

The background features a large, abstract graphic composed of overlapping blue circles and arcs. A horizontal yellow bar is positioned across the middle of the page, partially overlapping the blue shapes. The main title is written in a bold, dark blue font across this yellow bar.

# **Co-designing for Immigrant Participation**

**Designing for Services  
Autumn 2018**



**Designing for Services**  
**Department of Design, Aalto ARTS**  
**Autumn 2018**

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## ABSTRACT

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Citizen participation is a prominent topic in municipalities today, pervading every part of how cities function. In recent years, the issue of integrating the non-Finnish citizens (immigrants, exchange students, refugees) has become apparent. Until the potential of the immigrants and foreign language communities as able actors gets recognized, they will be unable to contribute to the city to the furthest extent.

This is an issue, as their voice gets left out and it discourages other immigrants coming to Espoo. To change this, we found that community hubs, hangout centers in which immigrants and other citizens casually gather, can be a source towards having the immigrants' issues heard. These centers can serve to identify key problems that can be given to their responsible administrative branch in the City of Espoo.

With this understanding, we have found there to be three barriers halting the

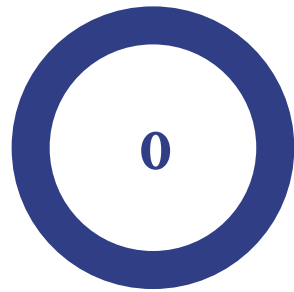
process of advancing on the levels of citizen participation.

Firstly, community hubs are few and not as broadly known as they could be. Secondly, the community hubs currently have no clear platform for addressing problems relevant for the administrative branches. Lastly, there is a lack of communication between the three administrative branches.

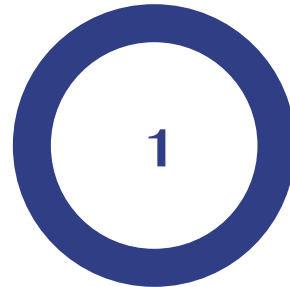
With our design project we have intervened at the third barrier, as we find this to be the head of the issue. We have developed a game in which each of the relevant administrative branches working with immigrants in one way or another is present to work together and solve issues given directly by the managing staff members of the community hubs.



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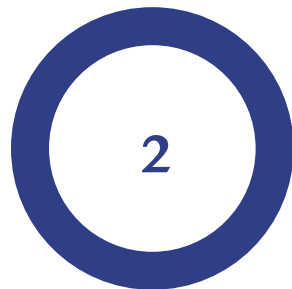


## Introduction



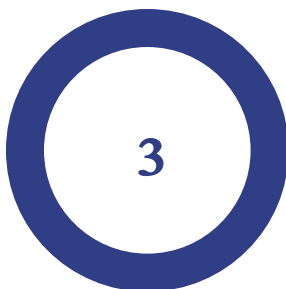
## Key notion

Why participation?



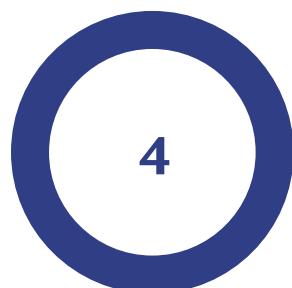
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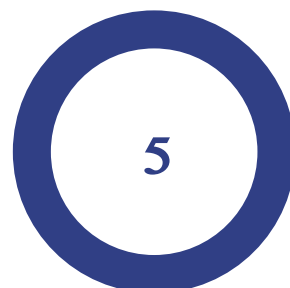
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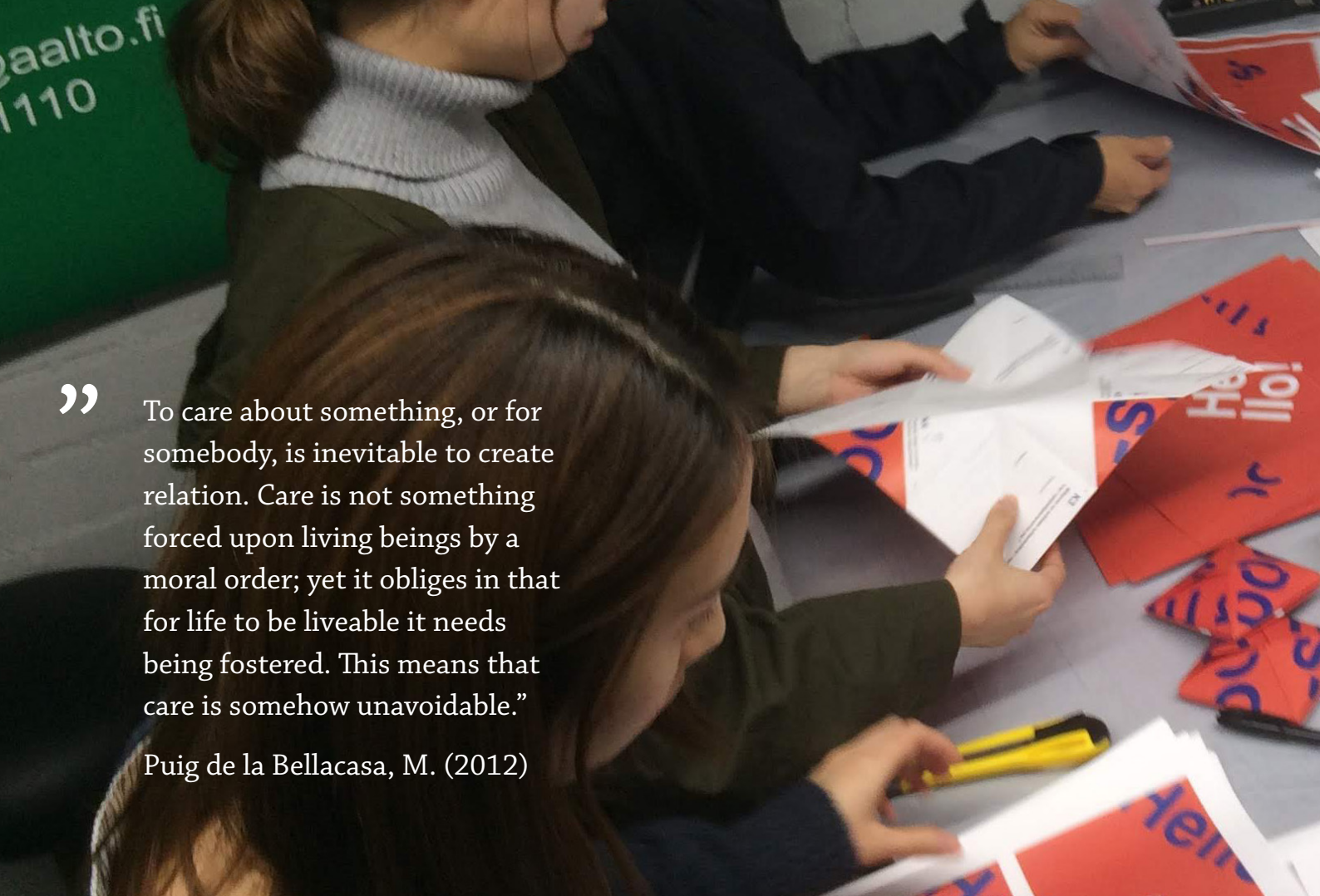
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” To care about something, or for somebody, is inevitable to create relation. Care is not something forced upon living beings by a moral order; yet it obliges in that for life to be liveable it needs being fostered. This means that care is somehow unavoidable.”

Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2012)



## INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to participate, when you lack the language skills to comfortably express yourself? How can you demonstrate you are there, actively present to others and engaged, when a language barrier prevents you from simply saying that?

Actions speak louder than words, and as designers we are trained to recognize just how much meaning and messages can

be delivered through means other than verbal. This is why we as a group were so intrigued by and drawn to the brief given by the Participatory Espoo program, represented by Tuija Nuorlamo:

*How to develop participation and facilitate interaction and communication with the focus on immigrants and communities with non-Finnish languages?*



To be able to respond to the brief, a lot of reflecting was in place to actually define what *participation* meant in this context, for this brief, for us and for the City of Espoo. Combining our brief with the broader topic for the whole course, fostering care, we started exploring the concept of participation.

To have people participate in common activities requires caring about their attendance, caring about them showing up, and actively welcoming them to join. This thought guided us to look at the citizens themselves, the city officials, the decision-makers and the providers of the services that the citizens use.

Mapping these various stakeholders as a part of our explorations led us to look at places we decided to call community hubs a little closer and to find ways in which to

develop and extend their importance as actors in the citizen participation.

The City of Espoo has a population of 279 044 people (Dec 31st 2017, Tilastokeskus). Espoo is growing and its population changing fast. Of all Espoo citizens more than 76% are Finnish-speakers, some 7% Swedish-speakers and 16% speak other languages (Dec 31st 2017).

The share of foreign-language population of working age in Espoo is predicted to increase to 30% by 2030 (Espoo story, p. 5). Thus the efforts of public engagement needs to be revisited in order to ensure the wellbeing of these growing demographic groups.

Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2012). Nothing comes without its world: thinking with care. (*The Sociological Review*, 60(2):198)



**KEY  
NOTION**

**1**



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## WHY PARTICIPATION?

According to Maria Jaatinen, citizen engagement is important to municipalities for various reasons. The first and most obvious reason is that the Finnish law obligates them to engage the citizens. In the technical and environmental office for instance, there are regulations on how the citizens should be informed about upcoming changes in the urban plan, where and how long this information should be available for anyone to look into and how long a time for taking in and handling complaints there should be given. Since there are also actors in the private sector offering same services, the municipalities need to be able to compete with them in effectiveness. (Jaatinen 2018, slide 7)

To be able to compete, the scarce resources the municipalities have should be invested smartly into the things that are most important to the citizens. Municipalities are also competing against each other in attracting habitants and businesses. All in all, the role of the municipalities is changing, and they are much less producing basic services as they are holistically fostering the wellbeing of their area and citizens. (Jaatinen 2018, slide 7)

How Jaatinen defines citizen participation, is through three partially overlapping con-

cepts: active participation in public matters, agency and belonging in your own community and the parliamentary system (Jaatinen 2018, slide 4). A model referred to by Tuija Norlamo in her presentation for the Espoo House evening on September 19th recognized five forms of participating: informing, consulting, engaging, co-creation and decision-making.

Arnstein's participation ladder from 1969 has a total of 8 degrees of participation, with the bottom two equaling non-participation. The remaining six are rather close to the list referred to by Tuija and seem to have the same contents: Informing, consultation and placation as different levels of tokenism and partnership and delegation building towards citizen control. (Arnstein, 1969.) Combining and interpreting these different frameworks for participation, we decided to use a four-level model for our project recognizing being aware of what is going on, feeling of belonging in the community, active participation in public matters and contributing to the parliamentary system.

Jaatinen, M. (2018). Osallisuus - Citizen Engagement. Lecture slides 19.9.2018. Hellon.

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder Of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 35: 4, 216 — 224.



# APPROACH

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## GATHERING KNOWLEDGE

Every design process begins with acquiring understanding about the situation at hand. Since our brief was rather open to begin with, we needed to quickly determine, who we needed to get to know and how.

We decided to plan and execute design probes to reach and learn from the non-Finnish citizens, interviews and observations to approach the community hubs and workshops to learn from the interactions of both community hub members and the Espoo City officials.

### **Design probes**

Nowadays we often see designers and non-designers working together, using making and creativity as a way to make sense of the future. Sanders and Stappers (2014) provides an understanding of making (the ability to express oneself through creative means) as a part of the methods and tools useful within the practices of participation.

Methods and tools for making give people - both designers and non-designers - the ability to make 'things' that explore future objects, concerns or opportunities. They can also provide views on their experiences and ways of living.

Probes and generative toolkits are two prominent approaches in the practice of

co-designing. They are both design-led approaches as described by the landscape of design research and practice (Sanders and Stappers, 2014).

Toolkits and probes are usually used in the early stages of a design process. The probes can be seen as artistic proposals used to evoke inspiring responses from individual participants. The approach invites people to reflect on and express their experiences, feelings and attitudes in forms and formats that provide inspiration for designers, with designers using the responses at their own discretion.

The design probes we created served as a means for reaching the immigrants at the community hubs, in an attempt to interact with them at these community spaces. The design probes provided us with an

Sanders, E. B. N., & Stappers, P. J. (2014). Probes, toolkits and prototypes: Three approaches to making in codesigning. *CoDesign*, 10(1), 5-14.v

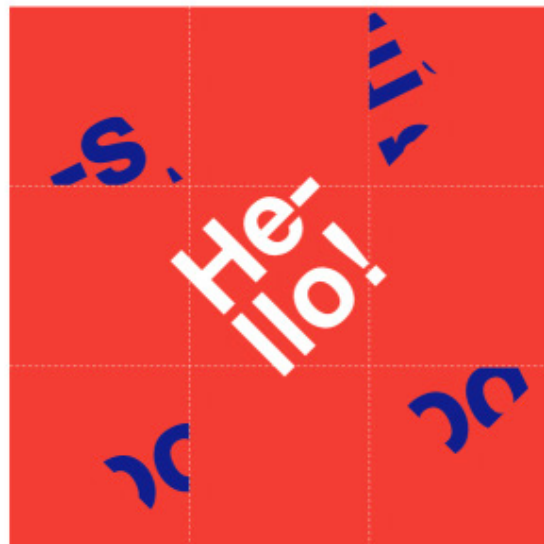
approach to get more in depth with our target group, the immigrants, and thus gain insights and inspiration for our future design work through their reactions. When designing our probes we went through three main steps:

**Brainstorming:** We started by ideating on what issue and answers we wanted to look for from the immigrants in order to support our research.

**Questions:** Through several creative tasks we aimed at exploring the immigrants' daily life focusing on different aspects of the day to day interactions and their relationship to the people they meet. How many people do they encounter each day?

How do they know the people they spend time with? What kind of relationship do they have with their colleagues and neighbours? What do their days look like both in Finland and before coming here? What kinds of daily activities and events do they attend? What kinds of challenges do they face and how do they deal with them? Finally, how do they experience Finland and the Finns?

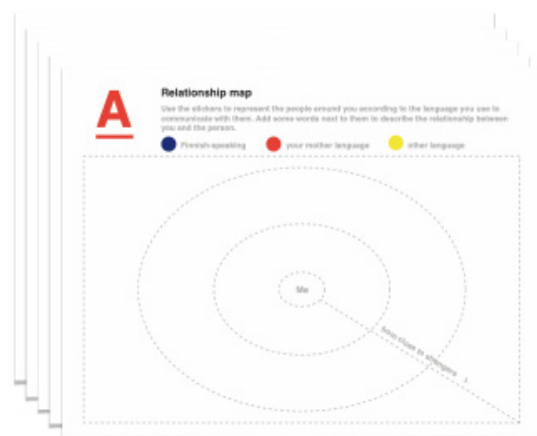
**Formgiving:** As we preferred to use the probes more visually, we created them in the form of a foldable paper and stickers. Each design probe consisted of an envelope with a foldable task sheet, five postcards (A-E) with small exercises, folding instructions and a set of dot stickers.



**Brainstorming**

**Forming questions**

**Formgiving**



## Observing

Observing is a crucially important method in a user-centered design process. Through observing people using different design objects without interfering it is possible to gain insights on matters that would not come up in interviews or other means of gathering information. When asked to explain their actions, people are likely to more or less subtly manipulate the truth, mainly to give a better impression of themselves to the interviewer. (Medeiros, 2013, presentation slides 43-54.)

Through several sessions of observing similar situations, the manners and habits start speaking for themselves. Any unwanted moment in the flow of events linked to the same process under inspection forms a pain point for the user. For a designer the pain points can be seen as leverage points: opportunities for design intervention and an idea of how to solve the problem.

Vilkka (2006) divides observing into five different types: direct observation, participant observation, activating participant observing, learning from experience and hidden observation (Vilkka, 2006 s. 42). In direct observation the observer keeps their distance to the object of observation and does not intervene. Participant observation differs from the first type by having the researcher engage in the activities around the subject of observation.

The two first approaches we used in our project as they allowed us to observe from a distance without intervening in the actions of the observed people. With direct observation we were specifically looking

at patterns of how the visitors and staff use the spaces.

Participant observation was also conducted by a group member, who attended a so-called 'Espoo-house evening' organized by Tuija on behalf of the City of Espoo on September 19th.

The aim of this event was to gather representatives of different local NGO's to ideate together for the use of shared citizen space in the future office building in Espoo Centre. At this point there were no drawings or technical plans for the building, but that is also what the Participatory Espoo program wanted to emphasize: Hear the opinions of the citizens before anything has been decided in order to later make better decision based on those voices.

There was a total of 14 people joining the event that lasted from 5 p.m. to 7.15 p.m. First hour was reserved for everyone introducing themselves and the project manager presenting the plans for the area. The presentation on the urban plan took some longer than originally planned, probably because it sparked a lot of questions from the attendees.

The ideation part of the evening started with a concentration exercise, moving on to a sort of a stream of consciousness writing part about what we could experience in the imagined space around us. The bunch of people were divided into two, and both groups then shared their thoughts and ideas with one person documenting onto a question form. The filled in question forms from both groups were lastly read through and digitalised by Tuija into powerpoint slides.

Medeiros, I. (2013). Designing Interactions / Experiences: Discovery "Mode". Course module *Designing Interactions*, Köln International School of Design. Lecture slides on <https://www.designative.info/2013/11/07/designing-interactions-experiences-discovery-mode/>

Vilkka, H. (2006). *Tutki ja havainnoi*. Helsinki: Tammi

## Interviews

Kivenkolo is a "citizen living room" where residents can meet and reside, as well as receive advice and guidance for any problem they might have. It is located in Kivenlahti, and the City of Espoo and some regional organizations operate there as part of a local partnership project. The project idea promotes the integration of immigrants living in the region. At the space they host a large variety of different kinds of clubs and teaching activities. We interviewed Elena who could be said to be in charge there, focusing with our questions on the visitors, the activities, the atmosphere and the staff who works there.

Similarly, we conducted an interview with the staff at Trapesa, an international meeting point near Espoo Centre. Trapesa is managed by the Non-Governmental Or-

ganisation (NGO) Filoksenia. The interview focused on Filoksenia and their relation to the City of Espoo, as well as the events they organise. Advertised as an international meeting point in Espoo the interview at Trapesa focused on their regular visitors and their volunteers.

The interview also covered the staff members, their daily life and experience working with the citizens, and their favorite part of their job. Filoksenia prides itself in promoting a culture of intercultural tolerance and equality, which we wanted to know more about, and ask how this philosophy influences the way the staff members work. Finally we wanted to learn more about the advice and support service that Trapesa offers, what kind of issues they help with and who and how many use it regularly.

Image 3: Visitors at Trapesa inspecting the design probes.



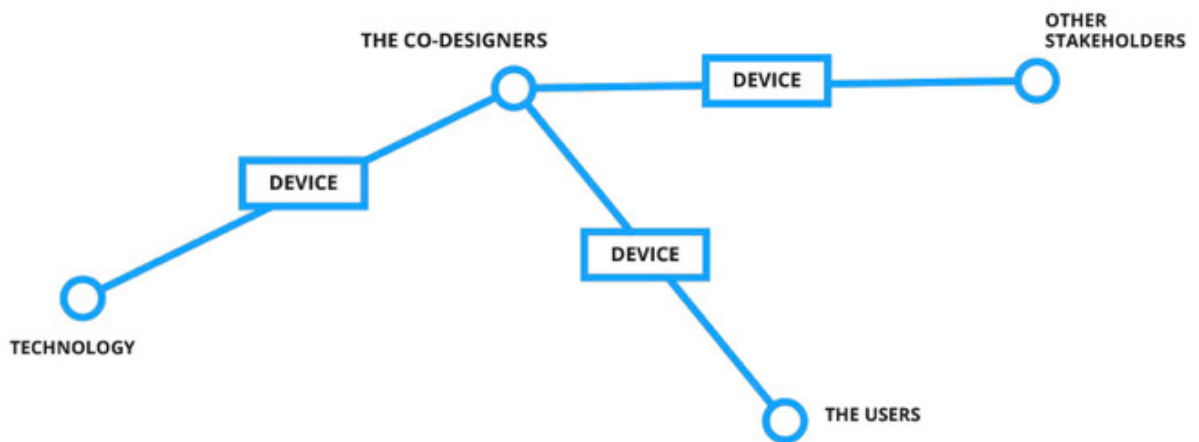


Image 4: Visualization of the working-net. Designerly entities serve as devices to attract different stakeholders to participate in co-designing.

### Organizing workshops

During the course of the project we attempted several times to organise a workshop among the Espoo officials and the staff at the community hubs but we were unable to do so mainly due to the invited participants not having enough time, or a failure to create enough interest for them to join. For this we attempted to understand how to best recruit workshop participants and what it means to interest others.

We found Actor-network theory (ANT) had some of the answers we were looking for. ANT specifically deals with relations between actors which can include people, technologies and animals, and their ability to act within an innovation network (Callon, 1986). This network functions as a work-net that is constantly unfolded and expanded through “negotiations” of interests.

If we put this in the term of co-design, a term used for “the creativity of designers

and people not trained in design working together” in a design process (Sanders and Stappers, 2008), co-design is a network that needs to be negotiated, established and sustained in practice by interesting, convincing and seducing the prospective participants to become part of the network.

To be interest is to be “in between” or inter-esse (Callon, 1986). To interest other actors is in other works to build devices that can between these actors in such a way that they become connected to each other in the network. These devices are in other words, a group of “artefacts” that we as (co-)designers can use to create and secure interest between our different stakeholders so that they become directly involved in our design project. In such a project it is crucial to find the right “artefacts” that can be used to recruit participants something that we simply were not able to do during such a short 6-week project period.

Callon, M. (1986). “Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay”, in *Power, action and belief: a new sociology of knowledge?*. London, Routledge, (196-223).

Sanders, E., & Stappers, P. (2008). “Co-creation and the new landscapes of design”, in *CoDesign. International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts*. Taylor & Francis, (5-18).



# RESULTS

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## LEARNINGS

### Design probes

The probes we created in order to gain more understanding about our main stakeholders, the non-Finnish speaking citizens, brought us results and knowledge not only in form of the answers filled in by the citizens, but also the comments of the community hub staff members facilitating their filling. First we were told by the staff that since they aspire to encourage their visitors in using Finnish, they preferred getting the probes in Finnish rather than in English.

Second learning was that even though we translated the probes, the level of Finnish used in the new iteration was too complex to be understood by the non-Finnish visitors. The only hub that thus delivered back all the probes left there, Kylämaja in Matinkylä, had advised their staff to help the visitors answer the questions. One returning probe had two different kinds of handwriting on it: supposedly one by the immigrant, other by the staff member. The feedback from the staff members was mainly positive though, and they had found the probes to be interesting and fun tools for language learning and reflection.

On the probes we were asking about the answerer's occupation. Most of the answerers said they were students, 'opiskelija'. Afterwards it was difficult to judge what kinds of studies they were referring to: Did they mean they were studying for a profession or 'studying', actually meaning 'learning' Finnish, confusing the words 'opiskella' and 'opetella'? It would have made sense to ask more specifically what they are studying or where they are working. Had we had the chance and more time to talk with those who answered the probes, we could have asked some follow-up questions which would have allowed us to go more in-depth with the design probes.

However, the returned probes mainly supported our pre-assumptions of the visitors of the hubs. The people answering were between 30 and 50 years old, except for one 25-year-old. Many stated that they had a family and stayed home with the kids - however, we did not ask about the gender of the respondent. Everyone gave language difficulties as the greatest struggle they faced living in Finland, similarly everyone suggested improved learning as a solution to that struggle.

## Interviews and observations

Elena has a strong passion to work at Kivenkolo. She does not want to be seen as a boss but rather as just another member of the family she feels the place represents. She emphasised that she is the emotional person, who always help others.

It is said that this living room mainly aims to promote the integration of immigrants, however it is welcoming and hospitable for not only immigrants but for anyone who wishes to come there. Elena emphasised she will never ask the people who visit about why they are there. Thus they never distinguish the people with labels such as 'foreigner', 'patient', 'person of sexual minority' or such. The background and the reason for them to come to the hub is irrelevant. To her this is because of the welcoming atmosphere, where everyone is seen as part of a "big family".

Through peer-to-peer-like working methods the staff supports the people who visit with their various problems. In the space they often offer free food which people can gather around without reservation. Additionally Kivenkolo also offers rooms for the teaching, language and working experience workshops etc. The contents of the events and workshops change depending on the people who visit and the problems they might have. The language spoken by the staff and visitors is mainly Finnish.

Filoksenia was founded 20 years ago and back then their main goal was to help people moving in from St Petersburg after the Soviet Union collapsed. Today they mainly work with counselling and helping people with their life in Finland. They also organise cultural events by trying to ensure that people feel like Espoo citizens. At the interview we met four staff members, Natalja, Leyla, Irina and Raisa.

Natalja has been working at Trapesa for two years and is mainly in charge of talking with visitors who come to the hubs asking for help with their official Finnish documents, but she also takes part in organising Trapesa's cultural events. Laila is the first person visitors meet when coming to Trapesa. She is mainly in charge on running the spaces of the hub, making sure that everything is in order when the visitors arrive. She also works as an Arabic translator and runs a set of cooking classes every week.

Irina serves people by offering advice on how to start a company, how to fill out documents such as language certificates etc. and she offers peer to peer meetings with people with special needs. Sometimes she is just there to listen to visitors concerns about their life and struggles. Finally Raisa is the overall boss and manager of the hub. Her job is to take care of all the bureaucracy, participate in meetings with cooperative organisations and funding applications. The last member Mikko (who was not present for the interview) works with communications.

While they are professionals, there are times when they can not help with certain issues, however then they guide the visitors to places where they can get the right kind of guidance, and in that way they teach the visitors to solve their problems independently. What is most important to the staff is the day-to-day contact with people and through supporting others they can make deeper connections. Having a creative mind and being able to use it is crucial to them. Being a community gives them a lot freedom for creativity.

Because Trapesa's main task is to help those who are trying to settle down in Finland, its visitors are primarily immigrants and foreign language citizens. Currently about 35% of their visitors are Finnish but these numbers are slowly growing. The

staff emphasised that this growth in numbers is important as it is crucial that the immigrants start to speak Finnish and that they are able to form Finnish friendships. They also have over a 100 volunteers (half of them being immigrants). People volunteer mainly because they want to give back now that they have found their way to live in Finland and because they want to share their happiness and the ideas that have been helpful for them with others who need it.

Trapesa organises a vast amount of different cultural events such as Indian, Chinese and Finnish dances, Russian Poets club, Mexican family costume catwalks (with more than 15 different cultures participating), festivals and feasts, Chinese moon-cake workshops, Persian Spring, Chinese tea and Estonian tea ceremonies, cultural cooking nights, Armenian, Caribbean and Russian cultural evenings, tai-chi, picnics, excursions and peer-to-peer discussions. The amount of participants ranges from 10 in the small events to 250 in the very big annual events.

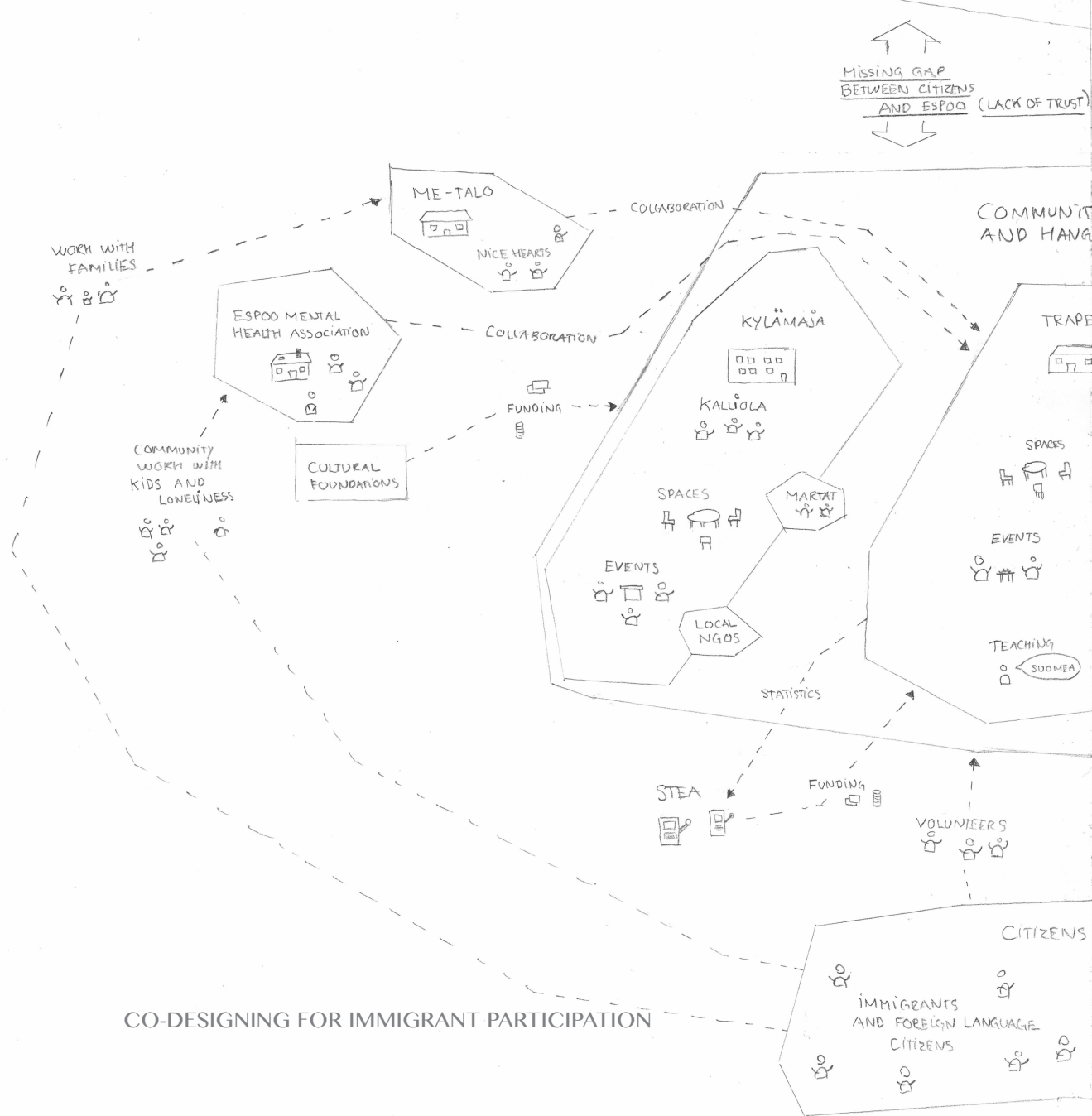
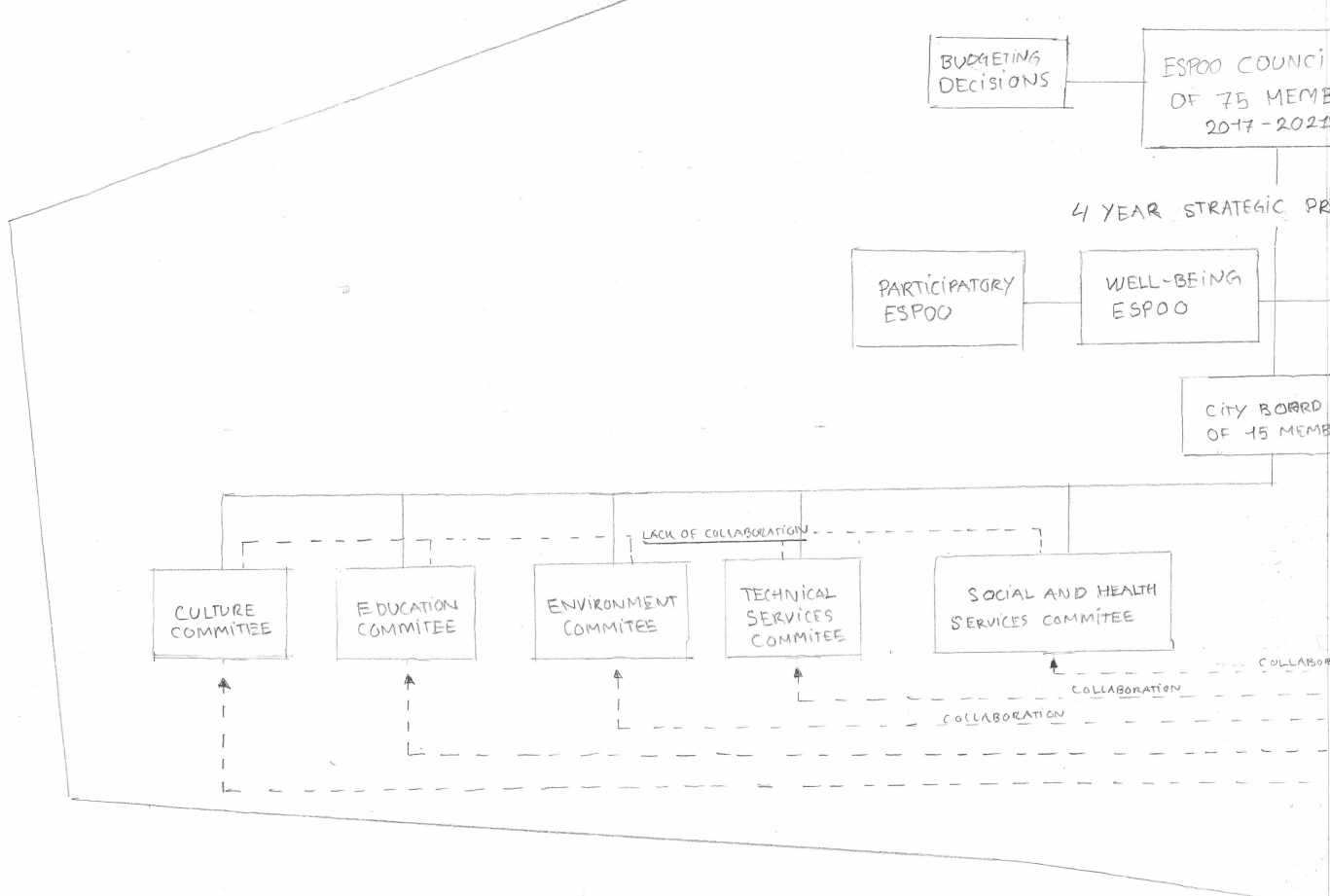
Finally, Trapesa receives most of their funding from Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations, STEA, and from the City of Espoo, but they also get money from various cultural foundations. Trapesa also collaborates with other community based houses in the nearby area such as Me-talo (which works with families) and Espoo Mental Health Association (Espoon Mielenterveysyhdistys) that works with children.

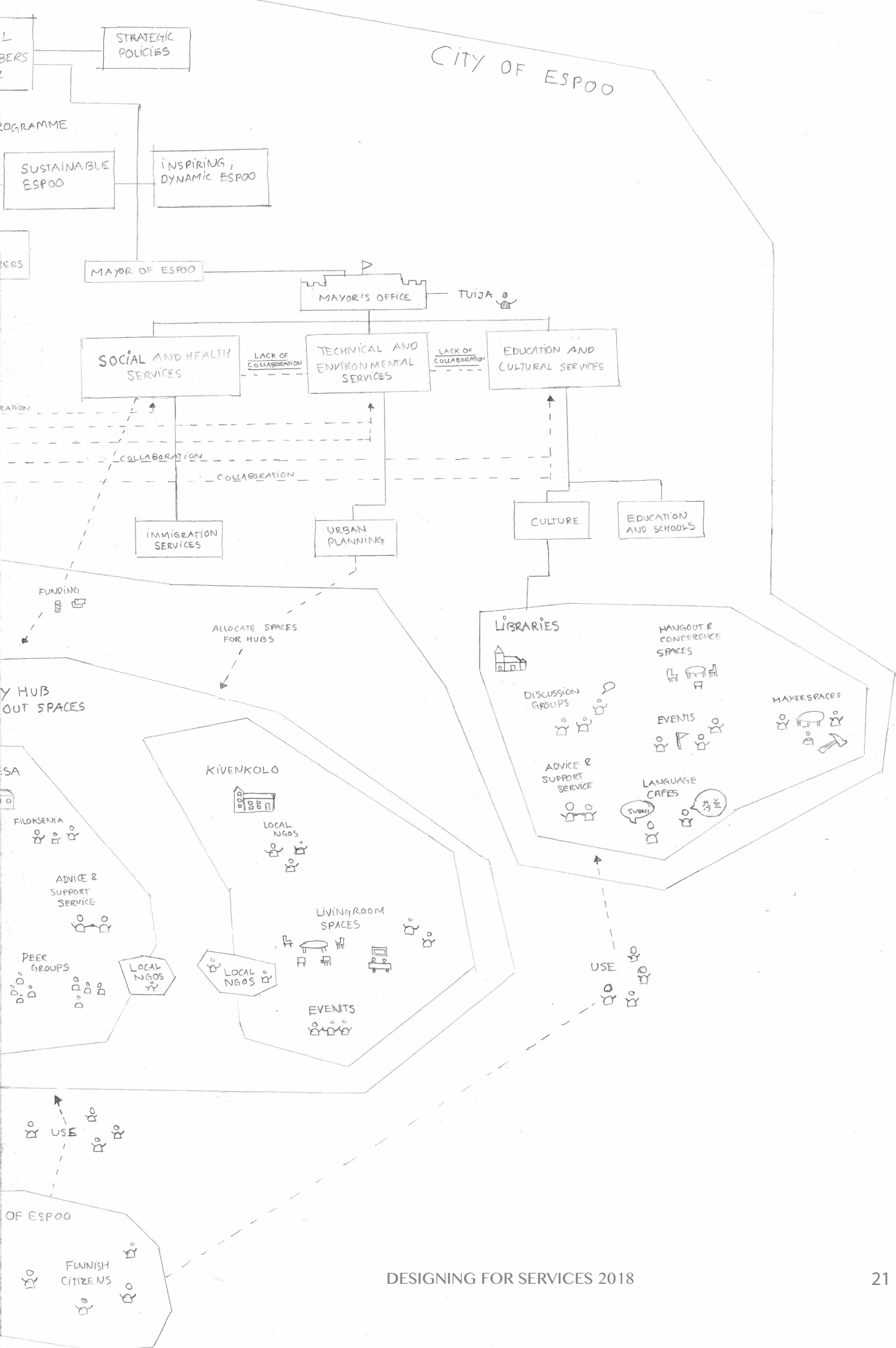
The Espoo-house evening was received well by the attendees, and one person who had been to similar events prior to this stated, that this was one of the best she had been to. There was talk about who was not there: no youth organizations were represented (nor any non-Finnish citizens, but this was not mentioned). One attendee commented in a sort of snarky

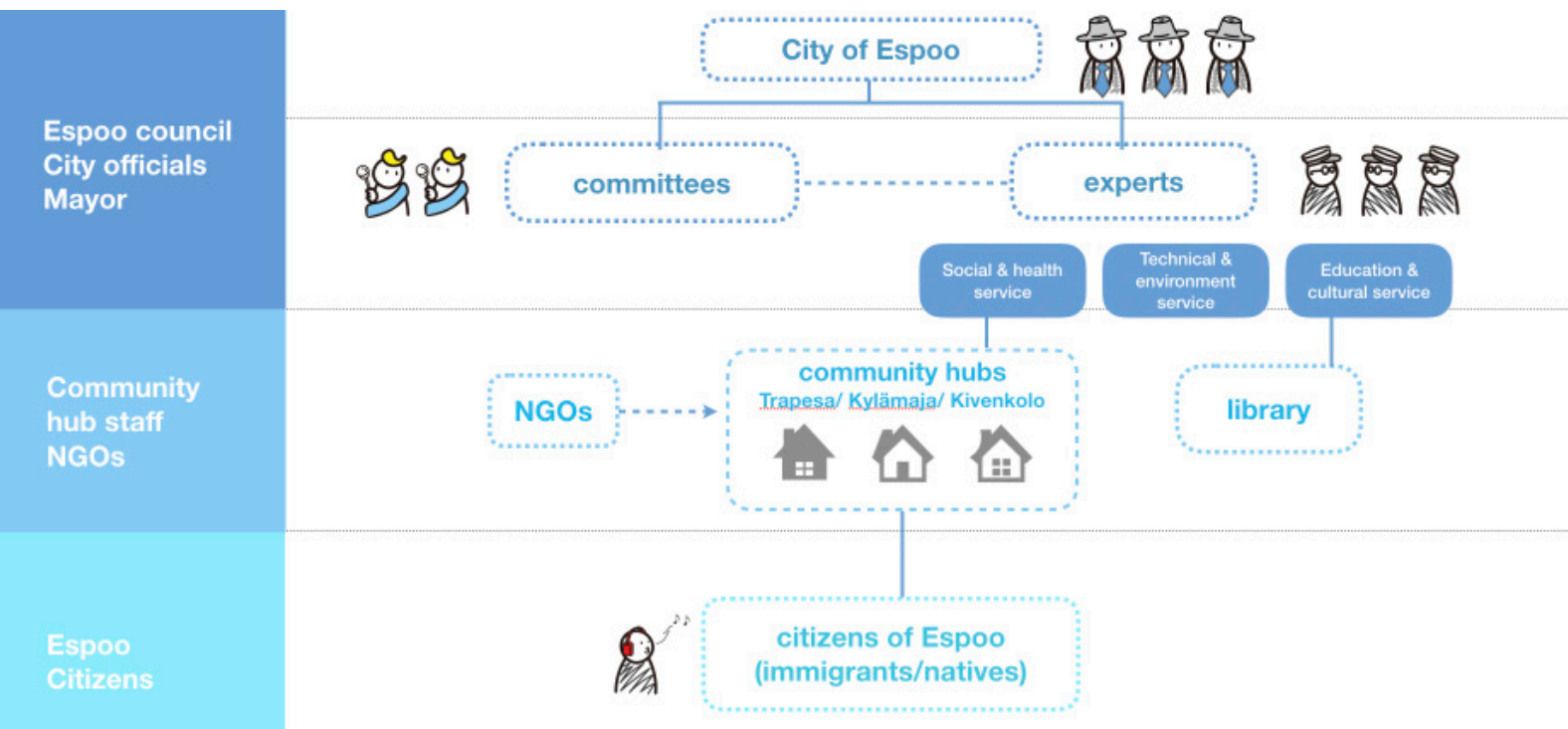
manner something along the lines: Well, it's not like they weren't invited, own loss if they don't show up. This felt a little bit brutal to the observer.

To a first-timer the event seemed rather heavy. It felt like lots of prior knowledge on the city matters would have been necessary to be able to follow and participate in the discussion around the urban plan presentation. The event was organized in Finnish, but even if it had been in another language, the themes would have been extremely complex to grasp to a newcomer. The ideation part was very straightforward and did not require any prior understanding of Espoo Centre or legislation or anything.

Since the material at hand for the ideation was a question form, pencil and the imagination of the participants, it felt a little bit like something was missing from the perspective of a designer: more inspiring materials to support the ideation and sharing of thoughts. The teams facilitated themselves but could have worked even better with some guidance. Now there were some mischievous voices trying to cut the wings of the wild ideas with their sort of poorly timed realism. After the wrap-up it remained slightly unclear to the observer what would happen with the ideation material produced during that evening.







## ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

### Systems map

In order to better understand how the City of Espoo functions, we mapped the different stakeholders who are active in Espoo. We wanted to create a holistic overview of the different political actors and processes operating within the city and how both the community hubs with their staff and visitors and the citizens at the grassroots level fit into the large system that is Espoo. Through the connections between the actors of the very complex system, we discovered several pain and leverage points that we could use as opportunities for design.

In Espoo the City Council holds the highest level of decision-making. It holds 75 members who are all elected by the citizens of the city every 4 years. They set the strategic policies of the city and have the final say in budgeting decisions. The City Council also selects members from their respective parties to serve in the 12

political committees in Espoo. Their job is to propose policies, while also managing the planning, development and monitoring of the city's day to day operations. To aid them, Espoo has three administrative branches. They are the experts, and they serve the political committees by providing their extensive knowledge and expertise.

At the local community level, the Community Hubs and libraries function as physical hangout spaces for citizens and are therefore in direct contact with the inhabitants of the city. They organise cultural events for local citizens, provide advice and support services and they offer teaching for anyone who wants to learn Finnish. They also collaborate with other organisations in the nearby area. The hubs are funded mainly by Espoo but they also receive funds from various cultural foundations and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Espoo's Education and Cultural Services are in charge of the

libraries, while Social and Health Services oversees the community hubs.

Finally at the grassroots level, it is the local citizens who use the hub spaces. In addition to using the spaces they also participate and support the hubs by volunteering in helping with the organisation of events or by providing ideas for new and upcoming events.

The third level has the highest form of participation in which citizens are actively taking part in city decision-making, typically done through taking part in the city's official meetings or by working with citizens at the community hubs.

## Levels of participation

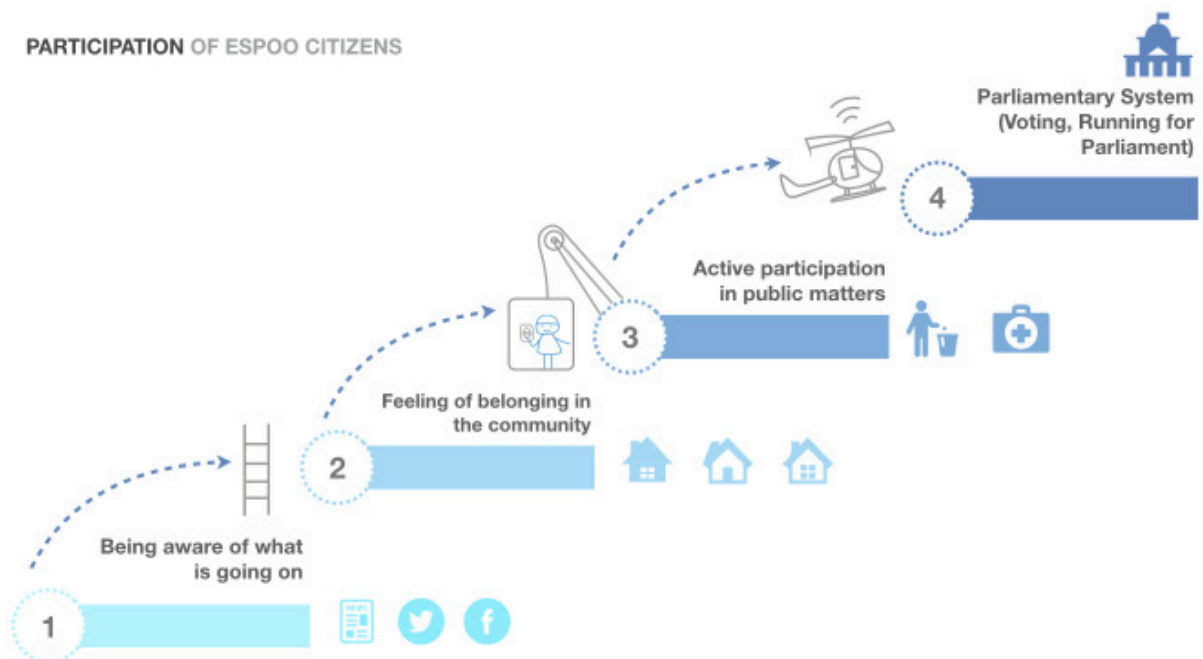
Through our research we discovered that in Espoo citizen participation happens at various different levels.

Citizens at the bottom level has the lowest form of participation, where their participation is mostly limited to staying up to date with what is happening locally by mainly following various news sources or through social media.

The second level is the community activities. On this level the local community is seen as a second home, that provides a sense of belonging among its members.

Finally the parliamentary system exists at the highest level of the ladder. At this level the citizens' voices and opinions are expressed through voting - both at a local municipality and national governmental level. This is an important part of democracy, and can not be influenced in the scope of our project. However it is good to still keep this level in mind when working with participation in general.

### PARTICIPATION OF ESPOO CITIZENS



## Typologies

The systems map and our model of the levels of participation present different stakeholders, each with their own activities in the City of Espoo. Through this mapping, we opted for creating a set of different typologies based on characteristics of the people who we observed and interviewed. In total we have divided the citizens of Espoo into six typologies. The main difference between each of them is their current activity in Espoo city matters. The Typologies are as follows: Settled Citizen, Citizen with own friends' circles, Eager Citizen, Gap Closer, Active Citizen and Expert on City Matters. They were given names to represent their action in the city.

Settled citizens are the least active in the city. They are settled in their current place in life, and choose to stay out of city matters. We found that this is either due to lack of time, lack of reason, or simply lack of interest in politics. Next, we find Citizens with own friends' circles. They share many similarities to the previous typology, but the main difference is that they have their group of friends they communicate with.

Next is the Eager Citizen. These are often people with genuine interest in acting in city matters, and show this by going outside their comfort zone to centers and events such as community hubs. We classify them as eager though, as we found during our interviews and probes that these people do not actively take part in city matters. We reason this to be due to lack of approachable channels for communicating their problems.

Next on the ladder is the gap closer. Gap closers are sort of separated from other citizens, as they actually have a connection with the administrative branches in City of Espoo. They are people who work for

government owned organizations, such as libraries, community hubs, etc. They both have interest in and are very active in city matters. However our research also showed a lack of time and resources to participate as strongly as they could.

Next is the active citizen. These are the people who are strongly invested in the City of Espoo, and go out of their way to attend city meetings and debate in them. We find there is little to none of this group among the immigrant communities, but instead they are mainly Finnish citizens. And even then, there is very few of them because of the amount of dedication and self-managing mechanisms required to achieve this level.

Lastly, we have the Expert on City Matters. These citizens are practically part of the administration of the city, and have in one way or another achieved a position of power in the system of the City of Espoo.

These groups show a clear difference in participation from each citizen to citizen. It is hard to move a person part of one typology to another, as we find there to be a set of barriers to overcome. These are points of interest to our design approach, as they show there is a large gap from one point on the participation ladder to the next, which we then can try to smoothen in order to support the citizens in becoming more active in the City of Espoo.







**OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR DESIGN  
INTERVENTION**

**4**

## PAIN POINTS AND SOLUTIONS

If Espoo's philosophy indeed is to involve their citizens more in common city activities and decision-making there are quite a few steps to be taken. Our research shows that to reach the higher levels of participation there are three barriers that need to be overcome.

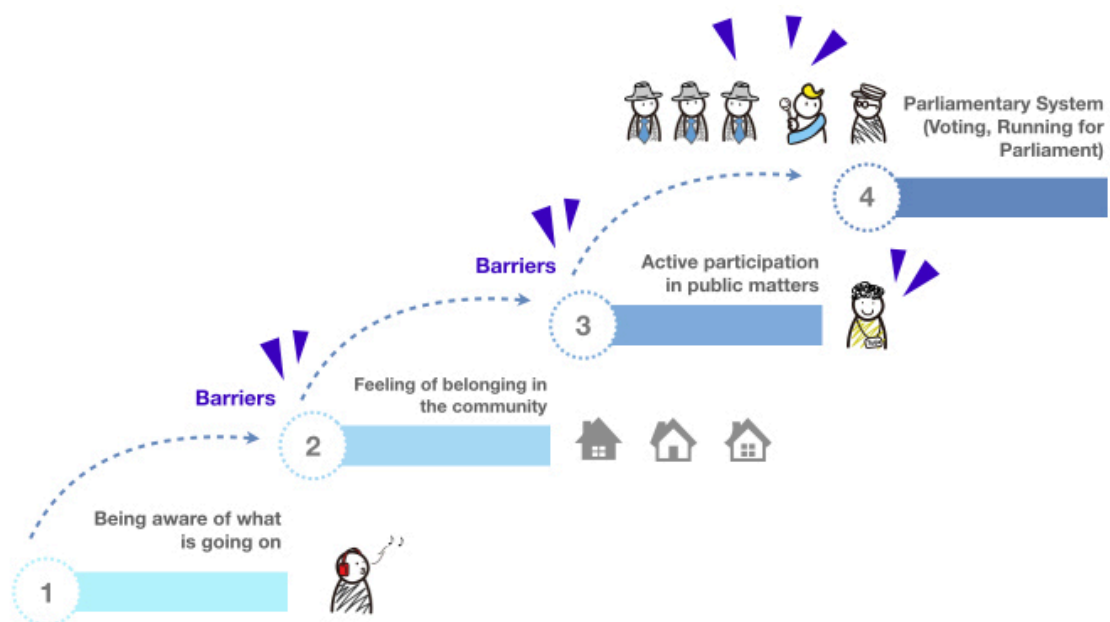
### Painpoints

1. Because of various different language and cultural backgrounds of the citizens and a lack of clear and broadly known channels, the hubs have difficulty reaching potential new visitors.

2. The Espoo officials still associate 'participation' with outdated concepts such as public hearings, a rather formal and heavy responsibility often experienced by the officials as a nuisance. This is also experienced by the citizens as a rather exclusive event only appropriate for the highly active citizens.

3. There is a lack of collaboration between the Espoo officials. This causes knowledge from one administrative branch to not get communicated to other branches. We found this is particularly a problem with information related to immigrants.

Because of the very large gap between the political decision-making and the everyday life of the citizens, it may seem like the voices of the people are not heard or taken into consideration. That is why we redefined our brief from the pain points.



## Solutions

We deducted three barriers in the system, each with their own group of affected people and set of problems. We find that these are the points where we can intervene with a design solution, all presented here for each of the pain points we discovered in our mapping of the system.

The first point is at the grass root level, affecting almost every immigrant in the city. The people get to know these places almost exclusively through social workers or friends. To this day, the majority of people get information through other sources, which is true especially among the population of immigrants at the community hubs. By investing in other mediums for communicating with the citizens, the knowledge of these centers can be spread further and target more people.

The second point is found between the community hubs and Espoo's administra-

tive branches. Through our interviews we found that the community hubs staff members are people with a vast amount of first-hand experience on the problems the citizens face, especially the problems of immigrants. We find there to be a missing link for the information gathered at the hubs to travel up to the decision makers, which strongly undermines the potential important information of problems the immigrants face.

The third and final point happens within the administrative branches of the city. We find that the different branches lack communication. What this means is that information that reaches one branch often does not travel to the other areas of importance. This most likely stems from different perspectives on the importance of certain information. So, what one branch might find to be of little importance, it might be vital for another branch.

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## DESIGN INTERVENTION

In the reading material *Design games in co-design: as a tool, a mindset and a structure*, we learned that a design game can be defined as a *tool* for designers to involve different stakeholders and support the empathic understanding during a co-design process, as a *mindset* for players to immerse themselves in the ideal game world with the help of a set of rules and characters, and as a *structure* for the 'design game' designers.

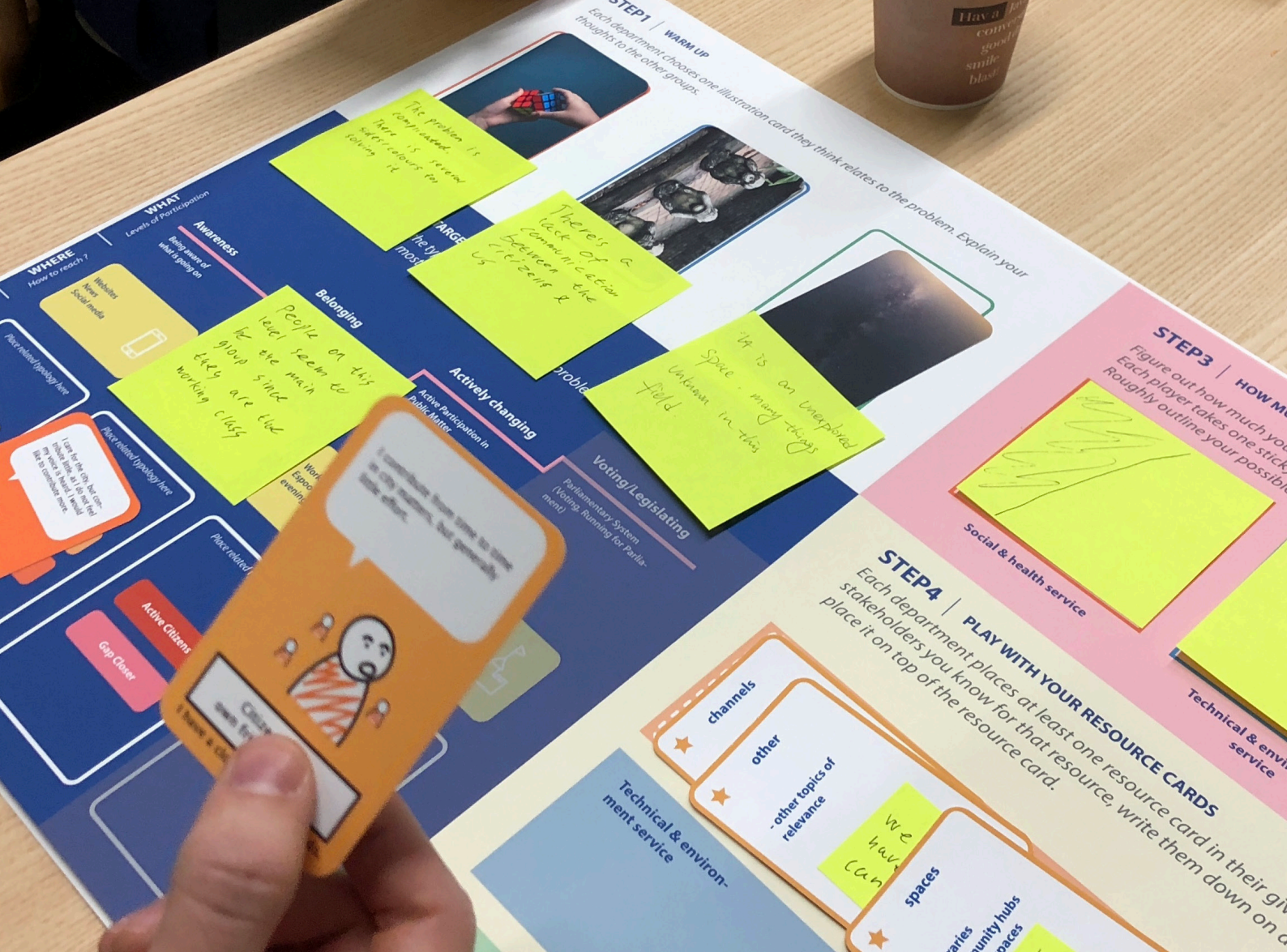
In this framework, the *tool* and *mindset* are concepts related to our own project. With the setting of the game materials we designed, we try to stimulate co-creation between our participating stakeholders using a playful structure that acts as a plat-

form for creative discussion, where each participant is equal despite their position in their organisation.

Our solution for the chosen point of entry is a game-driven workshop for the Espoo city officials. The aim of the game is to establish a way to connect and make the different branches of the City of Espoo administration collaborate and work together to improve the city. We wish for the meeting to flourish ideation towards how to approach and find solution for the problems given by the community hubs.

Before each workshop, a set of question tasks is collected from the community hubs. This is a way of gathering informa-

Vaajakallio & Mattelmäki (2014). Design games in codesign: as a tool, a mindset and a structure. CoDesign journal.



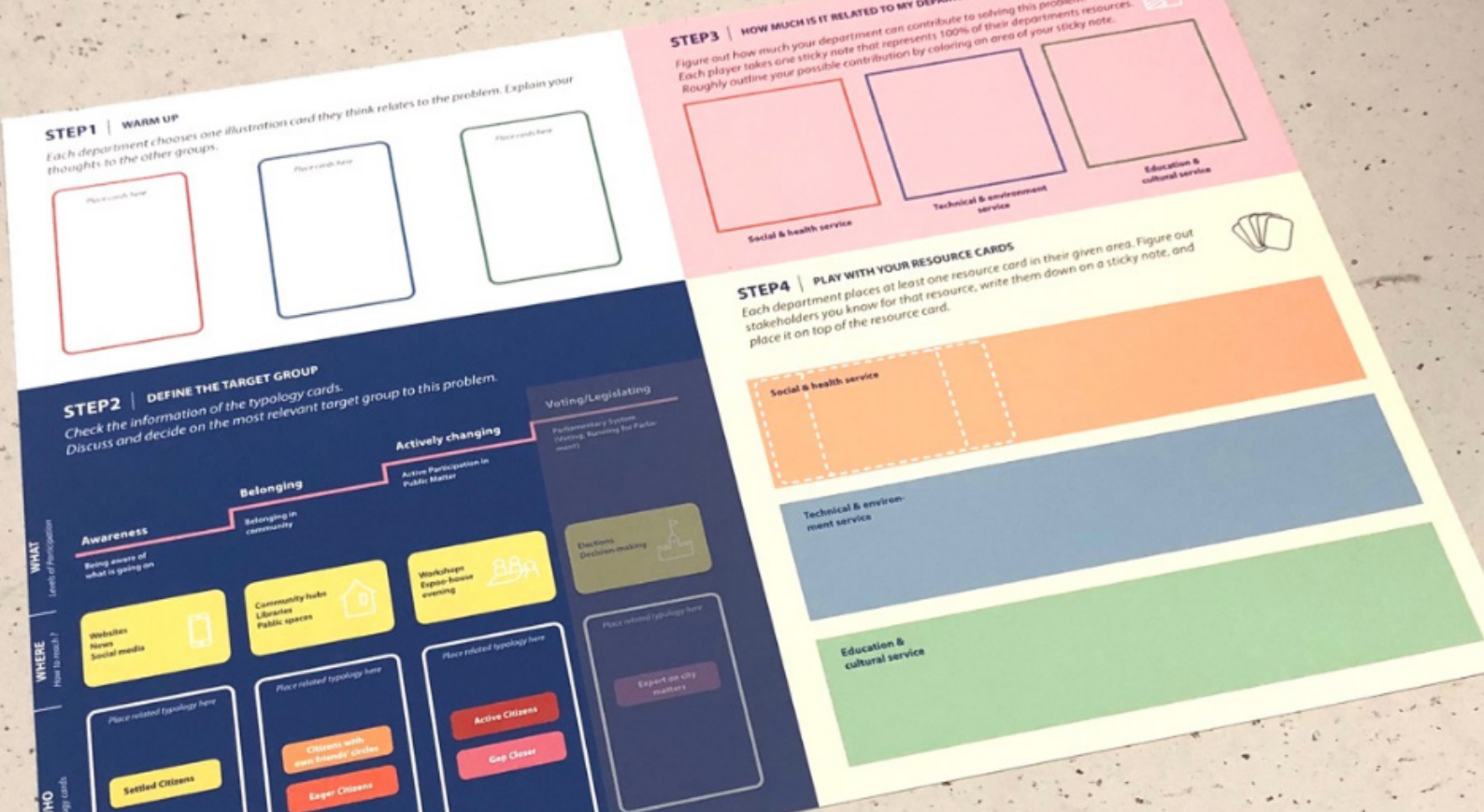
tion or problems from citizens including immigrants, and utilising the first-hand experiences of the community hubs to form the question. The question tasks refer to a theme for the monthly collaboration workshop. Each department should have at least one representative, but the more the merrier.

The first step of the game is a warm up, where the participants choose one picture each, discuss and share their initial thoughts and associations on the problem. This step is necessary not only to help warm up, but also to share thoughts and reach the same mindset.

In the second step they will work together to identify the target group most affected by the problem by using the system of

participation levels we figured out from our findings and research. Another valuable part of this step is that we combined our typologies to the game. With the practice of the typology cards, our players can gain a better understanding of the citizen categories and tangibly foresee the dominant platform where they could reach those citizens as well.

In the third step, we wish for the players to roughly designate, how much their department can contribute towards solving it. By this step, we push them to consider the inherent connection between their administrative branches and the problem given. Based on that, they can exchange their opinions and have this "The problem needs to be tackled through collaboration



among them” thinking process in their mind.

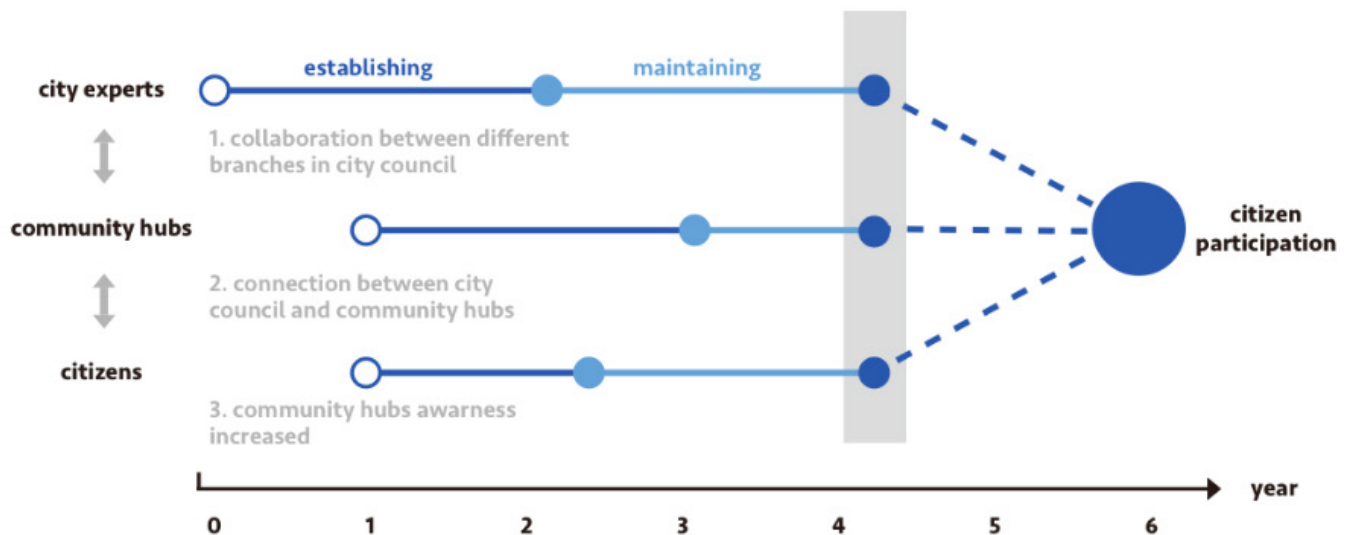
Lastly, each department puts their resource cards (people, places, channels etc.) that can be used to resolve the problem in the given area of the play board. Specifying the resource cards with actual people’s names on sticky notes helps providing more possibilities of solution.

The game ends with a wrap up step. This is a summary sheet to be delivered back

to the community hubs. The players need to document the discussion, the possible solution and the access to the resources they have for anyone who was not present for the game to understand.

To ensure the outcome of the game work, we wish for the departments to find a responsible person for tackling the problem, who brings the findings back to the community hubs, and who should now be working on taking the findings from the workshop further in practice.





## FUTURE VISIONS

The game we have created by the end of the 6 week course is the first draft for the solution and has not been tested in action. For our next steps we suggest getting back in contact with the same people we were earlier trying to reach for a knowledge-sharing workshop.

Over the phone Maria Tiilikkala, Said Aden and Teemu Haapalehto all sounded interested in participating in a project such as ours, had they only had the time for that. Maria was talking about having more time in November - that would be our near future goal with the game.

In a larger scheme of things, the Participative Espoo program provides us with a framework for conducting our design interventions. The current four year program will last until the end of 2020, some two years from now.

It seems reasonable to assume that during this period of time, we could get the game workshops running steadily and start with implementing the second solution as well:

the quarter-yearly, informal meetings between the Espoo officials and the community hub staff. The communications campaign for inviting more visitors to the hubs could be something to launch in autumn 2020 when the other steps have been up and running for a while.

At the end of the program it is time for an evaluation round on the success of our design interventions in engaging the (non-finnish) citizens. To be able to evaluate the impact of our solutions, some metrics should be acknowledged.

We hope that at the end of the program the Espoo officials can all see the positive impact of our design interventions and have gathered material visualising this development, so that they have means to convince the political bodies of investing in these methods in the future. A concrete suggestion for far-future aims would be to lobby for establishing two new community hubs in the big Espoo nodes still missing them: Tapiola and Leppävaara.



# REFLECTIONS

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## DISCUSSION

Dealing with an issue as broad and complex as citizen participation requires a large amount of effort into figuring out not only how to tackle it, but more importantly, to find the correct way to tackle it. As presented, there are several issues, and we only provide solution for one. We do not claim this to be the correct solution, but we found it to be the most predominant one.

What we found to be the main issues present with this solution is a lack of proof of effectiveness. We have not had the opportunity to run a test with the administrative branches as of now.

Furthermore, while we believe this to be the best approach to solving the issue, it is possible that this can not rock the boat, and a bigger intervention is needed, than the presented board game.

Lastly, the presented data in this project mainly focuses on the citizens in the community hubs, while having to make a lot of assumptions for the different groups of immigrants within Espoo city. A larger focus on data gathering and analysis could heavily support the validity of the games bearing.



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## CONCLUSION

This project approaches a delicate and leading issue in the City of Espoo. In its attempts at developing towards a more participatory municipality Espoo needs to recognize that a creative, enabling culture does not emerge out of nowhere but it requires resources and actions from the administrative structures. Citizens of Espoo have the will to participate, but given the current structure of the City of Espoo, do not feel encouraged to do so. To rethink its activities and make them more inviting for the citizens to participate in, the city needs to adopt creative methods starting from the top of the chain, namely in the administrative branches.

We as designers propose a simple and elegant solution by suggesting the use of a board game to facilitate communication between the administrative branches of Espoo. Furthermore, the game contains the key findings from our research, to not

only make the players aware of these, but also use them actively throughout the game. At the core of the game lies the focus on issues brought directly from community hubs, social centers that attracts a large number of immigrants. This means that the issues are relevant to the non-Finnish citizens, thus allowing for a connection between the city and them. Once a solution has been found, it can be given back to the community hubs, and thereby, the citizens.

This project aims to establish a stronger connection that will allow for the City of Espoo to continue growing and improve its services. We wish for the City of Espoo to take the thoughts presented here and implement the presented design game in their attempts to develop Espoo into a municipality that not only welcomes, but also endorses the immigrants.

