Sheffield Hallam University

AGENT MAKERS - The un-masking of environmental agency through design for speculative social innovation.

LEVICK-PARKIN, Melanie <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3925-9792>, STIRLING, Eve <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8989-4984>, HANSON, Maria <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6986-7441> and BATEMAN, Roger <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3086-6273>

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Design History Society Conference **2017** Oslo
Making and unmaking the environment

AGENT MAKERS – The un-masking of environmental agency through design for speculative social innovation.

Melanie Levick-Parkin, Eve Stirling ,Maria Hanson & Roger Bateman

Sheffield Institute of Arts
Sheffield Hallam University

m.levick-parkin@shu.ac.uk

Living in the Anthropocene, with its accelerating human agency impacting on the planet, we have to open our eyes to the ever increasing signs that the relationship between design(ers) and nature is more often than not disastrous.

Speculative & Critical Design

Speculative (often future focused) design allow us to suspend disbelief about change while at the same time open up space for discussion (Dunne and Raby, 2013) through the use of critical design objects which may not have a functional or commercial use.

Agency

Having the power to shape your life experiences. You can contribute to them and are not just shaped by them (Bandura, 2001).

Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. Annual Review of Psychology, 52(1), 1–26.
Dunne, A., & Raby, F. (2013). *Speculative everything: design, fiction, and social dreaming*. MIT Press.

And although designers hold a great deal of power to influence our relationship with our environment, it is questionable whether young designers feel like they themselves have any of this power or are aware that their training equips them with agency beyond the artifactual context.

This research explores whether and how speculative, future oriented design briefs can make design students aware of their agency in social and environmental contexts beyond the micro–environment of their immediate design discipline or disciplinary industrial context.

DESIGN

The project focused on ‘Design Futuring the City’, an international cohort of MA Students from a cross–disciplinary design programme were asked to imagine futures for their home cities, developed from a wide range of futurologist predictions.

BRIEF
Design for (speculative) Social Innovation:
Design Futuring the City

Module Task – Create a designed outcome that surfaces a particular issue in relation to design for (speculative) social innovation.

For this brief you will need to identify **one** issue/prediction, which may potentially affect your home city in time to come. (at least 50 years into the future) and come up with a designed outcome which attends to this prediction in some way.

Background: There are many predictions and forecasts out there about issues that will impact on how we will be living in the future. No-body knows exactly which ones will turn out to be true, but as designers we have the ability to imagine the future and put our skills and material knowledge towards/or against creating particular futures.

The Anthropocene

Human population to reach 85 billion by 2030 (UN, 2015)

Haraway (2016) suggests we eschew individualism and that 'making with' is the approach to take.

Design can and should promote social innovation and change.

Student perspective

'…we are in such a position of dire need, in terms of climate change, over population, that it feels urgent to focus now… this topic is relevant and feels vitally important to consider the ethics of what is being designed and how it impacts the earth and others.

Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.
UN (2015) http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/07/un-projects-world-population-to-reach-8-5-billion-by-2030-driven-by-growth-in-developing-countries/

Part of the students exploration was to give consideration whether their visions of this future were utopian or dystopian and to develop an understanding of how design ‘futures’ and ‘defutures’ (Fry 2015) at the same time.

What matters?

How can speculative design briefs make design students aware of their agency within a broader social and environmental context?

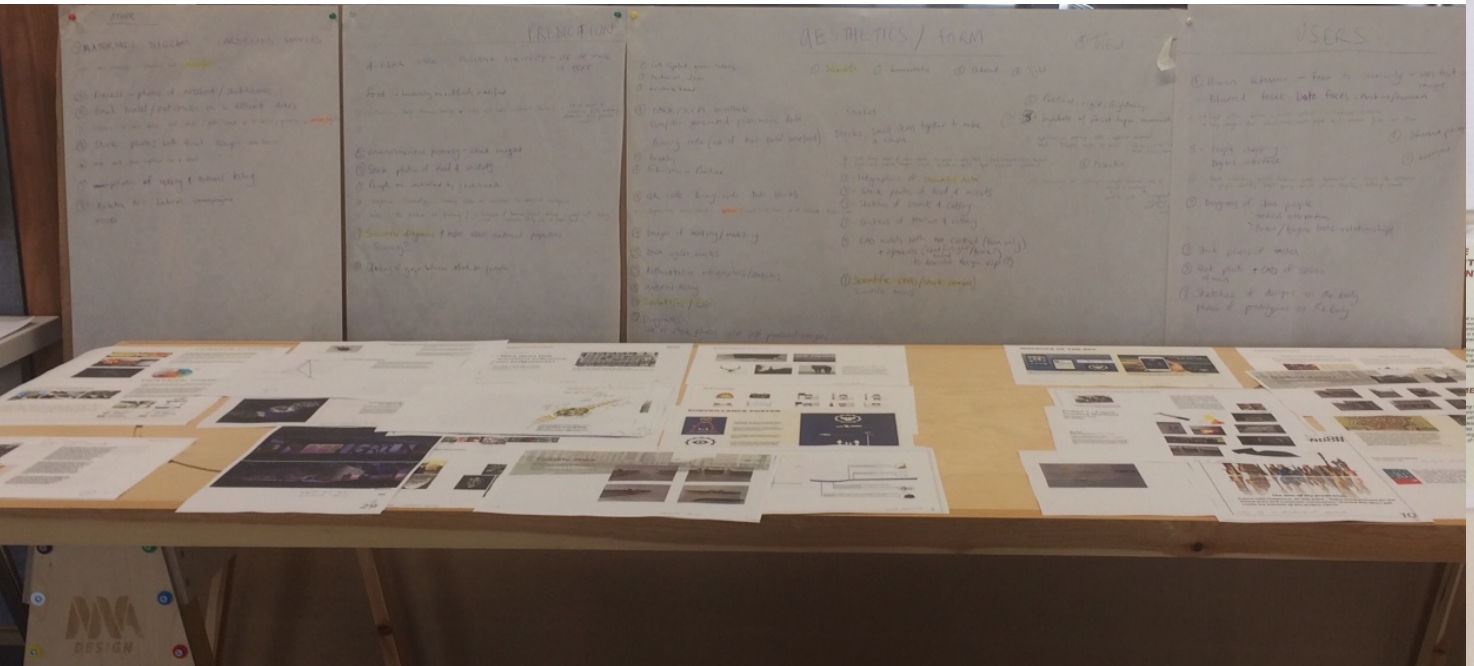
Do visual methods to create and document these concepts support this agency?

How can design pedagogy and research make this agency active?

process

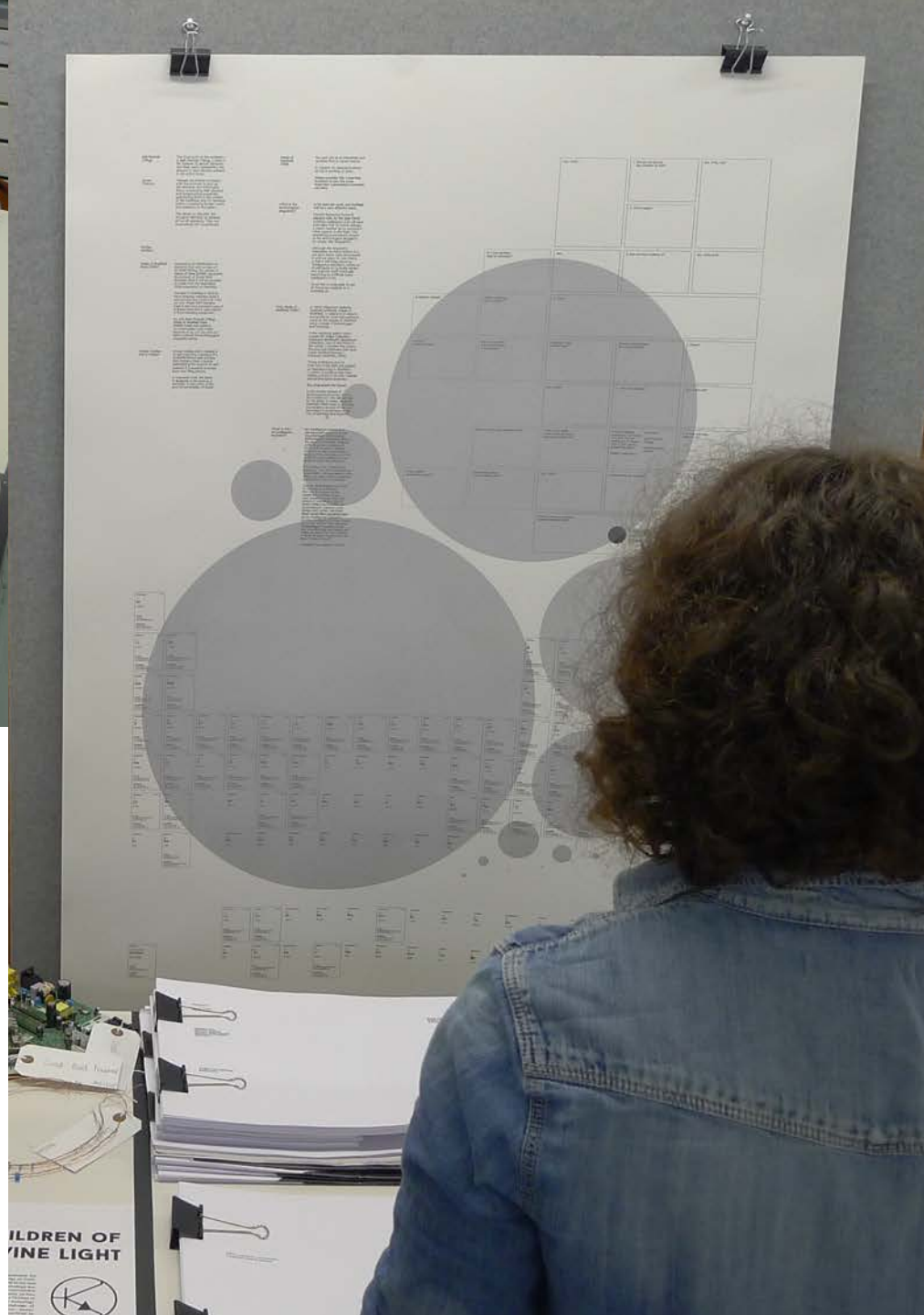
4 tutors

1 exhibition
48 project reports
10 projects chosen for a close reading (from HM or D level)
16 digital questionnaire responses
5 student interviews (1 tutor)
1 visual analysis day for 3 tutors (all 3D/makers)
Further analysis by 1 tutor



Student exhibition

PROJECT 7
Design Futuring The City



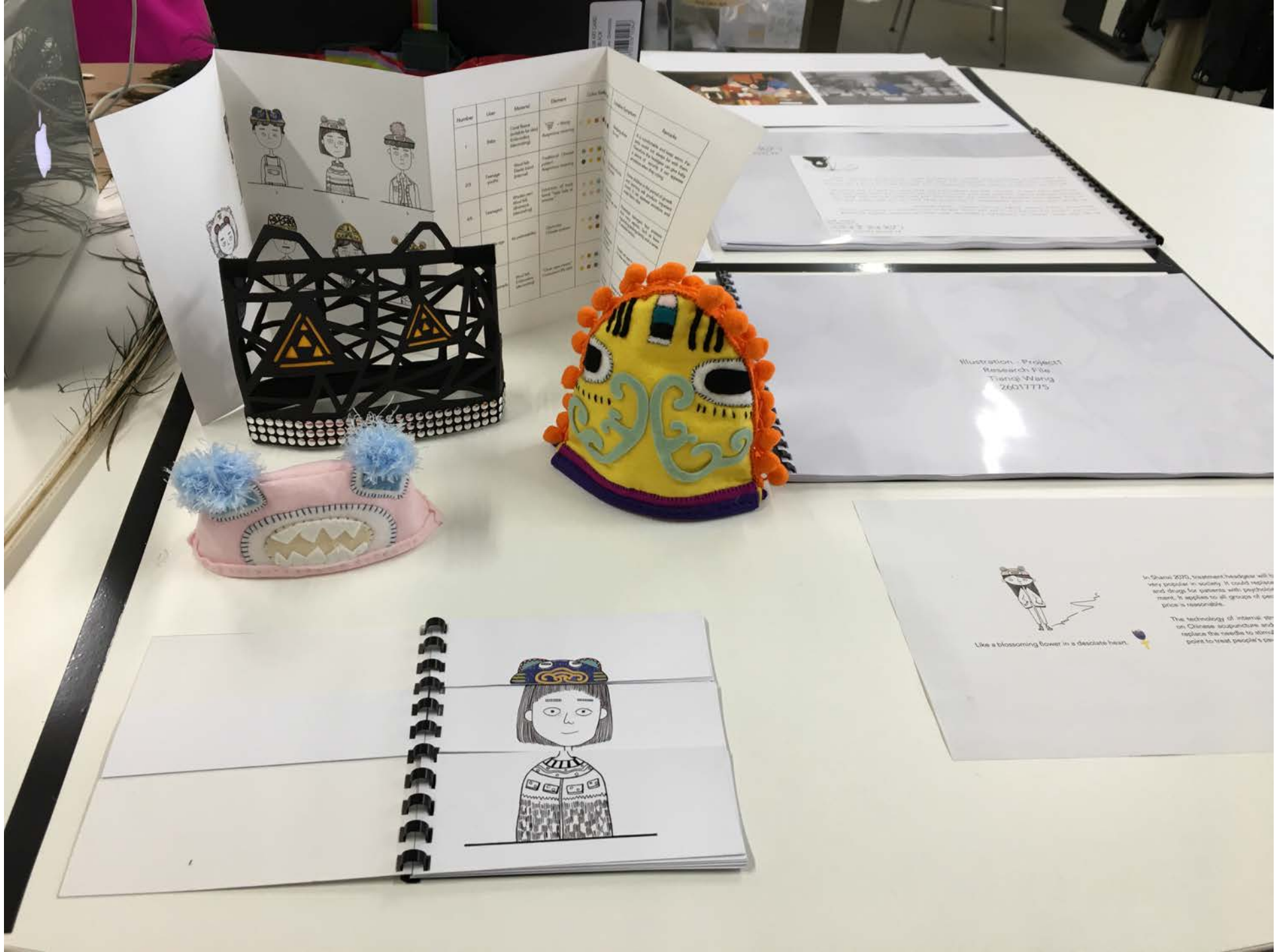


Illustration - Project1
Research File
Tianqi Wang
26017775
Like a blossoming flower in a desolate heart.

Jewellery can absorb
the sun's rays

SHEFFIELD
CHONG QING
Dreaming Space
NEW YORK
NEW YORK

Kitchen in Yemen in 2050

A prediction for kitchen in future

The future of capsules that will take over food!

How social life will be, if there will be no eating?

THE LINK BETWEEN YEMENI TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY VALUES AND A KITCHEN IN 2050 AND

By: Hend Abdulmawla
MA Interior Design
Project 1

Image 1: A Yemeni Woman (Al-abadi, 2014)

Name: Hend Abdulmawla
MA Design (Interior)
Project 1
Kitchen in 2050 in Old Sana'a City

In 2050 there will be no food as tablets and capsules will ta
we do every day is eating food; if there will be no food, ho

This kitchen is designed to protect the social life in 205
link between Yemeni traditional community values a
food.

Sleeping
Playing games
Crying
Reading
Growing plant
Go shopping
Do nothing
Traveling
Listen to music
Playing with pet
Doing excise
Eating delicious food

We have been reviewing student work to examine their agentic practices – can this been seen through the visuals?
Connections to articulate methodology. How are these the Interface to understand agency

Thematic coding framework：
Users
City/place
Aesthetics/form
Prediction
Dystopian
Utopian

The future city as . . .

an imagined future

Fig. 39 Future Skyscraper Anuar, 2016

Fig. 40 Future Skyscraper Porada, 2013

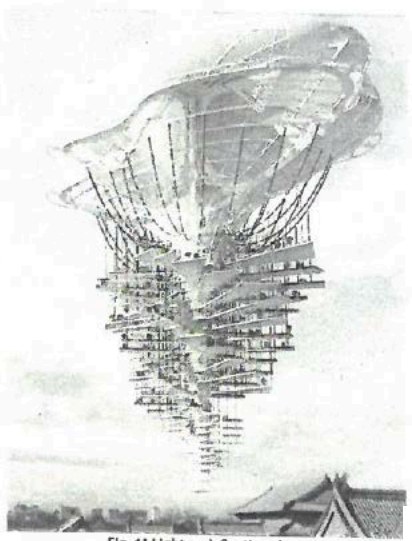
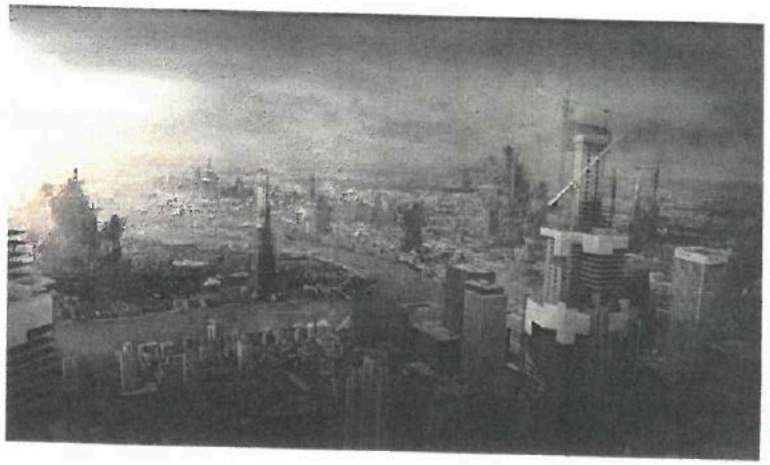


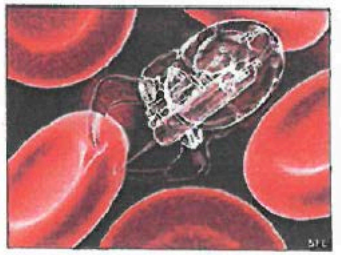
Fig. 41 Light park floating skyscrapper retrieve
from http://www.evolo.us

Fig. 42 Crater Scraper, retrieved from http://www.evolo.us/

https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu



http://lihouides.magmoda.uic.edu.au/



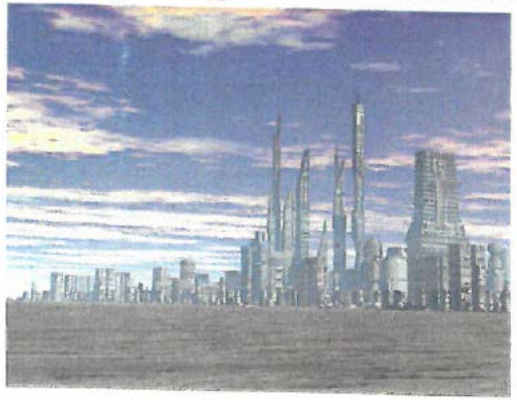
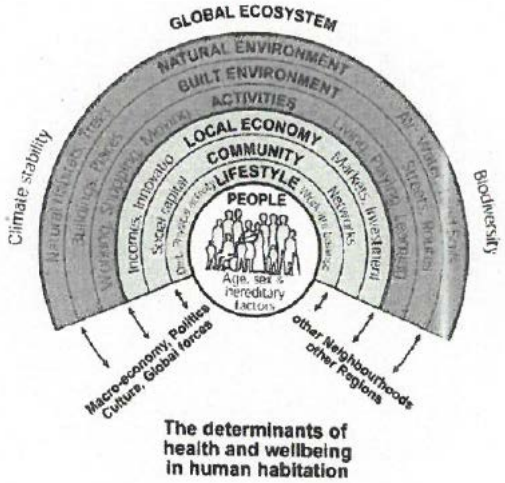


Figure 14

a diagram



The determinants of health and wellbeing in human habitation

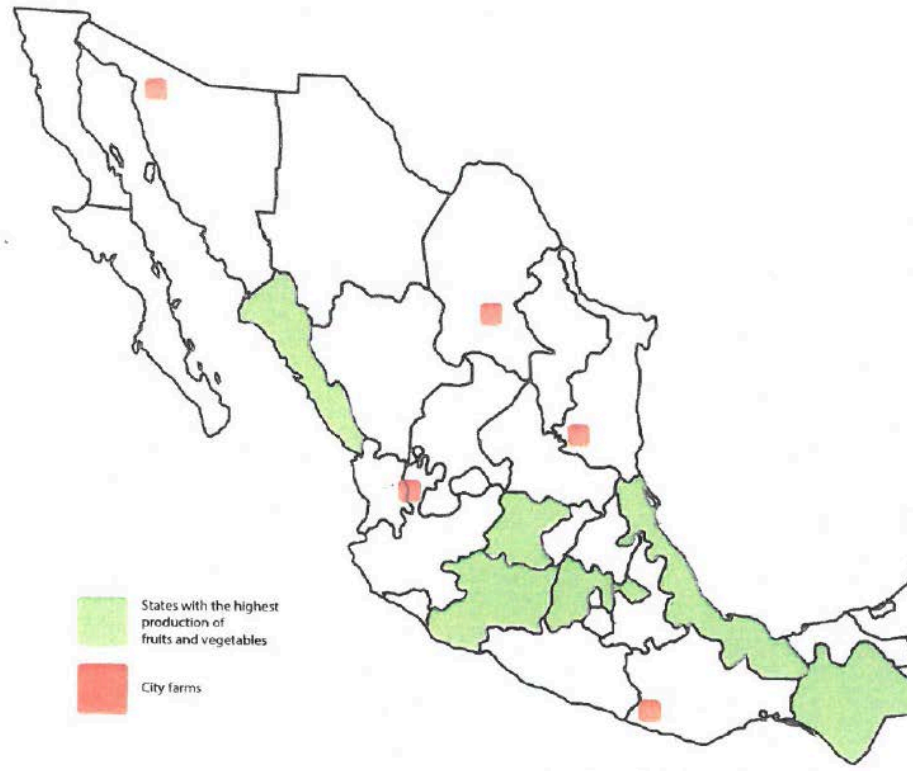


Fig. 27 Map of Mexico showing agriculture zones (green) and future

(Fig.18 Chart listing Cypriot political parties, n.d.)

ΕΔΕΚ ΚΙΝΗΜΑ ΣΟΣΙΑΛΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΩΝ

ΔΗΚΟ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑ • ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ • 1976

ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΚΟΣ ΣΥΝΑΓΕΡΜΟΣ

ΚΙΝΗΜΑ Αλληλεγγύη

Συμμαχία Πολιτών

ΧΡΥΣΗ ΑΥΓΗ

ΑΚΕΛ 1926

ΚΙΝΗΜΑ ΟΙΚΟΛΟΓΩΝ ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝΤΙΣΤΩΝ

LEFT WING	CENTRE	RIGHT WING
The left wing range from socialist ideologies to hard-line Marxist communist movements. Characterized by working class members and pro union policies with emphasis to a more independent from Greece foreign policy	The centre tend to accommodate milder political ideologies like democrats and eco-friendly parties. Characterized by compromising policies to national debates and a priority to citizen welfare	Cypriot right wing parties range from conservative democrats to far right nationalists. The right is characterized by heavy Greek unification sentiment,religious conservatism and xenophobia

(Ministry of Tourism of Cyprus, 2016)

Fig. 11 - Climate change is leading to migration of wildlife.

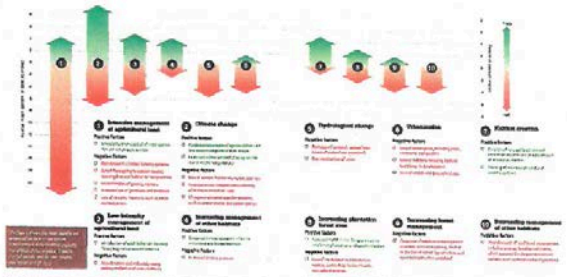


Fig. 12 - Leading causes and impact on wildlife numbers (Wildlife trusts, 2016).

national identity/ tradition

Figure 22

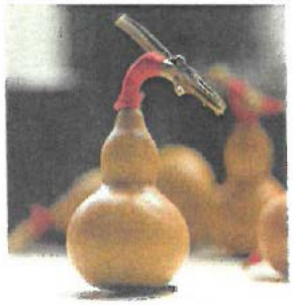


Figure 17-1. Gourd bottle.

Figure 17-2. The shape of gourd bottle on hat.

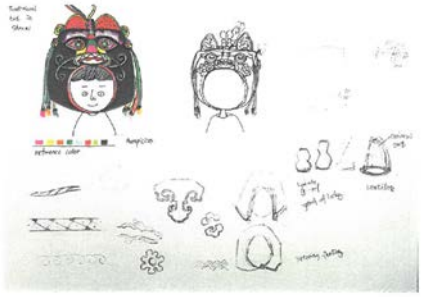
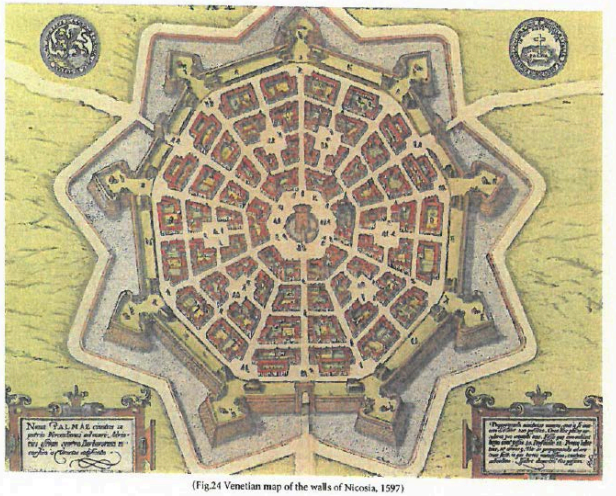
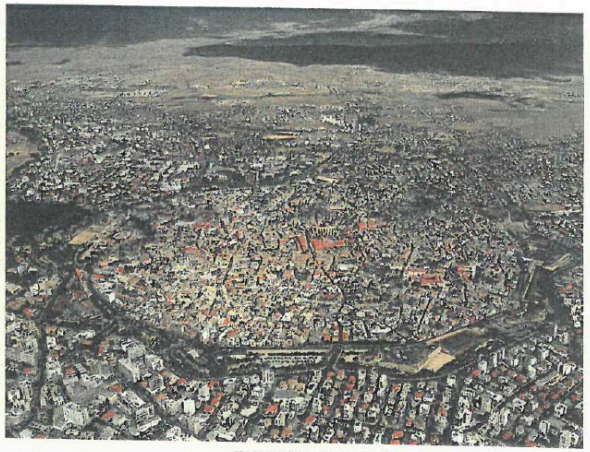


Figure 17-3. Sketch of thinking.



(Fig.24 Venetian map of the walls of Nicosia, 1597)



(Fig.25 Aerial photo of Nicosia, n.d.)

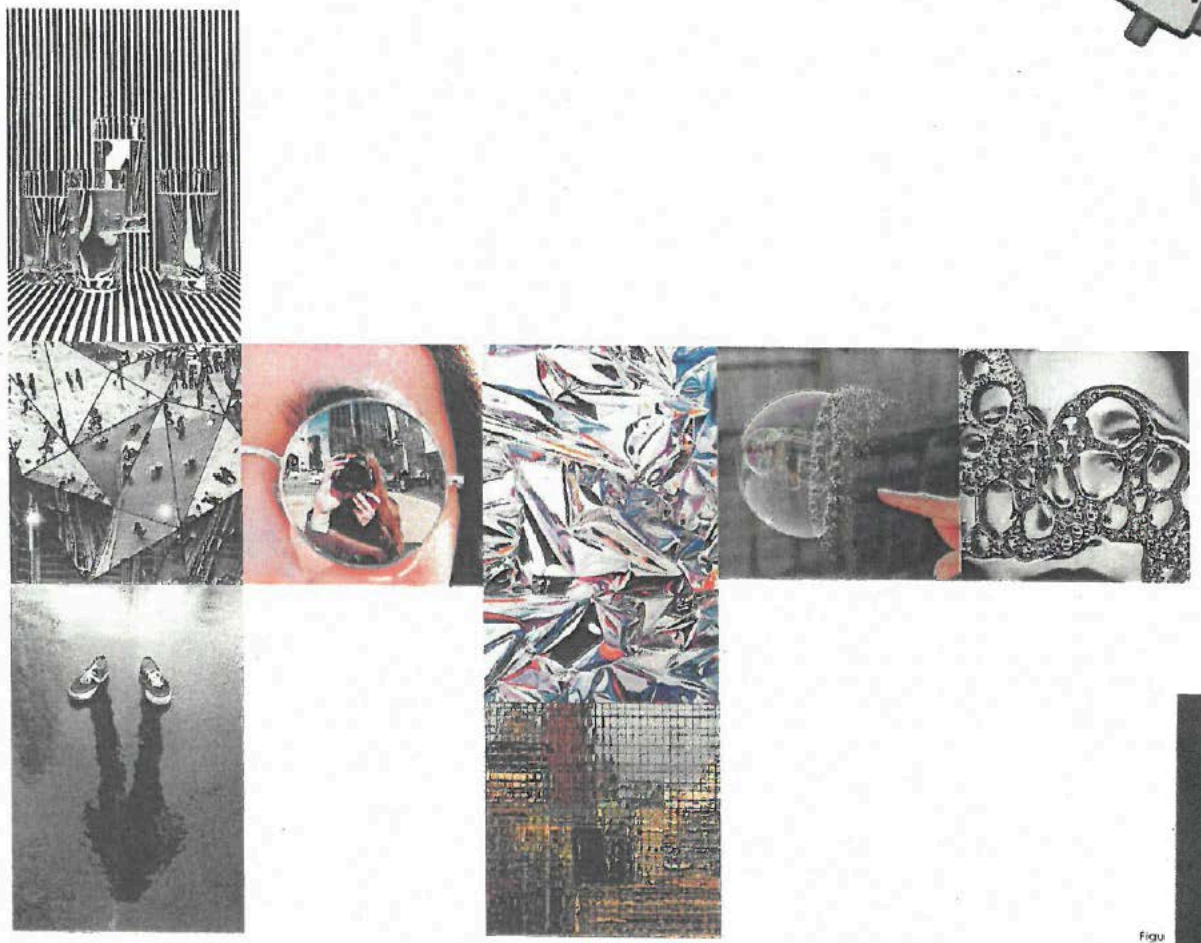
as product

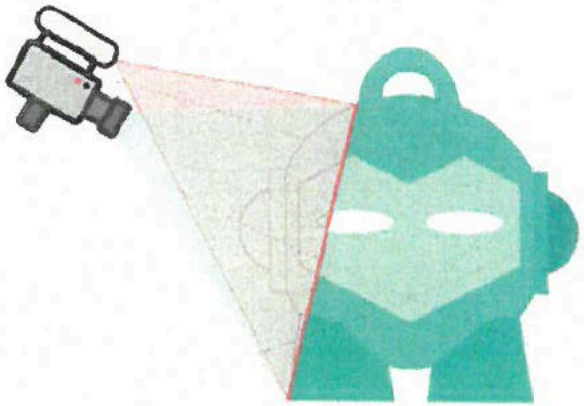
Mock-up of the app including the main app icon, home screen layout, notification bar and app permission warning that illustrates how the app uses the phones microphone to monitor the subject

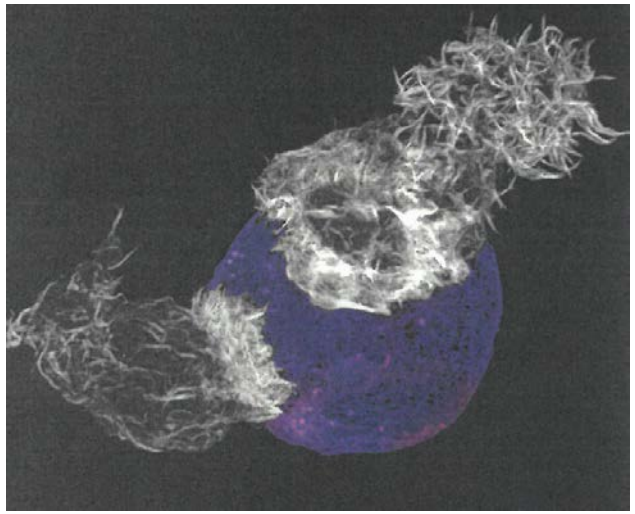
A advertisement mock-up poster that illustrates the ministry of information Advertising the censorship app under the guise that the app is in a way reducing the gap between government and people

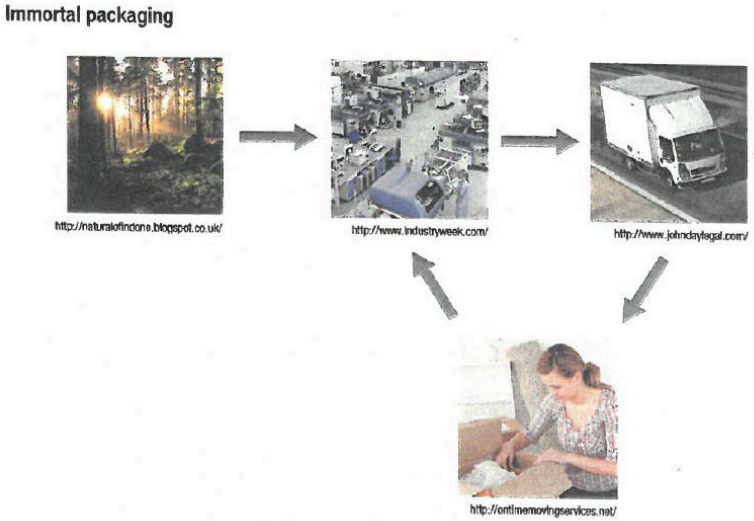
Agentic design

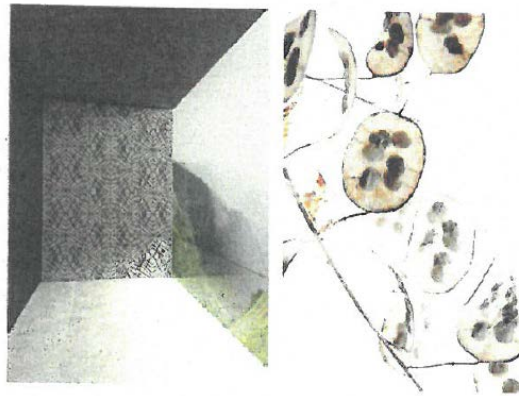
performative agency



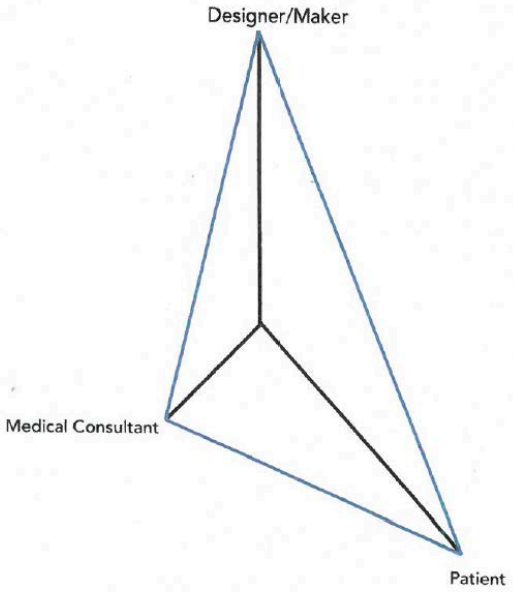




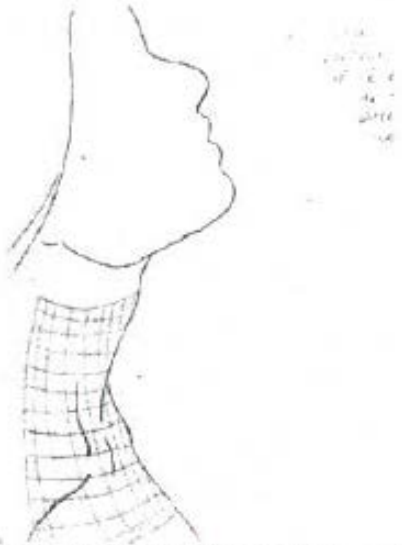




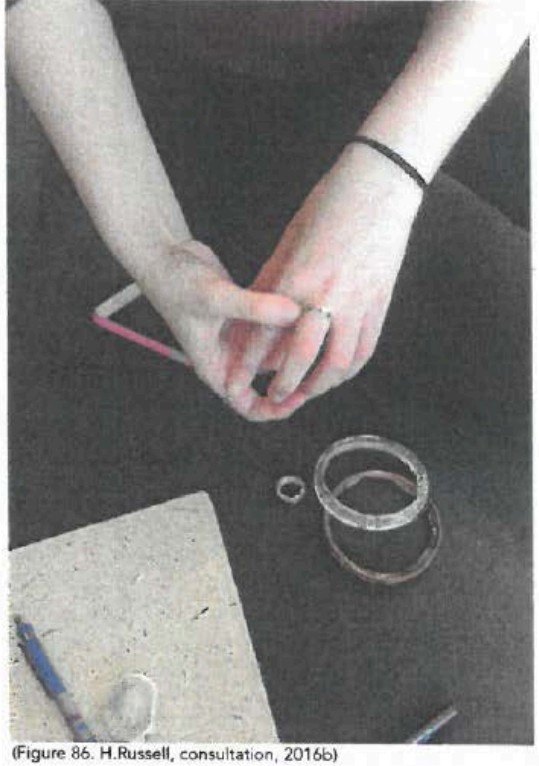
creational agency



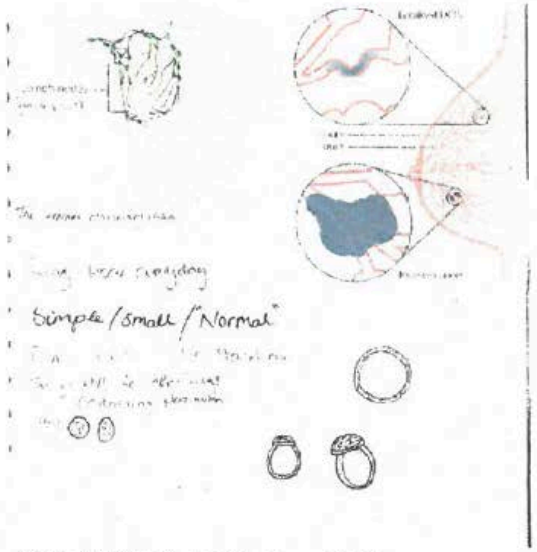
(Figure 104. H.Russell, Co-creative diagram, 2016)



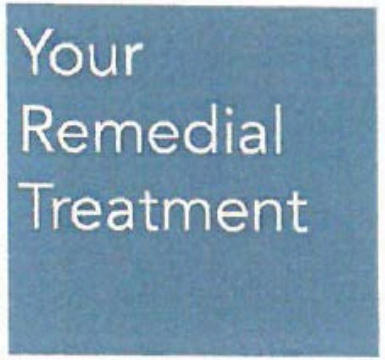
(Figure 70. H.Russell, sketchbook scan, 2016f)

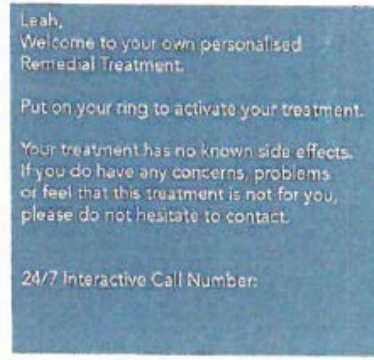


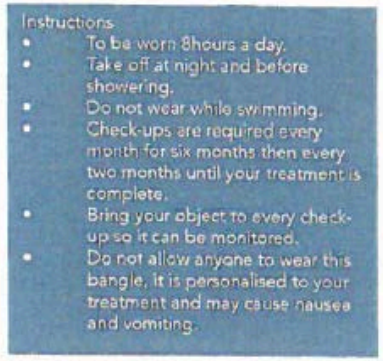
(Figure 86. H.Russell, consultation, 2016b)



(Figure 87. H.Russell, sketch book scan, 2016h)







(Figure 88. H.Russell, treatment leaflet, 2016b)

remedial treatment

human robot relationship

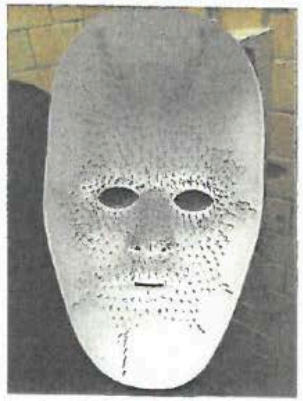
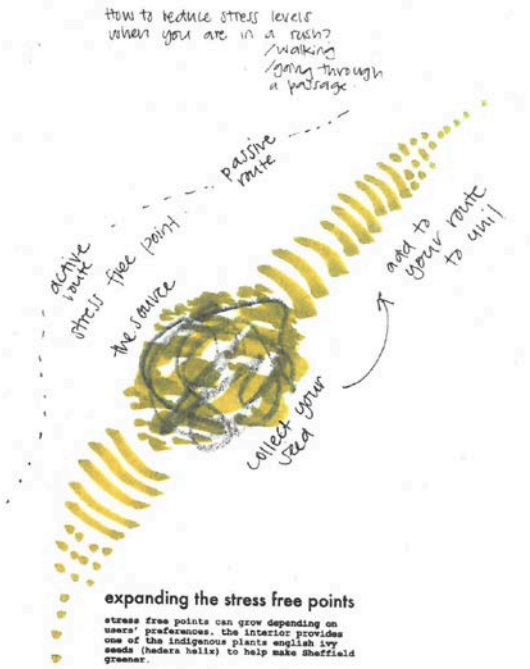


Figure 37

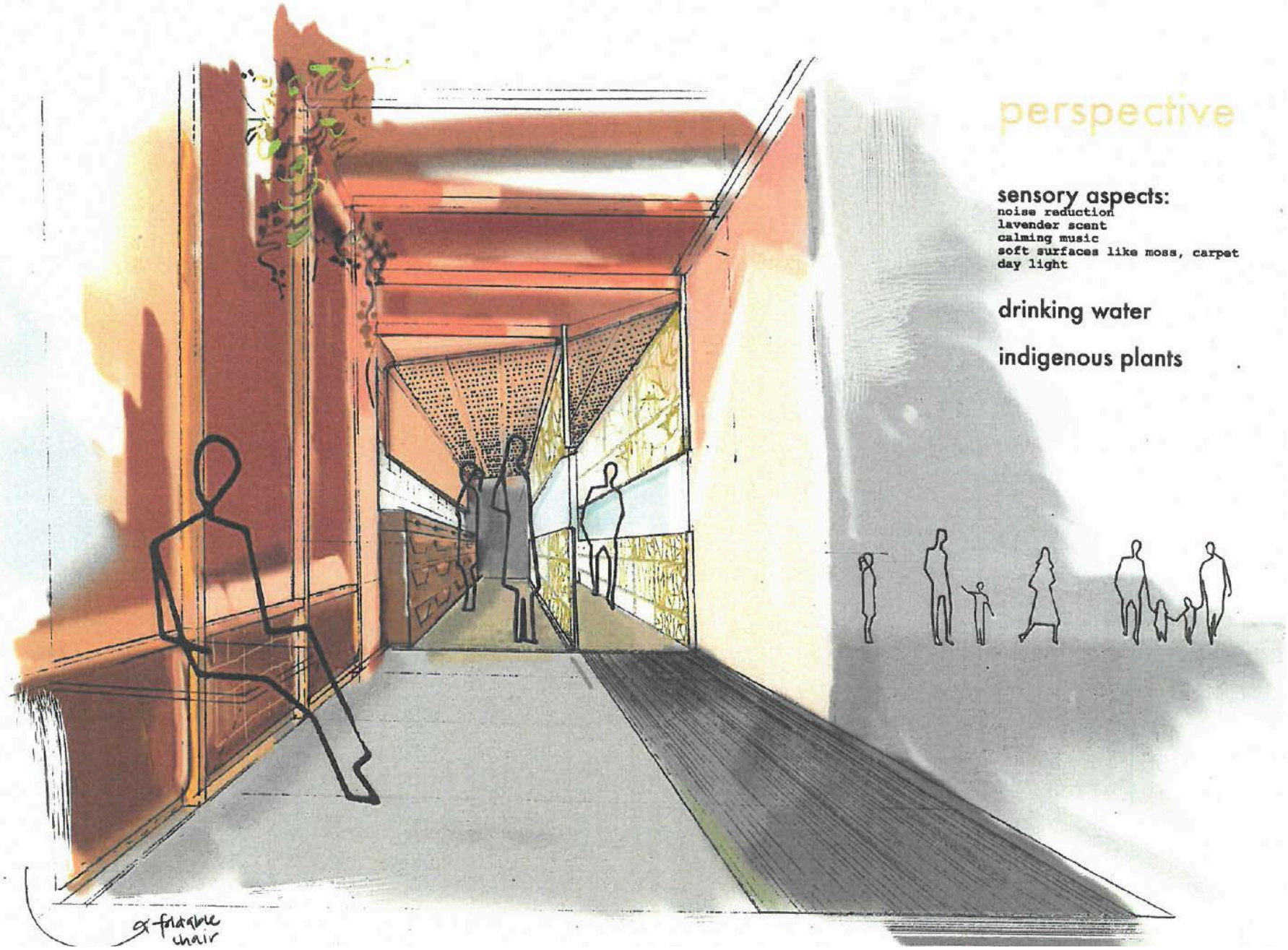
sanctuaries



expanding the stress free points

stress free points can grow depending on users' preferences. the interior provides one of the indigenous plants english ivy seeds (hedera helix) to help make Sheffield greener.

every student can help change their living environments in order to reduce their stress levels and walk through a greener route.



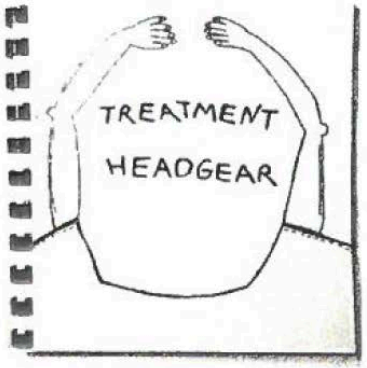
perspective

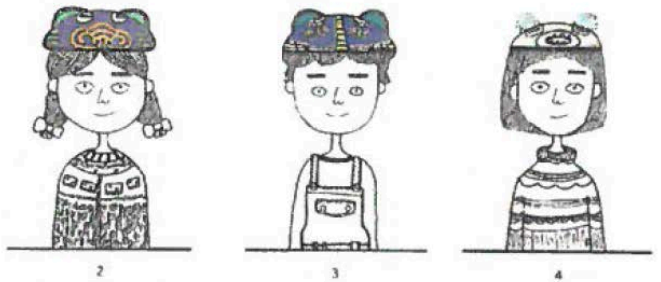
sensory aspects:
noise reduction
lavender scent
calming music
soft surfaces like moss, carpet
day light

drinking water

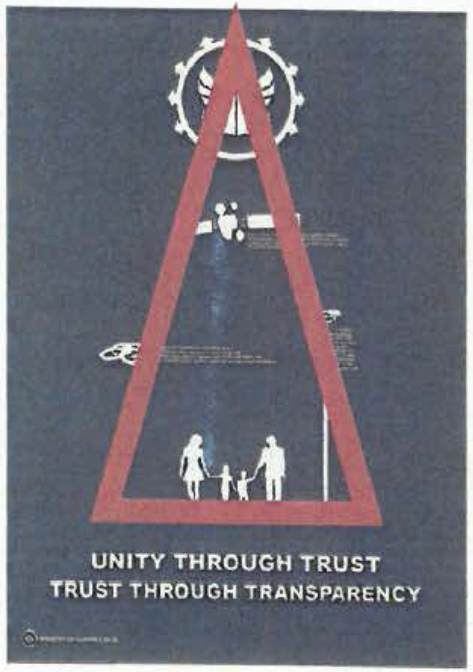
indigenous plants

social innovation through critical design





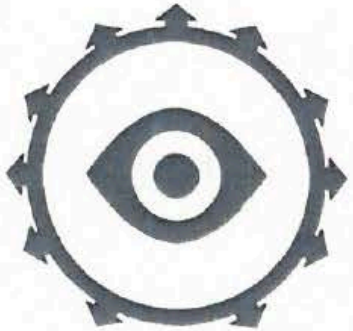
Number	User	Material	Element	Color Reference	Suitable Symptom	Remarks
1	Baby	Coral fleece (suitable for skin) Embroidery (decorating)	= Wang Auspicious meaning		Sleeping alone Go out	It is comfortable and keep warm. Parents could not always be with them. Therefore the headgear can give baby a sence of security. It can appease emotions when they crying.
2/3	Teenage youths	Wool-felt Elastic band (internal)	Traditional Chinese pattern. Auspicious meaning		Stay alone at home. Fret mood.	Some children in the period of growth and learning will produce impatient mood. It can appease emotions and make them relax.
4/5	Teenagers	Woolen yarn Wool felt Silverwork (decorating)	Extraction of traditional "tiger hats elements."		Depression Emotional ups and down. Anxiety	Nowadays teenagers face pressure from many aspects. Such as learning,working,feelings,family and a series of unstable factors
6/7	Middle-age	Air permeability	Geometry Chinese pattern		Depression When the mood is not stable (climacterium)	People can wear it at leisure time. To relax and reduce stress
8/9	Elderly people	Wool felt Embroidery (decorating)	"Close eyes means" Composure life style		Feel lonely Stay alone	Because of children not stay with them together. Elderly people usually feel lonely. The treatment headgear could make them feel happy.



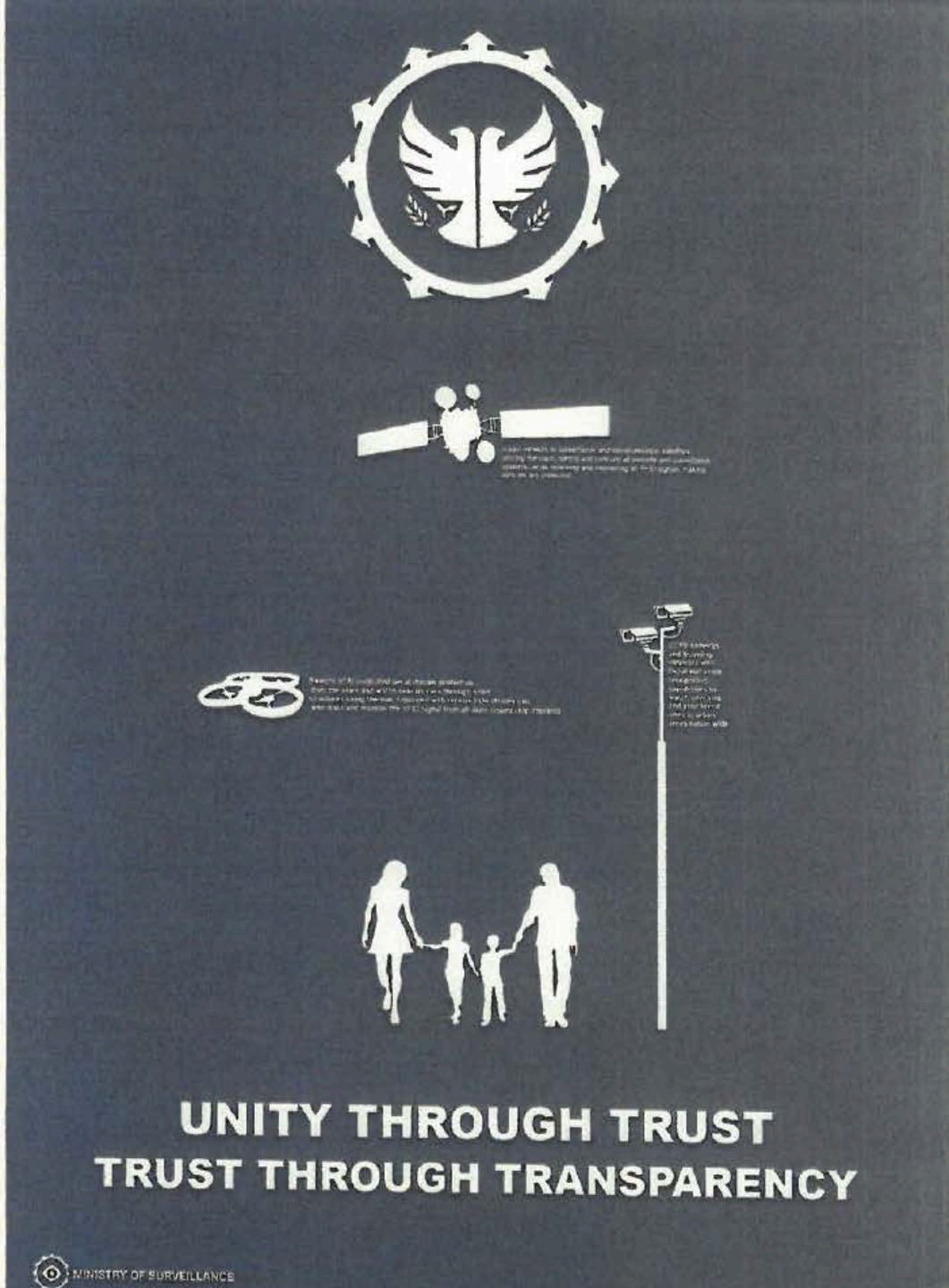
Illustrations set up in a triangular layout with the tip of it being the symbol of the authoritarian dystopian government

Items and illustrations are silhouetted vectors in order to look more generic to fit with the uniformity of a dystopia and the info-graphic style poster

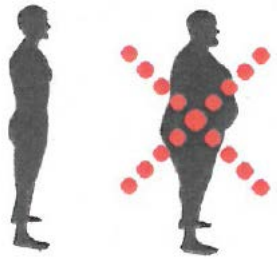
The language of the poster is direct simple and authoritative laying under the layout triangle and on top of the agency issuing it

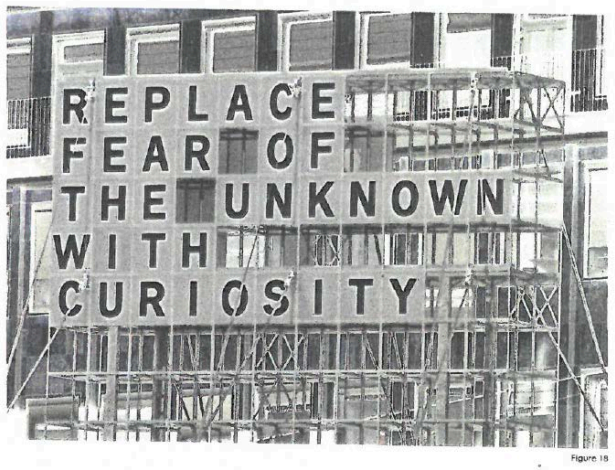


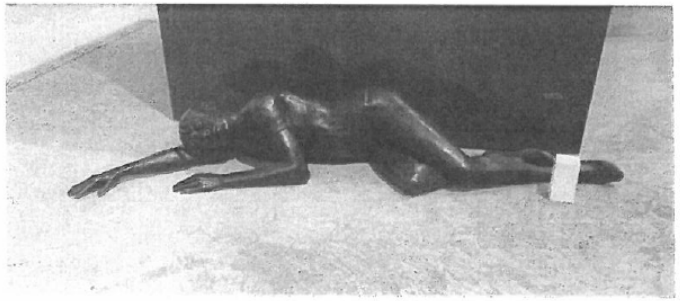
Label underneath with the seal and logo of my fictional ministry of technology it matches the official government issue poster and also the colours and ministry give a near medical agency look which is also linked to welfare

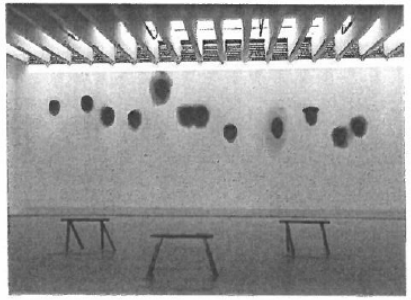


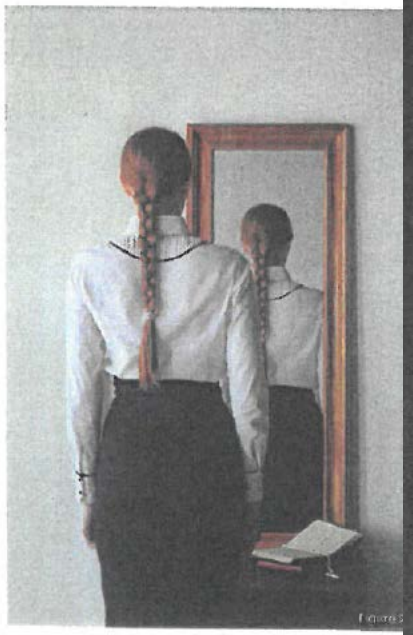
Mental health

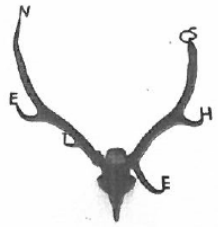


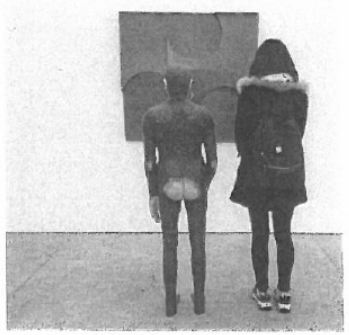


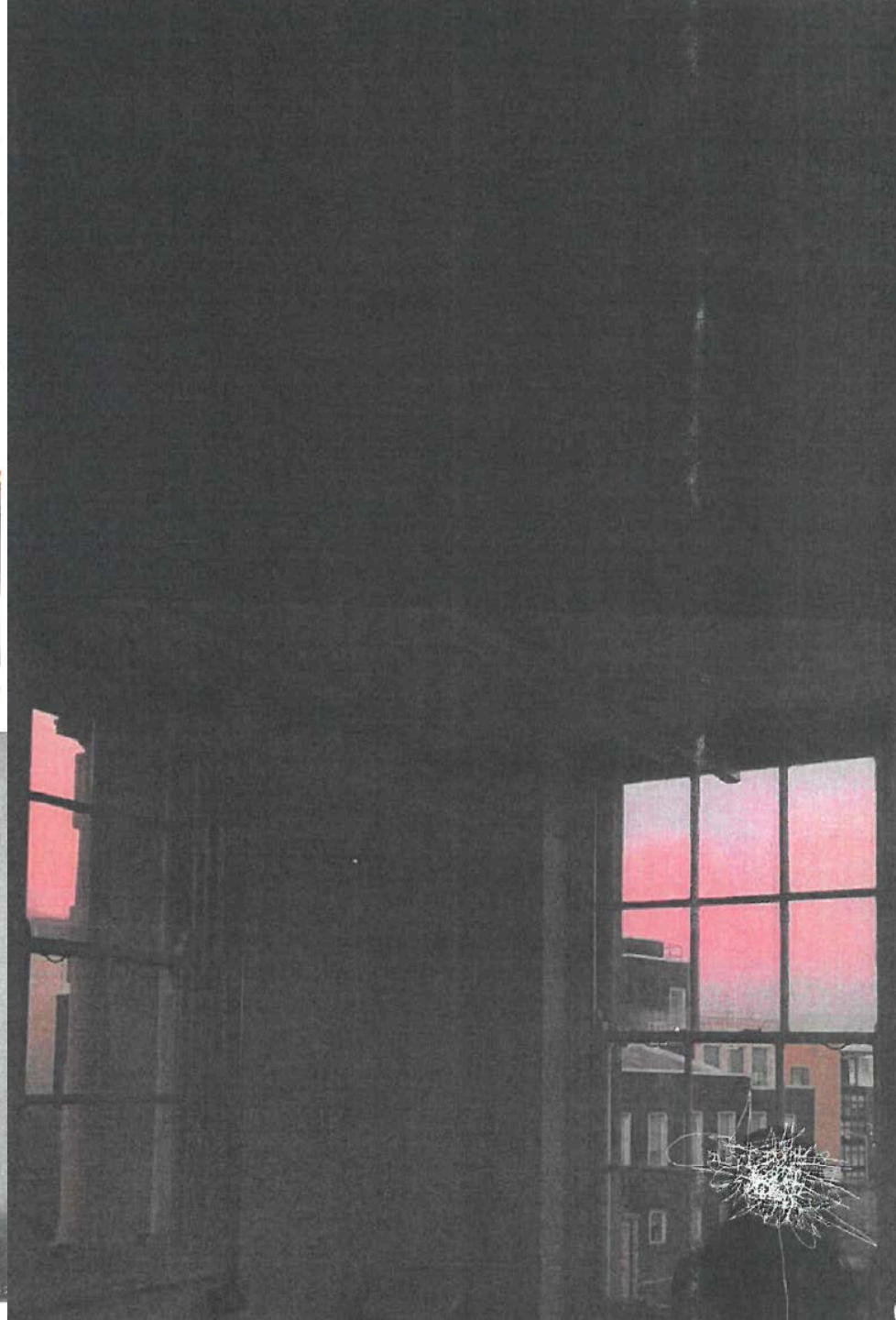






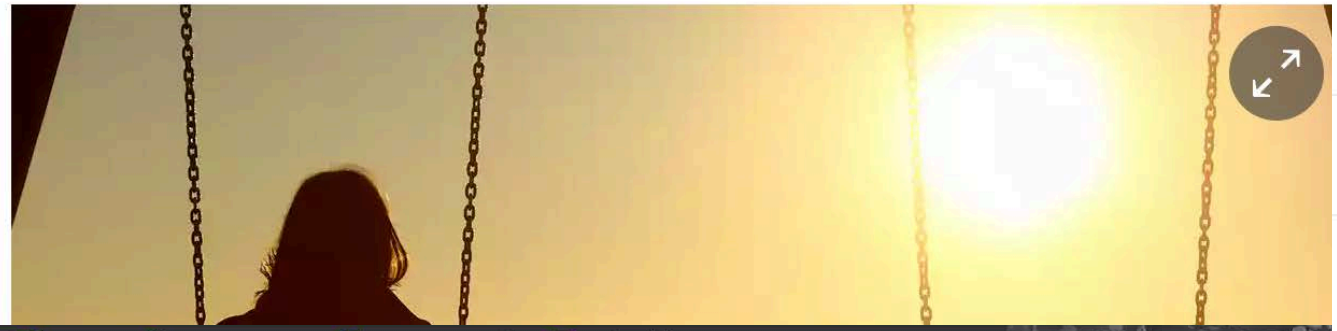






Majority of students experience mental health issues, says NUS survey

The survey, released as MPs meet to discuss student mental health, also shows 54% don't seek help



Blogging students / Eleven sketches inspired by the university mental health crisis – in pictures

The number of students dropping out from degree courses due to mental illness has increased significantly in recent years. Illustrator and student Ella Baron captures the experiences of 11 undergraduates

Arachnophobia (and other concerns): A Study of **Student Mental Health** at the **University** of Richmond
L Cabo, H Dunn, A Grimes, A Sampedro - 2017 - scholarship.richmond.edu
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Crying in My Office: The Current State of College **Student Mental Health**
G Baldwin, B Holbrook, C Leak - 2016 - digitalcommons.winthrop.edu
... and **university** retention, and how these concerns impact Winthrop **University**. Additionally, we will engage the audience in discussion regarding strategies to cope with this generation of college **student** as they present with more and more intense **mental health** concerns. **...**
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Mindfulness as an alternative for supporting **university student mental health**: Cognitive-emotional and depressive self-criticism measures
MA Azam, M Mongrain, K Vora… - International …, 2016 - search.proquest.com
Abstract Increases in **university**-based **mental health** problems require alternative **mental health** programs, applicable to students with elevated psychological risks due to personality traits. This study examined the cognitive-emotional outcomes of a **university** mindfulness
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R Woods - 2017 - digitalcommons.kent.edu
... Event Title. College **Student Mental Health** and The JED Campus Program. Presenter Information. Rylie Woods, Kent State **University** - Stark Campus. Location. 217 Science & Nursing Building. Start Date. 28-4-2017 2:15 PM. End Date. 28-4-2017 2:45 PM. Description. **...**
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R Bruffaerts, P Mortier, G Kiekens, RP Auerbach… - Journal of Affective …, 2017 - Elsevier
... Methods. As part of the World **Mental Health** Surveys International College **Student** project, 12-month **mental health** problems among freshmen (N=4,921) was assessed in an e-survey of students at KU Leuven **University** in Leuven, Belgium. **...**
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interface

The city as

an interface to student cultural background

an interface to student wellbeing

Performative agency

Creational Agency

Although many of the projects had environmental futures as their starting points, many of the final outcomes focused on the imagined impact on individual and societal experience of everyday life

This may hold further potential to encourage design students to become agents in both the micro and macro contexts of social and environmental sustainability.

We believe Design pedagogy, whether within or outside the art school, has a pivotal role to play in the making and un-making of design histories beyond dominant ontologies and a duty to contribute to more resilient social and environmental futures

Speculative design inquiries in relation to social innovation are one way of making visible how we as designers are trapped by our own ontological constructedness.

We need to strive to de-design ourselves to be able to think of 'futures yet unthought' (Grosz 1999) and to

'challenge the status quo by facilitating other types of encounters, conversations, and imaginaries, and giving voice to people, things, and animals otherwise marginalized…' (Kjearsgaard et al. 2016)

thank you!