Abstract

In this research, a transdisciplinary synthesis and extension of design thinking is created, leading to a comprehensive and philosophically grounded "fit, stick, spread and grow" framework for analysing designs and designing as a social, technological and pedagogic process. Through this framework the [re]making of higher education is seen in a new light. The framework is built using insights from design research, architecture, innovation studies, computer science, sociology, higher education pedagogy studies, business studies and psychology. The research is further enriched and empirically grounded through case studies and design studies, in many instances co-developed with participant staff, students and alumni using techniques from "design anthropology". The research is carried out at the University of Warwick, an example of a young, fast growing, self styled, entrepreneurial higher education institution. In addition professional designers (architects) and creative industry leaders are interviewed so as to put these cases in the wider context of design and business today.

In Part One of the thesis, the University of Warwick is explored as a supercomplex organisation, following Barnett (2000). Supercomplexity has positive consequences for individuals with already well developed design capabilities in that they can more effectively exploit opportunities, but for the majority, it presents difficulties and disruption. This creates a design divide, related to the digital divide, which limits the spread and growth of vital innovations. Part Two moves on to the positive task of creating a framework that examines and defines the nature of design (using an *assemblages* approach adapted from Deleuze and Guattari), designing, designers (professional, guerrilla and everyday), designerliness and design capability (both individual and collective). It considers challenges in managing design capability (especially *ad hocism* in everyday designing) and strategies for more designerly designing (including Design Thinking, the Thick Boundaries approach and practices from the creative industries). Designing is shown to work most effectively when it achieves fit (with *our* practices, projects and concerns), stick (enduring over a reasonable time), spread (to further people, projects and concerns) and grow (extending our capability for further designing). The **fit, stick, spread and grow** framework is shown to be a simple but powerful set of concepts for easing the transition to *designerliness by default* and more evenly distributed design capabilities.