

Creative pragmatics: learning how to navigate a complex world

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next-Gen Design Thinking in the Center for Design Research (with Larry Leifer)
— Stanford d.school

d.global — blended learning in the way of design
—Stanford Continuing Studies



Program in Urban Studies
Program in Science Technology Society
Program in Writing and Rhetoric

JANUS Initiative — looking back that we might be better prepared for uncertain futures — Business Archaeology

Michael Shanks



a design archaeologist working with organizations and businesses

this is so much more than a virus

we have always lived with other species, and in communities that include things

for better, for worse

complex human ecologies — connections

social distancing, control and regulation of movement and gathering
in a world of insecurity and doubt

is this a “new normal”?

what we are experiencing is not new

there is actually no “post-COVID”!

this is human experience

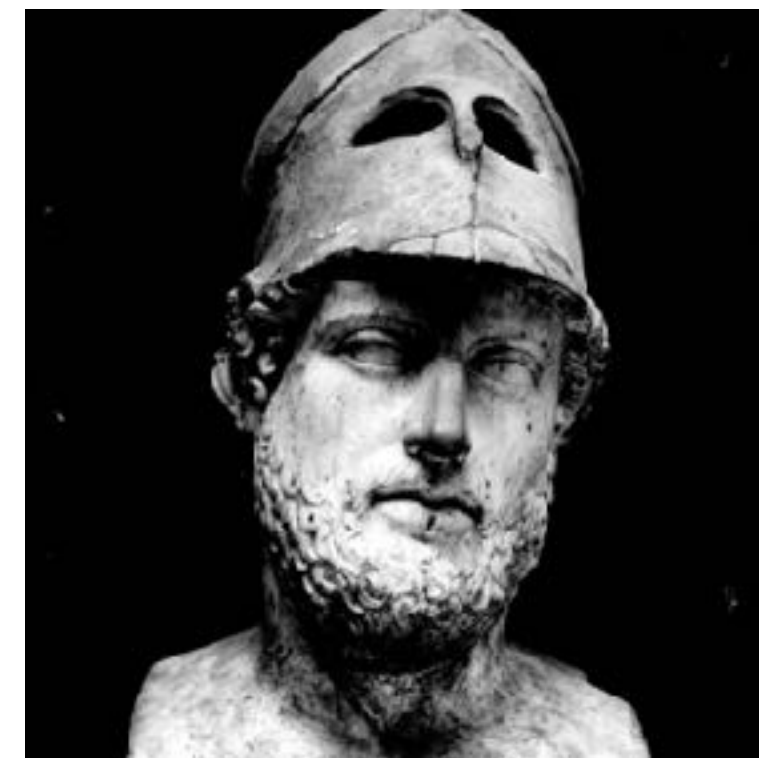
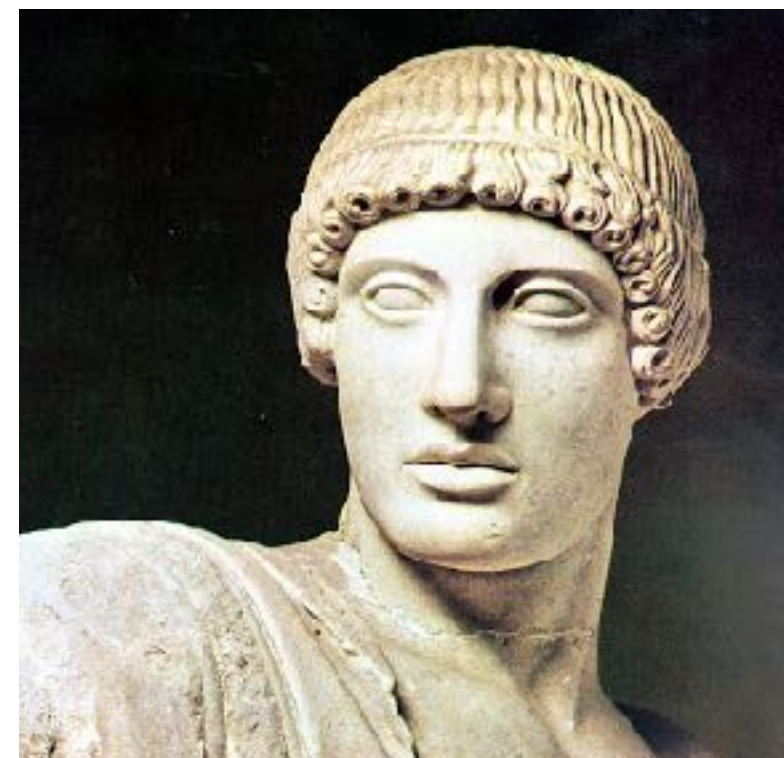
the limitations of short-term thinking
the irony of human centered design — the human experience is so much more than a
person's lifespan and memories

what many of us are experiencing for the first time is
the normal in human history

Oedipus — thought he knew best and had the answers

Agamemnon and Achilles, and Apollo — autocrats, arrogance and matters of who is in charge

Pericles — 5th century Classical Athens — matters of leadership and the people



three ancient stories of epidemic

what many of us are experiencing for the first time is the normal in human history

navigating COMPLEXITY and uncertainty
insecurity and who to trust

the limitations of reducing the world to rational deterministic causal relationships

uncertainty and ambiguity are features of complexity, not problems!

the virus is the norm!

complexity



the Segway

how not to understand complexity



the Segway

the result of a problem-solution mindset
— a failure to understand complexity



```
graph LR; A[problem] -- engineering --> B[solution]
```

problem

engineering

solution

commuter
frustration

engineering

Segway



what's the attitude to the future in this
problem-solution mindset?

can we fix it? — yes we can!

the world treated as a series of problems for which fixes/solutions may be engineered

through data capture, information analysis, rationalization, parsing of behavior,
application of algorithms

involving transparency (sensors everywhere monitoring/mediating everything),
quantification, optimization, elimination of ambiguity

a problem-solution mindset

security/insecurity and perceiving/assessing risk

finding trustworthy information and people

establishing effective collaboration (families, networks, corporations, states)

mobility and reach, migrations and territories, local/global scaling

human experience

— long-term insights into our current crisis

embrace ambiguity, complexity, uncertainty

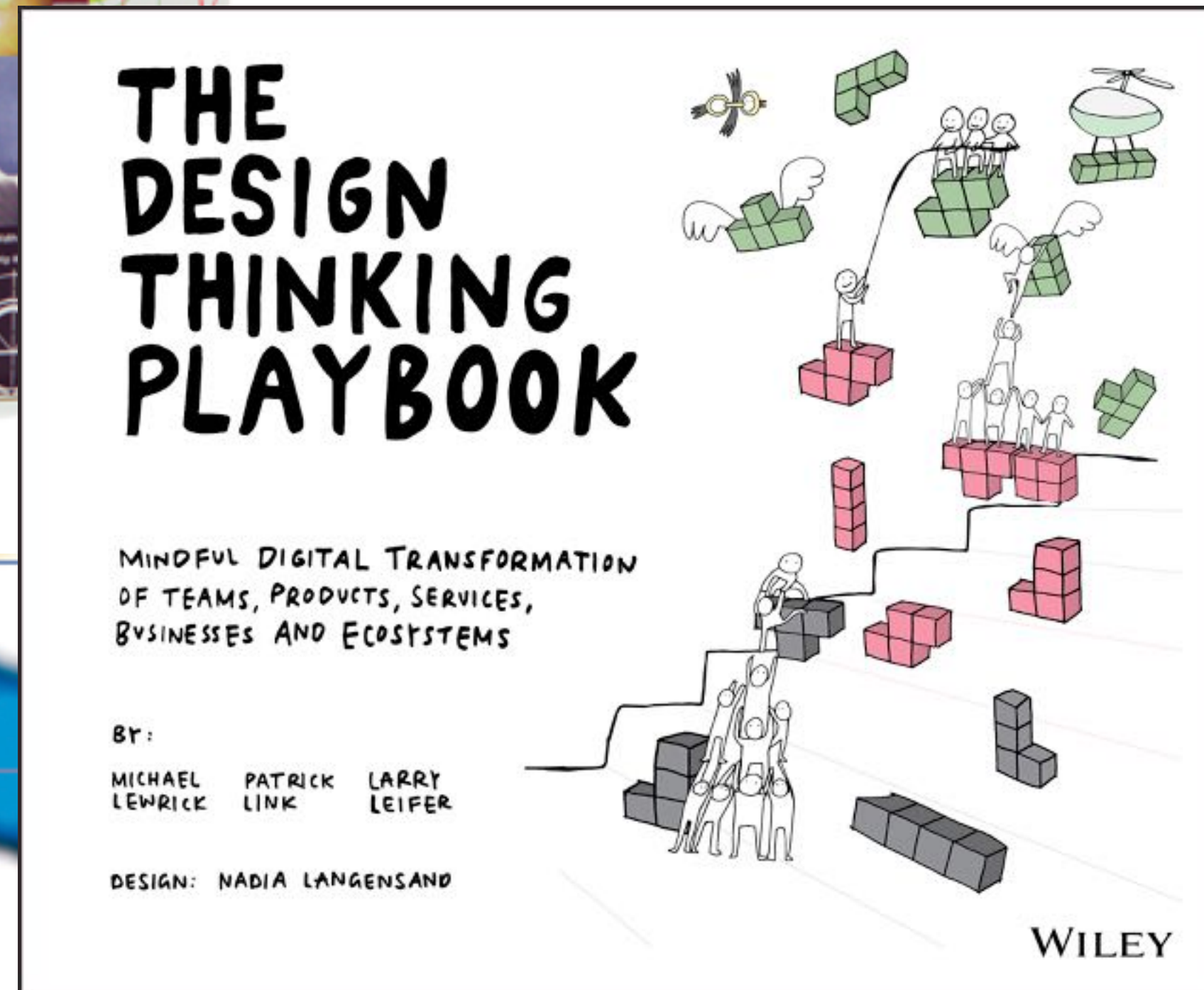
all predictions will fail

we need an imagination toolkit for future world building

creative pragmatics

a future building toolkit centered on open exploration
of matters that may actually never be defined

toolkits — beyond engineering, embracing creative ambiguity



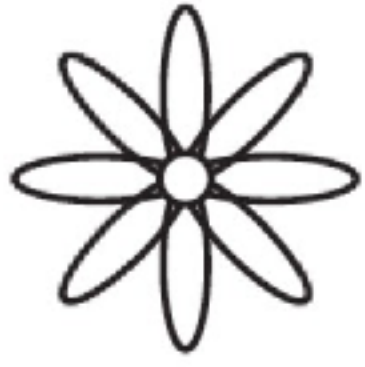
creative pragmatics
— action oriented



good news — we have the toolkits

METHOD SHORTCUTS

PERSPECTIVE



Context Map

→ page 61



Progression Curves

→ page 70



Janus Cones

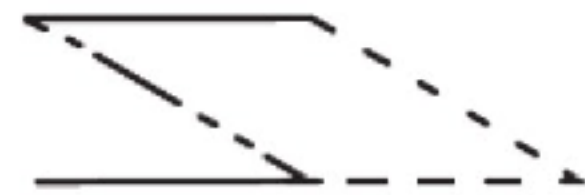
→ page 81

OPPORTUNITY



Generational Arcs

→ page 94



Future User

→ page 103



Futuretelling

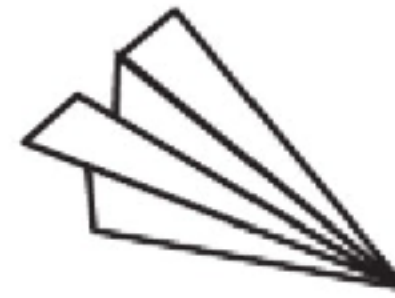
→ page 114

SOLUTION



White Spots

→ page 127



Paper Mockups

→ page 136



Change Paths

→ page 149

TEAM



Buddy Checks

→ page 168



VOICE Stars

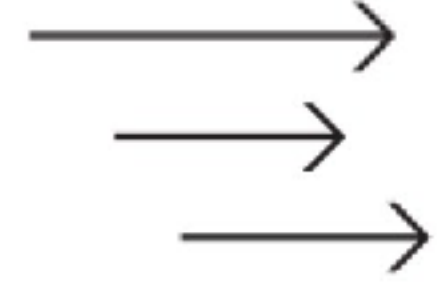
→ page 178



Crowd Clovers

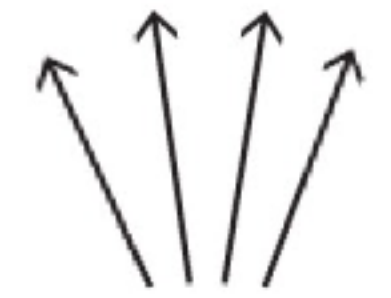
→ page 188

VISION



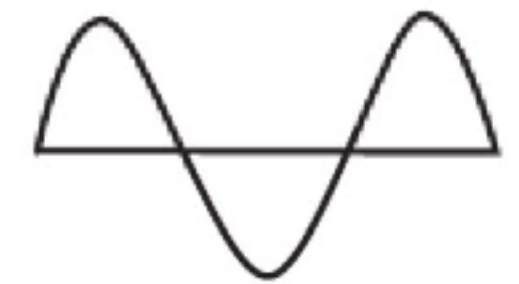
Vision Statement

→ page 203



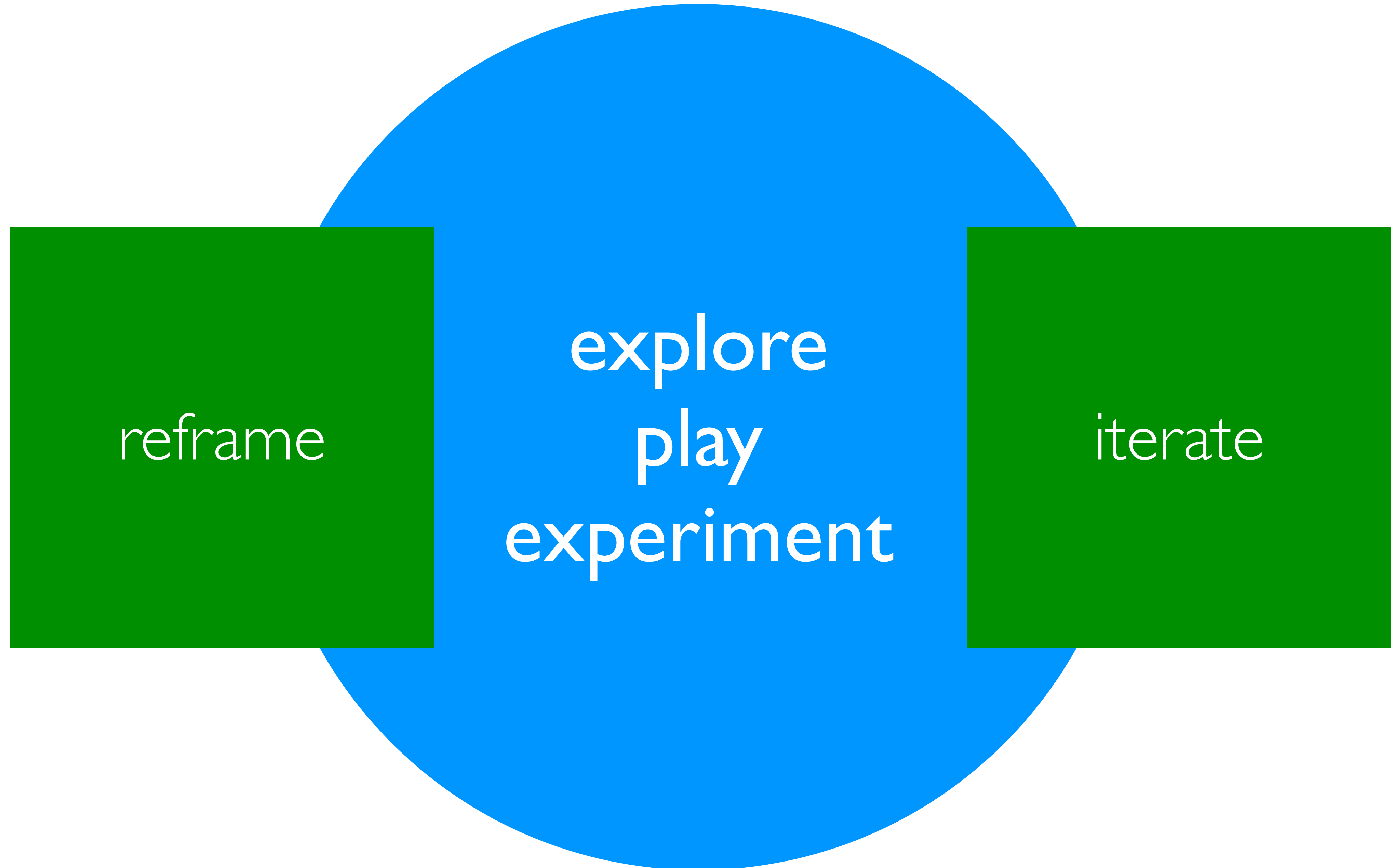
DARPA Hard Test

→ page 213



Pathfinders

→ page 230



reframe — it's not about a virus

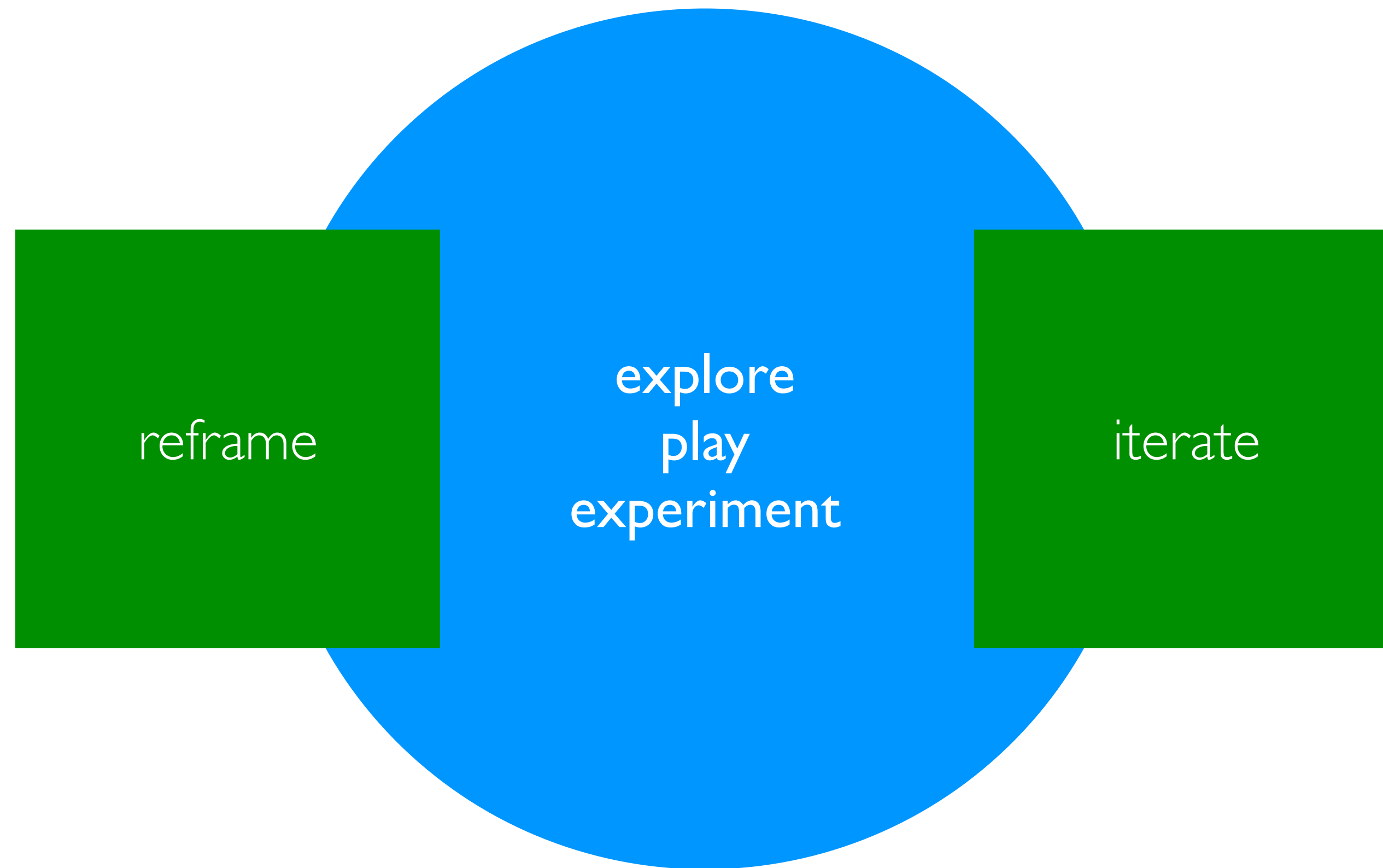
what are the lessons?

lesson in design thinking #1

complexity and the failure of traditional
(project) management



the limitations of a problem-solution mindset



lesson in design thinking #3

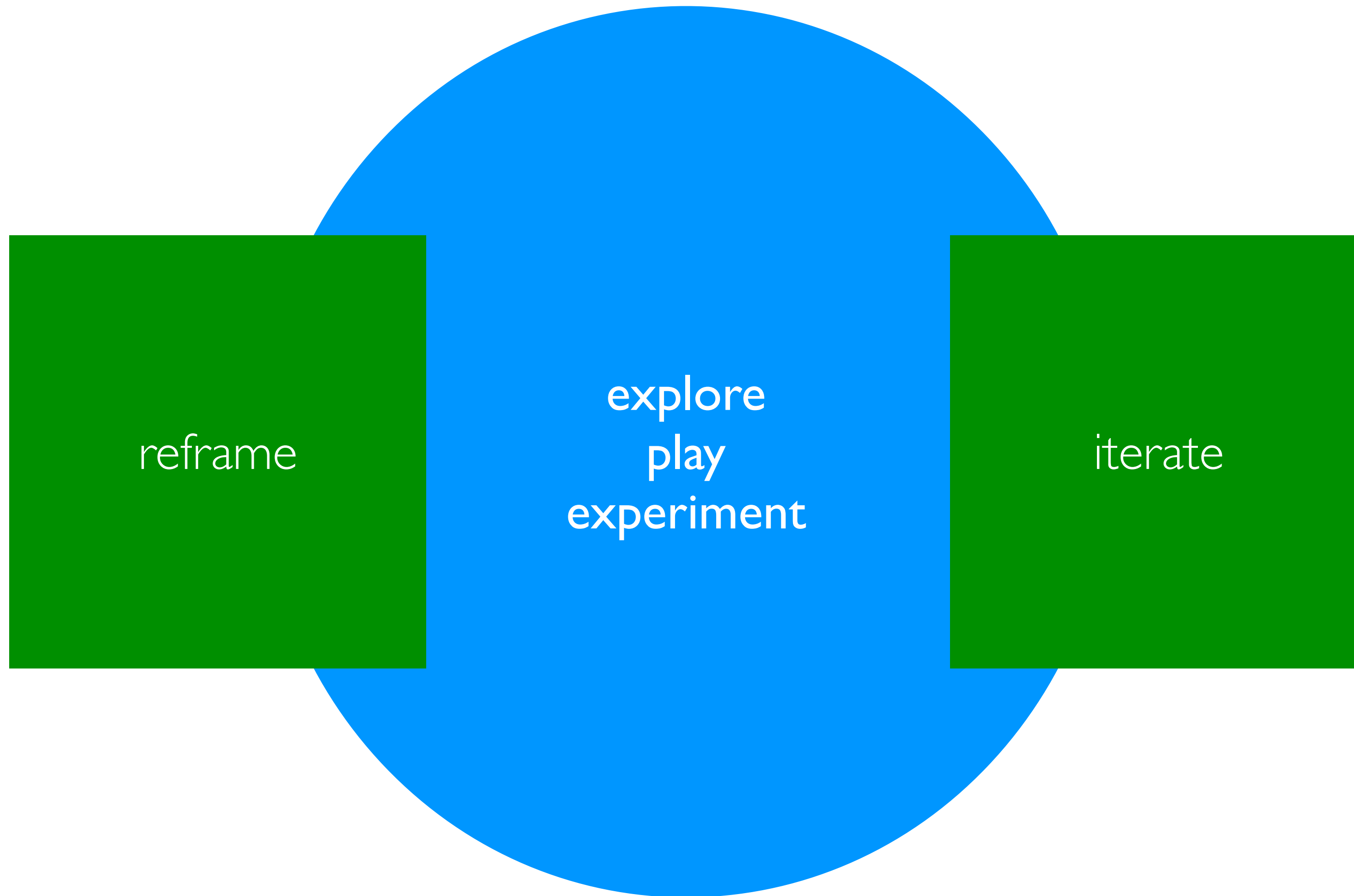
iterative exploration and constant learning

lesson in design thinking #4

research counts — and it's not just about numbers

lesson in design thinking #5

agility — all courses of action are local and provisional



this is creative pragmatics

creative pragmatics

go out, research, explore, ideate, build, test
and do it again and again!

