

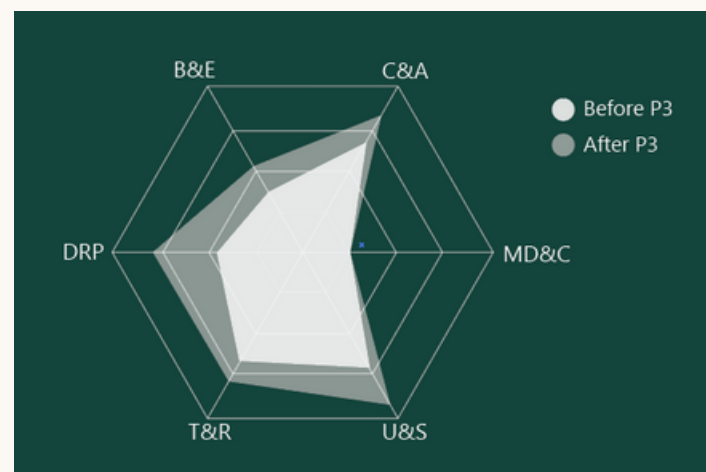
REFLECTION

Suus van Gogh

I describe myself as an empathic and human-centered designer. To my surprise, I found that a research project fits well with this. Before the project, I thought of research as just doing literature research and thus reading academic papers. Within the project, I learned that there are research methods that fit way better with who I am as a designer. For example, I learned the method “ethnography” which I applied in repair cafés. Embedding yourself in the environment and context of the research gave an extra dimension to understanding the practices, struggles and atmosphere. Next to this, I used interviews and user tests as a way of doing research which helped with gaining different type of knowledge. Interacting with people and being in the field sparks my creativity.

Moreover, I discovered I want to put my focus more on the initial phase of a design project. From identifying the problem by involving stakeholders and being in the field to coming up with different concepts is what I am most passionate about. Design research fits with my human-centered way of working. Besides, I can use it to inspire change in a way we can come to a more equal and inclusive society. Therefore, I want to gain more experience with design research, to figure out if this might be what I want to do in the future.

Next to the expertise area of User & Society, I improved mostly in the expertise area of Technology & Realization. I worked on the electronics for the water representation of the midterm Demo Day prototype. Working on electronics and coding is one of my weak sides. By taking the responsibility of this part, I improved myself by going out of my comfort zone to become more of an all-round designer. However, it made me also realize that this is not something I want to specialize further in in the future. Therefore, for the final demonstrator I focused on the physical prototype to gain more experience with materials such as wood and plexiglass.



During the project, multiple iterations of the prototype were created. In the initial phase, quick and dirty prototyping was necessary to be able to start user testing as soon as possible. As a perfectionistic worker, I struggle with low-fidelity prototyping because I have a hard time moving on to a next iteration when the previous one is not completely done yet. Working on these prototypes together with my team members during the

'Making Morning', helped me to achieve my goal of improving this skill. Having someone to tell me when it is okay to move on, helps me to realize when to move on and to reflect on it afterwards. The prototypes were valuable during user tests since the participants could actually interact with them. I want to improve myself further in low-fidelity prototyping by practicing it with team members so I can already make concepts tangible in the early phase of a project.

For me, this was the first time having an actual client for a design project, which was a great learning opportunity. Receiving a more specific design brief turned out to be a head start on the project. It makes you research and brainstorm within certain boundaries. For me, this worked well since I noticed in previous projects that the first weeks could become overwhelming since there were no restrictions or asks. Having this experience, I am planning to create my own design brief when this is not provided to have more structure in future projects. Besides, having a client helped me improve in the expertise area of Business & Entrepreneurship. Having to communicate professionally, provide updates and implement their feedback and requests are new skills that are valuable in my future career.

Within the team we did not assign roles, however, throughout the project, everyone grew into their own role. I see myself as a result-driven team player, who wants to keep good team atmosphere and tries to motivate others. Within the team, I kept an overview of the process and tasks that had to be done to make sure we stayed on schedule. I used organizational skills to make plans and to-do lists for each meeting. This made sure they went smoothly and were effective. Our project had a lot of different aspects such as the pile of waste, circuit board and coding part. For me, this was pretty stressful since I like to have control over what is happening. Making a planning helped to reduce this stress, since it gave some structure and overview of who was working on what. Besides, not being able to be in control of everything helped me to manage my perfectionism more. I found that you do not have to work on everything to be still able to provide constructive feedback. This was both useful for time management and to bring out the best in the team. These learnings will be valuable in future projects since they reduce stress and improve team collaboration.

My most important goal within Project 3 was to discover who I am as a designer and what I would like to do in the future. During the project, I achieved this goal by realizing I want to work on the initial phase of design processes. I believe everyone deserves the same opportunities and want to empower people with disabilities to come to a more inclusive society. Using a human-centered way of working through design research helps to find the underlying values and problems. Therefore, I want to gain more experience in the field of design research with a specific focus on human-centered research methods.

All in all, during the project I improved both hard and soft skills. Most importantly I discovered who I am as a designer and how I want to continue my learning path in the future.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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12/06/2024
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PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

I design products and systems that make the everyday lives of vulnerable target groups easier by striving for a more inclusive and equal society. To achieve this I take a human-centered design approach during design projects to make the most impact. I describe myself as an empathic designer, who wants to work with and for people. Working with experts, potential users, and team members inspires me and sparks my creativity. As a designer, I believe it is important to incorporate potential users throughout the design process, so the target group and their values are known. Also, to improve the usability and user experience, I believe that co-creation sessions are important.

As a designer, I am most passionate while working on the initial phase of a design process. From identifying the problem to ideating on concepts. I think it is important to embed yourself in the field through research methods as ethnography to give an extra dimension to finding struggles and feeling the atmosphere.

Besides, I create visual designs such as logos, websites, app designs, posters, animations, and 3d renders. In my opinion, these visuals are useful when involving stakeholders in the design process. It helps to convey design concepts even when there is no prototype yet. Therefore, I not only prepare user interviews by formulating questions but also by making visuals.

I am a perfectionistic worker who pays attention to all details so that the final design looks taken care of. Especially, when designing products for everyday usage, it is important to make sure they will fit in the users' lives. Because of this perfectionism, I like to have things in my own hands. Therefore, I keep the role of taking the overview within a team. My structured way of working helps me to keep an overview of the design process and to create a plan for future steps. These organizational skills help me to work structured, which gives calmness.

I see myself as a result-driven team player, who wants to keep a good team atmosphere and tries to motivate others. I believe the power of a team is having members who are motivated and passionate. By trying to motivate people I strive to work in a team where everyone is result-driven.

VISION

I like to think of a future with new inventions that contribute to realizing an inclusive society with equal opportunities. I think this can only be accomplished when we start thinking more outside the box. We as designers, should use our creativity to come to the real purpose. I believe it is important that we do not always choose the easiest solution to solve the short-term issue but take a holistic view.

This becomes even more important because of rapidly changing technologies such as AI. These technologies could take over people's decision-making, leading to a society in which people are less connected to the world and each other [1]. People will rush through their lives instead of enjoying it. Designers should combine these new technologies with their own creativity and human intuition to meet the values and needs of the users. This way, new inventions make our lives easier and more fun in a way that keeps us living in the moment.

Designing for everyday life, I consider it important that products fit seamlessly into the users' lives. Products should be adjusted to the users' needs instead of the other way around. Therefore, I believe products should become more personalized to meet users' values and aesthetics. New technologies in the field of artificial intelligence in combination with user-centered design processes will help to achieve this more and more.

I want to design for vulnerable target groups. I believe everyone deserves the same opportunities and therefore want to empower people. To achieve this I focus on equity-focused designs. Each person is different and therefore needs different resources and opportunities to come to an equal society [2]. Therefore, I believe more personalized designs will be a great start in creating an inclusive society.

[1] Northwood, A. (2023, April 21). Is AI destroying human connections? The dark side of artificial intelligence. Medium. <https://medium.com/@alexnorthwood/is-ai-destroying-human-connections-the-dark-side-of-artificial-intelligence-31509d59a38c>

[2] Equality versus Equity: What's the difference as we #EmbraceEquity for IWD 2023 and beyond? (n.d.). International Women's Day. <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/Missions/18707/Equality-versus-EquityWhat-s-the-difference-as-we-EmbraceEquity-for-IWD-2023-andbeyond#:~:text=Defining%20equality%20and%20equity&text=Equality%20means%20each%20individual%20or,t o%20reach%20an%20equal%20outcome>

GOALS

Over the last year, I realized that I want to design for vulnerable target groups in the future. I want to empower those people to come to a more inclusive society. Upcoming semester, I want to start focusing on this future goal by finding an internship in either the field of healthcare or social design. If this does not work out, I will take electives with a focus on the expertise area of User & Society.

Moreover, I have already discovered I am most interested in the initial phase of a design process with a focus on the expertise areas of User & Society and Creativity & Aesthetics. Therefore, I either want to dive deeper into this via an internship or electives.

1

Ethnography (U&S, DRP)

During Project 3, I got my first experiences with doing an ethnography. I think it is a really valuable research method which fits with my way of working. Therefore, I want to gain more experience by doing at least 1 ethnography upcoming semester.

2

Having 3 co-creation sessions (U&S)

I believe co-creation sessions are useful since you are not only listening to their needs but also empowering them to design with you. Therefore, I want to have at least 3 co-creation sessions upcoming semester. If I cannot get the opportunity to achieve this goal in either an internship or electives I will postpone it to my FBP.

3

Improving low-fidelity prototyping skills (T&R)

Within Project 3 I used low fidelity prototypes already in the initial phase of the project to give user test/interview participants the opportunity to interact with the concept. Being able to quickly create prototypes, gives the opportunity to get more user engagement throughout the project. As a perfectionistic designer, I tend to struggle with this because I have a hard time moving on to a next prototype. Therefore, I want to create at least 5 low-fidelity prototypes. To be able to do this in a quick way, I want to set a timer, after which the prototype should be finished.

4

Creating a branding and website for a client (C&A, B&E, U&S)

I have been asked to work on a new branding and website for an association. By working on this, I can get experience with working for a client which is valuable for my future career. Besides, I will improve my graphic design skills by designing a new logo and website. Lastly, I want to put specific focus on the user experience and usability aspects of the website. In the end, I want to have a new logo, color scheme, and website.