

Belonging & Belongings

Briefing for student project October - December 2009

How do people present themselves online and offline and is there a connection between the two? Belonging & Belongings is a research project that takes a multi-disciplinary approach to exploring how people express their multiple identities using fashion and communication technologies. What makes people feel they belong to a certain group of people, and how do their belongings (physical and virtual, garments and media) express this belonging?



From fieldwork #001 in London

Because there are many ways in which people express their identity and sense of belonging, we want to look at individual styles in the way they dress and the way they use communication technologies. The results of this project may identify subcultures or trends that share a specific socio-techno style.

So far we have done some preliminary field work in the UK and Japan. This included observations on the street of people using portable technology, recorded on photos and video. We also asked 10 students in Kyoto to fill out a questionnaire and made pictures/diagrams of their online and offline appearances. This resulted in two 'field work books' (#001 and #002).

The research project focuses on the UK and Japan, and looks at London and Kyoto in particular. Within this focus a wide range of different expressions of identities exist, allowing us to do comparative studies between different (sub)cultures.



From fieldwork #002 in Kyoto

We would now like to take the research to a next level in the collaboration with Chelsea College. In this research project we want to focus a bit more on the motivations of people behind their online and offline presentations. This will include interviews and visualisations of the data that will be gathered. We aim towards the publication of a printed magazine in January.

Specification of the briefing

Identity and its relationship to material culture is a unique area of study where we can use the artefact to reconstruct traces of the user/consumer. In this project you will be asked to build on notions of identity and material culture to produce a magazine that details people's navigation of identity in real and virtual spaces. Those technologies that foster this identity will be key in helping you contextualise your research and inform the production of your publication.

You will be required to work in groups of five and produce a mock up of a magazine for presentation on December 3rd as well as a group report of a 1,000 words identifying the key areas and outcomes of your research.

As per the learning outcomes you will be assessed on the following:

- Recognise, distinguish and have a critical understanding of key concepts and debates relevant to the issues and themes raised.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the language and terminology of the above and deploy it effectively.
- Conduct research thoroughly and efficiently with appropriate referencing.
- Analyse and interpret research findings and communicate these in type-written form with structured and coherent arguments, acknowledging sources.
- Begin to outline and evaluate the place of your own practice in relation to the broader context of contemporary practice.

Time table

22 oct	Kick off lecture
29 oct	Explore/pilot study in groups (auto-interviews, experimental templates)
10 nov	Workshop full day (review and collect data, review documentation)
12 nov	Field work (interview others, document and visualise data)
19 nov	Data analysis (organise data, store selection on shared server)
26 nov	Produce magazine prototypes (7 copies)
3 dec	Present prototypes, select winning group
dec / jan	Create magazine with winning group (based on all data)

Deliverables

Interviews

- Create an interview script with up to 15 questions
- Do 5 pilot interviews within the student group
- Do 5-10 extra interviews with people outside student group
- Spend up to 30 minutes per interview
- Document the answers to the questions in a standardised way
- Provide an overview of descriptors of all interviewees (age, sex, nationality, lifestyle,...)
- Select one student from the group to be responsible for the storage of all the interview data

Diagrams

- Think ahead of the data you need to create interesting and relevant diagrams
- Visualise your observations and the answers to the interview questions in a series of diagrams
- Create up to 15 diagrams, either per individual interview or across interviewees
- Be aware that these diagrams should be reproducible in a magazine (2-dimensional and printed)
- Select one student from the group to be responsible for the storage of all the diagrams

Photography

- Prepare a script for the kind of pictures you want to take
- Make at least 5 photographs as part of the interviews
- Ask participants to sign a release form that gives permission to use the photographs for the project
- Use a digital camera with at least 6 million pixels
- Work with a resolution of 350 dpi for the print outs
- Store the original photos and the digitally manipulated copies on the shared project server
- Select one student from the group to be responsible for the storage of all the photographic materials

Magazine

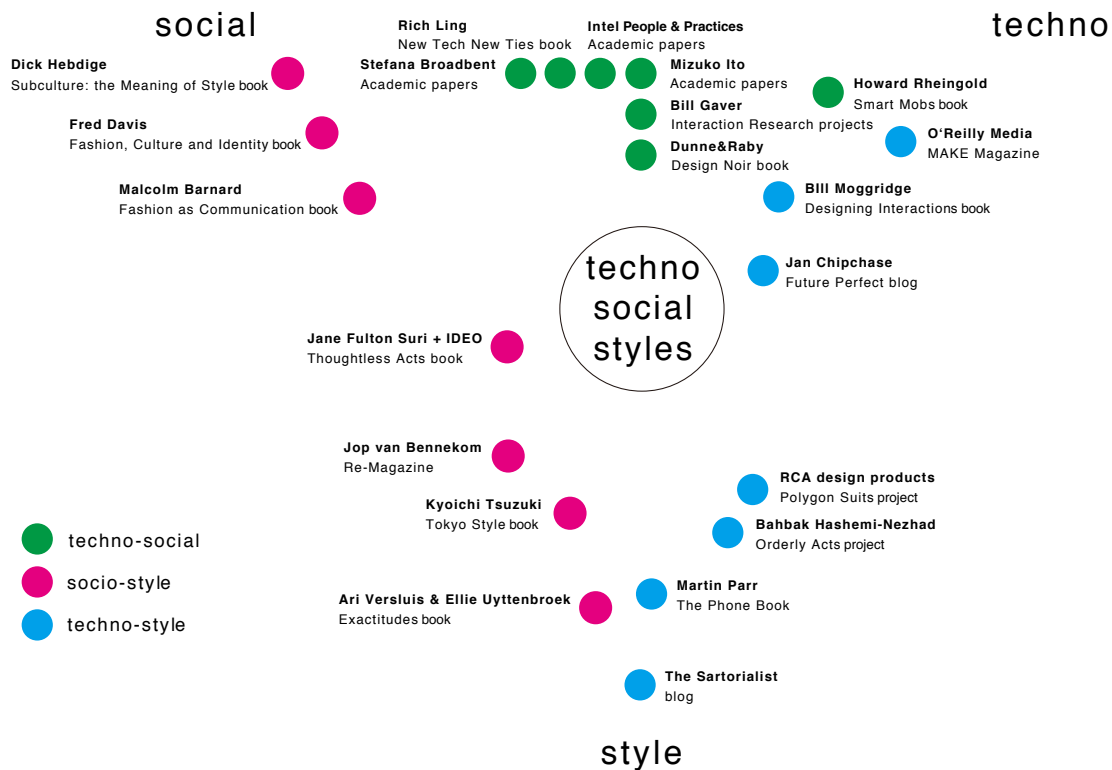
- Prepare a draft version of the magazine early on in the project
- Use this draft to guide the scripts for the interviews, diagrams and photography
- Use the pilot interviews to test out the draft version
- Adapt the draft version according to the findings from the pilot and wider sample
- Produce a magazine of at least 8 pages
- Work on a standard paper size to accommodate potential printing
- Size, lay out and format of the contents should be easily accessible yet attractive
- Pay attention to editorial design and information design
- Experiment with various paper weights and printing techniques
- Carefully select the paper in accordance with the printing quality/legibility/durability
- Produce 7 copies of the mock up magazine (for 5 students in the group, college and STBY)
- Remember that one-off designs may be very difficult to reproduce
- Select one student from the group to be responsible for the storage of the magazine materials

Group report

- Write 1000 word report identifying the key areas and outcomes of your research
- Length of this report should be 1000 words
- Select one student from the group to be responsible for joint production of report

References

As the theoretical framework for the research project we refer to 'techno-social styles'. We position this construct in the triangle between social studies, style studies and technology studies, as expressed in the diagram below. The coloured dots point to references we have described on the Belonging & Belongings blog.



More details and some of the pilot research materials can be found on our project blog:
www.stbyblogs.eu/Belonging-Belongings.

This research is initiated by Dr Daijiro Mizuno (Critical Design Lab at Kyoto University of Art and Design), Dr Geke van Dijk and Dr Bas Raijmakers (STBY design research London/Amsterdam).

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