

Rich Viz
1/3

Experimental elective course 'Rich Visualisation'

ECTS – 3

Number of students – 20

Required courses – id4215 Context and Conceptualisation

Period 3rd & 4th quarter

Course responsible: prof. dr. P.J. Stappers.

Instructors: dr.ir. R. van der Lugt, C. van der Lelie, ir. F. Sleswijk Visser.

Admission on the basis of motivation (portfolio elements may be supportive)

Description

In user-centered design, use-centered design and context-driven design, it is considered important that the designer or (multidisciplinary) design team establishes a high level of empathy with the user group for whom he or she is designing.

A powerful way of accomplishing this is *to immerse the design team in the user experience*, while at the same time let the design team reflect on that user experience from their respective expertises.

Immersive techniques for this purpose are, a.o., collages, storyboards, videos, scenarios, personas, personal cardsets, videocollages, certain kinds of weblogs, play-acting, and media uses. To some extent, these techniques are part of the Industrial Design Engineering curriculum, and industrial practice, but besides examples of good practice and general guidelines, a lot is still unknown.

This elective course has theoretical and practical components. The theory part comes in a seminar form, where students and instructors will discuss literature on the subject. The practical part (largest part) consists of a number of workshops and assignments, in which participants design and make immersive/reflective representations of user experiences, based on existing examples and guidelines from theory.

The project is tied to the contextmapping research project.

Times of meetings will be set at the beginning of the course to accommodate the different study schedules of participants as far as possible.

In submitting a motivation on 1 page A4, students should indicate why they are interested in developing these skills, and show examples of their earlier work in depicting user experiences, infographics, or other visualizations (if available). Deadline for handing in is December 23, 2005; notification of acceptance is given by January 13, 2006.

Note: we are looking for a real-world dataset from a contextmappings study, and a real-world company to be involved as 'users' of the visualisations (and sponsors for the materials).

Form of the course

Aim of the course is to learn together about rich visualisation, and that the staff learns as much from the students as the students from the staff. The course consists of work with the whole group, mostly in the form of workshops, in small groups, and individual work.

visualisation in people-centered design:

between empathy and overview, between immersion and reflection.

Information about users and contexts is multi-faceted, multi-layered, and incomplete. The way designers make use of this information is often described as ‘immersing themselves in the user data’, to step into the user’s shoes. But also, the design team needs to step back from the empathic experience, and reflect on the relations between the various elements of the context, the user, the product, etc.

Similar to an explorer, the designer comes to the terrain of user experience armed with a map of the context. But what is the form of the map? Visualisations of various kinds are used. Although there is considerable expertise about how these are used in practice and research, many of the known examples are not optimal. They are informative or inspiring, but not both. They support empathy or overview, but not both. In this course, we want to find principles that help bridge the gap, and create outstanding examples of such visualisations.

Context factors	Aspect	Techniques and visualisations
People	Individuals and groups	Personas, Personal cards, group cards
Places	Situations	Videocollages, collages
Time	Narratives	Scenarios, Storyboards
Complexity, diversity	Overview, integration, separation	School charts, infographics

Steps

3rd quarter: piloting

1. Lecture(s) presenting basic theory about visualisation, communication, and design communication in particular. Theory addresses levels as in table I, and contains cognitive/perceptual principles and practical guidelines. Contextual information and visualization goals are formulated and divided over the participants.
2. Three or four exploration workshops (in #s) on personas, storyboarding, videocollages, and maps; hands-on guided experience in making some visualisations and understanding their functions.
3. Individually, students read startup literature, find more literature and examples; make first visualisations of topic.
4. Findings seminar/workshop: findings, ideas and first visualisations are discussed by whole group; suggestions and help is given by participants to improve visualisations based on theory and findings.

4th quarter: tuning

5. Individual tuning and perfecting of visualisations. Small group meetings to improve the visualisations. Several iterations to create very good examples of rich visualizations.
6. testing the visualisations workshop, if possible with a design team (do they inspire, do they convey, do they invite, ...)
7. round-off (plenary)
evaluations of findings, maybe an exposition.

Level	
Pragmatics	Who in the design team uses what kind of visualised (aspects of users, situations, ...) how, when and for which decisions/associations/explorations...
Semantics	Which cognitive/perceptual principles give guidance in transferring messages, giving overview, and inviting empathy (e.g., Miller's 7+/-2, faceism ratio, Stroop effect, positive steering, rhetoric of 3, chunking, prototypes, hierarchy ...).
Syntactics	What are the evocative values of different aesthetic styles and effects? What is our toolkit of design solutions (Tufte, McCloud, Laurel, ...).

Table I: basic theory