

Individual Reflection

User Experience Theory & Practice

For me user involvement is an essential element for every step of the design process. However up until now this user involvement is more intuitive, rather than theoretical. During this elective I planned to critically reflect on the theoretical views and to take position on this. By getting acquainted with several methods for empathic design and different views on the role of the user in the design process, I plan to shape 'my way' of user-centered design before starting my individual master projects.

Different than expected this elective taught me more about experience than about user involvement. During the elective I have read and discussed nine different papers on topics that are related to- or touch upon user experience. Due to this approach I have not only gained new knowledge, but was immediately triggered to be critical towards the stated knowledge and form my own opinion on the topic. Furthermore we developed a concept to decrease the gap between intention and behaviour in relation to sport. What I found interesting is that designing for the experience means a different mindset right from the start; reasoning from humans and scenarios instead of designs and functionalities. It is not a 'layer' that you can put on your design at the end of the process. This might sound very obvious but it actually was a major influence on both the process we went through and the concept we came up with. Afterwards we did both a heuristic and a user evaluation of this concept. What I learned from the heuristics is that one should look deeper than just usability and usefulness. People buy (or not buy) your design to satisfy certain needs, which are at least as important to evaluate. Which needs do people have and how does your design effect this? As for the user evaluation the approach of co-constructing stories was new to me. What I found very valuable about this method is that it enables you to evaluate a concept with users before it's there. Since I am quite perfectionistic I often invest too much time in creating a prototype (or the like) which can be detrimental for user evaluation. Finally we created a tool to evaluate the experience of interactive designs. This experience taught me to be more critical toward the line between contextual and generalisable knowledge.

Overall I have gained more theoretical knowledge about the behaviour and experiences of people, which I can probably use for future projects. Furthermore I got acquainted with personal diary logging by pictures and co-constructing story sessions, which are both valuable new methods to get user insights. Since the topics were quite diverse I find it hard to pinpoint main learning points and implications for the future, but I do think I created a solid basis for designing for the user experience (especially in everyday life).