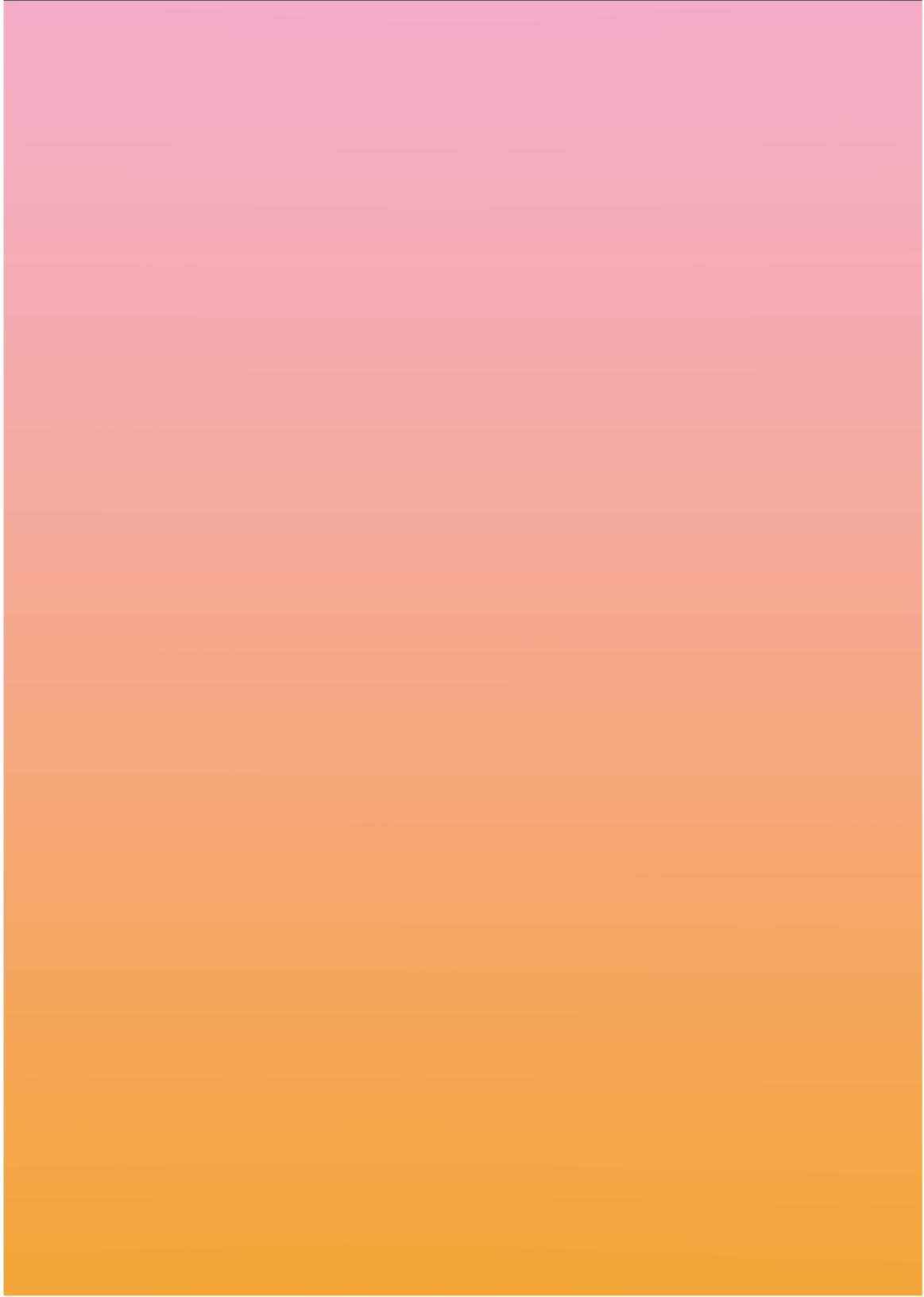




# **the social matters**

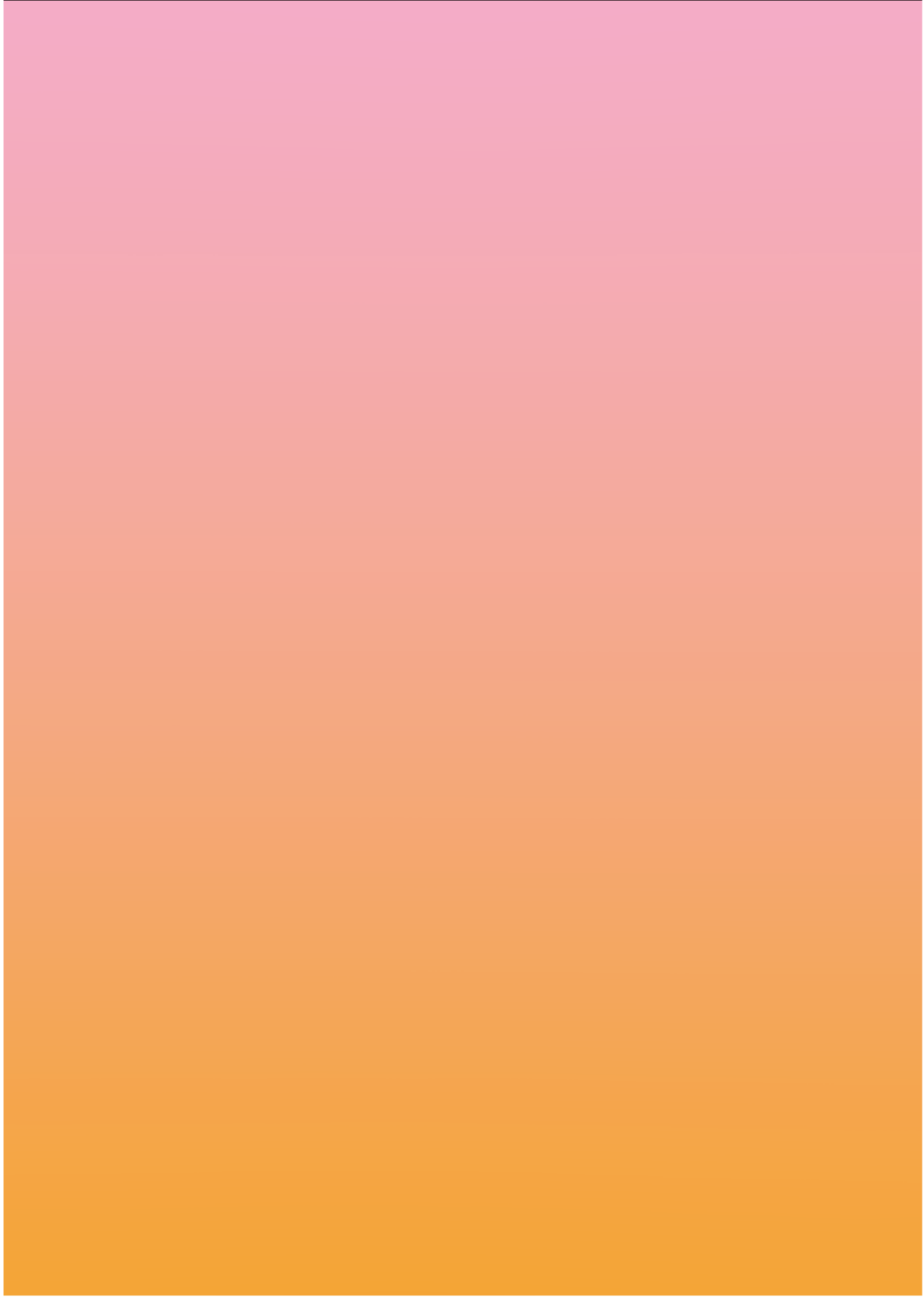
the thesis project report

Agnieszka Madej & Herman Ocklund, 2022



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## PREFACE

conversations, that challenged the way we were thinking about design and about being designers.

A crucial element of this thesis project was collaboration. It was clear to us that the context we wanted to dive into was a private sector organization, since we had a shared experience working with a public institution from a previous course, and were seeking new challenges.

Our master's education in Embedded Design was characterized by a global pandemic, which was definitely a challenging period, but at the same time, it drew our attention to and helped us to question the ways we live, study and work. Both of us shared an interest in exploring how design can support social sustainability and how it can become a critical and cross-disciplinary tool. In September 2021 we decided to work together and the reason for that was a belief that we shared, that design practice is much stronger and more relevant, when it is a collective effort. Having that said, we were looking forward to many great, but also tough

instead of seeing them as obstacles. The Embedded Design program has provided us with alternative tools and methods to understand and handle complex situations, stressing that the process is the outcome and the outcome is the process. We see that the strength of an embedded designer is to "infiltrate" certain groups to create an understanding using creative and explorative design methods and tools in a collaborative process together with the users. It is possible to see the issue beyond the surface and respond to the situation in the right way.

ready to go deep into this context and hungry for this experience.

In the course of the past two years, the master's programme in Embedded Design has introduced us to dozens of concepts and methods, that we feel now equipped with as we will continue our journey. These tools have made it possible to understand complex contexts and embrace them,

is ever-changing. We believe being an embedded designer can really affect the future.

Being an embedded designer means knowing that there might be several right solutions or no right solutions at all. In this thesis, we consider our role as wayfinders, finding a way to social sustainability. Embedded design is a term that could be (and was for us for a long time) hard to define. Now we understand it allows a greater understanding of those who we design for. It is a very important position that

## **ABSTRACT**

This project explores design as a social practice that provokes changes. The context that this project operates in is a growing private organization, which is a dynamic and market-oriented environment. The two core concepts that we have explored through the methodology of unlearning were belonging and care, which are both immanent to any kind of network, but at the same time intangible enough to not be prioritized. Those two terms were the topics we focused on the most, but at the same time, it's important to acknowledge that when working with social matters it's impossible to relate to a limited number of concepts, as everything is interconnected

and starts to make sense together. In this process, we addressed the employees of the organization and brought up topics of relations, values and the future. During the time when we were embedded in the corporation, we had a chance to explore several different methods, from which some of which were co-creative and participatory, but all of them were explorative. The product of this exploration is a conceptual space that was produced during workshopping moments, that allowed the participants to debate the current situation, as well as rethink and reimagine the possible future. The by-product of this process is a workshop manual that is providing complex designerly tools and tasks to open up discussions.

## INTRODUCTION

Design carries many responsibilities. In our education, we have often referred to the 3 aspects of sustainability, which are social, economic and environmental. The economic, market-related growth was in a way painting a background for this project - it has become a very wide context and a situation where we found ourselves in. However, that was not what we wanted to investigate. In our view, the biggest potential of entering this context was in exploring how design increases social engagement, that is addressing the social and moral obligations of the field (Papanek, 2019). Social belonging is a fundamental human need. To feel like

one is belonging means to feel she/he is accepted and included by those around them (Carr, Reece, Kellenman and Robichaux, 2019). Even though discussed before the pandemic, it becomes especially visible during the covid time, that belonging is something that needs to be addressed (taken care of) on the social level. As Hanno Burmester argues „organizations are the ideal place to prototype solutions that are needed in society as a whole” (2021, p.5).

Most of the organizations were forced to adjust to the situation of the time, which meant lots of special measures that no one was used to, e.g., social distancing, remote work or limited capacity of shared spaces. That has affected individuals of all professions and caused damage that required a response. The responsibility lies on the managers and hr departments of specific companies, but also on the individuals that constitute the institutions. That is what many

communities and companies have in common. Facilitating the feeling of belonging has been something pointed out as a challenge by AFRY back in 2020, when the world was just a few months into the global pandemic. Between then and October 2021 (that is when we started a collaborative project with the design studio of this consultancy), they experienced a radical growth from 30 to 150 people in the time of a year. That on one hand can be seen as great potential and source of opportunities, on the other hand, it did contribute to the alienation and feeling of loneliness among the employees. By having a chance to embed ourselves in the environment of the Design Studio for several months and getting insights into how people feel, act and find their way there, we decided to address it with an in-depth project, in which we explored the sense of belonging in a corporate/consultancy realm through care, belonging and unlearning.

**Embedded design  
allows a greater  
understanding  
of those who we  
design for.**



## COLLABORATION

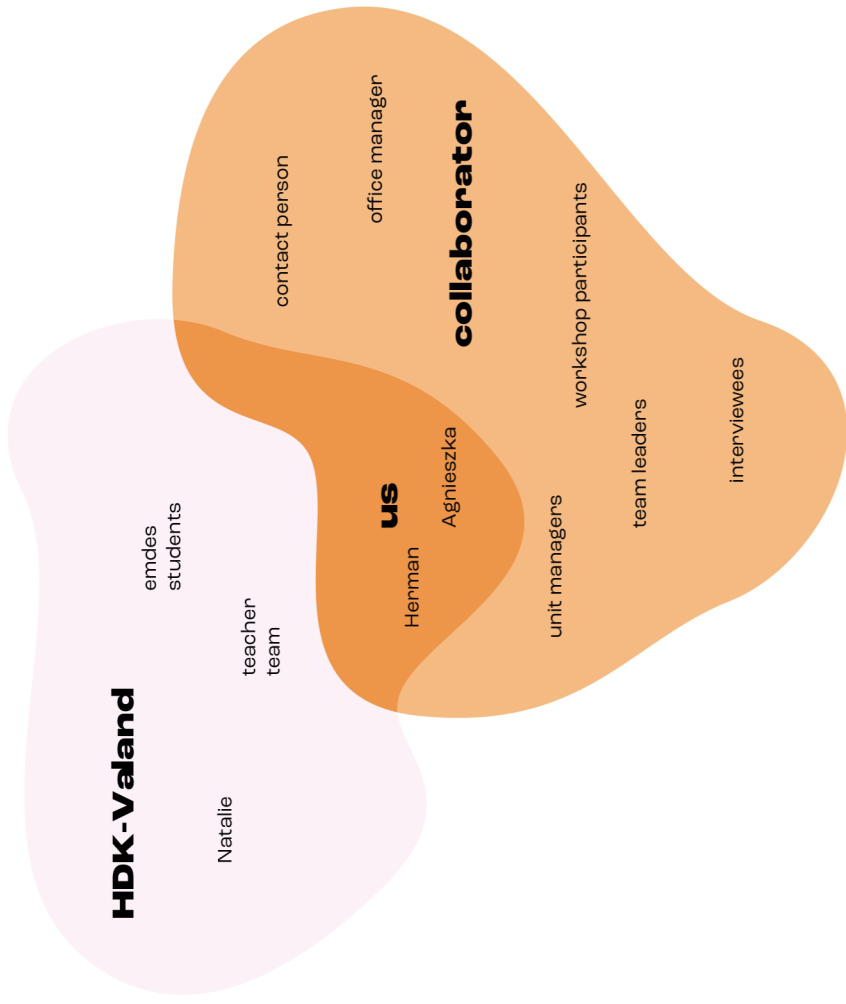
around 30 employees in the studio, while when we approached them in October 2021, there were already 120 people working there. Now, when we write this report, there are roughly 160. This growth became a background for our project since it was a situation when it became very apparent how hard it is to facilitate the feeling of belonging and sustain the atmosphere of a small studio, with continuous growth. The Design Studio offers services in visualizations, product design, user experience, and business and service design. Our immediate contact in the office was a manager of one of the sections.

The context we were immersed in during this project is a Design Studio which is a part of a bigger private consultancy firm called AFRY. It is an example of a private-sector organization that offers consulting, advisory and engineering services in many fields, with a sustainable, future-oriented agenda through socially responsible practices. It is a big size company that operates in more than 100 countries and hires around 17,000 people.

The Experience Studios is a unit of this company located in Gothenburg that has gone through a rapid growth. In November 2020 there were

## STAKEHOLDERS

The project stakeholders are the Foremost Designers at AFRY, but as the project developed also the HR department at AFRY (that has offered us a contribution to the organisation's Future Workplace program), managers and decision-makers, but also HDK-Valand, teachers involved and us.



## **PROBLEM DEFINITION**

When the scale of the organization changed, it became much harder to take care of social relations. Especially in the times of covid, when everyone who was hired went through the process of onboarding online and met only those colleagues that were both available and necessary to get in touch with. In this setting, the feeling of belonging (that already would have been challenged if the growth would happen so dynamically pre-covid), together with other social values, has become hard to facilitate and hard to be practised.

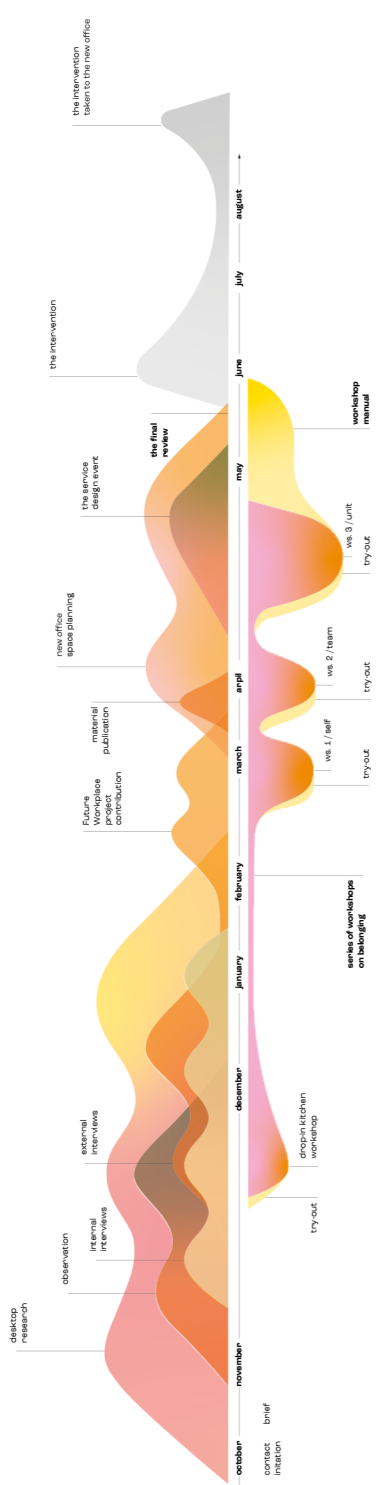
## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Having different cultural backgrounds and education from the past, but also slightly different interests in particular parts of this context, we have found two different research questions that were informing each other and also creating a dialogue between the two of us. These questions were changing over time, but always were rezoning around the office space, belonging, care and unlearning. The questions are:

**How can the  
future office  
space be used  
as a boundary  
object to support  
the feeling of  
belonging?**

**How can care  
as a practice be  
embedded in a  
growing private  
organization  
through  
unlearning?**

# TIMELINE



## PROCESS

in our process of becoming a team, finding a common ground and supporting each other. No design process that we know of is a linear line. Moments of going back and forth between these different steps were crucial for us to develop our research.

**Dialogue** – This phase is where we decided to work together with the same interest in social sustainability within a private realm. We also got back to this step when we opened up the discussion with our contact person.

**Diagnose** – when we set our shared objective for and the framework of this research project. Gathered our shared interests and from the dialogue

The inspiration from Adam Gray's triple diamond (2019) and the visual from Dominic Burton's article (2019), helped us define our process and the different steps we took. The triple diamond adds the dialogue and diagnosis steps from the Design Council's original double diamond introduced in 2004 (Elmansy, 2021), which was important

created our aim, our research questions and our topics of care and belonging.

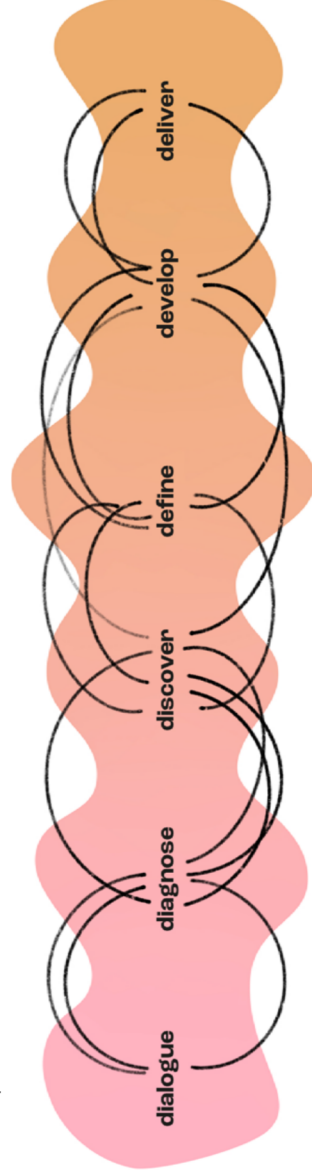
**Discover** – This phase is when we started to investigate care and belonging through interviews, observations, and drop-in workshop. We were going back to it several times, also when we created a series of workshops.

**Define** – To gather the knowledge and terms we use, we developed a glossary to have the same understanding of the terminology. Here we analysed the insights from each workshop and started to define our methods of gathering data.

**Develop** – In this phase, we developed each part of the

series of workshops, and explored different methods to materialize and visualize our research in a pedagogical way of understanding.

**Deliver** – here we packed all the data and methods to summarize it into deliverable material, which became a workshop manual and the future step plan.



## GLOSSARY

Belonging – a basic human need related to sense or a feeling of one being an important part of something (a group, place or situation) - being acknowledged, listened to and encouraged to be her/him/itself (Camr, Reece, Kellenman and Robichaux, 2019).	daily social interactions and relations (such as friendship, dependency, sharing resources etc.), more than to 'normative understanding of care'. In our project, we operated between the terms 'collective care' and 'self-care'.	that is a common, important thing for all of them and refers to demands coming from the human side of organizing (rather than the capital-related one) (S. Herbert and A. Szefer Karlsen).	and habits, and proposes a new way of thinking and doing (Burmester, 2021 and Choh, Krauss and Heide, 2018).
Boundary infrastructure – is a collection of objects that create a strategic system that connects users toward a common goal. It is strongly structured in personalized usage and maintains a common identity across fields.	Collective Care – seeing members' well-being – particularly their emotional health – as a shared responsibility of the group rather than the lone task of an individual (Mehreen and Gray-Donald, 2018).	Self-organized care – care practices that are performed by a group or community and operate independently from the organizational structures. Relate to care in a broad meaning of the word, as serious attention. It is not about 'artificially sustained care', but about including care whenever we organize.	Values – the beliefs people have, especially about what is right and wrong and what is most important in life, that affect and generate their behaviour.
Care – the notion of care we refer to comes from this in-betweenness and relates to	Co-design – a method to engage participants in a cross-level process where everyone is treated equally, in order to meet the needs of the local user. It's about empowerment, encouragement and inviting the users to the process.	Unlearning – a framework for encouraging flexibility and innovation by unlearning old mindsets and behaviours from top leadership down to the rest of the organization. Unlearning is a process helping to facilitate changes that starts at the individual level and affects the organization as a whole. With the help of this method, we can talk about the current behaviours and patterns, and speculate about the future. It addresses taken for granted routines	
	Self-Care – any intentional action taken to care for one's physical, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being (Pratt, 2021).		
	Self-organizing – means that a collective, community or group is engaged in something		



## THEORIES — CARE

byproduct of the work that they are performing. Since it is a byproduct and not the goal, there is rather little ownership being taken over it, and it is not prioritized as something to care for.

Celine Condorelli states that in the history of philosophy friendship, which is a relation that care is very often associated with, was described as something possible to exercise only by men and only when “the condition of friendship is equality – which is why it excludes everyone who doesn’t appear as such” (2013, p. 66). This is interesting to relate to care – care cares about equality, but cares also about inequality and does not exclude those who are unequal. On the other hand, the ancient concept of friendship is strictly a mainly activity, while the notion of care that was described by feminist scholars is considered mostly a feminine practice (Gilligan, 2011). Then care could be considered a discourse aiming at finding

Design has been described as a practice of care by Laurene Vaughan Scholars have approached the topic of care from several different perspectives. If care “constitutes a feeling with, rather than a feeling for, others” (Hobart and Kneese, 2020), it can be easily romanticized and used in marketing strategies and slogans. When it is quite easy to imagine feeling with others in groups that decide upon being a collective, it is harder to problematize the concept of care in a group of people that is bounded by their occupation and the same employer, that spend up to 40 hours per week in a professional setting. The unintentional collective is a

balance, not only relating to one patriarchic definition, but also to the way the world has been explained and built-in for hundreds of years.

The concept of collective care defined as “members’ well-being – particularly their emotional health – as a shared responsibility of the group rather than the lone task of an individual” (Mehreen and Gray-Donald, 2018), does not necessarily exclude the idea of self-care, described as “intentional action taken to care for one’s physical, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being” (Pratt, 2021).

These two concepts can inform each other, rather than compete. This is important to note since corporations are not literal-care environments, such as hospitals, care homes, or preschools, where care is understood as assistance for someone in need (Coxon and Braimer, 2018). Still, there is a notion of care present there, yet much different from the one referred to in listed,

immediate-care environments. It is not to label behaviours, but rather to point out how necessary many kinds of interactions are in order to create a caring work culture, and having this understanding allows the discussion about how care can be practised.

## **THEORIES — BELONGING**

"e.g. lack of anxiety, lack of nervousness, relaxedness, confidence in the future, assurance, security, etc. (1954b, p.66), which correlates to what he stated in his paper that there is a huge difference in character between the man who feels safe and the one who lives his life out as if he were a spy in enemy territory (1954c). That is related to the environment we surround ourselves with, in private or work constellations.

Belonging is a sense or a feeling of one being an important part of something (a group, place or situation) - being acknowledged, listened to and encouraged to be her/him/itself. To Belong is defined by Abraham. H Maslow (1954a) as a basic need for us humans to live a healthier and happier life. From a social aspect that relates to the interaction between humans and outlines the need for friendship, intimacy, family, and love. To be able to feel like we humans belong in a group, we need an exchange of love, if someone is denied this need, that individual may experience loneliness and depression. A clinical observation show corresponding belonging and safety needs accomplishment

how they treat people in their life, We subject people to our leadership, good or bad, for forty hours a week, and when they go home, it affects the way they treat others" (2015).

Companies working on the topic of belonging would increase the performance of employees and reduce sick days, which could lead to annual savings in the long term. A good working culture is what Chapman & Sisodia stated in their book, is the key to better communities, to heal the "brokenness: sending people home as better spouses, parents, children, friends, and citizens"(2015). The fact that how we feel in our surroundings affects everything around us, " the way we treat people at work affects the way they feel and

## METHODOLOGY

it is not about forgetting, but about consciously evaluating assumptions that preexist in the field. That has been especially useful when entering contexts such as office space and corporate culture, as the individuals who constitute the bigger group come from various backgrounds and have already a working style influenced by previous employers or education.

non-normative perspective. This research of a qualitative type has answered how and through what actions people care and feel cared for at workplaces and has been a way to challenge how we imagined and conducted the steps, and how we analyzed it later. During the workshops, the participants were invited to reflect and speculate through collective collaging, sketching, and mapping.

Unlearning is explained by Choi, Krauss, and Heide as “an active critical investigation of normative structures and practices” (2018, p. 199) and by Burmester as „the process of detecting and acknowledging the learned patterns that negatively shape us and our actions, and the conscious act of letting them go” (2021, p. 28). Unlearning was a process that helped us to facilitate discussions about belonging. With the help of this approach, it was possible to talk about the current behaviours and patterns and speculate about the future. Unlearning is addressing taken-for-granted routines and habits and proposes a new way of thinking and doing. At the same time,

The 3 workshops on belonging that happened between the end of February and the end of April related to 3 levels: the self, teams, and the department. During these participatory moments, we invited all the employees, including managers. The first workshop happened in a digital space, while the second and the third occasions were possible to facilitate in the physical office space.

During these moments the employees were invited to reflect upon their role within the company, unlearn some core corporal concepts, and approach topics of relations, values, and future from a new,

## METHODS

didn't seem relevant anymore. However, the notion of self-publishing, printing and binding came back when we were finalizing the outcome and decided to make a workshop manual.

At the beginning of our thesis project, we took on a specific role as observants within our collaborator's physical space. The unstructured observation method that we used is referred to as a way of collecting relevant information and data by observing a subject in a free and open space without using any predetermined objectives, or schedules (Bhasin, 2020). In our case, we used both active & passive participation observation as a tool to establish a link between our context and our research to build a sense of belonging for ourselves in their setting. This method helped us to investigate non-verbal expressions, cultural behaviours and feelings which gave us an entering point of how we could develop this research.

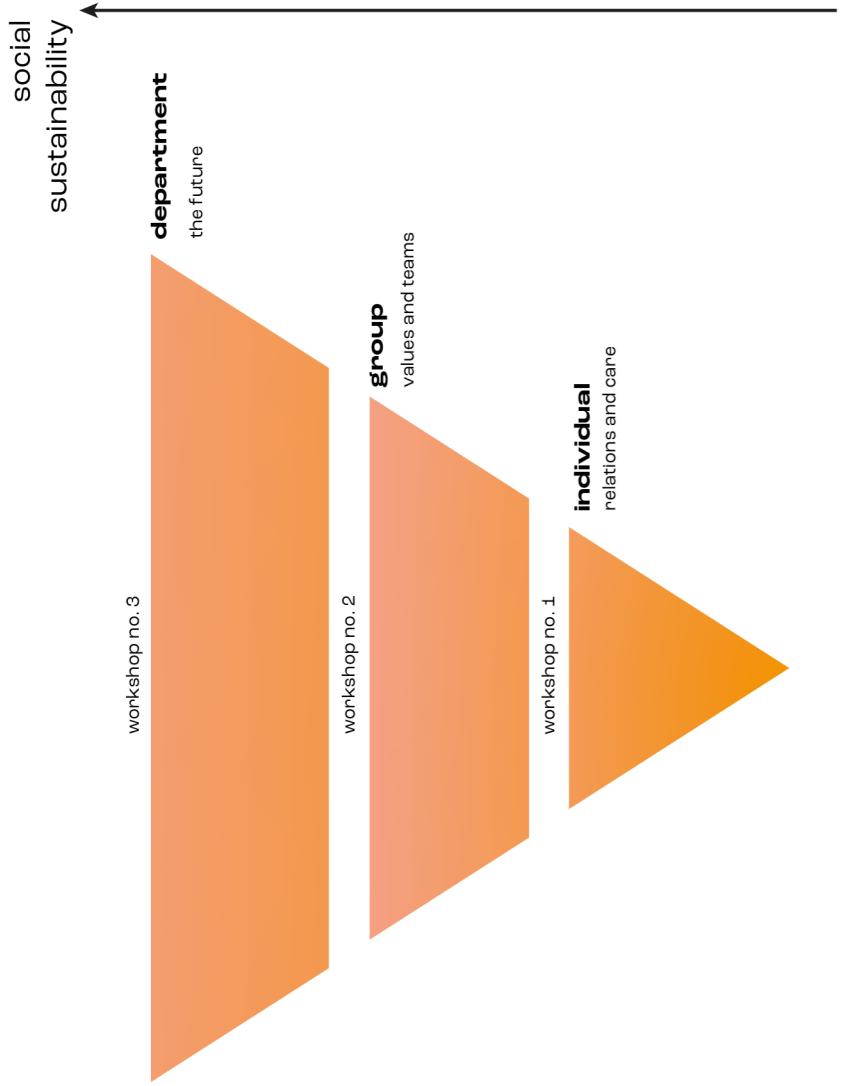
In this process, we used many collaborative and non-collaborative methods. In the beginning, we started with desktop research, and then, once we've been granted access to the office we moved to passive and active observations, interviews with internal and external partners, keeping journals from studio visits and facilitating a drop-in workshop. In the second part of the process, we planned a series of 3 workshops. Then, we also had a chance to facilitate a collective network mapping, together with a social mingle activity. For a couple of weeks, we've used zines as a way of documenting the process, but later, we decided to not continue with it, as it

From observations, we've learnt that as long as we were unknown actors in the office, we were disrupting the space even though our intention was just to explore it. This step has also confirmed that people miss their co-workers and common activities and that people hired there come from very diverse professional experiences. We applied an issue mapping scheme to our project. The issue mapping is made to identify and frame the complex problem within a context and then find a leverage point to "attack" the problem with a relevant solution. The starting point for us was our brief from the design project with collaborative partners where we together brought an issue and an interest that we would like to explore more. By researching the topic we could draw parallels with the issue and the evidence to our collaborative partner.

From the interviews, we've gained knowledge about how being digital is work-effective, but not social-effective, and

that culture is something we need to maintain continuously. That step has also informed us that even though the problem is common, what can be done at AFRY is different from what can be done at other companies. The external partners have also advised us to let go of reactionary thinking. To be able to identify and build empathy for the people we were working with and focus on their world, we have used the personas mapping method to identify five common personas within an office space. In the first stage of the process, we kept daily journals that proved that we experienced many situations differently and that everything we noted was already an interpretation. The last part of the first stage was a drop-in, semi-structured workshop, that addressed people who were already in the office (hence the test group was people whose motivation to socialize was already quite high)(Appendix A).



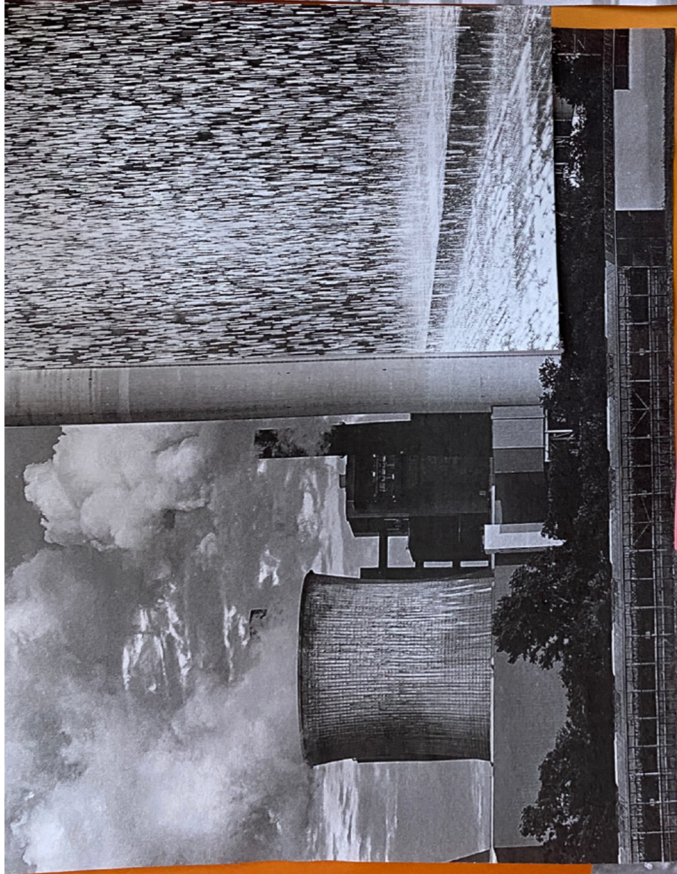


The second stage of the process, marked by the time when we entered the last semester of our education, started again with desktop research. In January 2022 we planned a series of workshops to address a bigger group. We chose the method of semi-structured workshops with the desire to open up sensitive discussions and discourses. The participants could answer and go through the workshop freely and had the possibility to open up the dialogue about the different topics. The 3 workshops were arranged as a series and had a continuous red thread through them with the aim to add a new perspective on interactions and relations within the participant's working environment.

Workshop no. 1 related to relations and care in the working environment and since it was at the time when some of the covid restrictions still applied, we decided it should happen digitally using an online workshopping platform. There were 13 participants gathered, which were later divided into smaller groups of 3 to 4 participants. The smaller groups were established with the goal of creating space for discussing the tasks and the findings in a more intimate environment, so each participant could be heard and listened to. During this session, the exercises were focused on relations and roles that individuals take in the collective inspired by Gretchen Rubin's four tendencies (2019). Answers from this workshop were possible to categorize into the following themes: those elements that can be taken care of by the organization (mostly related to the physical comfort and equipment), and those elements that are a collective responsibility of all individuals (such as relations to colleagues, spontaneous and planned social interactions, good communication flow and community) (Appendix B).

Workshop no. 2 happened in the shared kitchen space in the office and approached social sustainability through the topic of values by reflecting on the teams. Half of the people who confirmed their interest came, which meant that a group of 5 people present was split into two smaller teams of 2 and 3 and worked parallel as well as cross-team on visualizing and decoding values. The first task during this session was about writing down your own values and deciding which 3 of these can represent the team that was created during the workshop. Of the six words that the teams decided upon only one (the extra mile), was not related to caring, while the other five values (inclusion, kindness, authenticity, balance, and respect) are closely associated with the topic of care. In the latter steps, the group was asked to produce visual images of the already existing values of the company (being team players and being brave). In the reflection moment, both teams argued that these two words mean having the support of their colleagues and feeling safe in the environment, and at the same time encouraged to aim high. In the last exercise, the students asked the participants to take a value from the other group, visualize it through collages and write guidelines on how to achieve it. Then the division between social environment (that is everyone's responsibility) and physical conditions (provided by the employer) became apparent again (Appendix O).

In the 3rd workshop that had a theme of the future, there were 3 people, who were asked to work in a group, but also at moments individually (but still informing the common discussion). Since the number of participants was smaller the atmosphere of the workshop was much more intimate than before. This was also the only workshop when no managers were present. The participants were asked to imagine the best possible future scenarios, including reflection on what is positive about the present day (what to keep), together with a critical evaluation of what is negative and should be changed. During this time the participants responded with very personal answers. All of them were about the social



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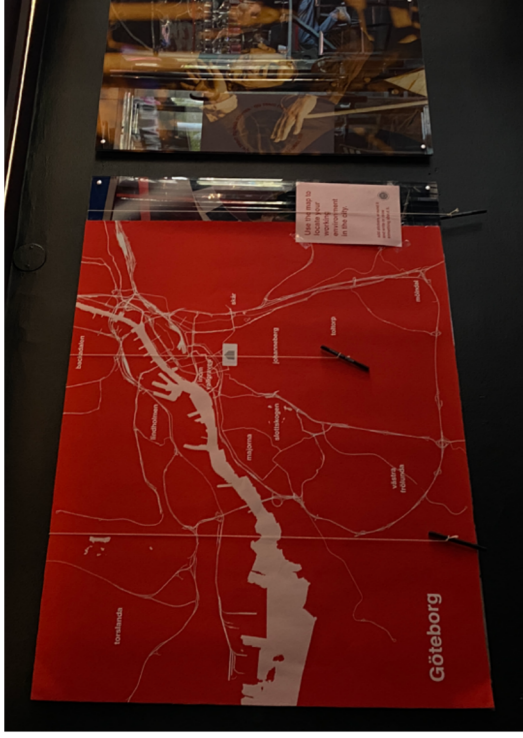
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matters at the workplace (e.g., inclusion, respectfulness, and self-awareness came back to a great extent) and none of the answers related to a physical environment (Appendix D).

Before this realization happened we prepared simple models and visualizations of how this intervention could look like. The current state of this intervention is described in the "Next step".

Towards the end of the process, we were invited to facilitate a collective mapping for a network of designers located in Gothenburg. Even though this moment didn't feel like part of the thesis, but rather a parallel activity, we realized that both of these things made a lot of sense together - since we were always designing for social interactions. Collective mapping was a way to make a bigger group engaged in a common piece and collectively visualize the size of it, as well as how spread it is. The social bingo was a way to help participants of the event to start conversations in a playful, interactive way. After this evening we realized that our initial plan for the intervention should be iterated and adjusted to the situation if we want to make it accurate and reach a bigger group.



## VISUAL LANGUAGE

organic, conceptual idea, that is fluid, hence can change. It was aimed at supporting unlearning the way the future can often be perceived as a (time)line, rather than a spectrum of many different factors.

Throughout the whole process, we were using organic shapes filled with different gradients. These visuals were aimed at showing how individual, dynamic, and complex the social matters are, and how care is more of an atmosphere that everyone contributes to, that consists of many factors put together, and is made of a spectrum of behaviours, objects and people. We used it to communicate the intangible, fuzzy terms, with an intention of not limiting the view of them either. During the workshops, we used shapes instead of white canvases, as reflection triggers and as colours and shapes that were used to represent an



## THE MANUAL

can be produced that will enable many great discussions and change within.

This workshop manual could function as a resource for a whole workshop program that other facilitators could use for their own processes to (un)learn patterns and mindsets. The usage of the manuals is depending on the situation, where the facilitator could decide to take one specific exercise out of it to start a dialogue or to use it as a complex workshop guide.

Throughout our project, we conducted a series of 3 workshops with 11 different steps/tasks that could be performed as individual assignments or grouped together.

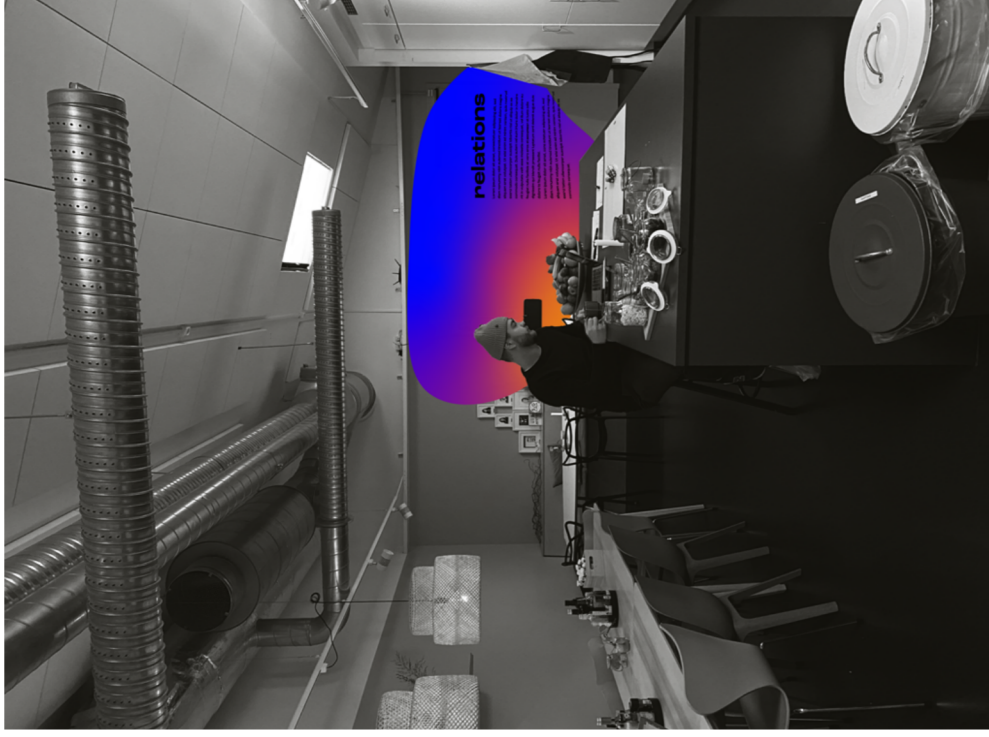
**The social matters** workshop manual is a collection of exercises inspired by some design methods and our own process, that we tried out and bent for the sake of our research about belonging and care. It can be used in various contexts to bring attention to the social matters that are often forgotten, especially in professional environments. We hope that by using this manual a high-quality conceptual space



## NEXT STEP

physical intervention we were planning to construct a set of "mood boards" that individual employees or teams could use to showcase their projects and inspirations to share with the rest of the unit. One of our findings was specific that people were lacking in knowing what's happening in other projects and teams. These "mood boards", of which different actors would be in charge, could become a shared infrastructure for communicating specific projects, strengthening teams' and the studio's identity and respond to the need for inspiration that we found in our process.

In our research, we made a decision to postpone our interest in intervention in the physical space, due to not losing the value and purpose of the event. We are thinking of creating some sort of ceremony for the farewell to the old office, something that would make people reflect on what was good (what should be taken forward), and what did not work well (to be left behind) in the transition between the old and the new offices. We have been in dialogue with our collaborator and co-designed an option for creating awareness, inspiration, and acknowledging in their physical space that they will be able to bring along to the future. To materialize this



## DISCUSSION

context of consultancy. Our agency was changing with time when we started to belong more within our collaborator's environment. We related to both physical and digital environments, but primarily social. By identifying elements of value within the employee's individual atmosphere, we could start to speculate upon the implication of transformation. As Krippendorff states, we aim to design our existing situations into preferred ones (2006, p.25). The future will transform office spaces as we know them, into approved ones. He also argues that there is no point in designing something that would not come naturally (2006) which would be if enough people thought of the flexible office as a crucial prediction.

Another interesting aspect of the findings is the ambiguity and interconnectedness of all terms, which became visible during the workshops. Each person had an own understanding of almost every word, and it was impossible

to separate one discussed value from others. Care then became a concept impossible to divorce from social inclusion and the context of relations to other people (collectiveness). It stresses that it is affected by everyday experience, and at the same time is affecting the atmosphere of every day. Care holds networks together and produces relations but does not have to relate to friendship. In designing cultures for care, it is crucial to acknowledge the different individual understandings. This is something to be aware of when entering growing private organizations. At the same time, this is the potential that culture holds – it is fluid, ever-changing, and ever-present, so it can be changed and redesigned (Rizvi, 2016), hence this challenge can also be used as an advantage of such an environment.

The way we approached the group and collaborated with it enacted the assumption that there is a need to put more focus on social matters. Throughout the process, we

were reassured several times that the topic of social sustainability is very important and not prioritized enough in a professional environment. Participants acknowledged that it is often unnoticed and needs much more attention than it is given. Starting this discussion has produced a conceptual space, slightly different every time the workshoping occasion happened, that allowed people to debate the current situation, as well as rethink and reimagine the possible future. It was difficult to reach everyone working for the department but reaching a smaller group that can become a beginning of the social change has already indicated a possible direction that the future development can take and informed that it is a structural change that is needed. Otherwise, there is a risk that a big potential of a network will be lost.

The challenges we faced during this project were primarily time-based which affected the number of participants during our series of workshops and the outcome of insights. Of course, the individual aspect of belonging and care is very personal, which made it hard to define overall concrete conclusions. Collaborating within a consulting context brought challenges which didn't completely line up with our timeline and the participant's schedules and their client's workload. The long process included many participatory moments when the participants who had time to join us were exploring sensitive topics within their professional realm and the

## CONTRIBUTION

As the first students of the Embedded Design program, we believe that our project has contributed to the embedded design practice and the embedded design research. By bringing two concepts such as care and belonging into an organizational context, and using many different designerly methods, we've opened up sensitive discussions and gained a greater understanding of those, who we were designing for. Our intention was to emphasize the importance of social sustainability within business strategies and planning. We've brought two ambiguous terms into the context of design and explored them from many different

perspectives in a collaborative process. We believe that discussing social sustainability with a help of design on a wider forum can offer questions that are challenging existing structures, and answers that support alternative ways of thinking and doing. We see this project as a valuable input for our collaborator, and as an example of how complex social challenges in organisations can be approached - how uncertainty and differences can be seen not as obstacles, but as important informing factors.

We believe this project is showing one of many directions that Embedded Design practice can take and one of many ways of how Embedded Designers can work for change.

## AFTERWORD

exploration and helped us in many moments back then but also checked on us multiple times the whole year. Major thank you to our thesis supervisor Natalie Novik for all the support we've received in this project, together with lots of knowledge and encouragement.

A special thank you to Agnieszka for being my thesis partner and inspiration in this process. For all the rollercoaster moments we shared through frustration, joy, struggles, and laughter together. //Henman

Thank you Henman for always being there for me, making me stay curious and open to change. It was great to be your design partner in crime. //Agnieszka

**The social matters** is about social matters – all the human-related things that can be taken care of. It is also about the social dimension that matters – cause we trust it is important to slow down and focus on it, especially in challenging times that bring uncertainty.

Special thank you to two people, Oriana Haselwarter and Mia Fay Johansson, who have helped us to anchor our exploration in real context and made it possible for us to try out our methods, and were truly supportive and encouraging for several months of our collaboration.

We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has joined our exploration. To all the AFRY Experience Studios employees who we interviewed, who joined our workshops and who welcomed us warmly in the office. We would like to thank Carl-Johan Skogh, who was our tutor when we started this

We would like to thank our classmates: Emma, Lina, Christoph, Oskar, Ola, Francesco, Gabriella and Louise – it was a great journey to become the first-ever embedded designers with you. There were many ups and downs, but we would do it again!

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# APPENDIX A

Workshop sheet		Date
2. Write down 3 words associated with your professional life before and after the pandemic.		14/11/2021
BEFORE	AFTER	
DIFFICULT RURAL COMMUNITY SOCIAL	INTEREST COMMUNITY FOCUS ON US	
3. What is the idealizable environment that you had that you longed for? Check 1 box in each category.		
Social environment <input type="checkbox"/> Great team company <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Experienced design studio <input type="checkbox"/> Project team <input type="checkbox"/> Desk neighbour <input type="checkbox"/> Design studio (A, B, C, D)	Physical environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Office space <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen <input type="checkbox"/> Lounge area <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop area	
4. How would you describe your office culture?		
A LOT OF FRIENDSHIP, FUN, FOCUS ON DEPENDENCY		
5. Where your resources had?		
CLEARLY		
Thank you!		

Workshop sheet		Date
2. Write down 3 words associated with your professional life before and after the pandemic.		14/11/2021
BEFORE	AFTER	
FREE HEALTH MATURE CHAIR	BOSS SMART ORDER	
3. What is the idealizable environment that you had that you longed for? Check 1 box in each category.		
Social environment <input type="checkbox"/> Great team company <input type="checkbox"/> Experienced design studio <input type="checkbox"/> Project team <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Desk neighbour <input type="checkbox"/> Design studio (A, B, C, D)	Physical environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Office space <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen <input type="checkbox"/> Lounge area <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop area	
4. How would you describe your office culture?		
AFFECTIONATE		
5. Where your resources had?		
POWER, FUN		
Thank you!		

Workshop sheet		Date
2. Write down 3 words associated with your professional life before and after the pandemic.		14/11/2021
BEFORE	AFTER	
FAST JUSTICE TECHNICAL	HAPPINESS FLEXIBLE COMMUNITY SUPPORTIVE	
3. What is the idealizable environment that you had that you longed for? Check 1 box in each category.		
Social environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Great team company <input type="checkbox"/> Experienced design studio <input type="checkbox"/> Project team <input type="checkbox"/> Desk neighbour <input type="checkbox"/> Design studio (A, B, C, D)	Physical environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Office space <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen <input type="checkbox"/> Lounge area <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop area	
4. How would you describe your office culture?		
AMBITIOUS		
5. Where your resources had?		
RESOURCES		
Thank you!		

Workshop sheet		Date
2. Write down 3 words associated with your professional life before and after the pandemic.		14/11/2021
BEFORE	AFTER	
SOCIALLY ADEPT CLIENT MEETINGS AHEAD	SOBER EFFICIENT LOWKEY	
3. What is the idealizable environment that you had that you longed for? Check 1 box in each category.		
Social environment <input type="checkbox"/> Great team company <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Experienced design studio <input type="checkbox"/> Project team <input type="checkbox"/> Desk neighbour <input type="checkbox"/> Design studio (A, B, C, D)	Physical environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Office space <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen <input type="checkbox"/> Lounge area <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop area	
4. How would you describe your office culture?		
VERY AHEAD		
5. Where your resources had?		
MONEY		
Thank you!		

Workshop sheet		Date
2. Write down 3 words associated with your professional life before and after the pandemic.		14/11/2021
BEFORE	AFTER	
BOSS TALK, TALK, BOSS	NERV NEIGHBOUR, TEAMS	
3. What is the idealizable environment that you had that you longed for? Check 1 box in each category.		
Social environment <input type="checkbox"/> Great team company <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Experienced design studio <input type="checkbox"/> Project team <input type="checkbox"/> Desk neighbour <input type="checkbox"/> Design studio (A, B, C, D)	Physical environment <input type="checkbox"/> Office space <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen <input type="checkbox"/> Lounge area <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop area	
4. How would you describe your office culture?		
NOT FRIENDLY, GOING		
5. Where your resources had?		
MONEY		
Thank you!		

Workshop sheet		Date
2. Write down 3 words associated with your professional life before and after the pandemic.		14/11/2021
BEFORE	AFTER	
STRESSFUL COMMUNICATING STRICT	PLEASANT RELAXED BOSS	
3. What is the idealizable environment that you had that you longed for? Check 1 box in each category.		
Social environment <input type="checkbox"/> Great team company <input type="checkbox"/> Experienced design studio <input type="checkbox"/> Project team <input type="checkbox"/> Desk neighbour <input type="checkbox"/> Design studio (A, B, C, D)	Physical environment <input type="checkbox"/> Office space <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen <input type="checkbox"/> Lounge area <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Workshop area	
4. How would you describe your office culture?		
RELAXED		
5. Where your resources had?		
EQUIPMENT		
Thank you!		

Workshop sheet		Date
2. Write down 3 words associated with your professional life before and after the pandemic.		14/11/2021
BEFORE	AFTER	
TROUBLE ON OFFICE PHYSICAL WORKSHOPS OFFICE COMMUNITIES, BUT THE FAMILY FEELING	PHYSICAL WORKSHOPS FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS TRYING TO BRING THE FAMILY FEELING	
3. What is the idealizable environment that you had that you longed for? Check 1 box in each category.		
Social environment <input type="checkbox"/> Great team company <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Experienced design studio <input type="checkbox"/> Project team <input type="checkbox"/> Desk neighbour <input type="checkbox"/> Design studio (A, B, C, D)	Physical environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Office space <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen <input type="checkbox"/> Lounge area <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop area	
4. How would you describe your office culture?		
COMMUNICATIVE, GOOD TEAM, FUN, WORK, AND LEARNING		
5. Where your resources had?		
EQUIPMENT		
Thank you!		

Workshop sheet		Date
2. Write down 3 words associated with your professional life before and after the pandemic.		14/11/2021
BEFORE	AFTER	
BOSS BACK FLEXIBLE LEADERS	EFFICIENT TIGHT HAPPY	
3. What is the idealizable environment that you had that you longed for? Check 1 box in each category.		
Social environment <input type="checkbox"/> Great team company <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Experienced design studio <input type="checkbox"/> Project team <input type="checkbox"/> Desk neighbour <input type="checkbox"/> Design studio (A, B, C, D)	Physical environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Office space <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen <input type="checkbox"/> Lounge area <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop area	
4. How would you describe your office culture?		
FLEXIBILITY, FUN		
5. Where your resources had?		
EQUIPMENT		
Thank you!		

## Workshop no. 1 Analysis

Date: 24th of February  
Number of participants: 13 (about 10% of people hired by Experience Studio AFRY)  
Time: 1 hr  
Place: Zoom and Miro  
Activities: 3 group tasks, one individual  
Notes: maybe too little time, discussions took place only in the breakout rooms.

### Intro:

This workshop was the first one in the series of 3, where we invited Experience Studio to reflect upon Social Sustainability. Our leverage point to enter this system was the individual belonging in a group. Hence, we asked the participants to think about themselves as selves that are more than their profession, but that still are gathered in this context. The following workshop will explore how the groups and teams relate to social sustainability and see their relation to the other teams in the organization.

### Ice breaker:

Time: 5 minutes  
Name: Love/hate  

- Here the participants were asked to put on sticky notes 2 things that bring them joy and one thing that they don't like to do, and chat about it in the breakout rooms.
- People understood the question easily (especially since they were familiar with this form of an ice breaker from before). Very few answers were about work life and most related to private life (that was our goal).

### Relations mapping:

Time: 15 minutes  

- In this task we asked the participants to map out what do they relate to in their work environment and operate between people and objects that they see as important between personal, close and distance levels.
- The personal relations are the easiest ones to point out
- All categories include social interactions and objects on environments (we can group them in a following manner: equipment-related, social-related, environment-related). However, it's hard to draw a boundary between social environment and physical environment, as both makes can be argued to be relevant, and they are interconnected so often one might support the other).

Column no.1	Column no.2	Column no.3	Column no.4	Summary
-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	---------







	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Upholder	I wish to be more		I wish to be more, I wish to be more.
Questioner	I am.	I am.	
Obliger	I am.	I am, I wish to be more.	I am. Respect and timing.
Rebel	I wish to be more	I wish to be more, I wish to be more.	Respect and timing.
Combators	I am Questioner and Rebel	I am a mix of Upholder and Questioner.	I am a mix of Upholder, Questioner and Obliger, I am a mix of Upholder and Questioner, I wish to be more of a mix of Obliger and questioner, I am a mix of Questioner and Rebel.

- In this task we have introduced and asked participants to reflect upon roles that they take in the organisation in a non-normative way. Using the 4 personality types from Gretchen Rubin we have presented (upholder, obliger, questioner and rebel), we encouraged participants to unlearn the typical for corporate ways of defining oneself and people around us, often related to position in the project or in the hierarchy. Instead, we proposed to think about personal tendencies and motivations.

Time: 15 minutes

**Role mapping:**

competence development	
client interaction	
information	
safety to make mistakes and grow	
file,	
snacks in the office,	
file, aw,	
aws,	
good	
tea,	
coffee	
time to reflect	
The city,	
term ride	
inspiration from other industries	

group 1		
often a combination is beneficial	no notes from discussion	
Combination of different types in a group can be good, dependent on the task/assignment		
Diversity in all means		
Which role does the team take towards clients - which role should we take?		
Within the group, we need all roles represented in different capacities		
Maybe it's not about fitting one 'blob' but scaling up and down different blobs depending on where one is at		
There is a time and a place for each role within the same person - as a designer		
Parts of each blob = a good mix?		
good to have punk-royal mentally - not without respect + to question systems and processes		
Of how do we develop self-awareness for this? What is the org infrastructure to support this culture		

Discussion		
Diversity in all teams. Often a combination of different types in a group can be good depending on the task/assignment.		
Maybe it's not about fitting one "blob" but scaling up and down different blobs depending on where one is at. There is a time and a place for each role within the same person - as a designer. Experience studio - seen as an organism, should we act as the "rebel" and push the boundaries. Asking why we do things in certain ways. Which role does the team take towards clients - which role should we take? Within the group, we need all roles represented in different capacities. Levels: individual - designers - team - experience studio. Critical mind. In team - we need all of those. Parts of each blob = a good mix? We, humans, are complex. Good to have punk-royal mentally - not without respect + to question systems and processes. We need to be rebels in AFRY, not conforming. As a consultant/designer - ask WHT; Sustainability aspect - bringing it up. Pushing the boundaries of what we are capable of. AFRY team focus. being the rebel.		

comments from the boards:

- One of the groups made a mapping and played with the layout, that was the same group that had the most notes, one group decided to not keep the discussion notes.

**Temperature:**

Time: 5 minutes

- In the last task we asked the participants to separately answer what is their current work situation and where do they wish to see themselves more. These answers can contribute to the new office planning, together with the relations mapping outcomes. In general, many people have the work setting in the way they want to, when there is a wish for something else it's usually a wish that things can happen more physically than digitally. Participants also hope for more group activities.

**General notes:**

- The workshop was dynamic, the time we were 'given' by the stakeholder was too short, so some of the tasks could have been longer. The next workshop will be planned for 1,5 hr and include discussion time.
- It was a good idea to start with a short presentation in the beginning to get participants onboard with our understanding of belonging.



## Workshop no. 2 Analysis

Date: 24th of March  
 Number of participants: 5 (about 4% of people hired by Experience Studio AFRY)  
 Time: 1 hr 30 min  
 Place: office / kitchen space  
 Activities: 4 group tasks  
 Notes: 2 people can agree more easily than 3 people / group with 2 was quicker in tasks, group with 3 needed more time.

### Intro:

This workshop was the second one in the series of 3, where we invited Experience Studio to reflect upon Social Sustainability. Our leverage point to enter this system this time was the team and the values. Hence, we asked the participants to think about their own values (briefly), the company values, and finally, the values of the group they just became part of. The following workshop will explore the ways future can look like for the organization.

### Own values:

- Everyone was asked to pick up sticky notes and write down 3 values that are important for them.
- Later, they were asked to discuss them in the groups they just created by choosing the color of the sticky notes and choose 3 values that will represent the group.

Pink group	The extra mile	Balance	Authenticity	Inclusion	Respect
Orange group					



### AFRY's external values:

- Each group got one value from 3 that AFRY's is communicating to the clients and to the public (they are brave, devoted and team players). They were asked to figure out / decode what this word means by making a collage of it.

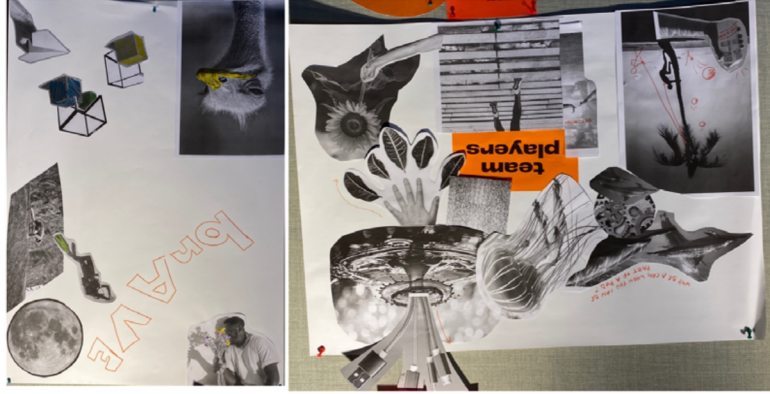
**Steal a value and how to achieve it:**

Time: 15 minutes + 15 minutes

- Participants were asked to take one value from the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the workshop, from the other group and visualize by collaging and drawing what does this word mean. Then, they were asked to build on this visualization and write down guidelines on how to achieve this value, what they can do to get there, how this value could be visible in the environment of the Experience Studio?

<p><b>Team players</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Why be a cod when you can be part of a pod?" (swim together)</li> <li>• There's always someone in the back that helps you climb (back play)</li> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Cords – everyone has a different function but they meet in the middle / support each other.</li> <li>• It's kind of like a gift</li> </ul>	<p><b>Brave</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "To be brave means to be outside the box and also not being the box"</li> <li>• AFTV's plane</li> <li>• Aiming at the moon but also climbing to the moon</li> <li>• You need to be brave enough to do it</li> <li>• Bird- don't put your head in the sand</li> <li>• Horns – it can be read from all the sides</li> </ul>
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- Notes from this task:





**APPENDIX D**

Workshop no 3. Analysis

Date: 19th of April  
 Number of participants: 3  
 Time: 1,5 hour  
 Place: Afry's shared kitchen  
 Activities: 3 group tasks  
 Notes: Maybe too official in a shared space, good to have a closed-door for more intimacy.

Intro:  
 This workshop was the third and last one in a series of 3, where we invited Experience studio to reflect upon Social sustainability. Our leverage point to enter this system was the future of the organisation. Hence, we asked the participants to think about the current situation compared to the ideal imaginary future one.

Task no 1.

Time: 15 minutes

Name: Reflection on the present

- Here the participants were asked to think about what is positive and what is negative in the present-day situation. They were asked to put down their thoughts on sticky notes, and discuss them in the group (alternative). We prepared a sheet of paper where they could put down their sticky notes, and position them depending on if they wanted to keep them or get rid of them. The lowest part of the sheet was for the negative things and the upper for the positive ones. The participants understood the task and got inspired by each other and the longer the more they put down the more they came up with new things. (mostly the negative ones).

Bring with us into the future	Colleagues, Thea + Twins	Colleagues within my group and withingest atmosphere	Diverse background	personal + approaches	
			Flexibility, sound		english speak
		balance			key to

interaction between teams		Balance WFO (work from office) vs WFH (work from home)				
Regular AM/ breakfast activities		Yoga + Jelena				
interdepartmental collaboration either in client project or internal projects. -> more of this	take care of students.					
		Sense of AFRY's growing too fast				
Different management and leadership approach within different groups of AFRY						
Managers lack insight into day-to-day jobs						
Lack of Good/ purpose vision for AFRY						





Task no 3.  
 time: 30 minutes Name:  
 Bridging the gap

i In this task, we asked the participants to discuss the gap between the present day and the ideal future. What does it take to implement the future? Is it possible to achieve it in the next 10, 50 or 100 years? Draw road maps, action plans or visualize the path.  
 Here we decided, due to the small group to have a more open discussion about it. During the conversation, we came up with a list of things the participants wanted to act upon

note: action list	
Kill the boomers	people needs to understand what chill workplace means
Generational shift	mandatory/encouraged activities for diversity
Changing the space - good or bad!	fix the gap between Experiences Studio and Midnal
Coffee machines! one or two!	team activities that need to happen
Create awareness	why are we selling design services that are based on something we don't practice ourselves
Addressing: you're not alone, how it feels for everyone	BUNDARIES: lack of professionalism, generic ignorance about certain topics
what does chill mean! for everyone	be aware that your actions contribute to how the space feels
Balance — boundaries	letting go of the ego
Quite the general ignorant	when you address things it's perceived like you're the weak link
walk the talk: what do you actually know about it!	people need more sense of the responsibility
Normalize diversity week	lack of insight for being part of cause
Separated — > agency	lack of awareness about certain topics
Missing the lore, or bring it back	normalizing things
Time - take and get	



