

# EXPERIMENTING WITH DESIGN: PLAYING WITH DATA DERIVED FROM UNUSUAL LOCATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

The field of design research is in a rapid stage of its evolution. As it does so, the methods for undertaking research, and the contexts that these occur in are also evolving. Situated in the space between critical design and design fiction, participants in this workshop will explore new ways for experimenting within design research.

The facilitators of the workshop come from three different aspects of design research, three markedly different locations and yet intersect in their interest in exploring and manifesting, new iterations of design research in practice. In this workshop, participants will explore methods for undertaking design experiments, methods as experiments, or experimenting with methods.

## INTRODUCTION

This workshop is situated in the productive space between critical design and design fiction. This is the experimental space of design research, interrogation, observation and application. It allows for the generation and critique of design outside of the traditions of consumer goods or aesthetic additions. This is design that exists in the new, challenging, and often collaborative spaces, such as placemaking, circus archives, or creative public events. What can be taken up, tried out and revised in such spaces for designing is the possibility of design for experience - experiences of play, performance, forecasting, safety, history and



storytelling. What transpires in such experimentation is design research that produces data in many forms that is used and manipulated, interpreted or applied in previously unknown digital or analogue ways. Through experimental and experimentation-centred modes of inquiry that mix design techniques and research tools we explore an approach to design inquiry that produces and engages with this multimodal data. This is a space of design research that is necessarily hybrid and can also be described as the relational space of practice and inquiry. This is arguably a crucial way to experiment with experimentation in design and in related research that is part of facing challenges and potentials now possible via digital tools and technologies that may be derived from various locations

Underpinning this workshop is the understanding that digital technologies have changed and continue to change every aspect of modern life. This extends to how and where we work, live or play. How we connect, love or disengage from others. It entails how we tell our stories, perform our tasks – and, significantly, how we envisage the new tasks we haven't even encountered yet. Such new dimensions of being, call for new paradigms of disciplinary collaboration and provide the ideal platform for design to position itself as method, form, methodology and technology. This includes interdisciplinary formations of Design + Science, Design + Humanities, Design + Socio-cultural production. These may lead to many new intersections, and these intersections bring with them past practices

and conventions and they pave the way for new kinds of data. Whether it be 'big data' or 'micro data', this new data - in scale and form - opens up many exciting and challenging possibilities for design research.

### FOCUS OF WORKSHOP

In this workshop, participants will explore methods for undertaking design experiments, methods as experiments, or experimenting with methods and then representing the data from those methods back to the world. This may include hacking known technologies, adapting the unexpected, or exploring practices from other domains to see what can be produced, considered and used. As we do this, we will move through 4 aspects that need to be considered as we experiment with new methods for knowing in design. These are:

- new locations for designing
- new methods and new data
- new roles for designers and design researchers
- new outcomes and modes of representation and narration.

### PARTICIPANTS

This workshop brings together design researchers from 3 locales – Australia, USA and Norway – who through the happenstance of academic work have connected in their shared interest in new methods and contexts for design research. Between them they have had extensive experience in exploring new and interdisciplinary design research methods in a range of applied and hypothetical contexts. The frameworks for this design exploration are: Place, Event & Archive – all considered within the context of 'living'.

The facilitators of the workshop are: Laurene Vaughan who has extensive experience in interdisciplinary design research. She is a Chief Investigator on the Circus Oz Living Archive Project (<http://archive.circusoz.com>), and Research Leader in the RMIT Design Research Institute. Aisling Kelliher works across the fields of HCI, interaction design and multimedia in creating and studying experiential media systems. She is an Associate Professor in the School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University and led the development of the documentation framework at the Emerge 2012 futures [file://localhost/symposium](http://localhost/symposium) <http://emergemedia.asu.edu>. Andrew Morrison leads the YOUrban project into social media, performativity and the city ([www.yourban.no](http://www.yourban.no)). He works across art, design and communication and is the Director of the Centre for Design Research at AHO ([www.designresearch.no](http://www.designresearch.no)). In addition his colleague Kjetil Nordby leads the Ulstein Bridge Concept project ([www.designresearch.no/projects/ulstein-bridge-concept/about](http://www.designresearch.no/projects/ulstein-bridge-concept/about)) that gathers and generates complex design data in the redesign of a large ship bridge. The workshop call invites access to project websites and related works and publications; images from each of the



conveners' projects from which the experimental methods are drawn are included in this call.

The workshop facilitators will be joined in this event by colleagues from their respective project teams. These colleagues will co-present methods that have been explored in the course of their research. These methods are to be catalysts for workshop activities. So too is collaborative experimentation to be taken up as a resource for further discussing innovative methods and modes of conducting design based research.

Participants in the workshop are required to submit a statement about their interest in the topic – experimentation, data, collation and representation and design research. The workshop will be capped at 12 participants in addition to the representatives from the 3 projects.

### APPROACH

The workshop convenors will select 12 participants prior to the workshop based on the submitted statements of interest. The sessions will comprise a combination of the facilitators own project based inquiry and the design experimentation interests of the workshop participants.

Our plan is for the all day workshop to be an immersive experience of design experiments in practice. Although there is a planned series of events, the full details of how this will manifest will be done in discussion with the participants.



The following is a sketch of the day:

In the beginning - Initial presentations by researchers from the three projects facilitating the workshop on their respective projects or methods and how we will use these as the basis for the day's investigations into creating a place and event based living archive, grounded in the locale of Malmo, and drawing on various analogue, digital and open source technologies.

This will be followed by – the workshop participants presenting their projects, data or areas of interest in a Pecha Kucha style presentation.

This will then lead to - participants making, hacking, exploring or designing data or methods based on presentations and associated tools.

Finally – the workshop participants will then discuss, critique and consider what this means for design research, the implications, challenges, etc. for design research. This discussion will focus on the following questions.

- What is the data that such methods manifest, and how do we engage, measure, evaluate or apply it to the contexts that we are designing within?
- How can we collect, collate, narrate and represent such data using innovative and exploratory methods?
- How do such new methods for undertaking design research inform or have the capacity to transform design research and its outcomes?

## OUTCOMES

It is anticipated that an exhibition, a special edition of a journal or the like on experimenting with narratives and representation of data in design research will be an additional outcome from the workshop. We invite participants to think about this as part of the wider view of looking together into experimentation in design research.

## PARTICIPATING IN THIS WORKSHOP

Whether you are technologically competent or a novice to new methods of undertaking research, we welcome applications from participants who have a passion for exploring what these new methods, data and contexts can and do mean for design research. This is a day of participatory exploration. To help us design the day within the framework of participant interest and expertise we are requesting that people submit a 1-2 page statement of interest. This should include:

- Statement of interest in the topic
- Experience or expertise in this domain
- 3 sentence biographic statement
- Link to any projects that you would like us to know about

This should be emailed to [laurene.vaughan@rmit.edu.au](mailto:laurene.vaughan@rmit.edu.au)

Following the selection process, successful applicants will have the opportunity to do a pechakucha style short presentation on their work and interests at the beginning of the workshop. (Max 10 images in 5 minutes).

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