

THE UNIVERSE IN A SINGLE STEP: USING PHENOMENOLOGICAL NARRATIVE AS DATA



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THE UNIVERSE IN A SINGLE STEP: USING PHENOMENOLOGICAL NARRATIVE AS DATA

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ABSTRACT

This paper is drawn from my current doctoral study of personal transport vehicle design. It investigates the role phenomenology can play as a methodological framework for understanding individual lived experiences. A lack of this understanding has featured significantly in the failure of recent attempts to innovate in the transport field. I propose, that an important key ingredient in these many failures, might be the inability to understand the true nature of the experience resulting from the designs and that if they can be captured, illustrated and made understandable, these experiences might assist design.

In this paper I discuss the use of phenomenological narrative in the interpretive understanding of lived experience and its contribution to the hermeneutic analysis of field data.

The field research considered ten current vehicle designs from multiple perspectives. The vehicle designers experience of practice, the 'lived experience' of their users and the immersive, participatory experiences of the researcher in the field. The paper presents examples of phenomenological descriptions of these experiential events interweaving layers of sensorial, affective and cognitive elements, with and within, an existential contextualization. The resulting rich text narratives, developed out of the primary data were analysed hermeneutically using NVivo software. It is the relationship between the narrative text data and the hermeneutic conversation that takes place with this data that is discussed and presented.

This case study proposes that phenomenological narrative is a valuable source of qualitative data and it can provide an acceptable facsimile of the lived experience when focused on a design question. Methods such as this, which help to understand the

essence of the socio-technical, interactive experience, have direct implications for design research and design practice in many forms.

[Keywords: hermeneutic phenomenology, descriptive narrative, interpretive data analysis

PROLOGUE

"A journey of a thousand miles, begins with a single step"

(Lau 1986)

One morning not long ago, I decided on the spur of the moment, to walk with my wife to her place of work in the city. On the way we squabbled over something unimportant and I was upset with her when we arrived outside her office. I said goodbye, kissed her brusky on the cheek, and turned to walk away. In that instant, the moment froze like a snapshot in my mind. I tried to imagine in that instant all of the things that were happening around us, to us, between us and within us. I imagined the world around us frozen like a three dimensional photograph, with me caught in the middle of my next step. I asked myself, 'how could I *know* all that was going on in and around me in this frozen moment'. The concept grew larger and larger the more I considered it. We were in a busy city street in the heart of Sydney. How could I even begin to understand all that was happening to the people around me, their attitude and appearance, the buildings around me, why they were there, what was my relationship to them, their own meaning in this place, why I was there at this time, the weather, the clothes I wore, how I felt about the world and about myself at that moment, why I was thinking about this at all, and so it went on. The possibilities expanded faster than I could grasp the richness of what was taking place.

This level of complexity is, of course, common to every human being, at every moment of the day, but I now realise I have grown so accustomed to it that I am no longer aware of it. Much of what takes place around me has become so much 'white noise'. And because I am not really conscious of it happening, it has ceased to have any impact on me. But has it? My 'frozen moment' thoughts were no idle daydream. The reason this moment appeared so poignant and caught my attention, was because for some months, I had been working with my field research data trying to describe moments such as these. Fragments of 'lived experience', rich in material and spiritual content, are often dismissed as outwardly mundane and seemingly banal events. In this paper I will examine ways phenomenological narrative can be useful as a design research tool to better connect with the everyday lived experiences that make up our life world.

INTRODUCTION

My aim is to share some sense of the journey of discovery I have had, from capturing 'lived experiences' in the field, through the slow processes of transcription and narrative writing, to its exploratory interpretation and analysis. I will discuss the richness that can be found in narratives of everyday events and what makes them such a rich source of material for designers wanting to understand the life world of those for whom they wish to design. I will begin by briefly outlining some fundamental aspects of Phenomenology and how they fit into my current study of personal transport and mobility vehicle design. Drawing on examples from this study, I will describe the techniques I have used to prepare and write phenomenological narratives. Careful preparation is essential for the narrative to become usable data and impacts directly on subsequent data analysis, theme development, and the discovery of meta-themes. Used as a milestone, meta-themes enable the researcher to formulate conclusions that are not an endpoint but crossroads from where new journeys begin.

PHENOMENOLOGY AND 'LIVED EXPERIENCE'

Phenomenology is the study of everyday moments similar to the one described at the beginning of this paper. On the morning that I had walked with my wife and turned to walk away, I was a participant in what Max Van Manen calls a phenomenological 'lived experience'

"Phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe ... the internal meaning structures, of lived experience. (van Manen 1997), p10

Lived experiences range from mundane minutiae of everyday life to exotic and special events. In my case, I was investigating the lived experiences of people who drive certain small vehicles that are only accessible in Western Europe.

The methodology applied in my field research is a human science approach, using hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutics as a research methodology is rooted in traditional studies of ancient texts such as the bible. It is a centuries old methodology adopted by modern researchers who are adapting and using its guiding principles of textual interpretation, in exciting new ways. In this instance the texts I have interpreted hermeneutically are video interview transcripts, rich narrative descriptions from observational / contextual video, photographs and audio tapes.

Modern approaches to hermeneutic phenomenology suggest that lived experience can be better understood by synthesizing the collaboration between researcher and researched, particularly in interview events.(van Manen 1997; Willis nd) A merging of participants experiences with the researchers, leads to a synthesis of experiences that are co-constituted in the interview. Through the hermeneutic process it is possible to also add layers of richness to the narrative after the event, by including contextual aspects (including existential aspects), as well as sensorial, affective and cognitive features.

The deeper layers of experience while not necessarily explicit in interviews and contextual studies can be brought to life during transcription and analysis. Later interaction with material recorded in the field, can provide significant amounts of additional,

meaningful material once it is recalled and included in the narrative texts. This non-finite, multi-layering technique defines my approach to 'rich narrative'. Later in this paper I will provide examples of some of the ways I was able to achieve this.

PHENOMENOLOGY IN TRANSPORT RESEARCH



Figure 1: Vehicles in the research

In 2004 I traveled to Europe to conduct field research into the experience of designing and using road vehicles of a special type, not generally available in other parts of the world, including Australia (Fig.1). These vehicles are known by various trade names such as *Groomy*, *Adiva*, *Twike*, *Scoop*, *Life Jet* etc. They are quite rare in transport terms and their owner/drivers are defined by their enthusiastic adoption of mobility choices that are not 'normal' automobile or public transport options. Characteristically they are smaller than small cars, have two or three wheels, carry 1-2 passengers, and feature lower power / speed outputs by normal automobile standards.

Research aims and goals

My aim was to develop a deeper understanding of the psychological and physiological aspects of the experience these people had in their everyday interactions (their 'lived experiences') with the small vehicles they have chosen. In the design world it is increasingly argued that understandings of this nature are a missing ingredient in the design of many modern artefacts including transport vehicles (Battarbee 2005; Forlizzi 2004; Norman 2004). Most products are designed within a particular design frame or set of intentions, when people use these products however, subtle emotional and physical interactions take

place that are seldom fully pre-understood by the designer. This lack of understanding often leads to consumers adapting the product to suit their needs or even adapting themselves to the product, thus using it in ways it was never intended. Often, these undesirable and unintended outcomes are useful as signposts for change in user centered design approaches. But if designers knew more about the lived experience of use *before* they designed, could they follow alternate design paths?

The dual goals of this research were firstly to uncover methods that could provide a better understanding of this phenomenon. Secondly, in order to validate these methods, to develop ways this understanding could be made available or accessible to vehicle designers. A lack of just this kind of understanding has featured significantly in the failure of many recent attempts to innovate in this field (BMW *CI*, Ford *Th!nk*, Renault *Ublo*, Daimler-Chrysler *Carving 400* and others). I am proposing that an important key ingredient in these many failures might be the inability to understand the true nature of the experience resulting from the designs and that if they can be captured, illustrated and made understandable, these experiences might assist design.

Research design

The field research was a qualitative program designed to consider a number of perspectives. The designers experience of practice, the 'lived experience' of the vehicle users and the lived experience of the researcher. Phenomenology not only recognizes the value of the researcher as a useful instrument, but encourages the inclusion of the researchers own experiences in the process of co-creating the lived experience of interviewees. The data used in this paper is drawn from the combined design/usage experiences of the three groups of participants associated with these vehicles. In order to obtain material for the project, interviews, close observations, immersive participant observation and contextual studies were conducted with the researcher, five users and nine designers. The vehicles of interest to the study were developed in the last ten years and/or currently in use. The types of media devices used to capture these experiences included static interview video, live action video using a helmet camera, video and audio taped contextual material, still photographs and notes. Blending this material added to the richness and diversity (read randomness) of data from which interpretations could be drawn.

WORKING WITH NARRATIVE DATA

Hermeneutic phenomenological approaches require careful 'listening' to the data to enable interpretive 'hearing' to take place. For this to happen, the field research material firstly needs to be transformed in a way that will give it a textual 'voice'. This is done by converting the various media into a common textual form. In this case, I have used descriptive narrative.

The narrative form enables a conversation to take place with the text, allowing questions to be asked such as, what is the text speaking about? What is it saying about this topic? What are the underlying meaning(s) of what is being said? For a healthy conversation to take place between two people, each of the parties must be informed about the topic. In a conversation with rich narrative this consists on one hand, of data that is richly constituted, that is, it contains enough content richness and diversity to provide one side of a robust conversation. On the other hand the researcher must be capable and skilled enough to know how to listen and question the text. This can mean making explicit, the researchers Forstructures¹ (a pre-requisite for hermeneutic interpretive analysis) and/or simply holding back from prescriptively interpreting its meaning, allowing the text to speak for itself (Geanellos 1998).

Most of my primary data was drawn from interviews and various types of observation material. The interviews were transcribed in the normal way (typing from audio-visual tape) but as much of the observational material was non-verbal, it needed a more descriptive, narrative form to bring it to life. In the following section I briefly discuss some aspects of the interview based transcription process which provided interesting and informative lessons. I then describe in greater detail, a number of different types of narrative that were drawn from the observational material and the unexpected richness they delivered. My intention in the

¹ Forestructures are comprised of, Forehaving, Foresight and Forconception. These may include respectively, background practices from the researcher's life world, the researcher's personal perspectives and their expectations of what might be found in an interpretation of the data.

following three sections of the paper is to show specific ways that extra data can be drawn from the research material, allowing additional richness to be developed in the experiential narratives.

Adding richness to interview transcriptions / narratives

Each interview was transcribed literally, which included pauses, uttered sounds, and gestures. Transcribing verbal dialogue in a phonetic form, meant that most of the sounds and mannerisms of speech were typed as the participants had used them, particularly those (and these were the majority) with a strong accent. I also made note (see example) of the gestures and sounds participants used, in order to emphasise certain points and even in some cases where they used gesture or sounds instead of verbal language. While other techniques are available for interpretation of facial expressions (Richins 1997; Tomkins 1963), in my interview narratives I have chosen to fully describe the participants expressions in order to be able to draw out additional layers of hermeneutic meaning in analysis. Texturally describing non-verbal language subsequently makes allowance for a deeper questioning of the text and subtexts using the video to bring it back to consciousness.

In this interview sample, the speaker has a reasonably good command of English but communicates with a prolific use of gestures and expressive sounds.

KA: also very interesting... Piaggio ...or the other companies... saw the concept..say...(KA:, purses lips, sucks air in noisily with a dramatic look of concern).. too much problems for the company.. for themselvesall the protectors.. all the crash moments... all the... (push pull gesture with arms and closed fists) the level is very high...make only quick ...scooter ..cheap...lot of...(makes various gestures with hands and face indicating a big difference between the others products and his)

The narrative in the above example describes a non-verbal expression "purses lips, sucks air in noisily". In analysis this was interpreted as an indication of the participant's level of concern and derisive dismissal of competitor's attitudes to design safety.

Further analysis allowed interpretations of other gestures and sounds with meanings like, reasons *why they don't succeed*, the importance of *keeping it simple*, views about *competitors*, influence of *corporate politics* and types of *design restrictions*.

Not all video material was recorded in the static interview style illustrated above. Many recordings involved dialogue and observation while in vehicles that either I or the owner were driving. These interview /observations / participation experiences produced quite a different set of demands which led to interesting and unexpected interpretations of the phenomenological narrative.

Enriching observation narratives

Some experiential events in the field, contained verbal exchanges while others did not, but all were treated as if they were a narrative snapshot of the experience. A snapshot allows us to freeze a facsimile of a moment in time and study it more closely.

The situation depicted below provided an unusual snapshot with unexpected results. The narrative comes from a section of tape where I had inadvertently knocked the 'night vision' button on, which made the video vision appear 'overexposed'. I didn't realize until much later when it was too late to re-shoot the video that the vision was 'flared out' to the point that very little could be clearly seen beyond a one metre radius. On this occasion I had intended to interview the owner/driver while he was driving and also to record the experience of driving the vehicle myself. After watching the tape and realizing my mistake, I almost discarded the video. At first I thought it was useless material, but decided to take a closer look at it to see if it might contain something worth salvaging.

Even though the visual quality was terrible, I made an attempt to transcribe the experience to see what could be gleaned from the tape. I was very surprised by the depth of alternate sensorial, emotional, and cognitive content that it was possible to 'revive' by viewing the videotape and turning the verbal and non verbal clues into narrative. The richness in this phenomenon recalls the McLuhan concept of 'sense ratios', and the way in which our senses are always at 100%. That is, if one is diminished the others are enhanced to compensate, so that we always operate at 100%. (McLuhan 1994) A lack of visibility on the day (it was raining and foggy) and the poor video quality, in this instance seemed to effect

a compensation in both the lived experience and in the re-lived experience, seemingly enhancing my sensitivity to the remaining senses of sound and touch. The event was almost as intense in the reliving, as in the experience itself.

That is why the resulting narrative is richer than many other events without this intensification of senses and resulting emotions. In the following video excerpt, I have just taken over the controls of a small (two person) electric vehicle (Twike) and am about to take off. The owner/passenger and I had moments before, pulled over beside a two-lane, (one lane each way) tarred, inter-city, side road in Germany. It was a cold wet and very windy day in October and I have never driven on a road in Europe before.

IC: I press the trigger and we start to move, I cautiously turn the stick to the left and enter the roadway. I am very conscious that I am now driving for the first time ever, on the right hand side of the road. I am unexpectedly and surprisingly nervous. The car feels very unfamiliar, I am tightly holding onto the hand-break with my left hand and strongly gripping the control stick with my right. I feel very strange to be steering a vehicle in this way i.e. without a wheel, arms in two different directions. I feel a little exposed. I also feel vulnerable, acutely aware that we are a much smaller vehicle than the ones which all of a sudden seem to be thundering past us with a threatening whoooosh on the wet road outside our seemingly flimsy little cocoon. The Twike suddenly seems quite fragile and like driving in an egg shell. There is poor visibility, it is windy and we are on a country road with a single lane each way. Traffic is passing us, that is much bigger and traveling much faster.

In this excerpt from the narrative, the following experiential elements are interwoven with existential / contextual components:

Experiential elements

- Sensory components (whooosh, poor visibility)
- Affective (cautious, nervous)
- Cognitive (conscious that I am now driving)

Existential elements

- Spatiality (driving in an egg shell)
- Temporality (this time of the day)

- Corporeality (arms in two different directions)
- Relation to others (a line of cars build up behind us).

By watching the tape and re-living these moments I was able to more deeply recall aspects of the experience I was not particularly conscious of, at the time. Aspects of the experience (experiential and existential) are ‘tuned into’ in sequence bringing them forward to consciousness so that they can be interwoven with the dialogue and other event instances which make up the complete event. Capturing these elements of the experience allows you to build up deeper, richer layers in the re-lived experiential narrative. I have represented this approach to enriching experiential narrative, in the experiential framework described in Figure 2.

Van Manen offers a number of suggestions for a “lived experience description” which also support this approach.

- Describe the experience as it is lived without reasoning why
- Describe the experiences from the inside, the feelings, mood, emotions.
- Focus on a particular example of the incident or experience and describe it
- Focus on an example that stands out for its vividness or as it was the first time
- Attend to how the body feels, smells, sounds etc.
- Avoid trying to beautify the account with flowery language or terminology

(van Manen 1997), p.64).

I found that using a descriptive framework in this way was also useful when trying to write narratives describing ‘contextual’ experiential events.

Enriching context narratives

The nature and quality of ‘contextual’ material can vary enormously according to the subject, location, event etc., but essentially in my research I set out to capture aspects of the ‘environment of use’ experienced by drivers of the vehicles in the study. Using video, photographs and audio tape I looked for locations / situations which epitomised the driving experience or reflected some specific aspect of the life-world of the participants.

I recorded material that had something to say about the driving experience or the context of the driving life world, and transferred it into narrative language. Realising that the phenomenological interpretation of these contexts is highly subjective, I again applied the framework of experiential interpretation described earlier.

The diagram below (Fig. 2) is a representation of this framework, showing the way experiential events are constituted in overlapping Sensory, Affective and Cognitive aspects of the event, all occurring within and mediated by, the existential / contextual framework.

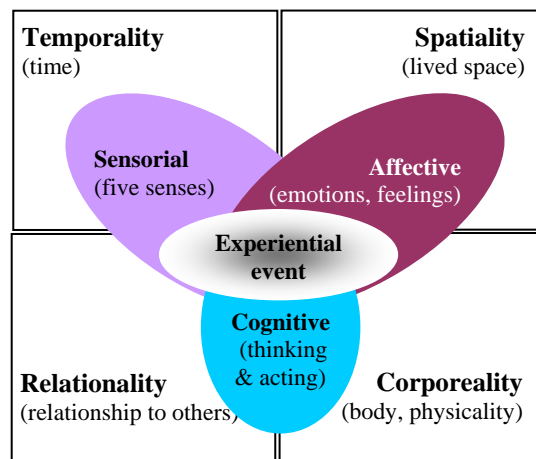


Figure 2: – Model of Experiential Framework

In writing descriptive narratives of events, I continually returned to this experiential framework and reflected on Van Manens ‘suggestions for a lived experience description’ enabling richer interpretations to be drawn out of the experiences. The following scene from one of the contextual videos is an example of this process. It describes an experience in early morning, peak hour traffic in Florence. This city has the highest number of scooters² per capita of any city in Europe and one of the most congested inner-city traffic environments. The following scene describes the seemingly simple exercise of entering, riding around and exiting from a traffic roundabout.

I invite the reader to be aware of the pace of the description, the changing tempo and urgency, the rising and ebbing levels of

² Motor scooters represent the lowest technological level of vehicles involved in the study

tension, and the emotional language. While the narrative may appear colourful it is not as Van Manen calls it, 'flowery language' (van Manen 1997), p.64)

IC: I am confronted with luxury cars a number of loaded trucks, large motorcycles, scooters, small cars and buses. The traffic starts to move forward with smaller vehicles bobbing and weaving around the larger ones patiently inching forward, and all positioning themselves to move forward into the changing gaps and breaks in the traffic flow. I see gaps opening and closing quickly and realise that within the next 50 metres, I need to get from the inside lane to the outside lane across the six lanes. I have to be very bold and dive into every gap however small. The scooter is only lightly powered (125cc) but is small and nimble. I have the feeling that I don't really know what I'm doing but must push on boldly as this is what is expected in this environment. There is no place here for the weak or timid. There is no giving way or rules of the road, it is simply accepted that if you can go, you do. I dart into and through seemingly impossibly small gaps and navigate around motorcycles and scooters who are like me but crossing the lanes in the opposite direction. The scene is of a chaotic mess of traffic but not one horn, nor one angry shout is thrown. It seems amazing but all of a sudden I am where I wanted to be, leaving the roundabout, heading in the other direction and the traffic is flowing calmly again. I have a slightly dazed feeling of... what just happened?

The type of narrative developed to describe this last event, is still written within the experiential / existential framework shown in the diagram above, however there is a significantly different level of intensity and passion in the moment which needs to be brought out. It was a highly stressful and exciting event requiring language that is as emotional, fast paced, and dramatic as the real time event. This type of narrative far from being fictional is anchored in the event and provides highly emotive and richly sensorial text.

Snapshots of an event, form descriptive passages which if well constructed and written with empathy will provide the rich text needed for analysis. Again the video material was used to bring the

moment back to life in order to provide a realistic basis needed for accurately capturing the experience in narrative form. Willis, when he defines a phenomenon as 'what manifests itself in experience', suggests that a person upon reflection "may become aware of many dimensions of an experience that were manifested but somewhat not attuned to at the time or at least not foregrounded in awareness"(Willis nd), p.9)

Using a framework (Fig. 2) to add layers of meaning to the text, is not about creating material that was not there in the original event, but it is about constructing a richer and more accurate interpretation of what took place. After all, a principle goal of the field research was to provide data for analysis, out of which, better understandings of experience could be developed. The value of capturing rich experiential narrative in this form is the way it subsequently provides richer data for analysis. How rich narrative is turned into rich data, will be discussed in the following section.

The concept of (re)turning narrative into data

This paper deals principally with using phenomenological narrative as data and in the last section I related two examples of how narratives can be enriched by using an experiential framework. In this section I will only lightly touch on the initial stages of turning these narratives into data for analysis. This is a complex process which I cannot fully describe at this time; however I will discuss the contribution that enriching the written narrative makes by improving quality in data analysis.

Marshall McLuhan could have been speaking about the complexity and richness that textual narrative offers as a data source when he said

"words are a kind of information retrieval that can range over the total environment and experience at high speed. Words are complex systems of metaphors and symbols that translate experience into our uttered or 'outered' senses. They are a technology of explicitness. By means of translation of immediate sense experience into vocal symbols the entire world can be evoked and retrieved at any instant" (McLuhan 1994) .p85

The words generated in rich narratives are keys (metaphors and symbols) to other meanings contained in the text, which must be unlocked through a process of interpretation. The hermeneutic interpretive process applied to phenomenological narrative is a conversation with the text. It requires the researcher to continually turn to the text and question it. The text in turn supplies answers (data) which the researcher further questions. This is the process of 'theme' building or 'coding'. In my project I used NVivo qualitative data analysis software to help me to stage this conversation and capture the system of codes (conversation topics) that came out of it. NVivo is a complex relational database tool which enables rich texts to be input, detailed interrogations to take place, and textual relationships to be explored.

At this point, it is timely to emphasise, that as the coding themes develop, they must be derived out of, and be constituted by, the text. They cannot be driven by the assumptions or preferences of the researcher. It is easy for previous understandings and bias (Described as Forstructures in (Geanellos 1998) to exert pressure, dominate the conversation and push it in predetermined directions. For a natural conversation with the text to develop, the researcher must restrain his enthusiasm, let the text speak for itself and most importantly from the narrative perspective, the text must have something to say. This again reinforces the importance of providing narrative texts with all the richness possible in the first instance. If the narrative textual depth is shallow when written, it will have little to say in the final analysis.

In the following section I will show examples of how data has been drawn from the narratives through an iterative process of interpretation and theme generation. This process of hermeneutic thematisation of the text from fragments (of text), into sub-themes (codes/nodes) and meta-themes (tree nodes), ultimately exposes the phenomenological essence of the experience. While it is understood that this is the substantive goal of phenomenological research, it is worth reiterating, that the success of the project fundamentally depends on quality narratives at the beginning of the process to ensure that useful data is generated at the end.

The process of turning narrative into data

Researchers have commonly identified four separate stages in the analysis of phenomenological narrative. At each of these stages the data is questioned at a deeper hermeneutic level, for 'coding' purposes. Codes represent groups of data that have been sorted into sub-themes, themes and meta-themes.

(Geanellos 2005; Titchen & McIntyre 1993)

1st order constructs - Coding data fragments (statements & images); what they are saying at face value.

2nd order constructs - Sub-themes - How the codes work and what they specifically say.

3rd order constructs - Themes - How codes collectively contribute to a meta-picture

Meta-themes - Success can be measured in terms of how well the meta-themes relate to the hermeneutic question, **what question does this text answer?**

During these various stages, I was helped immeasurably by reviewing the original audio visual research material, while I coded.



Figure 3: NVivo coding window with media player open

During these code / theme development sessions, I would open a media player window and play the audiovisual and sound files on the desktop as I coded the text in NVivo. (Fig. 3)

This significantly enriched the coding as I went along. Watching and listening to the video replay, brought forward more aspects of the experience than if I had simply read the text. Replaying the event, stimulated audio and visual memory. Re-experiencing the event, brought emotions, thoughts and sensations to consciousness,

adding deeper meaning to the interpretation. In some instances interpretation of non-verbal sounds or gestures was only possible using an empathy gained through watching the video. There were passages of text where the verbal dialogue had one meaning but non-verbal reactions to the dialogue and undercurrents of social meaning were present, which were not evidenced in the text. These instances could also be coded as data by either using the text or adding text during coding. Episodes such as these are reminiscent of Van Manens thoughts on epistemological silences.

“Epistemological silence ...the kind of silence we are confronted with when we face the unspeakable. We may have knowledge on one level and yet this knowledge is not available to our linguistic competency.” (van Manen 1997), p114

The quality (competency) of the narrative writing while it is important, can only ever attempt to provide an acceptable subjective account of an event and by being thorough in my description I could partially ameliorate the intrinsic shortcomings of subjectivity. But in hermeneutic phenomenology, the terms used in a narrative are not as important as the meaning which they contain. For example, a number of text fragments from my documents had been initially interpreted and coded to a node called ‘makes me feel bad’. In a subsequent conversation with these text fragments it was discovered that they also spoke about events (causes) which triggered responses from the users (effects) and/or emotions (affects).

Another node initially labeled ‘comparisons to cars’ when questioned again, spoke about aspects of safety, the owners identity in relation to the vehicle and also the vehicles identity in a new mobility niche.

In this type of progressive conversation with the text, questions are asked such as, what is really being said here? Is the text referring to sensory, affective, cognitive or contextual aspects of the experience? are there cause / effect considerations? Who or what is talking and does it influence what is being said or meant? This questioning process helps to make visible, different ideas in the text and to tease out multiple meanings in the same text. These layers of meaning were often enhanced by my (the researcher)

active participation in the event being described, subsequently allowing deeper understanding and interpretation of the layers of meaning.

CONCLUSION

My case study proposes that phenomenological narrative is a valuable source of qualitative data and it can provide an acceptable facsimile of the lived experience when focused on a design question. If a phenomenological narrative is gathered intelligently, written carefully and analysed with an open mind, it can form the basis for ongoing conversations which continue to increase in richness and value even while they are being analysed. There is no point at which the text stops communicating with the researcher, so it will continue to be a vital, ongoing resource for as long as the researcher chooses to communicate with it. However in order to complete the hermeneutic cycle and make the conversation accessible to and usable by other designers, it must be packaged in a form that encourages its use in practice.

Designers in practice often rely on tacit knowledge (a one way conversation) (Downton 2003) as their most convenient design resource. New research methods such as phenomenological narrative can enable designers to begin and maintain conversations with the life world that can open gateways to other universes of design possibilities.

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