

Proposed Workshop: Empathy "Things"/Games

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1. Workshop Organiser/s

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2. Context of Workshop

"The art of stepping imaginatively into the shoes of another person, understanding their feelings and perspectives and using that understanding to guide your actions."
Roman Krznaric (2014)

Research Q. ***How do empathy "things" (including social games) expand or reinforce the human capacity for empathy, and what are the devices/strategies they utilize to make empathic connections and what is their value to participatory design research?***

Barack Obama (2007) has famously written about an empathy "deficit" and the need for the human race to have more empathy for each other as well as the planet. The economist Jeremy Rifkin (2010) has similarly made the case for the need to build empathy. Rifkin suggests capitalism and the pursuit of materialism stunts empathy and fostering more of it could help bring people together to co-operatively solve global problems. His book, however, fails to provide sufficient evidence of precisely how increased empathy can be created and leads to cultural or political change. Baron Cohen's (2012) clinical work on autism and psychopathology, suggests only 2% of the population experience what he describes as "zero degrees of empathy". This has led to a discussion about whether we should take opportunities to build more empathy in the remaining 98% of the population. Cultural theorist Roman Krznaric (2011, 2014, 2015) has led debates for the Royal Society of the Arts about the need for Society to build empathy and has argued for the need to mobilise co-operation and imagination in order to develop more 'outrospection' between individuals as well as empathetic experiences/ perspectives that can help address the complex challenges that society faces. Krznaric evidences many case studies that demonstrate how focus on empathy can create successful new products, businesses and social innovation strategies (the blind café, the forgiveness project and the

Empathy Toy to name just three innovations), even if strong evaluative evidence about what these innovations deliver is not always available.

This has inspired us to invite design research colleagues to explore what really does build empathy in terms of participatory design strategies and devices, and to organize and participate in a workshop about empathy “things”. Empathy “things” are more than products and are defined “... as socio-material assemblies that deal with events and other matters of concern”¹ and so inform the socio-material interactions surrounding the product processes and experiences that form the bricks and mortar of daily life and could be mobilised to help build empathy. Specifically we propose to create a DRS workshop where we ask those who attend to bring examples of alleged empathy building “things” to our workshop. **These “things” could be work in progress such as probes, design concepts, mock-ups, design games or more finish prototypes that the participants wants to deconstruct, examine and discuss in a workshop format.**

The plan is to spend 15 mins deconstructing the properties utilised by empathy things to develop understanding about building empathy through design objects and processes. Our ambition is to build a list of qualities and experiences that are known to work to generate empathy so that future designers can draw upon it. We also aim to establish a design community of interest in this subject area to see whether there is an appetite for further experiments to produce a new focus beyond design WITH empathy to address design FOR empathy. This could include collaborating on a EU funding bid and/or a collection of essays on the subject of Design FOR empathy building on Gamman and Thorpe’s plans and established design research on this topic². Further examples of empathy things can be drawn from any arena and are infinite but in order to provide more information about what we are looking for we provides an additional page of examples (see p.4).

3. Planned Activities and Expected Outcomes

Workshop Participants will be invited to attend either with an empathy “thing” to deconstruct or to attend as a critical friend who would engage in the deconstruction process*. The purpose of the workshop would be to identify examples and to review them in groups and define ways they work to provoke empathic responses, what embedded qualities and devices they comprise, to understand better how to generate empathy. The workshop will run as follows; -

1. Introduction to the theme - What is empathy “ thing”? Gamman & Thorpe (15 mins)
2. Groups Introductions - Participants introduce themselves and their relationship to the topic (15 minutes)
3. 5 minute presentations of the “things” to be reviewed by at least 6 people (30 mins)
4. Establish working Groups (Open Space) to deconstruct qualities and empathetic devices and “things” (15 mins)
5. Action workshop groups – experience and deconstruct empathy things to understand their devices qualities and create information about this (in any form your choice) (30 mins)
6. Each group present their findings to all workshop attendees (30 mins)
7. Group discussion and Cluster themes will be identified (led by Thorpe) in response to groups findings and shared with Group (30 mins) and also the value of the approach to participatory designers.
8. Group members will create a potential brief of empathic elements to contribute to the design of a new empathy thing and leave with that information (15 mins).

*** There are 30 spaces in the workshop - each of the 30 participants are expected to be “discussants” but should nominate themselves as either a “proponent” or a “respondent” in advance so that workshop content can be assured.**

¹ A.TELIER (Project). (2011). *Design things*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

² Gamman, L., Thorpe, A., Malpass, M., and Liparova, E. (2012). Hey babe – Take a walk on the wild side: Why role-playing and visualization of user and abuser “scripts” offer useful tools to effectively “think thief” and build empathy to design against crime. *Design and Culture*, 4 (2), 171-193.

Gamman, L. and Thorpe, A. “Design FOR Empathy” – why participatory design has a contribution to make regarding facilitating restorative values and processes. In: Gavrielides, T. (Ed.) *Offenders No More: New Offender Rehabilitation Theory and Practice*. NY: Nova Science Pub. 2015.

Proponents are required to prepare a short presentation of their empathy thing in advance (2-5 minutes supported by props of their choice). A minimum of 6 proponents are required for the workshop. If we do not receive 6 proponents in advance we will rely on Facilitators to make presentations.

4. Intended Audience

We are interested in building the capacity of participatory and social designers to engage with audiences in new ways. We think this workshop will be of interest to practicing industrial and other designers in the field who wish to develop new forms of community engagement as well as academics/PhDs from diverse and multi disciplinary focuses who are exploring the value of empathy to design. Tom Fisher has agreed that this project could run as part of the OBJECTS, PRACTICES, EXPERIENCES, NETWORKS (OPENSIG) theme, if we so wish. Indeed, in this spirit the workshop will "To facilitate engagement with recent work (on Empathy) that has emerged in non-design disciplines over recent years, which is relevant to design and in which the term 'design' is used. [Drawing on and feeding into] work in Design Practice, HCI, Science and Technology Studies, Art Practice, work on Material Culture in Geography, Archaeology and Anthropology and Sociology, Art History, Design History and the Philosophy of Technology."

There are a number of intended outcomes for the audience from this workshop. First participants will develop knowledge and experiences about Gamman and Thorpe's conceptualisation of 'empathy things' and how this knowledge can be utilised in practice and research. The participatory deconstruction exercises will enable experiential learning where participants can also bring their own knowledge and experiences to broaden understanding of the whole group.

5. Length of Workshop

We anticipate a half-day (3 hour) afternoon workshop on 27th June. We are hoping to receive this date/time to ensure we will be able to meet our other obligations at the conference. We think the likely attendees of this workshop will be design researchers and PhD students who have already thought about this subject and so 3 hours rather than a whole day, is appropriate.

6. Spaces and Equipment Required

A studio space with room for drawing and projection from a laptop would be needed. We can provide our own laptop.

7. Potential Outputs

We are interested in raising a discussion that could be linked to the development of (a) a community of interest interesting in experimenting with empathy things (b) a bid that the partners could create aimed at developing this focus in an EU context (c) a book collection of essays on design FOR empathy with potential contributions from participants to be edited by Gamman and Thorpe.

About the Organisers:

- Organiser 1** Lorraine Gamman is Professor of Design and PI of the AHRC Extending Empathy Network (2014-16). Adam Thorpe is Professor of Socially Responsive Design and they are both directors of the Design Against Crime Research Centre at UAL/ Central Saint Martins.
- Organiser 2** Thomas Markussen is Associate Professor of Social Design and Eva Knutz holds a Post-Doc position of Social Design, at SDU Design University of Southern Denmark.
- Organiser 3** Rohan Lulham is a research fellow, Roger Watson is Deputy Director and Tasman Munro is a social design practitioner and PhD student at the Design Out Crime research centre, University of Technology Sydney

Organiser 4 Professor Tom Fisher is Research Coordinator for the School of Art and Design, representing research on the School Executive Group. He is also organiser/coordinator of DRS OBJECTS, PRACTICES, EXPERIENCES, NETWORKS (OPENSIG) stream.

Example contexts and products for exploring empathy things

There are infinite additional examples we could reference but here we include:

To convey the experience of Ageing

Empathy 'things', such as the AGNES (Age Gain Now Empathy Suit) developed by MIT AgeLab, enables designers to experience the restricted mobility and impaired vision common amongst elderly people, so that they might design universal products that better serve the needs of everyone.

To understand conflict between Lorry Drivers and Cyclists

Empathy 'things' are not just objects but come in all sorts of forms, such as systems, services, and even campaigns. For example, the 'Exchanging Places' initiative from TfL was developed in response to rising numbers of cyclist fatalities due to collisions with lorries on the streets of London. This programme involved cyclists and lorry drivers trading places under controlled conditions that simulated a traffic junction. Cyclists swapped the bike saddle for the lorry cab and experienced the impossibility of seeing a cyclist in the blind spots to the front and side of the lorry. Lorry drivers experienced the vulnerability of sitting astride a bike amidst heavy traffic. The aim was for each to become more aware of the situation of the other so as to change behaviour and accommodate each other more readily in the future. The expectation from such projects is that by developing more empathy between different societal actors we will be able to foster greater collaboration and contribute positively to conditions for design and social innovation. To date, however, whilst new road safety design has emerged there is little evidence available to corroborate whether empathy experiences were significant to such developments/ design findings.

To understand how to trust another through game play

The Empathy Toy is a blindfolded puzzle game that can only be solved when players learn to understand each other.

To provoke understanding and connection with people entrenched in the criminal justice system

Researchers at University of Technology Sydney and University of Brighton are considering how the design of new prisons may impact on community attitudes and sentiments related to the inmates housed in these facilities. In particular whether prison design could impact on the community's willingness to consider alternatives to incarceration as a focus of the criminal justice system. We contend design can challenge the cultural stereotype of what a prison is – and through this – who are the prisoners housed within its walls. Challenging this stereotype may be important to opening up new discussions about what is the purpose and means through which we administer a fair and effective modern justice system.

To understand people's different lives

Clare Patey of the Empathy Museum is an artist who has also created a range of designed 'things' to facilitate public engagement with empathy experiments. For example, *A Mile in My Shoes* is a giant shoe shop created in 2015 for a Vauxhall expo. It allows visitors to enter, put on different shoes and headphones, and to literally walk for a mile wearing someone else's life – exploring empathy by listening to stories provided. These 'things' are argued to have value beyond consumerism and individualism, and may promote empathetic understanding between diverse groups within society. This project is part of the Empathy Museum - the world's first experiential 'pop up' space dedicated to developing the skill of empathizing.

Short indicative bibliography

See videos and talks on Extending Empathy Network:
<http://extendingempathy.com/workshops/workshop-1/2/3>

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