METHOD-MAKING AS A METHOD OF DESIGNING

JUNG-JOO LEE
AALTO UNIVERSITY
HELSINKI, FINLAND
JUNG-JOO.LEE@AALTO.FI

ABSTRACT

The design research community has recently been
creativity. Innovative methods are in principle designed and re-designed in each project, while conventional methods aim to be easily reproducible and portable across situations. In this paper, we illustrate what learning is going on in the making process of the methods, rather than data collected by the methods. Our aim is to foreground the tangible benefits of innovative methods by discussing how the making process of innovative methods actually helps designers build contextual knowledge important for the design situation.

INTRODUCTION

In the historical development of human-centered design, the main agenda has been how to collect user information in a valid and reliable manner. A key response to this has been the proliferation of *methods*. A number of methods have been borrowed and adapted from more established human research disciplines, such as marketing, psychology, or anthropology (Hanington 2003). Methods have played a key role in describing how a human-centered design team works, systematizing the process, and educating designers (Matthews 2009). In the design research community, introducing and writing about methods is a popular way to generalize knowledge from designers' work (Keinonen 2009).

al. 2005) and design games (e.g. Brandt & Messeter 2004; Vaajakallio 2012), to name a few. The Nordes community has played a very active role in developing and experimenting with innovative methods. (e.g. Binder et al. 2011; Mattelmäki 2006; Westerlund 2011; Sanders & Westerlund 2011; Eriksen 2009; Vajaakallio 2012).

Distinguished from conventional methods, innovative methods are constructed upon designers' genuine practices, and support design-intrinsic qualities rather than conventional scientific qualities. They are designed and re-designed specifically for each project context. Instead of rigid method instructions, designers' reflective sense-making process (Schön 1983) and contextual knowledge grounded in actions (Akama & Prendiville 2013) play a great role in making their methods work in a particular situation.

Despite this, the design research community has not paid consistent attention to the *making process* of innovative methods, i.e., what designers actually do and feel when making their methods work. Rather, the analytic focus and interests still remain in *data* that comes out of innovative methods. This is due to field's conventional conception on how methods are supposed to work in design, i.e. methods should be easily reproducible and portable, and guarantee satisfying results under correct operation, as diagnosed by Boehner et al. (2007), Woolrych et al. (2011), and Akama & Prendiville (2013). Sympathetic to these