NEW WAYS OF NETWORKING:
A hands on workshop exploring the workspace:lab and its equipment

CHRISTINA LUNDSGAARD

THE ROYAL DANISH ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS, SCHOOL OF DESIGN

CLU@KADK.DK

CAROLINA SOUZA DA CONCEIÇÃO

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF DENMARK

CASOU@DTU.DK

JOHANNA ERIKSSON

SWECO ARCHITECTS/CHALMERS

JOHANNA.ERIKSSON@CHALMERS.SE

ABSTRACT

Are you interested in designing new ways of networking at the Nordes conference with fellow researchers?

Do you want to explore and discuss the so called "workspacelab" as a platform for user involvement?

This workshop invites participants to explore a particular version of the design:lab called the workspace:lab. With a focus on methods like probekits, design games and experience prototyping the participants will experience what it is like being part of the design:lab as "users" and they will be exposed to the different equipment and tools used in the "laboratory of change".

Though the main focus of the workshop is to explore the workspace:lab, the actual output of the workshop is also relevant. The participants will be encouraged to codesign examples of new ways of networking at conferences, which could benifit the Nordes community in the future.

INTRODUCTION

Currently the research team of the Project "Workspace Design II" (WSD II) is developing a methodological toolbox that encourages architects, designers and engineers to involve employees and other stakeholders when initiating major changes at workplaces.

Inspired by previous initiatives in Workspace design project I (for more details see Lundsgaard et al., 2007), the toolbox suggests creating a temporary environment that enables users and other stakeholders to have a design dialogue and jointly explore a future workplace environment. This temporary space is called a workspace:lab - a design.lab focusing on workspaces. Similar to the design:lab, it supports users, designers and other stakeholders to both reflect on their current work environment and explore new workspace designs in an open dialogue.

The backbone of a workspace:lab (or any design:lab) is a series of workshops, that feed into each other (Binder, 2007). Design games are often used in these forums to structure the workshops and ensure a common tangible output (Brandt, 2006). Usually the "gamepieces" are materials generated from field studies or through probekits (Mattelmäki, 2006).

Some of the methods in the book "Rehearsing the future" (Halse et al., 2010) were of interest in the

development of the toolbox. It brings new examples on how roleplaying and experience prototyping can be another way to experiment with and imagine new possible futures in the lab. Prototypes and mock-ups enter the stage as props, evoking new ideas (see Fig.1).

Figure 1: Prototyping ("Rehearsing the Future")

The toolbox is intended to guide architects, designers and engineers in how to establish a workspace:lab and it gives examples on how to do it based on four principles:

1) People at work

Prepare employees and other stakeholders for workshop activities (for example with "homework activities", see Fig.2).

2) Workshop dialogues

Make several of workshops to collaboratively reflect on a future workspace.

3) Design transformation

Transform and translate the material from one activity to another.

4) Beyond the lab

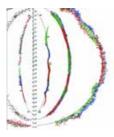Make sure that the design dialogue continues at the workplace.

Figure 2: Homework done in WSD I

The toolbox (see Fig.3) is seen as a prototype that evolves and develops when using it with potential architects, designers and engineers.

Figure 3: The toolbox prototype in WSD II

FORMAT OF THE WORKSHOP

A prototype of the WSD toolbox will be used to plan the workshop and the Nordes Conference will be seen as a design case and a temporary workplace. At the workshop participants will co-design new ways of networking at the conference.

The planners of the workshop are all architects (some of them part of The WSD project) who wish to create a workspace:lab with the toolbox as a guide and then reconfigure it in the process if necessary. In the process they will experiment with new methods and approaches that could accompany the existing material in the WSD toolbox.

The intention with the workshop is to bring together researchers and design practitioners interested in the design:lab setting (in this case the workspace:lab) and the tools that are used in the lab. The workshop will give the participants the possibility to try out new methods for the toolbox in order to reflect and discuss the experience with each other and the planners of the workshop.

SCHEDULE

Attendees will be sent a page in a "friendsbook" and asked to fill out and return in advance, which will both prepare? them for the workshop activities and make them reflect about themselves in relation to a network environment at Nordes. A limited number of submissions will be accepted (12) and the selection will be based on having a mixed group of participants from different research environments. Those intending to participate must send e-mail to Christina Lundsgaard clu@kadk.dk and the "friendsbook-page" will be mailed to them.

After an introduction to the toolbox, the full-day workshop will be divided in two workshop sessions (morning and afternoon) and end with a wrap-up discussion to reflect on the experiences with the workshops.

The morning workshop will be based on "the known" and the identification of challenges with ~~and~~ questions like: *What network facilities already exist in the Nordes Community, what existing space (cyberspace as well as the physical surroundings) are we networking within and what needs do we have as different participants when we enter the network? How do we know who to*

network with, how do we get in contact and what happens beyond the conference?

The "friendsbook-page" that the participants will have worked on prior the workshop will feed into the first session and a design game will be a tool to structure and make sure that the participants thoughts will be tangible and have an output. In the lunch break, the participants will be asked to do different interventions based on the morning session within the conference space. The breaks are one example of how conference participants network and a good time to try out some of the new ideas.

The output from the morning session will feed into the second more explorative session leading to future design solutions. The participants will be exposed to "scenario playing" through active engagement with prototypes. The output of the workshop will be functional prototypes that can support a new way of networking at the conference and following conferences.

To wrap up, the planners and the workshop participants will jointly reflect on their experiences with the workspace:lab and discuss it in plenum.

OUTPUT

The expected outcome of the workshop is ideas and inputs on ways to get to know a workplace environment better, in order to change it or design a new one. This brings together an awareness for the participants of different possibilities of using/seeing the same (work)space, as they will be part of the process both as users of the space and as designers. As the conference venue will be the "workplace" analysed and discussed during the workshop, possible changes of it will be the more tangible output. Methods and approaches will hopefully inspire the participants if they are engaging in similar projects in the future.

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