Communicate, Critique and Co-Create (CCC) Future Technologies Through Design Fiction in VR Environment

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Statement of Interest

I am a post-graduate student aiming to work in the field of Human-Computer Interaction. I strive to create meaningful user experiences by exploring the intersection between creativity and technology. My background and work experience in the IT industry have taught me to rationally justify and implement my ideas. On the other hand, my post-graduate courses like Interaction Design, Current Topics in HCI and Design Thinking have brought out my creative side. They not only imparted knowledge and skills about the field, but also guided me to view daily aspects of life from a designer's point of view.

I am interested in gaining further knowledge about the world of HCI and strengthening my design skills with hands-on experience in Design Fiction. This will help me in reimagining potential futures through narrative explorations and leverage the insights into designing novel interfaces to empower people through technology.

One prospect of research is sharing experiences though Virtual Reality [1]. I envision a future where people will be able to share immersive real-life experiences with others in real-time, in spite of being geographically apart. The motivation behind this comes from a personal experience of mine. Pursuing my master's in a foreign country comes with the perks of experiencing new things, visiting new places and embracing new cultures. Video conferencing does provide means for showing these new encounters to my loved ones from back home. However, the experience is restricted to the screen. I believe VR can play a crucial role here, in bridging the gap. Like in ReserveCAVE [2], the viewers will have a far more enriching experience if they are able to see what the user is experiencing with the help of Immersive Virtual Reality. Moreover, photorealistic real-world users can be used instead of avatar-based VR approaches for supporting real interactions [1]. This idea can also be scaled up for a larger target audience. This includes people with special needs or limited mobility like in the case of hospitalized or housebound patients.

A project that I am currently working on as part of my Design Thinking coursework, involves understanding how people are coping up with the sudden lockdown imposed due to the pandemic and how they are anticipating going back to their normal lives once this is over. For addressing their problems, I used Speculative and Critical Design approaches by imagining the current situation as the 'new normal' and then assessing the practicality of the ideas.

With Design Fiction, I hope to explore the future of VR, not only as a fun element but also as a way for bringing positive impact on people's lives – hence my interest in this workshop.

References

[1] Simon N.B. Gunkel, Martin Prins, Hans Stokking, and Omar Niamut. 2017. Social VR Platform: Building 360-degree Shared VR Spaces. In Adjunct Publication of the 2017 ACM International Conference on Interactive Experiences for TV and Online Video (TVX '17 Adjunct). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 83–84. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1145/3084289.3089914

[2] Akira Ishii, Masaya Tsuruta, Ippei Suzuki, Shuta Nakamae, Tatsuya Minagawa, Junichi Suzuki, and Yoichi Ochiai. 2017. ReverseCAVE experience: providing reverse perspectives for sharing VR experience. In SIGGRAPH Asia 2017 VR Showcase (SA '17). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, Article 9, 1–2. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1145/3139468.3139482