03 Designing with Values

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Concept mapping

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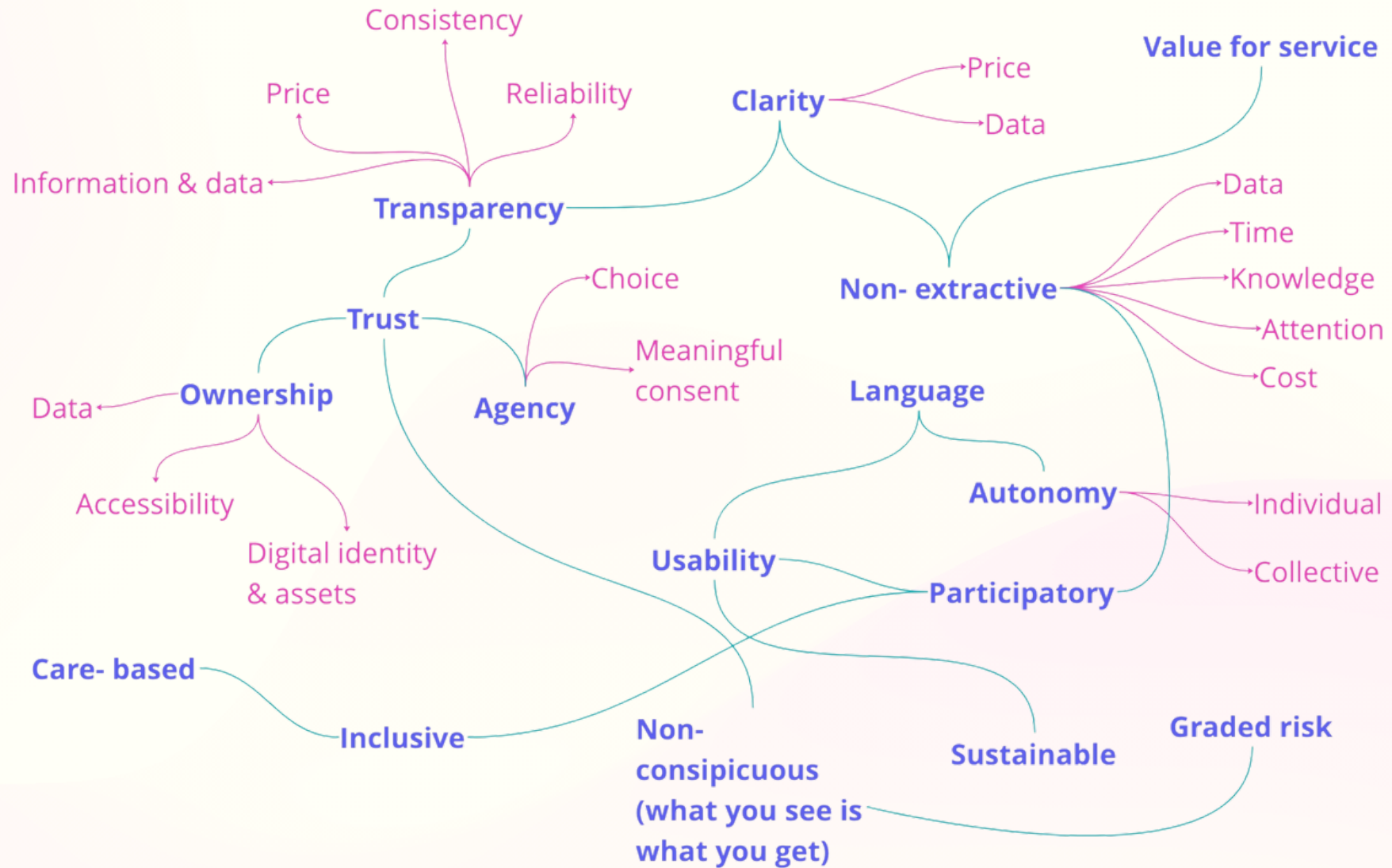
Values matter in design

No technology product can be value-neutral. Langdon Winner's influential work shows how technological systems inevitably embody and promote the attitudes, beliefs and values of those who build them. These can have far-reaching effects on society.

Your values flow into your product

In her article on Value levers in Design, Katie Shilton discusses how design practices affect social values, which then find their way into emerging technologies. Design is fundamentally an act of creation- of objects, environments, systems, or anything else. Being *'situated action'*, design embodies the values of the maker as well as the socio-cultural environment in which it has been designed. Simply put, your values and the values of your product team and organization matter. They flow into creating digital experiences that reflect these values for thousands of users.
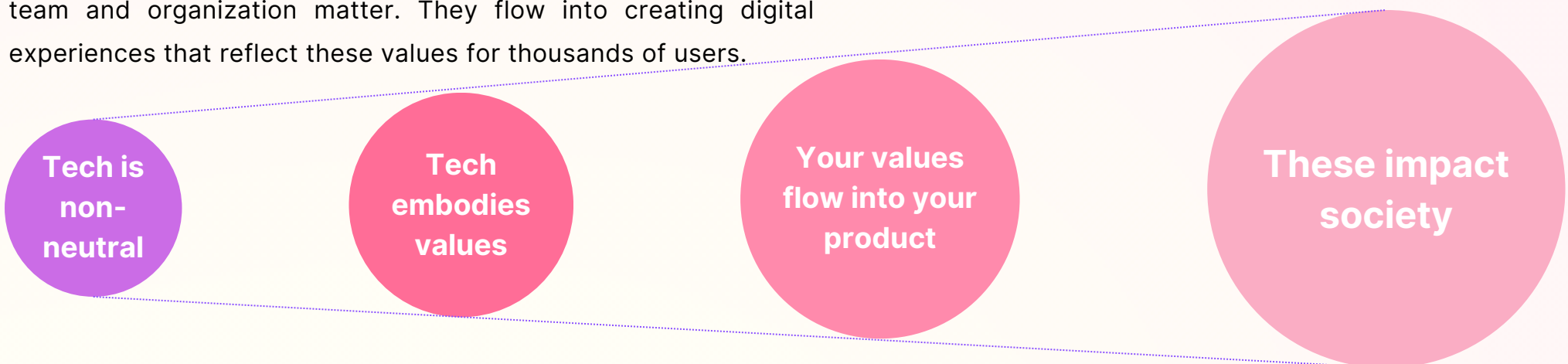
Privacy and other values

While privacy is often rightly recognised as a key value at stake when it comes to deceptive design, there are other values that are important as well. A broader understanding of values allows us to tackle deceptive design at the application level- and help build technology which keeps human values at the center.

Values which help tackle deception online

Designers worldwide are experimenting with different design processes and approaches to center complex values. In this section, we explore which values when centered in the design process will help us tackle deceptive design.

Tech is non-neutral

Tech embodies values

Your values flow into your product

These impact society

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"Design for trust"

Trust is the value that is at the heart of the deceptive design conundrum. Reports worldwide have shown that users worldwide increasingly report feeling tricked on digital platforms including ecommerce services, financial products, online education and social media platforms among others. Several consumers also did not return to sites where they experienced manipulation, showing that such design practices harm not just users but also businesses over time.

How do we build digital experiences that foster trust for our customers and the society at large?

Identify your values

Activity 1 - Values at work, and in action

Ethos refers to an embodied and intrinsic set of moral positions that tacitly guide actions and decisions. A project ethos, as a set of shared moral commitments, can provide powerful guidance for decisions in the project, but also help facilitate ethics in action.

If you were to list five core moral commitments that are at the heart of your current product, what would they be? Feel free to ask colleagues to chip in and make it a team activity.

ACTIVITY

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

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Activity 2: Do your values come across to your user?

What are some of the values of your organization which go into making your product or service? Here is a simple practice to find out:

1 **Write down the values** that your team/organization seeks to embed in the product.

_____

_____

2 **Step away from the designer's shoes and wear those of your user.** Try using your product or service. How comfortable are you with the data that is collected, app permissions which are needed etc?

_____

_____

3 **Document your opinions**, and feelings through **empathy mapping of yourself**. Seek the help of a colleague to avoid bias.

_____

_____

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4 Does your product or service **reflect the listed values** from a user's perspective?

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The TAO of Trustworthy Design

Trust is not a single thing that can be added to a product or the design process; it's an outcome of many small moves coming together. Based on our research and interviews with academic and industry experts, we believe that the TAO of trustworthy design boils down to anchoring three core values- Transparency, Agency and Ownership. These values enable a safe and more human-centred experience in digital interactions.
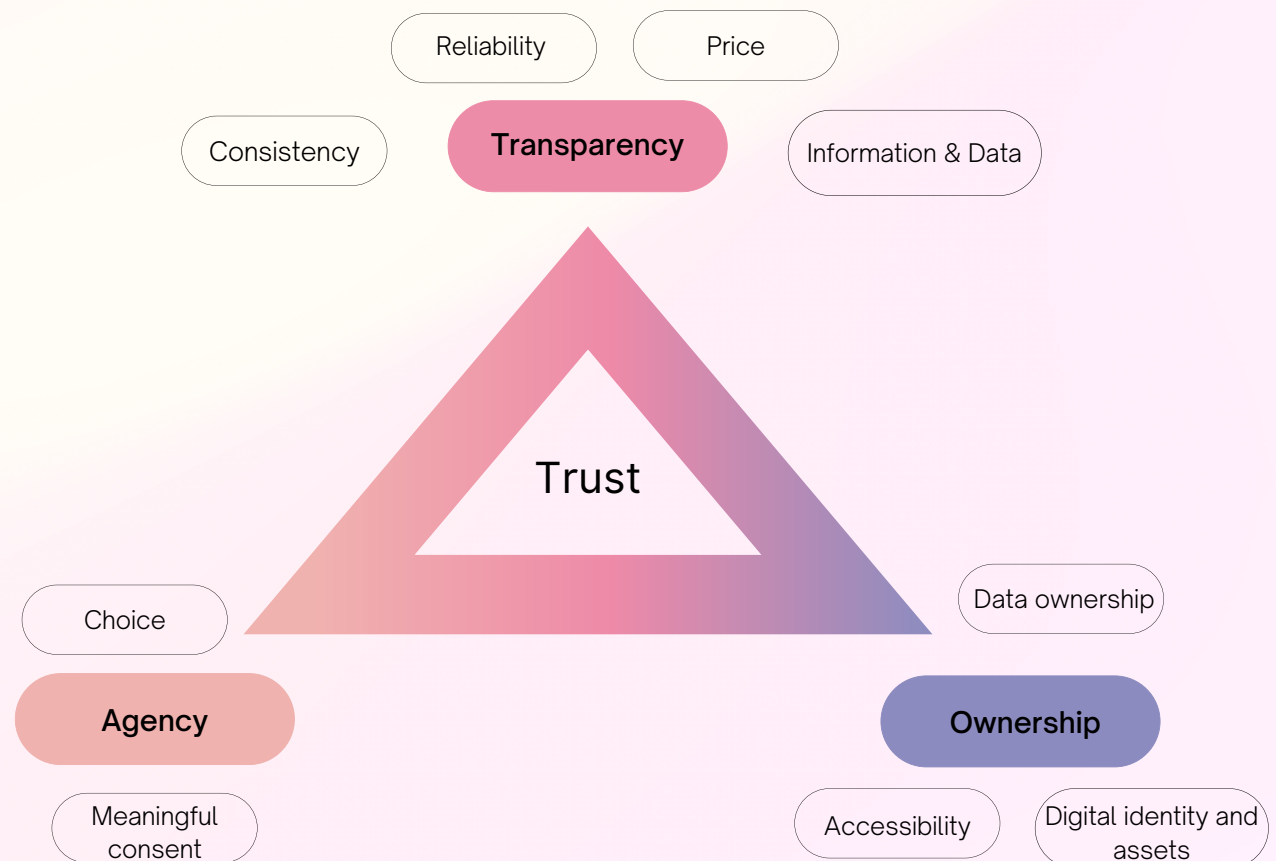
Our Tao Framework

Here is what Transparency, Agency and Ownership (TAO) mean in the context of designing responsibly:

Transparency: Transparency can be seen with respect to **information, data, and price.**

Agency: Values enshrined under agency can be clubbed under **choices** and **meaningful consent** which allows users to exercise their choice.

Ownership: Ownership with respect to **data, identity and digital assets.**

Reliability

Price

Consistency

Transparency

Information & Data

Trust

Choice

Data ownership

Agency

Ownership

Meaningful consent

Accessibility

Digital identity and assets

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Activity 3: Use the TAO Checklist

Use the checklist we created from the TAO framework

Transparency

Information and data

☐ The terms and conditions for the product are easy to understand

☐ Only data which is necessary for use is being accessed by the product

☐ Users are made aware of who else can see their data and for what purpose

☐ Information about data or terms and conditions is accessible to the user

☐ Text across the service does not manipulate the user to make some choices over others

☐ Your product is in compliance with WCAG guidelines for accessibility

Reliability and consistency

☐ The user relies on your service to remain true to the choices they make

☐ Language and messaging is consistent across the product experience

☐ Your product language does not communicate urgency, emotional

Pricing

☐ The pricing, inclusive of additional costs, is clearly presented to the user

☐ For differentiated pricing, users can choose any option without pre-selection or defaults

☐ Payment options make it clear if using them affects the credit score of individuals

☐ All information regarding rewards and discounts is clear and easy to access

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Agency

Choice

☐ The user can exercise choice in sharing of personal data

☐ Changing or altering preferences is easy

☐ There is visual and design symmetry between different options

☐ The user has some control over their experience of the product in terms of (eg. navigation)

Meaningful Consent

☐ Easy and clear design, and easy language is used to enable meaningful consent

☐ The user can go back to permissions whenever they want and change their consent settings

☐ Unsubscribing is as easy as subscribing to your product and does not take additional steps

☐ Consent boxes do not include pre-selection which may skew the customer in any way, thereby eroding choice

Ownership

☐ Your user is the final owner of their data, and you empower them in accordance with legal requirements

☐ Your product allows users to actionate on their ownership rights

☐ Your company ensures protection of personal, especially financial data of your customers

☐ You take steps to protect the digital identity of uses on your platform

☐ Security measures are ensured to safeguard digital assets owned by your users

☐ You ensure that the user solely owns the data, identity, or assets related to your product when they choose to leave, and you ensure the transfer of such information

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Ask "What could go wrong?"

Designer and artist Caroline Sinders in her [article](#) on Human-Rights Centered Design speaks about the need for asking "What could go wrong in this product?". Identify potential issues ranging from the benign to the extreme—and then make plans for those use cases. Caroline's approach can help us identify and pre-empt harms, and help us see problems as genuine concerns, not just as edge cases. Centering users who we are building for, and will ultimately use what we build, can go a long way in making better technology.

Who's most affected? Focussing on inclusion

A way to most effectively pre-empt harms and possible consequences of design is to map who can possibly be at risk. This needs to be included at the stakeholder and user persona creation level of the design process. Mapping graded risks for different use cases can help identify and differentiate tangible consequences.

In the book [Design from the Margins](#), Afsaneh Rigot states that designers must identify the most-impacted "decentered" cases from the margins and design for them directly–not through retrofitting. This design approach centers "those those most harmed by security and privacy issues, especially those communities that are hard-to-reach."

Non-extraction is important

Extractive data and information practices often result in loss of trust for users. An extractivist logic views the user simply as a valuable resource- rich with data, attention or time which can be mined for value. Creating non-extractive digital experiences are crucial to respecting user agency, fostering trust and moving towards responsible design. Extraction can be in the form of data, attention, cost, time and knowledge.

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Is this interaction extractive?

Here is a short exercise through which you can unpack if a product is extractive in nature:

Extraction of	Questions	Write your reflections
Data	Do they really need all the information we collect from the user?Are they sharing this data with others/ third-parties? Is the user aware of such sharing mechanisms?	
Attention	Are they employing design strategies to make the user spend longer than they need to on the product?Does this attention-seeking enrich the user?	
Cost	What does the user pay for the product? If it is free, what other non-monetary cost are users paying?	
Time	How much time is the user spending on the service? How much of the time benefits the user? Does a user have to spend more time than required to obtain value?	
Knowledge/ collected data	Does the company use user information for purposes other than those mentioned?	

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Your team needs a value advocate

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Activity 4: Play a values advocate within the team

1 As a design or a product team, let one of you take up the explicit role of being a values advocate in the initial stages of the project.

4 Brainstorm and Prototype with potential solutions with the team.

2 When you convene a design meeting to review your product or service with one person plays the values advocate. The role of the value advocate would be to raise issues on privacy, equity, consent, forgetting, legibility, or any values which are important for your company or business.

3 Identify the different issues in your product or service where these values are not being reflected, and might be value-pain points for the customer.

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