

# Playground Prototype

Itai Thomas Yavin

Team Members: Gundega Lapsa, Christian Antonio Kjær,  
Mathias Dam Hedelund, Mateo Pérez, Felipe Fragoso

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## Abstract

For this exercise we tried to create a playground aimed at adults within public transit areas. The thought was that danish people usually avoid interaction with strangers within the public space, whenever possible. So the task was to create a risk free environment where adult strangers could freely interact, in a way that was short, simple and without commitment.

## 1 Introduction

For the exercise we decided to use the space of an elevator as a playground. This was chosen because elevators are usually transitional spaces where strangers are likely to share, what often can be called a limited amount of space. This is an interesting space because, people often have a tendency to avoid interaction with strangers in public space, unless necessary. So by creating a playground within a space such as an elevator, the playground would have the opportunity to enforce interaction between strangers. The interaction itself revolves around the connection of virtual space. Two elevators would be connected through a display screen (see figure 1), each participant would then have a view into the other elevator.

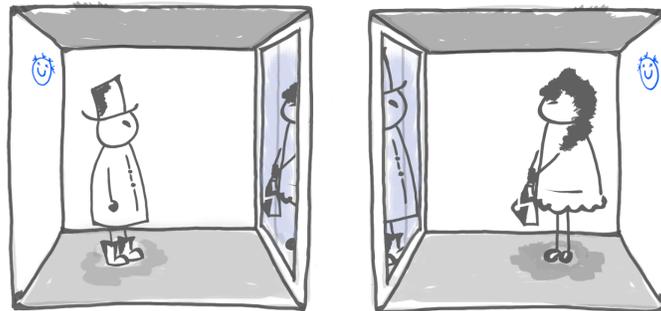


Figure 1: Illustration of elevator screen connection

The core interaction would revolve around the walls of the elevator, each user would be able to "draw" on the walls, using their hands 2. This would procure the drawing into the connected elevator as well, in the same position. Through this interactions users would be able to interact voicelessly, as well as collaborating in the creation of drawings. Drawn works would stay on the wall until a user erases them by wiping his hand through them. This means that interactions are also possible through time, as drawings may change as users add or remove them.



Figure 2: Illustration of how drawing on the elevator walls would function

## 2 Design Thoughts

### 2.1 The Extension of Space

The prototype functions through the idea of a connection of spaces. This connection would function as a visual extension of the normally limited space of the elevator itself. While the connection is purely visual, it at first, visually enlarges the elevator, but also unlocks the possibility of interactions with people who potentially could be physically miles away. This creates a sharing of space between what would most likely be strangers.

An inherent problem arises from the design thought. Due to the fact that the playground only requires the presence of a person, it also means that there are very few ways of avoiding the playground, should a person need the elevator. This means that it more or less forces the interaction on a person, whether the

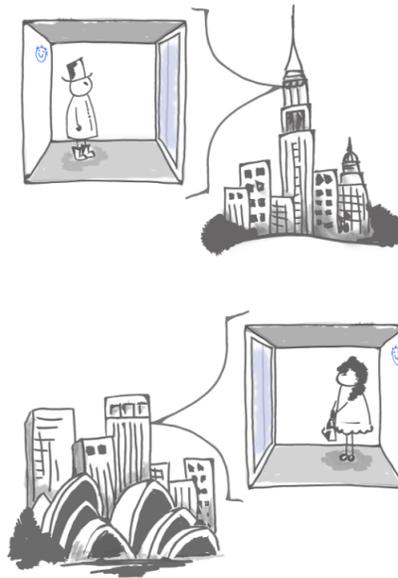


Figure 3: Illustration of how the connection of space

person is willing or not. Of course the person can choose not to participate in the interaction, but since the playground is limited in size, and also is surrounding the individual, there are very few ways of avoiding being a participant in the playground. For that reason an experience like this may be uncomfortable for some people, especially if the individual is shy and/or don't appreciate this "intrusion" of space. A way of avoiding this would have been the inclusion of an "on" button or functionality to the experience, which would have meant that both sides of the elevator would have to consent to the experience. Of course this would bring other problems, such as, what if only one person wanted the experience? Another solution could have been to remove the screen, while this limits the interactions, and effectively removes the expansion of space, it also makes the interaction anonymous, which may have been quite fitting for especially adult strangers.

### 2.1.1 Time

While the experience is potentially capped to the length of the elevator ride (a person could of course chose to stay in the elevator), this has both a possible positive effect, as well as a limiting one. Say an elevator ride takes from between 30 seconds to a minute. This means that a person who would find the experience uncomfortable, at least only has to endure it for a short amount of time. This also possibly adds a factor of non-commitment, since the experience is capped, the meeting between the strangers is ultimately going to be short, and this may make interaction easier as the stranger would be out of ones life after a short

duration anyway. Of course since the experience is short, this also limits the possible scope of interactions. One interesting aspect though, is the idea of the extension of space through time. Time itself can be thought of as a type of space. Time can encapsulate interactions, and some interactions can only exist through the passage of time. In this case, since any drawings/writings on the elevator walls, persists through time, this also enables an interaction between several participants through the passage of time. One participant may enter the elevator and start a drawing, which another participant may continue, this could continue of the passage of a longer amount of time, until the point where, even if participant number one should return to the same elevator, the creation he started, may be unrecognizable for him. This kind of interactions has many strengths as it has the potential of being fully anonymous and still be an interaction between strangers. It also adds the possibility of the individual participants to play within a space where no-one is there to witness it, which may make play easier to do. This in some ways could be seen as a stronger interaction than the one that was intended with the design, as this interaction would have the potential of being easier to do, and with far less commitment. A participant would enter, add his or her addition to the walls, and leave within the space of a minute or less.

## 2.2 Props

The playground itself has a very limited amount of props. Here the props within the interaction is the participants themselves and the walls. The idea is that the concept of drawing on the walls with your hands would be similar to other interactions that adults do through their daily life (as for example the interaction one has with devices such as ones smart phone or tablet). One main problem though, is that this design lacks in feedforward. Unless a participant is directly told (either through illustration, writing or the like), there is no visible feedforward to the possibility of writing on the walls, this means that unless a person figures this out randomly, or through another participant, the interaction may end up being fully invisible to the participant, and thus lost. One strength of the choice of props are their simplicity, most people have by this day and age, used their hands for similar interactions, which could make the transition to this interaction easier. Also through the limitation of props, it forces creativity, had the playground been full of props, this may have stifled interaction, by forcing the participant to make a choice. This would be problematic as the interaction (as mentioned earlier) is very limited in time. The time constraints on the playground would thus make a condensed experience more appropriate.

## 3 conclusion

This project aimed for a simple, quick and non-committing experience, between adult strangers. For that a playground was designed, that would break the walls of physical distance through a visual display between two elevators. The choice

of space was done so as to accommodate for the problem at hand, but ultimately also had its weaknesses. In the end it was theorized that the connection of visual space could prove inappropriate for a playground between adult strangers, especially with the coupling of the space of an elevator which in some cases could be hard to avoid. To this a couple of design changes were thought of, such as the removal of the visual display, and centering on an experience which would develop over the space of time instead.