



CONFLICTUAL HARMONY

An intervention philosophy for systems change



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INTRODUCTION

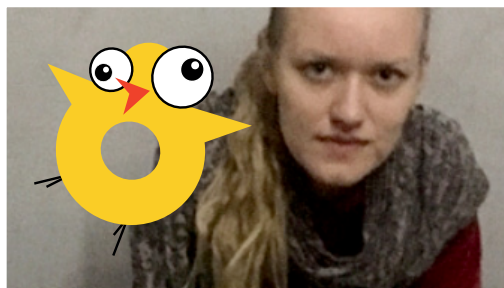
The intervention philosophy ‘Conflictual Harmony’ is a theory of change, as well as a set of principles, capacities, and processes, articulated to enable systems analysis, innovation and creativity across disciplinary, cultural and social barriers. It is rooted in design practice, expanding its scope to include processes from the visual and performing arts, as well as organization and community development.

It is the personal methodology and life project of transdisciplinary designer Johanna Tysk, but also an ever-evolving body of work and theory carrying influence and traces from a large collective of change agents across various sectors. As such, it is an open call for more aligned change movements and more holistic approaches to issues of social concern.

Its theoretical foundations range from ancient spiritual wisdom to civil rights theorists from the 50’s and 60’s, feminist

literature, brain science, performative theories within the social sciences, psychology and modern management theories and systems thinking. It has emerged and evolved over a period of 15 years through a pulse between action and reflection, in a spiral of lived experience-theory-practice-conversations. Acknowledging the simplified nature of any model, it makes no claims of trying to present an absolute truth, rather it is meant to be used as one lens among a variety of lenses out there to view practice through.

Its purpose to create more human, self-reflective and life-sustaining systems. Foundations for more authentic, equal and healthy relationships within a system. New types of belonging and community. Opportunities for deep and informed innovation. Ultimately, a world and a social order that moves with its people, its environment, and its own inner potential for life.



Johanna Tysk, founder of KOKO Labs, was born in Sweden in 1983 and holds an MFA degree in Transdisciplinary Design from Parsons School of Design in New York. Her practice carries influence from the multiethnic suburbs of

Stockholm, urban Atlanta and cosmopolitan New York. Her creative strategies and systems analysis draws from almost ten years of experience at the intersection of design, art and grassroots community innovation.

VISION & THEORY OF CHANGE

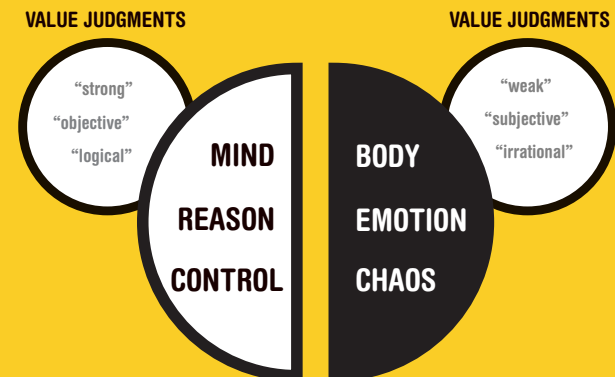
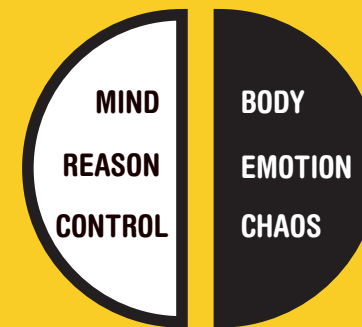
While learning about systems by trying to change them, we ask questions about how the world works, why we do what we do and how things connect – finding new strategies, methodologies, questions, and answers along the way.

One thing we have learned on our journeys across a vast array of social, disciplinary and cultural perspectives, is that we live in a world of dualities.

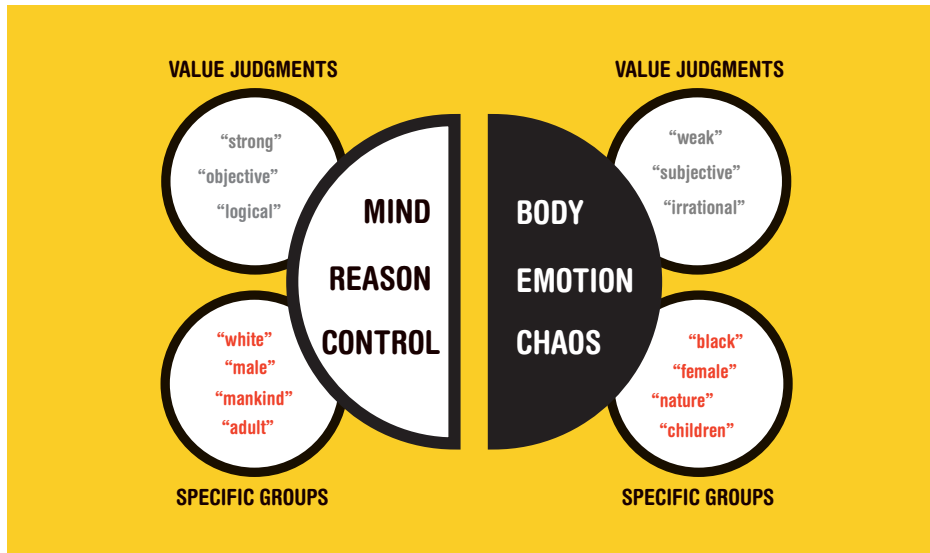
These dualities play out in many different ways, but for the sake of an easy to grasp narrative, let's draw some broad brushstrokes in relation to our Western societies and a few common dualisms operating here.

Going back to the days of Aristoteles, Western culture and thought are defined by a perceived split between mind and body, reason and emotion, order and chaos. It is a dualism that has been perpetuated by religious, scientific and philosophical traditions over thousands of years, and in many ways acted as a foundation for the design of our social structures and relations.

These dualisms are commonly followed by value judgments where one side is considered better than the other. Examples of value judgments tied to the mind-reason-order side, are “rational,” “objective,” “strong.” Value judgments tied to the body-emotion-chaos side of things, are “irrational,” “subjective,” “weak.”



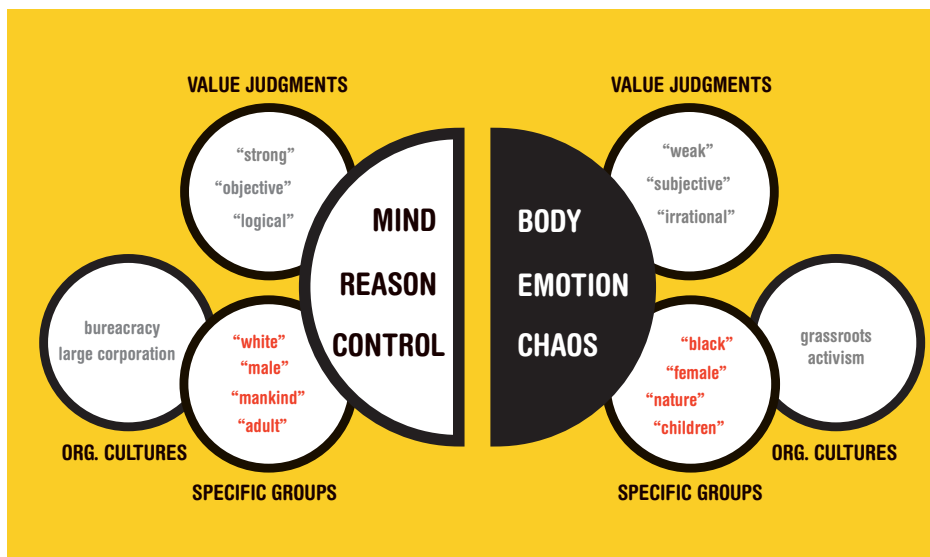
VISION & THEORY OF CHANGE: GROUPS OF PEOPLE & ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES



Along the way, people trying to preserve their identity or position of power, have projected the “undesirable” aspects of what is part of a human whole on specific groups of people. Thus, associating the “good qualities” with for example men, white skin, adulthood, mankind, the upper classes, urban areas. On the other side: women, dark skin, children, nature, the lower classes, rural communities.

These dualisms have also been translated to specific organizational cultures or ways of doing things.

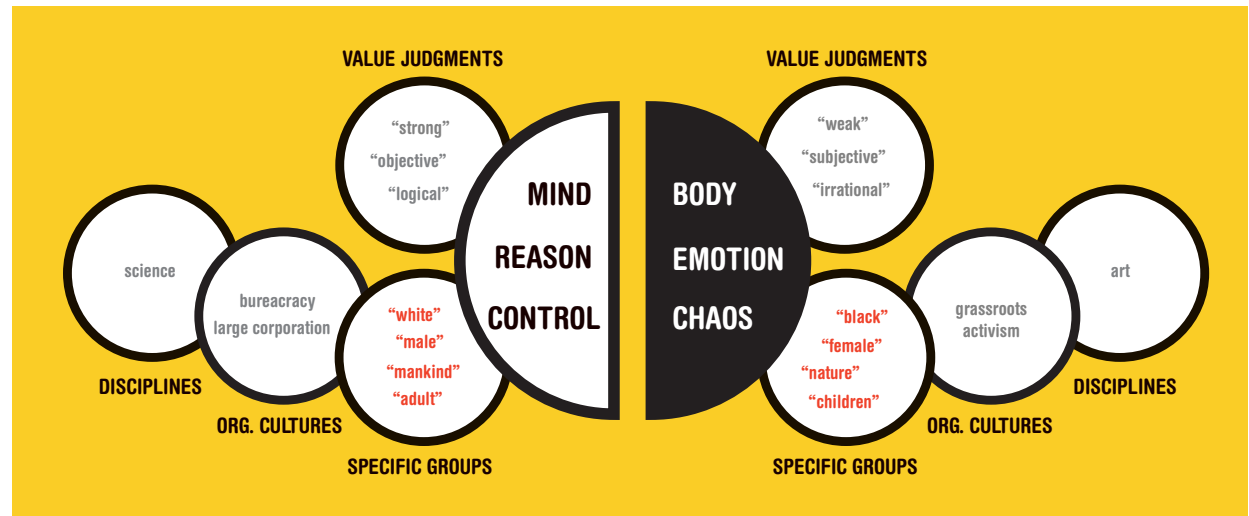
Tied to the *mind-reason-order* side is the idea of the organization governed by a top-down approach, with strict hierarchies, and advanced systems of controlling both employees and outcomes within the system. This is the kind of system that dominates most of our Western societies, whether within a public or a corporate sector, a communist or a capitalist society. To the *body-emotion-chaos* side, are practices of self-organization, as exemplified by organizational cultures tied to for instance grassroots activism.



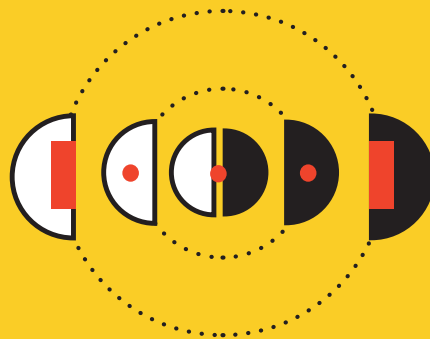
VISION & THEORY OF CHANGE: DISCIPLINES & SCALES

The dualisms have also been tied to specific disciplines, with one example being the perceived split between art and science. In reality, we know that both art and science rely on an analytic-creative approach, but within our mainstream society, we tend to believe that art belongs solely to the *body-emotion-chaos* side of things, and science to the *mind-reason-order* side. This split is embodied in vastly different resources on each side, as well as influence over politics, decision-making, and problem-solving.

The world that this kind of dualistic thinking has created is one containing a wide variety of oppressive structures and alienating roles. Depending on where you are born within this social construction we get assigned a particular role, with certain expectations, resources and possibilities tied to them. Some hold more power than others, but whatever role you are assigned, it is one that limits you to exercise a certain part of the “human whole”.



The nature of this system operates across scales



STRUCTURAL Embodied in institutions that grant advantages to particular groups of people or value particular behaviors over others.

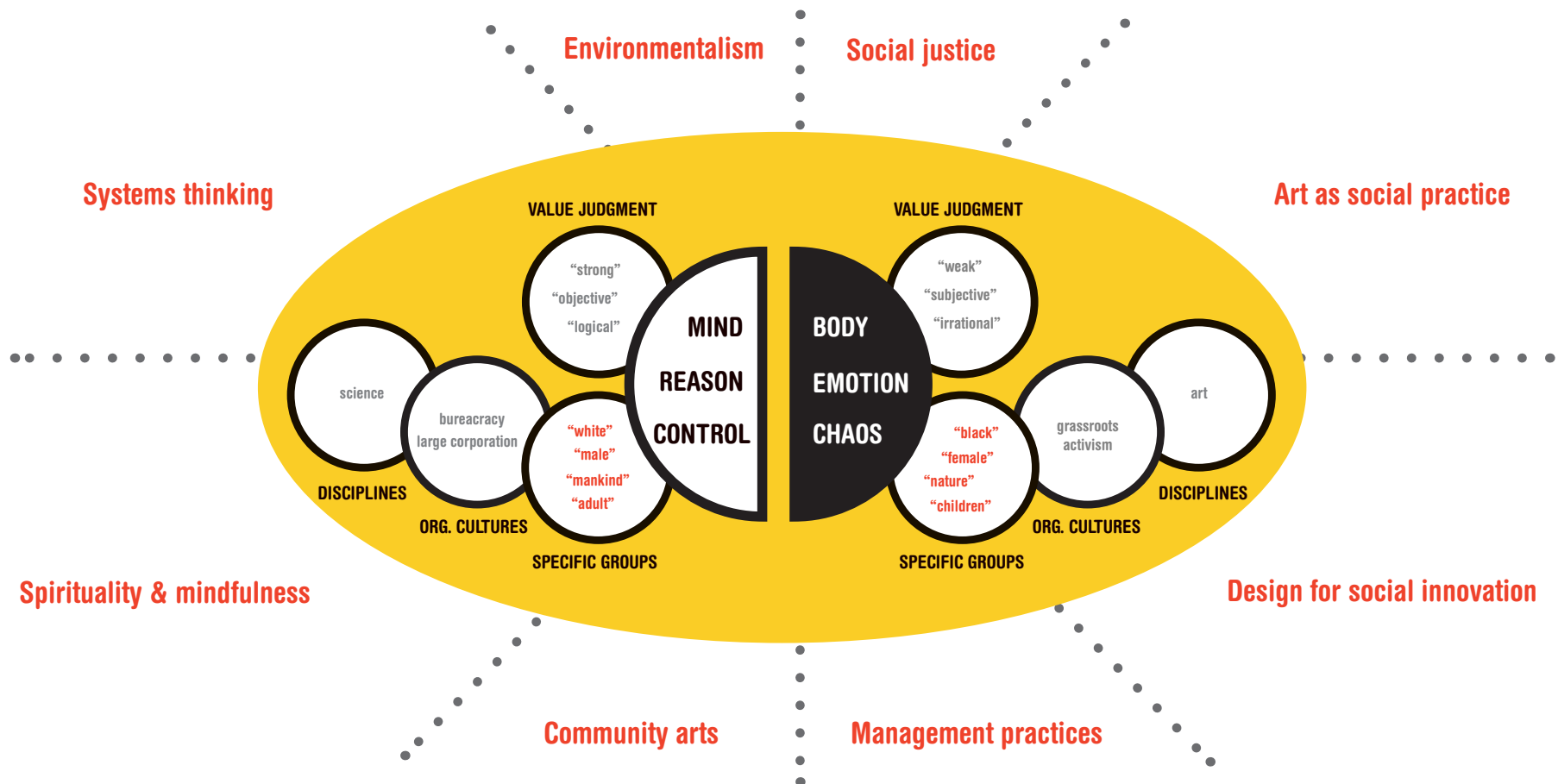
INTERPERSONAL Embodied in patterns of behavior, identities, and interactions that often carry elements of objectification and power struggles.

PERSONAL Embodied in internalized mechanisms of oppression that suppress or punish certain aspects of our being and potential.

VISION & THEORY OF CHANGE: CHANGE MOVEMENTS

Along the way, many attempts, from different angles, have been made to change this world that we have constructed. In more recent times, these change movements consist of, among others, social justice movements of various kinds, environmental activists, spiritual and mindfulness practices, artists, designers and cultural workers,

new management theories and practices, and systems thinkers within the sciences. Few are the platforms that provide opportunities for cross-sectional change work however, and even fewer are the attempts to integrate these change theories into a holistic framework providing guidance for a deeper systems change.



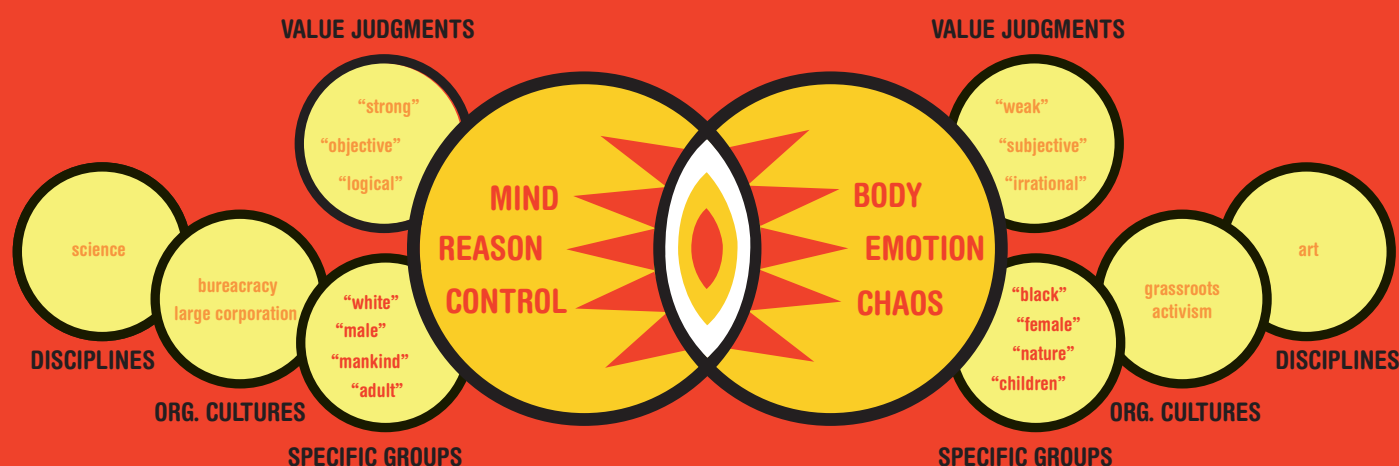
VISION & THEORY OF CHANGE: THE CONFLICTUAL HARMONY CALL

With the temperature of the world, literally and symbolically, rising to alarming levels, the intervention philosophy Conflictual Harmony is an attempt to align forces, but also provide a basis for more strategic interventions regardless of what systems you are operating within.

This means, learning to step out of our bounded rationalities and see the entire system that we are attempting to shift, with all of the dualities involved – abstract concepts, ways of doing things, particular groups of people. It means identifying unhealthy, unproductive or oppressive patterns of interaction between dualisms, and try to not fall into the trap of reproduc-

ing these. It means holding opposing elements and making them move together rather than against each other, setting new goals for the new systems we are trying to create, and carefully navigating the tensions and challenges of transforming the power dynamics, roles and identities involved.

It means holding our focus on opening up a third space in the meeting between different worlds, where dualities can play, dissolve, merge, shift meaning, transform into “new worlds,” or new systems, rooted in what could be. Ultimately, it means holding the tension between duality and non-duality, differentiation and Oneness, accepting and embracing both as intrinsic parts of our human realities.

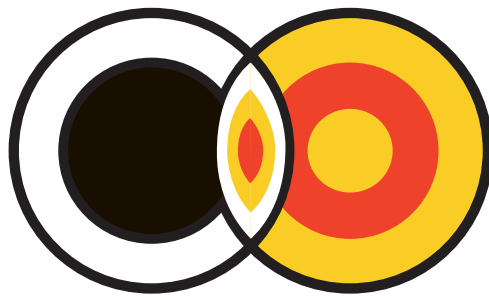


CONFLICTUAL HARMONY 101: DUALISMS

BASIC ASSUMPTION: The overarching dualism of our human existence is seen as the duality between dualism and non-dualism.

Dualism: The tendency to classify, differentiate and categorize, built into our left brain hemispheres.

Non-dualism: The interconnectedness of all things, a feeling of Oneness, built into our right brain hemispheres.



When addressing social challenges according to the Conflictual Harmony lens, we always acknowledge and work from the viewpoint of both these layers simultaneously.



Understanding the dynamics of the humanly constructed dualisms involved in any given system we are trying to affect change on. This includes perceptions, power dynamics, identities, roles, behaviors and social or organizational structures tied to these.



Operating from a belief in the inherent interconnectedness of all elements of a system, and searching for ways to evolve the overall system towards more resilience, creativity, and growth.

Thus, we accept that within social systems difference will always exist, tension and conflict will always arise, and hierarchies will appear on all levels. The challenge to work with these dynamics in a way that does not become or perpetuate relationships of oppression, static co-existence, a forced unity, a bad compromise, or a bipolar situation as outlined in the diagram on the next page.

Different kinds of dualisms

Specific social or cultural groups with generalizable differences in their position within the larger system, such as marginalized community-majority society, urban-rural communities, children-adults, men-women, people read and labeled as black-white.

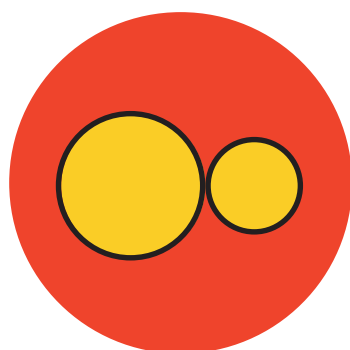
A culture of how things are done, such as bureaucracy-grassroots initiative, hierarchy-flat hierarchy, theory-practice.

Contrasting disciplinary perspectives, such as art-science.

An abstract concept or feeling, such as mind-body, chaos-order, reason-emotion, I-collective, happiness-sadness, agency-structure.

The specific dualisms are always understood as human constructs, therefore malleable, open to interpretation, play, and transformation.

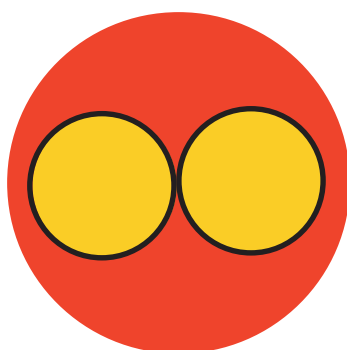
CONFLICTUAL HARMONY 102: COMMON DYNAMICS BETWEEN DUALISMS



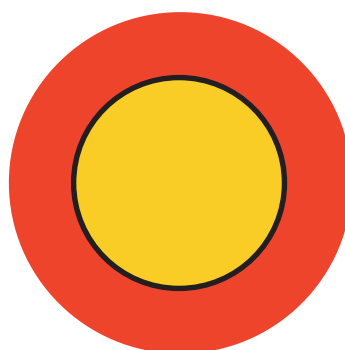
OPPRESSIVE

Oppressive: One duality dominates the other. This dynamic can also be maintained through an anti-approach, where the dominated pole seeks to shift the power dynamic by going into war with the other pole.

Static: Two dualities co-exist as equals side by side, with no learning or creative exchange in-between.



STATIC

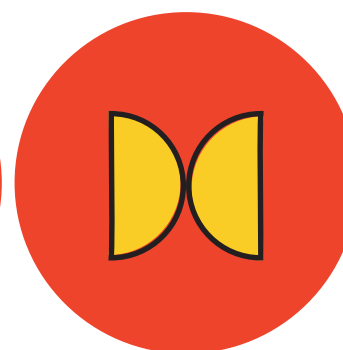


FORCED UNITY

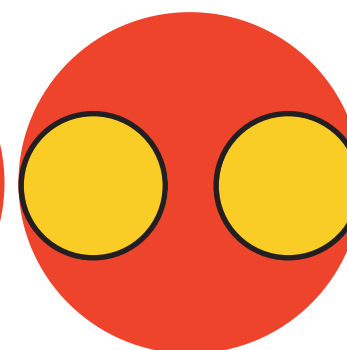
Forced unity: A dualism is “merged” out of fear of difference or free expression, stifling growth and learning on both sides.

Bad compromise: A dualism is “resolved” by landing in a situation that does not add much value to either side, rather subtracts from each party.

Bipolar situation: Drastic shifts between different poles of the dualism, with little exchange or integration in-between.



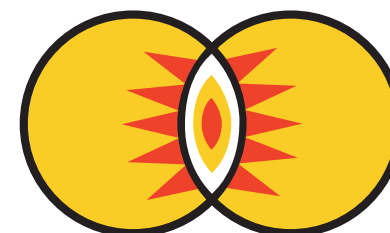
BAD COMPROMISE



BIPOLAR

A conflictually harmonious system

In contrast, a conflictually harmonious system, is defined by an aliveness, a creative-transformative capacity, moves and counter moves, full participation, and agency of everyone involved. A space where roles, norms, identities and power structures can be brought to the surface, played with, transformed and reconfigured. It's a space that can never be fixed, rather carefully upheld and continuously maintained.



CASE STUDIES: DUALISMS & WORLD BUILDING

◀◀ Tröstisar, Love Tensta & Creative Call ▶▶

2008 – 2012

TRÖSTISAR: Re-imagining sadness and joy

About



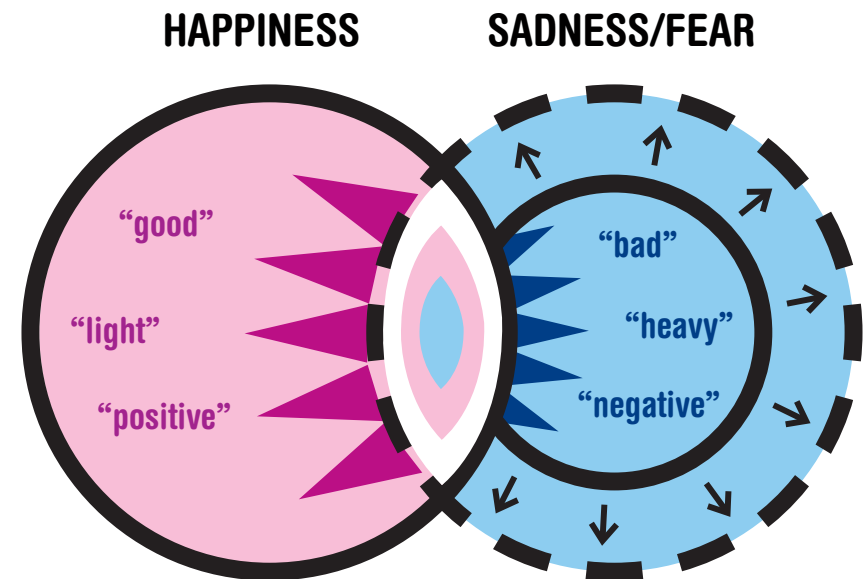
What? A global children's brand inventing products to comfort children in times of sickness, distress, and loneliness.

My role: Art Director, designer, illustrator, under the creative leadership of Shama Schwieler, founder of Tröstisar AB.

In the initial brief I was given for this assignment was also the idea of a different relationship to pain, suffering, and fear.

Simply put: why should comforting someone be heavy and sad? Could it be transformed into something light and joy-filled?

Conflictual Harmony lens



The smaller circle represents the marginalized position of this pole in the popular imagination, the arrows a desire to allow space for this pole to exist as is.

According to dualistic thinking sadness/fear and happiness stand in opposition to each other according to the above diagram.

The challenge to open up a space for sadness/fear to co-exist with happiness, as a way of transforming it and learning to live with our vulnerabilities.



The world of Tröstisar

The result an intercultural and non-judgemental world inhabited by characters with sad eyes but open arms and a warm embrace – all different personalities and animals but part of a family union.

Since the launch of Tröstisar Cuddly Bandages in 2011, the company sells their first invention in 14 countries and has expanded their product range to include a total of seven different products.

Learnings

Tröstisar was one of my first experiences of translating a “3rd space” of conflictual harmony into a coherent visual framework. The difficulties however, to translate this vision and its ideals to “mortal reality” of company policy, guidelines and culture. How does one practice nonjudgemental unity in diversity in the real world? How does one create a framework to keep the magic and creative spark of this 3rd space alive as the company grows?

..... LOVE TENSTA: Re-imagining the Swedish debate on integration

About

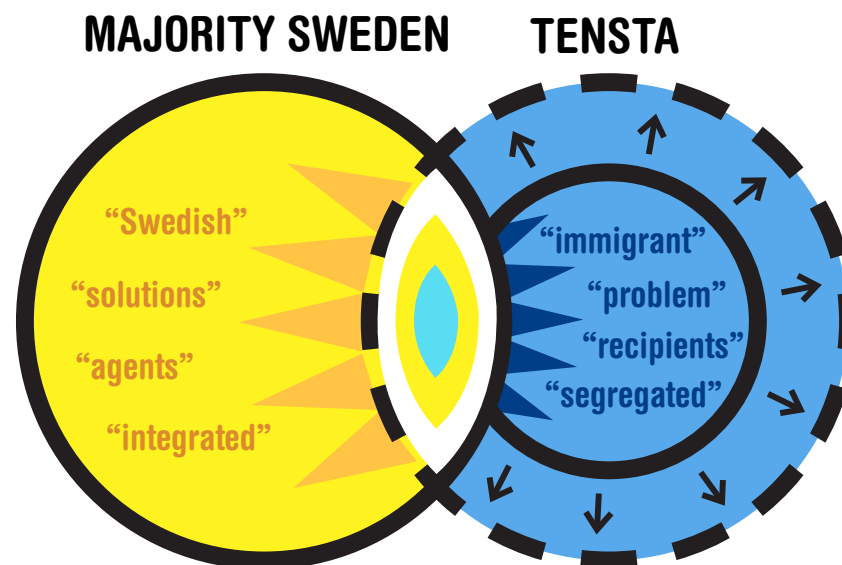


What? A network based in the Stockholm suburb of Tensta, comprised of a majority of people of non-European immigrant background.

My role: Co-founder, designer, communication strategist, event planner, copywriter.

Love Tensta was initiated by myself, Faid Issa, Suleiman Ali and Guleed Mohamed in response to the “victimization” of the inhabitants of Tensta in the general mindset, and an asymmetry of perspectives in the debate on integration.

Conflictual Harmony lens



The smaller circle represents the marginalized position of an area like Tensta in regards to matters of integration and determining what constitutes Sweden today, the arrows a desire to lift the agency and creative inclusion of this pole.

According to dualistic ideas connected to the Swedish national identity, Tensta is commonly seen as something “Other” than Sweden. Something to “fix,” “resolve” or “take care of,” turning it into a sort of third world colony instead of an integral part of Swedish society.

Reframing the integration debate



In sharp contrast to this image, the launch of Love Tensta presented the area with pride, hopefulness, and energy. A manifesto was introduced on the National Day where a bold vision was laid out for Tensta as well as for Sweden, claiming Tensta as the new Harlem/"nya söder" in terms of cultural capacity, and suggesting that the Foreign Ministry in Sweden move their department here to make use of the intercultural knowledge the area holds.

New image making



The branding and website displayed a new and unexpected symbiosis of traditional Swedish and foreign influence that introduced to the public a visual vision of what an integrated Sweden could look like.

Learnings

As much media attention and positive feedback as we received for this work, I with time had a sense that this approach was too shallow, relying on a "new image" which is static and

creates new roles to fulfill as opposed to new structures, new relationships, and new modes of engagement.

...CREATIVE CALL ATL X STHLM: Re-imagining art, hip hop and social change...

About

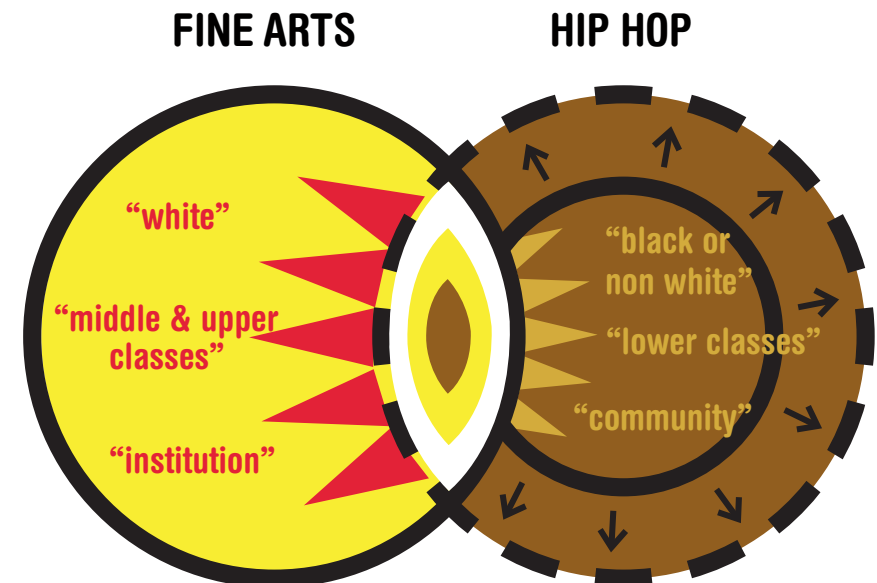


What? A cultural festival in Stockholm Oct 27 – Nov 4, 2012, engaging a transatlantic network of individuals, established cultural institutions and grassroots organizations, including 11 multidisciplinary artists from urban Atlanta.

My role: Initiator, Director, Designer, working in close collaboration with innovator Bem Joiner and curator Nicole Smith.

The festival happened in response to extensive research on social identities in relation to the contemporary art and cultural sphere in Stockholm, where large groups of young people with immigrant background feel like it's not for them. Also a frustration with the lack of diverse expression in established art spheres.

Conflictual Harmony lens



The smaller circle represents the marginalized position of this circle within an art context, the arrows a desire to lift the art status of this pole.

According to dualistic social and aesthetic structures, what is considered “fine arts” and “hiphop as art” stand in opposition to each other according to the above diagram. Attached to each pole are ideas of race and social status, but also ideas about how art is produced and expressed, and who it is for.

Creative Call ATL x STHLM



The result a festival that invited artists drawing from a hip-hop tradition but challenging traditional ideas of what hip-hop is. The activities were designed to stimulate creative expression among Stockholm youth, and

explore new forms of community across cultural, age and disciplinary barriers. The festival mobilized ca \$ 70 000 in sponsored resources, and engaged ca 300 participants in creative expression.

Learnings

I witnessed the power of transformative expression, a strong vision and a chaotic process to bring about new collectivities, identities and community relationships. The contrast between the kind of community we prototyped and the financial and

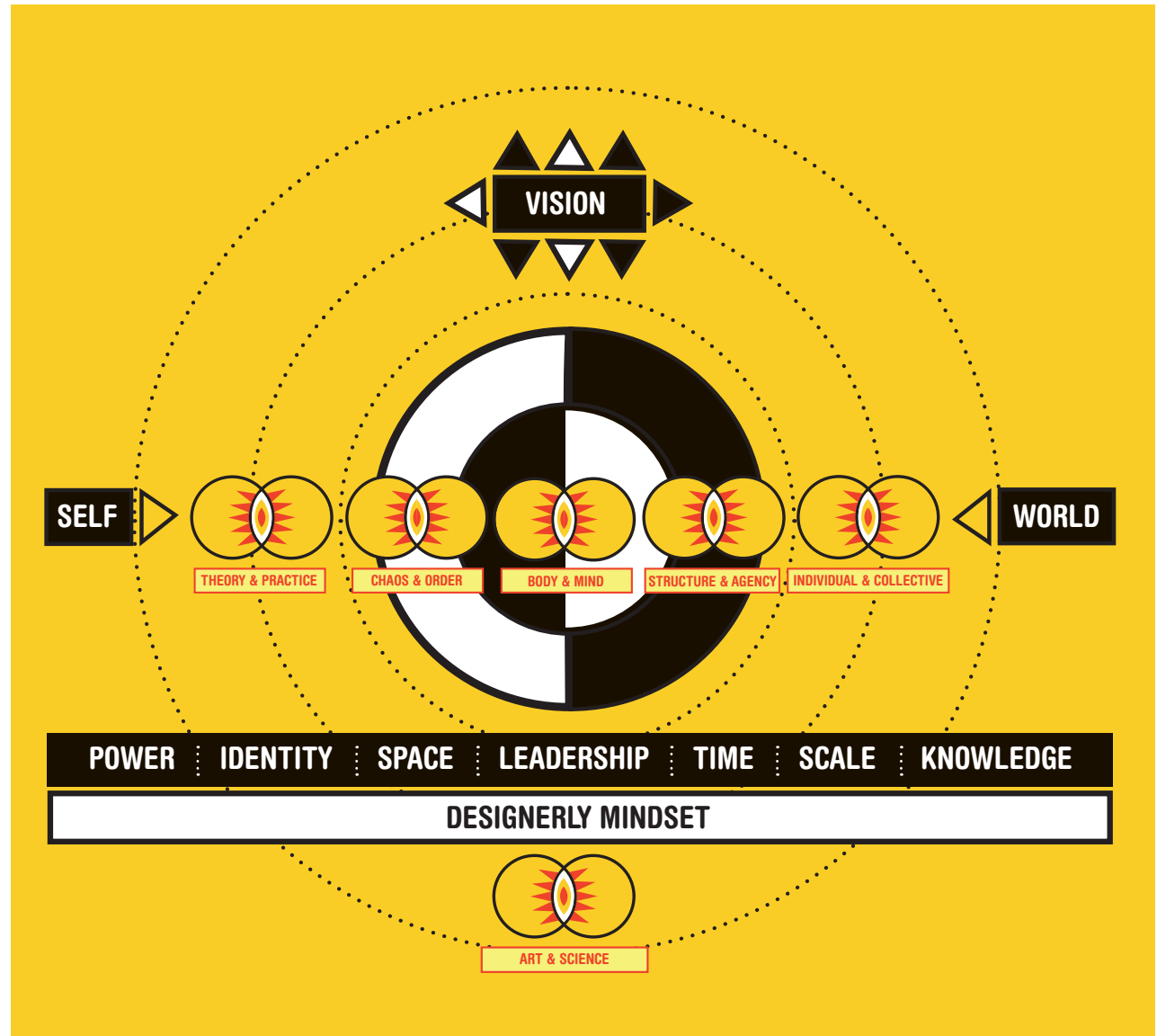
organizational structures around was also painfully obvious, making initiatives of this kind very hard to sustain long-term without a strategic framework to back it up.

PRINCIPLES

We have found that a conflictually harmonious space more easily opens up under certain conditions, including ways of seeing, ways of operating and ways of relating to the systems we are seeking to move in a different direction.

At the heart of these principles, is working with the tension of a set of common dualisms, illustrated in the graph to our right. To create a solid foundation for this work, we have identified a number of components to pay careful attention to along the way: power, identity, space, leadership, time, scale and knowledge. As exemplified in the graph, what we call the designerly mindset is encapsulated in everything we do, as well as the importance of vision.

On the following pages, we will go over in more detail how we see each of these components within the framework.

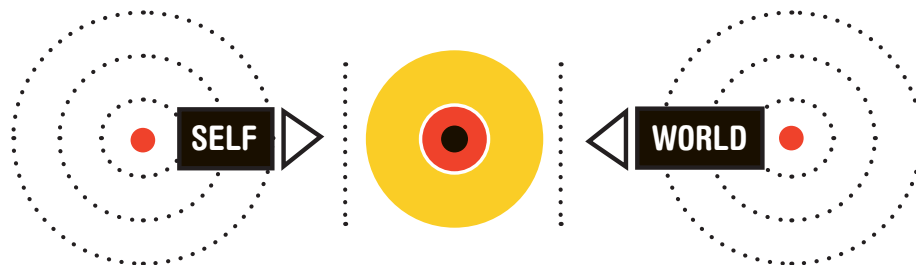


PRINCIPLES: DUALISMS

The foundational dualism we are working with in the Conflictual Harmony framework is one of self and world. This means that we continuously shift perspective between understanding the world “out there” and the world “inside.” We approach both through a systems lens, identifying the space in-between as our area of intervention.

World: We seek to unpack the playing fields we are operating within by mapping stakeholders, conflicting perspectives, power dynamics and tangible and intangible elements affecting a particular situation.

Self: We carefully examine our own positions, agendas, assumptions and performed roles, whether this is an individual, a collective or an organizational self. We evolve with the systems we are intervening in, by honoring our inner sense of purpose, our authenticity and our capacity for growth and learning.



Other important dualisms to work with:



CHAOS & ORDER

We pay careful attention to the need for both **order/structure** and a more process-oriented **self-organized** approach to any kind of change work.



INDIVIDUAL & COLLECTIVE

We recognize the need for both **individual freedom/expressions** and **collective solidarity or unity** and seek to create new forms of belonging with the capacity to hold as much plurality and individual expression as the system allows for.



STRUCTURE & AGENCY

We recognize and strive to understand the limitations imposed by social **structure**, and seek to foster an embrace of one's own **agency** – as an individual and/or a group – in relation to these systems.



THEORY & PRACTICE

We believe that knowledge generation comes from a reflective conversation between **theory** and **practice**, studying, applying and rethinking theory as well as practice as we go.



BODY & MIND

We use and develop methodologies that take into account the **embodied** as well as the **cognitive** dimensions of reality.

PRINCIPLES: FOUNDATIONAL COMPONENTS

POWER We understand power through a systems lens. This means, that to intervene in a system, we strive to understand the dominating narratives, norms, hierarchies, and associations that govern the rules, the mindset and the goals of the system.

Based on this analysis, we seek to identify groups as well as practices and qualities that are marginalized within the current system, recognizing that power always operates through an undermining of the subjectivity and creative inclusion of these groups/practices/qualities in the evolution of the overall system. We also seek to understand power through the internalization of these rules/mindsets/goals and the behavioral dynamics and practices that follow these, thus distributing the power to change these – within the confines of one’s own position – across the entire system.

IDENTITY We recognize identities and their expressions in performed roles as powerful containers of system rules and mindsets. As such, the sense of “I,” closely connected to an “Us” and an “Other,” often function as energy knots, or energy trapped in a system, preventing it from establishing new connections, new relationships, new ideas,

and practices. We seek to understand these identities and roles through a structural as well as an embodied lens, based on a belief in the potential of human beings and organizations to come to an awareness of and recreate identities and roles that are harmful to one’s own self and/or the system one is a part of. In this effort, we are not trying to eradicate the need for identity, rather stimulate flexibility and a creative-reflective distance from them, for increased self-awareness and agency in regards to achieving systemic change.

SPACE We lift the need for material/aesthetic spaces and protocols to support creativity across boundaries. To step out of our respective perspectives and comfort zones and embrace a process of discovery and innovation, we need to establish physical and/or imaginary spaces or platforms that strive for a kind of “neutrality” or systems level loyalty in relation to the different perspectives involved. Further, protocols need to be established for exchange that take the subjectivity and full participation of all actors into account, based on their respective needs and entry points.



POWER



IDENTITY



SPACE



PRINCIPLES: FOUNDATIONAL COMPONENTS

LEADERSHIP We search for ways to hold the tension between the need for oversight/synthesis and the agency of everyone involved by developing new types of leadership capacities. These leadership capacities are all in service of the overall system and the agency and expression therein. See the “leadership” section of the framework for more thoughts on these capacities.

TIME We seek to align ourselves with the inherent rhythm of the systems we are intervening in. Thus, recognizing that some forms of change (such as a sudden awareness and advocacy against a particular type of injustice) can come quickly, whereas other forms of change (such as changes to identity, relations, values and assumptions) are inherently slow moving and require a different kind of sensibility to growth and transformation. We seek to foster this sensibility through preparation and capacity building for challenges and bumps that may appear along the road towards real, transformative change.

SCALE We seek to understand systems through thinking across scales. We examine systems outside of us through both embodied, particular experiences and structural analysis, across different scales.

KNOWLEDGE We redefine competency and expertise to include capacities and knowledge currently marginalized or invisible in the current systems. We grant lived experience, theory, and reflective practice equal status as foundations for knowledge, and seek to incorporate all three in our processes. We seek to especially lift the insights inherent in the lived experience of navigating and existing “in-between” perspectives within a system, and the strategies and observations that emerge out of this position.



LEADERSHIP



TIME



SCALE



KNOWLEDGE



PRINCIPLES: DESIGNERLY MINDSET & VISION



We define this by an openness to collaboration, seeking to understand issues from many perspectives and adopting an experimental approach driven by equal measures practice and reflection – carefully examining the HOW of social change, not only the WHAT. We look for the creative potential of any situation encompassing conflict and differing agendas, based on the belief in the inherent capacity for growth in any human being, organization or system.

Adopting a designerly mindset also means embracing an analytical-creative process drawing from both the arts – where we look at the systems from the inside – and the sciences – looking at systems from the outside.



The overarching goal for the new systems we are seeking to set in motion is always a relational space and a living system rather than a fixed endpoint or mission. This space can operate in relation to a variety of different elements or perspectives but is defined by an aliveness, resilience, and a creative-transformative capacity, that includes the growth of everyone involved. It also comes with new narratives, including problem definitions and visions for the future, that incorporate perspectives from all stakeholders involved.

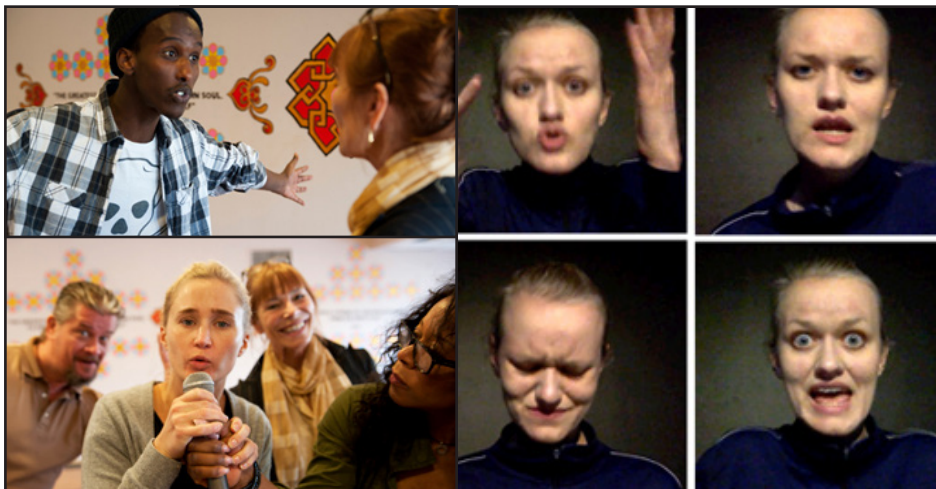
CASE STUDIES: COMPLEX SYSTEMS & LEADERSHIP

◀◀ Love/Fuck Sweden & Participatory mural arts ▶▶

2013 – 2016

LOVE/FUCK SWEDEN: Re-imagining roles connected to immigration and identity

About



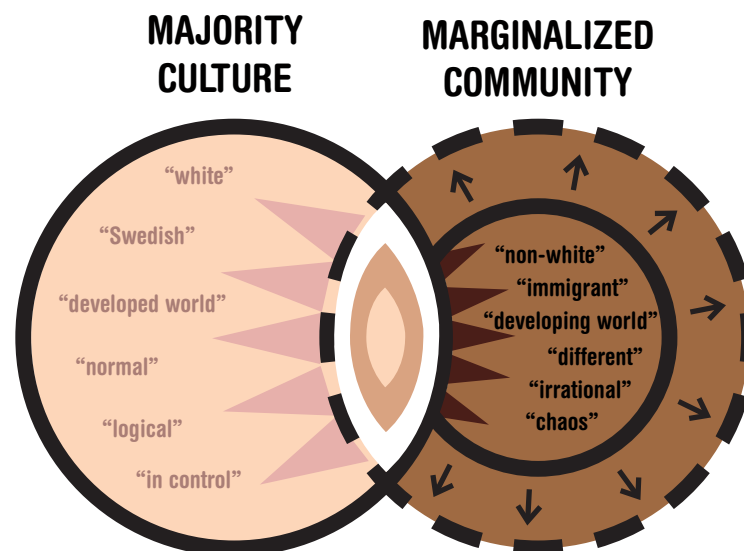
What? A script and a performance piece exploring identities, performed roles and patterns of behavior connected to race and immigration in Sweden, drawing from ten years of informal research at the intersection of race and identity in the US and Sweden.

My role: Researcher, scriptwriter, performer.

The purpose of the script to understand how the current system operates. What are the roles, the script and how is this embodied and upheld? What might be paths forward?

At first, the script was rehearsed by theater group Tjechoven-semblen. Later, I played all characters myself, pointing towards the constructed nature of the identities and assigned roles involved.

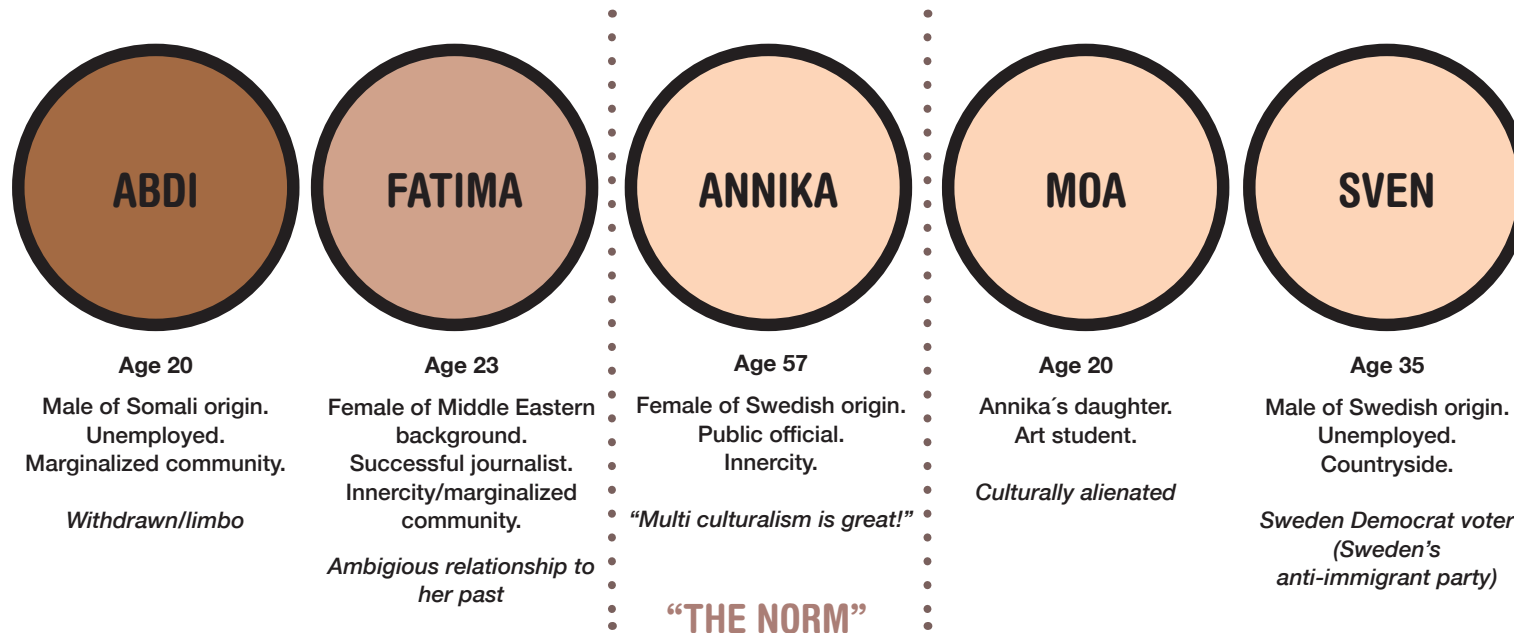
Conflictual Harmony lens



*The smaller circle represents the marginalized position of this circle in regards to political, economic and cultural power.
The arrows a desire to equalize this relationship.*

The overarching dualism explored in the script one of the gap between a majority culture comprised of people of Swedish origin, and a marginalized community comprised of a majority people of non-European immigrant background. Displaying in the diagram above a few of the associations and value judgments tied to each pole in the normative mindset.

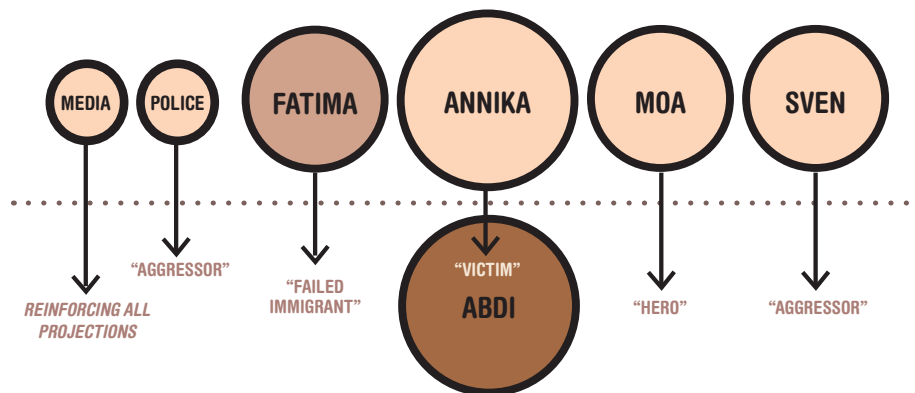
Identifying personas



As a starting point, me and community leader Gu-leed Mohamed identified five personas embodying

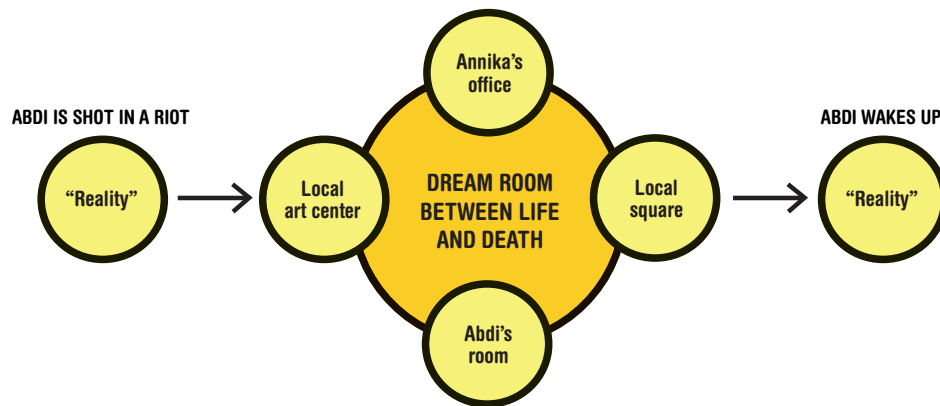
different perspectives on the debate on immigration from the standpoint of the community in which we both lived.

Selecting a protagonist



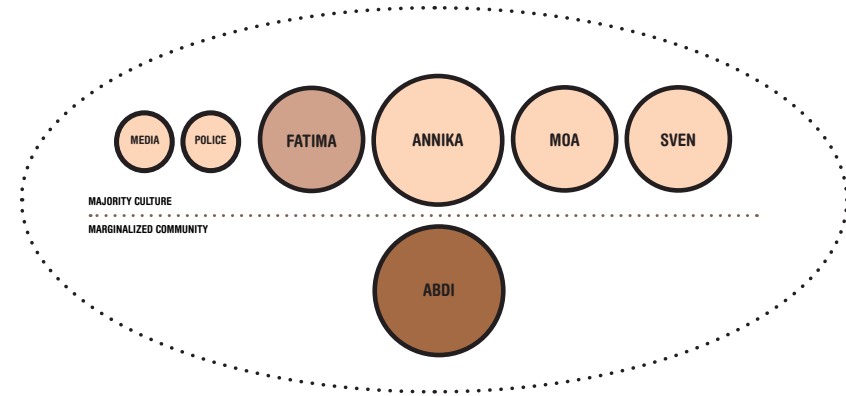
Abdi was selected as the protagonist of the script and the perspective from which we would explore the system. His "main opponent" public official Annika. By presenting Abdi with the same scenarios multiple times – allowing him to try out different resistance strategies and responses – we get to watch the systems dynamics in motion. See to the left some of the projections put on Abdi by the other actors.

Narrative & context for interactions



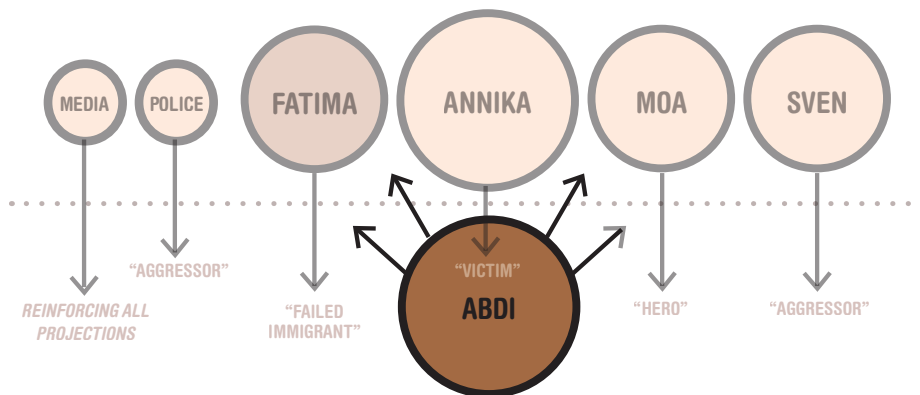
The fictional space where these encounters play out was constructed as a “neutral” no man’s land between life and death. Abdi enters this space after being shot in a riot and rotates between familiar scenes from his everyday life.

The role of the facilitator



A facilitator was used in the script to establish a safe space for Abdi to return to in-between his meetings with the others. This character catered to Abdi’s needs, yet maintained a systemic point of view, unattached in terms of identities.

A 3rd space opens up

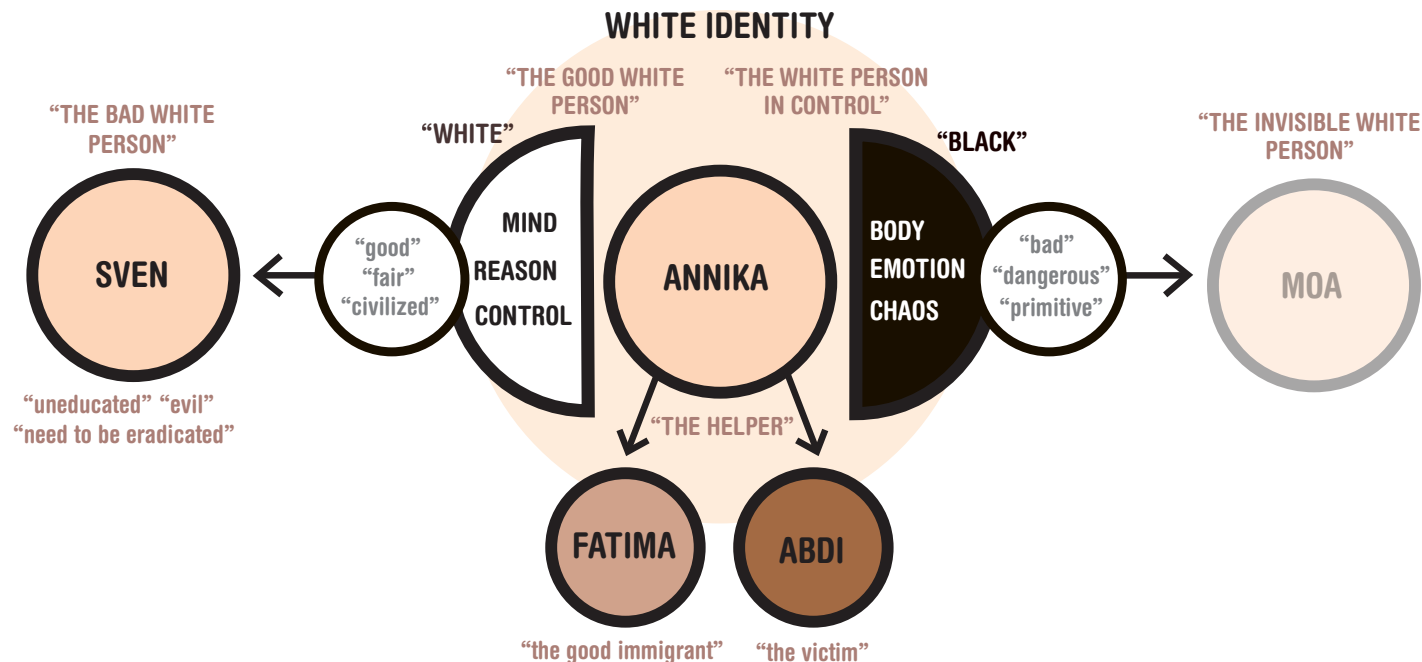


An critical turning point in the script comes after Abdi has tried “everything” – withdrawal, apathy, aggression, argumentation, domination – and is still left unsatisfied. **Out of desperation he suddenly steps out of the system mentally, recognizing the role he has been assigned.**

The gaze is now shifted from Abdi reacting to someone else's real or perceived gaze, to Abdi looking back. In the new space that opens up, the conflict is

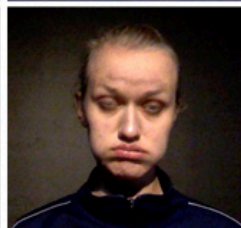
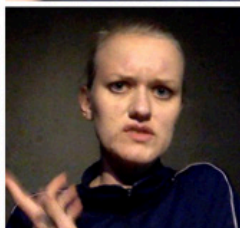
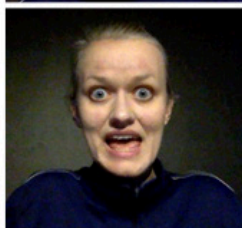
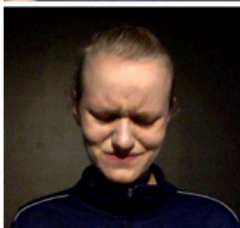
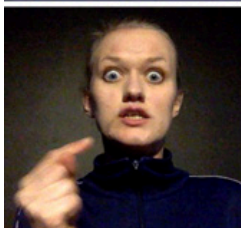
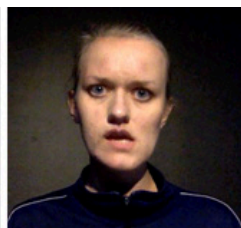
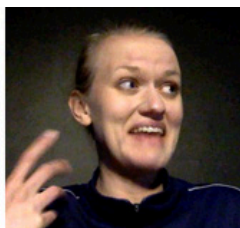
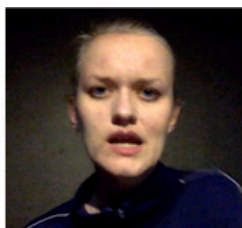
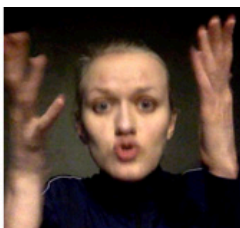
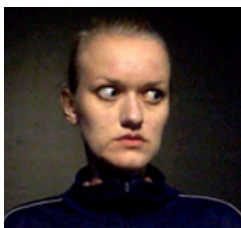
still very much present, yet authentic conversations start to appear, where insecurities, fragilities and dysfunctional elements of the roles and identities rise to the surface.

Interconnected identities



As one example, we can attempt to break down Annika's "white identity" through the following diagram. Aspects of this identity are the roles of "the helper," "the white person in control" and the "good while person." These are all maintained through the creation of an "Other," Abdi as "the victim" the most obvious one.

The diagram also gives insight into some of the inter white identity wars that are a part of upholding this white identity, the most obvious one being between Annika and Sven. In similar ways, all characters in the script, regardless of position, display behaviors of othering to protect their sense of self.



Learnings

The crucial role of identity as containers of cultural paradigms within social systems. The importance of a facilitator who stays unattached in terms of these identities. The importance of a neutral space. The importance of watching social dynam-

ics through two lenses: one of an unequal distribution of power and privilege, and one of interconnectedness in the unleashed potential for growth and development across the entire system.



characters in the play, linked and re-configured in an arrangement forming a foundation for a social innovation lab.

PARTICIPATORY MURAL ARTS AND DESIGN: Re-imagining design leadership

About

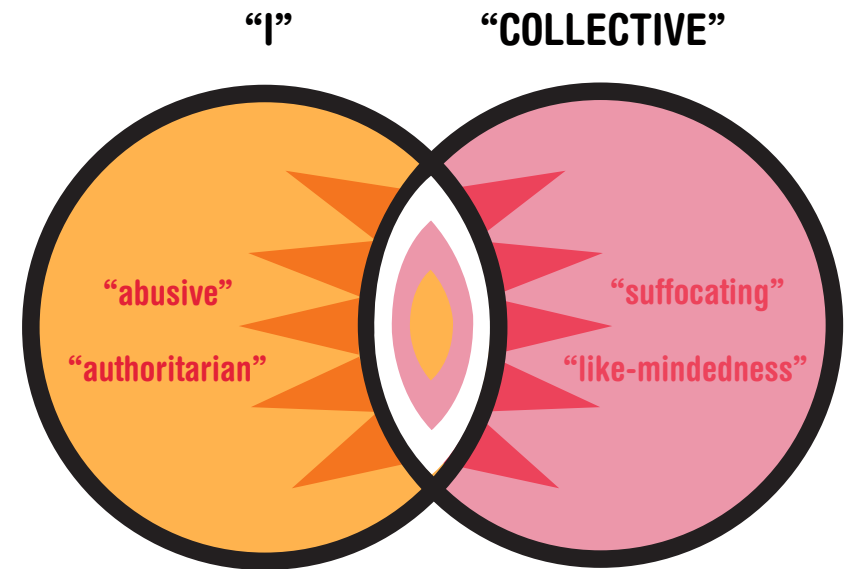


What? A total of six different projects commissioned by non-profit Stadsmissionen and culture house Fisksätra Folkets Hus, engaging groups of children, teenagers, and families in participatory mural arts and design.

My role: Designer, artist, community organizer.

How does one negotiate between social and artistic agendas? Engage participants of diverse age, art background, culture and language capabilities in a shared expression? Navigate the tension between individual and collective expression?

Conflictual Harmony lens



The value judgments tied to each pole, are negative traits associated with each pole. The challenge how to make these poles work with rather than against each other

According to dualistic thinking within art as social practice, individual creative agency and collective expression are commonly seen as standing in opposition to each other. This polarity shows up also in politics and society at large – collective solidarity is frequently believed to suffocate individual freedom, or individual freedom is believed to threaten collective solidarity.

New leadership model



To establish a “conflictually harmonious” relationship between afore-mentioned dualism, I practiced a serving creative leadership, carefully balancing the tension of mind/control and body/chaos. I experienced it as a form of motherhood, a symbiosis where the collective I worked with provided me

with continuous material in an on-going creative act, while I received and formed the outcome and its needs of emergence or structure. The baby, the work of art, then becomes something that does not belong solely to either the community or the artist but reflects and carries the DNA of both.

New role for design

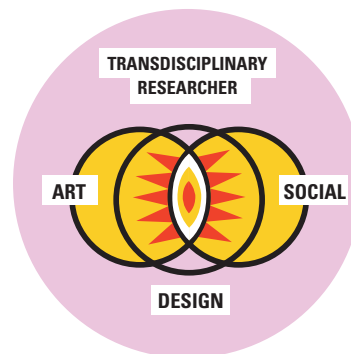
THE PATH TO CONFLICTUAL HARMONY

A DIALOGUE IN THE CONJUNCTION POINT OF ART, DESIGN & THE SOCIAL SPHERE

INCLUDING CONVERSATIONS WITH: Non-profit strategist Ihsan Kellecioglu (SWE), designer Pomme van Hoof (NL/SWE), art/design activist and journalist Gunilla Lundahl (SWE), psychologist Maria Bergström (SWE), professors and scholars in Visual Learning Ulla Lind & Anette Göthlund (SWE), and artists Danielle Deadwyler (US), Oscar Lara (PE/SWE) and Hanna Lundborg (SWE).

JOHANNA TYSK

KOKO LABS



In the publication to the left, produced at Konstfack in Stockholm, I investigated two mural processes by dividing myself into Jo, the artist, Hanna, the designer, and Tysk, the community organizer. Allowing the three of them to describe the same process from their respective perspectives, it was clear how my inner designer was the mediator between artistic and social agendas, carefully guiding the process forward through a “reflective conversation with the materials of the situation.”



Learnings

Through these projects, I learned how to invent myself as a new type of designer, a transdisciplinary one. I also started learning how to function as a designer within a “living system” rather than a graphic one, requiring in-the-moment flexibility,

letting go of some of the designerly habits of being in control, and incorporating uncertainty, social tension, and confrontation into the creative process.

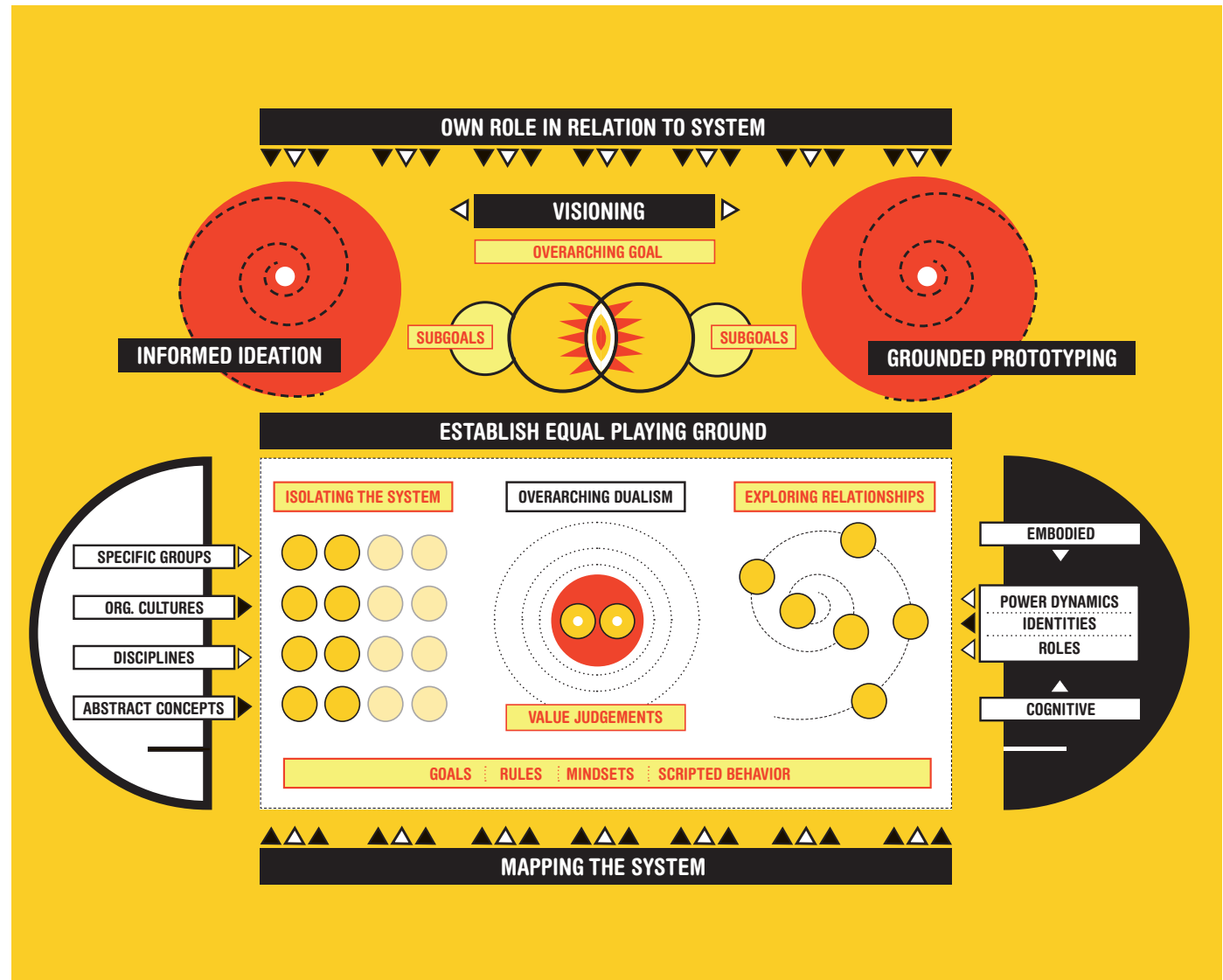
Read more about the different mural projects at <http://kokolabs.org/projects/>

Read the publication at <http://kokolabs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Thepathtoconflictualharmony.pdf>

NEW WAYS OF DESIGNING

The Conflictual Harmony new ways of designing are to be seen as guidelines or actionable elements to consider along the way, rather than linear step by step instructions.

Particular elements can be omitted depending on the needs of the project. The order between the elements can vary and/or go back and forth. Depending on the context, the resources available and the knowledge levels of the actors involved, each element can vary in time and be an individual or a collective reflection. Suggested methodologies will grow with time responding to new contexts and collaboration partners.

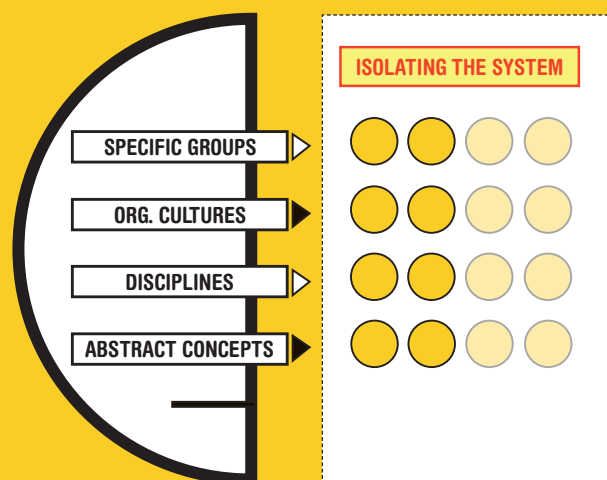


NEW WAYS OF DESIGNING: MAPPING THE SYSTEM

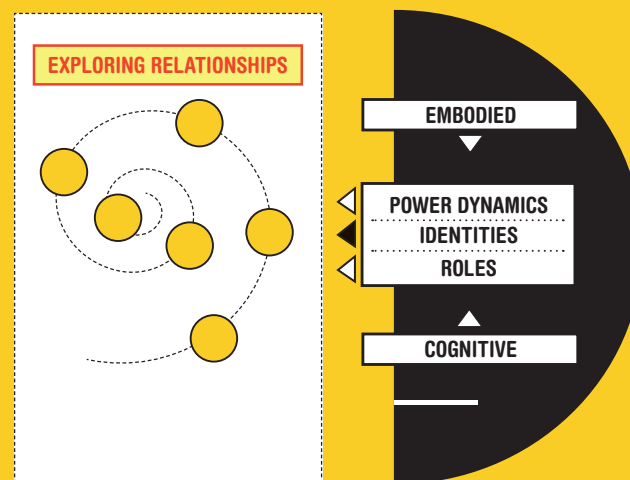
Systems basics

As outlined in the book *Thinking in systems* by Donella H. Meadows, systems consist of an interconnected set of elements that are organized in a way that it achieves something or fulfills a purpose.

Systems can be for example financial, mental, social, natural and mechanical, and operate across all scales. Systems are always nested within other systems.



ISOLATING THE SYSTEM When responding to social challenges, we always try to get a bird's eye view of the “worlds” involved, striving to isolate the system we are working with from an outsider or in-between position. Possible dualisms or multiple positions to map, are specific groups, organizational cultures, disciplinary perspectives, and abstract concepts. See page 9 for more info on what these dualisms or perspectives might be.

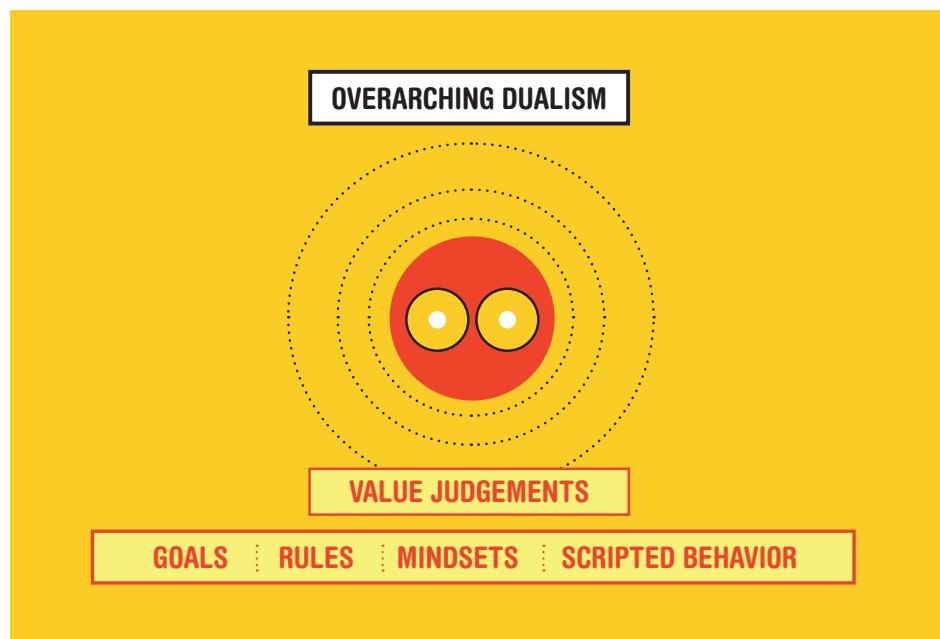


EXPLORING RELATIONSHIPS Including power dynamics, identities and performed roles.

Embodied: How are these relationships and roles experienced? What are fears, desires, expectations, and needs?

Cognitive: What are the problem analyses involved? The worldview as translated into opinions, values and declared goals? Potential theoretical underpinnings?

NEW WAYS OF DESIGNING: MAPPING THE SYSTEM



OVERARCHING DUALISM It can be helpful to look for an overarching dualism to work with, and attach normative value judgments, associations with specific groups, disciplinary perspectives and/or ways of working to this dualism, as exemplified in the case studies.

GOALS, RULES, MINDSETS AND SCRIPTED BEHAVIOR Through the mappings and explorations above, we try to get a sense of the overall system. What is the dynamic between these positions or dualisms? How does it play out in embodied and structural ways?

A few things to consider when mapping a system

- It is important not to leave out whatever “world” you as a change agent might carry identification with or work on behalf of, but include this in the mapping. If you need help to “see yourself from the outside,” make sure you include people with a different perspective from you in the process.
- When mapping a system, we always strive to understand the complexities involved, but also seek patterns and overlapping themes, interpretations and meanings that allow us to efficiently work with the system.
- Never mistake a map of a system as an accurate representation of reality. In the words of George Box: “All models are wrong, but some are useful.” Carefully consider the systems boundaries you choose to work with, and know these may be reconsidered along the way.
- Keep in mind that we map things to change them, always from the standpoint of a belief in the inherent potential of any system to transform. Therefore, identified positions, norms or value judgments are to be seen as starting points describing the dominant logic of the overall system rather than fixed or inherent qualities.
- It may be wise to explore and map a system from both an overarching structural perspective, and a very contextualized, specific perspective, allowing each scale to inform the understanding of the other.

NEW WAYS OF DESIGNING: OWN ROLE & EQUAL PLAYING GROUND

OWN ROLE IN RELATION TO SYSTEM This is an on-going reflective guideline, to be performed throughout the process. A reflective awareness connected to the systems oneself participates brings awareness of other systems as well. It includes mapping your blind spots, your identifications, your growth and motivations along the way, but also understanding how others may perceive you in this role and what limitations, challenges or opportunities this opens up. It is thus an exercise in sensing yourself from the inside, and understanding yourself from the outside so that you can move flexibly with the system.

ESTABLISH EQUAL PLAYING GROUND An essential foundation for true innovation or exploration of a new system across disciplinary, social and cultural boundaries, is the establishment of an equal playing ground. The most important thing here is to make sure that the subjectivity of everyone involved is recognized.

Often, the more powerful player intentionally or unintentionally does not recognize the subject position of the other, for instance by setting up frames for the meeting that cater to their own needs or problem analysis. The starting point needs to be to acknowledge the different entry points to the meeting, thus establishing a “3rd space” in-between.

Questions to ask oneself when establishing equal playing ground

Are the needs of all parties included in the design of the strategic framework? The problem analysis? The narrative around the strategic intention?

Is the physical space considered “neutral” by all sides? Have possible clashes been anticipated and accounted for through capacity building on all sides? Does the representation of different perspectives or positions account for disparities in power, making sure no one feels “underrepresented” and silenced?

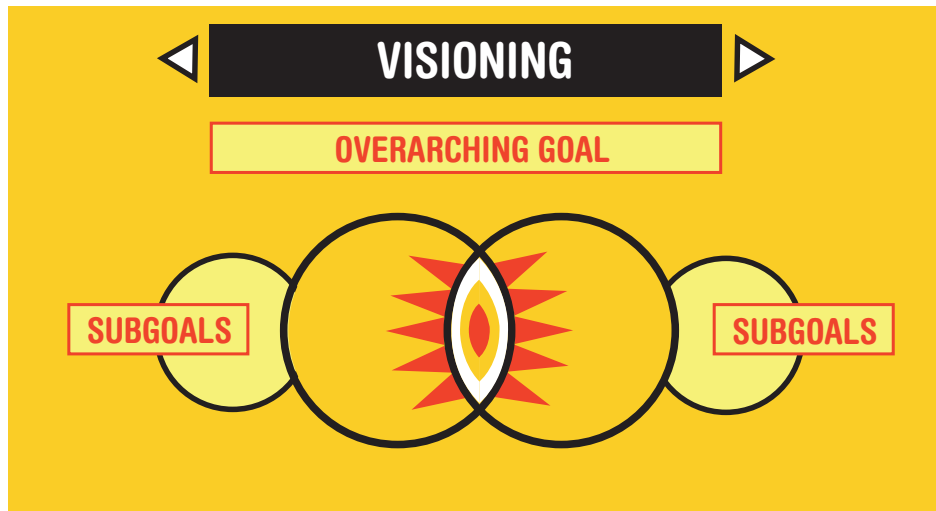
OWN ROLE IN RELATION TO SYSTEM



ESTABLISH EQUAL PLAYING GROUND



NEW WAYS OF DESIGNING: VISIONING



VISIONING When exploring a new system we search for an overarching vision connected to a conflictually harmonious system as described on page 10. If many actors are involved in the exploration, we seek for the alignment of various sub goals with the overarching vision.

Questions we might explore in this process are:

What are sub goals to take into account? What might a healthy dynamic between the identified positions or dualisms look and feel like? What would be an ideal situation from various sides? Would the positions and/or dualisms dissolve, transform or simply learn to live together? What might this

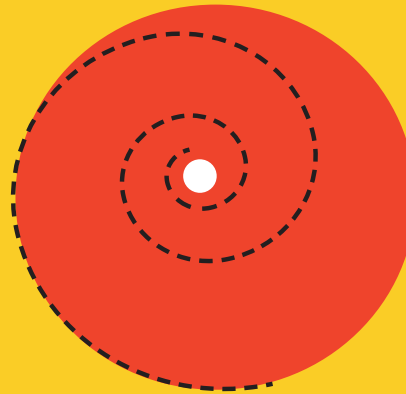
“new system” look like, feel like, how might it operate, across different scales? What are the new relationships we are trying to establish? What might be metaphors for the new system? What might be benefits to different sides, as well as the overall system? What might be challenges and limitations?

Few notes

- The new system can like the systems analysis happen on a sliding scale between realism and more speculative/imaginative.
- In the case of an individual or a group resisting a dominant system, the exploration of a new system might include a rewriting of internalized rules or mindsets that govern your participation in the system, e.g., more strategic systems aware resistance.
- The change agent might be the one to initially present a proposal for a new system based on a synthesis of the needs and agendas involved, and use this provocation/inspiration as a basis for continued discussion around a desirable new system.

NEW WAYS OF DESIGNING: INFORMED IDEATION & GROUNDED PROTOTYPING

INFORMED IDEATION

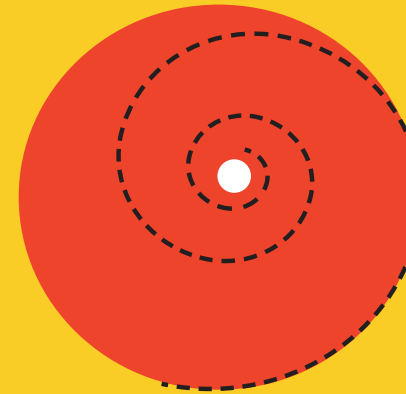


INFORMED IDEATION Informed by our systems exploration, we can ask questions about how this new system may be materialized and supported.

What roles, activities, objects, platforms, initiatives, methods, spaces, practices, principles, rituals, rules and services might support the new direction? What are initiatives and practices within our system that already support this new system, and what are tools that may leverage these? What can be imagined that does not yet exist?

GROUNDED PROTOTYPING The use of prototyping in an overall change strategy can be seen as holding the tension between action and reflection.

The philosophy behind it means that you test your way forward through small-scale interventions, stopping in-between each action step to evaluate the results, making sure that this informs your next step. Important therefore to carefully align



GROUNDED PROTOTYPING

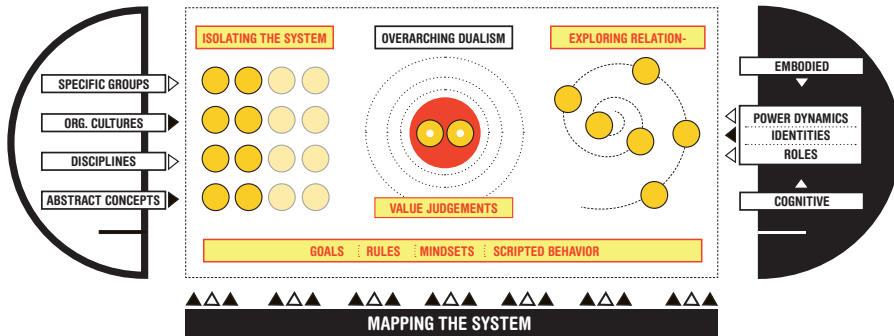
yourself with the needs of the situation, to assure a proper balance is established.

Prototyping can be included in the process from the very start depending on the context of your exploration. In this case, you learn about the system, by trying to change it. To ensure grounded prototyping, it is important to revisit the problem analysis as well as the vision along the way, which might change with the materialization of an imagined or desired system.

Note

As mentioned above, prototyping can also happen within a fictional/imaginative scenario. The advantage of this, especially at an early stage, is that prototypes can be quite bold and systems challenging, and give insights into deeper dynamics of a situation much quicker than real, small-scale prototypes.

NEW WAYS OF DESIGNING: POTENTIAL METHODOLOGIES



MAPPING THE SYSTEM Visual systems mapping, secondary research, ethnographic explorations and in-depth interviews connected to the site, art pedagogic exercises to understand perceptions on a deeper level, prototyping as research: for example script writing, development of personas and/or techniques inspired by theatre of the oppressed and systemic constellation work.

These explorations can operate on a sliding scale between realism and more speculative/imaginative work depending on the needs of the situation.

OWN ROLE IN RELATION TO SYSTEM

OWN ROLE IN RELATION TO SYSTEM See methodologies listed in the section “Posture and mindsets” on page 51.

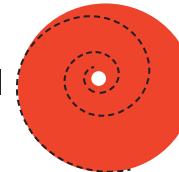
ESTABLISH EQUAL PLAYING GROUND

ESTABLISH EQUAL PLAYING GROUND Site scouting, meeting design, organization development theory.

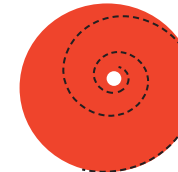
VISIONING

VISIONING Scriptwriting/storytelling and performance, theatre of the oppressed/systemic constellation techniques, visual mapping/mood board/representation of the new system, creation of a new world as expressed through character design and world building, speculative design, futuring exercises.

INFORMED IDEATION



GROUNDED PROTOTYPING



INFORMED IDEATION Brainstorming with sticky notes, secondary research, making sessions.

GROUNDED PROTOTYPING Whatever medium the system allows for.

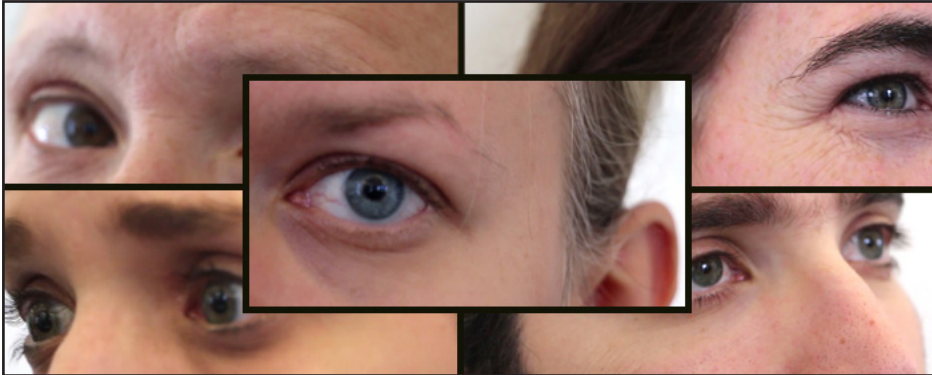
CASE STUDIES: SOCIAL INNOVATION & SPECULATIVE DESIGN

◀◀ Designing for end of life & Face it ▶▶

2016 – 2017

END OF LIFE STUDIO: Re-imagining the American health care system

About

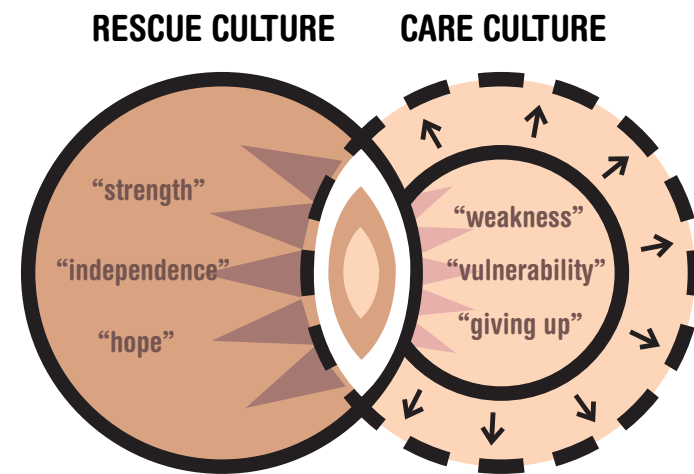


What? Student project as part of the Transdisciplinary Design program at Parsons, employing service design, film making, and organizational change.

My role: Designer along with Nandita Batheja and Charles Margaritis. My focus primarily on scriptwriting, performance, research, and strategy.

In this studio, we focused on end of life care within the American health care system. Through script writing and performance art we explored a specific moment of crisis through the lens of various stakeholders (including patient, family, and doctor) and then brainstormed and prototyped potential interventions in this system.

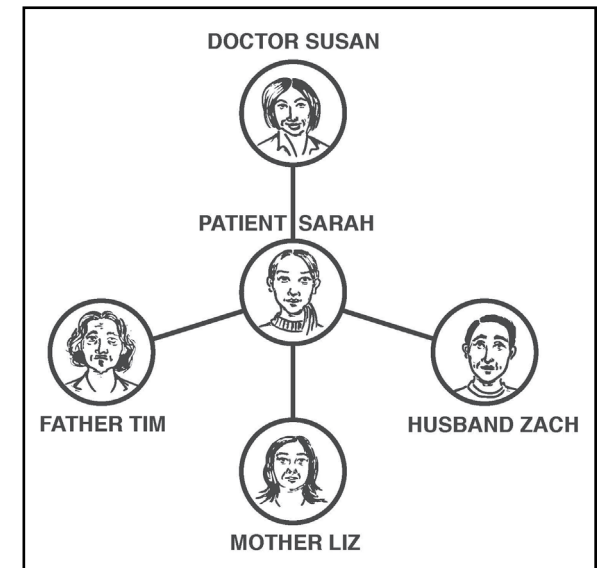
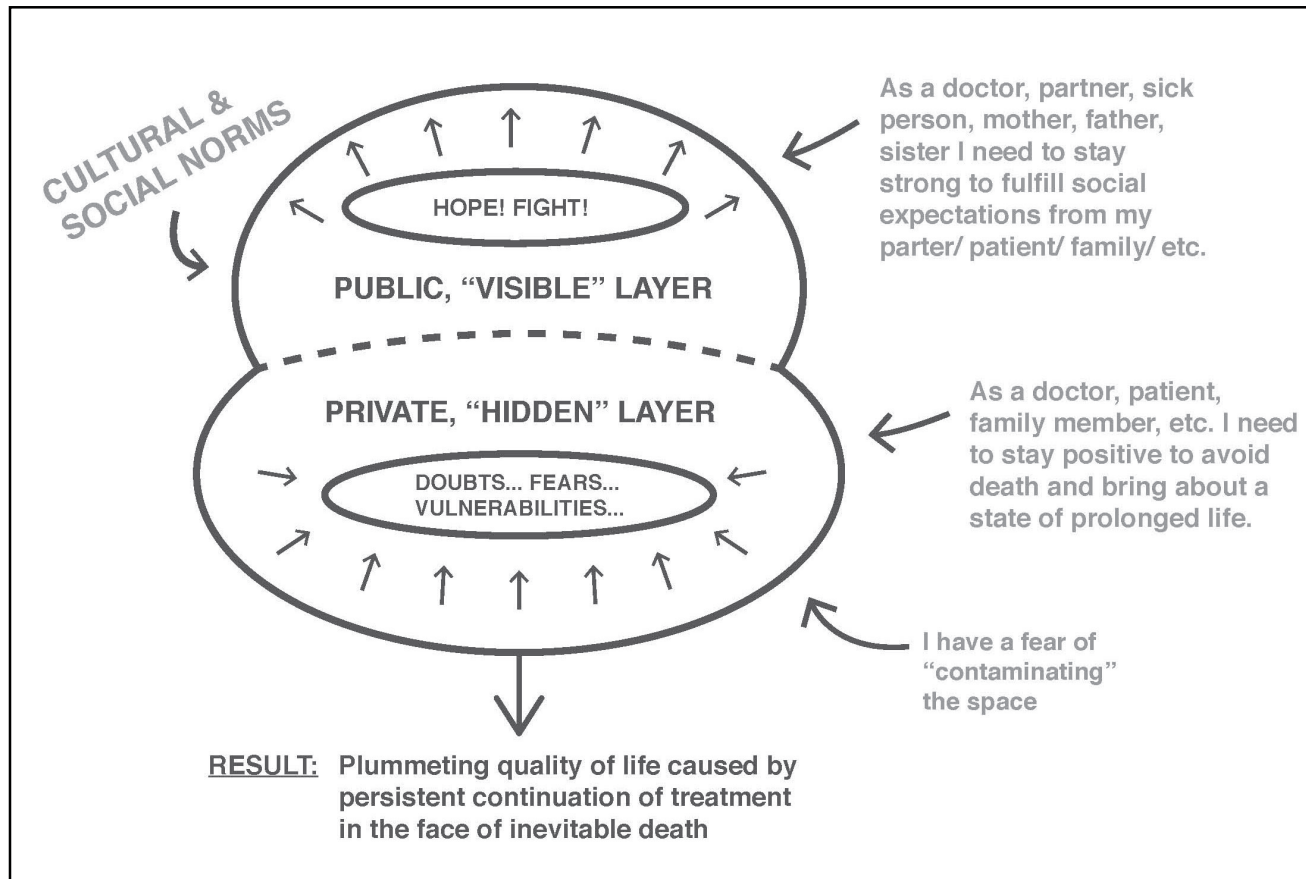
Conflictual Harmony lens



The smaller circle represents the marginalized position of care culture within the American health care system, the arrows a desire to equalize this position.

According to dualistic institutional and value structures within American health care, the culture of rescue (technologically driven) **and care** (focus on spiritual and psychological needs) **stand in opposition to each other according to the above diagram.** This asymmetrical relationship leads to a pattern of patients choosing to “fight” their disease even at a point when it’s time to start preparing for death, resulting in poor, sometimes tragic, patient and family experiences.

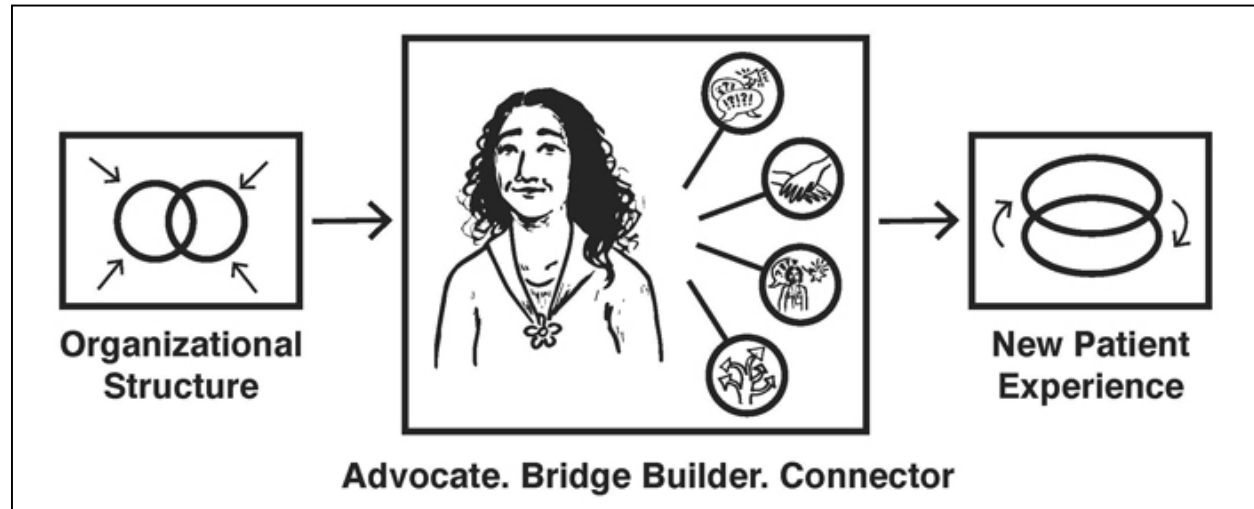
Interpersonal Conflictual Harmony lens



Discovered through our performance work, aforementioned duality also plays out in cultural norms between patient, family, and doctor. Each stakeholder

keeps vulnerabilities, doubts, and fears hidden to fulfill the perceived expectations of their social role from the others stakeholders.

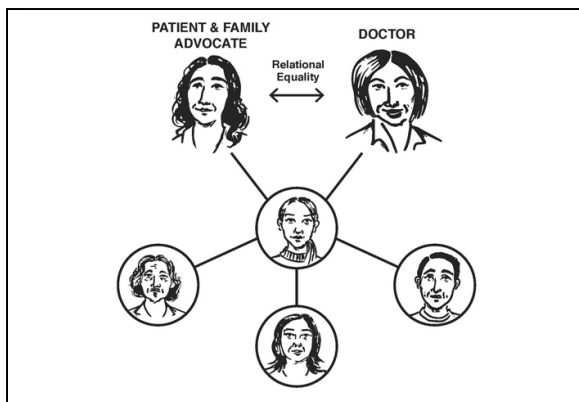
Our proposed intervention: The Patient and Family Advocate



We realized we need a way to navigate the tension.
We need a person. Someone with the competence of a counselor, but the ability to also work directly with the doctors, addressing their doubts and their internal struggles connected

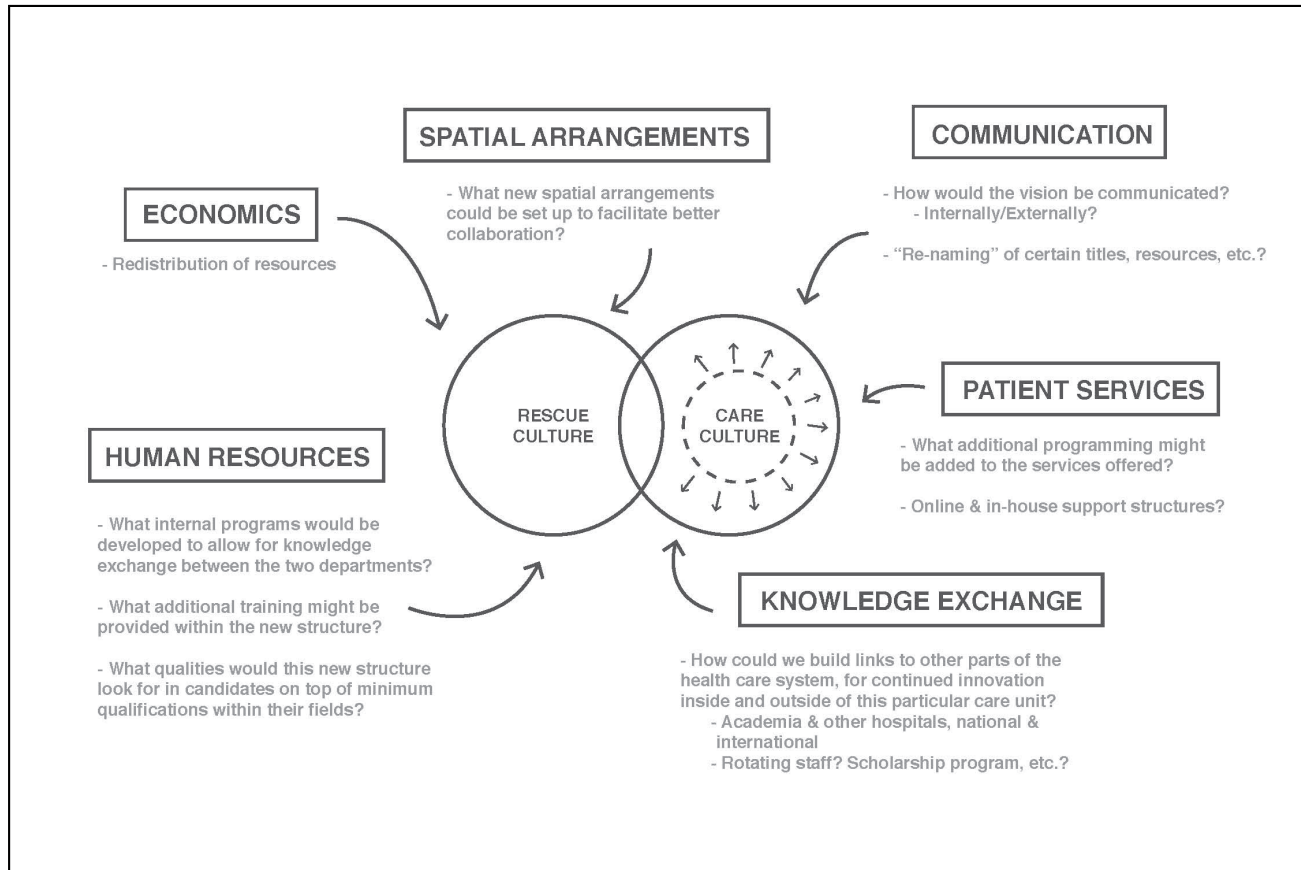
to their profession. To leverage that moment of crisis we need someone who can intervene with the hierarchies and silos of the rescue versus care cultures within the larger ecosystem of care.

De-centralized authority



Our intervention relies heavily on decentralizing authority through relational equality, peeling off the layers of heroism that burden the doctor. We do this by weaving the PFA throughout the patient journey.

Preferred state eco system



Zooming out to the support structures for this role we envision, we have a health care system that gives equal weight to rescue and care culture.

Where they are equally accessible and valued, allowing the overall system to adequately respond to changing patient needs.



Learnings

The importance of zooming in and out between the lenses of embodied and experiential on the one hand, and structural and organizational on the other, to properly understand and address issues within complex social systems. Also, the importance of performed identities within organizational settings

as embodied containers of structural and cultural paradigms. A powerful intervention to create a role that can translate across hierarchies and silos, and back this up through an organizational framework that established a new goal for the overall system.

FACE IT: Re-imagining human intelligence

About

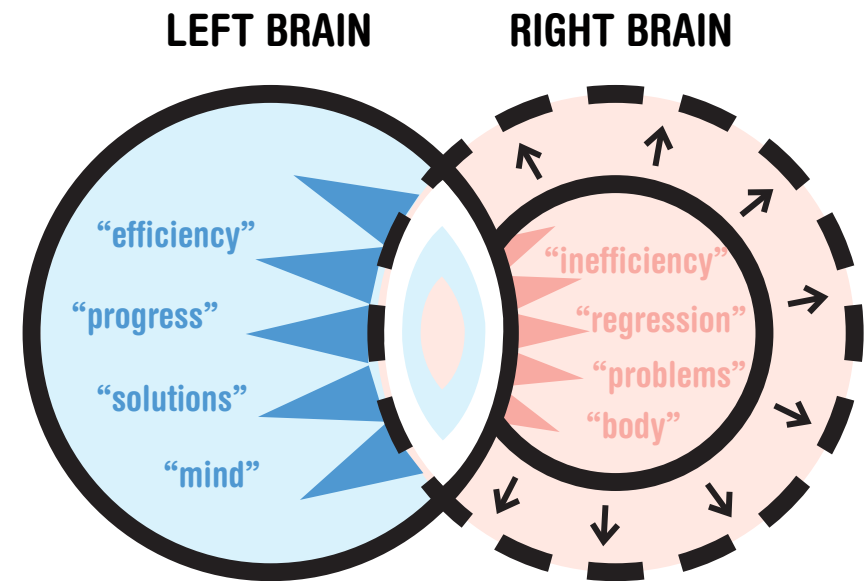


What? Speculative Design for studio class focusing on Artificial Intelligence, as part of the Transdisciplinary Design program at Parsons.

My role: Designer along with Celina Lacaze, Mikei Huang, Dani Sanchez and Carolina Corseuil. My focus primarily on research, strategy, script writing and performance.

In this studio, we delved into the philosophical, social, cultural and human implications of narratives stemming from the Artificial Intelligence industry. We then explored counter-narratives through worldmaking and speculative design.

Conflictual Harmony lens



The smaller circle represents the marginalized position of this circle within narratives around A.I., the arrows a desire to lift the status of this pole.

According to dualistic values within the A.I. industry, an over emphasis is placed on left brain thinking, creating a disregard for our own embodied, emotional intelligence. Through speculative design, we asked: What kind of a world might this thinking and technological development produce, and what might be ways to explore counter-narratives?

World of extreme being + doing

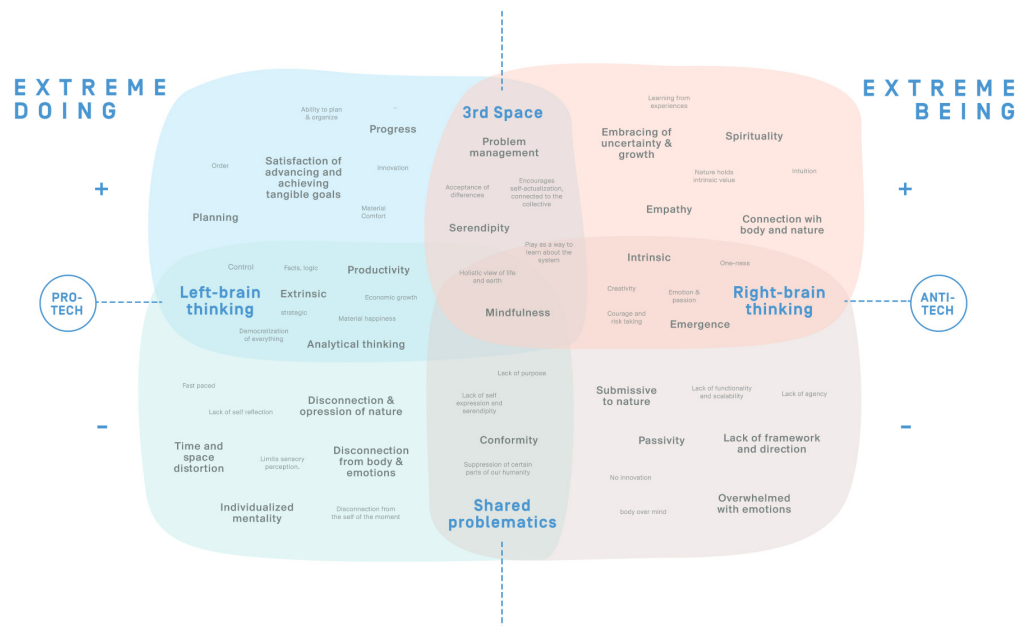


When critiquing current developments in A.I., we wanted to avoid falling into the traps of an anti-approach, exemplified through numerous failed alternative movements that reject technology completely. Through perso-



nas and script writing we therefore developed the worlds of extreme doing (left brain, pro-tech) and extreme being (right brain, anti-tech).

Polarity Map



Through a Polarity Map, we then mapped the pros and cons of each world and mind-set. A polarity map is used to map “unsolvable dilemmas,” in this case striving to find a healthy dynamic between left and right brain thinking rather than choosing one over the other.

Prototyping the development of H.I. within the world of extreme doing



Finally, we developed the speculative product Face it – a tool to help you connect to your emotions and thoughts, as well as larger societal and environmental ecosystems – and



placed it within the world of Extreme Being in an attempt to develop H.I. – Human Intelligence.

Learnings

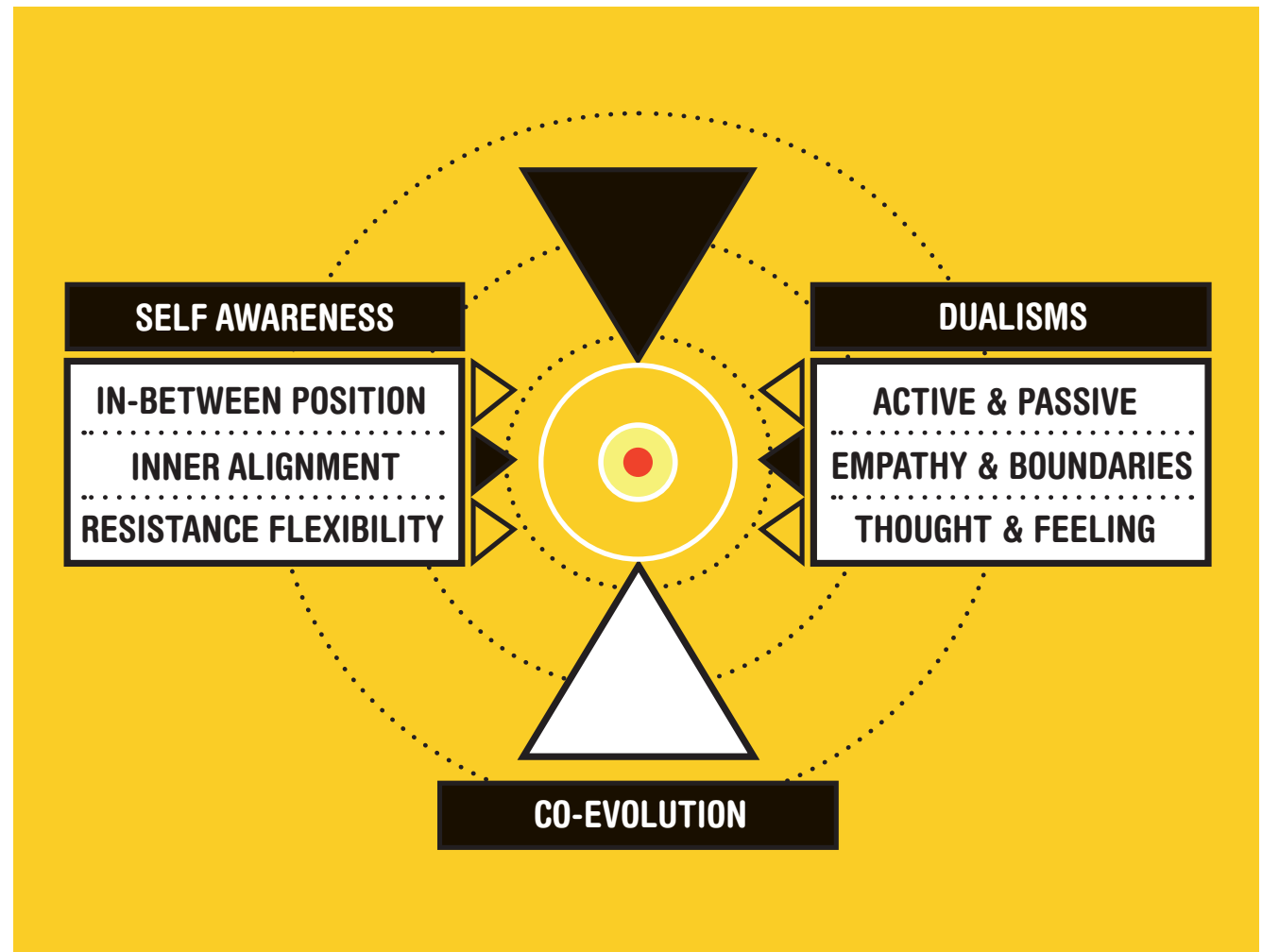
The importance of understanding the polarities involved in a given context, for proposed interventions that point towards a new system rather than an anti-approach. The power of speculative, otherworldly scenarios to be able to better see and

intervene in our current realities. Through Aqualizius' experience of "waking up" to the illusions of his society in the script, which was powerful but left him pretty lonely: the need for self-reflective interventions on a collective scale.

POSTURE AND MINDSETS

Involving and synthesizing input from a variety of perspectives across disciplinary, social and cultural boundaries, are bound to pose challenges for any practitioner of the framework.

Listing in the graph to the right a few general leadership capacities in support of the framework, that will be explained further in this section.



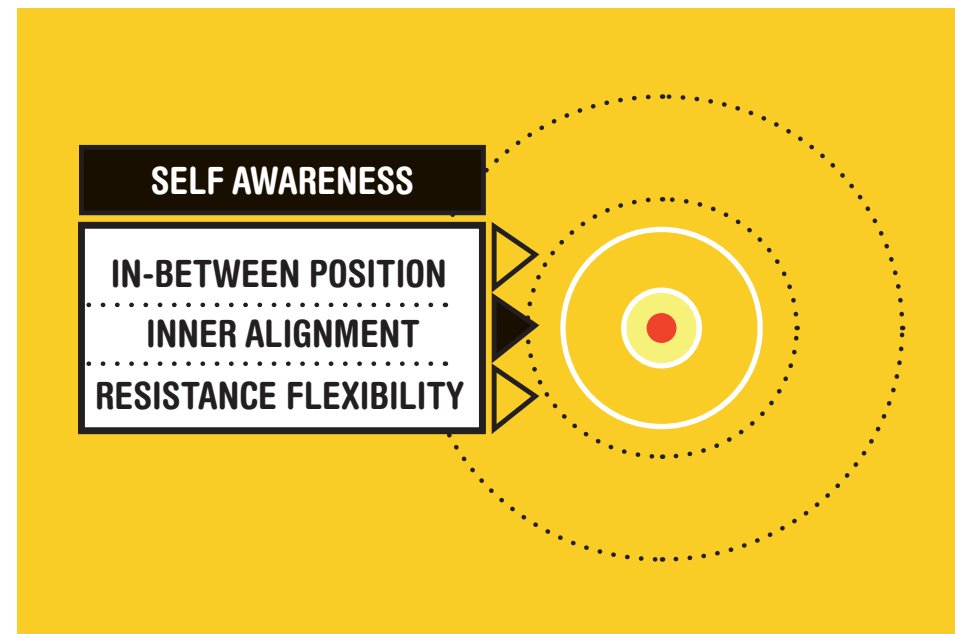
POSTURE AND MINDSETS: SELF AWARENESS

IN-BETWEEN POSITION To be able to see the positions and multiple “worlds” involved in any given situation, requires a reflective approach to one’s own identifications with the worlds one is navigating or negotiating between. This means a questioning of one’s assumptions, stereotyping, worldview and group loyalties. It also means both advocating for the full inclusion of whatever perspectives are marginalized within a given system, *and* maintaining a focal point on the development of the whole system.

INNER ALIGNMENT We recognize that the systems change we are seeking requires a multitude of sometimes conflicting actions, ways of seeing, coalitions, strategies, and thought models, working in a type of synergy that can only be upheld through a careful alignment of each actor to the specific part that they are capable or suited to fill. We seek to foster this awareness by paying careful attention to our inner sense of purpose and timing, as well as that of others within our system.

RESISTANCE FLEXIBILITY Creative-transformative work challenging set power dynamics, identities, roles and ways of working, is often followed by

resistance from multiple angles, requiring a flexible approach to conflict. From a systems point of view, we recognize that energy can never be destroyed or created, only transformed. In any conflict, we strive to maintain our systems awareness, by exploring opportunities for systems learning or “using” opposition to define ourselves more clearly. We carefully examine our projections, our use or abuse of power when feeling threatened, and seek to “work with the materials of the situation” in creative ways.

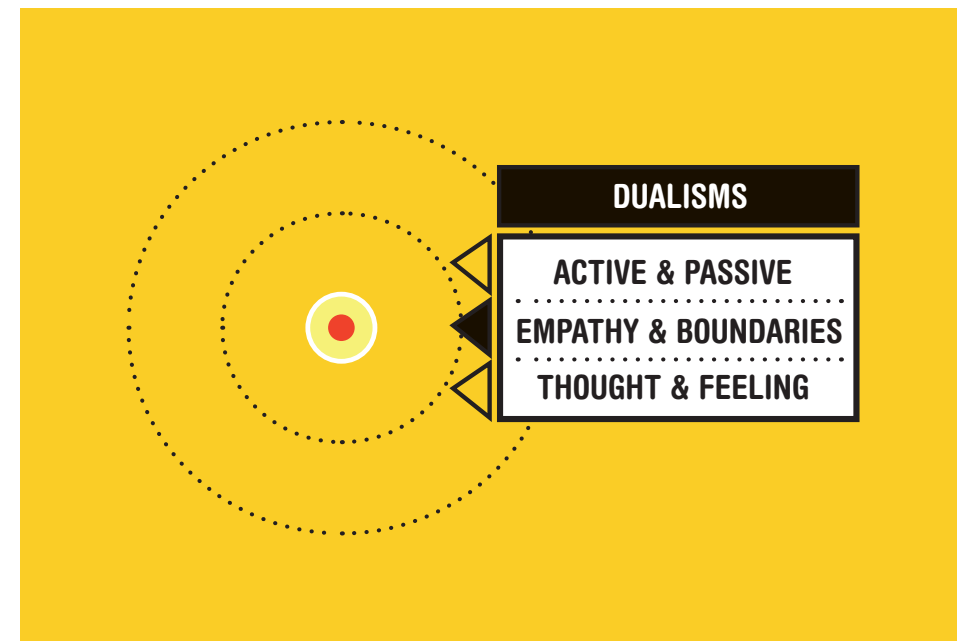


POSTURE AND MINDSETS: DUALISMS

ACTIVE & PASSIVE To maintain a balance between structure and self-organization in the leadership of a co-creative process, requires an **acute sense for when to step back and allow for things to emerge, and when to exercise control and authority**. We are holding the tension between the dualism of “I” (penetrating, active) and “Openness to the Other” (receptive, passive). This includes holding a space for uncertainty and emergence also before the creativity in others might have been unleashed, helping the overall system find a rhythm that stimulates growth, participation and shared leadership.

EMPATHY & BOUNDARIES Empathy is an expansive state and includes learning to let go of one’s ingrained beliefs to allow a different perspective or operating system to inform your own seeing. **Healthy boundaries, on the other hand, are contracting** and ensure that these perspectives are properly integrated with your awareness of the rest of the system, that your personal limits are respected, and that there is time along the way to rest, realign, and reconnect to one’s own self.

THOUGHT & FEELING When working with a system, we **seek to align ourselves with all aspects of the system**, including people/needs/potentials/contexts/materials/bodies/spaces. This requires cognition on many levels, a kind of situation where our minds sink into our bodies, holding and navigating the dualism of thought and feeling.

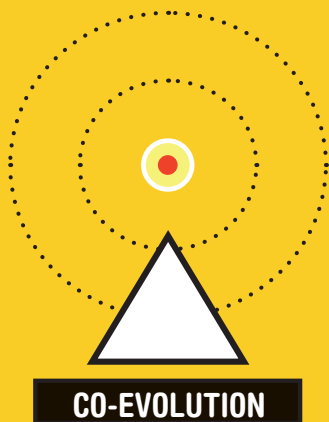


POSTURE AND MINDSETS: CO-EVOLUTION & METHODOLOGIES

CO-EVOLUTION We always evolve with the systems we are intervening in, exercising shared vulnerability with the people we involve. Instead of doing research on or about something, we create and become together. We seek to foster this kind of development and growth in all of our participants by respecting and understanding their/our starting points in terms of identity, worldview and comfort zone. Through creative exploration and knowledge of the system, we then seek to expand this towards a broader understanding of the world and one's ability to express oneself in it.

Potential methodologies

Body awareness and movement exercises, storytelling, writing and collective reflection, journaling or blogging throughout a process, art therapy, training in common master suppression techniques and theatre of the oppressed exercises to widen ones toolbox in terms of how to respond to inside and outside forces of various kinds.





THANKS FOR READING!



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