

5— *Reflection*

5.1 On the Past

Throughout my Bachelor's degree I learnt to make physical and digital prototypes, acquired some experience in programming and started to develop the ability to direct my own design processes. It was not until my B3.1 internship where I also found a design space which fits me well: UX Design.

In my Master's degree I had one overarching goal: to continue developing myself as a UX Designer. However, as time passed I started to realise that by itself it may not be enough. I wanted to develop a more unique competency profile by specialising in digital technologies, allowing me to better collaborate with others in my preferred career of working in digital, high-tech environments.

When I was reflecting on my experiences throughout both studies I found that one thing that always bothered me was the fact that all I seemed to be doing was creating prototypes, never truly creating products that I felt

were finished. Often this would be because of restrictions in time, resulting in questionable design decisions. Additionally, I felt that I never had all the skills required to complete the full process by myself, or learn enough during the project to do so.

5.2 On the Process

The Final Master Project provided me with the opportunity to integrate all of the skills, attitude and knowledge developed at the faculty over the past years. In this project, I wanted to do everything right.

I went through a highly iterative design process in which I sought to get ideas out of my head and into the hands of others as soon as I could. Above all, I prioritised ending this project with a fully functioning system.

However, before I was there, there were a number of hurdles to be taken. Prior to this

Final Master Project by Arthur Geel

project, I had never created any system that was able to reliably retrieve- and save persistent data.

One of the biggest moments of growth for me during this project was bridging the gap to back-end development. Bolstered in confidence by the electives in Computer Science I took in my M21 option, I took it upon myself to start learning PHP as a server-side language and MySQL to access databases.

I integrated these new skills in the first 'fully functional prototype', which felt like magic — I got the feeling that I was finally moving beyond the territory of making prototypes and into the field of making actual products.

This project however was also characterised by the circumstances of the world during a pandemic, which complicated things. Firstly, there was the issue of staying motivated, and keeping inspiration levels high. Secondly, I was unable to complete the project in the way that I had initially envisioned, which was by doing an in-depth, qualitative evaluation of the concept in a 'real-life' environment, preferably within a company in Eindhoven that shared the problem of low UX Maturity.

Fortunately, I had a great group of fellow master students with whom I had daily 'stand-up meetings', discussing our projects. I learnt that as a designer it is impossible to do things all alone, even if I would like it to be that way. One very valuable skill which I have developed during my Master's degree is the ability to adapt, especially by allowing perspective from the outside.

I adapted my expectations on the evaluation of this project, as the in-context evaluation as initially formulated no longer was feasible. In-

stead, I saw an opportunity to take advantage of the fact that the design process had resulted in multiple fully functioning prototypes.

For me, the research study conducted to conclude this project was the most thorough and well executed out of any I had done so far. The prototypes presented in the study worked well, and the experiment was set up to generate objective insights.

5.3 On the Future

Firstly, I would like to share my ambition in further working on this project, specifically on the evaluation. My biggest point of criticism on the study was the fact that the number of recruited participants was not enough to draw a reliable conclusion for all components of the experiment. Nevertheless, the trends suggested in the results are definitely interesting, which was affirmed by the comments made by my graduation mentor Dr. Khan. For that reason, I am interested in extending the experiment to accept a greater number of participants in order to produce well-grounded insights.

Furthermore, I feel that I am ready to make the change to start working on long-term projects in a professional career as a UX Designer. The Final Master Project has given me confidence in my ability to independently direct a design process from an early brief to a strong realization of a final concept. The world will remain in a strange place due to the restrictions we impose upon ourselves to contain the virus, yet I feel well-equipped to start contributing — be it through remote means or in physical presence.