Light focusing on design in society and working life

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Abstract
The objective of the project is to study and analyse Design approaches and methods in complex situations, such as public and urban settings and furthermore territorial development strategy, thus exploring the possibilities of creating light and colour solutions. It also aims to highlight the design process as a possible methodology for product and service development. The project made use of a design methodology named ITK - Identity Tool Kit -, a comprehensive method to create a more inclusive and easily accessible design method applicable to a wide array of design projects, academic and professional. The case studies here presented reveal how the method was used in the region of Kalmar, Sweden.

1. The Background and Purpose
The aim of the project was to study and analyse Design approaches and methods in complex situations, such as public and urban settings and territorial development strategy, exploring the possibilities of creating light and colour solutions that take into account both function, ergonomics, psychological and emotional aspects in public surroundings. It also aimed to highlight the design process as a possible methodology for product and service development.

The project stepped out from an initiative launched by the Swedish Ministry of Culture, to encourage the development and spread of design within the country and was the premise to the research LCS-light, colour and space, which is an ongoing international project.

2. ITK , Identity Tool Kit Method
The activities of the Year of Design in the region of Kalmar were planned and put in execution making use of the ITK (Identity Tool Kit) design methodology. The Year of Design was an act, on behalf of the Swedish government, to draw attention to the role of design in the Swedish society; exploring, thus, the cultural, economical, technological, historical, and even political relevance this role may play in enhancing both social and working life.

The Year of Light, the subsequent regional umbrella project, aimed at expounding the possible roles of lighting design in the local community, by discussing and reworking the lighting of a number of local public spaces in order to change their visual identity and expression.

The ITK method is an informal process that gives everybody the opportunity to be heard within a working team, and whose primary goal is to draw out a uniform identity idea that may be translated into a powerful and functional graphic identity, regarding the character, tone, colour and shape. The ITK method is essentially based on the connections...
among the visual, verbal, and the participants' dialogues and choices made during the process. The relations between the participants in a project or team are often complex and sometimes fixed, because they usually represent different interests and see then the purpose of the project differently, further most persons involved in projects lack familiarity with the aesthetic terminology used by professionals, which makes it difficult for them to make the connection between the goal of their work and the work on a new visual identity. These are the basic drives behind the creation of the Identity Tool Kit method. All tools has to be accessible to all participants in order to bridge pre-existing factions within the organization and allow the process to keep focus on the overall goal – what the involved entity is, what it would like to become and how it would like to represent itself. It is carried out through a series of workshops, using images and words to engage the participants in the design process such creating the premises for a management process.

3. The six steps of ITK

The Identity Tool Kit methodology consists of six distinct steps. During most steps “affect boards”, collages that expresses the image and sense that the organization wishes to convey, are used to express opinions and concerns.

The process begins by Step 1, the State board, describing what the concern presently stands for, as the current visual identity and the “core value”, where core value is taken to describe the spirit of activity of company, which is different from the business idea connoting the purpose of the activities rather than describing them, and this will eventually lead to an articulation of what the future visual identity should express. Example descriptions of terminology to use, would be “environmental”, “socially minded”, “flexible” etc.

The purpose of Step 2, the Position board, is to describe the context within which the organization operates. In order to frame the context the participants create a matrix using operational dichotomies to describe the organization’s context, for instance “expensive / cheap”, “simple / complex”. After creating the position board the organization is placed on the board in relation to other actors. In order to contextualize the organization in this way the participants are encouraged to think about their relation to their context and become more aware of it, something that can have determinate influence one future actions.

The Step 3, the Future board, is in other words a sort of aspiration board and it is supposed to illustrate the organization’s future profile and visual identity. It is produced by the same method, using core values that the organization wishes to hold in the future, using the affect board for illustration. After making the boards you return the matrix from the previous step and mark the place of the desired future position.

At this point it is time to create the basis for a future visual identity by Step 4, the Colour and Shape, trying to translate the affective qualities, shapes and colours present in the future board into building blocks. At this point it is still important to curtail the maximum number of colour and forms used in order to achieve clarity in the final visual profile.

Then one proceed to Step 5, the Condition/Tone, or what tone the organization wishes to have, let it be funny, serious, aggressive or else, considering that more than three key words risks leading to confusion. This part of the processes builds directly from step 4
and 5 and is aimed at arriving at an idea of the conceptual framework for the future profile and visual identity. Examples: Form – soft; Colours – cold; Tone – dynamic but not aggressive.

Finally we arrive to Step 6, the Guidelines: all the material is compiled as guidelines, creating a new profile that should work both internally and externally. At this stage all components of a new visual identity are present, shape, colours and tone and are, in this way, easily employed by designers in order to create a new visual identity.

4. The Development of the Light Year

The first phase was characterized by the arrangement of a “Light Year” where a knowledge platform was built and design methods were studied, aimed at lighting up urban spaces in the region. Throughout the course of the Light Year several communication, technical, artistic and educational events including workshops, conferences and other temporary or permanent initiatives were implemented. Since the projects involved a number of people from different backgrounds, such as architects, politicians, representatives from the local lighting industry, engineers, fine artists and interested members of the public, the projects proceeded by applying the ITK method in order to bridge potential communication problems. While working in teams the participants filmed their work in order to be able to later on analysing and elaborating it. During the second phase the design methods and processes were applied in full scale tests performed through workshops on the territory. The second project part of the Year of Light involved the students at School of Design,

Three particular projects were conceived, firstly, the reworking of illumination of an apartment bloc facing increased levels of social problems; secondly, the reworking of the lighting of the main square in a small town in order to create an increased community feeling and thirdly, the lighting of a public park now completely disused because of the lack of illumination. In addition to the artistic projects, involving fireworks, lights, poetry and dance, several design plans where carried out, such as the street-lighting on Öland, the island opposite the city of Kalmar, which was at the centre of most projects with the active participation of the national road commission and the superintending regional board for local arts. Furthermore light settings were implemented in urban, park and cemetery areas.

5. Concluding remarks

The goal of the project of moving beyond light design and showing the usefulness of design and design method so that design is perceived to be essential for everyone in work and at leisure and as well knowingly work with design and business development and strategic approach was achieved. The purpose of Light year, created by Henriette Koblanck and Jan Ejhed of the Kalmar University Now Linnaeus University, of clarifying the value of design in everyday life was rewarded by the National design prize, and by practical issues of permanent and temporary events such as light festivals, installations, urban lighting and urban plans, and the creation of new work places.
Figures 1., 2., 3., 4., 5., 6., 7., 8., 9., The various phases of the Year of Light

References


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