

PARTICIPATION

**SPECULATIVE
DESIGN**

A Critical Toolkit

Overview

In the following pages is a critical toolkit to explore the space of participation in speculative design.

It has been created to support designers in combining participation and speculative design by providing a set of questions for reflection about the process.

The toolkit is composed by 3 overarching challenge cards and 36 issue cards with questions used to deconstruct the challenges and navigate the space.

This toolkit is the result of a 6 month research project about Participation in Speculative Design.

Challenges

The starting point for exploring space of participation in speculative design are **three overarching challenges**. These are the three coloured cards:

Stuck in the Singular View relates to the challenge of dealing with plurality and nuance when creating or discussing alternative futures/scenarios and engaging a diverse set of views.

Stuck in the Context refers to the process of engaging participants in reflexive behaviour and facilitate self-critical perspectives beyond their own biases.

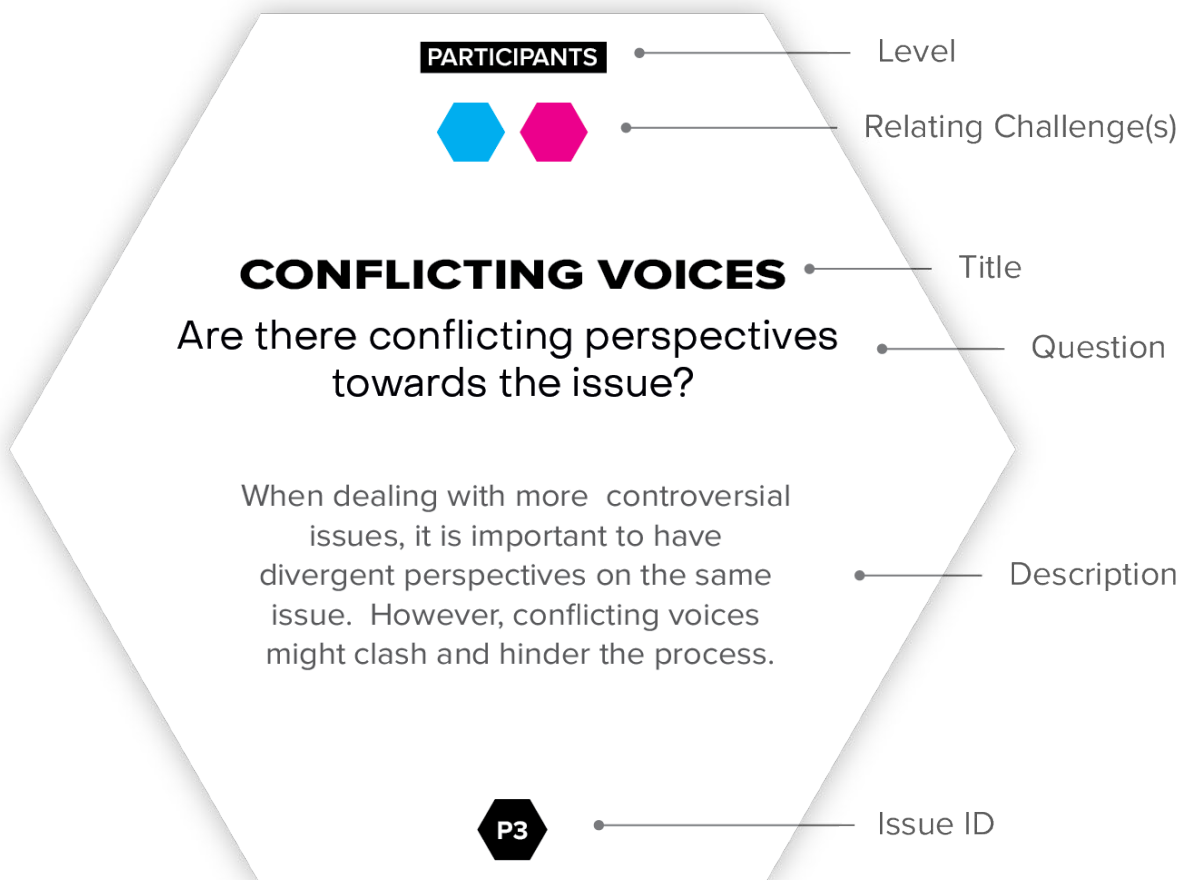
Stuck in the Now describes the challenge of distancing oneself from how the world looks today and imagine how things could be different.



Issues

The Issue cards represent specific issues in the space of participation in speculative design. They can be used to reflect on particular moments of the process and help deconstruct the overarching challenges.

Each of the **Issue cards** has a short title, a provocative question and a short description to help give more context. Each Issue card is colour coded by the challenge it relates to. One issue can be related to more than one challenge.



Issues

Additionally, the overall set of questions is divided in four levels relating to different aspects of the process of participation in speculative design:

Context level relates to the project's preconditions that might influence the participatory efforts. This includes the initial intentions, the framing of the project and the issues it deals with.

Participants concerns itself with who is included in the participatory moments and how that might influence the critical aspects of the project.

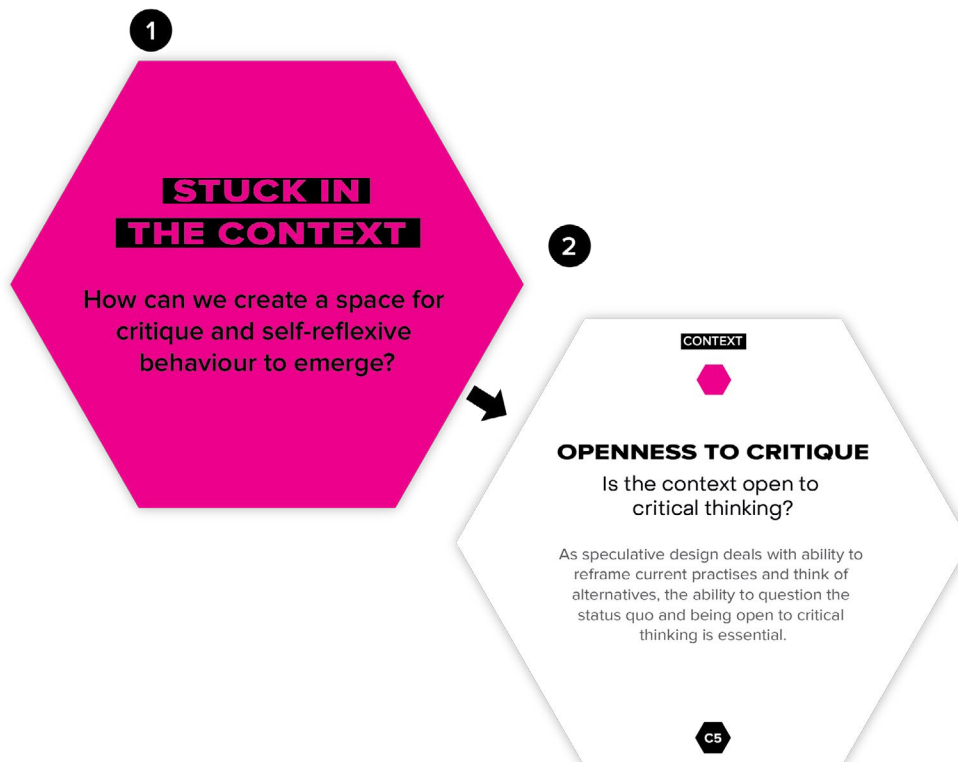
Engagement refers to the participatory moments themselves and how the process of engagement is curated and the discussion moderated.

Outcomes relates to the different outputs and ways a participatory speculative design project can develop.

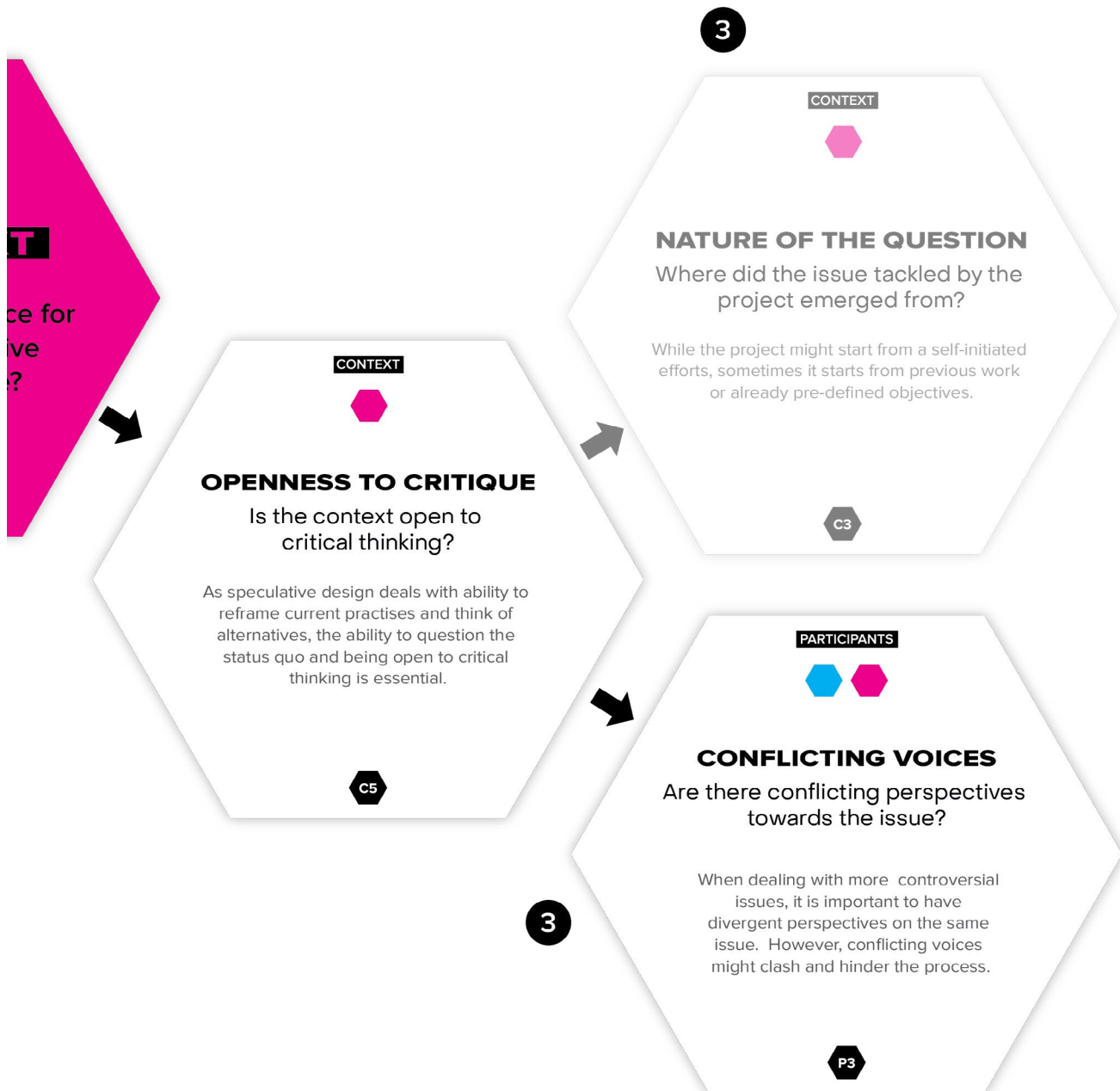
HOW: Navigating the Space

While each issue can be approached individually, they can be used in a structured way to navigate the space:

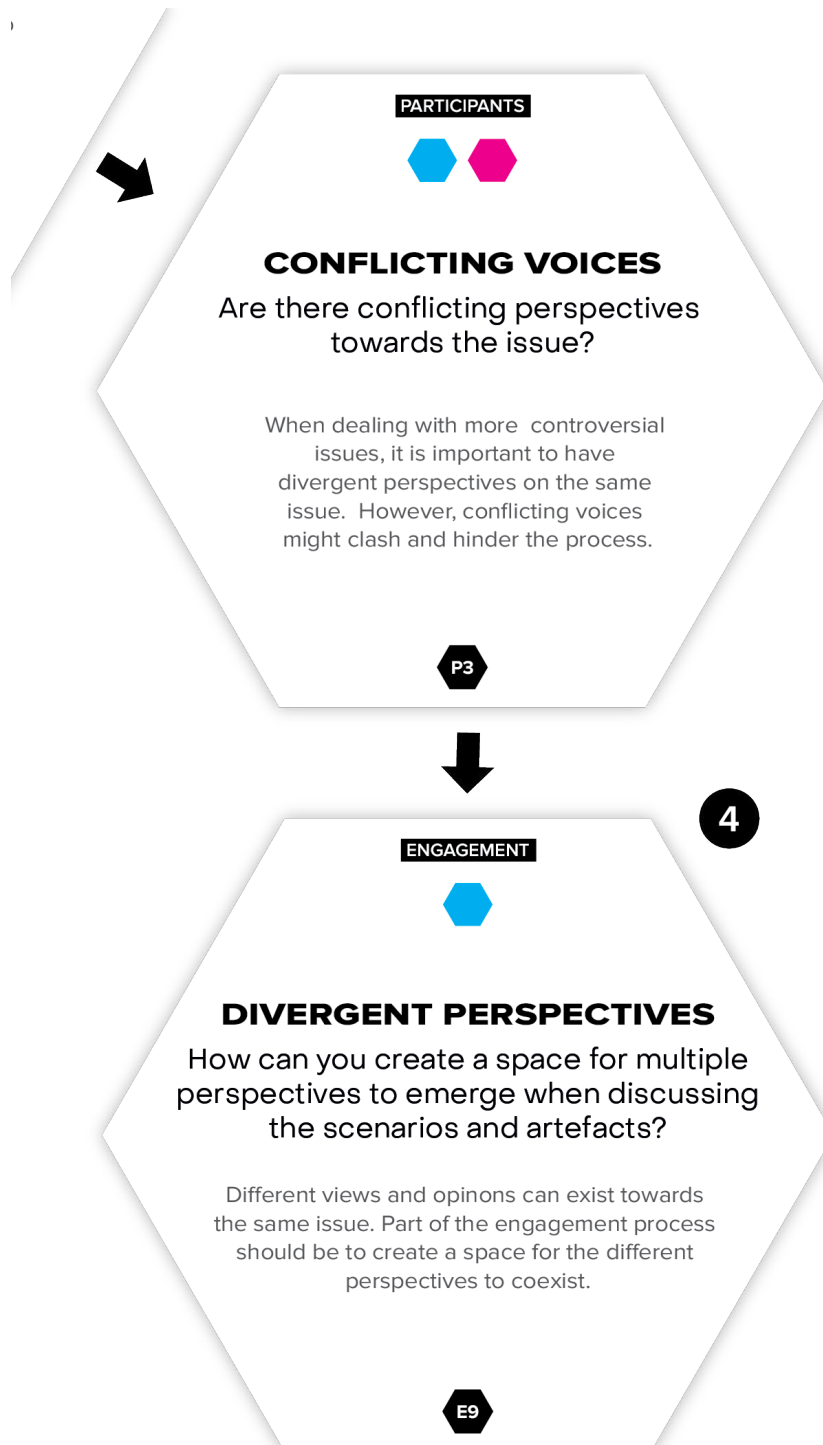
1. Select **one of the three challenge** and place it on the table/wall
2. Start with the **context** level, which issue might be interesting to explore? Select a context issue corresponding with the challenge you're exploring.



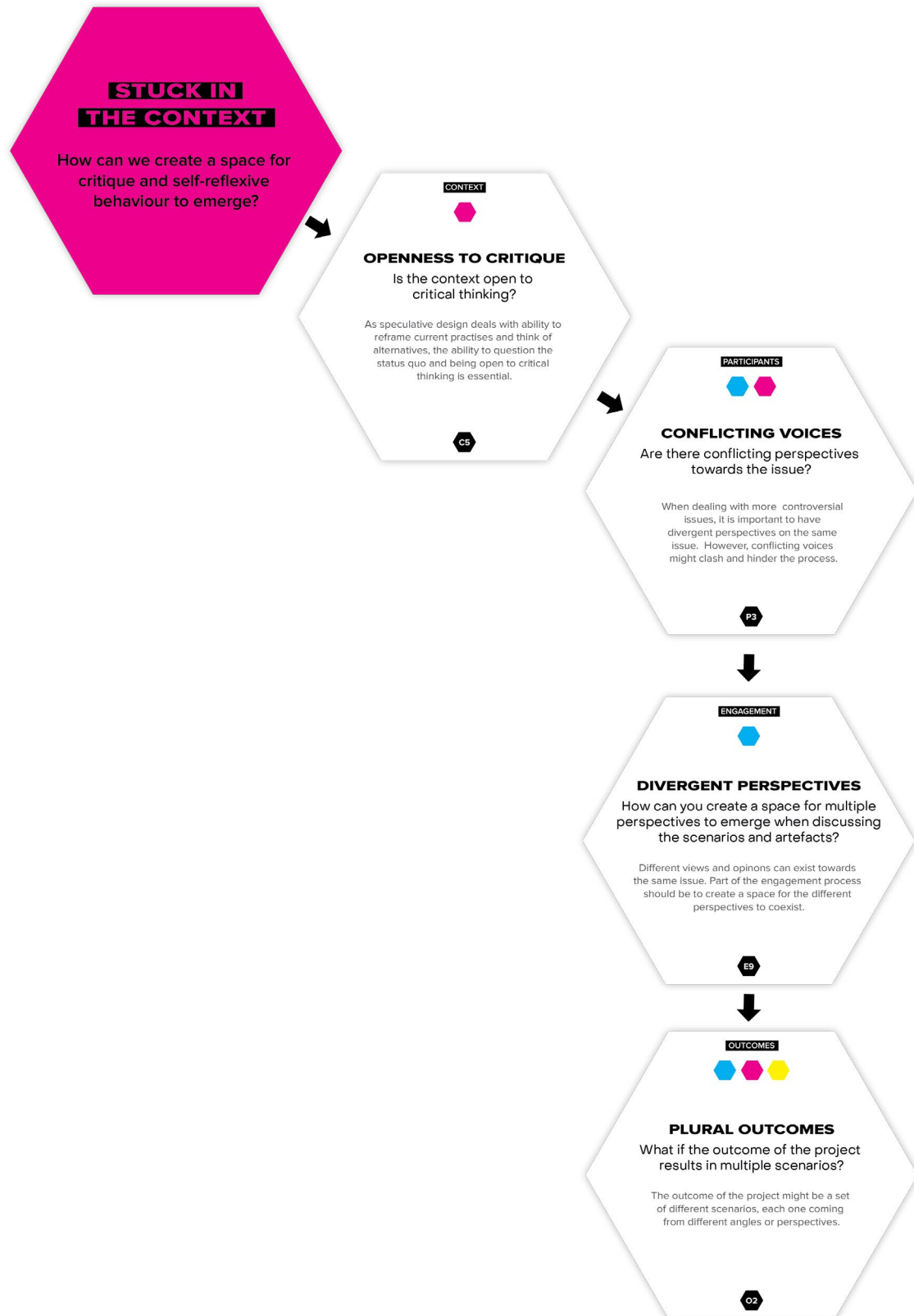
3. You can then continue to the next level, **participants**, or keep exploring the **context** level.



4. You can **only** explore issues that relate to the challenge selected at the start. **HOWEVER**, if the card selected is related to more than one challenge, you can start to explore the issues corresponding to these other challenges.

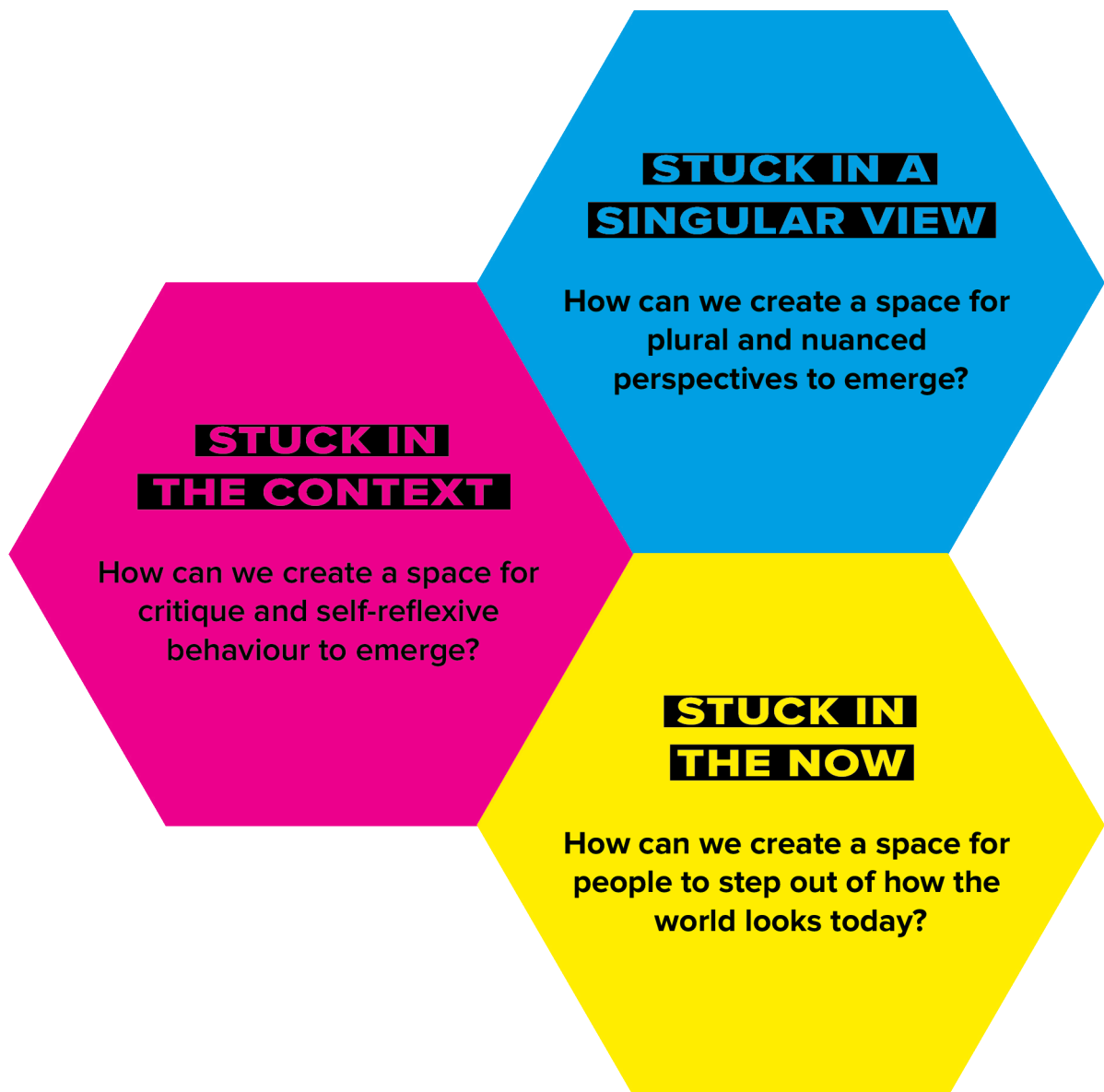


5. In the end, you have constructed a board representing your exploration through the participation in speculative design space and the reflection paths you've taken.



The Cards

Challenge Cards



Issue Cards

C1: Controversial issue

C2: Over-Framing

C3: Nature of the Question

C4: Openness of Brief

C5: Openness to Critique

C6: Predefined Goals

C7: Short Term Goals

C8: Urgency of the issue

P1: Different Perspectives

P2: Conflicting Interests

P3: Conflicting Voices

P4: Background Knowledge

P5: Imposing Views

P6: Interests and Agendas

P7: Plurality of Voices

P8: Reflecting Different Views

P9: Reflexive Criticality

P10: Underrepresented

E1: Generative Artefact

E2: Refined Artefact

E3: Attention Space

E4: Coming as an outsider

E5: Moderating the Debate

E6: Designer as Mediator

E6: Different Stages

E7: Difficult Questions

E8: Divergent Perspectives

E9: Level of Control

E10: Background Knowledge

E11: Setting the Stage

E12: Problematising the Process

O1: Considered a Prediction

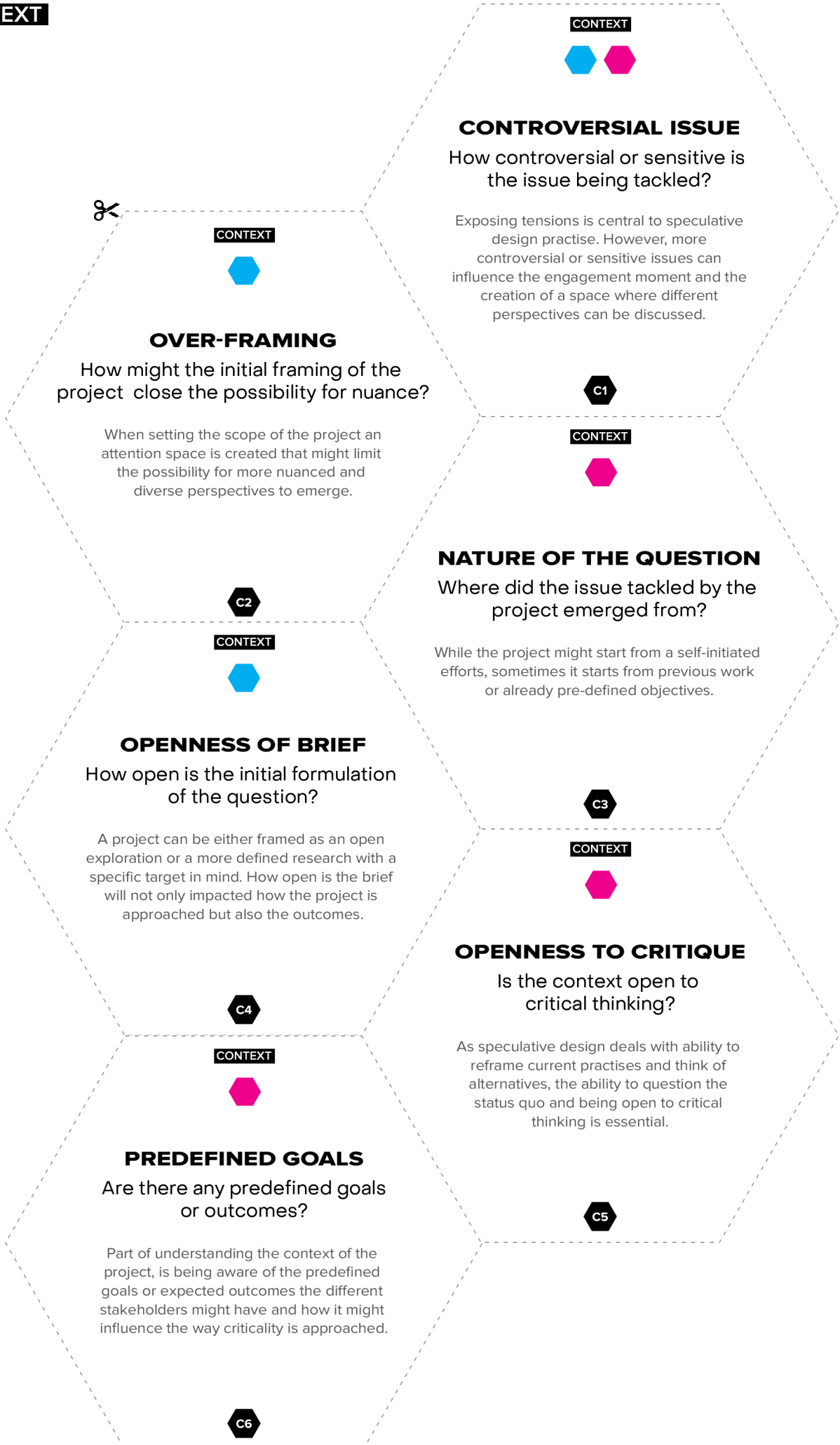
O2: Plural Outcomes

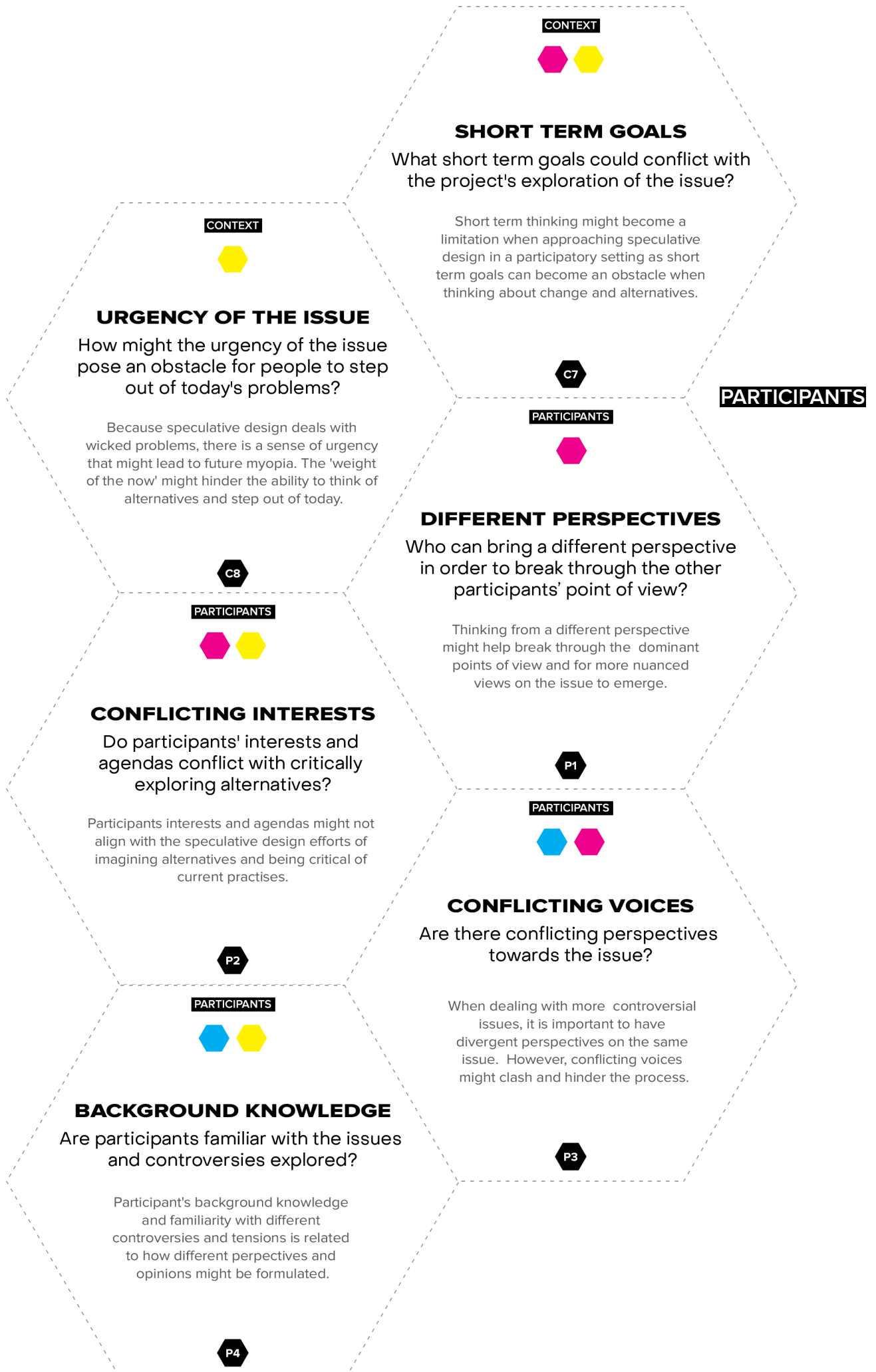
O3: Project's Afterlife

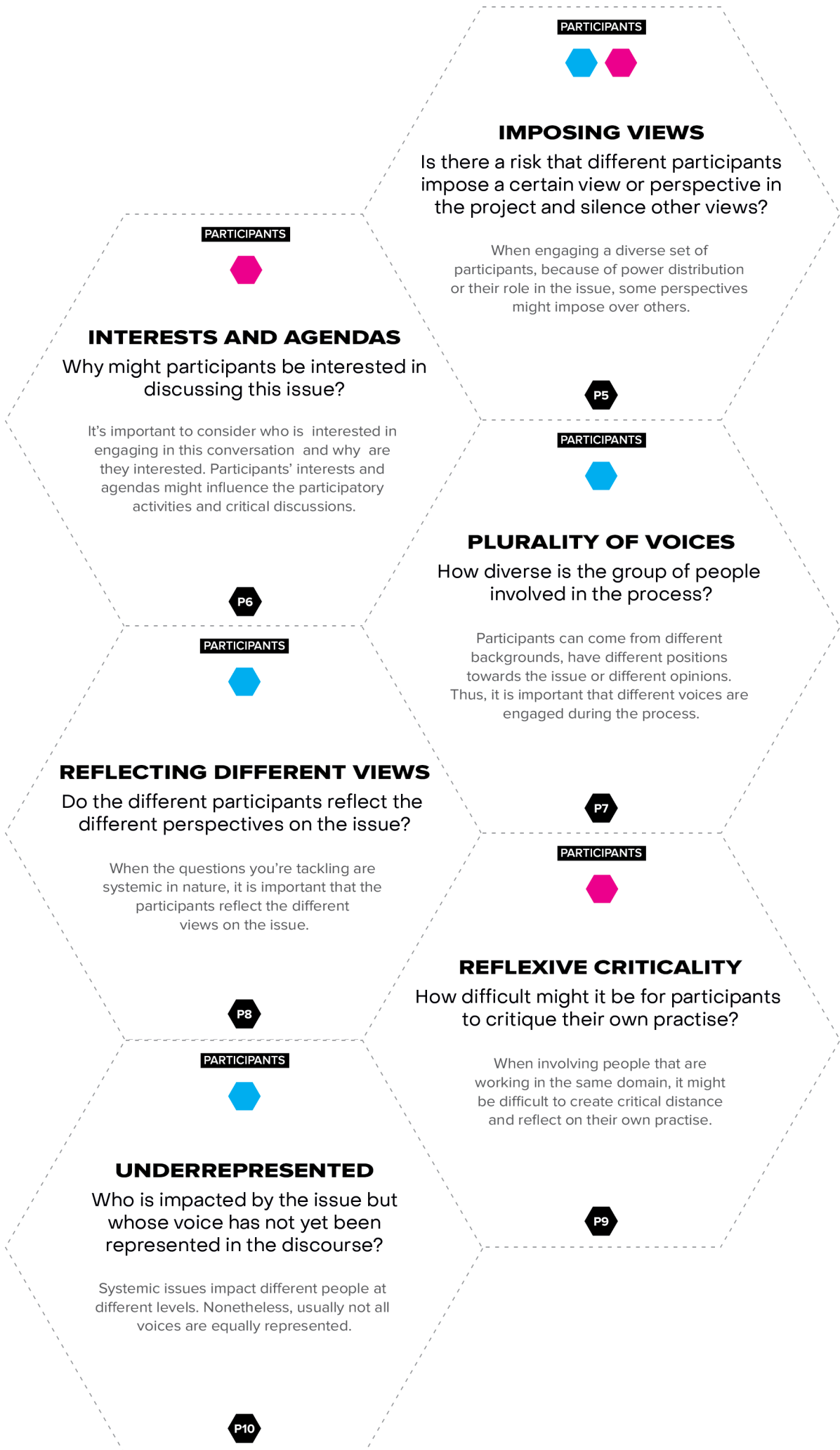
O4: Reaching Consensus

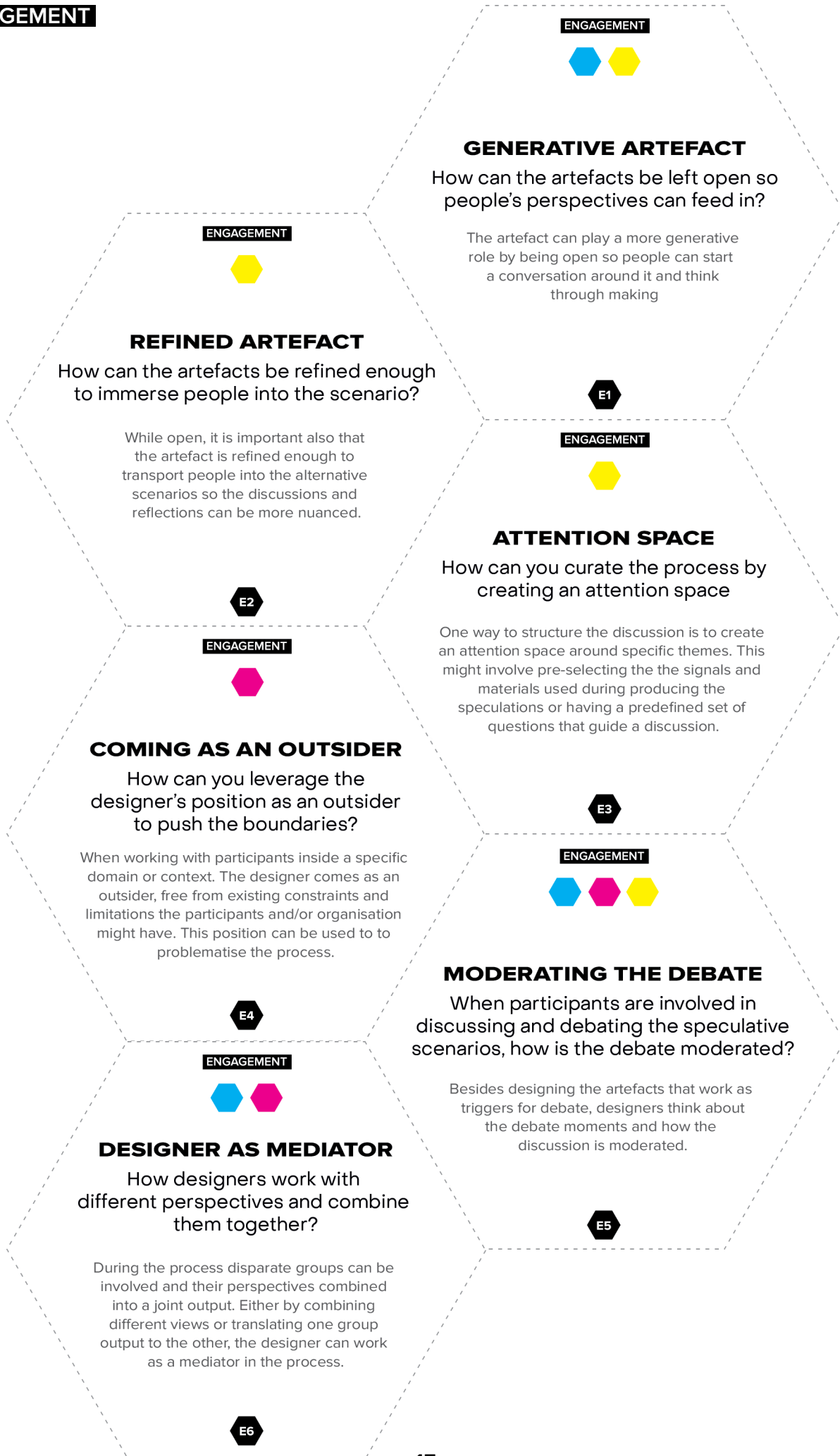
O5: Part of a Larger Process

O6: Dissemination









ENGAGEMENT



DIFFERENT STAGES

What if different voices are brought into the process at different stages?

Different groups can be involved at different moments as a way to bring the outcome of one participatory process to another. As an example, one group can co-create the artefacts used in a discussion with a different group.

ENGAGEMENT



DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

What are key questions that can be asked to problematise the process and provoke participants?

Critical to facilitating a participatory speculative design project is in problematising the process and engaging participants in difficult questions and decisions.

E7

ENGAGEMENT



DIVERGENT PERSPECTIVES

How can you create a space for multiple perspectives to emerge when discussing the scenarios and artefacts?

Different views and opinions can exist towards the same issue. Part of the engagement process should be to create a space for the different perspectives to coexist.

E8

ENGAGEMENT



LEVEL OF CONTROL

How controlled should the process of engagement be? Why?

The way control is shared during the project is important. While some projects might require participants to explore a specific topic it may also be valuable to have an open exploration.

E9

ENGAGEMENT



BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Does participating in the process requires any previous knowledge?

When including different groups in the process, it is important to understand if the project requires previous knowledge.

E10

ENGAGEMENT



SETTING THE STAGE

Are participants briefed on what is happening?

Sensitizing the participants, before the engagement moment, to be in the right mindset is a strategy that can be used. However, one might fall into the risk of framing the project too much and limit the participatory efforts.

E11

E12

OUTCOMES

OUTCOMES



CONSIDERED A PREDICTION

Is there a risk that the outcome of the project is seen as a prediction and close the possibility for discussion?

When delivering a high-resolution scenario or artefact, this might be seen as a proposal or prediction for the future and not as a device for discussion.

O1

OUTCOMES



PROJECT'S AFTERLIFE

How can the reflection engendered by the process be applied by the participants involved in the process?

When engaging people in participatory speculative design it is important to consider how can the conversations generated by the process can turn into action or decision making at the present moment.

O3

OUTCOMES



PART OF A LARGER PROCESS

How can participant's output be involved in a larger process?

Participatory moments might be integrated in a larger process. The designer can be in charge of refining and building on top of participants output or the output of a participatory process can be brought to a different stage with different participants.

O5

ENGAGEMENT



PROBLEMATISE THE PROCESS

How can you problematise the process by creating space for dissensus?

Sometimes facilitation is not about making life easier for the participants. Specially when you want to engage people in critical reflection, problematising the process might be a way to curate the discussion.

E13

OUTCOMES



PLURAL OUTCOMES

What if the outcome of the project results in multiple scenarios?

The outcome of the project might be a set of different scenarios, each one coming from different angles or perspectives.

O2

OUTCOMES



REACHING CONSENSUS

What if the goal of the project is to reach consensus by creating a single preferable scenario?

The value of the project might be in involving different groups of people to create or discuss a preferable scenario.

O4

OUTCOMES



DISSEMINATION

Where is the outcome of the project disseminated?

Thinking about the dissemination strategy is important if the goal is to engage different publics in discussion around project's outcomes. Who is inhabiting this spaces? Who is not there?

O6

