How do Inspirational Materials Help Frame Workshop Ideation and Establish a Shared Design Space?

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Abstract

In collaborative design activities, we might think of a shared design space as representing those things identified and named as important for consideration within the current framing of the situation. In this paper we outline an ongoing analysis in which we are attempting to better understand the roles that inspirational materials play in the construction and establishment of this design space.

Author Keywords

Design space; naming; framing;

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous

Introduction

Constructing a shared understanding of the situation at hand is an important consideration in collaborative design activities. Through this process, aspects of possible interest can be identified and named, and a vision for framing future design work can be established. Such a shared understanding might usefully be understood as the project's *design space*. This position paper develops the understanding of the

term design space and how it might be used to support reflective design practices that we presented in [1].

One way in which things can be brought forward for consideration and introduced into this design space, particularly during group ideation workshops, is through the use of inspirational materials e.g. images or videos. It seems likely that through a better understanding of the roles these inspirational materials play in naming and framing, and in establishing a shared design space, we will be in a better position to develop new tools that support design creativity. In addition, by explicitly representing aspects of a design space that typically remain unrepresented in workshop outputs, we will be in a better position to find out whether it can be operationalized to support the transition to later design activity.

Case

To better understand the role that inspirational materials play in establishing a design space, we are studying a particular case in close detail. This case study involves the design of a media façade installation at Væksthuset, the botanical gardens in Aarhus, Denmark. In particular, our analysis focuses on an inspiration card workshop [2] during which ideas for the media façade's content were generated. This workshop took place after some initial design meetings, and following some initial technical tests to investigate how different light sources might work in the context of this particular site. The workshop took place at our interaction design lab, with nine participants: three designer-researchers from our lab; two architect-designers from the consultancy partnering with us in this project; three stakeholder-designers from

Væksthuset; and a technician-designer from our lab, who is also acting as technical project manager.

Analysis

To investigate the role of inspirational materials in establishing a shared design space, we are currently analyzing a video recording of the inspiration card workshop, the workshop's inputs and output, and interviews with participants from both before and after the workshop. Our video analysis focuses on the concept development (combination and co-creation) phase of the workshop. Here we are taking a multimodal approach that draws on conversation analysis, but where interaction extends beyond speech to also include gesture and gaze, and interaction with and reference to tools and materials [3].

In our analysis of the workshop's inputs, supported by our interviews undertaken with participants before the workshop, we are trying to gain insight into how the different concerns of individual participants (as represented by the inspiration cards they select) provides initial framing for ideation. We hope that this may enable us to better understand the roles inspirational materials play in introducing things for consideration in collaborative ideation workshops.

In our analysis of the workshop video, we are identifying interaction with and reference to objects of interest (e.g. inspiration cards, and concept posters). We are identifying instances where participants highlight a constraint associated with the location or social context of use. We are also identifying each reference to earlier design activities (e.g. a technical test of lights at Væksthuset), and to previous projects undertaken by designers or previous events held at

Væksthuset. Finally, we are identifying instances where an aspect of the situation is explicitly referred to (which we code as naming), where ideas are generated or tested (which we code as moving), and where a new idea or option is raised to explicitly change the focus of the ideation activity (which we code as [re]framing).

To support our analysis we are producing timeline visualizations in which we highlight each instance during the workshop of interaction with or reference to objects of interest (e.g. particular inspiration cards or named aspects). Our purpose here is to visually explore the temporal traces of objects of interest throughout the workshop. We believe this will help us to ascertain whether the repeated naming of important aspects, in relation to inspirational materials and emerging ideas, helps to establish a shared design space that facilitates ongoing design work.

In our analysis of the workshop's output (the concept selected for future development), supported by our interviews with participants from after the workshop, we are trying to gain insight into the status of the shared design space, and how it relates to the interaction of individual participant's concerns. We hope that this may enable us to better understand how the concerns introduced into the workshop through inspirational materials are represented in the final output, and whether there might be value in explicitly representing and operationalizing the wider design space in new creativity support tools.

This research poses a number of questions regarding the roles inspirational materials might play in framing design activity, identifying and naming things to attend to, and establishing a shared design space. In our analysis we will attempt to address the dynamics of these processes, and uncover how these relationships unfold over time.

Acknowledgements

References

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