Individual Reflection

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This was not my first experience doing design research, during my bachelor at TU/e ID I also had the course Design <> Research, as well as a research project. However, this was my first time hearing about the different methodologies. I was aware of the differences between qualitative and quantitative (or mixed methods) research, now I can relate these differences to the different methodologies:

- Lab research is mostly quantitative and uses numbers and measurements to provide knowledge
- Field research can be mixed methods and the research methods highly depend on the context
- Showroom is mostly qualitative and the methods and findings are meant to provoke
- Studio is also qualitative, but in a very experimental way

After reading about the different methodologies, I was personally intrigued by the Showroom methodology for its (possible) futuristic view. It gives you the ability to research new and innovative technologies and focuses on its capabilities and opportunities, rather than being limited to the context of a specific product. The main difference with Field is that to me, Showroom felt like researching the long-term future where Field felt more like researching a short-term future. I was hoping to do a Showroom project, but did not mind switching to Field when I was not able to do a Showroom project about the topics I was interested in.

After doing a Field research, I realised that Field does not necessarily have to be about a short-term future, although that does make it easier to grasp for participants. In fact, our topic of a smart closet would only be realistic in the not-so-near future, but is still works well for a Field approach. From this, I learned that Field does not require something to be realistic short-term, but it does require knowledge about an existing or upcoming technology that is expected to be good enough at some point for the researched topic to be realistic. In our case, this was Machine Learning, a technology which is already well known and used but is only becoming more capable and powerful as time goes on.

Overall, I think Field as well as Showroom are and will be the most relevant to me as a designer, but the other methodologies might also become useful. I plan to have a career in product design and development, especially focusing on smart and connected products. In order to develop actual products, I believe Field research will be the most relevant for me. It offers a complete overview of how the design performs in its context, which is ultimately what you want to know when designing new products. However, I can also see myself deploying a Showroom approach in the future, for when I need to gather knowledge about a new technology rather than a specific design.

Although doing research is not my favourite aspect of Industrial Design, I do realise that in product design and development, research will always remain an important aspect. However, for me there is a difference between generating knowledge just to get new knowledge, or generating knowledge towards a specific goal. I would probably be more motivated when the latter is the case. I expect that I would be fine doing research when it allows me to deliver a better design and better a contribution to the world.