



MYANMAR

Summer Designmatters Fellowship 2015

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proximity

designmatters

Art Center College of Design

Myanmar is a country surrounded by China, Thailand, Bangladesh, India and Laos. It's culture is an eclectic mix of all of these countries from the diversity of cuisine to its cultural customs. The country was isolated under a military regime for over 50 years. In 2012, sanctions were lifted and the country started welcoming foreigners and organizations into the country. Since then the landscape and development were rapidly changing Myanmar's traditional and untouched infrastructures.

The country remains over 70% rural with most Westerners and expats found in Yangon, Myanmar's previous capital.





The culture in Myanmar is in the midst of developing after its isolation. The streets are full of traffic in the city bustling with night markets and noodle shops. It is quite common to get a bowl of “Mohinga” or “Ono-Cousway” noodles for breakfast walking or taking a taxi to your destination.

Outside of the city lies endless greens and jungle like forests where most of the rural population live in neighboring townships all accross Myanmar. It takes about 10 hours or more to travel to the other side of the country. The people are warm, friendly and love to talk.



proximity

Proximity Designs is a social enterprise located in Yangon, Myanmar. They create products for rural farmers and their homes, from innovating and engineering water pumps to financing loans for the rural poor. I was assigned as a Media Team Fellow with my main job to strategize the Sundance Stories of Change project. From there I jumped to work on Ideo.org's Future.Sense project and research.



VISUAL UX STRATEGY



FUTURE.SENSE

Stories of Change Proposal & Grant

Goal = Transmedia Platform
(Print, Digital, Events)

Focus = Customer, Product &
Policy Stories

Deliverable = UX Strategy &
Digital Branded Vision

Grant Awarded \$15000 to Proximity

Within the first two weeks of my internship, I was tasked with rewriting the Sundance Stories of Change project proposal, which was to be my main objective and focus for my time at Proximity. After a number of meetings with Jim and Geoff, I rewrote the old draft. The goal was to restrategize Proximity's Media Outlook by creating a streamlined platform for Print, Digital and Event-based media. It wasn't until 3 weeks before my internship was over that Sundance got back accepting the proposal.



Proposal and Design Brief

Sundance Stories of Change + Skoll Foundation
In conjunction with Tomorrow Partners

Detailed Description

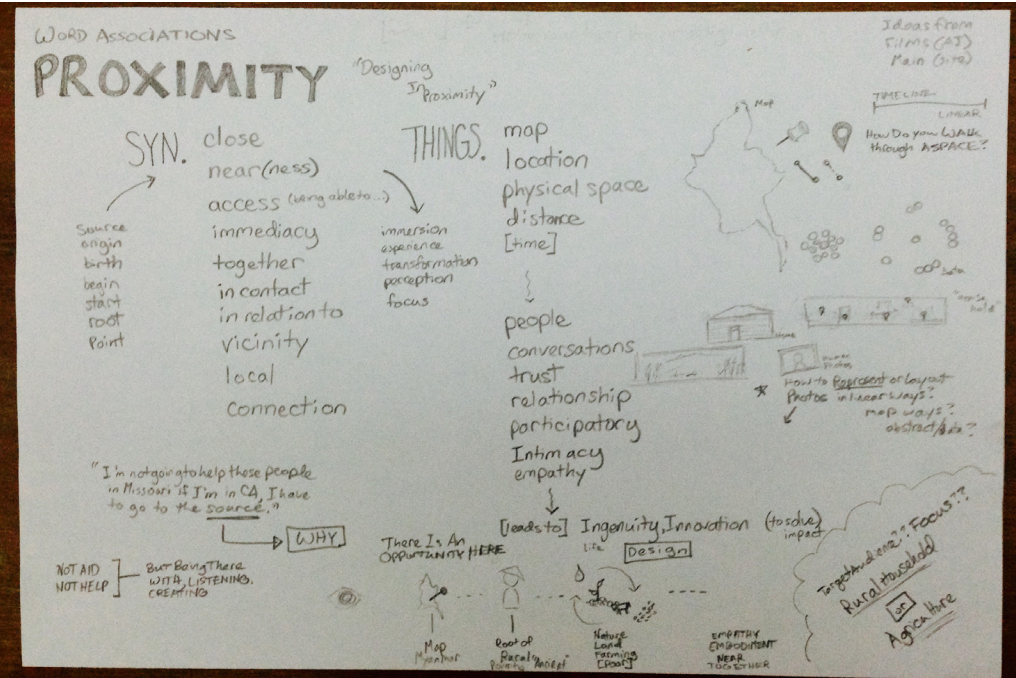
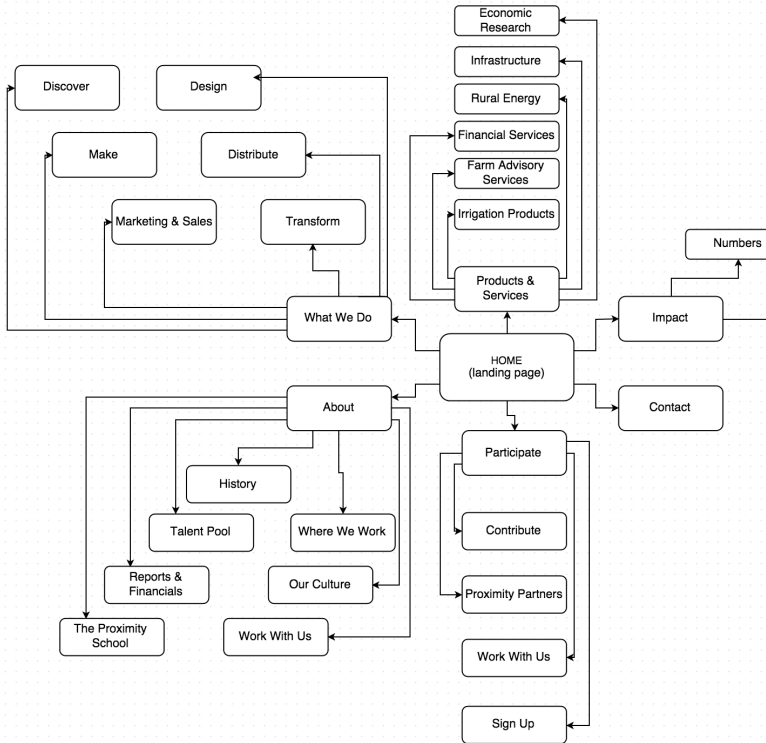
How do you tell a story of ingenuity and design? A story that is complex in practice, multitude in impact and innovative in change? This story does not lie with a tagline of the happy customer with a product or service in hand but the threads in between the ever-changing relationships of those impacted every day. The design that goes on here is a process of creativity and dynamic thinking applied to situations that arise from extreme affordances and traditions. The application of human-centered design and strategic design thinking to tackle problems of rural farmers in extreme poverty has not only improved the lifestyles of farmers but created innovation among the poorest of countries. The story is one of scalable transformation within lives, thinking, design and the overall future of Myanmar – applying modern approaches to transform ancient problems.

Stories are created every day through the key areas of focus and impact – customer, product and policy. As a social enterprise, the key goal is to better communicate and shed light on these stories in the constantly changing environment of Myanmar. The challenge is to discover the right balance of ingenuity and design that fuel and drive Proximity forward and highlight our unique social impact model. By focusing on stories taking place with farmers in the village to the openness and vibrancy in the work culture to the design innovation that happens in the lab, we hope to construct local stories that results in ingenuity and design to the wider scope of social sector. As a result, the impact in working in proximity to local people creates change within local economies and country policy for the rural farmers of Myanmar, who are at the backbone of the country's agricultural lifeline. This framework is based on a collected tale of multiple stories and should aim to immerse the audience into the life and motivation behind Proximity Designs to inspire creativity in the face

Research

In the research phase, I looked at various digital brandings of aligned design firms as well as mapping out what Proximity's current website lacked and did well. I also created a concept map of their name and brand to incorporate themes into the overall redesign. It was challenging to strive for the uniqueness Proximity hoped to convey.

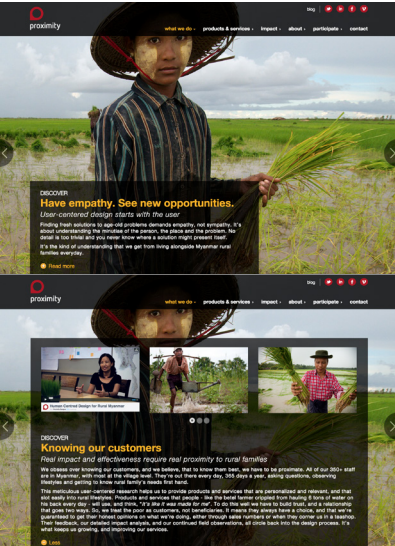
redundant links & pages
competing titles & type
too much text & clutter
hard to find product pages
conflicting text & imagery
- loss of focus



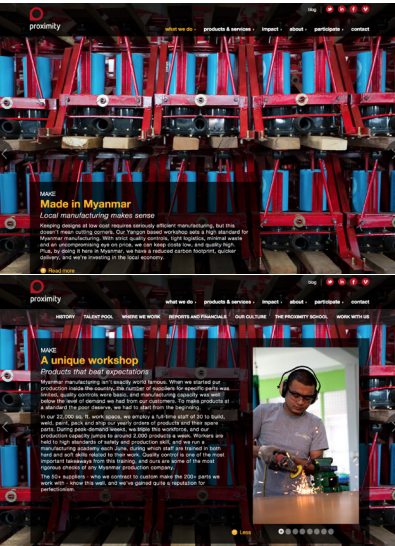
Design



Discover



Make

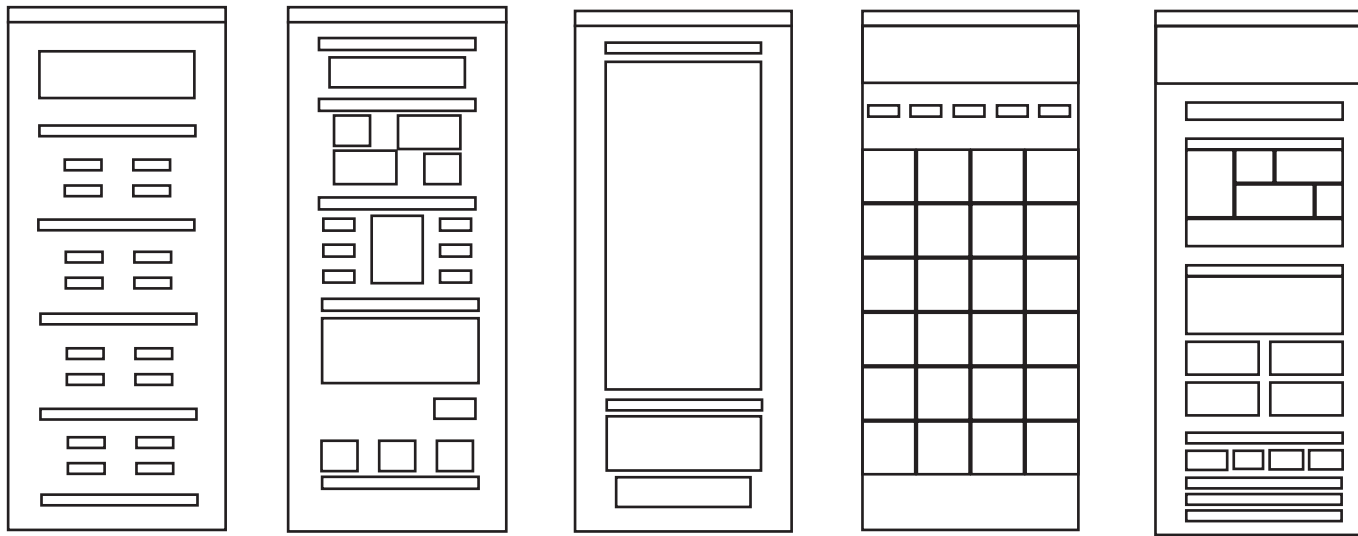


Market Sales



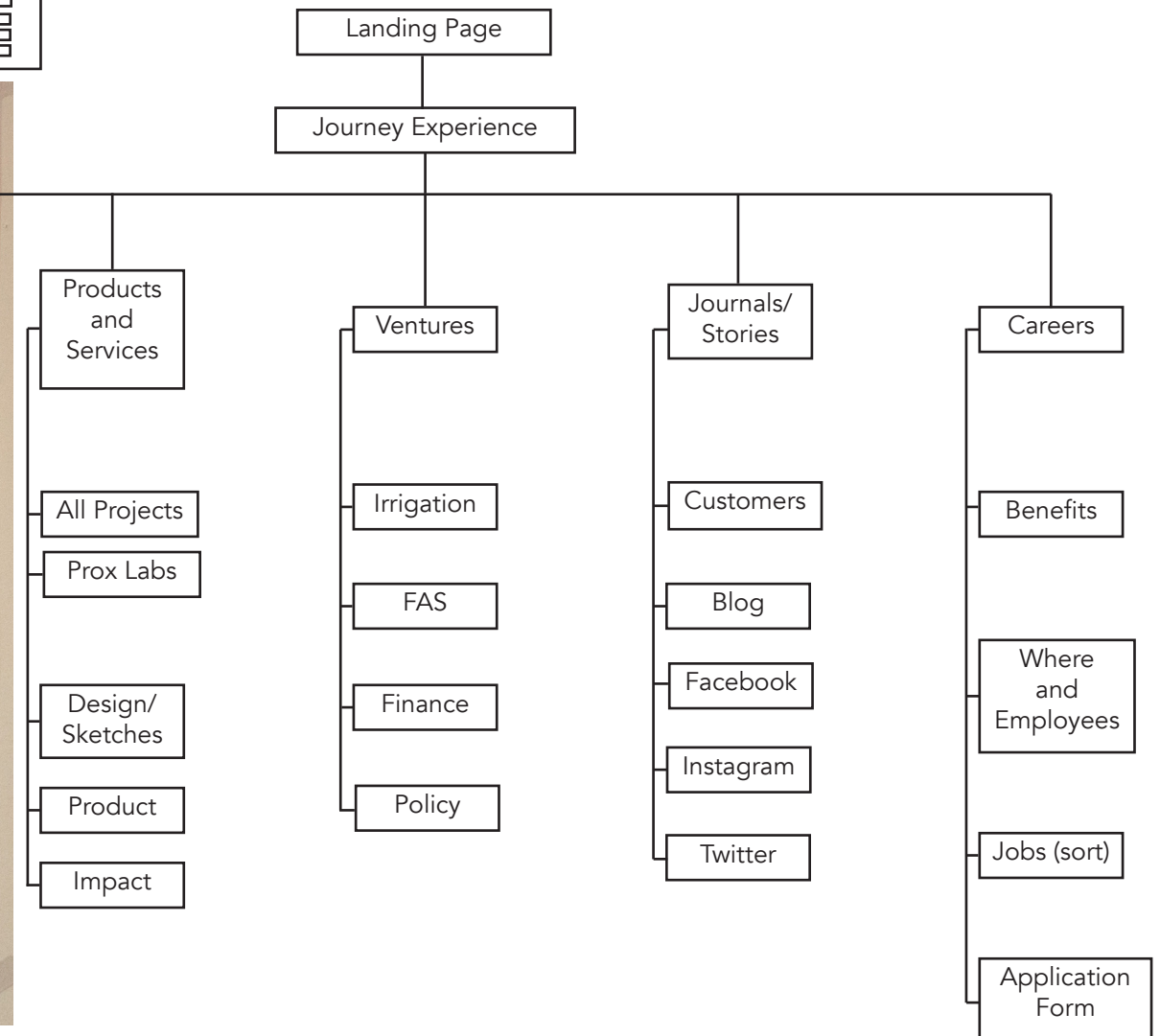
Transform





New Information Architecture

After the research phases and meetings to finalize a more effective structure and UX flow that would give life to Proximity's vision, I started to wireframe a streamlined digital platform. It was fun to sketch out designs for their main page because they encouraged me to be more conceptual and free-spirited with their storytelling experience page. I was free to create highly visual interactive elements.



version 1: Journey Through Myanmar

Landing Image

: tied to the idea of a journey through Myanmar that tries to embody how Proximity does design and research (it is immersive)

Definitions

: These phrases prime the viewer into our values

Video

: This leads to Debbie’s video on empathy that starts if the user clicks or scrolls

Mission

: A summary of WHAT and HOW we do

Customer Quotes

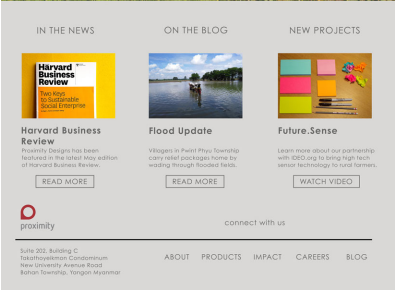
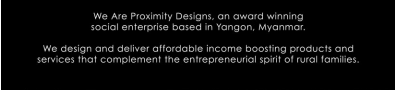
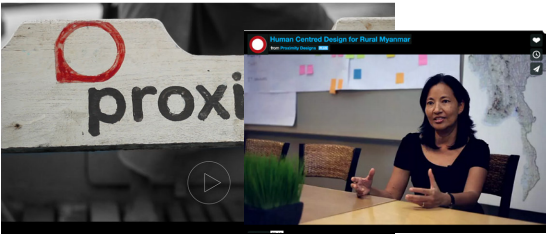
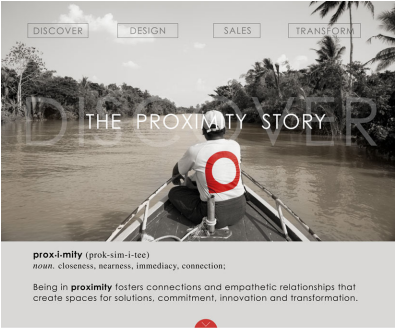
: Customers portraits appear in color next with their quote upon rollover

Interactive Button

: The Home leads the viewer to become more intimate with these customers by seeing their village or their own homes as an warm invitation

Footer

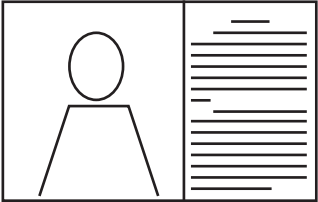
: 3 Card Grid with updates on Blog, Projects, Twitter or News



version 2: Proximity Stories

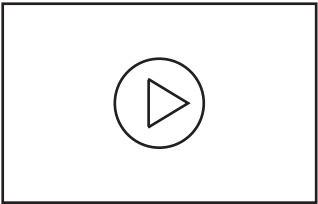
Taking the Journey concept further, this home page consists of a virtual tour walk-through Myanmar aiming to immerse the viewer capturing the spirit of going into the field and connecting to customers, experiences that fuel Proximity’s work and brand. Viewers are invited into the experience...

Portrait Popout

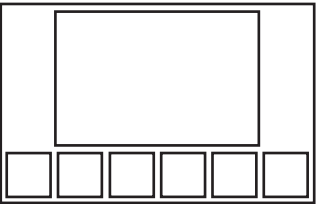


There are up to 4 stories contained in each section (staff in field, designing in the field, village life, customer stories, innovation). These are picked strategically and will stay up permanently.

Video Popout

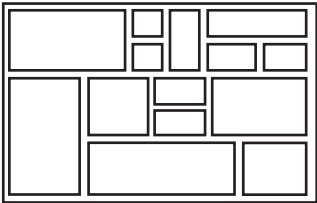


Storyboard Popout



Each button contains a story that offers knowledge and more information, going in depth into a story


Collage Popout



ABOUTPRODUCTS & SERVICESIMPACTCAREERSBLOG

FUTURE SENSE

a partnership with IDEO.org



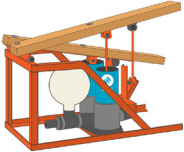
Products & Services

IRRIGATION

FARM ADVISORY SERVICES

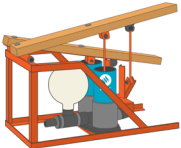
FINANCE

POLICY



THE ORIGINAL PUMP


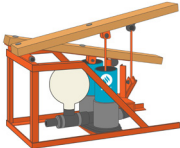
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Being able to draw water from a well and push it up under pressure direct to the field, eliminates the laborious task of hauling water from its source manually. Launched in 2006, the Original is a hard-wearing metal pump, which is very popular especially in hilly areas where the source is often down hill from the farmer's field. This model, manufactured like all of our pumps in Myanmar, is one of the most affordable of its kind in the world.

Price: 39,000 Kyat (US \$40)
Total Number Sold: 2,376
Suction depth: 15 feet
Flow rate of 15 feet suction depth: 580 Gallon/hour


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SALT WATER SEED SELECTION


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Our FAS techniques are all about simplicity. Take for example salt water seed selection (SWSS). All farmers need to increase their yield is saline soil and an egg. They start by making a salt water solution salty enough for the egg to float. Then farmers can dump in their rice seeds. Bad seeds float, good seeds sink. By removing the bad seeds and planting the good seeds farmers can significantly improve their income and yields by almost 10 to 15 baskets per acre.

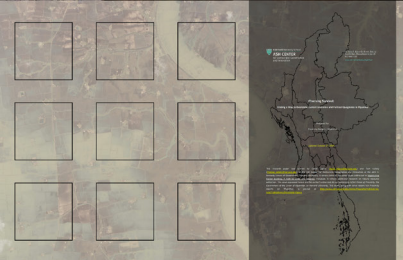
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AFFORD TWO EAT ONE

VIEW REPORT



Recruitment Page


ABOUTPRODUCTS & SERVICESIMPACTCAREERSBLOG

We're Designing a NEW Myanmar


JOIN US

We are Proximity Designs, an award winning social enterprise operating in Myanmar for over 10 years.

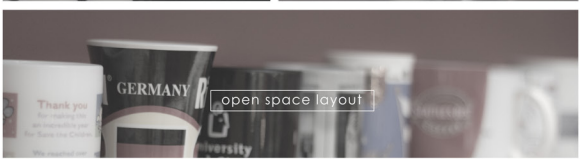
WHY WORK AT PROXIMITY




health insurance plan



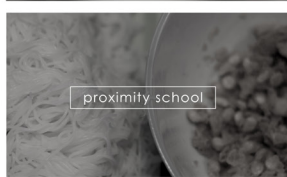
competitive salary




open space layout



diverse coworkers




proximity school




mohinga Mondays

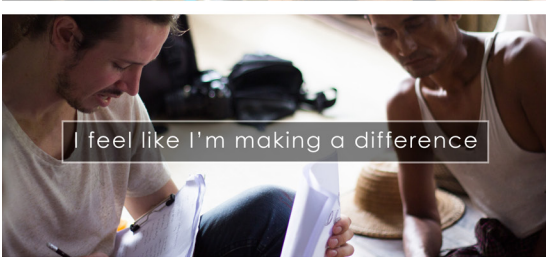
WHAT ITS LIKE TO WORK HERE



Things are changing everyday



You always learn something new

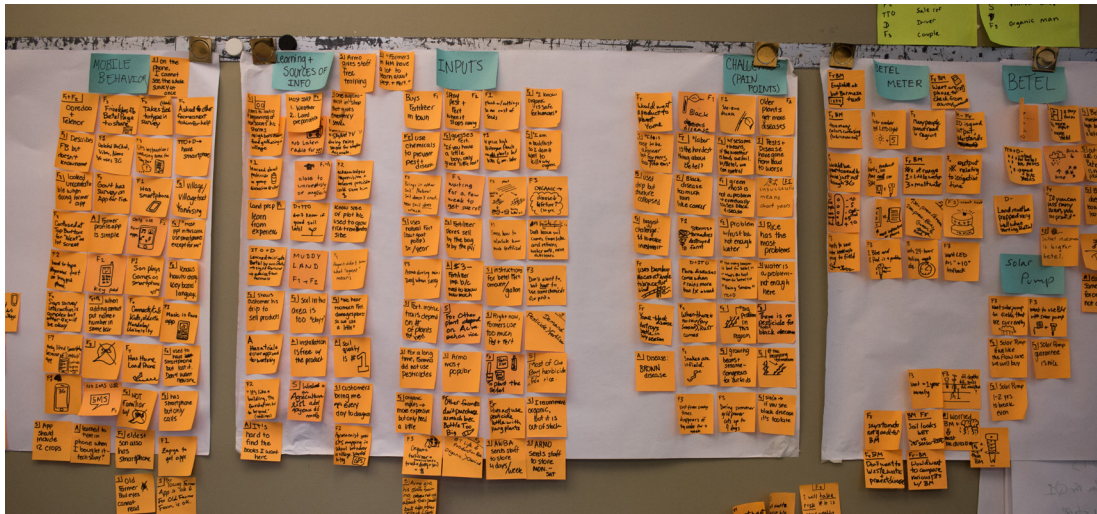
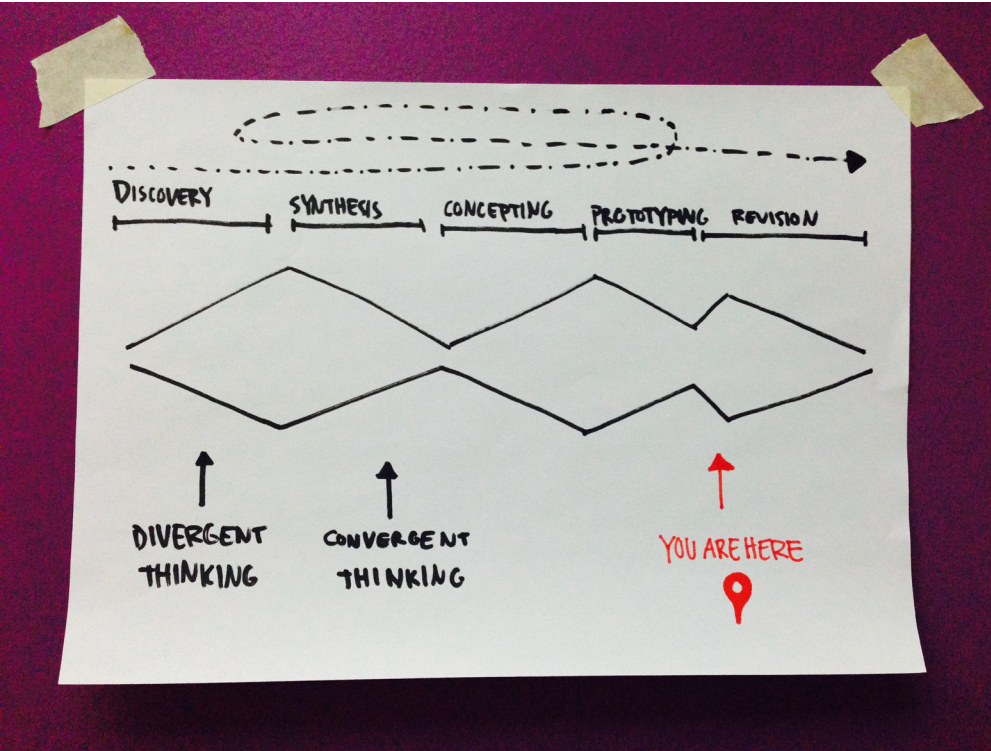


I feel like I'm making a difference

JOIN OUR TEAM

FUTURE.SENSE

In a collab between IDEO.org and Proximity Designs, I worked part-time on a research project looking at sensor technologies for precision agriculture in rural Myanmar farms and homes. For four days, our team went to the field to interview 5 betel farmers on irrigation behaviors and test IDEO.org's Betel Meter prototype on their land.



Field Research

Human Centered Design

Prototype Testing

Interviews

Synthesis for IDEO.org

Sensor Technology Workshop

As part of the Future.Sense project, I organized a sensor workshop with my co-team that was open to the Proximity staff to come and learn about sensors, the Internet of Things, computing and smart technology. This was to both ground Proximity in what the future might hold in their product line as well as creating a maker type community among those new or curious about design. We began by giving a presentation overview of these various concepts and sensors, then moved to a workshop style where the room was organized into teams and we did walkthroughs of tutorials with the plug and play pre-soldered toolkit. In the last 25 minutes we gave everyone a design brief to quickly prototype and devise with their team. Both sessions held on two days were fully packed and greatly successful.



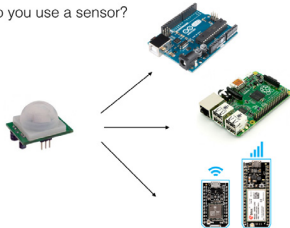
Sensor Technology and The Internet of Things

What is a sensor?



A sensor is an electronic hardware input that senses the physical world and converts what it senses into numbers and electrical signals.

How do you use a sensor?



With Microcontrollers....
These are small chips that are similar to the motherboard in your computer. They control the various signals going in and out.

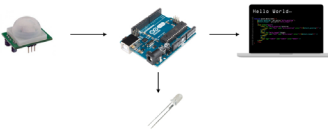
How do you use a sensor? (part 2)



With Actuators....
Actuators and other outputs convert and interpret these signals into the digital world - from LED lights to the internet.



What controls the system?



Code controls the inputs and outputs, telling the micro controller what to do like a set of instructions. Code is much like learning a new language, with its own set of syntax, grammar and sentences.

What's the big deal?



Overall

Working at Proximity Designs was an amazing experience from working with both Burmese, repats and expats in the office to going to the field in the rural offices of Proximity's branches like Bogale and Shwebo. The office culture with their communal like activities and atmosphere was welcoming and working on the Media Team with a talented group of staff encouraged a lot of learning on many ends. The fact that I got to jump on other projects and get hands on experience with field research and HCD methodologies was also a great learning opportunity. I enjoyed the bonds I created and sharing in Proximity's love of combining business for social impact and seeing their sustainability and values come through every day. Thank you for the great experience and being able to provide a helping hand to design that matters. Thank you both Proximity Designs and Designmatters for the wonderful opportunity.

