



Cultural Probes

Understanding the cultural context of future users

Type of the methodology: experimental research method

Description:

Cultural Probes are self-created material and artefacts designed to understand the potential target group in their context. They are usually used

- At the beginning of a design or development process
- To create an understanding of backgrounds, target groups, local cultures
- To create an access to the target group
- To understand diversities and identify differences

Usage:

Areas of use – HCI Designer, UX Designer, researcher, developer

Areas/Time of use – At the beginning of a design process

Examples:

- Images/post cards with questions on the backside
- Maps (e.g., city maps questions to individual meeting points or favourite places)
- Disposables cameras to take photos of specific situations or subjects to communicate
- Material like paper, plasticine, cardboard, several objects, found footage, etc.
- Photo album, e.g., for an image story

Literature:

- Gaver, W., Tony Dunne, et al. "Cultural Probes." Interactions January + February: page 21 - 29. 1999
- Gaver W., Beaver J., Benford B. "Ambiguity as a Resource for Design"; International Conference on Human Interaction – CHI; USA 2003
- Gaver W., Boucher A. et al. "Cultural Probes and the Value of Uncertainty"; Interactions – Funology Copyright Association for Computing Machinery; London; 2004

Assignment in the course:

Design + Use of a Cultural Probe Package

- Design + Implementation: Design a Cultural Probe Package with min. 2-3 probes; Design the CI and the container of the Cultural Probes
- Distribution + Collection: Distribute the probes to min. 5 users; Collect the probes that are filled in (at least 5 probes must be filled in); If needed talk to the users to clarify things while collecting them or ask them later

Analysis of the probes

- Inspect the probes: Identify the emotions, fears, pleasure, etc., ideas, inspirations
- Analyse: Identify the reactions to the stated questions and themes; Value the information about personal things and use qualities

Documentation and presentation of the results

- The design process and the final Cultural Probe Package (Photos)
- The filled in probes (examples, parts, ...)
- Analysis
- Main findings and output

→ 1 document per group

→ As part of the presentation in the intermediate presentation