COMP2213 - Interaction Design

Reflection 2: Design Space Mapping in User Centered Interaction Design

Daniel Braghis
ddb1u20@soton.ac.uk
UoS ID: 32161204
16/11/2022

This week's activity involved mapping the design space based on the concepts explored in previous course modules as part of a user centered design process. Thus, this section of the course aims to synthesize the information learned in the previous weeks and guide implementing it in a simple to understand framework as we move from the *specification* to the *developing* phase of the design process.

The prompt for the task was deliberately open-ended, asking to "make sense" of what we found so far through what would ultimately resemble a mind map of the design space. This initially posed a great challenge for our team when getting started but by the end it was evident why there were given so little guidelines. The process of developing the design space map is inherently creative and highly reliant on input from everyone in the design team requiring multiple iterations. Moreover, the result was specific to what our design team deemed a priority in our design process and that differs widely depending on the team member backgrounds and product. Thus, prescribing specific guidelines to the task would be a limiting factor for this exercise.

However, we were suggested Data, Systems, Implications, Products and Technologies (P&T), and Experiences as starting points when thinking about the design space. Our team decided to use these as the main areas of our design space and start organizing ideas around these key areas. The first observation we made was that there is a lot of overlap between these concepts in the ideas we were trying to organize. For example, finding a balance between P&T, Systems and Experiences are ideas to take into consideration when soliciting user consent and all these trickles down to the Implications area of the map if it is not properly implemented.

Another observation was the final positioning of the Data section of our map as the "input" to the rest of the areas on the map which is not surprising as it contained most of the *raw* assumptions and data points to consider in the overall picture. This makes sense from a contemporary Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) theory point of view. The design space map offers a medium to introduce observations and assumptions into the design space and then analyses the input from a diverse set of points of view in addition to the design team's own cultural context. The result is a design balancing practical affordances relevant to the products functionality with the needs and wants of the users residing in the Data section of the design space.

In a professional setting, this exercise would be used as a tool for generating new ideas and questions to include in the design process. I would also use this as an opportunity to actively involve the end users and other stakeholders in the design process. As I think about the degree of involvement of users at this stage, Sharp et al.[1] points out that while user involvement in general produces higher user satisfaction, some studies suggest that low participation correlates to highest satisfaction and it starts dropping as participation increases. Additionally, involving users early on produced more creative ideas that transitioned into improvement suggestion later into the design process. (p. 52-53) Taking this into consideration, I would opt for a "hybrid" approach where I would involve users to a high degree early on in the design space mapping following a cooperative design process to then transition into less to no outside involvement in the later iterations. Such approach seems to be a natural compromise between user centered and genius design we discussed in previous lectures, and I suspect that in practice there is a mix between different philosophies and approaches depending on circumstances.

Finally, the exercise thought our team how to collaborate in the designing of a design artifact to be used in a user-centered design process, independent of our development framework (Waterfall, Agile or other methodology). The result aims to guide us in further improving the design and starting to develop solutions to the users needs identified. Following this process, we are more likely to produce a design following contemporary HCI principles and satisfies the end users.

---

[1] Sharp, Helen, Yvonne Rogers, and Jenny Preece. 2019. *Interaction Design : Beyond Human-Computer Interaction* (version Fifth edition.) Fifth ed. Indianapolis, IN: Wiley. INSERT-MISSING-URL.