

core body of knowledge about design that is largely beyond contention. The reader should be assured that although this book will use design in unconventional ways and stretch it beyond the limits of the traditional design disciplines, we will be building on a solid knowledge base that has been amassed over all these years of design research. It is this strong foundation that gives us the self-confidence to build bridges to other disciplines that have become interested in design practices.

Not all design is good design

In pointing out the value of learning from “design practice,” we do not mean to suggest that all design is good or that all designers are equally skilled in these design practices. As in any profession, there is also superficiality and mediocrity in design—and many designs that make up our human-made world are hard to defend, even inexcusably awful. What we will be focusing on here is the practice of a select group of top professionals in the field.

WHAT IS THE PLACE OF DESIGN IN THE GREATER SCHEME OF THINGS? DESIGN AS A FORM OF REASONING

The case studies in chapter 2 show the strength and possibilities that a design-erly approach can bring to a wide variety of problems. As we’ve seen, it is very fruitful to look at problematic situations in a way that moves beyond conventional problem-solving approaches, and to consider these problem situations *as if* they were design problems. The designers and artists who were involved in the YD/ and DOC projects somehow regarded these very complex problems differently from the people who had tried to solve them before. But what, then, is the core reasoning pattern they apply when they design? Is it really that different from conventional problem-solving?

This is a fundamental question which cannot be answered by giving examples alone. We need a bit of logic to help us attain a much deeper understanding of the reasoning patterns behind design practice. We need to step back and suspend the “rich” descriptions of design that make the case studies such a good read, and take the question of design reasoning back to its very basics. Formal logic can provide us with a simple group of core concepts that describes the reasoning patterns behind design and other professions. This “poor” description of design helps us to understand whether design is different from other fields, and provides us with fundamental insight about the value of introducing design practices into other professional fields.