

Towards Practice Oriented Product Design

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From consumer behaviour to practice

Routines are to some extent directed by general “rules”

General “**rules**” are reproduced through practice and they change over time

Everyday **practices** maintain and transform themselves

Consumption occurs not for its own sake but in the course of accomplishing practices

Understanding consumer-user behaviour.....

Approach

Users as experts

Users as creative consumers

Design for all

Theory

Users' needs exist prior to design intervention, they can be understood

Universal: senses, feelings, instinct, emotional ergonomics

It is possible to design a user relationship

Method

Knowing the users: what to know, how to know it?

Pick and mix methodology, ethnographic techniques (but not theory)

Characteristics

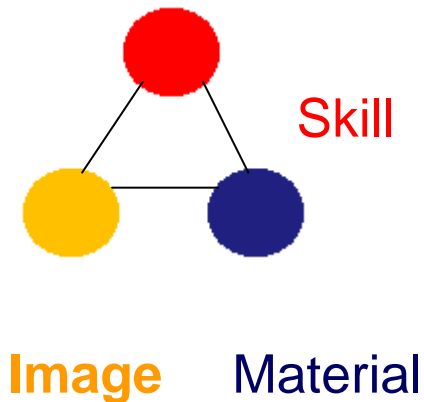
focuses on single products and on individual users or 'lifestyle' categories

Consultancies promise to help understand consumer-user behaviour and innovation

product innovation (often) requires *innovation in practice*.

Practice is a *process* of integration resulting in a structured arrangement - i.e. resulting in *a practice* that exists (for a time) as a recognisable *entity*.

Elements that are integrated consist of material, **image** and **skill**



Innovations in practice occur when everyday entrepreneurs (people) – make new connections between existing or new elements of image, material or skill

For example..... Nordic Walking

1.6 million years on, LEKI claims 'Four legs is better than two'

Don't underestimate walking. Nordic Walking is becoming a new, extremely successful trend sport

... According to manufacturers and retailers, the walking segment has been the fastest growing product category in terms of quantity and turnover, and Nordic Walking may just have what it takes to set the cash registers ringing.

Providing an ideal body work-out for optimum fitness, Nordic Walking reduces the impact on the lower joints, stabilizing heart and circulation.

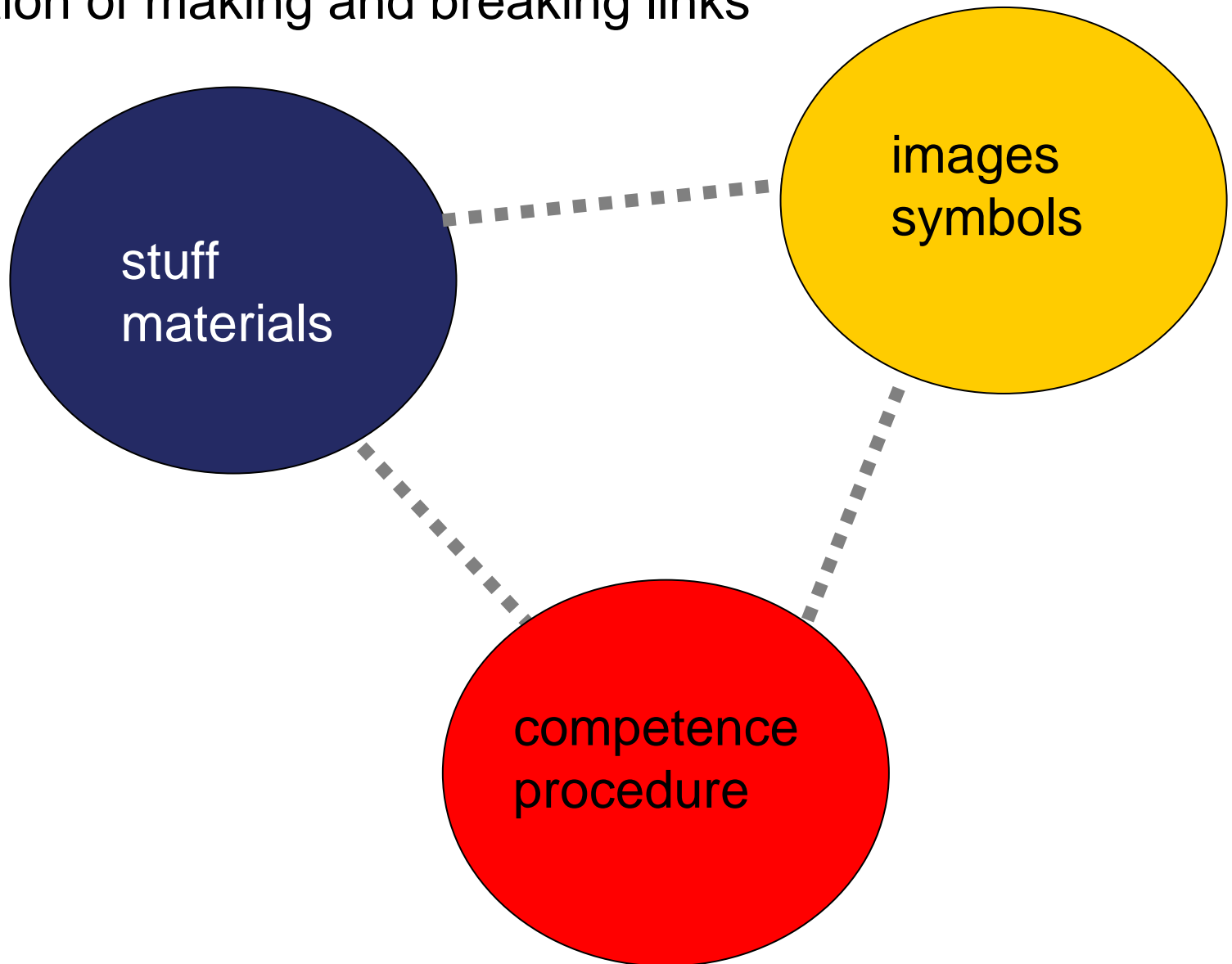
(report of ISPO 2003)

Exerstriding, Viking hiking, Nordic walking

Finland (14% of the population), Austria, Germany (a million plus), Norway, Japan, USA, Australia

Innovation in practice

a question of making and breaking links



slightly new stuff,

very new image

slightly new procedure



Proto-practices, prior elements
ski training, images of fitness,
infirmity, tradition and wisdom

System building – mild nature,
the nordic walking concept,
health and well-being, science of
the body, 100 more muscles

System integration – courses,
experts, trainers, accreditation

material

Image of 'mild nature'

Image of 'well being'

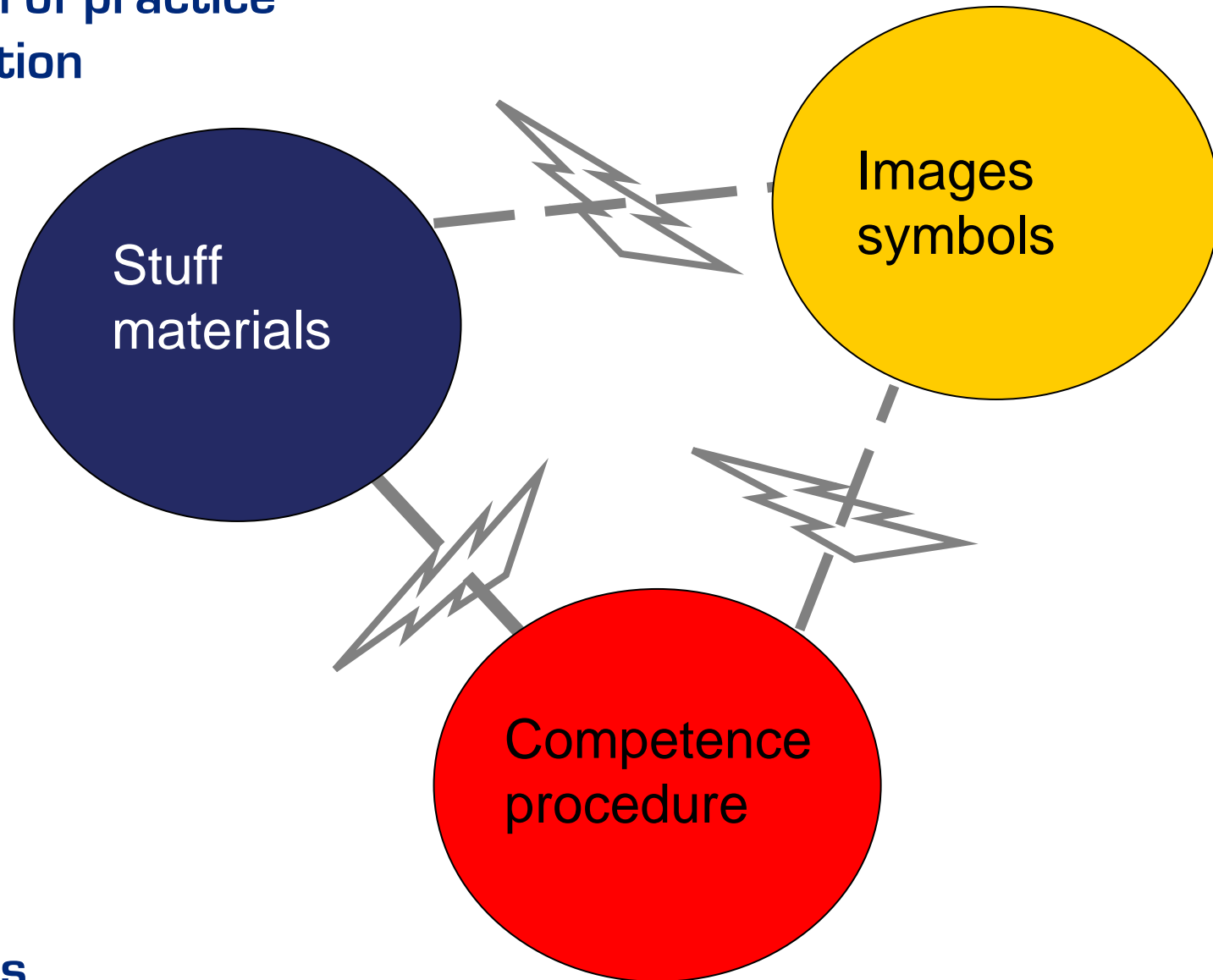
competence

How to re-imagine walking

How to re-materialize walking

How to re-do walking

De-formation of practice and fossilisation



a matter of
breaking links



“dead” objects, ideas, competences
Stranded elements of practice



**Links have been broken.
What would be required to
bring this back
into practice?**

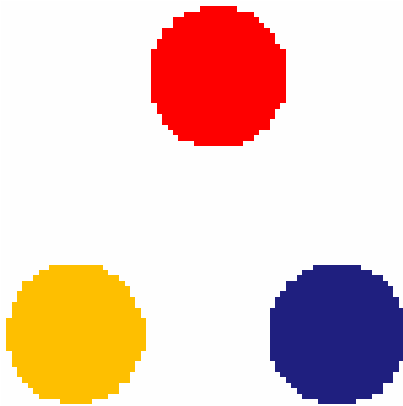
**Niches of
persistence?**

**Parallel to niches
of innovation..**

How do practices emerge, exist and die?

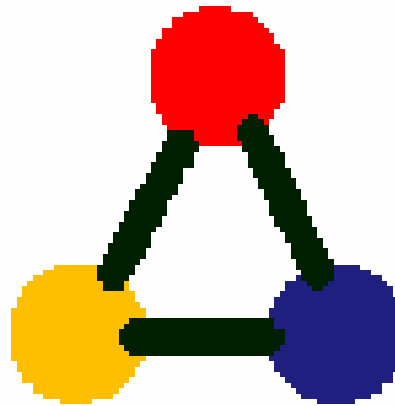
Making and breaking links between elements

proto-practices
(pre-formation)



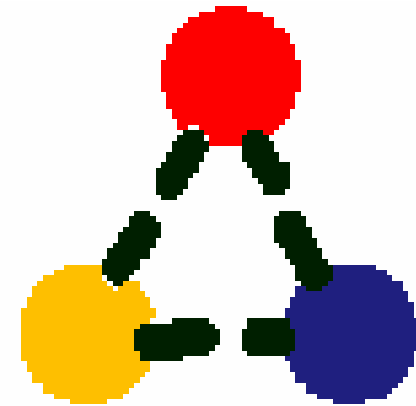
Links not yet
made

practices
(re-formation)



Links being made
and sustained by a
circuit of
reproduction

ex-practices
(de-formation)



Links no longer
being made

How do practices recruit constituent elements and activating practitioners?

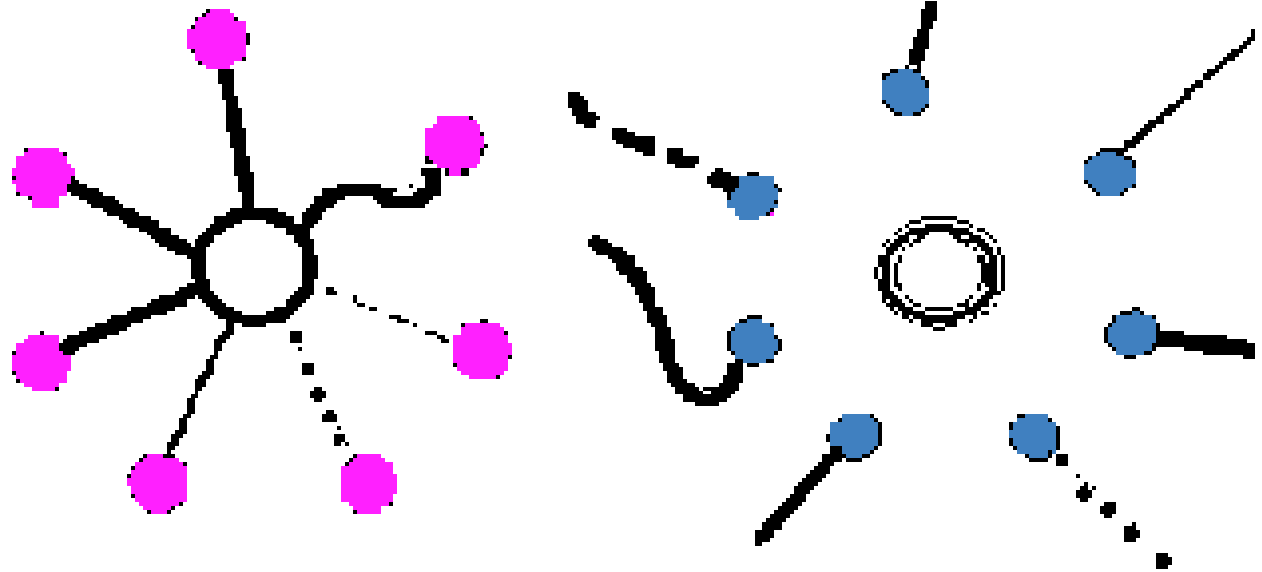
Recruitment and reproduction

Capture practitioners

Careers of carriers

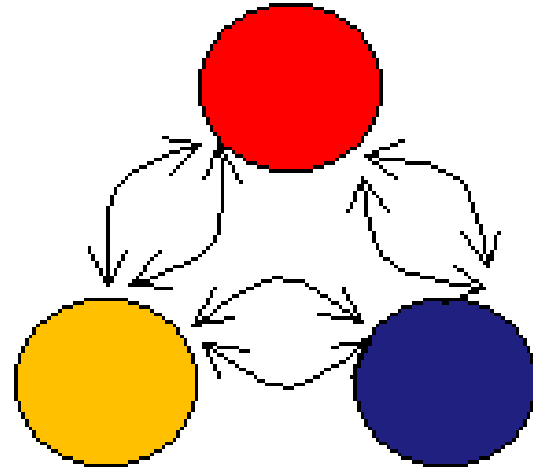
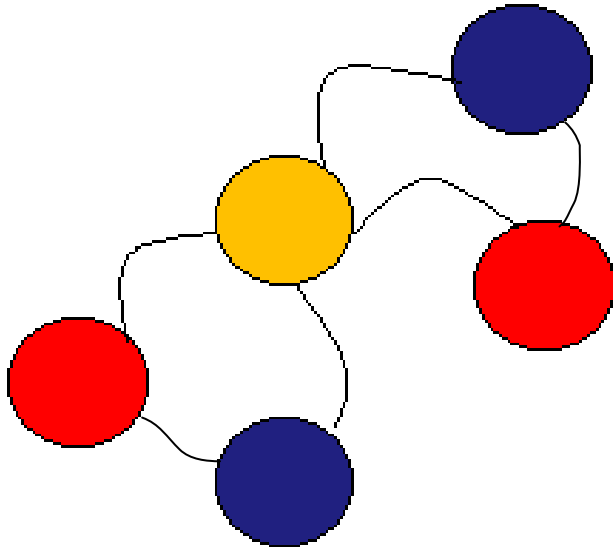
Path and project

Careers of practice



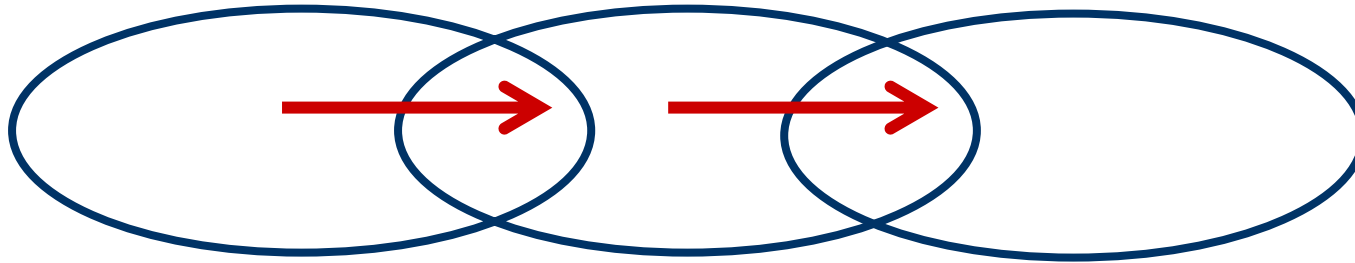
People as integrators, carriers and elements of practice

Elements are partly autonomous because they are created through multiple integrations (practices)



Notice real intersections between competence and material (scripting, delegation), image and material, competence and image

Transferable skills



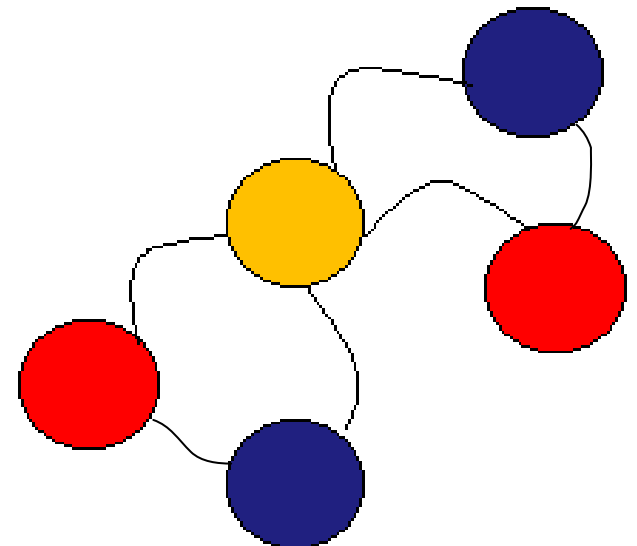
Practice 1
Football
Conference
presentation

Practice 2
Hockey
workshop
contribution

Practice 3 etc.
Ice Hockey
seminar paper

Circulating images

For example, freshness, well being, etc.

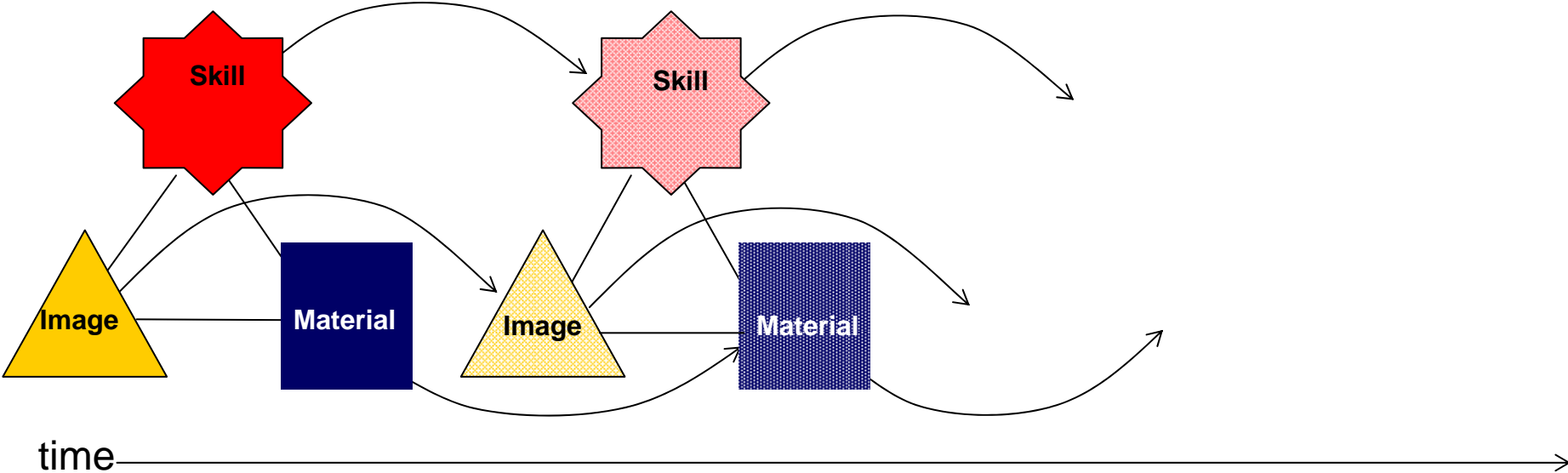


Mechanisms of cross-practice creep

Generating and reproducing elements

First integration of elements

Subsequent integration, showing how elements have changed



The dynamics of practice

Understanding the dynamics of practice means understanding continuities and patterns of co-evolution over time

Value is defined by relations between products, and between objects, skills, meanings and temporalities.

Needs emerge from the dynamics of practice.

Products, designers and consumers are all agents of change but none can change alone.

Their interdependence defines and limits the scope of deliberate intervention.

Practice orientation - mild

Design – IDEO

“we think of product in terms of verbs, not nouns, not cell-phones but cell-phoning”

(Kelley and Littman 2001)

“individual technologies add value only to the extent that they are assembled together into effective configurations”

(Suchman, Blomberg et. al. 1999)

Practice orientation - strong

Take the practice as the unit of enquiry, analysis and intervention



POPD!

Practice oriented product design

POPD seeks to influence the on-going dynamics of practice.

POPD does not end when product sits on shelf.

POPD focuses on practices and practitioners, not on consumption or consumers.

POPD realises that we are all active integrators and carriers of practice.

POPD attends to relations between practices (systems of practice).

POPD analyses constitutive elements and their trajectories.

POPD considers mechanisms and patterns of recruitment, reproduction and defection.

POPD methodologies

User studies, local anthropology, understanding situated practices etc.
But also.....

collective
understanding of the
cumulative careers
of materials, images,
skills and of relations
between practices

statistical traces
of practice

trajectories
across time and
space

Mechanisms of
recruitment and
defection

studies of ex-
practices

studies of elements
(material, image,
skill), of how they
interact, and of how
they circulate

POPD as paradigm

Is it a really different approach?

Not about attention, brand and communication

Never dealing in pre-defined consumer groups

Anchored in communities of practice – never universal

Is it relevant

Is it limited to radical innovation only?

Can it be a tool? Does it work?

Is it (too) undermining?

Would it result in different products, problems and solutions?

PO-POPD

What new conjunctions of material, image and skill would be required for popd to become – for a time – ‘normal’ practice?