

26th February, 2015

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

What it means to participate

Interesting facts:

Desiderata – Understanding your clients' needs (from a design perspective)

Power implies the ability to act, knowledge does not necessarily give the capacity to act, knowledge is not power.

Traditional research is participation without power.

Participatory Design Basics

1. Could involve any person or a group
2. Design/tech skills are not required to participate (but participants sometimes gain some related skills)
3. Produces better, more appropriate technology designs than user-centered methods alone.
4. There is no single "best practices" or algorithmic approach that will work for all contexts.
5. Some activities that are common include: collages, diagrams, maps, 3D modeling, diaries, card-based activities, games/games boards, improvisation, role-playing/acting, storytelling or envisioning/enactment.
6. Some are meant to better understand a group of involved people (values, beliefs, context, behaviors, problems, etc.), some are meant to actually have the participants do some design. It's up to you.
7. You can even do some participatory activities and engage your users online, via mobile phone etc.

Participatory Design Concept and Africa

- Although Participatory Design as such has not been a prevalent term in Africa, Participatory however is a familiar concept in Africans' every day activities and deeply anchored in the Southern African philosophy of UBUNTU, recognizing principles of relationships between people.

Besides, societies all over the world have acknowledged profound links between people and their environment for many centuries.

- By 'reflecting connectedness' in participatory design, we acknowledge influential relations across continents, societies, people, disciplines and time, beyond the direct involvement of stakeholders.

We further engage in critical debates of what it means to design within and for a multilayered network, such as the on-line world versus off-line interactions, the blurring distinction of designers and users, researchers and artists, design and research 'in the wild', designing for social justice, inclusiveness and sustainability.

What you can do with Participatory Design

1. Design for a multilayered network, such as the on-line versus the off-line interactions.

Negotiating Participation

- Differing understandings of participation are held by different societies based on local value systems.
- We often encounter paradoxes when developers and users originate from different socio-cultural values system, as is more and more frequent in international design teams across the globe, In these situations, even the underlying systems of knowledge may be contradictory and incompatible.

Local participatory performance is guided by implicit and explicit rules that aren't always obvious to community outsiders.

Homework

Make your prototypes