

Information Architecture:

Beyond Navigation, Labels, and Organization

Nathaniel Davis
IA Consultant, Methodbrain

START
HERE.

Objectives

- Explain information architecture as an area of study.
- Demonstrate how to integrate IA thinking into your process to improve design strategy and
- outcomes.
- Describe where to start exploring structure at scale


About Me

- Independent contractor
- Independent researcher
 - IA theory, science, and practice
 - Parameters to define and assess UI structure
 - Conceptual modeling software

A photograph of an elderly man with white hair, wearing a striped jacket and a scarf, standing in profile against a background of dense green foliage. The image is dimly lit, with the text overlaid in white.

Richard Saul
Wurman and
UNDERSTANDING

IA Origins

A photograph of Richard Saul Wurman in profile, looking to the right. He has white hair and is wearing a grey and white striped jacket with a scarf. The background is a dense, out-of-focus green foliage.

Richard Saul
Wurman and
UNDERSTANDING

IA Origins

RICHARD SAUL WURMAN
INFORMATION
ARCHITECTS
In·for·ma·tion Ar·chi·tect [L *info-*
tectus] n. 1) the individual who
organizes the patterns inherent
in data, *making the complex*
clear. 2) a person who creates
the structure or map of infor-
mation which allows others to
find their personal paths to
knowledge. 3) the emerging 21st
century professional occupation
addressing the needs of the age
focused upon clarity, human un-
derstanding and the science of
the organization of information.
-In·for·ma·tion Ar·chi·tec·ture
PETER BRADFORD EDITOR



IA Origins 2.0

Peter Morville & Lou Rosenfeld



Popular View of IA

Surfaced as an issue of scale and complexity in building Web user interfaces.

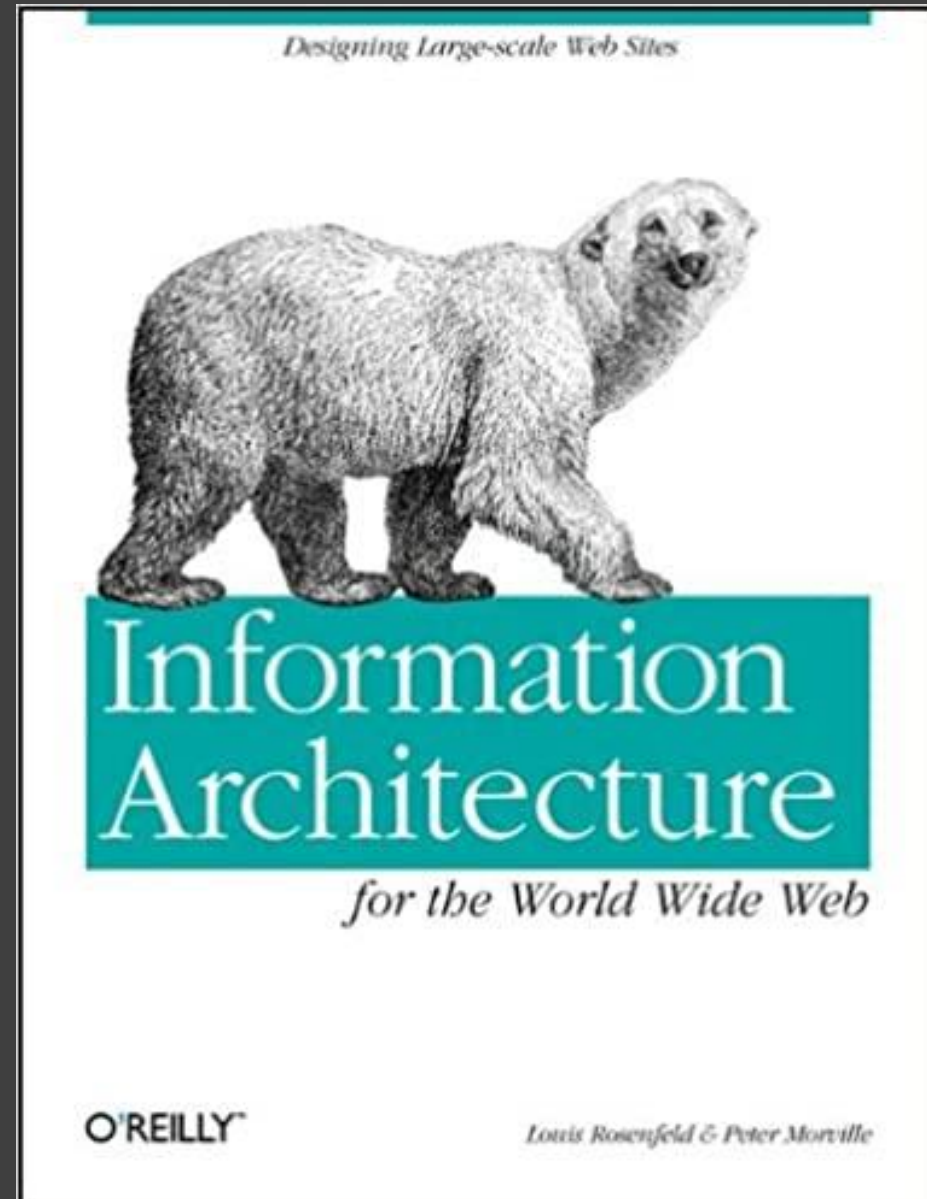
The pain

- Interactions and affordances were limited and becoming less intuitive
- Language in the UI often caused confusion
- Navigating content-rich environments was cumbersome

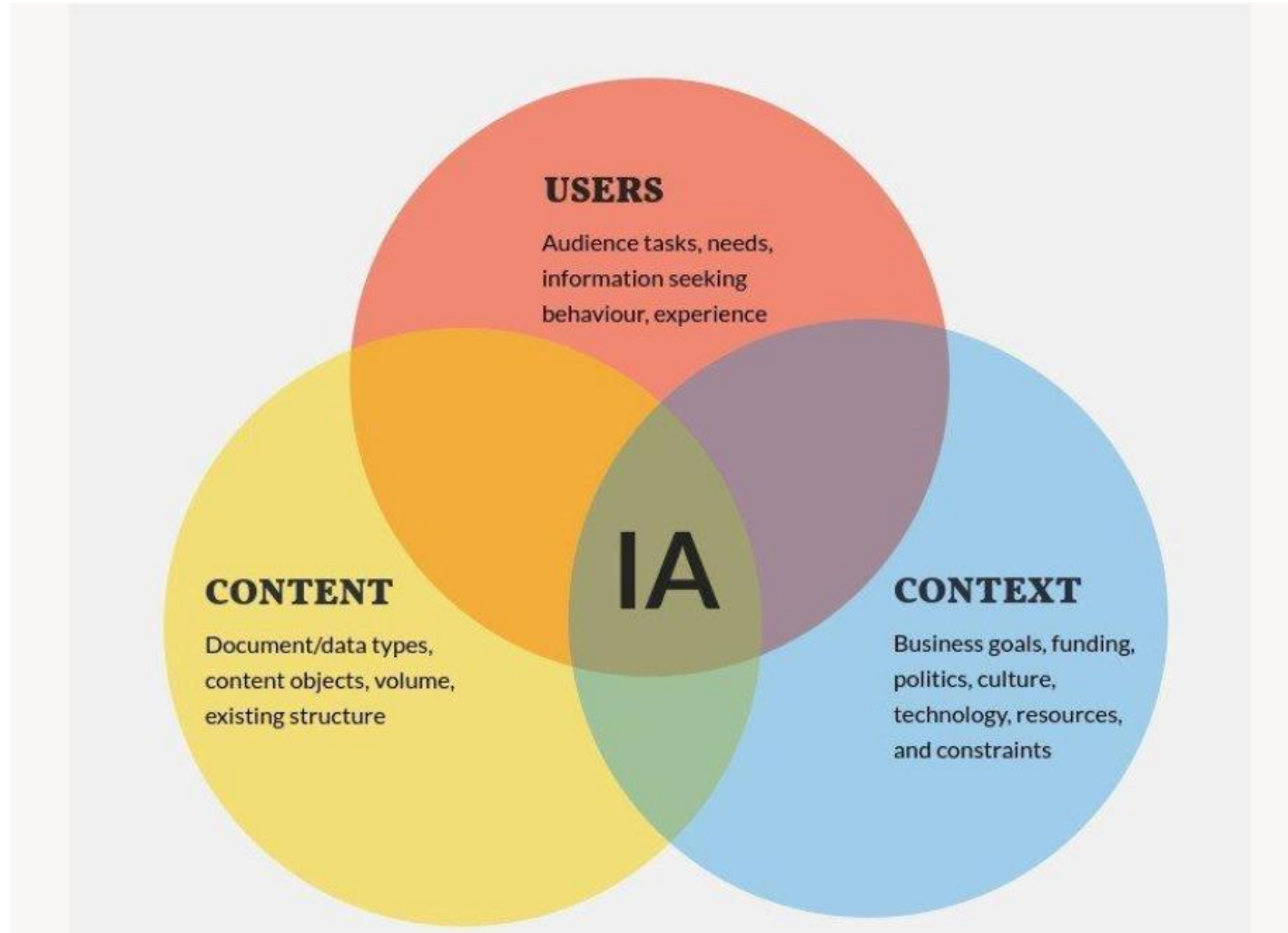
Ultimately

- People were not able to achieve their goals
- Businesses struggled to meet their objectives
- Teams struggled to deliver value

Information
architecture
to the
rescue!

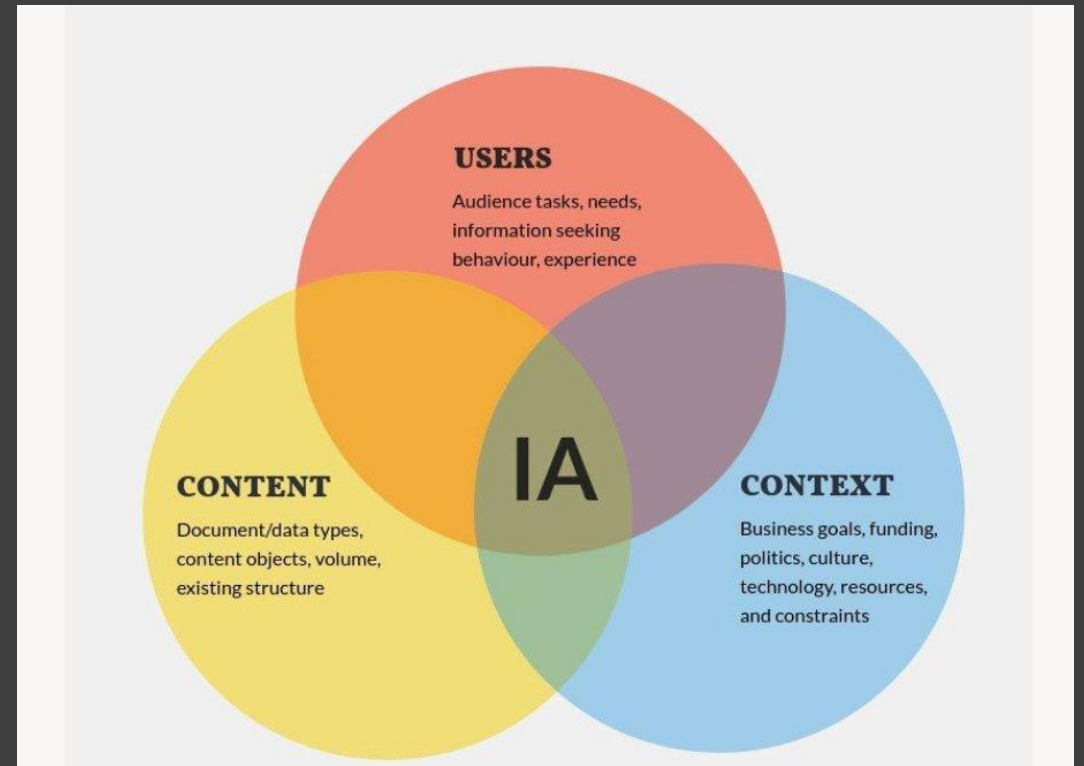


Areas of focus



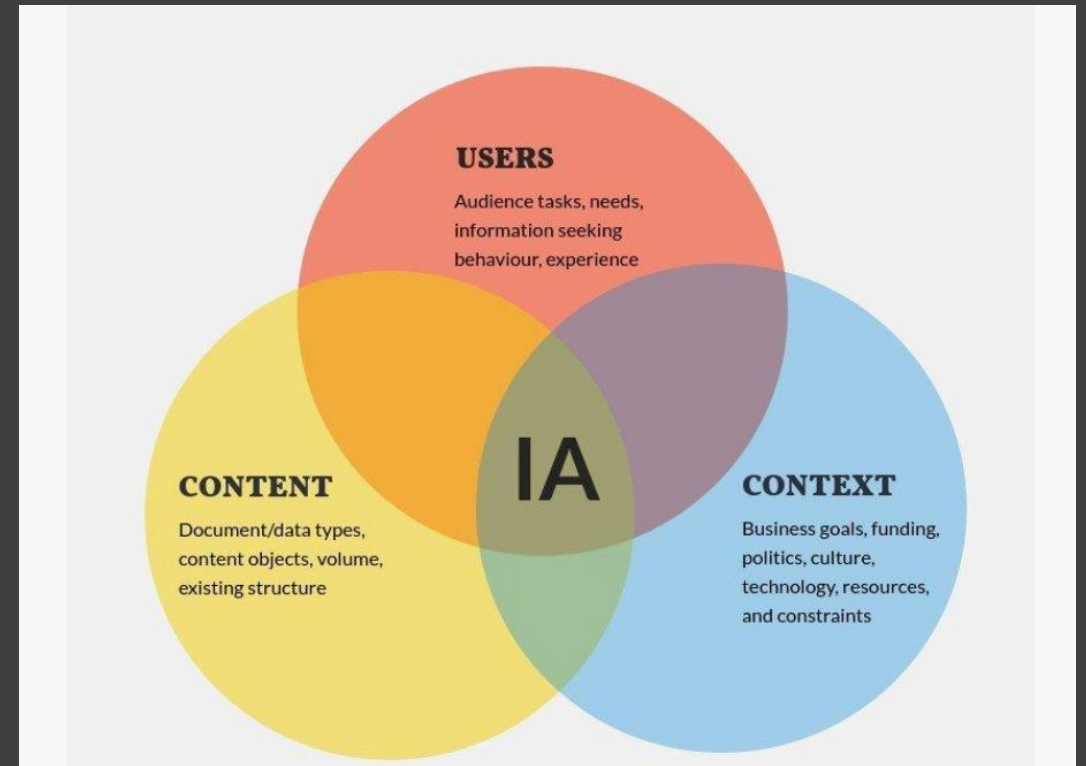
Practical Artifacts

- Navigation systems
- Labeling systems
- Organization systems
- Search systems

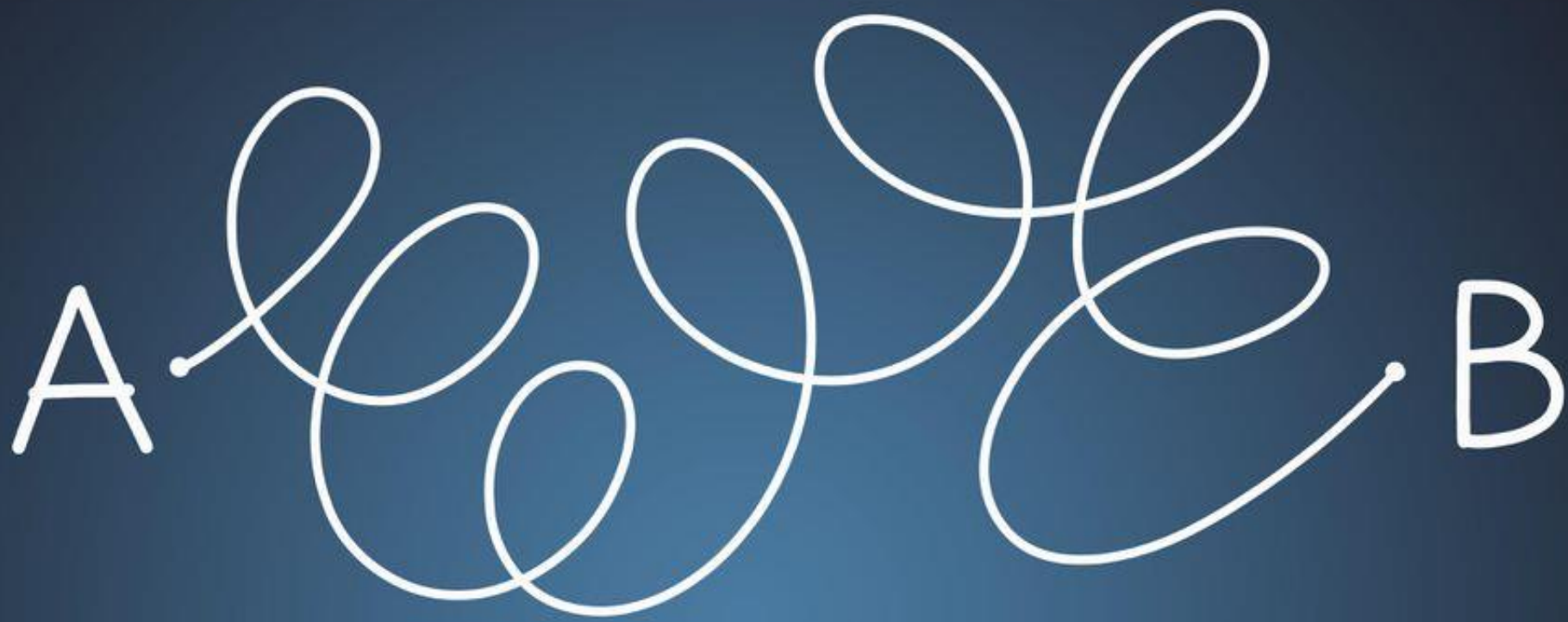


Practical Artifacts

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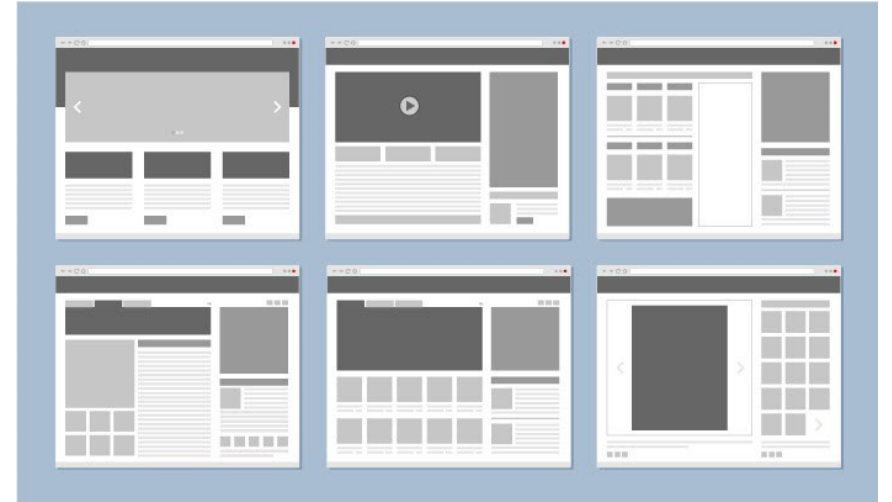
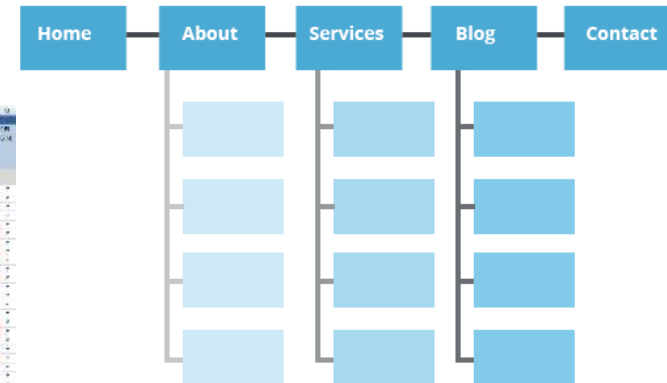


Information architecture is a victim of its
success



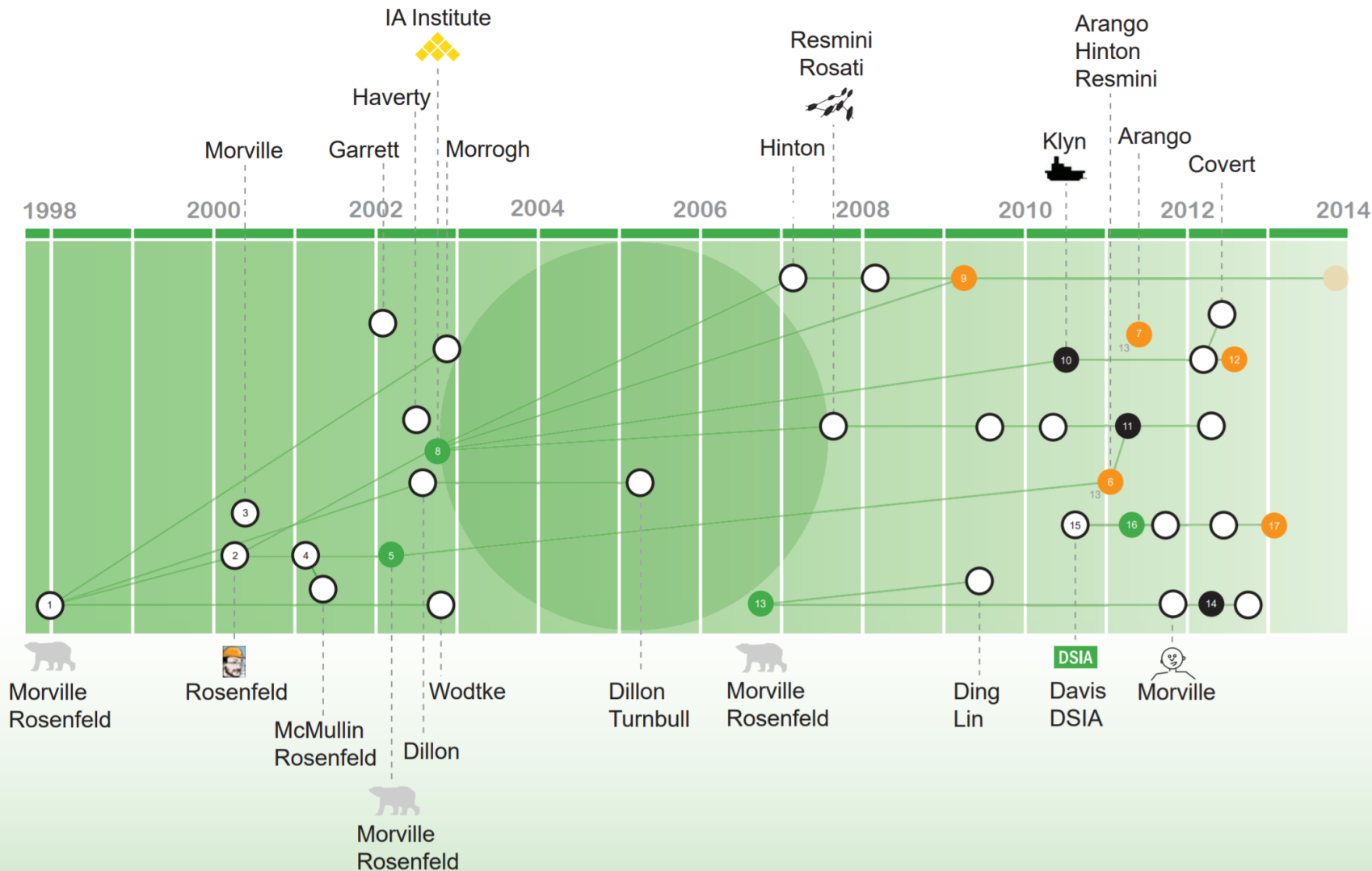
Desire for simplicity

- *Wireframes*
- *Sitemaps*
- *Taxonomy*
- *Excel spreadsheets*

An Excel spreadsheet with a grid of cells. The columns are labeled with various categories and sub-categories. The rows contain text descriptions of content items, such as 'Business', 'Marketing', 'Sales', 'Customer Service', etc. The cells are filled with text and some are highlighted in red, indicating a structured content plan or taxonomy.

- Information architecture, as an area of interest was quickly commoditized in the marketplace.

IA Schools of Thought – Beta



School of Thought

A school is a fundamentally unique perspective and approach to the practice of information architecture. The school and its branches are given credibility through ongoing supportive documentation. Peter Morville can be credited with originally articulating what would become known as classic and contemporary information architecture through his proposal of *little* and *big* information architecture. (3)

Branch

A branch is an independent perspective and approach within the context of an IA school of thought. A branch emerges through the canonization of a definition of IA practice that is supported by a combination of theory, new methods, research and published works.

Sub-Branch

A sub-branch is a specialization within a branch. It assumes the practice definition of a branch, but typically contributes to the knowledge in a specific area of interest or novel interpretation of its parent branch.

Define IA - IA
Institute

Reframing



Journal of IA – First issue published 2009



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Journal of Information Architecture. At the top, there is a dark red header with the journal's name in white. Below this is a navigation bar with links for HOME, SPRING 2021, PAST ISSUES, ABOUT JOFIA, and SUBMISSIONS. The main content area features a large black and white photograph of a city street with a bridge. Below the image, there is a paragraph of text describing the journal's mission and publication schedule. A section titled "Spring 2021 — Volume 6 Issue 1, Landscapes" includes a smaller black and white photograph of a landscape with mountains and a body of water. The text below this image discusses the significance of the new issue.

Journal of Information Architecture

HOME SPRING 2021 PAST ISSUES ABOUT JOFIA SUBMISSIONS

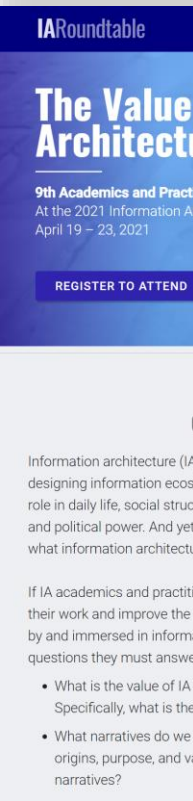
The Journal of Information Architecture is an international peer-reviewed scholarly journal bridging academia and practice. Its aim is to facilitate the systematic development of the scientific body of knowledge in the field of information architecture.

The Journal is published biannually in English and the current issues is **Spring 2021, Issue 1 Volume 6**. **Submissions** are open for the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 issues.

Spring 2021 — Volume 6 Issue 1, Landscapes



So, where were we?
The publication of the Spring 2021 issue marks the beginning of a new cycle in the life of the Journal of Information Architecture, and brings with it a few long-awaited changes.



The screenshot shows a promotional page for an IA Roundtable event. The header is blue with the text "IA Roundtable". Below this, the title "The Value of Architecture" is displayed in large white letters. The event details include "9th Academics and Practice" and "At the 2021 Information Architecture Conference", with dates "April 19 – 23, 2021". A blue button with white text says "REGISTER TO ATTEND". The main content area is white and contains text about the value of information architecture and a list of discussion topics.

IA Roundtable

The Value of Architecture

9th Academics and Practice
At the 2021 Information Architecture Conference
April 19 – 23, 2021

REGISTER TO ATTEND

Information architecture (IA) is about designing information ecosystems that play a role in daily life, social structure, and political power. And yet, what information architecture can do for us is still a question that many of us have not asked.

If IA academics and practitioners want to improve their work and improve the lives of others, they need to be by and immersed in information architecture. They must answer the following questions:

- What is the value of IA? Specifically, what is the value of IA in your field?
- What narratives do we have about the origins, purpose, and value of IA narratives?

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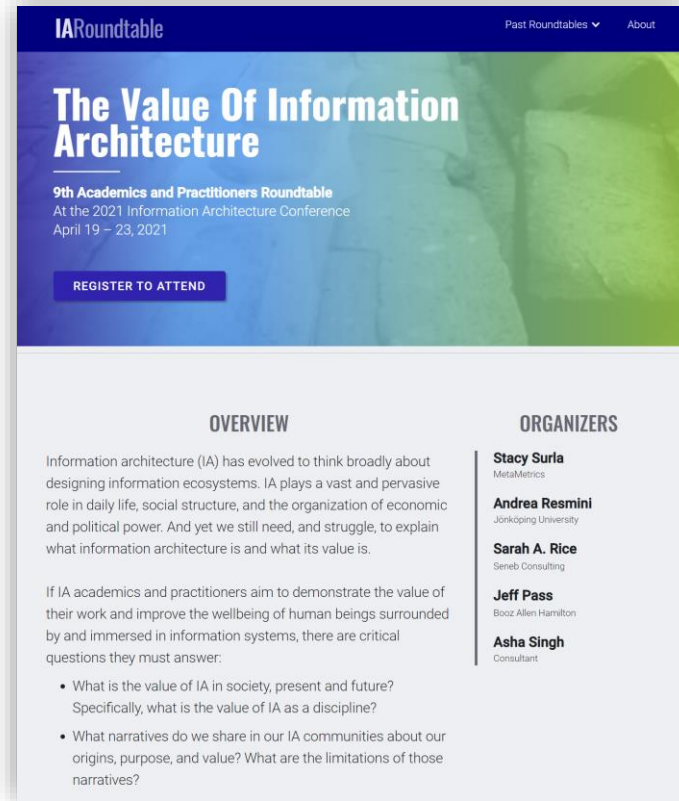
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IA Roundtable

Past Roundtables About

The Value Of Information Architecture

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REGISTER TO ATTEND

OVERVIEW

Information architecture (IA) has evolved to think broadly about designing information ecosystems. IA plays a vast and pervasive role in daily life, social structure, and the organization of economic and political power. And yet we still need, and struggle, to explain what information architecture is and what its value is.

If IA academics and practitioners aim to demonstrate the value of their work and improve the wellbeing of human beings surrounded by and immersed in information systems, there are critical questions they must answer:

- What is the value of IA in society, present and future? Specifically, what is the value of IA as a discipline?
- What narratives do we share in our IA communities about our origins, purpose, and value? What are the limitations of those narratives?

ORGANIZERS

Stacy Suria
MetaMetrics

Andrea Resmini
Jönköping University

Sarah A. Rice
Seneb Consulting

Jeff Pass
Booz Allen Hamilton

Asha Singh
Consultant



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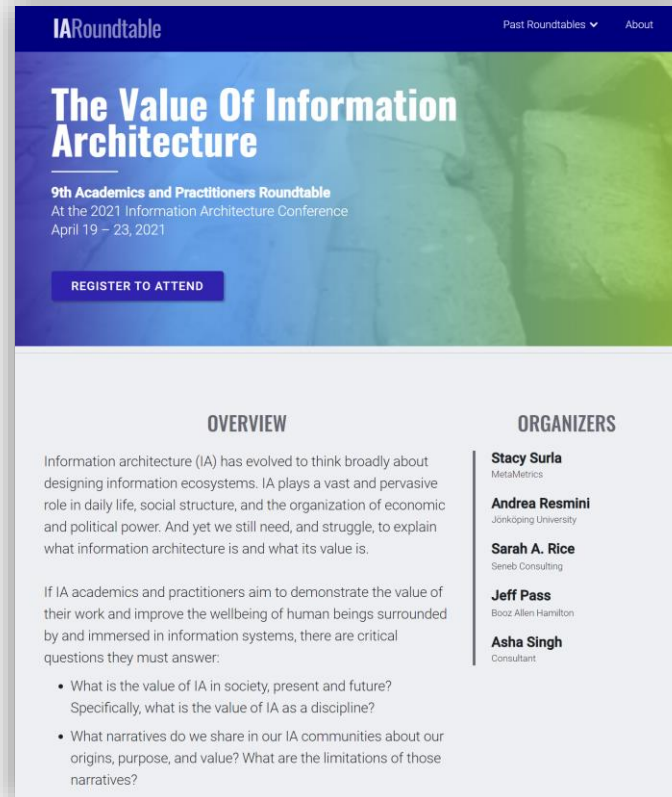
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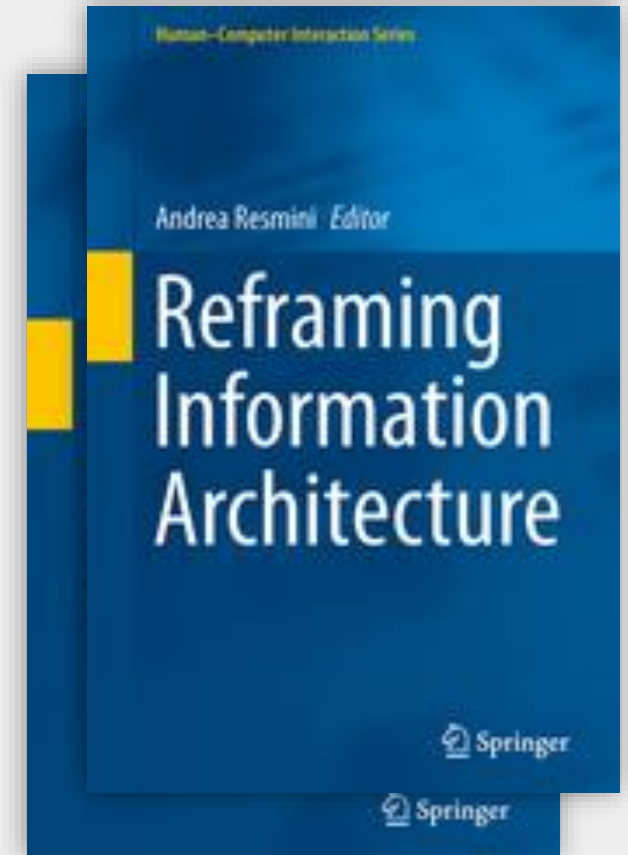
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Sarah A. Rice
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The image shows the cover of a book titled "Reframing Information Architecture". The cover is primarily blue with a yellow vertical bar on the left side. At the top, it says "Human-Computer Interaction Series". Below that, the editor's name "Andrea Resmini Editor" is listed. The title "Reframing Information Architecture" is written in large, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom right, the Springer logo is visible.

Human-Computer Interaction Series

Andrea Resmini Editor

Reframing Information Architecture

Springer

Andrea Resmini – “Keeper of the IA Flame!”



Journal of Information Architecture

HOME SPRING 2021 PAST ISSUES ABOUT JIJA SUBMISSIONS



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IARoundtable

Pair Roundtables About

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Moderator
York College University

Andrea Resmini
Sarah A. Rice
Sarah Consulting

Jeff Pass
Booz Allen Hamilton

Asha Singh
Consultant

Human-Computer Interaction Series

Andrea Resmini Editor

Reframing Information Architecture

Springer

IA Definitions

Warning: This is not a comprehensive list. I'm leaving out a lot of people who have contributed their perspectives.

Definitions – Morville, Rosenfeld

- “the **structural design** of **shared** information environments”
- “the ~~combination~~ **synthesis** of organization, labeling, search, and navigation systems”
- “the art and science of **shaping** information products and experiences to **support** usability, findability, and understanding.”

Definitions

“the structural integrity of meaning across contexts.”

– Jorge Arango



Definitions

“Information architecture is the **practice** of deciding how to **arrange the parts** of something to be **understandable.**”

– IA Institute

Definitions

“Practicing information architecture involves **facilitating** the people and organizations we work with to **consider their structures** and **language** thoughtfully.”

– IA Institute

Definitions

“the **design** of **language** and **classification systems** to **change** the world...**align** stakeholders behind a **shared vision.**”

– Peter Morville

Emancipating Information Architecture

<https://semanticstudios.com/emancipating-information-architecture>

HOW DO YOU GET TO GOOD?



What is most important about your information architecture? How does your work change as you work at different scales? What kinds of experiences does your architecture create? Does your approach prevent you from creating different kinds of experiences?

TALKING ABOUT IA • AUSTIN GOVELLA

<https://agux.co/bibliography>

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IA > Navigation + Labels + Organization



As Practice or Discipline

Disambiguation of IA



As Work Product (Artifact)



As Theory, Art, or Science



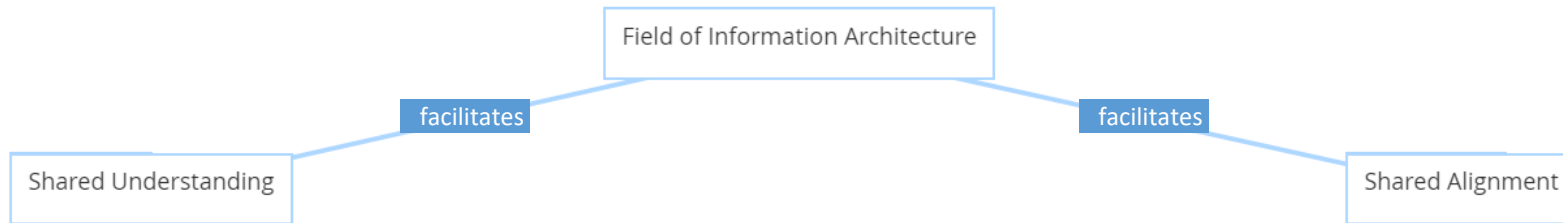
IA as a field of study



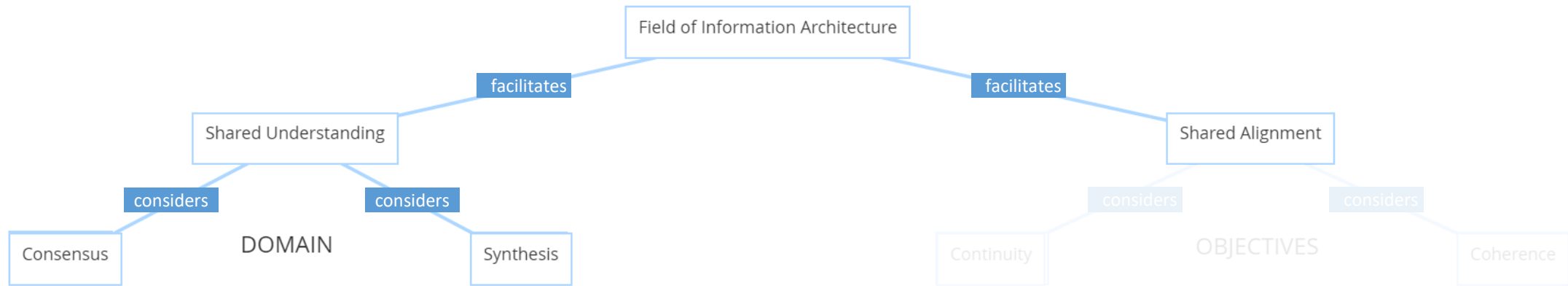
Information Architecture Field of Study

The study of facilitating shared understanding and alignment with conceptual clarity.

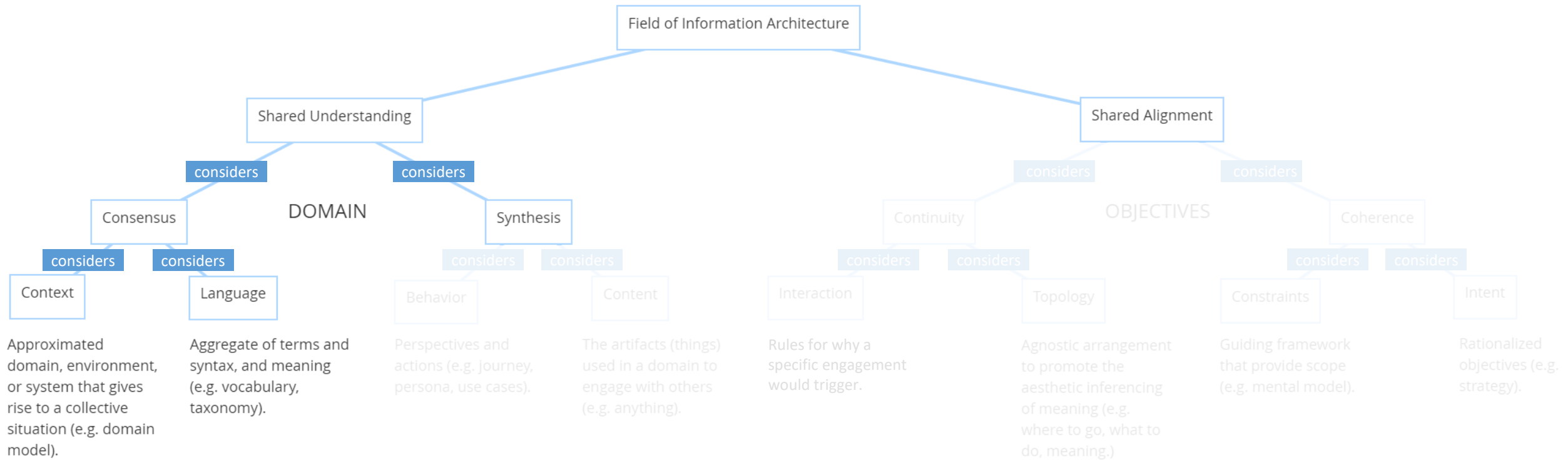
The facilitation of shared understanding and alignment with conceptual clarity.



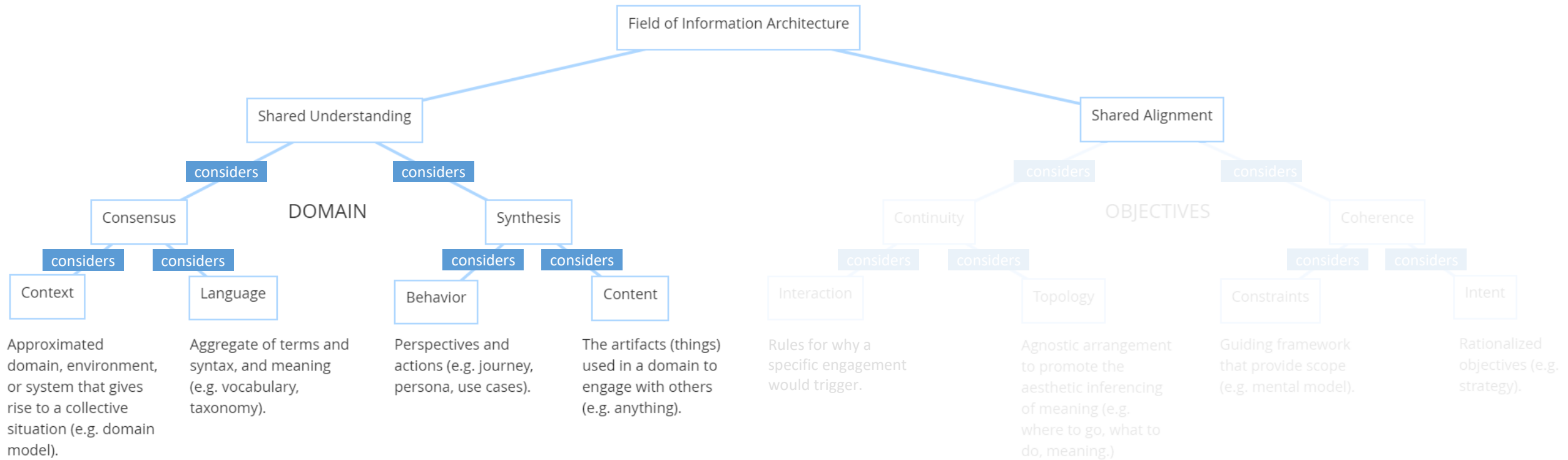
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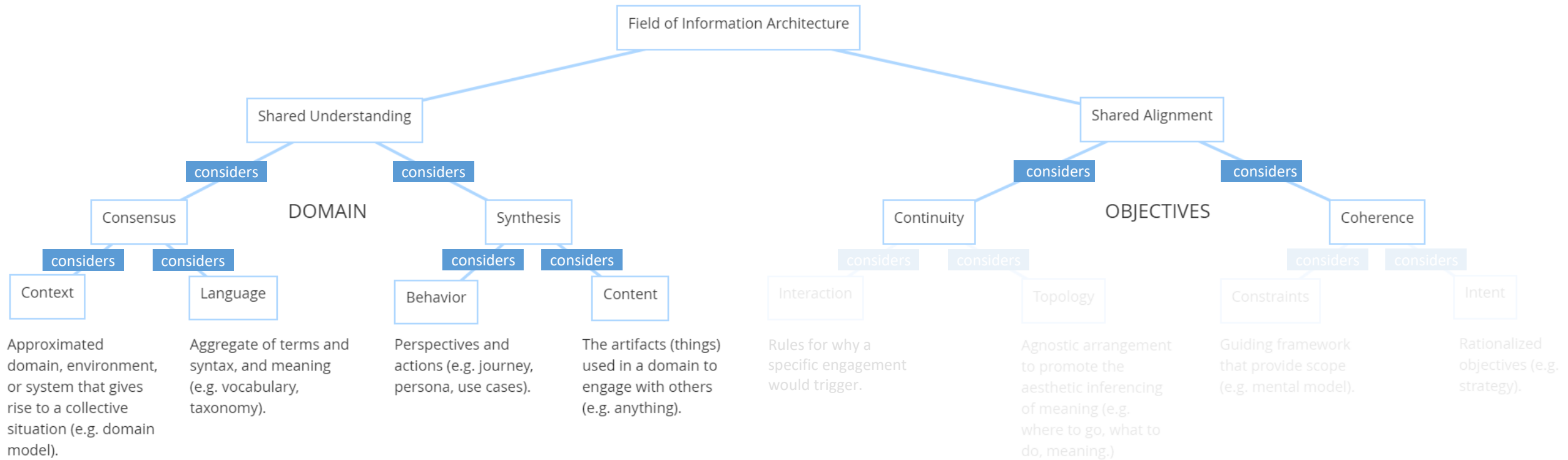
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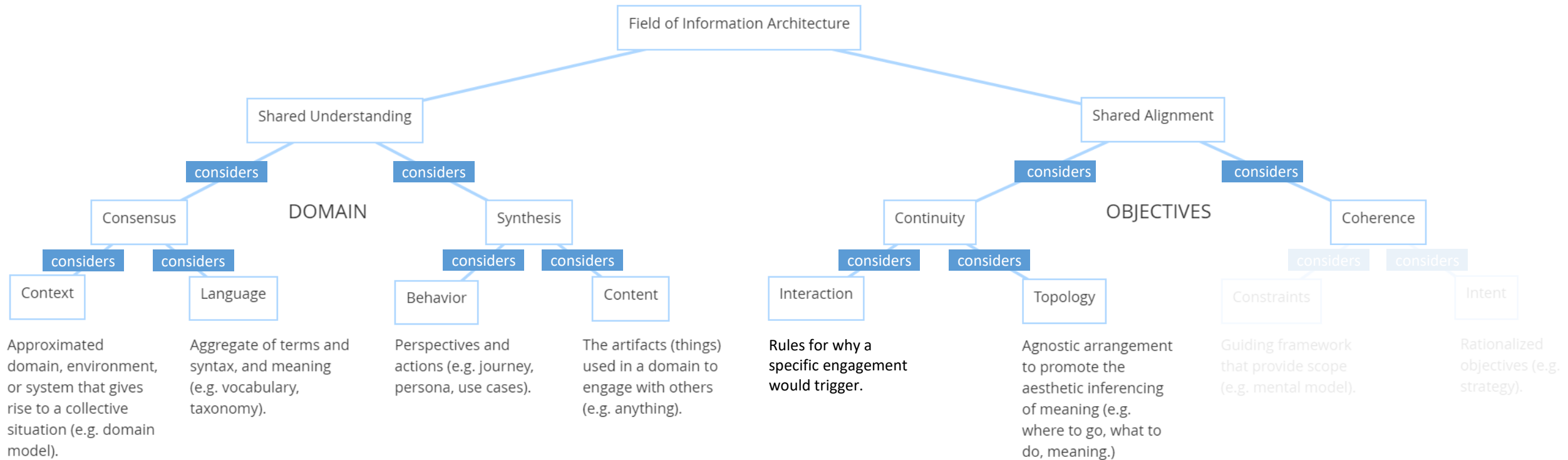
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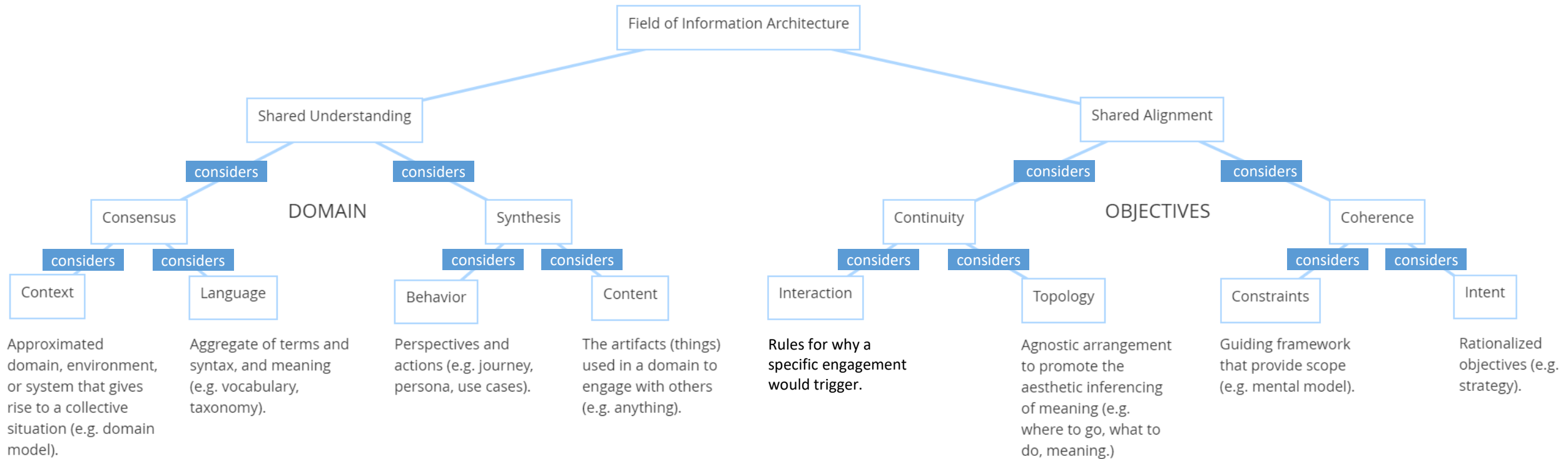
The facilitation of shared understanding and alignment with conceptual clarity.



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The facilitation of shared understanding and alignment with conceptual clarity.

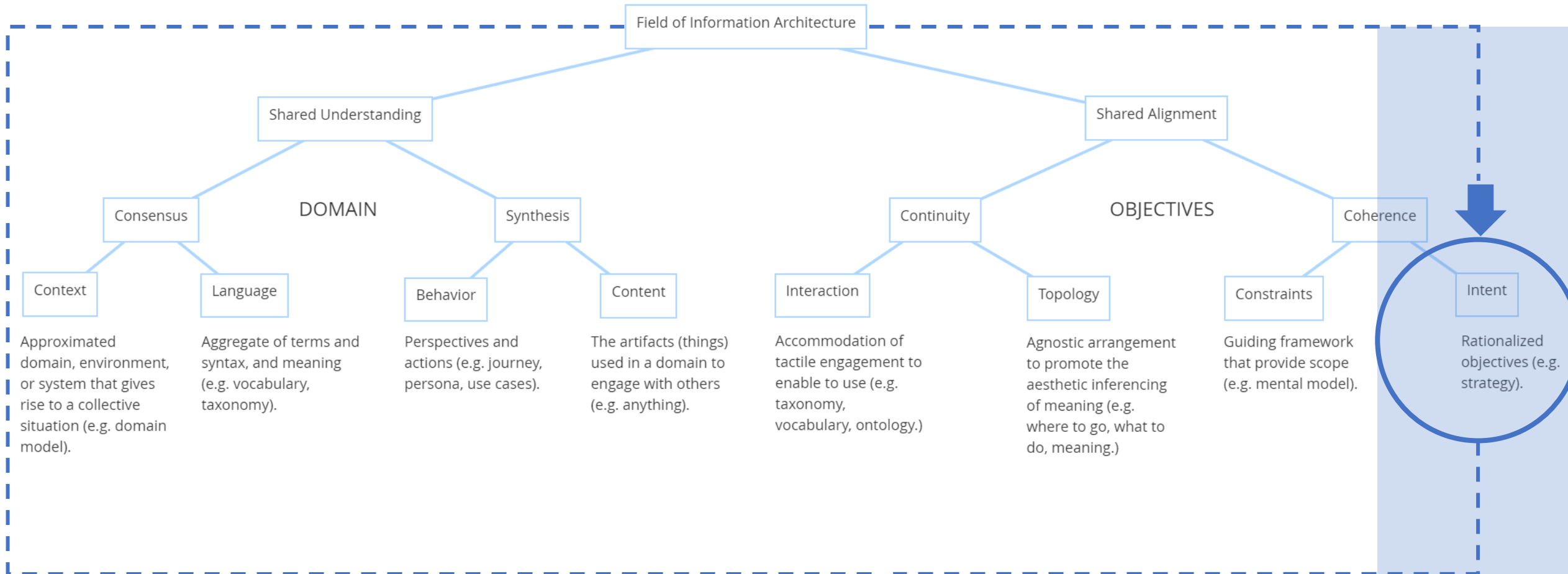


“Design is the rendering of intent.”
- Jared Spool

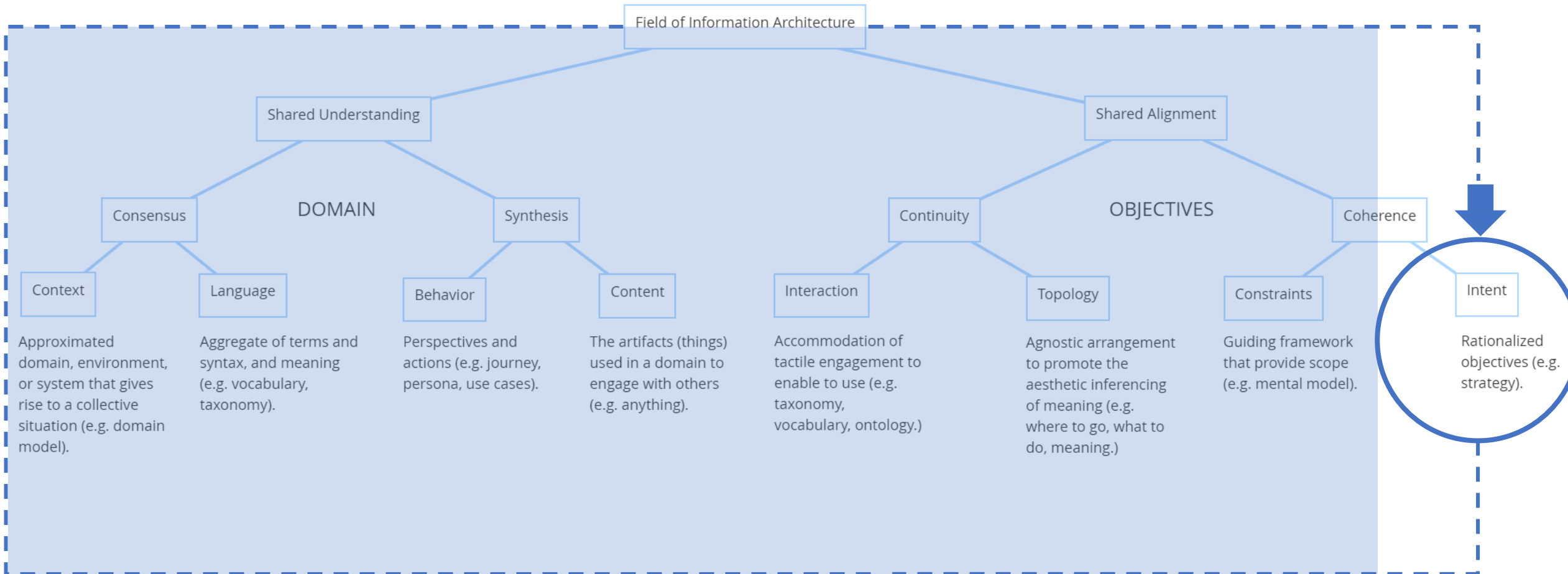


Without intention, design fails.

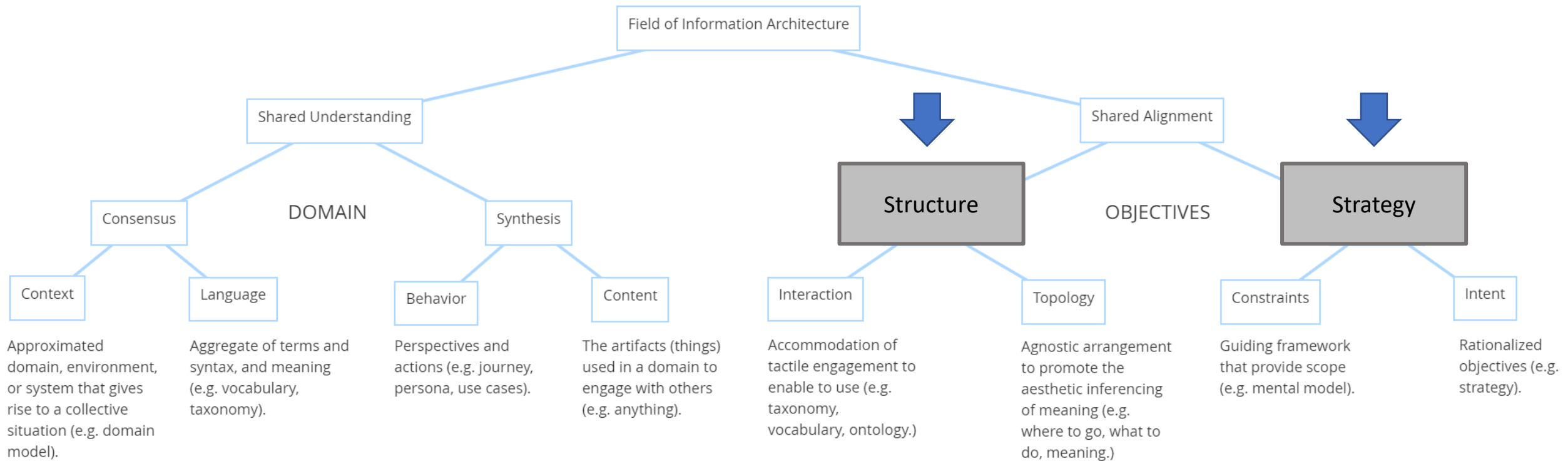
Using IA thinking to get to Intent



Using IA thinking to get to Intent



IA Lens for Design Intent and Structure



IA thinking for structural systems & scale

Digital teams create artifacts

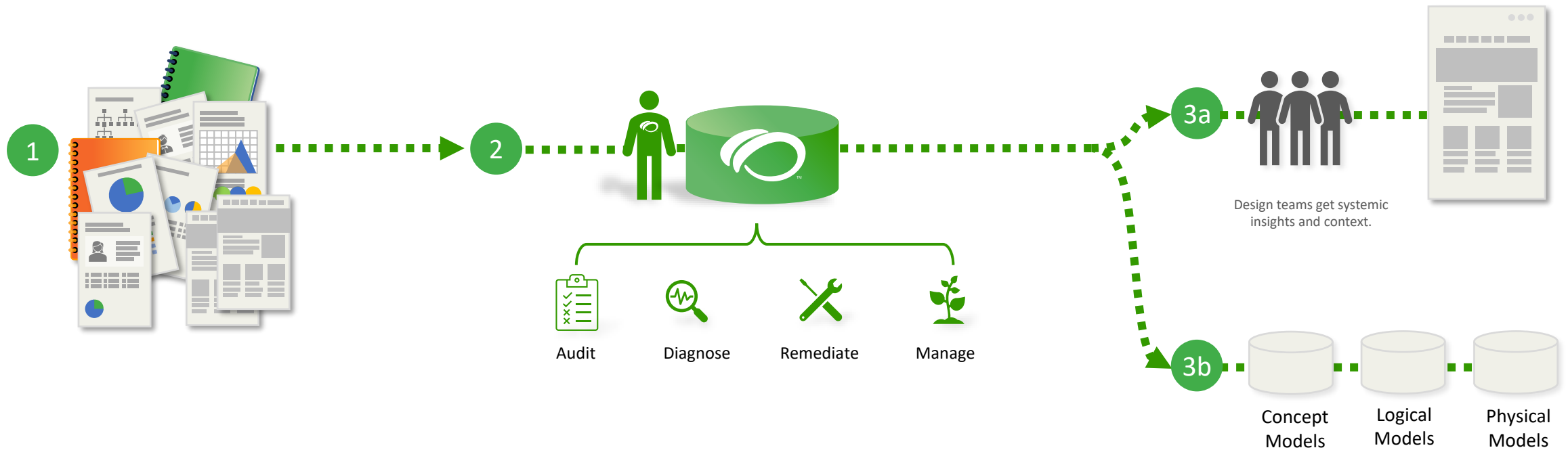
Product and design teams produce a wealth of documentation about site objectives and structure that is not easily discoverable or manageable.

Operationalize conceptual structure

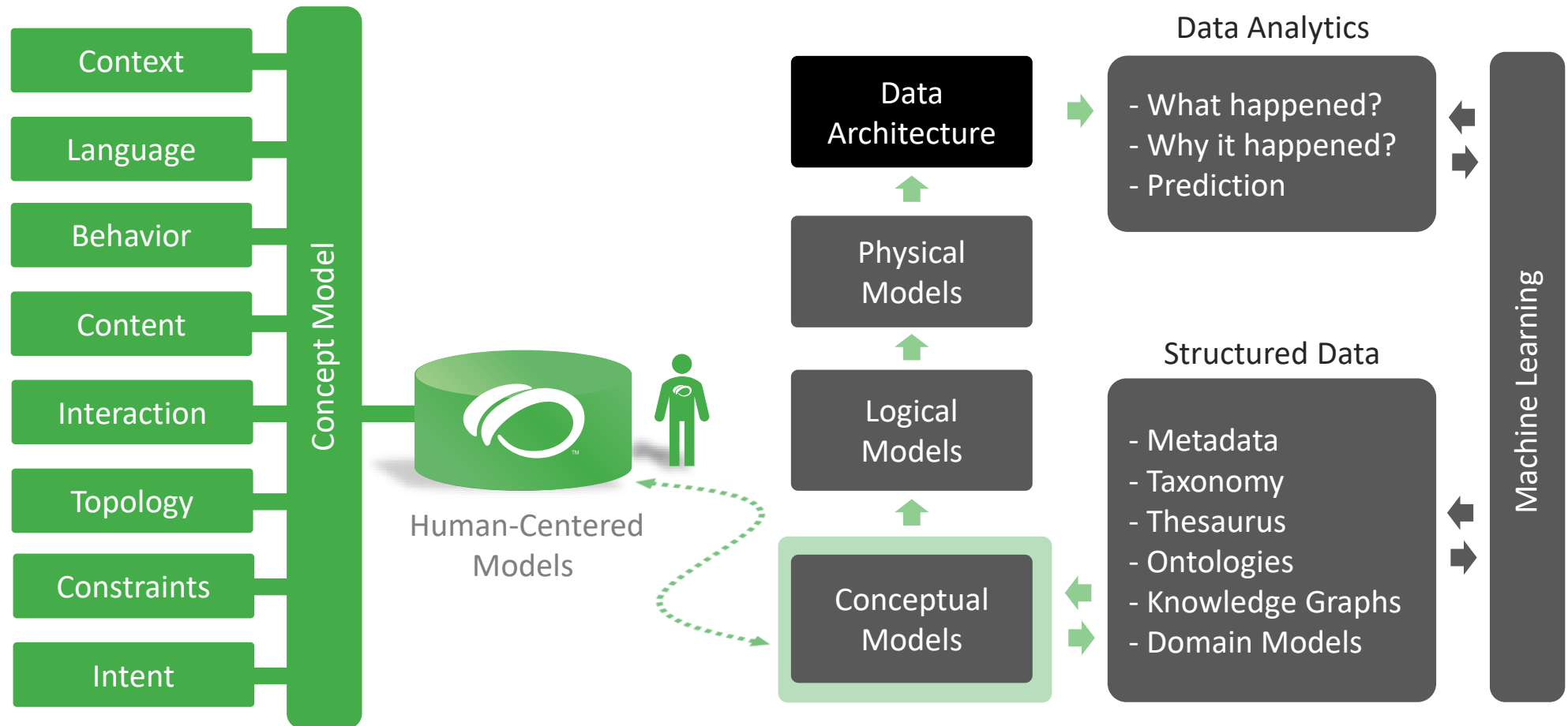
Insert an enterprise-grade workflow and reporting cadence and use structured modeling and diagnostic platform to assess, document, and manage UI structure.

Power performance with insight

Maintain an integrated system of human-centered models that informs digital design and data architecture efforts.



IA thinking at scale & complexity



Information architecture is the study of facilitating shared understanding and alignment with conceptual clarity.

START
HERE.

