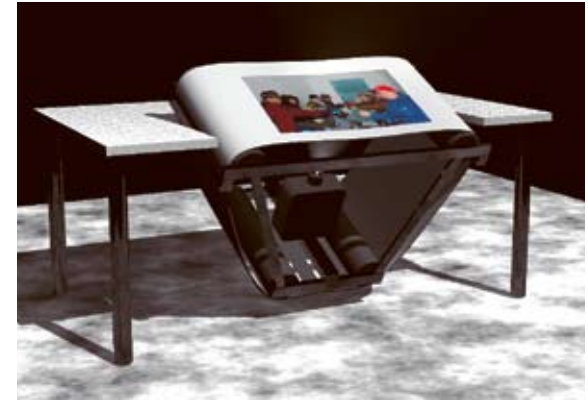# Future elderly environments

In this international project, students from LTU and Stanford University worked together to develop a product that enhances the wellbeing of the elderly.

The main goal was to develop a product based on the present and future needs of the elderly.

3D model in Alias, Studio Tools.

Göran is adding an idea in a brainstorm session.

Testing prototype on elderly home.

Background

Elderly care is changing. The expected retirements of many born in the 1940s combined with the limited resources in elderly care means that fewer employees will care for more elderly. Employees have a variety of technology to facilitate their work, e.g. lifts and alarms, though technological solutions are limited to increase the wellbeing of the elderly.

The team is convinced that the quality of life for the elderly can be improved in many ways.

Assignment

The mission was to enhance the wellbeing for people in their latter part of life. This statement was all the team had to start out with. To achieve this, the meaning of 'wellbeing for elderly people' had to first be investigated. To narrow down the task the global design team chose to focus on people living at eld–

Distributed collaborative work.

Fieldtrip at Lytton Garden.

Palm drive: The entrance of Stanford University.

erly homes. The project began with a need finding process to discover the needs of the users, and later translate those needs into concepts. From the needs found, certain activities were singled out and focused upon. The team proceeded to develop a solution that met the requirements and thereby could enhance the wellbeing for people living at elderly homes. The use of conceptual prototyping to create various artefacts during the project was emphasised. Implementing the final prototype for users in a new retirement home is the goal. The project was unique because of its heavy focus on the needs of the users and their participation in the product development process.

Collaboration

The whole project was conducted through global collaboration between four students from Luleå University of Technology, and four students from Stanford University, USA, working together as a team. This proved to be a challenging task due to the two universities having different theories of approaching product development and cultural and geographical separation. The experience of working internationally was still worthwhile, since diversity in views offers the best ideas of two worlds. Each group contributed with their professional and personal skills to the process and brought different points of view into the design process.

The Result

In this open-ended project, the team members developed a product based on the needs revealed through their need finding. Interactions between the elderly and even their relatives were infrequent. The elderly have much to tell and if their stories and knowledge disappear, it is our loss. A product that is individual and promotes social interaction between the elderly and relatives will increase the wellbeing of the elderly. The presented product will be implemented at a new elderly home in Luleå.

The Future elderly environment team.