REFLECTIONS

With my designs I would like to help people with disabilities to deal with everyday situations. These designs are covered by ‘assistive technology’. The way how people interact with these designs is a vital factor for the effectiveness of them. That is why I have investigated which type of interaction is comprehensible for people with dementia in my previous research semester. Within this investigation, I focused on physical, graphical and tangible interactions. By following this elective, I came to understand that there is a different way to approach interaction; rich interaction. This approach would have been quite interesting for my investigation, as the focus lays on perceptual-motor skills instead of cognitive skills (which has been impaired by dementia). In my opinion, rich interaction is very suitable for the target group that I would like to design for. Even though not all disabilities affect the cognitive skills, rich interaction is an intuitive way of interacting and therefore user friendly in many cases.

Therefore I would like to design products with rich interaction in my future designs, e.g. within my FMP in which I will design a tool to assist children with autism in making social connections with peers.

Next to the rich interaction, I found the shape changing approach interesting as well. Specifically, I found it interesting that only few sensory stimuli are presented at first to the user. Only when specific functions are relevant, they are shown to the user. This could be important when designing for people with autism or dementia as an overload of stimuli could be regarded as confusing. Again, this might be valuable to my aforementioned FMP.
One of the things I learned is it is important to create a harmony between the parameters of use and that these assist each other. This could be assisted by rich interaction in which the specific form assists the function and therefore assists the interaction using feedforward and feedback.

An interesting question that was posed during this elective was how products can become part of a bigger, growing system. For me, the answer is using an open-source platform that allows designers to create their own products that are connected to the system. Consequently, a modular approach can be created that allows users to personalise systems by choosing which elements, functions and options they would like to add to their system. This could be particularly interesting when designing for a difficult, diverse target group. With regard to people with a disability, it could allow them to choose which options they can use and/or are allowed to use.

Though I learned a lot from this elective, it is still a bit unclear to me how to design for the IoT. I know what IoT entails and how it can function, but to create IoT systems is still pretty difficult. In order to learn more about this, I will investigate how current IoT systems work within the remainder of this semester, so that I can apply the knowledge to my FMP.