INSPIRATION CARDS

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Abstract
Inspiration Card Workshop is a collaborative method for combining findings from domain studies, represented in Domain Cards, with sources of inspiration from applications of technology, represented in Technology Cards, to create new concepts for design. In micro-analysis of Inspiration Card Workshops we have been interested in how participants in a workshop start out from having a general goal and a number of sources of inspiration, towards forming a design concept, including identifying which elements in the process created and maintained structure and momentum. During our analysis, we identified four ways of relating sources of inspiration to emerging ideas: Selection, Adaptation, Translation, and Combination.

Keywords
innovation, inspiration, transformation

ACM Classification Keywords
H5.m. Information interfaces and presentation: User centered design.

General Terms
Interaction design
Introduction
In his book about innovation and creative processes, Tom Kelly from IDEO tell about The Tech Box [3], which is a centrally located file cabinet filled with very concrete design artifacts in terms of gadgets and materials, such as tiny switches, Aerogel, Kevlar, rubber balls that don’t bounce, super-heat-conducting copper heat pipes, and the like. People look into the Tech Box for inspiration, then use it for launching new projects, and for selecting items to bring to design meetings, to spark innovation, etc.

In this workshop-note, we introduce a specific design technique ‘Inspiration Card Workshops’ (ICW), which we over period of four years have been using in more that 15 cases. Like in the case of the TECH Box, sources of inspiration is an essential element of ICW but in the case of ICW sources of inspiration are materialized into design artifacts in terms of inspiration cards with potential properties of the object being designed. Properties, characteristics or elements of a source of inspiration are through a network of transformations influencing the object being designed.

In over analysis we take a look into the role of sources of inspiration in interaction design. In particular, we address two fundamental questions: What is the nature of the sources of inspiration in design processes? And how do sources of inspiration relate to emerging ideas?

Our work is rooted in pragmatic design theory of Donald Schö"n [4]. According to Schö"n, the designer rather than looking for standard solutions sees the situation as something already present in his repertoire of paradigm cases or prototypes.

Inspiration card workshops
Inspiration Cards Workshops [1,2] are collaborative design events involving professional designers and participants with knowledge of the design domain, and in which domain and technology insight are combined, to create design concepts. Inspiration Card Workshops are primarily used in the early stages of a design process, during which professional designers and their collaborators narrow down potential future designs. The goal of the workshop is to develop design concepts starting from Technology Cards and Domain Cards.
A **Technology Card** represents either a specific technology or an application of one or more technologies. As an example, the card in Figure 1a is a Technology Card representing a specific application of thermal camera tracking technology. **Domain Cards** represent information about the domains for which we design. This information may pertain to situations, people, settings, themes, etc. from the domain.

The preparation for the workshop primarily involves selecting and generating the cards. Technology Cards, primarily generated by the designers, represent technologies that may directly or indirectly be part of the design concepts. Technology Cards can often be reused in various other projects, and the ones we produce are predominantly created from a pool of resources available at www.digitalexperience.dk.

The workshop itself commences with a presentation of the Domain and Technology Cards selected often accompanied with video illustrating the technology in question. The main phase of the workshop consists of the participants collaboratively combining the cards on posters, in order to capture design concepts (Figure 1c).

After the combination and co-creation phase, the participants discuss each poster *in plenun*’ Figure 2 gives an overview of the workshop phases.

**Process analysis**

In micro-analysis of Inspiration Card Workshops we have been interested in how participants in a workshop start out from having a general goal and a number of sources of inspiration, towards forming a design concept, including identifying which elements in the process created and maintained structure and momentum. Initially we have had an interest in the roles of physical design artefacts, i.e. inspiration cards and design concept posters, in the process. However, our analysis has revealed three additional key elements that structured and drove the process in conjunction with the physical design artefacts, namely **External Sources of Inspiration**, **General Workshop Themes & Values** and **Derived Ideas**. Figure 3 shows how the various elements come into play during a six minutes period of the creation of a single concept poster. **External Sources of Inspiration** are sources of inspiration spontaneously brought into play by workshop participants and **General Workshop Themes & Values** includes constraint on the design as well as other issue which has a significant impact on the direction of the design process.
Kinds of transformation
During our analysis, we identified four ways of relating sources of inspiration to emerging ideas: Selection, Adaptation, Translation, and Combination.

In the case of selection, the designer picks a certain aspect or feature of the source of inspiration, which is perhaps the most fundamental strategy, when we discuss the role of sources of inspiration in design. In many instances during the workshop, it was the case that the selected feature only constituted a minor aspect of the source of inspiration.

Selection of a certain aspect of a source of inspiration is in many cases followed by some kind of adaptation or modification. For instance by replacing the ‘text’ of ‘the drifting text’ inspiration card with an item for the domain we are designing for, e.g. replacing the text with LEGO bricks when designing marketing experiences for the toy store section of a department store.

Translation is the strategy of taking an element of a source of inspiration into a new place or context. For instance taking an element from an art piece into an everyday context.

Whereas selection is perhaps the most fundamental strategy, combination of previously unrelated elements is an essential strategy in innovation.

In our research on maps for design reflection we are exploring design artifacts, which at a meta-level captures not only the individual design idea but also captures an ongoing record of the series of transformation.

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References