

HAUS

HOW TO GROW A CREATIVE BUSINESS
WITHOUT LOSING CREATIVITY

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	PAGE 1
BACKGROUND	PAGE 1
THE BRIEF	PAGE 1
THE CLIENT	PAGE 1
THE AIM	PAGE 1
THE AMBITION	PAGE 1
THE PROCESS	PAGE 1
DESIGN AND INNOVATION	PAGE 3
THE DESIGN INNOVATION METHODOLOGY	PAGE 3
THE PROCESS	PAGE 4
CONCLUSIONS	PAGE 16
NEXT STEPS	PAGE 17

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Innovation School at the Glasgow School of Art specialises in using research expertise to explore the role of design innovation in enabling capacity for innovation and change. Previous programmes of work include Creating Cultures of Innovation funded by SFC, where the Innovation School worked with industry partners to build and enable innovation capability and drive across the organisations¹.

Culture Change is a key delivery theme for Construction Scotland Innovation Centre (CSIC), in their ambition to support the industry in developing and adopting new approaches to innovation. CSIC were aware of the cultures of innovation capability at the Innovation School at GSA, and so when Scottish Architectural Studio, HAUS, approached the Construction Scotland Innovation Centre to explore how to build their innovation culture, the connection was made with the Innovation School to develop a collaborative project.

THE BRIEF

The key challenge posed by HAUS was to help establish a structured methodology to embed and enhance and support their current innovation culture. HAUS were ambitious in their desire to grow the business nationally and internationally, building on brand recognition to increase their value as a studio within the industry. However, they wished to achieve this growth without compromising the creative studio culture they had established. The innovation challenge of, 'how to grow a creative business without losing creativity', was therefore placed at the forefront of this co-design project

THE CLIENT

HAUS was established six years ago through the pursuit of an 'idea', a desire to design and create, to learn and educate, influence and enjoy, a studio of innovation. However, for innovation to become central to their approach they were aware they needed to create the space and environment where people feel free to unleash and discover their talents and passions, and engage and interact in the hard work of innovative problem solving.

They aspire to create a studio with the sensibility of a 'community', breaking down hierarchy to allow anyone, regardless of experience or role, to offer comment and ideas enriching their design process. Their goal is not to do business with everybody who needs what they have, nor hire people who just need a job; their goal is to invest in people who share their beliefs and passion. Through this pursuit of idea and innovation, they believe their architecture can contribute to the world that addresses social, cultural and economic issues enhancing human experience. This project for HAUS is key to the studio for developing a Culture of Innovation that will be the basis for the strategic growth and expansion of their studio, client base and projects without losing the creativity which is at the core of any creative business.

THE AIM

The project aim was to explore with HAUS "how to grow a creative business without losing creativity" by using GSA's design innovation expertise as an approach to build capacity and capability. Through that process the ambition was also to further develop and test a Culture of Innovation methodology that could be shared with other parts of the construction sector through CSIC dissemination. By co-designing a methodology where innovation behaviour drives change and engenders better practise, one of the outputs for Haus was to be able to create a self-perpetuating model which can be replicated for any small design studio, and in particular to use it to open a studio in New York in the next 5 years.

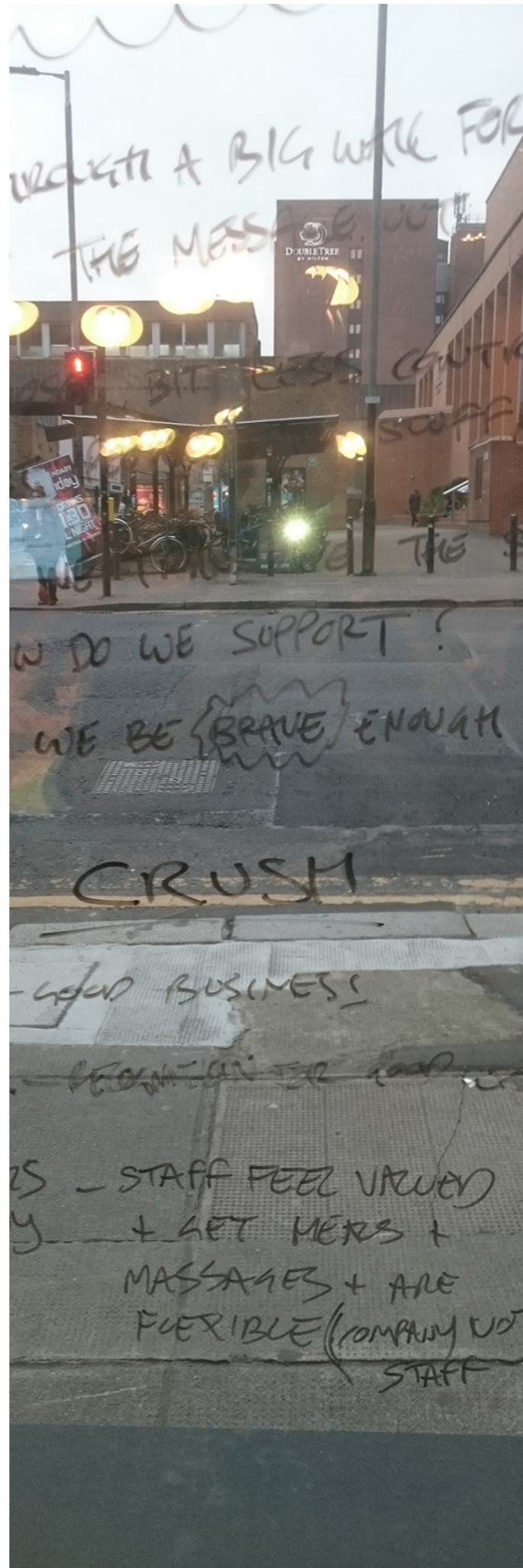
1. <https://www.gsainnovationschool.co.uk/project/creating-cultures-of-innovation>

THE AMBITION

This project pioneered the use of design innovation methodology from an academic partner to support a design company to liberate the knowledge, skills, competence and potential that resides within the practice. With the aim of working towards an innovative methodology to accelerate growth, the outcomes of this project will enable HAUS to work on projects of a larger scale, expanding into new international markets and across a variety of sectors, that would not normally be typical for an Architecture Studio of the scale or age of HAUS. The practice has already secured several larger scale projects based on their approach, but the establishment of the Culture of Innovation would allow the practice to consolidate and build on this potential. Defining a Culture of Innovation will allow HAUS to establish a framework to support innovation and an entrepreneurial approach to their development, which has already played an important factor in their success during the first six years of the practice.

THE PROCESS

All members of the studio worked collaboratively with the Innovation School team to develop the HAUS Culture of Innovation methodology through a series of design innovation workshops that explored the innovation challenge and opportunity for growth, and co-designed, iterated and tested improved approaches. This process assisted in identifying the key success elements for growth of a creative company, and informed HAUS' action plan for growth. The workshops, whilst delivering innovations and improvements, also acted as a vehicle to encourage and instill an innovation culture within the organisation.



DESIGN AND INNOVATION

The Innovation School at the Glasgow School of Art uses Design Innovation approaches to help explore innovation problems and opportunities. Through the development of Design Innovation as a way of structuring group creativity towards valuable outcomes, it enables businesses and communities to prototype new services and work practices, tackling cultural and economic challenges and creating policies to enable communities to flourish.

The underpinning research is "the role of design innovation as a sociological understanding" (Koskinen and Hush, 2016) where creative engagement with practitioners, groups and networks help link individual contexts with the wider system context in enabling capacity for innovation and change inclusive of practitioners' lived experiences.

The Innovation School research is not confined to one research domain but is concentrated on how a design process can be used as a catalyst for innovation. Design Innovation is focused on the methods and methodologies we use to deliver change, understanding how they work, and building the evidence that supports this knowledge. These approaches include methods for creative and cultural engagement, for visualising complexity and eliciting future perspectives and creating shareable outputs.

THE DESIGN INNOVATION METHODOLOGY

Organisations today operate in a highly competitive, global environment, making creativity crucial. Creativity is what fuels big ideas, challenges employees' way of thinking, and opens the door to new business opportunities. For a creative design studio such as HAUS the role of creativity is a key part of what they offer and deliver, across the whole studio cohort.

The aim of this project was to explore with HAUS how to grow a creative business without losing creativity by using GSA's design innovation expertise as an approach to build

capacity and capability.

In support of this aim, GSA adopted a participatory design approach to co-design the development of insights and recommendations for HAUS, and produce actions for change that could be taken forward by HAUS to achieve their collective ambitions.

Participatory approaches use techniques such as focus groups, interviews, design workshops and narrative accounts to gather valuable experiences and are inclusive of a wide variety of perspectives and skills that contribute to ideas for change. The approach took HAUS through a phased process aimed at: understanding the current culture and practices of HAUS, identifying and highlighting key issues and assets in the business based on personal and collective experiences, and collectively prioritizing identified challenges and co-creating ideas and solutions to address them and to amplify existing assets in the business. The overall aim was to feed the ideas and solutions into 'everyday working practices' at HAUS and develop plans for change for the future.

The value in this type of approach is it enables the whole HAUS team to have a clear view of the whole company, their role within it, and supports sharing and understanding of experiences from multiple perspectives to prompt debate on the most salient challenges and opportunities for creative growth. By linking individual contexts to the wider context of HAUS and engaging every member of the team in the process, the participatory approach develops solutions that are robust and realistic as well as innovative and creative.

Through a phase of pre-work, and a series of three design workshops the HAUS team explored issues, challenges, ideas and opportunities for innovative changes to HAUS, its culture and working practices, and strategies for future growth. In addition, the experiences of other creative businesses was explored, looking at existing best practice and challenges to creative growth that others have experienced and from which HAUS could learn.

The overall process used four main phases:

Phase 0 | Mapping HAUS | Pre-work.

Phase 1 | What is HAUS? | Workshop one

Phase 2 | Managing the right change | Workshop two.

Phase 3 | Making the right choices | Workshop three

The next section opens up the process in more detail. It discusses activities and actions from each phase, and introduces the tools and techniques applied to support HAUS in achieving their goals. The tools themselves are shared in a separate “toolkit” document for ease of reference. The case studies from other creative businesses are also collated separately.

THE PROCESS

HAUS architects wished to collaborate with Innovation School at the Glasgow School of Art to build a culture of innovation across the company as they grow and expand.

HAUS wished to include the whole organisation in the process, whilst taking forward the tangible ambition to internationalise and be established in New York in 5 years. As well as delivering a successful growth action plan for HAUS, this process also aimed to identify the key success elements for growth of a creative company, and pilot and demonstrate the innovative culture process within this sector. This would generate a structure around things to do and things not to do in this process.

It was envisaged that this would be delivered through a programme of initial interactions between GSA and HAUS, and three interlinked participatory workshops as shown in Fig one.

These stages were underpinned by in-house homework so that ideas and key questions could be tried and tested in between the workshops. In addition, a specific piece of research was fed into workshop three, looking at successful creative companies who have managed to grow and internationalise and learn lessons from their experience.

Phase 0 | Mapping HAUS | Pre-work

The intention for the initial phase was to build a current picture of HAUS, its people, culture and practices. This could then be used as a baseline which could be used to scope and shape the subsequent interventions, and from which to evidence change. It was also the intention during this first phase to work with the senior team at HAUS to co-develop the key aims and objectives of the project through a pre-briefing and discussion. The three key elements of this phase were:

- Frame the challenge for co-design with HAUS senior team
- Preparations of workshop and materials
- Briefing and “pre-homework” for HAUS staff

The approach

The GSA design team took a mix method approach to complete phase 0. A series of collective interviews with the senior team at HAUS framed the innovation challenge and set the key aims and objectives, as well as agreeing a scope of the project and the level of involvement and responsibility of the wider team. This took the form of a group interviews exploring history, ambitions, structure, communication and culture within the current HAUS organisation. Insights from these interviews helped inform the exercises for workshop one, including any pre-homework that would act as a feeder to discussions.

Setting ‘homework’ tasks for the HAUS team was an important part of the approach. It facilitated collection and collation of information in between workshops, and maximised time spent physically working together. It also acted as an opportunity to embed and further develop some of the changes identified during the different workshops.

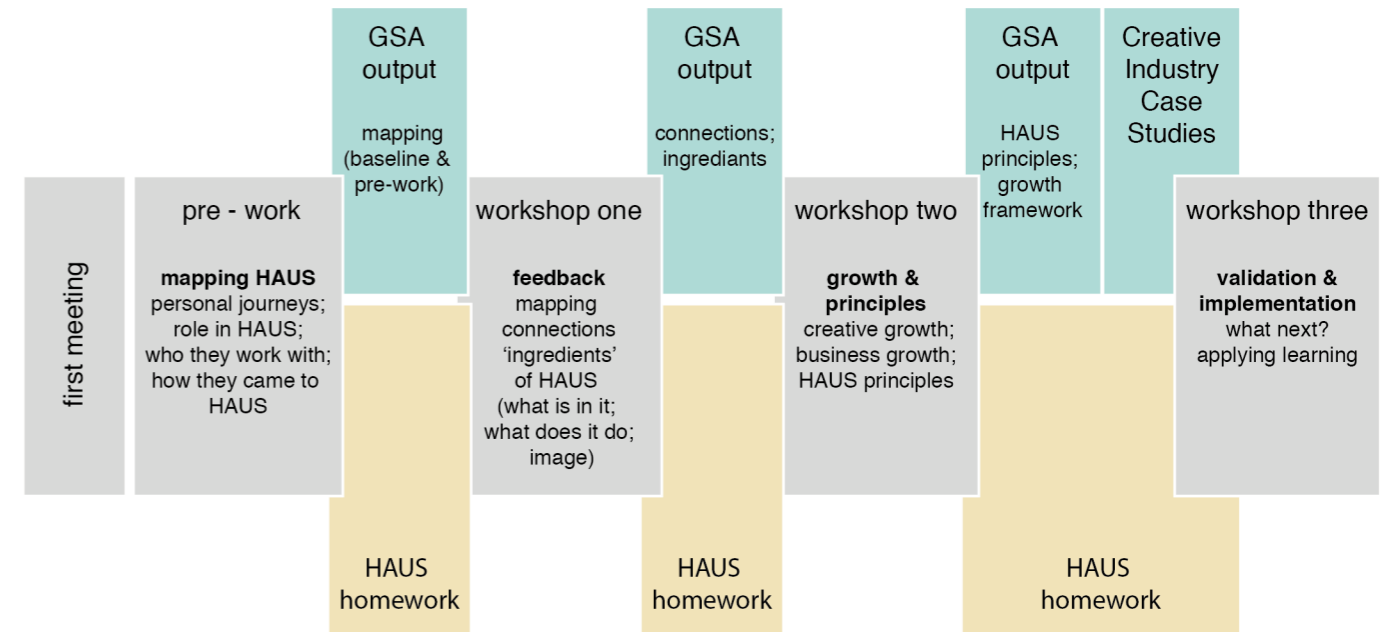


Figure one: intervention plan. Each workshop was supported by ‘homework’ assignments. A series of case studies focused on other creative businesses fed into workshop three.

Prior to workshop one the HAUS team were set a number of homework tasks. This helped to explore the current culture and different perceptions of their approach within the organisation. HAUS employees were asked to:

- Define HAUS in single words now and in the future.
- Illustrate a typical day in the life at HAUS.
- Describe HAUS as a night out.
- Describe themselves as individuals and individual connections inside the company.

This individual homework was then collated and analysed to bring together a collective HAUS perspective on these aspects. During workshop one these proved valuable discussion vehicles as they made visible different perspectives and understandings. For example the cube exercise describing HAUS in three words now and in the future, was collated into an overall “HAUS Periodic Table” showing the different “elements” that made up (or could make up) HAUS. (see fig 2)

The tools used to elicit this information and some examples of the responses can be seen in the ‘toolkit’ appendix. The resulting analysis of the ‘homework’ developed a collective picture of the day to day at HAUS, the work culture, the aspirations for the future and the staff profiles, and the “elements” of HAUS. This was then used as the basis for the design of the first co-design workshop.

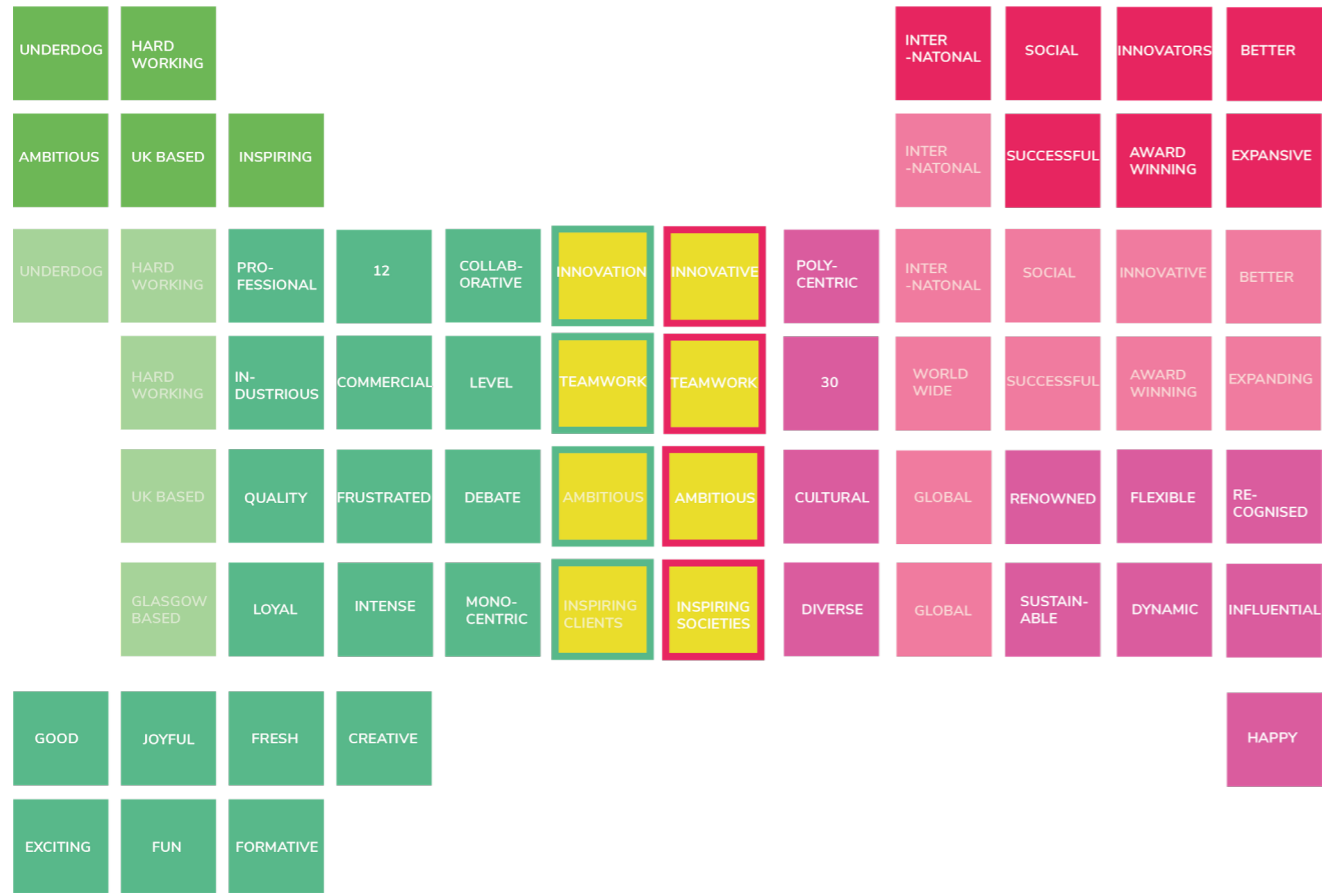


Figure two: results of the 'cube' homework. Employees were asked to define HAUS now (left) and for the future (right) in words. Darker shades indicate frequently occurring words. Words in the middle appeared in both the now and future definitions.

Culture Principles

Value and nurture all staff

Be flexible and varied in the projects we do

Be a good role model

Always be proud of our work

Be fun and sociable and happy

Give everyone a voice

Make people's lives better

Be sustainable

Always aim to be better

Be honest

Figure three: HAUS culture principles. First presented at workshop one, the principles were co-developed in subsequent workshops.

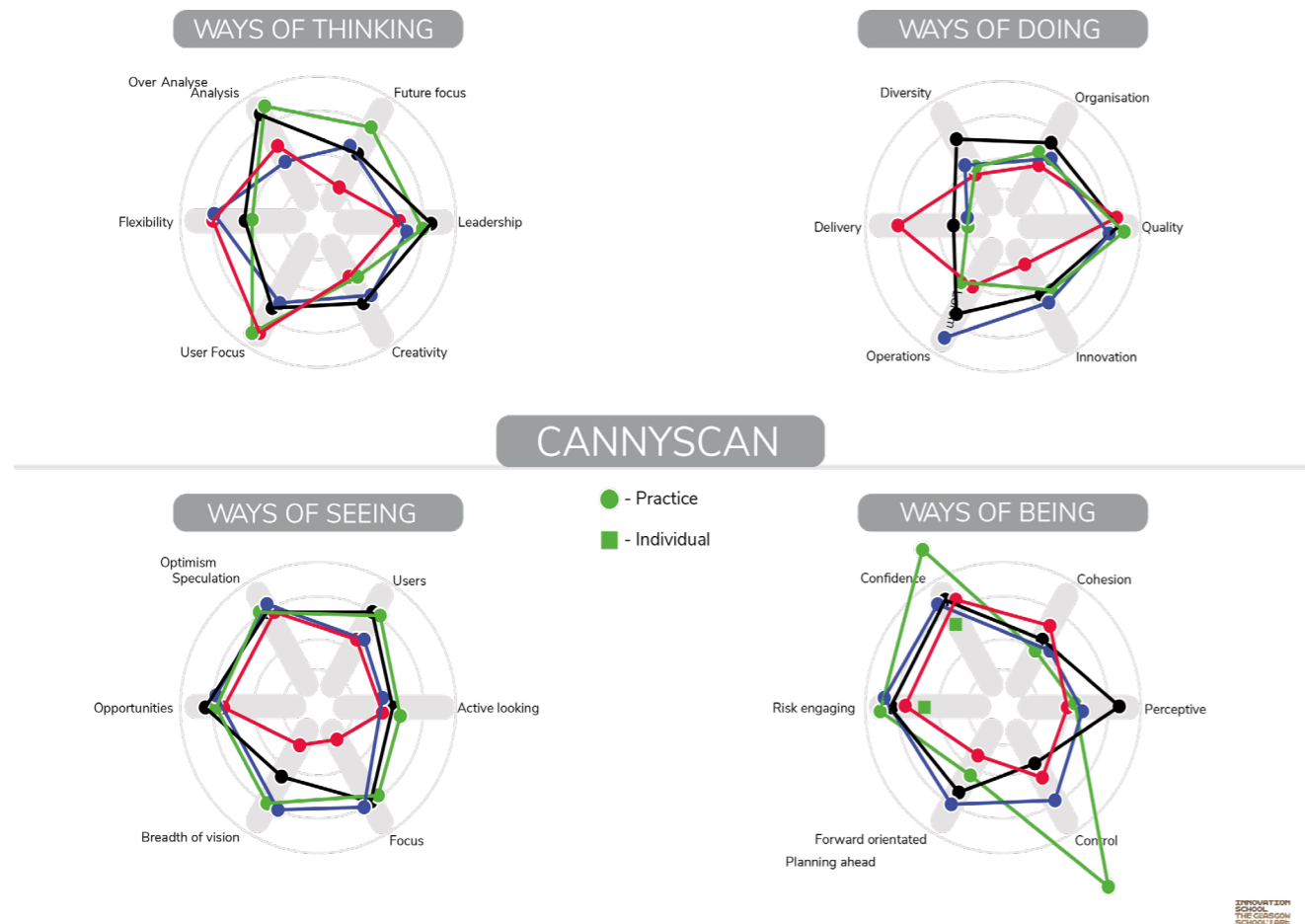


Figure four: HAUS were asked to 'rate' their current practice and creative culture using our CannyScan tool. The tool captures the rating from an individual and whole practice perspective.

Phase 1 | What is HAUS? | Workshop 1

In phase one the intention was to design and deliver a “what is Haus” exploration, including the first co-design workshop with the whole organisation, looking at history and background, who is involved and what internal and external relationships help drive forward innovation.

At this workshop the HAUS team led by the GSA design team collectively reviewed the outcomes from the pre-work and completed participatory tasks to further explore the culture of HAUS, its guiding principles, the reasons why individuals were attracted to work there and the ambition for the future.

The approach

Using visual tools and templates the HAUS and GSA design teams:

- Examined the different histories and trajectories to capture the HAUS journey
- Mapped actors, connections and relationships, internally and externally
- Explored the “personality” of HAUS
- Explored capability, behaviours needed to continue the journey (in particular focusing on areas of improvement), within HAUS and beyond HAUS.

Prior to the workshop the GSA team had reviewed the homework to develop the set of combined terms that could sum up HAUS in its current state which were presented back for discussion as the periodic table (fig. 2). Typical ‘days in the life’ were reviewed for similarities and differences and also presented back to the group for discussion. Key HAUS principles (fig. 3) were developed and discussed in the workshop, the aim was to dig down into a shared ethos for HAUS they could use as a basis or ‘checklist’ for future growth.

To add to this during the workshop, small teams produced an appraisal of the key skills and working practices in HAUS, noting capabilities and deficiencies currently, using a tool

developed by GSA called a ‘Canny Scan’ (fig.4) exploring ways of being, ways of seeing, ways of thinking and ways of doing². A full set of the tools used in the workshop and some examples of content generated during the workshop can be seen in the toolkit appendix.

The workshop inspired some in depth discussions amongst the group around their current culture and approaches to work within HAUS, and how they collectively wanted them to be in the future.

Phase 2 | Managing the right change | Workshop 2

Again homework tasks were set to support the design of the second workshop and contribute to the overall aims of the project. These tasks would further explore the internal relationships and working practices of HAUS and encourage staff to reflect on how they apply their principles in their work. Homework tasks included mapping their inner (within HAUS) and outer (beyond HAUS) connections and networks. They were also asked to reflect on the first workshop, and feed-back what and how things had changed. Phase two aimed to develop initial key aims for HAUS in three key areas:

- Business Growth
- Creative growth
- Being HAUS (personality and culture)

The ambition was to start to unpick in detail the barriers and opportunities for these three growth areas in both the working practices and cultural aspects of the business. It was also important to define as a team what each of these terms meant to HAUS as individuals and as an organisation. A key focus of workshop two was to understand their current ways of working, and particularly their design and delivery process and how they worked collectively to achieve results.

The approach

In this second co-design workshop, HAUS collectively completed a number of participatory

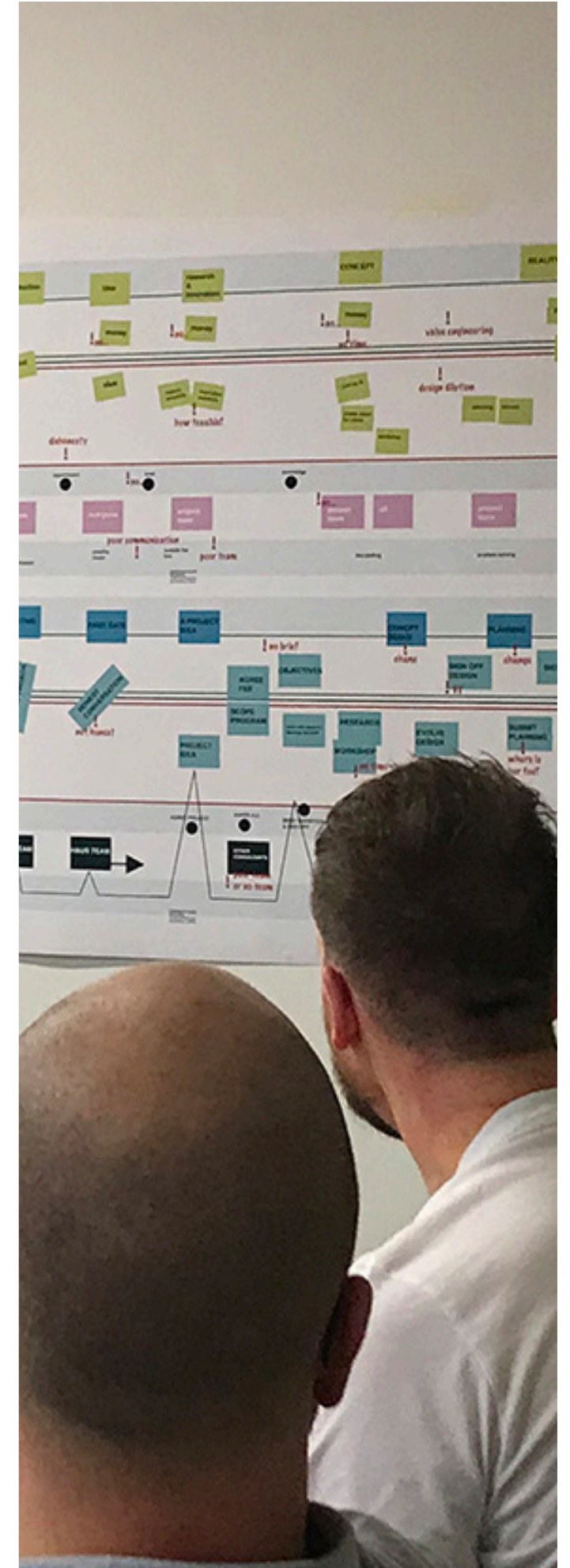
exercises to address two key questions. The key questions addressed in this phase were:

- What is the HAUS design process?
- What does HAUS mean by business growth, creative growth, and how can that be integrated with the HAUS personality generated in the first workshop?

Outputs from workshop one were synthesised into visual material and brought into workshop two for discussion and further iteration. This helped solidify the collective perspective of culture and values for the organisation. Visual tools were created by the GSA design team to explore the above questions, including a process map which was populated during the workshop which was used to dig down into the typical HAUS approach to architecture, the frustrations and assets, the approach and role of creativity and the opportunities for the future growth (fig 5). During the workshop the collective understanding and definition of creativity and innovation were also tested through a series of “provocation” statements, helping to draw out agreement and divergence of opinion in these aspects.

Based on the process map a current HAUS design approach was produced (figure 6). The process was used to define where innovation and creativity play a role in HAUS’s current design practice, with the aim of identifying the key opportunities for creative growth in the company. The process and a breakdown of key activities at each phase (fig 7) are illustrated below along with an illustration of the original process map. A full set of tools from this phase can be seen in the toolkit appendix.

The two ‘maps’ were analysed following the workshop and used to develop a high level HAUS design process and a more detailed description of the elements of each of the design process phases. The outcome of the analysis was a synthesis of two different scale project processes and also the group discussion that took place in the workshop. The discussion allowed the team to share their views on where they could add value to the current process and where they believed



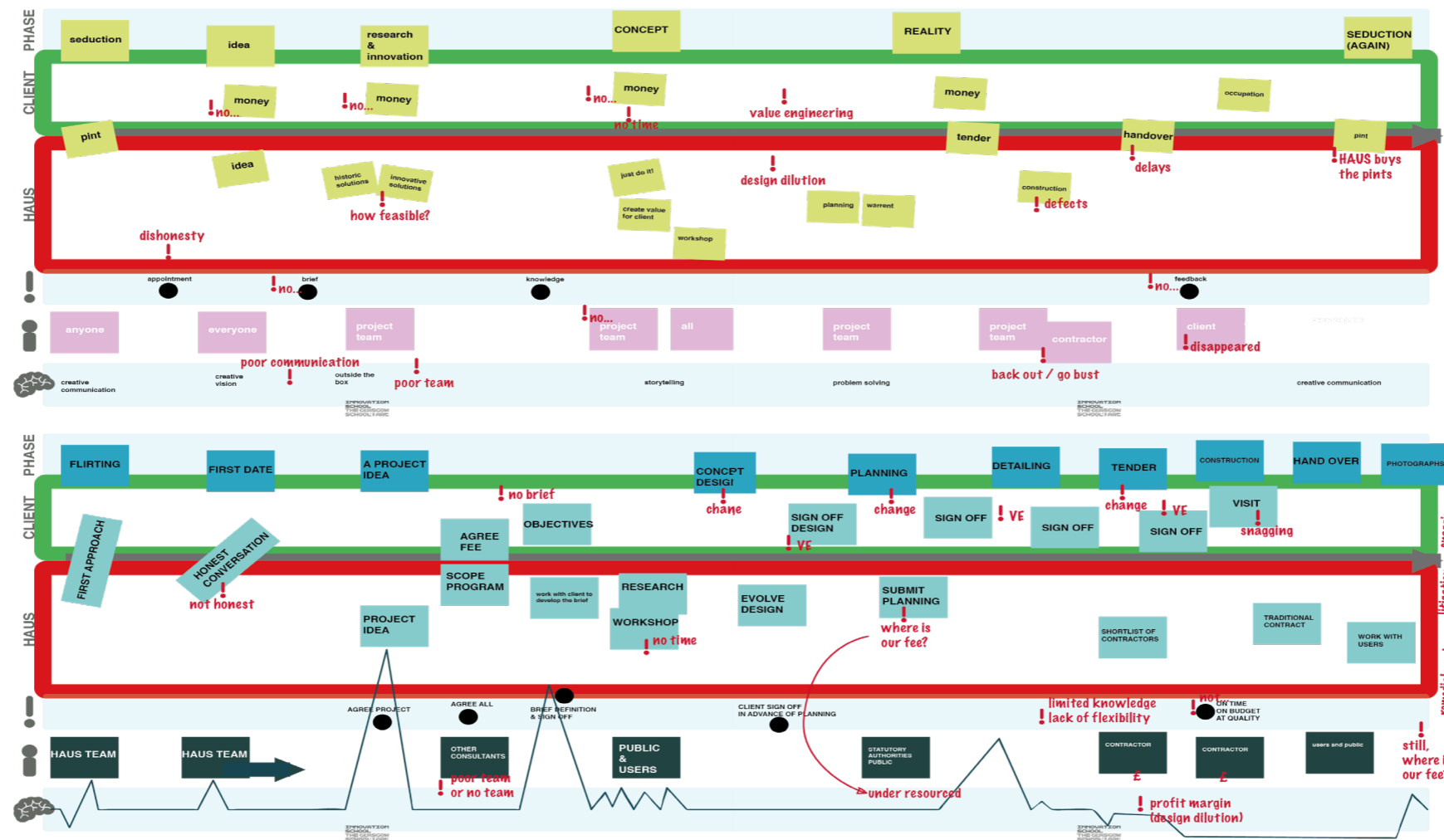


Figure five: the HAUS process mapped out for large (top) and small (bottom) projects. Two teams discussed typical project timelines, their design approach and issues they encounter, as well as the role of creativity within the process.

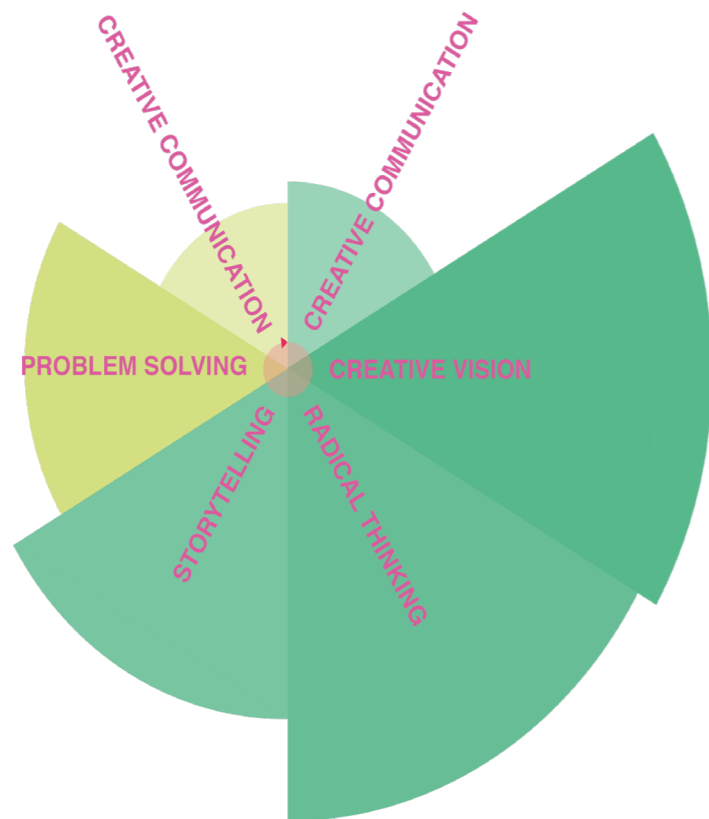


Figure six: the HAUS design process. Collated from two maps of typical project processes co-developed in workshop one and used to illustrate the opportunities for creative growth as well as the role of creativity within the process.

CREATIVE COMMUNICATION	CREATIVE VISION	RADICAL THINKING	STORYTELLING	PROBLEM SOLVING
FLIRTING SEDUCTION APPOINTMENT	IDEAS FIRST DATE PROJECT SCOPE	FIRST CONCEPT RESEARCH INNOVATION WORKSHOP	DEVELOP CONCEPT CREATE VALUE	DETAILING VALUE ENGINEERING SIGN OFF CONSTRUCTION



Figure seven: the HAUS design process in detail. The key activities involved in each phase of the HAUS design process

the process could be strengthened in terms of business and creative growth. The process uncovered the reality of where creativity plays a role in what HAUS currently do and where there are gaps that could be addressed in the future. Figure six illustrates where HAUS currently apply the most creativity in their work, the sections with the largest area show the points of most applied creativity.

Phase three | Making the right choices | Workshop 3

In this phase the aim was to generate a strategic action plan for HAUS based on the previous insights gathered from the earlier workshops. Alongside this, lessons learned for growing a creative business, and a framework for building an innovation culture (things to do and not to do, things to consider) were discussed. To inform the workshop design an additional piece of research looked at successful creative companies and how they have managed to grow and internationalise. This involved the GSA team completing desk research and interviews with Creative Industry companies that have broken into international markets and yet retained their identity, to capture their learning and generate case studies.

The approach

In this final workshop the GSA team moved the HAUS team from ideas and exploration to action planning and making choices. It included identifying how to say no and challenging whether there is a 'good fit' with HAUS, to maintain growth whilst keeping to HAUS culture and ethos. It was in this phase that we also discussed cultural and operational changes that could happen to support the ambition for the future growth of the company. These changes would be evaluated through subsequent engagement with HAUS after a period of 'bedding in' changes.

After reviewing and updating outputs from the previous two workshops, including the culture principles and the CannyScan assessment HAUS agreed their key actions to take forward and developed.

The homework from workshop two included individual reflection on the key attributes needed for creative growth, key internal and external connections for growth, and a look toward the future with a speculative day in the life scenario, taking forward the baseline assessment and building in what HAUS had already learnt and adopted from the process.

The outcomes from these tasks formed the basis of our discussion in this final workshop and helped to develop the action plans for HAUS to takeaway and implement as part of their new culture and practice. In this phase internal connections and external connections were revisited and revised into more concise 'maps'. The maps were used to explore how internal communications and collaborative ways of working could be improved for internal working (see figure 8), and a strategy to develop external connections to aid the growth of the company (see figure 9).

Figure eight shows how individuals from HAUS view their working relationships within the company at three levels: deep collaboration, peripheral collaboration, and social connection. Both internal and external connection maps formed the basis of discussion in the workshop around where and how to develop and strengthen relationships. As a result of these discussions HAUS identified an opportunity to develop ways of making projects more visible to the whole team to engender more collaborative working internally. In addition they identified four key areas of external connections they could strengthen to enable growth both creatively and for the business. Those of contractors and suppliers, clients, advisors and consultants, and market. Included in the discussion were strategies that would enable this development, these can be seen in figure nine.

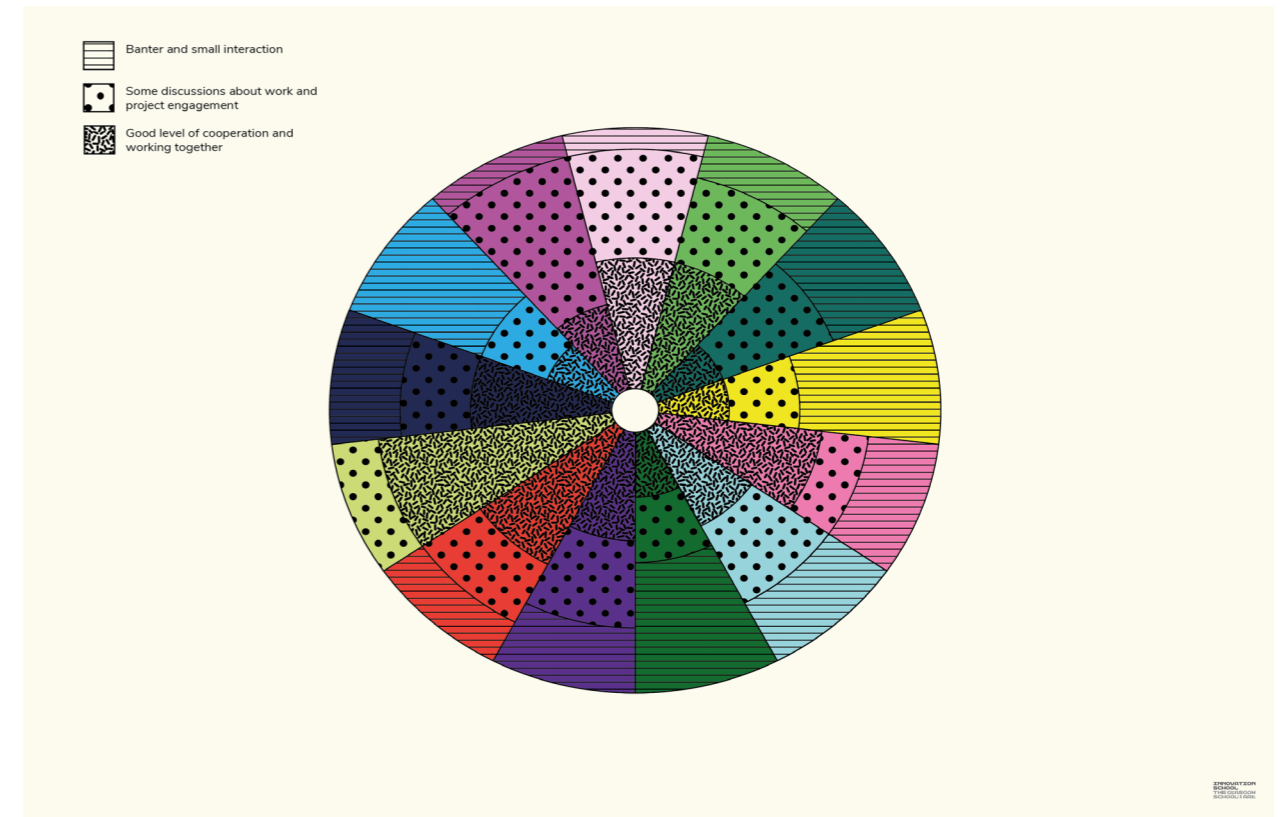


Figure eight: Mapping internal connections – this helped explore how HAUS could improve internal communications and collaborative working

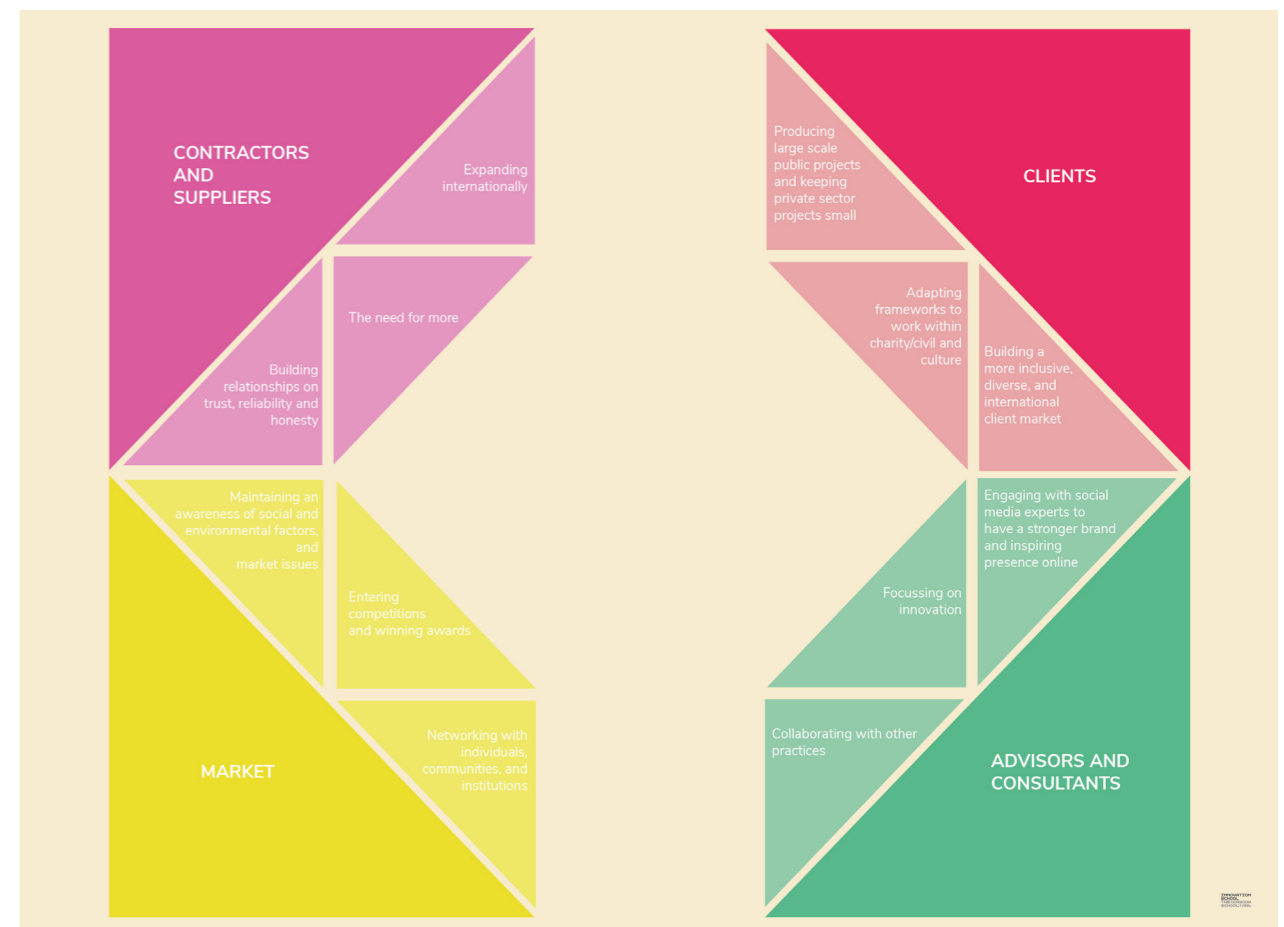


Figure nine: illustration of HAUS strategy to develop external relationships for growth. Informed by homework and further developed collectively as part of the final co-design workshop

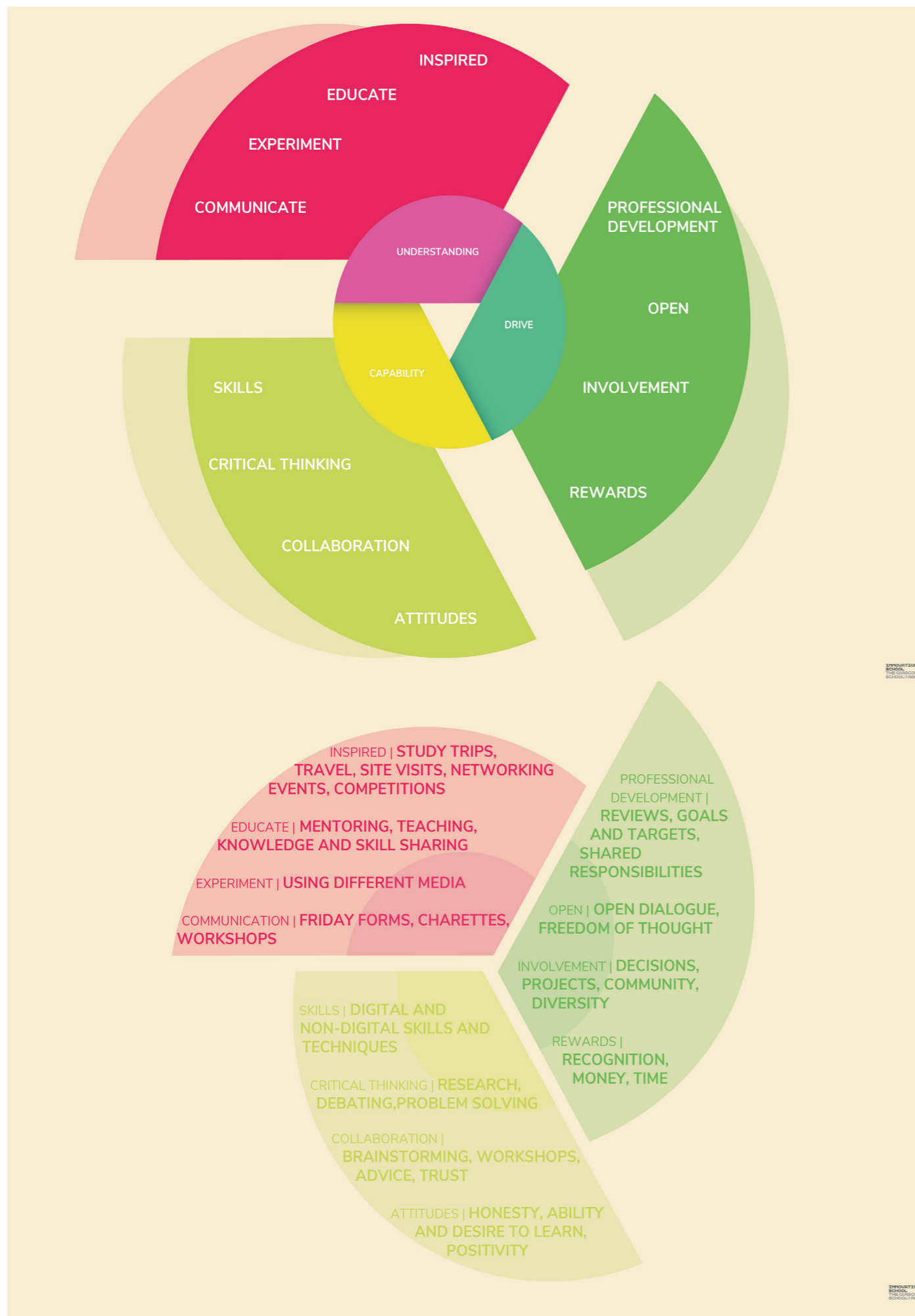


Figure ten: HAUS homework on creative and business growth – what they needed to do to improve their understanding, capability and drive in order to make their growth ambitions a reality.

In the build-up to the final phase the GSA team interviewed a number of creative businesses about their cultures and working practices. The aim was to garner some insight into what other successful creative businesses had done to achieve growth without losing creativity and any other learning that could be valuable to HAUS. Prior to the final workshop the GSA team reflected on the outputs from the case studies around people, practice and place and what learning there might be for HAUS.

Key insights included:

- People are the biggest asset. It is important to allow people to grow and develop. Make sure people are the right fit for the company culture, not just the right skill set.
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes as long as you learn from them. It is important to balance working apart and working together. Keep things visible to everyone so everyone can make a contribution.
- Technology means that geography is no longer a problem. You can work with people anywhere. Find the right ethos for the place you base your work. Surround yourself with the people and cultures you aspire to be.

Full case studies can be seen in the case study appendix.

The final stage of the process was to guide HAUS through action planning based on the learning so far, and to then put into practice the changes needed to take the business forward. It should be noted that due to the Covid 19 outbreak the phase of HAUS implementing change has been postponed until their normal working patterns resume.

As part of preparation in the final workshop the group had reflected again on the “elements” of HAUS established in the first workshop, and the HAUS principles.

As a final input the GSA team shared some of the key themes that kept emerging in any discussions, and should be included in any final action plan. These included:

- Trust, Decisions & Control
- Choosing Projects
- Creativity & Innovation
- Fun & Enjoyment
- Internal Collaboration
- Research & Innovation
- Time
- International Growth
- Financially Sustainable

The group was then tasked with developing their action plan for HAUS, in particular focusing on Relationships (who with), Audiences (who for), Outputs (What for) and How/Knowhow (what with).

CONCLUSIONS

At this early stage (i.e. just post workshop delivery) it is too soon to assess the ultimate success of the programme for HAUS. Plans for an immediate post workshop evaluation have had to be put on hold due to Coronavirus lockdown, which given the change in external context may also threaten the growth plans of HAUS and many other businesses. These conclusions therefore just capture the reflections and changes immediately delivered through the workshops, and the learning for GSA from delivering the approach within a creative studio organisation.

As part of the homework between each workshop HAUS were asked to reflect on and feed back any changes already in place. Participants reported positive changes already in place including more involvement of everybody, open and questioning culture, more communication. There were also some improvements already being put in place to improve the ways of working in the organisation, allowing more involvement of all and being embedded through planned changes in structure to allow greater delegation.

As a result of participation in the workshops HAUS have reported changes to their current business culture and practice that includes, more open discussions, better communications, and a collective ethos.

In the final workshop actions plans were initiated and were to be finalised as part of the homework as part of a collective endeavour for the studio. The plans put in place a series of practical aims and objectives that HAUS can implement to build the creative and business growth they set out at the start of this process. These success of these plans will be reviewed during post workshop evaluation which is planned for the future when normal working life resumes.

For GSA researchers this project allowed the testing of Design Innovation approaches in building a culture of innovation within a creative design driven organisation. The project allowed further development and renewal of tools and approaches, and proved beneficial in engaging all participants in collective understanding of the business and the opportunities for growth. The approach of looking internally at culture initially (understanding the elements and character of the organisation), then sharing a collective understanding of their approach to working and delivery (including the role of creativity), and finally learning from others, but also building on those foundations to put practical steps in place for growth, worked well as a process that can be adapted and adopted by others.

We look forward to following with further evaluation in the future with HAUS, and also in the opportunity for further testing of this approach with other organisations keen to build a better culture of innovation, and to grow their businesses without losing their creativity.

THE NEXT STEPS

To achieve their internationalisation goal HAUS will need to continue to be successful, but also to maintain a culture that allows the organisation to evolve and grow, to be sustainable and resilient, and yet to still be HAUS.

The series of iterative workshops and homework tasks allowed HAUS to continually reflect and assess what they wanted the future to hold for HAUS as well as giving consideration to their own personal values and growth.

Phase 0 and Phase 1 explored the history and background to HAUS, uncovering the stories behind the organisation which helped articulate a preferred studio culture. Through a series of understanding and accepting the HAUS personality, individually and as a collective, and by mapping out central relationships and connections, key specifications emerged that were integral to the HAUS culture.

To realise its internationalisation ambition HAUS needed to grow and change, but with an awareness that this change needs to be managed to ensure the growth is in the right approach. Key elements identified include becoming robust and resilient, but still producing what is felt to be “good” and credible work rather than just chasing financial benefits. Phase 2 allowed HAUS to explore change across three elements, all of which must be balanced:

- Business Growth
- Creative growth
- Being HAUS (personality and culture)

The earlier phases generated insightful options and ideas which linked to the final phase of identifying and maintaining growth whilst keeping to the newly refined HAUS culture and ethos. Phase 3 required a sense of motivation and drive to action, which by generating a strategic action plan for HAUS, allowed lessons to be learned for growing a creative business, and a framework for building an innovation culture.

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