

DCM100 — Constructive Design Research

Individual Reflection

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30.10.2018

Preface

In this course I have gone through a design research process using the *Field methodology*. For our research we designed a data visualisation platform for public spaces. Throughout this course I've improved my academical skillset: developing- and carrying out research plans and synthesizing the outcomes.

Key Insights

This course allowed me to broaden my perspective of the academic context of design. When reflecting on how my field research process went when compared with 'traditional' design processes, I found that former felt considerably less structured. I was under the impression that design research had very rigid structure and procedures, although this proved to not be fully true. While design research that includes 'hardcore science' methodologies resembles the *Lab methodology* most, both *Field-* and *Showroom methodologies* take a more unorthodox approach.

It took some time for me to adapt my vision on what design research is. In any past design project I have always used a form of research for inspiration, anticipation and evaluation: all focused on improving the design concept I had in mind. As such, I took a similar approach at the start of this research project. I later realised that the purpose of *research* in *design research* is different: its main purpose is generating knowledge for fellow designers. This realisation led to progress coming along more smoothly: I was able to efficiently use the *Field research* methodology as a tool for open-ended exploration.

At the end of this course I am able to appreciate the value of the other two methodologies. I appreciate *Lab research* for its use in generating fundamental knowledge in strictly defined concepts that can be used by other designers. I'd like to highlight Wensveen et. al's *Frogger Framework* ^[2] and Frens' *Rich Interaction* ^[1] as examples: these fundamental insights were generated through controlled, *Lab-style* experiments. The thing I enjoy most about *Showroom research* is its refreshing and controversial nature: it allows for exploration of design contexts that are not yet explored, leading to insights that can shape the future.

Future Application

This elective has given me an introduction to conducting design research. I was already familiar with components within the *Field research* toolkit including observations, interviews and thematic analyses, although this elective has allowed me to gain more experience. The same goes for parts of *Lab research*: finding causes, effects and variables in a controlled setting. However, *Showroom research* was new to me. This course has given me a better perspective on each methodology's use.

When considering all three methodologies I feel *field research* is the approach that suits me most. I enjoy its open-ended nature and the challenges that come with the qualitative data analysis. I would like to follow this approach once more within my M1.2 research project.

References

1. Frens, J. W. (2006). *Designing for rich interaction: Integrating form, interaction, and function* (Doctoral dissertation, Technische Universiteit Eindhoven).
2. Wensveen, S. A., Djajadiningrat, J. P., & Overbeeke, C. J. (2004, August). Interaction frogger: a design framework to couple action and function through feedback and feedforward. In *Proceedings of the 5th conference on Designing interactive systems: processes, practices, methods, and techniques* (pp. 177-184). ACM.