



# Bodily Boundary Objects

Exploring the  
meaning of  
identity through  
discursive design

Diploma project  
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## Summary

Identity is a manifestation of our individual characteristics and intentions.

It can be found in many different forms, spanning from physical features (skin colour, height, tattoos, etc) to abstract cultural elements (fashion choices, religion beliefs, political views, etc). However identity is rarely a passive component of our lives, but rather a powerful tool we apply to make decisions or position ourselves in the society.

Through identity we express, we learn, we confront, we find others, we vote, we change, we hate and we love.

How much does our personal identity play a role in our decision making process? Can it be designed as a medium to empower people? Can it be used proactively to be more equipped in case of uncertainty and hardship (for example in a global Pandemic)?

With this explorative discursive design project I attempted to gain a deeper understanding of the modern identity's multifaceted definition, drawing evidences academic research, interviews with people and conversations with experts, often in expertise outside of design. Through an inquisitive, reflective and analytical process I refined my findings into my own definitions of identity to validate through design.

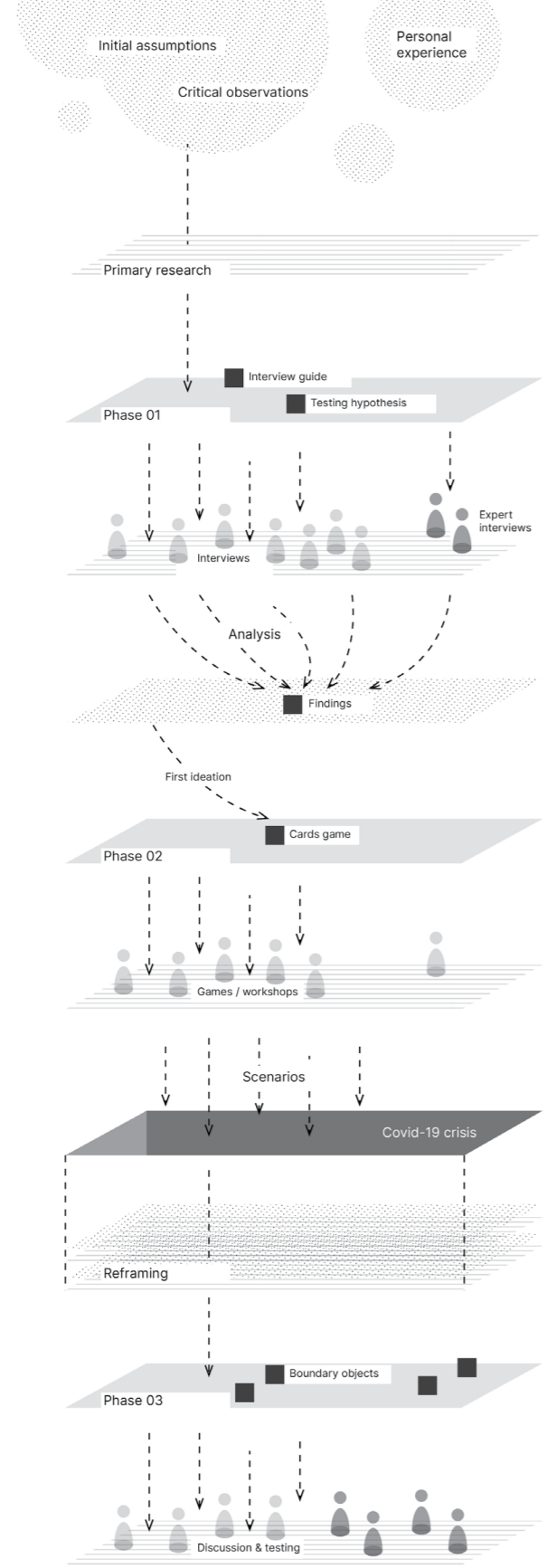
By mapping the areas of interest in the current global context, I distilled the decision points that I later developed into a series of realistic narratives, using storytelling, manipulation of graphic evidences and quick prototyping. I finally used these narratives as a workshop template to facilitate the conversation about these complex topics between a general public and specialists.

My main ambition for this project is to test the limits of what is "designable" and how design can be used as a toolkit to engage with complex topics, expanding and adding depth, instead of simplifying and minimizing.

At the same time, I want to contribute to the current broad conversation about the modern identity crisis and try to offer some alternative point of views through design.

Finally, by showing the adaptability and versatility of our discipline, I hope to encourage more designers to feel free of reimagining our role and impact in the society.

JAN  
FEB  
MAR  
APR  
MAY





# 00 INTRO

For millenniums, humans have been looking up to the sky at night, searching for the answer to a fundamental question: who are we?

We progressed enormously as a species and pushed our boundaries over the imaginable. We end up reaching those skies, and yet when we looked back at our planet the question is still unanswered: who are we?



## Motivation

As I explained in my diploma proposal, the motivation for this project is deeply rooted in my personal experience.

I engaged this project as a personal quest of unpacking a topic that has always fascinated me. I grew up exposed to different cultures, languages and lifestyles, and I developed a very flexible sense of identity. I take pride in the fact that I have to choose my own culture, it empowers me.

“No identity” has become my identity.

I do hold two passports, one is Italian while the other one is Chinese, but I never relied on them to concretise who I am, they only cost me bureaucratic pains in the past. This was a signal for me that this world’s understanding of identity based on physical hard evidences is not designed for citizens like me. This truth leads me to question often what do I rely on instead to build my identity, which are the tools and circumstances that define who I am. It’s an excellent personality training but it is also easy to get lost.

And it’s not just me. I belong to a generation of European citizens that have been living in a state of relative freedom and we are accustomed of moving across the borders, travelling

and living in different countries and being exposed to different cultures. We are also known as the millennials and “Zoomers”, the ones who grew up experiencing the transition into the digitalized and interconnected world we all live in. We are tech-savvy and adaptive, but because of the global crisis and polarizing political era we grow up in, we also developed a fragmented and fragile sense of identity as we live in a constant sense of the uncertainty for our future. That’s the reason why we often hear talking about the identity crisis in the younger generations, arguably at the source of many underlying modern society issues.

As a designer, I recognize this as a fertile context for exploration. I believe that through Design it is possible to offer a new perspective on the question “who” by converting it into a matter of “how”, segmenting the complexity and translating it into solutions that are easily relatable for our modern context. Further-more, as a 28 years old expat coming from a 1st generation immigrant family with a diverse cultural background, I see my own quest of challenging myself to find the answer, throughout this project, to my own question of “who am I?” and “how”.

## Why identity?

My Design history teacher in Venice used to often quote the architect Ernesto N. Rogers saying that “we can design anything, from the spoon to the town”.

But it’s not just a matter of scale, both the spoon and the town are interfaces we use to interact with the world surrounding us, and interestingly “we are what we eat” as much as we are where we choose to live. We often say that designers are problem solvers, however in this narrative I like to think that we are not just makers of -things-, we are the “toolmakers” instead.

This perspective unlocked what is possible to do with Design as discipline and elevated the role of the designer. Suddenly we are not just making things for the sake of the thing itself, but we became the facilitators, the translators, the researchers, the advocates and so on. This tremendously expands the

areas considered of the competence of the next generations of designers and I like to think that Design as a discipline is finally free to explore its own domain and language.

I think this is the reason why I have always been gravitating towards matters that challenge myself and my understanding of design. With this last project of my Master degree program, hence, I decided to take a step back and engage with a question that is nudging into the philosophical: what is the core of our identity and how can much of it can be designed?

The world we live in is a material one, we often set our values based on hard evidences, data, physical appearance. Things are changing fast though. With the rise of technology we see a dominant trend of virtualising, dematerialising and deconstructing our world into a more

fluid and augmented reality.

This affects our perception of identity in many aspects. We share more data, we take more and more fragmented decisions as we expand constantly our understanding of self, in exchange of instant gratifications. It’s only natural that we get quickly saturated, and as a result we jump back and forth between seeking high intensity (more productive tools, more efficient schedules, faster data flows and quicker responses) and yearning detox from it all.

It’s not easy to find balance, but these are all choices, choices we make to find definition of who we are and what we aspire to be, becoming an exercise of identity.

I am not a psychologist, sociologist, politician nor anthropologist. I am a designer, so how can I contribute to this

conversation with my own skill sets?

What I realised early onto the project is that what we need is not only to break down the complexity but to find integrity. To avoid being completely fragmented and disintegrated in this saturated reality, proactively filtering the noise and reaffirming our intentions has already become our main defense mechanism.

Said in a Shakespearian manner: to be, today, is a fight for personal integrity. And it’s my aim to build tools that can facilitate these choices and make people more aware of their own role in relation to the choices they make.





# 01 WHAT IS IDENTITY?

Like a sculptor, before I take the hammer in my hand I need to take a long step back so I take a good look at the block of material I get to work with. I contemplate on its beauty and its flaws. I mentally delineate the innate potential of the material and what can be done and what can never be. Then I close my eyes and take a deep breath, let it all sink in, find my voice and the words of my vision from the quietness in within. Once I visualised what I have to say, I finally open my eyes again and get ready to materialise my ideas.

When I started this project, I was well aware of the philosophical nature of my quest, with all the risks and obstacles I might crush myself into. The only way to avoid getting lost along the way was to be prepared, and I needed to be equipped.



## Significato & significante

When I started off interviewing people about their perception of identity, I asked my participants to bring a single physical object that they felt representative of who they are, as an exercise to warm up the conversation in a personal and less abstract term. Everyone came up with something very interesting and often unexpected. I printed each of them as a polaroid and collected them into a small photographic series (see image on the side page).

What became immediately evident from this exercise, however, is that often the notion of “thing” is not limited to the material representation of the object chosen, but rather the idea or the story behind it.

In Italian language we have the distinction between “significato” and “significante”, that I cannot directly

translate into English better than “signifier and meaning”, where the signifier is the container (the word), and the meaning is the content, the abstract idea behind it.

This coincides with my initial assumption described in my project proposal, where I imagined the identity to be both Instrumental and Taxonomical, declaring that I intend to explore the Instrumental (containers) manifestation of identity.

I confronted myself with an inevitable yet logical dilemma: how do I design tools of understanding that is univocal and static in the form (an object, a service, an interaction, a technology, etc) but at the same time fluid in the meaning and the representation of something rich and complex such as identity?

## An expansive research

When I started my Primary Research, I struggled to find projects or academic studies within the Design field that associate to the idea of identity I am interested in exploring.

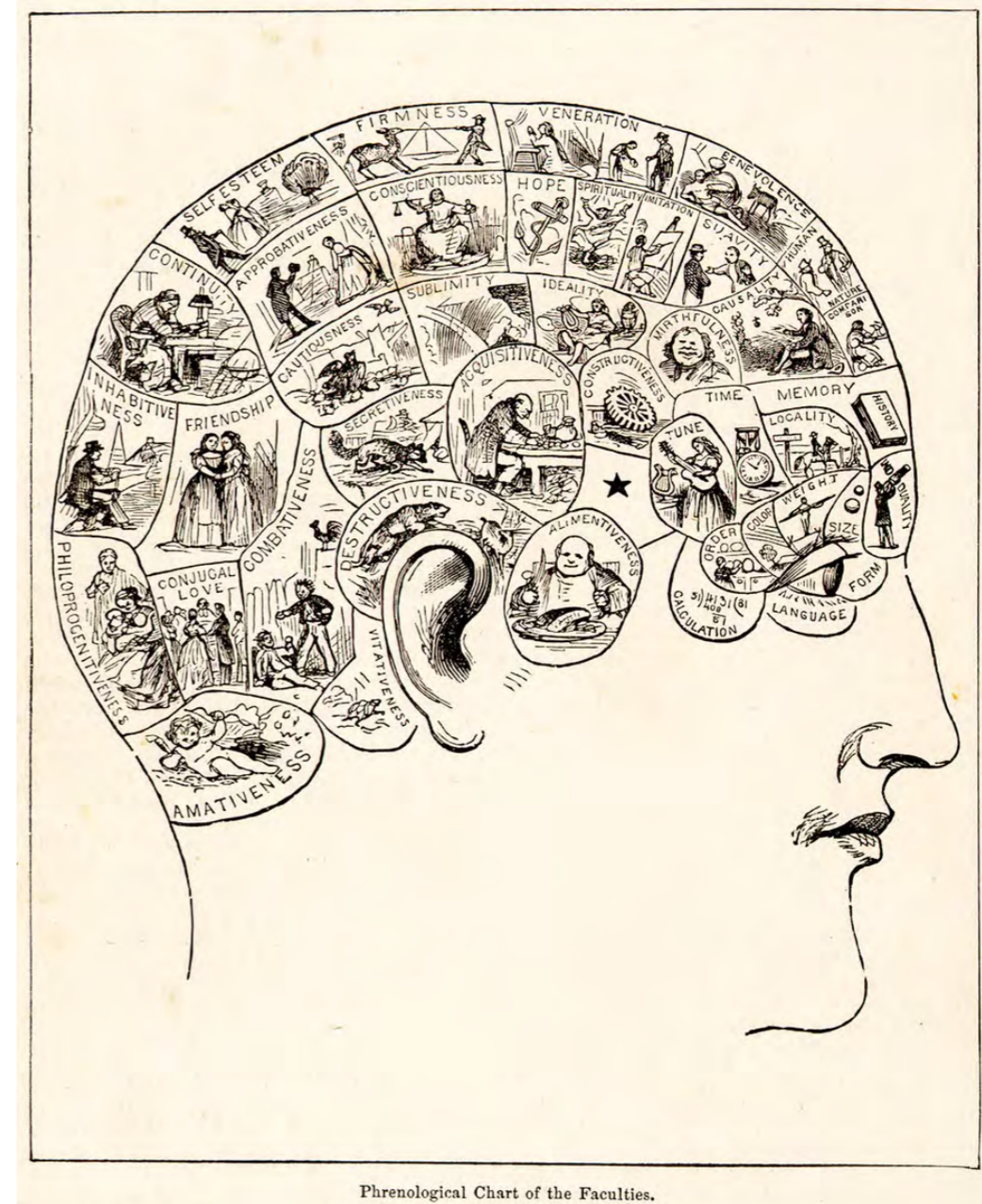
When we talk about “identity” in design, this is usually referred to a set of values and characteristics that define a brand or institution. We sometimes talk about the identity of tangible products or services but it’s safe to assume that in most cases these happen to be the results of an artificial personification process aimed to imprint empathy.

The identity I am interested in exploring resides more at a deeper, intimate level. But I was lacking of tools and rhetoric to build on this, so I expanded pretty early on my research into different disciplines other than Design, diving into unknown waters.

I first started exploring the realm of Art, and sometimes the hybrid common ground between art and design. I was especially attracted to the many ways artists are visually expressing their take on identity and how we can imagine and reimagine our body. (See Appendix 1.)

The projects I analyzed can be grouped into 3 meta clusters based on the type of visual language applied: visualization, expansion and emotion. Each of them offers a different approach to broaden the possibilities and playfulness of an intimate topic like identity and our bodies, but altogether they highlight the fact that Identity is a highly experiential matter, as all of the projects evolve around some level of manipulation or distortion of the body.

This made me wonder if identity is strictly related to our body only, or if



there are other forms of identities that are beyond the physical containers of our selves. In my diploma proposal I attempted to branch the definition of Identity between the taxonomical and instrumental, arguing that the first one is internal (how we perceive identity) while the second one is external (how we manifest identity). Art seems to adopt a more introspective approach, exploring and pinpointing fragments of our perception of self, but which are the external manifestations of self in relation to society, culture and more generally the world we interact with?

Without a doubt, Anthropology is the discipline that has a long tradition in observation, analysis and discourse about the cultural manifestation of the identity.

The first landmark was arguably set by Franz Boas when he introduced the concept of cultural relativism in 1887,

as it marks the ideological disruption from the understanding of the human behaviour based on biology and race, suggesting that it is, in fact, rather a matter of cultural and historical context. (Louis Menand, New Yorker, August 2019) Although Cultural Relativism has been very criticized and debated throughout history, it certainly opened the door to a conversation that shaped how we understand humanity, impacting.

*“Cultural anthropologists changed people’s attitudes [...] and they changed people’s behavior. “If it is now unremarkable for a gay couple to kiss goodbye on a train platform, for a college student to read the Bhagavad Gita in a Great Books class, for racism to be rejected as both morally bankrupt and self-evidently stupid, and for anyone, regardless of their gender expression, to claim workplaces and boardrooms as fully theirs—if all of these things are not innovations or aspirations but the*

*regular, taken-for-granted way of organizing society, then we have the ideas championed by the Boas circle to thank for it.” They moved the explanation for human differences from biology to culture, from nature to nurture.*

- Louis Menand

Later on, new branches of theories evolved from cultural relativism, one of which extremely relevant to my research: cultural anthropology and, more specifically, cultural citizenship (Lazar Sian, Aihwa Ong, Renato Rosaldo).

Aihwa Ong, Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, states that “citizenship is a process of self-making and being made”, pinpointing that our understanding of self (in this case applied to citizenship) is a plastic process that can be both inside-out and outside-in. But which are the transiting moments or tool we use to

generate these transitions?

Rosaldo, American Cultural Anthropologist, offered some directions when saying that “Cultural citizenship refers to the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity or native language) with respect to the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one’s right to belong, in sense of participating in the nation-state’s democratic processes”. Therefore the formation of self comes from the active participation and confrontation with the community, in a trial of conformity and differentiation. Cultural anthropology identifies several moments during an individual’s life (for example the school period or military enrollment) where the regimes can educate, homogenize the sense of belonging, while developing a national identity and civic commitment in order to create “good citizens”. However,

even though most of us under-go these forming process, we are rarely copy-pastes of each other, so where lies the boundary between the individual and the community, and how flexible is this boundary? Very flexible, according to Enging Isin, who claims that "citizenship and otherness are really not two different conditions, but two aspects of the ontological condition that makes politics possible".

But when this contrast is taken to an extreme, we confine in what we know as stigma, which is a discriminatory label used to distinguish certain individuals from the rest of the community. Erving Goffman, one of the most influential sociologists on the matter, defined "stigma as any physical or social attribute or sign that so devalues an actor's social identity as to disqualify him or her from 'full social acceptance'". However there is a spectrum of

ambiguity also in the definition of stigma, as we are all aware of our own imperfections as we face up to everyday situations. So, argues Goffman, the normal and the stigmatised are not two separate classes of people but the two faces of stigma, two ends of a continuum which varies according to the people, time, place and situation involved.

Although these theories helped me a lot in the framing of what I am dealing with, they somehow still confine the identity into the realm of ontological and meta-philosophical. There is a daily transactional aspect of our identity and sense of self that are still floating somewhere in the grey areas among these theories, and that's what I intend to explore further with some interviews.

## Interviews

Out of the readings, my questions were mainly targeting these specific topics:

> **Defining elements of a personal identity:**

This section of the interview was designed to better understand the mechanisms behind how we arrange our identities while navigating through everyday life, juggling between cultures, material possessions, social relationships, personal history and technology. The aim is to find out if there's any correlation between how we live and how we identify ourselves and others, and if yes, can I establish some common behavioural and psychological patterns?

> **Defining moments of a personal identity:**

according to the reading from Anthropology, the identity of a citizen is formed around some systematic identity formative moments (as cited previously).

I wanted to verify how people actually rely on these moments to formulate their identities, and if not, which are other "defining moments" for them.

> **Definition by opposition:**

Isin says "Citizenship and otherness are really not two different conditions, but two aspects of the ontological condition that makes politics possible.". We define ourselves in opposition to the multitude and the "otherness", but in the modern globalised, cosmopolitan and highly connected world, the border of "different/unique" are often blurred in favour of a more homogenous view of "world citizen". So how do we use the sense of uniqueness to our advantage? When does it become a barrier? We are all fighting for an equal and fair society, so what does it mean to be different, nowadays, anyway?



I sample interviewed 8 people. The main recruitment criteria was based on selecting people who have experienced displacements throughout their life and lived with different languages and cultures, plus, as a safety measure, also two Norwegians who are born and raised in Norway, and have travelled sporadically abroad.

As expected, the interviews were very informative and the semi-structured methodology allowed me to collect very rich and in depth data from my interviewees. Some of the patterns started to emerge quickly from the interviews, and I condensed them into my early findings that you see in the next few pages (the explanation of these can be found in appendix 3).

Building on people's anecdotes, these findings added a layer of objectiveness to my understanding of the identity.

They are not meant to be fully exhaustive and I am aware that they are mostly delimited in the area of cultural differences and personality definition. This is compliant with my research methodology I've chosen.

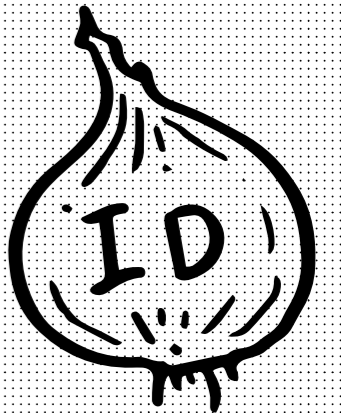
I decided to use these findings as initial principles to guide my design decisions. However, instead of designing for them as they are, it was simply more interesting to challenge them while generating the first round of ideas.

Combining my research of relevant theories and now enriched with the observations from the anecdotal hues of the identity through the interviews, I feel like I have more grasp of what I am dealing with. The problem was that I was still lacking in a clear direction and methodology to frame my project within.

I needed to find my own definitions.

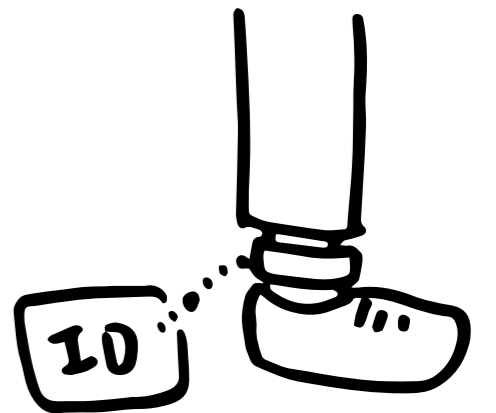
## Main finding 01

# Identity comes in layers.



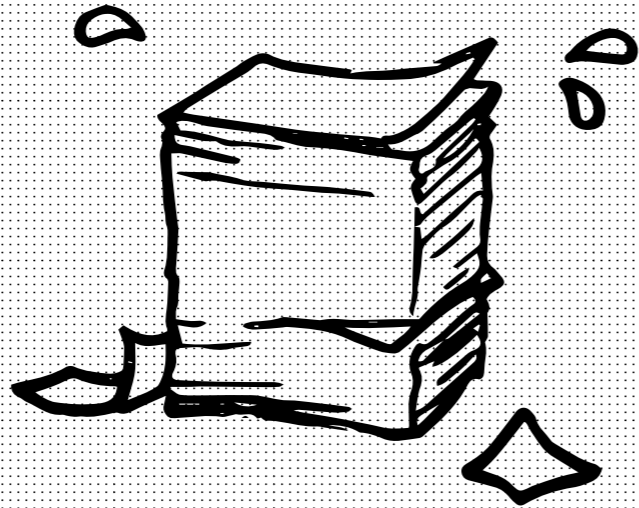
## Subfinding 1.1

# Documentation is necessary, but it should not be this powerful.



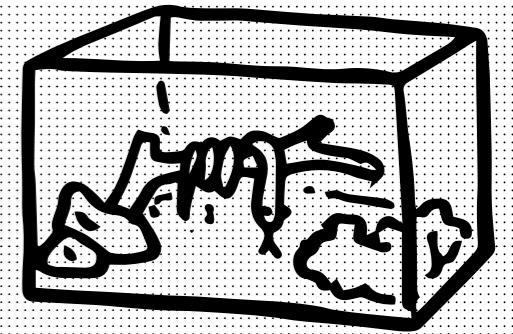
Main finding 02

Being different is a lot of admin.



Main finding 03

Identity is contextual.



Subfinding 2.1

Identity can be exercised.



Subfinding 3.1

Opposition is defining.





## My own definitions

To unravel this definition dilemma I was assisted by the enlightening conversations with my expert interviews.

The first interview was with Theodore Barth, current teaching professor at KHiO in Oslo and former Anthropologist. Prof. Barth's practice is suspended in a peculiar space in between anthropology and Arts. He introduced me to the fascinating concept of Boundary Objects.

Introduced in sociology by Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer in the 80s, the Boundary Objects are a category of specimens that can be interpreted differently across communities while maintaining its integrity.

Throughout history the notion and methodology of Boundary Objects has been criticized extensively for its

tendency to simplify the content these intend to convey by ignoring the politics and local conditions around the Objects (Kimble, Grenier and Goglio-Primard), and they tend to carry a certain degree of hegemony, as some others argued (Huvila).

Nonetheless, there was an undeniable link between the nature of what I am attempting to delineate and the idea of Boundary Objects, so I decided to use it as reference continuing with my project.

The second expert I interviewed that influenced early on my project was with Kate Louise Milosavljevic. She's an Anthropologist currently associate professor at Oslo MET. Her previous work in Prosthetic Citizenship was especially fascinating to me and among all the great pointers Kate gave me,



our conversation around the different “bodies” in Anthropology grasped my imagination in particular:

“In anthropology there is this theory that we inhabit three different bodies: a personal body, a social body and a political body.”

This spectrum of categorization matches with my initial understanding of the identity as a matter of “scalable extension” and “manifestation”, but it deepens it with a layer of sociological and political dimension. However the idea of “body” is maybe the most intuitive “container” of our identity, both physically and metaphorically. If we consider ourselves as an epicenter, this “bodies theory” implies that as individuals we expand our self-awareness in different dimensions.

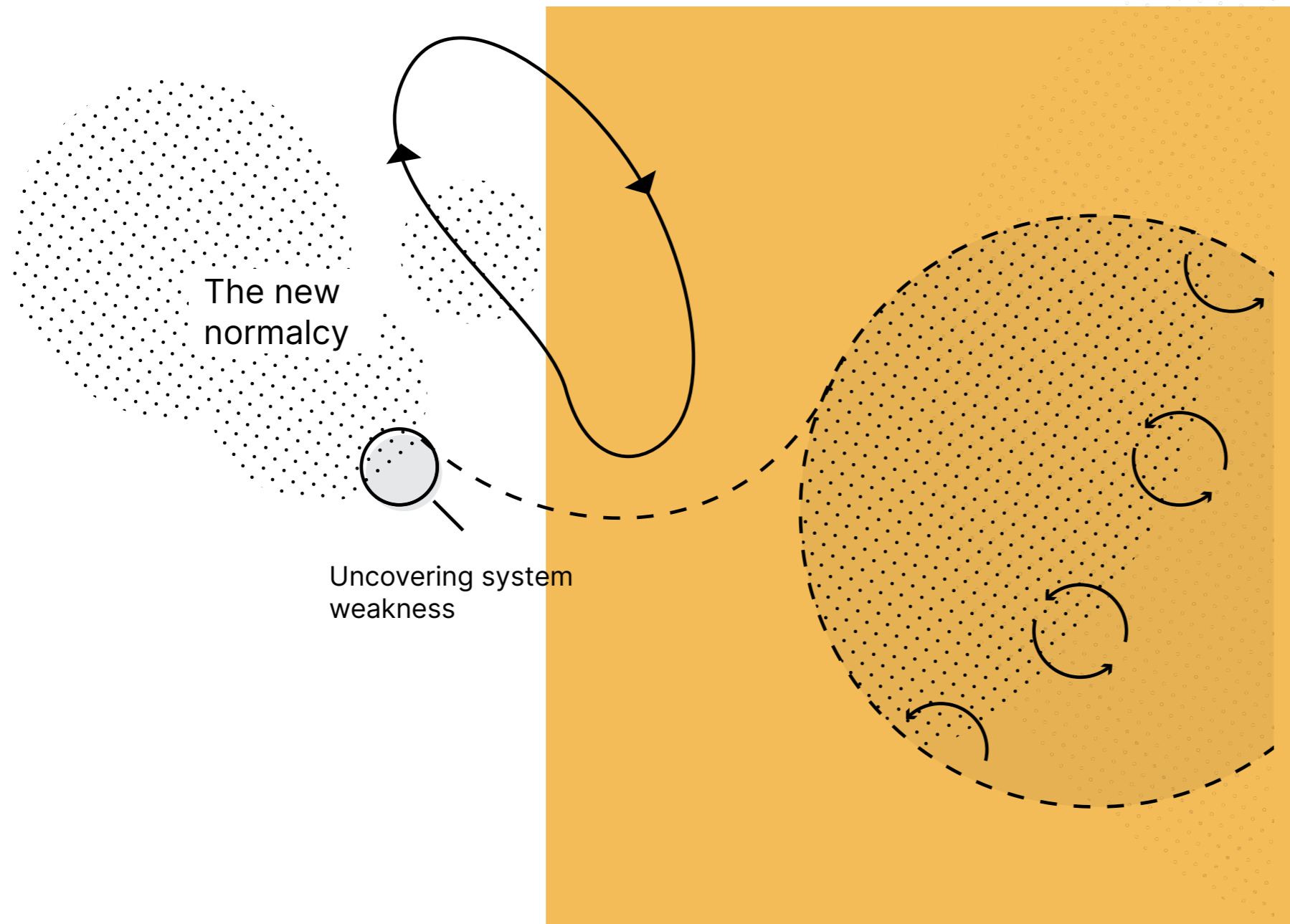
Therefore identity is a matter of definition and choice, and the expansiveness of where we outline our understanding of self is what I call boundary.

For these two reasons combined, towards mid-March I decided to name my project Bodily Boundary Object.

This also came with a problem statement: what is the current process of identity building in modern society and can we produce a more critical and objective behavior through the use of design?

Florida Museum, photo by Kristen Grace





## 02 APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The project name was defined through an expansive research and built on borrowed concepts from other disciplines and an almost philosophical dialectic.

Time to put on that designer hat again and start to ask myself what can I contribute to this conversation as designer.



## On design methodology

During my readings, I often came across the idea that, historically speaking, the design thinking is a distillate and readapted translation of problem-solving. Some argues that it's fundamentally preservative of the status quo (Harvard Business Review), while others say it's basically destroying the world (Mike Monteiro). It is namely solution-oriented and extremely applicable, therefore explaining its success in entrepreneurship environments. In order to be usable, the Design thinking requires a very distilled problem statement in order to generate a very focused process, but this approach is demonstrated to be highly inefficient to tackle high complexity problems or realities with a lot of uncertainties.

While I found this a discomforting truth, I encouraged myself to believe that this acknowledgement should be taken as a leap of freedom as designers, to embrace the complexity, exploring and

conquering the terra incognita we are enriching our discipline with.

Because of the almost introspective theme and the inquiring nature of my project, I couldn't define what type of deliverables I was aiming for and therefore I didn't start by positioning it in a specific design domain to frame my project with. After all, this is my final project as a Master student, I wanted to give myself the freedom and the risk of adopting a more experimental and explorative approach.

**For this reason, I think my approach should be framed as an explorative discursive design project.**

Discarding the mindset of problem-solving, my process has hence been developed organically as I go. I went back and forth between observations, research, analysis, interviews, quick prototyping and testing. The lack of a

linear conduct has not always been easy to keep it together and sometimes it has been messy, but it allowed me to continuously build my thoughts on top of other people's experiences and new learnings as I go in a fully reflective cycle.

However, the traditional designer toolbox I built through my years of study did come in very handy in many occasions. What I found out is that design can be used as much as a tool to ideate and create as much as to communicate and validate.

A very good example of this is the card game I created (see the game in the appendix).

After the first round of expansive research I struggled to tie the ends of the its complexity and translate it into something I can get feedback on. Inspired by the conversations and the readings, I started to collect a lot of initial post-it level ideas. But because

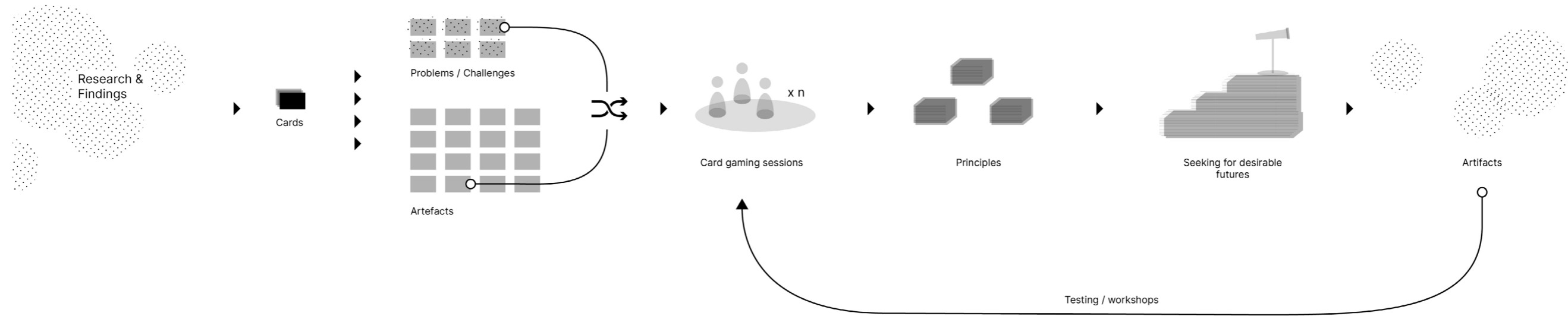
of their shallow nature, they were more meant to be provocations rather than solid concepts worth developing further.

After a few iterations and ideations, I decided to concretise these ideas into a card game, because it's an intuitive format that allows me to test them very efficiently without losing too much time at adding definition at this stage.

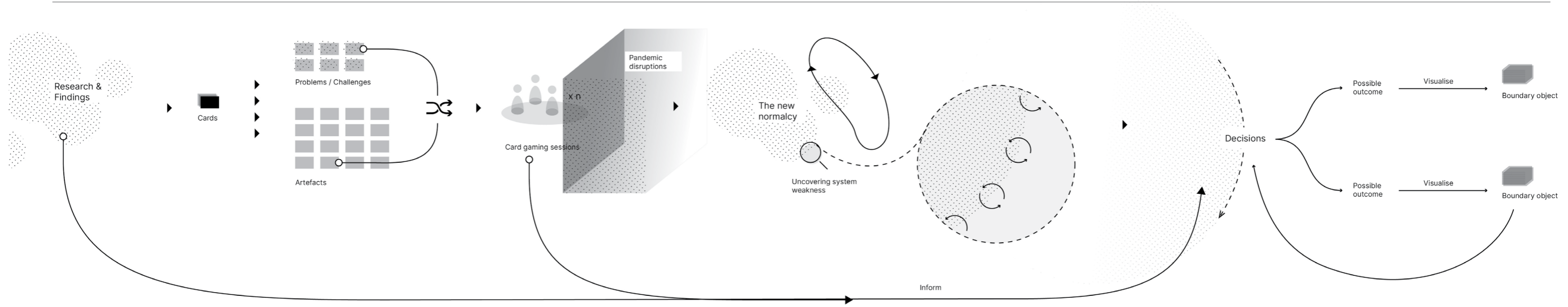
The format revealed to be a very effective way of translating my research into something testable with other people, and helped me gather very concrete feedback from the players. Although the participants found the game an enjoyable activity, they all found hard to wrap their minds around the problem presented. They needed time and additional information to create a scenario that is strong enough to build an opinion.

It required further iterations and refinement, but that's when the global Pandemic hit us all.



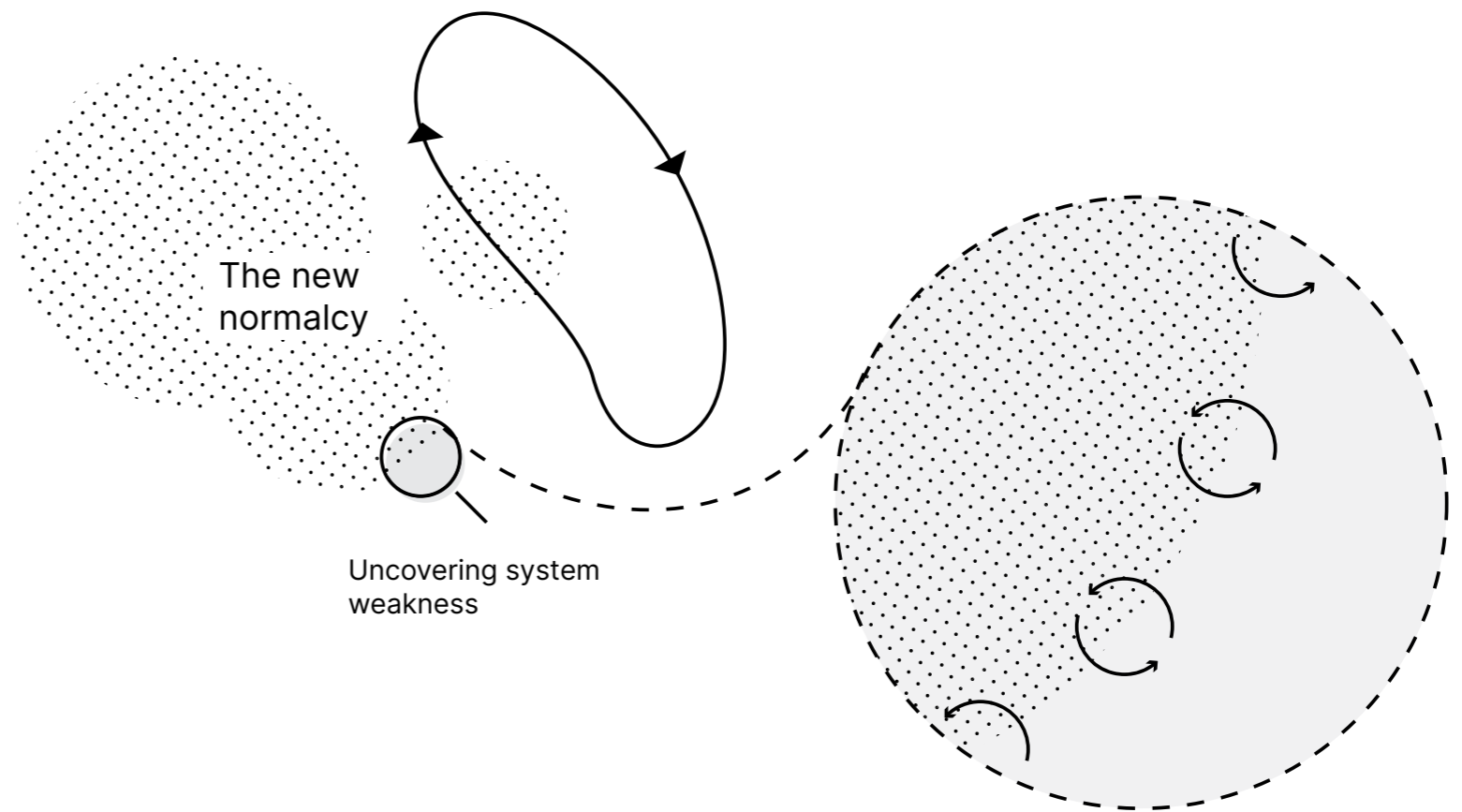


This diagram shows how I originally planned the process: analyzing the feedback from the card game, extrapolate principles that I can use as building blocks and seek for desirable futures, and use those future scenarios to generate a series of artefacts that I can feed back into the users and create this sort of dialogue loop.



This diagram, instead, shows what happened to my process with the disruption of Covid-19. It shielded me with a wall of uncertainty over which is hard to see. Behind this dark curtain, however, there is a cluster turbulences that we recognise as "the New Normal". In order to predict where these turbulences will lead the future, I tried to observe them closely and unpack them into opportunity areas, extracting decision points and scenarios to illustrate through design.

## Covid-19: Futures Catalyst



The horizons of the probabilities has been blurred by the pandemic.

My initial impression is that this crisis was like a black wall shielding our view of the future, but if we dig into it and walk through, what we see on the other side is that everything is still dust in the air, a state of universe dominated by a lot of chaos and particles trying to settle down.

My whole card game is designed to concretise many equally probable scenarios by highlighting the weak signals of anomalies. Ironically, "Global pandemic" was already one of the early

iterations of my card game as an event card, to add on as a possible variable to reshuffle the rules in play if the narrative we are building on the other cards reaches a kind of "dead-point". What was a mere inspiration now has become the predominant topic in whatever article, debate or paper I am reading these days. It seems like this has kind of become the only game worth playing, and this forced me to go back to the drawing board with the scenarios I was building and evaluate if they are still relevant with the new premises we are facing.

In a certain way, the Covid-19 emergency is acting like an accelerator and catalyst of the discursive futures.

This is what we call the new normalcy, but this new reality is still immature and constantly shifting and changing, forming a lot of turbulences. So, I sort of made myself into the meteorologist of the new reality and observed these turbulences closely and visualised these as decision points through design.

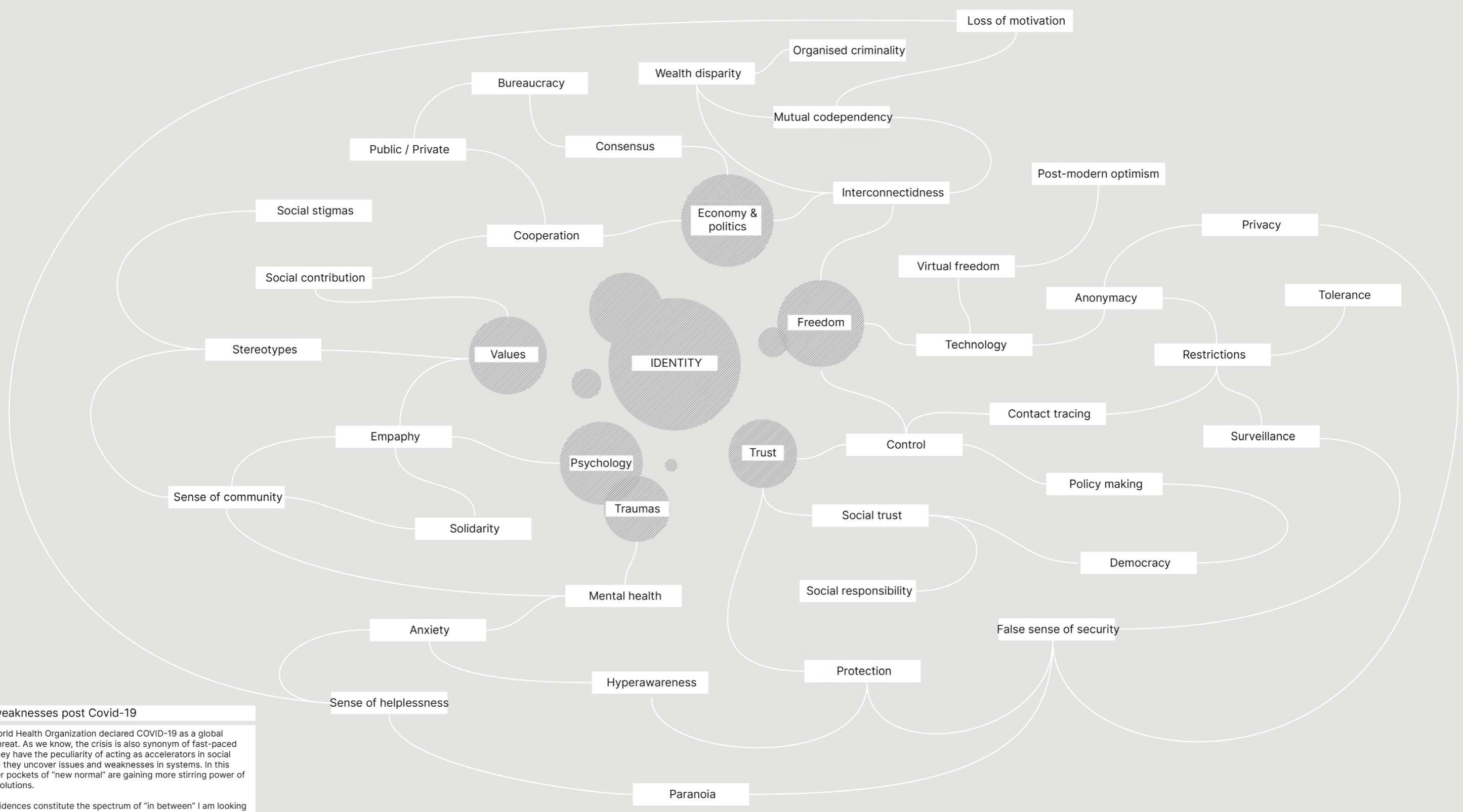
While it's true that everything is connected, I had to be very careful to avoid getting lost again and wanting to make this project into a Swiss Knife

with no actual purpose. So I needed to find a way to break this down again into something that is accessible to anyone and that can become a tool to facilitate the conversation.

So it's time to put on that designer hat again and start doing design.

By collecting and mapping anomalies and opportunities highlighted by the Pandemic, I extracted 5 main clusters of the New Normal that I found directly linked to my topic of Identity. I called these "Boundary Areas".





**Systematic weaknesses post Covid-19**

11th of March, World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic level threat. As we know, the crisis is also synonym of fast-paced chain reaction, they have the peculiarity of acting as accelerators in social development and they uncover issues and weaknesses in systems. In this sense, the smaller pockets of "new normal" are gaining more stirring power of probable future solutions.

These weaker evidences constitute the spectrum of "in between" I am looking for to define my boundary objects.

## Boundary area: **Freedom**

The pandemic emergency exposed the fragility of our virtual freedom, and, with it, the fragility of the systems we built upon it. When the governments started to shut-down their borders and set-up often contradictory regulations, we fell hard into a bureaucratic nightmare. What we learn from this is that our “freedom”, pragmatically, is virtual and not bullet-proof enough to sustain a catastrophic event of this kind.

A very much discussed example is the contact-tracing technology, and it's a plausible way to fight the spread of the contagion and transit back to normalcy. But it comes with a dangerous assumption: in order to work we need to create a reliable data batch, meaning that everybody should contribute to it by sharing their personal data with no exception, and this means, in other words, that we should all be willing to submit ourselves to some extents of vigilance and loss of privacy.

Given the special state of emergency, many governments started

implementing restrictive regulations at disposal of citizens . Although these measures raised a lot of skepticism and debates, it's generally accepted that we have to sacrifice some of our rights and freedom for a bigger stake in times like these, but to what extent?

Precautions needs to be taken when designing these tools. As we know, tolerance is usually the first stage of adaptation, and it is not hard to imagine how a reality that sounds excessive or sinister today might be perceived as the norm once we get a long enough exposure to it.

The image on the side is a proposal made by the Italian government on how they intend to implement safety measures in their seaside resorts during Covid-19 times. The possibility of taking a flight and travel to a beautiful Mediterranean beach to enjoy the sun this summer is simply not an option anymore, our freedom of travel and movement in public space is constantly restricted, reformulated and reimagined.



Source: LaRepubblica.it

### **Why it relates to identity:**

Living in a free and democratic society implies that we are given the civil rights and conditions to make our own choices, and this has been part of the identity of the last generations of European citizens. However, through the pandemic we realised that there is a fragile line between what we choose for our own sake and the effects this has on others. Therefore our understanding of personal sphere is also changed, and the choices that were free to make with apparent no consequences now seem to always come at a cost (for example going out but wearing a mask and gloves, travelling only if it can be justified, etc). So what's the cost to conquer back that sense of freedom? Is it worth it? And how will it affect the way we live, travel or work in the near future?

## Boundary area: **Trust**

One of the many factors that contributed to the latency of government's response is the lack of trust of the citizens towards their government as a widespread phenomenon. Taking for example how the pandemic evolved in Italy, where the government struggled to create, communicate, and enforce solid and clear emergency policies, and people responded with confusion, mass hysteria and violence. This forced governments to proceed in increasingly rigid reactive "stages" based on the gravity of the situation.

"The pandemic has proved that delays are deadly and expensive. If we are to avoid a cascade of future crises, governments must think beyond a return to business as usual." Says Jonathan Watts in his article on Guardian. He continues: "We need to accept – and share – risk. Instead of deferring risks to future generations, weaker populations and natural systems, governments need

to transform risks into responsibilities we all bear."

The fig.2 shows the screenshot of a food delivery app in China, that tells you the body temperature of your delivery guy. In this case, sharing something so intimate as the body temperature might seem like a necessary measure to guarantee the safety of the service, but most importantly gain the trust of the users, so they will continue ordering food on the app.

The disruptions we experience might be temporary due to the pandemic and they are not meant to stay, but we are blurring the boundaries that we will have to settle again once this state of emergency is over. What will be the new standard of privacy and who will be responsible for it? What's the threshold for a policy to be acceptable, before becoming oppressive?



### **Why it relates to identity:**

Freedom and security are two inherent elements of any democratic society and the base fundamentals for the formation of a functional identity. However, during this health crisis we are often left to wonder who's the ultimate responsible for our security: the government who makes the policies, the companies who provide the services or the individual citizens who try to act and live in their own interest? In these new premises, how can we build a new sense of security systematically and build a society with high trust rate?

## Boundary area: **Politics**

The European politics generally is based on a consensus driven system, in order to assure the representation and participation of all demographics and minorities through the decision-making process. However the consensus is often guided by the emotional response of the citizens to the current affairs, often influenced by polarizing campaigns and sensationalistic mass media. This consensus model limits a lot the ability of a government to make effective long-term plans, since the impact of a political agenda based on statistics is not as strong and as emotionally engaging as a hate speech. For this reason, even with the best intentions and shared interests, politicians are having a hard time to find agreement with each other, handcuffed by the interests of their own nation. Moreover this pandemic

has uncovered the fact that in a state of emergency this lack of planning and internal cohesion is, in fact, a very dangerous system flaw, weakening the social trust and creating dangerous latency.

As for the other areas, the virus outbreak shines a light on faulty mechanisms we were so used to, and offers us a chance to do amend and improve. In times of uncertainty like these we should not let instinct guide our strategies, but we need concrete and agile flexible tools to answer properly the emergencies we are facing now and in the future. While eliminating bureaucracy is not possible, are there alternative democratic ways of collecting consensus without relying on traditional heavy bureaucratic tools?



Source: Shutterstock

### **Why it relates to identity:**

After the disruptions, we are on the privileged position to redefine how the world that is going to be after the pandemic and who we represent as the citizens of the future. Therefore it's more important than ever to create tools that can empower each individual and find new ways of working together towards a better outcome.

## Boundary area: Values

While the governments struggle to find a viable agreement on international cooperative operation to stabilise the economy post-Corona, people across the globe have found a new sense of solidarity and empathy. This virus is affecting everyone, disrupting routines, jobs, and the lives of millions of people around the globe, in a way, social distancing is bringing people together in spite of race, nationality, social status and other differences. Through this experience we are maybe concretising a new form of cosmopolitan identity, but it is also casting a light on how inconsistent and superficial our value systems are. When our understanding of personal and physical boundaries is blurred, the sense of community is also shifting constantly looking for new definitions. These fluctuations might happen very suddenly and contribute to the formation of new dangerous social stigmas.

This phenomena is also evidenced by a continuous disarray of inconsistent stereotypes. For example, this virus has

been labeled in many different ways in very short time frame, for example “the Chinese virus”, “the Italian plague”, “the European Virus”, “the disease of the rich” and etc., as if one group of people or another are the ‘owners’ of it. These trends have obviously the main objective of creating that false sense of security that reliefs the sense of social responsibility, distancing oneself from “them”. These labels always come with a pinch of internalised stereotypes that showed they lack of foundation very quickly.

Even though staying safe and avoiding transmission is common interest of everyone, the way you follow and apply these precautions is debated with so much heat that it became a type of social stigma. For example the journalist Mckay Coppins reported that even weeks after the pandemic has become a national threat in US, if you wear a mask in the streets of New York you can be labeled as a radical chic democratic paranoid of the conspiracy theories. (picture on the side)

Source: The Atlantic

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of The Atlantic website with the logo, search icon, and links for 'Popular' and 'Latest'. The article title is 'The Social-Distancing Culture War Has Begun' by McKay Coppins, dated March 30, 2020. The main image features a row of faces wearing masks, with the central one highlighted in red and the others in blue. To the right, there is a 'MORE STORIES' section with three article teasers: 'Even Dead Bodies Pose Risks' by John Hendrickson, 'For the First Time, I'm Doubting My Decision to Come to America' by Yascha Mounk, and 'The Curve Is Not Flat Enough' by James Hamblin. An 'Editor's Note' at the bottom states that The Atlantic is making vital coverage of the coronavirus available to all readers and provides a link to the collection.

### Why it relates to identity:

The personal values system is at the heart of our identities and we rely on it to find our place in society and make our choices, it is a beacon of stability and sanity, especially in times of hardship like these. But how do we preserve the integrity of our core values during these turbulent times? Can the medias be reimagined and redesigned for clarity and proactively eradicate inconsistent avoidable stigmas?

## Boundary area: **Traumas & Psychology**

This pandemic is a collective tragedy we are all witnessing, it is something that will leave a deep mark on the generations to come. We will eventually come out of this, but with what consequences? The aftermath might have the longest lasting effects, not just for those affected directly by the virus but also by everyone who will live in the world post-Corona.

After the virus has started to regress and we move towards normalcy, we will have to inevitably undergo a transition phase, where strict safety measures has to take place and everything will need to be re-organised in order to prevent a second peak of the virus. Our personal hyperawareness will not be diminished, we will only be more alert, tense, stressed and worried, and this will in turn affect the way we interact with others.

Psychologists and many experts already raised the concern to public attention

and suggest we need thoughtful actions to prevent further damages of the post-traumatic symptoms on people's mental health. While we still don't have enough data to predict with certainty the long-term effects, what we know from researchers is that with long isolation we might experience increased forgetfulness, depression and even higher risk of heart attack. (Morris)

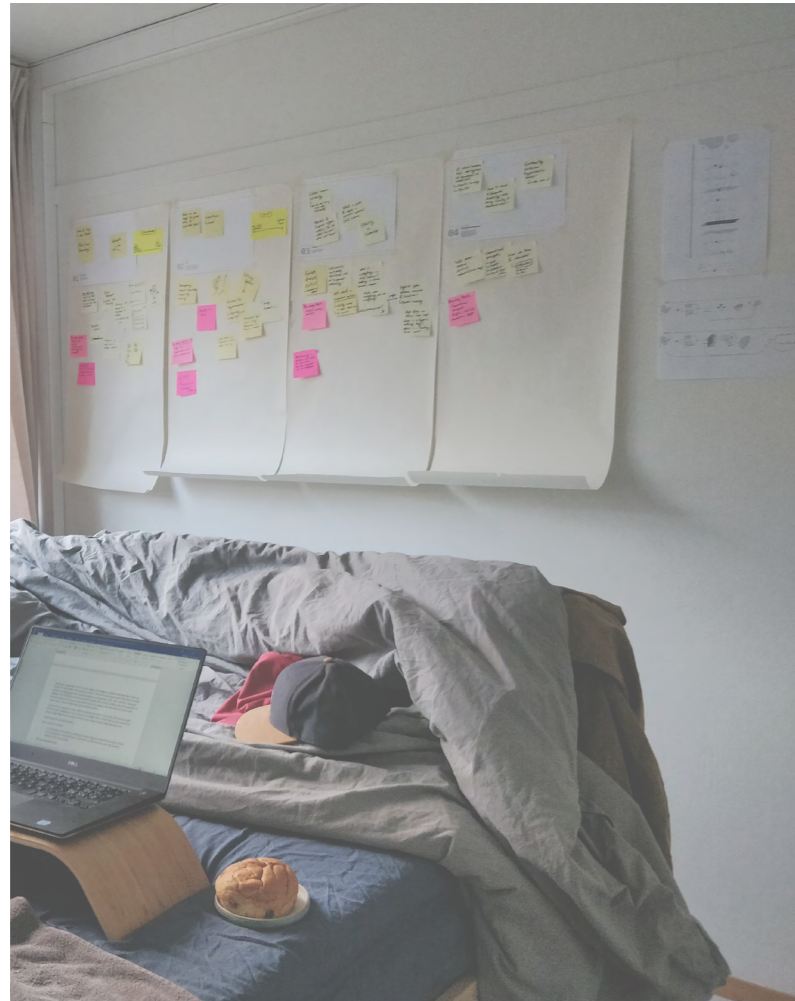
On the brighter side, during these weird times at home we got creative and explored new ways of getting together, finding hope in a new sense of community. Technology comes in handy in this, as digital support has already been used to help people deal with loneliness and isolation (see many examples especially for the elderly and children). However up until now these were always regarded as niche groups, not the entire global population. This opens up a terra incognita of possibilities to explore.



Source: Instagram

### **Why it relates to identity:**

Social life and mental health are two of the fundamental "pillars" on which we build our identity. From it we gain and share values, we build our self-image and confidence. Therefore during the current isolation we are forced into, we need to seek alternatives and find new ways of interacting to prevent atrophying and losing balance of who we are. Another finding is that identity can be trained, just like a muscle. So what could be an identity version of the trending in-house workout in a post-corona setting where we have a more prominent collective solidarity? Can mental health be collectivised too?



## How to do discursive design in times of uncertainty?

We are on the verge of a new era. In an article by Yuval Noah Harari on Financial Times (see bibliography) that went viral on social media these days, he states "This storm will pass. But the choices we make now could change our lives for years to come."

In the article, Noah Harari argues that "In this time of crisis, we face two particularly important choices. The first is between totalitarian surveillance and citizen empowerment. The second is between nationalist isolation and global solidarity." Even though this statement might be aligned with the trends we see across the globe, I find them to be also very polarized visions.

Polarizing positions is by definition a form of binary opposition (DiMaggio), and it tends to exclude from the focus the realities existing in between the two extremes. This approach tends to be characteristically not particularly farsighted. I believe that it should be in the best interest of the governments and citizens to make decisions and adopt solutions that are more equal and sustainable for everyone, while also keeping a realistic perspective in order

to guarantee a stable recovery from the crisis.

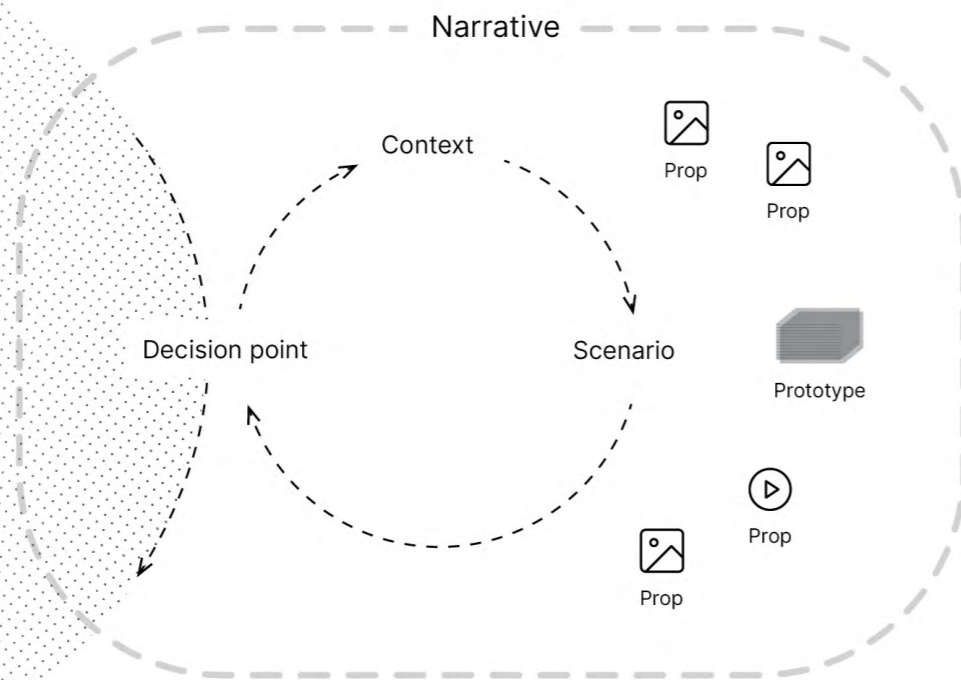
In this sense, the smaller pockets of "new normal" (the anomalies I extracted in the previous chapter) are gaining more stirring power of probable future solutions, as they are not symptoms of the mainstream trends or enforced policies, but they are representative of the side effects caused by human resilience. These weaker evidences constitute the spectrum of "in between" I am looking for to define my boundary objects.

This resonated very well with the working format of Studio Superflux, from which I draw a lot of inspiration to create my own framework.

Their approach consists in creating hi-fidelity scenarios with use of props, prototypes, images, installations and video sketches, allowing anyone to fully immerse themselves into these futures, not just rhetorically but also emotionally.

It's a great way of synthesising and visualising complex problems, facilitating the readability and valuable

Boundary area



insights. Taking inspiration from this, I designed a scenario creating a template tool that acts as a magnifying lens to zoom into the turbulences of our “New Normal” and pinpoint some anomalies very quickly.

As you can see from illustration of the template on the page aside, I focused on a single decision point located on the verge of each opportunity area (therefore a Boundary area), then I transferred the decision point into a chosen context and applies it into one chosen possible scenario. This process allows me to generate a concrete context around which I can populate as many props as needed to tell the story. The props can take the form of physical or digital prototypes, or simply fragments of the context as pictures or mock-ups useful to add onto the granularity of the narrative.

This template has been used to build the narrative for each of my problem areas.

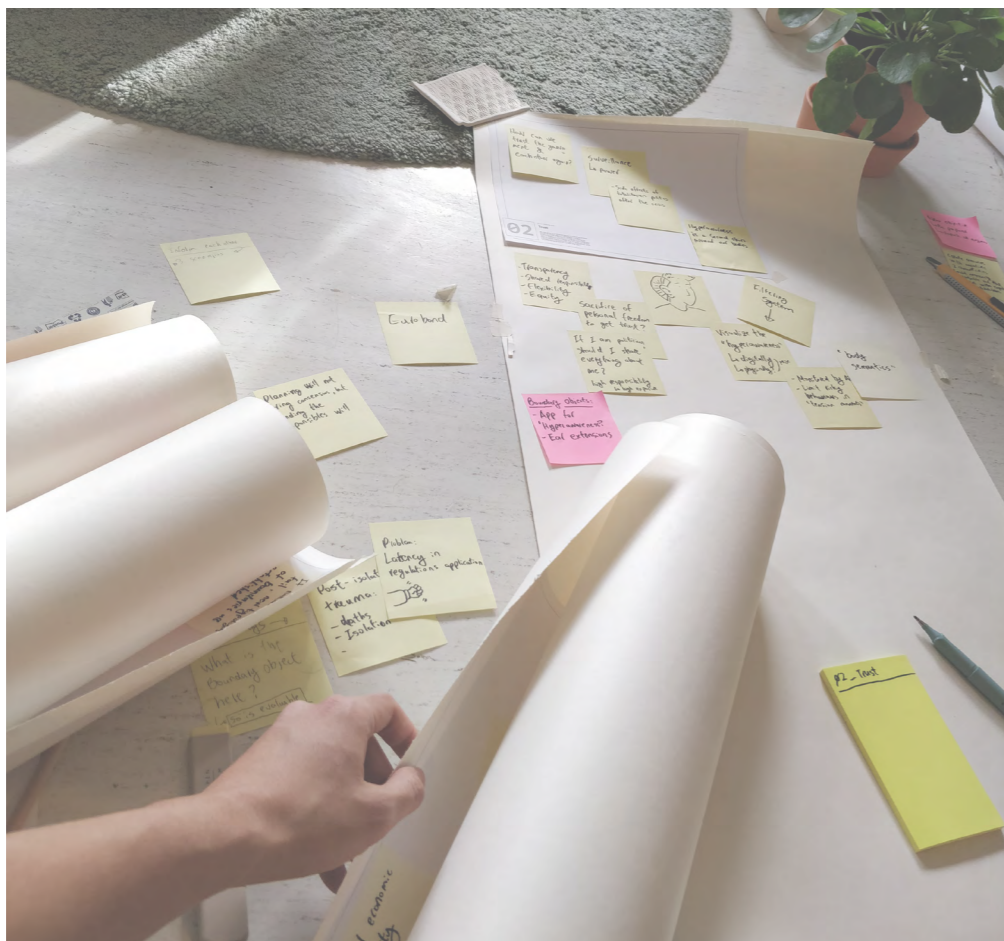
Although any decision point could be a valid entry-point to engage with each Boundary Area, my choice of these are based on the feasibility of the scenarios I can create with them, allowing me

to develop and test believable design in short time. It’s important to point out that these narratives and decision points are not meant to be an endpoint for speculations, they are not finished stories but rather a sneak-peek into a possible future, aimed to facilitate the conversation.

The choices we make about our identity are ever-present and we process most of them subconsciously. Their order of importance can fluctuate drastically depending on the context and historical moment these take place. Therefore the identity is never static, but contextual and time-fluid: it reflects the series of intentions we express in a certain timeframe and in a specific context we interact with. For this reason, the goal of these narratives is not to capture snapshots of our perception of identity as it is, but it’s rather to build tools that can break down the complexity of each choice we make into a granular state without losing its depth as a whole.

The main advantage of working with this template is its ability to create an organic understanding of the scenario as a whole and lift-up the focus from single





prototypes. This allows me to facilitate the conversation around the specific decision point and its consequences, instead of picking on the detailing of my prototypes.

For the same reason, the choice for the visual language for my props and prototypes are chosen to reflect as meticulously as possible each narrative's context, creating a sense of familiarity in the people I expose them to. I borrowed this criteria from the theory of Transitional Objects of I.D.W. Winnicott (see bibliography under A.Wilson), who has identified a specific category of objects we that "serve as a receptacle for internalised experiences".

This aspect of familiarity has been fundamental in the testing phase of my boundary objects, because the easy

legibility of the props linked the narrative into a phenomenological sphere, so that the response of the tester is not guided by the analytical mind but instead by the emotional response in front of the choice presented. By doing so I attempted to evidence our mental process behind the choice and to offer some alternative ways of building a more transparent and focused decision making process.



## 03 NARRATIVES

In this section you will find the 5 narratives I've built around the boundary areas I evidenced by mapping the anomalies of our New Normal that are somehow related to identity.

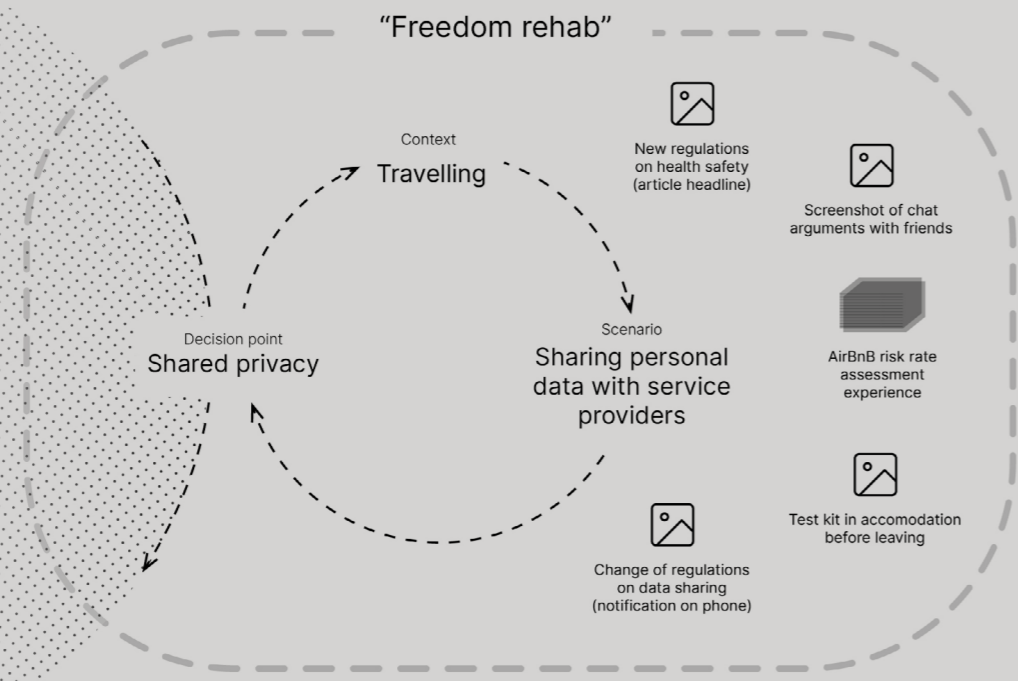
These are stories of different places and times, but told by people you might know. They coexist in an alternative and parallel universe but they are designed to be self-sustaining. You are invited to pick any of them that sparks your curiosity the most and immerse yourself in it.

**Disclaimer:**

Although inspired by real events or projects, everything contained in these narratives is fictional.

However, blurring the line between fictional and plausible is part of the objective of these narratives.

Freedom



Boundary Area:  
Freedom

Narrative

01

**Freedom**  
**Rehab**

## Narrative 01: Freedom rehab

The world economy got dramatically disrupted by the pandemic, and many industries suffered from the strict regulations set up during the health emergency. So, when the virus started to ease out, the policymakers started to inject the economy with a series of leaner and more flexible policies aimed to give the service providers more freedom to take more initiatives after this drastic lock down.

One of the regulations that came out of this generation of policies is called the Circumstantial Health Data Regulation. What it basically means is that any business can request access and process the health data of the citizen directly from the source, under a justified use and guaranteeing the security of their data storage.

When a group of friends is trying to book for a room on Airbnb for a holiday in Rome, they bumped

into an Health Risk Rating system set up by Airbnb, where they try to ensure the health status of their guests and hosts by requesting an evaluation of their health data.

This type of data is being collected in many different ways in the near future, for example using new forms of technology or apps for contact tracing after this pandemic.

What they found is the option to submit their personal health data either through automatic syncing using the Bluetooth tracking app provided by the government, Google Maps, iOS, or through manual input, by providing these location information together with some documentation such as medical evaluation reports and previous test results.

This created different reactions even just amongst the same group of friends. Some people might be

more okay with trusting the new systems, but some others simply are not really eager to give up their privacy for just a hotel room.

Most of the people in this group of friends decided to go through the data submission and they managed to get the assessment rate from Airbnb and become eligible to book a room, so they finally start their trip.

Everything seems to be going as usual, but some small things remind(s) them that things are actually a little different. For example, the host in Rome left on the table, together with keys, a small quick test kit for covid-19, so they can collect health data before and after the stay of their guests.

Then just as the trip is finished and they are on their way to the airport to catch the flight, they got notified that there is a

new outbreak of the virus and the government instantly shut down the borders and released the consensus given from the circumstantial health regulations in act. Because it's a state of emergency all the health data collected from the citizens travelling from abroad is made accessible to all the stakeholders to set up the safety system. This means that the air company they were travelling with made their own assessment of this group of friends and decided that they are not eligible to travel based on their recent travel history shared from Airbnb.

All of a sudden they realized their passports and tickets are not guaranteeing their civil freedom to travel, as that was revoked as a consequence of a decision they took in the past about sharing their health data.

# Narrative 01: Freedom rehab

DOW JONES, A NEWS CORP COMPANY ▼

DJIA 23515.26 0.17% ▲

S&P 500 2797.80 0.05% ▼

Nasdaq 8494.75 0.01% ▼

U.S. 10 Yr 2/32 Yield 0.602% ▲

Crude Oil 16.98 23.22% ▲

Euro 1.0773 0.48% ▼

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ECONOMY

## Circumstantial Health Regulations: a navigation guide for business owners

All you need to know about the new post-corona public safety regulations for the service industry and customers health data processing



### RECOMMENDED VIDEOS

1. Coronavirus Update: Georgia's Plan Criticized, 10,000 Nursing Home Deaths



2. What Role Pharmacies Will Play in Coronavirus Testing



3. The Vote-by-Mail Debate, Explained



4. iPhone SE Review: The \$399 iPhone Comes Back to Life



5. Doctor Treats Chicago's Homeless at Hotel During



# Narrative 01: Freedom rehab

1. Review house rules > 2. Who's coming? > 3. Confirm and pay

## Review house rules

**⚠️ This host requires a COVID-19 risk rate assessment of the guests.**

In order to help ensuring everybody's safety and health after the Coronavirus pandemic, Airbnb is offering an health status verification for both guests and the hosts.

Before completing this booking, please verify your health history in order to get assigned a risk rate.

You need to do this one time only as the rate will be valid for all your future trips, unless differently requested.

[Update my health info](#)

**The Cozy Suite -Rome Ancient- Campo de Fiori**  
Entire apartment in Rome  
★★★★★ 13 reviews

👤 1 guest  
📅 Jan 14, 2021 → Jan 17, 2021

€75.00 x 3 nights	€225.00
Cleaning fee ⓘ	€25.00
Service fee ⓘ	€43.05
<b>Total (EUR)</b>	<b>€293.05</b>

3 nights in Rome

JAN 14	Thursday check-in After 12:00 PM	JAN 17	Sunday checkout 10:00 AM
--------	-------------------------------------	--------	-----------------------------

🔑 Self check-in with lockbox

### Things to keep in mind

- 👶 Suitable for children and infants
- 🚫 No pets
- 🚫 No parties or events

Account > Personal info > Health info

## Health info

How do you want to submit your health information?

**Automatic sync of your mobile devices**  
(suggested method)

**Manual submission**

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English (US) · EUR · f · t · i



**To test the prototype**  
scan the QR code or go to  
<https://qr.go.page.link/UrKYa>


(Works the best on desktop)


# Narrative 01: Freedom rehab

**Roman Holidayzzz**

La videochiamata è terminata.  
24 febbraio 2019 15:31  
[Richiama](#)

GIO 15:57

 Airbnb



Siqi asked you to complete the Health Risk Assessment for this booking on Airbnb.

GIO 19:38

Omg is this really necessary? 😬

I am afraid it is... These are the new regulations from Europe. And you know, it's for everybody's safety after all

Yeah but they are asking me to share my phone's gps history! I don't know, I think these things are going too far.

You guys know how I am cautious about these things and I have a very bad feeling about this one.

I don't think I will join you for this trip... 😬

+ GIF 📎 📷 Digita un messaggio, @nome... 😊 👍



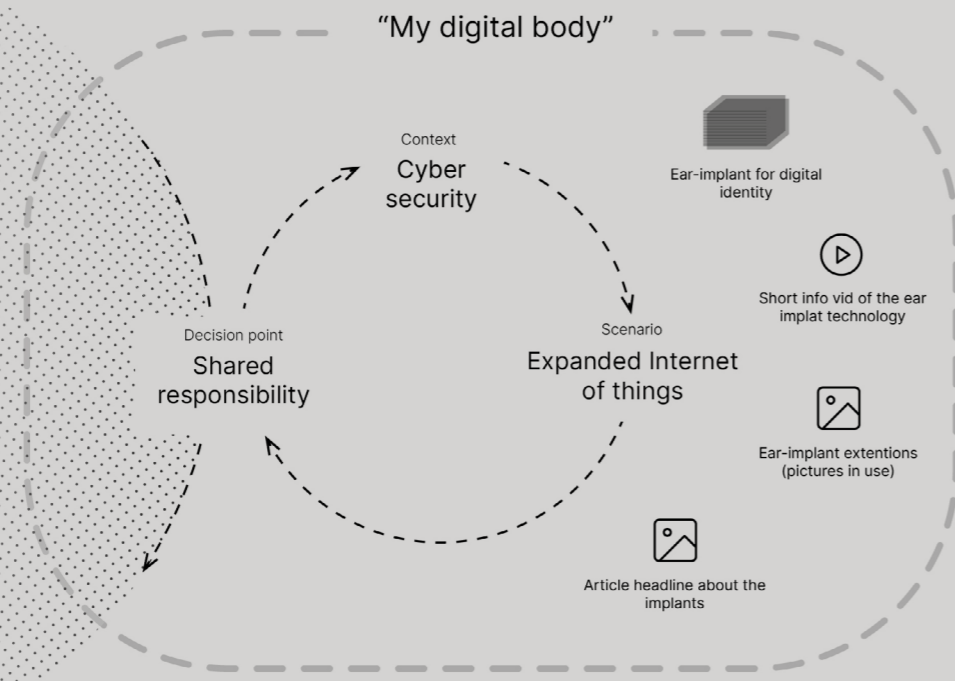


## Narrative 01: Freedom rehab



Trust

"My digital body"



- Ear-implant for digital identity
- Short info vid of the ear implat technology
- Ear-implant extentions (pictures in use)
- Article headline about the implants

Boundary Area:

Trust

Narrative

02

"My digital body"

## Narrative 02: My digital body

In the near future, the use of biometric information becomes an industry standard, and the opportunities of applying this technology to the development of highly customised IoT products just multiplies: the biometric data is being shared with household appliances like the smart TV (for example to automatically select the content to show based on who's watching), or with web stores and other virtual services to create smoother shopping experiences.

The emerging issue pressured the governments to collaborate with tech companies to create a new type of digital security.

This results in a form of under-skin digital identification system. Each citizen is required by the municipality to implant, behind

the ear, a micro-chip that stores all our personal data. This chip is programmed with an univocal string of code that is remotely stored in the physical chip only, implying that to unlock the data we need to activate the chip every time we are in a short distance contact-less interaction, just like with a bank card.

This is a hybrid solution, sort of like a physical block-chain where our bodies become the container of our digital selves too. This system is also considered leaner as it decentralises the digital security by delegating the accountability to each citizen, similarly to how we are responsible for our paper documentation.

This becomes the first human body extension used institutionally,

influencing deeply the pop culture and the perception of self. Not surprisingly, we see a rise in a whole new generation of products being developed, to manifest and explore the virtually infinite uses of this new 'digital organ' that we are familiarizing ourselves with.

For example, a clip reader is developed by authorities during security checks when they need to scan through larger amount of data in the chip.

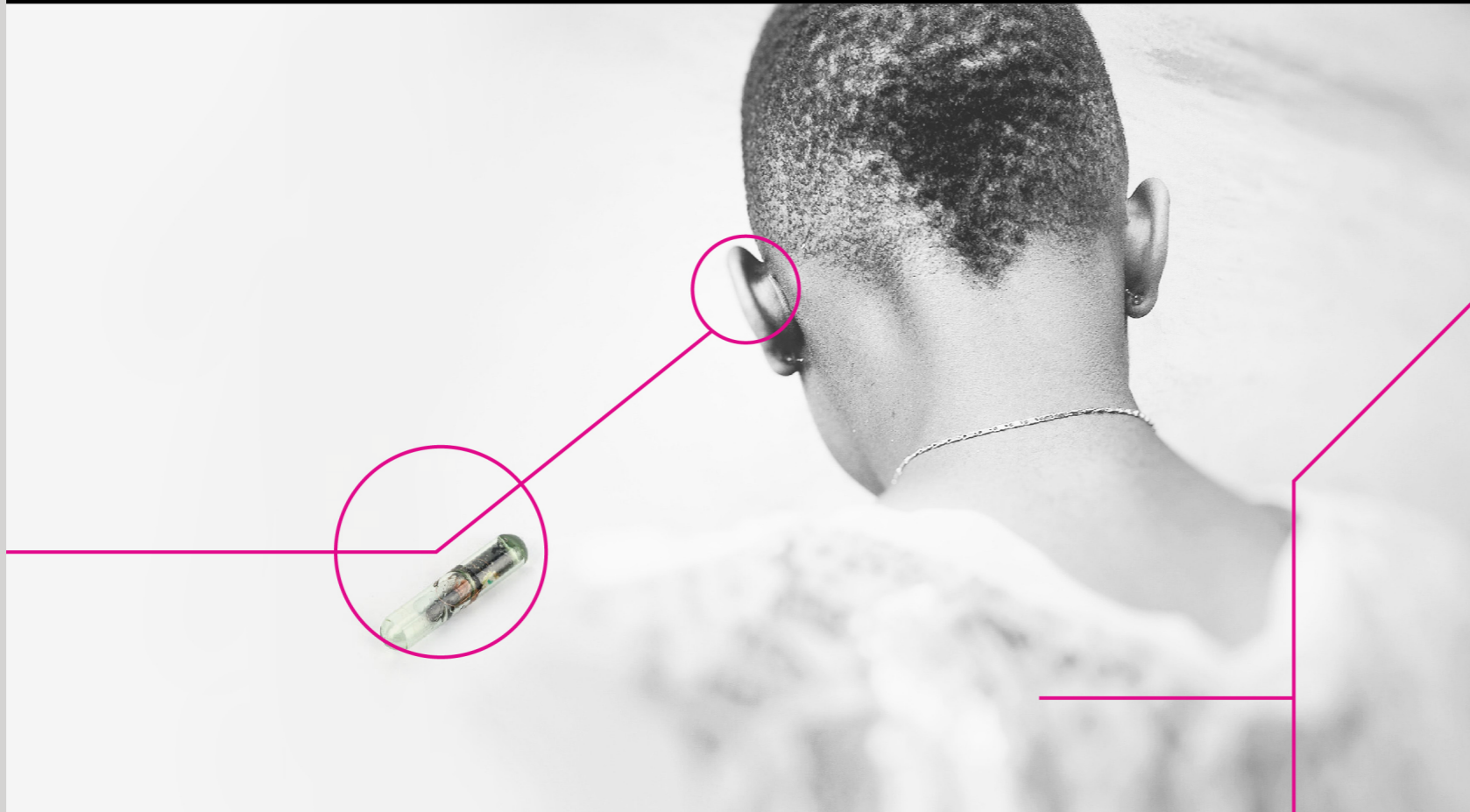
Another example is an ear cover designed by a start-up, that offers different functionalities such as extending the signal reception to other trusted devices so there is no need to tap your ear when you want to access your data but at same time it's an input device that can solve simple tasks like sending a bank payment with

simple voice command.

While this microchip is doing a great job at protecting our personal data, it is also making us exist physically in the digital space, creating a new type of vulnerability. Some time after a hacker finds out that the usage of the chips generate a trace in the devices it comes in contact with, making it in fact trackable. He also noticed that the government is silently using these "digital phantom" traces left behind by the users to bridge the data in case of need, as a form of surveillance and control.

Is it possible to become invisible when your own body can become a surveillance system?

THE VERGE



GOOGLE

## GOOGLE Digital Identity Implant: How will it change your life

*Created in collaboration with NCSD, Google's new technology is here to revolutionise all we know about IoT*

By [Chris Welch](#) | [@chriswelch](#) Apr 27, 2020, 12:03pm EDT

[f](#) [t](#) [SHARE](#)

[f](#) oogle's [original Pixel Buds](#) came at a time when the company was



**Narrative 02: My digital body**



## Narrative 02: My digital body



**M** THRIVE GLOBAL WELL-BEING WISDOM WONDER PURPOSE WORK SMARTER UNPLUG & RECHARGE

### The case of the Google Identity Implant data ghost - Why there's not such a thing as "total security"

Tristan Harris [Follow](#)  
May 18, 2016 · 16 min read

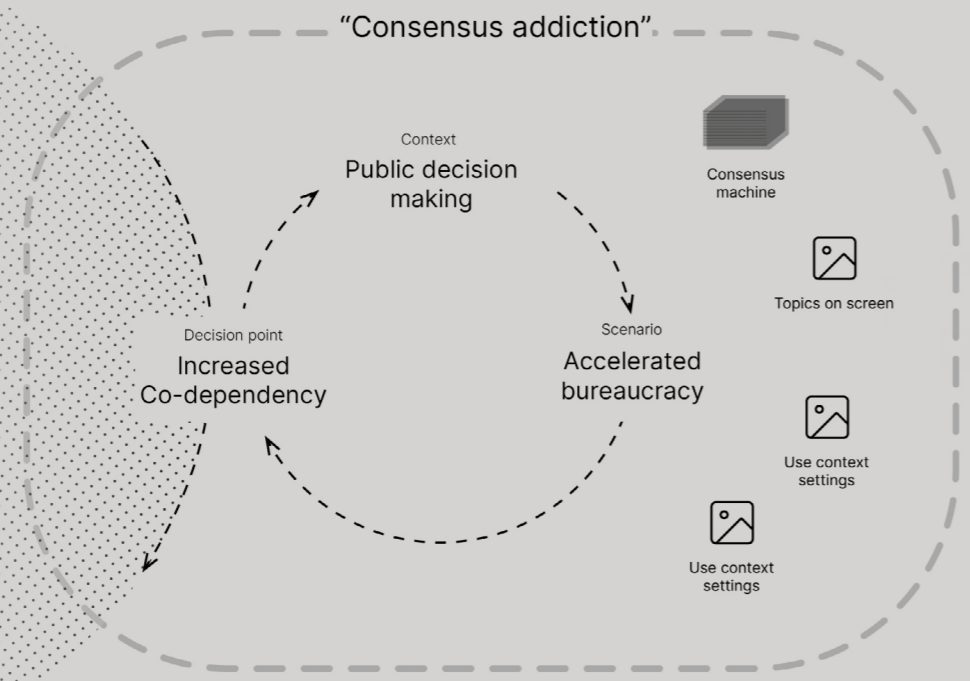
[Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Facebook](#) [Bookmark](#) [More](#)

*Estimated reading time: 15 minutes.*

*"It's easier to fool people than to convince them that they've been fooled." — Unknown.*

I'm an expert on how technology hijacks our psychological vulnerabilities. That's why I spent the last three years as a Design Ethicist at Google caring about how to design things in a way that defends a billion people's minds from getting hijacked.

Politics &  
Economy



Boundary Area:  
Politics

Narrative

03

**Consensus  
Addiction**

## Narrative 03: Consensus addiction

Norway has been using a bi-semester public survey system (Norsk medborgerpanel) since 2013 through NSD, and it has been proven how this research tool deeply influenced the orientation of many public administration areas such as urban planning, policy making and social development. However, the survey tool has been criticized for its inefficiency and has become the main evidence of a slow public bureaucracy and reaction times for important matters.

After the 2020's pandemic emergency, the Norwegian government tries to make amend to this latency by introducing a tool to quickly gain an overview of the public opinion and collect consensus.

After some iterations, the design team landed on a tool called E-PP (Electronic Poll Pager), which is

being posted to every citizen in Oslo for a first round of test by the beginning of 2021. The E-PP is a small sized device designed on the old concept of the phone calls pager. The sole dedicated purpose of this little appliance is to alert citizens about topics requiring their attention, on which they can express an opinion by answering with either Yes or No using the correspondent buttons on the device. It can be used in sync with the mobile to download more informative material in case the user wants to deepen their understanding of the thematic to ensure the best informed decision. The device also comes with a biometric reader to verify the identity of the poll participant. The polls range between a vast genres of thematic, spacing between political affair, local regulations, opinion poll and cultural trends.

Some months after its introduction, the public's response to the tool is overall positive, as it widely accelerated the decision time of the institutions while collecting concrete consensus numbers to support every stage of their decision making in a fully democratic and transparent procedure. E-PP made voting highly accessible and it lifted the hardships of traditional polling processes, to the point that it has become a fun intermission of people's daily life and some are even looking forward to it.

Politicians quickly realised that device has also become a powerful and specialised tool to speak directly to citizens and gain quick consensus, thus they adapted the way they address to the public accordingly. The main advantage from this trend is the enormous amount of money saved

in political campaigns, as E-PP allows to automate the reach and guarantee a much higher turnover of responses.

On the other hand, a lot of people found it to be a dangerous tool. Some experts in behavioural studies argue that accelerating the decision process is also draining the depth of the political debate, and the consensus collected is therefore less meaningful and pulling it down to the level of a mere like of Facebook. Additionally, other people pointed out that the binary answer format of "yes" and "no" is a very restricting configuration to present complex political matters, forcing a simplification process that is diminishing the actual importance of the topic.



**Narrative 03: Consensus addiction**



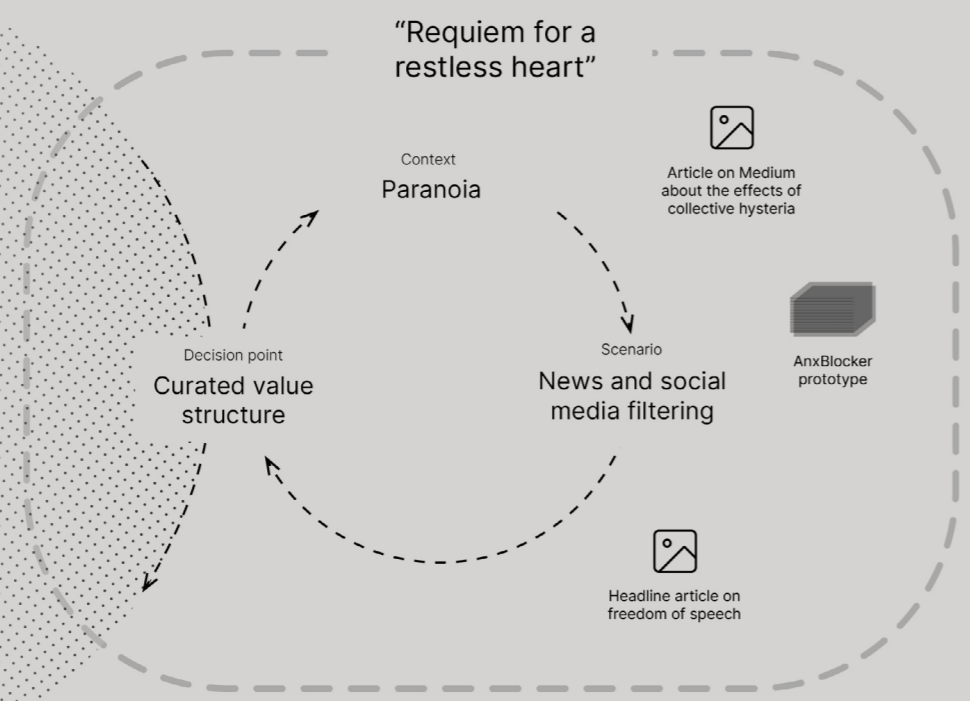
# Narrative 03: Consensus addiction



**Narrative 03: Consensus addiction**



Values



Boundary Area:  
Values

Narrative

04

**"Requiem for  
a restless heart"**

## Narrative 04: Requiem for a restless heart

When the virus covid-19 forced the governments to shut down borders and set up quarantine measures to contain the spread of the virus, many aspects of life as we used to know it were disrupted, and flipped the scripts on many realities such as healthcare, economy, politics, job market, school system and general welfare. Because our knowledge of the virus is very scarce, it's very hard to predict how the events will unfold.

This pandemic restrained us into an unprecedented time of uncertainty: when no experts can state for sure which are the outcomes of the events everything is up for debate, and it caused the steep shift of interests that characterise the public opinion for the last half year. What is a very debated topic might be discharged

in a matter of days or even hours.

A group of researchers studied the phenomenon of these rapid shifts of trending topics and gave them the name of "data flares". They are generally considered to be a form of noise pollution in the public debate but they are very difficult to filter out because of their vicious unpredictable nature.

The continued increase of these data flares also caught the worried attention of psychologists, who warned about the possible damage they might cause on mental health. The data flares cause disorientation of values that can generate great amounts of distress and mental load, and can lead to anxiety, depression and other alarming effects. The experts suggested that the most sensitive subjects should be

especially careful at isolating themselves from these.

Based on this, on the internet appeared some initiatives that aim to isolate and eradicate these flares through a community based reporting system. The reporting system ended up becoming a spam filtering plug-in that can be installed on multiple browsing devices and used to actively block the content related to trends that are labeled harmful by other users. Everyone is encouraged to flag and report the content and the most reported topics are suggested as potential threats to the user, who can decide to shield their feed from them.

After some times, the refinement of these filters has become a curated service that eventually matured into packaged digital

products offered by influencers and other public figures. In these services the filtering are no longer based on community feedback, but rather curated by individuals or institutions who become advocates of specific user groups. People can now subscribe to a tailor made service that can assure them to get only interesting content from like-minded people.

Some school of thought called out this tend to be actually more harmful, as it transitioned from being an act of necessity to a performance of status quo while sticking the head in the sand.

## Narrative 04: Requiem for a restless heart

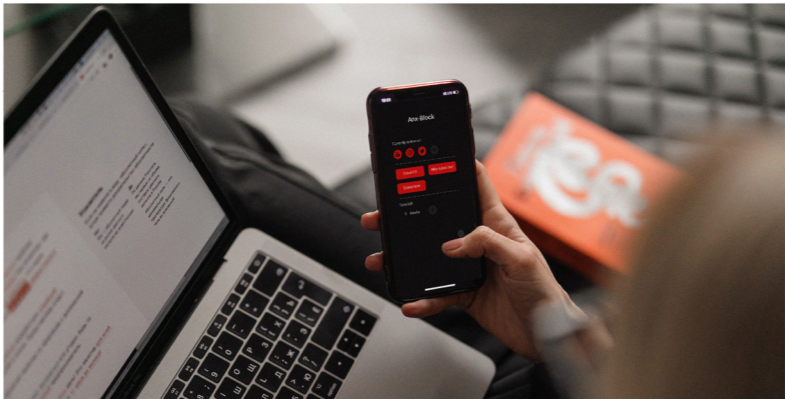
M

freeCodeCamp (🔥) ARCHIVE | CHECK OUT OUR NEW SITE: FREECODECAMP NEWS

### How AnxBlocker saved me from my chronic anxiety during the pandemic

 Charlie Jeppsson [Follow](#)  
Mar 31, 2018 · 59 min read

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HERE'S HOW TO WHITELIST THE VERGE


TECH \ YOUTUBE \ CREATORS

### YouTube creators are accusing AnxBlocker system of assassinating freedom of speech

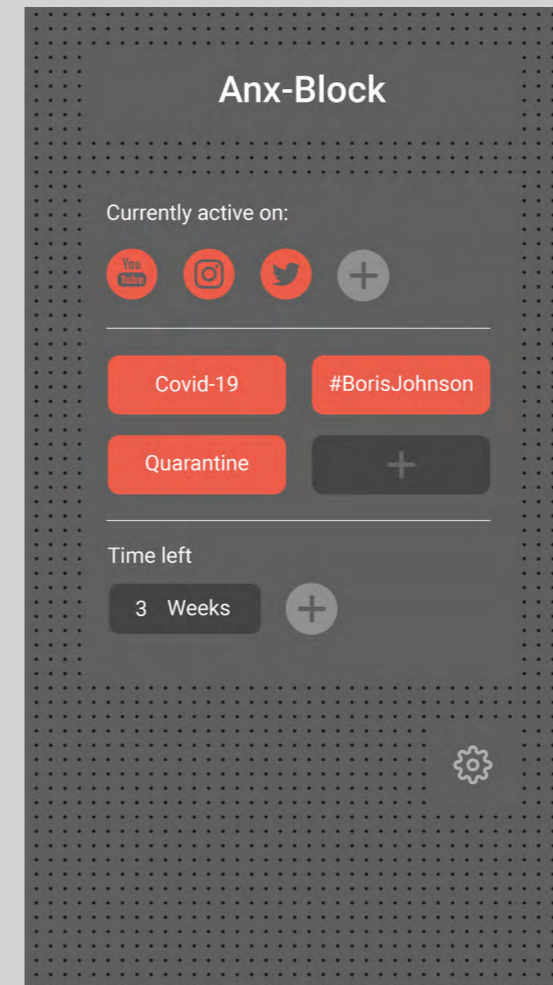
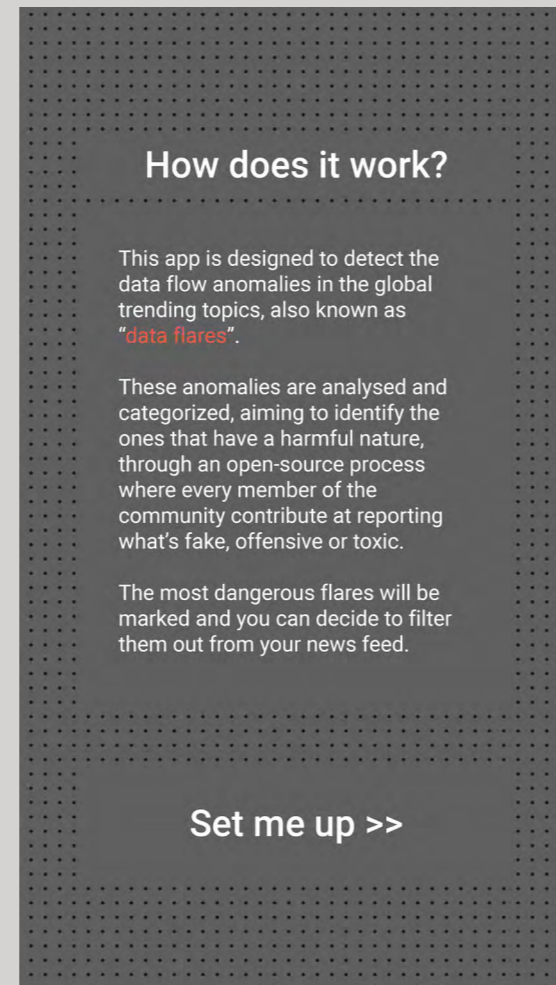
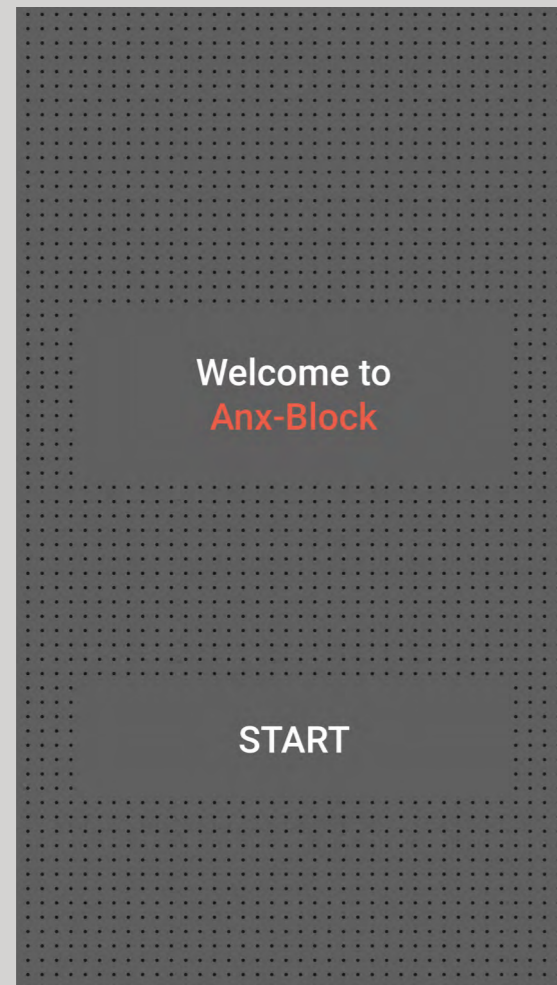
*A battle destined to breach out on many other platforms.*

By [Julia Alexander](#) | Mar 4, 2020, 4:26pm EST

[f](#) [Twitter](#) [SHARE](#)

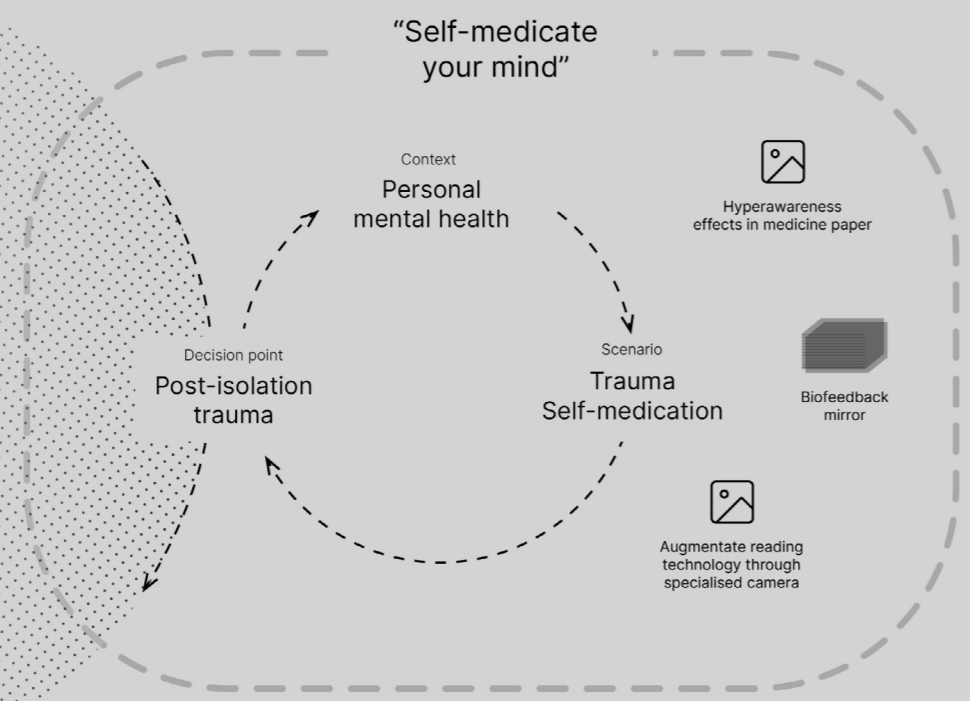


## Narrative 04: Requiem for a restless heart



To test the prototype  
scan the QR code or go to  
<https://qr.go.page.link/DD9Ax>

Psychology  
& Trauma



Boundary Area:  
Psychology & Trauma

Narrative

05

**"Self-medicate  
your mind"**



## Narrative 05: Self medicate your mind

The dramatic consequences of the pandemic and the enforced isolation has been defined by many as “collective trauma”, that will leave a deep scar on the generations to come. The phenomenon has made mental health a relevant topic to public attention again, as many psychologists have already raised concerns and suggested we need thoughtful actions to prevent further chances of post-traumatic stress symptoms in the general population.

In an attempt to acknowledge and digest the phenomenon, many governments around the world are facing the challenge of finding applicable tools to verify, document and process their citizens’ wellbeing in order to be able to produce effective regulations to manage the

first collective mental health emergency of this scale. Some of these tools consist in extensive medical assessments with the goal of building a reliable data source to guide the policy making, while other countries simply relied on standard formats such as self-certification and mutual trust.

What became quickly a concern is how this emergency is extremely costly for the already weakened health care system after the pandemic. Being a highly personal and internalised syndrome, the patients required tailor made treatment and they needed to be guided and followed in their progress. For this reason the researchers were pressured to find viable solutions that allow the medical personnel to perform effective treatments that can be standardised or replicated to as

many patients as possible.

After some time, a general trend emerged between the medical researchers, all agreeing to the idea of using biofeedback technology as a potential scalable solution to treat a post-traumatic case of wide extent while containing the costs.

Biofeedback is the practice of gaining greater awareness of an individual’s physiological functions (such as heart rate, respiratory rhythm, blood pressure, body temperature, etc), by using electronic or other instruments, and with a goal of being able to manipulate the body’s systems at will. It is often used in cases of post-traumatic stress disorder to improve health, performance, and the physiological changes that often occur in conjunction with

changes to thoughts, emotions, and behavior.

A group of experts in biofeedback collaborated with a tech company to finally develop an advanced form of biofeedback that eliminates the use of the uncomfortable body sensors. The new product operates on an empowered form of image augmentation analysis to extract and display biological metrics from the subject, simply scanning the subject with a specialised camera it is able of detecting his or her body temperature, heart-rate, stress level and many other specs, visualising them in real time on the mirrored screen.

The main advantage of this device is to allow people to conduct self-medicating sessions even in their own domestic setting, with no

## Narrative 05: Self medicate your mind

medical supervision. The device also keeps record of the progress and suggests the best practice to the user through machine learning. Moreover, the intimacy of looking into the own image while practicing biofeedback has proven to have a noticeable soothing effect on the subject, enhancing the effectiveness of the treatment.

However, not long after the its introduction, the device caused a lot of controversy when the government required the access and processing of the biometric data collected through the biofeedback mirror for censing and study purposes. Many patients expressed their disapproval as they don't feel comfortable sharing intimate data of their bodily functions, opening a debate around the ownership of the medical data in times of collective emergency.

THE AMERICAN JOURNAL  
of MEDICINE.  
Official Journal of the Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine

CLINICAL RESEARCH STUDY | ARTICLES IN PRESS

### Collateral Hypertension complications case study linked to post Covid-19 social Hyper-awareness syndrome

Jing Liu, MD ✉ • Ayman Elbadawi, MD ✉ • Islam Y. Elgendy, MD ✉ • ... Michelle Albert, MD ✉ •  
Biykem Bozkurt, MD ✉ • Hani Jneid, MD ✉ • Show all authors


Published: May 13, 2020 • DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjmed.2020.03.059>

Abstract	<b>Abstract</b>
Graphical Abstract	<b>Background</b>
Key words	There is certainly no doubt in anyone's mind that our recent COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a heavy dose of misery and death. However there are many clinical evidences that point out the health conditions induced by the isolation.
References	
Article Info	<b>Methods</b>

**Narrative 05: Self medicate your mind**



Vox TWITTER FACEBOOK



(b) Magnified (c) Spatiotemporal

## Video Magnification cameras: how this revived technology will relaunch the healthcare system

By Vox Staff | Updated Apr 22, 2020, 6:00am EDT

SHARE

**The Highlight**  
BY Vox

Part of the **Pandemic Issue** of **The Highlight**, our home for ambitious stories that explain our world.

**Narrative 05: Self medicate your mind**





## 04 BODILY BOUNDARY OBJECTS

In this section are presented the collection of Bodily Boundary objects I designed.

They are often the focal point where the narrative culminates or the decision moment around which the rest of the narrative evolves. The main purpose of the boundary objects is to invite the viewer to engage a specific area of identity with a critical mind, form an opinion about it through a natural emotional response. As Boundary Objects, they have the plastic nature of capturing a specific path of user journey as in the narrative, but at the same time they can be used as a versatile conversation tool to engage with experts from multiple disciplines.

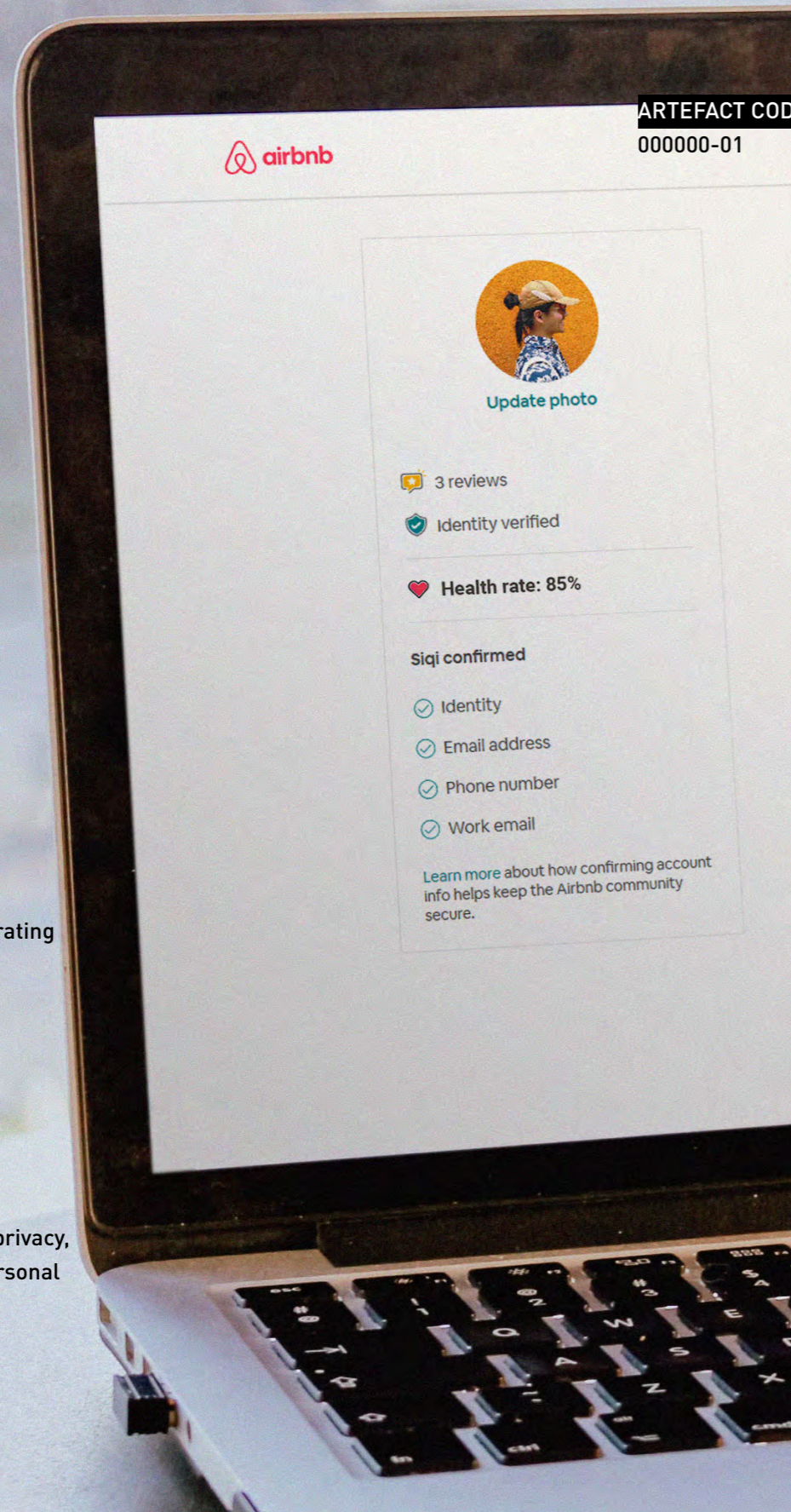
Because of their strong contextually determined aesthetics, these objects are not meant to be considered isolated and should always be evaluated within the scenarios in which they are designed to live.

ITEM NAME:  
AirBnB Health rating

LOCATION:  
On-line

YEAR:  
2020

CONTEXT:  
Health, travel, privacy,  
regulations, personal  
freedom.



ARTEFACT CODE:  
000000-01

“ **F\*\*k, this is making me want to stay at home and never travel again, even after quarantine.**

- Female, 28

“ **People are going nuts after this quarantine, I can imagine people willing to do this for a holiday.**

- Female, 27

“ **I am feeling so claustrophobic these days, so even if this the new state of things, I think I would still go. I think I would change my mindset and take in account the risk of not coming back for a while.**

- Male, 28

Bodily Boundary Objects



ARTEFACT CODE:  
000000-02

ITEM NAME:  
Digital identity interface

LOCATION:  
Unknown

YEAR:  
2025

CONTEXT:  
Privacy, digital identity,  
biometrics, cyber security,  
body extension.

“ This is so dystopic, especially because I know there are people already using something like that.

- Female, 28

“ The physicality of the digital identity feels risky, I rather prefer store it online. I would hate to be forced by the government to be responsible of something so important!

- Male, 29

ARTEFACT CODE:

000000-03



ITEM NAME:  
E-PP, Electronic Poll Pager

LOCATION:  
Norway

YEAR:  
2022

CONTEXT:  
Politics, consensus,  
democracy, digital behaviour

// **This would make the job of a politician a gate to hell, because you are telling them constantly what they have to do instead of letting them doing their job.**

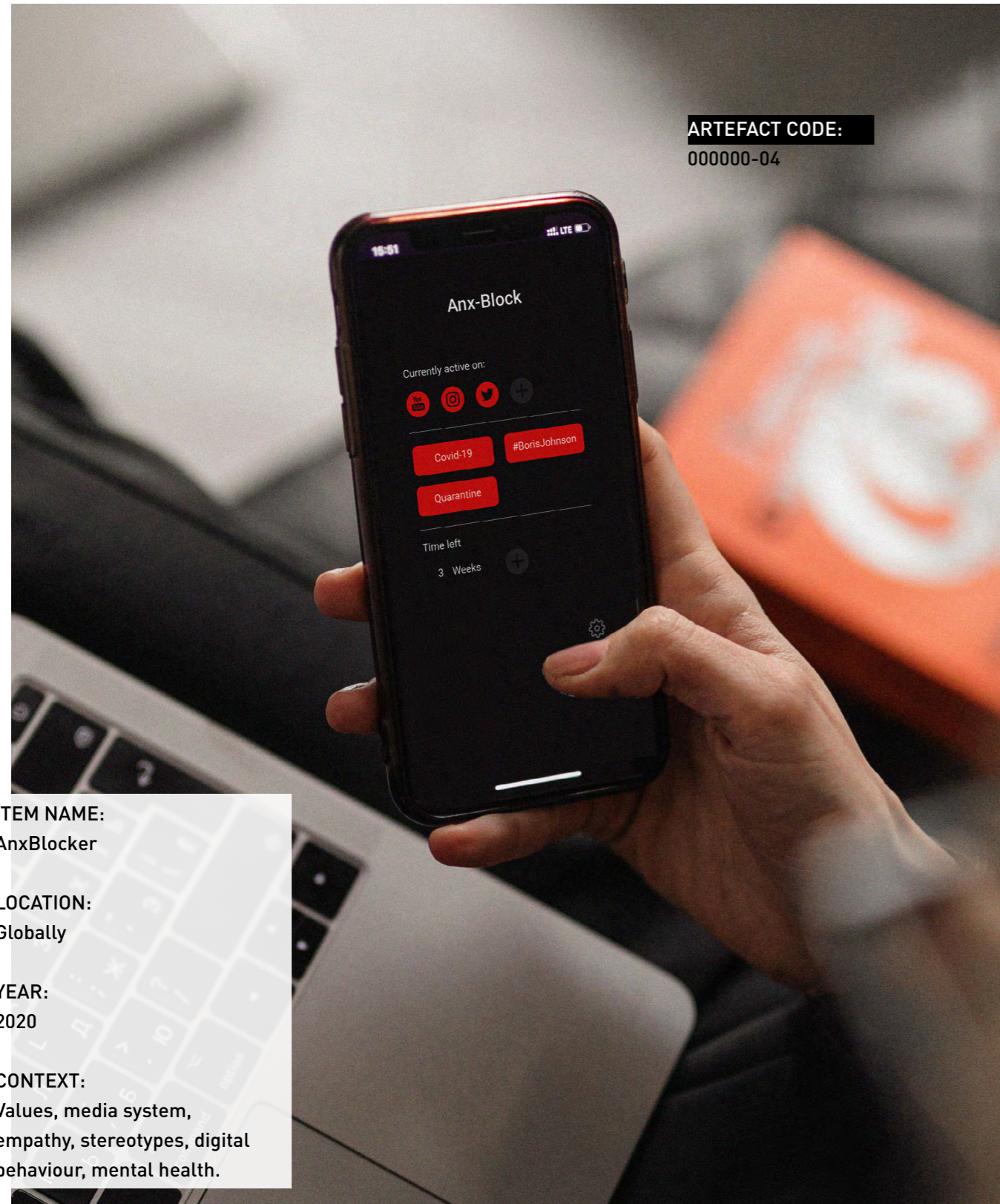
- Male, 42

// **How interesting, it shows how absurd is our voting system too, where our choice is always based on questions that are highly fabricated and processed, making whatever we choose inadequate and disconnected. Look at Brexit's referendum!**

- Female, 32



Bodily Boundary Objects



ARTEFACT CODE:  
000000-04

ITEM NAME:  
AnxBlocker

LOCATION:  
Globally

YEAR:  
2020

CONTEXT:  
Values, media system,  
empathy, stereotypes, digital  
behaviour, mental health.

“ I think I want this, but it would also make me wonder if it’s ethical to isolate myself from whatever I want.

- Female, 32

“ This reminds me of the Syrian refugees crisis some years ago, when my social media feed was flooded with pictures of dead children on the Italian beach. It was horrible, I wanted it all to stop.

- Female, 28

**Bodily Boundary Objects**

**ARTEFACT CODE:**  
000000-05



**ITEM NAME:**  
Biofeedback mirror

**LOCATION:**  
Unknown

**YEAR:**  
2023

**CONTEXT:**  
Mental health, post-traumatic  
syndrome, biodata,  
self-awareness

”

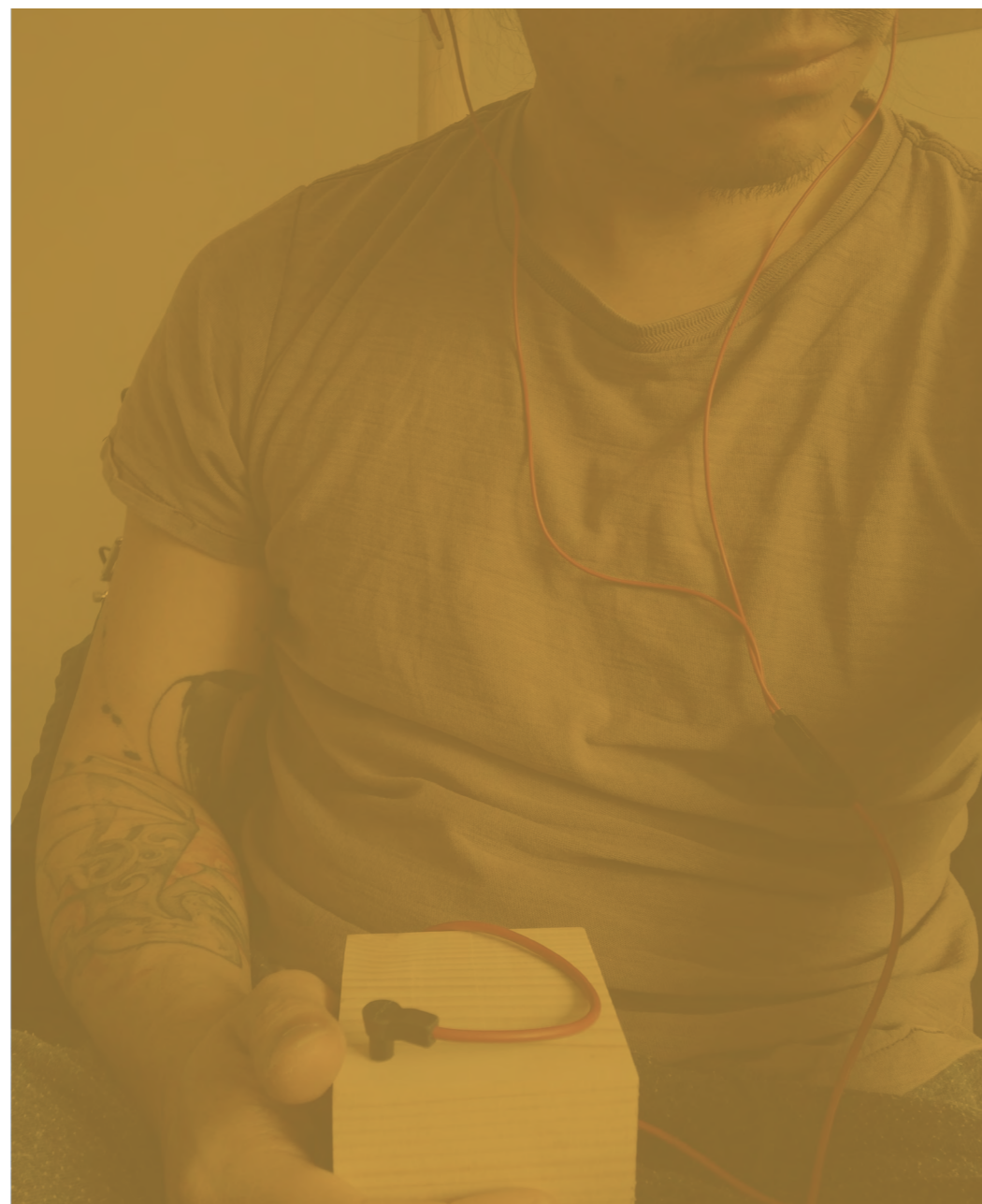
**That’s cool and super intriguing, but  
terrifying at the same moment.**

- Female, 27

”

**It fits with the whole trend of  
mindfulness ongoing right now, but  
I wonder if it would become more a  
novelty rather than a tool for curing a  
condition?**

- Female, 28



## 05 OUT IN THE WORLD

With these narratives and prototypes at hand, there's nothing else left to do but unleash them in the world, watching them take life of their own. I used my props and scenarios to facilitate conversation with both general audience and experts, with very different intentions and outcomes.

Time to pull the loose ends of the project and reflect on what's the potential impact of this project to the current state of reality, on the people and the future body of work.

## Feedback & Reflections

Because this is not a traditional design project and the design is being used as a sense making tool rather than a solution oriented outcome, I also had to adapt my testing and feedback sessions accordingly to what I am trying to validate.

After a very enlighten chat with my peer Helene Falstad (AHO alumni, whose diploma project "Don't fear the griever" with Andreea Tecusan is among the inspirations for this project) I settled on using my narratives and Bodily Boundary Objects differently if I am talking to a general public user or experts.

*"(In our diploma project) we used our evidences as a tool to engage with the arena of expertise from each expert we talked to, while for the general public audience it was more to validate the readability and level of engagement of our outcomes." – Helene F.*

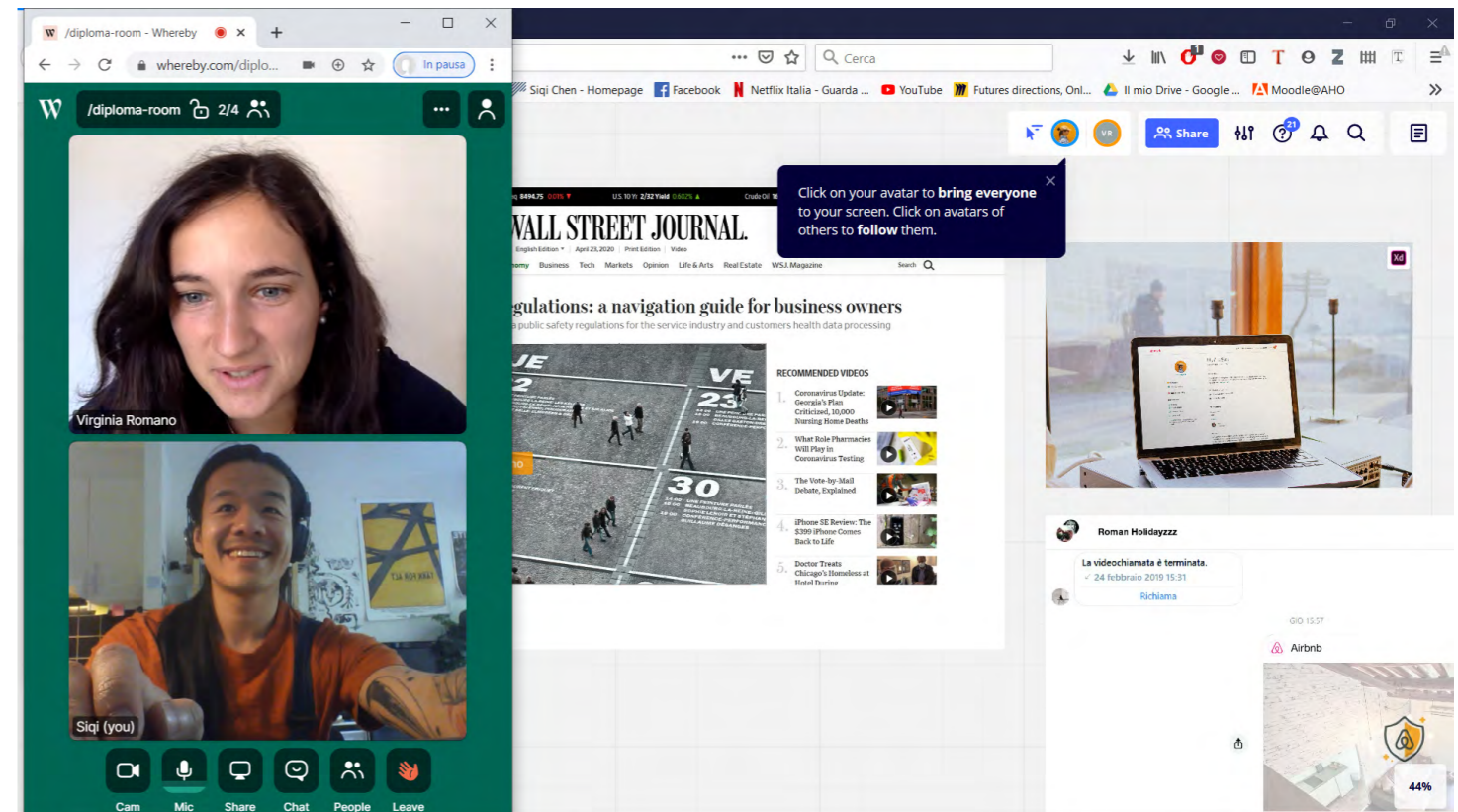
Adopting a similar mindset, I presented digitally my narratives to a modest group of 8 people (representing the general public, made by friends, most of which non-designers. The number and type of people available was limited due to the conditions of the pandemic), where I was able to discuss the narratives, investigate the props and test their emotional response to my prototypes.

I tested 2 different methodologies to present my narratives in an attempt of figuring out which one would be the most efficient way:

1. Without introducing the theme, I present the whole collection of the props together with the prototype and ask participants to examine them freely for 10 minutes, try to figure out what's the story behind. After some Q&A I finally present them the story of the narrative in text format. After they finish reading, I ask them how the story made them feel and some more questions to reflect on the context.

2. I present them a short intro of my project and the specific context I will be testing them on. I ask the participant some questions about the topic, before I proceed presenting them the narrative through the props and the prototype and ask for opinions.

The response was always very immediate, people engage with them very quick and often forget that these are fictional scenarios and start wondering if they actually exist, indicating that the level of definition I got on the props is befitting for the purpose.



The first testing method got a better emotional feedback, as they are more focused on understanding the props while trying to understand the topic. This format was much more effective compared to the card sessions, as the context didn't need introduction but they are made more accessible through the storytelling.

The conversation that followed needed little facilitation from my side to make them pick up the decision point in focus for each narrative and reflect on their opinion.

The Bodily Boundary objects seems to be projecting in an alternative future that is familiar enough to be understandable, but also future forward enough to create fascination for the participant, who always responded with asking questions about their functionality, instead of questioning their credibility.

I also managed to present my work to a small selection of experts from several disciplines. Among the group I managed to include designers, artist, digital infrastructure engineer, politician, journalist and an airline security manager.

With the experts I adopted a more conversational approach. I always start by asking for their own definition of the Boundary areas I identified and how it relates to their work arena, then I present to them a selection of relevant narratives and Boundary Objects, so they can build on these with their knowledge and add depth to my ideas. They were obviously more opinionated and sharp than the general public at criticizing the narratives, but instead of dismantling they were always constructive in telling what should be ideally the best practice in each case.

I was very happy to see original analogy of the Boundary object as the curated museum specimen happen to be still valid at the end of the project.

These Bodily Boundary objects I designed became the shared space where the ordinary visitor is able to easily engage with their opinion, while the expert can make them their own tool to express and inform about a complex matter. With this collection I created an abstract museum of identities with no walls, where everybody is invited get informed or to express something,

contributing to the flow of the knowledge between experts and non-experts that wouldn't take place otherwise.

Unfortunately due to the current situation I was not able to organise sessions where I could physically bring together the general public and the experts and see if this conversation would evolve naturally and test its effect on both side.



## Contributions

From the conversations with my sensors and other peer designers, I started to slowly notice something that was initially hard to see from inside, while working on this project.

After the pandemic, we are left with many questions about what is about to come, and most of the time the scale of the uncertainty is just paralysing. People were very interested in how I reframed my process and embraced the uncertainty as a tool to revitalise the speculations, renovating inspiration and optimism to continue designing. I think my project is a good example of the resilience and adaptability of our discipline, proving that we are not mere problem solvers but proactive interceptors of future opportunities. In this sense, the methodology I created to generate the narratives is in itself a Boundary Object, not only addressing the design disciplines but also encompassing other fields of expertise.

As I said earlier, my process was generated organically as I go, so I don't think I was able to create a process linear enough to be used off-the-shelf by other designers, but I believe

that through this project I showed a glimpse of how design has the great potential to be used as an alternative tool for exploration and rationalisation, instead of confining it to its classic problem-solving tradition.

Looking back, it's clear that I didn't use design as a generative tool but rather as a story-telling tool. This comes in handy especially during times of uncertainty like the one we live in, because through design we can generate a new level of definition in arguments that would otherwise be too complex and fuzzy to be understood and confronted by the general audience.

I believe my project can be interpreted in many ways, and it can be applied to different disciplines other than design. I see possible application of my methodology in both public and private sectors to highlight and focus on problems that are otherwise too big and tendentially neglected. As I was mapping out the extensiveness and interconnectedness of my topic, I quickly sensed that my narratives are not isolated case scenarios, but they can be easily translated into many other contexts to strike up valuable conversation.

Because of the intimate omnipresence, identity is a very versatile and adaptive lens to question our choices and the tangled reasons hidden behind each of them. The more I use my Bodily Boundary Objects to engage the conversation with experts, the more I realised how my project was never about designing identities themselves, but rather about proving that the identity can be used as a pretext to design discursive tools.

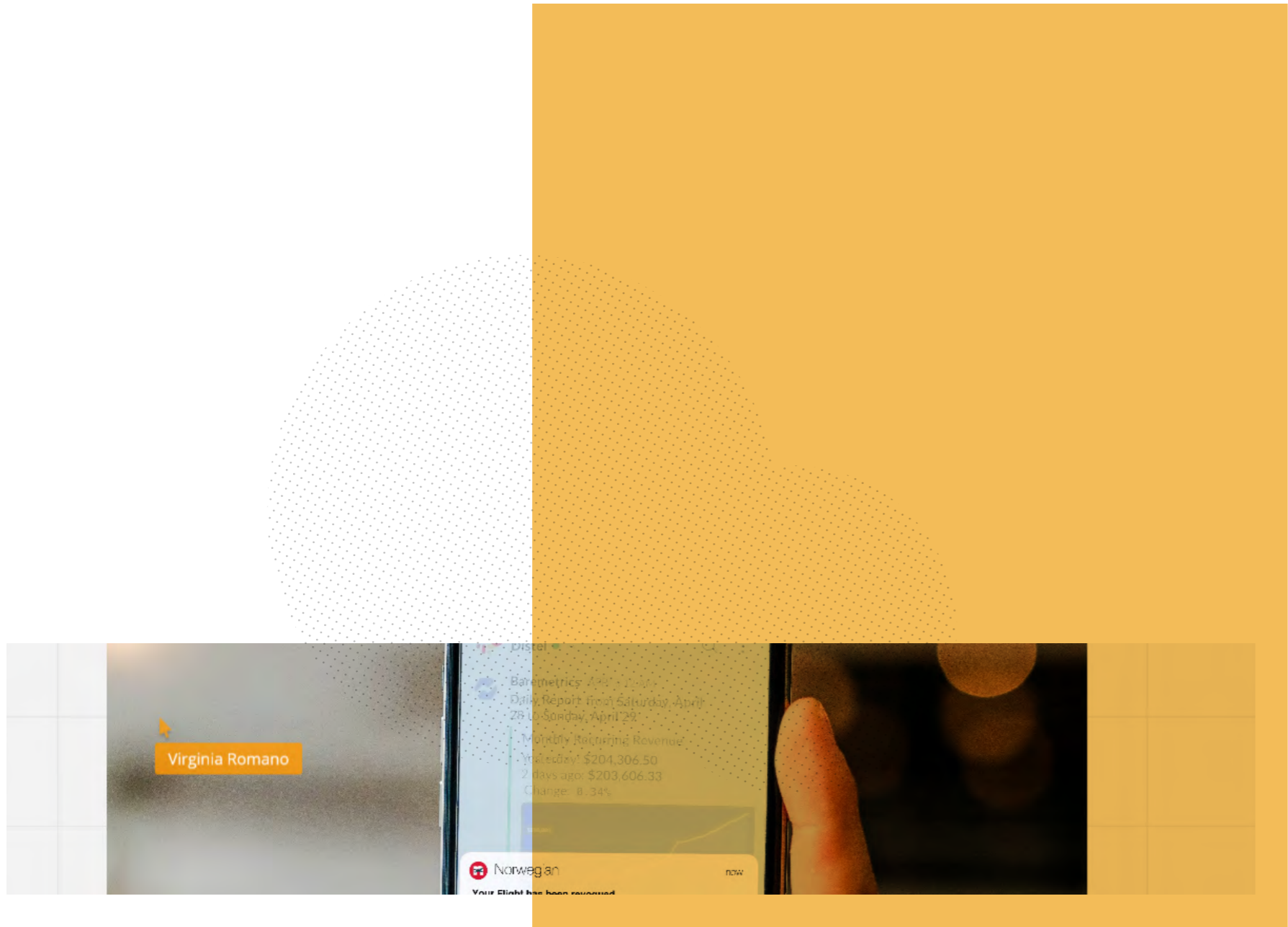
What gave me confidence, though, is the feedback of the testing sessions I facilitated. Everyone was immediately drawn into the narrative with little reserves and they engaged immediately with the decision points I presented them in each narrative. They validated my point that through design is possible to create something that is abstract yet capable of resonating emotionally with larger group of people across all sort of differences.

In this perspective, with this project I hope to contribute with the broader conversation about democratisation through design and the democratisation of design itself as a

discipline. My goal was to challenge the traditional idea of design methodology and explore what is "designable", trying to prove that they should always reflect each other.

In the specific case of this project, by focusing on the broad topic of identity, the organic development of the methodology eventually led me to define a new category of "designables", the Bodily Boundary Objects, to fulfill the purpose.

But what's next?



## // Appendices

Finally, this last section contains the reference materials and documentation of my process, analysis, thoughts and findings along the way that I decided to cut out from the main body of the work, for the benefit of the narrative cohesiveness.



Appx. 01  
**Reference Projects  
Analysis**

The closest and the most interesting projects I found are the ones hybridizing with the tools and means of Contemporary Art.

I quickly realized how the observant sensitivity of artists picked-up much earlier than designers and targeted this topic with very interesting contributions. Here follows a list and break-down of the most relevant projects I analyzed.





**What:**  
“Telepathy” by Laura Coudo Rosado

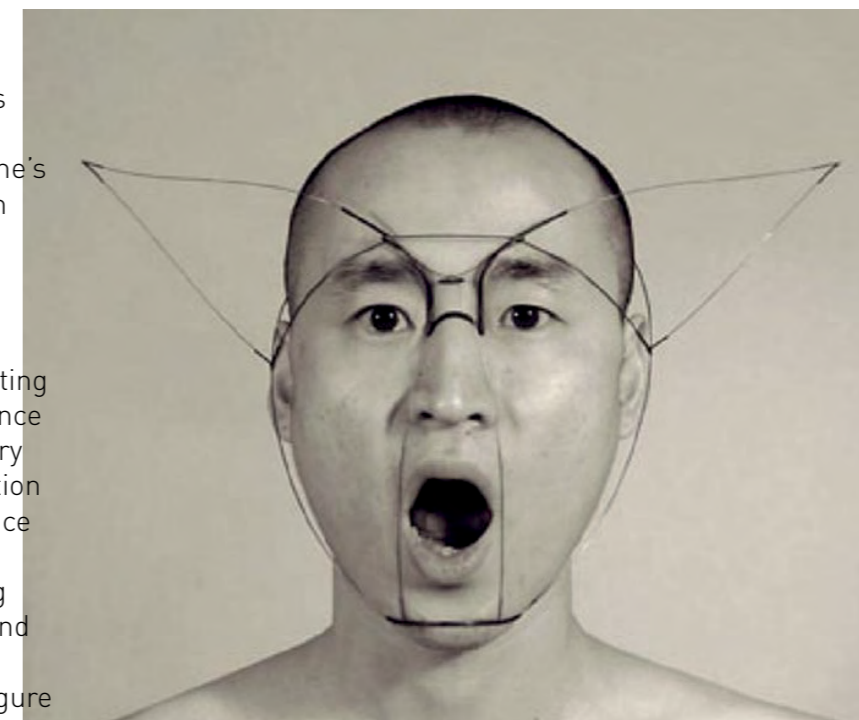
**How:**  
“Telepathy is a speculative design project created during my Master studies in 2012. It explores the idea that telepathy can become the predominant way of communication in the future. A series of blown glass helmets suggests a telepathic communication, by definition invisible.”

**Why interesting?**  
This project, within the realm of speculative design, aims to physically visualise something that we can only assume nowadays and the objects created, even though fictional and extemporal, has an immediate power of projecting us to an indefinite, weird and utterly fascinating future. The choice of the materials here is essential to set the mood of the project: using transparent glass was very smart idea, not only because of its allusive almost invisible properties, it also creates immediately a sense of familiarity and calmness with its rounded shapes, it doesn't feel dystopic, dangerous or hostile, but more like a natural extension of the body.

**What:**  
“Self-portraits” by Dukno Yoon

**How:**  
“This project is based on my formal study of face, in which I simplify face to lines. Composed directly from and on face, using steel wire with tension, these sculptures have kinetic potentialities due to the dynamics of the human face.”

**Why interesting?**  
Apart from the fascination for the surreal delicate kinetic architectures created by Yoon, what caught my attention in his work is the fact that he's touching upon the theme of “modern phrenology” with a very analogical approach. His facial jewellerys are designed obviously after an attentive study and measurement of human facial features and found the correlating movement patterns in order to enhance them, a process of reading that is very similar to the modern facial recognition systems used in advanced surveillance technologies. This offers us an alternative way of reading something that is commonly seen as negative and dystopic, offering us instead a poetic interpretation of how we can reconfigure our perception of human face.



**What:**

Data Masks by Sterling Crispin

**How:**

"Data-masks are face masks which were created by reverse engineering facial recognition and detection algorithms. These algorithms were used to guide an evolving system toward the production of human-like faces. These evolved faces were then 3D printed as masks, shadows of human beings as seen by the minds-eye of the machine-organism. This exposes the way the machine, and the surveillance state, view human identity and this makes aspects of these invisible power structures visible. Data-Masks are animistic deities brought out of the algorithmic-spirit-world of the machine and into our material world, ready to tell us their secrets, or warn us of what's to come."

**Why interesting?**

Similarly to Yoon's work, Crispin also explore reconfigurations of human facial features but with an explicit outside-in view from the technology perspective. The use of 3-D printing is almost an obvious yet necessary choice for this statement, as the language he's exploiting to generate them is the one used by machines. These mask are result of technology looking at us and describing us back, and somehow they generate instantly this undeniably dis-human feeling through a very aseptic and slightly disturbing aesthetics. As Crispin said himself, these pieces acts as a sort of warning, for this reason they are places on top of some mirrors, forcing us to reflect ourselves in these alien interpretations of our head and ask ourselves "am I comfortable with this? Is this how the future looks/feels like?".

**What:**

"Chimera" by Shai Langen

**How:**

"Chimera is a project consisting of an ongoing material and visual research into a contestable future of the human body, in which the body is grown and cultivated. Here it has become an amalgam of the synthetic and the organic. Where synthetic processes mutate the skin into fungi like textures, like living organisms feeding off its host."

**Why interesting?**

Langen's work is visually extremely powerful, even though the human's body is being distorted, violated and hybridised to an almost unidentifiable stage, they preserve a sort of elegance and, in my opinion, desirable and evocative. I think the emotional aspect here is what is the most appealing to me, it reminds me that what identity is not only an one-sense reading, as we don't express identity only from outside in but also from inside out. Emotions are decisive when it comes to making bold choices of our appearance, either because we are confronted with the yarn of feeling empowered, feeling belonging, feeling different, feeling complete or just for pure sake of expressing ourselves. With all the previsions we can get at hand, how will the humanity evolve emotionally in the future and in which ways these evolutions will affect how we look?





**What:**

Various works by Lucy and Bart.

**How:**

"The ad hoc duo work close to the body within their shared practice, and their mode of operation is impulsive; generating ambiguous images depicting our skin as an interface between our self and the world. The pair describe their work as an 'instinctual stalking of fashion, architecture, performance and the body.' Both fascinating and off-putting, the images in a sense disturb, as they refuse us the intel of the subject's emotional state. The modified humans look us in the eye, not horrified, surprised or excited by their transformation: they are simply present and allow us to see them. There is something primitive and curious to be seen in the "deformed" human body. The dichotomy of 'the everyday' that is present in materials used and un-fussy photography, and a type of super-future-human makes this series so brilliant. It also questions our ideals of beauty and the way we on look, the way we judge. Through Body Architecture, Lucy and Bart discover a low-tech, prosthetic way to alter the human body and pose question as to where body ends and ~space~ begins."

**Why interesting?**

What I find compelling about Lucy and Bart's work is the contemporary flavor of their imagery. Even though their visions are often distorted and sensually disturbing, the materials chosen and the visual language is somehow very familiar and relatable, almost fashionable. This reminds of the importance of defining a context at the core of identities I am exploring, because the context always inform a focused guidance for the interpretation of each piece.

**What:**

Cloud Nylon by Nora Fok

**How:**

"Nora works at home in Hove, on the sunny south east coast of England, she uses no mechanical equipment, all her work is carried out by hand processes, with only basic tools. She is intrigued by the world around her; she also asks questions and tries to find answers to them. She is fascinated by different aspects of nature, structure, systems and order, and the mysteries and magic which she sets out to capture in her work. They are often quite complicated requiring many hours, days or weeks to produce and she has the necessary dedication to see her ideas through. She likes to draw attention to the very ordinary to make something special by presenting it in her own way. Her approach is not scientific; she combines her discoveries intuitively with her personal technical skills to produce her unique pieces."

**Why interesting?**

Similar to Rosado's work, Nora creates a sense of intimacy around the body as an emotional extension of the human subject. The lightness of the nylon she uses is almost as transparent too, but unlike the glass these jewellery carries little weight while being ethereal and architectural at the same time. It's almost like Fok liberated the material from and gave it freedom to evolve around our senses, creating a sort of mental protection, confining into the semiotics around objects of faith and religion.



**What:**

Eunoia by Lisa Park

**How:**

"Eunoia" is a performance that uses a commercial brainwave sensor (EEG) to manifest the artist's current states into sounds. It means 'beautiful thinking' in Greek ('good' + 'mind'). NeuroSky brainwave headset and custom-written software are used to musicalize the artist's brainwaves data in response to her current states. During the performance, the custom code calibrates the volume, pitch, and panning of the sound associated with the artist's varying 'Attention' and 'Meditation' values detected from neurofeedback data. As a result, the sound produced from speakers creates vibrations on the water to correlate with the intensity of the artist's mental states.

**Why interesting?**

Park embraces a new technology and use it as a powerful expressive medium. What I find very strong and poetic is the use of the water to physically visualise something formless and in constant flow as our minds, it resonates immediately and gives power to the concept. Another interesting point advanced by this project is that technology allow us to extend, materialise and interact with the physical world beyond our imagination, our minds and bodies are not the only shifters of the material anymore, with new sensors, readers and prototyping tech we are generating new forms of affordances on the world, and vice versa.





## Appx. 02 **Interview guide**

From the readings I was able to extract some framing question for my first interview guide to create comparable understanding of my target group. The main objective of this interview was to test my initial assumptions and uncover some patterns of understanding in my target group of young citizens who has experienced multiple cultures.

The interviews are designed to be a semi-structured format, which means it contained a mix of questions and activities, and I tried to keep it at a conversational flow, also considering the often intimate nature of the information shared, it would be counterproductive to force a fixed interview structure against the narrative of the dialogue.

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

-Foundational exploration-

Target group: people between 20 – 35 who have lived in several countries during their lives.

Some tentative criteria to include:

- o someone from a minority group
- o people who has experienced a “forced displacement”
- o Safety measure: people who have not lived in other countries other than their birthplace

### INTRO

Hi, I am Siqi, a Master student from AHO University of Oslo.

A little bit of background to this conversation: this interview is part of a research I am conducting for my dissertation project, where I am exploring the definition of Identity in the contemporary era. I can elaborate on this later on during the interview.

I want to thank you first of all for your time dedicated to participate to this interview.

Since I don't have a note taker to register this conversation, I would like to ask your permission to record the audio of this conversation so it will be possible for me to come back to it later. I want to assure you that none of your sensitive personal information (such as name, address, etc.) will be used and published in my final work, since you will be anonymized in the case I will extract material from this conversation.

I want you to know that you can request to access, review, modify or delete these information at any point by sending me a request by email.

Because of the nature of the theme I am tackling, I am aware that I will be asking some question that can become intimate or private, so please feel free to pass on any question that you might not feel comfortable answering. The objective of this conversation is not about uncovering difficult past events, so just feel free about sharing only what you want.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes.

### Section 01: WHO (5 minutes)

I'd like to start by asking you to tell me a little about yourself:

- Name, age, profession
- Family background
- Where you have lived
- Current legal citizenship

### Section 02: WHAT (10 minutes)

- Before this interview I asked you to bring a single physical object, to identify yourself with. Can you tell me about it and why you have chosen it?

- Card sorting: here I have for you a randomly ordered list of things that are considered having an effect on a person's identity. Can you please re-arrange them in a ranking order of what you think is most important?

- o ID documentation
- o Nationality
- o Fingerprints
- o Religion
- o Skin colour
- o Culture, hobbies and sports
- o Country of birth
- o Language
- o Instagram & other social media
- o Gender
- o Sexual orientation
- o Family
- o Clothes
- o Music preferences
- o Food preferences
- o Idol or mentor
- o Friends and social groups
- o Job and income level
- o Political opinion

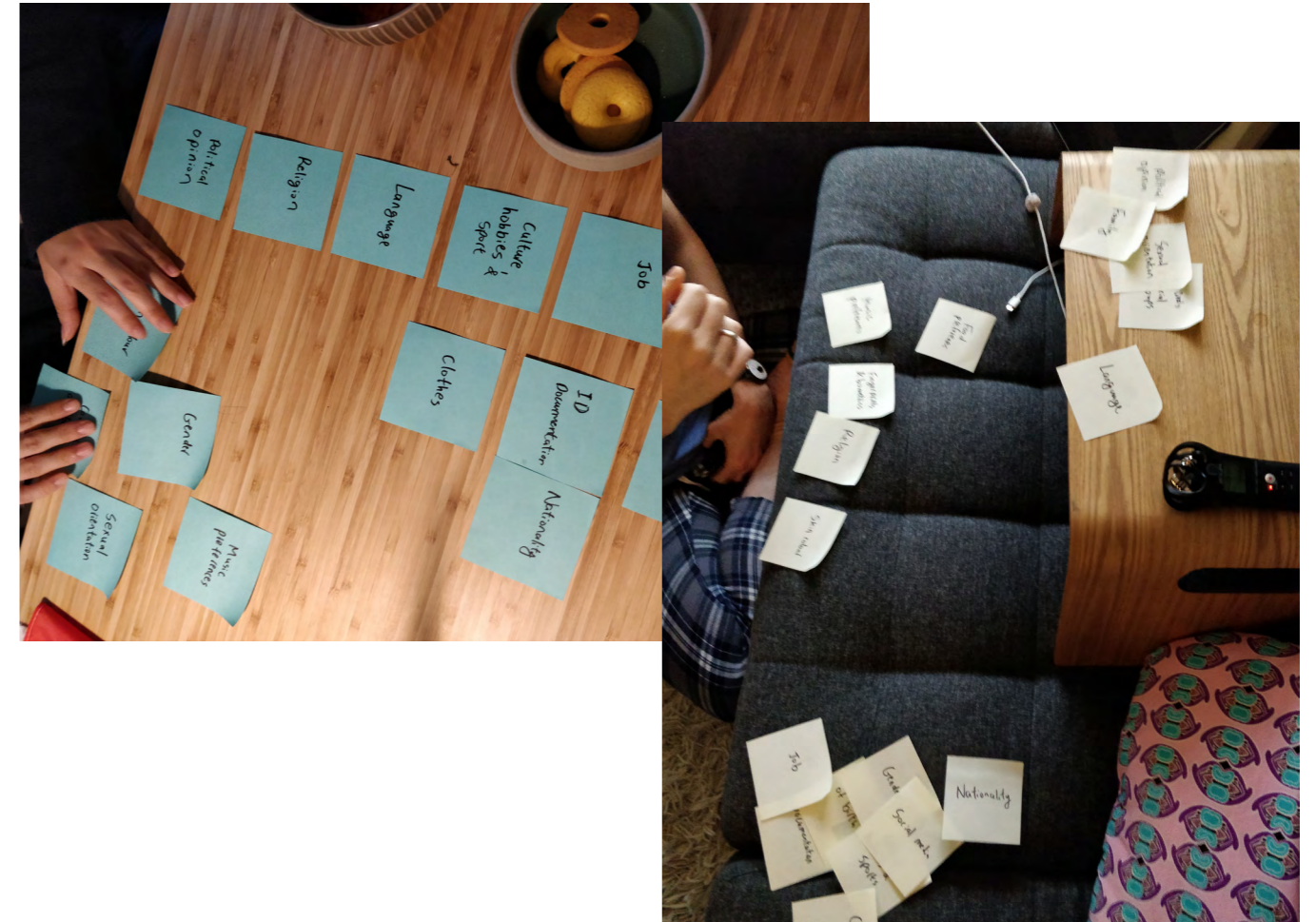
- Can you give me a definition of identity in one or a couple of sentences?
- Identity as sense of belonging: What does sense of belonging mean to you?
- Identity as reference: There is a specific person or role model you find especially inspirational or you look-up to? It can be any person from family, friends, mentors or idols. Why?

**Section 03: WHEN (15 mins)**

- Someone wants to write a biography about you, what would be the title? Which are the three main chapters of the book? (Identifying some "deciding moments" along the life) Which are the main things about you that you really don't want the writer to portrait wrong?
- Theory of multiverse: if you were given the chance to be change something at any point of your life, what would you do?
- Identity can also be defined a series of determining moments in a person's life, both as active and intentional choices (study, career decisions, marriage, moving to another country, etc) or passive experiences (accidents, traumas, historical events, etc) . What do you think is more dominant and deciding, the intentional or the unintentional events?

**Section 04: HOW (15 mins)**

- What do you answer when people ask you "where you come from?" (Identity by displacement)
- Can you think of a moment in your life you felt different that the people around you? What happened and how did you react?
- We are all different, but do you ever feel unique? If yes, when and how?
- In the modern times, do you feel like being different is empowering or it's a disadvantage?
- Identity is by definition the characteristic of uniqueness against a multitude, therefore we compare ourselves constantly to other people and things:
  - (Identity as protection and coping mechanism)
  - (acceptance, integration, participation)





Appx. 03  
**Findings & anecdotes**

In this section are collected and explained the findings I condensed from the interviews and conversations with experts.

Follows a selection of anonymised anecdotes collected from the interviewees.



## Main finding 1

# Identity comes in layers.



These are things that are active choices of a person to be surrounded with, such as people, friends, hobbies and culture. They can say a lot about where you will find this person and what he/she's like.



During my interviews, I asked the participant to sort in a hierarchy of importance (to them) a seemingly random list of elements commonly used to identify themselves and other people and sourced from my preliminary desk research. As expected, it's a highly personal exercise so the results were closely related to each interviewee's life experiences and cultural background. What was more surprising was that, apart from some fluctuations, all participants tend to group the elements based on the context or practicality. By using this grouping strategy, each of them boiled all the elements down to a similar structure of 3-4 groups that I identified as follows:

### Level 1: Positioning factors

Some of the interviewees defined these the "pillars from which you can generate all the other elements" or "elements that would tell you where you would find this person and how he/she is". At first glance to this category belongs all the elements where the person has the most active choice on (culture, hobby, friends, etc.) but in some cases also factors on which we tend to have more limited choice on (such as family, job, etc) might be included.

### Level 2: Transactional factors

To this category belongs the most practical elements (such as language, interests, idols, food or music preferences, etc.) we use when interacting with other people and in a social setting. These allow us to share opinions, engage in conversations or create social event, for example dinner party or date. These elements are not always fixed and

might change easily over time.

### Level 2.1: Curated factors

The elements identified in this level still belongs to the category of the externalized and transactional factors, but they are considered by the majority as "useful but superficial". To this group belongs mainly social media and fashion, but sometimes richer elements such as religion and political opinion counts. People seems to be very judgmental on these elements more than the other transactional factors, although they distrust them as defining elements of a person, since they can be easily misleading.

### Level 3: The untouchables

To this level belongs the elements that people feel they have the least choice on, for example biometrics, gender, ID documentation, skin colour, etc. Some people called these elements "tick boxes", because they are simply information given on a form, and everyone insists on the fact that these should not have any power on who you are. It's worth mentioning if the subject had experiences struggles with any of these elements this can be easily transferred into the top level positioning factors, but they are always regarded as a negative positioning element, since they represent a struggle and not an active deliberate choice.

**SUB FINDING: Documentations are important, but should not be this powerful.**

Main finding 2

## *Being different is a lot of admin.*

”

Of course it is empowering to be able to start a sentence in one language continuing another, but as much as it's empowering it's a never ending source of frustration as well.



Living in different countries and speaking different languages has always been described by interviewees as positive experience in the formation of a person's personality, but all participants agree on the stress and initial difficulty to navigate through the cultural differences and language barriers. Being different and non-conforming to the majority requires a lot of "processing power", that can generate false expectations to fulfill and mental stress. This has a direct correlation on the person's personality and political placement in the society, as pointed out by some of the participants, while confronting the different attitudes between native people and expats towards sharing their past experiences in a public setting. Identity definition therefore is not a natural and innate process, but rather a stressful ritual we pose ourselves into while growing up and interacting with different people and cultures outside of our initial safe zone (family).

**SUB FINDING: The identity can be exercised.**

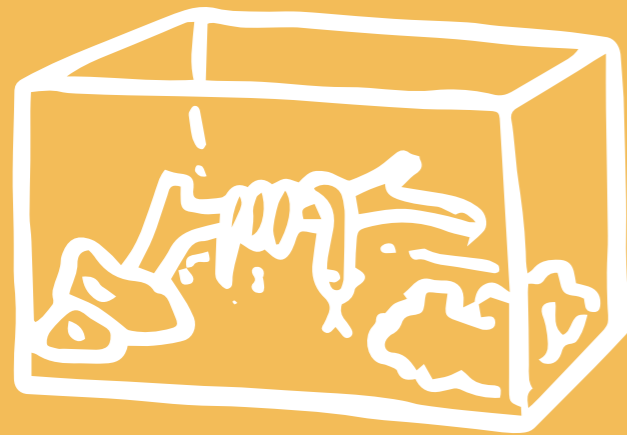


Main finding 3

## *Identity is contextual.*

”

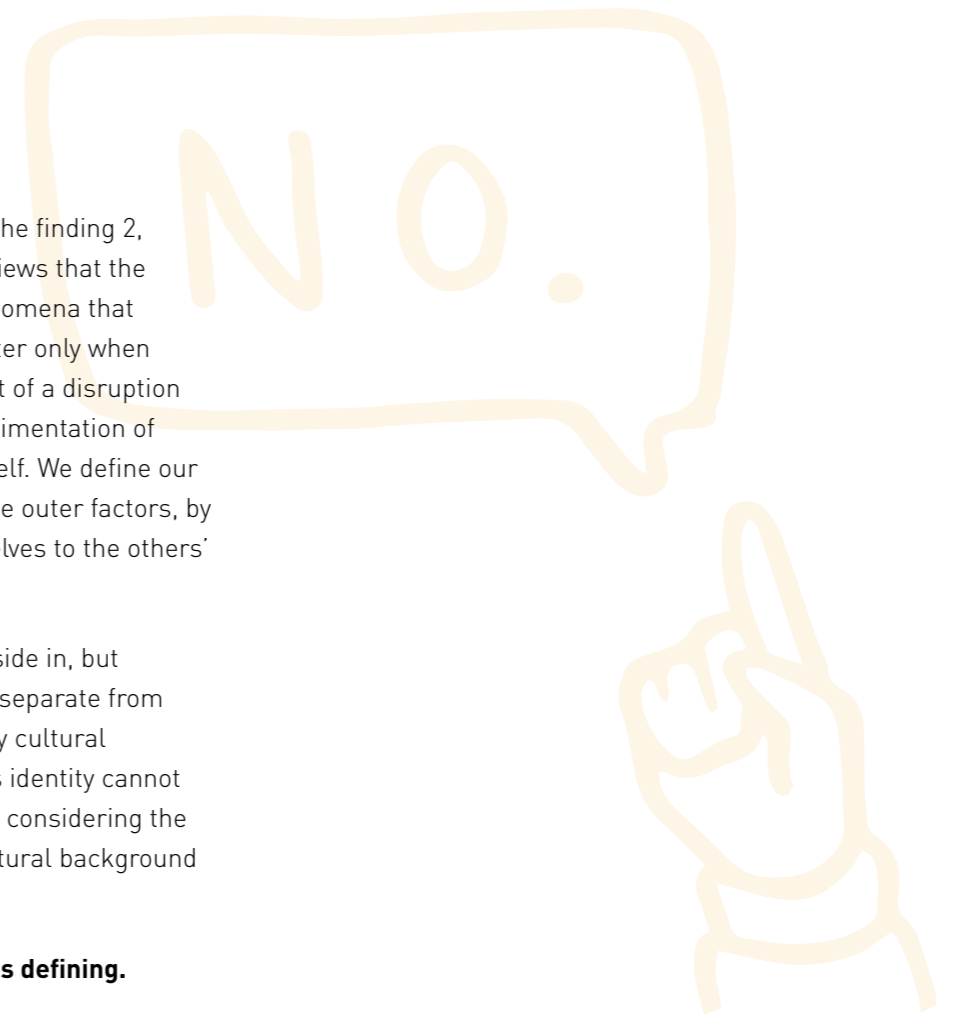
When you change country you have to deal with being from somewhere that in a way you weren't supposed to be from there.



As explained also through the finding 2, it was clear from the interviews that the identity formation is a phenomena that emerges as a tangible matter only when the subject is posed in front of a disruption and conflict of previous sedimentation of culture and perception of self. We define our identity in comparison to the outer factors, by adapting or opposing ourselves to the others' parameters.

It's both inside out and outside in, but ontologically impossible to separate from each other. As suggested by cultural relativism, each individual's identity cannot be fully understood without considering the context, timeframe and cultural background of the subject.

**SUB FINDING: Opposition is defining.**



## What is identity?

(The identity) is a series of experiences, languages, life lessons that make us who we are, and we use it every day as a currency to enrich and exchange with others. It's like a cultural baggage.

For me (the identity) is the ensemble of all your beliefs and morals, because you are who you believe, you are your morals.

Identity is how you see your role in the society, sort of how you define yourself, but also how the society define you or expect you to do.

Identity is a way in which we interact with others. how we how we project ourselves onto others, so that we can have a currency to talk about things and understand where people come from. So it's not a fixed thing.

(The identity) is probably the collection of your personal core values and experiences that make you be who you are. So I would focus on value and experience but of course you can decline it in several ways.

## About languages

I would say just a very important in part of the identity, at least for me, it's the language. I wouldn't say language as the cultural representation of a culture, but more as a tool. I would say it's brick number one when you are building your identity. But there are like a cognitive limitations to your awareness. Of course it is empowering to be able to start a sentence in one language continuing another, but as much as it's empowering

it's a never ending source of frustration as well. You're only a human you don't have infinite processing power so at some point it does explode in your face...

Language defines a person. every language I speak I think I have a different personality.

I love the fact that I can speak multiple languages, and living in an predominately English speaking country this is still a great conversation starter, people are fascinated by my "previous lives", they are always asking "what did you do, where did you live, etc"

## About being different

My identity is very split, so sometimes I feel like I am one thing and sometimes another, I can feel useful and needed but also something no reason to be there and not needed.

When I first moved to the States I slowly discovered that this this term, Asian I never thought that before. And from that day my whole life has been like an ongoing theme of exploring different a different culture. I think it's depends on where you are in life. When I was a teenager I felt that I was different and it was not a good thing, because it was difficult to handle all these things.

I want to always push myself and be uncomfortable in different cultures and kind of find the humour in the frustration as well as expand my understanding of what is possible when it comes to life and experiences.

I think it's very cool to talk about how special you are and it's very good to

construct an identity for yourself. So you can feel proud of who you are. But at the same time, that identity always access a barrier in the way that you can reach people. So we have to be careful with how we think about identity because if we make too much out of it, then we can start to exclude people.

There's no way that you could ever put yourself into the shoes of somebody unless you've been born and raised there, and really experience that culture firsthand. But you could start to feel what is important to people, you can start to enjoy the same things as them. And so on a day, busy day of shopping or whatever, you're on your errands, and you look into the mirror and you get a fright because it's a total foreigner standing there, and you realise it's you. And you realise, oh, wow, for a moment, I forgot that.

You have to understand that people are going to consider you a stereotype in the beginning, and that's part of deal. I am not one of these guys saying that stereotype are terrible, in itself a stereotype is just a shortcut. So as long as you're aware that you're taking a shortcut, it doesn't have to be terrible.

The idea that, you know, the nationality is defining opposition of differences is something that belongs to the past. I am a humanist, not an Italian, Norwegian or such.

I am proud of it (being different), but I also struggled a lot in the past. Being different can create barriers in ridiculous and absurd ways.

## About places

The perception of yourself change when you change the country. Because you suddenly realize you have a choice of giving the perception you wanted, at any time, basically because you slowly see

yourself with other people's culture.

(Where I come from?) I answer many different things. Sometimes they don't even tell the truth. I have faked it sometimes in the past. That I wanted to do by lying, was challenge that concept of one Chinese people could be.

You have to deal with being from somewhere that in a way you weren't supposed to be from there. And you have a your existence as an individual is linked very much to conflict and often oppression.

The whole tendency of, you know, just people going towards being more patriotic and more nationalist. It's just so it's so scary. It's absolutely terrifying. I don't think a place will ever be able to make me feel like I belong. And if your sense of identity is very broke, and it's very split, like mine is then you won't ever feel comfortable you won't ever feel like you belong.

I'm not really from places I happened to be born there. And I lived there because I have to. And as soon as I could have moved somewhere else where I felt like it was more, you know, Representative of my person.

The different places I have lived, each of them incarnate a particular phase of my growth and identity.

I like to think of myself as a resilient. And the reason for being resilient is that you are prepared and being prepared means that you ask yourself a lot of questions, and even though you can't have all the answers, you're still trying to interrogate yourself and finding new solution all the time.



Appx. 04  
**Card game**

Initially developed to be a sense making tool, in the following pages are collected the last iteration of the card game I created.



After a few iterations and ideations, I decided to concretise these ideas into a card game, because it's an intuitive format that allows me to test them very efficiently without losing too much time at adding definition at this stage.

Firstly, I made these gray cards that I call the artefact cards. These cards come mainly from the conversations with the interviewees and the experts, while some of them are polarised version of some fears or trends that I saw throughout my research, thrown in there just to provoke.

During one of the first iterations on these cards, my supervisor Pardis pointed out that they are very dense are context related, so I needed to problematize these cards to make them accessible and easily understandable. The solutions makes little sense without the problems, and once you give people problems to solve they will immerse themselves into it and build their own stories.

That's the reason why I created these red problem cards.

Now the idea was to combine randomly a problem card with an artefact card, but what I noticed is that sometimes it works out pretty well and other times it just doesn't

work and the narrative simply gets stuck.

That's where I decided to introduce these yellow event cards. These are random disruptions or events that can be introduced at any time to reshuffle the context and carry on the conversation.

In order to give a consistent structure to this game, I also created this template to be used in the game sessions, given to the players in the beginning.

(On one half you have the slots where you place the problem card and the artefact card picked from the deck randomly. From this combination the player is being asked if the artefact card solves the problem card. They can talk, draw, sketch, map down their thoughts in it.)

This template helped me to gather very concise and concrete feedback from the players, and it was a really nice and fun way of documenting also the process. After all, from the feedback I got people seemed to enjoy this quite a lot as an activity itself.

Originally I was planning to carrying on conducting more sessions of this game and use it as a generation tool for some ideation workshops, but I only managed to use it in 4 sessions before the pandemic happened.



Artefact

### Single-use Catfish Generator

To contrast the aggressive political activism, some governments collaborate with new tech companies to create secure digital identity surrogates generated on a chain-block fashion. These are intended to be used as anonized measures in digital environment, but still univocably trackable to the original by law institutions.

Digital-self / Protection / Anonymity



Artefact

### Biological passport

Some countries allows people to access citizenship benefits if, by undertaking a simple monitored genetic sample analysis, their DNA is proven to be applicable percentage to be originally from the country.

Experience / Citizenship / Bio-engineering



Artefact

### Cyber-stigma

Groups of politically driven cyberterrorists launched a silent malware that infiltreted into several European Countries' citizen database, filtrating a social hierachy mechanism based on a ranking of country of origin different from the resident one, that limit or prevent expats from accessing to services and goods.

Threat / Accessibility / Politics



Artefact

### Skin 2 skin ID system

To put a stop on identity thief cases and cyber crimes, citizens are starting to store their personal and sensitive data in a under skin chip that can be read only under owners' consent by a physical touch. This is the ultimate systematical form of data portability.

Digital-self / Protection / Anonymity



Artefact

### MyNewSelf App

Cosmetic surgery has become a common and socially acceptable practice. Many surgeon practices attempt to make their services more accessible by creating apps where the patients can use their phone's camera to tune easily their facial features using face recognition filters. The feature is accompanied by an estimation of the surgery price to achieve the new look, purchasable in-app with a single click.

Cosmetic surgery / AR / Beauty obsession



Artefact

### Self-curate filters

Similarly to ad-block plugins at filtering incoming information and advertisement, a new category of filters are getting widely used as common safety practice on internet. Once set up with desired level of security, these filters will prevent you from revealing on web any personal information, details, images, etc. blocking or censoring them in realtime.

Internet security / Privacy / Censorship



Artefact

### City passport

Some local communities obtained the permission from the government to decentralise the ID system management of their own citizens. This allows a more tailor-sized services for the citizens, empower the sense of community and participation to political life.

Diversity / Sense of belonging / ID documentation



Artefact

### Medical Integration

Recent studies demonstrated that some aspects of learned culture (such as food preference, climate comfortability, social attitude, ethic responsibility, etc.) can be easily modified medically with assumption of a daily pill. Some government decided to start test programs by prescribing these meds systematically to all the incoming immigrants, in order to facilitate their integration.

Medical system / Cultural diversion / Self image



Artefact

### Digital persona surrogate

With perfecting of customisable IoT systems, many tech companies started developing digital AI that becomes our "digital persona", programmed to take delegable decisions in our veces and preconfigure with a finger print identification input, a large variety of digital and physical services for us.

IoT / AI / Digital behaviour



Artefact

### The integration gym

As a desperate attempt to tackle the overwhelming migration flow while maintaining the quality of life, some countries introduced the format of "integration gym", where newly arrived citizen have to go through a month of mandatory cultural adaptation program, learning the basic tools to navigate the values of the hosting country and become quickly functional citizens of the society.

Policy making / immigration / Integration



Artefact

### Personality documents

In order to promote diversity and inclusivity, some local institutions created customizable Identification documents. These documents display the carrier's religion, political opinion, sexual orientation, personality, as an attempt to destigmatize these values and convert them into norm.

Customization / Diversity / Documentation



Artefact

### Biometric history archive

Genetic alteration has become a common and easily accessible practice, blurring the boundaries between the identification of self, to the extend that governments felt the pressuring urgency of creating a reliable biometric archive of the citizens, that is public, accessible and verified. Many institutions implement a "biometric history" in their identification documents.

Biological identity / Genetic Alteration



Problem

## Cyber security

The technology's omnipresence is raising concerns regarding the vast range of damages on the privacy in case of a data breach. Contribute to this mass phobia the fact that citizens are questioning the reliability of their government at protecting their data and interest, where the surveillance systems are also perceived as a sinister attack instead of protection.



Problem

## Generational Identity crisis

In these times of politic and economic instability, unpredictable and disastrous climate challenges and ever-evolving technology, many feel disoriented and struggle to define a personal value system. This causes consequent social anxiety, low civic engagement and mental health decadence.



Problem

## Aggravated Social stigma

A more standardized society is indirectly condemning the marginalised groups of citizen, and making their social life more challenging and paralysing. The inclusion initiatives are costly and require a radical culture shift, therefore governments are not prioritizing them in their political agenda.



Problem

## Integration & conformity

With a globalized society, many local communities are preoccupied at finding new tools and services in an attempt of transiting into a more inclusive and diverse community for everyone. The complexity of the demographics makes the policy-making a extremely challenging task for institutions, as any attempt of standardization or simplification implies some level of exclusion.



Problem

## Cultural bias

With an increasingly diverse society, many groups of citizens developed a syntomatic cultural bias as a coping mechanism to defend their own identity. Apart from daily social interactions implications, this phenomena leads to a general sense of intolerance and national sentiment that is splitting the political conversation and creating violent conflicts.



Trend / Event

## Individual citizenships

The notion of nation-state collapsed because of the destructive and nichelistic nationalism. The remaining organisations in power decided to constitute together stateless identifications through a shared archive, as an attempt to mitigate the conflicts.



Trend / Event

## Identity as meta-products

Personal data becomes a tangible investment of each persona's will. Metrics as personal social media gain tangible economic value that each individual can invest on and sell partially or fully to digital companies. Examples of products: popularity visa card, privilege passports, social credits.



Trend / Event

## Pandemic isolation

After a contagious virus breakage, all the countries reinforced their borders both as biological analysis of citizens and policy making. As a side effect, the sense of community and social responsibility are positively empowered, generating a renovated social identity.



Trend / Event

## Catastrophic black-out

After an unprecedented solar flair caused a breakdown of the majority of the internet servers. Although almost all the digital archives are lost, the technology is still functioning, therefore a new wave of digital platforms quickly start to replace the previous ones and a general sense of positivism settles among designers and content creators.



Feel free to sketch, map, link or do whatever you feel like in this pretty empty space :)

<b>Problem card</b>	<b>Artefact</b>	<b>Trend/event</b>
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**Predicted outcome** How does the artefact interact with the problem?  
Does it solve it? If not, what will happen?

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Alternative outcome**

.....

.....

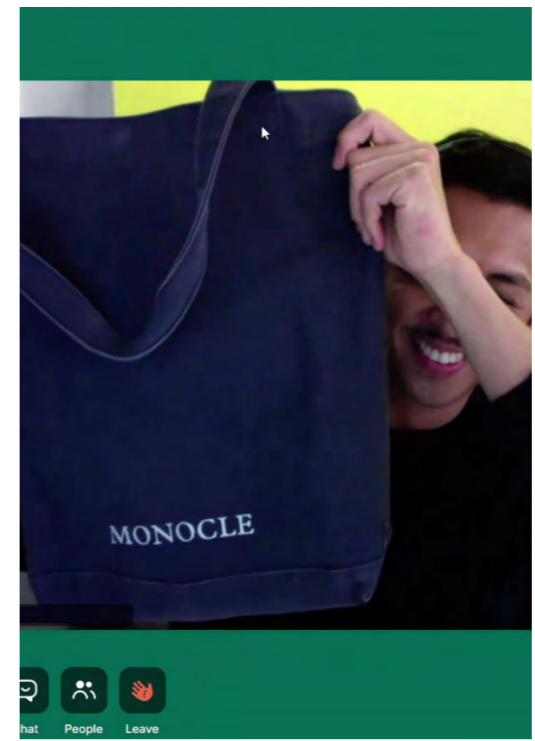
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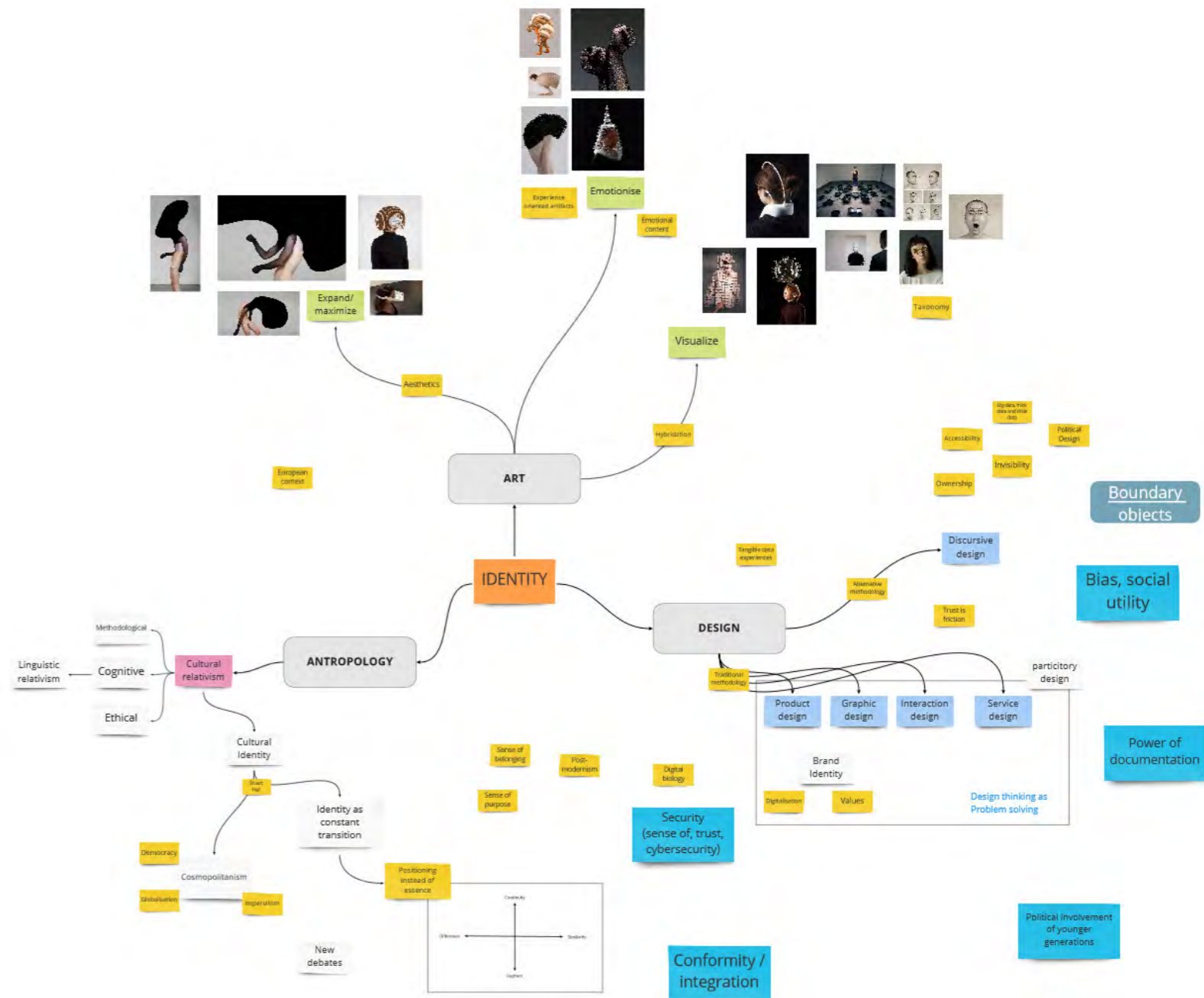
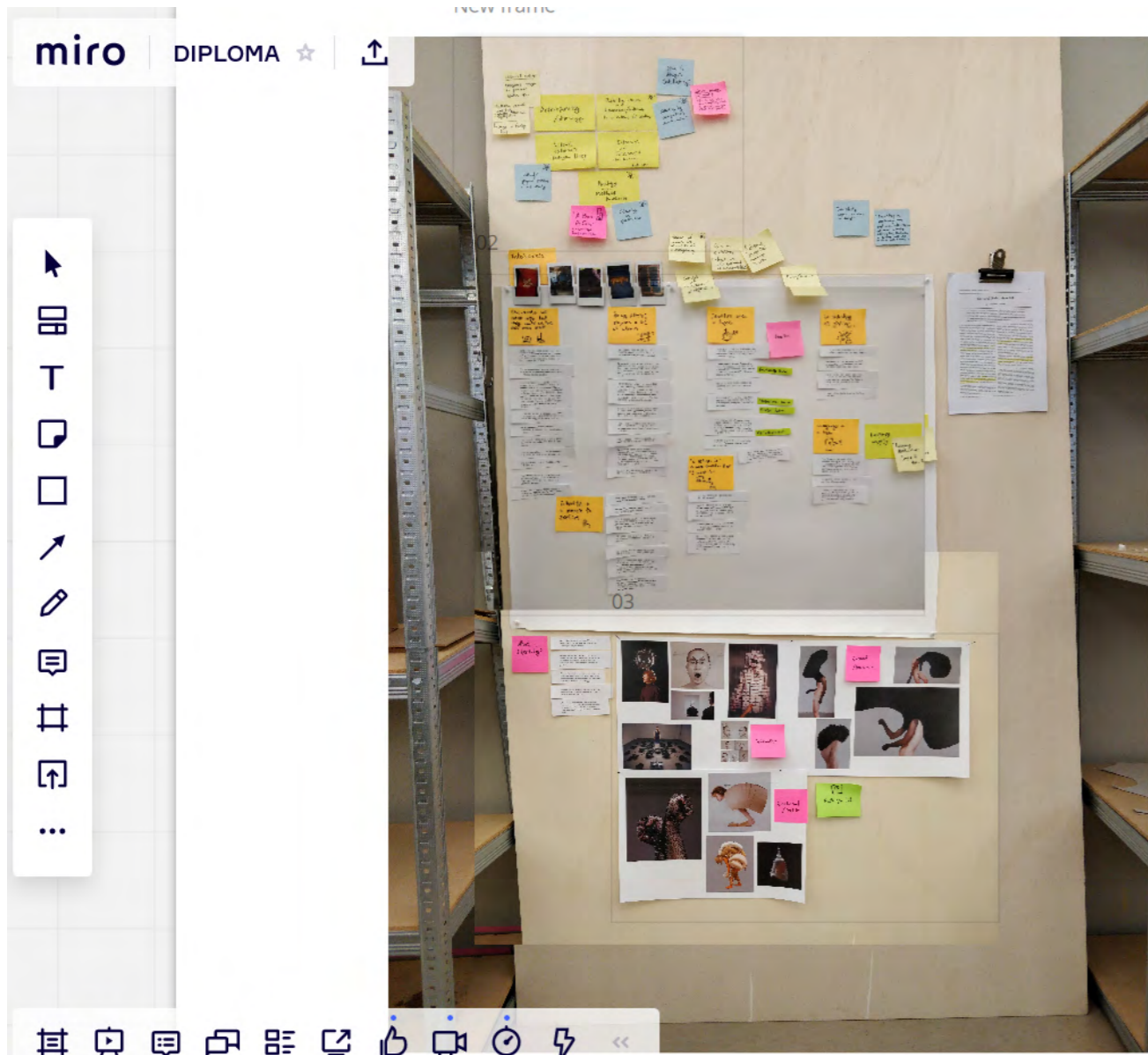
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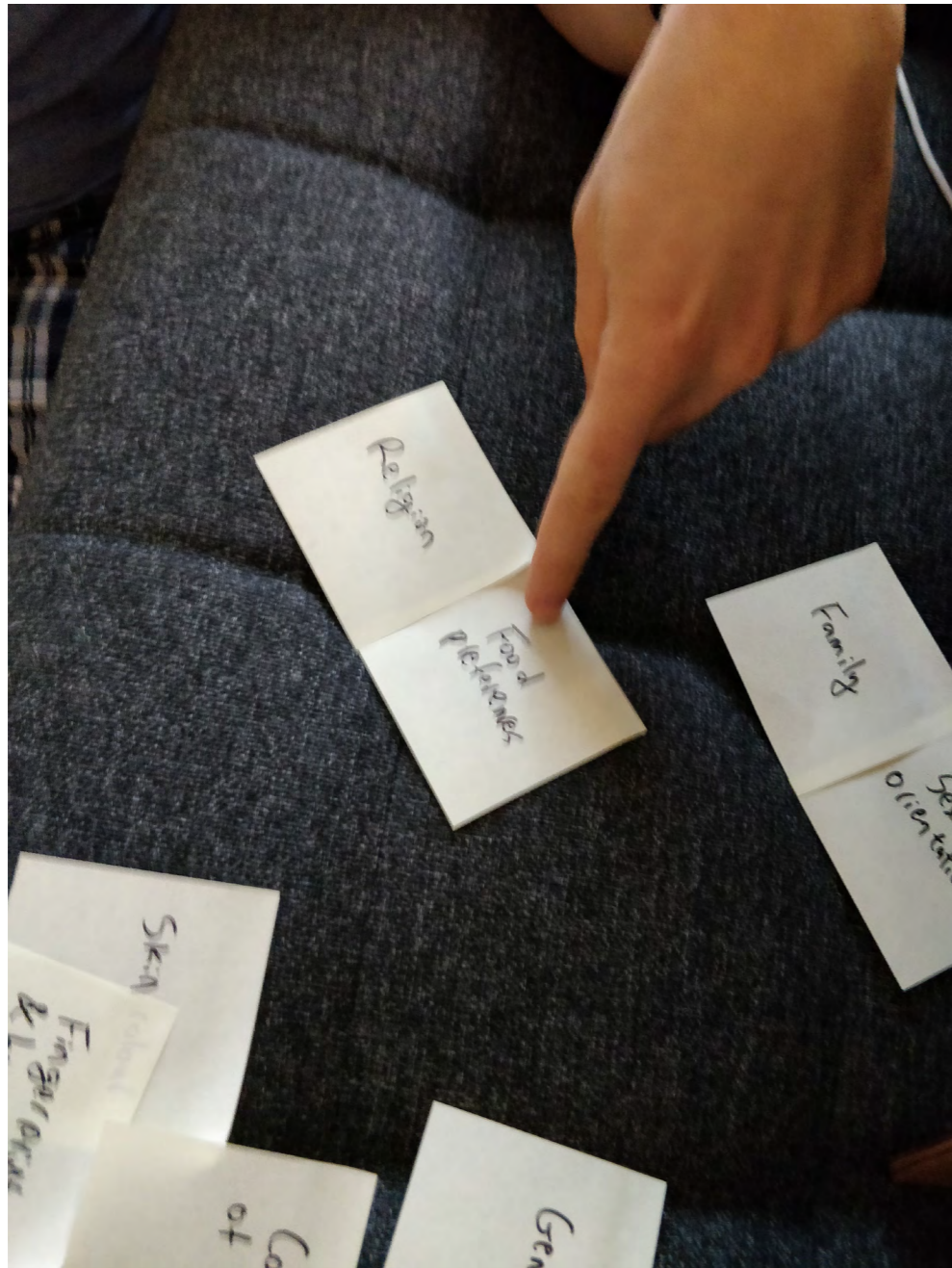


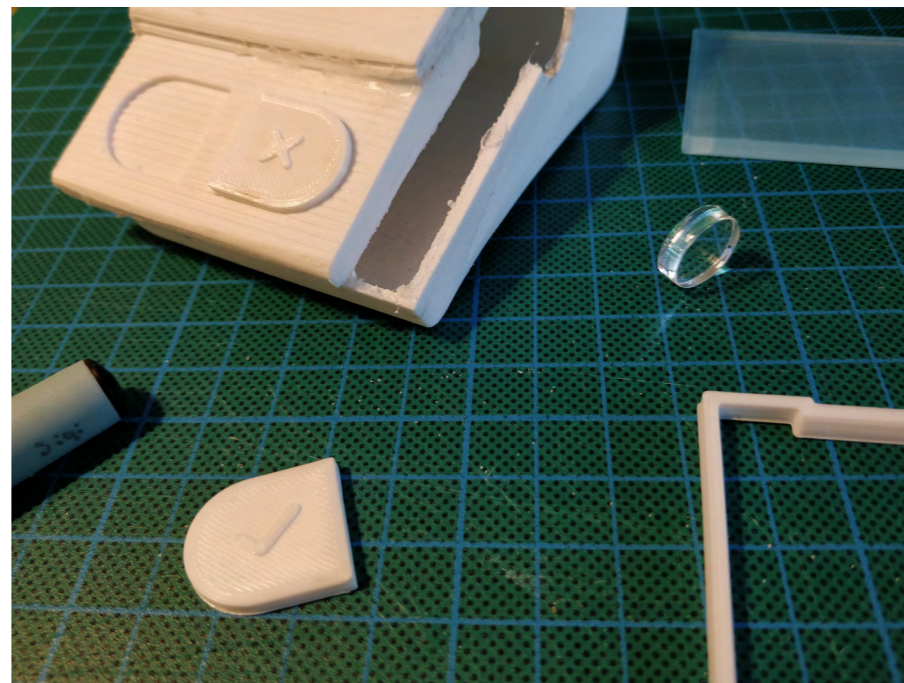
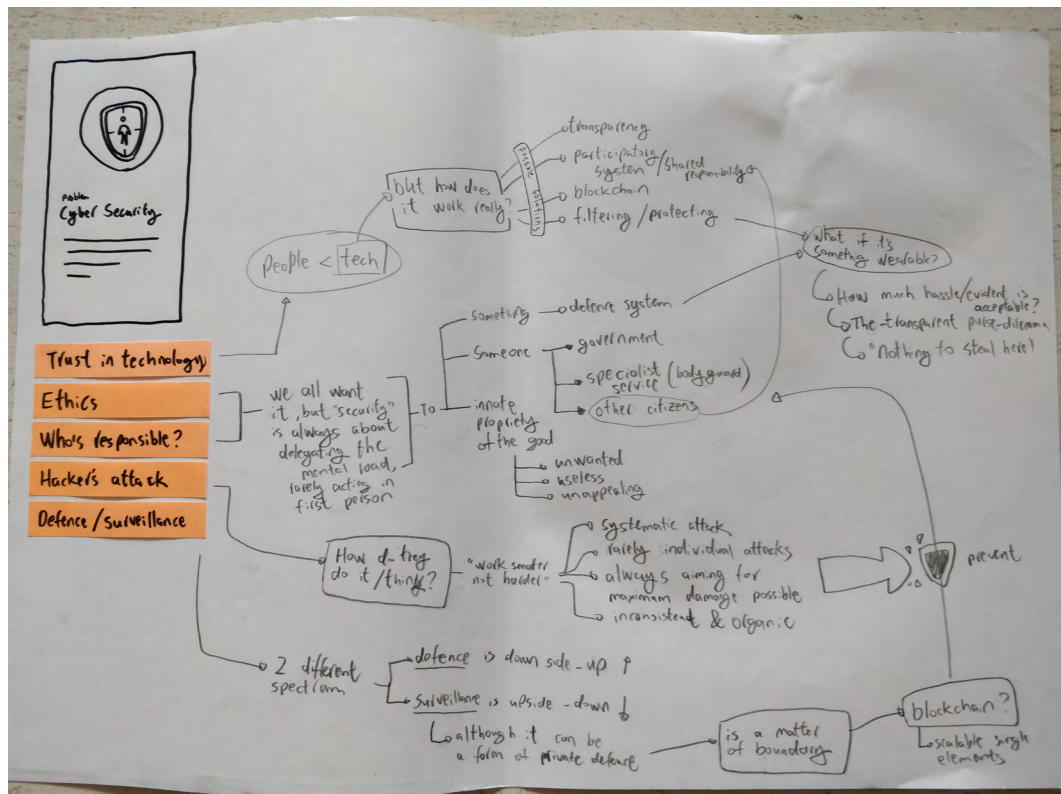
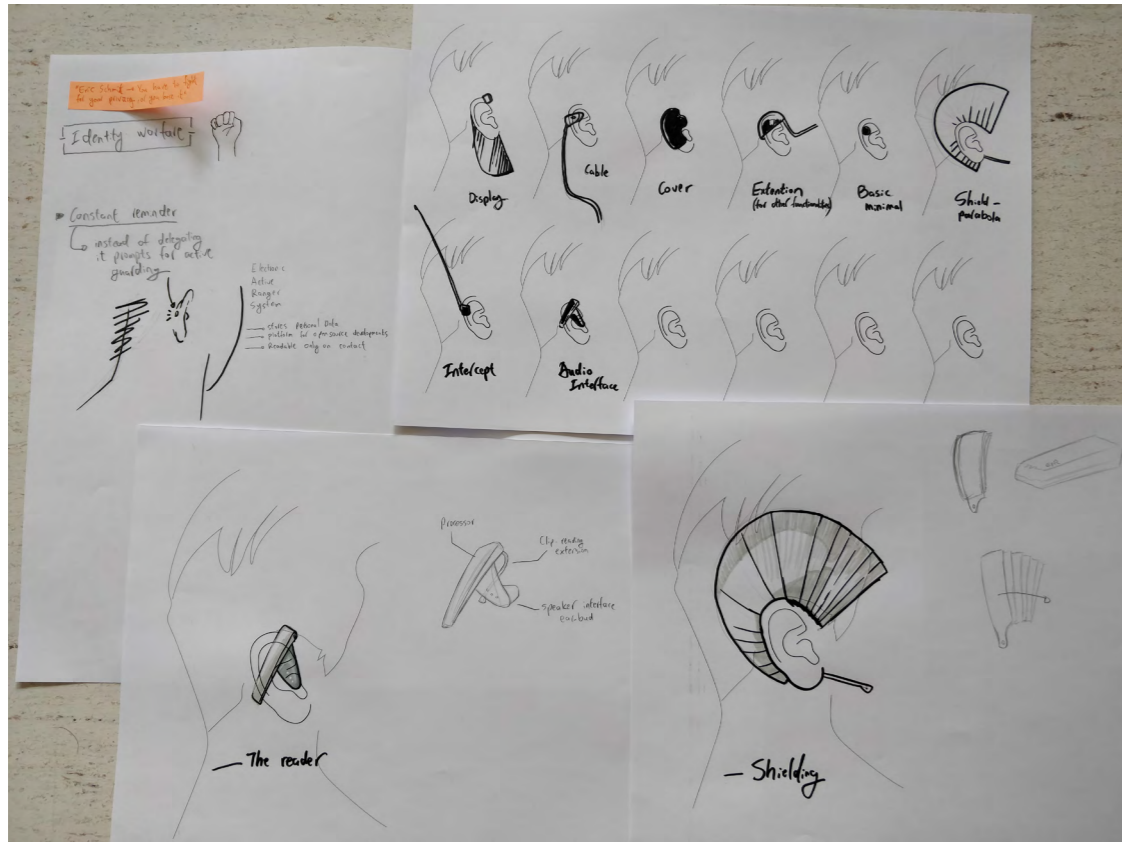
Appx. 05  
**Behind the scenes**

Images from the frantic working days, fragments of memories, details from dialogues and emotions captured on film.











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**Bodily Boundary Objects -  
Exploring the meaning of identity  
through discursive design.**

By Siqu Chen

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unless noted otherwise.

Book design & edit: Siqu Chen

-

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Pardis Shafafi



