

**KARELIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES**  
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**POSSIBILITIES OF COMICS AS INNOVATION TOOLS**

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Possibilities of comics as innovation tools

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**Abstract**

The topic of the thesis is to research the use of comics in innovation work and the scope of their possibilities in the future in this business-oriented field where profit is everything.

Innovation management and user-centered innovation and design probes were the main focus of the innovation work. Comics have gained attention beyond their traditional use. However, attitudes towards the medium, especially in the field of business, are prejudiced. As a term comics is relatively complicated; their main principles and elements are looked at in this thesis as well.

As a practical project, this thesis was to create a platform and a brand through which the Comics Center can develop and sell its innovation and visualization services to companies and make the versatility of comics more widely known. Research material and the knowledge basis were born from a practical training and previous projects done for the Comics Center; this was in addition to literature concerning the diversity of comics and the abilities of existing innovation principles and tools.

The versatility of comics opens new opportunities and views to the world of innovation. These possibilities are worth further research. The concept look created pleased the Comics Center, and the future plans for the project are promising.

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**OPINNÄYTETYÖ**  
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Tekijä(t)  
Jonna Kuitunen

Nimeke  
Sarjakuvan mahdollisuudet innovaatiotyökaluna

Toimeksiantaja  
Sarjakuvakeskus

#### Tiivistelmä

Opinnäytetyön aiheena on tutkia sarjakuvan käyttöä innovaatiotyöskentelyssä ja miettiä sarjakuvan elementtien mahdollisuuksia tulevaisuudessa.

Innovaatioalana opinnäytteessä keskitytään eritoten innovaatiohallintoihin, käyttäjäkeskeiseen innovointiin sekä muotoiluluotain-työkaluihin ja siihen, miten sarjakuvien käyttö voisi näissä auttaa sekä kehittyä mahdollisesti omana alueenaan. Terminä sarjakuva on suhteellisen vaikea ja sen perusajatuksia sekä elementtejä avataan myös opinnäytetyössä. Sarjakuva on saanut viime aikoina enemmän huomiota ja sen käyttöä perinteisesti. Suhtautuminen sarjakuvaa kohtaan varsinkin bisnesmaailmassa on kuitenkin ennakkoluuloinen.

Projektina opinnäytetyössä luotiin Sarjakuvakeskukselle alusta ja tälle visuaalinen ilme, jota kautta Sarjakuvakeskus pystyy kehittämään ja myymään innovaatio- ja visualisointipalveluitaan yrityksille sekä tehdä sarjakuvan monipuolisuutta tunnetummaksi.

Tutkimusmateriaali opinnäytetyölle syntyi Sarjakuvakeskuksella tehdystä harjoittelusta ja projekteista, sarjakuviin liittyvästä kirjallisuudesta ja niiden tarjoamista mahdollisuuksista sekä olemassa olevista innovaatiotyökaluista joiden erilaisia ominaisuuksia käytiin läpi.

Sarjakuvan monimuotoisuus tuo innovaatiomenetelmiin uusia ulottuvuuksia ja niiden mahdollisuuksia tulisi tutkia enemmän.

Luotu visuaalinen konsepti miellytti Sarjakuvakeskusta ja jatkosuunnitelmat hankkeelle ovat hyvin lupaavat.

Kieli  
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Asiasanat  
innovaatio, sarjakuvat, visualisointi, graafinen suunnittelu, käyttäjätutkimus

# CONTENT

1 INTRODUCTION .....	5
2 THESIS FRAMEWORK .....	7
2.1 Introduction to the project .....	7
2.2 Process timeline.....	9
2.3 Client: Comics Center .....	10
3 INNOVATION .....	12
3.1 What is innovation? .....	12
3.2 Innovation management .....	13
3.3 User-centered design & design thinking .....	15
3.4 Design probes .....	19
4 VISUALIZATION/VISUAL LANGUAGE.....	22
4.1 The basic language of humans.....	22
4.2 Vivid thinking .....	24
5 COMICS .....	26
5.1 What makes a comic? .....	26
5.2 Imagery and symbols in comics .....	28
5.3 Comics now in innovation.....	30
5.4 Pros and cons of the medium.....	32
6 PROJECT.....	35
6.2 Platform for comics .....	35
6.2 KOOKOS .....	36
6.3 Service blueprint and customer journey canvas .....	37
7 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT .....	39
7.1 Introduction .....	39
7.2 Visuals .....	39
7.3 Final results .....	42
8 CONCLUSION.....	44

REFERENCES

APPENDICES

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis maps the possibilities of comics as a competent innovation tool for designers and end-users and furthermore takes a look at the many ways of visualization and the tools available. The research presented manifests itself in the form of a website and a business card for people to purchase services where comics are used as a major innovation tool for internal and external actions inside the company. The work was commissioned by Helsinki Comics Center as a part of their plan to expand the Center's operation to previously unexplored territories as well as spread knowledge about comics.

Visualization is an important factor in our lives. Even with the new development towards user-centered design in the world of design, the most used out of the five senses is visual perception, i.e. eyesight. A huge part of a designer's work is traditionally depicted through visual results. This means a lot of information, and the messages have to be tailored for the eyes to understand (McCloud 1993.) We rely heavily on visuals and put a lot of effort on those to show the results fast. This shows how amazing our eyes are, as with a quick glimpse we are able to tell a comprehensive story from how something feels to reading different expressions and understanding scenarios and human emotions.

Comics are topical and trendy at the moment. Both commercially and artistically the field is flourishing; it is getting more response and publicity, and an increasing number of artists with various styles are entering the field. These new entries especially enrich the domestic market here in Finland as new publishing channels enable sharing faster e.g. the blog comics online. The buzz about using comics in school environments is getting stronger as well. There have been studies of how incorporating graphics novels to schools may improve memory and effective in teaching students than through common ways, e.g. through text books. (Short 2013.)

Still the comics area has its problems as an expression form and a visualization style. The combination of words and pictures together are considered, at best, a diversion for the masses and at worst a product of crass commercialism. (McCloud 1993, 140.)

Attitudes such as these should not hinder the process of coming up with new ways to improve innovation. The same trend of avoiding visuals, and especially comics, is still present in the world of business. This might be due to credibility problems and some partial prejudice factoring into why comics have not made their major breakthrough. A good example of taking something depicted as childish and turn it into a professional concept was when the toy company LEGO launched its Serious Play-concept for enhancing the innovation and business performance of companies. A toy that helps companies to level up their operation? This would be a rather new way to work, but nothing says it is not allowed. By understanding the possibilities of growth in these visual, unorthodox means of innovation, the growth in business and creativity can be boosted to great extent.

## **2 THESIS FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Introduction to the project**

Comics have been used to perpetrate innovation work, but in this thesis I wanted to research the possibilities of comics and cartoons as major components of the innovation process. Innovation is a large study field, and in the boundaries of this thesis I will concentrate mainly on the tools which visualization and storytelling would benefit the most. It was important to explore the world of innovation and comics and find the connections that exist today and how they could work in the future.

The company case through which I focused my thesis research on involves the Helsinki Comics Center, which commissioned this work as my practical training with them was ending in January 2013. For me comics have been a key element and a defining character ever since I was a child unable to read. Fortunately, I was able to do my last practical training and thesis at the Comics Center.

Embarking on this journey to map the possibilities of a relatively unfocused medium was a very demanding task, especially when the background research done on comics is small and innovation on the other hand has multiple studies. Combining these two and making a platform for them takes the research to the public and comics attract more attention this way. Understanding comics is going through the basics of visualization and the language of this sequential art.

The focus of the client project itself is in the visualization of its website and a small pamphlet. The web site hosts the whole concept in Finnish; here, clients can see the available courses, have means to contact the Comics Center and then order the service. The business card is meant to give to the potential clients face to face. The goal of the project was that the Comics Center has a good basis to start their operation on the website as soon as possible. As a designer, I provided both the research and a platform for the client, which gave them more time to question and develop their exercises and workshop packages. Through this, the client has time and a plan to develop their brand independently even after this thesis has served its purpose and my part has ended.

The two disciplines presented in this thesis form the basis of the research work. The first field studied was innovation and especially user-centered innovation, which offered essential knowledge needed to realize possibilities. To explore these new chances and broaden the horizons of innovation, a relatively new field of comics was looked into as another field. I researched and looked into to the medium of comics, and afterwards innovation was examined from a different point of view.

Figure 1 visualizes the major elements of the thesis and the connections the fields have with each other. Innovation is the main agitator and the host that connects with comics as well as a new resource of user experience where it takes new knowledge from. The two bigger elements are equal when it comes to importance and how much they contribute to the co-operation. In the thesis work graphic design is the evidence of these two together. Through graphic design the work gets a physical form and place where people can access to the knowledge the Comics Center offers.

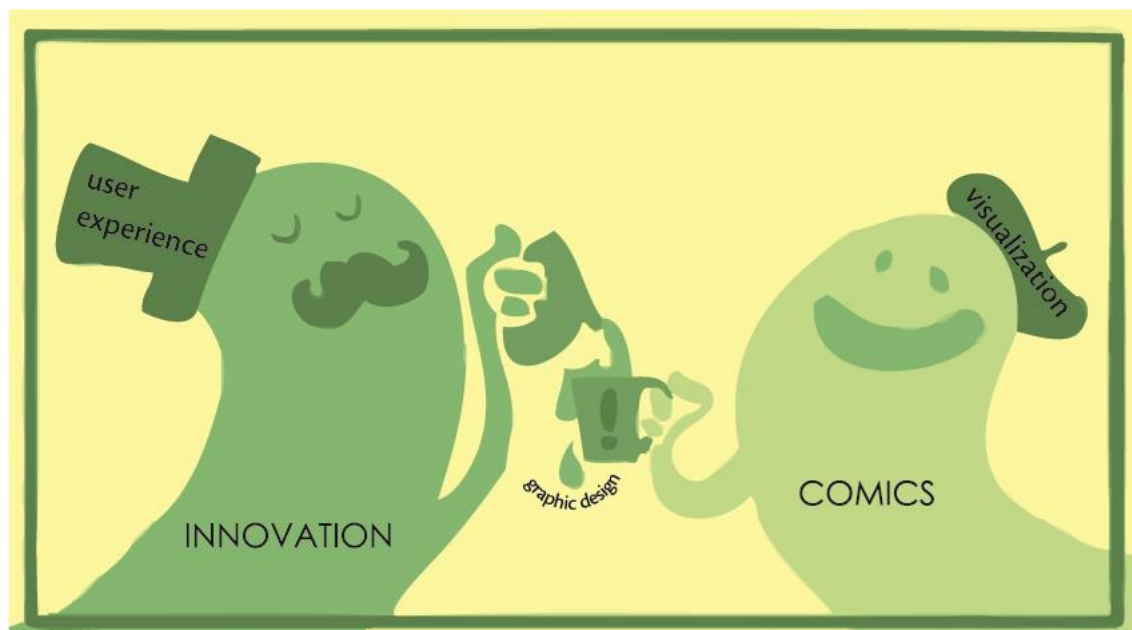


Figure 1. Visual framework.



## 2.2 Process timeline

Starting by applying the knowledge acquired from university, research and project created continuity where at first project commissioned by the client sparks up the research, supporting each other to form the base for the development and formation of a continuing snake where at the end awaits an unknown future. Requiring the needed information for the research began by reading books related to innovation and visualization. Research done about comics varies in value and was hard to come by, but academic textbooks and reliable internet sources let me understand the world and the nature of comics. Browsing through the few previous cases done by the client and their history, I had a background to see what kind of experiences companies want to have when they reach out to Comics Center and their network of teachers.

Figure 2 displays the process work of the thesis from the start until the desired finish. After the thesis plan was presented in January 2013, I put most of my energy into background research and understanding the subject matter before I felt I was ready to incorporate it to the project itself and create a platform for the brand. The knowledge acquired through this thesis process is also easy to adapt to the future development of this project. This is why the future is still unknown but highly anticipated.

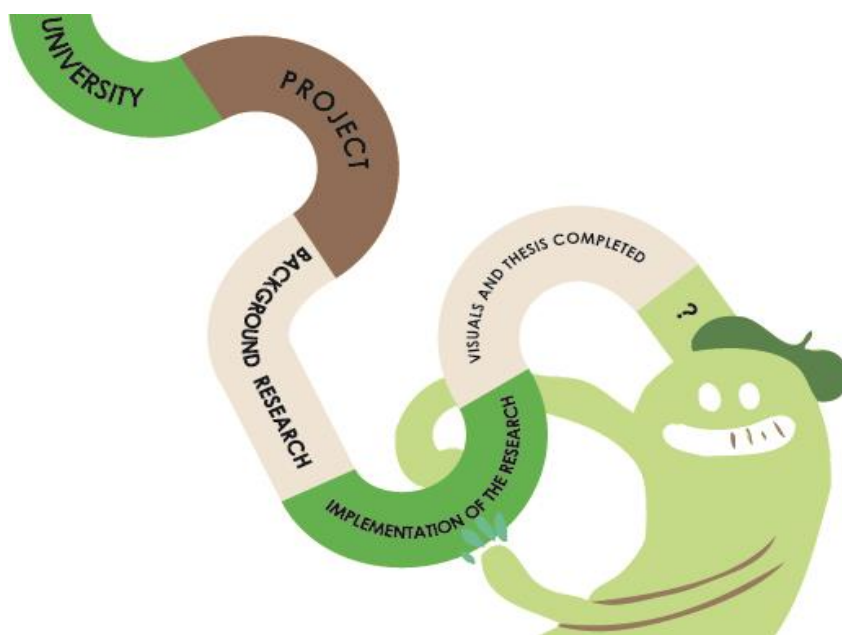


Figure 2. Thesis process

The research concluded after the thesis, as I and the people at the Comics Center evaluated the importance of the background research and seeing how it would benefit the project in the future. In April 2013 I prepared the graphic material based on the research and talk with the client in order to finish the project. Implementation was done by using graphic tools such as the Adobe Creative Suite in order to make the brand look appealing and user-friendly.

### **2.3 Client: Comics Center**

The Comics Center was founded in 2008 to work as the active part of the Finnish Comics Society which was founded back in 1971. Helsinki Comics Center, most commonly referred only as the Comics Center, is an independent cultural center for both comics and art related to comics alike. At the location operate the Finnish Comics Society, a shop, cafeteria, art exhibitions and premises for different events and courses. From October 2012 until January 2013 I did the second part of my practical training in Helsinki, at the Comics Center. To quote their web page they describe themselves as follows:

**“Sarjakuvakeskus (for Comics Center in Finnish) was founded in May 2008 to be an open cultural centre for comics and related art.... The Finnish Comics Society is behind the project. We’re open to the public with a shop for comic books, T-shirts, posters and more. Our cafe serves fair trade coffee and snacks. Art exhibitions are held at Galleria Sarjakuvakeskus. We are always open for ideas for events, courses etc.”**

Whilst working there myself, I was lucky to meet people with a countless backgrounds and ideas. Most of my assignment had something to do with the promotion of the Comics Center, such as creating banners for web usage and various posters for different events. I also had a chance to get to know the world of comics a bit more and understand both the joys and predicaments of the business.

Continuing with the same initial setting but changing the target group seemed a natural choice to make for the center in its current situation. Whereas Helsinki Comics Center does not have an actual brand and visual outlook at the moment, it projects a certain style of visual brand and image to consumers through different variations of its published material and imagery. Comics vary so much in style that defining the visual

style is not an easy task. Avoiding the most clichéd ways of representing sequential art is hard to go around keeping the imagery recognizable and relatable to those who are unfamiliar with the Comics Center. Usually the clients and organizations who are in contact with the Comics Center expect something different already than the traditional ways of doing things. This would demand me to focus more on the credibility factor of the brand as comics have their own disadvantages which are discussed later in chapter 5.4.

As of now, Helsinki Comics Center has courses and tailored course packages for groups and different age groups, but they have no consistent package targeted simply for businesses. Taking into consideration that Comics Center is relatively new, only founded in 2008, the need to create better connections to the business world is crucial. The information provided by the client was scarce as they had had only a few cases with actual companies before. The Center's primary audience had been children, teenagers and adults as well as other associations of different sorts.

Before starting with creation of the site and the actual graphics, the physical outcome of the thesis, I did interviews and had meetings with the client to understand their initial needs where I started my research work from. It is no secret sometimes the customer has only a foggy idea what they actually need in order to achieve what they want. Sometimes the quality of the solution cannot be well-tested as the solution itself changes the world and in this case this project revolutionizes the whole system of the Comics Center and adds a new channel for potentially regular customers.

### **3 INNOVATION TOOLS**

In light of the most recent studies, the key to most innovative designs and profitable business solutions seems to involve understanding and listening to the user. In the following segments I will review innovation disciplines that most appropriately take the end users into consideration and would benefit the most from the use of sequential art and other relevant visualizations. This chapter will also present and open up methods and thinking patterns that would provide the most benefit from the use of comics in their implementation.

#### **3.1 What is innovation?**

Innovation is probably one of the most overused words in recent history when looking at the subject matter and what it actually means. This is because its context changes. Making a long story short, innovation has been defined as a good idea executed well (Brown 2009). This open statement does not make define to the subject matter clearly but it gives a good concept what how vast of a field we are dealing with.

Innovation should not be confused with inventions or the genuine, normal improvement of a working environment. Innovation is still an invention but with a socioeconomic effect, i.e. changing the way we human beings think and live, even if it is developing internal actions or creating new products. Understanding current human behaviour and manners, applying it into the design process and thus turning the revelations into productive solutions is another good definition of current innovation as well. (Chayutsahakij 2003.) Another thing to remember when defining innovation is that it should not be confused or used interchangeably with creativity. Creativity is coming up with ideas, whereas innovation is about methods to bring these ideas to life and to make them profitable.

Taking the designer's point of view in innovation thinking can really broaden the horizons of companies. Still forgetting the scientific and logical side of innovation can turn out to be very dangerous to the desired development. Innovation necessitates a

balance between logical and illogical creativity. The approaches of scientists, researchers, and engineers as well as businessmen are typically systematic and specialized on certain field of innovation. Designers and users on the other hand as partners in the innovation process, ensure divergent, even radical, spreading of ideas and visualizations that benefit all sides. The creative innovation process is more certainly a social experience rather than individual genius at work (Kälviäinen 2009). Innovation can be tangible and scientific as well as based on the creativity of people. At its best use, innovative thinking constitutes to the any project right from the beginning until the end. In a few years a purely technologic view on innovation has been less and less sustainable compared to innovation processes based on creativity and subjective research based around users and the future.

Even with all this development, in the recent light economical productivity seems to be the only goal of innovation processes. This can be a downfall of the whole project if no creative elements are pushed into the project right from the start, yet still in corporation with business thinking. Very often businesses treat design and design-inspired innovation as an aesthetic tool in the end of the project to make their end product look as alluring to the public as possible. Having a completely different take on innovation and challenging the profitability as number one reason to innovate could change how people view innovation. But is the value of the innovation always measureable by the turnover produced? If the company staff's wellbeing and working improves through an innovation workshop, is the result measured only by its financial profit or is it based on humane principles?

### **3.2 Innovation management**

Even with a holistic view on innovation without proper management it is impossible to be efficient and achieve the goals set on the innovation process and development. Innovation as a management principle takes care of all the activities that are involved in idea generation to marketing of the new product (Trott 2005, 15). Innovation management's aim is to manage these activities that would boost and support the works of human beings (Kalliokoski 2008). This view of innovation is very common to that in the business world and should not be neglected. Innovation management involves

workers on every level of the organization to take part in the process. This term is mostly used in the field of business, but it views the organizations the most as it is one of most important working tools to develop interactions inside the company staff and other associates. This results in better solutions and working environments. Figure 3 is a framework that shows the basic principles focused on innovation management and how it works on a basic level.

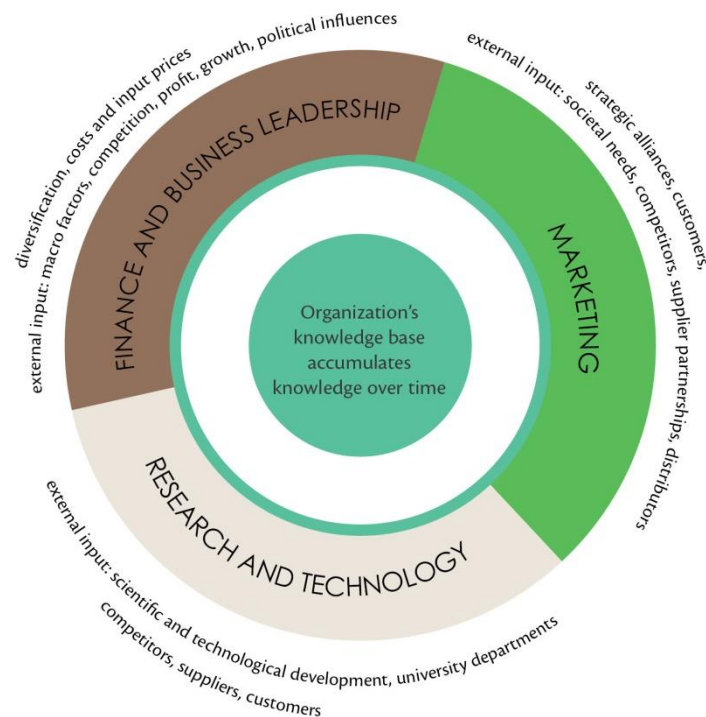


Figure 3. Framework for innovation management

According to this framework, these three principles are the most influential of the innovation process (Trott 2005, 27). How would innovation management gain from more creative thinking? As innovation management relies on having a strong narrative and communication, presenting innovation procedures and process reference models visually makes the process work better and it opens different phases. The goal of innovation is also better realized. Internal communication can be done through visuals as it boosts creativity as well. Seeking aid from visualization would help one to look at matters differently. This would help as innovation management's effort to incorporate the companies' processes into measurable and manageable form. The balance between stability and creativity inside a company's work is a major weak point and possible trap for innovation management. Stability and strict business thinking are needed to manage

tasks demanding efficiency, but without creative minds and resources where ideas and thoughts can thrive, businesses cannot develop. (Trott 2005, 77-78.)

For innovation to achieve its goal, seeing it as a process will facilitate the identification and definition of objectives performance. The process does not have to be or even should be linear as each individual phase needs reviewing and closer inspection from all knowledge fields which adds creativity of the process. This reviewing is done by various interest groups through formal and informal channels that overlap both time and scope of the innovation and boost the effects of the innovation process. (Kalliokoski 2007, 118.)

### **3.3 User-Centered Innovation & Design Thinking**

As of before, all innovation was based on marketing research, limiting the work and results. On the other hand user research in innovation, especially in design innovation, consists of human senses, research applicability, data gathering techniques, and user participation technique and business models. (Chayutsahakij 2003 ,3.)

Progress has been made in the field of user-centered innovation. A study commissioned by the European Communities (2009, 18) suggest that for the past ten years design has been seen as a more essential activity and a major component in user-centered innovation in both the business and academic realms. The word ‘design’ is both a noun and a verb. Design is something a user perceives, but as a verb, ‘to design’, is more about the process, creation, and making the design visible through visualizations and prototypes. (Utterback 2006, 212.) Even the very nature of design nowadays involves taking the user more so into consideration and placing him in the spotlight. Before the focus was more so on companies, taking their need as a primary concern and starting point. Nowadays, the end-users are not just passive, mechanical subjects but dynamic members, and activating them in the design progress demands designers to come up with new ways and methods to work with; we are no longer giving the right answers to customers. Design as a multidisciplinary approach to innovation takes the user’s abilities and needs as a base of the process. (European Communities 2009, 14.)

The usual tactic to start looking at companies' resources and starting the innovation process is to consider the budget and other possible resources. Next up is quite commonly technology and the possibilities it gives. This can result in some type of efficient solutions but it has no long-running effects. (Brown 2009) The cycle in user-centered innovation starts from a singular user who works on inventions and prototyping. Those individual accomplishments move to innovation through different networks when it reaches a community to develop a final, working prototype. After this the products might still be further developed before completion. (von Hippel 2005.)

Without taking the end-users and their needs into consideration the innovation process is inefficient. One of the main goals of user-centered design and methods used in it is to create and build interaction between the users and the designers with different companies. Taking users into the design processes has sparked a boom of different human-centered innovation and design approaches. The end users are an important part of the innovation team. This has been made possible by developed communication and computer science, which enables the sharing of tool kits and information. (von Hippel 2005.)

Figure 4 shows the basic interactions between the participants present in user-centered innovation methods. In user-centered innovation the user is placed in the center but they are still open to social influences. Design acts as a connection between different principles; a company representing product development and a society presenting those social values and the future view of the public. (European Communities, 2009, 19.)

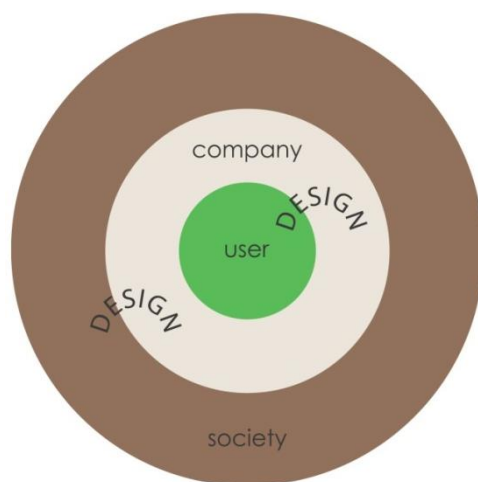


Figure 4. User-centered design innovation.



In the past, design development was based on market research, which limited innovation. As traditional marketing research builds upon opinions of current experience and already existing technologies, it is generally unhelpful for design that is not tied to a familiar consumer paradigm (Cheahjeasad 2009, 2). Companies have understood the importance of products and services in real-use processes and situations. User information is the key to understanding what users really think and wish for. (Kälviäinen & Rätty 2009). Rather than just looking at multiple solutions, user-centered design desires to create more solutions to choose the best out of. This development has been slow as companies have been cautious in changing their systems and taking risks. Still the advances of using user-centered innovations are worth the risks. The question is how to get that knowledge from the users.

The ultimate tool to involve users with the innovation process and thus to problem solving and development is design thinking. Rather than having a convergent phase where a big pool of choices and ideas is narrowed down to only few selected ones, design thinking encourages to divergent thinking phase where more choices are created to work with from those small ideas. (Brown 2009.)

As a process of creative and critical thinking, design thinking allows for the organization of information and ideas, the improvement of decision making, and knowledge access to the hidden yet significant matters. The tools designers have used for decades are through design thinking given to users to work with. Designers work more so as supervisors in the design thinking process. They know the right tools and methods to work with and guide users to boost the process of innovation thinking. By integrating these points and make them desirable from a human point of view right from the start create better products we enjoy to use. (Brown 2009.)

The approach to innovation and solution forming is experimental. It is of no use to spend time and resources on market research or generic surveys that do not provide concrete, groundbreaking solutions to the problems at hand (Brown 2009). The components presented in Figure 5, when in balance, are the basis of design thinking. These three are desirability as in what is wanted by humans, technical viability and

economic feasibility. These three principles are looked at from the people's perspective in design thinking.



Figure 5. Design Thinking.

In addition to these principles, design thinking has three fundamental elements that are present in every successful design project as well as in human-centered innovation. These three are insight, observation and empathy. Out of these three fundamentals, insight is the most important aspect of design thinking and the first to think about in a design process. To understand the users best is to see and not be able to tell by words alone what they wish for. The solution is not a separate goal waiting at the end but present at all times, so following the ways of working, living and how they do their own little innovations to go with everyday life. Through observation of others we understand what people are searching for, what the things they do not need are, and what they cannot achieve because they have no means to do so. We also get to see the little things that are not done which can give even more vital information. Empathy, as mentioned before, is an ability what enables us to walk in someone else's shoes. Even with material on hand about people, if we do not really know them, we cannot give them what they want. (von Hippel 2005.)

Design thinking is a good way to get away from very casual ways of working and thinking. Designers usually tend to like to work more on the fuzzy front of innovation: qualitative and subjective thinking and exercises that give variety of different answers.

This way one can extract intriguing solutions that take their base from creative jumps and picking up weak signals from a vast pool of ideas. (Kälviäinen & Rätty 2009, 4-5.)

Design thinking brings the fourth dimension, time, into the game. Designing with time deepens the experience, makes people more engaged and prompts them to tell their own stories, thereby generating more ideas. The most powerful tool to use in design thinking is based on an empathic way to work and tell stories; no collection of rules can stop this ability to create both relevant as well as emotionally resonant information which makes us different from technology we created to assist us on such occasions. This talent of ours makes us design thinkers. Storyboards, improvisation, and scenarios are among the many narrative techniques that help us to visualize an idea as it unfolds over time. (Brown 2009.)

People might be turned down by the free, i.e. methods with no structure, under which design thinking works. Creativity is in all of us, such as the ability to innovate and draw out those stories. This is what design thinking is based on. Strong visualizations and the mastery of storytelling are sometimes confused as these tools to create the best and the only plausible design thinking solutions. Even if these means mostly based on creativity and human emotions alone do not lead us to the wanted design solution, they help to form those unconventional stories that might be ignored otherwise, as design thinking is meant to be integrative. (Brown 2009.)

### **3.4 Design probes**

Design probes are methods of user-centered design for understanding human phenomena and exploring design opportunities through different tasks and open questions (Mattelmäki 2008, 39). Probes are meant to create a bridge between the users and the designers. These probes help and support designers in their quest to understand users by providing tangible results and other research material which gives a view on how people record themselves an unsupervised environment. These probes change the focus of the work to people who never even dreamed of being designers.

Innovation processes have always had a strong sense of making, but through design probes the results are as well inspiring and contribute a lot to the process itself. Design probes work as a platform to understand the users. They usually have an exploratory goal; probes concern the user's subjective view of the world, and probes are based on experience. (Mattelmäki 2008, 191.) Figure 6 visually shows the multiple reasons to use design probes in innovation process are listed in Mattelmäki's (2008) book, *Design Probes* (2008, 28-59; 193-194).

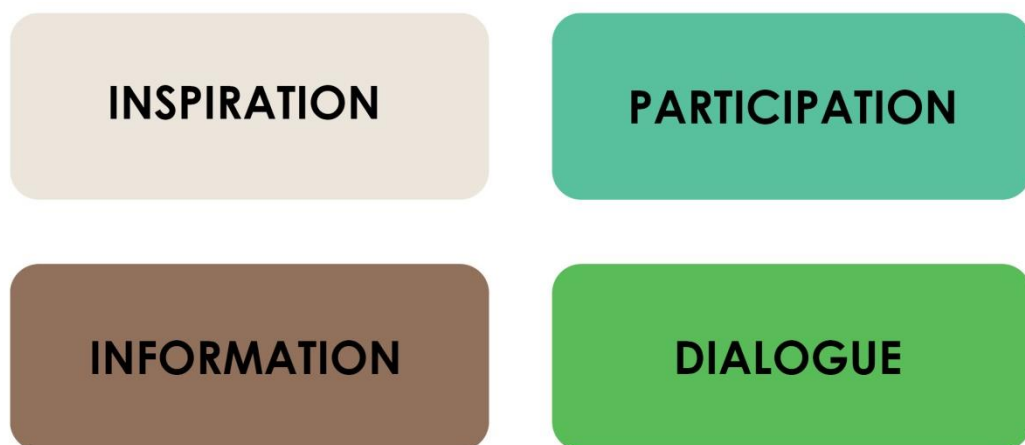


Figure 6. Reasons for probing

Designing probes intrigue designers to use their competence in new situations. The material meant for inspiration also does not need to be handled through means of scientific analysis, as open and creative materials leave room for the imagination, which cannot be valued through traditional means of implementation. One of the key aspects is getting information through new revenues. A participatory approach allows users to use their creative minds, giving them the feeling they are needed in the process and are listened to. Creating a dialogue, a bond of trust, between users and designers is significant to get useful and reliable information.

All four design probes provide input, but in the end the goal of the project, users and the context influence what kind of probes are chosen for the study. Context mapping, making collages, diaries and different storyboarding methods can especially contribute more information when one harnesses the elements used in comics to the mix. The probes above are also a way to organize and project information in a format where it can be evaluated.

This revelation also brings to a conclusion where we can say design probes serve as a great platform for the use of comics. Design probes utilize the means of self-documentation and reflection which comics are profound. The most typical forms of probes are diaries and storyboarding (Mattelmäki 2008). These can convey a lot of personal information and open up new, unexplored territories for the designers to make their work mean a lot more than it could before. As humans are natural storytellers, having a medium where cultural and language barriers are lowered through using combination of imagery and text seems like a natural way to go.

The data collected by users will work as an immense stimulation for designers and users. The difficulty of using probes comes from the analysis of results. Creativity and a user-centered approach are useful up to a certain point, but all these results are restricted by their subjective nature. This is still a chance to have unconventional ways to stir creativity and have a deeper view on the user's life at the same time.

## 4 VISUALIZATION

### 4.1 The basic language of humans

We humans process visual information with our right side and language with the left side of the brain, and everyone has their own unique way of seeing and understanding the world around us (Sibbet 2010). Pictures have four main functions. This visual information enriches observations and guides those actions, organize and ease the understanding verbal information (Hatva 1993, 49). Adding a visual element to a verbal process makes the process work better and more understandably, and different means of visual interactions help us produce a mutual mindset to ideation and building up co-operation among people (Roam 2011).

So as powerful as words are, we fool ourselves when we think our words alone can detect, describe, and defuse the multifaceted problems of today. They cannot – and that is bad, because words have become our default thinking tool. With words we can convey a lot of information, but there remains a chance for misunderstanding. Visuals leave next to no room for such action (Roam 2011). Visual and other sensual work can be easily applied to innovation processes as a means of sharing such matters as values, meanings, ideas and mental maps.

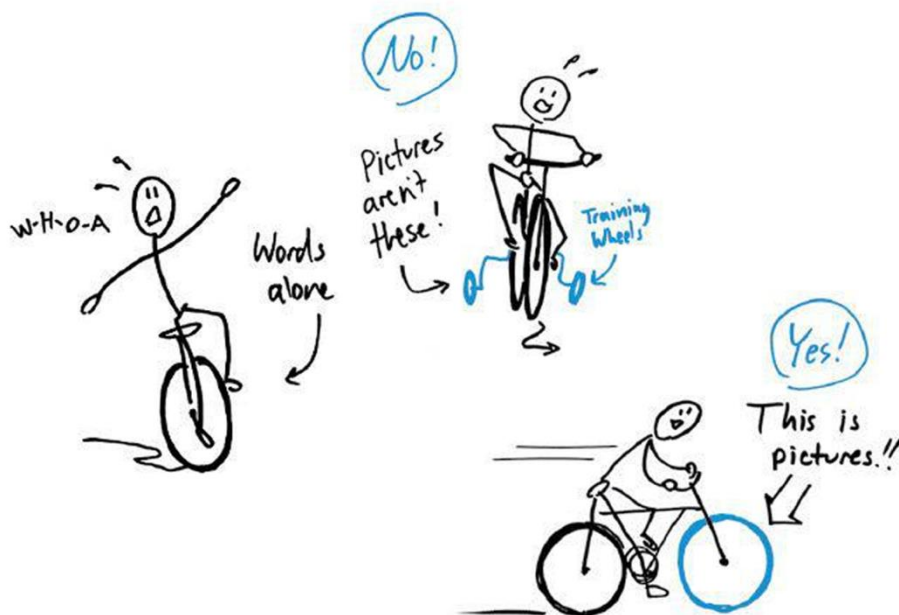
One of the most common visualization tools used by designers themselves are e.g. sketches, prototyping, different product visuals, persona creation and observation charts. As we draw these crude and simple drawings, they spark us with more ideas and give us inspiration. Provocative imagery inspires us and makes us work harder. (Sibbet 2010.) Us design professionals spend years on honing those visual skills to become good illustrators; not in the sense that we know how to draw technically perfect drawings but how we express our ideas. Visual thinking has nothing to do with actual drawing skills as it has many forms. (Brown 2009.)

Design reaches tangible/substantial thinking and outcomes through visual ideation material and methods. (Kälviäinen & Rätty 2009, 1-2) Visuals also help sharing values and feelings and ideas; turning what we feel and think into concrete substance. Visuals

alone leave matters ambiguous. For visualizations to help find the innovation, it is important the work group can take full advantage of the potential of the multicultural group and the each individual in it. (Balerina & Kälviäinen 2011, 51-55)

Innovation and the user-centered methods linked to them are one of the most used design tools. Furthermore, in innovation work, user information is displayed through different visual means of presentation. (Chayutshakij 2003) Helped by these visual aids and means that make interactions possible or more pleasing, people get to innovate as they draw and get inspiration from their interpretations of the visuals. Through that people are more expanding their narratives.

Having different scenery depicting tools such as storyboards and pictures showing networks stimulate us faster and better. Rather than going to the next extreme of just having pictures and pictorial charts all over, finding the golden path is what we need to crave. Just simple photos can achieve only so much before their rigidity makes them lose to comics where the broad generalization of art work which can quickly make its point and influence and the reader. (Eisner 1985, 144) Picture 1 below shows a collection of actions of how different combinations can contribute to the flow of the process itself, visualized in by Dan Roam in his book, *Blah Blah Blah* (2011). The black tire represents words and the blue one represents pictures.



Picture 1. Good visualizations together with well thought words can help your progress immensely (Source: Roam 2011).

So we can say comics are vastly used but still no one seems to talk about them, at least not with the right terms per say. The definition of what is a comic also brings its issues to the mix and it will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.1. This also clears why comics are a great tool to look at in the future. In the United Kingdom comics are sold as visual aids under the alias of info graphics and instructions. Instruction graphics, info charts and scenarios are a few of the most common ways where comics are used. Other phrases have been used to describe them but it does not change the fact we are dealing with a storytelling medium of comics.

## **4.2 Vivid thinking**

Compared to using just verbal information, visuals are an easier way to convey information fast and leave memory patterns, making matters easier to recall. Still, words and pictures alone cannot demonstrate the subject matter. Rather, it is their combination which has the most coverage. (Hatva 1993, 47-49.)

Vivid thinking is a principle introduced by Dan Roam to wider audiences which he talks about in his book, *Blah Blah Blah*. The basic principle of vivid thinking is to make it easier to think and understand complex ideas. Vivid comes from the combination of three words: visual, verbal and interdependent (Roam 2011). When people grow up, they are guided away from pictures and the visual worlds just as they are learning to read or speak about thoughts. It seems that more words equal a clearer image of the matter, thus leading to more knowledge and better knowing. This leads us to thinking just because we have the words to describe something, we automatically know the subject matter well.

Usually people respond to questions with explanations filled with words and text, but in reality more text does not equal greater understanding. It is images and visuals that fill the extra space between texts and clear the subject matter with the extra bonus of finding something new between the lines. (Roam 2011.)



This cluster of vivid thinking is only useful if we have the means to organize our thoughts. Figure 4 below shows how vivid thinking works. The big central part represents the core idea that is being tackled and the six small components are the supporting concepts. These six are presented by seven letters. The first letter F, for form, demands ideas to have concrete shape, O for only showing the ideas in a nutshell and R is for recognizability. The letter E is for evolution, when things are finished but there is still room for evolution, S for spanning differences and lastly, T for targeted: doing something that matters. When these matters are taken care of and visible, the idea can be expressed as a whole.



Figure 7. Vivid Idea FOREST

Visuals are not meaningless filters because, just as words, they too communicate the content to the world. Storyboarding and idea mapping are the two most fundamental ways to tell stories and understand the big picture of events and are most commonly used among users. Using these visualizations and design thinking is required to be able to think big to be able to create stories over long time periods. These drivers for change such as this are evident in the society nowadays. (Sibbet 2010.) Everyone is required to be nimble and work quicker while at the same time process more information than before and rapidly understand what matters. This evolution in information requires people to change their thinking pattern and ways. Possibilities brought by new technologies expand organizations' cultural and geographical boundaries but creative thinking is greatly limited and ideas misunderstood if we only use verbal information.

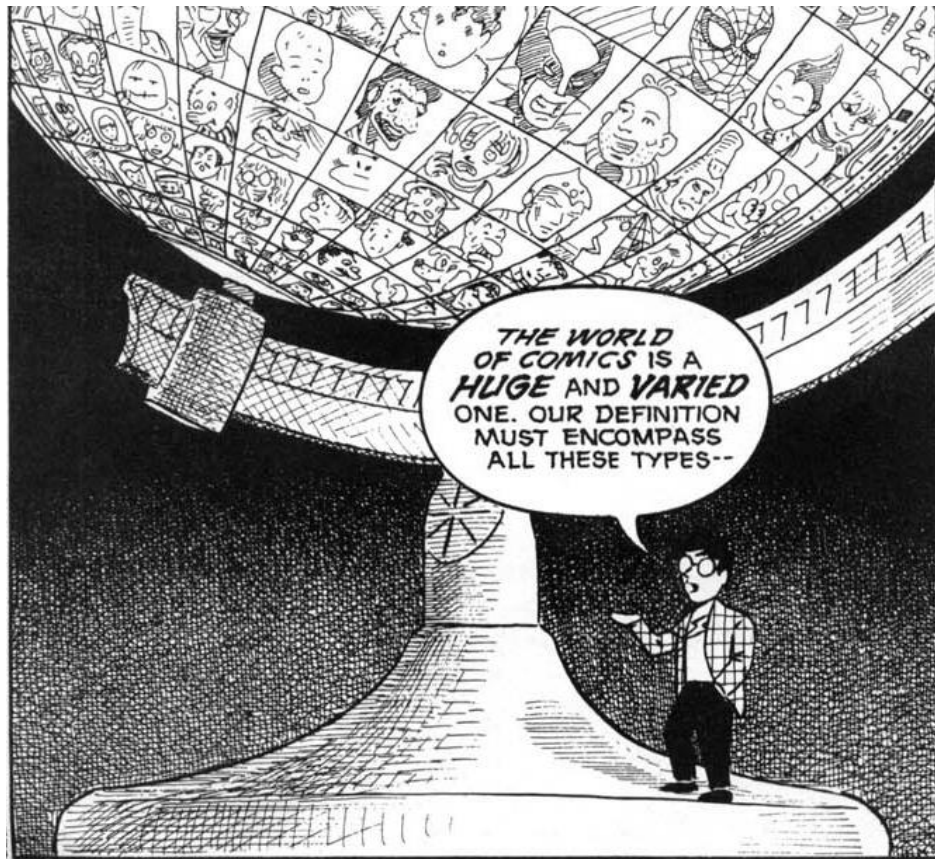
## 5 COMICS

### 5.1 What makes a comic?

The history of comics dates back a few thousand years. Humans have a natural habit of telling stories: edited stories which take the listener to different worlds. The early tapestries and Mayan wall paintings are considered the first comics by some, such as the highly appreciated artist and researcher Scott McCloud. These early works of art hold the basic elements that show up in novels and strips even as of now such as sequential pictures combined with paragraphs of texts. They tell a story in their own way (McCloud 1993, 10-11.) The modern comics started to develop in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the first notable one being Rodolphe Töpffer.

Like mentioned briefly at the end of chapter 4.1, comics are not easy to define and it has been an everlasting debate. Comic, as a term itself is a container of ideas rather than defining the right from wrong. Keeping this in mind, the definitions examined here do not define objects and subject matter e.g. what are the acceptable themes for comics or accepted equipment. It is more about the characteristics of medium itself, the idea. Still without a doubt, comics are a visual medium and they have the unique ability to create the illusion of sound through visuals.

While this is not the aspect when defining comics, it is fundamental to comprehend this to be able to understand what comics are and who should read them. (Khordoc 2001, 173) A crude person would just describe comics as bunch of pictures and text together but one can do anything with them. (Gravett 2005, 10) One common factor is in all comics but the presence of narrative, thereby making comics a great storytelling medium. This is important to understand, as it sets up the perspective into the world we read and gives chances to opinions or sets limitations as well as unlimited possibilities to the reader's imagination (Herkman 1998, 22). The style of the comic does not affect if the piece of art is considered a comic or not; everything from traditionally depicted superheroes to more simplistic and avant-garde art styles used in comics and thus are comics. A small peek of these different styles is seen in Picture 2.



Picture 2. The world of comics is vast, starting already from the style they are drawn with (Source: McCloud 1993).

In more refined explanations, such as in the popular one from Scott McCloud, comics are defined as juxtaposed pictorial and other images on a deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer (McCloud 1994, 9). This view is widely accepted as one of the best descriptions of comics and sequential art alike in the field. This is supported by Will Eisner, who defines comics as a montage of images and word making the reader exercise visual and verbal skills at the same time. This means that reading a comic book is an act requiring both aesthetic perception and intellectual pursuit. (Eisner 1985, 8) This means the most profound comics have multiple frames that make up the story rather than just having one single frame to depict everything.

The few major exceptions and boundaries the definition by McCloud sets make it troublesome to accept it as the sole truth. Demanding a sequence consisting of multiple pictures leaves single-frame gag cartoons out from the definition of comics, even though they usually have a narrative formed by both text and imagery. Then again some historical comiclike art pieces such as the Aztec codices, medieval embroidery of

Bayeux and even written Chinese are comics according McCloud's definition. Elevating the definition of comics where single-frame cartoons fit into the criteria of comics is presented by Robert Harvey (Varnum 2001, 75-76), who argues single-frame cartoons have the incorporation of verbal content and images; this blend is what makes comics unique and recognizable as their own medium. Another slim definition down from separating comic-like art from comics is done by David Kunzle. According to him, a comic is a comic if it presents a sequence of separate images and image has predominance over text. His more refined definitions then again leave out instructional or educational comics, which otherwise fit the criteria of comics if they have a story, multiple or one panel and text and image intertwined together. (Abel 2008, 5.)

We can conclude comics vary so much in style that it is hard to draw a fine line between what is and what is not a comic in its deepest level. Will Eisner used the term sequential art when he referred to comics and graphics novels. This describes the graphics medium the best and most concisely. It is not unusual that terms such as comics, graphics novels, comic strips and comic books are used interchangeably. Sometimes drawing comics is simply referred to as cartooning. (Brunetti 2007, 18.) Even if these terms are mixed in everyday usage, calling a thick graphic novel a collection of comic strips is a misnomer. It is as well debatable into what medium comics fall. This fusion of literature and art can be confusing to illiterate comic readers. Interviewees, based on their experiences, felt the comics would get more respect as a visual art form, but this would neglect the literacy side of it. Great literature and art combined do not create the perfect comic, as they are still also valued and evaluated by different standards. (McCloud 1993, 150)

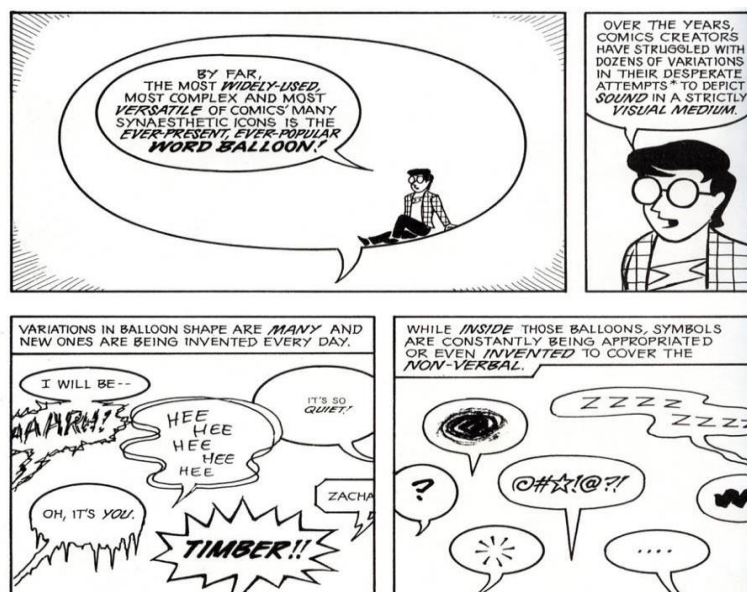
## **5.2 Imagery and symbols in comics**

One of the most fascinating possibilities comics offer is their habit of combining different ways of presentation together. (Herkman, 1994) This creates pressure, as in comics everything from movement to sound has to be done visually. This why is lot of special symbols called lexicons exists in comics. They are not quite text but not images either. These lexicons are a key element in comics. Symbols and icons depict and contribute everything from emotions, atmosphere movement and even a character's tone of voice and their actions.

Every part of the comic conveys information that needs to be understood. Humans have something which is called ‘the hungry eye’. If we now ignore the text in comics, a lot of possibilities open up to see the world differently. We look for meanings and try to draw conclusions from the simplest ideas and symbols to understand their meaning and context. (Varnum, 2001) With the right use of symbols, unnecessary text can be left out to avoid repetition.

Why are symbols not pictures then? We use imagery to represent concepts, ideas and philosophies in a blink of an eye. Most icons and symbols used have such a profound basis it is true, especially in non-pictorial icons, that meanings are absolute and have no space for any other definition. Still, it is the context of where these icons and symbols are used that the meaning changes. Pictures, on the other hand, are designed to only resemble their subject and have variable levels of iconic content. (McCloud 1994, 26-28.)

One of the most recognizable symbols in comics is the speech balloon. These vary in shape and size (Herkman 1994, 45). A balloon show how the characters in comics speak as well as their tone of voice. Like seen in Picture 3, even non-verbal communication can be put inside these balloons to represent different situations. Just changing the shape of the balloon or the line thickness can change the context of the conversation depicted inside.



Picture 3. The possibilities of different icons in balloons (Source: McCloud, 1993).

Others symbols present in comics are sound effects or onomatopoeia and markers; icons depicting emotions, sound and actions. These can be both symbols for abstract things or text. In this sense text also does its job as a part of imagery. (Varnum 2001, 165-168.) Some icons are standardized, e.g. a lamp above the character's head is understood as having an idea. The more symbols we can read, the better and quicker we understand the very core of the messages without writing them down and ruining the experience. These markers evolve as time goes on; a lamp has replaced a candle as a symbol of realization, and sleeping is no longer presented by a saw cutting a log but rather a chainsaw. We in Western cultures understand that lightning bolts, skulls and bats represent swear words and little flowers inside the speech balloon add a sarcastic tone to speech. (Khordoc 2001, 165-168.) There are other symbols that show more abstract emotions such as sweat drops or motion lines. In a book by Mort Walker these markers are called emanata. This made up word comes from the verb emanate. (Abel 2008, 8)

The best way to understand the use of symbols is to read them in their context. The more the reader encounters these symbols, the more their meaning will become clear and adjusting to them becomes less challenging (Gravett 2005, 11). The ever-growing world of iconography helps the reader to understand the meanings in the pictures better (McCloud 1994, 58). The possibilities provided by icons in storytelling are a unique trademark in comics. These icons demand us to participate and understand. Still, the most wonderful thing about clearly established icons is the fact that they can be used anywhere, changing the meaning of a situation in an instant.

### **5.3 Comics in innovation work now**

If we look at the characterization of comics covered earlier in this chapter and include single-frame cartoons to the definition, the current situation would look rather good. However, this part focuses on the comics with multiple panels and how they are used in innovation.

Luckily, comics have been used ever since more attention has been put on visuals and design-inspired innovation. Still, they work in the shadows, as a part of something but

not as its own tool. Comics are now used in describing scenarios or as a minor part of design probe tools for user-centered innovation.

Most commonly comics are used as scenario describing during an innovation process. There are a lot of visual and other sensual work that can be applied to the innovation process as a means to support sharing values, feelings, experiences, ideas, mental images and maps, which are tools for the creative unconscious act, social discussion and interaction. (Kälviäinen & Rätty 2009.)

Another considerable way that uses common elements with comics is storyboarding. Storyboards are called 'dummies' in the world of comics and are almost an inescapable requirement. This tool functions as a change to make all sorts of rearrangements before the final products is made. Dummies are important, as a successful story depends on the ability of intertwined text and imagery to convey the narrative and hold the reader's attention. The time and money saving advantages are obvious as making storyboards provides good control over the events that happen or are planned. (Eisner 1985, 133.)

In an interview with Virpi Oinonen (2013), a marketing consultant who works in the United Kingdom, comics as an idea are taken seriously if they are sold as info graphics. She noted the word comics has too much of a comedy factor in English. Through these different terms of storyboarding and info graphics, comics are used relatively often even more attention without people realizing it. These comics still play a supporting role; they rarely take the lead. This lack of interest in comics was also expressed in other interviews. What also came up was the lack of knowledge about comics and how they could be used. The reason why companies have not applied comics to their roster might be just those outdated thoughts about the nature and the purpose of comics.

The trend to get people to think outside the box more is to get them involved in more trivial and practical tasks of innovation. These concepts and tasks might be even playful and considered childish by most. LEGO has taken this step already by introducing a SERIOUS PLAY-concept. This might just be the different attitude needed to develop innovation, especially business-oriented innovation. LEGO says in their website that the workshops give ways to increase their self-reliance and insight of their supervisors and employees alike. These means will also unleash creative thinking and innovation and

help with management and strategic development among other things. And all this by just ‘playing’ with toys.

This mindset with businesses is the problem and comics are exactly in front of that challenge. On the other hand, all its elements give comics the potential to work as a communication tool, creativity booster and help in problem solving. Together with its communal nature comics can contribute discussion and stir development.

#### **5.4 Pros and cons of comics as a medium**

People have been starting to show interest on comics, but it still has not had its major break in business. To utilize the full potential of comics, it is important to understand both the limits and possibilities of this medium as well as the attitudes towards comics. That is why it is important to try and develop the usage of comics to get rid of the prejudice.

The biggest disadvantage mentioned in interviews and source materials is the credibility of comics as a ‘serious’ medium. Since we start to grow old and learn to read, we are guided away from using pictures and text interchangeably (McCloud 1993). Children have great interest in comics which results in an assumption and relatively strong belief where if something interested young children, comics cannot be high culture. (Herkman 1998, 8.) Between the 1940s and the 1960s this commonly accepted profile of the end user as a kid became widely accepted in the United States. If an adult was reading a graphic novel, he was regarded as an idiot. (Eisner 1985, 141)

This is rather interesting as in the wake of the 20<sup>th</sup> century cartoons and humour magazines’ audience in the United States was the elite. This prejudice might be the hardest wall to break to make comics seem a great tool to use. Picture 4 shows how we are taught to look at books and drop pictures out. In McCloud’s vision the future looks very dark as well.





Picture 4. Wanted/"normal" progression of reading (Source: McCloud, 1993).

The term comic itself has a stigma of childishness in it. This is one of the reasons why to use the word comics is problematic. The word 'cartoon' used to describe comics as well had another meaning in the past. Cartoons referred to sketches done for wall frescos and other considered high culture up until the Renaissance. (Abel 2008, 6.) The word 'comic' can be from the Latin and Greek words *comicus* and *komikos*, which mean a comic poet and something that provokes to laughter and humorous as well. The enjoyably factor of comics is often connected to being just humorous and not serious. A comic is intentionally funny, whereas comics can be everything from a collection of humorous strips to a graphic novel about a serial killer.

People are afraid their efforts are not taken seriously if they use comics in certain situations, e.g. in part of summaries or company presentations, as they only seem to serve as a small comic relief. Even in one of the interviews the concern about the personality of comics was brought up and talked about. (Hintsä 2013.)

Juha Herkman (1998, 10-11) brings up an interesting point that comics have never inspired nor demanded the development of new technologies. What this is means that comics repeat older patterns and techniques already existing; they do not function as an inspiration to work on better ways to make comics or have big revolutions to tell comics. This is despite the rise of the new virtual and visual ways to convey information, and comics seem to come late. On the other hand, this can also be an

advantage as producing and using comics is even cost-effective if profitability needs to be considered. Imagery of sequential art does have its limits when it comes to conveying emotions and depth in certain levels. The images created are specific, thus obviating interpretation. (Eisner 1985, 140.)

Another challenge is dealing with abstraction. Even when considering the vast field of styles in which comics are drawn, the need to pinpoint and show the key moment to the reading audience becomes important. It takes time to find and illustrate that moment. (Eisner 1985, 141.) On a very humane level, both for better and worse, long comics with well thought out narratives are time-consuming to create. Everything from script to character design to storyboarding demands time and durability from the creator. On the other hand, comics prove valuable when they are needed to comment on contemporary issues on a short notice.

The possibilities of comics outweigh the risks comics and its visual language has in innovation use. Looking at comics as a medium has almost no limits. Crudely put, comics are just bunch of images and words together, but in reality this sophisticated combination of the two gives so much. It is staggering how much information they can offer and convey easily to large masses. This open definition of the medium and the seamless unison of words and images can tell much and still leave room for the imagination. Comics are such a vast field, quickly progressing and changing all the time; they respond to changes in the field rapidly. Comics also give a window which through people can re-enter the world through numerous different windows and see a different view on the matter each time. (McCloud 1993.)

People have the ability to better recall if they have pictures to support the text and it does not overwhelm them. This can be amplified by text or not; comics leave a lot to the person's imagination. Maybe this might be one of the reasons why comics as a learning tool have had their break in the field of education.

## **6 PROJECT**

### **6.1 Platform for comics**

The purpose of the practical part of the thesis, the project with the Comics Center, was to help the client to achieve more publicity in a previously unknown business field for them and spread awareness about comics and their use to wider audiences they may not have had before. The product created in the timeframe of this thesis was the brand for the service but more importantly, the visual outlook of a website and a small pamphlet serving as a calling card for the business' brand. The project I worked with focused mostly on visuals of the said material. Work for the visual started in late March 2013 and will conclude after the thesis with putting the material online and public.

I was very intrigued to help the Comics Center in its quest to attract more revenues and people, and through this project I hope it opens revenues to be taken seriously where comics have a chance to be more in the limelight.

The research done beforehand and presented in this thesis was to present the subject to the customer as well as give them tools to think about their exercises more in the future – what they do inside the Center and what they offer to their clients. The previous assignments and workshops the client has held before for companies mainly consist of recreational exercises, company strengthening workshops and using visuals in presentation material.

Before this thesis, the Comics Center had used comics only on very few rare occasions during their courses as an innovative method in particular. They have used the possibilities that comics bring as a narrative tool inclusively to depict customer meetings and interactions and how these situation could be developed for the future. Whatever the situation has been, comics have also been used to show emotions and feelings of the people nonverbally. Teaching drawing has also helped company staff to bring out their ideas more as well.

Checking through Comics Center's existing exercise roster was very challenging as they only had few documented exercises for me to look at and evaluate. The lack of documentation does make the sampling harder but this is also due to the fact that the client has not had those connections to the business world before.

## **6.2 KOOKOS**

Finally the application of the design thinking and innovation comes to a point where the work done solidifies in to a form of brand creation, concept working and the platform to share knowledge. After consulting with the client on the view and working on the basis of the brand I started my project work. The basic principles were to keep it simple, fresh and business-like yet still keeping the playfulness to find the customers.

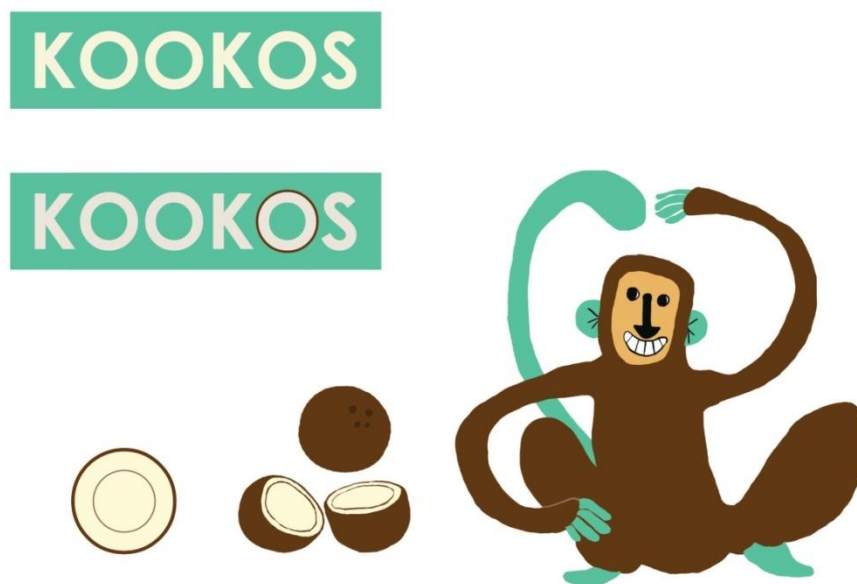
This was a fine line drawn in the sand between which approaches to take. If the brand looked plain, too cold per se, it would be hard to find the connection to the Comics Center. Then again having too many similar graphical elements with the Comics Center would not attract companies that well. It was probably one of the hardest decisions, but I decided to go with a balance of the two; having clean shapes, limited colour palette and simple logo but then playing with the idea and the imagery used in the business card and the web site. The brand also needed a simple, short name that would be easy to remember, interesting, had positive associations and stir emotions.

This led us to the name KOOKOS, in all capital letters, for the name of the brand. It is a name much easier to remember and pleasing than 'comic workshop for companies'. The word KOOKOS is short for coconut in Finnish. This name was a result of brainstorming. The story behind the name was to at first to attract attention. The choice to use food names is good as associations with food are usually received as positive and easily relatable.

KOOKOS or coconut in this case represents of the problem rather than the solution. An idiom 'a tough nut to break' really represents the idea and the choice of name the best. Sometimes companies struggle to find the right ways to look at their creative minds and put those ideas on paper or concrete form; they need new ideas and means that can

break tough surface of the coconut with ease. Comics Center will have these tools and means to break this coconut that company staff has troubles and help them get those creative juices flowing.

The colours are muted due to the colours brown and cream of the coconut that are supported the best by murkier colour sets than the Comics Center is known for. This is also good way to differentiate KOOKOS from other operations of the Comics Center. The colour turquoise was chosen as the accent colour to freshen up the colour palette. The visual basic elements and colours are presented in Picture 5. The simplistic monkey was the main character of the business card, trying to break the coconut to get to the prize, whereas on the website it acts as a part of the imagery and is not the main focus. The brown outline around the letter O seemed like a nice reminder of a coconut.



Picture 5. KOOKOS logo and other symbols used and the main colours

### 6.3 Customer Journey Canvas & Service Blueprint

Customer journey canvas and service blueprint are service design tools. A customer journey canvas shows the customer's user experience right from before the service to actions afterwards. Service blueprint on the other hand displays actions of the users and the company during the process. (Pattichis 2012.) These two applications, present in

Figures 8 and 9, were done to understand what the clients wanted and experienced when they contacted the Comics Center as well as plan the path of how this service would work. The canvas and blueprint focus more on the actions done during and after the service than the actions during service as every instance is custom-made for the customer and follow.

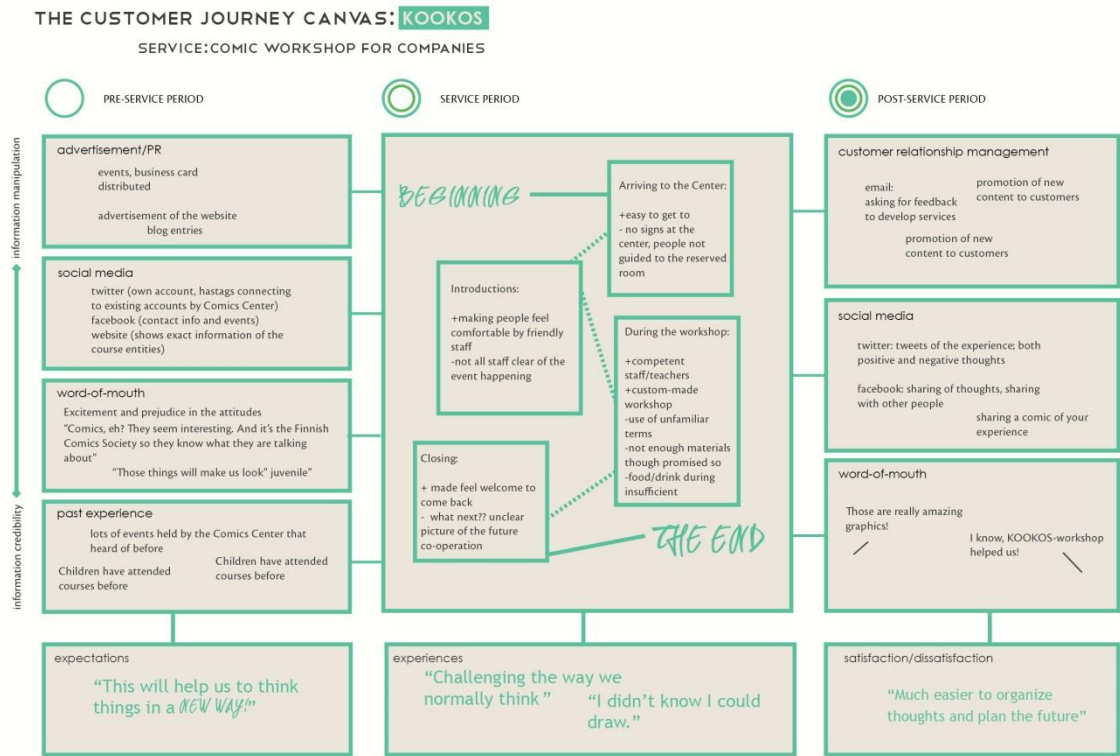


Figure 8. Customer Journey Canvas

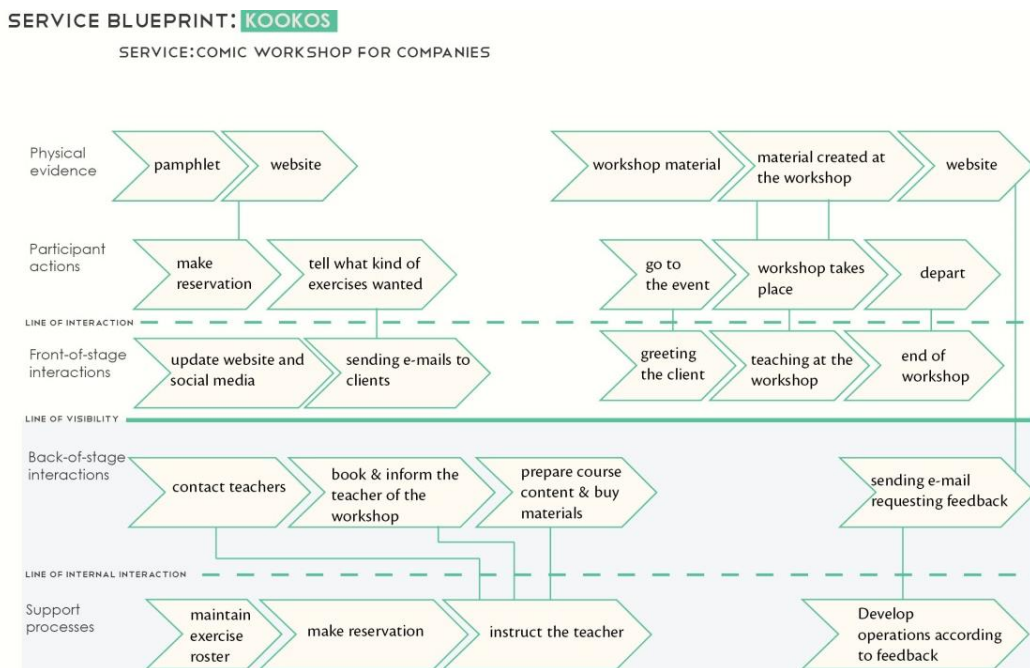


Figure 9. Service Blueprint.

## **7 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT**

### **7.1 Introduction**

After research and examining the subject matter, both me and the association to understand the brand, I tapped into the actual product; the final look and form of the graphics. Just as the research and writing down the first parts of the thesis was underway, creation of the brand and the web site itself started as well to make sure the schedule is binding.

As most of the courses are planned individually for the company, a roster of completed courses is not available for viewing. A few of the potential course entities are for companies of how to do lecture visualization and illustration of one's own material as well as for refreshment activities and developing their own skill set as well as possible design tools. Of course, these exercises include teaching drawing and interaction models.

Implementation of the project was done mostly using such graphics tools such as Adobe Creative Suite and sketching by hand. What did make implementation of the graphics challenging was the fact the Comics Center does not have a single imagery set that would provide me clear guidelines to which direction to go. There are some materials and colours such as the logo of the Comics Center; the dragon and the fish motif that both contain the same shape and basic colour shades. However, as mentioned in section 6.2, I used this existing imagery to be more of an example what not to do.

### **7.2 Visuals**

The concept for visuals where the created style, logo and colours would be used included having plans for the business card distributed face to face to the clients to sell the idea. The web site was the place where there is more detailed information about courses and such matters available for the customers. The reason why posters were not created was the wish of the client as they would also have no place to post them.

The idea for the pamphlet came from combining the basic elements of comics, such as having a narrative and imagery usually found in comics and cartoons. I knew already, based on the previous work and experience with the Comics Center, such elements used in comics as speech balloons would be highly disapproved of. It would also be a very easy way out of how to show the agenda of the Center right away. The unusual shape of the business card came from the basic concept of strip comics. Putting three business cards together formed panels that tell a story in the KOOKOS card. This idea was approved of very early on and it gave me the opportunity to work on the story in the card. The story had to be able to be coherent even if the card was folded in different ways.

Business cards come in many shapes but the easiest to remember are those that are easy to carry around yet innovative. I used the standard size Japanese business card, which is 55mm by 91mm. All the flaps form a small story but are still informative at the same time. The narrative in the card was a monkey having trouble to open the coconut. This represents how companies have trouble get in touch with their creative side to innovation. Comics Center is there to open the coconut. The intriguing format of the business card tells a slightly different story every time one opens it and turns it around, ending in success if the whole card and see all three panels inside are exposed. These small stories show the idea of KOOKOS. The basic principle is visible in Figure 10.



Figure 10. Business card as completely closed and open



The business card offers a lot to look at and it will stir conversation. Still one can easily see everything with one view to get interested and the card achieves its goal as soon as the person opens it. Figure 8 shows the stories in the cards that unfold as the flaps open and close; this includes both the right and wrong ways. Image I of Figure 11 shows the view when the business is closed and how the card is received. Image II is the view of the card when one opens the first flap and is faced with a situation where connecting with creativity has failed. Image III shows the inside of the business card when the card is fully open, showing the main story and information. Image IV is the backside of the business card. And image V is the result of when one starts playing with the card and folds the top part first when closing the card.



Figure 11. Visuals and stories of the KOOKOS business card

The website's main purpose on the other hand was to give most of the information about the courses and exercises and means to contact the Comics Center. The webpage was decided to make by using Joomla, a Finnish website builder, which enabled a lot of themes to our disposal to look at and through those modify the best look. Comics Center uses both Joomla and Wordpress respectively to maintain its operation, so choosing

Joomla was a natural choice. Other sites for Comics Center uses are quite simple but informative.

The screenshot of the website in Figure 12 shows the visuals of the website and the basic structure. The different sized panels remind of the comic panels and it is easy to navigate through. Each box has a corresponding text link in the top banner so as more material is produced for the web site; more these panels are placed in the front page. The marketing of the website would also be easy this way. Having a light interface makes the website easy to view on smartphones when people receive the business card and wish to check the site right away what is going on.

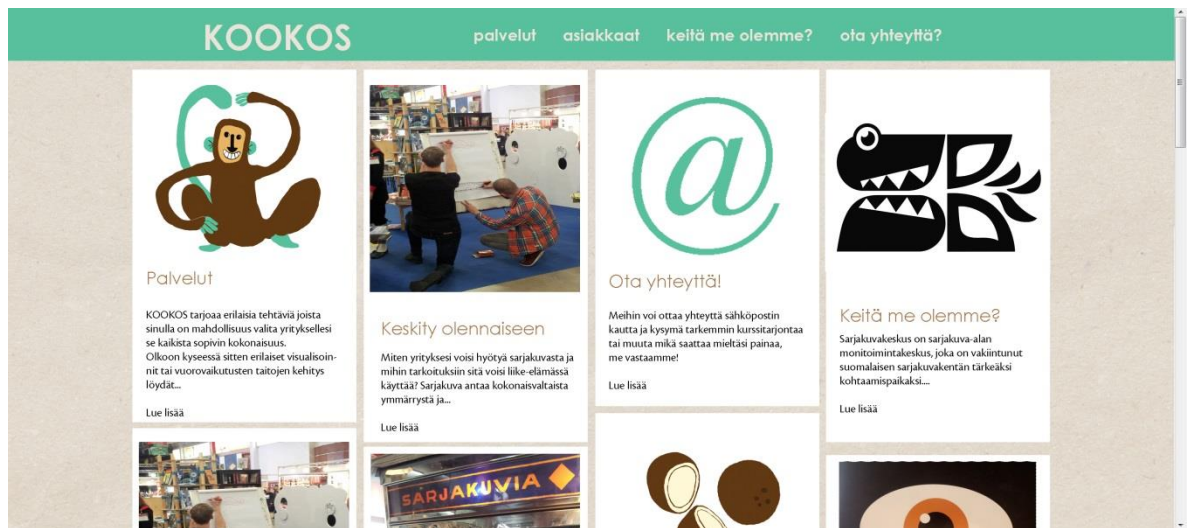


Figure 12. The front page of the KOOKOS.

### 7.3 Final results

After sampling the background material and taking the task ahead into observation, the results came rather quickly. Receiving prompt feedback and help from the client helped the project to succeed in its goal for them to benefit from the project itself in time for next autumn.

The final concept consists of the web page, and the business card conveys the brand image of KOOKOS to the public. Using the internet was the most natural decision to take as the Comics Center mostly does its advertising and interactions online, including

through social media such as Facebook, blogs, chats and Twitter with customers and the public alike.

I was very unsure about some of the decisions I made which delayed the process in the implementation portion of the thesis, such as coming up with the ideas for KOOKOS and the graphics that would support this combination of something professional yet playful in a mature sense of the word. In the end of concept work though, the people at Comics Center took the idea delightfully. They liked the overall look and the narrative of the KOOKOS, and have talked what to do with the concept in the future as well as how to develop it. This is a good sign, and I hope this positive development does not halt.

The project's schedule was lively as the small staff has a lot to do with their projects and tasks. Now this project would seem to have its major debut and realizations to the public by the time of Helsinki Comics Festival in September. By the beginning of June, the ideal situation would be where the website has been launched and the graphics for the small pamphlet are ready for printing. This upcoming spring period already seems promising as already now the Comics Center has had contacts from interested parties from different fields to order their business services. Only the future will show the results of this project and how the client will benefit in reality. Already now there has been one new client who has shown interest in this project.

Based on the interviews I did with teachers and comic artists for the thesis project and going through the previous feedback from companies that have already renewed their co-operation with the Comics Center, we can conclude that the user friendliness of the comics as an innovative medium has possibilities. The field is also very prominent and good for further development. This idea needs time to mature, which is why no closing can be had on the subject matter concerning user friendliness.

## 8 CONCLUSION

This thesis process was probably the most rewarding experience I have ever taken all the way to the end. Writing from such a vast field as innovation is challenge and it proved itself a worthy opponent. The purpose of the thesis was to write open comics and see their possibilities in the field of innovation. First I opened innovation and visualizations that could be used, the thesis finally culminating into a view about comics and their versatility.

My decision to use both qualitative and quantitative methods proved to be a very exiting experience and beneficial for the project as well when creating the graphics. Especially the qualitative research gave me a preview on the current situation of the comics today, which helped also with gathering the research data of comics. Expanding the interviews would have maybe provided a better understanding of the matter, but as an interviewer I am a novice, so the questions were not as good as they could have been to get the material more easily. Luckily, my interviewees were professionals and knew what I was trying to ask. These interviews provided more of a comparing piece of the research to see what has changed in the field of comics. Still I feel the research opened the knowledge about a relatively hard to understand subject and gives a good base for understanding comics and as well views about the best innovation methods for comics to be used in.

As I pondered in my thesis plan, the time management of the thesis was probably the hardest one to keep up with. I was simply overwhelmed by the thesis and everything that came with it. I spent a lot more time on research than I anticipated, which let me to work efficiently on the visuals, maybe lacking in finer details and having a bigger scale to work on.

Another matter which proved to be more challenging than expected was the difficulty of collecting the source material and references; especially about comics where there are only few reliable resource materials. Even the newest ones were published roughly five years ago. As time went by, more and more material came up and it started to feel overwhelming to choose the right things. In this sense the close co-operation and

previous experience with the Comics Center really helped me to understand the current situation of comics and see how matters are in the present day as well so that I understood what needed to be written about sequential art that was relevant for this thesis. The problem was also how much I could talk about comics without the information being too overwhelming to the reader. There is a lot I did not cover about the technical issues of comics, for example, in this thesis as I felt it was not relevant to understand the subject matter.

The research done supports the idea of using and incorporating the elements used in comics and its elements more to the field of comics. User-centered design and design thinking together with design probes form a good base for the use of more visuals and further develop the diverse use of more aesthetic tools in the business process.

Comics as a medium are still in great need of more research and in the field of design it should be taken seriously as any other medium; not treated just as a comic relief between presentation slides. This facelift might take a while though. Understanding the current situation in the field and developing it more might be a good path for innovation and me to continue. The future of the graphic novels and comics in innovation lie in the choice of worthwhile themes and interpretation of the possibilities of comics. It is the future application of this medium and being able to look new in the eyes of the customers which set the challenges to the development that give comics more boost in the field of innovation.

My benefits from this thesis project have been immense and life changing. It has opened new avenues for me and cleared my future and what I want to do after this thesis is finished. I have gained connections to the business world as well as to the world of comics and other co-operation concerning comics. Through this thesis I have gained illustration jobs, and my knowledge about both comics and innovation has definitely been an advantage. People have been interested about the project and the research as it is combining two fields not usually intertwined. For me, as a both comic enthusiast and industrial designer, to continue on this field and research comics more will benefit greatly from my knowledge base required through this thesis.

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## **BASE QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW**

Who are and what do you do?

What comics mean to you personally?

How do you use comics in your everyday/working life?

How would you use comics more?

Upside/downside of using comics?

Have you taken part to an innovation workshop or something similar in the past? If yes, how they used comics in their visuals?

Any experience as teacher or participant of such an event where comics and business thinking meet?

- personal view about these type of cases, need for them?

What you've learned from comics when used in a situation where they work as major teaching tool?

Do you recall remembering the subject better?



## COLOUR PLANS FOR BUSINESSCARD

version #1: "reverse"

outside



version #2: "coconut-like"

outside (darker)



inside



inside (light like the inside of a coconut)



main colours and their hex colour codes



# EAE4DA



# 58C09C



# 91715C