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, you can design more inclusive - more innovative - solutions, products and services that are better suited to users’ needs.

Many of the hints and tips are based on our own experiences of delivering 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.

References & further reading:

- Barriers to participation: the need to make a change. Journal of Health Services Research & Policy. 10(1), 45-53. (A detailed analysis of barriers to participation)
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An inclusive society is one with simple opportunities for many different kinds of people to engage in important public decision-making. There are many different kinds of participation that can be facilitated. Newt (2000), for example, has identified 12 forms of participation through the concept of a "ladder of citizen participation". The ladder consists of eight "rungs", each relating to a different form of participation, with the degree of citizen control over decisions increasing the higher up you go. Although encouraging citizens to take part in democracy more is a valuable action, don't be afraid that everyone has access to the internet. The trust in the practicality and feasibility of participatory design is often low, in account, people's differing needs and resources (Buckingham, 2012). From that perspective, securing the involvement of a range of users is not the same as the discussion of the class or the story of the participatory design, since the number of participants tends to be smaller than in the first rung. In the next rung, from group-formatting (Morgan, 2007)

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS
A Geographic Information System (GIS) is a tool used to store, analyze, and visualize spatial data so as to determine patterns and relationships that can inform decision-making (Dunn, 2007). Spatial data for GIS is commonly collected from historical paper maps and satellites, and combined with measured data from a variety of sources. The power of GIS is that it combines multiple layers of spatial information to reveal insights that are hidden in the picture of the environment and deepen our understanding of geographical phenomena (Carpiano, 2009). GIS is an information access to the method, a "form of participatory GIS" (PGIS) has been developed which is "context-dependent" and driven not by technology and aid alone but also to emphasize community involvement in the production and use of geographical information (Qiu, 2007: 611).

Feedback and Feedforward
In a design project, feedback is where outcomes inform the development of a design at an early stage, while feedforward is where feedback from the inclusion of users with different points of view (Dunn, 2007). It is based on a continuous approach of this type, and reformulation of the project, ensuring that the intended outcomes are produced. For example, with guidance on how to travel (feedforward), both outcomes and in the next rungs of user participation are determined in feedback and feedforward.

Feedback
Surveys and focus groups are a common methods of feedback and feedforward (Morgan, 2007). It’s important to remember that through the feedback and feedforward, we can help participants to develop a positive attitude towards others. Thus, in order to develop a positive attitude, it is important for the feedback and feedforward to be structured and guided.

FEEDBACK AND FEEDFORWARD

eco-friendly building
Modeling a creative, visual method of communication. Compared to verbal methods, such as interviews and focus groups, CA can help co-design participants present their ideas more directly with less interference from the co-design facilitator (Day, 2005). Physical models can show the components of a building or a site and can be manipulated to show various aspects of the design. CA can be used as a tool to understand and interpret the designs of other people. However, CA is not an end in itself - it is a tool to aid in the design process. It is important to note that CA can be used to show the various aspects of the design, and not just the final product.

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Participatory design processes should be accessible to all users and should provide for the involvement of people of different kinds of people. There are many different kinds of participation that can be facilitated. Newt (2000), for example, has identified 12 forms of participation through the concept of a "ladder of citizen participation". The ladder consists of eight "rungs", each relating to a different form of participation, with the degree of citizen control over decisions increasing the higher up you go. Although encouraging citizens to take part in democracy more is a valuable action, don't be afraid that everyone has access to the internet. The trust in the practicality and feasibility of participatory design is often low, in account, people's differing needs and resources (Buckingham, 2012). From that perspective, securing the involvement of a range of users is not the same as the discussion of the class or the story of the participatory design, since the number of participants tends to be smaller than in the first rung. In the next rung, from group-formatting (Morgan, 2007)

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