Using the creative potential of older people in design

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Plan

• Motivation
• Project context
• Methodology
• Sandpit 1 – ‘Custom computer’
• Sandpit 2 – VR ‘Travel glasses’
• Conclusions
Motivation
Older people often portrayed as a design problem rather than a design resource...
Older people often not the target market for design and therefore not involved
Over 60s is a large and growing market

**UK’s ageing population**
Projected population by age (millions)

Source: Government Actuary’s Dept (2003 projections)
So how can we involve older people in the lifecycle of design?

‘Participatory design’

Design concepts

Real-world Activity

Prototypes

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Stereotypical objections to participatory design with older people

- Lack of motivation
- Unfamiliarity with technology
- Comprehension of novel concepts
- Lack of concentration and stamina
- Lack of imagination
Project context
Sus-IT: Sustaining IT use by older people to promote autonomy and independence

• To strengthen capacity for effective participation of older people in ICT policy, research and design;

• to investigate potential of, and barriers to, sustained use of digital technologies by older people, from perspectives of a range of stakeholders;

• to explore potential solutions to overcome barriers and promote and sustain autonomy and independence for older people;

• to generate research outputs which will influence policy, research and design, in ICT for older people.

http://sus-it.lboro.ac.uk/latestnews.html
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Methodology
‘Sandpit’ workshops: extended focus groups with PC + non-PC owners of retirement age

Focus group + Co-design session

Dramatic envisionment
Physical and hands on demos

Concept re-design

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Sandpit 1 – ‘Custom computer’
Scenario 1 – Main concept
Participants own (re-) designs

ROOM (6)  X  FORM (12)  X  FUNCTION (20)
PC user re-design – Group C
Sandpit 2 – ‘Travel glasses’
Everyone has places which are special to them… where they have lived and worked, were they visited family, where they went on holiday. Re-visiting these places often brings back many memories of the times spent in them. However it is not always possible to travel back in person. It might be too expensive, time consuming or challenging to make long trips in later life.

So imagine a pair of travel glasses which can transport you back to a special place. When you put them on it feels like you are back in the place itself and can look and move around in it. Now the place you see could be as it is today in the present time. Or your could turn a dial to go back to the place as it was when you knew it.
Travel glasses hands on demo
Re-designed glasses concepts – Non-PC group

Augmented-reality goggles

- Goggle-like design to accommodate spectacles
- Superimpose old scenes on real life ones, based on old photos from personal or public archives
- Make other content available for new experiences such as extreme sports or travelling to other locations
Re-designed glasses concepts – PC group

Wearable camera and videophone

• Add a camera and microphone to allow users to record their journey and make commentaries

• A USB or memory card slot was integrated for storage and transfer

• Live relay of images and sound to another (housebound) person wearing another pair of glasses

• Remote control to keep glasses lightweight

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Conclusions
Stereotypical objections to participatory design with older people

• **Lack of motivation**
  Punctual, polite, engaged. 80% return rate

• **Unfamiliarity with technology**
  Sometimes a good thing

• **Comprehension of novel concepts**
  Need creative methods of concept envisionment

• **Lack of concentration and stamina**
  Take frequent breaks, tea and biscuits, lunch

• **Lack of imagination**
  Untrue – see concepts. Needs facilitation in small groups
Specific assets of older people in participatory design

• Honesty
• Humour
• Life experience
• Long technology history
Educational effect of participation

For some Non-PC users, the session changed their perception on computers and ICT devices:

“I have learned a lot and my ideas have changed a bit to what they were, I mean for my form it says ‘have you got a computer?’; I put no, and it said why? And I put ‘because I don’t want one’. It changed my mind because these things are very interesting and I learned quite a lot today. Changed my ideas a little….I would probably reconsider getting one…”

“I wasn’t really interested at all in computers as things but today, I’m quite intrigued about them I must say.”
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Sandpit 1
Participants – Dundee University ICT drop-in Centre
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Data analysis – Chris Woods
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Workshop organisation – Paula Forbes, Lorna Gibson
Scriptwriting & direction – Maggie Morgan
Actors – Iain Wotherspoon, Jane Nelson Peebles
Facilitation – Maggie Morgan
Film production – David Goodall

Sandpit 2
Participants – Age Concern Guildford
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