Term Project Proposal:

The Land of Eden: The Land of A Thousand Minds

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1. Overview

1.1 The Theme, Topic, Goal, and Issue

Throughout my academic journey in the Computation Arts program, I have not yet tackled everyday issues within my term projects. I have avoided topics concerning social, political, and economical matters to prevent upsetting my audience including my peers and professors. However, as it is my last semester, I thought to myself, if not now, then when? I always wanted to create something that will bring awareness to real issues regardless of other people's opinions, values, and beliefs through activism art.

That being said, I had the idea of creating a single utopia that will please everyone. Many will argue that it is mission impossible as everyone has a different definition and vision of a perfect world. However, my project will require the audience's participation to ensure everyone's values and beliefs are included. Interactivity for this project is crucial in order to create a utopian realm that caters to all races, religions, genders, and marginalized groups – essentially, the entire world.

In other words, my goal is to bring awareness of all issues, worldwide without the exclusion of anyone or anything, to hear every voice, and every cry for help. In the process of doing so, all my participants, including myself, will learn of new issues that others have endured that we have not personally experienced or even heard of. Every participant will gain much knowledge on current world problems and work together to create a perfect world.

1.2 The Project Form And Its Audience

My project will be in a form of an interactive database created by the participants themselves. The utopia will be created through words rather than imagery. As the creator, I will provide the following question on screen: "What would make the world a perfect place?". Below, I will display a textbox allowing the participants to type in their answers, one by one. Participants can enter as many answers as they please. Each submission will be displayed on the screen permanently and as the screen fills up, the answers will then overlap one another endlessly.

In addition to that, I intend on adding the top answers to the bottom of the screen to show the main issues in society today. The top answers will be updated every time a new submission has been entered into the system. I will also display a list of every submitted answer for those who want to browse through it. This will allow all participants to bring awareness to their own issues and experiences in today's world while also learning more about others. Note, all answers will be anonymous to protect the identity of each participant and their beliefs and values. This project will be a safe space for everyone to voice their concerns.

As mentioned above, there is no particular target audience as I want everyone to be included and work collaboratively to create a mental image of utopia. However, in order to participate in the creation of this perfect world, one must have access to a computer. Therefore it might unintentionally exclude a small percentage, that being those whom do not have a computer. Other than that, this project targets a diverse audience and participants in order to have an accurate data collection.

1.3 Inspirations through Mimi Onuoha and Hito Steyerl

Speaking of data collection, part of my project is inspired by Mimi Onuoha's article titled *The Point of Collection*. Onuoha discusses how data is collected and the results of its inaccuracy. She states the following; "same data set, two different means of collection, two wildly different results." From this she articulates that different parties collect data differently, leaving out crucial information which seems unimportant. This will then create different results in comparison to other parties. Such issue is common when data collection which inspired me to create a project that is based on all data that is submitted, without leaving anything out.

Hito Steyerl's article was also another source of inspiration. In *A Sea of Data: Apophenia and Pattern (Mis-)Recognition,* Steyerl briefly discusses the concept of 'utopian thinking' also known as 'magical thinking'. There, he argues that "bureaucracy is based on utopian thinking because it assumes people to be perfect from its own point of view." From this, I began thinking about doing the exact opposite and allowing people to create a perfect world based on modern bureaucracy.

Both readings allowed me to further my ideas of forms of activism art by potentially creating a mental image of a utopia that suits everyone's needs. Through accurate data collecting and utopian thinking, I hope to create a project that brings awareness to all issues without excluding any information from marginalized groups which is often done by researchers.

1.4 The Medium

In order to create *The Land of Eden*, I intend on using HTML, CSS, and JavaScript, as I am most familiar with and experienced. In addition to that, I will also be using the jQuery library, for instance, to create endless pop-up dialog boxes for every submission.

If time permits it, I would love to incorporate the use of Annyang, another JavaScript library. Annyang will allow me to add voice commands in addition to typing out submissions. By doing so, it will also broaden my audience so that people with disabilities, such as the visually impaired or even people who suffer from learning disabilities like dyslexia, can easily participate.

As for the textbox itself, I will be using DOM elements and p5.js to get text input from the participants. Using the enter key, the participants will be able to submit their answers which will then be displayed directly on the screen and in the 'submission list'.

I also want the submitted data to be saved and automatically display itself whenever the project loads everytime. That way, the data will never be lost whenever the project is revisited by either me or by participants. That said, I want my project to run endlessly however, I am not quite sure how do to so just yet. Although it seems possible to create a 'foreever' command using Node.js.

1.5 Data Collecting

As the aforementioned, my project will evidently be interactive and solely based on the audience's participation. Without their cooperation, the project will be a blank canvas rather than the activism art I intend on creating. That being said, the project will collect data only from the participants submissions. No external data will be part of the project to ensure all the information is accurant as it will come directly from the participants themselves. This will evidently avoid 'dirty data' which is when the wrong information is submitted as Steyerl discusses within his article.

Furthermore, I intend on attracting a large audience in order to ensure the participation of a diverse group. In order to do so, I plan on sharing *The Land of Eden* with the world mainly through social media platforms. Although many are not active on social media, I will also discuss this project from word to mouth to family members for instance. This will definitely allow me to get the best possible results for my project.

As this project will be running endlessly, my data collecting will too. Therefore, the results will forever be updated with every submission. Participants can enter as many submissions as they want. This will also create a much bigger data collection rather than only allowing one submission per person. Unlimited entries will also show that there are many aspects that one wishes to change within today's world in order to create that perfect realm.

1.6 The Algorithm

As I discussed earlier, *The Land of Eden* will include the top answers submitted by the participants. The project algorithm will create a system that recognizes repetitive and duplicated answers and count them as part of the most popular answers. For each repetitive answer, the 'score' will go up by one. By doing so, the participants can see the main answers given by themselves and their peers. This will show how common these particular issues are in today's society.

It is important to note that spelling mistakes within the submitted answers may affect the results. Therefore, similar to autocorrect, the algorithm must detect what the participant really meant through the misspelling of the word(s). For instance, if the participant writes "no violent", the algorithm will assume it was meant to be "no violence". Without detecting spelling mistakes,

the algorithm will be inaccurate when it comes to displaying the results withing the top answers. However, at this very moment, I do not know how to do create a sort of auto correct.

As for the list of submitted answers, I expect the algorithm to upload every answer for all participants to see and browse through. Ideally, I would want all submissions to be displayed in order to see how frequent each repetitive answer has been entered within my data collection.

Another element I would like to create is auto fill which Google search is known for. The algorithm will determine what I am trying to say based on the first few letters that have been typed into the textbox. With this, my project will be user friendly to all individuals with or without disabilities.

2. Similar Insightful Projects

Throughout the many creative projects I have been introduced to, Candy Chang's, *I wish This Was* is one of the ones that stood out to me regarding art activism. Chang's 2007 participatory project consisted of thousands of "I wish this was ___" labels (figure 1), posted onto abandoned buildings. Chang encouraged the public to fill in the blank as to what they wish that place were to be. This is a similar idea to my project as each participant will also write their own answers, some of which are based on environmental, political or social issues.

Another source of inspiration is Jason Edward Lewis' *Intralocuter*. His 2006 interactive installation uses text and language to create visual imagery with typography through speech from two interactants. Lewis' interactive project is dependent on it's audience participation as is mine. His participants create a new ways of communications through language and speech. Similarly, *The Land of Eden* will be created with the help of my participants throught text and at times,

speech. While Lewis' results depends on two participants at a time, mine will be determined by unlimited amount of people who's answers will all work together continuously.

Lastly, I came across *MIMMI*, (Minneapolis Interactive Macro-Mood Installation), an inflatable sculpture situated in the plaza of the Minneapolis Convention Center created by design groups, Urbain DRC and INVIVIA. This 2013 artwork collects information from Twitter data within specific radius from the *MIMMI* itself. From the collected data, *MIMMI* (figure 2) turns colors based on positive and negative words used in real-time tweets to create a 'city mood ring'. My project will likewise be based on real-time as both the top answers and the list of entries will be updated from every submission. In addition to that, the results of both *MIMMI* and *The Land of Eden* depend on a large amount of continuous data.

3. Visual Storyboard

The following images I have created, offer a visual representation of my project including some of its functions, layouts and aesthetics:

- The main page (Figure 3.1)
- The auto fill search box (Figure 3.2)
- 'Top Answers' page (Figure 3.3
- 'View all submissions' page (Figure 3.4)
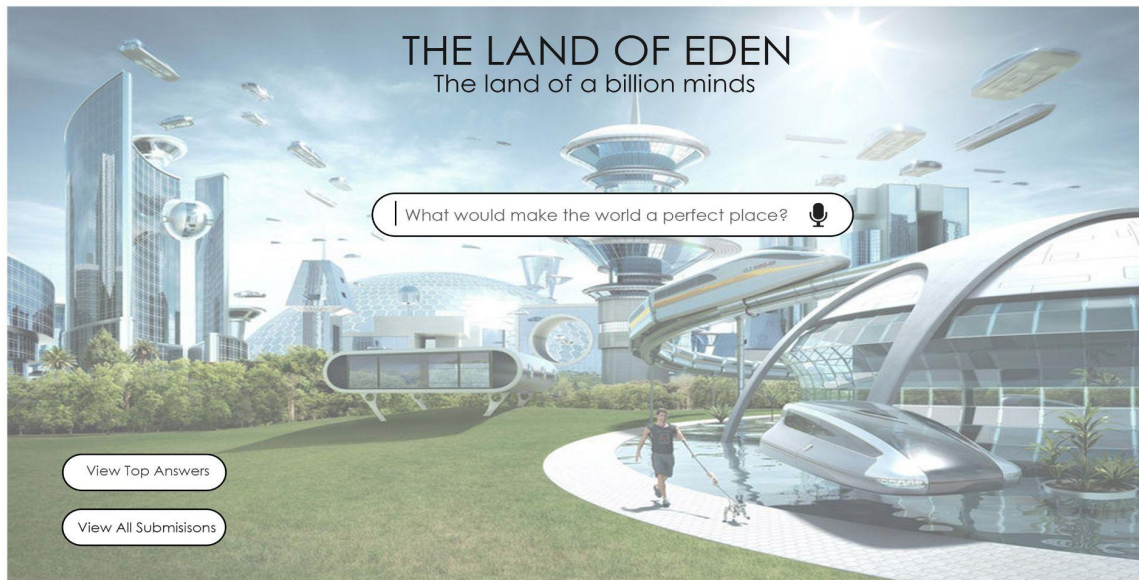- Enter answers using voice command (Figure 3.5)
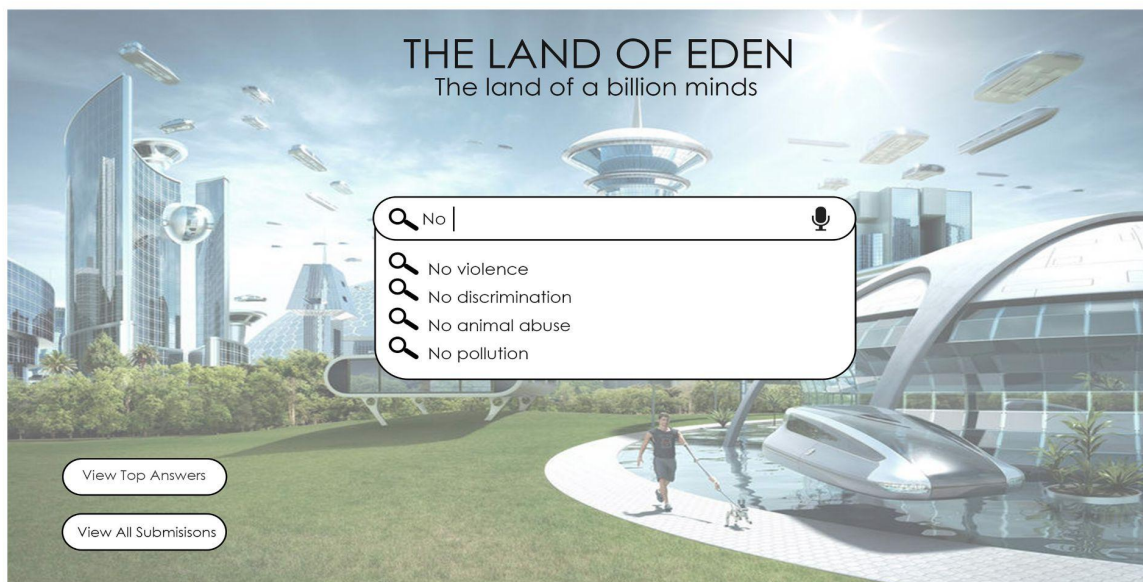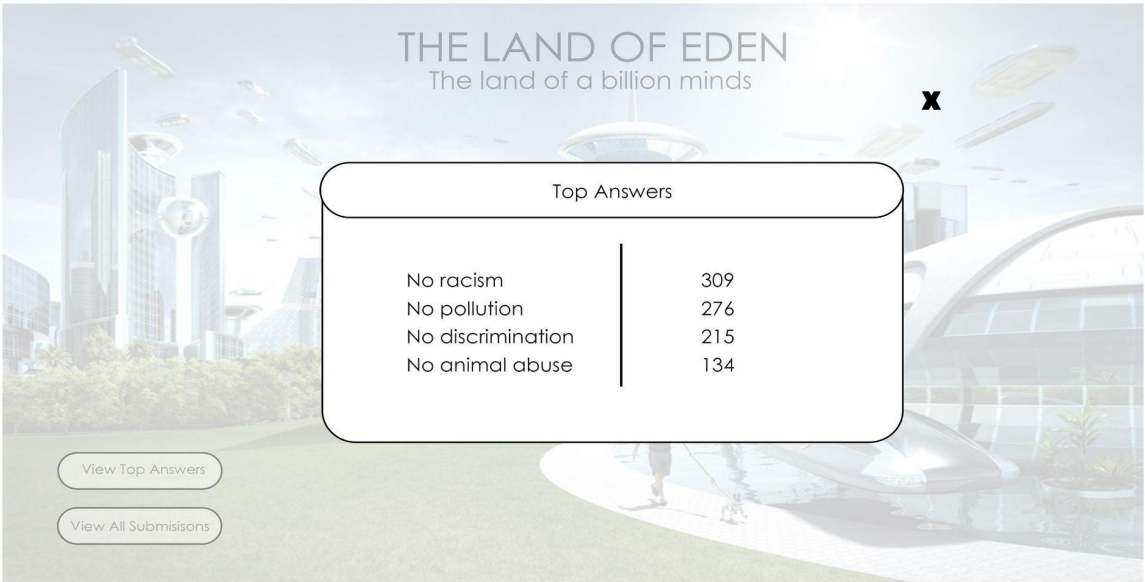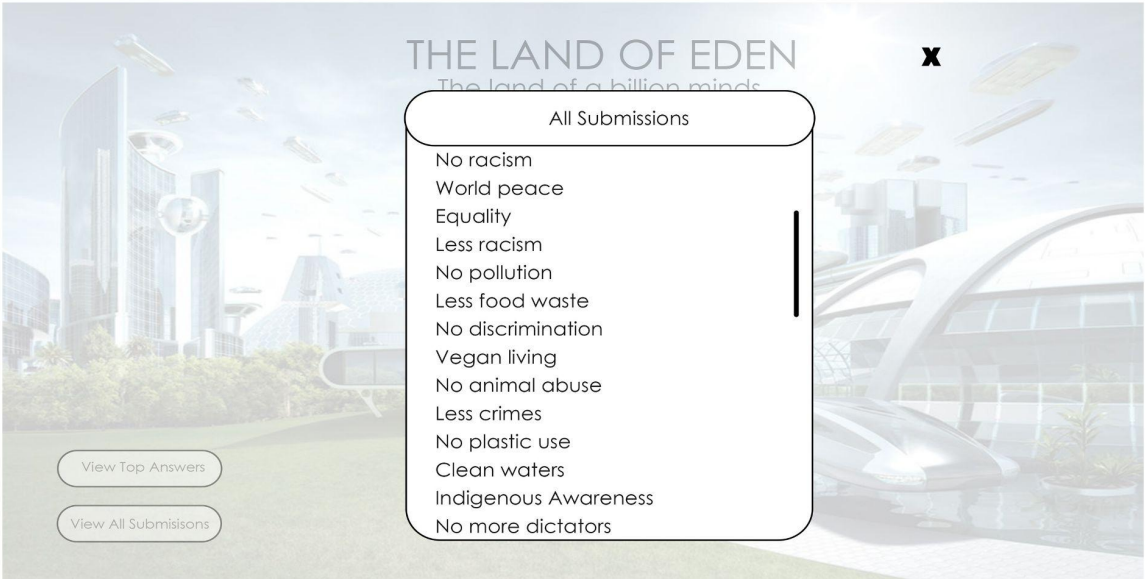- Submissions displyed on screen (Figure 3.6)

Figure 3.1

Figure 3.2

Figure 3.3

Figure 3.4

Figure 3.5

Figure 3.6

Figure 1
Candy Chang, *I wish This Was,* 2007

Figure 2
Urbain DRC and INVIVIA. MIMMI: *City Mood Ring,* 2013
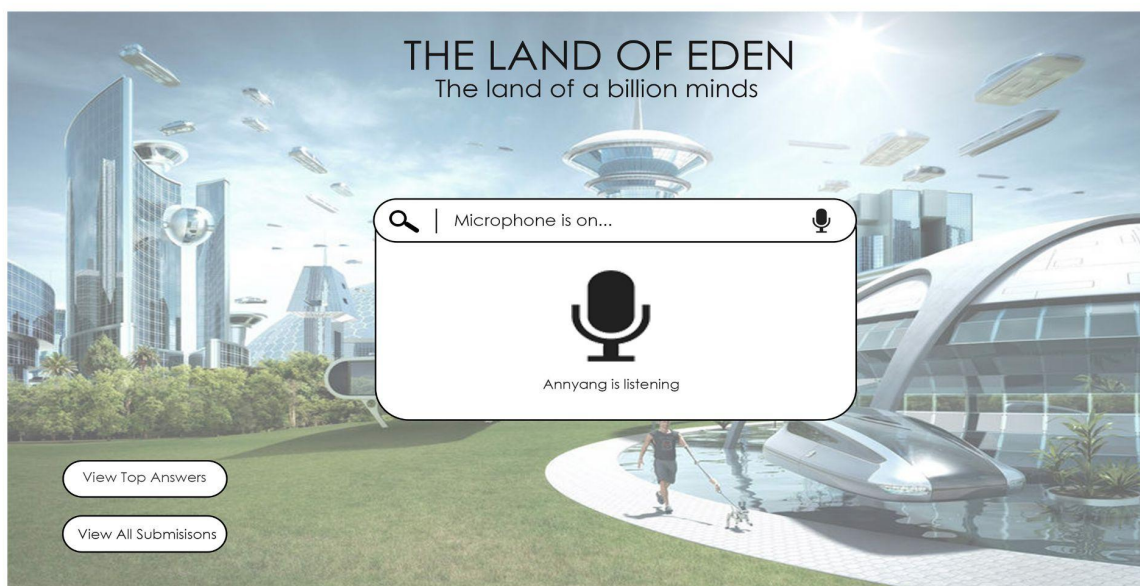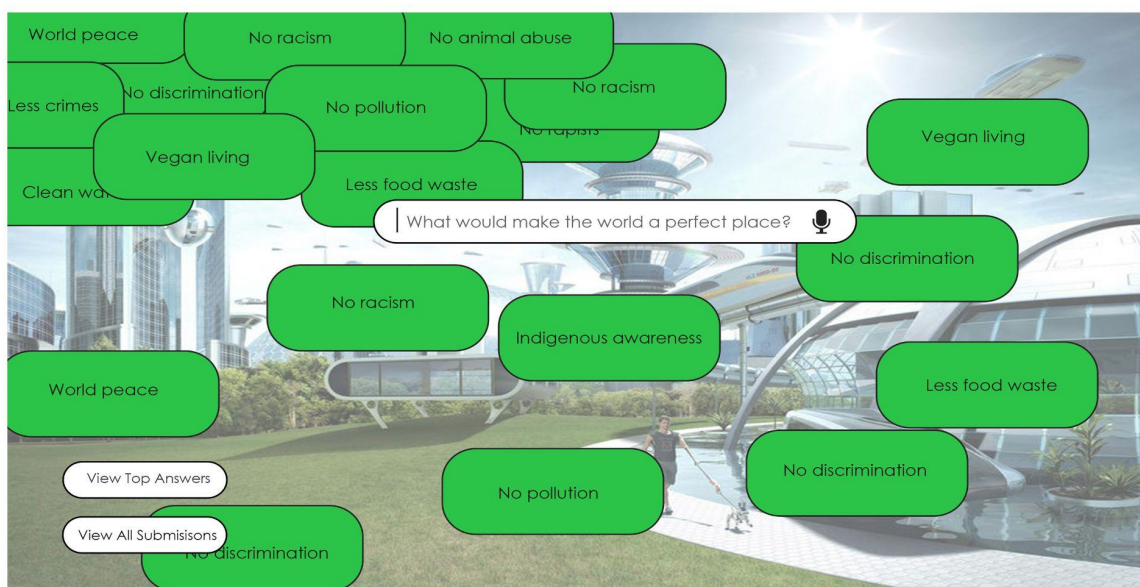
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