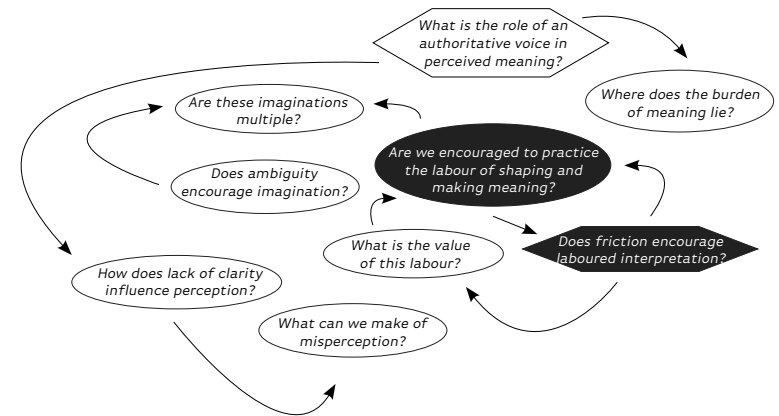Methods $\longleftrightarrow$ Positions

Positions *Through* Dialogue

Introduction

I began this unit by exploring the relationship between *Subject, Maker, Viewer* and their roles in shaping *Meaning*. Following this thread, through my research and practice, I arrived at a myriad of questions that guided my exploration.

What is the role of an authoritative voice in perceived meaning?

Where does the burden of meaning lie?

Are these imaginations multiple?

Are we encouraged to practice the labour of shaping and making meaning?

Does ambiguity encourage imagination?

Does friction encourage laboured interpretation?

What is the value of this labour?

How does lack of clarity influence perception?

What can we make of misperception?

My position - though not totally resolved - is that difficult concepts require time and labour. The labour of looking. The labour of consideration. The labour of shaping and interpreting.

At the end of the unit, I started to question - but did not totally explore - the pursuit of total efficiency, smoothness and immediacy within communication design. Perhaps revealing and encountering friction might allow us to better understand the way things are, and more importantly, imagine the way things *could* be.
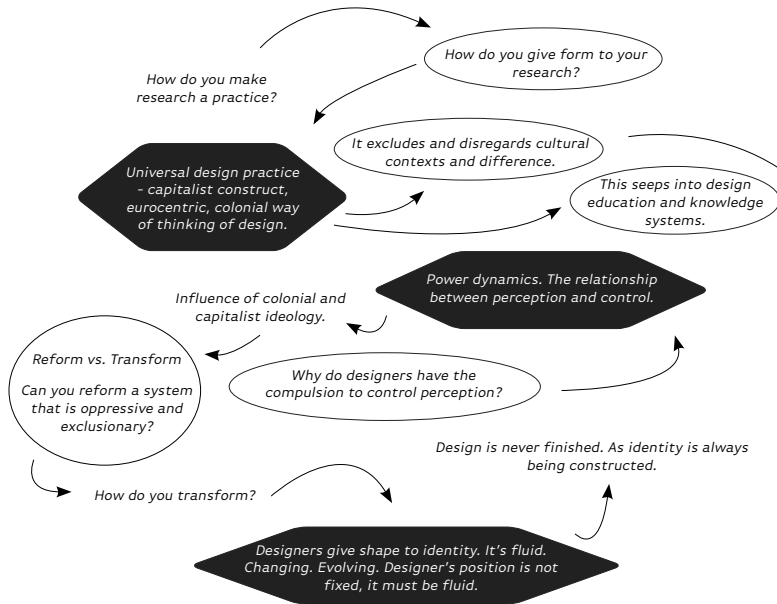
Dialogues

Over the last few months I have shared my position and dialogued with:
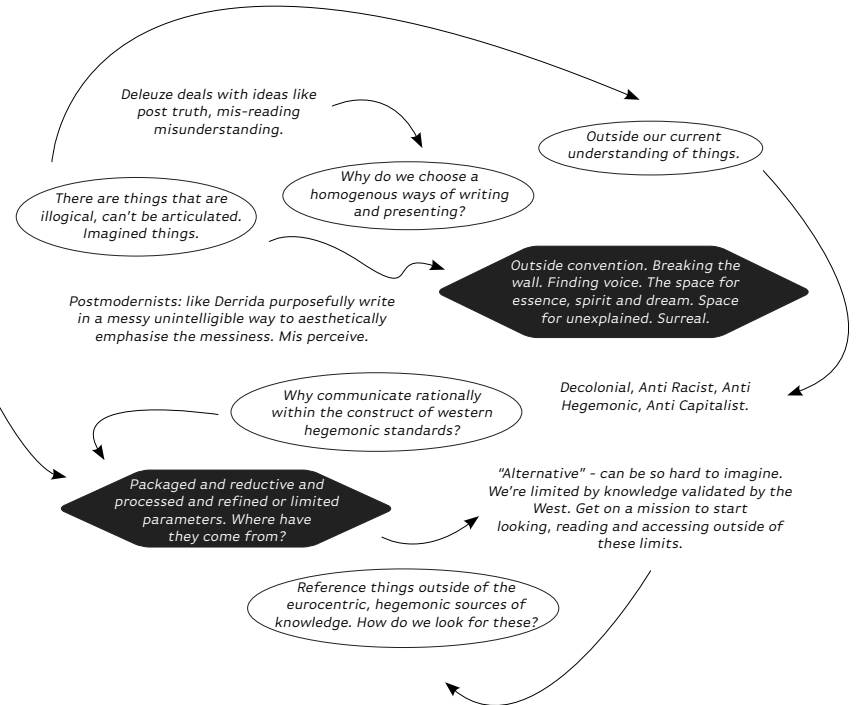
1. Maya Ober (Co-Founder at Futuress).

2. Mandeep Ahira (Lecturer in Fashion Media and Communication International Preparation for Fashion at London College of Fashion).

3. Deshna Mehta (Co-Founder at Studio Anugraha).

4. Nina Paim (Co-Founder at Futuress).

Each dialogue unique. Each approaching these concepts through different threads. Each challenging the way I think about my project. All these conversations have been engaging and overwhelming. The have left me to ponder: where do I want to go with this?
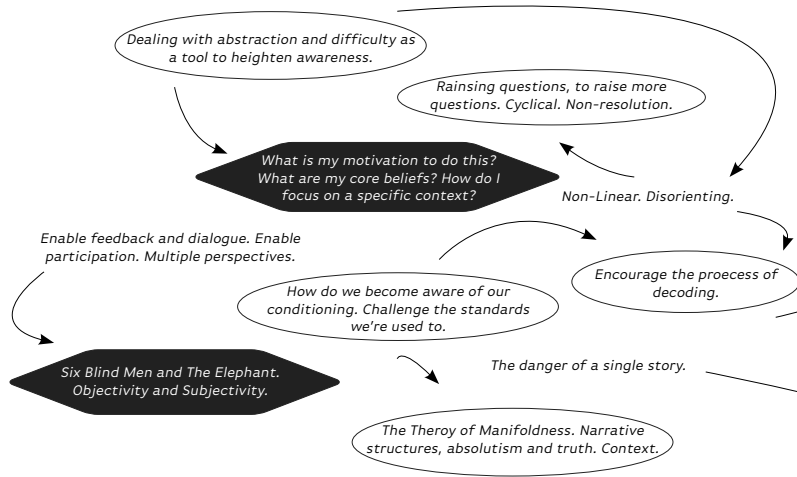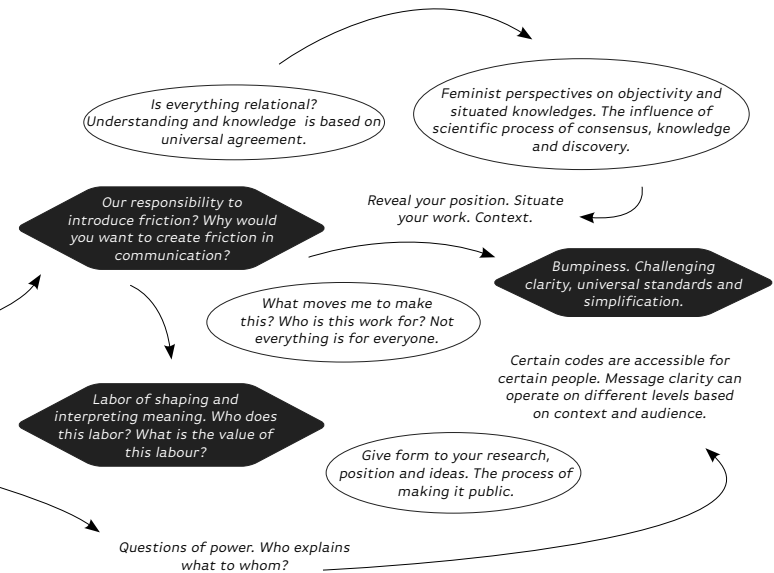
Dialogue with Maya Ober

How do you make research a practice?

How do you give form to your research?

Universal design practice - capitalist construct, eurocentric, colonial way of thinking of design.

It excludes and disregards cultural contexts and difference.

This seeps into design education and knowledge systems.

Power dynamics. The relationship between perception and control.

Influence of colonial and capitalist ideology.

Reform vs. Transform
Can you reform a system that is oppressive and exclusionary?

Why do designers have the compulsion to control perception?

How do you transform?

Design is never finished. As identity is always being constructed.

Designers give shape to identity. It's fluid. Changing. Evolving. Designer's position is not fixed, it must be fluid.

Dialogue with Mandeep Ahira

Deleuze deals with ideas like post truth, mis-reading misunderstanding.

Why do we choose a homogenous ways of writing and presenting?

Outside our current understanding of things.

There are things that are illogical, can't be articulated. Imagined things.

Postmodernists: like Derrida purposefully write in a messy unintelligible way to aesthetically emphasise the messiness. Mis perceive.

Outside convention. Breaking the wall. Finding voice. The space for essence, spirit and dream. Space for unexplained. Surreal.

Decolonial, Anti Racist, Anti Hegemonic, Anti Capitalist.

Why communicate rationally within the construct of western hegemonic standards?

Packaged and reductive and processed and refined or limited parameters. Where have they come from?

"Alternative" - can be so hard to imagine. We're limited by knowledge validated by the West. Get on a mission to start looking, reading and accessing outside of these limits.

Reference things outside of the eurocentric, hegemonic sources of knowledge. How do we look for these?

Dialogue with Deshna Mehta

Dialogue with Nina Paim

Dealing with abstraction and difficulty as a tool to heighten awareness.

Rainsing questions, to raise more questions. Cyclical. Non-resolution.

What is my motivation to do this? What are my core beliefs? How do I focus on a specific context?

Non-Linear. Disorienting.

Enable feedback and dialogue. Enable participation. Multiple perspectives.

How do we become aware of our conditioning. Challenge the standards we're used to.

Encourage the proecess of decoding.

Six Blind Men and The Elephant. Objectivity and Subjectivity.

The danger of a single story.

The Theroy of Manifoldness. Narrative structures, absolutism and truth. Context.

Is everything relational? Understanding and knowledge is based on universal agreement.

Feminist perspectives on objectivity and situated knowledges. The influence of scientific process of consensus, knowledge and discovery.

Our responsibility to introduce friction? Why would you want to create friction in communication?

Reveal your position. Situate your work. Context.

Bumpiness. Challenging clarity, universal standards and simplification.

What moves me to make this? Who is this work for? Not everything is for everyone.

Certain codes are accessible for certain people. Message clarity can operate on different levels based on context and audience.

Labor of shaping and interpreting meaning. Who does this labor? What is the value of this labour?

Give form to your research, position and ideas. The process of making it public.

Questions of power. Who explains what to whom?

Suggested References

The following list is a compilation of all of the references and practices that were suggested to me during my dialogues. I might not engage with every one of these. But this could be a useful starting point to build my own network of references.

1. Eco, U. (1989) *The Open Work.* Translated from the Italian by A. Cancogni. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

2. Chalabi, H. (2021) 'Refugees Welcome?' in Futuress. 18th February. Available at: https://futuress.org/stories/refugees-welcome/ (Accessed: 20th September 2022)

3. Lin, T. (2021) *Leave Society*. New York: Vintage Books.

4. Adunis (2005) *Sufism and Surrealism*. London: Saqi Books.

5. Mohaghegh, J. B. (2019) *Omnicide: Mania, Fatality, and the Future-In-Delirium*. Cornwall: Urbanomic.

6. Bhattacharya, K.C. (1996) 'Theory of Anekantavada' in S. Rampuria (ed.) *Facets of Jain Philosophy, Religion & Culture*. Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati Institute

7. *An Elephant and The Blind Men* (Parable) present in philosophies from the Indian Subcontinent - Hinduism, Jainism, Sufism, Buddhism.

8. The Guardian (1986) *Points of View* [Advertisement on television].

9. Adichie, C.N. (2009) *The Danger of a Single Story* [TED Talk].

10. Balaram, S. (2005) 'Design Pedagogy in India: A Perspective' in *Indian Design and Design Education*. 21(4).

11. Krishnamurthy, P. (2021) *On Bumpiness, In Letters.* [Recorded Lecture]. Available at: https://vimeo.com/theoneclubforcreativity/review/546841106/1d3121bfb4 (Accessed: 20th September 2022)

12. Krishnamurthy, P. (2020) *P!DF*. (V. 6. 0. 0.) Available at: https://o-r-g.com/media/00134.pdf (Accessed: 20th September 2022)

13. Preciado, P. B. (2019) *An Apartment on Uranus – Chronicles of the Crossing.*

14. Quijano, A. & Ennis, M. (2000) *Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America*. Nepantla: Views from South 1(3), 533-580. Available at: https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/23906. (Accessed: 20th September 2022)

15. Spivak, G. (2012) *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization.*

16. Spivak, G. (1999) *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason.*

17. Spivak, G. (1985) 'The Rani of Sirmur,' *History and Theory*. 24(3). pp. 247-272

18. Escobar, A. (2018) *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds.*

19, Kafka, F. (1936) *Description of a Struggle.*

[Not A] Resolution

In each of the dialogues I was asked some version of the question, '*what is it that has moved you to pursue this line of questioning*?' (Paim, 2022). What makes me feel so strongly about this position? Ambiguity is a conscious choice in my project. It is part of my inquiry. However, my motives don't have to be ambiguous. This has given me a lot to think about. How do I reveal my position? What has moved me to go down this path? Who is this work for? And what do I want to say to them?

The dialogues made me realise my hesitance - even struggle - to make a positioned stance. Subconsciously I felt that reaching a position would mean reaching a final conclusion, one that is set in stone, that I must forever believe and defend. But I've since come to recognise that doing so has made me feel inclined to conceal my voice - my motivations as a designer. In each of the dialogues there was an acceptance of non-resolution. Of evolution. As Maya Ober put it in my conversation with her, '*design is never finished*.'

So, that being said, where have I found myself now? What are the threads I'm keen to follow? And what do I want to say with my work?

Moving forward I hope to make explicit my motivation to reveal friction and '*bumpiness*' within my work (Krishnamurthy, 2021). I want to further the inquiry that aesthetic incoherence can encourage the labor of engaging with difficult things. And further substantiate that this labour has value as it allows for multiple imaginations born out of our (mis)perceptions. If we are to dream of alternative systems of thinking, working, and operating, we must be able to imagine it.

I hope to challenge notions of universality, smoothness, linearity and efficiency within Graphic Communication Design. Where have these standards come from? Why might they be problematic or worth challenging? How might we work outside of the constraints of the dominant systems we occupy? Is there space for imagination - the illogical, the surreal? And what can I engage with that does not limit my position within the comfort of the constructs of the current systems we occupy? And how can I give form to this line of inquiry?

References

Ahira, M. (2022) Interview with Mandeep Ahira. Interviewd by Rakshita Arvind.

Krishnamurthy, P. (2021) *On Bumpiness, In Letters.* [Recorded Lecture]. Available at: https://vimeo.com/theoneclubforcreativity/review/546841106/1d3121bfb4 (Accessed: 20th September 2022)

Mehta, D. (2022) Interview with Deshna Mehta. Interviewd by Rakshita Arvind

Ober, M. (2022) Interview [tutorial] with Maya Ober. Interviewed by Rakshita Arvind.

Paim, N. (2022) Interview with Nina Paim. Interviewd by Rakshita Arvind.