



Document: Personal Reflection
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Course: Design for Social Innovation
Group: Data-Enabled Inclusion
Project: TRYANGLE

The course

As mentioned in the collective reflection session, I had high hopes of this course. For now I would entitle myself a Social Designer; a Master elective in Design for Social Innovation sounded like the perfect match to deepen my skills and knowledge about this process. However, I must honestly admit I am a bit disappointed about the amount of depth we reached at several aspects of the course - I believe that there is quite some potential untouched. I liked the framework we got introduced to, but missed how to apply this in practice. I liked the expertise that was around, both at lecturers and at a wide variety of students, but missed to learn how to explore and apply the value of these different expertises. Also, I liked the hands-on approach in focusing on making and doing, but missed the structure in knowing when we had to meet which expectations.

For example; 3 days before the Christmas Holidays we were told to make an experience out of the exposition. Development of the concept was less relevant than making it 'theatre'. Go wild, go big!

To me this felt a bit like a struggle, as we had been designing in close collaboration with our stakeholders to create something that would help them in their real-life case. To me this is what designing for social innovation is about; making use of your creative abilities as a designer to connect different stakeholders and co-create something that can be brought into practice, which creates value and which benefits the stakeholders. Going wild, going big, like increasing our triangles 100x in scale (as was suggested), felt like missing the whole point and an unworthy end of our process.

Therefore we spent some extra time during our holidays to come up with a way to meet both expectations; bring in the experience, without losing the applicable value of our concept. The exposition design we came up with is one I am extremely proud of. We used the more abstract part of our research to create a nice and more extreme experience (the quantitative vs qualitative data debate), whilst staying true to the integrity of our concept by creating an applicable and carefully designed prototype.

I think designing for social innovation is often something that happens 'behind the scenes'; the impact you have as a designer can be big, but often on a very small scale. For now I have always considered this to be a good thing, as I believed that as long as you serve the needs of your stakeholders, you did a good job. Only now I realize that if you step a bit forward and find a way to share the impact you sparked with a bigger audience, you as a designer can inspire others. On this exposition only I talked with three different parties who are interested to collaborate, based on what they have seen and what we discussed!

Although this wasn't what I expected to learn in this course, this is the main lesson I take with me for the future; showcasing your work, for example with an exposition, is a great opportunity to increase the impact of your work, if you do it well. This means that everything is worked out in detail, it looks neat and decent, you have a clear story to tell and you trigger your audience to respond - creating an experience helps to do so.



The project

I believe that we made the best out of the course by having a nice starting point and anticipating on that well; Eva (de Bruijn) is doing her Final Master Project at SIM, which we also used as a client for this course. This meant that we already had some 'inside information' and could therefore speed up the start of the process by sooner defining our opportunities.

We deliberately selected the opportunity that we found best suited to the case description of 'Data-Enabled Inclusion'. Also, we gratefully made use of several experts that were advised by our lecturer.

What I especially liked about this project is the several layers we included, from more abstract to concrete, and the different discussions we had with multiple stakeholders on different levels. I think this is because we started the project from a more abstract angle (Data-Enabled Inclusion) before we zoomed in on the case of SIM, but never lost track of the abstract discussion. Usually, I am operating way more in the concrete layer of the process, searching for a way to abstract the outcome in the end. I realize now that I matured over the years at Industrial Design and am now more capable of incorporating and addressing these multiple layers throughout the whole process, which helps to increase the impact of it.

The group

In the beginning of the course we were located in a group with 8 people. Soon we all agreed that this group would be too big for efficient working (we only had 7 weeks!), so we split up in 2 teams of 4 and also made the choice to separate the Fontys and TU/e students accordingly, because the Fontys students already had been working for 2 weeks on the content before we as TU/e students started.

I must say that I felt very challenged and excited about our group, because the dynamics were very extreme. I think we had the whole spectrum of statements within our group, having one team member which could function as a persona for an extreme liberal and one person as a persona for an extreme socialist. My role in this became to retrieve the value out of these intense discussions and guide them in such a way that we were heading in the same direction at the end – which I really enjoyed. In these situations I am very glad for my empathic skills that help me to put things in perspective and my communicative skills to explain the different perspectives to others.

Within our group we all occasionally had different priorities (work or personally related) and I am nearly surprised how professionally we all handled this. We took responsibility for our work and were supportive and understanding, even without complaining. In the heat of the moment I sometimes doubted that we would sustain as a group, but looking back, I think we started to value each other more and more and found a way of collaborating that actually works very well.

The future

I am now even more convinced that designing for social innovation is something I could do for the rest of my career. I feel strengthened in my mission to show the impact of Social Design to the rest of the world and thanks to this course I have more skills, knowledge and a more 'outgoing' attitude to do so. Next to this, I increased my network with stakeholders that are related to this mission.

The main thing I would still like to investigate is how this course is related to 'Leadership'. I do have a sense that this has something to do with sparking inspiration by showing and thereby increasing impact, but if that offer for a cup of coffee still stands, I would love to discuss this with you!