



Picture Innovation

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Visual facilitation
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Visual facilitation
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Picture Innovation

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Introduction

As we meet Nicolette (49, lecturer, illustrator and visual facilitator) for this interview in the cantina of the Hanzehogeschool, she tells us that she is a very happy person: She has been able to make her job of what she loves most: visualizing stories. During her childhood, creativity played an important role in each subject. At school the children were allowed to draw during class. Today, while looking at these notebooks full of lively images, the essence of the lectures has come to life again. Evidently, visuals are a very powerful medium in embedding knowledge. That eye-opener has encouraged Nicolette to become an illustrator and visualizer.

Q 'So, now you are working at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences as a lecturer in concepting and design, but what is your background?'

A 'In 1991 -after graduating Cum Laude- at the Art Academy Minerva in Groningen- I started working as an independent illustrator for various magazines and publishers in Amsterdam and Paris. My work is related to topics like management, personal development, health, education and change. My clients say I'm able to translate complex concepts into summarizing images, with a touch of humor. As a mentor/student counselor, I often use my drawing skills to illustrate complex problems students describe. Many times they are relieved, surprised, or moved by the concise pictures. As a result of these conversations I discovered the huge but modest power of images..

Q 'Do you only use images only on personal level?'

A 'No, since I noticed that it helped people to develop a clear vision about themselves, their situations, their missions/visions and goals.; I applied it in coach groups, organizations and communities. That way I learned that the use of images as an universal language builds a bridge between knowledge and emotion. This motivated me to change my field of working: as a solo illustrator for other people, to a creative facilitator with other people.'

Nicolette truly enjoys working with a team and is often hired by organizations like municipal government, healthcare and personal development to enrich the process with her work. Recently she designed an artwork (5 x 3 m) based on the mission and vision of GasTerra, a company who trades in natural gas.

"GasTerra asked me to design an artwork for the conference room of the new building. One of their core values is sustainability. In addition, the company wants to encourage cohesion on several levels. In my concept I connected the values of the company with the personal values of the workforce, by asking the employees what provides them energy. The answers to these questions I combined with the mission and vision reflected in a colorful big "Narrative Panorama". And so the motives of the employees are a part of the vision of the company. Their slogan is: "Part of the Solution".



Her creative approach to different challenges in business & life has convinced many organizations that visuals can be used as the catalyst for change and innovation.

She recently started a master study in Creativity and Change Leadership at the Buffalo State College of New York.

Q *'Creativity is what I did when I was a child, drawing with crayons, painting doodling..., but that seems hardly a master study for grown ups, what is it that you learn there?'*

A 'We learn, what I always knew in the back of my head, that creative thinking is an essential life skill. Scientific research, which has been done for over 60 years at the Centre for Studies in Creativity, proves that. We study and apply the different cognitive methods which can be used to unleash creative potential. In order to encourage other people to develop theirs, we become skilled facilitators who help people to solve their problems in a very effective way, using creative thinking skills. Therefore we become Creative Problem Solving Facilitators.

Q *'You started last June, what was the first thing you learned?'*

A 'I learned that everyone is creative in some way, you can learn to solve problems more effectively, you can stretch your creativity even more and that creativity skills can be taught. That seems obvious, but a lot of people forgot that creativity and imagination are needed to come up with novel and useful ideas.

Q *'Why do we need that?'*

A 'Because everybody is coping with problems they want to change. But creating change is proactively looking for a way to bring about new solutions and approaches. Creative thinking involves specific cognitive, metacognitive and affective skills. Once internalized, these skills can be readily applied into all areas of life.. and combined with images, it supports each other.

Q *'How?'*

A 'Sometimes it's difficult to catch a phrase in words and people might find it easier to draw or pick a card with an image that illustrates the situation best. Images create a certain freedom, you are able to see different sides of a situation, like you change glasses, and that might lead to a different solution to an existing problem..'

Creativity rules:

#1: Capture ideas where ever they come to you. Many of our best ideas come to us when we are relaxed and not thinking about the problem at all. That's why you need to record your ideas immediatly on paper, voice-recorder or camera.

2: Be aware of your verbal and non-verbal communication. Be careful when someone tries a new idea on you. Model openness and acceptance. Much of our response to fresh ideas is communicated non-verbally.

3: Redefine your problem in many ways. Many times we are set out to solve the wrong problem. Ask why? Challenge your assumptions.

4: Go outside the problem area. Look for connections from other regions for solving problems. Out of the box. It will deliver different insights in how to tackle the problem. "What ideas do I get from this, in connection to my problem?"

5: Develop creativity habits. When working on a challenge or an opportunity, ask yourself "How else can I do this?" "What if...?" or "How can I use something that doesn't fit with this at all?"



Visual facilitation
Coaching Young unemployed people 2015
'Strenghts and Opportunities'

Q 'Nice metaphor...'

A 'Yes, thanks, it comes natural to me.. I often use metaphors, in language as in images and I discovered that it is a very forceful tool. I use it myself to deduce information and I discovered that it helps others too. As a facilitator I encourage individuals or a team to visualize a vision or problem statement together.

Q 'So that can help to solve problems in a different way? How would you describe that method? And can it solve any problem?'

A 'In fact: yes, it does, because it doesn't provide you answers. It provides a method of getting to answers. The method contains roles and rules which are designed to keep content and process apart, so each can make the maximum contribution.

Q 'Can you tell us more about the process?'

A 'The process contains 3 stages, rules to guide the process, certain roles, several artifacts that help to keep on track and are designed to guide your thinking.

The session facilitator conducts specially designed tools (methods), like brainstorming, for divergent and convergent thinking; to lead the resource group through the 3 process stages:

The stages are, see model on the right:>

- Clarification that means: assessing the situation and gather data from the client; (exploring the vision and formulating challenges > problems)
- Transformation (exploring ideas and formulating solutions)
- Implementation (exploring acceptance, formulating an implementation plan)

The roles are:

- The client, the facilitator, the resource group and the process buddy. The facilitator is the one who guides the session, he or she knows what has to be done, which tool is to be used and what questions to ask. He/she handles the guidelines and explains them to everybody.

Q 'How do you recognize a good creative leader?'

A 'A good facilitator is almost invisible. "It's not the sage on the stage, but the guide on the side". A good facilitator guides the process, establishes a supportive environment, is confident and flexible and stays out of content.

To make sure the process is heading in the right direction, he/she checks regularly with the client.

Creativity rules:

6: Separate your creative thinking from your judgmental thinking. When generating ideas, don't criticize your own ideas or the ideas of others. After you have generated a number of ideas, then evaluate them, but don't try to generate and evaluate them at the same time.

7: Evaluate ideas by considering the Pluses (strengths) of the idea first; then list the Potentials in the idea, then list the Concerns. When you determine your concerns about an idea, phrase your concerns as a question or problem statement. This way your brain will immediately begin to look for ways to overcome the concerns instead of disregarding the whole idea.

8: Creativity is hard work. We are all creative, but realize that creativity requires practice and development as any other skill.



Coaching students Art Academy, 2014



The facilitator is backed-up by a process buddy, who helps changing flipcharts, handing out tools or keeps an eye on the time.

Q 'So the client owns the content and is in charge of the direction, alone?'

A 'Well, he/she shares information, determines what problem statement he wants to work on and which he thinks are interesting to investigate further. But he is supported by a resource group which will generate the most possible ideas in the shortest time period ever.'

- The resource group consists of 5-9 people and is the 'idea engine'. As they come from different backgrounds, they provide a wide range of viewpoints. They are interested and eager to help out with the client's problem. By building on other ideas of the group, they contribute to the flow of ideas.

- The artifacts are several prepared flipcharts with the agenda, the key data of the client and the problemstatement; and several posters with rules and information about stages of the process.

They help to keep the session transparent and on track. The flipcharts and post-it's are prepared by the facilitator and hanged in the room, so everybody can see them and knows exactly:

- what the problem statement of the client they will be working on,
- where they are in the process,
- what their role is,
- what the do's and don't are in that specific stage

Q 'Coming from different careers, how do you integrate lecturing, illustration and CPS?'

A 'Well, I wouldn't consider it a big difference between being creative yourself or supporting others to think more creatively, composing an open, safe and comfortable atmosphere and handing out the tools people need to succeed. As a facilitator and lecturer in design, you have to be flexible keeping your balance between structure and spontaneity. Between discipline and freedom. The CPS process forces me to follow the process and not being seduced to wander a long and going nowhere, ideating without implementing, so to speak.' That way you will always end up with a follow up plan and a satisfying outcome for the client.'

Creativity rules:

9: **Stretch your brain!** When working to solve a problem, set a quota of at least forty ideas. To get new ideas, it is important to stretch beyond the obvious ways for solving a problem. The more ways you have of accomplishing your goals, the greater are your chances of doing it.

10: **Look at problems as opportunities.** Every problem we encounter has something to teach us. Solving a problem is a moment of growth.

Source: *Why didn't I think of that?* by Roger Firestein.



Flipchart with key data to share with the resource group. Usually made like a list with bullet points, but I prefer to draw a mindmap of the key data before the session, in order to make share data in a more appealing way ;-)

'My personal trait lies in visualizing complex matters and I have done that for a few years. Combined with my recent knowledge of Creative Problem Solving, I integrated the application of visuals in different stages in the existing CPS model, The Thinking Skills Model. Because I think it can be a fruitful combination, appealing to a bigger audience with different learning styles.

You can see it on the right >

'I experienced a positive energy coming from that extra addition. I discovered that people digest their information in different ways. By drawing the current situation and the desired outcome, and the use of mind maps to cluster complex information, data is presented in another way. Some people are more visually oriented and they will often be bored from long lists with bullets.

I read that the main part from what we observe is visual information, so our brain is set to see information instead of reading it. Visuals are simple, open for interpretation, so everyone can add his feelings, thoughts and ideas to it.

Drawing or letting people draw creates an active involvement and a shared responsibility because their vision becomes visible, tangible. An opinion floats away in conversation, but a visual which is stacked on the wall anchors the thoughts and ideas in the brain: every time you see it, it reminds you of your intention.'

You can see it in the model on the right >

Q 'How does CPS enhance your work in your opinion?'

A 'I visualized many student coaching sessions -one on one- and discovered its power. But with groups I sometimes felt insecure about not knowing how to guide the group and the process. I didn't trust that there would be a satisfying outcome. The creativity was the goal, instead of using creativity to get to our goal.

Working with the guidelines of CPS gives me structure and background to enhance my sessions, give it a good start, some useful tools anybody can handle, and a secure closure and tools for implementation. Besides that, it's fun.

I like the fact that the process can be conducted in different ways, there is a lot of flexibility to make it your own.

Being a both visualizer and facilitator enhances my career, because now I can choose whether I want to play a passive (visualizing the process) or an active role (leading the process). Either way I have the tools to facilitate others with CPS.



Q 'How does CPS enhance the life of others?'

A 'The CPS process parallels our own natural thinking processes and organizes them more efficiently. The process contains thinking and doing, helping people accomplish concrete actions and bringing their ideas to life. It's concrete, applicable, it forces you to focus on the core of the problem and you commit yourself to resolve it in a short time period.

You can see the Creative Change Model on the right >

Actively participating with the group, I capture the content of the dialogue in visuals. That image reflection creates awareness and is a powerful engine for change, both personal and in teams. You might think "this whole problem solving process must be a lot of hard work", but it's not! It is like playing! Working creatively with a team on your problem statement, knowing that there is a solution; all these fun tools and visual incentives, it makes the process fun!

Q 'Besides that it is fun, what is the most challenging?'

A 'To implement creative thinking skills in our curriculum at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen. There is a lot of emphasis on measures and assessments and they don't have the knowledge to point out the added value of creative thinking yet. I really hope I can change that... In CPS we would state this as following: *It would be great if I could successfully implement Creative Problem Solving in our curriculum ..*

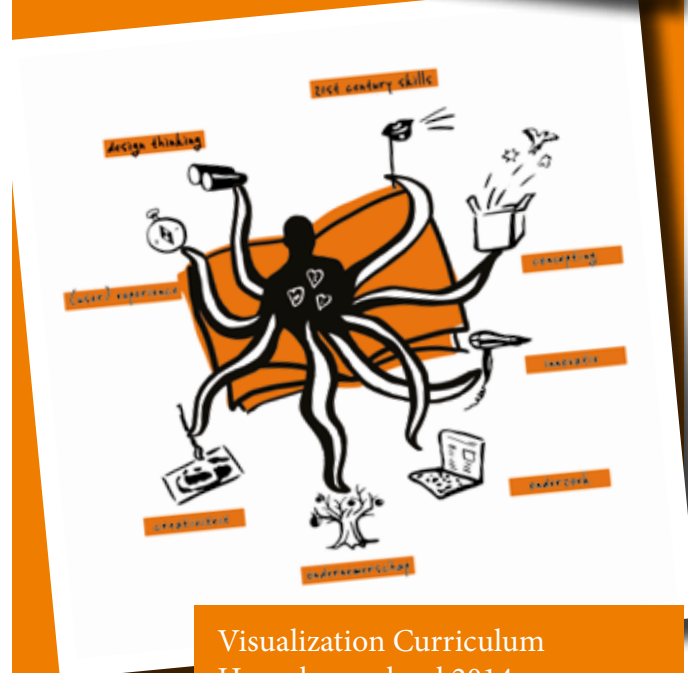
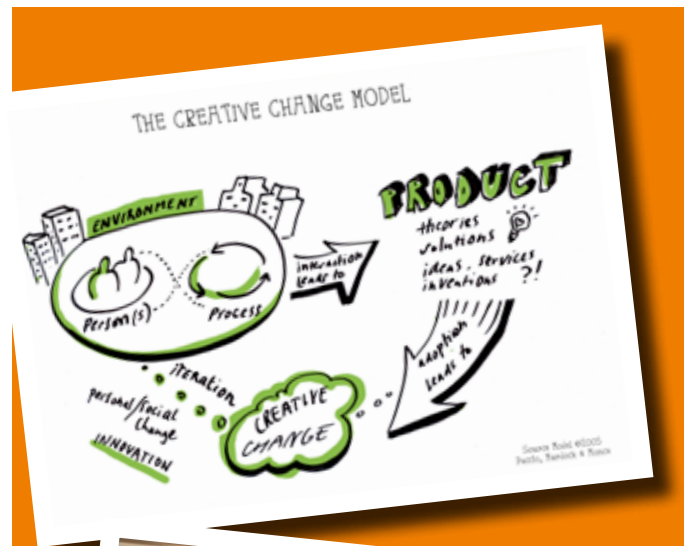
So now we can diverge on millions of possible ideas... And make a visual statement of it and hang it in the main hall..!

Q 'I wish you luck on your crusade...;-) What has been most rewarding till now?'

A 'Pleased clients or enthusiastic students that see a realistic sustainable solution to their problems.

And also the feeling of learning a new skill that enhances my way of working and therefore a change in my life. I am really attracted by the way this science is presented in the Masterstudy.

All the things I learn are to be used the next day in my personal and professional life. I hadn't thought of that when I committed myself to this study. That makes the hard work valuable.'



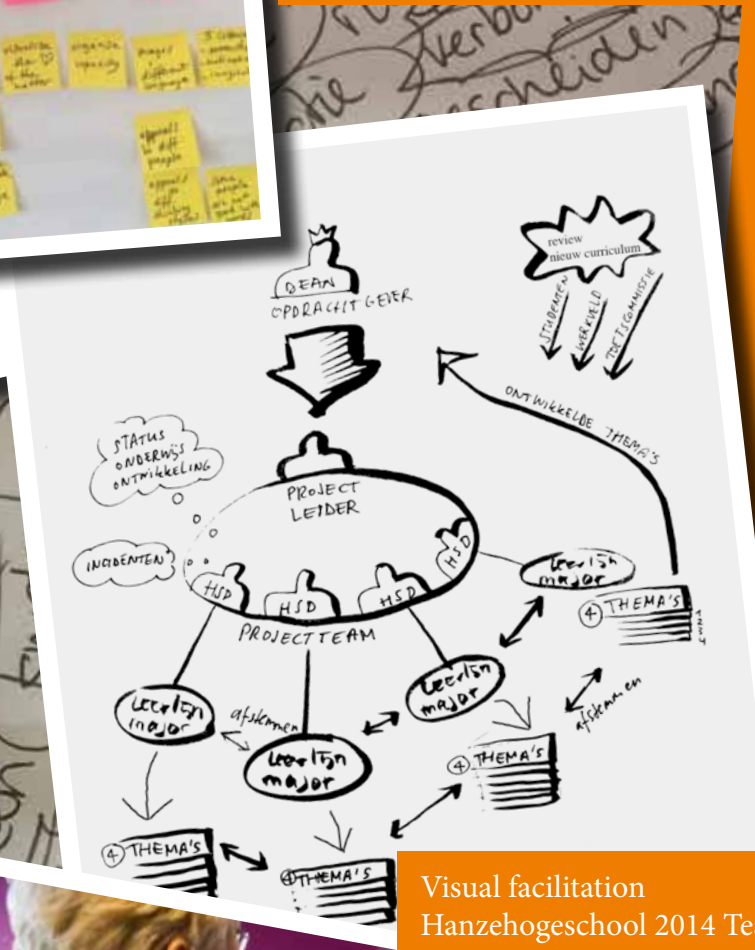
Visualization Curriculum
Hanzehogeschool 2014



Out of Class Facilitation
august 2015



Visual facilitation
'Van Milly' healthcare 2012
Vision and Mission



Visual facilitation
Hanzehogeschool 2014 Teamday

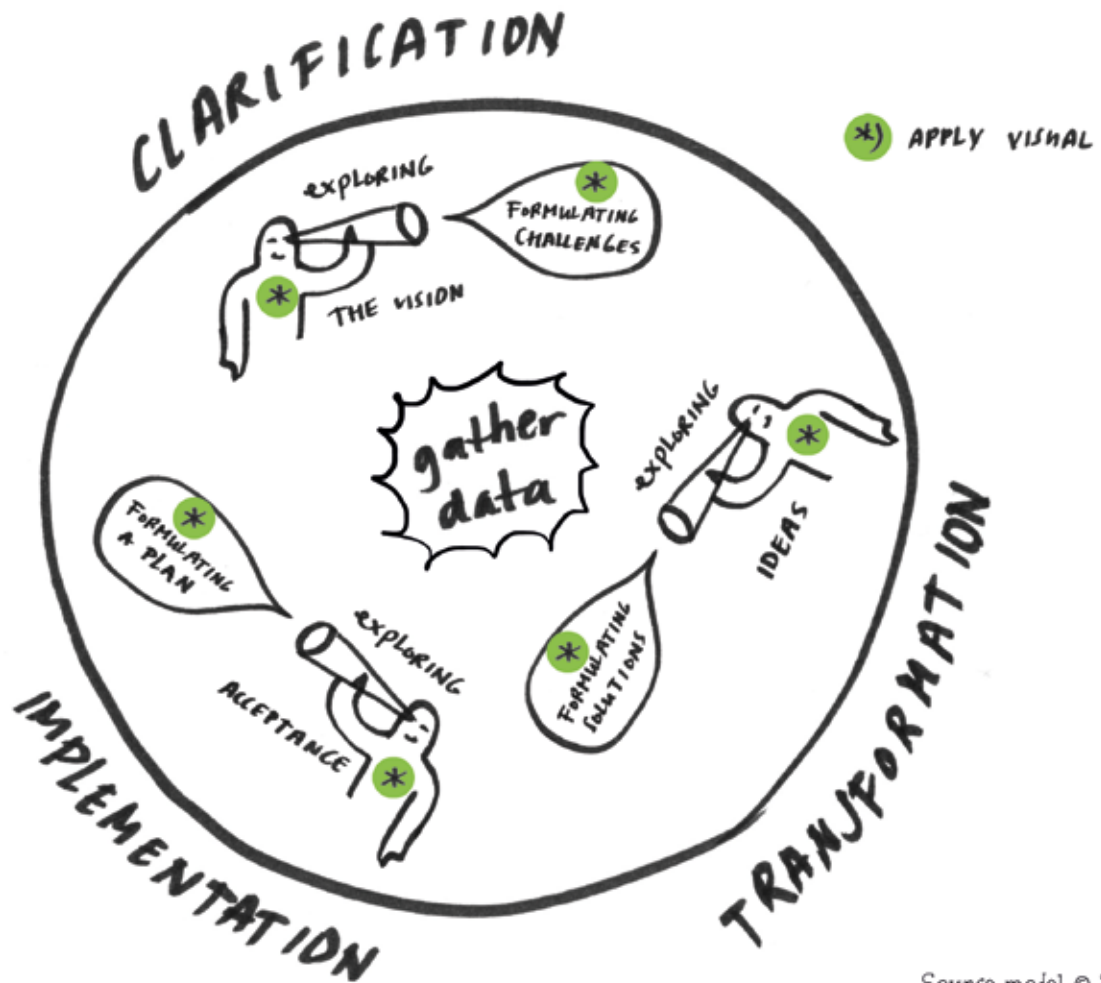


Visual facilitation
Entrepreneurs 2013

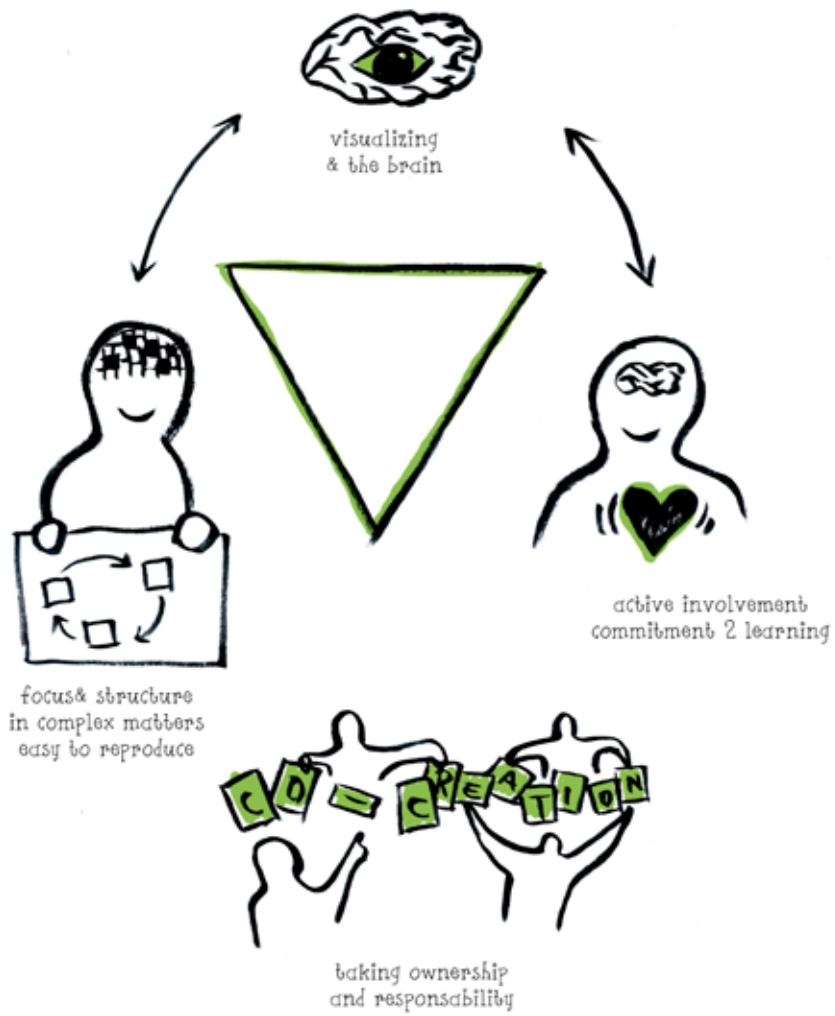
variante
man/vrouw
Ja knikker
eenheid
zen
Die
Schoone
beet
Parabering
terras
clown
team
zonnepanelen
knus
bank

Attachments models:

Creative Problem Solving: The Thinking Skills Model

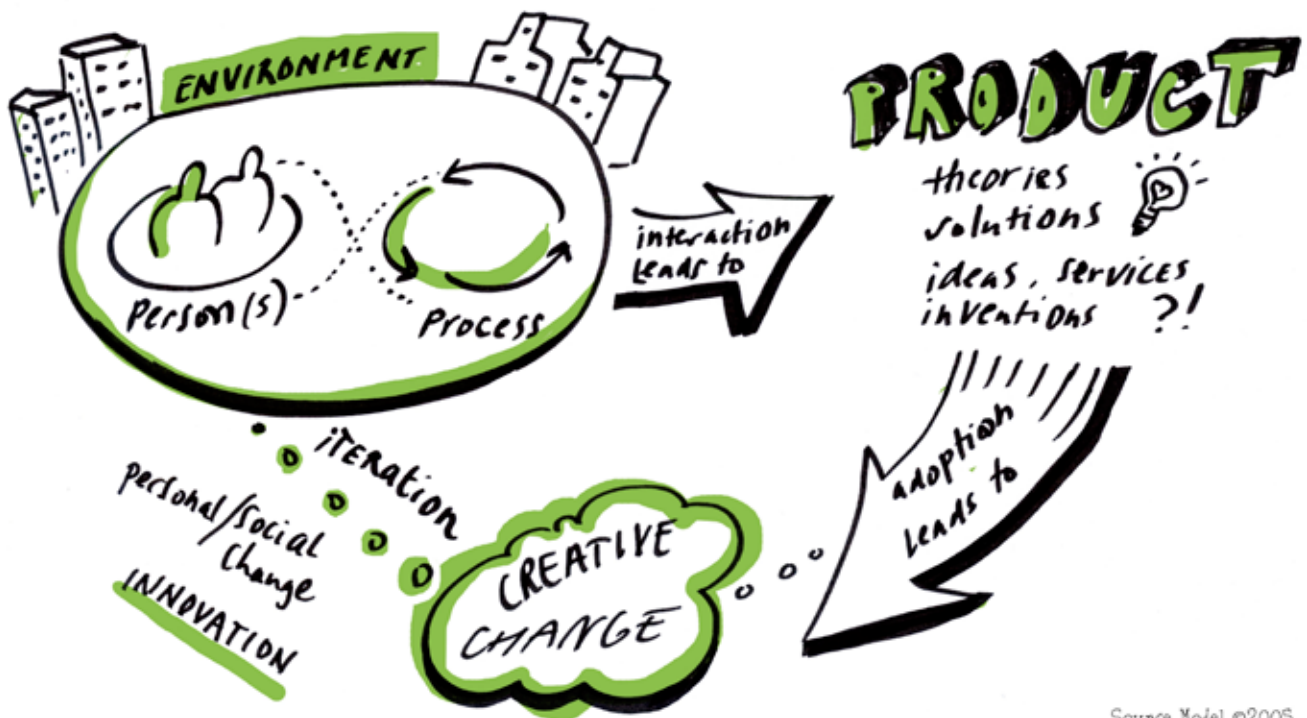


Source model © 2006
Puccio, Murdock & Mance



source model 1999
André Wierdsma
via Kim van den Berg

THE CREATIVE CHANGE MODEL



Source Model ©2005
Puccio, Murdock & Mance

CPS is:

passive observation & sketching

learning = teaching = learning

new insights

life long learning

freedom

or active as creative facilitator

SUCCESS IN SHORT TIME

new career opportunities

benefits

use my skills

flexibility

me for me as illustrator

different brainwave

images

drawing

music

peace

being special

self confidence

unorganized

happy

visualizing = understanding

praise

flow

STRUCTURE

seeing = believing

growth

DIRECTION

coincidence

associations

FOCUS

my skills are needed

me

other people

helping hand

"wandering is not being lost"

Reading list:

Facilitation, a door to Creative Leadership, Miller, Vehar, Firestein, Thurber, Nielsen;
Creativity Unbound, An introduction to creative process, Miller, Vehar, Firestein, Thurber, Nielsen;
Creativity Rising, Creative Tinking and Creative Problem Solving in the 21st Century, Puccio, Mance, Switalski, Reali;
Why didn't I think of that? Riger Firestein
Developing Minds, a resource book for Teaching Thinking. Article.
Dutch:
Ruimte voor beelden, werken met visuals, Zadoks
De kracht van beelddenken, Bromberger
Anders kijken, Anders denken, Anders doen; van Kim van den Berg