

# **Scaffolding Human-centred Innovation through Design Artefacts**



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## **Certificate of original authorship**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text. I also certify that the thesis has been written by me.

Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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## Abstract

Human-centred innovation refers to innovation that is informed by customer insight. Contemporary organisations are increasingly turning to human-centred design approaches to inform both their human-centred innovation efforts and the associated shift to customer-centricity. Unlike invention and design, innovation requires implementation. It rests upon collective outcomes, generated from the combined activities of many stakeholders. Design artefacts have always been at the core of design practice, comprising both *outcomes of* as well as *inputs into* design processes. Within human-centred innovation contexts, design practice and the roles of design artefacts have distinct qualities. Design artefacts such as personas, prototypes, customer journey maps and videos communicating customer research provide designers and other staff with valuable mediatory and enabling tools within human-centred innovation processes.

Organisational studies literature points to the valuable role artefacts play in communication, collaboration, social mediation, knowledge sharing and transformation; however there is a gap in the literature about the roles design artefacts play as inputs into the innovation process and as instruments to support innovation within organisations. Investigation into how design artefacts function to facilitate and motivate collective action, enable communication and support organisational transformation is the central motivation of this research. The research aims to examine the role of design artefacts as flexible tools that mediate the social, interlinked demands of human-centred innovation initiatives within organisations.

Through a practice-led case study, using the conceptual framework of Activity Theory, we examine how some specific design artefacts supported an organisation in designing and delivering a specific human-centred innovation initiative. Data from participant observation and qualitative interviews, conducted with a sample of artefact recipients and design practitioners, informs examination of the various roles the case artefacts played within organisational activities. The study draws attention to the persuasive character of design artefacts, their role as social mediators, their ability to facilitate a customer-centric perspective for diverse organisational members and their potential to affect organisational change. The term 'scaffold' in the thesis title signifies structures that enable and support the work of others. The research illustrates how design artefacts can function to scaffold human-centred innovation within the organisation. It contributes to knowledge about human-centred innovation processes, the role of the designer, design artefacts and design practices within organisational contexts. This research is relevant for academics, design practitioners and management audiences alike.

