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The _____
CRAFT

edition

FROM GOA 2017

A Publication by UnBox in partnership with Mozilla's Open IoT Studio

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CRAFT

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FROM GOA 2017

A Publication by UnBox in partnership with Mozilla's Open IoT Studio

Editing - Babitha George, Jon Rogers, Michelle Thorne and Romit Raj

Design- Sukanya Deepak, Nia Thandapani

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Identify characteristics and established patterns of human behavior and then spend time exploring in as many directions as possible what they mean. You can do this in lots of ways. Jayne - it's a conversation - it's before making things physically. Sharing stories in the wider group.

Narratives of Potential = early sketching/playing (speculative, but not critical, design fiction approaches)

Creating stories that are played out through little sketches, little models. It is about narratives of potential interactions. A lot of the time that is drawing on your own life, your own lived experiences. To whatever extent you've been able to emphasise and understand certain contexts.

Jayne: If I was doing this in a care home I would look to find what an 85 year would find enchanting. Not prototyping the final idea - not just about technology, but about sketching possibilities.

Then split up into our own expertise.

Grounded prototyping = viable, grounded, down to earth, craft, bricolage, to-handedness - grounded in terms of context in which you are working (hospital, market, etc) and grounded in terms of technology (it's doable), socially and technically viable.

Patient Making = collaborative trusting craft making in an appropriate space, enabling technologists and craft to come together in a way that is not functional and service orientated, but discursive and responsive.

Authentic evaluation & legacy = extended, human centred. Reward people you work with, recognising the significance of legacy (incl. friendships), privilege ethical stance.

NOTE: craftspeople and others involved in the process will have differing contributions (in terms of type and volume) at differing stages, so more emphasis on established craft practices at the patient making stage than the others, but it is NOT a handover scenario. The job of a technologist is not to deliver a finished job, but to enable the craftsperson to allow them to complete the job. (e.g glaze knowledge of colour could inform LED research)

NOTE: enforced collaboration is a useful mechanism

Can this process be systemised into set of instructions?

NO: it's a workshop, a guided meditation (like learning an instrument).

Why Craft?

Justin Marshall

As decentralisation is the core theme of this caravan, then looking for practices and communities which naturally, and often unconsciously, embrace this notion seems like a good place to start.

It could be argued that Design is as a modern activity born out of the industrial revolution. The separation of design from production and the divorce of design processes away from direct material engagement have given it strong affinities to centralized mass manufacturing models that aspire to global reach. So if this is what you are looking for then design's natural inclination and history makes it the practice of choice.

In contrast, though independent craft practitioners are consistently seeking ways to create economic viability, they tend not to be driven by economic models that seek to achieve scale through centralisation. Craft relishes a flexible ongoing interaction with the materials and situations to hand; it rarely seeks to create ubiquitous and dominant products. It is orientated towards creating more bespoke, personal/community objects in which value is created through the tailoring of outcomes/artifacts to specific needs and desires, rather than aspiring to design universally appealing high volume products. A craft approach holds the potential to encourage the consideration of localized IoT networks that grow from the bottom up and are not imposed from the top down. It privileges nuance and material sensitivity (in its broadest terms) over technical specification and feature overload. This might mean that a craft approach might facilitate more effectively than other approaches, the creation of simple, feasible, limited data, low power, localized responses to needs and desires within a particular context.

In a recent scoping session in Berlin, working with Jayne Wallace and Jon Rogers, we worked to map some of the characteristics of craft to an approach to IoT development:

A CRAFT mini- MANIFESTO FOR IoT

(is there dogmatism in design)

This is what we think is distinct about something that we call a 'crafty' way of working....

Our intention is to take people from a set of principles to a set of actions.

- a. Activities are about nurturing human values, communities and welfare. It is an antidote to 'disruption'.
- b. Applications are recognised through extended engagement. It is time consuming with a focus on considering flexibility over agility and being fit (for purpose) instead of being rapid/quick.
- c. Responsive to a situation rather than problem solving orientated. It is responsive not interventionist.
- d. Involves dialogue with the materials of a situation (incl. people, data, physical stuff). It is about finding a shared working approach between people, objects and their data.
- e. Recognises the complexity of situations (messiness), but aspires to beautiful (tidy?) responses.
- f. Uses enchantment as an experience and beauty as an emotional tool.
- g. Care and care transmitted through the objects, the way they are made and then used. -> the proposition that things can transmit the care that has been given to their creation.
- h. Seeks outcomes that are not reliant on large-scale industrial resources. Crafting masses of batches NOT designing for mass production.
- i. Using technology as a playground- revelling in the means not driving towards fixed and distant ends.
- j. Craft is ongoing and continuous and it understands that you live with and through things. Craft objects therefore are often not considered complete and finalised at the point of delivery/sales/transaction, but it 'acknowledges that in living with and (importantly) through things we not only adjust them, but mould them around ourselves'.
- k. Craft takes a 'bottom-up' approach by default. (whereas design may strive to do so, in an inclusive design approach) .
- l. Meaning is sought over novelty
- m. Finding the resources that are at hand takes precedence over notions of 'perfection'
- n. Mending is important.

Fixing and practical approach is at one end, enchantment at the other, it is all human. Mired in the mess. Things move beyond function and novelty towards enchantment. Meaningful NOT novel.

We recognise that this is an oversimplification and that craft and contemporary design (its ever-expanding remit, spheres of influence and methods) share many of their characteristics and should not be set against each other in binary opposition. However, the relative importance of these characteristics, and the configurations in which they are actioned, is distinct. Craft draws particular ways of knowing and acting together and holds them dear.

The human-centred (humane), localised (vernacular) and often idiosyncratic ways in which craft approaches and engages with the world makes it both a challenging and interesting way to think and act within the theme of decentralisation and IoT.