

# Final Reflective Report

## Describe:

This semester is the last semester of my graduate study. Compared with the previous two semesters, there are not many classes in this semester, but leaves more time for our independent study. Through the study of the first two semesters, I have basically mastered how to complete a project completely. Therefore, this semester, I have gained a lot in the process of independent learning by using the previous knowledge.

First, we were asked to identify a topic at the beginning of the semester. I chose the topic of "urbanization" and further determined the scope of my research after consulting materials and literature works. In particular, I watched a French movie *Someone, Somewhere*, which tells a story about the loneliness and helplessness of two young people suffering from "urban autism" working in a big city. This unfamiliar word attracted me and led me to decide on a theme: 'Urban autism'.

Spanish newspaper *El País* predicted loneliness would become the "social plague" of the 21st century. Urban autism is not a real illness, but a psychological condition in which people in cities feel chronically lonely. Obviously, this is a new type of problem caused by the rapid urbanization process. Although the population in cities is growing, loneliness is getting worse. According to a 2019 survey of more than 2,000 Britons by the British Mental Health Foundation, a whopping 88 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds reported feeling lonely, far more than the over-55s. According to this data, I determined that the user group is young people. Then I began to understand the causes and harms of the issue, among which work pressure became an important reason, so I further determined the target group is 22-28 years old young office workers working in foreign land. Through literature review, I found that it was difficult for them to blend in at the beginning because they were in a foreign land, and they would feel nervous when they were in an unfamiliar place (Rapp, 2017), so it was difficult to make friends, which was the main factor leading to loneliness. When they are in this state, they experience intense loneliness, persistent negative emotions, and become more resistant to communication with others. Only by comprehensively understanding the needs and pain points of user groups can we design more specifically. Therefore, I have done a lot of preliminary research and obtained a lot of convincing data.

## Interpret:

After completing my preliminary research on urban autism, I came up with three insights. The first insight is that I want to let more people know about 'urban autism', so that they can understand and care about their own and others' mental health. But in fact, this is a very common psychological problem, and simple propaganda and appeal cannot completely solve this problem. Therefore, after thinking about it, my design purpose shifted from focusing on the problem to solving the problem.

The second insight is to mitigate the effects of urban autism on young people in a more

holistic way, by alleviating loneliness and negative emotions. Through research and literature search, I found that travel, exercise, meditation and other methods can alleviate loneliness, so I focused on the theme of "meditation" at the beginning, because when people meditate, Positive psychological factors can be produced to reduce negative psychological factors (Shapiro, Schwartz and Santerre, 2002). However, after many tutorial discussions, my teachers and classmates gave me suggestions, hoping to solve the problem more directly rather than temporarily alleviate it. As a designer, I should not only care about the superficial problems, but also find and solve the core of the deep problems. Therefore, after re-thinking, I decided to change a way of thinking, face the key to the problem and solve the problem.

This was my third insight, and I decided to focus my work on how to connect the user community. Then after the questionnaire, I found that most young people think that not being listened to is more terrible than being alone, that is to say, the main factor for them to feel lonely is the lack of friends to communicate with in the city. Through further investigation, I found that the loneliest moment for them is when they walk on the road at night and see the lights on in every house. That is to say, they long for a corner of their own in this strange city and a kind of psychological sustenance and companionship. Therefore, how to relieve their loneliness psychologically and make friends are the focus of my work.

## **Evaluate:**

Through preliminary primary and secondary research, I have determined what is the focus of my current work. Then I made a user model, PACT analysis chart, Personas and Empathy Map based on the survey data, which enabled me to more clearly identify the needs and pain points of users. Among them, social needs and psychological needs are the two most urgent needs of users.

In terms of social needs, I first downloaded and used several well-known social apps, such as Tinder and Tantan. To be honest, my personal experience is not very good, because these social apps have many people's purpose is not just social. Then I interviewed some users who said they had such a bad experience too. Therefore, I think this kind of social app with strong purpose is not suitable for target groups. How to carry out natural social communication is my next step to think about, for example, to meet friends in activities or games.

In addition, as strangers, they are full of strangeness to this city. How can users quickly get familiar with this city? Traveling is the most direct and fast way to let them know the city more comprehensively.

Therefore, I decided to combine the three aspects, social, pet and travel together and explore an appropriate expression to present it.

## **Plan:**

Based on the above research and thinking, I have two ideas about the expression of the final work.

My first idea is to make an interactive animation installation. The protagonist is a pet snail, which can interact with users, and exhibit it in various places in the city and organize some

offline activities. In this way, users can not only feel the psychological comfort brought by pets, but also meet some friends in the exhibition. However, due to budget and COVID-19, I had to give up this idea.

Young people in the Internet age are very dependent on mobile phones, so my idea 2 is to design a virtual pet social app to help people get rid of the "urban autism". The core content of the app is pets, social contact and tourism, which enables users to experience the happiness of social contact and tourism while raising virtual pets.

The app is divided into three main functions. The first is pet raising. Users can let their pets work during the day, and the gold earned can be used to buy food or clothes. The purpose of the "work" function is to let the user feel that when he is at work, his pet is also accompanying him to work, so that the user can have empathy and make his psychological accompanying effect.

The second function is to walk the pet. Users need to walk the pet according to the place they want to go. The App will display the map navigation system to help users reach the destination. Upon arrival, THE 3D image of the pet can be scanned onto the ground with AR technology to interact with the pet. At the same time, if there are other pets around, your pet will play with them, which enables users as owners to get to know each other and achieve offline social interaction.

The third function is chat and socializing. Since pets can make friends with each other, users can get to know their owners through their pets. I've also designed games that allow users to meet new people.

I think the highlight of my app design is the combination of the three elements, which can make people feel bright. Then there is the use of AR technology, at first I did not think of to design with AR, I thought about just limiting it to mobile maps, let users never leave home can virtual travel. But my teacher advised me to do some more offline social, so I put the two way social into online and offline and AR technology is used to display 3D pet image. However, as I have never been exposed to AR technology before, learning and making AR pet models in a short time is indeed a very challenging thing. In the future, the real world and the virtual world will be more and more integrated. As designers, I should also strive to learn new technologies and design techniques to adapt to the changes and progress of society.

After completing the final design, I am once again familiar with the complete design process, research, user model, ideas and the final design work presented. In the future design work, I will remember my teacher often stressed the words "ideas, ideas, ideas!" She made me understand that the idea is the most important thing in design, and I will adhere to this concept and design more creative and practical works.

## Refernce:

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