashion design product design
information design industrial design interaction design design innovation
transition design user-driven innovation cross-cultural design car design
interior design do-it-yourself design entrepreneurial design collaborative innovation empathic design
aircraft design design management temporality-based design multi sensory design lighting design
bio-inspired design product and service development data-driven design service design
spatial design organisational design new product development architectural design graphic design
experience design health technologies design communication design strategic design
interface design innovation management environmental design business innovation fashion
metadesign user-centered design contextual design service innovation furniture design
types of design systems design critical design global design game design

Technology

Many design research projects explore or develop emerging technologies or practices. For example, if you work on a funded project about Artificial Intelligence.

new media sensors virtual reality
virtual environments personal informatics smart materials
infrastructures wearable technologies machine learning
geographic information systems big data
robotics information and communications technologies
electronics composites
augmented reality technology digital technologies
smart textiles assistive technologies health technologies
technologies

Theory

Design research often builds on models and theories from several other disciplines.

frameworks mental models awareness ontology
symbolism design frameworks product semantics
interpretations actor-network theory theory
cyber-physical systems activity theory
supply chains positive psychology positive design
pragmatism conceptual models
practice theory psychology business models
taxonomy

One More

You may well feel there is this one extra thing that we didn't ask for, but which you think is so interesting to tell. Tell it!