

Applause from jocelynw, IDEO.org, and 2 others

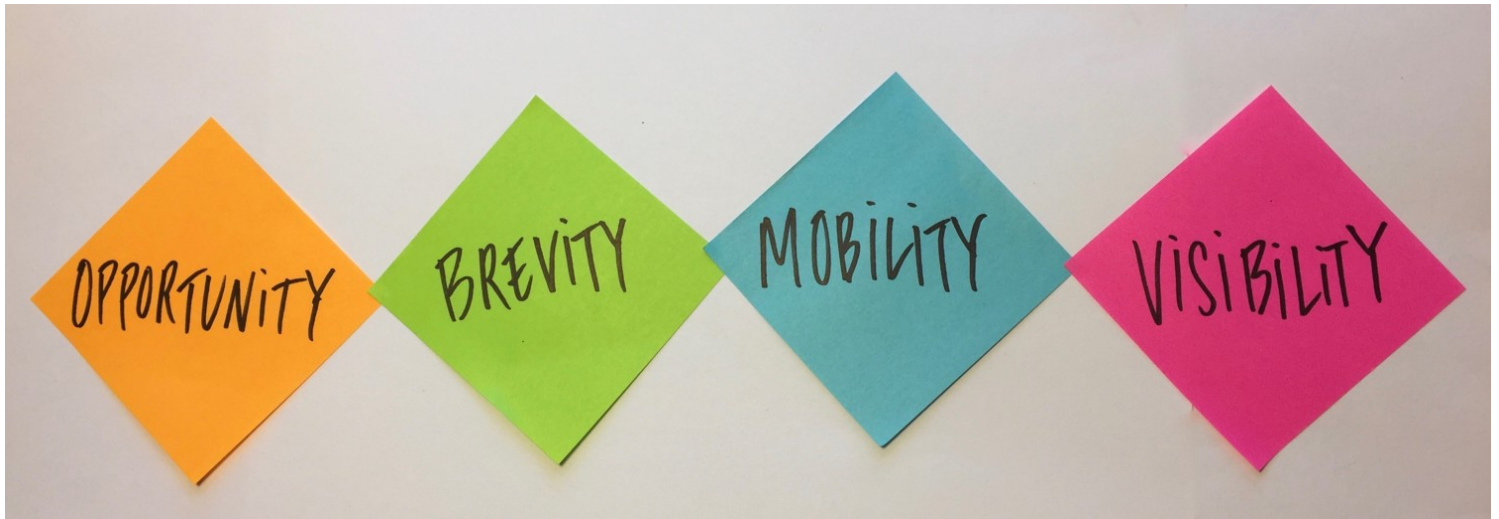


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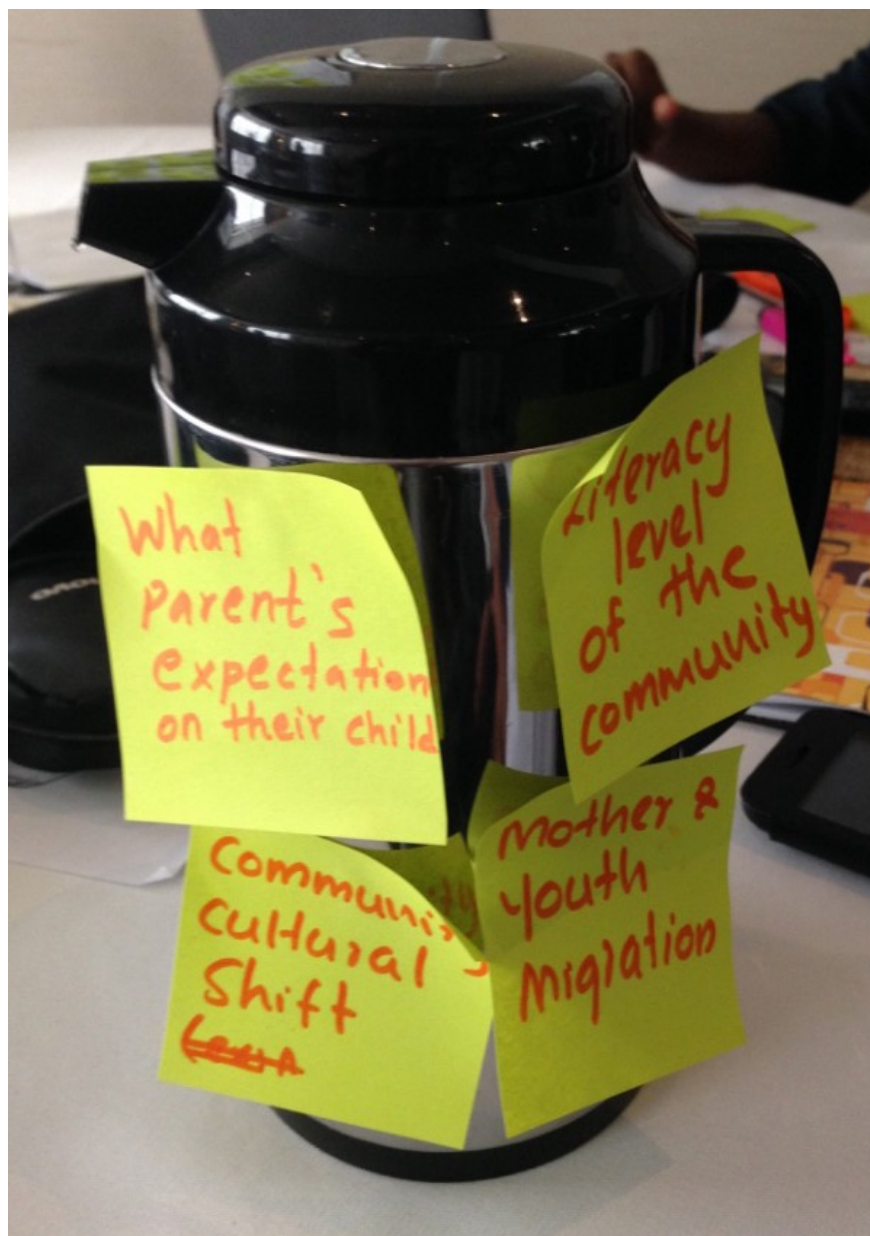


The Post-it® — Function beyond fashion

For me, they *do* need to be Post-its.® I'm brand-loyal because I like the color choices and because they stay *stuck*. I'm not the only fan; tips have been shared for design research and service design (use fat pens, avoid dark-purple paper, etc.) There is a "Post it notes" tag on Medium. Major news outlets have written about their use in colorful office smack-downs and post-election subway therapy.

Detractors have also weighed in.

I use them because they help me work more efficiently and collaboratively. When I am conducting and sharing field research I use Post-its because they foster: **1) Opportunity, 2) brevity, 3) mobility, and 4) visibility.**



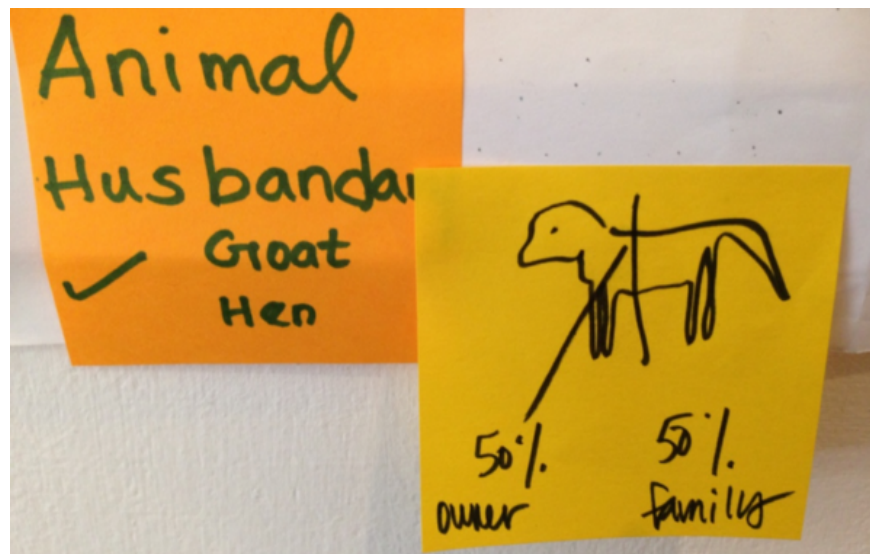
Idea parking lot, Sri Lanka, 2016.

Opportunity

When multiple people have access to markers and paper the possibility (and responsibility) of participation is distributed. Stacks of Post-its on a table can reduce the “gate-keeper effect,” where one person decides which ideas deserve to be documented. In Sri Lanka, several colleagues and I conducted interviews and home visits as a group. The photo above shows how Thadsa, one of the least-talkative group members, stored on the tea dispenser the flurry of ideas she wanted to contribute when it came time to “download” and share key ideas.

Brevity

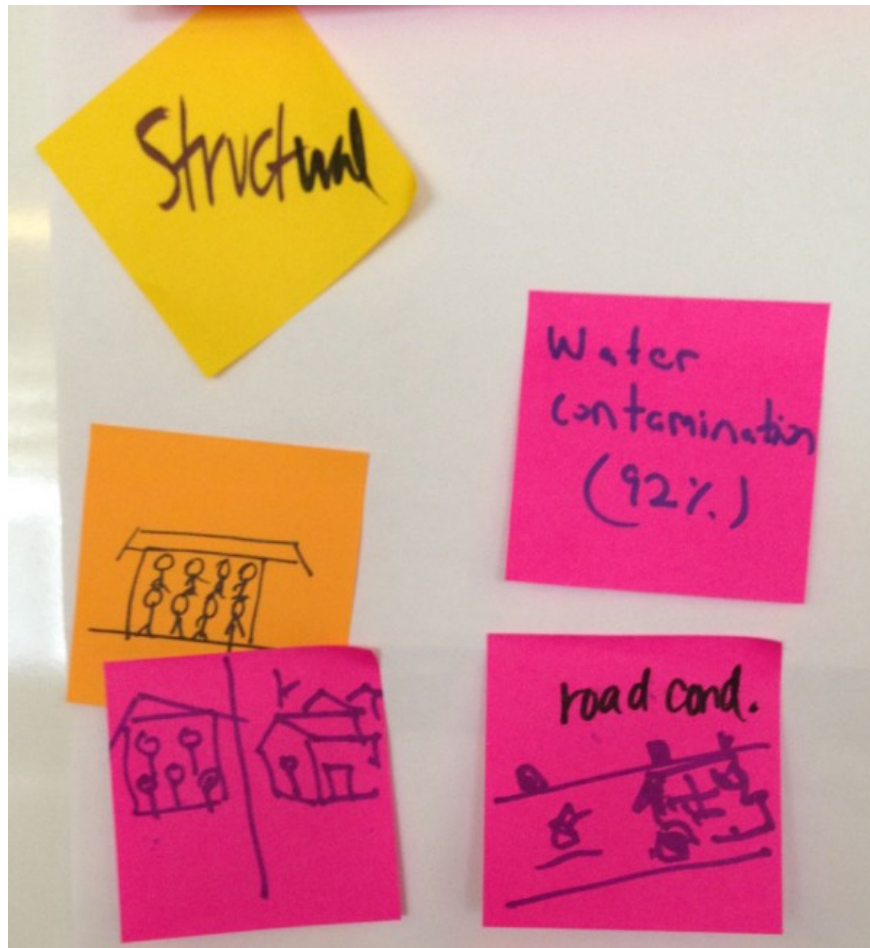
You can only say so much on a piece of paper that is 3 x 3 inches (7.5cm by 7.5cm). A small writing surface forces you to boil an idea down to the most essential—whether words or images. When a mother in Sri Lanka says her family earns money caring for the goats of others, splitting the profits with the owners, one Post-it can capture it all. (One *more* note may be needed, however, to explain that you've indeed drawn a goat, not a dog).



Research workshop, Sri Lanka, 2016.

Mobility

Once many people have shared their ideas, the mobility of Post-its allows you to re-arrange your notes, grouping like-ideas into clusters, or creating themes or categories in columns. A trick I learned from colleagues at Ideo.org is to tilt sticky-notes to make a diamond-shaped category header.



The category of "structural" barriers emerged from a participatory analysis exercise in Sri Lanka.

Visibility

When research observations and insights are posted on a wall in a public place, colleagues and other passers-by can view and discuss your work. The UK's Government Digital Services calls visible displays of their user research "vertical campfires." Unlike ideas in a closed notebook, research outputs that are visible and accessible invite questions and contributions from others.



Sharing research interview summaries with colleagues in Nepalgunj, Nepal (each interview is one flip-chart sheet).

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There many other uses of Post-its, or sticky notes, or whatever one might choose to call them. In this short essay, I aimed for the Medium.com under-three-minutes-equivalent of Post-it brevity. Any other fans out there? Do you have new uses, advantages or insights to share? Would love to hear thoughts from others...