



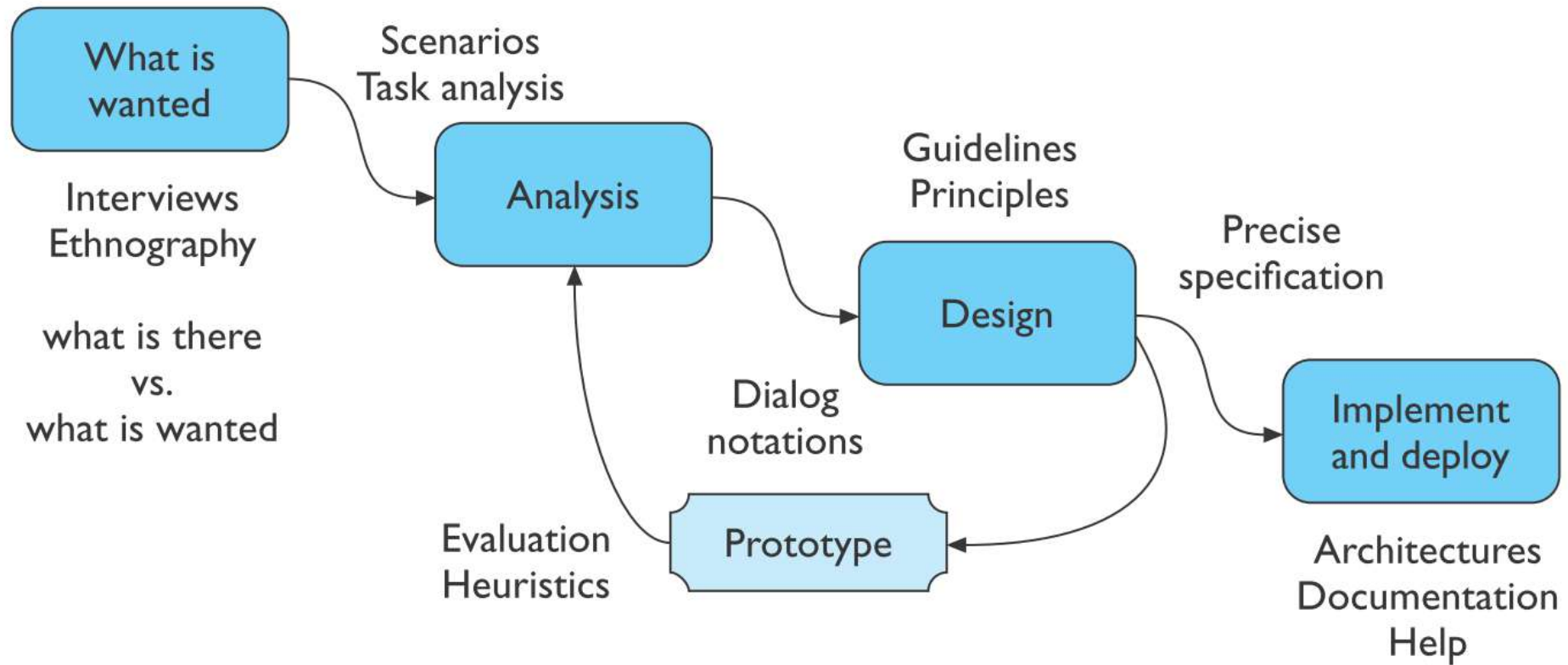
Strategies for Digital Wellbeing

Threats to Digital Wellbeing
Alberto Monge Roffarello

Outline

- From design patterns to dark patterns
- Attention economy and persuasive technology
- Attention-capture dark patterns

Human-Centered Design Process (simplified and generic)



Generating Design Solutions

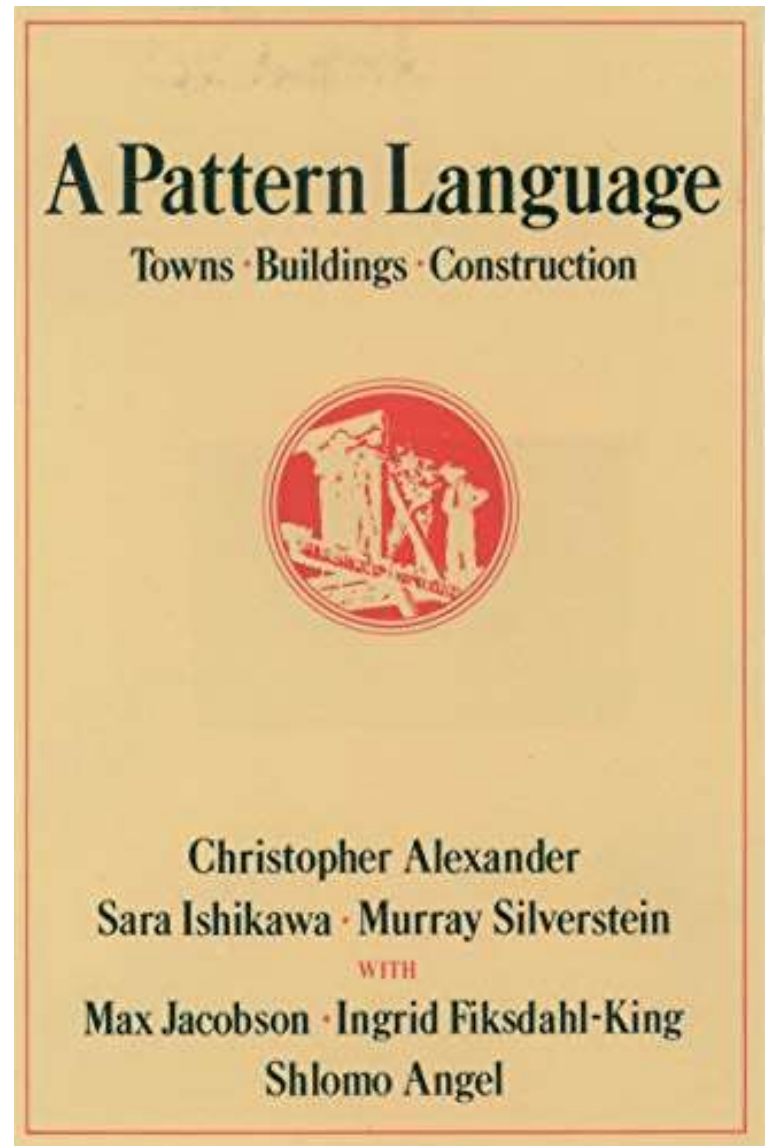
- **Design Patterns:** well-proven solutions that solve commonly recurring problems
 - they suggest a specific solution for the specific problem;
 - the solution has been tested by others;
 - the solution can be reused.

Design = Solutions

- Design is about solution
- Unfortunately, designers often reinvent things, so that it is hard to know:
 - **how** things were done before
 - **why** things were done in a certain way
 - **how** to reuse solutions

Design Patterns

- Design patterns were first used in architecture
- The idea was introduced by the architect Christopher Alexander, who defined a design pattern in this way: *"Each pattern describes a problem that occurs over and over again in our environment, and then describes the core of the solution to that problem, in such a way that you can use this solution a million times over, without ever doing it the same way twice."*



Design Patterns

- They are a way to communicate common **design problems** and **related solutions**
 - Design patterns are recurring solutions that solve common design problems
- They not too general and not too specific
 - use a solution “a million times over, without ever doing it the same way twice”
- They are a *shared language*
 - Design patterns are standard reference points for designers
 - They allow for debate over alternatives, where merely mentioning the name of a design pattern implicitly carries much more meaning than merely the name
 - They are readable by non-experts

Design Patterns As a New Literary Form

- A *literary form* is an agreement between the writer and the reader
 - A letter always starts with “Dear ...” and ends with some letter closings (e.g., “Best regards”)
- We can think about design patterns as a new literary form
 - They define certain **things** to be in a certain **place** with a certain **meaning**

Design Patterns Description

243 SITTING WALL**



1124

... if all is well, the outdoor areas are largely made up of positive spaces—POSITIVE OUTDOOR SPACES (106); in some fashion you have marked boundaries between gardens and streets, between terraces and gardens, between outdoor rooms and terraces, between play areas and gardens—GREEN STREETS (51), PEDESTRIAN STREET (100), HALF-HIDDEN GARDEN (111), HIERARCHY OF OPEN SPACE (114), PATH SHAPE (121), ACTIVITY POCKETS (124), PRIVATE TERRACE ON THE STREET (140), OUTDOOR ROOM (163), OPENING TO THE STREET (165), GALLERY SURROUND (166), GARDEN GROWING WILD (172). With this pattern, you can help these natural boundaries take on their proper character, by building walls, just low enough to sit on, and high enough to mark the boundaries.

If you have also marked the places where it makes sense to build SEATS—SEAT SPOTS (241), FRONT DOOR BENCH (242)—you can kill two birds with one stone by using the walls as seats which help enclose the outdoor space wherever its positive character is weakest.

In many places walls and fences between outdoor spaces are too high; but no boundary at all does injustice to the subtlety of the divisions between the spaces.

Consider, for example, a garden on a quiet street. At least somewhere along the edge between the two there is a need for a seam, a place which unites the two, but does so without breaking down the fact that they are separate places. If there is a high wall or a hedge, then the people in the garden have no way of being connected to the street; the people in the street have no way of being connected to the garden. But if there is no barrier at all—then the division between the two is hard to maintain. Stray dogs can wander in and out at will; it is even uncomfortable to sit in the garden, because it is essentially like sitting in the street.

1125

CONSTRUCTION

The problem can only be solved by a kind of barrier which functions as a barrier which separates, and as a seam which joins, at the same time.

A low wall or balustrade, just at the right height for sitting, is perfect. It creates a barrier which separates. But because it invites people to sit on it—invites them to sit first with their legs on one side, then with their legs on top, then to swivel round still further to the other side, or to sit astride it—it also functions as a seam, which makes a positive connection between the two places.

Examples: A low wall with the children's sandbox on one side, circulation path on the other; low wall at the front of the garden, connecting the house to the public path; a sitting wall that is a retaining wall, with plants on one side, where people can sit close to the flowers and eat their lunch.

Ruskin describes a sitting wall he experienced:

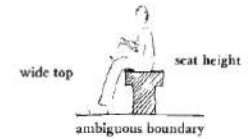
*Last summer I was lodging for a little while in a cottage in the country, and in front of my low window there were, first, some beds of daisies, then a row of gooseberry and currant bushes, and then a low wall about three feet above the ground, covered with stone-cress. Outside, a corn-field, with its green ears glistening in the sun, and a field path through it, just past the garden gate. From my window I could see every peasant of the village who passed that way, with basket on arm for market, or spade on shoulder for field. When I was inclined for society, I could lean over my wall, and talk to anybody; when I was inclined for science, I could botanize all along the top of my wall—there were four species of stone-cress alone growing on it, and when I was inclined for exercise, I could jump over my wall, backwards and forwards. That's the sort of fence to have in a Christian country; not a thing which you can't walk inside of without making yourself look like a wild beast, nor look at out of your window in the morning without expecting to see somebody impaled upon it in the night. (John Ruskin, *The Two Paths*, New York: Everyman's Library, 1907, p. 203.)*

Therefore:

Surround any natural outdoor area, and make minor boundaries between outdoor areas with low walls, about 16 inches high, and wide enough to sit on, at least 12 inches wide.

1126

243 SITTING WALL



Place the walls to coincide with natural seat spots, so that extra benches are not necessary—SEAT SPOTS (241); make them of brick or tile, if possible—SOFT TILE AND BRICK (248); if they separate two areas of slightly different height, pierce them with holes to make them balustrades—ORNAMENT (249). Where they are in the sun, and can be large enough, plant flowers in them or against them—RAISED FLOWERS (245)...


1127

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243 SITTING WALL**

Images



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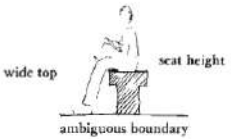
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243 SITTING WALL



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Place the walls to coincide with natural seat spots, so that extra benches are not necessary—SEAT SPOTS (241); make them of brick or tile, if possible—SOFT TILE AND BRICK (248); if they separate two areas of slightly different height, pierce them with holes to make them balustrades—ORNAMENT (249). Where they are in the sun, and can be large enough, plant flowers in them or against them—RAISED FLOWERS (245). . . .

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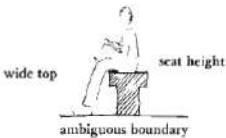
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1126

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Design Patterns Description

<p data-bbox="440 354 524 382">Name</p> <p data-bbox="198 411 517 444">243 SITTING WALL**</p>  <p data-bbox="496 496 598 529">Images</p> <p data-bbox="343 1135 382 1149">1124</p>	<p data-bbox="988 386 1098 419">Context</p> <p data-bbox="751 415 1172 654">... if all is well, the outdoor space is made up of positive spaces—POSITIVE OUTDOOR SPACE (100), in some fashion you have marked boundaries between gardens and streets, between terraces and gardens, between outdoor rooms and terraces, between play areas and gardens—GREEN STREETS (51), PEDESTRIAN STREET (100), HALF-HIDDEN GARDEN (111), HIERARCHY OF OPEN SPACE (114), PATH SHAPE (121), ACTIVITY POCKETS (124), PRIVATE TERRACE ON THE STREET (140), OUTDOOR ROOM (163), OPENING TO THE STREET (165), GALLERY SURROUND (166), GARDEN GROWING WILD (172). With this pattern, you can help these natural boundaries take on their proper character, by building walls, just low enough to sit on, and high enough to mark the boundaries.</p> <p data-bbox="751 654 1172 743">If you have also marked the places where it makes sense to build seats—SEAT SPOTS (241), FRONT DOOR BENCH (242)—you can kill two birds with one stone by using the walls as seats which help enclose the outdoor space wherever its positive character is weakest.</p> <p data-bbox="937 782 996 801">***</p> <p data-bbox="751 822 1172 882">In many places walls and fences between outdoor spaces are too high; but no boundary at all does injustice to the subtlety of the divisions between the spaces.</p> <p data-bbox="751 908 1172 1110">Consider, for example, a garden on a quiet street. At least somewhere along the edge between the two there is a need for a seam, a place which unites the two, but does so without breaking down the fact that they are separate places. If there is a high wall or a hedge, then the people in the garden have no way of being connected to the street; the people in the street have no way of being connected to the garden. But if there is no barrier at all—then the division between the two is hard to maintain. Stray dogs can wander in and out at will; it is even uncomfortable to sit in the garden, because it is essentially like sitting in the street.</p> <p data-bbox="945 1135 983 1149">1125</p>
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<p data-bbox="1523 149 1656 164">CONSTRUCTION</p> <p data-bbox="1375 182 1803 239"><i>The problem can only be solved by a kind of barrier which functions as a barrier which separates, and as a seam which joins, at the same time.</i></p> <p data-bbox="1375 239 1803 368">A low wall or balustrade, just at the right height for sitting, is perfect. It creates a barrier which separates. But because it invites people to sit on it—invites them to sit first with their legs on one side, then with their legs on top, then to swivel round still further to the other side, or to sit astride it—it also functions as a seam, which makes a positive connection between the two places.</p> <p data-bbox="1375 368 1803 462">Examples: A low wall with the children's sandbox on one side, circulation path on the other; low wall at the front of the garden, connecting the house to the public path; a sitting wall that is a retaining wall, with plants on one side, where people can sit close to the flowers and eat their lunch.</p> <p data-bbox="1375 462 1689 482">Ruskin describes a sitting wall he experienced:</p> <p data-bbox="1375 496 1803 776">Last summer I was lodging for a little while in a cottage in the country, and in front of my low window there were, first, some beds of daisies, then a row of gooseberry and currant bushes, and then a low wall about three feet above the ground, covered with stone-cress. Outside, a corn-field, with its green ears glistening in the sun, and a field path through it, just past the garden gate. From my window I could see every peasant of the village who passed that way, with basket on arm for market, or spade on shoulder for field. When I was inclined for society, I could lean over my wall, and talk to anybody; when I was inclined for science, I could botanize all along the top of my wall—there were four species of stone-cress alone growing on it, and when I was inclined for exercise, I could jump over my wall, backwards and forwards. That's the sort of fence to have in a Christian country; not a thing which you can't walk inside of without making yourself look like a wild beast, nor look at out of your window in the morning without expecting to see somebody impaled upon it in the night. (John Ruskin, <i>The Two Paths</i>, New York: Everyman's Library, 1907, p. 203.)</p> <p data-bbox="1375 786 1467 801">Therefore:</p> <p data-bbox="1375 829 1803 908">Surround any natural outdoor area, and make minor boundaries between outdoor areas with low walls, about 16 inches high, and wide enough to sit on, at least 12 inches wide.</p> <p data-bbox="1574 936 1612 951">1126</p>	<p data-bbox="2102 149 2283 164">243 SITTING WALL</p>  <p data-bbox="2168 368 2226 386">***</p> <p data-bbox="1982 408 2410 536">Place the walls to coincide with natural seat spots, so that extra benches are not necessary—SEAT SPOTS (241); make them of brick or tile, if possible—SOFT TILE AND BRICK (248); if they separate two areas of slightly different height, pierce them with holes to make them balustrades—ORNAMENT (249). Where they are in the sun, and can be large enough, plant flowers in them or against them—RAISED FLOWERS (245). . . .</p> <p data-bbox="2175 936 2214 951">1127</p>
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Design Patterns Description

Name

243 SITTING WALL**

Images



Context

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Problem statement

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Consider, for example, a garden on a quiet street. At least somewhere along the edge between the two there is a need for a seam, a place which unites the two, but does so without breaking down the fact that they are separate places. If there is a high wall or a hedge, then the people in the garden have no way of being connected to the street; the people in the street have no way of being connected to the garden. But if there is no barrier at all—then the division between the two is hard to maintain. Stray dogs can wander in and out at will; it is even uncomfortable to sit in the garden, because it is essentially like sitting in the street.

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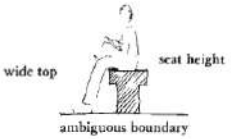
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1126

1127

243 SITTING WALL




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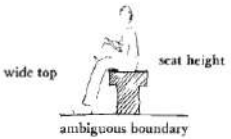
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243 SITTING WALL




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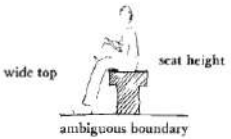
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Problem statement

In many places walls and fences between outdoor spaces are too high; but no boundary at all does injustice to the subtlety of the divisions between the spaces.

Consider, for example, a garden on a quiet street. At least somewhere along the edge between the two there is a need for a seam, a place which unites the two, but does so without breaking down the fact that they are separate places. If there is a high wall or a hedge, then the people in the garden have no way of being connected to the street; the people in the street have no way of being connected to the garden. But if there is no barrier at all—then the division between the two is hard to maintain. Stray dogs can wander in and out at will; it is even uncomfortable to sit in the garden, because it is essentially like sitting in the street.

1124 1125

CONSTRUCTION

The problem can only be solved by a kind of barrier which functions as a barrier which separates, and as a seam which joins, at the same time.

A low wall or balustrade, just at the right height for sitting, is perfect. It creates a barrier which separates. But because it invites people to sit on it—it invites them to sit first with their legs on one side, then with their legs on the other—it is still further to the other side of the barrier than the other side as a seam, which makes the two places.

Examples: A low wall with the children's sandbox on one side, circulation path on the other; low wall at the front of the garden, connecting the house to the public path; a sitting wall that is a retaining wall, with plants on one side, where people can sit close to the flowers and eat their lunch.

Ruskin describes a sitting wall he experienced:


Last summer I was lodging for a little while in a cottage in the country, and in front of my low window there were, first, some beds of daisies, then a row of gooseberry and currant bushes, and then a low wall about three feet above the ground, covered with stone-cress. Outside, a corn-field, with its green ears glistening in the sun, and a field path through it, just past the garden gate. From my window I could see every peasant of the village who passed that way, with basket on arm for market, or spade on shoulder for field. When I was inclined for society, I could lean over my wall, and talk to anybody; when I was inclined for science, I could botanize all along the top of my wall—there were four species of stone-cress alone growing on it; and when I was inclined for exercise, I could jump over my wall, backwards and forwards. That's the sort of fence to have in a Christian country; not a thing which you can't walk inside of without making yourself look like a wild beast, nor look at out of your window in the morning without expecting to see some one else's nose sticking in. *Tease*

Path, N

The

1126 1127

243 SITTING WALL



Examples of solutions

References to other patterns

Place the walls to coincide with natural seat spots, so that extra benches are not necessary—SEAT SPOTS (241); make them of brick or tile, if possible—SOFT TILE AND BRICK (248); if they separate two areas of slightly different height, pierce them with holes to make them balustrades—ORNAMENT (249). Where they are in the sun, and can be large enough, plant flowers in them or against them—RAISED FLOWERS (245). . . .

Design Patterns Balance Forces

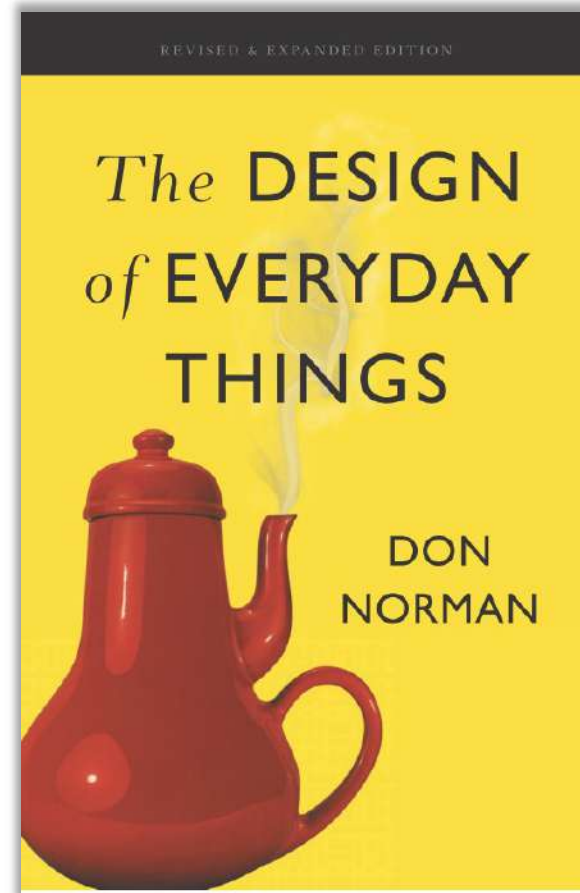
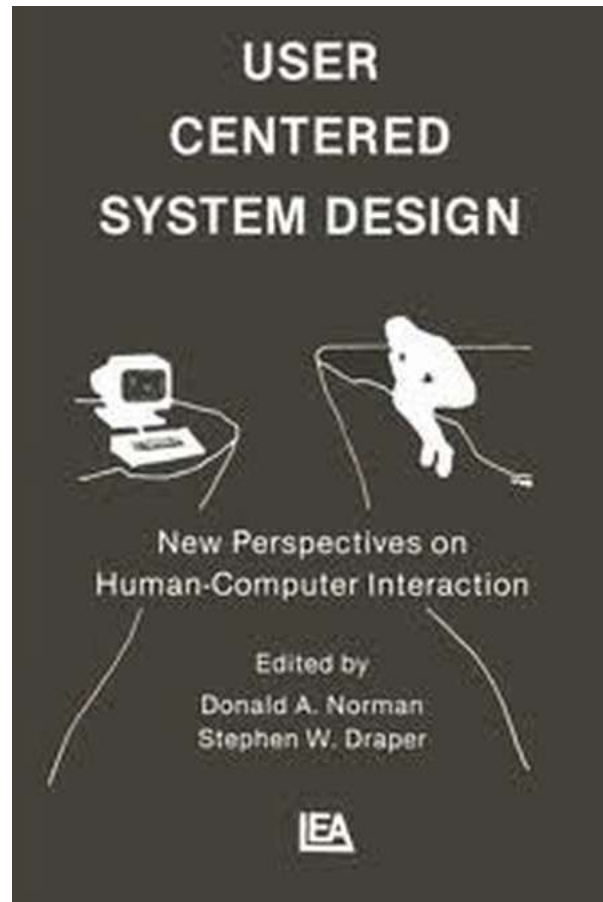
- Design patterns solve a problem **of conflicting forces**
- Example:
 - People are naturally drawn towards light
 - But like to sit

Design Patterns Balance Forces

- Design patterns solve a problem of **conflicting forces**
- Example:
 - People are naturally drawn towards light
 - But like to sit
- Solution:
 - Alexander's **Window Seat** pattern



Patterns in HCI



UI Design Patterns

- Each user interface is unique and has its own set of goals and data, but...
 - This does not mean that we should force users to learn new conventions to operate them!
- With UI design patterns, we can accelerate our users understanding of the interface

UI Design Patterns

Design patterns

User Interface Design patterns are recurring solutions that solve common design problems. Design patterns are standard reference points for the experienced user interface designer.

Dwell into the patterns below to learn a common language of web design.

Design patterns provide a common language between designers. They allow for debate over alternatives, where merely mentioning the name of a design pattern implicitly carries much more meaning than merely the name.

User Interface Design Patterns

Getting input	Navigation	Dealing with data	Social
Forms Password Strength Meter Structured Format Captcha Rule Builder Keyboard Shortcuts Drag and drop Inplace Editor Preview Expandable Input Autosave Input Prompt Good Defaults Fill in the Blanks WYSIWYG Input Feedback	Tabs Navigation Tabs Module Tabs Jumping in hierarchy Breadcrumbs Fat Footer Notifications Modal Home Link Shortcut Dropdown Menus Vertical Dropdown Menu Accordion Menu Horizontal Dropdown Menu Content	Tables Alternating Row Colors Sort By Column Table Filter Formatting data Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Dashboard Copy Box Images Gallery Slideshow Image Zoom Search Autocomplete Search Filters	Reputation Collectible Achievements Testimonials Leaderboard Social interactions Activity Stream Auto-sharing (Mini) Friend list (Mini) Reaction Chat Follow Invite friends Friend

<https://ui-patterns.com/patterns>

UI Design Patterns

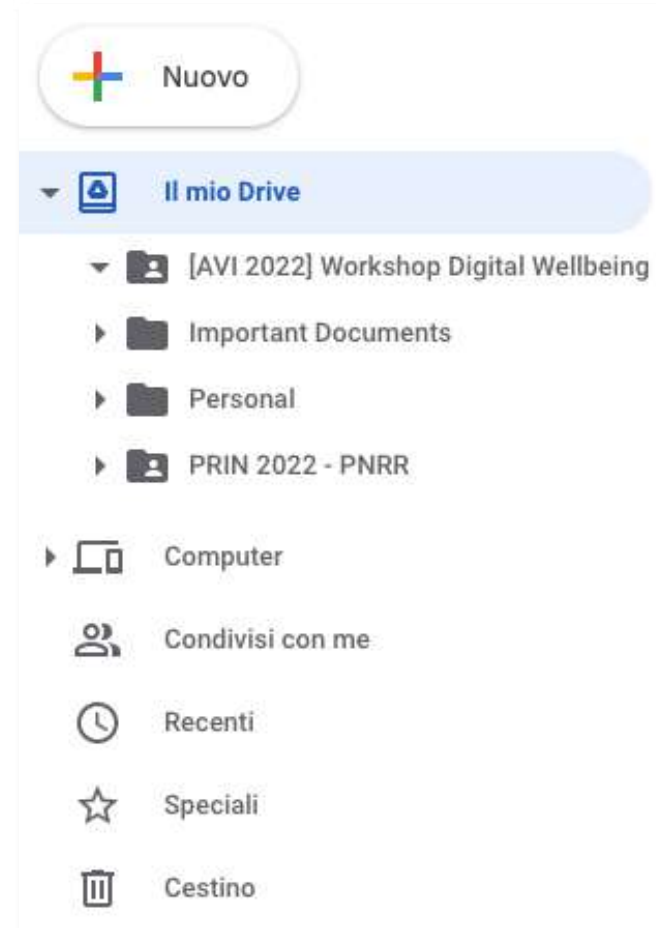
ACCORDION MENU

DROPDOWN MENU

CARDS

BREADCRUMBS

THE HAMBURGER



UI Design Patterns

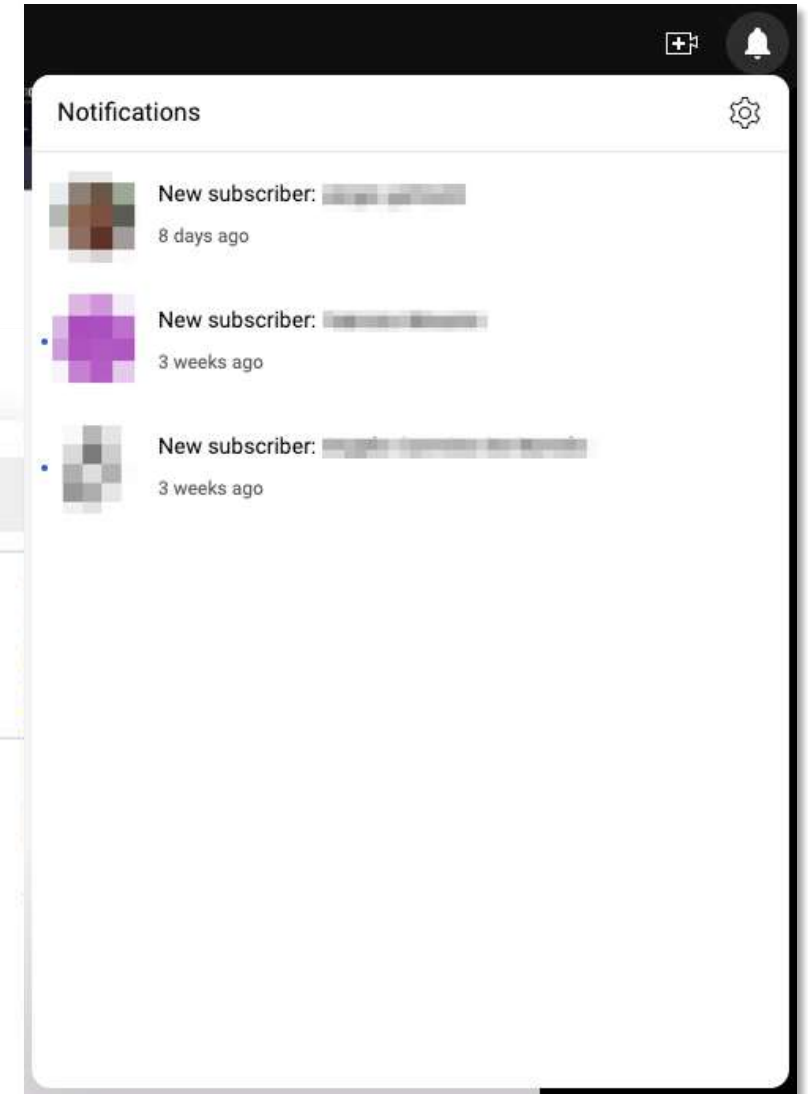
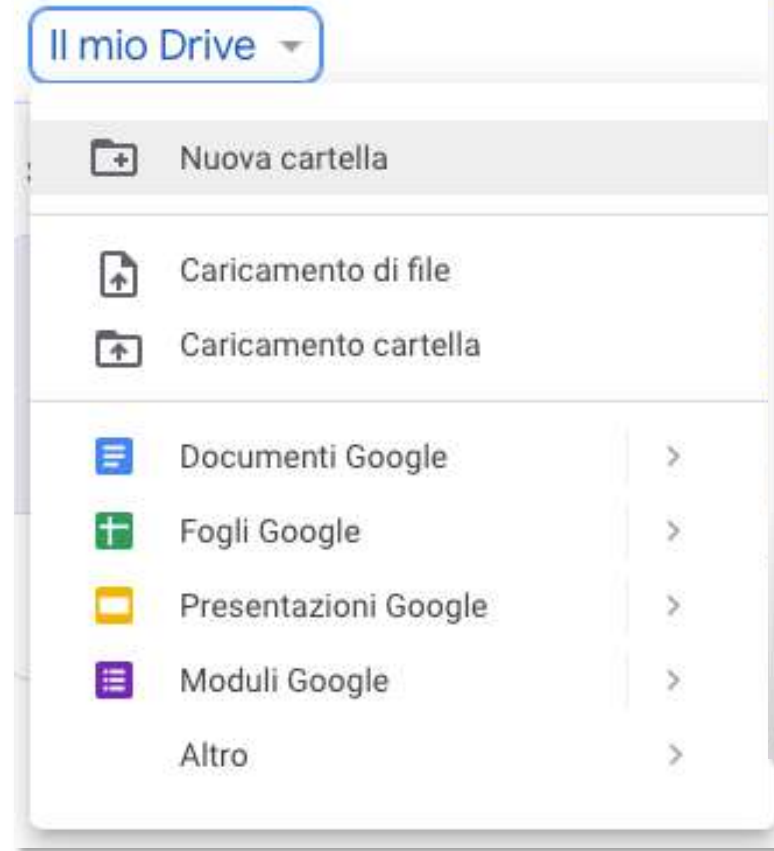
ACCORDION MENU

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CARDS

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THE HAMBURGER



UI Design Patterns

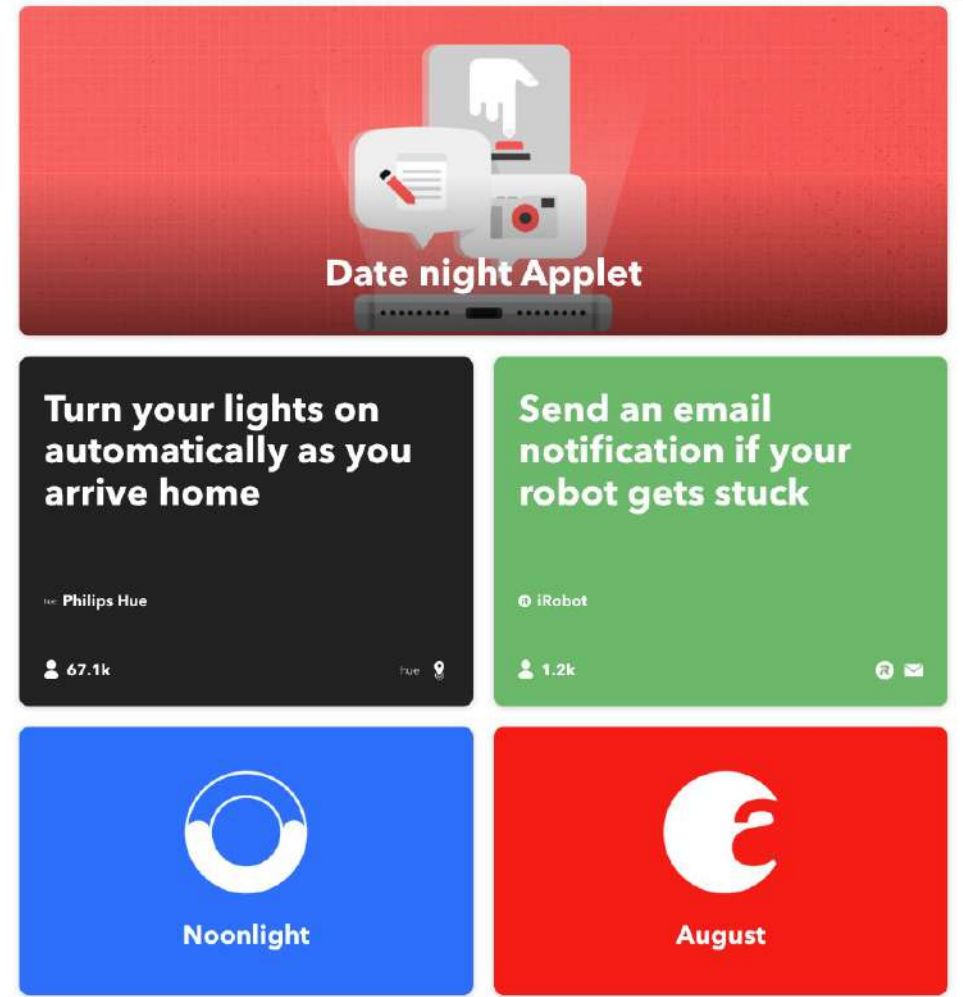
ACCORDION MENU

DROPDOWN MENU

CARDS

BREADCRUMBS

THE HAMBURGER



UI Design Patterns

ACCORDION MENU

DROPDOWN MENU

CARDS

BREADCRUMBS

THE HAMBURGER

[Cart](#) > [Billing](#) > [Shipping](#) > **Payment**



[Cart](#) / [Billing](#) / [Shipping](#) / **Payment**



UI Design Patterns

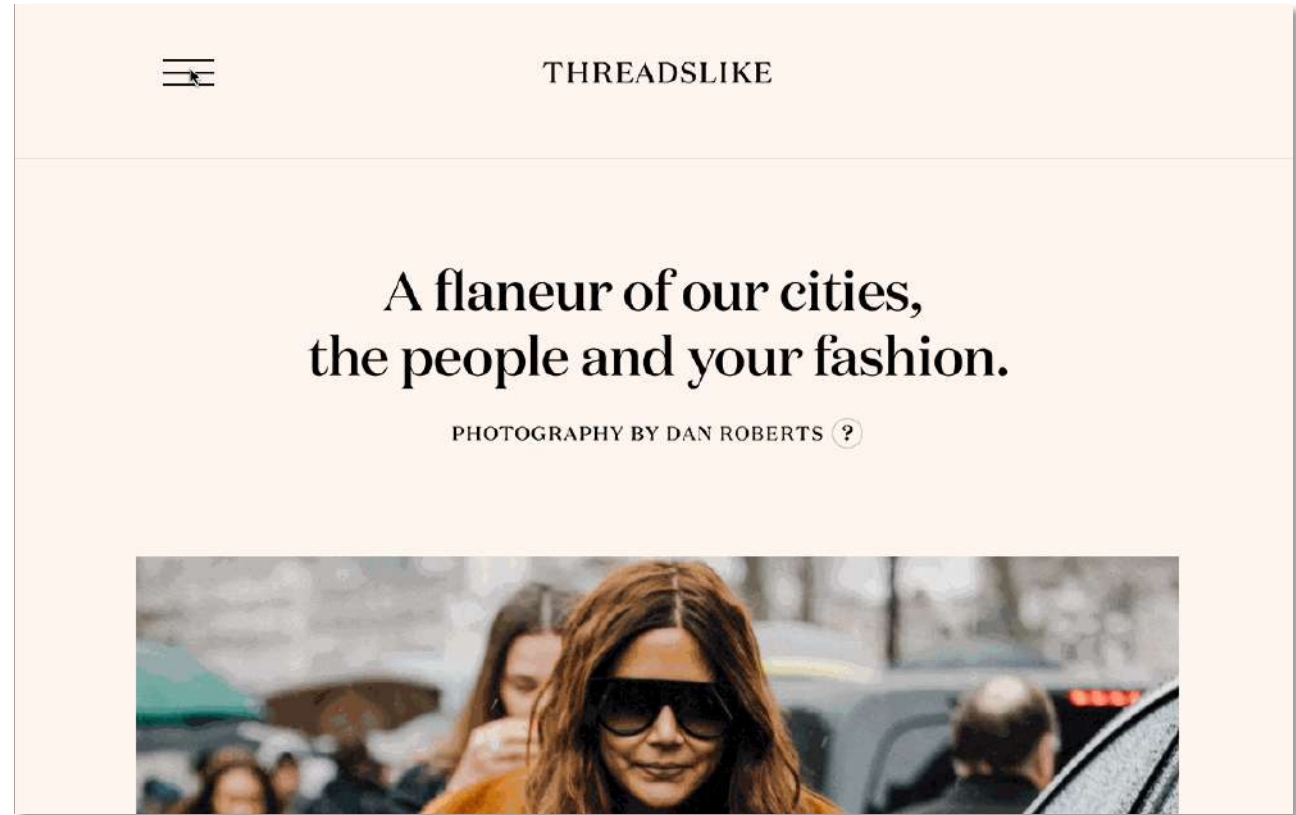
ACCORDION MENU

DROPDOWN MENU

CARDS

BREADCRUMBS

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Dark Patterns

Deceptive designs that go against users' best interests

Dark Patterns

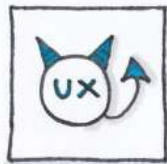
- The term “dark pattern” was coined in 2010 by **Harry Brignull**, a design practitioner
- The aim was to include all those designs that are **deliberately** adopted to promote choices that are not in the user’s best interest

Dark Patterns

- **Harry Brignull** published a gallery of dark patterns on the www.darkpatterns.org
- He launched an hall of shame campaign on Twitter using the hashtag **#darkpatterns**

Dark Patterns ... or Deceptive Designs

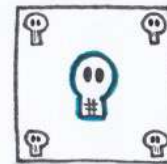
- Many organizations are moving away from the oppressive terminology typical in computer science
 - For example from “master/slave” to “parent/child” and from “blacklist” to “block list”
- In the case of “dark patterns,” the association of “dark” with harm is problematic
 - it may reinforce the racist heuristic of viewing people with darker skin tones as evil (i.e., the “bad is black” effect)
- There are nowadays alternative names for dark patterns as well, such as **deceptive designs**



DARK PATTERNS

©KRISZTINA SZEROVAY
WWW.SKETCHINGFORUX.COM

UX Knowledge Base Sketch #29



DARK PATTERNS ARE

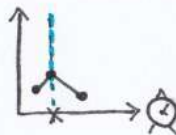


TRICKS

THAT MAKE THE USERS DO THINGS THEY DID NOT MEANTO.

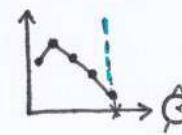
FINE LINE BETWEEN INFLUENCING USERS' BEHAVIOR AND TRICKING THEM!

DARK PATTERNS CAN WORK IF SOMEONE IS LOOKING FOR SHORT-TERM RESULTS.



ONLY INITIAL SUCCESS, NOT SUSTAINABLE

USING DARK PATTERNS HAS A NEGATIVE IMPACT IN THE LONG-TERM



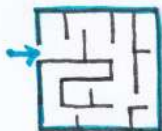
USERS WILL SWITCH TO MORE ETHICAL PRODUCTS / SERVICES

THE MOST COMMON TYPES



FORCED CONTINUITY

FREE TRIAL → CHANGES TO A PAYING SCHEME WITHOUT WARNING



ROACH MOTEL

THE START IS EASY (SIGN UP/SUBSCRIPTION), QUITTING IS HARD



GROWTH HACKING THROUGH SPAMMING

YOU BECOME THE SPAMMER WITHOUT KNOWING IT



DELIBERATE MISDIRECTION

FOCUSING THE USERS' ATTENTION ON THE MORE EXPENSIVE OPTION, HIDING THE CHEAPER WAY



OBSCURED PRICING

MAKING IT HARD TO COMPARE THE PRICES



SNEAK INTO BASKET

A RANDOM ADDITIONAL ITEM APPEARS IN YOUR BASKET (WITHOUT YOUR CONSENT)



BAIT & SWITCH

USE A CONVENTION, PATTERN IN A WAY TO MAKE THE USER FALSELY ASSUME SOMETHING



DISGUISED ADS

AN AD LOOKING LIKE ANOTHER TYPE OF CONTENT / NAVIGATION



ROADBLOCK

A POP-UP INTERRUPTS YOUR INTENDED ACTION



HIDDEN COSTS

AT THE CHECKOUT, A NEW, UNEXPECTED COST APPEARS



PRIVACY ZUCKERING

SHARING MORE PRIVATE INFO THAN YOU WANT



MISINFORMATION

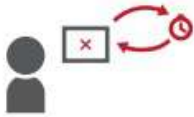
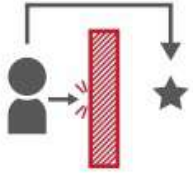



E.G. CONFUSING COLOR, CONTRAST LANGUAGE

TRICK QUESTIONS
CHECK BOX TREACHERY

Dark Patterns in HCI

- Gray et al., *The Dark (Patterns) Side of UX Design*, CHI 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3174108>
- Mathur et al., *Dark Patterns at Scale: Findings from a Crawl of 11K Shopping Websites*, CSCW 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3359183>
- Gunawan et al., *A Comparative Study of Dark Patterns Across Web and Mobile Modalities*, CSCW 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3479521>
- Mathur et al., *What Makes a Dark Pattern... Dark?: Design Attributes, Normative Considerations, and Measurement Methods*, CHI 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3411764.3445610>

Dark Patterns Taxonomies

				
NAGGING	OBSTRUCTION	SNEAKING	INTERFACE INTERFERENCE	FORCED ACTION
Redirection of expected functionality that persists beyond one or more interactions.	Making a process more difficult than it needs to be, with the intent of dissuading certain action(s).	Attempting to hide, disguise, or delay the divulging of information that is relevant to the user.	Manipulation of the user interface that privileges certain actions over others.	Requiring the user to perform a certain action to access (or continue to access) certain functionality.
	INCLUDES: Brignull "Roach Motel," "Price Comparison Prevention," and "Intermediate Currency"	INCLUDES: Brignull "Forced Continuity," "Hidden Costs," "Sneak into Basket," and "Bait and Switch"	INCLUDES: Hidden Information, Preselection, Aesthetic Manipulation, Toying with Emotion, False Hierarchy, Brignull "Disguised Ad," and "Trick Questions"	INCLUDES: Social Pyramid, Brignull "Privacy Zuckering," and Gamification

Gray et al., *The Dark (Patterns) Side of UX Design*, CHI 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3174108>

Dark Patterns Taxonomies

NAGGING

OBSTRUCTION

SNEAKING

INTERFACE INTERFERENCE

FORCED ACTION

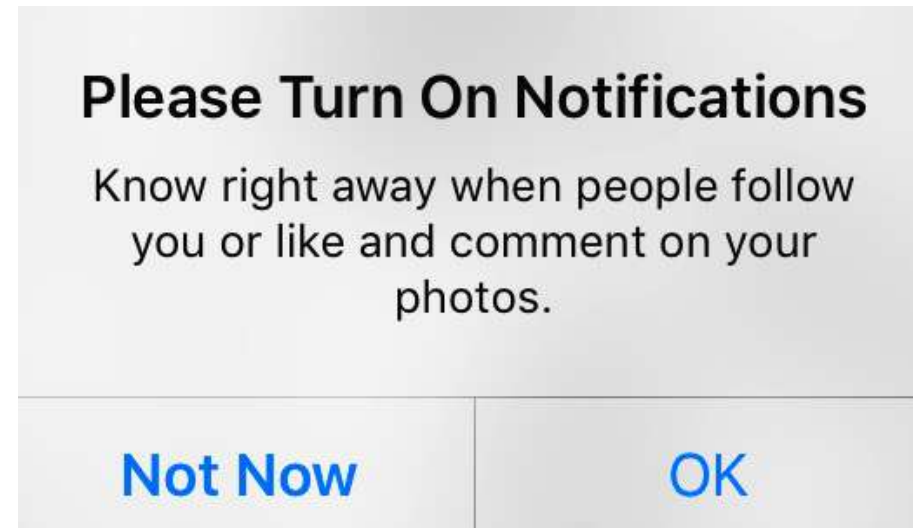


Figure 2: Example of nagging behavior on Instagram, where a modal dialogue provides no opportunity to permanently dismiss the message.

Gray et al., *The Dark (Patterns) Side of UX Design*, CHI 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3174108>

Dark Patterns Taxonomies

NAGGING

OBSTRUCTION

SNEAKING

INTERFACE INTERFERENCE

FORCED ACTION



Figure 3: Example of obstructive behavior limiting access to ad tracking settings on Apple iOS 6.

Gray et al., *The Dark (Patterns) Side of UX Design*, CHI 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3174108>

Dark Patterns Taxonomies

NAGGING

OBSTRUCTION

SNEAKING

INTERFACE INTERFERENCE

FORCED ACTION

You have been unsubscribed from all future mailings

I agree to the [Privacy Statement](#). In particular, I consent to the transfer of my personal information to other countries, including the United States, for the purpose of hosting and processing the information as set forth in the Privacy Statement. [-]

I understand that these countries may not have the same data protection laws as the country from which I provide my personal information. I have the right to withdraw my consent at any time. For more information, click [here](#).

*You can unsubscribe from Marketing emails at any time. Please note that opting-out of Marketing communications does not affect your receipt of business communications that are important to your interaction with Salesforce, such as support/service communications, security updates, event registration updates or account management communications.

Save All Changes

Figure 4: Example of sneaking behavior, asking users to authorize transfer of their information in order to unsubscribe from a newsletter.

Gray et al., *The Dark (Patterns) Side of UX Design*, CHI 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3174108>

Dark Patterns Taxonomies

NAGGING

OBSTRUCTION

SNEAKING

**INTERFACE
INTERFERENCE**

FORCED ACTION

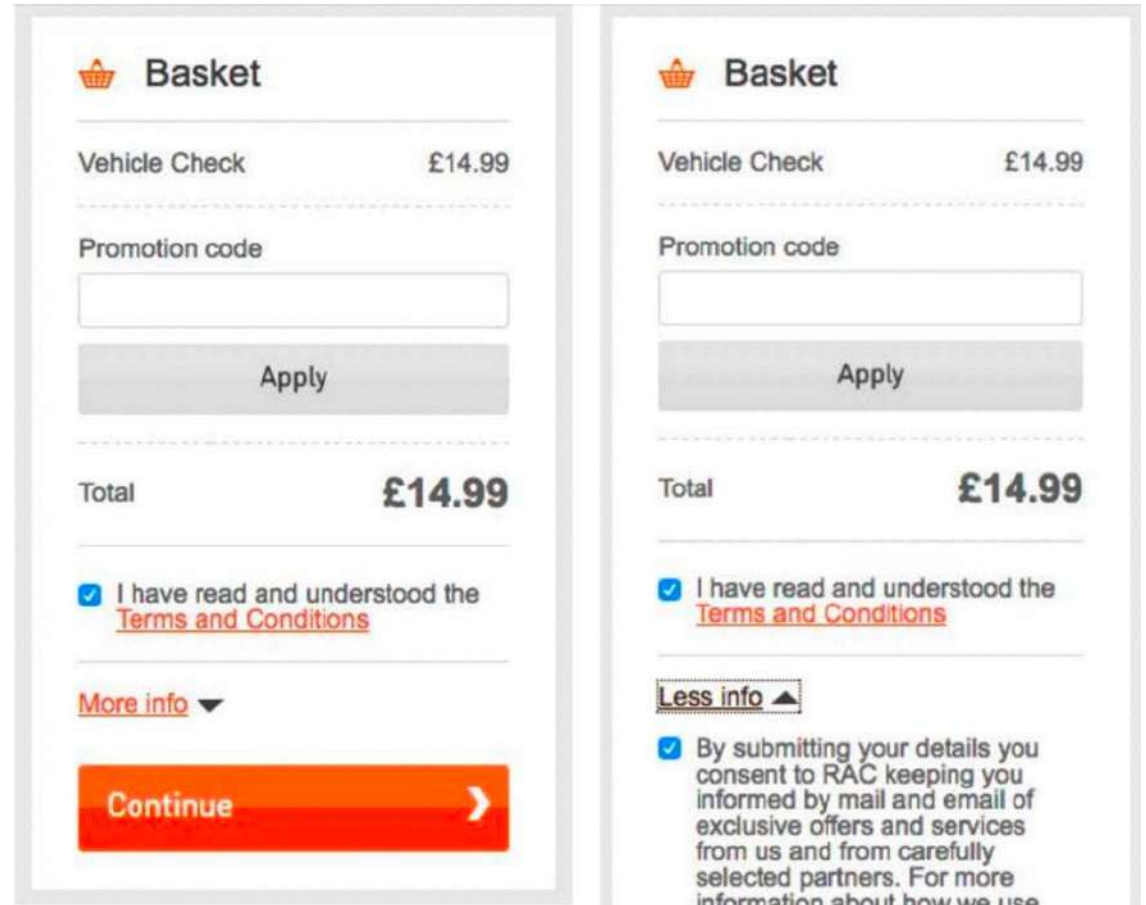


Figure 5: Example of preselection as a type of interface interference, hiding and preselecting a choice that may not be in the user's best interest.

Gray et al., *The Dark (Patterns) Side of UX Design*, CHI 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3174108>

Dark Patterns Taxonomies

NAGGING

OBSTRUCTION

SNEAKING

INTERFACE INTERFERENCE

FORCED ACTION

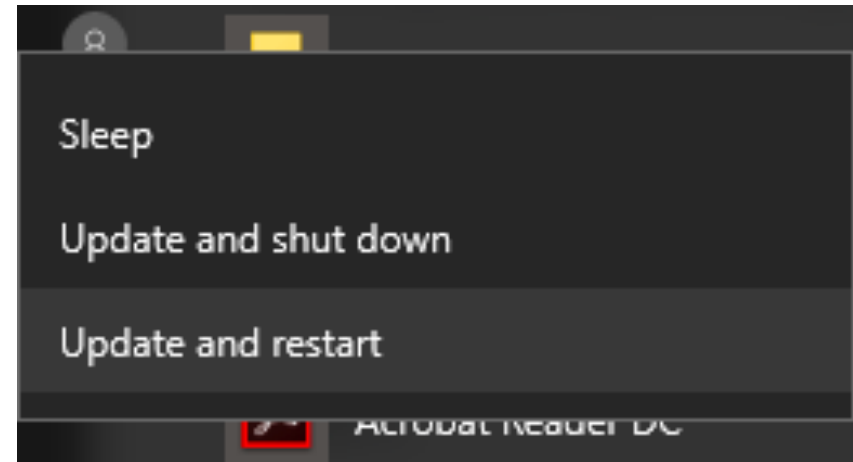


Figure 7: Example of forced action on Windows 10.

Gray et al., *The Dark (Patterns) Side of UX Design*, CHI 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3174108>

Attention-Capture Dark Patterns

A particular kind of dark patterns

Attention Economy

- Why is our digital well-being undermined by contemporary technology?
- Most of the contemporary tech-companies adopt a business model that is called the “Attention Economy”
 - Our **attention** is transformed into a **currency**
 - We «**pay**» for a service with the time we spend on it
 - Tech companies **may sell** our attention (and our data, sometimes) to advertising companies
- This business model is convenient
 - **Alphabet** (the company that owns Google) is worth \$1 trillion
 - **Meta** (which owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp) is worth about \$700 billion

Attention Economy

- Traditional advertising on TV, newspapers, magazines, or billboards is very straightforward:
 - everyone sees the same ads, and the ads don't feed precise data back to advertisers about the people looking at them.
- Digital services like social media have several unique advantages that make advertising vastly more powerful:
 - **artificial intelligence:** digital services can predict what ads can be most effective;
 - **personalization:** ads are personalized according to our previous digital interactions.

Attention Economy

2020 This Is What Happens In An Internet Minute



2021 This Is What Happens In An Internet Minute



Persuasive Technology

- Persuasive technology is broadly defined as technology that is designed to change attitudes or behaviors of the users through persuasion and social influence.
- Defined by Brian **Jeffrey Fogg**, a behavior scientist at Stanford University.
- According to the original definition, persuasive technology is used to influence user's behavior without explicitly using **deception or coercion**.

Persuasive Technology

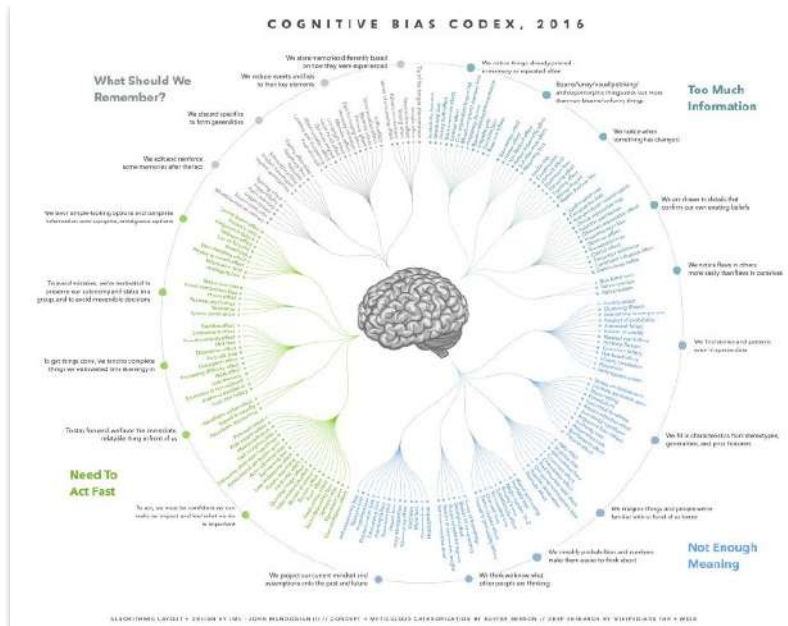
- **TRADING:** a digital service has some knowledge of the user's goal, and presents the user with options that are expected to increase both the service's utility and the user's utility (as a secondary goal).
 - The goal of a news site may be to increase its traffic, and so it offers articles that are most valuable to the user and most likely to be clicked on.
- **NUDGING:** a digital service tries to influence the human user's decision by targeting the user's biases and heuristics. More problematic with respect to trading:
 - when the user's biases are predictable, as many are they can be exploited by nudges that steer a user towards actions that they may not rationally choose otherwise and might even be of detriment of the user.

Exploiting Psychological Vulnerabilities and Biases

- In the Attention Economy, persuasive technology is often exploited to capture users' attention, a goal that is often not aligned with people's digital wellbeing.
- This is often achieved by exploiting exploiting people's **psychological vulnerabilities** and “**cognitive biases**”, e.g., adopting nudging strategies.

Exploiting Psychological Vulnerabilities and Biases

- A cognitive bias is a **systematic error** in thinking that occurs when people are processing and interpreting information in the world around them and affects the decisions and judgments that they make.

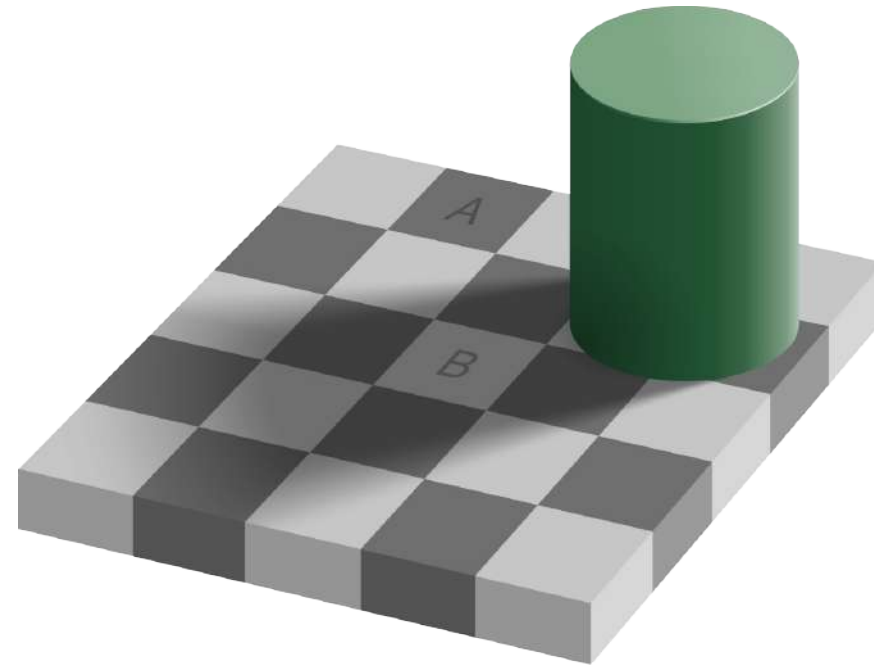


https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cognitive_bias_codex_en.svg

<https://betterhumans.pub/cognitive-bias-cheat-sheet-55a472476b18>

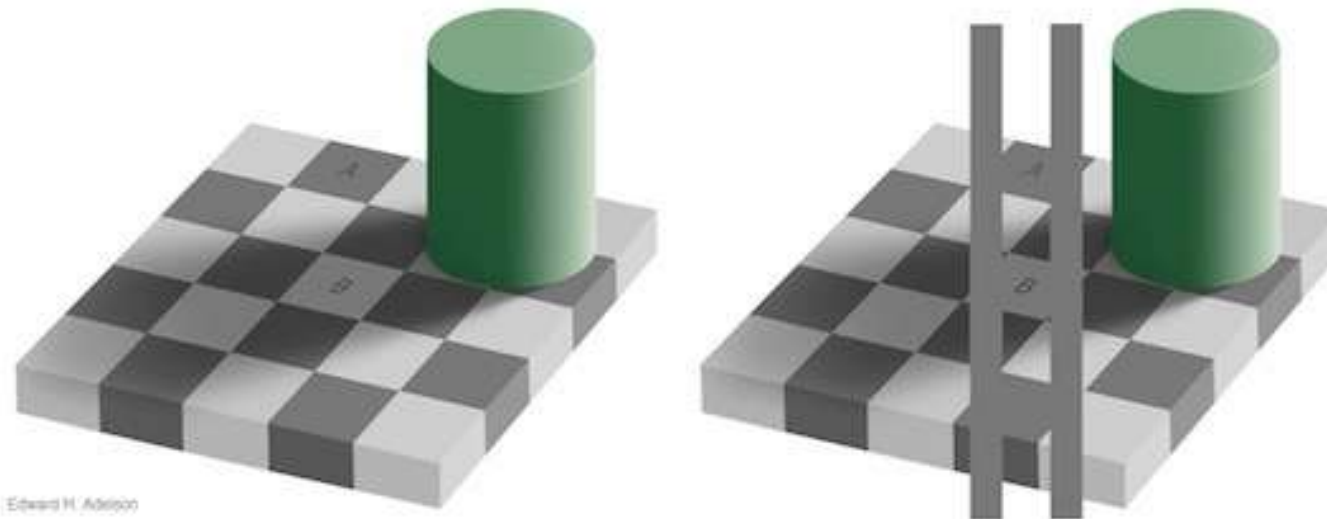
Exploiting Psychological Vulnerabilities and Biases

- **EXAMPLE:** What we perceive as true depends on the context in which we see it!



Exploiting Psychological Vulnerabilities and Biases

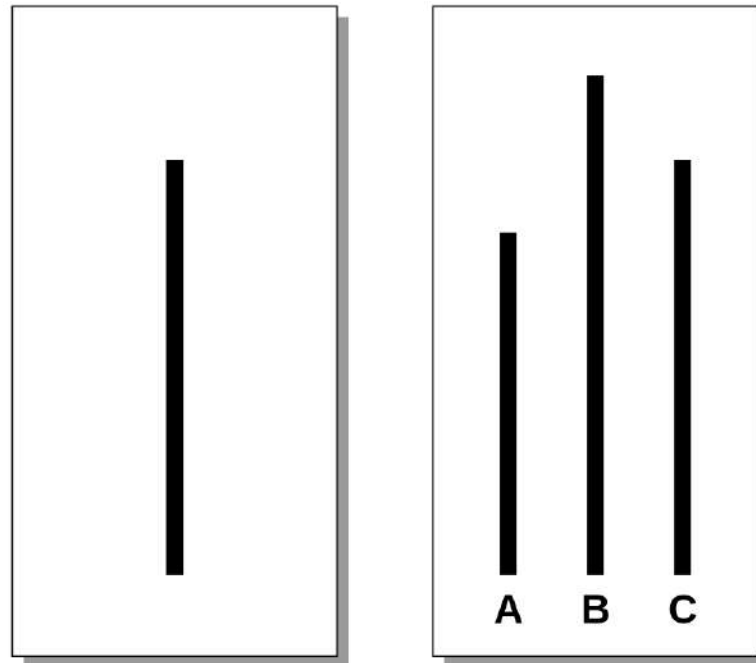
- **EXAMPLE:** What we perceive as true depends on the context in which we see it!



[Checkershadow Illusion](#)

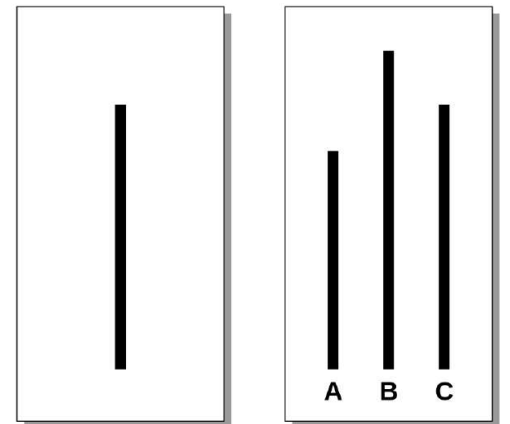
Exploiting Psychological Vulnerabilities and Biases

- **EXAMPLE:** match a reference line (on the left) to one of three comparison lines (on the right)

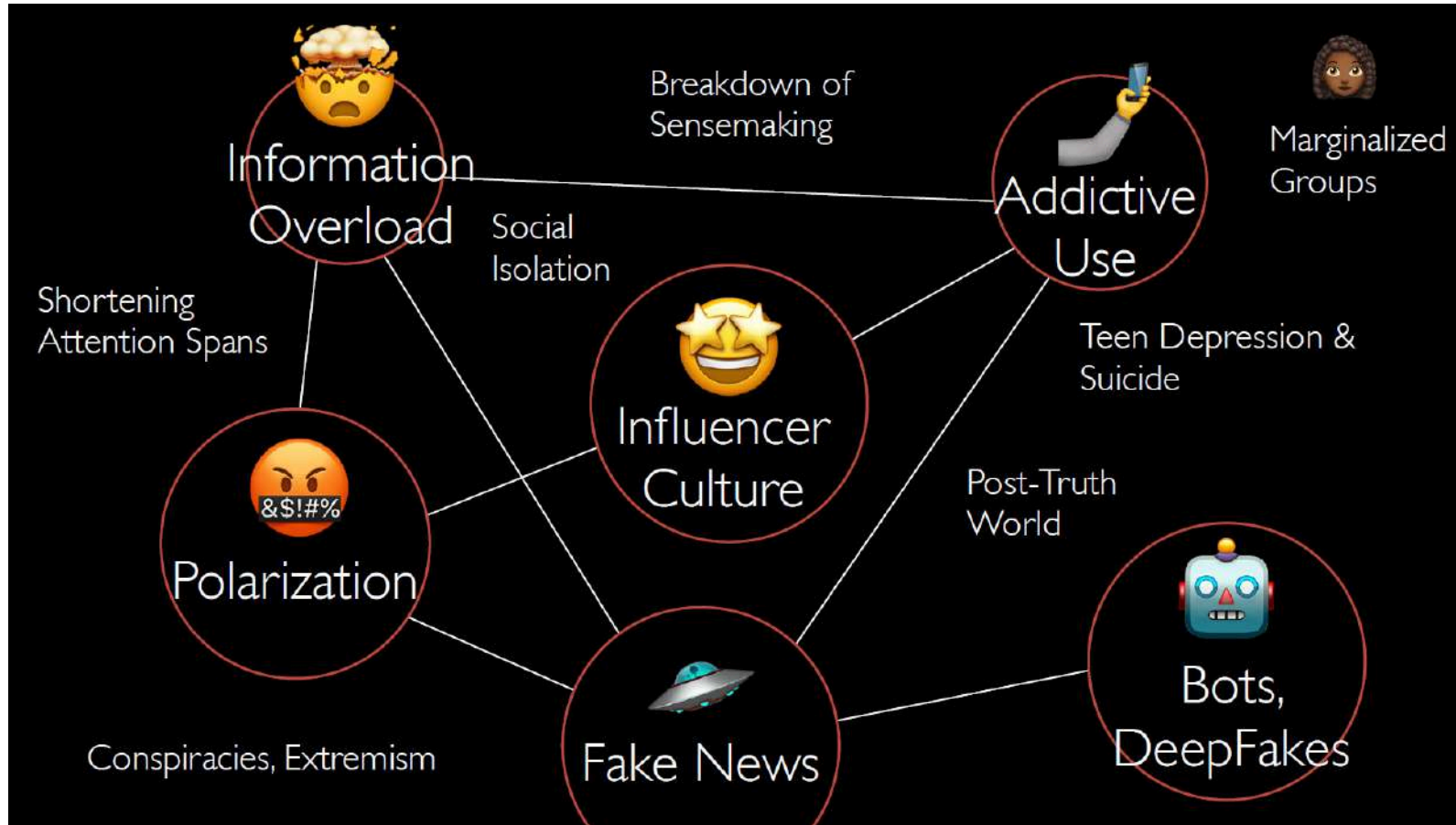


Exploiting Psychological Vulnerabilities and Biases

- **EXAMPLE:** match a reference line (on the left) to one of three comparison lines (on the right):
 - In the Solomon Asch experiment, participants were asked to perform the task after having listened to some actors giving a wrong answer.
 - Over 36% of the experiment participants chose the wrong line!
 - This is a form of **conformity bias**: we tend to want to conform to the social norms around us.



Exploiting Psychological Vulnerabilities and Biases



Taken from <https://www.humanetech.com/course>

Exploiting Psychological Vulnerabilities and Biases

- Social media exploit psychological vulnerabilities and biases to capture users' attention in several ways. Some examples:
 - they create **urgency**, e.g., through notifications;
 - they encourage **constant seeking**: the possibility of receiving new comments or likes keeps us in a persistent state of alert;
 - they encourage **social comparison**: every time we receive a comment or a “like,” our brain gets a dose of dopamine, prompting us to compare ourselves with others.

Exploiting Psychological Vulnerabilities and Biases

- In general, today's technology is designed to keep us “engaged,” offering us a mix of old and new content each time:
 - Such a **variable-reward** technique is used in slot machines, too!

Attention-Capture Dark Patterns

- We conducted a systematic literature review that develops and defines the concept of Attention Capture Dark Patterns (ACDPs)
 - Definition
 - Characteristics and Impacts
 - Typology of 11 patterns

Monge Roffarello A., Lukoff K., De Russis L., *Defining and Identifying Attention Capture Damaging Patterns in Digital Interfaces*, CHI 2023, to appear.

Attention-Capture Dark Patterns: Definition

- A recurring pattern in digital interfaces that a designer **uses to** exploit psychological vulnerabilities and **capture attention**, often leading the user to lose **track of their goals**, lose their **sense of time and control**, and later **feel regret**
- The goal of ACDPs is to maximize continuous usage, daily visits, and interactions (e.g., clicks, shares, likes, etc.).
- They make users more likely to visit a digital service again and click on similar types of rewarding content, thus creating a «**trap**» for the user that enables the **stakeholder's goal**

Attention-Capture Dark Patterns: Strategies

- Typically, they ACDPs the need for autonomous decision making by "automating" processes and functions
- Paradoxically, they can **improve the usability** of a platform:
 - user interface improvements and simplifications are sometimes a deliberate choice of designers and tech companies to promote a frequent and continuous use of technology;
 - the trade-off between usability and persuasion is critical, especially when there are ambiguities in the designer's intentions.

Attention-Capture Dark Patterns: Strategies

- The psychological vulnerabilities exploited by ACDPs can be of various type:
 - *Variable reward*: even the task of predicting an outcome is itself rewarding and triggers the release of dopamine.
 - *Reward depletion*: scrolling through posts and videos that you have already seen, while hoping for new items to appear.
 - *Immediate gratification*: people generally favor the choice that offers immediate gratification, e.g., watching a new catchy video, at the expense of long-term goals.

Attention-Capture Dark Patterns: Impacts

- ACDPs may negatively affect people's digital well-being
 - They promote **“digital addiction”**
 - They undermine users' **attention** and **productivity**
 - They undermine users' **sense of agency** and self-control
 - They result in a later **sense of regret**

Exercise

- Take your smartphone or PC and open one of the apps/websites you use most often
- How many attention-capture damaging patterns are you able to identify?

<https://polito.padlet.org/albertomonge/pattern>

Attention-Capture Dark Patterns: Typology

Pattern Name	Description
<i>P1 - Infinite Scroll</i>	As the user scrolls down a page, more content automatically and continuously loads at the bottom.
<i>P2 - Casino Pull-to-refresh</i>	When the user swipes down on their smartphone, there is an animated reload of the page that may or may not reveal new appealing content.
<i>P3 - Neverending Autoplay</i>	A new video is automatically played when the current one finishes. There is never a point for the user to stop and reflect, and the option to turn off autoplay is hidden or non-existent.
<i>P4 - Guilty Pleasure Recommendations</i>	Personalized suggestions that prey on individual consumer frailty to target user's guilty pleasures and increase use time.
<i>P5 - Disguised Ads and Recommendations</i>	Advertisements and recommendations, e.g., posts and sponsored pages, that are disguised as normal content into social networks' newsfeeds.
<i>P6 - Recapture Notifications</i>	Notifications that are deliberately sent to recapture users' attention and have them start a new usage session, e.g., notifications with recommended content or notifications about content the user has never interacted with.
<i>P7 - Playing by Appointment</i>	Users are forced to use a digital service at specific times as defined by the service, otherwise the user may lose points and achievements.
<i>P8 - Grinding</i>	Users are forced to repeat the same process several times to unlock an achievement, e.g., a new level in a video game or a badge on a social network.
<i>P9 - Attentional Roach Motel</i>	Registering to and accessing attention-capture digital services is easy, while operations like logout or canceling an account are painfully difficult.
<i>P10 - Time Fog</i>	A pattern through which designers reduce users' awareness of time spent, e.g., by hiding the smartphone's clock.
<i>P11 - Fake Social Notifications</i>	The platform sends messages pretending to be another user or social notifications about some content the user has never interacted with.

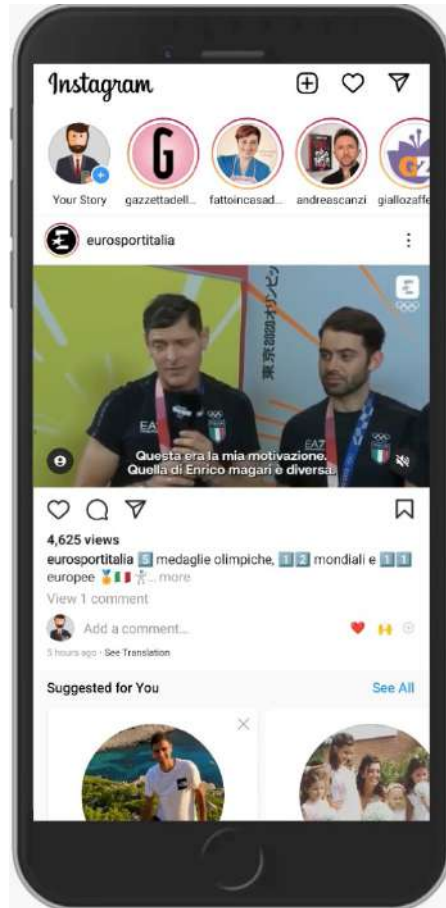
- We used **everyday language**:
 - Christopher Alexander advocated for patterns that are 'alive,' which spark inspiration for the designers and capture the imagination of the public.
- We focused on patterns leading to **attentional harms**:
 - we excluded attention-capture patterns more related to financial aspects, e.g., countdown timers on shopping websites.
- We used specific **contexts**:
 - not all patterns are harmful all of the time

Infinite Scrolling



- As the user scrolls down a page, more content **automatically and continuously loads** at the bottom.
- It **decreases** the **effort** required to browse content and promotes **“endless”** usage sessions.
- It exploits **variable reward techniques**.
- Common in social media.

Casino Pull-to-refresh



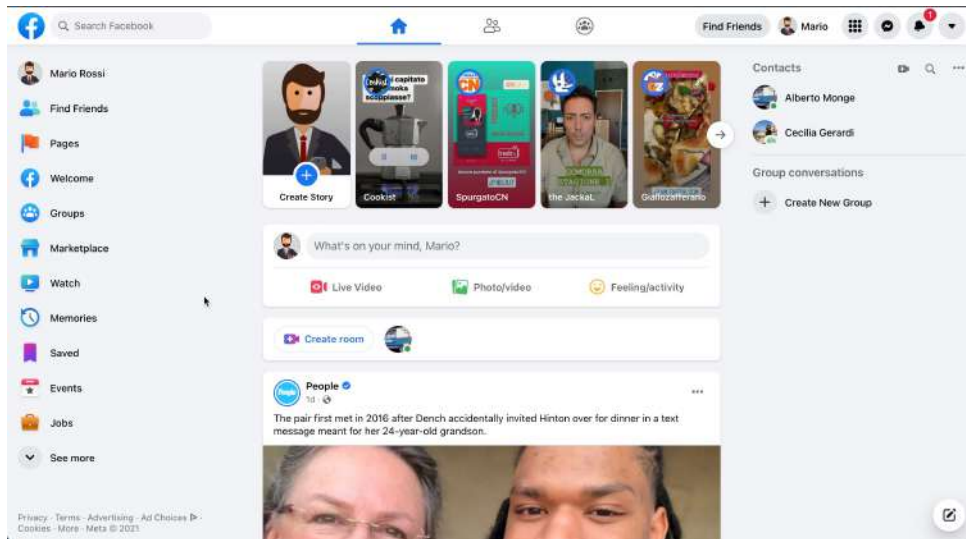
- When the user **swipes down** on their smartphone, there is an **animated reload** of the page that **may or may not** reveal new appealing content.
- Users may be tempted to refresh compulsively, hoping to receive new content.
- It exploits **variable reward techniques**:
 - similar to **slot machines**.
- Common in social media (accessed through a mobile interface).

Neverending Autoplay



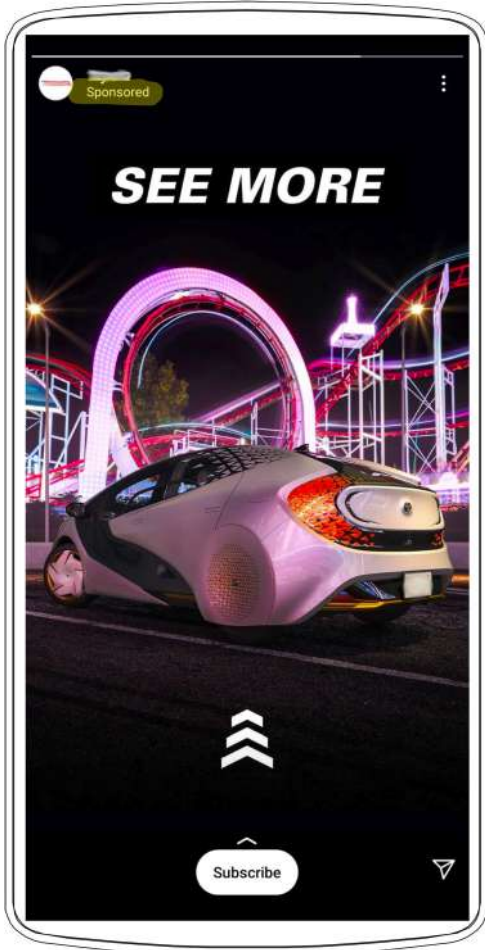
- A new video is **automatically played** when the current one finishes. There is never a point for the user to **stop** and **reflect**, and the option to turn off autoplay is hidden or non-existent.
- Autoplay may be **useful** in some circumstances, e.g., listening to music on YouTube while working.
- It can **prolong** usage sessions («*let me see this new video and then I will close the app!*»).
- It exploits **variable reward techniques** and reduces the **user's autonomy**.
- Common on social media and video-streaming platforms.

Guilty-Pleasure Recommendations



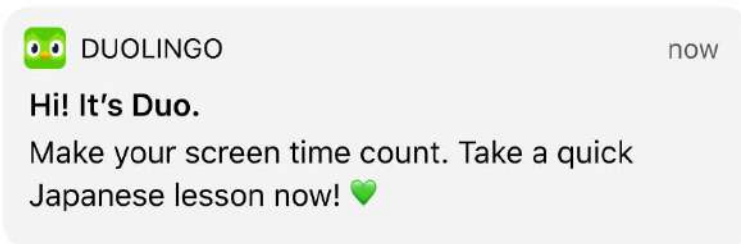
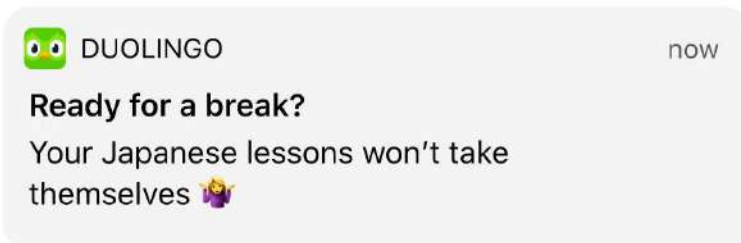
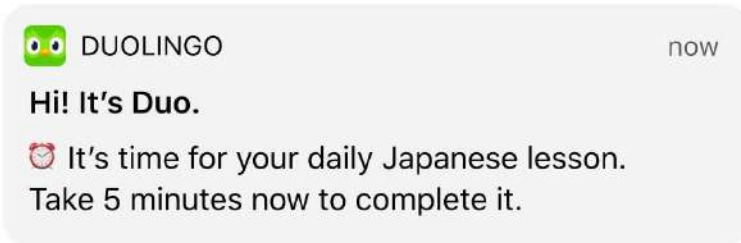
- They are based on:
 - previous user's interactions (**Content-Based**);
 - preferences of similar users (**Collaborative Filtering**).
- Recommendations are useful if the goal of the platform matches the user's goals (**value-alignment problem**).
- They can become a «**trap**» for keeping the user's attention on the platform against the user's will.
- They exploit **variable reward techniques**.
- Common on social media and video-streaming platforms.

Disguised Ads and Recommendations



- Extension of the **Brignul's Disguised Ads**.
- Ads and recommendations are **camouflaged** as normal content:
 - sponsored stories;
 - tweets from people that the user is not following ('you might like').
- It likely increases the chances of **prolonging usage sessions**.
- Newsfeeds become a representation of what the social network expects will elicit the most clicks based on prior behavior, rather than a representation of the user's preferences:
 - most users are not able to process such a **misalignment!**
- Common on social media.

Recapture Notifications

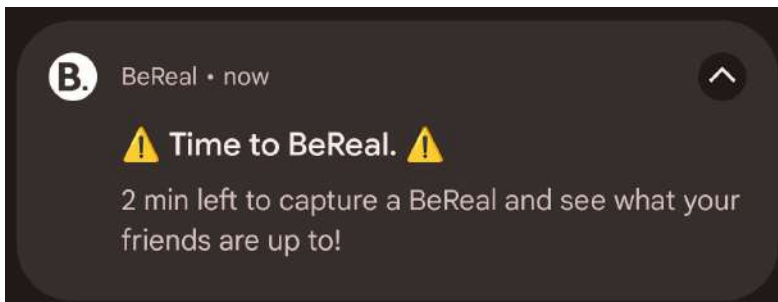
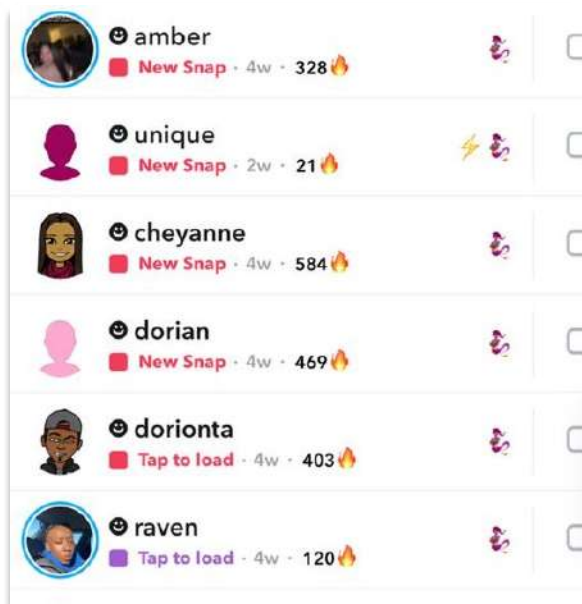


- *“if I didn’t have things popping up every 30 minutes like ‘this has happened’ I don’t think I would think about Facebook.”*

Lyngs et al., CHI 2020

- Notifications that are **deliberately** sent to **recapture the attention** of a user who escaped or left a digital service for some period of time:
 - used as a **pretext** to make user unlock a device and going into apps or websites to engage further;
 - typically activated **by default**.
- Common on social media, video streaming platforms, and messaging applications.

Playing by Appointment



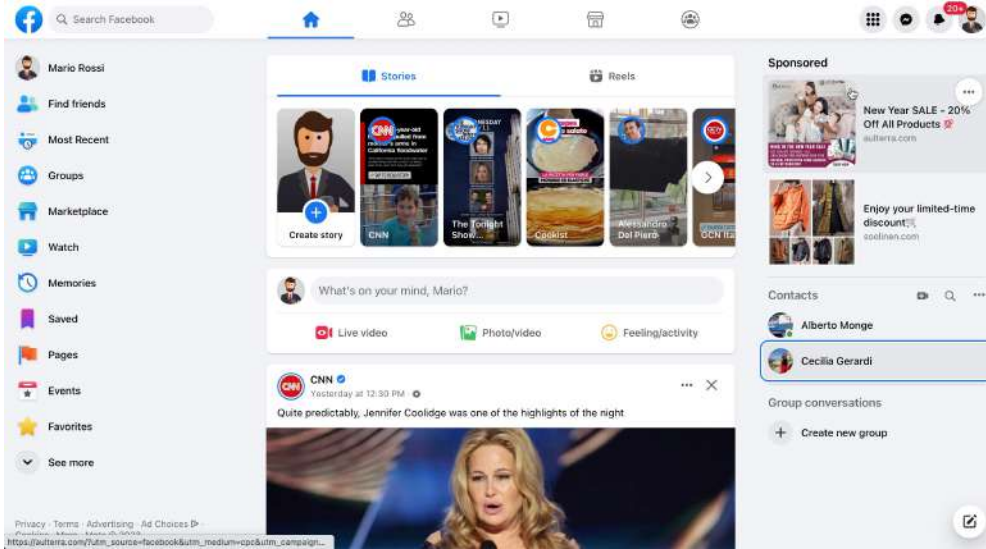
- Force users to use a digital service at **specific times** as defined by the service, rather than the user.
- Engineered to encourage users to **re-visit** a digital service to avoid losing the possibility of earning something, e.g., points or even the ability to progress in a game.
- Common on video games (mostly on social networks) and social media in general.

Grinding



- Force users to **repeat** the same process several times **to unlock** an achievement.
- Digital services “consume” the user’s time and attention by increasing engagement and promising **a later achievement**, e.g., a new level in a video game or a badge on a social network.
- Common on video games and social media.

Attentional Roach Motel



- Extension of the **Brignul's Roach Motel**.
- Easy to get in, hard to get out:
 - it may be exploited to make account settings difficult to access, e.g., to hinder the possibility of **logging out** from a digital service.
- Affect how alternatives are perceived by promoting a predefined action:
 - may exploit deceptive visualizations that leverage the **salience bias**.
- Common on social media.

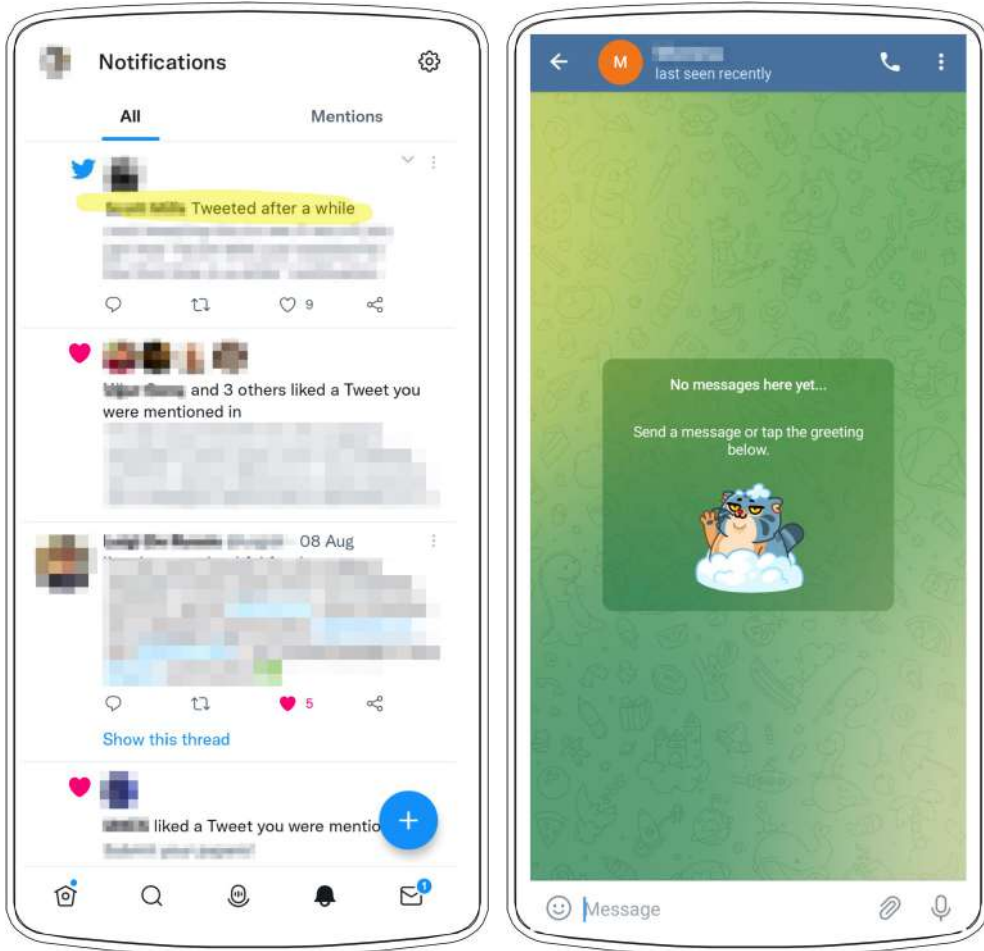
Time Fog



Incomplete Timestamp

- Designers deliberately induce **unawareness** by reducing autonomy of monitoring user **time spent**.
- Designed to reduce the possibilities to get feedback on the time spent, e.g., by hiding the video elapsed time, thus increasing the chances of longer usage sessions:
 - may exploit deceptive visualizations that leverage the **salience bias**.
- Common on video streaming platforms.

Fake Social Notifications



- Deceive users with **false social activities** and **information**:
 - digital services that pretend to be real users;
 - notifications about activities of unknown people.
- Violate the expectation that the received messages should actually be from a real person.
- May leverage may leverage on our **herd instinct bias** of replicating others' actions, as well as on the **spotlight effect**, i.e., an egocentric bias that lead us to perform behaviors that elicitsocial approval.
- Common on video games (mostly on social networks), social media, and messaging apps.

References

- Some material from
 - <https://hci.stanford.edu/courses/cs147/2022/wi/lectures/16-design-patterns.pdf>
 - <https://hci.rwth-aachen.de/cthci-ss2020>
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aB6us_txi54
- Slides on design patterns are from the Human-Computer Interaction course of the Politecnico di Torino (<http://bit.ly/polito-hci>)

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