



Stockholm  
University

Mobile Life VINN Excellence Centre  
at Stockholm University



# From High-Risk Design Work to a Fruitful Research Centre

Kristina Höök

Centre Director, Mobile Life  
Professor, KTH

Always explore!  
Always create!  
Always enjoy!





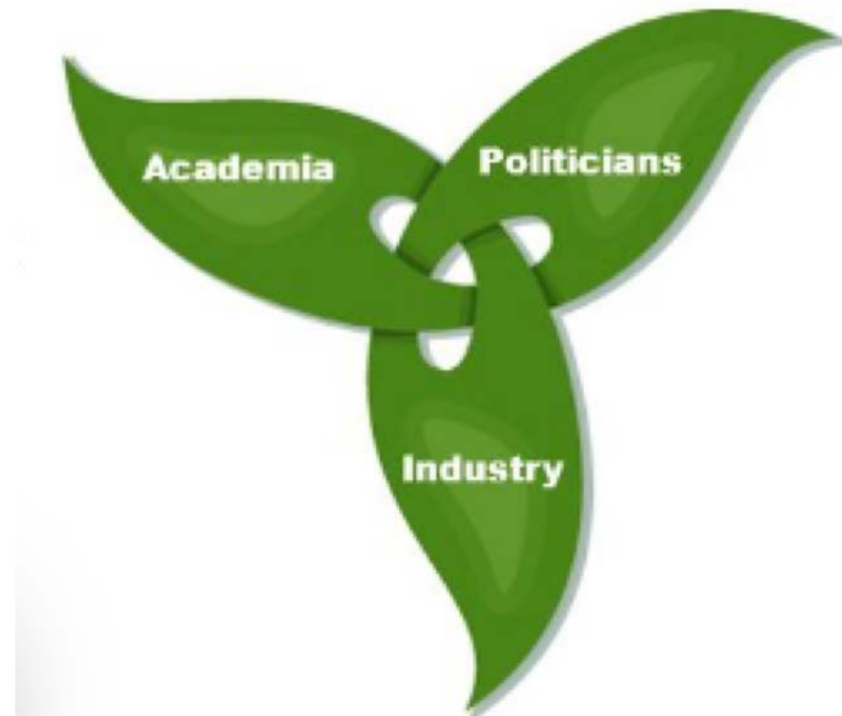
Stockholm  
University

Mobile Life VINN Excellence Centre  
at Stockholm University



2007-2017

# Triple helix





Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!



# Academic partners

- Worrying about relevance – not technology-driven but design-driven – would that work?
- Worrying about linking to partners' business models (workshop on “what do you make money from?”)
- Worrying about keeping the dialogue alive – experimenting with collaboration forms

# Industry & Society partners

- Worrying about relevance
- Worrying about letting outsiders into their secret rooms (co-creation initiatives huge step for e.g. IKEA and Ericsson)
- Worrying about having to spend time (money no big deal)
- Worrying about internal re-organisations/power games/not-invented-here-problems
- Worrying about unique selling points? Why shop research here and not somewhere else?

# Industry & Society partners

- Longing to be “challenged”, “encouraged” and “inspired”
- Longing for “seeing the future” before it exists
- Longing to bring in ideas to make their business/processes better – but annoyed if given what they already know
- Longing to know about the “digital disruption” will do to their business before it hits them
- Longing for a pre-competitive arena



Take risk?  
YAY!

Mobil@IT

# Example: Soma project

Keys to success here:

- Daring to do design outside-the-box?
- Honest dialogue?
- Hiding early ideas?
- Designing slowly?
- Exploring together?
- Finding the right person (rather than right organisation)?

Actuation

## Soma Mat & Breathing Light



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

MobileJIT



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

MobileJIT

## Somaesthetics?

### Soma

*“Soma as a living, purposive, sentient, perceptive body or bodily subjectivity”*

### Aesthetics

*“an awakening from the mindless, joyless behaviours ”*

### Analytical & Practical

*“the highest art of all – that of living better lives”*



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

MobileJ!T



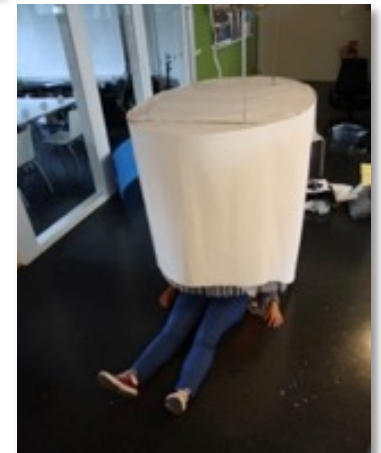
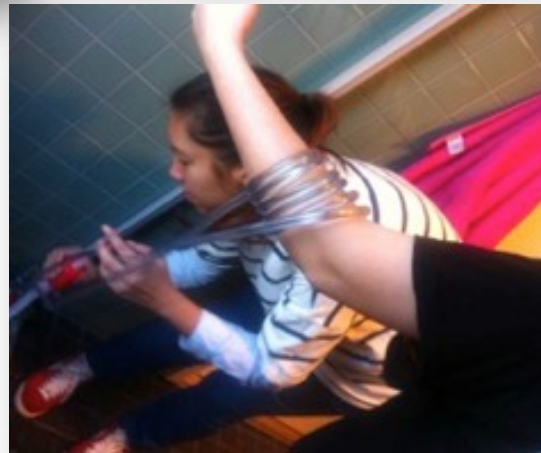
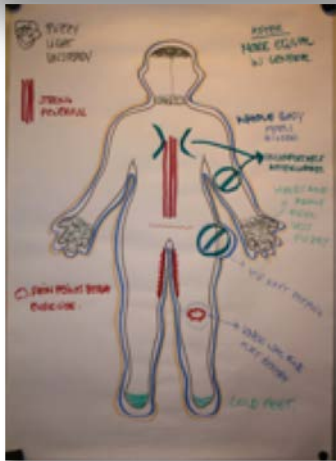
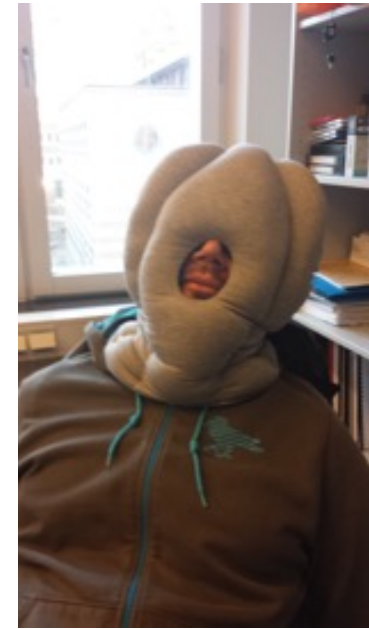
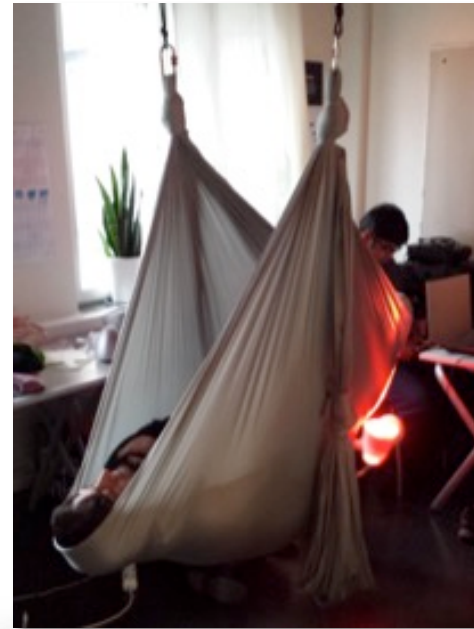
Long & winding  
design journey



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

MobileJIT

# Long & winding design journey



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

MobileJIT



Right person: Eva-  
Carin Banka Johnson



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

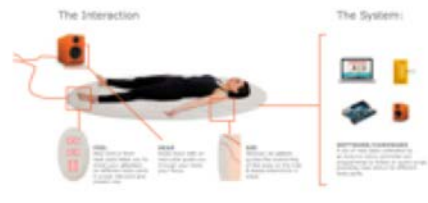
MobileJIT



Industrial success

# Hackaton democratic design centre Älmhult

Space10 exhibition



## The Soma project

by Johanna Mörck, Lena Sjö, Anna Karlsson, Martin Jönsson,  
Simon Rognard & Kristina Wickström from Mobile Life Centre

In the Soma Project, we searched for an alternative design stance that would not distract us from our own experiences, but instead deepen our understanding of and engagement with ourselves.

By adopting a somesthetic design stance, we challenged participants to deepen the experience of their own felt bodily sensations and movements instead of relying on external sensory interactions.

With the Soma Mat, we wanted to support participants' ability to direct their attention to bodily sensations by providing heat feedback to different parts of the body as they follow the instructions of a guided Feldenkrais lesson in a somatic educational system

designed by Moshe Feldenkrais. The guided session takes participants on a journey of bodily exploration. For instance, when you hear a question like, "How is your body touching the floor right now—your heel, your right heel? Left heel?" to there any difference in how they contact the floor? The mat heats up underneath your right heel and then your left heel. The warmth comes on slowly and leaves slowly. We had to work hard to make the heat subtle enough to not distract, but strong enough to be perceptible. When we found the right sensor, heat intensity, and interaction with the vocal instructions, the experience became intensely pleasurable.

We are now in the third prototype phase and have started to implement changes based on the feedback we received from our first sessions. We are really excited to exhibit it at Space10 and to receive more feedback from people.

## THE MOBILE LIFE CENTRE

The Mobile Life Centre's research is based on design-led exploration of novel technology. We envision an engagement ecology where happiness, pleasure and playfulness are key factors. The research is interdisciplinary, involving researchers from computer science, interaction design, sociology, and psychology, but also from game design, art, design, and business.

## Q&A



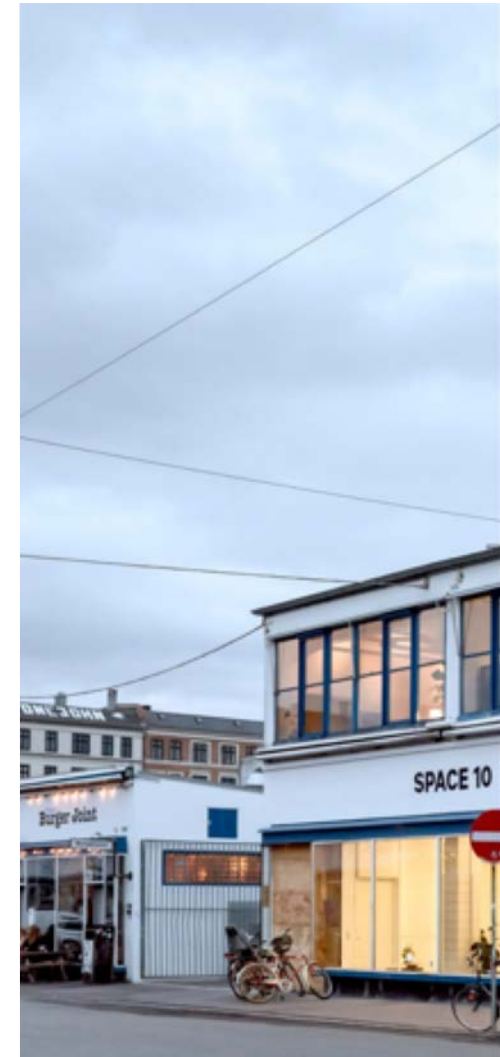
Innovation Leader at Future Forms AG  
Eva-Carin Berke-Johnson

## How did you start working with Mobile Life around the same project?

We were doing research on body awareness, and we were looking for a topic about design. We started with the idea of starting with our own needs and then creating a home around it. These days, we almost always start with the user burden and then all the home with various applications. We were curious to see if that research could help in understanding our needs. We also saw an opportunity to design something that could support relaxation, which we knew is something many people need in our time.

## What was the approach?

We started in a way that we could design with a somesthetic approach to support mobile body interaction. We use light and heat as modalities to subtly guide participants to turn their gaze towards their own bodies. People who use the prototype report feelings of relaxation, better movement, and an increased awareness of their own breathing.



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

MobileJIT

Academic success

Honourable mention  
at CHI-conference



Book on Soma Design  
with MIT Press in  
2018

Front cover  
interactions



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

MobileJIT

# Soma project: success

- We took risk
- We designed slowly
- We designed together with our partners
- Tangible design outcomes – of relevance to IKEA
- Beyond exemplars – an alternative design philosophy - scaling

# Soma project success: touching disruption & scaling

- Consumer-product companies (IKEA, Husqvarna, ...) met Internet of Things
- Products become services rather than things
- Who makes money in that new eco-system?
- What do you do with the data?
- How do you make IoT affordable to “the many people”?
- What is “ownership” in the age of sharing economy?



## Implications

## Smart Implicit Interaction: homes



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

Mobil@IT

## Implications

## Smart Implicit Interaction: cities



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

Mobil@IT

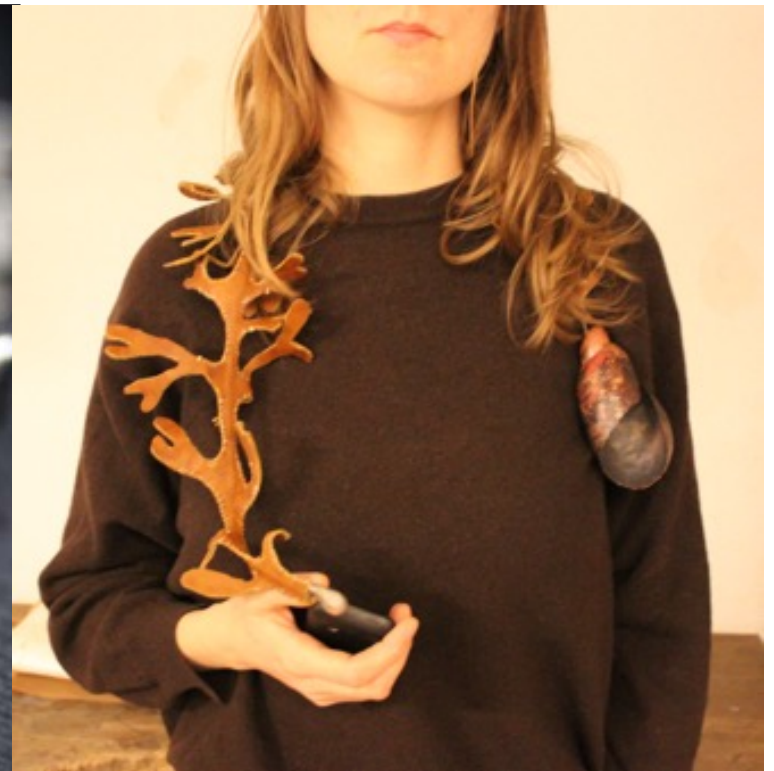
# Touching Disruptions?

- No banks in five years? (Rekarnes Sparbank)
- Nobody wants to work in control rooms? (ABB)
- Infrastructure no longer sold to operators? (Ericsson)
- Digital tools altering the conservative fashion industry? (H&M)



Actuation

Interactive Jewelry



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

MobileJIT



Actuation

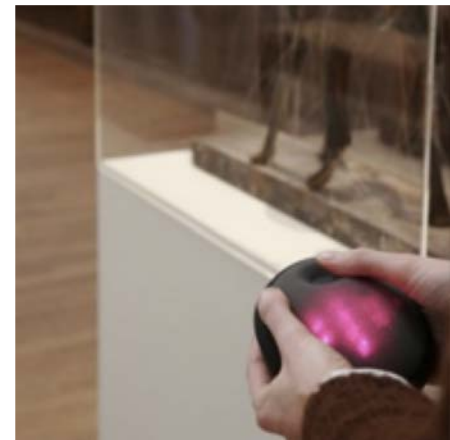
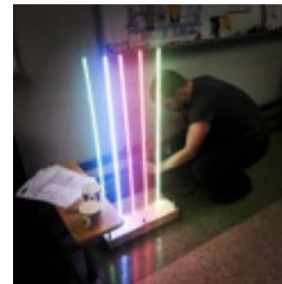
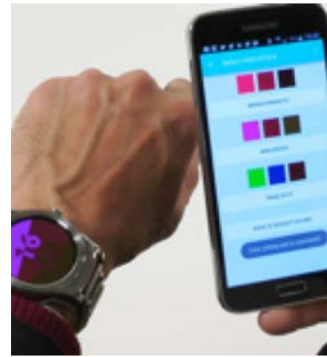
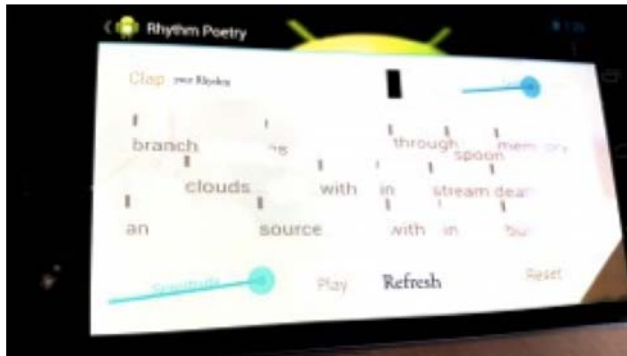
Fashion: interactive video



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

MobileJIT

...and much more



Always explore! Always create! Always enjoy!

Mobil@T

# Collaborations forms

There is no given formula for how to collaborate between partners!

- Pre-competitive arena
- Joint projects
- Internships – also for seniors
- Going on trips together – Japan, Silicon Valley, India and Europe
- Lectures
- Creating specific applications, tools or toolkits
- Creating popular descriptions or design fictions
- Joint workshops or brainstorming activities
- Sharing a research/design method
- Open house demos
- Joint exhibitions
- Partner days where all projects are presented
- Industrial PhD-students

A strength of the Mobile Life centre was probably our willingness to try out different collaboration forms in an equally creative manner as we engaged with our research topics.

Always explore!  
Always create!  
Always enjoy!







[www.mobilelifecentre.org](http://www.mobilelifecentre.org)



In numbers:

~250 people engaged in the centre (~150 people working in the centre)

210 MSEK + other grants ~145 MSEK = 355 MSEK

52 journal papers

184 full peer-reviewed conference

113 short papers, posters, workshop papers

6 books

4 spinoff companies

10 companies & Stockholm City Municipality