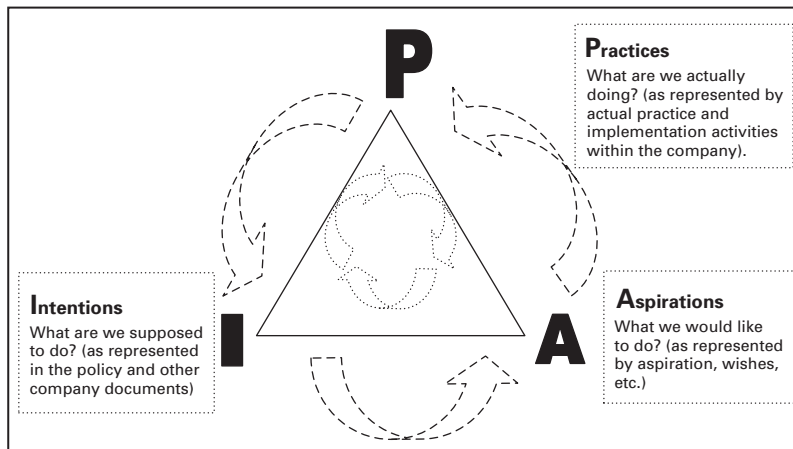


view of the design process is more myth than reality. This work gave rise to a realisation that there are in fact three views of the design process. The first view is that which is represented by documentation of policies and procedures either by individual organisations or by large groupings such as the RIBA map apparently representing a whole profession. We can also look at the web-sites and brochures of individual design practices which appear to describe their processes. This view of the design process we might call the 'Intentions' view. It tells us what individuals, practices, large organisations and even whole professions intend should happen when design is done. The 'Intentions' view thus tells us what is supposed to happen (Fig. 14.5).

Next we can study what actually happens in practice. That can be done through real-time observation but this is both a lengthy and potentially interventionist process that many commercial organisations find too intrusive. We worked retrospectively looking at six major design projects that had recently been completed by examining all the documentary evidence, interviewing participants and holding focus groups to talk through and draw out a balanced communal view of the actual practice. This gives rise to a view of the design process which we might call the 'Practices' view. The 'Practices' view thus tells us what actually happens in practice.

Obviously we can now study the relationship between the 'Intentions' and 'Practices' views of the design process and learn a great deal more about designing in the real world. However such research immediately throws up a third and, in its own way, even more intriguing view of the design process. Discussion with the participants of large and complex projects often draws out a set of comments not about what they were supposed to do or even what they actually did,



**Figure 14.5**  
Three views of the design process

but rather about what they would really like to do. We might call this the 'Aspirations' view of the design process. Of course those who talk aspirationally can usually also describe, often quite convincingly, what would be preferable about their process. Those who have many years of experience may even reflect on why their aspirational process is not actually realised. The 'Aspirations' view thus tells us what participants in design processes would like to happen.

Such data lead us to the inevitable conclusion that there is no one process map of the design process. This book accepts that pluralist view and we shall not argue here that any one process map is more accurate. It is clear that there is a multitude of ways of linking activities together to make a process map. Some might suit particular individuals or organisations for reasons of personality or management and policy.

## The three views related

However before leaving this investigation of design process maps it is worth exploring one other consequence of identifying these three views of the design process. This has to do with the relationship between the three views at any one time and in any one organisation. It must be obvious that these three views or 'Intentions', 'Practices' and 'Aspirations' can be aligned or not (Fig. 14.6). It might at first sight seem that a virtuous design organisation would indeed have them aligned. In such an organisation the participants would actually carry out their process as described in their documentation and indeed would feel happy and content with this way of doing things. What could be better?

Before answering this question let us imagine a different state. This organisation has a clearly described set of intended processes but actually in practice fails to observe these. However many if not all of the participants feel they could improve their performance by working in yet a third way. Such an organisation is what we might call 'totally unsynchronised'. It hardly seems a recipe for success. However there are also three intermediate states in which an organisation can have one of the three views of the design process unsynchronised, with the other two aligned. Each of these organisational states will create different problems for those working inside them and those in other organisations relating to them. Just how all this works is still a matter for investigation but we can already see some of the more obvious implications.