**Exploring the Design Space of Tangible Interfaces**

**Christopher Heiden**

Student ID: 120249

# Abstract

Experiencing the creation of music often depends on having a professional music instrument and the knowledge of how to interact with it to create music. Analog music instruments like a guitar can be used to create guitar music. The instrument itself cannot adapt to a situation or the player wants to play different instrumental sounds with a guitar, for example. On the other hand, a digital piano can do so, and can stimulate different instruments; however, the digital piano itself does not change. By using the token and constraints approach of tangible user interfaces, it is possible to change the look and sound of instruments by interacting with them. This has been tried to accomplish in this semester project at the Bauhaus University. Therefore, it deals with different approaches of tangible interaction and how it can be designed theoretically and practically to design an interface that can be used to simulate different sounds and instruments. Users’ advice is used to give the group information about how people use different objects and how they think it should sound by interacting with them.

**Keywords**

Human-Computer Interaction, Tangible User Interfaces, UI, Tokens & Constraints, Interaction, Sound Generation, Bodystorming

# INTRODUCTION

Common two-dimensional user interfaces are used in a wide range of applications. To interact with these kinds of applications, screen and input devices like a keyboard or a mouse or both together are used. On the other hand, Humans are not used to interacting within a two-dimensional space because, in the real world, humans are surrounded by three-dimensional objects. So, there is a mismatch between two-dimensional interfaces and interaction on digital devices and three-dimensional interaction with objects in real life. Still, people became used to work in two-dimensional space and just using one or two fingers over the years.

The idea of changing this standard and using three-dimensional spaces is not new. This project tries to explore the possibilities of tangible user interfaces by using music.

# RELATED Studies

There are many approaches to design and build tangible user interfaces; however, all approaches share the same idea. All agree that a physical object represents data and changing its object state changes the value of the object it represents.

One approach to build a tangible user interface is using tokens and constraints. Tokens are physical objects with an identifier, so a digital system can identify and handle the token that stores information. On the other hand, a constraint is an area that restricts the user from doing specific interaction gestures like moving the token to one specific position or rotating it. Therefore, B. Ullmer, H. Ishii, and R. J. K. Jacob present grammar that can be used to explain interactions with the token and what users would expect from the system.[1]

B. Ullmer, H. Ishii and R. J. K. Jacob state that token and constraint systems are used to interact with abstract and digital information that has no inherent physical representation, nor any intrinsic physical language for its manipulation. They draw on our basic knowledge about the behavior of the physical world and change the understanding of the relationship between physical tokens and constraints. Therefore, two interactions are defined, association and manipulation.[1]

First, there is the association which means that the user can place a token in or on the constraint, so the system can identify the token.[1]

Second, manipulation is the movement of a token like rotation or shifting.[1]

Adding multiple tokens at once is possible, so multiple tokens can be used on one constraint or even nested tokens could be possible.[1]

To describe the mapping of physical relationships to digital interpretations, a grammar table has been presented (see *Table 1*).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Physical Relationship | Interaction Event | Digital Interpretations |
| presence | Add remove | binding |
| Position | move | Scalar |
| Sequence | Order change | Query ordering |
| Proximity | Proximity change | Relationship strength |
| Connection | Connect/disconnect | Logical flow |
| Adjacency | Adjacent/ no- Adjacent | Boolean, axes |
| nesting | nesting | grouping |

*Table 1 shows a smaller grammar list that has been defined by authors B. Ullmer, H. Ishii and R. J. K. Jacob. These grammars are used for the mapping of physical relationships to digital interpretations.[1]*

A similar paper that tries to find an approach to handle tangible user interactions and their interaction methods is called “The TAC Paradigm: Specifying Tangible User Interfaces”. In this paper written by O. Shaer, N. Leland, E. H. Calvillo-Gamez and R. J. K. Jacob discuss the TAC paradigm, challenges for tangible interaction systems, and how to evaluate them. [2]

The TAC paradigm “identifies the common components and properties sufficient for specifying the structure and functionality of a wide range of TUIs.”[2] Therefore, tangible interaction systems are defined as a set of physical objects and digital information. This concept has five key properties. [2]

First, coupling is used to couple digital information and a physical object, so it can be defined as a token. A toke is a physical object that represents digital information.[2]

Second, there is a relative definition between a token and a constraint that limits the behavior of the token or both.[2]

Third, a “TAC is created when a token is physically associated with a constraint”.[2]

Fourth, interaction and manipulation of the physical object are interpreted. This process is automated regards to its constraint (computational interpretation).[2]

Fifth, manipulation can happen “discretely, continuously or in both ways.”[2]

Besides, other keys of a TAC system are presented.

For example, the “system [should] allow[.] users to design the information architecture”[2]. Therefore, simultaneous and cooperative work can be explored. Furthermore, it should “allow[.] users to construct a structure” [2] that visualizes information graphically on a display. The structure is built upon blocks. Each block is aware of its neighbors. The tokens and their constraints use physical constraints “to express, manipulate and visualize queries.”[2] By manipulation, tangible feedback works by a remote user.[2]

Though these two papers focus only on tokens and constraints and how to handle them, other approaches are also used in Human-Computer Interaction.

One is called “MCRpd-pattern” that has been explained in the paper “Emerging Frameworks for Tangible User Interfaces.” This paper discusses the technological extension of an object and how it is coupled to other its object. Therefore, it introduces MCRpd-pattern.

”M” stands for model and is the underlying digital database of information. “C” is the controller that is the input device. This is directly linked to rep-p (physical representations) that is “computationally coupled to underlying digital information (model)”[and] “[t]he physical representations are perceptually coupled to actively mediated digital representations (rep-d).[3]

In addition to this, the paper points out many examples and explains how the tokens are coupled. Furthermore, the paper explains in detail why and how these tokens are coupled, and categorized projects by using names like Spatial, Constructive, Relational and Associative. [3]

Coupling in this context means that additional information are shown around or next to the token. [3]

Spatial in this context means that tokens have a relationship to each other and express this relationship by their special position to each other. So, not the absolute position in a world is important, the relative position to another token is.[3]

The constructive approach is the “middle ground between spatial and relational approaches”[3]. It involves modular elements that can be used together. [3]

Relational, means that tokens can be linked together and the sequence, how these tokens are linked is important and change the outcome of the system.[3]

Finally, the associative group binds all other tangible user interfaces that cannot be linked to the other three groups.[3]

Another paper that has been written by Steve Harrison, Deborah Tatar, and Phoebe Sengers and is called “The Three Paradigms of HCI”. These parameters are called Human-Factors, Classical Cognitivism/Information Processing Based, Third/Phenomenologically-Situated Paradigm. The authors split the paradigms and defined all of them and explained how thinking can improve the tangible interface. [4]

The Human-Factor paradigm has the goal to optimize the interaction between the human and the computer. So, the shape of the props, the possible interaction methods and how to avoid errors are defined. [4]

In the Classical Cognitivism/Information Processing Based paradigm that test the actual system and try to improve it by research. [4]

Last but not least, the Phenomenologically-Situated Paradigm adds some emotional and cultural perspectives into the system. So here, the focus is not the system itself but rather than where and who is using it at some point. [4]

# Prototyping Methodes

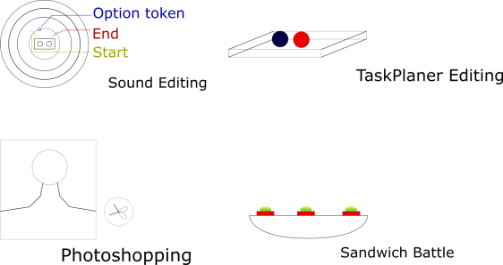
To get in touch with prototyping methods in human computer interaction and tangible user interfaces, methods like video prototyping, bodystorming, and prototyping with clay has been exercised.

Clay has been used to get started with prototyping methods. Therefore, vocabulary has been defined which had to be presented in an object. One example would be ‘resolution’. Props have to be designed to symbolize the word (see Figure 1). Furthermore, the project group did some brainstorming sessions to scrabble some ideas about how an interactive system could look like for a chosen word.



*Figure 1 shows the outcome of the clay prototyping session.*

Furthermore, video prototyping has been explored. Therefore, two weeks have been claimed to find ideas what can be presented in a video prototype. In the first week, ideas has been presented in a small presentation (see Figure 2).



*Figure 2 shows some ideas one group had in the idea and design process for the tangible interaction video prototype that has to be filmed later. This image has been created with Adobe XD[5].*

The first idea of one group was sound editing and how to make it tangible. The main problem of sound editing is that it is difficult to work cooperatively and simultaneously with other people. There is usually only one mouse and keyboard that is linked to a computer that can be used as an input device. Therefore, it is difficult to work together. The idea is to improve this by using tokens and constraints.

The second idea of the same group was about work-life-balance in a company and how to visualize how much work someone has. Therefore, a heart symbolizes the amount of work and balls are used to define tasks that can be placed around the heath. According to the number of balls and the heath shape changes. Moreover, the balls change their colors if the deadline comes closes.

Finally, there was an idea about robots that can be programmed with puzzle parts to find a door to leave a maze. Therefore, the two teams are needed. The first team programs the maze and how it looks like. The second team programs the movement of the robot that is inside the maze. The goal is to find a way out with the robot. The programming can be done by puzzle parts. The puzzle parts are color-coded that define the height level of a maze, borders or the code structure like red puzzle parts are used to define a loop.

Tips and what very group has to improve for each idea has been given. One idea of every group had to be video prototyped in the second week.

In the decision process, what the group wanted to video prototype, the group discussed everything and decided to build the maze-robot-idea. However, after some research, several example projects with nearly the same principles have been found[6], so the group decided to build the Sound Editing-idea.

To film the ideas, the groups had to cut wood pieces and buy some paper and print out stuff. After preparation, the authors filmed the interaction with the system to show the functionalities. The outcome had to be presented and the whole group discussed what every team must improve.

Last but not least, bodystorming has been introduced. Bodystorming is a method to find new inspiration and ideas for prototyping. This approach uses role-play elements to interact with an object, a prop or the actual prototype to gather information about how people use the device. The underlying relationships between the human, the surrounding, and the object will be explored.[42–44]

# Project ideas

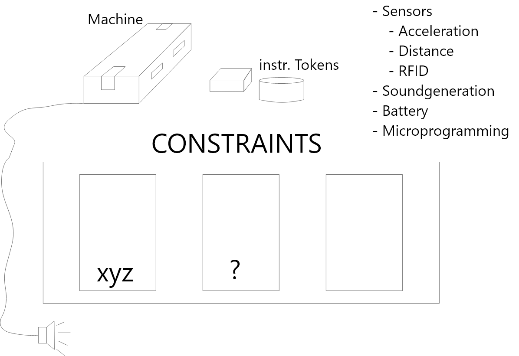
For a tangible interaction project, ideas had to be found. Therefore, every participant had to find some inspirations and present them. Three of them were the groups favorite.

First, a sword game. Two or more players draw cards that show a specific element like water or fire. These tokens have to be placed on the handle of the sword. The sword can be used to attack the other players, and according to the elements, the player makes different damage. The sword is divided into three areas (attack, defense, and void). Depending on the players’ hit, the opponent points are reduced, and at some point, the element gets destroyed and a new element must be drawn. If the play does not have any cards anymore, the other player has won.

Secondly, an abstract music instrument is built to generate music with daily objects and the users interaction with it. Uses objects that usually do not have an instrumental background; however, these objects get a musical, an augmented meaning. Any object can be used to create music if a sensor module is placed on the object. The objects/abstract instruments are constraints. At the same time, it uses a token to identify the instrument. If the technical system is placed on the token, music is generated. A token can be added to activate the object to play some abstract music, so nothing comparable to already existing music instrument sounds.

The last idea that was in the pool of favorites was the forest sound idea. Therefore, plants can be placed on the shelf and depending on where the plant comes from, different forest music is played. If the user wants to change the volume, he/she can rotate the shelve.

The whole group decided which idea was the best and what is worth building and implementing. Therefore, all favorite ideas have been discussed to find out their potential. Finally, the group decided to build and implement the music instrument idea (see Figure 3).

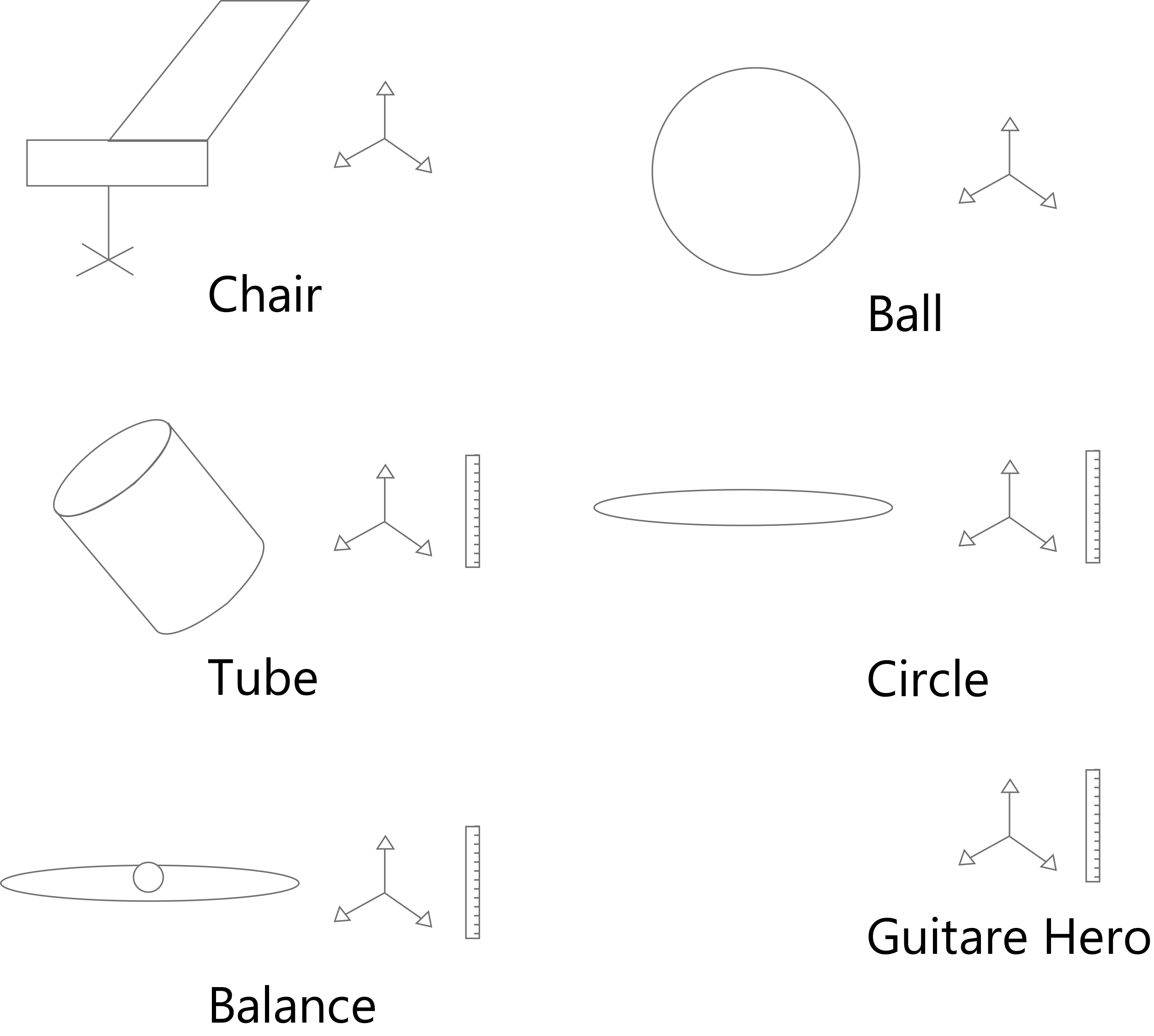


*Figure 3 shows sketches of the music machine/sensor module with its instrument tokens, and how the sensor module and how the instrument tokens could look like. Furthermore, it has been written down what hardware and software has to be thought about to generate sound. This image has been created with Adobe XD and the original image can be found in the Sensor\_Module\_Design\_Process folder.*

To develop such a system, the project can be split into three parts. First, there is programming that has to be done to detect interaction. Secondly, sound has to be generated. Thirdly, a proper design for hiding the electronics has to be done, and last but not least, inspirations from a bodystorming session has to be used to define proper interaction objects for the sound generation idea.

# 1. Programming

To define sensors that should be used for the abstract instruments sound generator project, the group did a bodystorming session and defined objects that could be used to generate sound. After around 15 minutes of finding objects in the lab, the ideas have been debated and how the interaction with the object would look like and what kind of sound the object could make. After thinking about objects and how people could use them, the group mapped this experience and interaction gestures with sensors that can detect these specific movements. For every interaction, the group came up with what can be detected by an accelerometer[7,8], a distance sensor[9], and an orientation sensor[10,11](see Figure 4). The interaction should not be restricted, so a wireless connection has been prioritized. This would allow the user to interact freely because no cables would stop the user to do a specific movement.



*Figure 4 shows objects that could be used to as the main interaction object that can be linked to the sensor module to generate sound and what kind of data could be used to define the interaction which defined the sound.*

To generate the sound, the group decided to use Pure Date[12]. This software allows the user the opportunity to generate sound by interaction.

For the project, a microcontroller has to be programmed to receive distance, acceleration, and orientation. Also, UDP for a wireless network had to be programmed.

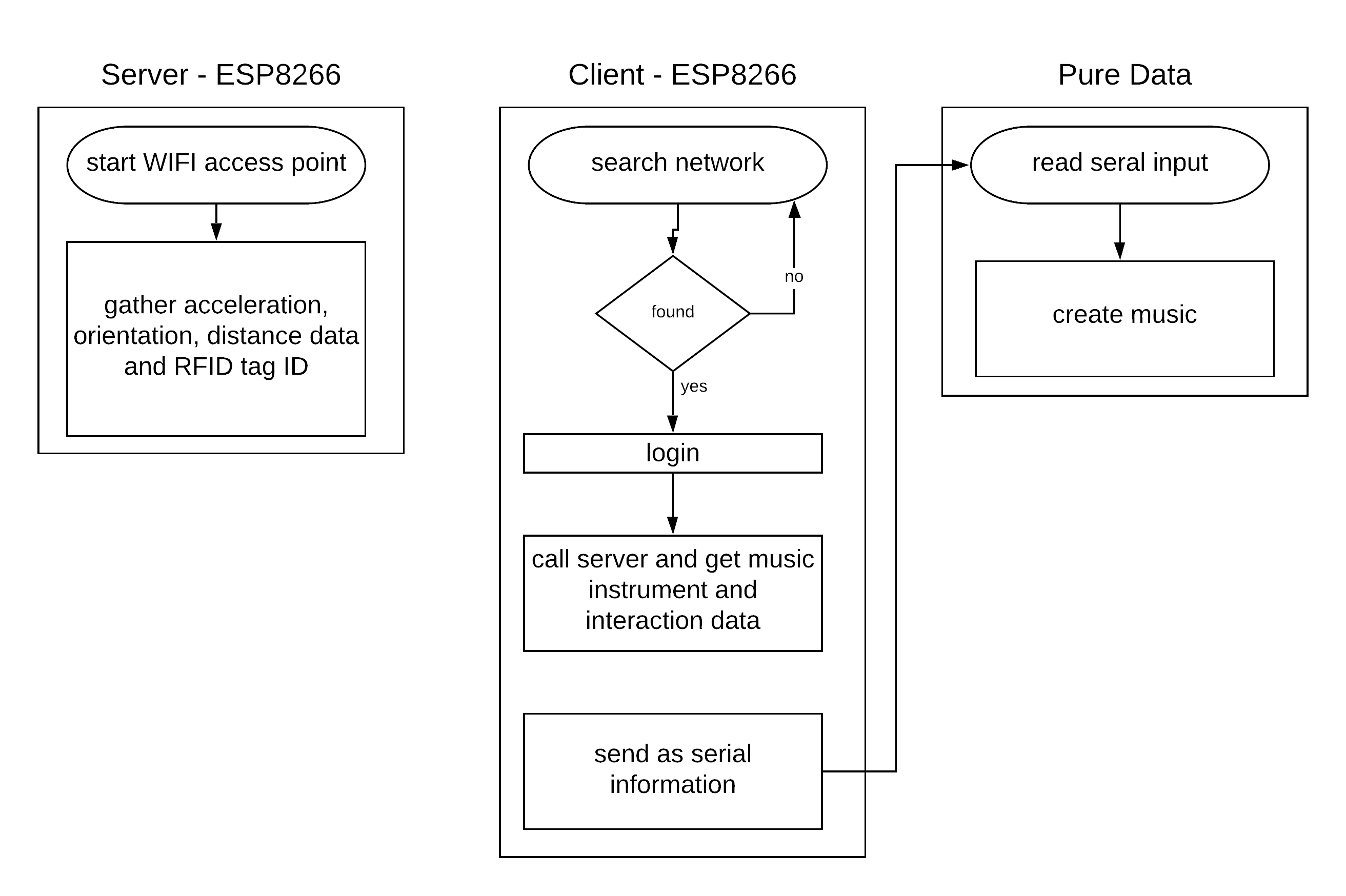
To develop this functionalities, the LSM303DLHC[16]and the VL53L1X[17]chips are used. This specific acceleration chip (LSM303DLHC) that has been used can also be programmed to detect the orientation. Furthermore, the microcontroller has been programmed, so it can use a RFID[[1]](#footnote-1) reader (RFID-RC522[18]) to read RFID tags. At the beginning of the project, the idea was that users can also use modifiers, so the user can change the sound of an instrument. Therefore, two RFID readers would have been needed; however, after a team discussion, the group agreed that the focus of the project should be to identify an instrument with RFID tags.

After coding and testing every sensor separately, the microcontroller and the sensors have been soldered. Therefore, a circuit board, an RFID reader, the LSM303DLHC and a VL53L1X sensor has been linked together (see Figure 5). As a microcontroller, an ESP8266 has been used for developing.

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*Figure 5 shows the first soldering of a NodeMCU 1.0 with an RFID reader, an LSM303DLHC, a VL53L1X sensor, and a circuit board.*

Because of PureData and the receiving UDP packages form the microcontroller, a wireless network has been reprogrammed because the sensor values must be shared with Pure Data. The microcontroller with its sensors is the server and another ESP8266 that is linked to a computer is the client. The server, that is linked to the abstract instrument shares its data with a client. The client is linked to a computer, so Pure Data can receive serial outputs. The whole code logic can be found in Figure 6.

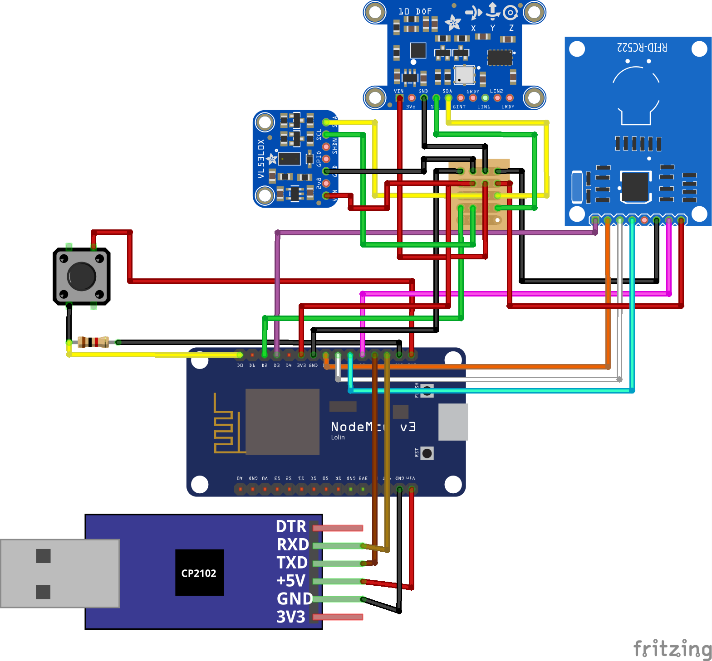


*Figure 6 shows the interaction between programs. The server gathers the acceleration, orientation and distance values. Furthermore, it creates a wireless network. If the Client is connected to the network, it calls for the interaction data and processes them, so Pure Data can use the data to generate music.*

The communication between the client and the server and the code processing takes around five seconds. Also, an ESP32 could not fic the problem. Without the RFID reader, the client can read the server messages faster (see **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**). However, the delay was around two seconds long.

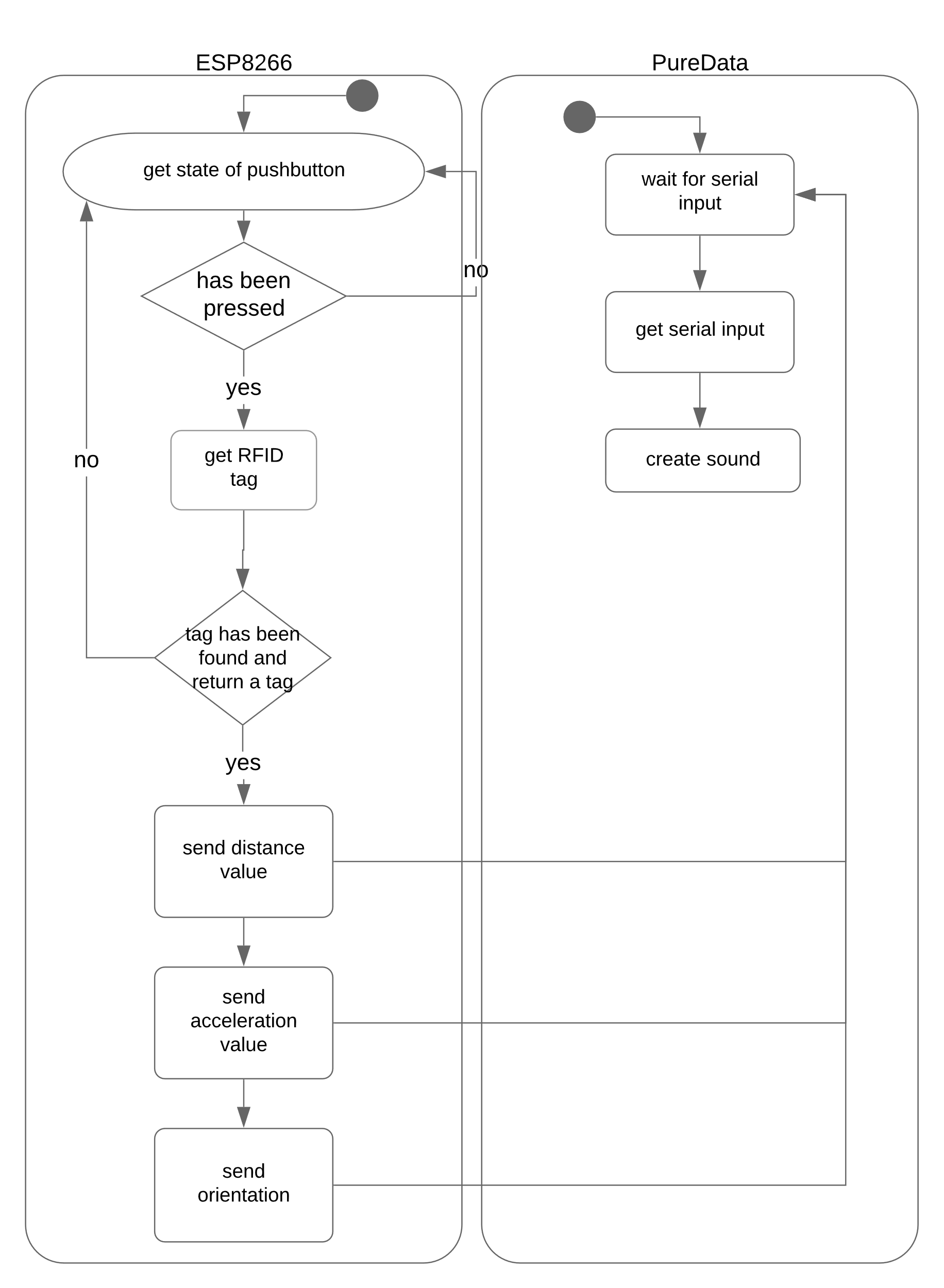
With a delay of two or five seconds, the wireless network is no option or at least the HTTP protocol is not. That is why a serial connection was used instead. Only one microcontroller is used for the project again. This one receives distance, orientation, and acceleration data. In addition, the RFID reader has been linked to this microcontroller again, so it can detect RFID and NFC tags. However, the RFID tag is only read if a button[24] is pressed. The button is new and is used as an initiator. Only if the Button has been pushed once, the RFID reader reads the tag on the object. Furthermore, a USB chip has been wired to the ESP8266. Therefore, a USB TTL Serial cable has been used.[25] This chip uses UART for communication. For uploading code and receiving serial information over this TTL Serial Cable, another USB driver has to be installed[26]. After compiling the code, the FLASH and the RST button must be pushed before uploading the code. Then, the user must release the button RST on the microcontroller first and the FLASH button. After uploading the code, the RST button must be pushed.

In the end, one microcontroller is used to gather all the necessary information. It is liked to an RFID reader that is used to know the abstract instrument, an acceleration and orientation sensors to get the motion and a distance sensor to get the distance between the module and the user. A button has also been added, so it only reads the new RFID tag if it is pressed once (see Figure 7). After wiring and adding everything in the sensor module, it has been noticed that NFC tags cannot be recognized by the RFID reader anymore. The distance between the reader and the NFC tag is too large. That is why RFID cards have to be used to identify the abstract instruments instead.



*Figure 7 shows the final wiring of the NodeMCU 1.0 with TTL USB, RFID reader, LSM303DLHC, VL53L1X, a button, and a circuit board.*

The code processing has changed while working on the wiring and removing the wireless network. One microcontroller is linked to all sensors and chips (see Figure 7). The button is used to call the RFID reader to get the tag ID. If a tag has been found it sends specific music data according to the tag ID to Pure Data (see Figure 8).



*Figure 8 shows the code processing. One microcontroller is linked to all sensors and chips. If the button is pressed, the RFID reader reads the tag ID. According to the ID, the different interaction values are sent.*

The final documentation with all their images and codes can be found on Github.[27]The changes can that have been made over the time can be found on Github as well.[28]

# 2 Sound generation

To understand sound waves and how sound can be created, an introduction of sound generation has been given. Therefore, the open-source platform Axoloti[29]has been used. In this session, the filters, pitches, or the envelope mode, for example, has been discussed and explained (see *Figure 9*).

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| *Figure 9 shows the music generation session. It included the Axoloti and how to program sound generation with the Axoloti hardware.* | |

To develop the sound generation, Pure Data[12] is used. A software solution has been prioritized since it felt more natural to the group using it. All group members have a background in programming. A hardware solution like the Axoloti was also discussed; however, this would add another hardware device users would need to buy. Instead, Pure Data is for free and open source.

At the beginning of the project, a wireless network between a microcontroller and Pure Data needed to be programmed. Wireless was the prioritized communication method because this would help to use the microcontroller with all necessary sensors freely. To develop such a network the patch MrPeach[30] had to be added. However, the group could not find out how the patch can be integrated even if many online sources have been found.

Because of this problem, a wireless connection between Pure Data and a microcontroller like the ESP8266 could not be created, so a direct wireless connection was not possible. That is why another microcontroller has been added to this project. This one is directly linked to the computer. The microcontroller receives the interaction data and sends it to Pure Data. Therefore, the serial port is used. To receive serial information the patch Comport[31] has to be loaded.This patch can be used to receive raw serial data, so this data can be used for music creation. However, this did not work because of the amount of data that has to be sent at once.

That is why another patch has been used to read data from the serial port. The object that can be used to receive MIDI data is called notein[32]. MIDI has been used because it was the only way Pure Data could receive information from a microcontroller. However, the user of the system must download and install two programs, LoopMIDI and Hairless.

LoopMIDI is going to create a virtual MIDI device. There is a default software in Windows that does it, but it often crashes and LoopMIDI is more stable.

The program Hairless is going to take the serial data and send it to the MIDI device.

In addition to these problems, there was another one that came up when instrument sounds needed to be added to the project. Abstract sounds like a sine wave sound were not difficult to generate; however, to generate instrument sounds, vst-files must be added in Pure Data. Those files are audio files that are used for the piano, cello, violin and flute sounds, for example. In order to play vst-files, plugins must be used. A plugin for Pure Data has been found and some example vst-files as well; however, the files could not be run.

As the last step, the final sound files had to be programmed and tweaked. Therefore, the final abstract instruments had to be defined. So, the group decided to present a chair, a stick, and a rope as the abstract instruments. The corresponding sound generation Pure Data files create plucked strings, snare drum, and phasor sounds.

By making sound with a chair, for example, the acceleration and the gyroscope data can be used. This could be useful because the rotation and relative position of the chair can be found with the gyroscope sensor values, and the acceleration is used to find out the velocity of the chair movement. On the other hand, the distance, gyroscope, and the acceleration sensors can be used for the stick instrument. By interacting with a stick, many interaction gestures are possible, so a wide range of sensor values could be used to detect them. It could be used as a guitar, and the distance between the fingers and the end of the stick has to be detected or as a sword and the relative position and the velocity with the gyroscope and the acceleration has to be found. The same goes for the rope as an abstract instrument. The user could use it as a whip or a Lasso, for example, and that interaction possibilities have to be found. With these data, plucked strings, snare drum, and phasor sounds can be created with Pure Data.

# 3 Design thinking

In the meanwhile, a case for the electronics had to be designed. Therefore, designs have been developed a meeting. Several ideas and drawings have been discussed. The shape but also the connection between the module and the instrument has been debated (see Figure 10).

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*Figure 10 shows sketched ideas of how the sensor module could look like and the favorite idea.*

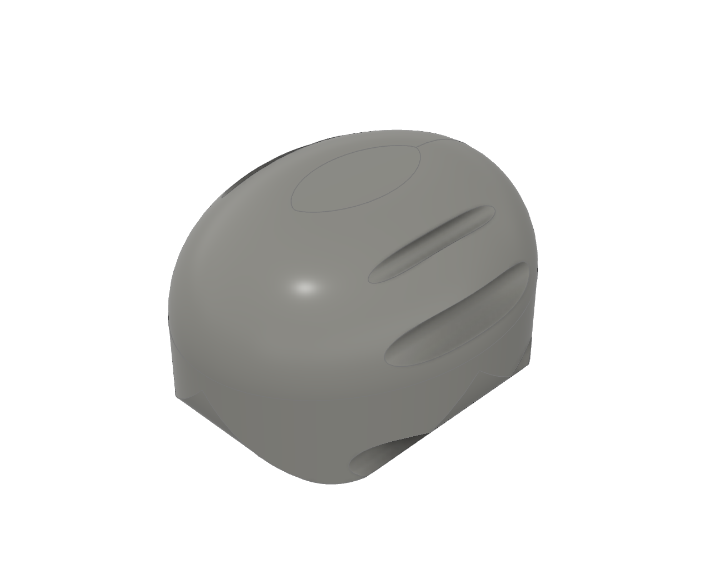
The group thought that the module should not have the shape of a common module like a rectangle or a cylinder. Instead, it should look interesting, so people want to interact and experience what it is. At the end of the meeting, it has been decided to design an abstract form of a brain. The brain concept is not linked to music. Instead, it has the meaning of including everything necessary to generate the sound. Other objects/the instruments/ the constraints that are attached to this module are like the body of the device. This, at least, was the intention and the metaphor as a concept (see Figure 10).

Also, the connection between the module and the constraints were part of the discussion. Two ideas were prioritized.

The first one was using magnets. This idea has a positive aspect that no connections have to be shown. However, this also is the biggest drawback because people would not know how to link everything (affordance issues). Furthermore, the magnets have to have a big magnetic effect; otherwise, the module would lose the connection to the object when the user is doing some fast movements.

Because of this problem, other linking mechanisms were tried to be found. Hook-and-loop fastener[[2]](#footnote-2) was another idea. This not only provides the user a hint about how to connect devices, but the connection is also very strong, so even faster movements should not be difficult to handle. However, also there the direction of how to connect the constraint with the module is not defined.

To model the abstract brain idea, a 3D program like Fusion 360[33] or Maja[34] can be used. Fusion 360 is very useful since the program can easily be used to model 3D printing models since the model can be exported into a 3D printer readable file. A first version can be found in Figure 11.

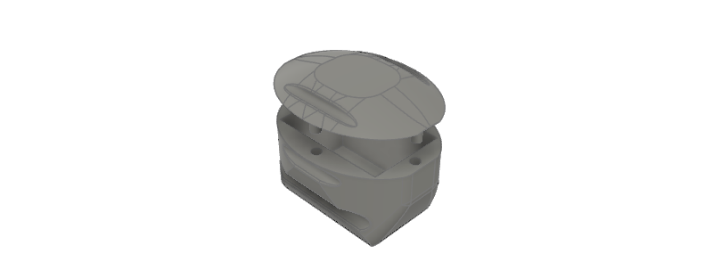


*Figure 11 shows the first version of a 3D model of the sensor module.*

The main problem with this model is that it is symmetry. This leads to the problem that users do not know how to connect it to an object. Since only one distance sensor is used, the direction of the module is important; otherwise, the observation of the users interaction will be interpreted wrong.

To hold everything in place in place, an asymmetric design has to be found, so the users automatically know how to place the module. Therefore, a base has to be modeled. This can, for example, be connect the interaction object and the sensor module via cable ties.

To be more efficient with the space and the case dimensions, the first model has been flattened, so the height of the overall model shrinks. Furthermore, more space for the sensors has been added, so all devices fit in the sensor module. In addition, an opening and closing mechanism have been added, so the device can be debugged if needed (see Figure 12).



*Figure 12 shows the second iteration of the abstract form of a brain.*

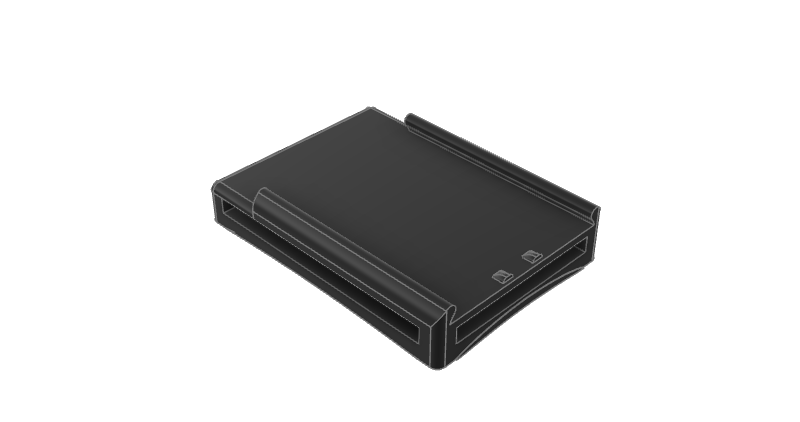
In a third iteration of the sensor module design, some space has been added to the top, so the RFID chip could also be added there. This version has been 3D printed. The whole process can be found in *Table 2*.

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*Table 2 shows the first 3D printing process.*

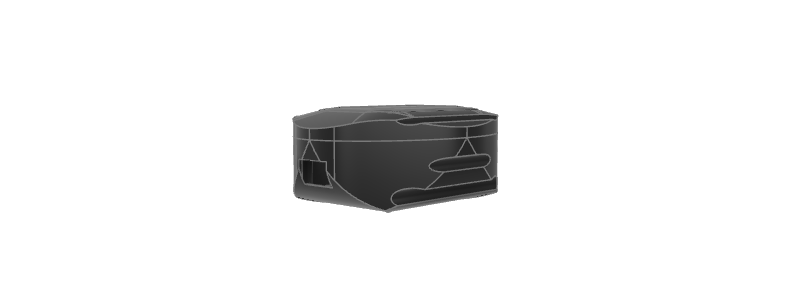
After printing out the sensor model, sensors have been checked if the sensors fit; some space could be removed. This led to a shrunken model. Furthermore, some sensors did not fit, so some bigger holes have been added. The sensors did not fit because there was a misunderstanding in the width and height values of some sensors. The datasheets used inches and not centimeters or millimeters. In addition, holes for the Micro-USB cable have been added. So, the battery that is linked to the microcontroller can be charged. Also, the space on the back of the top has been added again because the group decided to have the RFID reader on the ground.

In addition, the connection base (see Figure 13) that connects the object with the sensor module has been designed. However, it has not been printed because a new printer had to be found first. This base has four holes. These are used to wire the base to the instrument. Furthermore, a slider bar has been added. This holds the sensor model in place even if users move the model fast.



*Figure 13 shows the base model that has been designed to lock the sensor module. So, the module cannot move after locking it on the base.*

Because of using a server-client wireless network for the communication between two ESP8266 microcontrollers, a receiver module had to be designed. The client is placed in the inside of it. Later, the client is linked to the computer by a USB cable (see Figure 14).



*Figure 14 shows the receiver module for the ESP8266 client that is spired by the sensor module’s case but around half the size.*

However, after all these changes in the programming part (see 1. Programming) and what kind of communication is used, the receiver module does not need to be printed yet.

The sensors module is printed with some slight changed. First and foremost, the top of the module is not around anymore. The reason for this is the new printer that has been used. It would be difficult for the printer and the outcome would probably look bad, so a flat top is printed instead. Some smaller changes in the body of the sensor module have been done as well. In printing process can be found in *Table 3*.

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*Table 3 shows the final printing process.*

The printer uses Polylactide (PLA)[35]. This material shape change if the temperature is higher than around max. 50°C. The final sensor module can be seen in *Figure 15*.

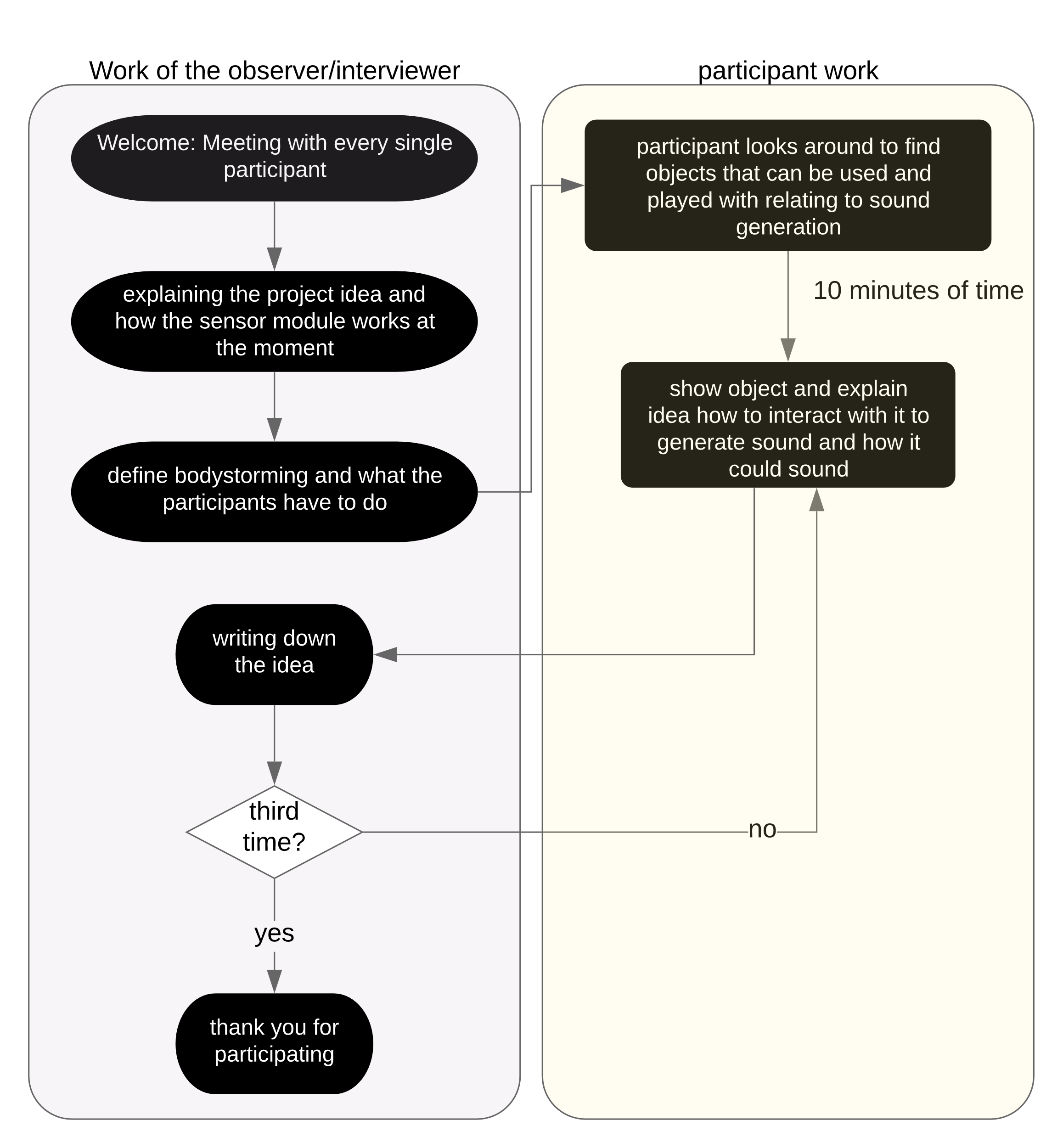
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*Figure 15 shows the final sensor module’s case with the ESP8266 that is linked to the acceleration sensor, distance sensor a sensors and the microcontroller included.*

# 4. BodySTorming

In order to get more inspiration on how to use the prototype and to find more constraints, a bodystorming session has been held. Like mentioned before, a bodystorming session has been done before (see 1. Programming); however, only the group participated. This time, more new inspiration has been found from people who have different backgrounds. In total, three students from the Bauhaus University have participated, two males and one female. The average age of these three people was 31.3. The first participant studies Human-Computer Interaction but also has a background in Design. The second, on the other hand, is studying Media Arts and Design and has a background in Music. The third participant is also studying Media Arts and Design. The bodystorming session has been held between 1 and 3 pm. The Human-Computer Interaction Lab in the Karl-Haußknecht Strasse 7 has been chosen to hold the session. In the lab, participants can find a wide range of devices and interaction properties.

A brief introduction to the project has been given. Sensors have been defined, so the participants knew what kind of interactions are possible. In addition, the sensor module has been presented and explained how it works and how it can be used to generate sound. An example has been used to explain bodystorming, and how the device can be used.

Afterwards, every participant had three sessions of 10 minutes. In this period, they had the chance to look around and use every object that is in the labor. These devices are later used to describe how they would interact with the object to create music. Furthermore, they tried to describe a sound the sensor module should create. After this time, the participants and the observer talked about their ideas (see Figure 16 ). 

*Figure 16 show an overview of how the bodystorming session for every participant was structured.*

The outcome of the bodystorming session can be found in Table 4 in the Appendix. In general, some new ideas and inspiration has been found. For example, the first participant mentioned a rope that is used by two people. These create waves with the rope by swinging it. Moreover, there was the idea playing the sensor module in a ball that is attached to a string and the other end of the string is attached to a paddle. The second participant, on the other hand, had an idea where the sensors that are inside the sensor module actually, are placed inside the surface or floor; however, the project is based around the fact that the sensor module is mobile and the data is gathered by the sensor modules movement, so it did not fit in the original idea of the project. Another idea from third participant which was out of our project scope is to use vibrations. For this, an additional sensor must be included.

Some other ideas that has been mentioned by the participants has also been mentioned the first bodystorming session of the group. For example, the sensor module can be placed inside a ball, and by throwing it, it creates a sound. Furthermore, some inspiration has been found in the guitar hero game. Another idea was when a sensor module is inside a stress ball and that ball can be squeezed or thrown around.

# conclusion

In this project, many problems occur when programming the music generation or the microcontroller: the RFID, wireless connection and MrPeach, the time delay of the wireless communication, the loading of vst-files.

The RFID-RC522 reader can technically be used via three different serial protocols (UART, I2C, and SPI[22]). All protocols have been tried but none of them worked with the ESP32 Feather. After connecting every pin correctly, the RFID reader did not respond. After two weeks of working on it, all agreed that the ESP32 should not be used anymore. Instead, the NodeMCU ESP8288 is used. With this microcontroller, everything worked well. The mistake that has been made was never found.

The sound generation over WIFI stopped the group for a long time as well. The MrPeach patch could not be included properly, so a second microcontroller has been added as a receiver. A wireless network between the ESP that was attached to the constraint/instrument and the ESP that is directly linked to the computer has been implemented to solve this problem. In this client-server network, the client received the interaction values from the server. The client sends serial data over a cable. However, the Comport patch that should have been used for this purpose cannot handle these numbers of data at once, so the notein object has been used. Later the wireless network has been removed because the delay was too long.

The problem that kept us from using a wireless connection was the communication delay. The client needed too much time to receive the interaction data from the server. To solve the problem, the ESP32 has been used as a client; however, there was no improvement. In the end, a longer cable has been used to transfer the information. However, there are ways to overcome this problem.

One of these solutions could be code/ software. Perhaps the used libraries are slow because it should not take so long. Libraries like ESP8266WiFi.h[36], ESP8266WiFiMulti.h[37] and ESP8266HTTPClient.h[38] should be included and tested. Also, the ESPAsyncWebServer library[39] could be tried out.

Another solution to this problem could be a different sensor. The NRF24L01 chip[40] could be tested, for example.

Adding vst-files to Pure Data was a major problem, and several days had to be used to find the problem without much success. A solution to this problem was never found; otherwise, there have been found some instructions on the Internet.

However, even with these many problems, the aim could be reached, and a working prototype could be developed.

# rEFLECTION

The class and its final project were interesting, the group agreed. The author came across many different topics and problems that had to be solved in a given time. Before working on the project, the class helped to learn more about tangible user interaction and Human-Computer Interaction. Still, the author would say that the project should start sooner by finding the final project idea and working on it. Before working on this project, the project meetings were not as productive as they could be. Still, this also gave time to get to know each other and build a group. A solution for this could be a project that includes two semesters. Then more theory could be taught and more time for a proper idea is given. In a class called “Idea meets technology” students had a whole semester to find a good idea. This additional time could be used to read about tangible user interaction approaches and design theory and also about finding an idea.

The project idea was never a question. We all agreed which this was the best idea, so there was no disagreement in this group. Also, another discussion like the design discussion was discussed friendly and with respect. This shows the good communication the team had.

In this project, the author had the chance to touch many different topics at once, like 3D printing, music generation and how it works and programming of different microcontrollers and sensors.

Every week and near to the deadline every day they could talk about their achievements and what they did. Splitting the team is sufficient; however, this also creates a problem because no one knows everything about the project.

Working in a project like this allowed us to have valuable experiences not only in situations where everything worked as planned but also in some bad cases whereas things were happening not as expected and how we faced those problems.

Most problems with the electronics could be fixed even if it took a bit of time. Soldering all sensors and devices should be done later in the project. Changes in the sensors or which microcontroller use which sensors appears often in the middle of the project and if the sensors are soldered already, it takes a long time to unsolder everything. However, this gave me more practice. The group could deal with problems well and always tried to find a solution by themselves first. Still, not every problem could be fixed sufficiently.

The wireless network was a big problem in the programming process. The delay of around five seconds could not be shrink to an immediate response of the system. Regarding the documentation, the time delay should have been tested more precisely. Therefore, the function millis()[41] should have been used to test the HTTP response time.

The number of participants with different backgrounds in a bodystorming session was too low. There was not too much overlap in their opinions; however, we could find out many different aspects and ideas to generate the sound. Still, the bodystorming session gave the group some further inspiration for attachments and constraints. However, three participants are perhaps not enough and more different participants with different backgrounds.

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# Appendix

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ideas / Users | User 1 | User 2 | User 3 |
| 1 | Attaching the sensor module to a rope and two people will hold the rope on each end. They will generate waves, like a Sine wave, on the rope which will trigger sound generation | The sensor module is inside a ball that is attached to a string. The user can roll the ball on a surface or spin the string in a circular motion to wrap it around one's arm | The sensor module is attached to a steel drum and a brush is used to strike the drum. The vibrations caused will trigger the sensor module and also the distance of the brush from the sensor module will be taken into account when generating sound |
| 2 | Having two sensor modules, one will be on a stick which will be used as a guitar and the other one will be in the user’s hand. Every time the two modules touch, it would generate sounds. The idea was inspired by Guitar Hero | The sensor module is inside a ball, and the ball is held in place by using a cup-like object. This allows the ball to be rotated like a trackball | The sensor module is inside a ball and the ball will be covered in bubble wrap. The popping of the bubble wrap will activate the sensors and generate sound |
| 3 | The sensor module will be inside a small and light ball, which would be thrown around using sticks with a net, similar to lacrosse, and depending on speed/acceleration of the ball, the sensor module would generate different sounds. | The sensor module is inside a ball which is similar to a stress ball. Users can squeeze it and throw it which will bounce back. | The sensor module is attached to a chalkboard and the vibration that is generated while writing with a chalk will be used to create sensor modules. |
| 4 | The sensor module is inside a ball and the ball is attached to a string. The other end of the string is attached to a paddle, similar to a table tennis paddle. The aim is to hit the ball in the target which could be the center of the paddle, which would generate certain sounds and every time the user hits the ball on the other part of the paddle, the generated sound is different | Install the sensors on a surface or floor and when an object rolls on it, or someone steps on it, it triggers the vibration sensor. The intensity will dictate how the sound is generated |  |

Table 4 shows the idea of the participants in every session.

1. Radio-frequency identification (short RFID) refers to a technology that is capable of sending information wirelessly via radio waves.[47, 48] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hook-and-loop fasteners consist of two components. Two lineal fabric strips can be attached to each other’s surfaces. The first component features tiny hooks, the second features smaller loops, so if they are connected, they are bind temporarily. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)