

THEME: Feeling the future

Prototyping futures:

How a mindful co-writing method for short videos support ideation

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Abstract

This case study is about linking a collective writing method to a process video approach that blends screen grammar with 2-D and 3-D prototyping. The study explores how to bring out the immediately felt subjective and qualitative aspects of the short videos, and gives a creative and interpretive role to the viewer. This pedagogically framed study was integrated into an on-going course for industrial designers to support an anticipatory practice for creating future scenarios and objects. By co-creating scenarios and videos, we aimed to enrich the course with an aesthetically driven co-writing method for short videos. This method emerged in a Nordic interdisciplinary design research project called Haptica. Students were introduced to basic screen grammar in order to use video as a creative-, process- and presentation tool. The results and discussion deal with how immediate aesthetic explorations combined with mindful co-writing method bring focus to the fuzzy phase at the start of an ideation process. The main contribution of this study is in how the process video about fictional scenarios and the co-writing method unfold into a collaborative anticipatory system that bringing desires for the future into the present situation.

Keywords

Collective method, aesthetic, haptic, future & fictional scenarios, performative, education, anticipation.

Introduction

We describe a case study about how a co-writing method for short videos can contribute to a creative, iterative process in the development of industrial design projects. During the last decade the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO) has integrated future prototyping methods in an industrial design studio course called "ProtoHype". This course, headed by Professor Håkan Edeholt, introduces radical change, sustainability, future studies, and foresight. What characterizes this ongoing course is the lectures and tutorials on video-based sketching techniques by Even Stormyhr, integrated with early phase physical prototyping methods developed by Nina Bjørnstad. By jumping between writing fictional scenarios and making 2-D and 3-D collages, the students find forms of interest that are featured in their videos. In 2018 we introduced a revised version of the "Aesthetic driven co-creative writing method for short videos" (Akner Koler et al, 2018). It is a mindful co-writing method that complements the established foresight and video-based sketching techniques, that has been part of the course from the beginning. As stated by Roberto Poli (2017), an anticipatory system is not only

predicting a phenomenon or possible future, but suggests that by taking action as a consequence, is accordingly an anticipatory behavior.

Background

The original co-writing method for short videos (Akner Koler et al, 2018) was developed and applied amongst professionals during an interdisciplinary aesthetic seminar. The seminar was supported by the research project HAPTICA (www.haptica.se), that engaged members and guests with diverse backgrounds from sculpture, design education, culinary arts and hospitality. After the seminar, the co-writing method was documented outlined in the following five stages 1. Video filming, 2. Viewing, 3. Interviewing, 4. Reflection and expressive writing, 5. Showing video and vocal performance (Akner-Koler et al, 2018). The method was later presented in an interdisciplinary workshop at the Design School Kolding in Denmark during the Design Micro Conference, "Addressing designed form - demarcating design" 2018, hosted by Richard Herriott (2018). Here we learned the importance of nudging the viewers' emotional response as they viewed the video and carried out the interview, before retiring for a mindful writing session.

"ProtoHype" course structure

A group of approximately ten students, take a course in screen grammar as a creative design tool for developing scenarios for fictional videos (Rabiger 1996). The scenarios are made collectively in a group of 2-3 students, who aim to support a sharing culture and a common "universe" for their individual stories that unfold over time. The students learn video filming and editing methods that discern the actors and the "acted upon."

The combined video methods have three stages:

- 1) *Process video* emphasizes the haptic and visual aspects of an activity/phenomenon. At this early creative and explorative stage, each student group present touchpoints for their future scenarios.
- 2) *Communication video* presents the design process.
- 3) *Presentation video* shows a future fictional scenario.

This extended abstract focus mostly on the *process video*.

The *process video* is meant to untangle how designers conceptually and emotionally relate to their scenario. It is about exploring some haptic /embodied aspects of the scenario by making mockups for the scenes. Each process video can be seen as an anticipatory action, since it highlights behavior within a tangible life situation in the present (Poli 2017). The *communication-* and *presentation videos* are designed in a more pedagogic way, that describes the design process focusing on the results.

Meaning makers

The student's point of view and chosen actions are of particular interest as; meaning makers, designers, video makers, and actors. The perspectives are discussed regarding technology, professional ethics and screen grammar, guided by the designers' intentions showing a way of foreseeing future changes. Co-creators are also the advisors and other students that may play a significant role in ideation. Involved actors' opinions are often immediate and intuitive; we see

that written feedback adds a mindful and creative aspect to the design process. Co-creation requires “interpersonal intelligence” (Gardener 2011) in order to consider other opinions. Moreover, Gardener’s “spatial-visual intelligence” explains the students’ capacity to visualize by creating physical prototypes, serving as “actors” that carry the leading role in the videos. These prototypes inspire students to explore their “bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence” through direct interaction.

Ideation

The imaginative co-creative process and the unpredictable outcome of explorations show a mindset and actions from which a future scenario could emerge. The process videos that capture the scenarios support the fuzzy phase at the start of an ideation process. Through embodied exploration with physical phenomena combined with metaphoric reasoning, the students develop their first process video. According to Murphy, Peters, and Marginson (2010), things come into being through metaphors and material application. They claim we experience imagination as imagery, and ideas as metaphors. Different metaphors and different styles frame our thinking. Different epochs express different metaphors for thought. Further, they state, “the imagination is a mix of feeling, sensing, and thinking” and “the imagination involves a process of object creation”. These ideas link to the first step in the creation of the process video, that start with a prototyping lab about what ‘ought to be’.

The process video shows making aspects, which are typical for designers way of focusing on “close to body” actions. New artifacts in future contexts are prototyped; soon story and style are of vital importance. Studying a model called “Design and radically different futures” from Håkan Edeholt (2004) brought our attention to tools designers use to create radical future designs.

We found by creating short videos combined with prototyping future scenarios to be both a creative way of working as well as persuasive, multimodal communication. The student voices came through in both dramaturgy and editing, where style is of particular interest. To explore iconic styles the students studied radical visualizations in the early 20th century futuristic films.

Contributions to the field of anticipation

The co-writing method supports a way for students to tap into their immediate emotional responses and develop empathy for other students’ work. It is a sensitizing method for learning to reflect on how a short explorative video can express a future scenario and awake feelings that bring you in touch with embodied memories. The method unfolds an anticipatory system by bringing the future scenario into the present situation (Louie 2010). The video maker is usually not aware of the different emotional layers embedded in a short video. By inviting one student group to respond to another group's short video, they can cultivate a felt experience for the video and support the emotional and narrative qualities of the scenario as it unfolds.

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