Passwords

by

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Abstract

In order to use critical, participatory or co-design to open up ideas that challenge assumptions about important social issues that may otherwise go un-discussed, designers, researchers and participants might first want to, 'create or occupy play environments or activities' (Flanagan, 2009) in such a manner as to reveal and challenge their own assumptions, in order to counter the adverse effects of expertise, privilege and entitlement in socially-motivated design research that may result in false claims of empathy.

Passwords is a modular and generative card-based tool designed in response to what the author has identified as the need for facilitating and mediating creative and political discussion, deliberation and debate. The objective of play in this activity is healthy dialogue through creative phrase making.

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Preface

This paper is not written conventionally. This paper is the attempt to find a middle ground between a subjective, confusing narrative and a coherent, objective outcome. As such, is it written from a first-person perspective to try and lend a subjective accountability for my decisions throughout the process of inclusive design. The concrete actions that I took were the result of a decision to sincerely accept that the subject of my inquiry is myself, and those who might be in a position similar to me. I knowingly have participated in a movement towards 'social innovation', without proper consideration and regard for the individuals who constitute 'the social'. My experience in Inclusive Design at OCAD University has shown me that the subject of inquiry needs to be myself, so that I can minimize any harm that I might do to others. Over the last two years I have worked to understand my capacity for social impact through my individual intentions. Rather than attempt to control my decisions, I chose to observe my decisions and question their immediate consequences to myself as compared to the individuals around me. By observing the kind of harm that my actions represented to others, I started to realize very slowly how much of a real social impact I was already having, and it altered my intentions. This is the best explanation I can give for what this MRP represents: A sincere effort to do no harm to any individual whatsoever as a mechanical engineer, an industrial designer a researcher and graduate candidate.

The Case of The Missing Empathy

> "I wish that science – if there is a science – would come up with a, 'brain ride', where you could get inside somebody's brain and see all their thoughts, and all their experiences and all their memories, and why they believe and think the way they do and how they see the world. And I know there's a low tech version just called listening, but… **I WANT A RIDE!**"

> (Bamford, 2013)

The Ride I Had Signed Up For

In late November 2014, I had successfully received research ethics approval from

OCAD University in order to engage in an interview process,

> "…with individuals who identify as having a unique and potentially critical perspective on issues of disability, accessibility, and inclusion. Interviews will be primarily guided by the participant in discussing his/her life experiences, perspectives, ideologies and beliefs, with the ever-present possibility to transition into a conversation of ideation and design fictioning.
>
> These discussions will be driven by a need to understand how individual reality and ideology is constructed by personal experiences so that a material interpretation can take place relating those experiences to objects, environments, services and systems. This material representation will give insight into the nuance of lived experience as well as the individual politics related to those experiences.
>
> My objective will be to use this constructed reality & ideology in order to create fictional ideas that can be used in critical dialogue with each other and with the public. I expect to be able to produce tangible material objects/that present themselves as unabashedly fictional, unproductive, absurd, political and ideological so that productive critical discussions can take place to locate new opportunities for meaning making."

I was hesitant to begin the interview process and by late January I decided to do

some pilot studies. By March I had interviewed two people and by the end of each

interview, I felt overwhelmed by the enormity of the stories being shared with me.

These were not going to be easy conversations to, 'creatively interpret' for public dissemination. It was clearly inappropriate to use critical design to bring awareness to and define someone else's experiences. I knew this because I was having difficulties understanding how any form of design could offer help. For the first time as a designer, I was really stuck. I couldn't bring myself to continue without resolving this internal dilemma, so I just continued my literature-based research hoping to find answers. 'What is it about critical design that is so problematic?' I asked myself again and again. As it turns out, the same question was going to be asked very publicly and very soon.

The Ride That We Are Already On

On April 10, 2014, a debate took place at the MoMA Celeste Bartos Theatre as part of the MoMA exhibition, *Design & Violence* (Hunt). The title of this debate was *Designing Empathy* and the motion was, 'Design's potential to transcend gender boundaries is limitless.' The debaters were Mickey Boardman (a magazine editorial director and fashion guru – motion: For) and Chris Bobel (a writer and professor of Gender Studies – motion: Against). The subject of the debate was a conceptual work of critical design by designer/celebrity, 'Sputniko!' who designed a *Menstruation Belt* (Fig. 1) that would hypothetically give it's wearer the ability to experience menstrual cramping and bleeding, and thus be able to empathize with women. During her portion of the debate, Chris had said,

'Because the shock inducing, blood-dripping machine only delivers the

partial experience, the wearer may think they get it, when in fact, they don't. They may even feel entitled to speak for those whose menstrual lives are so much more than a monthly uterine event, they may feel authorized now to speak more generally for women. That, in my opinion, would be using design to do violence. This is a hazard and a big ass one. And it is precisely this hazard that compromises design's potential to transcend boundaries. In fact, I think design can actually put more distance between us. It can diminish empathy. Buddhist nun Joan Halifax – someone I just encountered recently and am now a big fan – identifies three enemies of compassion – pity, moral outrage, and fear. Same goes for empathy, I think. And I'd like to add a fourth – entitlement. I lose my empathic connection when I pity you. When I judge you. Or when I see your world as a threat to my own. And I lose my empathic connection when I speak for you.'

Figure 1. Menstruation Machine – Takashi's Take (Ozaki, 2010, http://sputniko.com/2011/08/menstruation-machine-takashis-take-2010)

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During the Q&A portion of the debate, it became clear that one of the audience members (a designer named Tucker) wanted to confront Chris using her arguments.

The exchange between Tucker and Chris during the Q&A follows:

> **Tucker:** This isn't really a question, but first of all I think differences are really great and that we should encourage people to like everybody's difference, but I have a big problem with your argument against empathy, because I'm a designer and I'm looking at design from the other side, so I think it's really great for designers to put on a blindfold and try to figure out what it's like to live blind - I think it's really important for designers to get in a wheelchair and find out how horrible it is in their kitchen. And I think that because they can never know what it - sure they can stand up and walk around afterwards, but because they experience that for a short period of time they're gonna be in more concern about how to make the kitchen easier for - and you coming in here and complaining about that, I think is really counter productive.
>
> **Chris**: You want - you want a fight? [Audience laughter]
>
> **Tucker:** Yeah, I do!
>
> **Chris:** Okay, okay. So -
>
> **Tucker:** Tell me how - what's wrong with a designer being in a wheelchair for a few minutes?
>
> **Mickey:** Well you're not Melissa Gorga, I feel like – if you're putting on a blindfold to make a product that will better health – that to me a blind person is different from 'oh I was blind for a day and it was really a drag' and then think like... You know, exactly, so...
>
> **Chris:** Yeah, I mean I think – thank you so much, and I appreciate that and you're right, I'm not thinking about this as a designer, because I don't speak for designers, right, I don't embody a designer, I don't have that access –
>
> **Tucker:** [off mic] Try that one day! [Audience laughter]
>
> **Chris Bobel:** I could! I could try it out one day and then I will say 'and now I understand design and now I understand what designers think, feel and do, and now I speak for designers' and that's the problem I – that's the caution, the red flag – red flag, another pun – the red flag that I'm raising is that the hazard isn't – I'm not against empathy, I hope that that did not come across as I'm anti-empathy, and I'm not even against trying to access the other. What I'm against is the presumption

that now I get it and now I speak for the other. When others are those others themselves - can very clearly and eloquently speak for themselves – so if you're designing a space that's A-D-A compliant – yeah! Get yourself in a wheelchair and figure that out, of course, but it's the next level, the level of representation, and that's where I'm struggling – and the question was that... about the limitlessness – that was, that's where I went, I went 'so what's the limit' – is it productive to pursue, of course, but what's the boundary we hit and I think the boundary is speaking for the other. That doesn't satisfy you at all I don't think, I can tell.

Tucker: [off mic] No, no, that's a very... easy boundary

Chris Bobel: Okay next time you come up here and you do this! [Audience laughter]

This particular portion of the Q&A begins with a question about more commonly understood and accepted design activities, (for instance, the design of a kitchen for a person in a wheelchair) despite the actual debate being about a work of critical design, a category of design defined by well known critical designers, Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby as a more conceptual and deliberately political method of design 'at the level of representation', intended to, 'stimulate discussion and debate amongst designers, industry and the public about the social, cultural and ethical implications of existing and emerging technologies' (Dunne and Raby, n.d.). How that stimulation takes place is through public attention. On Sputniko!'s website she states that,

> "The video was immediately posted on influential blogs including Wired, Gizmodo and Boing Boing, and the story of Takashi's desire to have menstruation created a viral frenzy of debates, resulting in 100000 YouTube hits in mere one week" (Ozaki, 2011).

The fact that it was used for this MoMA debate and for their *Design & Violence* exhibition as well as various other publications is a clear acknowledgement of the

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project's exemplary status within the field of critical design, despite the work being identified as a misrepresentation of the complex and very individual experience of menstruation.

Chris's point of speaking for the other is taken as an critique of more than just the practice of critical design, but the practice of all design when Tucker tells her that she should try being a designer for a day rather than judging them. Tucker's reaction proves exactly Chris' point and by validating his need for empathy she further reinforces her position: You cannot speak for others.

Problem Space: The Stage for Debate & Discussion

I have always found something stimulating and intriguing in critical design, or as it is very commonly referred to in design circles as speculative and critical design (Dunne & Raby, n.d.). Having a background in mechanical engineering and industrial design, critical design allowed me to think it was possible for someone who only has instrumental creativity to affect social and political change. Dunne & Raby's practice originates in their education as industrial designers. What seems to make their practice effective is their ability to manifest stimulating critical questions as seemingly plausible physical objects of intrigue. This is because the objects speak the language of technology, and this is really where critical design originates. *Hertzian Tales* (Dunne, 2005) was a recognition of how technology was operating on a level beyond human perception and critical design was a way of highlighting interesting implications through conceptual experiments.

How these experiments come to be a point of discussion is due to the medium in which they are distributed. They are designed first and foremost for galleries and publication, which is how they participate in the act of consumption: As cultural capital. It is the ideas of these objects that have value, the concepts as images rendered virtually on screens and in books at the level of representation. Thus, the intriguing part of critical design relies heavily on its ability to circulate around the world through media representation. This ability to receive media attention and

get people talking artificially merits a sense of credibility and attracts designers looking to initiate a public discourse.

What Compels One Towards Critical Design?

The ability to vault ideas into a mediated social imaginary endorses critical design as a powerful sociopolitical tool for designers to playfully and critically address the public from an aesthetic distance. Because of this many designers want to use critical design to speak to what they see as intractable or wicked issues in society as it allows their work to engage with the public on their behalf. *Design meets Disability* (Pullin, 2009) expresses this very desire to use critical design in which there are many praises of the potential use of critical design:

> '…in design for disability, helping to change attitudes may be seen as less of a priority. In a field where so many everyday needs go unmet, the idea of design that does not provide direct solutions may seem wasteful and self-indulgent. How could critical design ever be justified?' (p. 115).

> '…critical design often relies on being uncomfortable or employing a dark humor. These might sound like inappropriate tools to bring to bear on the sensitive issues around disability. There is a tension between being sensitive to the frequently negative perceptions of people with disabilities, yet taking disability serious enough to challenge ingrained opinions. How can these objections be countered?' (p. 115).

> 'Other groups are also experimenting critically with the relationship between technology and the body. The word prosthesis gets used a lot in this context, and whether it refers to an artificial replacement for a part of the body or a broader idea of augmenting the body's abilities through technology, there is always some relevance to design and disability.' (p. 123).

> '…there is little evidence of critical design being applied to issues around disability. Indeed, one can anticipate several objections to critical design for disability: wastefulness, insensitivity, or frivolity.' (p. 125).

'…taking different perspectives could also be valuable. Disabled people's experiences are not just directly affected by their disability but also by how it affects others, and by their own perceptions of this and the perceptions of others too. This implies considering the experiences of the people around the user as well as that of the user themselves – perceptions as well as direct effects. Critical design could help to explore and provoke insights from new perspectives.' (p. 129-131).

'Showing an ambiguous or ridiculous response to an issue might seed serious discussions about what might not be so ridiculous. Does this come with the risk of ridiculing people with disabilities, though? Would the designers or a public audience be laughing with them or at them? One justification comes from the respect inherent in treating disability and accessibility with the same openness as other important design issues. Critical design is a lens best trained on profound yet underdiscussed issues. Design for disability deserves this attention.' (p. 131).

'Ultimately, the best defense of critical design is that more provocative attitudes are to be found among people with disabilities themselves to undermine attitudes towards their disabilities that they find unacceptable.' (p. 131).

'Critical design need not be exploitative if applied to the issues around disability. Instead, disability groups could exploit critical design as a tool to provoke discussion about issues that may otherwise go undiscussed – in particular, the often unspoken assumptions inherent in current development and design for disability. Should hearing aids be invisible? Should prosthesis mimic human flesh? Should it matter what equipment for the visually impaired looks like? Should the goal of assistive technology be independence rather than interdependence?' (p. 132).

'What issues around disability remain un- or underdiscussed? How might design render them more visible, even deliberately more controversial or confrontational? How else could design help?' (p. 285).

Taken all together it is quite clear that Pullin's statements are an attempt to

legitimize the use of critical design to publicly confront the broad social

perceptions of disability with the discrete lived experiences of persons with

disabilities. He seems to want a public acknowledgement of what he has identified

as a much-needed conversation to take place, as a result of using critical design.

Yet, his language belies a simultaneously apprehensive and assumptive tone about

the appropriateness of using critical design in this context and the reactions that

may or may not result. It sounds as if perhaps he is surer of the ends rather than the means, and as far as I can tell, those ends are critical discussion and social change. As social change is a very difficult measurement, and it is not in the interest of critical designers to seek quantitative measurement for validation (Dunne & Raby, 2013) it will be crucial to use debates such as the one took place at MoMA to gauge the efficacy of critical design.

Critical Design Aftermath?

The MoMA debate highlights the fact that Sputniko!'s menstruation belt can be taken a number of ways to interpret the topic of menstruation with no real method for measuring change in public perceptions, which fits neatly with really not having made that claim to begin with. However, the Q&A does a surprisingly good job of identifying three key social dimensions with which to question critical design's efficacy.

Chris Bobel's interaction with Tucker (the second audience member during the Q&A) highlights a dilemma of privilege present in design but most especially in critical design. It is a privilege that designers get to, pretend to be in a wheelchair, pretend to be blind in order to design for others. They even get to invite members of those groups to participate in design activities with them. However, the same cannot be said of individuals who are in wheelchairs or experience differences in vision; they do not carry the kind of professional expertise or privileged

knowledge that is associated with design. Mickey Boardman very much

understands his privilege,

> My approach I believe is very superficial – I'm all about artifice, so I mean – on some level wearing a woman's blouse makes you free from gender on a level, but at the same time it doesn't mean I am a woman or I understand what it feels like to be a woman or I've been... You know. At the end of the day I'm still a white American man, so I'm – you know – at the top one percentile of the universe, you know.

The other audience questions also provided interesting insight towards what might

be required in order to help the practice of critical design (and design as a whole)

progress in order to make it more socially accountable:

> **Audience Member #1:** Hi, I have two questions. In all of the visual examples that you guys showed there's definitely a given authority or a taken authority – … who are the ones who are disseminating these images that would invoke empathy. So I was wondering if you thought that there was a space where you didn't need that authority in relation to design... And then my second question would be, for me the act of empathy requires a kind of complicity from the receiver …I was just wondering if you could speak to what happens when violence is applied to empathy when it's forced and what is it called when it crosses that threshold?
>
> **Mickey Boardman:** … I did focus on men and also, in a way leaders …I think we historically look to leaders and to people who sort of lead movements that way… shame is, you should just be able to talk about it, you should be able to say you had your period and if there wasn't the shame around it that would liberate us all in an incredible way, so... That's the big problem, that we need to be able to talk about it, not wear a period machine.
>
> **Chris Bobel:** Yeah, I love the question because you're bringing the sort of target, if you will, right into the equation and I hadn't thought about that – duh – so that's super interesting. It's right, it's trans-sectional, right, it's a relationship – I mean, do I want you to experience my life, do I want you to know what I know, or what I feel? And if that, if I – 'cause otherwise it can feel like a breach of privacy, right, or a violation, or a boundary trespass.

The question observes and confirms the use of power that authorizes and enforces

design as a practice. Again, both Mickey and Chris are somewhat in agreement

despite their different presentations; neither saw authority as a positive influence

on accountability. The question of whether there could be a space where that

authority wasn't needed and what results when that authority takes on a violent

dimension speaks again to a dilemma present in authority of representation that

critical design can acknowledge in itself to become more socially accountable.

> **Audience Member #3:** Hi, can I have a microphone... In response to the
> gentlemen who was talking about designers getting in wheelchairs or someone
> strapping on the menstrual simulation machine, I think, for me the issue is
> whether it builds empathy for the individual or whether it builds empathy for a
> group of people who struggle against certain political and social structures and
> constrictions. If the designer at the end of the day recognizes how horrible that
> person's kitchen is, as opposed to how horrible it is to be in a wheelchair, then
> that is a specific direct and positive outcome of that. But if in the menstrual
> simulation exercise or in the wheelchair the crip for a day simulations – first of
> all people are very incompetent, the first time they use a wheelchair or the first
> time they're blindfold... So that – they come away feeling incompetent, weak,
> vulnerable, and are so flooded with that experience that it's impossible for them
> to understand that the struggle is with the external and not with the personal,
> physical embodied experience, and the tension between the personal and the
> political, I think, needs to be highlighted in many of the ways that you already
> did, Chris, and thank you, I wanted to underscore that, so it wasn't really a
> question…

This question highlights a social mobility, an agency that designers have with

respect to their profession, as it is understood in society. No single designer is

necessarily held accountable for making distinctions between the instrumental or

political agency of their field of practice.

Each of the three audience questions highlights important aspect of social identity

(what Chris Bobel refers to as social location) with respect to politics – privilege,

power and agency. From her reaction to Sputniko!'s project, she certainly doesn't

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think these aspects were given enough consideration to be mindful of who might be, 'spoken for' and to more properly represent, 'who is speaking'. As it turns out, Chris certainly isn't the first or only person to publicly take issue with how critical design is practiced. In Dec 19, an article on the MoMA *Design & Violence* website critiqued a work of critical design that asked what would happen if the world faced global food shortages and famine (Thackara, 2013). The comment section was given a question similar to the debate question that Chris and Mickey were given – *Do violent dystopian visions ever lead to substantive change?* Needless to say the thread quickly polarized with a lot of commenters quickly pointing out that the original critical design project was coming from what they felt was a very poorly informed and privileged social location with no political claim or accountability. The defense was equally predictable, claiming that these negative comments were counter-productive, against artistic expression, even that it was a kind of, 'class warfare'. The critique of critical spawned a few web articles as well, further calling out critical design (Prado and Oliveira, 2014) (Kiem, 2014).

Granted, there is no single way to practice critical design, and there are various smaller groupings and methods associated with the label. It's important to see how speculative and critical design is changing looking forward to see if the problems that it currently experiences are being addressed in any way.

How is Critical Design Changing?

In order to try and understand the future trajectory for speculative and critical design, I would like to highlight developments that I think offer three forward directions: political competition, ideological pluralism, and public participation.

Power

The first is an offshoot practice of critical that is more politically engaged. Adversarial design (DiSalvo, 2012) relies on the concept of political agonism to define how it sees technology and communication networks providing opportunities for contestation and confrontation. A great example of this can be found in *Agonstics: A Language Game* (Sack, 2002) in which players use a keyword-monitored discussion forum in order to gain popularity through dialog and establish political power and influence.

This form of critical design encourages political competition. It seems to offer more of a balance between provocation and debate in the sense that a work of Adversarial Design should have a clear political agenda and a direct political target, so discussion is likely to be a bit more fruitful than critical design. Because the work is in a sense, a power struggle, I feel that this has a polarizing effect on the viewer and that any subsequent debate inevitably will follow suit.
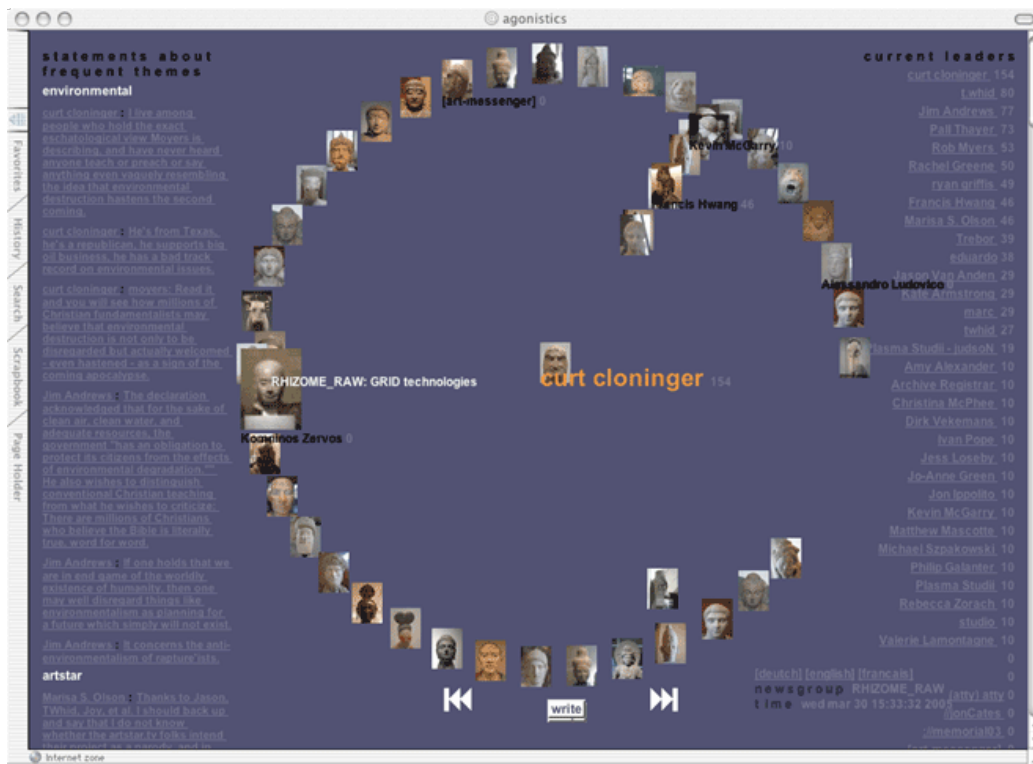
Figure 2. *Agonistics — A Language Game* screenshot. (Sacks, 2006,
http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewFile/1616/1531/16340)

Privilege

The second development can be located within recent publication, *Speculative*

Everything (Dunne & Raby, 2013). It collects and details many of their

inspirations, past projects and recurring themes. There's a very clear tonal change

from, 'critical' to, 'speculative' – the first is very politically charged and

antagonistic in tone, while the second is politically disengaged and asocial in tone.

It is not as if Dunne & Raby have actually dropped criticism or critical thinking

from the menu, it seems to be an attempt to shift the focus. The book ends with a

project called, *United Micro Kingdoms* that is based on a thought experiment in which they use a common political map in order to divide the United Kingdom into four separate states and to imagine how each state's transportation systems are designed as a utopian expression of each of the four different ideological positions on energy. This differs from past projects in the sense that it proposes more than one 'object' in order to address a larger political spectrum (in this case 4 series of objects). It also differs in the sense that it makes reference to objects that are somewhat dis-embodied, but actually no less political. This brings me to how this project remains in line with previous projects.

> "Plurality invites an essentially diverse and a multi-perspectival point of view, whereas pluralism rests with a stasis of hyper-conformity that reduces difference to equivalence. … Effectively, pluralism paralyses any ability to say or do anything beyond the pragmatic. In large part, this is because all other discourses are negated by a play of contradictions, with no appeal to an overall position of authority, independence or judgment. … It gathers incommensurate ideas, values and knowledge into a condition of mutual coexistence that leaves individual judgment indeterminate. Pluralism conserves the status quo by rendering change that is predicated on a clear direction, virtually impossible. It reduces change to continually moving elements of the same" (Fry, 2011, p.151-152).

Together, these designs very much represent a singular political and aesthetic representation of a fictional political plurality. They hold to a commitment of political and aesthetic distance from social reality. What they present is a simplified material vision of socio-political diversity and complexity. This 'designer-ly' approach is quite literally an exhibition, and a way to demonstrate instrumental prowess within one's practice, which can be misleading as far as the legitimacy of its actual argumentation. Nevertheless, it is a beautiful project with

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a conceptually ambitious and thought-provoking subject and of course deserves

praise within its own community. However it is still privileged work. Though it

may have attempted to address a more ambitious and broadly representative topic,

it is a reassertion of what makes speculative critical design problematic.

Figure 3. *United Micro Kingdoms* **Digi-car models on display. (Dunne & Raby, 2012-13, http://www.creativeapplications.net/reviews/compasses-for-wayfinding-dunne-rabys-speculative-everything/)**

Agency

Another trend of speculative design is that it is becoming more experiential and

participatory. One instance that I have personally participated in at OCAD

University, is called, *The Thing From the Future*, a card-based activity in which

players use a deck of cards that contain different contextual categories (Fig. 4). Combining these different cards offers players a small, 'speculative design brief' that they are all asked to respond to. These ideas are all gathered and communally shared. Other players pick up ideas and then proceed to turn those ideas into reality by using materials from the dollar store. Once these ideas are made, graphic designers make package labels and all of the objects are placed in a convenience store or a vending machine for purchase.

This form of speculative design is much more participatory, but not very politically charged. It gives its participants a large amount of mobility and agency through the activity and satisfies them with their own contribution of a material outcome whose aesthetic legitimacy is aided by playfully printed designer labels. The outcomes themselves are somewhat politically diluted because of their emphasis on alternative and distant futures rather than the present. The final group of items is fun and eclectic, but the emphasis for public engagement is clearly through the act of making and the immediacy found in experiential value.
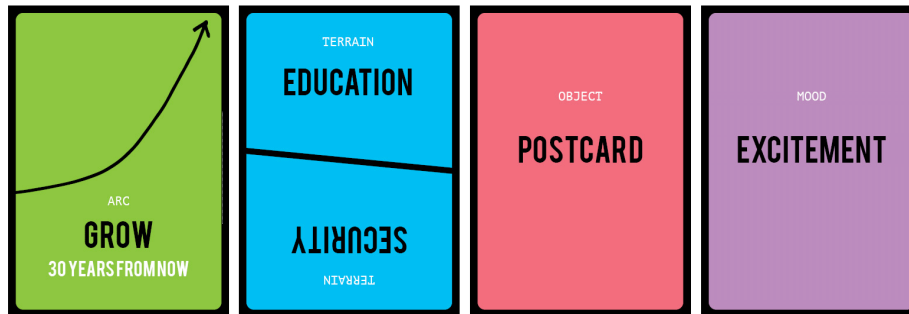
Figure 4. *The Thing From the Future* **prompt cards (Candy and Watson, 2014,**
http://situationlab.org/projects/the-thing-from-the-future/)

There is something interesting and valid in what each of these examples are attempting. However, I feel there is a certain lack when it comes to social accountability to the individual. This may sound like unreasonable critique given the amount of work involved in conceiving and producing these projects, just as I'm sure a menstruating belt takes time and skill to fashion. However this does not exempt the menstruating belt from accountability to the people it offends out of *mis*-representation.

I find adversarial design to be a kind of techno-political warfare – a novel way to utilize power. The speculative critical design of *United Micro Kingdoms* is very much like an ideological world fair/auto show – a way to utilize privilege. And I find design fiction/experiential futures of, *The Thing From the Future* a playful activity that makes one feel productive – a to way to utilize agency. In each instance, there is a sense of, 'comfortable discomfort', the same kind of 'convenient inconvenience' that Sputniko!'s menstruation belt offers to fictional

Takashi. Perhaps, in that sense, we are being compelled to accept the complacent expression of Takashi's gaze as a sign that we too should be complacent, and to choose our discomforts wisely.

Speaking For Myself

What interests me now in critical design, especially from the perspective of an inclusive designer, is how the aesthetic *mis*-representations of design solutions (from images of designer prosthetics to videos of special wheelchairs made for developing countries, all the way up to the conceptual renderings of speculative design) simultaneously advertise immense social action and seemingly strip me of my social identity, an effect that I feel most prominently with critical design. I get the distinct sense that if my own social identity is not somehow, 'ideal', that unless I am the most intelligent, the most researched, the most capable, most clever and observant, that I cannot possibly be of service to others in a creative, academic, political and social capacity. For me critical design holds a certain creative and academic currency that I feel I have somehow been caught up in and that if I submit my ideas to the scrutiny of non-designers, that it will frustrate or limit my capacity. I feel that critical design allows this absurd insecurity to perpetuate unchecked, which results in a need for creative isolation and protection of my authorship. I begin to act as if 'ignorant users' whom I place myself, 'in service of', are, 'threatening my expertise'.

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This all flies in the face of what I actually believe inclusive design to be. This is

why I feel the need to critically respond to speculative critical design with my

own artifact: an inclusive way to facilitate and mediate the interactions of diverse

social, political and economic identities without resorting to tools and tactics that

only serve to casually sidestep the existence of inequalities and in doing so, re-

assert them.

The Problem Context: How to Respond

Nowhere in, *Design Meets Disability* is there ever a mention of participatory design, co-design, emancipatory, anti-oppression or critical disability frameworks for research. The book initiates discourse through examples of how design as a response to disability has helped spawn innovations such as bent plywood furniture, how assistive devices such as eyeglasses become fashionable over time, expressive technology and fashionable prosthetics. The book gives primacy to hetero-normative simplicity in design, the kind of modern efficiency heralded by lovers of Braun and Apple, and is curious about emerging practices such as critical design. It can be difficult to understand how to navigate the seemingly poorly matched solutions that mass production already experiences for the masses, let alone the kind of solutions that require absolute individual attention. The same can be said for understanding how it could be possible for critical representation in the media to properly communicate the lived experiences of an individual without threatening that individual or overwriting the experiences of others. There is a breadth of ambition in Pullin's writing, but it is one that is not met with the kind of granularity and diversity that inclusive design requires for critical discourse.

Through my extensive survey of speculative and critical design literature, I have seen many interesting examples, case studies, and methods. What was absent in the literature (that I have seen) is a way to use design to address and emphasize

the quality and accountability of public debate and discussion of speculative

critical design. My own personal analysis of the, 'Designing Empathy' MoMA

debate (Appendix C) is a very rough attempt to understand the identities and

agendas of the key participants, stakeholders and concepts while maintaining a

lens of social cohesion in order to understand their common ground. Because the

debate was about critical design itself, this analysis becomes an opportunity to

discover some possible limits of critical design, or validate others' and how best

to productively address those limits. In the end, what I find to be so lacking in the

debate is not conclusiveness, but inclusiveness. Speculative critical design is

currently dominated by singular representations in one social dimension or

another, which when taken as holistically representative, may unintentionally

abuses its, 'social identity' as creative political discourse. However the debate

itself reveals small clues to as to what considerations could help critical design

progress socially.

- It does not acknowledge its own, 'social identity' (power, privilege, agency) as a professional and creative practice
- It does not check its own, 'social identity' (power, privilege, agency) as a professional and creative practice
- It is not accountable and inclusive to the groups and individuals it makes use of
- It privileges one attitude, perspective and ideology
- It does not work towards an equality and plurality of representation in order to better illustrate the objectives of political and social satire

There also needs to be functional considerations for the sake of diverse

participation and broad inclusion. If the debate/discussion needs to remove

authority and make room for socio-political expression, it must first be able to

address the unhealthy aspects of its public communication.

- It is not fit for a diverse audience.
- It misrepresents individuals, groups and ideologies
- It is conceptually and intellectually competitive
- It does not scale well in functional complexity
- It does not scale in conceptual complexity
- It does not meet critical ideas and discussion/debate in the same space (instrumental equivalence)
- It only moves mostly through media and technology

I want to be able to propose a specific constraint upon myself, one which has not

been brought up but I feel is present due to the nature of this project. It is also

potentially a response to the critique or debate of speculative critical design itself.

Dunne & Raby state at the end of, 'Speculative Design' in a section titled, 'New

Realities' (Dunne & Raby, 2013, p. 189),

> "The idea of the "proposal" is at the heart of this approach to design: to propose, to suggest, to offer something. This is what design is good at. It can sketch out possibilities. Although these proposals draw from rigorous analysis and thorough research, it's important they do not lose their imaginative, improbable, and provocative qualities. They are closer to literature than social science, emphasize imagination over practicality, and ask questions rather than provide answers. The project's value is not what it achieves or does what it is and how it makes people feel, especially if it encourage people to question, in an imaginative, troubling, and thoughtful way, everydayness and how things could be different. To be effective, the work needs to contain contradictions and cognitive glitches. Rather than offering an easy way forward, it highlights dilemmas and trade-offs between imperfect alternatives. Not a solution, not a "better" way, just another way. Viewers can make up their own minds.
>
> This is where we believe speculative design can flourish — providing complicated pleasure, enriching our mental lives, and broadening our minds in ways that complement other media and disciplines. It's about meaning and culture, about adding to what life could be, challenging what it is, and providing alternatives that loosen the ties reality has on our ability to dream. Ultimately, it is a catalyst for social dreaming." (p. 189)

It would seem that the book ends with a certain plea for compassion towards

speculative critical design, that there is merit in what it obviously privileges the

most in its work, and that is creativity. As a designer, I cannot pretend as if I do

not believe in those same merits. I privilege creativity and I have worked very

hard to exercise that privilege through many assignments, projects, presentations,

proposals, client interactions, peer interactions and group interactions. As hard as

I work, I never once believed that creativity was something to be earned in the

way that money is a privilege you earn. I always think of creativity as something

that is innate within all people but rarely acknowledged or accessed with sincere

acceptance. I think this quote from Dunne & Raby can be more than just a

compassionate plea for speculative critical design's role, but a compassionate plea

for a way to encourage the same attitudes towards individual creativity. To parse

out some of the potentially insightful phrases:

- "…to propose, to suggest, to offer something."
- "…it's important they do not lose their imaginative, improbable, and provocative qualities."
- "…not what it achieves or does but what it is and how it makes people feel, especially if it encourage people to question, in an imaginative, troubling, and thoughtful way, everydayness and how things could be different."
- "…needs to contain contradictions and cognitive glitches."
- "Rather than offering an easy way forward, it highlights dilemmas and trade-offs between imperfect alternatives."
- "Not a solution, not a "better" way, just another way."
- "Viewers can make up their own minds."
- "…providing complicated pleasure, enriching our mental lives, and broadening our minds in ways that complement other media and disciplines"
- "…a catalyst for social dreaming."

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I believe that we should momentarily set aside Dunne & Raby's own creative privilege and momentarily set aside the notion that the above insights are privileged to only speculative critical designers. I would like to ask if perhaps they can be interpreted as a suggestion towards the resultant discussion and debate, and as a call to action on the part of viewers and audiences of speculative critical design to take, 'social dreaming' as something that is innate in both the creator and the viewer – To ask the viewer to enact the social identity of social imagination. So I would like to add an additional, 'critique' upon the debate and discussion of speculative critical design: It does not allow for creativity.

So then the solution to leveling the playing field between critical designers and critical design audiences is to understand what activity or tool can be made such that these roles of designer and audience are somehow distributed more evenly and interchangeable?

The Design Challenge

I think if designers want to really achieve empathy for others while still retaining their right to dream up conceptually critical ideas, it might benefit them to seek a common ground with their audience, one where ideas are not just paradoxically disputed in the abstract theatre of extreme debates but also act as situated narrative deliberations through diverse fields of perspective. I want know if there is a possibility to further, 'toe the line' that Chris Bobel went to in her arguments, the one that Tucker claims is so, 'easy'. That line I believe is approached from a place of a desire for compassionate empathy, a sincere curiosity to, 'access the other', with an understanding and one cannot and must not speak for the other. Can this curiosity in the other be expressed through ideas, discussion, participation, on a level playing field?

So is it possible to design an inclusive activity or tool that can sits at the intersection between difficult social issues, diverse participation, and creative discussion? Can it mutually benefit divergent thinking and focused communication given potentially large gaps in perspectives and attitudes? Can it encourage and sustain a balance between diversity and equality, both in participation and outcomes? The solution should be able to afford the subjectivity and plurality of language, thoughts and ideas through clear and intentional interactions.

The Users and their Context

The users of this activity/tool are those who want to initiate critical and creative

discussions and debate about social issues. I tried to imagine the broadest user

base possible for this activity, but I did not do a survey or consult with any people

prior to prototyping. Diverse and inclusive participation in collective discussions

usually asks all participants to sign a diversity pledge, or construct one from

scratch, by taking note of everyone's attitudes and perspectives – This is often

done by having participants answer individually to such criteria as:

- Who they are and what is their background
- What are their skills/capacities
- What are their motivations
- What they need from the rest of the group to feel included
- What kind of language and behavior they feel excludes them

These answers are then collected into a document or pledge that then the entire

group agrees to. I have seen this method fail in circumstances where individuals

felt it in their best interest to maintain silence, felt intimidated or pressured by

others to conform, to react against the idea of disclosing personal details, or to

protest against the person/people more willing to participate. This method of

communication definitely places the onus on the individual to have to answer to

the group for their social identity. It is a form of authorizing membership through

transparency. I myself support the idea of transparency in the aim of establishing

trust, but I also understand that even for the sake of diverse participation,

transparency cannot always be instantly mandatory if one wants to build *more*

trust. I feel the same can be said about attitude. If transparency were seen as the best form of sharing perspectives, then the best attitude to have would probably be a positive, playful, engaging, open and productive attitude. However for the sake of diverse participation, having a positive attitude also cannot be mandatory. I have times when frustrated individuals want to be able to express those frustrations, but are left with even more frustration because they are perceived as being negative, disengaged and unproductive.

Given that both perspective and attitude have spectrums of possibility, I wanted to design for both of those spectrums at the same time, to try to level any qualities by using nothing more than systemic acceptance, to emphasize the quality of participant interaction and communication as more important than the quality of any single idea or thought by itself.

User Considerations

- **Engaging** – creative, playful, improvisational, didactic, intuitive, plural, political, accepting
- **Safe** – affords multiple and shifting personal boundaries, individual agency, equal representation, equal access to power mechanisms, does not encourage harm
- **Number of participants** – needs to be playable by one person, but also can be scaled up.
- **Structured** – clear and understandable mechanics, customizable, modular, responsive, open to being rebuilt from scratch
- **Modality** – a format that will allow the most flexibility in communication, and attempts to maintain a consistent baseline quality of experience across modalities. Has potential for simultaneous analog and digital interaction.
- **Objectives** – productive & unproductive, equal access to outcomes

Other Work In This Area

Personal Experiences in Creative Communication

Quad Exercises at OCAD U - Inclusive Design

During my first fall semester at OCAD University in September, 2012, our professor asked us to do a creative exercise called, 'Quad Charts' in which we would spend a certain amount of individual time articulating a single idea in different contextual aspects. We were then asked to bring these ideas to class, and individually present them one by one. As we did, we attempted to organize these ideas, group them into categories and look for overlaps in our interests. I'm not sure how much time was spent individually, but the group presentation and collaborative effort to thematically organize the work took three hours with each person only spending a few minutes presenting each idea. I was asked by the professor to photograph the entire work (Fig. 5) so that we could all view it from home and use it to find similar interests with one another as well as reflect.

Figure 5. Inclusive Design Quad Charts (Kwok, 2012.
http://www.gigapan.com/gigapans/115061)

It was a good attempt, but I feel that we were all overwhelmed by the sheer

amount of information and how quickly we were expected to ingest it and use it to

move on to the next set of ideas without taking the time to really understand

where it was coming from and how to invest more of ourselves into one another's

work.

A smaller group of students would regularly go for dinner with the instructor after

class. During this time, we would often continue to talk about our ideas and the

possible directions they could take. It was during these discussions when we felt

the most excitement, the most engaged, not only with those ideas but each other.

We often remarked how sitting around the table chatting was, "exactly what class

should be like".

Card Sorting

Card sorting is a creative activity that is actively used by lots of professionals and

designers that allow their thoughts regarding a certain problem to be transferred in

fragments to cards, and reconfigured to either adhere to known categorical

distinctions (closed card sort), or discover new potential new categorical

arrangements (open card sort) (Spencer & Garrett, 2009, p. 7). Throughout my

own process of understanding inclusion and how to practice design inclusively, I

would often make use of open card sorting to understand how I might be able to

discover insights within my own language, so that I could articulate myself better

or discover new possibilities for thought. The more and more I used card sorting,

the more I could observe its effectiveness as an individual activity. For example because card sorting is very non-linear, it does away with chronology and the association of time as a natural part of thinking. This ability to think both linearly and non-linearly using the same terms is of great value. I have noticed that card sorting works well in groups because it removes the need to have a discussion. Typically participants fill out cards individually without talking with one another. During the sorting process, participants do discuss a little, but it's very focused on getting the cards organized. After the sort is concluded, participants are ready to talk, but it can be difficult to know where to start unless the groupings provided clear categories and novel insights. I have noticed in many card sorts, especially with participants that are bored and don't understand the process, that card content seems to be generic and sometimes very poorly considered. Card sorting also does not put conversation at the center of action, rather it does away with conversation for the sake of expediency and objective structuring of terms and phrases. Thus I find it useful, but also one step removed from traditional oral communication.
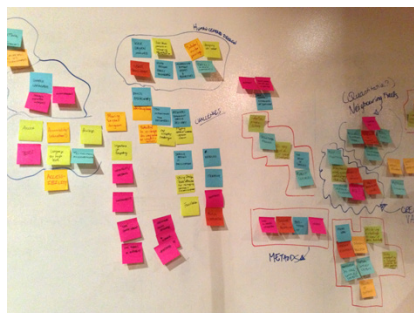
Figure 6. Card sorting with Post-it notes on the wall.

Untitled Feelings – Performance Art w/ Noelle

During the summer semester of 2013, my Inclusive Design cohort at OCAD University enrolled in a class under the instruction of Geoffrey Shea, where he guided us through some of the practices of contemporary performance art practices from such artists as Chris Burden and Marina Abramovic. We were given thirty minutes to create a performance of our own. I paired up with my fellow student, Noelle Campbell-Smith. Earlier, she had experienced a frustration in communicating with someone, and despite attempts to apologize and find a common ground, the hurt feelings on one side found their way back to Noelle and nothing was resolved. As someone who was only a spectator in all of this, it was not my interest to get involved or do anything other than to lend an ear. When it came time to conceive of our project, I expressed an interest in writing on the walls, or some sort of graffiti in which we could then erase. I wanted to convey the sense of breaking the rules but then leaving no trace, a kind of momentary defiance of authority. As we discussed, Noelle expressed her desire to address the idea of talking over one another, a trait that we both experience and share frustrations with. We decided to do a performance in which we stand on opposite sides of large picture windows (myself outside and her inside) and write messages to one another using liquid chalk markers. Because the pane of glass serves as both the invisible barrier to communication and the reverse image of the original message, it increasingly becomes a source of frustration. As misinterpretation and frustration climax into taunting and physical hostility (still mediated by the glass),

we simultaneously drop our markers and wash the windows with a piece of

canvas and a jug of water. Once the glass has been cleared of our transgressions,

we meet at the entrance, the threshold between us and exchange our soggy stained

canvases, thus concluding the performance.

I am using this as an example specifically for its embodied and performative

value. It encapsulates much of what is frustrating in human communication. The

performance generally conveys that much of the meaning is lost in the medium of

exchange, sometimes because we let frustration itself antagonize us to the point of

giving up, and sometimes because we are trying so hard to accommodate for one

another.

Figure 7. *Untitled Feelings* **screenshot. (Shea, 2013 http://youtu.be/vghB4x1HDNM)**

Conversations With Sergio

I have a friend with whom I now keep in touch with solely through text message. He and I share a love of books both for their literary value, their graphic design integrity. When we lived in the same city, we used to go for coffee and bounce ideas back and forth in conversation just for fun, often without ever drawing. Sometimes we would have a specific subject or problem that we were discussing, and other times an idea would just come out of the blue and we would share the idea. In the course of the conversation, we would add and change the idea into something we could both understand and accept, even in disagreement, jest or critique. We had done this so many times in person, sometimes even sharing our own, 'shelved' ideas just to see what the other person thought. None of these conversations ever directly resulted in something concrete. We never once required agreement of each other and we always stayed playful and aware of each other and each other's ideas as our minds wandered together. We often joked about how we should record our conversations and publish them. As we became more comfortable sharing our ideas, our conversations became longer and each of us would keep coming up with more ideas. When I came to Toronto, we would still keep in touch, solely over text message. Often times, our exchanges were merely to say hi or catch up, sometimes we would discuss personal matters and things that troubled us individually. We once exchanged a series of text messages very reminiscent of our old conversations. I had sent him a picture of a conceptual book design by Elizabeth Perez (ref) and wanted to know his thoughts. Initially

we started the conversation by critiquing it, deciding what each of us thought, what we like and didn't like. Then, as always, we started to think up new concepts. We did this up until an absurd point at which our ideas started to become overly silly and we resumed regular conversation. I hold on to this brief exchange, as an example of what I feel is focused, respectful and imaginative dialogue despite relative differences in perspective, attitude, knowledge and creativity.
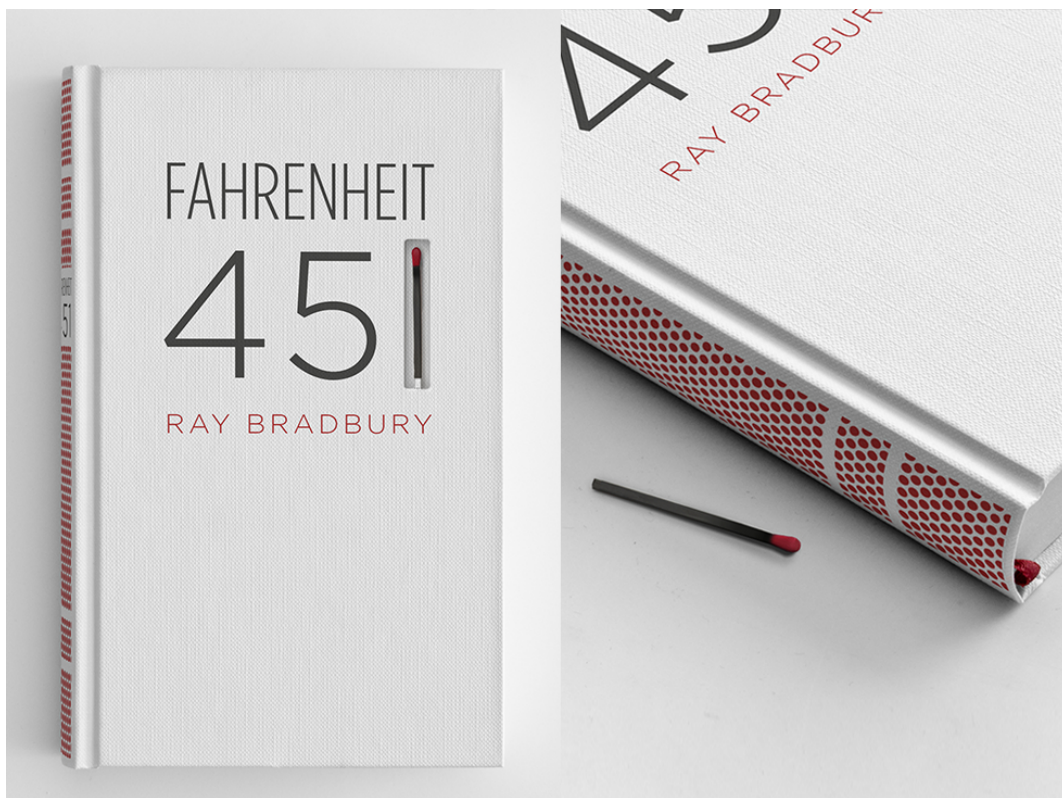
Figure 8. A *Fahrenheit 451* book cover concept. (Perez, 2013, http://eliperez.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/fahrenheit451bookcover-980x730.png)
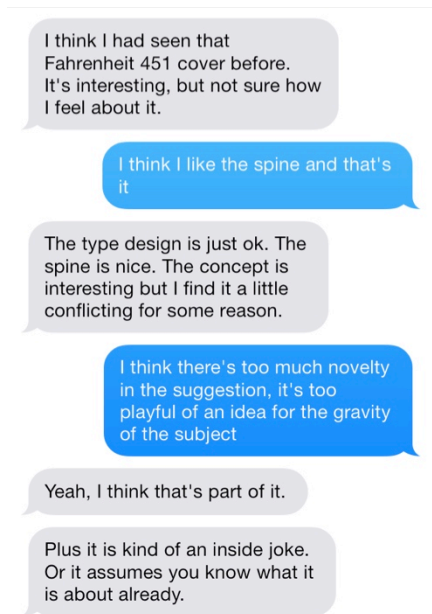
Figure 9. Text Conversation 1
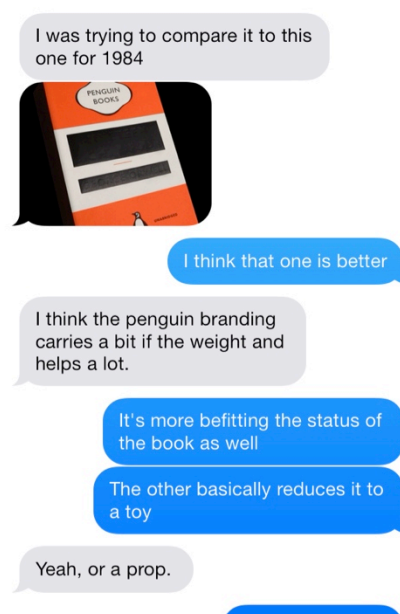
Figure 10. Text Conversation 2
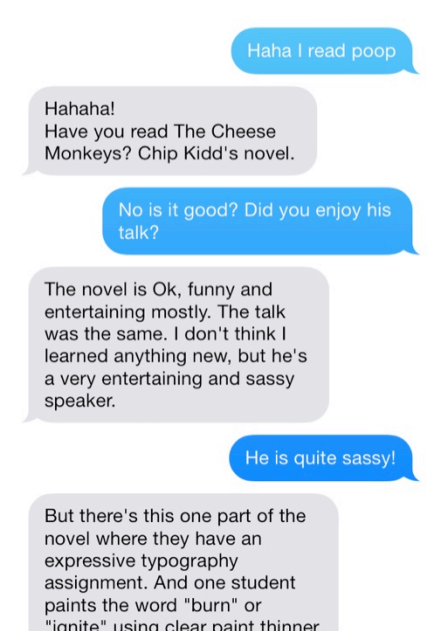
Figure 11. Text Conversation 3
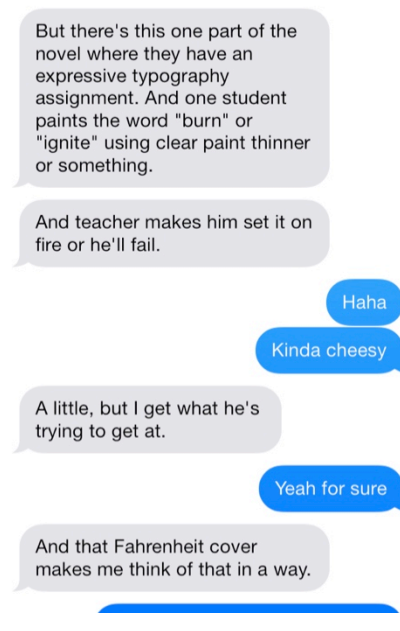
Figure 12. Text Conversation 4
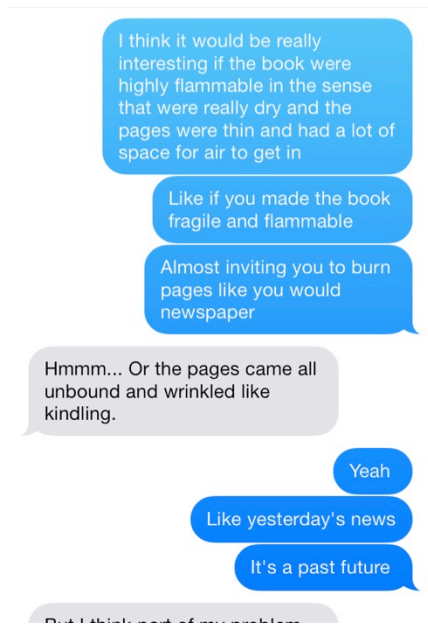
Figure 13. Text Conversation 5
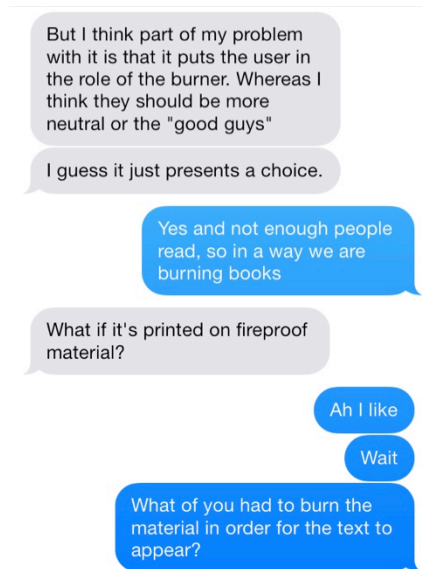
Figure 14. Text Conversation 6
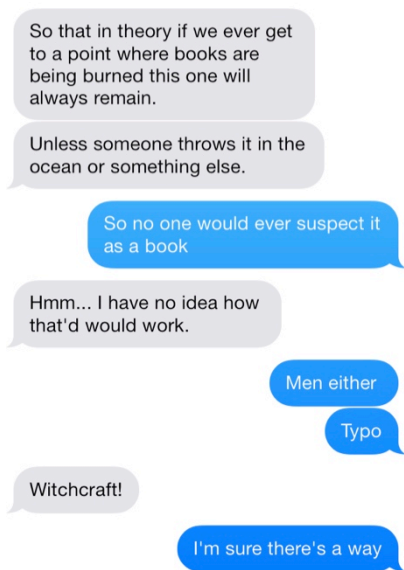
Figure 15. Text Conversation 7
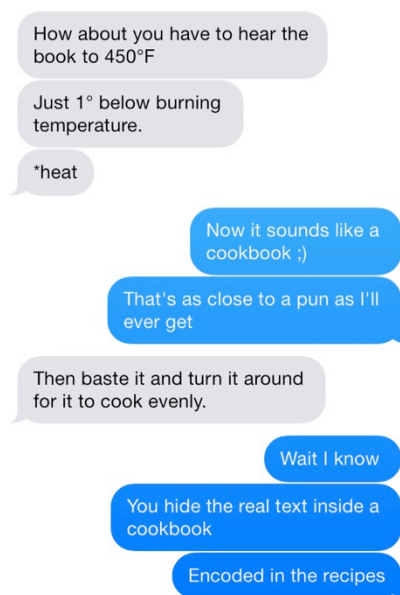
Figure 16. Text Conversation 8
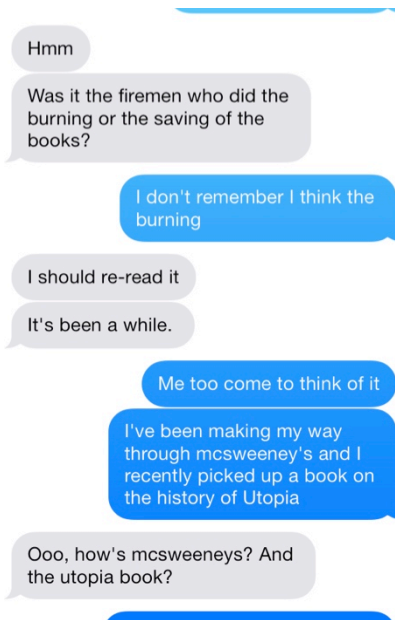
Figure 17. Text Conversation 9

The Thing From the Future

In mid Spring 2014, I attended a speculative design workshop held at OCAD by

Situation Lab (Candy & Watson, n.d.) with collaborators The Extrapolation

Factory in New York (Montgomery & Woebken, n.d.). This workshop involved

the use of a card game, *The Thing From the Future* (Candy and Watson, 2014), in

which a group of players used a single deck to distribute cards which used

different contextual categories such as, Mood, Future Trajectory/Time Span,

Environment and Thing. Using these cards, players would collaboratively select a

card from each category to construct a table hand or community hand. Once this

was done, players use that hand as a kind of creative container to fill out as many

ideas as possible on index cards in a few short minutes, and then proceed to

additional rounds. Once this was done, the ideas were evaluated for novelty and feasibility for prototyping, after which they were placed on a large central table in the middle of the workshop room (Fig. 18). The ideas were then perused by all the workshop participants and individually selected to make prototypes using randomly bought supplies from the dollar store. With the help of graphic design volunteers, labels were quickly designed and printed for these prototypes and then placed in a vending machine that had been rented for the month.

Figure 18. *The Thing From The Future Workshop* **at OCAD University**

I really enjoyed myself that day and these were my observations from an inclusive

design perspective:

- The activity had high social interaction between participants (+)
- Participants and facilitators did not directly interact through the activity (+/-)
- Participants' ideas were allowed to flow freely within given constraints (+)
- Participants' ideas were encouraged to share and contribute ideas to their group and the entire workshop (+)
- Participants' ideas did not interact with each other, or change very much due to feedback from others (-)
- Ideas were always centered on an object or thing to represent the idea (+/-)
- The game included some social issues and matters important to people (+)
- The game projected speculation anywhere from 50 years in the future to 10,000 years in the future (+/-)
- Participants were encouraged throughout the process to think ideas up quickly and let them go, ultimately giving them over to others to create a material artifact from (+)
- Workshop volunteers managed the majority of, 'expert' work such as graphic design (+/-)
- The workshop flowed quickly from one stage of activity to the next (+)
- The resultant ideas did not really spark further conversation (-)

Participating in the workshop gave me a lot to think about. It was a very hands-on

activity and there were many ideas being generated. The contextual categories

made it possible for participants to have positive and negative speculations using

objects to make statements about the future. I found the results very fun and

novel, but lacking in any kind of immediate impact about the present aside from a

vending machine full of non-functioning props. More specifically, I had seen a

really far-fetched idea about a prosthetic leg and felt the same sense of speaking

for the other was at play. Though I did not feel the idea was inherently good or

bad, I wanted to know why there wasn't more discussion about that idea, or why

discussions themselves were not highlighted as being just as important as the

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artifacts themselves. Ultimately I left the workshop feeling that it was very successful for being fun, but not impactful as far as social cohesion and meaningful social dialogue or interaction.

Conditional Design

While visiting a design-oriented bookstore in Toronto, I stumbled upon *The Conditional Design Workbook*, that is filled with examples of collaborative drawing projects for up to 4 participants. In the 'manifesto' at the back of the book, Conditional Design is described as being, "work focuses on processes rather than products: things that adapt to their environment, emphasize change and show difference" (Maurer et al 2013). Each turn-based activity in the book is based on a simple set of rules and each player is encouraged to be as creative as possible within those rules, to interpret them as they see fit. It is clear from the examples that the outcomes are very dependent on the individual player's aesthetic choices. Because each player is interpreting the same rules and given the same opportunities to respond, all players are equally responsible for the final composition and no single player has greater sway in the final outcome than the others. As the book progresses, some of the activities are quite complex, but the simple exercises are to me just as effective at conveying the idea: true collaboration produces beautiful and unexpected results. I have tried these activities with friends and students, and generally everyone seems to feel quite engaged and playful, mixed with a bit of the apprehension and confusion that

comes with decision-making. The rules (Maurer et al) for the 'Knots' ref exercise

(fig 19) are as follows:

1. Elongate your line on both sides by looping it over and under a line of another color.
2. You may not loop your own line or the line you looped in your last turn.
3. If you have no options left on one of the sides, that side is dead.
4. When both sides are dead, you may place a new line

Figure 19. *Knots* **drawing exercise from** *Conditional Design* **(Maurer et al, 2009**
http://conditionaldesign.org/workshops/knots/)

From an inclusive design perspective:

- The activity affords but does not require social interaction between participants (+/-)
- The activity emphasizes equal participation and turn-based action (+)
- The activity rules can be translated into any language (+)
- Differences between participants greatly affect the outcome (+)
- Participants' ideas are allowed to flow freely within given constraints (+)
- Participants have to dialogue when clarifying the rules of play (+/-)
- Participants have to accept other participants actions but still have choice (+)
- The activity has no goal other than to just draw a picture together (+/-)
- The activity has no explicit alternative to drawing (-)
- The activity has many levels of difficulty (+)
- The methodology can be used to make new rules and new activities (+)

Similar Work I Have Not Experienced

Grow-A-Game

A classmate of mine had become interested in a book, *Critical Play* (Flanagan)

through her own MRP investigation and I had discovered that she had designed a

game mechanic very similar to *The Thing From The Future*, (Flanagan, Grow-A-

Game) which is published online at her website and is available as a product for

purchase. The objective of *Grow-A-Game* is to play a game in order to,

"brainstorm novel game ideas which prioritize human values. While no prior

game design experience is necessary, both experienced designers and those new

to the field will have fun making games." (Flanagan)
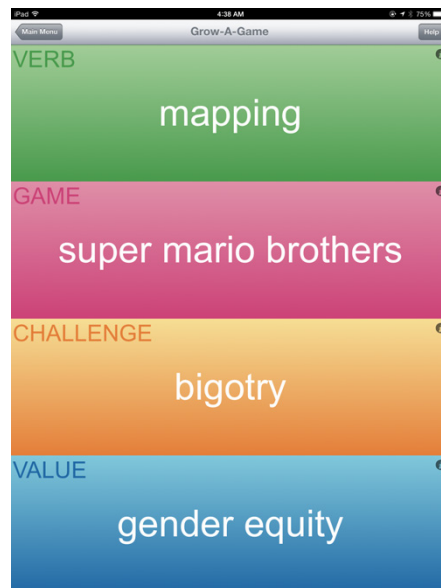
Figure 20. *Grow-A-Game* **iPad app screenshot (Flanagan, 2013,**
http://itunes.apple.com)

Grow-A-Game focuses more on distinct social issues as a contextual category but also introduces other categories, such as, Game, and Game Mechanic, focusing on the history of video games to provide the basic building blocks of a game. From viewing the free online templates, the similarities between, *Grow-A-Game* and, *The Thing From The Future* were more than just the initial use of contextual categories, but also the tacit assumptions of player interaction. From an inclusive design perspective my initial thoughts were:

- The activity is likely to be somewhat socially engaging and fun (+)
- There are clear rules for different levels of expertise and complexity (+)
- There is some emphasis on communication between players (+)
- It is not clear how differences between players affect outcomes (+/-)
- The end result is the initial design for a digital game idea (+/-)

PublicCITY

While searching online for card games that might be similar to, *The Thing From The Future* and *Grow-A-Game*, I stumbled somehow onto a Google group site (PublicCITY) that described their activity as being about,

> "…making public space *really* public again. It is about structuring inclusion in the shaping of our urban environment, and it's powered by YOU.
>
> This open-source game produces an unlimited supply of local design-activism projects that are about remixing and re-democratizing the public realm of our neighborhoods, one design at a time. Each localized, public project is born from the publicCITY game, and posted as a project card. Feel free to use the cards from the deck to incubate projects of your own!"

From the posted rules and an example of their cards (Fig. 21), I definitely got sense of what the game proposes to players — a way to come up with ideas to

make things as a way of re-claiming the urban environment. They even had a

schedule for events and a page for submitting custom cards to the general deck.

**Figure 21. PublicCITY rules and example card (2009,
https://sites.google.com/site/activistarchitecture/rules-card-1)**

From an inclusive design perspective my initial thoughts were:

- The activity is likely to be somewhat socially engaging and fun (+)
- The rules seem a bit complex and slightly made for experts (+)
- There is some emphasis on negotiation between players but not dialogue (-)
- The board relies on a matrix for organization and could work well with someone with a visual impairment so long as rows and columns are always being referred to along with content. (+)
- Differences between players do not really affect outcomes (-)
- The end result is the initial design for some kind of publicly built project (+)
- Players can generate new content and submit it to be integrated into the official deck (+)

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Design Approach & Iterations

First Considerations

Inclusive Design

Inclusive Design is often misinterpreted as an accommodation that is made to an existing design rather than one that from the onset, 'considers the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other forms of human difference (The Inclusive Design Research Center, 2013). The, *Three Dimensions of Inclusive Design* are:

1. Recognize diversity and uniqueness
2. Inclusive process and tools
3. Broader beneficial impact

Much of what needed to permeate throughout my work was a kind of consideration for an unknown user and to remind myself that an accommodation represented a kind of tolerant attitude when it comes to design. I wanted to have an attitude of acceptance, compassion and trust that who I was designing for was above all things a human being with rights that deserved dignity and respect. That being said, I chose to reconsider, accommodation as, 'improvisation'. I wanted to make sure that whatever activity I was designing gave just as much consideration to a broad range of foreseen differences, as much as it needed to acknowledge the possibility of the unexpected and to embrace it with fervor. As such, my design

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considerations attempt to embrace opportunities for improvisation as much as possible in anticipation of the unexpected.

Why a Card Activity?

I initially chose a card activity because my personal experience with inclusive design and speculative design showed me that there was an overlap between the type of inclusive communication that might be able to engage, improvise and sustain to a diverse range of participants in terms of modality and commonality, and a 'well-worn' design practice as a starting point for creative communication and ideation that promotes a stream of thoughts to be recorded as quickly as possible.

I like to think of language as, "the object of an Idea" (Lyotard, 1988, p. xii). Our perception that we learn and perform creativity in formal settings undoes the benefits of our natural abilities to be playful and creative beings. It's true that in formal education, designers are taught various methods of visual representation, but it does not make any one person more creative or imaginative than the other. We may associate drawing is a matter of visual literacy, much as we associate writing that of common literacy. Not being able to draw a picture, does not equate to being unable to picture an idea or to being unimaginative. I wanted to be able to create a tool that allowed non-experts and experts alike to be able to convene on a level playing field, where they can engage in their imaginations as a form of playful discussion that did not require or privilege any form of hard visual skills,

only a willingness to engage and be playful. I also wanted an activity that could

be easily played given different requirements for modality, such as solo-play, non-

literacy, the need for spoken word, sign language and potentially even a digital

variant for online play, or even perhaps a way to mix the analog and digital

together. I wanted to design the activity to be able to maintain the same level of

engagement for all players regardless of variation. Lastly, I wanted the activity to

be playable without any special tools or products, just simple pencil and paper and

a text of guidelines to explain the existing rules and to encourage improvisation

and adaptation to player's own requirements.

Comparing & Combining Games

I compared, *The Thing From the Future* to *Grow-A-Game* in contextual categories

to make sense of how those categories would influence the ideas being generated

by participants. I looked at the categories and asked myself which ones would be

most useful in an inclusive-minded exercise.

The Thing From the Future

- Thing - As much as I love designing objects, there are so many aspects to design that do not involve material things or concrete solutions.
- Future Trajectory/Timespan - This category was very useful in sparking the imagination and getting the participant to really try to forecast with a certain attitude with regard to the future. However, I also felt that it took away from the immediacy that is often being asked when having to think inclusively
- Mood - This was an emotion that was used to help a participant determine how they wanted their solution to, 'feel', such as 'awe', or 'anxiety'. I thought this category was very intriguing because it asked the participants how they wanted the recipients of the idea to feel. From an inclusive perspective, however, I felt that in general, people are entitled to feel however they feel or want to feel, despite what the designer's intent was.
- Environment - This category was very wide, anything as specific as a, 'military recruitment office' and broad like, 'socialism'.

Grow-A-Game

- Game - These were names of old console and computer games, which were of no interest to me
- Game Mechanics - These were more interesting because they involved more specific traits, but still seemed difficult to make use of
- Atmosphere - This category was pretty much exactly the same as the 'Mood' category from, 'The Thing From the Future' in the sense that it was about being prescriptive about how the outcome would affect the feelings or experiences of other people.
- Values - I found these to be very interesting and engaging, much more than the, 'mood' category from, 'The Thing From the Future'. Values seemed like a great way to understand how intent could translate to real-world impact through the communication of values or a, 'value proposition'. In a sense, values relate to attitudes, and the values card is asking the participant to temporarily focus on one specific attitude.
- Social Issues - These were implemented in 'Grow-A-Game ' as the most important category to drive the creation of a game. I found that to be very interesting and I wanted to know how social issues could be discussed creatively without having to add the extra layer of designing a game, but rather coming up with ideas and sharing them in a group.
- Wild Card - This category instantly made me think that ultimately the entire setup of contextual categories is really quite generative, and how a blank card is a very empowering thing when someone understands how to use it.

Topic Cards – Structure & Function

Deciding the Contextual Categories

Not long after I attended, *The Thing From The Future*, a friend from OCAD had

asked me if I could help them figure out how to brainstorm for an assignment. So

they let me facilitate an improvised brainstorming session whereby we started

with doing a mind map using word association (Fig. 22) After that we each spent

time individually, to write down ideas on post-it notes. We then took turns sharing

all of our ideas with each other and proceeded to sort the ideas into similar

categories (Fig. 23). Finally, we discussed which post-it ideas would be

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interesting to draw pictures of. Then we took turn drawing pictures of different

ideas with no written words (Fig. 24). The entire activity was quite engaging and

fun and seemed to generate lots of ideas.

Figure 22. Mind map drawing for an improvised brainstorming session.
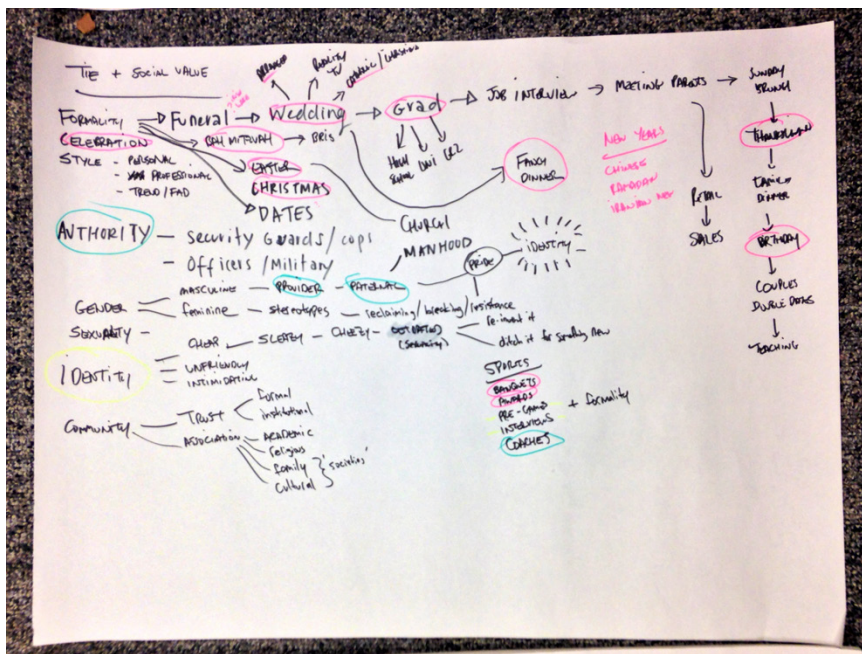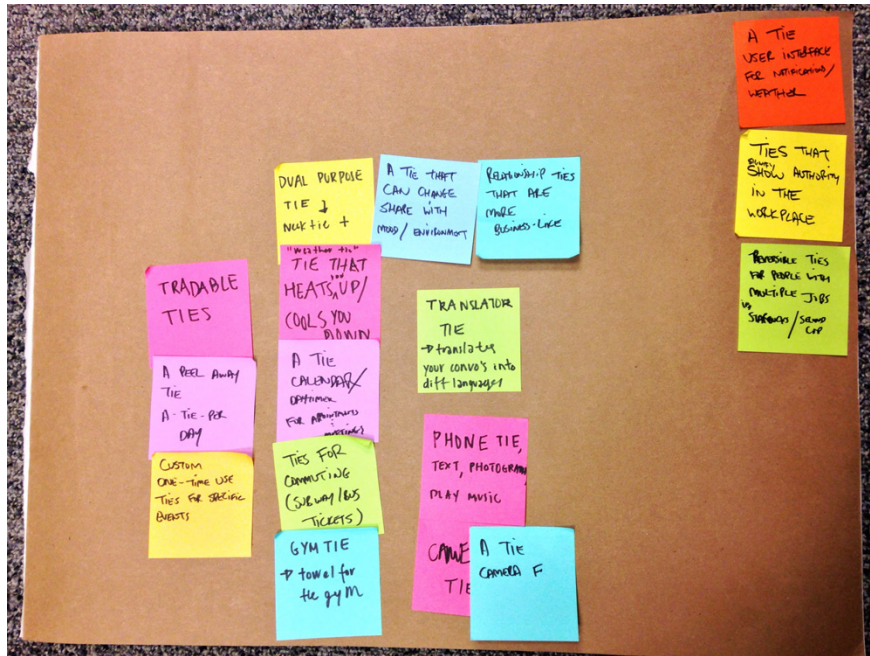
Figure 23. Open card sorting for an improvised brainstorming session.
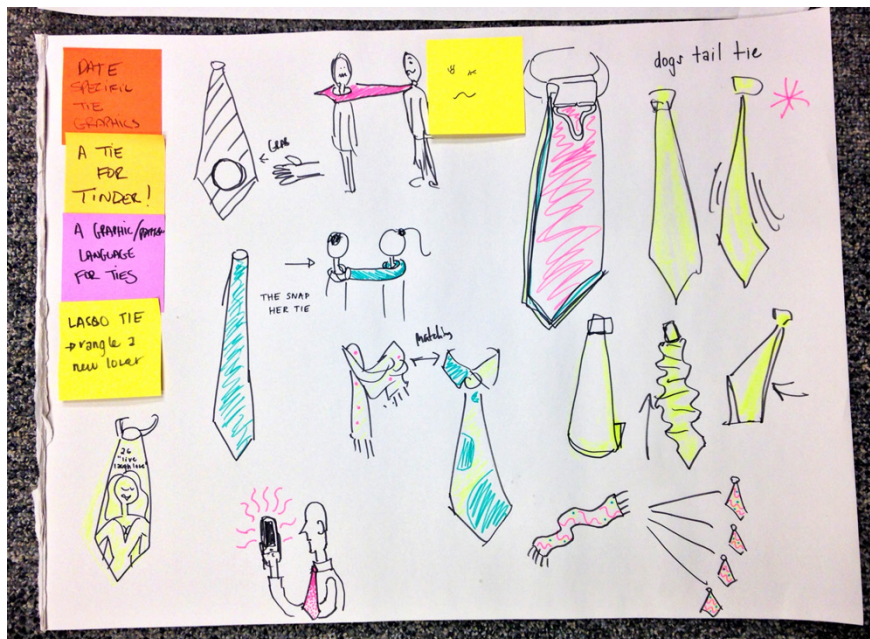
Figure 24. A Collaborative drawing for an improvised brainstorming session.

I later asked them in return if they could help me with a quick exercise where we could experiment with my MRP to see if we could improvise an activity based on the use of contextual categories.

When we got together the second time, I had decided again to improvise by mimicking the two card-based activities I was looking at and focusing on the categories of 'Social Issues', 'Things' and 'Daily Activities'. We did this activity by generating content on post-it notes together and then doing a quick sort to see what kind of spread we could achieve. After we played, we discussed our ideas and what we felt did and didn't work (See Fig. 25-28) I could clearly see that we were answering differently and it gave me clues as to how different our attitudes and perspectives might be. For instance one of the results (Fig. 28) shows our answers in relationship to body image. My answer describes a, 'A backpack designed for healthy living', and my friend's showed a similar answer but is phrased, 'A backpack w/weights that helps people reach ideal body image and makes them happy'. I feel like these slight differences in expression conveyed to me that perhaps we had different attitudes about body image. This is made even more interesting by the fact that one of their other answers was, 'A society where people's body image is defined by what you like.' This further reinforced my feeling that the activity was not filtering out our differences, but conveying them through ideas.

Figure 25. Prototype 1 - Improvised 'social issues' (cropped).

Figure 26. Prototype 1 - Improvised 'things' (cropped).
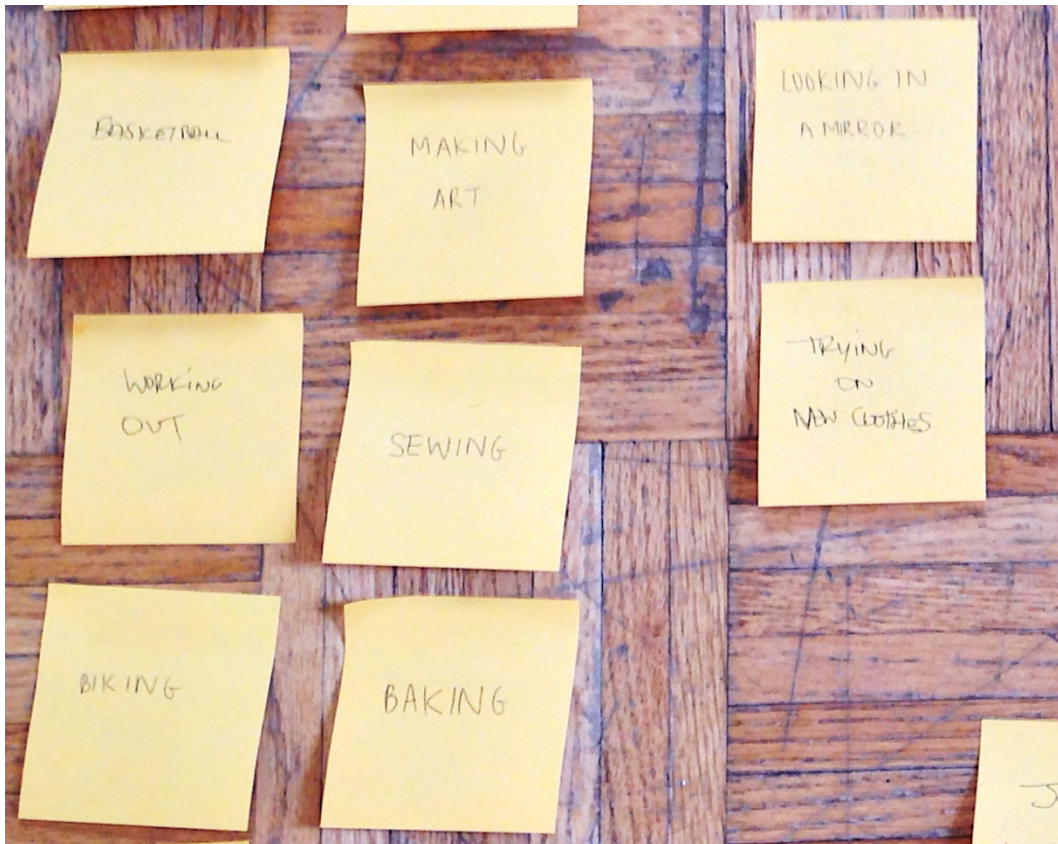
Figure 27. Prototype 1 - Improvised 'daily activities' (cropped).

After three rounds, we agreed that we were working with an awkward
combination of terms that were asking objects to be used for something they
weren't designed for in order to address a social issue. Many ideas felt somehow
more forced and less fun than our previous exercise. The activity and structure
had merit, but something was off with the combinations of topics.
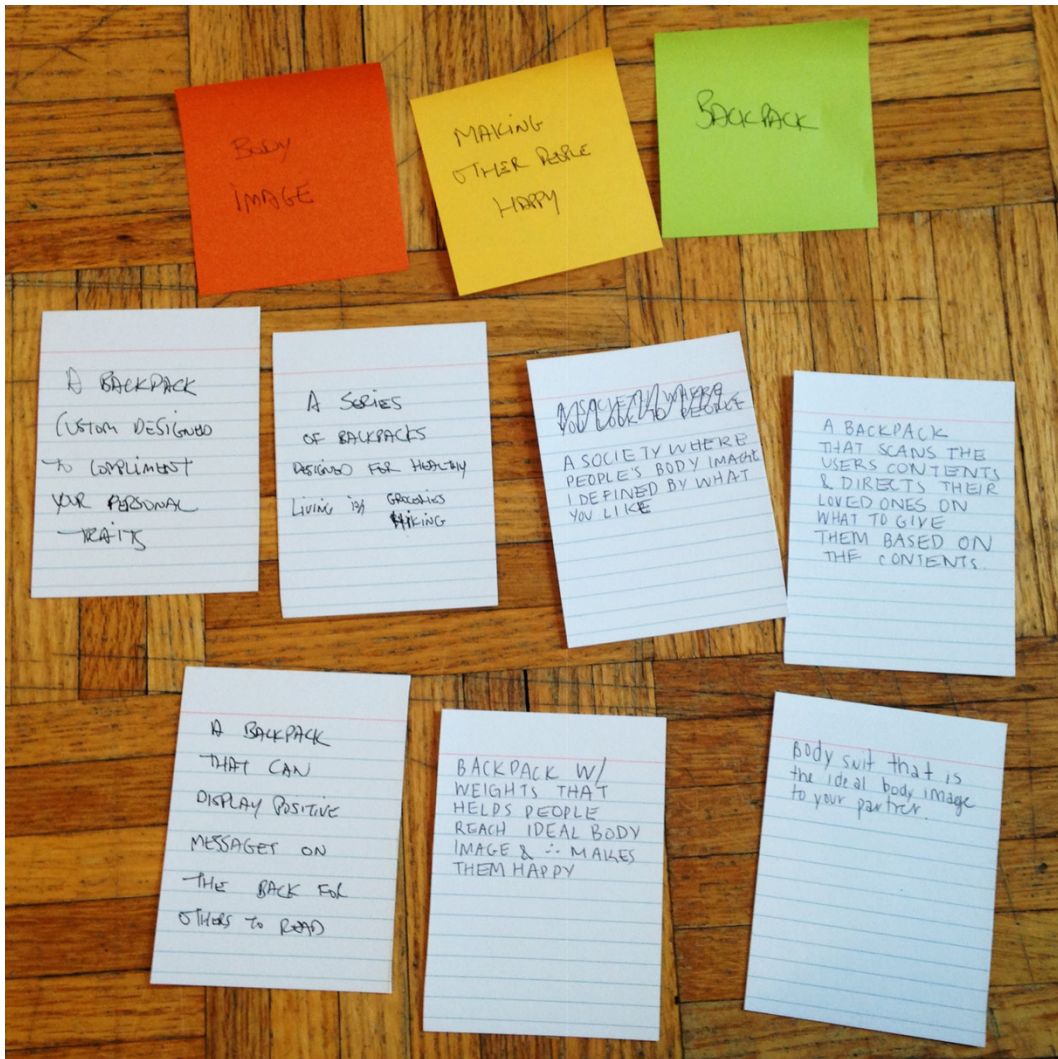
Figure 28. Prototype 1 - Ideation with mixed categories (cropped).

Based on the contextual categories of both games and these initial experiments, I decided to try identifying the categories of card that I thought would help spur discussion rather than limit ideas. I drew a diagram of 4 interconnected boxes to try and understand how I could give the Topic Cards more relationality to make this possible.

The categories I chose were:

- Social Issues
- Values
- Environments
- Designs

I drew a diagram where each category had its own node and the line between each

represented their relationship.
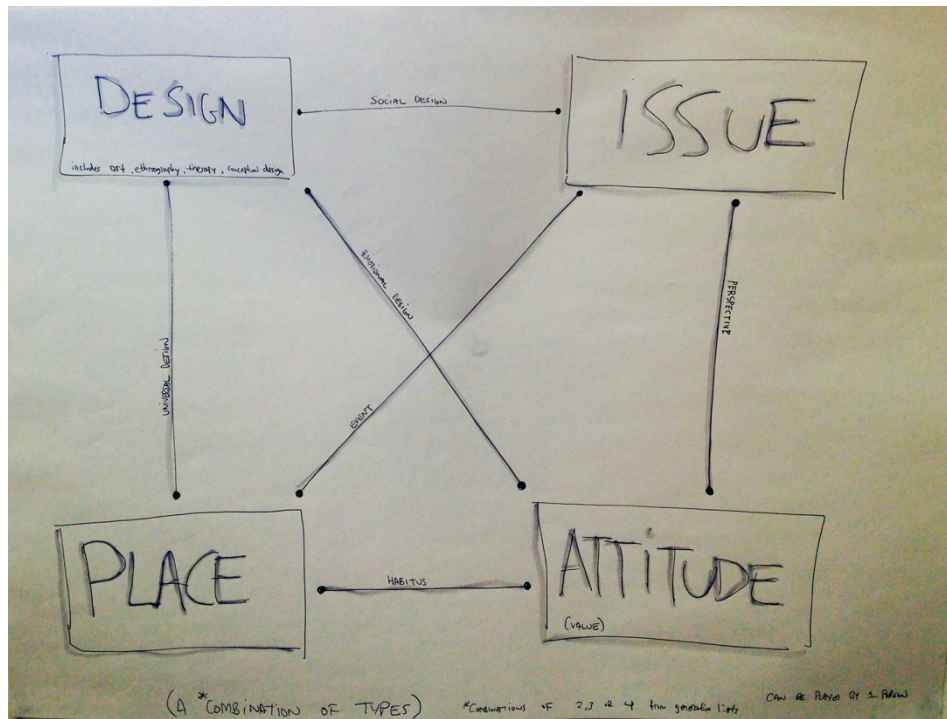
Figure 29. Prototype 2 – Diagram for new categories (cropped).

This diagram reminded me of one that I had seen in, *An Introduction to*

Cybernetics (Ashby, 1956). He writes of this diagram in relationship to feedback

circuitry in a complex system,

"The fact is that the concept of "feedback", so simple and natural in certain elementary cases, becomes artificial and of little use when the interconnexions between the parts become more complex. When there are only two parts joined so that each affects the other, the properties of the feedback give important and useful information about the properties of the whole. But when the parts rise to even as few as four, if every one affects the other three, then twenty circuits can be traced through them; and know the properties of all the twenty circuits does not give complete information about the system. Such complex systems cannot be treated as an interlaced set of more or less independent feedback circuits, but only as a whole.

For understanding the general principles of dynamic system, therefore, the concept of feedback is inadequate in itself. What is important is that complex systems, richly cross-connected internally, have complex behaviors, and that these behaviors can be goal-seeking in complex patterns." (p. 54)
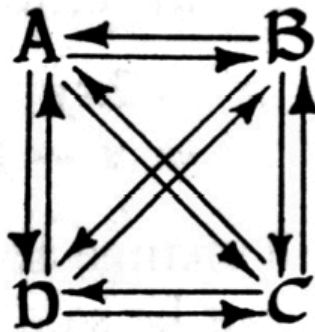
Fig. 4/11/1

Figure 30. **Feedback circuit diagram from,** *An Intro to Cybernetics* **(Ashby, 1956)**

This made me think that the relationship between any two categories is always going to be phrased differently depending on which category holds more importance to a person. I interpreted these relationships in the form of two questions for each potential combination a list:

- Environment + Social Issue
  - How might an environment define a social issue?
  - How might a social issue define an environment?
- Environment + Value
  - How might an environment define a social attitude?
  - How might a social attitude define an environment?
- Social Issue + Value
  - How might a social issue define a social attitude?
  - How might a social attitude define a social issue?
- Design + Environment
  - How might design define an environment?
  - How might an environment define design?
- Design + Social Issue
  - How might design define a social issue?
  - How might a social attitude define a design?
- Design + Value
  - How might design define a social value?
  - How might a social value define design?

After I laid these categories out, I found myself organizing all four categories in the form of a question:

What's an idea for [a Design] that addresses [a Social Issue] in [an Environment] using [a Value]?

This form of fill in the blank question gave the terms a semi-structural relationship that made it easier to reference. Compared to all my previous experience with card activities, the only completely new category was the, 'Design' category. Based on the first prototype's results, I thought that it might be beneficial for players to have a broader category from with which to choose solutions from. I saw this category encapsulating a variety of design typologies such as graphic design, interior design, architecture, etc. Looking at the diagram, all of the relationships I wrote in relation to the 'Design' category came from existing and popular design nomenclature. On the one hand this was very

reassuring, and on the other hand I found it troubled me because as a professional practice, design requires experience, formal education and a playful attitude about how to be productive. It is a category for experts. Omitting the, 'Design' category renders the question:

What's an idea that addresses [a Social Issue] in [an Environment] using [a Value]?

This simplified statement seemed to me more approachable by non-designers and non-experts. Because of the circularity involved in just comparing two different categories, I felt that any person looking at three cards would decide for themselves which was the most important or perhaps the most malleable: the social issue, the environment, or the value. I decided that it was okay to keep the, 'Design' category, but that it somehow needed to be treated differently in the guidelines for play as perhaps having more, 'complex functionality'. Ultimately, I wanted this activity to be playable by both experts and non-experts, but also to be playable by experts with non-experts.

I created a list of social issues, values and environments (Table 1). Rather than focusing on having a complete or objective set, I focused on generating as many as possible to cover a broad range of subjects within each category. My emphasis here was to try and understand what players would do with terms that were inconsistent, required explanation, were culturally or geographically specific, and also terms that different ways of saying the same things.

Table 1: *Prototype 3 - Topic Card Categories and Selections*

Social Issues	Environments	Values	Types of Design
Mental Health	Boat	Friendship	interior Design
Food Security	Dog Park	Honesty	Architecture
Violence	Food Court	Courtesy	Business Idea
Sterotyping	Parking Lot	Resourcefulness	Illustration
Invisible Disability	The Beach	Discipline	Public Service
Censorship	Walk-in Clinic	Integration	Web Page
Unfair Labor	Public Square	Cooperation	Phone App
Trans Disrimination	Library	Competiton	Clothing
Classism	Theatre	Leadership	Furniture
Age Discrimination	Home	Safety	Brand
Anxiety	Toy Store	Collaboration	Logo
Parental Neglect	Laundromat	Culture	Font
Bipolar Disorder	Tennis Court	Duty	Poster
Colonialism	Computer Lab	Order	Brochure
Sexual Harassment	Pub	Heroism	Advertisement
Global Warming	Coffee Shop	Decisiveness	A Painting
Health Care	Gas Station	Style	A Film
Ableism	Temple	Equality	A Documentary
Borderline Personality Disorder	Parkade	Spirituality	A Short Story
Malnutrition	Playground	Governance	A Publication
Eating Disorders	Summer Festival	Regularity	A Job
Religious Intolerance	Hotel Lobby	Courage	Persona
Racial Profiling	Shoe Store	Skill	Scenario
Sustainability	Bowling Alley	Hospitality	Story
Verbal Abuse	Concert	Faith	Wearable Technology
Police Brutality	Bar	Tradition	Landscape Architecture
Corporate Responsibility	The Street	Happiness	A Kind of Service
Body Image	Liquor Store	Play	Non-Profit Organization
Height Discrimination	Night Club	Diversity	3D Printing
Language Barrier	Resstaurant	Profit	A Therapy
Triggers	Theme Park	Tolerance	A Medication
Children's Rights	Skate Park	Openness	A Treatment
Slut Shaming	Public Washroom	Love	A Poem
Aggression	A Date	Innovation	A Song
Cultural Discrimination	Copy Shop	Respect	A Drawing
Crime	Skating Rink	Accountability	A Sculpture
Obesity	Sporting Event	Competence	New Technology
Poverty	Bus	Communication	
Energy Use	Bank	Beauty	
Disease	Airport	Lifestyle	
Homelessness	Wedding Banquet	Compromise	
Gender Equality	Office	Fairness	
Traumatic Stress	Street Car	Justice	
Media Portrayal	Diner	Fun	
Depression	School	Learning	
Schizophrenia	Park Bench	Pride	
Hate Speech	Baseball Diamond	Transparency	
Queer Rights	Clothing Store	Practicality	
Racism	Birthday Party	Adventure	
Bullying	Book Club	Consensus	
Gentrification	Picnic Table	Compassion	
Heteronormativity	Basketball Court	Tranqulity	
Aboriginal Issues	Subway	Accessibility	
Addiction	Shopping Mall	Accuracy	
Dyslexia	Hospital	Charity	
Weight Discrimination	Outdoor Patio	Wealth	
Suicide	Train Station	Simplicity	
Anger Issues	House Party	Intelligence	
Prostitution	Daycare	Honor	
Autism Spectrum	Food Truck	Commitment	
Self Esteem	Fast Food Place	Harmony	
Disclosure	Book Store	Comsumption	
Sexism	Backyard	Pleasure	
Sex Worker Rights	Church	Status	
Cultural Barriers	Commuting	Loyalty	
Domestic Abuse	Public Park	Gratitude	
Unemployment	Swimming Pool	Entertainment	
		Conformity	
		Empowerment	
		Influence	
		Privacy	
		Accomplishment	
		Authority	
		Security	
		Change	
		Community	
		Knowledge	
		Acceptance	
		Education	

Modularity & Generativity

I noticed that the various rulebooks for, *Grow-A-Game* (Fig. 29) included levels of play that involved using fewer categories of topic cards. I looked at the diagram that I had made and thought that each of the relationships I had mapped out could also be used the same way; that participants could choose the number and type of categories to play with in order to manage the complexity and focus of the outcomes before ever having to put pen to paper. I decided that as part of the rules, it should be possible to play the activity with as few or as many categories as desired by participants. *Grow-A-Game* also included blank, wild cards but I thought to go even further as to question the ability of participants to completely generate the content of the cards to be played with from scratch, much like a card sorting activity. For instance, a group of players could either fill out Topic Cards depending on what they experience in everyday life, or pick a particular aspect of daily life. From this they focus in on the cards as a kind of problem space. I wanted to distinguish this problem space from *The Thing From the Future* and *Grow-A-Game* in the sense that a very real and immediate social issue is given a random location, and being treated with a random value, which relates to the systemic nature of social issues and all the ways in which they locate and materialize. This way the activity would pose an immediate challenge as to whether to change the answers or change the questions, driving the need to customize Topic Cards while maintaining curiosity.

Play Styles

Grow-a-Game cards can be used a number of different ways. Any mix of the four card categories can be used to analyze existing games, or imagine new ones. Suggested card combinations are included.

New to game design? Begin with our one card excercise and then progress to two and finally three cards. By that point you'll be familiar enough with the cards to start designing games using any combination.

Play Style
One Card
1+ players or teams of 3-8
20 minutes

1. Shuffle the blue values set.
2. Each player chooses a values card.
3. Each player thinks of an existing game that expresses or requires the concept on the card.

Example: If one player draws the 'cooperation' card, basketball or pictionary could be used as games that express cooperation. Both games require teamwork and communication for players to succeed.

Play Style
Two Cards
3-8 players or teams of 3-8
20-40 minutes

1. Shuffle the blue values set, then the pink games set.
2. Each player or a team representative chooses one of each card.
3. Brainstorm with each player (or team) developing a game idea that modifies the game on the pink games card to express the value on the blue card.
4. When time runs out, each player or team shares the game idea. Teams can compete to see which group pitches the best game.

Play Style
Three Cards
3-8 players per team
30-60 minutes

1. Shuffle the blue values set, the pink games set and the green verb set.
2. A team representative chooses one card from each set for the team.
3. Take 10-40 minutes to brainstorm with each player (or team) to develop a game idea that modifies the game on the pink card with the green card's verb in order to express the value on the blue card.
4. When time runs out, each player or team shares the game idea. Teams can compete to see which group pitches the best game.

Figure 31. *Grow-A-Game* **classic instructions excerpts (Flanagan, http://valuesatplay.org/grow-a-game-overview)**

Solo Play

After I established what my categories would be, I spoke to a peer about how excited I was to start creating test kits for potential research participants. They had suggested that I might want to test the activity on myself first, so that I might understand the limitations of coming up with ideas to social issues I have not personally experienced, or potentially how triggered or exposed I may feel when coming up with ideas for social issues I have experienced. So I decided to play the activity myself with just the three categories of, Social Issue, Environment and Values using only self-generated and self-relevant content for each of the categories. Indeed, when it came to labeling and using certain issues that I felt applied to me, I experienced moments of apprehension and slight anxiety. After playing a few rounds, I did feel a certain sense of playfulness and lightness in being able to address the issue from an almost outside perspective rather than feel confronted by it. In fact, I found that there were moments that I was even able to laugh at myself for having ideas that poked fun at the fictional situation proposed by the cards. After I played a total of six rounds, I felt that there was enough merit in the activity being played by oneself that there was potential for further exploration with other individuals as well a group play.
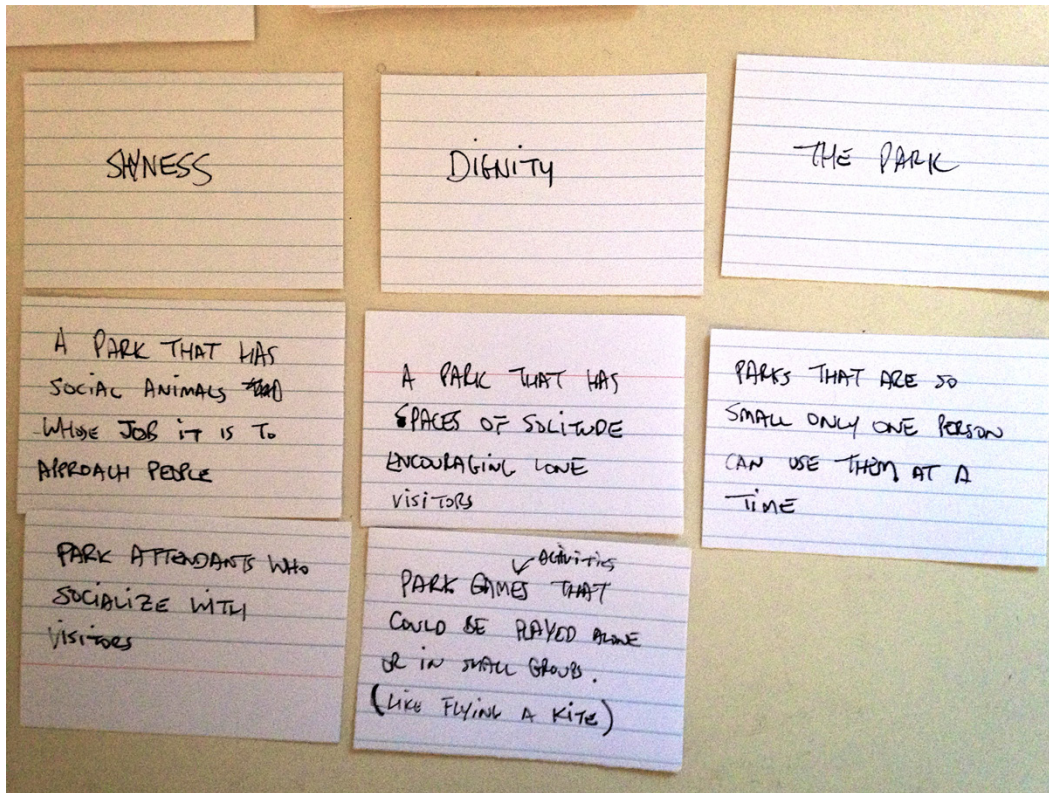
Figure 32. Prototype 2 – Solo Play self-test example.

Idea Cards – Structure & Function

Group Play & Feedback Mechanisms

I realized after my solo experiment, that it was easier than I had anticipated to

play the game by oneself because every card I was filling was a new idea.

Likewise all the previous card-based activities I had based my own on also relied

on the notion of coming up with as many new ideas as possible in a short amount

of time, and that verbal discussion was a separate matter.

As I started to imagine what group play dynamics might be like and how to structure rules for play around that, I imagined that there were two ways of looking at verbal feedback. One option was to allow all players a certain amount of time to respond to the cards, come up with ideas in isolation and then deliver those ideas to the rest of the group. The other option was to each take turns coming up with one idea and sharing it. The question then became, 'How would players change their own minds based on the ideas being shared?' This brought me back to the component of verbal discussion. I wanted to see if player feedback could be implemented directly onto the cards and what that would look like. I came up with a list of 4 positive and 4 negative feedback types with which players could label their cards. They are as follows:

- **Heart** - 'I like this idea'
- **Broken Heart** - 'I don't like this idea'
- **Equals Symbol** - This is an example of something that is similar to your idea
- **'Does-Not-Equal' Symbol** - This is an example of something that is different than your idea but addresses the same problem
- **Question Mark** - This is a question about your idea
- **Asterix** - This is an example of an exception to your idea, or an instance in which it would not work
- **Plus Symbol** - This is a partial addition to your idea
- **Minus Symbol** - This is a partial subtraction from your idea

Making these feedback mechanisms allowed me to see that initial ideas could also use some articulation. For instance, instead of requiring ideas, it could also be possible to write down thoughts, or questions. Sometimes people find it difficult to just have an idea without thinking it through. Despite the fact that the activity is really about encouraging a flow of ideas, I thought it best to have a variety of

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options to safeguard against, 'analysis paralysis'. So the initial set of idea symbols

becomes:

- **Light Bulb** - New Idea
- **Thought Bubble** - Thought (can be arbitrary/factual/random)
- **Question Mark** – Question

Initially I had thought perhaps that ideas would be written on the front of a card

and that feedback could be written on the back. But ultimately the only distinction

to be made is in labeling the card. So I decided that cards could easily be labeled

in the top corner just by drawing the appropriate symbol.

Designing the feedback mechanisms allowed me to better understand how the

cards could be used to communicate more than just the words written, but assert a

kind of tone to the card played. Because I had only played the activity by myself,

I had not yet considered what would happen if there was an idea or series of ideas

that I found to be threatening, offensive, or perhaps quite refreshing and

enlightening. So I decided on two more symbols:

- **Anchor** - I want to keep focus on this particular idea thread
- **Flag** - I want to stop this idea thread from going any farther

In total, there are 12 unique symbols (Fig. 33). The activity can be played with or

without these symbols, with or without feedback, and with or without control

mechanisms.
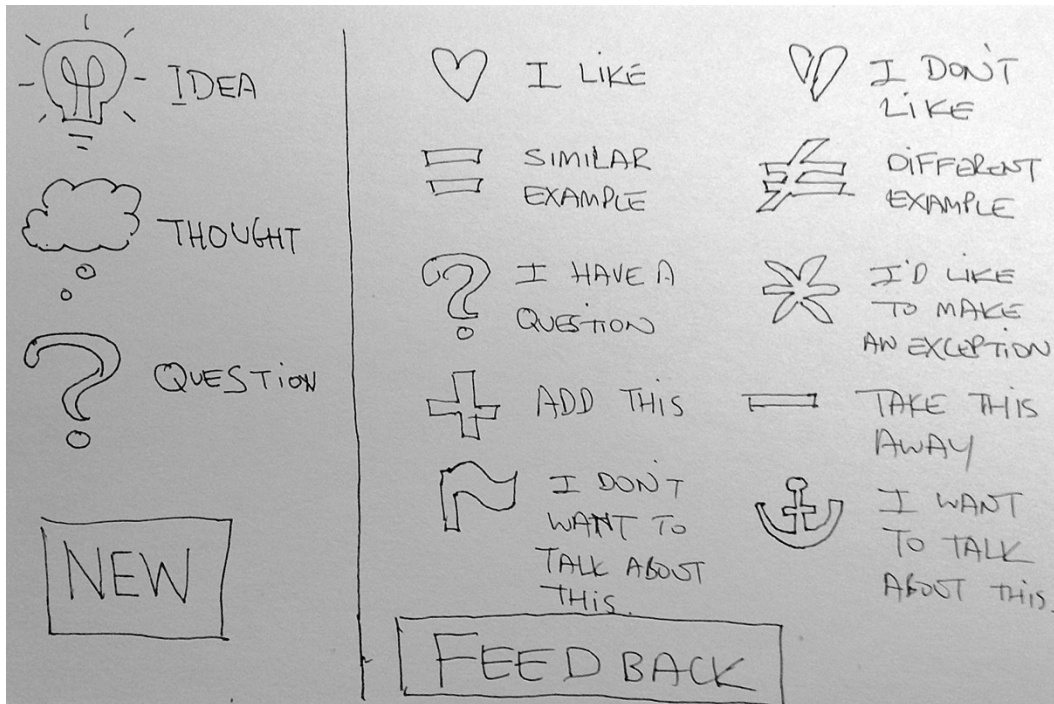
Figure 33. Prototype 3 – Idea Card Symbols

As an initial test, I went back to my text message conversation with my friend, and sketched out how it would look like if our messages had these symbols applied to each one (Fig. 34). After annotating eight messages, I decided to do a quick tally to see what the symbols we would have used. As it turns out, my friend used four thoughts, said they liked one thing and gave an existing example. I on the other hand, said I liked one thing, and stated a thing I would remove. If I would to compare those, 'scores' to how I see our personalities and attitudes, I would say that his, 'score' very much shows that he's a thoughtful person, that he looks for external validity and knows how to give a compliment. I would say that I tend to jump to conclusions and that I'm also quick to criticize.

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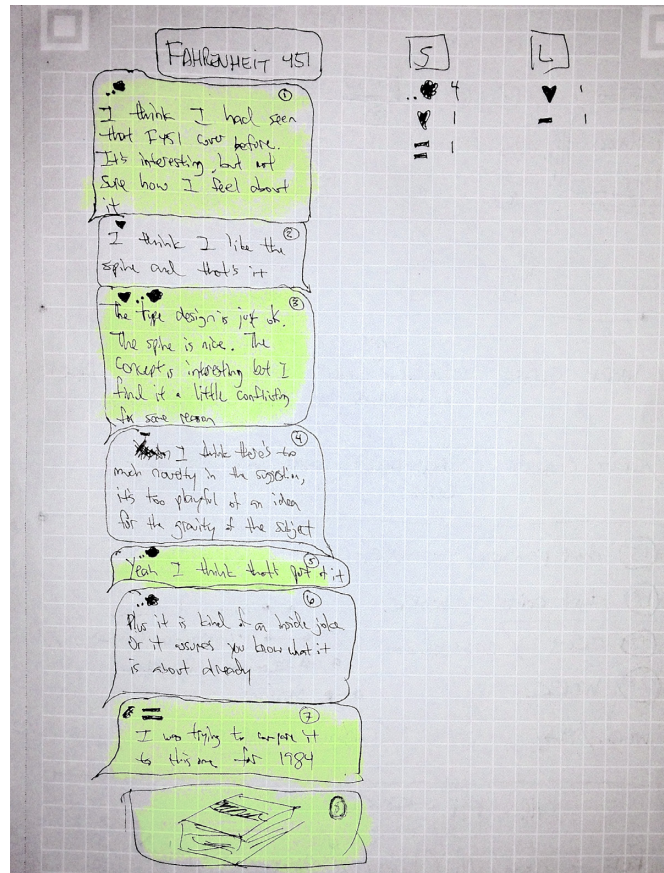
Figure 34. Prototype 3 – Testing symbols using original text conversation.

Turn-Based Play

It became clear as I started to prototype and sketch, how feedback mechanisms

introduce a layer of complexity into the activity. During my experience of, *The*

Thing From the Future workshop, players would write ideas individually and then

share them verbally, maintaining a very one-way relationship with the subject

constraints. After each round of sharing, a new round would begin and there

would be no opportunity to revisit or fill out new cards. This worked for the sake

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of time management, as it allowed players to be working simultaneously, resulting in as much as 30 new ideas in 5 minutes. As I started sketch out a mock simulation of how a multi-player activity might look with feedback involved, I imagined an Idea Card being played, and subsequent cards being played on top of it, cascading down much like a column of Solitaire. This looked very different from the method that I had experienced in, *The Thing From the Future* workshop, where cards were given a more conventional open card sort treatment (write first, sort later).

I wondered what would happen if players were allowed to decide whether to give feedback or to write a new idea, because I felt that it was closer to what a natural conversation would be. When I sketched this out, it started to look very much like a tree diagram (Fig. 35). It occurred to me that this kind of interaction would require that players choose between addressing the original Topic Card constraints, and addressing the Idea Cards of other players. I thought introducing formal feedback mechanism implied circularity, but I was not certain as to whether that circularity should be time-dependent or time-independent. "The most fundamental concept in cybernetics is that of "difference", either that two things are recognizably different or that one thing has changed with time." (Ashby)
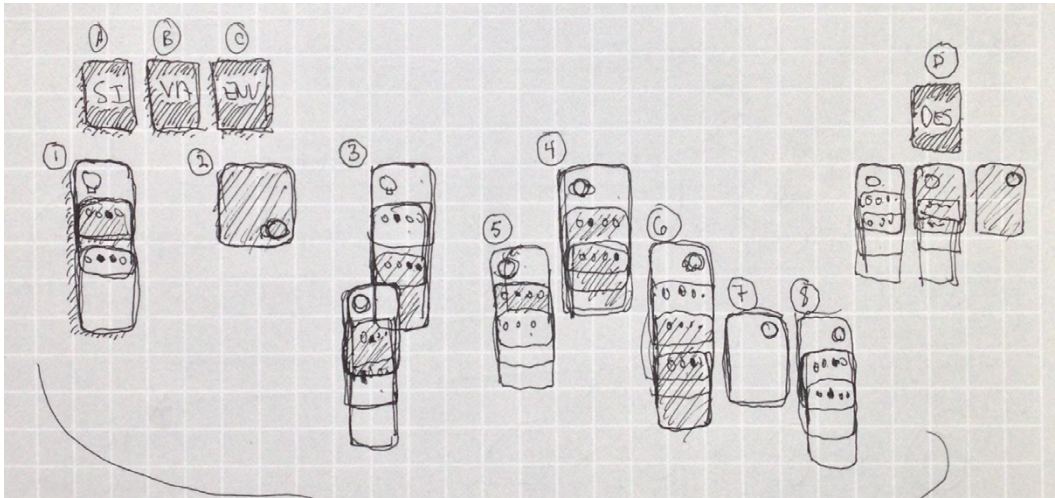
Figure 35. Multiplayer mock sketch

Although I felt that this sketch represent the most natural form of interaction, I wanted to also think about how to structure the activity to afford giving each player a certain amount of peer acknowledgement as opposed to acknowledging the conversation. So, as another form of feedback, I thought the activity could be structured such that each turn is comprised of a player having the opportunity to write down an idea, thought or question, and subsequently given responses by each of the other players.

Play Objectives & Outcomes

T he objective of *Passwords* is the conversation itself. Throughout my process, I purposely avoided having a set goal or to define *Passwords* as a game. I did not want there to be a way to decide winners from losers. I also did not want anyone's ideas, thoughts or feedback left out, dismissed or privileged over anyone else's

over the course of the activity. I did however, want to understand whether or not there was a way to more qualitatively measure the results of the activity, or help participants to be able to reflect on the activity in a variety of ways beyond the general mood experienced by the group, or ideas that stood out over others.

Here are some of the ways in which I thought to abstractly interpret the results

- Looking at the mixture of player colors
- Counting how many idea 'trunks' there are
- Counting how many idea 'branches' there are
- Counting the longest idea thread
- Counting the number of cards used in total and by each player (closed sort)
- Determining how many of each type of symbol was used in total and by each player (closed sort)
- Looking for ideas which garnered unanimous attention/consensus
- Looking for ideas which received anchors or flags (closed sort)
- Performing an open card sort all the cards to look for themes or insights
- Doing all of these activities on a, 'per-round' basis or at the end of the activity, or both.

Evaluation and Findings

I want to preface this section by noting that I am not evaluating the data whatsoever based on the text-based content of the resultant Idea Cards, as they mirror the verbal dimension to the activity. My interest is in measuring the nature of Idea Cards to see if their structure and dynamics can sustain a simultaneously verbal discussion and whether the notation can provide further insight into each player and player engagement with others through the activity.

First Participants – Research Ethics Approved

I had received research ethics approval from OCAD to assemble a toolkit and place it in the hands of my first research participant. The kit included:

- The rules for the activity for solo play
- Three decks of Topic Cards already filled out
- Three decks of blank Topic Cards
- Two decks of blank Idea Cards
- A variety of 3,4 and 6-sided die
- Two hourglass timers, 30 seconds & 90 seconds
- A blank journal for writing notes and reflections

Solo Play

Participant 1 engaged in solo play (Fig. 36) a total of 27 times (Appendix F) using game timers for roughly 9 rounds at a time, taking notes in the provided journal (Appendix G) as they went. They did not use the any dice, nor did they fill out any blank cards or choose any special game mechanics for choosing Topic Cards. Some of their observations are summarized as follows:

- 'Social Issues' Topic Cards did not include enough visible disabilities
- Can see players easily wanting to fill blank Topic Cards with their own suggestions
- Color coding is very helpful to stay organized and aesthetically very pleasing
- Cards are a good size
- Completely random Topic Card combinations can result in difficult scenarios to come up with ideas for
- Having difficulty distinguishing, 'thought' from 'idea'
- Might be good for a player to be able to stop and reflect between ideas
- Really want to be able to play this game with other people to get feedback and discussion going
- Thinks that many people will not be able to define certain, 'Social Issues' for themselves, requiring Google or Wikipedia
- Sometimes feels that this game is really a test of creativity more than anything.
- 30 seconds is definitely too fast for a beginner
- Flagging helps eliminate combinations that feel too awkward or absurd
- Has definitely encountered their own knee-jerk response, discovering something about themselves as far as a moral boundary
- Participant preferred to use slot-machine method of randomly drawing from three separate piles of Topic Cards, despite not always enjoying the combinations that came up
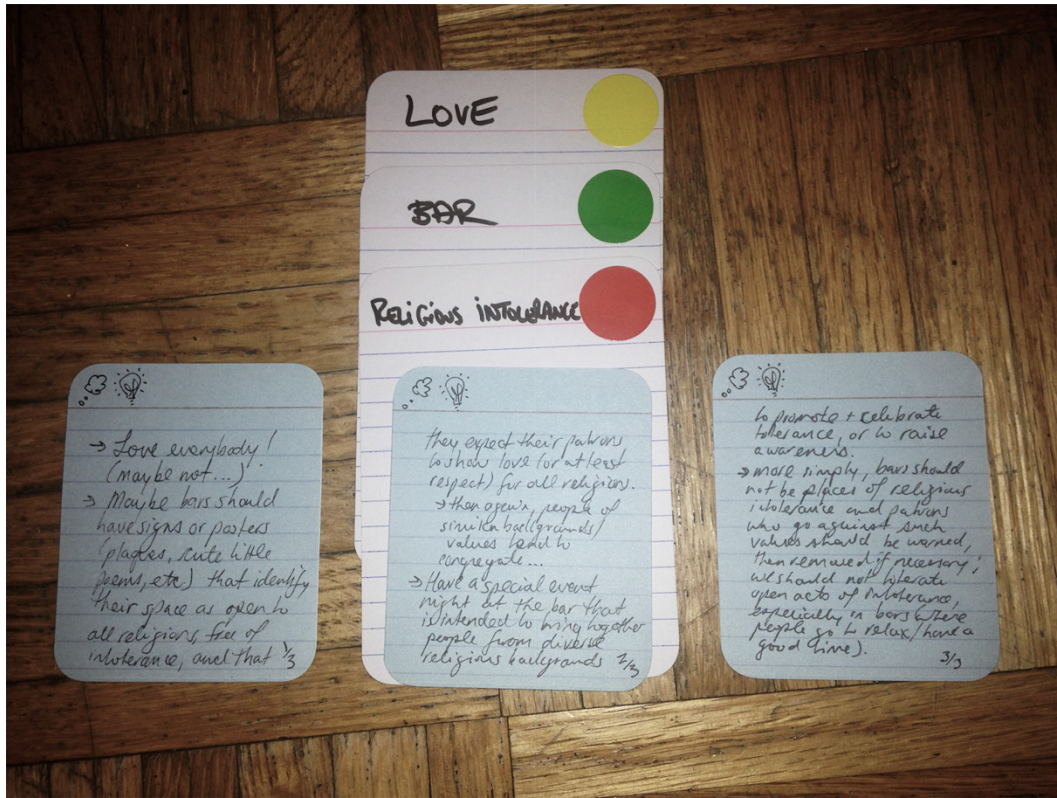
Figure 36. Sample Data from Participant 1 - Solo Play

Group Play

Participant 1 then played a single round with Participant 2 (Fig. 37), using two

Topic Cards and 19 Idea Cards. No journaling or recording was done due to time

constraints but the participant was pleased with how well the round went and

verbally noted:

- It was easier to differentiate thought from idea and also to talk about an idea longer and critique it with another player present.
- It is possible to open with a question, not just a thought or idea, so the guideline should reflect that choice.

- Finally, the participant also noticed that the activity had, 'naturally ended' when both players achieved consensus on one particular idea after much deliberation. They noted a sense of mutual relief and satisfaction.
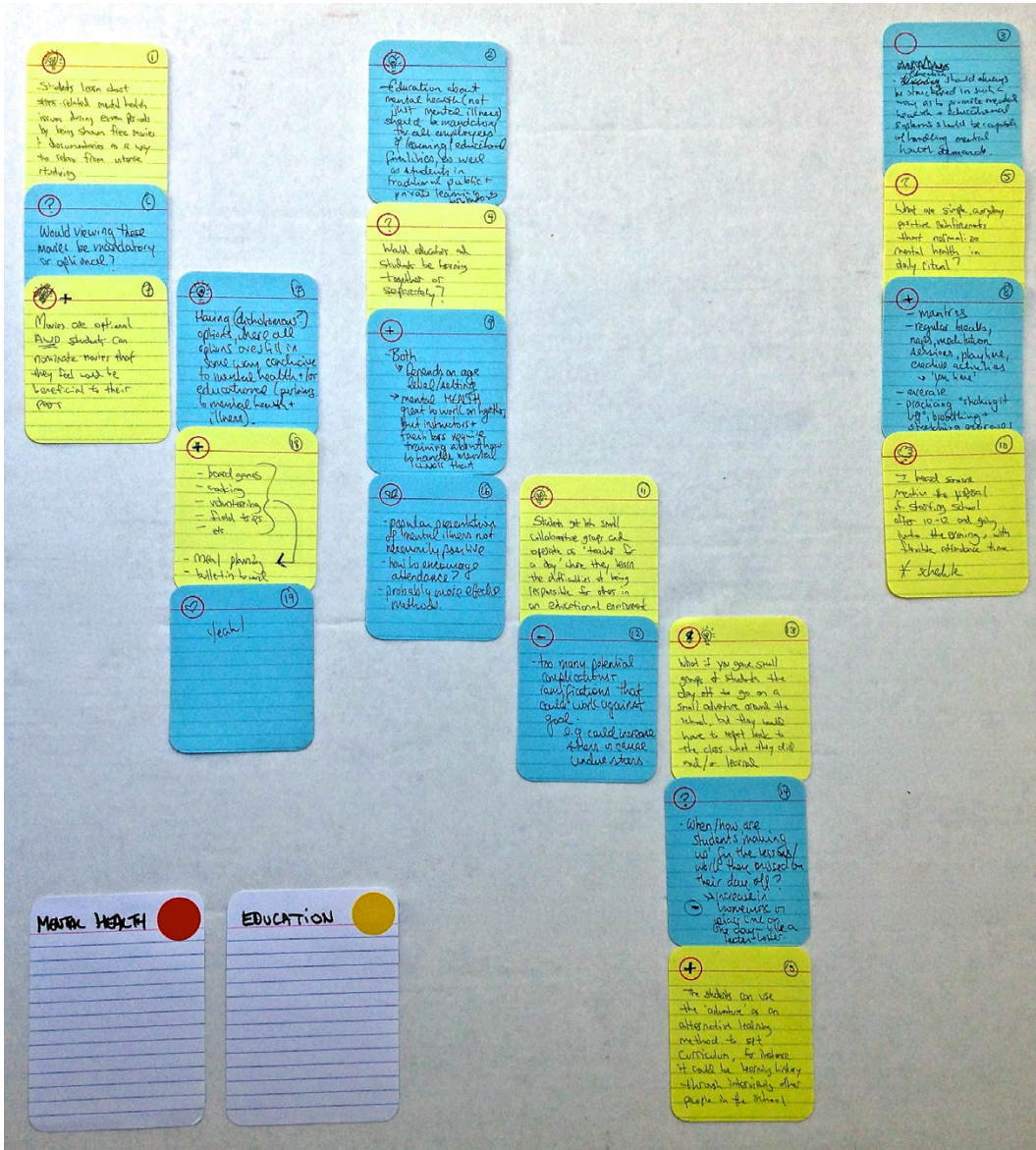
Figure 37. Reconstruction of Data from Participant 1&2 - Group Play

I returned to the Idea Cards afterwards to do a similar tally of everything I could

measure about the session:

Overall Stats:

- Number of Topic Cards used– 2
- Number of Idea Cards used – 19
- Number of original discussion threads – 3
- Number of derivative discussion threads – 3
- Shortest discussion thread – 4 cards
- Longest combined discussion thread – 8 cards
- Thread #1 card sequence – [1, 6, 7] – [17, 18, 19]
- Thread #2 card sequence – [2, 4, 9, 16] – [11, 12 – 13, 14, 15]
- Thread #3 card sequence – [3, 5, 8, 10]
- Overall player satisfaction with result – very positive

Player 1 Stats:

- Number of light bulbs – 2
- Number of hearts – 1
- Number of broken hearts – 1
- Number of feedback questions – 2
- Number of additions – 2
- Number of subtractions – 1
- Number of 'passes' – 2
- Participation % average per thread – 56.25%

Player 2 Stats:

- Number of light bulbs – 3
- Number of thought clouds – 1
- Number of feedback questions – 2
- Number of additions – 3
- Number of 'passes' – 2
- Number of 'null' cards - 1
- Participation % average per thread – 56.25%

I created additional categories. 'Passes' is to describe when a turn seems to have

been missed, in which I assume the other player has passed or been skipped over.

'Null' is to describe a card that was given no contextual symbol. Upon review, the card describes a set of rules, which is similar to an idea but also different.

OCAD Workshop – Pilot Study for Group Play

During a summer intensive with a new group of students, I was invited to introduce my card activity to a group of about twenty people. This was impromptu, and I was not going to gather any concrete data, so I decided to run the workshop in two sessions. In the first session I randomly handed out pre-made Topic Cards for each of the 3 main topics as well as a stack of Idea Cards to each participant. Then, participants were instructed as to how the Topic Cards functioned, and asked to fill out the Idea Cards in response given a short period of time, roughly 5 minutes. Some of the participants managed to fill out many cards. Some had difficulties due to language, lack of familiarity with given topic(s), and slight anxiety with having to come up with ideas on the spot. Overall everyone understood the task and it was clear who was more comfortable with creative exploration and abstract thinking. Those that struggled received verbal encouragement and explanation from others.

In the second exercise, I allowed groups of 4-5 players to gather and explained the use of the Idea Cards and feedback mechanisms. Additionally I explained the placement of Idea Cards on the table using a protocol that required players to take turns writing an Idea Card out, reading it out loud and placing it on an appropriate

spot on the board. I handed out new randomized Topic Cards to each group.

These were my observations:

- As they initiated, it was clear that most groups were more comfortable talking rather than attempting to have the discussion through the use of the cards. I had to request that they try to write as part of the discussion.
- One group had a member with deafness, who was accompanied by a sign language interpreter. This player did not seem to have any difficulties with the activity but I did not verify.
- One group did not feel the need to take turns, and thus many of their cards had the same numbers and certain group members did not even participate.
- Another group decided during the course of play that certain responses called for the use of pictures rather than a description. This was due to a cultural clarification about a certain item of clothing.
- One group had a disagreement over the topic of gender inequality in a foreign country and the validity of a certain statistic that a member of the group had written on an Idea Card. Later on this was fact-checked and the actual statistic was dramatically different from the one that had been written.
- One group found it uncomfortable to speak to an issue that none of them personally experienced; they did not feel the right to have a discussion about it.
- A few groups remarked on how taking turns made it possible to have equal representation by all players, learning from individuals, and extra time for all players to contemplate their own ideas as well as take in new information.
- From observing some of the pictures, it was clear that while some groups did not take turns, their contributions were still turn-based in that they took the time to carefully number their contributions

At the end of the activity I took pictures of all group's resultant Idea Card

arrangements (fig) Without reading the cards, I could instantly observe specific

qualities of their written conversations:

- Number of idea threads and branches
- Length of idea threads
- Equality of representation
- Level of player interaction/isolation
- Number of ideas/thoughts/feedback both positive and negative
- Locations of agreement/disagreement

Figure 38. scrubbed photo from OCAD U workshop - Group Play

All of these qualities appeared to me as visual communication patterns. It was through this activity that I had realized that with a group of individuals that was focused enough on using the Idea Cards to facilitate a creative conversation, that they might not necessarily need Topic Cards to prompt their responses. It is very

much similar to a card sort, except that there is a deliberate recording of the

discussion, taking place prior to the sorting of cards. Thus, I feel that it is possible

at the highest level to be able to use only Idea Cards to be able to have a creative

conversation in a very intentional way that encourages diverse participation.

Findings

- It definitely helps to start with solo play and simpler play mechanics to build confidence and familiarity before scaling up the activity and interacting with others.
- Every Topic Card category has its own, 'expertise', not just the, 'Design' category. There are social issues, environments and values that people need help in defining or clarifying. All terms are very subjective, which helps players to naturally question their own assumptions.
- It is important to emphasize that the cards must be able to represent the type of verbal conversation that is taking place, in other words, 'to have a conversation through the cards'.
- If players do not adhere to the same rules because they are not getting along, play can become lopsided, player interaction might suffer, communication may break down easily and the resultant ideas may not necessarily relate to each other. However, all of this is still measurable, even as a poor measurement.
- Turn-based play works well because it encourages players to listen to other players, spend more time thinking of what to write, wait for their turn and respond according to the ever-increasing amount of information being shared through the cards.
- When a group is functioning more autonomously, there are healthy indicators, despite the fact that exceptions to rules are being made, for instance, playing out of turn while still bothering to number the cards, or drawing pictures despite the game being word-based, or writing down something that is blatantly made-up because it can be used to hold a player accountable later on.
- The Idea Cards can potentially operate independently in facilitating and mediating conversation.

Description of Your Unique Contribution

The Ride I Created

Passwords is designed for having difficult conversations in a playful way. By the

nature of its design, it affords interaction and observation to take place in the same

experience amongst diverse participants. The amount and type of customization

possible in, *Passwords* as a creative communication tool aims for increasing and

sustaining player diversity, activity literacy, complexity of subject matter,

individual outcomes, player autonomy, and eventually player independence from

the constraints initially outlined by the *Passwords Guideline* (Appendix I). Its

modularity includes:

1. **Number of players** – 1 to 4 (tested)
    a. 1-player allows the activity to be played on one's own for self-reflection.
2. **Roles** – Player/Translator/Facilitator/Researcher/Participant (player, translator tested)
3. **Number of Topic Card Types** – 1 to 4 (3 tested)
    a. The more Topic Cards that are used, the more specific the solution
    b. Categories – Social Issue, Value, Environment, Design
4. **Generation and/or Customization of topics** – None/Partial/Full ('None' tested)
    a. Players may fill out blank Topic Cards with their own content
    b. Players may create a completely different Topic Card category
5. **Type of Topic Card selection** – Random/Semi-Random/Player Driven ('Random' tested)
    a. These depend on players desire for control over how Topic Cards are combined (none tested)
    b. Novelty may derive from outside game mechanics
6. **Idea Card Notation** – No context/Chronological Context/Idea Context/Feedback Context/Some/All ('All' tested)
    a. Gives Idea Cards additional context with respect to their content and player interaction
    b. Accounting for intent and dialogue

7. **Player autonomy** – Topic Preset/Topic Seeded/Topic Customized/Verbal ('Topic Preset' tested)
    a. Regarding the use of pre-set Topic Cards, or using an existing Topic Card to generate more, fully generating Topic Cards, or the use of a completely blank set of Topic Cards, or requiring no Topic Cards at all for Idea Card usage.
8. **Data Review** – Chronological/Compositional/Notational/Content Related/Some/All (All tested except Content Related)
    a. Interesting ways of relating back to a conversation, comparing, reflecting and measuring.

Intent VS. Impact

I created *Passwords* as both a critical and process-based response to my earlier journey through researching and attempting to use critical design methods to, 'access the other' and my subsequent attempt at addressing accountability and diversity. Looking upon my process, *Passwords* does critically reflect an emphasis on accountability and diversity in design intent, because it has potential for immediate impact within the participants involved, by making it possible for participants to observe the conversation they are currently having in greater detail and discover its potential for ethical access and feedback. I attempted to maintain a balance between striving for inclusion and having a goal to work towards that was a result of inclusion. Through testing on myself, I gained more confidence that my intentions as the designer were acceptable for the most part, but through testing with others, I did glimpse upon moments of individual isolation and of frustration. In those moments, I was reassured by the simple fact that *Passwords* is a design that is made up of a set of words, both in guidelines and results. To change those words is to engage with them, and that is my contribution.

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Next Steps

All of the testing that was done was very deliberately shallow and un-
authoritative. At every instance the results were positive, and I believe that the
activity should be expanded upon and explored in more depth.

Structural Considerations

Topic Cards

With respect to the Topic Cards types, I have not explored the Design category
and the relevant game mechanics that might be useful in adding complexity and
expertise to the type of ideas being generated, applying to fields of design such as:

- Industrial design
- Graphic design
- Interior design
- Architecture
- Landscape architecture
- Urban design/planning
- Speculative/Critical Design
- Design Fiction

I believe that in order to get to the conceptual level of design, it is really important
to visit and consider other aspects of the design practice. This is merely to give
consideration to the creation of everyday things from the point of view of the
creator and to create a certain familiarity and comfort. Once that happens, it can
become easier to address more conceptual work with confidence and openness.

Idea Cards

I have not explored many other mechanism variations on Idea Card generation and notation. More testing is required to see whether or not there can be variations created for different communication styles.

Customization

With respect to customized Topic Cards, none have been tested in mixed-use with preset Topic Cards or in fully customized decks. I believe much more time, familiarity and specific demand is needed with the activity in order for players to be able to feel comfortable navigating it for customized personal use.

Modality

'Passwords' has been tested in spoken and written English and observed with participants who speak English as a second language and a participant with deafness. 'Passwords' has not been officially tested with adaptations made for different languages or other forms of human communication including digital and online variants. The guideline treats the facilitated version of play to be the most responsive towards individual player needs, and that future considerations for adaptation will depend on how facilitation can identify necessary changes to the guideline so that players can directly interact with each other without facilitation.

Guideline Improvement

The *Passwords Guideline* (Appendix I) will need to be tested to see if it can be understood simply by reading it with no further input. Making improvements to guideline clarity and making the guideline accessible is a future priority.

Testing and Implementation

Scenario

I would like to try and use *Passwords* as a way to navigate a specific social issue by engaging with various stakeholders of that issue, first individually, then as a group. I would also like to ideally participate myself, and thus show a personal responsibility and accountability for my creation. This is a very ambitious goal and I believe that it would need to be staged over multiple sessions with various participant combinations.

Conclusion

Through my attempt to learn and adapt critical design methods for use in participatory design as a way to engage with individuals with disabilities, I discovered what makes critical design such a dangerous activity. Rather than turn away from critical design altogether, I chose to use inclusive design as a way to address critical design's shortcomings with an activity that focuses on the weakest area of critical design: public discussion and debate.

As a result of my inquiry and various experiences with inclusive design, speculative design and critical play, I conceived of a modular and generative card-based activity, *Passwords* that emphasizes accountable and diverse participation in communication while maintaining a desire for creative outcomes. This activity was tested on myself, a research participant, and in a large group with very promising results that warrant further inquiry in diversity and topic selection.

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Appendix A – REB Approval letter

Appendix B – MoMA Debate Transcription

Design and Violence, Debate II – The Limits of Empathy

Participants:

Jamer Hunt, Moderator

Mickey Boardman, Debater #1

Chris Bobel, Debater #2

Opening Monologue by Jamer Hunt: Okay everybody, if people would take their seats – Tucker, especially you. Welcome everybody and good evening, thanks for coming out to the second debate in the design and violence debate series. Tonight's topic is Designing Empathy. My name is Jamer Hunt, and when I'm not moderating debates on menstruation and violence I am director of the graduate program Transdisciplinary Design at Parsons, the new school for design just down the street. For those of you who were expecting Paola tonight, my sincere regrets – it's a bit like showing up at the theatre expecting Meryl Streep but instead getting Danny DeVito [audience laughter]. So... In drag. So... We have a motion for tonight, and the motion is: design's potential to transcend gender boundaries is limitless – I will explain how the motion functions as we move along, but we have a focus for that motion and that motion – that focus is the menstruation machine, a project by Sputniko, and I'll describe that in a few minutes. The format tonight is I will give a bit of a framing introduction to the whole evening, then I'll turn it over to the speaker for the motion, which is Mickey

Boardman, and then over to the speaker against the motion, Chris Bobel. We'll have a little moderated conversation back and forth and then we'll open it up from questions from you all, so please posit questions, formulate those questions and make them great, we need it. The debate format itself is something we've sort of twisted and stolen from the kind of Oxford debate format and made it our own. What we've done is we've really asked the two speakers tonight to take quite extreme positions and summon these positions, that even kind of work against what they might believe in, but we do that for a reason, we want to really begin to sketch out the outer limits of the possibilities within this conversation so that we can then have a discussion around the kind of fuzzy grey middle in between. Each speaker will be given about ten minutes and I will hold them to that to argue his and her side, and after that we'll kind of get rid of this podium, get some seats up here and we'll have a kind of nice conversation. For all of you who really don't have an attention span and need to be looking at your phones, this is the way in which you can do stuff while you're looking at your phones. Here's all our social media – so if you have questions and insights, ideas, there's a hash-tag up there, also our Twitter handle and if you are – have never even heard of Design and Violence and are curious about what it actually is I'll explain it in a moment, what that project actually is, you can see our URL up there. So those are the places you can go to comment on what you're hearing tonight. So just a little bit of an introduction to Design and Violence, this is an online curatorial experiment as well as a platform, and if you've heard all this from last week I apologise, but I'll be giving a slightly different version from Paola's – less interesting, more dreary [audience laughter] So what we've tried to do in the Design and Violence project is actually to pair brilliant writers with design outcomes that challenge our expectations of design's impact on our everyday experience. This is a theme that was conceived by Paola Antonelli, she's a senior curator in Architecture and Design here at the MoMA, and she mentioned it to me one day and week after week I sort of pestered her about it and told her how interested and excited it was

to me, and eventually she kinda said all right, you can come over and play. So I joined in. We've been abetted in this by initially Kate Carmody, who did all the hard work, and then she had a baby, so she did more hard work, and since she's taken leave Michelle Fisher has joined in – she's exhibition coordinator here at the MoMA, and she has done everything. So all of us tonight, success is attributed both to her and where we fail, it's all on me. And also we've been helped by my valiant research assistant Meagan Durlak – a design strategist and student at the Transdisciplinary Design program. The aim of the Design and Violence project is to explore the ambiguity of design and the ways in which it can sort of unwittingly lead to violence in many different guises. For me at least, the project came about because I was getting sort of tired of the kind of Poly-Anne-ish approach to design within the design profession itself and within the design press – too much was said about the great intent and the great impact that design was having, and yet it seemed to me that it was more ambiguous – it was more ambivalent than that. Design does many great things – there's no question about that, but it also reconfigures our ways of life, our ecosystems, our moral philosophies – design is creative, but it's also destructive, and we rarely take the time, we rarely provide a space for that conversation about the nature of the destruction that it creates. And so the Design and Violence project was an opportunity to explore that destructive side of design. Through this project we focus primarily on a period after 2001, which we sort of saw as a shift in the modalities of violence. It was the rise of things like asymmetric warfare, of cyber hacking of the permanent War on Terror and of counter insurgency – in other words violence was starting to take sort of new and unusual forms and we felt that this was an opportunity to sort of reveal and illuminate the new forms that was taking, and to understand the role that design had in giving form to violence. There are clearly lots and lots of ways to define violence for us. We have a fairly simple definition. We define violence as the manifestation of the power to alter the circumstances around us against the will of others and to their detriment. The

site itself looks a lot like this. Any individual post tends to look like that. This one, this post for example, is on green bullets. Green bullets are actually environmentally respectful bullets – in other words they'll kill you but they won't hurt the environment [audience laughter]. Only the military could think this stuff up. We've also featured Cody Wilson's 3d printed gun, if you were here for our first debate it was extraordinary conversation around the sort of political meaning and impact of this particular project – I encourage you on the design and violence website you can go back and view this, the video of that debate and it will blow your mind. We've also stretched the definitions of violence, we've looked at things like Sissel Tolaas's fragrance called Violence- this she extracts from cage fighter's sweaty shirts and uses Headspace technology then to create a fragrance that sort of reproduces the scent of violence itself. We've looked at Job Van Der Molen's weaponized insects and Trevor Paglen's excavation of sort of the dark military's patches that come from the sort of black sites and from the hidden operations. In order to understand violence we've sort of broken it up into seven categories to understand a little bit more about the forms that it takes and you can see those categories there. And we've brought in voices from outside of design to help us understand better the impact of design on everyday experience – this does not and should not be a conversation that's internal to the design field, but actually needs to have a broader public, and so we've got a long list of brilliant writers who've joined this project, and not everybody who responds to the design project itself is a writer – we've been very fortunate for example to be able to get Christoph Neumann, the insanely talented illustrator, to give a sort of illustrated response to one of the projects, and this was a project that was looking at ways to turn, sort of military rituals into games, to sort of gamify violence and gamify warfare and this is Christoph Neumann's take on other ways in which you might sort of gamify warfare. But we've also had a brilliant sound piece by Jad Abumrad from Radiolab, as well as a wonderful illustration from Meyer Coleman, and a poem. Tonight what we're going to do is we're going to look at the limits of empathy and

what we want to understand and explore is violence and the power and the limits of empathy. And empathy is actually a very strange word. I rarely – designers have this tendency to always when they're talking about a word they go to the definition and I hate that tendency, but I broke it for tonight, it's my last time ever. Because it's an interesting definition. First of all empathy is the power of understanding and to imaginatively enter in to another person's feelings. Or, in a definition I never knew about, the attribution to an object, such as a work of art, of one's own emotional or intellectual feelings about it. And what's particularly interesting to me is this idea that somehow we can adopt another's perspective, that we can enter into a person's feelings. What kind of embodiment, what kind of emotional atunement is this, and we wanna explore that a little bit today. It's also important to recognize that empathy itself has a bit of a sort of design history, which is to say that right now empathy is kind of a buzzword in design. Probably first came from advertising, with the idea of focus groups that were really meant to understand what the users and the buyers of these commodities were thinking, but then evolved – in design at least – into user center design, a very genuine attempt to understand what user's think and do when they use the objects of design. So there's a big emphasis right now in design and thinking about and trying to bring empathy into the design process. What we're gonna do tonight is to explore empathy through three vectors, and the first is Sputniko. So Sputniko if you're not aware is the alter ego of Hiromi Ozaki. She is many things: a Japanese pop star, a recording artist and a conceptual designers. She is only about two or three years graduated from the Royal College of Art, where she did her graduate degree. But that is by no means a way to limit her impact – she is also a huge star in Japan, recently being awarded woman of the year by Vogue Japan. If you wanna understand Sputniko, think Lady Gaga plus knives, and Quentin Tarantino's sense of blood lust. She's a shape-shifter, blending her body with technology and gender roles, violence and empathy, and there's no better way to understand Sputniko in her project the menstruation machine, and we'll show a

brief video. [A video clip is played]. So Chris before tonight pointed out to me that not everybody understands exactly what that project's about [audience laughter]. So let me – I've seen it a hundred times, I remember her as a student, so it's all self-evident to me, but just a little bit of explanation about what you saw. So the menstruation machine is that appliance that protagonist wraps around his waist and it applies pressure to the body, as well as slowly drips out blood over time, so that the idea is that it's a way for a male to strap on an appliance and to gain empathy for the physical sensation as well as the sort of leaky fluids of one's period. What makes the film wonderfully – Sputniko is that of course the boy's played by Sputniko, so the boy who's trying to gain empathy about a girl's experiences is actually a young woman and so it asks all sorts of really interesting questions – that's for sure. But in order to understand Sputnik's work and to put this in a larger framework, you need to see a little bit more of what she does. So this is a project, an early one, called Penis Cybernetique where she designed a male appendage to be worn so that a young woman could understand what it's like to wear sort of the happy and constantly moving organ of a boy. Crowbot Jenny, who's a robotic crow, enables cross-species communication. There's Sushiborg Yukari who is a revenge figure. She's playing off the tradition of serving sushi on the body of naked women and what she's done is she's created this sort of sushi service platter that rotates around her, but then also has knives, and in the film for it what you see is the slaughter as the Sushiborg Yukari exacts revenge on the Japanese businessman, leaving them bloody and on the floor. And Lunar Girl, who's a sort of fantasy figure, who's encouraging this young science-orientated girl to develop a robot that will leave the first footprints on Mars, those footprints will be the mark of a high-heel. And finally the menstruation machine itself in all its glory – and what you see is both the sort of electronics that allow for the pressure but also the delivery system for the blood, and the blood is taken out of – if you saw the early picture of Sputnik's wrist – the blood's taken from there. And so this particular project, the menstruation machine raises all sorts of interesting

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questions about the possibilities of design, to allow empathy across gender, across experience. It also asks the question of what violence – what form violence takes. Is it violence to the body, through the machine itself, is the machine enacting violence, or is it violence to the other, to the experience of the other – in other words through the presumption that one can ever know someone else's pain. We also wanna explore empathy through another vector, and that's one of bodily fluids. And designers and artists have addressed this kind of taboo, the taboos of menstruation, I wanna show you a couple of examples, one is one of my favorite projects of all time by Anna Meer, where this sort of perversely ambiguous tampon raises so many questions about whether it's giving a kind of finger to menstruation, a finger to men, it seems to be a male finger that's modeled as the tampon, and so asking all sorts of delicious questions about what exactly this finger is giving the finger to, or this piece of jewelry by Malgorzata Kalińska from the exhibition called *There Will Be Blood*. In her book, *Bossy Pants*, Tina Fey gives us her own take on the taboo and her own take on the experience of her first period, and she writes "I had noticed something was weird earlier in the day but I knew from the commercials that one's menstrual period was a blue liquid you poured like laundry detergent into maxi pads to test their absorbency' [audience laughter]. Looking something like that, we've all seen that image from advertising. Or vice medias, a series by Arvida Bystrom, where she documents the kind of everyday moments and the everyday banality marked by menstruation. Encaptured by the lens, these moments that are absolutely quotidian and banal, but also represent the everyday experience of all kinds of women rarely represented through film or photography. It's hard to talk about bodily fluids, menstruation etc without talking about birth control and it's important to recognise that in 1960 for the first time doctors developed a substance that allowed women to disrupt the chemistry and the biology of their periods and as Malcolm Gladwell's article points out, John Rock, one of the two doctors involved, the two male doctors involved with the development of the first pill, was in fact a staunch

Catholic himself, and he designed into the cycle of four weeks a one week period, because he felt it was interfering with nature to design out the period from that four week cycle. And that moves us on now to where we currently are, which is the rise of various kinds of pills that allow you to have as few as four periods in a given year, so Seasonale, Seasonique, Librals, Yazz, Bayazz, Bazzmine – gotta love those names – here science is literally re-writing and re-wiring our biological script. The third vector I wanna talk about is boundary crossing and here what comes to mind, inspired by the work of Sputniko and also thinking about empathy, is Donna Haraway's famous cyborg manifesto, written in 1985 at a time when cyborgs were really sort of male techno fantasies, she argued for the liberation - the liberatory possibilities of the cyborg. From a socialist, feminist perspective and she writes this chapter, an argument for pleasure in the confusion of boundaries, and for responsibility in our construction – that a great combination. Confusion in the boundaries, but also responsibility for the construction of those boundaries, we construct them, we deconstruct them, it is also an effort to contribute to socialist, feminist culture and theory, in a postmodern non-naturalist mode, this was the 1980s after all – and then the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end. And what's interesting what Donna Haraway provokes in her embrace of the cyborg, is the breaking down of certain kinds of categorical differences, that between, say, the natural and the artificial, or male and female, or human and machine, or animate and inanimate, or built and grown. In other words, we're creating a very blurry landscape of gender, bodies and machines, that look something like this... [murmurs from the audience] or like this, this is Amy Palmiero-Winters... Or like this... And Donna Haraway herself has gone on to explore the kind of interspecies boundaries, and questioning our relationship to those other living beings that we have in our home that we sometimes call pets. And this is the cover to her most recent book, and of course someone put on the internet the fact that nature sometimes bites back. So

all this leads to the question that animates tonight's debate, which is how far can we go in redesigning our experience of gender and the body, or, to put it in another way, is design's potential to transcend gender boundaries limitless, which is our motion. Okay, so here's where we start with the interaction. We need a vote. Underneath your seat you will find three cards, okay? And you will see blue for for the motion, yellow for I'm confused, I don't know, and red for against the motion, and what we want you to do, the motion once again is 'design's potential to transcend gender boundaries is limitless'. If you are for that you hold up the blue card, and if you're against that you hold up the red card, and if you're just still confused you hold up yellow, so if everyone could hold up their cards at the same time, we need to get a sense of where people are at. [The moderator goes briefly off mic, barely audible] ...So if you can just hold it up, I don't wanna confuse ya. A lot of it's pretty even. So what we're gonna do actually is after you hear the debate, we're gonna ask you to vote again, same way, and see whether one of our two speakers, the for for or against the motion, has convinced you and changed your opinion in any one way – it's gonna be tough because there's quite a blend right now. So, long introduction. I just wanna say before we get to the actual debate one small thing which was since I was – ever since I was a gangly adolescent boy growing up in a town in New Hampshire I have dreamt of moderating a debate on menstruation at the museum of Modern Art [audience laughter]. The moment is finally here [audience laughter]. So to introduce our speakers, in particular our speaker in favour of tonight's motion, is Paper Magazine's editorial director Mickey Boardman, otherwise known as Mr Mickey. He is a cultural commentator, lifestyle expert and fashion guru, for networks like VH1, A&E, Style Channel, E, and Fox News. And I defy anyone else to find those five channels in one sentence anywhere in the world – you know you've accomplished something when you've brought those people together. He hails from Hanover Park, Illinois and moved to New York to study fashion at Parsons School of Design – apparently a reputable school down the street. His advice

column Ask Mr Mickey has become a Paper Magazine fan favourite for the past fifteen years, his writing has appeared in the New York Times and German Vogue, he's been very active in many charitable efforts, including Doctors Without Borders, Coalition for The Homeless, and Red Cross Earthquake Relief for Haiti and Chile. He's most passionate about Cheetah, which builds schools, clinics and women's co-operatives in India and Nepal. Now, if you have the great pleasure of following Mr Mickey online on his Youtube channel, you'll get to see him live, but I was really impressed – one huge fan of his wrote in and asked how he could, this fan, how he could live a fabulous life like Mr Mickey, and Mr Mickey's answer was, I quote, "no education, a lot of sparkle tops and some ladies handbags." [Audience laughter] Words to live by my friends, words to live by. Our speaker against the motion tonight is Chris Bobel – she's an associate professor and chair of women's gender studies at the university of Massachusetts, Boston. Her scholarship lies at the intersection of social movements, gender, health and embodiment, or, to put it differently, how feminists thinking becomes feminists doing at the most intimate and immediate levels. She's the author of, first of all, *The Paradox of Natural Mothering*, also, *Of New Blood: Third-Wave Feminism and The Politics of Menstruation*, if you think there's someone out there in the world that's better than her for tonight's debate, I dare you to find it. She's the co-editor of *Embodied Resistance: Breaking The Rules, Challenging The Norms*. Her current project is an ethnographical study of menstrual health campaigns targeting school girls in the global South, in short she finds bodies and their taboos endless fascinating. I'm gonna invite my two speakers up to their podia, and we're going to start with Mr Mickey. Mickey Boardman.

Mickey Boardman: Thank you. Thank you all, and I would just like to say now that if I don't win the debate I would like to at least put in an outplug for being voted miss congeniality [audience laughter] I'll take it! Anyhow how – I apologise in advance if I don't know how to properly use this thing which advances the

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photographs – should I try it now? As you can see I get an A plus for this. And I would like to say in advance that I do not have any talk about tampons in my talk, I'm a fashion victim as you can see from my sparkle top, my ladies sparkle top and my Stellar McCartney handbag sitting on the floor, which I carry everyday and as a statement about what I think about fashion as it relates to gender norms, so... You know, the other day I was on Instagram as I often am and one of my favourite muscle-bound tattooed personal trainers who generally posts photographs of himself in his underpants, posted the following quote: "Girls can wear jeans and cut their hair short, wear shorts - shirts and boots, because it's okay to be a boy. But for a boy to look like a girl is degrading, because you think that being a girl is degrading. But secretly you'd love to know what it's like, wouldn't you? What it feels like for a girl." Now, I don't know if any of you recognise that, at first I thought it must be some Rhianna song that I'd never heard [audience laughter] 'cause I, despite my homosexuality, I'm not really familiar with all those cool things like Rhianna songs, and I, then I thought maybe this kid who I – who's sort of a borderline porn star type might have some deep poetic soul and some angst down there, so I Google searched it, and it turns out that it's a quote from the 1993 Andrew Birkin film *The Cement Garden*, starring Charlotte Gainsbourg, which was also then lifted later to be sampled in a Madonna song, *What It Feels Like For A Girl*, so I feel extremely like I've failed by gay brothers and sisters by not knowing that that was from a Madonna song. Anyhow, still it seemed oddly apropos considering tonight's debate 'design's potential to transcend gender boundaries as limitless'. Now historically contextualising, I just love to say historically contextualising 'cause it makes me feel like I fit in with all you smarty-pantses, [laughs] historically contextualising gender boundaries from a purely fashion perspective makes us see how contradictory they can be. Also looking at today's advance and ever more fluent ideas of gender, shows us that we're progressing towards a world where people can choose their own place on the gender continuum, at least in the more progress areas of our society. I'm gonna

move forward and come back to this in a minute. I mean Geraldine for – who else is gonna put ... as Geraldine in like a debate about menstruation – anyway, in the times of Louis the Sixteenth men wore to this – this might be Louis the Fourteenth, actually – wore tights, high-heels, powdered wigs and lace, to our modern eyes Louis looks like an over-primed drag queen, but of the time he was the epitome of the well dressed, filthy-rich, apres moi le deluge man. It seems that somehow throughout history that it's possible to transcend gender boundaries when it's more important to emphasis something else than your gender, like how rich you are, how alternative you are, what avant garde taste you have, how you care so little about what other people think that you're willing to dress up like another gender just to impress those people who you don't care about their opinion. Royal children throughout the centuries were all dressed in frilly dresses with long ringlets regardless of being male or female. This is one of my favourite family portraits of Queen Victoria's family, by Winter Holter. On the lower left – corner you see Prince Alfred the Duke of Edinburgh wearing what today would pass as a very tasteful cocktail dress. I love it. Now look I'm gonna show you my versatility by going backwards – thank you! [Audience laughter] Ta-da! I feel like this shot of – is this familiar this shot to you all? You can say yes or no or raise your hand – no, you don't know? It's Tilda - Academy Award winning actress Tilda Swinton, or should I say actor, Tilda Swinton, with her friend the performer and gender pioneer Justin V Bond and this really sums up where we're at today, on the forefront of gender. Tilda is really a modern day Marlene Dietrich when it comes to blending the gender lines. She has even played a man – one of her most famous roles was in the film *Orlando* where she played a man, and V, Justin V Bond, has become famous for redefining pronouns in the trans roles – he's not a 'he', not a 'she', but 'V'. I think they make it a perfect date at the Matt Ball which is the most fabulous night of fashion, sort of the Academy Award of the fashion world. Meanwhile, in TV land - we're skipping past, but – meanwhile in TV land Drew Paul perhaps is the most famous drag queen of all time as the star of several

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hit shows and appears both in and out of drag regularly. And one time being seen as a man out of drag was a drag queen's worst nightmare, now America's embraced drag culture so completely that if they tune into Drew Paul in or out of a dress – as well as programs like Fashion Queens, a hit fashion critique show on Bravo, co-hosted by two homosexual hairdressers who openly wear women's clothes and make-up but don't hide their gender. Historically we're an either/or society – you're either a man or a woman. If you're a man you wear pants, drink beer and love pussy. Excuse my language. But if you're a woman you wear dress and lipstick, have babies and make sandwiches for your pussy loving man. Yes, that world still exists in the literal and figurative middle of the country, but on the edges we see metrosexuals who use moisturisers and hair spray, even cosmetics. That opens up the entire beauty design field to men. Men like me carry handbags [goes temporarily off mic] isn't that cute? I mean come on! And it's cruelty-free – I don't wear any animal products. It's cruelty-free. And now a few decades ago I would've called that a Tote Bag, now at forty-seven years of age and in 2004 New York City I call it what it is – it's a purse. It's not a Murse – that's another man purse – it's not a Tote Bag, it's a purse. And as I explained to a six-year-old girl on the subway once who asked me why a man was carrying a purse, I said why should women get all the fun accessories. Now, speaking of accessories, if you watch any professional sports very often you'll see basketball players and football players wearing gigantic diamond stud earrings in both ears. These to me have totally blurred the gender lines that even fashion people haven't blurred – these butch, burly athletes are one step away from clip-on earrings. It's true, it's so shocking to me – like, kids used to get harassed for wearing like hoop-earrings, I wore a hoop-earring when I was in high school in the wrong ear – and now these guys are wearing gigantic diamond studs like Oprah Winfrey wears. But I love it, it's progress, that's another little royal baby. Janelle Monáe, I just love how she looks and she's – some of my favourite style. And I apologise, I realised I – I was thinking about this – that I really approached this from a men's perspective, so it's

very man heavy, so... Now this – Kanye West in a ... men's skirt is perhaps the best evidence that we've crossed an important line in the design and gender game. A famous rapper although a more – the most metrosexual of hip-hop stars, performing on stage alongside Jay-Z, the least meterosexual of hip-hop stars, wearing a skirt [audience laughter] I mean I, to me this is a revolutionary moment in human history. I have to say. The point is that a man in a dress is no longer shocking to most people, a woman in a tailored suit with laced-up shoes is no longer shocking to people. In fact the only thing shocking about it is that at one point it was so shocking. And that's why to me thanks to these, that's where we're at in terms of gender... And I'm gonna show you one more. A bunch of pictures from a recent Barney's... this is – now the reason I included Gerald Fred Bolson is Geraldine is – in the past, in the 1970s, a man could wear a dress but it could only be if it was for a comedy sketch on television, and he had to prove that he was butch in other areas of his life, so... And Fred Bolson hated that he was so associated with Geraldine, even though she was adorable. I think she looks totally adorable, and fun and successful. Now these are shots from Bruce Weber the legendary fashion photographer's recent ad campaign for Barney's and every person in the campaign is trans-gendered, along some lines of the trans-spectrum, which I think is an amazing thing. Now the point being that a woman in tailored suit with laced-up shoes is no longer shocking. Fact is the only thing shocking about it is that it was once shocking, as I said, and that's why I think that we've come to the point where people can wear whatever they want and there are no limits to design. Men can wear dresses, women can wear pants and it's a good place for us to not have limits in design. Thank you.[Audience applause] And look we're both in gorgeous necklaces, I can't believe I was out-accessorized by Chris at this debate, I'm a little bit humiliated [audience laughter].

Chris Bobel: I think you should vote for me, then.

Mickey Boardman: [laughs]

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Chris Bobel: I just advance to my slides I presume, is that right? Okay. So before I dive in I need to thank the organisers Jamer, of course, who has now been added to the menstrosity – welcome Jamer, and to Michelle Fisher who has met every possible need and <mark>…</mark> and to the rest of the team, and of course to my esteemed opponent – I did bring my a-game and my accessories, I'm glad you noticed.

Mickey Boardman: Yes you did.

Chris Bobel: Uh! Oh I don't wanna – I gave away my punchline, okay, [audience laughter] so, I begin... Sputniko explains her inspiration for creating menstruation machine this way, as a student soaring high at this esteemed royal college of art she felt like "superwoman", her word, brought elegantly back to earth each month by her period, the pain, the mess, the inconvenience, the body pulling in one direction, the mind pulling in another. What if non-menstruaters, her male colleagues in particular, experienced this too, she mused. What would they feel like? Like this? What would their art look like? What would the world look like? So for her menstruation machine is as much a playful glimpse into the cyborgic future as a shout into the void. I am hurting over here, do you see me? Do you hear me? Pay attention. Now, in my thirty-seventh menstruating year I can relate, though I am left wanting. Of course menstruation machine is not the whole package. While the device delivers cramp-like pressure or shocks, actually, and includes a tank that holds and dispenses blood, the blood does not drop in unpredictable patterns into your panties, soiling your favourite tonight's the night Victoria's secret pair, there's no hormonal fluctuations, but even if menstruation machine were somehow modified to better simulate the periodic shedding, it still only captures half the reality. Woman menstruation is a biological process, how we as a culture regard the ebbs and flows of the menstrual cycle is deeply gendered. In other words, we can take the menstruation out of the girl, but we can't as easily take the girl out of menstruation. I wanna be clear here: we have bodies, messy, smelly, sensual, imperfectly perfect vessels, but we need not be

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defined by them, even though we often are. Sputniko's aim is to help us see a near future in which our biological processes are split off from our bodies, where our flesh is not a cage, where our gender identities is released from bones, organs, skin, hemmed in only by our imaginations – and that is a thrilling hack. But this is where it gets tricky. How can we work to such a wide open world while still acknowledging that our embodied reality is so much more than hearts beating, feet moving, or staying still, food digesting, uteri contracting - embodiment itself is socially constructed. More specifically, the menstrual experience is shaped by an enduring taboo. Norms of strict containment, and a mandate of secrecy and silence, all of which represent hegemonic femininity, the consequence of these forces is a kind of hush that suppresses a rich and necessary menstrual discourse. Sure, there's PMS jokes. There's shame exploiting Tampax ads, like this one: 'embarrassment happens, leaks shouldn't', says the text, and there's 'do you have a tampon', whispered in the bathroom. But there's precious little more. And this dearth of talk inhibits body literacy and empowered living. For better menstrual health we need to be heard. 'Hey, pay attention!' Because the shock inducing, blood-dripping machine only delivers the partial experience, the wearer may think they get it, when in fact, they don't. They may even feel entitled to speak for those whose menstrual lives are so much more than a monthly uterine event, they may feel authorized now to speak more generally for women. That, in my opinion, would be using design to do violence. This is a hazard and a big ass one. And it is precisely this hazard that compromises design's potential to transcend boundaries. In fact, I think design can actually put more distance between us. It can diminish empathy. Buddhist nun Joan Halifax – someone I just encountered recently and am now a big fan – identifies three enemies of compassion – pity, moral outrage, and fear. Same goes for empathy, I think. And I'd like to add a fourth – entitlement. I lose my empathic connection when I pity you. When I judge you. Or when I see your world as a threat to my own. And I lose my empathic connection when I speak for you. The world we live in, that is, the post-industrial,

neo-liberal, late-capitalist, global-north, is especially hostile to empathy for two interrelated reasons: for one, we place a very high premium on individualism, inspired by our eighteenth century enlightenment roots in this country and perfected par excellence through norms of masculinity, among other things. That is our identities are based on what makes us each unique and about what we can do as hard-working rugged individuals, but we don't stop there. We like to cast ourselves in opposition to others. The boundary between you and me is rigid and we hold it up like a shield against the unknown. I'd like to call this love affair with contrast, dichotomania. We exaggerate the distance between two things, often two parts of a larger whole. We typically use that distance to justify oppression – man, woman, white, of colour, straight, queer, Americans, foreigners - it's a trick that ignores tremendous human diversity, not to mention potential, and it limits the impact of connection. So with this context in mind I wanna proceed by looking at just a few examples – because I have pretty pictures too – of design intent and enabling empathy – examples like menstruation machine but slightly different, and as I do I ask you to consider what the design actually accomplishes on an interpersonal and emotional level. So, what's it like to pilot a plane? Join Sarah Palin and try this flight simulator! Ever wonder what an insect sees? – cross the species divide with Donna Haraway, and find out! What's it like to be pregnant – try the empathy belly you goofy teens! [Audience laughter] How about labor? I love this one – believing their wives were guilty exaggerating the intense pain of labor, these husbands subjected themselves to a labor simulation. [Audience laughter] Result? The guys ate crow, the wives high-fived. For historical throw-back, consider John Howard Griffins 1961 book *Black Like Me*. Griffin underwent a series of injections to darken his skin and then rod the greyhound buses across America for six weeks, documenting his life passing as a black man. Then there's various and sundry quip for a day simulations – spend the day in a wheelchair – oh, sorry – there you go. Or visit a – and dine in a blind cafe. How is a disabled life accessed through these simulations? How is it distorted? And here's

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one I love to hate – the fat suit. In 2011, real housewives of New Jersey's millis agora donned a fat suit for Entertainment Tonight. It was another tired publicity stunt disguised as – according to the network – a special report on fat and discrimination and fame-whoring. At best the experiment produces a series of quaint realisations that fat people have been lamenting and research has been documenting for decades. We don't need a real housewife to speak for people, we need to listen to fat people themselves speaking their truths, demanding an end to size discrimination. We can critique the strengths and weaknesses of each simulation – how effectively each replicates the target reality, but the problem is not in execution, I think, the problem is the tool-based approach in the first place. When we rely on the sum aspect of our built world to engage our embodied world of someone different then ourselves, like a hot pink fat suit, we engage in a kind of cultural tourism that actually precludes a deeper knowing. After all a day of experience, a quasi experience at best, is not the experience – the very temporality is a limit. You know well and you know you will soon get your life back, and especially when the switch is to a less privileged reality from your own – from, say, able-bodied to disabled, from white to black, from thin to fat – when the exercise concludes you feel lucky, you feel blessed and perhaps if you're honest, relieved. Thank god I'm not blind! Thank god I'm not black, thank god I'm not fat! So what, you say, so the tool's limited? So the tool's partial – isn't it better than nothing, isn't it better than turning away from one another? But here's this: when the attempt to see into, to feel into the life of someone marginalized but what sociologists call social location, into a human space socially disadvantaged by identity or experience, or both, it is already hard enough to be heard, and that's usually because the powerful aren't listening. But the remedy is not your voice, the fix does not mean I want you to explain me to someone else, and I certainly don't want you to explain me to me. When men do it to women we call it mansplaining. Here's a final example. It may stretch the definition of design but it's certainly worth consideration. As a piece he wrote for Vanity Fair magazine in

2008, Christopher Hitchens subjected himself to water-boarding. After sixteen seconds he withdrew. It was too much. He titled his piece 'Believe Me: It's Torture'. Believe you, Mr Hitchens? Do we need to believe you to justify our outrage at state-supported torture. Wasn't the word of torture victims enough? Why do you or anyone else need to embody such atrocities in order to take them seriously? Would I feel differently if Hitchens endured a longer session – twenty-four seconds, two minutes? Would I like it better if he did not have the option of withdrawing at all? No. I don't want to chase better and better simulations and rely on them as a means to close the gap between us. I don't want to live in a world where embodiment of the other is a requisite for empathy. Imagine that world. I don't feel what you feel so I don't care. I don't want to live there. Do you? This reminds me of an exercise that I formally incorporate into sexual assault awareness trainings during college orientation. I'd ask the students to picture the four women closest to them. You can do that now. Yep, thanks Jamer. Today about one out of four women experience sexual assault in some point of their lifetime, I'd explain. Dramatic pause. And then I'd go in for the kill. So, which of the four women in your life will be sexually assaulted, I'd ask. Sloppy science aside, I don't do that exercise anymore because I don't want to perpetuate the notion that something horrible has to visit our own lives for it to matter. Isn't it bad enough that somebody's girlfriend, sister, mother, aunt, brother, uncle, boyfriend, is raped at such alarming rates? Isn't it bad enough, isn't rape bad enough, regardless of the biography of the victim? So I will end where I began: design's potential to transcend boundaries of any kind is limited by its inability to engender empathy. The tool cannot bridge the chasm between people, perhaps nothing can, yet I'm not arguing against seeking empathy, against seeking connection, rather I join my wide friend and member of the menstrati, David Linton, David, who suggested to me in an email, "perhaps we should aim for accepting and respecting the embodied other. We strive to appreciate our own selves in relationship with others." This is quite different than casting ourselves

against the other, the one we pity, we judge, we fear, the one we dismiss because we think we understand. The one we try, the one we try and fail to speak for. When a non-menstruater wears Sputniko's menstruation machine, the experience is partial but the process – sorry – but we might mistake it as total. What's missing is the experience beyond the biological, the cultural construction of the bodily process which in most cultures boils down to deep shame about the unruly undisciplined body. It is a shame that puts menstruaters on constant leak alert, and why our fem care products are called sanitary protection. Menstruation machine might help someone to feel the pain but it fails to enable the same person to feel the shame. This maybe where you're better off without the tools. Maybe we increase our chance of connection when we strip down to our vulnerable bra, unmediated humanity. Perhaps it is enough to encounter each other and say with the utmost sincerity, 'I hear *you*, I see *you*, I *am* paying attention'. [Audience applause]

Jamer Hunt: Have a seat both of you. [Inaudible speaking off-mic] So we've got a little bit of time here and – a quick sort of initial question for each of you. I'm curious about the point that you made about cultural tourism.

Chris Bobel: Yeah.

Jamer Hunt: Versus the point that you sort of, the lifestyle that you lead of inhabiting the clothes of the other. And – is it cultural tourism, is there an authentic cultural tourism and an inauthentic, false empathy?

Mickey Boardman: Well I think it depends how you look at it. My approach I believe is very superficial – I'm all about artifice, so I mean – on some level wearing a woman's blouse makes you free from gender on a level, but at the same time it doesn't mean I am a woman or I understand what it feels like to be a woman or I've been... You know. At the end of the day I'm still a white American

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man, so I'm – you know – at the top one percentile of the universe, you know. Despite being a gay, despite wearing a lady's blouse and carrying a handbag, you know. So – but to me, from the purely fashion approach that I took, it is, you know, I feel that I can relate to women – I just think that women's clothes are the cutest, it's not like a sexual activity for me, it's just – if men's clothes were cuter than women's I would wear men's clothes. So we're both right, it's a tie, thank you!

Chris Bobel: Well I think what's important here is Mickey doesn't speak for women. So he doesn't don the blouse or carry the bag and say 'now I get it', and that's what I was railing against, is this experiencing something partial and then – which you interpret as total and then authorizes you to speak for another, and I think that's especially dangerous when there's a power dynamic between somebody that occupies a position of power in culture and someone who occupies less power in culture. So Mickey acknowledging his social location, to use the sociological term, is precisely the piece that often gets lost and that's the hazard I'm trying to point out.

Mickey Boardman: Well I think being a, you know, a large and in charge person myself, I think the example of the housewife using the fat suit really hit home for me because as you say, it's, you know, Tyra Banks did the same thing and, you know, it's like oh my god, what a mother, Teresa, she was fat for a day. [Audience laughter]

Chris Bobel: Right.

Mickey Boardman: How did she survive!?

Chris Bobel: Right.

Mickey Boardman: We mothers – I'm available, I'll walk around as a fat person for free and I'll bring my own catering, you know what I mean, I'll be a lot less demanding than Tyra Banks!

Chris Bobel: Right and there's the luminous research that documents size discrimination, there's a rich and active fat-activist community, a size acceptance movement – we don't need to turn to Tyra or anybody else, and a suit for a day, a year or ten years, frankly, so it's that privileging of a certain voice that I think is really where we lose our way.

Jamer Hunt: So one of the things I think is very apparent from everything that you showed is that certainly kinda gender-blending seems pretty prevalent nowadays and it's kind of everywhere if you look for it, and I guess the question is, 'does that guess us any closer to a sense of empathy', do you think that this is just a kind of fashion of the time, do you think, you know Mickey I think what was interesting in your, to quote, your historical contextualisation -

Mickey Boardman: Thank you.

Jamer Hunt: You showed the extent to which at least what might not have been seen as gender-crossing but certainly, you know, we can look back in history and see lots of moments of kind of gender-blending and periods when people were not focused on the male or female. Do you feel like there's a – we're trending towards a sort of gender-blending, or are we just over saturated with exploitative images on television?

Mickey Boardman: I think we are trending towards – you know, I mean, things aren't perfect but I think that we're much, in terms of gender issues, in terms of gay rights issues, in terms of – a lot of those things, we've moved in a very strong direction and as I said just the fact that the discussion that are had about trans-sexuality and I probably get hate mail for just saying trans-sexuality because

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there's a real sort of, you know, you have to use the proper terminology or you can be beaten up, but you know, there's a lot of progress in those ways but at the same time I think there's a lot of work to be done on just equal rights for both genders, I mean that's, you know, it's pretty archaic on some levels and I think the thing about empathy is no matter what, unless you have a period you're not going to completely understand what it's like, unless – I can try to be as empathetic as possible but if you haven't lived it, as Chris was saying, you kind of need to listen to the person who's had it and try to empathize and relate to it as well as you can and trust them to – if they say this is how it is, this is how it is, so I think we need a lot of work on that in general. And a lot of thing, I mean, it's true that one of the most stigmatized things is, you know, your period, I mean it really is and it really shouldn't be, you know.

Jamer Hunt: And what do you, you know, do you think that there's progress being made, do you think that when you see the sort of gender-blending going on, do you think that there's something that we're getting closer to, or do you see this as, in the end, in the point that the argument that you made was really that there's a limit to empathy, that we can't get beyond certain things and do you think that's a human condition, a useful human condition, or is that something that we will as a civilization always trying to chip away at?

Chris Bobel: That's hard to answer 'cause I feel like there's two questions. Let me try to take the first one and then I might, you know, hide from the second one, but... In terms of this sort of trending of gender fluidity and, you know, the variety of gender expressions: yay, right? I mean that's the world I imagine as a gender theorist, that's exactly what I've been tracking and what so many others, such a community of people writing about this, are really championing and trying to facilitate. Yeah, I mean gender's a category it's a social construct, we made it up: we can unmake it. And people like the images that Mickey showed us in particular – Mickey himself are examples of people that are living that,

embodying that transgression everyday. Sometimes it's superficial, sometime it's minor, it's carrying a bag, it's wearing heels, it's wearing lipstick, sometimes it's really profound – like indeed altering one's body, indeed claiming a gender identity that's different from your sex and your embodied identity, and that is – this is a slightly historical moment, right? I mean, there's cultures all over the world that are more fluid in terms of their gender expressions. In the West, in particular in North America, we really like our boxes, we really like those gender boxes and we literally have them on forms, right, we check them. I was filling out an application for a VISA to do some traveling in India this summer, and there were three boxes: man, woman, and transgender, and I thought 'go India', right, because I don't see that on most American forms today. So I think that definitely this is the wave and I think it's a long time coming, it's terribly overdue, so much violence is done to people that don't conform to gender norms... What's the second question though...?

Jamer Hunt: The second question is whether in fact the inability to overcome empathy is something that we will always live with, it isn't sort of constituent of our human experience, or whether it's something we should always be trying to break through, whether we can design things to help us get past – or use empathy to get passed the boundaries that separate us, whether it's separate by ethnicity, separate by gender, separate by size, whatever it is that the distinction might be...

Chris Bobel: Yes. I mean really, I mean yes both because I think there are limits, I mean I can experience - my capacity to experience something outside myself is very limited, and I think we should strive to get as close and close to the experience of the other as possible, as long as we respect the boundary of I can only encounter a dimension, a partial reality, and I think we have to examine really carefully the intent behind that exploration – am I trying to dismiss you, so that I can discredit you, do I find it sort of fascinating, it is a fetish – I mean what's inspiring that exercise, I think, you know like Melissa Gorga the fat suit, it was a

publicity stunt. Clearly that's less noble, if you will, than some other attempts at empathy building. So that's – I mean really, yes, we're limited and we should do better.

Jamer Hunt: So I have a question relating to Sputniko's project for both of you. In a wonderful way she kinda throws down a challenge to the male gender and says 'see if you can endure this'. And, so I'm curious thinking back to Bobby Riggs and Billy Jean King and these various sort of battles of the sexes, put yourself in Sputniko's place, if you can, and think if you wanted the other gender to experience something about your own experience of your own gender, what would you have it be, would it be ill-fitting bras or jock-itch – what would you -

Mickey Boardman: Jock-itch is really not pleasant, I mean – well the thing about Sputniko that I was a little stumped by was why didn't a man wear the suit, I mean, trust me, I love attention, I love the spotlight, I'm not sharing it with anyone except you two – if there was a way I could get you off the stage I would, but I felt a man should've been wearing it. That's what I felt, but I – perhaps I'm in the minority there, but...

Jamer Hunt: But is there anything there that you would like, that you think that women should feel, that you in your experience have felt? You know, would you like to, sort of pick on any other gender with?

Mickey Boardman: I think women have suffered enough. That you don't need to – [laughs]

Chris Bobel: Mickey will you marry me? [Audience laughter]

Mickey Boardman: Yes. I've actually been married, I've once been married to a woman.

Chris Bobel: I think Sputniko nails it, I think the menstrual experience because it's tabooed is the one that's really, that's the really challenging one. I mean as your talking i'm thinking well there's lactation, there's having breasts in your way, there's – but I kept, it depends, you know, mine are in my way – yours may not be. But I – it's menstruation, because it's so reviled, it's so shamed and there's such an industry around it, right, it's like the most interesting paradox which is why I have spent so much time thinking about it, because it's at once everywhere and nowhere, right, and we have this huge industry which is completely, it's just dominant and multi-national and clever, brilliantly evil, that is all about helping us deny our bodies, and we fork over money, gratefully, and the feminist discourse in the 70s and 80s around menstruation was mostly gratified to fem care – thank you so much for the tampon. You have enabled me to clean up my mess and live like a man. Now I'm not discrediting that because I think there's a piece of that that's very real, but I wanna dig beneath and look at why's this such a pain in the ass for us, or why is this such a pain in the coochie for us. [Audience laughter] For some of us it is tremendously painful – people are disabled by their cramps, I don't deny that, and it is mess – there's stuff coming out of our bodies, you do need to clean it up. But the dimension that's really naughty and complicated and I think doesn't need to be is the shame around it, and we, because we don't talk about menstruation we don't talk about ways we could live a menstrual life that is different – it's not even in our imaginations. So, to answer your question, Jamer, I think Sputniko's right by the one that she chose – I think that's the messiest – sorry, there's a pun – but it is the messiest bodily function attached to the female body and we have so much work to do on it.

Mickey Boardroom: I agree, I also thought that in Chris's presentation the thing about simulated labor which I don't feel like they could ever really come close to – the man could shove a bowling ball up their butts or something like that – it's just, I mean, like the way you said about if men had periods they'd be in hospital

for a week, if men had to give birth, I mean... Species would die immediately. [Audience laughter]

Jamer Hunt: So we have a few minutes for questions from the audience, it's an amazing and rich topic and I wonder if any of you have questions for our two guests? There's some microphones going around so please speak into the microphone because we are taping this and we wanna hear what you have to say.

Audience Member #1: Hi, I have two questions. In all of the visual examples that you guys showed there's definitely a given authority or a taken authority – there are kings, there were ad agencies who are the ones who are disseminating these images that would invoke empathy. So I was wondering if you thought that there was a space where you didn't need that authority in relation to design... And then my second question would be, for me the act of empathy requires a kind of complicity from the receiver – like there's the stimulus, there's the will to do it, and I was just wondering if you could speak to what happens when violence is applied to empathy when it's forced and what is it called when it crosses that threshold?

Chris Bobel: Oh I love that question – Mickey I want that question, you take the first one.

Mickey Boardman: Okay. [Audience laughter] I can't even remember it – no, about kings and that nature – well I did focus on men and I mean it's interesting to me and it's a shortcoming perhaps, but I should still win, but I did focus on men and also, in a way leaders – people like Tilda Swinton and Justin V Bond are also pioneers as it were, sort of the forefront, and I think if you go to a normal town and meet, you know, normal, quote unquote, people, they might have different experiences, so it's an interesting question, I mean I don't know what the answer is necessarily but I think we historically look to leaders and to people who sort of

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lead movements that way, so – and I think in terms of, I agree that with the part about the person needing to be complicit in empathy and we sort of need to listen and to talk about what you were just talking about – shame is, you should just be able to talk about it, you should be able to say you had your period and if there wasn't the shame around it that would liberate us all in an incredible way, so... That's the big problem, that we need to be able to talk about it, not wear a period machine.

Jamer Hunt: Did you wanna - ?

Chris Bobel: Yeah, I love the question because you're bringing the sort of target, if you will, right into the equation and I hadn't thought about that – duh – so that's super interesting. It's right, it's trans-sectional, right, it's a relationship – I mean, do I want you to experience my life, do I want you to know what I know, or what I feel? And if that, if I – 'cause otherwise it can feel like a breach of privacy, right, or a violation, or a boundary trespass. So I love that, I don't have an answer for you but I just think it's a super-smart question, thank you. [Audience laughter] That's what professors do, we just say – I don't know but that's really smart, think about it, right? [Audience laughter]

Jamer Hunt: Other questions. There's the microphone.

Audience Member #2: This isn't really a question, but first of all I think differences are really great and that we should encourage people to like everybody's differences, but I have a big problem with your argument against empathy, because I'm a designer and I'm looking at design from the other side, so I think it's really great for designers to put on a blind fold and try to figure out what it's like to live blind – I think it's really important for designers to get in a wheelchair and find out how horrible it is in their kitchen. And I think that because they can never know what it – sure they can stand up and walk around

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afterwards, but because they experience that for a short period of time they're gonna be in more concern about how to make the kitchen easier for – and so you coming in here and complaining about that, I think is really counter-productive.

Chris Bobel: You want – you want a fight? [Audience laughter]

Audience Member #2: Yeah, I am!

Chris Bobel: Okay, okay. So -

Audience Member 2#: Tell me how – what's wrong with a designer being in a wheelchair for a few minutes?

Mickey Boardman: Well you're not Melissa Gorgann, I feel like – if you're putting on a blind fold to make a product that will better health – that to me a blind person is different from 'oh I was blind for a day and it was really a drag' and then think like... You know, exactly, so...

Chris Bobel: Yeah, I mean I think – thank you so much, and I appreciate that and you're right, I'm not thinking about this as a designer, because I don't speak for designers, right, I don't embody a designer, I don't have that access -

Audience Member #2: [off mic] Try that one day! [Audience laughter]

Chris Bobel: I could! I could try it out one day and then I will say 'and now I understand design and now I understand what designers think, feel and do, and now I speak for designers' and that's the problem I – that's the caution, the red flag – red flag, another pun – the red flag that I'm raising is that the hazard isn't – I'm not against empathy, I hope that that did not come across as I'm anti-empathy, and I'm not even against trying to access the other. What I'm against is the presumption that now I get it and now I speak for the other. When others are those others themselves - can very clearly and eloquently speak for themselves – so if

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you're designing a space that's A-D-A compliant – yeah! Get yourself in a wheelchair and figure that out, of course, but it's the next level, the level of representation, and that's where I'm struggling – and the question was that... about the limitlessness – that was, that's where I went, I went 'so what's the limit' – is it productive to pursue, of course, but what's the boundary we hit and I think the boundary is speaking for the other. That doesn't satisfy you at all I don't think, I can tell.

Audience Member #2: [off mic] No, no, that's a very... easy boundary

Chris Bobel: Okay next time you come up here and you do this! [Audience laughter]

Mickey Boardman: Join in next week for Tucker, the debate...

Jamer Hunt: Tucker will debate himself [audience laughter] on empathy... We've time for one more quick question, if you have it.

Audience Member #3: Hi, can I have a microphone... In response to the gentlemen who was talking about designers getting in wheelchairs or someone strapping on the menstrual simulation machine, I think, for me the issue is whether it builds empathy for the individual or whether it builds empathy for a group of people who struggle against certain political and social structures and constrictions. If the designer at the end of the day recognizes how horrible that person's kitchen is, as opposed to how horrible it is to be in a wheelchair, then that is a specific direct and positive outcome of that. But if in the menstrual simulation exercise or in the wheelchair the crip for a day simulations – first of all people are very incompetent, the first time they use a wheelchair or the first time they're blindfold... So that – they come away feeling incompetent, weak, vulnerable, and are so flooded with that experience that it's impossible for them to understand that the struggle is with the external and not with the personal, physical embodied

experience, and the tension between the personal and the political, I think, needs to be highlighted in many of the ways that you already did, Chris, and thank you, I wanted to underscore that, so it wasn't really a question, it was just -

Chris Bobel: That was – I mean – nobody could say it better than Sammy Lenton. So thank you that was lovely.

Jamer Hunt: This is of course a rich and messy topic we could explore for a long time, we barely scratched the surface – however, we have some work to do. So what I want you to do is to think about your position now that you've heard these two erudite explainers of the motion for and of the motion against, I want you to vote again, whether you are for the motion that design's potential to transcend gender boundaries is limitless -

Mickey Boardman: Are you still confused, girl with the -

Jamer Hunt: If you're confused still or if you're still more confused than when you arrived, vote yellow, and if you believe that Chris has made the more compelling argument against the idea that design's potential to transcend gender boundaries is limitless, you raise a red card. And I'm gonna have two sort of little rounds of voting here. So first just hold up your plain old vote, okay. I'm gonna come a little forward so I can see. Oh dear – looks, okay. Now if you changed your vote hold up your card, and if you didn't change your vote, take down your card. Oh man, this is -

Mickey Boardman: Inconclusive, thanks for coming, bye bye. [Audience laughter] It's very geographical, there are like chunks that vote together -

Jamer Hunt: They're whispering to each other. They're whispering. So, most of all thank you – we have a few people to thank in the education department here, to <mark>Pablo Headograoter</mark>, to Susanne Brown, to <mark>…</mark> also to Meagan Durlak, Kate

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Carmody and Michelle Fisher, to the inimitable though absent Paola Antonelli, without whom this night would not be possible, to our two incomparable guests.

Mickey Boardman: Can we hear from Jamer's beautiful socks as well, I don't know if anybody has noticed them, he did an amazing job and his socks are a fashion highlight – a gender non-specific fashion highlight – thank you!

Jamer Hunt: And... That just made my evening. So a shout out to you Mr Mickey, and one last thing before you go: if you could – oh, no, there's two last things before you go – the first is we have another one of these coming up, if you thought tonight was interesting wait until this one – to eat meat or not to eat meat – cruelty, violence, or not? So, this will be coming up in just one week, hosted by Paola Antonelli herself, two amazing guests and it should be just as interesting and just as exciting, so get your tickets now – and lastly, to give us a bit of a housekeeping headstart, if you could please take the three little cards – red, green and blue – and just drop them in a bag there at the top as you leave, we would greatly appreciate that. So thanks so much to everybody here, wonderful evening, thank you both. [Audience applause, end of script]

Appendix C – MoMA Design & Violence Comment Thread

Republic of Salivation (Michael Burton and Michiko Nitta)

BY **John Thackara**

From the curators: Designers Michiko Nitta and Michael Burton often work from a conceptual perspective—meaning that they identify future problems and imagine possible outcomes. In theRepublic of Salivation scenario, which is part of their larger After Agri project, they contemplate what could happen if our society were confronted with food shortages and famine. They envision a dystopian fallout in which the government is forced to implement a strict food-rationing policy, whereby an individual's food allotment is carefully tailored to the emotional, physical, and intellectual demands of their employment. The example explored here is that of an industrial worker's diet: composed largely of starch, allowing the body to work for longer periods on fewer nutrients.

I'm with Wendell Berry on this one: "The cities have forgot the earth and will rot at heart till they remember it again."

These oh-so-urban artists ask us to imagine what the world will be like in the event of a global food shortage, but they exhibit no curiosity as to the causes of this imminent threat. They focus, instead, on ways to change the body so that it can be fed synthetically—a solution that contrives to be both downstream and fantastical at the same time.

With their knowing references to "the scientific study of nutrigenomics," and an airy promise that "new organisms will be tasked with erasing Man's destructive effects," this kind of work masquerades as radical. But in its steadfast refusal even to think about the roots of our alienation from living systems—among them, food—it belongs squarely within the neo-

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liberal worldview that only Man is smart enough to correct the odd mistake that He may have made.

If the artists were to focus more on observable nutrient and energy flows, and less on infantile science fictions, they would discover that the roots of our food crisis lie in a bad idea that can rather easily be fixed. The bad idea involved pumping nutrients out of distant ecosystems and feeding them to cities in a one-way process. This misstep dates back a long way, to the beginnings of agriculture, but its malignant effects have accelerated under thermo-industrial capitalism.

For a long time, we did not realize that that the benefits brought by the plough and its successors would be time-limited. Now we do know. We are also beginning to understand how living soils function and how plants grow. In this new light, the idea of feeding ourselves by force, rather than by artful husbandry, is absurd.

The good news is that we are on our way to "remembering the earth" once again. We are discovering—thanks, in part to science—that when left to do so, soil organisms support flora and food webs in mind-bogglingly complex but self-renewing interactions. These processes are interconnected, too, in a most modern way. In mycorrhiza, as Paul Stamets puts it, nature has evolved its own Internet over billions of years.

Knowing what we do now, the ecocidal impacts of industrial agriculture can be eliminated by a transition to methods still used by hundreds of millions of poor farmers to this day. Yes, of course these practices can be improved. But the proper role of science is to help us work mindfully with living systems–not, by violent means, to subjugate them.

Do violent, dystopian visions ever lead to positive, substantive change?

1.
   ## *Susan Yelavich*

   "..to the choir'

   Violent dystopian visions affect us when they have the power of literature. Lord of the Flies has lost none of its force for all its exposure and readings over the decades. The question here is one of distribution and dissemination. I worry that critical design is only preaching to the choir. Work like this needs to move into the space of editorials and essays that are read outside of the design community.

2.
   ## *Tim Parsons*

   John, correct me if I'm wrong but I really feel this is a rather disingenuous response to Burton Nitta's project. You know as well as I do that this project comes from the realm known as speculative or critical design which does not work from the problem-solution paradigm but from the position of raising awareness and debate of issues through the creation of fictional scenarios that the creators do not necessarily advocate. This work does not therefore hinge upon its scientific accuracy, its moral relationship to our own values or even its plausibility to become reality. It rests on its ability to get its audience to discuss and react to the central subject matter – here, food shortages and famine. In fact your response in proposing a scientifically viable solution, in my view, only goes to prove the effectiveness of the work.

   To quote Paola from her Eyeo 2013 presentation, "in order to have consequence on a world that sometimes seems like to have lost its compass, designers and architects have to be brutal or disquieting, pose hard questions and tackle unpleasant subjects in uncomfortable ways." This is

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what Burton Nitta do. To label them as having a neo-liberal worldview could not be further from the truth.

3.
Design and Violence—MoMA's online experiment «

Manhattan Digest Manhattan Digest

[…] beautiful and functional ways. However, design can also be viewed as a creative act of destruction. Design and Violence, an online curatorial project at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), is currently exploring this […]

4.
Matt

Stand for something or fall for anything

Thackara is spot on. Critical design isn't just a waste of time, it actually does damage to how people understand design.

The critique of critical design has nothing to do with its departure from instrumentalism. The problem is that it does so without committing to anything other than noncommittal aesthetic play. This is precisely why it is a form of liberalism and the reason it is so at home within a fine art milieu.

The appeal to 'raising awareness and debate' should be categorically refused. This work trivialises the issue of food. It trades on a sense of 'what if …' without acknowledging that much of what it casts as speculative is not only already happening to the vast majority of the world's population (people's diets, even in wealthy countries, are already shaped along class and racialised lines through urban design and management, prices, food stamps, income management etc.), but is and has always been a condition of capitalism. What the designer's are in a sense saying then is 'OMG how would you feel if this were to happen to us', without acknowledging that you have to set

yourself apart from most people's histories and lived reality in order to frame this kind of thing as abnormal.

Suggesting that this work is somehow 'brutal or disquieting' is profoundly stupid. The only thing that this work 'confronts' its audience with is a narcissistic fantasy.

The real confrontation has to be with conditions that permit the privileged to forget and/or ignore the political significance of food (i.e. a form of structural violence that is both delivered and shielded from view by design). It means confronting the fact that in order to make universal access to healthy and sustainably produced food a reality (not just an abstract right), radical and decisive movements must be made against the status quo. The confrontation here is that 'we' are currently ill-equipped to achieve this and will continue to be so long as 'we' indulge critical design's lofty nonsense.

5. JANUARY 2, 2014, 5:18 AM
Tim Parsons

Design is big enough for both approaches

Forceful words Matt. Too forceful in my view. It is a shame that you find no benefit in critical design as myself and many others find it a force for good and an important addition to the field. To explore a few of your points…

I disagree that the critique of critical design has nothing to do with instrumentalism. Design has been bound to intrumentalism and optimistic futurism for so long that when it takes a different tack, when it borrows from film, literature and the fine arts and dares to offer us something cerebral rather than practical, it gets shut down. Well, perhaps its time to consider that the field is large enough to include these approaches alongside more instrumental ones. We need hospitals but we also need art galleries. If you want to live in a place where our design culture speaks only of functionality and is not allowed to use poetic means to explore and communicate issues, be my guest, just don't expect us all to want to live there.

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You suggest critical design has no voice because in your words it is "noncommittal". Have you ever listened to an evangelical preacher? Do you think being committed to a position when trying to make people think is a good thing? Critical design work is non-committal only in the sense that it doesn't shove one viewpoint down your throat. That doesn't mean its protagonists are apolitical charlatans. It means you have to think about the work to form your own viewpoint.

I think the designers know full well that diets are already shaped along class and racialised lines. I also think they may well agree that their project is about saying "what if this were to happen to us". The fact is have proved incapable as a wealthy western society of being sufficiently impacted by news of the realities of the food crisis around the world. Otherwise we would have done something about it by now. So why not let design try to help create that impact?

Finally, why is creating work to elicit debate about an issue of importance "lofty" and "narcissistic"? I really think you should be saving such adjectives for "star" designers churning out chairs with no subtext other than spreading their own name. At least these designers are trying to make work about issues.

6. JANUARY 12, 2014, 7:48 PM
   ## *Anon*

   We can't afford to spend thousands of dollars\pounds\euros on science fiction
   As a brown, lower-middle class, radically leftist designer living in one of the most dangerous cities in Asia, all I can say is that, while I can sympathise with the fact that the intentions of most speculative fictions lie in provoking thoughtful debate, critical design is a) speaking to the largely small community of people interested in avante garde solutions to design problems, and b) a huge funnel for money into solutions that are largely not feasible. It's a classic 'design-as-persuasive rhetoric' vs 'design-as-problem solving' debate. Rarely have I seen a design fiction lead to something that can be implemented to solve real problems, and my third-world sensibilities are often shocked at the large amounts of money spent on creating and then exhibiting these pieces. Design works when it fully understands the phenomenon, in all of its political and ethical

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dimensions, that it seeks to affect a change in. Bring me a design fiction that can demonstrate that it fully understands the complex politics of say, birth control in a country like Pakistan and can pose thought-provoking questions about what can be done, and I will not laugh at its shallowness.

7.   JANUARY 15, 2014, 10:44 PM
cameron tonkinwise

curators curate!

Paola, Jamer, Kate,

You have been running this site for a couple of months. There has been occasional debate in the comments (sometimes followed by peer attempts to discourage critique). Some substantive issues are emerging. In this case, important issues are being raised that go to the very heart of the project. It seems to me that these questions – concerning the efficacy of speculations in spaces of privilege – demand some editorial response. Is the project just going to be more of the same from now on: a well-written post, perhaps debated in the comments, followed by just another well-written post, and so on? Or is MOMA going to use its weight to make a difference with respect to the issues being raised, curating responses for example that extend beyond the usual spaces of privilege? Is this just a 'build-it-and-see' or is there some design behind this project? Is there responsibility being taken for what emerges by hosting this site and encouraging these debates, or is it just 'c'est sera sera?'

8.   JANUARY 16, 2014, 6:01 PM
James Auger

Misconceptions

It might be helpful to clear up some misconceptions about speculative and critical design (SCD). Addressing some of the specific comments made in the previous post by anon, and building on Tim's excellent responses…
Also I appreciate that the post was initiated by an analysis of a specific project (After Agri) but it is unfair and unhelpful (both to BurtonNitta and to SCD) to examine a whole approach by basing the critique on one project. I therefore speak in more general terms about the subject.

– Starting with the title of the anonymous post – one of the strengths of SCD is that it operates (entirely from my experience) on minute budgets. Many projects are self-funded or based on small commissions and are entirely not-for profit. The high-resolution delivery using many techniques may give the impression that big budgets are behind the quality but this is a reflection of the skill of the designers rather than the depth of their pockets.

– It absolutely does not intend to provide 'avant garde solutions to design problems.' And its intentions are to speak not to a 'small community of people' but as large and diverse a community as possible. The purpose of many SCD projects is similar to that of philosophers of technology such as Langdon Winner and Neil Postman but through using a product language they aim to make this discussion accessible to a much broader audience. SCD does not solve problems but attempts to understand better what the problems are… both today and in the near future. As Anon points out design works when it fully understands the phenomenon, but phenomena today and in the future are becoming increasingly complex, for example, how might disruptive technologies such as synthetic biology and informatics impact on our future lives? SCD projects can explore such questions to generate understanding and knowledge helping to better inform technological development.

– The classic rhetoric vs problem solving debate is non-sensical. As Tim points out, Why can't both, or even many other forms of design exist together. This mindset is the same as suggesting that all chefs should work in soup kitchens. This is clearly ridiculous so why do people get so upset when designers shift their effort away from solutions and markets?

– How many other practicing designers actually solve real problems? The majority of products shaped by designers are on a fast track to landfill sites through making ephemeral (and in many cases pointless) objects desirable. Design itself can be the problem. By moving away from markets and their constraints SCD is free to explore related issues, expose problems and imagine new possibilities.

– Birth control – whoever claimed that SCD could solve birth problems in developing countries? It is odd to assume that it could… Could the design team at Apple? But I would argue that with the right information and research it could pose though-provoking questions on the issue (admittedly not necessarily about what could be done).

The fact that people think that is shallow exposes its problems. It is unsettling (rather than violent). Like good horror films there is a lot of 'uncanniness' and that can be provocative. This though can be managed and exploited, it makes the work media friendly hence the viral nature of many SCD projects. The challenge is to curate the debates and discussions that follow, engaging policy makers, scientists, publics and others in the process. Not enough SCD projects have achieved that yet hence the justified wariness.

Coming back to the original question (as it seems to have been consumed by the role of design debate) violent dystopian visions can too easily be dismissed as fiction – they shock but only temporarily. Carefully crafted, plausible, tangible, but at the same time unsettling visions are far more effective.

9. JANUARY 20, 2014, 3:08 AM
cameron tonkinwise

carefully crafted

James,

Just to push on some of your points with a cruel mash-up

So SCD tries to:

1 "generate understanding and knowledge helping to better inform technological development"
by being
2 "unsettlng"
though

3 "on minute budgets"

but

4 "carefully crafted"

at the risk/benefit of being

5 "media friendly hence… viral"

but only when there are also well-designed attempts to

6 "curate the debates and discussions that follow, engaging policy makers, scientists, publics and others."

So, there seems to be some agreement that, re: 6, "not enough SCD projects have achieved that." (Will this MOMA gig achieve that?)

The argument in these comments here seems to be about the relation between 2 and 4 and whether either can achieve 1. I took Anon as saying, 'How wealthy do you have to be to be 'unsettled,' in ways that 'generate understanding,' by these carefully crafted communiques?'

Certainly Design must find a way of doing something other than filling landfills with wearables. Is SCD what it should be spending time on? (Is SCD what MOMA should be spending its [segment of the attention] budget on?)

10. JANUARY 20, 2014, 2:04 PM
Matt

Design is big enough to swallow the world if we let it.

To give it its dues, SCD does encourage a way of thinking about design beyond market imperatives. However, this does not mean that it is a progressive force. At most it means that SCD is making use of some privileged but historically contingent social spheres (fine art, academia) that permit the denial or obfuscation of an economic base. Sometimes this is done to good ends. In the case of SCD though I think we should be demanding much, much more.

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My critique (for those who didn't get it the first time) is NOT that SCD should be instrumental, or even that it is wrong to appropriate elements of the fine art tradition. My critique is that we ALL should be accountable to a serious political end, one that DOES NOT take the fine art and elite design worlds, the city, the suburbs, the West, the affluent, whiteness, the middle class, MoMA etc as the horizon of what is, among other things, 'shocking'.

In this sense SCD should not be permitted to get away with speculations that have no stated purpose other than speculation for the sake of itself. That is not cool, not progressive, not clever, and not defensible. It is just flitting away the large amounts of money and privilege that IS actually involved in schooling people up on elitist art culture, running galleries, publishing books etc.

Against indulging in 'anti-market' fetishisation, I want to know what SCDs current strategy is for actually abolishing the capitalist market system. I want to know what SCDs strategy is for addressing the problems raised by Thackara. I want to know to whom does SCD consider itself accountable to and how its work is evaluated in this light. I want to know to whom is SCD aligned and what collective goals it is working towards forming and achieving.

I'm not going to hold my breath for these answers though because, as far as I can see, SCD actually does not have, foster, or encourage the kind of serious political analysis that could provide these answers, let alone any serious inquiry into the nature of design. Hence why it falls back on to a banal liberalism, and hence why, again, Thackara is right.

11. JANUARY 22, 2014, 4:59 PM

James Auger

Clarity

You both make (some) good points and but others I'm afraid are completely wide of the mark. It would be helpful to furnish your argument with examples because at the moment it is overloaded with generalisations, unsubstantiated comparisons and misguided suggestions of privilege. The key problem that I alluded to above is that there are many approaches to SCD each with different

purposes or goals. As with any creative discipline there are good examples and bad examples. SCD is a work in progress and as such its boundaries are blurred, your arguments seem to be based on a generic understanding that is simply wrong.

It is experimental and evolving but (and I can only speak for myself and the projects I consider to be good examples to SCD) is done with both worthy and timely intentions and with a clear stated purpose. I don't wish to completely hi-jack the MoMA discussion on violence so will not go into detail about all the approaches, rather focus on one – that is to speculate on and to depict imaginaries of near-future life before it happens. These speculations are based on extrapolations of emerging technologies and are commonly informed through collaboration with scientists. The purpose is to facilitate a more considered and democratic approach to technological development and future formation and to examine and critique the established and largely capitalist notions of progress that are currently shape research into technology and its eventual application.

Basically design has the potential to move upstream from where it normally functions introducing the complexities of human needs and desires and the rules of everyday life much sooner in the developmental process. We have developed working relationships with scientists from a number of fields such as informatics and synthetic biology leading to extremely engaging collaborations and dialogue.

I totally agree that we should be demanding more of SCD, and we are in the process of finding new ways of exploiting the potential of the approach. This includes more curated events and discussions, new ways of using museums, finding ways of engaging different publics, policy makers, working with anthropologists, sociologists…

I still fail to understand why think this approach is capable of abolishing the capitalism market system (like the birth control issue above) but it certainly encourage serious political and enquiry – just click to the post on the liberator for example.

12. JANUARY 23, 2014, 4:17 AM

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Jamer Hunt

Cameron

Thanks so much for the thoughtful question…and for the frequent comments on the site. Your question is one that we consider continually. We launched the site to shine a light on a shadowy corner of design. Part of our ambition was to bring mostly unheard voices into the design conversation so that we could gain varying perspectives on the impact that design has—positive and negative—on a broad community. We also hoped that the interactive format would spark responses and reflection on important topics in a very public, accessible way. We, too, wonder how the site might lead to new initiatives—whether by us, or, even better, by others. In launching this experiment we also imagined that it might create a platform for other initiatives or other ways for designers to confront violence. We have conspicuously tried not to inject our own editorial voices into the fray. In that sense we see our role as facilitating conversation by providing catalytic prompts rather than staking out editorial territory. We don't see our position quite as "que sera, sera" as you suggest, but we do think the experiment simply needs more time to evolve.

13. JANUARY 23, 2014, 6:09 AM

Matt

James,

I consider designing to mean the imposition of direction (benign or otherwise) within situations that are already directed. In this sense, speculating on and imagining the future before it happens, as you say, is not in itself designerly (or political) as it avoids the task of forming a collective sense of where we SHOULD be going and how to get there. Speculation and political decision making are qualitatively different tasks (they actually feel different), with the later being not just a design outcome but a product of design i.e. structuring a social situation so that people can arrive at a decision about what is imperative along with a commitment to act in an organised and deliberate way.

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By contrast, what I have seen of SCD is for the most part beautiful musings about how technological things might change for white middle-class Europeans. There is little to no political analysis of what drives socio-technical change, and no position taking on where things should go. Things are left open to endless contemplation, exploration, and discussion. This might sound all nice and liberal, but is actually fundamentally irresponsible as it never amounts to a directive decision in a context that demands one.

This is to say that I question whether SCD can meaningfully 'facilitate a more considered and democratic approach to technological development'. The critique that Spinosa, Flores and Dreyfus give of liberal democracy in Disclosing New Worlds is relevant here, as is Tony Fry's in Design as Politics. Beyond this I've come across no evidence of SCD actually having an impact outside of its own discursive sphere (compare the project that Fry has been involved with in Timor Leste). Compared with, say, Atelier d'Architecture Autogéré or Marjetica Potrč, I've never seen a proponent of SCD talk in a serious way about organising with communities, so I don't understand what SCD has to offer to wider publics other than as spectators to more SCD. Fry, AAA, and Potrč are all important examples here because in addition to not being 'market orientated' their projects take responsibility for making change happen, not just hope other people will be inspired to act based on a museum exhibit. Because SCD doesn't take a political position I don't understand what its proponents would advise policy makers to do other than fund more vague chats about technology. I'm also suspicious that there is no critique of the state and the political class to guide any engagement with its bureaucracy.

If there are examples of SCD that contradict this assessment I would be genuinely interested to hear about them.

14. JANUARY 23, 2014, 2:26 PM

James Auger

Matt, with respect I feel that we are talking in circles. My second to last paragraph in the last comment acknowledged your issues with SCD and explained how we are hoping to address these.

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I feel that we have similar aspirations although probably in different contexts. Fry's book is inspirational as is the Timor project but I personally feel that there are enormous problems much closer to home, and that is where I chose to base my practice. Projects in Timor aren't going to stop people taking out payday loans to buy ipads for their 12 year olds christmas present. Why this leads to accusations of white middle classness is beyond me. These are different problems and require different methods; it is excessive middle class political correctness that values one over the other, or even seeks to compare… the world is big enough for both…and many others.

The approach I described above is exactly intended to form a collective sense of where we are going; once we have a better idea of what this is, figuring out how to get there is much more straightforward. Well-defined goals were much easier to identify in the past when the technology available for shaping, controlling, mediating etc. was tangible and local – designing a better chair/washing machine/car is a relatively simple challenge and the benefits obvious (with the car the implications less so). Recent developments though, such as the digital revolution and the internet, have changed the way we do everything – for both good and for bad (and not just for the white middle classes). The next revolutions will happen on the nano scale, in petabyte data sets and with living material, and our increasing levels of control over them leads to an imperative need for more clarity and communication on what the possibilities are and more importantly what is preferable. The role of SCD from my perspective is to communicate what these possibilities are, this needs to be free from industry as their presentations of possible futures are obviously shaped by promoting versions advantageous to their interests. SCD can simply show, as vividly and accessibly as possible, what could happen. We can then make more informed decisions about what is better. Designers cannot make these decisions on their own – but nor should scientists, or politicians. And involving publics (or from the perspective of those largely responsible for change, consumers) is imperative. SC Designs in isolation will not facilitate more considered and democratic approaches to technological development but as focal points and instigators of curated debates (with policy makers, scientists, communities…) and generators of information and feedback they can provide a way to better inform technological trajectories. At the moment it seems that the best approach is to work within the system hence the lack of overt politicisation.

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The system is incredibly complex and powerful – unsettling it seems to be far more achievable and constructive than revolutionising it.

15.
Matt

James,

Its ok that we're not going to agree. My own interest is in clarifying the lines of disagreement.

I was using the Timor project and the work of both Atelier d'Architecture Autogéré and Marjetica Potrč as examples of what SCD does not do, namely, use a political critique to guide transformative work with communities or institutions beyond academia and art galleries. Claiming that Timor is not 'closer to home' is very much besides the point that SCD has nothing to say on the matter of what should be done, or how to do it, at any level of political action (i.e. from 'grass roots' to policy making). It cannot to this because it has no political position (or, in other words, its politics is liberalism), does not do political analysis, and does not engage in political organising. SCD is speculative (non-directive, and therefore not designerly), asocial (the genesis of its fictions are nearly always some kind of technological change, not a change to social relations), and apolitical (for the reasons given).

The point about whiteness and class etc. is related to SCD being asocial and apolitical. There are very serious problems in the UK at the moment, particularly in terms of housing, unemployment, and racism, all of which are exacerbated by an economy in chronic decline (there are interesting arguments now to suggest the UK is actually dedeveloping i.e. it will never 'recover'). The UK is in the grips of futural crisis, one that the political class is unable and unwilling to solve. There is a need for radical socio-political (not technical) change, the kind that takes into account shifting movements at a global (e.g. climate change), regional (population movement), and local scale (the end of work, repressive social discipline). There is a need for affirmative visions of alternative futures and counter-formations of political actants. Why then, in the midst of this, is SCD fixated on very trivial prospects such as personal use robots? This seems to me to be a symptom of an

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unreflexively privileged imaginary, one that is uninterested in majority world experiences or social struggle, something reflected quite well in SCDs phlegmatic and generally pasty aesthetic.

The approach you described has little to do with what I mean by forming collective understanding and intentions. When I say this I am thinking about my experiences in workshops and meetings where a collective has decided upon a direction and strategy for political action (i.e. not conferences or exhibitions). Creating a fiction about a new technology is not the same thing. It does not provide any agency to anyone. It merely presents a possibility, it doesn't propose how to intervene it it, or how to learn how to intervene in it. To say 'We can then make more informed decisions about what is better' is meaningless. Who are 'we'? How are 'we' supposed to make a decision? When are 'we' going to make a decision (if you never pose an imperative it will never be answered)? What can 'we' do to stop technological changes when decisions about technological change are, for the most part, beyond 'our' power to control? I'm interested to hear you describe Design as Politics as 'inspirational' because if nothing else it is a forceful critique of this very argument (see especially pp. 52-62).

The biggest fiction of SCD is perhaps that it is unsettling. But in its narrow scope of interest it misses the extent to which our futures are being unsettled by much more dramatic movements. Either way SCD has nothing to say about what unsettlement means, at least not in the sense that helps to organise a response.

16. JANUARY 29, 2014, 7:21 PM

Anon

I stand by what I said before. Show any of the projects in this exhibition to a non-white, non upper middle-class, third world public and they will laugh. Nothing about them is in the least unsettling to such an audience, although it might be absurd. Again, we're talking about this being for a white, middle class American audience, so perhaps this is what white middle class Americans find shocking. What I find more shocking than the pieces themselves is that this is what white middle class Americans are supposed to find unsettling.

Imo, want to unsettle someone? Figure out a way to take them to the factory in China where their IPad was assembled and let them experience it firsthand. Let them go to the garment factory in Bengladesh where their t-shirts were sewn. This is both the present and the future of these communities and others – those factories won't shut down overnight, and are as much a part of the near-future as household robots and flexible lcd screens. I often find myself asking why a majority of scd projects are wholly occupied with revealing one side of potential futures, i.e. their promise and pitfalls, without showing the other side, i.e. how those futures will be made and sustained.

17. JANUARY 30, 2014, 12:21 PM
James Auger

What is this obsession with class systems? The UK may have its financial problems but most of us stopped obsessing about these divides in the distant past.

Also it is lame for you both to respond with such vitriol from behind the cloak of anonymity. Who are you to be so well placed to make such a damning critique of SCD?

To pick up (for the last time) on a couple of the points. Designerly – speculations do have direction; they are about exploring possibilities in informed ways, just like prototyping a concept. Many iterations are developed each informing the process and helping to identify goals. If you know what the goals are, there is direction.
SCD has much clearer goals for technological progress that those currently directing research, development and funding models, it is extremely 'designerly.'

Second, If you think that examining our current technological trajectory is facile or indulgent then this whole discussion is pointless. Matt, you choose robots to exemplify your argument. Why do you consider this a trivial subject? Perhaps if your understanding is based on several decades of stereotypical media depictions which are indeed quite fanciful, but the reality is that the robotics industry today is consuming billions of dollars annually in attempting to make them an everyday reality – this is happening across the globe. Google is buying robotic research companies; A.I.

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research labs and countless others forms of robot related research. Data accumulation, analysis and algorithms promise to be able to read humans and predict behaviour in turn making us more robotic. Robots have already revolutionised the industrial landscape through production lines and CNC machines. Our transport systems are potentially the next robot frontier – automated cars (and potentially drones) removing the work of taxi drivers, delivery vans etc. No! I don't think domestic robots are a trivial subject. Designers are perfectly placed to examine how this form of technology might impact on everyday life via the products, services and spaces that will exist as a result of contemporary research.

Your world view seems to be based on neatly packaged and isolated events and activities. How can you separate technological change, notions of progress, faith in technology etc. from political dogma, social change, conspicuous consumption and so on? It is an enormously complex ecosystem that needs to be first acknowledged and then examined, especially when we plan to bring new things into the world. As Postman said, change is ecological. And as Jared Diamond points out in Guns, Germs and Steel it was the ability to control nature through technology that originally shaped the global power structures that exist today.

Designers have always worked with technology (as an element to be arranged using Eames description of design). Designers have rarely considered the implications of the technology they arrange (social, political, economic, cultural, psychological). This should naturally be part of the design process and this is what we practice and this is what we teach.

18. JANUARY 31, 2014, 8:59 PM
Ahmed

So, I should probably say here that I'm a designer from Karachi, Pakistan (incidentally, considered to be one of the most violent cities on the face of the planet, if you believe Vice and Google – hence the interest in this MOMA exhibit). I live in a city where bomb blasts, riots and citywide shutdowns are the norm rather than the exception – I am no stranger to armed violence myself. I have also lived, for a time, in the US and in other parts of the world. I think I speak from a position of knowledge and experience – I am not weaving vitriolic statements out of thin air.

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If you agree that these systems are complex and interconnected, they are also global – in all likelihood, the parts of the robots of tomorrow will be assembled by underpaid factory workers somewhere in Asia. I've bought t-shirts in the US where the labels on their backs read 'Made in Pakistan', and I've been in the factories where they have been made here. This is an ethical argument that I am making. Most critical design that I have seen or experienced glosses over the global ethics of the kinds of futures it seeks to question. If you say that technological change, notions of progress, faith in technology, cannot be separated from political dogma, social change, conspicuous consumption etc., then they also cannot be separated from exploitation, poverty, the legacy of colonialism, cycles of violence that perpetuate long after the damage has been done (Pakistani citizens are now being bombed by the relatives of drone strike victims who turned to terrorism). The political, economic, social and cultural implications of technologies are never local but always global and systemic – they ripple out and affect people you may never know or see in your lifetime. It's great to believe in the promise of technological progress when you belong to a class and a society that will directly get to reap its benefits in the end. Most of the examples you point out…household robots, self driving transportation, robotic mechanisation…sorry, but 2/3rds of the globe won't get to seem 'em, regardless of the millions of dollars being spent on them by corporations like Google. Many villages and towns in Asia and Africa barely have electricity in this day and age – even large cities like Karachi loadshed electricity for as long as 8 hours a day in the summers.

So yeah, I do question scd's sense of responsibility, and I don't find the work unsettling or deep, but then, I don't come from a class or society where I would find this sort of work unsettling or deep. Obviously, we do not agree on this – the argument is moot.

19. FEBRUARY 4, 2014, 10:44 PM
Luiza Prado

James' misguided question – What is this obsession with class systems?- doesn't surprise me at all, honestly.

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SCD was theorised in and for developed, northern european countries by the privileged, intellectual, white, middle classes. It serves their own purposes, while largely ignoring the underlying issues of colonialism, liberalism and white supremacy it helps to perpetuate. I wrote some more thoughts on the subject here: https://medium.com/designing-the-future/5a355cac2ca4

20. FEBRUARY 19, 2014, 9:32 AM
Tobie

Tobie

I Identify my practice with what's being described here as SDC, and like other commenters here it's the topic of my PhD thesis. My sense is that descriptions of the SDC are often restricted to texts that go in exhibitions and on blogs. Often our claims to bring about debate are conflated with aims for the dissemination of the work. So it's probably a good thing that partitioners are writing scholarly accounts, and vital that the approaches are extended and challenged, otherwise there is a danger that the practice will become repetitive and irrelevant.

21. FEBRUARY 20, 2014, 6:02 PM
Scott Denison

SCD, as it has been labeled here is in the emerging, speculative space of design. Though many agree on what it is—and that of design fiction—it is too new and formative to 'be anything' or so well defined that it could fall neatly into conceptions or misconceptions of purpose and execution. In my practice of design fiction, it is not about what 'should' be but rather what 'could' be—good or bad. To me, fictions of snappy, sleek technologies that make the privileged more comfortable are neither SCD nor design fiction. In my definition (since there are many) design fiction stories are intended suspend disbelief about change, making it seem real enough to us that we want to talk about it, assess it, and ask ourselves if this is really the future we want—and if it's not—what might we do about it, how might we change it, refine it, or avoid it altogether.

In the broad spectrum of design and design thinking, the end result becomes more than solving problems, design thinking can be just that: thinking. Something I believe we do too little of before we create anything.

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22. MARCH 3, 2014, 11:30 PM

Chisun

Confused

"Violent dystopian visions affect us when they have the power of literature" and the movie industry?

Did the documentary movies, Food, Inc. and Fast Food Nation, lead to positive, substantive change? For me, yes. For others, I think so. Are they violent, dystopian visions? Sort of? Not really. I don't know. Can documentary movies be compared to SCD? I really don't know.

Is SCD the new kid on the block getting beat up in front of literature, movies, art, etc.? Maybe.

23. MARCH 6, 2014, 5:42 AM

Blair Moore

Marketing Scam

Chisun,

Although I have to agree that these films lead to a positive change, it was only a change in a small group which was most likely not a long lasting one. The reasoning behind this is due in part to the difficulty of maintaining such a specific and expensive lifestyle and diet. These documentary films are a fad, and are almost marketing ploys for these fast food companies. Every other word coming out of the commentators mouth is "McDonald's, Wendy's, and Burger King". If you're a younger child listening to your parents watching this movie, the only thing you're hearing are these words, and seeing their logos and products on screen.

What're your thoughts on this?

24. MARCH 12, 2014, 1:44 AM

Blair Moore

Living in a Dystopian World

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Dystopian novels are becoming the hottest sellers in the young adult/teen age group. Many popular series from this genre are The Hunger Games, Divergent, and the list could go on and on. However, although these books are highly entertaining and addictive to read most people do not see beyond the surface level of these books. They don't look deeper into the readings to try and see what these authors might be alluding too, but if you do what you realize is that these novels are cautionary tales of what could happen to our world in the future if we don't change. Of course, they are highly exaggerated, but they should hold some merit. All of these novels seem to start the same way, with the explanation of how the "old world" otherwise known as our current world screwed up and the human race nearly died off. What these novels are trying to say is what Wendell Berry said "The cities have forgot the earth and will rot at heart till they remember it again." (Berry, 2013). You can describe all of these books simply by using that statement. In the relationship to Human Centered Design being comprised of the expression of method and the expressions of principle, this issue relates more to the expressions of principle. The issues that are harder to fix on a whole instead of fixing the initial immediacy of the one.

25. MARCH 13, 2014, 5:46 PM
Jim

John, really?

John T, turning your back on the thing you helped create?

26. MARCH 13, 2014, 7:09 PM
Matt Malpass

I'm not Matt

This doesn't contribute to the discussion. In response to a number of inquiries I've received, I'd like to express to those participating in this discussion that I'm not the Matt expressing views here.

27. MARCH 15, 2014, 3:45 AM
Linda

In reply to Luiza Prado

@luizaprado you talk about blind privilege. but what you seem to be blindly promoting is a focus in SCD on classical political issues such as feminism, class divisions, etc., and you don't see a value in projects that focus on other issues whilst being in a white middle class context. SCD projects can't critique everything at once, there need to be elements in the design that are recognizable to the viewer, in order for the part of the design that is different from our world today to stand out and to be read as a critique. so, if a SCD project is for example dealing with the ethics of a new technology, it makes sense to not overload the project with a) a critique of our whole societal system and b) the potential ethics of this technology, but to decide for one. that is why many projects go with a familiar context – white middle class – to be able to more effectively critique one specific thing such as aesthetics.

yes, it would be interesting to see more projects on third world issues, gender, etc., but there are actually not that few SCD projects that deal with these topics (you exaggerate to make it sound like there are virtually none).

also, remember that SCD is not here to save the world and it never will be. it is such a young discipline and just now becoming more political, and it will be interesting to see how it develops. but seeing less value in all projects that don't deal with the political issues that interest you is ignorant – there are many things to be critiqued.

if you are really so worried about these political issues maybe you should get out there and protest, become involved in politics and found a transgender support group or something. pressing political issues will not be resolved through SCD, and it seems that's what you are mistaking it for. SCD is part of a culture, like literature, film, theatre, art, etc. it is not politics.

and as one of the many female designers working in the field i am offended by you saying that SCD is male dominated, that is definitely not the case. it seems it just fitted better into your list of clichés (white middle class MALE).

PS. "northern european" means scandinavian, i'm not sure that's what you mean? doing a bit of research before you write an article like this helps.

28. APRIL 21, 2014, 10:11 AM

Critical Graphic Design: Critical of What? | Modes of Criticism

[…] In the age of Behance, of earning badges and appreciations, when one of the most used words in the site's feedback circle is "awesome" and likes and followers are easily bought, graphic design has another opportunity to reexamine its apparently incurable allergy to criticism. Within interaction design, speculative and critical design is now being openly questioned and the critical design projects' political accountability and relevance to society debated. […]

29.   MAY 13, 2014, 3:57 PM
A PAREDE ツ hello[at]a-pare.de

[…] the past few days I've been following this excellent and profoundly enlightening discussion on MoMA's Design and Violence page. The conversation, initiated by John Thackara's comments on […]

30.   MAY 27, 2014, 4:22 PM
Pedro Oliveira

SCD is not politics?

Particularly directed to "Linda" who bluntly criticised the fact that we (since I co-authored the text she refers to) claim that SCD should take a stance on politics: I think your assumption that SCD is "culture" as art and film are, is not wrong, but to claim that they are not "politics" is at least a naive assumption. I honestly thought that this was a given among those working/researching in the field but apparently it is not.

In that regard, I cannot help but recall your own argument and kindly ask you to do some research before claiming such a fact. Some examples:

Not to go too deep, I will just throw in a very very brief and summarised notion of "politics" that happens to be literally lying around on my table now. Langdon Winner writes that "politics" are "arrangements of power and authority in human associations as well as the activities that take

place within those arrangements." If you want to go even simpler, here's Wikipedia (!!) definition of the term, after the Greeks: "[politics] is the practice and theory of influencing other people on a civic or individual level [...] A variety of methods are employed in politics, which include promoting one's own political views among people [...]"

I'd like to point you, as a SCD practitioner, to one of the so-called "canons" of SCD, namely "Design Noir" , in which Dunne and Raby affirm that "[...] all design is ideological, the design process is informed by values based on a specific world view, or way of seeing and understanding reality." In that regard, even though "politics" and "ideology" are not technically the same thing, you have to agree that they are immensely close to one another.

Assuming a small degree of text interpretation, you may see that in the text that is exactly what we meant by politics: SCD, as a practice preoccupied with "challenging narrow assumptions" (to quote Dunne once more) about said "specific world view" is and has to be responsible for addressing questions outside the privilege we point out.

Design and SCD can be a form of protest, so can be art, literature, film, theatre, music and whatnots. I do believe that "founding a transgender group" is indeed helpful, but so can be design, for trans* people are already invisible to society, let alone in Design circles.

While I do reckon that perhaps *your* practice might be apolitical (which is a political stance in its own right), please do not assume that *all* SCD should be as well. This is as narrow-minded as claiming that we dismissed all SCD projects to date in our text 😃

Cheers!

31. MAY 27, 2014, 4:37 PM
     Luiza Prado

     In response to Linda

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Hi Linda,

First of all let me thank you for your profoundly enlightening comment – few times have i seen the most disgustingly problematic issues with the SCD crowd illustrated more clearly than in your comment, so thank you for that.

Now, first of all, you depart from the assumption that SCD is made by the white, european middle class, for the white european middle class, otherwise you wouldn't be making a statement like "many projects go with a familiar context – white middle class".

Also, you say that "SCD projects can't critique everything at once". I certainly agree with that, but I don't see why they have to talk about the same things, over and over again, always from the same, narrow point of view. I'm not asking for SCD to deal with everything – I'm just suggesting it might be useful to stop being so self-indulgent if the discipline ever wants to truly fulfil its promises of critique.

You go on to say that "yes, it would be interesting to see more projects on third world issues, gender, etc., but there are actually not that few SCD projects that deal with these topics". First of all: I am most definitely not counting projects about developing countries (third world is a very outdated term, you know) made by europeans, because as a brazilian I'm kinda tired after 500 years of colonialism. We can think by ourselves and deal with our problems (most of them caused by colonialism…) by ourselves, thank you very much. Same thing for gender issues: why on earth would I want a cis man telling me about gender dystopia? In short: if you're on top of the food chain, please keep quiet and listen. Give space to others, let us, who are oppressed, tell our own stories. That's not what I've been seeing in SCD – even the few projects that do deal with these issues are usually initiated and led by the same old (colonialist) crew. And I still want to stress that gender violence/futures/dystopia is indeed a hardly touched topic.

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And sorry to break it to you, but EVERYTHING is politics. If you truly believe that politics are not embedded in your everyday life – from the way the urban space is designed (check out Winner and Latour on that one, to name a few) to the design of objects (you might want to read Dunne & Raby…) well… *shrug*

And as to your suggestion that I might want to "protest, become involved in politics and found a transgender support group or something": first of all, I don't own you any sort of explanation on my involvement with politics, activism or anything in general. The general tone of your comment is dismissive and aggressive, but this last part really is the cherry on the cake, especially your not-so-subtle sarcastic suggestion that things like "founding a transgender group" (which I won't do because i'm not trans……..) are useless. I'm sorry, but they aren't. When you come from a privileged background (which I assume you do, because you think that white middle class is the default mode of existence), even being part of a minority (assuming that you used your real name….) is easier, and the struggles of trans* people go through are something neither you nor I can fully grasp. So please show some respect and empathy – it might even help you step out of this marvellous world where everyone is white, cis and rich.

Finally, by "northern european" we mean the UK, Germany, Scandinavia, the Netherlands – the usual suspects. Ask portuguese, spanish, greek and turkish ppl for a bit of perspective on this 😃

32. JUNE 11, 2014, 10:40 AM
Design and Violence, the blog |

[…] http://designandviolence.moma.org/republic-of-salivation-michael-burton-and-michiko-nitta/ […]

33. JULY 11, 2014, 3:50 PM
Betsy

diversity through homosexuality?

are there chances to improve the diversity and impact of SCD? yes. is a heterosexual privileged girl (read: "brazilian phd student in berlin") claiming diversity by depicting a non-heterosexual

relationship the way to do it? probably not.

i agree with you, luiza, colonialist approaches concerning the developing world are not a way to bring diversity into speculative design. but being non-heterosexual myself i am also annoyed by the way heterosexuals keep claiming diversity simply by depicting gay people. how much do you know about our reality? and your project isn't even about any real gender issues. i'm really sorry, but it feels a bit like "look i did a project and i put some gays in it, so it's totally diverse". was the fetish look an accident or a cliché that you used because it shows gay people? this was quite upsetting to me.

it's easy to criticize things, but when you're doing exactly the same mistakes in a different way that's not going to bring SCD further at all.

on another note, here are a couple of quite interesting and diverse SCD projects, including some with gender and developing world topics:

http://www.core77designawards.com/2014/award_category/speculative/

34. AUGUST 5, 2014, 6:05 PM

Luiza

heteronormativity much?

Hi Betsy,

Who said I'm heterosexual? I certainly didn't, and I wish you wouldn't assume I am. Privileged, absolutely – I'm a PhD student in Berlin after all, but hetero… not so much, so please hold your horses there (and there it goes, I just had to out myself because of your comment. Not sure how to feel about that.)

Anyway, if you mean the A Protected Life project then yes, at the time I was doing this project for my Masters (late 2011/early 2012) my praxis in SCD wasn't completely engaged with my activism yet. Some issues in SCD had started bothering me precisely because of my activism, but I still hadn't found a way to converge both things – at least not completely – so I decided to start with the issue of representation, which was the one very obvious problem I felt I could approach at

the time. The "fetish look", as you put it, came much earlier than the documentation itself, but considering your assumption that I'm hetero I can understand where you're coming from with your critique, and I'm grateful you pointed that out – it had never occurred to me that it could be read in that way. Also, I never claimed that what I did with APL was the tell-all of diversity in SCD – to the contrary, I pointed out that it was still just a scratch in the surface of the problems within SCD.

Right now for my PhD I'm starting to develop a few projects that focus on the issues pointed out in the medium text. As with all kinds of activism, I'll probably mess up somewhere along the way, I'm sure. But hopefully I'll learn from these mistakes, and they will inform the next steps for my praxis, my dissertation and my activism.

Finally, thanks for the link! There's a lot of projects there, I'll be sure to check them all out 😃

Appendix D – MoMA Debate Analysis

This is a brief attempt to thread from and through the MoMA debate on the limits of empathy, starting from an initial point of objection, in order to trace a thread of sustained argumentation in the hope that it contributes to a greater understanding on my part as a viewer and an attempt to understand if participants also benefit from their efforts.

In presenting her case against Sputniko!'s machine, Chris had said,

> "Of course menstruation machine is not the whole package. …there's no hormonal fluctuations, but even if menstruation machine were somehow modified to better simulate the periodic shedding, it still only captures half the reality. Woman menstruation is a biological process, how we as a culture regard… the menstrual cycle is deeply gendered. … I wanna be clear here: we have bodies, messy, smelly, sensual, imperfectly perfect vessels, but we need not be defined by them, even though we often are. Sputniko's aim is to help us see a near future in which our biological processes are split off from our bodies… where our gender identities are released… hemmed in only by our imaginations… But this is where it gets tricky. How can we work to such a wide-open world while still acknowledging that our embodied reality is so much more… embodiment itself is socially constructed. More specifically, the menstrual experience is shaped by an enduring taboo. Norms of strict containment, and a mandate of secrecy and silence, all of which represent hegemonic femininity, the consequence of these forces is a kind of hush that suppresses a rich and necessary menstrual discourse."

So as far as Chris is concerned, there is definitely a silence to be broken with respect to the way society treats menstruation, but perhaps she is saying that the need to control chemically menstruation in the manner that men control erections is a manifestation of a historically negative portrayal of menstruation as an

unwanted female trait defined by the culture of men. Sputniko!'s belt certainly

breaks the silence, her rationale, as stated on her website,

> "It's 2010, so why are humans still menstruating? ...
>
> When the contraceptive pill first became commercially available in the 1960s, it was deliberately designed to have a pill-free, menstruating week every month. This was because the doctors felt that users would find having no periods too worrying and unacceptable. 50 years have passed since then... but women are still bleeding.
>
> For example in Japan, it only took the Ministry of Health only 6 months to approve Viagra, but it took them more than 9 years to approve the contraceptive pill in 1999 (which was approved 3 months after the approval of Viagra). It is quite clear that the advancement of technology can be heavily influenced by political, social and cultural backgrounds of the time.
>
> So what does Menstruation mean, biologically, culturally and historically, to humans? Who might choose to have it, and how might they have it? The Menstruation Machine – fitted with a blood dispensing mechanism and electrodes simulating the lower abdomen – simulates the pain and bleeding of a 5 day menstruation process.
>
> The music video features a Japanese transvestite boy Takashi, who one day chooses to wear 'Menstruation' in an attempt to biologically dress up as a female, being unsatisfied by just aesthetically appearing female. He builds and wears the machine to fulfill his desire to understand what the period feels like for his female friends." (Ozaki, 2010)

Sputniko! has every right to speak on her own behalf about her own experiences

and opinions of menstruation through critical design and to draw attention to the

subject of menstruation via her own visual and musical creativity, but she deftly

slips her own persona out of the story and installs herself as a fictional cross-

dressing boy who apparently wants to experience a 'conveniently inconvenient'

form of menstruation. But is it empathy for women? Chris relates cultural

interpretations of menstruation directly to hegemonic femininity, the social

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construction of gender role as experienced by the subjugated end of the heteronormative male/female binary. If we assume the agent of empathy is the fictional cross-dressing boy Takashi, then we are asking of ourselves, 'Why does Takashi want to feel what it's like to menstruate? Is it because he wants to better understand his female friends, better understand himself, or both?' A brief visit to the online forum, Crossdressers.com yields a thread labeled, 'Do all MTF (male-to-female) crossdressers want to become women?' (http://www.crossdressers.com/forums/showthread.php?170869-Do-all-MTF-crossdressers-want-to-become-women) Without going into detail, the general answer of course is, 'no'— Not *all* crossdressers seek to transition in gender, many are very happy as heterosexual men wearing female clothing, and many are exploring their sexuality and some decide to transition in gender. Chris Bobel's debate opponent, Mickey Boardman, had nothing but nice things to say about what fashion affords as far as dis-gendered expression,

> "Now the point being that a woman in tailored suit with laced-up shoes is no longer shocking. Fact is the only thing shocking about it is that it was once shocking, as I said, and that's why I think that we've come to the point where people can wear whatever they want and there are no limits to design. Men can wear dresses, women can wear pants and it's a good place for us to not have limits in design."

Perhaps Mickey's take that the journey through discovering one's own gender and sexuality is a journey of one and that contemporarily speaking, he feels that journey is easier than ever. While Takashi as a fictional character has the danger of, 'saying' a lot of things in public that do not represent the views or experiences

of others, Mickey is not threatened by it and thinks it's fun, and maybe thinks it

plausible that an individual might exist to be in such a position to desire

menstruation and seek the aid of technology to enact it.

Returning to Sputniko!'s rationale, she makes reference to the gender-biased

medicalized regulation of blood flow in the body through pharmaceutical

treatments, so it would seem to me that she has taken a transhumanist stance – one

that focuses on 'enhancing' human abilities completely outside what is already

considered to be good and normal. In, Gregor Wolbring writes of both ableism

and transhumanism,

> "Every ism has two components. Something we value and something we do not.
> The subjects of the isms can be negative or positive... Ableism values certain
> abilities, which leads to disableism the discrimination against the 'less able'.
> Ableism often confuses the valuing or obsession with ability with the term
> disableism. However besides confusing ableism with disableism speaking about
> ableism only in connection with the so-called 'disabled people' is also a
> problem." (Wolbring, 2008, p. 252)

Given this definition, It seems to me that disableism is to misogyny as ableism is

to chauvinism; the hatred towards another group and the privileging of one's own.

Wolbring goes on to add,

> 'One transhumanized form of ableism is the network of beliefs, processes and
> practices that perceives improving the human body and functioning beyond
> species-typical boundaries as essential.
>
> The emerging field of enhancement medicine pushes the boundaries of what is
> the human norm through genetic manipulation (genomic freedom) and biological
> bodies (morphological freedom) through surgery, pharmaceuticals, implants and
> other means.' (Wolbring, 2008, p. 253)

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So in a sense Sputniko!'s menstruation belt attempts to level the entire playing field using transhumanism, which according to Wolbring, places everyone in lack. It represents an ideal choice about something that biologically and historically, has never been regarded as ideal. This notion of ideal choice is very eutopian (or positive uptopia), and eutopian thinking is one of the tools central in critical design. So too is dystopian thinking (negative utopia). From the point of view of Chris Bobel, the menstruation belt represents a dystopic vision, as the leveling effect of the menstruation belt not only poses a false choice, but also adds insult to lack. She feels there is a real danger in misleading the public into thinking that it's a good or even possible idea to contain menstruation into a transactional experience, because of how eradicates the possibility of a public discourse on menstruation involving individual experiences and identities across the gender spectrum. One of those individuals is Sputniko!, who (if she is speaking on her own behalf) clearly wants a choice and has found an ally in Mickey who isn't confused about his gender or sexuality and doesn't see anything wrong with choosing to wear a belt that bleeds – on the basis that it's fashion, that it's a choice. So there is a line that is drawn between those who can choose to menstruate and those who cannot. That line is not natural, it is additionally defined by power, privilege and agency. The powerful define menstruation as a subjugate act, the privileged get to control it, and the autonomous are able to move through its subjugation and control. The objection to the concept of arbitrary choice is coming from the side that represents having no choice to begin

with, on the basis that it systemically removes any acknowledgment of the individual and societal worth of defining and expressing that struggle in all its forms.

Eutopian thinking doesn't factor harm into the equation because the ideas can't be grounded in harm. Dystopian thinking is exactly it's opposite as it follows harm to its logical conclusion, however absurd or extreme. The ability to address issues in these speculative ways is utopianism (the umbrella term), or social dreaming. Historically, there are two fundamental utopian traditions: utopias of sensual gratification (not under human control) and utopias of human contrivance (under human control) (Claeys & Sargent, 1999, p. 2). Given this dichotomy, it can be possible to see that Chris Bobel's argument for acknowledging the truth of natural menstruation is an expression of sensual gratification, while Sputniko!'s menstruation belt is an expression of human contrivance (ideally, the existence of the belt would signal the existence of pure choice for women). For Mickey Boardman (and I suppose Takashi), natural menstruation is a foreign experience and thus it is a choice on the part of those individuals whether they want to experience menstruation secondhand through the experiences of another or derivatively through the experiences of technology. Although it would seem that the first is an act of sensual gratification and the second is human contrivance, I would argue that they are both human contrivance and that the first is a human

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contrivance of sensual gratification – it is a choice to allow oneself to be open to the experiences of another that is out of both parties' control.

By the end of the debate it was clear that Chris Bobel gave a very compelling argument, it was difficult for her to establish for herself the same level of privileged creative expertise that authorizes critical design and redirect that privilege to be used where is it needed most in society, rather than to have it just reinvest in itself. The saving grace is that I don't feel that she lost any ground either, that in her brief time on stage she was able to reveal many of the limitations of Sputniko!'s design, despite agreeing that it was a great topic to pick for a critical design intervention. It was also clear that her and Mickey were not really opponents; the format of the debate obviously gave that option I don't think either of them exercised it. During Jamer's examination, Mickey had admitted that his personal need to wear women's clothing was not some kind of cultural tourism, or a need to empathize with women (a strike against Sputniko!) and Chris took that opportunity to clarify her position:

> "Well I think what's important here is Mickey doesn't speak for women. So he doesn't don the blouse or carry the bag and say 'now I get it', and that's what I was railing against, is this experiencing something partial and then – which you interpret as total and then authorizes you to speak for another, and I think that's especially dangerous when there's a power dynamic between somebody that occupies a position of power in culture and someone who occupies less power in culture. So Mickey acknowledging his social location, to use the sociological term, is precisely the piece that often gets lost and that's the hazard I'm trying to point out."

The audience questions provided interesting insight towards what might be

required in order to help the practice of critical design progress in order to make it

a more socially accountable practice:

> **Audience Member #1:** Hi, I have two questions. In all of the visual examples
> that you guys showed there's definitely a given authority or a taken authority – …
> who are the ones who are disseminating these images that would invoke
> empathy. So I was wondering if you thought that there was a space where you
> didn't need that authority in relation to design... And then my second question
> would be, for me the act of empathy requires a kind of complicity from the
> receiver …I was just wondering if you could speak to what happens when
> violence is applied to empathy when it's forced and what is it called when it
> crosses that threshold?
>
> **Mickey Boardman:** … I did focus on men and also, in a way leaders …I think
> we historically look to leaders and to people who sort of lead movements that
> way… shame is, you should just be able to talk about it, you should be able to
> say you had your period and if there wasn't the shame around it that would
> liberate us all in an incredible way, so... That's the big problem, that we need to
> be able to talk about it, not wear a period machine.
>
> **Chris Bobel:** Yeah, I love the question because you're bringing the sort of target,
> if you will, right into the equation and I hadn't thought about that – duh – so that's
> super interesting. It's right, it's trans-sectional, right, it's a relationship – I mean,
> do I want you to experience my life, do I want you to know what I know, or what
> I feel? And if that, if I – 'cause otherwise it can feel like a breach of privacy,
> right, or a violation, or a boundary trespass.

The first part of the question observes and confirms the element of power and

privilege that authorizes and legitimizes design as a practice, because it permeated

both sides of the debate prior to it taking place. The question of whether or not

there could be a space where that authority wasn't needed is exactly what the

practices of design should be addressing moving forward. The second part of the

question observes that natural result of removing that need for authority, because

each agent need not be complicit in what they perceive to be a moral or ethical

violation in response to the attempt of empathy from an other.

> **Audience Member #3:** Hi, can I have a microphone... In response to the
> gentlemen who was talking about designers getting in wheelchairs or someone
> strapping on the menstrual simulation machine, I think, for me the issue is
> whether it builds empathy for the individual or whether it builds empathy for a
> group of people who struggle against certain political and social structures and
> constrictions. If the designer at the end of the day recognizes how horrible that
> person's kitchen is, as opposed to how horrible it is to be in a wheelchair, then
> that is a specific direct and positive outcome of that. But if in the menstrual
> simulation exercise or in the wheelchair the crip for a day simulations – first of
> all people are very incompetent, the first time they use a wheelchair or the first
> time they're blindfold... So that – they come away feeling incompetent, weak,
> vulnerable, and are so flooded with that experience that it's impossible for them
> to understand that the struggle is with the external and not with the personal,
> physical embodied experience, and the tension between the personal and the
> political, I think, needs to be highlighted in many of the ways that you already
> did, Chris, and thank you, I wanted to underscore that, so it wasn't really a
> question…

I think this question (taken along with Tucker's) proves that critical design as an

explicitly political form of design reveals through this debate a clear weakness in

all of design. However, because critical design operates on the level of

representation, it becomes easier to confront it on the basis of accountability to

more than one political perspective. In the case of critical design, representation

of multiple perspectives should be a desired outcome, because it can then

simultaneously represent multiple ideologies under the same lens. Thus, it

maintains its practice as a reassertion of human contrivance, but perhaps with

more examples of the desire for the human contrivance of sensual gratification. I

wonder then, why no one thought to use the debate as an opportunity to propose

new ideas, iterations or speculative/critical rebuttals.

My conclusion of this debate overall is that it was not productive but it was not counter-productive either. The debate merely served to maintain and reassert the status quo that existed prior to it and to the artifact of critical design that it took place around. I believe the artifact was perhaps a material expression of the designers (and perhaps a more mainstream or normative) understanding of gender/sexuality/ability, posing as a utopian vision, as if its plausibility rested in its feelings of familiarity, that it shocks us with the obvious. Perhaps in that regard, it is not an intentional satire, but an unintentional parody? This is not to say it is a bad work of critical design, far from it. I believe that as a work of critical design, it merits the attention and praise it receives. I believe that the true problem lay in the ability for critical design as a practice to somehow include a sense of accountability or responsibility in its, 'social dreaming' for each and every individual in society, which is probably the most absurd eutopian human contrivance I could socially dream up, but ultimately driven by a belief in the rewards of communal sensual gratification to be found within.

Appendix E – Prototype Photos (Chronological)
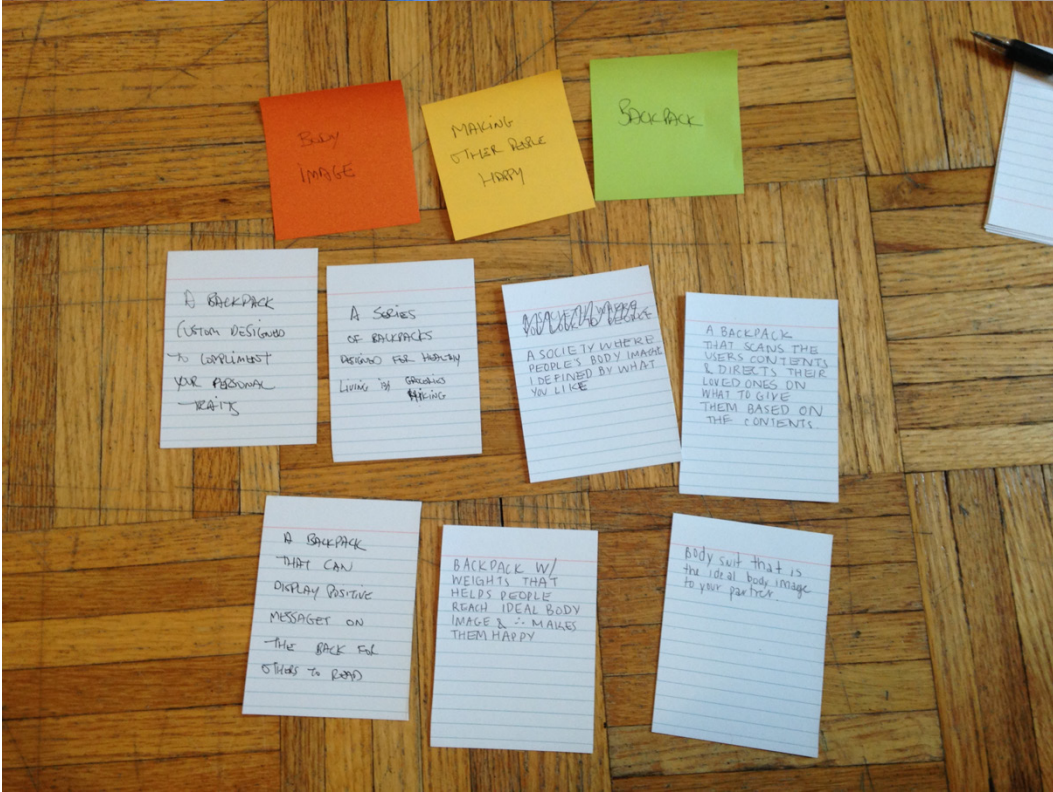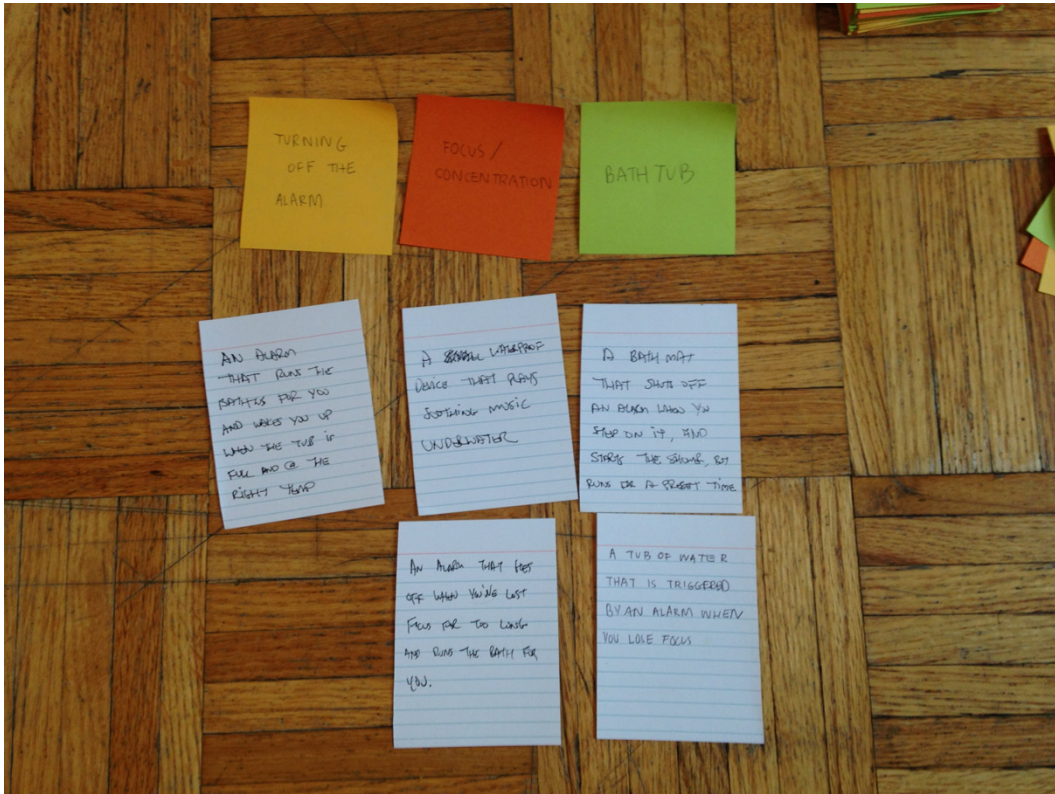
TURNING OFF THE ALARM

FOCUS / CONCENTRATION

BATH TUB

AN ALARM THAT RUNS THE BATHS FOR YOU AND WAKES YOU UP WHEN THE TUB IS FULL AND @ THE RIGHT TEMP

A SMALL WATERPROOF DEVICE THAT PLAYS SOOTHING MUSIC UNDERWATER

A BATH MAT THAT SHUTS OFF AN ALARM WHEN YOU STEP ON IT, AND STARTS THE SHOWER, BUT RUNS FOR A PRESET TIME

AN ALARM THAT GOES OFF WHEN YOU'RE LOST FOCUS FOR TOO LONG AND RUNS THE BATH FOR YOU.

A TUB OF WATER THAT IS TRIGGERED BY AN ALARM WHEN YOU LOSE FOCUS
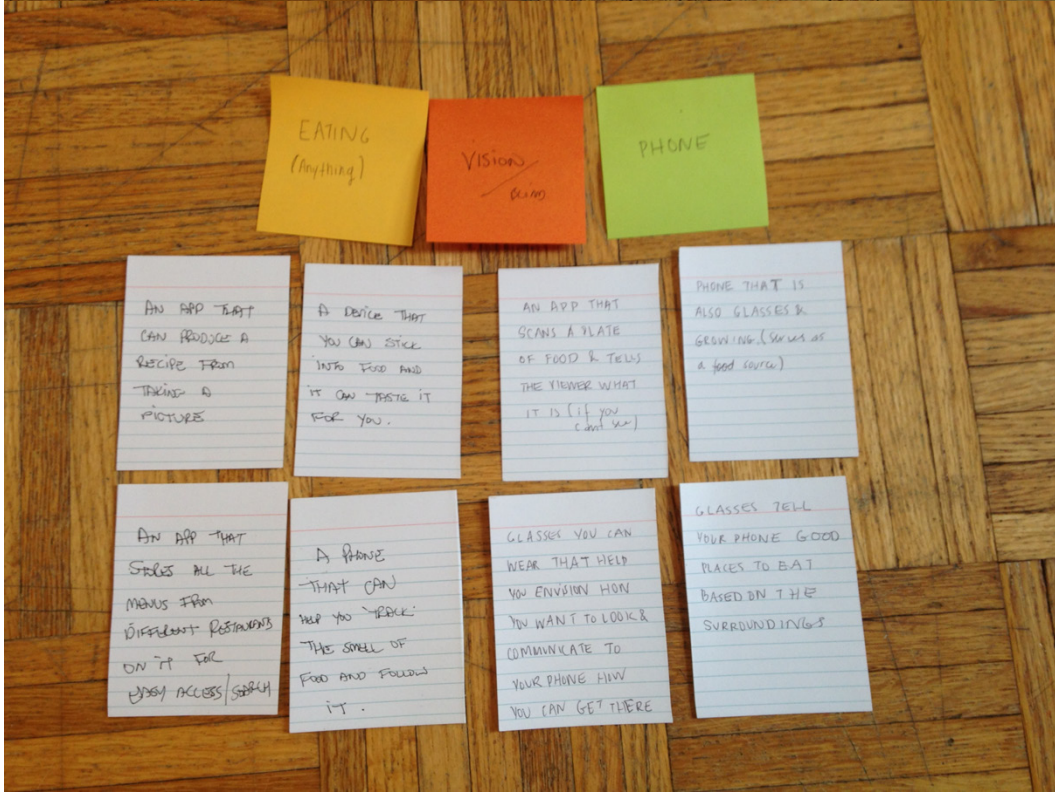
EATING (Anything)

VISION / BLIND

PHONE

AN APP THAT CAN PRODUCE A RECIPE FROM TAKING A PICTURE

A DEVICE THAT YOU CAN STICK INTO FOOD AND IT CAN TASTE IT FOR YOU.

AN APP THAT SCANS A PLATE OF FOOD & TELLS THE VIEWER WHAT IT IS [if you cant see]

PHONE THAT IS ALSO GLASSES & GROWING. (such as a food source)

AN APP THAT STORES ALL THE MENUS FROM DIFFERENT RESTAURANTS ON IT FOR EASY ACCESS/SEARCH

A PHONE THAT CAN HELP YOU "TRACK" THE SMELL OF FOOD AND FOLLOW IT.

GLASSES YOU CAN WEAR THAT HELP YOU ENVISION HOW YOU WANT TO LOOK & COMMUNICATE TO YOUR PHONE HOW YOU CAN GET THERE

GLASSES TELL YOUR PHONE GOOD PLACES TO EAT BASED ON THE SURROUNDINGS

171

INDIVIDUALISM

MIXER

INSECURITY

PEOPLE GET A CUSTOMIZED GIFT BAG BEFORE THE MIXER

EVERY VISITOR GETS ALERTED TO PEOPLE WHO WANT TO MEET THEM

MASQUERADE? ...

PEOPLE ARE ASKED TO PLAY A GAME WHILE THEY HAVE TO FIND EACH OTHER,

CUSTOM DESIGNED BADGES

1 2 3

INSECURITY

A CLUB

OPEN-MINDEDNESS

CLUB EMPLOYEES WHOSE JOB IT IS TO GO AROUND AND SOCIALIZE / HELP PEOPLE BE MORE COMFORTABLE

A CLUB THAT ALLOWS GROUPS TO SET THE MUSIC / ACTIVITIES EMPLOYEES

AN 'ONLINE' CLUB WHERE CAN MEET OTHER SPRING CLUBBERS AND DANCE WITH EACH ONE

A CLUB THAT CAN TAKE INTO ACCOUNT INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCES AND ADJUST MUSIC / VOLUME / AMBIENCE ACCORDINGLY

A POP-UP CLUB THAT TRIES TO ENGAGE NEW NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITIES

AN ONLINE' CLUB WHERE YOU ALL LISTEN TO THE SAME MUSIC AND CAN CHAT WITH NEW PEOPLE

A PLACE IN THE CLUB TO GO 'TAKE A BREAK' DO OTHER THINGS

A CLUB THAT CHANGES ITS NAME EVERY NIGHT TO 'WELCOME' DIFFERENT PEOPLE

PUB CRAWL THAT TAKES YOU TO A VARIETY OF PLACES TO OPEN YOUR MIND TO NEW EXPERIENCES

A CLUB THAT HAS A FRIENDLIER BOUNCER (less discriminating)

SHYNESS

DIGNITY

THE PARK

A PARK THAT HAS SOCIAL ANIMALS WHOSE JOB IT IS TO APPROACH PEOPLE

A PARK THAT HAS SPACES OF SOLITUDE ENCOURAGING LONE VISITORS

PARKS THAT ARE SO SMALL ONLY ONE PERSON CAN USE THEM AT A TIME

PARK ATTENDANTS WHO SOCIALIZE WITH VISITORS

PARK GAMES THAT COULD BE PLAYED ALONE OR IN SMALL GROUPS. (LIKE FLYING A KITE) ✓ ACTIVITIES

174

FAHRENHEIT 451

1 I think I had seen that F451 cover before. It's interesting, but not sure how I feel about it

2 I think I like the spine and that's it

3 The type design is just ok. The spine is nice. The concept is interesting but I find it a little conflicting for some reason

4 I think there's too much novelty in the suggestion, it's too playful of an idea for the gravity of the subject

5 Yeah I think that's part of it

6 Plus it is kind of an inside joke. Or it assumes you know what it is about already

7 I was trying to compare it to this one for 1984

8

S
●● 4
♥ 1
▦ 1

L
♥ 1
▬ 1

175

- IDEA
- THOUGHT
- QUESTION

NEW

♡ I LIKE

♡ I DON'T LIKE

≡ SIMILAR EXAMPLE

≢ DIFFERENT EXAMPLE

? I HAVE A QUESTION

✳ I'D LIKE TO MAKE AN EXCEPTION

✚ ADD THIS

⊟ TAKE THIS AWAY

⚑ I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THIS

⚓ I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THIS

FEED BACK
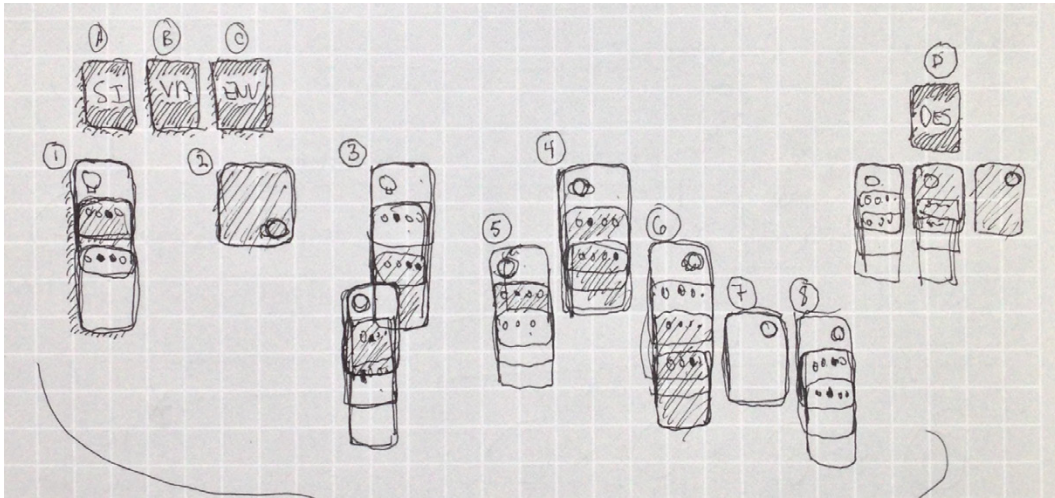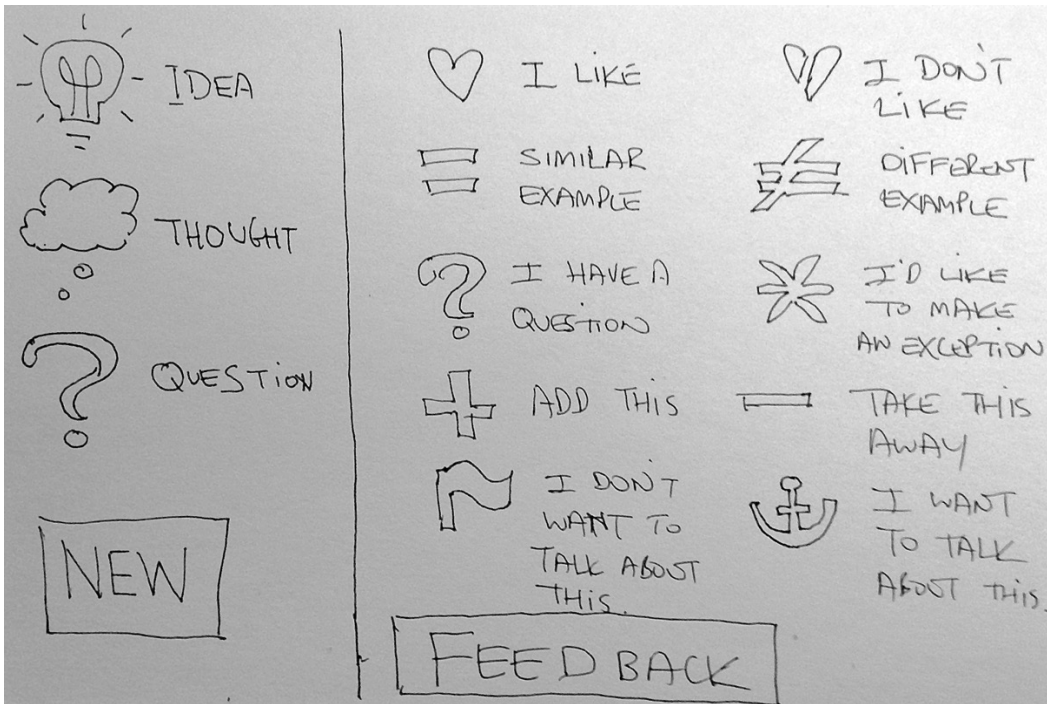
Appendix F – Participant Data Photos
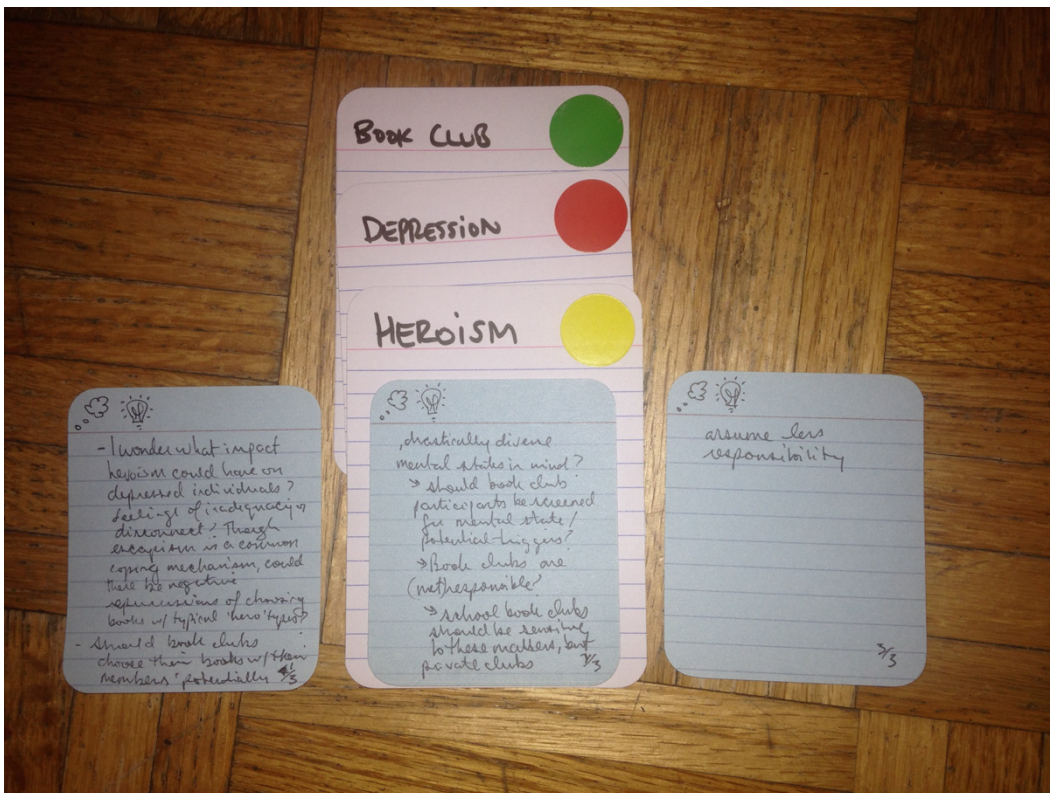
COMMUNITY

PARKING LOT

UNEMPLOYMENT
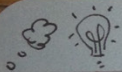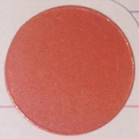
→ Foster a sense of
community by
advertising for em-
employment agencies,
hotlines, counseling,
services, etc. in
parking lots?

→ Could have community/
communal boards in
several major parking
lots where the public
1/2
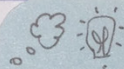
can help address
unemployment by
posting job opportunities,
websites, services, etc.
Work together to provide
more resources + opportunities
for the unemployed.
2/2

179
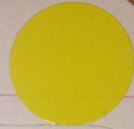
EDUCATION 〇

LIQUOR STORE 〇

DISEASE 〇
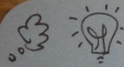
→ Liquor stores should
have advertisements/
warnings about the
dangers of alcohol/
alcohol abuse/alcoholism
/the use of alcohol in
combination w/ other
drugs VISIBLY on display.

→ The LCBO should be required
to educate potential users
of the drugs/products they
are selling + marketing.
(This means educating them

1/2
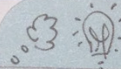
on the risks → dangers of
the products, not just the
new flavours + label
designs...)

→ Having a couple posters
around the store/at the
cash would be a nice
start, but maybe also
some educational
pamphlets on alcoholism/
liver disease

2/2

180

TOLERANCE
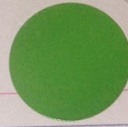
THE STREET

ABORIGINAL ISSUES
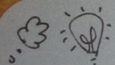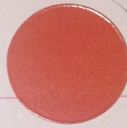
→ Pay attention; Do you see signs of intolerance? Do you see things that hint at aboriginal issues? Are we being properly informed/educated about aboriginal issues?

→ Posters + ads in the streets to raise awareness, focusing on the promotion of tolerance

→ Be tolerant, be aware

→ over-representation of aboriginals ~~xxxx~~

1/2
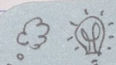
in the homeless population?
→ tolerance of homeless population

2/2

DOG PARK
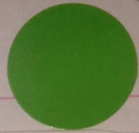
OPENNESS

ADDICTION
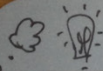
- Is there a genuine, practical issue to be explored here?
→ drug abuse should be discouraged for safety of dogs + owners?
→ But there are other types of addictions (e.g. "sex" addiction, food addiction)
→ what if the dog owners are all addicts? 1/2
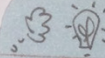
- We could create a dog park specifically for dog owners suffering from addiction, where dog owners can meet + OPENLY discuss their experiences... a place of tolerance + acceptance where addicts from all walks of life are brought together by their mutual love for dogs...? 2/2

LOVE 🟡

B̶A̶R̶ 🟢

ReLiGious iNToleRance 🔴

→ Love everybody!
(maybe not...).
→ Maybe bars should
have signs or posters
plaques, cute little
poems, etc.) that identify
their space as open to
all religions, free of
intolerance, and that 1/3

they expect their patrons
to show love (or at least
respect) for all religions.
→ then again, people of
similar backgrounds/
values tend to
congregate...
→ Have a special event
night at the bar that
is intended to bring together
people from diverse
religious backgrounds 2/3

to promote + celebrate
tolerance, or to raise
awareness.
→ more simply, bars should
not be places of religious
intolerance and patrons
who go against such
values should be warned,
then removed if necessary;
we should not tolerate
open acts of intolerance,
especially in bars (where
people go to relax/have a
good time).   3/3

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PRACTICALITY 🟡

HOME 🟢
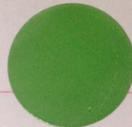
TRANS DISCRIMINATION 🔴
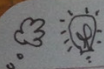
→ Practical ways to address/ reduce trans-discrimination at home? ...

→ self-educate; read articles, blogs, explore trans-community websites, maybe start your own blog to raise awareness/ open pro-activ ½
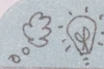
discussion.

→ talk to people: roommates, relatives, friends

→ make your own home a trans-friendly place.

→ self-education + self-awareness seem most practical. 2/2

CLASSISM 🔴

RESTAURANT 🟢
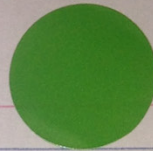
INFLUENCE 🟡

💭 💡
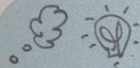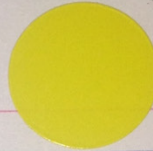
Can server/waiter
attitudes in restaurants
promote/encourage
classism?
↳ I think so.
↳ should use their
influence to REDUCE
classism; esp. w/
'fine dining' locations
— clothing restrictions

RESPECT 🟡
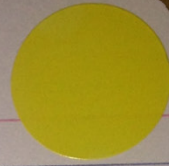
NIGHT CLUB 🟢
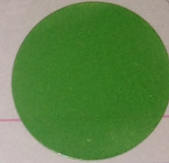
ANGER ISSUES 🔴
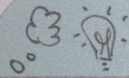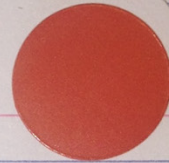
- Night clubs should have zero tolerance for aggressive displays of anger out of respect for all patrons.
  ↳ respectfully calm down or remove angry individual.
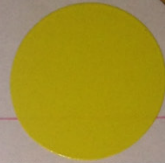
COMMUNICATION

DYSLEXIA
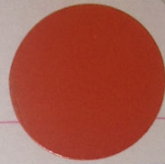
SUMMER FESTIVAL
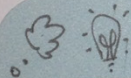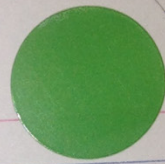
- Alternative forms of communication,
- patience.

- are festivals liable to inhibit (or impact at all) the communication of individuals w/ dyslexia?

PLAYGROUND 🟢
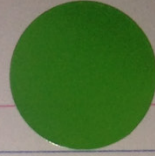
ENTERTAINMENT 🟡

invisible Disability 🔴
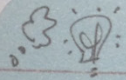
- Playgrounds may not
  be entertaining for
  those w/ invisible
  disabilities.
- Should we offer a wider
  variety of entertainment!
  to compensate for
  variation in pop?

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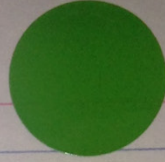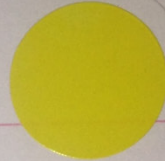
OFFICE

COURAGE

ENERGY USE
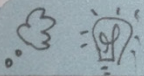
- employees should
  have courage to raise
  concerns about energy
  use in the office
  setting ; should
  feel their feedback
  is welcome, appreciated
  and concerned
- Do they have a responsibility
  to do so, though?
  ⤷business owners do,
     do probably.
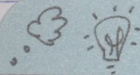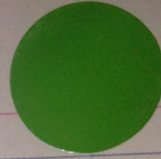
HOUSE PARTY

DECISIVENESS
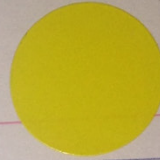
HEIGHT DISCRIMINATION
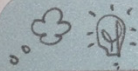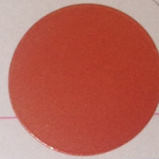
Decisiveness about rules
at a house party can
eliminate conflict/
unforseen circumstances
to be decisive + up front
about what the
house rules are!

FRIENDSHIP 🟡

SCHOOL 🟢

DOMESTIC ABUSE 🔴
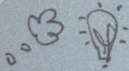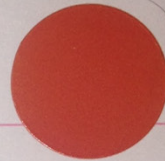
Friendship at
school can help
children/teens
cope w/ problems/
stresses stemming
from domestic
abuse.

FAST FOOD PLACE
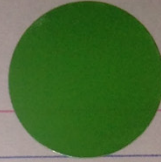
HOMELESSNESS
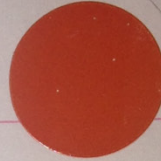
EQUALITY
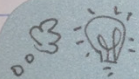
- "Paying customers only"
bathroom / entry
policies might
compromise equality
- equal access to fast
food places, judgment
free
- over-represented pop.

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DUTY
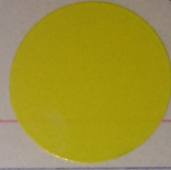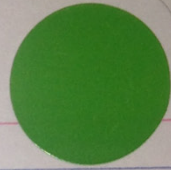
BOOK STORE

AGE DISCRIMINATION
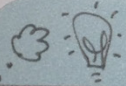
Bookstores should (i.e. have a duty to)
carry a selection of
books for all ages
to avoid age discrim?

QUEER RIGHTS 🔴
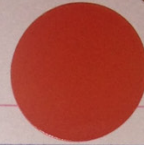
BACKYARD 🟢

TRANSPARENCY 🟡
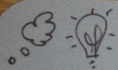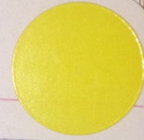
💭💡
- Does the value of
transparency conflict
w/ queer rights?
particularly w/ the
right to privacy?
(tolerance of ambiguity;
e.g. "my PARTNER + I's
- gender neutral)
- If Queer rights should be
maintained everywhere,
but does the owner of
the backyard have ½
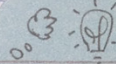
💭💡
the 'right' to demand
'transparency' of
guests, re. sexual
orientation?

2/2

CHURCH
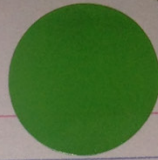
RACIAL PROFILING
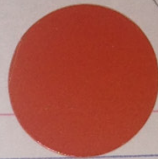
STATUS
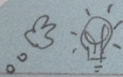
- Does status have an impact on whether or not racial profiling occurs?
- ~~The~~ "Church" is too broad. Some churches reinforce status, but are usually seen as a context in which racial profiling shouldn't occur...
- (don't have many thoughts)

COMPASSION 🟡

COMMUTING 🟢

OBESITY 🔴

☁️💡   1/3

💬 - I've seen + heard a lot
of unpleasant things
surrounding this
one

💬 - people should
exercise compassion
towards those who
are deemed 'obese'
+ use public transit

☁️💡   2/3

to commute.
💬 - Would it be a good
idea to have a
couple larger seats
on buses/streetcars/
trains so that obese
people can commute
more comfortably?
(compassion on a societal)

☁️💡   3/3

executive level)
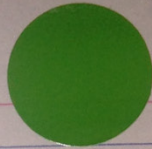
PUBLIC PARK 🟢

POVERTY 🔴
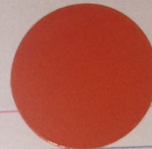
FAIRNESS 🟡
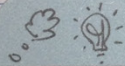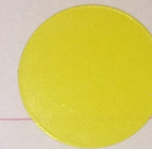
- smoking laws banning
  cigarette smoking
  in public parks are
  not fair, since poor
  populations are over-
  represented and, hence,
  more likely to suffer/
  be targetted.
- complaints about homeless
  in public parks: should
  there be places for the
  'poor' + places for others?
        NO.

SWIMMING POOL 🟢

JUSTICE 🟡
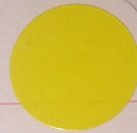
PARENTAL NEGLECT 🔴
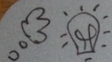
- trained 'officials' +
employees should have
the right/ability to
comment on parental
neglect + intervene,
for the sake of 'justice'
- It is just to prevent +
act against parental
neglect at swimming
pools
- Still, if a child suffers
due to parental neglect
1/2
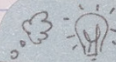
at a swimming pool,
would it be just to
hold employees (or
bystanders) responsible
as well?
- communal responsibility
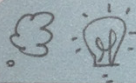to prevent parental
neglect (and intervene)
at swimming pools

2/2

SPIRITUALITY

CLOTHING STORE
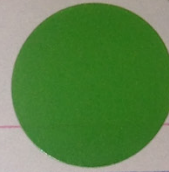
GLOBAL WARMING

- Clothing stores
should carry 'out of
season' clothes as well,
since temperatures
can be unstable
- Would an 'all-season'
clothing store be a
good idea?
by would such a place
be a good spot to
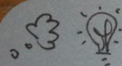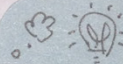advertise about
global warming concerns?
r_1

HONOR 🟡

ELEVATOR 🟢

ABLEISM 🔴

- elevator accessibility
can reduce ableism
+ promote a sense of
honor / respect?
- are enough buildings
elevator accessible?
should ALL buildings
w/ more then 1 floor
be accessible, or should
we allow exceptions?
- Should assistence
be offered to disabled
1/2

elevator patrons if
they appear to be
having difficulty, or
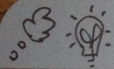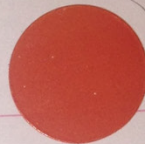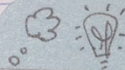could this compromise
their sense of honor?

2/2

COMMITMENT 🟡
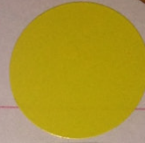
WALK-IN CLINIC 🟢

SEX WORKER RIGHTS 🔴

- Walk-in clinics should be committed to promoting / protecting sex-worker rights.
- Free, anonymous STD/STI check-ups + paps, contraceptives, condoms.
- Walk-in counseling for sex-workers should be made available.
- Should be committed to reducing/preventing   ½

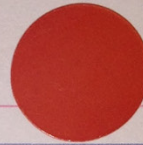discrimination + violation of rights (particularly privacy, judgment free environment, support, encouragement)
- Staff should be trained about sex worker rights/ rights issues?

²⁄₂

HOSPITAL 🟢

BULLYING 🔴

HARMONY 🟡
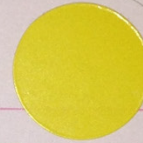
- How do we encourage/
contribute to a sense
of harmony in hospital
settings? Would
harmony reduce
bullying/discrimination
- Can preferential
treatment of certain
patients be considered
'bullying'? Does this
behaviour detract
from a sense of harmony?
                        ½

- Bullying + mental
illness in hospital
settings.
  ↳ Form 1 + forced
  commitment
  experienced as
  bullying by patients?

- reduce + eliminate
preferential treatment.
We are all equals + all
here to improve our
health.
                        2/2

PUBLIC WASHROOM

SECURITY
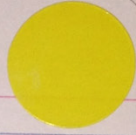
GENTRIFICATION
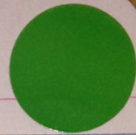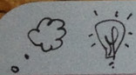
There are a lot of crimes/violations of privacy that occur in Ryerson's public washrooms.

Signs should be put up stating explicitly that the use of cameras, recording devices, taking of 1/2

pictures, etc. is not permitted.

How do we make public washrooms more secure?

emergency buzzers install in buildings that have security (e.g. universities, corporate offices) 2/2

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Appendix G – Participant Journal

<u>Preliminary Notes</u>:

→ Social Issue cards:

    ↳ mental health issues/disabilities + 'invisible' disabilities are well-accounted for, but there is a lack of attention given to visible/physical disabilities (even if these are generally more thought about, they should probably be included)
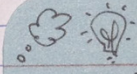
    (can obviously be added w/ blank cards, but, personally, I would want to avoid over-representation of one 'type' of health issue/disability)

    ↳ perhaps some cards dealing w/ environmental issues (e.g. recycling, energy consumption, vehicle usage)

→ Environment:

    ↳ "streetcar" used twice.
    ↳ Good diversity
    → Ppl. could add to these pretty easily.

→ Values

    → "order" used twice.
    → maybe add "honesty" since that's usually a big one for a lot of people + a tricky moral question.

→ there are so many values! I think this an area where having blank cards will be especially beneficial/ useful.

→ I like colour-coding. It tends to simplify things and can make the game more aesthetically pleasing.

→ Cards are a good size (both types) — both can be handled and shuffled easily.

<u>1st play-through: 10x 90 second rounds, "Slot Machine" play.</u>

⟹ Some combinations that come out aren't particularly fruitful (at least not at first glance / immediately). They are too specific or abstract (this is where I can see the anchor piece being particularly useful. ("sustainability", "hotel lobby", "faith")

⟹ Timed solo play might not be so fruitful. Rather, as fruitful as when used in a group. ~~Sometime~~ It prevents the player from being unable to move forward, though it might be good for the player to stop + reflect if they find a combination that has them intrigued, baffled, thinking in new ways.

→ I find myself really wanting to talk to other people about the combinations; to compare our ideas + have discussions

→ 4 plays in, no triggers yet.

⟹ Not sure I can clearly distinguish btwn what counts as a 'thought' and what an 'idea'.

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→ I'm really not sure if specifying types of
mental illness /'disability' is useful. Most
~~lay~~ lay people probably don't even know
what these conditions are or how to
distinguish them, ~~also~~ Actually, this holds
for a lot of issues, though. I can see solo
players running for Google/Wikipedia
an awful lot while playing!

⇒ Another weird combos: Gentrification, public
washroom, security.
    → anchored gentrification

→ Global warming, clothing store, spirituality.
    (→ This game seems to be more of a test
        of creativity than anything else at times!
    → anchored spirituality.

2nd play-through: 10× 30 seconds, Slot machine.

→ 30 seconds might not be enough time. The combos that come up are often complex and will be novel to most people. I am not sure if 30 seconds is enough time to process the cards and generate ideas (though thoughts may certainly arise instantaneously)... I'm tempted to say 60 seconds - 90 seconds would be a better minimum for this game.

→ Again, a lot of unusual combinations. Anchoring has been effective. While these situations are certainly useful for encouraging creativity or lightening the mood, I'm not sure they are ~~going to~~ going to... Hmm... I guess some combinations just seem silly or unimportant when combined, though the individual pieces may be important issues.
  → breaking through the initial absurdity.

→ I've definitely encountered some prejudices / immediate responses on my part.
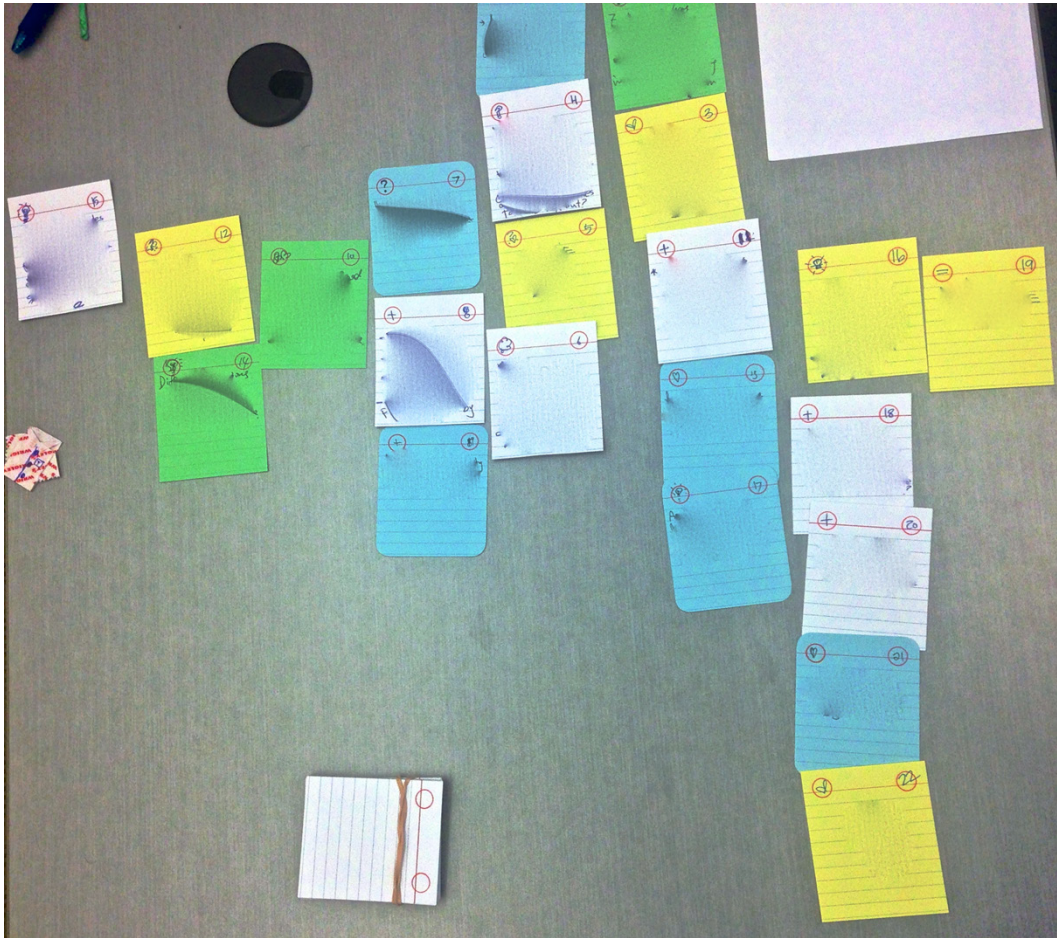 (e.g. "Hate speech is never okay!")

3rd Play-through: 10x untimed
Slot Machine.

→ addiction, in a dog park, using the value of openness...
   ⇒ Is there a genuine issue to be explored here?
   ⇒ drug abuse should he discouraged for the
   safety of dogs ~~?bbbb~~ ... openly?

Appendix H – Inclusive Design Workshop Photos

Appendix I – Passwords Guideline

__Passwords - Guidelines for Play__

'Passwords' is a playful form of creative dialogue that is suggested for 1-4 people. It is a very simple and highly customizable activity that can be scaled for size and complexity. You should be able to play from scratch using only pieces of paper and writing instruments.

Objective:

'Passwords' is a way to explore conversation through writing, and a way of learning about other people through how they think and respond to certain issues, conversation topics, suggestions, and new ideas.

The objective in *Passwords* is to try and keep an accurate record of the conversation you are having, but it can also be a way to keep the conversation going longer and letting it wander 'off topic' without worry.

It is recommended that you start simply and work your way up through more complex modes of play until you are comfortable enough to fully customize it to your liking and even make up new rules for yourself. At that point, you have hopefully memorized how to play and do not require this quideline.

Pieces:

1. **Topic Cards** (Large White Cards) - Topic Cards are used as subject-driven 'fence posts'. You may use anywhere from 1-4 colors of topic cards in order to construct a combination of cards into a Community Hand that will then become the container for your ideas/thoughts/feedback. The Topic Cards suggested for play are:

   - Social Issues (Red label)
   - Values (Yellow label)
   - Environments (Green label)
   - Design Types (Blue label)

   You should either have Topic Cards filled out for each category ahead of time, or you may want to do it together as a group. You should start by filling out Topics Cards with as many topics as possible (one per card) with no boundaries. Some Topic Cards may require extra explanation, in which case you may want to include a description of things people may not understand, like a particular social issue. Once you get more familiar with how Passwords works, you can start playing with blank Topic Cards from scratch and fill them with Topics that are specific to the conversation you want to have. This will become more difficult the more people you play with.

2. **Idea Cards** (Small Colored cards) - Idea Cards are used by each individual

    player to write down an idea/ thought/feedback in response to the subject

    of discussion and/or each other's Ideas Cards. Each player should have

    their own unique color of card to identify them during play. Idea cards are

    intended to be a way to have a conversation with others. Thus, in

    Passwords, anything you say to others is also what you should write down.

    a. **Notation** (Idea Cards) - You may use the top corners of each card

        for notation. The top left corner of an Idea Card can be given an

        icon to show what type of message you are writing and the top

        right corner of an Idea Card can be given a number to show the

        order in which the card is played in relation to other players' cards.

        Ideas Cards are filled out in response to Topic Cards. The In group

        play, icons and numbers are crucial for keeping the conversation

        going while maintaining a sense of order depending on the Idea

        Card mechanic you choose. The following are 3 sets of notation.

        The first set is the Idea Set, the second set is the Feedback Set, and

        the third set is the Control Set. Each has their own icons for you to

        draw on your Idea Cards as you fill them in. It will be helpful to

        write these down on a separate card as a player reference until you

        are more familiar with the notation.

Notation Icons

- **Idea Set**
  - **Cloud Icon** - Random Thought
  - **Light Bulb Icon** - New Idea
  - **Heart/Broken Heart** - I like/don't like this about your idea'
- **Feedback Set**
  - **Equal Sign/Doesn't Equal Sign** - 'This is an example of something similar/something contrary to your idea
  - **Question Mark** - The Question Mark is used to ask for clarification or further articulation on an idea.
  - **Asterix** - The Asterix is to illustrate a exception, effectively saying to another player, "Your idea would not work in this specific way"
  - **The Plus Sign/Minus Sign** - These are used to add or take away aspects of an idea. They may also be used to address previous feedback cards, such as creating an addition to an idea in response to a previously played, 'question'.
- **Control Set**
  - **Anchor** – Use this to display you desire to keep talking about this specific idea or thought or piece of feedback
  - **Flag** – Use this to completely halt the current thread of conversation, so that no one can talk about it further

3. **Optional Pieces**

  - Game Timers are useful for keeping the game pace. It is recommended to initially use a longer time until players are comfortable with more rapid fire play.
  - Dice (optional) - Dice may be used to help decide on a number, such as the number/type of Topic Cards to play or perhaps which player plays next.

Topic Card Mechanics:

The aim is to make a 'community hand' of Topic Cards by playing one of each Topic Card category to the table. **Choose** the number of topic colors you will be playing with. If this is your first time, it is not suggested that you play with the blue deck. **Choose** whether or not you will be inserting blank cards into any of the decks, or if you only want to play with blank cards. If this is your first time, it is not recommended you use any blank cards. **Choose** the game mechanic you will be playing with. They are as follows:

1. **Slot Machine**

     i. Shuffle each deck independently and turn them face down.
     ii. To make a topic combination, simply draw one card from each deck.

2. **Solitaire**

     i.   Shuffle all the decks into one large deck and place face down
     ii. Draw 3 cards at a time, keeping ones you like, and discarding ones that hold no interest
     iii. As you do this, try rearrange cards into interesting combinations until you have a combination that you like, regardless of how many topic colours it contains.
     iv. Place an anchor block on top of combinations to alleviate confusion

3. **Tic Tac Toe**
     i.   Shuffle all the decks into one large deck and place face down
     ii. Draw 1 card at a time into an imaginary 3x3 grid without discarding any cards
     iii. You may not rearrange cards after they are placed
     iv. Try to be mindful of potential combinations that could be made in straight lines (vertical, horizontal and diagonal) as you lay down cards. ‐ DIY
     v.   Try to come up with your own game mechanic

   vi. Think about how the mechanic can favour random combinations or provide the ability for the player to create specific combinations easily

Once a Topic Card Hand has been played to the table, it is up to the players to look at the topics and try to see them as a problem to be solved. For instance, if the cards are: Age Discrimination + Food Court + Cooperation, then you are asking each player to ask themselves,

What's idea that addresses age discrimination in a food court using cooperation?

How each player responds and how players discuss their ideas is where the Idea Cards come in.

Idea Card Mechanics

Regardless of which game mechanic you choose to create topic combinations, you will be using idea cards to write down thoughts/ideas that address those topic cards. Depending on the style of Idea Card mechanics, your ideas will be interacting with other players' ideas as well as their feedback.

General Mechanics

- You typically start with an Idea Card Notation with one of the icons from the Idea Set; either a thought (cloud), and idea (light bulb) or a question (question mark).
- Try to express your thoughts/ideas in as few words as possible. Use one of the game timers if necessary to keep the game moving.

- The Feedback Set and Control Set are notation that is used for giving feedback to other players or limiting the nature of everyone's participation. You will have to decide on your turn whether to choose to write down a new idea or to respond to someone else's.
- Number your card on the top right corner of the card to keep a track of the order of card placement to the table.

Specific Mechanics

- Free For All
  - Players independently write down as many ideas as possible in a short time. A good time to shoot for is somewhere between 3-5min
  - Idea Set and numbering notation are recommended
  - Afterwards, players then take turns sharing their ideas
  - Verbal feedback is optional but recommended
- Round Robin
  - Players take turns independently writing down one idea
  - Players take turns sharing ideas
  - Each player receives one Idea Card as feedback from other players before the next player proceeds
  - Idea Set, Feedback Set and numbering notation recommended
- Tree & Branch
  - Players take turns writing filling out an idea card, which may be a new thought/idea or it may be feedback towards a previous thought/idea
  - Idea cards are placed in a similar fashion to Solitaire columns, with new thoughts/ideas at the top, and subsequent feedback/placed in a cascading fashion down the column.
  - A completely new thoughts or ideas starts a new column
  - If an existing column happens to inspire a new thought/idea, it may sprout a new column by placing that new thought/idea next to the last card played from the source column, effectively creating a new column.

Facilitation

For whatever reason, it may be beneficial for one player to act as a facilitator in the group. You can think of this person as similar to the dealer in a game of poker or a referee in a soccer game.

Facilitation can include anything from:

- Helping the group choose the game style
- Helping the group fill out or choose Topic Cards
- Dealing out the Topic Cards
- Helping to keep the game at a healthy pace
- Keeping track of proper notation and card placement
- Making sure that Idea Card content represents what is happening in the conversation
- Scoring up the notation at the end of each session

Scoring

The objective of *Passwords* is to have a conversation, and all of the notation of

Passwords can help you understand how well the conversation went beyond just

your own perspective. Possible categories include:

Overall Stats:

- Number of Topic Cards used
- Number of Idea Cards used
- Number of original discussion columns
- Number of derivative discussion columns
- Shortest discussion column
- Longest combined discussion column
- Sequence of numbering notation on each column
- Overall player satisfaction with result

Individual Player Stats:

- Number of each Notation used
- Number of columns contributed to
- Participation % average per thread