DRAFT

Theatrical Improvisation for Participatory Design

RePlay is a framework developed by the author to observe a concept she has described as Creativity in Action. The framework explores spatial requirements, experiential knowledge and or other contextual information by utilizing the body as a resource for design process via creativity in action. This feature summarizes a month long study conducted with children where by RePlay was used as part of a bi-directional participatory design process within an applied architectural planning context in the Kabadkhana housing community in Bhopal, India.

The effectiveness of improvisation, body-storming, informance, role-play (amongst other names) as part of design process has been well documented by Brandt et al.[2], Sawyer[5], IDEO[1] and many others yet there hasn't been a great deal of research regarding understanding the nature of this activity as a valuable part of design process. Gongora has designed a framework called RePlay which uses specific games to facilitate a type of creative process which is of great relevance to service design. Gongora describes this as creativity in action, a process characterized by reflection,

flow, perceptual shifts, improvisational creativity, enactive perception and bodily externalization[34]. In this instance RePlay was used with children from the Kabadkhana improvised housing community to facilitate urban planners, architects, and community stakeholders to integrate feedback from the children as gatekeepers to the community and translate these findings into an architectural proposal to local government, NGOs, CBOs and other stakeholders during an international project called Global Studio.

Although our outcome was to create an architectural proposal including architectural drawings, 3d mock ups and plans the use of RePlay also facilitated the creation of a set of educational tools that would also serve to support activities. Games covered themes such

Alan Dix is a computing professor at Birmingham University and researcher at Talis Ltd. He works on most things that connect people and computers.

Layda Gongora, is a Mexican/Canadian Media Artist, Designer, Researcher, and Project Manager. She is currently a Phd student at Lancaster University in the Computing Department.

RePlay session in Railway Park

Architectural plans for Kabadkhana primary school

	EXISTING SITUATION	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS
SHORT-TERM	• garbage removal • tube well unhygienic	• tube well renovation (filtering out debris) • better garbage containers • clearing of green spaces backyard (garbage collection contest)
MID-TERM	• lack of social space • lack of teaching spaces • tube well unhygienic	• chalk board games painted on the courtyard (Lido, Hopscotch) • garbage separation area • creation of staff area • vegetable garden, play areas • new tube well filtration system
LONG-TERM	• need permanent roof • finish community hall • lack of security	• recommend a better roof solution and materials • rebuild stage platform to be used in community hall • create a second level as a watch tower for security guard

Project milestones and proposal for Kabadkhana primary school

as garbage collection and hygienic hand washing stations that via conducting RePlay were identified as important services to the community. Educational tools included a colouring book, a set of icons as teaching tools, and a logo of the Kabadkhana community. One of the unique characteristics of RePlay is that it provides a way in which experts and non-experts can establish shared mental models as well as explore social aspects of an experience such as place making. RePlay presented the opportunity for the children to communicate about the building site as well as the kinds of activities that were important to the community.

RESEARCH DISCUSSION

Two RePlay sessions were conducted, first at a local primary school and later at an informal park setting. Children who were students of the primary school and above the age of 7 were involved as well as other local children. In between the first and second session part of the design team generated mind maps that highlighted services that had been expressed by the community as being important as well as design proposals. During the Design Mapping activity the children highlighted areas they felt were important to the community such as gardens, play spaces and clean water. Informed by this process,

Community map by Kabadkhana children

our team then focused on particular locations we had collectively identified as areas where improvements or design proposals could be made for the school. These were the courtyard, backyard and community hall.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Briefly summarized RePlay encouraged exploring physical parameters such as spatial requirements, experiential knowledge and or other contextual information by utilizing the body as a resource for a bi-directional design process. Due to its low entry threshold and informal nature it offered the opportunity for children to participate and offer feedback as part of a complex architectural design process.

References

[1] *Buchenau, M. and Fulton Suri, J. Experience Prototyping. In Proc. DIS 2000, ACM Press (2000), 424-433.*

[2] *Brandt, E. and Grunnet, C. Evoking the Future: Drama and Props in user Centered Design. In the proceedings of the Participatory Design Conference, Cherkasky, T., Greenbaum, J., Mambrey, P. (eds), New York, November 28–1 December (2000), CPSR, pp. 11–20.*

[3] *Gongora, L. Exploring Creative Process via Improvisation and the Design method RePlay, DIS2011: Creativity and Innovation in Design, Conference Proceedings, SGCHI ACM Digital Library, Aarhus University, Copenhagen*

[4] *Gongora, L., Dix. A. (2010) Brainstorming is a Bowl of Spaghetti: An In Depth Study of Collaborative Design Process and Creativity Methods with Experience Design Practitioners, The First International Conference on Design Creativity (ICDC 2010) Kobe, Japan.*

5 *Sawyer, K. (2007). Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration. San Diego, Basic Books*