

Entry for Sustainability Degree Show Prize 2018

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Period poverty is a global problem that is becoming more visible in developing and developed countries. With the nature of poverty and stigma towards menstruation, providing access to sanitary products remains one of the most fundamental aspects of period poverty. Existing solutions and variations have been managed to be scalable between you and I, from buy-1-donate-1 sanitary products initiatives, public-initiated donation baskets for sanitary products to mobile applications that provide outreach to those who are in need of them. However, **they are concentrated on consumer goods for purchase and distribution, rather than being a part of a public scheme or service for a more complete and effective intervention.**

In societal setting, according to the Guardian, one in 5 of over 1,000 respondents mentioned that they have to go without sanitary products due to financial constraints. One in 10 also stated that their circumstances required them to prioritise other necessities rather than sanitary products. Thus, **this representative sample has shown how period poverty is still being overlooked in the society.** Educational setting is another area that needs to be considered. From a survey conducted by Young Scot that involved young people and students, around 26% said that they found difficulty in getting access to sanitary products, with the main reason of not having the financial means to buy them. There are also various articles stating that some girls are missing education in order to manage their menstruation, which means that **getting access to sanitary products is reciprocal to educational attainment.** In Scotland context, where education is complimentary, it is only natural for these girls with extenuating circumstances to **not only be provided with institutional intervention, but also a suitable channel for them to feel comfortable to receive help while attending school.**

As such, media coverage report stories of people who are experiencing period poverty, and activist campaigns accentuate the need to distribute free sanitary products for all. *As these approaches aim to instigate a solution with the government to eradicate the multi-faceted nature of public poverty, my design aims to present a dignified option in the in-between time for females in need, and form constructive discussions among the public while a solution like that is met out.*

This project entitled Quarter aspires to reimagine what a comfortable and alluding setting could look like if public amenities and services could cater to the needs of females who require more permanent aid for their menstrual cycle.

While this project does not aim to be a solution to fully eradicate period poverty, it seeks to bridge the gap with current users' needs, public perceptions and policy flaws.

The key component of Quarter is a redesigned female restroom that seeks to not only demonstrate sensitivity towards user social dynamics but also hopes to normalise the concept of providing free sanitary products as a "service for all". Through a framework of services driven by third sector network and public inclination to donate for the cause, Quarter will initially target those in educational settings, and then be improvised to be scalable to a variety of institutional and community settings, and finally be adapted to gender-neutral toilets in the future.



A cubicle in a restroom is perceived to be a transitional space between private and public, where females seek refuge in using sanitary products. Quarter hopes to provide a defined space of sanctuary for females that go beyond its original purpose, through a reconfiguration of activities that will accommodate to menstrual needs.



For hygiene, one of the subtler ways I tried to deal with it in this project centres around the deliberate action of pulling out for toilet paper in the cubicle. Not only is toilet paper a common archetype in restrooms, it is also the most accessible material that females frequently use as an alternative to sanitary products when they are cut short. However, the nature of toilet paper is deemed as improper as it limits physical freedom and brings health implications. Through the play of association, the exposed portion of the toilet paper is essentially an improvised version of the adhesive strip that holds the sanitary pad in place. Even if it picks up some dirt, it would not affect the lying surface of the other side that is stored in the tissue container. This material acts as a temporary safety measure in the case of emergency when free sanitary products ran out, and it is either disposed or recycled once the user finds an appropriate sanitary product.



A. Sanitary vending machines are located in every female restroom, but its utility is restricted due to the cost of dispensed products that is two times more expensive than those sold in convenience stores. For this iteration, the idea of purchase rather than the act of receiving aid is instilled as females can either opt to get a free sanitary product or "pay" for it. The collated amount is then used to partially fund this service.

B. By sensibly providing a division in an open space, users are able to wash their reusable sanitary products through perceived openness while maintaining sufficient separation. This notion reduces the embarrassment factor of cleaning blood spill and encourage the use of reusable sanitary products, which is known to last up to 6 years as opposed to the temporary lifespan of their counterparts. Also, posters will be up in all cubicles to promote the use of reusable sanitary products.

While innovation has to be inspirational and design seeks to be aesthetical, design innovation brings out the beauty of empathy that aims to create a more accommodating system for the highly-varied and non-homogenous females who experience period poverty. The nature of poverty and stigma towards menstruation may appear to be a "blanket" term for the masses, but such a complex topic combined with design innovation aims to bring out the many shades of period poverty where a reliable framework of services become a solid base to normalise the concept of period poverty with everyday experiences.