Identifying Unspoken Desires and Demands: A Collection of Design Ideas for Living Room Furniture and Zones

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Abstract
In this study, the outcomes of a particular elective course — Furniture Design and Everyday Life — were analyzed and discussed, in which the students were given an assignment regarding the development of design ideas for living room units. The common living room discourse established by professional actors such as designers, manufacturers, and marketing experts requires the user to undertake a set of generic activities like watching television, eating, hosting, relaxing, sitting, etc. However, one of the important tenets of design thinking is applying user-based research for discovering unarticulated user needs and providing a source of inspiration for design practice. Therefore, it was hypothesized that the emphatic approach of design thinking would contribute well to the area of living room furniture design, which has been a realm often dominated by stereotypes and normative configurations. During my elective course, industrial design sophomores were expected to develop design ideas considering the research analysis regarding respondents' desires and demands in the living room context. This article overlays the students' design ideas for new zones, furniture units and products that addressed the activities of studying, dancing, exercising, pet rearing and playing PlayStation games.

Keywords
Living room, Furniture, Industrial Design, User Appropriation, Design Education.

Introduction

Learning About Living Room Conventions and Furniture Stereotypes

An elective course, entitled *Furniture Design and Everyday Life*, in the spring semester of the 2016–2017 academic year was initiated[1]. This course included short-term design exercises, which aimed to get industrial design sophomores to contemplate the links between everyday life practices and the design of everyday products. The final module of this course was about the design of living room furniture. However, the intention was not to get the students to design *another couch* or a display cabinet that would fit a certain style. However, it was more about recognizing a fundamental notion which is furniture stereotypes. Students were expected to re-examine the current living room furniture stereotypes, through the lens of tenets and approaches pertaining design thinking. As Lockwood (2010) indicates, the term, design thinking, is generally referred to as applying a designer's sensibility and methods to problem solving. One of the important tenets of design thinking is to develop a deep understanding of the user, based on fieldwork research (Lockwood, 2010). Before immediately drawing from a certain stereotype, students were advised to reconceptualize furniture units. Away from the already developed furniture, they were asked to undertake user research and develop their design ideas according to how users want or need to use their living rooms. This module neither addressed stylization and aesthetics, nor did it advise students to develop neoclassical, modernist or local styles for certain furniture *stereotypes*.

Lockwood (2010) implies that using an emphatic approach can be both a source of inspiration and contribute to reaching user insights. Furthermore, such inquiries could help designers discover unarticulated user needs. Therefore, the module was organized for students, in such a way that they dealt with users and improved living room designs based on the data collected about user needs and demands. Such an endeavour is to be considered a valuable educational objective and learning outcome as the normative nature of the living room dominates the furniture market and even the design education realm. In this elective course, students proceeded in the following manner:

1. Studying, depicting and reviewing living room norms in the furniture market
2. Questioning and criticizing the market norms
3. Analysing users' needs and desires in their living room context through surveys and
4. Redesigning living room zones and relevant products based on data retrieved from the inquiries.

This paper involves phase four regarding the analysis of students' design projects.

Living Rooms and Everyday Practices

Interior guide books and mass market showrooms promote and construct the 'standards' for living room space and furniture. In that sense, interior design guide books[2] were introduced to students, providing straightforward advices about how a living room *should* be decorated and which units *should* be placed in the determined zones. De Chiara and Callender (2007) suggest typical furniture arrangements such as the conversation group — chairs, a sofa and a fireplace — the reading group — a chair, an ottoman, a lamp and a table — the writing or study group — a desk, a lamp, chairs and bookcases — the music group — a piano, a bench and storage space — the game group — a game table and four chairs — and the television group — a television set and seating for several people. For instance, taking two big-scale furniture sites, Modoko[3] and Masko[4], and the 1128 stores comprising them. Addressing middle and upper-middle-class consumers, in regards to what they suggest for constructing a living room, it is mostly seen that the dining zone and sitting zone division as a spatial standard. We also see that the furniture stereotypes of the dining zone are maintained with the main standard of a dining table accommodating several chairs around it, although the number of dining chairs may differ in different stores. Accompanying storage and display units are also presented. Sitting zones are generally presented as having a layout including couches, coffee tables and television units. Existing and persisting furniture stereotypes inform us about the standards and conventions of the market and manufacturers.

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[2] For instance, see Binggeli (2011), Mitton and Nystuen (2016) and Fisher et al. (2018).

[3] Modoko, established in 1969, accommodates 350 prominent furniture stores as a large furniture site (Modoko, 2020).

[4] Masko, established in 1984, is larger than Modoko, having 778 furniture stores (Masko, 2020).

Referring to Lefebvre's (1991) notion of 'abstract space' in the context of living room and furniture designs, all these standardized configurations can be considered 'abstract living rooms' of the professional actors in the furniture market. Nevertheless, the critiques geared towards design practices that barely consider users' everyday life through a top-down viewpoint in the agendas of everyday studies. The authoritarian approaches that aim to change and control everyday life practices have been contested in this field. Everyday life studies commonly focus on the core concepts of everyday life and investigate the capitalist discourse that leverages the everyday practices of people (Lefebvre, 1991; Certau, 1984). In conventional living room visual culture, the everyday lives of people are considered, addressing a set of activities such as sitting, relaxing, watching television, eating, dining, and hosting. While the rooted standards function as the repeating units of the furniture stereotypes throughout the capitalist production and consumption cycles, user practices are defined with a limited range. In a similar matter, Ingram et al. (2007) argue that the concept of scripting takes us into conceptual territory in which products and objects are accorded a measure of agency. Designers 'configure' their users and they play a role similar to that of scriptwriters in scripting the actions and practices of those who use and consume the products they make. Depending upon how they are designed conditions permit and prevent certain courses of action. A furniture company may consolidate scripting the users to have a fine dining experience through the inclusion of the dining table and chairs, and by using some elegant glassware and tableware, represented in its shop window. The dining table permits and addresses the dining and eating function. But it has a potential to afford other activities. Everyday studies imply that every individual is different and reductionist standards may not address every single person. It could be questioned that every individual having a dining table in a furniture showroom uniquely inherit to themselves? Adding the fact that recent studies (Nasir & Ogut, 2017; Nasir, 2021) overlay that dining tables are appropriated for different functions, like studying, folding laundry, etc., at a significant frequency. According to Michel de Certau, 'everyday' is the terrain in which ordinary people often make use of infinite local tactics to constantly manipulate events to turn them into opportunities (Certau, 1984). In this sense, then people — users— are seen as active rather than passive in their appropriation and use of consumer goods. They have the ability to resist the imposed meanings of cultural texts and goods, and instead often 're-appropriate' goods into their everyday lives (Certau, 1984). Theories about everyday life are important, as they inform the design research and practice. Studying everyday life is also in the region of design scholars. As Burkitt (2004) indicates, everyday life is a common ground that embraces activities and practices with their many contradictions and differences.

Tanyeli (2011) indicates that everyday life in which the dwelling itself — instead of the user — gets centralized is reduced to the basic functions of human life, such as sleeping, sitting, cooking, bathing, etc. Similarly, the 'living room' discourse conveys the notion of everyday life reduced to sitting, relaxing, watching television, dining and hosting. Individuals may comply with, sustain, appropriate or contest the norms. Tanyeli (2011) overlays that new problems and opportunities could surface when contradictions, mismatches and blind points are noticed. Everyday life studies refer to the critique of the approaches of design practice that do not necessarily include the user and his practices. Adding that, living room is a domestic space that immensely intertwines with everyday life and reproduces household practices, blurring the line between public and private (Money, 2007; Rechavi, 2009). Aspects of privacy for living rooms have the potential to be a venue for performing the ambiguous qualities of domestic everyday life which is difficult to formulate and standardize (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Cieraad, 1999).

Emphatic Approaches in Design Research and Practice

Critiques towards the top-down design practices unfold the significance of the position of the users. *Abstract* designs, barely considering the everyday lives of users, are highly criticized in everyday studies. Another critique was addressed by Brandes and Erlhoff (2006), whose research focus is on defying many industry norms and questioning the pre-defined intentions of designers. Regarding the industrial design process addressing thousands of users, they (Brandes, 2009) imply that the design decision arrives at users through a hierarchy of actors:

...hierarchies of decision making at the manufacturers, the representative of the manufacturer, the procurement manager of the wholesaler, the procurement manager of the retailer, shop windows, brochures, catalogues, advertisements, magazines and finally the salesperson (Brandes, 2009: p. 10).

Brandes and Erlhoff (2006) point out objects that are presented in glossy photographs with elaborate studio lighting in a sterile environment, visually lacking their users. On the other hand, design thinking keeps people at the center of every process. Brown (2008) defines design thinking as a human-centered approach to innovation which draws from the designer's toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology and the requirements for business success. A human-centered designer's mind set embraces empathy, creativity and ambiguity (IDEO Design Thinking, 2021). Following that, user research practices aim to develop design projects based on the data collected about user behaviours. User-centred design is highlighting the centralized position of the user. To cope with designing for many anonymous users, the practices of user modelling and user research have been improved and the process of developing user-scenarios has been greatly enhanced. Contemporary practices involving user research and/or even the users themselves, such as in participatory design, are utilizing the users as active players. By including the users in the design process, Kristensson et al. (2002) in evaluating the findings from their experimental study on user involvement, introduce users as a hidden source of creativity. Furthermore, Sanders and Stappers (2012) carried out an extensive study that elaborated on certain tools and methods for conducting participatory design practices.

Within design itself, the emergence of design ethnography, co-design, participatory design and design probes signals that designers are adopting the tools of social observation. As Hunt (2011) indicates, large corporations hire anthropologists and other social researchers to help them gain insight into the users' desires and demands, aiming for greater market share and more predictable success in the context of new product launches. Moreover, as Wasson (2000) indicates, the popularity of ethnography among designers and observations of naturally occurring consumer practices are widely credited with helping manufacturers identify significant new product directions. The scholars of user-based design, participatory design and co-design are involved largely with user habits, opinions and appropriations (Mattelmaki, 2005; Visser et al., 2005). Present-day critical designers incorporate anthropological-style thought into newly developing social habits. Clarke (2011) signifies that the region of design anthropology adheres to the tradition in which corporates, retail-driven associations regarding object culture are questioned. Increasingly, designers are immersing themselves in both social research and creating form. Hence, observational techniques, human focus and an emphasis on the dynamics of the everyday have become prominent subjects regarding contemporary design practice. Obviously, user research would contribute well to the region of living room furniture design, which has been a realm dominated by stereotypes and normative configurations, imposing upon the users which units they should acquire. Region of living rooms had rich potential for informing design research where such a standardized realm and the dynamics of everyday life — public and private qualities of home life (Rechavi, 2009; Miller, 2001) — were supposed to clash.

Design Projects Based on Data Analysis

Design project phase of the course aimed to design new living room configurations and furniture units after evaluating the results of the observations and interviews. Research phase showed that user research was very helpful for questioning the stereotypes and assigned activities of living rooms. The research also indicated that the affirmations advising which stereotypes a living room *should* include were not considered 'necessary' for every user. It was also revealed that respondents *do* undertake some activities like dancing and exercising — which are not scripted in current furniture stereotypes. The occupation and age ranges of the respondents are detailed in Figure 1.
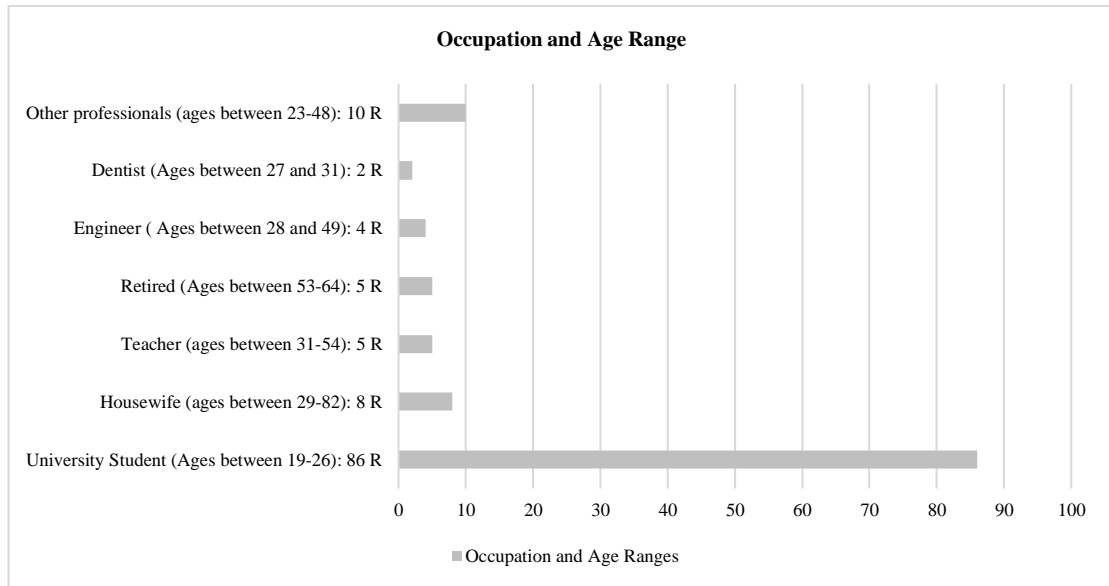
Figure 1: *Occupation and age ranges of the respondents.*

In the main stage of research, each of the eight students conducted interviews with 15 respondents to gain an understanding of their desires and demands in the context of their current living rooms. In this phase of the module, we discussed survey questions and developed an almost standard survey template composed of open-ended questions. The survey questionnaire for every student included questions to find out:

- Which units do the respondents have in their living rooms?
- Which activities are performed in the living rooms of respondents?
- What kind of activities are desired to be performed if there were means in the living rooms?
- Which kind(s) of object(s)/product(s) do the users desire to have in their living rooms?

Relying on the survey analysis, conducted with a total of 120 respondents, the students presented their data in the following class. Each student shared his/her data and fieldwork notes with the whole class, so a large pool of data about respondents' aspirations was created.

In total, 39 out of the 120 respondents defined a new activity or object as desired other than their current living room practice. Meanwhile, 16 out of the 120 respondents pointed to a *missing stereotype* regarding conventional living room as a desire. Some respondents addressed more unconventional activities like swimming, while some were content with small scale-improvements. Moreover, 30 of the 120 respondents desired no change regarding their living room configurations. Through this phase, the variety of user desires and demands inside and outside the established norms was contemplated.

In the context of analysing the activities that the respondents desire, but are out of the respondents' current setting, it was found that 39 respondents defined several everyday activities, as illustrated in Figure 2.

After students gained sufficient insight into the stereotypical understanding of living room furniture and the fact that the very nature of everyday life did not fit into standardized packages, it was their time to develop their own design process. The students could decide on the scale of their design, so the outcome could be either a product, a piece of furniture or a complete zone for living rooms. The important criterion was that their design would be inspired and based on user desires and demands. Observing the everyday interactions of people could help discover their needs in normative contexts and, for that reason, the design opportunities. After analysing the demands and desires of users in their living room context through surveys, students were asked to develop and enhance their design activity.
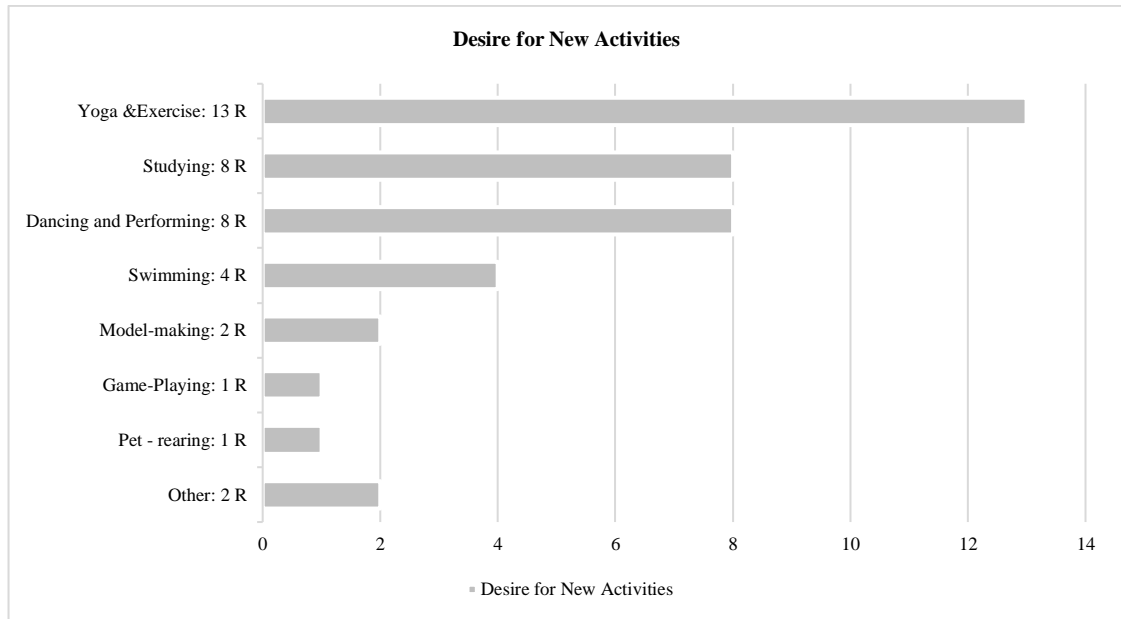
Figure 2: *Respondents' demands for performing new activities in living rooms.*

The domestic activities that were exhibited as aspirations in the analysis of their research guided the students in developing their design projects. Another form of guidance was the data about the units that the respondents preferred to remove from their living room settings. The data that the students collected provided valuable insights into people's everyday life practices, which were potent enough to bring inspirations. Suri (2005) asserts that designers can break through restraints set by current solutions and find innovations that support users' activities and experiences by dealing with people's behaviour. Students developed product designs and zone designs considering the practices of dancing, yoga, exercising, painting, playing games and pet-rearing in accordance with the data analysis covering user desires and demands, as seen in Figure 3.

Design Ideas for Study Practices: The *Multy* and the *Art Zone*

The respondents mostly conducted study-related activities on and with the current product and spatial configurations complying with the mainstream norms. In the context of developing design solutions for study-related activities, we see two different approaches from the students. While Student-2 created a sub-zone in the living room that would define an artistic activity, Student-4 focused on designing a new product, called *Multy*, which could be easily incorporated throughout current living room settings and can be seen in Figure 4. *Multy* is basically a wooden lap-tray intended for use with smartphones, tablets, computers and other technological devices. Student-4 aims to address users' needs for charging and plugging in their devices, including providing charging slots on the front edge of the unit. She incorporated a flexible strap structure so that *Multy* can easily be mounted on the armrests of couches and armchairs. It was understandable that Student-4 preferred this option, as one-fourth of the sample was in favour of leaving the living room as-is. The conformist tendency among respondents was not very low, and this student tried to address two needs:
1. studying
2. conserving the current living room setting

Student-4 took inspiration from the plug issues that the respondents brought up which they experienced problems while using electronic devices and that it was difficult when there are not enough plugs which were already far away from the spots of respondents.

Student-1: PlayStation zone and units

Student-2: Art zone and units

Student-3: Dancing zone and units

Student-4: Multifunctional armchair tray

Student-5: Exercise zone and units

Student-6: Mobile yoga mat

Student-7: Pet furniture and zone

Student-8: Exercise zone and units

Figure 3: *Students' Design Ideas Based on the Collected Data.*

Considering Student-2's living room design, the activities that people undertake by repurposing the current setting and furniture were the driving force behind her insights. After conducting her interviews, Student-2 reported that respondents would mostly like to generate their own freedom spaces. They aspire for enhanced functionality and comfortable use to exercise, study, etc.

Inspired by the users' intellectual activities, Student-2 designed a living room in which users could paint in one part as seen in Figure 3. She considered units and furniture customized for this painting practice. Student-2 discarded the dining zone and designed a brand-new zone instead. The reason for the elimination of the dining zone was that the dining zone units, like the centre table and display cabinet, were the units that survey respondents pointed out as being most desirable for abandonment. In addition, dining zones were sites of appropriation, as they accommodated elements such as chairs and tables, which have low complexity and, thus, can serve many functions, such as model making, studying and engaging in other daily activities that must be carried out over a table. Student-2 brought up the idea of dedicating a zone to painting, situating an "art table" and "art chair," as she defined them, as the focus of the zone. She considered placing a canvas roller on top of the wall facing the art table, which would cover the entire wall when opened. She had some ornamental-related concerns about making an *artistic* table and an elongated backrest for the chair. She also designed a storage unit for paints, crayons, brushes, canvas and other related equipment. This unit, which had an ironwork structure, divided the sitting zone and *art* zone. These motivations led to a zone design in which all the units were intended for study or painting, instead of a makeover for a temporary painting activity.
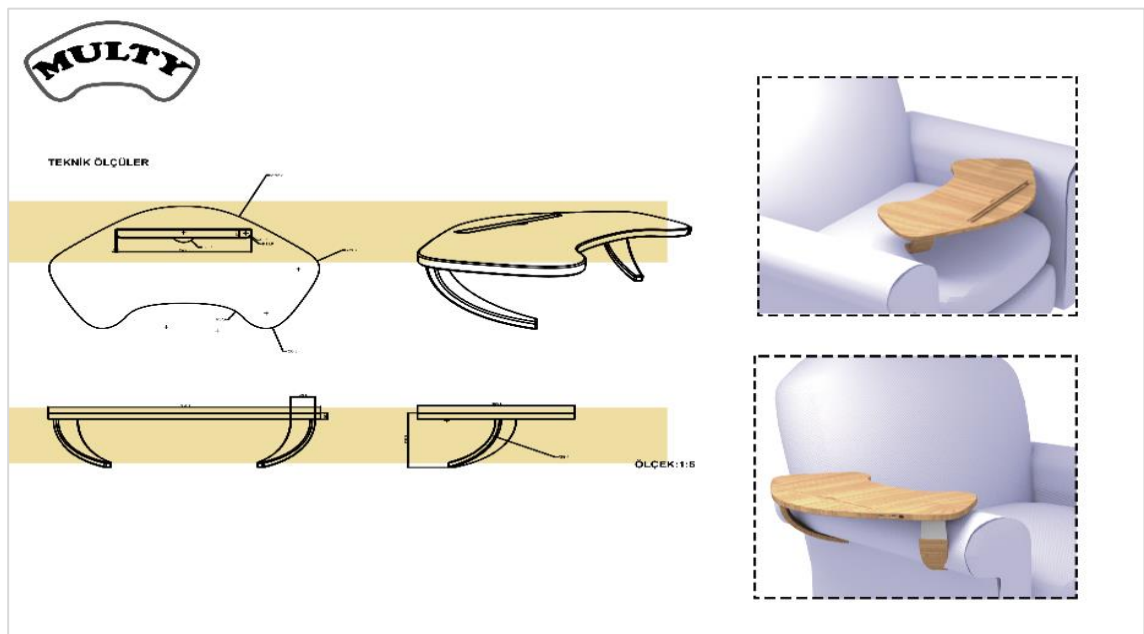

Figure 4: *'Multy' Mounted on Armrests (Student-4)*

Design Ideas for Bodily Practices: Yoga, Exercising, and Dancing

It is often observed that people's creativity in reinterpreting and adapting things leads to new solutions. When design actors break through limitations imposed by existing solutions and come up with innovations, they support people's activities and experiences in a more coherent way (Suri, 2005). From the data analysis, we found that some users desire to engage in, and some of them already undertake, exercise practices in their living rooms, by carrying stuff or making the environment messy. As Suri (2005) indicates, items used in unintended ways usually reveal something about people's needs, which has the potential to be translated into design opportunities. In daily life, people interpret the objects and products around them. As we saw in the analysis, the living rooms of the aforementioned respondents were not designed for engaging in exercise; rather, they were designed for a conventional set of activities. However, the users appropriate the living room for their individual needs. In this case, we see the norms, the interpretation, the negative impacts of temporary acts and the appreciation of a possible solution. This was considered a solid design problem and a source of inspiration for a new product or zone. Considering the findings regarding exercise, Student-5, Student-6, and Student-8 elaborated on incorporating this activity within the living room.

Student-5 designed a modular system consisting of a zone; she named it *Varsity*. Student-5's living room design consists of two zones: a sitting zone and an exercise zone, where she manifests the division with a large display unit. Again, the conventional dining zone is replaced by a new zone that makes exercise a legitimate activity to be carried out in the living room. This exercise zone has modular closet-like storing units that are visually compatible with conventional living rooms. In Student-5's system, the user has the opportunity to hide exercise equipment and accessories in these units when not in use, and then activate them when exercising. Student-5 considered placing a sandbag in one of the medium-sized modules, while she stored large-scale workout equipment, like a treadmill and training bench, inside the larger closet module. She designed an array of shelves with a glass flap for storing and displaying a dumbbell set and awards — if any. She also defined a part for a DVD player for example, for watching an exercise practice video and other multimedia devices, as well as another part where users could put their water bottles. The laminate floor has the appearance of grass, and a yoga mat is embedded in it. Under the mat is a built-in space for storing yoga equipment. When all the closet flaps are closed, the exercise zone looks like a somewhat conventional living room zone. Student-5, filtering the responses addressing conformist attitudes, as a significant portion of the sample 30 out of 120 desired no change while, again, another significant portion 16 out of the 120 aspired for the missing stereotype to align with the conventional set style developed a brand-new zone for a new activity under the skin of the conventional language of living rooms.

Student-8, in his concept designs, also designated a zone for workout activity. Unlike Student-5, Student-8 designed his exercise-related units such that they were visible and more obvious. In fact, he tried to appropriate the visual culture of the gym into the domestic environment. In that sense, he worked on a bar design that he associates with the vitamin bars in gyms, defining it as a "domestic-type bar which accommodates healthy food and beverages" (Student-8). Thus, by introducing a new zone, he inserted a new character into the living room visual culture.

On the other hand, Student-6 designed a product, rather than a complete zone, for engaging in yoga in the living room. She named it "Fold-Hide" as can be seen in Figure 5. Student-6 explained her motivation for developing her design idea as follows:

... the most frequent complaint I heard from respondents has been the limitations of space. So, I wanted to focus on this and to create my design.
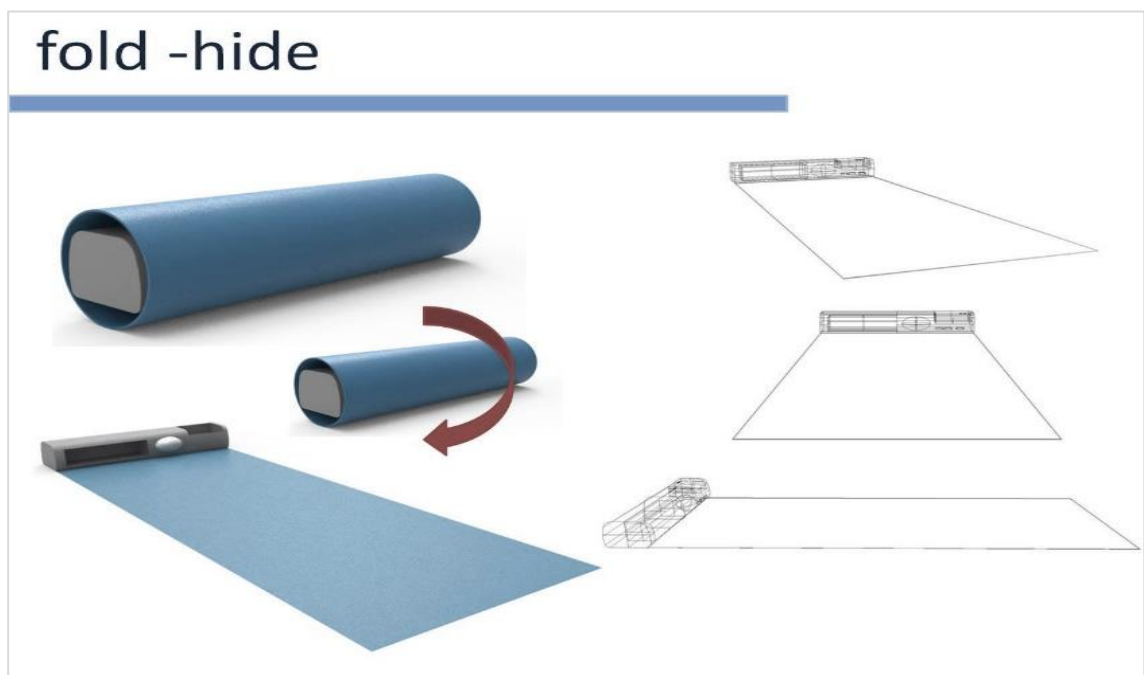
Figure 5: *Mat Rolled Up Inside 'Fold-Hide' Unit (Student-6).*

Student-6 essentially designed a body unit that accommodates and stores a yoga mat, which can be rolled up inside it. The user can place the *Fold-Hide* and overlay the mat in a suitable region of the living room. The compact unit also plays music and can store small yoga accessories like a shoulder/arm brace, neck traction brace, etc. After the exercise has been completed, the user can roll up the mat and store the smaller packed volume in the available space.

Some respondents fancy dancing and playing instruments in their living rooms. Student-3 changed the former dining zone into a dance and step zone, equipped with relevant units. She was inspired by the respondents who appropriated their living rooms by moving furniture to the side, which created a convenient space for dancing. Student-3 aimed to go beyond this temporary action and legitimize the act of dancing in living rooms. Inspired by a dance studio, Student-3 implemented some angled lines illuminated with LED lights on the dark grey floor. She completely covered one of the walls with a mirror. She also designed a main unit for providing the functions for dancing. An exercise rail with a telescopic structure extends from the edge of this unit. Student-3 included slots for connecting smartphones, USB discs and tablets to speakers. She considered carrying the glamour of a dance studio into the living room while enabling users to dance in a zone defined for dancing and decorated with relevant objects and accessories.

Designing a Gaming Zone

Another design idea that the students developed was the gaming zone of Student-1. Playing PlayStation games emerged in the analysis, which inspired Student-1 to design a gaming zone in her living room design. In fact, it was a common practice to put the console close to a plasma television and sit on the existing couches in many living rooms. However, Student-1's design highlighted the popularity of playing such games by dominating the living room area. Therefore, her living room configuration contained two zones: a sitting zone and a gaming zone. The gaming zone was different from an ordinary sitting-room used for gaming. It was customized specifically for gaming and accommodated relevant accessories like a projector, speakers and a customized ottoman for comfortably extending one's legs. The new zone became a permanent site designated for PlayStation gaming.

Designing for Pets

In looking at the mainstream norms for living rooms, we see that most of the design concerns address *human* individuals. Although new design developments have emerged for pet furniture, they have not yet become a widespread norm in the furniture industry. Yet the members of households that own a pet often conduct their daily lives with their pets in the living room. Therefore, pets have also become users of living rooms and furniture. Student-7 redesigned and reconsidered the living room environment, furniture and units with regard to its *pet* users as well. She developed couch designs promoting human and pet interaction, as well as designed couches with tubular structures that have an interior space with open ends. A cat can enter from one end, walk inside the couch and come out at the couch's other open end. Units were designed considering the playfulness of pets, such as hiding in an empty space.

Discussion and Conclusion

Inquiries regarding how users carry out their everyday practices and which activities they would like to perform in their living rooms using observations and surveys have been helpful in creating an understanding of their unmet needs and, thus, evolving to a higher level of insight upon which students could rely for new design ideas for the design phase of the course. The students took inspiration from the collected data and design units, products and/or living room zones. Considering the outcomes of this course, some students created defined zones for dancing, exercising and playing games, while others focused on developing product designs that would meet the aforementioned user needs, like a multifunctional armchair tray and a mobile yoga mat.

Reviewing the overall qualities and categorization of student designs in relation to user data, the conformist attitude, which suggests no change for current living rooms, might influence the students to design small-scale products to meet the aforementioned needs — like studying or doing yoga. However, some respondents desired unconventional practices like swimming, dancing and exercising, which do not have a defined *stereotype* or zone in the market context. Respondents' insights into visualizing a living room that would be created according to their personal desires might be interpreted as encouraging the students to design a complete zone for the expressed activity. However, still, some students who internalized this nonconformist approach had concerns about drawing from the visual culture of a conventional living room, though they were introducing a new zone design and units. Regular, day-to-day life inquiries concern a critique of the methods of design practice that do not really incorporate the user and his behaviour. In the project I carried out with second-year industrial design students, we tried to critique normative zones defining living rooms. Appropriation practices remain largely temporary actions. However, our aim, informed by user appropriations, was to emphasize the user construct and define new design approaches that offer permanent existence. These living room designs, created by students, provide insight into actual user needs and routines. Therefore, students gained awareness and illustrated it by analysing the daily lives of users. As a learning outcome, students became conscious about the difference between design relying on standardized norms and actual user demands in compliance with their everyday lives.

Clark and Smith (2010) consider that design is about making intent real and that there is plenty of reluctance to go around. When a design is put forward, something new is brought into the world with purpose. Looking in that frame, if a design informing the unintentional uses of furniture performing unarticulated activities such as dancing, exercising in the living room, then the unspoken user need is brought to the table. Thus, unarticulated needs are embodied studied and made explicit. Clark and Smith (2010) imply that unleashing the power of design thinking is about awakening design methods in business organizations — especially the ones designers traditionally do not work with. In living room furniture, although it seems as if many design activities are taking place pertaining to that region, it turns out to be that certain configurations and stereotypes do not necessarily change or give room for actual user needs. What users really desire and demand, or really do not need is not seen as to be recognized significantly in furniture market. Clark and Smith (2010) suggests that as design thinking is used to innovate and solve problems across many professions, the design itself will be brought into significant conversations and decisions that shape our collective future in the business world. It is believed that when professional research companies, design teams and furniture manufacturers get engaged with what users really do or desire to do in their living rooms and create design solutions according to that data, living room designs will evolve to a contemporary genuine quality. As user-focused living rooms find their place in the showrooms of furniture retail stores, people – perhaps even conformist users – will have more courage to decorate their living spaces according to their desires and demands. Reconceptualizing living room stereotypes and conventions, as this study signals, is an important issue requiring further design research and professional design practices. Living room conventions could have been justified when they were established but are likely to lack an update regarding contemporary lifestyles. Particularly, the market needs an update. Cooper et al. (2010) assumes that the focus of design thinking centres on innovations and business transformations that begin with people. Therefore, design thinking involves the discovery of unmet needs and opportunities. It also gets engaged with the alternative scenarios that can reorient an organization around the users it serves (Cooper et al., 2010). Design thinking is also being adopted to solve design problems, which have wicked nature (Buchanan, 1992) and help reinvent business. In this new way, managers and businesspeople are able to see how design methods and design principles can help them navigate the uncertainties and complexities they face. Therefore, the aim of this project was to create a platform for discussing and criticizing the established norms and standards of the market and design actors. Public display of these *work-in-progress* living room designs, which have a more conceptual character produced by students, might not be perfectly appropriate for general mass-market demands and dynamics right now. Yet these projects functioned to bring a contemporary interpretation and critique to the existing and persisting, somewhat outdated, living room furniture stereotypes.

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