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Design Log 3

## ## Assigned Readings

### # Are.na Workshop Debrief

In this project, Leo Shaw recounts a workshop conducted with many participants to discuss and consider their own time expenditure and relationship with technology in their day-to-day lives. Discussions held among the participants evoked broad experiences that coincided with each other and the topic at hand: "few of us feel happy with our habits, even though everyone's experience is different." In doing so, the problem is identified: addictive app designs that hold users captive, creating the need for self-disciplinary habits, taxing both one's emotional capital and time. A specific example mentioned was social media. Participants presented mixed feelings on social media, saying, "apps like Instagram promote certain patterns of use," like doomscrolling. The worksheet used in the workshop asks the user to self-reflect on their own screen usage across all aspects of their daily lives. This breakdown could potentially inspire participants to come to new conclusions or realizations about themselves and just how necessary a redesign is, or at the very least, realize a problem exists.

In the 21st century, just about everyone has social media. If you don't, what are you doing? Right? However, by joining in, we consent to "an informal social contract you never realized you signed." Once you create an online presence, there's really no turning back unless you can tolerate dwindling social connections, FOMO, and more. Platforms like Instagram have progressively evolved from an innocent online social platform to a profit-driven one that holds its users captive by addictive design. It is now more difficult than ever to avoid these predatory apps when they're an integral part of our daily interpersonal relations. The workshop goes beyond social media and self-discipline; it underscores a larger societal problem. In a nutshell, I'd say it aims to reveal how "societal problems" can be taxingly bandaged at the expense of the consumer, even though they originate from market-dominating companies making profit-driven decisions. In this instance, social media being centralized under corporations with addictive designs equaling more profit makes the user's online social experience a draining and rather problematic one. So even when users look to better themselves by limiting screen-time or platforms, in the end, they are still exerting their own energy to solve a problem that was caused by greedy corporations, with no plausible end as they cannot come to sacrifice their online presence.

This project inspired my own redesign thinking to incorporate an interactive medium for users to ponder on, like the worksheet. In addition, it aims to inspire users to see the specific problem for themselves, reveal it in a way, and connect their own personal experience as evidence. The central idea of this workshop runs much deeper than social media; its revelation almost resembles a kind of "moral of the story" in its broadness and application. The concept of users involuntarily compensating for companies' decisions can be seen in just about every department in the modern age. It inspires me to really think outside the box for my redesign concept.

### # "Dear Data" Project by Stefanie Posavec & Georgia Lupi

On the surface level, this project's function is to create a postcard of visual/analog data about a given "category" or part of your life and mutually transmit it by mail to a recipient, like cryptic pen pals. The card should have a data representation on one side and a legend/guide on the other for interpretation. Stefanie and Georgia's proposed idea could take any specific life events, from thinking about complaining to the number of times you check the time in a day, to create a unique and creative visual dataset. I interpret it as a humanistic project, reinspiring traditional means of observation and communication. In other words, a project that embraces tradition while subtly rejecting modernity, as they

say, "we can use data to become more humane and connect with ourselves and others at a deeper level." Are they implying that current modern uses of data, interaction, and thinking are shallow and bleak? In a YouTube video, Georgia admits, "the act of counting became something that was emotionally charged." She experienced firsthand a change of lens on the mundane that resulted from their year-long project. Counting, being present, and bringing awareness to the subtle experiences of life that would typically go unacknowledged so at the end of the week, they would have something to show for it. The purpose of this project isn't hidden by any means; they clearly state that it is ultimately a persuasion seeking to prove data is just the precursor to questioning and analysis, not the definitive answer; data is universally purposeful. Considering my own project, this one proves just how personal a redesign can be.

This project has inspired my own to incorporate elements of personal connection to make the experience all the more transformative for the user, as was the "Dear Data" project. Collecting data on the seemingly mundane aspects of life encouraged mindfulness and presence. It required users to pay closer attention to their daily habits and interactions, encouraging a deeper sense of awareness and self-reflection. A redesign project can utilize this by creating tools/ mediums to encourage users to be more present and mindful in their everyday life.

#### # Run your own social by Darius Kazemi

This is a technical project of building a local, decentralized social media platform for Kazemi and his friends. Kazemi generously documents his journey in creating an online social platform exclusive to him and his friends to inspire readers of the benefits, and how they can, and should do the same. Though a technical project, its underlying goals are motivated to tackle social problems like "policy, values, and power," not technical ones. Utilizing Mastodon, I'm assuming an open-source, widely-applicable application, Kazemi composes 99% of his platform, "Friend Camp." He explicitly proves this is not a display of coding or any other technical skill but a social initiative to decentralization prioritizing the consumer experience. Kazemi highlights the difference between corporate-run social platforms and locally run ones; all corporate-run social media platforms eventually become "entirely driven by profit," effectively replicating "the same bad experience" of current social networks. The ability to regulate your own moderation and set up your own community rules (for a small community) makes online social affairs very similar to how people operate in real life. The all-time classic "golden rule" works in terms of behavior with such a limited capacity for people, having just 50 members in Kazemi's "Friend Camp." All platform affairs and maintenance get a democratic approach; they can be discussed amongst users, like the Code of Conduct, user penalties, policy, and such. In comparison, corporate platforms have strict rules to accommodate various users with static/polar rules/consequences. The decentralized approach promotes interconnectedness resembling that of in real life. It removes the superficial layer/filter users typically adhere to protect their image, preserving original personality, as well as makes organizing group activities simple; what social media was supposed to be.

This reading truly spoke to my original redesign concept: the social media experience. While I really wanted to pursue it, it's something proven to be done before, and I feel there are larger problems to tackle. Specifically, though, I think the "Run Your Own Social" concept and project-in-practice is really cool because it skips the technical hassle and invests all efforts and energy towards online social media welfare (that's one way to word it). It is truly something I've never seen done successfully, obviously due to the fact that increased scale/user influx would make the positives exhibited in the project impossible. It inspires me to reevaluate all the everyday processes/experiences that are \*corporately centralized\*, and how easily we could decentralize with virtually no drawbacks.