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             IT'S A RAMP!
             accelerator program for wicked problems

Document: Integral reflection

Participatory design process

Over the past semester I have experienced that doing a participatory design process on your own, can lead to 'participatory' overshadowing 'design'. A huge part of my participatory design process was stakeholder management. In my case that consisted e.g. of scheduling meetings, writing scripts, booking rooms, arranging transport, writing personal invitations, responding to emails, making balanced group divisions based on availability, sending reminders, aftercare, etc. Though these are crucial elements for the process, they take up a lot of time, which could have been spent on designing otherwise. Looking back, I wish I had lowered the participatory bar a bit, since there was a lot on my plate now. Lowering the bar would have allowed me to focus more on designing the quality of the intervention. However, I feel proud of what I have accomplished, since I think, from a participatory perspective, I have managed the process on a high level. Moreover, this participatory experience was the impetus for my final concept, in which the strategic use of participation is the key element of the accelerator program for wicked problems. In future participatory design processes, I will try to find a fitting balance up front between 'participatory', 'design', 'manpower' and 'ambitions', in order to run a process that matches with the expectations of that project.

Reflection, strategy & integrity

I have improved both my reflexive and reflective skills, which I translate to reflecting in action and reflecting on action. At a certain moment, I lost myself in a reflecting pattern that looked 1 step back and 10 steps forward each time. This pattern worked really well in creating a strategy, yet this strategy was still pragmatic to a certain extent. After my participatory sessions, my coach forced me to stop this pattern and redefine my strategy. Hence, I lost myself in finding a strategy for my project and did not focus on what is asked from me (to get a diploma) as a designer. I reflected on a deeper level and took multiple steps back and only a few forward, in order to develop a strategy that would serve both my project and my graduation. Even though it felt unnatural to stop running just before the finish line, I do believe that by taking a different road, I have ran a better race. The road I had chosen was a different one than the one suggested by my coach, as I was willing to adapt my strategy, but not willing to disown my vision and identity.

Transformative Practices

I developed my own understanding of Transformative Practices by the many discussions we had and the experience I have gained over the time of my Master. To me, it is about dealing with situatedness (through designing). Whereas many try to 'capture' the context and design within that frame, I believe TP tries to work with the context itself, for it can not be 'captured', as it is due to everlasting change. From a research perspective it is interesting to research this change, what elements influence each other, yet from a design perspective I think it is interesting how to deal with this continuous change.