

Concept

Design synthesis

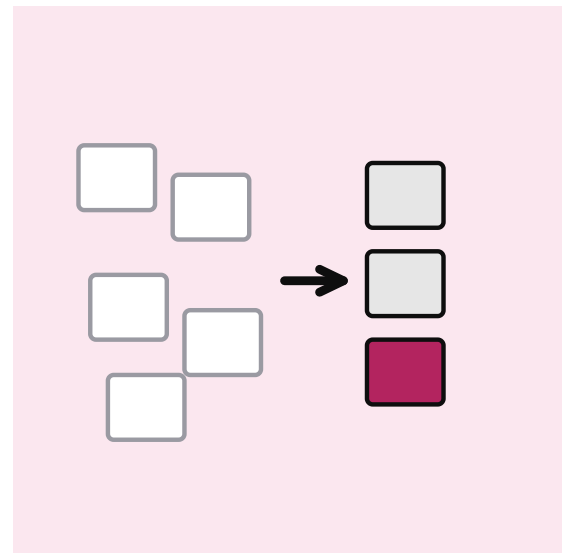
The process of organizing, grouping, and interpreting what has been researched until patterns, insights, and design opportunities emerge.

In Spanish

Síntesis

Origin

Sensemaking: Weick (1995); in design, Kolko (2010)



What problem it addresses

Explains how you go from a pile of data to a clear direction for design.

An example

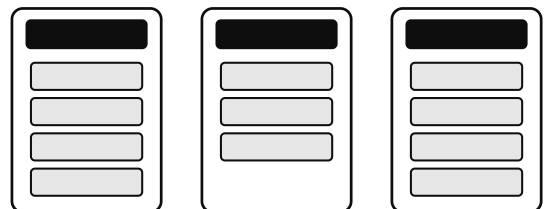
After ten interviews, the team has hundreds of notes.

A data report



All the answers are listed, question by question. **A lot of information.**

Synthesis



The notes are grouped by theme, connections and contradictions are sought, and insights are formulated. **A direction.**

Synthesis does not summarize: it interprets and proposes what the findings mean.

Why it happens

1



Get all the information out while it is fresh.

2



Group and regroup it, looking for patterns and differences.

3



Interpret it until insights and opportunities are formulated.

Applications in design

✓ Use it like this

Take the information out of notebooks and screens onto a wall or a board, where the whole team can see it.

✗ Avoid

Jumping from data to solutions without going through interpretation.

👁 Don't fall for it

Do it as a team and explain your groupings to others: they will see connections you do not.

Abduction

What the research says

Kolko describes synthesis as abductive reasoning: proposing the most plausible explanation for what was observed, rather than just deducing or generalizing from the data (Kolko, 2010).

● ● ○ **Debated evidence.** It is a theoretical framework about how designers work, not an experimental result.

Connections

Used in

■ How might we...?

■ Affinity diagram

■ Double Diamond

■ Five whys

■ Design principles

Related to

■ Insight

■ Triangulation

Authors and works

1995

Karl Weick

Studied sensemaking: how people and organizations make sense of what happens to them.

2010

Jon Kolko

Described synthesis as the engine of design, based on sensemaking and abduction.

Sources

Original sources

- Weick, K. E. (1995). Sensemaking in organizations. Sage.
- Kolko, J. (2010). Abductive thinking and sensemaking: The drivers of design synthesis. Design Issues, 26(1), 15–28. [View source \(https://doi.org/10.1162/desi.2010.26.1.15\)](https://doi.org/10.1162/desi.2010.26.1.15)

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