

Design studies

Studies design itself: what designing is, how designers reason and work, and how that knowledge differs from that of the sciences and the humanities.

In Spanish

Estudios de diseño

Origin

Emerged from the design methods movement (1962) and Simon (1969); consolidated with the journal Design Studies (1979) and Cross (1982)



What it studies

How design is done and what sets it apart. It gives design a language to explain and improve its own way of working.

Principles

The artificial

Designing is thinking about how things ought to be, not only describing how they are.

Wicked problems

Many design problems have no definitive formulation and no correct solution, only better or worse ones.

A way of knowing of its own

Design thinks by proposing solutions, not only by analyzing the problem.

Applications in design

✓ Use it like this

Draw on it to explain how you work, argue why a design process isn't linear, or teach design.

✗ Avoid

Thinking a design problem can be solved just with more data: often it has to be redefined.

👁 Don't fall for it

Theory describes how design is done; it isn't a recipe that guarantees the result.

Methods and tools



Approach

Design thinking

Tackling open problems the way design does: understanding people, ideating and prototyping.



Process

Double Diamond

Open up and narrow down twice: first to find the right problem, then the solution.



Approach

Research through design

Researching by designing: prototypes are used to generate knowledge, not just products.

Connections

Campos cercanos

■ Design history and criticism

Used in

■ Design research

Related to

■ Four orders of design

Authors and works

1969	Herbert A. Simon	Separated the natural sciences from the sciences of the artificial and defined design broadly, as devising how to move from an existing situation to a preferred one.
1973	Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber	Called “wicked” the planning problems that cannot be defined once and for all and have no true or false solution.
1982	Nigel Cross	Argued that design has a way of knowing of its own, different from that of the sciences and the humanities.
1992	Richard Buchanan	Linked wicked problems to design thinking and described design as a discipline that integrates knowledge from many fields.

Sources

Original sources

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