About Nanna Inie

Nanna Inie has a background in interactive, digital media and digital design. She has written her PhD dissertation at the School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University, where she has been a part of the CIBIS project. Her research is focused on creativity in practice, and how tools support human creative cognition.

Time and Place for the defence

April 9, 13.00-16.00
Aarhus University, Finlandsgade 21, Building 5335, room 229, 8200 Aarhus N

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DEFENCE

HOW INTERACTION DESIGNERS USE TOOLS TO MANAGE IDEAS AND WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM IT

PhD. Dissertation by Nanna Inie

AARHUS UNIVERSITY

HOW INTERACTION DESIGNERS USE TOOLS TO MANAGE IDEAS AND WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM IT

Summary of the PhD dissertation "How Interaction Designers Use Tools to Manage Ideas and What We Can Learn from It" by Nanna Inie, School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University.
This dissertation investigates how professional interaction designers use tools to capture and manage their creative ideas. It uses qualitative methods to identify challenges that designers currently experience, and to open up new avenues for developers of creativity support tools.

"Design ideas" are widely used yet poorly defined in previous creativity and design research. In the dissertation, I identify and analyze definitions of the concept "design idea", as it has been used in research up until now, and suggest a definition of ideas by comparing theory with externalized instances of design ideas in practicing interaction designers' archives.

We know surprisingly little about how professional designers use existing tools - notebooks,

smartphones, apps, etc. - to manage creative ideas. The dissertation presents patterns and challenges in current strategies for idea management, as well as an interpretation of these in a framework which explains the creative goals designers aim to achieve - using tools. This framework is mainly relevant for other design and creativity researchers, but can also be used by tool developers who wish to know more about use practices.

Finally, in the dissertation, I identify four design opportunities for novel idea management tools under the headlines of 'utilizing the potential of the design idea archive', and 'increasing focus on the creative designer'. These opportunities are: 1. Automatically consolidating ideas from different captures into one, shared design idea archive. 2. Resurfacing design ideas at relevant times. 3. Support the creative process as well as the creative product. 4. Build systems that translate from one platform or tool to another.

The findings I implications are for designers, developers, and builders of idea management tools. This is a broad category and can entail both researchers who actively build systems and industrial developers working on all products related to idea management - from Moleskine to Evernote. Both the papers included in the dissertation and chapter 5 describe design opportunities. The recommendations based on this research are overarchingly: to move towards being designer-centric rather than design-centric.

Facts about the field of study
- When we look at design practice, it is very clear that interaction designers use technology constantly and pervasively.
- Yet, creativity research in HCI has shown to focus predominantly on in vitro-studies, rather than creativity as it unfolds in the workplace.
- This dissertation represents a move towards using qualitative approaches to in vivo-studies with the goal of expanding our knowledge about distributed creativity in professional practice.

Facts about the empirical basis of the dissertation
This dissertation is an exemplar of research-on-design. I have utilized a variety of qualitative methods, most notably a lengthy interview study with practicing interaction designers.