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Haplos: Designing Technologies for Exploring Somaesthetic Experiences

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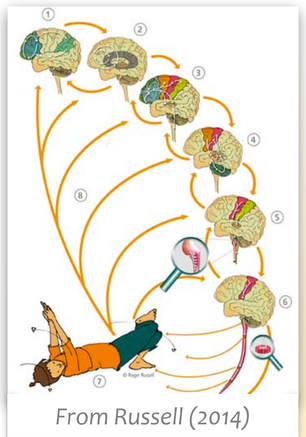
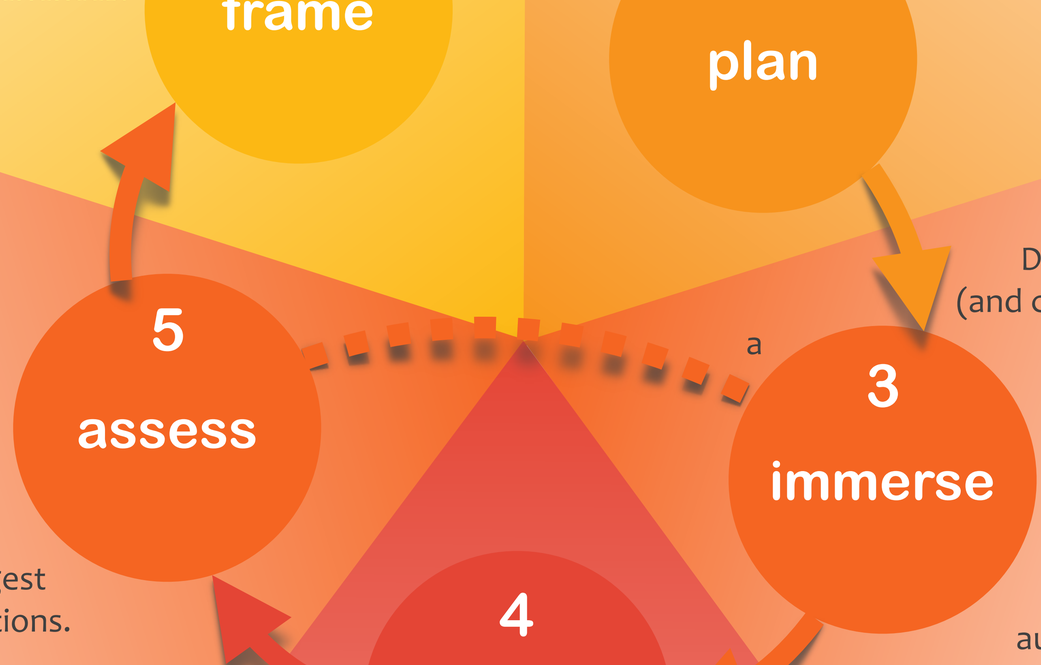


From Russell (2014)

Somatics is the first-person, phenomenological study of sensation and perception through movement. The development of somatic knowledge can enhance one's ability to sense and interact with the environment and attain personal well-being. The Feldenkrais Method (FM) is a movement-based learning system and somatic technique that aims to improve the organisation of the body in action by creating increasingly finely-differentiated and integrated cortical representations of the body schema (Verrel et al., 2015). Somatics has been applied to the design of human-computer interaction paradigms (Schiphorst, 2008). How can the neurophysiological and interrelational dimensions of the learning experience within the Feldenkrais Method lead the design of technologies that generate somatic and aesthetic —"somaesthetic" (Shusterman, 2008)— experiences?

This poster shows the iterative and agile design research method we have adapted from typical design thinking processes (Brown, 2008), an approach used by the Project 8 secondment partner Kin (a design studio) and by collaborator Curiosity (a design strategy firm). Immersion in the problem space by practical development of expertise in the Feldenkrais Method is critical, as is the constant development and assessment of prototypes.

An Awareness Through Movement (ATM) class from the Feldenkrais Method



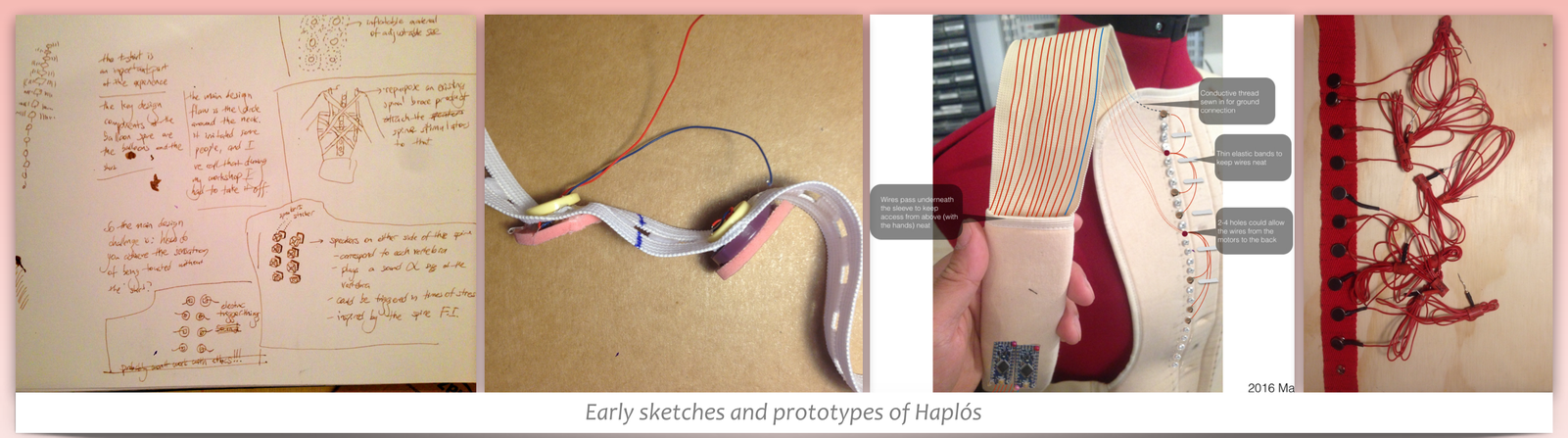
Deep expertise in somatic learning principles is (and continues to be) developed by participating in 4-year professional certification training programme for the Feldenkrais Method. Thick descriptions of phenomenological experience are gathered through conducting FM *Awareness Though Movement* and *Functional Integration* classes on other people and on myself (i.e., autoethnography) to understand FM principles deeply and translate them into design ideas and decisions.

Prototypes are assessed continuously by the investigators on themselves and other people in structured workshops, through daily use, and in informal events. Results of assessments reframe the problem, instigate adjustments in the research plan, suggest new strategies for deepening immersion in the problem, and suggest new design directions.

Assessing different versions of Haplós

The starting point for the design of the technology is Sally Dean's Somatic Costume™ (Dean, 2014), educational tools that bring awareness to different body areas as well as generate different movement qualities and experiences. We are applying FM learning principles to Dean's work to create **Haplós**, a modular, wearable garment that uses detachable vibratory motors. Haplós will be used in a set of scenarios and use cases in which it can be programmed in specific ways.

Conducting an ATM class



Early sketches and prototypes of Haplós

Brown, T. (2008). Design Thinking. Harvard Business Review, 86(6), 84–92.

Dean, S. E. (2014). Somatic costumes™: Traversing multi-sensorial landscapes. Scene, 2(1), 81–87. http://doi.org/10.1386/scene.2.1-2.81_1

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Schiphorst, T. (2008). Bridging Embodied Methodologies From Somatics And Performance To Human Computer Interaction (Ph.D. dissertation). University of Plymouth, United Kingdom.

Shusterman, R. (2008). Body consciousness: a philosophy of mindfulness and somaesthetics. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Verrel, J., Almagor, E., Schumann, F., Lindenberger, U., & Kühn, S. (2015). Changes in neural resting state activity in primary and higher-order motor areas induced by a short sensorimotor intervention based on the Feldenkrais method. Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 9. http://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2015.00232

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kin Curiosity

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