

Touchpoint

THE JOURNAL OF SERVICE DESIGN



Learning, Changing, Growing

- Being Led or Finding the Way?
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Teaching Service Design to Design Students

Course Highlights and Conflicts

Service Design and Innovation (SDI) is a mandatory studio course for all 4th year students (ca. 130) at the ELISAVA School of Design. In this project-oriented course, 4th year students from all pathways (graphic and interaction design, product design and interior and furniture design) work together in multidisciplinary teams of 3 or 4 members. Students can draw upon knowledge gained during earlier courses, such as sociology, anthropology, experience prototyping, user and interaction modelling and design management.

Course Objectives

1. To introduce students to design-driven innovation
- To enable students to build skills and knowledge designing for intangibles, services, and experiences
- To provide students with a set of techniques which will enable them to discover new user needs and business opportunities, as well as aid them in conceptualisation and prototyping of new services
- To enable students to work together and find common ground across different design disciplines

Assignments and Collaboration with Companies and Institutions

In recent years, institutions and companies have participated in this course

by playing the role of a real client, providing business goals, constraints and the context of an institutional organisation. Having a real client gives the assignment extra credibility, something that motivates the students even more.

In 2008 – 2009, la Caixa collaborated with us on this project. With its headquarters in Barcelona, la Caixa is Europe's largest savings bank. The assignment was to envision, conceptualise, and prototype an innovative financial service for people in the age range 14 – 25.

In 2009 – 2010, we partnered with 22@Barcelona, a project created by Barcelona City Council in order to foster social, urban and economic innovation in the 22@ district, the biggest ongoing development project

within the city. The assignment was to develop services that encouraged social participation in the 22@ district, in order to improve the social and business cohesion while increasing the quality of life and work.

In 2010 – 2011, we were supported by experts from the Generalitat of Catalonia, the highest government body of the autonomous community of Catalonia. The topic was active ageing and the assignment was to conceptualise and define services that foster the social inclusion of the elderly and increase their mental and physical activity.

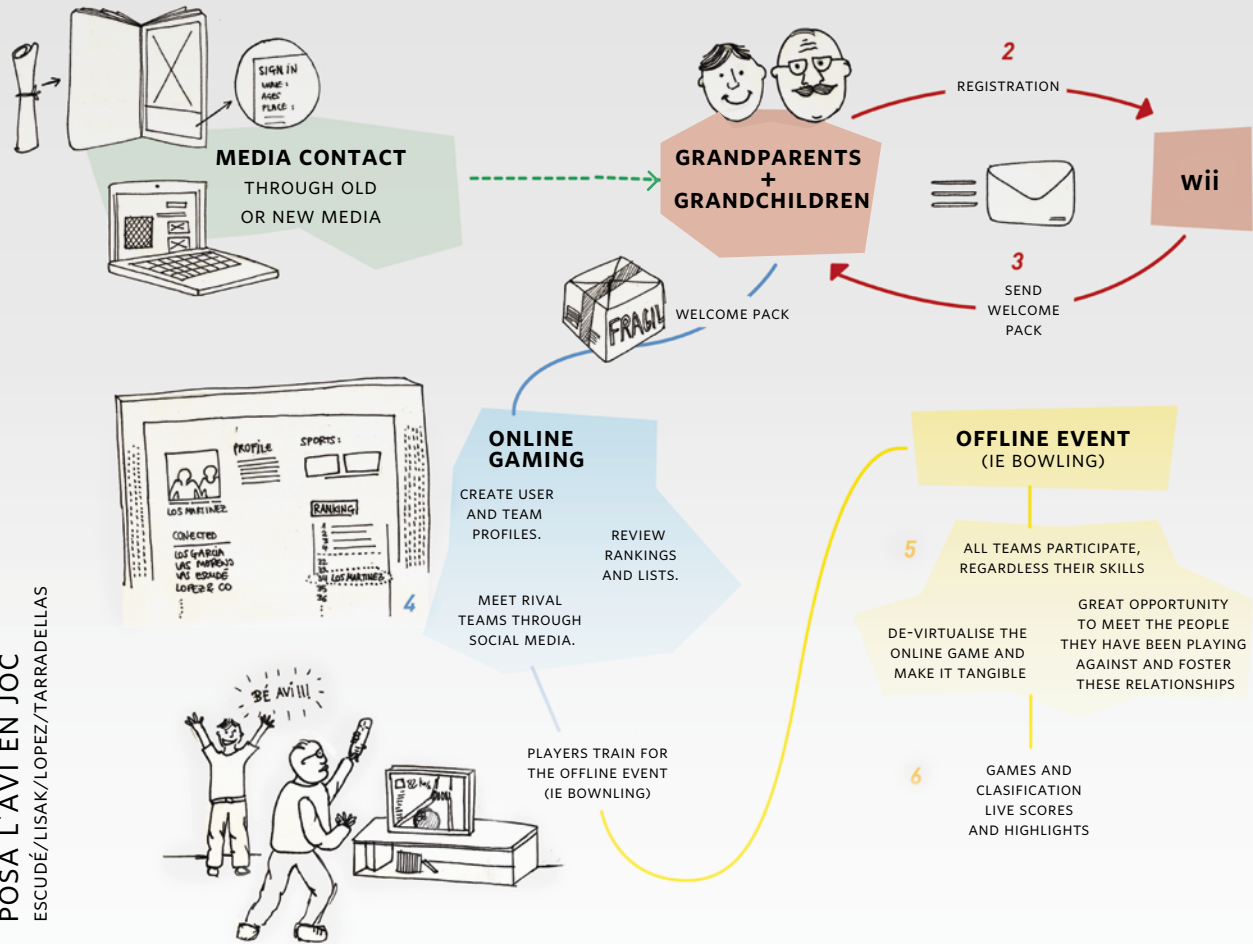
Process and Methods

The studio activities are structured around a four-stage design process: 1. Discover, 2. Generate, 3. Evaluate 4. Communicate, with frequent feedback loops and iterative returns to earlier stages. The process usually starts with the Discovery phase, by learning about the institution, understanding the brief, and defining stakeholders. After the students have defined an initial problem statement or design challenge, using mind maps and visual thinking tools, they define a user research plan for interviewing and observing users in context.

PUT YOUR GRANDPARENTS ON THE GAME

POSA L'AVI EN JOC

ESCUDÉ/LISAK/LOPEZ/TARRADELLAS



They conduct user research and, after sufficient initial data is gathered, they move to data analysis, modelling users through personas and scenarios and by mapping the user's mental models. They move to concept generation, selection and refinement, while still carrying out interviews and validating their concepts and early prototypes with users. As the generation and evaluation stages usually overlap, the evaluation activities are freely planned during the allotted weeks. The process concludes with final versions of a service blueprint and a video presentation describing the user experience and the value proposition.

Conflicts in Problem Finding

The SDI course confronts the students with the first complex project, in which they have to do as much problem finding as problem solving. In the first three years of their education, students have developed strong problem-solving skills and begin to master a solution-driven approach to design. Nonetheless, according to the course teachers, students seem to be less proficient at defining and framing the problem. This difficulty manifests itself during the Discovery and the Generation stage.

In the Discovery Stage

When they detect a promising design opportunity, it is very hard for the

System map for New Sports Generation, one of the Active Aging projects in which grandparents and grandchildren played together in a city wide sports contest.

students not to jump to envisioning a (final) solution right away. By asking students "What need is being solved by this solution?" or "What do you want to accomplish with this solution?" we encourage them to slow down and take time to reflect and explore hidden areas of opportunity, in order to better define the design problem.

Registration flyer for New Sports Generation

In this way, they learn that solution concepts are also a means of increasing their understanding of the problem.

In the Generation Stage

When students generate a first (abstract) solution, they tend to see it as an early stage of a final solution. Even though they are encouraged to do so, they resist exploring parallel approaches to a solution. Some teams do realise, though, that these initial solutions would be better used to learn more about the problem, used as triggers for new solutions and that they need not be seen as early stages of the final solution itself. The teams that make this step produce the best overall results.

In the Evaluation Stage

As I mentioned earlier, there is overlap between the Generation and the Evaluation stages. We have spotted two distinct approaches in evaluating: some teams evaluated raw concepts or prototypes as soon as they could in order to get new inputs;



they designed a little and evaluated a little. Other teams waited until they sensed the concept was finished and could not be further improved by the team itself: they designed first and evaluated later. The teams that chose the first approach, with several evaluation cycles, welcomed the external input and seemed to have little difficulty adjusting or revising their concepts. The teams that evaluated less frequently were often dismayed when they detected flaws in their designs during evaluation.

Informal interviews with students confirm these findings, which need to be researched further. ●



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