# DOES INNOVATION HAVE A METHOD?



## The Hamaguchi Protocols

I am in Tokyo University at the iSchool [Link], a new research and teaching initiative focused on creativity/innovation and human centered design. Visionary leadership provided by Hiroshi Tamura and Hideyuki Horii.

I am here as part of a symposium with Hideshi Hamaguchi, Director of Strategy at Ziba Design.

The topic – does innovation have a method?

Hideshi's answer – No. (If radical innovation were susceptible to specification,

wouldn’t there be no end of solutions to seemingly intractable problems?)

You can’t specify procedures, provide a rule book. But there are what Hideshi calls protocols.



When I arrived at the iSchool, Hideshi and a team from Ziba were running a week-long student workshop focused on innovation in schools. Not incremental improvement of the classroom experience, but radical innovation, down to the roots. I was surprised that it all looked very familiar – just like the classes at our Stanford d.school, and about which I have been writing a good deal this last nine months.

Hideshi has an extraordinary facility in thinking outside the box. It comes from immense experience, from many careful assessments of what led to successful design solutions, and, above all, I think, from a passion to keep learning, to keep taking in more and different techniques, viewpoints, facts. His protocols are about how to break out of cognitive bias, how to reframe perspective, how to map out the territory of a design problem or field such that hidden spaces or blindspots are

revealed.

I was fascinated with the way he uses visualization in all this. Diagrams, plans and concept maps, both concrete and abstract, make group discussion external; they *mediate* discussion, give it new form – an alienating effect that enables fresh review.

Hideshi is that Odyssean character that I identified at the core of design thinking – [Link] Speculative reasoning rooted in tacit experience and know-how.

Method? Protocols? We talked of tool kits. I have called it a pragmatics [Link].

In reflecting deeply on what he does, Hideshi was offering another contribution to the field I call

## pragmatology

– the study of "pragmata" – things, things done. [Link]

