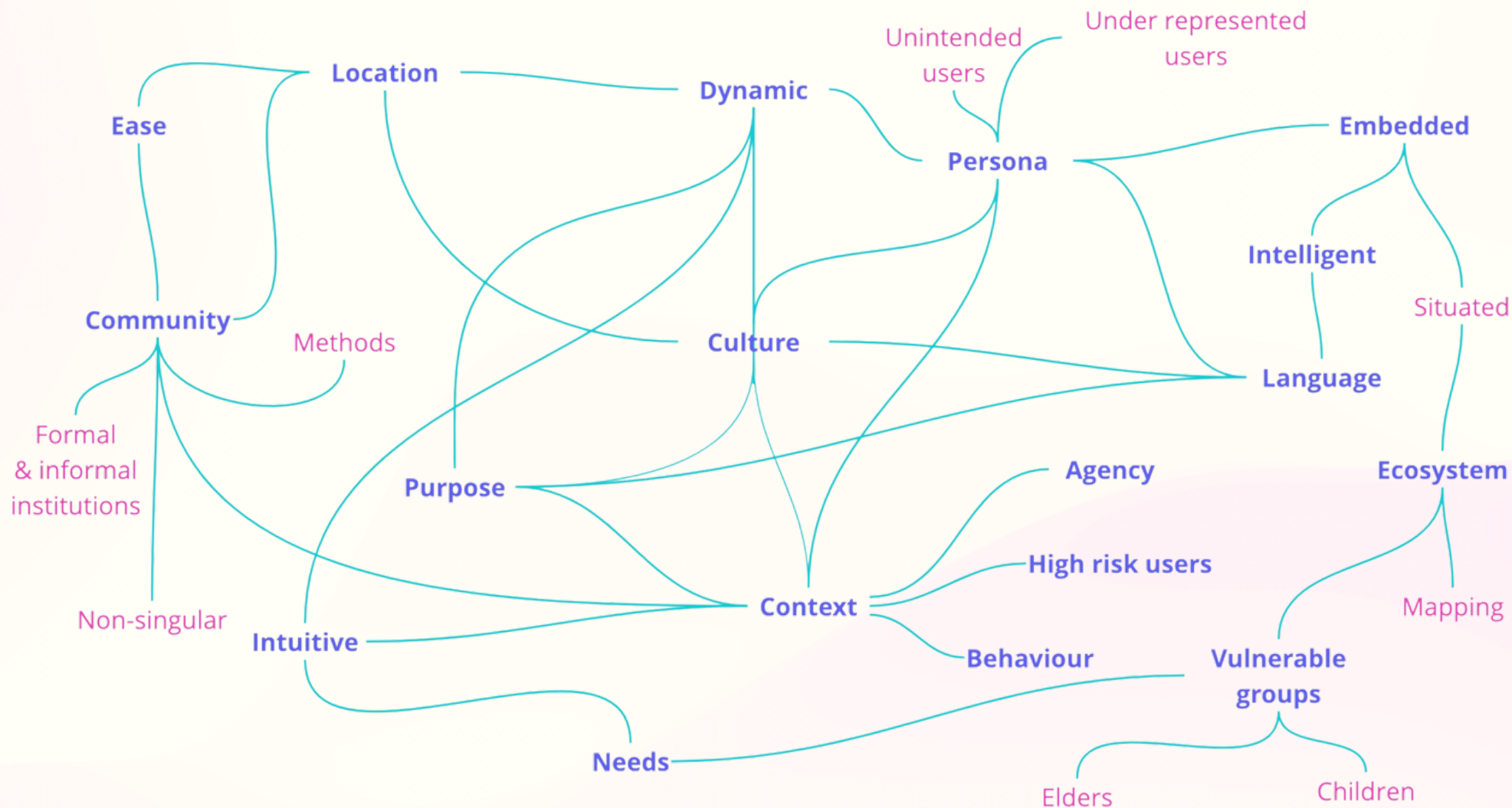


# 02 Rethinking the User

# Concept mapping



## Who is your user?

As digital adoption increases worldwide, users across diverse parts of the world will access and use your products which are probably designed for a different user context. This poses a new challenge- 'normal' design can be deceptive for users you did not plan for, or know very little about. Keeping this in mind, the usual ways of defining, attributing and personifying the user can be limiting.

## Do personas fully capture your users?

Designers use user personas to model the attitudes, behaviours and needs of the people for whom the product is designed. But user personas often only capture the average traits of an intended category of users.

However, products or services may be used by customers who are not represented adequately in our persona-building process. The gap between these may result in unintended deception or harm to excluded user groups. So it becomes important to understand 'users' in a much broader sense.



## The need to re-think the user

Deceptive design can be a result of a mis-match in what we think of as users and how users are. This gap can often result from not engaging with non-traditional users, or using methods which may not work in new contexts. Users are not a singular, static entity. They are diverse, dynamic, intelligent and intuitive human beings who interact with technology in diverse ways, shaping it and being shaped by it in a dynamic process. They are also situated in diverse cultural contexts which influence their needs, purpose and behaviour.

As we begin our journey of interrogating the user, here are some things to think through. We hope that these provocations help us deepen the design research process, and help us create better value through our products.

## Users and others

In his [talk titled Future Ethics](#), designer Cennydd Bowles, speaks about the need to expand what we mean by users by taking into account other stakeholders apart from the end-user we have in mind. He gives the case study of AirBnB's design process. AirBnB, in order to foster trust between renters and rentees, had to expand its definition of users to include not just travellers and property owners but also neighbourhoods and communities. Who are the people we have not traditionally thought of when we begin to think about design? Who else is impacted by what we do?

## Activity 1:

What are some tools you use to capture user personas more effectively? Check below.

 Design probes

 Archetypes

 Interviews

 Field-work

 Ecosystem mapping

 Diary studies

 Multi-disciplinary approach- engaging with experts, other stakeholders

 A day in the life of

 Surveys

 New tools you are experimenting with

 Others

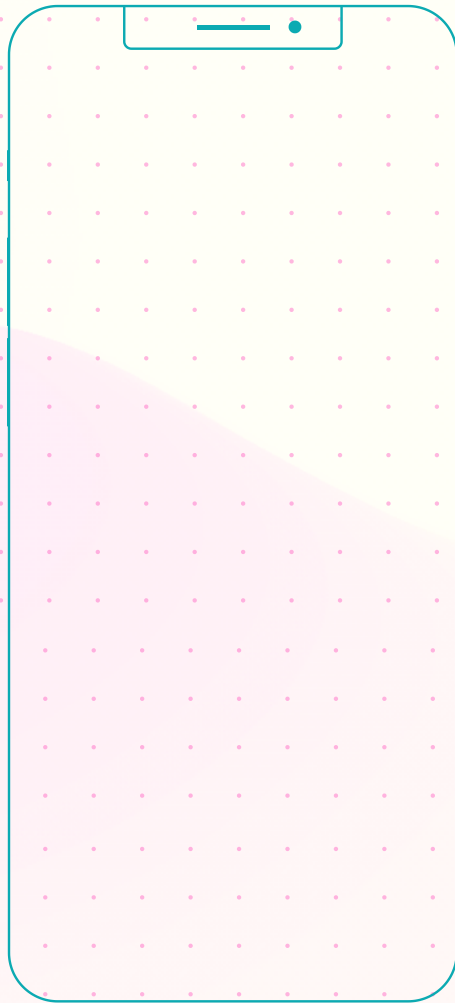
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Now think if these tools use information collected through research with users to align better with their needs.

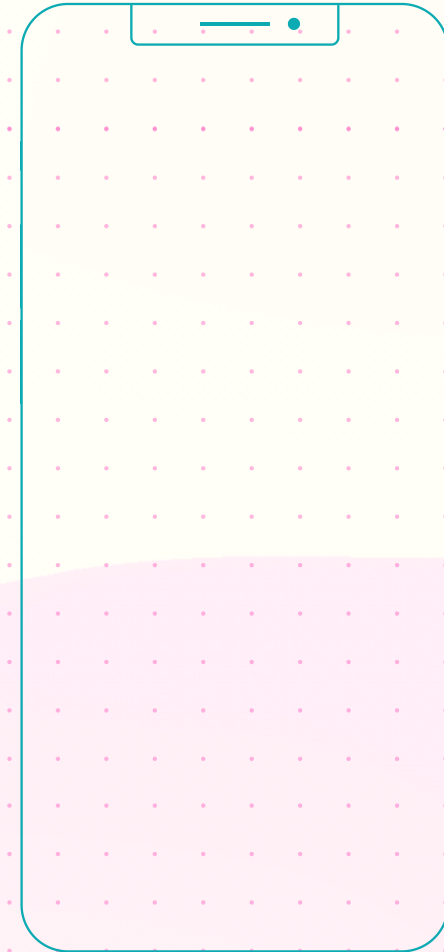
## Activity 2 :

If you were to replace words like 'user name', 'password' etc in your design and rethink it with some common words used in your day-to-day life, what would your user interface look like?

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Use this space to sketch out your user interface for the above activity





# Mapping users in contexts

## Adopting a community-driven approach

The first step to understanding the motivation and needs of the user is to map the different users and stakeholders who will engage with the tech we build. The users are dynamic in nature because the factors in their ecosystem are constantly changing.

Learning the dynamic nature of the user will help produce initiatives which do not resemble the currently existing solutions and also help integrate with technologies already in play. Teaming up with organisations, civil society and the government will help understand the user and their ecosystem better.

## Mapping the ecosystem

Ecosystem mapping is a powerful tool for designers to more deeply understand the context of their users. Users are embedded in complex networks including in communities that have their own formal and informal institutions. Incorporating an ecosystem mapping approach in your design process can provide a deeper understanding of a system of multiple stakeholders and competing incentives.

IDEO's [Ecosystem Mapping toolkit](#) is a great resource to get started.

## Interact with your users as humans

Interacting with users as “users”, “consumers” or “other” than yourself can be limiting. A simple way to gain more familiarity, understanding mental models and learn from lived experience could be to interact with your potential users as human beings who have their own life experiences to bring to the table.

## Identifying vulnerable or high-risk users

Research shows that deceptive design has a disproportionate impact on certain user groups over others. Digital literacy, income levels and financial literacy are some of the factors which become crucial. Moreover, vulnerable users are not always the same across all services and products. While journalists have been identified as a vulnerable group on social media platforms, low-income users are more likely to be harmed by deceptive design in digital lending apps or cryptocurrency applications. Identifying high risk and vulnerable users across cases is an important part of designing responsibly.

## How age appropriate are children’s apps?

A simple case to illustrate this is children and young people. Youth and children increasingly constitute a large proportion of the internet users. However, their voice in terms of what they seek from products remains limited. A [study conducted in the US on children’s apps showed](#) that ninety-five percent of reviewed apps for children ages 5 and under include at least one form of advertising. Researchers found play was frequently interrupted by pop-up video ads, persuasion by commercial characters to make in-app purchases to enhance the game experience and overt banner ads that could be distracting, misleading and not always age-appropriate.

In the UK, the Information Commissioner’s office has released the [Age-Appropriate Design Code](#) which lays out guidelines for design and privacy and data settings to protect children online.

## Do your users hold agency?

User agency is the power the user holds over the experience with the product or service being used. This is relevant not just in the context of privacy and data, but also the overall product experience.

Adopting more [database workflows which are multidimensional](#) and allow the user to explore the product at all times is one way to give more control.

## Activity 3: Reflection Activity

- How do you bring in the user/ user insights into your design process?

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- At which stage does the user intervene in the design process for your product/ service?

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- How do you evolve your product based on feedback and response form users?

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