Design Principles

Asynchronous web tool for online deliberation
Inspired by argument maps
A hierarchy of arguments through support, neutral, and oppose responses to each argument
Evaluation of arguments’ constructive writing quality is separate from agreement with their content
Lack of name attribution enables considering opposite perspectives

Web Prototype

Nested rectangles provide context by showing the current thread of arguments
As response is typed, relevant prior responses are suggested to encourage reuse and avoid repetitions.
Each argument can be responded to with support, neutral, and oppose arguments

Paper Prototype

Five individuals used a Wizard-of-Oz paper interface
Nested arguments focused attention to specific discussion areas, reducing distraction from neighboring arguments

Potential Uses

Public policy development or debates
Education
Controversial topics
Deliberative democracy
Debate planning or research
Decision making in online communities

Preliminary User Study

Five users added 35 responses and 50 votes to 49 seeded arguments in a lab study
Anonymity allowed users to add arguments and vote for arguments that conflicted with their personal views about the discussion
Voting allowed feedback about constructiveness of arguments
Users reported that the interface “forces focused critical thinking rather than criticism on character/morality”

Ongoing and Future Work

Tool design
Argument search feature, showing the contexts in which resulting arguments are used
Better argument sorting
Notify debaters when new responses are added to a followed argument to support continued argumentation
Research efforts
Deploy the tool and run a large scale study with debate teams