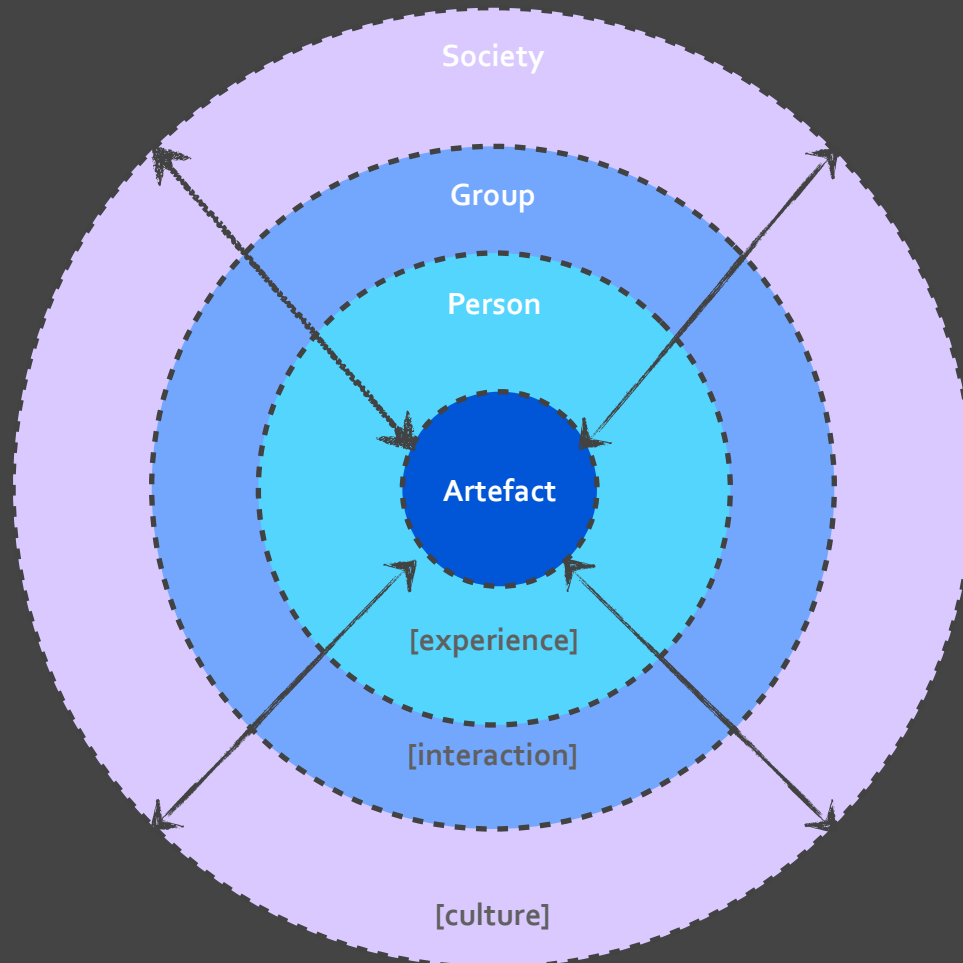


Design Ripples

aka Heather's research



Design Ripples Explained

Designed artefacts change the world(s) into which they are released. Digital artefacts especially create spaces for encounter, action and knowing. They can shape individual lifeworlds, interpersonal relations and social networks, providing ways for people to interact with each other and with the world. I think of these multiple layers of perturbations caused by designed artefacts as *design ripples*.

Because designed artefacts can change and, on some level, even create worlds, their design is extremely important and can have far-reaching effects. This is increasingly true as digital artefacts become more intimately caught up in individual lifeworlds, interpersonal interactions and culture. Conversely, culture and social groups can also shape how artefacts are conceived and used, and consequently how they develop. The goal of my research is to explore these dynamics in order to a) provide insight to designers that might be able to help them design more effectively and responsibly; and b) explore the role of technology in society in ways that can make contributions in the fields of cultural studies and philosophy of technology.

The *artefact* is at the center of my diagram, because that is my focus and anchor. It is what enables me to maintain relevance to the design process. The next ripple outward from the artefact is the *person*, the human who interacts with the artefact. At this level we can talk about that person's *experience*. Moving beyond individuals we can then look at a *group* of people that is shaped by or has a shared experience of the artefact. Here we can look at *interaction*. Finally, we can reach the level of society at large and speak of *culture* and its dynamics in relation to the artefact. Importantly, these ripples are *not* one way only. Society, social groups and individuals can shape artefacts as well. The shaping is mutual and ongoing at many levels.

There are several disciplines that are relevant to my research. HCI/d is probably the most obvious, as it is concerned with designing digital artefacts. *Phenomenology* and *philosophy of technology* are also relevant, particularly at the level of individual experience. I am especially interested in developing some type of analytic framework in the tradition of philosophy of technology to explore how digital artefacts can mediate between people and the world. *Communication, cultural studies, social Informatics and science and technology studies (STS)* are also involved at the group and societal levels. Finally, I would also like to use methods from *critical theory* to make visible the types of dynamics I have been describing, which might not be otherwise apparent.

With my research, I hope to ultimately be able to help us as a society to make informed choices about the design of our world that is increasingly shaped and mediated by technology.