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Arational design

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Arational Design

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Surrounding Signifiers
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RSD5
SYMPOSIUM
systemic design for social complexity

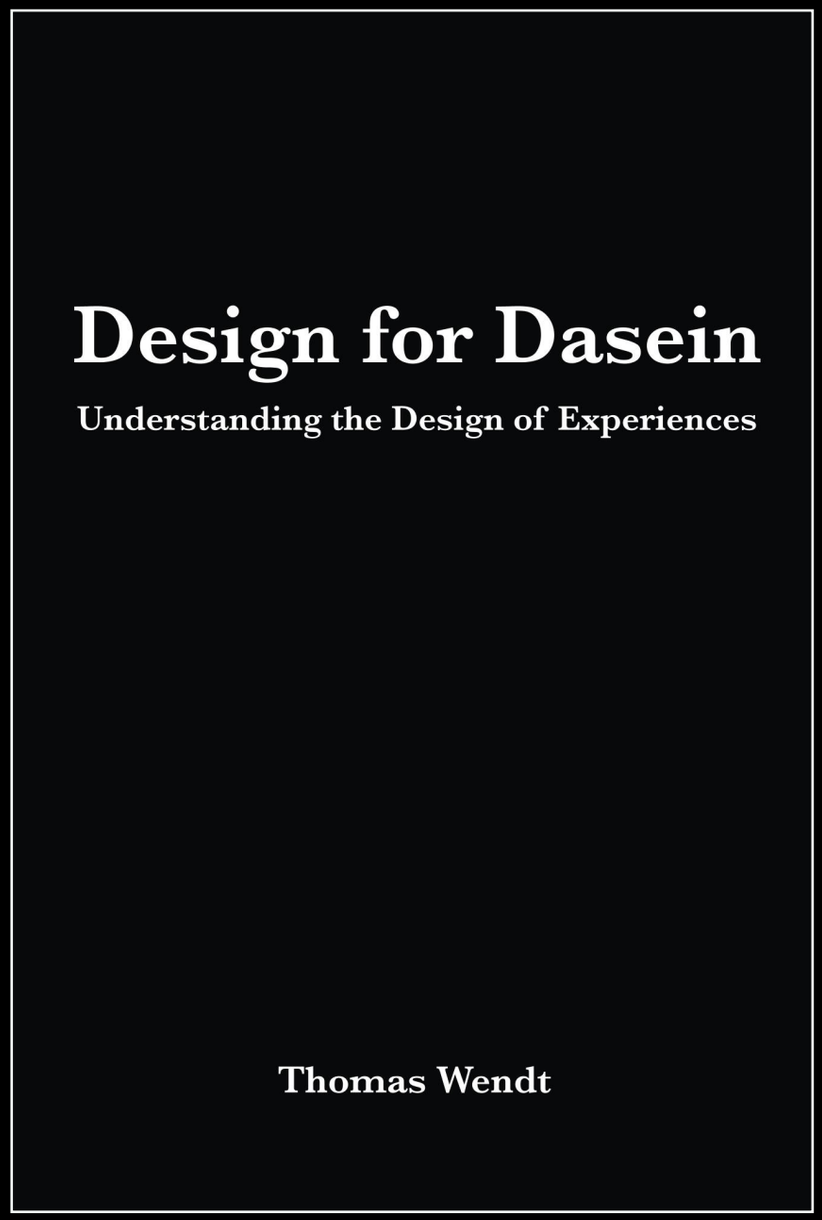
Thomas Wendt

pronouns: *they* or *he*

Design Facilitator
Strategist and Researcher
Design Critic
Author

Based in NYC

Research Interests: HCD, sustainability, design philosophy, co-operative and participatory design, design ethics and the politics of design



Premises

Designers rely too heavily on rationalist thinking

Rationality is unsustainable

Arationality is a form of self-care

Designers rely too heavily on rationalist thinking

"I shall consider that the heavens, the earth, colours, figures, sound, and all other external things are nought but the **illusions** and **dreams** of which this **[evil] genius** has availed himself in order to lay **traps** for my credulity; I shall consider myself as having no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, nor any senses."

René Descartes

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Think > Act

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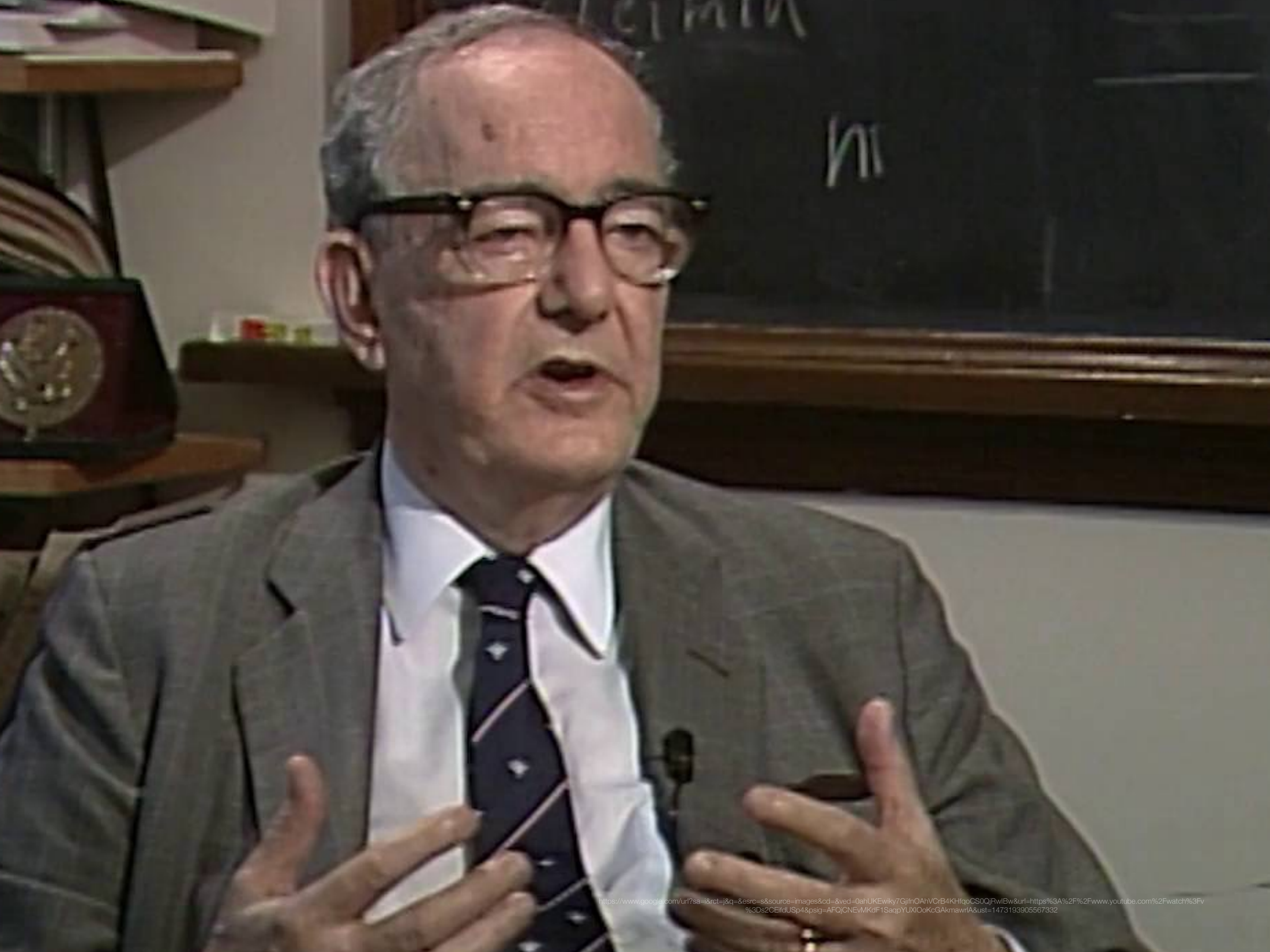
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Design Methods

Thomas Wendt **Surrounding Signifiers** **@thomas_wendt**

Designer's Antennae

Insights

Conviction

Design Thinking

Intentional

Categorical

Analytic

Explorative

Abductive

Designer's Responsibility ?

Synthetic

Reflective

Designer's Mind

Decisions

1, 2, 3, ...

Prototype

Success

Concept

Stone in the Pond

Design Opportunity

Perception

Imagination

Inploration∞

Exploration

Design Action

Go, Go Go .....

positive

Impact

negative

Designer's Emotions

Drop Project ?

Disaster

© 2007 M P Ranjan, NID

revised: based on model created in discussion with Sumiran.

Rationality is unsustainable

How Industry Works

1. Plan the thing
2. Make the thing
3. Convince people they need the thing
4. ???
5. Profit

"The knowledge acquired in craft work is **systemized logically**; the observable effects of this work become the object of **explanation** attempts. A new type of interaction with nature arises, supported first by architects and finally by engineers. They interact with nature by **calculating** it. The architect plans on the drawing board with the aid of assumptions on statics and material properties. The engineer **recombines nature** and **calculates the energetic effects** that result from it for people. By expanding this activity, society enters a **new state of nature**."

Klaus Eder

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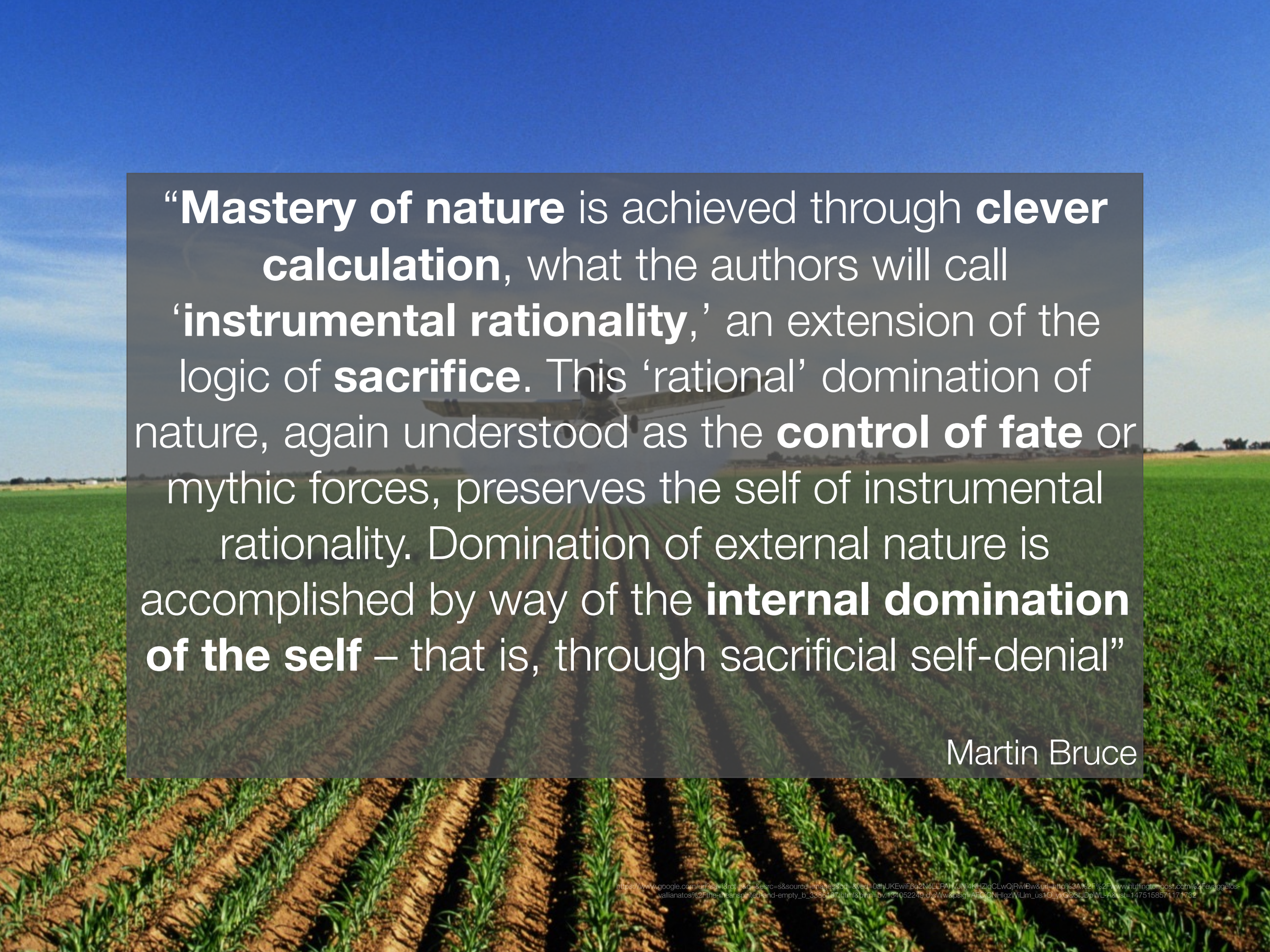

"**Mastery of nature** is achieved through **clever calculation**, what the authors will call '**instrumental rationality**,' an extension of the logic of **sacrifice**. This 'rational' domination of nature, again understood as the **control of fate** or mythic forces, preserves the self of instrumental rationality. Domination of external nature is accomplished by way of the **internal domination of the self** – that is, through sacrificial self-denial"

Martin Bruce

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CHANEL
CHANEL
CHANEL
STOP
BEING
POOR

“Civilization is not and can never be sustainable. This is especially true for industrial civilization.”

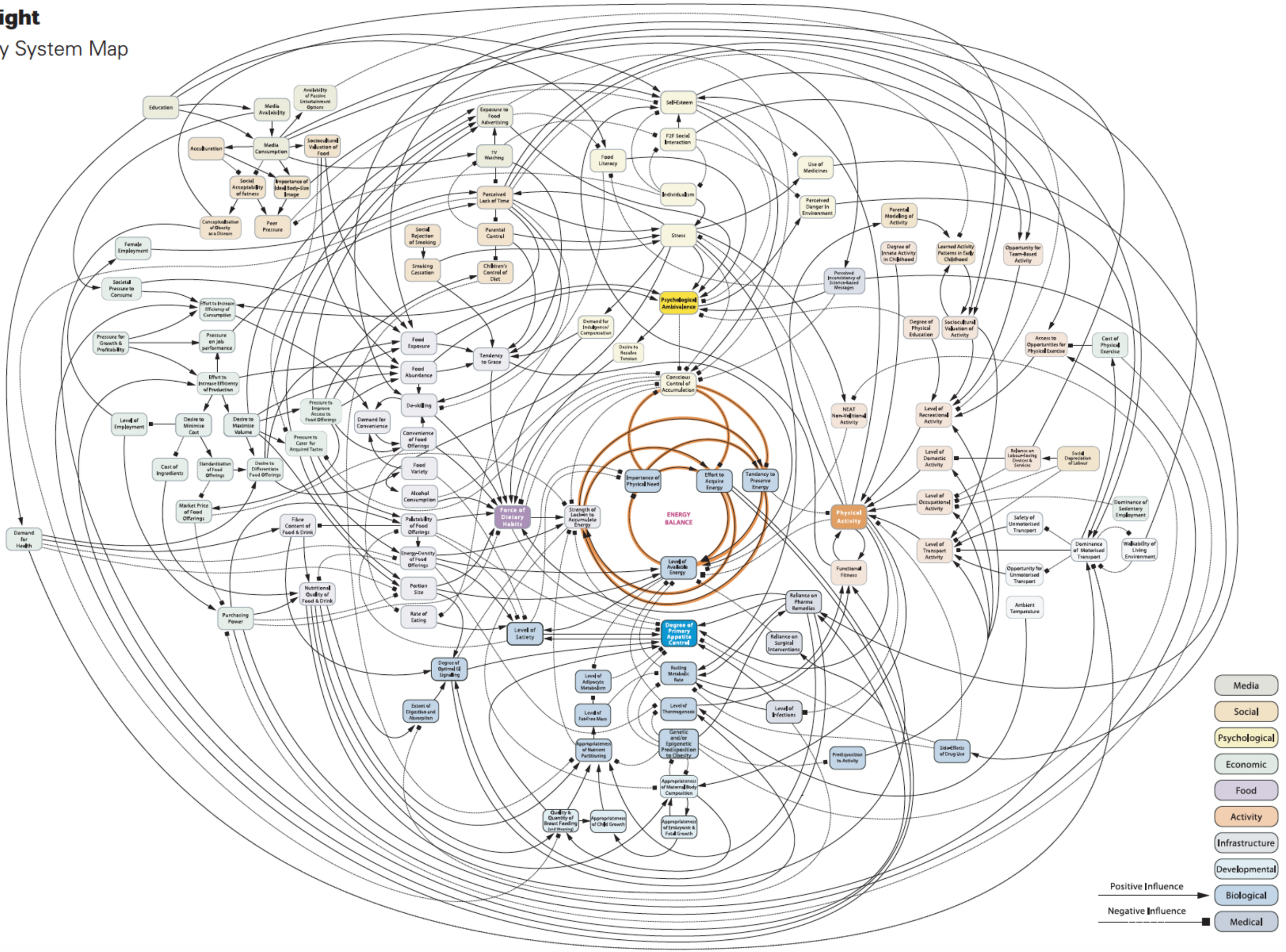
Derrick Jensen

Arationality is a form of self-care

Reductionism

Foresight

Obesity System Map



Problem-solution paradox

We cannot think about solutions until we understand problems

AND

We cannot understand a problem until we think about solutions

GET TRASHED
HEALTHVILLE
PARK OR PARKING LOT
BUDGET DAY
VOTELAND
JOANNE
Sarah
Nicole
EXIT

Arational Design

Praxis-based design methods and principles that embrace and shape the designer's individuality by resisting instrumentalism, scientific notions of progress, and innovation fetishism.

Design Thinking

Thinking = Making

Experiential Understanding

Divergence and Convergence

Participatory Design

Reduce hierarchy

Involve “non-designers”

Collective decision making

Confront socio-cultural complexity

Frame Innovation

Embrace paradoxes

Create points of view

Fit futures into existing systems

Critical Design

Design for discourse

Surface political implications of design

Provocations over deliverables

RESTROOM
#POP-UP POLITICS
Projecting Politics on Public Spaces
IGNITE DISCUSSION
I want to build a wall
is this guy serious?
#popuppolitics
immigration needs reform #popuppolitics
JR of politics
#FREEX3
SWIPE RIGHT FOR FREEDOM
Free Day
Free Drinks
Free Rides
Brought to you by
IBM Google Coors
Uber Sam Adams
Airbnb Walmart
Sears GM IBM
Ford Apple Nike
VOTER VILLAGE
#MAKEAMERICACANADA
BY THE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION
AND

"*Neu Bildung* has to learn to **speak the unspeakable**—it cannot tolerate the good manners of terminal humanism as it stands on the edge of the abyss. Rather than serving the 'human' it has to help **shatter** it and thereafter **remake** our 'being here' within a politics of **absolute care**."

Tony Fry

Innovating for People | Activity Templates | Creative Matrix
How might we increase civic engagement?
(on Voter Registration Day and beyond)
IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT WE...
Spark public interest in societal issues
IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT WE...
Increase attendance at meetings & forums
IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT WE...
Expand participation in elections & referendums
IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT WE...
Encourage more public service & volunteerism
Games & Competitions
Imagine the possibilities of using games for social good.
THINK ABOUT...
- Mobile apps
- Rewards, badges, points & prizes
- Teamwork
- Community competitions
- etc.
Quiz show about local laws
Speaker bingo
Shows & Videos
Imagine ways to utilize the power of audio/visual media.
THINK ABOUT...
- Live performances
- TV & radio programs
- Public service ads
- Viral internet videos
- etc.
Celebrities & Superstars
Imagine ways to leverage different cultural personalities.
THINK ABOUT...
- Famous entertainers
- Celebrated athletes
- Historical figures
- Hometown heros
- etc.
Hot spots & Hangouts
Imagine ways to utilize the spaces and places people frequent most often.
THINK ABOUT...
- Locations of daily activity
- High traffic areas
- Common gathering places
- Online sites
- etc.
Wildcard
WHY
WHY
MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!!!

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Full paper: bit.ly/arationaldesign
Slides: bit.ly/slidesRSD5
First book: designfordasein.com
Forthcoming book: bit.ly/persistentfools