

Application of Design Thinking for Quranic Exegesis

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Abstract: *The challenges of modern times, the fragmentation of knowledge on one hand, and the need for sustainable global solutions on the other hand, also require the contextualization of the Divine Message. This manuscript tends to offer alternative approaches to Quranic interpretation through the application of Design Thinking (DT) methodology. This approach maintains Quranic coherence, but it also restructures and systematizes man's relationship with the divine book. DT ensures the comprehensiveness and continuity of the methods and techniques of Quranic interpretation to date, making the Quran an essential factor in providing solutions to global challenges.*

Keywords: *Design Thinking, Quran, Exegesis, Tafsir*

The process of globalization, and the rapid technological development, population movement, the challenges of time - SDG, virus, vaccine discovery have put man on a global level, the one who fails to factorize as God's vicegerent on Earth. Dynamism, and the speed of events has faded the sensory element of man for his heavenly affiliation, turning him into a mechanical part of modern trends, far from offering Quranic solutions (Schmidtke & Pink 2014). The voluminous interpretations of the Quran, the ideological translations, the individual and limited approaches, the localized and fragmented approaches, the generalized and formally repeated interpretations, which as such offer no practical solution, have influenced the man of the 21st century to feel not included and alienated in relation to the Divine Revelation (Pink 2010). Viewed from this perspective, for the believer in the first place, as imperative and man in general, requires a necessary contextualization of divine revelation in accordance with contemporary circumstances and currents (Ali 2018).

The next step for a total and comprehensive contextualization, in accordance with the basic principles of divine revelation, for all and for all time, places the performer as an individual within the framework of limited conceptual views and competence. To fulfill this imperative of divine revelation, the "modern approach" again enters the vicious circle of limited conceptual contextualization and the inevitable pluralism of views. Occurring in the midst of a seemingly unresolved situation, this manuscript tends to offer alternative approaches to Quranic interpretation through the application of Design Thinking (DT) methodology. The application of DT as a model that is human-focused and oriented towards the achievement of ideas, new and innovative approaches in various fields, is a powerful technique in elaborating the Quranic content in accordance with the demands of the time and the challenges it faces the world at large (Pink 2010; Serrat 2017; Zainab 2018). This "third option" ensures the comprehensiveness and continuity of the methods and techniques of Quranic interpretation so far, but which eliminates the conceptual limitation and non-functional fragmentation (Gafoordeen 2017).

Method

There is no definitive definition of what DT actually is depending on the approach of different authors, has been named with different terms such as culture, methodology and philosophy but all the authors agree that DT aims to achieve the cognitive depth of an innovative, human-centered (human, user-centric approach) process that can be applied to business, engineering, education, and various academic levels (Mootee 2013; Plattner, Meinel & Leifer 2018). According to Brown & Katz (2009) DT is a deeply human mechanism, on all human capacity and relying on our ability to be

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intuitive, to recognize patterns, to construct ideas that have emotional meaning, as well as proper functionality. According to Roger Martin's three-stage funnel, DT helps organize information from which new ideas are gained, solutions are offered, and the knowledge horizon is broadened (Serrat 2017).

Viewed in practical terms, depending on the approach, the DT process is divided into three to seven stages, which in essence do not differ a lot. We consider that for this manuscript the most appropriate is the application of the five phases of DT Fig. 1, proposed by the Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford which are briefly defined below (Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford).



Fig. 1 The five stages of the design thinking process

1. Empathize - developing sensitivity to people, embodying their views and requirements, within the design context. Understanding their physical and emotional needs, understanding what is important and least important to them, is very essential for this stage.
2. Define - aims to achieve clarity in understanding the problem, depending on the degree of the sensitivity we have achieved from the first stage. This also defines the challenge, POV- "the-point-of view" that must be undertaken to meet the requirements, which challenge must be formulated as a clear and meaningful position.
3. Ideate - is the stage where the designer, based on compassion for the requirements and needs and the ability to invent, must provide creative ideas for innovative solutions to the submitted requirements. At this stage "brainstorming" is an important element, because the more ideas that can be generated, the more opportunities are created to see their functionality in solving the user's problem.
4. Prototype - is a model, sketch, drawing, graph, initial flexible, with which the user can interact. This stage is of particular importance as it is the threshold that helps us move from the theoretical to the practical part, encouraging us to observe the functioning of the DT in reality and make the necessary changes for eventual deficiencies before the testing phase.
5. Test - is a re-manifestation of human sensitivity, when he sees the created prototype. Through this process you fulfill or not, the feelings of the empathy phase at first. Testing is not a complete process in itself, but it is one more opportunity for design perfection and meeting requirements.

Various authors, comparing the above stages, also mention the power of this story-telling as very important factors in the DT process, as it includes the element of time, people, events, places, objects and thus awakens intuition, new models are formed, inspiration occurs, develops environment for innovative ideas and offers solutions (Brown & Katz, 2009; Lewrick, Link, & Leifer, 2018; Mootee, 2013).

Connectivity

Mootee (2013) defines DT as a mechanism that helps us assess and understand complex connections between people, places, objects, events and ideas. According to him, this is the most powerful provoker of innovation, which also drives long-term strategic planning. To this definition if we add the element of telling (story) power, "storytelling", in conceptual terms we get even closer to the idea that DT is a suitable methodology for commenting on the Quran in modern times, which is inclusive of the whole tradition so far (Rippin & Mojaddedi, 2017). The Quranic narration, the stories of the prophets and their people, the dramatic events associated with individuals, the legal norms, the physical and metaphysical elements, the mysteries, the relativity of time and the space of events, constitute a complex structure. Therefore, below in brief points, the explanations of the five stages of DT are given in relation to the commentary of the Quran, **Fig. 2**.

1. Empathy - Viewed from the current perspective of Quranic interpretation, individual and limited approaches, localized and fragmented approaches, generalized and formally repeated interpretations, for fear of "going beyond the religious framework", have drastically reduced the element of empathy. The contextualization of the Quran is impossible without a sense of empathy. For the attentive reader, empathy is the most powerful element of temporal and spatial transference, relating it to the prophets, their people, objects, and related events. Through an amazing, rich, meaningful "storytelling" recitation, he lives with the dynamism of Quranic events, feels, experiences, compares, sees, takes positions and reflects. Only as such, by "standing in the shoes of others" can the reader offer solutions to the challenges of the time and contextualize the Quran (Brown & Katz, 2009). But since we are talking about an inclusive "third option" of interpreting the Quran, at this stage all possible interpretations of the Quran, hadiths and other sources can be considered, which together would enable us to build a real connection between the Proclamation and current problems, which require solutions (which are pre-defined, e.g. SDG) (United Nations).
2. Define - Defining in relation to the Quranic interpretation is rather an intuitive and iterative process between the accumulated knowledge of what we hear or read. This stage makes the essential difference between the performer as an individual and the commentary of the Quran as an institution, which should include experts of different profiles, who determine the POV that the institution will take regarding the problem. At this stage it is very important to define the terminology, the reason and time of revelation of the Quranic verses, the definition of the circumstances with the relevant elements (sociological, psychological, economic, cultural, . . .) and other secondary elements, which bring us closer to defining the adequate solution in relation to the challenges that require solutions. Experts, depending on the impact from the empathy phase, need to build a framework of action for the later stages.
3. Ideate - It is a turning point in relation to the comments so far, as it provides a concrete idea for a concrete challenge that will not necessarily be adequate and accurate, as it will depend on the depth or degree of understanding of the teams from two preliminary phases. For this purpose, it is necessary to establish measurement mechanisms, evaluation. Even if the right results are not achieved, at this stage the ideas take concrete forms and these ideas send the institution to other research paths, opening new horizons. The Quran is re-actualized in the plan of the idea, in relation to the requirements of the time and as such becomes an important reference in providing solutions.
4. Prototype - is a work, a model attempt to solve a certain problem inspired by the Quran, which has been achieved by a group of people of different professions through the DT process. The constructed model should serve as a logical explanation of the connection of the containing components, but at the same time should logically match the real requirements of the problem solving. In the worst case the proposed prototype can only perform the function of "touching the possible solution" and help achieve the functional, final prototype. In the best case the prototype should ensure long-term durability of the respective solution.
5. Test - is the most important and courageous moment of the whole process of interpretation of the Quran, because it is obtained as product which solves a certain human issue. This phase requires intensive work of experts in various fields, who immersed in research work and should compare other models offered and prove whether the product offers partial or complete solutions to the given problem. The product, depending on the feedback of comparisons with other alternative solutions, if it is the best option, only then can it pass to the concrete piloting phase, where again depending on the feedback it will be applied or revised and remodeled further

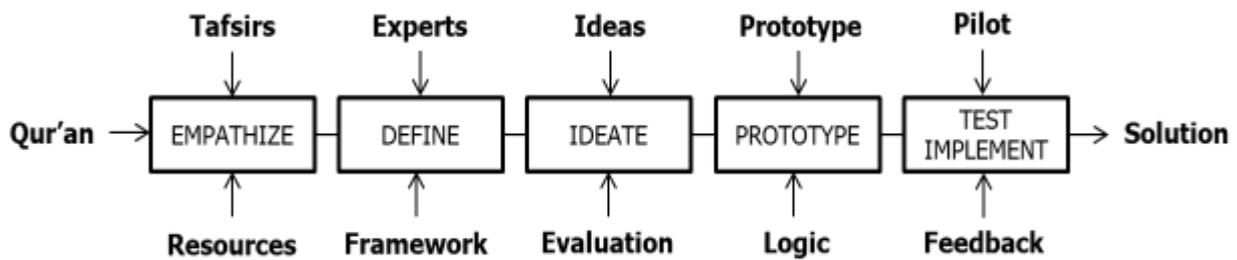


Fig. 2 The five stages of Design Thinking in relation to the commentary of the Quran.

The Two Dimensions That Must Meet

The application of DT as a technique which is used in providing solutions to challenges in various spheres is expected to strengthen the divine message as a dynamic and universal element for man and his future in this world. At this point, DT takes on a double dimension:

1. The Quranic dimension - where performers must create empathy with Quranic events, define certain issues, devise and provide models for solutions. At this point the element of Quranic "storytelling" is a powerful guide, as it connects us to the essence of the problem we are referring to.
2. Contextual dimension - where performers must create sufficient sensitivity to current human needs, defining them as concisely as possible, ideas and modalities most appropriate for their fulfillment in a sustainable way.

Viewed from this perspective, the interpreter is not an individual, but an institution with global responsibility, open and up-to-date, within the framework defined by the source itself, in this case the Quran. This methodology not only meets the hermeneutic criterion that "meaning is always dependent on the reader", but creates a dynamic and hybrid duality, **Fig. 3 (A)** (Rippin & Mojaddedi 2017). On the one hand the Quranic events are contextualized and on the other hand the human challenges are compared to the prototypes of the Quranic screening, which depending on the solution they offer can be applied or modified. Such an approach favors qualitative and practical interpretations and with the help of iteration excludes unfounded and non-functional interpretations. This closes the way for the generation of a voluminous material that does not help to solve concrete challenges. In the best case, when clear ideas and schemes are formed from the Quran for solving the problem, the "adapted" or "hybrid" solutions proposed by Banerjee and Ceri (2015) can be used, where the solutions are obtained ready by known models and the same are used for situations for which solutions are required **Fig. 3 (B)**, this based on the Modified Assnof Matrix.

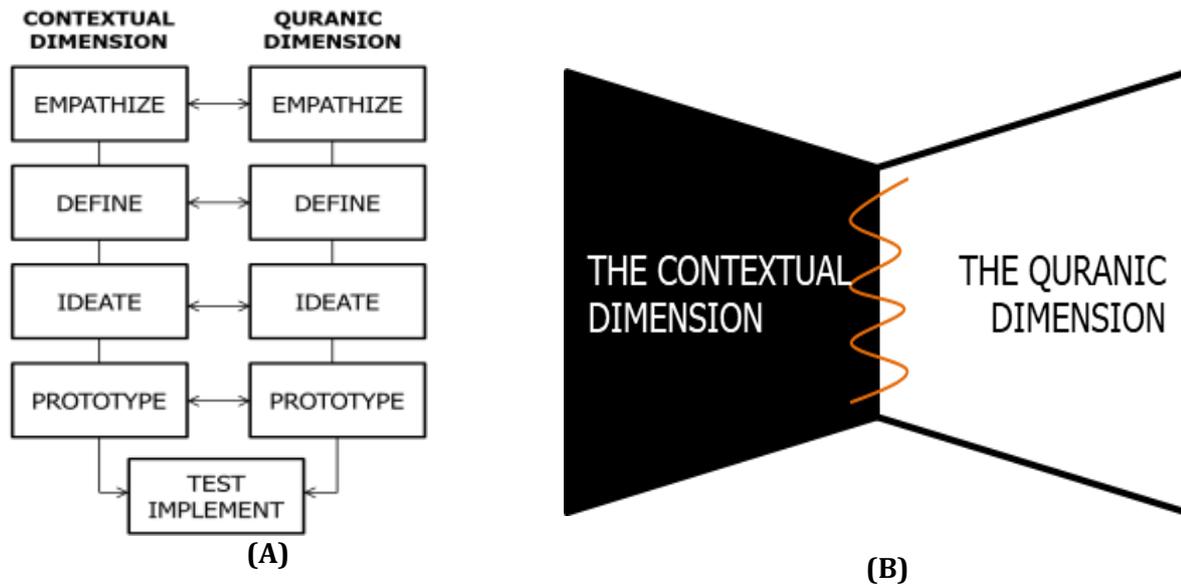


Fig. 3 (A) Application of DT hybrid methodology for the interpretation of the Quran and **(B)** the repeating process between the contextual dimension, the problem and the Quranic dimension, the solution.

DT's application for the commentary of the Quran is an idea which seeks to contextualize the Divine Revelation, without removing any element from the current contribution of the work of scholars. On the contrary, with the application of DT their contribution takes a unified and well-organized form, which is placed in solving the global problems. This idea tends not only to strengthen the human being in facing challenges, but individuals with the application of DT to rediscover the Quran within themselves, reflecting on their daily lives. The change of this approach is accompanied by other implications as well, as the individual-commentator goes into plan B, while the main role is taken by the competent institution of Quranic commentary. This transition requires an extraordinary approach at the global level, as it seeks to become an institution with global responsibility, which has its source in the Divine Revelation. This complexity requires a serious approach to understanding and implementing all stages of DT in accordance with the solutions that are required or other ideas that can be generated, but again within the framework of Quranic principles. Building a well-structured framework, which includes staff, forms of action, technical tools, activities and feedback with measurable results is a challenge in itself, but also necessary. After all that has been said above, the question still remains open, whether and how DT can be applied to the continuous commentary and contextualization of the Quran.

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