BECOMING A DESIGN & AI RESEARCHER

Personal Development Plan M2.2

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VISION

IDENTITY

I believe we should design a future world, instead of designing merely a future product. A future world in which technology is not added to our society, but in which it creates and cooperates with our society.

Many innovations and technologies advance in such a way that they don't bring real value to our lives or society. They help us in all sorts of practical ways, but no one seems to stand still to truly think about the cultural and societal effects on a bigger scale. Most people either just accept that these technologies are there, losing themselves in the chaos of fast developments, or they become afraid that technology will take over the Earth and become a danger to the human race.

This creates a challenge. The challenge to make technology that enables people and intelligent technology such as artificially intelligent systems to work together on the same level, to empower people in using their qualities such as imagination, to encourage people to live life to the fullest and create their own stories of life.

To achieve this goal, designers with a vision should cooperate across disciplines to be able to match (inter)national policymaking with technological development.

I think. A lot. About the world, society, life, death… And about technology and the role it has to play in the story of the human race.

I often wonder what the world would look like if certain technologies or ways of dealing with life would be different. I wonder what the changes would do to us, the people, what it would do to our feelings and perception of the world. Stories, especially in the genres of Fantasy and Science-Fiction, help in challenging the views we have on the world. They create scenarios of how society might be different when some aspects would change.

Writers and storytellers are designers of worlds, whereas many people are designers of little aspects. I want to design systems that take a vision of a future world into account, by using narratives and stories.

I want to research the interaction between intelligent systems and people, and how they can empower each other. I want to find out how the presence of intelligent systems influences people's perception and experience of the world and how I can support the processes of changing values and cultures.

I am a **design and AI researcher**. I like to research **fundamental issues** around the **social system of the world** and how **intelligent and autonomous systems** can play a role in that, while using **creative and pragmatic methods from design**. I **focus on the unique qualities of people** and even though I might conduct more theoretical and technical work, experiments with humans are essential to me. In this, I highly value a **combination of quantitative, qualitative and constructive methods** to get a broad view on a research topic. I thrive in interdisciplinary teams where team members can provide me with different viewpoints. One of the most enjoyable challenges in interdisciplinary research for me is to try to find the common ground between those viewpoints, a direction that makes most out of all expertise present.

INTRODUCTION

LONG TERM

As I'm halfway through the FMP, I am looking towards the future. What do I still want to get out of this final semester as a student? I want to develop myself as a researcher, but I also want to grab every opportunity I get to share my vision on AI, design and human-centered AI with as many people as possible. I want the design community to know that it is important to think about what it means for interaction design to work with adaptive and autonomous machines, especially in collaborative contexts. I want the AI community to realize that autonomous and adaptive machines cannot be developed without being human-centered and a thorough understanding of the behavior of the human and the machine as they act together and next to each other.

This final semester I will attempt to finish my FMP in a way that enables this communication across both an academic as well as an industry audience. Moreover, I hope to work on research that I can be proud of, and that feels as a nice end to my education.

Looking across disciplines and envisioning what role (AI) technology might play in a future world is what I would love to do in the future. There are four aspects that I feel I need in a future job:

HIGH-LEVEL HUMAN-AGENT INTERACTION such as human-agent collaboration or teaming

FUTURE SOCIETY ORIENTED taking into account future societal developments and culture changes, which makes the work rather exploratory

MIXED METHODS: ALSO CREATIVE it should be possible to use various methods, and there should be openness to unconventional and creative methods such as Research through Design

MULTI/INTER-DISCIPLINARY TEAM it would be especially great if there are other people working on the same or a similar project, preferably people with different backgrounds

The context in which I would like to have these aspects is that of a PhD project that I can dive into with my heart and soul.

GOALS

COMMUNICATE ACADEMICALLY Last semester, I worked on several papers. Since one of them got accepted, I will get the chance to attend my first conference in September, where I will do a poster presentation. I will also join two workshops. I want to get the most out of this experience by preparing my poster well and asking my team members for feedback at least once. Also, I will try to speak to at least three interesting people I will determine beforehand. Next to this conference experience, I will be working on one more paper and a rewrite for one of the papers I worked on last semester. The whole process of working on papers is a great learning experience, one which I plan to continue.

COMMUNICATE TO DESIGNERS I also want to communicate my vision and work amongst designers, not necessarily within the academic domain. I have been given the chance to present at an art, technology and society event, and I might get the chance to present my work at the Dutch Design Week. My goal for these presentations is to get a discussion going. Therefore, I will prepare my presentation with many visuals and questions. For the Dutch Design Week, there is still a lot of preparation to do. I will create visual material as well as a storyline for what I want to show by the end of September latest.

MAKE DECISIONS Last semester I have often been quite undecisive and passive. While this was for a large part due to insecurities, it made my process slow and probably strengthened the insecurities. This semester I want to be more decisive about my project. For every big decision there is to make, I want to give myself a final deadline and stick to that, so that I can move on. A bad decision is better than no decision, and I do believe that whatever decisions I make, I can definitely make them work.

MAKE MYSELF PROUD My ultimate goal for this final semester is to make myself proud. Last semester I often felt like the work I was doing was not good enough. However, looking back at what I produced, I feel that I actually delivered work of good quality, and especially the paper and reflection that I wrote at the end were clear and of high quality. This semester, I want to look back and reflect more, to hopefully see that I can be proud of my work at an earlier stage. I will take a moment to reflect every week on Friday. This will help me in creating my showcase at the end of the semester as well.