

Prototyping cultures: social experimentation, do-it-yourself science and beta-knowledge

*A two-day conference organised by the Spanish National Research Council, Madrid
4-5 November 2010*

Prototypes have acquired certain prominence and visibility in recent times. Software development is perhaps *the* case in point, where the release of non-stable versions of programmes has become commonplace, as is famously the case in free and open source software. Developers are here known for releasing beta or work-in-progress versions of their programmes, as an invitation or call for others to contribute their own developments and closures. An important feature of prototyping in this case is the incorporation of *failure* as a legitimate and very often empirical realisation.

Prototyping has also become an important currency of explanation and description in art-technology contexts, where the emphasis is on the productive and processual aspects of experimentation. Medialabs, hacklabs, community and social art collectives, dorkbots, open collaborative websites or design thinking workshops are further spaces and sites where prototyping and experimentation have taken hold as both modes of knowledge-production and cultural and sociological styles of exchange and interaction. Common to many such endeavours are: user-centred innovation, where users are incorporated into the artefact's industrial design process; ICT mediated forms of collaboration (email distribution lists, wikispaces, peer-to-peer digital channels), or; decentralised organisational structures. Some economists favour the term 'open innovation' to describe an emerging production paradigm. From a historical and sociological angle, however, the backdrop of such cultures of prototyping is not infrequently connected, if in complex and not always obvious ways, with the do-it-yourself, environmental and recycling movements of the 1980s and 90s. Prototyping, then, as both a means and an end of social re-production.

Experimentation has also been at the centre of recent reassessments of the organisation of laboratory, expert and more generally epistemic cultures in the construction of science. An interesting development is the shift in emphasis from the experimental as a knowledge-site to the experimental as a social process: for example, in open access publishing, or more generally in open collaborative knowledge exchanges, where sociality and social exchange often become the limit-tests of experimentation itself. These are only a few examples of what we mean by prototyping cultures. Our workshop invites participants to consider their own work in light of some of these developments and tensions.

[List of speakers]

Georgina Born, *Professor of Music and Anthropology*, Oxford University.

Nerea Calvillo, *Architect*, CMASA Arquitectos.

Alberto Corsín Jiménez, *Investigador Científico*, CCHS, CSIC.

Hernani Dias, *Re:farm the city*.

Adolfo Estalella, *Postdoctoral Fellow*, CCHS, CSIC.

Michael Guggenheim, *Research Fellow*, University of Zurich / Goldsmiths College.

Chris Kelty, *Associate Professor*, Center for Society and Genetics, University of California, Los Angeles.

James Leach, *Professor*, Department of Anthropology, Aberdeen University.

Javier Lezaún, *James Martin Lecturer in Science and Technology Governance*, Said Business School, Oxford University.

George Marcus, *Chancellor's Professor of Anthropology*, University of California, Irvine.

Alain Pottage, *Reader in Property Law*, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Lucy Suchman, *Professor*, Anthropology of Science and Technology, Lancaster University.

Fred Turner, *Associate Professor*, Department of Communication, Stanford University

Alex Wilkie, *Lecturer in Design and Research Fellow*, Interaction Research Studio, Goldsmiths College.

Thursday, 4 November

Venue: Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, C/ Albasanz 26-28, Madrid 28037. Room: Sala Gómez Moreno, 2C24

9:45. **Welcome.** Eduardo Manzano, Director, CCHS (CSIC); Alberto Corsín Jiménez & Adolfo Estalella, conference organizers.

10:00. **Introduction: Prototyping and social experimentation,** Alberto Corsín Jiménez.

10:15. **The end of innovation (as we knew it),** Lucy Suchman.

10:45. **A Countercultural Prototype for Cold War Social Engineering: Revisiting the Pepsi Pavilion,** Fred Turner.

11:15. Questions and discussion.

11:45. Coffee break.

12:15. **Infra(proto)types,** Nerea Calvillo.

12:45. **Re:farm the city. Connecting food to people,** Hernani Dias.

13:15. Questions and discussion.

13:45 – 15:00. Lunch break

15:00. **Prototyping and the prospects of obesity,** Alex Wilkie.

15:30. **Ethnography of and as prototyping culture,** George Marcus.

16:00. Questions and discussion.

16:30-17.00. Coffee break.

17:00. **Title TBC,** Georgina Born

17:30-17:45. Questions and discussion.

17:45-18:00. Final discussion.

Friday, 5 November

Venue: Medialab-Prado, Plaza de las Letras, C/ Alameda 15, 28014 Madrid

10:00. **Prototyping as legal techne. A historical case study,** Alain Pottage

10:30. **Title TBC,** James Leach

11:00-11.30. Questions and discussion.

11:30-12.00. Coffee break.

12:00. **From Prototyping to Allotyping: The Invention of Change of Use and the Crisis of Building Types,** Michael Guggenheim.

12:30. **Establishing the reality of politics: Revisiting Kurt Lewin's experiments in 'democratic atmospheres',** Javier Lezaun.

13:00-13.30. Questions and discussion.

13:30 – 15:15. Lunch break.

15:15. **The hospitable prototype: a techno-polis in construction,** Adolfo Estalella & Alberto Corsín Jiménez.

15:45pm. **Title TBC,** Chris Kelty.

16:15-16.45. Questions and discussion.

16:45. Closing remarks.

More information: <http://www.prototyping.es/prototyping-conference>
Program and inscription: http://medialab-prado.es/article/prototyping_workshop
Contact: info@prototyping.es