

MediaFranca

STRENGTHENING CIVIC CONNECTION AND SOCIAL AGENCY

The decline of civic connection has been well documented over the last 40 years in Western societies. Special attention has been drawn to information and communication technologies [ICTs] in order to understand the role they have been playing in this crisis. Recent dissemination of social software through the Internet is not necessarily bringing people closer: enhanced connectivity doesn't necessarily mean enhanced collectivity. Problems in this area seem to be particularly concentrated among youth, who appear less cohesive and disengaged than earlier generations. MediaFranca explores interaction opportunities for leveraging stronger relations among teenagers and young adults.

AIMS

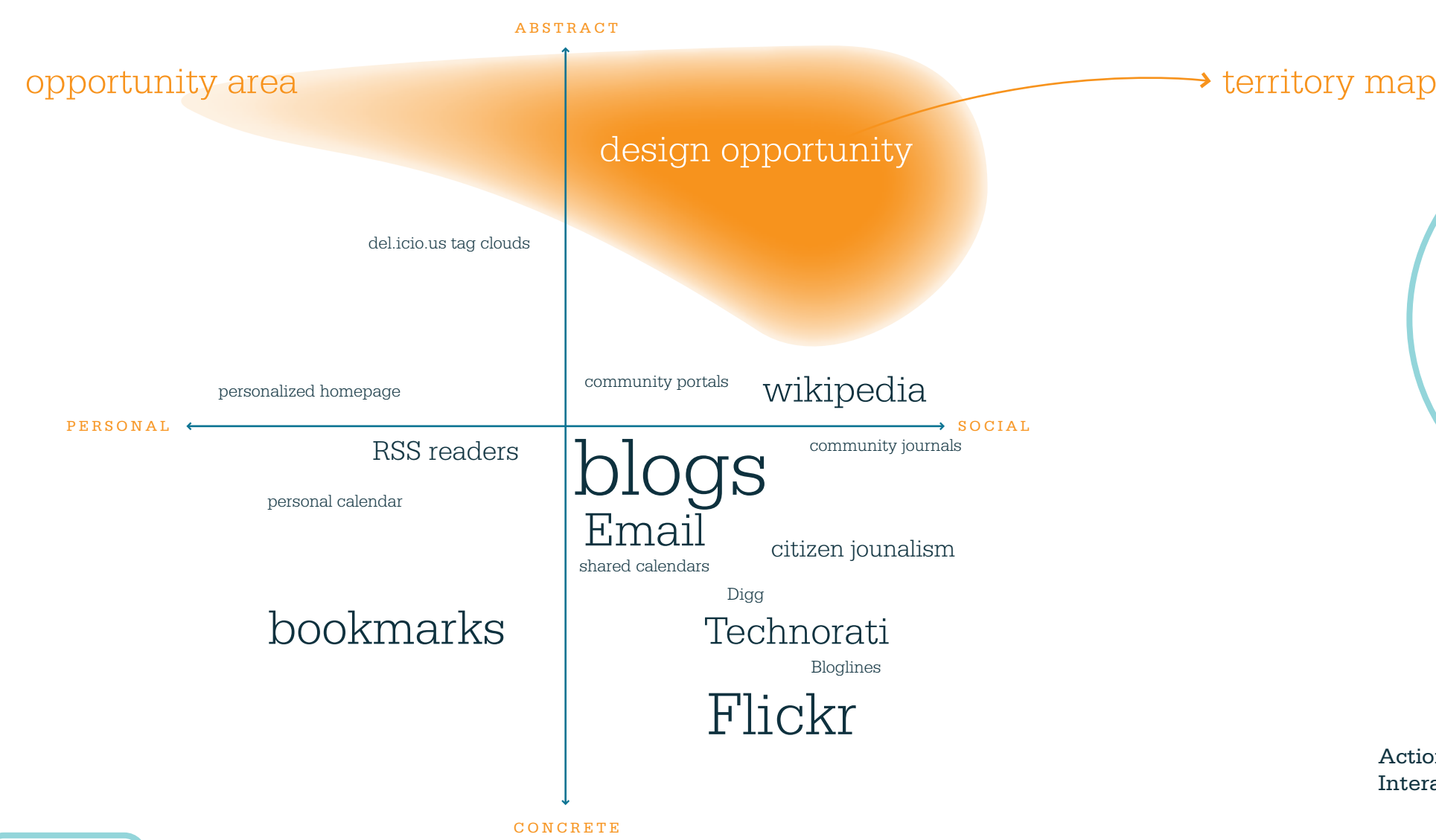
MediaFranca is about empowering young adults and teenagers to express their point of view in an egalitarian conversational environment. A key goal is to impress upon teenagers their inherent civic presence as active stakeholders of their communities. MediaFranca is also focused in generating more creative and collaborative enterprises over passive and consumptive ones.

INQUIRY

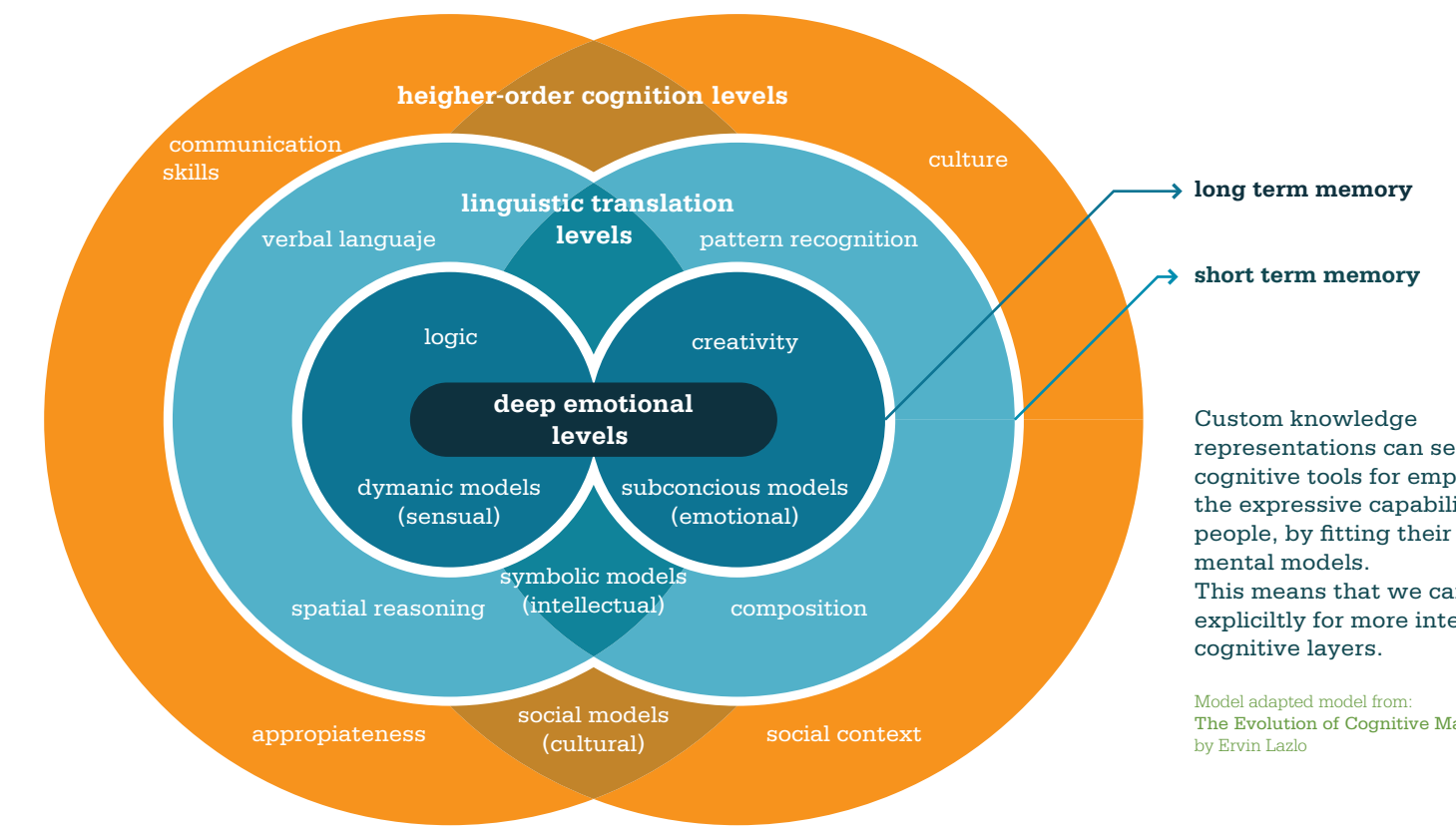
How can we help teens be aware of their potential agency?
 How can we help them understand the relationships they have with others and how can we strengthen those connections?
 How can we design an interaction that can support the plasticity, open-endedness and organic nature of collaborative communication?
 How can we transcend the digital realm and bring interactions into the physical?

USER RESEARCH

Research inquiry is focused in understanding teenagers' needs and motivations as well as their current use of networking technology. Initial research studied perceptions, patterns and behaviors around knowledge representation in adolescents in order to identify design opportunities for the development of visual tools for the Semantic Web. Initial interviews and participatory design sessions focused in understanding their current level of engagement as well as the nature and quality of relationships among themselves.



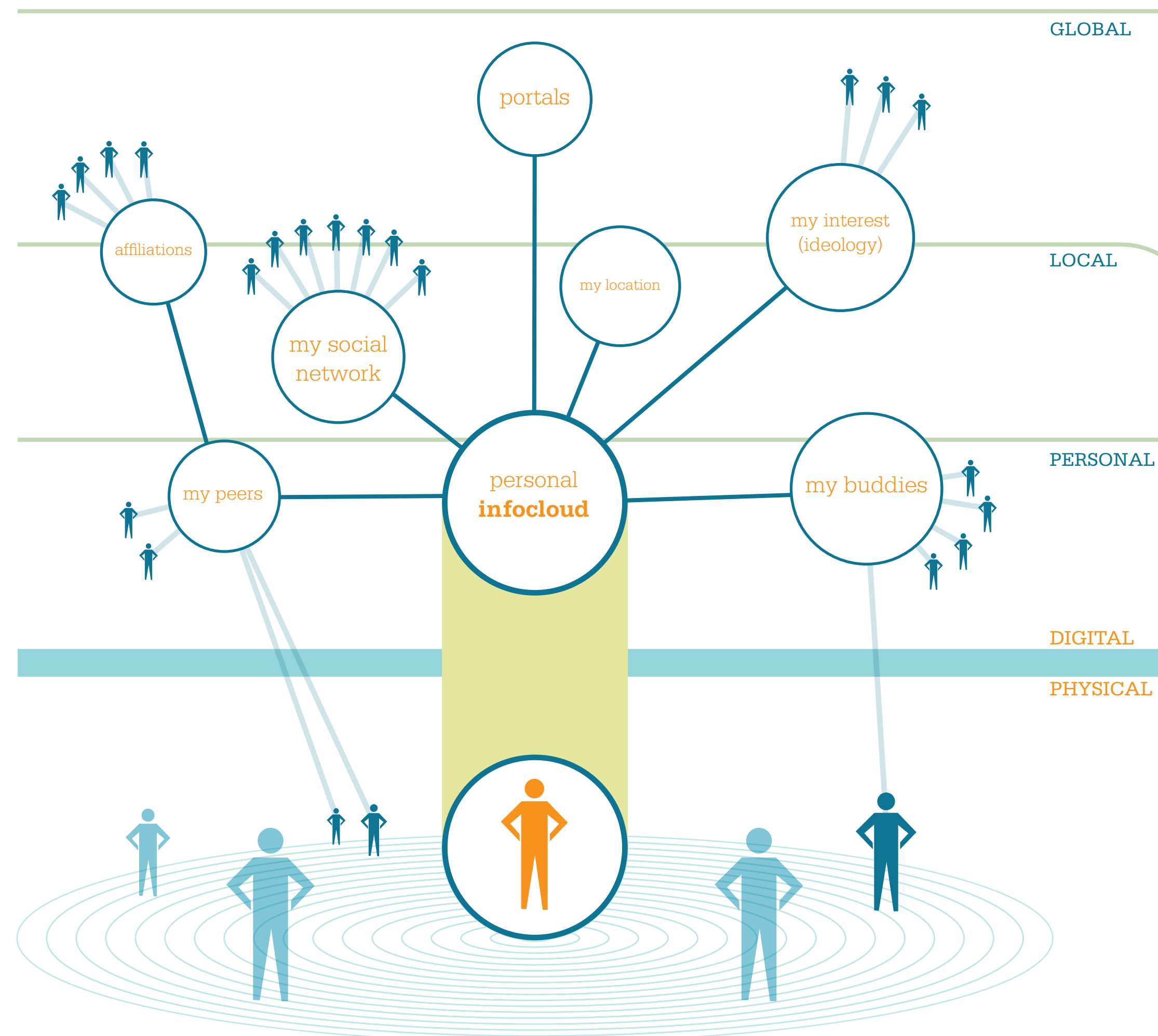
cognitive model



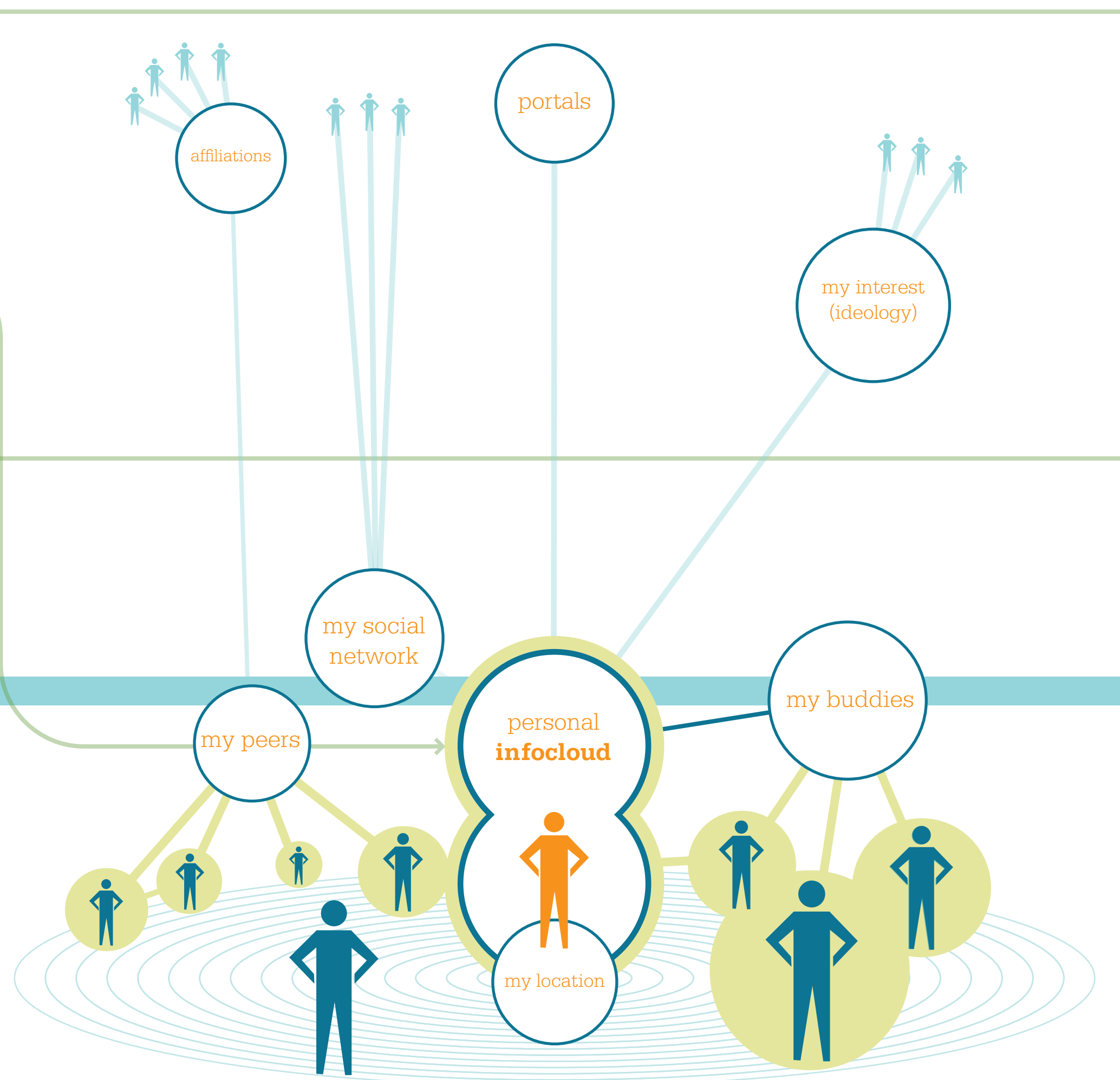
TEENAGERS

Preliminary literature review focused on the cognitive development of teenagers and understanding communication dynamics within youth movements. Later, two workshops were conducted in different settings, one with school students (13-16 yrs.) and another with CMU freshmen (17-18 yrs.). Students were asked to build posters with a given set of icons to depict their social networks, their trusted sources of information and the role technology is playing in the construction of their information milieu. As a separate activity, they were asked to depict their daily routines in relation with their immediate surroundings and their community.

CURRENT SITUATION



PROPOSED SITUATION



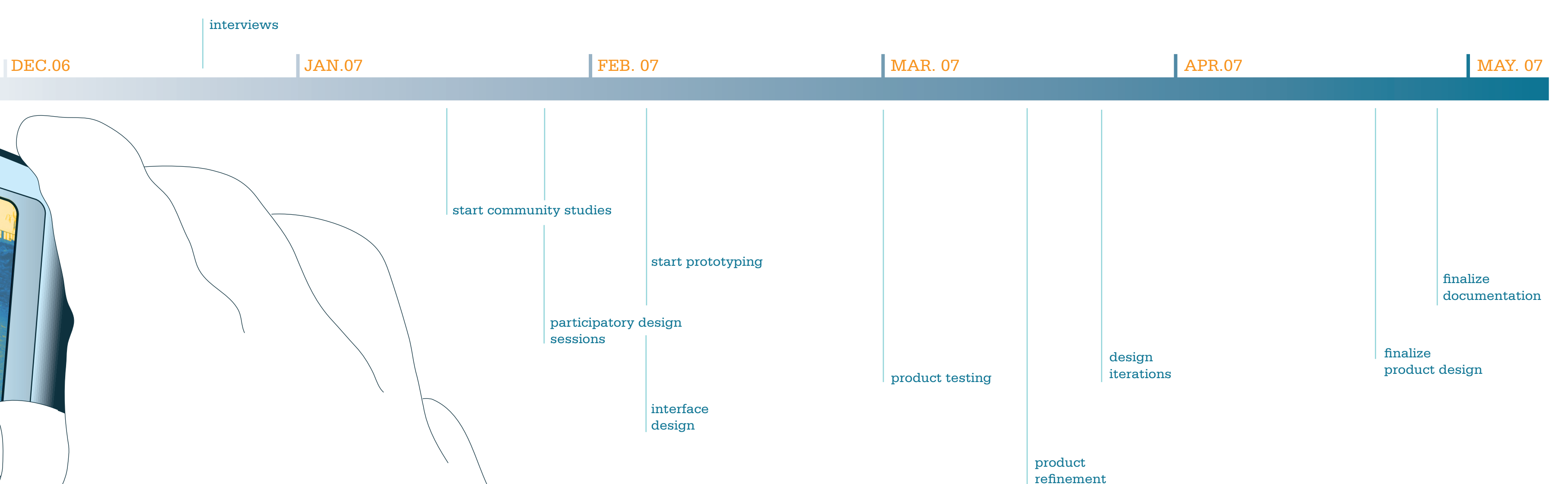
CONCEPTS

1. A mobile device similar to a cameraphone allows users to access posts attached to specific locations. While framing a specific view with their camera, users can access situated content.
2. Users can "plant" different media formats by attaching them to a location or an artifact.
3. People can approve or reject the claims contained in specific posts. Popular posts might eventually grow and become more visible than others.
4. People can modify labels and descriptions in the artifacts of their environment as a way of mutually shaping the semantic representation for further use.

IMPLICATIONS

Situated interaction is more likely to unfold and transcend from the digital to the physical. Physical interaction and situated communication raises the relevancy of the near and promotes further discovery of the immediate surroundings. Invention, design, or arrangement of a digital artifact in this realm can become a way of settling an issue in the affairs of the community. The next steps of the project will be focused in the definition of a malleable interaction with the environment where people can feel politically accountable through the inherent political nature of their created artifact; also, in developing a way in which digital artifacts can promote rich and dynamic conversations where people feel their agency through immediate system feedback.

TIMELINE



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