

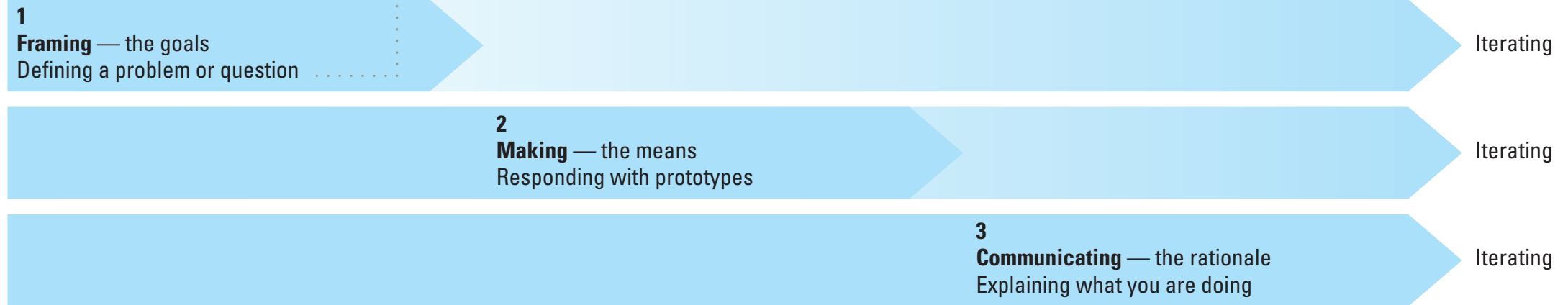
UC Berkeley, Jacobs Institute, MDes Program

Thesis Map

A thesis has 3 main components:

Framing, making, and communicating run in series *and* in parallel.

“There is no direct path between the designer’s intention and the outcome. As you work a problem, you are continually in the process of developing a path into it, forming new appreciations and understandings as you make new moves.”
– Terry Winograd, 1996



- Start with these steps:
- Identify the general field of inquiry.
 - Articulate a clear and concise “diagnosis” of a specific problem within this field.
 - State why this problem is significant.
 - Identify others who have addressed this issue in the past — list what has succeeded, what has failed, and what deficiencies remain.
 - Limit the scope of your work given your time.

- Including:
- Literature review
 - Domain history, prior art, + related examples
 - Conversations with experts
 - Research with users
 - Concept, parti, or generative metaphor
 - Program + requirements

- Including:
- Schedule
 - Frameworks
 - Storyboards
 - Sketches
 - Physical + digital prototypes (demos)
 - Exhibition space + signage

- Including:
- Project diary
 - Milestone 1, proposal presentation
 - Milestone 2, first full presentation
 - Written Thesis
 - Milestone 3, final presentation
 - Exhibition with demo

- Including:
- Abstract
 - History / Prior Art
 - Motivation
 - Methods / Approach
 - Final Design
 - Discussion
 - Future Work
 - Conclusion
 - Bibliography
 - Images / Figures

- Ideally, an MDes thesis brings together:
- emerging technologies
 - pressing social issues
 - innovative approach

“An artifact consisting of a physical design, product, service, environment, curio, interface, and/or process that engages with an emerging technology. In representing and communicating this proposal, projects may adopt multiple appropriate media – verbal, visual, time-based – and must include a functional embodiment of the artifact. The degree of fidelity and functionality will be negotiated with the instructors.”

- Communications should include:
- Designer’s name
 - Project title
 - Project summary (problem / hypothesis)
 - Who it’s for
 - What it does
 - Why it matters
 - Context of use
 - Personas + their goals
 - Scenarios of use
 - User’s conceptual model
 - System map (actors, elements, interactions)
 - Open issues + questions

“...focus on the design and essential experience of using or engaging with your final project.”
– MDes Thesis Studio Syllabus, Fall 2024

