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Restructuring (Inclusive) Innovation Narratives for Institutional Systems Transformation

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Systemic change and transformation have evolved into a prevalent concern for design scholars and practitioners. Whilst this agenda broadens the horizon of design's potential role and social impact, recent research (both within and external to the design community) has called for greater criticality around this movement, and the development of research and practice capabilities which allow designers to navigate complex institutional realities. Failing to do so may result in design being ineffective at best, or at worst, inadvertently reproducing the systems (and their production of harm) it aims to transform.

The work presented in this paper draws on evidence from an ongoing doctoral study, exploring the utility of the institutional logics perspective (ILP) for design research and practice. The concept of 'innovation narratives' is proposed and used as a lens to explore the often ambiguous and contradictory landscape around 'inclusive innovation'. This study utilises data generated through a 4-month research placement embedded within a project aimed at establishing an Inclusive Innovation Network (IIN). It presents findings that indicate the prevalence of three distinct inclusive innovation narratives, within a particular organisational context, and generates knowledge relating to the utility of integrating the ILP with design's reflective practice.

This research highlights how, by becoming cognisant of dominant and alternative innovation narratives within a complex system, practitioners can more intentionally navigate contestation and contradiction in order to embed and empower innovation narratives which work to resist and challenge the existing system. This is significant because it provides new understanding about how design and design practitioners might bring about systemic transitions through the restructuring of dominant neoliberal innovation narratives.

KEYWORDS: Systemic design, institutional logics, innovation narratives, inclusive innovation, neoliberalism

RSD TOPIC(S): Cases & Practice, Methods & Methodology, Society & Culture

Introduction

The now 'expanded field' of Design (Dorst, 2015) has experienced something of a metamorphosis in recent decades; no longer primarily concerned with objects, design has turned its attention to the social, taking up a role in addressing societies' most complex challenges throughout a range of professional fields. With a new-found diversity of practices, approaches, tools and mindsets underpinning design, defining contemporary practice can at times be confusing and contradictory. The more recent development of 'social design' as an evolved but distinct discipline is a welcome one – despite ongoing debate as to what exactly constitutes social design (Tonkinwise, 2021), there is now a concerted effort amongst designers to consolidate understandings and approaches (Tromp & Vial, 2023). Whilst we might acknowledge design has fundamentally always been concerned and entangled with the socio-political (Latour, 2008; Fry, 2011), recent developments in research and practice showcase a growing and more explicit agenda around the intentional transformation of systems, to transition societies into more equitable and sustainable states of being (Irwin, 2018; Jones & Van Ael, 2022).

By taking up a mission of systems change, designers are prompted to address the rather large neoliberal elephant in the room – this research, and the ongoing doctoral study it stems from, focuses on this topic. Design has a rather uneasy relationship with neoliberalism, having irrefutably contributed to and benefitted from the proliferation of its economic instrumentalism throughout all areas of social life (Julier, 2017); indeed the very expansion of design, as a practice employed to address societies' most complex challenges, is born out of the retrenchment of the welfare state and the deepening role of privatisation, which design arguably continues to actively reproduce (Chen, Cheng, Hummels & Koskinen, 2016; Thorpe, 2019). Consequentially, design is yet to be widely considered critical (in both an importance and deprecatory sense) for the mission of resisting neoliberalism. Rather, design is facing critique from outside of the field (Lewis, 2022) as well as within, being recognised as a tactical function of neoliberalism within the remit of policy and innovation practice (Hall, 2019; Mortati, 2019). In this sense,

design is understood to be deeply implicated in the everyday reproduction of neoliberal systems (Julier & Kimbell, 2019).

Resonant throughout various sources of critique are calls for design to become more cognisant of its entanglement with neoliberal institutionalism, and to more reflexively navigate complexity in a way which resists and redirects the neoliberal status quo (Kaszynska, 2023). This research contributes to a nascent approach; to integrate the Institutional Logics Perspective (ILP), described as "a meta-theoretical framework for analysing the interrelationships among institutions, individuals and organisations in social systems" (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012, p.2), with design research and practice. This serves as a direct response to much of the critique which suggests that "social design is doomed not to be effective until practitioners turn their attention to institutional factors" (Kimbell, 2021, p.3). The ILP provides a robust and holistic approach to exploring institutional realities, however whilst "the concept of institutional logics is intuitively attractive, [it is] arguably difficult to define and even harder to apply in an analytically useful manner" (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012, p.1). Echoing the lessons of Dorst (2015), from his commentary on the appropriation of design by non-designers in the 'expanded field', we must not simply *adopt* the frameworks of institutional theory, but also *adapt* them for use in the context of our own research and practice – in this paper, the authors put forward the concept of *innovation narratives* to support integration between the ILP and design studies. Used as a lens through which to retrospectively understand and generate knowledge from a practice case study¹ which centres around the creation of an 'Inclusive Innovation Network' (IIN), the concept of innovation narratives is explored to generate knowledge relating to how designers can utilise the ILP to intentionally surface and navigate multiplicity when (re)designing systems.

As an overview of the paper's structure; first, we discuss the ILP in more detail, highlighting challenges with adoption, grounded in institutional theory and the

¹ Conducted as part of the lead author's doctoral research.

experience of the lead author as researcher–practitioner within the context of the case setting. We then introduce the concept of innovation narratives in response to these challenges, and generate new knowledge about the application of the ILP in (systemic) design research and practice through the exploration of the practice case study, looking at how three distinct (inclusive) innovation narratives were surfaced, which allowed the project team to more intentionally navigate the institutional politics surrounding the creation of the IIN, and co-develop a novel framework for inclusive innovation practice to offer a challenge to dominant neoliberal approaches.

Background: The Institutional Logics Perspective (ILP) and *Innovation Narratives* as a novel concept

An institutional logic can be defined as “the set of material practices and symbolic systems including assumptions, values, and beliefs by which individuals and organisations provide meaning to their daily activity, organise time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences” (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012, p.2). Scholars have started to utilise the Institutional Logics Perspective (ILP) in design research and practice, for example, to understand organisational transformation through service design (Kurtmollaiev et al., 2017) and to develop tools for surfacing and navigating complexity in healthcare systems (Sangiorgi et al., 2022). However, there are few examples of studies which examine design's broader entanglement with neoliberalism through the lens of institutional logics – Kimbell (2021) serves as a starting point, whereby she identifies three field-level 'ideal-type' logics which represent distinct approaches to social design in the neoliberal context. As stated, the ILP is observed to be difficult to apply in the field. Even within institutional studies, there is ongoing contestation about how to appropriately adopt the popular approach set out in Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury (2012) (Zilber, 2023), adding to the difficulty involved in its application. This situation also reflects the challenges experienced by the lead author, in their appropriation of the framework for their ongoing doctoral research.

Zilber (2016) reveals limitations with conventional approaches to applying the ILP, which tend to focus on institutional logics at the macro (organisational or field) or meso (intra-organisational) levels, thereby conceptually reifying institutions and institutional logics, ignoring the underlying micro-dynamics of practice and interaction. She proposes an approach which accounts for the bidirectional structuration of logics across different levels of society, revealing "how macro-level phenomena emerge out of micro-level dynamics among individuals and how, at the same time, such phenomena structure these micro-dynamics" (Zilber, 2016, p.173) by focusing on 'practices' and 'interactions'. This is echoed in Lounsbury (2021, p.219): "a practice orientation focuses on the world inside the processes, the work of actors as they attempt to shape those processes, as they work to create, maintain and disrupt institutions". The complementary relationship between the ILP and practice theory, with regards to understanding the emergence and transformation of institutional systems, is an ongoing development (Schatzki, 2023). The theory of *practice architectures* – arrangements of cultural-discursive *sayings*, material-economic *doings*, and social-political *relatings* (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014) – offers a valuable understanding of how particular organisational arrangements enable and constrain practices, constituting practice arenas in which a multiplicity of logics emerge and interact in the everyday performance of organisational life.

In addition to the aforementioned challenges and limitations, despite the exploration of institutional transformation being central to the purpose of the ILP, the authors suggest an additional challenge associated with the exploration of practices concerned with the intentional transformation of social systems (i.e. social design); their entanglement with socio-material systems is actively foregrounded (through intervention), making them, at once, more pronounced as well as precarious in the way practices are actively engaged in the (re)structuring of social life. However, this also reveals the inherent potential of the framework for design; to generate insights into the structuring of design's (re)structuring practices. We therefore propose the concept of 'innovation narratives' to encapsulate that which underpins practices geared towards the intentional transformation of social systems. The concept synthesises lessons from Zilber (2023); by integrating a 'practice–interaction' based approach to institutional logics with narrative theory relating to *meta* (or *grand*) narratives. These are essentially stories or narratives

related to change (innovation – in the context of this paper) which "operate as a filter through which a group understands its world, and both structure and limit what can and can not be seen" (Zilber, 2023, p.178), reflecting "specific organising practices, their development, and their outcomes" (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012, p.155). In this sense, innovation narratives underpin the intention and strategy involved in the structuring of complex systems; shaping practice architectures which enable and constrain everyday innovation practice and interaction. The concept serves as a basis for understanding how an organisation is set up to practice innovation and why i.e. its underlying logics, as well as what courses of action and behaviour represent an alternative approach.

The case study presented in this paper is examined through the lens of innovation narratives to cast light on how, by foregrounding research and practice with the ILP, the lead author and the team in which they were embedded, were able to more intentionally surface and navigate multiplicity in a complex system, during the creation of an IIN.

Methodology

Research Background

The practice case study explored in this paper took place as part of a 4-month research placement within an innovation organisation considered integral to the delivery of the UK Government's innovation strategy; providing impartial innovation services centred around urban, transport and market development informed by a human-centred design approach. This serves as the context for the case setting whereby the lead author, working as a researcher–practitioner embedded within a team of professional designers² (henceforth: the IIN team), was involved in a project constructed around the creation of an Inclusive Innovation Network (IIN). This project corresponds to the

² The core IIN team consisted of four members, including the lead author.

Government's goals for developing and diffusing 'inclusive innovation' across the broader innovation landscape as part of its 'Levelling Up' policy set out in 2019.

As a precursor to conducting doctoral fieldwork, the lead author developed a theoretical framework which informed the approach for the study, underpinned by the fundamental axiom that the relationship between the world we experience and the world we create (or design)³ is bidirectional – Varela, Thompson & Rosch (2016, 3) capture this concisely as "The World [being] inseparable from the subject, but from a subject which is nothing but a project of the world, and the subject is inseparable from the world, but from a world which the subject itself projects". Mol (1999) describes the inherent multiplicity and inter-relatedness involved in the shaping of social reality through the concept of 'ontological politics', suggesting that "rather than being seen by a diversity of watching eyes while itself remaining untouched in the centre, reality is manipulated by means of various tools in the course of a diversity of practices" (Ibid., 77). The ILP, as set out in Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury (2012), characterises the social world as an inter-institutional system comprised of seven 'ideal-type' societal level institutional logics (or institutions) – family, community, religion, state, market, profession, and corporation – and sets out the ILP as a meta-theoretical framework to explore how institutions influence and shape human cognition and action (field-level institutional logics expressed through everyday practice and interaction), and how they in turn are shaped by them. Building on the philosophical assumptions expressed by Varela et al. (2016) and Mol (1999), the social world or inter-institutional system exists in a state of bidirectional mereological interdependence with human cognition and action.

³ This point forms the precipice of a deeper inquiry relating to how human cognition and action is shaped according to determinism; that is to say that free will is an illusion characteristic of conscious experience. This has broader implications for morality; notably, that moral action is a tautology – all action ultimately relates to morality as we act in accordance with our values, beliefs and assumptions in relation to what we believe is conducive to our well-being. What is to be grasped here is that we shape the world according to what we believe is ultimately good for us, whilst this process is always open and contested, and subject to power dynamics.

To subsume this theoretical framework into design research and practice means to turn one's attention, as a designer, to the socio-political and systemic, and to investigate the role design has and continues to play within the ongoing prefiguration of social life. This philosophical foundation is not entirely new to design, with the likes of Tony Fry (see Fry, 2011) and Anne-Marie Willis (see Willis, 2006) serving as seminal examples of design philosophy which explore familiar lines of thought, along with more recent work such as Spencer & Bailey (2020) and The Yunus Centre (2022)⁴. Whilst the value of the ILP for design research and practice is echoed throughout these works and others through a variety of frameworks and concepts, the lead author has chosen to utilise the ILP specifically as it serves as a robust and established approach to research and practice within institutional studies, and a nascent approach within design discourse.

Through this theoretical framework, neoliberalism can be understood as a proliferated market logic across the inter-institutional system as its economic instrumentalism has come to dominate all aspects of social life (Bang, 2016) – understanding design's entanglement with the everyday enactment of neoliberalism is therefore recognised as a critical inquiry for systemic design theory and practice. The questions this study aims to respond to are: how is neoliberalism currently reinforced by design, in the context of work geared towards inclusive innovation? What are the dominant innovation narratives at play? What innovation narratives, either extant or possible, represent an alternative? And how might designers navigate multiplicity in a way which challenges the status quo?

Research Design

This work is presented as a single-case study with emphasis placed on the rich exploration of the complexities of design practice *in situ* – consistent with the principles of social constructivist case study research with the aim of co-constructing reality through interaction with participants (Stake, 1995; Hyett, Kenny & Dickson-Swift, 2014;

⁴ These serve as examples of work which have contributed to the lead author's own philosophical understandings.

Bhatta, 2018). Kimbell, applying the ILP to design, frames an institutional logics inquiry as highlighting "systems of beliefs and values constructed at the societal level, built into the material and symbolic arrangements of organisations and practices resulting in particular courses of action and forms of agency" (2021, p.2). Through the lens of innovation narratives, this instrumental qualitative single-case study utilises a mixed

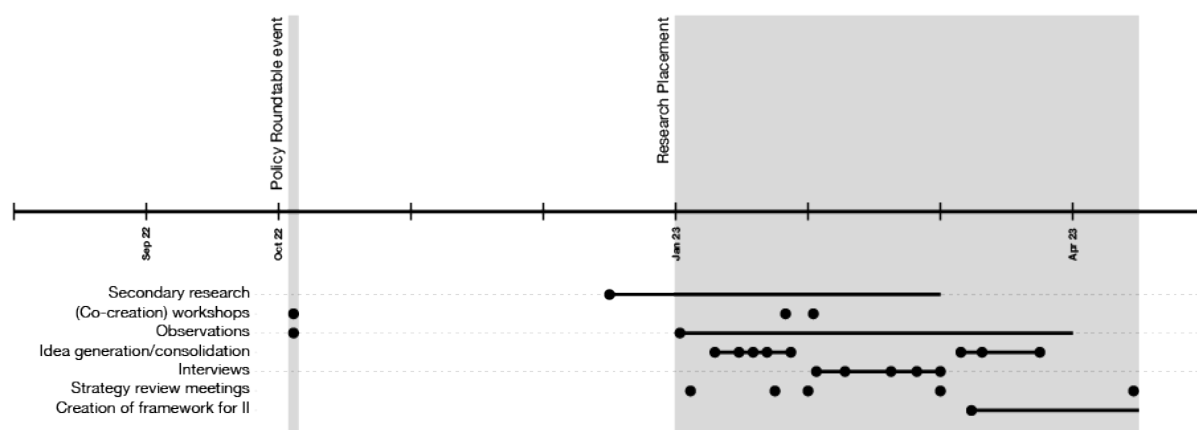


Figure 1: case study timeline

methods approach to produce understanding about the utility of integrating the ILP with design research and practice for the purpose of surfacing and navigating multiplicity in complex systems.

As a meta-theoretical framework, the ILP serves as a bridge between the lead author's theoretical framework and the analytical process during and post fieldwork, shaping processes of reflection (both in-action and on-action – see Schön, 1983), data collection and analysis. This process involved a continual process of sense-making to give meaning to experience and data (see Appendix B for methodology and methods table), in order to recognise and locate particular instantiations of sayings, which represent particular innovation narratives. This approach, supported by reflexive engagement with participants, allowed for the surfacing of three distinct innovation narratives, with an underlying institutional logic, by identifying patterns and themes within the data, informed by the lead author's theoretical framework. This, in turn, helped to shape preliminary strategies and the co-development of a novel framework for inclusive

innovation practice over the 4-month period. The case study incorporates work conducted from October 2022-April 2023, with the main research activities taking place during the research placement from January 2023-April 2023 (Figure 1 presents the case study timeline).

Findings⁵

Given the nature of the organisation's published ambitions for the IIN; to play a central role in facilitating the 'design, delivery and diffusion' of inclusive innovation (Internal Document A, 2022, p.21), the IIN team conducted an internal audit⁶ of current practices, which included the exploration of recent and ongoing projects where 'inclusive innovation' was of primary concern; in the spaces of micromobility transport development, accelerator services for SMEs, violence against women and girls (VAWG) on public transport services, housing development for older adults, and NHS discharge processes. These efforts allowed the IIN team to become cognisant of the ways in which decision-makers, design (innovation) practitioners, and other stakeholders conceptualised inclusive innovation through sayings, doings and relatings connected to existing practices and interactions. What became clear were the contradictory ways in which various key stakeholders within the organisation conceptualised, discussed and practiced inclusive innovation more broadly (mostly implicitly). Contestation was made more explicit during conversations with decision-makers regarding their visions for what the IIN ought to be, and how it ought to operate. Through independent reflection and analysis, underpinned by the aforementioned theoretical framework and additional desk-based research⁷, the lead author was able to synthesise data into three innovation narratives which correspond to an underlying institutional logic, as illustrated in Table 1.

⁵ Written data pertaining to findings has been presented in a 'data matrix' – appendix A. Each item has been provided with a code and will be referenced throughout the findings section e.g. appendix A, item E1.

⁶ This involved unstructured interviews with project leads, co-creative workshops with professional design (innovation) practitioners, and ethnographic observations, led by the lead author.

⁷ This involved investigating published academic and professional literature around inclusive innovation.

INCLUSIVE INNOVATION NARRATIVE	DESCRIPTION	SYMBOLIC ACTIVITIES	UNDERLYING INSTITUTIONAL LOGIC
Inclusive Growth	Conceptualises inclusive innovation in relation to the economy; emphasises the productive participation of marginalised groups in the 'innovation' (high-tech) labour market.	Central Government providing R&D funding opportunities to marginalised individuals and communities.	Market logic (dominant; neoliberal)
Inclusive Objects	Conceptualises inclusive innovation in relation to things; the production of products and services which meet the needs of marginalised groups.	Generating user insights through service design tools to inform the design of technologies and/or public services.	Professional-market logic; human centred design (HCD) (dominant; neoliberal)
Inclusive Processes	Conceptualises inclusive innovation in relation to innovation processes; the meaningful participation of marginalised groups throughout an intervention.	Decentralisation of power through regional partnerships, community engagement initiatives and public service interventions which utilise participatory (co-design) methodologies.	Professional-democracy logic (nascent; alternative)

Table 1: Three inclusive innovation narratives

Inclusive Innovation Narrative 1: Inclusive growth

An 'inclusive growth' narrative emerged as dominant; institutionally embedded in UK Government strategy (e.g. Levelling-Up White Paper) and replicated within a high-level internal report (which preceded the genesis of the IIN project – Internal Document A, 2022). This narrative is characterised by an emphasis on the outcomes, as opposed to the processes, of inclusive innovation – framed through economic prosperity and production. Supporting R&D efforts within marginalised communities is presented as a symbolic practice associated with this narrative, where 'innovation' is framed as 'high-tech', and the growth of this particular market segment seen as a critical mission of inclusive innovation. The team was initially exposed to this narrative in the report (see Appendix A, item E1).

These findings infer a technocratic framing of innovation as concerned with the development of technology and science to be commercialised. From the outset, the centrality of a narrative which 'fetishises' the marketisation of 'high-tech' innovation is made clear – associated with UK Government strategy, thereby constituting a dominant narrative deeply embedded within the existing system. This development resonates with the observation that "the commercialisation of science emerges as a central project and/or front-line in the ongoing project of deepening neoliberalism" (Tyfield, 2016, p.343). For the purpose of making innovation more inclusive, the primary agenda becomes to provide opportunities for more 'diverse' participation in the innovation economy (see Appendix A, item E2).

Innately present within this narrative, is the tenacious neoliberal mission of economic growth, albeit an evolved version. This reflects the notion that global development policy has turned its attention to inclusive innovation as a result of the "failure of economic growth in absolute terms to eliminate persistent and in some cases worsening inequality within and between nations" (Hoffecker, 2021, p.1). Keynote speeches (during the Policy Roundtable event) and the internal report showcased evidence of this evolved growth narrative through an initial critique of 'trickle-down economics' in addressing inequalities (see Appendix A, item E3 and Appendix C).

The narrative of incessant economic growth has metastasised through the frame of 'inclusion', requiring a more widely 'productive' society (see Appendix A, item E4). The fundamental tenets that underpin this narrative were also prevalent within extant literature on inclusive innovation; the idea that "like other hegemonic economic concepts such as growth and productivity, innovation is presumed to be a good thing for individuals, communities, and society. It carries an imagined future that is believed to be necessary, benevolent, and inclusive" (Schrock & Lowe, 2021, p.182).

Inclusive Innovation Narrative 2: Inclusive objects

An 'inclusive objects' narrative characterised the dominant approach to how 'inclusivity' was currently practiced within the organisation. This narrative underpins a human centred design (HCD) approach to innovation, embedded within existing practices and interactions. This narrative centres around the design of 'inclusive objects' which serve the needs of marginalised communities, often in the form of technological or digital innovations. To suggest each of the five projects, explored as part of the internal audit, were performed in strict accordance with this inclusive innovation narrative would be to overlook the nuance, contention and manoeuvring involved in the complex delivery of a design intervention. However, the ways in which each project was constructed, strongly aligned to this narrative, as illustrated in Appendix D (left). Evidence pertaining to this innovation narrative was also surfaced during a digital co-creative workshop activity which prompted participants (professional innovation practitioners) to provide their own definitions of inclusive innovation – captured responses have been presented in Appendix D (right).

Recognised as a critical component and competency of a HCD approach to inclusive innovation is the *representation* of 'users', on the part of the designer(s), by integrating user insights into designed solutions for the purpose of serving unmet needs – where users are currently marginalised and excluded (See Appendix A, items E5 - E9). This reflects a conventional HCD approach to innovation, within the IDEO–design thinking school of thought (Kimbell, 2011), albeit whereby 'inclusivity' is more explicitly

foregrounded in discourse surrounding practices (John Clarkson & Coleman, 2015). The entanglement between design (and design thinking) and neoliberal instrumentalism has been described as "complex and complicated" (Kaszynska, 2023, p.22). Even with an emphasis on social outcomes, design often fails to challenge neoliberal systems of austerity which actively work to produce harm (Julier & Kimbell, 2019; Thorpe, 2019). Dorst & Watson articulate this situation well, reflective of the reality within this particular organisational case setting: "In the public sector, this take-up is sometimes embodied in the establishment of [design]...teams that adopt a project approach with HCD as the underpinning practice. However, the very human centredness of these labs might lead to an emphasis on finding better outcomes within the existing problem frame effectively achieving incremental, rather than strategic innovation and impact" (2023, p.4-5). This plays out most explicitly in how designers related inclusive innovation to new mechanisms of consumption as a means to economic development (see Appendix A, items E10 - E11).

This approach resonates with the notion that "design thinking reveals itself as an ideological tool which positions marketisation and responsabilisation as 'pragmatic solutions' to pressing socio-environmental issues" (Cook, 2019, p.19).

Inclusive Innovation Narrative 3: Inclusive processes

An 'inclusive processes' narrative represented a nascent professional (design) logic, emphasising value in relation to democratic processes of innovation, and the generation of socially-driven (as opposed to technological-economic) outputs and outcomes. New forms of community engagement (and implicit; co-creative practices) were recognised as important for the (re)structuring of power and governance within existing systems, central to the mission of inclusive innovation. Evidence of this alternative narrative surfaced through contestation between participants within the Policy Roundtable event during workshop activities (see Appendix A, items E12 - E15).

The notion of decentralising politics and empowering communities to practice innovation in their everyday lives to address their own challenges, is not new for design (see Manzini, 2019). Whilst framed in a more 'designerly' way; with explicit references to co-design and commentary on the role of a designer, the authors feel that data pertaining to this conceptualisation of inclusive innovation (specifically an emphasis on new forms of community engagement within innovation processes) was replicated within the organisation during a workshop activity where innovation practitioners were prompted to provide their own definitions of inclusive innovation (presented in Appendix E).

This narrative, whilst mostly theoretical and abstract (not yet embedded in innovation practices within the organisation), reflected an ambition to introduce new ways of working. This was further evidenced during the interviews as part of project investigations, with practitioners voicing their discontent with current approaches to inclusive innovation (see Appendix A, items E16 - E17).

Following these engagements, as well as through the literature review, the IIN team co-constructed a working definition of inclusive innovation (see Appendix A, item E18), resembling an alternative innovation narrative, focused on the 'meaningful participation'⁸ of actors which represent diverse perspectives in a given context, foregrounding multiplicity within innovation processes which deal with complex systems and situations. As an alternative narrative, "its operative mode takes challenge and transformation, rather than the continuation of the status quo, as the desirable outcome" (Ten Holter, 2022, p.278).

The co-development of a novel framework for inclusive innovation practice

These three innovation narratives represent distinct ways of perceiving the world as it is and how it could (and potentially ought to) be – each relates to a particular narrative of

⁸ Adapted from Hoffecker (2021)

change with underlying values, beliefs and assumptions which are institutionally entangled; underpinned by an institutional logic. In everyday practice and interaction, it can be difficult for practitioners to disentangle meanings which constitute a complex institutional politics. Reflecting on the IIN project, the competency to 'see' and 'hear' particular instantiations of innovation narratives and attach meanings to otherwise ambiguous and complex practices and interactions is vital for being able to understand and navigate the political structuring of everyday life within a broader institutional system.

By integrating the ILP with design research and practice, the lead author and, in turn, the IIN team, became cognisant of the distinct ways in which inclusive innovation was being politically structured in the early stage of development for the IIN. This allowed the IIN team to more intentionally surface and navigate contradiction and contention, whilst also being more strategic by empowering particular instantiations of an innovation narrative which offered a challenge to the status quo. This is evidenced through the co-development of a novel framework for inclusive innovation; utilising the data captured during co-creative workshops, the IIN team were able to iteratively shape a framework which embedded the core elements of the 'inclusive processes' innovation narrative, as an alternative to the dominant neoliberal innovation narratives extant within the institutional landscape surrounding the IIN. The co-developed framework was then incorporated into a reflective tool⁹, for the purpose of catalysing practice (and potentially organisational – see Kurtmollaiev et al., 2017) transformation over time. Photos which capture the process of the co-development of the framework are presented in Appendix F. The final version of the framework (prior to being embedded within the reflective tool) is presented in Appendix G.

⁹ Remains part of the organisation intellectual property

Discussion & conclusion; significance for the purpose of systemic design

Through this research, the concept of Innovation narratives is proposed as a means of exploring the symbolic entanglement and translation of institutional logics within organisations; how they constitute the shaping of practice architectures which enable and constrain (the structuring) of particular forms of innovation practice and interaction. This case study evidences the multiplicity at play in the ways in which various institutional actors conceptualised, discussed, and practiced inclusive innovation; what it is in terms of its processes and outcomes, why it's necessary and how it ought to be practiced. These various elements which characterise a particular approach to inclusive innovation are inherently tied to an individual's beliefs about what constitutes a better future – notions of *good* inclusive innovation, are based on its potential to future in ways which bring about preferred realities.

Design, in this context, is thereby evidently entangled in the institutional politics of inclusive innovation which, for the purpose of this study, represents a complex institutional system. As Vink, Rodrigues & Wetter-Edman (2017, p.7) suggests, "Understanding multiplicity opens up and keeps open the possibility that things might be done differently" – utilising the ILP, as a meta-theoretical framework, to support and underpin reflective practice throughout a design process allows a designer to recognise multiplicity in action, and to (imperfectly) capture and concretise multiplicity in a way which enables a more intentional and reflexive navigation of contradiction and contestation involved in the design for complex systems. We believe this approach represents a means to develop the capability of *cunning intelligence*, as discussed by Thomas Wendt – proclaimed as critical for designers concerned with the transformation of (neoliberal–capitalist) systems:

"If we cannot escape the defuturing, depoliticising, and unsustainable pull of capitalist accumulation, then we need to resist it from the perspective of insurrection and prefigurative politics rather than revolution...insurrection calls for modes of resistance that embody the individual's unique method of envisioning different ways of being, as opposed to an

overarching call for revolt. It emphasises that all perspectives are important, that diversity in both tactics and actors will determine success, and that the foundational mindset shared amongst individuals is one of designerly optimism and rigorous criticality. This is really the first step. When individual designers are able and motivated to seriously critique their contribution to systems of oppression, I think we will begin to see change" (Wendt, 2017, p.195).

Being able to recognise dominant innovation narratives, underpinned by neoliberal logics, sets the field for what is possible throughout a design intervention, it allows for a strategic (co-)development (i.e. empowerment) of alternatives which have the potential to challenge and (re)structure complex systems. In the words of Dorst & Watson (2023, p.11), "for a new designed solution to 'change the game' it needs to exert influence beyond the confines of the design project, it needs to impact the practices in the organisation(s) involved, the strategy of the organisation, perhaps (in the case of a radical innovation) the processes and structures of an organisation" – to reiterate, the inference here is *not* that this was achieved as part of this case study, but that the approach i.e. the integration of the ILP with design research and practice, represents a valuable approach for design(ers) to become more systemically strategic, and to transcend the typically tactical function of design in the everyday performance of neoliberalism.

This case study showcases how by integrating the ILP with design's reflective practice, as mentioned, the IIN team were able to more intentionally navigate and negotiate preliminary sayings, which characterised the IIN's strategy development during workshop activities, interactions with key decision-makers, as well as less formal interactions as part of everyday life within the organisation. This is where and how organisational restructuring begins; through design tools and methods which "in and of themselves have significant political implications" (Vink et al., 2017) – by foregrounding alternative innovation narratives within co-creative workshops and other forms of interaction, designers are using cunning intelligence to prefigure new forms of politics

within the organisation. Within the context of the creation of a (inclusive innovation) network, this has the potential to bring about novel institutional realities.

The co-developed framework for inclusive innovation (Appendix G) aims to prefigure an alternative approach to practicing inclusive innovation, whilst also serving another purpose; to introduce redundancy into the organisation (by introducing formal periods of reflection into existing organisational processes¹⁰). In this way, the tool provides both the space and the knowledge framing required to facilitate reflection, experimentation and learning (Thorpe, 2019). Supported by the underlying framework, designers can learn from projects (on-action) and/or during projects (in-action) with the aim of leveraging agency within their everyday lives to transform practices. In this way, designers enact resistance to dominant approaches, which has the potential to bring about transitions within the existing system over time as the organisation and the field adapt to the alternative approach – Dorst & Watson (2023), provide their 'Game Changers' model to illustrate this phenomenon (how designers can leverage individual agency and bring about transformation). An adapted version of the model is presented in Appendix H to represent the dynamics of transformation when a co-constructed artefact (in this case, a novel practice framework embedded within a reflective tool), underpinned by an alternative institutional logic, is introduced in a practice environment. In this sense, practitioners (when incorporating the tool into everyday practice) form part of an endogenous resistance, with the potential to bring about institutional transitions. The reflective tool plays the role of the trojan horse by implanting an alternative logic within the organisation. Embedded within new forms of practice and interaction, alternative logics have the potential to bring about transformation over time through the everyday enactment of resistance and disruption by practitioners (Kurtmollaiev et al., 2017).

¹⁰ During fieldwork, practitioners within the organisation expressed existing challenges around reflection due to time and capacity constraints

Limitations & future research

This research showcases a novel strategy for how nascent institutional logics, which present a resistance to neoliberal instrumentalism, might be propagated within an existing system for institutional transformation. Naturally, this 4-month project represents an early phase of development for the IIN, and any suggestion of how this intervention may affect the restructuring of existing systems is speculative¹¹. In addition to this limitation, Vink et al. (2017) present a warning that "social design may need to do more than simply integrating new methods of dialogue and critical reflection that risk reinforcing dominant realities" – a critically reflective tool developed over a 4-month period is unlikely to transform the way an entire system conceptualises and practices inclusive innovation. Given the time, resources, and agency to proceed with additional engagement, implementation, refinement, and co-construction within the IIN project, the continued shaping and proliferation of an alternative institutional logic may have taken hold within the broader politics surrounding inclusive innovation, serving as a co-ordinated resistance to the dominant neoliberal situation.

The work presented in this case study prompts many questions; could the reflective tool actually have a catalysing effect, both internally and externally (given the purpose of the IIN)? How might the turnover of individual stakeholders within the organisation and/or the network affect the uptake of an alternative innovation narrative? What forms of resistance (particularly where the neoliberal status quo is not problematised) might interrupt processes of transition? Which supplementary strategies would be required to establish a co-ordinated resistance? The case study presented in this paper has generated insights into how, through the lens of innovation narratives, designers can adopt and adapt an ILP as part of their reflective practice to intentionally navigate multiplicity within design interventions for institutional transformation. Whilst the ILP holds promise for the future of social design in the pursuit of a more reflexive, less harmful, and potentially transformational practice, this emerging approach to research

¹¹ Notes on progress: from discussions following involvement and engagement with members working in the team, the authors are aware the tool has been used both internally and externally, but it is not yet clear to what extent, or to what effect.

and practice appears largely inaccessible to professional practitioners who simply don't have the time or energy to engage with the theoretical foundations of the ILP. However, as design researchers and practitioners continue to engage with new developments in the field, and the discipline of systemic design (for transitions) continues to mature, novel approaches should continue to be adopted and adapted over time, potentially forming the basis for a more co-ordinated resistance to the defuturing and depoliticising governmentality of neoliberalism.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Data Matrix

Data Matrix				
Item code	Relevance (pertaining to which inclusive innovation narrative) [Inclusive growth; inclusive objects; inclusive processes]	Raw data	Data source [FN: field notes; T: transcript; ID: internal documentation]	Research activity [SR: secondary research; W: workshop; I: interviews; O: observations]
E1	Inclusive growth	<i>The government has set out the aim to make the UK a centre of global R&D activity, while correcting some of our deep regional disparities. In 2017 it targeted to spend 2.4% of GDP on R&D investment within 10 years, bringing the UK in line with OECD average. Since then, the Innovation Strategy of 2021...have targeted the creation of productive and thriving high-tech industries across the country...Investment in innovation assets is increasing across the country, with new labs, research institutes, and innovation districts all set to build on the UK's existing science and technology strengths...For too many people working in innovation is inaccessible, and for too many the benefits of new discoveries are remote from their own lives. We need a more inclusive innovation economy to activate the UK's latent potential.</i>	ID(a)	SR
E2	Inclusive growth	<i>Engagement focused on innovation districts as concentrations of expertise and economic activity, and magnets for investment and talent. As they grow over the next decade, they represent an opportunity to involve more people from more diverse backgrounds.</i>	ID(a)	SR
E3	Inclusive growth	<i>High levels of inequality and a concern that the benefits of growth are not widely shared. Inclusive growth is an attempt to correct this, maintaining and supporting the drivers of growth whilst spreading its benefits equitably.</i>	ID(a)	SR
E4	Inclusive growth	<i>Discussion shifted the focus to productivity; how to make productivity in the UK more inclusive...Discussion continued to focus on challenges around productivity...Tension arose in the discussion around funding, with one participant suggesting we need more funding in the various areas of health, transport, skills development etc.</i>	FN(a)	W1(a)

E5	Inclusive objects	<i>There's very much an opportunity to help DfT understand what are the current requirements of people with unmet needs and how these new micromobility transport modes or technologies or innovations might be able to satisfy a lot of those needs that are currently unmet</i>	T1	I1
E6	Inclusive objects	<i>So if someone has developed something for the accessibility community in their proposal, is it clear that they are designing with this group at the centre? Are they involving people that are part of this community? Or are they involving people that are credible representatives?</i>	T2	I2
E7	Inclusive objects	<i>We need to encourage and probably incentivise interventions to engage with end users, to validate that they're actually meeting their needs and are effective and accessible</i>	T3	I3
E8	Inclusive objects	<i>And the offer was to get access to people, to homes, and to do testing, and to refine the products and listen to people's needs, feedback and refine the product</i>	T4	I4
E9	Inclusive objects	<i>With the sensor element, it was making sure that when we were speaking to the patients, providing them with these 'what if' scenarios to better understand what sort of impact does that have on them</i>	T5	I5
E10	Inclusive objects	<i>There has been a stigma around it, so they don't want to say this is an accessibility vehicle, but then there's an opportunity if they did brand it that way they might be able to go for the 249 billion purple pounds, there's another market that they could go for</i>	T1	I1
E11	Inclusive objects	<i>I think the focus really is private industry and the commercial potential of interventions and what needs to be done to make them more impactful</i>	T2	I2
E12	Inclusive processes	<i>One participant suggested the need to come away from focusing on productivity (in society, not the conversation) and instead 'focus on problems', she also suggested setting up 'task forces' which tackle problems - this was identified as having a different structuring of the problems we face</i>	FN(a)	W1(a)
E13	Inclusive processes	<i>Tension arose in the discussion around funding, with one participant suggesting we need more funding in the various areas of health, transport, skills development etc., with another participant (the same who suggested coming away from productivity focus) arguing that throwing money at problems doesn't work</i>	FN(a)	W1(a)
E14	Inclusive processes	<i>Participants Identified problems with centralised policymaking. Identified the need for local leaders/local understanding of local problems (or national problems at</i>	FN(a)	W1(a)

a local level). Identified the value of devolution (community-led policymaking)

E15	Inclusive processes	<i>Importance of networks i.e. an understanding of power structures, in local communities. Individuals need to be able to navigate institutional structures by understanding their own (potential) value contributions within those structures. Also the need for flatter hierarchies i.e. multi-stakeholder governance - these initiatives need buy-in from the top</i>	FN(a)	W1(b)
E16	Inclusive processes	<i>I find it difficult because the idea of innovation, I find challenging to begin with. Because there are so many basics that aren't met already, so to talk about innovation feels weird sometimes</i>	T3	I3
E17	Inclusive processes	<i>I have the impression that the Motto – the thing that the catapult used to say like – ‘we’re enabling business growth’, eventually it’s business growth for the UK. But in that case, we’re like: we want social impact!</i>	T5	I5
E18	Inclusive processes	<i>We believe inclusive innovation means facilitating meaningful participation throughout the innovation process; this infers a democratic & generative co-creative process which develops shared understanding, collective agency, and legitimacy amongst a multiplicity of stakeholders which are entangled within a complex situation, prioritising those who experience the challenges being driven by established patterns of behaviour and dynamics of power</i>	ID(b)	O

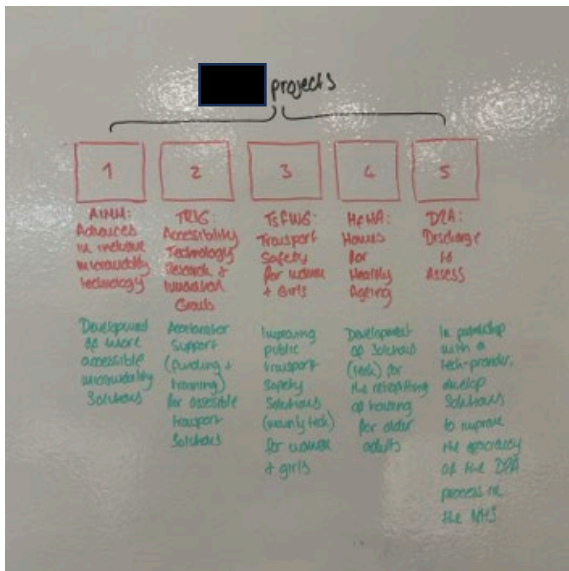
Appendix B: methodology and methods table

Methodology	Research typology (Frayling, 1993)	Methods	Supporting materials	Sources of data
Case study (Stake, 1995)	Research through design; design of an Inclusive Innovation Network (IIN)	Secondary research; literature & internal documentation review	N/A	Publicly available material. Key literature: CPC (2022); Holter (2022); Hoffecker (2021); Schrock & Lowe (2021)
		Ethnographic observation	Reflective journal	Researcher-practitioner field notes
		Expert practitioner interviews	N/A (unstructured)	Interview transcripts
		Co-creation workshops	Adapted design thinking, service design, & co-creation tools and resources	Workshop outputs and online chats, researcher-practitioner field notes
		Design-led innovation practice (Bailey & Spencer, 2019)		
			Reflective practice (Schon, 1983) Supported by the ILP (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012)	

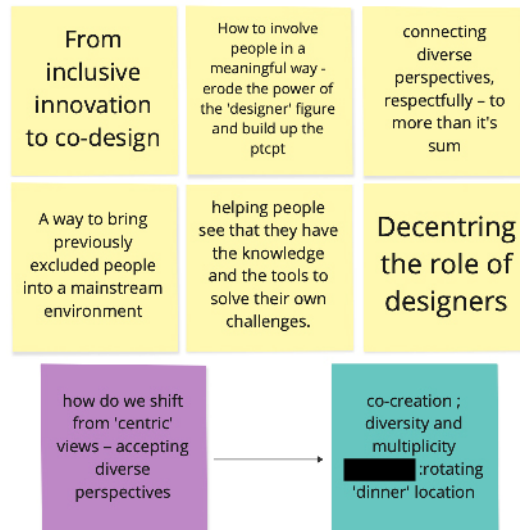
Appendix C: Transcription of field notes from Policy Roundtable event, during keynote speeches.

- Speaker 1:
- Global competition
 - Low productivity
 - 'Old challenges and new challenges'
 - "Growth the way out" - what does he mean by growth?
 - Free market opportunities
 - Innovation - what does he mean by innovation?
 - Critiques trickle-down growth
 - Need for a wider set of frameworks and institutions
 - Inclusivity - breakdown barriers to innovation. Increase innovation opportunity.
- Speaker 2:
- Are we still levelling up?
 - Growth narrative (inclusivity is the means to growth)
 - Recipe for local growth is there, we know the ingredients - what ingredient is missing? Local challenges (seems to consider this a technocratic problem i.e. identifying elements that are missing in a community and solving the problem of growth by fixing those missing elements)
 - Importance of local knowledge - is this how he thinks we identify missing ingredients? Seems to be the case
 - Business dynamism is fundamental for local growth
 - Not about pushing the frontiers of innovation - UK does this well (R&D-tech framing). Rather about diffusion of innovation across industry and the economy. UK lacks 'productivity' because of this. Diffusion and development is poor which is why UK lags behind its competitors
 - Inclusive innovation and inclusive growth

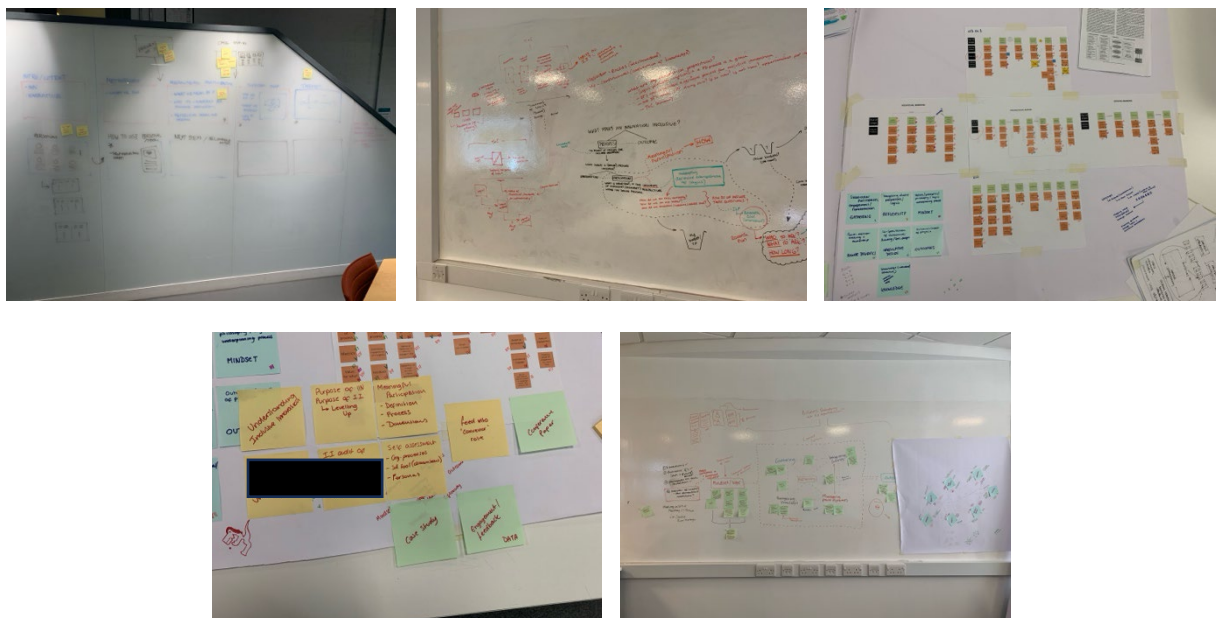
Appendix D: (Left) descriptions of the 'inclusive innovation' projects evaluated as part of the internal audit conducted by the IIN team. (Right) digital post-its captured as part of one of the co-creative workshops carried out with innovation practitioners within the organisation – showcasing individual definitions of 'inclusive innovation'.



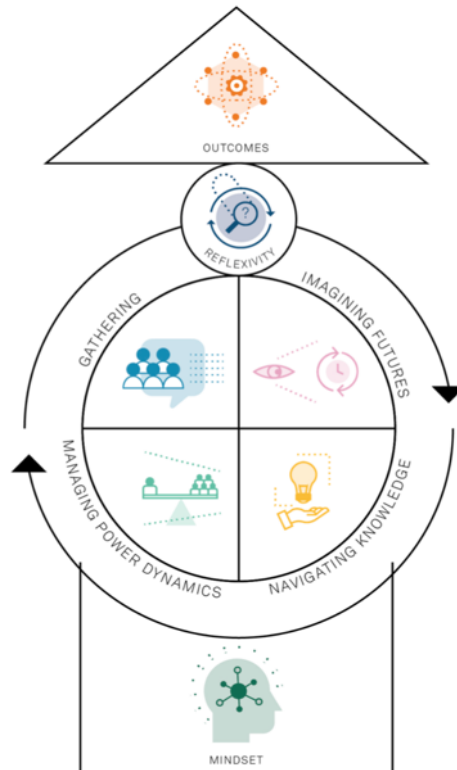
Appendix E: Digital post-its captured as part of one of the co-creative workshops carried out with innovation practitioners within the organisation – showcasing individual definitions of ‘inclusive innovation’.



Appendix F: Photos capturing the co-development of a framework for inclusive innovation – representing the intentional shaping and empowerment of a nascent alternative innovation narrative.



Appendix G: Final iteration of the novel framework for inclusive innovation, taken from an internally circulated strategy document at the end of the research placement (Internal Document B, 2023).



Dimensions of Inclusive Innovation



Mindset

Our mindset acts as a framework for our behaviour, guiding our practice and interaction. Deeply embedded values and assumptions underpin our individual mindsets. For inclusive innovation, it is important that we are aware of our mindset, remaining open to challenging our preconceived values and assumptions throughout the innovation process.



Gathering

Gathering is key activity for inclusive innovation, this includes identifying the diversity of relevant perspectives entangled within a complex situation. This goes beyond only identifying the technical 'experts', and includes perspectives of those who directly experience the benefits and challenges associated with a complex situation.



Imagining Futures

Imagining futures is critical for inclusive innovation. This must be a collaborative activity in order to better understand the current situation and what better might look like to different people.



Managing Power Dynamics

In order to bring about change, rather than reinforcing power structures, inclusive innovators must surface and manage dynamics of power within the innovation process in order to develop collective trust and agency for a more democratic process of innovation.



Navigating Knowledge

Knowledge needs to be surfaced, explored and challenged throughout the innovation process in order to develop shared understanding in relation to what is, and to co-produce new-knowledge in relation to what could be.



Reflexivity

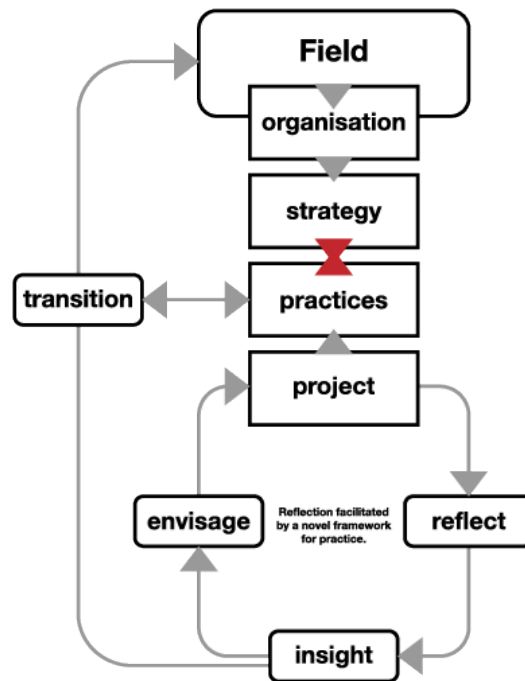
Reflexivity is a key dimension within an inclusive innovation process, as it represents the ability to generatively and democratically navigate different perspectives, dynamics and knowledge which is entangled within the complex situation for the betterment of those who are currently being challenged by it.



Outcomes

An outcome is simply any change that has taken place as a result of the innovation process. Not to be confused with innovation outputs i.e. deliverables. Of course the goal of any inclusive innovation intervention (process), is to help mould the present situation into a preferable one as it evolves over time, this infers challenging the drivers of the current state of things (the status quo) rather than reinforcing them.

Appendix H: Adaptation of the 'Game Changers' model from Dorst & Watson (2023)



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