

5th Ethnographies of Crime, Harm and Control Symposium

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Thomas Marriott, Goldsmiths University (Department of Design) – thomas.marriott@gold.ac.uk

Buttons, Bombs, Books, & Body Cameras: Taking Design Things to the Field

Ethnography has had a profound impact on design as a discipline. Keen to understand the social worlds and realities of those they design for, designers have incorporated ethnographic methods into their research practices (Nova, 2014; Ward, 2015). Despite efforts by social researchers to introduce novel – what perhaps might be referred to as ‘designerly’ – methods to their research practices (Lury and Wakeford, 2012), and the growing interdisciplinary area of design anthropology (Gunn, Otto and Smith, 2013; C Smith *et al.*, 2016), it might be fair to say that in terms of method designers have taken more than they have given. What can ethnographers learn from design? How might we do ethnography in a designerly way? This paper discusses out how ‘Design Things’: a button, a ‘homemade BWC’ which resembles a bomb, and a book, were used as research devices in conjunction with ethnography to understand police use of the technology.