

## Project Overview

### GOAL

The aim of this project is to explore how the research findings about hygiene and civilisation illnesses could impact on the direction civilisation has at present.

### OUTCOME

- 1) The conceptual approach to tackling an identified problem. This problem was researched and put into context of global sociocultural trends. The range of concepts addresses this and explores possible solutions through the fictional company “Barsenberg” and their product lineup “immuniToys”.
- 2) The just described outcomes are a conversation starter and want to spark discussion and thinking. This is happening through focus group research as well as through a website that has been setup and a press release that has been published to national press.

### PROCESS

After a research stage where the topics were explored, concept creation was done through brainstorming and story writing. Four short stories were written that tackle different needs that were identified in the research and that let the uninformed reader both understand and empathise. Three were selected to take further, they were condensed and partly visualised. For the fictional products, a brand name and a company was created in order to create more imaginable scenarios. These outcomes were then used for testing and as conversation starters.

## Research Background Summary (See references on page 2.)

### THE HYGIENE HYPOTHESIS AND CIVILISATION ILLNESSES

Civilisation illnesses like Asthma and Allergies are a growing problem for the developed world. The Hygiene Hypothesis states that one cause is the lower level of infectious agents and microorganisms that children are exposed to today, especially in urban environments.

### EVOLUTIONARY MEDICINE

Researchers in the field of evolutionary medicine combine biology with medicine. There is a vast range of topics in which research is carried out.

One example is that intestinal worm parasites that have diminished in the developed world are being cultivated again, as researchers found out that these parasites don't harm the human body, but in fact help it in many ways.

### SOCIOCULTURAL OBSERVATIONS

Furthermore, a cultural change towards an over-sensitivity in terms of cleanliness and sanitation can be observed. This is perhaps driven by negative and disgusting media depictions, for example in adverts for sanitising products (see image collection on page 2).

### OVERARCHING TRENDS

Lastly, the global urbanisation means a continuing growth of cities and the rise of digital technologies like the computer and the Internet are possibly leading to children being less active and less exposed to a diversity of environments.

## Primary Research

### FOCUS GROUP

A small focus group with four Mothers was held in Chislehurst on Monday, 23. November 2009.

General Comments: Terminology makes a strong difference in perception. The word “Bacteria” is not regarded as negative necessarily, the word “Germs” is.

Product 1 - Enhanced Cuddly Toys: The most imaginable concept. There is a trust issue in regards to the fact that parents have no control over the contents of the cartridge - what if Barsenberg makes errors and the cartridge holds harmful contents?

Product 2 - Parasite Monitor: The question was raised, whether or not we really want to know what lives inside us. Possible issues were raised with teenagers not being interested in this device. Potential of being for a younger age group instead. The fact that it communicates wireless / through radio makes it uncomfortable.

Product 3 - VLE Bacteria Spreader: This concept was related to the idea of "chicken pox parties". In some cases, parents like the idea of "getting it over and done with". Generally this concept was not well understood.

## WEBSITE AND PRESS RELEASE

As another research method, the website [www.barsenberg.com](http://www.barsenberg.com) was created and a press release announcing the first product, the Enhanced Cuddly Toys, was sent out to numerous Newspapers. The aim of this effort was to create public response and feedback. Until the submission of this work, unfortunately no responses were collected. As a next step, it is intended to turn the website into a space presenting all the three product concepts and create discussion and conversation about them in topic-related forums and websites.

## Further Reading

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## Media Depiction Examples

