



Utrecht University

Faculty of Science

Department of Information and Computing
Sciences

An introduction to Design Science

Advanced Research Methods 2018-2019

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Learning objectives

- Explore the characteristics of the design science framework
- Specify research goals and research questions
- Explore basic characteristics of experimental design



Experimental design in a nutshell

For assignment A1:

Some notions on experimental design are useful before selecting the artefacts for the comparative experiment

After selecting a topic, choose one research artefact (i.e., technique, method, framework, etc.) within the topic you have selected. The artefact you select should fulfil the following requirements:

1. It is possible to compare the selected artefact with similar artefacts
2. There are scientific publications with a clear presentation of the design of the technique, method, or framework within the topic that you have selected
3. There are publications presenting examples of the application of the technique, method, or framework. If there are no examples available, they should be derivable.
4. There is a clear need to do research in the topic you have selected. There is related work or similar designs to the technique, method, or framework you have selected.
5. There is a clear need for conducting empirical evaluations for the technique, method, or framework you have selected. There is a clear need to investigate the selected technique, method, or framework in a certain context.

The motivation document consists of the following parts (1 to 2 pages)

1. Student names and numbers
2. Selected topic
3. One to two paragraphs with the motivation. Why are you interested to do research about the selected artefact/topic? Can you identify a possible technological impact?
4. What kind of variables could be validated? Please identify qualitative and quantitative variables.
5. One to two paragraphs with the expectations of the team. What do you expect to learn when designing this research project? Which grade do you want to get for the research assignment? What is your plan to maximise the chances to receive the desired grade? What do you need to achieve your goal?



Experiment

a.k.a. controlled experiment

Empirical evaluation that **manipulates one factor or variable** of the studied setting.

Based in randomization, **different treatments are applied to or by different subjects, while keeping other variables constant, and measuring the effects on outcome variables.**

It is **mostly done in a laboratory environment**, which provides a high level of control.

When experimenting, subjects are assigned to different treatments at random



Experiment

Quasi-experiment: The assignment of treatments to subjects cannot be based on randomization, but emerges from the characteristics of the subjects or objects themselves

In experimental studies, methods for statistical inference are applied with the purpose of showing with statistical significance that one method is better than the other (theme 3 of the course)



Experiment vs Case study vs Survey

Strategy	Design type	Qualitative/Quantitative
Survey	Fixed	Both
Case Study	Flexible	Both
Experiments	Fixed	Mainly quantitative



Experiment

Advantages

Control of subjects, objects and instrumentation

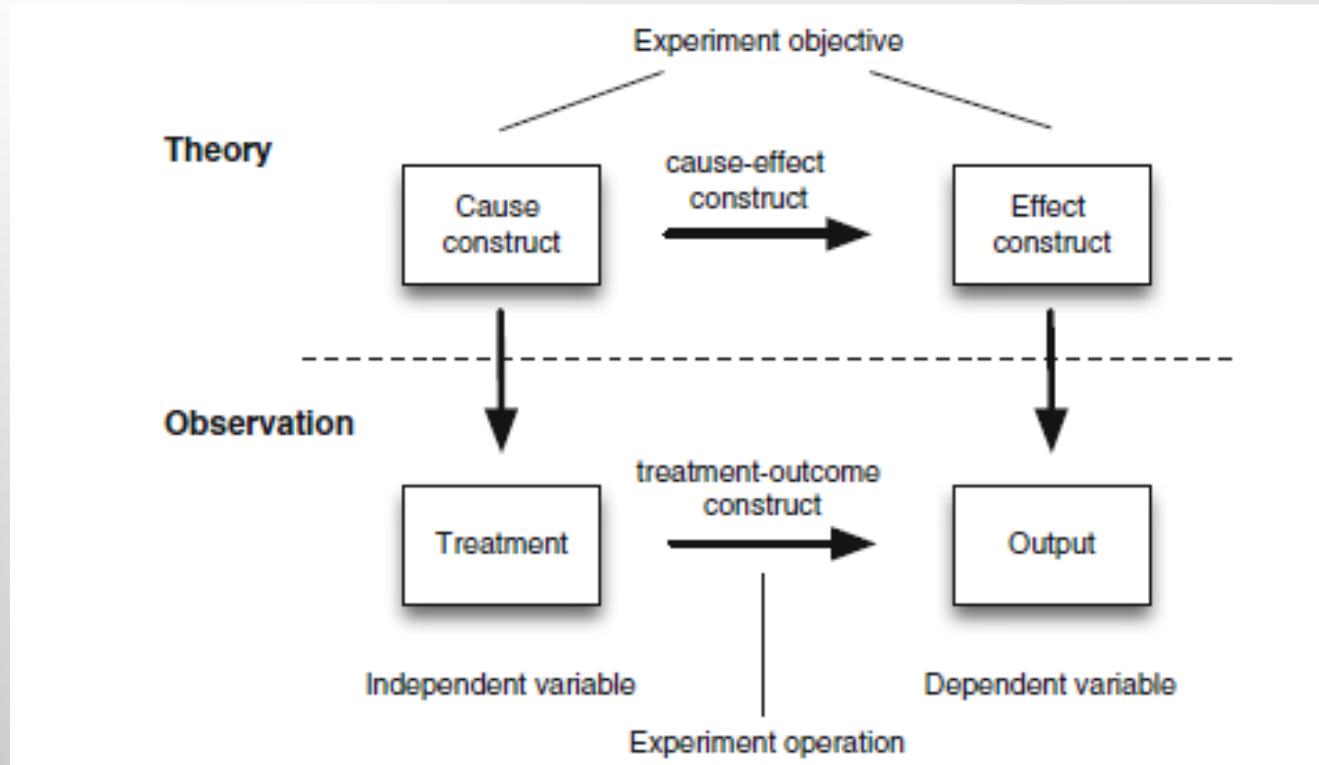
It is possible to **draw general conclusions** if you get significant differences

Ability to **perform statistical analysis** using hypothesis testing methods

Opportunities for replications in other settings

Experiment principles

The main objective is to evaluate hypotheses or relationships



This topic will be further developed in week 49

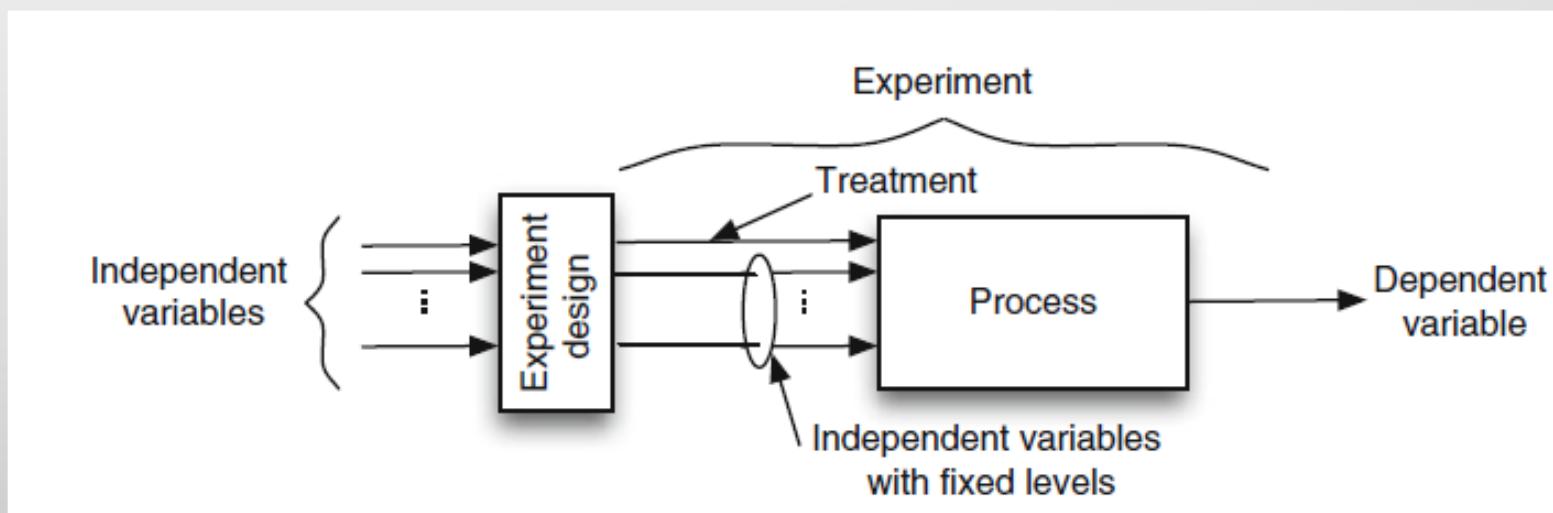
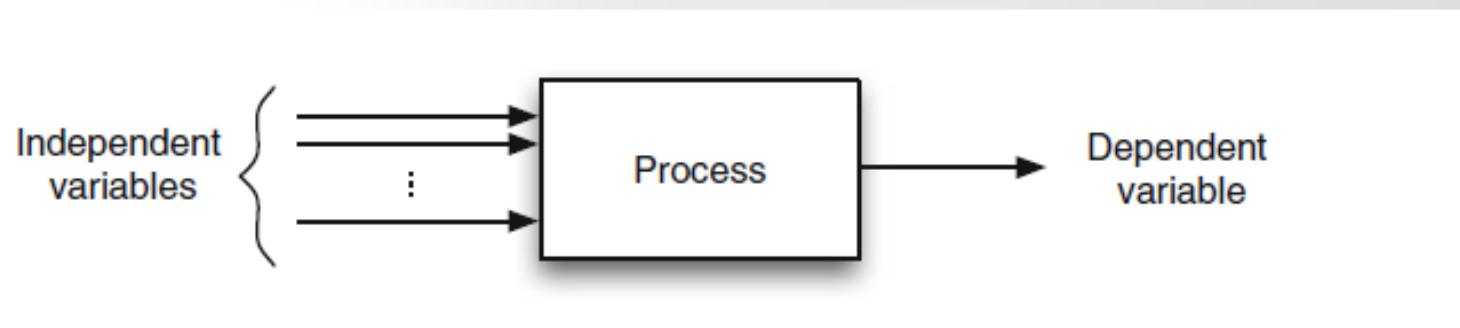


Variables

We want to study the outcome when we vary some of the input variables to a process. There are two kind of variables in an experiment: independent and dependent variables

Dependent variables: variables that we want to study and see the effect of the changes in the independent variables

Independent variables: variables that are manipulated and controlled. They affect the dependent variables





Example: MDD vs traditional SW development

"The goal of this experiment is to compare the MDD paradigm with traditional software development methods for the purpose of filling the existing gap in empirical evidence about MDD. The focus is placed on the differences that appear when building a system from scratch. Of all the existing differences, we focus on product attributes, as well as on developer comfort and workload. The experiment is conducted from the perspective of researchers and practitioners interested in investigating how much better MDD is than traditional software development methods"

Download: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0950584915000488>

Good example of experimental report



Variables of the example

Independent variables: development method (traditional method vs MDD)

Dependent variables: Accuracy, effort, productivity, satisfaction



Variables

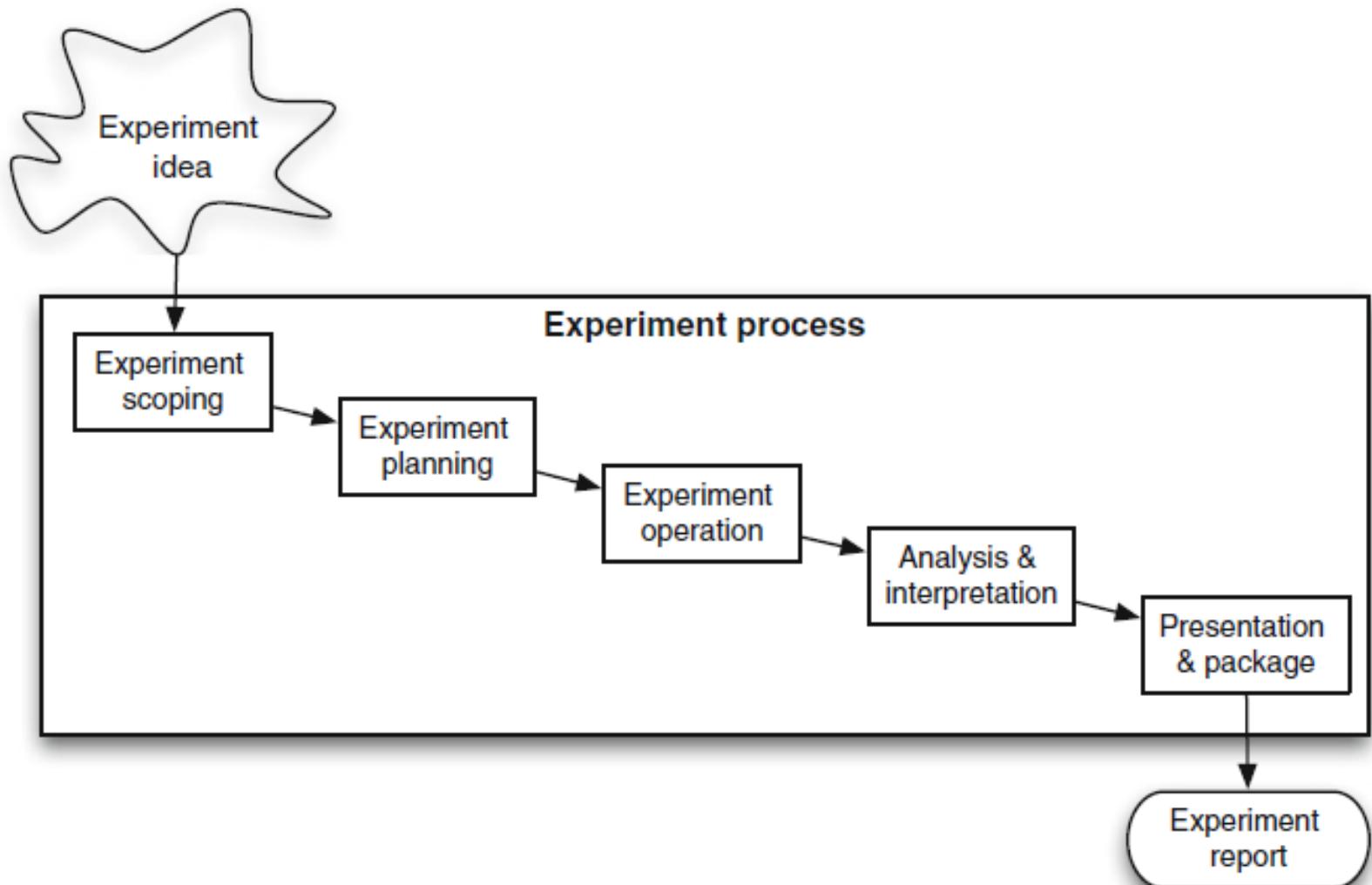
Independent variables are called factors

A treatment is one particular value of a factor

In the previous example, the treatment is the development method (traditional or MDD)

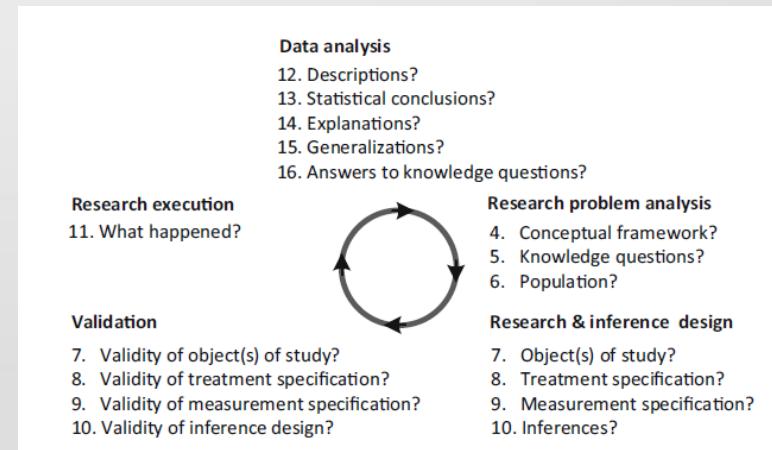
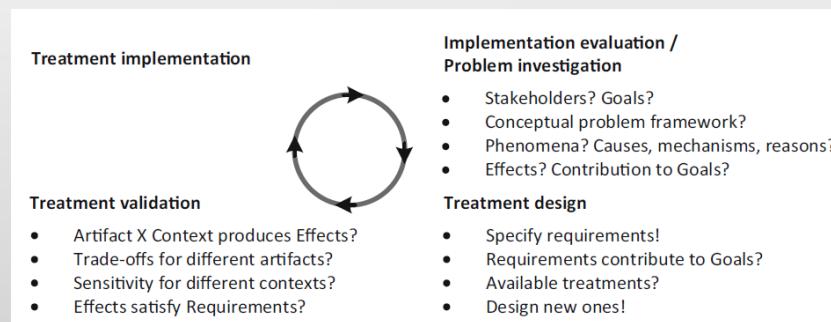
Experimental process

A general overview



Experimental design

We have two artefacts that we want to test
We want to evaluate the artefacts in context: Design science!



Design cycle: for your master thesis (maybe), we don't have the artefacts

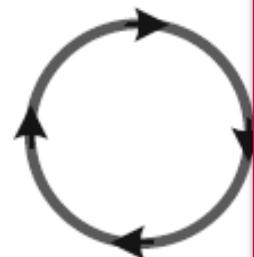
Empirical cycle: for the ARM course, you choose your favourite artefacts!

E:

Research execution
11. What happened?

Validation
7. Validity of object(s) of study?
8. Validity of treatment specification?
9. Validity of measurement specification?
10. Validity of inference design?

Data analysis
12. Descriptions?
13. Statistical conclusions?
14. Explanations?
15. Generalizations?
16. Answers to knowledge questions?



Research problem analysis
4. Conceptual framework?
5. Knowledge questions?
6. Population?

Research & inference design
7. Object(s) of study?
8. Treatment specification?
9. Measurement specification?
10. Inferences?

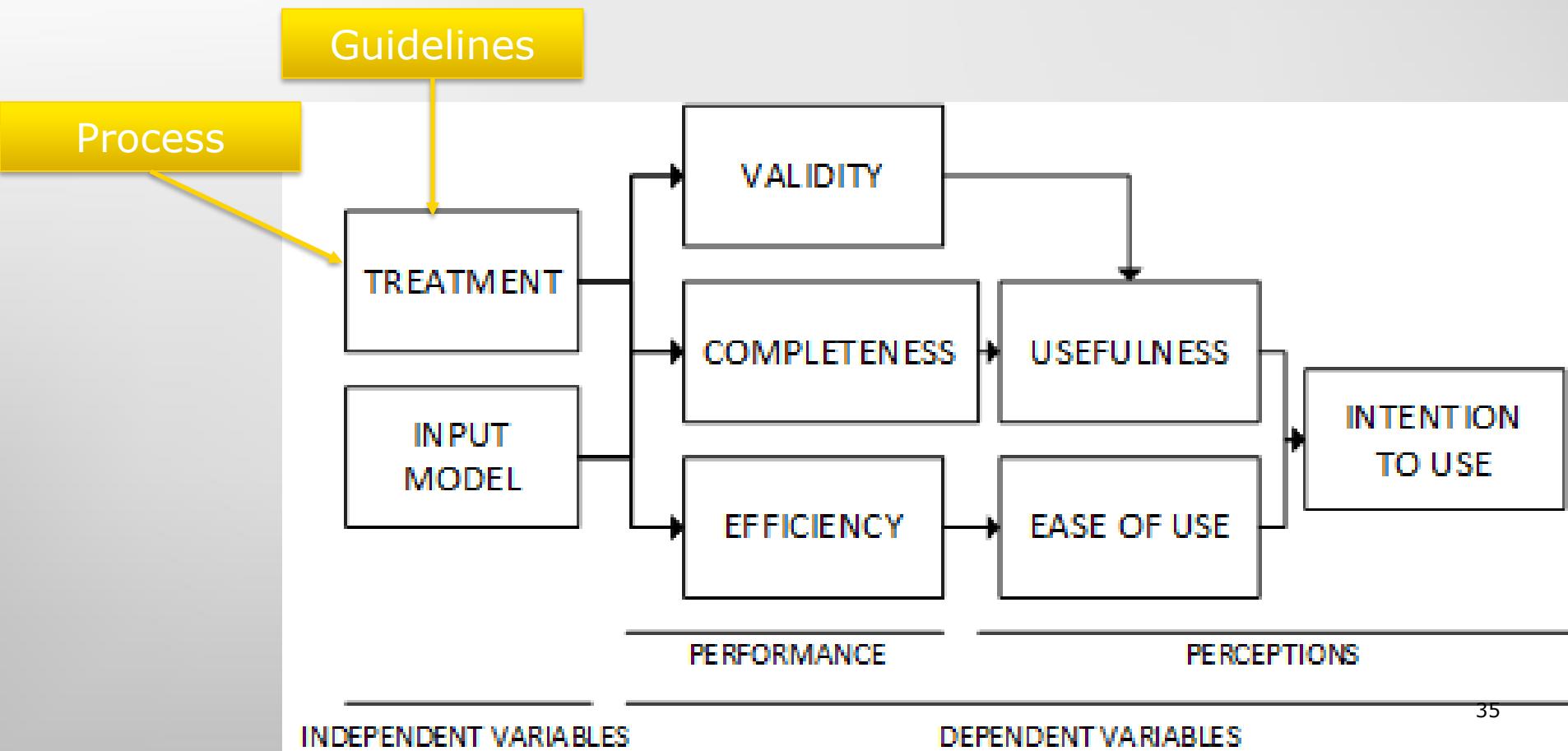


Check existing frameworks or methods for validation

- We are the researchers of this project. What to test?
- It is convenient to check existing frameworks or methods for validation

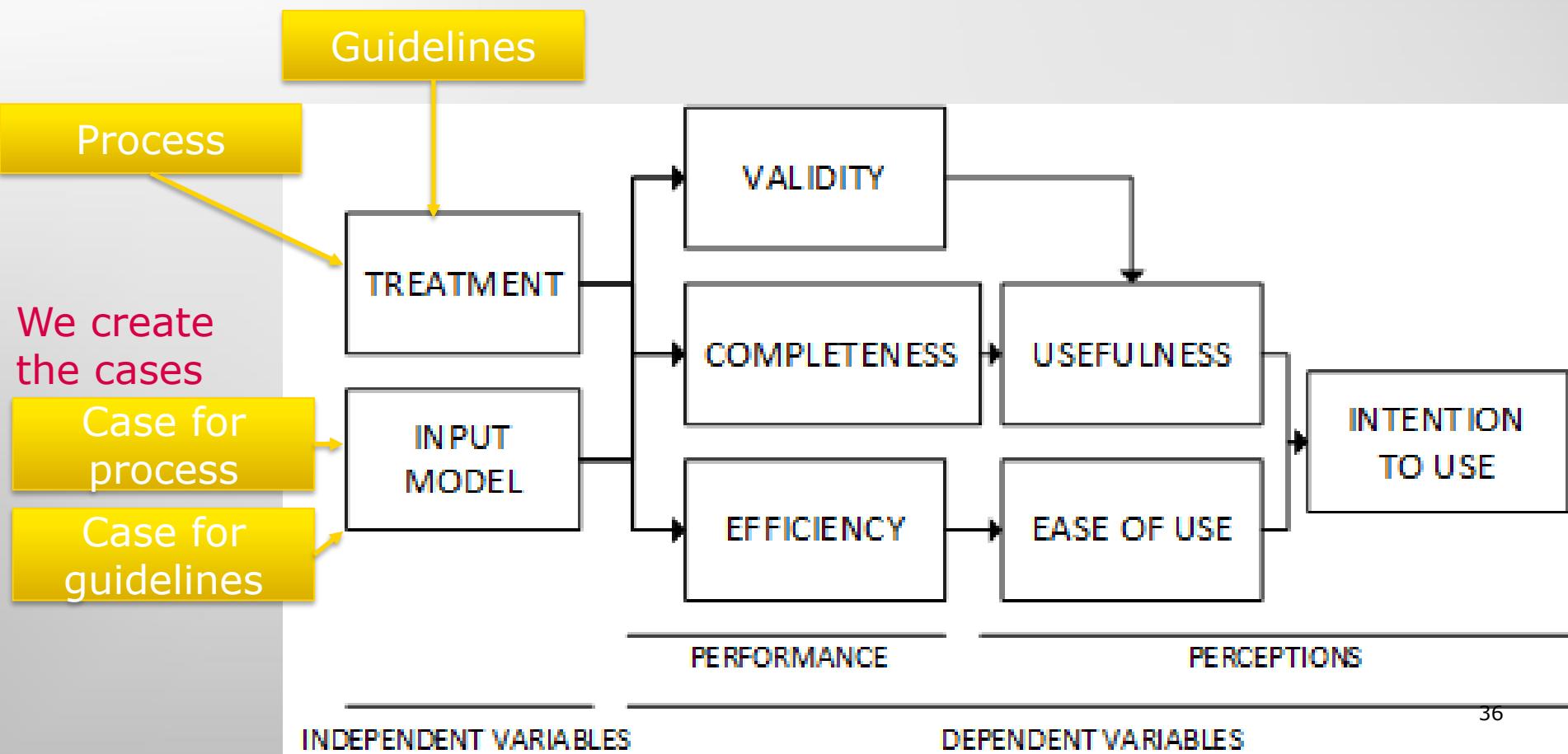
Example

Selected artefacts to test



Example

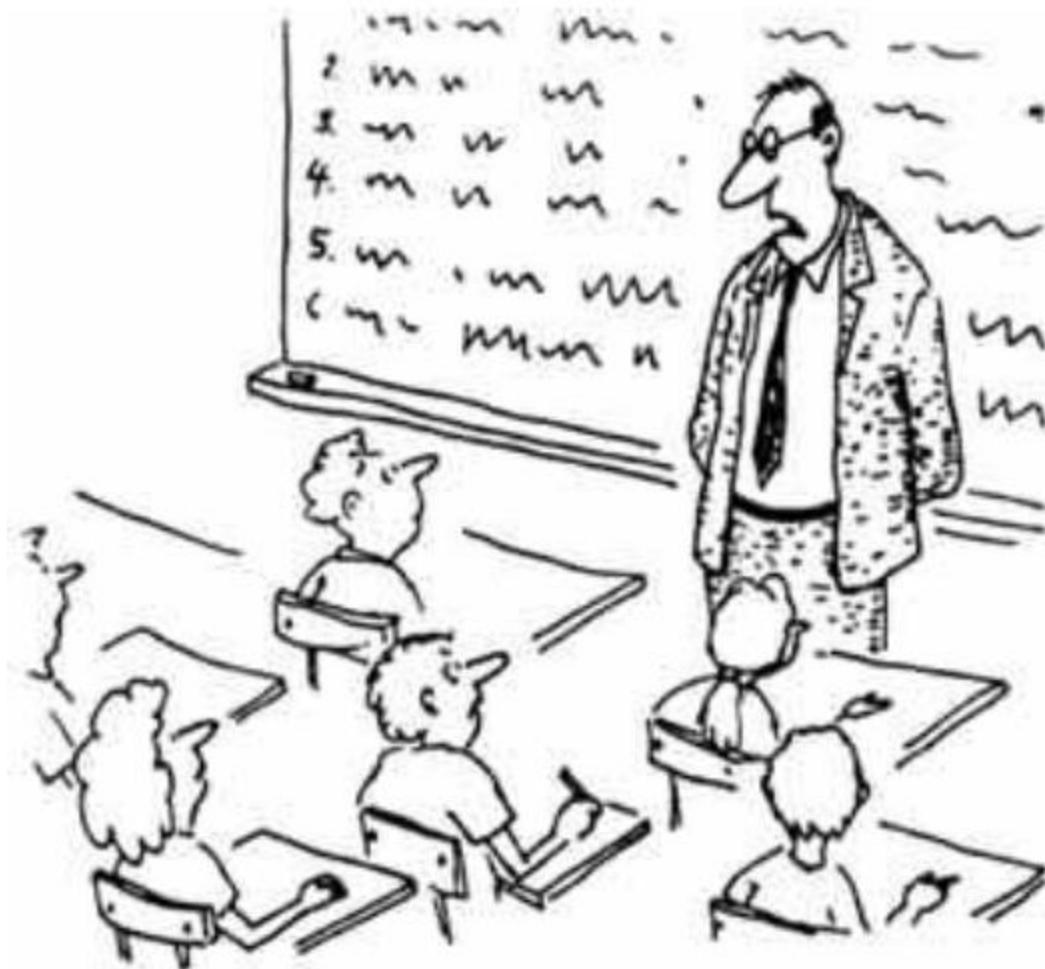
Selected artefacts to test





Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance. It's helping them to learn rather than teaching them.

~ John Whitmore ~



*"I expect you all to be independent, innovative,
critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say!"*



Expectation management

What do you expect from your supervisor/teacher?

What can I (as a supervisor) expect from my students?



STUDENTS' PROBLEMS:

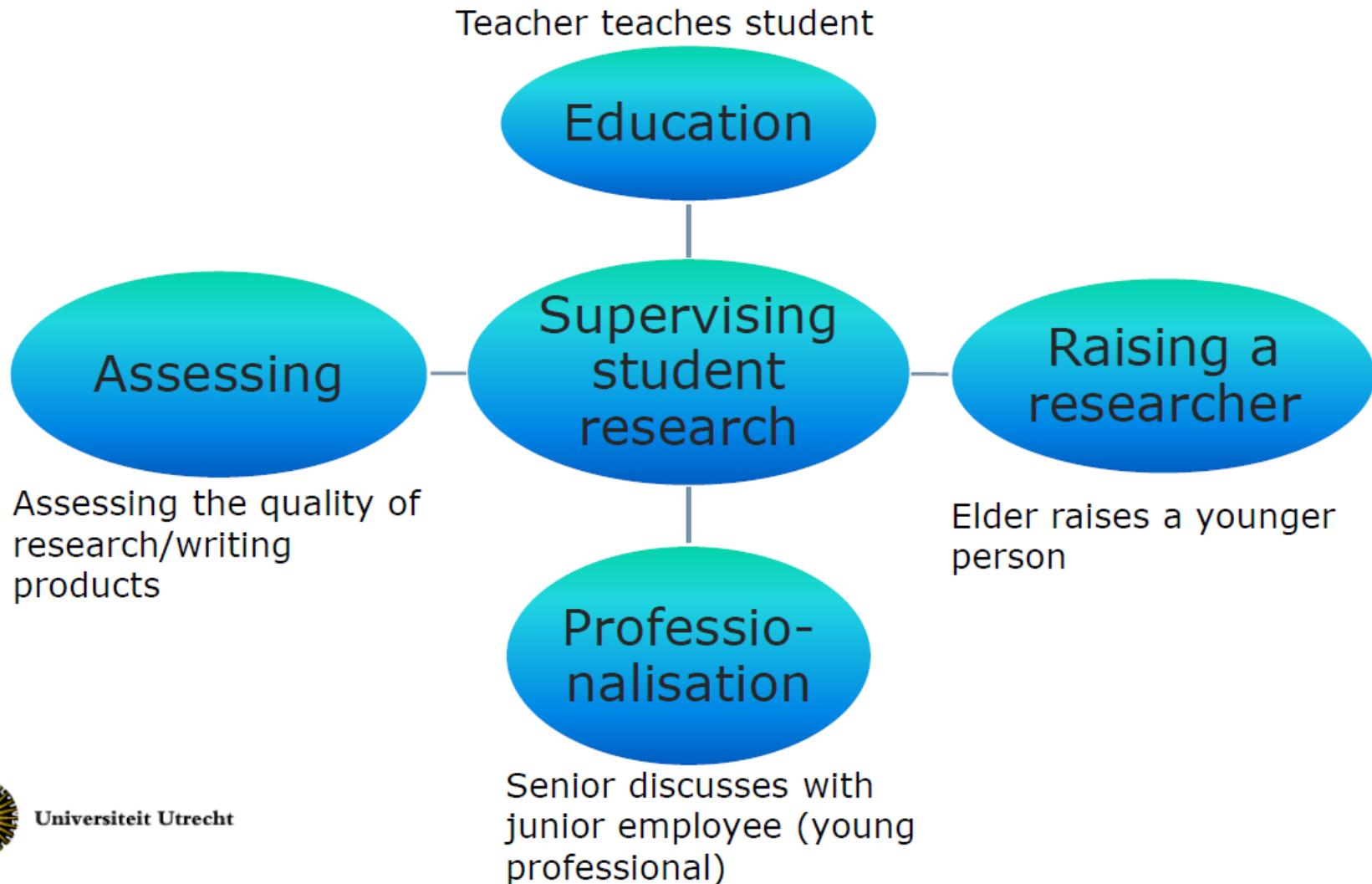
- **Prior knowledge:** insufficient research skills
- **Research Question:** how to define a good research question (unaware of what's a good question)
- **Writing:** writing the first version, unawareness of successful writing strategies

SUPERVISOR'S PROBLEMS:

- **Role taking** (teacher, educator, coach, assessor)
- **'Tool kit'** (switching in style, role, degree of steering)
- **Efficiency & effectiveness** (planning, clear communication/expectations, effective feedback)

Roles of the supervisor

8





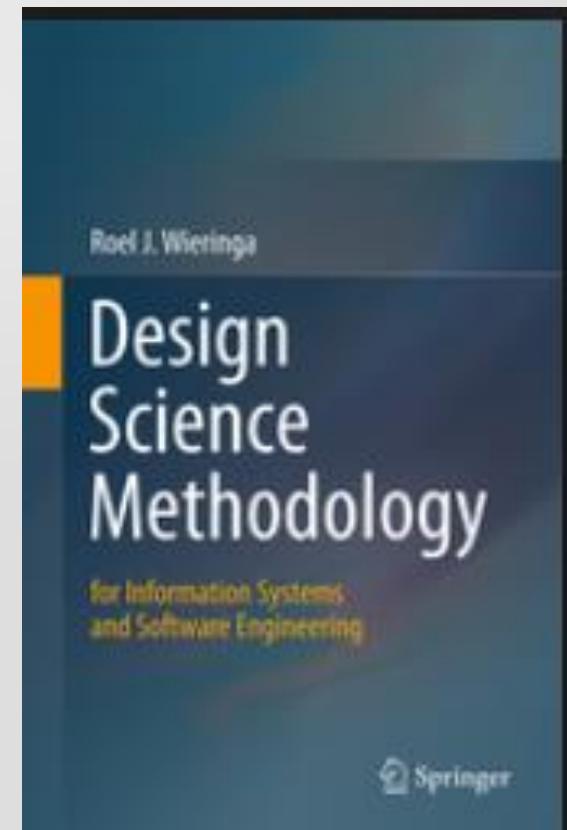
Basic structure of a meeting

- ❖ Start
 - Atmosphere, relation, initiative, expectations
- ❖ Planning / Agenda setting
 - Objectives meeting
- ❖ Core business (content)
 - 1. Discussing progress in research
 - 2. Content (concept of research plan or report)
 - 3. Future: research process and next version report
 - 4. Additional topics (e.g. expectations)
- ❖ Closing
 - summarizing, checking, smart goals



1. What is design science

2. Research goals and research questions





Goal of the course

Introductory lesson to help you do your research projects
(e.g. Bachelor thesis, Master thesis, etc.,)

Improve your capability to justify your solution

Help you structure your research

Improves your problem-solving capability

But not a creativity course



Reality check

What kind of problems?

Business Information Technology master thesis at the University of Twente:

<http://essay.utwente.nl/view/programme/60025.html>

Bachelor and master theses UU:

<http://studenttheses.library.uu.nl/>

Can these two kind of problems
be linked?



Two kinds of research problems (projects)

(1) Design problems

- Improve something, design something , how-to-do something
- Problem, design of a treatment, validation of the treatment
- Design cycle
- Improvement is the goal, utility is the criterion
- Knowledge is a side-effect
- “Technical research problems”

(2) Knowledge questions

- Describe, explain, predict
- Questions, research design, research execution, data, analysis
- Empirical research cycle
- Knowledge is the goal, truth is the criterion
- Utility is a side-effect



Focus on justification

This is not a creativity course

Not about how to be original

- You can be creative with your classmates at the moment to select a research artefact for the assignment
- In the future, your supervisor will provide you with tools to be creative at the moment to find a research project
- The course is about how to justify and report your research results
- Why would anyone use your design? There are many other designs.
- Why would anyone believe your answers? Opinions are cheap.
- Your report must have a logical structure
- This also helps you to organize the project itself.
- You can be creative when reporting results and designing your research



Questions?





1 What is design science?



1.1 The subject of design science



Design science is the design and investigation of artifacts in context



Reality check: What is the artifact and what is the context?

Business Information Technology master thesis at the University of Twente:

<http://essay.utwente.nl/view/programme/60025.html>

Bachelor and master theses UU:

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Without a context, an artifact does nothing



1.2 Research problems in design science

Research problems in design science

Problems & Artifacts
to investigate

Knowledge,
Design problems

To design an artifact to improve a problem context

To answer knowledge questions about the artifact in context

Design software to estimate

Direction of Arrival of plane waves, to be used in satellite TV receivers in cars

- *Is the DoA estimation accurate enough in this context?*
- *Is it fast enough?*
- *Is this routing algorithm deadlock-free on airports?*
- *How much delay does it produce?*
- *Is the method usable and useful for consultants?*

Design a Multi-Agent Route Planning system to be used for aircraft taxi route planning

Design a data location regulation auditing method

Artifact of a design problem =
the artifact **to be** designed

Artifact of a knowledge question =
the artifact **about which** we ask the knowledge question

Heuristics

Design problems

Call for a change of the world

- Solution is design
- Many solutions
- Evaluated by utility
- Many degrees of utility
- What is useful depends on stakeholder goals

Doing



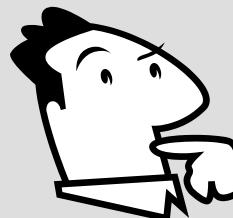
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Knowledge questions

Ask for knowledge about the world

- Answer is a proposition
- One answer
- Evaluated by truth
- Many degrees of certainty about the answer
- What is considered “true” does not depend on stakeholder goals

Thinking





Discuss with your colleagues

Ingredients for your research assignment

What research problem(s) are you investigating?
Artifact and context

Note

In the context of the ARM course we are going to conduct a **knowledge-oriented research project**, which is motivated by a design problem. In the future you can be confronted with the challenge to conduct any of these two type of research projects

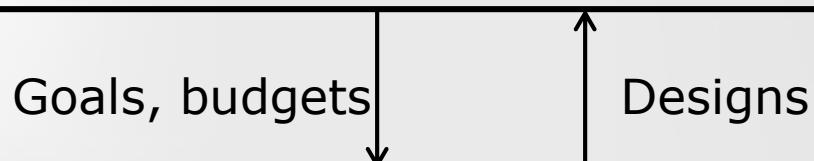


1.3 The context of a design science project

The social context of design research

Social context design research project:

Location of stakeholders



Design science

**Improvement
design**

**Answering knowledge
questions**

"Design a estimation system to be used in cars":

Stakeholders: Researchers, Sponsor, component suppliers, car manufacturers, garages, car passengers

"Design an assurance method for cloud service provider data compliance".

Stakeholders: Sponsor, consultants (end-users), researchers, Clients.

The knowledge context of design research

Social context:

Location of stakeholders

Goals, budgets

Designs

Design science

Improvement design

Answering knowledge questions

Existing problem-solving knowledge,
Old designs

New problem-solving knowledge,
New designs

Existing answers to knowledge questions

New answers to knowledge questions

Knowledge context:

Mathematics, social science, natural science, design science, design specifications, useful facts, practical knowledge, common sense, other beliefs



Knowledge sources

- Scientific literature
- Scientific, peer reviewed journals and conferences (math, natural science, social science, design sciences)
- Technical literature
- Design specifications, manuals
- Professional literature
- Non-peer reviewed professional magazines, trade press, marketing literature, white papers (useful facts and opinions, practical knowledge, common sense)
- Oral communication
- Colleagues, supervisors, practitioners (useful facts and opinions, practical knowledge, common sense, other beliefs)



Discuss:

- How is the channel managed?
- How does the source ensure quality of information?

What about the Web?

- The Web is a communication channel, not a source of information
- Sources are more diverse
- Scientific literature
- Technical literature
- Professional literature
- On-line databases
- Social networks
- Did the information survive
- Empirical tests?
- Critical judgment of peers?



Your research aims at theories

- Knowing the relevant properties of a particular artifact in a particular context is not enough
 - Theories should be general, so you can use them for prediction
 - Theories should explain, so that you understand why phenomena occur
-
- If the artifact prototype that you built disappears, what is the knowledge remains?
 - Tested, critiqued knowledge



Main points: What is design science

- Design science is the design and investigation of artifacts in context
Research problems are design problems or knowledge questions
Artifacts interact with their context to deliver a service
- The social context of a design science project consists of stakeholders and their goals and budgets, laws, processes, norms, expectations, etc.
- The knowledge context consists of scientific knowledge, design specifications, useful facts, practical knowledge, common sense, etc. You aim to contribute scientific theories.
Sources and channels of information



Activity

Motivation for your research project

- What is going to be delivered by your ARM project?
- What is new?
- Who are the stakeholders of your project?
- What are their goals?
- What knowledge will be produced by your project?
- What is new?



2. Research Goals and Research Questions



2.1 Research goals

Social context:

- Stakeholders,
- **Goals that are external to design research**
- Budgets,
- Application scenarios

Goals, budgets

Designs

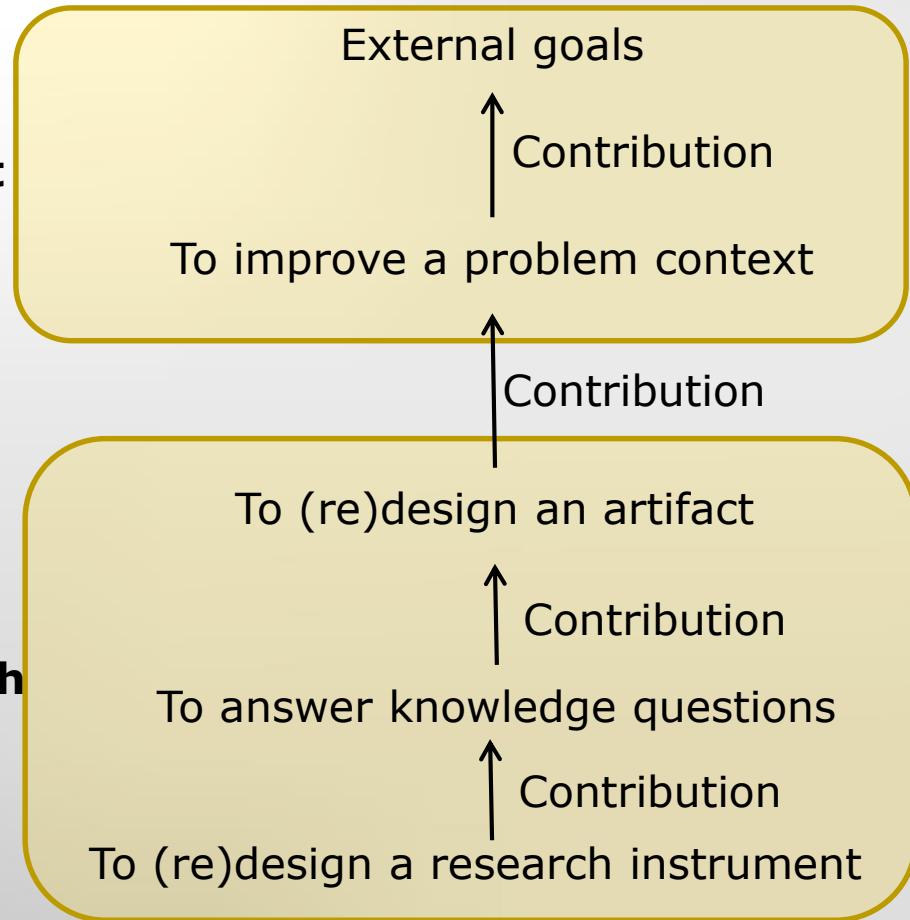
Design research

Design an artifact to
improve a problem
context

Answer knowledge
questions

Goal structure

Social context



Motivation of the research goal: friends, family, the government, sponsors, investors, etc. are interested in these.

A design **research goal** is the desired outcome of a research project, to which the research budget is allocated. Colleagues are interested in these.

Examples

Ucare

External goals:

- Reduce health care cost (government)
- Reduce work pressure, increase quality of care (health personnel)
- Increase quality of care, increase independence (elderly)
- Design goals
- Design a mobile home care system for use by elderly that provides:
 - Medicine dispensing
 - Blood pressure monitoring
 - Agenda
 - Remote medical advice





Two kinds of design research problems

To achieve the design goal, we need to answer research questions.

- Design problems
- A.k.a. technical research questions



Knowledge questions

- **Analytical research questions:** can be answered by analysis
- **Empirical research questions:** must be answered by collecting data



2.2 Design problems



Template for design problems

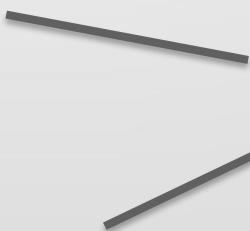
Improve <problem context>
by <treating it with a (re)designed artifact>
such that <artifact requirements>
in order to <stakeholder goals>

Improve my body / mind health
by taking a medicine
such that my headache disappears
in order for me to get back to work

Template for design problems

Improve <problem context>
by <treating it with a (re)designed artifact>
such that <artifact requirements>
in order to <stakeholder goals>

Improve my body / mind health
by taking a medicine
such that my headache disappears
in order for me to get back to work



External: Problem context and stakeholder goals

Template for design problems

Improve <problem context>
by <treating it with a (re)designed artifact>
such that <artifact requirements>
in order to <stakeholder goals>

Improve my body / mind health
by taking a medicine ——————
such that my headache disappears
in order for me to get back to work

**Design research
problem: Artifact
and its desired
interactions**



Template for design problems

Improve <problem context>
by <treating it with a (re)designed artifact>
such that <artifact requirements>
in order to <stakeholder goals>

Improve my body / mind health
by taking a medicine
such that my headache disappears
in order for me to get back to work

Particular problem

Improve home care
By a mobile support device
That provides some services ...
So that cost are reduced etc.

General problem



2.3 Knowledge questions



Kinds of empirical knowledge questions

Empirical knowledge questions may be

1. descriptive or explanatory,
2. open or closed,
3. effect-related or requirement-related

First classification knowledge questions

Descriptive questions:

What happened?

When?

Where?

What components were involved?

Who was involved?

etc.



Journalistic questions,
Provide facts

Explanatory questions:

Why?

What has caused the phenomena? Which mechanisms produced the phenomena? For what reasons did people do this?



Example

Descriptive question: What is the performance of the Ucare system?

- Accuracy of output
- Reliability of communication infrastructure
- Usability of interfaces
- Etc. etc.

Explanatory question: Why does Ucare have this performance?

- Cause: data entrance at 03:00 causes the data to be lost
- Mechanism: because the hospital database server is down for maintenance at night and there is no fallback retention mechanism
- Reasons: Users feel free to enter data any time they are awake, and they are awake at 03:00.



Prediction problems

There are no predictive knowledge questions

- We cannot know the future
- Descriptive and explanatory questions are about the present and the past

But there are prediction problems

- How will the program behave when given this input?
- How would users behave when the program is changed?
- To solve a prediction problem, we need a general theory that tells us what happens

What concept relates to theory
in the context of our ARM
assignment?



Second classification of knowledge questions

Open questions (exploration):

No hypothesis about the answers.

- What is the execution time?

Closed questions (testing):

Specific, testable hypotheses as possible answers.

- Is execution time less than 1 second?
- Hypothesis: the execution time is less than 1 second.



Third classification: Design research questions

Effect question: Context X Artifact → Which Effects?

- Trade-off question: Context X Alternative artifact → Effects?
- Sensitivity question: Other context X artifact → Effects?

Requirements satisfaction question: Do these Effects satisfy requirements sufficiently?



Main points

Research goals & questions

A design science projects has **goals that range from designing an instrument** (lowest level) to **contribution to external stakeholder goals** (highest level).

Design problems have the form

Improve <problem context> by <treating it with a (re)designed artifact>
such that <artifact requirements> in order to <stakeholder goals>

Knowledge questions may be analytical or empirical.

Empirical knowledge questions may be

- descriptive or explanatory,
- open or closed,
- effect-related or requirement-related

To answer prediction problems, we need general theories



Questions?

Empirical knowledge questions may be

1. descriptive or explanatory,
2. open or closed,
3. effect-related or requirement-related

Discuss with your colleague!