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              DAM150

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              Assignment 7

Expectations

Learning expectations
At the beginning of the course, my learning expectations were as follows:

*"I find it still hard to explain what the track is about or why I fit in there, except for that every part of me feels this is the right track for me. In my opinion, Entrepreneurship is pretty well **defined**, though many of us associate this track therefore solely with setting up a start-up as a graduation project. Personally, I am more triggered by the **Design Leadership** part, and I am looking forward to **co-reflect** in this course what that means. Also, I hope, by forming clear understandings of DLE (whether this is in the form of profiles or something else, we will have to see by the end of the course!), we will be able as a group **to position DLE within the department** in a justified manner. Also, I hope I will be able to subsequently **position myself within DL**E in a convincing manner, so that I can use this to steer the process of my graduation project within the DLE track."*

Summarized: position both DLE within the department and myself within DLE, by co-reflecting on what DLE actually means.

Expected profile
I decided to dive into the profile of 'Social innovation and leadership in the public sector', since my graduation project is taking place in that field (with Cindy van den Bremen, who was consulted as an expert for this profile). Therefore I expected it to be useful (for both her and me) to get more acquainted with this profile.

However, at the start of the course, I identified myself with the profile of 'Social Entrepreneurship in the public and private sector', since that is what I am currently doing (on a very small scale) as a freelance designer. The consulted experts are people I regularly talk to or work with, and I therefore envisioned my name to become a part of that list of experts in a few years' time.

Insights..

.. about (design) leadership & entrepreneurship and our educational model
From our discussions in- and outside class, I draw the conclusion that entrepreneurship is rather focussed on **creating** change on the short term, whereas leadership is rather focussed on **triggering** change on the long term. However, we can also conclude that there can be a big overlap: entrepreneurs can also be -and frequently are- leaders; and leaders can have -and frequently do- have entrepreneurial skills.

Because of this overlap, I think it would be interesting to look at the role that **design** can play and how this distinguishes us from other leaders and entrepreneurs. In the last session we came to some sort of

a consensus, that the aspects that set us (e.g. <u>design</u> leaders and entrepreneurs) apart are: **'creative'**, **'pragmatic'** and **'vision'**. However, I think that these aspects can vary in e.g. skills and attitude. For example: Is creativity embodied in your practice and/or is it a creative mind that you are selling? Is pragmatism a characteristic and/or a perspective? Is a vision something you operate from and/or something you create?

I think that incorporating this dimension of design into the discussion of leadership vs. entrepreneurship would have helped to lift it to the next level. I've tried to bring this into the discussions we had, but I think the set-up of the course didn't allow for us to reach this point in the time being– perhaps with two more weeks we would have been there. I can (and will (no worries)) reflect on these kind of questions myself, but would have loved to debate about this in class, so I can also hear how fellow students relate to this.

For the leadership and entrepreneurship at least, I valued it very much to exchange perspectives, as the main way I position myself within DLE is in comparison with other students. To me at least that is the key of positioning: it's not about being either A or B, but about taking place in a spectrum that is defined by the context. Whether I am in the context of DLE, ID, TU/e, Netherlands, Europe, etc., I can position myself in a different way as the spectrum changes. For example, in a Dutch context I would position myself as someone who is aware of technological developments, whereas in the context of the TU/e I wouldn't.

I therefore very much look forward to further discuss how the output of this course can be used as input for positioning the tracks within our educational model. Besides digging towards the meaning of DLE, I think it would be super interesting to discuss this in a similar way with the other tracks (RDD and CDR). Can we find dimensions that distinguishe one track from the other, that are not purely based on the final deliverables? I think through this course we created a constructive foundation for this debate, now let's make it happen.

.. about perspectives

The main eye-opener for me was the perspective of.. perspectives! I remember the debate we as a 'class group' started about 'social': is this an approach or a domain? We ended up with 'social' being a perspective. This got me thinking that as a person you can have multiple perspectives, such as social, commercial, technological, but also that of a designer, an elderly, a Norwegian, Nelson Mandela, individualistic, pessimistic, etc.

Being an entrepreneur or a leader is a **role** that you take, but you can play this role from multiple **perspectives**. As a person I collect perspectives: the more I engage with others, the more perspectives I can take into account in situations. Per situation it is up to me to pick the perspectives I want to incorporate in the process and by doing so also steer the process - from abstract (why) to concrete (how? what?) and vice versa. But more importantly, I have to include the perspectives of the ones I am working with and for. This means that I have to understand them, but also find ways to share my perspectives with them:

"How well we communicate is determined not by how well we say things, but how well we are understood." – Andrew Grove

The crucial part of this is that I have to be very aware of the 'glasses that I am wearing'. I am e.g. unintentionally always wearing my Dutch glasses, and over the past years my designer glasses have also become omnipresent. This means that whenever I am conversing with someone who doesn't share the same glasses, I must be able to explain where I am coming from. I think therefore the greatest asset of being a DLE'er -or at least for me- is the ability to shift and share perspectives. This makes me **connected** to the persons I work with and **adaptive** to the context I work within.

.. about myself

Label

I have been struggling a bit with the 'label' I present myself with; the one I currently use is 'social designer'. Thanks to this course I now approach my label to be a [perspective] and a [role], which can differ per context I work in. How I present myself can steer the message of my intentions, but what matters more is the perception of the 'audience'. Ethics is something we decide as a society, so whether it is suitable to label my role e.g. 'social' is therefore context related. Once more, this shows that a high sensitivity towards context is key.

Leadership

I consider myself to be a leader with an entrepreneurial attitude: I like to be able to perform both roles depending on the situation. However, leadership doesn't exist without the presence of others and therefore I think it is interesting to reflect on what position I would like to have as a leader:

Over the years I discovered that the formation I feel comfortable in is that of a 'diamond' (see figure 1). I like to operate with two leaders: a pioneer and a driver. In this situation I describe a **pioneer** as the one taking the lead, mapping the road, having the vision, being the front man, trying things out. The **shepherd** is the one keeping the overview, steering the team, being pragmatic, the 'serving leader' [1].

I am able to play both of the leadership roles as described above, but have a natural preference for being the shepherd of a team. This is because I like to have the overview and steer where needed. Also, I am quite a control freak, so in this position I can take responsibility for whatever is happening since I am the one who could have seen it coming. I have had this preference since I was a child: in my soccer team I was both the captain and the sweeper (Dutch: laatste man) of my team. Being a pioneer is therefore a bigger challenge for me, as I can only do this to my full extent if I have complete confidence and keep moving without constantly looking over my shoulder.

Figure 1 Preferred team formation

In my future work, I would like it best to have a co-leader, with whom I am aligned in vision and complementary in skills. Additionally, there is mutual trust in one's capabilities. Once that is covered, I might be as comfortable in one role as the other.

However, bringing this diamond model back to our current educational model, I see a more natural fit for pioneers than shepherds. Pioneering is something that you could still do on your own, but shepherding rather requires the presence of others. Since our graduation projects are set up individually, it is quite a challenge for the shepherds amongst us to flourish. If this is something others besides me recognize themselves in too, it would be valuable to include this in the debate about the subject-matter and positioning of DLE too.
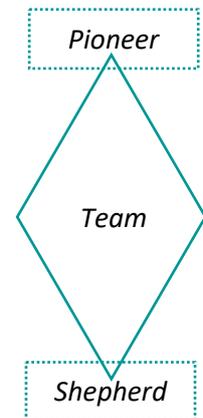
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Ambitions

After reviewing all 'profiles' presented in class, I see myself actually fitting in all of them – which still makes me a bit doubtful whether this is the right way of classifying 'different DLE'ers'. Hence, the aspect that attracts me most towards leadership and entrepreneurship is the diversity and challenging environment, which demands an adaptive character. Therefore I wouldn't mind switching from e.g. being a strategic leader to a social entrepreneur, even in the same project.

I did however get triggered by the profile of 'transformative leadership'. I perceive this profile as the higher goal I strive towards, which made me start reflecting on the compass of my intuition. So far I conclude that it is guided by societal impact. I'd rather trigger others to create impact than to create impact on my own, since this increases the chances of creating more impact in the end. Also, I am very intrigued by 'the system', since a change in the system can lead to impact on a way bigger scale than creating impact for a certain target group in a certain context.

However, I am very much aware that becoming a transformative leader doesn't happen overnight. I consider **credibility** to be the most essential element for this, and again, I think this is related to your audience. Over the past years I gained quite some knowledge about 'the field', mainly due to my collaboration with Cindy van den Bremen. However, my own experience in it is still limited. What I therefore plan to do: is let my intuition guide me; keep collecting perspectives and practice in sharing them; get acquainted with 'the system world' and try out different roles and perspectives in multiple projects. I aim, by doing so, to explore what kind of societal challenge(s) have my main interest and develop a tailored vision and strategy that can lead to transformation in that field, together with a co-leader and a team that shares the same ambitions.