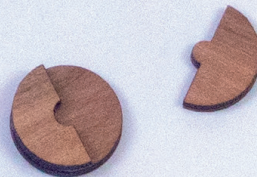


PAROLI

REFLECTION ON FINAL MASTER PROJECT

2018 | 2019



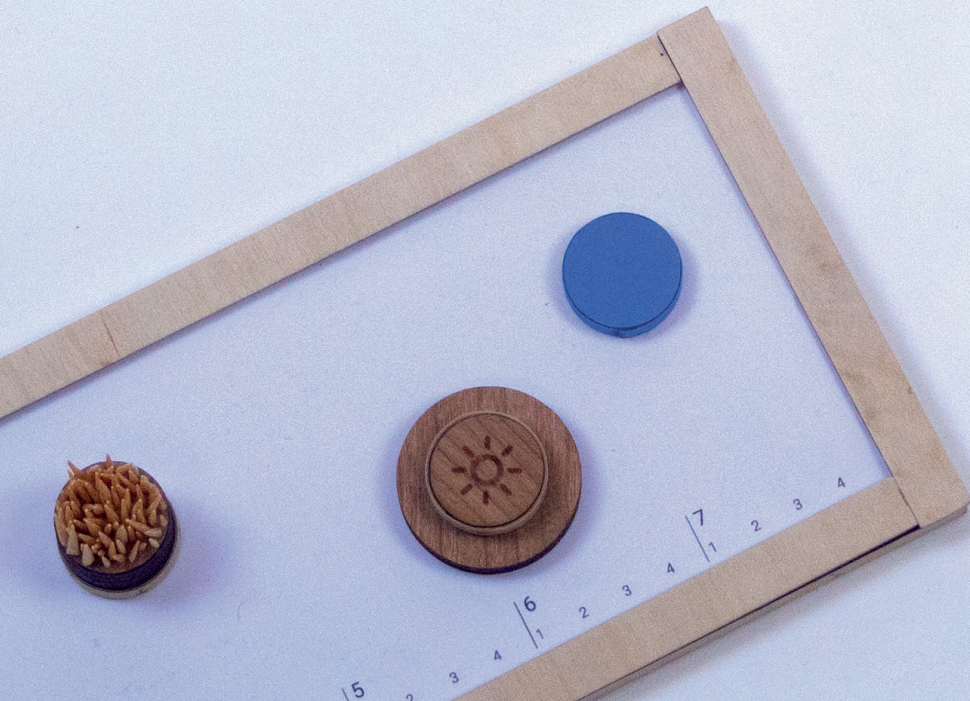
IN COLLABORATION WITH
PHILIPS DESIGN



COACH
CAROLINE HUMMELS



FINAL MASTER STUDENT
MINERVA LOOS



PERSONAL REFLECTION

As the final element of my Master studies, this project offered to me the opportunity to apply my learnings of these past semesters.

After having explored the topic of perinatal health care during my research semester, I got the opportunity to dive deeper into the topic in my Final Master project. I was very happy about this possibility, as I had already identified the topicality of the issue and wanted to explore what designers could do to address societal challenges like this one.

Not only the project itself, but also the collaboration with Philips evolved along the process of this year. It went from an inspirational cooperation running in parallel in the beginning to a ever stronger linked and mutually influenced cooperation. Adapting to this changes was sometimes challenging, as I had to, on top of constantly reframing my own focus, also take an external perspective into account for my work. However, eventually this allowed me to learn a lot about the interests of such a big company, about their approaches and how value is developed. Even though at some points in the process I felt like this process could be bringing me further away from my project goals, this was actually the only way in which I was able to understand the perspective and positioning of a stakeholder like Philips in this context and learn from their experiences. Already the diversity within the team supporting us, their different views on certain topics and personal interests gave me an interesting overview. Working in this context was indeed very enriching and I think it would have been beneficial to schedule moments of exchange more regularly already in the initial phase of this project. A close exchange in the initial project positioning phase could have promoted the development of a more coordinated alignment of our projects from the beginning.

What helped me to navigate through this whole process was the collaboration with Nicky. With her as a fellow student working on this project by my side, I had someone to relate to who was going through the same process and was most of the times experiencing the same difficulties. While sometimes it felt like this made the project reach a dimension which was too big for me to bring further, it was very helpful to have someone to reflect on project together. I think we both benefited from having a second pair of eyes and ears to gather insights, identify issues and develop plans of how to overcome them.

The collaboration with Nicky was specially helpful when it came to the organizational part of this project. The process of establishing contact with all the stakeholders, experts and users and organizing the meetings with them was facilitated by the fact that we could divide tasks and were two people keeping an overview of the situation. This was specially supportive against the background of the time it takes the stakeholders in this context to react, their limited availability and the challenge to arrange moments of exchange with them. Hence, being two people working on the same topic helped to tackle the very practical manifestation of the complexity of this project.

For the more abstract levels of complexity of this project, the exchange with Nicky has helped me, but I needed to figure out how to tackle them in my work on an individual level. Difficult in this context was the same aspect that motivated me to pursue the project in the first place. The lack of a given procedure structure made it necessary for me to find the way for this project as I went along with it. The highly qualitative nature of this work furthermore made it difficult to find helping guidelines. Often, mainly in the moments in which the project needed a shift in direction, I struggled

to find supporting examples or references which I could base my decisions on. In these moments, I experienced to have an intuitive understanding of the directions that would need to be taken. However, in the beginning I was scared to follow this intuition. With time, I noticed that sometimes it was the only possible way to move further. What I think is really important in moments like this is to, first of all, learn to understand the own intuitive thoughts and then to validate them in field. Unlike in projects with a more quantitative nature, where you can test a certain assumption with the help of set guidelines and rules, I believe that sometimes the only way to evaluate the validity of a direction in this type of projects is to test them in context. Important here is to keep in mind that they are assumptions and to be prepared and open to look for another way.

That's why I believe that it is necessary that we, along with the projects for systemic change, also develop the methodologies for this, by describing and sharing our work. I think that thus a framework of how to navigate through the process of designing for transformation can slowly be built up.

As my project was developed within the Research, Design and Development track, I started my work with the classic design approach in mind. The process of this project however, as I described in this report, shifted the result from the expected outcome of a working prototype which I could test in field, to a tool aimed at researching the context and providing an understanding of it. Initially I planned to improve my math and computing skills within this project by creating the digital platform I envisioned as part of my concept. However, during the process and in exchange with Philips, it became evident that this would not be a valuable contribution for the project. As the project is still in its initial phase, what was needed

at this stage are insights about the context rather than high fidelity prototypes. That's the reason why, contrary to what I planned in the beginning, I didn't spend a lot of time on developing my technological skills further. Hence, while in this project I focused on my core areas of expertise, I used the opportunity to develop the other skills in my electives. Looking back at where I started 2,5 years ago, I can say that I am very satisfied with my personal development, not least when looking at the outcomes, with one project (volo) being exhibited at the DDW and in a museum exhibition, another one (FRANK) being presented at the TEI 2019 conference in and one being prepared to be sent to the DIS conference.

This project allowed me to apply and develop my skills on the area of creativity and aesthetics through my work, which I tackled with an approach developed from the perspective of the individual users and their bigger societal context.

The strong involvement of users and the focus on their personal values and needs is what guided my work. Through the constant exchange with them, I experienced their appreciation and confirmation of the importance of my work, which always gave me the energy and motivation to continue. Through this encounter I learned a lot, not only for the development of this project, but also for me as a person.

Overall, I can say that I am satisfied with the outcome of the project, even though I have struggled with the fact of developing something that is so different from what we are used to within this faculty, and as designers in general. I think that if I would have approached the project with a different mind-set from the beginning, freeing myself earlier from the idea of what I think is required from me as a student and focusing instead on what I think the situation demands for, it would

have made it easier for me to navigate through the process of the project. However, I don't believe that the type of the result would have been a different one, as I think this is what is most valuable for the stage of process we are looking at. Hence, I think that designers should, rather than thinking about how to make their projects fit the expected outcome, explore what is the most appropriate outcome for the different stages of a project. This can even lead to rethinking if the academic requirements we impose are still fitting the design challenges we are facing and if we need to re-evaluate them to promote a shift towards designing for transformation.