



Telling stories: Moving beyond empathy tools to reciprocity

Giti Datt¹, Lucy Klippan¹, Helen Eason², Juanita Sherwood²
lucy.klippan@uts.edu.au

¹ UTS Design Innovation Research Centre, UTS Building 15, Level 2, 632 Harris St, Ultimo NSW 2007

² Nelly's Healing Centre, 145 Cleveland St. Darlington NSW 2008

Workshop outline

Design is neither agnostic nor neutral – it reflects a particular worldview. Our often unchallenged cultural standpoint and unquestioned subjectivities create a dominant set of assumptions. As designers we must increasingly reflect upon and recognise the cultural specificity of our disciplines (and by extension the tools and methods recommended as law). As we do so, another question arises: how do we shift our gaze and processes while utilising relational praxis that respects the importance of co-designing the design tools with our clients? That is, how do we ensure that the tools we are using are suited to the users, particularly when their cultural reference points are different to our own? This session is presented as a partnership between Nelly's Healing Centre and the UTS Design Innovation Research Centre and will draw from Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing and decolonised methodologies and worldviews. It will demonstrate a culturally safe way to value the importance of co-design and development that is required when relating to and working with others. We aim to validate the power of narratives and telling stories, based on an Indigenous framework of tools. As design moves into complex social spaces, we propose that specific tools may become less transferable, while principles of reciprocity and reflexivity become more important.

This session will use a combination of methods – possibly pre-recorded materials, video discussion, live visual recording – in which the hosts will share and reflect on their experiences and involve participants in an interactive exploration of the subject matter. We will ask participants to consider what we ask of users, and to consider what we need to be asking of ourselves.

Keywords: decolonised research methods, empathy, tools, service design, reciprocity, reflexivity, stories, narrative