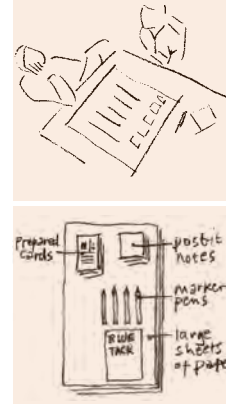


Method 3: Mapping innovation ecosystems

Time involved	Preparation, 120 minutes Using the method, 90 minutes
Associated capabilities	Recombine capacities into new innovation ecosystems Increase the variance/bring in new actors
Methods to use before or after this one	Method 4 Mapping the user experience Method 5 Creating a persona/storyworld

What you'll need

One table per group
Large sheets of paper, Post-it notes, Blu-Tack, marker pens
One set of cards per group (see preparation)
A facilitator to guide the teams
A documenter to photograph the results



key question

What are the actors involved in an innovation ecosystem, what are their roles and how do they connect?

Purpose

This method stimulates participants to shift towards identifying the diverse actors involved in an innovation ecosystem, such as people, things and technologies, organizations, the roles they play and how they connect. It involves creating a visual map of the actors involved. One way of using the method is for participants to analyze the current ecosystem (the as-is). Another is to assemble actors and capacities together into a new ecosystem (the to-be).

Outcomes

Creating a collective visual map results in a shared understanding of the complex world of people, things and organizations involved in co-creating value. It opens up understanding of connections and interdependencies between actors and the contingencies shaping how they connect. Instead of focusing exclusively on people and organizations, it highlights the sometimes mundane material and digital things within an ecosystem, thus offering an on-the-ground view of a value constellation that is oriented to value-in-use. Using this method allows teams to explore what could happen in the future, by adding in new actors to a value constellation, or by combining actors and capacities in new ways.

Tip

Preparing a visual deck of cards allows participants to draw on different parts of their brains, increasing the diversity of ideas generated in the process.

Preparation

You'll get most out of this method if you customize it to your specific context by preparing a deck of cards in advance. You don't need graphic design skills, just an enquiring mind, access to the web, a printer, paper or card, sticky tape and scissors. Involve several people in making at least 30-50 cards to increase the diversity of ideas.

First, create a list of different actors with some connection to your issue. The aim is to harvest a diversity of digital and material things, people, organizations, technologies, capacities and places as part of the lives of the people and contexts you are thinking about working with, or already work with. Use the checklist on the template, but modify or add to any of the actors, to keep it relevant to your context. Make one card for each actor. Each actor needs a description, and some needs and capacities. If possible, get colour images that capture or allude to these actors. Be specific. For example, if you want to include a major supermarket chain as an actor, name it.

Print out the cards approximately eight to an A4 page. Prepare enough sets of cards for small groups to use in the workshop. Make sure they also have blank cards to create other actors if they need to.

How to do it –

Version 1: Describing the as-is

Explore the shared issue. Introduce the issue or opportunity you want to analyze. For example, this might be a question relating to a goal such as “How can we encourage customers to self-serve using the web?” Or it could be an issue such as “How can we support young people with limited social capital to improve their employability?” If you have created

persona storyworlds (Method 5) or mapped user journeys (Method 4), have these available for people to explore and share.

Identify the actors. If you have not made a card deck in advance, the first job is to make one. Invite people to create cards based on the template, to describe actors they think are part of the issue or service. Each actor needs a description, and some needs and capacities. The template suggests some of the people, technologies, organizations, digital and material things, and needs and capacities that might be involved in, or connected to, the issue or opportunity. Each group should make about 30-50 actor cards.

If you have made a card deck, make sure everyone has access to it, along with some blank cards. Ask participants to look through the cards and review whether or not they make sense, by asking if – together – these actors are a reasonable approximation of the various people, organizations, technologies and capacities involved in an issue.

Identify the central actors. Ask participants to draw a set of concentric circles on a large piece of paper. Now, ask the groups to choose actors to be located at the centre of the circles. These could be one or more cards representing a segment of customers or users, but people could also choose a resource such as a database or building. Be clear who or what this is and why it has been chosen.

Arrange the actors. Then ask groups to select and loosely arrange the cards on the circles in relation to the central person or thing. The more important an actor is to how value is co-created, the closer it should be to the centre. Aim to place a minimum of 20 actors onto the map. People may not agree how closely related things are or what their roles are – which is useful discussion.

Identify the flows. Ask participants to use marker pens to draw flows of money, data, or brand associations between the actors.

Identify the roles. Now ask participants to use marker pens to identify actors that play key roles in holding the value constellation together. Use the template for some suggestions.

Share and tell. Finally, ask participants to present their maps to the wider group. Discuss what makes a strong ecosystem (e.g. formal or informal partnerships, socio-cultural factors, proximity) and which actors might be important but hidden from view because they are considered mundane (e.g. databases).

Reflect. Discuss how stable the ecosystem is and what might disrupt or change it. Which actors are on the margins? Is it important or inevitable that they are there, or should they be closer to the centre?

Synthesize. Finally, summarize observations about the key roles and resources of the ecosystem as it is right now. Note these down on a flipchart.

Version 2: Reconfiguring the hybrid to-be

Ask “what if?” This variant starts by asking people to focus on what an ecosystem could look like in the future over a particular horizon (e.g. next year or in five years). Begin with a blank piece of paper marked with concentric circles. Pick some actor cards to be in the centre, and invite people to arrange the other cards in relation to these central actors. Again, draw

the flows of money, data and brand associations between actors. Identify key roles that actors play in holding the ecosystem together.

Ask questions that focus on imagining what could happen to the people or organizations involved – e.g. “What if X happened?” Imagine adding a new digital or material object, organization, group of people, or technology into the ecosystem. How would the addition of something new disrupt the ecosystem? How would other actors respond to accommodate the change? Invite participants to move the cards around to result in different combinations. Do you need to add new actors or change their roles? How could the flows of money, data and brand associations change?

Reflect. Compare the future configuration to today’s ecosystem. What would need to happen for the new ecosystem to exist?

Mapping innovation ecosystems

Use this to describe key actors that co-create value together

Card format

Actor name
Description
Capacities
Needs

Descriptions

People

Adult
Child
Family member
Friend
Neighbour
Employee
Volunteer
Manager
Expert
By-stander
Person with special needs
(others you can think of)

Things and technologies

Smartphone
Tablet computer
PC
Database
Software application
Sensor
Website
Mobile app
Application form
Poster
Retail outlet
Call centre
Web chat
Email
Package
(others you can think of)

Organizations

Large consumer organization
B2B organization
Non-profit organization
Community group
Small business
Entrepreneur
Venture
Municipality/local authority
Technology provider

Utility
Central government
Regulator
University
Intermediary
Public institution
Financial institution
Investor
(others you can think of)

Roles actors play

User
Customer
Beneficiary
Connector
Solution creator
Resource provider
Infrastructure provider
Hub
Influencer
(others you can think of)

Needs and capacities

Knowing
Doing
Having
Relating
Earning
Connecting
Nurturing
Sharing
Learning
Sustaining
Assembling
Creating
Resourcing
Providing
(others you can think of)

Example

Possible new innovation ecosystem around UK older people to help them connect with remote family members or friends or interests

