



In my own professional practice these are examples of *devices*: **1)** the modular diary-form established by my flyers that come in sets of 6 [HEX]; **2)** the sound system called SWIRL used to enhance the use of video conferencing tools in class-rooms; **3)** immersive field-expeditions.

All of them are *negotiable* because they are “hacked” in the sense that the walls within and between the three elements above can be pushed (by other people and/or by me). This is why I am conceiving them as *techno-cultural* ‘semi-intelligent’ *devices*. They can coalesce with *devised* theatre methods.

The methods are *devised* in the aspect that it depends on the people who are involved. In a theatre not intended for dramatic theatre—that is, the *learning theatre*—the designs are *devices* that are created for the pushing of walls (cf, Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood’s work with the [Fun Palace](#)).



The idea of ‘techno-cultural devices’ came to me from an article written by Erik Born on Mediaeval archaeology and how arrangements involving an icon and monks moving in a hemicycle around it, was used by Nicolas of Cusa to teach the abstract concept of Divine omnipresence to his students.

Erik Born discussed this—and the broader class of arrangements it belongs to—as ‘cultural technologies’. When developed *beyond* the point where they operate as inventive pedagogical arrangements, devised by the sharp mind of an exceptional teacher, they become a subject matter of design.

In his paper, Erik Born engages a critical discussion with Wolfgang Ernst’s notion that the term media archaeology should be *reserved* for the study of electronic media. Accepting this restriction, opens a room *next* to it: the arrangements we design extending working along with electronic media.

My own experiments in *re-routing sound* around an iPad is “electronic” in *style*: the miscellaneous elements connected are not developed to support video-conferencing but for the monitoring of sound in the *music*-field. The only piece of software involved is one that gets around the Zoom-app.

Borrowing from the legacy of the music stage—or, broadly from the Black Box—docks the iPad in a system with a different cultural history, than the office (and its meeting practices) as a distinct contemporary cultural paradigm. Another is the privatisation of surfaces in public space.

This is to say that there is a variety of techno-cultural devices “out there” and the ones that we are currently inventing—responding jointly to the necessities of the pandemic and to a playful urge—not only leave different cultural “footprints” but constitute *dormant* political strategies (of sorts).

They have the potential of bringing our society and culture in *very* different directions. The need to contain these developments creatively would seem an almost obvious challenge to designers and the design field. Also, considering design as techno-cultural devising has a *wide range* of application.

It is a *candidate* framework—though of course *not* the only one—to discuss the join *process* and *results* of ongoing projects such as [costume agency](#). More generally, it results from the need to reach a broader public with succinct design-propositions without resorting to “megaphone language”.

By ‘megaphone language’ I mean the development of slogan-like language—often with adversarial implications—which is canalised by the brutality of sensorial reduction (with megaphones, the sound) imposed on users, at a scale that can affect mass-psychology, at the detriment of *substance*.

This effect can already be detected after 6 months of monoculture on video-conferencing, owing to the pandemic. But with effects that are substantially similar to the effect of PowerPoint on our cognitive styles, which has been point out for decades by social economist and graphic designer [E. Tufte](#).