

superject (a proposition)

The S.P.A.C.E consortium

2020-11-14

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Superject (as of 2020-11-14)

A proposition, for Whitehead, is neither true nor false in itself. It is a lure for feeling the world that "might be." A proposition is what places a concreting subject (an occasion of experience) in relation to a potential predicative pattern. It is the potential togetherness of subject and predicate that characterizes a proposition and not its actual exemplification. But propositions do not hang in the thin air of abstraction; they always emerge from somewhere and are entertained by an actual subject within a particular milieu. The proposition's relevance and importance (or its "truth"—in William James' sense) is contingent upon the world that it finds itself within.

—Adam Nocek

edited & synthesised notes can be found near [here](#) (local file) and [here](#) (foam repo).

propositional #1 — 2019-09-24

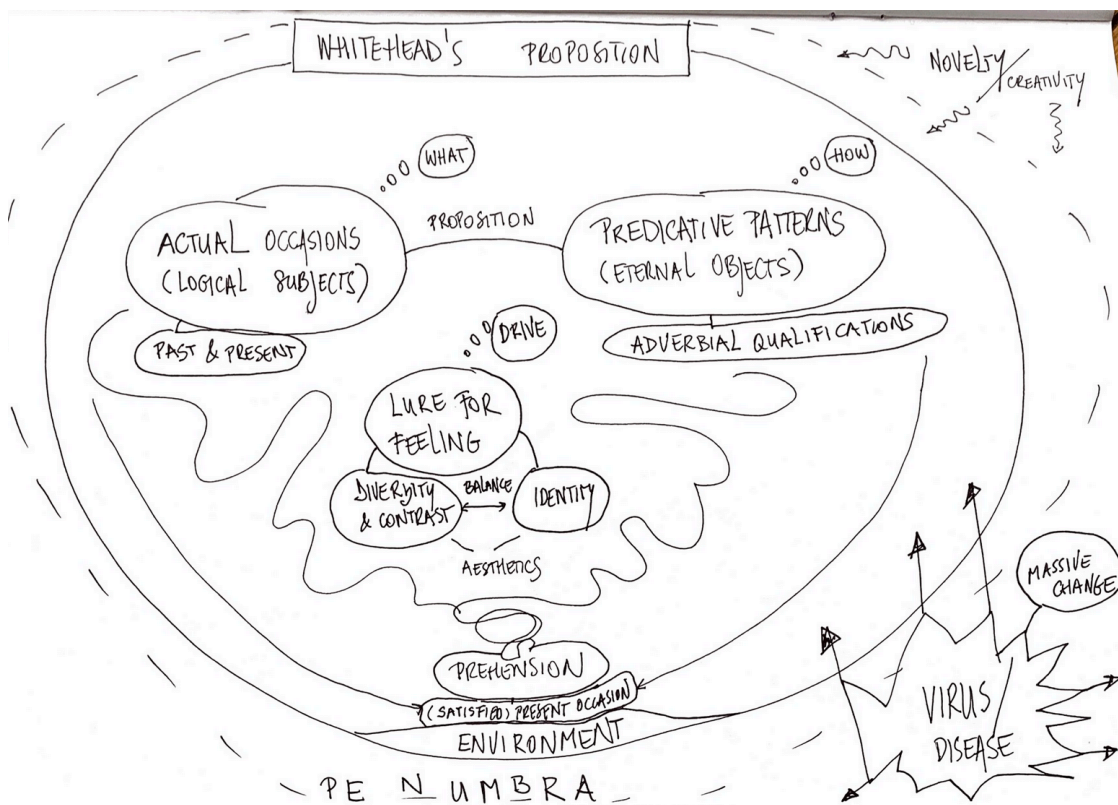


Figure 1: in progres...

Reading: A.N. Whitehead. [Process and Reality](#), Chapter IX: The Propositions

propositional #2 — 2019-09-26

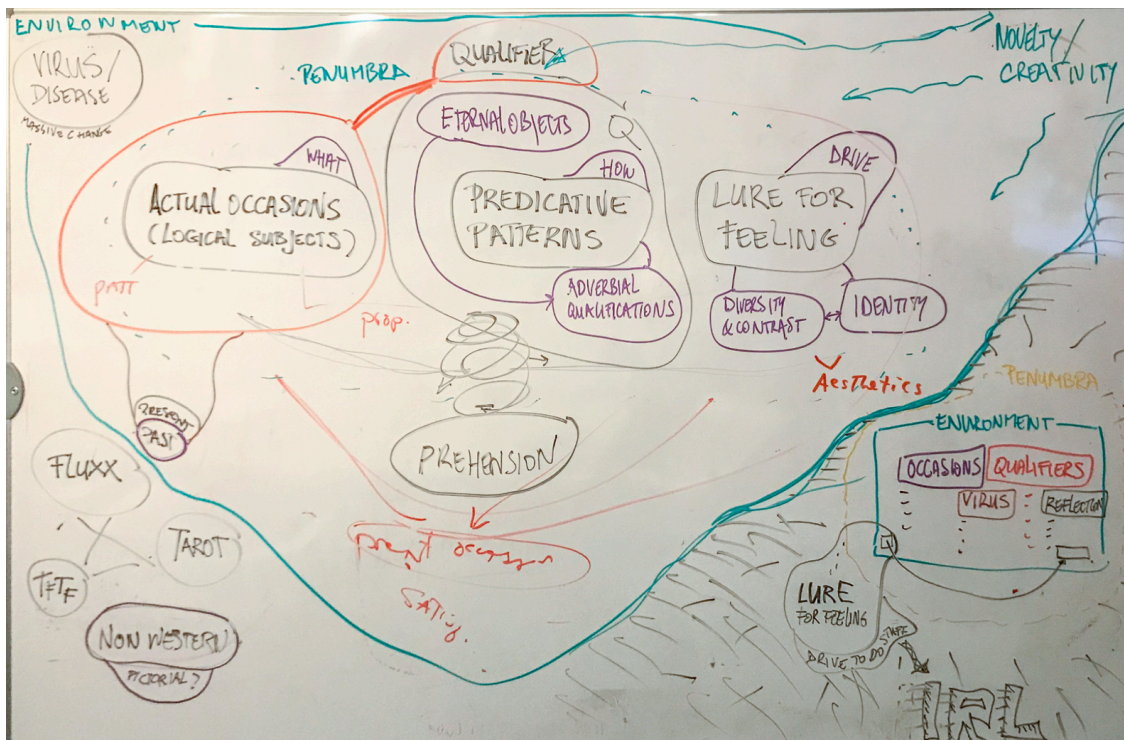
Question: How to translate Whitehead's proposition into a generative worldbuilding toolkit?

Proposition: A card game as a philosophical technique.

FoAM & CPT hosted a workshop exploring how to design a card deck which could clarify, generate and/or play with propositions (as described by Whitehead). These cards could be used in workshop situations, classrooms, futures sessions, policy labs, etc.

prototyping a game

Some ideas, principles, decisions, constraints, suggestions, open questions that emerged as we explored the propositions.



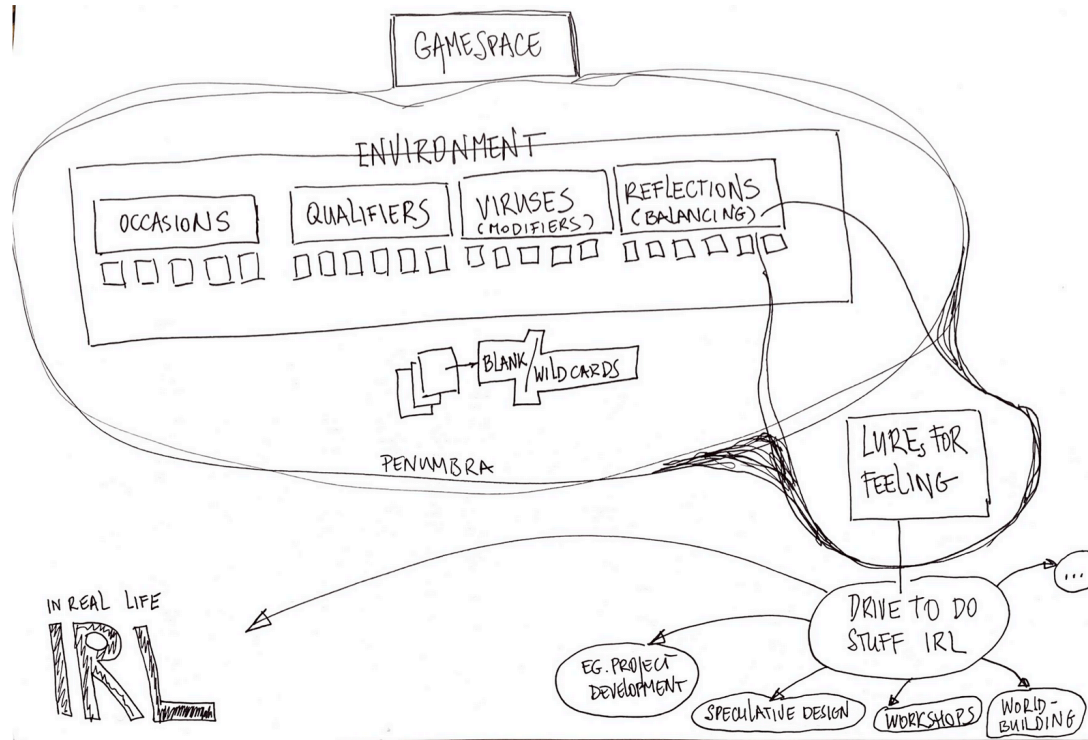
Whiteboard annotations from the workshop where we attempted to understand how Whitehead's propositions might be translated into a deck of cards.

Figure 2: Whiteboard annotations from the workshop where we attempted to understand how Whitehead's propositions might be translated into a deck of cards.

Design constraints

- Occasions exist in the past and/or present (but not in the future)
- It should be possible to play the game in different contexts, languages and cultures
- A game needs a starting point.
- ...

A proposition (P) requires an "actual occasion" (O) and a "predicative pattern" or "adverbial qualification" (Q) We tested the idea of a proposition (P) requiring two cards 1xO and 1xQ which are played as a single unit, which could be seen as "entertaining the proposition"



An attempt to reduce (or begin) with a simple set of potentials (or categories, types, mechanics, etc)...

Figure 3: An attempt to reduce (or begin) with a simple set of potentials (or categories, types, mechanisms, etc)

We tried using 2xO cards as a seed to begin the game. Some alternatives could be to use a minimal P (as a pair of 1xO and 1xQ), to decide collectively on a spread, or randomly choose cards for a starting point.

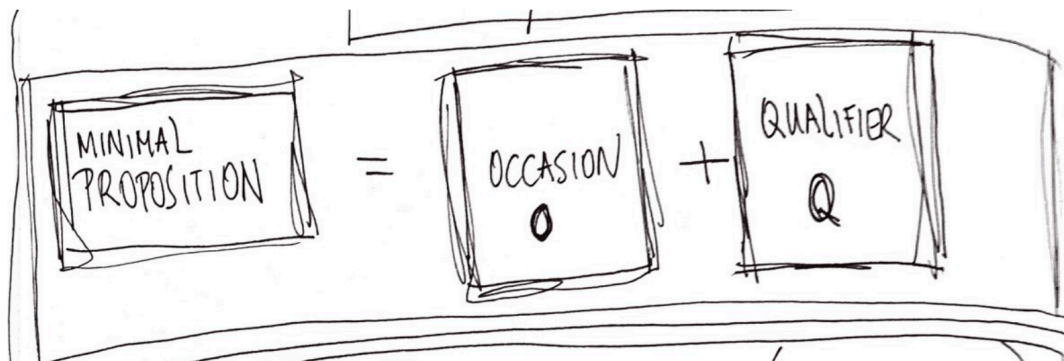
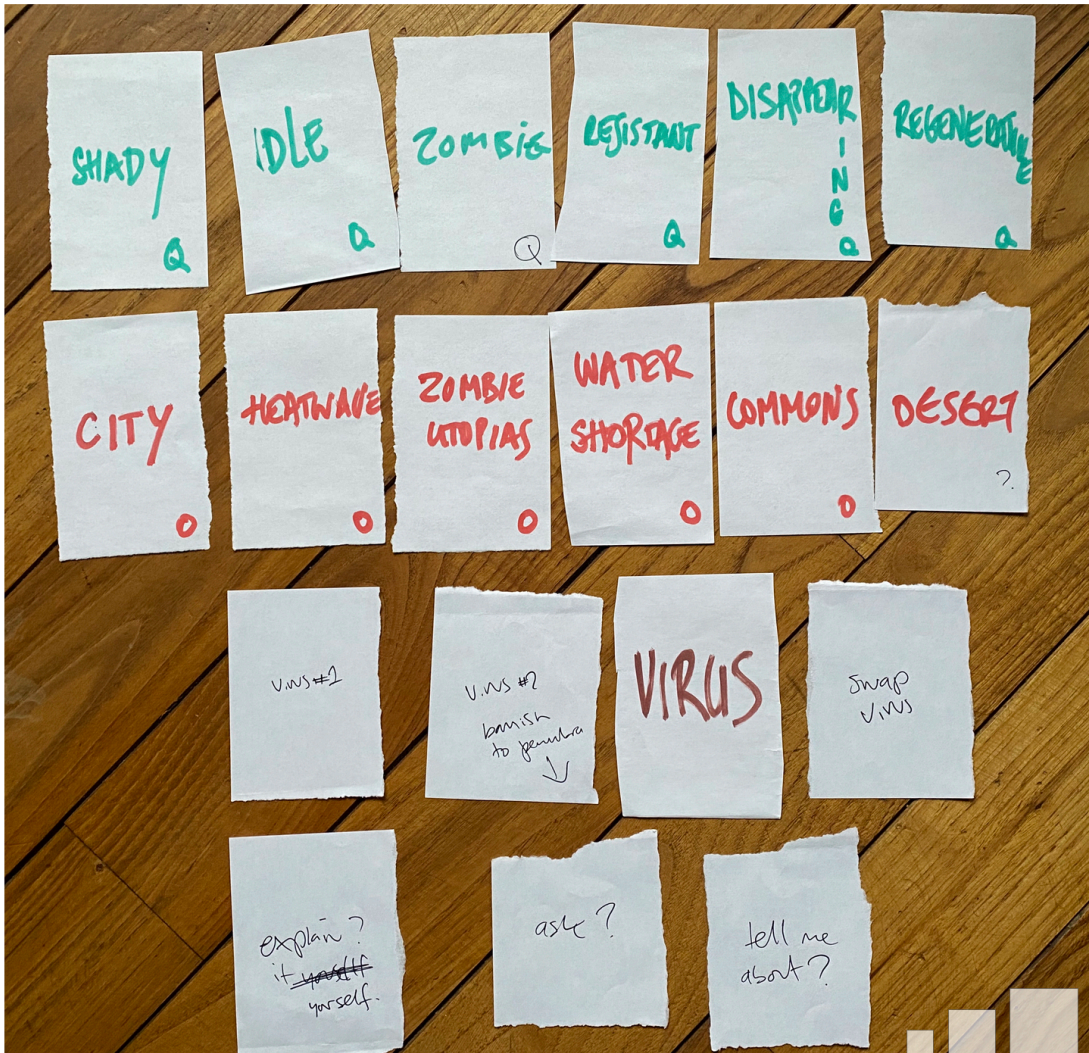


Figure 4: A minimal Proposition comprised of an Occasion and Qualifier

Possible categories of cards in the deck

- **Occasions** (actual occasions of experience)
- **Qualifiers** (predicative patterns/adverbial qualifications)
- **Viruses** (disruptive change, modifiers of the environment)
- **Reflections** (lures for worldbuilding/storytelling/IRL experiments)
- **Blank cards/wildcards/jokers**



An example of four types of cards as they could work in the Shadow Belmont scenario (blank cards not depicted)

Figure 5: An example of four types of cards as they could work in the Shadow Belmont scenario (blank cards not depicted)

Possible game dynamics

How are cards distributed at beginning of the game? The deck could be divided evenly and completely between players (dealt randomly) or players can have one 'hand' at a time. (etc)

Cards are played in an 'Environment' (E). We thought it important that any P would modify the E directly in a way that effects the game. (i.e. each card played has an effect on the 'whole' when it is played). Once a P is part of E is should persist and remain apparent.

Negative prehensions are placed in the "penumbra" (U).

Game dynamic #1: Prehending/entertaining propositions in an Environment

Once the starting point is established, players can add a P "below" any of the O cards currently in E. This can be either turn taking or out-of-order speed based play. A new P contains an O which is then becomes a new 'opening'.

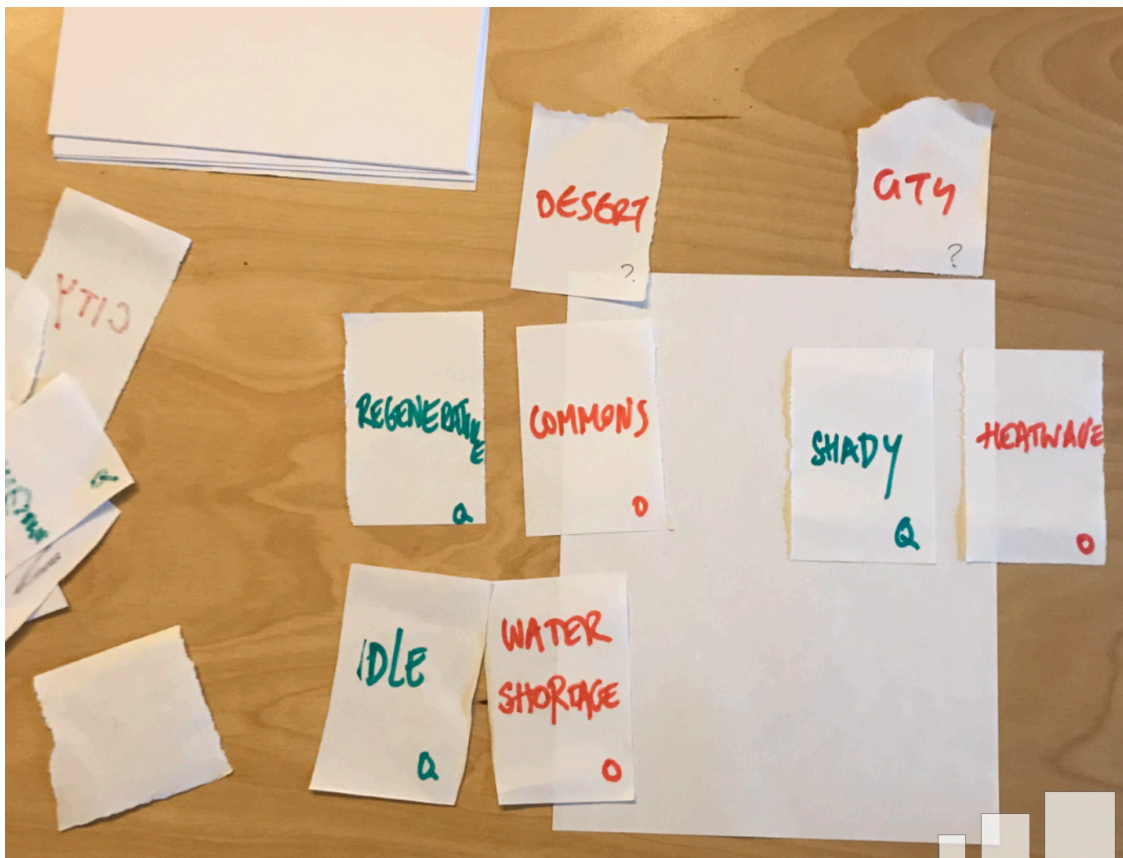


Figure 6: an example of propositions in an Environment

This appeared to create a game which could mindlessly perpetuate existing patterns., raising concerns about the role of storytelling, game play and collective/individual player's roles.

Game dynamic #2: Environment, Penumbra, Viruses (etc...)

- Prehension. Playing a Proposition ($P=O+Q$) alters the Environment (by "entertaining" or "prehending" the proposition, i.e. putting the cards "on the table")
- Adding multiple propositions (P) adds complexity to the environment (through accretion)
- Negative prehension. Moving one element of an unwanted proposition to the Penumbra (a space in which all cards continue to be available)

- Massive change to the environment can happen through "Modifier" cards or "Viruses".
- Different types of viruses can modify the environment in different ways by changing, moving or grouping cards
- Once the virus has modified the environment it moves itself to the Penumbra
- Novelty: We thought blank cards (wild/joker/temp) could be interesting (but haven't explored the ways they could work much).

more on Modifiers/Viruses

We thought that "virus" V cards are needed to cause disruptions or unexpected change. They can interact with all other cards in some way. This could be structural in that it changes the cards that are present in E for example, by moving cards from E into U (penumbra) swapping Q or O cards, etc. It could also be a way to change game play in various interesting, unpredictable ways.

This game dynamic seems to create a more complex game where the environment keeps growing, changing and collapsing. It isn't clear how this version of the game would end...

Game dynamic #3: Reflection/Storytelling

We agreed on the importance of including narrative or storytelling aspects. The Environment could act as a prompt, or way of developing a scenario. To test how we could introduce this as part of the game play (rather than between rounds for example) we tested "reflection" cards (R) as a way to ask questions (which could be about the propositions, environment or players) and to tell stories.

A reflection card requires a player to explain, elaborate or describe the Proposition (we chose the most recently played, but could be applied to any other card, or branch in the Environment). This could involve the player who played the card, another player or all players. Various combinations of Reflection cards could prompt structured conversation around the various Propositions.

We entertained the possibility that the V and R cards could be merged, or that there could be another category that is not Propositions made from pairs of O and Q cards,

Game dynamic #4: The end?

We had some ideas (but did not reach any conclusions) about how the game could end. We would like to test ideas around 'keeping the game going' and finding points to use a scenario (as developed in E) as a prompt for further work IRL (cue the "mere matter of implementation" deck.)

Game dynamic summary: Some simple rules

- a Proposition P is composed of one Q card and one O card
- (details and the specific cards are still to be sketched...)
- A 'turn' is comprised of a single activity (play)
- valid actions are to play P, V or R in E; to play one P in U; or to swap one card from U into the players hand (or the unplayed deck?)
- a player can only play one P, V or R at a time (turn?)
- a P can be played in E or U (the Penumbra)
- a P played in E is appended to an 'active' O in a vertical sequence (an active O is one of the lower most...)

- the cards played in E are usually fixed and accrete.
- any cards played in U become available for other players and are messy (visible? layered?)
- one R or V card can be played at a time (turn?)
- a R card starts a process of reflection on one card or collection of cards in E (or possibly U?)
- e.g. a question about a P or a story about the present E, and could also include creative prompts...
- a player can swap one of their cards for a card in U
- [...]

At this point, we still need to describe lures, iceberg tips of lures, the inside, outside or boundedness of a game, how it could be expanded, extend, situated, localised...

propositional #3 — 2020-09-17

These instruction emerged during a series of discussions, tests and design probes conducted mainly online from September to November 2020.

some ideas, reiterations, motivations and questions

- The card or deck types can be “situated”, “archetypal” or “blank” we still think this is open, yet defined enough to be interesting and that cards, from different decks can be mixed, or merged as required.
- play as an origin story of a shared world
- As the game develops, lures for feeling can emerge and provide ways to blur gameplay and the “outside”
- A proposition, or the process of realisation, or following a lure is not usually “instructional”
- what makes a player move is the environment around them, driving play further rather than going toward the penumbra (as “negatively prehended”)
- As the game is played there is an accumulation of cards and shifts in relevance between them.
- how does time pass? (in the game and/or in Whitehead’s cosmology)
- how does something “gain relevance”?
- once a proposition is fulfilled an Q&O pair become ‘actualised’, the proposition enters the ‘actual world’ as a satisfied occasion.
- parameters for how cards are related to things in the real world can be agreed upon at the outset (e.g. ecological, meal, etc...) but the interpretation may change during the course of the game, and the relationships develop in unexpected directions.

an example the gameplay in a workshop context

...a workshop occurs as part of the world and a card game occurs as a part of the workshop with formal (explicit) relationships between cards and aspects of the outside world (still interior to the game)

round 0 (cards)

- start with an “actual world” a pre-existing game state (created, discussed or random...)
- a way to establish the world in which you’re playing
- entertaining propositions (as gameplay)

round 1 (IRL or “the wider realm”)

- Play a Q&O as an ‘occasion’ to become ‘actual’. actualise.
- actualising propositions (e.g. a meal) in game and ‘in the world’
- an ‘actualised proposition’ becomes a ‘satisfied occasion’
- generate new O cards to bring to round 2.

round 2 (with cards)

- Q&O –actualised→ into a new ‘O’
- after returning from the ‘actualised occasion’ add Q cards to the new compound O (qualifiers of O as experienced)
- create new propositions: by adding O cards generated during round 1 to the Q cards played in this round. (alternatively: Play a Q&O as an ‘occasion’ to become ‘actual’. actualise.

come back, add Q card to new O, generate more Os during dinner & play them)

round 3 (IRL or "the wider realm")

- choose a new proposition to actualise
- do it. (repeat round 1 & 2)

(how does this end?)

questions, realignment, reconfiguration, etc

- what provides the "lure"?
- what are the relationships between the "world of the game" and the "world of the game in the world" how are they made apparent?
- porous boundaries between speculation/actualisation and game(cards)/world(game) could be confusing or productive.

another attempt exploring possible game play

working from various ideas and minimal conditions (as above)

- there is a pack of cards and a place in which the game occurs
- the game can happen quickly, or last for several days using the same rules/gameplay
- there are O and Q cards and possibly R/V cards
- a 'minimal proposition' is made up of a pair of cards, one O and one Q.
- the "deck" is open ended, in that there isn't a fixed number of cards, size of deck, some can be blank, etc
- there must be some explicit 'relationship' or link between particular cards and things in the wider space of play.
- players agree on rules, relationships, duration, etc.
- the game has an impact on the people playing it and the place in which it happens
- the people playing, and place in which the game is played has an influence on how the game is played
- gameplay can encourage cooperation and/or conflict
- the game is "just" a game, yet always acts as a metaphor for the world in which is it played (?)

Ground assumption. The world is not a 'blank slate' so game begins with some establishing process

- e.g. careful deliberation and selection of relevant pairs of O&Qs placed in play
- e.g. shuffle & randomly select an agreed upon number of pairs to start working with

Gameplay proposition

round 0

- establish duration, conditions for ending the game, 'way of beginning'
- establish relationships between cards & non-card world (should be fairly explicit)
- select pairs of O&Q cards to set the basis for the game (via deliberation, chance, etc+)

round 1 to n

- play some pairs (each player in turn, or collaboratively/collectively)
- a proposition (pair) is 'realised' by being 'played' (?) becoming a lure.
- the proposition (having a relationship to something 'outside' the cards) becomes 'actualised' (by doing something)
- having (done something) players return to the cards
- select new cards (pairs) based on their experience of the (something that has been done)
- player(s) can play Q card(s) on the 'actualised proposition' (now treated an "occasion"?)
- layer, add, repeat

place a proposition...

[Q][O]

each player (or unit of players) adds a Q to the now (unified?) Q&O pair that was 'realised'.

[Q]

[Q] [[Q][O]]

[Q]

adds O card(s) to test propositions

[O][Q]\

[Q]-[[Q][O]]

[Q]/

repeat

[Q]-[[O][Q]]\

[Q]-[[Q][O]]

[Q]/

prototyping a 'situated deck'

On 2020-10-08 & 2020-10-22 we embarked upon some more specific game play tests using a situated 'pandemic' deck for context. There are 3 types of cards, O,Q & V, each is labelled with a single word (in English) and there are consistent colours for each type of card.

We began with an extensive deck (of around 260 cards) in the expectation that some cards would work together in particular ways, and could suggest interesting directions for specific cards.

(an editable version of can be found at <https://neon.fo.am/s/qjEeXnbFTzmpDj>)

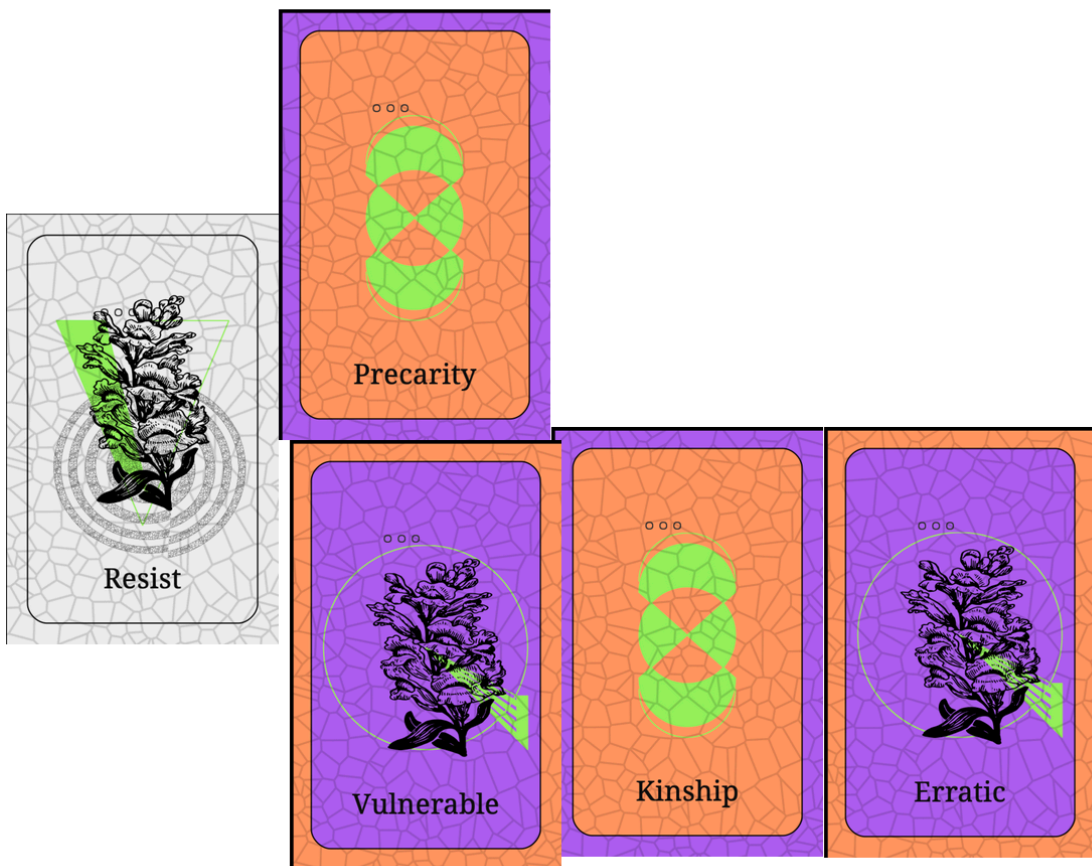


Figure 7: Proposition and Verb. does it provide a lure?

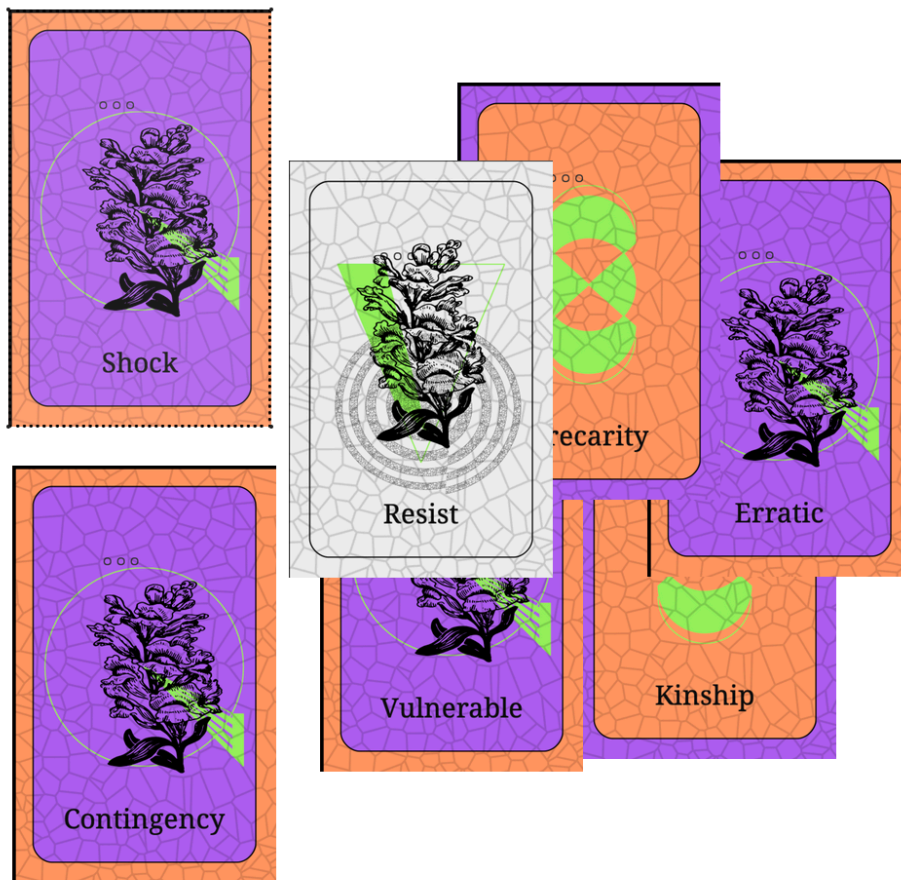


Figure 8: An actualised propositions, with qualifiers

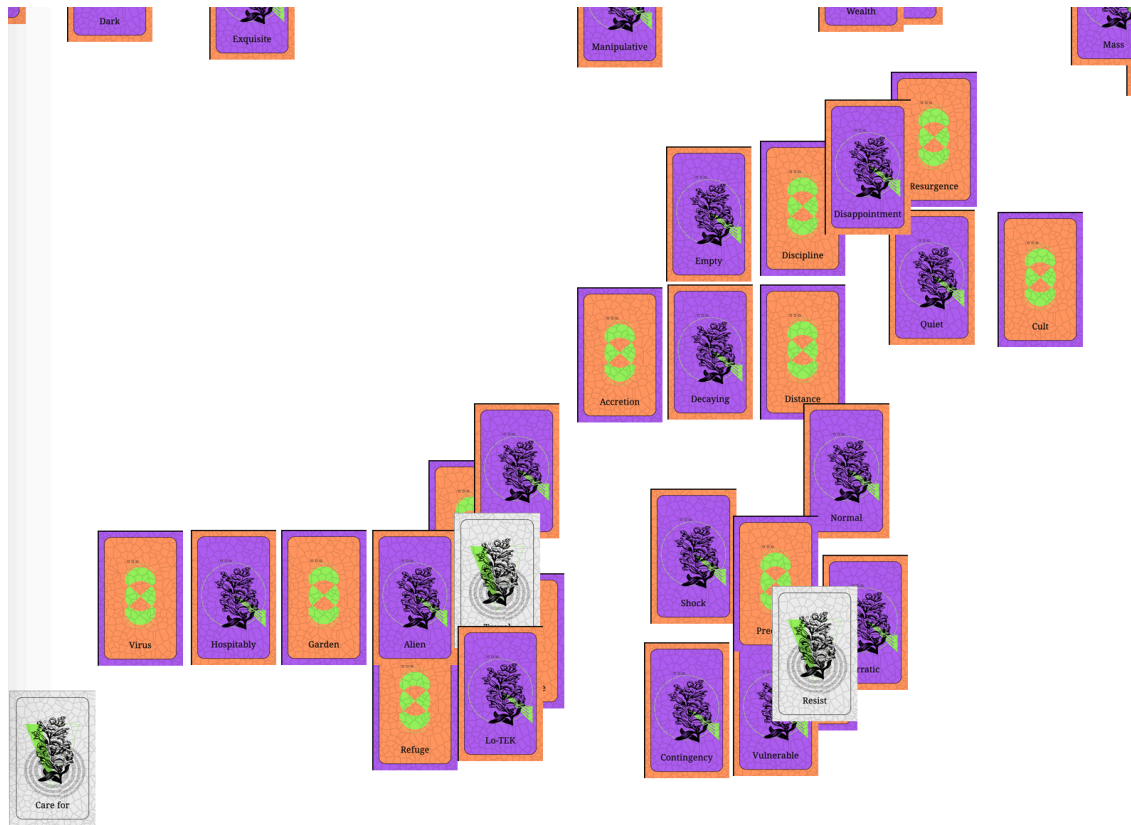


Figure 9: Extended, accreted...

occasions	qualifiers	verbs
Livingroom	Hostile	Cook
Computer	Malaise	Walk
Facebook	Anxiety	Isolate
Urban	Boredom	Test
Empty City	Frenzy	Avoid
Depleted Resources	Suffocating	Plan
Supplies	Paralyzed	Slow down
Mask	Desperate	Unplan
Hospital	Hospitably	Explore
ICU	Erratic	Play
Bed	Tedium	Transform
Sanitizer	Wastefully	Protect
Patio	Conservatively	Regenerate
Produce	Solidarity	Grow
Meat	Racist	Incubate
Canned Goods	Inequality	Mourn
Debate	Acedia	Repair
Fight	Fake	Destroy
Resistance	Interdependent	Create
Inertia	Shock	Travel
Truth	Normal	Bake
Vaccine	Authoritarian	Trick
Hoax	Hybrid	Break
Internet	Postal	Move
Connection	Care	Build
Disconnection	Life	Assemble
Conspiracy	Fool	Dissolve
Cult	Young	Embody
Meme	Ageing	Enact
Space race	Confined	Prototype
Idiocracy	Belonging	Ferment

propositional #4 — 2020-10-14

continuing from previous tests with the pandemic situated deck...

(expand: rounds, cycles, introduction of "verbs". expanding and joining propositions [OQ] and spatial layout)

First cycle (establishment)

- setting parameters for the game
- spread - tarot like for the individual (mechanical/chance) or multiplayer (agree collaboratively how it could work)
 - (deliberation in a multiplayer situation) - determining the stakes, this is the scope of the game, these are the connections, these are the rules...
- one position in the spread → a situation in the wider realm
 - what might be the other positions?
- what is the current situation? each player is dealt an occasion card and you can pick a qualifier to describe the current situation. all occasions exist - place them closer to the centre if they describe the situation, put them further away to the edge of the environment if less relevant
- the environment has a centre and periphery (spatial architecture matters). first round - describing the current situation, next rounds - what's in the centre has been actualised
- after everyone has put down a proposition i.e. O+Q cards (that describe the current situation), one verb card is played (a lure to intervene in the current situation) - either random (as a constraint), or chosen (because the player(s) agree that this action is a good lure?)

Second cycle (continuation)

- **Round 1:** everyone adds a qualifier to the propositions in the environment (either to one proposition or to connect two propositions → propositions that shouldn't connect, connect → depth of satisfaction). the qualifier should make it more appealing to entertain the propositions in the wider realm.
- **Round 2** (,3,4,5,n): everyone can play either a qualifier or an occasion on the propositions that are in the environment
 - after the 2nd round the players can discuss if they want to play the verb on a proposition and go actualise it in the wider realm. if they're insufficiently 'lured' they play another round (Q/O cards)
 - alternatively → any player can BECOME GOD - choose to play the verb that is already in the environment and add it to a proposition, in whichever round (if the player has an idea how the proposition could be actualised). the other players can discuss.
 - the players decide how to actualise the proposition and go and do this in the wider realm. if they are satisfied they can decide to end the game. otherwise they come back to the card game for the next cycle
 - The propositions that are not going to be actualised in this cycle move into the penumbra.

Third cycle

- **Round 1:** the actualised proposition now becomes an occasion.
 - players add qualifiers to this occasion based on their experience of actualising it in the wider realm
 - a new verb card is given/chosen

- **Round 2** (,3,4,5,n) - the same process as in the Second Cycle (playing occasions or qualifiers until the verb is added to a proposition.
 - a player can decide to bring a proposition from the first round back from the penumbra and entertain it in the environment again with a different verb.
 - as the propositions get more complex (if multiple rounds are played), things at the end of a chain are more prominent for the actualisation.
- After the proposition is actualised in the wider realm, the players decide to either stop (satisfied) or continue for another cycle.

Questions

When does the discussion about duration of play happen (i.e. how many cycles will be played)?

The game can end in a few different ways

- after any actualisation in the wider realm by agreement of the players (end of a 'cycle')
- after all (verb) cards are exhausted (or all qualifiers/occasions) (end of the deck)
- or it's open-ended, or end of a workshop, or all players satisfied... (ongoing...)
- the players can agree on how they want the game to end beforehand (pre-determined)

...and 2020-10-28

for next time:

- clean up the notes for game mechanics
- decide how to start the game (try out different ways)
- clean up the word lists - situated (pandemic) + archetypal
- empty deck, printable decks, deluxe printed decks (with images), programmable e-paper deck

...and 2020-11-11

- tested the 'chance' and 'deliberation' modes of play. both appear potentially interesting...
- working title becomes 'superject' (rather than S.P.A.C.E)

There was some discussion about reintroducing 'virus' and/or ways of changing the physical layout of the Environment as the game progresses, and there may be 'too many' cards in play. how could something like an 'abstraction" process work? how can these 'modifier' cards be introduced? at points of frustration? by chance? and possibly acting over longer game cycles (if a modification takes effect over several rounds, etc+). Modifiers could remain face down → selected at points of inflection during the game.

Following the game flow as outlined in the diagram (ref.) raised a question about when the V cards introduced. is it part of the starting cycle (cycle0) or the ongoing cycles? are they chosen with, or after the initial P or with the first round of qualifiers?

For example, during the opening 'deliberation' cycle...

- each player chooses one card (O or Q) and places in E
- discuss amongst, between, etc
- aim is to describe the 'current situation' something like a check-in round

- place matching cards to create P in E
- decide collectively on relevant V cards (a suitable number of V cards for expected length of the game)

The glossary has been transferred to subetha (at [superject](#))

design notes

In thinking about how image centric cards could work, we tested a few methods of automating image selection for the pandemic deck. the `squib` script now includes an option to add images from searches based on the description of the card.

- **text2image** generates an image from the card's "name" using a GAN
- **unsplash** can be used to search for photographic images
- **pelxels** for clipart search (not guaranteed to provide a match)

...and a first pass at an online interface (using [deck-of-cards](https://superject.space))



Figure 10: <https://superject.space>

...some cards are more humorous than useful, but could open other directions and/or serendipity.

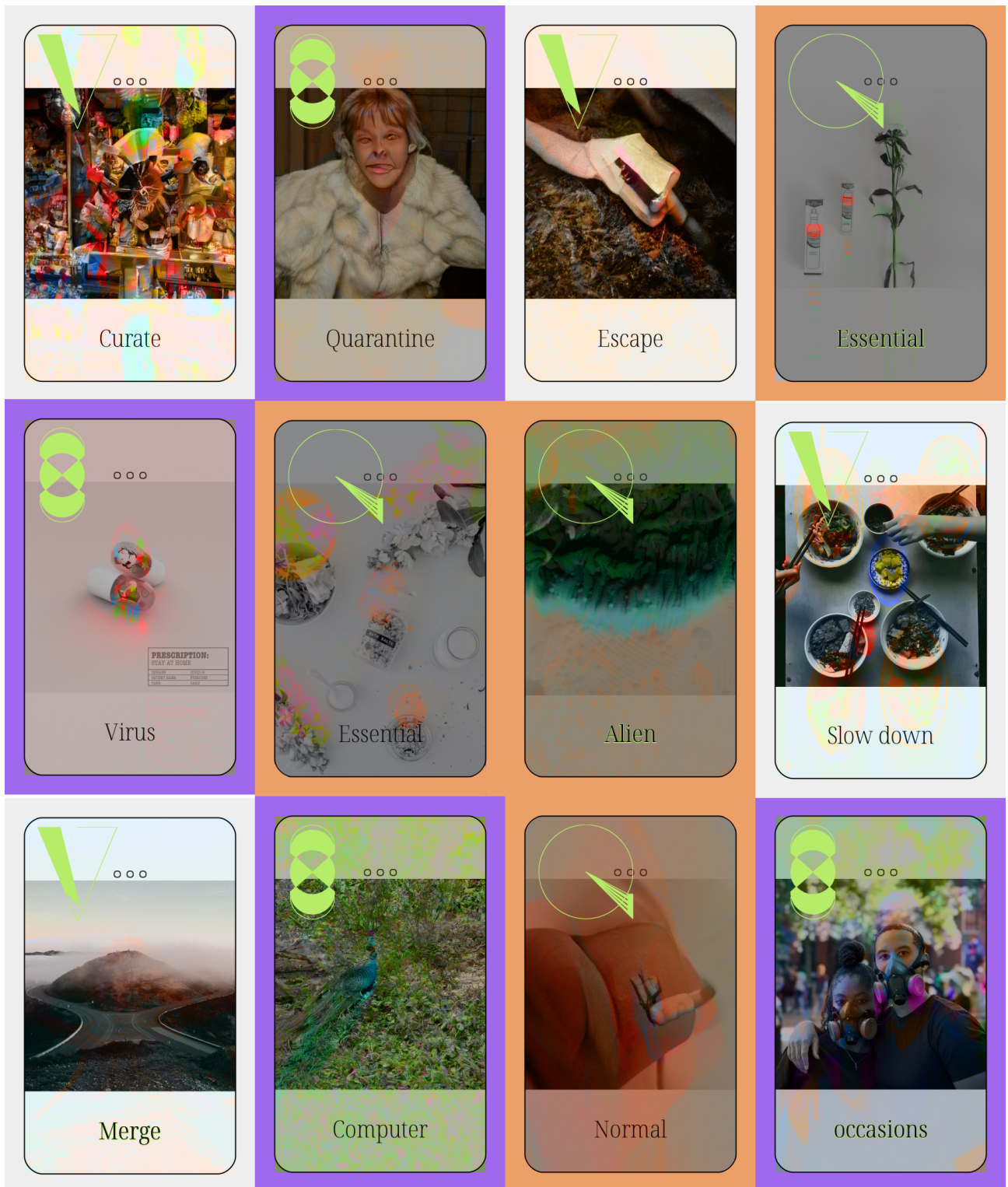


Figure 11: various cards

other games, gameplay and/or narrative tangents

Looking at various cards, decks and games in an attempt understand our possibility space, focus and intent, through the lens of Whitehead's propositions....

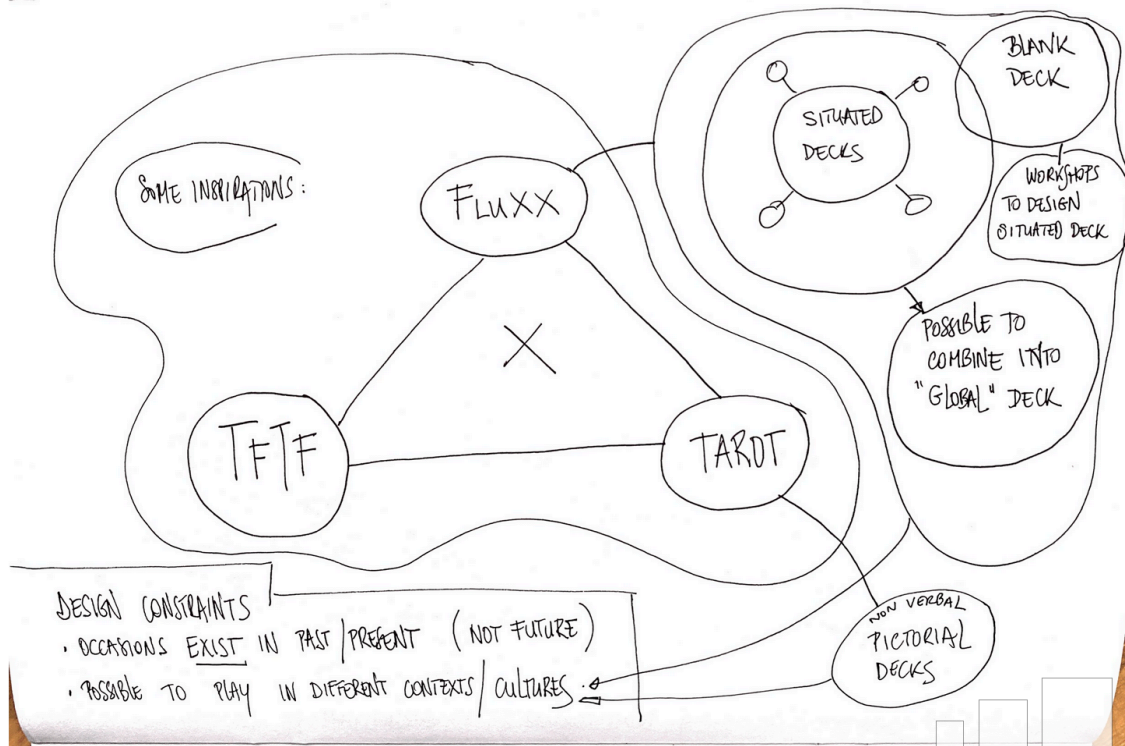


Figure 12: various games

some examples, an attempt at taxonomy and cartomancy (game like rules → games with an outside?)

Tarot

- [Tarot tutorial](#) (libarynth)
- combinatorial, graphic, fixed symbolism/archetypes, open grammar, spatial → context/interpretation loop (open? context)
- see also [Lenormand](#)

Fluxx

- [Fluxx](#) (wikipedia)
- fixed categories of cards, can change rules, and goals of the game as part of the game

Thing from the future (etc)

- [The Thing from the Future](#) (situation lab)
- combinatorial, fixed categories, fixed grammar, sequential → compound prompt (closed? context)
- focus on objects, design fiction

oblique strategies

- [Oblique strategies](#) (wikipedia)
- single 'prompt' → 'new' context (card encourages activity 'outside' the boundary of the game)

exquisite corpse

- combinatorial → each choice shapes the next → ?

Design fiction (changeist)

- combinatorial, text, developed context, focus on worldbuilding

1000 Blank White Cards (c.f. nomic)

- open!? variable, context dependent, and very much player dependent.

various (iterated/rotated/terminology)

- [card games](#) (wikipedia)

MTG

- [Magic: The Gathering](#) (wikipedia)
- fixed rules, extendable by adding new cards within existing categories(?)

Arboretum

- ([rules.pdf](#))
- according to the rules of the card game arboretum, "In case of a tie the player with the most colors present in her arboretum is the winner. If there is still a tie, the players must each plant a tree. In 5 years' time, the player whose tree has grown the tallest wins."

Dixit

- <https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/39856/dixit>

"One player is the storyteller for the turn and looks at the images on the 6 cards in her hand. From one of these, she makes up a sentence and says it out loud (without showing the card to the other players). Each other player selects the card in their hands which best matches the sentence and gives the selected card to the storyteller, without showing it to the others."

Kabufuda / Hanufuda

[Hanafuda](#) and [Kabufuda](#) "cards are tiny, only 2 1/8 by 1 1/4 inches (54 x 32 mm), but about three times thicker than Western cards. [...] There are twelve suits, representing months of the year. Each is designated by a flower and has four cards. The point values should be considered merely as a ranking mechanism, as the most popular games only concern themselves with certain combinations of taken cards. "

Hanafuda Cards

Traditional Japanese card game

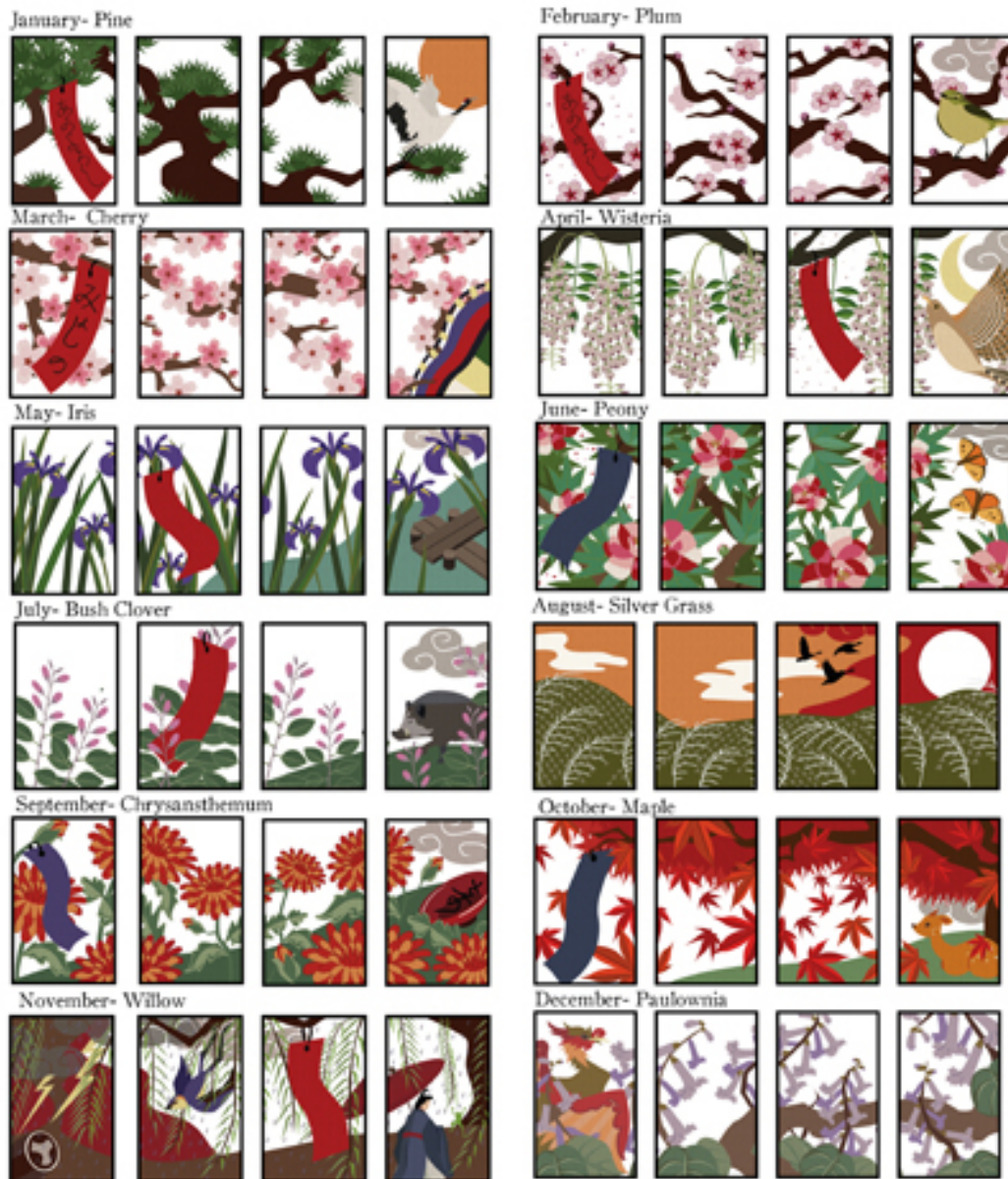


Figure 13: Hanafuda Cards

digital and/or physical prototypes

Our current game prototypes are using [squib](#) to create card decks from templates (details can be found in the [cards/](#) folder)

potentially useful...

- [boardgame.io](#) is an engine for creating turn-based games using JavaScript.
- using [spacedeck](#) (or other shared whiteboard) for testing
- [Tabletop Simulator deck importer for Magic, Yu-Gi-Oh and Pokémon TCG](#)
- a [multi-player card game simulator](#) (aka. “deck of cards”)
- [open game art](#)

other card game prototyping tools

- [squib](#) ([github](#))
- [card creatr](#) & [card creatr studio](#)
- [pycard](#)

epaper

- [1.02" - 2.2" E-Ink display modules](#)
- [2.9inch Passive NFC-Powered e-Paper, No Battery](#)
- [800x600, 4.3inch e-Paper UART Module](#)

printing (etc+)

- [Cartamundi](#)
- [MPC](#) (make playing cards)