Mobility, Mood and Place: The A-Z of Co-Design

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Co-design, or participatory design, is about the meaningful involvement of end users in the design process. By taking account of a wider range of perspectives and experiences, we can design more inclusive, more innovative solutions, products and services that are better suited to users’ needs.

Presented in bite-sized form, this A-Z explores the origins and background of participatory design. It looks at the practical methods and techniques you can use in a participatory design project, and at the key roles, principles and issues these projects entail. It explores topics you might be familiar with and others which might be completely new.

Many of the hints and tips are based on our own experiences of delivering co-design, rich, varied programme of co-design activities as part of the three-year research project, Mobility, Mood and Place. Bringing together architecture and landscape architecture students and older adults, we investigated how we can design environments that are enjoyable to be in, and easy to move around, as we age.

We’ve combined insights from this work with those of experts from a range of fields—from planning to design, geography to health, sociology to gerontology. Extensively referenced, we hope you will find this handy, practical guide both supportive and inspirational in your future participatory design endeavours.
ENgage


FEEDBACK AND FEEDFORWARD

Feedback and feedforward may help to improve participatory design situations. In a participatory design project, knowledge and experience can be collected through one-to-one conversations and/or in small and large groups. The method allows often-excluded groups, such as people with disabilities, to participate in the decision process. It’s important to remember that feedback and feedforward are used to improve participatory design processes. Further reading: Y Bukman, A. (2015). Social research methods.

Just

It’s important to think about how feedback and feedforward can be used to improve participatory design activities. (Blow, 2010). It’s important to remember that feedback and feedforward can be used to improve participatory design situations. Further reading: Luck, R. (2007). Learning to talk to users in a participatory design project.

Engage

In such a society with so many opportunities for different kinds of people to engage in important public decisions, there are many different opportunities for participatory design to be facilitated. (Blow, 2010). Further reading: Green, J. and Hart. L. (1999). The impact of context and social norms and values, often resulting from people’s different experiences, may lead to the development of a sense of place for health and well-being. Health & Place. 15(1), 263-272.

Locate

It’s important to consider how people’s perceptions and experiences can inform the design of participatory design. Further reading: Green, J. and Hart. L. (1999). The impact of context and social norms and values, often resulting from people’s different experiences, may lead to the development of a sense of place for health and well-being. Health & Place. 15(1), 263-272.

Photovoice

Photovoice is a community-based, participatory research method. It uses photographs to explore a particular aspect of an issue, e.g. health status or environmental quality. It is a powerful tool for participatory design and can help to identify and address social issues. (Blow, 2010). Further reading: Green, J. and Hart. L. (1999). The impact of context and social norms and values, often resulting from people’s different experiences, may lead to the development of a sense of place for health and well-being. Health & Place. 15(1), 263-272.

Harmony

Because participatory design processes typically encompass a range of different perspectives, there is likely to be a high degree of harmoniousness and consensus; particularly in situations where people are motivated to participate. (Blow, 2010). Further reading: Green, J. and Hart. L. (1999). The impact of context and social norms and values, often resulting from people’s different experiences, may lead to the development of a sense of place for health and well-being. Health & Place. 15(1), 263-272.

Draw

Creating can be a useful way of investigating ideas quickly, as well as an effective mechanism for accessing people’s understandings of the world (Blow, 2010). Popular drawing types include mapping and visualising activities, which may help to identify and understand place meanings and bear in mind the different affordances of these activities. (Blow, 2010). Further reading: Green, J. and Hart. L. (1999). The impact of context and social norms and values, often resulting from people’s different experiences, may lead to the development of a sense of place for health and well-being. Health & Place. 15(1), 263-272.

Zeitgeist

The social and cultural context of the participatory design process may allow for the identification of relevant context for the design. (Blow, 2010). Further reading: Green, J. and Hart. L. (1999). The impact of context and social norms and values, often resulting from people’s different experiences, may lead to the development of a sense of place for health and well-being. Health & Place. 15(1), 263-272.

Xperience

The social and cultural context of the participatory design process may allow for the identification of relevant context for the design. (Blow, 2010). Further reading: Green, J. and Hart. L. (1999). The impact of context and social norms and values, often resulting from people’s different experiences, may lead to the development of a sense of place for health and well-being. Health & Place. 15(1), 272-273.