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On the move

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Doctoral Colloquium DIS2010:
ON THE MOVE

Creating domesticity through experience design

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a summary of the Ph.D. project about home and mobility in the field of research-through-design. The project concerns design for mobile life and through various prototypes it is an investigation of how to support the act of home making away from the primary home.

Keywords

Home, mobility, modern nomads, interaction design, design research.

1. INTRODUCTION

As globalization grows people are getting more and more mobile. Many people travel around the world and have several houses or stay at hotels on a frequent basis. We call these people modern nomads. Research by anthropologist Ida Winther indicates that people are not place-less nomads [1] but rather that people make home locally through different tactics to establish comfort and develop 'homing strategies' in the middle of changeability. Inspired by this perspective, the challenge of the increasing mobilization and globalization is to develop strategies for making home not physically attached to the primary home.

These findings call for new inventions. We identify areas that have not yet been designed for and design for some of these areas through a selection of prototypes.

2. RESEARCH SUMMARY

The Ph.D. has the title "On the move –creating domesticity through experience design". It runs from April 2008 to February 2012 and it is an industrial Ph.D. in cooperation between the high-end a/v company Bang & Olufsen and Aarhus school of Architecture. My professional background lies within interaction and industrial design. The Ph.D. project is a part of an interdisciplinary project called Mobile Home Center.

The project scope aims to investigate domesticity for the modern nomads, being people with several homes or frequent travelers. With offset from user studies and ethnographical work we will create concepts and prototypes to investigate how to create a sense of domesticity while being away from the primary home.

My research question is at the moment "*How can we design interactive artifacts/services that encourage the modern nomad to be homing outside the house?*"

The doctorate is placed in the field of research-through-design[2], as we will build prototypes and demos for testing the concepts and theories about domesticity and mobility for today's global experience society. It is founded on people centered design, and I will therefore conduct various user studies throughout the project with both inspirational approaches and more engaging approaches such as participatory design.

The process of the Ph.D. is divided into three stages:

1. Understanding the existing situation of extreme mobility through user studies and development of a new terminology within the field
2. Prototype development of products and services
3. Evaluating the prototypes in terms of the first findings

I am currently midway developing and testing various prototypes.

3. CURRENT WORK

We started out with anthropological studies of people with several homes. This was done to learn about the experienced long distance commuters and mapping their tactics for home making. We identified seven homing tactics[3]:

- *Territorializing* is a way of taking in more/new territory
- *Bubbling* is shutting out context
- *Outboxing* is preparing artifacts for moving
- *Connecting* is staying in touch with extended family
- *Differentiating* is contextualizing the home feeling
- *Doubling* is copying things from the primary home
- *Rhythming* is continuation beyond mobility

As a parallel to these studies I conducted 9 interviews with costumers of my company, also being extremely mobile people, but owning several homes. These findings are then juxtaposed with the preliminary studies and findings from these studies inform the designs of various prototypes.

We have developed a series of prototypes and more are under progress. Several of them are about connecting in various ways: Connecting by means of sharing media and communicating, by connecting a person to a place or feeling a physical connection to the remote person while interacting. The first prototype (Figure 1)

was about collecting pictures and sending them home to the ones left behind, receiving it on a picture frame where they could then respond by pushing the picture frame. This was presented at European Conference on Ambient Intelligence[4].



Figure 1 HOMEinTOUCH picture frame



Figure 2 HomeAwareness –revealing remote sound, light and temp.

We are currently working on a prototype about connecting by means of sharing music experiences with focus on the negotiation about control of the experience, level of connectedness and communication between the two places. The development is done in a very iterative process as the prototype is being tested by the developers and users outside the project, it is then in constant change both in the details of the software and UIs but also in the physical construction and setups by findings and creative workshops with users.

4. FUTURE WORK

Other prototypes will be developed, covering some of the other tactics, in particular territorializing, differentiating and doubling.

A theme of interest that I want to bring to the prototypes is for instance how the user appear when interacting, inspired by the aesthetics of interaction[5] with focus on the feeling of luxury when interacting with the prototypes.

The prototypes will all be evaluated in relation to the first findings about homing on the move, using the design material as a way to examine the field further, by bumping into real people living the lifestyles of the modern nomads to certain degrees.

5. REFERENCES

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