Facilitating strategic conversations through service design

Communicating a startup studio vision

PROCESS REPORT

Title of Project:
Facilitating strategic conversations
through service design.
Communicating a startup studio vision.

Project type: Master Thesis (30 ECTS)

Master's program: Service Systems Design

University: Aalborg University, Copenhagen

Project period: January 2021 - May 2021

Semester: 10th

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Keywords: *Service design, Strategy, Strategic Conversations, Startup Studio, Innovation*

Illustrations and identity:
Stupid Studio

Abstract

This thesis explores how service design can facilitate strategic conversations.

The research was conducted through an empirical case together with the leader of a Danish communication design agency, Stupid Studio. The project case consisted of supporting the client in creating a vision for a startup studio, in order to communicate it to potential stakeholders and launch it sustainably.

During the project, the team probed service design capabilities and facilitated the client in engaging strategic conversations. It did so by providing expert insights, developing boundary objects to evolve and communicate his concept, mapping a possible service value system, and finally by orchestrating the process and facilitating activities. An open, trustworthy and collaborative client-designer relationship was key to enable the leader.

During this process, service designers were confronted with a more agile approach based on the client's business needs. As a consequence, this project represented a lab where to assess and reflect upon service design strengths and limitations, when applied in a business strategy context.

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Learning Goals

The learning goals for this thesis are a combination of the official learning goals set by the curriculum of the Service Systems Design MSc at Aalborg University, as well as our personal learning goals. Throughout the thesis process, we used these two sets of goals to orient us when planning and executing the project. At the end of our report, we will address whether we have met our personal goals.

Official learning goals

Academically, this thesis serves to demonstrate the students' competences, skills and knowledge as service designers (Aalborg University, 2020). The official learning goals set by the curriculum of the Service Systems Design MSc at Aalborg University (2020) are outlined below:

Knowledge

- Students must have knowledge about the possibilities to apply appropriate methodological approaches to specific study areas.
- Students must have knowledge about design theories and methods that focus on the design of advanced and complex product-service systems.

Skills

- Students must be able to work independently, to identify major problem areas (analysis) and adequately address problems and opportunities (synthesis).
- Students must demonstrate the capability of analysing, designing and representing innovative solutions.
- Students must demonstrate the ability to evaluate and address (synthesis) major organisational and business issues emerging in the design of a product-service system.

Competences

- Students must be able to master design and development work in situations that are complex, unpredictable and require new solutions (synthesis).
- Students must be able to independently initiate and implement discipline-specific and interdisciplinary cooperation and assume professional responsibility (synthesis).
- Students must have the capability to independently take responsibility for their own professional development and specialisation (synthesis).

Personal learning goals

At the start of the thesis, the group organized an internal workshop to align on our personal goals for the thesis. In this workshop, we expressed our interests regarding service design, and we discussed what we were curious to explore further in our last semester of the MSc program – and how we wanted to contribute to the field of service design after our studies. Through conversation and a brainstorming activity, we identified common learning goals to use as a guide for defining our thesis topic and approach.

- Applying tools and knowledge learned in the Master program to a real-life case, to explore how service design can be applied to collaborative projects in new fields.
- Involving different stakeholders in a co-design process.
- Experimenting with the design process.
- Using future foresight tools.
- Contributing to research on how service design supports multi-disciplinary collaboration in practice.

Fig. 1 - Photograph from first group meeting

chapter 1

Setting the stage

Introduction

Business agendas are shifting away from products and towards service oriented models (Vargo & Lush, 2008). Considering this, successful businesses must be designed strategically within their wider ecosystem to ensure their resilience; they must place the needs, values and demands of their users at the core in order to successfully offer value to them. The complexity of these models requires collaboration across domains (Gloppen, 2011).

In this new landscape, companies need a more flexible, creative and user-centred approach in order to drive innovative solutions.
The rising interest in service design is due to its multidisciplinary, problem-solving and open-ended nature which seems to be aligned with the necessities of current organizations (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017). However, this increased demand of service designers in new contexts requires them to be versatile, flexible and quickly move from one role to another: addressing negotiation challenges, facilitating conversations, collaborating across disciplines and managing projects (Akama, 2009).

This change has led service designers to evolve their role in order to better understand organizational change, behavioral change and new collaborative and complex systems – upgrading them to higher strategic levels (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017).

Despite service design being a field of rapid growth (Sangiorgi et al., 2015), there are few empirical studies on how to utilize service design tools and methods in processes outside of the traditional design sphere, and what value service design contributes in the contexts of cross-discipline collaboration (Yu, 2017).

In this thesis, our goal is to explore how service designers can apply their capabilities at the frontier with business strategy. In particular, we set out to explore how service design can support envisioning, communicating and promoting a new business to potential stakeholders. We established a client-designer collaboration with the leader of Stupid Studio, to develop a case study in which to investigate and develop our research and draw preliminary conclusions.

Particularly, the research focuses on how service design might facilitate the client's strategic conversations. They are intended as moments in which the leader can discuss goals and next steps, and negotiate with current or potential stakeholders.

Initiating the collaboration

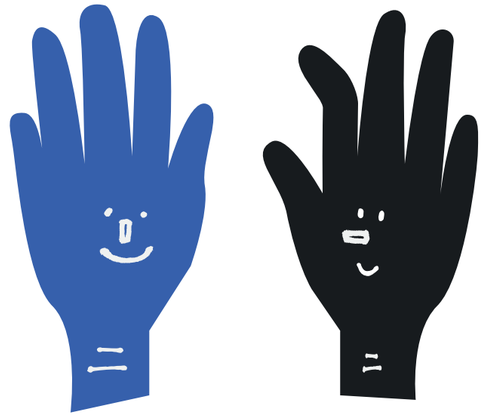
As anticipated in our personal learning goals, we wanted to challenge ourselves in a professional context with this thesis. As one of the members of our group worked at the design agency Stupid Studio (Copenhagen), we saw the possibility of working with a "real-life" project by collaborating with them. After some initial talks as a team, we agreed that we felt aligned with their philosophy and values, and that we wanted to collaborate with them.

Stupid Studio is a Danish design and innovation agency founded in 2006. It specializes in playful facilitation; experiential futures; co-creation; and brand development and communication (Stupid Studio [SS], 2021). The studio has worked with both private and public clients, and is known for their extensive portfolio of projects designing for children, society, and culture (SS, 2021).

The collaboration began with an introductory meeting with our client Daniel Gjøde, partner and founder of Stupid Studio. In this thesis, he will be referred to as our client. He was interested in collaborating with us from the start, and suggested we propose possible project topics that would fit both parties. Thanks to the internal knowledge that our team member had, we were able to identify topics that could benefit both us and the agency. After a few iterations of our proposal, the client shared his goal of setting up an innovation program (such as an incubator or a startup studio) at Stupid Studio by 2021. This goal resonated with us; moreover, it would allow us to work internally, avoiding the slow communication and bureaucratic processes that we might have experienced if working with larger Stupid Studio's clients. So the team agreed to work with the client on facilitating his process of shaping his business idea.

This project excited us because it pushed us to work on the border between service design and business strategy. We would need to adopt a new mindset and way of working, challenging and exploring our capabilities. By taking on this project, we hoped to be confronted with the core meaning of service design. In fact, it is possible to understand oneself only when confronted with the 'other', or that which is different to us. (Re)discovering what service designers can do through this collaboration seemed to be an appropriate way to end our Master's program.

In this report, we refer to work conducted by our "team" and "group" as that which was done by us without the client's direct involvement. In the activities we conducted with the client, we have explicitly stated his involvement.



Client expectations and collaboration

In order to give a clear picture to the reader and contextualize the motivations behind our research focus and process, we consider it necessary to describe our client, his expectations, and the type of collaboration we had. In fact, the type of client inevitably has a strong impact on the project (Einiö et al., 2016)
and, in our case, defined the open-ended nature of our process.

Moreover, service designers need to be empathetic and listen to the client's needs, when directing them towards new solutions (Polaine et al., 2013). In fact, leaders have their own motivations, needs and concerns which need to be taken into account in order to facilitate organization transformations and support managers in decision-making (Polaine et al., 2013; Akama, 2009). For this reason, we present an archetype of the client (Fig.2) that allows not only to picture the client type but also to stay empathetic towards him along the way.

Daniel Gjøde, is a client type that can be described as curious, open-minded and eager to experiment. For the last five years, he has been considering the need of shifting Stupid Studio's focus away from branding and towards innovation, strategy and future thinking.
His current goal is to set up an innovation team and develop an innovation portfolio that would allow him to grow and gain recognition in this area. For this reason, in the last two years he has invested in innovation by hiring experience designers, a future researcher and a service designer.

At the start of our collaboration, the client was relatively new to our practice, and therefore unfamiliar with our capabilities and methods. However, it was clear that he wanted to deepen his knowledge on service design methods and ways of using them, to shape his organizational transformation. The client trusted that our role as service designers was relevant for setting up an innovation program, namely to facilitate his process of developing a vision and to produce tangible materials to help him communicate it.

Client expectations

Despite the project being open-ended and exploratory, the client communicated certain aspirations for the project already in our initial conversations. Based on these aspirations, we aligned with him on what was possible for us to support him with. At this moment, we took the time to clarify our roles and capabilities as service designers.

The client openly communicated that he had the urgency to engage in conversations for possible collaborations, in order to launch his innovation program.

Based on this goal, we listed together the ideal outcomes of our process. Below we list the client's wishes for our collaboration:

- Having a defined value proposition;
- Defining organizational structure, service offerings and actors' level of engagement;
- Gaining insights on the startup development process and defining a startup development journey for the startup studio;
- Producing materials to communicate his future business vision to the external world;
- Engaging in conversations with potential stakeholders, and established partnerships;
- Conducting market validation to facilitate decision-making around the future of the business.

The type of collaboration

In order to facilitate the reading of this report, we find it necessary to specify the kind of collaboration we had with the client in this chapter. This is done with the knowledge that it is, in fact, a reflection made at the end of the process.

To describe the type of collaboration, we will refer to the categorization developed by Sangiorgi and Prendville (2017) regarding the types of client-designer relationships. Our collaboration can be defined as a mix between a *collaborative process led by designers* and an *integrated and emerging process* (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017) shaped both by the client and the designers.

As designers, we led many collaborative activities in the process, such as producing documents and prototypes for the client to comment, iterate and share; and facilitating knowledge sharing. On the other hand, the client identified in us the potential to contribute to his company's transition towards innovation, and thus he assumed an open-ended flexible approach, allowing the process to be affected by the knowledge constantly gained along the way. For this reason, our process can be defined as integrated and emerging, since it was continuously affected and readapted according to the leader's needs and beliefs. For the same reason, the client was not strict on what exact deliverables needed to be produced.

Furthermore, to set a transparent collaboration and facilitate the leader's decision making and communication, we mutually agreed on setting weekly check-ins with the client.

Visionary entrepreneur

Leader and founder of a 15 year old medium-sized brand and communication design agency in Denmark

Approach

Business-oriented, agile,
hands-on and go getter.
When in need of help or advice,
he's open to reach out to friends
or peers in his network.
Doing more than thinking.
Reflects through writing.

Aspirations

Breaking free from the agency-client relationship and innovate his business model. Ideally, would like
to transform his company into an innovation platform by selling its own products and services – instead of designers' hours.

Concerns

Getting stuck into bureaucratic processes, slowing down his innovation, work and activities.
Having investors breathing down his neck, hindering his independence, freedom and creativity.

Needs

Establishing relationships with potential strategic partners.
Developing a vision and vocabulary
to communicate his business concept
and engage possible stakeholders.
Understanding the his business context.

Research-oriented service designers

Students of a MSc in Service Systems Design, applying their knowledge in a new context.

Approach

Human-centred, research-oriented.
Good overview of the big picture of a design process. Open to involve the client and other stakeholders
in co-creation processes.

Aspirations

Understanding how service design could be implemented in business context.
Probing and challenging their facilitation skills and service design tools within a "real-life" project with an actual client.

Concerns

Being limited by business goals and client's assumptions, instead of building an informed project based on research insights. Feeling demotivated and not being recognised as valuable assets by the client. Not being able to communicate their intangible value as service designers.

Needs

Contribute to service design research through the thesis project. Acquiring knowledge on the project topic as well as learning how to position and sell themselves in a business context.

Figs. 2 & 3 - Client and design team archetypes

chapter 2

The project case

Case Study: introduction

The collaboration started with an agreement that we would support the client in his process of developing the innovation program, through our service design capabilities.

At this initial stage of setting up an innovation program, much was unknown for the client and hence, for us. We accepted the challenge and embraced the exploratory open-ended nature of the collaboration. Also, the client was unfamiliar with our methods and approach, and could not envision fully what support we could deliver.

In order to address this open-ended project, we agreed to start with two main activities: first, we had to better understand the concept of an innovation program; second, we had to align this understanding with the client's initial vision and mission for his innovation program. Accordingly, we started the project first with a foundational desk research, and then with a kick-off workshop with the client.

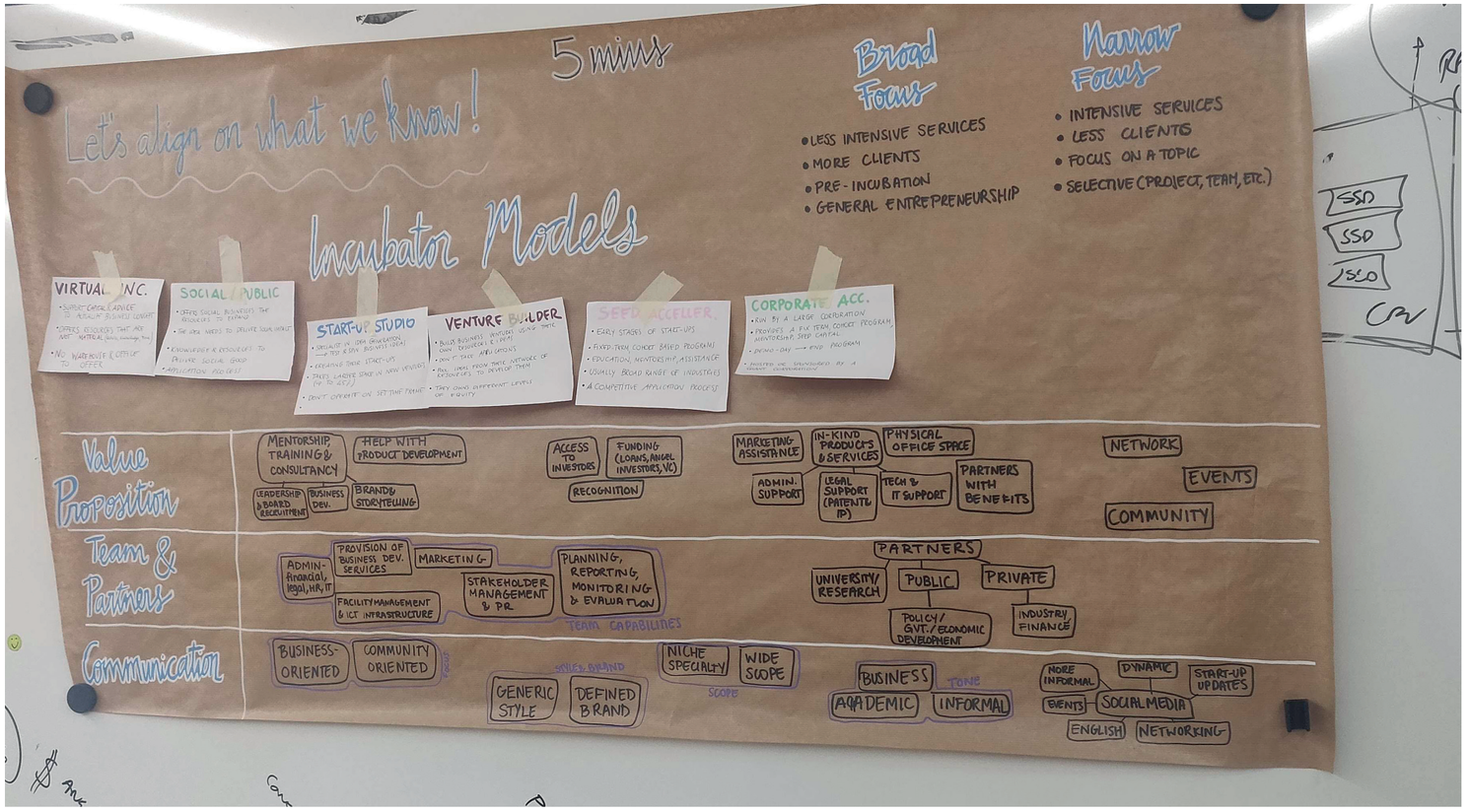


Fig. 4 - Research wall presented to the client during the kick-off workshop

Foundational desk research

At the very beginning of the collaboration, we found ourselves in need of lexicon and knowledge around the mechanism of the startup world. For this reason, we carried out foundational desk research on innovation programs. We set out to understand how different kinds of innovation programs are structured; what their value proposition is; and who their users and other relevant stakeholders are. Having understood that many innovation programs work in providing value to startups, we also focused our research on startups, working to understand what they are; what resources are needed to develop and launch them. In our desk research, we looked at case studies both at an international level, as well as within a Danish focus. This part of the process was crucial to kick-start the design process, as we were highly unfamiliar with the subject.

See Appendix A for a more extensive glossary containing our desk research findings. Below, we present a slim summary of key findings and definitions:

Innovation programme
Innovation programmes exist in different forms and structures. They support the innovation of startups by providing them with facilities and services such as office space, management training, mentorship, funding, investment, connections to companies, links to mentors and experts, and access to markets (Roland Berger [RB], 2019).

Incubator
Incubators support early-stage startups with long-term business development (Lesage, 2019). The support incubators provide includes mentorship, tools, access to a network, and often office space – they help startups refine their idea and business model, build out a business plan, work on product-market fit, identify intellectual property issues, develop a minimum viable product, prototype it (Forrest, 2018).

Accelerator
Accelerators support fast startup growth through a short, yet intensive program. The startups they support are those which are more mature than those which would apply to an incubator – they must have a clear business model and prototype, which the accelerator can support to develop further through mentoring, and connection to experts, partners and business networks (Gilhuly-Mandel, 2018; RB, 2019).

Startup Studio
Startup studios create companies from scratch, and use their internal team to build them up by providing hands-on support from the start (Lesage, 2019; Perdue, 2020). Once the startups are created and developed, startup studios will match them with the right talent to run them, and provide hands-on operational support to these founders to get their companies off the ground (Lesage, 2019). Startup studios focus on the talent, operational know-how and skills of their internal team rather than hearing external entrepreneurs pitch ideas and funding them to build the company (Lesage, 2019). There are different ownership models for startups at startup studios, but the studio often co-owns the launched businesses alongside the founders that are brought in to run them (Lawrence et al., 2019; Lesage, 2019).

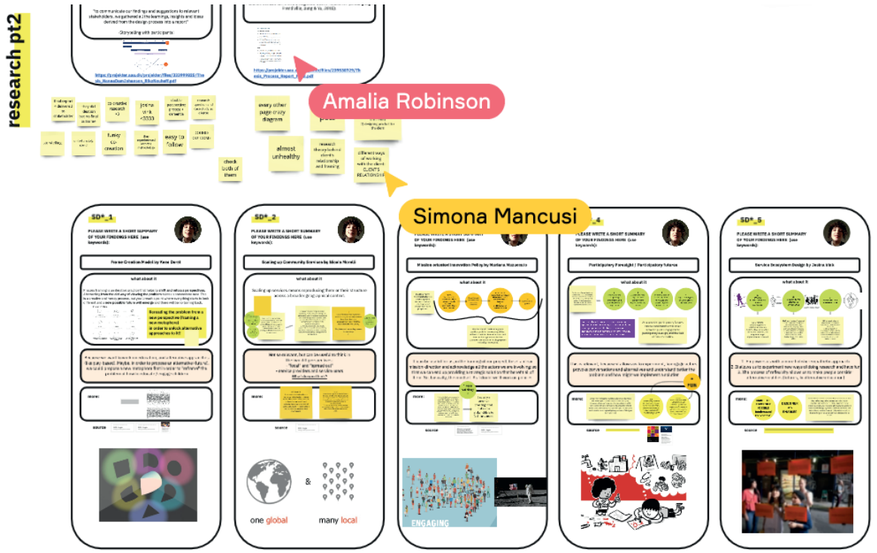


Fig. 5 - Miro board research wall

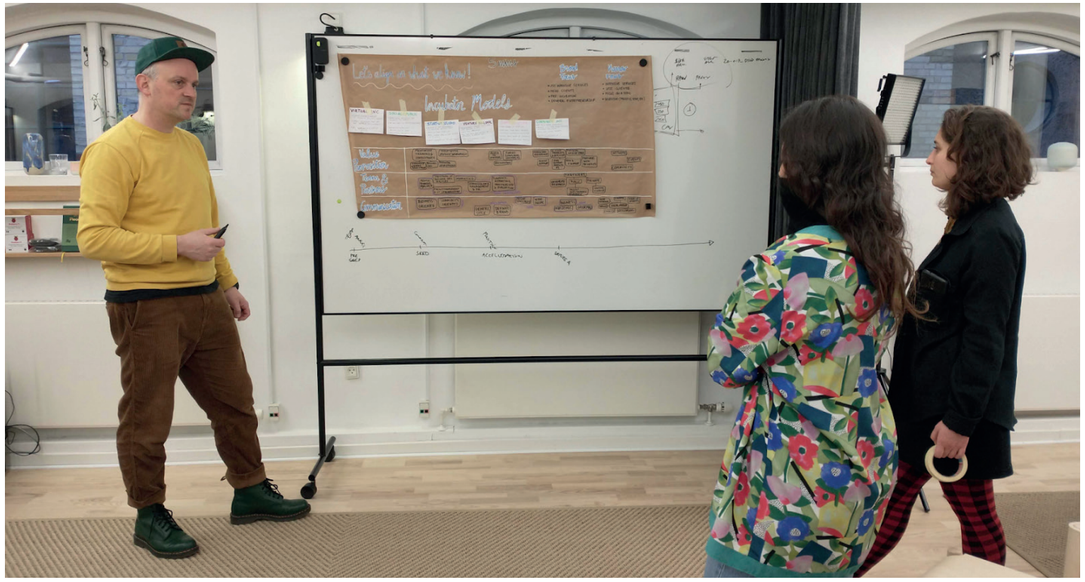
Fig. 6 - Illustration of differences between incubators, accelerators and startup studios, based loosely off of Bridge for Billions (2016).

Kick-off workshop: aligning with the client

Once we had gained a deeper understanding of startups and innovation programmes, we organized a half-day workshop with the client to kick-start the project. We chose the format of a workshop because it is an experience that allows for bringing the team together and sharing knowledge and expectations (Stickdorn et al., 2018).

The workshop was designed with a client-centred focus: the activities were intentionally shaped to provoke the client to talk openly and freely, sharing his initial expectations with us. By asking questions, we supported him in sharing knowledge, from abstract to concrete, employing one of our service design core capabilities: active listening (Penin, 2018). We chose this approach to facilitate the client in defining his initial thoughts and supporting him in choosing directions.

In the following section, we will describe the workshop activities and outcomes.



Figs. 7-9 - Photographs of the group conducting the kick-off workshop with the client

Workshop structure

Duration of the workshop: 4 hours
Number of participants:
4 (three of us and the client)
Location: Stupid Studio Odense office
Methods and tools:
energizers, brainstorming, mapping
Goal of the workshop: empathise with the client; align on our knowledge; begin defining the mission, vision and focus of the innovation program; defining the expectations from our collaboration, as well as the next steps.

Part 1 - Aligning on our knowledge

Goal: sharing information and extrapolating insights.

Activity:

- *Sharing*
  We presented a poster where we had summarised the desk research to the client. We shared information about the case studies we analysed, focusing on innovation programmes' value proposition and their team composition.

- *Sense-making*
  Using post-its and supported by key questions, the four of us took some individual time to reflect and write down the key components of an innovation program, based on the research findings. We then shared our insights and elaborated them while conversing. During this moment, the client shared his own knowledge, building up on ours.

Part 2 - Vision and mission

Goal: support the client in defining the vision and mission for the innovation program.

Activity:

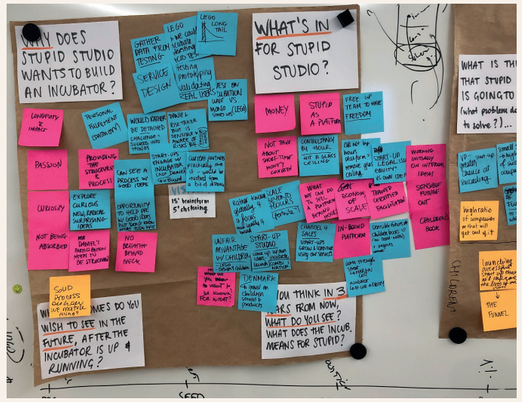
- *Questioning*
  We prepared two boards to facilitate this activity, one for the vision and the other for the mission. In order to frame the vision, we asked the client questions regarding his motivations and expectations for this innovation program. To define the mission, we questioned the client about what kind of benefit he wanted to deliver and to whom. During this activity, the client took the opportunity to clarify what type of innovation program he wanted to develop: a startup studio.

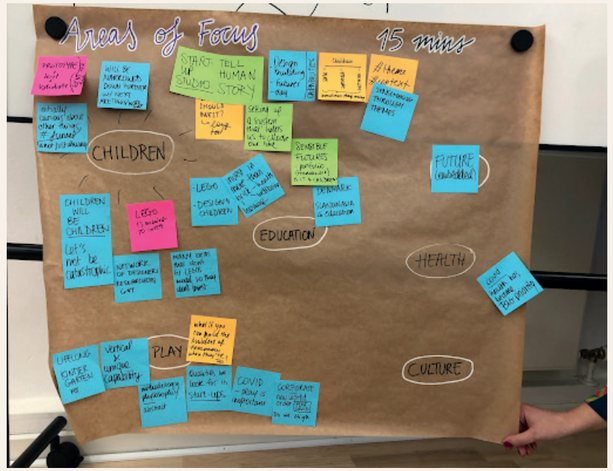
Part 3 - Area of focus

Goal: Identify themes that represent Stupid Studio (considering their portfolio, strenghts and network) that could fit the Stupid Studio innovation program.

Activity:

- *Brainstorming*
  This exercise was led as a conversation between us and the client. We asked him questions to facilitate him in the process of defining Stupid Studio's expertise and their strongest selling points. Consequently, we tried to lead the conversation towards possible areas of focus for Stupid Studio's innovation program.





Figs. 10-12- Photographs of vision, area of focus, mission brainstorming

Part 4 - Next steps

Goal: agree on the next steps and tasks.

Activity:

- *Conversation*
  To conclude the workshop, we set the directions for the project. We took the time to reflect and agreed on the tasks to do and how to collaborate together.

Workshop outcomes

Through the brainstorming and discussion in this workshop, we were able to support the client in defining the following points:

1. The type of innovation program that the client is going to develop will be a startup studio (it is going to be named Stupid Startup Studio, and will be often abbreviated as SSS throughout the thesis);

2. The initial vision for the startup studio is to:

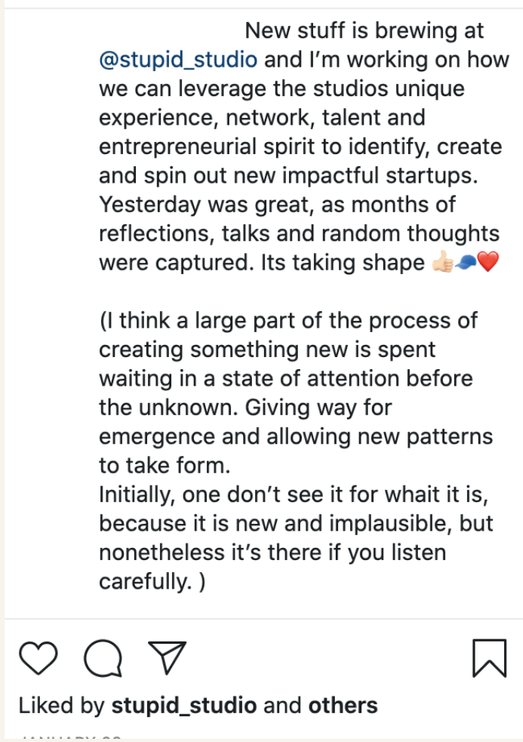
   -Give Stupid Studio longevity through a focus on innovation;

   - Help ideas and startups to succeed;

   - Help children design a better world;

3. The initial mission of the startup studio will be to build and launch products and services that will improve the lives of children and youth;

4. The focus area of the startup studio will be the well-being of children and youth.



Figs. 13-14 - Instagram post from the client's profile communicating his intentions to launch a startup studio

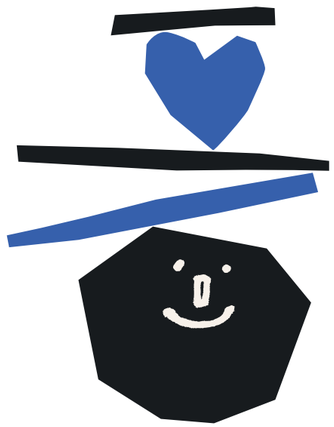
Kick-off reflections

This workshop was helpful for us to align with the client on the process and to start defining the project. Our job as designers was to listen to the client, and support through imagining, influencing, and conceiving his visions (Meroni, 2008). Through conversation and discussion, we were able to support him in defining key aspects for the project. This served as one of the first strategic conversations of the project, as it supported an exchange of ideas, and thinking together towards the development of the project.

The process we followed to do this was one that encouraged conversation by us asking the client questions; actively listening to his answers; writing them down; and at times repeating his comments back to him. By doing this, we acted as facilitators and catalysers of his ideas in order to support him in becoming an active designer of his own startup studio (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011). This strategic conversation process was somewhat akin to therapy conversations, in which two interlocutors dialogue to reach a shared state of knowledge about a topic and to conceive visions (Nardone & Salvini, 2004; Meroni, 2008).

For this reason, we were tactical in asking questions that slowly became more specific and in taking our time to do it, to support him in narrowing down his vision.

This workshop was also crucial for us to align on our next steps in the project, and to agree on our expectations from the client and his from us. We also began defining what deliverables we would hand in to the client in this collaboration.



Project Brief

Based on the kick-off workshop conclusions, we were able to define the project brief and start framing our process together with the client. At this point in time, the project brief was to support the client in envisioning the startup studio by using service design and help him promote and communicate his new business.

We summarise the project brief as follows:

How might we shape and communicate the vision of Stupid Startup Studio?

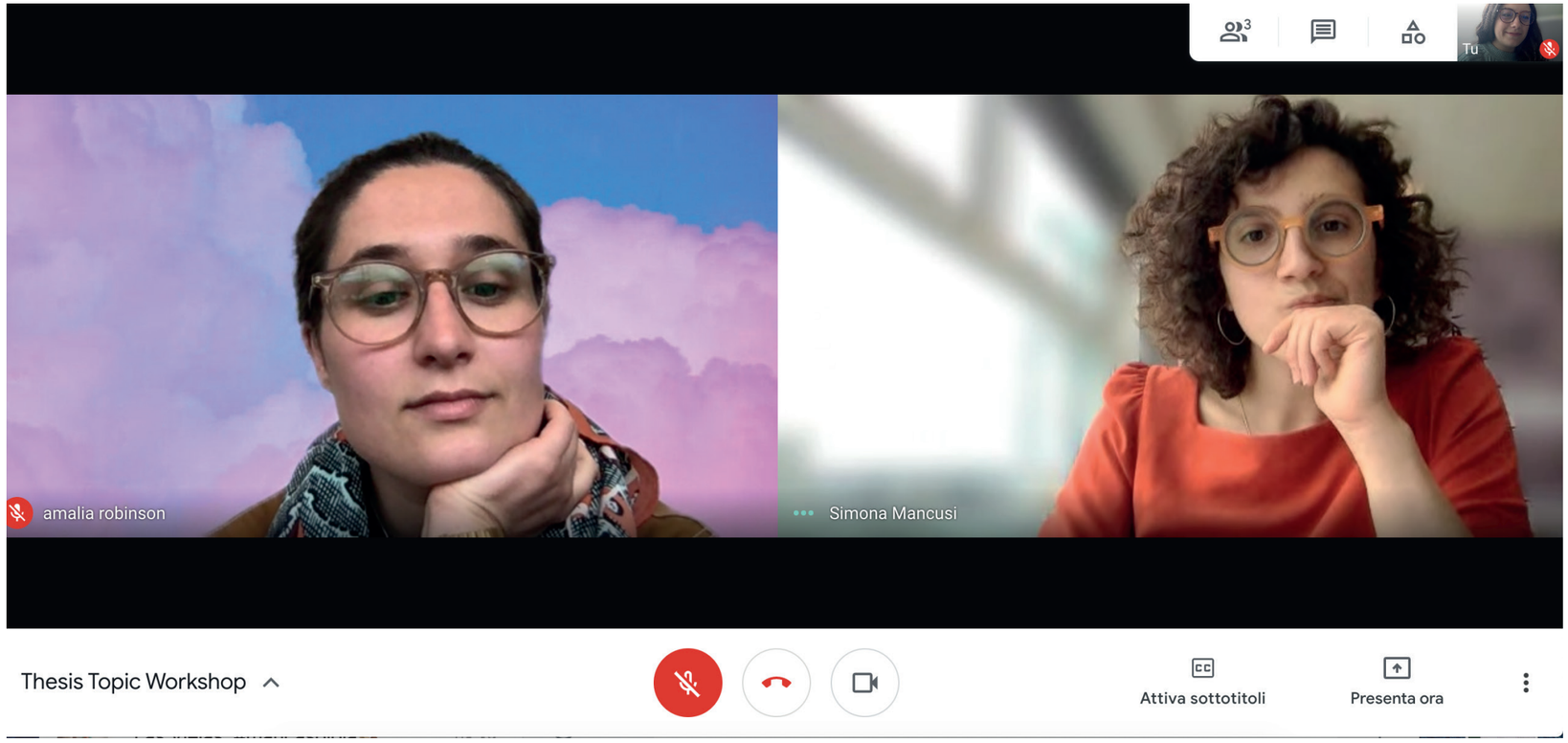


Fig. 15 - Group meeting after the kick-off workshop to agree on the project brief

chapter 3

Theoretical framework

Literature review

This chapter will illustrate the theoretical foundation of our research project.
The theoretical context of our thesis is service design; to frame this field, the chapter starts with an introduction on
the origins of service design. After that,
we describe what the object of service design is and can be.

The project started as an open-ended exploration of possible strategic scenarios. Their purpose was to support the process of envisioning a business structure and mapping a value co-creation system for the startup studio – identifying the value exchanged, the actors involved and the flow of exchange.

Furthermore, since the startup studio project was at an early phase of its development, strategy was a key aspect of our collaboration. There was a need for the client to engage with possible partners and experts; make strategic decisions; promote his business idea; and define an ecosystem. Because of this, our literature review continues on to examine design's contribution to strategy. Here, we analyse different perspectives on the topic – even though we found few sources on the link between service design and strategy.

We continue with an analysis of service design capabilities and contributions. Then, we contextualize these capabilities within our project brief and identify how we can contribute in supporting our client at this stage of his process. We hypothesize that, given our competences as service designers, the best contribution we can provide him is by facilitating his conversations with potential partners and experts. At this point we identify the thesis research question.

The research focus is facilitating strategic conversations and the case illustrated in this thesis is going to be our field of experimentation in order to address the research question.

Service Design

In this first section we look back to look forward. We draw a picture of the origins and object of service design in order to define the context of our study and position our research in this field. Also, we explore the object of study of service design, in order for us to position ourselves towards our project case and communicate our practice to our client.

The origins of service design

The term *service design* emerged when the value of services as a key engine of economic growth and jobs became evident. In the early 2000s, two pivotal concepts regarding service design were introduced: *service-dominant logic* and *product-service systems* (Penin, 2018; Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017).

Service-dominant logic

Service-dominant logic (SDL) places service at the center of our economy (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). It affirms that the core activity of any organization is service, even if it manufactures products, as these also provide a service (Stickdorn et al., 2018). In SDL, there is no divide between goods and services (Penin, 2018). Vargo and Lusch (2008) provide a list of axioms to understand SDL. Specifically, they affirm that value is co-created by several actors whose contribution is essential for a service to work. Moreover, they state that such value co-creation is enabled and coordinated by actor-generated institutions. Stickdorn et al. (2018) base themselves on these axioms to propose a definition for service design as "the process of coordinating designed institutions and institutional arrangements to enable the co-creation of value" (p.124).

Lara Penin (2018) observes how SDL proposes a paradigm shift where the exchange of goods is not at the center of value creation anymore. However, she points out that this shift has not gained a foothold yet. For example, political discourse is still product-centered, as it still often highlights the manufacturing industry to be the main source of employment. SDL responds to this gap, proposing a more meaningful and contemporary model (Penin, 2018).

Product service system

At the same time as SDL was emerging in Europe, a complementary concept was brought forward to bridge the gap between products and services: product-service system (PSS) (Penin, 2018). As defined by Goedkoop et al. (1999), PSS are the combination of products and services which are able to fulfill a user's needs. In order to sustain value creation and exchange in PSS, it is crucial to build infrastructure and networks (Mont, 2001).

Manzini and Vezzoli (2002) underline the potential of PSS in shifting the business focus away from material goods and towards service offerings, similar to the paradigm shift introduced by SDL. The innovation brought by PSS is a model of consumption that integrates services and goods keeping in mind environmental sustainability (Manzini & Vezzoli, 2002). The strategy adopted was to reduce material goods by promoting shared use of them, and still meeting the business need for profit (Manzini & Vezzoli, 2002).

The origin of the term *service design* comes from marketing literature. Shostack (1982) was the first to point out the need for designing all the components of a service, due to the coexistence of both services and products in the majority of market bodies. Since then, new approaches to service design have emerged.

Kimbell (2011) proposes a framework to summarise and classify all the different perspectives on service design. In it, she identifies two main tensions: the first one focuses on the interpretation of design, which can be intended either as problem-solving or as an inquiry; the second tension focuses on how services are perceived: either as separated from goods or as the basic unit of economic exchange. As a result of this analysis Kimbell (2011) defines *designing for services* as the activity of creating value involving different actors, in an open-ended problem space. She underlines that calling this activity *designing services* would be an error since it is not possible to plan and define every aspect of a service since it is deeply dependent on the interactions and contributions of its actors (Kimbell, 2011).

There is not one established definition for service design. Stickdorn et al. (2018) outline different approaches to it:

- **service design as a mindset:** places users first; understands products as the avatars of service relationships; responds to assumptions with research; and prefers testing prototypes to discussion.

- **service design as a process:** an iterative cycle of research and development which prioritizes early user feedback processes, prototyping, testing and quick-and-dirty experiments.

- **service design as a toolset:** the tools used in service design. However, tools are useless without a mindset, a process, and a common language. If used well, tools can spark meaningful conversations; create a common understanding and language; and make knowledge implicit and assumptions explicit.

- **service design as a cross-disciplinary language:** the ability of service designers to break down silos by connecting people and organizations across disciples. They do this by using tools, visualizations, and boundary objects enabling collaboration and a shared language. In this case, service design can be considered as "the glue between all disciplines" (Stickdorn et al., 2018, p.102).

- **service design as a management approach:** a management approach used to increase already existing value or for radical innovation of new services and products. Furthermore, its collaborative processes can lead to insights that address the need for a change in an organization's structure.

Finally, the authors propose the following definition:

"[service design] is a human-centered, collaborative, interdisciplinary, iterative approach which uses research, prototyping, and a set of easily understood activities and visualization tools to create and orchestrate experiences that meet the needs of the business, the user, and other stakeholders." (Stickdorn et al., 2018, p.102)

The object of service design

As a consequence of SDL, the distinction between tangible and intangible goods is rendered irrelevant (Blomkvist et al., 2016). This, however, has not helped practitioners who work with shaping design materials for services (Blomkvist et al., 2016). For this reason, Blomkvist et al. (2016) have looked into the materials and the object of study of service design.

According to the authors, the material of service design consists of both a whole service and its individual parts. This material is ever changing, since each interaction can shape the service (Blomkvist et al., 2016). Moreover, it emerges through negotiations and explorations with team members while tackling *wicked problems* – unstructured, unique problems, with no one right solution (Blomkvist et al., 2016).

Looking at the object of study holistically, the authors state that the object of service design is the service offering – or value proposition.

Considering the tools used by designers, the authors state that *service representations* can be considered as strategies to make the service tangible in order to explore a situation. Moreover, these *service surrogates* can also be used as boundary objects to facilitate co-design processes (Blomkvist et al., 2016).

Moreover, the authors reflect on touchpoints. They affirm that, even if touchpoints are the material representations of a service, they cannot be considered themselves as the material of design. And so, they propose the notion of *service phrases*, which have a beginning and an end, allowing for scalability and integrating the concept of time (Blomkvist et al., 2016).

Sangiorgi and Prendiville (2017) trace the evolution of the object of service design. Initially, the practice focused on designing interactions between users and service providers and service interfaces (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017). The important contribution of users in service production has led service design to assume a more human-centered approach, building on participatory practices (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017). In order to deliver great experiences, also the backstage of a service needs to be well defined (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017). As a consequence, service design developed a new focus: organizational systems and processes, hidden from the users (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017). This evolution led service designers to better understand organizational change, behavioral change and new collaborative and complex systems – moving to higher strategic levels (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017). These changes along the years have transformed service design into a broad multidisciplinary practice (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017). Consequently, the continuous expansions of all the disciplines involved in service design leads to a continuous redefinition of service design itself (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017).

Kimbell and Blomberg (2017) summarise three lenses of interpretation regarding the object of service design:

1. **The service encounter:** focus on the experiences of the users, looking at their interaction with service providers. One of the tools used to understand how these encounters happen is the service blueprint.

3. **The value co-creation system:** focuses on the exchange of resources among the actors of the same service system, defined as an *ecosystem* or *constellation*. It evidences the relationships among the actors more than their experiences. One of the tools used to

understand how value is exchanged is a value constellation map.

5. **The socio-material configuration:** holistic focus encompassing materials, digital touchpoints and people's experiences. This lens is grounded in the belief that services are dynamic and evolve based on their context. When designing socio-material configurations, service designers use participatory design techniques.

Morelli et al. (2021) describe the three different levels of services on which service designers operate:

1. **Service as interaction**: service designers facilitate the interaction and value co-creation between service beneficiaries and the actors and infrastructures of the service.

3. **Services as infrastructure:** service designers design the processes and spaces for value creation.

5. **Service as a systemic institution:** service designers address institutional contexts characterized by specific socio-cultural and political frames, in order to create change and trigger innovation.

According to this three-level conceptualization, our case brief lies in between the second and the third level. On one hand, our project is open-ended and aims to identify the possible space that can facilitate the value creation between different actors. In that sense, we are involved in an *infrastructuring* (Morelli et al., 2021) process by proposing a possible system of value exchange among the innovation program and its probable stakeholders. This process includes engaging in conversations to negotiate expectations and reach shared visions (Björgvinsson et al., 2010). On the other hand, we are designing on the institutional level since we are supporting our client in building a strong vision. In doing so, we are contributing to picturing and shaping the system of values, regulations, social and cultural beliefs of the innovation program.

Designing at these two levels means facilitating our client's process of making initial decisions, visualizing organizational structures, and determining who the players involved in it could be. In other words, our client needs to be supported with strategizing around preferable scenarios and in engaging with possible partners.

For this reason the next chapter covers the value and contribution of design to strategy, in order to understand our position as designers in a more strategic context.

Design contributions to strategy

Here, we frame how design is used in strategic contexts in order to inform our own practice and research process. Moreover, we focus on design methods and capabilities that have been and are currently employed to benefit strategic processes. In doing so, we build on the experience of other professionals to identify how we can support our client and carry out our project.

Design and strategy

There is an extensive collection of literature focused on bridging the gap between design and strategy. However, there is not one consistent description of their relationship.

T.J. Brown (2019) makes a distinction between *strategic design* and *design strategy* and provides a definition for both practices. *Strategic design* is "a design process that includes business considerations such as competitive positioning, pricing strategy, distribution strategy, and advertising strategy" (T.J. Brown, 2019, p.41); whereas *design strategy* is "the process of designing for the purpose of strategic analysis and formulation" (T.J. Brown, 2019, p.41).

Stevens and Moultrie (2011) offer a different interpretation. They define *design strategy* as a long-term roadmap for the implementation of design and *strategic design* as the process concerned with the complex ecosystem of actors interplaying in and outside of an organization.

Meroni (2008), describes *strategic design* as a process where organizations are provided with tools, rules and values to evolve, in order to survive. As a result of this evolutionary process, organizations affect the environment they inhabit, as well (Meroni, 2008).

Knight et al. (2020) use a different terminology to categorise the integration of design thinking into organizational strategy: *design-led strategy*. *Design thinking* is a discipline that converges people's needs, business viability and technological feasibility to create market opportunities and generate value for customers (T. Brown, 2008). The *design thinking* approach has spread ubiquitously, and is commonly seen as a simplified ready-made design framework useful to address a variety of issues; this has caused a lot of confusion regarding what it is (Baker & Moukhliss, 2020). However, there is a consensus on its principles: it is a problem-solving approach that focuses on users' needs in order to frame the problem space and visualize possible solutions to test out, while keeping a holistic perspective (Baker & Moukhliss, 2020).

The value of design for strategy

One of the main contributions of design lies in its process – it is empathetic and user-centred (T.J. Brown, 2019). By empathizing with customers, designers give leaders the possibility to step in their customers' shoes through simulations (Knight et al., 2020). In doing so, leaders are able to experience how their own strategy feels. As a consequence, designers trigger leaders' reflections (Knight et al., 2020). Also, designers engage with customers when informing and sharing brand value (Kotler & Alexander Rath, 1984). This proximity to people, allows for designers to shape customers' experiences and loyalty (Stevens & Moultrie, 2011).

Moreover, designers invest time exploring and understanding users' experiences in order to frame their needs before jumping into generating solutions (T.J. Brown, 2019). This deep knowledge of users transforms designers into cultural gatekeepers (Dell'Era & Verganti, 2010), with a clear picture of the problem space (T.J. Brown, 2019). User research is able to address customer satisfaction and the problem of product-market fit, and therefore it contributes to enhancing company profitability (Rath, 1984).

For this reason, Rath (1984) defines design as a strategic tool: if involved in the early stage of product development, designers can contribute by generating ideas, involving customers who can inform the design development with relevant insights. According to Knight et al. (2020), knowledge about the users not only allows to sustain current business models but can also transform and create new ones.

The collaborative nature of design facilitates knowledge exchange and transforms that knowledge into innovative products (Dell'Era & Verganti, 2010). Collaborative innovation challenges underlying assumptions, which leads to more in-depth and informed discussions (Knight et al., 2020). As a result, design thinking is a proper catalyst for innovation (Knight et al., 2020).

On the same line of thought, Rygh et al. (2014) define designers as *change instigators*. Stevens and Moultrie (2011) describe design as an enabler for corporate strategy as it has the ability of opening to new market doors (Lockwood, 2007; Stevens & Moultrie, 2011). Particularly, design contributes in differentiating products and services in crowded

market spaces, in order to win the competition (Rath, 1984; Stevens & Moultrie, 2011). Moreover, design contributes to strategy by developing tangible prototypes (T.J. Brown, 2019). Liedka and Kaplan (2019) state that learning through prototyping allows businesses to see new opportunities, and therefore it improves strategy development. Also, designers provide visual solutions, helping to picture complex systems and create shared strategic visions (T.J. Brown, 2019). Through these tools, designers facilitate the evaluation of uncertainties, sparking new perspectives and creativity (Stevens & Moultrie, 2011).

By translating strategic plans into shared visions, designers are able to simplify them into engaging solutions that can be safely assessed and executed (Stevens & Moultrie, 2011). Often, designers use maps or other visualisations to support leaders in communicating their strategic goals (Lockwood, 2007). In this regard, Rygh et al. (2014) describe the designer as a *visualizer*, who is able to make abstract concepts tangible and understandable.

Knight et al. (2020) reflect on the contribution of design materials and methods and how they can influence strategy. They are summarised as follows:

- Dynamic materials enable new idea generation;
- Static materials generate informed reflections;
- Individual practices enhance learning;
- Collective practices support discussions.

Liedtka (2000) states that the potential of design applied to strategy lies in its capacity of enabling more participation and dialogue-based strategy. Knight et al. (2020) build on this concept, highlighting the importance of using diverse materials and approaches to integrate the two disciplines in order to enrich both strategy conversations and actions.

An interesting perspective is the one proposed by Ballie and Prior (2014) who conceived design as a strategy itself, used as a scaffold built to support participants in knowledge exchange by involving different stakeholders and breaking silos. This concept resonates with Rygh et al.'s (2014) idea of the designer as a *connector* and broker of collaborations. Dell'Era and Verganti (2010) describe designers as *language brokers*. In fact, their collaborative experience across different sectors on so many different projects "allows designers to transfer language from one sector to another" (Dell'Era & Verganti, 2010, p. 125).

The complex and rapid world we live in calls for designers to confront themselves with complex societal problems (Gloppen, 2011). This means for them to learn to construct bridges among disciplines that would be otherwise very separated (Rygh et al., 2014). In order for designers to play more strategic roles, Rygh et al. (2014) suggest that they need to be involved in the very early stage of the innovation process, connecting both with the company and engaging its stakeholders, breaking silos, and fostering empathic conversations.

Designers mediate across different professional domains and actors, both outside and inside of the organisation, and in doing so, they optimise links and identify potential partnerships (Stevens & Moultrie, 2011).

Stevens and Moultrie (2011) state that the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders is as important as the relationship with the customers. Therefore, the authors suggest, designers can have an emotional impact also on the loyalty and preferences of the stakeholders.

To conclude, Meroni (2008) provides a perspective on strategic design that is very close to the field of service design. In her view, strategic design is intrinsically connected to PSS, as the increasing complexity of services requires companies to build a coherent vision, identity and offer through coordinated decision-making. Hence, there is a need for strategizing on how to achieve this coherence (Meroni, 2008).

According to Meroni (2008), the contribution of strategic design to companies who have to coordinate complex services can be summarised as follows:

- Before providing a solution, strategic design articulates the problem space, and in doing so offers a direction. In this way, designers support building a shared vision for the future.
- Through co-design practices, strategic design offers the opportunity of taking advantage of people's knowledge and capabilities in order to tackle complex problems.
- Strategic designers can be seen as therapists. They are able to catalyse collective visions, knowledge sharing and behavioral change by facilitating strategic dialogues.

Service Design Capabilities

Polaine et al. (2013) assert that service design operates at a strategic business level in its process of connecting a business proposition with the infrastructure that delivers it. However, literature has not elaborated further on any direct contribution of service design to strategy formulation and development. Therefore, we choose to focus this chapter specifically on service design capabilities. We do this in order to build a foundation on how we can use service design capabilities to support a strategic project; particularly, we aim at understanding how we can deploy our competences to support our client in his process.

To keep the focus of our research consistent to our project, we have closed in on service design capabilities that contribute to building services as infrastructures and systemic institutions. This was done in reference to the framework provided by Morelli et al. (2021).

One of the first activities that service designers carry out in a project is *addressing the context*, as no service proposition happens outside of a specific context. This allows designers to discover how the interactions among the relevant actors can be shaped and affected according to the specific service space they inhabit (Morelli et al., 2021).

Penin (2018) identifies active and *empathic listening* as one of service designers' core capabilities. In fact, she explains, in order to address the context, designers need to talk and listen to actors, learning to see the world from their perspective, while suspending their own judgment.

Most of the time, service designers move in an open-ended context (Morelli et al., 2021). In fact, services are strictly dependent on the actors' relationships and interactions (Morelli et al., 2021). As a consequence, designers need to keep a broad perspective, designing not one single solution but a framework of open and possible ones that will be shaped by the different moments of interaction and co-creation within the context; therefore, Morelli et al.(2021) define this capability as *open problem solving*.

When creating infrastructures, the designers' contribution is often to *build logical architectures* (Morelli et al., 2021). Service designers are able to diagnose the building blocks of service architecture and rearrange and organise them together to represent the ecosystem and its moments of interaction (Morelli et al., 2021).

Being able to represent such logical infrastructures requires designers to picture structured visions of how a service configuration could look like (Morelli et al., 2021). This capability is coined *vision building* (Morelli et al., 2021). It is crucial for designers to be able to envision better futures and facilitate the negotiation of future service propositions among different stakeholders (Penin, 2018). This capability allows stakeholders to picture and evaluate business and organizational aspects before the service is actually in place (Morelli et al., 2021).

Modelling is the capability that enables designers to facilitate these kinds of discussions (Morelli et al., 2021). In fact, modelling consists of simulating, visualising or experimenting possible future visions and solutions (Morelli et al., 2021). For example, visual representations and stories can help people to see how a service could look like in the future (Penin, 2018). Modelling is especially useful in the early stages of a project where there are many questions and few answers (Morelli et al., 2021). The authors affirm that modelling can be used both as an analytical tool to frame the problem space, and as a facilitation tool – *a boundary object* – to facilitate stakeholders' interactions. Penin (2018) adds to this by explaining that prototyping and testing ideas allows designers to experiment together with stakeholders to determine what works and what doesn't – facilitating decision-making processes.

Moreover, Penin (2018) states that service designers are increasingly becoming strategic assets for organizations. In fact, designers help in reimagining internal culture and support with strategic guidance and decision-making for the future (Penin, 2018). Therefore, the author argues, it is important that service designers are equipped with managerial and organizational capabilities.

Lastly, service designers should not create alone (Penin, 2018). Through their process, they need to involve actors and enable collaborations (Penin, 2018). Facilitation objects and techniques help designers mediate the value of co-production and *engage stakeholders* in co-designing processes, to build together innovative solutions (Morelli et al., 2021). For this reason, *process facilitation* can be identified as another key capability (Penin, 2018).

Research focus: strategic conversations

In our project case, our client had the need of strategizing around possible future visions and defining preferable organisational models, envisioning and engaging with potential stakeholders.

Our aim was to deploy our competences and utilize service design tools and methods to facilitate the processes of defining possible strategic visions for the innovation program and of engaging in conversations with potential stakeholders.

For this reason, we framed our research question as follows:

How might service design facilitate strategic conversations?

What are strategic conversations?

In this last sub-chapter of our literature review, we focus on the meaning of strategic conversations and their value and use.

Liedtka and Rosenblum (1996) propose *strategic conversations* to be "a way of thinking about how organizations address [their] external and internal questions" (p.147). Daly et al. (2003) offer another perspective, they describe strategic conversations as *complexity-reducing mechanisms*.

According to Miles et al. (2006), *strategic conversations* are open-issue oriented, fact-based communication mechanisms that aim to facilitate top managers in strategy formulation; they do this by integrating insights regarding competitors and a company's current resources.

Similarly, Ertel and Solomon (2014) state that *strategic conversations* are creative and collaborative problem-solving sessions where participants address open-ended challenges, not only analytically but also emotionally. According to the authors, strategic conversations are needed when a leader is looking for new ways to expand in a slow growing market; or when a startup team needs to take a pivotal decision on whether to evolve or maintain their current business model.

Van der Waldt (2019) points out four situations that call for a strategic conversation: situations that need to be addressed both rationally and emotionally; situations that are new and unforeseen; situations in which leaders need to take new actions and they need to communicate it to their employees; situations that are complex.

In situations where problems are open-ended and processes are experimental, knowledge arises along the way, through interaction with different stakeholders (Zurlo, 1999). Meroni (2008) affirms that strategic conversations between different actors in an ecosystem enable learning in these evolutionary situations. In this regard, Miles et al. (2006) affirm that strategic conversations are especially valuable for strategy formulation because they facilitate the exchange of knowledge among managers, employees and stakeholders, providing a pool of specific information about the entire business environment.

For this reason, Von Krogh and Roos (1995) refer to *strategic conversations* as the birthplace of a company's strategy. The authors affirm that strategic conversations enhance company advancement. Moreover, the conversation process contributes to generating original solutions to new and complex problems (van der Heijden, 1996), generating fuel for strategic action (Di Virgilio & Ludema, 2009).

Leaders can use the fuel of strategic conversations to boost the company, as co-creative conversations about the desired future of a business can create "upwards spirals of energy" (van der Waldt, 2019, p.64). In fact, one of the greatest powers of strategic conversations is their ability to empower leaders to formulate and communicate strategic visions for the future of their organization (Deetz et al., 2000).

Strategic conversations can be employed as a medium to engage with stakeholders, in order to strategically negotiate with them (Spender & Strong 2014). This process builds networks of collaboration in an organization's structure (Weick, 1979).

Finally, Ertel and Solomon (2014) define *strategic conversations* as *moments of impact*. By embracing different points of view, these conversations produce innovative insights capable of affecting an organization's long-term future (Ertel & Solomon, 2014).

Literature gives different descriptions and uses of strategic conversations. **In our case** we intend strategic conversations as, discussions aiming to provoque reflections around how to move a project forward; the collaborative process of shaping future visions; and the negotiations conducted with stakeholders external to the organization around possible value-exchange.

However, we have decided to assume an explorative approach and probe the meaning of strategic conversations throughout our case study. The last part of our literature review focuses on what makes strategic conversations effective.

How to generate effective strategic conversations?

Van der Heijden (2015) states that for strategic conversations to be effective, initially they need to leave space for sharing unstructured views and thoughts; in this way, participants are able to build a shared understanding of the subject of the conversation. Alignment is necessary in order for conversations to activate organizational learning (van der Heijden, 1996) Hoon (2007) provides a similar perspective when elaborating on his characterization of strategic conversations. In his study, he describes the informal interactions between middle and senior managers. The author identifies three levels of strategic conversations:

1. **Generating understanding:** on this level, middle managers inform senior managers about their progress before meetings, in order to generate a common understanding. Through these conversations, people try to frame an issue and identify the cause and effect relationship.

2. **Aligning towards an issue:** on this level, middle managers seize informal moments of proximity to share ideas and solutions with senior managers in order to sense their opinion on the topic and evaluate whether to explore a concept or not. Aligning, in this case, is intended as the act of giving a signal about one's attitude regarding a strategic issue/concept.

5. Making pre-arrangements: on this level, the conditions created in the previous levels support middle managers in deciding how to proceed and frame further strategic activities.

According to Miles et al. (2006), strategic conversations can contribute effectively to strategy making when they allow for participants to talk, listen and reflect. The authors describe the steps that can lead to an effective strategic conversation:

1. Question participants regarding their concerns and aspirations to generate a clear pictures of everybody's intent.

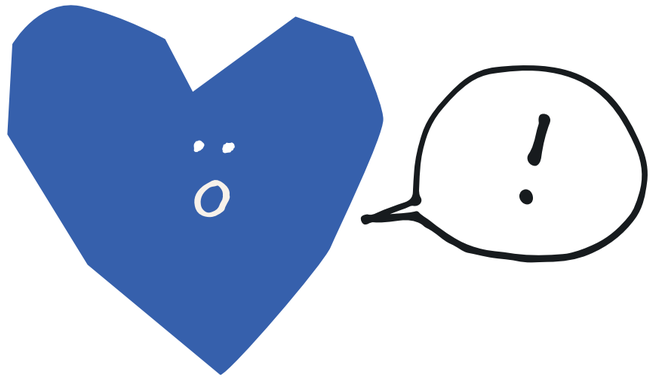
2. Surface unspoken knowledge to create a platform for shared learning and understanding of the subject.

5. Make the invisible knowledge tangible to make it usable by all participants.

7. Use the tangible knowledge to evaluate current and emergent strategies and challenge participant's assumptions and mental models.

9. Use the tangible knowledge and the emergent insights to take actions and inform the strategy-making process.

The case study presented in the thesis is the explorative playground that we are using to address our research question: *how might service design facilitate strategic conversations?*



Methodology

The following paragraphs provide an empirical and theoretical overview of the framework utilized by the group during our case study, in order to address the research question.

Service design is rooted in design thinking (Stickdorn et al., 2018) and therefore utilizes its models with the aim of facilitating the planning of projects, tasks, activities and consequent collaborations (Tschimmel, 2012).

Our design and research process has followed the Double Diamond framework (Design Council [DC], 2015), an explorative, iterative, co-creative and human-centered framework (DC, 2015). The Double Diamond is also named *4 D Model*, as its process consists of four main phases called *Discover, Define, Develop, Deliver*. The model is visually represented by two diamonds placed next to each other to communicate the main peculiarity of the framework: allowing convergent – explorative phases to search for opportunities – and divergent – phases consolidating the knowledge collected to make decisions – thinking (DC, 2015).

The reason for this choice, on the one hand, is motivated by the fact that our client was familiar with this Double Diamond approach. This facilitated our intent of keeping the client involved and informed throughout the process. We planned several check-points along the way, in order to keep the process of briefing open (Becermen et al., 2018) and the whole project flexible and adaptable to the continuous discoveries and the emergent needs of our client. In that sense, the iterative Double Diamond framework represents a great fit, as it presents both divergent and convergent moments, allowing for the project to breathe and evolve organically. The adaptability of the framework suited the client-designer relationship in place, which was open-ended, emerging and exploratory.

Moreover, the Double Diamond framework includes a final converging phase where the project outcomes are packaged and delivered. As agreed with the client, we had decided to deliver all the tools and knowledge we developed together throughout the project at the end of it.

Furthermore, the Double Diamond framework facilitated the convergence of both our academic research and design brief. We could easily merge the framework on a timeline and use it to underline the core moments when we have addressed our research question.

Service design is generally very difficult to frame (Akama, 2009), which is why practitioners need to make visible what is generally difficult to grasp (Polaine et al., 2013). In a client relationship, it is needed to illustrate the process, make it evident and show the outcomes as useful resources for the organization (Polaine et al., 2013). Therefore, another important benefit was to represent the Double Diamond and use the visualization both at the beginning and
at the end of the process.

At the beginning, the visualization supported the alignment with the client's expectations; at the end, it facilitated our final reflections.

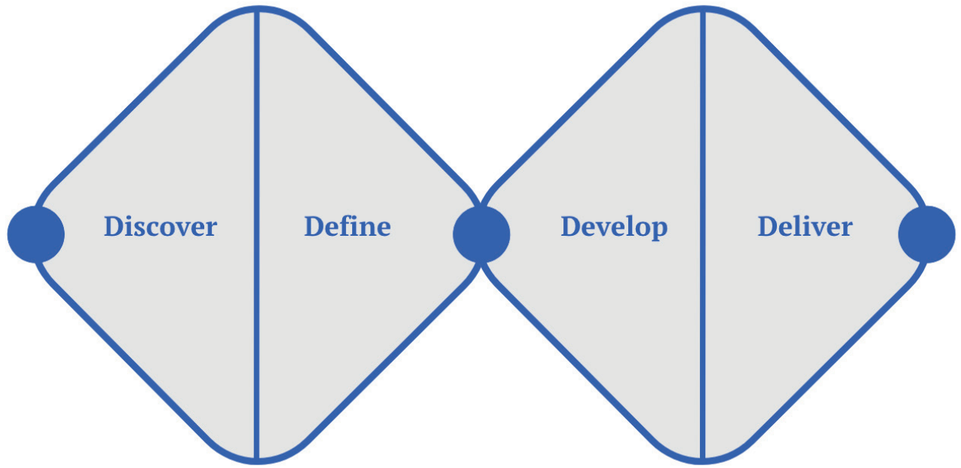


Fig. 16 - Double Diamond framework (DC, 2015)

The overall research process

This chapter continues on to describe the main goals, activities and outcomes carried out throughout the four phases of our process.

Discover phase
This phase is a moment of exploration, where the team is openly seeking to gain contextual knowledge on the subject (DC, 2015) and framing the problem space in which it is operating (Penin, 2018).

The goal of this phase for us was to build a clear picture of the ecosystem in which we were operating. Also, we wanted to understand how to develop a successful startup studio; what resources and capabilities are needed to do so; and how to validate a business idea to get investors to invest in it.

This phase aimed at collecting knowledge in order to enable us and the client to have informed strategic conversations. To do this, we carried out market research to identify major competitors and other actors in the Danish startup ecosystem. Also, we conducted more than a dozen interviews with relevant experts, such as people with experience in incubators, accelerators or startup studios; people with experience developing, launching, or running a startup; possible strategic partners identified by our client; and people with experience in startup investment. Moreover, we conducted a brief trend research to analyse current trends in order to identify possible areas of focus for Stupid Startup Studio.

Define phase
In this phase the team synthesizes the insights collected during the exploration in order to facilitate decision making (DC, 2015).

The goal of this phase was to share, synthesize and analyse all the knowledge collected in the previous phase, in order to extrapolate relevant insights and key questions that could aid us in choosing directions and defining how to proceed to evolve the project.

We started by clustering all the information acquired during the research and transformed it into concise and actionable pieces of knowledge. Adding on that, we developed a SWOT analysis that allowed us to identify the weaknesses and strengths of our client organization. Using the SWOT analysis, we drew a tentative stakeholders map that we then commented and enriched together with our client.

This phase contributed to shaping our research question, as it consisted mostly of sharing knowledge and transforming it into tangible and useful tools for strategic decision-making. This learning process was facilitated by strategic conversations which were designed so that they could allow for talking, listening and reflecting, both collectively and individually.

Develop phase
This phase supports the definition of the problem and encourages co-designing solutions with the stakeholders involved in the problem (DC, 2015).

The goal of this phase was to identify possible alternative configurations of Stupid Startup Studio that could both suit the needs of the client and fit the market ecosystem. For the client, it was very important to translate these possibilities into communicative future narratives that he could share with potential stakeholders, in order to receive feedback as well as engage in potential partnerships and negotiations. Finally, this phase aimed at developing those alternatives and building a potential service solution together with the client.

We started this phase with a workshop with the client, fed by all the knowledge we mapped and extrapolated in the previous phase. During this session, we ideated and co-created possible Stupid Startup Studio scenarios, outlining the core value proposition and operational system per each alternative. Afterwards we enriched those concepts and transformed them into engaging narratives, that we then visualized into slide decks to be used by the client to have more tangible conversations. In order to develop the scenarios into one possible service solution, we shared them across experts to collect insightful feedback. Finally, we assembled the scenarios with the feedback and the client aspirations to build and iterate on a possible service architecture for Stupid Startup Studio (defining actors profiles; stakeholder map; business model canvas; system value map; motivation matrix; a map of the service process; a prototype of the website homepage).

During this phase we have both directly facilitated strategic conversations, as well as created maps and visualization to support our client in having his own conversations.

Deliver phase
This is the moment where there is a possibility of a solution, which is more defined and ready to be tested, prototyped and presented (DC, 2015).

The goal for this phase for us was to provide tangible descriptions of the future Stupid Startup Studio and help communicate its complex system. As part of this phase, we agreed to deliver to our client a full package of tools and materials that he could use to build and communicate his vision, facilitate his strategic conversations and engage in negotiations with possible stakeholders.

We condensed all the knowledge, decisions and solutions developed in the previous phases into a Miro board in order to communicate, discuss and deliver the service concept to the client. In this

way he could continue to iterate on the service concept and architecture. Finally, we concluded the phase with a session with the client where we have discussed, criticized and commented on all the methods and tools used and delivered along the process in order to understand which enabled effective strategic conversations, and how.

Throughout the process, we have experimented with different methods and tools to facilitate and support strategic conversations. In fact, as stated by Knight et al. (2020), it is important to use diverse materials and diverse approaches to enrich both strategy conversations and actions.

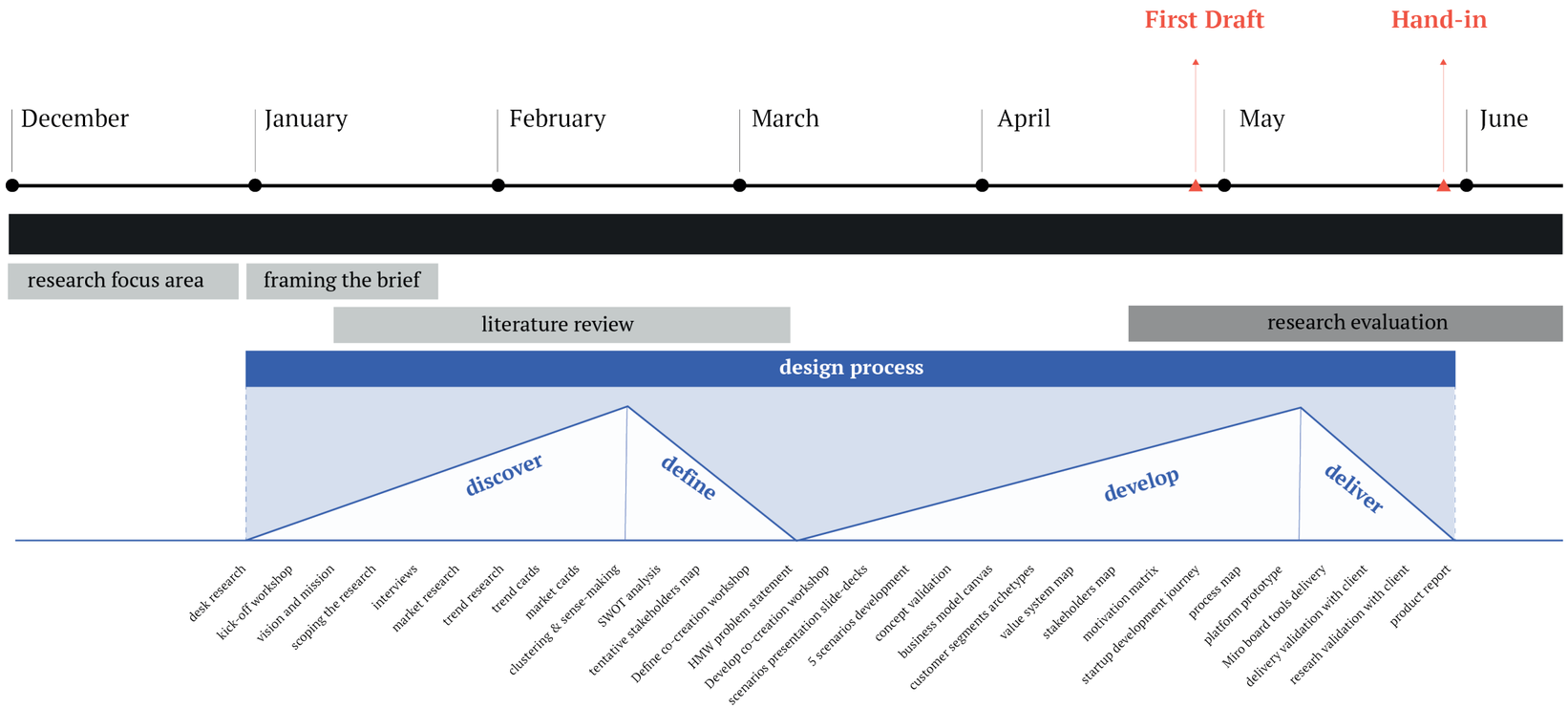


Fig. 17 - Group research process showing the tools used on a timeline

chapter 4

Discover

Discover: introduction

The goals of the discovery phase were agreed upon together with the client. We believed it was important to have the client buy-in as, according to Polaine et al. (2013), leaders need to see the strategic benefits of the research in order to recognize its insights as valuable.

Given the case context, the project called for a communicative, foundational and exploratory kind of research (Chipchase, 2017).

Our objectives for this phase were:

- **Earning a general understanding of the topic**
- **Identifying the stakeholders playing in the ecosystem.**
- **Acquiring the foundational understanding of the stakeholders' needs and innovation funnels.**
- **Discovering possible opportunities for SSS.**
- **Identifying storytelling assets to engage strategic conversations.**

In order to achieve these objectives, we used desk research – primarily market and trend research – and qualitative research – predominantly constituted by semi-structured in-depth interviews.

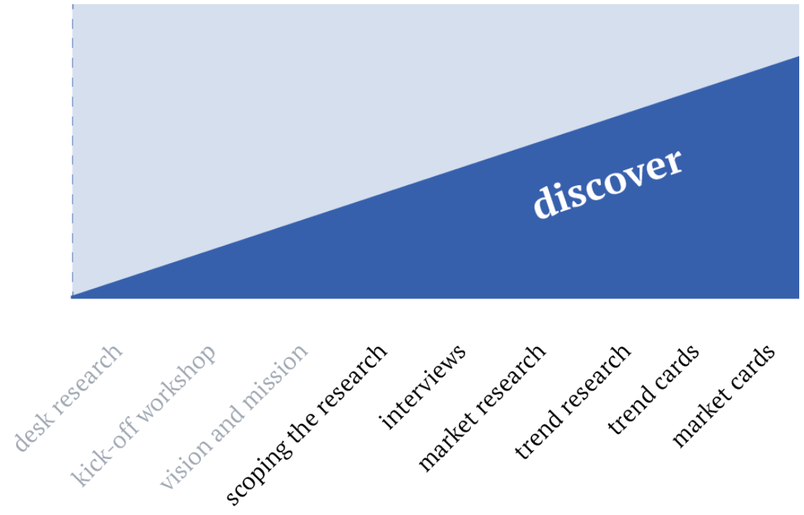


Fig. 18 - Zoom-in on the tools used during the Discover phase

Scoping the research

This section describes the process of planning our research. It briefly illustrates the tools used to align on the research scope, the research methods used and the logic behind each choice.

The relevance of planning the research

At the start of this phase, the group agreed that it was necessary to plan out the research and consequently select the methods to use. This was done to efficiently manage time and our client's resources and expectations. Stickdorn et al. (2018) explain that defining the scope of the research can support the process of considering which methods could more likely give more fruitful answers for set objectives. Moreover, being aligned on the research objectives ensures that the team has a mutual purpose (Stickdorn et al., 2018).

Despite agreeing on having a clear research plan, we also kept our process relatively flexible. In fact, as argued by Polaine et al. (2013), it is essential to stay open and recognize that any revelation gained along the way is helpful to formulate further questions, and narrow down the important factors still needed to be explored (Polaine et al. 2013; Stickdorn et al. 2018).

The process of scoping the research

After conducting the foundational research and meeting with the client in the kick-off workshop, we had an internal session to outline what the next steps were in our research. By clustering insights and using the scope wheel (Dyrman et al., 2018), we identified the main topics we needed to cover with our research to successfully support the client and produce valuable insights for the Develop phase.

In this session, we first clustered the insights from the kick-off workshop and the foundational research using post its on a board. From these insights, we built a scope wheel to define clear objectives and questions needed to answer in our research. The scope wheel is a research tool useful for defining the research scope of foresight explorations (Dyrman et al., 2018). The authors state that, to effectively plan the research, it is necessary to define the subject of the study. In this case, we re-adapted the tool to map out all the known unknowns for our project, even though it was not a foresight exploration.

The themes selected for our scope wheel were the following: children and education; startups; startup Studios; incubators; startup investors; and studio funding providers. The most important questions we had for each domain are outlined in the scope wheel illustrated on the right.

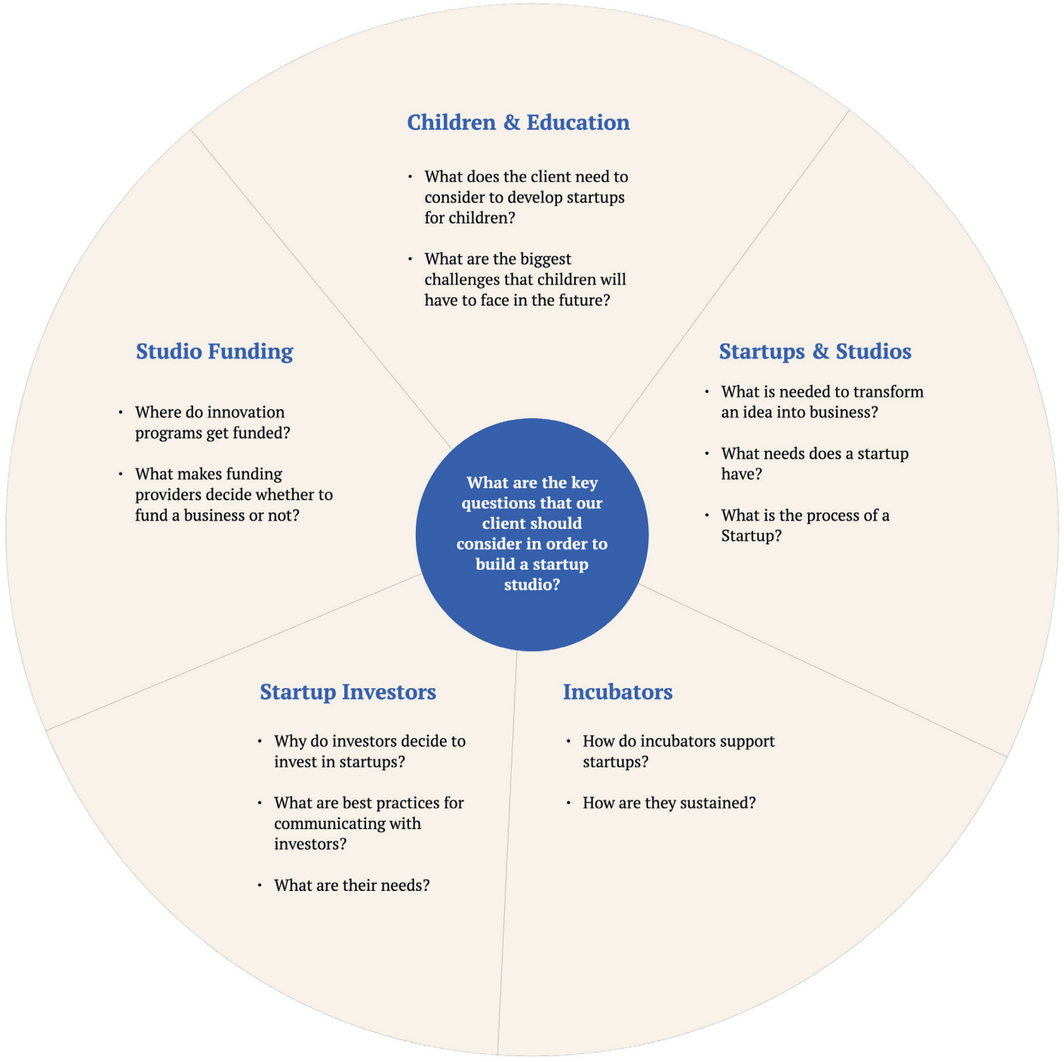


Fig. 19 - Iterated scope wheel to scope the Discover phase research

Reasoning behind chosen research methods

The scope wheel supported us in determining which methods we would use to answer the unknowns: qualitative research (expert interviews) and desk research (market and trend research).

The market research aimed at addressing the questions related to investors, startups, startup studios and funding. It was meant to support the group – and consequently the client – in acquiring a good understanding of the startup ecosystem, specifically within the Danish context.

The market research was complemented by a *participant approach*, which studies people's expectations, needs, challenges, as well as processes and operations (Stickdorn et al., 2018). Our participant approach method was semi-structured interviews with experts, which we conducted to answer the questions on our scope wheel and to become acquainted with the actors in the innovation ecosystem.

The client had expressed the need to narrow down the focus of the startup studio in order to better position himself while conversing with the stakeholders. It was tentatively agreed in the kick-off to be wellbeing of children and youth. In order to explore this avenue, we conducted trend research on this topic. The aim of this was to identify trends relating to children and youth, as well as their future needs, to start defining the scope for the studio further. Some of the questions related to this domain have also been covered by the semi-structured interviews.

The client was involved throughout the research phase. In fact, we collected research insights on a Miro board to which the client had access. By doing this, it was possible for him to asynchronously have an overview of our research board. We welcomed him to use the board to gather insights to use in the conversations he was having with possible stakeholders, and for his own reflections. In the expert interviews, instead, he actively participated in most of them and even led some of them.

Throughout the Discover phase, we relied heavily on the collaborative platform Miro to map, synthesize, visualize, share and collaborate.

Fig. 20 - Clustering and scoping the research board

Expert interviews

In order to plan the interviews, we drew another scope wheel (Fig. 21) to map our known-unknowns – the things we know that we don't know yet and need to discover – to build Stupid Startup Studio.

This scope wheel was used to support planning for the interview process; it helped us identify who we wanted to interview and what we wanted to ask them. Specifically, we planned the interviews keeping in mind that we wanted to gather information which would help us and the client define: the studio's mission and vision, value proposition, ecosystem value map, business model canvas, long-term goals, business / growth plan, and blueprint.

To answer the questions that we identified in our scope wheel, we reached out to experts in the following areas: startups, investing, startup studios, incubators, and working with children. We identified experts for each of the aforementioned categories through desk research as well as through our client's personal contacts.

The interviews ranged in structure, from semi-structured to strategic conversations. This difference is due to the fact that we interviewed two types of experts: general experts who were external to our ecosystem, and experts who could be potential strategic partners, already acquainted or friends with our client.

We adapted the interviews to this difference. For general experts who were external to our ecosystem, we conducted semi-structured interviews and stuck more to the designed flow of questions.

Although not commonly thought of as a best practice in qualitative research due to its lack of grounding in objectivity, interviewing of acquaintances is a relevant method to be used during the initial, exploratory phase of a project, as it adds openness, honesty, and trust to the process (Blichfeldt, 2007). For this reason, the client functioned as an interlocutor for these interviews, for there to be equal recognition and appreciation between the interviewee and the interviewer. While the client led, we were reporters tasked with active listening.

Early on, the client expressed that he prefers using slide decks to explain concepts in strategic conversations. For this reason, we designed multiple slides for him to use (see Appendix B), based on the vision and mission agreed during the kick-off. We built them with the understanding that they were drafts and that he would likely rework them and combine them with other slide decks he had.

We designed interview scripts with questions for each interviewee category (see Appendix C), based on the known unknowns mapped in the scope wheel. Both for semi-structured interviews and strategic conversations, the scripts served as a guide to remind us of the key questions to ask. The level of structure for an interview was based on the relationship the interviewee had with our client.

We conducted interviews with 19 experts based in Denmark, the USA, the UK, and Norway – all online through video calls. Six were experts on startups; four were experts on incubators; two were an expert on startup studios; five were experts on investing and funding; and two were experts on designing with and for children. Having said that, multiple experts we interviewed covered more than one area of expertise.

As we conducted each interview, we took notes on a Miro board, and summarized the key points from each interview, using color-coded sticky notes. This served as a way to keep track of the main insights from the interviews.

The tool is organised as follows:

Core: the question that leads our exploration
Second level (yellow circle): leading question per target group
Third level: target groups
Fourth level: color coded question based on topic
Grey boxes: research deliverables from interviewing that target group.

Legend:

- values/resources needed to grow a startup idea into a successful business
- money flow
- validating the success of startup ideas
- people
- market and trends
- general

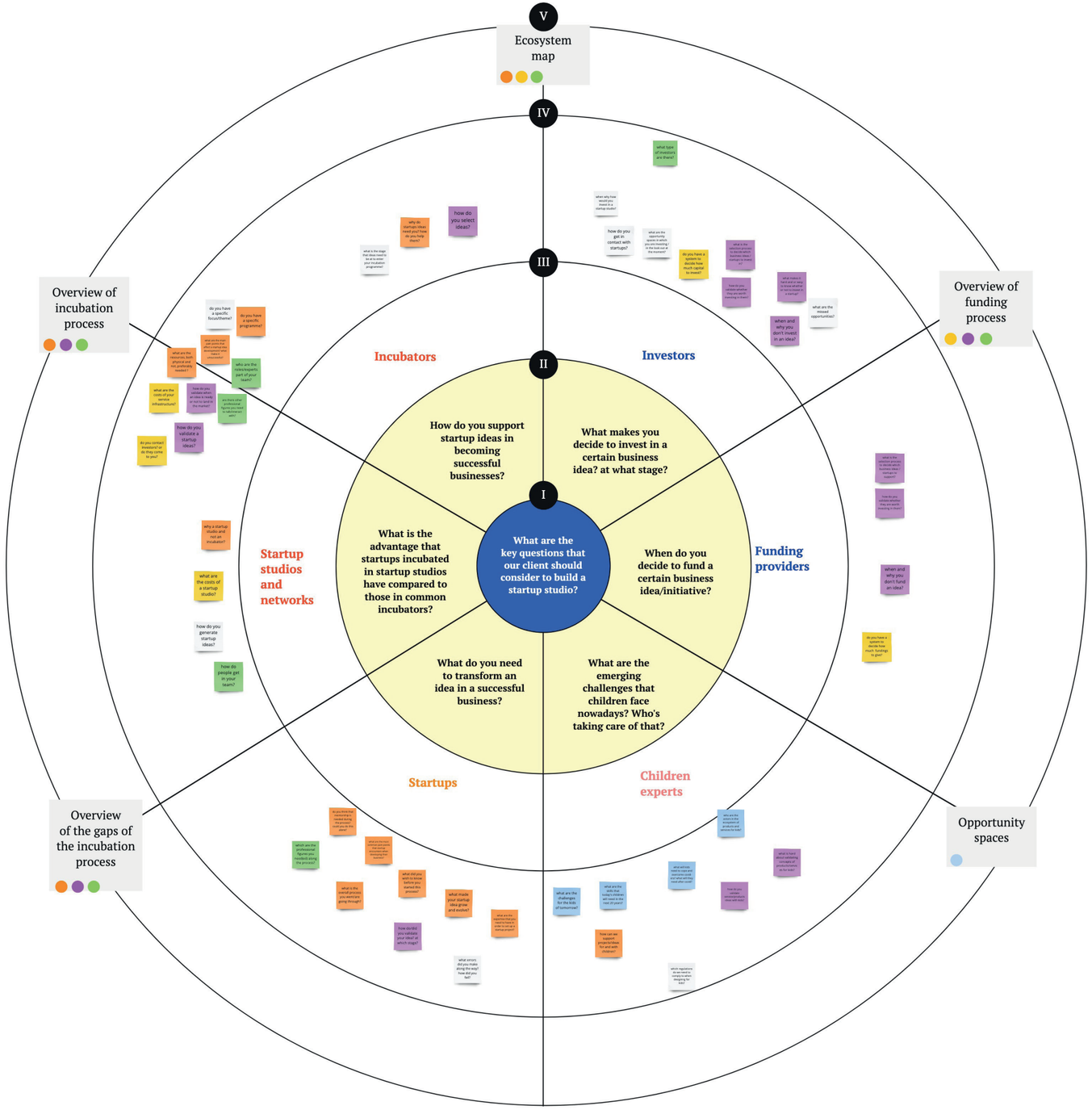


Fig. 21. - Expert interview scope wheel

Why do we need to research this info?
↓
to define:
- vision + mission
- value proposition
- ecosystem value map
- business model canvas
- long-term business/growth plan
- blueprint

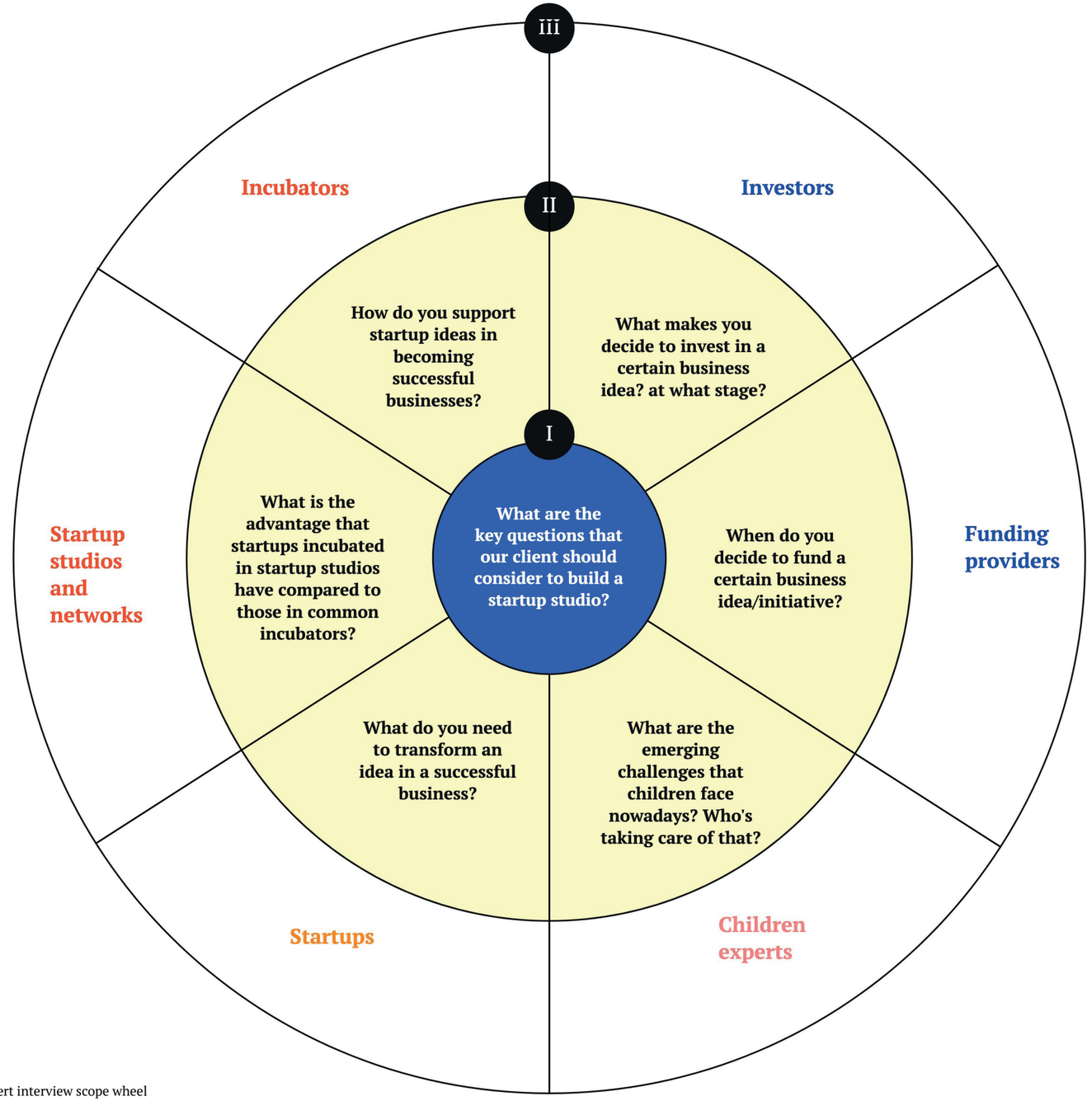


Fig. 22 - Zoom-in on the first three levels of the expert interview scope wheel

Market research

To support our client in communicating his business idea, it was necessary to take into account potential partnership and funding opportunities for Stupid Startup Studio. Also, we wanted to explore the ecosystem of innovation and children-related projects in Denmark.

Moreover, as stated by Rumelt (2017), basic to strategy is the utilization of strengths against weaknesses. Particularly, in projects with specific strategic goals, it is important to systemically map competitors, their offerings and value proposition, and to benchmark oneself against industry standards, in order to tackle the organization's objectives (Chipchase, 2018). For this reason, we agreed to examine successful competitors in our market research, in order to analyze their value propositions, strengths and weaknesses, to take into consideration when shaping Stupid Startup Studio's offering and organization. This knowledge would facilitate the client in leading informed strategic conversations.

Moreover, another goal of this research was to create awareness around what Stupid Studio cannot provide stakeholders, based on its current resources. This was done to support the client in considering strategic partnerships and engaging in conversations with them.

To facilitate our process, we defined a research question for the market research:

"How do we position Stupid Startup Studio in the Danish startup ecosystem?"

Based on this, we identified the four domains to explore with our market research, as shown in the figure on the right. We brainstormed on possible questions related to each domain, with the aim of guiding the process and defining the deliverables for the client.

We created cards as *visual artifacts* to gather information for all the actors in a systematic way that was easy to read and organize. Each domain has a different card layout, according to what type of value exchange could exist between the organizations in that domain and the startup studio. The following section will describe each domain card with an example.

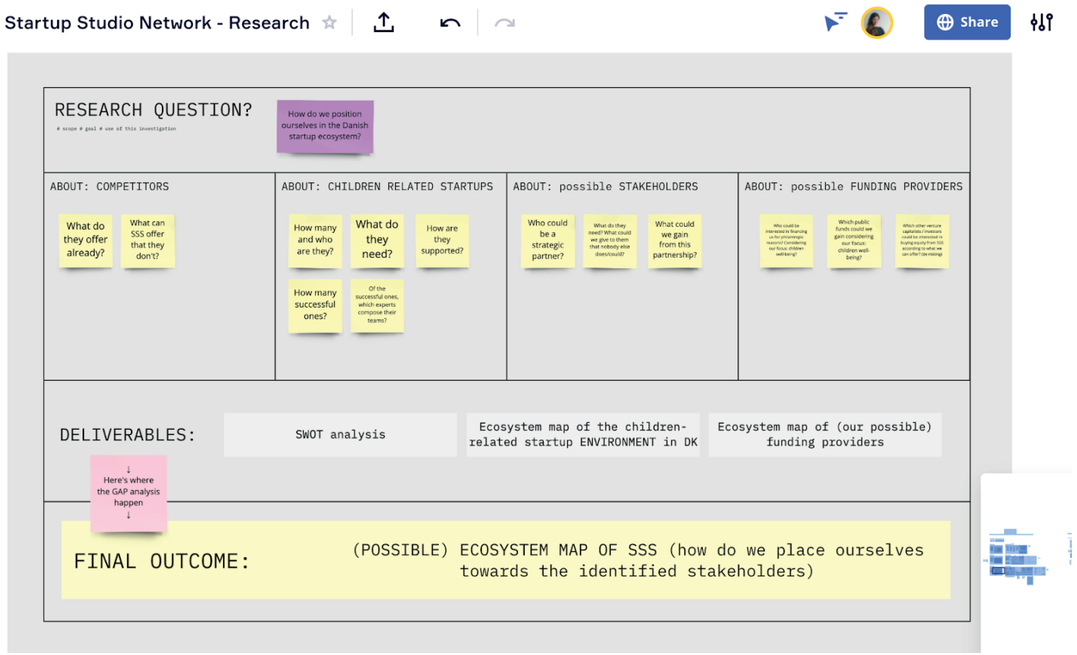


Fig. 23 - Scoping the market research on a Miro board

Competitors
In order to better understand how to differentiate SSS from already existing similar businesses or initiatives, we decided to research and analyse competitors' offerings. In doing this, we hoped to inform a reflection on what the competitive advantage of the startup studio could be.

In these cards, we clustered competitors based on their offering, how they are funded and who are their main partners. Additionally, we attempted to answer the question, "*What can SSS offer that this competitor cannot?*", with the aim of supporting the client in defining Stupid Startup Studio's competitive advantage.

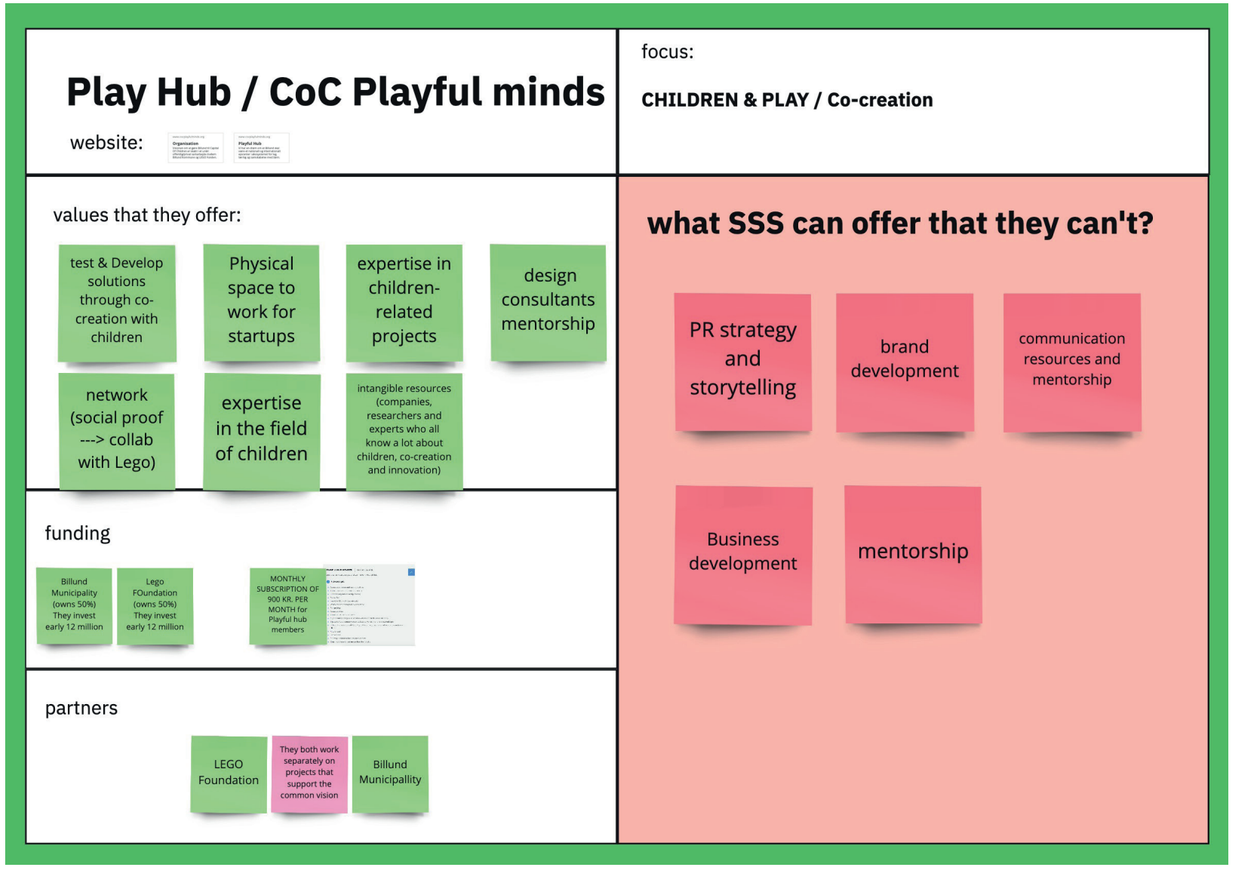


Fig. 24 - Competitor card

Children-related startups
From the interviews conducted, we came to understand that there are very few startups with a focus on children in the Danish innovation ecosystem – and just one innovation program specialized on children. By researching startups working with and for children; we aimed to identify their needs; how they function; what programs they partake in; their team structures and how they are funded.

From the insights collected during our semi-structured interviews, we discovered that one of the main reasons why startups fail is due to team composition. For this reason, in the children-related startup cards, we included an analysis of their team competences. We also included the innovation programs they participate in and who their investors are. Through these cards, we tried to answer the question, "*What could Stupid Startup Studio potentially offer to these startups?*"

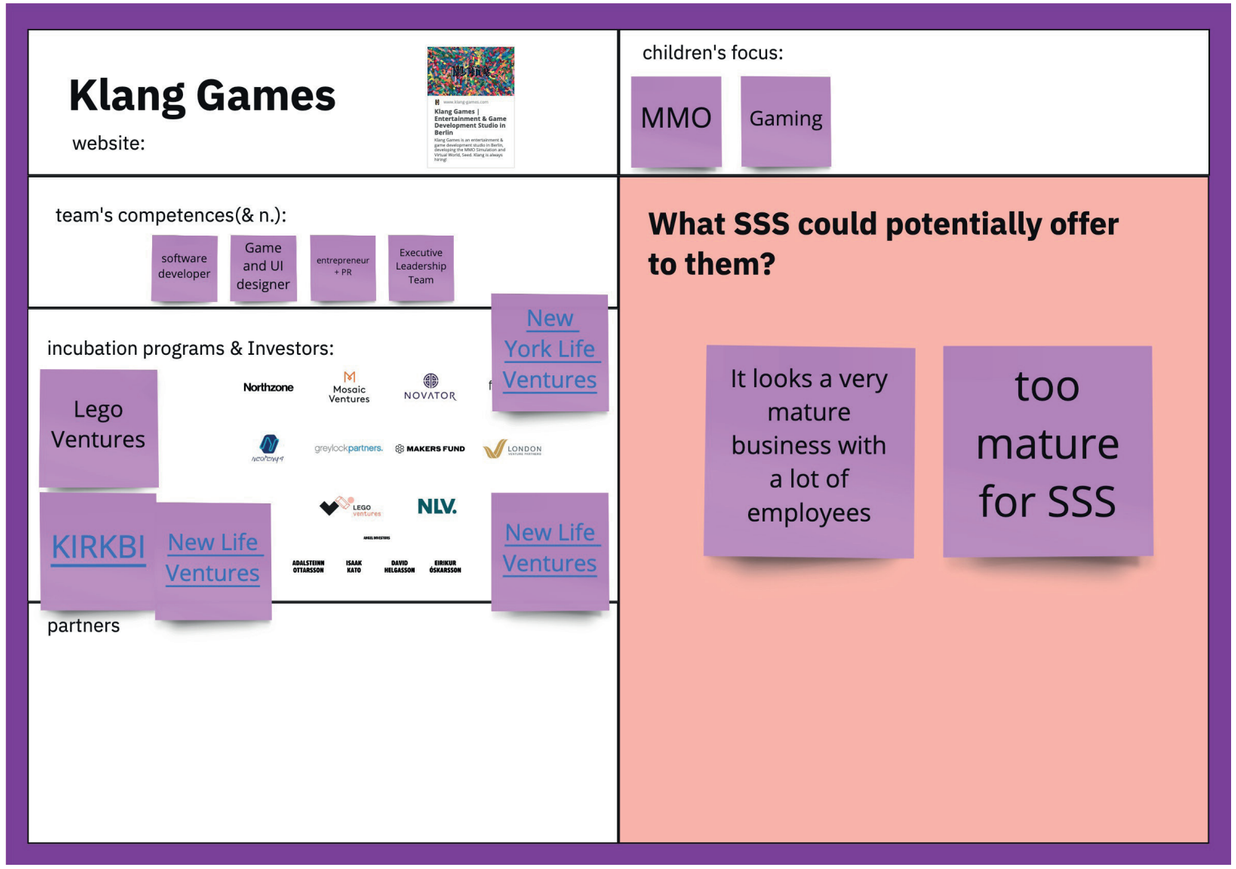
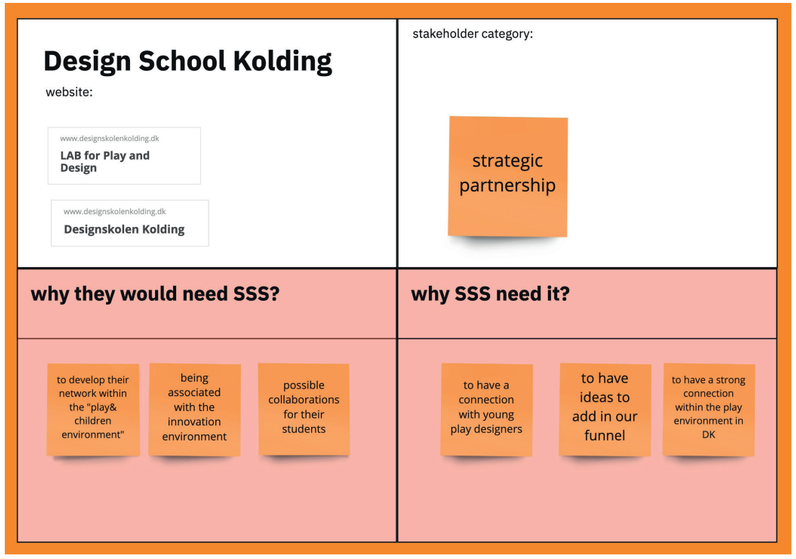


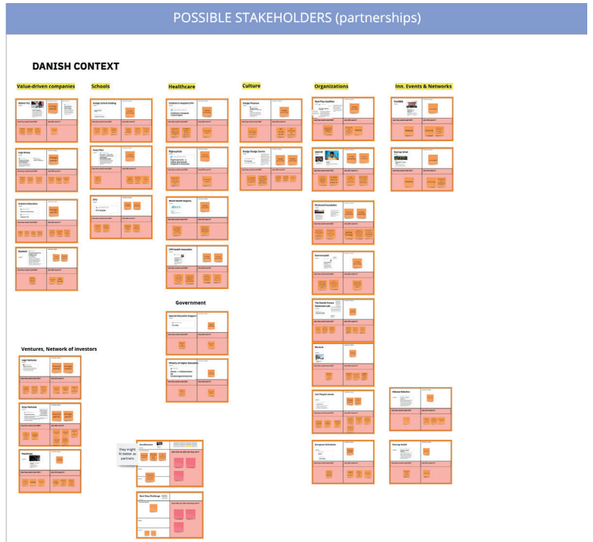
Fig. 25 - Children-related startups card

Possible stakeholders (partnerships)
In order to enable the client to engage in strategic conversations and position himself in a wider ecosystem, we researched possible partners who could support the launch of the startup studio. It was important that we analysed what the value exchange could be between the possible partners and the startup studio, to support the client's process of deciding on who to reach out to for strategic conversations.

We outlined different categories of possible partners, in order to support the client when looking at the cards. The categories are: value-driven companies, educational institutions, healthcare, cultural organizations, children organizations, innovation networks and events. In this layout we tried to answer for each organization the following questions:

"*Why would they need SSS?*" and
"*Why would SSS need them?*"





Figs. 26 & 27 - Possible stakeholders (partnerships) card and research wall

Funding
The client had the needs of securing the financial stability of SSS, de-risking its launch, and safeguarding Stupid Studio in the process. To support our client in ensuring this, we researched on funding possibilities for the studio. While we worked on this, our client was also researching and conducting strategic conversations to cover this domain, as he had the urgency of identifying financial possibilities to launch Stupid Startup Studio as fast as possible.

The funding domain cards were organized differently from the others, as it was difficult to organize them through specific questions. Therefore, we clustered them by types of funding, and we linked the resources to each cluster, with the intention that the client use the Miro board to explore the options directly.

Fig. 28 - Possible fundings research and clustering

Trend research

The Discover phase concluded with a trend research. A trend analysis consists of the systematic collection of information to identify patterns and/or trends (Chipchase, 2018). It can be informative, inspirational, or both (Chipchase, 2018).

In our case, we decided to use a method called *horizon scanning* (Smith & Ashby, 2020). It is the process of looking for early signals of change that are hidden in the information and news in the landscape we work in (Smith & Ashby, 2020). It is the first step to gain future knowledge through desk research (Cabinet Office, 2017).

We conducted this research with the intent of identifying current trends and weak signals (Smith & Ashby, 2020) in order to determine possible areas of focus for Stupid Startup Studio. In fact, throughout the interviews, experts suggested our client having a specific focus for the studio, in order to differentiate it through its expertise; gain credibility; and attract the right talents and relevant investors more easily. Moreover, the research aimed to provide our client with relevant knowledge he could use to discuss areas of opportunities for collaboration with possible partners. For this reason, we believed that providing our client with insights about the future of the market would facilitate him in carrying strategic conversations.

To scope our research, we defined the key question leading our horizon scanning and set the length, breadth and depth of the future exploration, in order to frame the research and have a compass to guide us in our process (Smith & Ashby, 2020).

The key question was decided based on the area of focus agreed during the project kick-off together with our client: children well-being. Therefore the key question leading our horizon scanning was: "*What are and will be the most influencing emerging issues affecting children's wellbeing?*"

Then, we drew a scope wheel. The domains of our scope wheel were defined based on Stupid Studio's experience and background, and the shown interest of our client: education, health care, mental health, technology.

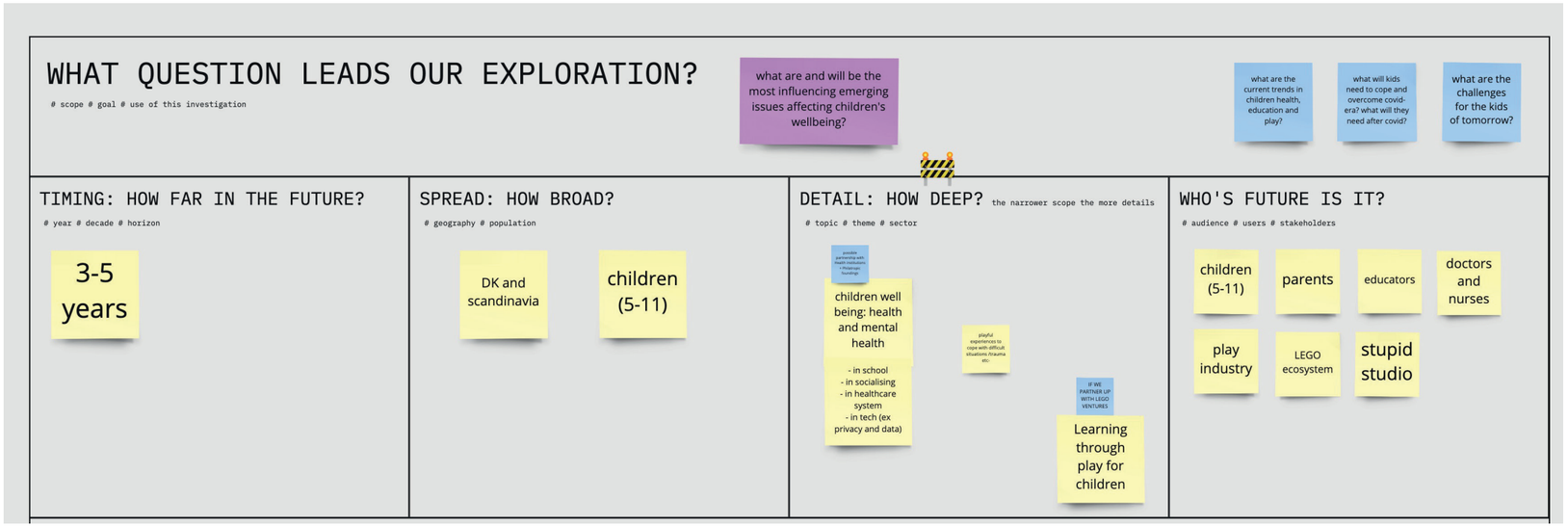
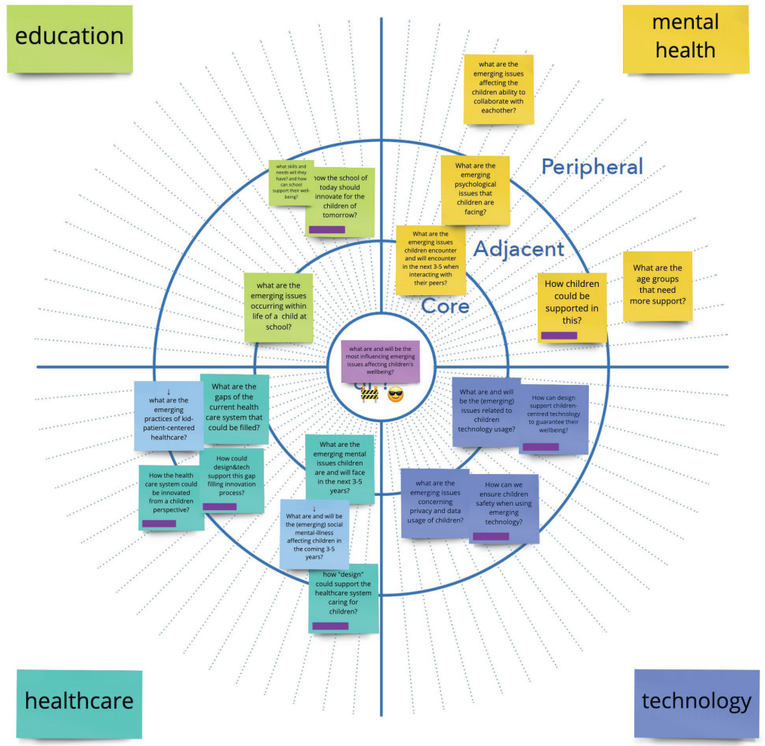


Fig. 29 -Scoping the trend research on a Miro board

The scanning process consisted of looking for and skimming international news, articles from official reports or academic journals, and expert blogs. Once we identified more than one source addressing the same emergent topic or issue, we categorized and summarized them under the same scan card (Dyrman et al., 2018). We created scan cards to be used as facilitation objects that could easily portray key information deriving from the horizon scanning. Each scan card represented a specific signal of change and followed a specific structure: title of the signal, key description and impact, sources, images. We provide an example on the right. The rest of the scan cards can be found in Appendix E.

The scan card format was employed in order to facilitate the sense-making process with the client. Particularly, the cards were meant to be used to support a strategic brainstorming where the team could analyse possible *opportunity spaces* for Stupid Startup Studio to specialize on.



Figs. 30 & 31 -Scope wheel used to scope the trend research and one of the trend cards used to cluster the research

Reflections of the Discover phase

The Discover phase provided the team and the client with a base of knowledge for the project – including the essential vocabulary to navigate the startup and innovation ecosystem – and a deeper understanding of the problem space. Therefore, in this phase we acted as *connectors* (Rygh et al., 2014) and *language brokers* (Dell'Era & Verganti, 2010) by building a network of possible collaborators and developing a shared understanding that we could pass on to our client to facilitate his conversations.

In this first phase of the project, we kept a people-centred approach while designing our research, by putting the focus on our client's needs and expectations. We realized that for this reason, the research sometimes followed a more agile rhythm based on the client's business needs, as the client's main concern was to guarantee the financial sustainability of the new business as fast as possible.

This phase brought forward a new meaning of strategic conversations. In fact, the client explained that he usually utilizes continuous strategic conversations with friends, partners and stakeholders as iterative research moments in his design processes.

The friction between the service design approach and an agile business approach was evident to us. The client expressed that, despite how much he valued the research being conducted, a regular paid designer-client relationship at Stupid Studio would not permit the resources to conduct a month-long research process; this poses a conflict with the importance placed in researching and empathising in the service design process.

Furthermore, despite the leadership that the client provided, he inevitably influenced the process through his involvement in it. At times this got in the way of us carrying out objective research. An example of this is how, while conducting strategic conversation interviews, he sometimes held on to something mentioned by an interviewed peer, and this would hold prominence for him in later conversations over the many insights from all the conducted research. We found ourselves facing a complicated balance to strike; the defined client-designer relationship required the client's guidance in outlining and guiding the project at this early stage. However, as designers, we needed to also conduct research in a systematic way, in order to avoid proposing solutions and ideas based on assumptions or bias. We had come to understand that the client relied on strategic conversations to gain insights, but he did not always work to triangulate the insights from these strategic conversations through other methods of researching. This led us to set up boundaries in our collaboration with the client. We included the client in the relevant interviews, invited him to see our Miro boards, and continued to have conversations with him. However, we decided to limit how much we discussed our findings with him until the end of the Discover phase, and until we had made sense of all our research.

Expert Interviews

A further reflection of the interviews is that, despite the fact that they were highly useful and insightful for us in our process, we did not systemically check for the validity of the claims made in them. This means we did not methodically employ strategies to check how true the claims made were, or how accurate our interpretations of them were (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Many insights, however, were brought up repeatedly by multiple experts we interviewed, which worked in the process of triangulation (Bjørner, 2015). Also, many of our insights from the interviews were backed up by desk research, even if this was not done systematically.

Finally, some of the experts we interviewed were contacts of our client – this included friends, acquaintances, partners, and potential partners of his. These conversations worked to support the client's divergent exploration of the topic with experts who he trusts, respects, and calls his friends; this was done without any pretense of it being an objective interview, but instead was deliberately a strategic conversation between peers. Furthermore, interviewing experts who already knew the client ensured that they would have a more complete picture of the project and the client, and thus be able to provide actionable insights.

These more strategic interviews were not objective due to the relationship between the client and the interviewee, which affects the validity of the insights gathered. However, this way of interviewing brought a level of trust and levity to the interaction which drew from the advantages of the interpersonal relationships that the client had with them. Notably, the client stated that for him, the closer the relationship is, the deeper and more meaningful the strategic conversations are.

We are convinced that our process was strengthened by having both in-depth interviews with acquaintances and with experts external to our client's ecosystem; this variation provided different types of input – many of which triangulated insights – at an exploratory phase. Whereas the structured interviews provided more general insight, the strategic conversations provided guidance and trustworthy suggestions to the client.

The slide deck used in the strategic conversations by the client was a key boundary object (Star & Griesemer, 1989) – an object that enhances co-ordination accross boundaries and disciplines. It was used in the conversations

we set up and continued to be used later on to support the process of presenting the studio to potential partners, as the client later told us.

Moreover, building the slide deck was useful for us to start putting down what had been discussed about Stupid Startup Studio – and aligning with the client on it. Yet again we employed a client-centred approach, as we had come to understand that slide decks on a Miroboard were his favorite communication tool. The client liked having a pool of visualizations and slides to support the communication of the project, the process, and the research behind it when having strategic conversations. He took what was relevant for each conversation, and mixed and matched them with other slide decks of his.

This was interesting, as we understood that, to support strategic conversations by creating visualizations for the client, the designer must produce material and hand it over knowing that

1. it is incomplete in that it reflects the stage of the process;

2. the client may change it and place it into new contexts and for this reason should be handed over in an editable format;

3. the client may not use it at all;

Whether or not they are used by the client in a strategic conversation, they serve the purpose of synthesizing and clarifying hours of conversations and a lot of research.

Market Research:

At the start of the market research, we posed ourselves the following question, "*How do we position Stupid Startup Studio in the Danish startup ecosystem?*". However, despite having worked to support the client with information on the Danish startup ecosystem and what values are being exchanged between its actors, we did not have all the required capabilities to position an emergent startup studio in its context. We were missing skills and knowledge in order to answer this question fully, most notably pertaining to business. In fact, we did not consider market figures nor business structures, which are required for the client to gain credibility. Instead, what we did was to support the client in positioning the studio by researching the ecosystem and the value propositions of his competitors. For this reason, the following market research question would have been adequate: "*How do we support our client in analysing how to position his startup studio idea within the Danish startup ecosystem?"*

Through the market research cards, we attempted to outline Stupid Startup Studio's competitive advantage. In retrospect, this was challenging to do as the startup studio did not have a tentative value proposition or service offering yet. Furthermore, in this research, we studied already existing startups – which had a specific market-fit and were already successfully launched in the market. This made it hard to imagine what Stupid Startup Studio could offer them, as the studio would build startups from scratch and not provide services to external startups – different to an incubator or accelerator program.

In any case, this research facilitated the client's understanding of the need to design his business within a wider ecosystem. It supported him to strategically consider who the actors in the startup studio ecosystem will be in order to begin having strategic conversations with them, and ensure the studio provides value to them. It also informed the client in understanding what offerings to establish and grow in the studio, in order to hold a competitive advantage.

Trend Research:

Despite the client's judgement that this research was conducted too soon in the process, the material we produced was still useful for him later on.

Instead of focusing solely on children's wellbeing in this trend research, we realized that it would have been valuable to carry out trend research on the topic of startup and startup studios. In the later Develop phase, this focus would have provided a wider knowledge and perspectives on the market shifts in this field, and new ways of running innovation programs. Topics we later realized would have been useful to explore are: trends and changes in wage and work distribution; business ownership; currency systems; and company structures.

chapter 5

Define

Define: introduction

In Define, we focused on converging from the Discover phase. We organized, clustered and did sense-making of all the information collected throughout the research. In doing so, we were able to extrapolate relevant insights for the development of our project.

We transformed the knowledge acquired into tangible and manageable tools that could aid strategic decision-making. Moreover, we defined key questions for our client to take decisions and move the project forward. Finally, we condensed the design challenge into a *How Might We* question, which guided us along the design process in the next Develop phase.

To enable fact-based strategic conversations, it is crucial to include a moment for knowledge-sharing and creating a common ground for discussion (Miles et al., 2006; Hoon, 2007; van der Heijden, 1996; Ertel & Solomon, 2014). Therefore, the Define phase has been of great value to address our research question.

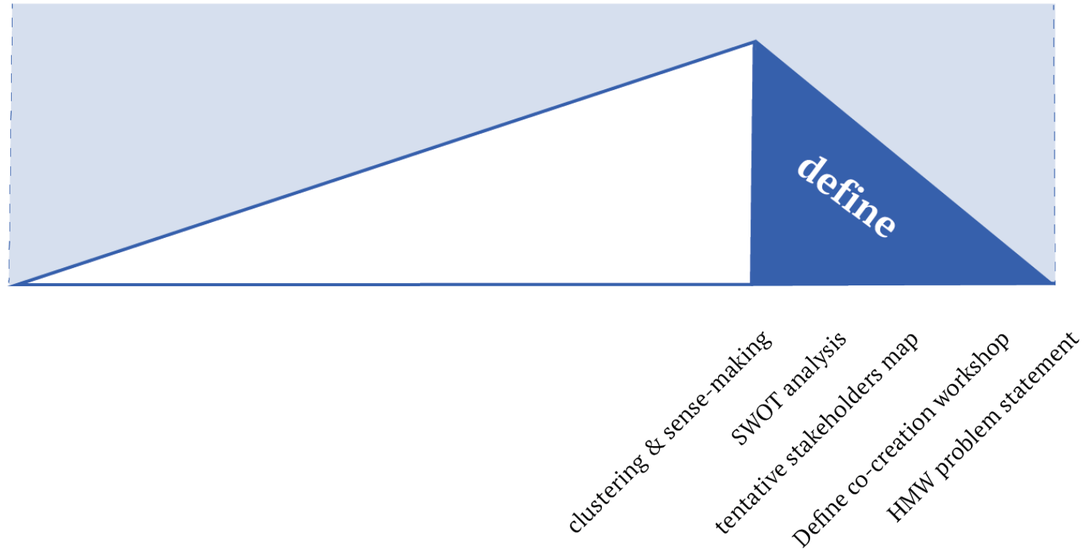


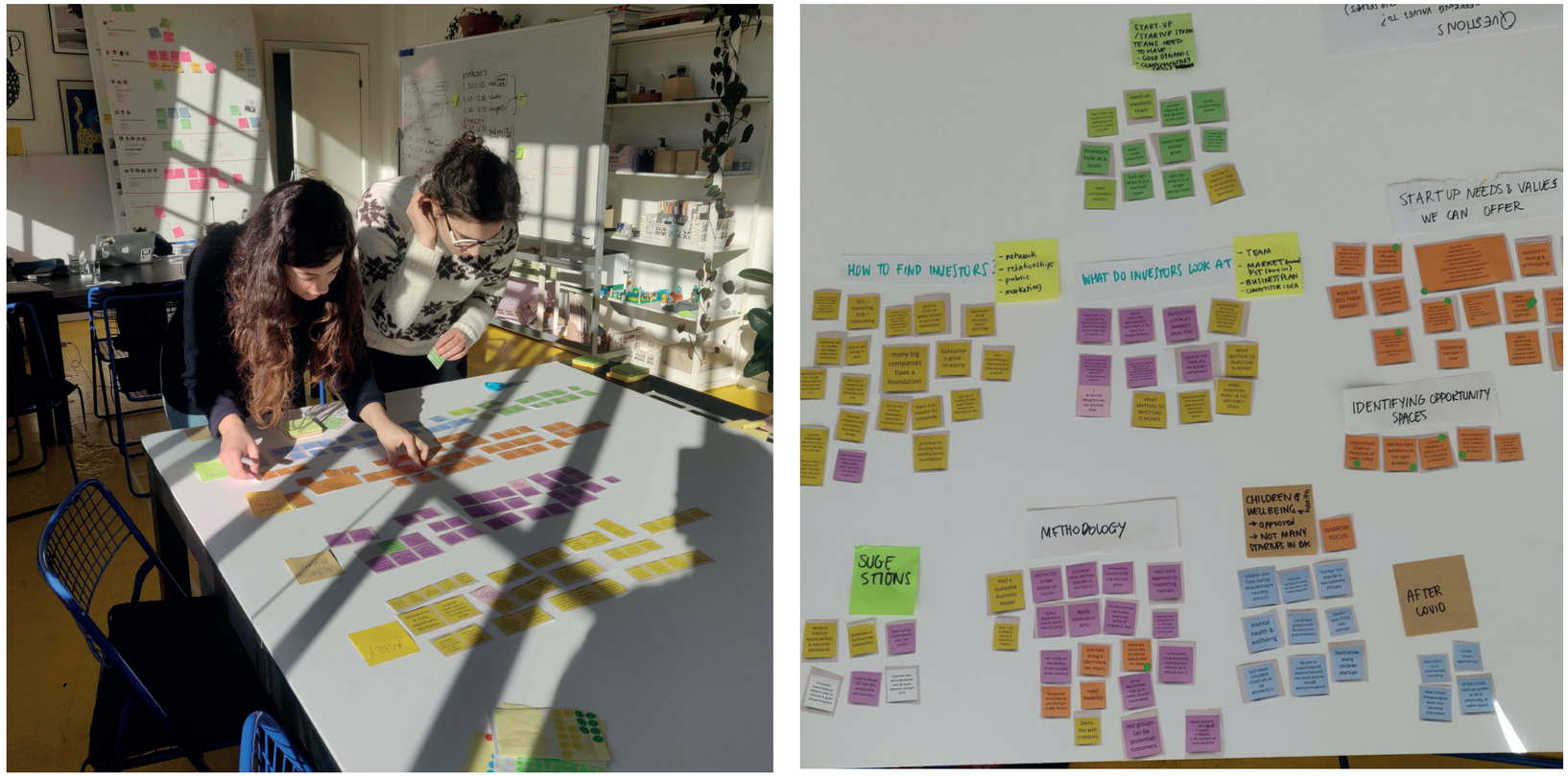
Fig. 32 - Zoom-in on the tools used during the Define phase

Key findings and sensemaking

During the Define phase, we planned a sense-making workshop with the client. In preparation for that, we had to synthesize the research findings to be able to properly communicate them to the client and enable meaningful conversations. Therefore, we organized an internal sensemaking session for ourselves.

Sensemaking expert interviews

To make sense of the interviews we printed the most important insights, which were clustered by topics on the Miro board: money; idea validation; actors; resources needed to grow a startup; market trends. We then clustered these notes, through which we identified connections and extrapolated key insights.



Figs. 33 & 34 - Sensemaking the interview insights in Stupid Studio. Some of the clusters identified after the sensemaking activity

Interview Insights Report

In order to communicate these insights to the client, we decided to draft an interview insights report for him to read and keep as reference (see Appendix D). We assumed that this report would be updated continuously after each new strategic conversation, as the learning cycle continued and new insights emerged. on the right, we have summarized the content of the report by topic: startup studios; startups; investors; and children & youth.

Startup Studios	Startups	Investors	Children & youth (kids)
Non-negotiables: • Management team • Operating experience • Investor network • Hiring talent • Market fit	**Need support with:** • Opportunity space mapping • Prototyping and testing • Branding • Marketing • Business mentorship • Legal help • HR • Labs • Developers • Connecting with investors	**Look for:** • Good team (more than project) • Market fit • Competitive idea • Promising numbers • Sound business plan • Positive impact (especially after COVID-19) • Engaging pitch	**Considerations for designing and testing with/for kids:** • Challenging to find kids • Term 'Startup' doesn't inspire trust with kids' health, education, growth and wellbeing • Consider actors around kids • Validate by finding gaps in laws • Be around children at all stages • Build trust (takes time) • Ensure kids understand what they're doing and what they get out of it • Not many startups in Denmark specifically for kids
Best practices: • Build scaleable businesses • Set time limits for projects • Move fast, launch fast, kill fast • Playbook for launching ideas • Benchmarking • Look at trends, future needs • Innovation funnel	**Teams are the most important factor affecting success. They need:** • Good communication • Complimentary skills • Diversity in members' experience, expertise and methods	**How to find them:** • Networking • Existing SS partnerships • Public funds • Foundations • Venture capital firms • Angel investor networks • Look internationally • Crowdfunding	

Fig. 35 - Experts interviews main insights

Sensemaking market research

To make sense of the extensive market research, we printed the market research cards and reviewed them as a group. We clustered them into groups based on their potential relationship with Stupid Startup Studio: strategic partners, big organizations/companies; marketing partners; validating and testing partners; potential talent matching partners; investors and customers; and competitors. In doing so it was possible to identify what the startup studio's ecosystem could look like, and what the different possible stakeholders could offer to it.

SWOT Analysis

The research and clustering of market insights helped us to conduct a SWOT analysis (Hoskisson et al., 1999), in which we identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Stupid Startup Studio. Strengths and weaknesses are the internal elements of an organization that facilitate or interfere with it reaching its goals, respectively. Opportunities and threats, on the other hand, are external aspects that help an organization succeed or are barriers to this success, respectively (Fleischer & Bensoussan, 2002; Benzaghta et al., 2021; Gürel, 2017). We conducted this analysis under the assumption that SSS will be based off of Stupid Studio's current resources, portfolio, and network.

We found the SWOT analysis to be appropriate since it invites decision makers to assess their organization's internal and external environment, and competitive advantages and disadvantages – informing strategic conversations through actionable and clear insights (Sluisman et al., 2010). This SWOT analysis was intended to guide the client in strategizing and further developing the startup studio concept with an understanding of its competitive position, considering potential partners and using the market cards as reference. We delivered the SWOT analysis to the client in preparation for the upcoming Define workshop, which we will present in the next chapter. In the next page (Fig. 37), we have synthesized the findings from the SWOT analysis.

Fig. 36 - Clustering market research cards in sub-categories

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Network: • designers & innovators • LEGO & IKEA • known in DK (strong brand) **Team skills:** • illustration & animation • motion graphics • brand building & communication • selling ideas • storytelling • low-fi prototyping • trend research and opportunity space mapping • co-creation with end users • project management • matching talent • business management & leadership **Methodology & frameworks:** • Design Thinking • Strategic Thinking • Future Thinking **Portfolio:** • many projects working on children-related topics	**Human capital:** • mainly designers • can't cover all capabilities needed to run SSS • Stupid team is very busy with projects, no bandwidth to do more **Economic capital:** • Stupid Studio can't afford all the expenses entailed in launching and running a startup studio alone. **Network gaps:** • no network of investors • no netowrk of partners that can regularly validate ideas • no connection with talent pools **Tech skills:** • no skills or material to support tech idea development and design **Trend research datasets:** • need for a database of research and software to understand trends **No startup portfolio:** • Stupid Studio has not designed or launched any startups yet	**Location:** • Scandinavia known for innovation, kids, education, healthcare • Denmark has public funding for innovation **COVID-19:** • world more connected digitally •possibility of remote work, partnerships • focus on health innovation • focus on wellbeing • catalyst for innovation • growth in social impact investing	**Economic:** • no surplus money to fund startup studio **Market shifts:** • Need to be able to adapt to fast changing market and user needs **Conservative investors:** • Danish startup investment ecosystem is more conservative than that of the US

Fig. 37 - Synthesis of SWOT analyis conducted

Tentative stakeholder map

The insights collected throughtout the analysis of the market research enabled us to draw a possible and tentative stakeholder map (Stickdorn et al., 2018) for SSS. The map does not include specific names and organizations. Instead, it shows possible partners and actors' roles in Stupid Startup Studio's future ecosystem.

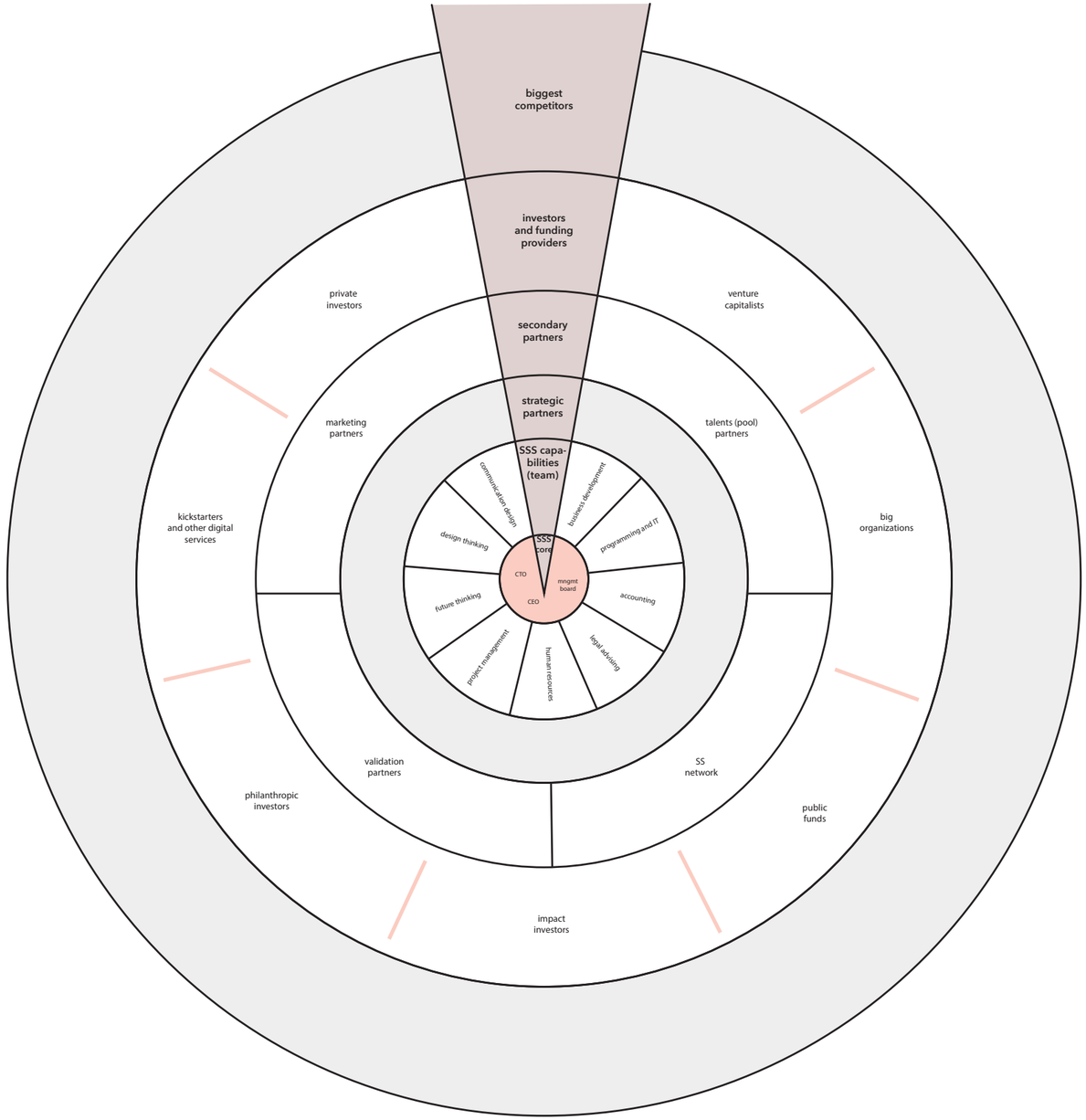


Fig. 38 - Tentative stakeholder map

Categories explained (based on market research and interviews):

- **SSS core:** the core partners, management team, board behind stupid startup studio.
- **SSS capabilities:** the core skills and values that need to be present in SSS team members.
- **strategic partners:** those partnerships that would bring money, visibility, resources (material, immaterial, talents, users) to SSS.
- **secondary partners:** those connections that can bring to us specific benefits (such as marketing visibility; resources to carry tests with users; etc.)
- **investors and funding providers:** all those actors who can and would be interested in financing SSS.
- **biggest competitors:** the main actors in the Danish ecosystem whom SSS should really differenciate from.

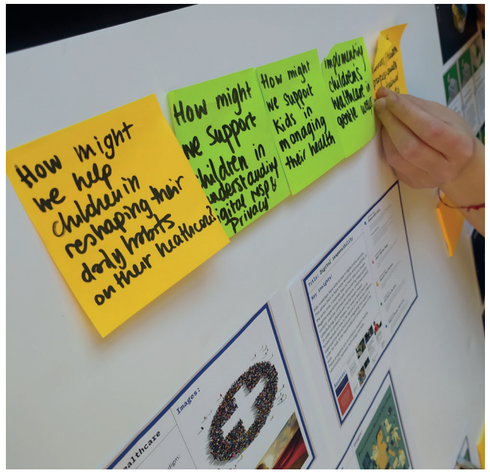
Sensemaking trend research

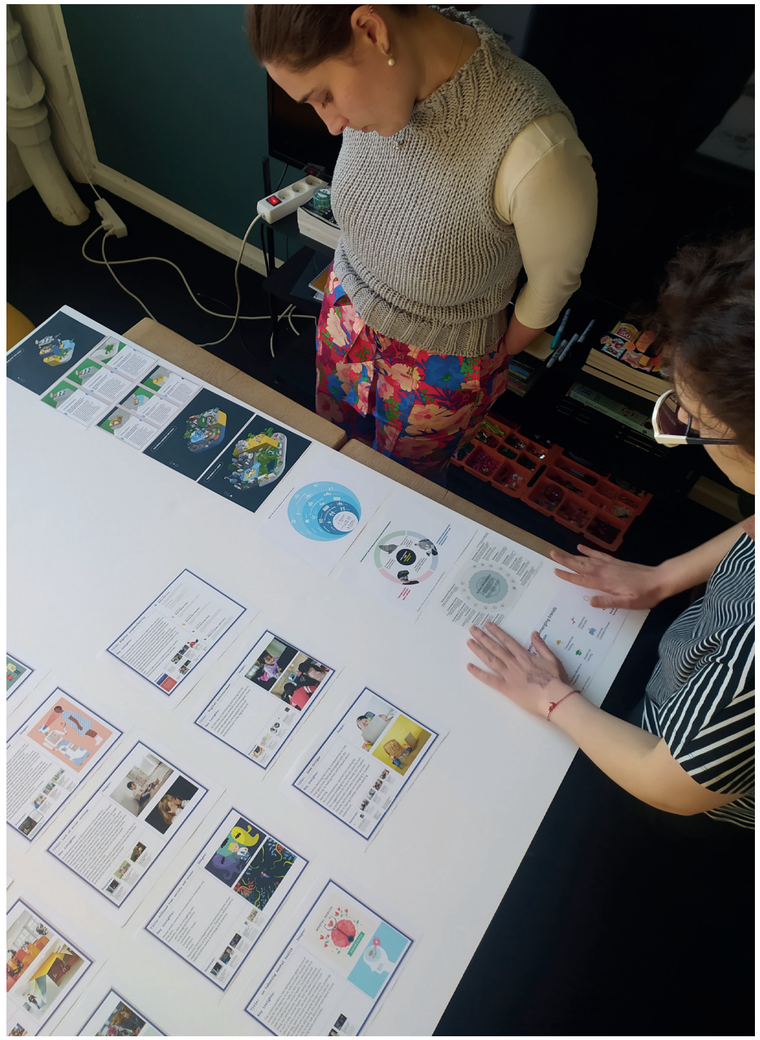
As described in the Trend Research chapter, the horizon scanning was clustered, synthesized and communicated through trend cards. In the Define phase, we agreed to use the cards for a brainstorming session. In it, our goal was making connections between trends, in order to outline possible areas of expertise for the startup studio – which was the reason why we conducted the trend research in the first place.

We soon realised, however, that we could not make decisions and draw conclusions of this kind without involving our client. In fact, the areas of focus for the studio were dependent on his resources, connections and aspirations.

For this reason, we decided to postpone this activity and do it together with the client at the Develop workshop, using the trend cards to ideate together. Nonetheless, we took this time to reflect on the cards and discuss among the three of us what possible opportunity spaces we could identify, to reinforce our knowledge.

In this way, we also prepared ourselves for the ideation session we would have with the client later on, thinking of how to design the activity.





Figs. 39-41 - Photograph of the group clustering trend research and discussing on possible SSS opportunity spaces and areas of focus

Define workshop with the client

Having made sense of our research, we organized a workshop to share our deliverables (the market cards, the SWOT analysis, the interview insights and the tentative stakeholder map) with the client. At the same time, we wanted the client to share information with us to integrate it with our knowledge. As the leader, he was a gatekeeper of information specific to the case that we could access only through him. Moreover, we realised that our market research was incomplete if we did not include our client's perspective on potential partners in the startup studio. Also, by conducting a workshop, we wanted to spark reflections through conversation and help the client identify possible strategic partners to start engaging with.

We chose to center this workshop around the tentative stakeholder map we had created from our market research. Specifically, we wanted to build upon it with the client, encouraging him to contribute with his first-hand knowledge and ideas. This is because a stakeholder map does not just work as a representation tool, but as an actionable conversational tool useful for sparking conversation and reflection about roles, partnerships and power dimensions (Giordano et al., 2018). Also, we conducted this activity to get information from the client about potential stakeholders that we did not have, as we knew he was conducting his own research.

Through building upon a stakeholder map together with the client, we planned to facilitate his process of transforming his implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge. In doing this, we hoped to support him in shaping his strategy. In fact, Miles et al. (2006) argue that sharing implicit knowledge is an essential step in having a strategic conversation, and is key for turning strategic conversations into strategy.
In this sense, we hoped to use the stakeholder map as a boundary object to share information and brainstorm on possible SSS configurations.

In the following section, we will describe the workshop activities and outcomes.

Fig. 42 - Aligning with the client on the research conducted during the "Define workshop".

Workshop structure

Duration of the workshop: 2 hours
Number of participants: 4
(three of us and the client)
Location: Stupid Studio Copenhagen office
Methods and tools: brainstorming, SWOT, stakeholder map, market card clusters
Goal of the workshop: knowledge sharing and aligning between the team and the client; sparking reflections on the insights collected; envisioning possible partners to start engaging in conversation with.

Stakeholder map

Goal: envision and discuss
a possible business ecosystem

Activity:

- *Sharing*
  We presented the research output on a research wall, to set the stage for our conversations and facilitate the process. We started the workshop by individually reviewing the SWOT analysis, market card clusters, and interview insights on the research wall. By doing this, we aimed for everyone to recap on the research insights (previously shared) before starting the conversation around the stakeholder map.

Brainstorming

Through a conversation, we brainstormed with the client to fill the gaps in the tentative stakeholder map we had created. As he wrote on the board with a pen, we practiced active listening and asked him questions to inspire reflection while writing on the map. We also asked him to challenge the actors we had placed into it. As this happened in the form of conversation, we took notes down in post-its and added them to the ecosystem map.

Workshop outcomes

Through sharing information and building a stakeholder map together with the client, we aligned with him on potential stakeholders in Stupid Startup Studio.

Fig. 43 -Stakholder map brainstorming

“How Might We” question

In the Define workshop, we provoked our client to talk openly and reflect out loud upon his concerns, wishes and needs for the startup studio. Through active listening and taking notes, we were able to identify the main design principles to use as guidance along the next steps. Our client needed to develop a solution that allowed him to be financially stable; at the same time, he wanted to retain his independence and freedom, without having investors chasing him with demands and expectations. Moreover, he wanted the whole structure to be flexible and agile, free from excessive bureaucracy that would slow down the process and “kill the fun”.

Given these principles, we proceeded in framing the design challenge that we had to tackle. Our principal consideration was the client’s need to communicate a concept of a business that was not yet in place. Therefore, the need to develop a vision and make it clear and engaging. In fact, our client expressed the urgency to establish initial and essential partnerships that would allow him to launch Stupid Startup Studio, in a sustainable and agile way. Therefore, we agreed that our focus should be on facilitating the communication process.

We framed the design challenge in the form of a *How Might We* question, as follows:

How might we support our client in defining and communicating the vision for Stupid Startup Studio, so that he can successfully engage in strategic conversations with stakeholders and launch the business sustainably?

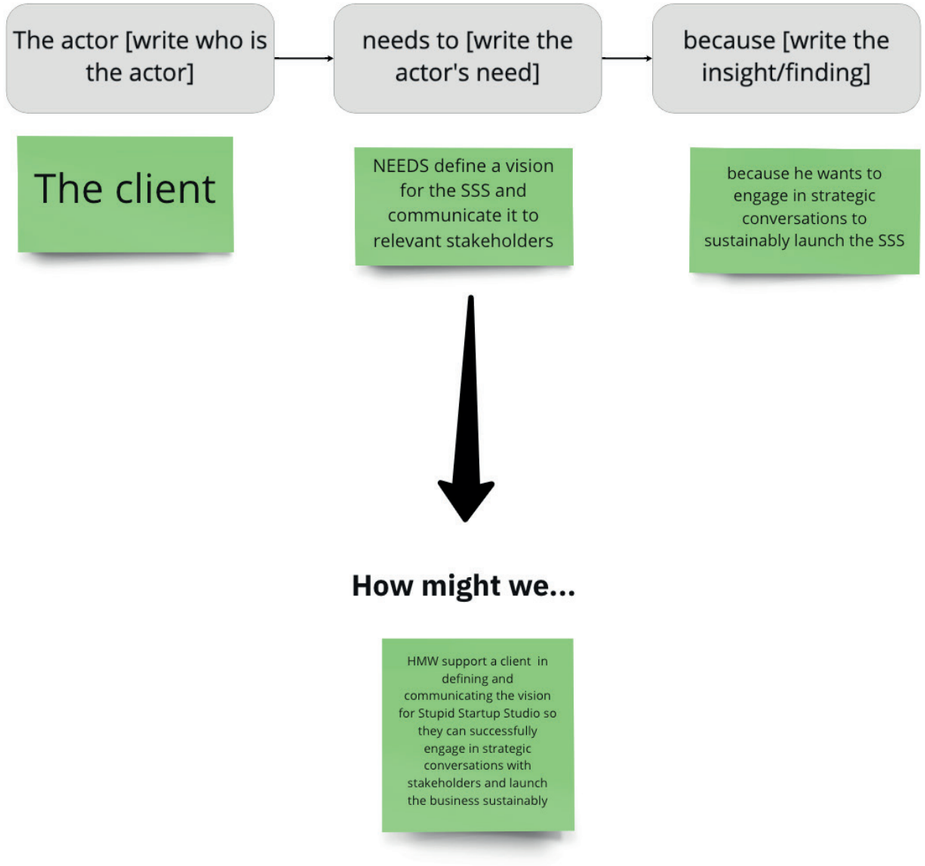


Fig. 44 - Developing the *How Might We* question on a Miro Board

Reflections of the Define phase

In Define, we addressed the research question by making sense of knowledge, sharing it, and transforming it into tangible design materials. These would allow for reflections, brainstorming, communication and strategic decision-making. Through these materials, we translated information into knowledge, making the research digestible and actionable.

Since Miles et al. (2006) define strategic conversations as open issue oriented and fact based, we can state that this phase enabled us to facilitate strategic conversations for our client – both between us and with potential partners. This is because in this phase we focused on making sense of our research, while continuing to add the client's insights in order to inform the process with his own crucial knowledge.

To make sense of our research, this phase required the team to work independently from the client at times. Both in this phase and in the previous one of Discover, we had come to understand that, as helpful and important as it was to include the client in our process, we needed to take breaks to step aside, understand our research, and synthesize it in order to best communicate it to the client. At the same time, we acknowledged him as the gatekeeper to knowledge, being the business leader. Therefore, designing moments in which to include him has supported us in gaining and integrating his knowledge as well.

An example of one of these moments is when we built upon the stakeholder map with the client.

After presenting our research findings to him, the client expressed how useful they were and how much he appreciated the work. However, the client also expressed skepticism of the research process in a few conversations we had with him during the workshop. This made us reflect on how service design research can be hard to communicate to a client.

Another criticism we received from the client on this process is that we did not research enough on organizations, businesses and people who are doing things differently to established systems, especially in the areas of investment and innovation programs. He would have liked to understand about new innovative ways of setting up a startup studio and finding investment, such as for example looking at experts on crowdfunding, crowdsourcing, and cryptocurrencies. For us, our research was a way of getting acquainted with the topics of startups, startup studios, funding, and designing for and with children, so we were not focused on going deep into the future of these areas. Having said that, upon reflection we may have liked to incorporate a second research process into a later stage in the project, after ideating with the client.

Interview insights

Sense-making and clustering the interview insights helped us to identify the needs and expectations of the different actors in the startups and designing for children ecosystems – both internationally and within Denmark. This process also provided us with a systemic view of all the aspects that the client needs to consider in order to build the infrastructure for Stupid Startup Studio, which informs the strategic conversations he is to have in the process. With this qualitative data, we were able to support him in understanding who he should be having conversations with, how he should be doing them, and what to consider and address in these conversations with different stakeholders. Also, we were able to clearly communicate to our client the basics of running a startup studio, such as what to consider when building a startup team, and what kind of support startups need to receive to develop. The collected data from the expert interviews allowed both us and our client to lean on actionable and objective findings.

Discussing the interview insights, the client expressed that he finds conversations to be one of the best ways of gathering actionable and interesting insights. In fact, the interview insights came up throughout the project in conversations with the client, continued sparking reflection, and informed many aspects of the process.

We handed the interview insights with the knowledge that the client himself conducts many strategic conversations as part of his own process. They were delivered with the expectation that the file would be iterated on by the client, as he continued to gather insights. However, we delivered this file in a PDF format, which is static and doesn't allow for the client to iterate on. Were we to redo this, we would deliver a document to read in a dynamic format for the client to build upon and use continuously. For example, we could have used a Miro format to map out the insights and create profiles for each type of actor identified and interviewed. In this way, the client could have kept adding insights to it and he would have had a profile to guide him when building his slide decks for his presentations. This would have been especially useful as he explained that every slide deck he builds is very specific and tailored to each stakeholder.

SWOT analysis:

The SWOT analysis was a useful tool to condense the information we gathered from the market research in order to extract actionable insights. Our assumption is that the SWOT analysis guided the client in strategizing and further developing the startup studio concept with an understanding of its competitive position, and what actionable steps could be needed to address the weaknesses and threats.

We believe that we inspired the client to reflect on what potential partnerships could be useful to shape his ecosystem strategically. This reflection was intended to be supported by the market cards we delivered, to inspire the client in thinking about what potential partner could support Stupid Startup Studio and what the value exchange could be with this partner. Yet again, the PDF format made it hard for the client to iterate upon the deliverable.

A further critique of how we built this tool is that it was based on Stupid Studio's positioning under the assumption that the startup studio would be based off of it when it would be developed. Furthermore, we did not build it with the client's direct input – and we believe that he would have had valuable insights to add to it.

Stakeholder map

The stakeholder map was a great tool to synthesize our research and share knowledge with the client. It supported the team and the client' learning process. When built upon further in the Define workshop, its use evolved into being a brainstorming tool to identify possible strategic partners.

In the workshop, the client filled the map out and shared some knowledge on possible stakeholders, but was tentative about using this tool. He explained that it felt premature to define the actors and the ecosystem, as this was very dependent on the operational model that was to be decided on and on the thread of strategic conversations he was currently conducting. He explained that he was having many strategic conversations with different peers and friends, but it seemed like he was processing too many ideas and thoughts from these conversations to update us on all of them. We came to understand that the client would rather first define an innovative value proposition and operational model, and then seek partners based on who this model would appeal to and based on his existing network. It seemed that perhaps the stakeholder map was too elaborate for this stage in the process.

Despite having introduced the stakeholder map as a brainstorming tool that is not a final product, the client seemed weary to make any decisions in the session. He explained that brainstorming with the stakeholder map was limiting because it felt too decisive, and he still wanted to explore possibilities. This made us reflect on the difficulty of communicating a mapping tool for brainstorming to clients so they understand that it is not a final product, and so they feel free to explore and play with it.

Finally, in retrospect we would have delivered the tool on a Miro board and not just a PDF, for the client to try different configurations as he advanced in his conversations.

chapter 6

Develop

Develop: introduction

In the Develop phase, we addressed the *How Might We* question by developing, communicating and visualizing possible business configurations for the startup studio. We kept this phase open and iterative, allowing the team to continuously evolve the concepts of the possible business configurations through additional research and with parallel conversations conducted by and with the client. In this phase, we addressed our research question by both designing a workshop involving the client, and by developing facilitation objects to deliver to him.

In the workshop, we employed design materials to facilitate a moment of co-creation where the team and the client were invited to ideate on possible future scenarios for Stupid Startup Studio. To do this, we used our research insights and the design principles identified in Define.

After the workshop, we proceeded to develop a possible service architecture, identifying actors, value exchange, resources and the startup journey from idea to business. In this part of the phase, we worked asynchronously from the client to develop the service further.

We did this to inspire reflections and ideas between our team and the client; and to support the client's communication process in strategic conversations with partners, potential stakeholders and his team. The outcomes of this phase have been used as a visual prototype.

The approach we took during this phase was tailored to fit our client archetype. As he is someone with many ideas who enjoys exploring, we purposefully followed a path that went from abstract to detailed and logical. This process was designed to encourage the team and him to explore different options and diverge before defining one possible set-up. During the development of the concept, we welcomed all the different contributions and insights that arose – and evolved the concept to reflect them.

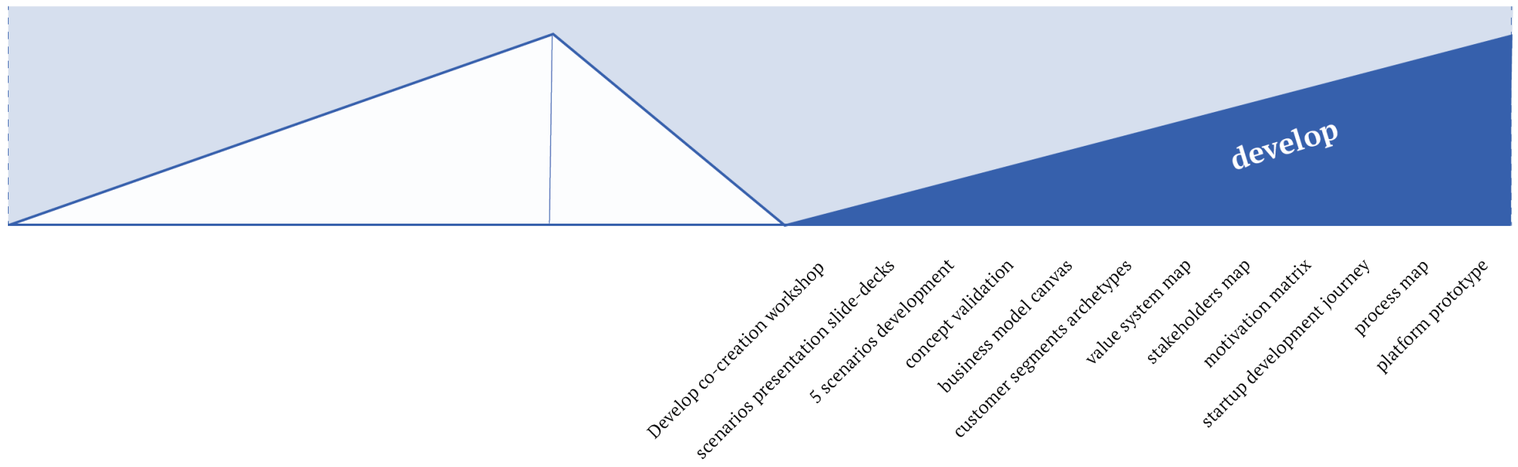


Fig. 45 - Zoom-in on the tools used during the Develop phase

Develop workshop with the client

Having shared insights and knowledge in the Define workshop, we continued with the Develop workshop in which we began envisioning how SSS could look like. To do so, we decided to first co-define the opportunity spaces and possible value proposition, and from there ideate on strategic scenarios together. Through scenario building, we aimed to support the client in envisioning his next steps and his current partnership possibilities. Also, by building scenarios, we hoped to develop materials to support our client's communication during future strategic conversations.

The workshop was divided into three parts: opportunity space mapping, value proposition building, and scenario development.

In the following section, we will describe the workshop activities and outcomes.

Fig. 46- Planning the Develop workshop in Stupid Studio office

Workshop structure

Duration of the workshop: 4 hours
Number of participants: 4 (three of us and the client)
Location: Stupid Studio Copenhagen office
Methods and tools: opportunity space mapping, brainstorming, scenario building
Goal of the workshop: identify possible areas of focus (opportunity spaces) for SSS; propose possible value propositions; make the value propositions into more tangible strategic scenarios; create materials for communicating the scenarios.

Part 1: Opportunity space mapping

Goal: identify possibile areas of focus (*opportunity spaces*) for Stupid Startup Studio, as it facilitates the business branding and communication, and attracts relevant talents, partners and investors.

Activities:

- *Brainstorming*
  We printed and used the trend cards designed in Discover in order to use them as a brainstorming tool. To use them, we clustered them and individually tried to identify topics and opportunities in the clusters. Slowly, we began defining how different cards could be linked. By identifying emergent issues we were able to imagine what Stupid Startup Studio could specialize on. The trend research supported this exercise, by formulating informed ideas, instead of merely speculating on trends.

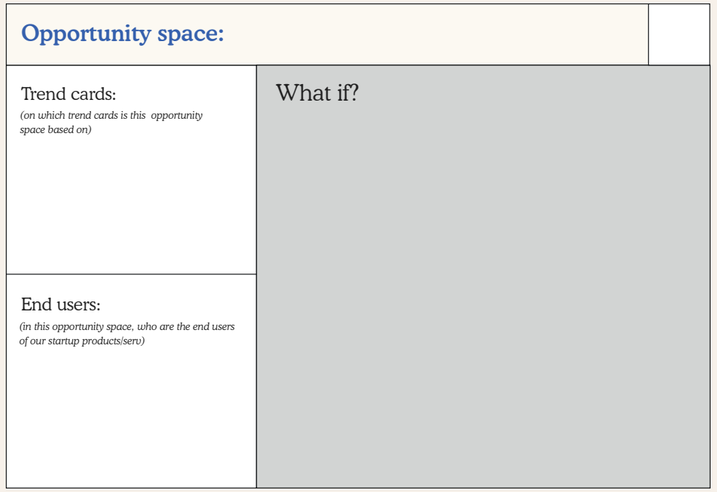
  Clustering
- We then clustered all of our opportunity spaces by theme in order to identify four main themes: digital safety; children centered health care; shifts in educational systems; and next door opportunities.

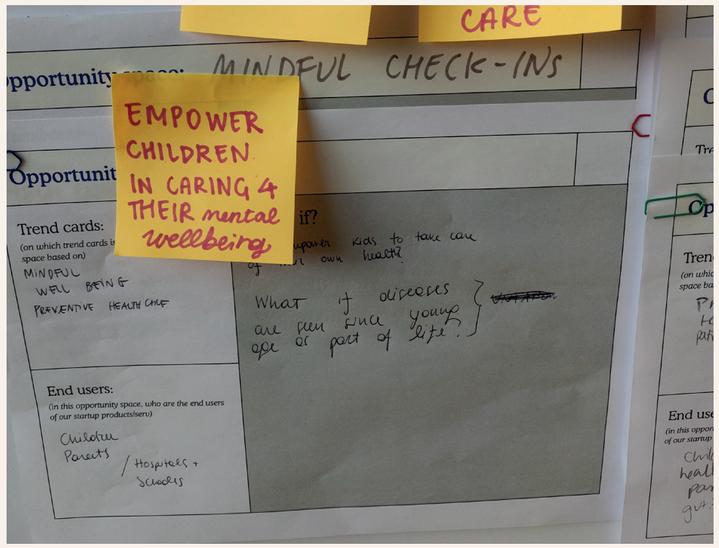
Part 2: value proposition building

Goal: outline Stupid Startup Studio's possible offerings. In this way, we could identify key actors and operations, and draw possible visions to communicate to external parties.

Activities:

- *Brainstorming*
  In order to define the offerings, we designed and printed facilitation materials to ideate on these value packages. We called them packages because each template was structured to include: users – as in service beneficiaries; partners – as in possible strategic stakeholders who would be interested in partnering up; a value proposition – as in the service offerings provided by the startup studio; a prioritization of offerings – to identify the '*pièce de résistance*' that would differentiate the studio.





Figs. 47 & 48 - Opportunity spaces sheet and opportunity space cluster

This exercise was a first attempt to delineate possible value co-creation structures, by identifying possible actors – such as partners – involved in the service. It was enabled by all the knowledge collected in the Discover phase, such as the startup development process key activities; the professional competences needed in a startup studio; what makes startups successful; and the actors identified on the stakeholders map.

- *Clustering*
  Once all the team members had reflected and filled the value packages template, we took turns sharing them. After that, we clustered and identified five value package groups based on their value propositions and stakeholders:

  1 - Theme Based;
  2 - VC partnership;
  3 - Crowdsourced Community;
  4 - Nonprofit;
  5 - Organic Growth.

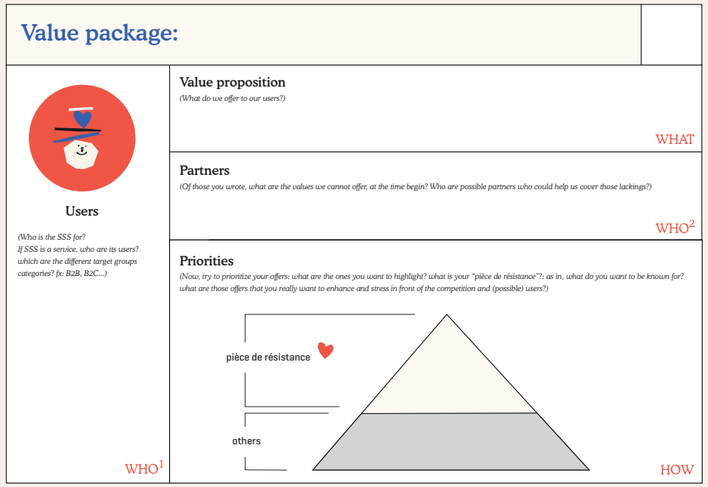
- *Mapping*
  These clusters were then placed on a feasibility/impact map, to spark reflection around the different models, according to the design principles previously identified. The map aided the client to evaluate these possible value packages and identify the ones that were the most feasible and interesting to pursue for him.

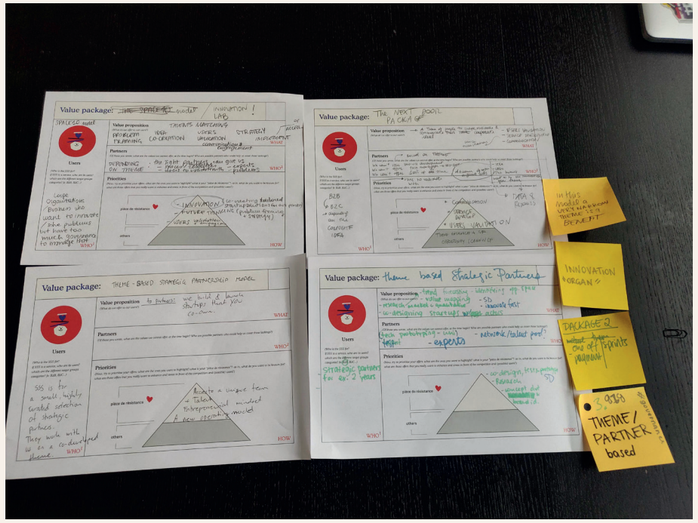
- *Strategizing*
  Next, we drafted a possible value exchange between the actors identified in each of the five value packages listed above. Our goal was to encourage the client to think strategically on the possible benefits he could gain from and provide to the identified partners, investors and customers. Here we aimed to spark a strategic conversation where the client could reflect and think out loud about how to position his future business.

Part 3: scenario building

The workshop's activities culminate in *scenario building*, which are then to be developed into strategic scenarios. We wish now to give an introduction of this tool in order to illustrate in which context and for what scope it was used.

A scenario is a design method that is used to communicate a future concept, with the understanding that there are multiple possible futures (van der Heijden, 1996; Kahn & Wiener, 1967; Meroni, 2008). Scenarios work as activators of strategic dialogues among different actors in a project, as they explore potential ways to innovate (van der Heijden, 1996). Through scenarios, a designer transforms visions into plausible hypotheses. These sharable visions translate information and intuitions into perceivable knowledge that guides strategic processes forward through actionable insights (Meroni, 2008; van der Heijden, 1996).





Figs. 49 & 50 - Value package worksheet template and filled out sheets

By building scenarios, we aimed to provide the client with *boundary objects* (Star & Griesemer, 1989) that would enable his strategic conversations with possible stakeholders. These scenarios would facilitate him in negotiating the service proposition before the service is actually developed (Morelli et al., 2021). Moreover, these narrative tools support the leader in building a common language with stakeholders (Stickdorn et al., 2018; Morelli et al., 2021).

Goal: build together a consistent vision for each value proposition.

Activity:

- *Creative writing*
  To build our scenarios, we facilitated a brainstorming session in which, together, we filled a worksheet for each value package. The worksheet prompted us to imagine a *Wired Magazine* article about this scenario for the startup studio. We were asked to brainstorm on headlines, quotes, and other sections of the article about the scenario. We did this in order to build a shared vision of the scenarios, discussing possible partnerships, organizational structure, and value proposition for each one. By doing this, we were able to take abstract concepts and shape them into concrete narratives, which allowed us to discuss them together more thoroughly in strategic conversations, and inspire reflection in the client.

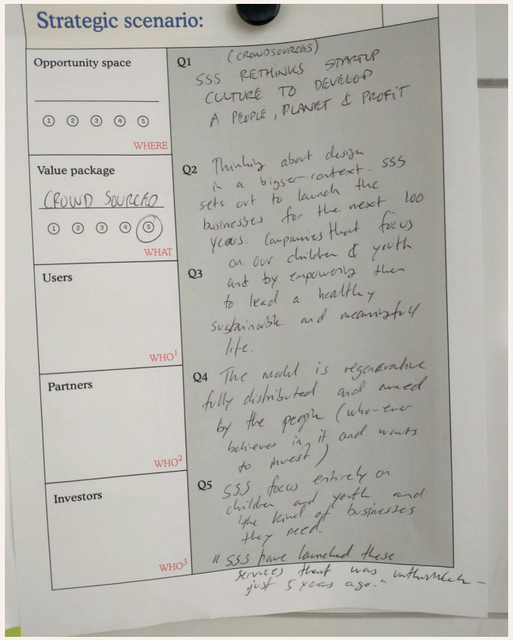
Outcomes from the workshop

After the Develop workshop, the client expressed that he understood what kind of questions he needed to answer in order to make his idea clear to external interlocutors. Based on this, he asked us to create a narrative around the possibilities we framed during the workshop. He intended to share them with experts and peers, to receive their feedback on them in order to develop the scenarios. His end goal was striking the balance between launching his business fast and ensuring the business model and value proposition were "crisp".

We agreed on delivering tangible materials to our client for him to engage his external and internal conversations. At the same time, developing this material was a great way for us to synthesise the workshop's outcomes and synthesize our brainstorming. Moreover, it was an opportunity for us to keep iterating on the scenarios to cover gaps and fallacies.

Finally, we believe that by delivering tangible materials we would prompt our client's reflections, supporting him in recognizing inconsistencies and enabling him to make the concepts more solid.

Therefore we chose to deliver a written scenario narrative for each five possibilities and consequently synthesize them in a slide deck format, as a visual digital tool to enable strategic conversations.



Figs. 51 & 52 - Worksheet and questions for the scenario activity

Fig. 53 - Discussion moment during the Develop workshop

Scenarios

In order to elaborate the *Wired Magazine* scenarios developed during the workshop, we transformed them into short narrative descriptions. While rewriting them, we enriched them with concepts we researched on and with knowledge that our client transferred to us.

On the right, we show each scenario with a key phrase and an evocative collage to picture them. Please find the scenario narratives in Appendix F.

Slide Decks

To meet our client's needs, we then translated the narrative scenarios into slide decks, for him to use in strategic conversations. In fact our client is used to communicating concepts through slide decks, that he modifies according to the interlocutor. Therefore, we identify this as the best tool to provide our client in order to facilitate his conversations and discuss possible business structures and partnerships.

Moreover, slide decks have been proven to help the interlocutor to grasp abstract and complex concepts, and raise the engagement level of the conversation (Knight et al., 2018). Slide-decks make visible the strategic objectives of the strategist, who can use this tool during her negotiations (Knight et al., 2018).

Since we aimed to use our service design capabilities to contribute and support moments of strategizing and negotiation among stakeholders (Morelli et al., 2021), we reflected on whether all of the scenarios developed were needed to be converted into slide decks to share externally. Consequently, we decided to deliver only three out of five scenarios. The three scenarios were chosen because they were the ones that required most strategic conversations with external actors.

We then built the three slide decks (see Appendix G) to visually synthesize the content of the written scenarios. This method stimulated our client's reflections on how he could communicate the business to possible interlocutors, particularly it helped him to develop a vocabulary to express his ideas. At the same time, they were developed to hint the client at identifying lacunae in order to iterate on the scenarios concepts. Some of the slides were left intentionally blank to provide the client the space to fill and cover gaps.

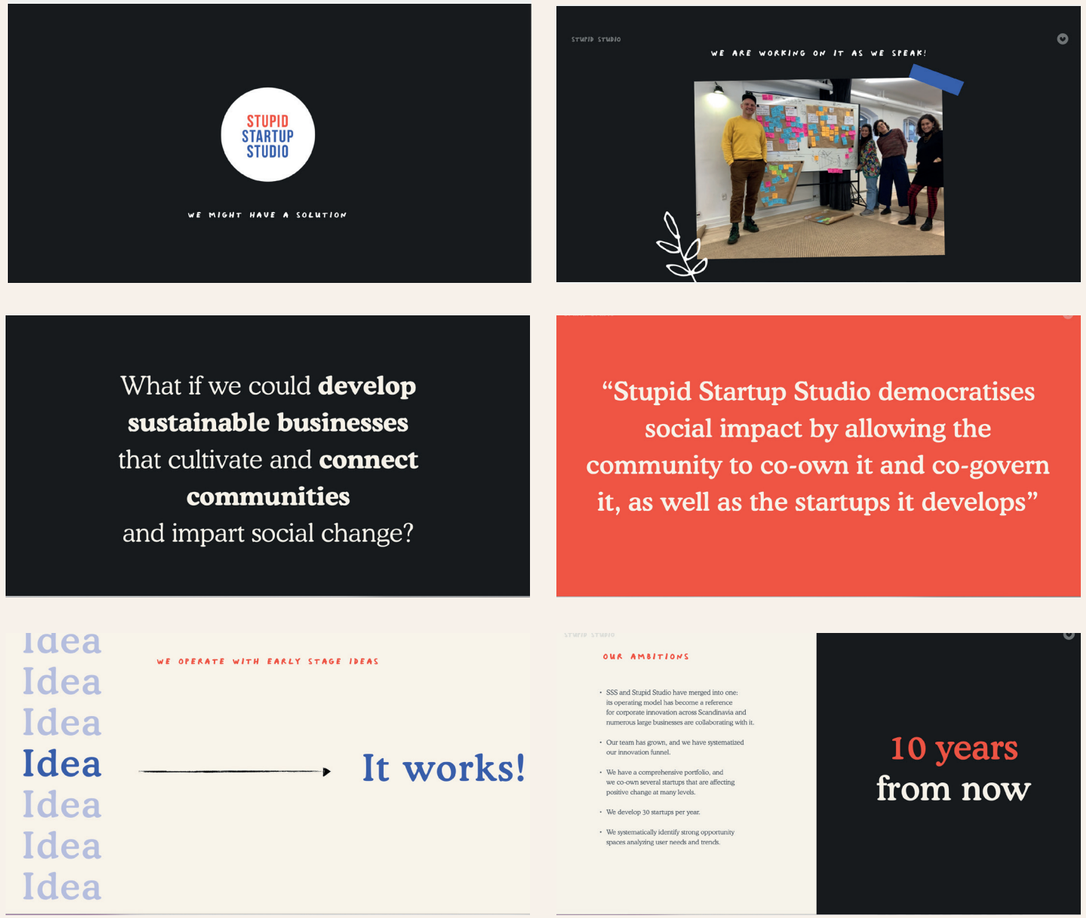
Specifically, we decided to leave the client the responsibility to reflect upon the value that he intended to offer to the interlocutor and drive him to consider the possible value constellation for each scenario configuration.

Our knowledge and capabilities alone could not support him in designing the business

Figs. 54-58 - Collage and pay-offs used to synthesize the 5 scenarios on a Miro board

configuration of a startup studio, as we do not have the needed expertise to develop such a business model plan. Therefore, in this moment we clearly recognized the importance of the client's contribution as the expert who detained the knowledge that would enable us in co-developing a startup studio infrastructure.
In this process we acted as *maieutic facilitators*, meant to elicit knowledge and ideas from our client.

However, the group felt that the client's urgency to identify possible stakeholders and engage in conversations sometimes diverted the focus from developing the vision into an actual possible service solution. Therefore, after delivering the outcomes of our workshop, the group decided to temporarily proceed independently in concept validation and development. This decision was taken after a mutual agreement with the client, who agreed to give us the space for developing a consistent solution, meanwhile he would continue to pursue his strategic goals. Moreover, the client expressed the need to reflect on the next steps in order to make the launch possible.



Figs. 59 - 64 - Some of the slides developed to present the Crowdsourced model

Concept validation

After the Develop workshop, we felt the need to further evolve our solutions and investigate how our service design capabilities could support our client in narrowing down his business idea and communicating it to the external world. As mentioned earlier, we lack entrepreneurial capabilities to measure the risk and impact of each concept. Therefore, we felt it was necessary to have a validation session with some experts that could help us to identify the gaps of our concepts and their communication. We then created an asynchronous digital feedback session on Miro and shared it with experts. While building the board with the client, we explained to him that it was in no way a final product, and instead part of the process of exploring, defining and developing the concepts further.

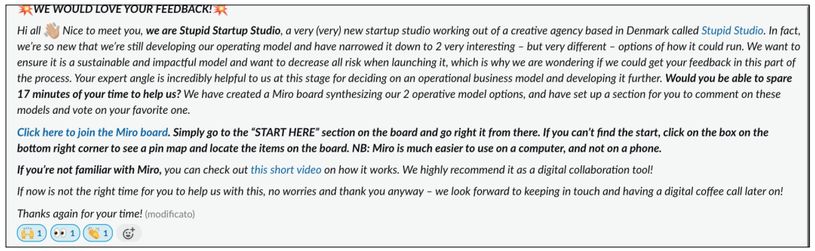
Initially, we planned to share the board with the client's contacts with whom he was conducting strategic conversations. However, the client asked us to change this plan, as the board was discordant with where he was in the strategic conversations with the stakeholders, and he feared it would confuse them. For this reason, we proceeded to share the board on a Slack channel for startup studios called Global Startup Studio Network (GSSN). We chose them because they are experts on running a startup studio and they have entrepreneurial knowledge. We hoped they would provide us with insights on our models based on their operational experience.

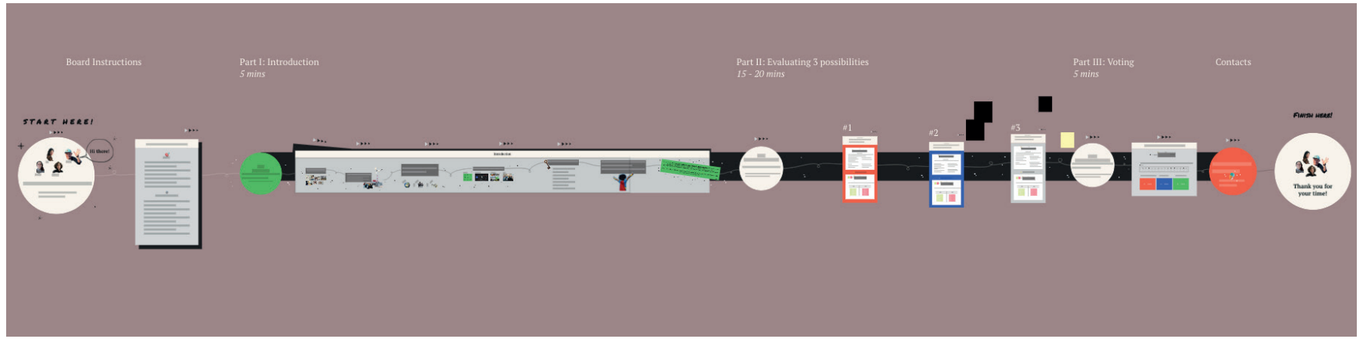
In order to ensure we were innovating, keeping options open, and challenging our and the client's assumptions, it was important to us that we get feedback from diverse sources. Specifically, from experts with knowledge that we did not possess which was key to the model we were creating. In fact, as explained by Dell'Era and Verganti (2010), businesses that are open to diverse perspectives make better collective decisions, produce more creative work, and are more adept at recognising opportunities than their competitors. Furthermore, we saw the importance of involving experts with no stakes in the project, in order to hear their unbiased feedback.

Other goals we had for this process were to pick one model to be developed and eventually launched and to identify gaps in how we were communicating the models, in order to develop the final one into a solid solution.

The Miro board we created (see Appendix H) and shared contained an introduction of the startup studio project, with its mission and vision; an overview of each scenario concept; and a section for the experts to vote and write feedback on them. Instead of sharing all five operational models developed, we only shared two of them: the *Theme based* one and the *Crowdsourced* one. We chose to narrow down the models for feedback to two because the client had expressed to us that these two were the ones he was considering and discussing in his conversations. Also, our goal was to pick one model from the feedback, so this information from the client supported us to start narrowing down. Furthermore, the Miro board was already quite information-heavy, and by having fewer models, we hoped to make it as straightforward to navigate, grasp and provide feedback as possible. When building this board with the client, we were explicit in that we did not assume these models to be final versions, but instead a way to shape the concepts further by including external experts.

Unfortunately, we did not get as much of a response to the board as we expected. The few people who provided feedback on the board voted for the *Crowdsourced model*.





Figs. 65 - 68 - Message written into the Slack channel of GSSN to invite people to validate the concepts, some of the screenshoots from the validation board on Miro

Business Model Canvas

The concept validation session, together with the client's needs and set design principles, informed the further development of the service. The model chosen was the *Crowdsourced* one. To it, we merged and integrated some key aspects belonging to the other scenario models created. Moreover, the insights generated from the Discover phase were embedded while developing the model – such as, nurturing a community to test ideas with in order to validate the startup market fit, which is one of the key factors investors look into.

The *Crowdsourced* model aims to pursue social impact, balancing profit and social value. Furthermore, this model mirrors one of the long-term aspirations the client had shared with us in the kick-off workshop. His vision was to transform Stupid Studio into a financially sustainable platform, breaking free from the consultant-client relationship.

In order to iterate and further develop the *Crowdsourced* concept, we chose to utilize a Business Model Canvas (BMC) (Osterwalder et al., 2010). A BMC is a canvas that captures the essence of a business (Osterwalder et al., 2010). It portrays its most important actors involved in the business, the customers and key partners, and the value exchanged between them and the business organization (Osterwalder et al., 2010).

This tool was selected for its simplicity in depicting a clear holistic overview of business key elements (Osterwalder et al., 2010). When choosing how to represent Stupid's future business and which tools to employ in the development phase, we kept in mind our client's needs and the *How Might We* question. We believed that the BMC could be a great tool to spark reflections, questions and discussion; Moreover, we believed it was the right tool to start structuring the concept.

The BMC we developed was not considered to be a definite version, but rather a a brainstorming tool we used to make the concept more tangible and start structuring its key aspects. Particularly, at this point we needed to define Stupid Startup Studio customers. Therefore, we started filling in the BMC from the *customer segments* box, continuing into *customer relationships* and *channels*. These first steps allowed the team to frame more clearly the value offered by SSS to its customers (*value proposition*) and therefore the studio's *key activities* and *key resources*. Afterwards, we continued to fill in the template addressing the key partners. Finally, we were able to identify a possible money flow, defining *cost structures* and *revenue streams*.

The team co-created the BMC content and transferred it to a Miro board.

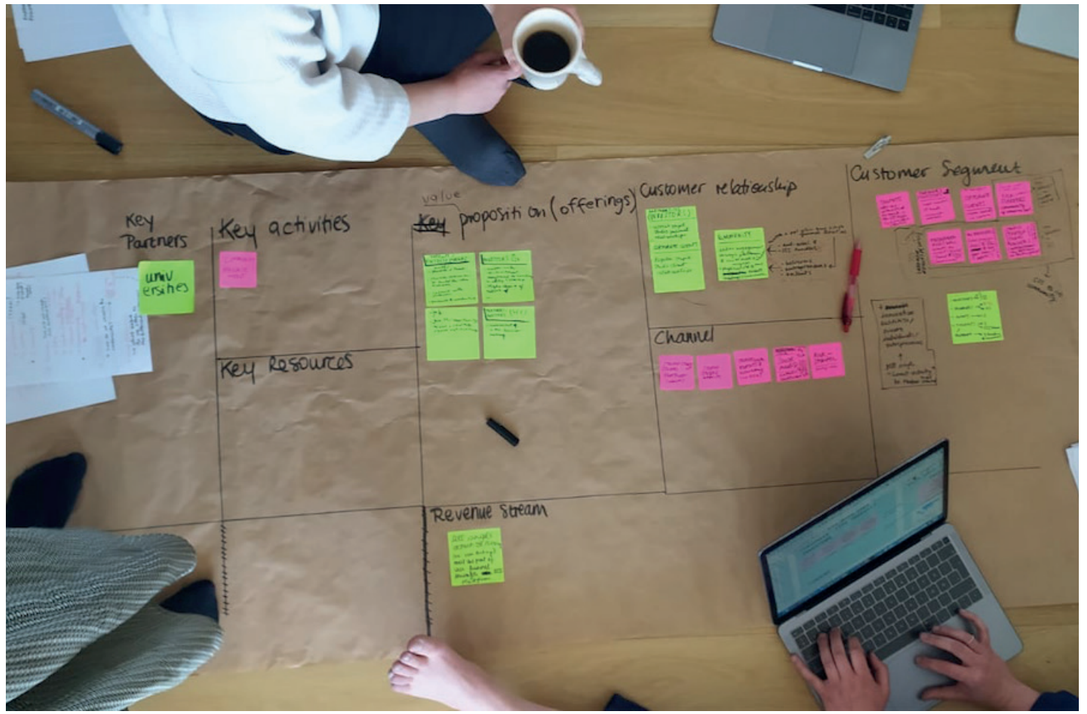


Fig. 69 - Photograph of the group building the Business Model Canvas

The Business Model Canvas

Key partners
What are your key partners to get competitive advantage?

VC firms & angel firms
universities & social entrepreneurship programs
corporations
accelerators & incubators
entrepreneurial networks & events
gvt. institutions
co-working spaces
press & marketing entities
talent pools

Key activities
What are the key steps you need to move ahead to your customers?

Community management:
-SoMe management
-newsletters
-engaging community
- events
- customer service
- updating platform
- managing single startup communities

Operations
- Recruitment of team
- Fund allocation
- HR/legal/accounting
- Project management
- stakeholders engagement
-press

Fundraising
-identifying financial needs & developing plan
- recruiting investment
- generating market materials
- recruiting talents
-recruiting "kickstarters"
-pitching
-closing & contracting

Execution:
-identify opportunity spaces with active investors
-engage the community to identify problems & needs
-engage SSS & community to propose ideas
-select best ideas
-SPRINT to give a first concept validation
-market & context/user research
-co-design idea with our community
-validate & pretotype concept
-create brand & communication (marketing) & prototyping
- engage users & validate market fit
-mentorship for startup co-founders (business & legal help)
- exit

Key resources
What resources do you need to make your idea work?

HUMAN CAPITAL
-entrepreneurs - core internal team
- experienced entrepreneour for spin-off team
- mentors & advisors (PM)
-investors
-board members
-industry experts
-technical SSS team members (ex. service designers)
-legal counsels
- HR
- community manager

FINANCIAL CAPITAL
-investment funds for studio operation & startup creation
-investment resources
-for the spin offs startups
-equity
-crowdfunding

OTHER
- space
- equipment
- event space
- platform
- digital marketing

LEGAL RESOURCES
-contracts
-patents
-incorporation filings

Value propositions
How will you make your customers' life happier?

Should investors be able to *put money* w/o contributing to the process? How much say do they have in the process

INVESTORS
Lower risk profile than investing in one startup
increased return on investment (compared to other innovation units)
Ability to influence the project scope & pace
Ability to influence the project scope & pace, decision making
investors of SSS

FUNDERS
opportunity to contribute in an idea financially
opportunity to participate in the co-design (interviews, focus groups, feedback)
we meet their needs or interest into solutions
we meet their needs or interest into solutions

CLIENTS
services package to enable their innovating process development
agile process to develop the product/services they need

TALENTS
ENTREPRENEUR
provide opportunity to run a startup, provide resources to develop idea, mentorship, guidance, validation, market fit, connecting with investors, team building, salary

Customer relationships
How often will you interact with your customers?

INVESTORS
Partners of SSS
- current SS personal relationship
CORPORATE CLIENTS
- current SS client relationship

COMMUNITY
- end-users & SSS funders
online engagement through platform & social media personal

- believers, entrepreneurs, talents, ppl who buy single funnel activities
online engagement through platform & social media personal AND physical/digital events/meanings/conversations

Channels
How are you going to reach your customers?

Stupid Startup Studio platform (website)
Stupid Studio website
traditional events & networking (ex. GSSN)
social media -linkedin, clubhouse, mighty, fb, twitter, slack, discord, twitch, email
kick-starter, funding sites

Customer segments
Who are your customers? Describe your target audience in a couple of words.

Entrepreneurs: possible startup founders
Investors: Angel, VC, corporate
Corporate client (theme based)
Normal people (kickstarter)
Talents who are interested in working in the team/precise startup)

S- believe in a singular startup

entrepreneurs who want to invest/fund/build startups (luxury) (ENTREPRENEURS MEMBERSHIP)
the believers (who propose ideas & no time) we test ideas on a sprint, they take a share if it works (BELIEVERS MEMBERSHIP)
stupid startup studio funders (entrepreneurs who believe in the project) (BASIC MEMBERSHIP)

SSS - PLATFORM MEMBERS (colony inspired) who believe in SSS

- Investors (SSS)
- Funders (S - end users & SSS)
- Clients (S)
- Talents (S & SSS team)

of which,
- Entrepreneurs - S funders & investors

Innovation entities/private individuals/entrepreneurs who we sell single funnel activity to get them started.

Cost Structure
How much are you planning to spend on this project?
Compare your costs and revenue streams

team salaries
team & investor recruitment
developers/engineers (prototyping & maintenance)
validating & prototyping
equipment
space & utilities
sales & processing
press & marketing
operations

Revenue Streams
How much are you planning to earn in a certain period?
Compare your costs and revenue streams

startups sale/buy-out
aquisition & mergers
funds from community
startup spinoff profit from equity on revenue stream
funds from community
sell single activities/service (ex. user testing) that are part of our funnel through SSS platform.

Money

Fig. 70 - Digitalized Business Model Canvas on a Miro board

Customer segment iteration

As we proceeded in the Develop phase, the business model concept was iterated and simplified. We decided to reduce the customer segments to facilitate our client's comprehension, and to avoid overwhelming him.

We developed a short profile archetype per each customer segment, in order to empathise with them and identify what benefit SSS offers them. The mutual beneficial relationship among all the actors is developed and described later on in the process in the motivation matrix.

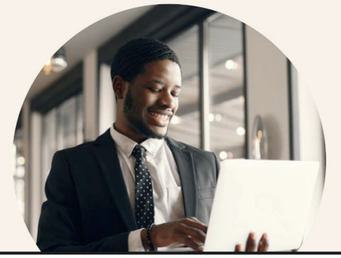
The customers identified as a *special case* represent those who do not normally take part in the typical innovation process envisioned for SSS, which is explained in detail further on. They commission the development of a startup (*corporate client*) or buy specific services offered by Stupid Startup Studio such as brand identity, or trend research (*innovator*). These two segments are very important as they represent the bridge between what Stupid Studio is now and where the client wants to go, with Stupid Startup Studio. We believe that these two *special cases* can encourage the client in thinking and reflecting on how to slowly introduce this business transformation to his current customers, and imagine how to position and transform Stupid's brand.

The entrepreneurs

Who are they:
Entrepreneurs are people with a business-driven mindset, years of professional experience, and the will to lead a business. They have visionary skills and a natural leadership ability that is not just driven by profit. They are co-founders of the startups that the SSS has built.

What SSS offers them:
Once the Entrepreneur has taken leadership over a startup, SSS can support by matching them with the right team; supporting their and their team's onboarding process; introducing them to the right investors and partners; and supporting them to become the official Co-founders of our startups and scaling them further.

Typologies:
Former employees of corporations, change makers, innovators, leaders of a company, experienced young talent.



The investors

Who are they:
Investors are the people who invest their money in the startup studio, and in startups it develop. They have economic interest through their ownership, and they want to be part of the decision making process of an innovation unit.

What SSS offers them:
An investor who backs the SSS can invest in a diversified portfolio of high-quality, lower-risk companies incubated by proven entrepreneurs instead of investing in single startup.

The investor has a say in the innovation process of the Startup Studio through their involvement in opportunity space mapping and yearly theme selection.

Typologies:
Impact investors, VCs, angel investors, foundations, SSS strategic partners

Figs. 71-72 - Customer archetypes: *the entrepreneurs* and *the investors*

Figs. 73 & 74 - Customer archetypes: the special cases such as *the innovator* and *corporate client*

The "Kickstarters"

Who are they:
Kickstarters are those who believe in an idea that Stupid Startup Studio is developing and want to support it. It is likely that this idea will address a specific user need they have related to their context. Their support comes through their participation in co-designing an idea, and/or by contributing financially to it. They are passionate about their values and they want to invest in transparent and democratic ways of doing businesses for people.

What SSS offers to them:
SSS offers kickstarters the possibility to financially contribute through the platform to fund the startups they believe in. Furthermore, SSS provides them with the possibility to shape the idea by asking them to provide their knowledge and insights in processes such as testing, validating, interviews and prototyping. They will also have the option of interacting with the rest of the community, and of receiving newsletters with updates on the process and more special content.

Typologies:
People interested in the yearly theme. For example, if the theme is 'education', the Kickstarters will likely be educators, advocates of learning, and parents.

The "Believers"

Who are they:
Believer have a great business idea – the kind of idea they would never have time to develop by themselves or just wouldn't do so because they lack entrepreneurial spirit. They are passionate about innovation, change making, sustainability, and social impact. They don't want the responsibilities of running or investing in a business, but they are curious about the SSS model and would like to test if their idea could fit into it.

What SSS offers to them:
When SSS does the yearly open call for ideas, Believers can send their business idea in. If SSS picks and develops their idea, they will get equity in the business.

Typologies:
Creative people interested in the proposed theme.

Talents

Who are they:
Talents are people who be part of the team running a startup. They are passionate people that believe in SSS' values and would like to be part of a startup with people that share their own vision. They are 'Yes' people – always eager to challenge themselves, their skills and their knowledge.

What SSS offers to them:
Through SSS, Talents will be matched with their team and onboarded to work on a startup. SSS will connect Talents with its network of innovators, to help them grow their startup sustainably. SSS will ensure that Talents are matched based on their personalities, skills, and backgrounds. This matching will be done in a way that ensures the synergy of the team and co-founder. Also, Talents will be matched with a startup based on whether they complement the startup's mission and vision – as well as its community of supporters and investors.

Typologies:
Energetic people, preferably with experience in the startup environment.

Figs. 75 - 77 - Customer archetypes: the special cases such as *the kickstarters*, *the believers* and *talents*

Stakeholder map and value system map

At the point of designing the infrastructure of a service, its potential for value is being defined. This potential for value – or value proposition of a service – consists of material and immaterial components aggregated in a way that creates potential value; this value, however, is potential in that it can only become real value through the value co-creation phase that happens through interaction between actors in a service later on (Morelli et al., 2021; Shostack, 1982). To design the infrastructure for the value co-creation, designers create the conditions for the users of a service to create meaningful value (Morelli et al., 2021).

Based on the BMC, we mapped the value exchanged among the main actors belonging to the system, and called this tool value system map to facilitate the client comprehension. It is based on the concept of a value-network map (Stickdorn et al., 2018), in fact, as the authors state, it represents the exchange of values among stakeholders. This map was designed as a tool to facilitate the client's possible negotiations, showing not only who is involved in the system but also their reciprocal benefits.

Initially, we identified three main flows of value: money, data, and capabilities. We also distinguished between Stupid Startup Studio and its startups. This is because we imagined some actors would interact only with single startups, whereas others would interact with the studio. Moreover, we clustered a group of these actors under the umbrella term *community*, to point out which of them belonged to the SSS community. By *community*, we refer to those actors who are not clients or direct investors of the studio, but rather people who engage with SSS through its digital platform.

After the first sketches (Figs. 78 and 79), we reiterated the map in order to simplify it. As previously with the BMC, we reflected on our client's need of using these tools to engage conversations. Hence, it was important to not overcrowd nor over complicate the tools we were developing.

Firstly, we decided to create a map representing all the main stakeholders (Fig. 80), and clustering them according to their roles, putting SSS co-founders at the center of the map. Secondly, we added and integrated the value exchange layer providing a more detailed value flow represented by simple icons and arrows (Fig. 81).

In these maps, we have not portrayed the *talents* customer segments as they simply join startups teams, performing a very similar role to the core SSS team. This was also done to avoid cluttering the map. We believe that this omission does not have a deep impact on the service development as, once again, these tools are meant to spark discussion, guide conversations and be iterated.

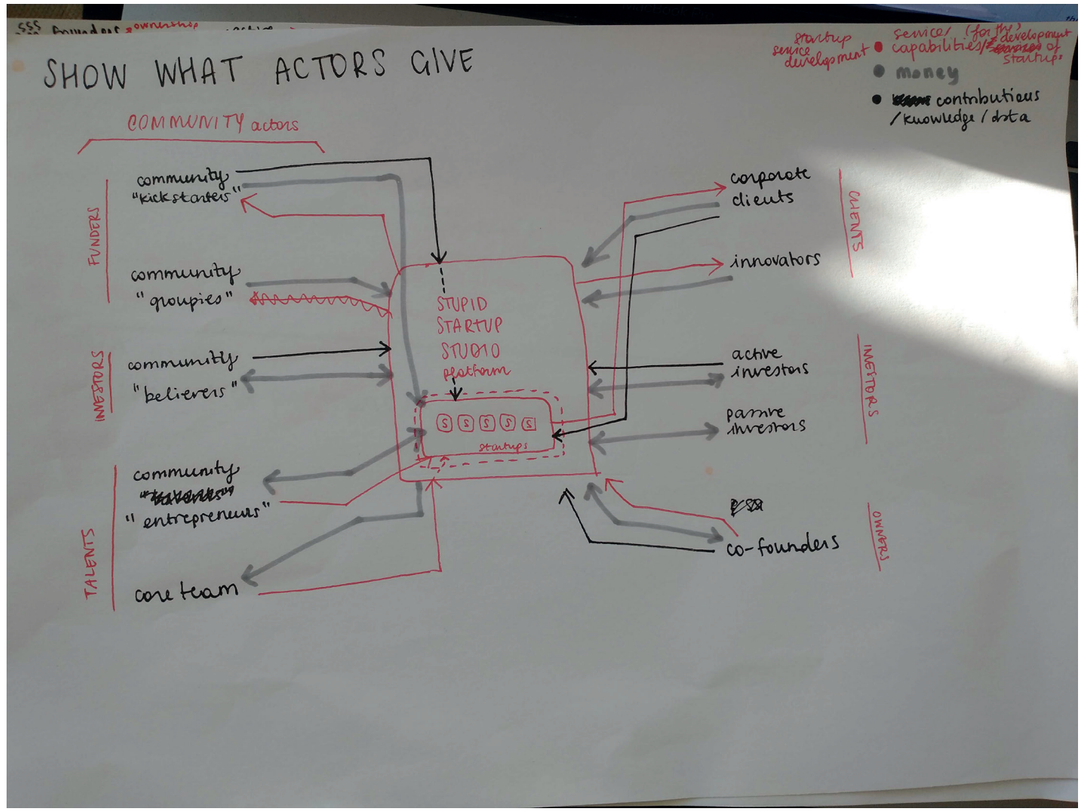


Fig. 78 - Sketching the value system map

COMMUNITY

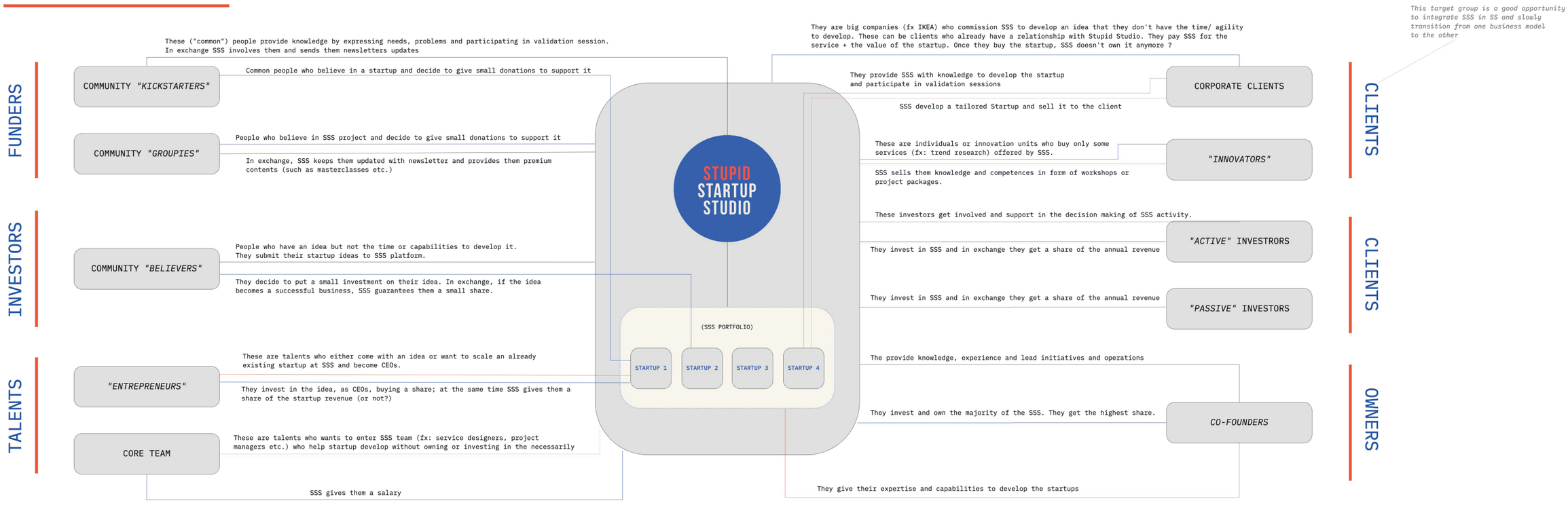


Fig. 79 - First digitalised draft of the value system map

Legend

- Actors who develop the startups
- Actors who own startup shares
- Actors who support SSS initiatives
- Actors who buy an SSS service

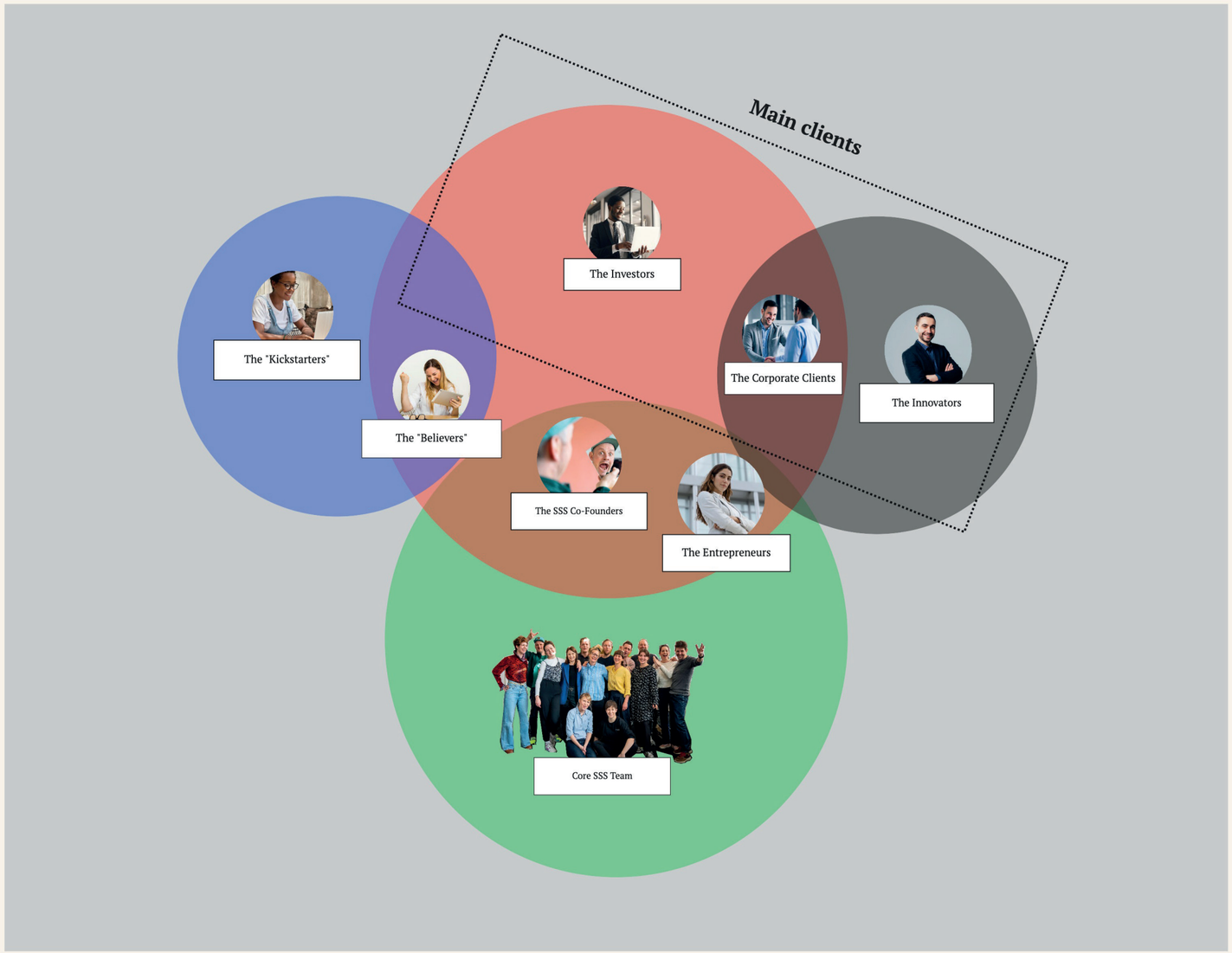


Fig. 80 - Stakeholder map

Legend

- Who develops the startups
- Who owns startups shares
- Who supports SSS initiatives
- Who buys an SSS service

Value exchange

- Money
- Equity
- Skills & Capabilities
- Access to community content
- Idea
- Data & insights

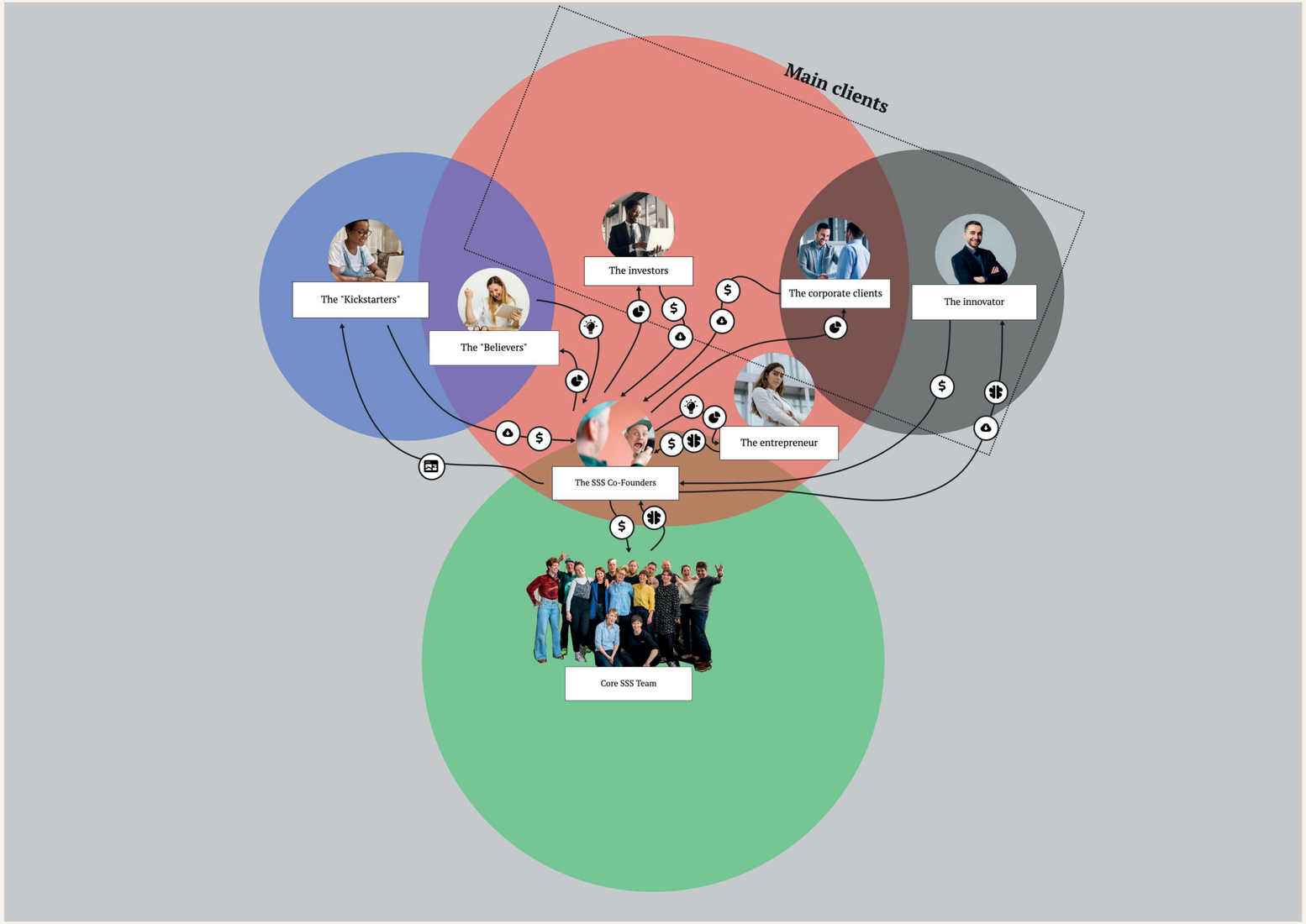


Fig. 81 - Iterated value system map

Motivation matrix

From the value system map, we decided that we needed to elaborate further on the multiple actors involved in the startup studio. Specifically, we wanted to define why each actor is involved with Stupid Startup Studio, and what they are providing each other. For this reason, we constructed a motivation matrix (Morelli & Tollestrup, 2007).

In a system involving many actors, such as the one we had designed, there is a need for mutual understanding of a problem and the identification of common interests and possible synergies or conflicts between actors (Manzini et al., 2009; Morelli & Tollestrup, 2007). A motivation matrix is a tool showing all the actors in a system; their motivations for being involved; their potential contributions; and their expected benefits from it (Manzini et al., 2009). Motivation matrices can be used to support strategic conversation throughout the innovation process towards the development of shared visions (Manzini et al., 2009).

For us, using the motivation matrix to align on why the different stakeholders were involved. Also, we wanted to catch any gaps that we may have missed in previous tools by looking at each actor's benefit from each other in a detailed way.

Our goal for delivering this motivation matrix to our client was for it to be used as a tangible tool to communicate the benefits that the studio can gain from different actors. It could support internal conversations to identify the benefits of engaging with a specific potential partner over another one, based on whether they fit the stakeholders motivations and synergies. Moreover, another goal for this tool was for it to support the client and his partners in further developing the value proposition and defining the specific activities that the startup studio will engage in, to ensure they meet the motivations of all the stakeholders.

In the motivation matrix, the actors are represented on the side and the top. The squares on the grid contain what the actor on the left vertical column gives to the actor on the top row of the matrix. The middle diagonal orange line, instead, represents an actor's motivation for participating in the service system.

GIVE TO	COMMUNITY "KICKSTARTERS"	COMMUNITY "GROUPIES"	COMMUNITY "BELIEVERS"	ENTREPRENEURS	CORE TEAM	CORPORATE CLIENTS	"INNOVATORS"	"ACTIVE" INVESTORS	"PASSIVE" INVESTORS	SSS CO-FOUNDERS
New table										
COMMUNITY "KICKSTARTERS" — Common people that want to contribute in the funding of a startup because they believe in the initiatives.	To support startups that will innovate in areas which are of personal interest to them or that will solve their problems (potential final customers)		• Provide knowledge/insights for the development of a startup they propose to grow. • Funding the idea that the believer suggests.	• Provide knowledge/insights for the development of a startup they propose to grow. • Funding the startup they co-own.	• They provide their involvement in the design process (for ex. testing, validating, interviews, prototyping).			• Provide market fit and de-risking assessment for investment proposal.	• Provide market fit and de-risking assessment for investment proposal.	• Help funding startups (pocket money). • Provide market fit which is good for credibility. • Help identify problems to focus on.
COMMUNITY "GROUPIES" — People that believe in the whole project of the SSS, and want to support it by giving small amounts of money		Want to show support the innovation that SSS is bringing forward.			economic support for carrying out SSS projects					Help funding the startup studio and its operations
COMMUNITY "BELIEVERS" — They offer an idea to SSS but they don't have time or resources and if this idea becomes a business they'll receive a little share	By suggesting ideas, the believers are addressing problems that kick-starters may have or may be interested in supporting		To see their ideas come to life without spending too much time on it. By doing this, they can understand if their idea is a good one, has market fit and, if so, get a percentage of profit from their launched idea.	Believers provide a good idea which will become a business for the entrepreneurs to take over and co-own, and scale up.	Flow of ideas for the team to pick and develop further.					Believers provide ideas for SSS to develop and grow as a business.
"ENTREPRENEURS" — talents who are interested in being co-founders of startups.	contribute in developing a startup that kick-starters can benefit from.		If the idea of the believers get chosen, they are involved in developing, launching and scaling the idea. By doing this, they will provide the believers with profit through their share.	To be a co-founder of a startup, supported by a studio that gives them the resources to develop the idea in order to launch and scale it succesfully.	Work collaboration to get towards the goal of developing, launching and scaling successful and impactful startups (depending on when they join).	They lead the startup project and collaborate with them when the startup is sold to the corporate client. Likely to be picked and managed by the corporate team.		Collaborate with investors, considering their suggestions and ideas throughout the process.	Developing a startup towards the ultimate goal of being profitable for investors	• continue the work that the SSS co-founders run after the startup is launched. • manage the scaling up of the startup in order to grow the value of the startup, as the SSS co-founders hold a share in the startups
CORE TEAM — SSS internal team	• They involve them in the process of developing startups (testing, interviews, prototyping) • They keep them informed of the process through newsletters and other forms of Social Media	Special content (webinars, newsletters, articles)	Sprinting, developing and testing the idea to understand if it is market fit.	It provides them with the support of capabilities that they don't already possess which will be necessary for developing their startup (service design, futures research, branding, visual design, etc.)	Having a job that matches their profession, challenges them in working in new projects that address a VUCA world.	Help develop the idea they commission.	Offering services to support their own innovation process.	• Develop startup so that it fits the market and becomes successful. • Facilitating the process of collaborating and listening to investors, to ensure that our process fits their business goals.	Develop startup so that it fits the market and becomes successful.	Carry out all the tasks and activities needed to run the studio
CORPORATE CLIENTS — large clients who commission startups				Give the opportunity to work on a Startup and having investors and people to work with right after the exit.	• An idea to work on • Information to use for the startup development • Resources to support a faster and better development of the startup • Involvement and support in concept validation, business development etc. • Legal support.	To have a fast process to develop an idea by using an external innovation organ that can provide them with startup(s) to launch within their own business.				• Money , resources and support to develop the startups ideas. • They provide ideas
"INNOVATORS" — innovation programs who want to hire SSS for one activity from funnel					• Resources and information to work on specific tasks (activities) • Commission specific services to be carried out		To outsource needed activities and tasks to develop their own projects/ businesses. Their interest is on a specific service rather than the idea development.			• Money to sustain Stupid Startup Studio by buying an individual service / or a package of services that SSS offers
"ACTIVE" INVESTORS — investors who have a say in the process	They identify the themes on which to work in to develop ideas that can impact specific groups / users that will then be able to fund it through "kickstarter" option.		Partake in the process of selecting the right ideas and finance the process of developing them.	Support in decision making and leadership (mentorship)	• Support in decision making and leadership (mentorship) • Collaborate together towards the same goals.			Having a share in the business, and in such, benefiting from its growth. By being active they have the opportunity to shape the direction the studio takes.	Shape the growth of the startup studio, guaranteeing the revenue for this other type of investors	• Money to run the startup studio operations • Support in decision making and leadership - peer-to-peer collaboration
"PASSIVE" INVESTORS — investors who invest but are not involved									To make money through equity.	Money to run the startup studio operations
SSS CO-FOUNDERS — Daniel & co.	Hopes and promises to their kick-starters, that the projects will come to fruition	• Special content (webinars, newsletters, articles) • A space for the community to learn new things • Bringing to fruition a project that the Groupies believe in.	• Opportunity to develop an idea that otherwise would be difficult to bring to life for the Believers. • Opportunity to earn from it	Opportunity to develop and run a startup with the studio team (resources) and funds from investors.	• salary • guidance and directions • managing the interests of all parties	• promise to deliver a startup that fits their business goals and delivered brief • Developing an idea into a functioning product/service/business	provide them with specific services and knowledge to enable them in carrying out their own projects.	• opportunity for revenue • opportunity to play a role in the development of the startup studio	Revenue opportunity	Making a positive impact in the world. Move away from project based work to a more independent business model for Stupid Studio. Positioning of Stupid Studio as an innovation driver. Revenue opportunity (longer term).

Fig. 82 - Motivation Matrix sketched on Miro

Process mapping

Once we had portrayed the main components of the startup studio, we agreed it was important to provide a more tangible tool that could tell the story of how Stupid Startup Studio would work.

In order to tell a story that would be easy to grasp for external parties, we decided to represent the startup roadmap in a diegetic way. Such a roadmap represents the journey that a startup would undergo from the selection process to the launch.

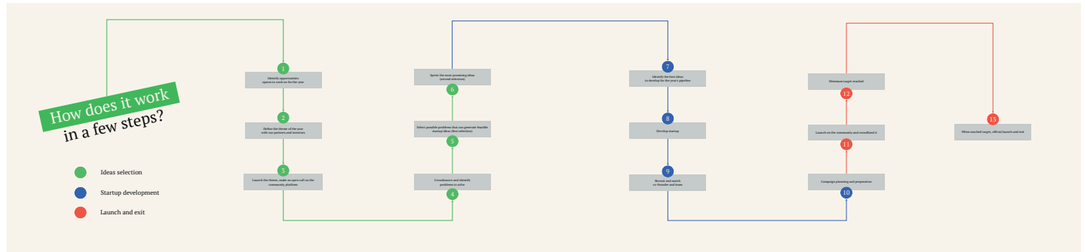
We chose to develop this tool also because our research showed that it is one of the key points that investors judge a startup studio upon. We therefore wanted to enable our client in using it to engage in strategic negotiations and build his credibility.

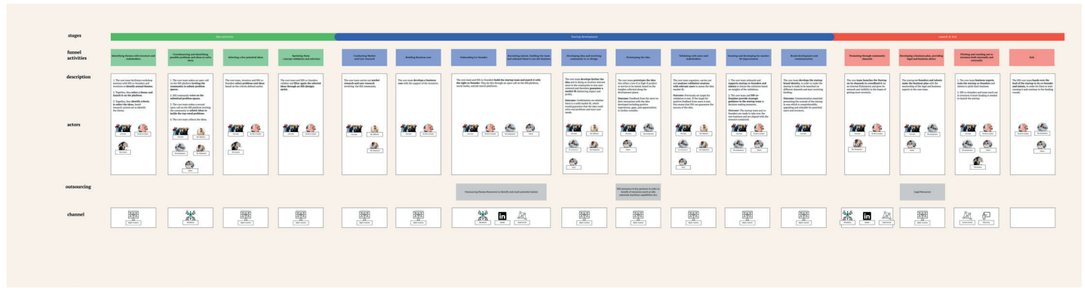
In order to enrich our client with a people-centred mindset, we decided to evolve this roadmap further and build a process map. We developed it based on a blueprinting technique (Shostack, 1982; Stickdorn et al., 2018). In fact, a blueprint builds on a journey map and portrays main activities and interactions among stakeholders. However, we shaped it according to what we needed to portray and communicate.

We envisioned the client using this tool as a boundary object to communicate and onboard the internal Stupid team, showing how the startup studio would work, giving them the chance to share how they would like to contribute to it. At the same time, we figured this process map could be used also with external talents and stakeholders, showing in which moment of the process they would be involved and for what. Therefore, we built the map showing the main actors involved and their actions and interactions at every step of the startup journey.

Moreover, we wanted to provide the client with a tool that could help him reflect and discuss with his current partners about resources and competences needed. Therefore, we have added two more layers: one representing outsourced support and the other representing the channels used at each stage.

The reader can find the zoom-ins of the Figs. 83 and 84 in the next pages.

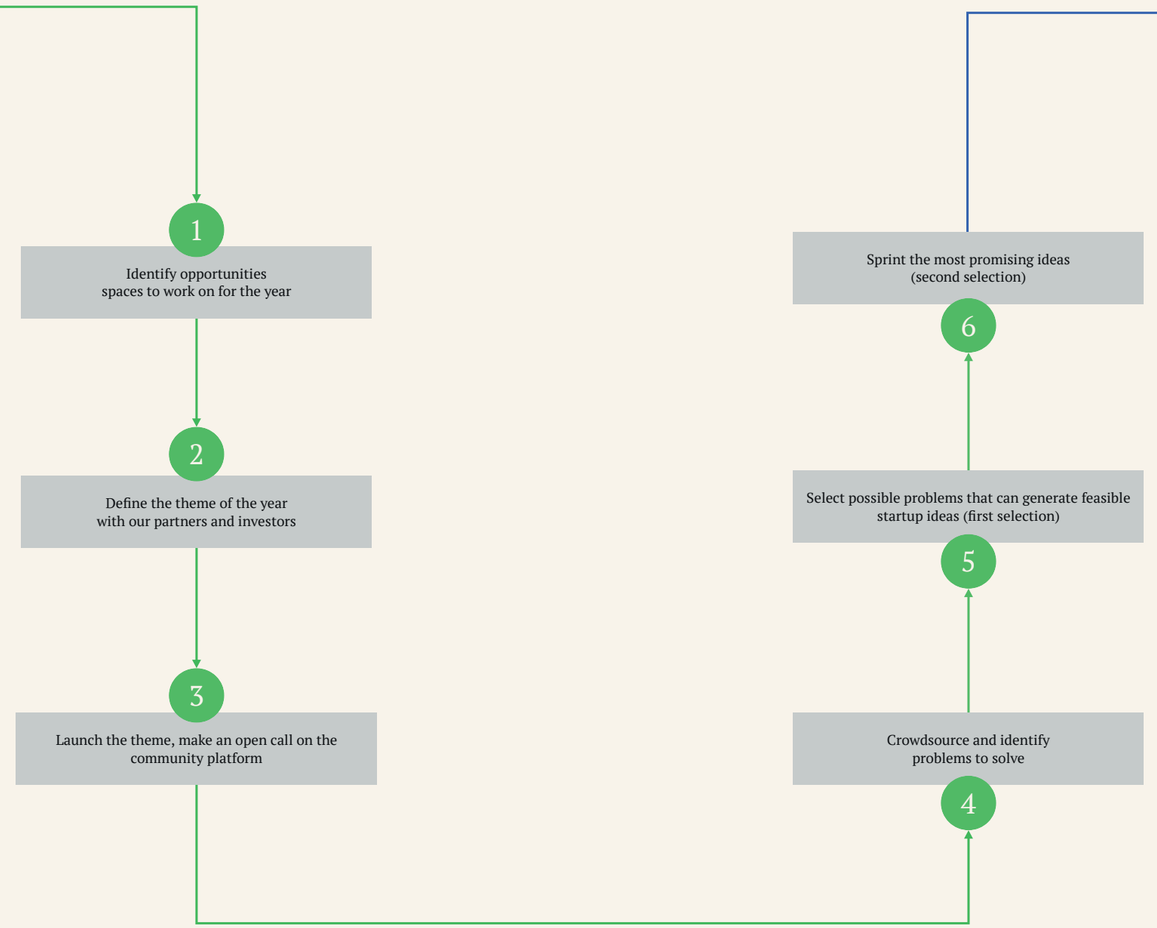




Figs. 83 & 84 - Startup Studio main steps and process mapping

How does it work in a few steps?

- Ideas selection
- Startup development
- Launch and exit



7

Identify the best ideas
to develop for the year's pipeline

8

Develop startup

9

Recruit and match
co-founder and team

10

Campaign planning and preparation

11

Launch on the community and crowdfund it

12

Minimum target reached

13

When reached target, official launch and exit

stages

Idea selection

funnel activities

Identifying themes with investors and stakeholders	Crowdsourcing and identifying possible problems and ideas to solve them	Selecting a few potential ideas	Sprinting them - concept validation and selection

description

1. The core team facilitates workshop sessions with SSS co-founders and investors to **identify annual themes**. 2. Together, they **select a theme and launch it on the platform.** 3. Together, they **identify criteria to select the ideas,** based research carried out to identify the theme**.**	1. The core team makes an open-call on the SSS platform **inviting the community to submit problem spaces.** 2. SSS community **votes on the submitted problem spaces**. 3. The core team makes a second open-call on the SSS platform inviting the community to **submit ideas to tackle the top voted problems**. 4. The core team collects the ideas.	The core team, investors and SSS co-founders **select problems and ideas** based on the criteria defined earlier.	The core team and SSS co-founders validate and **filter again the selected ideas through an SSS (design) sprint.**

actors

 Core team  The SSS Co-Founders  The investors	 Core team  The "Believers"  The entrepreneurs  The "Kickstarters"  Talents	 Core team  The SSS Co-Founders  The investors	 Core team  The SSS Co-Founders

outsourcing

channel

 Digital / In person	 SSS platform	 Digital / In person	 Digital / In person

Startup Development

Conducting Market and User research

The core team carries out **market research and user research** involving the SSS community.


Core team


The "Believers"


The "Kickstarters"

Digital / In person

Building Business case

The core team **develops a business case** with the support of the investors.


Core team


The SSS Co-Founders

Digital / In person

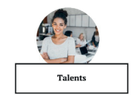
Onboarding Co-founder

The core team and SSS co-founders **build the startup team and match it with the right co-founder.** They do this through an open-call on the SSS platform, social media, and job search platforms.


Core team


The SSS Co-Founders


The entrepreneurs


Talents

Outsourcing Human Resources to identify and reach potential talents

SSS platform

linkedIn

Stupid network

Recruiting talents, building the team and onboard them to run the business

Developing idea and involving community to co-design

The core team **develops further the idea** and in doing so involves relevant users in the community to stay user-centered and therefore **guarantee a market fit** (balancing impact and profit).

Outcome: Confirmation on whether there is a solid market fit, which would guarantee that the idea could solve real problems and meet user needs.


Core team


The "Believers"


The entrepreneurs


The "Kickstarters"


Talents

Digital / In person

Prototyping the idea

The core team **prototypes the idea** into either a low-fi or high-fi product or service to be tested, based on the insights collected along the development phase.

Outcome: Feedback from the users on their interaction with the idea developed including positive experiences, gaps, and opportunities to further consider.


Core team


The entrepreneurs


Talents

SSS outsource to key partners in order to benefit of resources (such as labs materials machines capabilities etc)

Digital / In person

Launch and exit

Validating with users and stakeholders

The core team organizes, carries out and **analyses validation sessions with relevant users** to assess the idea market-fit.

Outcome: Previously set target for validation is met. If the target for positive feedback from users is met, this means that SSS can guarantee the success of the idea.


Core team


The "Believers"


The entrepreneurs


The "Kickstarters"


Talents

Iterating and developing for market-fit improvement

1. The core team onboards and **supports startup co-founders and talents** to iterate the solutions based on insights of the validation.

2. The core team and **SSS co-founders provide strategic guidance to the startup team** in decision making moments.

Outcome: The startup team and co-founders are ready to take over the new business and are aligned with the research conducted.


Core team


The SSS Co-Founders


The entrepreneurs


Talents

Brand development and communication

The core team **develops the startup brand identity,** in order to make the startup is ready to be launched on different channels and start receiving funding.

Outcome: Communication materials presenting the concept of the startup in way which is comprehensible, appealing and relatable for potential users and investors.


Core team

Promoting through community channels

The core **team launches the Startup on its channels to crowdfund it** (as an internal Kickstarter) and grow its network and visibility in the hopes of getting more investors.


Core team


The SSS Co-Founders


The "Kickstarters"

Developing a business plan, providing legal and business advice

The startup **co-founders and talents make the business plan** with the mentorship of the legal and business experts in the core team.


Core team


The entrepreneurs


Talents

Legal Resources

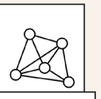

Digital / In person


Digital / In person


Digital / In person


SSS platform


linkedIn


Stupid network


Digital / In person

Pitching and reaching out to investors both internally and externally

1. The core team **business experts train the startup co-founders** and talents to pitch their business

2. SSS co-founders and team reach out to investors if more funding is needed to launch the startup.

Core team

The SSS Co-Founders

The entrepreneurs

Talents

The investors

Exit

The SSS core team **hands over the lead of the startup to its co-founder and talents**, in order for them to start running it and continue in the funding rounds.

The SSS Co-Founders

The entrepreneurs

Talents

Investors network

Pitch events

Platform prototype

After having developed multiple maps for the client, we wanted to show how possible actors would interact with the studio through the platform. Therefore we created a lo-fi digital prototype of the startup studio's homepage website.

The prototype was also an attempt for us to speak the client's language of design. Throughout the project, the client would send us websites that were inspiring his process of thinking about the startup studio. He also often spoke about how to communicate our ideas through a website. We came to understand that he worked very well by thinking about concepts through what their website could look like. In this sense, the prototype served as a boundary object with which to engage with the client.

We hoped the prototype would be a support in kick-starting the communication of the startup studio to the outside world. We delivered the prototype with the knowledge that the client and his team of expert UX/UI designers could perfect it.

In the prototype, we specifically show the top menu, to allude to the other pages through which stakeholders would be able to engage with the startup studio. Then, we also show the page for *our startups*, to show the ways that *community* actors and investors can be part of shaping the startups.

Fig. 85 - Low-fi platform prototype

Reflections of the Develop phase

The Develop phase generated a tangible understanding of the startup studio's possible structure. However, during the Develop phase (after the concept validation) we took a break from working closely with the client. Nonetheless, we kept an open channel (Slack) for the client to share links and information with us. We tried to build on these inputs when developing the concept asynchronously, however we could only hypothesize what the client appreciated in a certain article he shared. As a consequence, we realized that the architecture of the service we developed was based on a concept which might not represent what the client had in mind. Moreover, it might lack depth and perspective, since we did not co-design the models together with the client. Nonetheless, we believe these tools can represent a starting point for the client to be iterated and rebuilt.

Opportunity space
When presented with the trend cards to brainstorm on opportunity spaces, the client seemed hesitant. He stated that it was hard for him to use them to identify an opportunity space at that point in time. Instead, the client would rather define an opportunity space after having defined the operational model, value proposition and partnerships, so it can be co-defined and fitting to the model. We realized it was too early to identify precise areas of focus for Stupid Startup Studio, since at that point, the client wanted to stay flexible.

Value proposition and scenario building
Throughout the process, the client asked us continuously for a clear value proposition to use in his strategic conversations. This was hard to do for us, as he was asking for it prematurely, before the service concepts and its users were defined. By developing value propositions for possible scenarios, we supported the client in getting closer to one that he can use. However, these value propositions were too immature to be "crisp", because the visions they were built on were not developed enough. Moreover, the worksheet we used for this activity was hardly filled out by the participants, because it was too specific and complicated for where we were in the process. For example, it asked us to define clients, funders, users and partners, which is way too many actors to grasp and differentiate at this stage.

In retrospect, we believe it would have been helpful to communicate to the client that there is a need to work on the process before arriving at a sharp value proposition, instead of formulating many during the entire process. This was another moment in which there was a discrepancy between our processes; whereas the client wanted to launch fast, we needed to go slower.

Furthermore, we realized that the word value proposition was perceived differently between our client and us. By value proposition, we meant a bundle of benefits (products and/or services) that a business offers to its customers (Osterwalder et al.,2010). On the other hand, the client understood it as a slogan to use during his negotiation moments and to sell his idea to possible strategic partners. We reflected on how this term was confusing in this project, and on the importance of clearly communicating with the client from the start what specifically we mean by using a specific term or tool.

Scenarios and slide decks
By creating the slide deck and the scenarios, we observed that both tools were helpful for us to align with the client on the shape of his ideas, by taking them from abstract to concrete. At the same time they forced him to reflect on the aspects of the operational models that still needed working on. We noticed that they challenged the client's assumptions and pushed him to realize that further research was needed in order to have more solid conversations in which he could present a value proposition.

Although the client expressed gratitude for the work we did and the materials we delivered, we did not receive any further feedback or information on how he used them. However, at around the same period as we delivered these tools, we noticed that he used some of the concepts and terminology from them in a LinkedIn post to introduce Stupid Startup Studio, validate it and engage in strategic conversations with potential stakeholders.

Concept validation
At the point of concept validation, the client made it clear that he had a preference for one of the models developed during the scenarios building. We explained that there was value in getting feedback from multiple experts on more than just one before running with one concept. This was another discrepancy between our process and the client's, as he wanted to move on and we wanted to involve experts in order to challenge our assumptions and question our concepts.

The client was hesitant about this process, and did not see how it could support his strategic conversations – and in fact he even said it would disrupt them. He felt the design was not sharp enough to share with potential stakeholders. He asked us to a workshop with possible strategic partners for this reason, and encouraged us to find another group of experts to validate the concepts with. However, the Miro board we developed for the concept validation has worked as an internal boundary object to align on the scenarios and further reframe them together with the client.

At this point, there was a friction for us between the academic aspect of our thesis and the client project, as they represented two different

processes. Also, we were not aligned with the client and we were unable to understand what he needed. We would have required more communication from both sides prior and during this point to fully understand the client's needs and practice empathy with him. Also, as service designers, we should have explained the material produced and its intended used better in order to convince the client of their value and contribution to the process.

Unfortunately, the concept validation session was not as successful as we had hoped, as we received very little feedback. Reflecting on that, we realized later that the Slack channel chosen was quite inactive and did not have a culture in which users shared feedback with each other; these conditions do not make for a good space for us to get concept validation.

Furthemore, we later came to understand that the channel mostly included people running startup studios in the US. The Danish startup culture is very different to that of the US, which we found out is very focused on developing *unicorn startups* – startups with very high return on investment. Our scenarios were not focused on market and investment figures, and thus we realised we probably did not target the right audience to validate with.

chapter 7

Deliver

Deliver: introduction

The Deliver phase is the last part of our design process. In this phase, we synthesized the developed service into a communicative structured package to be handed in to the client.

Rather than considering the deliverables as final, acknowledging the early stage of the startup studio's process and the living nature of services, the team focused on enabling the client and delivering a framework of tools he could iterate on. We reflected on which tools were more useful and appropriate to communicate his vision to internal and external actors, for different purposes. We identified tools that could leverage and facilitate his strategic conversations for negotiations, reflections and onboardings.

To conclude this phase and our collaboration with the client, we had a validation and reflection session with him. When presenting the deliverables package, we asked for his feedback on how he could benefit from the tools delivered and what uses he envisioned for them. In doing so, we addressed both the project *How Might We* question and the research question.

After that, we interviewed him to understand his point of view on strategic conversations and service design contribution. To end, we reflected upon the process and the collaboration, and wrapped up the case.

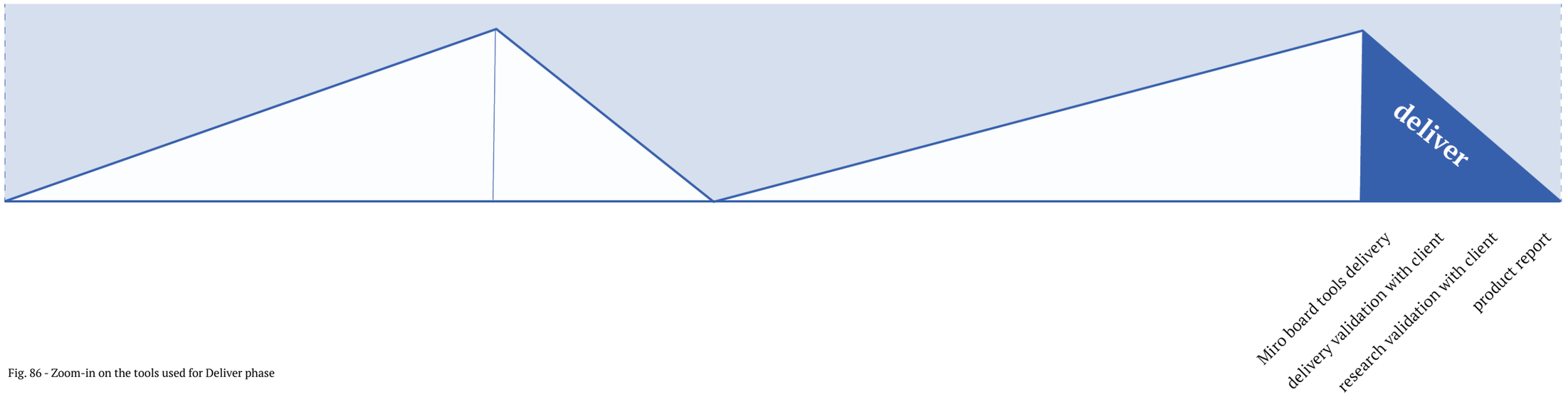


Fig. 86 - Zoom-in on the tools used for Deliver phase

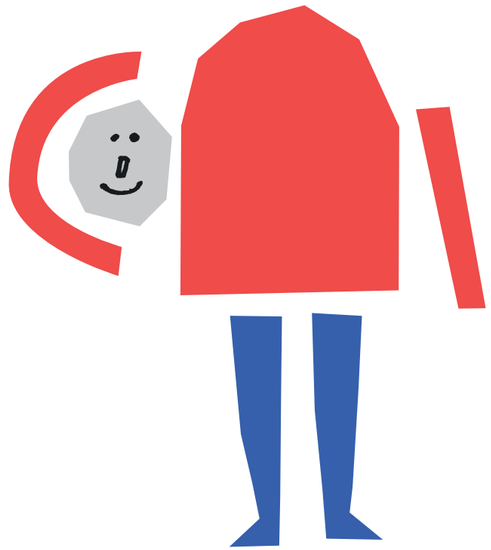
Deliver session with the client

Instead of delivering a product report, in order to enable our client to keep iterating and building on the concept, we built a Deliver Miro board (see Appendix I). The Miro board followed a logical thread going from simple to more complex in order to not overwhelm the client, and to provide him with a narrative frame he could reuse in his own conversations.

When designing the board, we decided not to present all the tools we had developed. Instead, we decided to show the models we believed to be more suitable and relevant for strategic conversations. The board starts with a synthetic description of what Stupid Startup Studio is, depicting its vision, mission, value proposition and innovation journey. Following that, the board shows who is involved in Stupid Startup Studio. It provides a description of customer segments and contextualizes them in a stakeholder map. The presentation continues increasing in complexity. It shows how SSS works, portraying the process map and the value system map.

As we believed the board contained all the information from the BMC, we chose not to include it in the presentation to avoid redundancy. However, we added a box on the side of the Miro board with additional tools where the client could find the canvas. In this same box, we also added the motivation matrix, which was excluded from the presentation as it is very content heavy. Nonetheless, we believe that the client could benefit from these two models for further reflections, as they are sketched.

In the following chapters, we are going to describe the Deliver session more in detail.



Session structure

Duration of the session: 4 hours
Number of participants:
4 (three of us and the client)
Location: Stupid Studio Odense office
Methods and tools: Miro board presentation; feedback session; semi-structured interview; visualization of project milestones.
Goal of the session: share tools and methods to represent and communicate SSS vision; collect feedback and reflection from the client on: how he would use the tools, strategic conversations, service design contribution, our process and collaboration.

Part 1 - Present solution and models

Goal:

1. Share tools providing a consistent picture of the concept all together, and a narrative framework that could be reshaped and reused.

2. Provoke reflections, criticism and further discussion on the models presented.

3. Understand how the client would use and benefit from the presentation and each tool.

Activities:

- *Present*
  We presented the deliverables by following the narrative built on the Miro board, and explained the tools' purposes and uses.

- *Feedback*
  We prepared a list of questions:

- How can these tools support you in shaping your vision?
- Can you imagine iterating on these tools to keep building your business concept?

- Which are the most useful tools to facilitate business development?

- What is missing in these tools?

We asked the client to reflect upon these questions and share his thoughts with us. We facilitated the conversation and actively listened to him, asking further questions.

Part 2 - Interviewing the client

Goal:

1. Define the client's interpretation of the term strategic conversations, how he uses them and what purpose he sees for them;

2. Understand how service design has supported the client and contributed to the project; specifically envisioning how service design can be implemented in such complex strategic projects.

Activities:

- *Interview*
  In order to understand the client's perspectives, we decided to conduct a semi-structured interview with him. The interview was divided in two parts: one about strategic conversations and the other focusing on service design and its value to the project.
  The reader can find attached the interview script in the Appendix.

Part 3 - Process feedback

Goal:

1. Go through the process to analyse when and how we have supported the client's strategic conversations – both directly and indirectly;

2. Validate and discuss our service design approach and process;

3. Discuss and reflect on our collaboration, and give the project a conclusion.

Activities:

- *Share process milestones*
  The team printed pictures and tools used throughout the process and put them on a board to form a timeline. One of us did a short storytelling of those salient moments. Afterwards, we asked the client how each of those moments and tools had facilitated – or will – his strategic conversations.

- *Conversation*
  Finally, the client shared his point of view, commenting not only on the tools but the process choices and our collaboration. We talked about the next steps and concluded the collaboration.

Deliver session outcomes

Feedback on the deliverables (Miro board presentation)

Once we shared our product presentation on Miro, the client confessed to us that his idea of shared ownership of the model was different. He did not imagine a community based model, which seems quite impracticable at the moment for him, considering Danish legislation. In fact, after the private conversations he has had in the last month, he is looking into a different solution: a type of partnership with a big corporation which is somehow detached from the mother company.

The client really appreciated the stakeholder and value system map. He stated that these tools are a great way to show who are the participants of a system and how they are dependent on one another. They are very useful to reduce complexity and make things more simple. Moreover, they help him structure his thinking and create new questions, such as, *"What further value do we want to provide?"* and *"Who is not involved?"*

The homepage prototype was great to make the concept tangible. Moreover, the client added that it unlocks new questions, such as, *"How do we build it?"* and *"How do we make people participate and interact?"*

He sees these tools as very useful to communicate and validate the strategic approach with his current Stupid Studio partners. However, to have this conversation, he needs to start from a very simple concept and then keep adding information in a modular way. The client underlined that he needs to communicate different things not only based on the audience, but also based on how many conversations he has had before with this person or group.

The client saw the process map as a great tool to onboard the team. However, he explained, it is very specific and therefore more concrete, which makes it slightly scary. Before sharing it with the Stupid team, he would like to keep building on it.

Moreover, the client shared that, as a *doer*, he was very challenged in these months by the complexity of the project; indeed, it was a learning process for him, too. This delivery, he asserted, helped him reflect on how to simplify things and get started, reasoning about the next steps.

Meanwhile the client showed us what he had been developing in the previous weeks. He had also drawn models to make his thoughts tangible and visualize the complexity of the business, from an organizational and legal perspective. In these maps, he had also thought about different approaches and customer segments.

His maps showed the legal links about entities, which were missing in the service design maps. The client communicated to us his intention of trying to merge his tools with our service design tools, to have full-rounded tools.

Interview insights

Strategic conversations
For our client, strategic conversations are high level conversations, where there is a focus on the bigger picture. In these conversations, he evaluates what he knows, what he does not know, and what he knows he doesn't know. During strategic conversations, he looks at the context to shape directions and make decisions. An example of one is the conversation around the question, "*Is it a good idea to launch a startup studio?*".

When he goes into a strategic conversation, he generally does not prepare too much. In fact, he believes that it is important to be open minded without heavily shaping the direction of the conversation. The client stated that most of his strategic conversations about SSS were with us three throughout the project. He believes that all the conversations we had were strategic, since they were all about how to approach the startup studio project. He also had them with some of his peers and other experts.

He generally uses Miro board presentations and slide decks to lead strategic conversations. However, he affirmed that the best conversations happen when there is a change of scenery, for example during a three-day trip with Stupid Studio partners. Finally, the client told us that when engaging with people he knows, strategic conversations flow easier and go deeper. However, these kinds of conversations tend to be less biased when he has them with people who do not know him well.

Service design contribution
The client recognizes service design as a practice capable of bringing ecosystems to life; including participants into a system; and figuring out how to create value. Service design has supported him in understanding what Stupid Startup Studio could be, how it could operate and what could be possible touchpoints. Particularly, the client praises service designers for being able to quickly picture who are the actors involved in a business. According to him, service designers have the ability of orchestrating processes.

Moreover, he felt supported by us in building a vision for his future business, adding that we contributed in shaping a more ambitious project. Furthermore, our tools have helped him structure his thoughts, providing a common language for the four of us. However, the client pointed out that often our maps require a lot of cognitive power to be interpreted, and he needs

more clear directions on where to start.
The leader appreciated the interviews we organized and conducted, as they gave him perspective, and some of them led to possible collaborations.

Comparing us to his current team of *design doers*, the client recognizes us to be very user-centred, and eager to talk and understand people. He sees the benefit of being user-centred as it helps organizations to build solutions for people. He is interested in embedding service design capabilities in his upcoming startup studio. However, he believes that service design methods need to be integrated in a more agile process and in a more strategic way.

Feedback on the process and collaboration

Going through the timeline of our process (Fig. 87), the client immediately stated that the **kick-off workshop** and the **interviews** were a great start. They enabled him to elevate the conversations very quickly, as he was coming from a position in which he was missing a lot of information. He particularly benefited from the outside perspective gained while talking to people.

He did not draw much value from the **SWOT analysis** and the **initial stakeholder map**, at that point of the process. Instead he affirmed that **building scenarios** helped him very much. They were very imaginative and not so structured, which was needed at that point to diverge. The client admitted that the scenarios enabled him to shape alternative models. After that exercise he felt the urgency of having further conversations. At the same time, he found himself in a position where he could not discuss the specifics of the models, as he missed a lot of knowledge and had many new questions. For that reason, he had a hard time continuing developing only one of them, at the time.
It was not the right moment to have a **concept validation**, especially with people he had already started conversations with. He was afraid that the concept validation might destroy what he had been building so far. At the time, he did not see the point of doing it, and therefore we decided to work separately.

He found the **slide decks** to be very helpful. Particularly, iterating on words and sentences helped him to see the big picture and think through a possible value proposition. They represent for him a medium to consolidate knowledge and a tool to support conversations. In fact, thinking in retrospect, he would have loved to continuously produce slide decks at each stage and iterate on them. He would have preferred that to the concept validation. He suggested that we could have even built different slide decks communication strategy for different audiences, developing different languages for each of them. After sharing his thoughts, the client spontaneously drew an emotional line representing his experience during the process, as shown in Fig.87.

We reflected upon our collaboration and reflected on our role as Master's students. The client told us that we had to divide and work asynchronously at some point, because we were following our own process to meet our academic objectives; whereas he had to meet different needs and goals at that point in time. He also believes that as we gain more experience, we will be able to intuitively understand when it is appropriate to use, develop and test solutions, and when it is too early.

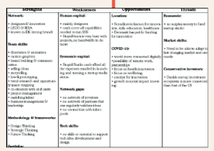
Retrospectively, after the first ideation session (scenario building) it would have been useful to reflect further and lay down new questions, and finally conduct a second round of research.

January

Kick-off Workshop

February

Interviews



SWOT Analysis

March

Define Workshop

April

Develop Workshop

Slide deck delivery

May

Concept Validation

June

Delivery

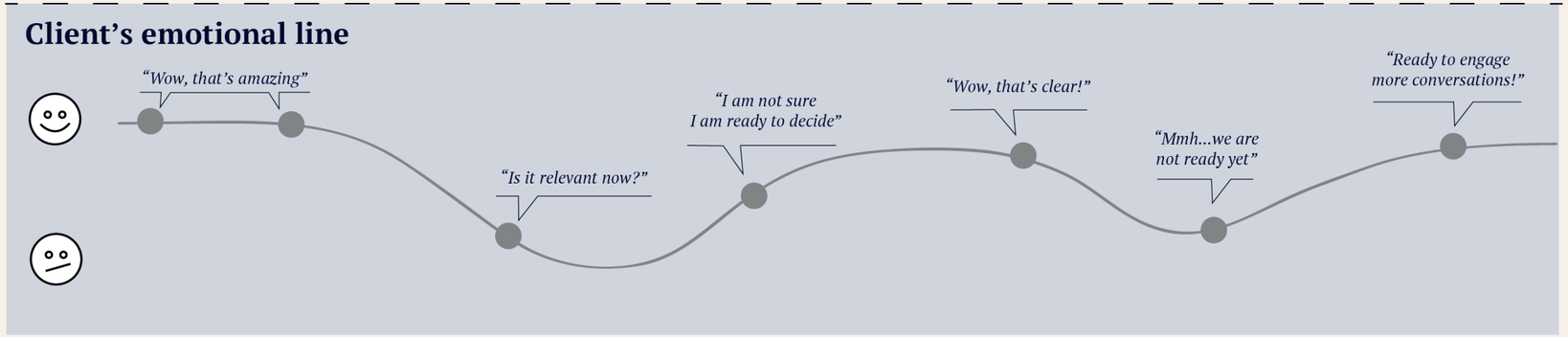


Fig. 87 - Zoom-in on the tools used for Deliver phase

Based on the session with the client, we have identified the moments in which we believe we facilitated strategic conversations in our process. We specify them in the following figure.

Legend

Facilitating strategic conversations

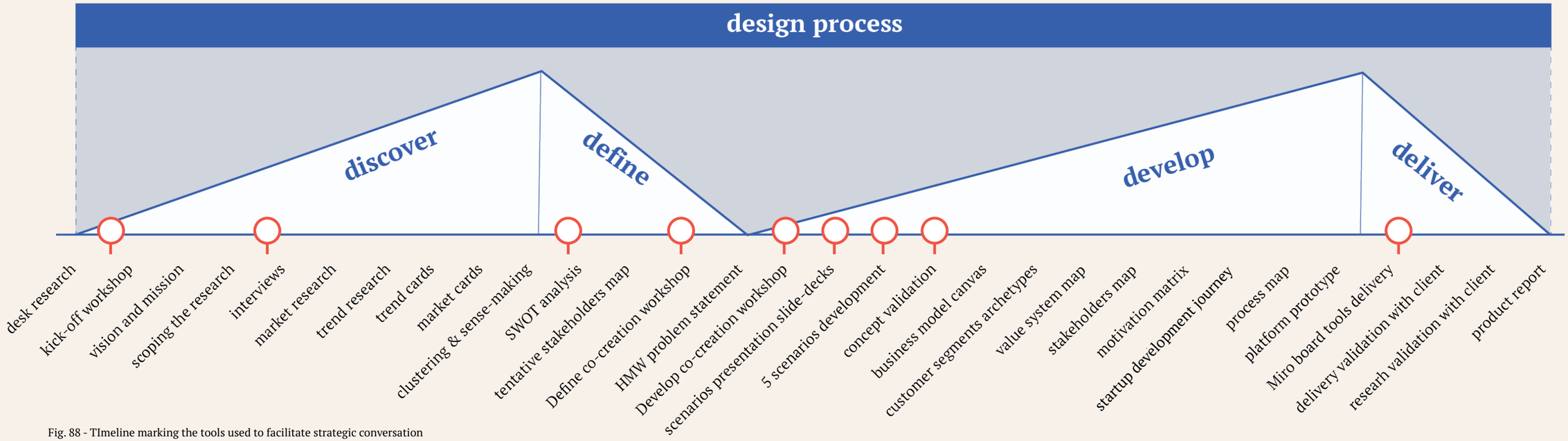


Fig. 88 - TImeline marking the tools used to facilitate strategic conversation

Reflections of the Deliver phase

In this section, we condense our general reflections for the whole thesis project process. This is because the Deliver session with the client touched on all the topics we wish to reflect on, and his feedback is directly connected to our reflections.

Client collaboration

The experience of collaborating with the client was a great opportunity for us to measure our own capabilities and identify the meaning of service design by confronting ourselves with the liminal field of strategy.

Throughout the entire collaboration with the client, there was an open channel for him to communicate with us. Often, he shared thoughts and ideas with us in an unstructed abstract form through conversation or on our Slack channel, almost as if he was sharing his thinking process in snippets with us. Differently, in workshops we stimulated his sharing of knowledge in a structured way. We now realise that in these moments, our role was akin to that of a therapist: practicing active listening, empathising, and trying to understand the client's needs (Meroni, 2008).

Other parallels we found with a therapist are in their use of techniques of *reorganising paraphrase* and working with *alternatives*, to support the patient to arrive at a certain optimal state (Meroni, 2008). In our case, we were using *reorganising paraphrase* by structuring abstract concepts into a logical architecture and system through design materials. By working with *alternatives*, we were helping the client grasp different possible futures for the startup studio, much like a therapist does by helping their patient see different options they have (Meroni, 2008). This process taught us that, for this kind of relationship with the client to work, there needs to be trust, transparency and open communication.

Our job was to support him in communicating and developing his vision for the startup studio. For this reason, we tried to stay in tune with him throughout the project, to ensure we were translating his input into the process and the final solution. For the most part, it worked well. However, we did not get feedback and input from him consistently throughout the project. Therefore, we missed key information from the strategic conversations he was having; from the research he was conducting independently; and from the thoughts that were popping up in his head. Hence, the client was both an enabler and a gatekeeper of knowledge. This means that as soon as we started developing a solution, we knew that whatever we delivered would be heavily iterated by the client, as he had a lot of information that we did not.

In fact, we realised that, had we all (client included) been dedicated to this project full-time, we could have delivered a more innovative product with more alignment with the client's vision. This is because there would have been much more information being shared by the client and we would have had the time to discuss conversations and ideas at length, and time to research and develop those ideas. Also, this would have impacted our process, as we would have had the time to communicate more with the client in order to understand his needs and avoid engaging in activities that were not particularly useful to him, such as the concept validation. And as a consequence, we would have focused on facilitating his strategic conversations.

Throughout our collaboration with the client, there was a latent tension between our service design process and his agile business process. Whereas we wanted to conduct research, avoid bias, and validate our concepts, the client wanted to move fast in order to launch. As a person, the client is a *doer* and is very hands-on; he likes to make decisions based on hunches, conversations, and ideas – and this is arguably one of his strengths as an entrepreneur. At times, it seemed that the service design process was pointless, slow and too complicated to follow. Although he trusted us and collaborated with almost all of our requests, he suggested a few times that he could have figured something out without our extensive process behind it. Conversely, we were often confused by the client's process, which was very intuitive and at times not justified or fully communicated; an example of this is his request for a value proposition before we were ready to deliver one to him. It is for the aforementioned reasons that we had a short break in collaboration towards the end, which the team dramatically dubbed, "the breakup moment".

In "the breakup moment", we decided to work asynchronously with the client so we could focus on developing the final concept, and build tools to communicate it. At this moment, we reflected on the balance that is needed between moments of open communication, reflection, and discussion with a client, and moments of separation for the designers to process all the information and deliver valuable solutions.

Finally, this project made us aware of the limitations that service design has when working with strategy. In the Deliver session with the client, he explained to us that when ideating and developing concepts, he needed to understand legal structures and whether his concepts were viable, allowed under Danish law; with no legal background, we were not able to support him with this. Also, throughout the project, the client had as a top priority to engage with potential investors. With no business background, we could not provide him with the information that

most investors want to see, which is market figures and the return on investment.

The tools developed

One of the main challenges we faced with the tools we developed is that they were sometimes “too finished” or complicated for the client to relate to them. This meant that the client found them hard to read, and did not know how to approach them. Also, many tools we developed were too elaborate for the client to use in the strategic conversations he was having at the moment we delivered them. This made us reflect on how service design practitioners need to pick their tools to avoid overwhelming the client with complexity. Also, they need to understand at what level the client wants to communicate in order to support a conversation with the appropriate tool. Something we understood in our final delivery is that tools should be introduced in a gradual way, first presenting a concept with easier tools such as a user journey and archetypes, and slowly introducing complexity with tools like stakeholder maps and blueprints.

At times, the client was unsure about why we were using a specific tool, and hence was skeptical. This was the case with the trend cards and the stakeholder map, for example. We understood later that it is counterproductive to spring up a tool without clearly explaining the benefit of it, as it just leaves the client confused and hesitant.

Since the client is the person who will decide on the final solution, the tools were delivered as iterative materials for him to use and build on. In order to do this properly, however, we should have delivered them all in an iterative format, such as Miro. We delivered some materials in PDF format, which is static and difficult to iterate. Furthermore, in order for the client to iterate them, he has to understand them well and thus, learn how to build them and use them. We did not have the time to explain each tool in detail to him and, unfortunately, this means he probably will not use nor iterate some of the tools we delivered.

The process and service design’s contribution to it

Our open-ended process required trust from both us and the client. On one hand, we embraced the exploratory nature of the project without knowing exactly how to support the client and, instead, figured it out along the way. This means we had to be very empathetic and adaptive. On the other hand, the client did not have much knowledge of service design and simply trusted that we would support him without knowing exactly how. We realize that the project would not have been possible if we had not worked in order to reach and nourish this trust.

Reflecting on the design process, we came to understand that it would have been useful for the client if we had conducted a second round of research after ideating. This would have allowed us to look into the concepts we were developing further, in order to develop more informed scenarios to validate. The client explained that the scenarios we developed and consequently validated were too hypothetical, lacking a solid knowledge. Furthermore, it is at this point that the trend research would have been valuable, according to the client, as it would have explored trends regarding the models we were developing, such as cryptocurrencies and community platforms.

Perhaps the hardest moment in our process was the concept validation. We didn’t get much feedback from the experts we shared it with, and the client did not want to get too involved with it nor show it to his contacts. Instead, the client explained, what would have been useful for him to receive from us at this point was a set of slide decks to communicate to stakeholders. In doing so, we would have been able to reflect more on how to facilitate strategic conversations, and explore the differences of communicating to different actors.

To end, one challenge we experienced in working with a client as service designers on a project that is not strictly service design related, was that we constantly felt the need to prove our value. Whereas the client is used to working with visual designers and receiving products from them, we struggled with communicating the intangible value that service design provides.

For example, it was difficult to prove the value of our research to the client, as it was hard to explain how exactly we would use it, it took a long time to conduct, and he seemed to think he knew most things we uncovered. In retrospect, we would have liked to have asserted our skills and capabilities and the benefits of our process better to the client from the start. However, as this was a new domain and it was an open-ended project, we did not know how we were going to support him before we explored it.

chapter 8

Learning goals

Learning goals

At the end of the process, we revisited our initial personal learning goals in order to evaluate whether we achieved them or not.

- **Applying tools and knowledge to a real-life case, to explore how service design can be applied to collaborative projects in new fields.**
  We can undoubtedly state that we have met our first goal. We did apply our knowledge and tools to a real-life case. And we have experimented how to use them in a new field, through a client-designer collaboration.

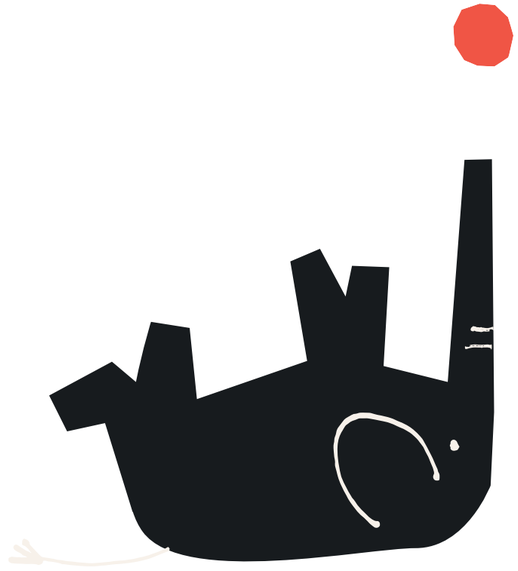
- **Contributing to research on how service design supports multi-disciplinary collaboration in practice.**
  We are also satisfied with the reflections and experience that arose within this project. In fact, we believe that we have contributed to the service design research field, describing how service designers can partake and support multi-disciplinary collaborations – especially in the context of working with a client to shape and communicate their vision.

- **Using future foresight tools.**
  We did explore future foresight tools and methods, such as the *scope wheel, horizon scanning, trend cards, scenarios*. However we would have liked to use more of them. Particularly, we would have liked to experiment with participatory foresight in the context of a business strategy project.

- **Involving different stakeholders in a co-design process.**
  Unfortunately, the project case did not give us the opportunity to actually involve other stakeholders apart from the client in the process and co-design solutions together. This was especially the case because the client did not think it was the right time to do so. The project ownership belonged to him, and we decided to acknowledge and respect his needs and concerns.

- **Experimenting with the design process.**
  Finally, we sadly recognize that during the project, we did not get a chance to experiment much. We attempted to prepare a BMC workshop where, together with stakeholders, we would have experimented with the co-making of tangible business models through physical objects. However, the client was not ready to involve stakeholders at the time, so we had to drop the idea.

Furthermore, we now realize that we would have loved to work with and for the (real) end-users of the startup studio, children.



chapter 9

Discussion

Discussion

In this section of the report, we address our research question, enriched by the project experience described above.

Strategic conversations

At the beginning of the process, we stated our intended meaning of *strategic conversations*. In fact, literature had not proven a unified definition of the concept. We considered strategic conversations both as reflective discussions aiming at defining steps forwards and (or) at shaping future visions and negotiations with (possible) stakeholders around value exchange. Enlightened by the experience gained, we take the opportunity to redefine the meaning of strategic conversations to us, before proceeding with the discussion.

By strategic conversations we mean high-level conversations discussing abstract ideas or issues in a complex context, enabling a project forward. These conversations all aim at meeting certain goals, and yet they allow for emergence and divergence. In fact, both our practice and our client confirmed the need for these conversations to stay flexible and avoid being too structured, in order to allow knowledge sharing, reflections, and new questions to arise.

These types of conversations happen in a complex context, where no right answers exist and major forces affect the ecosystem (Snowden & Boone, 2007). According to the Cynefin framework (Snowden & Boone, 2007), in this domain, people learn in retrospect, solutions emerge from trial and error, and no experts can provide a certain solution (Snowden & Boone, 2007). This particularly applies in the case of service systems, where actors' interactions actively and unpredictably shape service solutions (Blomkvist et al., 2016). Given the complexity of this domain, the object of conversation results to be abstract and intangible for the participants. This is particularly the case in the context of new service development and innovation, where the object of these conversions often does not exist yet.

According to our experience, the goal of strategic conversations can vary:

- agree and define end goals of a project;
- share and assess knowledge, in order to challenge assumptions, spark reflections and generate new questions to be addressed;
- envision informed future scenarios;
- define a way forward, in order to address a problem or build a solution;
- negotiate values among stakeholders.

Here we summarise the identified core activities during strategic conversations:

Share knowledge: bring different perspectives and expertise to the table, in order to facilitate learning and create a shared vocabulary;

Reflect: create space for speculation in order to challenge participants assumptions and decisions, and identify new known unknowns to be covered;

Negotiate: invite participants to envision possible futures, and discuss individual benefits, contributions, and motivations to partake in a given project or situation;

Make decisions: define shared visions, steps forwards, and resources needed in order to achieve the chosen vision or goals.

How strategy can benefit from service design

When laying the theoretical foundation of this thesis, we looked into the contribution design makes to strategy. However, we could not find specific references on the direct relationship between service design and strategy.

Therefore, we touched upon service design capabilities in order to build on them while conducting the project, hypothesizing that they could benefit strategy formulation and development. In light of the experience acquired throughout our project, we seek to outline the benefits that service design capabilities can bring to strategy.

To begin with, by addressing the context (Morelli et al., 2021) and staying people-centred (Penin, 2018) service designers bring multiple outside-in perspectives. In doing so, strategists can validate their solutions and challenge their own assumptions, gaining unbiased insights, new questions, and a broader overview of the problem space. Therefore, service design can support informed and empathic decision-making.

Core to service design are process facilitation and active listening (Penin, 2018). These essential capabilities enable the orchestration of different viewpoints, elevating service designers to the role of mediators among stakeholders (Morelli et al., 2021). Therefore, leaders can be supported by service designers during strategy formulation processes.

Moreover, the service design modeling capability provides strategists with tangible objects. These design materials enable stakeholders to speak a common language and understand each other (Morelli et al., 2021). Therefore, strategy can be supported during negotiations and participated sessions.

Moreover, service designers are capable of building logical architectures (Morelli et al., 2021). Our experience taught us that this competence enables people with a scaffold for thinking: providing a structure for abstract thoughts, thus reducing complexity for leaders

and strategists. Therefore, this capability can support strategy formulation and development by transforming chaos into flexible and actionable structures, easier to work with than abstract thoughts.

When strategy formulation regards new service development and innovation, these abstract thoughts refer to future possibilities. Once again, service design capabilities can aid strategy.
In fact, service designers are able to structure future visions (Morelli et al., 2021). In doing so, they not only provide strategists with tangible visualisations that facilitate cognitive processes; but can also support them in negotiating future value propositions with relevant stakeholders (Penin, 2018).

Finally, service designers prove to be a great fit in a strategic context. In fact, their open problem-solving capability (Morelli et al., 2021) enables them to easily adapt to the emerging open-ended nature of strategic projects. Particularly, in the case of our project collaboration, empathetic listening was key to facilitating the relationship and professional exchange, as well as the trust needed to embark on such ambiguous strategic projects.
However, in our experience service design has proven also to clash with the strategic mindset within a business context, in some points. Based on our experience we assume that in a business context, leaders follow a very agile approach that does not allow for much time on people-centred discovery and research triangulation.

Furthermore, existing service design tools have proven to provide only a partial picture of a business organization, as emerged during our project. In fact, our maps lacked the business and legal levels, which are extremely important in this context. Therefore, it is highly important to pair up with business developers when working in this context, in order to benefit strategy development.

How service design can facilitate strategic conversations

Based on our project experience and the re-defined meaning of strategic conversations for us, we address here the thesis research question, formulating an answer.

Service design can facilitate strategic conversations by:

- **Making the unknown known**
  Through research and people participation and (or) inclusion, service design enables strategic conversations to include different perspectives, guaranteeing empathetic and informed decisions. Moreover, through research and validation, service designers extrapolate insights to enrich and elevate strategic conversations. In doing so, they spark reflections and enable participants to probe their knowledge and identify further known unknowns needed to be covered, in order to bring a project forward.

- **Making the intangible tangible**
  Service design enables participants through maps and models that transform abstract complex thoughts into tangible structured visions. In this way, service designers reduce complexity and facilitate cognitive processes. Moreover, these design materials represent boundary objects allowing participants to gain a shared language and understanding, and a starting point to discuss, comment, reflect and iterate upon.

  When delivering design materials, it is very important to underline that these objects are not finished nor definitive; otherwise, leaders might be scared away and refrain from using them. Preferably, they should be used as iterative models in a similar way to how we use Lego© bricks: they are meant to be built up and down, reshaped, and evolved. For this reason, in light of our experience, we suggest using tools that allow and encourage dynamism and flexibility.

- **Process facilitation**
  Service design can support strategic conversations by orchestrating activities and providing a structured yet flexible framework that guides participants and therefore nurtures conversations with them. Moreover, active empathetic listening allows service designers to mediate different voices and points of view, supporting stakeholders' negotiations.

As our experience consisted mainly of empowering one client in leading his strategic conversations, we present here a set of recommendations for service designers who likewise want to support leaders and strategists.

Suggestions:

- **Establish trust**
  In order for the service designer to build a transparent and efficient relationship with the leader, it is important to clearly communicate to him or her the intentions behind each design proposal. This point is crucial for the leader to open up with the designer and express his or her invisible motivations and concerns, which enable the designer to empathize with them and design accordingly. However, building trust can require time and interpersonal affiliation.

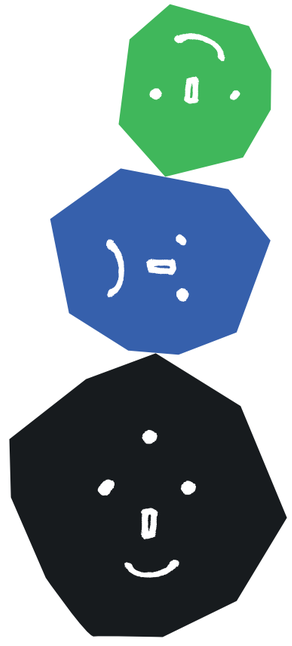
- **Empathize**
  In order to practically support leaders and effectively design and facilitate processes, designers need to empathize with the leader,

extrapolating their needs, goals, and fears. Designers play the role of therapists through active listening and *maieutic questioning*, allowing for unspoken words to surface. This process benefits the leaders, as it helps them to put words on their own thoughts and visions.

- **Identify preferred means of communication**
  In order to empower their leaders with boundary objects, service designers need to detect which are the means of communication with which the leader feels most comfortable and familiar. In doing so, there is also a higher chance that the leader will appreciate and understand and finally use those tools. Nonetheless, when delivering such tools, designers need to consider that they cannot predict how and if they will be used.

- **Evaluate timing**
  When facilitating strategic conversations, the designer should take into account how many previous conversations the interlocutors have had. In fact, this will affect the level of depth that both boundary objects and workshop activities should provide.

- **Evaluate relationship**
  At the same time, service designers need to take in consideration the relational tie between the interlocutors. In fact, the amount of information needed to be explained and manifested may vary based on how close the relationship is.



chapter 10

Limitation

Limitations

In order for the arguments previously discussed to have a formal validity, we consider it important that we frame them within the limited context of this project case.

First and foremost, within this project, we have worked exclusively with one (type of) client. Given the extreme subjective nature of conversations, we are reluctant to believe that the findings collected during this project apply for every type of client. In order to construct stronger and more reliable arguments, we believe that such a process should be repeated and applied within different contexts and with different client archetypes. At the same time, we believe we cannot provide a general recipe, as service design projects are deeply tied to their ecosystems (Akama, 2009). Therefore, the reader is invited to intend our suggestions as a possible framework or guideline to be considered when approaching a similar process.

Furthermore, our experience is limited since (apart from initial strategic interviews we partook in) we did not actively and directly facilitate strategic conversations with stakeholders. Therefore, our suggestions and findings are once again tied to the only one person we have worked with. We acknowledge that when more participants are involved in a strategic conversation, its complexity rises. The designer will need to be able to mediate the conversation among different stakeholders, including the client. Particularly, we suppose that negotiations are a type of strategic conversation that might require their own defined approach and different service design contributions.

Furthermore, our research is blind towards how the client has used the majority of design tools to facilitate his conversations. Therefore, we cannot provide specific reflections related to the tools, as we could not observe how they were interpreted and utilised. For this reason, we believe that our arguments lack depth regarding the characteristics that these boundary objects should have, in order to effectively support strategic conversations.

Acknowledged these limitations, we identify a possibility for further research. An interesting area of topic would be how service design might facilitate negotiations, intended as conversations where each participants has a high stake and where tensions are in place. How might service design support these conversations in the sensitive environment of business? Particularly, we envision that the research could dive in dynamic (digital) tools to facilitate value co-creation maps among stakeholders.

After months of collaborating with the client, it has become evident to us that the client is a well-connected person, with a strong network. In previous occasions, this network has been the force that impells his business ideas further, and not necessarily the research and process behind it. For this reason, it is appropriate that we supported him in conducting strategic conversations, as these are key for discussing with peers in his network. However, it leaves us space to question whether our service design process has widely benefited the client, as his foolproof way of developing, launching, and funding a business is through networking.

chapter 11

Conclusions

Conclusion

The rapid pace of the global economy and the growing service sector calls for service designers to play more strategic roles. In these complex contexts, they are confronted with multi-disciplinary teams and different mindsets. Acknowledging that, we decided to challenge ourselves and explore the agonistic and multifaceted nature of collaboration. The focus of our research delved into how to enable communication in a strategic context.

The project case exposed in the thesis worked as a lab to probe how service design capabilities might facilitate strategic conversations. In this case, we understood strategic conversations as high-level conversations discussing abstract ideas or issues in a complex context, enabling a project forward. This experiment shows that service design can facilitate them through: research and validation – guaranteeing empathetic and informed decisions; boundary objects – transforming chaos into structure and providing a common language; and process facilitation – nurturing and orchestrating conversations and participated activities.

Moreover, this process required us to exercise active listening and empathize with our client in order to understand his needs, motivations and concerns. We acknowledged the client ownership of the project and worked to support him in ways that worked best for him. Staying people-centred in our client relationship turned out to be key to learn how to facilitate him in his strategic conversations. We hope that the outcomes of this process will be inspiring for service design practitioners who need to play a similar role and enable leaders, managers and strategists' conversations.

To conclude, this thesis represented for us a journey at the frontier between service design and business strategy. An experiment to assess ourselves and construct new meanings around our own practice and role. At the end of this trek, we feel enriched and able to better evaluate our fluid and catalyst roles, recognizing our own forte and limits. We now proceed our journey with the same open-ended approach, eager to learn more.

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Appendix

Appendix A - *Glossary of the case*

Innovation programs

Innovation programs have come to be key players in the entrepreneurial and startup ecosystem. They support the innovation of startups by providing them with facilities and services such as office space, management training, mentorship, funding, investment, connections to companies, links to mentors and experts, and access to markets (Roland Berger, 2019). There are different types of innovation programs aimed at supporting startups to design, grow and launch their businesses – they operate at different stages of maturity, have different business models, durations of programs, enrollment processes, and provide different services to startups (Lesage, 2019). Also, there are important geographical differences in the makeup and services delivered by innovation programs (Roland Berger, 2019). For the purpose of this thesis, we will study those based out of Europe and the U.S., which are two of the regions which have most embraced innovation programs (Roland Berger, 2019).

The concept of innovation programs began in 1959 with the Batavia Industrial Center incubator, in New York (Roland Berger, 2019). The 1980s and 1990s saw a growth of innovation centers, predominantly in Europe and the U.S, mostly run under research institutions, supported by university and government funding (ibid.). As time progressed, these programs generated economic growth by providing businesses with services and working space (ibid.). To adapt to this need, more business oriented programs were developed, such as accelerators, which were popularized in the 2000s in Silicon Valley and quickly replicated throughout the U.S. and Europe (ibid.). In this process, many innovation program models have emerged and taken form to fit within their startup and innovation landscape, most notably incubators, accelerators, startup studios, coworking, living labs, innovation labs, science parks and hackathons, to name some (Lesage, 2019). In our research we honed in on the operational business models for incubators, accelerators, startup studios, as those were the ones which were identified as possible avenues for our project with our client.

Incubators

Incubators support early-stage startups with long-term business development (Lesage, 2019). Startups in incubator programs often apply at the start of their lifecycle, when they have an idea and need support to develop and structure it (ibid.). The support incubators provide includes mentorship, tools, access to a network, and often office space – they help startups refine their idea and business model, build out a business plan, work on product-market fit, identify intellectual property issues, and network in the startup ecosystem (Forrest, 2018). Incubation programs vary in duration, some lasting 3 months and others lasting 24 months, or even longer, and they recruit startups on a rolling basis (Roland Berger, 2019).

While there are some independent incubators, they can also be sponsored or run by venture capital firms, angel investors, government entities, universities or major corporations (Forrest, 2018). Many incubators operate within a specific area, such as "tech" or "sustainability" – this is often dictated by the ownership model, such as is the case with the Danish Technical University's Skylab incubator, which focuses on incubating tech startups, in alignment with the university's domain (Forrest, 2018; DTU Skylab, 2021). Incubators sometimes provide financial funding to startups, for which they may take equity in exchange (Lesage, 2019).

Accelerators

Accelerators support fast startup growth through a short, yet intensive program. The startups they support are those which are more mature than those which would apply to an incubator – they must have a clear business model and prototype, which the accelerator can support to develop further through mentoring, and connection to experts, partners and business networks (Gilhuly-Mandel, 2018; Roland Berger, 2019). Accelerator programs usually last a short period of three to four months, they recruit startups in cohorts based on applications, and they often invest capital in the startups they support in return for equity in their company (Roland Berger, 2019) Also, acceleration programs often end with "demo days", for startups to pitch their project to potential investors (Roland Berger, 2019). A successful example of an accelerator is YCombinator, which accelerated both Dropbox and Airbnb (YCombinator, 2021).

Startup Studios

Startup studios create companies from scratch, and use their internal team to build them up by providing hands-on support from the start (Lesage, 2019; Perdue, 2020). Startup studios run startup development functions under one studio, and share resources throughout a few projects (Perdue, 2020).Once the startups are created and developed, startup studios will match the startups with the right talent to run them, and provide hands-on operational support to these founders to get their companies off the ground (Lesage, 201) As described by Josh Burgess from the impact-driven startup studio Good Machine, startup studios work as an "idea factory" with the experience, resources, and discipline to de-risk putting the ideas into practice (ibid.).

Whereas accelerators and incubators typically support external startups and teams for a duration of time, startup studios work internally on a project as early as the problem-identification stage on through their scaling (Lawrence et al., 2019). Startup studios focus on the talent, operational know-how and skills of their internal team rather than hearing external

entrepreneurs pitch ideas and funding them to build the company (Lesage, 2019). There are different ownership models for startups at startup studios, but the studio often co-owns the launched businesses alongside the founders that are brought in to run them, usually following a formula in which greater involvement from the studio results in them retaining more equity on the business (Lawrence et al., 2019; Lesage, 2019).

Startups
Startups are young companies that are founded by one or more entrepreneurs to develop a unique product or service and bring it to market for customers. They are often innovative and "disruptive" in that they address gaps of existing products or services, or they bring new ones to the market. (Baldrige & Curry, 2021)

Types of startup funding

Investors who invest in a startup usually do so to support its entrepreneurship, as well as to make a return on their investment through the growth of this business. Because of this, many investments during the different funding rounds are arranged so that these investors own part of the company, through equity; this means that if the company grows, the investor will get a return on their investment through their ownership. Before funding rounds, a valuation of the company is conducted by analysts, who look at the management team, the business plan, the market fit, the maturity level, growth prospects and the risk involved. This valuation influences what kind of investment and investor the company will look for. (Reiff, 2020)

In our research, we set out to understand the different ways a startup can be funded, because in order to support the client in his process of designing his business, we would have to facilitate his process of seeking funding for it. We found out there are many ways for startups to get funded, and below we outline the most common ones.

Equity
Equity means ownership in a company. When startup investors invest in a company in return for equity, this means they receive a percentage of the company's shares. (Feldman, 2013)

Bootstrap
A startup is bootstrapped when it is funded by an entrepreneur's personal resources or the startups's own revenue. This term evolved from the phrase "pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps" (Feldman, 2013, p.111). This form of funding allows for more freedom and control for the entrepreneur, as well as the possibility to retain full ownership of the business (Feldman, 2013, p.112). Although there are a few startups that grow organically with no outside funding, most are not able to survive without external funding, as they are not able to secure enough economic flow to secure their businesses' survival (Reiff, 2020).

Public funding
Many governments have programs that provide loans, investments, or grants to small businesses (Feldman, 2013, p.113). The Danish government and the EU government both have programs to fund startups (Angel Investment Network DK, 2021).

Bank funding
Some businesses receive bank loans to grow their business. This allows for them to keep their ownership of the business, but it also requires qualifying for lending, and for the entrepreneur to pay the money back within the agreed period of time, with the bank's interest (Feldman, 2013, p.115).

Friends and family
Friends and family are often investors in the early stage of a company, when an entrepreneur reaches out to those they know personally for support (Feldman, 2013, p.116).

Angel investors
Angel investors are individuals with experience in investing or management, who invest a small amount of capital to a startup for a stake in the company. Angel investment usually happens at an early stage. Entrepreneurs can find angel investors through programs, communities and networks, at "demo days" or through personal connections. (Reiff, 2020; Forrest, 2014; Feldman, 2013, p.118)

Venture Capital
Venture capital is a way for institutional investors and wealthy individuals to invest in a promising startup. Venture capital firms raise capital from investors to create venture funds. With these funds, they invest in startups, in exchange for equity in them. These investments are locked in until a "liquidity event", in which the startup is acquired or goes public – at this point the venture capital firm will profit from its initial investment. (cbinsights, 2020)

Startup funding rounds

As a startup business grows and matures, it advances in the funding rounds. Funding rounds usually follow this order:

Pre-seed
Initial investment to get the operations off the ground. At this stage, a startup is exploring its business feasibility, conducting market testing, researching, and developing a marketing and sales plan. This investment is often funded by entrepreneurs' personal funds or that of their friends or family. (Sajid, 2019)

-**Seed**
Investment to determine final products and the target audience. At this stage, startups are developing a product, building traction, and recruiting. This investment often comes from friends or family, Angel Investors and from crowdfunding. (Sajid, 2019)

-**Series A**: investment to support the development of the product. At this stage, startups have a working business model, have an established team and a scalable business blueprint. Investment at this stage usually comes from Accelerators, Angel Investors and Venture Capital firms. (Sajid, 2019)

-**Series B:** investment to support the growth of the business. At this stage, startups are scaling up, increasing their market share, growing their team, and competing with competitors. Investors at this stage are usually late-stage Venture Capital firms. (Sajid, 2019)

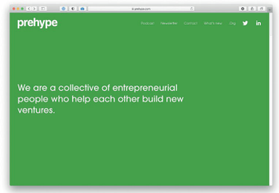
-**Series C**: investment to support a company to build more products or scale to new markets. At this stage, startups are focused on expanding and scaling, increasing their market share, and often looking forward to an initial public offering. Investors at this stage are late-stage Venture Capital Firms, Private Equity firms, hedge funds, and banks. (Sajid, 2019)

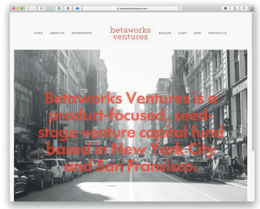
-**Initial Public Offering (IPO)**: process of selling shares of a company to the general public for the first time. When this happens, the startup goes from being a private company to a public one, and is no longer a startup. (Forrest, 2014) At this stage, the company has a growth-oriented team, has proper and stable financial statements, and has a developed corporate governance. (Sajid, 2019)

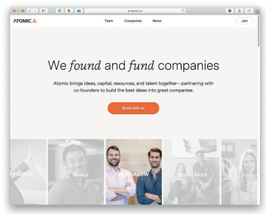
Appendix B - *Preliminary slide-deck*

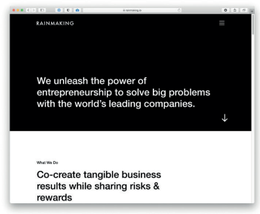
What the hell is a Startup Studio?

The not-so-sexy explanation: It's **a startup factory.**









+ many, many more

What is Stupid Startup Studio?

Klar exit plan... Efter 3 år...

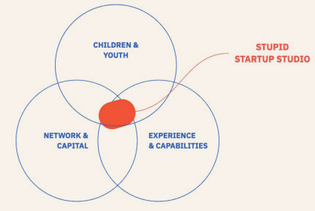
STUPID STARTUP STUDIO

We are a **small, experienced design team** that **creates the impact-driven companies of tomorrow** by matching great business ideas with the best entrepreneurial talent to create **a better everyday life for our children and youth**.

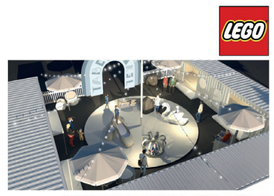
OUR ROLE

We **identify**, **validate** and **launch** startups, and nurture them in the early stages of their life, until they are ready to stand on their own two feet, and **become strong and scalable startups**

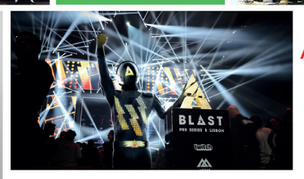
OUR SWEET SPOT



Why us?
Why now?





Strong values and vision

Positive Social Impact Only	RESILIENT
Stupid as a platform	REGENERATIVE
Stupid in 100 years	SCALE BEYOND TIME & COGNITITVE BANDWIDTH

Tech: Help them with tech stuff: Platforms, etc...

Why now?

The timing is great

Startup Studios are better at this

CORE TEAM


Daniel


Isa


Amalia


Simona

Question:
What makes us unique from your perspective?

Question:
Who would be great partners for us?

Question:
What capabilities would we be needing for our Startup Studio team

Question:
How important are values vs. hardcore ROI /profit facts?

Question:
Do you have anyone in your network we should talk to?

How we qualify and vet opportunities

NARROW FOCUS

Children & Youth

Question:
Too narrow?
Too wide?

CLEAR OPPORTUNITY SPACES

Using our **Opportunity Space Mapping** to establish the space we operate in, and the opportunities within them

Opportunity Spaces
Specific Opportunities
Start-up ideas

SENSEMAKING & PERSPECTIVE

Using our **Sensible Futures Framework** and methodologies.

– Context
– Scenario mapping
– Future roadmaps and backcasting
– Actionable next steps.

SPACES

Learning Through Play | Mental Health & Wellbeing | Digital / Post Covid Life | Life at Home

Question:
What spaces do you think is interesting for us?

OPPORTUNITIES

Question:
And do you see any BIG opportunities in those spaces?

IN A NUTSHELL

Sensible Futures is a **mindset**, a **toolset** and a **community** for progressive future thinkers and doers.

A PROCESS AND RIGOUR FOR LAUNCHING THINGS

An **action-oriented**, market focused **funnel**, enabling us to quickly identify, conceptualise and launch startups

Selection process
Launch process
Seed process

WHAT DO WE DO?

OUR POSSIBLE OFFERINGS

- IDEA VALIDATION through Sensible Future Framework
- NETWORK & COMMUNITY
- SUPPORT IN COMPANY CREATION
- HOSTING EVENTS
- TESTING & PROTOTYPING
- MENTORSHIP

Practical & Structural Setup

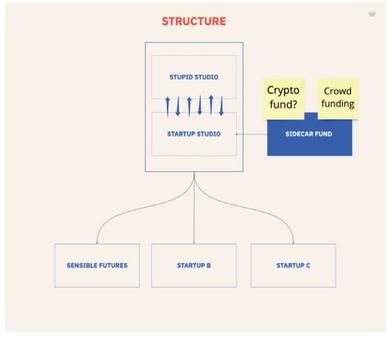
OUR INCUBATION FUNNEL

Question:
What are the strenghts and weaknesses about our funnel?

Question:
As a startup, what would you wish you have had access to?

Question:
As a VC, what would you wish you have had access to?

STRUCTURE



Question:
Will investors be interested in investing in SSS itself AND in a sidecar fund?

Question:
What makes us unique to investors?

Question:
How do we create a valuation at this stage?

Engaging with startups / cofounders

Question:
What is the right balance between equity for founders and for SSS?

Question:
How do we create valuations at various stages?

Appendix C - *Interview scripts*

Interview structure with startups

1. Introduction: set the stage

Who are we, what are we doing and why.
What is the goal of the interview and why we decided to contact them.

-> allow participants to ask you questions here.

Comment: Set the stage in a way that it's clear who we are (startup studio) and the level we start with / to avoid additional conversations that could take time in the beginning and confuse

2. Introductory question: get at ease

- Would you like to share a bit of your journey with us? How was your startup idea born? How did it all start? (10 mins)

3. Leading questions: body

- What are the milestones (main steps) you had to go through in order for your startup to be founded and developed?

  At what stage of your idea you got into a program, what was the starting point of this business ?

  Possible follow ups:
  - what made your startup grow and evolve?
  - what were the most difficult moments?

- How did your startup get funds? What was the most challenging moment when you needed money?

- How did you validate (or are validating/ plan to validate) your startup ideas?

  Possible follow ups:
  - *how will the validation benefit your business project?*

    Of course you are a startup that focused on children, What are the challenges of testing and validating products/services for children?

  - DId you conduct customer research or testing with real users?

    Did you conduct trend research? Do you think it's important?
  - are there specific regulations and norms you had to be mindful about?

- Do you believe that mentorship is needed along the process of developing a startup?

  Possible follow ups:
- what is the expertise that you needed, either from other professional figures or that you had to grow yourself, in order to develop your idea?

4. Closing question: wrapping up

- What do you wish you knew before starting this journey?

- - In a utopical world:I what would it be your ideal program to get in as a startup? What would you like to be offered from someone that could help you to grow as a business?

5. Conclusion: interview ends

Thank the participant for their time and expertise they decided to share with us.
Tell them you will wish them the best of luck and that it was a pleasure to chat.
--- something something ---

Interview structure with investors

1. Introduction: set the stage

Who are we, what are we doing and why.
What is the goal of the interview and why we decided to contact them.
-> allow participants to ask you questions here.
Comment: Set the stage in a way that it's clear who we are (startup studio) and the level we start with / to avoid additional conversations that could take time in the beginning and confuse

2. Introductory question: get at ease

- Is there a common path that people follow through to become investors? What was your journey?
- *how do you work to connect startups with investors?*
  - working with and supporting startups
  -

3. Leading questions: body

- What makes it hard to decide whether or not to invest in a (startup) idea?
  Possible follow ups:
  - what are the missed opportunities?
  - when and why you don't invest in a startup idea?
  - what are promising signals of success?
  - what are promising signals of failure?
  - where do you think there are more mistakes while working in a startup?

- How do you validate whether or not a startup is a worth investment?
  Possible follow ups:
  - do you have/follow a precise selection process?
  - do you have a system to decide how much capital to invest in each startup you select?

- How do you get in contact with startups? How do you find them?
- Have you worked with startups for children?
- In your opinion, what is the drive for investors to invest in that?

- Are you familiar with the concept of Startup Studio? Would you invest in them?
  Possible follow ups:
  - why? why not?

- if you were to put yourself in our investors' shoes, in your opinion, what are the benefits that they would see in investing in (Stupid) Startup Studio

4. Closing question: wrapping up

- What are the opportunity spaces in which you are investing / in the lookout for at the moment?

5. Conclusion: interview ends

Thank the participant for their time and expertise they decided to share with us.
Tell them you will wish them the best of luck and that it was a pleasure to chat.
--- something something ---

Interview structure with Incubators

1. Introduction: set the stage

Who are we, what are we doing and why.
What is the goal of the interview and why we decided to contact them.
-> allow participants to ask you questions here.
Comment: Set the stage in a way that it's clear who we are (startup studio) and the level we start with / to avoid additional conversations that could take time in the beginning and confuse

2. Introductory question: get at ease

- Would you like to share a bit of your story with us? How did your journey at X start?
- Would you like to introduce the concept behind DTU skylab?
- **What is the difference between a university run incubator and others you know?**

- **What kind of ideas are you incubating into startups?**
-

3. Leading questions: body

- What leads a startup to you? Why do they need to join an/your Incubator?
  Possible follow ups:
  - what were you you offering them? (main offerings)

- What makes a startup idea successful?
  Possible follow ups:
  - In your opinion, why do some of them fail?

- How do you validate a startup idea?
  Possible follow ups:
  - how do you select them to be part of your incubator, in the first place?
  - at what stage are they?

- Who are the experts part of your Incubator team?
  Possible follow ups:
  - are there any other professional figures who need to be involved in a startup development? For example, how do you get in contact with investors? Do they contact you?
  - what other resources, both material and immaterial are needed to run the Incubator?

- What are the overall costs of an Incubator?
- What organisations do you collaborate with most?
- What are your funders? We are currently scoping where to get money to start the SS.
- Do you know other

4. Closing question: wrapping up

- In your opinion, what are the most common errors that startups make along their incubation journey?

5. Conclusion: interview ends

Thank the participant for their time and expertise they decided to share with us.
Tell them you will wish them the best of luck and that it was a pleasure to chat.
--- something something ---

Interview structure with investors

1. Introduction: set the stage

Who are we, what are we doing and why.
What is the goal of the interview and why we decided to contact them.
-> allow participants to ask you questions here.
Comment: Set the stage in a way that it's clear who we are (startup studio) and the level we start with / to avoid additional conversations that could take time in the beginning and confuse

2. Introductory question: get at ease

- In order to get started with our interview, please help us with getting more familiar with your working environment. What type of fundings do you provide and to what type of organizations?

3. Leading questions: body

- How do you choose whether or not funding a business idea?
  Possible follow ups:
  - do you have/follow a precise selection process?
  - do you have a system to decide how much funds to provide to each business idea you select?

- What makes it hard to decide whether or not to fund a business idea?
  Possible follow ups:
  - when and why you don't fund a business idea?

- How do you get in contact with startups and business ideas? How do you find them? or How do they find you?

- Are you familiar with the concept of Startup Studio?
  Possible follow ups:
  - Would you give funds to them? why? why not?

4. Closing question: wrapping up

- What are the opportunity spaces / areas of interest which you are working in and funding / in the lookout for at the moment?

5. Conclusion: interview ends

Thank the participant for their time and expertise they decided to share with us.
Tell them you will wish them the best of luck and that it was a pleasure to chat.
--- something something ---

-Interview structure with Children experts

1. Introduction: set the stage

Who are we, what are we doing and why.
What is the goal of the interview and why we decided to contact them.
-> allow participants to ask you questions here.
Comment: Set the stage in a way that it's clear who we are (startup studio) and the level we start with / to avoid additional conversations that could take time in the beginning and confuse

2. Introductory question: get at ease

- Would you like to share (briefly) a bit more about your concept and how it started?
  - What was the reasoning behind the choice to work with children / x / x ?

- In which way to you support startups? HOw do you identify the startups you work with and support?

- we realized there are not many startups that are children-related? what's the reason behind it in your opinion?

- What is CoC's business model? Do you take equity from startups? gvt. & corporate funding?

- How do you sell CoC to investors, if it isn't a money making business? Impact?

3. Leading questions: body

- What are the challenges of testing and validating products/services for children?

- What are the main challenges that children (in x) face nowadays, in your opinion?
  Possible follow ups:
  - for example, if we consider the pandemic, what are the consequences you can observe on children?
  - and what do you think are the challenges that nowadays children will have to face in the next 5-10 years?

- How do you think new businesses could support children's needs?
  Possible follow ups:
  - are there specific products and or services you wish to see developed for children?
  - are there specific regulations and norms we should be mindful about?
  - For experts who create products/services: what's the most common error in developing product/services for children.

Possible follow ups:

- How did you sell your idea to potential funders - how did you convince them that was something valuable for users?

4. Closing question: wrapping up

- In your opinion, with what skills should we equip children today in order to empower them for their future?

5. Conclusion: interview ends

Thank the participant for their time and expertise they decided to share with us.
Tell them you will wish them the best of luck and that it was a pleasure to chat.
--- something something ---

Appendix D - *Interviews insights*

Expert Interview Insights

Our expert interviews were a **qualitative research** process con
with the aim of gathering knowledge from experts on **startups;**
ing; startup studios and incubators; and working with/for
dren. We identified experts in the aforementioned fields through
research as well as through personal contacts. The experts we in
viewed ranged from possible strategic partners, to experts extern
ecosystem, and the interviews were adapted to this difference (**s**
vs. traditional interviews). We conducted interviews with exp
based in Denmark, the USA, the UK, and Norway – all online thr
video calls. The calls ranged in duration from 15 minutes to an h
a half, depending on the interviewee's availability.

The main goals of this stage of the process were to understand:

- how to set up and run a startup.
- the needs of a startup in their seed/pre-seed phase.
- how to set up and run a startup studio.
- what resources are necessary to run a startup studio.
- what startup investors look for when investing.
- how to design for children and how to validate and test with

Startup Studios

Non-negotiables:

- **Management team**: they work on deciding the unique experience, the focus and leverage of the startup, as well as establishing the network.
- **Operating experience:** the startup studio needs to understand the process of setting up startups within the given context, preferably having a "playbook" or process for setting up.
- **Investor network:** the startup studio needs to assure an exchange of money for the startups being created.
- **Hiring talent:** the startup studio needs a dedicated team to hiring the right people for each team, effectively delegating tasks and responsibilities to these teams.
- **Market fit:** 32% of failed startups fail because they had no market fit. Startup studios need to function in a space where they can identify opportunity spaces and read the market, so to build startups by "asking the right questions to the right problems".

Startup Studios/Startups

Best practices:

- **Scaleable business model:** From the start, focus on building business models which can easily be adapted and scaled if necessary, and which can adapt to increased market demands.
- **Time limits for a project/startup:** Startups can be a "time-suck". Set yourself limits for how long you will work on each startup, and for when you will hand it over to the team to pursue an exit.
- **Move fast, launch fast, kill fast:** "default dead" for startups. Be ready to kill them or reinvent them if they do not meet the stage-gates.
- **solid approach (playbook):** although every startup idea is different, establish a system for the Startup Studio to create startups, to streamline the process.
- **set benchmarks for your startup:** it is very helpful to compare the studio/startups processes and performance metrics to industry bests and to best practices from other industries.
- **trends, forecast future needs:** it is important to understand the future needs of the scope audience that the startup studio is focused on, in order to identify opportunities and set relevant problems.
- **innovation funnel, stage-gates:** stage-gating consists of having different stages in the process of creating a startup. The startup must pass a series of tests within each gate in order to pass on to the next stage, using a "Go/Kill" protocol at each stage. This process de-risks startups.

Startup Needs

What can we <u>can</u> offer:

- **Opportunity space mapping**: startups need a clear strategy and focus. Stupid's experience with trend and market research can support defining opportunity spaces, defining a problem statement, and setting goals.
.
- **Prototyping & testing**: startups have a need for prototyping and testing their services and products. Although Stupid does not have a technical lab nor create tech prototypes, they can support by prototyping interactions, doing concept validation, researching user's buy-in into a product, and prototyping websites.

- **Branding**: startups need help shaping their brand and defining who they are at the start, and few have the budget to hire a marketing and graphic design team. Stupid Studio has the capabilities for designing narratives, visual identities, tone of voice, and for establishing online and offline presences for startups (social media, website), all in a way that will stand out and communicate effectively what the startup is about.

- **Marketing**: startups need help promoting their products, service, and company. Stupid Studio has experience using marketing tools, processes and strategies – both for their clients and for themselves. They have experience conducting research to understand customers and their needs, outlining strategies for maximizing interaction, tracking audience interaction, solidifying brands, determining key metrics and goals for a company, determining a budget, and producing quality content for target groups.

Startup Needs

What can we <u>can't</u> offer (yet):

- **Business mentorship**: It is crucial for early-stage startups to receive business mentorship, to help them make the most with their limited resources and grow their business. Mentors help in identifying pitfalls and positives in a business plan; in identifying business and funding opportunities; and in facilitating a view at the bigger picture to identify potential obstacles to business development and how to approach them. They also support startups in building their business pitch for investors.

- **Legal help**: Setting up a startup requires many legal processes, but most startups can't afford to hire a lawyer. Startups need legal support throughout their lifecycle, from company formation, to contract development, and the eventual development of patents and intellectual property protections.

- **HR**: Our research showed that the important factot to a startup's success is the team makeup and dynamic. Startups need support focused on human resources, with access to talent pools and with experience hiring teams.

- **Labs**: Tech startups need the right space, equipment and knowhow to research, design, and build their products and their prototypes. These labs are usually in universities, as they have the resources and research capabilities to run these labs.

- **Developers**: For software based startups, you need developers to iterate through versions of an idea so it fits the market, and then to code the final product to be marketted.

- **Relationships with investors**: Startups need formalized access to investor pools. This can be through competitions, pitch days, or (secured) partnerships.

Teams

Our research found that the most important factor affecting a startup's success is the **team makeup and dynamic**. This also applies to the team of a startup studio.

One interviewee explained, "a startup is like a marriage, you raise a child together, discuss values together, agree on your schedule together, pay rent together, and even make food together." For this reason, building a team requires know-how to ensure the members will communicate and work well with each other. A good "vibe" matters.

Teams should be diverse, with a range of experience, expertise, and working methods, to ensure the roundedness of the startup. Skills should be considered as complimentary.

Homogeneous teams are stable from the start, but they don't grow further on. Diverse teams, on the other hand, will struggle at first, as it takes time for the members to adjust to the different skills in the team, but will perform better once the initial hurdles have passed.

Investors

How to find investors and customers?

- **Networking**: It is important to spend time talking to the investors and customers for your startup. When you're creating a B2B startup, you need to talk to schools, hospitals, municipalities, and anyone who might become a customer or investor. Denmark is a small country, and the startup ecosystem seems very connected. It is important to establish connections with potential investors (for the startup studio and for startups) and start having conversations with them.
- **Partnerships**: Stupid Studio already has strong partnerships with large companies that could invest in the startup studio and in individual startups it created.
- **Public funds**: Most incubators and other innovation units in Denmark are publicly funded, which is why they rarely take equity for incubating or accelerating startups. The startup studio could look at the option of applying for public funds.
- **Foundations**: There are many wealthy families and companies in Denmark with foundations focused on non-profit projects. To apply to them, you need to ensure that your project aligns with their goals and criteria.
- **Venture capital firms**: Venture Capital Firms are interested in working with startup studios because the studio takes care of the management work and operational expenses.
- **Angel investor networks:** There are multiple companies in Denmark which provide the service of connecting startups with angel investors, in exchange for a fixed price.
- **Go international:** Although the popular belief is that most investors invest in their own community/country, there are many investors in the US that are interested in investing in Europe.
- **Marketing**: When you're creating a B2C startup, 30% of your spending will go to marketing. When you are selling a product or service for children, you are appealing to them and to their parents.

Investors

There is an investor for every project, so what do they look at?

- **Team**: Investors look at the team composition and dynamic. They are interested in the people's personality, grit, and previous experience, as well as how well they work with each other. If the team members have set up other successful projects, it will be easier to secure investment.
- **Market fit**: Investors are looking for products that fit the opportunities in the market, as market-fit-fail is the largest reason for why startups fail.
- **Promising numbers**: investors want to see growth or promise/potential for growth in the form of a business model. This can be in the form of economic growth, or customer base growth. Investors are interested in seeing that you can attract, engage, and retain customers, and proof of this helps.
- **Business plan**: Investors want to see a sound business plan with financial projections, marketing plans, and specifics about the audience. This plan should include a short and long term vision on how the startups plans to grow the business and remain competitive.
- **Competitive idea**: Investors are interested in seeing how a startup idea will compete with others in the market. They are often looking for a unique idea.
- **Positive impact**: Although the most important thing to an investor is a ROI, there are many investors who will opt for ideas with a positive social impact, provided there is some return in the long run. Also, after COVID, there is much more investment in social impact startups, as there is a stronger collective consciousness regarding the importance of social wellbeing.
- **Pitch**: startups often get their angel or VC investors attention through their pitch. The pitch presents the startup, its value proposition, technology, and team to the investors.

Children & Youth

Designing and testing with/for children

- **Challenging to find them:** it is hard to find children to test with, and it often takes time to build trust with institutions and parents that will allow this. Strategic partnerships and facebook groups for parents seem to be good approaches to this issue.
- **"Startups" don't inspire trust:** Parents, schools, hospitals, government don't trust the volatility of startups. It is important to convey confidence that the service-product is trustworthy and will be around for the child's full development.
- **Consider the actors around the child**: When designing for children, consider the actors around the child. Parents, educators, healthcare providers, are also your customer. Consider their needs and pain-points.
- **Validate by finding gaps in laws for children**: education and healthcare laws require innovation to meet new needs. For example, laws require schools to teach programming to children, but the tools and training for this are missing, a clear gap in the market.
- **Be around kids at all stages of the design process.**
- **Build trust:** make sure the children you are working with uerstand what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how they will benefit from this. This takes time, which means that working with children is a long term committment because you need to ensure they are getting something out of it and not just the other way around.

Opportunity Space: Children/Youth, Wellbeing & Health

- **Approved opportunity space:** experts confirmed that this is a good area to focus on. After covid, there is a lot of focus and investment being placed on children's wellbeing. There are no incubators not startups focusing solely on this.
- **Narrow focus:** it is good to establish the startup studio as a leader in a specific area, in order to stand out amongst the many incubators and startup studios, and to use Stupid Studio's portfolio and network strategically.
- **Not many startups for children in Denmark:** all the people we interviewed said there are not many startups in Denmark focused specifically on children.

Appendix E - *Trend scan cards*

Title: Preparing children for life

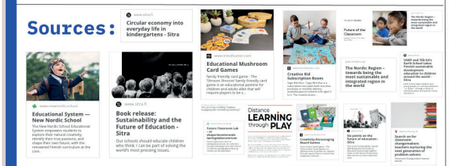
Key insights:

In front of an everchanging volatile and complex world as the one we are inhabiting right now, children need to be equipped with the skills necessary to cope with this (VUCA) world. To be prepared to face their future, kids need to be equipped with:

- problem-solving
- creative thinking
- critical thinking
- working together
- strategic and system thinking
- future-readiness
- sustainable development

Since life doesn't happen in silos, the educational system is also thinking of innovating its pedagogy going towards a more holistic, flexible (personalized) and purposeful way of teaching.

Sources:



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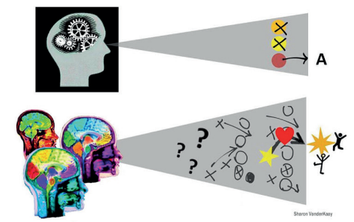


Title: Gender equality

Key insights:

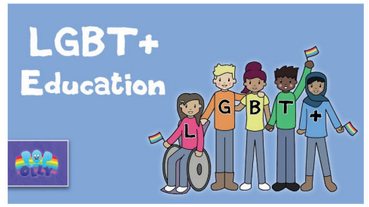
The Nordics are putting on their educational agenda teaching on gender equality, making sure that every kid feels comfortable and accepted, supporting kids in discovering, forming, and expressing their own identity. Without imposing conformity.

Sources:

pub.norden.org

The Nordic Region – towards being the most sustainable and integrated region in the world

Images:



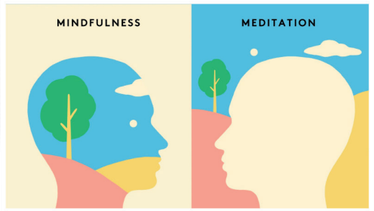
Title: Mindful wellbeing

Key insights:

In a world that puts us under continuous stress, requiring us more and more co-operation, emotional intelligence is a great resource. Schools are slowly integrating mindfulness and empathy practices in their curriculum, teaching kids how to take care of themselves and others. How to understand and communicate emotions. Wellbeing is not only physical anymore, but also emotional and mental.
Children need to learn from a young age how to cope with their own stress in order to survive the next crisis.

Sources:

Images:

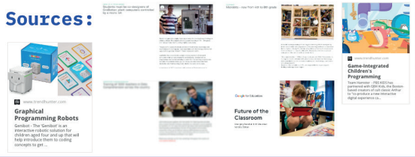


Title: Computational thinking

Key insights:

The OECD has highlighted that students entering schools in 2018 will face future challenges that can't even be predicted today.7 There's a call for teacher training to ensure students are ready for the increasingly digital economy - with only one in five Swedish math teachers possessing knowledge of coding, Stockholm is funding coding lessons for approximately 3500 (mainly math) teachers.
The Minister of Education in Denmark stresses that instead of being "users of technology", students have to learn to be "creative makers."9 8 And 2018 saw the development of an education technology (edtech) action plan in Denmark; this plan seeks to improve digital competencies for students and educators, as well as make better use of ICT in teaching

Sources:



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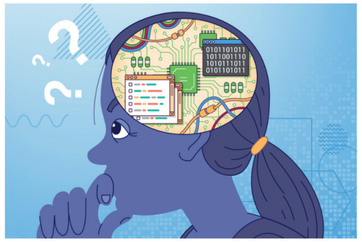


Title: Cultural diversity

Key insights:

On the Nordic agenda, we can find also cultural diversity and integration. On the one hand, the Nordic region aims to increase the collaboration and exchange among the nordic countries.
For example, one of the goals is to introduce the teaching of another or more Nordic countries into K-12 curriculums.
On the other hand, these countries are facing higher rates of immigration, resulting in a more diverse population. These numbers lead Denmark and the rest of the Nordic region to face and take care of an interracial integration problem that is starting to surge.

Sources:

Images:

Title: Collaborative learning spaces

Key insights:

In Scandinavian schools, the teacher is not left alone in the educational missions. The walls, classrooms, equipment, garden, and halls are designed to support teachers and learners in their journey, more and more. Particularly, space is studied and build so that it can facilitate collaboration and different ways of learning and working.

Sources:

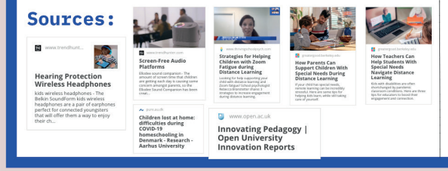
Images:

Title: Zoom fatigue

Key insights:

Online learning has tiring consequences on kids that goes from feeling disengaged with the learning, to feeling tired and stressed about learning.
As a consequence, teachers are looking for innovative pedagogical methods; parents look for suggestions on how to handle the situation to professionals; new less intrusive and kid-friendly technologies are emerging to support kids in having a better online learning experience.

Sources:



Images:

Title: Digital responsibility

Key insights:

Kids nowadays have wide access to digital online services. This allows them to have more resources and possibilities; at the same time, it exposes them to more risks and threats. Negative experiences include: encountering inappropriate content; overuse; commercial pressure; unwanted contact; cyberbullying; physical and mental health impact.
In order to protect children, we need to teach them the fundamentals on how to be secure on the internet. Different organizations and schools are integrating this subject, in order for kids to be responsible and aware citizens of the web.
These programs aim to enhance overall a healthy relationship between technology and kids.

Sources:

Title: tech-enabled heathcare

Key insights:

An abundance of new tools and technologies—especially in data analytics and virtual reality—are aiding the shift in healthcare and insurance from legacy systems to more human-centered practices. Machine learning applied to healthcare data can potentially reduce costs by helping to better predict clinical trial success through an increased understanding of drug candidates and efficacy likelihoods. Right now, startups and tech companies are the early entrants in this new space, but providers, insurers and pharmaceutical companies need to take note.
The surge in virtual care during the COVID-19 pandemic has boosted interest in digital health tools for children, especially using remote monitoring devices and virtual specialty care to help track children's chronic conditions at home. But historically, there hasn't been a focus on children.
Wearables Make Medical Care Fun for Children

Sources:

https://scenario.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CIFS_Delphi-Study-on-a-Post-COVID-19-World.pdf

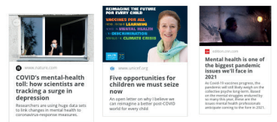
Images:

Title: un-tabooing mental health

Key insights:

The current pandemic has represented a great source of stress for the majority of us, kids included. However, the current situation has made us also more aware and more open to talking about mental health. Considering well-being non only physical, but also mental and emotional.
In such a way, mental health, that has been considered a taboo in many contexts, has been addressed in a more open way, both in formal and informal situations.
With children and young people facing so much challenge to their mental well-being, this pandemic is also an opportunity to both talk about and learn about mental health among adults and children.

Sources:



Images:

Title: preventive healthcare

Key insights:

The fundamental shift from sick care to preventive health requires a movement that will inspire and activate people across the Nordics.
The nordic health 2030 manifesto says "We must repurpose and redesign the provision of preventive health services to secure the long-term prosperity of the Nordic population. We must encourage systems that enable individuals as points-of-care. We must reward the sustainable stakeholder proportionately for their provision of preventive health services, while still incentivizing those who provide high-quality sick care"
and "The health of the individual is inseparable from the health of the ecosystem. To take proactive responsibility for our health is to contribute towards planetary care"

Sources:

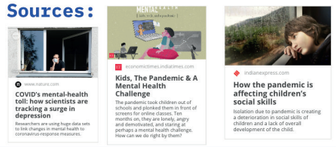
Images:

Title: Lack of social exchange

Key insights:

Studies and surveys conducted so far in the pandemic consistently show that young people, rather than older people, are most vulnerable to increased psychological distress, perhaps because their need for social interactions are stronger. “Kids have got the boring part of the school at home — the class. The fun part of the school — playing and interacting with schoolmates — has been taken away from them”. There is a disruption in the child’s cognitive and emotional stability which could in turn create a harmful effect on the child’s mental health. This further contributes to the lack of overall development in the child.
It is important for educational institutions to not only focus on textbook, but also make it their duty to incorporate the skills lacking at the moment in the curriculum

Sources:



Images:

Title: **Diffused kids anxiety and stress**

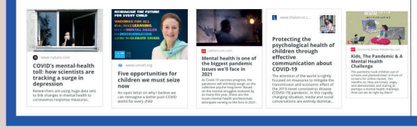
Key insights:

Mental health issues are not expected to disappear any time soon.
Generally, kids are struggling with:

- self-managing themselves
- social anxiety
- concentration issues
- tiredness
- boredom
- stress

Moreover, less privileged kids are experiencing way worse negative effect of the pandemic. Therefore, adults need to make children aware of privilege and diversity.

Sources:



Images:

Appendix F - 5 scenarios narratives

SCENARIO 1
THEME-BASED

IN A SENTENCE:

Stupid Startup Studio pilots 'pop-up' innovation partnerships with large companies, overtaking slow institutional bureaucracy

VALUE PROPOSITION: We partner up with large value-driven companies on 'pop-up' theme-based projects to innovate, co-design and launch new businesses fast.

INTRODUCTION: In a VUCA world, staying ahead of the curve is not only important but also necessary. Fast-paced and complex conditions mean that organizational models for innovation that were viable yesterday are outdated today and will be obsolete tomorrow. In order to influence any social impact in a society in constant flux, innovators need to work actively to detect and anticipate change. This need to transform adversity into creative challenges calls for new models – and that is exactly what Stupid Startup Studio is.

Stupid Startup Studio is a startup studio that partners up with large value-driven companies that are looking to invest in innovation in their field. The partnership lasts a limited time period to be agreed upon between the partners – what is referred to as a 'pop-up' partnership. Together, the company and the studio co-develop a theme and identify the opportunity space to innovate in. The startup studio and the company will then co-design and innovate within the chosen themes, launching businesses fast. The large company finances the project, and in return gets to co-own the innovative businesses they co-develop.

Large companies need help from a small startup studio to innovate because their institutional size and complexity makes it hard for them to adapt and innovate fast and because they lack mechanisms to go from ideas to implemented solutions; the slow cogs of their bureaucratic systems stifle innovation. Stupid Startup Studio is tightening the innovation gears for these companies through this partnership, as they function external to the company and can design and launch open innovation fast.

SCENARIO 1
THEME-BASED

As mentioned earlier, the partnership has a co-defined theme to direct the innovation process. The startup studio team supports the process for defining what the theme and what the strategic opportunity spaces to innovate inside this theme will be – this means looking at signals for what will be important in the future, in order to innovate solutions to problems that will be relevant into the future.

This 'best of both worlds' model allows for both the benefits of working in partnership with the company – being able to co-design with them, having access to their expert knowledge in the field, to potential users to test with, to their research and to the possibility of conducting more research with their support – as well as the benefits of being a small and agile studio, so it can innovate and launch ideas fast and openly without having to go through slow institutional processes.

IN A SENTENCE:

Stupid Startup Studio: a non-profit startup creator challenging systemic corporate thinking by launching regenerative and sustainable businesses for kids

VALUE PROPOSITION: Using a non-profit model, we partner up with private and public funds to launch startups with a focus on social impact for children and youth, not corporate gain.

INTRODUCTION: The startup ecosystem is heavy with outdated thinking. It rewards quick exits and shareholder profit over shared prosperity. Instead of focusing on how to innovate to address pressing problems, entrepreneurs are forced to worry about sales and attracting investors in order to stay afloat and survive. In fact, no matter how brilliant a startup's idea is, if it can't be made profitable or scalable it will not be a successful business in the competitive landscape for startups. Much too often, profit leaves out other markers of value, and many good, impactful ideas fall through the cracks because of lack of funding. The current startup ecosystem is driven by a fixation for a constant economic growth which cannot by its nature confront the many social and environmental challenges we face today.

Stupid Startup Studio is a non-profit organization working in collaboration with private and public funds to pilot a new model for innovation – one that develops ideas based on their social impact, and not based on their return on investment (ROI). These ideas focus around how to improve children and youth's lives, well into the future. They are launched into holistic, regenerative and sustainable businesses as an attempt to challenge existing systemic thinking and to explore new ways of doing business. It is their hope that venture capital firms and investors will see this model as an example of how to innovate sustainably, meeting today and tomorrow's critical issues, and shift to it eventually.

SCENARIO 2
NON-PROFIT

When Stupid Startup Studio says that they focus on impact, it doesn't mean that they don't believe that these ideas will be successful or scaleable. What it means is that their operating model follows a strategy focused on impact over economic profit, with the understanding that often they go hand in hand. This process involves a rigorously developed impact strategy that translates impact visions into key quantifiable metrics that the startups will be measured against as they are developed and launched.

Stupid Startup Studio counts with an experienced design team skilled in building brands and businesses, which will support the process of designing and developing ideas, and making them appealing for their target audience. Also, the studio's expertise in design thinking, strategic thinking and future thinking support their innovative process of researching opportunity spaces to innovate in and designing and executing the strategy for the project. Finally, their experience developing, validating, prototyping and testing ideas ensures the startups' eventual success.

IN A SENTENCE:

Stupid Startup Studio democratises social impact by allowing its community to co-own it and co-govern it and the startups it develops

VALUE PROPOSITION: We innovate and build social impact businesses for kids that are funded through a shared ownership model that allows organizations and individuals to invest in them and be part of the community that shapes them.

INTRODUCTION: The current startup ecosystem rewards shareholder profit over shared prosperity. What this means is that startups are forced to chase "quick exits", and thus do not have the bandwidth to develop into sustainable businesses that cultivate communities and impart social change. The success of a startup depends too much on who has financial wealth and not nearly enough on the social capital of our communities. What if startups could mature and grow in a way where working towards an "exit" event didn't mean the end of their social impact mission? To achieve an equitable and sustainable startup ecosystem, new ownership models are needed – and that is what Stupid Startup Studio is piloting.

Stupid Startup Studio works to transition from large investor ownership to co-ownership by a community that believes in the innovation the studio is putting forward, and wants to be part of shaping it. In this way, it is disrupting the startup ecosystem by delivering rewards to those that make the startups valuable, rather than to those who are investing to just make profit. Stupid Startup Studio advocates for a system where startups spread wealth, support and ideas across communities.

Stupid Startup Studio is a start-up builder that creates startups with a focus on improving the lives of children and youth. It functions as a company with distributed ownership and collective governance. The community of co-owners does not just participate in the crowd-funding of the startup studio, but also in the crowd-sourcing of the ideas, themes, and design processes it engages in to launch startups for kids; its members are integral and active players of the studio process. The community is made up of a combination of end-users, employees, partner organizations, and the general public, and it is built with diversity, equity and inclusivity in mind; for the studio, it is crucial to ensure the design process and resulting businesses embody these values and actually 'walk the walk' when it comes to imparting positive social change. Throughout the process, it is Stupid Startup Studio's goal to foster open and constructive energy in the community and to honor the contributions made by its members.

The Startup Studio's operating model is as follows: first, the studio itself is crowdfunded by the community that will co-own and co-govern it. Next, the studio crowdsources innovative ideas with the community and develops them in the studio to launch them. Finally, when the studio launches a business, members of the community are offered to invest in it first, at a low rate, before it exits to a new community or to market.

SCENARIO 3
CROWDSOURCED

IN A SENTENCE:

Stupid Startup Studio: the spinning wheel of a large venture capital fund

VALUE PROPOSITION: We build and develop early stage ideas fast to spin them into our venture capital partner's innovation funnel.

INTRODUCTION: At the early stage of venture investing, financial metrics are very hard to come by for startups; those seeking this kind of funding have usually not gone to market yet, and there are few ways to accurately model future potential returns. This makes it hard for venture investors to predict whether an idea is a good one and is market-fit. Furthermore, many of the ideas that are presented may not fit the specific funnel or mission of the venture capital (VC) fund, no matter how promising they are as a business in the long term. This is where Stupid Startup Studio comes in.

Stupid Startup Studio is the agile and playful way of doing corporate innovation. As a partner to a VC fund, it spins ideas quickly and tests and validates them by engaging users and investors from an early stage. This process sets these ideas up to fit right into the VC fund's innovation funnel, which the startup studio is familiar with. To ensure these ideas are viable and market-fit, Stupid Startup Studio has its own funnel and stage-gating process, which is tailored to feed into those of the VC fund.

The VC fund fuels the startup studio with all it needs to operate and innovate, in exchange for the fast and open innovation that it brings – namely shaping, validating and communicating businesses to prepare them for the VC's investment.

Stupid Startup Studio develops two types of ideas. First, it receives ideas

SCENARIO 4
VC PARTNERSHIP

from the VC fund that require developing, testing, validating and branding. Second, the studio also develops their own ideas to feed into the VC fund's funnel. To do this work, the studio engages in service development and design, experience and play design, actor facilitation and co-creation, sensemaking processes, and communication and branding – all of which they have years of experience in through the work of their parent company, Stupid Studio. Also, Stupid Startup Studio works to ensure ideas are not just market fit, but also future fit, through their Sensible Futures Framework.

IN A SENTENCE:

Stupid Startup Studio: the startup factory launching ideas fast

VALUE PROPOSITION: We conceive, develop and launch startups fast with the goal of learning, experimenting and building a portfolio of launched ideas.

INTRODUCTION: Stupid Startup Studio is a new venture builder looking to learn. Their goal is to eventually focus on creating startups with a focal point on kids and youth, but first they acknowledge that they need to understand the rules of the game. And what better way for a studio to find its own way than starting small?

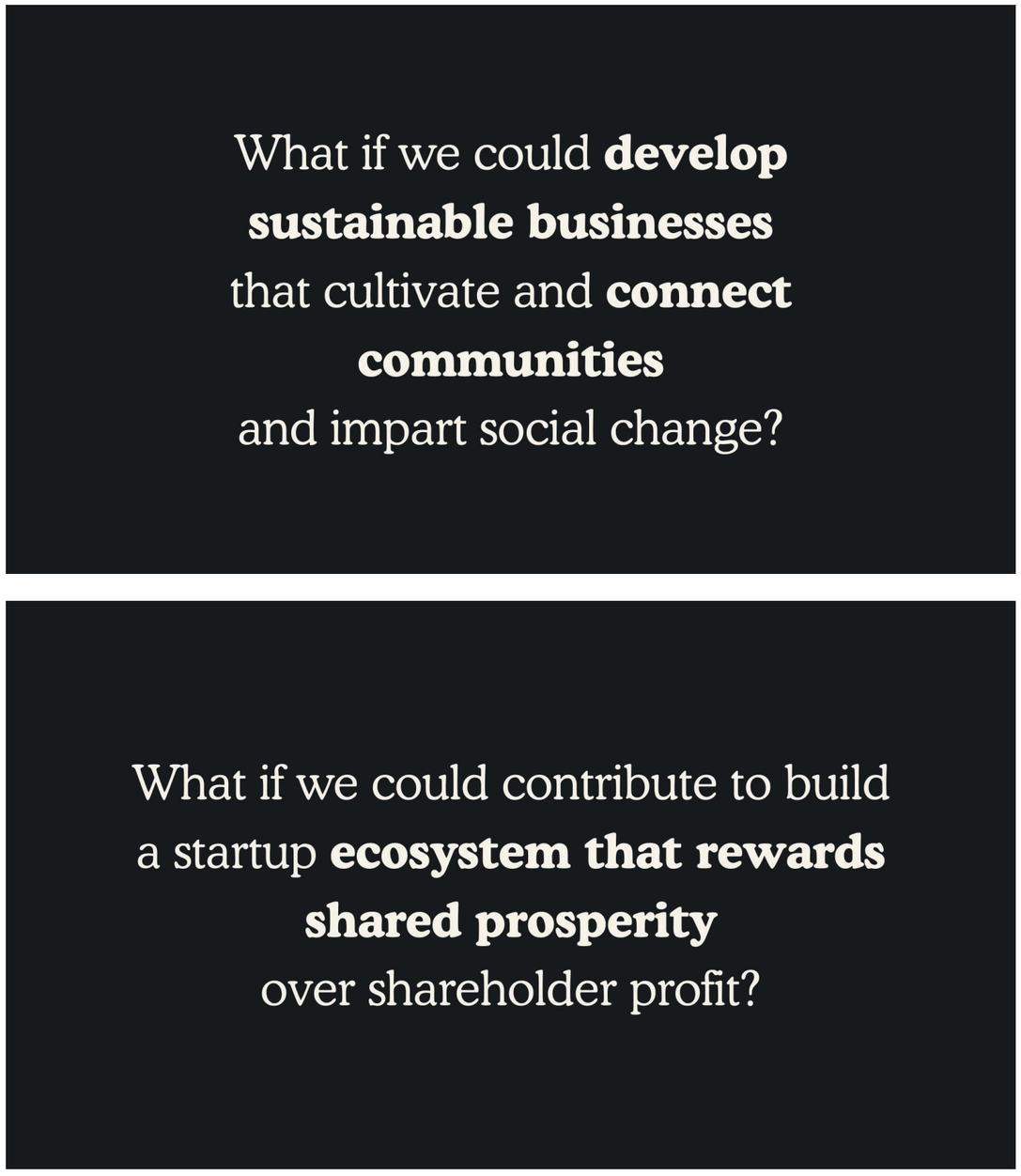
To reach the long-term goal of impacting children and youth, the studio has decided to first focus solely on developing and launching startups, to better understand how this process works. This means that the first startups the studio will launch will be more general in their themes, all working towards the eventual shift of a theme of children and youth.

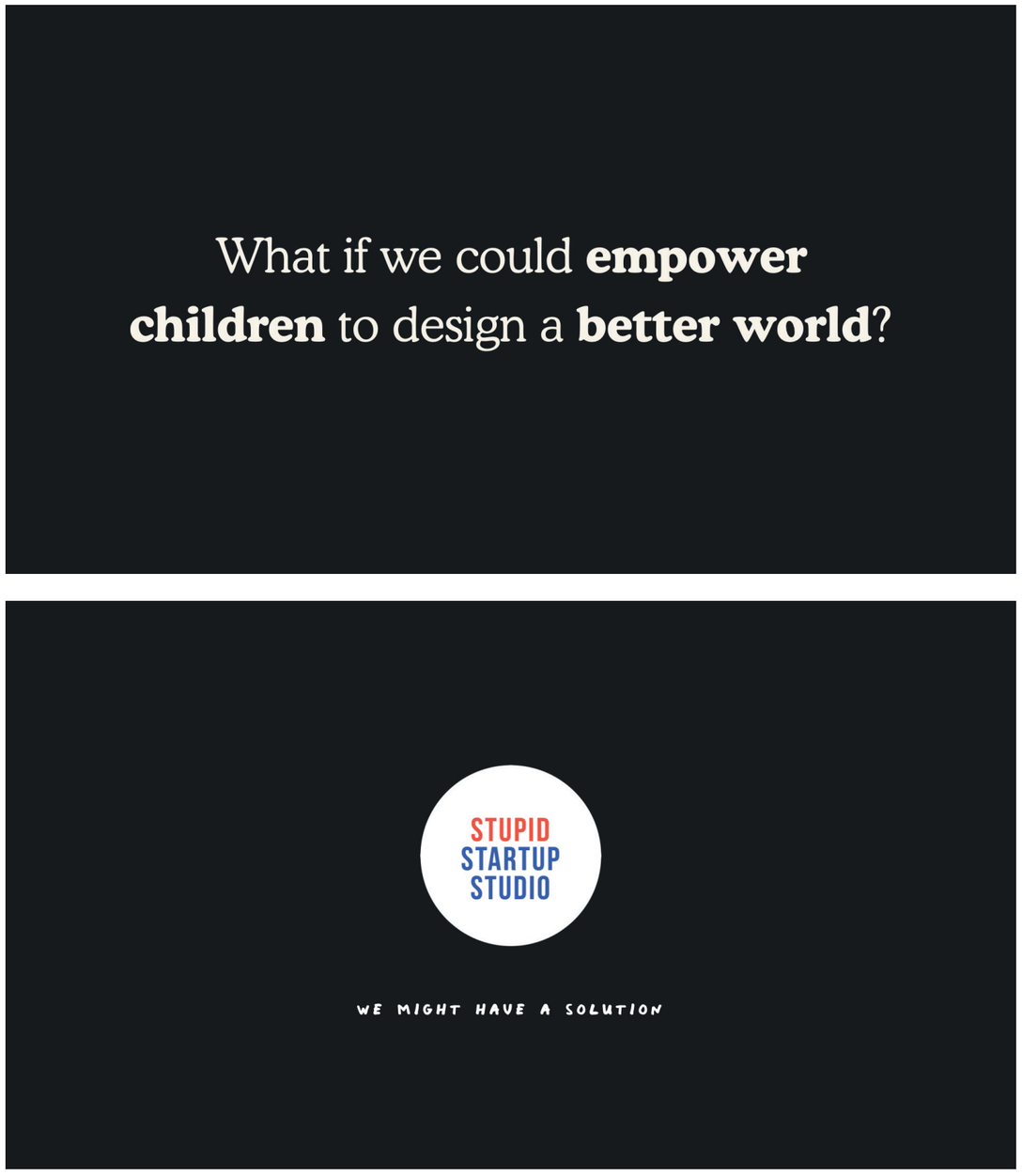
Without having to go too far, the Stupid Startup Studio team and its partners already have a large pool of business ideas to work with. These ideas will be developed, tested, validated and launched by the studio – all using the lean process of a creative agency. The ideas that are not market-fit will be discarded or reworked. This fast pipeline allows the studio to build a 'how to launch a startup' playbook for internal purposes, as well as to refine its innovation funnel and stage-gating process. Also, it will provide the studio with a portfolio of launched businesses and revenue from those in the long term.

SCENARIO 5
ORGANIC GROWTH

To sustain this organic business model, the Stupid Startup Studio team functions as a consultancy, selling their services in service development and design, business entrepreneurship, experience and play design, actor facilitation and co-creation, future forecasting, sensemaking processes, and communication and branding – all of which they have years of experience working in through their parent company, Stupid Studio.

Appendix G - *Slide deck example of one scenario: Crowdsourced*





STUPID STUDIO

"Stupid Startup Studio democratises social impact by allowing the community to co-own it and co-govern it, as well as the startups it develops"

SSS

YES, we can!

STUPID STUDIO

That sounds good, right?

STUPID STUDIO

WE ARE WORKING ON IT AS WE SPEAK!

STUPID STUDIO

WE ALREADY HAVE A TEAM

Daniel
Founder

Marialuisa
Service Designer

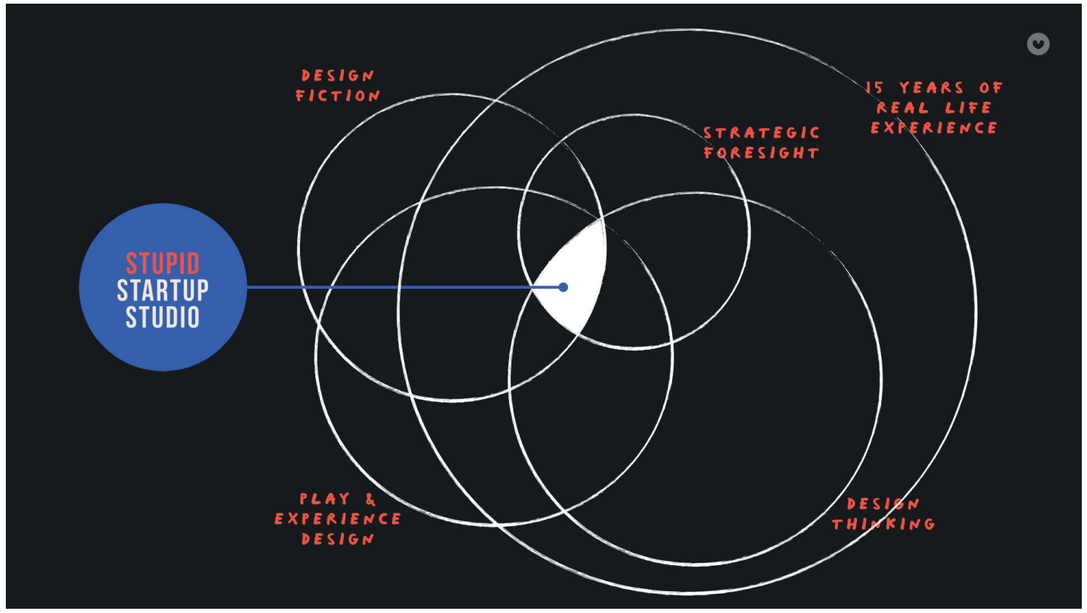
Amalia
Service Designer

Simona
Service Designer

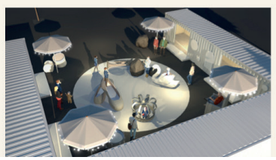
STUPID STUDIO

With a strong support

SSS
We are ready to play!



Co-creation
Marketing
Business Dev.
Design
Communication
Strategy
Trend & Forecast
Prototyping
Project Management
Selling & Pitch
Brand Dev.



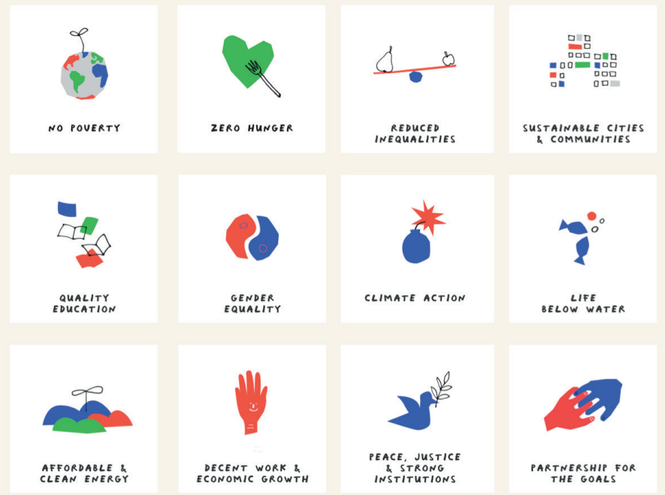
SSS

Stupid designs with
and for people

STUPID STUDIO

The Sustainable Development Goals

The SDG framework is a recurring frame of reference for Stupid work. It helps us set goals and gauge whether or not we are addressing real impact issues.



STUPID STUDIO

Stupid friends and partners

We choose our playmates with care.

Each and every company we engage with has a **clear impact agenda**, and we are proud to be working with these **bold organisations that take their purpose** and meaning seriously.

FOLKETINGET
IKEA
DET KGL. TEATER
LEGO
Creative Play Lab
Sheep INC.
UNDERVISNINGS MINISTERIET
GRUNDFOS
ASTRALIS GROUP

STUPID STUDIO

NOW IS THE RIGHT TIME TO MAKE AN IMPACT...

The current **technology and venture capital structure is broken:** it rewards quantity over quality, consumption over creation, quick exits over sustainable growth

STUPID STUDIO

WHAT DOES SSS DO

SSS innovates and builds social impact businesses funded through a **shared ownership model** that allows organizations and individuals to invest in them and **be part of the community** that shapes them.

SSS

What does
Stupid Startup Studio do?

STUPID STUDIO

WHAT DOES SSS DO

SSS turns the tables to focus on the **social capital of communities**, rather than on the financial capital of a select few.

STUPID STUDIO

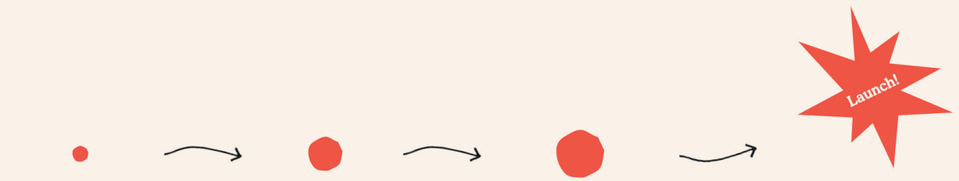
OUR FOCUS

Children & Youth

Fotograf: Mouneb Taim, Syrien

STUPID STUDIO

OPERATING MODEL



Community Building

Creating communities, focusing on common issues, driven by common values

Crowdsourcing ideas

Crowdsourcing innovative ideas in the community

Studio Process

Co-creating and testing solutions involving the community

Exit

Startup exit to Community!

Idea
Idea
Idea
Idea
Idea
Idea
Idea

WE OPERATE WITH EARLY STAGE IDEAS

It works!

STUPID STUDIO

WE WANT TO DEMOCRATIZE INNOVATION

SSS democratizes social impact: **everybody can invest** in innovation, and SSS will bring the next level with their expertise

STUPID STUDIO

OUR KEY ACTIVITIES

Problem framing
Our holistic research aims to identify urgent problems affecting our planet and society, now and in the future.

Co-creation and concept development
We co-create and develop impactful solutions involving real people affected by those problems.

Concept validation
We build low-fi prototypes in order to test and validate concepts, at the very early stages.

Branding and communication
We design evocative brand identities based on our community's values.

Strategic guidance
We make sure ideas are not only impactful but also financially viable and able to compete in the market.

but just 1 year
from now...

STUPID STUDIO

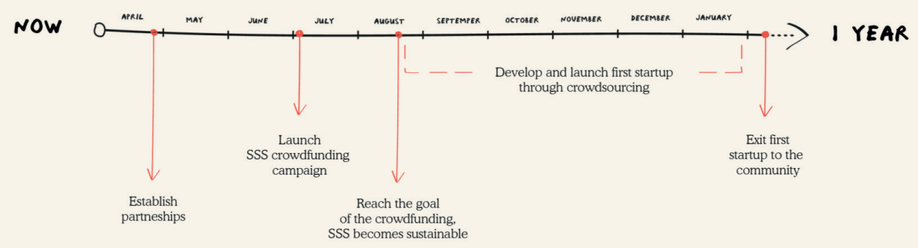
OUR AMBITIONS

- SSS and Stupid Studio have merged into one: its operating model has become a reference for innovation across Scandinavia. The community that owns it has become larger, diversifying the crowdsourcing process.
- Our team has grown, and we have systematized our innovation funnel.
- We have a comprehensive portfolio, and we co-own several startups that are affecting positive change for children and youth.
- We develop 30 startups per year.
- We systematically identify and crowdsource strong opportunity spaces, focusing on user needs and trends.
- Our SSS is owned by the community, this includes private and public players who want to invest in innovation.

10 years
from now

STUPID STUDIO

WE WANT TO RUN AN IDEA FACTORY



STUPID STUDIO

HOW MANY IDEAS?

3 ideas in the **first year**

STUPID STUDIO

OPPORTUNITY SPACES

Future Creativity

Future Learning

Future Resilience

STUPID STUDIO

To be filled by the client

COMMUNITY BUILDING

STUPID STUDIO

To be filled by the client

FIGURES

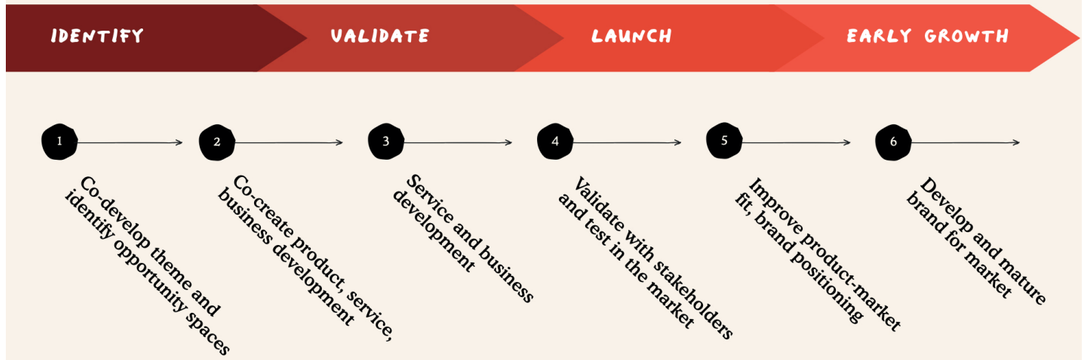
STUPID STUDIO

OUR CURRENT CAPABILITIES

- **Network** of designers, innovators, change-makers, researchers
- **Resources** to validate ideas, develop them, prototype and test them
- **Experience** in leadership and talent matching and mentoring
- **Tools and methodology:** design thinking, strategic thinking and future thinking
- **Sensible Futures** community and framework
- A **team of people** eager to make a difference and drive social impact

STUPID STUDIO

IDEA AS A RESULT OF CROWDSOURCING



SSS
Innovation funnel

STUPID STUDIO

To be filled by the client

YOUR CONTRIBUTION CAN BE VALUABLE

what we can offer

STUPID STUDIO

To be filled by the client

OUR PROMISE FOR OUR COMMUNITY

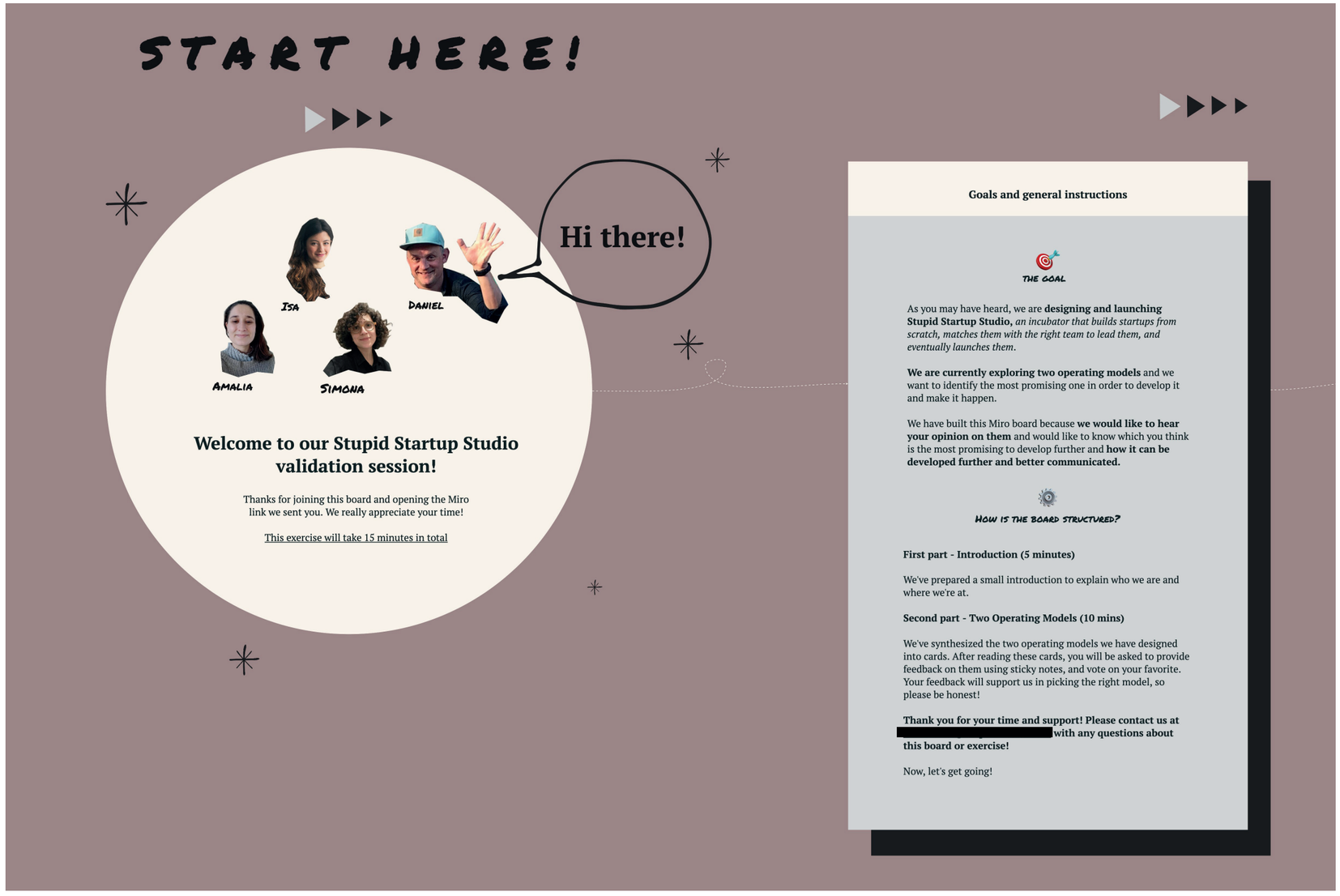
…make a promise, make it appealing

To be filled by the client

WE WANT OUR DREAMS TO COME TRUE

• • •

Appendix H - *Concept validation Miro*



Part I

Introduction

Follow this thread for an introduction and context on our project

Task: Reading
Time: 5 minutes

What are we doing?

We're building a startup studio as an extension of our existing design and innovation studio, Stupid Studio.






We want to create an idea factory!

Our Startup Studio will create and launch positive-impact businesses which hold principles of sustainability, democracy and equal access at the heart of what they do. Social and environmental impact matter more to us than 'quick exits' or large return on investment (ROI).

The team will be semi-permanent and will work internally for the Studio to develop early-stage ideas, match them with the right talent, launch them, and support them into their 'exit' investment.

Introduction

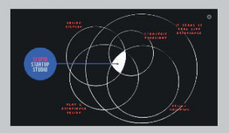
We want to develop startups that commit to the three Ps, with a focus on building partnerships to make it happen sustainably.

PLANET + PEOPLE + PROFIT

We have the right resources to start with

NETWORK

CAPABILITIES



EXPERIENCE

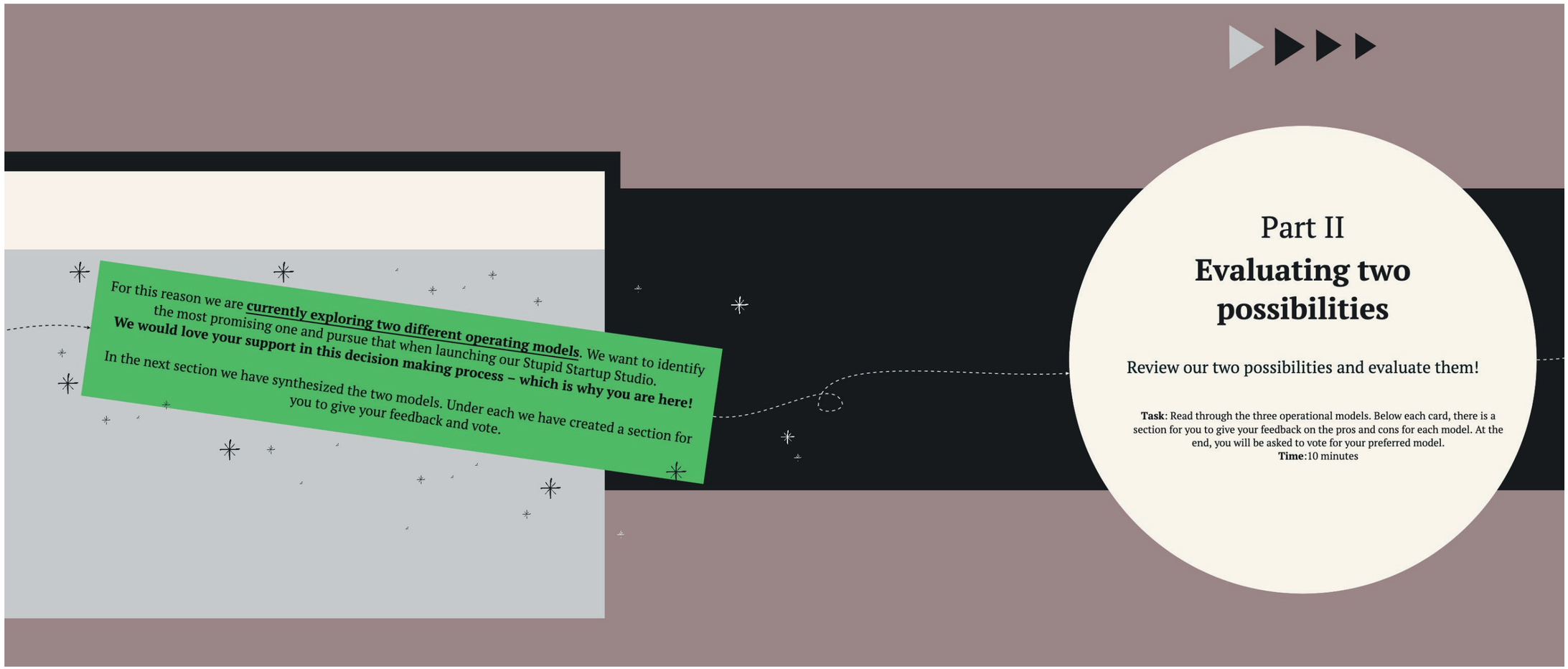
TEAM

Stupid Startup Studio will provide these key activities when building startups

- **Problem framing and opportunity mapping**
- **Co-creation, concept development, problem framing**
- **User research & concept validation with stakeholders**
- **Branding and communication**
- **Strategic guidance**

We want to challenge traditional systems of doing business by launching regenerative startups with people and for people.

We aim to develop startups with triple bottomline: People, planet and profit.


For this reason we are currently exploring two different operating models. We want to identify the most promising one and pursue that when launching our Stupid Startup Studio.
We would love your support in this decision making process – which is why you are here!
In the next section we have synthesized the two models. Under each we have created a section for you to give your feedback and vote.
Part II
Evaluating two possibilities
Review our two possibilities and evaluate them!
Task: Read through the three operational models. Below each card, there is a section for you to give your feedback on the pros and cons for each model. At the end, you will be asked to vote for your preferred model.
Time:10 minutes

#1

OPERATING MODEL #1

Through strategic partnerships with value-driven organisations, we co-develop startups addressing a particular problem space

TASK

Read the explanation card for the operating model. Under the card, you'll find a space where you are asked to evaluate the pros and cons of this model.

Value proposition

We form strategic, yet temporary, partnerships with companies on a specific theme or problem space. In these partnerships, we co-develop and launch businesses fast to solve identified problems. The companies we launch will be co-owned initially.

Partnership topology

Temporary partnership with value-driven companies that invest in innovation to drive positive impact in their field by launching new business ideas fast.

Focus areas:

Co-defined theme and opportunity spaces based on the partnership's strategic objectives.

Ownership structure of startups:

Shared ownership of ventures between our Studio and the partner.

Startup Stupid Studio Funding:

Partner(s) funds the collaboration for the period of collaboration.

⚠ FEEDBACK SECTION

TASK

Write on an empty sticky note below: click on it and write.
If you want to pick a new one you can find sticky notes in the vertical bar on the left of your miro screen, fourth from the top. Remember you can resize them to make them smaller/bigger, and you can zoom in and out of the screen using your mouse/screenpad.

What are the main pros and cons from a possible partner's POV that you see in this operating model?

Pros	Cons
	

#2

OPERATING MODEL #2

Through a crowdfunded model that utilizes a bottom-up, decentralized model of governance, we want to empower the diverse and open community of co-owners to play a key role in the social impact startups we launch.

TASK

Read the explanation card for the operating model. Under the card, you'll find a space where you are asked to evaluate pros and cons of this model.

Value proposition

We innovate and build social impact businesses that are funded through a model of shared ownership, allowing organizations and individuals to invest in them and be part of the community that shapes them.

Partnership topology

The studio is co-owned by people and organizations who are active participants in the studio's process of building, growing, and governing the startups. This community is built with diversity and inclusivity in mind.

Focus areas:

Theme and opportunity spaces co-defined with the community and future users.

Stupid Startup Studio funding:

Its co-ownership is open to anyone who wants to be part of the community through their investment. Owners can opt-out by selling their share.

Ownership structure of startups:

Each startup is crowdfunded by the community that will use it and cares about its growth. Co-owners of the studio have first access at investing to be a co-owner of each startup, at a reduced price.

⚠ FEEDBACK SESSION

TASK

Write on an empty sticky note below: click on it and write.
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What are the main pros and cons from a possible partner's POV that you see in this operating model?

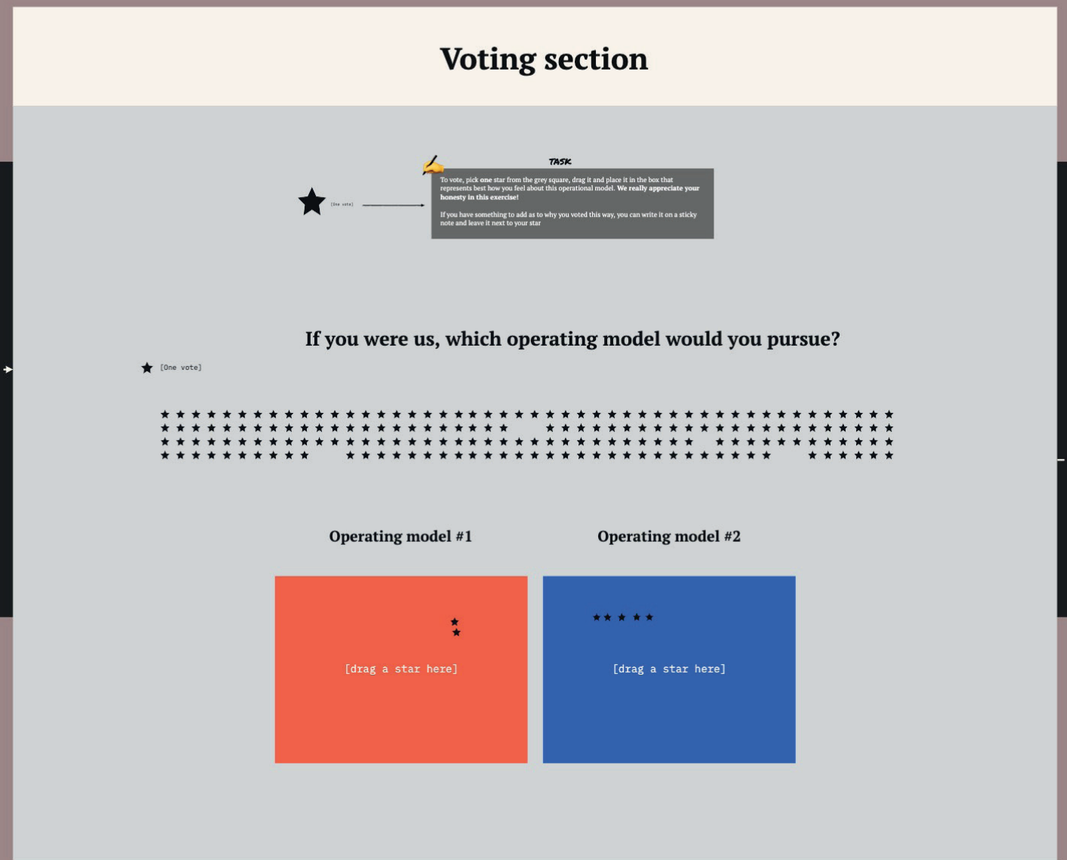
Pros	Cons
	

Part III

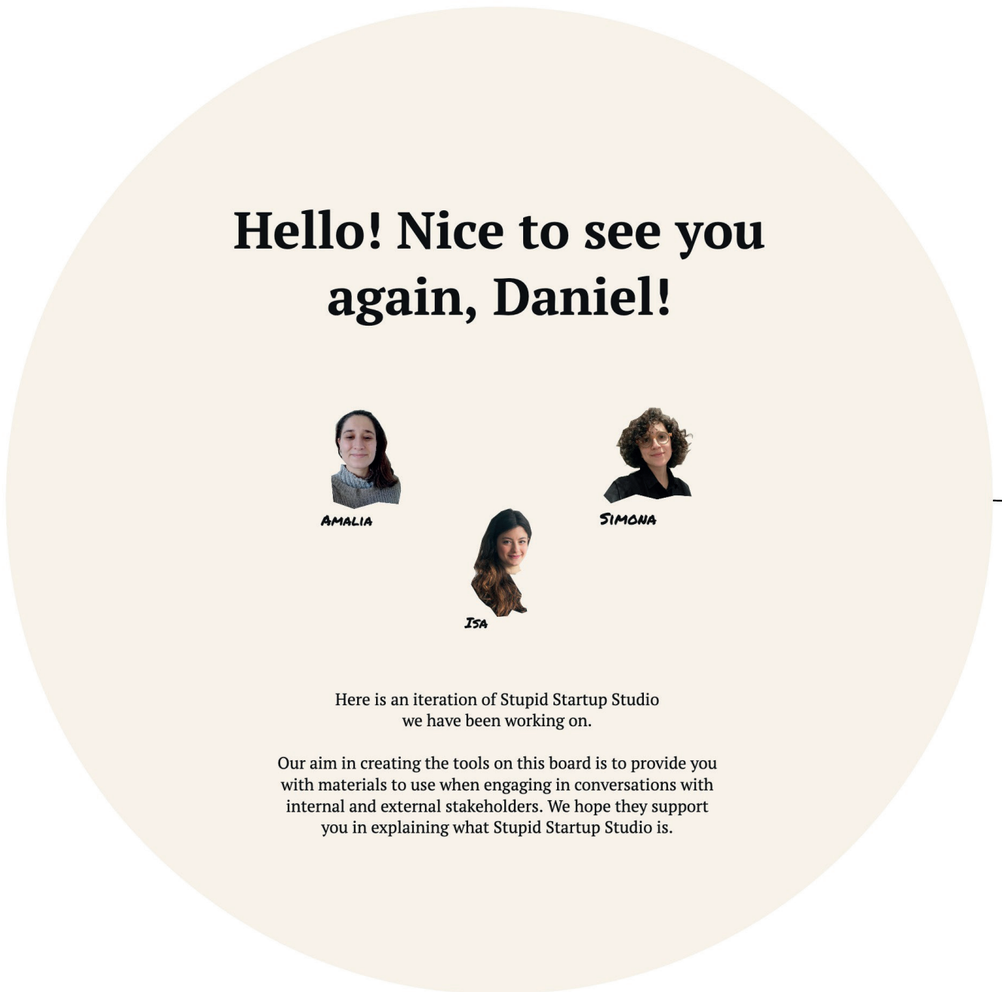
Vote for your favorite

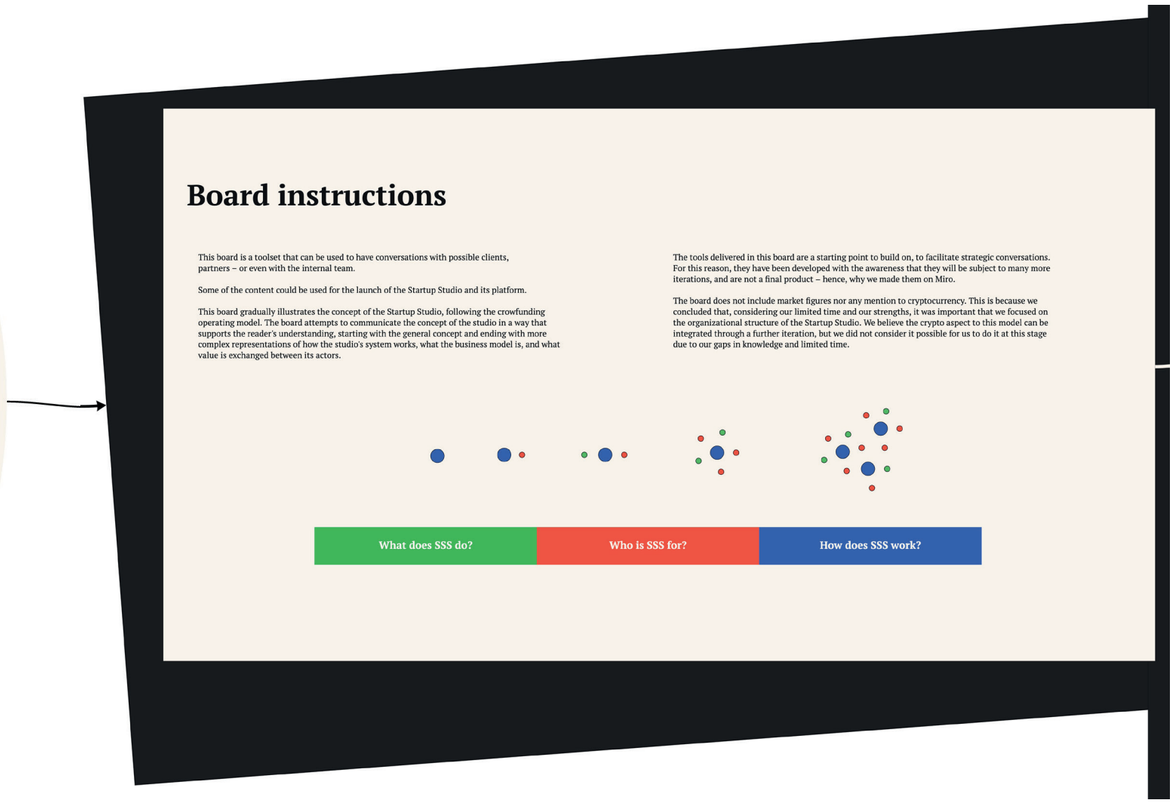
Last but not least, we would like to ask you to put yourself in our shoes and vote for the model you would decide to launch if you were us.

Task: Pick a star and use it to vote on the operating model that you would pursue.
Time: 2 mins



Appendix I - *Concept presentation and deliver on Miro*





Stupid Startup Studio

A democratic model to build new impactful businesses

Stupid Startup Studio is a new innovation program designed and launched by Stupid Studio, a danish creative and innovation studio.

What is a Startup Studio?

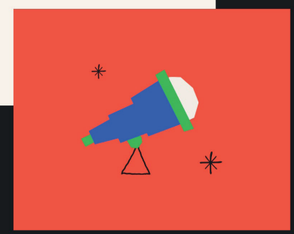
Despite being a rapidly growing model, Startup Studios remain widely unknown among the public and investors.

For this reason, we find it important to clarify what they are.

A Startup Studio creates companies from scratch using their internal and permanent team. They build up a few startups at a time, and match them with the right team and co-founder to run them after their exit.

As an "Idea Factory", a Startup Studio focuses on de-risking projects before investing significant amounts of time and capital in developing the solution. This de-risking is also facilitated through its ideation methodology and the possibility of recycling teams and ideas easily.

Though its innovation process, a Startup Studio regularly develops and launches businesses that fits its set innovation goals.



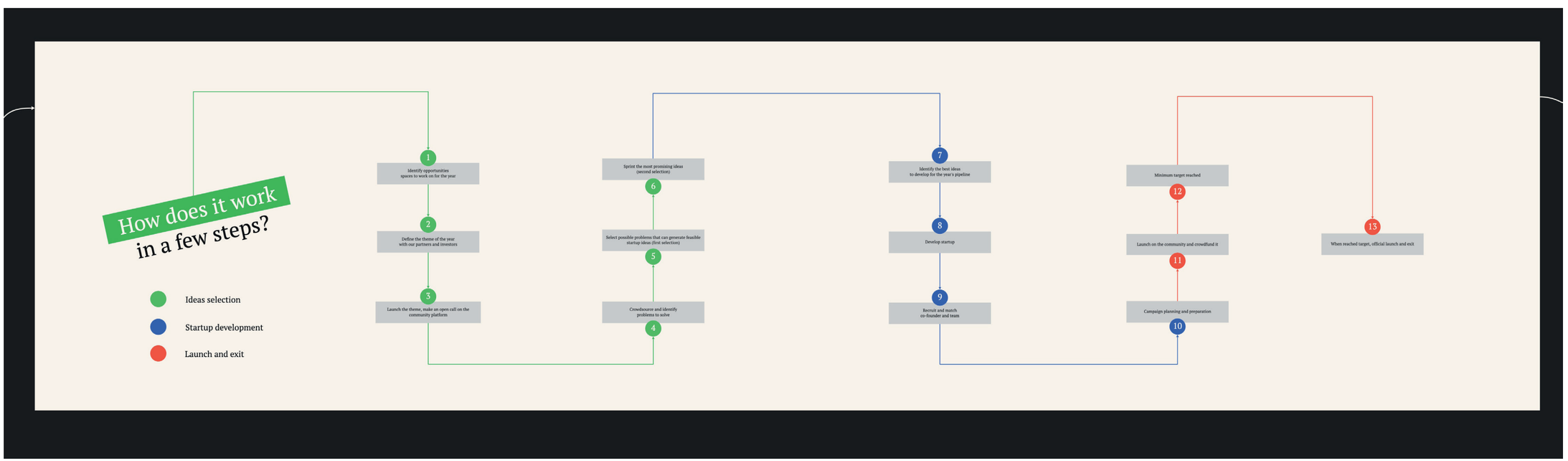

STUPID STARTUP STUDIO
Okay, so we're a Startup Studio. That's great.
But... we want to go further and rethink the whole innovation and entrepreneurship landscape!
Stupid Startup Studio follows a crowdfunding operating model
We want to democratize the way of doing business innovation
What is special about Stupid Startup Studio?
Our crowdfunding model allows everyone to be involved in our innovation process; invest in the studio; and fund our startups.
Stupid Startup Studio is a platform that enables a bottom-up approach: we welcome everyone's ideas into our innovation funnel, and we want people who care about our ideas to be part of shaping them with their insight and knowledge. We aspire to change the narrative of the startup environment by building social impact businesses for people and with people.
Through a community platform, we want to enable everyone to:
• Contribute in developing impactful ideas by sharing their experience and insight with us
• Participate in the process of shaping ideas
• Propose ideas for us to develop
• Fund our Startups
• Become the talent that will run our startups
• Systemic and proved process of innovation shaped with investors
• Own a share on our startups

Mission

Stupid Startup Studio welcomes the public to participate in an online community-platform in order to shape the startups that the studio develops and launches.

Vision

Stupid Startup Studio wants to democratize entrepreneurship by empowering communities to participate in shaping and funding the businesses that address their needs.


How does it work
in a few steps?
Ideas selection
Startup development
Launch and exit
1
Identify opportunities
spaces to work on for the year
2
Define the theme of the year
with our partners and investors
3
Launch the theme, make an open call on the
community platform
4
Crowdsource and identify
problems to solve
5
Select possible problems that can generate feasible
startup ideas (first selection)
6
Sprint the most promising ideas
(second selection)
7
Identify the best ideas
to develop for the year's pipeline
8
Develop startup
9
Recruit and match
co-founder and team
10
Campaign planning and preparation
11
Launch on the community and crowdfund it
12
Minimum target reached
13
When reached target, official launch and exit

Who is Stupid Startup Studio for?

Goal
To define the SSS offerings and operating model, we need to define the stakeholders involved in the Startup Studio system.

We imagine the following content could be used to build a SSS platform, to communicate what the studio offers to each segment.

Outcome
We have identified the groups of people involved in Stupid Startup Studio. Specifically, we have categorized the groups into those who own startups; those who support SS initiatives; and those who commission just one of service (activity) from SSS.

Clients:
Startup studio ownership

Definition:

Clients are the actors who own Stupid Startup Studio startups, or hire part of the studio's innovation process.

Key offerings to Clients:

- Lower risk profile than investing in one startup
- Increased return on investment (compared to other innovation units).
- Ability to influence the project scope and decision making
- Possibility to buy one service package of the SSS to support their innovation funnel

The entrepreneurs

Who are they:
Entrepreneurs are people with a business-driven mindset, years of professional experience, and the will to lead a business. They have visionary skills and a natural leadership ability that is not just driven by profit. They are co-founders of the startups that the SSS has built.

What SSS offers them:
Once the Entrepreneur has taken leadership over a startup, SSS can support by matching them with the right team; supporting their and their team's onboarding process; introducing them to the right investors and partners; and supporting them to become the official Co-founders of our startups and scaling them further.

Typologies:
Former employees of corporations, change makers, innovators, leaders of a company, experienced young talent.

The investors

Who are they:
Investors are the people who invest their money in the startup studio, and in startups it develops. They have economic interest through their ownership, and they want to be part of the decision making process of an innovation unit.

What SSS offers them:
An investor who backs the SSS can invest in a diversified portfolio of high-quality, lower-risk companies incubated by proven entrepreneurs instead of investing in a collection of companies in which each is created and operated by a separate founder.

The investor has a say in the innovation process of the Startup Studio through their involvement in opportunity space mapping and yearly theme selection.

Typologies:
Impact investors, VCs, angel investors, foundations, SSS strategic partners

Special Case

The corporate client

Who are they:
The corporate client is a part of an innovation unit within a structured corporation. They have their company goals and vision to reach, they need to develop new businesses and they want someone else to develop for them without being caught up in the process. They need to outsource an innovation unit to speed up their process.

What SSS offers to them:
SSS offers corporate clients the possibility to develop a business idea in a quick way. With this arrangement, they are able to outsource external facilitators that can involve different departments to trigger better corporate innovation. Also, SSS offers them the possibility of having a say in the process.

Typologies:
Heads of innovation, Incubators, Big Companies

Special Case

The innovator

Who are they:
The innovator represents an organization that needs support for one stage of their innovation process – but does not want to invest in developing an entire startup. They need to outsource one specific activity to the Startup Studio.

What SSS offers them:
SSS offers innovators packages of service offerings that are part of its innovation funnel. For example, they could offer services such as opportunity space mapping; upvisting ideas; mentorship; and business development.

Typologies:
Current clients of Stupid Studio, value-driven companies, innovation programs, small businesses, etc.

Community members:
SSS initiatives supporters

General definition:
The Community members are the actors who are involved in the digital community of the SSS – people who believe in the Startup Studio and the startups it develops. They do not have an entrepreneurial spirit per se, but they want to contribute in developing better and more sustainable solutions for people with the aim of driving social impact. They want to share their experience and knowledge within a specific theme, field, and context, in order to get a project running. Sometimes, they also want to contribute financially to a project they believe in, to make it happen.

Key offerings for them:
• Opportunity to financially contribute to an idea.

• Opportunity to participate in co-designing (interviews, focus groups, feedback).

• Getting their needs and interests met through SSS solutions.

• Possibility to propose an idea for the SSS pipeline – and get equity in it if it is picked for development.

The 'Kickstarters'

Who are they:
Kickstarters are those who believe in an idea that Stupid Startup Studio is developing and want to support it. It is likely that this idea will address a specific user need they have identified in their everyday life. They support through their participation in co-designing an idea, and/or by contributing financially to it. They are passionate about the idea and they want to invest in transparent and democratic ways of doing businesses for people.

What SSS offers to them:
SSS offers kickstarters the possibility to financially contribute through the platform to fund the startups they believe in. Furthermore, SSS provides them with the opportunity to shape the idea by asking them to provide their knowledge and insights in processes such as naming, validating, interviews and prototyping. They will also have the option of interacting with the rest of the community, and of receiving newsletters with updates on the process and more special content.

Typologies:
People interested in the yearly theme. For example, if the theme is 'education', the Kickstarters will likely be educators, advocates of learning, and parents.

The 'Believers'

Who are they:
Believer have a great business idea – the kind of idea they would never have time to develop by themselves or just wouldn't do so because they lack entrepreneurial skills. They are passionate about a specific topic such as making, sustainability, and social impact. They don't want the responsibilities of running or investing in a business, but they want to see their idea be realized and would like to see if their idea could fit into it.

What SSS offers to them:
When SSS does the yearly open call for ideas, Believers can send their business idea in. If SSS picks and develops their idea, they will get equity in the business.

Typologies:
Creative people interested in the proposed theme.

Talents

Who are they:
Talents are people who be part of the team running a startup. They are passionate people that believe in SSS values and would like to be part of a startup with people who share the same values. They are also the ones always eager to challenge themselves, their skills and their knowledge.

What SSS offers to them:
Through SSS, Talents will be matched with their team and ecosystem to work on a startup. SSS will connect Talents with its network of innovators, to help them grow their startup sustainably. SSS will ensure that Talents are matched based on their personalities, skills, and backgrounds. This matching will be done in a way that ensures the synergy of the team and co-founder. Also, Talents will be matched with a startup based on whether they complement the startup's mission and vision – as well as its community of supporters and investors.

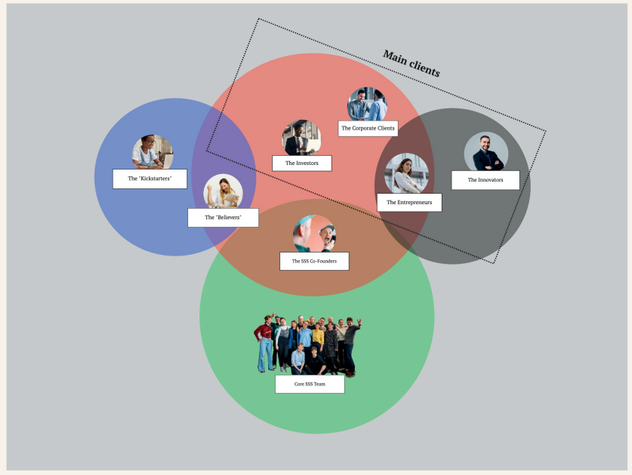
Typologies:
Creative people, preferably with experience in the startup environment.

The main actors in the SSS

Legend

- Actors who develop the startups
- Actors who own startup shares
- Actors who support SSS initiatives
- Actors who buy an SSS service

Crowdsourcing community



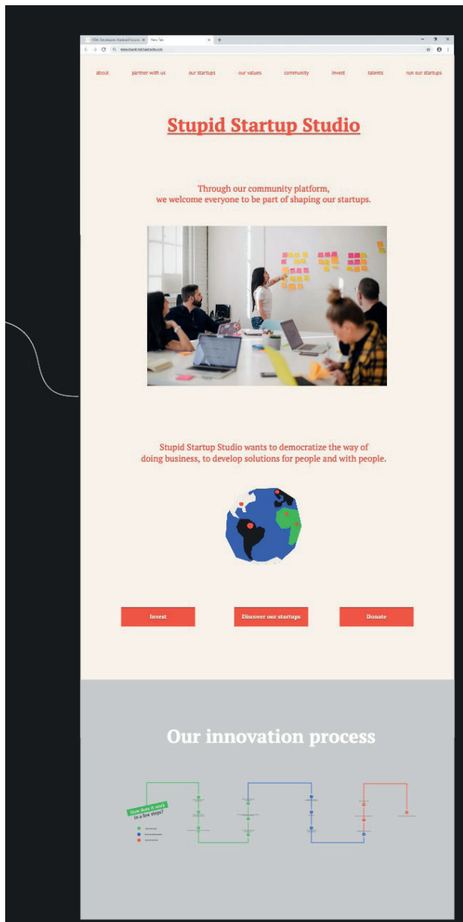
How does SSS work?

Goal

To show the ecosystem of the Startup Studio and the value exchange between each stakeholder, we have mapped their interactions, their motivations and how they benefit in being part of Stupid Startup Studio.

Outcome

To communicate how the SSS works, we have developed a low-fi prototype of the SSS platform, showing how actors can invest and crowdfund the ideas, and we have developed an innovation funnel for the startup studio.
Also, in order to onboard people internally and externally onto SSS, we have mapped the journey of the core team and have identified the actors that would be involved in the process – both in the front-end and back-end.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partner with us
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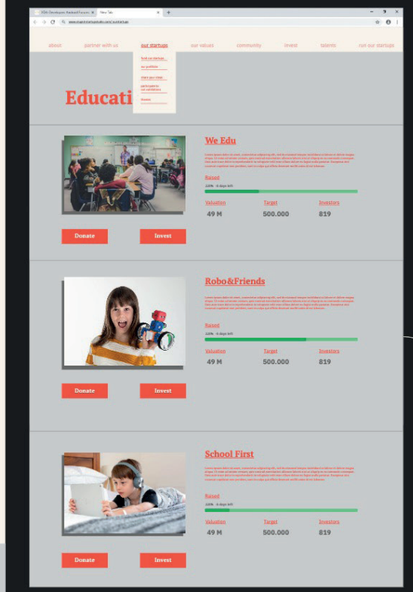
run our startups
Stupid Startup Studio
Through our community platform,
we welcome everyone to be part of shaping our startups.
Stupid Startup Studio wants to democratize the way of
doing business, to develop solutions for people and with people.
Invest
Discover our startups
Donate
Our innovation process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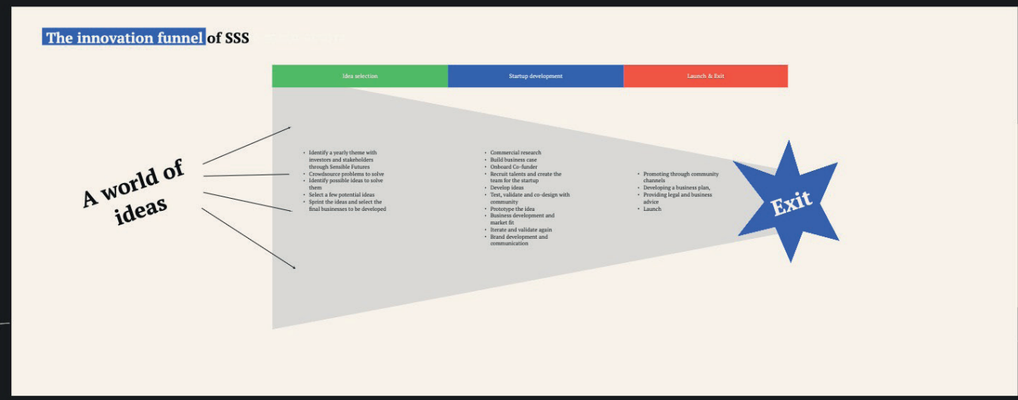
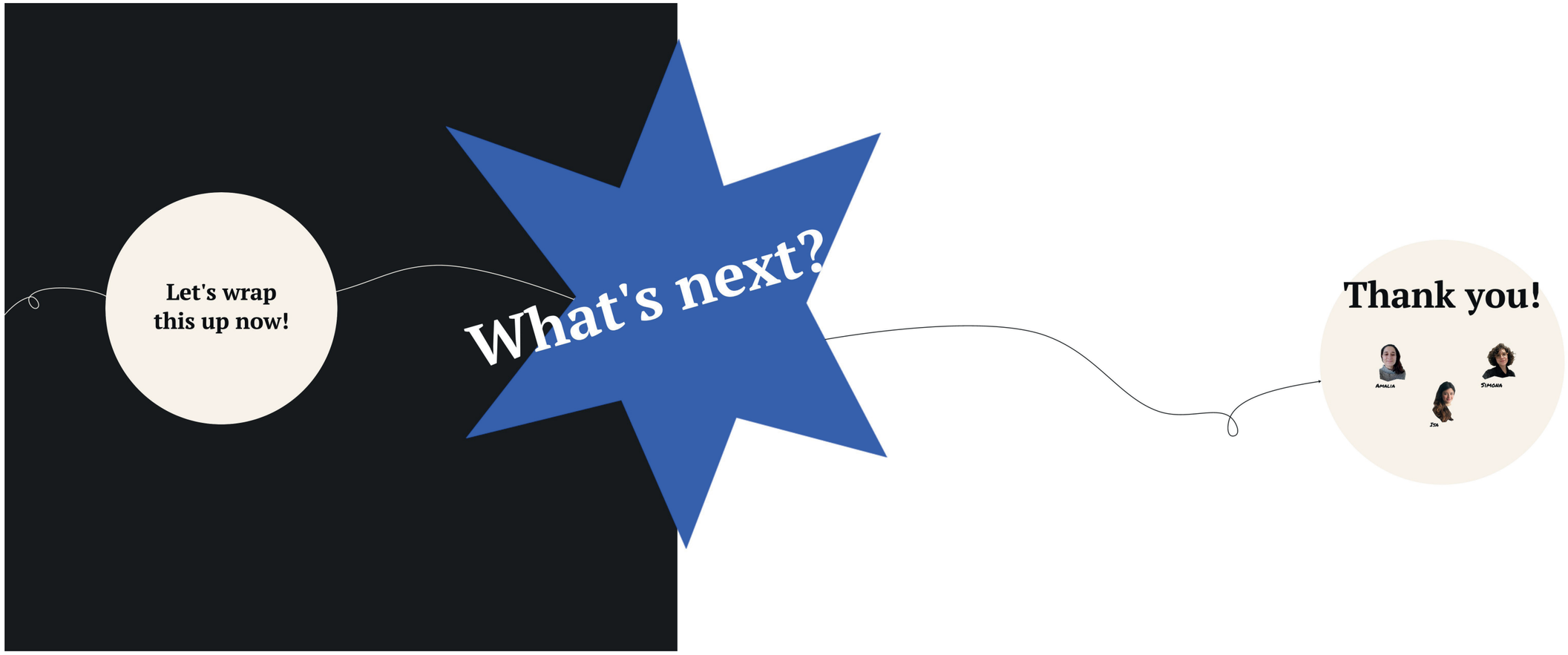
Donate
Invest


The innovation funnel of SSS
A world of ideas
Idea selection
Startup development
Launch & Exit
Identify a yearly theme with investors and stakeholders through Sensible Futures
Crowdsource problems to solve
Identify possible ideas to solve them
Select a few potential ideas
Sprint the ideas and select the final businesses to be developed
Commercial research
Build business case
Onboard Co-funder
Recruit talents and create the team for the startup
Develop ideas
Test, validate and co-design with community
Prototype the idea
Business development and market fit
Iterate and validate again
Brand development and communication
Promoting through community channels
Developing a business plan,
Providing legal and business advice
Launch
Exit


Let's wrap this up now!
What's next?
Thank you!
AMALIA
SIMONA
ISA