Cultivating kindness through Service Design

Creating relational processes for public services

Master Thesis by
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I.

Abstract

This thesis explores the implementation of kindness in the public sector through the adaptation of the Service Design process. Traditionally, public service delivery has been predominantly focused on economic efficiency and effectiveness, often neglecting the human component of the individuals involved. This thesis aims to expand the rational approach by incorporating emotional states to better address citizen needs. By conducting an extensive literature review, kindness emerges as a promising concept for transforming public systems and processes towards a more citizen-centred approach, particularly in enhancing human-to-human interactions within these services. Drawing upon Research through Design and the IDEO 3I methodology, this research develops tools for Service Designers to analyse kindness in public services, explore opportunities for its integration, and create concrete approaches for fostering relational services. Through qualitative research encompassing surveys and expert interviews, kindness is explored interdisciplinarily and in depth to establish a strong foundation for building the pillars of kindness in public services. By employing ideation workshops and testing with Service Designers, a toolkit is developed that aims to integrate the highly versatile and subjective concept of kindness into their practices. The thesis presents three distinct tools that broaden the scope of Service Design, shifting the focus from the design of service functions to the manner in which they are performed through the lens of kindness. The use of these tools within Service Design processes ultimately aims to enhance the connection between service users and providers, fostering a solid foundation of trust between citizens and government. This endeavor strives to initiate the transition from a rational to a relational public service approach, with Service Design acting as a catalyst for effective and user-centered public service development. By intertwining kindness and Service Design, this work serves as a initial effort, stimulating broader discussions and inspiring future research in these areas.

Keywords: Service Design, Kindness, Relational Services, Public Services

"I accept that the list of demands on all of us is long. Be it domestic, or international, we are operating in challenging times. We face what we call [...] "wicked problems". Ones that are intertwined and interrelated. Perhaps then it is time to step back from the chaos and ask what we want. It is in that space that we'll find simplicity. The simplicity of peace, of prosperity, of fairness. If I could distil it down into one concept that we are pursuing [...], it is simple and it is this: **Kindness**. In the face of isolationsism, protectionism, racism — the simple concept of looking outwardly and beyond ourselves, of kindness and collectivism, might just be as good a starting point as any."

— Jacinda Ardern

II.

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A special thank you goes to Jenny, who provided us with the opportunity to promote the importance of kindness in her creative space, ANON, in Malmö, Sweden.

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♡

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VI.
Terminology

In the context of kindness, the **provider** is defined as the person performing a kind act, whereas the **receiver** is defined as the person obtaining the kind act.

In the context of a service, the **service provider** is defined as the person delivering the service as part of the service staff, whereas the **service user** is defined as the person receiving the service.

The methodology Research through Design is abbreviated as **RtD**.

The Danish Medical Helpline 1813 is abbreviated as **1813**.

1
Introduction

This chapter provides a brief overview of the topics covered and explains the core problem that the thesis attempts to solve. A context for the thesis is set in order to clarify predefined limitations. In addition, the official and personal learning objectives for this thesis project are presented in order to evaluate their achievement. Finally, the chapter provides a brief introduction to the main segments to serve as a reading guide.

The chapter is divided into the following sections:

1.1 Brief description of the identified problem
1.2 Project context
1.3 Aim of the thesis
1.4 Reading guide

1.1

Brief description of the identified problem

In recent decades, public systems have been designed for economic efficiency and effectiveness, with a focus on cost-benefit ratios and a prioritisation on short-term solutions. This approach favours transactional over relational interactions and is "deaf to nuance and individuality, ignor[ing] what really matters to people, and privileg[ing] that which can be counted" (Mental Health Foundation, 2020, p. 2). According to recent studies, trust in governments is declining in many countries (Perry, 2021; Ballatt et al., 2020). One reason for this trend is the perception that some policies are stigmatising and dehumanising, which can contribute to a negative spiral leading to poverty and poor health (Mental Health Foundation, 2020). In contrast, policies that are responsive to citizens' needs can improve social conditions and promote well-being, which is essential for building social and cultural satisfaction and trust in the government. Public services play a critical role in this process and should not be limited to serving as safety nets (Ballat et al., 2020). Decades after the establishment of current public services, expectations have increased, and citizens' demands have shifted (Ferguson, 2017). In light of the multiple crises facing societies, policymakers are confronted with a choice between maintaining the status quo of public service delivery or seizing the opportunity to break down and redesign outdated models (Capita, 2021). To counteract the prevailing lack of trust, a growing body of evidence showcases kindness as a potential method for building relational services that foster positive relationships (Ballat et al., 2020; Mental Health Foundation, 2020; Ferguson, 2017). It is imperative to reassess the manner in which the human is integrated into public services and prioritise kindness as a central principle in this process (Rowland, 2018). The current approach of implementing well-structured processes without involving the irrationality of human nature and preserving barriers to kindness must be challenged. The belief that standardised processes are the fairest and only way of public service delivery

ignores the prevailing inequalities in terms of sense of agency and univer-salises individuality (Unwin, 2018). To move towards a politics of kindness, institutional change is necessary for the establishment and implementation of relational public services (Ballat, 2020). This requires breaking long-es-tablished and outdated norms and encouraging a much-needed shift (Unwin, 2020; Mackenzie, 2021). For decades, the discipline of Service Design has been focused on improving service experiences by making people's integral needs central to the design process. Service Design's ability to analyse and design complex, multi-stakeholder service systems and its growing influence at the strategic level and top-down decision-making support its increasing relevance as a driver of innovation and change (Mager, 2020; National Skills Council & Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2020). Not addressing this urgent need for change in public systems can lead to far-reaching systemic failures, for example, losing the trust of younger generations in policymakers (Ballat et al., 2020). A shift towards kindness is, therefore, crucial, "not because it is a nice extra, but because our population is now so different and has such different needs and desires that an attempt to homogenise is bound to fail" (Unwin, 2018, p. 31).

This thesis is dedicated to exploring the integration of kindness values into public services through Service Design. It aims to develop practical solutions for incorporating kindness into service delivery by thoroughly examining the concept from various perspectives and within the context of public systems. Furthermore, the thesis critically examines the discipline of Service Design to evaluate its potential and effectiveness in driving transformative change that promotes a more humane approach. It aims to contribute to the improvement of public service processes that are currently driven primarily by rationality by infusing them with elements of kindness.

1.2
Project context

To establish a framework for this thesis, it is essential to acknowledge certain inherent limitations. These limitations encompass various aspects:

Firstly, the research work is conducted within a defined time frame, which influences the scope, process, and outcome of the study. Moreover, the existing literature on the topic offers a constrained foundation for synthesising the subject matter and relating it to established theories. Consequently, the primary sources incorporated in this thesis focus on public systems in Western high-income countries where well-developed infrastructures are already in place. Therefore, this thesis does not encompass countries where basic infrastructures fail to fulfil fundamental human needs, but focuses on Northern european countries, particularly Denmark. It is crucial to note that the concept of kindness should not be regarded as a panacea for existing issues but rather as an incremental step towards sustainably enhancing already structurally stable systems.

Furthermore, it is important to note that this thesis exclusively concentrates on kindness within human-to-human interactions during service delivery. As a result, digital touchpoints are deliberately excluded, as they necessitate a distinct research focus. This decision is rooted in the motivation to emphasise the significance of human encounters in a technology-centric society and to explore their potential for Service Design more extensively. Moreover, the thesis primarily focuses on the practice of kindness, specifically between service providers and service users, excluding interactions between service personnel or between service users themselves.

1.3

Aim of the thesis

The thesis is guided by a set of learning objectives that are derived from the official learning objectives defined by Aalborg University and complemented by the researchers' personal learning goals. The primary aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the competencies, skills, and knowledge that are expected of Service System Designers. Furthermore, the researchers' personal learning objectives reflect their unique areas of interest and intended contributions to the field of Service Design.

1.3.1 Official learning objectives

The prescribed learning objectives, as stipulated by Aalborg University (2023), are delineated as follows:

Knowledge

Students who complete the module will obtain the following qualifications:

- Must have knowledge about the possibilities to apply appropriate methodological approaches to specific study areas.
- Must have knowledge about design theories and methods that focus on the design of advanced and complex product-service systems.
- Account for the scientific foundation, and scientific problem areas, of the specialisation.
- Describe the state of the art of relevant research in the specialisation.

Skills

Students who complete the module will obtain the following qualifications:

- Must be able to work independently, to identify major problem areas (analysis) and adequately address problems and opportunities (synthesis).

- Must demonstrate the capability of analysing, designing and representing innovative solutions.
- Must demonstrate the ability to evaluate and address (synthesis) major organisational and business issues emerging in the design of a product-service system.
- Master the scientific methods and general skills associated with the specialisation.
- Produce a project report according to norms of the area, apply correct terminology, document extensive command over relevant literature, communicate and discuss the research-based foundation, problem and results of the project orally, graphically and in writing in a coherent manner.
- Critically evaluate the results of the project in relation to relevant literature and established scientific methods and models, evaluate and discuss the project's problem area in a relevant scientific context.
- Evaluate and discuss the project's potential for further development.

Competencies

Students who complete the module will obtain the following qualifications:

- Must be able to master design and development work in situations that are complex, unpredictable and require new solutions (synthesis).
- Must be able to independently initiate and implement discipline-specific and interdisciplinary cooperation and assume professional responsibility (synthesis).
- Must have the capability to independently take responsibility for own professional development and specialisation (synthesis).
- Participate in, and independently carry out, technological development and research, and apply scientific methods in solving complex problems.
- Plan, execute and manage complex research and/or development tasks, and assume a professional responsibility for independently carrying out, potentially cross-disciplinary, collaborations.
- Independently assume responsibility for own scientific development and specialisation.

1.3.2 Personal learning objectives
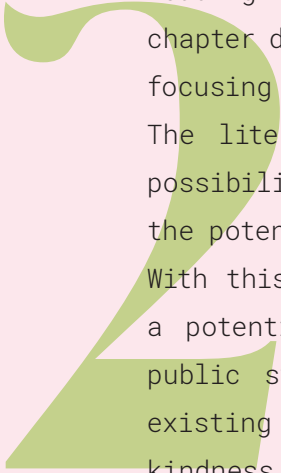
The personal learning objectives of this thesis are articulated in accordance with the researchers' shared drive and motivation:

- The thesis provides an opportunity to engage in a profound exploration of a topic of personal interest and passion, allowing for an in-depth examination and analysis of the chosen area of inquiry.
- The thesis aims to make a contribution towards the advancement and evolution of the field of Service Design by proposing innovative solutions and addressing key challenges and opportunities within the discipline.
- The thesis is driven by personal interest and a desire to contribute to a better tomorrow, and as such, places particular emphasis on promoting kindness and humanness in the Service Design practice. Additionally, the thesis seeks to extend beyond the traditional boundaries of Service Design by addressing broader societal challenges, with the aim of demonstrating the significant impact that Service Design can have on society.
- The thesis endeavours to impart significance and sincerity to subjects that are commonly referred to as "soft topics" within the academic, scientific and societal realms. Through rigorous analysis and critical examination, the thesis aims to demonstrate the relevance and importance of these topics.
- Through interdisciplinary collaboration with subject matter experts who share the researchers' passion for the chosen topic, the researchers want to draw inspiration to broaden their personal and professional perspectives.
- The objective of the thesis is to design and develop a solution that can be realistically applied in daily work and decision-making contexts.
- As a team of two, the researchers aim to write the thesis collaboratively, recognising the benefits of cooperation by building upon their individual strengths and skills. This collaborative approach is particularly important given that both researchers previously authored their respective Bachelor's theses independently.
- Given the researchers' mutual interest and expertise in the field of Visual Design, they intend to incorporate visually compelling elements into the thesis, with the aim of enhancing the presentation and communicative power of the thesis.
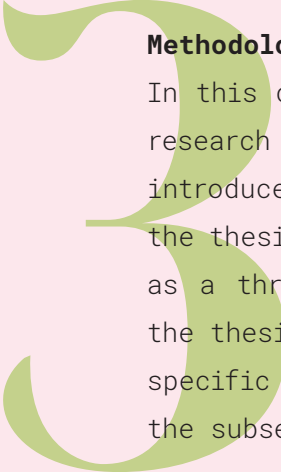
1.4
Reading guide

Literature review

Chapter 2 of this thesis serves as a critical theoretical foundation, leading to the formulation of the academic research question. The chapter delves into an analysis of the concept of prosocial behaviour, focusing specifically on kindness, through a multidisciplinary lens. The literature review then shifts towards the exploration of the possibilities of kindness within public systems, highlighting both the potential advantages and drawbacks of cultivating such behaviour. With this objective in mind, the chapter proposes Service Design as a potential implementation discipline for cultivating kindness in public systems. Furthermore, the chapter critically evaluates the existing capabilities of the Service Design process in relation to kindness. Ultimately, the chapter presents the academic research question, which serves as the core of this thesis and attempts to address the identified research gap.

Methodology

In this chapter, the methodologies employed to address the academic research question are presented. Firstly, Research through Design is introduced as a guiding framework that informs the elaboration of the thesis solution. Additionally, the IDEO 3I framework is described as a three-phase process that provides structural support to both the thesis and the design process. The rationale for selecting these specific methodologies is also discussed. Finally, a brief preview of the subsequent design process is provided.

The design process

In chapter 4, the design process used to address the research ques-
tion and develop a design solution is thoroughly documented. The
chapter is organised into three phases, which align with the IDEO 3I
framework. The first phase involves qualitative research, which is
carefully explained, and the findings are presented in detail. The
second phase focuses on idea generation, leading up to the devel-
opment of the final solution proposal. This process is described,
highlighting the key steps taken to arrive at the proposed solution.
Finally, the third phase involves the iteration of the solution and
the description of its value using a range of design tools. Through
this iterative process, the solution is refined and improved upon,
ultimately leading to a more robust and effective answer to the
research question.

Discussion

This chapter entails a discussion of the reflections and limita-
tions relating to the accumulated research findings. It encompasses
a thorough review of the executed design process and a critical
reflection on the extent to which the research question has been
addressed. Additionally, it incorporates an assessment of the initial
learning objectives established for the thesis. Furthermore, this
chapter presents and explores thematic areas that warrant further
investigation in the context of kindness, as their exploration
has the potential to yield significant and far-reaching societal
implications.

Conclusion

This chapter provides a concise summary of the main findings gathered
throughout the research, as well as the solution and its motivation.

Thesis overview

January 2023

Preliminary research & literature review

Kindness
Kindness in design
Kindness in public policy
Compassion in healthcare
Service Design
Policy Design
Humanity-centred Design
Systems Change

● **Research
question**

How can the toolkit
of Service Design be
extended to foster
kindness in public
services?

Inspiration

Survey
Expert interviews
Desktop research

in team   **with citizens**   **with experts**   **with Service Designers**

Implementation

May 2023

● **The Kindness Toolkit**

User testing

Testing on existing service

Development of the final solution

Ideation

Workshop 1

Workshop 2

Development of the preliminary solution
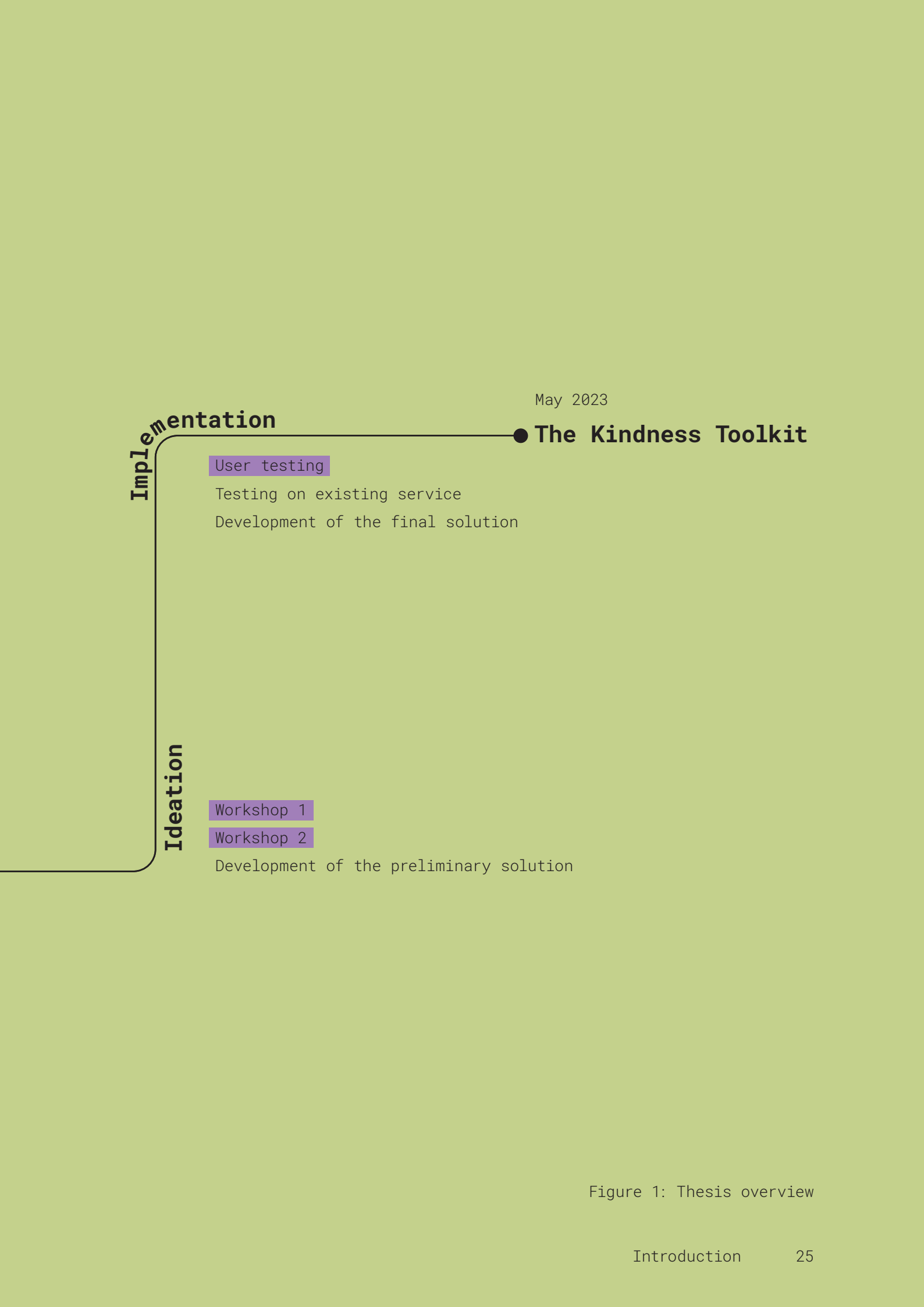
Figure 1: Thesis overview

2
Literature review

In order to obtain the broadest possible yet in-depth and comparative knowledge about the main topics of the thesis, an extensive literature review was performed and will be presented in the following chapter. The research is led by six sources, including the publications from Carnegie UK (2018-2021), Polaine, Løvlie & Reason (2013), Rowland (2018), Crawford (2014), Willis (2021), Andersen & Brownlie (2019 & 2021) and Ballat, Campling & Maloney (2020). In addition to these sources, other academic papers are cited to provide further evidence. Grey literature has also been included to integrate the opinions and expertise of experts from the design industry, as it often reflects temporally relevant societal discourses (Hagen-Zanker & Mallet, 2013). In part, the sources were found through the snowballing method, in which the references of important knowledge bases are examined in order to explore topics like Service Design and kindness in greater depth.

The chapter is divided into the following sections:

2.1 Kindness
2.2 Cultivating kindness in public services
2.3 Service Design
2.4 Analysing the shift from rational to relational public services through
     Service Design
2.5 Research focus
2.6 Key takeways of the literature review

2.1 Kindness

Kindness can be defined as a meta-value encompassing, for example, altruism, empathy, and respect, always carried out through actions from which others and oneself will benefit. This section explains its complexity and variety from different perspectives to understand the full picture of that concept by comparing it to other related traits. Some preliminary qualifications of the concept of kindness are presented — to set out what it is, what it does, what can be done with it, and what other researchers have found about its use and misuse. This involves etymological, biological and socio-cultural aspects, as well as prevailing narratives.

2.1.1 Comparison to correlating prosocial values

A wide range of definitions for the term "kindness" can be found, which are often accompanied by similarities and overlaps with other prosocial behaviours. The generic term prosocial behaviour includes, among other things, sympathy, empathy, care, compassion, love, altruism, activism, and kindness. The occurrence of social behaviour can potentially lead to costs for the provider, depending on the nature of the act (Eysenck, 2017), but always imply a benefit for the receiver. Efforts are being made to gain a better understanding of how the concept of kindness differs from others. Fundamentally, it is crucial to consider that emotions are felt internally but consequently affect the behaviour of the individual. This behaviour impacts interpersonal relationships, thus cultures, and vice versa (Crawford, 2014).

According to Rowland (2018), kindness is not exactly synonymous with compassion and altruism, as compassion, while remaining an aspect of kindness, can also occur without a consequential act and is more temporally extensive, in contrast to kindness, which is often characterised by short gestures (Andersen

& Brownlie, 2021). Although scientific studies show that both kindness and altruism are innate and are already evident in childhood (Rowland, 2018), only altruistic actions require to come at a cost to the provider (Eysenck, 2017; Rowland, 2018). This is also the case with care, although the dependence of the receiver on the provider must additionally be fulfilled (Willis, 2021), as well as the feeling of obligation or responsibility of the provider (Andersen & Brownlie, 2021). Another more intense form of prosocial behaviour is activism, in which the person performing it devotes any available resources to combat an injustice close to their heart (Johnson, 2019), which is not true for kind acts, as in this respect, perceived desire can be addressed, but does not need to be accompanied by sacrifices of the provider. Similarly in love: Although the shared quality to kindness is not to be enforced, love includes deep feelings of belonging to emotionally close people, while kindness can also be seen as a practice towards strangers (Andersen & Brownlie, 2021). However, the most common and perhaps closest comparison to kindness is empathy. The feeling of empathy is defined by the ability to understand another person's situation and perspective, sometimes followed by an intend to improve that person's condition (Crawford, 2014; Eysenck, 2017; Crawford, 2014). Regarding kindness, the sole intention is not enough, as it is, first of all, only felt intrinsically and, secondly, does not take into account one's own projections onto and assumptions about the other person. The "recognition of the difference between actors" (Willis & Kavka, 2021, p.10) is therefore crucial and a core characteristic of kindness. Empathy takes the important role of a precursor to kindness (Youngs et al., 2021). However, only the latter requires actionability and consequently leads to individuals acting in a morally correct manner (Zaki, 2019) and thus strengthening social interactions (Youngs et al., 2021). According to Rowland (2018, p. 34), kindness consists of three core components:

- "**Benign tolerance:** A type of everyday courteousness, acceptance and love of one's fellows.
- **Empathetic responsivity:** A consideration of the feelings of other particular individuals.
- **Principled proaction:** [...] Broadly altruistic behaviour that is proactive and about behaving honourably."

The preceding subsection shows an attempt to delineate the concept of kindness, which is difficult to achieve in its completeness since there are many complex overlaps and interpretations with other notions.

2.1.2 Different perspectives on kindness

In this subsection, an in-depth examination of the concept of kindness is undertaken to provide a comprehensive understanding of this often subjectively perceived concept. By examining the linguistic history of the word, the effects of kindness on hormones and the brain, the implications for social and interpersonal relationships, as well as the negative connotation of kindness, this subsection seeks to shed light on this complex and multi-layered concept.

Etymological and biological background

In order to better understand the concept of kindness, this subsection analyses the etymological origins of the term and its associated adjective "kind". In addition, the biological connections between kindness as well as its physical reactions are explored.

In everyday language, the word "kind" is one of the 500 most widely used words (Haskins & Johri, 2018). It is, therefore, all the more important to understand the meaning and origin, as the term is often used synonymously to describe individual acts of affection, generosity and sentiment in contemporary discourse (Ballatt et al., 2020). When defining kindness, many sources relate to its etymological root "kin", which denotes sameness, "a natural

Old English

Cynde or cynn
Noun: family; race; kind; sort; nature; kin
(ge)cynde
Adjective: natural; native; innate

Middle English

Kende or kunde or kinde
Noun: kind; nature; race; kin
Adjective: natural, native, innate, originally "with feeling of relatives for each other"

mode of relating between members of the same family, group or species" (Willis, 2021, p.3), or being "of a kind" (Ballatt et al., 2020, p. 9). In the Old English Language, the word relates to the nouns "family", "race", "sort", and "nature". In today's modern language, "kindness" describes the quality of being kind (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023b) and its adjective "kind" is described as "generous, helpful, and thinking about other people's feelings" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023a). The original meaning of the term "kin" highlights the close link between the concept of kindness and social constructs. The following subsections will explore this connection in greater depth, emphasising the ways in which kindness manifests in social relationships and the biological and social impact it can have on individuals and communities.

From a biological perspective, humans are genetically predisposed to engage empathically with others and have an innate desire for deeper connections (Johnson, 2019; Phillips & Taylor, 2009), which is due to the fact that kind behaviour towards others releases hormones that promote a positive mood (The Science of Kindness, 2019). In order to recognise the ability to act kindly towards another person, the human mirror neuron system helps in feeling what others feel through neural resonance (Crawford, 2014). In general, the brain's reward centres are stimulated when generosity is perceived (Johnson, 2019). Even the simple act of imagining kindness has a calming and connecting effect on a person's emotional regulatory system, as data from a functional magnetic resonance scan shows (Mathers, 2016). Research demonstrates that regular kind behaviour can lead to growth of the parts of the brain responsible for

Modern English

Kind

Noun: a group of people or things having similar characteristics
Adjective: having or showing a friendly, generous or considerate nature

Figure 2: Etymology of kindness, adapted from Ballat et al., 2020

empathy, demonstrating that kindness can indeed be cultivated through practice, similar to muscle gain (Zaki, 2019). This phenomenon means that kindness does not have to be a deliberate behaviour but can become a habit through regular practice and thus be done out of affect (Rowland, 2018).

From a hormonal perspective, oxytocin – commonly referred to as the "love hormone" – is produced during acts of kindness and plays a crucial role in fostering trust and developing social bonds (Barraza & Zak, 2009; The Science of Kindness, 2019; Crawford, 2014). In addition, serotonin and dopamine levels rise after conducting an act of kindness (The Science of Kindness, 2019). This combination of positive neurotransmitters leads to the so-called "helpers-high", which can be observed after one single act of kindness (The Science of Kindness, 2019). However, this biochemical high lasts only three to four minutes and therefore has to be repeated in order to be felt again. Consequences of integrating kindness in everyday life include, among others, the reduction of anxiety, depression and defensiveness, as well as lowered blood pressure thanks to the release of oxytocin in the provider's body (The Science of Kindness, 2019). A study has demonstrated that individuals who exhibit kind behaviour, such as helping, sharing, or caring for others, can experience improved gene expression associated with a healthier immune profile (Abrams, 2021). The high effectiveness of the released hormones demonstrated physiologically but also psychologically, even led to the formal introduction of acts of kindness in types of psychotherapy (The Science of Kindness, 2019; Youngs et al., 2021).

Kindness not only benefits the mental and physical health of the person exhibiting it, but it is also often reciprocated by those who receive it, leading to mirrored biological effects in both individuals (Wiseman, 2018). This feedback loop between emotions and behaviour describes the neural circuitry in humans, allowing them to perceive, act and generate reactions in others (Crawford, 2014; Sciotino, 2018; Nutbrown et al., 2021). These biological and psychological mechanisms motivate humans to act kindly by deriving satisfaction from their actions (Curry et al., 2018).

Socio-cultural context

As inherently social beings, humans use prosocial behaviour to form bonds, which is innate from a very young age and regarded as essential to human nature to ensure survival (Mental Health Foundation, 2020; Zaki, 2019; Nutbrown et al., 2021). Studies on twins show that prosocial behaviour is partially

genetically determined, but non-genetic factors such as the environment, habits and experiences also have a significant role to play (Zaki, 2019; Phillips & Taylor, 2009).

On a social scale, acts of kindness are not only based on the proactivity of an individual but can also be prescribed by social and moral norms, such as everyday politeness (Youngs et al., 2021; Rowland, 2018), which can be expressed through actions or carefully chosen language (Gregorini, 2021). In order to carry out kind acts, it is necessary to first recognise the other's concerns and occupations (Willis & Kavka, 2021) by being sensitive to external circumstances and being able "to assess whether an act is truly kind in a certain context" (Chow, n. d., p. 5). This includes, for example, being able to differentiate and tactically assess how much space the receiver needs. In other words, kindness is about the balance between respecting distance and yet achieving closeness (Badhwar, 2009). It is important to recognise that help should only be given if it is welcomed and that it should not be forced on the individual just to satisfy their own, resulting sense of wellbeing, reducing the receiver's sense of agency (Willis & Kavka, 2021). Being sensitive to the needs of others means understanding and respecting their unique desires rather than imposing one's own on them. Kindness thus requires the recognition of different power and position relationships (Willis & Kavka, 2021), which distinguishes the social definition slightly from the etymological definition via the word kinship, i.e. sameness.

An important aspect mentioned by some authors is that kindness is a subjective perception, which means that it can only be measured and determined by the receiver. This indicates that kindness cannot be self-proclaimed, but it can only be attributed based on the perception of others (Andersen & Brownlie, 2019). If the benign action of the provider is interpreted as kindness by the receiver, it leads to a consequential reaction which directs attentiveness, enables attunement and builds trust between interacting people (Mathers, 2016). This powerful phenomenon of emotional response triggers the desire to respond with similar behaviour, activating a projection or boomerang effect in the receiver, whose motivation to emulate kindness as a counter-reaction is increased (Chueng-Nainby et al., 2015). Furthermore, there seems to be a positive correlation between the number of acts of kindness and the level of wellbeing: The more people find themselves in situations where kindness is either given or perceived, the more feelings of trust, connectedness and positivity towards humanity arise (kindness.org, 2018a), promoting healthy social

interactions (Youngs et al., 2021) and increasing subjective wellbeing (Zaki, 2019). Studies indicate that such positive feelings do not depend on whom the act is directed to nor on the magnitude of the act itself (Hammond, 2022; kindness.org, 2018a; Sciotino, 2018). However, acts of kindness seen as low-effort are often perceived as having the greatest impact (kindness.org, 2020). Regardless of the specific nature of the act, it is evident that engaging in acts of kindness benefits not only the provider but also the receiver (Sciotino, 2018): A study demonstrates that kind behaviour as a healthcare professional can have positive effects on patients' healing journeys (Zaki, 2019).

Through the "inseparable connectedness between the individual and the collective" (Chow, n.d., p. 3) and the contagious quality of kindness, even in observation alone (kindness.org, 2018a), relational behaviours can emerge not only between one-to-one interactions but entail the opportunity to spread to wider social networks and thereby to whole societies (Rowland, 2018). Since the environment's impact on an individual's behaviour is considerable, society plays a big role in the way citizens interact with each other (Zaki, 2019; Phillips & Taylor, 2009). The next subsection, therefore, examines the societal perception of kindness and points to the prevailing negative stereotypes around kindness, which could pose a limitation in the execution of kind acts on a systemic level.

Current narrative of kindness

The outbreak of the pandemic has brought about major changes in the narrative of how people interact. Helping each other, being mindful and considerate suddenly became the agenda of society and policy-makers (Johnson, 2021), whereby positive psychology experienced somewhat of a renaissance (Rowland, 2018). Critical authors even argue that kindness has become a trend and, therefore, financially profitable (Wiseman, 2018). Following the shift in narrative, there was a relapse into the pre-pandemic perception of kindness as an inherent quality rather than one that requires conscious effort and consideration (Mental Health Foundation, 2020).

Roman philosopher Marcus Aurelius described kindness as mankind's "greatest delight" (Wiseman, 2018). Today, "kindness can seem like an unquestionable good, but it is frequently associated with a patronising and pitying approach" (Unwin, 2018, p. 14), indicating a potentially problematic and hierarchical relationship between the provider and the receiver of kindness. In the impe-

rial context, the concept of kindness served white Europeans as a means to establish and maintain their superiority over others. It was employed to rationalise colonisation by portraying themselves as benevolent bestowers of knowledge in supposedly less advanced societies (Magnet et al., 2014). Kind acts towards marginalised groups – especially if they do not empower these communities and lack a genuine effort to understand their needs and perspectives without giving them a sense of agency – can perpetuate a condescending dynamic and ultimately defeat the potentially positive intentions behind such acts (Unwin, 2018; Orsini, 2020).

The historical legacy of colonialism and the systemic white privilege – which persist in contemporary prejudices and are made visible, for example, through certain charity campaigns – evoke emotional reactions that ultimately influence political responses. While individual kindness may be perceived as less objectionable because of its connection to early childhood learning, the application of kindness at a systemic level is often viewed with discomfort and ambiguity (Unwin, 2018; Phillips & Taylor, 2009). Fear of vulnerability and the possibility of needs spreading to the whole of society contributes to social aversion to any form of dependency and highlights the collective desire to avoid the potential burden of supporting those in need (Unwin, 2018). "Kindness – that is, the ability to bear the vulnerability of others, and therefore of oneself – has become a sign of weakness" (Phillips & Taylor, 2009, p. 6). This narrative leads some to distance themselves from the concept of kindness through rationality in order to come across as neither dependent nor weak, seeing kindness as the enemy of reason (University of Auckland, 2020) or a stereotypically "feminine, rather than human, trait" (Nutbrown et al., 2021, p. 22; cf. Willis, 2021). Another author justifies this negative portrayal by claiming that kindness has been devalued and is no longer seen as a treasured skill (Wiseman, 2018). The prevailing view that humans and society are inherently antagonistic has partly contributed to the belief that expressions of sympathy are primarily for self-protection (Phillips & Taylor, 2009), leading to a lack of public commitment to collective life – "to kinship in action" (Ballat et al., 2020, p. 28). The following section attempts to examine the extent to which kindness can be integrated into the normative framework of society as a positive behavioural trait and what impact this has on the effectiveness and quality of service systems.

2.2

Cultivating kindness in public services

Public services describe governmental activities and infrastructural offerings like education, welfare and healthcare. This section describes the benefits and drawbacks of incorporating the prosocial behaviour of kindness into service processes. It discusses contradicting opinions regarding its fit for an infrastructural system focused on quantitative metrics. Lastly, the various opportunities for a formal introduction to kindness in public services are presented.

2.2.1 Risks of institutionalising kindness

The contemporary narrative of kindness presented in the last subsection is reflected in today's systems. In the latter half of the 20th century, there was a noticeable shift towards prioritising metrics, effectiveness and efficiency in response to fiscal challenges and scepticism about the efficacy of existing approaches in public systems. In order to make public services fair, safe, effective and (cost-)efficient, they are rationally and universally constructed (Unwin, 2018; Mental Health Foundation, 2020; Klaber & Bailey, 2019). To preserve these values, several reasons why kindness may not be deemed suitable for integration into the public system are presented. Bloom (2018) and Bigger et al. (2022) argue that an effective and accountable modern system must be based on transparent rules and principles to uphold the equity and dignity of citizens and avoid any possible favouritism or discrimination through a neutral and objective approach that excludes personal preferences and emotions. In society, the prevailing assumption is that professional relationships are devoid of emotional warmth and impulse. Nonetheless, this

emotional distance within professional relationships provides a beneficial and necessary safeguard for practitioners within the system, protecting them from allegations of injustice and the pressure of overstraining (Unwin, 2018). The existence of favouritism is demonstrated by a study about social attitudes in which 98% of participants considered it important to be kind to each other. – in contrast, only 68% believed that all individuals are equally deserving of kindness (Willis, 2021). Accordingly, institutionalising kindness would theoretically allow more room for biased behaviour and thus make favours possibly acceptable, leading to more unfair services for its users (Unwin, 2018). On the other hand, stereotypical thinking can be projected towards service practitioners. The users' expectation of kind behaviour from service providers can lead to gender and racial burden, as women and people of colour are expected to provide more care and support, reinforcing stereotypes of these groups as being unfriendly, ungrateful and lazy when expectations are not fulfilled (Magnet et al., 2014).

Another reason against a more systematic adherence to kindness is the loss of the concept's nature. Authentic kindness, described as spontaneous, impro-vised and informed in the precise moment of interaction, is not considered a prescribed element of processes. The habitual and mechanical act of kindness in institutional settings would divert from its essence, which is tailored to the individual and their needs (Ballat, 2020). When such acts are expected, demanded or mandated, they are transformed into obligation, duty and care. Therefore, kindness cannot be uniformly distributed, expected or required, which distinguishes it from other important relational concepts such as dignity and respect (Anderson & Brownlie, 2019; Phillips & Taylor, 2009; Mathers, 2016). Phillips and Taylor (2009) give an illustrative example: In a study, it was found that patients felt that staff was not laughing enough, which led to a regulation requiring nursing staff to laugh more in the workplace. The authors describe this approach as "a cartoon version of policies" (Phillips & Taylor, 2009, p.105), increasing compassion fatigue in caring professions and thus harming service quality (Zaki, 2019). Another problem with this approach is the fact that kindness cannot be faked, and the unseriousness of the "brief professional half-smile" (Mathers, 2016, p. 526; cf. Polaine, 2013) diminishes the original intention of elevating trust. Another example where a healthcare institution changed its slogan to "Patients First" resulted in negative reac-tions from service personnel due to the perceived lack of equality between staff and patients (Ballat, 2020). When discussing kindness, it is, therefore, essential to also consider the needs of professionals dealing with emotion-

ally demanding situations. A certain amount of emotional distance can enable them to protect their wellbeing and deal with the potentially stressful nature of their work (Zaki, 2019, p. 39). Consequently, these examples show that the forced use of kindness is not effective and, according to Asafo (2021), can lead to attempts addressing issues that require more than kindness alone.

In addition to the risks of concern, there is debate around the measurement of kindness, since the seemingly soft, fleeting and superficial concept is not obviously compatible with the quantitative metrics of public services (Ferguson, 2017). The forthcoming subsection will provide a more in-depth analysis of this discussion.

2.2.2 The debate on measuring kindness

The current professional code and working habits are determined by a value attitude with a focus on technical and academic skills, as well as detachment and coldness (Ferguson, 2017), which carries with it the risk of leaving kindness out of the equation (Anderson & Brownlie, 2019). Although there has been an increase in the appreciation and recognition of a more human approach to leadership methods, transferring this notion to the public service remains difficult, as there is still disagreement about how to articulate and measure actual implementation (Ferguson, 2017). The general social assumption is that kindness in informal settings is a valued form of social currency (Willis & Kavka, 2021), with increasingly substantiated evidence of psychological benefits (Youngs et al., 2021). Despite the importance of leveraging kindness in societal systems, the lack of a clear and distinct definition is prevalent, making kindness difficult to capture, assess and quantify (Wiseman, 2018). Especially in interpersonal, enmeshed concepts, more than simply countable units need to be considered (Andersen & Brownlie, 2021), as there is a threat of measuring aspects that are easy to assess out of convenience rather than those that are worth bearing in mind (Ferguson, 2017). The conversation about the actual determinants of how to measure kindness and, even more, the ethical questions arising about its purpose are "far from comfortable. [As it] calls on us to focus on the relationships, not the transactions. It requires us to focus on the reality of people's lives, not just the data" (Unwin, 2018, p. 35). This becomes a barrier in incorporating the measurability of kindness, as most attempts at harnessing data around this topic have been qualita-

tive in nature (Andersen & Brownlie, 2021), while quantitative measurements are still attributed more value (Klaber & Bailey, 2019). The quantitative measurement of kindness can, however, be criticised as being too simplistic since difficult moral decisions are easily overlooked and "placing a 'value' on life in its various manifestations is a problematic and bold enterprise" (Ballat, 2020, p. 192). Anderson and Brownlie (2019) mention that the general measurement of kindness is not dubious in itself but rather the attempt to do it in an oversimplified way, which runs the risk of disregarding critical characteristic qualities of kindness or even the unintended consequence that kindness becomes another instrumentalised and detrimental metric (Anderson & Brownlie, 2021). When striving to quantify kindness, it must therefore be critically questioned whether this prosocial behaviour is not simply being used expediently as a tool of power (Willis & Kavka, 2021; Willis, 2021) and is thus working against its intended purpose. Some approaches to comparing kindness through quantitative methods, however, exist (MORI, 1999; Ballat, 2020) but are mostly undertaken in the field of psychology, which mainly refer to kindness as a personal character trait and do not extend to a service level (Andersen & Brownlie, 2021). Opinions persist against the inclusion of kindness as a measurement value in the professional world, on the one hand, because of the concept's vague delineation, and on the other hand, because of an alleged deviation from far more significant problems of society (Andersen & Brownlie, 2021).

Opposed to this, Andersen and Brownlie (2021) see the importance in the general recognition of kindness in public systems and in its measurement. The two authors raised an important caveat regarding what should be included: The impact and influence of the implemented methods must be determined in order to analyse whether they successfully lead to more kindness. To best understand complex social phenomena, it is described as helpful to focus not "only on 'the thing itself' but on the preconditions that lead to it and the consequences that flow from it" (Andersen & Brownlie, 2021, p. 13), as shown in figure 3.

The
preconditions
of kindness

The
consequences
of kind acts

The
perceptions
of kind acts
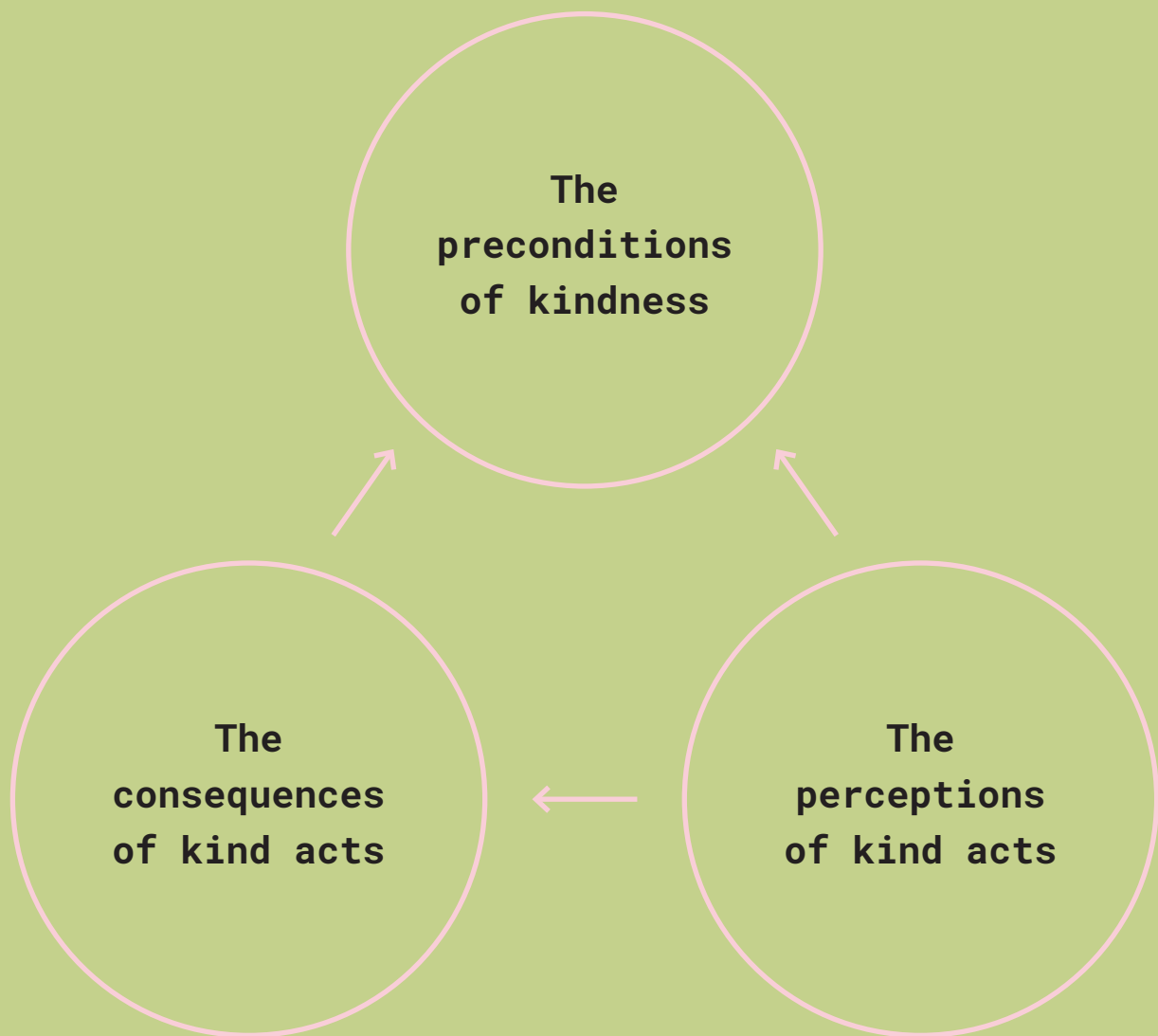
Figure 3: A measuring framework for kindness, adapted from Anderson and Brownlie, 2019

2.2.3 Opportunities of cultivated kindness

In humans' everyday lives, interpersonal values and emotions are highly present and important, while at the policy level, they are considered "irrational and sentimental" (Mental Health Foundation, 2020 p. 3) and, therefore easily discarded in decision-making (Unwin & Carnegie UK, 2018). This is based on the conventional assumption that kindness is a personal trait that has no place in state affairs or public services (Andersen & Brownlie, 2021). In conjunction with today's paternalistic forms of government (Willis & Kavka, 2021), the result is a prevailing deontological worldview that excludes kindness from the general ethical discourse (Chow, n.d.) while "valuing the formal and organisational over the informal and individual" (Ferguson, 2017, p. 2). Nutbrown et al. (2021) criticise that social services like healthcare are often managed like companies and thus do not do justice to their purpose. Bureaucracy today is structured to focus on economic efficiency and effectiveness by standardising procedures (Ferguson, 2017), which, among other things, is intended to reduce the risk of favouritism. While reducing this risk is crucial, it simultaneously leads to a transactional relationship between people and institutions that ignores human differences and is blind to individuality (Mental Health Foundation, 2020; Klaber & Bailey). The individual's agency is undermined by the system as they are reduced to passive and rational receivers of services, neglecting their humanity (Unwin, 2018). However, it is never possible to privatise emotions completely, as they are socially constructed and consequently also have an influence on political structures (Crawford, 2014). In other words, it is necessary to distance oneself from emotions as a personal, confined notion and instead consider them as a collective and influential concept in order to move from a rational to a relational approach in public policy (Mental Health Foundation, 2020; Johnson, 2021). It needs to be recognised that emotions "shape group identity, culture, and institutions" (Crawford, 2014, p. 537f) and thus influence operational processes of addressing challenges.

Todres et al. (2009) present a framework (Table 1) of dimensions that describe what constitutes processes and interactions that are humanising or dehumanising. This framework is based on an in-depth study of patients' experiences in medical settings, where subjects frequently reported feeling "dehumanised"

(Bournemouth University, n.d.). In response to these findings, the authors proposed a series of plausible scenarios to embody the concept of "humanity", formulating a definition of the term that can be operationalised in the context of policy-making. The existing literature, including the research conducted by Todres et al. (2009) and the various sources on kindness cited in this thesis, consistently calls for a radical overhaul of existing systems and policy-making in the sector. The framework developed by Todres et al. (2009) sheds light on the factors that contribute to humanising or dehumanising experiences, giving practical guidance to evaluate and improve the quality of interactions and experiences within services.

Forms of Humanisation	Forms of Dehumanisation
Insiderness	Objectification
Agency	Passivity
Uniqueness	Homogenisation
Togetherness	Isolation
Sense-making	Loss of meaning
Personal journey	Loss of personal journey
Sense of place	Dislocation
Embodiment	Reductionist body

Table 1: Conceptual framework of the dimensions of humanisation, adapted from Todres et al., 2009

In order to prevent public services from becoming even more dehumanising, objectifying and isolating in the future, publications suggest incorporating kindness as a solution (Willis & Kavka, 2021). As an added benefit, kindness can play an important role in addressing other societal gaps that are often overlooked because there are no obvious financial incentives (kindness.org, 2018b). In addition to transforming the public system, kindness could have a positive impact on societal problems such as loneliness and lack of trust: Recent research suggests that the proportion of people living alone in modern times has risen significantly compared to a century ago (Zaki, 2019). As a result, concerns about social isolation and loneliness have become more prom-inent, which not only affects the individual but also weakens the solidarity in society itself. Other studies indicate an unprecedented low in public trust towards governments, making distrust the default (Park et al., 2013; Ballat, 2020; Johnson, 2019; Perry, 2021) and resulting in the majority of study participants perceiving the current system as working against their best interests (Ferguson, 2017; Johnson, 2019). Johnson (2019) states that today's societal problem is of psychological origin rather than an often-assumed technological one.

These grand societal challenges can, therefore, no longer be lastingly solved by mere rationality in environments devoid of kindness, emphasising the need for new social contracts elevating prosociality in a world of multi-crisis (Ferguson, 2017; Sciortino, 2018; Rowland, 2018; Unwin, 2018). Through kindness' capacity to create interpersonal connections, it has great "political poten-tial" (Willis & Kavka, 2021, p. 11) to be implemented and maintained within infrastructures specifically. This places a responsibility on decision-makers to encourage opportunities for the inclusion of kindness in communities and public services (Mental Health Foundation) to move from a culture of omni-present distrust to a culture of default kindness (Ballat, 2020; Digital Surgeons, 2018), which additionally leads to preserving people's dignity and self-esteem (Sciortino, 2018). This form of collective kindness prioritises prosocial behaviour towards other citizens who are not part of one's close social entourage and thus goes beyond family and friendship relationships (Johnson, 2021).

In this way, previously mentioned standardisation processes can be ques-tioned in order to shift the focus from economic efficiency and effectiveness in professionalism to more humane practices (Ferguson, 2017; Willis, 2021). Particularly in complex and emotionally charged human labour, mandating people

to be kind to each other has little effect unless it is systematically and culturally organised and managed in a way that supports humanness (Ballat, 2020; Anderson & Brownlie, 2019; Mathers, 2016). According to Anderson and Brownlie (2019), it is crucial to prioritise the reduction of barriers that hinder acts of kindness by transitioning towards processes where such acts are "commonplace, encouraged, facilitated, and supported, but not necessarily codified or enforced" (p. 20). Citizens should be given a sense of agency and ownership to ensure a successful implementation of kindness on a larger scale (Ballat, 2020). The characteristics that describe kindness, such as spontaneity and voluntariness, set a natural framework that limits the possibilities of implementing kindness on a structural level. However, this framework allows the creation of conditions in which kindness is fostered, and its suppression prevented (Anderson & Brownlie, 2019).

Ballat (2020) argues that including kindness in service systems is not counterproductive for effectiveness or efficiency, but can, on the contrary, even reinforce them. Mathers (2016) describes an interpersonal cycle that includes kindness, attentiveness, attunement and trust (cf. subsection 2.1.2). Ballat (2020) extends this concept to the service level: When kindness is given to the receiver by the provider, a bond is created between the actors, whereby both parties can understand each other more clearly, communicate more effectively and thus respond better to problems and requests. This optimises the service outcome, resulting in mutual satisfaction and wellbeing. This satisfaction facilitates the way for further acts of kindness – an uplifting cycle is created, as shown in figure 4. Kindness can thus become a valued norm that flourishes in communities and enables even more acts of kindness – kindness begets kindness (Zaki, 2019; Nutbrown et al., 2021). Besides the positive consequences for the receiver, kind behaviour from the service provider leads to a lower probability of stress, more happiness and satisfaction, increased motivation, as well as a greater commitment at work (Zaki, 2019; Haskins & Johri, 2018). Thus, the overall quality of the service experience is elevated (Ballat, 2020; Unwin, 2018). Likewise, public services have the potential for increased trust "between government, citizens and the wider society" (Mental Health Foundation, 2020) and, thus an increase in effectiveness. Kindness alone cannot solve all significant policy objectives, such as equality and justice. Instead, it should work as a supplementary measure without oversimplifying complex problems or "sugar-coating" them (Biggar et al., 2022, p. 1). If values such as kindness and connectedness are not considered in services and policies in the years to come, authors suspect that even minor irritations

will "lead to appalling systemic abuses, neglect and maltreatment" (Ballat, 2020, p. 4). "Policies perceived and experienced as stigmatising and lacking in humanity, rather than being supportive and responsive to well-evidenced needs, can undermine trust and push people further into a cycle of poverty and poor health; they certainly cannot be described as being informed by kindness" (Mental Health Foundation, 2020, p. 12). Especially during the post-pandemic period, studies show a widespread desire for politicians to include kindness in service delivery (Mental Health Foundation, 2020). However, it can be assumed that effective top-down implementation will not be fruitful on its own but will require the cooperation and action of citizens (Willis, 2021).

directs → **Attentiveness** — enables

Kindness **Attunement**

promotes builds

Kinship **Trust**

reinforces
conditions for generates

Better Outcomes ← produces — **Therapeutic Alliance**

Figure 4: The virtuous cycle of kindness, adapted from Ballat et al., 2020

There are examples of institutions that have already taken strides to integrate the language of kindness and adopt a relational lexicon (Unwin, 2018), gradually recognising the value of human relations in public services and its favourable impact on individual and collective wellbeing (Anderson & Brownlie, 2021). In the English healthcare system, kindness has been written into both the Nursing & Midwifery Code and the NHS Safety Strategy to foster a positive healthcare culture (Unwin, 2018; Mental Health Foundation, 2020). Furthermore, a recent study of complaints from Australian healthcare practitioners has prompted changes in the recruitment process to prioritise communication skills, which also resulted in adaptations to legal language that aims to reduce stress and shame, providing a more humane and kind approach to regulation and more personal interactions (Biggar et al., 2022).

In conclusion, investing in human relations by elevating the importance of kindness can challenge long-established norms and be disruptive to institutional change (Unwin, 2018). It is important to recognise that integrating kindness as a fundamental value in strategies and frameworks requires further implementation measures that go beyond the mere expectation of "just being kind". Translating positive "intention into action" (Ballat et al., 2020, p. 204) requires a nuanced understanding of the complexity of these systems, as described by Munro et al. (2014) in the phrase "You can't grow roses in concrete" (p. 1). In order to promote real change and meaningful progress, it is, therefore, crucial to recognise the challenges associated with these efforts and to adopt a comprehensive approach that takes into account the multi-faceted nature of the issues (Ballat, 2020). This transition from a rational to a relational lexicon (Unwin, 2018) results in better recognition of needs, better cooperation between the service provider and receiver and, thus, an increase in efficiency and quality (Ballat, 2020). Kindness should not be seen as synonymous with weakness (Sciortino, 2018) but rather be recognised as a social glue helping society as a complementary tool to tackle issues of a time in need of "radical social transformation" (Fleener & Coble, 2022, p. 2; cf. Willis, 2021). "Learning to have more intimate relationships with people and seeing service as support rather than as a commodity may not only generate the outcomes we are looking for but also offer the route to securing the legitimacy that public services in the twenty-first century so desperately need" (Mackenzie, 2021, p. 13).

2.3
Service Design

This section outlines the practice and purpose of the emerging field of Service Design, clarifying its importance for innovative problem-solving in the 21st century by describing the shift from creating products towards the development of service delivery. The section aims to outline the discipline's theoretical underpinnings, methodological approaches, and practical implications, as well as describe the Service Design's human-centred approach with its accompanying tools and process frameworks to then discuss the relevance of the discipline in the context of a shift from public services to kindness in section 2.4.

2.3.1 Definition of Service Design and its purpose

In general, services are defined by the exchange of value between different actors (Penin, 2018) and therefore have existed since the earliest social, interpersonal interactions. With industrialisation and the resulting development of new needs and desires, the task of design has expanded from the development of objects to that of service delivery. The design practice has thus evolved from the improvement of living standards to the enhancement of quality of life (Polaine et al., 2013). The term Service Design was coined when the relevance of services in an economic sense became apparent (Morelli et al., 2020), and service receivers started to compensate service providers for the performance of a task involving a specific output and experience (Penin, 2018). A decisive moment in establishing Service Design was the publication of Shostack's paper "How to Design a Service" (1982) and its introduction of the service blueprint to describe the service performance of participating human and non-human actors in a concise and incremental format. In its early days, Service Design was a practice to optimise customer experiences mainly related to organisations' touchpoints and was considered a descendant

of business development and marketing management (Catalanotto, 2018; Vink, 2019; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Clatworthy, 2011). Services were more and more tailored towards the human element of their users and personalised accordingly. Service providers were motivated to enhance interactions with customers by making them more individualised (Cipolla & Manzini, 2009). In the nineties, Service Design moved gradually away from its origins and was recognised as a design discipline of its own when it became a course of study at universities from 1991 onwards (Catalanotto, 2018). By creating a dialogue "with the material practices of design and [...] the strategic and systems-oriented approaches" (Penin, 2018, p. 147), the practice enables users to have a usable, meaningful and desirable service while being efficient, distinctive and effective for the provider (Mager, 2009). However, there is no universally accepted definition of Service Design, though it is described in the mainstream literature as a synthesis of mindset, process and toolbox (Stickdorn et al., 2018). Followingly, a diverse array of definitions is provided to enhance the understanding of the discipline's scope and aims.

Stickdorn

"Service design [...] is a human-centred collaborative, interdisciplinary, iterative approach which uses research, prototyping, and a set of easily understood activities and visualisation tools to create and orchestrate experiences that meet the needs of the business, the user, and other stakeholders" (Stickdorn et al., 2018, p. 27).

Gibbons

"Service design is the activity of planning and organising business resources (people, props, and processes) in order to improve (1) directly, the employees' experience and (2) indirectly, the customers' experience" (Gibbons, 2022, para. 2).

Moritz

"Service Design helps to innovate (create new) or improve (existing) services to make them more useful, usable, desirable, for clients and efficient as well as effective for organisations. It is a new holistic, multidisciplinary, integrative field" (Moritz, 2005, p. 6).

Mager

"Service design choreographs processes, technologies and interactions within complex systems in order to co-create value for relevant stakeholders" (Mager, as cited in Stickdorn et al., 2018, p. 19).

Miller

"Service Design helps organisations see their services from a customer perspective. It is an approach to designing services that balances the needs of the customer with the needs of the business, aiming to create seamless and quality service experiences. Service design is rooted in design thinking, and brings a creative, human-centred process to service improvement and designing new services. Through collaborative methods that engage both customers and service delivery teams, service design helps organisations gain true, end-to-end understanding of their services, enabling holistic and meaningful improvements" (Miller, 2015, para. 13).

Another decisive factor in the discipline was the change from a product-dominant logic, which focuses on the physical evidence of a service, to a service-dominant logic, which represents a paradigm shift towards a value co-creation between the service actors (Vargo & Lusch, 2015; Vink, 2019). The following values of the service-dominant logic describe some of today's axioms of Service Design (Stickdorn et al., 2018, p. 75):

- "Service is the fundamental basis of exchange.
- Value is co-created by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary.
- All social and economic actors are resource integrators.
- Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.
- Value co-creation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements."

Since shifting towards the service-dominant logic, the value of the discipline has been appreciated outside the business context and is establishing itself in dealing with politics, public services and societal issues (Pierri, 2017). In economically highly developed countries, at least 60% of the national income is generated in the service industry, highlighting the importance of Service Design competencies for such offerings to stay successful (Mager, 2020). Its holistic approach makes it possible to address economic, environmental and social challenges by systematically breaking down complexity into smaller components without sacrificing the big picture. This makes the discipline a "catalyst for organisational change and transformation by collaboratively creating preferred futures" (Pfannstiel & Rasche, 2018, p. 2f). Today, Service Design has thus the potential to shape human activity (Stickdorn et al., 2018) as services have become ubiquitous in modern societies and build the scaffold, the "soft infrastructure of our lives" (Penin, 2018, p. 21) – whether it is for decisive moments, such as having children, buying a house or getting married, or in everyday situations like shopping, money transactions or transport (Downe, 2020). However, this ubiquity also leads to services being taken for granted and appearing almost invisible, at least as long as they operate flawlessly. The importance of the role of the Service Designer becomes visible when the narrative is turned around: If services were not designed, they would simply adapt to external conditions and no longer focus on fulfilling user needs or the desired outcome (Downe, 2020). Service performance can thus only be sustained if care, access and response are combined (figure 5), considering both the front-end and back-end of multi-channel touchpoints in physical and

digital interactions from end to end (Quicksey, 2018). Details of how this is achieved and the methods used to do so are illustrated in the following subsection.
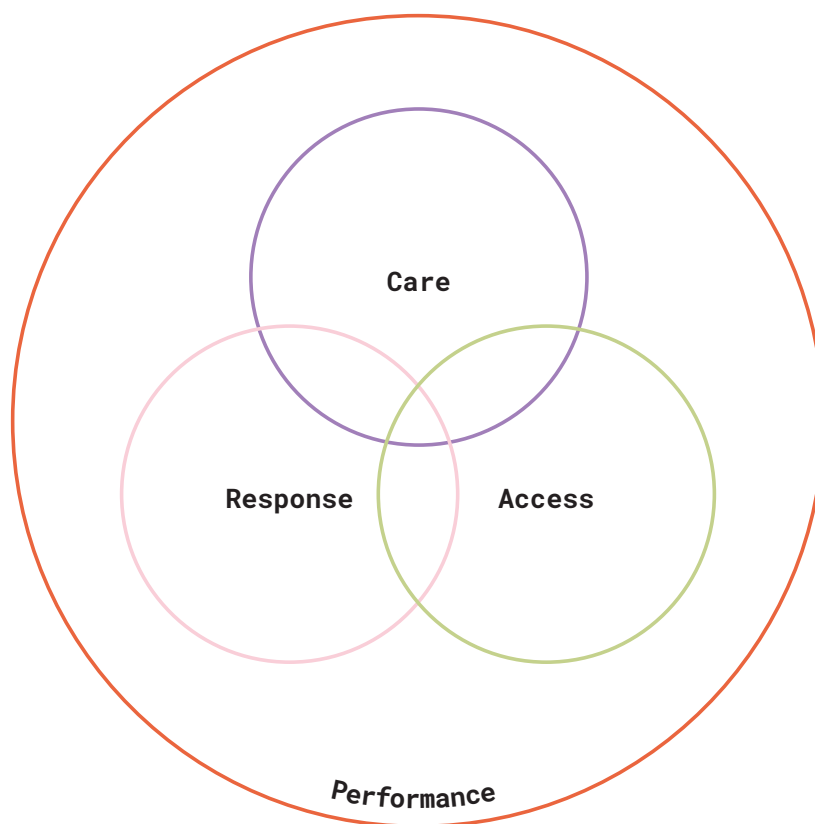
Figure 5: Core service offerings, adapted from Polaine et al., 2013

2.3.2 The Service Design process and its core patterns

An important attribute of services is that they require people to use them in order to (co-) create value (Polaine et al., 2013). This automatically means that people are involved in any service, allowing human interactions to occur. Emotions are, by definition, part of such interactions, making them a significant aspect of the expectation and actual experience of a service (Penin, 2018). However, the industrial product mindset has transferred to today's service economy and remains to this day. Prioritising efficiency may be valuable in product design but ineffective and inefficient for services, as these values do not translate to living, feeling and emotional beings (Polaine et al., 2013). That is why Service Design focuses on all the individuals affected by the service and their experiences and has thus adopted human-centredness as one of its main principles. To do this successfully, Service Designers work collaboratively and interdisciplinary with a wide range of actors to maximise knowledge and understanding in the design process and holistically address the needs of all concerned by connecting users, experts and stakeholders (Stickdorn et al., 2018; Mager & Sung, 2011). This collaboration of multiple actors within the service throughout different touchpoints over the course of time makes a system highly dynamic. The challenge for Service Designers is to skillfully orchestrate these distinct sequences of a service, in order to prevent any disruptions or issues for its users (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2019). An example of this challenge can be seen in hospital waiting rooms, where inefficient coordination of individual processes can lead to prolonged waiting times, frustrated patients, and overburdened staff (Teixeira Lot et al., 2016). To reduce such scenarios from occurring, data-driven work is of critical importance in the design process, as relying solely on assumptions to develop solutions is not sufficient. Instead, qualitative and quantitative research must be conducted to design services that actually meet the needs of users (Stickdorn et al., 2018). As Downe (2020, p. 35f) aptly states, "services, unlike almost everything else that has an equivalent effect on our lives, have remained unrefereed and unscrutinised." To address this, one of the fundamental principles of Service Design is iteration: Services must be continually reviewed and adapted to ensure they remain relevant and effective (Stickdorn et al., 2018).

There are several frameworks that are used as guidance for a Service Design process, like the Double Diamond model, including the stages of Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver (Ball, 2019) or the Design Thinking process going through the stages of Empathise, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test (Staten et al., 2016). However, in general, the different phases of the design process are formulated and structered differently depending on the project and approach.

Generally, the Service Design process, disregarding any specific framework, starts with the exploration of the problem space, continues with the creation of a solution and reflection upon the outcome and then ends, ideally, with the implementation of the solution. The basic goal of each design process should be to first identify the right problem before putting various resources into solving the problem the right way (Stickdorn et al., 2018). The core patterns to achieve this objective involve the use of divergence and convergence, which were originally introduced in design and architecture by Paul Laseau in 1980. This interplay between seeking and creating opportunities, as well as narrowing down and deciding, leads to the development of successful solutions (Stickdorn et al., 2018). It should be noted that the design process is never linear in reality. The frameworks primarily serve as a trajectory and build a scaffold to keep the overview, as it is often necessary to iterate in the individual stages (Stickdorn et al., 2018). Integrated in the several phases of the design frameworks are a variety of different tools and methods that can be used in almost every conceivable combination, whereas the aim of a successful Service Design process lies in the right decisions about which tools to use in what stage of the process (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2019). The commonly used and most known tools include the ecosystem map, user journey, stakeholder map, persona, scenario, evaluation matrix, service prototyping, and service blueprint. The flexible application of these and additional tools make it possible for Service Designers to adapt to most given problems rather than having to follow a rigid and restrictive process (Stickdorn et al., 2018). Their expertise in synthesising and visually processing abstract information enables them to identify problems within existing systems and redesign complex structures to develop more inclusive and thoughtful solutions (Sevaldson, 2013).

2.4

Analysing the shift from rational to relational public services through Service Design

Public services describe services provided by a country's government and being part of a public infrastructure like welfare, healthcare and education. Such services range from issuing passports to public transport, tax collection, child care and education to health and care facilities (Quicksey, 2018; Polaine, 2013). The way these public services are structured today, which is also described in subsection 2.2.3, is defined by Cipolla and Manzini (2009) as rational services. Rational services are designed and function based on transactions, which means that they are quantitatively valued, measured by productivity and focused on their function instead of their quality of execution. Human interactions within rational services are anonymous, standardised and reproducible. If kindness were cultivated in public systems, these rational services could be transformed into relational services, which are defined by their focus on interpersonal interactions (Cipolla & Manzini, 2009). In contrast to rational services, relational services provide the opportunity to foster the essential human quality of relating to each other (Mackenzie, 2021). In other words, "while the rational model is characterised by a goal-imposing logic, the relational involves actors conforming their actions to their mutual relationships – a logic of appropriateness" (Lejano, 2004, p. 371). Strengthening citizen-government relations requires higher productivity as well as enhanced citizen experience in public services (Capita, 2021). Hence, service providers need to be given back the ability to build "up relationships and [make] the most of their human capabilities" (Mackenzie, 2021, p. 11). For some services, their quality is critically dependent on the relationship

between the service provider and the user, for instance, in the care sector. In order to support the development of a deep connection rather than a superficial transaction, the interpersonal skills of the service provider are necessary to recognise the user as a "whole person" and thus add a human touch to the service (Muir & Parker, 2014). With the aim of a more personalised service delivery, relational public services have a higher potential to solve current social issues in comparison to a transactional model (Capita, 2021; Mackenzie, 2021). Nevertheless, a high number of public services are still carried out in a rational manner (Muir & Parker, 2014) and focus on efficiency and effectiveness (cf. subsection 2.2.3), even though Service Design has already been striving to integrate the human element more into the design process (Cipolla & Manzini, 2009; IDEO et al., 2016). For example, in the early 2000s, when Service Design research and practice found its way into British public services, while at the same time, interdisciplinary teams in Denmark were working on government projects with a citizen-driven approach (Qicksey, 2018).

As Muir and Parker (2014) mention, a shift from rational to relational services requires tools that represent interconnectedness in systems as well as relationships between citizens and service providers. By using Service Design as an approach, governments can better understand and meet citizens' needs to improve the overall satisfaction as well as efficiency of public services (Sangiorgi, 2015; cf. IDEO et al., 2016). To comprehend service stakeholders as human entities, empathy has become one of the core resources in design frameworks (Kouprie & Visser, 2009) and is often described as an essential factor for design by design theorists and practitioners (Heylighen & Dong, 2019). When applied to design, empathy is the designer's capacity to put themselves in the perspective of the user, the target group or the research participant. The trait is considered a mandatory aspect of Design Thinking, with various tools and methods aimed at enhancing the designer's comprehension of the target user and thereby improving the quality of the service delivery (Kouprie & Visser, 2009, cited in Heylighen & Dong, 2019; Polaine, 2013). The prominence of empathy is also evident in the naming of design stages, such as the fundamental research phase of the Design Thinking process called "Empathise" (Haddadian et al., 2019), and the development of tools and methods like personas, journey maps, and empathy maps (Ferreira et al., 2016). In these tools, however, the connection between the service user and service provider is not represented, but they solely target the illustration of individual service roles. Although empathy provides a solid foundation for

relational Service Design and is a precursor to kindness, the Service Design process does not currently provide the instruments to address relationality. On the other hand, there are tools such as the service blueprint, stakeholder map and ecosystem map that display transactional connections but do not address emotional aspects. The Service Design process does not yet offer any instruments that have been researched and meet the requirements of relational public services that foster kindness (Muir & Parker, 2014). Interpersonal interaction and emotional response must be considered in the design process if kindness is to be enhanced in public services in the future. Thus, one could infer that in order to cultivate kindness, Service Design ought to incorporate tools that address both interpersonal dynamics and skills. As kindness is fundamentally rooted in the actions between two or more individuals, it is imperative that designers consider these factors to generate outcomes that prioritise human interaction over rationality. Especially the long-term and ever-present services in the public sector, such as healthcare or education, should not primarily focus on the fulfilment of tasks but should include more profound needs. In other words, Service Design should encompass an in-depth analysis of **how** tasks are accomplished, rather than just focusing on **whether** they are completed, as they influence how people feel they are perceived in their role of citizens (Polaine, 2013). The assumption is that Service Design can "bridge the gap between service systems and human value" (Polaine, 2013, p. 137) and transition from rational to relational public services.

2.5 Research focus

Through the literature review, several key insights emerged that inform the formulation and reasoning of a research question, which addresses the establishment of kindness in public services through its inclusion in the Service Design process.

Kindness consists of three key elements, being benevolent tolerance, empathic response and proactiveness, by benefitting another person. This means that a good intention alone is not sufficient for kindness but requires an action by the provider that is considered to be good by the receiver. To fulfil this requirement, it is crucial to recognise differences between oneself and the other, to respond to the individual circumstances of the receiver without projecting one's own needs onto the other person and without intruding on personal space. More broadly, kindness requires a delicate balance between closeness and distance. Once this is achieved, a foundation of trust is formed between the two parties. Alongside the definition of this concept, a social narrative has developed around it that tends to give this intrinsic human behaviour a negative connotation. It is based on the assumption that kindness refers primarily to vulnerable and dependent people and implies that identifying with such individuals would be undesirable (subsection 2.1.2). This narrative has been adopted by policymakers and is reflected in public services, which were consequently designed to achieve economic efficiency and effectiveness, leaving humanity out of the equation. A compelling reason for the prevalence of bureaucracy in modern society is the need to ensure that all public systems are based on principles of fairness and respect for the dignity of citizens (subsection 2.2.3). When considering the integration of kindness into public systems, some argue that institutionalising this prosocial behaviour can diminish its authentic character and even lead to unintended negative consequences, like promoting the unequal treatment of service users (subsection 2.2.1). To monitor and compare developments, be it positive or negative, it is important to conduct assessments in public systems. For this reason, the measurement of kindness has become a topic of intense debate,

wherein some opinions stipulate that the measurement of kindness must include its circumstances, experiences and consequences (subsection 2.2.2). The change that is necessary today is noticeable in a multitude of crises and the resulting decline in citizens' trust in public systems. Through the literature review, kindness emerges as a possible solution for an improvement in the recognition of human needs and better cooperation between the state and the population. It is assumed that this co-creation will lead to a shift from a rational lexicon to a relational lexicon, which will not, as some claim, make services more inefficient but will even increase service quality. The current approach of implementing well-structured processes without involving the irrationality of human nature and preserving barriers to kindness must be challenged. The belief that standardised processes are the fairest and only way of public service delivery ignores the prevailing inequalities in terms of sense of agency and universalises individuality (subsection 2.2.3). One process that specialises in identifying and integrating such needs is Service Design. Its operators have the innovative and strategic skills and the necessary mindset needed to shape public service systems towards adequately solving the challenges of the 21st century by addressing society as a coexistence of people as sentient beings. The capabilities of Service Design include dealing with complex, multi-actor service systems and thus offer the appropriate methods to make room for more responsiveness towards personal circumstances by improving the relationship between the service provider and user (section 2.3). Tools that represent emotions and stakeholder exchange are already established in Service Design, but a combination of both factors is missing in order to develop the potential for kindness. The assumption is that Service Design can drive enduring change towards cultivated kindness if the toolset used so far is expanded by interpersonal dynamics and emotional reactions to transition from rational towards relational public services (section 2.4).

Based on these findings, the researchers dedicated their academic research to examining how kindness can be integrated through Service Design to remove the barriers of acting kind, encouraging more humanised processes in public services and thus raising its importance from a dyadic to a strategic level. Therefore, the research question is framed as follows:

How can the toolkit of Service Design be extended to foster kindness in public services?

Key takeaways
of the literature review

Defining kindness
- Kindness consists of benign tolerance, empathetic responsivity and principled proaction.
- For kindness, the intention is not enough: It needs execution.
- Kindness is a balancing act between respecting boundaries and creating closeness.
- Kind behaviour fosters attention and facilitates attunement between individuals, leading to mutual trust.
- Acts of kindness that require little effort are those with the greatest impact.

Kindness in systems
- When incorporating kindness into public systems, it is crucial to ensure that transparency and equality are maintained.
- Kindness must not become a professional burden for service providers.
- Kindness makes systems focus not only on transactions but also on relationships, creating a change from rational to relational services.
- Kindness makes systems perceive citizens as sentient people with needs, not passive receivers of services.
- Relational services offer the possibility to emphasise humanity and be able to act in a more personalised way.

Kindness through Service Design
- Service Design already offers opportunities to combine citizen needs and service efficiency.
- Transactions can already be analysed through Service Design, as well as individual material and emotional needs of users.
- For Service Design of kindness, interpersonal interactions and emotional responses need to be included.
- Service Design does not yet offer tools that combine the relevant factors for a relational design of services.

3
Methodology

This chapter presents the methodologies that are applied to explore the research question. First, Research through Design is introduced, which provides an approach that utilises design practices to conduct scholarly research. Thereupon, IDEO's 3I Model is presented, which is integrated to guide and structure the research process. Additionally, the chapter provides an overview of the applied methods and tools.

The chapter is divided into the following sections:

3.1 Research through Design
3.2 Research process and methods

3.1

Research through Design

The term "Research through Design" (hereafter referred to as RtD) was coined by Christopher Frayling to provide a framework that describes research outside of traditional scientific disciplines. Compared to "Research **for** Design" and "Research **into** Design", "Research **through** Design" is an approach that applies techniques, methods, and processes of the design practice to generate new knowledge by conducting scholarly research driven by a research question (Zimmerman & Forlizzi, 2014). Some authors refer to RtD as a designerly inquiry of creating an artefact with the aim of societal change by challenging current perceptions. This artefact serves as an implicit, theoretical contribution that represents the designer's understanding of a current state and the description of a preferred situation. As the goal of this thesis goes beyond providing design artefacts but additionally produces novel insights around the meaningful use of kindness within Service Design for public systems, RtD is considered a legitimate approach of inquiry to address the research question and speculate on proposals for the future of the Service Design practice by contributing to its improvement (Zimmerman, Stolterman, & Forlizzi, 2010; Savic & Huang, 2014).

As a concrete framework for conducting RtD is not established (Savic & Huang, 2014), the research approach is merged with IDEO's 3I design framework to serve as process guidance and help structure the research methods. The framework includes three phases, namely Inspiration, Ideation, and Implementation, yet still represents a shift between divergence and convergence. The first phase, Inspiration, focuses on learning and understanding the problem, while the second phase, Ideation, deals with the divergent and convergent development of ideas by distilling insights into a number of opportunities. In the final phase, Implementation, the opportunities are synthesised and reduced to the most promising solutions by eliminating, prototyping, and testing. The best concept is ultimately refined with insights gained from testing and made actionable (Tschimmel, 2012; IDEO.org, 2021). In the subsequent process of this research, this framework will be utilised to structure the research approach

and methodologically answer the research question using design methods. It is important to note that this design framework serves solely as a guide, and deviations or iterations may occur (Kochanowska & Gagliardi, 2022). The upcoming chapters may appear similar to general design practices, especially when supported by a design framework. However, the use of the Research through Design approach involves a more systematic and reflective process. This method is distinguished by the presentation of detailed documentation and reflection on research methods and tools (Zimmerman & Forlizzi, 2014). In other words, the subsequent chapters include a comprehensive report of the research methods, the insights generated through the exploration, as well as reflective conclusions that accompany each subsection. In order to methodically approach the reflection on the applied design methods, the components of qualitative validity and reliability were employed. Validity is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of the insights developed through the approach of each research procedure, whereas reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of the research instrument (Bjørner, 2015). While reproducing the insights may not be essential or anticipated in the context of RtD (Zimmerman & Forlizzi, 2014), the framework of validity and reliability offers a means to evaluate the applied research practices and to identify any possible areas for improvement, encouraging the learning process.

3.2

Research process and methods

Figure 6 visualises the overall research process, including the employed methods through the structure of IDEO's 3I framework. The Inspiration phase of the thesis process — including the survey, expert interviews and desk research — represents the most divergent practices, for which the generated knowledge can not only serve the Service Design practice but also produces insights relevant outside of the design discipline. Through applied methods, stakeholders from various sectors were integrated to enhance the understanding of the discussion on kindness in public services and build on theoretical knowledge from the literature review. However, it was only during the Ideation and Implementation phases that kindness was contextualised fully within the Service Design discipline. Design-specific tools and techniques were utilised collaboratively with external Service Designers to explore potential ideas and reach convergence on a solution that could positively impact the future Service Design practice, specifically in the realm of public services and human interactions.

Inspiration

Survey

Expert interviews

Desk research

Ideation

Ideation workshops

Development of preliminary solution

Implementation

User testings

Testing on an existing service

Motivational matrix

Impact journey

Value proposition

Offering maps

Figure 6: Design process overview

4
The design process

This chapter documents the research process that addresses the research question of the thesis. As mentioned in chapter 3, this chapter is structured in three sections representing IDEO's 3I framework to serve as guidance for the process phases. Each section reports different methods and tools applied to generate knowledge in order to answer the research question based on the Research through Design approach. In addition, the final solution is presented.

The chapter is divided into the following sections:

4.1 Inspiration
4.2 Ideation
4.3 Implementation
4.4 Presentation of the final solution

4.1
Inspiration

In the pursuit of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the issue of kindness in public services, a two-fold approach was adopted in the Inspiration phase of this research. Specifically, two different target groups, namely non-experts and experts, were questioned to gain insights into the perception and definition of kindness in today's society. Opinions of the former group were gathered through a survey consisting of ten open-ended questions and a single-choice question. The aim of this survey was to gain a general understanding of how non-experts perceive and conceptualise the term kindness in the context of public services. To complement the results, seven experts from different professional backgrounds were interviewed. Through their insights, the research was enriched with professional knowledge and nuanced perspectives on the topic. Followingly, the results of the survey and expert interviews were analysed and synthesised to develop a contextualised definition of kindness, which served as a guiding framework for the further phases of this research.

4.1.1 Survey

As the literature research shows, especially section 2.1, the definition of kindness is frequently used but not always distinctively clear (Anderson & Brownlie, 2019). Kindness can be a very subjective and context-dependent concept, which is why understanding and unifying this notion is important, especially from the perspective of an investigation in a thesis. In order to complement the insights from the literature review, a survey was conducted to gather insights into the layperson's understanding of the concept. By including perspectives from non-experts, it was aimed to provide a more comprehensive and inclusive view of how kindness is defined and understood. Given that this thesis centres around public services, citizen involvement is a crucial aspect of the design process. As such, understanding and incor-

porating their perspectives was of significant relevance and importance to the overall research. The primary objective of this survey was to validate, falsify, or supplement existing definitions of kindness and thus provide a more nuanced and complete account of the concept. Additionally, the goal of the survey was not only to explore dyadic views of kindness but also to establish a framework for kindness at higher infrastructural levels to gain insights that inform the following process of this thesis.

Research design

To maximise participation and gather rich, diverse perspectives, an online survey consisting of ten open-ended questions was conducted as an exploratory research method (Roopa & Rani, 2012; Gideon, 2012). The questionnaire was intentionally designed with a small number of compulsory questions to minimise participant fatigue and still get as much input as possible by providing participants with input fields with no word count limit (except for question 5). To elicit more detailed and insightful responses, the questions were formulated in a direct and open-ended way that allowed for personal opinions and encouraged a variety in responses (Gideon, 2022). This was attempted by avoiding leading or biased language, providing clear instructions, and allowing enough space for respondents to express themselves fully. To capture a wide range of perspectives, the survey was shared on social media platforms (Facebook, Reddit, Slack) using the volunteer sampling method, and sent to personal contacts (Hassan, 2022; Gideon, 2012). This approach ensured that the survey collected diverse viewpoints.

The survey consisted of six questions focused on defining kindness, and four contextual questions, including two scenarios. To better understand the motivation behind each question, table 2 presents a detailed breakdown of the survey content.

	Question	Purpose / Motivation
1	How do you define kindness? Describe in a few words.	The first question aimed to get a general understanding of what participants associate with kindness by using direct language to receive an explanation of the concept from the personal point of view of the respective participant.
2	What is a small act of kindness in your opinion? Give an example.	Since the literature research revealed that a distinction is made between different acts of kindness, the second and third question aimed to find out which acts are defined as small and which as greater acts. This should serve as a basis for understanding the scope in which kindness can take place, to possibly draw upon in the further course of the thesis when evaluating the possibilities of kindness in public services.
3	What is a big act of kindness in your opinion? Give an example.	
4	Is there a context in society where you feel kindness is missing? Name as many examples as you can think of.	This question aimed to assess whether there are areas in society where a particular lack of kindness is identified. Since the research on kindness published so far clearly focuses on the public sector, this question intended to validate or falsify whether citizens do indeed have the greatest need for kindness in this sector. In addition, the question served to iden-

		tify response patterns and whether different services in the public sector (or even in the private sector, interpersonal relationships outside of infrastructures) are particularly emphasised.
5	Do you think kindness is measurable?	This question is based on the debate in subsection 2.2.2. Although measurability in services is a relevant topic, the literature review does not show any agreement. Therefore, this question aimed to get the opinion of citizens on this matter and thus complement the overall discussion. In contrast to all other questions, this question only provides a "yes/ no" answer option, as a more detailed explanation can be given in the following response.
6a	You think kindness is measurable. How? Explain how you could measure it.	Based on the previous question's response, the participants were prompted to provide a justification for their answer, aiming to capture how participants believe kindness can be measured or why they assume it cannot be measured. Question 6a attempted to capture methods by which participants suggest the concept can be made measurable. Question 6b, aimed to understand whether participants believe that something
6b	You think kindness is not measurable. Why not?	

essential to the concept would be lost or if other reasons underlie their viewpoint.

7	Where do you see kindness being incorporated into our society's systems? Name as many examples as you can think of.	This question served partly as a counter-question to question 4 but was specified to systems and infrastructure. Its aim was to determine the extent to which participants perceive certain policy decisions as acts of kindness. The goal was to identify what type of service may already be implementing kindness.
8	**Imaginary scenario 1:** How would the world look like if acts of kindness would be the new currency?	This question represented the first of two scenarios, which, although formulated as questions for the purpose of this survey, are intended to stimulate thinking and initiate a discussion about potential futures (Tibbs, 1999). Scenarios are commonly used in foresight and design fields, but they also serve as a research method for presenting fictional situations and integrating a stimulus (Sampson & Johannessen, 2020). In this case, the scenario method was used to present a surreal and exaggerated implementation of kindness, primarily to elicit critical voices and understand the extent to which participants identify negative aspects of kindness and where

		the limits of implementation lie. However, the question was formulated in an open-ended manner, allowing for positive reactions and testing whether the idea of kindness as a currency - as previously argued by Willis & Kavka (2021) and Klaber & Bailey (2019) - resonates with participants.
9	**Imaginary scenario 2:** Imagine a government that includes kindness as an obligatory aspect before introducing or modifying any regulations. How would that world be different from the world we live in now?	The second scenario again targeted an alternative future, but unlike the first scenario, it specifically focused on the top-down implementation of governments. The aim was to analyse citizens' reactions when kindness, as already discussed in chapter 2, is elevated to a political level.

Table 2: Survey questions and motivations

Research analysis

Following a nine-day period (06.02.2023 - 14.02.2023) during which the survey was available for participant responses, a total of 54 participations were recorded. Although this sample size is not representative of society as a whole, it nonetheless provides valuable insights into individual perceptions of kindness. The survey data was analysed using the customer insight platform called "Dovetail", which facilitated efficient data cleaning and subsequent evaluation. In particular, responses to each question were analysed and coded with specific keywords, also called tags, in order to create categories and, therefore, provide a clearer overview of opinions. This method is referred to as the Qualitative Content Analysis (Bjørner, 2015). The applied keywords differed across questions, with some overlap between them. It should be noted that none of the tags were predetermined but rather emerged through the interpretation of the responses. This approach allowed for a more organic and nuanced analysis of the data, as the tags were derived directly from the content of the responses rather than being imposed from external categories. Furthermore, this flexibility allowed for the emergence of unexpected insights and themes that may have been overlooked in a more rigid and predetermined framework. Subsequently, the resulting tags were sorted in descending order based on their frequency of occurrence, which provided a comprehensive over-view for the interpretation and analysis of the survey outcomes. A nominal scale was used for the evaluation process, in which no variable (i.e. tag) was ranked higher or lower in importance than the others (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2003). Rather, the purpose was to identify the prevalence of certain opinions among the survey respondents. Finally, the filtered and analysed results of each question were summarised in written form, aiming to elucidate the connections between the responses provided by the participants.

This approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the underlying themes and patterns in the data, enabling the identification of key trends and insights into individual perceptions of kindness, presented followingly.

Main insights

This subsection highlights the most interesting insights and emergent patterns that arose in the responses. These were partly compared and contrasted with the literature review in order to find out to what extent the findings vali-date or falsify author's opinions.

Kindness is perceived as a mix of different prosocial behaviours

The survey respondents described kindness as acts of help, friendliness, respect, care, thoughtfulness, and empathy. Although scientific research distinguishes between different prosocial behaviours, in this survey, the terms were used interchangeably as partial synonyms, indicating related but not identical meanings (Koppel & Tuulik, 2021). Participants did not make clear distinctions between individual prosocial behaviours and instead treated them as having slight variations in meaning. Kindness was often compared to love, consideration, and openness. Participants often associated kindness with the idea of making the other person feel seen and heard, as well as improving their overall wellbeing and happiness – an insight that thus supports the findings from the literature review. Participants referred kindness to specific groups, including the vulnerable, unfamiliar individuals, and even animals and plants. Some emphasised treating others as one would like to be treated, without expecting a reward, even at the provider's expense. However, the literature review suggests that kindness involves considering the individual wishes of others rather than projecting one's own desires onto them (Willis & Kavka, 2021). These two insights demonstrate a conflict. In addition, kindness was described as a subjective bias towards treating someone in a way that is driven by affection – highlighting that the bias, in this case, is not necessarily negative. This implication was one of the few indications that kindness arises from a highly subjective and, therefore, context-dependent perception. Some respondents viewed kindness as a defining characteristic of humanity, demonstrated by selfless acts for others, including those who cannot reciprocate. This notion is exemplified by the German term "Nächstenliebe," which lacks a precise English translation but signifies profound interpersonal affection shown to both friends and foes (Kohlmann, 2016).

Courtesy, smiling and low-effort help are defined as small acts of kindness

When asked which acts of kindness the participants consider as small, the vast majority stated that helping with minor tasks and giving a smile would represent a low-effort act. Participants gave examples such as carrying some-thing for someone or giving a friend a ride home if it is on the way. Some statements focused on the cost factor for the provider, with the notion that a small act should not require much effort. Politeness was also mentioned as a form of small kindness, with holding doors open for others being the most common example. Additionally, saying "Hello" and "Thank you" were cited as examples of everyday politeness. The conflict that exists in scientific research regarding politeness as a form of kindness did not arise in the

analysis of this survey: The results show that politeness is an important component of small acts of kindness for the respondents. In addition, sincere compliments and asking how one is doing were mentioned as further examples of verbal expressions. What has been stated much less are actions that regard material exchanges.

Big acts of kindness involve monetary, time or health expenditures

In great contrast to a small action, the answers about large acts of kindness predominantly referred to help that requires a large investment of time, effort or money. For large acts of kindness, the deprioritisation of oneself and the accompanying greater relevance of others for whom one acts selflessly and altruistically outweighed and goes hand in hand with greater sacrifice. Often cited as an example of this sacrifice were monetary transactions, ranging from lending money to friends to paying bills in shops for strangers or making large donations to non-profit organisations. Outside of the monetary focus, which was very prevalent in this question, volunteering for social projects and charities was mentioned, describing the increase in wellbeing not only for individuals but for whole communities. On an individual level, mental support for acquaintances or strangers was noted several times, with active listening being referred to repeatedly. Beyond the time, effort or money involved, answers referring to lifesaving acts exemplified blood and organ donation.

Humans have lost connection to each other

When asked about the lack of kindness in society, the most common response was that it is lacking "everywhere" or "in many parts." Participants found it easier to identify contexts where kindness is absent than the opposite. Examples primarily involved everyday situations, like interactions with strangers in public transportation or supermarkets, where kindness was notably lacking. These instances often occurred among people within the same group, such as commuters pushing and shoving or customers attempting to cut in line. The explanations often revolved around a lack of interpersonal connection and a sense that people do not consider themselves part of the same social organism. Participants also noted that small acts of kindness, like polite-ness, were considered insufficient in certain contexts. Time constraints and resulting stress were frequently mentioned as reasons for prioritizing oneself over others. Lack of kindness was observed among both service providers and users in the service industry, with negative experiences reported regarding unfriendly salespersons and disrespectful behaviour from patients towards care providers. One participant explained that neoliberalism has led to a

focus on the self and competition instead of community and collaboration. This response confirms some statements from chapter 2, in which the need for kindness is often justified by the prevailing focus on economic efficiency and effectiveness (Ferguson, 2017; Unwin, 2018; Willis & Kavka, 2021). Furthermore, the study confirmed that people do not perceive everyone as deserving the same level of kindness, particularly those perceived as "different" being deemed less deserving (Willis & Kavka, 2021).

High subjectivity of kindness makes it difficult to measure

Responses to questions 5, 6a, and 6b revealed a majority opinion (32 responses) that kindness is not measurable, contrasting with the assumption of its measurability (22 responses). Those in favour of measurement often emphasised the possibility of comparing different acts of kindness or evaluating individual acts. However, others argued that a simple comparison would not be meaningful. Suggestions for measuring kindness ranged from qualitative methods like storytelling, interviews, and observation to quantitative approaches such as counting the number of acts, their frequency, or using a yes/no determination. Despite these proposed methods, two primary reasons were identified against measuring kindness. Firstly, kindness is subjective, perceived differently by individuals based on their relationships, emotions, and circumstances. This makes defining parameters and creating a standardised measurement tool challenging. Secondly, kindness was described as an emotional experience that defies quantification, leading to the risk of diluting its essence and purpose: "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts" (Appendix 1), as cited by one of the respondents. Participants expressed the view that kindness should be promoted and exemplified rather than quantified. They highlighted its intangibility and the lack of a universally respected framework for measuring kindness.

Even though kindness as a currency could lead to more happiness, the risk of counterfeiting is high

While participants offered various answers regarding the potential outcomes of kindness as a general currency, there was skepticism towards the idea. The majority expressed concerns about the potential abuse of kindness, which could undermine its authenticity and lead to chaos in society. They questioned whether kindness could remain genuine if driven by transactional motives or if people were rewarded for it. As one participant in the survey summarises: "It might devalue the intrinsic worth of kindness itself. If people are being kind for personal gain, it may be less genuine and therefore less effective"

(Appendix 1). Participants argued that kindness should not be treated as a currency, citing challenges in measuring it and highlighting political, religious, and cultural differences as barriers. However, it was acknowledged that kindness as a currency could potentially foster a stronger sense of community and support for those in need, creating a culture of generosity and reciprocity without the expectation of indebtedness.

Potential positive effects outweigh the risk of losing the essence of institutionalised kindness

The question of introducing kindness as a compulsory aspect in government elicited various interpretations. Responses predominantly fell into two categories: those emphasising the positive impact on society and those highlighting how such a scenario could undermine the essence of kindness. Positive effects mentioned included increased consideration of minorities, enhanced social cohesion, and reduced conflicts. While kindness alone may not suffice to create a fairer society, some argued that it could motivate individuals to develop kind behavior as a habit. This would develop a positive co-living space with the potential to return the government to its original envisioned form, in which people debate with each other instead of arguing and do not behave like enemies. As one participant in the survey noted, it would have a positive effect if kindness simply meant causing the least amount of harm. Implementing kindness in governance was seen as fostering inclusivity, empathy, and a shift away from a purely capitalist orientation. Suggestions included selecting leaders based on their approved empathic capability. However, skepticism was expressed by many respondents, reflecting the low trust in governments highlighted in the literature review (Park et al., 2013; Ballat, 2020; Johnson, 2019). Concerns were raised about the potential for those in power to define kindness to their advantage and the resistance to government-imposed behavioural mandates, which also agrees with statements from Ballat (2020), Anderson and Brownlie (2019), as well as Mathers (2016). Instead, participants advocated for teaching kindness at an informal level, emphasising its value and nurturing intrinsic motivation. The importance of authenticity in acts of kindness was also emphasised, cautioning against reducing kindness to a mere task. Additionally, one participant noted that the implementation of kindness in government might not differ significantly from the current system, where kindness is taught but often not consistently practiced.

Reflections

on the research quality

Reliability

- Survey research is commonly regarded as a reliable method due to its ability to ensure consistency and repeatability. By employing a standardised questionnaire for all participants, this approach minimises the risk of variability (Bjørner, 2015). Even though kindness is a very subjective topic on which an individual could change their opinion, it is assumed that the main patterns from the unified questionnaire would be similar even if the method were repeated.

Validity

- To enhance the validity of the survey, several adjustments could have been implemented. As the survey was only conducted online, it resulted in a non-response bias (Gideon, 2021), which could have been avoided by incorporating other modes of participation.

- Additionally, pre-testing the survey could have ensured that questions were clearly understood and any necessary modifications could have been made to improve comprehension, which may call into question the accuracy of responses (Roopa & Rani, 2012).

- One potential criticism of the survey is the immediate language used to explore the concept of kindness, which is inherently subjective and open to broad interpretation. A more nuanced, less linguistically direct approach to questioning could have been beneficial in exploring the topic, its prerequisites and consequences (Andersen & Brownlie, 2021).

- The complexity of the scenarios posed in the survey was time-consuming and might have induced a cognitive burden and thus affected the spontaneity of responses. Additionally, the scenarios in the survey may have benefited from more contextual information, such as political or temporal framing, to further clarify the research question.

- Open-ended questions are beneficial in eliciting a range of perspectives. However, the answers can be more challenging to analyse due to the variability in responses (Gideon, 2021).

- Moreover, the answer options for question 5 were not complete; in this respect, there should have been a third option in addition to the yes/no answer, which allows a neutral positioning so that participants can assign themselves to a category without any ambiguity.

- Regarding the survey design, it was initially decided to omit demographic questions in order to reduce the length of the survey and avoid making participants feel uncomfortable about sharing personal data. However, this limitation means that it is not possible to analyse whether there are cultural, gender-based, political, or age-related differences in the perception of kindness. Although some responses indicate that the study reached people from different parts of the world, it is not possible to determine which areas had the most responses, making it impossible to contextualise or nuance the patterns that emerged from the data.

4.1.2 Expert interviews

In order to conduct more specific research on kindness at systematic and infrastructural levels and thus diversify the insights of the survey, interviews were conducted with experts from various fields. Expert interviews are "a systematic and theory-guided process to gather data from a person who has exclusive knowledge" (Kaiser 2014, as cited in Van Audenhove & Donders, 2019, p. 181). The interviews were designed to draw on the theories and discourses identified in the literature review to fill knowledge gaps and to learn more practical ways of implementing kindness in services.

Research design

In addition to the literature review and the survey, seven in-depth interviews were conducted. The interviewees were selected through various methods, including targeted recruitment from individuals who have authored papers or delivered lectures that served as foundational sources for this thesis. Additionally, participants were identified from organisations actively engaged in addressing topics related to kindness. They were contacted via email, in which the topic of the interview was briefly introduced, and the expert's impact on it was explained. As the interview process with all stakeholders took a total of 1.5 months, the interviews served to both converge and diverge in the design process. Each interview was individually adapted to the specific expertise of the interviewee as well as the current level of knowledge of the researchers in order to develop an optimum of insights. This need for adaptation led to a combination of semi-structured interviews, where questions are prepared but do not have to be asked in a strict order, as well as unstructured interviews, in which a free-flowing conversation can take place (Bjørner, 2015). The questions — which were partly defined beforehand and partly asked spontaneously — were always preceded by an introductory question also known as an "icebreaker" (Kilanowski, 2012) to understand the background and motivation of the interviewee to the main topic (Bjørner, 2015). All interviews were conducted online and were recorded. The interviews lasted for an average of 00:53:48 minutes. Consent forms were signed by each of the seven interviewees, in which they could indicate the extent to which they agreed to be quoted in this thesis, as conducting qualitative research includes the protection of the people involved (Bjørner, 2015). The interviewees are subsequently briefly introduced, along with their current country of residence, description of their occupation, as well as relevance to the thesis.

Stakeholders

Name	Region	Occupation & interview focus
Dame Julia Unwin	United Kingdom	Is a strategic leader and consultant specialised in voluntary and public services. She has led a foundation, chaired multiple boards, published books and reports and is now an award-winning honorary lecturer at three British universities. Some of her work on kindness, emotions and human relationships in governments was published in reports by Carnegie UK and served as one of the key references for the literature review of this thesis. With her decades of experience in public services in the United Kingdom and her involvement in the topic of emotional intelligence in public policy, the interview mainly focused on questions about the institutionalisation of kindness in the public sector, its risks and opportunities, as well as the practical suggestions for the implementation of humanised service processes.
Marie Huntington (pseudonym)	United Kingdom	Is a design researcher at Careful Industries, a company that specialises in conducting research about social and technical change and designing equitable policies. The interview aimed at getting insights into Marie's expertise on alternative futures for the government of the United Kingdom, focusing on human values in system design and social change to further understand how durable changes in policy-making can be achieved.
Jenny Grettve	Sweden	Is an architect and strategic design director that specialises in shared spaces, economic systems, behaviour patterns and

		societal change. She has published multiple books and recently founded a design agency with the mission of spreading kindness through design. Having held a speech about feminist futures and matriarchic values, which also served as one of the main inspirations for the topic of this work, the interview questions revolved mainly around the integration of kindness into systems to bring about social change and thus break down patriarchal structures.
Dr Melissa Q. T. Nguyen	United States	Is a political scientist and lawyer with a PhD from the UCLA Department of Political Science. She has conducted research about legal incentives that promote kindness for the UCLA Bedari Kindness Institute, which is why the interview centred on legal incentives for kind acts and the extent to which regulatory implementations of kindness in public policies can, in fact, arise.
Dr Emma Willis	New Zealand	Is an associate professor of English and Drama at the University of Auckland. Emma was the project leader of an interdisciplinary team working on the topic of politics of kindness and afterwards published multiple papers about kindness in policy, serving as key references for the theoretical research of this thesis. The aim of the interview was to find out more about kindness in the context of New Zealand, as this issue of kindness in the public sphere was particularly shaped by the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern. The questions focused on the social narrative around kindness and the implementation of kindness on a systemic level and the risks associated with it.

Michelle Johnson	Netherlands	Is a PhD candidate at the Technical University of Delft and currently conducting research on designing for kindness for the Delft Institute of Positive Design. As she is an expert on the intersection between design and kindness, this interview — unlike the others, which mostly had a policy focus — aimed to find out more about how kindness can be integrated into design and the impact it can have on the target group of the design solution. In addition, topics like cultural differences of kindness and the positive effects on wellbeing were reviewed.
Dr Lee Rowland	United Kingdom	Is a behavioural scientist and consultant, having done a PhD in experimental psychology at the University College London. Additionally, he worked as the research director of Kindlab, which is the research department of kindness.org, an organisation working on projects to foster kindness. Having published multiple papers about kindness and happiness and worked with governments on topics like citizen science and social change, the interview revolved around the motivation for acting kind, differences between kindness in the private and the public sector, and assessing the success of kindness.

Table 3: Expert interviewees

Research analysis

In the first step, the recordings of the interviews were transcribed using the software Dovetail. At the same time, the individual speakers were assigned to their respective sections to ensure a better understanding and structure of the text. The software used was relevant for the subsequent steps, as it allowed for qualitative content to be coded with tags and thus clustered thematically. The Qualitative Content Analysis as a method of evaluation involves working with categories and subcategories to sort content by topic (Kuckartz, 2019; Bjørner, 2015). During the research process, a systematic coding system was employed. After transcribing and proofreading each inter-view, the researchers assigned specific codes (tags) to the text consistently across all interviews. This coding process allowed for the identification and organization of key insights and relevant topics. Once all seven expert interviews were conducted, the researchers determined the top-level insight categories and placed the individual tags within their respective groups. This modified approach to Qualitative Content Analysis went beyond mere thematic clustering, incorporating initial interpretations and contextualization to provide a more analytical perspective in defining the categories.

Main insights

The following subsection presents the patterns, contradictions and findings that have emerged after analysing the seven interviews. Similar to subsection 4.1.1, the insights are compared to those from the literature review, if rele-vant, in order to put correlations into context.

Kindness needs redefining to be incorporated strategically

During interviews, the definition of kindness was extensively discussed and subsequently redefined. These conversations emphasised the subjective and context-dependent nature of the concept, highlighting the need to tailor the implementation of kindness to the specific requirements of the public service sector. This is relevant because acts of kindness cannot be replicated in different contexts with the same impact, and may even have significantly varying effects. In the context of public services, kindness is viewed as a disposition and attitude, which represents an evolution of the concept from previous literature. This definition places less emphasis on specific actions and practices and instead highlights the emotional service positioning. At the institutional level, the concept of "strong kindness" has emerged as a distinct form of benevolence that goes beyond mere politeness. It entails a proactive stance towards promoting the wellbeing of others and a willingness

to engage in advocacy and action on their behalf. When defining kindness, many interviewees have focused on the relationship between the provider and the receiver, recognising that these actors are inherently relational and cannot be considered in isolation, which corresponds to insights from the literature. In this context, kindness has been described as a form of negotiation in which the provider responds to the needs and preferences of the receiver. However, this approach requires the receiver to clearly express their needs, which can be difficult to do in practice. This presents a contrast to some scientific definitions of kindness, which do not require or expect explicit expressions of need. In other words, the way in which kindness is defined depends not only on the context in which it is being used but also on the discipline or field of study that is defining it. For instance, the way economists, sociologists, psychologists, or biologists define the concept may differ from the way in which kindness is defined in the Service Design field due to the different perspectives and priorities that each discipline brings to the table. An expert suggested that the components of kindness may vary in different contexts or at least may not need to be weighed equally. The expert pointed out that an organisation, such as a government, cannot feel emotions, empathy, or compassion, and therefore, at that level, the selflessness or intention of action may be less relevant as long as the action itself produces positive results. These nuances suggest that kindness may take on a different, more tailored form in service contexts, which is not defined yet.

Current systems prevent humanised processes

Through interviews with international experts, insights were gathered from the Swedish, American, British and New Zealand governments. Despite cultural and political differences, the root cause of the lack of kindness in public services was described similarly across all countries. Repetitively, it was argued that the implementation of policies that make citizens increasingly independent of each other had reduced positive qualities such as human connection, which hinders the inclusion of kindness. Experts noted the growing prevalence of loneliness among the elderly, which is compounded by the fact that many people fear loneliness as one of the greatest threats to their future wellbeing. Jenny Grettve mentioned the Swedish approach to the so-called "State Individualism" as one reason for loneliness to have become so prevalent. The system is based on promoting individual autonomy rather than the welfare of households and is nowadays strongly criticised, among others, in the documentary "The Swedish Theory of Love" by Erik Gandini (cf. Documentaries On Youtube, 2018). In the United Kingdom, the introduction of

New Public Management in the 1980s led to the suppression of human capabilities and radical questioning. "Many of our systems and professional processes stop us seeing ourselves in the eyes of others. Governments reward approaches that are self-protective, mechanical and cold" (Appendix 2). Experts also drew a comparison between current public services and the philosophical concept of Cartesianism, a form of rationalism shaped by the French philosopher René Décartes, in which all phenomena are explained in purely mechanical terms (cf. Nadler, 2019). The experts noted a dichotomy between politics, which is viewed as a rational pursuit, and aid organisations, which are seen as driven by emotions and empathy. This separation of head and heart prevents governments from acknowledging the importance of human connection and emotions in public services, resulting in a lack of kindness and empathy in decision-making. As a counterexample and a very recent integration of kindness into the political system, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, polarised opinions through her use of emotions and kindness in political speeches. While she received much recognition for her political strategies, opposition parties revealed significant resistance to this style of governance. Those parties criticised a lack of political action to back up the rhetoric around kindness, leading to the perception of kindness as "politically toxic and weaponised" (Appendix 7). This example highlights the difficulty in implementing kindness, even when attempted by high-level political decision-makers. The reason for this is not a lack of desire to be kind but rather that it has become the norm to exclude emotions from political decision-making. As trust and affection towards public services decrease, experts predict that public services will continue to suffer unless there is a timely shift in the definition of parameters, goals, and values, so that citizens feel seen and heard.

Kindness should be applied in a local and targeted manner to avoid generalising cultural differences

The discussion on kindness highlighted an important aspect that cannot be overlooked: The influence of cultural background on the understanding and definition of the concept. It was noted that the concept of kindness originates from Anglo culture, which has shaped its meaning and perception. However, there are broader concepts rooted, for example, in the New Zealand indigenous culture, that have similarities with kindness but emphasise community actions rather than just individual efforts. So-called "manaakitanga" focuses on showing respect, generosity, care, and hospitality towards others, while also recognising the individual's sanctity and promoting their strengths. This nuanced form of kindness acknowledges the interdependence between the

individual's wellbeing and that of the community and was therefore referred to as an alternative understanding of a social form of kindness. In a recent experiment conducted by one of the experts, it was discovered that the execution of generosity can vary based on an individual's cultural background and personal experiences. The study revealed that individuals from the United States, as well as those who have experienced poverty, were more likely to engage in more generous acts of kindness compared to people from Northern Europe. Another issue that was brought up pertains to the cultural diversity within countries, which can potentially lead to inequalities in the interpretation of kindness. The discussion highlighted that individuals are more likely to exhibit kindness towards those who are similar to them, drawing on the concept of "kindness to kinship." However, in order to interact with individuals from diverse cultures, individuals must first enter into a "space of unknowing," which can be "difficult, uncomfortable and confrontational" (Appendix 7). Consequently, practising kindness in such situations can be correspondingly more challenging. Accordingly, kindness should be defined and applied in a local or punctual manner to prevent excessive generalisation or universalisation. A related yet distinct topic in this regard was related to gender inequalities in the discussion of kindness. In one interview, it was hypothesised that there was an unequal gender balance in the research and attention-raising of this issue — suggesting that women may be more engaged in this topic — and that it was necessary to examine whether the way kindness was discussed also differed between the genders.

To measure kindness, related factors must be used, whereby from a legal point of view, only the act is considered significant

The debate about measuring kindness has been widely discussed in the literature review as well as in the survey outcomes. Nevertheless, the interviews provide further arguments. The assumption, according to one interviewee, is that the more diversity there is in a society, the more complicated it is to measure kindness, as more different definitions of it exist. However, the proliferation of metrics can be counterproductive if, for example, the underlying subject is no longer understood because of excessive measurement. Furthermore, most measurements in public services are representations of what people do rather than how people feel, especially the users of a service. One interviewee states that these personal feelings and experiences are probably the most difficult element to assess. One way to effectively measure kindness, which is also similarly stated in subsection 2.2.2 in figure 3 (Andersen & Brownlie, 2019), could be to include other related aspects, such

as the preconditions, the perception and consequences of a kind act. The assumption, stated by the expert, is that kindness itself cannot be measured, but its expected effects can. In terms of public services, these could be, for example, child poverty, school truancy, or integration opportunities. In this way, no further measurements would have to be introduced, only their combination and interpretation would be adjusted to draw conclusions about the level of kindness in society. Another suggestion for a possible measurement of kindness that has not been mentioned in this wording before is "gut data": People feel when an action is kind and well-intentioned or whether the opposite is the case, which is comparable to the assumption that kindness cannot be faked (cf. subsection 2.2.1). However, quantitative measurement can not be applied in that case, rather, each individual relies on their own gut feeling. In contrast to this stands the legal perspective and measurement of kindness, which is not based on the intention behind kind behaviour, but merely assesses the outcome. In this context, a participant highlights the significance of measuring whether a kind action brings benefits to others. The emphasis should be on promoting acts of kindness within society. If kindness is not observable in its manifestations, a protocol-oriented legal system, which is obligated to regulate and document conditions, cannot solely consider the intention behind the action. In summary, this implies that from a legal standpoint, the internal motivations or thoughts of individuals are irrelevant if there is no tangible outcome that can be measured.

Kindness requires a bottom-up refinement following a top-down decision

The concept of kindness in public services presents a challenge in terms of ownership and implementation within society. The question remains as to who should take the lead in promoting kindness — citizens or the government? While some argue that kindness should be modelled from the top down and incorporated into policy systems, others argue that it is more effective in form of a non-governmental community engagement. Interviews with various experts shed light on these contrasting perspectives. One interviewee, who was involved in policy analysis, concluded that governments are not the place for incorporating kindness. This sentiment was echoed by other interviewees, who emphasised the need for citizens to take a greater part in promoting kindness in society. However, a bottom-up approach to promoting kindness is not without its challenges, as citizens have differing opinions and proposals on how to implement kindness and whether to do so at all. One interviewee from Sweden suggested that the state of affairs would probably first have to worsen before citizens would become involved. The lack of promptness in decision-making and

the slow incorporation of emotions into public systems were attributed to the risk of losing authority that decision-makers face when change is proposed in this direction. Introducing kindness from the top down also depends on the nature and the political positioning of the current government in power, which can already be deduced from the answers to the survey (cf. subsection 4.2.1). Despite these challenges, some argue that a top-down inclusion of kindness as a core value in the political and public system is an exception to other decisions, as the evidence base is clear and distinct: People want to be treated well. Once institutions make this decision, citizens are likely to follow, participate, and bring forward more detailed proposals. Most of the conclusions from all interviewees were the probable combination of both approaches, as summarised by Dr Emma Willis: "It's an interesting model [of how] you actually marry those two things: The aspirations at the top with the grassroots at the bottom." Therefore, a top-down decision of kindness, must be refined bottom-up to ensure that it is effectively implemented within society.

Psychological aspects are to consider when implementing kindness

Psychology is an essential factor to consider when designing public services, given their purpose of serving people. One interviewee emphasised the importance of recognising that service providers, particularly in service-oriented sectors such as healthcare, generally possess a desire to perform kind behaviour towards service users. Furthermore, kindness can serve as a powerful motivator for individuals, as it resonates with their innate tendency towards goodness and the desire to perceive themselves as virtuous. It is crucial to acknowledge that negative emotions may arise if individuals are unable to carry out the intended act of kindness. The general social norm of the Golden Rule ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you", cf. United Nations, n.d.) can also be presumed to be fundamental to the interaction between citizens and service providers. Appropriately, one respondent mentioned the Broken Window Theory (McKee, 2023), which states that if a window is broken in a neighbourhood and it is not repaired, further broken windows will not be taken care of, and the neighbourhood will deteriorate. However, if the one broken window is fixed, care will be taken to ensure that the neighbourhood continues to be maintained. This theory can be applied to kindness: If kind behaviour is observed and cultivated, it will spread. Dr Lee Rowland, formerly working with deradicalisation in the Middle East, shared his experiences and the resulting approach of not only preventing violence but rather promoting good behaviour — entering the field of positive, or also humanistic, psychology. A shift from focusing on negative examples to observing

and facilitating healthy relationships, communities or societies might add more value to foster kindness sustainably. Similar to this is the Rational Choice Framework presented by another interviewee: When people are presented with a choice between two possible actions to take, they logically choose the one they think will benefit them. Therefore, options should be given or designed in such a way that the choice is not between "do nothing" and a bad action, but rather between "do nothing" and a good action. For a better understanding, the example of posters in the waiting room in hospitals was given, on which it is stated that patients should not be aggressive towards the personnel. This shows that there is an option between "doing nothing" or "being aggressive". Rather, the poster should be worded positively, suggesting that people behave in a friendly manner towards the staff. Finally, savouring strategies are mentioned by one interviewee, which can be used to sustain or reinforce positive emotions. This includes, for example, appreciation and acknowledgement of pleasant interpersonal experiences (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Taking into account that the "helpers-high", which can be observed after a kind act as mentioned in subsection 2.1.2, only lasts about four minutes, this time span could be extended through such strategies, enhancing the reverberation of kindness.

Choosing and implementing the right incentives is crucial for cultivating kindness in society

Incentives have been proposed by several interviewees as a potential tool for promoting kind actions within societies, particularly in those with diverse backgrounds. Motivation is stated as a central concept in psychology and numerous models have been developed to explain its various forms, like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Wahba & Bridwell, 1973). Incentives are a basic form of motivation that involves providing rewards for certain behaviours. However, the use of incentives as a means of encouraging certain behaviours requires careful consideration of potential consequences. As exemplified by the classic proverb, "trying to solve one problem can create a bigger problem somewhere else," the implementation of incentives can lead to unintended and negative outcomes, also known as the phenomenon of the Cobra Effect (Warczak, 2020). Another interviewee emphasised that when considering incentives as a means of promoting kindness, it is essential to acknowledge the principles of the Criminal Deterrence Theory. This framework suggests that the purpose of imposing punishments is to prevent future harmful actions that are deemed to be crimes. The use of incentives to encourage positive actions can be seen as an inversion of this theory: Instead of punishing individuals for negative

behaviours, incentives are offered to encourage positive ones. Taking these insights into consideration, the implementation of incentives as a means of promoting kindness must be thought through carefully within the local and cultural context of the society or organisation in question to have a meaningful impact in terms of public services.

Examples of kindness in governance and public services already exist

During the interviews, several examples of the diverse ways in which kindness is utilised in public services and society as a whole were shared. This includes health campaigns in New Zealand that promoted kind behaviour towards each other or their government's "kindness budget", where an increased amount of public money was invested in education, social services or the raise of the minimum wage. Taking into consideration that New Zealand includes their indigenous population, different concepts of kindness meet and can be combined with each other. In classrooms, for example, the so-called "manna", the individual value of everyone in the room, is valued highly, thus creating a benefit for all. By incorporating indigenous values, an attempt is made to create a space in which everyone is equal and can learn from each other. This example illustrates how New Zealand is committed to build a society that values kindness, inclusivity, and cultural sensitivity. Another example of the implementation of kindness can be observed in Tokyo, where a policy to promote altruistic behaviour is widely applied. People who find a lost item can hand it in at frequently available police stations, where millions of lost items are collected every year. The city offers a finder's reward as an incentive, but the vast majority of finders refuse it. Since the financial compensation does not play a role for most of them, it can be concluded that an intrinsic motivation outweighs the monetary one. The mere option of returning an item in a simple way reduces the barriers to kind behaviour in Tokyo. Examining this phenomenon allows to discuss certain policy design principles that can help promote kindness.

When creating a solution for fostering kindness, some pointers can be taken into consideration

During the course of the interviews, several approaches were proposed for integrating kindness into public services. These proposals encompass both general ideas or applications around kindness as well as specific suggestions for integration in design. First of all, it is essential to not only discuss kindness on a systemic level but to bring about actual implementation, a "material realisation" (Appendix 7). Jenny Grettve suggests a further

approach in which designers and decision-makers should think about themselves in their own role of a citizen when creating solutions for public services to expand understanding towards service receivers. Another interviewee emphasises considering different human personalities, fears and peculiarities in the design of services, for example, people who are phobic about hospitals. Fourthly, in order for intrinsic motivation to translate into action, the barriers to the person wanting to act must be as low as possible. The worthwhile goal is to make it convenient for people to be kind, as thus the probability of deciding to act kind raises, as one interviewee explains. She furthermore states that it has to be clearly communicated how the kind action can be executed in order to attempt to make it normative in society. It needs to become a deeply held belief that it is the right thing to do to go beyond personal advantages and prioritise reciprocity. As soon as this state is reached, communities can take ownership and enact a designed policy for kindness in ways that serves them more specifically.

Reflections

Reliability
- Due to tailoring the expert interviews to the expertise of the interviewees, there was no uniform questionnaire and, therefore, no strict internal consistency as with surveys. Additionally, the questions were adapted depending on the flow of the conversation, which could potentially reduce the reliability of the results, as interview responses can vary under certain circumstances.

- Both researchers participated in the execution and analysis of all interviews, thus increasing interanalyst and intraanalyst reliability, as they agreed on the coding and interpretatioon of insights together.

- Time was a crucial factor in the recruitment of participants and the execution of interviews. Due to the time constraints of the thesis and the availability of the participants, some perspectives were not included, which could have yielded different insights if the research had been conducted at a different time.

Validity
- By adapting the questions for each participant, discussions that arose in one interview could be revisited and discussed in the following conversations. This approach helped to gather multiple perspectives, also known as data triangulation (Bjørner, 2015) and thus reducing research bias. The diverse set of questions and adaptable topics allowed for complexity and diversity in expert perspectives. However, significant variations in responses, made the analysis more challenging.

- With the exception of a few direct quotes, participants were not asked to review the transcripts to correct any misrepresentations and ascertain whether the investigated topic is adequately represented. Doing a so-called respondent validation would have increased the validity of each expert interview (Bjørner, 2015).

- Another critical factor that became increasingly evident during the recruitment and execution of the interviews was the gender imbalance among the participants. Originally, ten interviews were planned, including three male experts, which would have resulted in a gender balance of 40:60. However, three of the four planned interviews with male experts were cancelled at short notice without the option of rescheduling. Consequently, the interviewer's knowledge is based on 85% female participants, which is not representative of society and introduces a gender bias. Therefore, this gender imbalance should be considered, particularly in relation to the stereotypes around kindness as a feminine trait highlighted in the literature review (Nutbrown et al., 2021; Willis, 2021).

4.1.3 Emerged definition of kindness

The definition of kindness is complex and multifaceted and can vary depending on the context in which it is applied. As a result, there is a need for a clear and consistent definition of kindness in the realm of public services. Based on the insights that emerged from the survey and the expert interviews, an adapted definition of kindness in the context of public services is presented and used for the subsequent process of this thesis. The fundamental aim of incorporating kindness into public systems is to create humanised services in order to establish a positive and supportive environment for service users.

The tangible performance of kind actions is deemed the most effective and actionable means of promoting kindness in service delivery, as it is the only aspect that can be evaluated and ultimately lead to positive outcomes. Thus, the underlying intrinsic motivation behind each act of kindness is depriori- tised, as its identification and evaluation are, in general, challenging. Care must be taken to ensure that the service provider is not personally harmed by a demand for emotional labour, which is why it must be facilitated and not mandated for service staff to act kindly. The reciprocity of prosocial behaviour makes room for more pleasant interactions with service users and thus improves the working climate.

Decisions on the implementation of kindness in working practices should be made in a top-down manner. However, the execution and refinement of the implementation require the cooperation of the service staff and the users, which leads to a mixed complementary approach. In this way, a sustainable cultivation and cohesive definition per service can be created and adopted as an attitude. While the adapted definition of kindness presented in this subsection is a valuable starting point, it is crucial to recognise that the explicit implementation of kindness in public services must be determined iteratively on a case-by-case basis. It is important to remember that the implementation of kindness cannot be transferred directly from one service to another, as it must be tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of each service and touchpoint. The evaluation of kindness, if deemed necessary, is contingent on the particular circumstances. For service users, factors such as the degree of trust and sense of agency may serve as useful metrics, while on the provider side, indices like job contentment or staff retention rate could be considered. Kindness must be able to take place within service

limitations, which means that it does not necessarily have to be unexpected, but at least provides the best possible handling of service failures, causing the least amount of harm. The big acts of kindness identified in the survey, such as giving money or donating organs, are not feasible in the service sector. Rather, prosocial behaviours that can be defined as politeness or active engagement are relevant to enhance. Therefore, the goal is to enable service providers to go beyond the mere completion of a transaction in a perfunctory way and focus on providing a supportive and engaging encounter that leaves customers feeling valued and satisfied.

4.1.4 Desktop research

After conducting qualitative research and gaining insights, desktop research was carried out to specifically focus on finding solutions for the identified problems. This research involved analysing reports, videos, and articles, which is known as secondary research. The main purpose of this analysis was to build upon existing knowledge and expertise (Stickdorn et al., 2018) by exploring mainly grey literature (Hagen-Zanker & Mallet, 2013) to identify best practices. During this process, the desktop research was used to gain inspiration from other disciplines, concepts, and methods that may not be directly related to the topic of kindness but could potentially serve as a stimulation for generating ideas. The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of the topics that served as the basis for the subsequent ideation:

Private sector & Hospitality Design
A glimpse into private companies and hospitality establishments provides some insights into how to deal with customers. The emotional platform of a company, for example, is a crucial element of its competitive positioning. It involves selecting the specific emotions that the company wishes to convey to its customers and utilises them as a foundation for decision-making regarding processes, people, and physical assets. This makes it easier to reduce negative emotions among customers and increase positive ones. It is advantageous to focus on the most crucial pain points first and to explore whether emotions are caused by external factors or by the company itself (Dasu & Chase, 2010). One fundamental concept in the hopitality industry is the "5 and 10 staff rule", or also "Zone of Hospitality", which involves making eye contact and warmly smiling at customers within 10 feet and adding a sincere greeting or

friendly gesture within 5 feet. This principle can be adapted to any service industry and helps staff members understand that a crucial part of their job is to help and welcome customers. For example, the Coyle Hospital in New York City has successfully applied this principle to improve their customer experience (Gurtman, n. D.). Furthermore, motivation is higher valued than competence in most professional services. Motivation is seen as a reflection of attitude, while content-related errors are seen as inadvertent or the result of extraneous causes and thus easier to forgive. A waiter who makes a mistake with taking an order but then compensates with diligent service is likely to get a bigger tip than a waiter who makes no errors but is viewed as indifferent or even unfriendly (Dasu & Chase, 2010).

Behavioural science & Behavioural Design

To gain a deeper understanding of user behaviour and effectively design touchpoints, it suggested by Van Lieren (2022) to incorporate insights from behavioural science. It is a common assumption that people make rational decisions and behave accordingly. However, individuals operate in two distinct mindsets – a subconscious, instinctive mindset and a conscious, reflective mindset. The former governs around 95% of people's actions, while the latter only accounts for 5% of their behaviour, as shown in figure 7. Behavioural interventions such as nudging or rational override* can be used to modify undesired behaviour by influencing people on both conscious and unconscious levels. By incorporating the right kind of interventions into existing processes, a lasting impact on behaviour can be achieved (Van Lieren, 2022).

***Nudging**: Influencing individuals to take a desired action by targeting specific elements of their subconscious mindset.
Rational override: Short moment of friction during automatic interactions can disrupt and shift individuals into a conscious state.

Instinctive subconscious mindset   Reflective conscious mindset
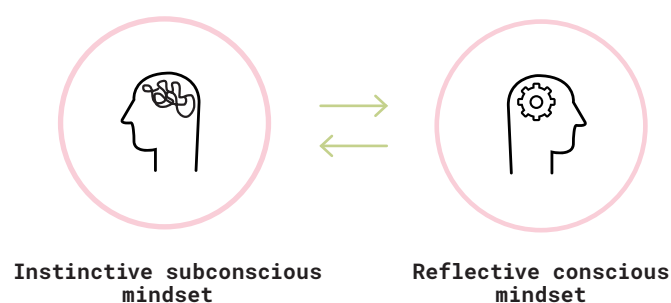
Figure 7: Unconscious competence, adapted from Van Lieren, 2022

An essential principle of Behaviour Design is to ensure that the desired action is as easy as possible to perform (Di Sipio, 2017). This is achieved by creating a "minimally satisfying solution at the lowest cost" (Fogg, 2008, 00:02:24 - 00:02:30) after identifying barriers that may hinder individuals from executing an action. According to Dr BJ Fogg (2008), there are six factors that may impede simplicity, known as the elements of simplicity:

- **Time**: If something costs time, it may not be simple.
- **Money**: For people with limited financial resources, something costly may not be simple.
- **Physical Effort**: Long ways and heavy lifting or carrying may not be simple.
- **Brain Cycles or Cognitive Effort**: Thinking a lot or for a long time may not be simple.
- **Social Deviance**: Going against the norm, breaking the rules of society - if it causes discomfort, it may not be simple.
- **Non-Routine**: Breaking the routine may not be simple.

However, the level of simplicity required may vary depending on the individual and the current context. Additionally, perceived simplicity also plays a role. For example, if a task can be completed using fewer resources than expected, it is considered simple (Fogg, 2008).

Compassionate Design

Throughout the research process, the theme of Compassionate Care emerged in relation to healthcare services — which has often been discussed by authors in the academic field to improve the healthcare sector. Compassionate Care describes the compassionate engagement between care provider and user (Crawford et al., 2014). It argues for more effective and efficient service delivery through the introduction of an interpersonal relationship between the two actors, which is seen as crucial to the delivery of care. It is thus about seeing the patient as a human being, recognising the staff as a human being and building a therapeutic alliance between the two (Pfannstiel & Rasche, 2018), as Ballat describes in subsection 2.2.3. The aim is to improve value creation within the service and to see treatment more as a "two-person medicine", "wherein the doctor and the patient are influencing each other all the time and cannot be considered separately" (Pfannstiel & Rasche, 2018, p. 8). This research has led to the concept of Compassionate Design, which is specifically concerned with services and products that affect the wellbeing of users. The design concept is based on principles of Human-centred Design

and Participatory Design but focuses on specific user feelings of safety, empowerment and dignity. These factors have been contextualised from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Wahba & Bridwell, 1973) to alert designers to consciously consider often unexpressed basic needs and not leave them to chance (Seshadri et al., 2019).

Tone of Voice

During the research on the topic of Emotional Design, the concept of Tone of Voice emerged, which is particularly important in user experience (UX) writing. This concept is mainly related to digital communication strategies, where a context-specific tone is determined to establish an emotional connection with customers through language and trigger emotional responses (Babich, 2022). For instance, it involves defining whether a brand wants to address its customers in a funny, serious, formal, or casual manner (Hougardy, 2023). Considering kindness in services, it is relevant to examine this topic because it strategically incorporates user emotions to give the product or service a "personality" (Moran, n.d.).

Existing tools & methods

A key component of the desktop research was conducting a best practice analysis of tools and methods. The goal was to become familiar with the range of solutions as an addition to design processes in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of what tools are available beyond the already established Service Design methods. The following tools stood out as particularly helpful:
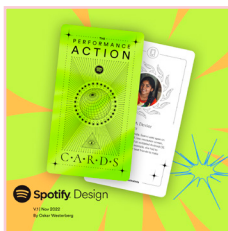
Performance Cards by Spotify: A set of cards developed to increase empathising with so-called "access-constrained users" to make products more accessible (Westerberg, 2022).

Nudging Cards by Hello Design: A set of cards presenting scientific behavioural insights to consider when designing products or services (Hello Design, n.d.).

Ethics Assessment by Spotify: A tool to assess the potential physical, emotional or societal harm a product could cause (Han et al., 2020).
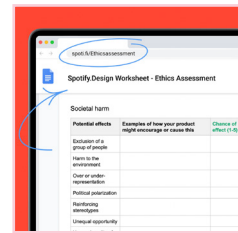
Service Image by Service Design Tools: A tool developed to capture the core value of a service experience in one image (Service Design Tools, n.d.-c).
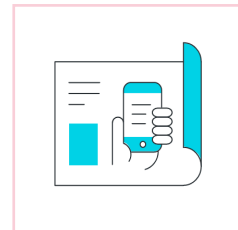
Multifaceted Journey: An adapted version of a journey map to compare the emotional experience of a healthcare professional to a patient by simultaneously visualising both stakeholders (Ku & Lupton, 2020).
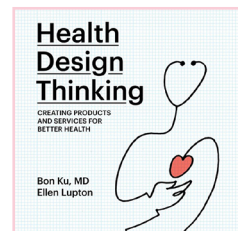
User Archetype Cards by Youngblood and Chesluk: A set of cards to include more than just direct users and encourage ecosystem thinking (Youngblood & Chesluk, 2020).

Nuggets by Coglode: Behavioural concepts extracted from 25 research journals and presented in a concise form to make behavioural science accessible for other disciplines (Coglode, n.d.).

We're Not Really Strangers Card Game: A set of cards based on questions and tasks to encourage deep personal connection between the players (We're Not Really Strangers Card Game, n.d.).

Figure 8: Existing tools and methods

Key takeaways

of the Inspiration phase

Survey:
- There is a clear distinction between the execution of small and large acts of kindness.
- In the current narrative, there is a general understanding that the well-being of the individual takes priority over that of the collective.
- There is doubt about systematising and measuring kindness because the concept is perceived as too subjective.
- The desire for more connectedness and a sense of togetherness is strong.

Expert interviews:
- Kindness must be redefined according to the context, and a framework for it must be established.
- In order not to generalise subjective differences of citizens, kindness has to be applied in a targeted way.
- At a systemic level, the execution of kindness is more relevant than its intention.
- The implementation of kindness in public systems needs a top-down decision and a subsequent bottom-up adjustment of the execution.
- To define the right incentives, people's behavioural patterns must be taken into account.
- Kindness must be facilitated and not mandated in order to cultivate it.

Desktop research:
- Customer care and meeting individual needs is already well established in the private sector, especially in the hospitality field.
- To facilitate the implementation of kindness, barriers must be as low as possible.
- In the healthcare sector, there are already approaches of Compassionate Design, in which the service provider and user are already viewed relationally.

4.2

Ideation

The IDEO 3I framework comprises Ideation as its second phase, aimed at moving beyond research insights and the newly defined concept of kindness towards problem-solving. This divergent and convergent phase involved generating multiple solutions, clustering, refining and testing them to ultimately develop and implement the idea with the highest potential (Stickdorn et al., 2018). In this phase of the design process, the participation of Service Designers was enlisted to experiment collaboratively with potential solutions for the Service Design process. This strategic inclusion of Service Designers was deemed significant due to their specialised knowledge and expertise in pertinent methods, approaches, and tools, enabling them to evaluate the potential impact of diverse ideas. Furthermore, the inclusion of novel perspectives from individuals who have not hitherto been involved in the process served to mitigate potential biases and diversify potential solutions. The following section describes the implementation of two diverging ideation workshops, followed by converging methods to systematically streamline the richness of ideas and identify those that have the greatest potential for further development. After the selection process, a chosen idea was subjected to further development, contextualisation, and expansion. This entailed an iterative process of refining and building upon the initial concept, incorporating insights and perspectives gained through research.

4.2.1 Ideation workshops

In order to work co-creatively with Service Designers and to effectively incorporate their expert opinion into the development of the solution, two workshops were held to generate ideas collaboratively. Service Designers were included in the process not only because of their knowledge of the discipline but also because they represent the end users for the application of the solution, in this case, Service Design tools. These workshops aimed to build

the foundation for the subsequent concretisation of ideas.

Workshop planning and execution

A virtual ideation workshop was organised for multiple Service Designers with the goal of attracting a diverse and international group of participants to collaboratively ideate on possible solutions that address the research question. To achieve this, the workshop was advertised on the Eventbrite platform rather than relying solely on personal networks to reduce bias. The online collaboration tool Miro was chosen as the platform for the workshop. To accommodate the potential for no-shows, the workshop was designed to ideally have six participants, with a maximum capacity of ten participants listed on the Eventbrite page.

The workshop was designed with the intention of incorporating three primary activities, each of which serving a distinct purpose. The first activity was conceived as an introduction to the topic at hand, serving to level the playing field for all participants in terms of their prior knowledge of the subject matter while also laying a foundation for the subsequent ideation exercises. Establishing a common baseline of knowledge aimed to increase the overall effectiveness of the workshop activities. The second activity of the workshop centred around the practice of divergent ideation, with the aim of generating a diverse array of potential solutions as a creative exploration of the workshop brief. In this activity, participants should engage in uninhib-ited brainstorming, with the goal of generating as many potential solutions as possible without concern for the practicality or feasibility of each idea (Stickdorn et al.; 2018 Service Design Tools, n.d.-a). The generated, large and diverse pool of solutions served as a starting point for subsequent activities aimed at clustering and combining the ideas. After aligning on the most viable idea direction, the workshop would conclude with a convergent ideation exercise, in which the remaining solutions would be further developed into more concrete and detailed concepts. Throughout this activity, participants would engage in a more critical evaluation of the ideas by discussing more elaborate elements the solutions entail.

On the day of the planned workshop, a low attendance rate of only one out of the ten registered participants necessitated a spontaneous adjustment in the ideation workshop. The researchers were compelled to guide the individual participant through a single and scaled-down workshop, in which a brief time was allotted to generate ideas, which were subsequently discussed. The paucity

of participants resulted in a shift towards maximising the exchange of knowledge and ideas shared by the lone participant, with the aim of generating the most insights possible. Consequently, the converging activity that was intended to follow the first ideation exercise was not executed as planned but was rather discussed verbally with the participant.

Subsequently, a change in plans was implemented, which involved recruiting Service Sesigners from the researchers' network to repeat the workshop. As a result of this decision, three Service Designers were requested, and several activities were modified to accommodate the smaller number of participants. This alteration provided an opportunity to grant the participants more room to present their ideas and engage in discussions, which allowed for the ideas to align and complement each other more effectively. Additionally, the converging exercise was slightly adapted from its original version. Initially, three teams were to develop one idea further and create a condensed concept within a brief period. However, due to the final number of participants, the time was utilised to enable the team of three to collaborate on two distinct ideas. To establish a documentation framework, an idea template was provided to the participants for structuring both concepts (inspired by the concept catalogue, cf. Kumar, 2013). Table 4 showcases the detailed structure of the adapted workshop.

Activity	Purpose	Time
Introduction & Icebreaker	The purpose and the agenda of the workshop were explained to align all participants on the aim of their contribution. The participants introduced themselves by answering a pre-defined set of questions (Kilanowski, 2012).	10 min
Insights presentation	To align all participants, some guiding insights gathered from the literature review, survey and expert interviews were presented to create a foundation and common understanding of kindness and Service Design for public services. While the researchers presented, participants used emojis as an interactive way of receiving feedback about the insights. The "How-might-we"-question was shared to define the problem the participants should ideate on in the subsequent activities (Stickdorn et al., 2018).	10 min
Individual ideation	The participants ideated individually on possible solutions that address the workshop brief. To avoid cognitive blockage, a reduced version of signal cards (Service Design Tools, n.d.-b) was provided to provoke creative thinking. The generated ideas from the participant of the first workshop were included in order to provide a potential foundation to build upon during the second workshop.	15 min
Share & expand	The participants presented their ideas and shared their thought processes. The listening participants were asked to ideate further and build on top of each other's ideas by providing a blank set of additional sticky notes.	15 min

Dot voting	Participants got the opportunity to read the generated ideas and vote on three ideas with the highest potential of addressing the workshop brief successfully (Gibbons, 2019).	10 min
Cluster & combine	Ideas were clustered and combined as no clear preference was identified in the previous exercise (Dam & Siang, 2022).	5 min
Idea napkin	Participants further ideated on and concretised the two chosen solutions in a provided template with a certain set of questions to be filled out for each concept (inspired by the concept catalogue, cf. Kumar, 2013). For documentation purposes, participants were asked to describe their solutions briefly and visualise how they can be integrated into a design process.	2x 20 min
Share	The participants were asked to share their further developed solutions.	2x5 min
Evaluate	The participants were asked to share which of the two solutions they believe has the highest potential in addressing the workshop brief successfully. They evaluated how realistic they think it is for kindness to be considered in Service Design.	10 min

Table 4: Structure of the second workshop

Figure 9: Workshop boards

Main ideas and outcomes

Through the ideation activities of both workshops, several ideas were developed. As some showed overlaps, they were clustered together and are followingly presented.

Journey, storyboard & service blueprint

- An adapted service blueprint that presents risks and advantages of kind actions at each touchpoint.
- A user journey to identify crucial interactions that might have the biggest potential to elevate kindness.
- Embed a storyboard that shows possible kind interactions in the service blueprint.

Story cards

- Develop usecase specific cards to guide service providers through user interaction by sensitising their communication. The content of the cards is research based, includes specific user needs, and communication key words to avoid or to use as a best practice on how to deal with certain situations. The cards could be categorised in a spectrum of low and high risk situations. A definition of kindness for specific moments is provided as service guidance.

Kindness as a strategy

- Kindness is used as a design requirement or service strategy to adapt designers' mindset that considers preparing service stakeholders (both service receiver and provider) for interactions they might have.
- Kindness is considered as a prioritised value in a business model.

Role play

- Include body storming in ideation processes to empathise with other service stakeholders' experiences of kind or unkind interactions to find anti-patterns and how to deal with rudeness.

Assessing kindness

- Assessing kindness in the testing phase of a design process to evaluate the emotional impact of stakeholders' actions in a service.

Further speculations that arose in the workshop

- Empower service providers' creativity for identifying opportunities for kind actions and how to enact kindness.
- Kindness as an economically unviable aspect of services.
- Kindness as a job requirement and possible need for higher compensation.

Reflections

on the research quality

Reliability

- The limited attendance of only one individual in the first workshop afforded the opportunity to experiment and subsequently modify the format and activities, resulting in the implementation of more efficacious workshop exercises, thus increasing the reliability of the ideation method. Moreover, the initial workshop afforded undivided attention to the sole participant, enabling ample time for the comprehensive articulation of the participant's opinions and experiences, thereby facilitating a deeper comprehension and broader insights. Given the positive experience of the first workshop, the decision to conduct the second workshop with only three individuals was intentional. This approach allowed for more in-depth and nuanced discussions.

- One way to enhance the reliability of the first workshop could have been to charge a low participation fee from each participant, which could have been donated to a charity. By doing so, the participants would have a greater sense of accountability and a stronger incentive to attend the workshop. Additionally, this approach would likely ensure that only those who are truly committed to attending the workshop are present. Therefore, requesting a symbolic fee would have been a simple yet effective way to improve the success of the first workshop.

- The lack of internal consistency in the execution of the two workshops may have undermined the reliability of the methods employed. The first workshop, which was adapted spontaneously due to unforeseen circumstances, deviated from the original plan and subsequently produced inconsistent outcomes. The subsequent workshop resulted in a more consistent outcome, but the differences in execution between the two workshops may have introduced confounding variables that might have impacted the reliability of the methods.

Validity

- The utilisation of a methodological format that required the participants to document their ideas and concepts in keywords resulted in enhanced validity as the participants' thoughts were captured in their own words. Nonetheless, the non-recording of the presentations deprived the facilitators of the ability to recall the precise contextual background of each idea, which would have been advantageous in cases of potential misunderstanding or memory lapses.

- The recruitment of three out of four participants from known groups may have introduced biases in the research methodology, which can reduce the validity of the obtained results. At the same time, however, all participants are trained and experienced Service/UX Designers or UX researchers and could therefore contribute with both academic and professional knowledge. However, three out of four participants were female, reducing the representativeness of the findings and contributing to the overall gender imbalance of all research methods used in this thesis so far.

4.2.2 Development of the preliminary solution

After conducting a literature review, survey, and expert interviews, as well as undertaking desktop research and facilitating workshops, potential solutions were investigated. The aim of this part of the design process was to identify possible areas of convergence in order to develop concrete ideas for testing and ultimately arrive at an answer to the research question.

Process and applied tools

To achieve this goal, various design methods were employed, which differed from the divergent ideation phase as they were not executed in collaboration with other stakeholders but within the research team.

IDEO Theory of Change

As a first step, the Theory of Change method by IDEO was applied to identify the shifts for which solutions are sought. This involved writing down the current problem state as the baseline in the first step. During this process, problems from both the literature review and the qualitative research were documented. For each problem, the corresponding desired state was then described in the second step (IDEO, n.d.; Kumar, 2013). These problems not only encompassed the current and desired state of public services but also of the Service Design practice. In the third step, solution concepts were generated that aimed to lead the transformation from the current state to the desired state. The objective was to identify concepts that could effectively bridge the current state of design methods to the desired future state of Service Design for more relational and humane interactions in public services. Conceptual frameworks from the two workshops were integrated along with self-generated ideas for this ideation process.

Crazy 8

After generating initial ideas collaboratively using the Theory of Change, another method was used to collect more concrete ideas individually. This design sprint method is described as a quick exercise that challenges designers to develop eight different concepts, with eight minutes allotted for each idea. These ideas can be expressed through writing or sketching on paper. During the exercise, it is important not to focus on creating perfectly refined concepts but rather to stretch one's thought process and communicate

creative ideas effectively. This method is performed individually, with the goal of generating a wide range of concepts (Design Sprints, n. d.). By using rapid idea generation, overthinking is avoided (Hermanto, 2021). To facilitate the comparison and combination of ideas, it was decided to integrate guiding subtitles for each square. These subtitles represented rough concept ideas that emerged already through the former steps of the ideation phase. Nevertheless, the free interpretation of the categories was given (Hermanto, 2021). The Crazy 8 helped to develop and define more concrete ideas around the previously abstract and fragmented concepts. Various possibilities of combinations of insights and their applicability to the design process have been generated and are presented in figure 10.
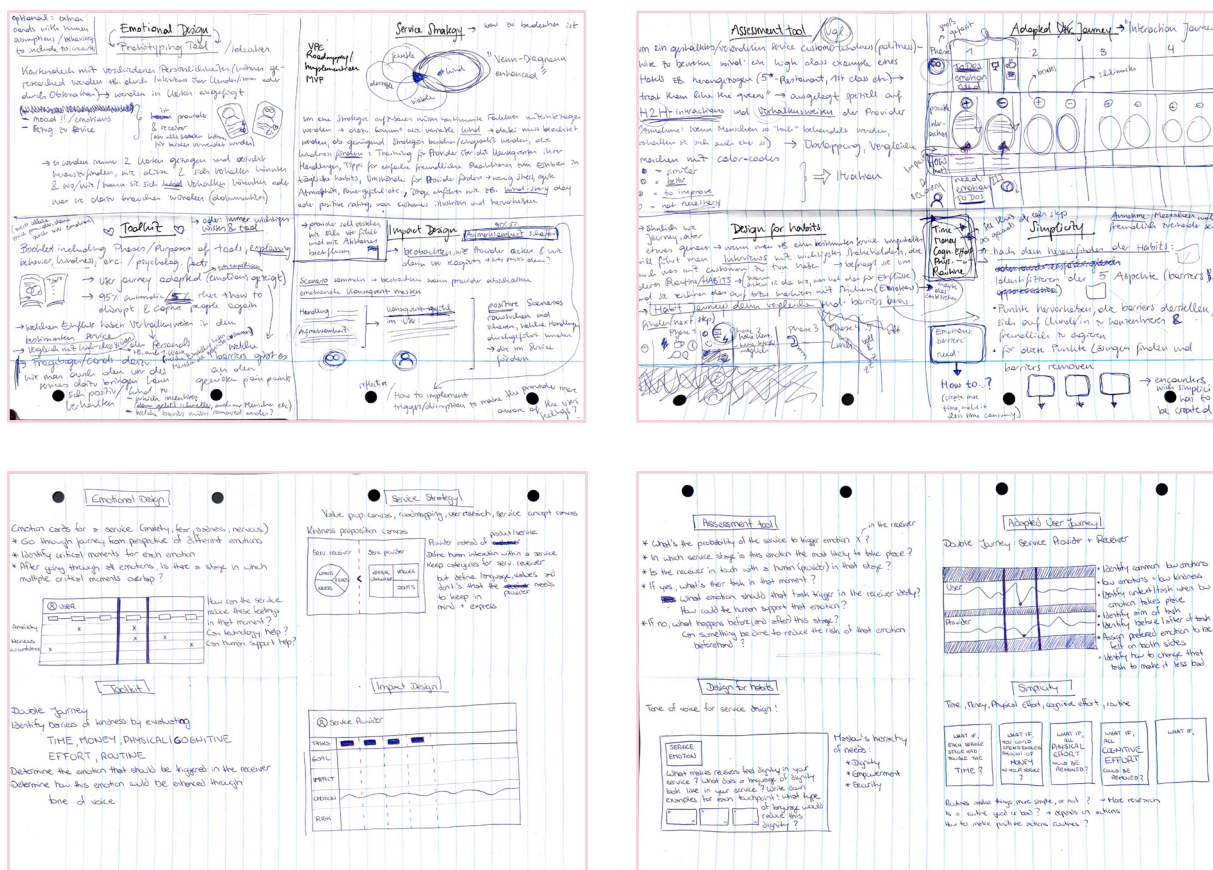
Figure 10: Crazy 8 to ideate on the solution

Clustering

In order to find the similarities and overlaps of these outcomes and to link them efficiently, the synthesis tool clustering was used. This involves gathering a set of entities and deciding on how they can be grouped together. The patterns that emerge create more concrete ideas and promote concept exploration. It is important to share thoughts, discuss details, summarise the content and provide feedback to revise the conceptes (Kumar, 2013). The clustering of information through an organised structure creates order and helps to navigate through the developed ideas to subsequently test and improve them further (Dam & Siang, 2022).

Rapid Prototyping

To converge on the most effective and promising ideas from a large pool of clusters, the method of rapid prototyping was employed to visualise and make the mostly written ideas more tangible. Through this approach, the details of the ideas can be further developed to evaluate whether the concept could successfully address the research question or not. Using pen and paper, the idea clusters are transformed into abstract prototypes to facilitate discussing and testing a variety of iterations quickly and enable a more focused selection of solution approaches (IDEO, 2015). Through this method, combinations of different theme clusters are experimented with to test a diversity of possibilities and avoid overlooking any potential options. Rapid prototyping thus allows for quick and collaborative evaluation of the potential of ideas through multiple iterations, enabling an exclusion process to narrow down the selection of solution approaches.

Preliminary ideas

Through the ideation process, it has proven useful to develop several tools in order to offer Service Designers a choice and flexibility depending on the problem. Three tools have emerged that can be applied in different phases of a design process and understood as a toolkit. For the use of the tools, it is assumed that an introduction to the topic of kindness, relational services, and behaviour patterns is of help for a relevant application. The aim of these tools is to support the service provider in improving the experience of the service receiver and, consequently, to design a reciprocal improvement of the service execution. The focus of the tools thus presented is to include the exploration of not only **why** and for **what** purpose an action is performed but also on **how** it is executed (Cipolla & Manzini, 2009).

Kindness Trigger Cards

The Kindness Trigger Cards are a set of cards used in the ideation process to sensitise Service Designers to the relationship between the service provider and receiver. The set consists of 26 cards, which are divided into two different features. The main category consists of 20 speculative scenarios, which are supported by a "What if...?"-question that suggests an interaction possibility. A short descriptive text lets the reader delve deeper into the scenario and gives more context to the question. The aim of these cards is to expand the Service Designer's imagination and push beyond possible creative boundaries. In addition, there are six Knowledge Cards, each presenting a concept to be considered in relation to the implementation of kindness in services. The concepts presented were noted as references in the course of the research for the thesis. They are intended to support the Service Designer in drawing attention to relevant knowledge with little effort and to stimulate thought. Overall, the card set serves as a provocation for discussions and a source of inspiration to focus attention on the development of more humane processes in public services.

Figure 11: First digital draft of the Kindness Trigger Cards

Relational Recovery Map

The Relational Recovery Map is used to compare the actions of the service provider and receiver, as well as to identify possible service risks and the associated opportunities to recover from these negative situations and thus keep the overall service experience positive. The different human touchpoints of a service are presented vertically, while the details of each touchpoint are elaborated in six horizontal swimlanes. The distinctive feature of the tool is the representation of both service participants, which shows the interpersonal exchange in a relational way. Consequences and the impact of service failures on the receiver's emotional state are incorporated in order to manage the situation as well as possible through Tone of Voice principles. These approaches are included to enhance the service experience through language and create positive emotional connotations in response to a negative experience. As guidelines for the linguistic solution paths, the focus lies on three basic, but often not articulated, human needs, which are often referred to in Compassionate Design: security, dignity and empowerment (Seshadri et al., 2019). The aim of this tool is to design services beyond rational task execution and value exchange and to provide support for Service Designers to exemplify possible behaviours on the part of the provider.

Figure 12: First digital draft of the Relational Recovery Map

Kindness Reflection Sheet

The Kindness Reflection Sheet consists of a questionnaire including four to five steps that analyse a specific service task for opportunities to use kindness. Service Designers can focus on a crucial task from the service journey and are followingly asked to ideate on how this task could be executed in a kind manner. Consequently, in the third step, it is evaluated whether the more user-friendly version of the task can be carried out with the given resources. If this can be answered in the affirmative, the next step is to consider how such behaviour can be encouraged in the service provider. If the answer is no, the obstacles to this positive behaviour are identified. For this, the elements of simplicity by Dr BJ Fogg (2008) are used as a support to generate ideas that can reduce these obstacles consequently. The tool helps to develop and consider a more positive user experience for certain service tasks. The Service Designer is thus provided with a guide to evaluate specific implementations and explore alternative ways of performing a task.

Figure 13: First digital draft of the Kindness Reflection Sheet

Reflections

on the research quality

Reliability

- The ideation and development process utilised established tools, but the researchers made spontaneous decisions on the most appropriate tool to use at any given moment. While the researchers had previously familiarised themselves with various tools and their respective strengths and weaknesses, the exact selection of tools was made ad-hoc. This flexibility was possible due to the absence of external stakeholders, allowing the researchers to focus solely on the process without external pressures. This elasticity and spontaneity facilitated greater iteration, which in turn bolstered the stability and reliability of the method.

Validity

- Unlike the workshops, the rest of the ideation phase was not carried out with other stakeholders. Although the idea development is based on the results of the workshops, the reliability of the method could have been increased if the external stakeholders had also been part of this part of the phase.

- During this phase, insights obtained from various sources, including literature reviews, surveys, expert interviews and desktop research, were consistently reviewed and integrated. This approach enhances the validity and relevance of the method, enabling the researchers to address the research question effectively.

- Through applying rapid prototyping in this phase, the ideas have undergone early testing and numerous iteration rounds to improve the clarity, purpose and functionality, leading to increased validity of the results.

Key takeaways

of the Ideation phase

- To help Service Designers deal with kindness, tools can provide valuable support.
- For the development of new Service Design tools, it is helpful to build on already established tools.
- Service providers need creative support and concrete suggestions to identify and implement opportunities for kindness.
- Kindness must become a strategic requirement for services and their development.
- Service providers need to become more aware of the emotional impact their actions have on users.
- The incorporation of kindness into public services should not lead to economic inefficiency.
- The inclusion of all factors identified as important for kindness through Service Design cannot be solved by a single tool.
- To embed kindness as strongly as possible in the Service Design process, it is best to offer tools for different design phases.

4.3

Implementation

The developed solution was elaborated and made ready for use through test runs and iterations up to the final product. Two different types of tests were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the tools. Firstly, so-called walk-through tests were conducted with four participants to evaluate the solution. Feedback from the participants was collected while applying the main parts of the tools to public services. Secondly, the whole toolkit was applied in the context of an existing service by using the Danish emergency helpline 1813 as a context, as testing is most efficient in an environment close to reality (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2019). This allowed the performance of the tools to be evaluated under more realistic conditions. By using both test procedures, the solution could be adapted to Service Designers and their requirements. A precise documentation of the testings and iterations is furthermore presented.

4.3.1 User testings

The three tools and their combination were tested by Service Designers as potential users. This process entailed a comprehensive evaluation of the tools' descriptive information, self-explanation, meaningfulness of the content, graphic structure, and relevance for designers. The usability testings were conducted through the testing method of a concept walk-through, aimed at gathering feedback on early versions of the toolkit. This testing method allows designers to obtain user feedback on digital and physical prototypes and make necessary changes before a product or service is finalised (Stickdorn et al., 2018). This qualitative evaluation approach involves a experimentation with a product or service systematically guided by a facilitator (Service Design Tools, n. d.-e). The goal of this method is to uncover incomprehensible parts of the tested product or service and identify opportunities for improvement (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2019).

Implementation overview

● **Preliminary ideas**

● **Testing 1**
Online with one user

Iterations

● **Testing 2**
Online with one user

Iterations

● **Testing 3**
On-site with 2 users

Iterations

● **Testing 4**
In team on an
existing service

Iterations

● **The final solution**
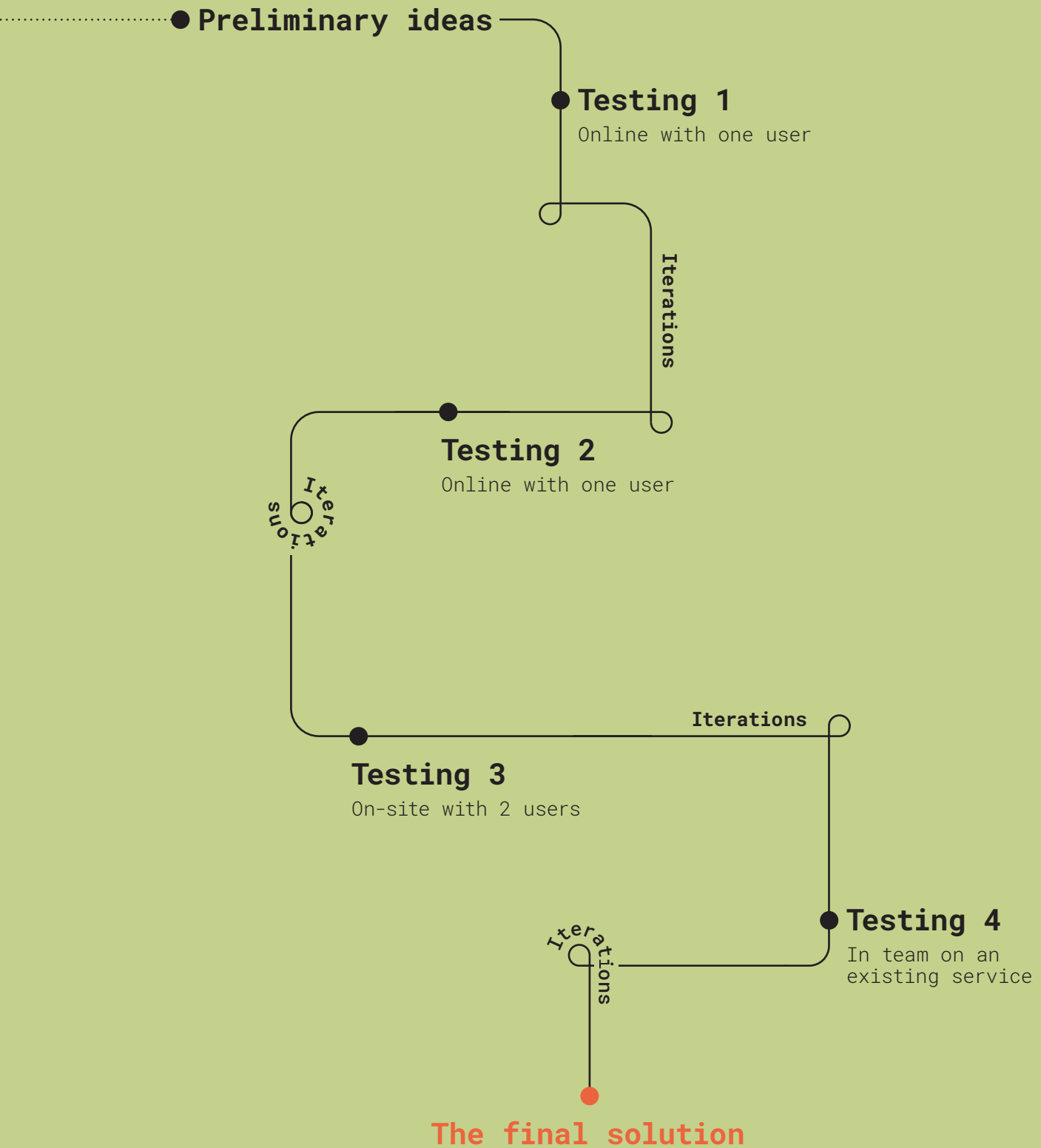
Figure 14: Implementation overview

Research design

The four participants of the test runs were Service and UX Designers, as prevailing knowledge and experience with different design methods and tools were required in order to provide better references, comparisons and constructive feedback. The first two sessions were conducted with individually, whereas the third testing was undertaken as a team of two participants. Two of the testings were carried out digitally with the help of a Miro board, while the last session was conducted analogously with the physical tools in order to evaluate and optimise both possible implementations and application options. The sessions lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. After a short introduction to the background of the solution approach, the participants were given small tasks related to public health services in order to test the tools specifically for this area. The participants were exploring the tools and thinking aloud, which led to honest feedback and the revelation of misinterpretations (Nielsen, 2012). Simultaneously, the insights were documented on post-it notes. This allowed for a quick visual identification of positive aspects as well as areas for improvement. If there appeared to be uncertainty regarding the answers, questions were asked, and possible solutions to points of criticism or opportunities were already discussed during the testing sessions. After each testing, the participants' feedback was revisited for relevance and implemented, allowing an iterated version to be used for the next testing and thus ensuring that most of the potential for improvement was utilised.

Main insights

In the following, the most relevant feedback of the four test participants is listed, as well as the subsequent changes on each tool.

Testing 1

Kindness Trigger Cards

- The participant rated the tool as possible guidance in the ideation phase to provide more structure to a high quantity of thoughts. It was compared to an "artificial supervisor".
- In order to avoid questions being too broad and abstract, a suggestion for change was to provide more concrete tasks for each card. However, the proposal to include further guidelines for each card was not incorporated for the time being, as the oppenness of the questions was anticipated.

Relational Recovery Map

- It was not obvious for the participant to write down the service provider, even though she mentioned them correctly. After explaining the intention of including different service providers in each human touchpoint, it seemed confusing that the service user stays the same in most cases (possible exception: parent with child). To clarify the swimlanes for the service provider and service user in the template, additional descriptions were therefore inserted into the first column.
- The line between the service provider's and the service user's swimlane was wished to be removed, to highlight the relation between each other. To emphasise that interactio visually, their swimlanes were connected by adding the same background colour.

Kindness Reflection Sheet

- The first box to be filled in was not considered an integral part of the complete tool. It was criticised that this task does not seem to be visually connected to the rest of the steps. The participant suggested an additional arrow as a connection to the following steps. Therefore, the box was linked to the next steps by adding arrow.
- In step 4, the exact execution of the task was not clear to the participant. Hence, the instructions were specified.
- The information box about the six elements of simplicity was not given attention to by the participant, even though there seemed to be a struggle with understanding the task. This why the information box was relocated to empasise its relevance.
- For the last steps, the participant proposed to include more space for ideation. However, as this tool focuses on the reflection about kindness in services and should solely offer the evaluation before iterating further ideas, both of the last steps were compressed with instructions to the use any desired ideation method.

The Kindness Toolkit

- Overall, the participant positively mentioned the combination of more open tools as well as more concrete tools to allow for divergence and convergence within one toolkit.
- Furthermore, it was mentioned that the toolkit might not be particularly focussing on public services only, but services in general.

Testing 2

Kindness Trigger Cards

- Overall, the tool was perceived positively and described as helpful guidance to ideate on kindness. It was described to be a useful introduction to the topic of kindness and also considered as a valuable first step before using the other two tools.

- The participant mentioned that subcategories for the "What if-" question cards might be useful to quickly assess which cards might be the most suitable for the user's service. An attempt was made to include this feedback, however, it has proven unnecessary to add more subcategories when the number of cards is low. In addition, it was not possible to divide the cards into valuable and helpful groups.

- The participant expressed the desire for the tool instructions as an inspiration on how the card deck could be applied. Consequently, Exercise Cards were added to provide guidance and inspiration on how the cards could be used. These cards can be understood as various ways of playing with the set of cards to encourage different ways of ideation and maximise the idea outcomes. The several methods of play can either be used individually or combined with each other.

Relational Recovery Map

- The tool was understood without any questions and was described to be relatively straightforward to fill in, while stimulate thinking, which is why it might take a while longer to complete.

- The participant expressed the need for a more detailed explanation of "human touchpoints" to guarantee that users undoubtedly understand what to fill out. Accordingly, further guidelines were added.

- The participant criticised the clear separation of "Risks of Service Fail" and "Emotional Impact on User" as represented by distinct swimlanes, despite the fact that the two are intimately connected and draw heavily from one another. Which is why, the dividing line between "Risk of Service Fail" and "Emotional Impact on User" has been visually adjusted.

- The information box on the Service Recovery swimlane as a further addition was felt to be necessary and helpful.

- Upon encountering the keyword "security," the participant paused momentarily, reflecting on whether security would be a ubiquitous requirement across all use cases. However, the participant subsequently acknowledged

the criticality of security, noting that it had even prompted them to consider novel ideas that they may not have otherwise reflected on.

- In general, the tool was described to be particularly helpful as it is less abstract than other common design tools and results in specific recommendations and concrete action steps for the service provider.

Kindness Reflection Sheet

- While the participant found no issue with completing the form, they expressed a desire for a brief written description of the tool prior to engaging with it. Consequently, a short introduction was included to the Relational Recovery Map and the Kindness Reflection Sheet.
- Regarding step 3, it was suggested that particular emphasis should be placed on highlighting the importance of improving kindness, as failure to do so may cause users to overlook the fact that the tool's primary purpose is to enhance prosocial behaviour, as opposed to identifying other areas for service improvement. The importance of kind behaviour was therefore visually emphasised.
- The participant highlighted the value of step 3, as defining kindness in the context of the specific service task proved instrumental in effectively navigating the subsequent steps.

The Kindness Toolkit

- The toolkit was described to be easily understandable, specifically for people that work with design tools on a regular basis.
- The order of the tools was perceived as meaningful, as they build upon each other.
- It was considered specifically useful to use the Kindness Reflection Sheet with a touchpoint specified in the Service Recovery Map.
- In addition, it was mentioned that the Kindness Trigger Cards could be reused for the ideation in the Kindness Reflection Sheet, thus allowing circularity and diversity in the application of the tools.

Testing 3

Kindness Trigger Cards

- Overall, the tool was perceived as an opportunity to open up for imagination and placing oneself in a mindset one would otherwise not have considered.

- It was noted that parameters are needed that put kindness in a service context. This is why a definition for kindness in services will be provided as an introduction to the toolkit itself.
- The card set was felt to be a very speculative design tool in itself, and a feature was desired that would bring the speculation closer to reality. The exact implementation of this feedback was awaited until the last testing in order to obtain a more concrete estimate of the value.
- The Knowledge Cards were identified to be thought-provoking, however, it was desired to make a clearer connection to the topic of kindness. Therefore, these cards were complemented with an additional question that frames the presented concept within a kindness and service context to help designers in applying that newly gained knowledge.
- In addition, it was noted that the Knowledge Cards include too much text, which might not be read by Service Designers. Participants mentioned that dyslexic designers might have problems with the readability of the card. Consequently, the description text for each card was shortened to increase the probability of reading and increase the accessibility of the card deck.

Relational Recovery Map
- The tool was described to have a very clear structure, with each element being of major relevance.
- While presenting the tool, one participant asked if human touchpoints also include other service users, e.g. other patients in the waiting room of a doctor's office. It was observed that the term "human touchpoint" might be misleading in comparison to, e.g. digital touchpoints. This is why it was decided to change the terminology of the first swimlane using another Service Design term, "activity", which is commonly used in journey maps or service blueprints. In addition, the term "relational" was added to clarify that it specifically concerns interpersonal interactions.
- One participant noted that user and provider needs could be divided into emotional and technical aspects to encourage thinking around emotional states. It was decided to specify that the user and the provider need to focus on functional requirements to implement the specific actions. Emotional needs are deliberately excluded, as this step serves as a foundation to identify potential service fails in the following swimlane.
- It was asked if the emotional impact of the service provider might be necessary to assess whether they are also emotionally charged after service fails. However, it was concluded that the toolkit primarily serves as a means to foster kindness by designing kind opportunities for the provider

towards the user as a necessary first step towards the cultivation of kindness.

- Regarding the swimlane of Service Recovery, it seemed to not be clear that the service recovery addresses actions from the service provider only. Therefore, the instructions in this swimlane were expanded.

- In conjunction with an insight from the first testing, one participant mentioned that quotes might be limiting when thinking about service recovery opportunities. Consequently, the concept focus of verbal language was reiterated so that the tool now also includes body language and active listening as recovery options. This reiteration was not only based on insights from the testings but also from the literature review, expert interviews and survey, in which, e.g. active listening, eye contact and smiling are also regularly mentioned as ways of showing kindness.

Kindness Reflection Sheet

- It was noted that the headlines for each step could be more actionable rather than descriptive. Accordingly, each step was adapted to incluse action words.

- The terminology of "Service Task" was not clear to one of the participants. To reduce confusion and increase coherence in terminology for the toolkit, the first step was adapted to the term "Service Action".

- The term "behaviour" within step 2 was mentioned to have the potential to be perceived as personal criticism for service staff, which is why it was removed.

- It was criticised that the headline of step 3, "Service Improvement", implies a service flaw to be improved rather than a functioning service to be elevated in service quality. Hence, the explanation was changed to "Service Ideal" to make clear that kindness goes beyond functional service completion and describes a speculative optimum to be achieved.

- Step 4 was described to be a very necessary and relevant "reality check" for the implementation of kindness within services.
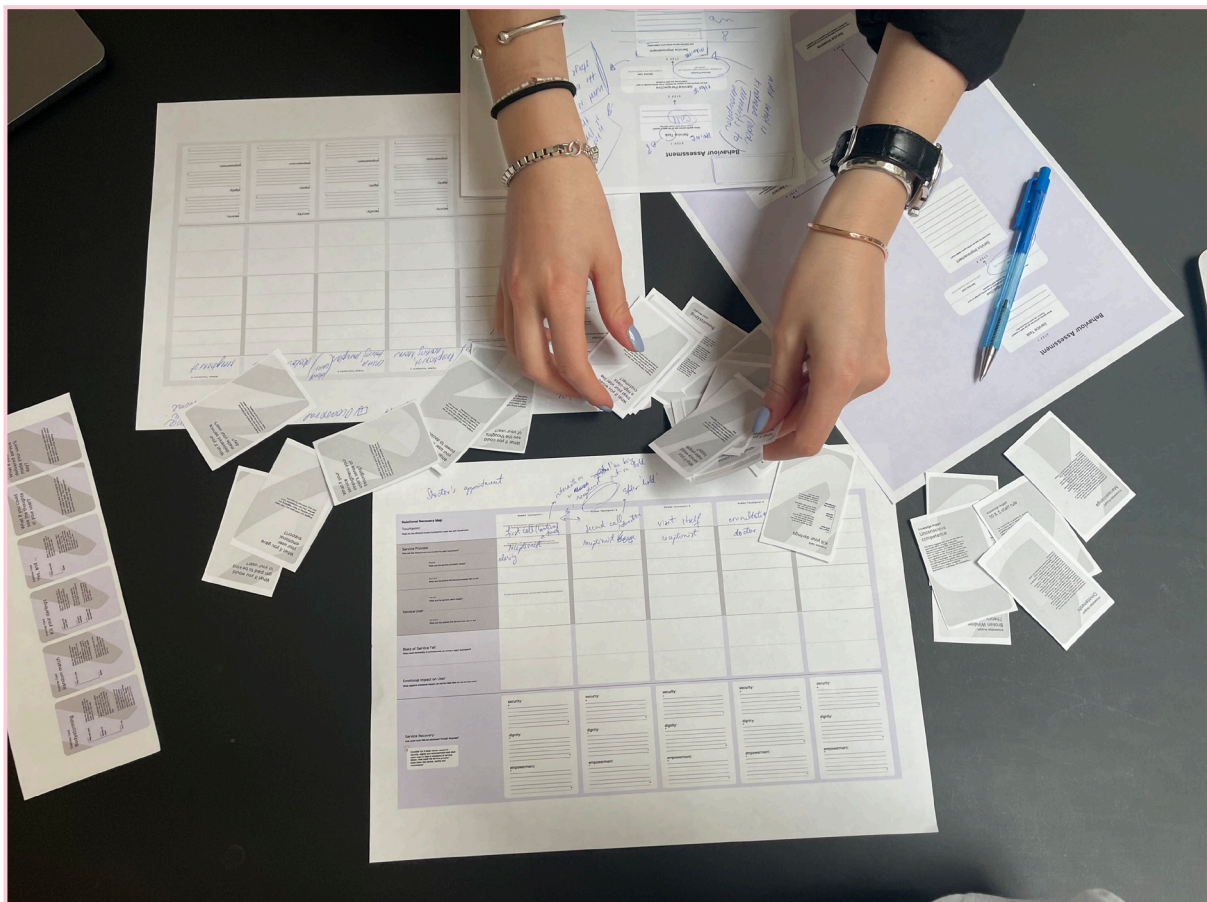
Figure 15: Testing with the tangible Kindness Toolkit

Reflections
on the research quality

Reliability

- All subjects were given the same task during the different sessions, which ensured a higher stability of the method and, thus, higher reliability. However, the last testing was slightly adjusted to test with two people at the same time to see how the tools interact in a group situation. In addition, the tools were printed out and physically experimented with, which is a deviation from the first two sessions and thus affects the reliability.

- Since each design iteration was solely based on the results of a single testing, this compromised the reliability of the insights obtained, as design adjustments were made without waiting for pattern recognition.

Validity

- Although the third testing presented an adjusted setting, the validity of the findings was increased as it allowed to test various application scenarios and thus to gain more realistic and valid insights. The final version of the tools should enable digital and non-digital application for individual use as well as for application within design teams, which was attempted to be replicated within the testings.

- The testing sessions were always scheduled for only 30-60 minutes, which meant that the tools were not used in detail. Instead, the researchers focused on specific questions and features. This compromised the validity of the insights gained since the tools were not used to their full potential, and certain aspects were examined in greater depth than others.

- The testing process involved making adjustments to the tools after each feedback session and testing the new iteration in the subsequent workshop. The validity of the method was thus increased, and the maximum potential of insights from the testing process was obtained.

- Lastly, the testings were executed in cooperation with four external Service and UX Designers, reducing the research bias of the findings.

4.3.2. Testing on an existing service

To establish a suitable basis for testing the functionality of the developed tools, a service from the healthcare sector was selected based on insights from the literature review, which highlighted the prevalence of the topics kindness and relational services in this particular domain. Healthcare services, in general, are described as high-contact services, i.e. including many interactions between the user and the provider (Mersha, 1990) and are therefore suitable for an analysis of tools focusing on human-to-human encounters. Polaine (2013) describes the healthcare sector in general as based on the rational lexicon, in which cost saving and efficiency have a higher priority than patient wellbeing. This reason makes an analysis of relationality within this thesis all the more important. The Danish medical helpline 1813 was identified as an ideal option for the testing due to its unique features that distinguish it from other public medical services and the existence of several human touchpoints in its service delivery model. Despite having multiple human touchpoints, the service and processes of 1813 are relatively straightforward and not excessively complex, making it a suitable candidate for testing the efficacy of the toolkit.

1813 is part of the Danish prehospital emergency healthcare system and is publicly funded, providing free-of-charge medical assistance to citizens. The service is operated by trained nurses and doctors, who use a decision support tool to help users finding the appropriate medical assistance for their health concerns (Lindskou et al., 2019). The service is available in the time frames a user's General Practitioner is unavailable, such as outside of business hours during weekdays and on weekends. The service includes telephone advice on medication, referrals to hospitals for assessments, and even home visits. If hospitalisation is necessary, the user is provided with an appointment at the nearest hospital with the shortest waiting times and receives a notification with the necessary directions and time (The Capital Region of Denmark, n.d.). To identify potential pain points in the service delivery process of 1813, critical aspects were sought. S A limitation of the service is the sole availability in the Capital Region of Denmark and is therefore not accessible to citizens throughout the entire country (Lindskou et al., 2019). One critical aspect is the issue of understaffing, which can lead to prolonged waiting times and negatively affect the quality of the response provided by healthcare professionals. This problem

can lead to increased stress among the staff and potentially result in a less professional response to the patient's needs and a higher potential for technical or professional errors (DR et al., 2021).

The purpose of researching about 1813 was to fill out the tools with as much detail as possible to ensure an accurate representation of the service and its challenges. The following subsection outlines the specific execution of the toolkit testing through its application on 1813 and presents the resulting insights.

Execution

The fourth iterated version of the individual tools was utilised to implement the toolkit in the healthcare service 1813. It is important to note that the available information on the healthcare service is restricted due to the lack of access to primary research involving the service providers. The research was thus limited to the above-mentioned desktop research, discussions with relevant stakeholders in the Danish healthcare sector, and personal experience. The central aim of the testing was to apply and evaluate the tools rather than effecting service change. In order to test the Kindness Trigger Cards comprehensively, each specified game version represented in the Exercise Cards was executed once, allowing for a detailed evaluation of the game's application and an assessment of the significance and usefulness of each card. In order to reflect on each specific feature, both the Service Recovery Map and the Kindness Reflection Sheet were completed in their entirety. The Kindness Reflection Sheet was tested from two possible service perspectives, as well as analysing both options for the (non-)existence of service resources. The identified areas for improvement were reiterated and adapted, leading to the final version of the solution.
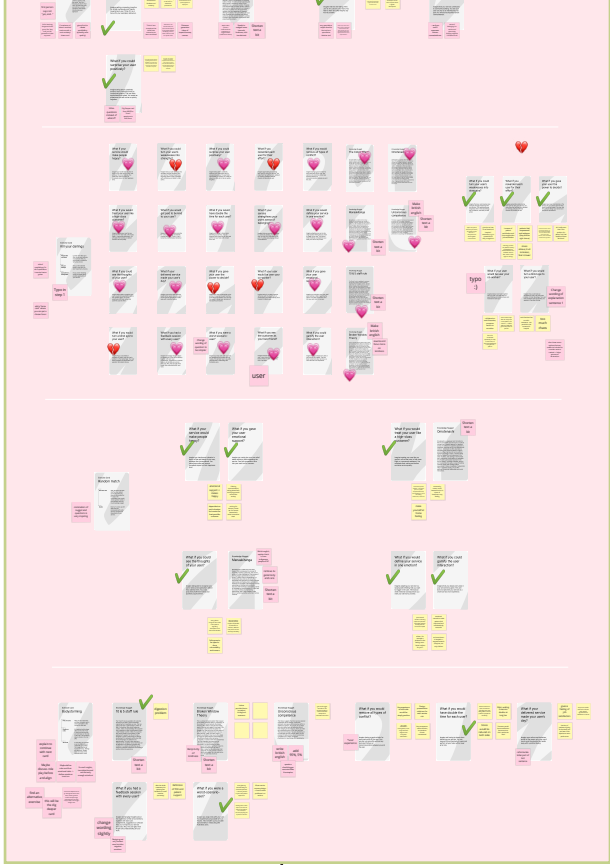
in its entirety
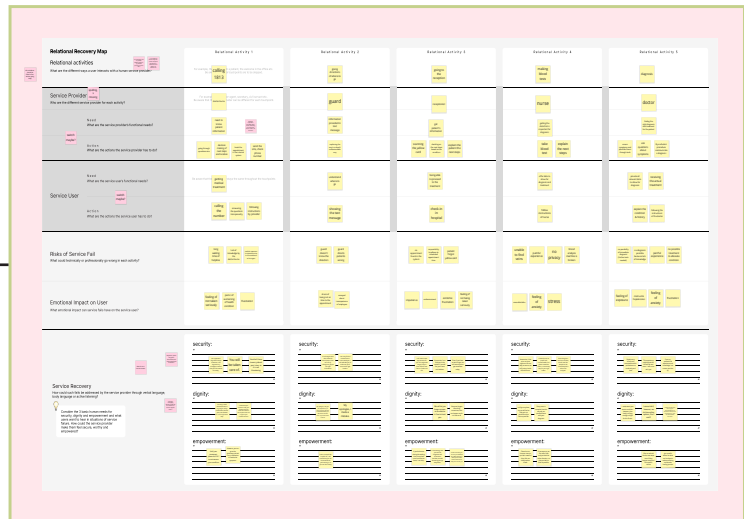
to identify flaws
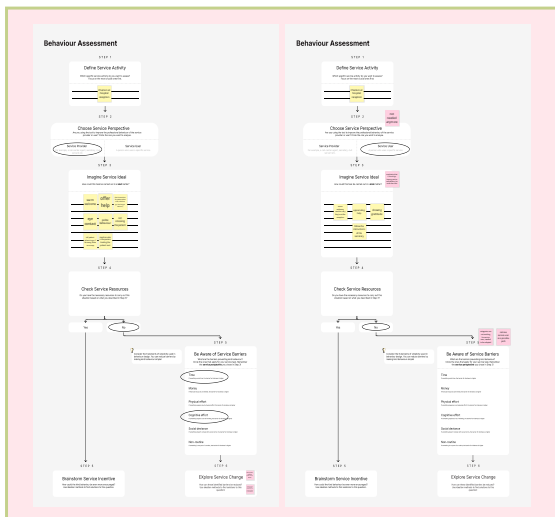
Figure 16: Testing with 1813

Main insights

In the following, the reflections of testing the tools on the service 1813 are listed, as well as the subsequent adjustments on each tool.

Kindness Trigger Cards

- It took multiple hours to go through the whole card deck, which indicates that 30 cards can be sufficient for an ideation session.
- As one of the Exercise Cards did not served its purpose and the formerly mentioned desire to allow for more concreate ideas rather than solely speculations, the card was substituted by the Wildcard. It invites Service Designers to dive deeper into high-potential ideas by making them more concrete and therefore converging from speculative to more feasible outcomes.
- Through testing all the cards, some overlaps were identified and therefore exchanged to diversify the card deck.
- Some instructions of the exercise cards were not clear enough to understand the task, which is why they were reformulated.

Relational Recovery Map

- The sequence of the swimlanes "need" and "action" (for service provider and user) was found to be illogical. Defining the action before the need seemed more natural and were consequently swapped.
- Visual uncertainties arose regarding the coherence of individual swimlanes, hence certain visual adjustments were made to improve the clarity of the tool.

Kindness Reflection Sheet

- Through testing the perspective from both the service provider and the user, it got clear that the steps would need adaption in order to evaluate for kindness opportunities from the users' perspective. To prevent over-complexity in the tool, the task of deciding on the Service Perspective was removed. The focus now lies solely on the service providers' view. However, the service users' perspective could be considered in further tool developments.
- It was noticed that one necessary step was missing to complete the logical process in the tool and complete the service reality analysis. Accordingly, an additional step was added, which lets the Service Designer reflect on the realistic execution of kindness if resources are given.

Reflections

Reliability
- By selecting an existing public service as the testing context, the reliability of the method is increased, as this service is not likely to change suddenly in its basic functionality and would therefore probably lead to similar results if the testing were repeated.

Validity
- Thoroughly testing all features of the toolkit on an existing public service allowed for better recognition of interrelationships, resulting in increased validity of the testing and, thus, a more valid solution concept. By incorporating an existing public service, the tools were tested on a more complex use case, demonstrating their suitability for application on both simpler and more complex systems.

- The testing aimed to thoroughly apply every feature of the toolkit to an existing service. This allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the entire toolkit and potential optimisations. However, since it is intended for use within Service Design processes, the testing did not reflect a realistic application of the tools. The design brief was fictional, and the process was limited to the use of only these three tools. To improve the validity of the testing, the toolkit could have been incorporated into a complete and genuine design process in conjunction with other established tools and methods.

- As this testing method was not carried out with other stakeholders, the likelihood of biases in the research findings is increased, especially as the individual features could no longer be checked for their comprehensibility, as the researchers already have a deep understanding of the tools. However, the researchers themselves are Service Designers, which allowed them to draw on their own experiences with tools within design processes.

- In contrast to the previous testing sessions with external stakeholders, this time, the tools were analysed in detail, including every feature. Since

no time limit was set, it became clearer how long it realistically takes to apply the toolkit. This thorough run-through enabled the researchers to observe the structure, wording and interrelations more closely, leading to the generation of more valid insights.

Key takeaways

of the Implementation phase

- A definition of kindness for Service Design must be provided as an introduction to the tools to create a firmer framework for the concept.
- Design tools in regard to kindness should produce clear proposals as a result; particularly in the case of speculative tools, there should be an option to arrive at concrete ideas with a closer connection to reality.
- Since the combination of service provider and user may be unfamiliar in a relational context, visual support for the Service Designer is needed.
- Flexible tools need clear instructions in order to be used effectively.
- The combination of speculative and more concrete tools offers a diverse choice for the Service Designer to initiate the cultivation of kindness in public services.

4.4

Presentation of the final solution

The solution represented by the Kindness Toolkit consists of three distinct and versatile tools that aim to shift the focus towards kindness within Service Design processes. The goal is to create awareness and a foundation for the implementation of kindness and make the abstract concept tangible and actionable. This approach seeks to address the previously overlooked opportunities in designing relational connections by placing a greater emphasis on human-to-human interactions in the service development. Through the testing with participants as well as on an existing service, the individual tools were adapted to the needs and routines of Service Designers. The solution serves as a flexible framework that can be adapted to any type of design process. The following subsections present a detailed description of the toolkit including the specific values of each tool through offering maps. Furthermore, a motivational matrix, impact journey and value proposition that specifies the application and desired outcome.

4.4.1 The Kindness Toolkit

The Kindness Toolkit represents an innovative approach to Service Design that aims to expand the latitude of the discipline. This initiative seeks to equip Service Designers with a basic understanding of kindness, enabling them to integrate it into their work. By doing so, it aims to foster stronger connections between citizens, service providers, and policymakers, ultimately leading to the development of more effective public service infrastructures. The toolkit intends to create a foundation for investing in the development of infrastructures that open the "opportunity to use human beings involved in our public services more effectively to do what human beings do best: relate to one another" (Mackenzie, 2021, p. 11). The tools are designed for diverse

use within different service types but have been designed and tested with a specific focus on public services. In the case of the Kindness Toolkit, the service provider is seen as the executive authority between the government and citizens, building connections at the forefront. The focus of the toolkit is thus on recognising and leveraging the service provider as a human unit of a service that can respond to the individuality of users' needs and challenges, as opposed to technological touchpoints. The selection of kindness as a focus for Service Design is underpinned by empirical research findings suggesting that an initial top-down decision to incorporate kindness in service provision is efficacious (cf. subsection 4.1.2). The literature confirms to the public's expectations of being treated respectfully in service encounters. Given the reciprocal nature of kindness, a bottom-up response can be anticipated, and the cultivation of a culture of kindness can gradually evolve.

A basic understanding of kindness is provided to the Service Designer in an introduction to the topic. The toolkit was built based on perspectives from different fields, such as behavioural sciences, Compassion Design, and the hospitality sector. This results in a total of three different tools that can be applied in different phases of the Service Design process and focus on the analysis and design of human-to-human interactions. The Kindness Toolkit encompasses diverse tools that span the spectrum between speculation and concretisation. These tools include a card game (Kindness Trigger Cards), a stakeholder journey (Relational Recovery Map), and a questionnaire (Kindness Reflection Sheet), which can be used individually or in combination by Service Designers to suit their unique needs. The toolkit's adaptability for both physical and digital use further reinforce its accessibility and usability.

The Kindness Toolkit aims to help Service Designers to:
- Analyse and integrate a mindset of kindness in public services.
- Work towards a change from predominantly rational services to relational services.
- Consider human-to-human interactions to a greater extent in design and decision-making processes.

Motivational matrix

A motivational matrix is a map of incentives, benefits and contributions for the different stakeholders of a service in relation to each other (Manzini et al., 2004). With regard to the Kindness Toolkit, the motivational matrix is applied to go beyond the motivations of use of the Service Designer and to include other stakeholders, such as the service user and provider, as well as the government, since these actors would be influenced through the implementation of kindness in public services. This puts the benefits of the toolkit into a broader framework (figure 16).

Impact journey

The aim of an impact journey is to combine a successive representation of the user experience with an analysis of the positive and negative influence of each phase of the journey. Different lenses can be applied for the evaluation of the service impact, such as environmental, societal or economic factors (Service Design Tools, n. D.-d). In regard to the Kindness Toolkit, the impact journey was adapted to represent a typical design process from a Service Designer's perspective, including design phases, activities and established tools and methods to be used in each phase. It highlights the proposed applicability of the elements of the toolkit within the design process and defines the specific impact that each utilisation can have for the Service Designer. As each design process is structured differently and has to consider various contexts, the application of the tools presented is a suggestion and leaves room for flexible application (figure 17).

Value proposition

The value proposition by Jones & Van Ael (2022) is an adapted version of the traditional value proposition canvas by Osterwalder et al. (2014), focusing on mapping desired product or service value on different levels. Jones & Van Ael's template suggests considerations on an individual, organisational and societal level through the lens of economic, ecological, social and psychological aspects. For the representation of the values of the Kindness Toolkit, this template was adapted to showcase the actors involved on different levels. It offers an overview of long-term goals for each stakeholder through an economic, societal and professional lens (figure 18).

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gives value to →	Service Designer	Service Provider	Citizen (Service User)	Government
Service Designer	personal & professional development	provides guidance & concrete recommendations for human interaction with users & thus promotes a better working atmosphere through higher user satisfaction	provides the opportunity for a kinder human-to-human interaction & thus a higher quality of service in the public sector	applies Service Design skills which include qualitative & quantitative research, analysis & synthesis of the findings & development of a strategically elaborated solution towards relational public services
Service Provider	• provides necessary insights for the research, enabling the toolkit to be completed on an evidence-based foundation • represents the performing actor of the kindness strategies designed by the Service Designer		• implements a kinder approach that is more inclusive & attentive to the emotional states of service users, creating a more welcoming service atmosphere • creates space for the possible connection between the people involved	is the executive power of the service encounter and thus holds the responsibility to strengthen the link between government & citizens
Citizen (Service User)	• provides necessary insights for the research, enabling the toolkit to be completed on an evidence-based foundation • represents the receiving actor of the kindness stratgies designed by the Service Designer	increased appreciation of the kind service experience leading to an eventual return of prosocial behaviour		more positive service experiences increase satisfaction & thus trust in government decisions & investments
Government	offers the possibility to realise optimised solution strategies for implemented kindness	takes away the expectation of purely rational service delivery & allows a redefinition of professionalism	• enables citizens to benefit from improved public services & thus ensures a more efficient investment of citizen taxes • facilitates a focus on humanising processes that leaves more room for individualisation	

Figure 17: Motivational matrix

	Activites	Possible Tools & Methods
Brief	• team alignment* • stakeholder meeting*	
Kickoff	• budget, time and (human) resource planning	
Empathise	• detailed research about the project context from different perspectives • research analysis & insights formulation • deeper understanding of the problem & the stakeholders involved	video ethnography • survey • desk research • stakeholder interviews • focus groups • the 5 whys • field visit • observation • diary study • design experiment
Define	• expert knowledge about project context & definition of a clear project direction as well as outcome criteria • summarising & contextualising the research results • synthetisation & problem formulation of insights • identifying problem areas & areas of opportunity	scenario • insights sorting • storyboards • personas/archetypes • journey map • stakeholder map • (eco-)system map • empathy map
Ideate	• generating ideas for possible solutions • addressing the problem statement from a stakeholder needs perspective • selection of the most potential ideas in order to minimise the possible approaches to the key solutions & innovations • develop selected solution through creative thinking	brainstorming/brainwriting • crazy 8 • concept-generating matrix • "how might we...?"-questions • idea generation workshop • SCAMPER • future backcasting • signal cards
Prototype	• design of tangible solution prototypes through a number of inexpensive & fast developed prototypes • showing the possible functioning of the ideas in a fictional setting	mock-ups • wireframes & clickdummies • behavioural prototypes • user-stories/scenarios • paper prototypes • visual storyboards • service image
Test	• identification of the functioning of the solution through rigorous testing • investigating the conditions of use • identification of the best possible solution • detection of errors in the solution to identify service improvements • detection of unforeseen positive & negative impacts	observation • stakeholder inter-views/focus groups • service walk-through • survey • AB-testing • service safari
Deliver	• presentation & handover of the developed solution • stakeholder meeting* • alignment about possible implementation & further planning	business model canvas • service roadmap • service blueprint • value proposition canvas • success metrics

* ongoing throughout project

Kindness Reflection Sheet
in the Define phase

- further use of research insights & thus contextualisation with kind behaviour in services
- identification of behavioural barriers & not yet considered problem areas
- allows a targeted analysis of specific service activities
- creates the basis for a focused ideation session & bridges problem analysis to the ideation of solutions
- presents kindness as an evaluation criterion for problem identification

Kindness Trigger Cards
in the Ideation phase

- broader reflection of the relations between service provider & user
- diversifying ideation triggers through including content from other fields
- gamifying the ideation process & providing guidance in the diverging phase
- offering a foundation for conceptualising high-potential ideas
- extending creative boundaries by provoking thinking on alternative futures
- bring relational considerations on an equal level of importance as technical & functional aspects of services

Relational Recvery Map
in the Ideation phase

- allows research insights about service provider & user to be visualised in relation to each other
- provides a clear overview of human encounters in a service
- integrates human emotions as a basis for solution approaches
- considers basic human needs which otherwise often remain unarticulated
- allows thinking for concrete solutions that are deeply user-centred
- provides the Service Designer with specific factors needed for direct solution finding
- considers the development of service recovery through deliberate human action & thus designs for service failure

Kindness Reflection Sheet
in the Test phase

- offers a targeted analysis of specific redesigned service activities
- presents kindness as an evaluation criterion for service validation
- allows a shift in the testing focus from purely functional and technical aspects to emotional and behavioural ones
- encourages immediate iterations & thus improvements of individual service activities
- involves the scope of possibilities on the part of the service provider & the government, by questioning resources

Figure 18: Impact journey of a redesign for an existing public service

professionally

- extension of the discipline & its impact
- extension of the Service Design toolbox
- awareness about design for relational services
- Service Designers are seen as shapers of the trust relationship between government & citizens

societally

- the toolkit provides the lens for the development of relational services & thus, by extension, a societal shift towards the inclusion of emotions in policy making
- through the Service Designers' work, the concept of kindness gains more relevance & concrete approaches for its execution

economically

- the Service Designer is recognised as economically valuable for the design of relational public services
- an expansion of Service Design skills & thus a broader application of the discipline

Service Designer

- work can be carried out more efficiently & effectively by designing preventively & more concretely for recovery from service failures
- consideration of relational connection with service user in the design process, which gives more focus on the provider's work & thus leads to an optimisation of workflows
- optimised work athmosphere & increase of job satisfaction
- concrete recommendations & guidance for action in the service interaction

- better reputation of job role
- service users are seen as collaborators in achieving a common goal & not as opponents

Service Provider

Figure 19: Value proposition

- catching up with the private sector in terms of focus on user-centeredness & service quality
- development & expansion of the change from rational services towards relational services

Citizen (Service User)

- higher satisfaction with public services
- gaining trust towards the government
- higher level of personalisation & citizen empowerment
- a step towards greater respect for the humanity of the user & thus a change towards the possibility of a greater sense of agency & dignity in the public service
- connections between provider & citizens is getting stronger
- gaining space for more inclusivity in public services without favouritism by maintaining standardised process frameworks

Government

- less resistance & criticism against the government as increased awareness of services is placed on the needs & desired practices of citizens
- pioneering investment in positive human connections & thereby setting a proactive example
- increases trust of citizens towards the government

- a higher quality of service for similar high expenditure of taxpayers' money
- possibility of more effectiveness & efficiency in public services
- service recovery spending minimised through implementation already in the Service Design process
- possibility of higher job retention & thus less spending on recruitment processes

- increase of value for money in regard to taxes (price performance ratio)

4.4.2 Kindness Trigger Cards

The Kindness Trigger Cards represent a tool designed to facilitate the inclusion of relational aspects and encourage speculation about possible changes in the design of a service. This tool operates based on the concept of Speculative Design and allows Service Designers to imagine possible future states of service interactions. It fosters a discursive space in which current design concepts are challenged, contextualised with kindness and informed by knowledge from other disciplines (Vistisen, 2021). The card set invites Service Designers to contemplate the possibilities and implications of their design choices. Additionally, a valuable means for Service Designers is provided to incorporate considerations of human interaction into the Service Design process from an early stage. By introducing kindness as a complementary element alongside other design requirements, designers can take a more extensive and empathetic approach to Service Design that recognises the subtleties of human interaction in service contexts. This approach prioritises user emotions, fostering stronger connections between service providers and citizens, and has the potential to create more inclusive and effective service infrastructures.

The Kindness Trigger Cards represent a valuable tool in the ideation process for Service Designers seeking to develop a more relational approach to the design of interactions. Comprised of 30 cards, the set is divided into four distinct features. The main category, consisting of 20 speculative scenarios, is designed to stimulate creativity and expand the designer's imagination by presenting "What if...?"-questions that suggest interaction possibilities. These scenarios are supported by descriptive text that provides context and depth to the question. Additionally, six knowledge cards are included to draw attention to relevant concepts related to the implementation of kindness in services, serving as a valuable resource for designers seeking to broaden their understanding of relational Service Design. Furthermore, three exercise cards provide guidance for the ideation process by presenting different possibilities for playing with the card set. An additional Wildcard is included to aid in the concretisation of developed speculations and to provide a tangible means of exploring the possibilities presented by the card set. Overall, the Kindness Trigger Cards serve as a provocative source of inspiration for Service Designers seeking to develop more humane processes by sensitising them to the relationship between service providers and users.

The Kindness Trigger Cards aim to help Service Designers to:

· Explore a shift in mindset to consider human interactions within service contexts through a speculative design approach.
· Use a lens that goes beyond technical and functional requirements to consider the emotional and social aspects of service experiences.
· Foster exploration of new possibilities through a playful approach.

Offering Map

Sangiorgi's (2004) offering map aims at clarifying values for specific features or clusters of features to the product or service user. The design of the model is flexible and adaptable to the complexity of services or products and can therefore be used at both macro and micro levels to describe their functions. In the case of the Kindness Toolkit, each tool is represented by its different features, rationale and value in detail (Table 5, 6 & 7). It highlights the impact each feature can have on cultivating kindness in services.

KINDNESS

Trigger Card

WHAT IF YOUR SERVICE WOULD MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY?

Imagine you handle each situation in favour of the well-being of your user, whatever the circumstances. You make them smile and have an immediate impact on their happiness level.

WHAT IF YOU WOULD TREAT YOUR USER LIKE A HIGH-CLASS CUSTOMER?

Imagine treating your user like you would in a five-star hotel, a first-class flight or a renowned restaurant. You anticipate their wishes and deliver exclusive service quality.

WHAT IF YOU WOULD GET PAID TO BE KIND TO YOUR USER?

Imagine getting a monetary incentive for acting courteously and friendly towards each user. Think of it as a bonus for your exemplary behaviour.

WHAT IF YOU WOULD REMOVE ALL TYPES OF CONFLICT?

Imagine having a good solution for every pain point in the user experience. Your service runs smoothly without any technical frictions or miscommunication between you and the user.

WHAT IF YOU COULD TAKE AWAY ONE OF YOUR USER'S FEARS?

Imagine your user has a significant fear related to your service. However, you know about this fear and can take action to at least alleviate their concern.

WHAT IF YOU COULD SURPRISE YOUR USER POSITIVELY?

Imagine being able to creatively enhance every interaction with an unexpected gesture. The user feels appreciated and valued. You create an experience that will not be so quickly forgotten.

WHAT IF YOU WOULD HAVE DOUBLE THE TIME FOR EACH USER?

Imagine reducing all points of stress in your service. You can respond more intensively to users and perform all your steps with a lower error rate.

WHAT IF YOUR SERVICE WERE TRANSPARENT?

Imagine your service no longer has a back-end, but operations are visible to the user. You reduce misunderstandings and create transparency and thus more trust for the user.

WHAT IF YOU COULD TURN YOUR USER'S WEAKNESSES INTO STRENGTHS?

Imagine that your user develops new strengths through interacting with your service. This learning process empowers them in their knowledge, self-confidence, and ability to take action.

WHAT IF YOU GAVE YOUR USER EMOTIONAL SUPPORT?

Imagine you could give your user relief about worries or fears regarding the service. Your felt compassion turns into your work tool for success.

Trigger Card

WHAT IF YOU DESIGNED YOUR SERVICE AROUND ONE EMOTION?

Imagine adapting your service to a single positive feeling that you want to trigger in the user. Think about what emotional consequences you want your service to provoke.

Trigger Card

WHAT IF YOU REWARDED EACH USER FOR THEIR EFFORT?

Imagine appreciating and praising each user for using your service. You make them feel admired and validated by showing gratitude. Material rewards are possible as well.

Trigger Card

WHAT IF YOUR SERVICE STRENGTHENS YOUR USER'S SENSE OF BELONGING?

Imagine your service creates a feeling of ease and comfort. You adapt your service in a way that doesn't make the user feel out of place.

Trigger Card

WHAT IF YOU WERE A WORST-CASE-USER?

Imagine you swap roles with your user that experiences all possible service failures. This will alert you to possible improvements in interacting with frustrated users.

Trigger Card

WHAT IF YOU WERE INCLUSIVE TOWARDS ALL YOUR USERS?

Imagine designing your service to be accessible to users from different ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, sexual, neurodiverse, physical and age backgrounds.

Trigger Card

WHAT IF YOU GAVE YOUR USER THE POWER TO DECIDE?

Imagine your user could decide on the process of your service and how they would like to be treated. The personalisation makes the service experience unique for each user.

Trigger Card

WHAT IF YOU COULD GAMIFY THE USER INTERACTION?

Imagine designing every step in your service like a game. The user does not perceive your service as a chore but has a fun experience.

Trigger Card

WHAT IF YOU HAD A FEEDBACK SESSION WITH EVERY USER?

Imagine having a conversation with each user about their experience with the service delivery. Compliments, suggestions or criticism help you to improve your service every day.

Trigger Card

WHAT IF YOUR USER WOULD BE YOUR CO-WORKER?

Imagine being in one team together with your user. You meet them on equal footing and collaboratively work towards a common service goal.

Trigger Card

WHAT IF YOU SEE THE USER AS YOUR BEST FRIEND?

Imagine that the well-being of the user is very close to your heart. You feel for them and offer help for any kind of problem.

Figure 20: Trigger Cards

Exercise Card
RANDOM MATCH

STEP 1
Pick two cards

After the card deck has been shuffled, two random cards are drawn.

Tip: The combination of a Trigger card and a Knowledge card can be very inspiring.

STEP 2
Ideate

Now try to come up with ideas that incorporate both cards and thus optimise the interactions of your service.

Knowledge Card
THE COBRA EFFECT

The Cobra Effect refers to the attempt of solving a problem that actually worsens it. In colonial-era India, the British government offered a reward for every dead cobra with the aim of reducing the population of venomous snakes. This led to people capturing and killing cobras, but some began breeding them for the reward, leading to an increase in the cobra population. The Cobra Effect can occur when incentives are misaligned or actions have unintended consequences.

What incentives can you implement in your service context to effectively implement kindness and avoid the Cobra Effect?

KINDNESS

Wildcard

Knowledge Card
MANAAKITANGA

Manaakitanga is an essential aspect of Māori culture — the indigenous people of New Zealand. The concept promotes respectful and caring relationships between individuals. It emphasises the importance of welcoming and hosting visitors, sharing resources and knowledge, and creating a sense of belonging and connectedness. By prioritising kindness and generosity, Manaakitanga fosters positive relationships by empowering people and building on their strengths.

What possibilities do you see for using the concept of Manaakitanga in your service context?

Exercise Card
YES, AND …

STEP 1
Pick one card

After the card deck has been shuffled, a random card is drawn.

STEP 2
Ideate

The first player starts by speculating about the chosen card. The next player then adds to the speculation by starting their sentence with "Yes, and..." and sharing an additional idea about the card. Each player takes a turn building on the ideas of the previous players until you have collectively created a speculative concept.

STEP 3
Take the next

If you can't generate more ideas, take the next card.

Knowledge Card
BROKEN WINDOWS THEORY

The Broken Windows theory is a phenomenon where visible signs of disorder and neglect can lead to a general disregard for rules and norms in other areas of life. It highlights the importance of addressing and maintaining a sense of order and respect in our environment and daily routines. This effect is applicable to a wide range of social behaviours beyond cleanliness and can influence our perceptions of what is acceptable or expected in our communities.

Where do you see the biggest opportunity for kindness to spread within your service?

Exercise Card
KILL YOUR DARLINGS

STEP 1
Prepare the card deck

Lay all the cards face up in front of you and intuitively choose those that you quickly see a connection with your service.

STEP 2
Kill your darlings

Now put the selected cards on the side, you don't need them anymore.

STEP 3
Consider the disregarded

Focus on the remaining cards and ideate about possible applications in your service.

KINDNESS
Knowledge Card

Knowledge Card
OMOTENASHI

Omotenashi is a Japanese concept that embodies hospitality and service. It emphasises anticipating the needs of others and providing a high level of service without expecting anything in return. Omotenashi is important in the service industry for building customer loyalty and creating positive experiences. It is also a fundamental value in Japanese society and is practiced in personal relationships and social interactions.

Do you see crucial points in your service journey where the concept of Omotenashi would be decisive?

Knowledge Card
UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE

This theory proposes that learned skills or behaviours can become automatic, requiring minimal conscious effort to perform. As a result, we may carry out routine tasks without realising it, accounting for up to 95% of our daily activities. While the exact percentages may vary, the concept of habitual behaviour and unconscious competence is widely recognised in psychology and neuroscience. This highlights the potential for ingrained habits to impact our lives and the importance of being mindful of our behaviour.

How could you use this knowledge to make kindness part of habitual behaviour?

Wildcard
… BUT HOW?

Place this card in the center of the table. Each player can use this card whenever they feel it is relevant.

If someone has a speculation that seems interesting to explore further, one of the players can pick up the Wildcard and show it. Now, all players have to generate concrete ideas for how to make this speculation feasible in the service. The goal is no longer about asking "What if?" but rather "How?".

Knowledge Card
10 & 5 STAFF RULE

The 10 and 5 rule is a customer service guideline used in various industries. It requires staff to make eye contact, smile, and greet customers when within 10ft. Within 5ft, staff should offer assistance or initiate a conversation. The rule creates a welcoming environment and shows attentiveness, making it a useful tool for training staff and improving customer experience.

How could you incorporate aspects of such a rule within your service context?

KINDNESS

Exercise Card

Figure 21: Exercise Cards, Knowledge Cards and Wildcard

What?		Why?
Trigger Cards	"What if"-question	• To raise awareness for possible implementation scenarios of kindness. • To push creative boundaries and consider design possibilities that designers were not aware of before. • To provoke a divergent quantity of speculative ideas. • To make alternative futures imaginable.
	Explanation	• To contextualise the question and thereby increase the understanding of the Service Designer. • To offer more guidance for speculation. • To provide examples and consequences of the question.
Knowledge Cards	Explanation	• To cite existing concepts related to kindness and thereby stimulate speculative thinking. • To enrich open-ended thinking with a realistic reference and examples. • To increase cultural diversity. • To include content from other disciplines and thus facilitate connections to Service Design. • To make existing concepts quickly and easily accessible for Service Design.
	Question	• To show the connection between the presented concept and the actual application in Service Design. • To offer guidance within the speculative generation of ideas. • To provide more tangibility to the presented concept. • To make the use of the card more understandable and actionable.

Exercise Cards	Step-by-step explanation	• To provide guidance to Service Designers on how to use the tool. • To illustrate and explain the diversity of possible applications of the tool. • To facilitate idea generation in a team of Service Designers in a playful way. • To challenge the non-obvious possibilities of using kindness. • To encourage innovative ideas through randomly combined themes.
Wildcard	Explanation	• To enable more concrete idea generation and thus give abstract speculations a more realistic reference. • To allow thinking about and discussing certain approaches in greater depth. • To be able to further develop speculations with the highest potential selectively. • To facilitate unexpected twists and turns in the game.

Table 5: Offering map for the Kindness Trigger Cards

4.4.3 Relational Recovery Map

The Relational Recovery Map is inspired by established Service Design tools, the user journey and the service blueprint. Elements such as the sequential flow of service activities and the simultaneous representation of several stakeholders served as the basis for the development of a tool that focuses on human-to-human activities in order to support service recovery. This tool incorporates kindness into the Service Design process by taking into account the potential emotional reactions of service users to negative service experiences. By considering the users' emotional circumstances, a mediation strategy is designed to facilitate a more positive service experience that addresses the three basic human needs. These have been contextualised from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and are applied as fundamental elements within Compassionate Design (Wahba & Bridwell, 1973). By placing emphasis on human interactions within services, this tool serves to elevate the status of human-to-human interactions, particularly within domains that often prioritise technological solutions. Through this approach, the tool supports the development of services that are more attuned to the complexities of human interaction and emotional experience, ultimately leading to more effective and user-friendly service infrastructures.

This tool employs a format in which the various human touchpoints of a service are presented vertically while detailed elaborations for each touchpoint are arranged horizontally across nine swimlanes. Notably, the tool represents both service participants, highlighting the interpersonal nature of their exchange. By analysing the emotional impact of service breakdowns, it promotes awareness of the influence of emotional states on perceived service quality. Recovery paths are guided by a focus on the fundamental human needs of security, dignity, and empowerment, which often remain unarticulated (Seshadri et al., 2019). Ultimately, the tool serves to expand Service Design resources that go beyond a purely functional approach and offers valuable guidance for Service Designers seeking to model desirable behaviours of the service provider.

The Relational Recovery Map aims to help Service Designers to:
- Make amends for possible service failures and resulting emotional impacts.
- Focus on and analyse the human-to-human activities in a service.
- Clearly visualise the journey of service provider and user in relation to each other.

Relational Recovery Map

Relational Activities
What are the different ways a user interacts with a human service provider?

Service Provider
Who are the different service providers for each activity?

Action
What are the actions the service provider has to do?

Need
What are the service provider's functional needs?

Service User

Action
What are the actions the service user has to do?

Need
What are the service user's functional needs?

Risk of Service Fail
What could technically or professionally go wrong in each activity?

Emotional Impact on User
What emotional impact can service fails have on the service user?

Service Recovery
How could these fails be addressed by the service provider through verbal language, body language or active listening?

- Consider the 3 basic human needs for security, dignity and empowerment and what users want to hear in situations of service failure. How could the service provider make them feel secure, worthy and empowered?

	Relational Activity 1	Relational Activity 2	Relational Activity 3	Relational Activity 4	Relational Activity 5
	For example, the first call from a patient, the welcome in the office etc. Be aware that digital touchpoints are to be skipped.				
	For example, a call-center-agent, secretary, civil servant etc. Be aware that the service provider can be different for each touchpoint.				
	Be aware that the service user stays the same throughout the touchpoints				
Security	Security	Security	Security	Security	Security
Dignity	Dignity	Dignity	Dignity	Dignity	Dignity
Empowerment	Empowerment	Empowerment	Empowerment	Empowerment	Empowerment

This tool makes it possible to find solution approaches for human actions in response to potential service fails.

Figure 22: Relational Recovery Map

What?		Why?
Relational Activities		• To sequentially list the relational encounters between service users and (possibly different) service providers. • To focus on the human-to-human interactions. • To establish the foundation for the further swimlanes.
Service Provider	Touchpoint	• To clearly define with which service provider a service user interacts with and thus identify the responsible person of each activity. • To make it clear with how many different service providers a user (possibly) interacts with and thus to make the complexity of a public service visible. • To relate the two actors, service provider and user, and thus illustrate their interaction.
	Action	• To present the exact task(s) of each activity and thus create a foundation for identifying the risks of service failures more easily. • To give more context to each activity and to better understand its process.
	Need	• To identify what the service provider's objectives are in each activity. • To be able to recognise which prerequisites must be fulfilled in order to accomplish the action. • To create a foundation for identifying the risks of service failures more easily.

Service User	Action	• In order to present the exact task(s) of each activity and thus create a basis for identifying the risks of service failures more easily. • To give more context to each activity and to better understand its process.
	Need	• To identify what the service user's objectives are in each activity. • To be able to recognise which prerequisites must be fulfilled in order to accomplish the action. • To create a foundation for identifying the risks of service failures more easily.
Risks of Service Fail		• To recognise potential service failures and inconveniences. • To create awareness, not only to design for the ideal process, but to consider obstacles. • To include technical as well as human failures in the Service Design process. • To understand potential problems in the activity and design recoveries based on these problems. • To identify opportunities for kind behaviour from the service provider.
Emotional Impact on User		• To create awareness of the emotional impact that possible service obstacles can have on the service user. • To increase the understanding of human reactions and to take into account possible irrationalities. • To broaden the focus from the rational design to the emotional one. • To humanise the user and thereby stimulate greater empathy in the Service Designer.

| Service Recovery | 3 Basic Human Needs | • To make amends for the identified service failures.
• To more effectively address the emotional responses of a user within a service.
• To consider alternative solutions to service failures.
• To give Service Designers the option to think about different possibilities of service recovery and thus diversify the potentials of kindness.
• To make Service Designers aware of looking at kindness through the lens of different behaviours and to consider this in the design process.
• To incorporate investigated basic needs of people and to focus on often unspoken needs. |
| | Info Box | • To give the Service Designer (especially at first use) a better understanding of the swimlane.
• To briefly explain the background of the categories presented.
• To give additional guidance on the application. |

Table 6: Offering map for the Relational Recovery Map

4.4.4 Kindness Reflection Sheet

The Kindness Reflection Sheet is a questionnaire designed to serve as a cognitive aid for Service Designers to inspect individual activities within a service for opportunities to cultivate kindness. The guidelines, which are structured in a logical manner, aim to develop potential improvements or initiatives that maximise resources to establish optimal human-to-human connections. Drawing inspiration from Dr BJ Fogg's (2008) research on the six elements of simplicity and their application in Behavioural Design, the solution approach is predicated on the assumption that simplification of these elements reduces barriers that impede service providers from exercising kind behaviour during encounters with service users. Due to the clear and gamified structure of the questionnaire, targeted reflections and solutions can be found in an efficient way, which gives Service Designers an in-depth insight into specific tasks of a service. Furthermore, the tool involves a combination of divergent imagining of optimal situations and behaviour, as well as a subsequent convergent funnel that analyses the ideals through a reality-based lens before opening up for further idea generation and therefore working towards kindness-orientated service encounters.

The Kindness Reflection Sheet comprises a sequence of seven steps, with the initial two steps serving as the groundwork for reflection on the ideal state of the chosen service activity with regard to kindness. Subsequently, in step three, a decision is taken concerning the actual amount of available resources, which represents a reality check that may require supplementation with researched data to proceed sensibly with the optimisation of the service in question. The tool offers two distinct paths: The first path focuses on the situation of resource availability and prompts reflection on the actual utilisation of available resources. The emphasis is on the perceived kindness of the service task from the viewpoint of external stakeholders. The second path entails exploring the necessary changes to a service activity through the lens of the six elements of simplicity and their application in Behavioural Design. This approach enables the identification of specific areas for improvement, which can be further explored to make it easier for the service provider to demonstrate kindness towards the service user. After working through these steps, which serve to analyse the given situation more specifically, the tool encourages the ideation of potential improvement possibilities and therefore helps to establish relational services.

The Kindness Reflection Sheet aims to help Service Designers to:

- Analyse resources related to kindness specifically for a selected service activity.
- Identify barriers to kindness and therefore address the root of the problem.
- Conduct a reality analysis and consider limited resources in the design process.

Kindness Reflection Sheet

STEP 1

Define Service Activity

Which specific service activity, defined by
human-to-human touchpoints, would you like to assess?
Focus on the most crucial one first and write it down.

STEP 2

Imagine Service Ideals

How could the service provider carry out this activity
in a **kind** matter? Write down your ideas and be aware
that kind behaviour goes beyond service completion.

STEP 3

Check Service Resources

Do you have the necessary resources to carry out this
situation based on what you described in Step 2?

Yes	No

STEP 4

Reflect on Service Reality

Are the existing resources already being used optimally to achieve
the service ideal? Consider opinions from service users about the
perceived service to make a decision.

Yes	No

STEP 4

Be Aware of Service Barriers

What are the barriers preventing kind behaviour?
Circle the ones that apply for your service task.

Consider the 6 elements of simplicity used in
behaviour design. You can reduce barriers by making
kind behaviour simple!

Time

If something costs time, the barrier for kindness is higher

Money

If financial resources are limited, the barrier for kindness is higher

Physical effort

If something requires much physical effort, the barrier for kindness is higher

Cognitive effort

If something requires a lot of thinking, the barrier for kindness is higher

Social deviances

If something doesn't comply with social norms, the barrier for kindness is higher

Non-routine

If something is not part of a routine, the barrier for kindness is higher

STEP 5

Brainstorm on Service Incentives

How could the kind behaviour be **even more** encouraged?
Use ideation methods to find solutions to this
question.

STEP 5

Explore Service Change

How can these identified barriers be reduced? Use
ideation methods to find solutions to this question!

Figure 23: Kindness Reflection Sheet

What?		Why?
Service Activity		• To focus on one specific activity in the service process and thus reduce complexity. • To nudge the Service Designer to evaluate those activities with the highest need for kindness first. • To provide a foundation for the next steps and set a frame to work in.
Service Ideals		• To enable Service Designers to imagine ideal states of the chosen activity in terms of kindness from the service provider. • To ideate on new possible standards for service providers' behaviour towards service users. • To evaluate service quality not only on the basis of task fulfilment (ideate on the "how" and not just the "why"). • To expand the usual creative scope of Service Designers.
Service Resources	Check-Point	• To evaluate the extent to which the previously defined service ideals can be implemented at the given time. • To check the previous speculations for realistic implementation. • To compare the status quo with the target state; to reflect on whether the necessary conditions are given or not.
	Yes/No	• To guide the Service Designer towards a decision and thus bring about specific solutions for different situations. • To incorporate the perceptions of service users and thus discover possible areas for improvement. • To put service perception and service execution in perspective.

Service Reality	Reflection	• To reflect on the realistic execution of the service ideal. • To check whether the given resources are already being used effectively.
	Yes/No	• To guide the Service Designer towards a decision and thus bring about specific solutions for different situations.
Service Incentives		• To invite Service Designers to reflect on motivations for practising kindness in services. • To not exclude services that are already considered kind from optimisation. • To encourage the Service Designer to generate ideas beyond the tool. • To think about how the service provider could be positively influenced.
Service Barriers	Elements of Simplicity	• To identify specific factors that prevent the service provider from acting kindly. • To provide the Service Designer with an established framework to more easily identify these obstacles. • To analyse the behaviour of service providers. • To evaluate a service activity from different perspectives. • To consider important aspects of behavioural science in the design process. • To make content from other disciplines accessible to the Service Designer.
	Info Box	• To give the Service Designer (especially at first use) a better understanding of the step. • To briefly explain the background of the elements presented. • To give additional guidance on the application.

Service Change	• To be able to specifically ideate about certain service obstacles and to find approaches for optimisation. • To encourage Service Designers to reduce obstacles and thus increase the possibility for kindness in services. • To encourage the Service Designer to generate ideas beyond the tool. • To explore approaches that bring services closer to the service ideal.

Table 7: Offering map for the Kindness Reflection Sheet

5
Discussion

This chapter focuses on the reflections and limitations of the previously formulated research question:

How can the toolkit of Service Design be extended to foster kindness in public services?

It provides an answer to the addressed topic and offers further thoughts on the issue. Additionally, it highlights potential areas of research that could be relevant in the future with regard to kindness and Service Design.

The chapter is divided into the following sections:

5.1 Reflections and Limitations
5.2 Future Research

5.1

Reflections and Limitations

In this section, reflective thoughts are thematically discussed. The process of this thesis is critically questioned, including the methodology, qualitative methods, and the nature of the process. Furthermore, the answer to the academic research question is contemplated by discussing kindness through Service Design, the Kindness Toolkit, and the general cultivation of kindness in public services. In addition to an academic discussion on the thesis process and research question, the learning outcomes are addressed.

5.1.1 Review of the design process

Contemplations about qualitative research

The initial phase of the research focused on exploring the unfamiliar and complex themes of kindness, public policies, and relational services. The recruitment process for the expert interviews included, among others, a search for Service Designers working with the concept of kindness, but due to the research gap of the combination of those topics, no expert was found. Instead, a Product Designer who was already familiar with the topic of kindness was selected. Opinions from Service Designers were only included at a later stage of the process to expand participant diversity and include insights from the potential users of the Kindness Toolkit. This approach was beneficial as it allowed the research team to first bridge the gap in knowledge and acquire the necessary expertise to effectively link kindness with Service Design before discussing solutions. At the same time, this posed a challenge, as the connection was not elaborated directly through expert insights, but had to be developed independently.

Reflecting on the entire qualitative research, a gender tendency towards a strong representation of female participants emerged. Upon reflection of the qualitative research conducted, a gender bias towards a predominantly female representation of participants was identified. Initially, an equal number of male and female experts were sought for interviews, with three men accepting the request. However, two men subsequently cancelled, leading to a gender ratio of 1:7. This gender discrepancy continued throughout the thesis, with a majority of female participants recruited for the ideation workshops and testing, resulting in an 87% representation of women within the qualitative research. The survey did not collect demographic data on gender, precluding any analysis of gender balance. It is worth noting that the gender quota of the thesis is also increased by both researchers identifying as female. The results of the literature review suggest the existence of prevailing stereo-types associating kindness with feminine characteristics (Nutbrown et al., 2021; Willis, 2021), which unfortunately seems to be reflected in the research participation of the thesis. This raises two hypotheses:

- Is the willingness to volunteer for research projects such as a Master's thesis higher among women than among men?
- Is the topic of kindness more likely to be addressed by women than by men?

The decision to exclude demographic data from the survey was made intention-ally to prevent the survey from becoming too lengthy and to ensure partic-ipants did not feel obligated to disclose personal information. However, in hindsight, it became apparent that including demographic data would have been beneficial for exploring potential cultural, gender, and generational differences in the perception and description of kindness. While the cultural classification of kindness is not the central focus of the thesis, analysing the participants' places of residence could have provided insights into any specific characteristics observed in Western high-income countries, particu-larly the Northern European region. This information could have potentially influenced the definition of kindness that emerged from the study and subse-quently impacted the final solution.

The nonlinearity of the design process

The thesis process turned out to be far more iterative than expected due to several aspects. Initially, various issues related to kindness were considered, such as Humanity-centred Design and systems change, which later turned out to be too broad and were therefore excluded. This allowed for a more precise focus and deeper research within the chosen topics instead of working super-

ficially on multiple subjects. During the design process and the development of the solutions, iteration rounds were carried out frequently, which ensured a higher degree of optimisation and allowed a large number of divergent and convergent phases to emerge. Concepts and disciplines that had not been considered before – e.g. behavioural science and Hospitality Design – were included, which led to a further redefinition and refinement of the focus. The high number of iterations sometimes led to uncertainty and increased the complexity of the work. Nevertheless, the links between the fields were strengthened in the end, and a more coherent overall concept was created. If those additional concepts and disciplines had been considered and examined at an earlier stage, there would have been an opportunity to conduct more comprehensive research and establish connections with the concept of kindness. This could have potentially altered the primary focus of the thesis.

Another challenge that arose in regard to the iterations was the transfer of the non-linear process into a coherent structure of academic work. For this reason, it was decided to include insights and individual reflections within the specific sections of each design method to increase comprehensibility and provide a more realistic representation of the process. Therefore, a traditional division of chapters, in which insights and reflections are only presented at the end of the thesis, was deliberately avoided. This approach aims to enhance transparency and provide a more holistic view of the iterative research process.

Reflections on the methodology

Initially, selecting an appropriate design process to address the research question posed challenges. The difficulty arose in finding a framework suitable for the development of tools. The nature of these tools leans towards product design, which deviates from traditional Service Design outcomes. After extensive research and discussions, Research through Design was deemed appropriate for this thesis as it enables the translation of design processes into academic works. However, this methodology is still abstractly defined (Savic & Huang, 2014), providing minimal guidance and structure for its implementation. Consequently, incorporating the IDEO 3I framework was decided to provide a clearer structure for both the design process and the thesis organisation. While the choice of these methodologies allowed for ample freedom in developing solutions, the researchers' internalisation of design processes due to regular application resulted in less attention being paid to the precise allocation of methods to design phases. This raises the question of whether

the regular execution of design processes leads to a routine and intuitive handling and whether this has a positive or negative impact on the outcome. The utilisation of design methods and tools has proven to be effective in answering the research question, as these instruments are highly adaptable and versatile for a wide range of applications. In the case of this thesis, expert interviews, surveys, stakeholder workshops, several ideation tools, a motivational matrix, offering maps, an impact journey, and a value proposition were employed to generate insights for the development of solutions and to clearly and comprehensively present the outcome's value. While some of the utilised methods and tools are typically associated with Service Design processes, there is no clear delineation that this process strictly adheres to a Service Design process. The applied instruments are applicable to any design thinking approach, and therefore, the process of the thesis does not represent a traditional Service Design process in which services are conceptualised using, e.g. personas, user journeys, and service blueprints. Despite the fact that no service was developed in this thesis, the outcome is a valuable contribution to the Service Design discipline and is intended for use by Service Designers.

The limitations of Service Design

Since designers are not exempt from internalised prejudices, these stereotypes can also be transferred to the use of the Kindness Toolkit, the Service Design process itself and thus the result. As an Australian study shows, a third of respondents believe that not everyone is equally deserving of kindness, and Service Designers, as well as service providers, are probably not excluded from this. Although a major focus of the design process is to design empathetically towards target groups, it cannot be assumed that designing is completely objective. This is also evident in the criticism on the topic of empathy in design, where it is stated that active empathy and understanding of the target group rarely happens, and empathy remains rather a passive approach in design processes (Stephan, 2023).

Before the widespread application of the Kindness Toolkit is even possible, it is first necessary to establish the discipline of Service Design in public services. This means that the basis for the use of Service Design at the policy level must first be created. Scandinavian and British countries already regularly apply Service Design processes at this level, but the diffusion in other countries is still less or not at all pronounced. Moreover, the implementation and management of the design outcomes often lie outside the realm of control

for Service Designers, as numerous factors come into play during execution. Service Designers typically play a role in the design process and are seldom involved in ongoing maintenance. This disparity between design intent and actual execution is particularly relevant when dealing with abstract concepts such as kindness, which poses challenges in terms of measuring. Hence, it would be of advantage for Service Designers to continue being part of an evaluation team even after the design and implementation phase. This would enable them to observe outcomes, conduct additional qualitative research, and make necessary adaptations to enhance the longevity of the service. In a broader sense, the limitations of design practices in general should be considered, as not every problem, even if uncovered by design, can be solved by design (alone) (DiSalvo, 2022).

5.1.2 Review of the research question

Contextualising kindness for the discipline of Service Design
The definition of kindness, which is frequently regarded as a soft and subjective concept, presents a significant challenge. Although academic definitions from different disciplines are already available, they vary widely and are sometimes even contradictory in their nuances. In addition, there is the challenge of liberating society's understanding of the concept from stereotypes and recognising kindness as a genuine value that can shape the future. It is precisely because of these stereotypes that a discussion about kindness in the political sphere is far from pleasant. It challenges to consider the reality of people and not just plain data, which leaves out relations and feelings (Unwin, 2018). The thesis attempts to give kindness a place in public services and decision-making instances in order to move from a passive and rational view of citizens to one of sentient beings with a desire for a sense of agency. In a broader sense, it aims to build trust between citizens and the government, which is achieved through an optimised recognition of needs and, thus, a better collaboration between both parties. Given its emphasis on human-centredness, Service Design provides a foundation for the implementation of kindness in public services. However, it is essential to comprehend the potential as well as the constraints of fostering kindness through Service Design. From the thesis process, it emerges that kindness — in the context of Service Design — can be defined as a method to stimulate the shift from rational to relational services. It is seen as a problem-solving, connecting

and creative force to build relationships between service actors. Moreover, kindness serves as a cohesive agent that fosters cooperation among these stakeholders, thus benefitting the majority of people and enabling progress. By incorporating kindness, emotional responses are taken into account. Due to the inclusion of these unpredictable human characteristics, kindness cannot be implemented as a standardised regulation but needs to be cultivated by reducing barriers and providing incentives. Therefore, kindness should not be mandated as a universal concept but rather facilitated in its execution. This will also reduce the great concern about losing the essence of kindness, which has been raised repeatedly in the course of the thesis.

More specifically, the qualitative research demonstrates that kindness through Service Design does not represent a monetary, time-consuming or health expenditure, nor should it support unfair treatment of different service users. In contrast to conventional notions of professionalism, the concept of kindness should be integrated within the realm of possibility for service providers, aligning with their professional roles. It should not pose an emotional burden on the providers nor hinder the frictionless delivery of services. Kindness represents a humanising element within the contemporary understanding of professionalism, seeking to expand mere transactional exchanges by fostering relational and personalised interactions between service providers and users. This entails practising politeness, courtesy and exhibiting emotional intelligence in order to uphold a sense of shared humanity towards service users. Although seemingly small acts with little effort, these are the most realistically applicable in everyday working life and have even been identified as the most impactful. Even though these may not necessarily come with a surprising and ecstatic feeling, these small acts can create the groundwork for kindness - and thus create a minimum viable product (MVP) for kind interactions in services, as one participant in the workshops formulated it. Based on the insights gathered from the survey, this MVP can be interpreted as the objective of a service to minimise any potential harm to users by encouraging a cooperative mindset during service encounters and promoting a collaborative approach towards achieving common goals and thus co-creating value.

To render kindness in services tangible and practical, insights from expert interviews highlight the legal perspective as the most relevant framework within the context of public services. Within this framework, emphasis is placed solely on the demonstration of kindness, with no regard for underlying intentions. Therefore, the focus remains on the practical execution and

establishment of an attutide of kindness rather than delving into motives, as prioritising intentions above actions would diminish the positive impact on service users and impede the overall goal of cultivating a more humanised and relational public service sector. Prioritising the performance of kind acts rather than subjective intentions ensures maximum benefit for service users and facilitates a kinder public service environment, granting citizens more agency, individuality, and embodied recognition.

Act > Intention

Creating an impetus for establishing kindness through the toolkit

The research identified a gap between the concepts of kindness and Service Design, revealing a need for the expansion of the existing toolkit to promote the adoption of relational services. Through the qualitative investigation, kindness was redefined in the concept of services, and as a result, a set of tools was developed. In order to optimally build the tools and make them usable for Service Designers, the following criteria for successful implementation were identified through the iterations:

- The tools must be easy to understand, both visually and in terms of content, in order to achieve a high degree of user-friendliness.
- The tools should resemble existing and established Service Design tools in order to facilitate integration into the routines and processes of Service Designers.
- The use of tools is most helpful when they produce concrete results, as abstract outcomes are perceived as less applicable within design projects.
- The tools should be flexible and versatile to cater to diverse use cases, thereby facilitating a broad spectrum of applications.

These factors have been taken into account as much as possible in order to make kindness applicable and considered in public services. The developed toolkit serves as a facilitator rather than a determinant for the cultivation of kindness in Service Design. It should be noted, however, that the application of the toolkit does not guarantee the creation of a relational service. When implementing the toolkit in real projects, it is important to acknowledge

that it will typically be used in combination with other established design methods and tools. One limitation of the toolkit is that it does not offer specific guidelines for incorporating kindness during the initial stages of project research. Therefore, it is advisable to proactively consider kindness within service interactions as early as the user research phase and gather relevant insights that can subsequently inform the toolkit's application in later stages.

The tools are deliberately designed for targeted and focused application, and their impact is limited to micro-interventions. Therefore, the toolkit serves as a support mechanism for enabling the cultivation of kindness, but it cannot bring about a service-wide impact on its own. However, the targeted application has the advantage of being applied locally and thus, as emerged from the research, addressing context-specific definitions of kindness. Acts of kindness can be carried out by the service provider with the help of the elaborated outcomes of the tools. Based on the insights from the expert interviews, the focus on the service provider is deliberate, as it represents the link between the government and the citizens. The service provider is the executing instance in contact with the service user and can be incentivised to achieve a cultivation of kindness through the reciprocal nature of proso-cial behaviour. Through the tools, the Service Designer can provide support for service providers and reduce the barriers to practising kindness more easily. Through this initial nudging, the likelihood of kindness is increased through simplification. In a broader context, the ultimate objective may be to instigate behavioural transformation through subtle interventions, thus bringing about the cultivation of kindness. Although included at the begin-ning, nudging the service user towards kindness proved to be challenging – as it would have required a different approach to the development of the tools. Although the service user's behaviour is indirectly influenced by that of the provider, nudging them could have been further explored in the toolkit.

Challenges and considerations in cultivating kindness

The toolkit developed does not claim to quantitatively measure kindness but rather aims to provide a comprehensive definition, facilitate reflec-tion, and encourage its implementation through human-to-human interactions. The research reveals that the measurement of kindness is a controversial issue, and a universally recognised metric for it is currently non-existent. Nonetheless, the ability to measure kindness would be advantageous in demon-strating progress or regression and providing a more rigorous and empirical

dimension to the study of kindness in Service Design. Moreover, the process of developing the toolkit has revealed that the integration of kindness into service provision does not inherently entail an economic value for the service provider. As the primary executor of kindness, a significant portion of the responsibility is allocated to the service provider without corresponding financial compensation. Accordingly, it may result in a potential increase in the service provider's workload, particularly in sectors already struggling with challenges such as excessive pressure, staffing deficiencies, and time constraints. Nonetheless, by virtue of the reciprocal nature of kindness, the concept holds the potential to enhance the overall working atmosphere and foster a more conducive and harmonious environment.

However, the toolkit lacks differentiation in addressing kindness towards diverse users, thereby neglecting the opportunity to personalise kindness for marginalised groups, for instance. It does not take into account possible physical or mental disabilities of service users, consequently lacking a focus on inclusive or accessible solutions. If desired, the toolkit offers the flexibility to be adapted and applied in the direction of Inclusive Design.

On a societal scale, the application of kindness as a method to transition towards relational services faces limitations. A critical consideration relates to the readiness of society to embrace such transformative changes (Muir & Parker, 2014). Especially in times of increased pace of change and novelty, people can quickly feel insecure and neglected when familiar structures and processes are broken up and transformed. Even if the reason behind change is understood, reluctance and overwhelm are common emotional reactions. This applies not only to service users, but also to those who work within the service (Ballat et al., 2020). The cultivation of kindness, while holding the potential to foster stronger connections, thus may necessitate additional time investment, thereby raising concerns regarding increased costs and potential criticisms of the perceived financial burden associated with the provision of relational services. In addition, it cannot be assumed that an intrinsic motivation for prosocial behaviour exists in all people and its reciprocity can thus be questioned. To implement kindness at the public level, a collective effort is needed, which makes the implementation of kindness a more difficult task. A realistic view must be taken of the fact that the complex problems of the 21st century addressed in the literature review cannot be solved by kindness alone. Kindness can be seen as a means to progress, but it cannot be seen as a panacea either.

In addition to the above considerations, the principles of fairness and equity play an important role and need to be taken into account when discussing the development of public services. While kindness can be a positive attribute to cultivate in the public realm in Western high-income countries — where such services are already structurally and nationally established — it is important to recognise that many countries still face fundamental challenges in meeting basic human needs. These countries should first address more pressing priorities before any consideration of relational services becomes meaningful. It remains uncertain whether these countries will ever reach a point where addressing such services becomes feasible. In Western high-income countries, the cultivation of kindness in public services may contribute to a shift away from the capitalist view and a renewed focus on the fundamental nature of public services and the most effective ways to deliver them. At the same time, Western high-income countries are also partly affected by crises in which other issues should and must come to the fore. In conclusion, it is important to uphold values of equity, justice and efficiency (Andersen & Brownlie, 2021) in the development of public services, with kindness as a complementary attribute and not a substitute for these basic principles. Kindness should be addressed as a bilingual approach to governance (Unwin, 2018) as an investment in human capital, which does not mean disregarding important state tasks and responsibilities, as kindness, in the long term, is not an antagonist of effectiveness.

5.1.3 Review of the learning objectives

Official learning objectives

The thesis process has contributed to the knowledge of applying Service Design methods, as well as the history and further development of the discipline. The analysis of Service Design has deepened the understanding of it, while revealing the possibilities for its expansion. By designing and going through a methodological approach, skills in the strategic application of design methods were deepened, both for the analysis and synthesis within the process. The thesis has helped to strengthen critical reflection skills, whether in relation to the literature and its contextualisation or in relation to one's own methodology and design execution. Furthermore, knowledge of scientific research and implementation was deepened, particularly through the application of a non-linear design process to academic work. The thesis has

highlighted the overlap of design and science once again, but at the same time, it has revealed a gap in academic representations of various design methods and tools, which has partly posed difficulties in providing statements with accurate references. This has enhanced the ability for argumentation and reflection while emphasising the importance of detailed documentation of processes and outcomes, specifically in relation to Research through Design, thus providing new knowledge about a design framework and its possibilities. The choice of a complex concept such as kindness and its connection to public services has additionally heightened the complexity of the thesis, bringing forth insights and learnings on dealing with more complex service systems.

Personal learning objectives

One of the primary objectives, which held personal significance, was to make a meaningful impact on the ongoing advancement of the Service Design discipline. By creating a toolkit that offers Service Designers a user-friendly and streamlined integration into their workflows, the aspiration was to go beyond a mere academic contribution and foster the actual adoption of the Kindness Toolkit within Service Design processes. While practical implementation falls outside the purview of this thesis, the goal of expanding Service Design and its practical application has been accomplished through the provision of novel tools. Additionally, the inclusion of kindness – a subject previously unexplored in Service Design – expands the scope of the discipline and its overall societal relevance. Furthermore, this thesis successfully sought to grant greater scientific significance to the often-considered soft, feminine, and emotional topic of kindness. This was achieved through an extensive literature review that encompassed various dimensions, including biological and socio-cultural aspects. Additionally, the incorporation of qualitative research provided detailed insights, enhancing the topic's scientific relevance and lending it a level of seriousness that may not have been recognised by the reader previously. By underpinning the discussion with rigorous academic and empirical research, any preconceived notions and underestimations that may have existed will hopefully be dispelled. While acknowledging that a societal shift towards kindness or relational services may still be more of an ideal than a current reality, this thesis successfully accomplishes the researchers' personal objective of making a modest contribution towards promoting such a shift and increasing awareness of it, particularly within the realm of Service Design. Furthermore, there is potential for the impact to extend beyond the discipline, reaching a wider audience and influencing broader perspectives on the subject.

The objective of interdisciplinary collaboration, thereby engaging with specialists from various fields and exchanging insights on a topic of mutual interest, was successfully realised. Through conducting expert interviews with individuals who served as inspiration for the chosen topic of this thesis and whose works form the primary references for the research, a great deal of inspiration and help was obtained. These interactions even led to a few moments of fandom, which made this interdisciplinary approach all the more valuable from a personal point of view. By working on a rather complex topic, collaboration allowed for a much deeper analysis and always provided for complementary knowledge and exchange of opinions. Working as a team of two was thus successful and had a positive impact on the thesis process and its outcome, given that analysis, synthesis, and elaboration always benefitted from two perspectives.

In addition to the intended learning objectives, the process of conducting this thesis has yielded unexpected insights: Initially, there was a desire to explore additional topics in relation to kindness, but due to constraints of time and content, it became necessary to prioritise and focus on the main areas of investigation. This experience taught the valuable lesson of honing in on key subjects and letting go of peripheral areas of interest for the sake of the thesis quality, even if analysing them could have provided further relevance. Thus, it was learned that reducing the scope of topics enables greater depth, which proves more valuable than superficially covering additional subjects. Nevertheless, the research consistently demonstrated that even delving into fewer topics in depth proved to be extensive enough. It was challenging to conclude both the literature review and the expert interviews, as new insights and connections were regularly discovered that could have enriched the thesis further.

Moreover, it was discovered how much development potential the Service Design discipline still holds. By connecting the discipline with a previously unexplored topic, reflection on its realm of possibilities took place, revealing the significant potential for further advancement, not only in the direction of kindness and relational services but also possibly towards other subjects. Lastly, there was an underlying desire to engage in exchanges with multiple Service Designers beyond one's immediate network. However, the thesis process revealed that collaborating with external parties without offering material or financial compensation can present challenges.

5.2
Future research

Relevant and interesting topics that have emerged in the course of the thesis are briefly presented in this section. It represents options and directions in which the work of the thesis could be further developed and topics that kindness can be related to in future research to find a deeper anchorage. These include the exploration of kindness in relation to technology, the connection between kindness and feminism, Humanity-centred and Postcapitalist Design, as well as kindness on a systematic level.

5.2.1 Kindness in technology

Since this thesis solely focuses on kindness as an exchange between humans, disregarding technology, it could be further explored how prosocial behaviour can become part of interactions with technological devices. The connection between kindness and technology was discussed during the expert interviews and in one of the ideation workshops. Although kindness, as a prosocial value originating from humans (partially from animals as well, although there is no clear scientific consensus on this (Zaki, 2019)), cannot be directly transferred to technology at this point, there have been attempts to trigger and promote such behaviour in humans through the use of technology. There are already concepts of prosocial robots, such as the therapeutically used seal-like robot PARO or the prosocial video game Chibi Robo, which have scientifically demonstrated the promotion of prosocial behaviour in users and contribution to positive development (Baisch et al., 2018; Gentile et al., 2009). In this context, there have also been developments in recent years in the field of Conversational AI, where voice assistants have been reprogrammed to not respond to or address sexual, violent, or abusive user prompts (West et al., 2019). Particularly in the further development of AI, researching the concept of kindness within this technology would be intriguing.

5.2.2 Kindness and feminism

Within this thesis, a connection between kindness and the female gender surfaced unexpectedly multiple times, both in the literature review, where kindness was often described as a feminine trait expected of women and in the gender imbalance of the research participants. This topic was also addressed in the expert interviews, particularly in the example of the former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who was the first political leader to elevate kindness as a political strategy at such a high level. Media reports often associated her political focus and language with her female identity, physical appearance, and role as a mother. Despite her success, she was regularly compared to male politicians and reduced to her caring qualities (Pullen & Vachhani, 2021). The insights gained regarding kindness and gender reveal that the topic of kindness is strongly associated with gender stereotypes, although pro-social behaviour — especially in a political context — has more to do with feminist values than gender identity or sex. Kindness holds political potential within feminist approaches and overlaps with the understanding of feminist politics, emphasising the political incorporation of emotions, embodied knowledge, and connectedness (Willis & Kavka, 2021). Therefore, it would be interesting for future research to explore the integration of kindness into feminist politics and how to dissociate it from the female gender.

5.2.3 Humanity-centred Design

In the next steps of the thesis, incorporating the topic of Humanity-centred Design could be taken into consideration. This design approach emphasises addressing society's complex and deep-rooted problems rather than solely focusing on individual needs (Norman, 2023). It entails a shift from designing for individuals to designing with communities while also considering the wellbeing of the entire ecosystem, including all living creatures and the natural environment (SPACE10, 2022; Norman, 2023). While the thesis did not address topics such as climate change, plastic pollution and its consequences, exploring kindness towards not only people but also ecosystems would be a significant and necessary step. As nature has inherently created a fully circular and regenerative system, it should be incorporated and respected in the design process (SPACE10, 2022). To effectively implement Humanity-centred

Design, a holistic approach that considers the broader context of the living environment is crucial. Traditional design processes often neglect the wider societal and environmental impacts (Kirst, 2022). Therefore, changing the mindset and approach of design methods to view people as part of a larger whole and to extend kindness to all aspects of life would necessitate new research and development of methods and tools. This shift in perspective could have the potential to transform the design process itself and lead to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes.

5.2.4 Postcapitalist Design

Since today's systems often focus on economic effectiveness and efficiency, while kindness represents an antipode to this, connections to the concept of Postcapitalist Design can be identified. Postcapitalist Design criticises capitalism, labelling it as anti-democratic, defuturing, and ultimately self-destructive. In contrast, Wizinsky (2022) proposes Postcapitalist Design as a superior alternative for today's world. It aims to strengthen social power by decentralising knowledge and fostering a cooperative and social economy through degrowth. It views users as essential contributors whose experiences should result in increased social, economic, and political agency. This perspective particularly emphasises perceiving individuals in the private sector as human agents rather than mere consumers. The strategic intent is to diminish competitive individualism and encourage social collaboration (Wizinsky, 2022). These characteristics align closely with the theme discussed in this thesis. Further research can delve into exploring how capitalist tendencies manifest in the public sector and how postcapitalist approaches could be effectively implemented in that context.

5.2.5 Systems change

Since the prevailing rational lexicon is no longer up to date, as explored in this thesis, a systemic shift towards a more comprehensive consideration of emotions should occur. Evidence shows that neglecting emotions has negative effects on society and individuals and that the better the welfare state fulfils its role, the healthier our society becomes, not only in terms of

individual wellbeing but also in terms of general social welfare (Ballat, 2020). Therefore, further elaboration and extension of the thesis could focus on the Theory of Systems Change, whereas a system is defined as an inter-connected set of elements that is coherently organised to achieve a specific purpose. A system consists of three types of things: elements (human and non-human), interconnections, and a function or purpose (Meadows, 2009b). Considering the importance of striving for long-term improvements in society rather than just short-term solutions, it would be interesting to further explore the impact of kindness on these factors. Public services are part of a larger system, which is why the integration of kindness in such institutions could have far-reaching effects on the overall societal operational approach, as prosocial behaviour has transformative potential (Willis, 2021) and is decsribed to be disruptive (Unwin, 2018). Those effects could be simulated or created in extensive future research, discovering the openness for change and its possible impacts.

6
Conclusion

In conclusion, kindness holds significant potential in shaping public systems and Service Design to prioritise human needs and foster mutual trust. In recent years, public systems have prioritised economic efficiency over relational interactions, leading to declining trust in governments and stigmatising policies. To address this problem, a shift towards kindness and the integration of Service Design principles are crucial in redesigning public systems to meet the evolving needs and desires of the population. Defined by benign tolerance, empathetic responsivity, and principled proaction, kindness goes beyond mere intentions and requires active execution. By promoting attention, attunement, and respect for boundaries, kind behaviour paves the way for meaningful relationships and relational services that emphasise the humanity of individuals. Engaging in conversations about kindness prompts to reevaluate existing values, leading to heightened awareness and potentially improved implementation of those values. To effectively reduce obstacles and foster the growth of kindness, it is essential for decision-makers to encourage and facilitate these discussions, taking deliberate steps towards cultivating kindness within individuals and society. Incorporating kindness into public systems necessitates maintaining transparency, equality and ensuring it does not become an undue burden on service providers. While challenges exist in systematising and measuring kindness, there is a strong desire for connectedness and togetherness, which can be addressed by Service Design. This requires an extension of the existing Service Design instruments, moving towards the analysis and design of relational interaction and emotional responses. Tools can offer valuable support to Service Designers in implementing kindness, bridging the gap between intention and execution. By embedding kindness strategically and providing creative assistance, public services can enhance positive emotional impact without sacrificing economic efficiency. Ultimately, by cultivating kindness through Service Design, the discipline can help transform transactions into relational experiences and nurture a more compassionate society. The developed Kindness Toolkit presents an invitation for Service Designers to understand kindness and its integration into their practice. The toolkit encompasses a range of tools, including the Kindness Trigger Cards, the Relational Recovery Map, and the Kindness Reflection Sheet, each of which can be flexibly employed throughout various stages of the Service Design process, focusing on the analysis and design of human-to-human interactions. The development of the toolkit aims to connect the dots between kindness and Service Design by providing user-friendly tools that produce concrete results and cater to diverse use cases. The tools encourage designers to explore new possibilities, consider emotional and social aspects, address service

failures, and analyse resources and barriers to kindness. While the toolkit serves as a facilitator for cultivating a mindset of kindness in Service Design, its impact is focused on micro-interventions and relies on the service provider as the executing instance to foster kindness through their inter-actions with service users, with the long-term goal of cultivating kindness through reciprocity.

This thesis aspires to strengthen connections between citizens and service providers, leading to more relational public service infrastructures by providing added value to the discipline of Service Design. In order to bring more humanity into a world of complex crises, an attempt was made to give a soft and emotional topic more tangibility, importance, and space.

7
References

The appendices that are referenced in this thesis can be found in a separate document.

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Master Thesis

Aalborg University
Service Systems Design

by Helena Zobl & Isabelle Schmit

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