Project Recoding

as part of the UiO course INF5011

GROUP 5

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Table of Contents

Introduction

The work constitutes an amalgamation of a series of projects, related to recoding i.e. changing the purpose, the essence or the perspective of a concept to indicate and yield to something completely different. This recoding report comes as a prerequisite for Course INF5011. For this purpose, the formulated three-member team as appearing in the cover, studied thoroughly the syllabus [4] and more specifically [10-20] and managed to deduct the presented report and an accompanying presentation. The principal methodology employed for the genesis and completion of those projects is Participatory Design (PD) [6, p.1-5]. In the remainder of this report, we analyze all related issues in respect with recoding.

Collective reflection over Group 5 collaboration effort

Once the formulation of the project team took place, as a result of deliberation by the supervising course authority, the first step was to initiate and establish a communication between the members of the designated group. We began by exchanging email addresses, mobiles and other electronic means of communication including skype contact details. We also agreed on the meeting point for each group session as well as the timeline progression of the work. Notably, the group itself handled in the same manner and other assigned presentation work.

The primary target was to delineate the respective framework, in which we intended to work upon and the design theory. This facilitated our task of setting up to identify the goals of this project. As the main background theory for our recoding venture, Participatory Design was employed [6, p.1-5], which covered the entire lifecycle of each developed project.

Participatory Design (PD) was finally chosen as a qualified method of enabling participation of each member in the process of recoding. Regardless of who thought what, the execution was done in coordination and contribution by every member, either in suggestion, prototyping or implementation level. In this process and in order to realize the designated venture, we decided to proceed cautiously with converging on the criteria of evaluating its idea. The final outcome of this procedure can be summarized in the following bullets:

1. Imagination, creativity & innovation (points 20)
2. Its practicality, feasibility, presentation and applicability impetus (points 10)
3. The social perspective associated with this idea, with the intention to abide to the Science and Technology Studies (STS, [2, p.50]) infrastructure (points 30)
4. Its concept and essence, positively influencing the environment or the public sphere (points 20)
5. Adhering to the limitation of recoding (points 20)

It was left to the members of the group to assign their own values on a free-will basis for each criterion per idea. Nevertheless, the impact factor of each criterion, upon prior negotiation and compromise, was pre-agreed, as appearing in each bullet. The average of the score was then derived and comparison was quantitatively feasible.

Steps undertaken to yield to recoding ideas

We decided in the beginning that each group member would take some time to understand the purpose of this project, to think and come up with ideas previously discussed with other people and friends or deliberated with oneself. As part of this sequence of events, brainstorming and investigations in bibliography, the internet or course INF5011 syllabus [4] played an important role for the proposal of recoding concepts. Also, an inspirational factor and trajectory was to present ideas that realistically can carry a positive sign as a meaning, a symbol or an actual effect. As a baseline milestone or a sere example of implementation ingenuity, the group decided upon refs. [1] and [5].

In this (purposely deduced) context, each group participant, to a certain extent, was also a prosumer [2, p.117-8], actively involved in the project's production process. Each participant also was instructed and hopefully acknowledged to maintain a Neutral Point of View (NPOV, [3, p.144]) against religion, personal political beliefs, education level, gender, age and other potentially influential factors. We also tried to refrain from adopting a utopian or a dystopian perspective

[2, p.42-3] over technology and the examined theme. Despite the former, to a certain degree, allocating weights per criterion can't realistically exclude unbiased personal beliefs, with its natural consequence.

Group process encapsulating activities and contributions

As previously mentioned, upon agreeing on the fundamentals, we started off by arranging on the meetings and activities. The desired target, in regards to the group activities was to promote collaboration and synergic conduct. In that respect, we can't quantitatively enumerate the level of contribution of each person. Though, the group scheduled interleaving gatherings, on average once per week, either physically (most typically) or electronically (video-conference, email).

We decided to alternate our collaboration methods to resemble of produsage [2, p.118] models, mostly focusing on three key characteristics: A) communal, open participation, B) fluid heterarchy and C) Ad-hoc meritocracy [2, p.120-121]. This approach enabled a flexibility and harmonic resolution of any arisen controversies. In regards to methodologies, Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) was closer to our venue of action. The motivation for progress and completion, behind this venture can be summarized in the following bullets

A) Change the grounds of what we consider by alternating the meaning or use of concepts, products

B) Bring forward new methods of viewing technology and society, possibly in an innovative manner

C) Have a good time and show off our ideas,

D) Naturally it was part of the course INF5011.

In the screening process, each participant had to gather all of his/her ideas in a structured form that was either physical or presentable through digital content (pictures, video, sound e.t.c.) or other forms. The prime engine of materials to be explored could only be limited by our imagination, including A4 pages, old clocks, telephone machines, cameras, expendable items of everyday use like bottles e.t.c. In the context of SCOT methodology, we decided to weight human action to supersede and guide technology.

Different types of ideas were presented to the team, by the team members. For each idea, the person responsible was also responsible in a first degree to present it and its potential/stimulus. Although the idea itself played the main role, in the aftermath the presentation[1] had changed the view to the idea. We had also agreed to associate the ideas with themes[2], some of which are also appearing in the final presentation. The screening process was a strenuous but also fun process that took time and effort from all the contributing parties. Some ideas passed the five mentioned criteria, others did not. In the final screening, due to the limitation of presentation time, we decided to shift the baseline to higher score credits in order to eliminate some ideas that received lower score.

The candidate ideas that passed the initial selection process were further developed by the person that had proposed them, possibly in association or with the aid of other member(s). This design phase was comprised of

A) the phase of gathering the necessary materials,

B) selecting the process, method or software to use and employ realistically in order to achieve the designated goal of that idea,

C) make up a timeline, in case the project required a long process,

D) allocate tasks per involved party[3] and

E) making it happen by I) identifying problems or deviations in its progress and readjusting, II) coordinating with involved members, III) covering and documenting the entire phase with proper means.

Recoding Projects

Each idea resulted in a project. For each project, we devoted time, money and effort in order to synthesize a collage of different themes, each belonging to one of the three categories

[1] to a certain degree

[2] Titles of theme consist among others “Thinking out of the box”, “Resource conservation”, “Farm in a house” and many others

[3] Promoting collaboration between members

A. “Green” direction: environmental tendencies, practices promoting clean technologies

B. Human Rights / Ethics: Privacy infringements, human right violations

C. Changing the viewing angle: sometimes seeing things under different angle and perspective or reversing the thinking concept can lead to a different result, possibly with more information.

After the insertion of a higher milestone, we summarize the following descriptions for the recoding projects.

1. *Thinking out of the box*: we took a camera, disassemble it and make the base for a tree. (A)

2. *Resource Conservation*: Materials used were a plastic bottle and a bottle of Malibu and we converted them into a vase. (A)

3. *Farm in a house*: Seeds, tubes from diving equipment and cornflakes transform a balcony stand into a farm. The intention underlying this project is that each house has the capacity to maintain a space for creating its own agricultural plants and seeds. Recoding in this case is having corn for sun, white beans and lentils for house and others. (A)

4. *Telephone plantation*: The everyday usage of a telephone is transformed into a small garden. (A)

5. *Freedom is threatened:* camera lens and screen on the top of the Eifel tower if utilized in our everyday life insert dynamite on the foundations of freedom. The horseman symbolizes our fight against panopticum, posture copied from [9]. (B)

6. *Take a hike with a bicycle or a tricycle*: utilizing an old clock [7], we composed a sketch of a bicycle and a tricycle. (A)

7. *Is privacy in the eye of the beholder?*: An digitized image from a member of the team, generated from facegen software [8] and a camera lens inserted on his forehead, indicating loss of privacy and life control. (B)

8. *(I) Bottle on a ship / (II) Alternating angle*: (I) each knows the ship in a bottle concept. Reversing this concept, we put a bottle on a ship. (II) Guessing from a micro to macro perspective what this figure represents?

For more information and images, see the accompanying presentation.

Outcome and deliberation

In the end of the referenced process, each member decided to come forward, render and express those personal experiences that stemmed from this process. The basic point that each person identified as primary gain from this project is that he or she was able to think outside the box. Thus, this project enabled to expand our horizons and our perspectives of the reality, our personality and the way we usually act or consider or choose.

One member wondered how the outcomes can be exploited and embedded from this project in our life, in our work as a process of opening to new ideas, doubting our very basic customs or beliefs, introducing a critique to established norms in technology, science, society and ethics. This scope is not limited to one direction but could very well encompass interdisciplinary areas of human interest. On the other hand, new ideas do not necessarily entail better future. Caution and scrutiny in filtering what contribution and impact would have and whether that would be desirable.

We also agreed that our selections and choices in life affect others as part of a communal, interacting and ongoing process. Thus, we should not act as individuals, since by acting in a network structure form and contributing our fair share, we benefit not only ourselves but, through different lenses and layers, the world and the rest of humanity (hopefully the environment, the animals e.t.c). Our decisions, our actions have an effect and depending on what type of people we wish to be, that will reflect the society that we wish to build, to develop, to deliver to the next generation.

Conclusions

The experience that emanated from this recoding project can't be accurately portrayed through a simple sentence. Opening our eyes and basically changing the fundamental notions of our way of thinking, acting or envisioning is surely not a small step, neither a simple one.

The key success of this venture relies in the participation of each team member to produce the presented results and projects, as prescribed within the qualified Participatory Design theory [6, p.1-5]. Coordination and cooperation were vital to accomplish this target.

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