Five Political Provocations for Soma Design: A Relational Perspective on Emotion and Politics

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ABSTRACT

Soma design is intimately entangled with the politics, not only of design itself, but of bodies. We combine perspectives from soma design, political theory, and Sara Ahmed's work *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, to develop five political provocations that reflect on the politics of soma design and the possibilities and frictions therein. Inspired by soma design's roots in somaesthetic philosophy, our five provocations are (i) Knowledge and Ways of Knowing; (ii) The Self and Self-Knowledge; (iii) Felt Ethics and Right Action; (iv) The Pursuit of Happiness; and (v) Justice and the Emotional Labour of Transformation. Our contribution intends to foster reflection on the politics implicit within soma design practice.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing → Interaction design theory, concepts and paradigms**.

KEYWORDS

Soma Design, Felt Ethics, Ethics, Politics, Politics of the Body, Design Epistemics

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1 INTRODUCTION

Design practice and designed artefacts are entangled with ethics [34], morals [90], and politics [92]. This is because design can play a critical role in organising and reorganising the relations between people, structures, and institutions [16, 27, 52]. There is a rich history of political design practices in interaction design: critical and speculative practices [28], adversarial design [26], participatory design [15], feminist approaches [12, 31], and design as a democratic enquiry [27], to name but a few. Notably, there is a flourishing body of work concerning the politics of the body (e.g., [6, 32, 83, 84]), which is of particular interest to the practice of soma design: a practice of designing with the body [44].

Soma design positions the living, moving body as the site of our subjectivity, and as a resource for design [44]. It draws upon the philosophy of somaesthetics; an ameliorative practice of cultivating the body that promises change, transformation, and ultimately, living a better life [78]. It is here, then, that somaesthetics poses a question: *what better life do we want?* This is a fundamentally political question – and one that also lies at the heart of design practice [34]. This reflective and critical essay emerged through discussions between the authors of this paper, who share an interest in the politics of soma design practice. In particular, recent work regarding felt ethics [34, 66], prompted us to revisit the bodily politics of soma design practice [47] and reflect more deeply on our ways of knowing, feeling, and doing politics in soma design.

Höök and colleagues have already drawn bridges between the soma design stance and different political aspects of the body, such as plurality, privilege, and bodily freedoms [47]. Here, we shift our attention towards how we might practice soma design in ways that are attentive to the political nature of change and transformation, as well as how soma design's epistemics and methods can make space for ethical intention to be exercised, in order to bring about better ways of living and conditions of flourishing. To this end, we return to one of the foundations of somaesthetic philosophy: "*Somaesthetics blends aesthesis, cognition, and praxis to address some of philosophy's most central aims: knowledge, self-knowledge, right action, happiness, and justice*" [77, p.109]. We have often discussed this quote in relation to our design practice, and therefore, we have chosen these five aims as starting points for our reflections.

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Our point of departure is grounded in felt ethics [34]. Felt ethics adopts the position that rationality – traditionally held as our "superior" capacity for moral reasoning [17] – is inseparable from emotion in the enactment of our ethical sensibilities [23]. Though the political aspects of felt ethics are explored to a lesser extent [34], work by feminist theorist Sara Ahmed has demonstrated how emotions similarly orientate, align, and conceal certain bodies within a political commons (supposedly) characterised by rationality and reason [2]. Therefore, the development of a conception of ethics for design that explicitly foregrounds emotion and lived experience, is intrinsically connected to such a politics of emotion. We cannot engage with ethics of soma design practice without becoming entangled in the politics of bodies, especially at a time of global crises characterised by the exploitation of difference-between-bodies and the production of certain bodies as "immoral" [3, 55, 62].

This forms our motivation to attend to the politics of soma design practice. Though the body is arguably always present in human-technology interaction [93], soma design as a stance explicitly centres the body as our root of knowing the world [44]. Bodies are ingrained with moral [72] and ethical sensibilities [34], shaped by socio-cultural habits [38], and disciplined by political norms [33]. Interlocking systems of oppression, such as colonialism [2], racism [24], patriarchy [29], and ableism [53] all rely on the production and orientation of certain bodies as being "others" [56]. Whether through discipline [29], violence [67], gender [18], or labour [30], bodies have always played a central role in the enactment of politics and power.

Against this background of contentious political discourse concerning the body, we have chosen to draw upon the work of political theorist Chantal Mouffe. The prevalent liberal discourse on politics has traditionally focused on efficiency, solutionism, and the avoidance of conflict. However, antagonisms are central to how we interact and form societies [61]. Instead, we build upon Mouffe's definition of '*the political*' to mean "*the dimension of antagonism which I take to be constitutive of human societies*" and '*politics*' to mean the "*set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organising human existence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political*" [61, p.9]. Applied to soma design practice, we interpret the political to mean the ever-present possibility of friction that can unfold between different bodies and perspectives in the design process, and politics to refer to how we organise relations within that space, as well as how designs eventually orientate relations between bodies and broader political systems and power structures.

We draw upon these theorists to help articulate our reflections and develop five political provocations for soma design; (i) Knowledge and Ways of Knowing; (ii) The Self and Self-Knowledge; (iii) Felt Ethics and Right Action; (iv) The Pursuit of Happiness; and (v) Justice and the Emotional Labour of Transformation. In each case, we reflect on both the political potential and tensions of soma design practice, and connect to other works in the interaction design community. This contribution hopes to open avenues of inquiry and reflection to soma designers and other practitioners who position the lived body or subjective experience as a key aspect of their methods and epistemics. More broadly, this paper may be of interest to human-computer interaction (HCI) designers who are interested in different ways of reflecting on the role of politics in design practice, as well as the synergies and tensions between soma design and other methodological approaches.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMING

Here, we conceptually frame our provocations by describing soma design and somaesthetics, providing related literature regarding the politics of bodily epistemics, as well as building connections between felt ethics and the politics of emotions.

2.1 Soma Design and Somaesthetics

Soma design is a stance that centres on the "*living, purposive, sentient, perceptive body or bodily subjectivity*" [76, p.141] in the design process, and positions movement as our primary way of knowing the world [44]. Movement refers not only to the body-in-motion and bodily sensations [73], but also the felt-sensing body that experiences shifts within itself [63], and how we are moved by our thoughts and emotions [2]. Drawing on the pragmatist philosophy of somaesthetics [78], soma design advocates for deep somatic engagement with our bodies during design processes, in order to cultivate a richer appreciation of how potential interactive design materials offer different experiences [44]. Such processes have been shown to generate rich insights into the transformative potential of design [7, 34, 85].

One aspect of this potential for change is that rendering tacit bodily knowledge perceptible allows designers to engage with knowledge that might otherwise remain implicit [34]. This includes "*our values, meaning-making processes, emotions, and ways of engaging with the world*" [44, p.12], and offers a means of understanding how *our own bodies* have been shaped by the world [2]. For example, soma design methods such as estrangement [91] and defamiliarisation [13] serve to disrupt our habitual ways of moving and feeling which, in turn, makes space for reflection on why and how such habits or normative behaviours have come to be ingrained in ourselves [44]. As such, soma designers can become aware that "*the technologies and interactions we develop encourage certain movements, certain aesthetic experiences, certain practices and responses, while discouraging others* [44, p.1]. This makes space for intentional design choices that can seek to challenge or reimagine the ways in which technologies relate to bodies and shape our lived experiences.

It is in such design decisions that ethical – and political – intention can be exercised [34] to pursue, in somaesthetic terms, "*knowledge, self-knowledge, right action, happiness, and justice*" [75, p.109]. These five philosophical aims are admittedly abstract – each subject to their own extensive histories of philosophical discourse – however, we use these aims as starting points to explore how we might engage with politics in soma design; a politics of change, movement, emotions, and different ways of living and knowing. To do so, it is necessary to examine more deeply the politics already implicit in bodily epistemics.

2.2 The Politics of Bodily Epistemics

There is a flourishing body of work in HCI that, from various directions, engages with the politics of the body. From the lived experience of neurodiversity, Spiel and colleagues critique the way in which technology research approaches ADHD as a 'problem' to be mitigated [84]. Cunningham and colleagues have criticised

ontological blind-spots in HCI, particularly regarding blackness, and how many anti-solutionist design discourses do not radically challenge the power structures that permeate our practice [22]. Others approach design as a means to populate such gaps with alternative ways of knowing, such as how experiences of technologies are shaped through gender [82], disability [65], and histories of trauma [20]. Riggs has worked with *Button Portraits* that archive the stories of LGBTQ+ communities and the relationship between bodies, selves, and spaces [69]. Janicki and colleagues who adopt queer and crip perspectives to reorientate technologies of productivity towards 'glitchiness' [50]. Finally, Kaklopoulou and Sanches explore whose bodies are rendered invisible during design and turn to mapping "neglected things" to explore an ethics of exclusion [54]. We see these researchers – alongside many others – as participating in the political work of reorganising the relationship between different bodies (and their lived experiences) and our wider processes of knowledge production in the HCI community.

Soma design has primarily adopted a phenomenological epistemic position; the moving body (the product of evolutionary biology [73]) is the root of our subjective experience [60]. Thus, centering the body in design is a generative source of knowledge production [46]. Phenomenology, as an epistemic mode, aims to understand the essential structures of conscious experience [81]. However, this *essential subject* (i.e., any single biological or phenomenological account represented as fundamental human experience) has long been the target of feminist philosophical critique [5]. An essential subject is inherently reductive, for example, in the case of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology [60]; it is an anonymous, impersonal and solipsistic body [86] that precludes the socio-cultural, gendered, or racialised subject [38]. Queer and feminist phenomenologists have worked extensively to counter this narrow view of the self and subjectivity, e.g., [4], showing how phenomenology is also vital to understanding the experience of marginalization and resistance, and further, there are multiple aspects to our identities that might conflict with each other [64].

Soma design, though not inherently essentialist, does engage with these different positions; phenomenology that (traditionally) assumes a fundamental subjectivity [64, 86]; the critical conception that our lived subjectivities are fundamentally constituted by a set of social, cultural, and political relations [59]; and the somaesthetic positions that the self is a fluid entity that is both politically shaped and constantly engaged in a process of becoming [79]. These tensions may not impact soma design in practice, as it emphasises a pragmatist attitude [74] focused on empirical practice that abstracts metaphysical concerns. This allows soma design to explore the experience of being in a body that may become socially and politically reconstituted in relation to e.g. menstruation, pregnancy, illness, or aging, and further, how factors such as class or privilege shape our capabilities and bodily freedoms [47]. However, we outline these different views of subjectivity to inform the development of our political provocations.

2.3 Felt Ethics and the Politics of Emotions

Soma design is a non-dualistic design stance [45], meaning that it does not view *feeling* as being separate from *knowing* (a manifestation of the mind-body dichotomy made between rationality and emotion [23]). Garrett and colleagues use this as a point of departure to explore ethics and aesthetics in soma design as being entwined; ethics as reflecting ways of living that hold value, and aesthetics as the ways of living according to those values [34, 66]. Their conception of felt ethics is an approach to cultivating ethical sensibilities: "*our sensitivities towards ourselves, others, and situations in which we find ourselves. These sensibilities prompt us to act and guide the actions that we take. They include our ability to recognise if some action is required from us and sensitivity towards how we can respond*" [34, p.1]. This conception of ethical intentionality relies on the understanding that emotion and rationality cannot be separated in the enactment of ethics [89].

The political dimension of this dichotomy between rationality and emotion has also been critically explored by Sara Ahmed [2] who demonstrates how emotions are central to producing the relations between people and larger social structures [2]. For example, pain can affect differences between bodies; fear can orientate us towards or away from certain collectives; and disgust can be used to produce certain bodies as closer to objects (rather than subjects) [2]. We draw on two overarching ideas from Ahmed's work, which we use to augment the interpretation of 'politics' and 'the political' offered in the Introduction. First, that emotion (which we take to be constitutive of ethical sensibilities) plays a central role in making bodies 'matter' within soma design practice, and further, that "*emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside from an outside in the first place. So emotions are not simply something 'I' or 'we' have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others*" [2, p.10]. We take this to mean that emotions are not simply felt, but rather, they play a central role in how bodies are produced. Therefore, emotions can be understood as a constitutive aspect of the potential frictions that can unfold between different bodies and perspectives in the design process (i.e., the political). Second, that the idea of "being moved" [48] in soma design practice can also be understood in terms of "*attachments or about what connects us to this or that. The relationship between movement and attachment is instructive. What moves us, what makes us feel, is also which holds us in place or gives us a dwelling place. Hence movement does not cut the body off from the 'where' of its inhabitance, but connects bodies to other bodies: attachment takes place to movement, through being moved by the proximity of others.*" [2, p.11]. This can be used to understand that emotions – in how they orientate, align, attach, shrink, or expand different bodies – are constitutive of the organisation of relations within a design space (i.e., politics). This relational understanding of emotion and politics forms the foundation for our political provocations.

3 POLITICAL PROVOCATIONS FOR SOMA DESIGN

We offer the following provocations as an invitation to reflect on the complex relations between politics, power, and ethics that permeate soma design practice.

3.1 Knowledge and Ways of Knowing

Deeper engagement is needed regarding the political frictions that unfold between pluralities of knowing through the body.

Our ways of being and knowing cannot be separated [11], and inevitably our subjectivities are limited in ways we cannot address [40]. When considering soma design as an ally to feminist research practices, Höök and colleagues advocate for *plurality* to avoid the reproduction of harmful power structures [47]. While we do not deny the importance of plurality, simply having "more bodies" in the design space does not, in and of itself, address the tensions that can unfold between different lived experiences – in Mouffe's terms, the antagonisms that characterise the political [61]. This is particularly true when emotions are central to knowledge production. Attending to, appreciating, and articulating emotions are fundamental aspects of soma design [44]. There is an assumption of subjectivity (or at least the capability to exercise subjectivity) inherent in knowledge production in soma design; that every body is able to experience and articulate their felt experiences as a 'holistic' subjectivity that is both attentive to and appreciative of all aspects of their being. However, not every one may be in the same position within such a design space; many have complex relationships to their bodies due to physical or emotional trauma, pain, or previous experiences that have made it unsafe to expose themselves to others. This orientates bodies differently towards the research space, with – depending on the configuration of the space – some able to more easily and comfortably participate than others [19]. Understanding the complex relations and power dynamics between bodies is ethically important when it comes to understanding how to best create spaces for soma design to be practiced.

This is because power can act insidiously and subtly, and it has shaped our very subjective selves [2]. Ahmed writes that "*… bodies are 'impressed upon' by the world, as a world made up of others. In other words, such impressions are effects of labour; how bodies work and are worked upon shapes the surfaces of bodies. Regulative norms function in a way as 'repetitive strain injuries' (RSIs). Through repeating some gestures and not others, or through being orientated in some directions and not others, bodies become contorted; they get twisted into shapes that enable some action only insofar as they restrict the capacity for other kinds of action*" [2, p.145]. As such, we should not make the presumption that the epistemic intentions of soma design [34] – alone – enable everyone to engage with and articulate bodily sensations and emotions that, in soma design, allow them to participate fully in the knowledge production process. In Ahmed's terms, many subjectivities are shaped by encountering 'blockages' that produce certain bodies as closer to 'objects' within particular social structures [2, p.181-182].

There is potential in soma design's non-dualistic stance [45] – the problematisation of *object-subject* dichotomy – to explore how power has already shaped our subjectivities. Such power dynamics are not unique to soma design. For example, Harrington and colleagues draw attention to how participatory design practices, despite their intention to democratise design processes, are laden with expectations that can serve to reinforce existing racist power structures [42]. In the context of soma design, which also strives to dismantle hierarchies between bodies, it is easy to present knowledge contributions as emerging from smooth and frictionless engagement [49], which can unintentionally diminish the different orientations of bodies towards the process. However, we do not see addressing power imbalances as simply acknowledging that certain bodies are privileged. Though privilege is both real and pervasive, we should also be wary of binary ontological categorisations wherein some bodies are constituted as 'inherently privileged', and others are 'inherently not'. In doing so, we potentially risk reinforcing the orientation of certain bodies as being objects pre-defined by their 'victimhood'. For example, Bennett and Rosner demonstrate the 'slipperiness' of empathy in design; and how even well-intentioned designers can orientate disabled bodies as 'non-experts' within research spaces, or even as the 'spectacles' of such processes [14].

Ahmed refers to this as the 'stickiness' of bodies, due to their historicity, to become attached to certain labels and assumptions [2, p.90]. For example, though intersectional categories of gender, race, class and sexuality are useful concepts for analysing interlocking systems of oppression, Puar argues that such ontological categories are, in and of themselves, the product of Eurocentric, modernist, and colonial discourses and practices [68]. These 'ontological delineations of otherness' are deeply ingrained into our research practices. Our first provocation is to engage with the assumptions attached to bodies in the research space, and the political frictions that unfold between pluralities of knowing through the body [61]. This is a process characterised by potential discordance between perspectives, contradictory accounts of lived experiences, and gaps in our understandings of each other. As such, political work might need to be done *in order to* construct spaces for pluralities of knowing, rather than *through* pluralities of knowing.

3.2 The Self and Self-Knowledge

Self-knowledge is cultivated through friction with those who know differently.

In order to make space for pluralities of knowing, we must first engage with how we ourselves are orientated towards knowledge production. This is a process that not only requires self-reflection but opening ourselves to the emotions of others. Höök and colleagues write that some disregard soma design as focusing on oneself to the point of 'self-indulgence' [47, p.5]. Though we similarly reject that soma design is intrinsically self-indulgent, we acknowledge that self-knowledge can serve different roles in design [94]. Here, we see the politics of *knowing oneself* as entailing how we orientate ourselves towards others. Self-knowledge is vital to understanding one's own situatedness and by, extension, how we may be (unintentionally) constituting other bodies in relation to ourselves. Self-knowledge is most useful if it can lead to political change: the reorganisation of relations. Allowing others to move us through their emotions – to 'reshape the surfaces of our bodies' [2, p.10] – requires that we treat our selves as provisional and engaged in a continuous process of becoming [34]. The meaningful reorganisation of political relations entails a willingness to unlearn and relearn our selves. We advocate for cultivating self-knowledge in ways that build coalitions across difference, i.e., understanding

how we can best support each other by acknowledging experiences that are shared whilst not diminishing the differences and tensions between them [53].

In the case of first-person perspective research [46] (though we would include broader articulations of researcher positionality [40]), many orientate themselves 'inwards' towards their own socio-cultural position as researchers. This allows others to situate knowledge, in so far as it acknowledges there are differences between ways of knowing. However, we see space here to approach situating our knowledge more proactively, intentionally orientating ourselves 'outwards' towards others. We take inspiration from Ahmed's concept of *wonder*, which "*with its open faces and open bodies, involves a reorientation of one's relation to the world. Wonder keeps bodies and spaces open to the surprise of others*" [2, .183], and becomes a key mechanism of sociality and care to those around us. For example, Bala and colleagues conducted a collaborative autoethnography focused on sensory engagements with physical sites and historical narratives, generating rich knowledge by focusing on the differences between different bodies interacting with specific discursive and material conditions at heritage sites [9]. This work demonstrates how situating oneself has the potential to serve, not solely as a means of articulating self-knowledge, but as a means of questioning how experiences are differently meaningful across ways of knowing. This could serve as the foundation of building coalitions across difference; through reflecting on where our experiences converge and diverge with those of others, we can come to a deeper understanding of ourselves. We see this kind of self-knowledge as the first step to considering how we might need to cultivate alternative ways of knowing that make space for others. Again, we see the potential here in soma design regarding its attentiveness to one's self in dialogue with different perspectives [45]. Connecting to Ahmed's notion of alignments [2], soma design can potentially explore how different perspectives (e.g., I, you, we) organise relations, expand or shrink different bodies, and what coalitions are being created therein. Importantly, it is vital to remember that such coalitions should never be static, for consensuses are temporary [61].

This is not a call for epistemic or moral relativism, but rather an invitation to consider our selves within the tensions that can unfold between different bodies. Rather than delimiting them, the tensions themselves are ways of knowing, for as Minna Salami writes, "*… because they had seen […] wholly, from all angles, they understood that discrepant views, however challenging, produced a richer understanding of the world*" [71, p.9]. Our second provocation is that self-knowledge is cultivated through friction with those who know differently. These joint understandings of the world are also, in and of themselves, impermanent and transitional: engaging in politics by forging temporary coalitions to bring forth shared perspectives that still remain differently meaningful for those involved. This essay is such a temporary coalition.

3.3 Felt Ethics and Right Action

Ethics is not a mechanism of curtailing friction between bodies; rather, it is a process of exploring how we might better relate to each other.

Opening ourselves to the emotions of others can entail significant vulnerability and discomfort [66], both for those who express emotions and for those who are "moved" towards ways of knowing that might challenge their habitual ways of being. Not everyone is in a position where it is safe to "open up" to others – such as research contexts where power dynamics may be structured by institutional traditions [42] – but also due to how ethical sensibilities towards emotion have been socio-culturally and politically shaped [34]. Ethics has traditionally been regarded as a domain dominated by rationality, wherein emotions frustrate the application of well-reasoned moral judgement [34]. Spaces of rationality and reason, however easy to participate in from a position of safety and security, tend to minimise the emotions of those whose experiences have been shaped by marginalisation, injustice, or oppression. In these contexts, rationality can implicitly – or easily be exploited to – 'shrink' certain bodies and uphold the status quo.

Therefore, it is important to engage with how bodies exist differently within power structures that, in turn, may have shaped how emotions are expressed and received [43]. Feminist movements, communities of queer activists, and coalitions of civil rights advocates have been (and are still) attacked using emotion-centered rhetoric that constitutes those who voice injustice as "angry", "unreasonable", or even "dangerous" [1, 35, 58]. As Ahmed writes; those "*… who speak out against established 'truths' are often constructed as emotional, as failing the very standards of reason and impartiality that are assumed to form the basis of 'good judgement'. Such a designation of feminism as 'hostile' and emotional, whereby feminism becomes an extension of the already pathological 'emotionality' of femininity, exercises the hierarchy between thought/emotion*" [2, p.170].

Here, soma design rejects the mind-body dichotomy; pushing back at the idea that emotion is an "inferior" way of knowing the world [44]. This is a potential catalyst to explore how power imbalances have shaped our ethical selves. In particular, we find it important to openly engage with, not only emotions, but also attend to how we receive such emotions and allow different bodies to take space. This can be viewed as enhancing our capacity for ethical sense-making and action-taking towards each other – even when it entails confronting ingrained ethical sensibilities [34]. We view this as challenging the traditional conception that vulnerability, discomfort, and risk are ethical breakdowns to be avoided or minimised. Rather, as Mouffe argues, this is an inherently antagonist process [61] that allows for our conceptions of ethics to be treated as political, and as such, contested and contestable [53]. This contestation is vital to challenging how enactments of ethics might inadvertently reinforce existing power dynamics, in particular, those enacted on or through our bodies [34]. Our third provocation is that ethics should not be treated as a mechanism of curtailing friction between bodies, but rather, as a process of exploring how we might better relate to each other.

3.4 The Pursuit of Happiness

Emotional frictions are transformative explorations of different political futures.

Treating ethics as an antagonistic process of exploring future relations [34], of contesting what better life we want, might seem to oppose the pursuit of happiness as a central aim of somaesthetic philosophy [78]. However, we do not view the pursuit of happiness as simply trying to 'feel happy' nor as an end goal of designed products [25]. Rather, we see this as entailing the pursuit of more systemic change and transformation [8], or in other words, questioning the conditions of flourishing in which happiness is possible – and for who it is possible. For example, designers have started working with fabulation [41, 70] as a storytelling practice characterised by imaginative and alternative world-makings [51, 88]. Through such storytelling practices, designers can explore different orientations towards potential future conditions where happiness is possible. However hopeful, exploring alternative worlds is an antagonist process characterised by different orientations towards challenge, change, transgression and transformation. Bodies are constituted within socio-political systems [38], and as such, critical work that seeks to challenge those systems can destabilise habitual ways of being and shift bodies out of places of safety and security. This connects to the somaesthetic idea that change can be painful [78], but in this context, the 'pain' unfolds in the antagonisms between different orientations to political futures. Such friction is a necessary facet of the pursuit of happiness, for it reveals the 'borders' of such futures and which bodies are included in potential conditions of flourishing. This is needed to critically examine whether our designed futures perpetuate existing structures of exclusion [36].

Soma design offers two potential ways to broach this space. First, soma design can be a method of deeply attending to the painful emotions elicited by destabilisation and transformation [34]. However, second, such introspection can also offer a path to critically and somatically explore how the dominant social and economic structures have shaped our emotions in the first place. Ahmed writes; "*Within contemporary culture, emotions may even be represented as good or better than thought, but only insofar as they are re-presented as a form of intelligence, as 'tools' that can be used as subjects in the projects of life and career enhancement (Goleman 1995 [37]). If good emotions are cultivated, and are work done and towards, then they remain defined against uncultivated or unruly emotions, which frustrate the formation of the competent self*" [2, p.3]. Soma design challenges this idea that our bodies should be treated as instruments to be perfected and kept free from such "bad influences" [44]. We see potential in soma design, therefore, to trouble the delineation of supposedly 'uncultivated' and 'unruly' emotions and, by extension, this could allow us to question whether supposedly 'good' emotions necessarily point towards desirable futures or whether they reproduce existing power structures – assuming that all bodies enjoy a similar level of comfort and security with which they should be 'satisfied' [8], rather than seek potentially social or political transformation. Our fourth provocation is to treat emotional frictions as transformative explorations of different political futures.

3.5 Justice and the Labour of Transformation

Emotion work is a political-ethical endeavour.

Finally, considering emotional friction as politically transformative prompts us to reflect on the relation between emotions and justice. Ahmed writes; "*Feeling better is not a sign that justice has been done, and nor should it be reified as the goal of political struggle. But feeling better does still matter, as it is about learning to live with the injuries that threaten to make life impossible*" [2, p.200]. Further, injustices done to certain bodies can be rendered invisible under the guise of (supposedly) feeling better – particularly if meaningful change or reparation does not occur [2]. Considering this, we ask; how might this conception of justice inform how we engage with emotions in soma design practice?

As we have unpacked throughout our provocations, soma design offers a method of deeply engaging with subjectivities in design, and potentially exploring how politics and power are deeply grounded in our bodies. We see space for design justice [21] to inform soma design's ideals of change and transformation; engaging with the frictions that unfold between pluralities of knowing; exploring how we might relate more ethically towards one another; and exploring future conditions that support flourishing. We can reorientate the relations between bodies in design – an important step (yet far from the only one) – in engaging the political potential of soma design. Here, we propose that soma design can take inspiration from work such as that of To, Smith and colleagues who demonstrate how happiness, flourishing, and self-actualisation (beyond mere 'survival') are critical aspects of a transformative justice that allows communities to move beyond damage-centered narratives [87]. Similarly, Hansson and colleagues are exploring what might be included in 'A Toolbox of Feminist Wonder'; theories and practices that can destabilise and modify the structure of research [39]. Light and colleagues also look towards mapping the complexities of transformative design work [57].

Finally, we advocate for a deep criticality [34] towards whose bodies are orientated towards the emotional labour of change and transformation. Throughout our provocations, we have highlighted (some of) the complexities in which soma design is entangled; how different bodies are constituted within research; the frictions between different subjectivities; the difficulty of bringing emotions into design; and the emotional labour entailed in envisioning potential futures. One pertinent example, in soma design, is the methodological emphasis on defamiliarization and estranging our normative experiences [13, 91]. It is important to recognise that "*Maintaining an active positive of 'transgression' not only takes time, but may not be psychically, socially or materially possible for some individuals and groups given their ongoing and unfinished commitments and histories*" [2, p.153] and further "*....what might feel necessary for some, could be impossible for others. Assimilation and transgression are not choices that are available to individuals, but are effects of how subjects can and cannot inhabit social norms and ideals* [2, p.153]. For soma design, it is vital to recognise that – even as we strive to 'flatten' hierarchies and attend to our shared vulnerabilities [34, 66] – every body is already orientated differently towards vulnerability. The emotion work unfolding in these spaces is already unevenly distributed, which further complicates existing tensions in design work, such as meaningfully involving different bodies in research spaces, without constituting them as 'objects' of research [14] or those responsible for "fixing" things that do not serve them [80]. We reiterate that this should be a process that does not seek to avoid or hide friction [61]. A commitment to justice means listening to those confronting injustice and experiencing vulnerability more

intensely, and this should "move us" into new coalitions and ways of knowing, even if it involves discomfort or a loss of influence. Our fifth and final provocation then, is to consider emotion work in design, as not only an individual labour [10], but as a political-ethical endeavour.

4 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We have presented these provocations to outline the transformative potential of soma design through a conceptualization of emotions as political, and therefore, productive in either maintaining or transforming power through the reconfiguration of relations in design. Soma design itself is a call to reimagine our approach to interaction design, in ways that attend to complex subjective entanglements of ethics, emotions, and ways of knowing. This critical and reflective essay contributes to this agenda with a relational understanding of emotions and politics that reveals the frictions of designing with bodies; a necessary mechanism of doing politics in design. We call for other designers to render visible the fine-grained tensions that unfold between different ways of knowing the world, and the ethical-political work necessary to construct research spaces where these frictions can best unfold.

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