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## Editorial: Synergy and experiential knowledge in collaboration – the Experiential Knowledge SIG

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### Introduction

The selected papers for the EKSIG section at the *DRS 2020: Synergy* present case studies that address tacit knowledge generated and communicated in the *processes* of making and designing that take place as collaborations, in one way or another, between the maker and the material, the maker and the designer, or the maker and the user. The papers relate to the fundamental issue of the DRS Special Interest Group on Experiential Knowledge (EKSIG) that is concerned with the understanding and role of knowledge in research and professional design practice. It is also linked to the trend that EKSIG is leading with regard to how joint experiential knowledge is accumulated and communicated in and through collaborations or collaborative processes, how synergy between collaborators is generated, and how such knowledge is embodied in the outputs and may be traced back to the origin of the practice.

### EKSIG section: Selected papers

The paper ‘Material connections in craft making: the case of felting’ by Bilge Merve Aktaş, Maarit Mäkelä and Tarja-Kaarina Laamanen (paper 216) describes a study that aimed to understand how the practice of felt makers developed in connection with wool (i.e. collaboration between the makers and the material). It was carried out by interviewing and observing felt makers in Turkey and its empirical data was analysed using Malafouris’s (2013) theory of material engagement. The data demonstrates how felt makers’ identities evolved in relation to things, people, space, and time. “Through their material interactions, felt makers design their artefacts, organise their workspace, and review their connections to other makers”. The findings of the study elucidate a holistic and insightful understanding of the material’s role in shaping felting practice.

Tacit knowledge generated and communicated in a collaboration between the maker and the



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designer can be seen in Estelle Berger's paper entitled 'Empowering artisans through design: a case study on the dynamics of collaborative projects' (paper 113). The paper examines collaborations between artisans and designers, aiming to address the gap between theory and practice by analysing the dynamics of co-design projects. The case study presented in the paper was conducted in France with immigrant artisans who were paired up with designers to work as co-design teams to design and prototype objects based on the expertise of the artisans including wickerwork, woodwork, sewing, jewellery, tapestry, and ceramics. This case study followed a guiding framework built from Ingold (2012) and Niedderer (2013) that consisted of the following three approaches: know-how driven; material driven; and concept driven approaches. The framework did not aim at generalizable findings, but rather at contribution to knowledge on the dynamics of collaborative projects that could potentially be used for future projects. The results of the case study led to the following recommendations to promote stable and rich collaborations: preparing the collaborative approach; projects' dynamics and management; and empowering artisans to play an active role in their professional path. Transversal competences and interactional expertise are key to success.

The study presented in Jessica Priemus's paper entitled 'Materialising weaving: embedding a narrative of construction time within experimental woven textiles' (paper 354) aims to illuminate a synergy between the maker and the user. The question asks in the paper is what methods and tools of design could be utilised to connect the user to textile making processes. It is to find ways in which woven textiles can narrate the weaver's traces of time involved in hand weaving to the user, serving as the site for user engagement. Priemus explored the question from a first-person perspective of a weaver who employed a practice-led research methodology, a weaving log to track her own actions, and Anni Albers' (1965) hierarchical 'three elements of weaving', which includes texture (weave), yarn and colour, to provoke haptic experiences to the potential user. The study followed Nimkulrat's (2012, p. 1) practice-led research methodology that places an emphasis on how research can "theoretically inform practice" in order to "develop the practitioner's aesthetic intelligence" in designing objects that can be interpreted more easily. The outcome of this research was the development of a "framework for textile designers and weavers that privileges cloth as a conduit for temporal connections between maker and user".

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About the Author:

**Dr Nithikul Nimkulrat** intertwines research with textile practice, focusing on experiential knowledge in craft processes in the context of design research. Her current research interest lies in the correlation between craft practice and mathematics as well as digital technology. She is the main editor of *Crafting Textiles in the Digital Age* (Bloomsbury, 2016).

For more information on the Experiential Knowledge SIG, please visit the SIG's webpage at <http://drs.silkstart.com/cpages/experiential-knowledge-sig>. To find out whether the SIG is organising a satellite event to the DRS2020 conference, or just to get in touch with members and see news on the SIG, please visit the SIG webpage.