

Ever since I have started to incorporate proper literature research in my projects I have been interested in design research. After my internship, which was in a company that conducts design research which is mostly ethnographic research, I realized that I am mostly interested in research through design. For this reason, I was excited to follow the Constructive Design Research course. Also, after having read 'Speculative Everything' by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby and having developed a general interest in design fiction and futures, I was sure that I wanted to find out how the Showroom methodology could be a respected way of doing design research as well.

My learning goal for this course was to understand how to design and conduct a Showroom type of research, as well as how to present it in such a way that it could be regarded as proper and useful research. I believe that I reached those goals and gained many insights on how to use the methodology in the future, maybe combined with (one of) the other methodologies.

Picking a topic for me was one of the most interesting parts of the process. During our brainstorming and discussions, we were constantly trying to find a balance between going into a direction that was too far off and restricting ourselves too much. After the first feedback session, I realized that was not the real problem; we first had to find a societal problem related to technology, after that the ideas for more concrete research topics followed from our discussions quite naturally, as long as we were not afraid to go a bit crazy. I believe that the real challenge was in turning this topic of discussion into a working prototype that would help us to actually gain insights.

While designing the prototype, we faced a contradiction. Our prototype had to look and feel realistic, but still be provocative enough. We came up with the general idea quite quickly, but as we wanted to provoke a very specific type of reaction, the details in the interaction had to be just right. Therefore, I believe I learned a lot about interaction design in general. In Showroom, the look and feel of the prototype is maybe even more important than in the other methodologies, because people need to be as unaware as possible of its provocative nature. They can only find out at the moment that we as designers decided on. In this project, we carefully designed that moment and the process towards it.

In gathering and analyzing the results again was the danger of being too clinical, trying to get numbers. In the end we decided to mostly use qualitative data in the form of quotes of our analysis and main conclusions, which I believe is the right way to approach it in Showroom. Also, the way we set up the process of gathering data (interviewing through provocative questions) showed to be quite effective in getting people to talk about their opinions and attitude towards data sharing.

Connected to that, for presenting we chose to let our participants speak and showed videos as well as quotes. This proved to be very effective to open up the discussion around our topic. After a while, I even started to feel guilty for showing our data. Exactly this shows how effective our research had been; without us noticing, we had taken up the role of evil data gatherers ourselves, therefore being able to reflect on the topic on a whole different level. I think in the end this is where the true power of Showroom lies; it has the ability to let people take up a role they wouldn't otherwise, making them feel what it's like to be in that situation and being able to reflect upon it afterwards, basically providing ethnographic research by becoming the subject. This counts for both participants, researchers and the audience reviewing the research; together they enable a discussion from different viewpoints.

In conclusion, I definitely want to try to use the Showroom approach in my research project. I am in general extremely interested in how technological developments relate to societal trends, and I believe that the Showroom approach is a very fitting way to find out how far technology can go, how far it should go and where it definitely shouldn't. Using quality prototypes that carefully guide users through the interaction is a must, and pre-defining the roles of the participants, researchers and audience can be a powerful tool to gain even more valuable insights.

ROLE IN THE TEAM

I believe I had the most prior knowledge about the Showroom approach of the whole group. Because of this, over the whole process I felt that my role has been mostly to watch our process and be critical on our work, in all stages of the process. I constantly tried to ask critical questions about what we actually wanted to find out and how this fit with the vending machine and interaction we designed.

Besides that, I felt that it was very important to also guide participants in the discussion that came afterwards, and I took the lead on carefully designing that process. I also conducted most of the interviews, trying to get the most out of the discussion by listening to what participants were saying and trying to provoke them to think about their answers even more.

I also took up most of the literature research. At the beginning of the process, we divided the framing research amongst us and all took our part, but compiling it for the research proposal was mostly done by me. Later in the process I extended the literature research for the presentation as well as the report, to make sure we had a round story to tell.

Last, I believe we had a great group, and worked together very well throughout the process. This means that although it wasn't necessarily my main responsibility, I also helped with designing the prototype, building the prototype and doing observations.