Individual Reflection

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The first project of the ID Master is the only group project, all the others will be individual. I was looking forward to a group project after an individual design project (my FBP), mostly because I found out that brainstorming individually is very difficult. Based on my prior experiences, I prefer brainstorming in groups because everyone inspires each other with their (sometimes silly) ideas. After furnishing the garden and making a tree in the IoT sandbox, Alexis, Harry and I started off with our project, and I was looking forward to some inspiring and fruitful brainstorming sessions. They were... disappointing.

I very quickly noticed that my teammates took the words "technology" in "university of technology" and "industrial" in "industrial design" very literally, and came up with a bunch of highly technical ideas like wireless car chargers, modular home batteries / powerbanks, or "something with graphene". Right away I tried to mitigate this by explaining the type of projects at ID and what a process could look like, to focus more on users and what they need rather than staring blindly at what might be possible to achieve in 15 years. I explained that our ideas don't have to be super realistic, it is more important to have a good concept and good reasoning behind it. I felt like my efforts did not help. Luckily, during the first coach meeting, Joep was able to kindly throw all our ideas so far out the window (thankfully) and place emphasis on the family in the IoT sandbox, it exists for a reason. We could restart.

From the start, because of our struggles during the brainstorming phase, I was confronted with the fact that I am not a leader. I wanted to take on a leadership role because I identified that we needed that, and tried to guide the process into something more designerly, speculative and user-centred, rather than the technical and industrial views from before. This was somehow very difficult for me and felt like I was not doing enough, even though my teammates told me they did appreciate how I was keeping things organised and under control. I sometimes find it difficult to determine what to do next, partly because the topic of energy and heat does not quite speak to me, but I also don't like to tell others what to do and be the only one responsible for the process. If my teammates have any ideas of what to do next, they should be able to share this, I do not want to create an atmosphere where I'm the one making the decisions.

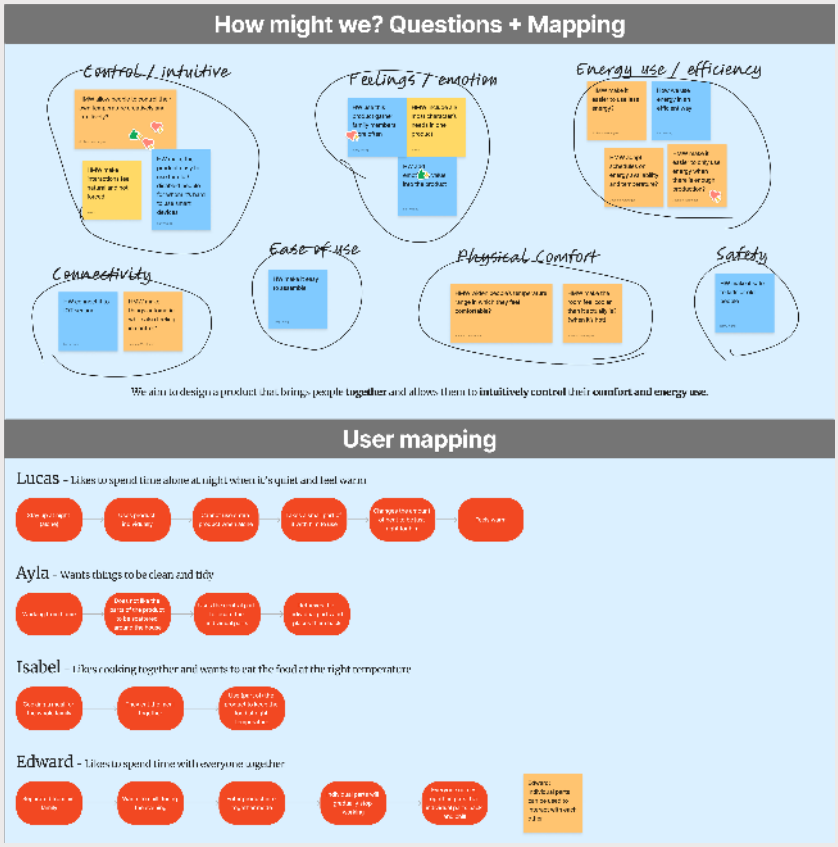

Figure 1: Some design sprint methods I proposed and guided as a means of brainstorming

In situations where I do concretely know what to do, like assembling a prototype or formulating / explaining a design concept in words, I am able to take leadership and responsibility. So while I might not be a good process leader, I am completely comfortable taking the lead over smaller steps. Some examples from this project were the mini design sprint we did at the start (see Figure 1), defining our design concept, deciding what mechanisms to use in our demonstrator, implementing these mechanisms and assembling the demonstrator, and defining the final concept based on feedback and reactions during Demoday. I feel like these were the parts of the project lead by me, along with the creation and analysis of the survey which I did individually (while the rest was working on different things). This is a pretty long list, so it seems that I am indeed quite comfortable with leading when I know what to do. Based on this, I assume that I would be able to be a good leader if I know generally what process to follow, or am more comfortable with the topic. However, whether this is actually true remains to be seen, and being able to lead does not mean that I like to lead. I also like to listen to others and just do my own thing.

Although it was not part of my initial goals in my PDP, guiding the process became by main goal during this project. Although I still do not feel very satisfied in this area, we did end up with some structure in the process and my teammates told me that I did help in this regard. Another goal of mine was to make energy use at least a little easier to understand and control through our design, and I think that our design does this very well. I also provided an overview about the data sharing between projects for everyone to use, which was initially unused for a while but eventually did become a useful tool for others to decide on their data sharing (see Figure 2). I'm happy to know that my ideas for this seemed to work, and I managed to make things just a little bit easier and convenient for others. As for my last goal of implementing at least one theory about behavioural change, this is not something I actively did, although it could be easily implemented in our concept. To me, having a good process to even come up with a concept was a little more important than this goal. :)

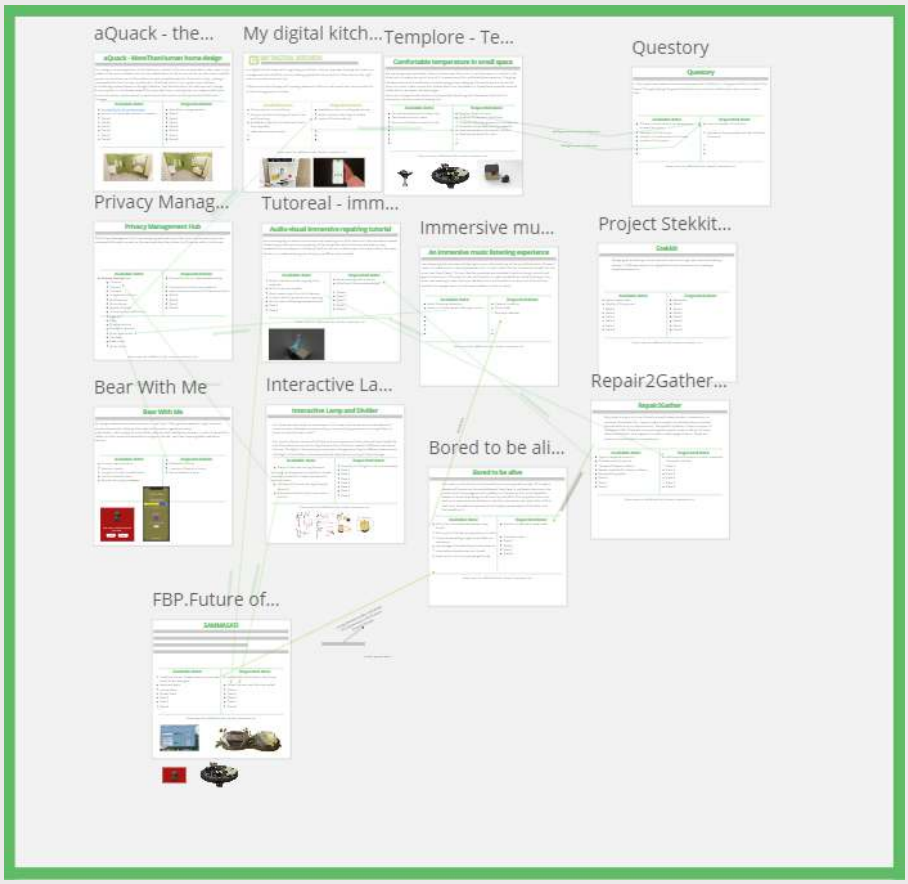

Figure 2: The Miro board I set up was eventually used by others to decide on what data could be shared and with who

Overall, my main takeaways are that I like to listen, but am also able to speak up and lead, provided that I know enough of what I'm doing and the activity falls within my expertise. If a similar situation would arise where my group has difficulty with the process, I think I would look for and show examples of previous projects from the faculty and the squad to hopefully kickstart a creative process. Also, I still believe that collective brainstorming is very valuable, and I will be looking for ways to brainstorm with others even in my individual projects. One idea is to propose to organise a session with students doing individual projects, to brainstorm together about everyone's project for a good and creative start.

PI&V

Professional Identity

> ***In one sentence:*** *I am someone with a passion for anything smart, connected or clever, who likes to keep trying out new things to work on and learn from.*

I am someone with a passion for smart products, ranging from connected devices to internet-of-things to even a very cleverly designed item or service. My passion for smart (connected) products, like consumer electronics, has been a part of me for many years and resulted in closely following interesting activities in this area, in turn leading to a vast amount of knowledge and understanding about various types of products. Later, this passion expanded into the field of smart home, a rapidly developing market with lots of interesting innovations. Of course, I have and am still making my own home smarter using a wonderful open-source platform called Home Assistant.

My passions partly define me as a person, but also partly define me as a designer. Of course, anything within my passion is something I'd be most interested in working on, as well as this being something I know and understand a great deal about. In design, this could be helpful with determining if something is possible to do or has already been done, as well as knowing where it would be possible to find inspiration. Other than that, I am someone who is always interested in trying new things, which is also true for designing. I do not want to do the same thing over and over again and love to explore new things, be it locations or technologies or anything else that is new to me. This means that as a designer, I would love to work on something different every time, including things out of my comfort zone (and passions) every now and then.

I do not have a specific process or approach to follow during a project. When working on a project, I will do what the project needs in order to progress. This aligns with my identity, because I do not want to have "my own" approach and repeat it every time. To me, this is nice because it allows me to try different approaches. One weakness of mine is that I find it difficult to approach people to do a user study due to my shyness, though none of that shyness is visible when I am working together with people. In a group, I am usually the one who organises our work and files. I am not always able to take a leadership role, this is especially difficult for me if the topic or process are not very familiar to me, but when I know what needs to be done I am comfortable taking the lead or responsibility. When it comes to design processes, I have a strong set of skills for prototyping and am able to work with various materials, electronics and digital tools. I see brainstorming as a joint effort in a group where every person and idea inspires new ideas, therefore I believe that even the silliest ideas are worth mentioning and exploring.

Vision

> ***In one sentence:*** *I am interested in making increasingly more complex products and systems easier to understand and more intuitive to manipulate and use.*

With more and more technology entering our lives, it can be said that things are becoming more complicated. From self-service terminals in stores, to managing more and more public services online and to dealing with an increasing amount of connected products in the house - many of them with their own separate app. We've got a lot to take care of and not everyone is able to keep up with the developments. New technologies will always keep on coming and existing ones are constantly being improved to make a process just a little easier or more efficient.

Some of these complex processes we don't actually have to do ourselves. In the future, there will be a lot of automations to take care of some complex process, in any fields. More and more robots are being used in production facilities, at some point cars will be better at driving themselves than human drivers, the tax office automatically makes estimations of our income to determine any allowances or taxes, lights and devices in our house could automatically switch states depending on our presence or mood, et cetera.

I don't think these are bad things. On the contrary, since I always like being surrounded with new and modern stuff, I am excited for a future like this. But there are challenges to keep all these complex systems easy to understand and intuitive to control by users. I believe this will be a responsibility for industrial designers. In the future, I want to be surrounded with various kinds of new complex systems like these and turn this complexity into a fun and satisfying experience for users. My goal is not to aim at a specific group of users with more difficulty, but rather at the general user base. I want to make new novel products or systems easier to understand and use.

Do I have a specific field where I want to be active? No, I don't. I like to continuously keep doing different things in my work, learning new things along the way.