Understanding and Supporting Group Creativity in Design

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OVERVIEW

ONE CLUSTER AIM WAS TO EXCHANGE AND STIMULATE NEW INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH TO GENERATE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF GROUP CREATIVITY AND CREATIVE PROCESSES IN DESIGN. A FURTHER AIM WAS TO UNDERSTAND HOW GROUP CREATIVITY COULD BE SUPPORTED BY 21ST CENTURY TECHNOLOGY. DEVELOPING IMPROVED TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR COLLABORATIVE CREATIVE DESIGN IS A SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH CHALLENGE. THE MAIN MOTIVATION FOR THE CLUSTER IS THE LACK OF CROSS-DISCIPLINARY FERTILISATION OF DESIGN IDEAS AND UNDERSTANDING IN THIS AREA. DEVELOPING A LEADING AND COMPETITIVE EDGE TO DESIGN MEANS DYNAMIC, EVOLVING AND TIMELY USE OF NEW AND EXISTING DESIGN PRACTICES BEING APPLIED TO NEW DESIGN PROBLEMS. COMPUTING TECHNOLOGY COULD BE THE ENABLING VEHICLE FOR DEVELOPING BOTH NEW COMBINATIONS OF PROBLEM SOLUTION, AND INNOVATIVE DESIGN SOLUTIONS. HOWEVER, SOFTWARE DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT CREATIVITY CAN ACTUALLY HINDER IT. YET DEVELOPING TECHNOLOGIES THAT CREATE NEW POTENTIAL FOR LOCAL AND DISPERSED GROUP CREATIVITY IS CRUCIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF FUTURE DESIGN PROJECTS.

Activities

Four themed workshops were run within the cluster period. These included invited talks and presentations, artists' fora, individual and group activities and further support for subgroup activities between workshops.

The first workshop identified commonalities and differences across disciplines in their understandings of, and support for, creative design processes. The second workshop identified representative creative design problems and solutions with a view to cross-fertilisation across disciplines. Additionally, research themes to pursue began to emerge.

The third workshop involved prioritising emerging research themes. Groups of research collaborators were formed and proposal aims and objectives were developed. Artists gave short presentations of their creativity in design work.

At the fourth workshop, research proposals were further developed with artists' input, and the artists each gave talks which addressed questions about how they used computers, the utility of computers for their work and how could they be made more useful.

Insights

The workshops brought researchers, industrialists and artists together to investigate commonalities, differences and opportunities for cross-fertilisation of ideas. One insight was that although there were different understandings and usage of terms, the creative activities engaged in were common. A second insight was a growing awareness and reflection of other discipline, interdisciplinary and participant perspectives. Prioritized research issues included:

- Understanding and supporting transitions between individual and group creativity in design.
- How do we encourage and support collaboration in creativity?
- What properties of the environment facilitate creative designs?
- How can we capitalize on accidents that lead to creative inspiration?

From the artists' forum, a distinctive feature of creativity relates to fun, laughter, entertainment, pleasure and optimism. Commonalities across artists included how everyday life led to inspiration. Computer support for creativity was not good for issues of materiality, adherence to linearity and a lack of a facility for creating mess.