

UNDERSTANDING USERS & THE EMPATHIC DESIGNER

ITPDP'26, L4

Minna Pakanen
Department of Digital Design and Information Studies
mpakanen@cc.au.dk



TODAY

- Designers role
- Empathic Designer
- Understanding users



Course Schedule 1/3

- L= lecture
- E=TØ sessions & practical exercises
- IW= Individual/group work
- A= Assignment hand ins
- P= Design or Demo presentation
- GIT= Delivered via gitlab.au.dk
- BS= Delivered via Brightspace
- I= Individual delivery
- G= Group delivery

28th Jan

	Week 1/5	Week 2/6	Week 3/7	Week 4/8	Week 5/9	Week 6/10	Week 7/11
Mon	L1 26/1 Introduction & Design Theme (All)	L2 2/2 Project Introduction (Guest + Minna) + one guest on Wed morning!	L3 9/2 Design Process + ethics, GDPR, consent (Clemens)	L4 16/2 Understanding Users & The Empathic Designer (Minna)	L5 23/2 Diary studies (Minna)	E5 2/3 Tour to something fun (All)	L7 9/3 Innovation and Business (Kaj) 13:00-15:00
Wed	E1 28/1 Interview and reflection exercise (Simon)	E2 4/2 Guest + Getting on Gitlab + Miro [GIT/G] + Project planning	E3 11/2 GDPR and consent forms exercise	E4 18/2 Intro to AI, AID, APS+ work on tooling exercises	L6 25/2 Design Rationales and Models (Simon)	E6 4/3 Ideation	E7 11/3 Business Model Canvas exercises
IW		- Read the articles from Bs for next Mon	- Read the articles from Bs for next Mon - Finish TØ task	- Read the articles from Bs for next week - Start writing Problem area sub-assignment 1	- Remember the tour next Monday!	- Read the articles from Bs for next Mon - Finish TØ task	- Read the articles from Bs for next Mon - Finish sub-assignment 1 by Fri

1. Reflection assignment:
 - Interview and reflection exercise [BS/I] - Context observations & inspiration phase

2. Tooling exercises:
 - Adobe tools & Fusion 360 [GIT/G]

Sub-assignment 1: Problem Area [BS/G]

DL for Fusion 360 & Illustrator (AI)
20th March at 15:00!!!

DL: March 13th at 15.00

TAs feedback

Teachers and TAs feedback



DESIGNERS ROLE

Harold G. Nelson & Erik Stolterman (2003) The design way. Intentional Change in an Unpredictable World. Foundations and fundamentals of design competence



DESIGN AS SERVICE RELATIONSHIP

- A dynamic service relationship between service provider (designer) – those being served (clients, surrogate clients, customers and end users)
- Design is about *service on behalf of the other*
- The clear difference between traditions of design vs. art-science



Own curiosity/
passion for knowing



Own need for
self-expression



'Serves' the
client?



Self-serving



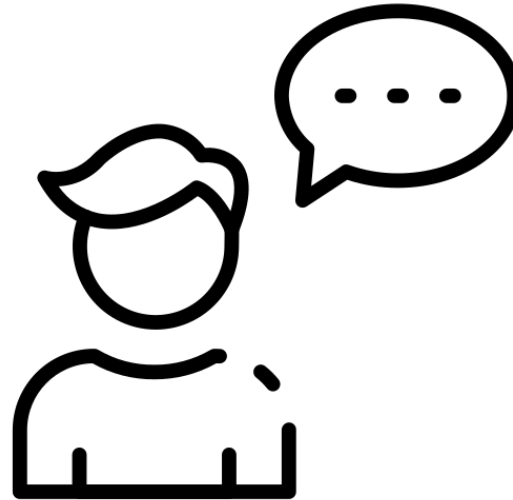
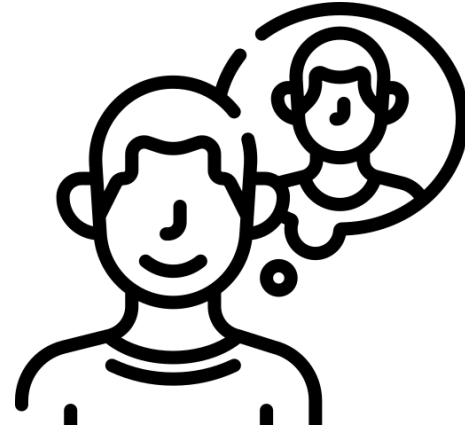
Other-serving

DESIGNER AS SERVICE PROVIDER

- Being in service **does not mean**
 - being a servant, or subservient
 - acting as a mere facilitator on behalf of someone else's needs
 - service to exclude self-expression, but it is not as dominant as in art-science
- Service **is not** about helping people to create what they already know they want

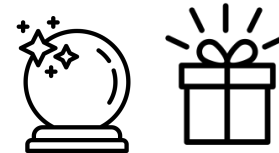
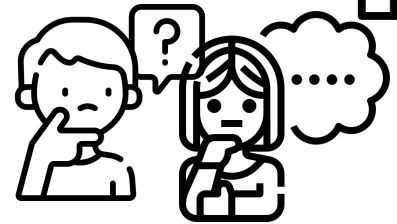


**Desiderata?
&
Designer's role in it?**



DESIDERATA

- The success of the design process can best be determined when those being served experience the *surprise of self-recognition*
 - when the outcome of the design process **meets and exceeds** the client's original expression of what is desired (usually only dimly perceived) is known as the client's *desiderata*
- **The designer's role is to midwife that desiderata!**
 - Not fully imagined from the beginning, by either client or designer
 - to provide end results in the form of an *expected unexpected* outcome



SERVICE IS NOT SERVITUDE

- Other party is seen as *equal*, but not as *similar*
- Service is not about *helping*

“Helping is based on inequality; it is not a relationship between equals. . . Service is a relationship between equals. . . Helping incurs debt. When you help someone, they owe you one. But serving, like healing, is mutual. There is no debt.”

Remen (1996)



DESIGN EDUCATION

Own curiosity/
passion for knowing



Own need for
self-expression



Objective and subjective
understanding on behalf
another's interest

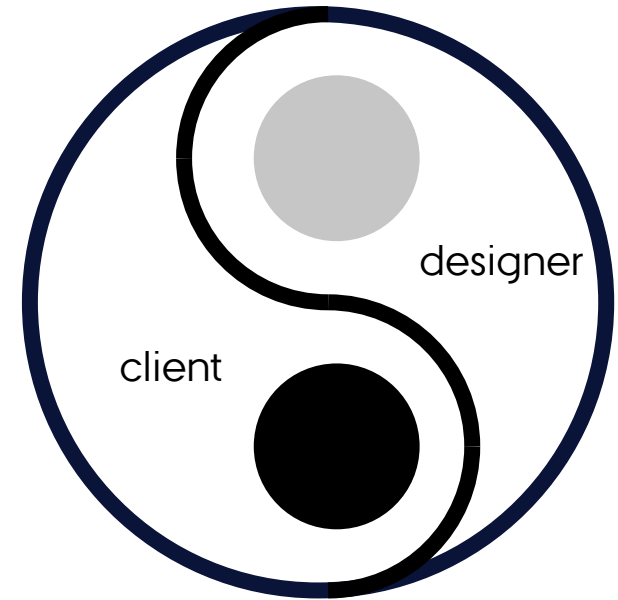


Self-serving



Other-serving

reflective thought + practical action ->
knowledge of 'why' + knowledge of 'how'



EMPATHIC DESIGNER

Harold G. Nelson & Erik Stolterman (2003) *The design way. Intentional Change in an Unpredictable World. Foundations and fundamentals of design competence*

Peter Wright & John McCarthy (2010) *Experience-Centered Design. Designers, Users, and Communities in Dialogue*



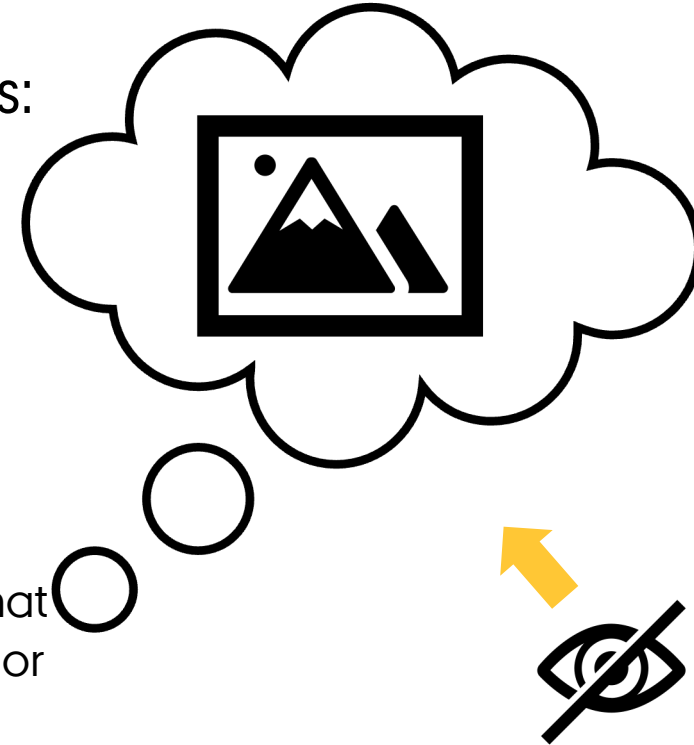
LISTENING

- Design communication is about listening
 - Helping people to express what they believe will help them live fuller lives.
 - design communication may at times include the use of rhetoric and persuasion, as is true of science and art
 - A good designer does not convince clients of needs or desires they have not authored –no ‘selling’!
 - It is the client’s own intentionality—in the form of their desiderata—that triggers the process.
- Design is democracy
 - Heightened ability to ‘listen’, utilize *notitia* (Hillman, 1992)
 - Notitia is an act of attention that is complete and uncompromising: ‘focus’

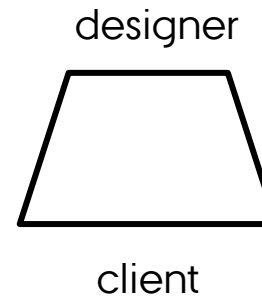
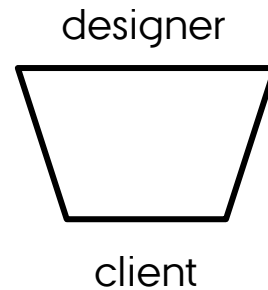
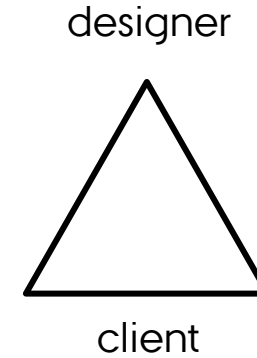
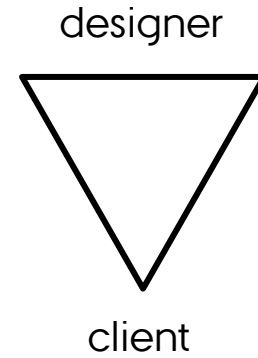


DESIGN COMMUNICATION

- A complex multi-dimensional and multi-phased process:
 - initial phase of *building trust* (through conversation)
 - *finding common ground* through dialogue (using logic) and developing *a shared or common understanding*
 - = creation of an *uncommon understanding* through *diathenic graphologue* (Greek: *diatheno*= to show through or let a thing be seen through; and *grapho*= image or representation).
 - produces breakthrough insights in the form of rich, complex images that are difficult, if not impossible, to apprehend from a single perspective or cannot be represented in the linear format of text
 - break the established common ground and bring the process back to a need for more dialogue, in order to find new common ground.



DESIGNER/CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS?



designer technician

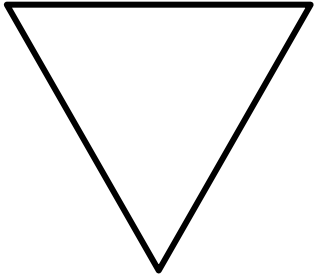
designer facilitator

designer artist

designer expert

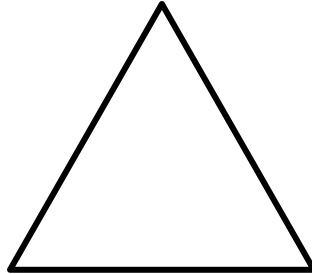


designer



client

designer

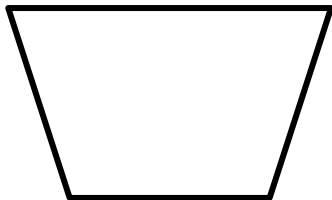


client

designer technician

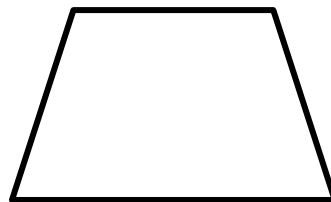
designer facilitator

designer



client

designer



client

designer artist

designer expert

designer



client

designer artist

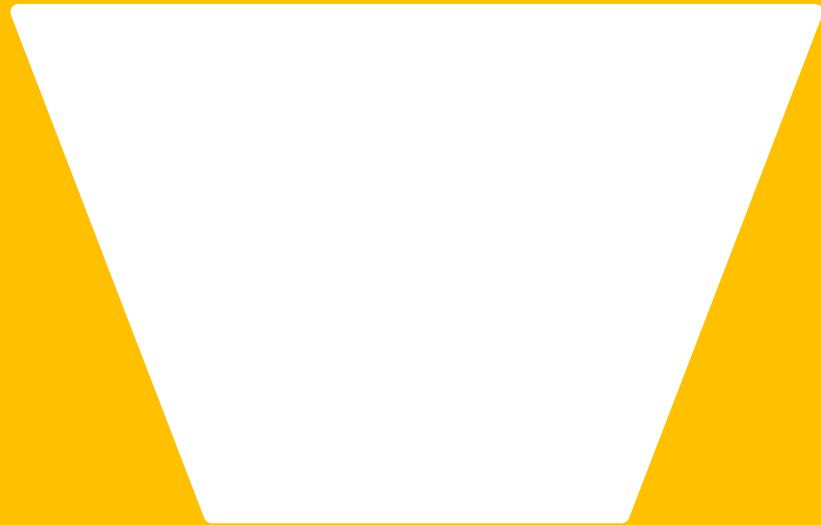
designer



client

designer facilitator

designer



client

designer expert

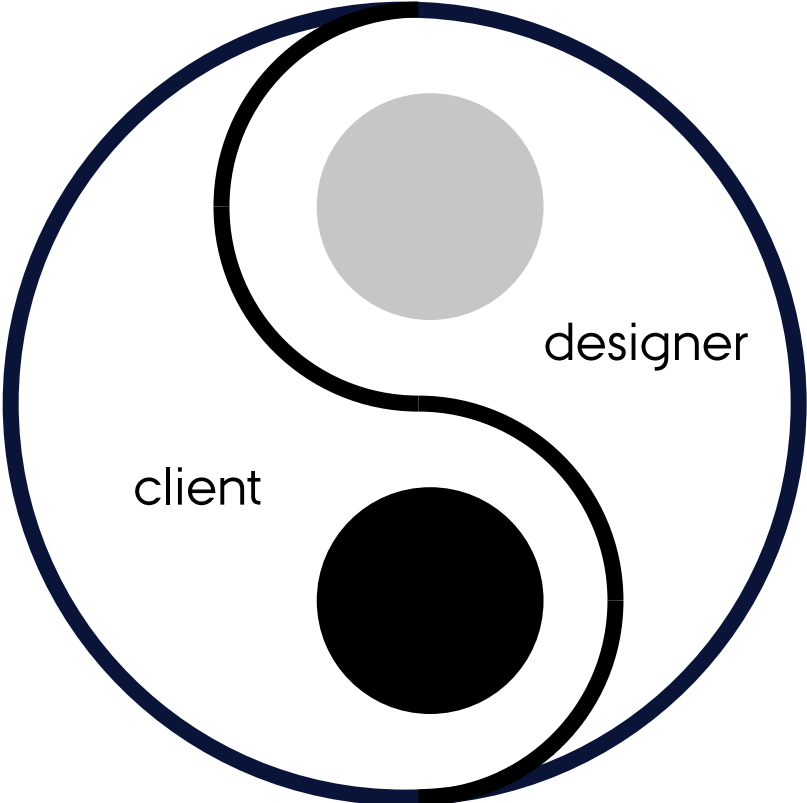
designer



client

designer technician

IDEAL SERVICE RELATIONSHIP

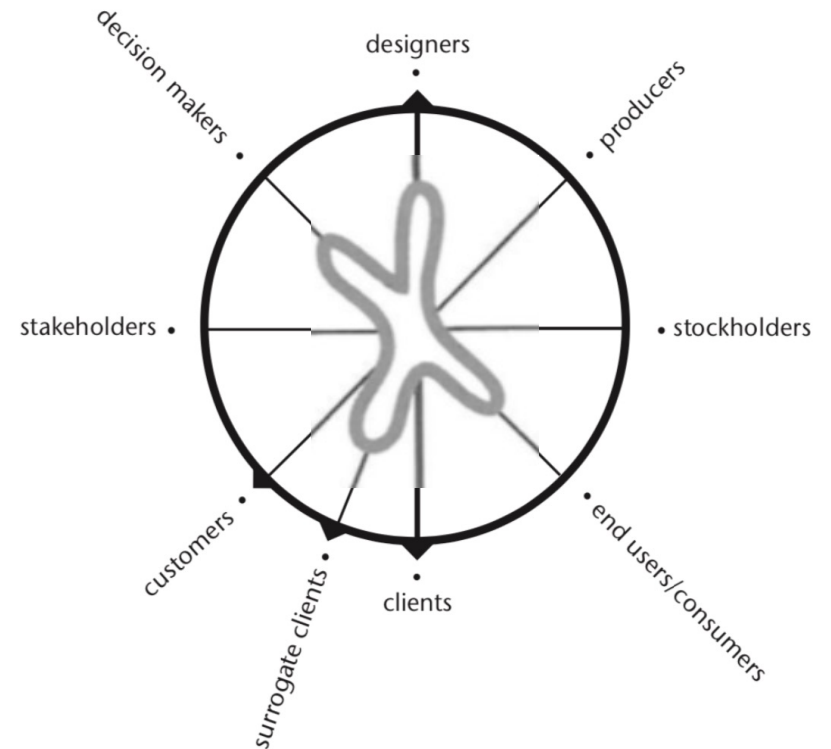


DESIGNERS CHOISES OF RELATIONSHIPS

But any given process have more stakeholders...

- People who influence ...
- People who are affected ...
- People who are using ...

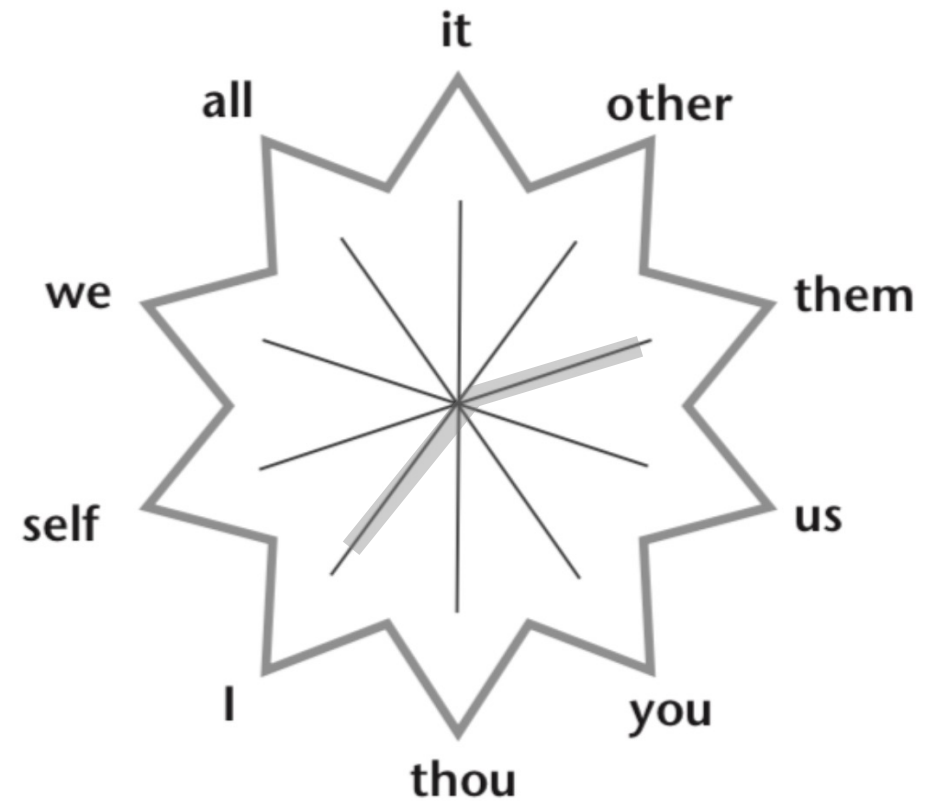
Key exercise is to identify them and decide which ones to satisfy, this needs to be designed!



DESIGN RELATIONSHIPS

- Interaction “protocols” describing a relationship
- Can change along the way
 - I (designer) -> you
- We (designer + specific stakeholder) -> them
 - I (designer) -> It / other

Everyday relations / partnership / alliances etc.



EMPATHIC DESIGNER

- 'Makes meaning' for a client by empathetically drawing out his or her pre-formed desires
- Does not ask the client what fully-formed outcome is to be designed, but instead, **through open communication**, tries to discern the underlying intentions of that client's **vague ideas of desiderata**
 - This symbiotic relationship is possible only if there is an exchange of empathy
 - Empathy in design means: **ability to 'be' as the other, while remaining a whole self.**
- Must be willing to let empathy lead the way!



UNDERSTANDING USERS

Peter Wright & John McCarthy (2010) Experience-Centered Design. Designers, Users, and Communities in Dialogue



BEYOND USABILITY

- Computer systems started to spread from workplaces into home and leisure use context
 - Design for usability is only one of the many values that user-centered design could focus on (Blythe et al., 2003)
 - It no longer seemed enough for user-centered design to focus solely on usability, ease of learning, efficiency, and effectiveness, and for a transparent interface to be the ultimate criteria of success
 - “beautiful things work better” (Norman, 2004)
 - significant impetus toward experience-centered design
 - slogan opened up an interdisciplinary debate around beauty and pleasure as a design value and the relationship between aesthetics and usability (Sutcliffe, 2009) and (Hassenzhal, 2010)



EXPERIENCE

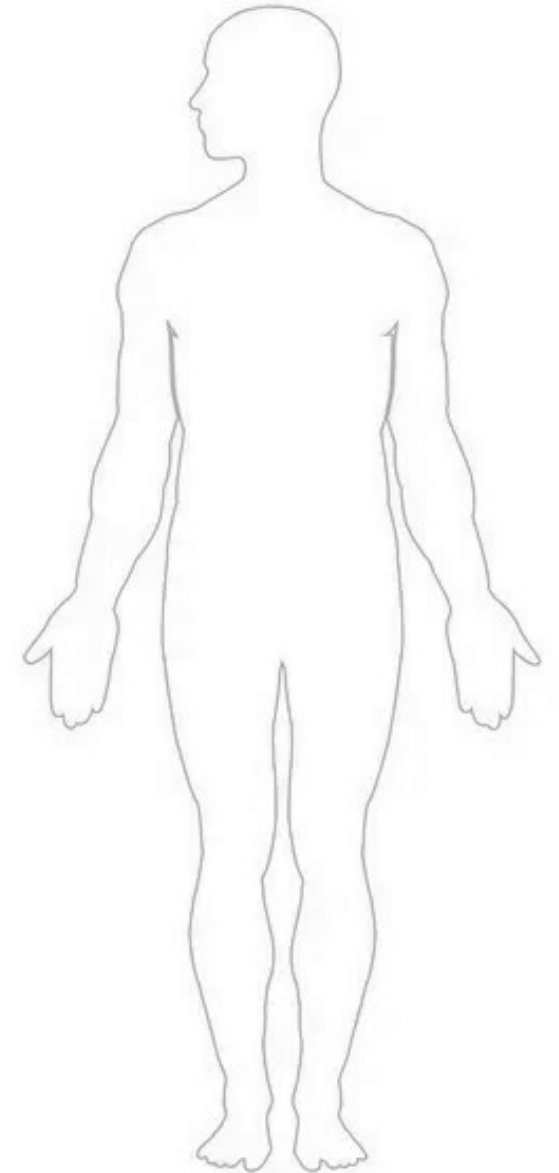
- Developed from pragmatist philosopher John Dewey's focus on human experiences (Art as Experience, 1938)
- Thoughts and ideas do not exist separate from our bodies and separate from each other
- There is no knowledge (or experience) without a knower, language without context or emotion without thought and action
- We must engage with **felt life** — the full range of our **embodied experiences**



Felt life?

“FELT LIFE”

- Life is felt in as much as the continuous **sensory and sensual connection** we have with it is integral.
- This is a connection that is **situated** in and **built up over time and space**.
- It reminds us that the world of experience is a world that has **a kickable reality** both in the **physical sense** and also in terms of the way in which **actions we take have consequences** for us **intellectually and emotionally**.



EXPERIENCE

- Experience as sensation, emotion, intellect and action situated in a particular place and time
- Most experiences consist of a subtle interplay and overlaying of unconscious and conscious action
- Highly subjective, solitary and introspective process vs. social experience
- Anticipation and expectation connect past experience to present and future experience
- “Levels” of experience:
 - Aesthetic experience (flow — body directly connected to the world)
 - Pre-reflective experience (successful habitual interactions)
 - Reflective experience (engage in process of sense making)



WHAT AFFECTS ON THE EXPERIENCE OF DRIVING A CAR?



EXPERIENCE-CENTERED DESIGN

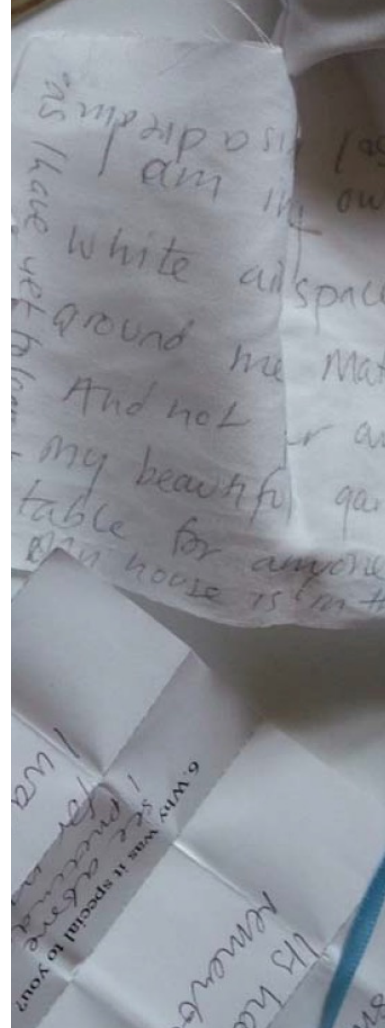
Valuing the whole person behind 'the user'

- Focusing on how people make sense of their experiences
- Seeing the designer and user as **co-producers of experience**
- Seeing the person as part of a network of social (self-other) relationships through which **experience is co-constructed**
- Seeing the person as **a concerned agent**, imagining possibilities, making creative choices, and acting.



STORIES IN EXPERIENCE-CENTERED DESIGN

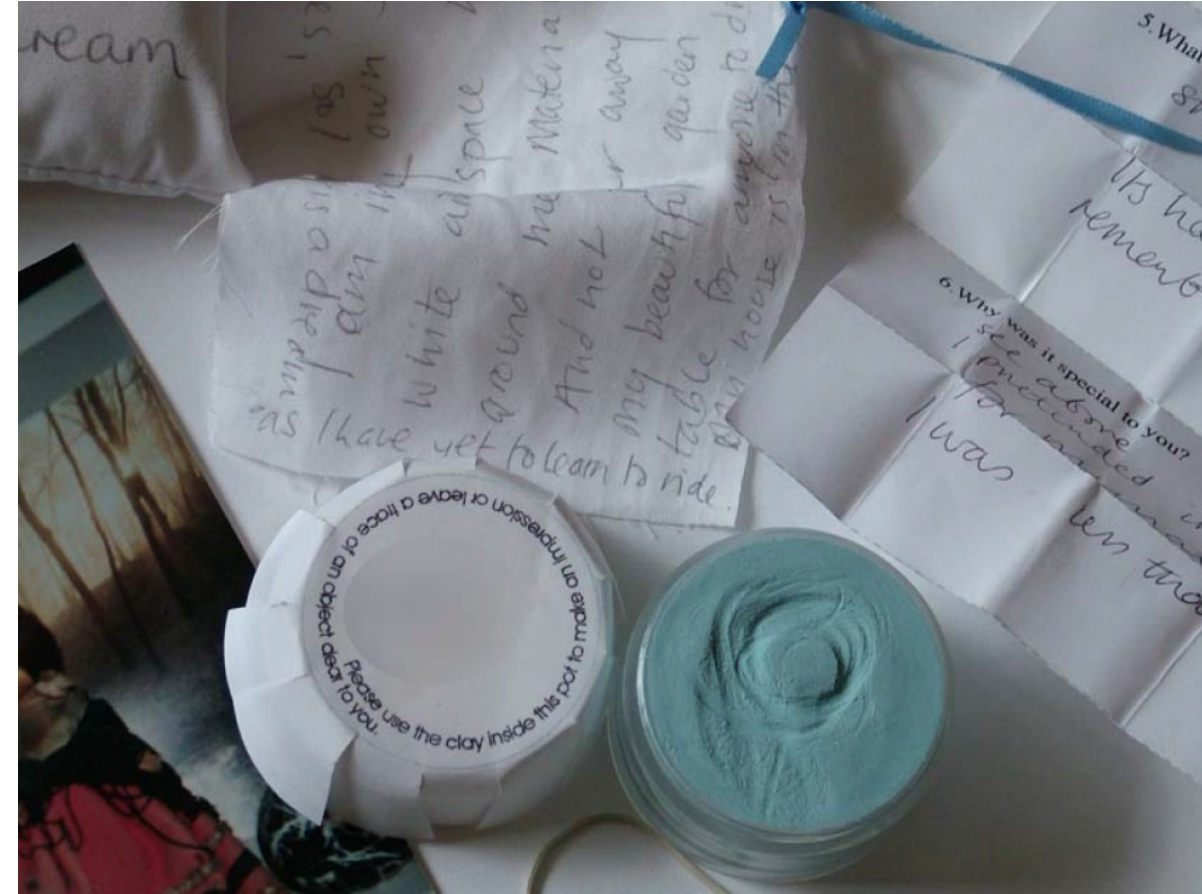
- Focus on stories over use-cases, requirements, etc.
- Collecting and analysing stories (understanding the users)
- Conceptualise and interpret for design
 - Scenarios (agents, goals, plot, action, events)
 - Personas (personal histories, goals, and feelings)
 - Drama and role-play (to connect and evoke)
 - Sharing stories as a way to involve participants



EXPERIENCE-CENTERED DESIGN

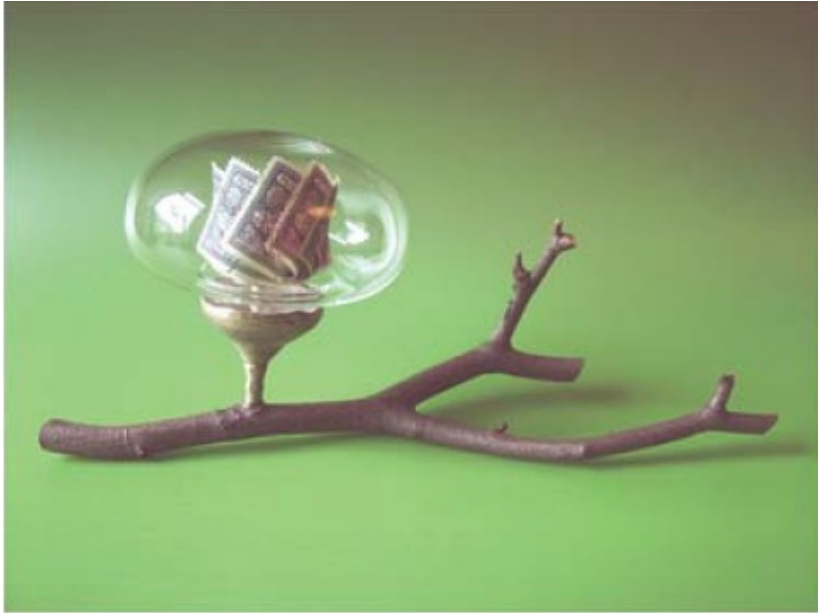
Requires empathic understanding of the users → Dialogical methods for:

- Dialogue **with the person** for whom the object is designed, before and after the object is made
- Dialogue **with materials** when the object is being made



Cultural probes (Gaver et al., 1999)

BLOSSOM FOR ANA BY JAYNE WALLACE



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXdUNVBOtb0>





DIALOGUE IN BLOSSOM

- Wallace uses the [...] **conversations** to try to get a glimpse of the other person's life, perspectives, and values, their own **sense of who they are**
- **She immerses herself** in the materials produced by **the participant and in the conversation they have had together**
- Wallace finds some **threads that are familiar to her** from **her own experiences** or with which she **can empathize**.



EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO BLOSSOM

- Blossom piece provoked a strong emotional response and important insight.

"...when it blossomed, it kind of upset me that it was only the once, and I thought 'oh my god!' (laughs) but ...if it wasn't only once then that would defeat the object ... for me anyway... I mean that was a kind of crucial point for me, when I started blubbing (laughs) when it said it 'only blossoms once' and I was just like 'oh!', 'yeah!' and it, I sort of got it, that it was sort of, represented life really and that, erm, you only live it once..."

(Ana interview transcript lines 155 – 161)



DESIGN AS DIALOGUE

Separate knowing versus connected knowing

- “Dialogue puts the focus clearly on processes between people. It sees communication, knowledge, and identity as **constructed in relationships between people, not within individuals.**”
- “New understanding is created in the **respectful, responsive engagement** with dissimilarity. **Trying to understand other people**, including users, by foregoing one’s own perspective may reproduce existing knowledge but will not produce new understandings.”



Listening?

**Listening by thinking
about the situation in
terms of problems and
needs?**

**We already impose our
frame of reference rather
than listening to what the
other person has to say.**

In active listening we have minimum of preconceptions about what we will hear in the situation and the understanding that it may be necessary to change how we already think about the people, practices, and events we find there.

Active listening is the way forward when aim is to do experience centered-design.

LISTENING

“By thinking about the situation in terms of **problems and needs**, we already impose our frame of reference rather than listening to what the other person has to say.”

VERSUS

“**Active listening** involves **going into a situation with the minimum of preconceptions** about what we will hear and the understanding that it **may be necessary to change how we already think about the people, practices, and events we find there.**”



**Why you should not
design to students who
are studying in IT
Product Development
Program?**

REFERENCES

- Harold G. Nelson & Erik Stolterman (2003) *The design way. Intentional Change in an Unpredictable World. Foundations and fundamentals of design competence*. MIT Press.
- Wright, P., & McCarthy, J. (2010). Experience-centered design: designers, users, and communities in dialogue. *Synthesis Lectures on Human-Centered Informatics*, 3(1), 1-123. (chapters: 2-5)

