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Re-defining journalism education: Using systems thinking and design to revolutionize the future of storytelling

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Systems Journalism:

Building Design + Systems Thinking
Into Journalism Education

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Wednesday, October 24th

**JOURNALISM
+ DESIGN**



THE PROBLEM

Journalism education hasn't kept pace with the growing complexity of the practice.





THE APPROACH

We looked to design strategies and systems thinking to help with this.





DESIGN IS

“changing existing situations into preferred ones.”

—Herbert Simon





DEFINING DESIGN

- Systems thinking
- Deep listening
- Define the problem
- Open process
- Challenge
- Experiment





SYSTEMS THINKING

Studying wholes rather than parts in isolation





WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY SYSTEMS THINKING?

1. What are the forces that create the “problem”
2. How are the forces interconnected
3. Feedback loops
4. Who are stakeholders in the system?
5. Who has power in the system?
6. Who does the system benefit?
7. Where might change happen in the system?





REDESIGNING JOURNALISM EDUCATION + PROFESSIONAL LEARNING





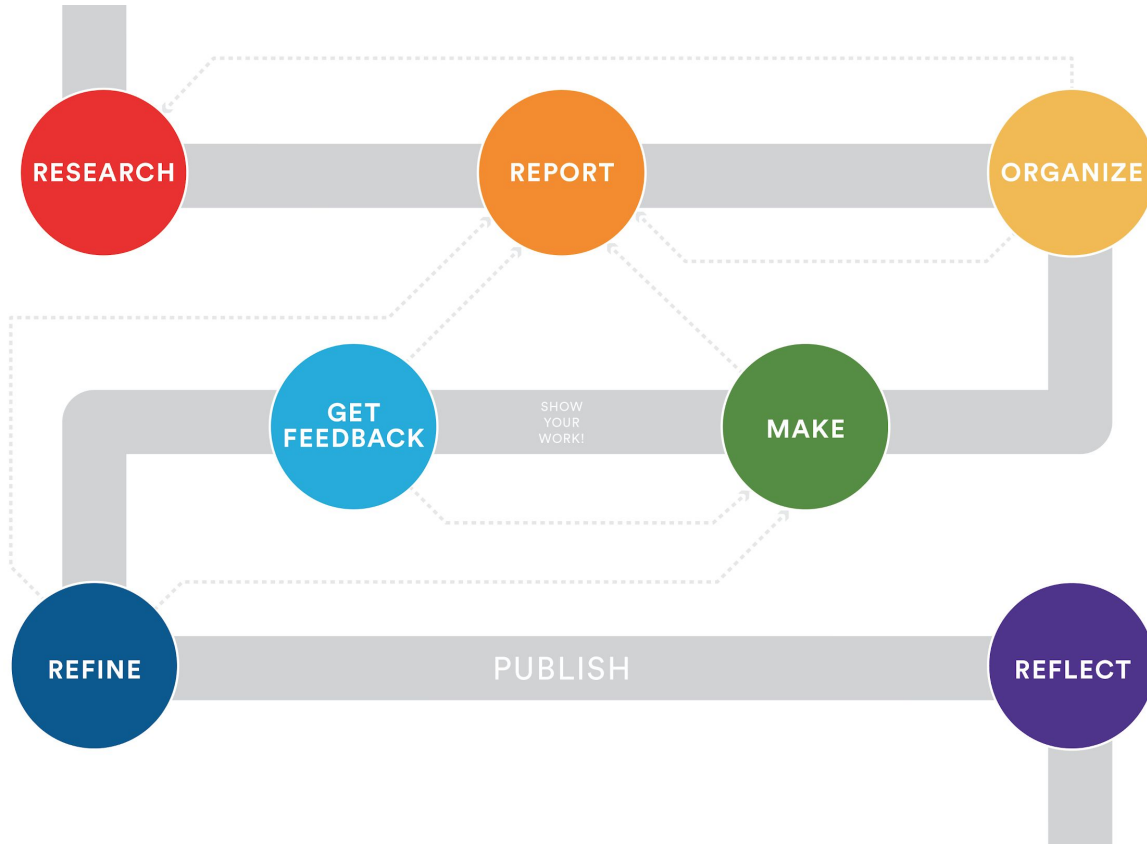
TRANSLATING

~~Systems Thinking~~

How to deal with complexity



THE PROCESS





FOR EXAMPLE

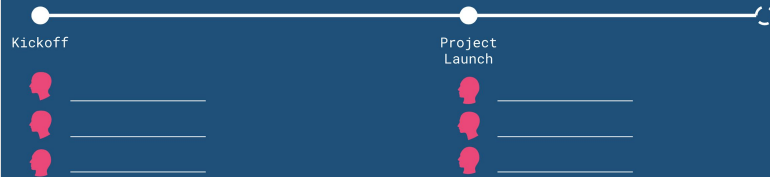
- Visualizing Data
 - Product Design Strategy for News Organizations
 - News, Narrative, & Design I, II, III
 - The Politics of Interactives
 - Design for Journalists: From Typography to Interaction
 - Designing Workflow and Product Strategy for Modern Newsrooms
 - New School Free Press
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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

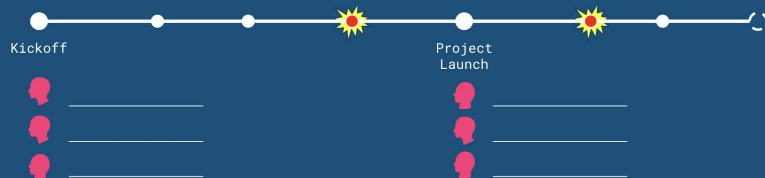
Make a Timeline



Who is involved at each point?



Highlight 2-3 pain points



What is the nature of the pain points?

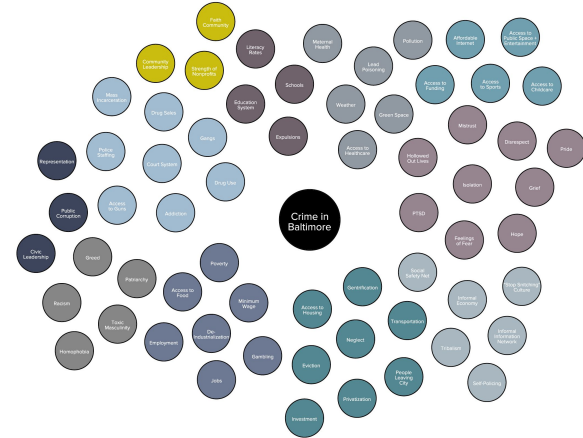
- communication
- technical
- no obvious decision maker
- act of god
- mission creep (you thought it was this, and now it became something else)
- lack of expertise/wrong personnel
- misunderstood audience
- lack of resources/time



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

CAPTURE + CLUSTER

What are the forces that contribute to, and are affected by, crime in Baltimore?



FOCUSING QUESTION

*What questions will help us better define our area of focus?
Start with "Why..."*



FOCUSING QUESTIONS

1. Why are people outside of the city so interested in crime?
2. Why do people stay in certain neighborhoods?
3. Why does one join + stay in a gang?
4. Why isn't the city re-thinking its approach to crime?
5. Why do we expect a community to thrive when the system is not designed for them?
6. Why is there such a divide between city residents and outside-of-the-city residents?

ACTIVITY CARDS

SYNTHESIZE

Identify Leverage Points

Use what you know about a system's structure to identify possible leverage points. Consider the strength of the evidence that is leading you to these points.

Leverage points are points of tension — this is where the stories are.

Where might a small change have a long-lasting, desired effect?

Are there other small changes that you have not yet considered that could lead to significant, enduring improvements?

Are there spots that are frozen or unlikely to change? Or have pent-up energy disrupting the status quo or causing pattern changes?

JOURNALISM + DESIGN

RESEARCH

Find Your North Star

Develop an aspirational goal for your journalism to help focus your approach.

What future are you working toward?

What outcomes are most important to you and your publication?

What are you hoping your audience will do after reading your story?

JOURNALISM + DESIGN

SYNTHESIZE

Identify Enablers and Inhibitors

Think of five forces that are enabling the system you are reporting on from being effective.

Think of five factors that are inhibiting the system from meeting its goal.

Use this brainstorm to refine your argument.

What "enables" or "inhibits" the problem or issue you are exploring?

What is the relationship between your story and its broader context?

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ONGOING CHALLENGES





Closing slide