Design and language

Media Design Research seminar

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September 21, 2010

What is culture?

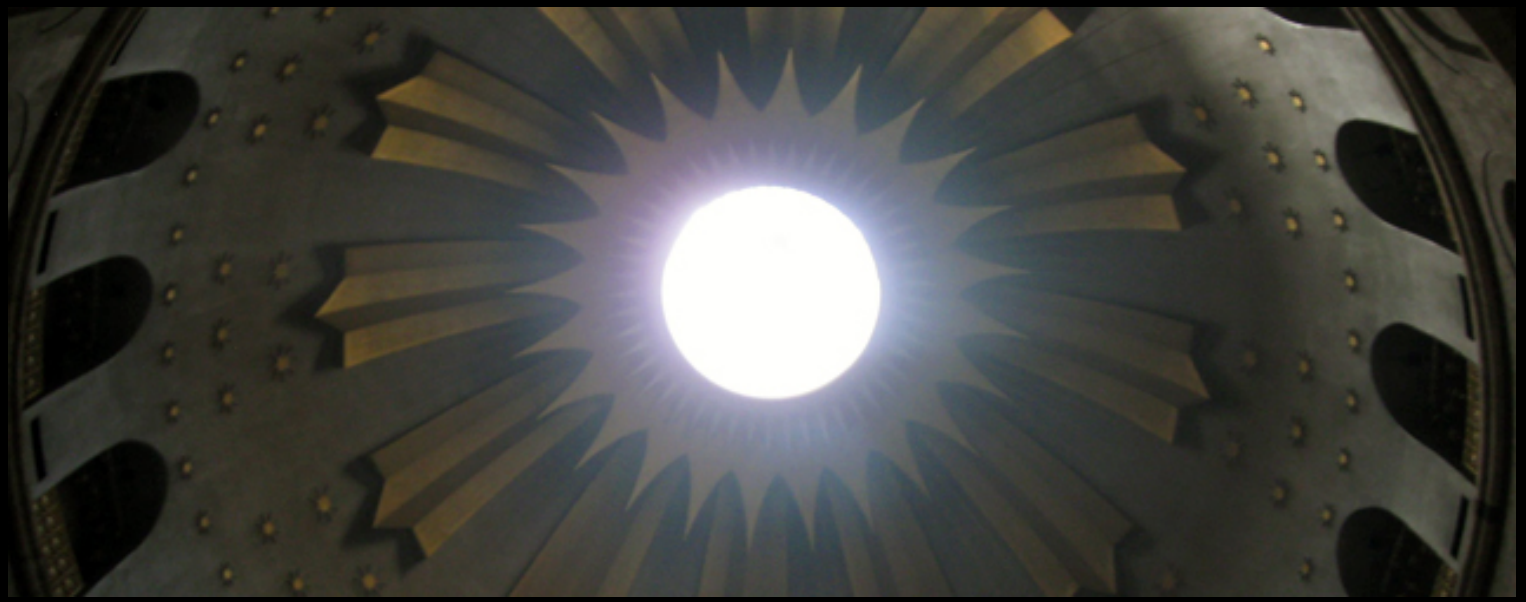
- Whatever is distinctive about the way of life of a people, community, nation, or social group.
- The shared values of a group or of society
- As a set of practices, culture is concerned with the production and exchange of meanings
  - Diversity
  - Multiple interpretations

Cultural meanings

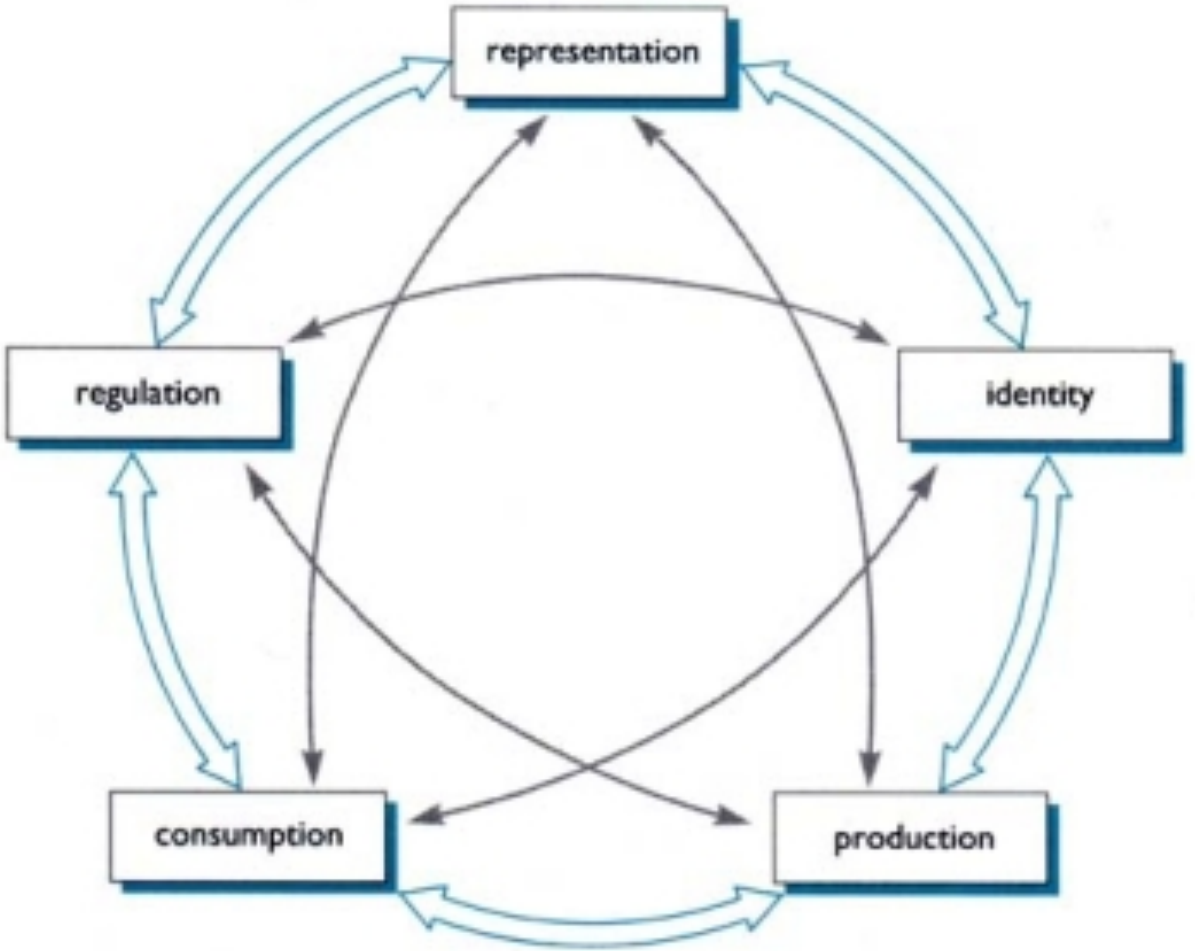
- Organize and regulate social practices
- Influence our conduct.

Practice

- It is the participants in a culture who give meaning to people objects and events.
- Things ‘in themselves’ rarely if ever have any one, single meaning.



The circuit of culture



from Paul Du Gay, Production of Culture/Cultures of Production (London: The Open University), 1997

Andy Warhol

Brillo (1964)

Space that Sees, James Turrell, 1992
Museum of Jerusalem
Photograph by Lily Díaz

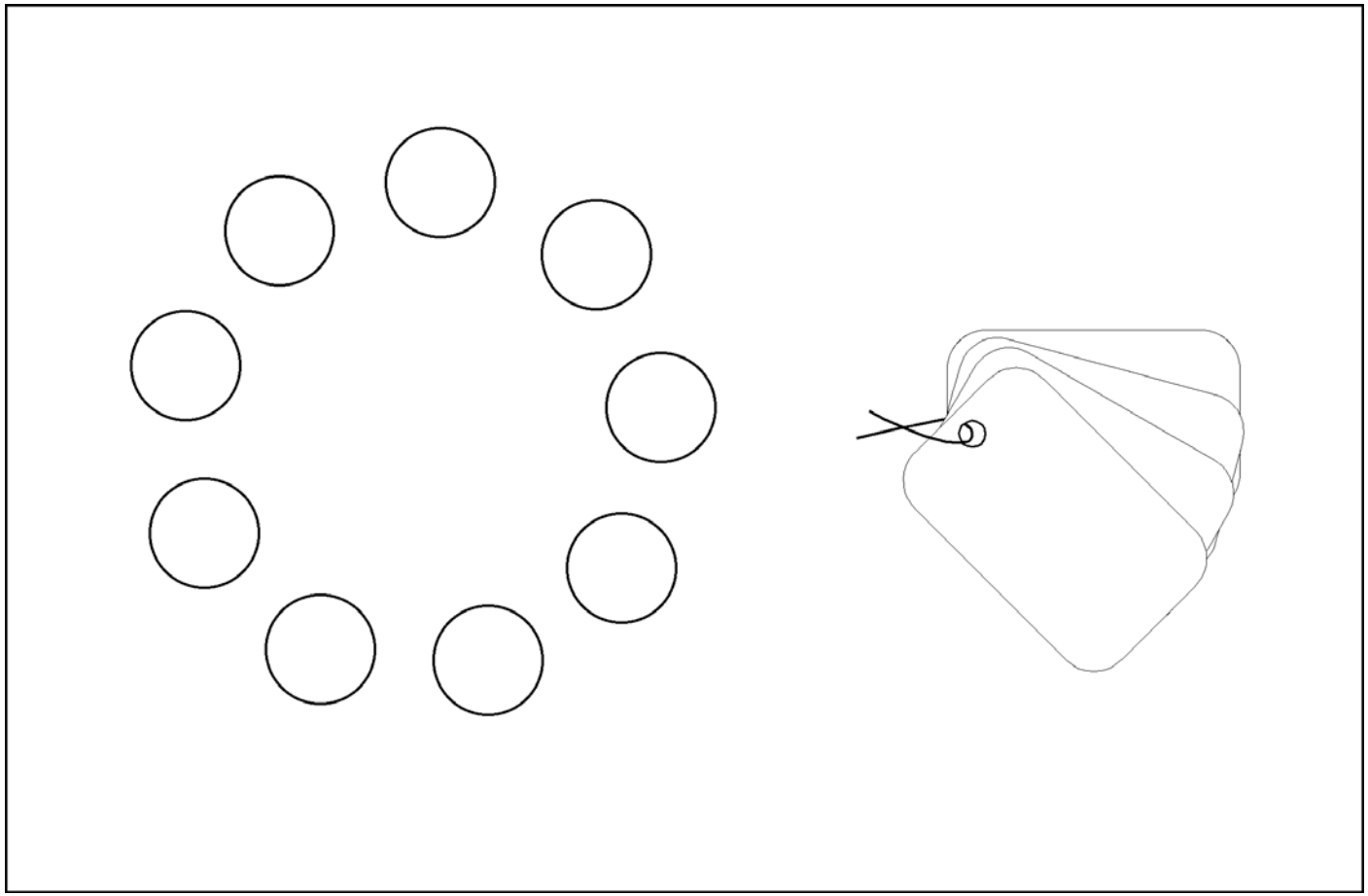
What is language?

- A representational system
  - Sets up a correlation between our conceptual system and our language system.

Design and language

- Schemas
  - Cognitive frameworks that enables us to organize and interpret information.
  - Organized patterns of thought.

Networks and sequences

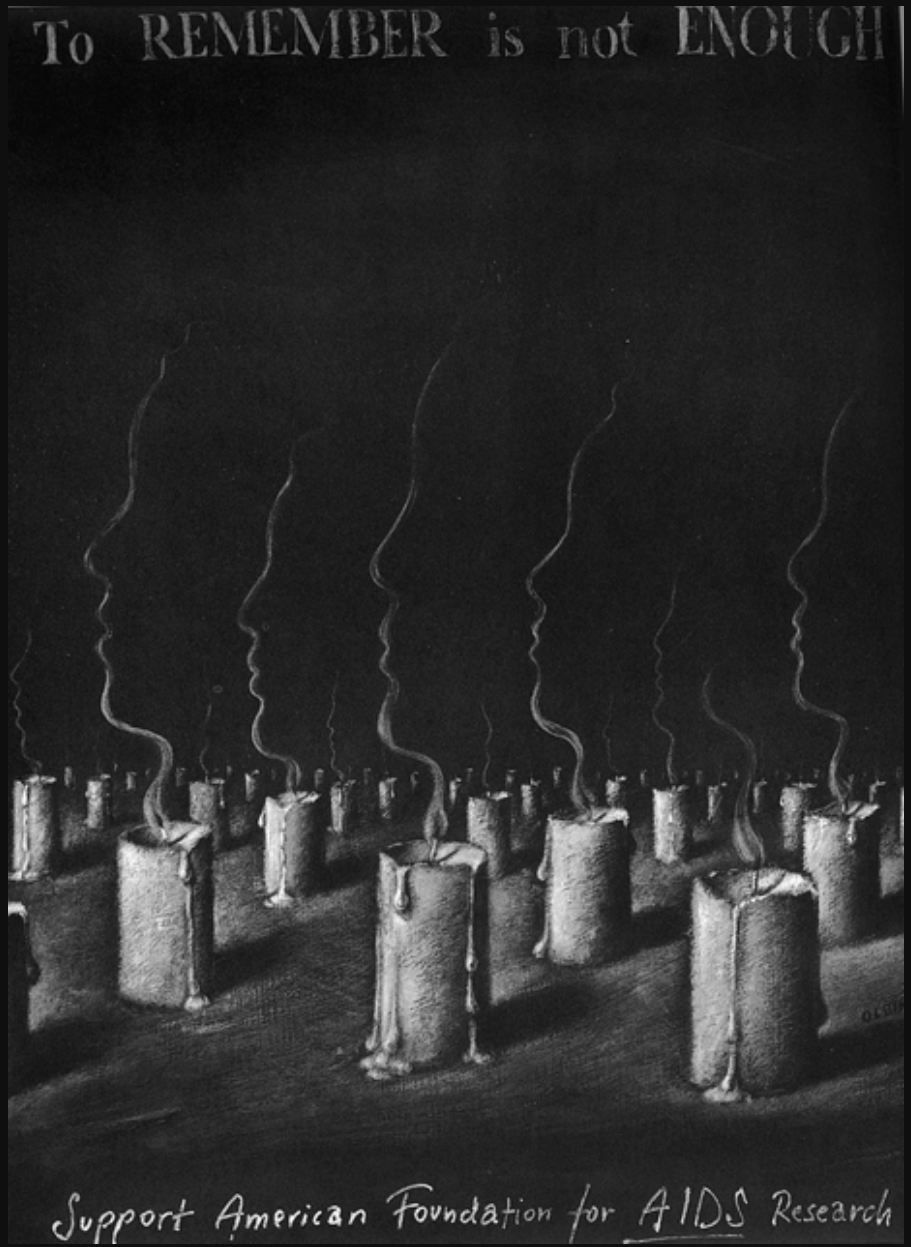


Networks and sequences

[Kiosk 1]
Everyday object

Design and language

- Rhetoric
  - Metaphor
  - Analogy
  - Synecdoche
  - Metonymy
  - Hyperbole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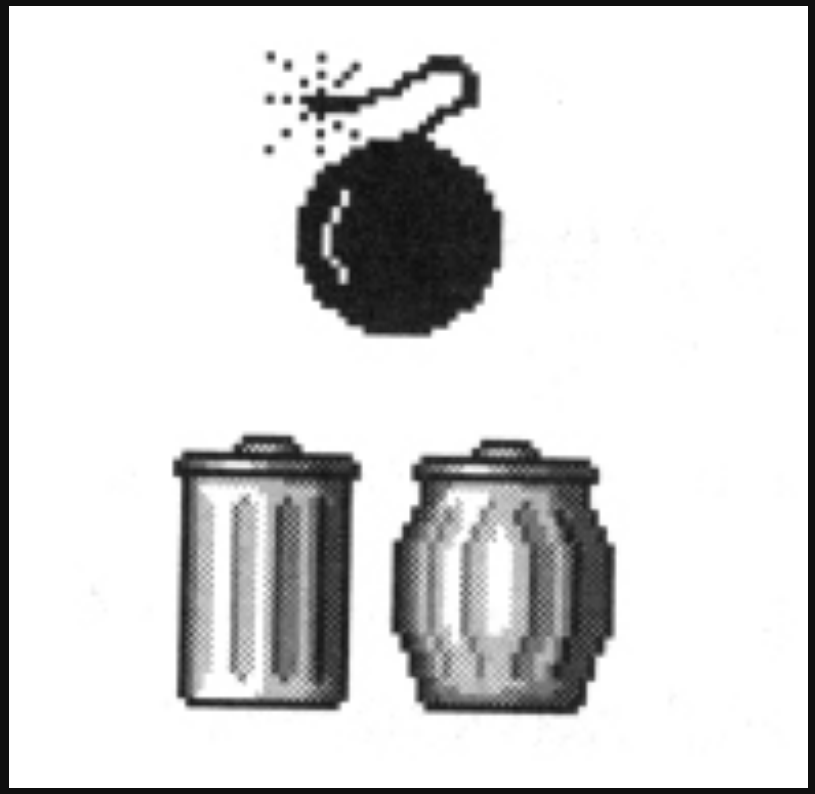


What is language?

- A trans-modal medium through which we *make sense of things*
  - Text
  - Images
  - Sounds
  - Gestures

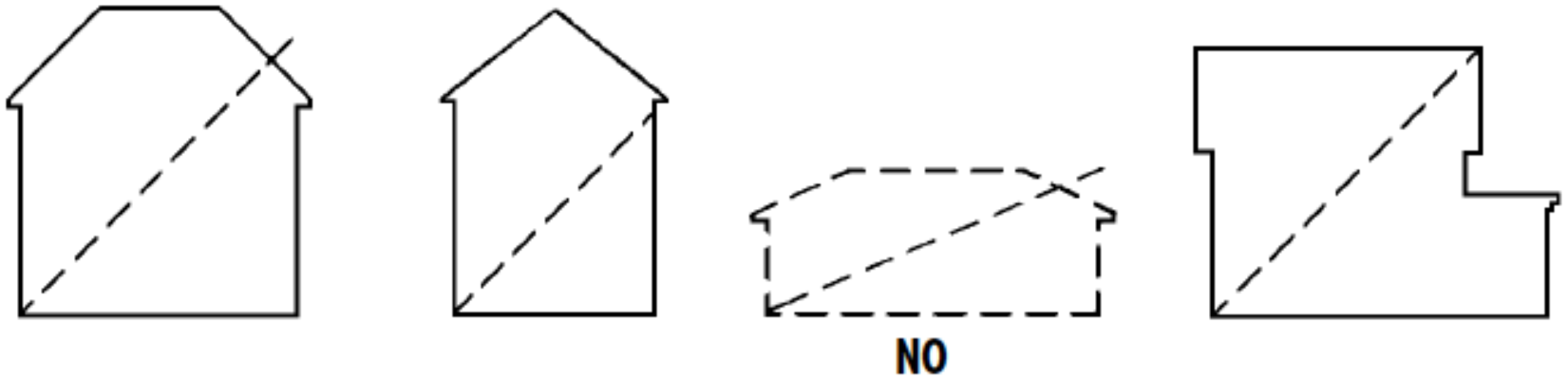
Examples of “design languages”

- Snow white, Frog Design
- Design guidelines, Comdirect AG
- National Parks Services, USA, Raleigh Historic District Commission Guidelines for preservation

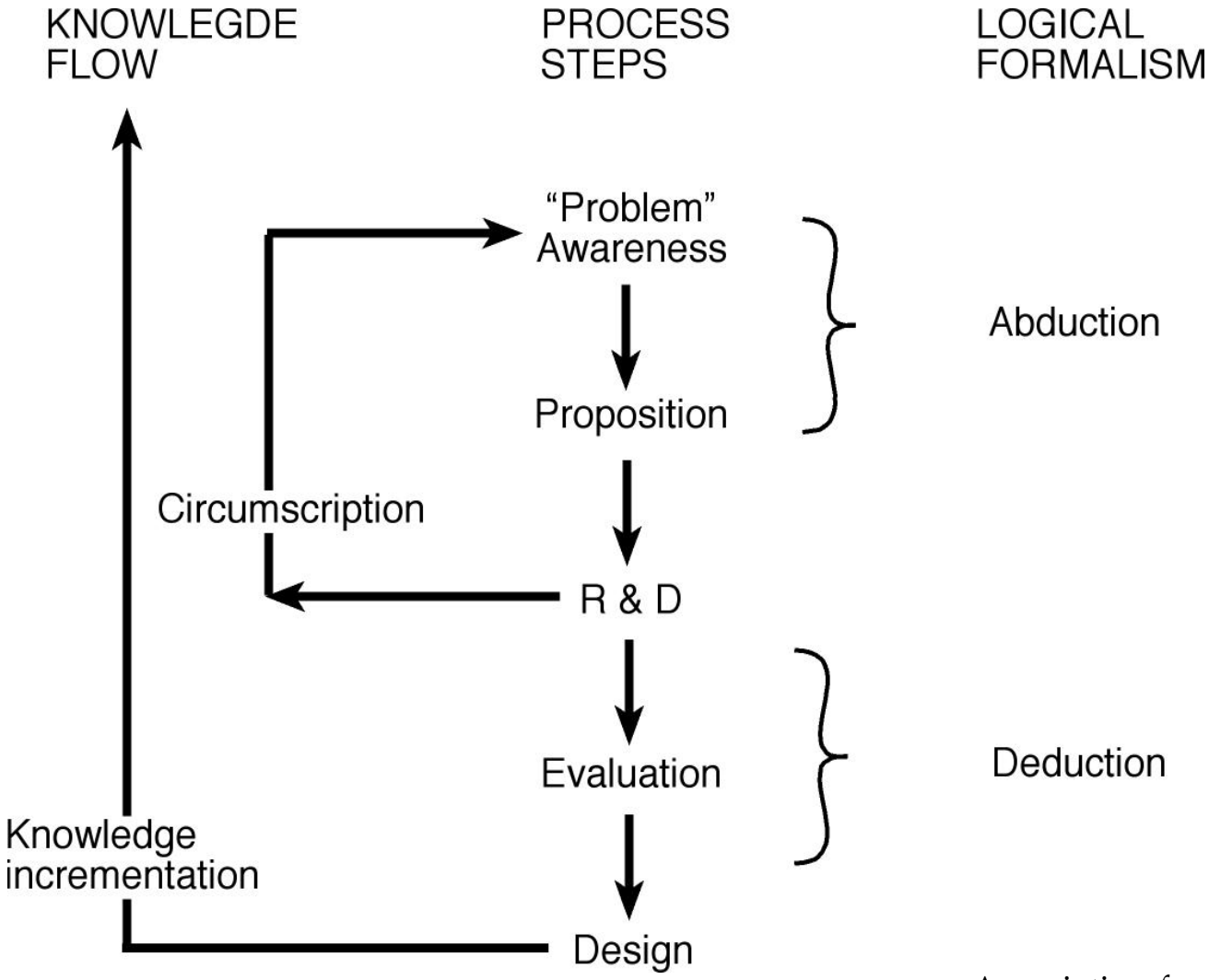
Snow white: Macintosh SE

Corporate identity guidelines

Historic commission guidelines



The research process in design



Association for Information Systems website, 2006

Design research outputs

- Conceptual constructs
- Models
- Methods
- Instantiations

A comparison of research perspectives

Basic belief	Positivist	Interpretive	Design
Ontology	A single reality, knowable, probabilistic.	Multiple realities, socially constructed	Multiple, contextually situated, alternative world states.
Epistemology	Objective, detached observer of truth	Subjective	Knowing through making.
Methodology	Observation, quantitative, statistic.	Participation, qualitative.	Developmental
Value	Truth, universal prediction.	Understanding, situated description	Control, creation, understanding

Association for Information Systems website, 2006