



Figure 9.00: Debating the methods with a student at KISD

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH

CHAPTER NINE - CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

9.1 Conclusion to the thesis

The guiding research question¹, 'how can we (as designers) understand experience? has been partially answered by the two methods developed in the project.

Firstly, the Taxonomy of Experience (*ToE*) is a method for systematically structuring the collection and processing of qualitative field data about a particular experience or set of similar experiences. This allows a clear picture of the experience to be developed by the researcher and initial (superficial) understandings of its various values to be comprehended.

The second, the *SEEing* method, operates on the information contained in the *ToE* to delve deeper into the experience through a series of interactions designed to draw out deeper meaning at each of four stages. At a certain point physical aspects of the experience are sequestered and the most meaningful intangibles remain; these '*Superordinary elements*' are the essences of the experience. The *SEEing* process helps these essences to be seen, extracted and communicated for design purposes.

The secondary lines of inquiry mentioned in my discussion of the Research Question in Chapter Five, have also been answered. Expanding on the primary research question they asked; how to define what experience is? How can it be researched? How can it be made understandable and useful to design?

¹ The research question was discussed more fully in Chapter Five

Defining experience as an entity has been formalized to some extent by using the *ToE* to structure, the capture of data about an experience, enabling a more detailed and momentarily clear view of it to be considered.

How experience might be researched has been demonstrated throughout this paper culminating in the two methods described here. The methods presented continue to acknowledge the intangible and ephemeral nature of experience, understanding that while it might not be captured, fixed and labeled, a useful understanding can still be achieved.

Focusing the *SEEing* methods on an experience of interest makes the experience understandable and accessible to the designer. The final distillation of an experience down to its *Superordinary* essences, provides a concise representation of that experience, enabling it to be communicated to others.

The *ToE* and *SEEing* methods have shown themselves to be communicable to and learnable by others. The structure of the methods as they currently stand, were developed in such a way as to enable them to be taught to design students. This was achieved. The learning evidenced (particularly in the German trials) showed that the methods could be learned and significantly enhance design thinking. The *ToE* – *SEEing* processes are not only idea generators, but generators of ‘authentic ideas’. They have not yet been tested in commercial environments but with adjustments they may also be useful to decision makers in fields outside design where understandings of human experience would be beneficial.

The understandings generated by the application and use of the *SEEing* methods are such, that a third party, not directly involved in the original *ToE* research experience, may be presented with, consider and discuss the results, but will not have the full depth of understanding that the original researcher will have gained. A personal understanding of the language of the

experience is required to effectively take the *ToE* information into the final phase using the *SEEing* methods. Throughout the *SEEing* process, a deep and intimate understanding of the experience is also generated within the researcher/designer providing a rigorously constructed but openly subjective perspective on which to base design decisions.

Following the *SEEing* methods and applying them to carefully collected and interpreted field data, can provide deep understanding of both the mundane everyday aspects of an experience as well as a concise understanding of the *Superordinary* essences contained within the experience. Considering that both the *Superordinary* and the everyday aspects of an experience is a way of bringing more information and perspectives into the conversation which constitutes designing.

How can we (as designers) understand experience? I have answered this research question in a quite pragmatic way. Experience can be understood in a designerly way by deeply engaging with a particular experience and then using the methods developed in this research to explore the deeper layers of meaning contained within it; thereby new knowledge that was not previously available is made available to better inform the designers decisions. This then, is knowledge not only for designing but also about designing, because it also informs the way in which designing is done. I have therefore not only answered the question how to understand experience but also, importantly, how this information can be made useful in design.

9.2 Summary of contributions

Through the research project described in this thesis, a number of new ideas have been developed and partially demonstrated.

1. A useful general model for observing, documenting, framing and communicating an experience in the form of a 'Taxonomy of Experience' (*ToE*).
2. A useful systemic process (*SEEing*) for analysing experiential data, which enables distillations of the '*Superordinary*' essences of an experience to be 'seen'.
3. The *SEEing* methods applied to the *ToE* of a given experience, provide a rigorous, auditable process of handling qualitative information on which to base alternative and often divergent design decisions.
4. Prototype software process flowcharting for the *ToE* and *SEEing* methods described above that show how each stage of the research and analysis is conducted.
5. Prototype models and templates for how the *ToE* and *SEEing* methods might be pedagogically communicated to others.
6. The manner in which these methods generate a deep systemic understanding of an experience in a design researcher when used to study a specific experiential situation, makes a different type of knowledge available to the greater palette of information a designer can draw on for making design decisions.



Figure 10.00: *Shakespeare & Co's* bookstore - Paris 2004

CHAPTER TEN

REFERENCES AND APPENDICES

CHAPTER TEN – APPENDICES AND REFERENCES

Appendices list

The Appendices for this thesis are only available in digital form on the CD attached to the inside back cover of the manuscript.

This has been done due to the large number, volume and scale of some of these files (especially large Excel spreadsheets) and also due to their multimedia nature (video files).

[Hyperlinks to all appendices are included in the digital thesis version included on the CD](#)

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