Micro-Contributions

An Exploration on the personal sphere of influence

Damaris Büchner

Abstract

The collaborative shaping of our community life is determined by the actions of many individuals. Society is a compilation of the contributions of each individual.

However, the impact of these micro-contributions that each and every one of us makes remains mostly invisible.

This project gathered a composition of tools which brings awareness for the impact of our actions and inspires to make use of the same.

Everyone of us is a microcontributor - yet we are mostly unaware of our actual influence.

Acknowledgment

My further thanks go to:

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– for your countless, uncoscious contributions to my work

Introduction

Our interest in social change defined the starting point of this thesis. Private observations in the field of frustration, the feeling of powerlessness and neglection of one's own influence to change raised the question about the actuall power of a single individual within this world. This resulted in the research field of what means can make the impact of individual actions tangible and useable? We assumed that, by revealing the personal sphere of influence to someone, we would be able to generate individuall empowerment.

Micro-Contributions turned out to be the ideal subject to observe. Those are small-scale actions, executeable by single persons in their everyday life and therefore an entity of universal relevance. They interplay with one's personal sphere of influence by mutual dependency and experiencability.

To approximate towards possible intervention points, we structured our theoretical knowledge along the action chain and analysed the steps leading a human towards taking an action.

While experimenting with those parameters, trying to trigger actions with our interventions, we discovered, that by providing the right setting, people would automatically do more micro-contributions and therefore being able to experience their sphere of influence on their own.

Our further effort was invested into creating the ideal setting to generate micro-contributions. This manifested in a multipart composition, complementing each other and with the option to be further expanded. The composition unexpectedlly appears into peoples daily life and enables them to browse through a collection of information bites around the topic of one's personal sphere of influence and furthermore, providing an experience of mutual empowerment and a glimpse into the collective shaping of our society.

Introductory Remark

This thesis started as a tandem project from Damaris Büchner and Janina Tanner. We joined our forces for almost half of this thesis, as well as the prior concept seminar. Due to Janina's decision to pause her bachelor for the moment, I (Damaris) continued our process on my own.

Therefore, you will find a mixture of "We" and "I" in this thesis, depending on the stage of the process.

The bulk of the writing is done by me. The chapters primarily written by Janina Tanner, only with edits by me, are labeled with her name right underneath the title.

At this point I want to take the chance and express my gratitude for our joint process to Janina. A stranger to me in the beginning, you have turned into a valued colleague, a feminist rolemodel and beloved friend. I will remember our extended city walks while observing people or philosophising about humanity and life, doing post-it sessions once in a while to escape the laptop screen and joyfully eating currywurst next to the Sihl.

Table of Content

01

Research

Background & Context

We are convinced that a community is the most prosperous when it evolves through inclusive co-creation. Social equality co-determines the quality of life [Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009]. We humans are social creatures; interconnected by a myriad of strings, intertwined in a complex network. Most of us are probably neither aware of this, nor the consequences it entails. We are confronted with countless decisions every day. According to the "Optimal Distinctiveness Theory" every individual tries to maintain an optimal balance of blending in and standing out within a group of peers. [Brewer, 1991] We consider our decisions to be made autonomously, but numerous psychological studies (e.g. the chameleon effect [Chartrand & Bargh, 1999], the Stanford prison experiment [Haney *et al*, 1973]) have shown that many of our everyday choices are influenced by the people, the infrastructure and the norms surrounding us. This manifests, for instance, in the way we dress in the latest fashion or clothes which seem "appropriate" for the specific occasion. We trust in the opinion of friends and peers when we ask them for advice, but we are not necessarily aware of the effect that our mere co-existence already has on our mindset. However, our decision-making process is rarely detached from outside influences [Mock, 2020]. When a string in our social structure is pulled by an individual, it can have far-reaching effects on others, even if they are not linked directly.

Comming from Sprenger's "Epistemology of the surrounding" [2019] we argue that, this is a mutual interconnection, meaning that we are not only influenced by our surroundings but we also influence the mindset and behaviour of other individuals. This reach and impact each individual possesses by its participation in our society, we frame under the term "one's personal sphere of influence" in this thesis. Unfortunately, the effect of those interconnections is not easily perceptible. For instance, effects may accumulate over time or might not

occur in our presence. The feedback loop is disturbed or incomplete, which inhibits our perception of our own influence.

This uncertainty and unawareness about the extent and power of our sphere of influence, we presume, leads us to neglect its potential. We are content with the status quo, shuffle off responsibility and engage less with society, because we feel powerless and of no significance.

Therefore we deduce, if people were be able to better understand their personal sphere of influence they would be empowered to make use of it, which would lead to a more collaboratively created society.

However, this awareness of one's personal sphere of influence also comes with an obligation. The capacity of our influence can be overwhelming because we feel the urge and responsibility to make the best out of our opportunities. Every missed chance to contribute seems like a waste of potential. In addition, the term "influence" often, we perceive it that way, has a negative connotation in our society. We try to deny the effect others have on us. We don't necessarily want to be influenced and phenomena like social media magnify certain influences, which for example leads to unhealthy comparisons. This might lessen the appeal of the whole topic of mutual influence. However, shutting one's eyes will not change the matter, in our eyes. Social behaviour is in our nature as human beings. Yet, in order for our influential endeavours to be fruitful, they need to be rooted in a firm base of knowledge.

*What tools
can contribute
to the discovery
and use of one's
personal sphere of
influence?*

Foundations

Aim

We aim to establish and strengthen the belief in one's own impact on the co-creation of the community; We aspire to reveal a latent potential for a more democratic and participatory creation of our community.

Therefore, we explore the potential of micro-contributions in the form of individual, hands-on participation; We address the level of independent, small and low-resource everyday actions in order to empower individuals.

This will yield tools for the discovery and use of one's personal sphere of influence; At first, people need to gain awareness of their sphere of influence in order to then consciously make us of it.

Research Question

Our aims result in the following research question, merging our intention and the means to reach it:

What tools can contribute to the discovery and use of one's personal sphere of influence?

Hypothesis

This roots in the hypothesis, that a self-reflective examination with one's own sphere of influence, strengthens the belief in the self-made impact.

Therefore, if we can bring people to a state of self-awareness in the context of their sphere of influence, they will be empowered and convinced about their possibilities to influence not only their close community but also contribute to the shaping of our global society.

Our target group is the public. Restricted by the scope of this thesis and our locality we can define it more precisely as the public of Zurich, maybe Switzerland.

We address individuals who are open-minded and/or seeking possibilities to make the best out of their opportunities. They should bring an intrinsic motivation for contributing to the co-creation of our society.

Target Group

With our project, we want to offer a platform to learn about the value and the impact of one's contributions, no matter how small they are. The goal is not to lose faith in the impact one can make, even on a micro-scale.

Our topic is rather intangible and the effects are hard to trace. The outcome of our work will invite individuals to participate and bring their unique pieces to the puzzle. The work can be experienced alone, but it will also provide the opportunity to meet and connect with strangers for a few brief moments.

In connection to design, people often talk about "solutions". But how could one arrogate to have the competence to come up with solutions, in such a fast and ever-evolving world as ours? The studies at ZHdK empha-size the field of Design to be more than just designing "things" but also "processes". This revealed to us an interesting new prospect of a potential working field. We aim to gain more skills in designing transformations, especially in a non-profit setting. This is because we apprehend the designer's job is not to create a product or trying to provide a static solution, but rather to make a contribution towards an ameliorated world.

Motivation

Contribution

We aim to contribute to the intersection of theory and practice. We want to give people the opportunity to experience our topic by themselves and gather their own empiric knowledge, rather than only reading about it.

Providing people with this tangible experience is a contribution to the democratization of knowledge and power. At first, the knowledge needs to be made accessible and understandable for everyone. Second, we need to offer space and tools for transforming the gained knowledge into action, because, according to Miriam Mock, this transformation is dependent on its surrounding (society, given infrastructure, etc.). She describes this in the context of environmental-friendly knowledge. [Mock 2020]

Positioning

Our work should primarily be participatory, tangible and encouraging.

Due to our focus on the co-creation of the community, our process should contain a high share of participatory components. With the people involved, our project might also turn into a "Selbstläufer" that continues existing without us authors actively maintaining it.

Our result should be tangible: something people can work with hands-on and receive a direct feedback.

Our audience should receive empowerment from our project. This might be in the sense of a discovered perspective, a new motivation, or many others. However, it should bring them intrinsic encouragement, not indoctrination.

"The whole is a mirror of the parts"

– Adrienne Maree Brown

Related Work

Image 01

by *Nora Gailer and Mona Neubauer*

Pop-Up Forum

The Pop-Up Forum is an invitation to strangers to take a seat and participate in discussions in public spaces. It allows to exchange opinions on social-political topics and gives you a chance to meet people with potentially oppositional arguments and ambivalent views. By getting together, a novel space for thought is created. A space, open and neutral where everybody can participate. [Gailer & Neubauer, 2016]

The project is relevant to our project because of its participatory aspect, its aspiration for an exchange of views and the prompt to take a step outside of the common bubble.

by Tanja Walliser and Sonja Wolfensberger

The vision of Empathie Stadt is "to make Zurich the most empathetic city in the world". [@empathycity_zurich] Ideally we listen and help each other more, we take breaks when we need it and Mondays are fun again because we are fulfilled by the work we do. As Tanja and Sonja call it, it is a "community-based movement". [Walliser & Wolfensberger, 2020]

Their current focus is on their Instagram channel, it provides their followers with encouraging and motivational posts. They share honest stories from their everyday life which are, unlike the content of many influencers, easy to relate to.

The project has huge ambitions, but approaches these visions in feasible steps. Partakers are welcomed and assured that their contribution matters, that they are being heard and that they are not alone with their problems.

Empathie Stadt Zürich

Image 03

by Martin Dušek und Jannic Mascello

A speculative project on the empowerment of individual citizens and the discharge of the police. It provides a series of objects as helpers to report criminal acts in order to keep the city neat and tidy. The project raises the question "if we want to live in a world where the smallest infringements are prosecuted and who should be responsible to take care of this?" [Dušek & Mascello, 2017]

The work of Martin and Jannic is an inspiration due to its humorous and exaggerated character. First, one might be tempted to shrug off the importance of this work. It is excessively overstated and therefore easy to not be taken seriously. But we think that exactly this sense of exaggeration keeps it buzzing around in your head and brings itself back to your attention, even after you have left the exhibition.

Amt für Kleinstdelikte
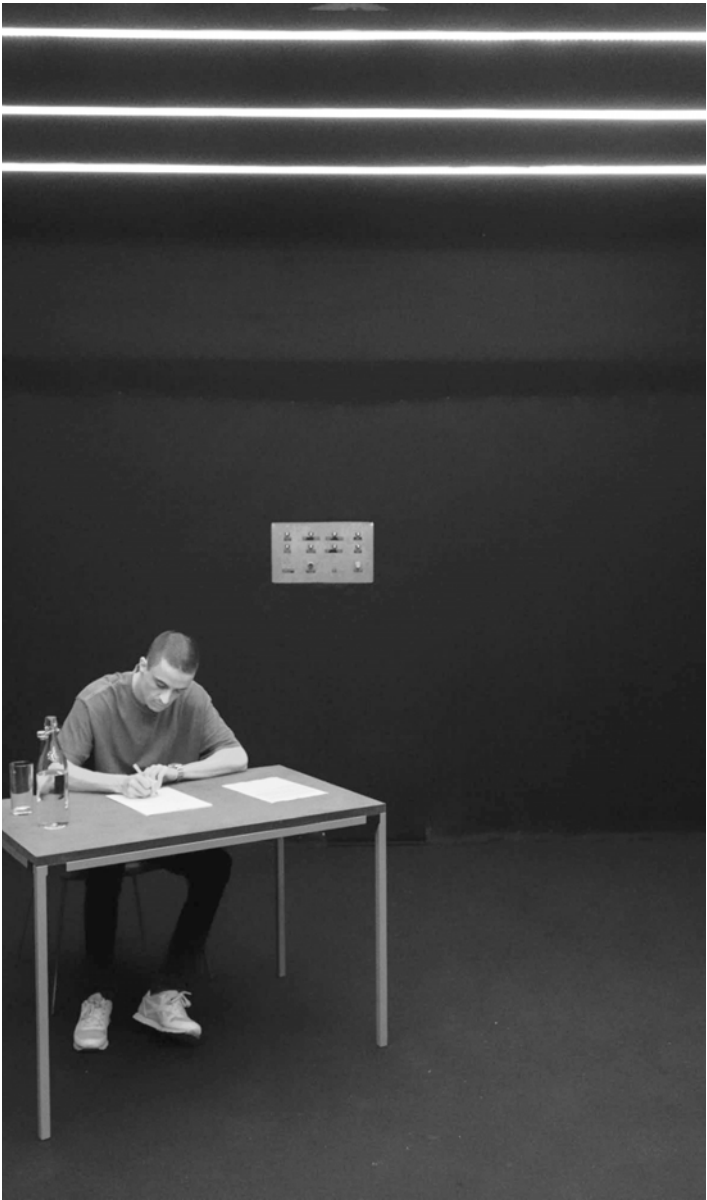
Image 04

by Fernando Obieta and Claudio Rainolter

Raum der Konfrontation

A critical design project on the topic of self-contemplation. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we make hundreds of decisions each day. But in the rush of everyday life, we often do not take the time to reflect on our actions. Raum der Konfrontation is a space created solely for this purpose: an hour dedicated to yourself and your thoughts. [Obieta & Rainolter, 2018]

Thorough contemplation often helps us to better understand the things around us and can be a source for more empathy towards others. The project demonstrates a new, poetic approach to raise compassion.

Image 05

by Lena Grossmüller

Instead of guiding through the city like traditional travel guides, the travel guide to serendipity gives inspiration to get lost. It raises questions and encourages exploration on 154 pages with over 50 impulses and urban experiments - both of unknown places and surprising encounters, and of serenity and leisure. A homage to chance, an affront to the comfort zone. [Grossmüller, 2014]

By offering this "playbook" with a collection of ideas and experiments, Lena inspires people to get involved and discover the world from a different angle. She engages to change one's viewpoint and found a format, which is at the same time humorous, but also stimulates reflection.

Reiseführer des Zufalls

02

Concept

The Exploration

In the first chapter, we explained where our idea origi-
nates from and what the background of our research is.
We talked about how we are all part of an interwoven
structure that makes up our society.

This project makes use of this societal entanglement of
which we are part. We further explore the tight-knit net
and use it as a basis for individual empowerment.

We make people's sphere of influence experienceable
based on the interplay of micro-contributions and one's
personal sphere of influence. Thanks to this initial
exploration the topic gets tangible and leads to an
intrinsic, continuous, self-sustaining loop.

The project offers this path of self-exploration to its
audience. The intensity, depth and the extent of it are left
up to each individual. Thus, everyone can determine their
own approach.

The Int

Micro-Contribution

[ˈmaɪkrəʊ-ˌkɒntrɪˈbjuːʃən]

A small action that contributes to a bigger issue.

Micro-Contributions are characterized by the low effort of time and resources needed to execute them, as well as a single individual being able to carry them out. The motivation for the actor is the aim to contribute to a personal value or conviction connected to an added value for another individual or the collective community.

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sphere of influence.

Personal Sphere of Influence

['pɜːsnl sfɪər ɒv 'ɪnflʊəns]

The perimeter of subjects we affect
with our actions.

These subjects included in our sphere
of influence are of a wide variety, from
persons to objects to whole infra-
structures. It reflects the parameters
an individual can shift and change
during the interaction with their
surrounding subject which through
pure co-existence is automatically
their target.

An Excursion

Each of our days contains thousands of small actions. Our actions are fractal, divisible from big to smaller and smaller individual actions.

Each of those actions holds the potential to be a micro-contribution by corelating with our values. It can be a smile on the streets for a stranger, bringing your own coffee mug to the cafeteria or taking the time to hand in your vote.

Each of those micro-contributions potentially influences our environment, but to what extent? Do they even make a difference? Those questions can make us lose confidence in our impact, especially because we cannot often see a direct result of them.

We believe that those micro-contributions are key to the overall shaping of our community. Or as Florian Sprenger puts it: The surrounding and the surrounded are interdependent. [Sprenger, 2019]

The effectiveness of these micro-contributions results from the repetition, sharing and participation of many individuals. They create an additional option between doing nothing or making a large contribution, thus generally achieving a higher level of participation in the co-creation and elaboration of collective goods such as the common welfare, democratization and equality, sustainability and much more.

Micro-contributions are comparable to individual donations in crowdsourcing. Everyone gives as much as they can and want to without it "hurting" them. The increasing participation inspires further donors and as a result of the many (small) donations, a project is created that brings added value and satisfaction of needs for the community.

The definition that a micro-contribution needs "low effort in time and resources" remains subjective. This is an individual perception that varies due to different circumstances and capabilities of each member of society. To a wealthy person, a donation of a large amount of money might be their preferred way to contribute to an issue of interest. To someone else, giving some of their time might be the best opportunity, and to an other person offering their skills might make it.

It is exactly this variety that makes micro-contributions accessible for everyone. Additionally, it yields a rich and diverse harvest, since, the best of each individual is brought into the community.

The concept of "added value" is a rather more controversial part of the definition of micro-contributions. Does the intention to add value already suffice, or is an act only a micro-contribution if it actually does? How can the subjective members of a society agree upon whether something objectively brings value?

What comes to my mind about these questions is: "you can never please everyone", which casts a dark shadow over the whole issue of trying to contribute to the general welfare. While one's intention can be pure, there can always be people who feel unpleased from it.

This raises the question of how we should deal with that aspect in the definition of micro-contributions.

A short story, written by Johann Peter Hebel [1811] thematises the absurdity of trying to please everyone:

Once a father said to his son: "Come, dear son, I will show you the folly of the world."

He pulled the donkey out of the stable and they led him by the hand into the next village. Then the peasants ran together and

shouted, "Look what fools are coming. They are leading the donkey by the hand and no one is sitting on it." Now they set off for the second of five villages to see the folly of the world.

When they had passed the first village, the father sat on the donkey and the son led the animal by the hand. After a while, they came to another village. Then the farmers said, "Look, the old man is riding and the poor boy has to walk alongside."

They went on and when they came to the third village, the father dismounted, let the son mount and he led the donkey. They had hardly gone a few steps into the village when the peasants came running up and shouted: "Well, the strong boy rides and makes the poor old father walk!"

They went on and when they came to the fourth village, the father asked his son to sit on the back of the donkey and he took a seat in front of him. So they both rode into the village. Then the peasants also came running together, scolding and shouting: "Fie, these animal abusers! They are both sitting on the donkey and want to ride the poor animal to death. Shouldn't we take a stick and beat them both down?"

We should reject the idea of trying to please everybody, but rather use our energy to educate ourselves further and make use of our experience.

We cannot do more than act to the best of our knowledge and beliefs. But I would argue that this is enough. As long as our intentions are pure and we stay open-minded for critique and learning, there can be nothing wrong with our actions.

We should give ourselves permission, be confident and appreciate our own values. This will strengthen our self-esteem and bring out the best in us. How could that not be valuable for the community?

03

Action Chain

Overview

The "Action Chain" is a concept representing the different phases of the process around making an action. The presented chain is created by us to approach the complexity of this taking-action procedure, and as such is not not a finished list. Also, the order of the individual steps can differ, or even skip steps, from time to time.

The chain can be classified into three subcategories (To be compared with the illustration of the Action Chain following on the next page):

Background + Preparation Phase

This phase contains all steps leading to a goal. Beginning from inevitable input an individual gathers over one's lifetime, over the extracted knowledge, drawn conviction and values, which all together lead to (life-)goals.

Transformation + Action Phase

Originating from those goals, a transformation happens, incorporating the given possibilities, awareness of one's own sphere of influence, evaluating the possibilities of intervention, and acquiring tools to overcome the transition from mental goals to tangible actions.

Feedback + Closing Phase

During and after the action one will collect some kind of feedback from it. This feedback then flows back into the renewed background + preparation phase as newly gained input.

Background + Preparation Phase   **Transformation + Action Phase**

External Input   **Mental Formation**   **One's Personal Sphere of Influence**   **Tools**
Genes   Awareness   Environmental Conditions   Bodily Properties
Education   Conviction   Goals   Influencable Parameters   +   Skills
Culture   Values   Available Targets   Extentions + Amplifyer
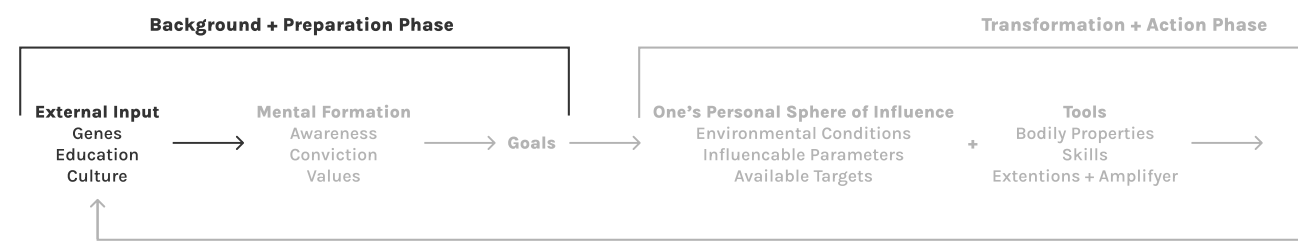
Background + Preparation Phase

This phase includes all steps which together lead to a target goal. Those are everlasting steps, evolving throughout a lifetime, constantly reshaping and reforming themselves by newly gained input.

Each individual comes from a unique background with a distinctive compilation of genes, education and culture. Those inputs are immutable.

Although there might be exceptional events reforming one or multiple of the listed inputs, this special event again would create a formative effect on the individual.

Genes

Our genes do not influence the human actively, but how Dawkin [2007] puts it: they programmed our bodily infrastructure beforehand and therefore influence each of our actions significantly.

Education

Education keeps going throughout a lifetime, but still, we can assume that the general education level of an individual, caused by social status and wealth, does not significantly change after leaving school.

External Input

Feedback + Closing Phase

Evaluation	**Action**	**Reflection**	**(Success-) Measurement**	**Rewards**
Leverage Points	Uncoscious	Self-Reflection	Numbers	Short time Compensation
Effectiveness	Conscious	Self- and Other-Awareness	Else	Superior Gratification
Expectations				

Culture

Culture is an input factor that mainly depends on the location of birth. While globalization has mixed up those geological borders one's area of living gets combined with the culture that remains with the origin of one's family, and the passing on of traditions over generations.

Mental Formation

Awareness

The state of awareness emerges out of gathered knowledge. This can be trivial or consequential knowledge, but all of it leads to awareness of facts.

Multiple knowledge can be put together into a bigger context, revealing a more holistic understanding of circumstances.

Conviction

A conviction that sometimes also manifests in belief is an internally built view on things.

The social environment in which we operate and the state of awareness we have reached contributes to the manifestation of our conviction.

It can be a great source of motivation, a spark for the aspiration to change something or to take action.

Values

Merging the inputs, the knowledge and the beliefs we have,

Background + Preparation Phase   **Transformation + Action Phase**

External Input	Mental Formation		One's Personal Sphere of Influence	Tools
Genes	Awareness		Environmental Conditions	Bodily Properties
Education	Conviction	→ Goals →	Influencable Parameters	+ Skills
Culture	Values		Available Targets	Extentions + Amplifyer
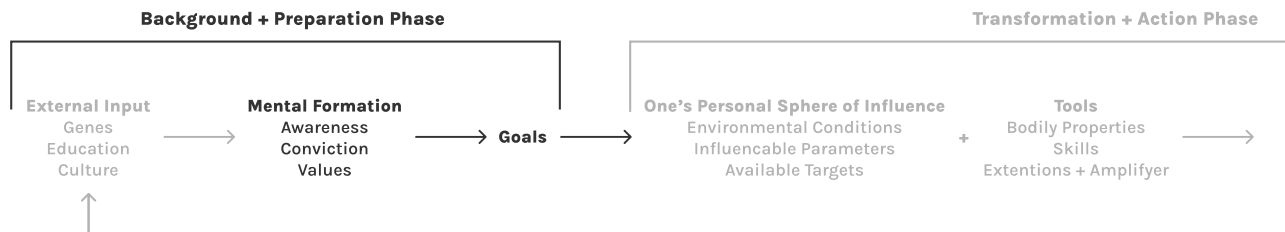
we form a set of values that can serve as a guideline for decision-making processes.

Values are like landmarks; we orient and align our behaviour towards them, more or less often checking if we are still on track, and if we still adhere to our self-made rules. When a decision is ahead, our values are a major parameter that influences each decision.

Goals are oriented towards our mental formation, but are inspired by external inputs.

Goals

Often, goals are not formulated consciously. They can remain subconscious, yet still influence our actions.

For now, these goals are only mental targets of what one aspires towards. There are many goals competing within an individual, facing slowly and rapidly changing circumstances, which influence the the shifting of priorities among those goals.

However, eventually this mental compiled goal will make its way to the next phase and transform into a tangible action.

Feedback + Closing Phase

Evaluation	**Action**	**Reflection**	**(Success-) Measurement**	**Rewards**
Leverage Points	Uncoscious	Self-Reflection	Numbers	Short time Compensation
Effectiveness	Conscious	Self- and Other-Awareness	Else	Superior Gratification
Expectations				

Transformation + Action Phase

No matter how many goals someone has, solely the ones acted upon have an affect on the environment. It is completely in the spirit of the proverb: Turning words into action.

Coming from the goal, which evolved out of the last phase, a transformation process happens, eventually resulting in action. During the transformation steps, there are mainly considerations and evaluations happening while the tools symbolize an acquisition step. This finally enables one to execute an action in the interest of one's goal.

To simplify this phase one could also illustrate it with a pair of scales: One's personal sphere of influence + Tools are weighed against the possible effect, which then either triggers or not triggers the action.

Since one's personal sphere of influence is such a weighty component of this transformation step, we aim to address it to trigger more action within our society.

One's personal Sphere of Influence

What we mean by "One's personal sphere of influence" is the perimeter with all its content such as environment, people, structures, etc. we affect with our actions.

The following will be an excursion on the main components

Background + Preparation Phase   **Transformation + Action Phase**

External Input	Mental Formation		One's Personal Sphere of Influence		Tools
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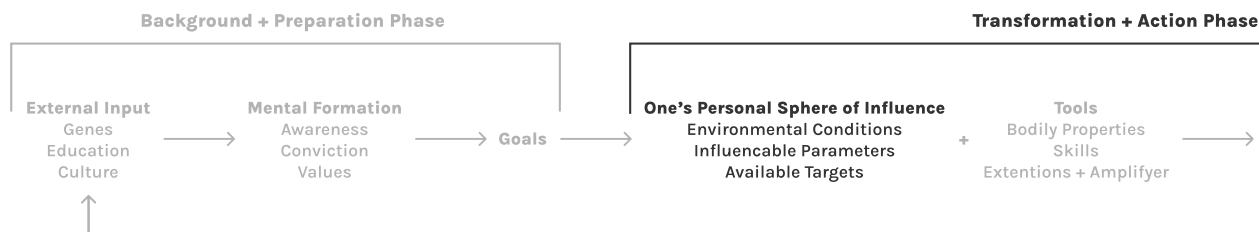
of one's sphere of influence. Firstly, the parameters an individual is able to influence on a personal level and secondly the available targets an individual can point their influence to.

To remark: this chapter about the sphere of influence is quite extended. This detailed exploration is due to it being of great interest, but also importance to our topic. We want to tackle the complexity of one's personal sphere with a holistic approach, but in order not to get lost in this chapter, we provide you here with a short summary to classify it within the Action Chain:

One's own sphere of influence is part of the transformative steps leading to action. It contains the considerations and opportunities of influencing parameters and targets available to select from, thus in order to plan and address one's action. It reveales one's possibilities as an individual.

Environmental conditions

An actions, same as each individual, can never be completely independent of its surrounding. Florian Sprenger's [2019] empistemological concept of surrounding and surrounded presents this "rat tail" in detail, to condense it for our project, it is important to consider the interdependency of the two.

Miriam Mock [2020] includes a connected fact in her discussion in the chapter "Verantwortliches Individuum?" (responsible individual?) where she points out that the individual's activities depend on the available infrastructure, as well as the societal practices. The human is still a herd animal, which tries to fit in and seek societal prestige.

Feedback + Closing Phase

Evaluation	**Action**	**Reflection**	**(Success-) Measurement**	**Rewards**
Leverage Points	Uncoscious	Self-Reflection	Numbers	Short time Compensation
Effectiveness	Conscious	Self- and Other-Awareness	Else	Superior Gratification
Expectations				
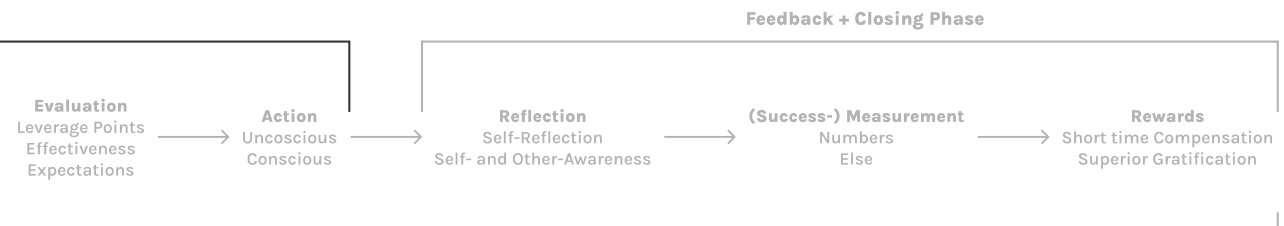
Infrastructure

As long as one has not opted for a hermit lifestyle, one is inevitably dependent on the given infrastructure. An individual can for example not decide to avoid capitalism and the associated circumstances, and a single person cannot build and use their own means of transport without corresponding conditions, just as little as we can separate ourselves from our physical "infrastructure" in a human body.

What I wish to express is the realization that we as individuals are bound to our given infrastructure. We are able to improve this infrastructure, but by doing so we still depend on the same.

Societal Environment
by Janina Tanner

As herd animals, humans strive for acceptance within the group. This is exemplified by peer pressure.

Our decisions, millions of which we have to make every day, are influenced by the expectations and actions of the people around us. We might not be aware of it, and we might think we came to conclusions completely on our own. In an article, Marilynn B. Brewer presents a theory, which she calls "Optimal Distinctiveness Theory" [1991]. It explores and describes the human behaviour of finding the optimal balance between blending in and standing out. This striving for balance between two extremes has an impact on our opinions and values. It steers our actions in everyday life without us being actively aware of it. At first sight, this realization might seem daunting, but it makes me wonder: is the influence of others on our choices all that bad? This question might feel counterin-

Background + Preparation Phase		Transformation + Action Phase

External Input	Mental Formation	Goals	One's Personal Sphere of Influence	Tools
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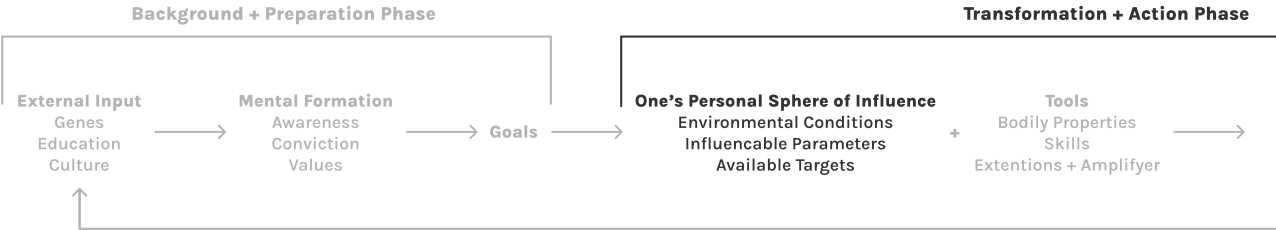
tuitive, but I imagine having a conscious mind about our position in the social construct we live in could be a tool and help to gently discover one's personal sphere of influence.

Social Norms
by Janina Tanner

Social norms are the individual or collective perception of acceptable demeanor within groups. Many individuals do not want to stand out from a group too much, so they try to conform to these unwritten, social "rules". These rules act as a directive to govern an individual's behavior. Social expectations can vary from one group to the next group and the pressure to conform to certain social roles is not perceived equally strong by everyone.

Let's take an example from childhood: a group of friends is at the public swimming pool and everyone lines up to jump from the springboard. With an exception of only one child, everyone is excitedly waiting for their turn. One child is too afraid at first, but in the end, it jumps anyway. The watching peers made it do what it normally would not. This is just to illustrate one case where peer pressure makes an individual do something against their beliefs, fears and values.

But social pressure is not always this apparent. In everyday life, we often decide on things and we consider this decision as ours. But have we really considered all our options? Is this really the choice we would have made even with nobody watching? Or is it simply the option tied to the smallest probability to cause a sensation within our social context? This thought experiment highlights how social norms allow space for social influence. The majority of a group establishes an accepted standard.

Feedback + Closing Phase

Evaluation
Leverage Points
Effectiveness
Expectations

Action
Uncoscious
Conscious

Reflection
Self-Reflection
Self- and Other-Awareness

(Success-) Measurement
Numbers
Else

Rewards
Short time Compensation
Superior Gratification

They have the power and the others are expected to adapt if they wish to belong.

The Stanford prison experiment by Philip Zimbardo, Craig Haney and Curtis Banks [Haney *et al*, 1973] shows that our environment constitutes an important part to how we act and conform to imposed social roles. Students were put in an artificial prison, randomly assigned to either the role of an inmate or guard. Rapidly, some students adapted and (terrifyingly) played off their roles. They replace their behaviour completely to the one assigned to them.

It shows that the way we act can often be explained through the situational context rather than just a dispositional one.

Influencable Parameters

The following chapter deals with parameters we can influence on a personal level. This will not fully cover all influenceable parameters, but give an insight into the possibilities and width of an individual's capacity to affect its surrounding.

Chameleon Effect

Mimicry is the psychological concept of unconscious behavior imitation and a big part of the chameleon effect. This effect, characterized by Chartrand, T. L. & Bargh, J. A. [1999] in their article of the same name, describes the phenomena of individuals mimicking emotions and behavior in social interactions. A further aspect is the term "Emotional Contagion" where psychology describes the transfer of emotions among individuals. [Hatfield *et al*, 1993]

Background + Preparation Phase   **Transformation + Action Phase**

External Input	**Mental Formation**		**One's Personal Sphere of Influence**	**Tools**
Genes	Awareness		Environmental Conditions	Bodily Properties
Education	Conviction	**Goals**	Influencable Parameters	Skills
Culture	Values		Available Targets	Extentions + Amplifyer
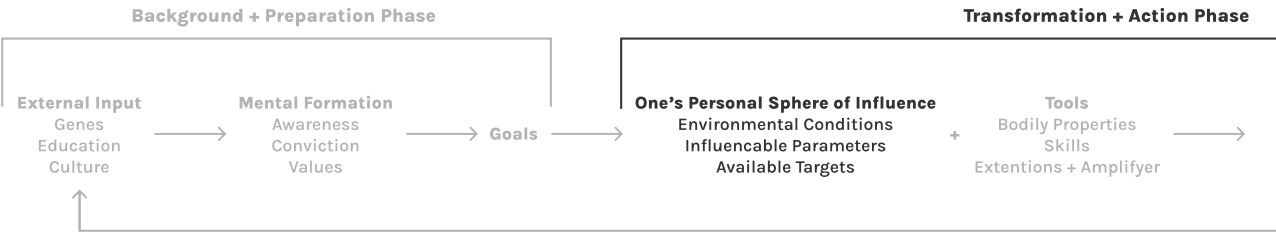
In the episode "Make 'Em Laugh" [Santos], the Happiness Lab makes an excursion on this topic field by exploring the phenomenon as well as our possibilities with it. By being aware of our emotional response to other individuals, we can protect ourselves from negative emotion imitation, but also make use of our own opportunity to influence others to the positive.

This acknowledgment refers back to our own sphere of influence, where we can now add "emotion sharing" to the influenceable parameters.

Egoism + Altruism

Altruism is handled as an antonym for egoism. It describes a behaviour, where an individual at a cost of themselves, benefits another individual, without the expectation of compensation for that action. [Steinberg, 2010]

As Dawkins widely explains and proves in his book "The selfish Gene" [Dawkins, 2007] egoism is an inevitable part of our human existence. Evolution has made us "survival machines" for our genes. Every action is driven by the aim to let the genes survive and replicate. Dawkins elaborates how even seemingly altruistic acts ultimately increase the chance of survival for our genes. He summarizes that no action the animal "human" does can be selfless.

Yet, selfish motivation underlying an altruistic act, automatically illegitimate the same? Paul Watzlawick names many examples of what aspects one could question about the purity of good deeds and helpfulness: "*Did I do it as a deposit into my heavenly savings account? To impress? To be admired? To force the other person*

Feedback + Closing Phase

Evaluation	**Action**	**Reflection**	**(Success-) Measurement**	**Rewards**
Leverage Points	Uncoscious	Self-Reflection	Numbers	Short time Compensation
Effectiveness	Conscious	Self- and Other-Awareness	Else	Superior Gratification
Expectations				

to be grateful to me? Simply to cure my mental hangover?".
His summary is: "[...] there are hardly any limits to the power
of negative thinking because those who seek will find."
[Watzlawick, 1983, P. 32]

Still, there are different outcomes for social interactions that are just selfish and ones that are altruistic with a selfish base. In the first case, an other individuals does not gain anything from the action or even has a disadvantage from it. In comparison, the altruistic act leaves the other with an advantage. The two individuals end up in a so-called "Win-Win" situation. From the perspective of the reciever, the altruistic act is still preferred, even when the altruist is driven by a selfish motivation.

Therefore we can add another parameter to our own sphere of influence: "win-win-driven-actions".

Empathy

"Empathy is the capacity to understand or feel what another
person is experiencing from within their frame of reference,
that is, the capacity to place oneself in another's position."
[Bellet & Maloney, 1991]

These mentioned skills are a crucial part of human interactions. If the parties cannot empathize with their opposite, the interaction will most likely leave to both of them dissatisfied. "Unempathic" interactions can lead to cross-purpose talks, misunderstandings, false intentions and other misguided social behaviour.

We gain the ability of empathy during our childhood, and may further develop it afterwards. The "capacity levels" differ depending on environmental conditions, but it is

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Culture   Values   Available Targets   Extentions + Amplifyer
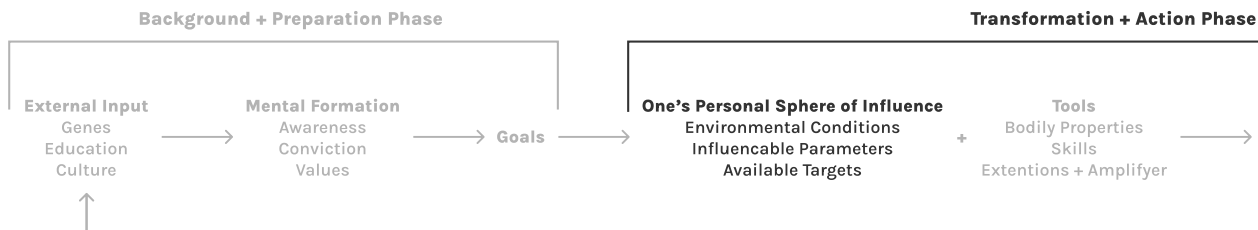
something one can learn and improve. By training this capacity, individuals will be able to have more inclusive interactions with others and create a more mutual community.

This "capacity level" is another parameter we can steer, regarding our sphere of influence.

Chain reaction of kindness

This concept is introduced by Paul Watzlawick in his lecture "Wenn die Lösung das Problem ist". [Watzlawick, 1987, Min. 40:10-41:40] There is a social chain reaction phenomenon, that makes us feel obliged to act "kindly" when someone has, in the same way, acted kindly towards us beforehand. Watzlawick states that doing good on a small scale will trigger a chain reaction and spread this societal commitment. He gives the following example:

Imagine you see someone exit their car during a rainy night and leave the car lights on. You run after this person in the rain and tell them: "You have left on your car lights". This person will for sure think that this is very kind of you, that you run after her, 300 meters in the rain to tell her. And if this person then for their part sees someone else leaving the car lights on, they will practically feel committed to do the same. Thanks to your attitude. [...] The affected one will be committed to decency due to your small action. And this will spread further, that's what I mean by the chain reaction of kindness and tolerance. (translated from german by the authorship)

With this concept, we gain another parameter to influence: "attitude to kindness".

Feedback + Closing Phase

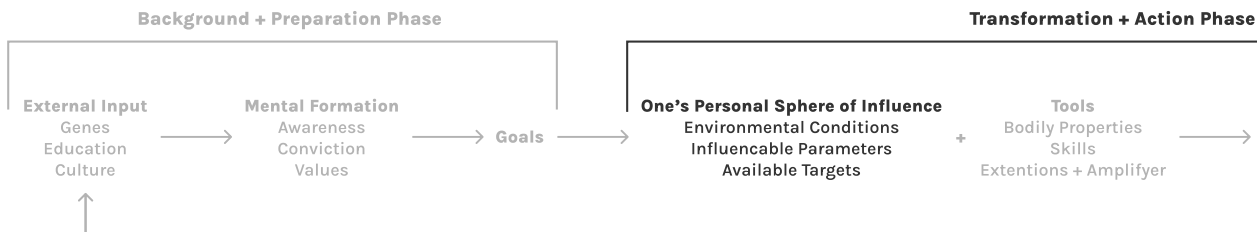| Evaluation	Action	Reflection	(Success-) Measurement	Rewards
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Expectations				

Ordinary Privilege

Dolly Chugh names learning about one's ordinary privileges as an important step towards acknowledging one's own influence in a positive way and putting it to a worthwhile use. Ordinary privileges are the privileges we don't even realize we enjoy. They give us the "ability to forget about aspects of who you are because they represent the majority demographics of your country or organization" [Chugh, 2018]

As an example of how to apply one's privilege, one can look at the study "Confronting Prejudice (Literally): Reactions to Confrontations of Racial and Gender Bias" [Czopp Monteith, 2003] which revealed that people behaving socially offensively react differently to a confrontation about their behaviour, depending on if a target (affected by the behaviour) or a nontarget (unaffected by the behaviour) confronted this person: "[...]. *Regardless of confronter status, allegations of racial bias elicited more guilt and apologetic-corrective responses and greater concern over having offended the confronter than similar confrontations of gender bias, which elicited more amusement. Target confrontations elicited less guilt but greater discomfort than nontarget confrontations and were associated with feelings of irritation and antagonism among more prejudiced participants. In addition, participants perceived a target's confrontation as more of an overreaction than the same confrontation from a nontarget. [...]*"

Chugh encourages each to make use of their ordinary privilege because: *"those with ordinary privilege have the power to speak up on behalf of those without it, and have particularly effective influence when they do"*. Therefore, ordinary privilege is a strong tool with which to exert influence.

Background + Preparation Phase			Transformation + Action Phase	
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Growth Mindset

We tend to assume that our mindsets are fixed. We label ourselves as a specific kind of persona with fixed abilities. We do what we do and deal with the consequences. Nobody is perfect, so mistakes inevitably happen.

However, to a "Growth-Mindset-Person", mistakes mean that one has the opportunity to better themselves. Realizing this ability to change is key to a growth mindset. They do not deny that mistakes happen, but they handle them differently.

People who have a growth mindset spend more neuronal energy analyzing the mistakes they made. *"And what we know from the mindset research is that when you're in a fixed mindset and you make a mistake, your brain activation actually goes down, you actually withdraw attention from the mistake."* [Santos, "How to be a better Ally"]

It is as simple as reminding ourselves that we can change and make it better by using the word "yet". For example say to yourself: "I am not a good person yet, but I can learn how to be one (if I put some work into it)". This is about encountering the greyscale between the inapplicable and applicable.

Shifting our mindset away from the fixed and closer to the growing one will make us more resilient to the mistakes we make and therefore influence our future actions to the desirable.

Meme

Memes are in culture what genes are in biology. They are

Feedback + Closing Phase

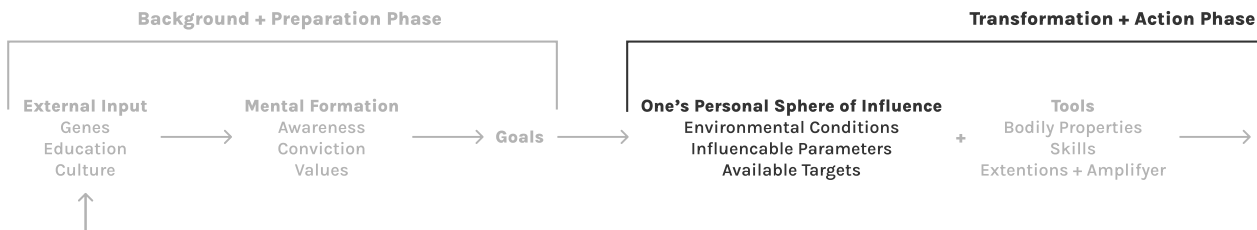| Evaluation	Action	Reflection	(Success-) Measurement	Rewards
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a unit that promotes their own replication from one generation to the next.

In his chapter "Memes: the new replicators" Dawkins describes memes as follows: *"Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation."* [Dawkins, 2007, P. 192]

If a human gets in contact with a meme, the further replication is crucial for the survival of the meme. The so-called "survival value" of a Meme depends on its distribution and consistency. Whether a meme is replicated is dependent on the goodwill and judgement of the person experiencing it. To stay in the comparison with genes, the same survival factors count for memes as well: longevity, fecundity, and copying-fidelity. Longevity can only be achieved by many fertile copies and documentation, otherwise the meme "dies" with the person carrying it in their brain. Since most genes require mixing in order to reproduce, there will always be a certain extent of fragmentation and blending reducing the copying-fidelity. The same applies to memes, which also rely on copying processes that inevitably alter them.

Replication of memes happens by forwarding them into the brains of other people, making use of whatever medium might serve the transmission such as spoken and written word but also human role model. *"When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism*

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of a host cell." [Dawkins, 2007, P. 192]

"When we die there are two things we can leave behind us: genes and memes" [Dawkins, 2007]. Memes offer the possibility to forward one's ideas and accomplishments independently from the genes. As Dawkin proposes, we should not seek immortality in genes, because they get lost in the gene pool a few generations after our existence, but memes hold the potential to last if they hold a value for the culture of the world.

Considering the tide of memes one is confronted with on a daily basis (amplified through globalization and the internet) one needs to imagine the human brain with its limited capacity. It becomes clear that memes need to fight for attention in our brain.

Memes flourish best when they serve their own survival and, therefore, evolve in a "selfish" manner. This means just like genes, memes are "blind" replicators, incapable of looking ahead. As long as there are humans capable of imitation, there will be memes exploiting this capability.

Dawkins ends his chapter with a hopeful plea:
"We [humans] have the power to defy the selfish genes of our birth and, if necessary, the selfish memes of our indoctrination. We can even discuss ways of deliberately cultivating and nurturing pure, disinterested altruism— something that has no place in nature, something that has never existed before in the whole history of the world. We are built as gene machines and cultured as meme machines, but we have the power to turn against our creators. We, alone on earth, can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators." [Dawkins, 2007, P. 200]

We cannot influence our genes, but we can influence the memes we produce and spread.

Feedback + Closing Phase

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Available Targets

Our sphere of influence can affect different subjects or individuals. On the next pages, we make an excursion on the spectrum of targets that are at someone's disposal.

This range differs from person to person due to varying positions in society. Therefore, these descriptions aim to be as general as possible, in order to cover the circumstance of as many people as possible.

This thesis focuses on targets within the society, such as other people, institutions, or societal structures. What is not considered (respectively only affected throughout the former mentioned) are elementary subjects such as objects, nature and ecosystems.
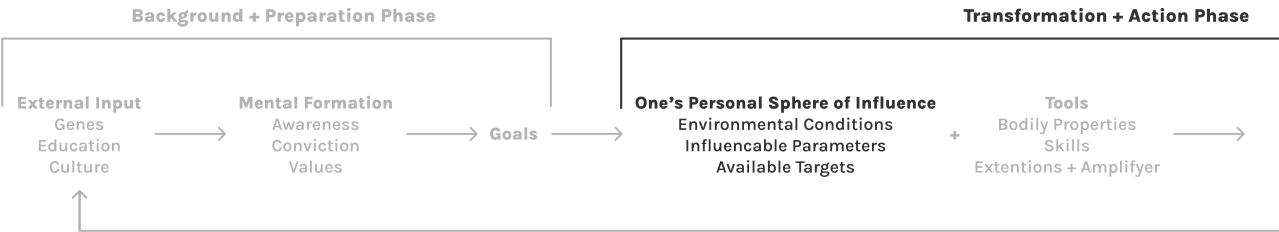
Individuals

As long as we are not isolated (e.g. by a current pandemic), we are likely to get in contact with other people. There are many different occasions where and how we get in touch with others.

Families and Friends:

With those people, one has more or less stable relationships, close ties and regular gatherings. Of course, those relationships held their peculiarities but in general, one can have deep and open chats with those persons, due to a basis of trust and mindsets mutually shape each other.

Therefore one does highly probable influence the people in this category and it is also the one in which most people already actively and consciously make use of their influence.

Background + Preparation Phase			Transformation + Action Phase	
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Working environment:

Most of those people one does not actively choose to be in one's circle of contacts, but they automatically are due to the working environment. The relationship with colleagues remains on a "professional" level and only touches private aspects on a superficial level. But some of the colleagues might become friends and therefore swap their category of belonging.

Depending on the position there are also other contacts coming into play such as customers or principals, one most likely only has a loose and business-based relationship. But all of those are social interactions we co-shape with our opposites.

Neighborhood:

This surrounding varies widely depending on the living situation. Urban and rural areas differ in people-density as well as dwellings by themself. But as long as one does not live in the outback, one's neighborhood consists of other people. However, the relationships to them vary as much as the living situations themself.

With some, one might have close ties, others one just meets on the fence for an informal talk and with others, one might not have any relationship at all.

But no matter how the relationship is, one can not avoid coming across those peoples. Somehow one will either see, hear or else perceive the presence of them, and the other way around. Therefore we inevitably take on the role of fellow citizens and therefore influence them as a role model for cohabitation.

Feedback + Closing Phase

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Random encounters:

Those are the people one passes by on the streets, sits next to in public transport, simultaneously visits the parc and so on. One has little to no relation to them at all. There might be a connecting smile or a very short conversation but most often that's the highest of interaction.

But as the "Chameleon Effect" and the "chain reaction of kindness" have shown, there is still a level of influence on those people and it can make a huge difference if we smile or at least are sensitive to their presence.

Social Media:

Although this category contains people from the previously mentioned categories, there is still another publicness level to this one and one might also be in the scope of loose contacts or even strangers.

Social Media provides a platform to show only what we want to share of ourselves to others. Kind of presenting our ideal self.
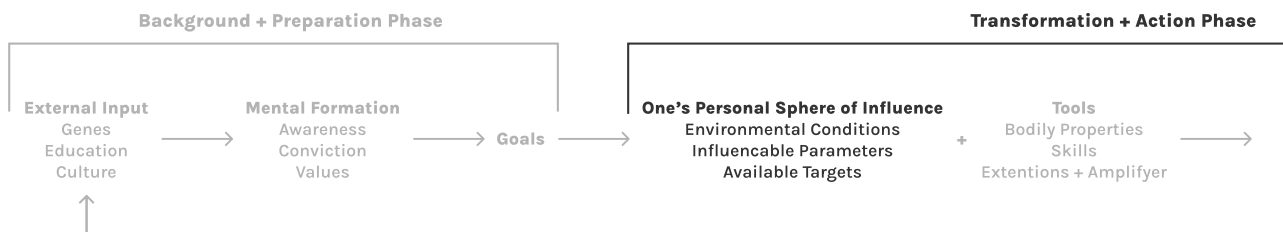
Therefore, it is a fateful place to influence others on the shaping of their ideal self as well.

Institutions

Work place

When looking for employment, one may preferably apply to a company that shares one's values.

By taking this opportunity one influences the labour force

Background + Preparation Phase

Transformation + Action Phase

External Input
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Education
Culture

Mental Formation
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+

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on the market by supporting the valuable companies with one's own employment.

Consumption

By one's consumption of goods and services, one gives feedback to the market about what the needs of the same are. Therefore, by rejecting or supporting market objects one can steer the perceived public attitude and cash flow.

As a consumer one has the chance to influence the availability of goods and services as well as the existence of the underlying companies.

Politics

This target for influence strongly differs from country to country. This thesis focuses on the political system in Switzerland and therefore lists the correlating points to influence.

Voting

As a citizen with voting right, four times a year one can hand in one's own opinion upon political submissions in form of a Yes or No. The majority opinion determines if the submission is implemented or not.

With this voting right, one can have a direct influence on the political happenings.

Electing

As a citizen with voting rights, one has also the opportunity to elect people for different political man-dates. In regular periods, elections for the municipal, can-

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tonal and national departments are carried out.

The election system bases on a proportional procedure based on the political parties and candidates. However, the elected people steer the political focus and resources.

With this election-right, one can have an indirect influence on the political happenings.
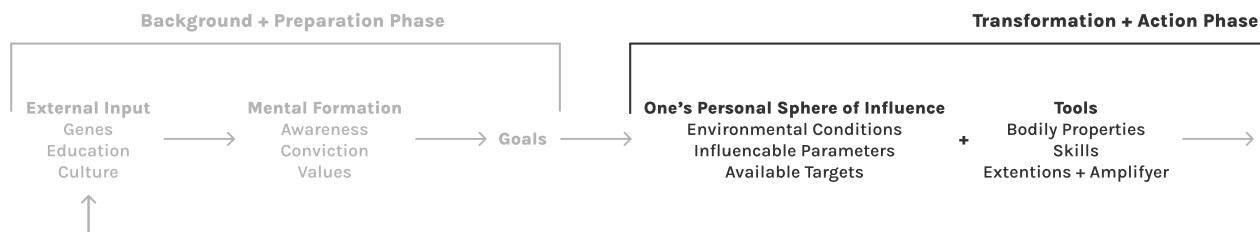
Committee

Every Swiss citizen can participate in committees situated in different political layers. For example, they can engage in a committee of a "Volksinitiative", a citizen-driven pro- posal for change in the law. The committee drafts a bill and collects a reasonable amount of signatures to at- tempt the government.

By engaging in a committee one can introduce a proposal into the political discussion, to the extend of a national vote on the same and therefore influence the political themes.

Political Mandate

As a citizen with voting right one also gains the opportunity to run for various political mandates. As one holds such, one will be part of political sessions, bring in one's opinion in the discussion and generate proposals for the citizens. To a certain extend, differing from one mandate to another, one will be part of political determinations.

As a holder of a political mandate one extends one's influence onto the instruments of the government by being part of the same.

Background + Preparation Phase **Transformation + Action Phase**

External Input **Mental Formation**   **One's Personal Sphere of Influence** **Tools**
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Culture Values   Available Targets Extentions + Amplifyer

Activism

As an activist, all tools for attracting attention to a topic of interest are at your service. Most often in one's free time, one organizes and/or participates in activities to gain public attention.

With this engagement in activism, one can influence the public attention to specific topics.

Tools

In order to put something into action, we depend on tools. Those tools can take many different forms and shapes, from the trivial use of human communication to the overengieneered consumption object, as long as it serves the needs and supports the reach of the goal.

Not all individuals have the same access to the same tools, this refers back to the "environmental conditions" section, earlier in this chapter. However there are always available tools, they just differ in their usefulness and effectiveness.

Bodily properties

Those tools refer back to our mental and physical abilities as human beings, kind of our fleshly infrastructure. Our brain capacity to process and forecast information, as well as our nerve system and muscles to be active and interact with our environment.

Skills

Skills are learn- and trainable abilities. They can continuously be expanded by adding new skills or strengthening existing

Feedback + Closing Phase

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ones. Examples are countless from basic hu- man language, calculating, drawing, playing the piano, up to questionable skills such as recognizing crayons just by their taste.

Extentions + Amplifyer

This category includes all tools that add on to the previously named ones. They are objects supporting us in any kind. This can be an exoskeleton to backup our bodily structure or a calculator to support our mathematical skills. They either extend our possibilities or amplify them.
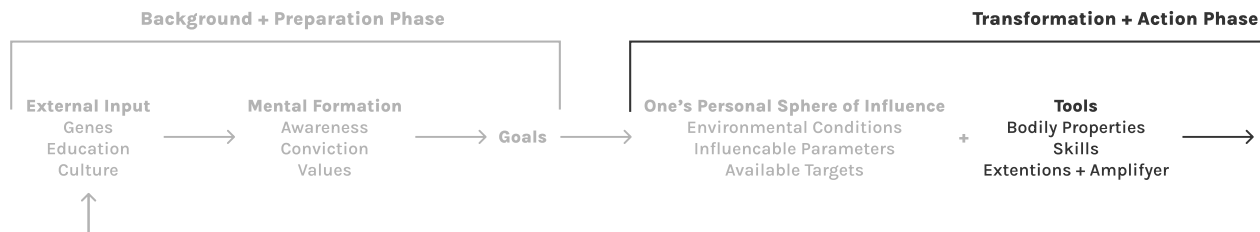
Evaluation

Since each situation is unique, we have to constantly re-assess possible points of intervention.

This evaluation of one's possibilities to influence and through that, the meaningfulness of one's actions emerge from the combination of one's personal sphere of influence and the tools at one's disposal.

Leverage Points

Following the principle of Meadow's [1999] leverage points, there are different points to intervene in a system. There are 12 Points, ordering from the easiest to the hardest, the crucial fact is, that at the same time their effect and power to change runs parallel with the feasibility. Therefore the easiest to achieve is at the same time the one with the lowest impact. Ideally, one evaluates, with which leverage point one generates the best "cost-value-calculation".

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Effectiveness

A very pragmatic example for calculating the "best possible outcome" is the concept of effective altruism by Peter Singer [2015]. A large aspect of this concept is comparing the effect of the same amount of money, investing in different charity institutions and throught that evaluating how you can do the best with the resources you have.

Expectations

Expectations play a crucial role in this mind phase. We try to forecast the result of an action by mentally playing through the event. This might include wording conversations, pre-empathizing with expected emotions or predefining hurdles. By means of this forecast, we evaluate the action, if we can and will execute it.

Now is the moment, where all the preparation and transformation steps manifest mental subjects into a tangible action.

The terms tangible and action imply some kind of physical activity, but at this point, needs to be remarked, that tangibility does not exclude mental actions such as "forgiving someone" or "envisioning a time machine". Tangibility in this application is used like the german term "greifbar" - something is concrete, available, feasible.

Actions vary in their extend and expense extremely, from a smile within seconds up to a diet for months. This is also a question of classification, but picky categorization is not the focus of this thesis. Therefore let's continue with

Action

Feedback + Closing Phase

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the most relevant categorization considering the nature of the human mind, where we just come from out of the last chapters: Unconscious and conscious acts.
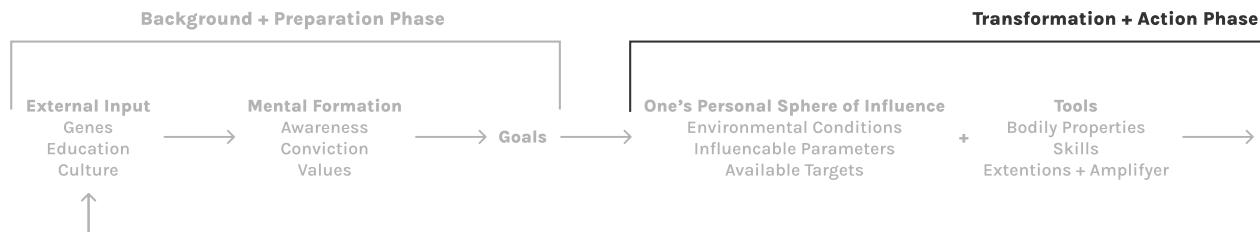
Unconscious

These actions mainly happen through our so-called "autopilot". Instinct and habits make up the majority of this category. Also, those unconscious acts make up the majority of our actions in general.

Those sequences of acts run automatically in our brains. We have automized them, meaning that we have repeated and internalized them so much, that we don't consciously think about them (anymore) while doing them. Examples are breathing, driving a car, walking home, and so on.

We depend on our "autopilot" because we only have limited brain capacity. Playing the autopilot for trivial actions gives us the capacity to better execute the conscious decisions we face. Framing it with our concept of the action chain, one could say the autopilot skips the whole background + preparation phase, as well as the transformation steps.

A factor that strongly interplays with this autopilot is our trained biases, connecting back to the inevitable input we collect from our environment. That's where autopilots reveal their bad side, when biases are forwarded from generation to generation and form the new normal, no one questions.

Breaking up habits and seeking behaviour change is a big topic for psychology, but necessary for progress. In some areas, advices for behavior change are highly requested (just think of all the diets advertised on the market) but I would argue that it's quite hard to achieve behavioural

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change (just think of all the people you know that started a diet and quit again). There is no miracle cure out there but just hard work and the requirement for many conscious decisions.

Conscious

Those actions only make up a small part of our acts in total but at the same time use up the majority of our brain capacity. Coming from the huge background we thematized before, leading up to an action, we can relate to the effort it can take if one aims to execute an action.

Conscious actions require at least partially making use of the previous mental steps. Coming from the decision made in the evaluation step just before, one goes over to the execution well aware, maybe one defines a time or a trigger when one overcomes the mental hurdle and actually does it.

I call it a hurdle on purpose because making a conscious action always requires a moment of decision, and sometimes even courage to take one's opportunity.

Feedback + Closing Phase

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Expectations				

*"I am not important,
but what I do
— and don't do —
matters."*

– Megan Swoboda

Feedback + Closing Phase

This last phase is at the same time connected with the first phase again. It deals with the gatherings from the executed action during the last phase, evaluates them and brings them back into the chain as new input. This phase gives the possibility to iterate and improve on the whole process.

Reflection
by Janina Tanner

Reflection is crucial for the iterative process. It is an important source for learning and improving. So ideally, and in order to understand the extent of the preceded action, it is followed by a moment of evaluation and reflection. But personal reflection is only helping when we really learn from it and adjust ensuing actions.

Self-Reflection
by Janina Tanner

Self-reflection or introspection is a process in which one examines and evaluations their personal actions, habits, feelings and thoughts. We make millions of decisions each and every day. Most of them are insignificant and can safely be left to our subconscious mind, but in some situations, it might trigger reactions that do not align with our values. Ideally in the process of self-reflection, one would identify these situations. Introspection helps you to grow an understanding of who you are as a person, your goals and your values. From these insights, you

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Background + Preparation Phase

External Input	Mental Formation	
Genes	Awareness	
Education	Conviction	Goals
Culture	Values	

Transformation + Action Phase

One's Personal Sphere of Influence	Tools
Environmental Conditions	Bodily Properties
Influencable Parameters	Skills
Available Targets	Extentions + Amplifyer
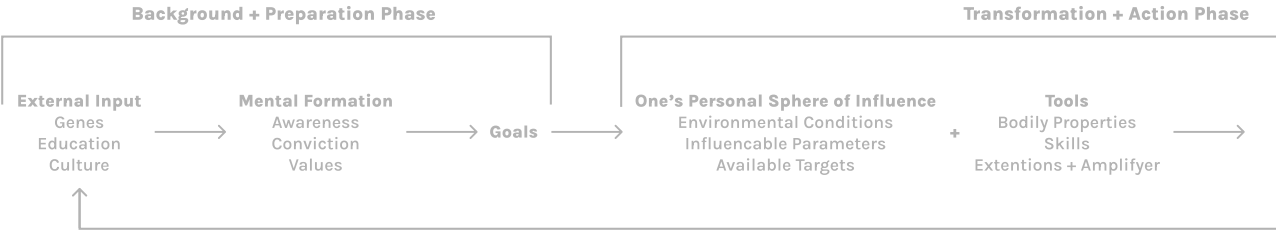
gather knowledge about your way of thinking and your actions. By stepping back you are able to assess a situation rationally, without emotions getting in your way. You might be unhappy in an arrangement and you only see the things you dislike while you are involved.

Introspection does not only improve your personal situation, it can also help you bring understanding to how others might take your actions. Maybe you realize you were not so nice in a discussion with a friend over coffee this afternoon. Later you reflect on your actions, on the things you said and find that this is not the way you want to treat your friend. So you go back and apologize to them.

Self-reflection aids you to bring your values and actions into alignment. You spot situations that would have passed unnoticed otherwise and make small steps to adjust your course.

Self- and Other-Awareness
by Janina Tanner

Self-Awareness is defined as "*the ability to see yourself clearly and objectively through reflection and introspection.*" [Ackerman, 2021] When we briefly rename "empathy" to "other-awareness", it is easy to draw the connection and see it as a counterpart to self-awareness. Through the ability of self-reflection, one not only gains insight into personal habits and actions, but it offers a tool to discover all the ways in which one is alike or different from people around them. Empathy is a bridge, which closes not only the gap between you and your friends but brings you also closer to strangers. This realization could be an aid to trigger cognitive and emotional reactions to emotions expressed by others. So while being more self-aware does not automatically cause greater empathy, it offers space for empathy to unfold.

Feedback + Closing Phase

Evaluation	Action	Reflection	(Success-) Measurement	Rewards
Leverage Points	Uncoscious	**Self-Reflection**	Numbers	Short time Compensation
Effectiveness	Conscious	**Self- and Other-Awareness**	Else	Superior Gratification
Expectations				
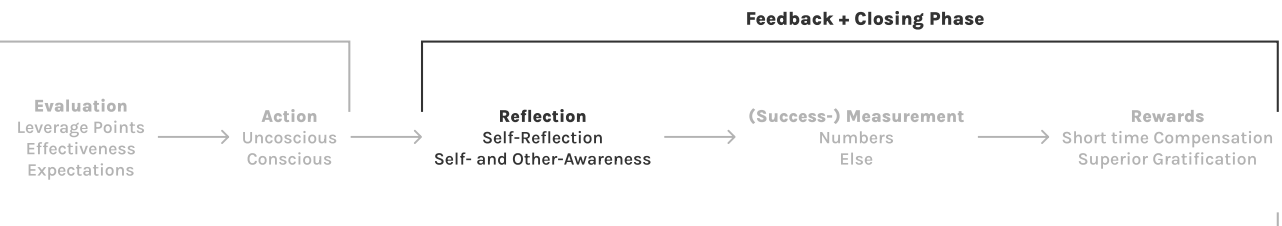
(Success-) Measurement

Depending on the actions, the measurement tools differ. Sometimes there are visible outcomes for the actor, which makes it easy to measure the success, but it is also possible, that there is no direct or visible outcome. In those cases, the individual lacks an important part of the response.

This immeasurability implies that there is no outcome, no effect, nothing achieved with the accomplished action. Therefore, negative feedback is generated and reflected back to the background + preparation phase. This naturally causes discontinuation of the action and can even manifest in frustration and lack of motivation for the individual.

Numbers

Numbers are the easiest way to evaluate a result. They offer a clear and most important an objective labeling to measure the outcome and success.

Unfortunately, the area of application for numbers is extremely limited. They are only useful for quantifiable things, subjects that can be expressed in numbers such as time, temperature, age and so on. This measuring method excludes all unquantifiable data such as happiness, emotions, comfort and many more.

Else

How can one measure a so-called "unmeasurable" thing such as motivation or belief? There are tools to approach a measuring to such, but they depend on a clarification note in order to be verifiable and be somehow objectively comprehensible. Examples are categorizations, visualization, descriptions and more.

Background + Preparation Phase   **Transformation + Action Phase**

External Input   **Mental Formation**   **One's Personal Sphere of Influence**   **Tools**
Genes   Awareness   Environmental Conditions   Bodily Properties
Education   Conviction   **Goals**   Influencable Parameters   Skills
Culture   Values   Available Targets   **+**   Extentions + Amplifyer
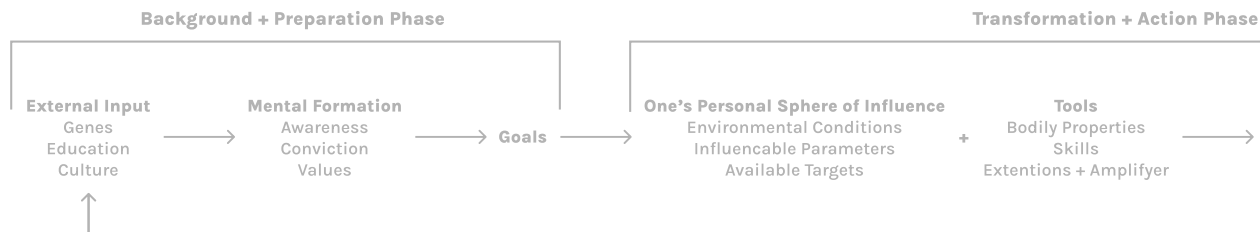
One approach in the context of non-economical value indicators by Jean-Baptiste Labrune grounds on the ancient evaluation methods of journeymen. [Labrune 2016] This method uses a list of parameters and checks if all (or if enough) of them are fullfilled.

But in general, one should always question if it is even necessary to approximate to a quantification when a thing is not.

Rewards

Reward and motivations are drivers for actions. The reason why it is placed in the "feedback + closing phase" is that the effective reward might differ from what we expect to gain beforehand an action (expectations are covered in the chapter "Evaluation" as a reference). But the reward is what brings evidence and drive to further actions. Although, as so often, we might not consciously recognize the reward, our mind does store it and influences further decisions through it. Those rewards vary strongly in their manifestation, from monetary to spiritual and from physical to intangible. The following listing will document some rewards with major driving potential.

Short time Compensation

Too often in our current society are we striving and rewarding with short time compensations. We treat ourselves with an episode of our favorite Netflix series after doing the dishes, stay awake all night long to meet the deadline or promise candy to our children if only they are quiet.

But as the name suggests, those rewards only last for a short time and therefore soak us in the endless spell of this treadmill to always strive for the next reward.

Feedback + Closing Phase

Evaluation	**Action**	**Reflection**	**(Success-) Measurement**	**Rewards**
Leverage Points	Uncoscious	Self-Reflection	Numbers	Short time Compensation
Effectiveness	Conscious	Self- and Other-Awareness	Else	Superior Gratification
Expectations				
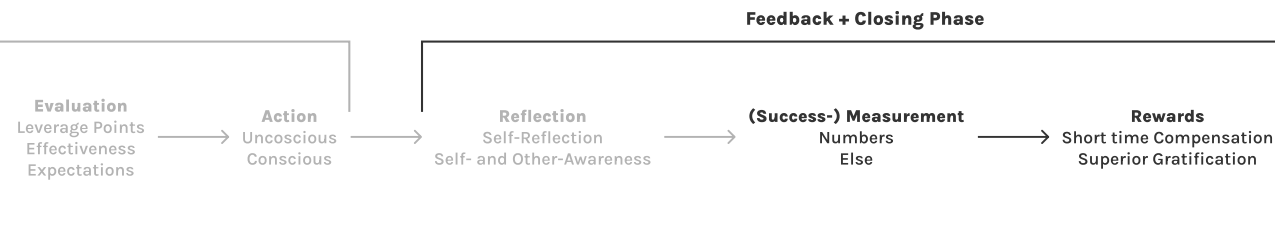
Superior Gratification

Those rewards hold the mystery of what Aristoteles calls "Eudaimonia" - a satisfying lifestyle, balanced state of mind and bliss.

Happiness

Happiness is a state of mind one can visit for a short time, but it is not a lasting one. Due to the psychological immune system in our body, the level of happiness is adjusted and brought back to a new "normal", otherwise, our body would collapse under the overwhelming emotional outpouring. Therefore happiness must be a short time state. What we can influence is the frequency one situates itself in the happy-state. [Santos "The Unhappy Millionaire"]

Making Sense

According to Emily Esfahani Smith [2017] there are "four pillars of a meaningful life".

1. Belonging: Relationships with mutual valuation and true love, not for your attitude but for your intrinsic self.

2. Purpose: (Independent from your job) "using your strengths to serve others". Something to life for, contribute, feeling needed and the "why" that drives you.

3. Transcendence: Losing sense of time and space, reset and being less self-centered. *"[…] those rare moments when you're lifted above the hustle and bustle of daily life, your sense of self fades away, and you feel connected to a higher reality"*.

Background + Preparation Phase   **Transformation + Action Phase**

External Input   **Mental Formation**   **One's Personal Sphere of Influence**   **Tools**
Genes   Awareness   Environmental Conditions   Bodily Properties   Lev
Education   →   Conviction   →   Goals →   Influencable Parameters   +   Skills   Ef
Culture   Values   Available Targets   Extentions + Amplifyer   E:
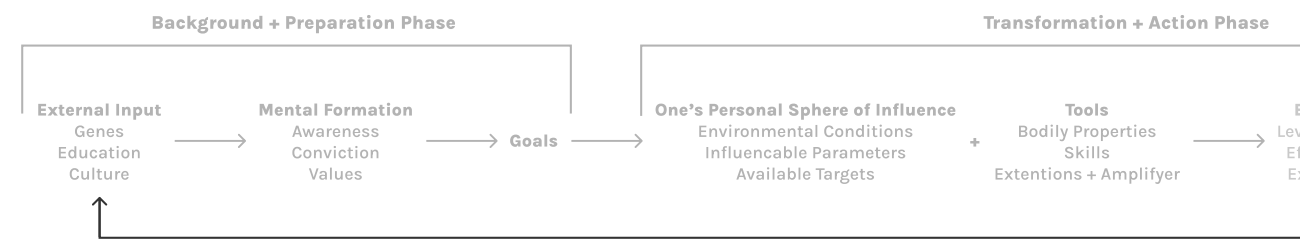
4. Storytelling: "The story you tell yourself about yourself". Clarifying the events of your life by creating a narrative. Understanding how you became who you are.

We can bring meaning to our life by building some or all of those pillars in our lives and orient our actions on this as a reward.

Feedback + Closing Phase

Evaluation		**Action**		**Reflection**		**(Success-) Measurement**		**Rewards**
Leverage Points		Uncoscious		Self-Reflection		Numbers		Short time Compensation
Effectiveness		Conscious		Self- and Other-Awareness		Else		Superior Gratification
Expectations								

04

Project Development

Experiments

During the run of this thesis, we have executed a bunch of experiments in order to evaluate different aspects of our theory.

At this point it is necessary to remark that theory and practice are not as separated as it appears in this document. We executed some of the early experiments simultaneously to our ongoing theoretical exploration. This is due to the nonlinear and interwoven design process where theory and practice run parallel and influence each other. I rearrange this process in this thesis into a comprehensible and reasonable order for the readers. That's why some experiments might seem out of place and pointless, coming from our theoretical chapter just now and having all the theoretical findings already, but they were actually valuable steps in our process.

Zoom Spreading

Description:

During our first Progress-Session presentation we reserved two minutes to execute this spreading-observation experiment. We sent the following message to two people via private message:

Aim:

"Hi there, this is our prototype. Please put on the heart emoji (zoom reaction) and keep on doing so whenever it dissolves again. Forward this message via private chat."

Observe the dynamics evolving in the group as well as the spreading of the introduced action (heart emoji).

Over the following two minutes we observe how many people would turn on their heart emoji, although we would not know if they did it because of the message that reached them or if they would just follow a role model.

Location/Setting:

Zoom-Application (online video-call conference) during a mandatory presentation format.

Findings/Summary:

Very striking was the instant reaction on the first heart emoji when many people put up other emojis or filters. Which held on until the end. But more and more turned into hearts over time.

Target/User:

Peers and mentors

Included people (who already received the message) reported, that they were fed up with the task and could not concentrate on the group anymore.

Methododlogy:

Group dynamic experiment; Individual message forwarding

Excluded people (who did not receive the message yet) reported feeling confused about what is going on and even felt excluded because they gained the feeling that they missed out on something.

Tags:

-

In total the experiment was executed in a very limited setting and therefore was quite superficial.

Continuation:

We would prefer to work in physical settings further on, due to the limitations in digital applications.

Image 06

Mini-Workshops

Description:

We conducted a series of mini-workshops with our peers in the atelier. The participants were invited to a table with discussion questions and a lined with paper to write their thoughts on.

The questions were:
"What do you mean by a 'good deed'?"
"What is your motivation to do a 'good deed'?"
"How much 'good' do you want to do?"
"Do you think you benefit enough from the 'good deeds' of others?"

Findings/Summary:

We quickly realized that the questions we asked were phrased rather openly and that the topic itself was highly subjective. This lead to great discussions, but obviously not to very specific answers.

Exchange and discussions in small groups can push an individual's thoughts more forward, with less pressure. Each one can simply answer the question to which they have something to say.

Gathering different opinions and views was helpful for us in this stage of the project. It mainly shaped our attitude about the topic and helped us better estimate the common opinion about it. For the participants themselves, it was more of a nice reflective thought than something they could bring with them and make use of in their daily life.

Continuation:

The aspect of a collective brainstorming about a topic is the part of this experiment we would like to further explore. But next would be bringing together stranger people and opinions, rather than peers which already know each other and are comfortable exchanging their viewpoints.

Aim:

Gain a general idea of the thoughts about good deeds among our peers. In addition, observe the dynamics within the workshop setting.

Location/Setting:

The couch areas in the Interaction Design Atelier as a casual, semi-informal setting.

Target/User:

Peers around our atelier.

Methododlogy:

Casual workshop; brainstorming through talking and exchanging; documentation by simultaneous written notes and keywords

Tags:

-

Image 07

Opinion Survey

Aim:

Observing the contribution rate to those question-sheets as well as the dynamic evolving out of collective brainstorming with strangers and the different opinions written on the paper.

Location/Setting:

Public areas inside Toni-Areal (e.g. individual workplaces, group tables, toilets, benches)

Target/User:

Everyone moving inside Toni-Areal.

Methododlogy:

Public paper questionnaires; collective brainstorming

Tags:

Public Space

Description:

We prepared 6 different questions about the topic of empathy. Each was printed multiple times so that in the end we could spread 30 question-sheets among the public areas in the Toni building. In order to lower the contribution-threshold, the papers were equipped with a pencil.

The questions we asked were:
"How much empathy is too much?"
"Why is empathy necessary?"
"How could one train empathy?"
"How could empathy be measured?"
"From whom and where should empathy be taught?"

Findings/Summary:

After we collected the surveys a few days later, we were surprised to find most of them still in place and with significantly more (serious) participation than expected. Some people contributed humorous stuff, small drawings or keywords, but some also wrote whole paragraphs about their opinion or suggested sources. Sometimes people answered, complemented or commented on other opinions.

Another interesting observation we made was the participation level in relation to the positioning of the survey within Toni-Areal. We found out that public benches, toilets and group tables were participation hotspots, whereas at individual public workspaces participation was rather low.

Continuation:

The participant group was narrow inside Toni, as a next step, we would want to go out into public spaces.

Also, the collective brainstorming was limited in the sense of its tangibility. The gathered ideas and thoughts are nice to exchange, but we want to further explore the step of making people "do" something.

Image 08

"Reiseführer des Zufalls"

by Janina Tanner

Aim:

Our aim thereby was to figure out, why we enjoy the ideas presented in the book, but why we tend to put it out of hand right after we take a look at it. What would we need to redesign to make people step into action?

Location/Setting:

Zurich inner city center

Target/User:

Ourselves

Methododlogy:

Self-observation; Reenactment

Tags:

Imagined and Everyday self

Description:

Because we referenced Lena Grossmüller's master thesis "Reiseführer des Zufalls" as related work in our own thesis, we decided it is about time to try out her work by ourselves. So we went to the bookshop at Stadelhofen, browsed through the book and decided to take it with us for a further and more thorough analysis.

For the analysis of the project book, we sat on Sechsiläutenplatz and afterward decided to follow one of the experiments in the book. We started from where we sat before and then kept walking through the city.

Findings/Summary:

Browsing through the book is inspiring, many of the questions and exercises are really creative. Nonetheless, we missed the incentive to actually perform one of the exercises. After some discussion, we came to the conclusion, that there exists a gap between the ideal imagined self and the everyday self.

Continuation:

The presentation and topic of Lara's work are still an inspiration for our own thesis, but apart from that, we strive to use a different mediation format.

Image 09

Daily Life Observations

Aim:

Observe the impact of those micro-contributions on ourselves and our surroundings.

Location/Setting:

Implemented into our daily life

Target/User:

Ourselves and our environment

Methododlogy:

Self-observation; Self-committment

Tags:

Stress and Mindfulness

Description:

Out of a self-observation from the "Reiseführer des Zufalls" we made ourselves a catalog of daily micro-contributions and committed us to implement and do them consequently during our daily life. We both execute three identical ones and one additional that refers to our habits:

1. Greet other pedestrians on the street
2. Use the manned cash desk and wish the cashier a nice day
3. Visit all groups in the atelier and ask them how it is going

Additional Damaris: Wish the conductor in Public Transport a nice day

Additional Janina: Wave thankfully to the car driver who let you pass

Findings/Summary:

Greeting other pedestrians on the street:

- most people, in general, appreciate my greeting on the street and also greet back if I did so, some actively avoid eye contact
- in crowded places, the greeting of people is not really applicable. As soon as I reach the train station or the marketplace, I kind of stop greeting people because there is not that clear passing from each other anymore as it is in narrow/uncrowded streets.

Use the manned cash desk and wish the cashier a nice day:

- cashiers seemed too stressed and busy to go on with the next in line to notice my "have a nice day" and just took it as a phrase (Floskel) with no special reaction

Visit all groups in the atelier and ask them how it is going:

- this needs quite some time
- great talks and exchange emerge and everyone asks back how we are doing

Wishing a nice day to the conductor in public transport:

- conductors at the train were positively surprised by my add-on "have a nice day" and seemed happy about it - that also made me happy
- even a person sitting in the same section, mimicked me and also wished a nice day to the conductor

The most important finding I generated was, that your interaction needs to come pure. It should not be a deed to fulfill. If I wish the cunductur a nice day, but my thoughts are already back in my book alike my eyes, then the action is infiltrated by multitasking. Those Interactions are most pure if I give myself this short time to concentrate only on them.

Continuation:

Actively doing micro-contributions sparked joy in our lifes, but how can we get other people to do them?

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– Randa

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tuations"

ll Collins

Redebänkli

Aim:

Investigate the pedestrian's reaction to my public offer.

Location/Setting:

Inner City center in Liestal, a car-free street with many benches, where people go for shopping and groceries. I sat there 30min on a Saturday afternoon, so neither hot nor low time.

Target/User:

Pedestrians

Methododlogy:

Indirect-active approaching people in public

Tags:

Public Space

Description:

This experiment was part of the Workshop "Hello Stranger" led by Dimitri Van den Wittenboer. He is an artist researching in the field of public-space activities and introduced the audience of his workshop into the field of "super public activities". After some theoretical input and discussion, we went out to execute a rapid prototype idea.

I executed my idea of the "Redebänkli"; an offer to pedestrians to join me on the bench for a talk. I put up a sign next to me saying: Redebänkli; Lust zum schwätze? (Talking bench; Do you feel like chatting?) and actively greeted pedestrians passing close by or give a nod if they were far.

Findings/Summary:

In general, most pedestrians took notice of me, some were obviously pleased by my offer (friendly greeting me back and some even making a comment on how nice they find my idea, although no one made this comment directly to me but to their company), others actively avoided eye-contact after reading the sign and again others were a bit perplexed after reading the sign and not able to react in any further than just responding my greeting.

In the half hour I was sitting there, no one took my offer and wanted to talk to me.

Continuation:

We bring from this workshop and practical experiment more knowledge of public space activities into our further experiments.

The talking bench itself will not be continued, because it could be a whole project by itself, but does not correlate to our aim to inspire people for micro-contributions.

Image 11

Support Mobil

Aim:

Offering our time and support to strangers in a mobile setting.

Location/Setting:

The neighborhood of Toni Areal in Zurich, up until Schiffbau and back.

Target/User:

Pedestrians

Methododlogy:

Indirect-active approaching people in public

Tags:

Public Space

Description:

We stuck signs onto a shopping cart labeling it as the "Support Mobil" and further invitations to approach us such as: "How might we support you right now?" and "Is there anything we can help you out with?". Then we set off and strolled through the neighborhood with our mobile setup.

Findings/Summary:

Our mobility was too big to give people the opportunity to approach us. We guess that it would need quite some time and presence to encourage people to approach the Support Mobil and till that moment we were already disappeared with our shopping cart again in this setting.

Just now reflecting on it, turns out that we did almost exactly the same again as the "Redebänkli" just in mobile-version. Which was again semi-successful due to its indirect-active approach.

In general, my biggest finding out of those two experiments is, that we both are not the kind of people who like to in-person approach strangers (of course there is a general discomfort and fear of those interactions, but that's not what I mean by this remark). We prefer to leave traces for others and approach them through those subjects.

Continuation:

The superior subject of the "Support Mobil" as an entity we work for brings reason and comfort into our actions in public space, this aspect is worth to be continued. But the aspect of in-person approaching strangers is nothing that brings me joy if I think of continuing that.

Image 12

Streetchalk Call-to-Action

Aim:

Figure out if low-threshold call-to-actions have an effect.

Location/Setting:

Limmatplatz (there is always a lot of people and traffic)

Target/User:

People who use the crosswalk while a car has to halt for them.

Methododlogy:

Field research; call-to-action

Tags:

Public Space; Stress and Mindfulness; Pluralistic Ignorance

Description:

To return to the micro-contributions and how to get people to do them we started to test the effectiveness of calls-to-action in public space. We decided to commence with a simple method: chalk writing on the street. We observed the micro-interaction of thanking the car driver who let you pass. We watched a pedestrian crossing for 20 minutes and counted the total amount of people crossing the street while a car is stopping to let them pass. This was our reference group and the percentage of people thanking the car drivers for halting was really low. So we did two more rounds, with the aim to increase this percentage. For this we wrote the question "Bedankst du dich bei haltenden Autos?" ("Do you thank stopping cars?") at one of the crosswalks and at the other one the call "Winke den haltenden Autos" ("Wave to the stopping cars").

Findings/Summary:

After watching strangers cross the street for two hours, we had to admit that our chalk writings did not show any effect. Some were obviously reading what was written there, but then they crossed the street without even looking at the car driver.

The next day we decided to take another chance and try it in different city areas, where the crosswalks would be in a different setting. The second try was at Langstrasse (fewer people and traffic, but still) and the percentage of people waving to the cars was already for the reference group significantly higher. But still, our call-to-action did not influence the percentage at all. So lastly we observed Förlibuckstrasse (almost no people and traffic) where we noticed, that almost everyone thanked the car drivers.

This revealed an unexpected finding for us: people auto-matically do more micro-contributions when they are put in a more intimate setting.

Image 13

Continuation:

The findings imply that we should concentrate on creating the right setting for people, in order to automatically generate micro-contributions instead of actively addressing those.

Extreme Mindfulness

Aim:

Observe me when no entertainment functions are at my disposal at any time.

Location/Setting:

My daily life (I gave myself a tight schedule of different duties I had on my to-do-list, to create a stress-like setup)

Target/User:

Myself

Methododlogy:

Self-experiment in a daily-life setting

Tags:

Stress and Mindfulness; R.A.I.N

Description:

Drawing from the learnings about the imagined and everyday self as well as the matter of perception of ones surrounding, I set up a self-experiment:

My Smartphone would be cut in possibilities to avoid any entertaining purpose but only provide "essentials". Some functions I would be allowed to use are the watch, communication tools and administrative purposes. Some functions I would need to avoid are listening to podcasts & music, watching videos & movies and exploring any kind of social media

The omission of entertaining functions should bring my attention to the analog surrounding. I should sharpen my sensories for my surrounding, i.e. listen, smell, see and feel my environment. This would be like an ongoing meditation process in focusing my mind on myself and my surrounding.

Findings/Summary:

When I decided to go on this self-experiment it scared the sh*t out of me. I am a commuter, I spend 3 hours a day in public transport (when I go to school, as I did that day), normally I would fill these at least partly with entertaining activities. I expected it to be super boring and unproductive and if I hate something then it is the two.

Surprisingly it was not that boring. But it was quite exhausting to concentrate on the moment. I found myself mostly mind wandering, e.g. already preformulating this "Findings-text" in my head or getting reminded of something I should do when I return home, thanks to something in my environment that reminded me of it.

The social media I missed the least. What I missed most was listening to something, e.g. on my way home or during repetitive work. In the evening I was mentally exhausted

No image applicable

from the experiment, but the free time for my mind without entertainment also brought me some relaxation and calmness. So this experiment showed my, that I am doing well without constant entertainment (especially during short timespans e.g. a tram ride of about 10min).

My awareness of the importance of connecting with the moment has made me reconnect with it more often than elsewise. Also, the experiment brought me productiveness in the sense of concentration on what I am doing instead of multitasking and lacking capacitiy for everything else.

Continuation:

The aspects of giving yourself time and space to reconnect with the moment during your daily life are valuable to continue on. I already brought the knowledge about mindfulness with me into my daily life and only needed to practice it, but to make strangers implement the same in their day would require to somehow bring this knowledge to them.

Micro-Objects

Aim:

Catching people's attention in their daily life with an object and trigger an interaction. Find resonance level of the matchbox prototype.

Location/Setting:

Trams in Zurich (public transport)

Target/User:

Users of public transport in Zurich.

Methododlogy:

Unfamiliar object in a familiar space; analog and low-level interaction

Tags:

Public Space; Stress and Mindfulness; Inatentional Blindness

Description:

In order to intervene in people's daily life and give them a moment of mindfulness I came up with small objects holding a trigger for reflection for the people and placing them in public spaces.

I have built a small scenery out of a matchbox, holding an unfinished sentence on the front in order to make people curious and the finishing word with corresponding visualizations on the inside. This micro-object is placed in the tram on a spot where people can find it easily from their seating position.

I as the observer sit/stand nearby and observe (or even document depending on the situation) people's reactions and interactions with the object.

Findings/Summary:

Roughly 80 percent of people sitting next to the micro-object opened the same. This is in my opinion a quite high resonance.

The matchbox turned out to be an object of interest to people. The concept of the matchbox is very clear: there is an inner part to pull out and my attached flap with an arrow on it enhanced this interaction.

People were very curious about the inside, not clear yet if this curiosity results just from the matchbox itself or also the cliffhanger text on it. However, people even changed place when they were sitting one or two rows behind the object and spotted it from back there.

The interaction itself was quite short. The box was, in most cases, only open for seconds. But according to the user feedback, I gathered in short conversations, it gave them a spark of joy and a push in the day. Some were also looking for further information about it.

Image 14

Continuation:

The resonance on the attention for the micro-object I experienced is promising. Now that I have found an object of interest, needs to be evaluated the individual parts in order to best address people's mindfulness and trigger the chain reaction of micro-contributions.

- evaluate the content of the box (that generates the desired reaction from people)
- evaluate outside of the box (the role of the outer appearance in triggering the pull-out interaction as well as connection to the inside)
- evaluate positioning (is the tram the only place or are there further places where the object can generate the same outcome)
- evaluate style (what style generates the best outcome, e.g. more professional or more self-made appearance)

Manifestation

Origin

During a period of reflection about the past process, I acknowledged how many things, facts, terms, phenomena andy many more I have learned about, during this whole bachelor preparation and project phase.

This bunch of collected knowledge has shaped my view on society, my understanding of human nature and my opinion on myself. I wished I could share this with as many people as possible.

Now, I am not the only person out there, that has something to share, vieing for the attention of the crowd. Also, I don't intend to enforce my knowledge to other people, but I want to make it at the disposal of those who desire it. How can I gain attention, mediate the gathered knowledge in an approachable and convenient format and give people a takeaway for their daily life?

Approach

The outcome of my project will be a composition of three components. These components don't have clear edges but merge into each other.

First, there are public space interventions. Objects, which are placed in public spaces, catching the attention of people in their daily life, providing a moment of joy and triggering a reflection for their current state.

Those objects are linked to a reference point. An environment providing the beneath information about the objects, as well as background knowledge about the topic of "one's personal sphere of influence". This allows people to dive deeper into the topic if they want to.

Lastly, there is an experience embedded that allows people to witness their sphere of influence in a more tangible manner.

Public Space Intervention

The intervention can take many different forms. There are no limits to this and it is so to say "open source", doable by everyone. This is also where its strength lays: Everyone can contribute their own individual strengths, which in turn strengthens the whole movement.

These interventions serve as attention-grabbers. They are implemented in public space, to unexpectedly intervene in people's daily life. Further, they hold the link to the reference point, leading people to the underlying topic and corresponding knowledge.

Micro-Objects

As I am myself, I made use of my personal strengths and possibilities. I created the micro-objects: A matchbox covered in a new dress with a self-made scenery inside holding a thought-trigger for the observer. I am a commuter, that's why they are placed in public transport areas. They are small because I have an affection for details and love to craft those little sceneries. And they spread joy because I can envision nothing to be better, as the optimist I am.

Reference Point

This reference point should provide an environment, allowing people to learn more about the project, but also dive deeper into the topics of micro-contributions and one's personal sphere of influence.

Platform

For now, I decided to go with an Instagram account and the corresponding infrastructure provided by the platform. Through this, I will profit from existing and common mechanisms people are used to, which lowers the hurdle to find my content.

I occur as a testimonial (a mikrocontributerin) and share

my experience and gathered information with followers and visitors.

Knowledge Bites

In order to make the knowledge approachable, I envision it split up in tiny bites, each bite treating another term, thought, quote I have gathered during the process.

These bites of course are interconnected and together they draw a bigger picture of the topic. The more bites one learns about, the clearer the picture gets. But still, it is up to oneself, how many bites one dives into, able to manage one's own receptivity and interest.

For this purpose, I use Instagram posts. Holding an image /visual component as well as a short text paragraph about the subject.

The entirety of those posts I call: "a collection of cheesy things about how each of us co-creates our community with their micro-contributions".

Link

As the connection from the public space inter- vention to the reference point serves the username (@eine.mikrocontributerin) from Instagram, as well as a hashtag (#mikrobeitrag).

The hashtag not only makes it possible for people to find my content but also to spread the topic further through their sharing, making their audience attentive to it.

Background Information

In order to inform people, what those public space interventions and the collection is about, I use Instagram highlights with short explanations.

Experience

As a product of the former two components, an experience arises for the observer. The public space intervention itself provides a small interaction and an object to discover and the collection further completest this observation with an individual learning process around the topic.

Ideally, my project triggers a wave of communal activities, like a trend to tag one's micro-contributions over social media, which would generate a community of mutual encouragement and cheering.

One's small contribution would be embedded in a more holistic context and through that partly reveal the impact of one's action and the collective shaping of our society.

Image 16

Image 15
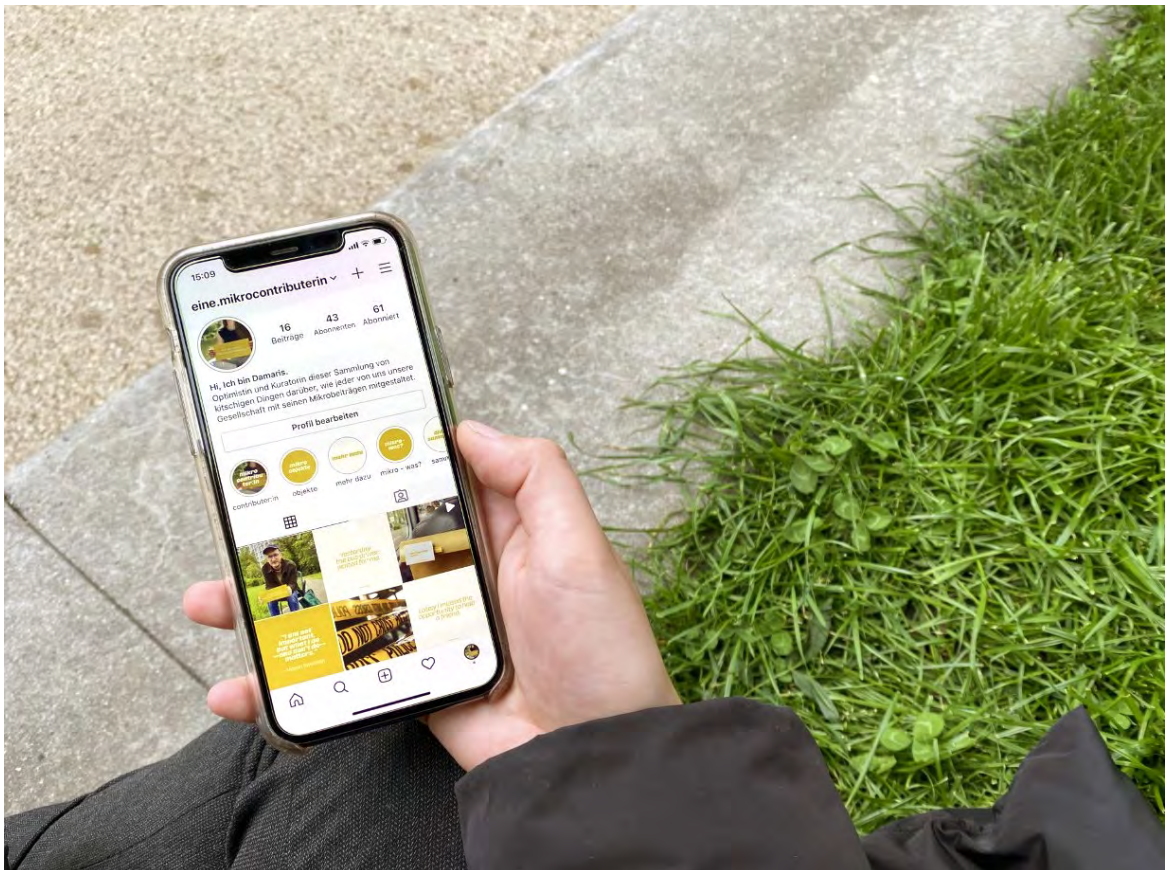
My adjustable manifesto as a microcontributer:

I am aware of my personal sphere of influence

—

and authorize myself to make use of it

I embrace my very own skills and passions

—

they will bring the most prosperous result

I consider our society as a complex system

—

different oppinions are essential for progress

I dare to make mistakes as long as I am willing to learn

—

any action is better than no action

I don't doubt my impact

—

it is somewhere, sometimes even if it remains invisble for now

Glossary

In the chapter "Experiments", you found some tagged terms that reffer to this glossary - a collection of terms we stumbled upon during our process and thereupon further explored in order to sharpen our progress. Most terms interlink with further terms again.

Public Space

Tags: -

Public Space is a combination of two rather broad terms. First "public", which one could consider an antonym of private and second "space" can describe any kind of surrounding a human can enter.

How Dimitri Van den Witteboer put it: What makes public space differs from private space is the interaction with strangers. ["Hello Stranger", 27.03.2021]

People in general change their attitude, as soon as they leave their private space and enter a public one. Aspects like external perception and comfort interplay to this attitude change.

Another interesting aspect is private groups in public space. "groups" can start from just two people up to a whole crowd. Those groups appear as connected individuals moving and staying together in public space, representing an overlap of private and public. This aura of privatization those groups segregate, not even by purpose but just by the fact, generate isolation of this group for strangers.

Imagined and Everyday Self

Tags: -

Our imagined self emerges in reflective moments or is triggered by inspiration. We imagine or even commit ourselves to behave in a certain way. We envision ourselves doing that yoga session every day, buy all the veggies in the store while seeing ourselves cooking that healthy dish, pin fancy DIY projects on our Pinterest-pinboard while projecting us into the process of doing them, but what we execute in the end is a completely different matter.

This dissonance can be caused by multiple reasons. The combination of those reasons creates the everyday self.

Do you know this feeling of being caught in one's daily struggle? Deadlines want to be respected, missed calls and unanswered emails waiting in line, unloved administrative tasks have been postponed for too long already, bills laying on your desk, you should also do the laundry, organize gifts for upcoming birthdays, think of the menu for this diner... This list could be continued forever.

Time is always short. The twenty-four hours a day exists of seeming not enough to fulfill all your duties, not even thinking of the joys yet. Not surprising, that we are constantly accompanied by a certain stress level.

The everyday self is restricted in time, as well as capacity (e.g. choice overload, physical exhaustion). Shifting more into the imagined self requires behaviour change and/or compromises. It is an ongoing process and one that can easily vanish during one's daily life.

Stress and Mindfulness

by Janina Tanner

Tags: *R.A.I.N; Inatentional Blindness; Time Affluence*

We listen to the radio while folding the laundry and also having an eye on the neighbor's kids. We have become experts in handling multiple tasks at once, our minds are constantly occupied, but everything outside of our current tasks slips our attention.

J.M. Darley and C.D. Batson did a study of situational and dispositional variables in helping behavior in 1972. One of the examined variables was the aspect of time. In an experiment they were sending students across campus, some in a great hurry to reach their next lecture in time and some with no time pressure at all. On their way to the other building, the sidewalk was blocked by an actor who pretended to be injured. Darley and Batson's findings were quite unambiguous: people in a hurry were significantly less inclined to help the injured person than people with spare time on their hands. [Darley & Batson,1973]

Mindfulness could generally be defined as the practice of focusing attention on the present moment. To perceive the things happening right now all around us in a neutral and non-judgmental manner. While it has its roots in Buddhism, a mindfulness trend was discoverable in recent years in Western culture too. Jon Kabat-Zinn helped spread its popularity through founding the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) method in 1979. As the title suggests already, it is a method of reducing stress through training in mindfulness. [MindfulnessSwiss]

R.A.I.N

R.A.I.N represents the terms: recognize, allow, investigate and nurture. It is a method to gain back control over our emotions and thoughts in order to react more resiliently to whatever situations might happen to us.

It works the following:
When one recognizes that one is not in a good mood (how our body lets us know this varies from person to person, one might get shaky hands, the other might get hot cheeks and another might feel numbed) it suggests going through the R.A.I.N steps. The first one is already accomplished: recognizing one's mood. Second, it advises one to allow the emotions, not trying to suppress or overdub them but to accept their presence. Thirdly one is encouraged to investigate the emotions. Not only what they do to oneself and one's body but also where they come from. So to say explaining to oneself why this emotion occurred and how it makes me feel. Lastly one should nurture oneself. This does not mean feeling sorry for oneself, it means looking after oneself like you would do for a good friend. [Santos, 2021, "Reconnect with the Moment"]

It is of significant importance, that we are able to maintain a reasonable treatment of our own thoughts. We should not drill and harm ourselves, as well as we should not pamper ourselves. The comparison with treating a good friend is very adequate in my eyes on how we should nurse ourselves.

Inatentional Blindness

Tags: *Stress and Mindfulness; Negative Visualization;
Pluralistic Ignorance*

Most of our time, we spend in our thoughts, pondering about all the things that occupy us, or we are on the phone, immersed in the endless content there. This makes us unreceptive to our current surrounding. Inatentional blindness describes this inattention for our environment, due to the distraction and the non-presence in the moment.

This phenomenon makes us miss diverse experiences. It weakens our social interactions, lets us not notice when people are in need or makes us isolate ourselves, numbed by the distraction. And one of the most crucial aspects of this phenomenon: we all do this inatentional. We don't even notice, that we miss out on something.

Cutting down our distraction or even making use of some meditation techniques, can lower the inatentional blindness drastically.

Time Affluence

Tags: *Stress and Mindfulness*

This term describes the assessment, that one percieves that one has enough spare time and time for oneself.

This perception influences the satisfaction with one's standard of living significantly. Wealth in time serves as a parameter for happiness on the same level as monetary wealth (if not even more important).

Research shows, that money can generate more long-lasting happiness if one pays to relieve oneself of disliked tasks rather than buying material stuff. [Santos "The Unhappy Millionaire"] One could for example pay a cleaner to do one's household or order one's groceries online, directly to one's front door, whatever relieves one most, in order to gain some quality time - time where you don't need to do anything.

This aspect of doing nothing is important. One will not attain a higher standard of living, if the saved time will be invested in doing another task, like having more worktime or doing other productive stuff. The saved time must be invested in "idling" or "life"-activities such as visiting friends, reading a novel, pursue a hobby and so on.

Negative Visualization

Tags: *Stress and Mindfulness*

This stoic meditation practice builds on the theory that visualizing a worse scenario makes us validate the things we have more.

By imagining an altered reality, where one aspect of our life would vary to our current state, we build a stronger awareness for the current state. If one would for example think about how one's life would look like without a loved one, one recognizes the value of this person. This not only turns into a higher appreciation for one's current state but also into more joy, the next time one is able to meet this person.

There is one aspect of this concept one needs to pay attention to: not getting lost in the negative visualization. It is meant as a short time thought trip one can practice during one's daily life and after some minutes return to reality. So one does not carry the negative thoughts further on but shakes them off by the greatfulness for the reality. [Santos]

Pluralistic Ignorance

Tags: *Inatentional Blindness*

This term describes the situation in which a majority of the people silently reject a norm, but mistakenly assume, that the majority accepts this norm. This leads to especially crucial situations when the circumstances are ambiguous and difficult to assess so no one really knows how to act within this situation. The attendees then try to figure out the most appropriate way to act, by observing the others. If every one of the attendees is clueless, a pluralistic ignorance is evolving, because no one is the role model and shows of what must be done, so no one can imitate. [Katz & Allport, 1931]

Combined with a "responsibility diffusion" (a task that obviously has to be done is not carried out, even though enough capable people are present or available to do it. [Wikipedia "Verantwortungsdiffusion"]) no one will act up in the situation. Everyone adapts to the passive behaviour of the crowd, consciously or unconsciously hoping that someone else will intervene.

This combination causes the so-called "bystander effect", which states that individuals are less likely to offer help to a victim when there are other people present. [Darley & Latané, 1968]

05

Conclusion

Process Summary

Research

Our research is based on the ground of empowering people through the revelation of their sphere of influence. This has triggered the urge to develop tools in order to support the discovery and use of the same.

Concept

During the conceptualistaion, it became clear, that there is this remarkable interplay between one's personal sphere of influence and micro-contributions.

Action Chain

With the help of the action chain, we were able to clarify and trace the underlying structure which leads to an action. This enabled us to address our practical process more specifically towards the needed transformation causing micro-contributions.

Project

While experimenting with different aspects of the transformation process and exploring the application of micro-contributions we crystalized the intervention into people's daily life as our chance to embed our experience. The same developed as an object holding an impulse for one's daily life and is backed up with a collection of info-bits to make the background knowledge accessible to a wide mass.

Contribution

With my project outcome I generate awareness for the topics of one's sphere of influence and micro-contributions. I make the gathered knowledge accessible, even implement it into people's daily life. From the generated experience people arise empowered and inspired to make use of their own opportunities.

Refinements

Platform

For now, my reference point for the audience is hosted on Instagram. I am aware of the exclusionary aspects of this platform because the information is not freely accessible. Not only the requirement for an account. but also technological affinity is required in order to use this platform.

To still benefit from the advantages and infrastructure of Instagram but be more openly accessible, my goal would be to add a website into the scope of my project. The website could hold the info-bits as well as the background information, but the Instagram channel would remain as a space where people are able to link their own micro-contributions via the hashtag and use the "follow"-function in order to stay updated whenever a new post is out there.

Experiencability

Making people's sphere of influence experienceable through my personal sphere of influence was a good starting point, especially because it was a method for me to clarify and order my gathered knowledge around the topic.

For a further development of the project, I would like to investigate further tools which would allow people to more directly investigate their own sphere of influence. Closing the feedback loop of micro-contributions by connecting actor, reciever and witness would be my next approach.

The former aim towards literally tracing one's personal sphere of influence turned into a more subjective approach, leaving space for individual experiences and a collective shaping of the topic. We made the basework, by narrowing the complex topic and therefore did not reach the desired stage yet, nevertheless, we were able to bring it into an accessible format which lays the foundation for furthuer exploration.

Mediation Format

Since the early beginning of the project, Janina and I were on the same page with our intention to make this project humorous and "cool" just like the project "Amt für Kleinstdelikte". We intended not to be cheesy at all and not to draw a "glossy vision of the world", claiming how awesome the world could be when just everyone would use our "solution". We thought no one is interested in this kind of solution, because they are too far from reality. We struggled all along the way, dropping our ideas, because of that, loosing the interest by ourselves, even losing motivation for an idea, because we could not envision it without being cheesy in the end.

This striving for uncheesiness has held us for a long time, until that moment I heard the quote "If you can't be cheesy, you can't be free" in a podcast. This sentence was like a slap in the face. After that, I was able to release myself from the pressure to be humorous at all costs and from then on embraced the cheesiness of myself and the project.

Self-Expectations

During my apprenticeship, I have learned, that one should do the things one does for oneselves and not for the grades or any other external motivator. During my studies, I continuously worked on counteracting my trained strive for doing stuff for meeting a deadline but shifting my motivation to intrinsic drivers.

The lesson I had to learn now after implementing the learning about personal-driven motivation was, that one can be a hard judge of oneself. I have set the goals high for this bachelor thesis - the grand finale of this study so to say and a good stepping stone for my future working career. With those expectations, I lost myself in counterproductive pressure and self-doubts, which of course also caused a loss of motivation and engagement. In retro perspective, I directly run into a "Be Happy!"-Paradoxon (about which I ironically learned about during this process).

Learnings

This Paradoxon is about imposing an obligation onto yourself or someone by claiming that it is only a question of mental willpower to reach "happiness" or "spontaneousness". Whenever the person called upon does not find themselves in the requested mindstate, searches the "mistake" either in the world, but most likely in themselves. As a consequence it is the demand to "Be Happy!" itself, that makes it impossible to reach the desired status. [Watzlawick, 1983, P. 27-29]

Courage to Commitment

During this final stage of the bachelor thesis, I sometimes curse my past me for not being brave enough to take decisions and commit myself to a more specific topic earlier. I was wobbling in the hover of open topics, not ready to commit myself to a more narrow sphere because I feared I could find a better topic once later or I could get feed up by this theme and so on. In retrospect, I would call this hesitation a waste of time (not a complete waste of time, I can acknowledge that I was not ready yet and needed to make this experience by myself in order to feel its effects).

Next time I will get the chance for such a project, I will urge and encourage myself to commit earlier to a specific topic.

Unintended Success

This bachelor thesis semester was almost like a self-discovery process for me. I could (more or less) freely browse a topic that has occupied me and thus blocked me not only in my conviction about the design field but also concerning my life path and the vision where I should invest myself and my time.

Thanks to this period of timer and the rich exchange, I was able to refine my viewpoint as well as my convictions and goals. I emerge with a clearer vision and as a more determined person out of this process. In this aspect, this bachelor thesis was a pure success, because I can imagine nothing more valuable for myself and the society as the purposeful me to contribute.

06

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Image 01: *Pop-Up Forum*
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Image 02: *Empathiestadt Zürich*
Walliser T. & Wolfensberger S.
https://empathiestadt.ch/ (latest retrieve 16.05.2021)

Image 03: *Amt für Kleinstdelikte*
Dušek, M. & Mascello, J. (2017)
https://interactiondesign.zhdk.ch/en/projects/amt-fuer-
kleinstdelikte/ (latest retrieve 16.05.2021)

Image 04: *Raum der Konfrontation*
Obieta, F. & Rainolter, C. (2018)
https://interactiondesign.zhdk.ch/projekte/raum-der-ko
nfrontation/ (latest retrieve 16.05.2021)

Image 05: *Reiseführer des Zufalls*
Grossmüller, L. (2014)
http://dscvr-guide.com/der-reisefuehrer/ (latest retrieve
16.05.2021)

Image 06: *Zoom Spreading during progress session 1*
Büchner, D. & Tanner, J. (2021) Private Source

Image 07: *Mini-Workshop in the atelier*
Büchner, D. & Tanner, J. (2021) Private Source

Image 08: *Opinion-Survey on the toilet*
Büchner, D. & Tanner, J. (2021) Private Source

Image 09: *Self-experiment on the Sächsilüteplatz*
Büchner, D. & Tanner, J. (2021) Private Source

Image 10: *Reminder Post-It's on the mirror*
Büchner, D. (2021) Private Source

Image 11: *Redebänkli in Liestal*
Büchner, D. (2021) Private Source

Image 12: *Shopping Cart converted into the Support Mobil*
Büchner, D. (2021) Private Source

Image 13: *Writting Calls-toAction on the floor*
Büchner, D. & Tanner, J. (2021) Private Source

Image 14: *Micro-Object "Neugierde"in the tram*
Büchner, D. (2021) Private Source

Image 15: *Micro-Object "Komplimente" in the train*
Büchner, D. (2021) Private Source

Image 16: *Micro-Object in the elevator*
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Image 17: *Micro-Object in the bus*
Büchner, D. (2021) Private Source

Image 18: *Micro-Object "time for you" in the tram*
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Image 19: *Instagram page "eine.mikrocontributerin" on a smartphone in hands*
Nugroho, S. (2021) Private Source

Image 20: *Damaris holding sign: "Ich bin ein:e mikrocontributer:in"*
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