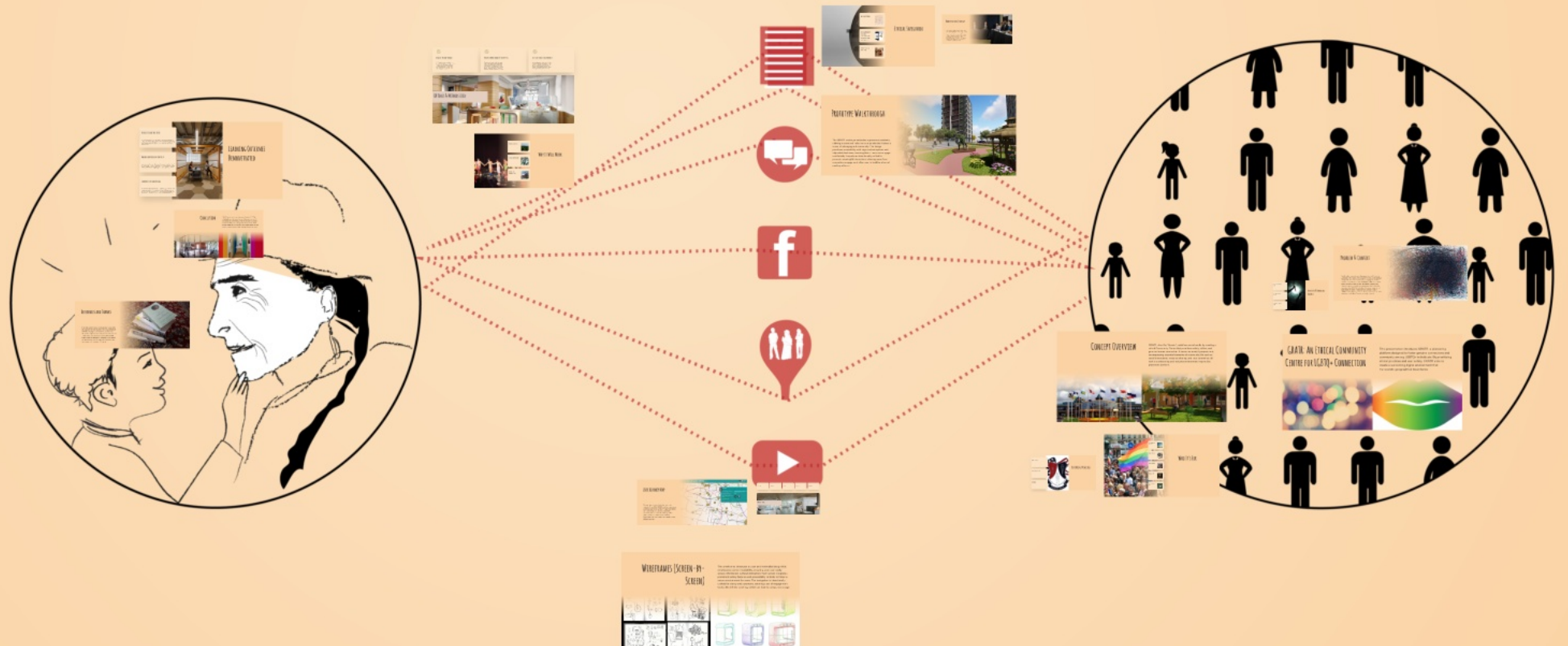


GRATR: AN ETHICAL COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR LGBTQ+ CONNECTION

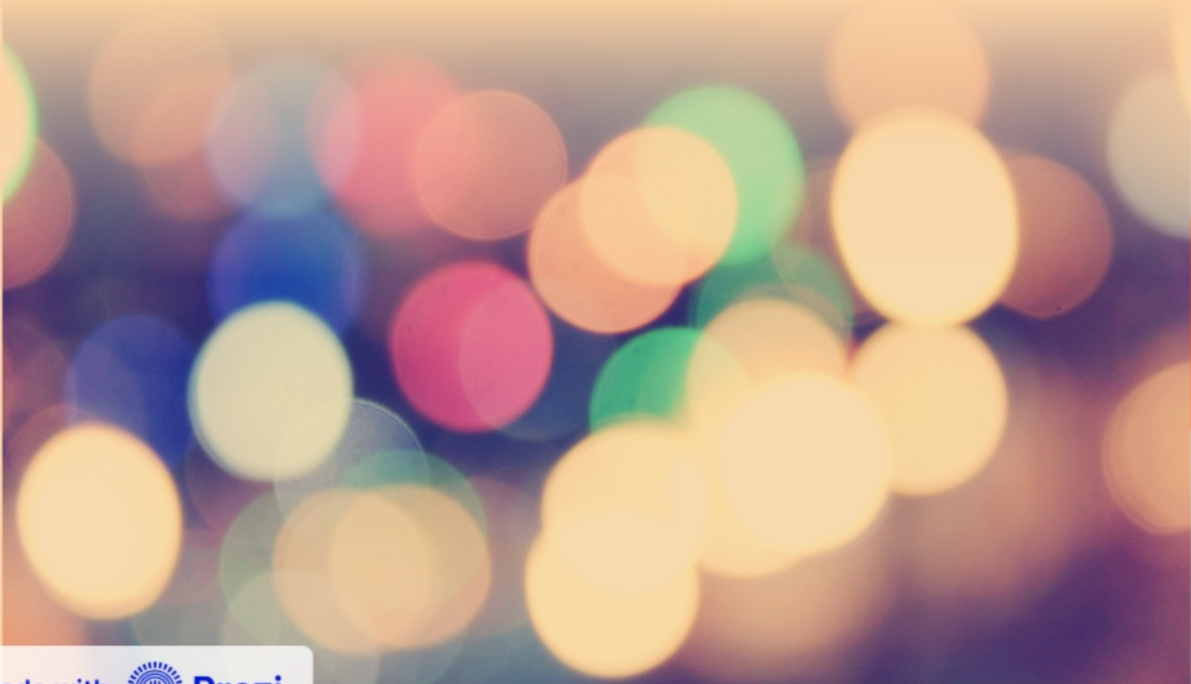
Exploring an innovative platform aimed at creating safe and authentic connections for the LGBTQ+ community



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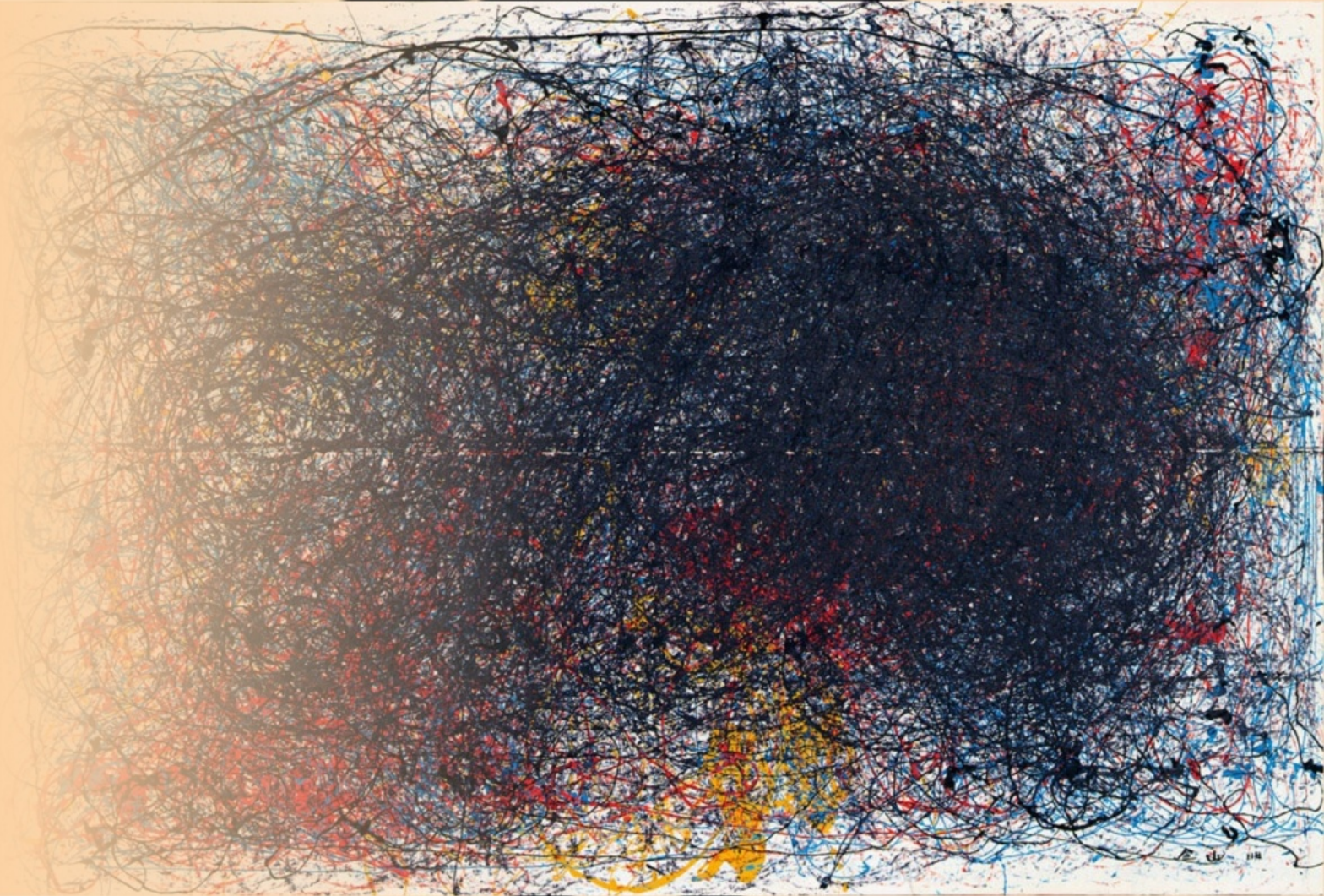
GRATR: AN ETHICAL COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR LGBTQ+ CONNECTION

This presentation introduces GRATR, a pioneering platform designed to foster genuine connections and community among LGBTQ+ individuals. By prioritizing ethical practices and user safety, GRATR aims to create a welcoming digital environment that transcends geographical boundaries.



PROBLEM & CONTEXT

Social media companies prioritize generating profit over the wellbeing of their users. This is evident in their use of addictive design and behavioral manipulation, as highlighted in Jaron Lanier's critique known as the 'BUMMER' model. This system erodes autonomy, distorts truth, diminishes empathy, and negatively impacts mental health, particularly for vulnerable populations like LGBTQ+ individuals. Moreover, many current applications fall short in addressing the unique needs of LGBTQ+ users, exposing them to privacy violations, superficial interactions, and a lack of essential safety measures.



WEAK AGE VERIFICATION EXPOSES MINORS

Grindr has been criticized for its inadequate age verification processes, which have allowed over 100 cases of exploitation involving minors since 2015. This alarming statistic highlights the urgent need for stricter safety measures to protect vulnerable users.

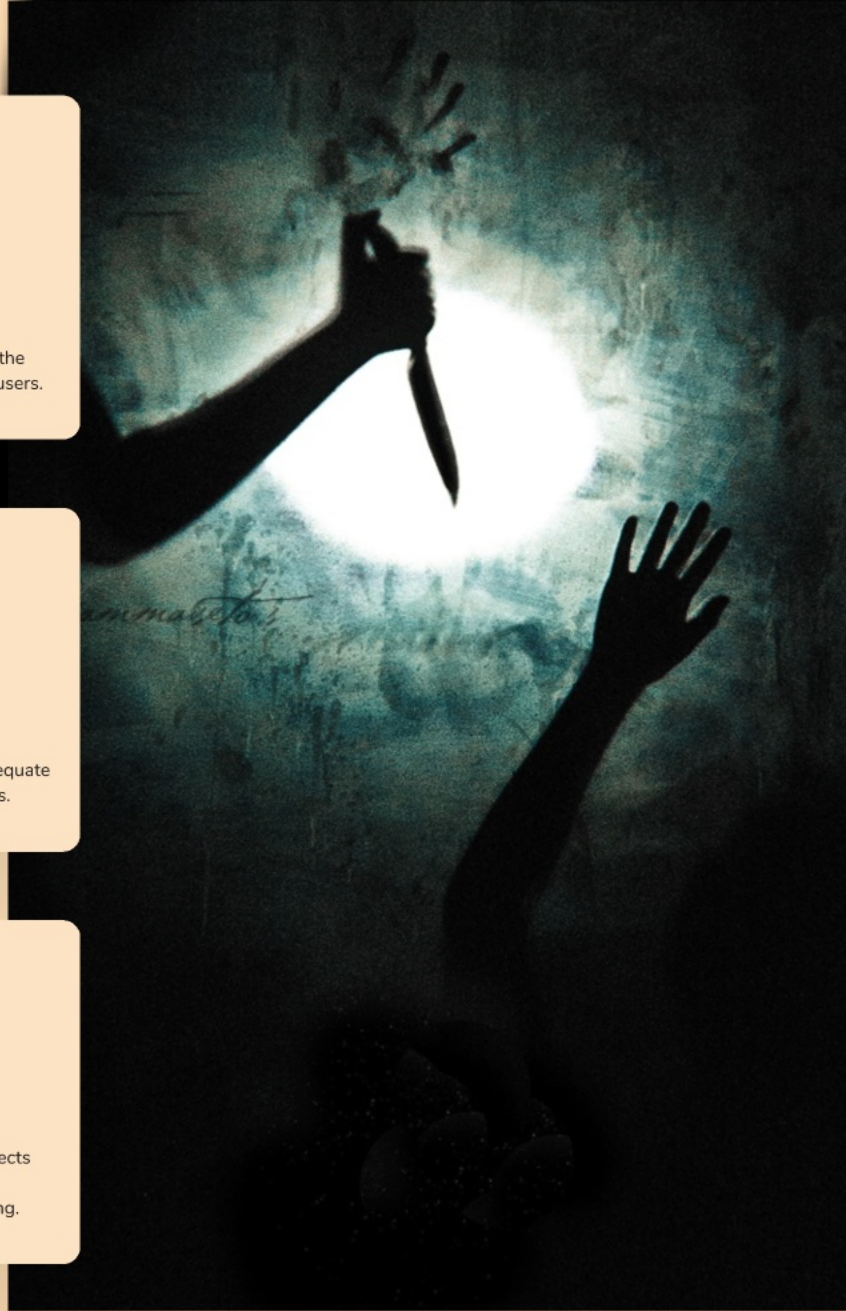
SAFETY RISKS FROM LOCATION TRACKING

Real-time location tracking on Grindr raises significant safety concerns, as users can be easily targeted based on their whereabouts. Sensitive health data is often shared without adequate security measures, making users vulnerable to privacy breaches.

ADDICTIVE DESIGN HARMS SELF-ESTEEM

The addictive design of Grindr, characterized by frequent notifications and appearance-based interactions, adversely affects users' self-esteem. This compulsive use jeopardizes authentic connections and fosters a detrimental cycle of validation seeking.

INTRUSIVE & DAMAGING FEATURES



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CONCEPT OVERVIEW

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GRATR, short for 'Greater', redefines social media by creating a virtual Community Centre that prioritizes safety, ethics, and genuine human connection. It serves as a multi-purpose hub, encompassing essential elements of community life such as social interactions, resource sharing, and local commerce, all within a welcoming and inclusive environment inspired by grassroots activism.





LGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS IN SOCIAL DESERTS

LGBTQ+ individuals often find themselves in "social deserts," which are areas with limited access to community resources, support networks, and inclusive spaces. These environments can lead to feelings of isolation and hinder personal growth.



THE ISOLATED SEEKER

The Isolated Seeker is someone who craves safety and belonging. This person may feel vulnerable in their environment and seeks out supportive communities to foster connections and friendships.



THE LOCAL ORGANISER

The Local Organizer represents individuals who take initiative to build community resources and connections. They often lead and facilitate local events to strengthen bonds among LGBTQ+ individuals.



THE ETHICAL DATER

The Ethical Dater seeks authentic connections that go beyond superficial interactions. This person values meaningful relationships and is focused on building a supportive and genuine dating experience.



HIGH DISCRIMINATION RATES

Research indicates that up to 61% of LGBTQ+ individuals experience discrimination, which can lead to heightened psychological distress, particularly for those living inable urban centers where resources are scarce.



WHO IT'S FOR

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PRIVACY & SAFETY

GRATR prioritizes user privacy and safety through regional filtering, which avoids the risks associated with GPS tracking. This ensures that users can engage without compromising their exact location. Mandatory age verification adds an additional layer of protection against underage exploitation, while a strict no third-party data sharing policy keeps user information secure and private.

ADDICTION SAFEGUARDING

To combat addictive usage patterns, GRATR incorporates a series of addiction safeguarding features. Users can set daily limits on their usage, ensuring they engage with the app in a healthy way. The 'Pause' mode allows users to take breaks when needed, while delayed photo reveals encourage users to connect based on values and personality rather than superficial appearances.

GOVERNANCE

GRATR operates under a robust governance structure that enforces ethical standards. A zero-tolerance policy against discrimination ensures that all users can engage safely and inclusively. A Community Review Board allows users to participate in the governance process, giving them a voice in decision-making. Anti-discrimination filters are implemented to maintain a respectful and supportive community environment.



KEY ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

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EDUCATION GROUPS

GRATR Community offers a diverse range of educational opportunities, including Conversational French and Photography classes, enriching members' skills and enhancing community engagement.



SOCIAL GATHERINGS

Social gatherings are a key feature, providing a space for activities like Line Dancing, Coffee Mornings, and Slimming World, fostering friendships and community spirit.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events such as Weddings, Produce Shows, and Fetes will allow members to celebrate milestones together and strengthen community bonds.



EXERCISE AND WELLNESS

Health and wellness are prioritized with classes like Pilates, Tai Chi, Keep Fit, Yoga, and Zumba, supporting both physical and mental wellbeing in a safe environment.



COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Community meetings addressing important topics such as Protest, Politics, and Public Meetings ensure that all voices are heard, fostering civic engagement and activism.





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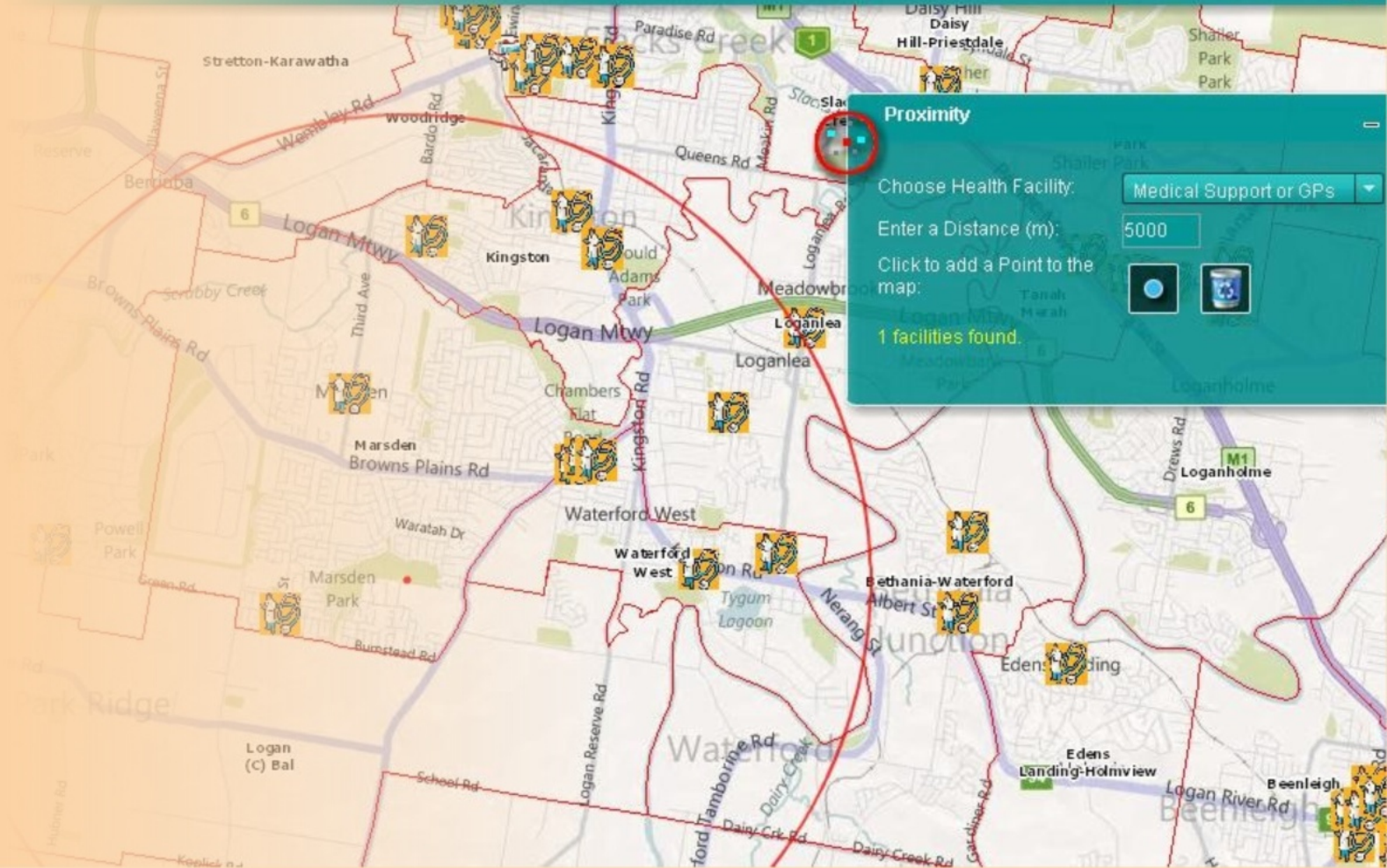
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USER JOURNEY MAP

The user journey map illustrates how users navigate through the GRATR platform, ensuring a seamless experience. With a five-part navigation bar, users can quickly access all platform functions, while a universal toolbar provides global search capabilities and consistent accessibility controls to enhance usability across different sections.

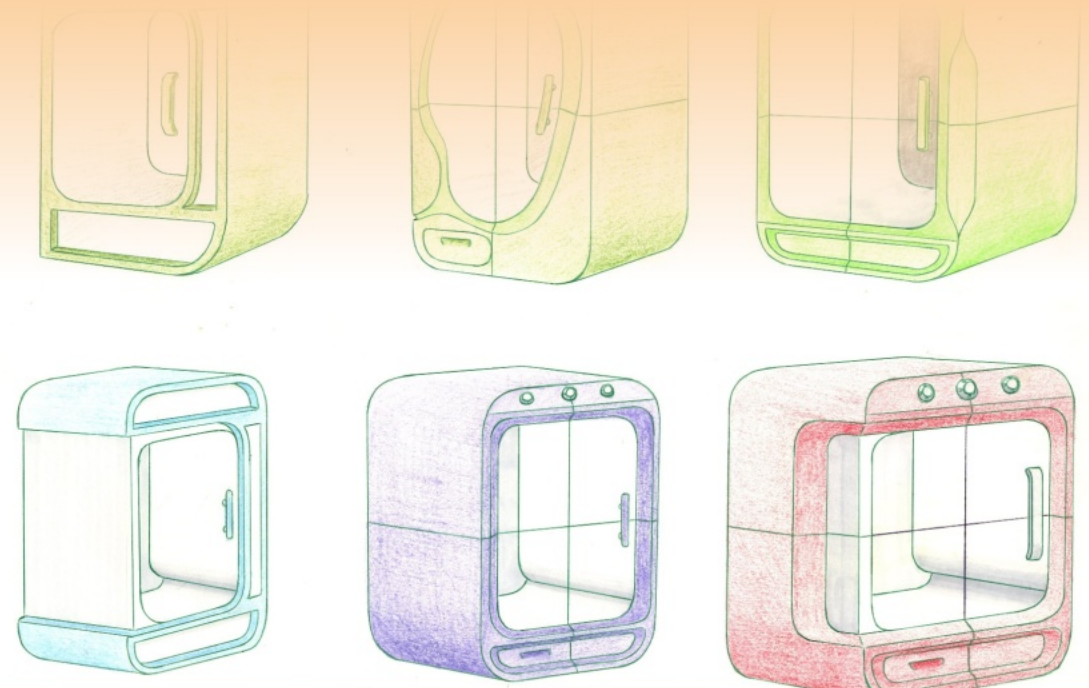
Decision Support System (HDSS)



WIREFRAMES (SCREEN-BY-SCREEN)

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The wireframes showcase a clean and minimalist design that emphasizes content readability, ensuring users can easily access information without distraction. Each screen integrates prominent safety features and accessibility controls to foster a secure environment for users. The navigation is intentionally crafted for clarity and autonomy, steering clear of engagement tactics like infinite scrolling, which can lead to compulsive usage.



PROTOTYPE WALKTHROUGH

The GRATR prototype embodies a grassroots aesthetic, utilizing a warm and inclusive color palette that fosters a sense of belonging and community. The design prioritizes accessibility with high contrast options and adjustable text sizes, ensuring that all users can engage comfortably. Layouts are intentionally crafted to promote meaningful interactions, steering away from compulsive engagement often seen in traditional social media platforms.



ETHICAL SAFEGUARDS

NO INFINITE SCROLL

GRATR eliminates infinite scroll, a design feature known to encourage compulsive usage among social media users. Instead, it promotes healthy engagement by allowing users to interact with content at their own pace and avoid mindless scrolling.



WELLBEING REMINDERS & DAILY LIMITS

Daily interaction limits help users manage their time on the platform, fostering a healthier relationship with technology. Wellbeing reminders nudge users to take breaks, ensuring that their engagement with the app remains balanced and supportive of mental health.



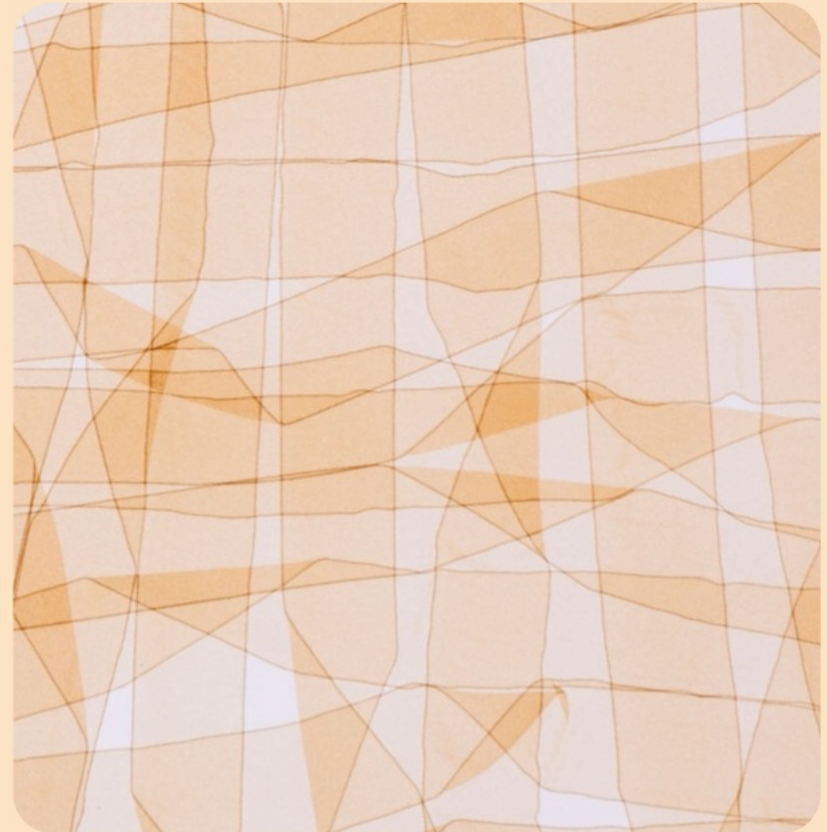
PRIVACY-PRESERVING VERIFICATION

Privacy-preserving verification processes are implemented to safeguard user data and maintain anonymity. GRATR ensures that users are verified without invasive tracking methods, prioritizing safety while protecting personal information.



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MONETISATION STRATEGY

GRATR adopts a Platform Cooperative model where users are not just participants but co-owners, ensuring that all voices matter in decision-making. This model features a sliding-scale membership system ranging from £1 for lifetime access to various supporter tiers, ensuring financial accessibility. By eliminating surveillance advertising and data extraction, GRATR prioritizes community value over profit, fostering a healthier online ecosystem for all users.





HIGH ISOLATION RATES

Research indicates that LGBTQ+ individuals residing in rural and suburban areas often face significant social isolation due to a lack of community resources and supportive networks. This demographic has reported higher rates of loneliness and mental health struggles compared to their urban counterparts, highlighting an urgent need for comprehensive support systems that facilitate connection and engagement.



ETHICAL TECH MOVEMENT

The ethical tech movement is gaining momentum, with users increasingly rejecting platforms that exploit their data and manipulate their behavior for profit. This shift towards valuing privacy, safety, and genuine connections aligns perfectly with GRATR's mission to create a user-centric platform that respects and uplifts its community.



COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY UTILITY

GRATR stands out in a crowded market as a holistic community utility that goes beyond the typical dating app. By offering various features—such as community support groups, event planning, and resource sharing—it addresses the multifaceted needs of LGBTQ+ individuals, establishing itself as an essential tool for fostering genuine connections and community engagement.



WHY IT WILL WORK

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RESEARCH-DRIVEN PERSONAS

Identifying specific user personas was essential for tailoring GRATR to the needs of the LGBTQ+ community. Research studies highlighted the unique challenges faced by individuals, particularly in terms of social isolation, discrimination, and mental health. This informed the creation of targeted personas that represent diverse experiences within the community, ensuring that the platform is empathetic and relevant.



ITERATIVE WIREFRAMING & PROTOTYPING

The design process involved iterative wireframing and prototyping, allowing for continuous feedback and refinement. By incorporating user input at every stage, the development ensured that the interface was not only functional but also accessible, ultimately fostering a user-friendly experience. This approach emphasizes agility and responsiveness to user needs.



USER-CENTERED DESIGN PRINCIPLES

User-centered design principles were the backbone of the GRATR development process, prioritizing the needs and experiences of users throughout. This approach fostered an environment where user feedback drives design decisions, ensuring that the platform remains intuitive and aligned with the community's values and requirements.

UX TOOLS & METHODS USED



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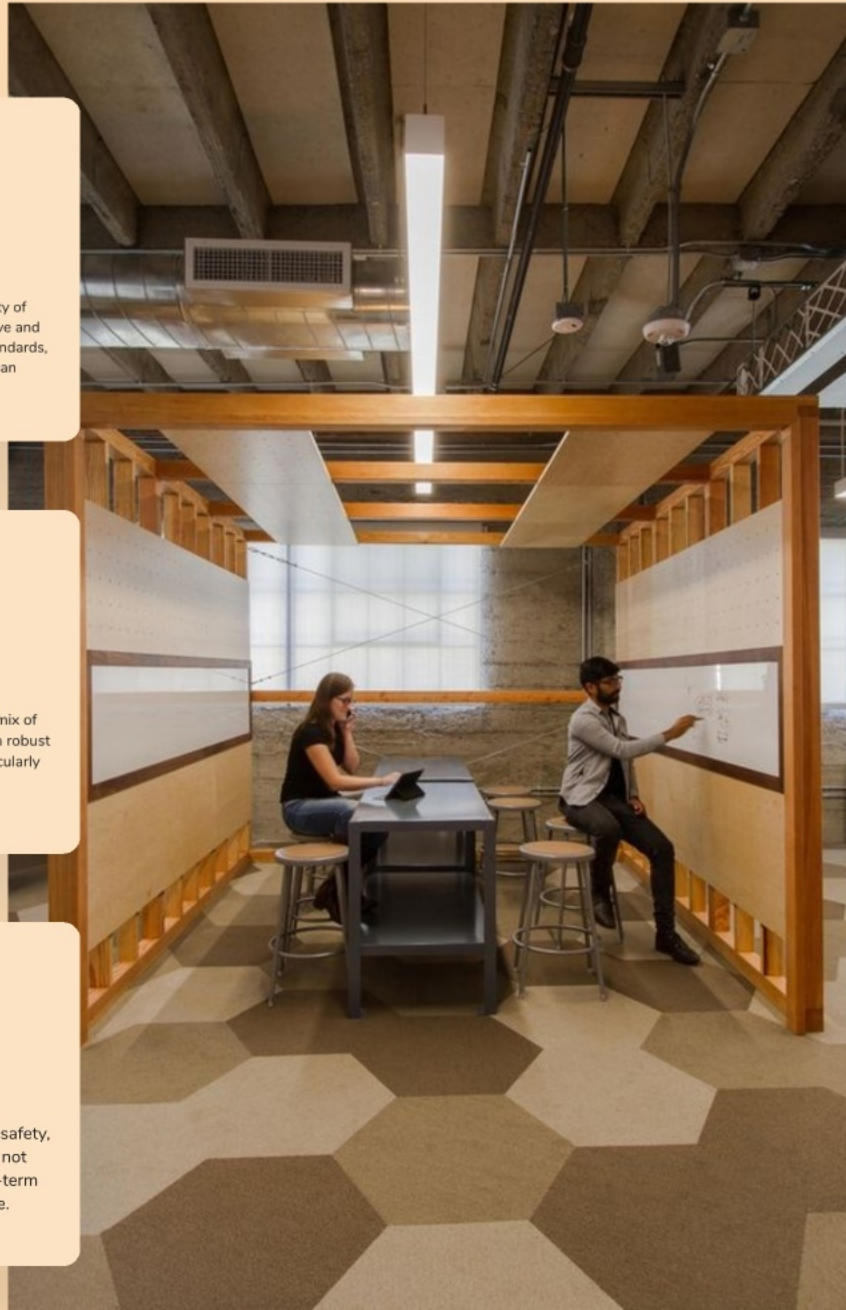
This project applies ethical design principles that prioritize the needs and safety of LGBTQ+ users, ensuring that every interaction on the platform fosters a positive and respectful environment. The design framework also considers accessibility standards, making the platform usable for individuals with varying abilities, thus creating an inclusive space for all.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

Independent research formed the backbone of this project, incorporating a mix of academic literature and current industry trends. This synthesis allowed for a robust understanding of the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly in non-urban areas, ensuring that the platform is tailored to their needs.

COHERENT PLATFORM DESIGN

The platform design integrates complex requirements such as user safety, privacy, and accessibility into a cohesive framework. This approach not only meets the immediate needs of the users but also ensures long-term sustainability and adaptability as community needs evolve over time.



LEARNING OUTCOMES DEMONSTRATED

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CONCLUSION

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GRATR serves as a transformative force for LGBTQ+ individuals in underserved areas, fostering a sense of belonging and community. By prioritizing ethical design and accessibility, it challenges the conventional profit-driven models of social media, proving that platforms can prioritize users' mental health and genuine connections.



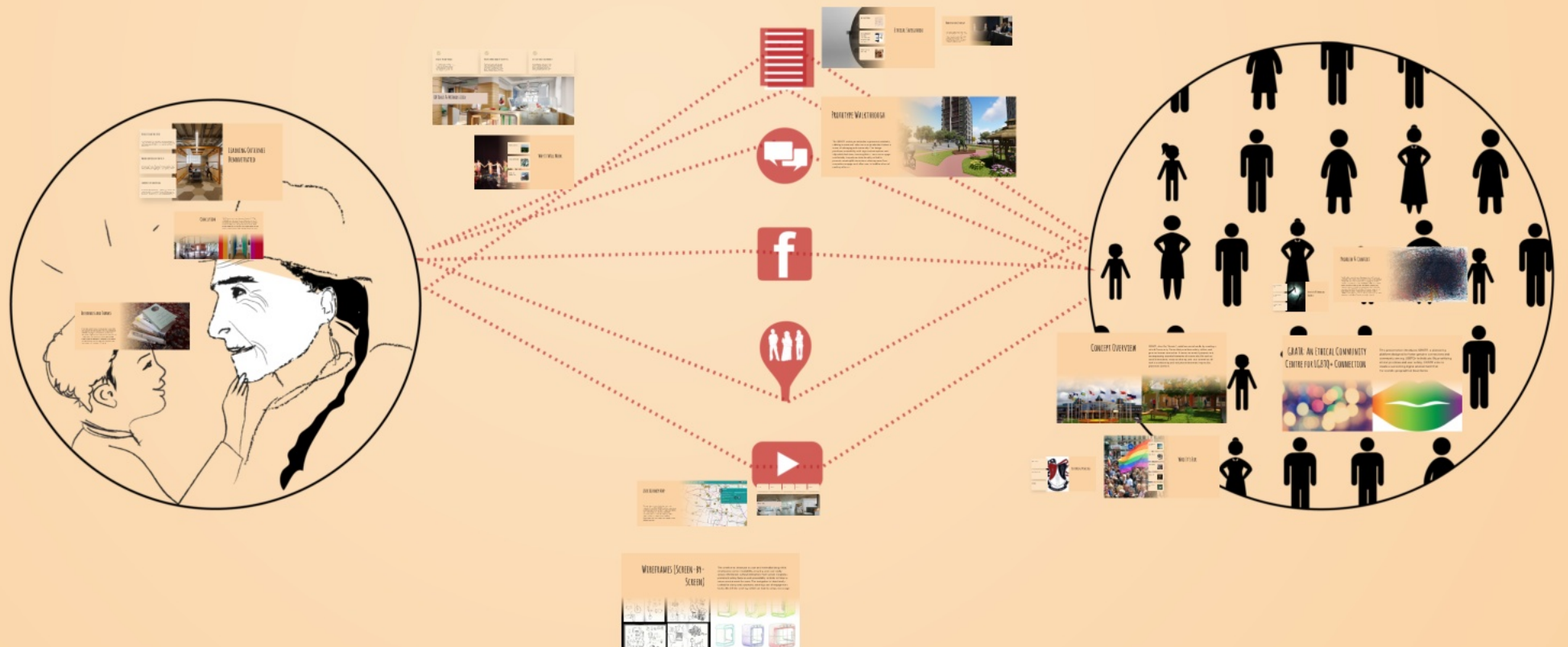
REFERENCES AND THANKS

This slide acknowledges the foundational research and support that contributed to the development of GRATR. It highlights key academic sources that address LGBTQ+ isolation, critiques of current social media ethics, and successful cooperative models that inspired our approach. Additionally, we extend our gratitude to those who provided guidance and encouragement throughout this project.



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