

DCM-100 Individual Reflection

Helena Mossel - 2012588

Before this course, I primarily saw research as a preliminary step in my design process, a way to gather information on a topic before ideating solutions. However, this course challenged and expanded my understanding of research, showing me that research can be a means to satisfy my curiosity and generate new knowledge rather than simply solving a problem.

Through achieving my first learning goal, to understand various research methodologies, I learned about the lab, field, showroom, and studio approaches, recognizing that each has strengths and weaknesses. It became clear that there is no "better" methodology; rather, the choice depends on the research context and the type of knowledge sought. I was particularly intrigued to learn that these methodologies can be combined for richer, more diverse data. For instance, starting with studio research could generate personal knowledge of the topic to help inform a second phase of research with the methodology of field research to generate knowledge close to the target group.

In addition to understanding methodology, this course taught me how to use design within research through artefacts, such as prototypes for inquiry rather than solutions. This mindset shift was initially challenging, as I'm used to seeking answers rather than asking questions. However, using research artefacts to pose questions during our field study on user interfaces for low-literacy adults helped me see the value of inquiry. This experience allowed me to learn field research, which I chose due to my passion for close, empathetic engagement with users, to understand the local issues. Conducting interviews and deploying our research helped me work on my learning goal of being more sensitive and pick up interesting insights, as I want to become a better designer that is keenly sensitive to aspects of what is going on around them and use the observation to inform and inspire my work.

Seeing other teams' presentations further deepened my understanding. For instance, the group using the Showroom methodology for the same topic, provided an emotional, awareness-focused perspective on low-literacy issues, which contrasted with the more experience-based, guideline-oriented insights we obtained through fieldwork. This contrast illustrated how methodologies influence not just data types but also the perspectives they bring to light.

Overall, this course reshaped my view of research as a tool not just for solutions, but for inquiry and understanding. The skills I gained, such as organizing semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis, and building prototypes, give me confidence to use field research in future projects, including my upcoming M1.2 semester. Achieving this way my last learning goal for this course. However, there is still space to grow, I hope to further develop my observational skills and sensitivity as a designer.

Looking ahead, I envision myself in a research role within an industry R&D department, using field methodologies to bridge the gap between academic research and practical application. I want my research to make a direct impact, using insights to develop designs that resonate with real users and bring meaningful change. This course has not only equipped me with new methodologies but has also clarified my vision for research as a humane, curious, and impactful pursuit.