

The contribution of a co-design approach to idea generation for travel plans

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Abstract

Typically, approaches to travel plan development employ traditional, and relatively passive, methods such as surveys and focus groups to engage with the user group who are the focus of the study. In addition, engagement of users at the earliest stages of problem definition and idea generation is not common in this domain. This study proposed the cooperative, continuous processes of 'co-design' as a means by which to increase 'active' participation in the early stages of travel plan development. In particular, the research takes a first step towards a quantitative comparison of solutions/ideas generated by a co-design approach vs the more traditional methods normally used in travel planning by comparing the number, originality, breadth and type of ideas generated. Two groups of staff within an organisation were matched on potentially confounding factors (commute mode, stated intention to change to sustainable transport behaviours and creativity when problem solving). One group took part in a co-design study (which included 'sensitisation' and 'idea-generation' activities) and the other in a non-co-design study (with the main technique being a survey). The main findings were that co-design techniques (in comparison to non-co-design techniques) appear to: encourage a greater number of ideas overall, a greater number of ideas that are innovative in the specific organisational context and different types of idea (particularly ones that veer towards more psychological-based interventions). However both approaches are similar in terms of the *global* innovativeness of the ideas they generate which was generally low. The paper discusses how these findings could have relevance to the development of travel plans.