

Final Reflection Final Bachelor Project - BeB (Buurt en Besparen)

Charlotte van der Sommen

This project was my first big project all by myself. It made it possible for me to follow my own vision on design. This is why Hidden-Design became my approach this semester. After talking with my coach about "Creating rural energy", a project of the company "Afdeling Buitengewone Zaken" that is a typical example of my vision, he suggested that I could use their methods to go through my design process. I managed to get to the core of this research method "Hidden-Design" and it showed me a different view on the design process. In my project I used the method for testing, but Hidden-Design is also a great method for ideating. Hidden-Design made it possible for me to have an unordinary user-test that gave me a lot of interesting insight in my product. Because the family used my product like it already was in the market, it became very real to me what kind of project I want to design. Like this project, service-product combinations that influence the behavior of people are the kind of projects I want to do.

During this semester I learned a lot about the Internet. By learning the basics of the programming language PHP, I managed to a sort of understand the Internet. Now I can say I know how complex the Internet is and how databases work. A world opened itself to me this semester. I started to understand how for instance a pin device works and what kind of comments are sent from one device to another and how the information is saved to servers. Now I know how to ask experts to help me with complicated problems concerning the Internet.

One big goal for me this semester was to focus on the making process. I set this goal because of feedback I gained during my previous semester about making prototypes. I'm very skilled at making low fidelity prototypes but not so skilled at making final prototypes. For this project it was important to make a final prototype because the product had to look finished. Eventually I made a final prototype that in my eyes still was a low fidelity prototype. Even though it worked as a final prototype. My idea of a finished prototype is perfection to the smallest detail and a very well considerate choice of material use. This is not what I did for this final prototype due to lack of time. I figured out that a good concept is much more important to me than a good prototype. The low-fidelity prototype worked and I'm not the designer that spends its time at perfect looking object but more at innovative concepts.

In previous semesters I had a hard time asking others for help or involving other people within my project. A goal for me was to become more open about what I'm working on. This semester was a big growing process for me. I had a lot of expert meetings and I talked regularly with friends about my project. The thing that helped me to become more open was scrumming. With a group of students that were sitting around me, every few days we would present the development within our project to each other and gave each other feedback on it. These meetings helped me enormously to become more secure about my work and they gave me tips to talk to other people. This caused that I went through a very big transformation from a very individual designer to an open designer. Next semester I will be working in a team and I will definitely introduce scrumming in this team. It will help us to work together more closely.

During an assignment in the first block of the semester I figured out, I can be chaotic in what I communicate. I'm too easy going and I think people will just understand what I mean, but that is not the right attitude for doing user tests and also not in other circumstances in life. In order to make my user-test a success I took a lot of effort to prepare the user-test. I talked a lot with my coach, experts and fellow students to make sure I had prepared all the aspects of the user-test. It surprised me how much effort it takes to well prepare such an operation just by myself. Next time I will plan in much more time to prepare a similar situation well.

It was very important for me to work together with a real client this semester. I see a lot of projects that are not very relevant in the real world. I want my designs to really fit in society. That's why I

needed a real context. By working together with "Buurkracht" I learned a lot about the energy industry in the Netherlands. By learning about the ins and outs of the company and getting insight in their service blueprint I learned a lot about project based companies. The communication of Buurkracht to its clients is impressively clear and has a clear style. I realized how important it is to build your brand on a clear style and be very open and transparent in your communication. I plan on starting my own project-based company and I will definitely apply the knowledge I gained from working together with "Buurkracht" to create my own brand.

I had chosen the project "Local Em(power)ment, because it gave me the possibilities to work together with a real client, and there was room for me to follow my vision on design within this project. The fact that the project was about energy was a side issue. After doing this project about energy I figured out that the subject "energy" and the use of energy interest me a lot. I plan on focusing on Energy and the way people use their energy as an overall subject in my master projects at Industrial Design.