Seeding without leading: making space for participant contribution in design elicitation techniques

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Seeding without Leading: making space for participant contribution in design elicitation techniques

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ABSTRACT

As HCI embraces experience design, it will increasingly rely on new elicitation methods that are capable of drawing out the multi-faceted subjectivities of individuals without being overly prescriptive as to the final design or experience outcome. In this panel we wish to describe and discuss subtle elicitation techniques that allow the elicitation of participant ideas and interests with minimum prejudicing by the researcher. We argue that leaving space for meaning to be made by project informants is a valuable approach to understanding both design requirements and use issues. We show work that has come from taking this approach and discuss why we have been concerned to keep a creative space open in our research and how we invite people into it.

Categories and Subject Descriptors
J.O general

General Terms
Design, Experimentation, Human Factors,

Keywords
Person-centred; meaning; design; future; scenario

1. INTRODUCTION

As HCI moves beyond a cognitive methodology and begins to embrace a broader context of everyday life and experience, new methods need to be developed which are able to draw out the multi-faceted subjectivities of individuals. Achieving this without influencing or leading participants is difficult however. In this panel we wish to explore how this might be possible and we present three projects that have made their mission the elicitation of participant ideas and interests with minimum prejudicing by the researcher. We argue that leaving space for meaning to be made by project informants is a valuable approach to understanding both design requirements and use issues. We will show work that has come from taking this approach and discuss why we have been concerned to keep a creative space open in our research and how we invite people into it.

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reject, develop or critique and this will determine the thinking that subsequently ensues. Seeds are smaller units of content, designed to allow thoughts to go in all directions (see fig 1). [5] talks of finding ‘as small a seed of content stimulus as possible that would ensure that some relevant creative work could be undertaken, but that the nature of it would be determined by the participant.’ Another approach comes from design, where absurdist cultural probes [6] such as dream recorders made space for people studied to bring in their own experience.

Figure 1. The different thought constellations of scenario and seed content stimuli [4]

Gaver’s later work on ambiguity acknowledges the many layers of meaning that technologies carry, but works more analogously with scenarios in that the products also already have definition as something, even if what that is is not clear. Bowen’s work [7] on critical design bridges this gap by presenting generic objects that hint at functionality but have none.

3. THE DISCUSSION

In what ways might we elicit an audience reaction to the general rather than the specific? How might we capture user concerns or enchantments at an early stage in design: before a working model is available, but in such a way that we can discuss user experience? These are key issues, especially when dealing with nascent technologies, empty social spaces, or future-related material, when we cannot predict form and content. We need ways of working unaccompanied by embedded values, assumed behaviours and implicit meanings, particularly when crossing cultural boundaries where values as well as beliefs may differ.

4. THE PANELLISTS

4.1 Briggs

Pam Briggs and Linda Little have been developing principles for filmed scenarios that can effectively communicate futuristic technologies to a wide audience (eg [8]). However Briggs will be showing a film from a joint project with Patrick Olivier from Newcastle University’s Culture Lab. The film describes a ‘biometric daemon’: a futuristic biometric pet, based upon the literary work of Philip Pullman, that serves as an authentication device. The concept is explained in detail in [9]: the focus in this panel is on the principles underpinning the film rather than on the device concept. Specifically, the film is designed to be explicitly non-committal about the form of the biometric daemon and yet offers an engaging scene, rich in comedy, that allows the user to speculate as to just what kind of a device the daemon may be.

4.2 Light (chair)

Ann Light will be showing material devised as part of the “Democratising Technology” Designing for the 21st Century project, in which a performance artist, cognitive scientist, interaction design researcher and media arts strategist collaborated to create methods for engaging those excluded from digital design decisions and give them the will and the confidence to consider the forms of social relations that they would like ubiquitous digital networks to enable [5]. Working with material offered by participants to explore their interests and priorities, the team avoided suggesting what the future might look and feel like. The resulting workshop method is available on a DVD and here: http://www.thenotquiteyet.net.

4.3 Martin

Karen Martin was co-organiser, with Arianna Bassoli and Johanna Brewer, of a series of workshops on in-between-ness, in which researchers from industry and academia, architects, artists and social and computer scientists came together to explore the transitory nature of in-between spaces. These workshops served a dual purpose as an exploration of the topic of in-between-ness and of the nature of interdisciplinary collaboration [10]. Through observation, discussion and design activities the workshops offered participants the opportunity for immersive experience of, and reflection on, the workshop topic. From this a deeper understanding of the subject emerged organically as the workshop progressed. The workshops are documented on www.inbetweeness.org/

5. THE SCHEDULE

We anticipate a section of show-and-tell from each panellist before a more general discussion of the ideas. And we will set a brief experiential exercise for the audience in keeping with the theme of the panel before opening the conversation to the floor.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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7. REFERENCES


