

ProtoPolicy Design Report

Using Design Fiction to
Negotiate Political Questions



Andrew Darby, Anna Whicher, Emmanuel Tseklevs & Naomi Turner



Activity Locations



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at The Centre, Halton



Participants
Credit: Dhruv Sharma

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- = Management Team
- ♦ = Operational Team

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Participants
Credit: Dhruv Sharma

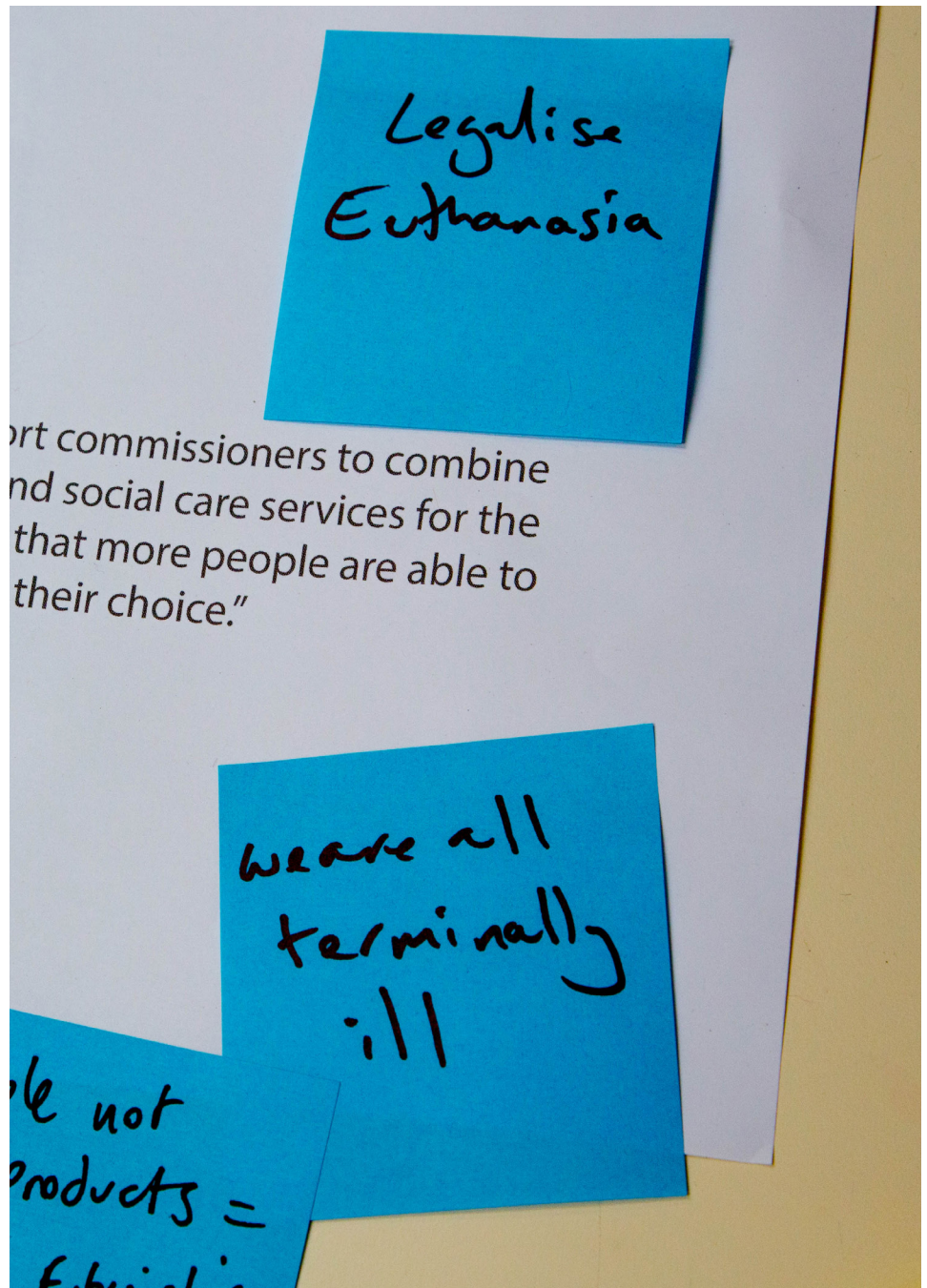
Introduction

PROTOPOLICY IS A THREE MONTH pilot project that ran from June to August 2015, which aimed to investigate how ‘design fictions’ – provocations such as texts, artefacts, images and films that conceptualise future scenarios – could be used to help politicians and community groups imagine the future implications of policy initiatives in creative ways. ProtoPolicy was part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project ProtoPublics, which aimed to support researchers and community partners to become active participants in ‘crafting new services, experiences, projects and policies that address contemporary issues’. For the purposes of this pilot, ProtoPolicy focused on issues of ageing in place (people remaining in their homes rather than moving to institutional facilities) and isolation. The research team ran a series of creative workshops with older people to respond to the ‘Ageing in Place’ policy agenda by co-creating future design fictions that envisage what a future of ‘flexible living’ – a space that has the benefits of independent living without the downsides of loneliness and vulnerability – might look like. Through this engagement, the design team created two design fictions with older people and community groups. SOULAJE is a self-administered Euthanasia Wearable. The design team created a ‘Prototype’, ‘User Guide’ and mini film. Smart Object Therapist combines occupational health with experience in technology to ensure that future smart home appliances correspond to user needs. The design team created a job description for the Smart Object Therapist, intervention report and mini film. The design fictions were shared with civil servants and MPs at an event hosted in Westminster by All-Party Parliamentary Design and Innovation Group (APDIG) as well as through telephone interviews.

...to help politicians
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ways.

The findings reveal that design fictions appear to be more readily adopted by the civil service rather than politicians because of the shorter timescales usually adopted to take political decisions. However, through additional advocacy and research, the ProtoPolicy team seek to demonstrate that design methods, particularly design fictions, could contribute to a shorter decision-making cycles through rapid problem definition, co-developing solutions with citizens, rapid prototyping and refining concepts before full-scale deployment.

at Miner's Court, Redruth



Workshop exercise
Credit: Emmanuel Tseklevs

Contextual Review

AS REMARKED BY ONE MP on the 6 July 2015, at the APDIG Speculative Design in Policy-making event in Westminster:

“Design methods, in the widest possible sense, are increasing being used by government to make public services more efficient and cost-effective, where as we all agree, resources are diminishing but need is growing. Sometimes this leads to the transformation of that service and the whole service system. More recently, design is also being adopted for policy development to foresee and predict certain technological and social trends and their implications for political decision-making.”

There are a growing number of UK central and devolved government units using design methods such as the Cabinet Office Policy Lab, the UK Trade and Investment Ideas Lab, the Government Digital Service, Scottish Government Citizen Participation Team, Scottish Government Creativity Team, Northern Ireland Innovation Team and Welsh Y Lab. Although design is increasingly being used by the civil service to examine policy and public service challenges, it is rarely adopted by parliamentarians to reposition political issues or consult with citizens. Fundamentally, there is a lack of academic evidence on how design can be used negotiate political questions. This project seeks to connect politicians to communities using design methods to generate academic evidence on the contribution of design fictions to political decision-making. Furthermore, as parts of the civil service become more and more familiar with design methods, they are delving deeper into more specialised design methods such as speculative design and design fictions.

In March 2013, the House of Lords Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change stated in a report ‘Ready for Ageing?’ that the Government and British society are “woefully underprepared” for rapidly ageing society. The report outlined key projections about ageing:

- 51% more people aged 65 and over in England in 2030 compared to

2010:

- 101% more people aged 85 and over in England in 2030 compared to 2010;
- 10.7 million people in Great Britain can currently expect inadequate retirement incomes;
- 50% more people with three or more long-term conditions in England by 2018 compared to 2008;
- 80% more people aged 65 and over with dementia (moderate or severe cognitive impairment) in England and Wales by 2030 compared to 2010¹.

Increased longevity is a sign of improved healthcare; however it also poses a number of challenges particularly around the quality of life. The committee called for the Government and all political parties to open a debate on ageing society as there is no vision or coherent strategy on how to address the challenges that will emerge in coming years in health and social care, pension

Three out of four people say they would prefer to die at home, in a familiar place with close family or friends, without pain and treated with respect.

schemes and the labour market. The Alzheimer's Society published updated edition of its key publication 'Dementia UK' in September 2014. According to this report there are about 850,000 people living with dementia in 2015 and this number is forecasted to increase to over 1 million by 2025 and 2 million by 2051. The Alzheimer's Society estimated the total annual cost of dementia to the British economy is £26.3 billion, with £4.3 billion spent on healthcare costs, £10.3 billion on social care (both publicly and privately funded) and £11.6 billion of opportunity cost of the work of unpaid carers of people with dementia².

As a result, in 2015, the Department of Health's Dementia Policy was launched, which sets out to raise awareness and understanding of dementia, increase diagnosis rates, make every hospital dementia-friendly, set new standards for dementia care and improve research in dementia, among others³. These goals are implemented through the Dementia Challenge programme launched in March 2012 by Prime Minister, David Cameron. The End of Life Care Strategy recognises that everybody has their own idea of what a 'good death' should be. Three out of four people say they would prefer to die at home, in a familiar place with close family or friends, without pain and treated with respect⁴. In 2011 over half of deaths happened

in hospitals, although the number of people dying at home is increasing (42% in 2011)⁵. The Department of Health has taken a ‘care pathway’ approach to provide end of life care in 2008 and is monitoring its implementation. The survey carried out in 2011 showed that 43% of beavered people rated the quality of care in the last three months of life of their relatives as outstanding or excellent, however one in four found it fair or poor. Only one in three said the care was outstanding or excellent where the death occurred in a hospital, 51% for a care home, 54% home and 59% hospice⁶. A review of choice in end of life care ‘What’s important to me’ published in February 2015, suggests that the Government should commit to deliver the following standard in the end of life care by April 2020:

‘Each person who may be in need of end of life care is offered choices in their care focused on what is important to them and that this offer is:

- made as soon as is practicable after it is recognised that the person may die in the foreseeable future.
- based on honest conversations with health and care staff, which supports the person to make informed choices.
- consistently reviewed through conversations with health and care staff.⁷

The report explored the choice of the place of care and death and other aspects of care, such as pain control and involvement of family; it has not asked however about the choice of the time of death. Assisted dying is currently illegal in the UK and the British Medical Association opposes all forms of assisted dying and insists that voluntary and non-voluntary euthanasia should not be made legal in the UK⁸. On 11 September 2015, Parliament voted against the Assisted Dying Bill by 330 to 118⁹.

at Miner's Court, Redruth



Participants

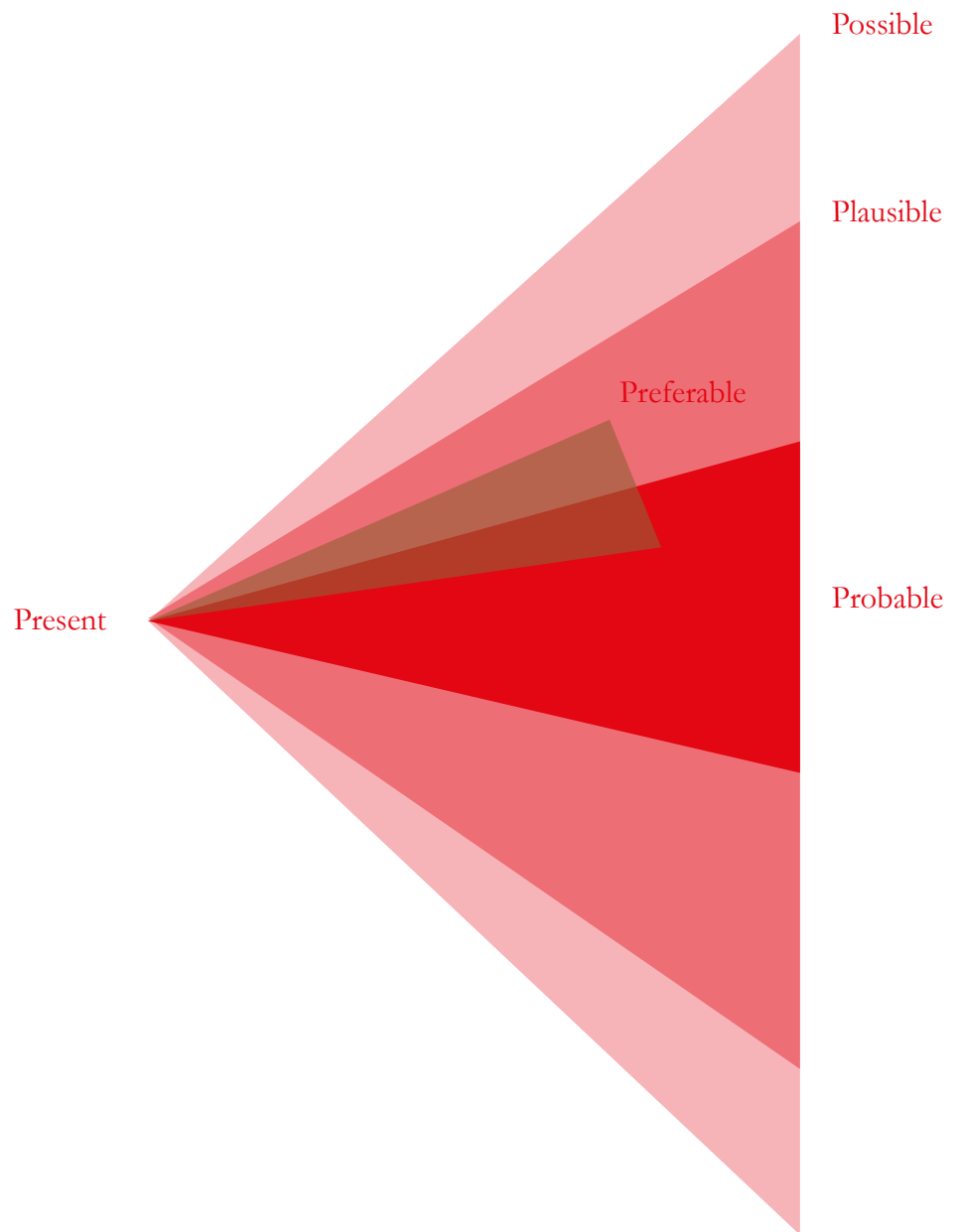
Credit: Emmanuel Tsekleves

at Miner's Court, Redruth



Modelling activity at Miner's Court
Credit: Emmanuel Tseklevs

Speculative Design Spectrum



Literature Review

DESIGN IS INHERENTLY CONCERNED WITH improvement, changing existing situations into preferred ones, as remarked by Nobel laureate, Herbert A. Simon. In the reality of the free market, design is inextricably linked to the consumption, usability criteria, and current needs of the market. Therefore, when considering the future most design practice deals with forecasting trends, analysing customer behaviours, predicting technological developments or resource supplies. It is about creating the 'future scenarios of use' to deliver goods or services that are more desirable and better suited to what people need. There is however a trend in design that breaks away from this rather reactive logic of extrapolating 'current' to 'future' and allows for the free deliberation of what might be possible ahead, of *'the kind of future people want and, of course, ones people do not want'*¹⁰.

Dunne and Raby mention several interconnected fields of design that deal with ideas rather than market applications: speculative design, conceptual design, critical design, design fictions, design futures, design probes, radical design, discursive design, design for debate, interrogative design or anti-design¹¹. As observed by Auger, there is much overlap between these practices, the differences are rather subtle and the choice of the term is usually subject to a region or a context¹². Their common feature is operating beyond the realms of what consumers want and what is profitable. Nevertheless, they are different from the social design and public design in a sense that they deal with the 'unreal', while socially-engaged design practice still lies within the limits of the current reality.

ProtoPolicy adopts the term speculative design to explore the concept of design fictions. According to the taxonomy developed by Hales, speculative design is an approach enabling us to think about the future prospectively and critically¹³. One of its principal assumptions is the negation of the status quo and initiation of a discussion on possible future scenarios through confrontation with tangible object or process, the so-called design fiction. However, to distinguish speculative design from science fiction it is necessary to determine the spectrum of likelihood within which it operates. In the model below Dunne and Raby offer possible scenarios for the future in the form of

...the kind of
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the cones expanding with the passage of time. The widest (*possible*) includes everything that is permitted by the laws of physics. The narrowest cone represents what seems likely based on extrapolation of existing trends and it is where the most of design practice happens. Somewhere in the middle of the spectrum, the authors delineate the area (brown) of what can be considered the preferred future. Within this area designers interact with the public through speculative scenarios to discuss people's preferences for the future.

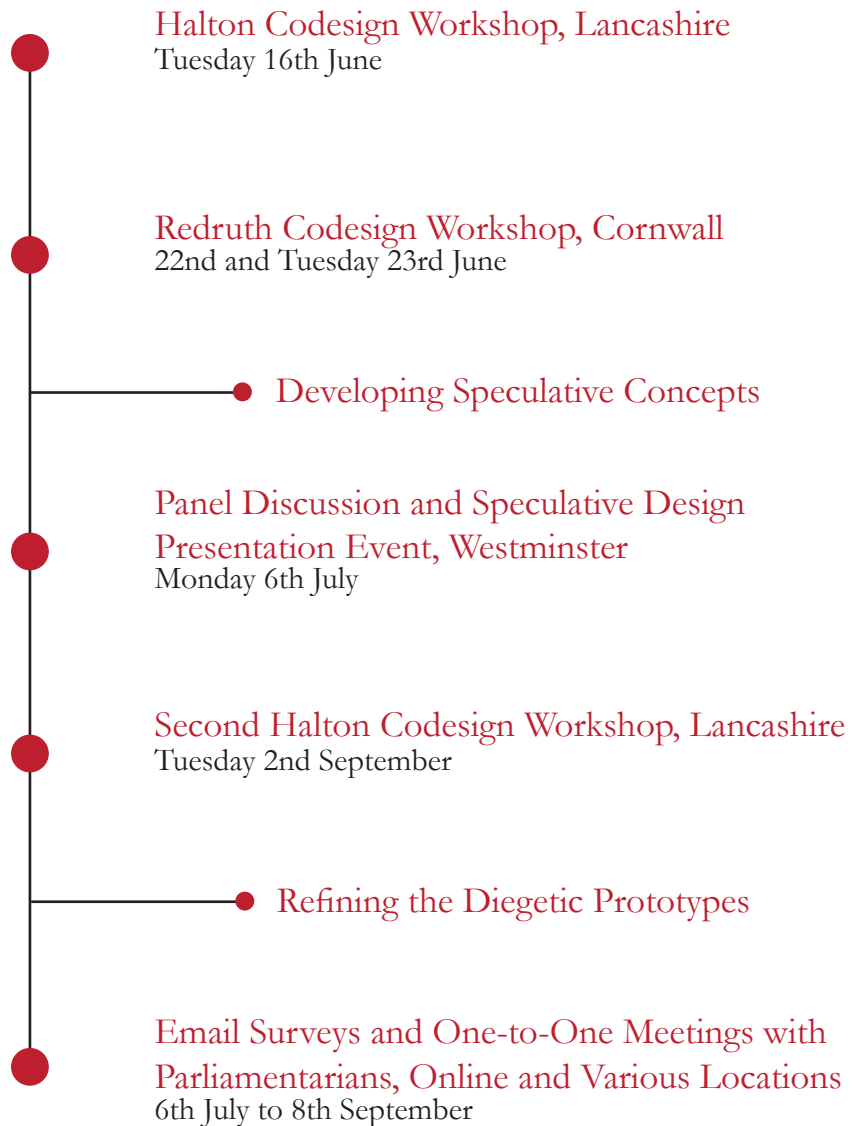
Speculative design uses design thinking tools and methodologies such as scenarios, brainstorming and rapid prototyping along with techniques borrowed from art, literature, film, psychology, philosophy, anthropology and ecology to create design fictions – provocations or '*narrative elements to envision and explain possible futures for design*'¹⁵. Hales refrains from offering a single definition emphasising the 'multidimensionality' of design fictions. For Hales, '*design fictions create a discursive space within which new forms of cultural artefact (futures) might emerge*'¹⁶. Similarly, Sterling suggests that design fiction '*is a contemporary form of forward-thinking intervention that has been enabled by the current networked media environment*'¹⁷. Bleecker refers to non-market orientation of design fictions as a '*way of exploring different approaches to making things, probing the material conclusions of your imagination, removing the usual constraints when designing for massive market commercialization. [...] Design fiction is about creative provocation, raising questions, innovation, and exploration.*'¹⁸ Bleecker points out that design fiction is a '*hybrid, hands-on practice that operates in a [...] middle ground between ideas and their realization, between science fact and science fiction and creates opportunities for reflection as well as active making*'¹⁹. We can therefore assert that design fiction serves both to represent and intervene. Kirby in turn uses the term diegetic prototypes '*to account for the ways in which cinematic depictions of future technologies demonstrate to large public audiences a technology's need, viability and benevolence*'²⁰. As noted by Tanenbaum, this is the crux of design fiction – '*it uses a fictional frame to make an argument about a potential future by demonstrating that future in a context that a large public audience can understand*'²¹.

Design fiction is
about creative
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and exploration.

Speculative design and design fictions do not claim to predict the future; they create imaginative pictures of potential futures that can make the future more

familiar. Fundamentally they act as aids to enable users to act as research participants or potentially, as this research seeks to explore, as real-world policy-makers. Design fictions are concerned with progress, ideas for the better, but they take into account that better means different things to different people²² and do not focus on implementation, but on discussing ‘what-if’ scenarios. In a time of uncertainty, when ‘hopes’ for the future replaced ‘dreams’, *‘any method that purports to enable decisions to be made in the face of it, should prove popular with decision-makers’*²³.

Timeline



Method

THROUGH ITS PROJECT PARTNERS, THE All-Party Parliamentary Design and Innovation Group (APDIG) and Age UK, this project seeks to build a shared understanding of the constraints and opportunities of political issues around Ageing in Place and loneliness through design fictions. The APDIG is a cross-party coalition of parliamentarians and design sector organisations that works to develop new design policy ideas and critique existing government decision-making around design. Age UK is the country's largest charity dedicated to helping everyone make the most of later life. The project sought to investigate the central question 'How can design fictions be used to negotiate political questions?' through a series of workshops with older people.

Halton Codesign Workshop, Lancashire

The first ProtoPolicy Codesign Workshop was held in Halton, Lancashire, UK. The venue was a large hall with kitchen facilities at The Centre @ Halton. The workshop was held on Tuesday 16th June from 1:00pm to 4:00pm in one session (n=14). Recruitment was conducted by AGE UK through direct calls to potential participants. Participants were drawn from across the local area and included members of the AGE UK exercise class and two workers from project stakeholder AGE UK. Participant's ages ranged from 45 to 95 years of age. The Design Research Team for session 1 was made up of a lead academic and two PhD researchers.

Redruth Codesign Workshop, Cornwall

The second ProtoPolicy Codesign Workshop (Sessions n=6, n=4, n=3, & n=4) was held in Redruth, Cornwall, UK. The venue was a medium sized room at Miners Court sheltered accommodation. The workshop was held on Monday 22nd and Tuesday 23rd June with sessions taking place between 10:00pm to 12:00pm and 1:30pm to 3:00pm. Recruitment was conducted by an academic researcher and advertised using posters and word-of-mouth at the site. Participants were drawn from across Miners Court and also included a member of project collaborator Foam Kernow. Group activities were planned over 4 sessions. Group activities: Session 1 (n=6) and session 2 (n=4) on day 1, session 3 (n=3) and session 4 (n=4) on day 2. Participant's ages ranged from 32 to 92 years of age. The Design Research Team for sessions 2-5 was made up of two academics and a PhD researcher, an artist, and a filmmaker.

Developing Speculative Concepts

Design Friction developed speculative concepts from the codesign workshop outputs. The management team selected two for development. Design Friction designed a range of graphic materials, including user manuals, job descriptions and intervention reports. These materials were central to the creation of a diegetic prototype and two short design fiction films by Lancaster University.

Speculative design in Policymaking Panel Discussion, Westminster

The lead academic presented the Design Fictions that emerged through the codesign workshops at Halton, Lancashire and Redruth, Cornwall as part of the Speculative Design and Policymaking Event presented by the All-Party Parliamentary Design & Innovation Group and held on Monday 6th July 2015 Jubilee Rooms, House of Commons, Palace of Westminster. The research team engaged in discussions with civil servants, politicians and design professionals on the use of Codesigned Design Fictions in enhancing community groups' engagement with policymakers.

Second Halton Codesign Workshop, Lancashire

The third ProtoPolicy Codesign Workshop was again held in Halton, Lancashire, UK. The venue was a large hall with kitchen facilities at The Centre @ Halton. The workshop was held on Wednesday 2nd September from 12:30pm to 3:00pm (n=12) and consisted of 1 session. Recruitment was conducted by AGE UK through direct calls to previous participants. Participants were drawn from across the local area and included members of the AGE UK exercise class and 4 workers from project stakeholder AGE UK. Participant's ages ranged from 45 to 95 years of age. The Design Research Team for Session 6 was made up of a lead academic and a PhD researcher.

Refining the Diegetic Prototype

In preparation for the second Halton Codesign Workshop the interaction design of the diegetic prototype was redesigned, focusing on safeguarding. In response to the workshop a further iteration was developed.

Email Surveys and One-to-One Meetings with Parliamentarians, Online and Various Locations

Between July 6th and September 1st the academic partners conducted a series of email surveys and one-to-one meetings in order to elicit the views of Parliamentarians on the design fictions and the potential of the method for enhancing political questioning.

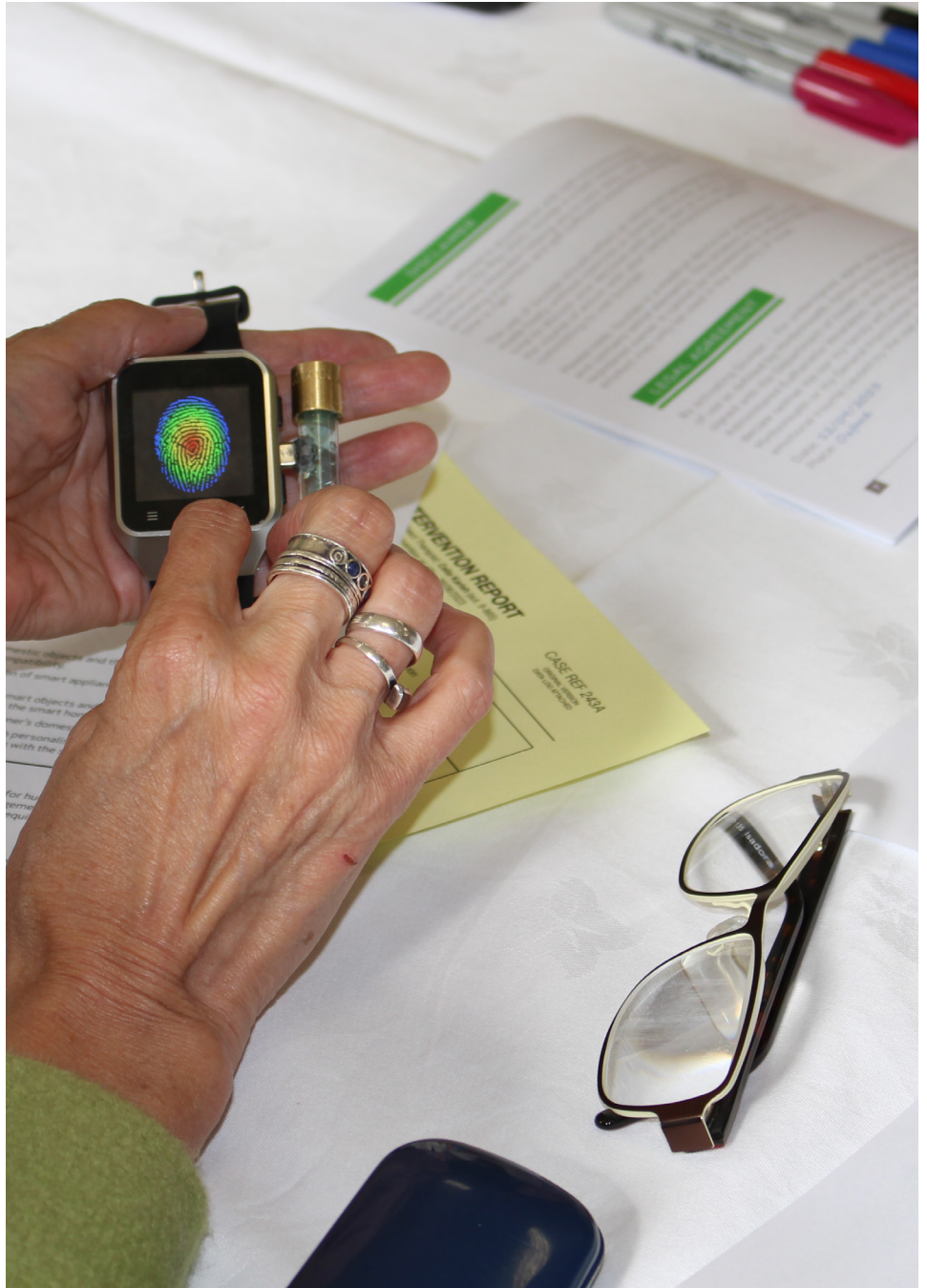
Workshop Process

Over the course of the three codesign workshops a range of techniques were employed to explore the use of design fictions in negotiating political questions. The workshops began with a presentation introducing the wider project and the concept of design fictions to the Halton participants. This was followed by discussions in smaller groups considering nascent policy statements expressed within the Conservative Manifesto. The groups then focused their responses through another exercise and were supported in drawing out the central themes. A range of technologies were introduced and participants were invited to develop ‘what if?’ scenarios set 5, 10 and an indeterminate number of years into the future. These speculations were shared, discussed and ranked by the group.

Redruth participants began their workshop with making exercises that explored people’s values through their relationship with technologies of the past and of imagined futures. The work of the Halton participants was then shared with the Redruth group, with their speculations and ideas placed in the relation to the themes of social isolation and ageing in place. Linkages were explored between the group’s ideas and policy statements through discussions and table-top affinity mapping. The group went on to design a range of services and products for potential futures in response to their understanding of the policy statements. Iterating through the design cycle several times they eventually produced a short video presentation capturing their ideas.

In the second Halton workshop participants were given a presentation to bring them up to speed on the project to date, and then they were shown the design fictions that arose through the design process. They then went on to discuss the design fictions and the underpinning speculations in depth.

at The Centre, Halton



A participant explores the Soulaje euthanasia wearable
Credit: Emmanuel Tseklevs

Findings & Discussion

AS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED, DESIGN METHODS, including design fictions and speculative design, are increasingly being used by civil servants in policy development; however, design methods are rarely adopted by politicians to negotiate political questions or engage with citizens. As such, the research team interviewed three civil servants who had recently used design fictions in policy-making to compare their attitudes to those of a Members of Parliament who had never considered using design fictions for policy-making. The semi-structured interviews took place face-to-face or by telephone between 6 and 31 July 2015 and focused on the challenges of and opportunities for using design fictions in policy-making, the reactions to the two design fictions developed in the project as well as whether design fictions could enhance political engagement by community groups.

It's a really strong technique but the important thing is working out exactly what you want to understand.

Challenges of using design fictions in policy-making

From the point of view of the civil servants who had already used design fictions to generate insight for policy-making the resounding challenges were data collection and interpretation and their link with evidence. The civil servants we interviewed had used design fictions or speculative design for the first time. Particularly, for an institution as rigorous as the Government Office for Science, the question of whether design fictions can generate representative and reliable evidence to inform government decision-making was of paramount importance. For one civil servant:

“The challenge with design fictions is data collection and interpretation. It questions us as data controllers and how accurate or inaccurate data collection can be. It requires abductive reasoning. It requires us to develop an iteratively hypothesis to test.”

Economists tend to be the gatekeepers of neoclassical policy-making drawing conclusions from large datasets. This is not the value of design methods. Design methods tend to generate deep insight into a very small dataset from, for example, focus groups or ethnographical observation. With small sample

sizes and particularly selection bias, considerable attention should be paid to what conclusions can be drawn. In using design fictions with focus groups it is important to ensure balanced participation among users. There can be a predilection for the views of the most dominant voices to be recorded, which may not always be representative. This goes hand in hand with managing the expectations of participants and ensuring people understand that they are provocations not predictions.

A further challenge that was raised was the link between the design fictions and the research question and how they relate to evidence that can inform policy-making. One interviewee stressed that:

“You must ensure a connection to the research question. It’s a really strong technique but the important thing is working out exactly what you want to understand.”

The design fictions and the subsequent data collection exercise must be developed to ensure that users focus on the questions and issues under investigation. For example, there could be a risk that the SOULAJE design fiction would lead only to a debate on whether euthanasia should be legalised or not rather than the broader research question. As one civil servant pointed out:

“As a non-specialist coming to speculative design for the first time my lesson would be that developing the design fiction is important but facilitating the interaction with the design fictions is as important for generating meaningful data.”

In dealing with something abstract, which design fictions often are, there is the possibility for a proportion of the data gathered to be unrelated to the question in hand. There is always a risk that the insight gathered from the design fictions is off the mark and particular attention should be paid by the researchers to ensure that the debates are kept on track. We can condense the challenges of using design fictions in policy-making to small sample sizes, ensuring a connection to the research question, collecting meaningful data,

drawing conclusion from abductive inference and translating the findings into evidence and the subsequent implications for validity and reliability.

As the civil servants had already experimented with design fictions and speculative design, their challenges focused on the transition from citizen interaction with the design fictions to generating input for evidence-based policy-making. Alternatively, for the politician who had not used design fictions before, the challenges focused on the barriers to using the approach for the first time. For example a significant challenge focused around terminology and timeframes:

“The way I understand design fiction it’s more a long term view than I would usually adopt to take political decisions. For everything we do there is a degree of ‘what if’. If you think design fictions are more about implications and imaging what could happen if you did something; it’s like a ripple effect.”

In this case there appears to be a perception that design cannot deliver a rapid approach to engagement. Arguably, design approaches could contribute to more flexible and agile policy timelines. Design departs from the premise of rapid problem definition, jointly developing solutions with stakeholders to mitigate the risks of implementation further down the line, prototyping, testing and refining solutions with stakeholders and consolidating the user feedback before full scale implementation. Furthermore, design methods are an opportunity for parliamentarians to engage more closely with constituents. Even among politicians with an awareness of design methods, there appears to be a reluctance to implement these approaches with members of the public:

“There are two standpoints in policy-making: government and the civil service adopts a longer-term perspective while politicians, particularly backbenchers, are more concerned with what legislation is coming down the line and what the implications will be for their constituency. MPs tend to be more concerned with their constituents and therefore tend to have a more short-termist approach.”

The major challenge is that imagining is “very subjective” and in the context of design fictions and policy, “MPs must always consider ethics, public opinion and resistance to change among certain parts of the population not to mention party lines”. The pressures of public opinion and party whips should not be underestimated in the process as demonstrated by the following reaction to the design fictions:

“I gave the design fiction on euthanasia to my researcher – it hit a nerve. It was shocking and distressing. The Smart Objective Therapist was not as ambitious as the euthanasia wearable. It was in effect an extension of sales engineer. It’s not beyond the realms of possibility anymore. Many ideas that seemed far-fetched a decade ago are now a reality. I think there’s a real opportunity for using technology for health in a very customisable way, which not too long ago would have been a design fiction.”

Sensitivities to certain types of design fictions was not raised by the civil servants but the SOULAJE euthanasia wearable was certainly topical during the data collection period for this research and more controversial than other examples. Designers as researchers must be aware of these issues when engaging with audiences. Intriguingly, cost was also raised as a barrier to using design in political decision-making: “I do not have the resource to test the ‘what if’ scenario”. For parliamentarians, the risks associated with cost, the unknown of using design fictions, the perception of the timescales involved, pressures of public opinion as well as party lines can be considered the main barriers to using design methods for the first time.

Opportunities for using design fictions in policy-making

For civil servants with an appetite for change, design methods constitute a major departure from traditional approaches to policy-making. While design researchers may take iterative, visual and creative techniques for granted when using design methods, such approaches are not the norm in the civil service.

For one civil servant an advantage of design fictions was being able to interact with a physical artefact beyond a traditional written report:

“Design fictions enable participants to engage with something physical. Very often in public engagement, there are no prompts that enable creative thinking, usually a written report is provided to citizens.”

One civil servant asserted that “users were extremely engaged”. By breaking down the barriers between research participants, design fictions can create empathy and therefore deep insight into highly specialised data. They can create a symbiotic relationship between citizens as participants in the policy process and government departments as researchers. According to one civil servant:

“The future is intangible and even someone’s experience of the now is entirely unique. It is difficult to focus on the future. What we needed was a methodology to get people to think about the future and to be focused on that topic during the entire process. We needed quality, qualitative evidence.”

Policy processes and political decision-making are changing. There is a drive towards more inclusive and transparent governance. Within this paradigm shift, design methods can offer more collaborative and socially responsible methods for policy formulation. Design methods are increasingly being adopted by the civil service but these methods do not appear, as yet, to have extended into the realms of political decision-making. Nevertheless, the attributes of design methods could enhance the relationships between the public and elected officials:

“Given the proximity of most MPs to their constituencies, design fictions could be a useful approach for exploring future plans and policy options with constituents, community groups and other stakeholders. However, this assumes that the design fiction can stimulate a productive debate for the particular policy

issue. There is an inherent issue of pace and rate of change in terms of design fictions.”

Using design as a means of political engagement could change attitudes of the general public towards the policy process. Whereas previously citizens have been the object of policy, in a user active paradigm, they could jointly make political decisions with politicians and jointly create policy with civil servants.

“Design methods would be a good way to involve constituents. They could be good for planning, education, health. In terms of the public services I can see advantages to understand what society will need in coming years. I think the concept of codesign, where community groups, the public and politicians can jointly develop understanding of political issues is valuable.”

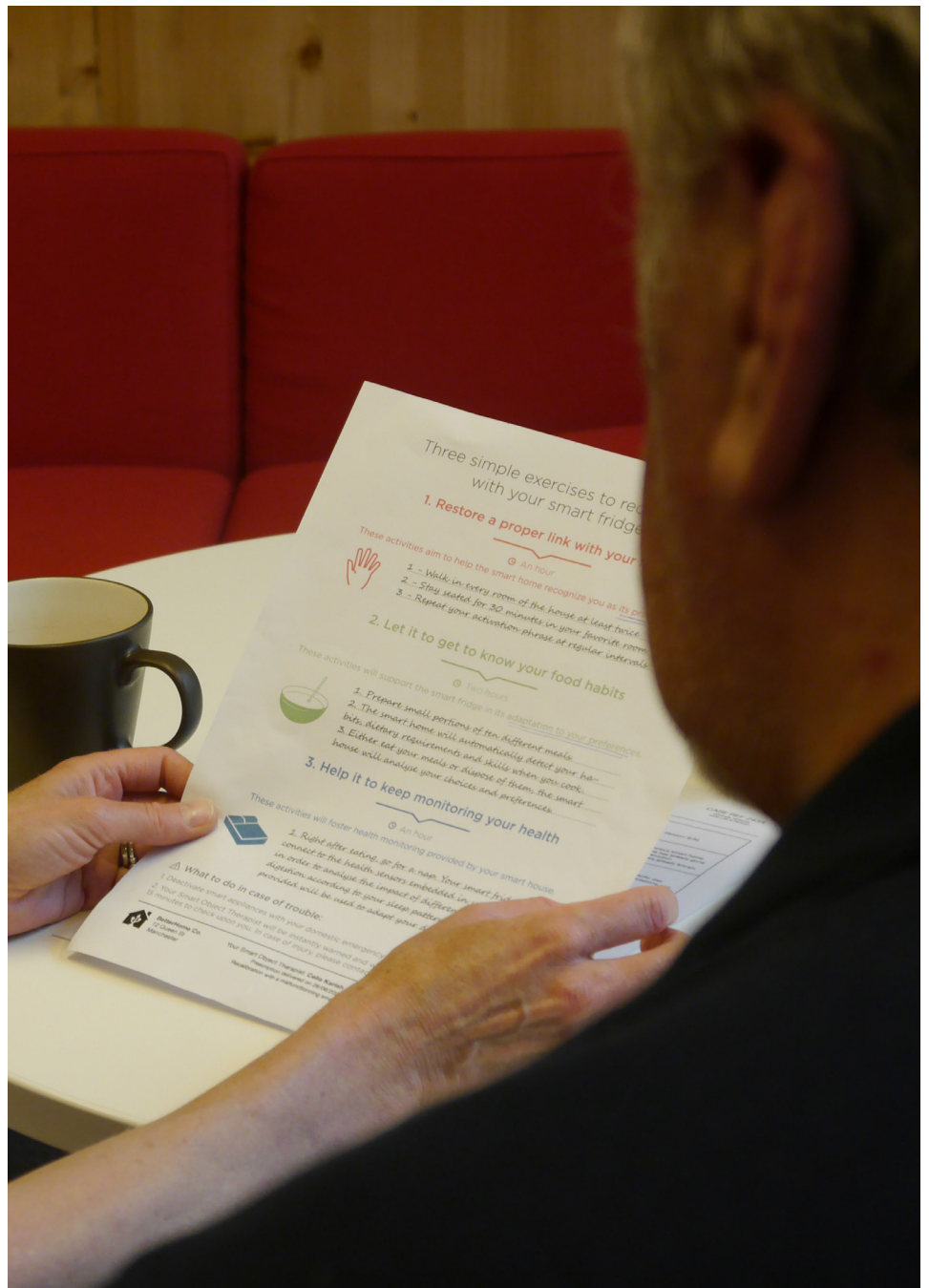
The opportunities afforded by design fictions in policy-making might be the added-value of an enhanced interaction between the civil service or parliamentarians in the form of physical objects rather than more traditional communication mediums from government such as written reports. For example, these types of interactions may contribute to more inclusive policy-making as lengthy government reports isolate those tranches of society that arguable might be able to contribute the most to the policy process. By creating empathy and a deeper engagement, the data and insight generated by the research might be more useful for evidence-based policy-making. Design methods such as speculative design and design fictions might create a symbiotic relationship between the public and governance structures.

at The Palace of Westminster



Emmanuel Tseklevs presenting at the Speculative Design in Policymaking event
Credit: Josh Butcher

Design Fiction – Smart Object Therapist



Smart Object Therapist
Credit: Emmanuel Tseklevos

Conclusion

POLICY CHALLENGES ARE INCREASINGLY INTERCONNECTED and there is increasing recognition that citizens need to be at the centre of policy and public service development processes. A generic design approach advocates: 1) rapid problem definition; 2) jointly developing solutions with stakeholders; 3) prototyping; and 4) analysing user feedback prior to full scale deployment. While it was initially perceived by the research team that design methods, and in particular speculative design or design fictions, may not be considered rigorous enough by civil servants or politicians, in fact, there was a perception that design may not be rapid enough for the time constraints of policy and political decision-making. In addition to the issue of timescales, further barriers to using design fictions for the first time as perceived by the politician included cost, ensuring productive debate and the pressures of public opinion and party lines. However, among the civil servants who had already used design fictions for policy-making, the challenges focused on translating the outcomes into evidence including drawing conclusions from small sample sizes, ensuring a connection to the research question, collecting meaningful data, adopting abductive inference and the subsequent implications for validity and reliability. Creating the design fictions with citizens is only one step in the process; the key step is the facilitation between the design researchers and the participants. Nevertheless, conducted appropriately, design fictions should respond to the growing trends of open policy-making in government. With additional advocacy efforts design methods could be positioned as a tool for politicians to generate greater participation by constituents in political decision-making. Although design methods in general, let alone more specialised design methods such as design fictions and speculative design, may not be well-known by politicians, with a growing capacity for design-driven innovation in the UK civil service a future trend could be for design to permeate through to the political scene.

...design methods could be positioned as a tool for politicians to generate greater participation by constituents in political decision-making.

Design Fiction – Euthanasia Wearable



Screenshot from Youtube video
Credit: Emmanuel Tseklevs

Signposts to Online Project Materials

MORE INFORMATION ON ProtoPolicy can be found at the project's website: <http://imagination.lancs.ac.uk/activities/ProtoPolicy>

ProtoPolicy project videos may be found on the YouTube.

Smart Object Therapist:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEyLzuULXKw>

Soulaje:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpSM00j9c2I>

Design Fiction – Euthanasia Wearable



Soulaje

Credit: Emmanuel Tsekleves

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