

OPEN

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Open

"Allowing access, passage, or a view through an empty space; not closed or blocked."

Introduction

The Open Design method is a total a new approach for developing products or tools for an engineer student. Additional to the Open Design method important questions arrive such as: What is the position of the user, designer or engineer? In what way can Open Design be used best?

In the project "Stargazing" the first aim is to find knowledge within a focus group about the subject stargazing. For this, it is necessary to determine how to find the knowledge using Open Design methods. The knowledge gained has to be transferred into a product that is useful for individuals unknown to the practice of Stargazing.

Therefore the research question is:

"How is Open Design best used to gain knowledge about stargazing, transforming this information to develop a product that is useful with the possibility for future iterations by a layman, while understanding the position of the designer?"

In this statement there will be an explanation on my view of Open Design and how Open Design is best used within the different parts of the process. This is explained by reflecting on existing relevant projects and literature.

Research

Research based on a focus group has been done to gain the most and best information about views and experiences of the topic. To really get in the subject of stargazing, active membership of the workgroup was necessary, this is called doing embedded research. The past 3 months, there has been contact with members and visitors of Vesta (the stargazing foundation) for 5 hours a week; taking interviews, discussing and questioning particular subjects about observing the universe. By using this approach, integration and quantitative information is gained. This is a way of doing research that is very suitable in Open Design. In the article *The generative bedrock of open design* Michel Avital explains: "People's generative capacity is a key source of innovation"¹. The sentence is meant to emphasize the human capability when an open product is given to them, and how well they are able to improve it. This positive way of looking at people is extremely suiting for how to approach a focus group.

In the Stargazing project the best information that has been gained from the focus group research was by keeping an open view and letting anything be a possible inspiration or idea, call it serendipity: finding what you need without knowing what it is you are looking for.

As an example of transforming information there is MittiCool. MittiCool is a company that produces kitchenware made of clay, the owner, Mansukhbhai, is a traditional clay craftsman. How an expert can transcend his knowledge: When there was an earthquake in Kutch (India) and therefore a lack of electricity, Mansukhbhai, designed a refrigerator that did not need electricity. This was only possible because of the expert clay knowledge. The refrigerator was a great success².

Talking about the Stargazing project instead of only showing the final product has resulted in people getting excited and willing to add to the process: an app developer who offered to help in the future, a cameraman helping with information about lenses and an nanotechnologist explaining how to imagine what you cannot see.

In order to fully develop a product, end users should really be interfering with the design. The Open Structure project from Thomas Lommee gives a very good example of a project where the users are the designers and vice versa. Lommee has designed a sharable grid where people can build and design upon. Because all the blueprints are online, every design can be used by everybody³. Even though there is a great randomness of products and you can only design for disassembly, which makes it look quite DIY, the whole project seems to be working well and people are using it in the way it is meant. This has to do with the understandable guidelines and attractive web design. Understanding the

crank 180
element - fridge
not for sale



¹Avital, M. (2011). *Generative bedrock of open design*. In L. E. Bas van Abal, *Open design now* (pp.48-58). Amsterdam: BIS.

² *Refrigerator* (2016). Retrieved October 20, 2016, from <http://www.mitticool.com>

³ *OpenStructures is restructuring* (2016). Retrieved October 6, 2016, from <http://openstructures.net>

project and boundaries of usage are important for the product to be iterated or for the tool to be used as intended.

Statement

Distinguishes between designers, users and engineers are vaporising. Due to the abilities of internet and the wealth that comes with western capitalism, users no longer have to be a passive group. Users can transform their direct needs into products suitable for them, often done in mass customization, like NIKEiD. Or is this the commodity fetishism of the 21st century⁴? Is this just an illusion that is used to give "the people" the idea that designing and thereby art is off importance for them, or that they are important and unique?

Due to the makerspaces, open source programs and the informational society, described in the Open Design Manifesto by Ronen Kadushin, designers and artist are able to engage in a world of science and vice versa. Kadushin claims that by usage of CNC and CAD programs industrial designers can be of value to the future⁵. We have reached a place of sharing that in my opinion is beyond the limits of the tools you have to work with: being open. Still, just a select group of people interfere in these kinds of initiatives such as earlier mentioned makerspaces.



Positioning/Application

In the table "Juxtaposing archetypes of open-X" in "The generative bedrock of open design", Mr. Avital explains what openness means for different fields. For instance the prime actors of *open innovation* are organisations based on views, the prime actors of *open source* are developing communities based on modifying and in *Open Design* the prime actors are consumers based on usage⁶. This helped me understand the position of an engineer but made me want to explore the value of seeing consumers based on their views and innovating thoughts even more.

Being educated as an engineer in 2015 I have noticed that the design approach has already been shifted from designing the best product in the eye of the developer (and its company), towards optimising user experience and usage of a product or tool, by actually interfering with its users. A set of tools has been given in the established design methods for technical designers, for example in the Delft Design Guide, System approach. This method mainly issues users as being a source for evaluating own pre-existing analysis and ideas or testing products in a way that the feedback can be used for optimisation⁷.

In this type of approach there is always a predefined possible outcome. The way that open design can only work is by really engaging with the users; give users a platform, let them be a member of the design team. Do not only give the users pre-existing options. Only then new ideas or solutions will really be able to occur. The position of the designer or engineer is managing and guiding the design process and connecting the right people.

Usership

The rules described in the previous section transcends the idea of usership. While the view of Mr. Wright is that there is much negativity surrounding the term "art" when it is connected with "usage"⁸, the Delft Design Method mainly looks at usage as a scenario tool to determine and prevent unwanted-use. Let the role of the user shift; let them be creators/developers and let the designer be the designer of the whole process, both in art and in engineering. The sense of authorship comes with the overview and grasp on the process, this might be a humble role but if the shoe fits, wear it.

⁴ Marx, K. (1848). *Het Communistisch Manifest*. Londen.

⁵ Kadushin, R. (2010) *Open Design Manifesto*.

⁶ Avital, M. (2011). Generative bedrock of open design. In L. E. Bas van Abal, *Open design now* (p. 50). Amsterdam: BIS.

⁷ Boeijen, A van. (2014) *Delft Design Guide*. Amsterdam: BIS.

⁸ Wright, S. (2013) *Usership*. (pp. 66 -68).

Participation

Only if the users have a sense of ownership they will be engaged in the project which will benefit the outcome by making the iterated products as beautiful as possible.

Open design art forms like the project with the dots of Yayoi Kusama are interesting to look at. Her exposition "Obliteration room" is a white room where people get a leaflet of stickers to stick anywhere. People visiting the exposition are fully participating and experiencing⁹. However, in this way they are part of the design itself, like a canvas or paint to a painter. This is a kind of participation which can be explained as the designer "using" the users. This open form is not my method of choice.



However in the project Stargazing, before starting the actual gazing, perspective realisation is necessary. Therefore Open Form in the project Stargazing can be very useful. you have the most playful and natural way of communicating with the users, which gives an impact.

Real and qualitative interference with the focus group is the best way to gain information, the methods of open design which are used, depend on what you as a designer want to give to the user: If it is a new perspective use Open Form with a toolset, if it is a product make sure the user has a great sense of ownership. As a designer you are mainly a designer of the process and the boundaries, this statement is the beginning of mine.

⁹Exhibitions (2016) Retrieved October 6, 2016 from <http://yayoi-kusama.jp>