



*Techno-cultural devices* are ones we use to *transpose* “wicked problems” to where the problem is reproduced, but now with propositions that *we can work with*. That is, we move them *from* vicious circles (that characterise wicked problems) to generative loops, with the power to change *us*.

One major challenge with operating necessary changes in people, culture and society, are the *passive* affordances that, along with our *active* repertoires, shape deeply wired and enduring tendencies of our life-form. Even when people *want* to change, they readily *reproduce* the life-form.

Because they embody an element of random, techno-cultural devices can be used to transpose passive affordances into a realm of learning. One can foresee a range of experimental approaches to *pushing walls* within the agglomeration of passive and active tendencies that determine our life-form.



A device is here defined as a technological arrangement set up by a group of users, that is *partly* left to its own means. It is not automatic, but produces outcomes that are unpredicted, yet may be instrumental in revealing the intention of the group, as efforts are sustained and repertoires hatched.

The device accordingly shares some characteristics with the embodied object, in that it constitutes a body which—like a heavenly body, for instance the moon—has a *backside*. In the terms of Merleau-Ponty, the backside of the object, is *passive* (because present but unseen/not sensed).

We can turn around an object and wherever we perceive it from, there is always a backside. It is implied by our perceiving the object from several sides. In this sense, the object mirrors the frontal organisation of our own senses, and also the 360° scope achieved by turning, or moving.

Which is why we can use such an object to witness events that we are not around to observe: when we say of a river that it *flows*, Merleau-Ponty writes in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, we have surreptitiously placed in the river a *witness* to its course—e.g., a round stone in the river-bed.

When a thing, which otherwise would be lost in the infinity of matter, rises to such prominence, it is not only constituted as a object that appears to us and is perceived, it appears on the horizon of our perception as a *body*. This is the philosophical sense of *embodiment* (way beyond health & wellbeing).

As we engage with an object, thus conceived, in a *practical way*—handling or using it—we read/intercept aspects of its previous history (for instance its making and use) which would remain closed to us if we just continued to observe it. We can also know an object by learning how to [make](#) it.

This does not mean that the backside—the “hidden side”, as it were—is not revealed, but that the passive affordances of the object now have been transposed. It means that by engaging practically with the object we have put ourselves in a position to *receive* some of its passive affordances.

The sorts of communication at a material level—material communication—that allow us to intercept and process information that is unavailable to sense-perception, but that moves us and we can feel through touch and movement: the meandering connections of the [haptic and kinaesthetic](#).

Hence the interest we can take in the affordances of our *own* passive side. Our own backside. If a body is defined as having a backside and can rotate in a 360° spherical perimeter, then our body is a body in that sense too. But how does an active creature *link up* with its passive register, or backside?

This is not abstract nor mystical. We see it every day: the more determined we are, the more unaware we tend to be of things that come up from behind us. We can keep the mandatory 1m while we work—and in class situations—but between the sessions, or after class, we relax considerably on this.

