

DCM170 Researching the Future Everyday – reflection Anika Kok

Researching and designing for the future

When signing up for this course, I was triggered by the '*future*' aspect that was clearly stated in the course description in Osiris. I am very well aware that we are or should be designing for the future. However, I had no clear idea what approach, tools or methods I could use to create products that will be relevant in the future or at least over a longer period of time. Within this course, I have started to learn how to approach designing for the future by using information that is already available, to conduct research that will give answers but most importantly, ask more questions.

Within our project, we have worked hard on getting to the core of our paper without trying to solve problems. Asking questions with your research and product rather than creating solutions proved to be very difficult for designers that are programmed to unravel problems with their designs. By going through multiple rounds of iterations and feedback, I believe we managed to pose an interesting, thought provoking question very well. Because I truly understood the main research objective, creating a what-if question and future scenario was relatively easy in my opinion. Connecting this to the future, rather than the present was a challenge at first, but by trying to recognize trends and by using literature research, we managed to create a well-defined scenario of what the future could look like.

Deploying an artefact

Something new for me was deploying a product or artefact with participants that would use the product without my presence or assistance. In my previous education, I only performed usability tests where I would sit next to the participant so I could see their actions and ask questions regarding the prototype. I only started designing physical products since starting my master track at Industrial Design which is something we deliberately chose to do in this course as well, despite the current social distancing circumstance. We chose to do this as we believe that actually experiencing a situation where you have to choose between time and convenience would have a major impact on the results of our study.

I am glad we made the choice to create a physical artefact as it made us think creatively as well as giving me the opportunity to learn how the deployment process works. After getting approval from the /d.search/Rapid prototyping lab, we were ready to place the research artefact in context which made us rethink the user test and the questions we wanted to be answered. '*Where to put the artefact?*', '*What will we explain in advance?*' and '*How can we get insights on varying contexts?*' are examples of questions that arose during this process.

Using new interviewing techniques focused on the experience of the participant but most importantly the imagination of the participants to gain more insights was challenging but super valuable in our study. It allowed us to draw conclusions on the context in which we tested, as well as other contexts that proved to have completely different results. Rethinking interviews and realizing the importance of considering different situations and contexts is something valuable that I will definitely use in future products. It will help me to create products that are relevant and applicable in a wide range of scenarios.

My professional identity and vision – Calm Technology

The most interesting to me during this course was finding the link between my core paper and my professional identity and vision. Over the past couple of months, my interest for calm technology has grown immensely because of personal experience with frequently being busy and overloaded with information. I didn't recognize the connection at first, but my core paper turned out to be a very good fit to my interests.

During our process, we started to focus on temporality and the increased pace of everyday life. In this case, caused by smart home products, that while intended to save time, result in people feeling rushed and pushed to make the most out of their time more than ever. I think that this temporality and feeling the need to be efficient lies very close to calm technology, as so many products are screaming for our attention and time nowadays. Researching and reflecting on how products contribute to this effect has left me wondering what I as a designer can do to counteract undesirable phenomena like this. While most of these consequences come from unintentional side effects, it might be hard to predict what reactions your designs may cause. But keeping this in mind and using the skills I have started to gain in this course, might just be the thing that will help me as a designer further, in making unintentional side effects a little more intentional.