



Fig. 1—discovering the *footprints* of digital usership in *non-digital work-forms* has brought on a number of related discoveries in the theory courses in KHIO's design MA. The diagram features an attempt to phase in some particularity of digital communication into the study of proxemics in space (modified from Edward T. Hall, 1966). It seeks to model the shift, in *any* control-display unit, between the communication taking place *on screen* ( $S_1$ ), and the communication taking place *at the two ends* ( $S_2$ ). Thus the subject **S** is split (**\$**).

Following a decision by the design dpt. at KHIO in 2024, the theory-courses of the first year MA (MA1) will *no* longer be organised as *weekly* sessions alongside the studio-courses. The course-evaluation of spring course (theory 2/ $T_2$ ) has accordingly contracted the extra workload of securing the learning-outcomes—at the course-level—from teaching theory-development *along-side* the studio-courses, that the dept. has been running successfully for 12 years. The objective of this handout is to come up with a *synthesis* (readable to students/staff) to program a *new* structure.

Over its 12-year history, the course has evolved by “frog-leaps” which we here (for convenience) conceive as 4 major *growth rings* (of a tree-trunk): (1) the introduction of *logbooks* into the students' weekly working habits [they were first called BlackBooks]; (2) the introduction of *media-references* for theory development [in APA7<sup>th</sup> style]; (3) the introduction of trans-disciplinary groups of 4, with a rotating role-structure, called **QUADs** [they hatched during the C19 pandemic]; (4) the incorporation of elements from the [DASart](#) feedback method [verbal feedback, while QUADs are *interactive*].

The sense that these four growth-rings have together contributed to a kind of *flowering*—opening, unfolding, development and understanding *combined*—has given me the hope that the 4 growth-rings in time, fit together as puzzle-pieces in *unified* structure. This handout intends to explore whether this is wishful thinking. This I propose to do by looking at how a *maximum* of output can be secured through a *minimum* of effort, depending on how the different tasks, occasions and encounters are *combined*; to emphasise this combination as the classes become *more* autonomous.



Fig. 2—in general physics the *fulcrum* is a point where distributive principles of forces (minimum effort for maximum impact) meet with operative intelligence: it operates according to the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics which is the conservation of energies. Can digital usership create/destroy energy?

In sum, the theory courses are put on the *couch* to go through some psychoanalytical *sessions*, of which the present handout features the final one. With regard to the *logbook* (1) the dpt. of design has decided that it be shared *across* the courses in the MA structure. Which means that the students will have *one* logbook with *weekly* entries that they will keep across *all* the MA courses. The development of a personal *ownership* to the logbook is, of course, critical to its working in a variety of course-settings. Materials for editing.

The *media-references* (2) have evolved alongside an investigation of adequate use if AI in the theory courses in MA1. This query has evolved alongside the exploration of using editorial methods to generate *emergent* contents: (a) *discovering* rather than *authoring* contents; (b) *finding*

rather than cooking up conclusions. In the wake of these discoveries it has become apparent that the strengths of **AI** is in *editing*, and *not* authoring and but *testing* contents (e.g., chatGPT 4).

When they submit their 1000 word essay ( $T_2$ ) the students are asked to include **AI**-apps into their list of references. A protocol for that was established in the essay-anthology last term (2023). **AI** was also used to explore the wider uses of APA7<sup>th</sup> for items the students bring for their mandatory media-presentations: to include *media* into their reference-lists, *items* that do not usually appear in reference-lists, seeking to establish a *validity* for items that are of sufficient importance for the students to present them publicly in *class*: aiming to include design matters into *public matters*.

This brings us to QUADs and the *learning theatre*: the QUADs (**3**) are similar to *morning-meetings* in a design bureau, aiming at prompting rather than guiding the students to work on their logbooks. The students bring their logbooks to the QUADs and take each their turn at **i**) presenting an *idea*; **ii**) *supporting* that idea with *research*; **iii**) critiquing *that* research and **iv**) pitching a *hands-on*/direct approach to the idea. The students rotate in taking on these roles. The *learning theatre* also arose during the C19-pandemic, exploring a variety of seating patterns in periods with *variable* restriction.

The *learning theatre* is also a term used for a certain kind of process where the students *learn-by-doing*: by the time they have their theory-exam in the second year, they are practiced in *designing* the conditions of visibility and audience-interaction according to *the needs of their projects* (both for *presentation* and to receive *feedback*). The common denominator, however, lies in articulating the difference between *signifiers* ( $S_1$ )—physical items and material objects—and the *signifiers of signifiers* ( $S_2$ ): projected images, digital contents, videos, layouts summoning a *distributed* intelligence.

This brings us to the **DASart** feedback method (**4**). The elements we sampled from this method were applied to **QUAD**-presentations *in class*, where the students present their logbooks with the **QUAD**-order above, but with an audience present who can move around, looking at the logbooks, and feeding back according to the formal feedback used in the **DASart** method: **a**) *what works for me* is x, y, z; **b**) *from my experience working with P, I need more clarify on* x, y, z. From come up in this way the students billboard comments on post-its, and the other **QUADs** write letters afterwards.

This bridge from *within* to *outside* the classrooms (since the regular work of the QUADs is outside of the teaching-space) has had an quiet electrifying impact on the class. Which may be due to the compound affordances created by the learning theatre and the DASart elements conjointly. The

virtue of the formal feedback **a**) and **b**) above, is that it articulates a place *between* like and dislike—since **a**) is a moderated *like*, and **b**) is a *modified* critique—the *billboard* is a distributed yield of comments, while the personal *letters* the QUADs write to each of the members of the presenting QUAD, are short (tops 200 words) building up to an *open* (not yes/no) *question*.

The objective is for the students to develop an ability to hatch the kind of feedback that they *need*, by the time they have their logbook presentations for the entire MA staff by *mid-June*: taking responsibility for their needs by staging, and by running a presentation that brings clarity to *what these needs are*. An important tool in reaching this objective is for the students to work on a overview of the logbook, providing a synthesis of their work, which is likely to tie loose ends and discover their own work afresh.



**Fig. 3**—Is it possible to build a 12-year long experience with the current theory structure, into a new—more concentrated and less distributed—structure, with students who do not have the same experience, nor the same knowledge of the history behind it? To what extent will working up a handout like this one be of help?