

Motivating Teenage Boys

Co-Design BFIB-2010

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Introduction

With the recommendation (link) for HumanKoncept as a starting point I will, in this reflection rapport, discuss the ways we did things, with success as well as what could have been improved and in what ways we could have used other aspects of Co-Design, to strengthen our results. I will critically reflect upon our progress throughout the course and look at the obstacles that we meet along the way.

Co-Design - Why?

First of all it might be a good idea to give a shallow introduction to the concept of co-design and in what way it makes good sense to use the methods. Up until now the way manufacturing companies have gone about new designs has been with “experts” (researches) observed and interviewed passive users, who performed instructed tasks and gave their opinion about the tested product (Sanders. E, Stappers. P, 2008). Co-design, although not a new concept, is about changing the users status and upgrading them to experts in their own lives. As they are the ones that have to use the designs in the end, why not take their advice from the beginning, in the fuzzy front end, and learn from their experiences and daily routines? And this is what Co-Designing is all about.

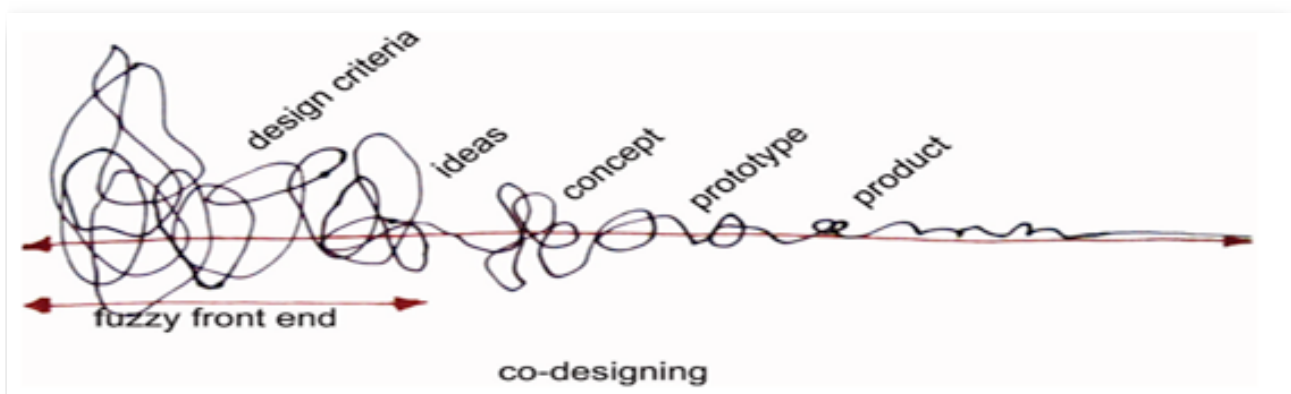


Fig.1: Sanders Co-Designing (2008)

The change in roles

This puts the professionals in a bit of a different light. The researches no longer “just” looks at the gathered data and translates that for the designers. Their new role is more in the part of being facilitators. According to Sanders and Stappers the researches needs to learn how to; Lead, guide, provide scaffolds and offer a clean slate (Ibid, pp. 11). Also the professional designers have to adapt to the new settings. Not that their role in the process will change drastically, but they will need to refine their skills as designers, in order to help the creative flow in the process and in order to sort out all of the input that is gathered, for example from workshops.

The Process



Recruitment

I can not, in all fairness, make this reflection rapport without mentioning the difficulties we encountered during our first recruitment of a target group. Everyone knows that it is difficult to recruit participants, a fact that hit our group pretty hard.

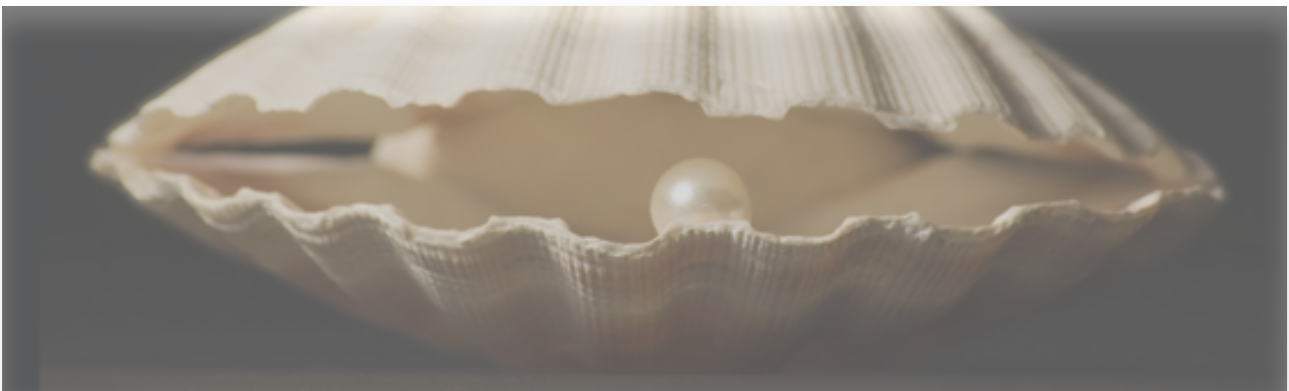
At first we decided to focus on cancer patients and their rehabilitation / exercise course after they had been released from the monitoring of a hospital. We put in a lot of effort in getting in contact with various hospitals and rehabilitation clinics, but everywhere we were meet by doctor patient confidentiality and a general lack of cooperation, in the way that, I think, it was not taken seriously by the ones that we contacted on a management level (doctors, head nurses, and general management), and the ones that actually took the time to listen to what we had to propose, like nurses and health workers actually thought that it was a great idea and could relate to the fact that they were missing research in this part of the rehabilitation. We did however get through to one particular department of Copenhagen Research Hospital. They are running a great project called “Krop og Kræft” (Body and Cancer), where we were received with open arms. We got as far as to present the project to a group of patients both orally and in writing. And although the patients thought that it was a great initiative, no one signed up to participate in the focus group and workshop. I still feel very strongly for this project and if it wasn't for the time limit given by this course it is my strong persuasion that we would have perused it further, and hopefully succeeded. On the positive side of this we did get a great insight in how hard it is, no matter how good your intentions to save the world are, to recruit a group of participants takes a lot more effort than we initially thought. A well known fact and a good lesson!

Wiser from experience our second round of recruitment went a lot smoother, partially because we aimed at a “easier” or at least more approachable target group; Teenage boys, but possibly also because we tempted them with cinema tickets.

Preliminary Interview

In our study we used a preliminary interview as a way of getting to know the target group and for us to open up to possible issues/thesis there might be there. We had some preconceived assumptions as to what we were looking for, like a way to combine computer games and physical activity, which is why we went in to this interview only carrying a loose interview guide, that allowed us to follow a lead if one was given. I think that this decision was beneficiary to our further process of targeting in on a single focus for our process. At the same time as being an informant the participant also functioned as a possible gatekeeper to potential participants for the focus group and workshop, which made it paramount for us that he felt comfortable at the interview. They way we tried to obtain this, was by conducting the interview at his home, as well as to refrain from making it seem too much as a questioning.

Focus Group



When critically looking back at the focus group, I am compelled to call it a group interview based on the following. Firstly, only two of the four participants showed up and secondly, it was very hard for them to engage in any sort of discussions in order for us to truly get their perceptions and attitudes to shine through. Easier to transcribe but at a cost. In retrospect what we possibly could have done was to split the two participants up and conducted narrative interviews with them in order to get their spontaneous opinions (Kvale, 2009). This being said though, we also managed to extract a lot of valuable information from them.

Workshop

What we did for the workshop was a variation of the Video Card Game as described by Buur and Ylirisku (2007), where we found clips of various sports and showed it to the participants. Again, we had to make some modifications on the spot, due to the lack of participants and looking in the rearview mirror, having a “Plan B” (and even C) would have been a great idea, as we would have had a chance to think the consequences of our choices to an end. The way we resolved it was by having me and a group member stand in and play the part of the opposite team with the critical opinions to the sports. Half way through we made the mistake of asking the participants to take the critical stand, while we now took the part of being positive. To me that was a mistake as we needed informations on what the motivational

factors were, and as such one could argue that, their critical stands had little or no value to our research. Getting the participants to attach a few words to each of their positive statements, showed to be of great value to us when it came to inspiration and when writing our recommendation for HumanKoncept. Having them explaining it in their own terms meant that the margin for misinterpretation was modest, not saying that it wasn't possible.

Summarizing Interview



At the end of the workshop day we had, a rather spontaneous, summarizing interview with the participants. We still had some unanswered thesis that we needed to shed some light on. This was done without any sort of preparation and was conducted more as a closing conversation, where we jointly reflected on the topics that we had shared over the afternoon. We tried to rephrase our thesis on the spot in ways that would make them come across as questions, but truth be told, some of them might have fallen in the leading question category.

Considerations



Surely we made a lot of good and effective moves in the process of gathering the empirical data. Some gave us good insights while others left us with room for improvement. For instance we could have benefitted from the use of cultural probes and diary studies in the beginning of our process to gain a more general knowledge of our target group, to be used when designing the workshop, as well as we could have used the target group in a better way in the idea generation phase. Another method that I think we would have benefitted from, would be Personas (Nielsen, 2007). That would have made great sense in the recommendation, as a good tool for HumanKoncept to keep their mind on the users of the concept being developed.

Conclusion

Like all good learning processes there have been room for improvement in the way we have addressed the different methods of this course. However with the given tasks and the given time I doubt that we could have handled it much differently. Sure we made mistakes, but in the end of the day I am satisfied with the recommendation that we passed on. We managed to find a possible new target group for HumanKoncept to focus on, although the number of participants was very small, and in no way could or should be considered a statistically valid probe, we still accomplished to generate a good starting point for further research.

Reference



Buur and Ylirisku (2007): "Video Card Game Method", in "Designing with Video: Focusing on the User-Centered Design Process", Springer, London

Kvale, S, (2009) Interview: Introduktion til et håndværk. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2009

Nilelsen, Lene (2007) Ten steps to personas, Published at HCeye

Sanders, Elisabeth and Stappers, Pieter (2008) "Co creation and the new landscape of design", CoDesign, Taylor and Francis, March 2008. www.maketools.com

Links

Body and Cancer (In danish only)

<http://tinyurl.com/264384g>

Recommendation for HumanKoncept (Group Project)

<http://tinyurl.com/33hvo3q>