

Edited by: **Turkka Keinonen & Kirsikka Vaajakallio & Janos Honkonen**

# Designing for wellbeing



Aalto University

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# Preface

This book is a hybrid. It is a report of the 365 Wellbeing projects that were part of the Helsinki World Design Capital 2012 programme, it presents researchers' thoughts about the increasing interest within design towards public wellbeing services, and it displays a collection of students' proposals for new health and wellbeing services and solutions. 365 Wellbeing has been one of Aalto University's flagship programmes during Helsinki's year as World Design Capital. It has allowed us to experiment with and design for public wellbeing services together with the cities of Helsinki, Kauniainen, Espoo and Lahti. The book is based on this collaboration in both an immediate and more distant manner. The immediate results are the design concepts that the Masters students at Aalto University have created, the wide range of which is an indication of the broad scope of design that falls under the umbrella of design for wellbeing. The concepts include discussion starters with artistic twists that have been driven by individual students' passions and interests, as well as realistic digital services developed through a laborious co-design process. The results that are somewhat more reflective are the chapters written by the researchers who participated in the projects and tutored the students. Their texts deal with the ways traditional and contemporary design approaches can be utilised when designing for public wellbeing services, and what kind of new approaches we have been elaborating. Our city partners also had the opportunity to comment on the design process.

Consequently, the book adopts a couple of different roles. We believe its target audience is also pluralistic, covering readers working in the social, health, urban development and cultural sectors in cities, but also designers and design students considering the emerging opportunities within the reconfiguring field of design. This is why we have tried to avoid technical jargon and write in a way that is approachable to different readers, while

still using the language of design. The book is published in two language versions: a printed book in Finnish and a digital one in English. The working language of the project has been English and the book was written in English. The Finnish version is a translation.

The book was edited in an academic context at the Aalto University School of Art, Design and Architecture. The majority of the contributors are students and researchers at the Department of Design. We are not, however, aiming for the academic ideal of neutrality. Instead, the book shares the agenda of its creators. The Helsinki World Design Capital Foundation, Aalto University and the participating cities believe in improving the collaboration between design and social and health services, and are willing to work towards enhancing this dialogue. We hope that the experiences, insights and examples shared in this publication will show a path towards how design could be used to plan public services.

To learn more about 365 Wellbeing we recommend visiting <http://365wellbeing.aalto.fi/>.

The book and the work leading to editing it have been enabled by financial support from the Helsinki World Design Capital Foundation, the cities of Helsinki, Kauniainen and Espoo, and Socca – The Centre of Excellence on Social Welfare in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, as well as the high spirit and motivation of the individuals participating in the projects, the open-minded and insightful approach of the students and the analytical rigour of the authors. The editors extend their warm thanks to them all.

Helsinki 13.3.2013

Turkka Keinonen  
Kirsikka Vaajakallio  
Janos Honkonen

# 1

## Design, wellbeing and design for wellbeing

**Turkka Keinonen**

The Department of Design at Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture focused on designing for wellbeing during Helsinki's year as World Design Capital in 2012. The focus on wellbeing has meant a continuation of our long-term shift from material objects to the immaterial ways things and systems are organised to create conditions where people are supported and taken care of, and where they can take care of themselves and each other. This book summarises our experiences during the 365 Wellbeing programme in two ways. First, it showcases a generous sample of our students' design results in the field of design for wellbeing. Second, it includes a series of articles written by researchers reflecting several aspects of our work.



## **Elements of design for wellbeing**

After a year's work, we should be in a position to define design for wellbeing, but unfortunately a definition is neither easy to find nor self-evident. In this case, as in many others, going deeper reveals more questions than answers.

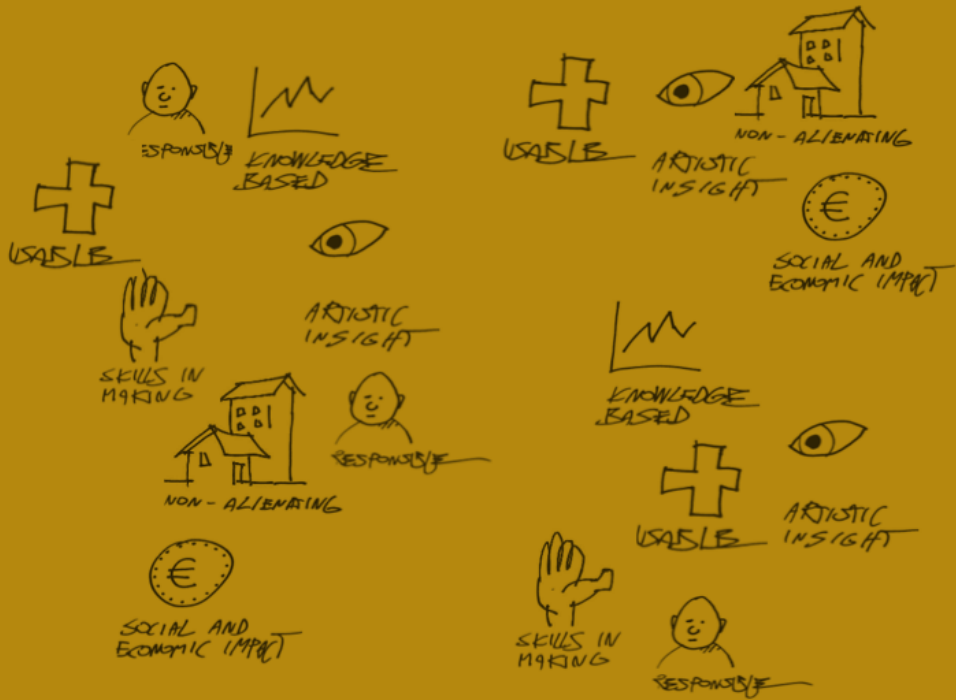
Addressing wellbeing through design means that the narrow disciplinary conception of design being about making objects beautiful is no longer enough; it must be replaced with a more inclusive understanding. When we design for wellbeing we pay attention to improving intangible objects such as digital interfaces, internet and face-to-face services and urban development. We must also design critically, underlining topics that require further discussion. Traditional three-dimensional and graphic design obviously have a place in this more inclusive definition of design too. Design for wellbeing requires that design is seen as a broad umbrella of activities that identify issues in systems and find technical solutions and practices that can and should be improved for the betterment of human life. It can also point the way towards better solutions. Accepting a broad definition of design like this has consequences, the most obvious being that the disciplinary borders within design need to be crossed and that design requires and includes a lot of work not often identified as design. However, to be able to understand the broadening concept of design as a unique activity that is different from any other type of planning, something needs to be said about its specific nature.

Design, and indeed design for wellbeing, is an integrative and fundamentally cross-disciplinary practice that operates in a complex environment of different and in many cases conflicting values, methods, occupational roles and responsibilities, historical legacies both positive and negative, and societal forums and practices. To understand design, it needs to be seen as a practice that encompasses art, craft, innovation and research. First, design inherits the artistic aspirations of creating aesthetical experiences, it relies on individual creativity and subscribes to the practice of exhibiting results

that are characteristic of visual arts. Second, design competence and the societal role of design is also built on the long traditions of craft, including knowledge of materials and manufacturing techniques, respect for precedents, the ability to make thoughts tangible and a passion for high quality craftsmanship. Third, design aims at initiating change and, as such, needs to be seen within the practices of innovation. Designs need to be realised to become socially or commercially beneficial, making collaboration with technical, commercial and administrative partners a key requirement for impactful design. Fourth, good design is based on a proper understanding of reality and justified assumptions. Consequently, design applies methods and knowledge parallel to those used in research. In some cases design can also be seen as a way to produce new knowledge that supplements traditional methods of academic knowledge creation. Depending on the particular design project, the team involved and the stage of the process, designers can choose approaches, points of view and arguments that borrow from various different disciplines. Competent designers have the skills to draw from the methods of art, craft, innovation and research. To summarise, design is a complex and integrative field, drawing on a broad repertoire of sources.

Wellbeing is a concept used to refer to quality of life in a broader sense than just health, adequate income, or satisfying social relationships. Wellbeing is something that is experienced subjectively and individually, but is at the same time fundamentally social and dependent on the man-made environment, i.e. on design. Often the wellbeing of the weaker is seen as needing the stronger to share their wellbeing. In some other cases wellbeing is seen as an extra for those that can afford it. It is a key concern of our social value systems and in political decision-making about how to allocate common resources.

In 365 Wellbeing, the complex idea was practically managed by adopting a couple of different stakeholder perspectives or levels of analysis. In some of our projects, wellbeing was looked at from the point of view of



**Figure 1: The elements of design for wellbeing**

the individuals taking responsibility for their own and others' wellbeing. In others, we focused on designing services provided by the participating cities, private providers and third sector organisations to address situations where particular support is needed. Finally, we studied infrastructures on the scale of neighbourhoods and suburbs to create environments that are not alienating but inclusive and empowering. Even though our projects approached wellbeing from these three distinct perspectives, it became obvious that the perspectives ultimately merge.

In summary, design for wellbeing means improving the quality of life by combining artistic, craft based, innovative and research driven approaches

for individual, system and infrastructure level changes through integrative and collaborative processes (**Figure 1**). These combinations take innumerable forms and the processes by which the different starting points come together vary. Design for wellbeing is not one thing, it is many. If this sounds overly abstract, the real-life cases that we completed will make it easier to understand.

### **365 Wellbeing**

We worked with projects illuminating future development scenarios for suburbs in eastern Helsinki and Lahti. These residential neighbourhoods were built in the 1970s and are now reaching an age where the buildings are in need of fundamental renovations. At the same time, the areas suffer from a somewhat unfavourable reputation because of social issues. Our design target has been to create positive future visions for the suburbs, combining the initiative of residents with alternative ways to develop the infrastructure, aiming to turn area problems into strengths. We worked with the city of Kauniainen to rethink concepts of service provision for the elderly. The driving ideas have been built on local strengths and the local identity, on the integration of municipal services and on bridging the generation gap. The Helsinki Health Care Centre has been our collaborator in the development of information technology services for basic health-care, such as solving the problem of patients missing appointments and getting high-risk segments of the population to test for sexually transmitted infections. We have also worked with psychiatric wards and outpatient clinics for improved care practices and patient experiences, and more fluent collaboration between special healthcare units and third sector organisations. Finally, our projects have also dealt with the problems of individuals and families needing to adopt healthier and more socially responsible lifestyles, particularly in the areas of smoke-free living and helping families to cope with bringing up the next generation.

# Grannygotchi

This innovation makes it finally possible to take care of your grandparents in a fun and easy way! Plug n' play!



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City of Espoo

WDC Helsinki 2012

Aalto University

The work was organised as a series of twelve projects where Master's students, doctoral candidates and professors dived into design for wellbeing for eight weeks in each project. About 150 international students participated under the supervision of a dozen doctoral candidates and professors. The projects did not follow a single agenda or any particular educational structure, but combined educational strategies, artistic exploration, user research and collaboration with the cities and their residents in different and unique ways. The processes and outcomes were all different, as will be seen in the following chapters and on the pages presenting the resulting design concepts.

The theme for Helsinki's World Design Capital year was 'embedding design in life'. Design for wellbeing is exactly that. Beautiful design objects on top of one's living room bookshelf are no doubt embedded in life – it is actually difficult to imagine design that isn't. However, in our project the embedding is seamless to the extent that telling design from non-design becomes impossible. Apart from supporting the implementation of the World Design Capital agenda, there have been other reasons for us to focus on wellbeing. Socially responsible and ethical design is not exactly a novel perspective, but it has been outside the mainstream of design for a good while. During recent decades, designers, and especially design scholars, have been interested in being methodological and research driven; they have learned to design collaboratively and to use digital tools. The commercialisation of design has also been a prominent theme. We need to go back to the 1970s to find an era of design that was strongly driven by social responsibility. But now it seems to be coming back. We are again asking fundamental questions about the real need for objects, the futility of consumption, about alternative lifestyles and the meaningful things designers can do to make lives worth living. Design for wellbeing is about caring, and that is meaningful.

In our projects, design for wellbeing was carried out in close collaboration with the cities in the Helsinki region. The setting was interesting in many

ways. With the demographic change of an increasing retired population and a diminishing workforce, the welfare society is facing increasingly difficult problems. How will the elderly manage to maintain their level of wellbeing with society struggling to allocate resources to the increasing demand for care – and how will social and healthcare employees cope with the growing workload and continue to enjoy their work? Balancing the growing demand and scarce supply does not seem possible, and a new non-linear variable is needed in the formula. Design could be one. Our students have had the opportunity to be involved in something that is both a megatrend affecting all first-world countries and a very immediate, acute and local problem in the everyday life of healthcare centres near us.

While the bold goal of 365 Wellbeing has been to start a serious dialogue between design and the healthcare and social sector to save the latter, the dialogue might also save the first. The global scene of product design is changing, and, geographically, design follows where manufacturing and markets are growing. And the growth does not seem to be in the scarcely populated, high-expense North. There are some tap manufacturers, tableware brands and sports equipment companies in Finland needing design services, but not many. The number of healthcare centres, central hospitals, residential homes, outpatient clinics, social welfare projects and suburbs requiring renovations and design work is, however, substantial. Consequently, design for wellbeing has a true potential to employ designers. Design for wellbeing could be a win-win, but we are not there yet.

### **Design seems to work**

The articles in this book show our progress in learning to design for wellbeing, especially in designing public services. One avenue of learning deals with better understanding how the old and new core competences of design respond to the challenges of design for wellbeing. In chapter 3, Jari-Pekka Kola discusses how designers are often naïve when it comes to the complexity of health, social and wellbeing services, but are still

capable of contributing. He sees this capability as two-fold, referring to the experiences in two of our student projects that followed very different processes. In one, design students were able to contribute through adopting the process of user-inspired design, which combines user insights about everyday activities with designers' insights and their ability to transfer ideas across disciplinary borders. In another, students used subjectivity and emotional sensitivity as a level to allow meaningful contributions despite a lack of specialised disciplinary knowledge.

Collaborative development, or co-design, of services has been a major research interest in design recently and was also very prominent in 365 Wellbeing. Both chapter 4 by Kirsikka Vaajakallio and Tuuli Mattelmäki and chapter 9 by Sebastian Greger and Zagros Hatami deal with the merits of co-design, underlining two main benefits. First, when co-design is organised as a cross-disciplinary project, giving a fair amount of freedom for the project teams to adjust their goals and processes, it is possible to identify new service concepts that are essentially different from present ones. These may not all be ready for implementation, but they contribute towards defining future service offerings by presenting alternative perspectives. Second, the authors explain how collaborative design can be used as an approach to shorten the social distance between different stakeholders within public service development. Health service users, medical personnel, public administrators and consultant designers all have their expectations and ideals when it comes to service design, which are justified and understandable as generic principles. When it comes to practical implementation, the solutions derived from these principles lead to systems that either ignore important perspectives or are weak compromises giving little value to anybody. Co-design is a process that builds mutual understanding and facilitates joined-up thinking for stakeholder groups, focusing the design challenge for mutually optimal solutions.

Several of the chapters discuss novel design methods that we have noticed are well suited to the collaborative design of public services and



environments. In chapter 5, Tjyhien Liao writes about narratives and scenarios as vehicles for design. Scenarios, i.e. stories about using future products and services, have frequently been applied to support design ideation, communication and evaluation. Liao, however, puts stories into a much more central role, claiming that when designing for wellbeing, a story about agony might already be a meaningful result of design. Giving voice to those who cannot speak for themselves is necessary, demanding and sometimes enough.

In chapter 6, Katja Soini and Heidi Paavilainen reveal how they went with a student team to the Mellunkylä suburb – and stayed there. They rented office space and turned it into a temporary suburban design studio. Their methodological approach to designing for social wellbeing was built on being and working in the area, in immediate dialogue with its people and atmosphere. A design studio in the field gave students an eight-week window to look at the neighbourhood, providing a more comprehensive insight than occasional visits while still avoiding the blindness of overfamiliarity.

Kirsi Niinimäki, Malin Backman (chapter 7) and Sandra Viña (chapter 8) write about creating social wellbeing through involving local residents in changing their neighbourhood through means that fall outside of the traditional scope of professional design, such as events and temporary public art. However, they are means to change the environment and especially change the way people see their own role in their neighbourhood through introducing something new and meaningful. Thus ‘design interventions’ is a suitable name for this type of design-supported citizen activity.

### **Next goals**

We learned a lot about what seems to work within the emerging field of design and wellbeing, but during our attempts to design and learn we also met several challenges. The lessons learned therefore include the identification of our next learning goals. Figure 3 summarises the agenda for understanding and developing design for wellbeing education.

# Yhteiskiituri

In Finnish suburbs, the lack of basic services and local activities are common problems, along with the passivity of inhabitants. People are often disconnected and the poor community spirit makes it difficult to work together for a better future. Our fieldwork in the Tonttila neighbourhood in the city of Lahti revealed a need for a more organised community and a shared space open for everyone. A customised bus and related service concept, Yhteiskiituri (Co-Coach) was designed to tackle the problem. Yhteiskiituri is a service that offers suburban communities a hub for activities based on the exchange of knowledge, skills and experiences. It creates a process where services are crafted to meet the needs of the community. Basic services are provided by the city and people and organisations donate additional ones. In addition to basic equipment like computers, the bus offers an informal meeting place, thus supporting spontaneous encounters. Yhteiskiituri provides professional advice to create initiatives and events such as cultural events and neighbourhood meetings. The bus moves around neighbourhoods helping unite the areas around the city.

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We started 365 Wellbeing with a somewhat naïve self-confidence, trusting that the design process and the user-centred approach would be robust enough to allow us to do almost anything in almost any conditions. Or perhaps we were not that naïve, but we had some humble understanding telling us that the problems we are dealing with are complex and there have already been serious attempts to address them much more rigorously than we are used to attempting as designers. However, we had the confidence that we were capable of contributing. And, as can be seen in chapter 3, to a certain extent we managed to be successful but some future challenges remain, which are discussed below.

We entered the world of healthcare and wellbeing through service and spatial concepts, not so much through technical solutions. Consequently, we did not deal with high-tech hospital equipment but with care practices. The technical complexity that often makes industrial design demanding was replaced with the complexity of socio-technical systems. This complexity is characterised by several interconnections between stakeholder groups, their responsibilities, values, rules and resources. This type of complexity is not solved with faster processing power or more clever engineering. Instead, we need to understand the different stakeholders' interests, articulate solution proposals and negotiate benefits. Practices, values, professional roles, historical patterns of behaviour and power games became material for design in addition to user experiences, digital interactions and physical artefacts.

The negotiations required us to find suitable ways to discuss matters, often by creating shared languages understandable to different participants. We trusted designers' traditional strengths of prototyping and visualising in this new context and tried out some new approaches too. One challenge, perhaps more on the level of attitudes than skills, was that when going into new domains and facing new design challenges, polishing visualisations started to feel unnecessary and secondary. The core of the design seemed to be somewhere else than in posters and animations. However, part of

**Cross disciplinary borders with subjective and emotional bridges.**

**Trust in combining user-centred processes with commitment and insight.**

**Build on collaborative open-ended processes for out-of-the-box solutions.**

**Use collaborative design to minimise social distance.**

**Use storytelling as a design approach to give those in need of care a voice.**

**Go out into the field to work with grounded, immersed and equal design perspectives.**

**Allow design and citizen activity to merge using participatory design interventions**

**Figure 2: Old and new methods for designing for wellbeing**

the heritage of design comes from the crafts, and we need to understand what crafting of quality means when the design material changes from the physical to the more conceptual. Even though this is only a partial answer and we need to look seriously at the whole answer, the high quality of

service concept presentations is part of the new craft.

Spoken dialogues are also more important and demanding when in the domain of design for wellbeing. The problems we faced with working in English in Finland were indications that the conversations were more demanding. Our international university uses English as its working language and English-language collaboration with industry has not been a problem in our experience. Most of the companies interested in design research and design education are international and they use English as their corporate language. In addition to business collaborators being more used to English than the stakeholders in public services, there might also be another reason for the communication challenges. Negotiations when designing for wellbeing for health services can be more sensitive and nuanced than in technically-oriented product development. The industrial product development jargon and the art talk that we were used to was not enough. Instead, the administration talk, the care talk, the organisational talk, the political talk, the regional development talk, the talk of the every day, and the talk of people whose every day is very different from our own all had to be understood. Without being able to use the native language this turned out to be a problem.

Designing for wellbeing and health sets new standards of sensitivity necessary for user-centred and collaborative design. When we design power tools we are primarily interested in users as physically performing kinetic machines, producing certain powers and having certain dimensions. Measuring these and testing prototypes with user participants is not especially sensitive when it comes to respecting users and their privacy. More recently, the attention of designers has shifted towards system and cognitive ergonomics. Users have come to be understood as cognitive machines dealing with information, and the framing of users has also started to deal with professional identities and the values we put on mental capabilities. Not making users feel stupid in the tests and deprived of their previous competences by the new solution became design issues. When the context of

interaction design shifted from offices to everyday practices, and mobile phones became the iconic design product, user orientation changed again. When designers want to know with whom and about what people share information, trust becomes essentially more important. With design for wellbeing we are now facing the fourth phase of sensitivity. When design teams aim to contribute to the design of health and social services, for example child protection, psychiatric care or reporting sexually transmitted infections, doing it through a process including stakeholders – as we believe is the right way – places the sensitivity and privacy of individuals at its core. Sensitivity is the design target but it is also a condition that defines its approaches. We believe real people with their real conditions are the fundamental foundation for design, the understanding of which calls for cross-disciplinary dialogue. But how can we talk – and show and create images – about things that are extremely private and sensitive?

One of the questions that we need to address, optimally before but at least after parachuting into this new territory, is what type of contribution should we aim at. Sometimes it is possible for designers to identify solutions that seem attractive and on some kind of superficial level would solve certain problems, but which at the end of the day would not be compatible with system structures and thus would most likely remain unused. Should we work for and wait until we have gathered a proper and deep understanding of the healthcare system, and then contribute with focused, compatible and well-integrated solutions? Or should we choose the opposite way and turn our ignorance into a strength, using design as a way to ask questions and illuminate conventions that could be changed? It might be possible that from time to time good design would be a reason to change current practices.

Historically, participatory design has had a political agenda of ensuring the democratic participation of employees in the development of their working environment. Some interpretations underline the importance of the participation as a tactic to get stakeholders committed to change.



**Figure 3: Educational agenda for designing for wellbeing**

It is easier for people to accept something that they feel they have partly defined. Thus, in addition to participation leading to better design solutions and being an instrumental strategy with reference to the quality of a project's results, the participation itself is often seen as valuable for different reasons, be they idealistic or opportunistic.

The 365 Wellbeing programme has been a substantial effort, but not a very focused one. Our resources were spread over several topics and partner organisations. In these conditions, it might be that the non-instrumental gains of the collaborations were more important than the instrumental ones – the doing more important than the results. Many healthcare and social services are not regarded as extremely glorious or attractive. On

the contrary, they have a flavour of being necessary expenses and thus a burden for the taxpayer. Apart from the cost, these services also easily fall into the NIMBY category – not in my back yard. Design – unlike these services – is a celebrated activity in Finland, where it is seen as an important part of the national cultural heritage, with young designers often treated as minor celebrities in the media. Could it be that participation in design and feeling part of World Design Capital activities is motivating, even without instrumental expectations? Did the design collaboration provide an opportunity to be on the more sunny side of the street for a while? Was being involved in design a way for healthcare and social sector units to get some positive attention, or at least a break in their routines? If it was, was that enough of a design contribution?



# 2

## The cities on design

**Janos Honkonen**

In the 365 Wellbeing project, designers worked with personnel and experts from Helsinki capital region cities and third-sector organisations. This book focuses primarily on the co-operation from the designers' point of view. This chapter is the exception. After the projects concluded we interviewed the key partners and stakeholders. What follows are stories of their preconceptions, and perceptions of the successes, surprises and points of friction that emerged. Some of the comments apply to designers in general, some more naturally to those who are faced with the challenge of creating public services. Some of the views are probably best explained by the fact that on the designer side of the collaboration was a university fulfilling its educational duty.

Recognising and solving problems with public services and developing concepts around them required the students to quickly learn the practices and realities of the cities' social work, healthcare, cultural activities and urban planning tasks. The best way to achieve this was under the guidance of professionals from these fields. For some of the partners, both the overall concept of design and the process of guiding design students to the core issues of the services appeared somewhat strange at first – what did design have to do with, say, healthcare or social work? The following comments illustrate the initial reactions from some of the partners.

*“When I think of design, I primarily think of this industrial, well, design. I definitely couldn’t imagine that they would do anything like this [developing scheduling and customer communications], and I did ask ‘Say what?’ when I heard where the partners were coming from.”*

– Nurse in an internal medicine clinic, Helsinki

*“I did not know for a long time what this collaboration would entail... Then I heard that earlier a similar kind of project had resulted in pieces of art. I started wondering how child protection services could take part in this, and how it could benefit us. In our everyday work we are under a lot of pressure, and we always need to decide where to get involved.”*

– Expert in family and social services, Espoo

The collaboration encountered a lot of valid concerns about regulations, responsibilities and non-disclosure issues. In certain projects the interviewees felt like the designers had more freedom than the medical personnel and were following an entirely different set of rules. This caused some confusion.

*“In child protection services we are operating in an environment of norms that is very strictly regulated by the law. We have strict practices with data*

*protection... Maybe the thing that felt a bit scary for us in the beginning was our strictly regulated work meeting open artistic expression and creative processes. Standing on that threshold, we were slightly tense and scared of what would happen."*

– Expert in family and social services, Espoo

*"Suddenly we had professors and head nurses coming in from totally different fields. It didn't feel too credible or reliable... What bothered me was not being sure if our supervisors knew we were involved in a thing like this – and was this legal? We have very strict rules about confidentiality, and we can't implement anything ourselves that we haven't applied for a permit for and which hasn't been agreed with our superiors."*

– Head of department in an internal medicine clinic, Helsinki

When the nature of the projects was elaborated over the phone and the time came to meet the professors, researchers and students taking part in the projects, the idea of the collaboration became clearer and these preconceptions were replaced by preliminary trust.

*"I myself am an architect, and I have been thinking about this social side of design. I hadn't actually realised that design could be of this much use in designing everyday things, not just spaces. Maybe there was a dash of fate in this. I have now ended up planning things in a similar way; this just somehow swept me along with it."*

– Architect, social services, Espoo.

*"In the beginning of the project we discussed with Maarit Mäkelä [professor at the department of design] about what would be a good common goal. What the child protection services and everyone else who works with children needs are different ways to see the world from the perspective of a child... Somehow we thought that the collaboration would help us take a*

*child's point of view in a new way, or think about things like a child. That kick-started some pretty quick brainstorming about what we could do together to further that goal."*

– Expert in family and social services, Espoo

Especially in healthcare, there were initial concerns about whether or not the designers would be able to understand the everyday routine of the field in such fast-paced projects, but there were positive surprises in store.

*"When the schedule was revealed, it was really strict, and I was pretty sceptical. I didn't really know what to expect, so I adopted a 'let's see what happens' attitude. When the first process proposals were on the table, I was simply thinking, 'Goodness, how have they been able to understand our workflow this well in this little time?'... The schedules were adhered to well – when we agreed on a one-hour meeting at a given time, one hour it was."*

– Head of department in an internal medicine clinic, Helsinki

For those who were used to the tight norms of child protection services, adopting the designers' open and creative method of working took a while, but talking helps – even when working with designers.

*"Our development processes can be open and unstructured at times, but maybe not this unstructured. When the starting point is that people get into a creative process based on some stimulus, we can't go and say 'be creative like this' or define the end results. Maybe that was a little bit scary in the beginning, but that too faded away. It was possible to talk about these feelings at any time. The success of a co-operation requires being able to say during the process that something makes you nervous, suspicious or scared. Here, it worked well."*

– Architect, social services, Espoo

# Lumipallo

Lumipallo (Snowball) is an artefact that expresses the safety and regeneration of family using a closed structure and infinite stairways.

**Student:**  
Jonghoon Jun

**Instructors:**  
Maarit Mäkelä  
Simo Puintila

**Partners:**  
City of Espoo  
WDC Helsinki 2012  
Aalto University



# Grand piano

Grand piano is a fully playable toy piano that creates imaginary world-like soundscapes. The aim of the work is to remind us how differently children might see things.

**Student:**  
Jokke Katajamäki

**Instructors:**  
Maarit Mäkelä  
Simo Puintila

**Partners:**  
City of Espoo  
WDC Helsinki 2012  
Aalto University



Overall, the partners were happy with the results of the projects, or positively surprised at the very least. Many of the partners described the collaboration with designers as giving their job a new and different viewpoint – the kind of angle that one does not necessarily think to adopt during the everyday tasks of the job.

*“When I start writing a notification letter for a scheduled appointment, I’ll write in the five most important things and nothing more... When we started thinking about these letters with the designers, they started immediately thinking about the tone of the letter. What kinds of secondary messages does it send? How does the letter look and what things are emphasised? We only think about getting the information into the letter, and not how the reader will pay attention to the information.”*

– Nurse in an internal medicine clinic, Helsinki

*“When, I finally saw the finished concepts, after the initial nervousness I was really impressed by them... They didn’t manifest my fears about clichés, which people who don’t understand child protection services and who are outsiders to the field attach to the field and to children. Personally, I was the most touched by Jokke Katajamäki’s sound installation; it was so moving that I started to cry.”*

– Expert in family and social services, Espoo

*“I think it’s great that both us and the designers have opened up our respective worlds. Now we will need this sort of breaking of boundaries in all sorts of different situations. Questioning the currently used model leads to progress.”*

– Architect, social services, Espoo.

*“I did like many of the concepts... They didn’t contain much that was new and wonderful, but they brought up what kinds of things are on the surface nowadays. I loved the concept about promoting silence and renovating*

*the metro station with a whole new level of ambition, so that it's not just a space to pass through."*

– Project coordinator, Helsinki

*"In my personal opinion the visual outlook of the notification letters was really refreshing, when I looked at them from the bureaucracy's point of view... They had good tips, and so did the project about student healthcare. For me the maternity centre section was the most vague from the point of view of what we could get out of it. We did get a lot out of it, though, and it gave us lots of hints about how to reach people who can't be bothered to read our officialese."*

– Head nurse, Helsinki

However, the designers' and clients' approaches were not a good match in every respect. In particular, the amount of work and effort demanded by co-design raised questions for the busy clients.

*"I think the overall rating of the project is good, but on the practical side there was something more to wish for... The working method of the project was strenuous compared to ordinary consultation work. If you arrange events that you want the city's representatives to attend, there should be more warning time. Well, it says so in the contract that we have to engage and take part, but the amount of participation that was demanded exceeded our resources. I understand the point of view and the methods of the project, but it was really heavy. There are plenty of strengths in that, but as a package it requires more thought."*

– Head of an urban development programme, Helsinki

*"I'm not used to the steering group being exploited as unashamedly as it was in this project. There were seminars and other things as if we had no other jobs to do... This time we were pretty nice and attended. Usually,*



*scheduling clashes are solved by just skipping things – if you can't make it, you can't make it."*

– Project coordinator, Helsinki

*"The biggest challenge was to figure it out so that when the designers could come and visit us, we had the time to receive them. Most of these groups announced beforehand that they were coming and asked if it was possible on a given day. Then there were some who just suddenly dropped in, expecting that one of us would have the time to explain what this thing and place is. If you are not prepared, that'll take an hour, easily. It was not nice to have to tell them, 'Sorry, in ten minutes I have to be somewhere else' and leave them hanging. You could imagine this is because of lack of experience."*

– Director of a service home, Kauniainen

The co-operation was regarded as interesting from both the child protection services and urban design perspective. The students had been successful in dismantling the often elitist image of design with their practical, human-centred and down-to-earth approach.

*"Perhaps my view of design hasn't changed that much, but my view of designers... The main insight was that they can work with real everyday things and that they are interested in the lives and points of view of totally ordinary people, so design is not just some high culture in a museum. Somehow the contacts with the students, Maarit and the whole bunch made them much more human, and feasible partners for collaboration. Of course a central theme in meeting them was one of crossing the borders between different worlds."*

– Expert in family and social services, Espoo

*"The Action Painting Wagon concept took the design student to work with children in several workshops. For the people who work in child protection*

*services with clients, this raised a strong hope or an expectation about how to make more room for this sort of work on the client side and how it could be enabled more. We were left thinking how this collaboration could continue somehow."*

– Expert in family and social services, Espoo

*"Design can address every kind of environment planning, smaller than zoning and construction. This is a neglected area. We are here concentrating so much on getting the downtown as fine and presentable as possible, but how to get the suburbs comfortable in terms of the small things – to make them places that people want to spontaneously love right away? I would say that the designers could have a lot to say about this. Designers are so much more aware than ordinary people about what environments and public spaces communicate. Urban design has slipped away to tinkering with skyscrapers again, and somehow it feels that the contact with the everyday lives of ordinary people has vanished from the city planning department. It would require professionals who are more on the side of the inhabitants."*

– Project coordinator, Helsinki

*"The starting point in architecture and physical and technical design in Finland is very technology-rational ... The inhabitant is acknowledged through the building or the plan, which in my opinion is slightly condescending. We would need a designer working next to the architect and engineer to develop processes for the everyday world."*

– Head of an urban development programme, Helsinki

The students received a lot of praise for their positive and enthusiastic attitude, which made the professionals see their work in new and refreshing light.

# Siblings

The process of casting a ceramic piece has similar qualities to the way children are brought up. When you make a series of casts each piece will react differently depending on how it is treated. For example, when a piece comes out of a mould and is dented the clay will always return to the dented shape. This same quality can be seen in the way children are treated. This piece illustrates this similarity through sculpture.

**Students:**  
Kalya O'Donoghue

**Instructors:**  
Maarit Mäkelä  
Simo Puintila

**Partners:**  
City of Espoo  
WDC Helsinki 2012  
Aalto University





*"It's very positive that someone has the energy to be enthusiastic and think of these things. In my opinion the most useful thing was that it's healthy also for us in here for someone to come and look at us through the eyes of an outsider, because it's so easy to get stuck in a rut of 'this is how we have always done it, this is the best way and it works, why do we need to change it?' It's part of human nature to resist change. We should work to get rid of that."*

– Director of a service home, Kauniainen

*"There were such great moments like, well we had this exhibition created by the students, and when they came here to do it they didn't want to leave. The caretaker had to drive them out in the evening – 'Go on now, let's continue tomorrow'. The burning enthusiasm."*

– Director of a cultural centre, Helsinki

In the 365 Wellbeing projects, the recurring theme was that the representatives of the cities were initially somewhat suspicious about what the designers had to offer. This was followed by positive surprise regarding, for example, how practical service design is. Not all of the projects went smoothly. The largest problems were caused by incompatible ways of working and the schedules dictated by the course plans of the university. Also, the designers' way of working on the projects appeared scattered or ill defined compared to a run-of-the-mill consultancy project, and left false expectations in its openness. Many of the concepts produced by the students gave food for further thought. Even if the concepts themselves weren't directly useful in the sense that they would be implemented, the new perspective of the work was seen as valuable and necessary.

# 3

We have always been here before: on design courting real disciplines

**Jari-Pekka Kola**

This chapter discusses the situation designers face when they step out of their comfort zone to work in unfamiliar and highly specialised disciplines that have established practices and require specialist knowledge. For example, sciences such as psychiatry and practices such as social work are worlds apart from designing white goods in what goes to setting design problems. The specificity and depth of knowledge required to work in these domains causes us to doubt how much we can contribute.



Designers are used to being handed unfamiliar problems from unfamiliar organisations. They proceed to investigate the organisation and the problem, and then propose a solution. And they seem to have been doing this successfully for a good while, since they continue to get asked to do it. Why, then, should working with psychiatric care or social work systems be different from any other new and unique design case? There is no precedent for design dealing with such topics, but the difference lies more in the fact that they are disciplines that require rich and specialised knowledge. This chapter sheds light on the different means through which the design students dealt with being naïve about such disciplines, and how they found the confidence to proceed and produce valid contributions.

Donald Schön<sup>1</sup> has researched accounts of problem-solving practices in disciplines such as architecture and the psychiatric care, to examine what he calls reflective practice. With the concept of reflective practice, Schön extends Michael Polanyi's<sup>2</sup> term 'tacit knowledge' into a more conscious and structured activity that allows the practitioner's intuition and subjective judgement to play a role in professional problem solving. Reflective practice proceeds through learning by doing while avoiding making premature judgements, however familiar the situation may be to the practitioner. To extend the idea of learning by doing, Schön borrows Samuel Taylor Coleridge's<sup>3</sup> concept of willing suspension of disbelief to describe how understanding arises from experience if one is willing to enter the experience without judgement. Reflective practice proceeds through a 'conversation' with the situation, in which the practitioner tests hypotheses and then the situation 'talks back', calling for alterations to the current hypothesis or for new ones to be tested. This makes it possible for a person without

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1 Schön, D (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, 2nd ed. Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Surrey

2 Polanyi, M (1967) *The Tacit Dimension*. Doubleday, New York

3 Coleridge, S.T. (1983) *Biographia Literaria* (J Engell and WJ Bates, eds). Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ. (Originally published 1817)

knowledge about a situation to tackle it with whatever competencies he or she possesses, without having to go to excessive lengths to learn the particularities of the topic. It also provides continuous holistic feedback, which informs the practitioner about aspects above and beyond what the tested hypothesis was looking for. For example, proposing an improvement to how a healthcare system handles patient records is likely to elicit sensitive notions about patient privacy and other matters that perhaps fall outside the scope of the initial problem statement. These notions can prompt the designer to develop the proposal in ways that might not have been obvious to a person more familiar with the domain.

Tom Kelley<sup>4</sup>, CEO of IDEO, talks about the different kinds of personalities that are crucial for innovation. One of them is the anthropologist, who Kelley credits as practicing the Zen philosophy in the sense of having the mind of a novice. This means they are able to approach a familiar thing as if it were something completely new, without a priori truths and assumptions about the phenomenon being studied. This ability is closely linked to another skill Kelley attributes to anthropologists: that of *vujà de* – the opposite of *déjà vu*. It is the ability to see with new eyes what has always been there. Anthropologists seek epiphanies through seeing something familiar with new eyes.

Design's contribution to this comes through its use of visual communication and modelling. This use is perhaps related to tacit knowledge; the ability to understand more than we can explain. We show more than we can tell, and without words the receiver may also understand more than we are able to communicate. This does not have to mean highly polished images and complex artwork; rough sketches are enough. Visual modelling of even highly abstract problems and issues is a way of thinking them through. This way of reflecting on the problem helps the conversation by

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4 Kelley, T (2006) *The Ten Faces of Innovation: IDEO's Strategies for Beating the Devil's Advocate and Driving Creativity Throughout Your Organization*. Tom Kelly with Jonathan Littman. Profile, London



finding shortcuts through simplification, revealing new understandings of the problem in question. The designer's combination of ethnographic skills and attitude with a capability for visualisation is a powerful one, as it makes use of analogies and metaphors to convey insight and interpretation without the need for written descriptions.

The first of our design project examples builds on user-centred design methods and teamwork, and the second one on subjective interpretation and personal creativity. Common to both is the openness of the brief, which is typical in educational settings.

### **The user-centred approach**

The first example deals with the Psychiatric Care<sup>5</sup> project, which was executed in collaboration with two mental healthcare units in Helsinki: Aurora Psychiatric Hospital and Malmi Outpatient Clinic. The goal of the collaboration was to explore how design can help improve the environments, practice and image of psychiatric care. The user-inspired approach taught to the students provided a framework for reflecting on the findings and allowed freer interpretation and ideation. User-centred design methods borrow from ethnographic research. In this type of qualitative design research there is a strong link between the data and the observer, and there are no a priori truths or established assumptions about where the researcher should start. The influence of the social sciences on user-centred design has a bearing in terms of the readiness of students to approach new domains and view everyday things as interesting and worthy of careful study. This approach leads to an iterative process in which the students expand their knowledge of the context through various means of inquiry and user involvement, while simultaneously focusing on the development of a feasible solution proposal.

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5 User Inspired Design taught by professors Turkka Keinonen and Jack Whalen, and supported by researchers from Aalto University

# Transfer ticket

A major problem in mental healthcare is the lack of knowledge and sense of continuation in the treatment process. Patients often see the future of their treatment as an uncertain "black hole". The solution to this problem is the transfer ticket, which uses a train ticket and the idea of a voyage as a positive and practical metaphor. The travel ticket details the next appointment for the patient, including all relevant information such as the date and time, the doctor they will be seeing, and even instructions on how to get to the clinic by public transport.

**Students:**

Tamara Amalia  
Sanna Tuononen  
Otto Schultz  
Mike Walker

**Instructors:**

Turkka Keinonen  
Jack Whalen  
Tjhien Liao  
Jari-Pekka Kola

**Partners:**

Aurora hospital  
Malmi out patient clinic  
WDC Helsinki 2012  
Aalto University



# Mind Mate

The Mind Mate concept provides a person in psychiatric rehabilitation with stories about successful ways to deal with mental disorders and getting their life back on track. The stories are from previous patients' personal video journals, highlighting experiences, activities, encounters and services that have supported their recovery. The short videos can be viewed on tablets lent by the mental care institutions. Once the customer has progressed with their rehabilitation, they can take on the role of experience expert and share their story with a similar video.

**Students:**

Aino Jakobsson  
Carolina Rebelo  
Dongjing Byeon  
Tae Yong Kim

**Instructors:**

Turkka Keinonen  
Jack Whalen

**Partners:**

Helsinki Health Care Center,  
WDC Helsinki 2012  
Aalto University

## MindMate Contents



# Our Step

Our Step is a service to support mental rehabilitation. It promotes the concept that a healthy body leads to a healthy mind and a reduced danger of relapse. Our Step promotes mental wellbeing with products that motivate people to stay active. The products are delivered in subdivided thematic kits over a period of time to support the rehabilitation process. The kits are chosen according to the person's individual needs and progress in rehabilitation by psychiatrists and physical therapists – and, when relevant, even together with previous patients who have experienced similar conditions. Examples of kits include a kit for mapping pleasurable places of interest, a step counter to give encouraging feedback on physical activity, and a camera with colour filters for documenting moods and sceneries.

**Students:**

Lewis Just  
Irina Massmann  
Jesmine Liu  
Rami Santala

**Instructors:**

Turkka Keinonen  
Jack Whalen

**Partners:**

Helsinki Health Care Center  
WDC Helsinki 2012  
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## **Transfer Ticket**

Transfer Ticket<sup>6</sup> is a design proposal that tackles the patient transfer process in psychiatric care. The goal for this project was to humanise the process of transferring patients between clinics by focusing on its emotional aspects and experience. The solution bridges the communication breakdowns that can occur during the process. It transforms the referral into a ticket format that includes the necessary information about the patient's care and which the patient can bring along for the transfer. This alleviates the anxiety felt by the patient at being left on their own while being transferred to the next phase of treatment. As well as being a practical reminder for the patient, the ticket acts as a tool for the person receiving them by providing the necessary information about the patient's care. The power of the final concept lies in its use of a simple metaphor. It can be seen as *vuja de* brought to life. It is a concept familiar to everyone, and the psychiatric care professionals can identify the value it adds to the transfer process. From the patient's perspective the added prestige of the transfer ticket compared to a conventional referral, or no referral at all, conveys an attitude of appreciation and respect and creates positive expectations for the next appointment. (page 42)

The student group found airline and train travel as useful analogies for their concept through conducting an ethnographic study of care personnel and ex-patients as representative users of the system while relating their own experiences to bear on the findings. This reflection was crucial as it enabled the group to see familiarity in an unfamiliar situation. Through the analogy the team was able to map the critical points in the patient transfer process and develop ideas around them. The application of this method is significant because it allows emotional aspects and hard data to be connected, thus yielding solutions that are not only practical but give something more.

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6 Transfer Ticket by Tamara Amalia, Sanna Tuononen, Mike Walker, Otto Schultz

The students approached the discipline of psychiatric care with little prior understanding. The little information they had gathered served as background and a source for developing initial questions to pose on the first ward visits. The loose analysis of the initial data gathered on this excursion allowed a lot of room for opinions and feelings, but more importantly for searching for openings where design could best intervene. The students state that the key words and phrases used to guide their direction in the project were chosen through discussion rather than in-depth analysis of the findings, and thus these choices were based on a subjective interpretation of the perceived phenomenon and reflection on prior experience. Rather than making things easier for them, this only served to open up more avenues for deeper investigation and the formulation of new questions. However, it was after the first visit that the group identified an area where they could contribute to the improvement of psychiatric care – the patient transfer process. This illustrates how the design process simultaneously adds to the knowledge of the context in question and enables focusing and narrowing towards a solution.

The student group identified the need to involve the most relevant stakeholders in the project. This contributed to their confidence and enabled the project to move forward and generate results with real impact. To this end, the group engaged care personnel and ex-patient representatives in semi-structured interviews and a sketching workshop. Sketching enabled the required data to be gathered quickly, easily and holistically. The technique uses the representatives' sketching for knowledge production in place of structured discussions, which are more cumbersome and time consuming to distil into concrete findings. Here, the structures laid out by the user-centred methods play an important role as they provide a loose procedure and some theoretical framing to reflect the data against. The user-centred methodology and its application in the research phase of the project does not, however, impose rules for the development of solutions. The collaboration also involved mutual ideation, as questions about the system and the sketches could be

posed during the exercise. In this way epiphanies may come to either party, and they can be instantly developed. This is a good example of bridging the discipline gap by finding mutually unfamiliar territories.

Involving the stakeholders meant following an iterative process where the group visited the site regularly to discuss the project and listen to the representatives' opinions. The representatives not only shared their specialist knowledge, they also played a role in the formation of the results being developed by the designers. The designers acted as catalysts for the creation of a mutually desirable solution. Taken at face value the solution resulting from the project appears simple and obvious; however, it was simply not there before. This underlines the *vuja de* approach the designers brought to the project. They helped the specialists to view their discipline, and their everyday work, through fresh eyes. The Transfer Ticket is critical of the routine practices in psychiatric care and the relationship between the patients and the facilities they use. This is of great value, as it is the result of a collaboration between stakeholders and external provocateurs.

The group's process of interpretation through discussion with the situation and reflection on the actual user input closely follows Schön's concept of reflective practice, while their use of metaphors and drawing of analogies from their own personal experiences of travel is an exemplary case of the *vuja de*-type thinking that Kelley talks about. The group managed to effectively cut corners in their own process, avoiding the difficulties of learning and understanding the nuances of patient transfer and its relation to care but understanding it enough to find a shortcut.

What is notable about this way of working is that the facts do not dictate decisions. Working in this way postpones the cost engineering and other analyses to later stages of the project and allows more room for pursuing goals that are desirable despite their costs and difficulties. This may seem tedious, as it is through iteration that results can be gained, but when working towards the specific goal of contributing positively to a discipline that you know virtually nothing about it is a feasible route to follow.

## **The creative process focused approach**

The two other examples we will look at are from the Family<sup>7</sup> project executed in collaboration with the City of Espoo's child protection unit and various social work representatives in Espoo. The teaching focused on helping the students to understand and consciously develop their personal creative processes. This approach therefore focuses more on the artistic side of the design process. It builds on an openness to allow any given input to change the route of the process, and the design student is expected to maintain an open attitude towards the phenomenon being investigated and to explore it from multiple perspectives in order to be receptive to stimuli. As the creative process is executed in a design context, the results display a desire to change things for the better, as the central purpose of design is to support and enable a better quality of life. In this exercise the students' frames of reflection are firstly personal ideals, secondly peer group discussion and support, and thirdly set by the media one works with. As already discussed, this can yield positive contributions to disciplines that, on the face of it, are far removed from design.

The emphasis on personal creative processes encourages the students' involvement in and engagement with their projects and the individuals they meet. This encourages the projection of their own ideals about quality of life onto their work, and provides a very different perspective from the user-centred approach, which relies on set frames against which data can be reflected and conclusions made. In turn, the creative challenge is a setting for encouraging responsibility from designers – they cannot hide behind the paradigm. Concrete, material results are emphasised, implying that the students cannot hide behind a vague conceptual design proposal, but rather have to face up to the evaluation of a materialised idea. Transforming a conceptualised phenomenon into a material output renders the implications of the proposal visible and assessable.

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7 Design Experimentation and Exploration taught by professor Maarit Mäkelä and lecturer Simo Puintila, and supported by researchers from Aalto University



# Action Painting Wagon

The Action Painting Wagon brings joy to children's experimental painting sessions by combining painting with music. Paper can be placed on top of a speaker that is in the centre of the tabletop. Different musical experiments can be carried out that cause the painting to vibrate according to the intensity of the sound waves. The design was developed together with children from Espoo child welfare services.

**Student:**

Maarten den Breeijen

**Instructors:**

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Simo Puintila

**Partners:**

City of Espoo

WDC Helsinki 2012

Aalto University



## Action Painting Wagon

Action Painting Wagon<sup>8</sup> (page 49) is an art therapy device for children in foster care. The wagon comprises a table with an upward-facing speaker mounted in the centre. One end of the table holds a roll of paper, from which a sheet can be pulled over the speaker and painted on. When music is played through the speaker, the paint vibrates according to the intensity of the sound waves. The space between the top and bottom of the table is used for storing the music player, amplifier, painting accessories and two different-sized benches to accommodate children of different heights. The wagon was developed together with children under the care of Espoo child welfare services.

The wagon is the result of the designer's interest in combining music and visuals, but what makes this case special is how he applied his interest and how the project was realised. Because he wanted to work with media that interested him personally, not professionally, his motivations were genuine and honest. The project was inspired by a presentation by Espoo child welfare services and, although there were no expectations to do so, he took it as his mission to provide something for children from troubled families. While this project is different in its approach to the user-centred projects, he wanted to make it collaborative for the sake of providing a positive contribution to the children's situation while exploring and developing his own professional identity.

The decision to involve such stakeholders in his project also imposed a great deal of responsibility on him. In his final report he discusses the uncertainty he felt about realising the project, having no previous experience of working with children, and about undertaking a project that could become so meaningful for the people it touches. His medicine for this uncertainty was to rely on a common denominator he had found during the course – that of happiness. Albeit a fairly vague term, it was the cornerstone that

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8 Action Painting Wagon by Maarten Den Breeijen

he built the project on, and on which he reflected the direction his process was moving in to check whether it was the direction he desired. This is a good example of what Schön means by discussing with the situation and listening to its feedback to help you cope with uncertainty and instability. Having found that confidence in this reflective conversation with the situation, the Dutch-speaking student was able to carry the project through despite the language barrier he faced.

The process progressed distinctly through visualisations and mock-ups. Whenever there was a moment of doubt or a difficult decision to make, it was resolved by turning the problem into a material and visual form rather than through theoretical analysis or imaginative reasoning. This helped him clarify what was feasible and desirable. The process also allowed for projection of personal interests and ideals of better quality of life into the mock-ups and drawings. The student tested reactions to his designs in trial sessions. This phase of the work was very sensitive because the identities of the children in custody had to be protected, and working with children with such backgrounds is hardly something a design student can be fully prepared for.

### **Tools for Infiltrating the World of Mothers**

Another case from the same project is Tools for Infiltrating the World of Mothers<sup>9</sup>. This design was prompted by many of the student's friends starting families around the same time. She felt peer pressure to start one herself, and felt discomfort in social gatherings as the new mothers suddenly developed a whole new language and talked about things utterly unknown to her. (page 52)

Tools for Infiltrating the World of Mothers comprises a baby doll and a Baby Life to Finnish dictionary. The introduction of a baby into a friendship can be devastating as the new mother is occupied with the baby and all of a sudden has a whole new life, whereas nothing has really changed for the

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9 Tools for Infiltrating the World of Mothers by Riina Oikari

# Tools for infiltrating the world of mothers

A baby doll and a dictionary that explains words associated with babies work to help mothers communicate with their childless friends. They narrow the gap between people in different life situations and help the childless to understand the world of babies better. The baby doll works as a baby substitute and helps others to empathise with the situation. In addition to these concrete tools, the work also consists of pictures taken when testing the tools in practice.

**Student:**  
Riina Oikari

**Instructors:**  
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Simo Puintila

**Partners:**  
City of Espoo  
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Aalto University



# Absolute Custody

Alcohol is the biggest reason behind children being taken into care in Finland.

**Student:**  
Janne Karsisto

**Instructors:**  
Maarit Mäkelä  
Simo Puintila

**Partners:**  
City of Espoo  
WDC Helsinki 2012  
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friend without children. It is hard for those without children to understand what the new mother is talking about or even understand the words she is using, and this can lead to unintentional social exclusion. The intended use of these tools is to facilitate and ease communication between new mothers and their childless friends, and to alleviate the turmoil caused by the new member in the social circle. By arming the childless with a substitute baby to help them empathise with the mother and a dictionary to make sense of the language she now talks, the tools let the mother's friends be part of her new life. While the student's designs are simplistic and humorous, they do not mock mothers or their loved ones. They approach the issue in a light-hearted way that is immediately recognisable and understandable. This design is not about the objects, rather the discourse they influence and how they go about it.

The tools address the issue on a broader level and for a wider discourse and audience, elevating the work above being simply a personal artistic response. By simplifying the tools and designing them to be aesthetically more generic rather than lifelike, they could help a wider audience solve the social handicap of losing friends to their babies. The photos of the tools being used in a real-life setting show how the subject matter of the design transcends from tangible objects to discourse.

In her reflections the student paints a picture of a smooth process, in contrast with the Action Painting Wagon. Her attention was more focused on refining the aesthetics of the final presentation in order to achieve the most effective results when facilitating and shaping discourse. In spite of the differences between the two cases, this process also relied on realising different trials and versions of the tools in order to find a balance between emotionally evocative and lighter discussion prompters. This is delicate work, as the tools need to prompt the discussion in a direction from which it can continue freely, rather than becoming too gloomy and serious or jokey and yielding only cheap laughs.

## Discussion

User-inspired practice proceeds with a framework for thinking and generating understanding of the problem in question. It allows and calls for personal interpretation in the process, which is useful for pushing it forward, but its validation relies on views set by external parties and theoretical groundings. The artistic approach relies on personal interpretation only. They are equally valid approaches, but tend to have different goals. User-inspired design aims to create viable solutions, at least hypothetically, while the artistic approach contributes to the discourse on its chosen topic. The Transfer Ticket is a viable development solution that should be taken seriously by care professionals. It resulted from designers investigating the patient transfer system and simplifying it, where possible, while maintaining the mutual benefits for both patients and professionals at the core of the project. The Action Painting Wagon is a functioning prototype and can be used for art therapy sessions, but the underlying thought there arose from the designer's personal concerns about the children in custody and his will to make a positive contribution to their lives. The wagon does not aim to solve the problem of children being taken into custody, let alone the reasons behind this, but offers some betterment for their lives. Realising the prototype itself was the most valuable contribution. Tools for Infiltrating the World of Mothers are on the point in their own right, but the connection to wider discourse and social phenomenon is its key value. Neither of these last two tools are solutions to their respective problems, but are instead visualisations of the problem's existence and tools to aid further thought.

Koskinen and his colleagues<sup>10</sup> discuss the differentiation between art and design. A designer cannot merely disturb, as the results would be too easily dismissed. But if the design, while being provocative or even

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10 Koskinen, I., Zimmerman, J., Binder, T., Redström, J., & Wensveen, S. (2012). *Design research through practice. From the Lab, Field, and Showroom*. Waltham, MA: Morgan Kaufmann.

disturbing, manages to retain the qualities of something that is intended for use, its impact is stronger as it implies that things could be different. Another point they make is that this kind of work should be taken to where it makes a difference, i.e. to companies, policy-makers and so on, which is something the projects in 365 Wellbeing achieved better than most study projects usually do. The work done in these projects has involved such people directly and attracted them to exhibitions where the results have been discussed. However, in order to take their responsibilities even more seriously, designers should keep the discussion going and respond to it, for example, with follow-up work.



# 4

## Co-design with the public sector

Kirsikka Vaajakallio & Tuuli Mattelmäki

Co-design starts with the assumption that people should have a voice regarding the public services that influence their lives – either directly, when they use the service, or indirectly through the wellbeing of the community and society at large. Co-design is driven by the iterative reframing of problems, and the exploration of alternatives through dialogues, visualisations and prototypes that are created as collaborations between the stakeholders. This chapter addresses the question of how design, its processes, tools and mindset can be applied in collaboration with public organisations, which are not used to experimenting and continuously reframing the problem. People working in the public sector are often unfamiliar with design's explorative approach and

lack knowledge about the opportunities, objectives and challenges of design. On the other hand, designers face challenges in giving proper attention to the conventions of the public sector<sup>1</sup>. We will discuss these challenges through focusing on the following:

- framing the design challenge,
- understanding concept design as a decision-making tool, and
- utilising concept design for promoting discussion.

We will illustrate these with insights and results from a student project, Rethinking Villa Breda, which was conducted in collaboration with the City of Kauniainen. The project focused on public services provided especially for seniors – but not, however, restricted to them. We applied a co-design approach to combine the visions and skills of design students, city representatives, service users, and wellbeing and health stakeholders. The students exercised and developed their co-design skills and the application of empathic design tools. Empathy is especially meaningful in design contexts that look at individuals' wellbeing as a personal experience. Furthermore the seniors' daily lives differ from those of the students, and in order to better understand what wellbeing means to different people, empathic understanding – the ability to look at the world from other people's perspectives – becomes essential<sup>2</sup>.

### **Framing problems by co-design**

The first task in design is problem finding and/or framing. When we work with complex service-product systems, identifying the right problem demands a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach that might be a long-lasting effort.

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1 Hakio, K. & Mattelmäki T. (2011). Design adventures in the public sector. In Proceedings of Designing pleasurable products and interfaces DPPI2011, (Eds.) Cautela, Deserti, Rizzo, Zurlo, 475-482

2 Koskinen, I., Battarbee, K. & Mattelmäki, T. (Eds.) (2003). Empathic Design. Finland: IT Press.

In Rethinking Villa Breda, the first formulation of the design brief took place when negotiating the project contract between Aalto University and representatives of Kauniainen, including the director of culture and leisure, director of social and health services, and chief of senior services. This took place approximately six months before the project started. The brief was further elaborated in several meetings. Additionally, to create shared expectations and objectives, a half-day workshop focusing on framing the design problem and the design brief to be given for students was organised a few weeks before the students started. More than ten people participated in the workshop organised by the project coordinators: the professors responsible for the three student courses and the core representatives from Kauniainen. It was decided that the design brief should be left purposefully open, so that each student team would need to frame their own approach based on their learning during the course. This enabled meaningful foci for the students and made it possible for them to suggest diverse perspectives for public senior services.

The overall topic was to develop ideas for senior services to be provided by the Villa Breda service centre in Kauniainen. Instead of just focusing on physical healthcare, the students were encouraged to look at, for example, the meaning of cultural services in seniors' wellbeing. Accordingly, the services did not need to be limited to the ones provided for the permanent service centre residents or even the elderly in general, but could cater for a wide range of customers and people living in Kauniainen.

A general structure for the three courses was created including a) a kick-off event at Kauniainen at the very beginning of every course, b) one co-design workshop to verify and co-design ideas together with people living in Kauniainen and with invited experts, and c) final presentations in Kauniainen for anyone interested in learning about the project. In between these events, the students conducted their own studies on the topic, the city of Kauniainen and its inhabitants. As many students were not Finnish, they didn't know the area beforehand.

The students started to explore the topic from the given starting point but, as expected, ended up choosing alternative interests based on their observations and empathic insights. They also learned that Kauniainen is one of the most densely populated and geographically small cities in Finland, which enabled travelling by foot. By getting to know the area, people and the services provided, the students<sup>3</sup> noticed that although most residents in Kauniainen get around by private car, many of the elderly visitors of Villa Breda don't drive. In addition to regular means of public transportation they walk, take taxis, use a special public service line, use Villa Breda's own service line and get lifts from friends and family members.

To gain experiences of the existing means of transportation, the students tried both service lines and talked with the seniors and the drivers. They noticed that although the vehicles were somewhat designed for the purpose (minibuses with low, flat floors to ease stepping in, and a wheelchair lift) the vans didn't play that big of a role in the service. Instead, the driver had a significant role by being a personal contact person, helper or even a friend. The downsides of the service included inadequate operation times and lack of flexibility. During a co-design workshop an elderly lady told the students how she was not able to participate in art classes anymore because there was no suitable public transport running in the evenings and she did not dare to walk due to the hilly and slippery terrain. The students started to think how seniors could stay active if they could not get to the activities. Accordingly, they focused their design problem on supporting seniors' independence by enhancing their mobility, and developed a transportation concept, *Ajo* (page 61).

Another student team<sup>4</sup> built on their understanding that loneliness is a reason for the high suicide rate among the elderly. The students decided to focus on finding new relationships, since one of the major causes of

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3 Student group: Ilmari Mansikkamäki, Tamara Amalia, Saana Tikkanen

4 Student group: Petri Junttila, Tuukka Kingelin, Varurt Rintanalert, Erdem Tatal

# Ajo

The Ajo (Ride) concept supports the independent mobility of the elderly. Independent living is about the ability to be mobile and take care of one's everyday business, such as buying groceries and running other errands. The service consists of two people: the driver and the walking buddy. The former drives a minibus to take customers where they want to go, whereas the latter walks with them to their destination. A personal, trustworthy and friendly service is strongly emphasised.

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# Honestly?

We all have or had grandparents, but how many of us actually spoke with them honestly? Do we know who was their first love? What was the most difficult period of their lives? How much do we actually know about them? Honestly is a campaign that aims at encouraging interaction between seniors and the younger generations. It consists of short videos where elderly people answer questions about their lives. This shows the similarities between the generations to bring them closer.

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depression in later life is the death of a spouse. Students explained that, *"It was also interesting to know that there were some older people who felt that their relationship wasn't meaningful and who sought another chance after their retirement. However, they usually face many stigmas from their family as well as their friends when attempting to look for new love."* One of the seniors, who participated in a co-design workshop to develop a dating service, put it nicely: *"Love and a relationship is for everyone as long as one still breathes"*. Accordingly, the students aimed for a service that helps to find like-minded people to share one's stories and experiences with. Furthermore, they had learned that maintaining one's own identity was a major concern in the later stage of life and they wanted to highlight that in the service too. They began to develop a dating service, AVAdate (page 64), with a particular question in mind: *"What if we created a world that they [seniors] could be what they really wanted to be and share their memories in a way that really reflects themselves?"*

A third team of students<sup>5</sup> talked with the elderly and learned that they genuinely enjoyed spending time with the young, but they experienced a lack of communication between the generations. This got the students to wondering how well people know their older relatives; how many of us have actually spoken with our grandparents honestly? Do we know who their first love was? What was the most difficult period in their lives? Consequently, they reformulated their design problem to enhance inter-generational interaction and to get the younger generation interested in seniors' stories and life experiences. They noticed that seniors have a lot to offer if the service underlines similarities between the old and the young instead of the differences. Their proposal was a campaign, called *Honestly!* (page 62), consisting of short videos where old people answer questions about their lives and an internet platform where people can watch the videos, ask questions and contact the people in the videos.

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5 Student group: Martina Frantzen, Kajsa Sundeson, Goran Bjelajac, Panu Harju



# AVAdate

AVAdate is an online platform to help find new partners, especially later in life. AVAdate allows users to meet each other virtually, but also to share experiences and memories, making it different from regular online dating services. AVAdate focuses on who the users really are and not on their physical appearance. Users are represented in the service by avatars designed by the users to reflect their personality and interests. This allows users to meet someone that truly shares their attitude to life.

**Students:**

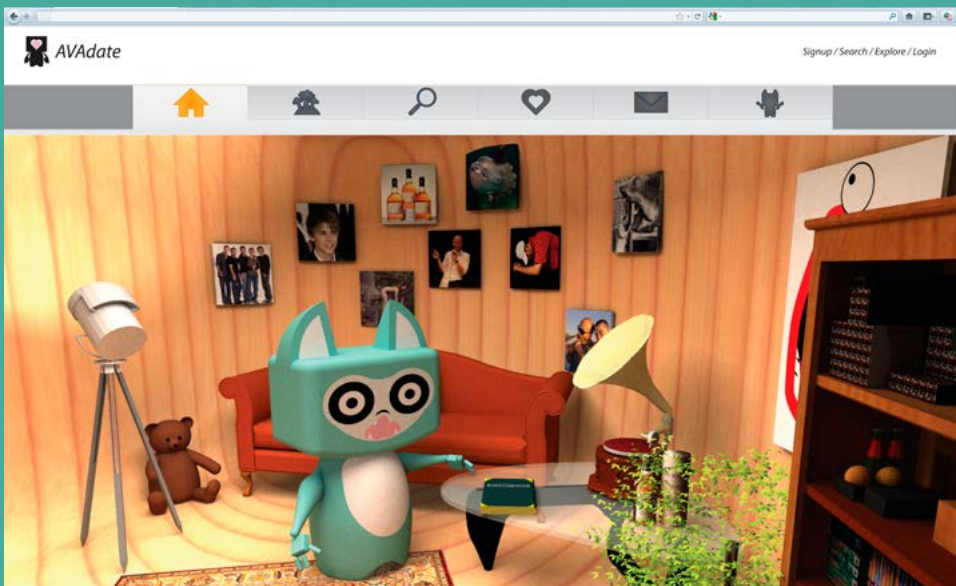
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These three examples of framing the design problem illustrate the versatility of the overall topic and the diverse approaches that one can take. In the beginning there are no right or wrong questions or answers, just different sides and emphases. The understanding, issues raised and ideas should be seen as an ongoing reframing of the problem rather than as purely solutions. Based on the project, the people who are responsible for developing public services in Kauniainen and Villa Breda can rethink what the aim of their services actually is and how they can achieve it. However, continuous reframing of the problem is a fuzzy and sometimes uncomfortable process. The process leads gradually towards a solution that can be hard to foresee beforehand. Furthermore, for the participants, the solution may look evident in the end but hard to justify to outsiders.

### **Concept design as a decision-making tool: different foci for wellbeing**

We considered co-design a feasible strategy for producing diverse design concepts that can stimulate discussion about alternative foci of future public services in Kauniainen. Altogether 13 concepts were created and presented to the city representatives. The concept proposals can be seen as *rethinking* and *decision-making tools* for the city management by concretising different service ideas. Some of them point out incremental improvements for the current services, whereas some are more radical and demand rethinking the way things are organised today.

For example, the Ajo concept shows how the current transportation services have good elements, but as such do not meet all the seniors' requirements. To support the freedom of choice about when and how they leave home, the students developed the existing services with two key actors: *the driver and the walker/walking buddy*. Based on the need and the mood, a senior can order one or the other. The concept underlines the mental and physical dimensions of wellbeing and links them by encouraging seniors to walk and run their errands as usual. The walker not only accompanies the elderly person to her art class, but they share stories during the walk as well.

AVAdate highlights the need for services that prevent loneliness. The group's studies encouraged the use of a web platform against the belief that over-65s don't use computers. When the students talked with the elderly they found out that most had basic computer and internet skills; some had even used dating websites before. The AVAdate concept suggests that solutions for ageing people do not have to be serious. It presents service users as avatars with characteristics that the user has chosen to represent themselves. For instance, if the user is an introvert rather than an extrovert, energetic rather than calm, etc., the computer program creates a unique avatar for every user (page 64). The avatar then represents the user in the virtual dating service. Another way the users can represent themselves in the service is through their "home", with personalised objects such as a photo book, music player, TV, bookshelf and furniture.

Like AVAdate, the Honestly! campaign stresses that there is something extraordinary in every ordinary person – there is a whole life of experiences. All seniors were once teenagers, with first crushes and sexual experiences. They were in love, and some of them still are. What is the secret behind a long-lasting marriage? The campaign message is that you do not need a researcher or a book to tell you the answers, since there are people all around who have lived through it. By going to the Honestly! website everyone can ask questions, listen to stories and even contact the person behind the story.

### **Concept design for discussion**

The project aimed to be user centric but only a limited amount of users were reached and many of the experts and frontline workers were not fully involved in the process. The new service concepts were based on diverse sources of information and interpreted with an artistic twist. They aimed to provoke discussion about public services and their role and focus within the city in order to guide decision making in the near future. Unconventional ideas, such as the dating service AVAdate, provoke fresh points of

references, discussion and reflection about the attitudes towards seniors instead of providing easy-to-accept improvements for the current systems.

Concept design can be a vehicle for triggering discussion and trying to understand what people actually want and what is meaningful for them. *“Showing people some ‘crazy ideas’ can help designers understand what people really need in a new gizmo, and producing new designs is how the designer develops this understanding”*<sup>6</sup>. Since project Rethinking Villa Breda was a student assignment, concept design can be explorative or even artistic and critical. The aims of such project are not tied to the short-term objectives of the organisations involved, and the educational context allows or even expects alternative ideas that facilitate and trigger discussions, and which can shape future solutions that become realised<sup>7</sup>. There are several reasons why, for instance, AVAdate evokes mixed feelings and reactions. First of all, it focuses on a taboo related to seniors: falling in love and having new relationships in old age. Secondly, it is an online service with avatars, rarely thought of as appropriate for the elderly.

All these concepts approached wellbeing from the social perspective, indicated that old people are valued and needed in the community, and highlighted the importance of having others around to avoid feeling isolated. However, they propose different approaches, including spending more time with younger generations, meeting people while taking care of daily tasks, or finding new relationships through a dating service.

### **Challenges of creative design in public organisations**

In the public sector, some of the fundamental barriers to applying service co-design include a fear of novelty and risk-taking. These are factors at the

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6 Bowen, S. (2009). A critical artefact methodology: Using provocative conceptual designs to foster human-centred innovation. PhD Thesis, Sheffield Hallam University.

7 Gaver, W., Martin, H. (2000). Alternatives: Exploring Information Appliances through Conceptual Design Proposals. In CHI '00 Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, ACM New York, NY, USA, 209-216.

heart of any innovation and design process. The hesitation results from the lack of experience and competence in managing creative collaboration but is also due to an organisational culture that may not encourage exploration and seeking innovative solutions. The urge to reach into the future rather than just understand the present, and creating future visions with people rather than for them, is also a new approach in the public sector.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, designers should remember that developing and applying design-based processes in the public sector is an innovative development and, as such, requires a change in culture and behaviour, which in turn demands time, resources, and management support<sup>9</sup>.

Service design has a particular value to innovation processes by providing tools to engage people, to visualise alternatives and develop service prototypes for testing. The co-design workshops conducted during the project had two purposes: Firstly, they were meant to invite people to raise issues they found important and, hence, direct design processes. For example, the team that designed the Honestly! campaign described the trigger for their design as follows: *"By doing research about the life of elderly people in Kauniainen and in the whole of Finland, we saw their isolation from younger generations as the biggest problem. When we spoke with people in retirement homes across Helsinki, we saw their wish to talk with us, to spend time with us, to tell us what they learned through hard times in their lives, to give us advice. We immediately jumped on that idea. Wouldn't it be nice to create a platform where young people can learn from much older and more experienced people?"* Secondly, co-design workshops gave the project participants and city employees first-hand experience of applying design thinking and tools in practice.

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8 Bason, C. (2010). Co-creation is key to innovation in government. In Ipsos MORI Understanding Society/winter 2010, 14-17.

9 Bailey, S.G. (2012). Embedding service design: the long and the short of it: Developing an organisation's design capacity and capability to sustainably deliver services. In Third Nordic Conference on Service Design and Service Innovation, ServDes 2012, Finland

# Memo

A last will and testament is not enough because it completely ignores the emotional side of a legacy. People rate values and life lessons as being equally important to receive or leave. Memo is a service that helps people to save, organise and share their most beloved memories. It combines modern mobile technology and low-tech solutions, helping to close the generation gap. It works by attaching one of a pair of QR code stickers to an important object and sticking the other in a book with written memories, photos, music or even pieces of fabric. When the book is full, it is sent to the service provider, who digitises it, attaches any sound or video clips, and publishes them on a website. When relatives point their smartphones at the QR code they get access to the memories.

**Students:**

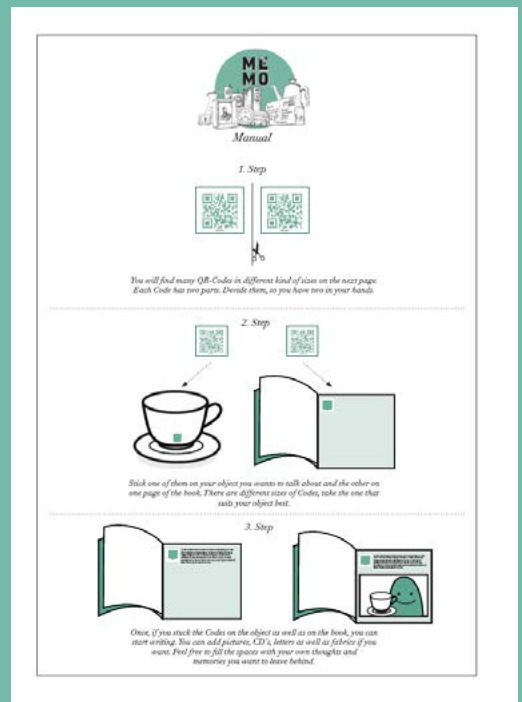
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To concretise the non-existing solutions, students created so-called service evidences. These are tangible parts of the service, such as brochures, websites, tickets etc., which can easily be created and tested before the actual service exists. Service evidences illustrated students' ideas, invited discussion and feedback from the audience, and aimed to allow continuing debate about the ideas within the city. Service evidences like posters and brochures could be distributed around Kauniainen to raise awareness of the topic and the city's attempts to develop its service offerings with an open mind.

The differences between the organisational language and designers' jargon is one of the barriers that emerge when embedding design and a public organisation meet. This can be witnessed in the communication of design students who did not yet have the confidence to argue for their service design propositions.<sup>10</sup> Regardless of the attempts to ease the communication about the concepts, there was still a lack of common vocabulary between the design students and the audience when the final concepts were presented at Kauniainen. It was easier for the audience to understand the benefits of the concrete and day-to-day proposals such as Ajo compared to more novel services such as Honestly! or AVAdate. This experience highlights the fact that both the designers and the audience should find a common vocabulary in order to be able to discuss the benefits and challenges of the proposed concepts. A long-term relationship and collaborative learning can support this process.

## Conclusions

The public sector has acknowledged that one-size-fits-all services do not work in modern society.<sup>11</sup> This has influenced the way that citizens are

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<sup>10</sup> Bailey (2012).

<sup>11</sup> Langergaard, L.L. (2011). Understandings of 'users' and 'innovation' in a public sector context. In *User-based Innovation in Services*. Sundbo, J. & Toivonen, M. (Eds.), Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 203-226.

increasingly seen as active users or co-producers of services, and public organisations are viewed as service deliverers instead of as a governmental institution. This view challenges the traditional production of public services and opens up opportunities for service design, including co-design and human-centred approaches.

Our experiences from earlier cases and the ones presented in this chapter support the view that design approaches and practices like empathic, visual and participatory methods can be applied in cross-functional public-service development projects. However, besides experiencing the potential benefits, we have also faced challenges in the collaboration between designers or design students and public organisations due to different conventions, expectations and lack of a common vocabulary. For example, unrealistic expectations may result if people don't understand that the role of design goes beyond concrete improvements in current practices and environments. In this chapter we have discussed how design can be utilised in the public sector for framing the design challenge, as a decision-making tool and for promoting discussion. In order to create successful collaboration in the future, we think that both designers and public organisations should become aware of the diverse meanings and opportunities of co-design.

# 5

## Designing wellbeing through storytelling

Tjhien Liao

In one of the presentations<sup>1</sup>, a student acted out the life of a fictional individual, beginning with: “This is my story”. Step by step, the student acted out the loss of the desire to live, culminating in the question: “Why do I live?”. In this story, the fictional individual was aided by “Mi”, a web service that provides a means for self-reflection in close communication with others, such as family, friends and psychiatric care professionals. Vividly, the student managed to grip the audience’s attention, reaching a level of resonance that would otherwise have been difficult to achieve.

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<sup>1</sup> Florina Trost, Vesa Ylirisku, Kaushik Eshwar and Nargis Guseynova



Described above is one of the six presentations given by the design students during the project “Design for wellbeing in psychiatric care”. By deciding to perform a story, this group clearly deviated from the other presentations. And although the presentation directed our attention to the suggested solution, “Mi”, we cannot isolate the solution from the story and the compelling manner in which the story was told (page 74). This is just one example that illustrates that, in addition to the proposed solution, both the story and its telling form significant elements that are integral to its design. In examining the different scenarios presented in this project, we are provided with the opportunity to exemplify the role of stories in designing a scenario within the context of psychiatric care.

### **Psychiatric care as an inspiration for design**

For our design students, working with psychiatric care was challenging and not very straightforward. For an eight-week project, the psychiatric care discipline may have seemed very large, and the services it provides complex. The issues that such organisations face are seldom reducible to a single department, group or person. Instead, issues are often found in and around the organisation at large, and the distinct ways in which the services are organised. The challenges that psychiatric care poses become even bigger when we consider that the complexity of its organisation is easily matched by the complexity and varying needs of those who are dependent on its services. With an organisation this large and a service this complex, it was challenging for our design students to envision a desired change by means of a single artefact or, for example, a cosmetic change in its premises. These may simply not do the trick to make a convincing wider change in regards to wellbeing in psychiatric care.

The design students had to challenge some of the traditional views of design as a practice of creating concrete material artefacts or solutions that are immediately implementable. Some even questioned what role they could possibly play in such an environment and why designers were

# Mi

Mi is an online platform designed for people in psychiatric rehabilitation, their friends, family and providers of rehabilitation services. Mi helps the patient to maintain normal everyday routines, to stay connected with friends and family, to get the necessary information and support for following their individual care plan, and to develop cognitive skills. Mi is targeted at the growing group of younger customers of psychiatric services who find online communication a natural part of their social life.

**Students:**

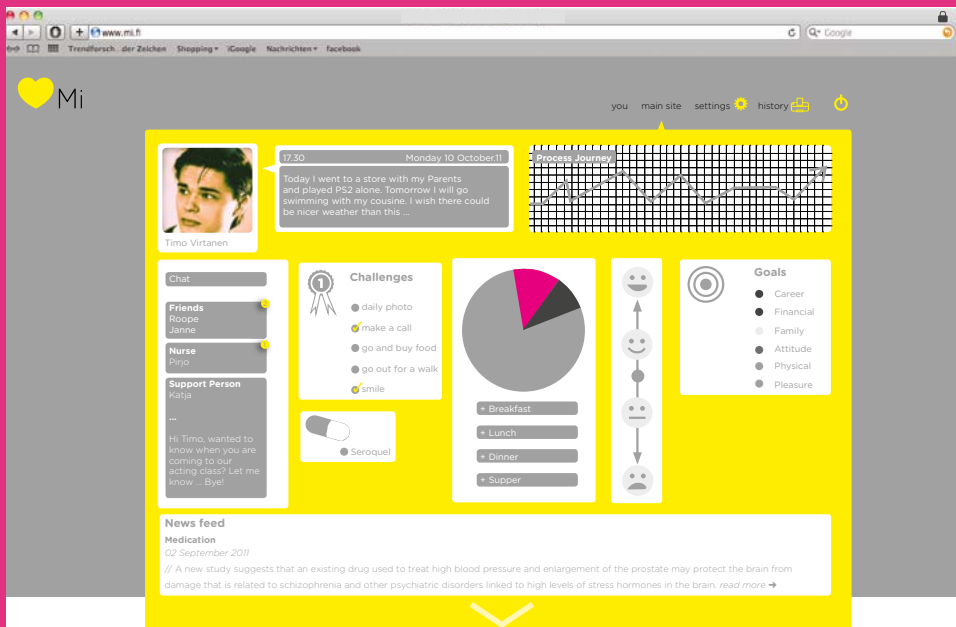
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# Compass

The present system for psychiatric healthcare is built on the premise that when patients are aware of the rationale and process of their treatment, they are more motivated to follow the plan. This is why a treatment plan is a legally-binding tool for collaboration between patients and medical personnel. However, clients are often ignorant of their plans and the third sector organisations participating in the rehabilitation may suggest plans of their own. Compass is a concept that visualises the treatment plan in a form that is understandable for the patient and other stakeholders. As the plan requires reviews along the rehabilitation process, Compass also provides tools for reflecting on the success of the treatment and information about alternative choices available. Depending on the client's choice, Compass can be implemented as a printed calendar like a notebook or as an interactive online service.

**Students:**

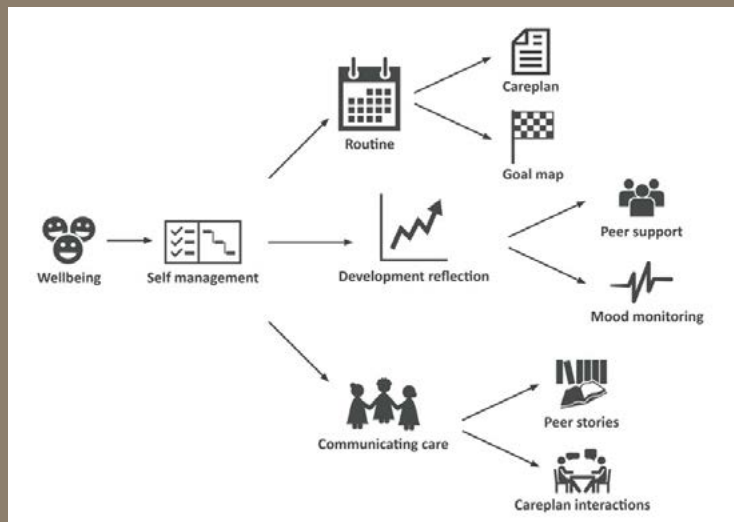
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dealing with psychiatric care in the first place. Needless to say, such an environment opened up an array of questions that addressed the very “craft” of design practices. The students had to look at the design practices introspectively, and question whether the “business as usual” of design still fitted. In this way, the environment of psychiatric care inspired the design students and opened up opportunities to explore new approaches, thereby developing new skills that were needed for this particular challenge. It pushed the design students to question *how to design* in the context of psychiatric care. It pushed them to explore the very methods of design. This chapter aims to extend our understanding of the scenario as one of the main methods available for design when dealing with psychiatric care.

### **Design as a form of storytelling and the designer as storyteller**

Among the many methods of design, such as sketching, prototyping and making diagrams, creating scenarios belongs to the core methods by which a designer constructs their understanding of a problem or issue. At first, a scenario is used to illustrate a concept, a solution or an artefact. In some cases it may illustrate a benefit or prove a research finding. In its simplest form, a scenario tells us how something works and supports the viability of a particular artefact. But what if the design is not wholly concerned with an artefact? What if the scenario is not there to prove the viability of some design, but the viability depends on the design of the scenario itself? It is clear from the students’ presentations, particularly in the example given above, that the artefact shown in the particular scenario is not always of primary interest. Some of the scenarios do not even exhibit a specific artefact. And if they do, they do not require an in-depth introduction of its particular design features, aesthetic qualities or technological capabilities – that is not what interests us. This raises the question, if the artefact is not our primary interest as designers, then what is our primary interest?

Design is unlikely to happen in isolation from non-design disciplines, and it is hard to imagine design nowadays without the involvement of

other disciplines. The scenarios that the design students produced were co-designed via design workshops, design games, and other methods of design that aim to integrate non-design disciplines into the design process. They were produced in a multidisciplinary environment and served to give form to the understanding that the students gained through the stories they exchanged with doctors, nurses, patients, and non-governmental communities. The process of organising the co-design activities testifies to the substantial effort that had to be invested in gaining this understanding, of which the designs of the very scenarios themselves became proof. As a result, these scenarios served to communicate between the different disciplines the principles, facts and considerations concerning the pressing issues within psychiatric care. They allowed us to see the connection between the different stories the design students were dealing with. In doing so, the scenarios were not only short stories about an issue – they described the issue as the design students came to understand it. But the scenarios represented more than mere understanding. The scenarios were essentially projections that did not represent an issue as it is understood today. Instead they represented the issue as it could be understood tomorrow. The scenarios represented hypotheses in the form of a short story on a projected situation. The process of creating a scenario allowed the design student to ponder alternative situations and follow them through to their logical conclusions, imagine things differently and to see a different world. With a scenario, the design student progressed towards an alternative world, establishing a new story. And it is this new story, as a representation of design, which holds our primary interest here.

### **The significance of stories**

Stories are one of the oldest forms of knowledge transfer, affecting each of us significantly and profoundly. We all have a story to tell. Telling stories creates order, allowing a search for meaning and enabling connection with others. It is one of the main ways in which we explain our lives, not only

as projected to others, but also to ourselves. Stories give us the illusion of sequence and order: the appearance of causality and the look of necessity. Stories justify our actions and they explain our behaviour towards others. Our very identities become constructed out of the stories we tell to ourselves and others. But what if one is unable to tell one's own story? If we tell ourselves stories in order to live, then the consequences of the inability to do so must be dire. One can only imagine being in a condition where the self-narrative is decomposing, producing the anxiety and depression of meaninglessness.

The problem with stories is not necessarily that we lack a story; it is rather that we are unable to act upon it – telling one's story becomes the problem. *"The ill person, who fails to turn his/her illness into a story, fails to transform his/her fate into experience."* *"In the telling of stories, we create empathic bonds between ourselves and the listeners. Those who listened then tell others, and the circle of shared experience widens."*<sup>2</sup> Like a story, the scenario becomes part of this wider circle of shared experience. The scenario becomes an extension to a story that waits to be told and shared. And in presenting a scenario, the design students suddenly, perhaps unknowingly and unintentionally, played an important role in extending this story to a wider audience. Hence, in regards to the maelstrom of psychiatric care, it is essential for us to understand that seriously ill people are wounded not just in body or mind but also in voice. And the design students can assume a significant responsibility by extending the stories of those who are unable to tell them themselves.

But to fulfil this responsibility of storyteller is not easy. The designers may not have considered themselves storytellers and storytelling may not have been commonly seen as a craft within design. Each design comes with its own story, but it is different when we consider the story as the main

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2 A. W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*, 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1997.

focus. Unlike concrete artefacts, the design students were not accustomed to developing ideas and concepts by realising stories. They had to make significant decisions on what to include and what to omit. This decision process, therefore, becomes a strategic endeavour, making it an essential aspect in the design process. These stories were not just picked up here and there and reported to a random audience. They were selected from a range of stories that formed the material with which the students constructed new and alternative stories directed at a specific audience. For the design students, the stories played a significant role in both the processes of design, and, as we will see later, their final designs.

### **Small stories, big stories and alternative stories**

On the one hand the students dealt with really big stories. These are the stories of mega trends, ageing populations, increased social isolation, reduced healthcare budgets, large IT systems and so on. On the other hand, these big stories made room for smaller stories of communities and individual lives, such as a person in need of assistance from psychiatric care. Although the design students worked with big stories, their imaginations lived within these smaller stories and the endless variety of small biographies springing from the individuals that they spoke to. In this wide range of stories, the students had a particularly keen eye for the ways in which the bigger stories held consequences for individuals' smaller stories. These smaller stories could form alternative stories, sub stories or even counter stories, which in turn could inform the students in their design. Connecting the big stories with the smaller stories, within a single scenario, became possible through the close investigation of the smaller stories of a different kind. Particular stories of communities, groups and individuals were preserved, resulting in an accumulation of detail that could be assembled into a fuller picture – the scenario. Constructing a scenario becomes an analysis, interpretation and illustration all in one. It involves the kind of imagination that is vital for good design.

In one of the student projects<sup>3</sup> (page 42) the story of the transfer trauma played a central role in the design. These students recognised that the way psychiatric inpatient and outpatient care is organised today holds particular consequences for the individual when they are transitioned from one part of the treatment to the other. This transition is often accompanied by disorientation of the individual in transit, possibly resulting in transfer trauma. To give individuals forward momentum in getting to the next step in their care, this team introduced the metaphor of the “transfer ticket”, turning a referral into a gradual transition.

Systematically describing stories is a step to gaining empathic grasp, but design does not stop there. The storytelling offers an understanding of the very fabric of a world, of a group, but most importantly of a person's life. Giving this understanding shape requires a process of selecting the stories to tap into or, in design terms, *a process of selecting the stories to design from*. Designers have to select which stories to tell and which stories to highlight. Creating a scenario becomes a unifying endeavour, in which stories of different kinds are combined into a balanced whole. Those selected become the materials used to model a new/alternative story and the solution may get a role in it. Hence the scenario becomes a plot hypothesis in which solutions may become plot devices.

### **Giving agony voice**

The students presented a set of scenarios in which different kinds of stories strike a balance and together contribute to a fuller picture of how they came to understand the pressing issues in psychiatric care. Their understanding covered the stories of those who seek the assistance of psychiatric care and those who give it. Going further, some of the presentations even critically addressed the way mental illness is regarded as a phenomenon in society at large. However, the stories that addressed those seeking assistance formed

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3 Tamara Amalia, Otto Schultz, Sanna Tuononen and Mike Walker



# Peloton Jokapäivä

The vast majority of those recovering from mental illness are financially marginalised and live with unhealthy food everyday, so cooking is very important. The Peloton Jokapäivä (Fearless Everyday) concept offers an open kitchen area where rehabilitants can come, pay a little money, and cook for themselves with the help of volunteers and organisation staff. The volunteers will eventually be change agents in society, reducing the stigma of mental illness and raising private funds for the Peloton Jokapäivä initiative. Peloton Jokapäivä is a nationwide brand that can be adopted by any non-profit organisation offering rehab activities. The open kitchen is adjacent to the activity area, so rehabilitation activities are more easily exposed to all participants. There will also be care professionals from different sectors informally available for patients and each other. This will eventually enhance the care practice in general by having caregivers in different areas learn from one another.

**Students:**

Ida-Maria Kivelä  
Ilmari Mansikkamäki  
Lin Pei  
Seungho Lee

**Instructors:**

Turkka Keinonen  
Jack Whalen  
Tjhien Liao  
Jari-Pekka Kola

**Partners:**

Aurora hospital  
Malmi outpatient clinic  
WDC Helsinki 2012  
Aalto University



# Vihreä muutos

The Vihreä Muutos (Green Change) concept uses plants as a medium to bring people together. Mixed groups comprising patients in psychiatric rehabilitation and elderly volunteers would be created. Taking care of plants in a group requires coordination among the members and the activity can be used to start a conversation. Growing plants is a slow process, which gives people the chance to get to know each other slowly. Success in taking care of the plants builds patients' self-confidence.

**Students:**

Muheyon Kim  
Rosa Laajisto  
Sarang Ganoo  
Thomas Abrell

**Instructors:**

Turkka Keinonen  
Jack Whalen  
Tjhien Liao  
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**Partners:**

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the main focus in most of the presentations. These stories expressed the individuals' struggles on an everyday basis due to the consequences of their mental disorder, the stigmatisation of mental illness or social isolation. In the context of psychiatric care, the significance of the students' stories lies in their power to express loss, hurt or agony and, by extension, the need for change. And in reworking these stories into the scenarios, the scenarios themselves became extensions of this voice of agony, in which the students suddenly played an important role in presenting the story and the need for change to a wider audience. The stories used were not so much supporting their designs, as much as their designs only made sense in light of these stories. Below, I will give two examples to illustrate how agony can form a perspective and an overall theme that could direct design.

In one of the student presentations<sup>4</sup> the story of the revolving door played a central role in the design (page 81). These students understood that in some cases individuals might never fully recover from mental illness. As one of the students says, *"One has to live with disorder"*, thereby recognising the lifelong struggle that comes with mental illness. Their design addresses the observation that some individuals stop preparing their own food as soon as they move out of the rehabilitation hospital, despite the fact that during their time there they had practiced these kinds of skills. During the presentation, one of the students recalls being struck by a story in which an individual is not able to prepare their own food, and starts eating a frozen pizza raw. Food, the student says, apart from providing an account of agony, also offers opportunity for improvement. Their final design proposes a communal kitchen that encourages cooking. Furthermore, the scenario illustrates the creation of branded premises that could be deployed throughout the country.

Just like in the example given at the beginning of this chapter, these students illustrated what it means for an individual to face mental illness.

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4 Ida-Maria Kivelä, Ilmari Mansikkamäki, Lin Pei and Seungho Lee

In their scenario they struck a balance between the bigger story of the revolving door, which affects many individuals, and a smaller story of frozen pizza as one of the consequential and significant realities they came to understand. A small but powerful story like this affects the process of design significantly and, with it, the voice of agony found its way into the presentation through the single quote: *"He ate the frozen pizza – raw"*. If we were to understand the design process as guided by this pain (eating the frozen pizza – raw), all elements in the design (communal kitchens), the scenario (cooking together/eating together), the artefact (secondary in this example), including the technical descriptions (branded premises across the country), could also be understood to contribute to this primarily – voicing that pain. Agony can form a valuable perspective and an overall theme that can guide the design process in the context of psychiatric care. For example, we could ask the following questions: How well does the design articulate and convey this agony? How do the different elements of design, the presentation, the scenario, the artefact and the technicalities contribute to voicing this pain? In respect to the smaller stories, these questions could even be considered pressing because if the design does not answer this call, the opportunity of giving agony a voice could be lost.

An example where this voice had to compete with technicalities was with the design of Vihreä muutos (Green Change, in Finnish, [page 82](#)). The students identified empathic people as significant for the rehabilitation process. They learnt this through a story from one individual who they spoke to about their experience of rehabilitation. One of the students says: *"Empathic people can be a turning point in a healing process"*. The final design is a public indoor green space, that intends to bring together elderly people and people in need of psychiatric care, with the hope that both groups are passionate about caring for plants and can connect with one another because of that.

Instead of agony, this group decided to voice a positive story in their design: the encounters with empathic people. And although the perspective

of the positive story of people helping at crucial moments in a patient's life is as valuable as the perspective of agony, both the design and presentation of *Vihrea muutos* do not fare well in illustrating this. It was as if the design was trying to systematise these moments of significance, disregarding the actual particulars of these empathic moments as they occur. In the *Vihrea muutos* concept, both the elderly and the mentally ill are supposed to take care of plants and, by extension, each other. However, it is unclear on what stories the overall design of a public indoor green space was based on. Although this design tries to address stigma, it is questionable why the elderly and the mentally ill are put together. One gets the impression that they were not put together due to stigmatic reasons, but they were "mashed up" for the convenience of a solution that, by now, seems only remotely to address the positive story of the empathic encounter. As if both the elderly and the mentally ill were unutilised resources in society, for whom *Vihreä muutos* has now found a new purpose, culminating in a student's statement: *"And we can give them a new task in their life"*. This was a design of bigger stories based on an ageing population and the rising costs of healthcare, which did not account for the smaller stories of individual lives.

### **The role of design in telling stories**

I have stressed the significance of stories when designing for wellbeing in psychiatric care. In particular, I have argued for a perspective with scenarios that look beyond the designed solution. The scenario is a story of need and, especially in the context of psychiatric care, a story of agony in which a solution or an artefact may play a role. By giving agony a voice, the scenario does not primarily illustrate a solution, but a problem, an issue, a lack, and with it the need for change. From this perspective, the solution and the technical elaboration are important only in so far as they play a role in expressing this problem and this need for change. A scenario unifies stories of need in a single plot or story, in which solutions, artefacts and technical details may play the role of plot devices in getting that story across.

The scenario as a representation of design carries its own power in voicing a story of need to a particular audience. This perspective opens up the significance of the student projects and their role in bringing the story of psychiatric care to a wider audience. In telling the stories, the design students perhaps unknowingly and unintentionally represented those who do not possess the ability to articulate their agony themselves.

In respect to psychiatric care, stories play an important role in design, and design plays an important role in telling these stories to a wider audience. This suggests a role for design within psychiatric care and the public sector at large. Indeed, these scenarios are not about telling those within them what to do, as much as they are meant to express to those who are not in them what it is like, and proposing what they could do about it.

In conclusion, this chapter aimed to extend our understanding of a design practice that does not restrict itself to this project. Reviewing the diverse design projects in *365 Wellbeing*, each and every presentation contained a scenario. Often the scenario was the main method for the design students to express themselves. And if the design becomes a story and designing becomes storytelling, then the craft of design is not limited to providing a solution.

# 6

## Design studio in the field

Katja Soini & Heidi Paavilainen

The city of Helsinki<sup>1</sup> had worked on suburban development for decades, applying a range of tools and methods. In spite of this we saw an opportunity to revolutionise suburban development. We believed that future suburbs could be a key attraction in Helsinki and, in our bold vision, wellbeing in Helsinki suburbs could be so deeply satisfying that it would draw people to Helsinki and drive the cultural and financial growth of the whole metropolitan area<sup>2</sup>.

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- 1 Our project partner was the city of Helsinki and its Neighbourhood Project. See <http://lahioprojekti.hel.fi/en>
  - 2 The vision described Helsinki as a so-called "alpha + global city" due to certain global developments (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global\\_city](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_city)). The vision included, for instance, industrial innovations ("ridding technologies") and excellence (Helsinki will have prospering biotechnology and marine industries), pedagogical innovations (Helsinki will learn how to domesticate immigrants) – all of these making it possible for Helsinki to attract and benefit from people moving to Finland due to, for example, climate warming. As such, the vision provided working grounds for the students to focus on a positive future.



We realised it would be futile to try to imagine such a future on our own. Instead, we believed that much of what will be great in the future is already inherent in everyday life. Consequently, we wanted to build on local resources and opportunities that could be nourished and grown to create good living – a wellbeing suburb for the future.

We looked for a neighbourhood that would be responsive to working with us. This meant that we needed a place with a history of development projects and experiments, and where we could meet an active community. We were also interested in social contradictions and the need to revitalise the housing stock. Together with the city of Helsinki, we chose the suburb of Mellunkylä for our design studio. We set up the studio in the heart of Mellunkylä, next to the Kontula shopping centre, in a neighbourhood actively avoided by the mainstream creative class.

## **Mellunkylä**

Mellunkylä is the largest neighbourhood in Finland, a district of about 36,000 people, some 10 kilometres east of central Helsinki. It is divided into five sub-districts, called Kivikko, Kontula, Kurkimäki, Mellunmäki and Vesala. Together they form an area of about 10 square kilometres. The metro station at Kontula marks the concentration of traffic and commerce in the area, while Mellunmäki station is one terminus of the metro network. Mellunkylä has a poor reputation and social problems but also a lively and rich culture. Eastern Helsinki has by far the biggest intake of immigrants in Finland, at roughly 25% of inhabitants. Mellunkylä has the highest unemployment rate of all Helsinki's 34 districts, at over 15%. This can be linked to the comparatively low education of the ageing population, leading to short-term employment<sup>3</sup>. About a third of the apartment buildings

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3 City of Helsinki urban facts, 2011, 14–15



in Mellunkylä were built in the 1960s and 20% in the 1970s<sup>4</sup>, making major renovation projects inevitable in the coming decades. Since a third of the Finnish housing stock is located in suburbs and will need repairs soon, there opens a complex bundle of issues challenging the affluent society. These factors combined mean that Mellunkylä and other Finnish suburbs face a complex set of issues and encourage us to ask and study what long-term social and material improvements will be required, and how they could be coupled with the approaching wave of repairs.

### **Design studio**

A group of Aalto University students and teachers established a temporary design studio in Mellunkylä in order to have immediate access to the neighbourhood, to be able to work and to organise events locally. We joined a local development coordination team and presented our project in several ways, such as in a local magazine, on a local web portal and at resident events. We also delivered over 500 copies of our project leaflet to local residents. Student teams also worked regularly in a local hub called Kontupiste. By combining trend forecasting and user-oriented approaches we explored the future of Mellunkylä from two angles. First, we identified and applied emerging global trends to suburban dwelling. Second, we challenged the trends with local residents' personal everyday experiences. The work materialised gradually through teams of students making a series of video portraits about Mellunkylä. Each of the four teams elaborated themes they found most compelling. The result was a set of four scenarios describing the future of wellbeing in Mellunkylä<sup>5</sup>.

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4 City of Helsinki urban facts, 2011, 180–182

5 In the scenarios, teams discussed Mellunkylä as a multicultural living environment (Carmen Brecheis, Camilla Mitts and Elina Määttänen), from the perspective of tourism (Maria Maattola, Justus Reinikainen and Zavieria Sánchez de la Barquera), living ecologies (Alexandra Ketzler, Roosa Lehtinen, Alisa Närvänen and Olli Poutanen) and climate warming (Sakari Castrén, Pihla Mäkinen and Avesta Omar).

The design studio itself was a spacious office on the ground floor of an ordinary apartment building. The office had four rooms for the student teams, a common room for lectures, workshops and meetings, and a hall with access to basic facilities such as a small kitchen and storage rooms. The teams were themed by seasons and they had a budget to personalise and revitalise the slightly run-down spaces. Interior decoration efforts were modest, aiming just to facilitate a relaxed working environment. Student teams had airy rooms where they attached drawings and memos to the walls. One team created the “Kontula atmosphere” by asking local teenagers to make a graffiti wall. Another team drew a “tree of tolerance” on the wall and asked people to add the things they love about Mellunkylä. In one room, the students and visitors wrote opinions, insights and ideas on the walls. The walls and the spaces were used as living guest books displaying the unfolding of the collaborative creative process. Altogether the studio felt like a good space to work – so much so that it felt sad to leave the place after the intensive eight weeks it was ours.

### **Designing in the field**

We organised three public events at the design studio. The first was the open doors weekend at the beginning of March, which was one of the 160 events of the World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 weekend. We had visitors from Mellunkylä, and our partners, colleagues and friends popped by. During the three-day event the student teams gathered information and inspiration, mainly trying to understand what makes Mellunkylä what it is and how people interpret local issues. We treated our thirty guests to refreshments, the tastiest being an apple pie baked by a student. We expected more people after being interviewed on a popular morning programme on a national radio channel, but the weather was record-breakingly harsh: it was snowing and snowdrifts blocked roads and the metro line. On a brighter note, a local couple was so determined to visit us after listening to the radio programme that they skied to Kontula in order to spend the

afternoon with us.

Two other events were workshops with our partners and local residents. The homely and slightly messy spaces created a relaxed atmosphere, and encouraged participants to explore the suburb from within, from a lifestyle perspective. The students presented their future scenarios describing the visions of future living in Mellunkylä. For example, one team described – based on material they collected from local residents – a tolerant suburb where people with different cultural backgrounds would feel at home. They presented the story of a Spanish exchange student called Anna, who “wants to stay here”. She loves the green environment, the spacious building scheme, the car-free infrastructure with supported cycling and reliable public transportation, and the multicultural community that makes her feel at home. The idea was developed further in workshops to rethink the suburban soundscape: what if the soundscape could improve wellbeing and cultural tolerance? A new point of view on interpreting structural and spatial designs through the sense of hearing gave professional planners, architects and designers food for thought: should we, for example, upgrade thermal insulation to also provide a sound insulation?

### **Being local**

Beyond these events, the world of Mellunkylä and Kontula engaged the students. Local involvement was easy-going and natural. Occasionally students lingered in their rooms and drank hot chocolate while observing people walking outside in the snow, sometimes they hung out at a shopping centre, in pubs, on the streets or took walks in the forest to cross the boundary of the working methods they were used to at the design university. Students visited local collective spaces, such as a library and a youth centre to meet people. We also wanted to become members of the resident community in our apartment building, but failed because we forgot to deliver invitations to our neighbours during the fuss of moving. Unfortunately we realised our mistake too late, and only had a couple of

# Villa Breda Family

A service centre for the elderly needs to allow young people to hang around to encourage more intergenerational activities. Activities include Knitting Stops, where people can stop to knit while socialising with friends. The elderly and adults could also act as “neighbourhood teachers”, going to primary schools to teach subjects such as arts and crafts. The activities can be less traditional, such as a graffiti workshop, and they can work for the common good, for example by building benches for public spaces or painting overpass tunnels. The aim of the concept Villa Breda Family is to activate and encourage people of all ages to work together and build their own community.

**Students:**

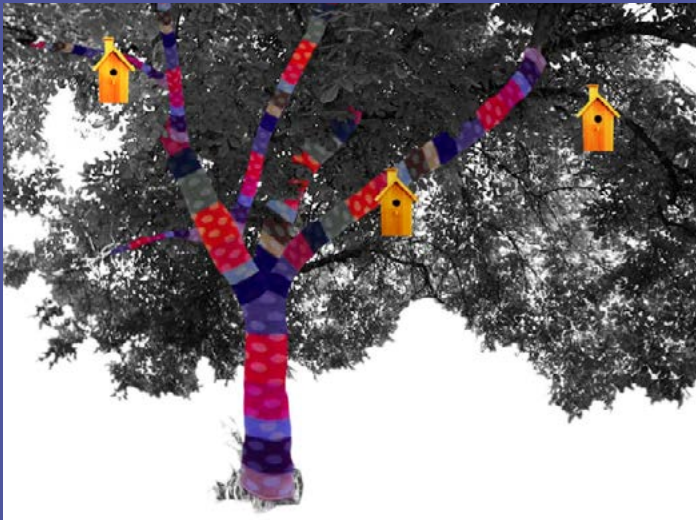
Ahrum Jeon  
Emmi Pouta

**Instructors:**

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**Partners:**

Villa Breda, City of  
Kauniainen  
WDC Helsinki 2012  
Aalto University



our neighbours visiting the open-doors event. Even though we missed a general awareness of our work at “home”, we were lucky to encounter some neighbours in other ways. That said, being on location helped local involvement tremendously. Moving into the neighbourhood crossed the boundary of our being tourist-like outsiders, and encouraged students’ sensitivity and an empathetic mind-set.

Difficulties with the winter weather and other practical issues while establishing the temporary design studio helped us to build a feeling of community. Everybody had the patience to wait a week for the internet connection: *“We are in the field, this is real life, we cannot expect everything to be ready for us,”* stated the students. Simple, unexpected challenges made the students turn towards the suburb surrounding them, for example the need to spend time in the local library to get access to the internet. At the same time they adapted to the suburb and got used to the idea of visiting unknown places. During the project, students visited most of the local activity centres and other places enjoyed by local people. Acting local sensitised us to local issues. It re-contextualised our design, because reality is different in an eastern suburb compared to an admittedly exclusive design university. What may seem important at the university or in a design office, might prove to be trivial on site. The suburb showed us local priorities in which sophisticated design plays a far smaller and a lot more practical role than in the university corridors where design is appreciated even in abstract. Mellunkylä inhabitants do care about their environment and its aesthetics but the design needs to become personally meaningful.

### **Beyond user centricity**

To understand the local systems of meanings, we benefited from the understanding and methods developed in user-centred design research, where intensive involvement with people is de rigueur. These methods

can be described as design ethnography<sup>6</sup>. Design ethnographers aim at an empathetic dialogue with people and their “*aim is to turn fieldwork into an exercise of imagination rather than mere data gathering*”<sup>7</sup>. Similarly, trend forecasting is about the imaginative interpretation of data<sup>8</sup>. Forecasters typically work by combining statistics and ethnographic material. But while designers with an empathetic stance towards users interpret data in the present tense, forecasters build visions of future. They do this by having an understanding of possible future developments in society, economics, technology and politics. We were also aware of the downsides of emphasising methodology<sup>9</sup>. Sometimes the methods become a barrier behind which it is easy to hide and we wanted to avoid building them. Therefore, we experimented with the idea of the user and aimed to see whether it is possible to act as a designer without “configuring users” and instead just try to build a dialogue between fellow people. Consequently, we felt that we did not need to teach any specific collaborative methods. And indeed, students’ spontaneous use of their existing knowledge proved to be enough, and released their attention for the design work. The design studio brought people together to work with a shared agenda and, simple as it may sound, it is such design work that should take place more often.

A peculiar set of temporal dimensions was one of the main reasons why we think our design studio managed to bring people together. First, the far-reaching future, the year 2072, on which we aimed to shed light vis-a-vis suburban developments and their long-term consequences. At the same time we had to be present in the here and now in order to find

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6 Koskinen, I., Zimmerman, J., Binder, T., Redström, J., & Wensveen, S. (2012). Design research through practice. From the Lab, Field, and Showroom. Waltham, MA: Morgan Kaufmann.

7 Koskinen et al. 2012: 76

8 Brannon, E. L. (2000). Fashion Forecasting. New York: Fairchild publications.

9 Redström, J. (2006). Towards user design? On the shift from object to user as the subject of design. Design Studies, 27(2), 123–139. The article is critical towards user-centred design and claims that even the most empathic designers all too often use user-centred methods to configure imaginary users as opposed to encountering real people.

local points of view. Second, our presence in Mellunkylä lasted only eight weeks. Through this combination we managed to avoid, on the one hand, the disinterested habitual presence typical of permanently living or working somewhere that is a common problem for locals, for example never having time to visit local attractions because there is always “tomorrow”<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, through emphasising that we really are living here, in Kontula, in these quarters, we think we also managed to avoid the equally disinterested mindset of a tourist looking for exotic events taking place but not really touching anyone’s real life. We think we can say that we had a temporary home in Kontula that enabled us to better understand the local systems of meanings at our design work and ensured that the future visions would have roots in real life.

### **Reception**

The design studio affected our reputation. The local people saw us in a different light than the numerous other, more distant, projects. Having a design studio in the field was a message of commitment to the local community. Our local perspective showed our interest, which the locals appreciated. It opened doors to visit places and meet special people. Also, the students’ humble perspective and admiration for the neighbourhood made local activists appreciate their own efforts more. The neighbourhood is reaching out, for example, by initiating collaboration with the more up-scale Töölö neighbourhood in downtown Helsinki. Nowadays we are seen as one of the local actors and expected to run new projects. The project helped define a longer-term mutual interest between local activists and design researchers, and a partnership between Aalto University and

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10 Löfgren O. & Ehn B. (2010). *The secret world of doing nothing*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mellunkylä was established<sup>11</sup>.

The city of Helsinki also welcomed our approach. Typically, regulations and norms tend to restrict urban planning and suburban development. The city takes responsibility for the democratic, sustainable, long-term and cost-effective development of urban neighbourhoods. As such, the development system does not allow much freedom for wild ideas. Our project's use of, for example, long-term trend forecasting, introduced ideas that combined the experiences and wishes of residents, workers and activists, it tried to revitalise local activities and places as resources, and it built on the excellence of east-Helsinki suburbia. Our message was about valuing the people and locality and applying design methods in a friendly and natural manner. For example, we examined the suburban seasons. The students showed that taking advantage of the changing Nordic weather and lighting conditions could recreate suburbs that would respond to people's changing needs and overall wellbeing.

## Discussion

The design studio in the field was an exercise in collective imagination. Moving to the temporary studio gave us an understanding of the suburb and people's systems of meanings, and it made us rethink its future. Our conceptions as well as our designer and academic realities also became a bit more familiar to the Mellunkylä and Kontula residents. Everybody

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11 Partnership actualises in the collaborative project of Aalto University and 7 organisations (in Finnish: Lähiö 2072 – Matka kaupunginosan radikaaliin kehittämiseen). The core idea is to rethink the building renovation service and build an areal development model around it. The initial focus of the project is to create an alliance of locals, the public sector and housing and construction businesses that can debate and affect the perceived problems in the suburbs. The idea of a suburban neighbourhood should once more be seen in a positive light. The areas could become seen as city districts with unique identities, and the ensuing renovations are seen as a major opportunity to discuss and work toward these goals. See Heikkinen, T, Soini, K., Dhima, S. (2012). Outlining a participatory approach for using building renovation momentum for wider effects. Proc. PDC '12, Vol. 2, 113–116. New York: ACM.



involved knew that we had only eight weeks to get the most out of our Mellunkylä experience, which made the project intensive. The temporary nature of the design studio was helpful in our becoming local, as the tight project deadlines encouraged the students to get to know Mellunkylä and its people. We built a relationship with the local people and learned local phenomena that inspired us with richness, vulgarity and beauty. Acting local in Mellunkylä made us aware of the complexity of rethinking suburban dwelling. We needed to understand multiple perspectives, some of them parallel and some creating contradictions for the design task. We also needed to interact with multiple actors, local people and various organisations that could commit themselves to rethinking the neighbourhood and take actions based on the new ideas. The opportunities for both small everyday improvements and radical innovations are practically endless.

The design studio in the field was a serious exercise. It involved people who have a personal and fragile relationship with their homes and neighbourhood. If you move to the field, you are responsible to them for your actions on site. If you wish to establish a design studio in the field, consider that:

- you cannot limit your creativity to a certain activity, because in the field you will need to use your creativity in any task that might come in front of you;
- on site you are on an adventure and you will never be able to predict what might happen next – it may bring you new people or issues to work with; and
- your previous design principles might feel insufficient, and you might end up questioning your design material or objective.

We suggest that suburban developers should work with designers in the field. Suburban development is a matter of acting locally and making change through action. The collective learning and building of new realities in the imagination of everybody involved happened through the creative process, and therefore the result is different for every participant. Everybody

needs to get “out there” and build a personal relationship between the place, their own reality and their professional standpoint. We found it difficult to represent the final result because the creative process was an integral part of the result. We do not know how to re-contextualise the ideas to be exciting also for those who did not take part in the fieldwork. We tried traditional presentations, storytelling, video making and leaflets, but we are not happy with the agency of presentations. However brilliant the presentations are, they are only shadows of having had the experience.

All we can say is that we believe the joint design ethnography of the future opens novel paths for suburban development. The students did not give answers, let alone polished design objects, but instead raised fresh and meaningful questions to be reflected upon further. Complex changes in society, which suburban development is definitely about, call for sophisticated methods. The sophistication does not need to mean going and improving drawing and model-making skills or the meticulous application of a carefully designed set of research methods. Instead, one needs to cultivate social skills to encounter and engage with people, find a location to act as a designer, and collectively re-imagine the every day. The design studio in the field is about being involved in a change.

# Tangible inspiration package for interior design

Workday rests and breaks have an important impact on the wellbeing of staff. How can nurses and other staff be kept motivated and relaxed so they can support the wellbeing of others in Villa Breda? Creating a relaxing and cosy space for coffee and rest breaks is one important element. But what is the best way to discover what nurses would like for their break room? Our inspiration package invites nurses to share their thoughts: what materials, colours and smells evoke positive memories and feelings, and which are disliked in this kind of environment? Pictures and diverse tactile material samples evoke discussion, enhance storytelling and enable opinions to be communicated to designers. Transforming these stories into design drivers helps to create spaces that take user wishes and insights into consideration.

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**Partners:**

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Kauniainen  
WDC Helsinki 2012  
Aalto University



# 7

## Social wellbeing through participation in Kannelmäki suburb

Kirsi Niinimäki & Malin Bäckman

Kannelmäki is a suburb of Helsinki with about 13 000 inhabitants. The oldest part dates from the 1950s and the newest parts mainly from the 1970s. The area is a mix of detached and flats, both rented and owner-occupied. The centre of the area is Sitatori Square, surrounded by pubs, a railway station and a cultural centre called Kanneltalo, where the city of Helsinki offers a range of cultural events. According to a recent survey<sup>1</sup>, the inhabitants of Kannelmäki are not especially satisfied with their neighbourhood. They feel disconnected, most do not find the area cosy or nice, and less than half of the residents think that the area is a safe place to live.

1 Helka ry 2009, Helsingin kaupunginosayhdistykset Caddies asukaskyselyn tulokset. Caddies, Creating Attractive, Developed and Dynamic Societies together with Inhabitants - EU project.

Based on the same survey, the inhabitants are not active in local activities: only 45% have participated in a local event within the last year. Low participation in neighbourhood activities can be assumed to be connected with the inhabitants' weak feeling of community cohesion.

In the following we discuss the building of a better neighbourhood and improving social wellbeing in Kannelmäki based on two overlapping projects: a Master's thesis<sup>2</sup> project about participatory community design and an intensive short-term student project called *Repicturing a suburban neighbourhood*.

But what is a neighbourhood? The word can have different connotations – something that became evident during our projects. One of the students, for example, described what the word neighbourhood means for her in the following manner:

*“For me, the idea of my own ‘neighbourhood’ changes depending on who I’m talking with. If it is with someone familiar with the area, I might speak about a very small portion of a specific area as my neighbourhood. But if it is with someone from another city, I might speak about the larger general area as my neighbourhood.”*

The variance of interpretations also becomes apparent in the following quotations from the inhabitants of Kannelmäki:

*“I live in an apartment so the people from your own stairway. I think that a neighbourhood is...those who live in the same building.”*

*“For me it means the area where I live, the closest quarters and the houses that are closest to my home. And it can also mean my old neighbourhood where I used to live with my parents.”*

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<sup>2</sup> Malin Bäckman



# Les Possibles, the memory object

A group of students wanted to address how to encourage interaction and a sense of community in Kannelmäki. The solution was a public, participative and shared collective diary. The concept consists of audio recorders organised in a flower shape, which are placed in the park. People can record their stories and listen to what other people had to say. They then receive a small clip as a sign of their participation in the community, encouraging them to recognise and interact with other participants.

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# Connection

This project aimed to connect a natural area, the river Mätäjoki, with the urban space of Kannelmäki railway station. The sound of bird song was recorded and then played at the railway station from a designed object, the Cone. Hearing natural sounds in unexpected surroundings surprised and delighted passers by, sparking conversations between strangers. The intervention created a special atmosphere and a shared experience, reminding inhabitants about the natural areas of Kannelmäki.

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A neighbourhood is, however, more than a house or several nearby houses full of people. It includes the actions of knowing each other, sharing, chatting, doing things together and, at its best, caring for each other.

*"I live in this house where there are mostly older people and we have all kinds of happenings of our own. For example, we have this kind of card game club; it is on Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays. I am now going again to play and this describes precisely that we do all sorts of things together within this community and we care for one another. We care if someone has not been seen for a while, we go to knock on the door or then we contact someone who has the key to the apartment. So we do not forget."*

*"During summer we are always with the neighbours...now and then we even get drunk together. With one woman we "make the world a better place" in the garden. And then we have these community work parties and afterwards we have these evening get-togethers, and like that have quite a lot to do with each other. There is help from the neighbours, and sometimes you go to borrow something, like sugar..."*

A good neighbourhood is an active social system requiring inhabitants' participation. Participation creates a sense of belonging, engagement and social cohesion and leads to taking care of the area, its surroundings and buildings. These lead to mutual trust and a feeling of safety. A sense of belonging to the community and neighbourhood is important for mental health. *"Healthy individuals feel that they are a part of society"*<sup>3</sup>. Therefore participation is of the utmost importance for social wellbeing.

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3 Keyes, C.L.M. (1998) Social well-being. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 2, pp. 121-140





**Figure 1. Components of learning as participation based on social theories (based on Wenger, 1998)**

### **Rethinking learning in a social context**

Participation can be understood as a learning process that includes both action and being connected, and is both personal and social<sup>4</sup>. Participative

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4 Wegner, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice. Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

learning includes four components: *identity, community, practice* and *meaning*. Identity refers to the opportunity of becoming, learning new skills and understanding one's new role as a good neighbour or an active citizen<sup>5</sup>. Through social participation, people can reshape their understanding of who they are and what kind of neighbourhood they are living in. These social practices also enable participants to belong to a certain group of people, or to a certain area. Therefore the second component in the process is the community aspect, learning as belonging. Third, learning through practical participation – doing things together – is an issue of engaging in one's own neighbourhood and contributing to its practices. The fourth component is the generation of meanings. The community starts becoming a more active and safe place to live through people's actions.<sup>6</sup>

### **The participatory process in Kannelmäki**

In Kannelmäki we explored how to approach residents to enhance their living environment in a collaborative manner. Our process started by observing the area, followed by an event where the locals were interviewed about the meaning of the concept of neighbourhood. These steps led towards us choosing a more specific set of problems, which we addressed in a workshop together with Kannelmäki residents. Finally, we organised a block party in collaboration with local stakeholders and associations as a way to demonstrate how the area could be improved by simple actions highlighting existing resources rather than creating something completely new. Furthermore, new service ideas to make inhabitants more active were generated. The process of engaging people to build wellbeing is explained below on a more detailed level.

The observation phase included several visits to Kannelmäki. The aim was to get a first impression of the area, to find out its strengths and weaknesses,

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5 Wenger 1998, 4

6 Wenger 1998



**Figure 2. Steps for participatory process**

and to create initial connections with local residents. By walking around and observing the surroundings at different times of day, we got a feel for the atmosphere and learned where services and other places of interest are situated. Simple questions such as *“What do you think about Kannelmäki?”* or *“What are the pros and cons of Kannelmäki?”* were asked while making our first encounters with residents.

During the observation phase different resources within the area were mapped in order to know what already exists and to find channels through

which it would be possible to reach local residents. Some of the resources, such as local associations, seemed like potential collaborators later on in the process and channels to meet active residents. Active locals are important nodes in a social network and usually know how things work in an area. During our meetings with a few of them, we collected valuable information about different initiatives taken within the area, where people meet each other, and what Kannelmäki's most important information channels are.

After we had gained our first impression of Kannelmäki, choosing a direction for the project required more information about residents' attitudes and desires towards their neighbourhood. An event was set up in the local cultural centre, Kanneltalo, in order to engage with residents and hear their views on what an ideal neighbourhood would be and how they perceive their current living environment. The event also served as a way to let more people know about the on-going project, and to show local residents that they have the opportunity to get involved and affect the direction of the process. To facilitate the discussions with residents we used pictures. The interviewees were asked to describe what the word neighbourhood means to them, to choose a picture that they associate with their ideal neighbourhood and another one that they associate with their current neighbourhood. The pictures used during the interviews aimed to help the interviewees to recall memories, emotions and attitudes about the neighbourhood and to give answers resembling storytelling.

The Sitratori central square was frequently mentioned as a restless and unpleasant area and was therefore chosen as our focus. We arranged a workshop to allow the locals to share their ideas for the amelioration of Sitratori by drawing and using collage techniques on top of black and white pictures of the area. For those who hesitated to express themselves visually there were notes with three simple questions or tasks: *"What kind of things in your living environment make you feel good?"* *"What kind of things in your living environment bother you?"* and *"Describe Sitratori in one sentence."*

Some participants, especially the younger ones, enjoyed the task and stayed at the workshop for quite a long time. Some discussed the area, and exchanged opinions and ideas about the current situation and how to improve it.

The data gathered so far was exhibited at the *Repicturing a suburban neighbourhood* workshop in the Kanneltalo expo space. Exhibiting the data was a way to show the residents what had been found during the process, and to portray how the area is seen by those who had participated. Exhibiting the findings also aimed to reate discussion among the residents, raise new questions and make them think about their living environment in new ways.

During the workshop the idea of holding a block party at Sitratori was developed. The event reflected the data gathered within the previous steps. For example, the interviewees talked about the neighbourhood mostly by referring to other people and the importance of being able to interact when desired. They also talked about doing things together with their neighbours and the ideal neighbourhood was described as a place where neighbours organise community efforts and parties together. The ideas to improve the area dealt with events, markets and cafes at the square to replace the current scene of bars and drunken people. (page 110)

During the preparation phase of the block party, students from one of the schools in Kannelmäki participated in a workshop to brainstorm ideas for what could happen at the event. They proposed things such as music, dance, games, bingo and a café. The local actors and associations realised some of the ideas during the event. For instance, a local band of teenagers performed, an art therapist ran a whole day painting workshop, a local association for retired people organised bingo, the library sold old books and a lady from the café in Kanneltalo had a coffee stand.

The block party was set up together with local people and associations as an example of how Sitratori could be made into a friendly and inviting place. It was a way to show that small initiatives can have an impact on

# Block party

The objective of the project Repicturing Kannelmäki was to uncover the identity of Kannelmäki and address ways to improve its profile and increase social wellbeing. Local culture and the arts were utilised to deliver beneficial intergenerational interactions and revitalisation models into the everyday life of the suburb. Students developed ideas with locals in a real-life context through design interventions. One of the ideas was a block party that was organised in the middle of Kannelmäki in Sitratori square. The party was realised in collaboration with local actors and associations as a way to demonstrate how the area could be improved by utilising existing resources rather than creating something completely new.

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# 360+5 System

360+5 System is an online service that makes it possible to join a neighbourhood community and share, develop and implement ideas to revitalise the environment.

**Students:**

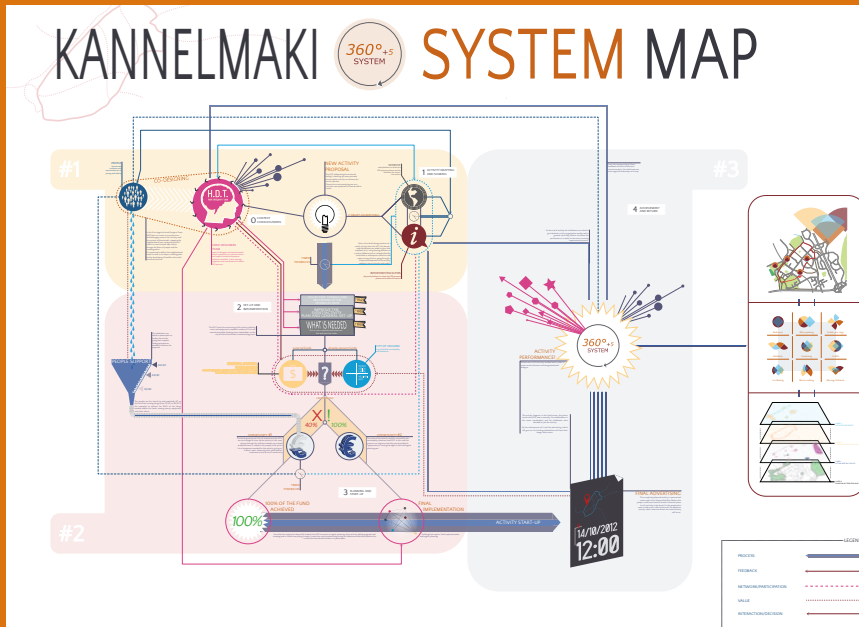
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how the environment is experienced and that it is not too difficult to make such an effort. The event demonstrated that the space could be used and made more vivid and enjoyable. It also gathered local people together around a common concern in an enjoyable way, while resources found within the area were highlighted.

In addition to organising the Sitratori event, we collected information about where people like to hang out and drew a map based on our findings. The map visualised how close, for example, the elderly and children were to each other, but still they rarely met spontaneously. Adding a feature in the middle, a sparkle, a topic for discussion, a place to share stories through drawings, handicrafts, music and discussion, might be enough to change things and create social interaction. (page 111)

A group of students created a proposal for activating inhabitants' own participation. The aim was to create events in their neighbourhood based on crowd sourcing: collecting ideas from inhabitants, using them as a starting point to structure feasible activities to involve people, giving them a common goal and offering tools to realise proposed ideas. People could join the community on a webpage and share their ideas. There would also be a physical location, where people who are not comfortable using the internet could share ideas face to face. The web pages would provide a means to plan local events; people can participate in the arrangements and external stakeholders and sponsors get a channel to become involved.

### **Design for social wellbeing**

A good neighbourhood is an active place with active inhabitants. Getting people engaged in the development of their neighbourhood is a participative learning process that emphasises the practice: learning as doing, learning to be an active member in one's own community, and creating meaning through everyday experiences and practices. Through inhabitants' own activities, the neighbourhood begins to be a place of trust, joy, experimenting and sharing a good everyday life with others. This increases the



neighbourhood's social wellbeing. While aiming at social wellbeing, design can create processes, systems, opportunities and mental or physical places for inhabitants' activities. Through an open design process it is possible to enter an unknown area, but the designers have to trust residents' input to guide the process. The knowledge emerges during the process and by observing and listening to residents, and by collecting their insights, it is possible to discover a new perspective on an area's opportunities, as well as further design possibilities for social wellbeing.

# Space Change Behaviour

Smoking is a complex issue that involves both physical and psychological aspects of a person. This makes it impossible to impose on smokers a reason to quit. Instead of telling smokers what to do, this concept uses the existing environment to change their behaviour, making non-smokers take action and reclaim their public space. The approach is to have objects with calm and soothing semantic messages that attract different non-smoking groups to reclaim their environment. As yarn bombing is widely used to indicate concern within a public space, it is also suitable to be used to attract children, families and the elderly to these reclaimed spaces.

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# Smoking Area

The goal of achieving a smoke-free Finland by 2040 is a project that requires a gradual change of attitude from both smokers and non-smokers. Although smoking is banned indoors, most outdoor spaces are not yet smoke free. This project proposes a gradual reduction in smoking areas as a transition stage between banned indoor smoking to a smoke-free Finland. The approach to achieving this transition state is to make comfortable smoking areas outdoors. By using these, smokers would leave the rest of a park, for example, smoke-free.

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# Responsible Smoker

The ban on smoking in all indoor spaces in Finland has efficiently decreased the smoking population. This project aims to have a similar effect on smoking in public spaces outside. The first step is for the smoker to take responsibility for the effect their smoking has on others. A communal rack with individual portable ashtrays was designed to be used in public places. The ashtray gives smokers the opportunity to spend time with their non-smoking friends while disposing of their cigarette butts properly. Although the ashtray marks the smoker in a public space, by voluntarily picking up and using the portable ashtray, the smoker will gradually become more considerate to others and the environment.

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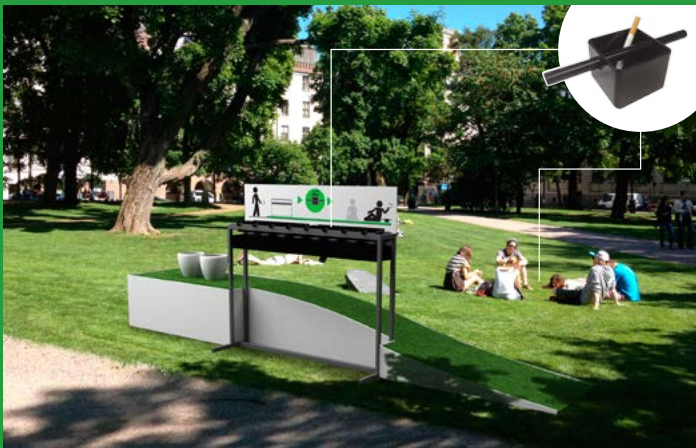
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# Villa Breda senior village

Villa Breda senior village takes the opinions and perspectives of seniors into account from the very beginning of the design phase, for everything from services to experimental spaces and surroundings. It focuses on accessibility, holistic care and using different senses as a design driver. Questions asked include: how do seniors comprehend space through different senses? How to make use of contrasts? How to best place lighting for people who spend most of their time in a wheelchair or bed? How can we support relationships between seniors living in a nursing home and their relatives and friends? How best to maintain a relationship with oneself?

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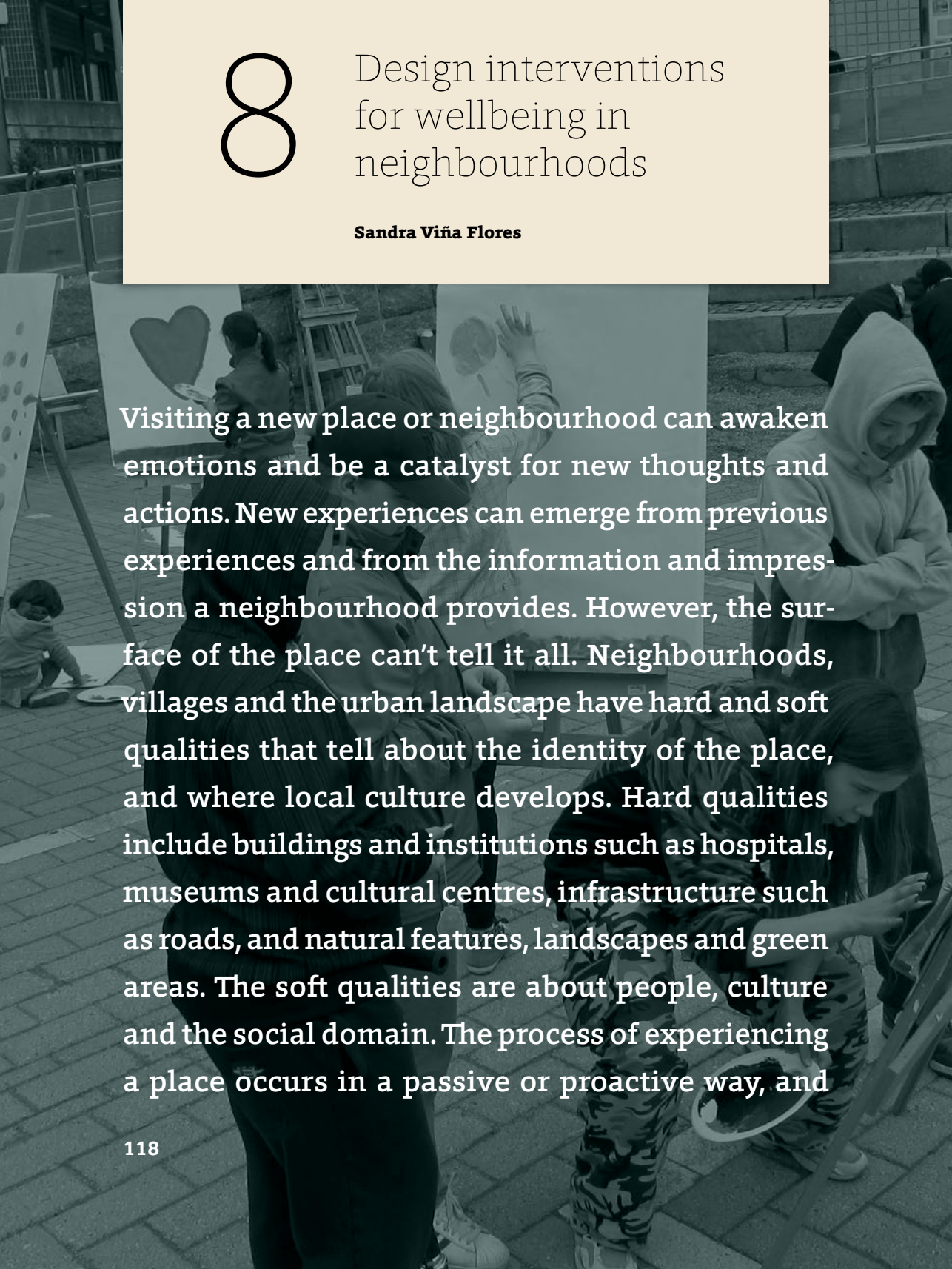




# 8

## Design interventions for wellbeing in neighbourhoods

**Sandra Viña Flores**



Visiting a new place or neighbourhood can awaken emotions and be a catalyst for new thoughts and actions. New experiences can emerge from previous experiences and from the information and impression a neighbourhood provides. However, the surface of the place can't tell it all. Neighbourhoods, villages and the urban landscape have hard and soft qualities that tell about the identity of the place, and where local culture develops. Hard qualities include buildings and institutions such as hospitals, museums and cultural centres, infrastructure such as roads, and natural features, landscapes and green areas. The soft qualities are about people, culture and the social domain. The process of experiencing a place occurs in a passive or proactive way, and

is based on interaction with the hard and soft qualities. The passive is based on observing, hearing, touching and smelling, while the proactive also combines communication with people, exchange of knowledge and actions within the neighbourhood.

This chapter deals with an interventionist approach based on design experiments in small-scale neighbourhood revitalisation and design for wellbeing. The chapter reflects on the projects carried out in Kannelmäki described in the previous chapter. From the interventionist perspective, the students' projects explored how design can operate as a "treatment" in a suburb. Design students experienced the suburban neighbourhood through passive and proactive means as they observed and communicated with locals about the essence of their immediate environment and ways to improve daily living. They then intervened in Kannelmäki and introduced new ways of reinventing and re-experiencing the neighbourhood. This intervention was carried out by activating the residents and facilitating actions that co-produce new uses and activities in the area. Tiny bits of the neighbourhood landscape were temporarily modified by utilising local knowledge, local resources and design. The interventions temporarily re-shaped some of the social and cultural qualities of the Kannelmäki residents' immediate suburban environment. They explored how participatory and social design can contribute to small-scale urban revitalisation and community cohesion. They particularly looked into the importance of citizens' involvement in design activities and in making people realise their role in local development.

Design is the planning of something: an action, a system, an object, an abstraction or a set of them. It applies to all fields of study and to our everyday life experiences as we plan our daily activities and the way things function at home, for instance. Therefore, we can say that all human beings are designers. However, this thought blurs the line between the role of professional designers and others. Professional designers are trained to have design skills and are tuned to problem solving and the search for

opportunities. Design has different meanings and intentions. Often, design is regarded as an activity that gives form to products. This kind of product design includes aspects of usability, functionality, ergonomics and so on. However, within this chapter we see design as giving form to communities, cultures and places, utilising participatory, empathic and user-inspired approaches. These approaches put people at the heart of the design process, and consider their ideas, opinions and wishes in the design brief. In this sense, design aims to improve, shape and re-shape the social landscape and people's interactions within the material, cultural and social world and their immediate surroundings.

Taking participatory design to the streets and to public spaces has the fundamental difference of working with the public and communities rather than within private organisations. The new attitude of design substitutes the replacement of objects with, for example, fascinating events. The shift towards a more sociomaterial thinking diminishes energy and material consumption and brings forth the design of activities and environments in which more people are active.

Within this work, a design intervention in the public space is defined as a temporal action caused by a problem, gap, opportunity or programme between two or more individuals or entities. It usually involves artefacts that help to create interactions between people, people and places, people and topics, and people and designers.

This exchange helps designers to:

1. understand the context of the work;
2. get to know the local people;
3. introduce new ways of doing and designing;
4. motivate people to get involved;
5. collect people's opinions and desires;
6. make sense of problems and possible solutions;
7. measure the success of the design intervention and its



- application; and,
8. create new places and environments.

A design intervention in the urban landscape is by nature mobile rather than fixed, stimulating and dynamic rather than static, liberal rather than conservative and open rather than restricted. Design interventions deal with both pragmatic and theoretical conditions as they are statements, phenomena and situations, as well as applied science, people's and designers' know-how and experiences in making, acting and reflecting. Interventions in urban public spaces can occur in different places: in institutions like libraries, cultural centres and public buildings or in streets, boulevards, squares, parks and shopping centres.

The objectives of design intervention vary, as well as its form, scale and scope. There are design interventions that aim to understand the values of an area, context or neighbourhood through participatory means, to promote new approaches to the reformation of places and public environments, or to introduce new products, services, uses and experiences to the public realm. Design interventions also serve as experiments for academic research. They help to study new opportunities for local development, community cohesion, to design in collaboration with various stakeholders and to envision services and design opportunities for the city. Design interventions can pop up in the public space without previous announcement or interventionists can invite people in advance to participate in the event.

The design interventions illustrated in the previous chapter help to identify directions and possible modes for small-scale urban revitalisation. They serve to explore new ways to enliven suburban places and communities. The significance of design and the design interventions is not at this stage to influence urban politics or to make stylish designs, but rather to try out and measure the impact of new uses and activities through participatory means. Design interventions help to identify how giving

new form to suburban areas and communities can work, be maintained and be developed. In this sense, design is also about experimentation and testing different working models and approaches for the recreation of suburban living.

Moreover, local inhabitants were engaged in creating and recreating their immediate environment, being the force to produce small modifications and activities in the social and physical landscape of the neighbourhood. Thus, the soft assets of a neighbourhood can change the course of action of their physical surroundings. Experiencing one's immediate environment, and especially a familiar place, through new active means can produce novel thoughts and impressions about the place and one's relation to it.

The design produced ideas on paper and actualised them in practise. The design interventions were accomplished for different reasons and at different stages of the design process. A tango workshop took place at the beginning of the design process so that designers could understand the qualities of suburban living, its problems and opportunities. It also helped them gain new understanding about the relationship between people and their immediate environment. Furthermore, it helped designers to meet and engage with local people and entities such as the cultural centre of Kannelmäki where the event occurred. The input of local people was at the heart of the design process, from the first intervention until the last. The material gathered during the first intervention, the thoughts, ideas and directions, guided the design ideation process. During the Sitratori block party these ideas and design directions were prototyped, actualised, experienced and evaluated in the neighbourhood. (page 110)

The Sitratori block party reflected people's desires about things they would like to see and experience in their neighbourhood – more social and public events and recreation for various age groups. At the same time, inhabitants wanted to picture the heart of the neighbourhood in a new, colourful and positive way. The design intervention gave them the opportunity to re-appropriate their immediate environment for their preferred

# The Cube

A student team tried to find the essence of a good neighbourhood and define what social wellbeing is. After interviewing locals and walking around Helsinki's Kannelmäki neighbourhood, students drew an analysis map of routes and places of interest for different age groups. These places are close but do not overlap and there is no spontaneous interaction between the elderly and children. To create dialogue between the generations, students launched an experimental project called The Cube. This moving cafeteria visited a few selected hot spots and showed that spontaneous dialogue could be created with small-scale intervention at a grass roots level.

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uses and to share local knowledge. The design interventions had a key role in creating social wellbeing that enabled the introduction of locals to locals, and brought forth the power of individuals and local groups to the rest of the community.

Intervening in suburban areas using social design and participatory approaches helps to break the ice between people and create a shared space where strangers become familiar. Moreover, designing for wellbeing through design interventions can help to map and test what kind of activities can be carried out in neighbourhoods and how people from different communities can contribute to them. For example, children and youth together with seniors can have a role in producing cultural activities that create wellbeing in neighbourhoods.

Designers can have a key role in initiating actions, activating places and engaging citizens. They can facilitate events, situations and spontaneous interactions and they can make local knowledge visible. Designers have the potential to become like social workers, enabling people with design methods, tools and approaches to make things happen. Furthermore, they can create design strategies for suburban wellbeing. Above all, designers make things and they make things happen, they create environments where experiences take place and which can be told and explored later. Designers can have an essential role in revitalising places and communities. With stronger synergy and collaboration between design universities, neighbourhoods and the public sector there could be the beginning of a truly social design application, embedding design for wellbeing in our everyday urban life.

# 9

## Reducing social distance through co-design

Sebastian Greger & Zagros Hatami



Public healthcare in Finland is based on the provision of tax-funded services, which, in times of limited public finances and an ageing population, translates into a demand that often exceeds available resources. Since municipalities are legally obliged to provide their services equally within binding time frames and at a predefined level of quality, there is a strong demand for solutions that will help cut costs, optimise the utilisation of available resources and save on expensive treatments through preventive care.

The allocation of resources is mainly done at a system level by setting up rules that ensure appropriate thresholds, while the assessment of treatment needs is done at clinics by healthcare staff. Information technology (IT) has been seen as a means for nurses and doctors to provide the best care possible while acting within the frames set by the administration. However, the complexity of the existing IT systems, paired with the challenging procedures of public requests for tenders for municipal investments, have resulted in a situation where the present systems seem to have put the burden of additional desk work on healthcare professionals rather than freeing more time for patient care. In addition, innovations are often restricted to what the available infrastructure and software technology can accommodate within the smallest common denominator of technical feasibility, instead of truly addressing end-user needs. Valuable data that could help make the system more efficient remains unused. At the same time, healthcare units have refined their own local workflows to compensate for the IT shortcomings – nurses and doctors are required to adjust their work to the IT limitations instead of the technology being adjustable to their needs.

This chapter describes three student projects carried out with Helsinki Health Care Centre (HHCC) that address the future of health IT. The starting point for our work was to search for design solutions based on the needs of both healthcare providers and citizens. We started from desirable outcomes without being too restricted by the potential feasibility of their implementation into the existing IT infrastructure. Nonetheless, it was part of the brief to have the concepts grounded in the realities of the public health sector and its systems. Therefore, each future health IT project had a concrete starting point within on-going developments at HHCC and the solutions proposed could be implemented today with little to medium effort.

## **Social distance as a design challenge**

For designers, the public healthcare context is challenging due to the complexity emerging from the legally bound public system, multi-layered and intricate bureaucracy, inflexible IT systems and heterogeneous and site-specific requirements. Yet the biggest challenge is the conflict of interest between citizens demanding the best care and their providers forced to act within a framework of rules that limit and rigidly distribute the scarce resources. This brings forth four groups of key stakeholders in our process:

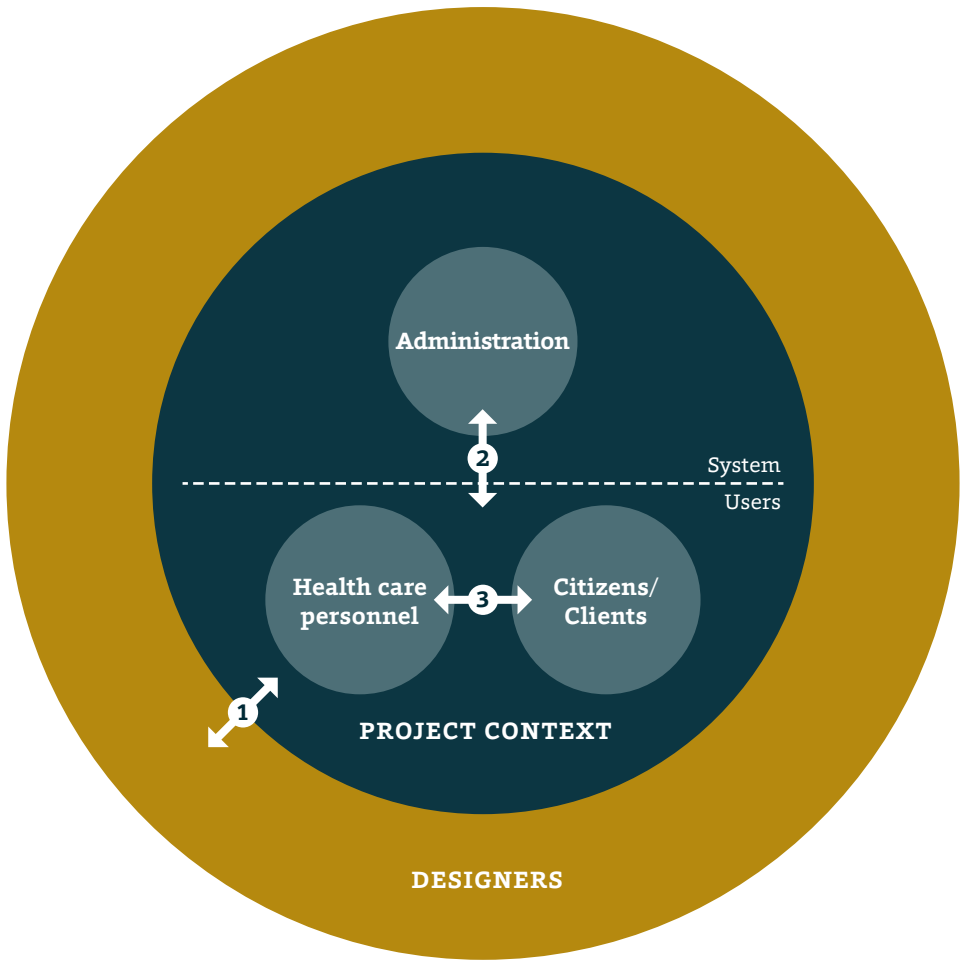
The *healthcare system*, represented by administrators who look at health services in terms of the costs incurred, the volume of patients treated, the scarcity of the available resources and the efficiency of their operations. Its objective is to establish rules and build systems that ensure the accomplishment of set goals.

The front-line *healthcare personnel*, engaged in direct interactions with patients, who provide care to individual patients as their main responsibility. Healthcare personnel, by profession, have a more patient-centric view, but their work is restricted within the structures of the public healthcare system.

The *citizens*, also referred to as patients or clients, expect to receive the best individual care possible without being fully aware of the challenges facing the healthcare system at large and the healthcare professionals in particular.

The *designers*, who were in our case Master's level students involved as external experts, bring along tools and skills for creative problem solving. They first need to immerse themselves in the realities of the project stakeholders in order to gain the insights for the creation of concepts that benefit all of them.

In the context of the cases presented here, both *healthcare personnel* and *citizens* can be users of the proposed IT service concepts. Therefore, both groups are mutually referred to as *users*.



**Figure 1: The multi-dimensional distances to be considered in our projects.**



Throughout our project, it turned out that the IT tools are often developed on a somewhat abstract administrative system level, which by nature is not able to fully accommodate the human side of healthcare in practice. This refers to both the perspective of front-line healthcare personnel, who serve as the interface between the healthcare system and citizens, as well as the perspective of citizens on the receiving end of healthcare. Therefore, we need to pay attention to the multi-dimensional social distances that designers face in public healthcare. These include the following (Figure 1):

The *designer-user distance*. Designers need to gain insight into the realities of both user groups, namely the clients as well as the healthcare personnel. This social distance affects designers' capability to provide solutions that suit the needs of all users.<sup>1</sup>

The *system-user distance* with IT systems, which are developed from an administrative perspective. An estrangement from the needs of the users (both healthcare personnel and citizens) manifests itself in a mismatch between the tools and the practices in place versus the realities of daily work in each healthcare unit.

The *alienation of healthcare personnel and citizens* through system-imposed approaches. By default, these two groups of users have a fair amount of proximity as their mutual interaction is mainly based on face-to-face unmediated contact dealing with the client's health. However, the system-imposed procedures and style of communication may restrict personnel from applying their intimate insights to the situations at hand and can as a result alienate patients.

Our approach to overcoming the social distances and turning them into assets instead of constraints was to bring all the stakeholders' viewpoints together. Collecting the key actors' points of view and expertise gave the

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1 This distance is akin to the "developer-user social distance" described in Johnson, M. and Hyysalo, S. (2012): Lessons for participatory designers of social media: long-term user involvement strategies in industry. In: Proceedings of the 12th Participatory Design Conference: Research Papers - Volume 1. DOI: 10.1145/2347635.2347646.

# No-shows

## – reducing the number of missed appointments

Patients who skip their appointments repeatedly are a burden to the healthcare system. The current healthcare IT systems, however, do not properly support addressing regular no-shows. For example, they do not tell nurses which patients have a history of not showing up, and the letters and reminders that are sent are too formal and generic. This first stage of this project was a No-show toolkit, which clinics can use to build customised letters, notifications and appointment cards. The second stage was to improve the IT systems to make communication and scheduling easier. Thirdly a system was proposed that gives patients access to their healthcare history, such as missed and upcoming appointments. This makes scheduling and cancelling appointments easier for both staff and patients.

**Students:**

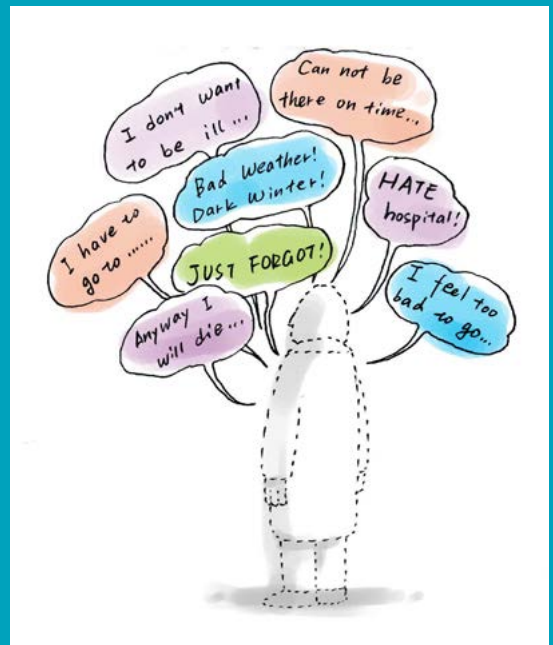
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Vallila psychiatry ward  
WDC Helsinki 2012  
Aalto University



designers the information they needed to create more considered, comprehensive and human-centred solutions.

Nine Master's programme students participated in an eight-week project, *Co-designing the Future of Health IT*,<sup>2</sup> to solve three specific real-world challenges. The project involved administrative staff from the HHCC central organisation and healthcare units, healthcare personnel including doctors, nurses and office staff at the clinics, and Helsinki citizens. Given the two-month time constraint from brief to final concepts, the co-design approach had a strong focus on design from an "expert perspective"<sup>3</sup> with the users as the subject of the designers' study. However, we also included participatory elements, where healthcare personnel and citizens participated in the design work. The designers and HHCC staff met approximately every two weeks for interviews, evaluation of ideas and co-design workshops. In addition, the designers engaged in field observations, the analysis of artefacts and literature research. The groups also recruited citizens to be interviewed and surveyed.

### **No-shows – rethinking the system approach**

Patients who do not keep their appointments without previous cancellation are a burden to the resources of public healthcare. Valuable care time gets lost and the treatment of others is unnecessarily delayed. Our initial assignment from HHCC asked for the design of an IT-based solution that would reduce the number of no-show appointments. The introduction of an SMS reminder functionality in the electronic patient database made it possible for the healthcare centre to send reminder messages to patients. However, designers were needed to shape such messages. The brief further specified that a desirable concept should take into account the contexts of

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2 Under the coordination of the HHCC management, supervised by professors Sampsa Hyysalo and Jack Whalen and supported by researchers from Aalto University.

3 Sanders EBN & Stappers PJ. (2008): Co-creation and the new landscapes of design, *CoDesign: International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts*, 4:1, 5-18.

various healthcare units while being applicable on a broad scale. It should also be universal enough to be used by many units while specific enough to serve particular needs.

Starting from the initial thought of an SMS reminder, the students<sup>4</sup> started working with two clinics: a unit doing routine eye screening examinations for diabetics and an ambulant psychiatry clinic. Based on discussions in these units, a series of interviews and a literature review, it became apparent that the reasons for no-shows are too complex to be solved by sending a default reminder message. Not showing up for appointments is often related to the client's health condition, life situation or lack of awareness of the scarcity of the allocated resources. The designers identified that existing patient data in combination with the clinics' locally gained insights could be used more effectively to identify potential no-show cases and assist them in making their appointments.

The students' concept ([page 130](#)) is based on a three-stage development process. In its first stage, existing communication material is given a makeover. A "No-Show Toolkit" enables clinics to design their own info letters, appointment cards, reminder postcards and so on, based on their specific needs. The new materials reduce no-shows by reminding and encouraging patients. In the second stage, the patient database is improved to make communication and scheduling easier for staff. A smart scheduling system suggests the best appointment times based on the patient information, including the patient's no-show history, which is currently recorded but not systematically used. Clinic staff retain the freedom to organise scheduling according to local processes, and the system supports their work. Finally, in the third stage, the group envisioned a future system that enables patients to see their own healthcare history. The interface displays data on missed appointments and provides staff with scheduling tools for efficient and accurate management of patient communication.

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4 Group "No-show": Lu Hu, Sanna Petlin and Antero Vanhala.

A patient portal displays previous and upcoming appointments, allowing patients to confirm or cancel.

The project team experienced a radical change in the scope of the problem as the task changed from a system-centric design of an effective SMS reminder system to a user-centric understanding of how to increase the cooperation and communication between healthcare personnel and their clients. This had the potential to reduce the number of no-show cases, but also to contribute to a better service for citizens. In terms of the *designer-user social distance*, the no-show example demonstrated how co-design enables designers to dissect a complex problem and challenge the seemingly obvious initial brief. The team learned that the current practice of threatening no-show clients with penalties, which is an attempt to solve a variety of chiefly individual problems with a one-size-fits-all solution, does not work. The current tone of voice in the health centres' communication is cold and bureaucratic compared to the warm and empathic identity of healthcare personnel. The proposed concept reduces the *system-user distance* by using the patient database for empathic personalisation of reminder messages. It enables the adaptation of the system to the specific needs of each clinic by acknowledging the current workarounds and "hacks" used by the units and embracing them. The co-design treatment of the no-show context helped to re-think the solution from penalising no-show patients as perpetrators failing to comply with the rules of the system, to treating each no-show case with care and applying a more humane interaction aiming at significantly reducing the *alienation of healthcare personnel and citizens*.

### **Maternity and child care – making self-service desirable**

"Neuvola" is the Finnish name for public healthcare clinics whose role is to guide, train and advise expectant and new mothers and their families during pregnancy and after childbirth. The aim is to secure the best possible health for the expectant mother, foetus, newborn and entire family. The student

group was asked to design a self-service health data portal for Neuvola's online service in the city of Helsinki. The desire was to free up time from staff's busy schedules by eliminating a few face-to-face appointments that were just routine check-ups. The idea was to let mothers take care of them themselves through the online reporting of self-measurements such as body measurements and taking urine samples for testing. In addition, Helsinki Health Care Centre asked for conceptual input into the Neuvola appointment booking process to improve the productivity of the personnel managing appointments. Again, the aim was to give the task to the clients themselves by providing them with the means to book and manage their own appointments online. The brief allowed for both self-serve services to be integrated into the same portal.

The design students<sup>5</sup> explored the realities of a maternity and child-care clinic by interviewing several parents about their experiences and expectations. It turned out that the value of the Neuvola service to mothers was not only in the routine check-ups, which were the prime candidate for self-administration, but, more importantly, in the face-to-face contact with Neuvola staff. This gave mothers the opportunity to share their concerns and get answers to the questions they were facing. The latter was perceived as a crucial element of the service that the mothers were not prepared to forgo. Therefore, despite the administration's perception of service improvements by offloading routine tasks to mothers and making staff more available for other consultations, mothers viewed the reduction in face-to-face appointments as a deterioration of the service. Given that most mothers already felt overwhelmed with the amount of information and tasks they were facing, it became clear that assisting mothers and their families in digesting all the information and managing all their tasks and appointments, while improving the communication between the clinic, the clients and their support network, was the direction to go.

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5 Group "Neuvola": Rahul Abhisek, Jung-Youn Ko and Pihla Mäkinen.

# Lapsen kanssa

– solving maternity clinic communication challenges

Lapsen kanssa is an online service concept to help new mothers and their families through pregnancy, childbirth and after, in co-operation with maternity clinics. The service aims to enhance the clinics' work in securing the good health of everyone involved. Lapsen kanssa is a multifaceted online service that is built around a calendar that runs from pregnancy to the child's early years. All the relevant information is included, for both the mother and her partner, allowing the mother to monitor her progress and reduce the workload of nurses. The system also works as a communication channel between the mother, partner, hospital and other relevant health-care providers.

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The screenshot displays the 'Calendar' section of the Lapsen kanssa online service. The interface includes a navigation bar with tabs for 'Pregnancy Card', 'Help Book', 'Events', and 'Contacts'. A user profile 'Matti / 30 / 2012' and a 'Log Out' link are visible in the top right corner. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Image:** A photograph of a fetus in a womb.
- Fetus Information:** Length: 1-3 mm.
- Week 8:** A list of tasks and links: '1st Neuvola meeting', 'Preliminary info. form' (with a PDF icon), 'Choose your hospital', 'Nutrition', and 'Chances of miscarriage'.
- Fetus:** Text describing the fetus's size and development: 'Your baby is about the size of a lentil this week. If you could see inside yourself, you'd find she has an oversized head in proportion to her body. Your baby's facial features are forming, with dark spots where the eyes are, openings where the nostrils'.
- Mother:** Text about the physical and emotional experience: 'The outside world won't see any sign of the dramatic developments taking place inside you but tiredness and nausea can make you feel low, especially as you may not have told anyone at work that you're pregnant yet. To compensate, offload as much'.
- Father:** Text about the emotional journey: 'At the outset of the pregnancy, talk to your wife about how she envisions her pregnancy. Some women may have the view that it will be the most challenging 9 months of their lives while others may envision it being 9 months of bliss.'

At the bottom, a 'Weeks' timeline shows a progression from 5 to 40 weeks, with the current week (8) highlighted.

The group's proposal, "Lapsen kanssa" (With child), is an online service designed to help new mothers and their families in co-operation with the maternity and childcare units (page 135). Built around a content-rich calendar and enabling the guidance of mothers over the course of their pregnancy and childbirth, the service provides a reliable channel of available, relevant and credible health information to parents. Scheduling features help parents to remember appointments and make it easy for families to find events, places and services relevant to them. The service also provides tools for mothers to enter their own measurements and thereby reduce the nurses' deskwork. In addition, the service provides a communication channel between the maternity clinic, the mother, her partner and hospitals.

The design team enjoyed a close proximity to one of the user groups, namely the mothers, since one of the designers had been a client of Neuvola as a young mother. This allowed her to share and reflect on her first-hand knowledge and experiences during the team discussions. However, speaking with other mothers, nurses and other healthcare personnel afforded the design team the additional necessary insights for further reducing the *designer-user social distance*. Interviews with mothers revealed their hesitance to lose valuable face-to-face appointments with nurses. Closely working with nurses and other healthcare personnel in co-design workshops allowed the students to enrich the design with their insights and expertise. Engaging the system representatives and sharing the designers' discussions with mothers and healthcare personnel reduced the *system-user distance*. The concept made the healthcare administration aware of the concerns raised during discussions and workshops with both user groups of the future IT service concept. Furthermore, by improving the communication between Neuvola clients, their families, support networks and staff, the service concept aimed to reduce the risk of *alienation of healthcare personnel and citizens*.



# oireeton.fi – awareness of chlamydia among students

Chlamydia is the most common sexually transmitted infection. It does not usually present noticeable symptoms, but can cause serious effects, such as infertility. More awareness of sexual health is therefore needed, especially among the high-risk groups of young students. The approach of oireeton.fi is to offer facts about chlamydia, give information about how to get it treated and provide online tools for actions such as informing ex-partners, determining if your behaviour is risky, and taking a chlamydia test at home.

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## **Student healthcare – students design for students**

The student healthcare unit of Helsinki Health Care Centre, the provider of health services to 22,000 polytechnic students, was searching for a new means to fight the rise in sexually transmitted infections. Chlamydia, which is the most common of these, does not usually present any noticeable symptoms. This calls for raising the sexual health awareness of students, especially those with high-risk behaviours. Initially, the students were briefed based on experiences with the successful application of online questionnaires to reach undiagnosed diabetics in at-risk age groups. This sparked the idea of developing a similar tool to screen for chlamydia. The designers' task was to explore how IT could be used to enable more efficient screening of students who may be in need of chlamydia treatment. The core idea of such a service would be to get the polytechnic students more interested in their own health and make them aware that they could be carrying a potentially symptom-free chlamydia infection. The tool should attract 20-year-old students to participate in a campaign that is easily available and approachable.

The design team<sup>6</sup> set out to identify the students who were most at risk and to understand the current ways in which the student healthcare unit reached out to them. Through field visits, interviews and observations, it became evident that the students least likely to visit a nurse were the ones most at risk. Raising awareness among these students and getting them to understand their risk would be the most effective contribution. Another important insight was that the way to screen high-risk individuals would be to approach those who have been intimate with people who have tested positive.

The proposed "oireeton.fi" (symptomless.fi) (page 137) concept is an online service with related promotional elements. It reaches out to students who engage in risky behaviour and aims for easier testing and detection

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6 Group "Student health": Markus Lappalainen, Helinä Lehtonen and Riku Rantala.

of chlamydia. The service presents the facts about chlamydia, gives information about its treatment and allows those tested positive to inform former partners who may be at risk. The campaign elements get student organisations on board in order to bring the topic into discussion among students in a fun way. The campaign is brought to parties, where alcohol is usually consumed and after which students face the highest risk of infection, and badges for student overalls and ice cream bars with a hidden chlamydia awareness message are distributed. The online service offers easily digestible information about chlamydia prevention and a quiz-format risk assessment. The service makes it possible for students to order home sampling kits online and locate the nearest healthcare centre. It also enables anonymous informing of ex-partners about their possible infection after a student has been diagnosed with chlamydia.

In this project the *designer-user social distance* was rather immediate as, unlike in the other two projects, both the design team and the user group were comprised of students. This enabled the design team to come up with solutions that are rooted in the social reality of their users. The student health unit's system-led thinking was perhaps most evident in their existing questionnaire for screening the health of new polytechnic students. A student who answered "yes" to the question "have you engaged in a risky sexual activity?" would be invited for a check-up, while the real problem is that those with the most risky behaviour would not consider their behaviour risky and would answer "no". Free from IT infrastructure constraints and epidemiologic thinking, the designers were able to find a new approach that the student healthcare unit would probably not have been able to ask for. This reduced the *system-user distance*. The final concept went further than just providing information. It made it easy to get tested and provided solutions for the doctors' requirement for chlamydia patients to inform their potentially infected ex-partners.

Looking at the healthcare unit's online sexual health questionnaire, one could see the potential *alienation of healthcare personnel and citizens* as

the tools do not reflect the reality in the polytechnic healthcare unit. In a face-to-face situation, a nurse would be able to assess the risk factor of a student based on their sexual behaviour, but the online questionnaire limits personnel to asking students for self-assessment through a static form. The proposed concept overcomes this by letting a social mechanism take care of the screening process and empowering those reached by the campaign message by providing them with appropriate tools.

### **Establishing advocacy for the user in the system**

There is a potential conflict between how the public system administration, front-line healthcare personnel and citizens see the role of healthcare IT solutions. This became evident in the early stages of the projects when discussions with healthcare system representatives were mainly about efficiency, better allocation of resources and empowering patients to take care of themselves to free up healthcare resources. From a citizen perspective, direct face-to-face interaction with healthcare personnel is perceived as the most valuable element. An example that demonstrates how unaware citizens are about the IT challenges facing the system was an interviewee's comment: *"I do everything online. Why can't I manage my appointments in a similar way?"* This illustrates how the citizen's expectation for the availability of IT services has surpassed the ability of the healthcare system to keep up to date with the standards set by other public or private services.

In our observations, the challenge lies in handling the differences between the system's perspective, which is mainly focused on creating health IT solutions that help public healthcare to be more efficient, and the users' perspective of expecting solutions that enable the best possible care, both from a medical practitioner's point of view and the citizens' needs. This discrepancy manifests itself in the social distances described earlier. The co-design approach created a shared language. The reduction in the *designer-user distance*, the *system-user distance* and the *alienation of healthcare personnel and citizens* were achieved through increasing the

understanding of each key stakeholder of the other perspectives present. Therefore, the process of applying co-design methodology and gaining insights into the world of each stakeholder afforded designers the advocacy of the users, healthcare personnel and citizens.

In the no-show case, the co-design approach provided the insight that the problem does not lie with just patient behaviour, but also in the way the system forces healthcare personnel to communicate with patients. Limited flexibility of patient database communication tools, the omnipresent threat of fines for failure to cancel an appointment and the difficult access to data for identifying high-probability no-shows created the problem. The designers' solution took a step towards system-level tools that allow healthcare personnel to enrich their client interactions utilising their experience and empathy.

Despite the regular contact between Neuvola personnel and mothers through a series of predefined appointments, the nurses did not fully realise the value to mothers of their face-to-face appointments. Influenced by the system-level pressures of efficiency and budgetary limitations, and observing their own busy schedules and struggle to keep up with paper work, they agreed with the objective of freeing up resources by handing off routine check-ups to the mothers themselves. However, after hearing the mothers' concerns, it became clear that the face-to-face meetings are valuable for asking questions and sharing concerns. Gaining insights into both sides of the story helped the designers to present a comprehensive solution that didn't replace the face-to-face dialogue but allowed mothers to manage appointments to reduce the nurses' paperwork.

The student health case solved the problem of early identification of students at risk of chlamydia infection by creating a concept from a patient-centred point of view that went beyond the reach of the on-site nurses. One of the most valuable features of the concept is the possibility to inform ex-partners anonymously. The proposed concept envisions campaign materials that go where students gather, socialise and party, educating

students who otherwise may not seek health information. Through the online service, the students are assisted in evaluating their risk, getting tested anonymously, and easing the difficulties of informing ex-partners after a positive diagnosis. By approaching a large-scale problem on an individual level, the design solution satisfied a wide range of needs from those of the administrative system to those of healthcare personnel and individual students.

### **Takeaways**

It can be summarised that wellbeing is not created by establishing systems that chiefly support the goals of the healthcare administration. Nor would it be achieved by creating solutions that are purely based on the desires of the users of such systems, at the expense of neglecting the realities of the public healthcare system. By balancing the interests of the key stakeholders and creating a common language, designers facilitate the process of envisioning more balanced solutions. The consideration of the human actors at the heart of healthcare is an important step away from the top-down approach of interpreting wellbeing as an efficient and equitable distribution of scarce resources. This requires an understanding and insight into the context and needs of human actors. Design, with its various methodologies, is a vehicle for bringing this understanding to various stakeholders. The design approach informs decision makers about the realities of both healthcare personnel and citizens, and thereby refreshes the resulting solutions with a breath of humanity through the reconciliation of the needs of all users within the requirements and constraints of the system.

These three cases highlight the major benefit of co-design, namely its ability “to collectively define the context and problem and in doing so improve the chances of a design outcome being effective”<sup>7</sup>. While searching

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7 Fuad-Luke, A. (2009). *Design Activism: Beautiful Strangeness for a Sustainable World*. Routledge. p. 147.

for an administrative solution might appear the obvious task at first, getting designers to work with all stakeholders in an integrative manner enables the utilisation of aspects that would otherwise remain undiscovered. This will increase the likelihood of solutions being created in which the system supports the social reality of the users, thereby reducing the *system-user distance*. It also eliminates the risk of the *alienation of healthcare personnel and citizens* by keeping them as close as possible to one another.

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