



Emma van Zoelen

A Personal Development Plan

M1.2



Vision

I believe we should design a future world, instead of designing merely a future product. A future world in which technology is not added to our society, but in which it creates and cooperates with our society.

Many innovations and technologies advance in such a way that they don't bring real value to our lives or society. They help us in all sorts of practical ways, but no one seems to stand still to truly think about the cultural and societal effects on a bigger scale. Most people either just accept that these technologies are there, losing themselves in the chaos of fast developments, or they become afraid that technology will take over the Earth and become a danger to the human race.

This creates a challenge. The challenge to make technology **that enables people and artificial intelligence systems to work together on the same level, to empower people in using their imagination, to encourage people to live life to the fullest and create their 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 think. A lot. About the world, society, life, death... And about technology and the role it has to play in the story of the human race.

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. Stories, especially in the genres of Fantasy and Science-Fiction, help in challenging the views we have on the world. They create scenarios of how society might be different when some aspects would change.

Therefore, 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 want to research the interaction between intelligent systems and people, and how they can empower each other. I want to find out how people experience the world and how I can help them to experience it in a more 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

This semester, I am going to do a research project in the Connecting Realities squad. While the topic of this squad fits my interests, I believe I will also get a lot of freedom to define a topic I find interesting. My main aim is therefore to get the most out of the project by defining a topic that both greatly interests me as well as a topic that clearly originates from existing literature. But most of all, I just want to get as much as possible out of this semester.

I hope to combine my two Master programs by working on complex technologies and their implementation in society. The two expertise areas that I am focusing on during my Masters 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

RESEARCH I have now decided to do the ‘Constructive Design Research’ track here at ID. However, this semester will be the first time I will conduct a real research project. To get the most out of it and learn how to acquire knowledge that is worth writing about in a paper, I plan to finish a research plan based on literature in the second week of the semester. This research plan will then be a guideline for the rest of the semester, and includes a research question and literature based hypothesis.

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT Since I really enjoy coming up with research topics and in general like gathering knowledge, I want to understand a bit better what the world of academic research looks like. Also, thinking about my future, I think it would be very good if I can manage to publish something. Therefore, I want to put a lot of time in writing my paper. I hope to start writing by the end of Q1, being supported by my research plan. I will also ask feedback on the paper at least 2 times before handing it in.

DEFINING THE FUTURE I want to use this semester to define more clearly what I want to do for my AI thesis, which I will hopefully start in April. For this, I would like to have drafted a project outline (or a few) by the end of Q1, including a list of companies that I would be interested in working with.

AI AND SOCIETY Within my project, in terms of topic I would like to explore roles for AI in society. I am especially interested in synergy between AI and humans, to help them both reach their maximum potential. In general, this is my great interest for now, and I hope that researching this topic in this project will help me to define what I would like to do for my AI and ID theses too. Also, in the course ‘Philosophy in AI’ I will discuss several topics related to this. I will frequently reflect on how these topics might influence my project and its impact.

PROGRAMMING AND COMPLEX SYSTEMS In Q2, I will be following a course about Cognitive Modeling. I hope that this will help me to get a better understanding of how to model (complex) systems. Also, it will give me an introduction in R and therefore help me to improve my technical skillset, something I will hopefully be able to use in projects. Next to that, I want to learn Python, as it is a relatively easy but widely used programming language. I will build a prototype with a Raspberry Pi that I will program with Python.



The End

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

Contact me at emmavanzoelen@gmail.com