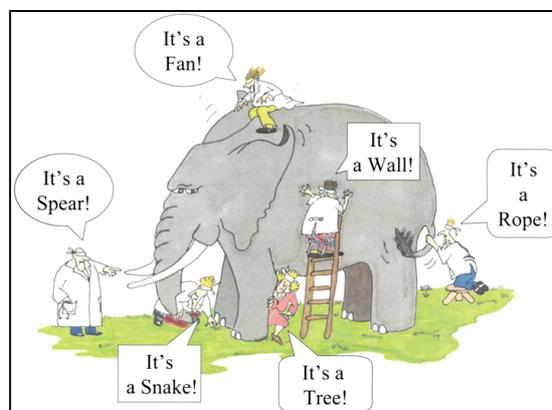


PROPOSAL: Ph.D. Thesis (Strategic Design)

Design Factors for Sustainable Cultures of Creativity & Innovation

When it comes to our current capacity relating to *Design Factors for Sustainable Cultures of Creativity & Innovation*, I am reminded of the Story of the Blind Men and the Elephantⁱ

A group of blind men heard that a strange animal, called an elephant, had been brought to the town, but none of them were aware of its shape and form. Out of curiosity, they said: "We must inspect and know it by touch, of which we are capable". So, they sought it out, and when they found it they groped about it. In the case of the first person, whose hand landed on the trunk, said "This being is like a drain pipe". For another one whose hand reached its ear, it seemed like a kind of fan. As for another person, whose hand was upon its leg, said, "I perceive the shape of the elephant to be like a pillar". And in the case of the one who placed his hand upon its back said, "Indeed, this elephant is like a throne". Now, each of these presented a true aspect when he related what he had gained from experiencing the elephant. None of them had strayed from the true description of the elephant. Yet they all fell short of fathoming the true appearance of the elephant.



Used with the kind permission of Jonathan Himmelfarbⁱⁱ

A Nagging Question

The above parable is at least 2,000 years old. So why then does it seem so fresh when it comes to us talking about structuring for Creativity & Innovation? It's not like we lack for concrete example (sometimes literally) of Creativity & Innovation produced by the myriad civilizations that came before us. We dig them up the time, often with a sense of wonder. In fact, many of our greatest treasures come from civilizations that are literally strangers to us - long gone, thousands or even tens of thousands of years old. The link has been somehow broken and we normally talk about them as "The Greeks, The Egyptians, The Romans" much as we would talk about "The Martians, The Alpha Centauri, The Andromedans".

This gets a bit strange when you consider that for some of these civilizations we actually have easy access to millennia of their historical records, especially the ones that have a more or less uninterrupted historical record. Yet, they remain the "other". So, why are we still so bad when it comes to structural approaches with respect to Creativity & Innovation?

For centuries now we've lived in a rational, efficient, effective, quantitative, data-driven societal paradigm. So why do we lack a common vocabulary, approach and method? Deep down, most people intuitively know that adopting a purely imitative approach is very likely to produce disappointment, even with the best intentions, funding and people involved.

Yet we continue to do it. Why are we still fumbling around? So, where are the "silver bullet" solutions? Where are the "schools" of discipline we see in pursuits ranging from cooking food to stock market analysis to martial arts? Where's the lore, the Best Practices, the Protocols?

Has history taught us nothing? Don't we understand that implication of not knowing how to do something puts us at risk when the time comes that we really need to produce or generate that very thing? Surely we must understand that our societal need for Creativity and Innovation is only going to grow as we reach the carrying capacity of the many systems in which we reside and live. Everyone must realize, at some level, that our inability with respect to *Design Factors for Sustainable Cultures of Creativity & Innovation* puts our civilization and our lives at stake?