# Transdisciplinary **Education &** Life-centred Design

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Transdisciplinary School University of Technology Sydney 5th Global Citizenship Education Symposium

> UTS ‰∔

**TD School** 















# **MULTI** disciplinary

Refers to the obtaining of information from two or more disciplines, without either being altered by this interaction.

# **CROSS** disciplinary

Is when aspects of one discipline are imposed on another discipline. Such as design thinking being applied to business, which might alter business but not alter design.

# **INTER** disciplinary

Is where several sub disciplines within a broader disciplinary field co-operate, but with no permanent change to any of them.

# **TRANS** disciplinary

Is a holistic approach. It's not just about joining up of individual outcomes or the interaction between disciplines, but integrating these interactions into a new system of thinking which transcends the disciplines forming an entirely new framework of understanding.



## Why TD Open Complex Have no boundaries Have many elements and relationships Networked Across organisations Dynamic and stakeholders Are constantly changing



# Why TD



The major challenges of our age won't be solved within the boundaries of single disciplines.

Wicked problems will require new ways of thinking and collaboration to create new and novel conceptual, theoretical, methodological and translational innovations that integrate and move beyond traditional discipline-specific approaches.



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# TD programs @ UTS

Bachelor of Creative Intelligence & Innovation (BCII)

Diploma in Innovation (Diplnn)

Master of Data Science & Innovation (MDSI)

Master of Creative Intelligence & Strategic Innovation (CISI)





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# WHAT IS



# **TD Electives**

Building capacity to respond to complex problems and learn for a lifetime Subjects:

- TD: Technologies reimagined in a complex world
- TD: Shaping technologies that shape us
- TD: Reframing, remixing, reimagining society
- TD: Sustainability in an interconnected world
- TD: Envisioning futures worth wanting
- TD: Change-making for social impact
- TD: Pathways to societal transitions
- TD: Shaping better futures

External partners:

Australian Red Cross, City of Sydney, Regen Studios, Stockland



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# **TD graduate attributes**

Holistic analysis

Transformative creativity

Action orientation and TD experimentation

Contextual and self-awareness

**Indigenous graduate attribute** UTS graduates will have knowledge of Indigenous Australian contexts to inform their capability to work effectively for and with Indigenous Australians within their profession









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## Innovation



## **Human-centred**

# **•** ... the world is working exactly as designed. And it's not working very well. Which means We need to do a better job of designing it.

*—Mike Monteiro* 







## **Human-centred**

Life-centred



Source: Kirsten Moegerlein's PhD thesis 'Designing in Transition: Towards Intimacy in Ecological Uncertainty' (via Kimberley Crofts on Twitter)



## **Human-centred**

Life-centred





Terreform ONE, New York



From human-centred to life-centred design: Considering environmental and ethical concerns in the design of interactive products

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#### ARTICLE INFO

#### ABSTRACT

Keywords: Digital technology Interaction design Interactive products Life-centred design More-than-human Responsible innovation

Over the past decades, the field of interaction design has shaped how people interact with digital technology, both through research and practice. Interaction designers adopted human-centred design to ensure that the interactive products they design meet the needs and desires of end consumers. However, there is surmounting evidence that placing the end consumer at the centre of the design process creates unintended consequences, damaging global systems that are essential to human well-being. This article reviews emerging paradigms that provide a more holistic perspective, such as value-sensitive design, more-than-human participation and lifecentred design. Based on this review, the article introduces a practical framework for life-centred design consisting of principles, actionable methods and a model for responsible innovation. The article discusses how interaction designers can use the framework to balance human-centred considerations with environmental and ethical concerns when designing interactive products.

#### 1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the industrial revolution, technology has significantly transformed the relationship between people and the goals and the design of the tasks needed to achieve them (Kolko, 2011; Saffer, 2010). The success of design solutions was "judged based on the relevance to the individual who ultimately must use the creation" (Kolko, 2011).

To the meet formance the intervention design community has been to



Borthwick, M., Tomitsch, M., Gaughwin, M. (2022). From human-centred to life-centred design: Considering environmental and ethical concerns in the design of interactive products, Journal of Responsible Technology, vol. 10, Elsevier.





# Non-human

# Personas

# Giving a voice to living things and ecosystems

#### ACADEMIC RESOURCES:

DiSalvo, C., & Lukens, J. (2012). Nonanthropocentrism and the Nonhuman in Design: Possibilities for Designing New Forms of Engagement with and through Technology. In M. Foth, L. Forlano, C. Satchell, & M. Gibbs (Eds) From Social Butterfly to Engaged Citizen (pp:421-435). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Frawley, J. K, & Dyson, L. E. (2014). Animal personas: acknowledging non-human stakeholders in designing for sustainable food systems. In Proceedings of the 26th Australian Computer-Human Interaction Conference on Designing Futures: the Future of Design (pp. 21-30).

Mancini, C. (2011). Animal-Computer Interaction (ACI): a manifesto. Interactions, 18(4), pp. 69-73. When designing products, services and systems, we tend to turn to methods that put humans at the centre of our design process. This is important to ensure that our design interventions address the needs of the end users, customers and other stakeholders. However, there is an increasing awareness that focusing solely on human needs and values may be detrimental to the planet and humanity's continued existence. Non-human personas address this limitation of human-centred methods, by adapting the personas (p.122) method to give non-human stakeholders a voice in the design process.

Non-human stakeholders that should be considered in a design process may incorporate representatives from flora, fauna and habitats. Whether at home with companion animals or at work in services such as disability support, law enforcement, customs or special forces, human life has always been entangled with the lives of other species and nature. Sectors such as agriculture, veterinary science and conservation are particularly focused on this. But even outside these spheres, our own habitat of cities intersects with a complex wider ecology of land, soil, water systems, plants, insects and animals.

Like personas, non-human personas are based on research data - collected from secondary sources, such as contextual observations (p.50) or interviews (p.92) with experts. Just like conventional personas. non-human personas represent the character, attributes and needs of others within all stages of the design process. They expose and challenge assumptions and provide a means for the design team to represent or speak on behalf of another species or biosystem. Evaluating designs from alternate perspectives may reveal both symbiosis and conflict (e.g. prey/ predator, farmer/farmed). Even if conflict is not resolvable, these insights can feed into each stage of the design process and ideally lead to a more environmentally considerate solution.

## EXERCISE

YOU WILL NEED Pen, paper, 3-4 people, sticky notes, internet access

ternet

In this exercise, you will create and use non-human personas to critique existing designs. Focus on your own design problem, or follow the 'Environmentally Resilient Communities' brief (p.205) and use the photo resources from the companion website.

Identify flora, fauna and habitats potentially impacted within your design problem area. If the scope is too large, narrow it down to a single context and/or a limited number of species of interest. *E.g. an urban farm with butterflies, chickens, possum and crops* [30 minutes]

Write a set of non-human personas using the provided template (on the companion website), by following steps 2-5 of the personas method (p.122). Undertake interviews (p.92) with owners or experts to generate a data pool for these personas, or use trustworthy internet sources. The persona should be as specific as possible. E.g. an ISA Brown chicken in a flock kept in the backyard of a suburban home E.g. a recently-hatched monarch butterfly Alternatively, use the non-human personas from the companion website. [30 minutes]

**Speak on behalf of your chosen species.** Members of the design team introduce their non-human persona/s as they would a person.

E.g. this is Betsy, she is an ISA Brown chicken who lives in an urban backyard. After each introduction, other team members make notes on sticky notes about the needs of that non-human persona as relevant to the design project.

[10 minutes]

4 **Each team member silently reviews** the design concepts from the perspective of their chosen persona/s and adds comments using a different coloured sticky note (one colour per persona). Critique is written in the first person. If you don't have your own design concepts, use the photo resources from the companion website.

E.g. the team member representing the possum might write 'I am nocturnal, the lights on this farm will disrupt how I live.'

[10 minutes per design concept]

Review and discuss your findings as a team. What problems or conflicts has this activity unearthed? Look for sticky notes where the needs of different personas contradict one another or are in conflict with the intention behind the design.

[10 minutes]

**Brainstorm ideas** that help address the needs of the different personas, focusing particularly on finding compromises for each of the conflicts. As you progress with your design process, revisit your designs and evaluate them using persona-based walkthroughs (p.120) with your nonhuman personas.

[10 minutes]





### Human Stakeholders



Emma the Office Worker

### Non-Human Stakeholders



Beans the Possum



Loraine the Lorikeet



Adrian the Proud Homeowner



Florence the Native Flora



Buzzy the Bee





In 2017, New Zealand granted legal personhood to the Whanganui River. Since then, other nations have followed suit in an effort to protect the environment.

Story continues below

Interaction Design and Architecture(s) Journal - IxD&A, N.50, 2021, pp. 102 - 130

### Non-human Personas: Including Nature in the Participatory Design of Smart Cities

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Abstract. For the past decades humans have been placed at the centre of designing information and communication technologies (ICT), leading to the rise in prominence of human-centred design. The field of smart cities has equally adopted notions of citizen participation as a way to ensure that technological solutions improve people's livelihoods. However, these kinds of processes treat the urban environment as separate from nature, promoting human comfort and convenience over planetary health and wellbeing. Motivated by these growing concerns that highlight the urgency to reconsider how we define and practice participation in smart cities and in human-centred ICT solutions more broadly,

### PRINCIPLES FOR CULTIVATING A LIFE-CENTRED DESIGN MINDSET



### PURPOSE OVER PROFIT

01

Choosing purpose as a driver for decisionmaking over profit, to serve the many



### INSPIRED BY NATURE

Applying biomimicry and taking inspiration from natural systems and nature as a whole



### INTER-CONNECTED

03

08

Applying systems thinking and upholding the balance of the ecosystem



Choosing a holistic approach and regarding the entire life cycle of a product, service, or initiative



### LONG-TERM THINKING & DOING

Applying long-term thinking and aiming for sustainable and regenerative solutions



### SUFFICIENCY

Focusing on what is important and leaving out unnecessary complexity if it does not add value



### EQUAL & THRIVING

07

Aiming for services, systems, and products that are socially just and ethical throughout their whole life cycle



### **DE-CENTRING &** REIMAGINING

Questioning the status quo and current solutions, aiming to change the world to improve all life



### ACKNOWLEDGING OF ALL LIFE FORMS

Considering all peoples, species, and environments while designing products, systems, and services





# NETWORKS

# INTERVENTIONS

## PARTNERSHIPS



	NETWORKS			
TACTICS	Understanding the larger system	Identifying unintended consequences	Capturing diverse perspectives	
TOOLS	Feedback loops; systems maps	Iceberg visuals; impact ripple canvas	Actors mapping; non-human personas; participatory systems maps	
STRATEGIES	Systems thinking	Spotlighting boomerang effects	Capturing diverse perspectives	
INTERVENTIONS				
<b>TACTICS</b>	Visualising the impacts	Envisioning futures	Implementing change	

TOOLS	
STRATEGIES	

diagrams; stock and flow diagrams

Rating schemes and rankings

scenario-based thinking

Cathedral thinking; seventh generation principle; three horizons pagers; provocation prototypes; shifts; speculative prototypes

Change metrics; synthesising over cherry-picking

IACTICS

Enabling effective collaboration

PARTNERSHIPS

DLS TA

STRATEGIES TOOLS

Collective impact framework; participatory systems maps

Creative collaboration; middle-out change; understanding the DNA



Future funnel; triple layered business model canvas

Alliances

Becoming a strategic leader

Strategic mindset







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