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Recipe for contract for careful sharing

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This is a recipe for how humans and other species can negotiate the sharing in cohabitation. This might be sharing of a home, a neighbourhood, particular spaces, equipment, time, tasks and community.

This contract is a reminder that sharing requires care. It also brings into the open how much sharing that goes unnoticed, and perhaps unvalued. For example, we are sharing Earth with a multitude of species and those of the future. It is also considers cohabitation across long geographical and temporal distances. Life and death is in the making.

Method:

→ Agree on a time frame to revisit the contract.
→ Consider who is at stake. Who can influence the sharing, and who might be affected (positively and negatively) by the sharing? How might silent stakeholders have a voice and be heard with realistic influence?
→ Consider what is at stake. What will you share? What are the advantages and risks of the sharing?
→ Consider what is fair share in the specific situation, expanding your imagination to stakeholders not present.
→ Consider what to do if sharing does not feel fair. How can this be expressed and addressed in a caring way?
→ Make your contract as accessible as possible to those concerned and acknowledge its value.
→ Consider the contract a living actor in its own right.
Hi!

I would like to be able to see my kids play on a trampoline while I cook for my family. What size of a dream can I allow myself to have?

Three persons, Ra (👤), Sol (🌞) and Helios (バイ), were ready to do their shift in the Matching Agency. 🌞 noticed that there were no flowers in the office. But there were plenty of greens growing in pots in the windowsills. Beetroots seemed to have been growing for so long that it would soon be time to harvest them. Office, by the way, 🌞 thought. Is office the right word for this space?
There's an email about a dream here! We don’t get many of these.

I don’t agree. As a designer I think basically everything we get to act on is about dreams, needs and desires. But they come in such different shapes. Some are super modest, others are grand. And they’ve got so much to do with the action space that people have.

I agree with you, 🌟, that there is such a great variety of dreams and it seems to have to do with the power that this person has in a particular situation. For example, coming new to a country usually makes you dance without the same accumulated resources as others who have grown up there and who have grown into rules, norms and codes.

Great that you agree 🌟 but I don't understand what you mean.

I guess I’m just saying that we come into the housing and home making dance under such different conditions.

Sure! It makes me think of how I first came to envision this Matching Agency 🌟 when there were unusually many migrants that came here in the autumn of 2015. We urgently needed somewhere to stay, my siblings and I. And I passed by the summer houses, cottages and sheds that were scattered in the forests and the farms. I had been trained as a designer in my home country and part of my training was to make up scenarios for how to live and to make the scenarios turn into actual designs and practices. And then to make the scenarios happen.

Haha, yes, those were the days, when we were dreaming of how to change the world. In the village where I live there is a history of cooperatives amongst the home owners, like the dairy cooperative and the
forestry cooperative and the hunting team. They’ve been keen on trying things out. In parts, the creativity is still bustling, like with the people who have started a joint workshop for repairing bicycles and sewing machines. And around housing: subletting not only a room, but whole houses. They called it hyreshushus. We even started our own glossary with their creatively made up words.

I certainly haven’t stopped dreaming! And to honour that, now let’s return to the dream in the email.

Yes, the dream is about the size of a dream, including not only a trampoline, but also cooking and see-through glass that can secure both distance and presence. How about we gather actors who could concretely help her out to get this addressed, while at the same time helping more actors out in figuring how similar situations can be dealt with?

When we send invitations to such a gathering, we have to think strategically about who to turn to in order to get things moving. Is it the janitor, the owner of the block of flats and, or glass window makers? Or researchers on glass? Or politicians, rather?

It has turned quite practical immediately. Shouldn’t we probe into the dream a bit more? Is there more to it? Are there other things in what the email says that are not on the surface?

True, true. It’s a fine balance between dreaming and locking things down by giving them a form that appears to be too solid and complete.

It’s not in the email, but my impression from meeting similar questions earlier is that there is more to this glass window than helping out in performing both distance and presence. I was told by another recent immigrant that he wanted to be present in the children’s
outdoor playing, but didn’t want to be invaded by the unknown, for example, spiders and bugs. A glass window could help out there – to slowly let him get to know the more-than-humans while at the same time allow him to somehow intervene in the children’s games, or at least being able to talk to the children afterwards about what they did.

Could it also be worked around the crux that another person was telling us about. She’s so good at cooking and creating a great homely atmosphere that their friends keep on coming over during weekday evenings. She said that while in some ways it was great, in the end the visits made it difficult for her to engage in her children’s homework. Her great home making was in effect having a bad impact on the children’s ability to concentrate. She said that of course she wants to be part of her community, but it makes it difficult for her to form a new life.

That’s an interesting sphere of being great at: cooking and home making. Another person said that she had used her cooking skills to get in touch with her new surrounding and new neighbours. She simply invited them over for dinner.

Inviting. Perhaps we should invite the man who said that he was surprised he had forgotten how we acted when there was a significant immigration from Chile in the 1970s. Back then he and his family had gotten deeply involved in giving to and receiving from the new neighbours. Now he had much more time on his hands than before retirement. He could perhaps be involved in this dilemma of being both present with the children and at the same time getting to know the small insects and other creatures somewhat from a distance indoors. Could the retired man lend out a piece of his garden to
the trampoline and to help out with introducing the insects to the humans – and perhaps with homework? May I suggest that we try out food as a designerly material?

What?

I mean, we’ve talked so much about food and cooking. Couldn’t we try to make scenarios out of food? I mean, food seems to be a language and material that many speak through. We’ve had many encounters where language is a crux, and through making some kind of edible scenario we could then eat the materialised suggestions of how to live well together and let our bodies digest it? Scenario salads, we could call it.

Yes, that would resemble when we try to make scenarios in paper and clay and through small theatrical enactments. Scenario salads as a design language.

Seriously, I think we know too little and should turn to others who have first-hand experience of getting to know a new place, and of helping other immigrants.

Notice board: Migrants’ housing needs in the BOOST metadesign material

- To have continuity of housing and housing location
- To live with or be close to family and friends
- To be included into local community
- To have genuine access to information
- For it to be recognised that processes of integration vary, depending on, for example, cultural background and age at arrival of migrants
- To be recognised as an individual with needs, preferences, interests and contributions to make