

Participatory Design and Cultural Probes: a Teaching & Learning experience

By Daria Loi, RMIT University, Melbourne

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This talk will focus on the approach I adopt when teaching Participatory Design methods and tools (including Cultural Probes) to Industrial Design undergraduate students at RMIT University (Melbourne, Australia).

From a pedagogical perspective I am oriented towards constructivist principles. I indeed believe that learners have a key role in learning processes and that they should learn through experience and by reflecting on experiences.

Consequently, my teaching method looks at ways to enable students in developing their own participatory approaches to design.

I will demonstrate my method and related challenges via a case study: a project involving two visually impaired users which was undertaken in 2003 by 5 second year students. The project will be illustrated via a DVD the students prepared for their final presentation.

My hope is that the DVD will act as a stimulus to trigger a series of questions around the notion of PD (generally) and of PD in learning environments (particularly). I consequently ask the audience to actively engage in participatory practice during the presentation, asking questions, offering alternatives, challenging ideas and opening new possibilities.

Structure of presentation:

Introduction: my context (approx 15 min)

Overview of pedagogical underpinnings (approx 10 min)

Overview of teaching method (approx 20 min)

What was happening in parallel: D/R/C (approx 20 min)

Break – 10 min

Contextualization of experience: the brief (approx 15 min)

Challenges (approx 15 min)

'live like I do' – DVD (approx 20 min)

Debriefing and discussion

Daria Loi (BArch Hons Politecnico di Milano; current: PhD RMIT) worked as architect/designer (1994-97) and researcher (1994-96) in Italy. She joined RMIT University in 1999, lecturing in design theory, history and methodology. Between 2000 and 2003 she coordinated the ID/RMIT Design Studies Stream and now is the ID International Coordinator.

Her practice revolves around: Inter-disciplinary research methods; Design of collaborative work environments; Constructivist learning/teaching; Participatory Design; Product-Service Systems; Management Consulting.

For further details, including a series of downloadable publications, please refer to her website: <http://users.tce.rmit.edu.au/daria.loi>

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