

Design for and with people living with dementia: Designing the ExperienceSeat in the Pleyade Innovation team

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Purpose: The number of people living with dementia is increasing rapidly. Since a cure is not available, alternatives such as technology need to play a crucial role in combatting this challenge. To design meaningful technology for people with dementia we promote, firstly, that people with dementia should be addressed as unique individuals rather than a collective defined by their disease (Lazar, Edasis & Piper, 2017). And, secondly, technology should be designed together with all relevant stakeholders, such as for example family and caregivers (Brankaert, Den Ouden & Brombacher, 2015). In this paper we exemplify the design process and evaluation of the ExperienceSeat design project. This was executed by the Pleyade Innovation Team (PIT), a team with care professionals and designers, to design a positive outdoor experience for people living with dementia. **Method** In this design process we conducted a participatory approach, in which people with dementia and their carers were involved respectfully in the development of a new design concept through interviews and focus groups in co-design (Hendriks, Slegers & Duysburgh, 2015). This study adopts a design-driven Living Lab (Brankaert & Den Ouden, 2017) where we iteratively developed and evaluated prototypes in the real-life context of its intended use, a long-term dementia care facility, as a field study. **Results and Discussion** In a focus group and several interviews with people with dementia, their families and care professionals the participants indicated they would benefit from a meaningful experience in the garden of a long-term dementia care facility. Together designers and those involved in dementia care designed the ExperienceSeat (Figure 1) in line with their wants and needs. The resulting design, a park bench, plays poems and stories from the region and from residents when a person sits down. To evaluate the added benefits of the ExperienceSeat, a prototype was installed in the garden and followed by the PIT team over a longer period of time, in this field test the tools to upload stories and poems were handed over to the carers working in the residence. Results show that when designing together with the context, technology can aid in providing a meaningful experience custom for their environment and address specific needs. By designing together with the relevant stakeholders in a dementia care environment, ownership of new technology concepts is more easily transferred, which encourages the adoption of that novel technology. Towards the future we aim to standardize the lessons from the Pleyade Innovation Team, to transfer this approach to other care organisations.

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Figure 1. The ExperienceSeat prototype is positioned in the garden of a dementia care residence and plays stories and poems of interest to the residents.