

Host Report of Short Term Scientific Mission

COST STSM Reference Number: COST-STSM-IS1305-021116-080656

Period: 02/11/2016 to 12/11/2016

COST Action: IS1305

STSM type: Regular (from Austria to Spain)

STSM Title: Designing collaborations: Could design probes contribute to better communication between collaborators?

Guest/STSM applicant: Alisa Goikhman, OeAW

Host: Prof. Roberto Theron University of Salamanca, theron@usal.es

Duration: 8 working days

Report

The purpose of the STSM of Alisa Goikhman was to investigate on the difficulties and challenges that interdisciplinary research in Digital Humanities offer. This problem was approached from a User-centered design (UCD) perspective and, in order to provide the best possible setting to conduct her investigation, the scientific mission was scheduled to occur during the celebration of the Fourth International Conference on Technological Ecosystems for Enhancing Multiculturality ([TEEM'16](https://2016.teemconference.eu/new-trends-in-digital-humanities/), organized by the host institution), in general, and the Track *New Trends in Digital Humanities* (<https://2016.teemconference.eu/new-trends-in-digital-humanities/>), that was co-chaired by the host researcher (Roberto Theron) and Eveline Wandl-Wogt (OeAW). Furthermore, part of the STSM was carried out during the COST ENEL working group 4 meeting held in Salamanca.

Previous to the visit, we discussed during some weeks which UCD methodologies would fit better, and we reasoned that, for the time frame at hand, Design Probes ¹would be an excellent device to mediate between the different project participants, as they are reported to provide insights into the personal perspective of the user that are hard to gain otherwise, encouraging open discussion and stimulating the imagination. However, to leverage the power of this methodology for DH we needed to discover as much as possible on the customary methods and conventions in the collaboration and inner-communication of scholars in DH. To that end we planned to carry out two participatory design activities, and designed the design game that was to be used in the process:

1. Survey and interviews (before the STSM)
2. Immersive workshop (during the STSM)

Survey and Interviews

SURVEY

The online-questionnaire (see Figure 1) was prepared and distributed before the STSM, and highlighted 6 areas of interest:

- interdisciplinary
- knowledge
- methods
- prototyping
- design

¹ B. Gaver, T. Dunne, and E. Pacenti. Design: Cultural probes. *interactions*, 6(1):21 {29, Jan. 1999. <http://doi.acm.org/10.1145/291224.291235>.

- dissemination

6 → **Interdisciplinarity...**

name issues you encountered personally, as well as challenges that you noticed others to have

Please address some of the following aspects:

- Communication
- Leadership / Decision Making
- Prototyping
- Documentation

To add a paragraph, press **SHIFT + ENTER**

7 → **Knowledge / Communication**

Collaborations in DH result in new knowledge. It not only allows the project participants to reflect back on the methodologies in their respective disciplines, but more importantly on ways to integrate the new knowledge into their field.

In your experience, how often do you learn something new from your collaborators, and do you implement this knowledge in other projects.
Please give an example.

Figure 1. Disseminated questionnaire

Results: The survey was answered by 24 participants (65% women) from 12 states. It was answered by 10 scholars with background in humanities, 10 scholars whose research focuses on methodologies, education and art, and 4 scholars from information technologies.

INTERVIEWS

We conducted three additional interviews based on the same list of questions with participants of the TEEM'16 conference.

Immersive workshop

The designed game (i.e., Cards Against Digital Humanities) consisted on a card game around the innovative approaches to the European dictionary portal.

12 members of the working group participated in the game (see Figure 2).



Roberto Therón
@robertotheron



Siguiendo

@caissarl @TEEMConference playing against the cards

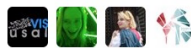


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Figure 2. Design game: Cards against Digital Humanities (<https://twitter.com/robertotheron/status/794209914042322945>)

The game consisted of eight hubs distributed on the table. Each hub highlighted an emerging area of experimentation² that were chosen by us in order to provide a concrete base for the discussion (e.g., Humanities Gaming, Visualization and data design, Code, Software, and Platform Studies, etc.). Each hub surrounded by 7 empty spots, which the players filled out using the cards they were dealt (see Figure 3).

² A. Burdick, J. Drucker, P. Lunenfeld, T. Presner, and J. Schnapp. Digital Humanities. Mit Press, 2012.



Figure 3. A participant is arguing why a particular innovation could be added to one hub

Results and discussion

The STSM proposal of using design probes to enhance communication in Digital Humanities has been published in ACM proceedings:

Alisa Goikhman, Roberto Therón, and Eveline Wandl-Vogt. 2016. Designing collaborations: Could design probes contribute to better communication between collaborators? In Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Technological Ecosystems for Enhancing Multiculturality (TEEM '16). ACM, New York, NY, USA, XXX-XXX. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/3012430.3012431>

As a first result, we can conclude that the game provoked a speculative discussion about the practices and ingredients of a DH project. We observed the lively interaction and discussion between the players with the goal to distinguish challenges of communication in a diverse group of collaborators.

After the activities carried out during the TEEM'16 conference and COST ENeL working group 4 meeting, the results coming from the survey and interviews were analysed. A number of issues were identified (as discussed in detail in Alisa Gohkman's STSM report).

Design probes prototype

With the input obtained from questionnaires, interviews and design game, an online prototype addressing the identified issues was proposed (see Figure 4).

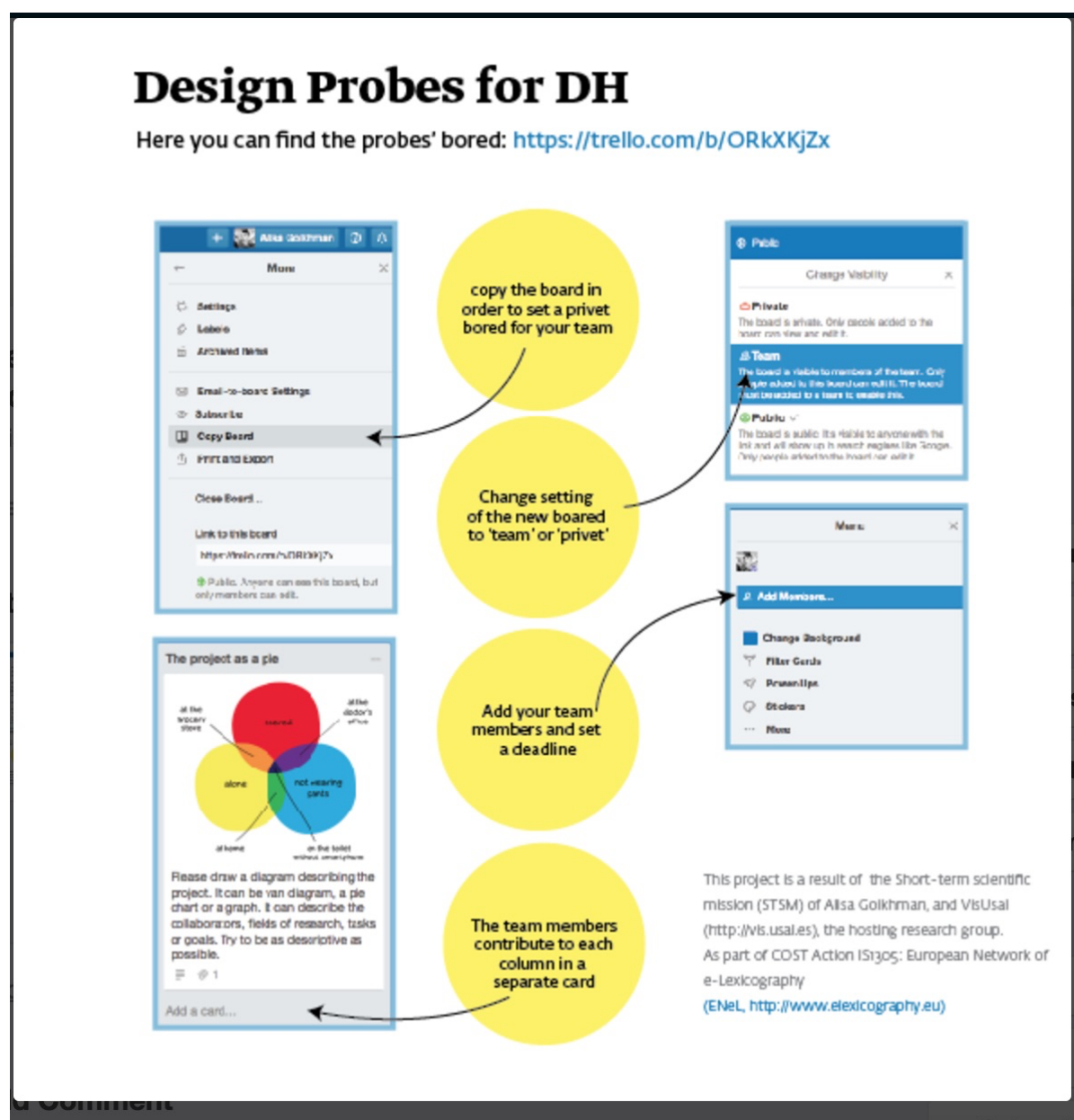


Figure 4. Instructions for the online prototype for the proposed design probes

Very briefly, we can describe the probes as a Trello ³collaborative board consisting of four tasks, namely (full details on the purpose of these tasks can be found in Alisa Gohkman's STSM report):

1. Creating a common inspiration
2. Screen capture — walking tours of related projects
3. Venn diagram drawing of the project components
4. Pass the Parcel game for terminology

At the moment of writing this report, the first prototype of the design probes is undergoing evaluation, with several research groups testing it, that will provide feedback that will be used for the re design of the probes.

STSM Assessment

To conclude, I assess Alisa's STSM as a success in terms of the results obtained and the pathways the mission opened for future research. Regarding the capabilities and skills of Alisa, she demonstrated during the STSM a high level of expertise in human-centred design coupled with great initiative and enthusiasm in the process of interacting with both our local research team and the bigger and multidisciplinary group of people that participated in the proposal.

Dr Roberto Theron

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³ <https://trello.com/>