

Participatory eTextiles design with mental health care communities

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Abstract

We will discuss methodological findings from the Internet of Soft Things project, in which we have been running participatory eTextile workshops with a mental health care community. This multidisciplinary project aims to develop a person-centred methodology for participatory design in the fields of eTextiles, Interaction Design and Service Design for the Internet of Things. Furthermore, it seeks to include mental health service users and providers in the developing public imaginary of these technologies. Since Autumn 2014 we have run a series of workshops at Bassetlaw Mind, a third sector mental health care provider in the UK, where participants made hand held textile forms with soft circuits and light output. One outcome of this is a set of recommendations for other design researchers who wish to develop their practice in the fields of mental health and wellbeing.

In this talk we will describe the planning of the workshop content, discuss tensions between the Person-Centred Approach and skills-based learning, and outline our recommendations for a participatory design research protocol for e-textiles work in mental health care environments.

The protocol includes aspects such as:

- Pace of working and resource intensity
- Timing within each workshop
- Levels of involvement in the design process
- Kinds of relationships and communities in the design space
- Use of psychotherapy methods to frame experience and expectations
- Debrief sessions between researchers
- Supervision to support researchers
- What counts as data for analysis
- Implementing equal power relationships
 - In the workshop
 - In the evaluation and analysis of data
- Co-production of narratives of the experience
- Wider disciplinary and research expectations

Conceptual framework

The protocol sits within a phenomenological framework informed by the Person-Centred Approach (Embleton-Tudor et al. 2004). We believe that many of the tools to be found in contemporary participatory design can be used in quite different ways by different research teams, and that the experience of the participants (and researchers) is dependent on the model of the person underlying each research project. Researchers may be more or less explicitly aware of such models; this approach asks us to be not only aware but to reflect on the models we habitually work by. For example in design it is common to find multidisciplinary projects with a psychologist on the team, but it is less common to find an explicit account of the approach taken by the psychologist. For the most part it seems that it is behavioural and cognitive psychologists who collaborate in design research, operating on

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an evidence-based practice model; a Person-Centred Approach (PCA) to psychotherapy practice on the other hand, believes in practice-based evidence (Sanders, 2005). This inversion of the 'scientific' approach found in the natural sciences, is a function of the model of the person as expert in their own experience, which the PCA is founded upon (Kagan 1980). The implications for research are far reaching – as Cooper says, “all the facts are friendly” (2014) – and all participants become co-researchers not only in the moment of the hands-on workshop, but in the generation of analyses and narratives as a result of them. Sanders and Stappers (2014) work on emergent PD is relevant here, in their framework for valuing the different types of knowledge made visible through things that are made, things that are said, and things that are done. We find this helpful when working with individuals with diverse lived experience of mental health, as normative techniques of data collection such as talk-aloud protocols and even reminiscence work may not capture emotions or thoughts when a participant is largely non-verbal.

Sarah Kettley is a Reader in Relational Design at Nottingham Trent University. Her research interests include the development of design research methodologies that emphasise user experience, particularly in emerging technology sectors, such as eTextiles. Her practice-led research resulted in the first user-centred application of the ubiquitous computing platform, Speckled Computing in 2005, in the form of a bespoke wireless jewellery collection. She convenes the Design Research Society special interest group in Tangible, Embedded, and Networked Technologies (tentSIG), and is a member of the Design for Health and Wellbeing, and Digital Craft and Embodied Knowledge Research Groups at NTU. She currently leads the UKRC Research-in-the-Wild project, *An Internet of Soft Things*.

Richard Kettley is a Research Fellow at Nottingham Trent University, working on a project with Nottinghamshire Mind Network. He has a Masters degree in Person-Centred Psychotherapy and Counselling, and is registered with the UKCP and a member of BACP. He is interested in group therapy as well as 1:1, and has particular experience of working with trauma and abuse. Richard has developed and delivers training material in using Interpersonal Process Recall methods, and is a tutor on the Counselling Concepts course at the Sherwood Psychotherapy Training Institute. Richard has previously worked for many years in a variety of educational settings.