

Design Anthropological Futures

Proposal for Interactive exhibition

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The Ethnography of Absence: Mapping Emotions

Background

Family Rituals 2.0 is a collaborative research project between four UK universities funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Digital Economy programme. Research disciplines within the project include anthropology, product design, psychology, design interaction and geography. The research is examining how quotidian family rituals contribute to wellbeing for mobile workers and their families during periods of work related separation. The project initially proposed that designers and anthropologists would undertake participant observation with families, but during pilot interviews it became abundantly clear that family time was sacrosanct and the research team were effectively denied access. This focused the project to develop tools for ethnographic encounters in absentia of the ethnographer's presence, one of which was the 'emotional map' (pictured below).



Interaction

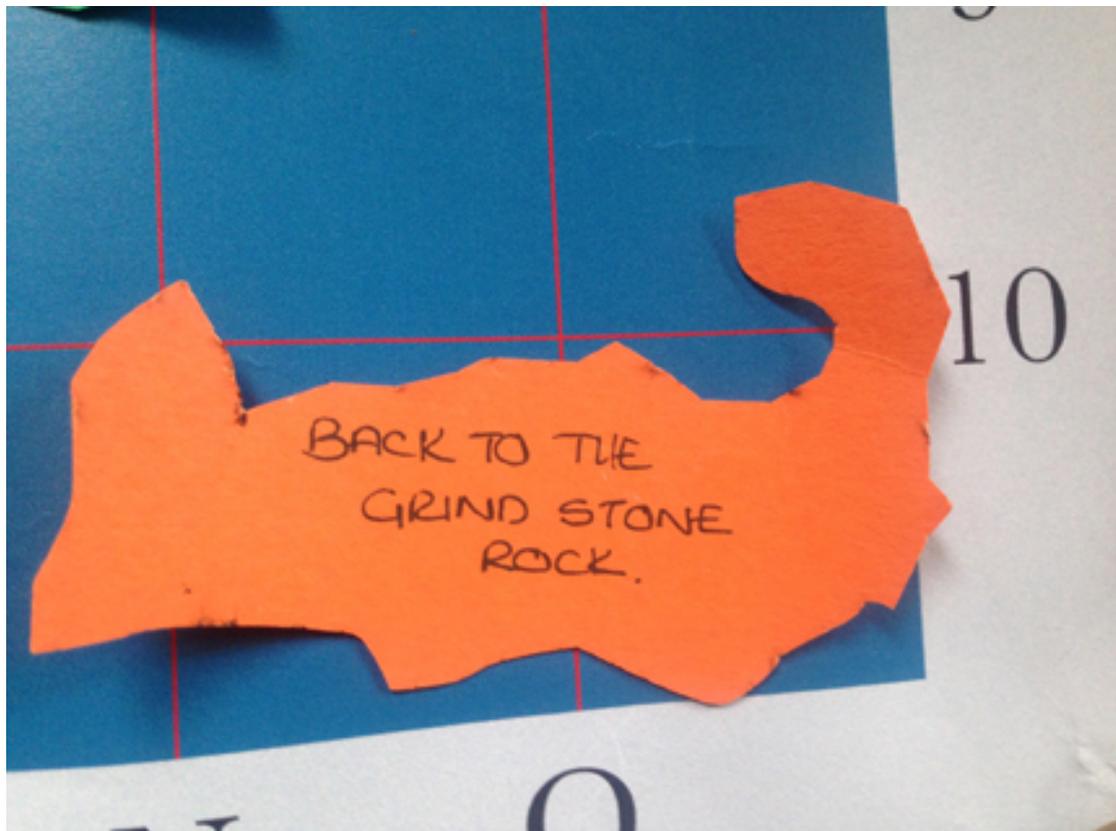
This interaction will place the workshop participants in the frame of the absent mobile worker, a form of auto ethnographic encounter. Participants will be asked to place islands on the map noting how they are feeling about being separated from 'family'. Notes will be anonymous and participants will be encouraged to add their islands throughout the conference with, ideally, a collaborative reading of the map towards the end of the event. There will be a map for each day of the conference and all attendees will be encouraged to participate. The workshop will identify key themes

that emerge from the maps landscape and speculate on how a digital intervention might address the quotidian rituals of family life that the absent mobile worker will be missing.

Interpretation

Current estimates for the worldwide 'mobile worker' population are currently estimated to be 1.19 billion, nearly 35% of the global workforce (IDC, 2010), and due to difficulty tracking those who work away from home it is suggested that being away from the family for periods of work is extensive and growing globally.

What does this mean for the family now and in the future? Whilst mobile communication technologies may afford day-to-day contact and 'checking in', what elements of family life do the mobile worker, and the families miss? The workshop will undertake a reflexive collaborative analysis of the maps and speculate on how digital futures may bridge the gap in space and time between the mobile worker (the delegates) and their families. The workshop will close with a short presentation of the speculative designs produced through this and other ethnographic tools used during the Family Rituals 2.0 project.



International Development Contractors (IDC) 2010 *Worldwide Worker population 2009-2013 Forecast*. Document no: 221309.

Workshop requirements

The workshop leader (Bichard) will bring all materials. Ideally the workshop would best be scheduled towards the end of the second day.