

## Influential Researcher: Dr Emmanuel Tseklevs



Dr Emmanuel Tseklevs is a Senior Lecturer in Design Interactions at Lancaster University. Emmanuel's current work focusses on co-design of digital tools in the areas of health, ageing and wellbeing. Emmanuel is currently working on research projects that envisage the future in creative ways using design. He employs playful design intervention as a means of engaging with people in the early stages of Dementia, with families of children with autism and with public health policymakers. Emmanuel is a co-editor of the Ashgate Design for Healthcare book to be published in 2016 and blogs regularly for The Guardian and The Conversation on the design and use of technology in Health.

### How have you engaged with public policymakers as a researcher?

Most recently I have engaged with policymakers through the AHRC-funded pilot ProtoPolicy (<http://imagination.lancs.ac.uk/activities/ProtoPolicy>). In the world of an ageing population, a team of UK researchers, worked with Age UK Lancashire and the all-party parliamentary design and innovation group to explore how older people want to live post-2021 and what tech could be useful to support independent living. The project's aim was to investigate how 'design fictions' can be used to help politicians and community groups imagine the future implications of policy initiatives in creative ways. A number of future scenarios were envisaged that sparked debate on the issues and policies around ageing. These included:

- A euthanasia wearable 'design fiction': a smart watch device which enables the wearer to end their own life when they choose to.
- A smart therapist 'design fiction': a fully automated smart home similar to the one portrayed in the Robot & Frank sci-fi film (2012) and a new type of specialist fully equipped to fix the array of smart goods and "program" human behaviour, to further support independent living for older people.

These 'design fictions' were then shared with politicians in an event held in Westminster that was designed to provoke debate and provide a space for engagement between policymakers, researchers and community groups.

### What are the challenges? What practical skills and strategies can help to address these?

There are several challenges when seeking to engage with policymakers. There are logistical challenges, such as finding the time to engage given policymakers' very tight schedule and availability. Communication can also be a challenge. As researchers we tend to use a technical language and offer very comprehensive descriptions of our work and its aims, whereas policymakers tend to be more to the point and often expect a very brief and direct description of the benefits of research. Academics tend to focus more on the academic value of research, yet for policymakers societal outcomes of research are often considered the aspects of most value, when backed-up with a solid evidence base. Therefore it is critical that researchers develop better communication skills – placing emphasis on describing their work in a couple of sentences and using a lay language. Highlighting related cases from other contexts or countries always helps in enhancing understanding and communicating the value of research outcomes and in certain cases can win policymakers over.

### **How has engagement with policymakers enhanced your research and your career?**

Engaging with policymakers has enhanced the reach of my research through dissemination and knowledge exchange, but it has also helped me to improve the core communication skills a researcher needs. Since engaging with policymakers I have developed a better understanding of how to frame my research area when applying for research grants and when writing blogs or articles for various online media outlets. It has generally helped me to express much more clearly and succinctly the value of my research and its contribution to society.

### **You can read examples of Dr Tseklevs writing for The Guardian and The Conversation at:**

*It's not too late to turn the NHS apps library disaster into an opportunity*

<https://theconversation.com/its-not-too-late-to-turn-the-nhs-apps-library-disaster-into-an-opportunity-49171>

*The rise of wearable health tech could mean the end of the sickie*

<https://theconversation.com/the-rise-of-wearable-health-tech-could-mean-the-end-of-the-sickie-41320>

*Can co-design help wearable technology take off?*

<http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2014/sep/04/co-design-wearable-technology>

*Wearable tech for Christmas? It probably won't help you get fit*

<http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/2014/dec/01/wearable-technology-gadget-christmas-health-fitness>