**Event Report 1: A Shift in Design**

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**Introduction**

Design is a powerful tool. Despite its seemingly innocent uses for achieving aesthetics and beauty, its utility is potent in affecting the way people interact with objects. Designers are capable of influencing, and even manipulating subjects using their products. In this age, many brands and platforms obtain ‘good’ UX design as they effectively prioritize, evaluate, and achieve entrancing user engagement. Despite the user experience managing to keep people utilizing their products, UX designers Johannes Ipen and Sally Woellner underscore a critical need for people to be conscious of its adverse impacts. Furthermore, Johannes Ipens “Humans, Not Users: Why UX is a Problem” presentation alongside Woellner’s “Dark Patterns: How Designs Seek to Control Us’ exemplify the predominant focus of elements and collective patterns that have effectively secured user engagement through good user experience, yet turn a blind eye in securing well being of their users.

As a web developer concentrating on front-end development, pertinent skills overlap with UX design. I will potentially be working with UX designers to create an immersive experience that is not only accessible but enhances the experience and interactions they take away from web pages. The potential collaboration will require programming of the designs we work select, reflecting my work and integrity as a web developer. Additionally, as a designer it calls to my attention the fact that my work is capable of controlling users, and that I need to evaluate whether my work resides as ethically as I strive to be. As someone who aims for user-centered design, the lessons I learned through my education have instilled my consideration for a range of individuals. I am considerate of social contexts, goals and tasks to ensure I effectively assist the real and diverse set of users who will be utilizing my projects to fulfill their information needs from my information architecture course. My policy and ethics course instilled the habits of being diligently updated in legislation within a field of technology and internet that is constantly facing innovation, and being conscientious of my own work and its ethical arguments. Overall it is critical I understand the weight and impact that may be derived from my designs.

**Humans, not Users: Why UX is a Problem**

Johannes Ipen is a UX (user experience) designer and author that is advocating for designers to shift the current practices in design. As he underscores the power of design, he effectively portrays its abilities go beyond bringing beauty into objects, it is capable of influencing, even manipulating people (Ipen, 2019). His examples begin as he denotes small elements that can have such a large impact beyond securing engagement from its users, emphasizing the power designers have.

He exemplifies how a range of elements thriving top platforms have been using in their services have been designed to attract and motivate users’ habitual and unconscious reliance and usage. He discusses the usage of a single element, the red notification buttons that we come across in our phones everyday, prominently used to attract attention as red can prompt an innate trigger. It seems naturally ingrained for us to check and evaluate what has caused this notification, or look for a message without a second thought. Meanwhile, designers have a thorough plan to elicit this response from you. The innate triggers in their designs are enhanced as designers incorporate them into a reward system that loops around triggers, actions, rewards, and investments to produce habit forming experiences (Ipen, 2019). He exemplifies this with the Snapchat streaks element that rewards friends for messaging back and forth consecutively day to day. He emphasizes how an originally innocent fun feature showcasing relationships ended up inciting anxiety and fear of missing out, causing labor and compulsive usage to ensure this fun feature is not lost (Ipen, 2019). It is crazy how attached I feel to apps and hold myself accountable for lacking control when these services have been able to disrupt your control and conscious usage with their designs. He successfully encapsulates how these big services like Facebook, Snapchat, and Twitch services are not prioritizing you but themselves as they simply catch and kidnap your attention to monetize from their advertisements effectively (Ipen, 2019).

Ipen motivates designers to advocate and work towards the shift into ‘human centered design’. After recognizing the power held in his designs, Ipen guides conscientious design for users’ mindful usage, straying from blindly securing user engagement. Ipen begins encouraging looking into users’ dreams and purpose in life that your product could be a part of (Ipen, 2019). Ipen discusses real-world applications he has taken initiative in, such as his involvement in designing Sanadak. Sanadak is helping vulnerable users, war refugees dealing with PTSD. The design has dismissed the prominent element of notifications that attract attention and habits that nag returning users. Instead, the distinct innate red colors associated with the notifications has been incorporated into a single button ‘emergency’ that sits in the homescreen, simply waiting there for when his users in case of a stress attack are in need of the service. He aligns with the user-centered mindset I want to achieve, gaining my support for his advocacy. He efficiently reinforces that designers are not simply visualizers, they can resemble psychologists and researchers in the way their work can influence and impact through their products.

**Dark Patterns: How Design Seeks to Control Us**

Sally Woellner is a UX designer advocating awareness of dark patterns users are frequently facing, alongside numerous solutions to combat their unforeseen harm prompt action mitigating their adverse control. She briefly goes over the charming goals of providing users with digital spaces that are easier and more delightful than stray as online platforms seek to make controlling experiences. Like Ipen, her experience and current developments in the field have disappointed her ideals. The current state of UX design as someone who entered the field in pursuit of adding beauty into the world yet finding these addictive and controlling designs stray from her ideals.

Woellner informs her audience of four dark patterns pervasively incorporated in a variety of diverse apps. She provides a comprehensive understanding of the range of online platforms and services that take advantage of these techniques. She presents the misdirection pattern employed by StubHub to influence your behavior as they keep the total price from you. The added fees and tax, and sneaky selectable insurance are only revealed after a user rushes through screens requiring input of personal information, right before you purchase your ticket (Woellner, 2022). I have been a victim to this technique time and time again from numerous sites, frequently accompanied by anxiety of getting tickets before they sell out. She successfully helped me familiarize with the term and connect them with real world examples. Woellner continues by expressing more severe examples, and how the priority of user engagement bypasses the well being of their users, ultimately conjuring harm. It is exemplified by the privacy zuckering mental health platforms are performing even to their vulnerable users who are in grave need of privacy and respect, yet have their information sold and shared to social media platforms to help them target better content for you( Woellner, 2019). On top of this disregard, “7/10 apps failed to even meet basic measures of clinical quality” (Woellner, 2022). She exemplifies and warns of the harms and disregard that platforms dump upon their users as they aim to better serve themselves as opposed to ensuring quality service to their users.

Woellner finally advocates an inclusive global audience to take action. She expands on the data zuckering from mental health platforms being an issue relevant to a legislative scope as design and technology unfortunately innovate faster than law maintain pace with, allowing it to bypass strict laws therapists and counselors controlling such privy information are required to respect (Woellner, 2022). She provides hope in the shift aligned with the ideal of design as tool for good as opposed to harm. Be an informed user, choosing platforms that respect you and use your data ethically as well as being informed about dark patterns so that you can avoid being trapped by them (Woellner, 2022). She additionally encourages your advocacy against these patterns by lobbying for legislative changes and awareness as well. She encourages effective advocacy, mentioning the successful efforts in changing legislation in the European Union and United Kingdom outlawing several predatory dark patterns (Woellner, 2022). Woellner ensures users they are worthy of conscientious services that will respect their needs and goals as opposed to a means to an end for the online platforms utilizing manipulative tactics to get users to behave under a brand’s ideals and desired influence.

**Conclusion**

The altruistic ideals Johannes Ipen and Sally Woellner advocate for have my full support in taking action towards a shift in design. They present distinct examples that collectively provide a comprehensive suite of design techniques raising awareness of the day to day impact they have on users. Besides allowing users to bear witness to these practices, they give a new lens to observe why platforms need to be held accountable for participating in such practices. The altruistic advocacy these creators convey in speaking out against their own field’s successful work due to its expense to its users instills reliability, trust and support. They strengthen and support their advocacy as they provide possible solutions calling for users to designers to take action and help shift UX design to truly beautiful design in our digital platforms. It aligns with my ideals of user centered design that serves the dreams, goals, and tasks of my users as opposed to using them as a means to an end for my services.

**References**

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