

relationships,” and “desired outcomes” in place can be critically investigated, using the powers of observation and deduction to see if the “elements” and “frame” combined actually create the desired outcome.

In our Kings Cross example, strengthening the law enforcement approach didn’t result in a desired outcome. But the metaphor of the “music festival” introduced a whole new set of relationship patterns (about access, crowd management, the creation of a benign atmosphere, etc.) that could be applied to the Kings Cross situation, and led to the introduction of new elements in this public area (such as signage, Kings Cross guides, public toilets). We can only learn whether the metaphor of the “music festival” is fruitful by implementing these new elements that flow from this frame, and observing whether the desired outcome of a more peaceable and less violence-prone nightlife in the area is achieved. Until it is thus tested, the proposed frame is just a possible way forward.

Earlier research into design practices (appendix 2) has shown that designers indeed spend a lot of time reasoning from desired outcomes via frames to possible design solutions, and go back again to reframing the problem when they suspect the design solution is inadequate. This reasoning pattern leads to the above-mentioned phenomenon of designers playing around with ideas, tossing up possibilities (proposals) for frames, relationships, and solutions in what may look like a childishly playful hit-and-miss process. Yet in doing so, design practitioners try out and think through many possibilities, building up an intuition about what frames might work in the problematic situation before they pursue one in greater depth. We have seen in the case studies of chapter 2 that designers naturally think beyond the current context (often much to the surprise of the other stakeholders, as in the “integrated living” case study). Designers realize that a real-life paradox is completely contradictory only in a certain, predefined *context*. Strategies to move forward from a paradoxical situation are based on the investigation of this context, exploring the assumptions that underlie the paradox.

This is a process of thinking around the paradox rather than confronting it head-on. The solution is not within the core paradox itself (which is stuck in closed definitions), but in the broad area of values and themes in the context surrounding the paradox. The richer this context, the more chance that fruitful avenues can be found to move forward. Thus, the very same properties of problem situations that are so challenging to conventional problem-solving—the open, complex, networked, and dynamic nature of contemporary problems that