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Project         **M1.1 Design Project**  
URAN  
Play & Learn

Deliverable    **Personal Reflection**

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### **Multi stakeholder collaboration**

Initially I arranged a handshake for this Squad to be able to work on the STEC project: a project that almost perfectly reflects my vision and identity as a designer. As a Social Designer I like to transform societal complexities into multi stakeholder collaborations, bringing practice into policy and vice versa. In this position I am able to do what I like most: searching for synergy; forming a strategy; creating value exchange and above all - enjoy what I'm doing. All of this I mainly do with a bottom-up approach, striving to create ownership amongst my stakeholders and empower them to uphold the created collaboration without my further help.

However, there are more souls and ambitions in a group and it turned out I was the only student willing to work on this project. This meant we had to somehow find a way to let our interests meet. Looking back, all the activities I just mentioned (searching for synergy, forming a strategy, etc) I now applied within our own team. Until now I didn't have much experience working on a design project with multiple disciplines: over the past years I have been collaborating with Industrial Design students mainly. Although my group partners are also doing the Masters at Industrial Design, it quickly became very clear that they have a different background, which brings along different skills and a different mindset.

This brought along both challenges and opportunities in the design process. It challenged me to not start working on setting up collaborations between- and empowering my stakeholders, but to take one step back and do this as a team first. Once we succeeded and found a constructive way of collaborating, we could take big and efficient steps, all either using our strengths or providing each other with sufficient space to dive into certain subjects.

### **Design process**

My expertise in this project was to run the design process. After many years at this department I sometimes forget this is a skill in itself, but during this project it turned out that the aspects I now feel to be 'logical' are not as self-explanatory as I assumed.

For example: When we decided to work with a specific target group, I wished to meet some of them to get a frame of reference. Especially since we were planning to develop a Serious Game, I wanted to get into their heads and learn about their perspectives. However, my group members initially didn't see the use of this, they thought it was a waste of time.

This forced me to deliberately explain the steps I wished to take and argue for the value of these. This reflects the same kind of conversations I have with clients: Involving stakeholders brings along a form of uncertainty you must accept. It is about having faith in the process that we will be able to translate these findings in something useful. I am glad my team members trusted me by agreeing with this step and many other steps further on in the process, as I believe these have been very beneficial for our project.

My challenge was to also trust my team members with their expertise, something I used to struggle with in the past. However, after having done a board year, an internship, Master Design courses and some relevant work experience, I learnt a lot about how to handle this. Mainly, I implemented the principles of consent instead of consensus. This means that if we have a disagreement, but neither of the options crucially hurts the project, I am okay with going along with the option the one feeling most responsible for that part suggests. This is in line with the 'Subtle Art of not giving a Fuck', as I am currently learning from Mark Manson's writing. 😊

## **Project**

What first felt like a project of compromise, turned out to be one in line with my interests and very relevant for my work field. I feel proud for what we have accomplished and see potential in bringing this project into different sorts of context to explore the conversations this project could spark.

For example: While pitching this project to a single man without any children, he was very much confronted with his footprint on this planet. As he claimed not to have anyone to "leave" the planet to, he now realized he probably behaves differently than when he would have had children.

This means that we have designed not merely a product for children to play with, but a tool to open up new discussions with multiple kind of stakeholders. In future projects I wish to take along the knowledge gained from this project, such as the role of storytelling or the principles of Serious Games, in order to create more tools that spark the exchange of perspectives.

Also I am amazed by the level of participation some children can already handle, which opens up new opportunities for future projects. In previous projects I now realize I didn't use the full potential these children have, as I mainly observed their behaviour or asked some superficial questions. Now I experienced that (some) children can also really attribute in a co-creative process, being well able to express their thoughts.