

The logo features the text "VERGE NYC" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The word "VERGE" is positioned above "NYC". This text is centered within a dark gray circle. Surrounding this central circle are several concentric, slightly offset white circles, creating a sense of depth and movement.

**VERGE
NYC**

Facilitation Guide

2015

HELLO!

How we curated VergeNYC conversations	3
Objective	4
DAY 1 OUTPUT: Personas	6-8
DAY 2 OUTPUT: Systems & Hotspots	9
Activity: Introduction	11-12
Activity: Priming	13
Activity: Defining	14
Activity: Making	15
Activity: Storytelling	16-17

How we curated VergeNYC conversations

I. DESIGN FIRM

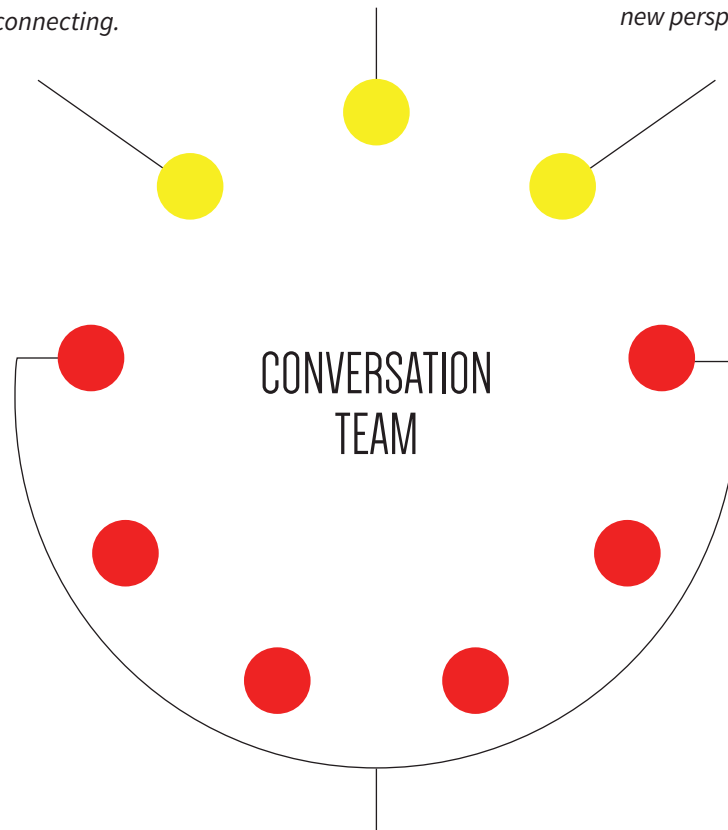
Lead facilitator who structures the conversation. *Demonstrates company methodology, evoking meaningful discussion, providing basis of future work, and connecting.*

2. FIELD EXPERT

Brings expertise on the conversation topic. *Applies design to a familiar topic, gain new perspectives, and connecting.*

3. TRANSDISCIPLINARY STUDENT

Event host & liaison between facilitators, attendees and overall event. *Thought leader of transdisciplinary design, ambassador of MFA program, gaining new perspectives, and connecting.*



4. ATTENDEE

Participants from a range of backgrounds, including graduate students, design professionals, non-design professionals, and academics/researchers bringing unique perspectives and experiences. *Learning new methodologies, adding to personal practice, gaining new perspectives, and connecting.*

Objective

The objective for VergeNYC 2015 was to explore how we could embrace and leverage uncertainty through critical thought, discussion and activities.

When we call our participants to act in the face of uncertainty, we are encouraging them to reexamine their outlook on, and relationship with uncertainty as it relates to professional and personal practice. We are not looking to create methods to work around uncertainty. We are not aiming to “fix” uncertainty or to overcome it by leaning on the things you can know for certain. We hope to create shifts in mindset and action through the work and conversations at the event, and that these shifts will help participants produce more meaningful and resilient impact in their work.

The two afternoons of conversation work sessions will flesh out modes of thinking, acting, and interacting in the face of uncertainty. This guide outlines the strategies during those two afternoons on Thursday and Friday.

The goal is for each group to produce a shareable output to hang in a “gallery” to provoke discussion with other attendees. Whether it’s a poster, video, or game, the final product will reveal key insights from the two afternoons of conversations.

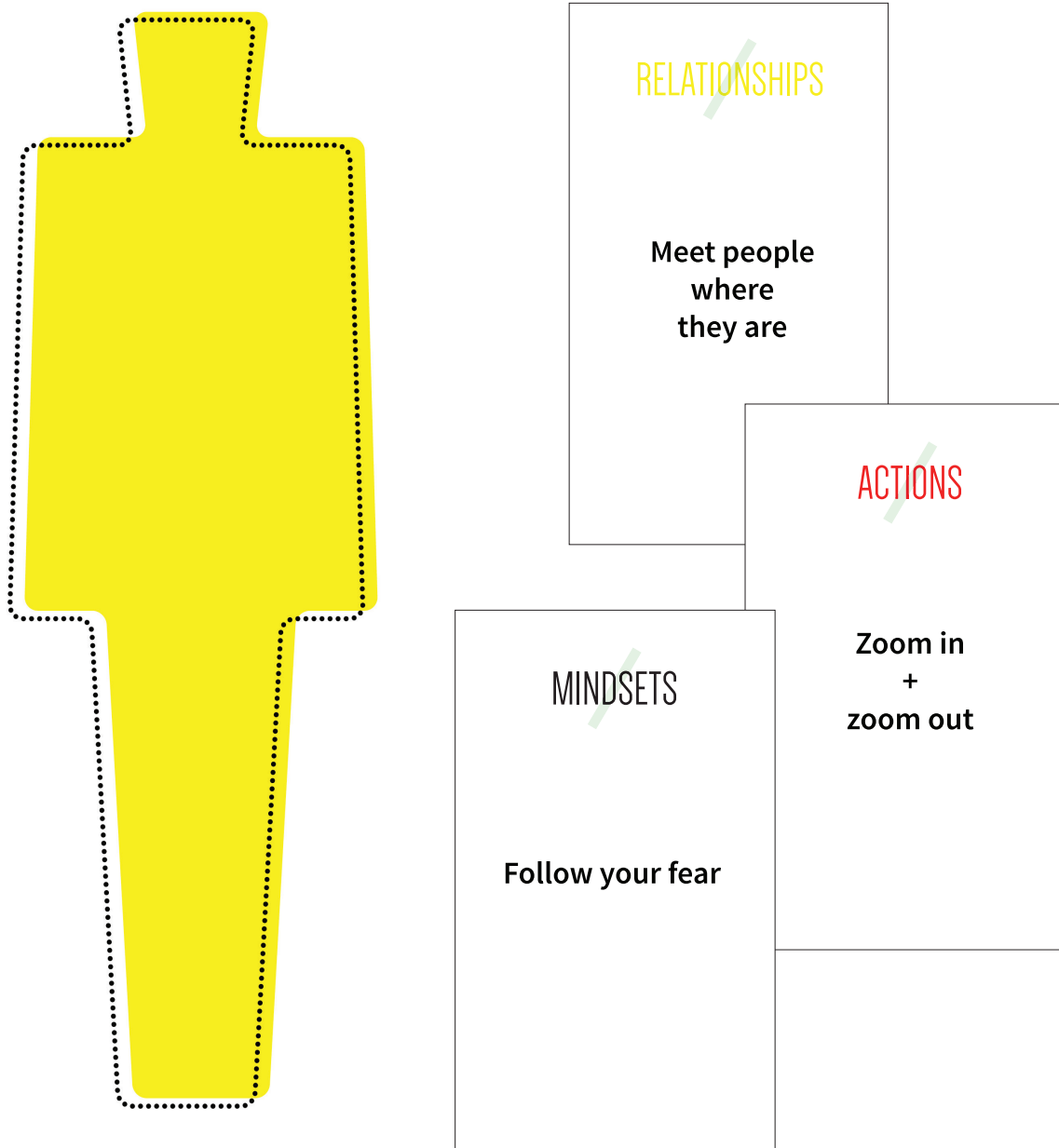
OUTPUTS

The goal for the breakout sessions was to have each conversation arrive at a specific output, facilitated by the design firm, field expert, and transdesign student.

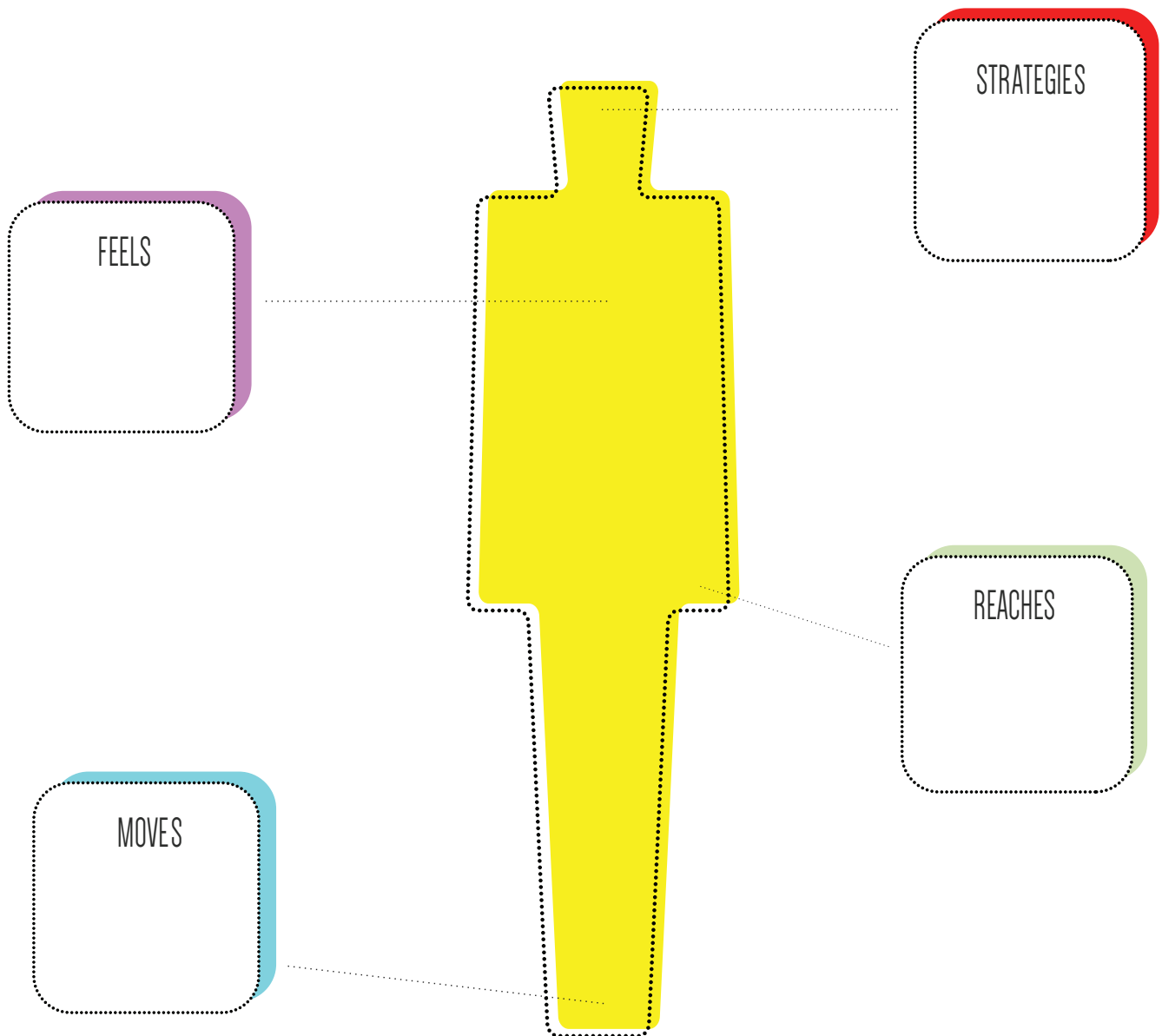
DAY 1 OUTPUT: Personas

Who is someone who acts in the face of uncertainty? Develop a “persona” to help visualize and define the qualities of someone who embraces uncertainty in the specific arena of your conversation. Distill discussion and findings into areas of actions, mindsets and relationships and share them out on cards.

See following pages for activities to help think about and build this persona.

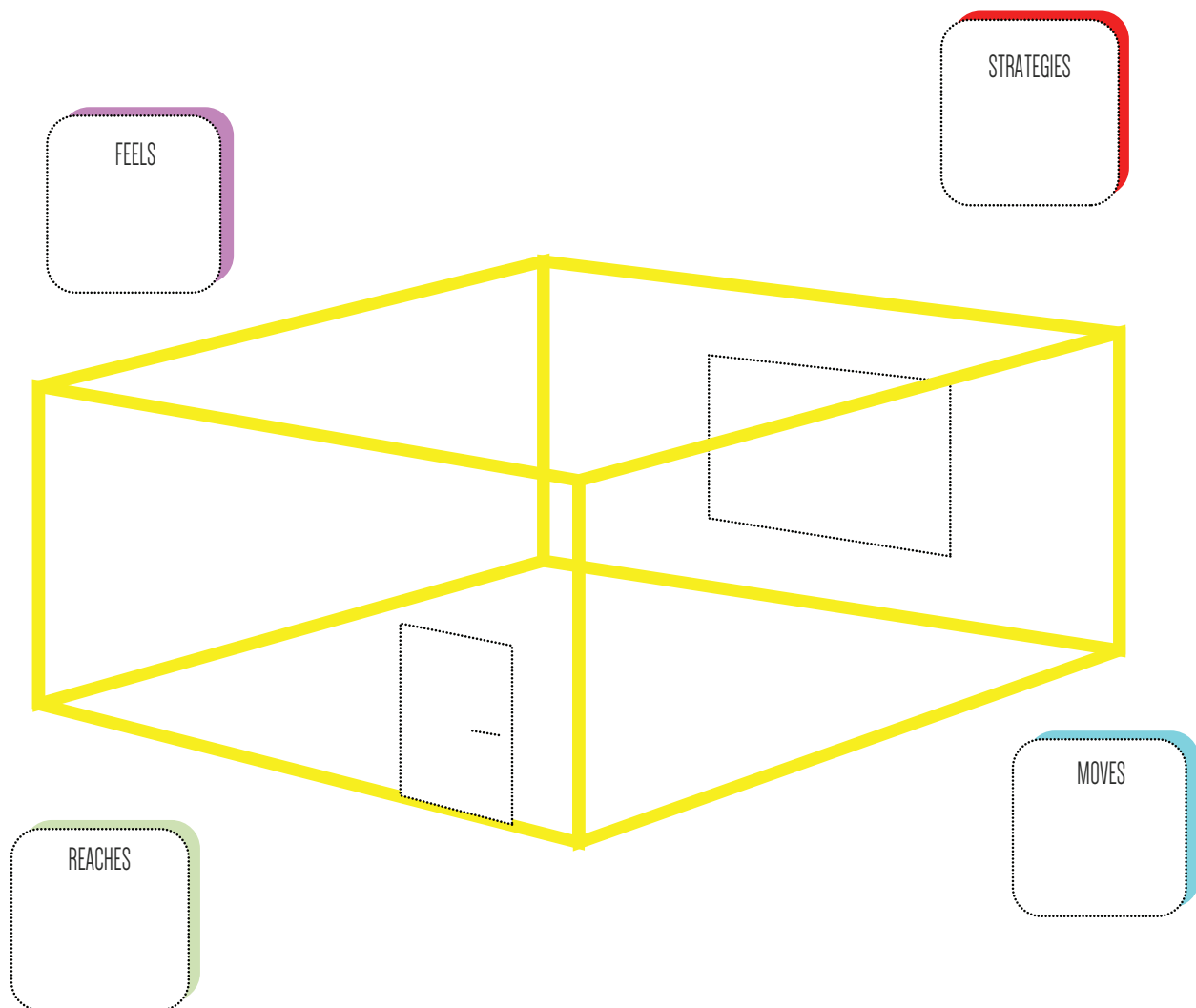


Personas Alternative



Personas Alternative

What are the characteristics of a space that allow it to embrace uncertainty?



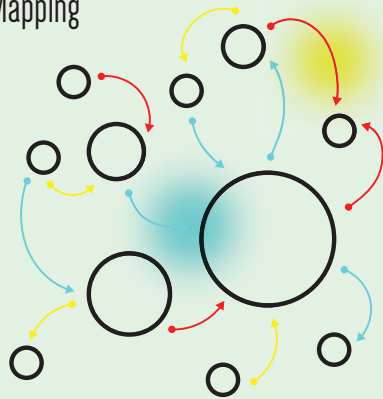
DAY 2 OUTPUT: Systems & Hotspots

Take a concrete example (a story, case study, experience, etc.) and map it out visually. The more specific and concrete the example, the better. The goal is to visualize a multivalent system and as a group consider all possible influencing factors, turning points, decision points, inputs/influences, outputs/exfluences and consequences.

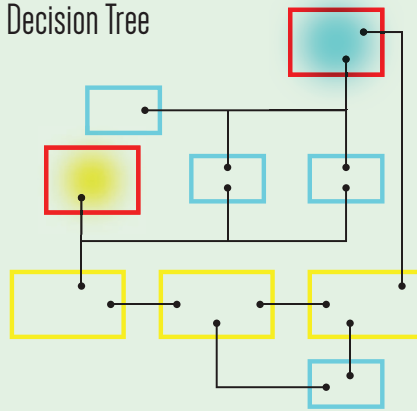
Looking at the diagram or system, identify “hotspots” where uncertainty seems particularly strong. Discuss how these points make the overall system stronger or weaker. How could these areas be embraced as areas of strength? How could some of the embracing cards be applied in order to leverage or strengthen the system?

Next, identify spots of certainty. These are also considered uncertainty “hotspots”. Flip the assumptions around these actors. How can you reframe these elements as uncertain? How does that change your system?

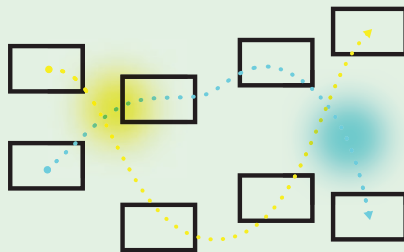
Mapping



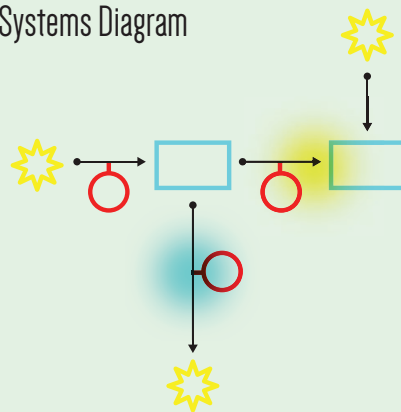
Decision Tree



Customer Journey



Systems Diagram



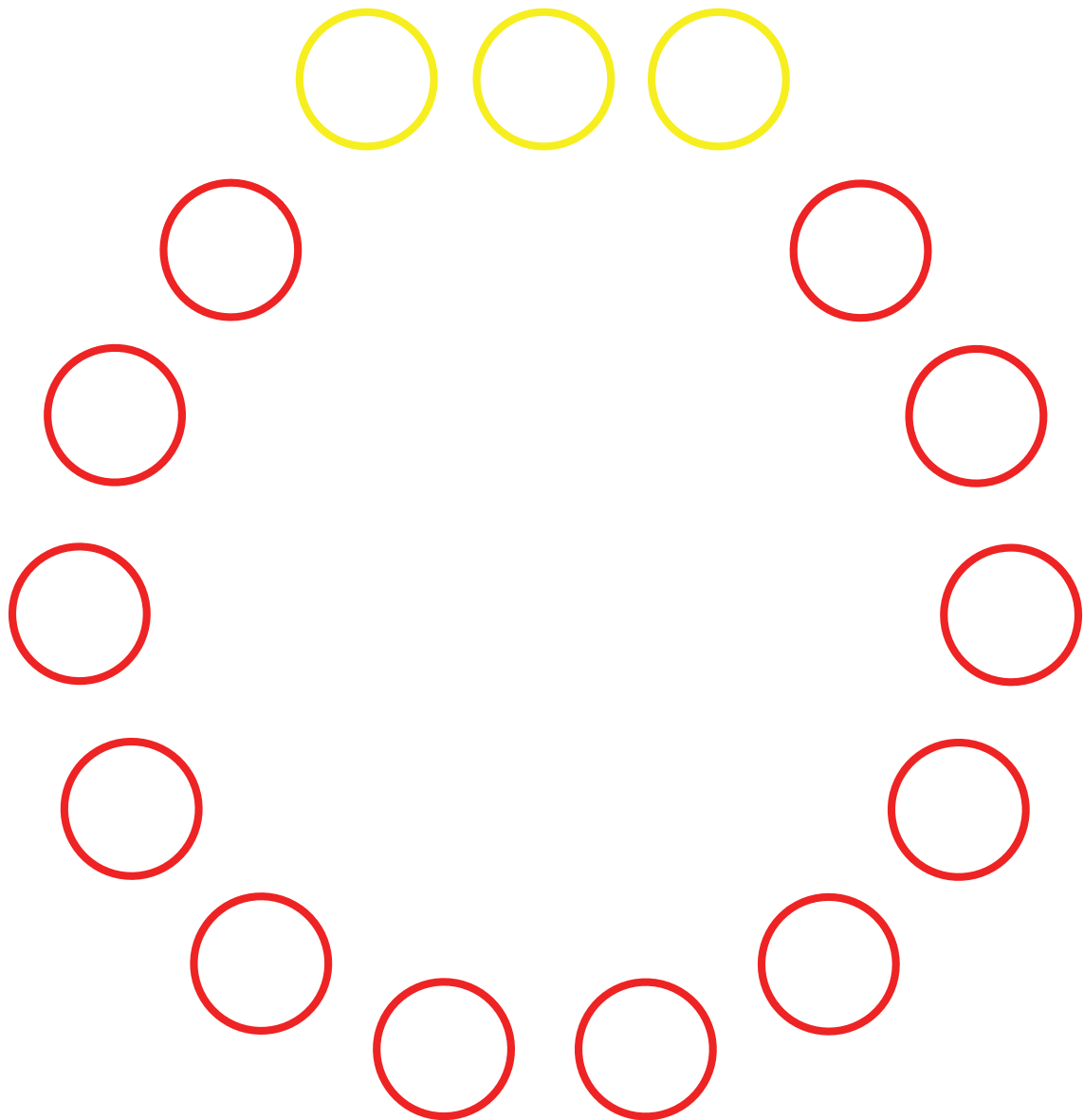
ACTIVITIES

Leading up to the conference, our design partners, field experts, and transdesign students worked together to create activity frameworks to help ensure that each conversation arrive at each output in a productive and inclusive manner.



Activity: Introduction

Introduce people at the table. Use this framework to introduce names and why people are participating in this conversation.



Activity: Introduction

Warm up your group. Using simple questions that are about each participant allows the group to get to know each other better in addition to adjusting to the group dynamic. Some examples might be: what are some of the aspects of your work that you find most worrisome? Most inspirational? What is uncertain about your situation? What is certain? etc.

WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

Activities: Priming

Lead the group through an ideation or mind mapping exercise asking them to describe the ways in which uncertainty shows up in this conversation topic. Below are possible points surrounding uncertainty in urban policy design.

OBJECTIVE

- 1 Bring the group into the head space of this conversation topic.
- 2 Get the group comfortable with generating ideas collaboratively.
- 3 Think about specific examples of uncertainty in this field.

Audiences with varying, disparate needs

Service providers have wide range of skill levels, quality and training--can't guarantee

The role web/internet will play in the future of services vs. traditional means of communication vs. connected objects/cities

Users have very different levels of experience with and exposure to technology resources

Elections can change outlook, strategy and management of organization

The "rest" of the system that affects your work -- integrated into a large organization

Many different outreach programs that connect here

Not able to rely on long term budgets

Multiple stakeholders behind every decision, oftentimes not directly end users

Balancing act to city planning

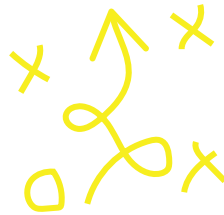
Activities: Defining

Guide group to generate the kinds of verbs and actions that would fill in a mad lib exercise framework. Answers can vary from literal, to thinking in analogies or metaphors.

OBJECTIVE

- 1 Begin building persona by concretizing modes of actions a person faced with uncertainty can take.
- 2 Guide participants to reflect about how they use action to define their own practice.

DEFINING



Practices

Embraces

Moves like

Seeks out

Straddles

Studies

Is willing to

Accepts

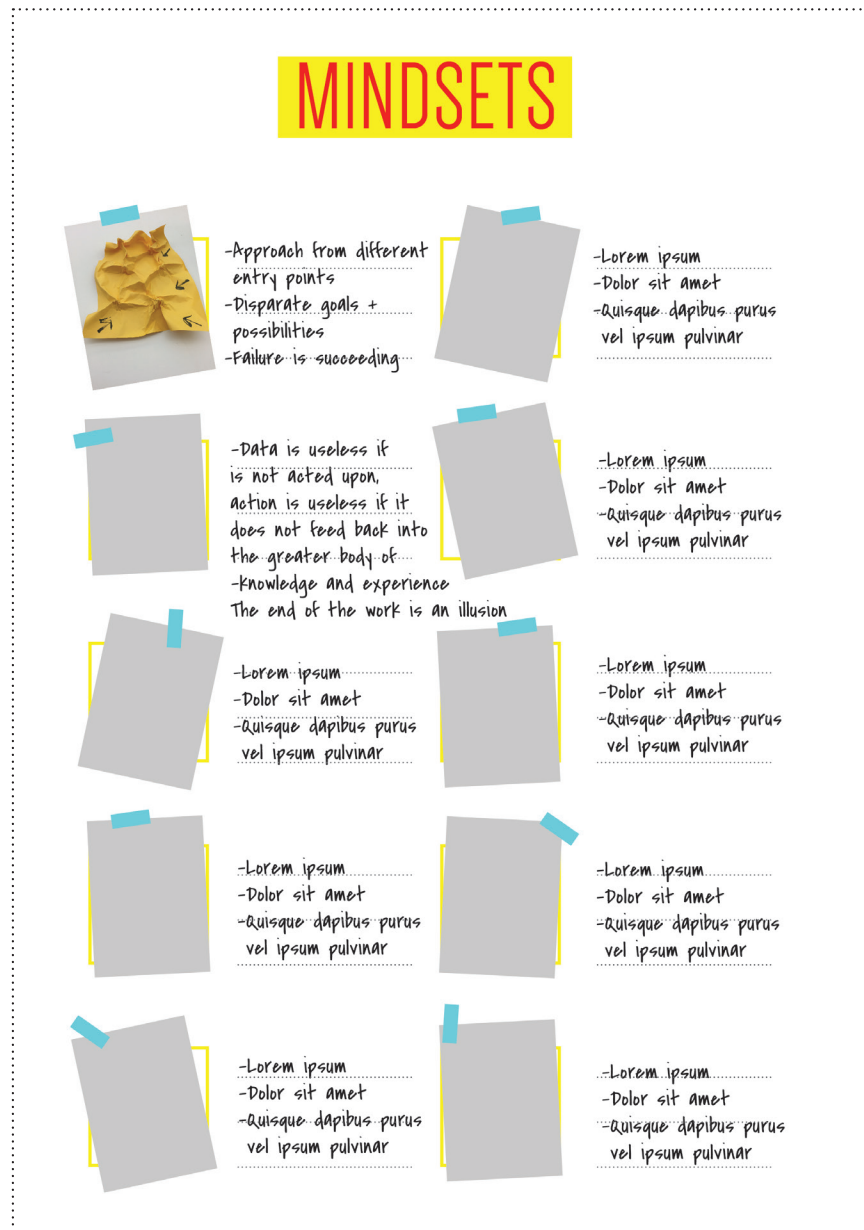
VERGE NYC 2015

Activities: Making

Organize participants to use physical tools to build a representation of the mindsets necessary to act in the face of uncertainty. Have each participant describe the physical model. Facilitators translate the work into insights about mindsets to leverage uncertainty.

OBJECTIVE

- 1 Encourage more abstract thought.
- 2 Explore the value of making to discover.
- 3 Physical models that represent mindsets.



Storytelling

Use the provided reflection questions with participants in pairs. Conduct interviews or use the relationships exercise to explore modes of interaction.

OBJECTIVE

- 1 Reflect on past experiences and personal skills for insight.
- 2 Practice storytelling and active listening.
- 3 Generate stories and quotes that reflect valuable norms, behaviors and organizational structures.

Set 1: Building Rapport

- 1 What are three ways you would describe successful group work?
- 2 What are key strategies for productive communication?
- 3 What are qualities or abilities that you value in team members?
- 4 What are qualities or abilities you value in leadership?
- 5 What is something you have noticed about the group dynamic in this room so far?

Set 2: Example from Specific Experience

- 1 Think of a time when you truly enjoyed collaborating with one or more people to create something. Could be a school team, a musical band, past or current place of work, or group project.
- 2 What were some of the norms and behaviors did that group culture have?
- 3 What was the power structure of the organization? Criteria and rules about who decides what and when.
- 4 How would you describe the leadership of the group?
- 5 What behaviors were celebrated and what behaviors were discouraged (explicitly and implicitly)?
- 6 What did you look for in new members? Who is the ideal member?
- 7 Where is that group today?
- 8 Based on the above reflections, what did your past group have or exhibit or establish that you feel creates a culture in which to leverage uncertainty?

Set 3: Self-Reflection

- 1 What skills do you bring to group interactions and group culture?
- 2 What tasks, behaviors, and roles have you done or created in relation to building a group culture/dynamic?
Has your behavior been serious? inclusive? respectful? entertaining? thought provoking? Etc.
- 3 How would you describe the energy you bring to the group's culture?
- 4 What's your superpower?
- 5 How do you specifically contribute to creating culture within a group? Mention specific instances/ examples/ stories.
- 6 How have you communicated? How does your communication affect the group?

RELATIONSHIPS

Behaviors Norms Organizational Structure Personality Traits

