

Shakin' the classroom

Spreading alternative knowledge sharing methods

Please briefly explain the knowledge sharing method/approach/tool.

What are the main processes? What are the expected outcomes? In what ways does that method bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

This method helps students (and, in fact, participants involved in any project) to consider perspectives and worldviews that are not necessarily human-centered. It does this by giving these other entities (plants, animals, buildings, products, systems) a voice in debates, around the discussion table, across different meetings, and across different locations. It can involve role-play, but it is not only based on one person taking another identity for a short period of time. It relates on a thorough, often interdisciplinary research about a non-human of interest, and within the bio-physical, cultural and specific project/stakeholder context. It is a powerful tool that is able to open up perspectives that usually stay invisible and therefore neglected.

(in your diagram, I think this method belongs to Othering)

In which way is this method alternative?

How does it try to bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

It brings the agency of non-humans into the learning and discussion of the future/change. It becomes different when the group considers the active agency of a non-human, instead of observing it as a passive object, or assuming all its needs and properties. By giving non-humans the active voice, their rights, emotions, ways of operating, their flexibility/adaptability and their non-negotiables/inflexibility come to the surface, in a specific context. The method is alternative as it gives agency to what we have considered inanimate for a long time.

What are your experiences with the method?

In case you have created, tested or experienced the method, what are your experiences? How have you applied the method? Would you change anything or suggest further development?

I have applied the method in different ways. For example, in a project that used green technology for solving the water and sanitation systems in informal settlements, I brought the Wetland as a non-human into design workshops with residents, with engineers, and in the explanation of the entire project. This is the video in which this Wetland speaks about her experience in this project: <https://entangledwithwater.com/Wetland>

Then, I used it in a neighborhood regeneration project, where residents and students were interviewing selected buildings from the area. Here, choosing the questions that you would ask to a building was an interesting exercise, as well as hearing the responses that different residents would give from the perspective of the building.

I have also used it in a course where I assisted a colleague in teaching digital tools for designing. Students had a task to build a doll in real life, and then also to model that doll in the virtual world. As they were doing some design exercises, they were filling out bi-weekly Google Questionnaires from the perspective of the doll (sometimes the one on their desk, sometimes the one in their computers, and sometimes it was the conversation between the two of them). Asking the students to actively take the perspectives of 'objects' in these two realms, enabled us to open up valuable conceptual themes with them.

In your opinion, for what kind of pedagogical contexts, settings, participants and/or objectives is this method best suited for?

E.g. age, educational level, cultural and professional background, etc. Did it prove useful or successful in particular contexts and for particular objectives?

I have used it in different contexts, with students and with residents of different ages. I think it works the best in interdisciplinary teams that can understand a specific non-human from different perspectives. Otherwise, we might miss to represent the non-human in the right way.

What are the requirements for applying this method?

Are there any requirements or limits in terms of location, number or profile of participants, tools and devices, time constraints and other? Are there certain skills, sensitivities or relations that need to be developed or assumed for the method to be successfully applied? What are the crucial points to pay attention to when implementing the method in different contexts? Are there any contexts for which this method is not best suited?

The tasks needs to be designed with careful consideration of the goals of the course/project and learning objectives for the group.

If possible, please briefly explain the context in which the method/tool/approach has been developed.

Who were the main actors? What were the main reasons/motivations/inspirations behind the creation? Which previous developments have influenced it? If relevant, in what ways did the method/tool develop or change over time or in different locations/contextes?

I think I explained in the question above; if you need more information, I can expand on this.

Could you provide any relevant testimonies?

If possible, please provide testimonies, reflections, evaluations and statements about the method, by yourself or method's author(s) or other users.

NA

Additional references and links

If possible, please provide additional links, literature, instructions and/or other relevant content.

I will share additional pictures in the email.

Recently, I came across this video from a course at University of Groningen: https://youtu.be/ig_CK9cmLb8 . I am not related to this research group or project, but I think they used this method in a brilliant way.