

Reflection Preparation FMP

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This project was both challenging and enlightening. Before the project, I attempted to find a suitable company to collaborate with. I had an email conversation with someone from Homey, but it is safe to say they did not know what to do with an Industrial Designer. Based on this, I realised that being more proactive and seeking input from others might have helped. However, once I settled on a topic that excited me, my enthusiasm about the topic significantly boosted my motivation to continue. I finally got to do a project about my main interest: Smart homes. I learned about the weaknesses of current smart home systems when it comes to creating automations, something I did not initially expect to find before starting the project as a tech-savvy smart home user. Now, I see ample room for improvement regarding automation editors.

After the literature review, I struggled to find a way forward. I brainstormed through sketching and quick prototyping, but I felt the project lacked some crucial creativity. A breakthrough came during a meeting with Matthias, where we discussed methods to spark creativity. It became clear that creativity can be triggered through a structured approach rather than relying solely on inspiration.

This was new to me. Previously, all my creative moments just sort of “happened” by starting to work on something and hoping good ideas would come halfway through. Now I learned that, while creativity can't exactly be forced, it can be triggered using the right method. In future projects, I will explore other methods to trigger creativity or attempt to create my own approach. Combinational creativity, which has a similar effect as the card set, seems to me like it can be applied in many different ways. Being aware that combining two ideas is a very common source of creativity will be very helpful going forward. This feels like a big development for me when it comes to *Creativity & Aesthetics*.

Another new thing I did, was using a game to gather data. This sparked a new interest in the expertise area of *User & Society* for me. I have always seen this expertise area as a (boring) requirement of a design process, after all, you need input from users to design for users. But it can also be fun! Of course, gathering data is serious and needs to be done thoroughly, but creating a game kind of feels like a game in and of itself.

As a smart home user myself, it was helpful to try out many different combinations of cards from the card set. This allowed me to narrow down what I needed to learn from the workshop, as well as make it easier to adjust the game rules to make it playable and enjoyable for the participants. My experience as a user was valuable to have in this project, and I truly believe that having experienced what you're designing for would be valuable in any project.

Leading up to Demoday, I had concerns about demonstrating something impactful, given my previous experiences of rushing to finish prototypes. This time, I decided to incorporate Demoday into my project and use it as an opportunity to collect valuable data. I turned the table into an interactive game board, allowing visitors to contribute their ideas, which resulted in several automation concepts and some nice observations about the added value of the card set. Despite being located in the darkest corner of the entire exhibition space with the lowest visitor traffic.

Although I liked my stand and the idea of printing something the size of the table, I did learn something about making big prints like this. First of all, the resolution should not be too high, or else the print will never reach the printer. My file size was only 2 megabytes, but the resolution was too big, which I did not know was possible. Additionally, handling and cutting a sheet of paper as long as I am tall (181cm) is very clumsy. If I ever want or need to produce large prints like this again, I should consider splitting it up into multiple files. That will help with both issues, a nice learning point regarding *Technology & Realization*.

Writing the project report was generally smooth, aided by the visual overview I maintained throughout the project. I attempted a new structured writing approach, outlining sections and bullet points before fleshing them out, which proved efficient. While I experimented with using AI for text generation, I found it provided nothing useful. I honestly have no idea how people manage to make AI write their assignments, it never works for me. Probably because AI didn't do this project, but I did. One way I can speed up the writing process even more in the future is by writing the bullet points to use in the report within the visual overview I'm keeping.

Within this overview, I did include regular small reflections throughout the process. Not only was this helpful in writing this reflection, but it helped me steer the process as well. In some cases, writing down what I was struggling with allowed me to realise what I needed to do to fix it. It's like clearing my head by writing down my struggles, opening up some space for the ideas to flow in. That was nice, I will keep doing that.

I intentionally decided to leave the programming part of home automation out of the project scope. I first wanted to focus on the automation ideas themselves, perhaps the programming could come in the next project. Having a realistic scope from the start felt much calmer than having to remove some parts from the project scope halfway. Simultaneously, it makes it easier to plan a project. Perhaps, having too large scopes is what kept me from planning my projects better in the past, so this realisation might help me plan my next project better.