

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN IN THE SMART VILLAGE:

CO-DESIGN OF A PUBLIC DISPLAY IN A RURAL VILLAGE SHOP

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ABSTRACT

Our work describes the process of co-designing a public display for a village shop with

- the active participation of various stakeholders (shop owners, younger and older citizens) in idea generation, design and design decision making as well as
- considerations of various aspects of the involvement of multi-stakeholder groups in the context of a long-term and participative co-design project.

INTRODUCTION

The shop is intended to create a social meeting place that promotes communication between the generations and offers older people in particular the opportunity to participate in social life.

There are various challenges in regard to co-design in rural areas:

- How to develop a strategy for the involvement of multi-stakeholder groups with different interests, abilities and skills in the development of social and digital innovations.
- How to create sustainable structures for social and digital innovation.

This paper reports on a multi-stakeholder and practice-based design process (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2010, p. 51; Müller et al., 2017).



DESIGN PROCESS

SETTING

The project was carried out in a small village in a network of seven villages in North Rhine-Westphalia.

The village's digital infrastructure is underdeveloped due to poor networks and a lack of fast Internet.

There were three heterogeneous groups of stakeholders:

- (a) (younger) volunteers who run a village shop,
- (b) a local public practitioner's practice, as well as
- (c) a group of older citizens (67-82 years).

CO-DESIGN PROCESS

The focus was on working with older people:

- Future workshops and biweekly work shops were held to support the acquisition of technology.
- Format chosen was "Experience-based Participatory Design Workshops" which combine everyday-based technology training and qualification for co-design (Müller et al. 2015; Hornung, 2017).

CHALLENGES

- Some ideas were rejected for practice- and community-based reasons, such as the installation of a permanent camera in the village shop, so that people interact with the villagers in the shop at home. Reason were fears of data protection, ethical and anonymity-related issues.
- A major concern in the selection and implementation of widgets were sustainability strategies after project as well as financial aspects.
- Different timings of the groups and differences in interests and abilities in engaging with display development ideas forced the team to separate the groups, but to find measures for bridging between them.
- The researchers took on a role as information brokers for the transfer of informations between the groups.

CONCLUSION

- (1) Different levels of participation, opportunities and skills of younger and older citizens and the co-design process must be seen and solutions need to be found to bridge between.
- (2) The different motivations and interests for participation should be carefully dealt with.
- (3) Sustainable participatory design processes should be ensured.
- (4) The first running prototype serves as a „technology probe“ for those who did not participate so far, to rise wider interest. By this, the results of the project are visible to other community members and can be motivating to participate in further co-designs and decisions for the next re-design cycle.

LITERATURE

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