

by exuding some influence. In mapping the field of players, we concentrate on their “currency,” power, interests, values, and in particular the practices and frames they bring that could push the problem in a new direction. Importantly, our exploration of the field focuses on the deeper, universal values that will inform the formulation of themes in the next step of the frame creation process. By stepping back, we will see deeper patterns emerge, bringing to light areas where shared underlying values could lead to a new and promising direction. From this perspective, we often see new parties emerge as significant, leading to opportunities that have not been considered before.

THEMES

In theme analysis, we identify and seek to understand the deeper factors that underlie the needs, motivation, and experiences of the “players” in this wider field. A theme analysis ends with an understanding of the “universals,” a selection of themes that are relevant to the problem situation on the deeper level at which players in the field have much in common. Because these universals are hidden beneath the surface of our everyday (professional) lives, it can be quite difficult to make them explicit. We are not used to discussing these deep themes in normal parlance. It takes exceptional circumstances for these profound human themes to be expressed (in eulogies, for example). But for the process of frame creation to work, the themes have to be very explicit. The elaborate methodologies that have been developed in hermeneutic phenomenology work through a process of filtering the texts or descriptions of experiences, finding patterns, and filtering these again until a core insight is achieved. The themes described in phenomenology are typically both deeply personal and universal. But themes are not strictly limited to these humanistic ones. For instance, designers of the Eindhoven Designing Out Crime center were delving deeply into traffic safety issues (see case 19) when the theme of “friction” began to emerge as a bridge between the human and the technical realm. This theme opened up a rich conceptual field, as “friction” can describe both a traffic flow blockage and the human feeling of being held back from what you want to achieve. Using the word “friction” also allows us to become more subtle in our thinking, realizing that blockages may be beneficial, even pleasurable (who would want to live in a frictionless world?). These concepts that bridge the human (cultural) domain and the technical or economical realms can be inordinately useful as themes.