

**What can be learnt from the MoverWitness Exchange
for the Development of Gesture-Based
Human-Computer Interfaces?**

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Abstract

The MoverWitness exchange (Goldhahn, 2007) examines form and content of gesture in embodied communication. Its interdisciplinary application is the result of practice-led research that arose out of a new interpretation of Authentic Movement (Adler, Chodorow, Whitehouse, Pallaro, 1999, 2002, 2008) originating from the field of Dance and Movement Psychotherapy. The MoverWitness exchange has taken a methodological rather than a therapeutic view of the original workings. Crystallising them within a new framework this can be used in interdisciplinary applications including the arts, engineering, design and natural sciences.

The MoverWitness exchange operates on the premise that subject and object of observations influence and inform each other. Hence knowledge generated in the MoverWitness exchange is qualitative and inclusive of divergent views and experiences. It trains, refines and examines researchers' perceptions and recall of gestural movement and sound so that this new, more detailed knowledge can be made available for other uses and applications. In an exchange between 'performer' and 'observer', a mover and a witness, gestures are embodied whilst observed and then shared following a prescribed method. Thus a direct link between embodied experience and articulate knowledge is established and made fruitful.

Participants initially develop skillfulness in gathering detail about gestures on a phenomenological level. They learn to distinguish and name what was actually moved, seen and heard on a purely sensory and haptic level. Gradually the more difficult to pinpoint, qualitative aspects and metalevels of gestures come under

scrutiny. These are impressions coloured by feelings, emotions, imaginations, thoughts and intuitions. Using very specific linguistic rules participants learn to develop more distinguished, intricate and accurate ways to observe and to 'language' gesture, benefiting from the personal involvement in this process which brings empathetic and other subtle mechanisms into play.

The MoverWitness exchange provides a method to increase individual acuity and at the same time helps to mediate between individual, dualistic and collective perspectives. As multiple views gather into a web of viewpoints a larger, 'holistic' understanding of the inherent complexities of a singular gestural event can be appreciated. A web fused with knowledges originating from experiential horizons of embodiment emerges.

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