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RIVERS OF CONVERSATIONS

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Undercurrents of Reframing: Understanding social dynamics in organisational innovation settings

Emile Mazerant

Reframing is considered to be at the core of design practices. A frame is believed to be a cognitive map of how we make sense of a situation, shaping our goals, behaviours, and actions within that context. The process of reframing purposefully moves involved actors away from (pre-) existing ways of making sense of an (undesirable) situation, i.e., away from their existing frames. Consequently, developing novel frames opens up new design space for creating conceptual ideas and futures to change the existing situation into a more desirable one. In reframing literature, frame acceptance (i.e., the stage at which a novel frame is mutually comprehended and considered actionable) has received some scholarly attention, mainly as a landmark in designer-client reframing practices. However, this paper contends that achieving true impact in reframing processes requires more than just client acceptance of a frame; it necessitates absorption by the organisational actors who must alter their (often routine) behaviours to effectuate innovation. Although reframing is considered a socio-interactive practice, limited research exists on how social dynamics in reframing processes influence this absorption by involved actors. Therefore, this study explores how experienced designers read the social dynamics in reframing processes in organisational settings involving multiple organisational actors. Using a retrospective case-study approach, eight expert designers reflected on what they considered the key moments in these processes, how they perceived social dynamics to have influenced the adoption of novel frames and absorption of subsequent novel actions by involved actors over time, and

what they perceived to have been relevant factors driving these dynamics. The findings show that three distinctive stages can be identified within reframing processes that organisational actors go through towards absorption of novel actions: 1) engagement in a designerly approach, 2) frame acceptance, and 3) frame engagement. Next, it details factors that are regarded as driving social dynamics in multi-actor reframing processes at each stage and categorises them as personal-, occupational-, and organisational factors. These factors are perceived to both cause and mitigate tensions in reframing processes. As such, this implies that strategising for impact with reframing processes in multi-actor organisational settings requires a deeper understanding of those factors driving involved actors towards the absorption of novel actions that may logically lead from the developed novel frames.

Keywords: systemic design, reframing, frame acceptance, frame engagement, social dynamics, innovation

RSD: Economics & Organisations, Methods & Methodology

Introduction

Systemic design fosters positive transformations within intricate, multi-actor social systems as they tackle complex societal issues (Systemic Design Association, 2024). Design methodologies are promising approaches for addressing complex challenges and crafting innovative interventions (e.g., Dorst, 2011; Tromp & Hekkert, 2018). Within these methodologies, reframing takes centre stage (e.g., Dorst, 2015; Van der Bijl-Brouwer, 2019; Whitbeck, 1998). As a design practice, reframing involves purposefully altering the frames surrounding a problem situation to create fresh design opportunities (e.g., Stompff et al., 2016; Valkenburg, 2000). A frame is a cognitive map that influences how we perceive, interpret, and evaluate a situation, informing our goals, behaviours, and actions within that context. Given systemic design's aim to spur alternative actions, i.e., innovation, within the system, it is argued that reframing is a pivotal concept in this domain (e.g., Mazerant & Van der Bijl-Brouwer, 2023).

In its aim to reach impact, systemic design efforts often require organisations to change (parts of) their behaviour. An organisation and its members can be seen as embodiments of prevailing frames at any given time (e.g., Gray et al., 1985; Weick, 1979). Consequently, their frames shape (collective) actions in line with how they make sense of a situation (e.g., Drazin et al., 1999; Weick, 1995). As such, these members, including actors crucial in translating conceptual ideas into reality, play a vital role in achieving impact with these ideas. The term 'intermediate actors' is introduced here, derived from 'intermediate users' in NPD processes (Smulders & Dunne, 2017), to denote those organisational members needed to breathe further life into the conceptual ideas. Reframing may challenge the basis for their current actions, meaning their existing (situational) rationale. Changing their course of action following the novel frame is critical for new conceptual ideas to become part of routine organisational behaviours.

Reframing as a change of mind

The underlying assumption of reframing is that a change of perspective on the situation may also bring to mind novel actions that make sense *within* that new way of seeing. Reframing as such is the precursor to the change of (organisational) actions required in more radical innovation processes such as (systemic) design.

Scholarly work on organisational change, such as Kotter's Theory of Change (e.g., 1995), often focuses on change within existing organisational structures and rationales, and the assumption appears to be that change is mainly managed top-down. Even what in Kotter's theory is referred to as narrative construction, emotional engagement, and synchronisation of mental models seems concerned with motivating or convincing employees to go with the change of action. In a reframing process, sense-making in itself is being challenged and changed, making subsequent actions logical to its adopters. Organisational change, as such, happens at a deeper level.

On the individual level, theories like the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Theory of Reasoned Action provide conceptual frameworks for understanding what drives individual behaviour (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) as rational and planned behaviour. These theories depart from existing behavioural, normative, and control beliefs. These beliefs are all connected to how we have come to make sense of a

situation in the first place. Our frame of a situation informs us on what we believe to be quality (i.e., which values and attributes are most salient), what we believe to be likely outcomes of our actions, whom we believe to be relevant to us, and what behaviour we believe we can control. The mentioned theories fall short of helping us better understand how processes evolve in which we deliberately try to alter these beliefs in the first place and get them to be adopted, i.e., how a change of mind comes about preceding a change of behaviour.

Reframing as a social process

The concept of *frame acceptance* has received previous scholarly attention, based on which, in this study, it is conceptualised as the stage at which actors involved in the reframing process have collectively reached an agreed-upon and actionable novel frame (e.g., Paton & Dorst, 2011). To enhance our grasp of frame acceptance, it is crucial to recognise that frames are socially constructed, maintained, and changed (Bartunek & Moch, 1987). Within organisational settings, actors operate within communities of practice, where they learn and shape their practices, identities, and meanings through social interactions (e.g., Wenger, 1996, 1998a). Given the social nature of frame construction and the understanding of innovation (e.g., Van De Ven, 1986), design (e.g., Bucciarelli, 1988), and learning (e.g., Wenger, 1996, 2000) as social processes, fostering acceptance of novel frames can be seen as a socio-interactive effort. Consequently, actors' thoughts and actions throughout the process are influenced by the behaviours of others in social interactions over time (i.e., social dynamics). Therefore, both (social) innovation professionals and (systemic) design practitioners would benefit from a deeper understanding of these social dynamics as undercurrents of the reframing process.

Despite the significant research on framing (e.g., Cross, 2006; Lawson, 2006; Schön, 1984) and the concept of frame acceptance (e.g., Lee, 2020; Paton & Dorst, 2011; Vermaas et al., 2015), a limited body of literature explores the nature and degree to which social dynamics in multi-actor reframing processes drive individual actors to accept a novel frame and change their actions accordingly. To explore this, a retrospective case study was conducted, in which designers experienced in reframing processes in multi-actor organisational settings were interviewed. The study's primary

research question is: How do expert designers read the social dynamics, over time, of multi-actor reframing processes in organisational settings?

Research Method

The study explores how expert designers read the social dynamics, over time, in multi-actor reframing processes in organisational settings. A retrospective case-study approach is adopted to address this aim, using the timelines of real-world cases to guide semi-structured interviews. The case study approach focused on real-world situations in which expert designers considered radical reframing to have played an important part. In each interview, the unit of analysis was a case that a) the designer had actively participated in from beginning to the end, b) had ended less than two years ago, and c) was considered to have been either successful or unsuccessful in achieving impact.

Participants

To gain a broad perspective, practitioners who were peer-recognised for their reframing expertise in the public and/or private domain and represented a mix of genders, nationalities, countries of operation, embedded and external, and social, service, and strategy designers were interviewed. The author's network in academia and practice was used to make a first selection based on the above criteria. Eight respondents affirmatively responded to the invitation, giving their informed consent (see Table 1 in Appendix A for an anonymised description of the respondents).

Procedure

An interview outline predefining the main themes for the interview and a template outlining a simple timeline, including placeholders for elements like key moments, involved actors, and observed dynamics to guide the reflection visually, were prepared. Both were pre-tested in an interview with an academic and practical expert in multi-actor reframing processes. The test interview was recorded and analysed afterwards to assess the quality of the outlined questions and the template, and adjusted accordingly (see Table 2, Appendix B).

For practical reasons, three interviews were conducted in person and five by video call. Each interview took 60-90 minutes. After explaining the interview procedure, including

the recording, transcribing, and anonymising recorded data before analysis, the author and the respondent synchronised the definitions of 'reframing' and 'social dynamics'. Reframing was understood as the process of purposefully changing the sense-making of a situation and giving it meaning. Social dynamics were conceptualised as actor behaviour influencing other actors' feelings, thoughts, and actions.

Next, the timeline template was introduced to the respondent – either printed or via Miro – as a shared point of attention for reflection (e.g., outlining the beginning, the end, the key moments, and the involved actors). Whenever input was translated onto the timeline, it allowed respondents to associate more easily with what they considered to be key moments and relevant elements in reframing and to correct any misconceptions by the interviewer.

Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed in full and anonymised. Considering the explorative nature of the study, an inductive thematic approach was used to analyse the interviews (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006). Firstly, the author identified emerging descriptions of experiences and refined categorical descriptions to encompass collections of experiences articulated by various respondents. After reading and rereading the transcripts, themes and subthemes emerged, which were discussed with a systemic design researcher experienced in qualitative research methods. Iteratively, the data were then coded and re-coded. The data was coded in Atlas.ti.

In the inductive code category development process, two main categories for coding were discovered. First, a distinction could be made between three interconnected yet different stages in reframing processes, which were coded as follows: 1) engagement in a designerly approach (code: '3L1'), 2) frame acceptance (code: '3L2'), and 3) frame engagement (code: '3L3'). Second, coding for these stages showed that the respondents speak of different factors driving the social dynamics at each one of those three stages, which were categorised into organisational (code 'OrDF'), occupational (code 'OcDF'), and/or personal driving factors (code 'PDF'). These factors led to (a build-up of) tensions or mitigated these tensions. They can be either factors that drive actors towards (i.e., positive driving factors; code 'DF-P') or away from (i.e., negative driving factors; code 'DF-N') any previously identified stages. The data was coded accordingly.

Results

Patterns in reframing processes

Different stages in the reframing processes

In all cases, the respondents referred to key moments in the reframing process related to three stages, which I define as follows.

Firstly, all respondents referred to *engagement in the designerly approach* as the stage where individuals actively engage in an approach to solving problems, purposefully deviating from conventional problem-solving approaches within their organisations. Respondents talked of a designerly approach as an open, reflective, iterative process where the situation is reframed and the lifeworld of stakeholders is a central point of departure. They also indicated that participants in these processes often experienced them as ambiguous and disorderly, with uncertain outcomes, especially when new to such an approach.

A case study (1/3) – anonymised

Key moment: engagement in the designerly approach

A major city's administration had struggled for years with a growing number of citizens who suffered from a certain situation. The dominant approach had long been to communicate to citizens not to get into that situation. However, a small government faction began to realise this was insufficient. The organisation's embedded design team was briefed to develop a simple digital button that people could press to get help if they find themselves in that situation and, in doing so, save lives.

The design team proposed more profound research, considering the situation too complex for such a simple solution. They suggested centring the study on citizens, including a peer researcher with experience in that situation, and involving civil servants – from operational to the executive level – in the research process. This proposal was met with a lot of uncertainty: *Can we do this? We're not sure we dare. We've never done this before.* When the board suggested outsourcing, the lead designer argued that collaboration could build trust with organisations connected to citizens with these problems. This idea was again received as very challenging. The designer, new to the organisation, then shared her experiences with this designerly approach and asked to trust her. The collective ultimately agreed, and this moment was afterwards described as the first key moment in the reframing process.

A case study (2/3) - anonymised**Key moment: frame acceptance**

As the research progressed, the emerging frame shifted towards avoiding the stigmatisation of citizens within the problematic situation. A colleague from another division, clearly holding a higher position than the design team, who had not been involved thus far, walked into the design team's research room unannounced. He threatened to halt the project immediately based on the limited information he could gather. Through discussions conducted along the proper hierarchical lines, it was revealed that this individual was personally very much against people entering the situation and was already far along in preparing a campaign to communicate the traditional message not to get into that situation. This person had previously not been considered to be briefed on the ongoing research. Over a week, the superior of the design team, from the same hierarchical level, shared the insights gained from the study with citizens. By conveying the stories of those involved in the research, the new frame became more relatable, creating space and understanding. The colleague was believed to have started to identify himself with the problem. This moment is afterwards described as a second key moment in the reframing process.

Secondly, *frame acceptance* refers to those situations that respondents described as the point at which relevant actors seemed able and/or willing to 'see' a novel frame as providing a possibly valid new and productive perspective on the situation. This aligns with scholarly work on frame acceptance (e.g., Paton & Dorst, 2011).

Finally, *frame engagement*¹ refers to a stage in the process that the respondents described as when a transformation had happened at a personal level. This transformation manifested itself, for example, as an actor's commitment of individual or organisational resources (e.g., time, money) to take alternative action(s) that logically followed from the novel problem frame.

While the differentiation between accepting and engaging with new frames may appear insignificant, multiple respondents pointed out that this is the difference between design processes that reach impact and those that do not.

¹ The term frame engagement, as introduced here, is inspired by Goffman's work on frame analysis (Goffman, 1974). In his work, he discusses frame *disengagement* as the instance when external factors compel individuals immersed in a frame to relinquish their attachment to it despite the ongoing activity, disrupting participation. Conversely, *frame engagement* entails actively participating as it gains influence over the individual.

A case study (3/3) – anonymised**Key moment: frame engagement**

Now identifying with the situation, the colleague decided to halt ongoing activities and develop new campaign initiatives aligned with the novel frame. These initiatives were documented in the design team's opportunity book and subsequently presented during a meeting at a higher hierarchical level for approval and financial support.

However, the usual timeframe for presenting the opportunity book in such meetings was deemed too short to foster empathy and identification among those who still need to be involved in the research. It was felt that low-risk, low-hanging fruit was preferred over real change. The designer in that meeting confronted the decision-makers, pointing out that the real problem was that there was no connection to the situation at this hierarchical level. As she had clearly stepped out of line, the decision-maker was believed to have found it too challenging to move beyond the traditional message openly. Consequently, no further commitment was made to the initiatives derived from the novel frame. In retrospect, it was believed that involving the decision-maker in the design research could have significantly enhanced their connection to the situation. The (lack of) resource commitment was considered a third key moment in the reframing process.

Ultimately, the opportunity book – and thus the novel frame – did play a crucial role in shaping the activities of an emergency centre connected to the situation planned for construction in the city.

Conditionality of stages

Five respondents explicitly mentioned the conditionality of the three different stages. Beyond the most apparent engagement following acceptance, frame acceptance and frame engagement were indicated by the respondents as more likely to happen when the actors are also actively engaged in the designerly approach. As an example, one respondent indicated how her previous extensive experience leads her to steer towards getting relevant intermediate actors to engage in the design process early on, making frame engagement in a later stage more likely (Designer_A, 2023).

Co-evolution of frame acceptance and frame engagement

Five out of eight respondents mentioned how novel frame acceptance and frame engagement by actors co-evolved over time. For example, one of the respondents reflected on how the attitude to reflect upon one's assumptions, the reframing of the situation, and the actor's responsibility towards that situation need to co-develop to be effective (Designer_B, 2023). Another respondent explained how a novel frame was disseminated in a broader system by actively iterating with actors who had not been involved thus far. This allowed the frame to be accepted and for actors to engage in it simultaneously (Designer_H, 2023).

Overall, the time spent on and involvement in the reframing process were perceived to be positively correlated to ultimate frame engagement. This implies that a transactional perspective (e.g., designer -> actor or actor -> actor) of novel frames and subsequent actions is less effective in bringing about actual change in the required context.

Patterns in factors driving the social dynamics in reframing processes

Organisational-, occupational-, and personal factors driving the social dynamics

From an actor's point of view, respondents spoke of factors driving the social dynamics that concerned the actor's individual self, professional role, and/or organisation. They could be positive as well as negative drivers.

Firstly, *organisational factors* include those perceived to be outside the reframing process yet seem to influence it through involved actors. These include perceived organisational constraints such as available time and budget, alignment with organisational Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), organisational politics, and culture.

Second, *occupational factors* relate to an actor's perceived role and responsibilities within a professional context. These include occupational values (e.g., a security officer being mainly concerned about security), subsequent qualities, felt role responsibility, and occupational groupthink. It answers what the actor, as a professional, believes to be (and not to be) about.

Third, *personal factors* include those that encompass a range of individual personal characteristics. These include an actor's maturity to reflect on and/or revise one's mental model, comfortability with the process related to confidence in one's skills and/or (un)certainty about the process and its outcome, interpersonal trust between actors in the reframing process, an actor's attitude towards risk, curiosity in the outside world, enthusiasm of doing things differently, empathy and/or identification with stakeholders and the situation, alignment with individual interests, and the feeling of being valued and heard.

Some factors driving social dynamics can be related to only one category. Depending on the situation, others fit more than just one, like self-relevance bias, which concerns the (in)ability to see oneself as part of the solution and could be both occupational and personal.

Perceived factors and tensions in social dynamics per stage

When both positive and negative drivers apply to a situation, tensions build up, keeping actors from moving towards a particular stage. These tensions are perceived to be smoothed (i.e., mitigated) or intensified through the social interaction between the involved actors.

Tensions to engage in the designerly approach

Four respondents spoke of a 'maturity or willingness to reflect and/or revise mental models' as a conditional factor to engagement in the designerly approach. With that condition being met, positive driving factors were found to be a 'shared curiosity', 'felt risk of doing more of the same' and 'the need to approach the situation differently'. Six respondents mentioned that tensions arose as this coincided with an actor's 'discomfort about the process' related to 'uncertainty about how the process would unfold' or the 'lack of confidence in their skills' to go through it successfully. For example, one respondent reflected on a case where the pre-existing approach had not led to a satisfactory concept to work with. However, the suggestion to include users in the approach led them to express their insecurity about how to move forward (Designer_E, 2023).

Logically, in the interviews, the respondents reflected on cases where actors eventually did engage in the designerly approach. Wherever negative drivers applied, the actor's ultimate engagement in the process, according to the respondents, was primarily due to the 'confidence they had in the process' and 'excitement' based on previous experiences (also from hear-say), or the 'interpersonal trust' between the involved actors, such as their peers and the facilitating designer. One respondent pointed out how this is usually something they need to pay "quite a bit of attention to" at the forefront of the process (Designer_C, 2023).

Interestingly, *disengagement* from the designerly approach also happened *in flight*. When that happened, the involved actors got confused or insecure about where the process was heading, leading to new tensions. For example, in one reflection, "a lot of dynamics in the room" were described as confusion struck. Tensions were reportedly eased by fostering interpersonal trust and encouraging participants to rely on the facilitator's confidence in the process (Designer_E, 2023). More respondents indicated

that the mitigating factors mostly involved building trust between the actors (e.g., through a shared positive experience with the process) and between the actors and the designer (e.g., through process authority and authenticity). In addition, building skill confidence (e.g., through training) and clarifying the steps of the process (e.g., through management of expectations) were also mentioned to mitigate the effect of any negative drivers.

Tensions to accept and engage in a novel frame

Considering the perceived co-evolutionary nature of frame acceptance and frame engagement, simultaneously looking at both positive and negative influences at these stages is warranted. Overall, 'involvement and time spent in the reframing process' influences whether actors build 'empathy' (leading to acceptance) and can ultimately 'identify with the stakeholders and the situation' (leading to willingness to engage). This means identification builds over time, leading to a 'moral responsibility towards the stakeholders' and/or 'ownership of the situation'. This depends on an actor's ability to see themselves as a relevant part of the situation and its way forward (i.e., a 'self-relevance bias'). These are primarily positive occupational and personal driving factors at this stage.

However, in accepting a novel frame, negative occupational drivers were often linked to 'confidence or belief in the perceived qualities of the novel frame', the extent of 'rigidity of (pre-existing) occupational frames', and '(occupational) groupthink'. These factors pertain to whether, from an occupational point of view, one can see other values and qualities to be salient in a situation and to be able to accept that one's current way(s) of doing is being challenged, notably by other actors. To mitigate tensions related to occupational rigidity and groupthink, the perceived 'legitimacy' and 'authority' on either process- or content-level of those suggesting a novel frame were considered relevant factors. Respondents did not mention organisational factors driving actors towards or away from frame acceptance.

Contrarily, perceived organisational constraints, such as 'organisational KPIs' and 'time and budget', were indicated to play a role in engaging in a novel frame. For example, one respondent reflected on situations where a novel frame gets accepted, yet expressed a general concern about the actual engagement of actors due to a lack of

experienced time to take it in. The respondent explained how people are evaluated each year makes it understandable why they might be reluctant to engage with a new framework. The lack of time and rigid evaluation criteria are interconnected. This issue will persist until these criteria are adjusted to allow for the possibility of not immediately grasping new concepts (Designer_B, 2023). This underlines the tensions that may arise between dominant values in the existing organisational context and the changing values underlying the conceptual ideas leading from a novel frame.

In addition, 'uncertainty about implications of the frame' for oneself and (others in) the organisation was mentioned as negative personal- and occupational drivers to frame engagement as if leading to some decision paralysis. For example, there was a meeting where concerns were raised about the uncertainty of the project's direction and outcome. There were doubts about whether such a broad task could be managed effectively, and fears emerged that opening up this scope might exceed available resources or economic constraints. The focus was on ensuring the project remained feasible within those limits (Designer_E, 2023).

Mainly, occupational and personal drivers were indicated to be factors mitigating the tensions in frame engagement. Actors were perceived to be more likely to follow through (i.e., accept and engage) when they felt 'respected, valued and heard in the process', e.g., through 'positive language' and 'being given the time to digest' and when the frame was perceived to 'align with their personal interests'. Also, respondents indicated that the social dynamics between actors in moving towards frame engagement were helped by feelings of 'support/confidence from their organisation', 'belief in their leadership', and 'trust in the designer'. It was also considered relevant whether the reframing process is 'experienced together with other organisational actors', building towards 'interpersonal trust' and 'shared understanding'.

Below, Figure 1 provides a visual overview of the main results. Appendix C, Table 3 provides an overview of all the primary factors perceived to be driving the social dynamics at the three stages of the reframing process.

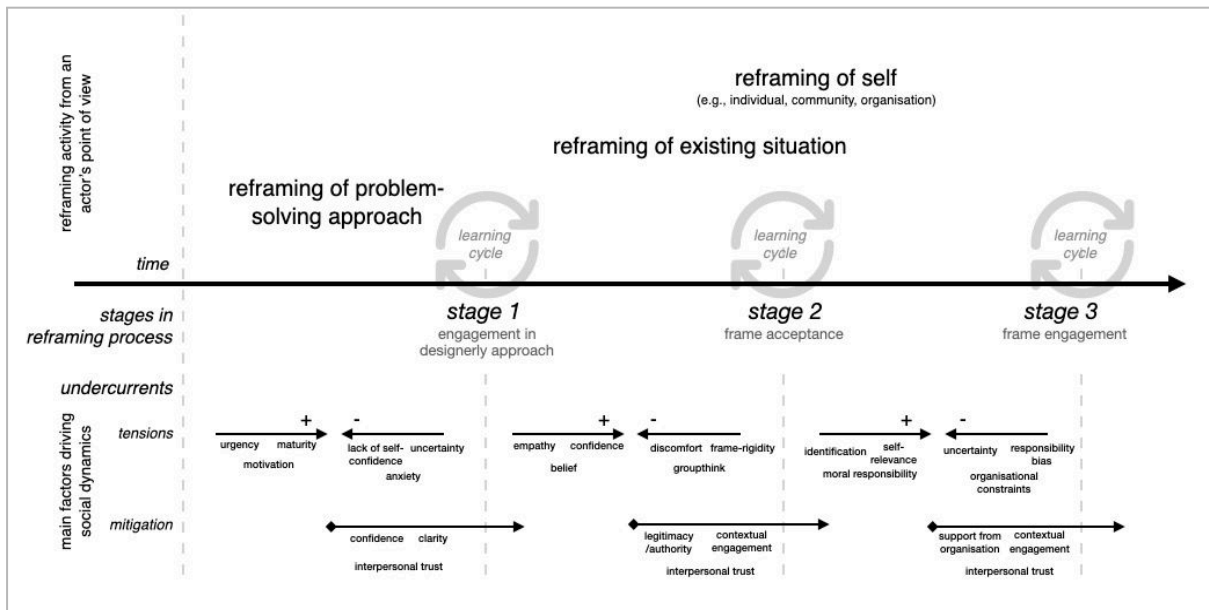


Figure 1. Learning cycles, stages, and (social) undercurrents in multi-actor reframing processes in organisational settings

Discussion and Conclusion

Despite the substantial research on frame acceptance, as exemplified by studies conducted by Lee (2020), Paton and Dorst (2011) and Vermaas et al. (2015), there is limited investigation into how social dynamics influence the acceptance of, and engagement in, novel frames by involved intermediate actors (Mazerant & Van der Bijl-Brouwer, 2023). The results support a social-dynamic perspective on reframing and the identification of different stages in multi-actor reframing processes. Additionally, it identified relevant factors and differences between categories of factors leading to the build-up of tensions driving the social dynamics in such reframing processes, centring around these stages. As such, this paper uncovers an exciting new layer to be studied and makes several contributions.

First, this study contributes to the literature on reframing processes in design by identifying the social dynamics to centre around tensions at the stages of 1) engagement in a designerly approach, 2) frame acceptance, and, ultimately, 3) frame engagement. The study also shows that the latter two stages co-evolve over time. These are perceived to be positively correlated with actors' time spent on and involvement in a

reframing process. In addition, three different reframing activities occur from an intermediate actor's perspective. Firstly, the reframing of the problem-solving approach. That means that a designerly approach's underlying values and assumptions are perceived to differ radically from dominant problem-solving approaches such as rational problem-solving (e.g., Schon, 1983; Simon, 1991). Secondly, the reframing of the situation itself. And thirdly, the reframing of oneself concerning that situation. Involved intermediate actors iterate between these activities as they go through multiple learning cycles in which their assumptions are challenged, and sense-making is changed. Different factors drive the social dynamics influencing actors' acceptance and engagement in these frames at all three stages. Further research should deepen our understanding of how specific factors influence acceptance and engagement.

A second contribution lies in identifying a difference between personal and occupational factors driving the social dynamics at any of the three identified stages. As such, this study marks an exciting point to address in multi-actor (systemic) design approaches and adds to the literature on systemic design, design methods, and innovation. This study broadens the focus of design approaches and innovation efforts to include intermediate actors within the organisational context, essential for integrating novel frames into routine operations. While previous research on frame acceptance in design emphasised designer-client interactions, this study advocates recognising intermediate actors as key figures in designing for impact in systemic design and social innovation. It raises the question of how these actors navigate the shift from established rationales to new ways of understanding situations, personally and professionally.

Third, fixation, problem-solving models, and resistance to the journey have been identified as barriers to adopting novel conceptual frames in design (e.g., Jansson & Smith, 1991; Paton & Dorst, 2011; Purcell & Gero, 1996). This study adds to the existing body of literature by categorising these barriers into personal, occupational, and organisational factors that influence social dynamics in multi-actor processes. Whereas occupational factors like *groupthink* and *frame rigidity* hinder frame acceptance and frame engagement, personal factors like (interpersonal) trust and confidence facilitate engagement with novel frames. The perceived *legitimacy* and *authority* of other actors help to open up to a novel frame as a professional in the first place. *Organisational factors* also shape social dynamics, particularly during the engagement phase. As such,

this study sheds light on the undercurrents of earlier identified barriers and enablers in reframing processes in design.

Practitioners do well to recognise the different learning cycles actors go through and focus on understanding and empathising with intermediate actors early in the process to reduce tensions and enhance impact. Key considerations include aligning personal, occupational, and organisational values, defining quality, and building trust and confidence. Like standard design practices for end-users, the intermediate actors' professional lifeworlds should be understood and considered. Additionally, it's crucial to identify and engage decision-makers who can connect with the problem at hand as early as possible.

This study suggests that strategising for impact in multi-actor reframing (and innovation) processes within organisations requires further research to understand how intermediate actors transition from known ways of doing and seeing, potentially altering their personal or occupational identity, in relation to the novel frame. With rationales in existing contexts being situational, the novelty of new approaches, frames and actions to an actor is relative (Hatchuel & Weil, 2009). As such, it influences the social dynamics as it may well lead to a dissonance with personal-, occupational-, or organisational values and qualities within the actor (e.g., existing versus new role identity), between actors, and between actors and the organisational (intermediate) actors that have not been involved in the reframing process.

Consequently, further research is suggested to investigate how social dynamics lead to a shift in quality perception within a community of practice (e.g., Wenger, 1998b) and, considering how relevant interpersonal trust was believed to be, how the quality of the relationship between involved actors plays a role. An interesting angle could be to use the lens of improvisational performance arts such as theatre and jazz, as it could help to understand better the factors driving the social dynamics between actors in emergent generative practices such as systemic design as narratives continuously change (see also: Barrett et al. (2018); Vera and Crossan (2005); Weick (1998)).

Limitations

Despite the valuable insights from this study, a more thorough approach, such as real-time protocol analysis or interviews, would enhance the findings. Respondents

relied on memory, potentially missing some social dynamics. The data reflect a Western context with egalitarian power distribution, so results may not apply to more hierarchical settings. Future research should explore more diverse contexts. Despite limitations, this study offers a comprehensive view of factors driving social dynamics in reframing processes. It guides practitioners to broaden their focus and build in-process support for intermediate actors to build confidence and (interpersonal) trust.

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Appendix A

Table 1. Anonymised description of the respondents.

Respondent_ID	Gender & nationality	Type of expertise	Dominant location of practice	Cases for reflection
Designer_A	Female, Dutch	Social design practitioner, embedded and external, public domain	Canada, The Netherlands	1 case in the public domain (city government)
Designer_B	Male, Dutch	Strategic design practitioner and academic, external, public and private domain	The Netherlands	2 cases in the public domain (national government programs)
Designer_C	Female, Dutch	Social and service design practitioner, external, public and private domain	The Netherlands	1 case in the private-public domain (provincial government with training agencies) 2 cases in the private domain (pension funds)
Designer_D	Female, Australian	Social and service design practitioner and academic, external, private and public domain	Australia	1 case in private-public domain (social housing) 1 case private-public domain (security and hospital)
Designer_E	Male, Danish	Service-, and strategy design practitioner, external, private and public domain	Norway	1 case in private-public domain (emergency communication) 1 case in public domain (student housing)
Designer_F	Female, USA	Social Designer, Social Innovation practitioner, external and embedded, private and public domain	Australia	1 case in private domain (insurance company)

Respondent_ID	Gender & nationality	Type of expertise	Dominant location of practice	Cases for reflection
Expert_G²	Male, Dutch	Sr. research practitioner and academic, embedded, public domain	The Netherlands	3 cases in public domain (national government: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and Ministry of Defense)
Designer_H	Female, United Kingdom	Social-, Service-, Systemic Design practitioner, external, public and private domain	United Kingdom, Denmark, Canada	1 case in public domain (municipality government, youth work)

² Expert_G was not a trained designer, yet had built extensive experience applying a designerly approach to performing research over many years in multiple cases, together with an embedded design team, in a government setting. His multi-actor reframing experience centered around getting organizational actors to engage in a reframe of the often problematic, traditional research approaches. Because of this valuable experience, the expert was included as a respondent in the analysis.

Appendix B

Table 2. Themes and subtopics covered in the final interview outline.

Theme	Subtopics
Setting the stage of the case	timelines, involved stakeholders, role of the designer in the project, relationship of the designer to the client
The reframing process	what made the designer think the case was an example of a radical reframing process for the context, how the framing of the situation at the end was different from the framing at the beginning.
Key moments	descriptions of perceived important moments throughout the reframing process, what took place, and which actors were involved
Social dynamics in case	descriptions of (concrete) social interactions at the indicated key moments, its perceived effects on involved actors, and the interviewee's interpretation of what the social interaction was about
Experiences in social dynamics and strategies in reframing in general	interviewee's strategies to move involved actors from pre-existing frames to changing actions in line with novel frames, failed reframing processes due to social dynamics
Conclusion	interviewee's additions and suggestions for research

Appendix C

Table 3. Factors perceived to be driving the social dynamics at different stages of the reframing process

	Engagement in Designery Approach			Frame Acceptance			Frame Engagement		
Factors	Positive drivers	Negative drivers	Mitigating factors	Positive drivers	Negative drivers	Mitigating factors	Positive drivers	Negative drivers	Mitigating factors
Personal	<p>Felt risk of doing more of the same, felt need to do something differently</p> <p>Maturity and/or willingness to revise mental models</p> <p>Excitement about process, believe in different approach</p> <p>Curiosity in the world</p> <p>Intrinsic motivation to change</p>	<p>Discomfort with process:</p> <p>Lack of confidence in own skills, uncertainty about steps of the process</p>	<p>Trust in designer/facilitator,</p> <p>Interpersonal trust between organizational actors, gained confidence in skills,</p> <p>Confidence/certainty in process</p>	<p>Empathy with the stakeholders/situation</p>	<p>Discomfort about process</p>	<p>Involvement and time spent in reframing process</p> <p>Process experienced together</p> <p>Interpersonal trust between actor-designer/facilitator</p> <p>Positive language</p>	<p>Identification with the stakeholders/situation</p> <p>Self-relevance bias:</p> <p>Moral responsibility towards the stakeholder, ownership of the situation</p>	<p>Uncertainty about implications of the frame for self</p>	<p>Involvement and time spent in reframing process</p> <p>Feeling respected, valued and heard in the process</p> <p>Felt support from organization</p> <p>Trust in designer/facilitator</p> <p>Interpersonal trust between actors</p> <p>Alignment with personal interests</p>
Occupational	<p>Felt risk of doing more of the same, felt need to do something differently (e.g., role responsibility)</p>	<p>Uncertainty/anxiety about outcome (i.e., how will it affect my role, position, etc).</p>		<p>Confidence or belief in the perceived qualities of the novel frame</p>	<p>Rigidity of occupational frames</p> <p>Groupthink</p>	<p>Legitimacy and/or authority on either process- or content level of those suggesting a novel frame</p>	<p>Self-relevance bias:</p> <p>Moral responsibility towards the stakeholder, ownership of the situation</p>	<p>Uncertainty about implications of the frame for self and for others in the organization (responsibility towards others)</p>	<p>Belief in leadership</p> <p>Trust in designer/facilitator</p> <p>Interpersonal trust and shared understanding between actors</p>
Organizational								<p>Organizational KPI's</p> <p>Perceived constraints of budget and time</p> <p>Decision makers with occupational disconnect to situation</p> <p>Organizational politics and culture</p>	