

WINNING WITH LOSING STRATEGIES

Medium design has been proposed as a design theory for disposition-driven media, as a way to address injustices and imbalances in systems. It suggests reconfiguring the exterior field of play, to change the wider context of a problem.

When you're missing information, you may find yourself fighting a losing battle. This design manual explores Parando's Paradox as embracing indeterminacy, error and complexity, which are often perceived as counterintuitive to our notions of order and efficiency.

By adopting a playful design approach that interacts with the system, we can think of problems as a pair of counter-balancing games. By pairing two games together, new variables begin to subtly change the rules and reframe the problem, creating a ratchet effect that can solve an underlying problem in a non-forceful way.

"In game theory, Parando's Paradox claims that although two losing games played independently will always lose, two losing games played alternately may generate a winning streak"

Heller Easterling, 2002



DESIGNING WITH PARADOX

Rather than impose a designated solution, the following manual guides you through unpredictable interplay, and trial and error to introduce new information and players, as a way of breaking out of the closed loops, and amass new potentialities and wins.

IF SOMETHING ISN'T WORKING

1. Identify an alternate problem
2. Reimagine problem 1 in the context of problem 2
3. Reverse engineer a move in problem 1 that makes it part of problem 2
4. Alternate between both problems until you start to win

TOOLS

Disposition

Perhaps it is possible to slither in between as social/political entrepreneurs who adjust disposition in space and offer spatial urban variables that change the terms of the problem.
Heller Easterling 2016

Improvisation

"Not limited to prescription, the designer can engage in improvisation—in the pleasures of knowing how as well as knowing that"
Heller Easterling, 2014

Re-imagination

"above all, open streets events let people live briefly in an alternate reality where their city prioritizes streets for people. This alternate reality challenges what people experience in their daily life, and argues that streets where people come first are not only possible but better than the current reality."
Mimi Sheller, 2018

Knowledge

"This is what the apparatus consists in: strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge" Foucault, 1977 196

Irrationality

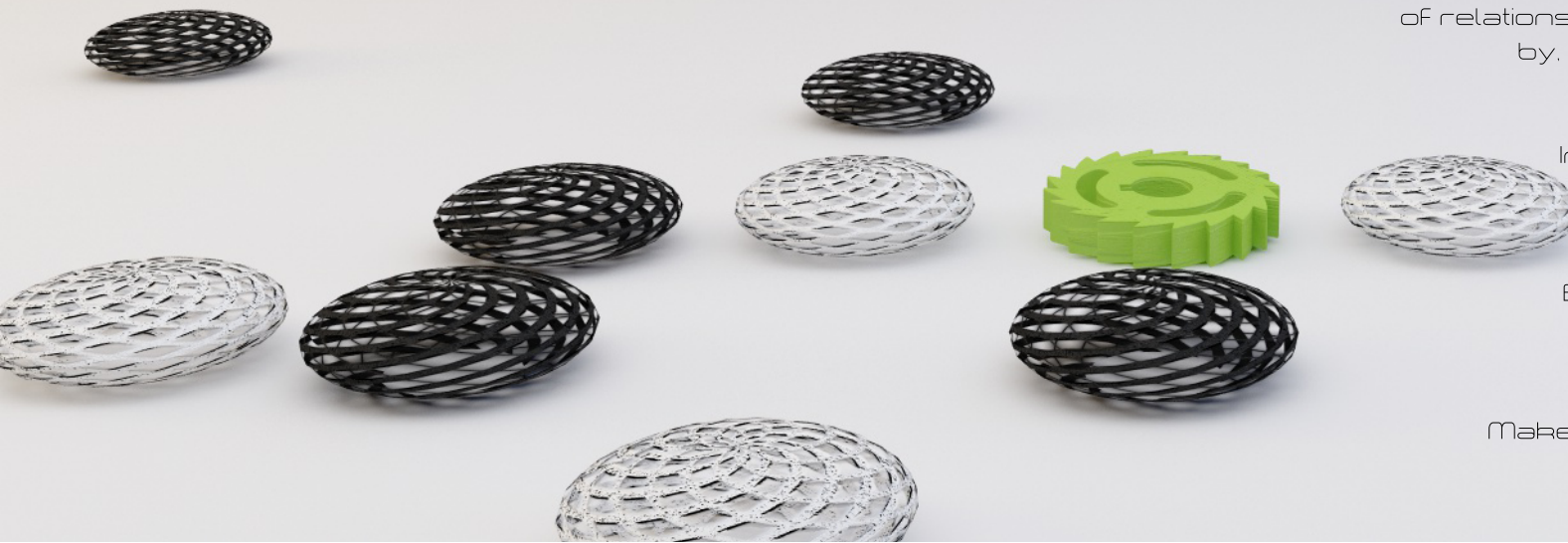
In these situations we think that people are simply acting irrationally

Simulation

By simulating possible futures we can fill in these information gaps

Strategy

Make better decisions based on the model



Go

Irrationality is caring about losing
Winning strategy is to keep playing

Breathing

Irrationality is only inhaling or only exhaling
Winning strategy is to inhale and exhale

Organisations

Irrationality is blind faith
Winning strategy is to speak up or to exit the organisation

"Insanity is
doing the same
thing over and
over again and
expecting a
different result"

Whether in a global battle over
technology and democracy, devising
urban strategies, or as small as
the natural a function of breathing,
alternating between games as a form
paradox-driven design can be used
to pair complementary problems into
new forms of information, multipliers
and interplay.

