

Editorial

Analyzing design review conversations: Connecting design knowing, being and coaching

Whether they occur formally or informally in academic or professional settings, design review conversations are interactive performances between those who give and those who receive feedback, advice, critique, or mentoring. They are sites of authentic practice where design coaches (i.e., instructors, peers, experts, and industry or community stakeholders) implicitly or explicitly demonstrate or perform their design knowing and being, and make their accumulated experience, knowledge, competencies, values, and belief systems visible and shareable to others. They also provide a window into the insights coaches have about design learners as they seek to support them in becoming designers. For example, during a design review coaches readily identify problematic and promising aspects of a designer's work by drawing on repertoires of practice and knowledge to anticipate problems learners may encounter and ways to help them work through these problems. They point out features of a design that could be improved, push learners to justify their ideas about 'good design' more clearly and thoroughly, and praise design work by pointing to particular insights and choices. Design learners are also performing their design knowing and being — making visible their reasoning, perspectives, and habits of mind. Through design review conversations, learners are supported in revisiting and critically evaluating their design rationales, and making sense of design review experiences in ways that allow them to construct their own design thinking repertoire and evolving design identity.

Design review conversations are robust sites for investigation and action. They offer multiple lines of inquiry into the nature and nurture of design expertise — in ways that make manifest design thinking and ways of being and becoming, reveal interactions among personal—social—epistemic dimensions, and convey disciplinary values, norms, and expectations (Adams & Siddiqui, 2016). As a prevalent and common approach for helping designers to develop and demonstrate design expertise, they offer actionable insights that carry relevance across design domains. As such, design review conversations offer pathways for bridging the gap between design research and design practice.

The papers presented in this special edition all stem from the 10th Design Thinking Research Symposium (DTRS) held at Purdue University, Indiana, USA, in October 2014 in which participants shared a common dataset of *design review conversations*. This common dataset served a three-fold, interconnected purpose (Adams, 2016b). First it provided a common *focus of inquiry* for researchers from a diverse range of perspectives working in their own domains including art, architecture, business, cognitive and learning sciences, communication, computer science, design, education, engineering, industrial and product design, informatics and computing, science and technology, and sociology. The dataset also fostered *collaborative inquiry* among these researchers as they came together to share their findings at the symposium and make connections across individual studies to link aspects of



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design inquiry, design discourse and interactions (involving humans and non-humans), design being and becoming, and design coaching. Finally, through this special issue in *Design Studies*, the symposium proceedings (<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/dtrs/2014/>), a book based on the symposium, *Analyzing Design Review Conversations* and a special issue of *CoDesign* on the visual and material dimensions of design review interactions (forthcoming in 2016), we hope these same conversations foster *community inquiry* among a global cohort of design researchers, educators, and professionals.

As shown in [Figure 1](#), the DTRS10 dataset consisted of video-recordings with associated transcriptions of design review conversations across different disciplines, review structures (e.g., formal and informal, one-on-one and group critiques, in classroom, studio, and client settings) ([Oh et al., 2012](#)), and design phases over a 3-month period (see [Adams, 2016a](#)). The dataset also included work products such as digital presentations, storyboards, and prototypes. Participants in the design review conversations included students working individually and in teams on design projects and numerous versions of coaches: instructors, experts, industry and community stakeholders, and peer students. The settings included choreography, entrepreneurial design, industrial design, mechanical engineering design, and service-learning multidisciplinary design. While there were many similarities, design reviews across settings varied in their structure, intentionality, and approach. All data were collected from June 2013 to January 2014 in naturally occurring settings.

This history of sharing a common dataset to bring together diverse methodologies and advance an integrative synthesis on the nature and nurture of design expertise has become a 'landmark in design thinking research' ([McDonnell & Lloyd, 2009a](#)). [Figure 2](#) illustrates the expanding scale and scope of Design Thinking Research Symposia

shared datasets – broadening to include multiple contexts over time, inclusive of different disciplines, and a capacity to support different theoretical and methodological frameworks. For example, DTRS2 held at TU Delft, The Netherlands, focused on the use of protocol analysis as a research tool for analyzing individual and team design activity (see [Cross, Christiaans, & Dorst, 1996](#); [Dorst, 1995](#)); DTRS7 held at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, UK, focused on stakeholders' design meetings in authentic settings (see [McDonnell & Lloyd, 2009a, 2009b](#)). Taking a slightly different track, DTRS9 held at the University of Northumbria, UK, was based on a shared design task – the design of products, spaces, and services for making growing old seem more attractive and inviting ([Rodgers, 2012, 2013](#)).

As a collection, the papers selected for this special issue provide vantage points for imagining a more holistic perspective that embraces the complexities of design. These papers argue for an integrative view that connects design knowing with ways of being and becoming (see [Dall'Alba, 2009](#)), and further connects these with design coaching practices. Some authors bridged or borrowed frameworks from within and outside design domains; others challenged existing views and revealed new conceptualizations or areas of inquiry that have potential to advance our collective understanding of the nature and nurture of design expertise. Whether authors focused their investigations on design inquiry, design being, or design coaching, each took up the work of connecting design research to design practice. They collectively make connections between what happens within design review conversations and the ways coaches support or stimulate learners in becoming designers – pushing them to commit, justify, defend, evaluate, and reconsider their decisions with an eye towards what it means to be a designer. From this vantage point, they offer a variety of recommendations regarding the critical role of

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