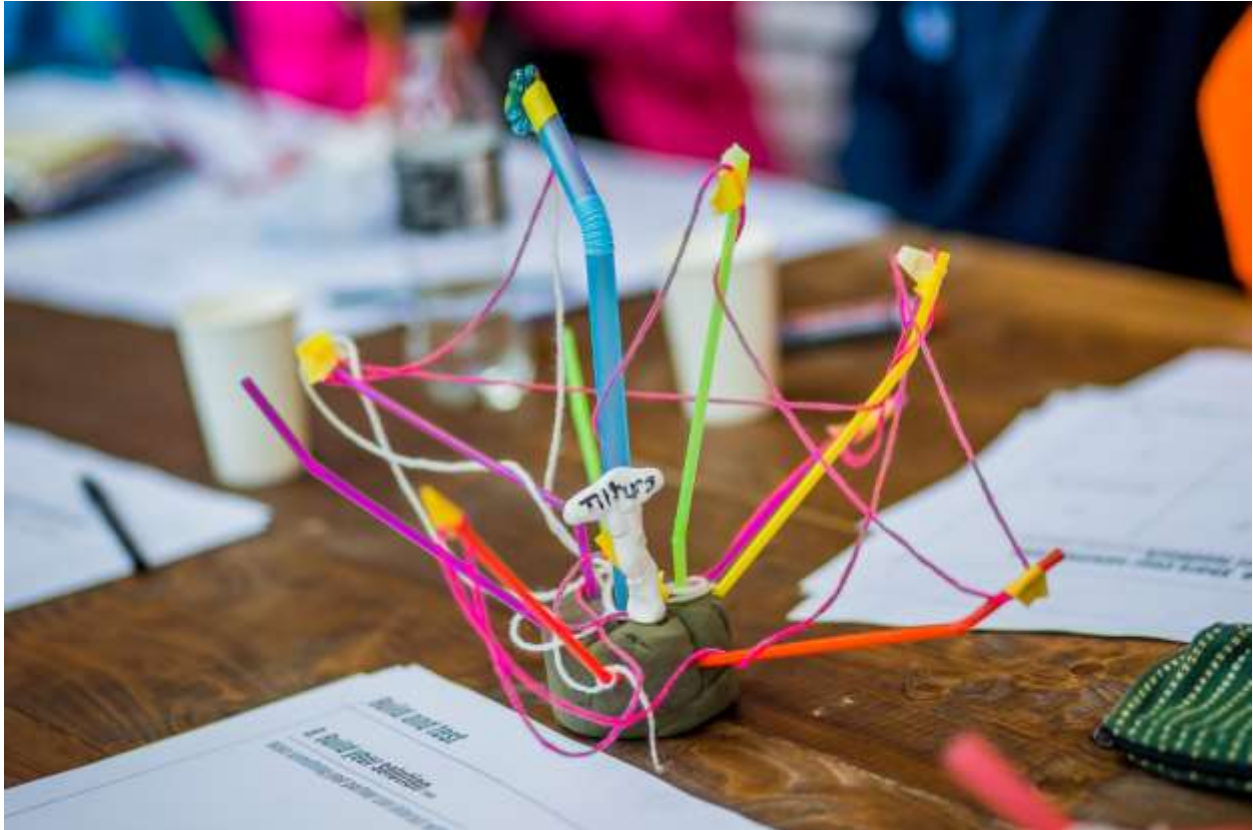


THEORY INTO PRACTICE

Dutch Design Deltas and ABC-model



Innovation Games, Tilburg (2017)

Introduction

This article contains an explanation about Design Thinking and Imagineering. In addition to the explanations, there's a description given underneath both theories, about the models Dutch Design Deltas and the ABC-model. These models are effective and practical in use. Though, will they always function the way that is been stated in the theories? What are the most important pro's and con's when these models are implemented from theory into practice?

The link between this research and Social Innovation is visible because both models can be used to develop an effective and innovative solution for (social) issues.

'Social innovation is the process of developing and deploying effective solutions to challenging and often systemic social and environmental issues in support of social progress.' (Business)



First a short introduction of the writers: Loes Jeucken and Anne-Claire Pap. Both are studying Social Innovation at Performatory, NHTV University of Applied Sciences in Breda. Performatory is a learning community, where students, experts and alumni are designing their own course where creativity and collective learning is stimulated, using project-based working methods. The philosophy behind the Performatory and its working methods find their roots in Imagineering and Design Thinking theories. While Loes and Anne-Claire were working with models that are linked to these theories the research question arose, which became the inducement for this research.



Loes focused mainly on Design Thinking and the Dutch Design Deltas. Besides desk research, she explored the implementation of the theory and the Dutch Design Deltas at the Innovation Games. The Innovation Games 2017 was organized by StudioWhy, as part of the Innovation Week (Dear Future) in Tilburg. The community-based organization is initiator and creator of the Dutch Design Deltas.

Anne-Claire mainly focused on Imagineering and the ABC-model. She went to the IMA Booth camp (Imagineering booth camp) to explore the implementation of the theory and the ABC-model likewise.

What is Design Thinking?

Design thinking is a problem-solving method that puts its focus on creativity, intuition and logic. It brings together different opponents to create an advanced new way of thinking. A human-centered point-of-view and technological & economical vision make the perfect combination. Design Thinking puts the focus on the abilities other problem-solving methods care to neglect (Curedale, 2013).

The four most important aspects of Design Thinking are:

- human-centered approach
- optimism
- collaboration
- not being afraid to experiment

It's not about having the perfect process and outcome, but being able to solve problems by making mistakes and working together with full conviction on something that binds you as a group. These aspects make the process differ from most other similar processes.

Despite its tolerance for mistakes, Design Thinking has a structured approach. The process has five different phases that will help with generating and developing ideas and with the problem-solving process.

1. *Discovering*

How do I approach?

➔ In this phase, the user learns about the audience and the subject. The user needs to try and find as much information as possible, by not being afraid to dig a little deeper.

2. *Defining*

How do I interpret it?

➔ In this phase, the user observes and tries to create a point of view on the problem.

3. *Ideating*

What do I create?

➔ The user gets the chance to generate as many ideas as possible. Nothing is too experimental in this phase.

4. *Experimenting*

How do build it?

➔ Now it has come to the point when the user is going to select some of the best ideas. The ideas need to become something tangible. They need to be tested on feasibility, by checking the time frame, supplies, space etc. Then the products/ideas are tested by the target group, as a prototype, to get feedback.

5. *Evaluating*

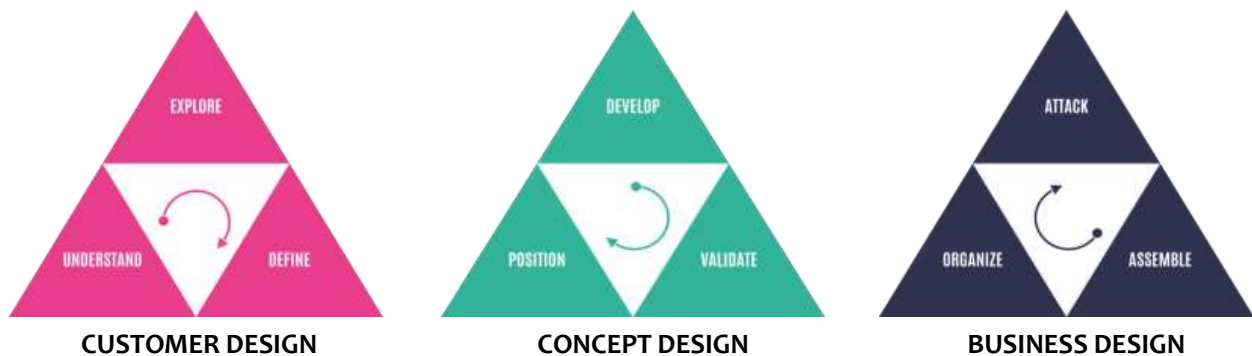
How do I improve?

➔ During the evaluation, feedback is given and received on the solutions and the process. It's now time to learn and improve the product/service.

Design thinking is often used as a base for designing concept development models. One of these models is 'the Dutch Design Deltas', which were created by StudioWhy.

The Dutch Design Deltas

The Dutch Design Deltas is a practical explanation of Design thinking, which goes even a little further into the process. In its process, it moves through three main stages, and each stage has three phases. So the designer (the user) goes through nine steps. Through the process, the designer finds a perfect balance between creativity and analytical thinking. A lot of information is gained from different perspectives. This method will push the users to question the given problem and (re)define the real problem. The three main stages are called Customer Design, Concept Design and Business Design (StudioWhy, 2017).



Stage one

The beginning of the process is Customer Design. In this stage, the user will question everything. Is the problem that is been given, really the problem, or is there something underneath? The user needs to collect as much information as possible from all the involved parties.



The first part of Customer Design is the ‘*understand*’ phase. In this phase, there are five questions that are very important for the user to get a clear view what’s underneath the stated problem.

Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?

Some people believe that if you ask ‘why’ five times, you will come to the real answer. With this in mind, the process will continue with talking to various stakeholders. By trying to look for information which is not evident, the user will get more underneath the surface of the subject. The user tries to understand the problem and look at it from different angles.

The next phase is the 'explore' phase. The user will create a deeper understanding of the subject, and gain empathy with the project. It is important to talk to the stakeholders and end-consumers. Their connection and influence with this problem need to become clear. With this in mind, the user can decide which stakeholders are most important in the process and which are not. There are three things to focus on when talking to others involved, namely:

Empathy

- Seek and find the perspectives of him/her on the problem/subject
- Try to stay out of judgement
- Recognize emotions and communicate through emotions

Observe

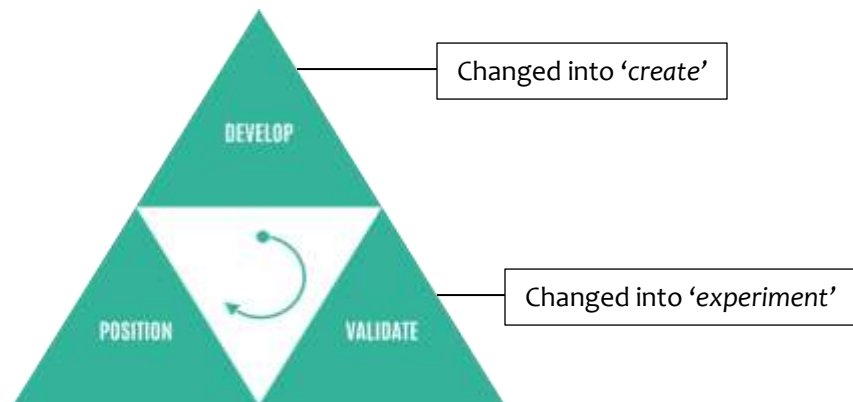
- Ask questions that go from concrete to emotional (What? How? Why?)

Engage

- Try to have a good conversation, search for inspiration and really listen to what he/she says

The last phase of Customer Design is the 'define' phase. In this phase, the user assembles all the collected information into a new problem definition.

Stage two



With a redefined problem the process continues towards the Concept Design stage. This stage starts with the 'develop' phase. In this phase starts with generating ideas, preferably as many ideas as possible. They can be crazy, impossible, in the box or out-of-the-box, it does not matter. The only thing that matters is:

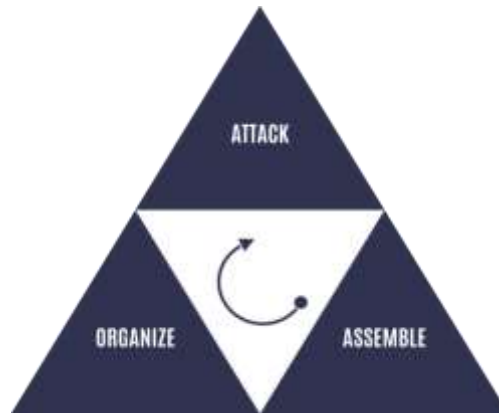
NO IS NOT AN OPTION!

Every idea is a good idea. When there is a substantial number of ideas it is time to select your best ones.

The process will continue with the 'validate' phase. In this phase, the selected ideas are going to be tested. Presenting the ideas to the target group and other stakeholders is crucial. They are the ones who are going to use the ideas. This is the moment for the user to get feedback and get new insights, to gain the ability to pick out the best idea(s) and work it (them) out in more details.

In the last phase, it is time to present. The user needs to develop an elevator pitch to persuade the stakeholders. The 'positioning' phase is about positioning the concept, defining its market position and competition.

Stage three



Now it is time for the Business Design stage. The user is going to make its concept ready for the market. The first phase is '*assemble*'. The concept needs to become concrete, something tangible. It is recommendable to find a third party in the matter, to support the idea and concept.

The '*organize*' phase is about building a core team and managing resources and time. The user is going to start creating its own company and brand.

The last phase is the '*attack*' phase, which is about finalizing the product. It focuses on the operational side of the developed idea and concept, with as outcome a product that is market ready.

What is Imagineering?

Imagineering is a composition of the words 'imagination' and 'engineering'. Imagineering could be defined as *value-creation and value-innovation from an experience perspective*. Imagineering is not based on mental needs, but on emotional needs. It will not only result in the communication of ideas but also in the creation of experiences. The approach ensures a connection between supply and demand when creating an experience-concept. The organization becomes a value-oriented organism with emotions and various characteristics. Also, it is used as a tool to control creative processes and makes themes, stories, product and communication consistent (Redactie, 2012). Through the years Imagineering evolved from a concept- and product development method into an innovative process of value co-creation by stimulating collective creativity (NHTV, Imagineering, 2017). By using the collective creativity present at an organization every person is considered to be inspiring, creative and helpful. No knowledge will be thrown away. Imagineering is an addition to the Design Thinking theories (Peters, 2016).

The ABC-model



We chose to use the ABC-model to compare the Dutch Design Deltas with. The picture above is the ABC-model (NHTV, 2017). The model is divided into several steps. Each step stands for the stage the user is in during the process. This Playground is holistic in use because the process is dynamic. The user cannot go through all the stages linearly and expect to have the best solution possible. The user will go back and forth the stages in order to obtain an integral result. While it is important to respond to new developments and environmental issues, the fast-moving surroundings can provoke changes during the ABC-process.

The Playground is not only a useful tool to acquire thoughtful solutions, but it is also an important work principle. It requires an open and thinking out-of-the-box mindset, including a creative workspace. As part of the process, it is important to meet all the parties and stakeholders (such as the end-consumer) involved regularly (in person or online). The end result could be co-created, which makes it even more valuable because every aspect and opinion will be taken into account. Therefore the Playground should be a place where the user can meet its colleagues and stakeholders. It should function as an easily accessible and inspirational and transparent workspace, where creativity is stimulated.

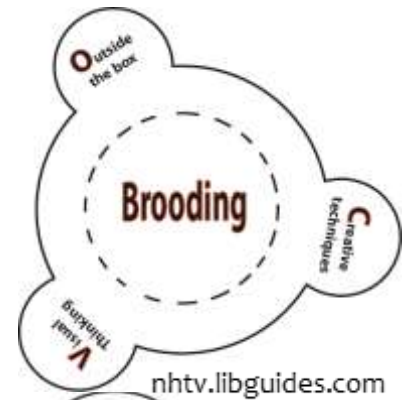
The A-phase

In the *'analysis'* phase the user starts with the investigation of relevant trends and developments (macro-analysis), supply (micro- & meso-analysis) and demand and (potential) audiences. Especially the backgrounds of the (potential) consumer or visitor is interesting information to collect. The gathered information will serve as a basis for the user's vision and concept. Even though the user's own intuition and guts are important in the analysis phase, it is also important to keep in mind that the better the research, the better the end result will be. It could be used as a solid basis for the rest of the process.



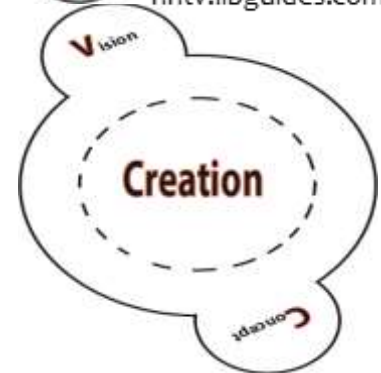
The B-phase

The *'brooding'* phase is used to assemble and structure the information and knowledge that has been collected in the analysis-phase. It is a moment to be playful and creative with the findings and search for similarities and remarkable differences.



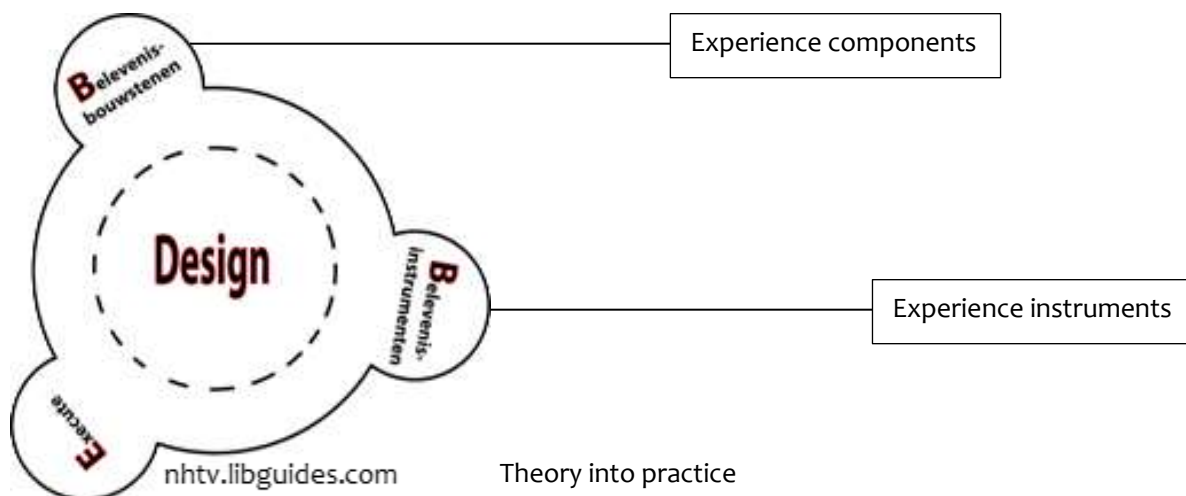
The C-phase

The *'creation'* phase could be seen as the heart of the ABC-model. In this phase imaginative decision will be made, that will function as the base for the future design, products and action. The C-phase starts with a recap of the A- and B-phase. The vision/future goal will be formulated. All the information/ingredients that are gathered are now used to compose a concept, that is imaginative and effective, durable and sustainable, distinctive and authentic, meaningful and recognizable, all fused into an eye-catching one-liner.



The D-phase

When the concept is created it is time to make the plan tangible. This is part of the *'design'* phase. What deliverable products/services are part of the concept/needed to make the concept alive and kicking? How are these created? Instruments such as storytelling, co-creation, theming and animation can be used to make these products/services fit the concept as good as possible.



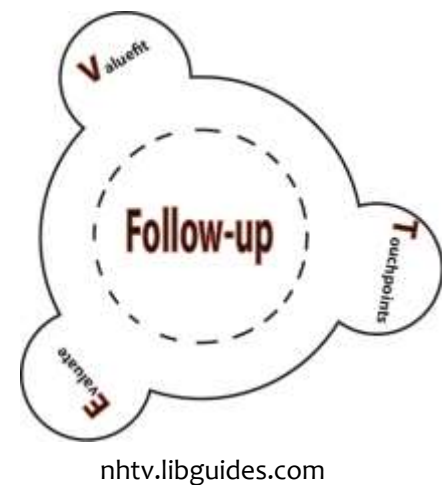
The E-phase

In the 'exchange' phase it is time to communicate the designed solution to the outer world. It is important to be interactive and co-creative, so the end-consumer gets engaged and inspired about the outcome. It is a necessity to take all the communication/media channels into account whether they're useful or not.



The F-phase

Be aware, yet again, that the ABC-model is dynamic, a never-ending process. The 'follow-up' phase is used to observe the implementation of the (prototype) products/services. When a product/service is not functioning properly/at wish it needs to be altered. This means follow-up phase might change into the design phase again and the whole process iterates itself. Also, the follow-up phase is used to evaluate the process. What went well? Are there things still missing? Could be products/services be fine-tuned?



The information stated on the previous pages has been gathered by diving into theories. The next part will be about the theory used in practice. Loes and Anne-Claire discovered the advantages and disadvantages, together with the similarities and differences between the two models. The field-research was used to get a deeper insight into the experiences other people have when working with these models.

During the Innovation Games and the IMA-boot camp, Loes and Anne-Claire got the chance to talk to various people, who all had a clear vision of what either the Dutch Design Deltas or the ABC-model meant for them. At the beginning, Loes and Anne-Claire had the idea that the Dutch Design Deltas and the ABC-model were two completely different things. By learning more and more about the models they discovered that their functioning seems very much alike. There are a few prominent aspects that make them differ from or comparable with the other. Among the people who got interviewed were experts, experienced users and un-experienced users. All findings have been explained below, which could be used as guidance when choosing between both models.

Comparisons

Process

Something which came forward repeatedly was the importance of the process. When working with models such as these it is crucial to keep in mind the following:

‘Designing for evolution, not solution.’, which means the focus needs to be on the process, not on the outcome. When focused on the outcome it’ll interfere with the creative movement, that takes place among the participants.

Lisa Keltjens, Performatory-student about the ABC-model:

‘During the brood-phase encourages the participants to brainstorm about possible ideas for a long period of time. The participant is able to give ideas that even ‘seem’ irrelevant.’

The ABC-model stimulates a dynamic process and gives freedom for creativity. There is room to share every idea that pops up in mind, even if there’s not a true relationship with the subject.



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Maarten Kerkhofs, Performatory-alumni about the ABC-model:

‘Without being truly aware of it, I use the ABC-model as a guide to develop creative sessions, or when I am working on an issue, received by a client.’

In comparison with the DDD-model, the ABC-model could be used as a guide during personal assignments (usage of each phase to develop a concept). On the other hand, the DDD-model evokes a certain mindset that influences the way of approaching personal assignments (deeper analyzing-approach on the assignment: is the question the real question? Who are the ones involved?).

Even though the ABC-model could be applicable to manage both small and complex issues, the following dissimilarity with the DDD-model is rather conspicuous. The DDD-model gives a structured approach. With an extended guideline and tools for each phase, which could support the process, the model is much more detailed. Due to the elaborated stages, tools and guideline, the DDD-model is capable in handling complex and much larger issues. In addition both models stimulate creativity, however, the DDD-model creates much more clarity in confusing moments.



Bas Antonis, StudioWhy about the DDD-model:

‘The issues need to have the following conditions: There has to be an all-encompassing situation, a certain need and a friction. Besides, the question/issue may not contain a solution.’

Approach

The dynamic approach of the ABC-model stimulates spending enough time on each phase. When the participant has not gathered enough information during the analyze-phase, they get encouraged to go back and seek for more input. The same applies to the other phases. There is enough room to take every idea into consideration and eventually define the best idea, before turning the selected idea into a concept.

The DDD-model differs from its approach. For example, the ‘customer design’ stage takes up one-third of the process. It pushes the participants to explore everything into depth until every aspect will become clear regarding the issue, frictions and needs. The ‘develop’ phase is the moment when participants need to generate ideas, that will fit the gained findings. This phase is rather small in comparison to the ABC-model.

Lisa Keltjens, Performatory-student about the DDD- and the ABC-model:

‘The Customer Design stage is much more detailed (DDD-model). As a participant, you get pushed to unravel information about the core of the issue and the needs and the frictions of all stakeholders.’



Innovation Games, Tilburg (2017)

Guidance

Guidance is most important when turning the theory of both models into practice. Along with the DDD-model, there is a DDD-toolbox, which includes explanations, workshops and guidance throughout the entire creative process. Though, to transfer the of both the DDD-model and the ABC-model in the best possible way, from theory into practice, more guidance is recommended. It is job for the facilitator(s) to give good explanations, create involvement of all participants, to interactively guide them into the desired direction, to make transfer from an objective method into a subjective way of working, which is able to connect the participants wishes and needs, as well as those of the issue they are working on. If the facilitator(s) would give just a basic and brief explanation of the method the participants are assigned to work with it could ruin the entire process (lack of interest, motivation, involvement).

Bas Antonis, StudioWhy about the facilitator's necessities:

'The facilitator needs to give good explanations and give guidance when needed.'



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Communication

Communication is crucial with the usage of both models. The participants that will use the method need to understand the approach, together with the process. Participants who are used to working in a structured way might not immediately understand why these models work the way they do. The participants need to have a clear vision of what needs to be done at each step.

Lisa Keltjens, Performatory-student about the importance of a clear explanation:

'Both models stimulate different-thinking. This needs to be explained in an understandable way, to all participants.'

Both the DDD-model and the ABC-model possess adaptable characteristics. The models are used to manage creative processes. The phases should give clear structure in the chaotic process, which makes 'right word-use' a necessity. Among the participants, there could be both experienced and inexperienced users. The phases should be clear, and jargon should be avoided.

Mitch van Veldhoven Goedzooi, about the ABC-model:

'The original model did not fit Goedzooi's way of communicating. The words did not seem to fit the phases they represent. The actions that need to be undertaken could be expressed in a different and unequivocal way. Goedzooi created a model of its own, based on the ABC-model, that is much simpler and comprehensible to their target group.'



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Duration

Time is an important factor that could make or break the process of the models. It is desirable to have enough time, so each phase and stage can be elaborated completely. Though, when the process takes too much time this could demotivate and cause lack of focus. Time pressure could be beneficial to manage the process as wished.

Place

Furthermore, the working place should be considered as a necessity, when it comes to organizing a creative process. It is desirable to have a working place that is different than the place the participants are accustomed to work in. The workspace should be creative and unstructured, with enough distraction included. In this manner creativity and an unstructured mindset could be stimulated. It pushes the participants to not fall into regular working habits and encourages them to make use of the designated method.



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Desired group layout

Both models work the best in smaller groups from 3-5 people. If the groups are too small there could arise the situation when there are too few people to participate. When the group's too big, there are too many opinions and ideas. This could make the process too long and could cause lack of motivation and focus. Besides, it is recommendable to have diverse groups (for example, the difference in the profession, the difference in age, etc.). With multi-disciplinary teams, the issue will be visualized in many different perspectives, with a clear overall picture as a result. Also, it's good to remove all forms of hierarchy within the group (everyone has equal right to share their thoughts). This again has to do with preventing participants to fall into the same working habits as they're used to.



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DDD-model goes one step further...

Bas Antonis, StudioWhy about the DDD-model:

'Other models, such as the Doon-method, the Lean-Startup-method, the Design Thinking-method and the Innovation-cycle did not seem to correspond to the wishes Bas had while using the models. By the reason of 'too big variety in possibilities', 'not a clear analysis-phase', 'lack of focus on the implementation of the concept'. He figured it was time to create a model which would fit his, and the other future participant's wishes and needs.' Especially the last stage and phases of the DDD-model have a feature that makes this model unique, which is the 'attack' phase. In the attack phase the participants start with the implementation of the concept, they make the product operational and market ready.'



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Conclusion

The blue and green parts are the differences between both models. The red parts are similarities and applicable for both.

	Dutch Design Deltas	ABC-model
Process	Detailed and elaborated analyzing stage, with multiple stages	Focusses mainly on generating many (creative) ideas
	Complex issues	Complex issues
	Suitable for both small and big issues	Suitable for personal, small and big issues
Approach	Structured + A lot of guidance - Not much flexibility	Flexible + A lot of room for creativity - Not much guidance
Guidance	Detailed and elaborated toolbox + Incl. clear explanations, tools and workshops	Most guidance is in the hands of the facilitator
	Good facilitator during sessions is necessity	Good facilitator is necessity
Communication	Adaptable by character	Adaptable by character
	Clear and understandable communication is crucial	Clear and understandable communication is crucial
	Take away jargon	Take away jargon
Duration	Make the duration of the process not too short, but not long either	Make the duration of the process not too short, but not long either
	There has to be enough room for each part	There has to be enough room for each part
	Time-pressure cooker could be beneficial	Time-pressure cooker could be beneficial
Place	Creative area	Creative area
	Enough working-space	Enough working-space
	Enough distraction	Enough distraction
	Different than habitual working-place	Different than habitual working-place
Group layout	3-5 persons	Individual 3-5 persons
	Diverse	Diverse
	No hierarchy	No hierarchy
Elaboration of the product	+ Operational product + Market ready	- No clear implementation-phase of the concept and product(s)

A disproof of the research question would be that both models are adaptable to situations. The pros and cons depend on how the models are used, and in what kind of situations. The table shows an overview of the similarities and differences between these two models. Though, when the facilitator spends enough time on adapting the model to his/her own wishes there's a big possibility the model would function properly as well.

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