

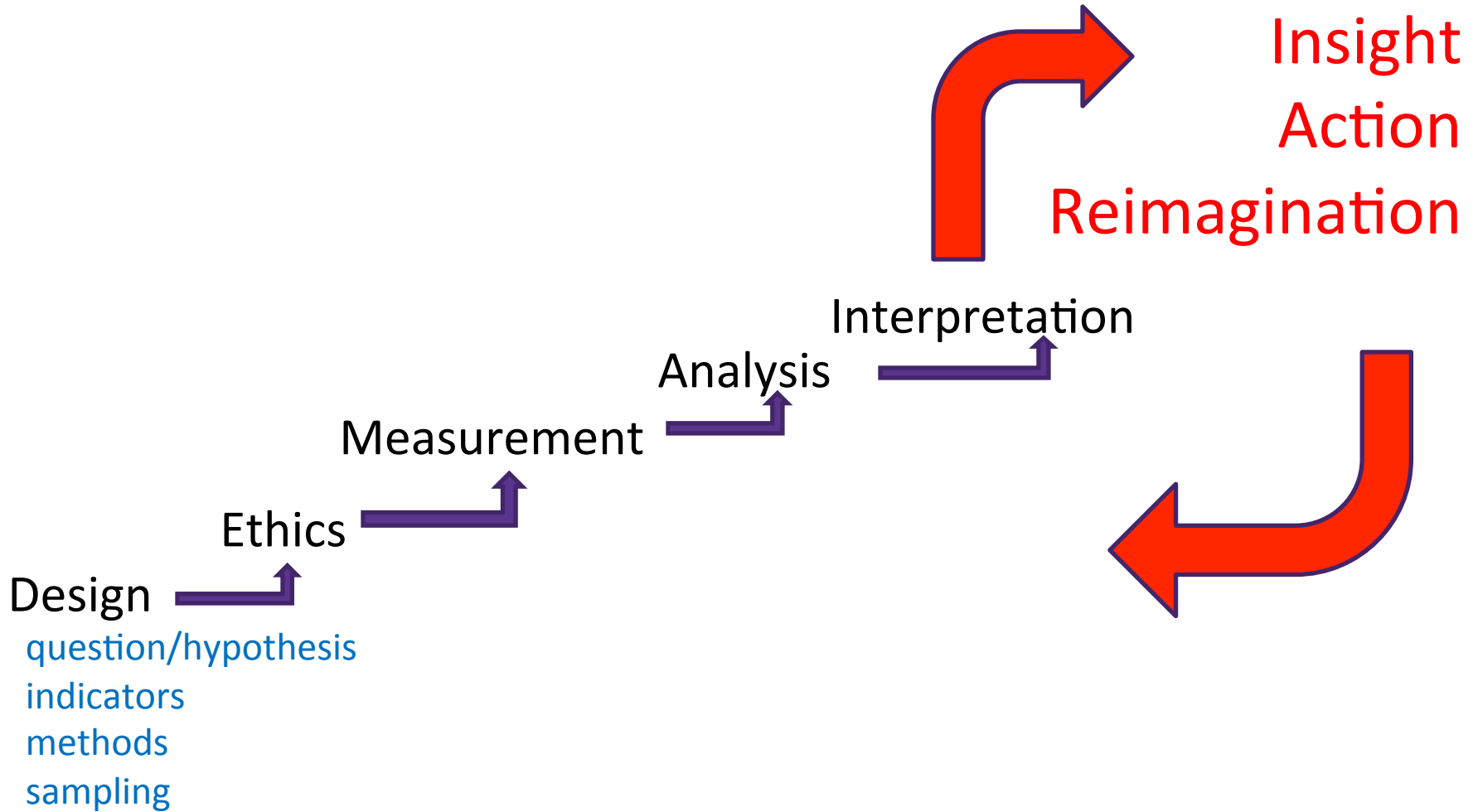
A Camper's Guide to Basic Ways of Knowing

**MuseumCamp – Museum of Art of History, Santa Cruz
July – August 2014**

Our Goals

- + Understanding the basic methods of assessing social impact
- + Feeling confident about matching the method to the question
- + Creating a basic research design linking the questions and the methods
- + Not worrying too much about methodology at camp

The Assessment Flow



The Basic Methods

- + Surveys
- + Interviews/Focus Groups
- + Natural observation
- + Participant observation
- + Secondary or archival information
- + Mixed methods (hybrid)

Which Design Should I Use?

Method	Considerations
Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questions require broadly representative responses from a relatively large group• When good data can be obtained by asking structured short-answer questions• When you expect a high percentage of respondents to answer• You have a good way to distribute surveys with an understanding of possible biases
Interviews/ Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-depth exploration of participants' meaning is key part of question• You can access appropriate participants willing to talk to you• You don't need results to be representative
Natural observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You can observe without unduly influencing what you're studying• You want to explore a social, cultural or political process• You're more interested in identifying new variables than measuring established ones• You seek a rich description of context

When Design Should I Use? (cont.)

Method	Considerations
Participant observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural observation does not provide enough insight• Merely asking questions is too distant to allow deep understanding• You need to get inside a social, cultural or political process• Allows analysis of variables in context
Secondary or archival data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing data is better than what you could collect yourself• When object of research is not directly available but can be addressed through archival methods• When the research question involves the past so other designs are not feasible
Mixed methods (hybrid)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A single method not sufficient to allow full understanding of the question• Each method can address a different aspect of a complex question• The methods can support each other in reaching a robust conclusion• Allows you to explore contradictory findings or explore existing questions in a new way

Always Keep in Mind

- + Cultural lens – how does your cultural perspective influence your perceptions of other people's behavior?
- + Validity – are you really measuring the thing you care about?
- + Consistency – are you doing assessment consistently to make sure that differences you observe are due to underlying differences rather than measurement error?
- + Bias reduction – is there some kind of unintended bias lurking in your design or methods?
- + Sampling – how do you make sure your approach to selecting participants allows for representativeness or at least allows you to understand its limitations?

How Is Impact Assessment in the Arts Different?

- It's not:
 - Human attitudes, behavior and social organization are universal
 - The process of inquiry and discovery is universal
 - Engagement is the same in the arts, education, politics, social services and other areas of civic life
- It is:
 - The concepts and outcomes are not always clear
 - Sometimes hard to get access to the participants you seek
 - Resources and capacity of arts organizations are frequently stretched

Trying Out the Methods

What is the impact of public art on the public?