Hyperreal Enterprises: Notes on Bristol Workshop

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Abstract

This document is an initial analysis of our Open Future Design workshop on January 23rd 2023 at Watershed in Bristol. Attendees included:

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1   Open Future Design workshop: Introduction

1.1   Overview

Our *Open Future Design* (OFD) workshop is mirrored by a collaboration method called "PLACARD" that scaffolds social perception, cognition, and action.[1] PLACARD combines design patterns with futuring exercises and review processes. The OFD workshop walks participants through a cycle of creative learning using these methods, which they can later reuse on their own. Our intention with the workshop is, therefore, primarily to introduce new collaboration methods and to show how they are effective.

Applications of the method range from building new platforms for collaborative design and citizen science, to assisting on-the-ground innovation projects. In the workshop format, we work from the assumption that we are talking to groups of people who have not yet formed a strong group identity, and who are not necessarily all going to work together on one highly cohesive project, but who are likely to need to communicate with each other in the future. We make structural use of breakout groups and full-group discussions to gather information at different levels of significance. We also introduce a technology-assisted quasi-real-time sensemaking process, which allows participants to focus on content, while the technology helps to weave new meanings at the context level.

1.2   Outcomes and Evalution

1.2.1   Intermediate artifacts

- Mindmaps created with participants
- Group insights in a form of shared future stories

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[1] Corneli, J., Murphy, A., Puzio, R. S., Vivier, L., Alhasan, N., Danoff, C. J., Bruno, V., & Pierce, C. (2021). Patterns of Patterns: A Methodological Reflection on the Future of Design Pattern Methods. https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.2107.10497

- A constellation of interrelated design patterns outlining potential paths of action, produced by a diverse group of experts based on a collaborative analysis of complex challenges.

1.2.3 Outcomes

- Leverage in a complex challenges, based on a shared understanding of the core issues and a well-articulated design strategy.

- Time-savings, a unified action-orientation, and further multi-lateral relationships, as compared with more naive methods such as interviews, discussions, and focus groups.

- Potential next steps may include new communities of practice, and new initiatives (e.g., grant proposals, working groups).

1.2.4 Narrative Example

On November 3rd, 2022 we ran a pilot workshop in Bristol with the theme "Public Space and Public Health". This brought together 8 people with varied expertise on these themes for a structured discussion. We discussed the theme, and potential scenarios for development. We then zoomed in on one of the scenarios, and discussed its surrounding motivations. In follow-up analysis, the facilitators identified new 'design patterns' that could enable workshop participants to solve the problems they identified. On November 17, 2022, we ran a second pilot with a group of futurists at the Anticipation conference in Tempe, Arizona, focused on workshopping the methods. Following this pilot we reflected on how we could make better use of the direct particpants' skills to facilitate broader uptake beyond the activities in the room.

On January 23, 2023 we ran a longer workshop on a similar theme to the first pilot: "Public space for public health: a call to action". This time, there were approximately twice as many participants, and we had most of the day together. We had made several changes to the structure of the workshop. In the first session, we used a multi-stage share-back process to understand layered meanings. In the second session, we used manipulatives to elaborate design solutions. In both phases, participants were accompanied by a remote team that worked to make sense of data coming from the room. Each break out group was additionally supported by one or more persons who had attended the initial pilot.

1.2.5 Limitations

- Interrater reliablity is initially low, though it should improve as our collection of design patterns grows. For now, have partially addressed this concerned through the multi-layered analysis process, which weaves between small-group, whole-group, and written text.

2 Remote Facilitation

For the Bristol Full workshop, we introduced a remote facilitation circuit. This wasn't as effective as we'd hoped, so for now let's record the problems that came up, and then think about mitigation strategies.

Previously, technology had been used asynchronously, to help identify new patterns in an "offline" analysis; see Bristol Pilot Screenshots, for example.

For this workshop, we wanted to try some real-time analysis, which would reflect what was going on in the room into a org roam repository and Org Roam UI interface that participants could look at. This was something of a stop-gap solution given that the technology+skills aren't yet available for participants to easily edit a shared graph in real time. (However, this did constitute a 'pilot' for such a system, given that Noorah and Leo were working together as two skilled Org Roam operators to create the graph!)

Some obstacles could be expected given this set-up.

2.1 Obstacles

2.1.1 Lossy communication from photos

Remote facilitators were sent photos of text but didn't have the context. Accordingly, they could start to type up what they saw on the page but didn't typically know what what the contents meant. (E.g., what is "Turbo Island"?)

2.1.2 Briefing over lunch did not have quite the desired effect

Joe had some time over lunch to describe what was going on with the images, but didn't join the ongoing Org Roam session in progress. We might have been more effective if the remote facilitators had 'interviewed' the in-person facilitators about outstanding questions, and recorded their answers into the graph.

2.1.3 Participants did not use the chat function, or at least not much

We set up a way for participants to reach the remote facilitators, using a chat tool rather than a 'text box'. Participants perhaps didn't see the point, but in any case they didn't use it much.

2.2 Potential mitigation strategies

2.2.1 We could try to replicate the setup for an upcoming ERG meeting so that we take notes directly into a constellation

- Rather than sharing one buffer via CRDT, let's try to co-edit a constellation so that we get more familiar with the workflow.

2.2.2 Other ideas: TBA

3 Bristol Pilot Screenshots

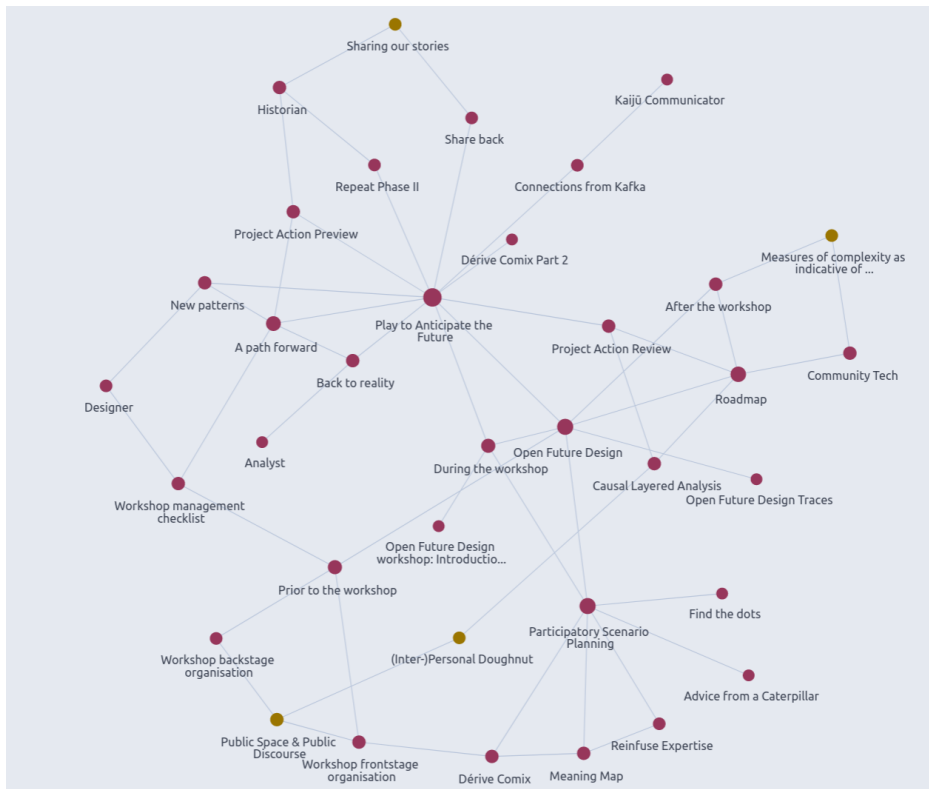These images were produced by filtering Org Roam for the `WS` and `BP` tags.

Figure 1: Our overall network of patterns: new additions in yellow

Figure 2: Example of the local network around "Public Space & Public Discourse"