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Disorganizing by Design

Shaking things up to do things differently

Properties of spaces: imagining them in new ways

Intervening in systems: practices and approaches for changing how systems work

Disorganizing by design: breaking up routines so that new things can happen

Reorganizing from our values: redesigning structures that embody the values we want to see

People + Places I've Stolen From



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Montreal School (who borrow from Weick and others)

Video Game Design (MDA model)

Anarchism (Emma Goldman)

Mary Parker Follett

Systemic Consulting Theory (German)

In Praise of Shadows (Tanazaki – wabi-sabi)

Nonaka Ikujiro (BA)

Nietzsche (transvaluation)

Participle (service design, hacking deficit-based approaches)

Hermeneutic approaches (Brian Woodward, Colin Funk, etc.)

Mezirow (Epistemology of Transformational Learning)

Values at Play (Mary Flanagan)

Eclipse



Some Definitions



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System: The term "**system**" can best be translated as a "**framework of effects**," or "**effect structure**." The system (or structure) is created through recursive operations of the system, that is, by repeatedly running the same patterns. When changes are introduced, over time, small deviations are quickly acuminating - the system can become turbulent and tilt into a new mode of function.

Aesthetic: A particular individual's set of ideas about style and taste, along with its expression. For our purposes, the subjective experience of a dynamic.

Dynamic: A force that stimulates change or progress within a system or process. For our purposes, the real-world outcome of mechanics (among people and objects).

Mechanic: Rules, spoken or unspoken, that regulate how individuals behave in a given space. Mechanics can show up as modelled behaviour, formal requirements, cultural expectations, or rewards + praise.

Space: This is a bit trickier...

EAST VS. WEST

The Japanese words for “space” could change your view of the world



By Jerrold McGrath • January 18, 2018



AP PHOTO/RYO TANABE

Is this room half empty, or half full?

**Sign up for the Quartz
Obsession email**

When you are the first person to arrive in a meeting room, do you think of it as being empty or full?

If you were raised in the West, a meeting room is made for people to

Where did you feel
safest as a child?



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What was
your favorite
game to play
as a child
with other
children?



Autonomy
Community
Generosity
Sustainability

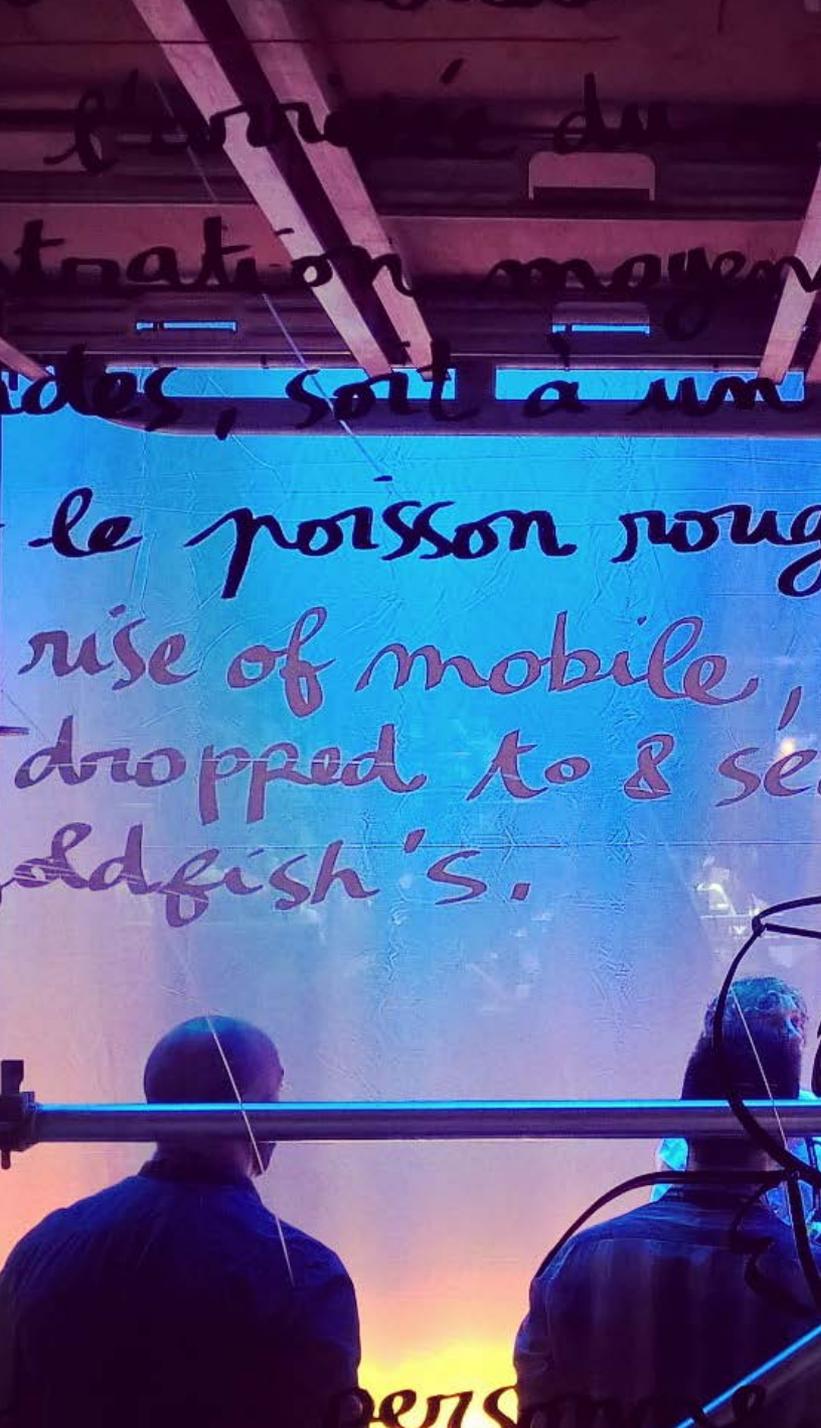


The Ossification of Structures



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Objectification of consensus and difference takes place both through the construction of artificial structures (infrastructure, legal codes, walls, etc.) as well as through **internalization** (habits, perception and expectation patterns, behaviour, prejudices, etc.). Objectifications allow for permanent distinctions to be made; what is important or unimportant, useful or useless, permissible or prohibited, desirable or undesirable, true or false and so on.



“thinking about games as designed artifacts helps frame them as systems that build behavior via interaction”

Decolonizing Canadian Dance





Disorganizing by design: breaking up routines so that new things can happen

Transvaluation: “Our institutions and conditions rest upon deep-seated ideas. To change those conditions and at the same time leave the underlying idea and values intact means only a superficial transformation ...” (Emma Goldman, 1924)

BACKR



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Employability > Backr

[Context](#) [Insights](#) [What We Did](#) [Impact](#)

The welfare state was primarily designed to get people into work. Today the labour market has changed and current services fail too many people. Today a job is not for life, it is harder to move up the skills curve and more and more jobs are never advertised. Through the lens of [Beveridge 4.0](#) we could see a very different approach is needed.

During our first phase of research in 2011 we worked in depth with 140 people: people in work, out of work, cycling in and out of work, students, local employers, providers and those involved in economic policy. We wanted to develop a new narrative about work, one that looks beyond the welfare lens and opens people up to

Can games teach values?



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You are going to disorganize a familiar game by introducing different values into it. Then we will apply this to a real-world system through the same process.

Game

1. Monopoly
2. Soccer
3. Hide + Seek
4. Manhunt
5. Tetris
6. Pac-Man

Action

1. Subverting
2. Nurturing
3. Jamming
4. Tempting
5. Collecting
6. Sharing

Value

1. Autonomy
2. Confidence
3. Generosity
4. Humility
5. Justice
6. Creativity

Challenge

1. Sexism
2. Pollution
3. Displacement
4. Addiction
5. Inequality
6. Isolation

Mechanics



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- Mechanics can show up as modelled behaviour, formal requirements or rewards + praise
- We tend to focus on mechanics first because we want to limit uncertainty
- We tend to apply personal rules to groups - hire and work with the same mechanical preferences - this reduces our ability to complete complex tasks
- Most systems are defined by unspoken rules that are taken for granted but that might not reflect changes in attitudes over time
- This is how we can have racist systems with very few racist people
- This is how we can have a welfare system that keeps people on welfare rather than helping them to find jobs

Dynamics



- Dynamics are what happens as a result of the rules (either by following them, disobeying them, or avoiding spaces where the rules are in place)
- Dynamics can be among people or among people and objects
- Countless repetitions of dynamics create an 'effect structure' or a system
- When we reject rules, interactions occur, often efforts to enforce the rule (lining up)
- When we avoid spaces where the rules feel incompatible we see homogenous rooms (even when they want inclusivity)
- Interactions also serve as feedback mechanisms, either amplifying or moderating system behaviours

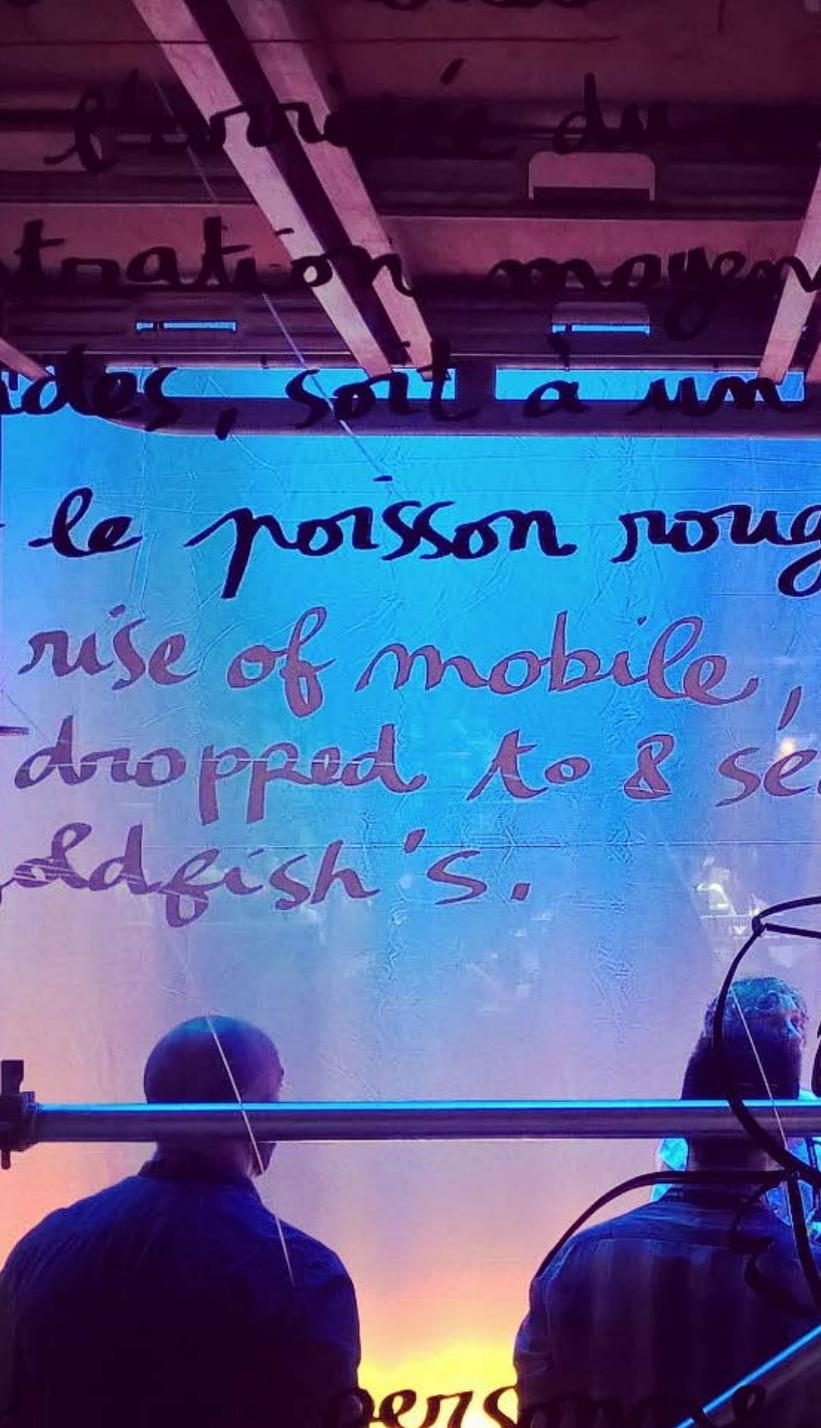
Aesthetic



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- Put simply, aesthetic is how we feel about the structures that are enacted by the dynamics
- Aesthetics are subjective responses to the interactions
- We have very little direct control here as it is an emergent property of the system (mechanics and dynamics) and is the subjective experience of the user
- Our experience is idiosyncratic yet many systems are designed to be homogenous (and privilege particular ways of knowing and seeing the world)



- How do we want people to feel?
- What interactions are most likely to make us feel that way?
- What are the minimum rules necessary to facilitate these interactions?
- How do we test our assumptions?

Potential Aesthetics

1. Sensation - Game as sense-pleasure
2. Fantasy - Game as make-believe
3. Narrative - Game as drama
4. Challenge - Game as obstacle course
5. Fellowship - Game as social framework
6. Discovery - Game as uncharted territory
7. Expression - Game as self-discovery
8. Submission - Game as pastime

Pitfalls of Focusing on Mechanics



Instrumentality: Believing that people are objects

Infrastructure: Building systems before testing interactions

Incoherence: Mechanics that don't support the core aesthetic/objective

How do you want them to feel?



- Try not to focus on outcomes
- What feeling is most likely to generate the kinds of behaviours you want to see (when you're in the room, but particularly when you're not)
- Think about games – challenge, fantasy, expression or submission – all are possible

What interactions make you feel that way?



- Don't think about the work, think about everyday life
- Interactions can be with other people, but can be with objects, environments or symbols
- Focus on both positive interactions and negative interactions (that kill the feeling)

Design the system



- What structures need to be in place for those interactions to evolve
- Rules can be explicit or implicit
- Think about what you will say
- Think about how the space will be set up
- Think about the kinds of prompts and triggers you can use
- How do you draw attention to the elements you want to draw attention to?
- What rules do you need to break?



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What experiences,
consistently applied,
might shift how
your system
operates?

Things to Remember

- We need to make moments special.
- When we focus on our own needs, we are apt to ignore how others feel and we are less likely to get where we want to be.
- Existing scripts too often assume causes and effects that rarely are realized in the world.



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