



Gutentag!

Emma is an author and Drupal trainer.



that's me!



that's my company
www.designtotheme.com

Agenda

1. Define “base theme”.
2. Evaluate base themes.
3. Reframe the conversation about “themes” in Drupal.



Too often in the IRC channel #drupal-themes I watch people asking “Should I use Zen or Omega?” without context of where they’re at in their Drupal learning curve, and more importantly, what they’re trying to accomplish by using a base theme.

Define "base"

base (bāz) (n)

noun The lowest part or edge of something; esp. the part on which it rests or is supported.

noun Also as the foundation (or groundwork); then as a point from which (something) can develop. "The film is based on a novel".

adjective Without real principle; greedy. "The molecule's base instincts of greed and selfishness".

Synonyms: basis, back, foundation, bottom, pedestal, ground, rock, found, ground, solution, addition, mean, end, low, humble, level, easy.



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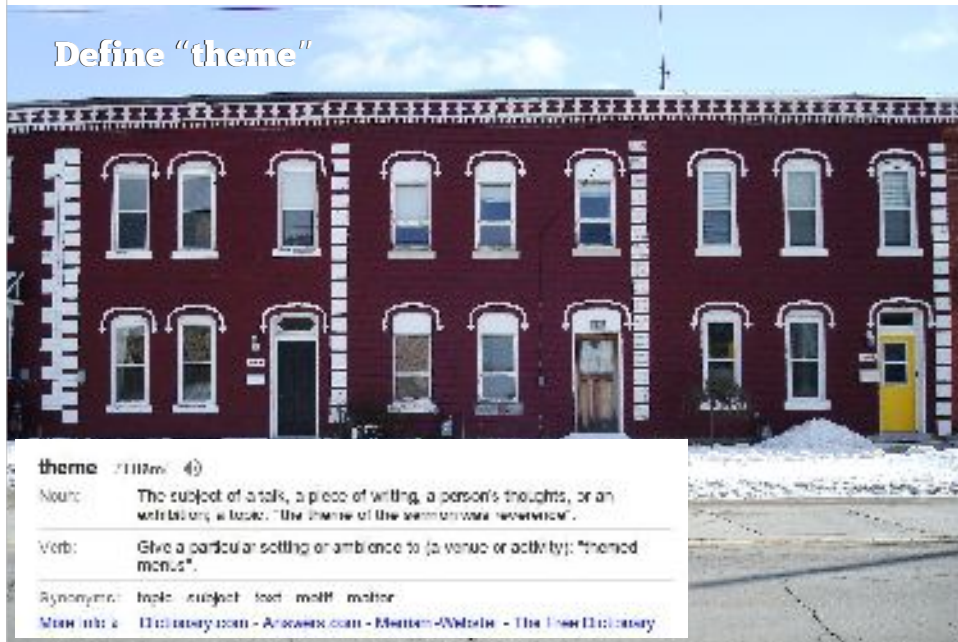
noun Also as the foundation (or groundwork); then as a point from which (something) can develop. "The film is based on a novel".

adjective Without real principle; glib. "The molecule's base instincts of greed and selfishness".

Synonyms: basis, bank, foundation, bottom, pedestal, ground, rock, found, ground, solution, addition, mean, end, low, humble, level, easy.



Define "theme"



theme /ˈθiːm/ ⓘ

Noun The subject of a talk, a piece of writing, a person's thoughts, or an exhibition; a topic: "the theme of the sermon was redemption".

Verb Give a particular setting or ambience to (a venue or activity): "themed menus".

Synonyms: topic, subject, text, motif, matter.

More in: [Dictionary.com](#) - [Answers.com](#) - [Merriam-Webster](#) - [The Free Dictionary](#)

theme

noun (THIEM) +40

themes, plural

1. The subject of a talk, a piece of writing, a person's thoughts, or an exhibition; a topic.
 - the theme of this writer's last poem was
 - a study of the theme of waste and recycling
2. The first, main constituent of a passage, including the subject matter, typically being the subject but not necessarily other *constituents*, as in "perhaps is not".
 - an idea that must be in or produce a work or an art form etc
3. A constituent of a musical score, including a group of notes in a composition
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9. A constituent of a musical score, including a group of notes in a composition
10. The stem of a noun or verb; the part to which inflections are added, esp. one composed of the root and an added vowel
11. Any of the twenty-two consonants in the Sogdian script

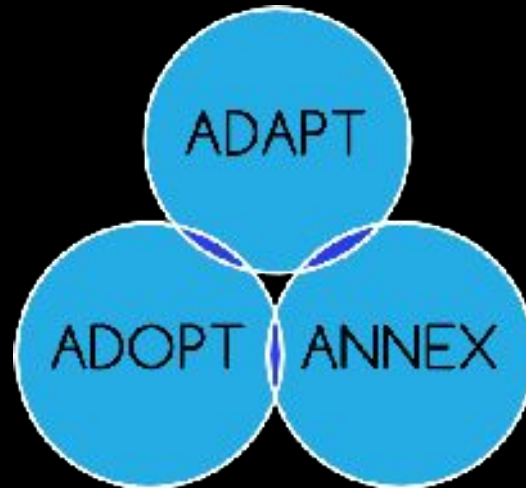


And yet when we combine these two words into a “base theme” we too often forget that a base theme is meant to be a foundation on which we build. Base themes are a starting point. They are not merely a stripped down version of a decorated theme. They provide us with value, and have nothing in them that we would want to take away. Indeed, when something integral is missing it is easy for us to add it to our sub-theme.

The theme system enables us to override what is provided.



There are 3 different kinds of base themes.



Adapt Drupal core.

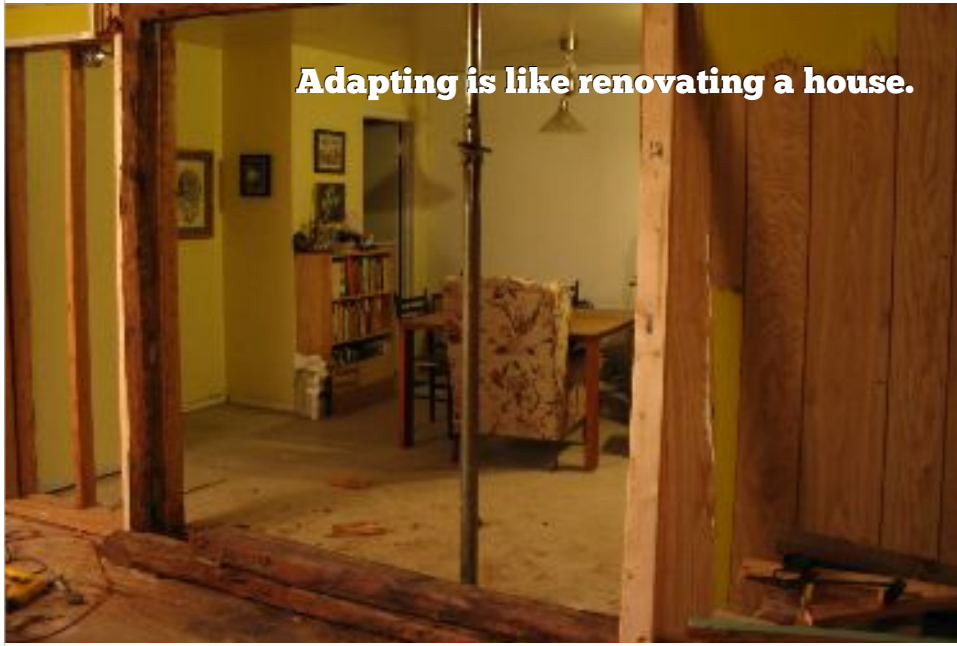
- Theme developers strive to improve Drupal core's markup and template variables.
- Base themes include: Zen, Boron, Mothership.



for improved:

- work flow.
- semantic purity.
- standards-compliance
- If you're interested in this sort of thing, attend Jesper's presentation "dominate the theme layer" this afternoon (look at the schedule around your neck).

Adapting is like renovating a house.



Adopt non-Drupal frameworks into Drupal.

- Typically used for grid frameworks but always has an external-from-Drupal code “library”.
- Base themes include: NineSixty, Square Grid, Blueprint.



Adopting is like buying a house.



Annex components into a new mega system.

- Incorporates “all the things”.
- Requires you to install at least one module.
- Base themes include: AdaptiveTheme, Fusion, Omega.

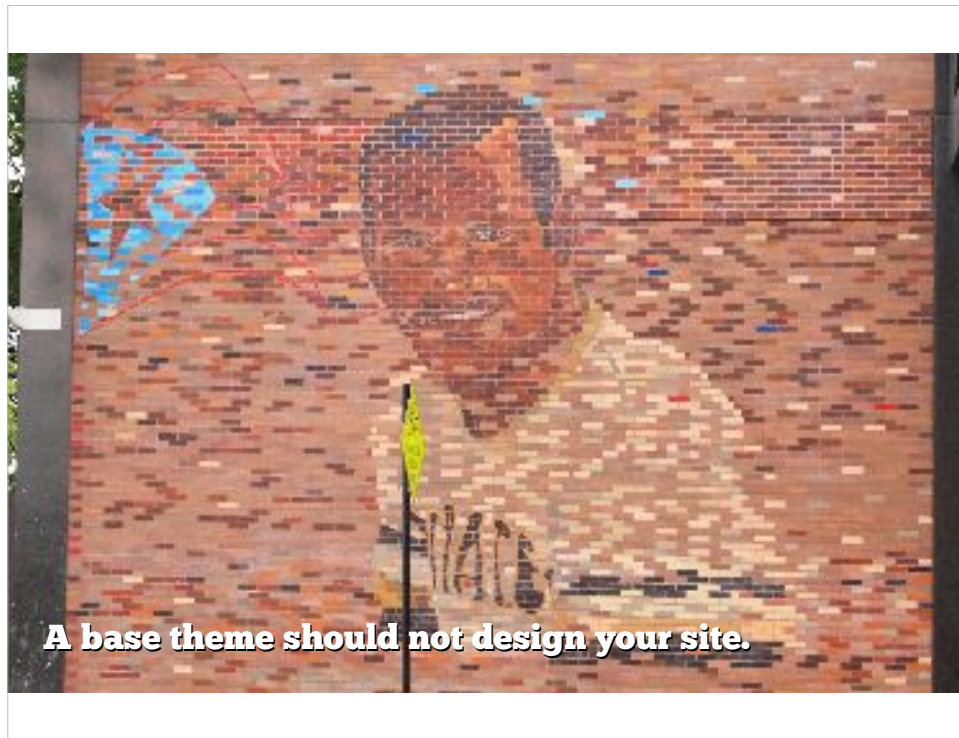


- Annex base themes “do all the things”.
- Extends Drupal core with additional modules.
- Adapts Drupal core markup (e.g. adds HTML5).
- Adopts a CSS grid-framework.

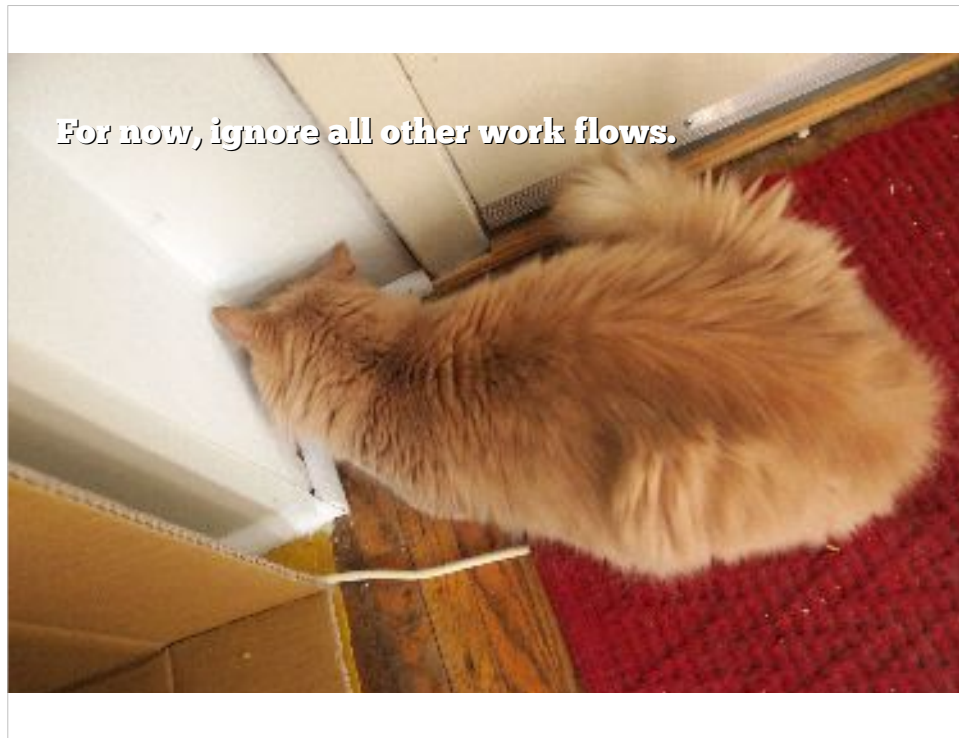


The Annex is a neighbourhood in Toronto.

source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Annex;
Photographer: simonp



- “modules” or verb-like functionality enhancements (a la WordPress). We share our verbs by making them stand-alone modules. This makes upgrade paths (and security patches) easier.
- Colours, fonts and other decoration-based decisions for the “design” of your site.

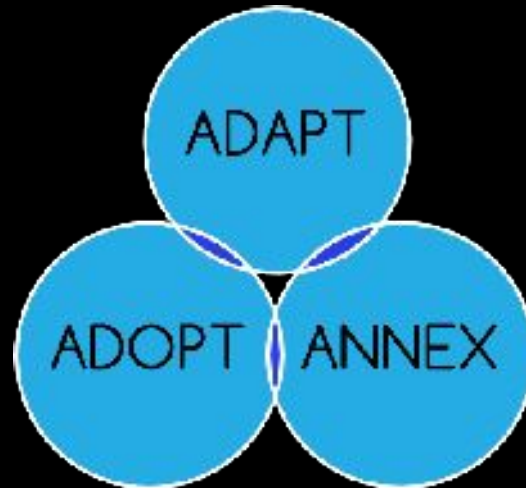


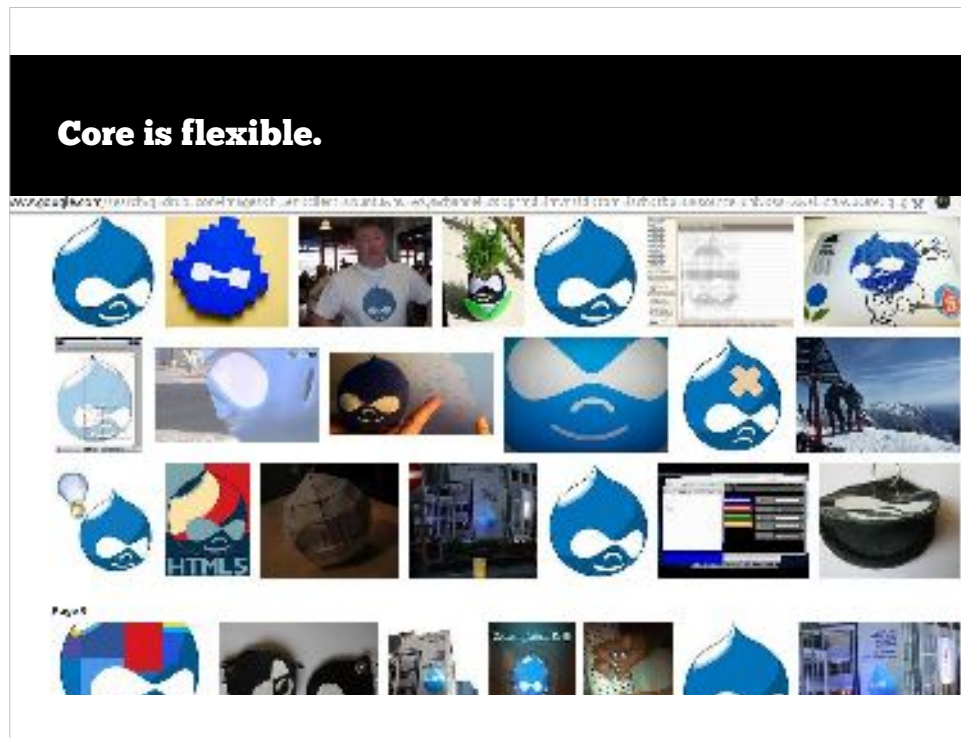
This talk is about base themes.

I am ignoring the following work flows:

- no base theme used.
- corporate “starter” kit, sub-themed by individual departments.

These differences tell us interesting things.

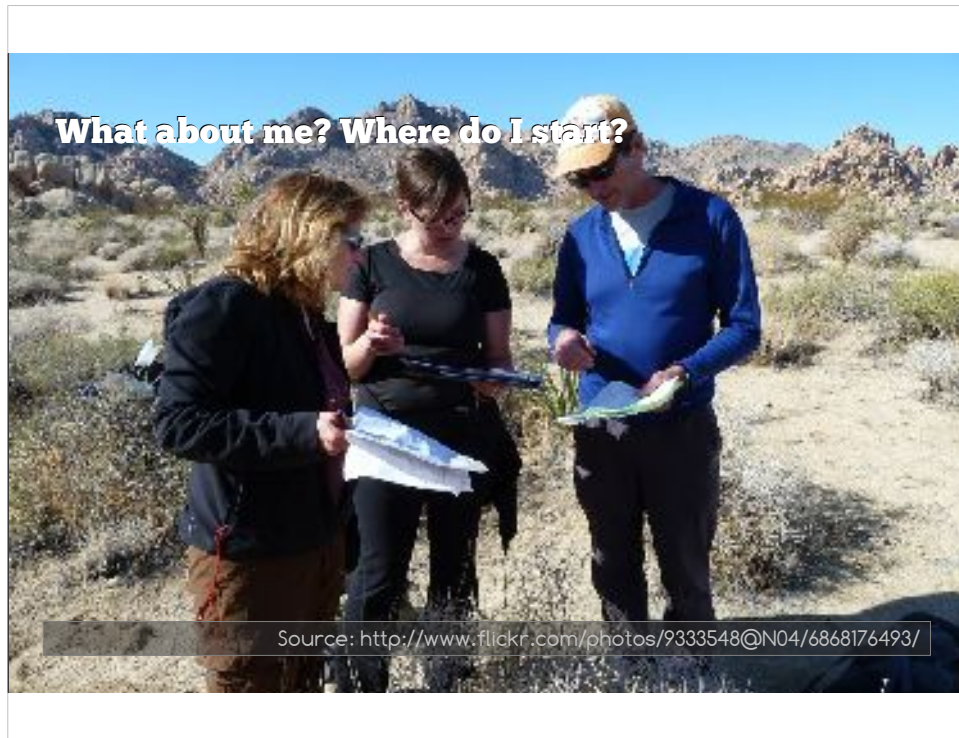




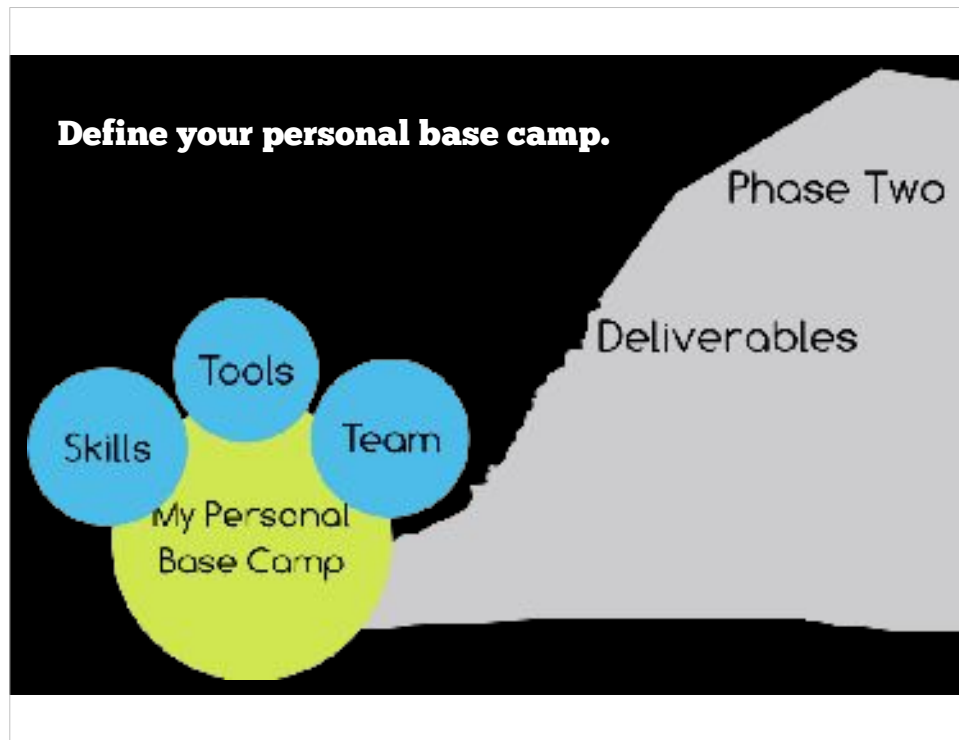
- By allowing front end developers to pull in any grid framework, we future-proof ourselves against whatever the next great trend is on the web.
- No one saw responsive coming, thank goodness we didn't “hard code” the 960 CSS Grid Framework into core.



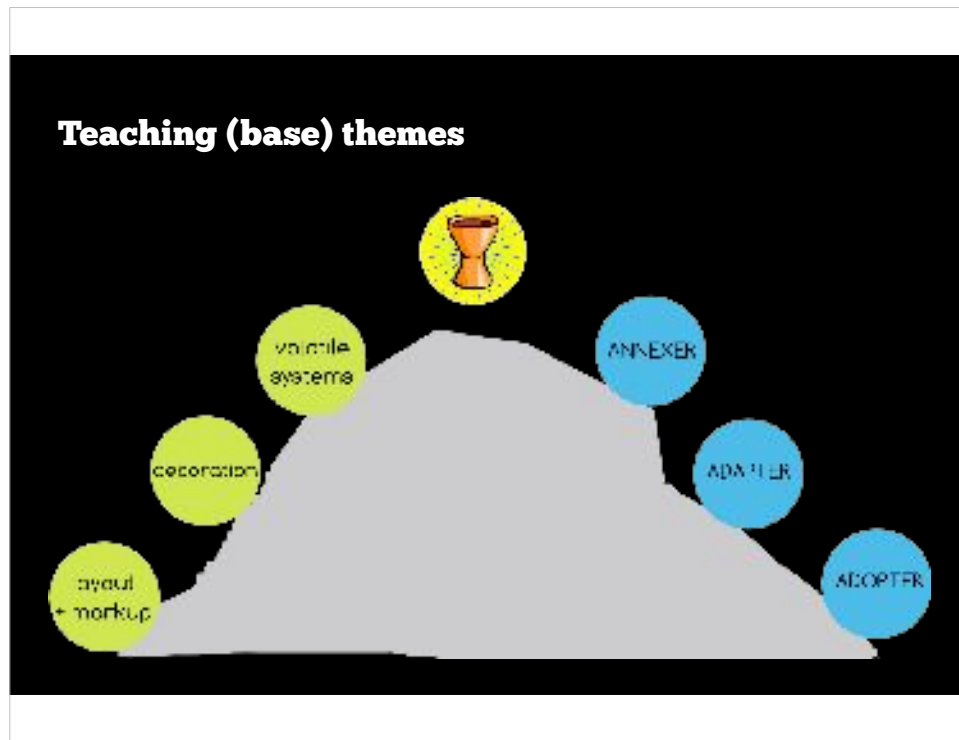
- The annex base themes show us how we've outgrown "themes".
- Designers have finally prevailed and we can no longer simply slap some CSS on Drupal to "theme" it.
- Our markup still needs work. Thank goodness theme developers care.



- This presentation is about helping you choose the right base theme for your needs.
- Before we can proceed, I need to know a little more about where you are, and where you want to go.
- You don't get a sherpa if you're only going up one flight of stairs.



- HTML, CSS, JS, PHP, etc
- SASS
- Do you work alone, or with a team of developers?
- Is your client tech-savvy? Will they want to manipulate their site after you hand it over to them?
- What are you contractually obligated to do?
- Do you *really* care about HTML5?
- How important is source order and SEO?
- How will the client use your theme?



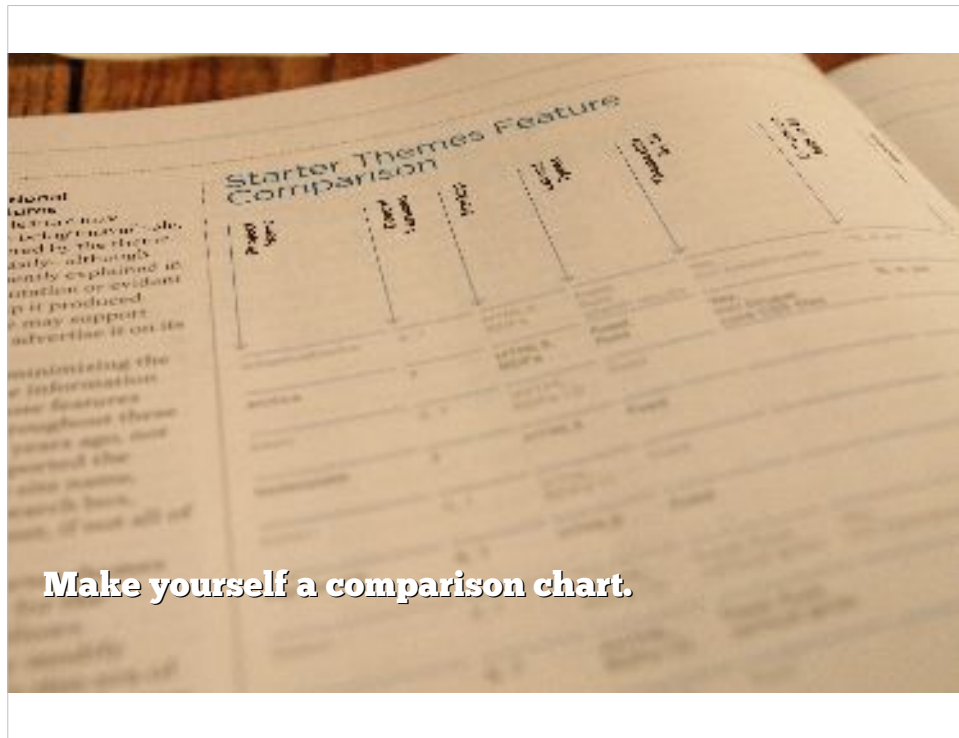
When i teach I progress from:
layout + markup -> decoration -> volatile
technology

This maps onto base themes.
layout + markup -> ADOPTER. I start by
teaching grid + drupal.
decoration -> ADAPTER. Start to focus
on the underlying tech (mostly CSS).
volatile systems -> ANNEXER. volatile
because the web moves quickly.
complex systems are hard to maintain

There is no fixed criteria to evaluate base themes.

- # of installs
- lines of comments vs. lines of code
- buzzword compliance
- in-code documentation
- ease of installation
- UI help text
- online documentation
- support (community + professional)
- “cache-able”
- performance
- security

- There are no rules on how to evaluate base themes.
- What does the theme set up for me over Drupal's default markup?
- Do I need everything that the theme sets up? How much am I going to have to remove each time I build a theme?
- How easy it is to turn off or remove an unneeded feature? e.g. You want to use Eric Meyer's reset stylesheet instead of the theme's default normalize.css.



- layout type (fixed, fluid, responsive)
- themeable by UI
- dimension units in UI
- # of regions
- CSS reset
- print CSS
- IE fixes
- mobile
- accessibility
- SEO optimized
- RTL support
- sub-themes
- documentation

"A base theme should have nothing left to take away."

A quote from

- Leonardo da Vinci
- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
- John Albin Wilkins

When using a base theme, you'll find it's easier to add new stuff you use all the time then it is to remove all the base theme's stuff you don't use.

--

John Albin Wilkins

Base Themes According to Their Developers

Hello!

At DrupalCon Munich I'm giving a talk on base themes.

As part of the presentation I'd like to highlight a few base themes. I'd like to include an honest evaluation of what the *developers* of the base theme think of their own theme's strengths and weaknesses. I'd love it if you'd take part!

Please email me back the answers to the following questions. Each answer should be not more than 140 characters. I will trim *at* 140 characters. ;)

Base themes contacted

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Mothership | Genesis |
| Zen | Framework |
| NineSixty | Arctica |
| Blueprint | Layout Studio |
| Square Grid Theme | Detamo |
| Fusion | |
| Omega | |
| AdaptiveTheme | |

Four categories

1. Your theme in a nutshell.
2. Best feature.
3. Worst thing about your base theme.
4. Notable difference from other themes.

drupal.org/project/zen



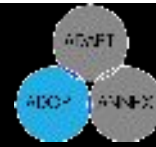
1. Zen is a Sass/Compass-powered, SMACSS-lovin', drush-buildable HTML5 Drupal starter theme with a responsive, mobile-first grid design.
2. All of Zen's components are concerned with performance: lean HTML5 markup, SMACSS-style CSS rules and organization, and light-weight PHP.
3. Its total lack of omniscience. If you don't know CSS well, Zen won't be able to build your sub-theme for you.
4. Zen gives you the Sass tools to easily build lean, custom designs with any responsive layout imaginable, not a giant configuration form.

drupal.org/project/mothership



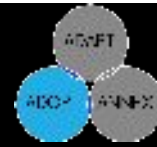
1. Cleans up the fucking markup & gimme wtf i want
2. looks like stark & you have to know wtf you doing ;)
3. you get to swear like a pirate & wear little white sailor hats

drupal.org/project/detamo



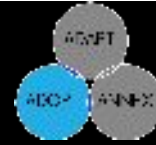
1. Detamo is a responsive base theme featuring 3 separate grids. Grids are fluid; based on a 960px desktop, a 640px tablet and a 320px Mobile.
2. It's easy use Detamo to make an existing 960-based theme responsive. Just add the grid classes for tablet and mobile to your template.
3. It won't appeal to those who don't like (non-semantic) grid classes. (And you'll have them for the desktop, tablet and mobile grids).
4. The responsive layout is in the template file so you don't need to write css to control the layout.

drupal.org/project/ninesixty



1. NineSixty is a Drupal implementation of the 960 Grid System. It's a CSS framework rather than a true "base theme."
2. It's very lightweight, flexible, and makes no assumptions about the look and feel.
3. With the rise of Sass/Compass and responsive design, the 960 Grid System is no longer the best starting point for grid-based design.
4. As a CSS framework, it can be "stacked" with other frameworks or base themes. Or you can simply copy the grid CSS file into your theme.

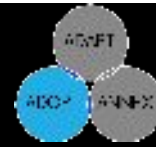
drupal.org/project/squaregrid



1. A lightweight base theme leveraging The Square Grid thesquaregrid.com framework for rapid, lightweight theming.
2. Square Grid is lightweight and flexible, and otherwise stays out of your way. A child theme could be done in 2-400 lines of (commented) CSS.
3. Lightweight = few configurable settings. If themer wants to change layouts, comfort w light php in template.php and .tpl files is needed.
4. This is not a theme that tries to make your coffee. Settings are minimal. The power is in the Square Grid css.

exactly 140 chars

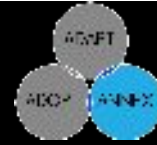
drupal.org/project/blueprint



Thanks for contacting me about Blueprint. Unfortunately at this point, I will have to back down from this opportunity to answer questions about Blueprint. Since I took over the development, my interests have moved beyond what Blueprint provides and I am no longer able to maintain or develop it. At this time, I would, however, love to find another developer who can take over the theme and really make it shine.

Blueprint is great, but as I have started to use responsive design techniques in my designs, I have moved beyond the limits of blueprint and begun using SCSS.

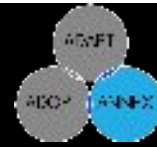
drupal.org/project/adaptivetheme



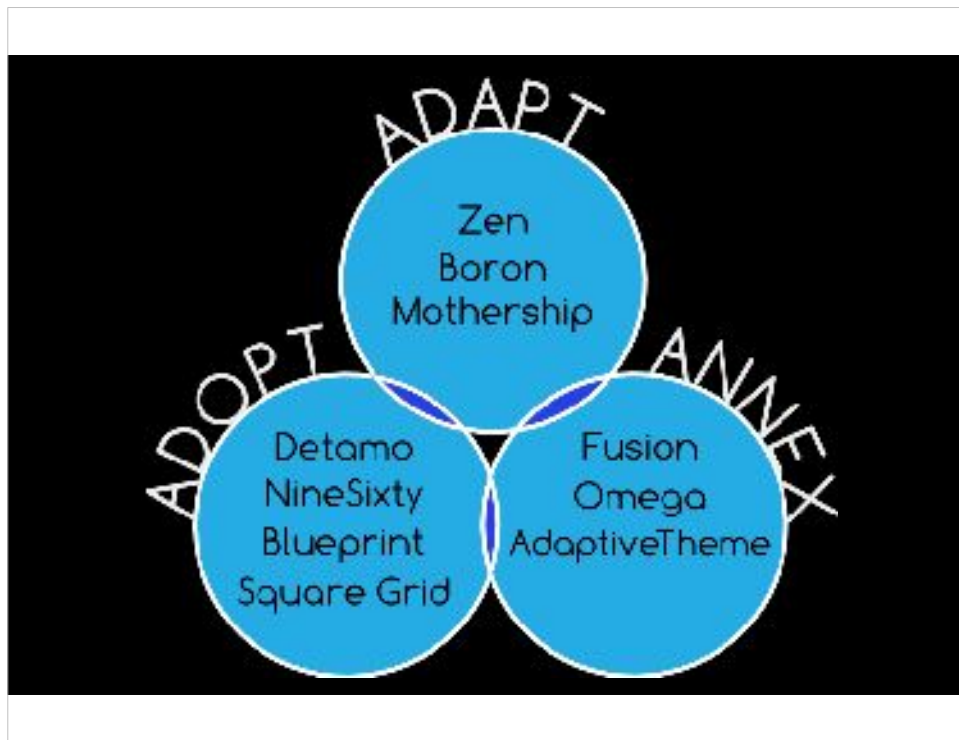
1. Responsive, HTML5, uses responsive plugins to support Panels, Panelizer and Display Suite, uses SASS, normalize, focus on accessibility
2. Tools for mobile: Browscap integration, responsive JS, responsive layout, integration with Panels & Display Suite, extensive theme settings
3. Layout plugins more complex than standard Panels plugins, necessity to abstract from Drupal to gain performance, undocumented Easter eggs ;)
4. Pluggable layout system, Responsive JavaScript, Browscap integration (move blocks, unset regions, use `$is_mobile` to test for mobile context)

exactly 140 chars

drupal.org/project/omega



1. Base theme for developing mobile friendly themes.
Currently 3rd highest used theme on Drupal.org
2. Responsive out of the box, adapting to today's and tomorrow's devices.
3. That it fails to make my coffee or clean my house.
4. One of the most passionate communities I've ever seen surround Omega, and support the documentation and improvement of the code base.
It's a [trimmed at 140]



- ADAPT: Theme developers strive to improve Drupal core's markup and template variables.
- ADOPT: Typically used for grid frameworks but always has an external-from-Drupal code "library".
- ANNEX: Incorporates "all the things".
 - Requires you to install at least one module.

And the winner is...

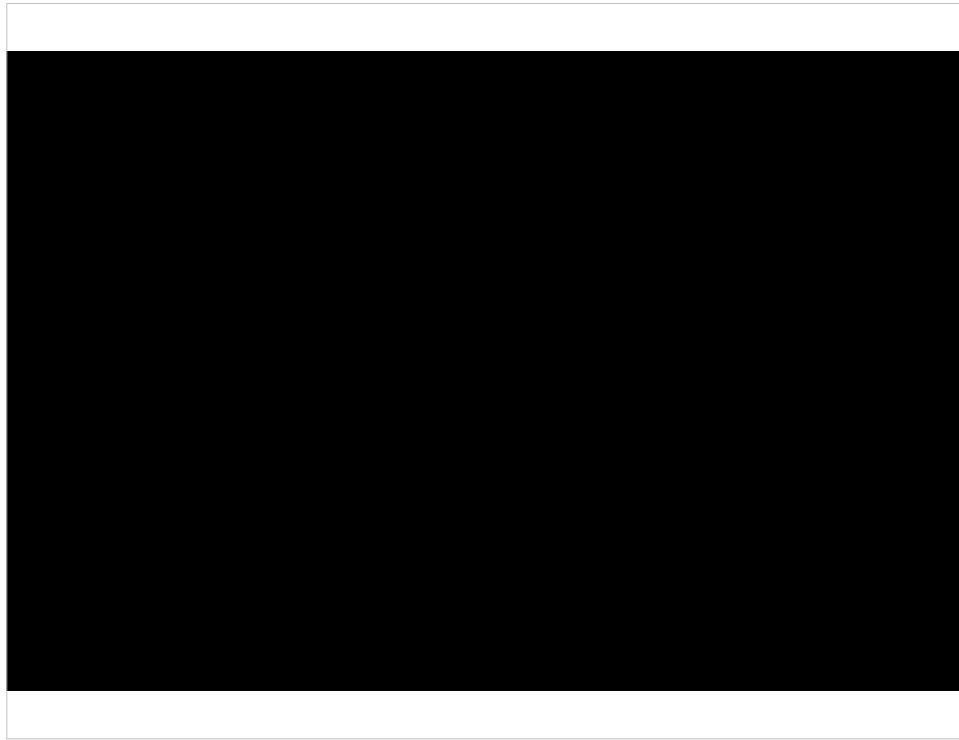


**Mummy lied.
No one gets to
win at base
themes.**

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/binusarina/3889528397/>



- The theme that helps you do your job faster is the winner for you. There is no global winner.



Remember when I said themes were broken in core?

I have spent a lot of time in this space.

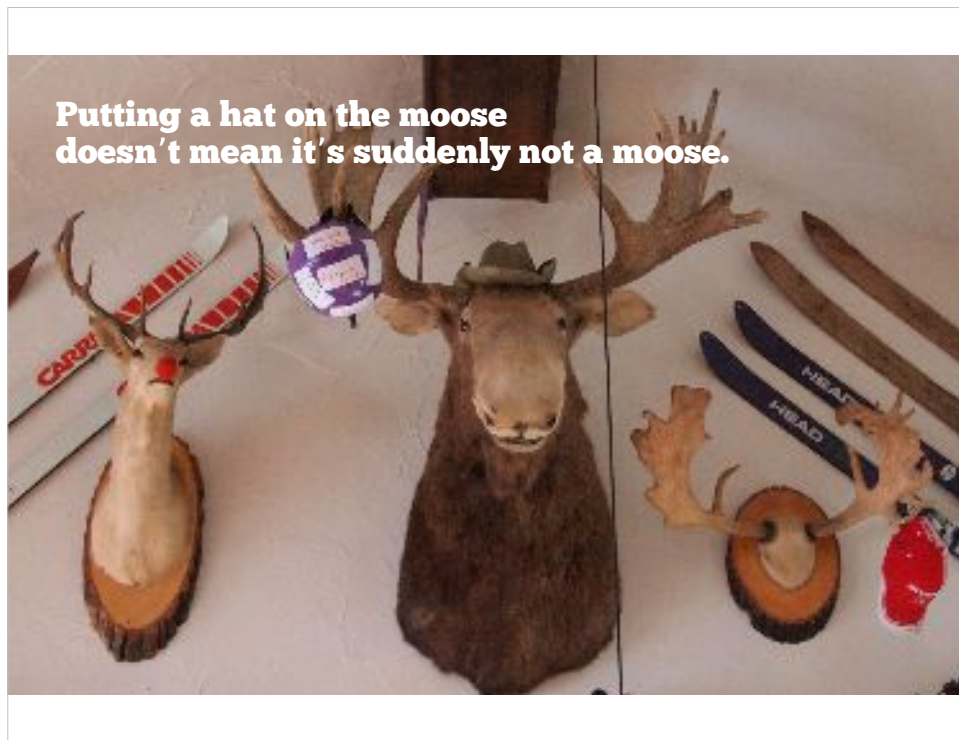
But this presentation forced me to admit, is that the problem lies deeper than the question of base themes.

To name a winner risks moving that approach to theming Drupal forward and into core for Drupal 8. I fundamentally believe this is the wrong way to go.

**"Once the issue is framed,
if you accept the framing,
if you accept the language,
it's all over."**

George Lakoff.

Base themes have given us the tools to get our job done faster as themers. The community of theme developers has also taught us a lot about the limitations of our core theming system. For Drupal 8 I would like to explore what happens if we reject the idea of a "theme" that is applied to a Web site, independent of the underlying product and underlying content.



What do we really want to do when we “make Drupal look pretty”?

- Granular Layout of components +
- Page layout + Style +
- Libraries/scripts
- Install profile of Modules + Layout +
- Groups of styles (skinr) + Markup +
- Libraries/scripts + palette

(need a better way to connect scripts to markup)



insert. rant. here.

But it's more than that.

We need to stop trying to make theming "easy" within the existing framework.

We need to go madly off in other direction and bring front end developers into the developer playground.

We need more John Albins.

We need to stop pretending that themes are interchangeable and can just be dropped onto a site.

We need to acknowledge that "themes" are more than what you can punt into a theme folder.

They are views, view modes, image sizes, fields, markup, javascript libraries, etc.

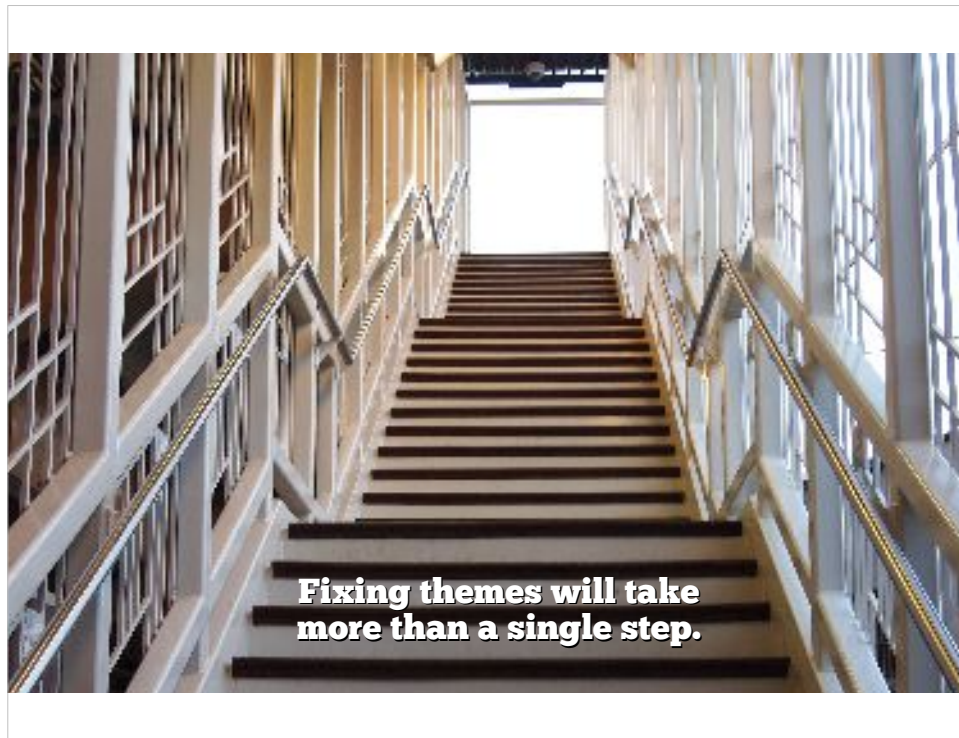
We need to create a front end developer framework that makes it easier to drop in non-Drupal/web best practices.



in short: we know there's a problem with theming.



...eaton told us so last year.



Let's rethink this whole "theme" thing.
Let's fix the markup in Drupal core.
Let's start treating themers like the real developers they are. The "front end" stuff got really complicated, and it moves really fast. We tend to forget the complexity of trying to drop a javascript library into a Drupal site. We tend to ask our designers to solve the problem in a drupal way.
Let's stop lying to ourselves by saying themes are as interchangeable as window curtains. Decorations can be changed, designs cannot.
Let's examine the solutions base themes are creating and address the underlying problems.
Let's force themers to imagine a new front end tool kit.

**Work is happening in Drupal 8
to fix the theme system.**

(stand up if you're working on this)

(if you're not standing, please clap for those who are)

EclipseGC

Jen

Chx

Morten

John Albin

Johan

etc

<http://drupal.org/community-initiatives/drupal-core/>

The Theming Pledge.

I promise to help make theming ~~suck-less~~ rock in Drupal 8.

make people say the pledge!

“Fix it in 8” Sessions to Attend at DrupalCon.

- Designer-friendly theme system in D8
Tuesday; 17:00-18:00 in the (Sheraton) Asam room.
<http://munich2012.drupal.org/program/sessions/designer-friendly-theme-system-drupal-8>
- A new theme layer in D8
Wednesday; 15:45-16:45 in the (Westin) Barcelona room.
<http://munich2012.drupal.org/content/new-theme-layer-drupal-8>



@emmajanedotnet
emma@designtotheme.com
<http://drupal.org/user/1773>

Now, go fill out the freaking form...bitte. :)
<http://munich2012.drupal.org/program>

danke

