Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Human-Centered Design Meets Community Block Party

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• Abstract (300 words):
Springdale, Arkansas is like many communities that are undergoing gentrification. Springdale is located in Northwest Arkansas, which as a whole, is rapidly growing. Between 2010 and 2018, it was the 13th fastest growing area in the United States. (1) Due to great economic opportunity for a variety of workers, Springdale has become one of the most diverse communities in the area, home to a vibrant Latinx and Marshallese community. However, many people from these communities lack representation and lack access to community decision making.

TASC (The Teen Action Support Center) was founded in 2009 and created ‘The Station’ a downtown Springdale “teen collaboratory” to empower teens to take action in their lives and communities. In 2018, I was introduced to Aron Shelton, Executive Director of The Station, and we discussed ways that my Human-Centered Design course could support a series of community block parties. We used the first block party as a prototype to gather data about community needs and desires in a way that would authentically engage the community. My design students worked closely with the teen interns from
The Station throughout the project, co-creating the branding, the concept, and the block party itself. My students created trilingual activities such as Bingo and ‘This or That’ that collected qualitative and quantitative data about the community. The students compiled the findings into a book that now lives with The Station and functions as a guidebook for community activations. During my presentation, I would like to share the process of this project, both from a pedagogical standpoint as well as reflecting on the ways that using a human-centered approach to community engagement can increase inclusion and access to decision making.


• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Marty Maxwell Lane is a graphic design educator, researcher and writer. Her research focuses on design that facilitates learning, empowerment, and social change, often through the lens of pedagogy and participatory design. An Associate Professor of Graphic Design at the University of Arkansas, Marty worked with colleagues to establish the first BFA in Graphic Design. Marty is currently serving as the Associate Director of The School of Art.

Marty’s active role in the design community has led her to speak in Cyprus, Berlin, London, Rome, Toronto and across the U.S. Her newest book (co-authored with Rebecca Tegtmeyer) Collaboration in Design Education. Case Studies and Methodologies, will be released in 2020 (Bloomsbury).

Previously, Marty taught at The Kansas City Art Institute and Kent State University. Marty received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design from the University of Illinois-Chicago and a Master of Graphic Design from North Carolina State University’s College of Design. Before returning to school to obtain her Masters degree, Marty worked as a designer in Chicago, where her work was recognized by AIGA, The Type Director’s Club and Print’s Regional Design Annual.