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Staged Atmosphere: The Air[craft] Workshop

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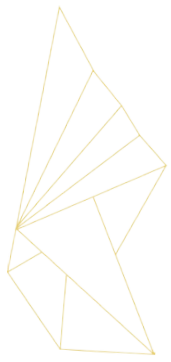
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Keywords: probes; liminal spaces; staged atmosphere; micro transitions; sense of self

Abstract: Probes and variations of this method are seen as valuable tools in design research enabling rich insights into lived-experiences. Although they have been adopted widely, significantly less attention has been given to the environments in which probes are being introduced. This study describes the experiential qualities of using probes within liminal spaces to gain a deep understanding of a lived experience, in this case a micro transition in participant's lives. The liminal spaces of planes and airports became the setting for the Air[craft] workshop, an exploratory codesign workshop, in a stationary plane and a group discussion at an airport.

In this paper we present our method. We argue for the value of a

perspective in which the authentic environments, the probes and the theatricality of the workshops are all equally important. Widening the context of the probe approach, we propose the term staged atmosphere to describe this method of engaging people to talk about their feelings, their frustrations, their excitements or moments of anticipation and explore design opportunities of reassuring the self in a particular context. The word atmosphere is used to employ elements of authenticity; being in the real place and exploring the atmosphere of the real environment and the word staged is used to indicate that the experience has elements of theatricality leaving room for participants' reflections and imaginative thinking.





Introduction

Heterotopias, transitional situations, in between places begins to function at full capacity when people arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time (Foucault, 1986 p.22).

Transitional experiences are periods of time that are concerned with an unsettled, disoriented, uncertain sense of self; when one experiences a period of in-between (Beech, 2011, Turner, 1964). The uncertainty of an experience and its creative potential to be seen as spaces of becoming (Andrews and Roberts, 2012, p.2), makes it an interesting space for research where our identities undergo change or transformation.

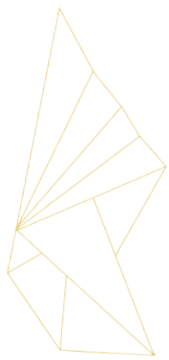
The focus is on micro-transitional experiences. A micro-transition is a period of gradual disconnection and re-adjustment to something familiar and grounded, which is concerned with experiences, negotiations and meanings in a personal setting. Within micro-transitions Holdsworth and Morgan (2005, p.25) identifies two types a) life transitions, for examples death or motherhood and b) day to day setting transitions, for example joining a different social circle, falling in love, visiting home for short breaks. The latter has received significantly less attention in research in social studies (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005; Nicholson, 1990) and even less from other disciplines. The affect on self is not as experienced as dramatic as in life transitions, nevertheless it is a period when the self experience an uncertain, messy and disoriented

period (Beech, 2011; Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005; Ozenc, 2014). In such periods, it is valuable to understand the felt experience and how we can, as individuals, find ways to adjust to a negotiating self and centre ourselves in ways that are personally meaningful to us.

As transitions are personal and often implicit in nature, it is necessary to engage with people in personal dialogue (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005) to elicit a more detailed and sensitive understanding of meaning and negotiated practices of transitions. This approach is also suggested by Wright et al. (2010) when we are designing for experiences for people. Taking an experience-centred design approach (ibid.) we explore micro – transitions in day to day setting; when someone working in a different country travels home for a short break.

A range of methods have been introduced to research practices and design processes to help designers gain a rich understanding of people's lived experiences. Probes (Gaver et al., 1999) and the variations of the method (Mattelmäki, 2005; Sanders and Stappers, 2014; Wallace et al., 2013) have enabled valuable insights into people's lived experience and provoked unexpected design ideas that could enrich people's lives. They have been used to enrich the co-creative, empathetic context between a participant and a design researcher (Wallace et al., 2013).

Making probes work can be challenging however (ibid.), and as documented by Gaver et al. (2004) and Boehner et al. (2007, 2012) the



method is often misunderstood. There are significant challenges in designing and deploying probes to be sensitive to both the participant and the context. Moreover participants can find it challenging to articulate aspects of their lives as it can be far from straightforward for people to express their feelings (Wallace et al., 2013). Thus, it is worth further exploring methods that may help people feel as comfortable as possible to share aspects of self with the design researcher.

The authors see probes as valuable tool to gain a rich understanding of people's transitional lived experiences, when designed within the probe approach (Boehner et al., 2012), but they argue that the environment where probes are introduced and worked and how they are shared with the participants are also of great significance and deserves attention.

Probes - Widening the context

Some commentators have argued that the probe method has become somewhat standardized in its deployment, (Gaver et al., 2004, Boehner et al., 2007). They argue that the subjective mark and expression of designers evident in the process of designing probes is increasingly lost and that probes commonly only inform the final design of a system, losing an important stage which could advance the conversation between designers and participants.

Although probes are widely used to establish relationships between researcher and participants and elicit insights for design, Graham and Rouncefield (2008) argues that they are not inherently participatory, both how the method is chosen and deployed should be where the design community dedicate more attention. In the same respect, McCarthy and Wright, (2015) have investigated a number of research projects in Human Computer Interaction (HCI) through a critical lens of participation that lead us to rethink traditional HCI categories of designer and user, maker and developer, researcher and participant. Characterising these relationships instead as mutually responsive and dialogical. A dialogical and responsive relationship between researchers and participants is concerned with how we choose our participants, how they might be involved in the research, and how researchers and participants can equally benefit from such participation.

Probes should not merely be seen as a method to inspire design, but as a method to engage and encourage participants to talk about their lives and experiences in an open and often uncertain way (Gaver et al., 2004) and a tool to establish a dialogical relationship between researchers and participants (Wallace et al., 2013).

Wallace et al. (2013) challenged the undocumented leap between the probes and the design of the probes, as identified by Boehner et al., (2007, 2012), with a proposed framework for the design of probes. In her analysis of a series of design probes, centered on sense of self



and personal significance, she highlighted the value of openness and boundedness of the probes, the pace that the information is revealed, and the reciprocity of the probes. She argues that each of these factors are key to creating a reflective and reflexive relationship between researcher and participants. This understanding of probes set the framework for us to design the physical objects in dialogue with the participants.

Motivation

The research is a part of a broader study on digital jewellery and sense of self. Drawing from lead author's experiences of travelling back to her home country for short breaks and reflecting on her sense of self in two different places (UK and Greece), we identified that micro-transitions represent a particular context that people are going through, where digital jewellery can have its place and be rich and meaningful to them, as it combines the long history of jewellery to accompany life-transitions and the potential of digital technologies to open new ways of connecting the self with real-time data.

The Air[craft] workshop is part of this exploration, pondering three women experiences of micro transitions to gain insight into how and where digital jewellery might play a role within the personal aspects of

micro-transitions. In this paper, we present the employed method and we briefly present the potential impact of the research.

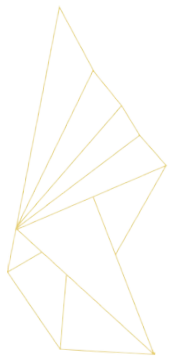
The atmospheres of airports and planes

Airports and planes are liminal spaces (Andrews and Roberts, 2012) that we pass through, as part of the physical transition one undertakes when travelling from one country place to the other. Such places have certain atmospheres that we experience with our embodied presence. The atmosphere of a liminal space exists in the negotiation between subject and object and merges with how an individual feels.

Atmospheres

"I enter a building, see a room, and – in the fraction of a second – have this feeling about it. What on earth is it that moves me? The atmosphere of the place" (Zumthor, 2006, p.13).

Atmospheres can be encountered in everyday language as ambience, sense of place, or the feel, the mood of a room and can be perceived through our emotional sensibilities (Zumthor et al., 2006a). Everything in our surroundings creates the mood, the things themselves, people, the air, noises, sounds, colors, material presence, textures and forms (ibid). The notion of atmosphere has been conceptualized by philosophers



(Bohme, 1993) and discussed in practice by many architects (Borch et al., 2014; Pallasmaa, 2013; Zumthor et al., 2006). In the design disciplines the significance of atmospheres has received less attention. Exceptions can be found in work addressing the bodily felt experience in space (McCarthy and Wright, 2004; Kinch, 2011).

Pallasmaa (2013) states that 'an atmosphere is an experience of the in-betweenness of subject and object in which the emotive and sensory experience are central.' Heidegger (1962) as cited in Pallasmaa (2013 p.232) gives a rich description of an atmosphere of a space '...as we enter a space, the space enters us, and the experience is essentially an exchange and fusion of the object and the subject'.

Experiencing liminal spaces of planes and airports

From a phenomenological perspective the way we experience spaces is through our bodily felt experience and is multi-sensorial and emotive (Pallasmaa, 2013). Our experience of being in airports and aeroplane is a fusion of our bodily relationship with the built environment, the objects and other people around us and the way we feel about ourselves during the different parts of the journey.

As we are being transported across distance we experience different relationships between the space we temporary inhabit and our bodies. Sitting in the condensed space of the aeroplane seat, for example, with the seat belt fastened, limits our bodily movements and our comfort is

a completely different bodily experience from sitting in the chair in our office. Some people experience a tension on body during the take off or the landing due to environmental changes, nervousness, excitement or the fear of flying. During the flight, our body and the objects around us respond to the physical environment (air-pressure, difference in temperature) and they are in a constant adjustment to the situation. The close proximity to other people and the seat in front defined our personal space and create a setting for social interactions with strangers.

The physical transition is often linked with the rituals of travelling with control and checks and a process of decoding signs to stay connected. But, our understanding of the space is extended beyond its physicality to its capacity to connect us with other types of spaces by contradicting and inverting the sites that it connects (Fuller and Harley, 2004, p.105).

Being in transit is an emotive experience influenced by the purpose of the journey; for example, our experience of flying will be different when anticipating arrival at a holiday destination, rather than a work engagement, or a visit home to meet people we love. In different parts of the journey we experience a variety of audio visual stimulus. The signs at the airport, the cabin crew announcements, the sounds of announcement machine, the sounds of taking off and landing, the experience of being over the clouds, sitting by the window or by the alley, as are parts of the actual experience of the space affect the sense of self in the context.

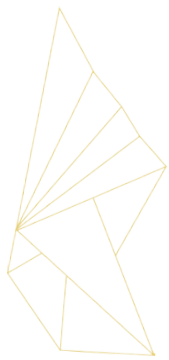


Figure 2. Flight Ticket. Photo: Nantia Koulidou.

Staged Atmosphere: probes, theatricality, liminal spaces

To situate this thinking in the context of a particular piece of research through design we now turn to describe an experiential workshop on a stationary plane and following discussion that took place at the airport. We created an atmosphere as close as to the real context as possible to explore how a person feels when in transition and ways to support times of micro-transitions. Our approach has elements of theatricality as our intention was to create that space between reality and fiction and leave room for participants' reflections and imaginative thinking (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). We refer to this methodological approach as a staged atmosphere, meaning that the experience is close to reality, but still fictional. The word atmosphere is used to employ elements of authenticity; being in the real place and exploring the atmosphere of the real environment and the word staged is used to indicate that the theatrical aspect of the method.



Figure 3. Sketches made by the researcher after the first meeting with the participants to visualise aspects of their self in transition. Photo: Nantia Koulidou.

Getting to know the Participants

An initial meeting gave us a glimpse into the lives of participants and help us to get to know each other and create the space for dialogue. Participants were female design researchers from different places in the world, but each lived and worked in the UK and travel to their home of origin for short breaks. During the first meeting, we introduced them to the theatricality of the experience they could be part of by giving them the invitation in a form of a flight ticket (see Figure 2). Participants were asked to prepare their luggage for travelling which in this case meant to bring artefacts that would usually accompany them during an aeroplane journey and artefacts that they relate with home. centred on Insights from the first meetings became inspiration for the design of bespoke probes centred on sense of self and expectations of travelling home (see Figure 3). The goal of the probes was to act as tickets to talk (Sacks, 1992), reflect on their experience of transition, how this effected their sense of who they are, as well as to trigger participants' imaginative thinking on ways to support the transition in an emotional and personal way.

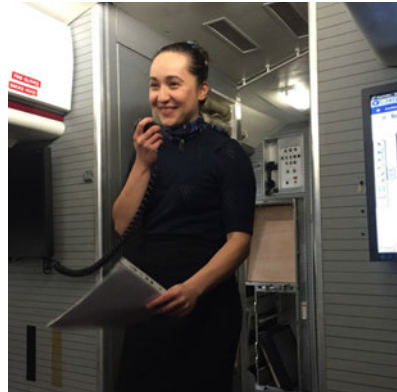


Figure 4. The researcher in the role of a flight attendant. Photo: N. Koulidou.



Figure 5. The Travel Journal. Photo: Nantia Koulidou.



Figure 6. The interior of the plane. Photo: Nantia Koulidou.

The Air[craft] Workshop

The two hour workshop was set in a functioning but stationary plane at the Aviation Academy in Newcastle, adjacent to Newcastle airport, UK. The Air[craft] workshop was centred around a performance in which the first author acted as a flight attendant (see Figure 4) throughout the workshop. The series of probe objects were given to participants in different times during the fictitious flight that they were taking, in order to stir their reflections.

The theatre of the workshop was created by the first author using the onboard PA system to deliver flight attendant announcements that invited the three participants to explore the probe objects in relation to the artefacts they brought with them and their feeling and emotions of being in-between, by turning on the aeroplane engines to create the sound of being in-flight, by using the flight attendants' trolley to pass between the participants at intervals to give them probes to respond to and by having a set trajectory of take off, in flight and landing periods.

During the workshop the participants documented their thoughts and reflections in a Travel Journal (see Figure 5) or by making audio recordings. The workshop was documented by taking pictures and short videos (see Figure 6). After the workshop, participants and the researcher had an hour discussion at the airport to reflect on the workshop activity and the way they experience it. The probes were placed on the table at the café at the airport and we talked through the various experiential and performative qualities of the workshop, the actual location and ways to continue our dialogue over time.

Probes

We now describe the probes in brief before moving onto a discussion of the workshop in terms of theatricality and staged atmosphere.

The **Comfort Me Kit** was the first probe given to participants and contained a Sleeping Mask, Comfort Cushion and Earplugs, which are

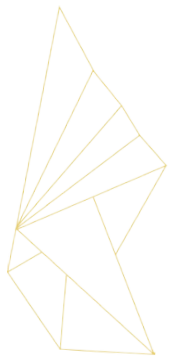


Figure 7. The Comfort Me Kit Probe.
Photo: Nantia Koulidou.



Figure 8. The Chew of Familiarity Probe.
Photo: Nantia Koulidou.



Figure 9. The Chew of Familiarity Probe.
Photo: Nantia Koulidou.



Figure 10. The Neither Here Nor There Probe. Photo: Nantia Koulidou.

conventional objects used in the flight to provide comfort. Participants were invited to focus on their bodily experiences and listen to their bodies through paying more focused and intensive attention to what is happening to their bodies by listening to their senses. Questions were embroidered onto each of the probe pieces to encourage participants to think about the feeling of being in-between and their bodily presence (see Figure 7).

The **Chew of Familiarity** is a jewellery-like probe that invited participants to chew a piece of gum and focus on their senses; the sense of smell, taste and feelings or physical places that have a significant meaning to them. Participants were engaged in a reflective practice and think of home as well as think of the artefact in relation to their body. The probe could be worn as a brooch (see Figure 8, 9).

The **Neither Here Nor There** explored the temporal and spatial dimensions of the transition; when does the transitional period starts and ends and what does this mean for the participants sense of self. The piece invites participants to engage in a reflective practice of being in-between.



Figure 11. The Parts of Me probe.
Photo: Nantia Koulidou.



Figure 12. Interacting with the Parts of Me probe during the workshop.
Photo: Nantia Koulidou.

The question 'When does the transition start and where does it end' was slowly revealed to participants when they placed the flight ticket (given to them in advance) on the side of the piece. Variations of the piece were presented to the participants. One object utilised polarising filters and the other with a-centric circles to hide and reveal the question (see Figure 10).

Parts of Me is a bespoke probe; a different sketch was made for each participant and placed in an embroidery hoop. The sketches featured a female figure representing the participant and divided the self into work



(right) and home (left) (see Figure 3). Each image was inspired by the first meeting with participants where they shared things about their lives. The sketch was covered with a layer of thermochromic ink, which once heated up over 27degrees it disappeared and the sketch could be partly seen. This interaction was reversible (see Figure 11, 12).

In the last part of the workshop we invited participants to start thinking and exploring ways that objects could potentially support the experience of being in transition. Surrealistic techniques for elevating the unconscious and provoking new dialogue, such as dream writing and the game of chance have inspired the initial use of probes (Boehner, 2012). We employed experimental and parallel collage (Levy, 1995), another surrealistic technique to provide resources of inspiration. We used the technique to create forms with odd combination of materials and shapes and sketches with obscure compositions.

The **Unknown Pieces** were two intentionally surreal objects with an ambiguous function that the participant was asked to name and to think of it's function. For the workshop, we took advantage of the physicality of the objects and invited participants to explore design possibilities (see Figure 13, 14).

Parts of Me and You was a piece that was a continuation on the Parts of Me piece. The initial sketches captured notions of self from the perspective of the researcher and presented in the beginning of the workshop. Parts of Me and You acted as a reflexive tool for participants to see themselves in an abstract, visual way and continue the sketch with similar visual language (see Figure 15).



Figure 13. The Unknown piece. Inside the piece there is a note "Whisper a thought, nobody can hear it". Photo: Nantia Koulidou.



Figure 15. Jayne's drawings on the Parts of Me and You Piece. Photo: Nantia Koulidou.



Figure 14. Laura's reflections for the Unknown piece "The shell reminds me of the sea. It was the place where I used to dream about the future. In some way I wanted to feel connected with a pleasant feeling of "home" .Today this place is the highlands. A sea of mountains, where I go to feel smaller than nowhere, smaller than the inevitable parts of life. I have no control, that comforts me." Photo: Nantia Koulidou.

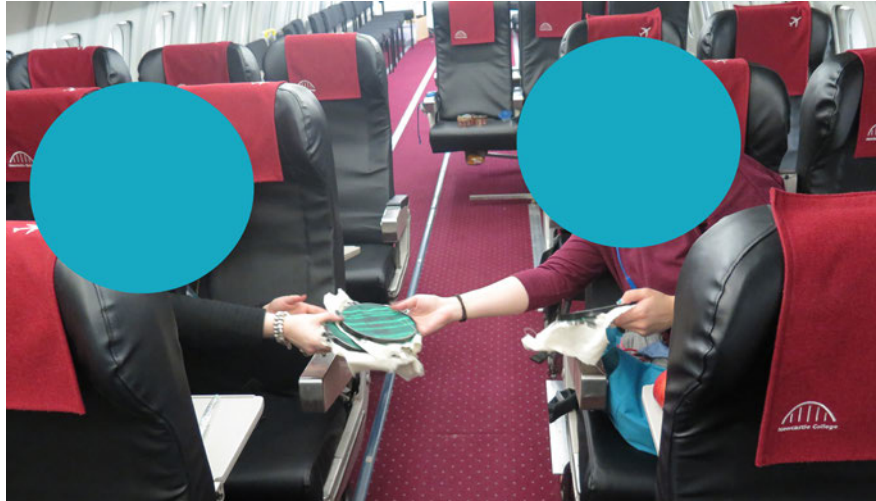


Figure 16. In the Air[craft] Workshop. Exploring the probe *Parts of Me*.
Photo: Nantia Koulidou.



Figure 17. In the Air[craft] Workshop. Engaging with the *Unknown Piece*.
Photo: Nantia Koulidou.

Reflections

The value of authentic environments

In early examples of experience design practices (Buchenau and Suri, 2000), designers engaged themselves in real contexts. These designers valued the actual space where experience takes place and argued that a real setting gives them the permission to observe live passengers' experiences (ibid). Furthermore, they applied theatrical methods such as role-playing and body storming to better understand a certain experience, generate and evaluate ideas. Expanding from experience prototyping practices we argue for the value of authentic environments. We introduced a method where designers and participants are in dialogue (Wright, 2010) to conceptualise and gain an understand the

richness of an experience. The method of Staged Atmosphere proposes a multi-sensorial experience where participants and designers can get a rich understanding of how a certain situation affects their sense of self in context (See Figure 16,17).

'It really worked for me. When you said we "are ready to take off" and we listened to the said of taking off. I felt the same as I am feeling when I fly, the anxiety on the stomach, the excitement.' Laura (fictional name), reflections from the discussion at the airport.

'The plane surrounding really helped. I was able to forget that we are not taking off. ..So it did feel the same to me, definitely... being inside the plane really helped me imagining.' Jayne (fictional name) reflection from the discussion at the airport.



'We are here now. We are so familiar with this bit of Newcastle Airport. And even better if we could be on the inside. If we could have passed the security into the place where I have spent hours sitting around waiting for planes. It is a very ritualised space.' Laura, reflections from the discussion at the airport.

Even though people have an intimate capacity for remembering and imaging places (Pallasmaa, 2013), this experience is not as stimulating as the actual experience of being in a place, as we argued that latter is a multi-sensorial and emotive experience in the constant interaction between a person and one's surroundings. When engaging people to reflect on feelings and emotions in transition we suggest that it is not enough to create an abstraction of a particular environment (Buchenu and Suri, 2000) , because an important part of the experience of this space is lost.

In this respect, we argue that when design researchers aim to gain a rich understanding of how a transitional experience affect the sense of self in context, they should consider the liminal spaces as the design activity is being introduced, as it can stimulate feelings and emotions of the actual experience that would not be possible otherwise.

The method and its challenges

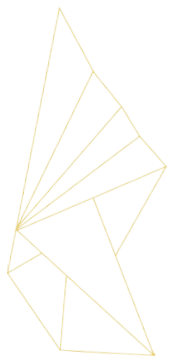
We used the method of role-playing to create an immersive environment where participants can reflect on their feelings in the context. In

the space between reality and fiction participants found themselves comfortable to share their reflections. The sound of taking off and landing and the sound of the announcements machine enriched the theatrical space. The announcements using the onboard PA system structured the workshop, creating the space for exploring the various design probes in a performative way.

Moving probes on from things that are their own bubble (i.e used by people when the researcher is not there) they become a rich part of the process where the theatrical environment draws the person into a liminal space and gives participants space for their reflections. We consider the probes objects, the space where they are introduced and the theatricality of their deployment equally important to elicit rich reflections and stir imaginative thinking. All of these elements helped form a staged atmosphere.

However, we were aware that participants wanted to interact longer with certain probes, yet they were limited to certain time as the workshop progressed. During the reflective session at the airport participants were given the space to chat about the workshop. Participants discussed the challenges in the interaction with the probes, discussed the reasons why some probes did not feel right for them and shared with us an additional level of reflection on their feelings in the context.

There are some interesting issues that arose from participants' engagement in the study. As design researchers, the participants were



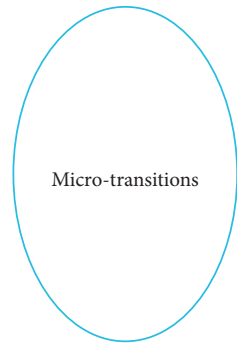
well placed to explore the role of digital jewellery in the context as they understand their experience of being in-between. These qualities resulted in an interesting form of participation that added depth to the exploration, but not without its challenges. Because we are setting up a Staged Atmosphere people can be seen to be actors with multiple roles (themselves, passengers, researchers), acting in the way that they think it is appropriate. Although we cannot ignore the fact that our participants were not naïve, they were three women with different personalities and different experiences of this particular transition, bringing valuable insights in understanding this particular experience of a micro-transition.

The value of crafting probes

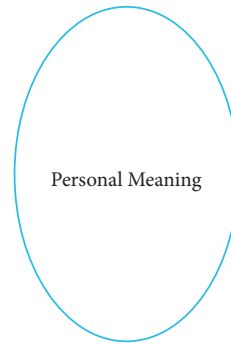
Working with a set of probes, we gave a variety of options to participants to pick and interact with the objects that they felt more comfortable with. As we expected, the different probe objects that draw the attention of the participants, were the probes that were the most engaging to reflect on their sense of self during the transition. The probes in relation to the body proved to be an important trigger in the narration of participant's individual story. These probes played a significant role in stirring reflections on the participant's experiences of being in an in-between state. We suggest that to gain an understanding on how a certain situation affect one's sense of self, it is worth considering probes that can be worn on the body or fit on the body so people can respond to its physicality.

In the making of the probes we were concerned with the openness and boundedness of designing the probes (Wallace et al., 2013). We wanted the probes to feel considered, skilfully made and beautiful, but still to leave a level of unfinished element that left space for their reflections and interaction with the artefacts during the workshop. For the Neither Here nor There piece participants had to place the flight ticket to start the interaction (see Figure 10), for the Parts of Me they had to interact with their body (see Figure 12), for the Unknown ceramics piece the surface left unglazed (see Figure 14) and the last Unknown piece we worked with an odd combination of objects that invite participants to explore its form (see Figure 13).

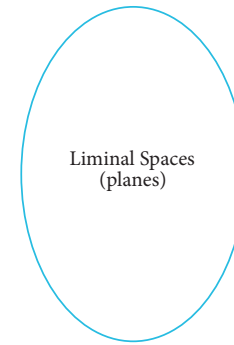
By removing the bark from the stick for the Unknown piece, the crochet embroidery hoop used in the Parts of Me Piece suggested a slow creative process of making the objects. Working with craft practices and various materials there was something we conveyed by valuing each participant. Participants valued the objects, asking us if it was possible to take some of them home. This relationship enriched the role of probes to act as objects that invite researchers and participants in a co-creative and reflexive form of participation. With the Parts of You and Me we introduced an atypical visual dialogue with the participants by sharing sensitive and intimate issues in a way that is imaginative, not descriptive. The pictures had an open-ended interpretation remaining faithful to the initial exploration of probe approach (Boehner et al., 2012). We see the hand-crafted qualities of the probes as an important attribute that



- personal and implicit
- unsettled nature of self
- sense of disorientation
- every transition has its own story
- different transitions happen in life at the same time.
- adjustment period
- temporal and spatial dimensions
- experienced as constant shifting (Jude) - as a stream of the ocean
- experienced as just floating every now and then (Laura) - strong sense of self
- experienced as gradual disconnection and re-connection in space and time to something familiar (author)
- anxiety and uneasiness - prepare yourself to meet the different (Laura)
- routine, standard preparation, practicalities of traveling



- re-adjustment to something familiar and grounded
- value of anchor points
- being comfortable with change
- familiarity in objects and places
- bonding activities during flight
- a settled sense of self



- a space one can reinvent one's self
- a space where one can spend time with one's self
- give up many of our conventional freedom
- a space where we are given a bit of personal control in our seats
- sense of disorientation, sense of being lost
- sensory deprivation
- magic of flying
- passing over countries in acceleration
- temperature differs
- altitude changes
- the sound of engine accompany our thoughts
- stay connected - maps on screens, pilot announcements
- a space we are recovering our sense of self

Figure 18. Insights from the Air[craft] Workshop

Photo: Nantia Koulidou

opens up space for participants to reflect on aspects of self and explore what is personal meaningful in the context. The surreal forms were another attribute that enriched the connection between the probes and participants as they could relate to them in an unpredictable way. These qualities can contribute to the discussion on the personal gains of participants in participatory design processes (Iversen et al., 2010) as they bring back the subjective mark and expression of designers in the process of designing the probes and enrich the conversation between the designer and the researcher.

Potential Impact of this research

In this research, we have identified that liminal spaces have the unique characteristic of being places between our origin and our destination, where people can reflect on their feeling and emotions of being in-between. The Air[craft] Workshop offered the fictitious space for the participants to explore how experiences of travelling home affects their sense of self in a physical, emotional and social dimension. In figure 18, we list findings on how participants experience one example of a micro-transition. In the second list, we highlight the most important points on how participants can find personal meaning during transitions and on the third list are the qualities and dynamics of planes as experienced during



the workshop. These findings are insights that can contribute to social sciences and the understanding of these transitional contexts as well as useful insights into design opportunities for these liminal spaces. There is a great potential within design practice to consider liminal spaces as a context where design of digital objects can play a significant role in supporting the unsettled and disoriented self.

Conclusion

In this paper we introduced the method Staged Atmosphere where designers and participants are in dialogue to conceptualise and understand the richness of a micro transitional experience to inform the design practice. The method involved through the process of the Air[Craft] workshop. During the workshop we opened up the dialogue between researchers and participants; both parties engaged with each other in constructing meaning, enabling the relationships based on trust and empathy. We argue that the design of the probe objects, the liminal spaces and the theatricality of their deployment are considered of equal importance in order to elicit rich reflections and stir imaginative thinking. We propose that for probes to become more than a single object, and a rich part of the design process, the theatrical environment has to be present, drawing the individual into a liminal space, giving them time for reflection. These forms of engagement can potentially be designed

and applied in a broad field of understanding transitional experiences and contribute to the broader conversation on a dialogical approach in experience-centred design.

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