Emma van Zoelen

A Personal Development Plan

M1.1

Vision

In our constantly changing world, many people get lost in the chaos of technological development and political struggles. **It seems like we all long for a way to cope with these developments, something that gives meaning to everything we do, something that inspires us and stimulates our imagination.**

At the moment, most innovations and technologies advance in such a way that they don't bring real value to our lives or society anymore. They help us in all sorts of practical ways, but no one seems to stand still to think about the cultural and societal effects. The way they are implemented now, they often destroy our creativity and imagination. **I believe though that, when combined with good design, technology has the potential to bring us the spark that will make us enjoy the little things in life again. It should stimulate and help us to be creative and imaginative.**

Instead of designing a future product, I believe we should design a future world. A future in which technology is not added to our society, but in which it creates and cooperates with our society. In this, it should make use of the value we have as people by encouraging and enabling us to live life to the fullest, find joy in the simple things and create our own stories of life.

To achieve this goal, designers with a vision should cooperate across disciplines to be able to match (inter)national policymaking with technological development.

Identity

I am Emma and I like to think about life.

Ever since I was a child, I have always been interested in fairytales, magic and stories. Even as I grew older, I kept on wondering whether some kind of magic would be possible in this world, whether the stories I read about could ever be true. I think that stories, especially in the genres of Fantasy and Science-Fiction, challenge the view we have on the world. They create scenarios of how society might be different when some aspects would change. **I think technology and design gives us the possibility to add a magic touch to our life to create our own stories and memories in reality.**

I design through narratives and stories, to first live through the experience myself and search for the most meaningful aspect. **I believe that writers and storytellers are designers of worlds, whereas many people are designers of little aspects. I want to design systems that take a vision of a future world into account, by using narratives and stories.**

I am a person who thinks about the way society and people work. **I often wonder what the world would look like if certain technologies or ways of dealing with life would be different. I wonder what the changes would do to us, the people, what it would do with our feelings and perception of the world.**

Following from this, I have a great curiosity for the way people think. I am always looking to find out who someone truly is.

I want to research and experiment with the connection between emotions and technology in the interaction between intelligent systems and people. I want to find out how people experience the world and how I can help them to experience it in a more positive and imaginative way.

I am...

- A Perfectionist

I always want to deliver good work and therefore always work precise. I have eye for detail. Also, I can't stand people that are satisfied with a minimum.

- Analytical

I have a talent for mathematics and analytical thinking. This helps me to solve and think in complex problems.

- Empathic

People interest me; I have a great curiosity for the way people think and behave. I believe I am good at understanding why people do certain things, even if I don't agree with them.

- Serious

I take everything I do seriously. I will always listen to people and sincerely do the best I can.

- A Storyteller (especially verbal and written)

Telling, debating, presenting, writing... They are my passions. I love to capture, intrigue and touch people with my stories.

Introduction

Over the last three years, I have grown a lot. I changed from a high school student who was just following her talents and hobbies to a confident and independent designer. I do feel though that there is still a lot for me to learn, if I want to become a mature and professional design researcher. **Since I feel that Industrial Design is an environment that constantly inspires me and challenges me, I have chosen to continue into the Master's program.**

However, I did long for a way to put my talent for mathematics and theoretical, analytical thinking to use. While ID still greatly challenges me, I wanted to look into another direction too, to get the most out of my studies. Therefore, **I have also started in the Master's program of Artificial Intelligence at the University of Utrecht. I plan to do the track 'Agents', which means that I will learn a lot about doing research in and designing intelligent agents and multi-agent systems, how they are coded and how they work logically.**

Having this theoretical and mathematical background in Utrecht will allow me to focus on the more creative, user and society focused areas at ID. Therefore, the first elective I will do will be Composing Everyday Rituals. For my project I have chosen to work in the Smart Mobility squad, since it is an area where the technology is already quite advanced, but the implementation in society is still quite far away. I am looking forward to working in a team where I will be able to use everyone's talents to do a successful project.

Within my projects I hope to combine the two by working on complex technologies and their implementation in society. The two expertise areas that I would like to focus on during my Master's are User & Society and Math, Data & Computing.

LONG TERM
Looking across disciplines and envisioning what role technology might play in a future world is what I would love to do in the future. **My dream job would be to work at a quite large company that can afford to do research on future and more long-term solutions. In that company, I would like to work on implementing technologies in such a way that they bring value to society.** Having a team around me with both engineers and social scientists will help me to stay critical and use their viewpoints to lead the research into a certain direction.

Learning Objectives

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
Within this program, I hope to focus on system design, logic and programming. While I do not see myself as a computer scientist or a coder, I do see myself as a designer of complex systems, or at least hope to become that. Studying AI will help me to achieve this goal and become an expert in the area of Math, Data and Computing.

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN
Within this program, I hope to focus on society, how technology is part of our lives, how it influences our daily rituals and our general way of living. I believe that the politics of design and technological development is very important in this. This focus will help me to become an expert in the area of User and Society.

OVERALL
In both programs, I hope to learn more about research and research methods. I consider the combination of research and design to be extremely interesting and relevant and through the courses and projects that I will follow in the Master's I hope to acquire more knowledge about it.

Goals

LOGIC IN COMPLEX SYSTEMS Learn about logic by following logic lectures, and understand how it can be used in the creation of intelligent agents. I want to apply this knowledge in my project by taking up the task of modeling out the system of our final design, especially the way the system should be thinking to enable the interaction.

MULTI-AGENT SYSTEMS AND EMERGENT BEHAVIOUR Learn about multi-agent systems, emergent behaviour and communication by following lectures related to agent technology.

RITUALS AND DAILY LIFE Since I am interested in how technology will change our society and way of living, I would like to learn about how people's daily rituals are influenced by technology, and how we can use design to compose these rituals in a certain way. For this reason I chose to follow the elective 'Composing Everyday Rituals'. In the project, I plan to focus on the scenarios surrounding our design through storyboards and other methods I hope to learn in the elective. At the end of the project, I want to have clearly analyzed an interaction scenario people go through when interacting with our design on how it will become part of their daily rituals.

SOCIETAL FOCUS For my project, I wanted to work on the implementation of a complex technology in society. Being in the Smart Mobility squad gives me the opportunity to look at such a technology that is actually starting to become part of our society. Therefore I would like to focus on how to design for trust and user experience, on which I will do some literature research and conduct user field research at least twice. Besides that, I want to write a critical scenario for the far future of how this technology might shape our society.

RESEARCH At the moment, I am still doubting whether I want to take the research or the industry focus in my ID Master's. Since my dream job would be to do research in a corporate context, I believe both would suit me, but both require different research approaches. By conducting a small research project in my AI Master's, I will gain more experience with academic research. Besides that, I want to investigate what research in a corporate context looks like by looking at vacancies and talking with companies through Lucid activities.

TEAMWORK This semester, I will be working in several teams in ways that I haven't before. First of all, within my design project, the challenge for me is to design in such a way that everyone's personality comes back in our work, since we are a team of experienced designers. I plan to regularly discuss what everyone wants to get out of the project to achieve this. Within the AI Master's, I will be working in a multidisciplinary in which I hope to learn a lot from the people I work with. A challenge will be to add my own value in a group with people who have more concrete skills. I will do this by taking the lead in the group and taking care of the general project management.

The End

Thank you for reading. I hope you enjoyed looking at my
plans.
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