

I N T E R D E P E N D E N C Y
THE WAY TO BELONG

A new dining scenario

A R I A N A A M I R H O S S E I N I

INSIDE MIA thesis - Part I
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I N T R O D U C T I O N

INTRODUCTION

I'm a food lover. I love everything related to food. The taste, the smells. I like its infinite colors. The yellow of the pepper, the red of the tomatoes, the purple of the beetroot, the blue of the blueberry, the brownish color of the crust of baked potatoes and the green color of its spices, rosemary and thyme. I am already hungry at the very thought. I like to play with its colors and create something of my own, find the right combination of ingredients, to make a good and beautiful meal. It puts me in a good mood and relaxes me. It's something I do on a daily basis. I prefer to prepare food instead of heating a pre-packaged food. It is also a matter of health. My father, since I was a child, has always handed down to me the love for food and its beneficial properties on health and mood.

He comes from Iran, and he lived there during his young age. A couple of years in Isfahan and then in the capital, Tehran, after which, he followed his friends and moved to Venice to study architecture. It was a studio that he actually never liked, and therefore never finished. He then met my mother and with her they moved to the Italian part of Switzerland, to Lugano, a place, which, as my father says, "is the most beautiful place in the world".

I'm saying this, because in Iran there is the custom, taken from the ancient Greek, the "Unani medicine", where food is divided between hot and cold. But this division between hot and cold, is not based on the temperature of the food. No. "They rather indicate intrinsic properties of foods that can affect the body"¹ and in every dish, the balance between hot and cold is balanced. I'll give you some examples reported by Global Voices in an

interview with Persian cooking expert Maryam Sinaiee: "Coriander and bitter plums are considered cold; therefore, if someone has a fever, he is given a coriander and plum soup (ash-e gesh-niz bagalu) to make it fall. "The same for fish, considered a cold meat, which is usually accompanied by rice seasoned with dial or garlic, another hot ingredient. Yogurt, a cold food, will never, ever appear near fish on a Persian table."²

I grew up with few medicines but with the idea that with food you can cure yourself naturally because it is from there that the body takes its strength.

I love food for the sensory experiences it gives me, for its healthy and beneficial aspect, and for the social function it has played over the years in my connection and bonding with those who are now the dearest people to me.

Over the years, growing up, I matured more and more the desire to have people around me, and therefore I organized several dinners at home with friends. I like it so much! It was a way to create bonds with them, to say that I love them. I was committed to making the evening perfect and comfortable for everyone. Because this, was and still is, my way to take care of people, to make them part of my circle of friends, people with whom I have an interest in spending good time together and building a deeper relationship.

I have to be honest, before moving to Holland for the master's degree, I never dealt with food preparation. My mom and dad have always taken care of this aspect. So, during the evenings I let my mom or dad cooking. People loved it when my dad co-

^{1,2} <https://it.globalvoices.org/2021/04/caldo-e-freddo-i-segreti-della-cucina-persiana/>

oked one of the typical Persian dishes "Chelo kabab koobideh". As a good future architect, I took care of the space, the decorations, the light so that everyone felt good and comfortable.

Now, my gesture and desire to take care of people through food, is my way to create a bond, a community around me, a safe place where I feel to belong and, if you think, it is also like that for many other people: nowadays, food is always present. It is in every meeting to relieve tension and try to start the speech with the right feet. Moreover, if you want to start creating a new relationship, professional, friendly, or more intimate, you always invite the other person for a coffee or dinner. When you want to spend good time together, you invite people home for dinner. The food is always there and creates bonding and, in the end, sense of belonging.

Sense of belonging is an important feeling for everyone, including me. And it will be the key word that will accompany me throughout my research. I will take care, study, and analyze, through one of my favorite elements, namely food, what really interests me: the physiological and psychological well-being of people fueled by design. I am convinced, that the environment that surrounds us, from the large to the small detail we touch to the space that we are surrounded by, has to do with our daily mood and our motivation. Far too often design follows only function and money, putting aside the social needs. To this end, I will use food as a strong tool, a mediator to bring people together, but it will not be part of my design analysis.

What interests me to explore and analyze, is what happens around food. I am interested in people's behavior given by the design that is part of the ritual of food. What are the environmental and architectural elements that can influence the mind and behavior of people during the ritual of food? And which of them encourage sense of belonging?

My final goal as a designer for this research will be to find those elements that will lead me to create a design where the important aspect will be what the chosen design will physiologically and psychologically provoke in those people who will use it. My personal challenge will be to design elements for a scenario that evoke actions and emotions with the final aim of bringing sense of belonging through design.

My master's thesis is therefore a reflection on the sense of belonging. A dualism between theory and practice. Scientific analysis and emotional introspection. Past and present. I will take you on a journey to understand what sense of belonging means, through my past, through my multiculturalism and how this has always made it difficult for me to feel deeply part of a group. I will start by explaining the importance and reason why sense of belonging is so important for everybody, where it came from, and then go deeper and deeper into different definitions, personal experiences and workshops and arrive finally at the conclusion that interdependency is the way to belong.

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SENSE OF BELONGING

PRIMARY NEED

Sense of belonging it is well known to be one of the primary needs for all human beings. It is an intrinsic need of the human species and is the key to live a happy life. It is said that those who experience this feeling have a much happier, healthier and more balanced life³. In fact, we speak of necessity rather than desire, so much so that this feeling is important for us.

Indeed, its importance has been researched by different studies. One of them, is the longest study of happiness in human history, the research of "the Harvard Study of Adult Development"⁴. Started in 1930 and still ongoing under the direction of the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Robert Waldinger, has confirmed that deep relationships with people is the key to have a happy and healthy life.

In addition to happiness, there is also people's need to achieve their "self-actualization"⁵. A study developed by the American psychologist Abraham Maslow in his book "A Theory of Human Motivation"⁶, where he summarized and depicted in the eponymous "Maslow's Pyramid"⁷ the basic human needs. This is divided into 5 levels of people basic needs, where at the third level there is "love and sense of belonging (friendship)". What I find interesting and reinforces my research on the sense of belonging and how necessary and required it is in today's society, is his statement that only 1 in 100 people manage to achieve his self-actualization. All the other 99 can't make it due to a lack of esteem, love, and other social needs.

99% is a very high number. Why is it so difficult to understand where we belong?

The American Heritage® Dictionary defines belongingness as "To be a member of a group or to fit into a group naturally"⁸. What does naturally means? Hearing from different feedbacks to the question what sense of belonging means, for a lot of people is a matter of identity and culture. Is easier to relate to the person with a similar background rather than one with a difference one.

I personally have a multicultural background: my mother is Swiss German, my father is Iranian, and I was born and raised in the Italian part of Switzerland, which represents a very small part of the Swiss territory where Italian is spoken. I used to live near the Italian border, and I have several Italian friends. For a matter of language and closeness, I therefore feel I can relate more with an Italian person instead of a Swiss one. But for reasons of customs and ways of doing things, I can't identify myself as Italian and, on the other hand, I can't even identify as a Swiss person because of my Iranian background, but I also can't feel 100% Iranian because I don't know all the customs and neither the language.

To be honest, the question "where do I belong?"⁹ has always haunted me.

Culture is like a person's programming. It helps you to have a guideline, to understand other people and then to interact with

³<https://bmcp psychology.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40359-015-0085-0>

⁴<https://www.adultdevelopmentstudy.org/>

⁵ 'It refers to the person's desire for self-fulfilment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. The specific form that these needs will take

will of course vary greatly from person to person. In one individual it may take the form of the desire to be an ideal mother, in another it may be expressed athletically, and in still another it may be expressed in painting pictures or in inventions'

⁵ (Maslow, 1943, p. 382–383). <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html#self>

them. From there then also to identify yourself and understand if you are in tune, if you belong to that group.

⁶<https://www.house-of-control.nl/piramide-van-maslow-behoeftepiramide-motivatietheorie.html>

⁷<https://www.house-of-control.nl/piramide-van-maslow-behoeftepiramide-motivatietheorie.html>

⁸ <https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=belonging>

ETIQUETTES

For sure, one of the moments where culture manifests itself the most is during food rituals.

*"Watching how people eat, even more than what they eat, could teach us a lot about the family or organizational system and the prevailing culture."*¹⁰

This concept is very close to me and I recognize it thanks to my different experiences with my "family of different cultures" (Mediterranean, Swiss and Iranian). Although in small details, the rituals, and the way of interacting with people around the ritual of food are always different and would seem to arise from the habits that our ancestors had in the past:

IRAN: coming from a history of nomads, where the need to be hosted to stock up on food and sleep was crucial, in the middle east the trend towards hospitality developed.¹¹ In fact, this aspect is reviewed by bringing the simple example of tea: every family must have many glasses, and all the same to be able to accommodate any guest even if unexpectedly. My father in the first place, when I asked him if I could invite a person home at the last minute, he said "yes of course, there is always a place".

MEDITERRANEAN: in a Latino contest where collectivism and conviviality are the rule of the day, "simpatia,

respeto, and familism" are the three words that characterize this culture.¹² In fact, with my boyfriend's family, the tones are always very bright and lively. Jokes and teasing are the rule of the day and the need to have family moments and to eat together are more felt. I saw my boyfriend's family members more often than my own. An important factor I have always seen, is the importance of food quality. Through that you show how much you care about your guests. It is a form of respect and love that manifests itself through food (maybe that's why Italians are always so good at cooking?).

SWISS: It takes its origins from a Protestant and individualistic context.¹³ In fact, sitting at the table with loved ones is not so heartfelt. To spend time together you prefer to do activities such as going walking or skiing, which are activities that you can do for yourself, staying fit and having a new experience, and in the meantime take advantage of the moment to be with someone. Efficiency. Very Swiss. BUT I know that in some families the fact to be all at home for a specific time is important. That's the moment where for 30 minutes you are with the family and then everyone goes back to do what they must do to build their future.

I therefore had to learn over the years how to behave or rather, what "cultural program" I had to choose to face dinners. I remember my first approach with my

^{10,11,12,13} <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=104228>

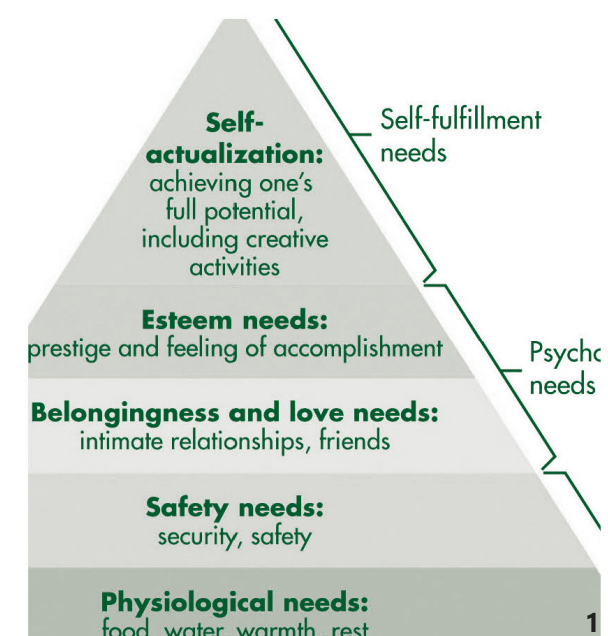
boyfriend's Mediterranean family when they told me that they didn't like me because I was so quiet and calm, when for a Swiss family this is a value (*now, of course, they like me*).

Can I therefore belong to a group if I do not have the same culture?

At this point I want to tell you about my experience during a workshop that I organized at the very beginning of this research to better understand in which direction I wanted to go: "The Iranian dinner".

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TESTING ETIQUETTES

Iranian dinner workshop



START

It all started from my love and happiness in looking at two images taken during two different events: the first **SP1** represents the end of a dinner at my house in Switzerland with my family. We are used to eat on the floor, as in the Iranian traditional way (which is disappearing). Yes, got it right. Every evening, we prepare the space by making room for the soffre (a plastic sheet placed on the floor used to put the food on it. Like our classical table.) which for 30 minutes a day gathers me, my sister, my parents, and our guests who that evening, were my uncles. The second image **SP2**, instead, represents an afternoon with my classmates at my place in the Netherlands, where, for convenience, we sat on the carpet of my living room to play cards and eat some snacks.

As you can deduce, the carpet has a great emotional value for me. I feel comfortable. It reminds me home and my family in Iran. The carpet for me is a memory treasure chest full of people and love.

So, from these memories and emotions, is started my exploration without yet knowing the direction I wanted to go.

I followed my instinct, and I went in search of Iranian communities in The Hague. I found a shop called Black Fig on Noordeinde Street, which sells Iranian products. I started talking to the owners, wife and husband who emigrated to Holland from Iran and moved to Rotterdam. Not being from the place they could not give me much information regarding the Iranian communities in

The Hague, but, just as we were talking, a girl came in asking for some specific ingredients that she needed for the Iranian restaurant where she works. I asked for the restaurant name and the very next day I went there, and I asked the owners if it was possible for them to organize a traditional Iranian dinner for me and some classmates.

My curiosity was to see how other people would react in a place with different rules and rituals than they are used to.

The owners, also Iranians, were enthusiasts at the idea and immediately started to work to create a perfect traditional Iranian evening for us. They moved the tables, brought a carpet from home, brought the soffre, arranged a shared menu for everyone and offered the traditional black tea served by the Samovar (Traditional container to hold and serve tea) at the end of the evening **ID9**.

NOTES

The course of the evening went on average well. In everyone there was curiosity to try a new experience. The first thing to do was to take off your shoes before getting on the carpet. In this way, the space around the food would have remained more hygienic and, to be honest, it is also more comfortable to cross your legs without shoes. After this first step, people started to choose where to sit: the places where you could lean with your back were occupied first. The couples put themselves close to each other creating a natural division around soffre where on one side there couples were and on the other couples of friends **ID1**. The fact that we didn't have chairs allowed us to be much closer to each other. So close that not everyone had the opportunity to sit cross-legged comfortably but rather overlapped in front of you. We all had an average of 55cm of personal space to sit on. **ID3**.

After we sat down, the first course of food came. The approach to food, something foreign to most of the present people, was held back. Not knowing how to eat, my guests felt intimidated to start (despite everyone being hungry). They waited for me to see how I behaved and then they started. **ID5**

The consumption of food begins. Everyone begins to eat and try those new flavors, curious to understand if they were to their taste or not. The colors, the association of ingredients, the textures, the flavors were all new and the curiosity in knowing what was being eaten, incentivized

to start a conversation by asking me and another Iranian classmate what the dishes were made of.

As good designers, my guests begin to look around and talk about the spatial differences and analyze them. In one part of the group, it is commented how the fact of not having physical barriers between one person and another is much more beautiful **ID8; ID10**. It's a curious fact because in the environmental psychology books I've read¹³, it was always said that a physical barrier that protects you from others, makes you feel more protected. Let's think about presentations. You feel more comfortable if you are behind a table talking rather than completely exposed in front of all the listeners.

The conversations continue and I notice that the interactions between the group take place mainly in two smaller groups, which, more or less, were of the same size. From a group of 14 people, two interaction groups of 6 and 8 people were formed. And the division was formed on the shorter half of the table. Not perfectly halfway but diagonally from the moment people were not part of the group of people who already knew each other.

After 10 minutes we started to eat, comes the second course. We haven't finished eating yet. We try to create space on a soffre already full of food. So, we tried to throw what we can in our dishes to free the food containers and give them to the waiters. We feel the stress of having to finish what we were eating.

¹³ (Costa, Environmental and architectural psychology(Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2009)

During the second course, looking at the others, I notice some differences in the posture of my guests: some are keeping their legs crossed, some crossed in front, some leave the plate on the soffre, and some hold the plate on one hand, closer to the mouth, so that they don't always have to lean towards the soffre to eat. It is not a culturally very divided group, but my eye stops on my Chinese classmate, who maintains a posture reminiscent of that of the tea ritual: legs stuck under the butt, erect back and hands gently resting on the knees. It shows how the habit of sitting in different cultures affects your movements. **ID7**

Here comes my favorite part, with which I will continue to work on. Since we all had a shared menu, there was a constant passing of food from one person to another. They were careful not to take too much food to make sure that everyone could taste the food that was so new to them. If the food was too far away then there too, they helped each other cut and pass the pieces **ID6**.

There was a mutual care and help given to each other by the size of the soffre and the division of the food on the table.

20 minutes have passed since the beginning of the dinner and the first people needs to stretch their legs and change position **ID2**.

After 23 minutes, the first one, stops to eat.

After 30 min people start to complain about the discomfort of sitting on the floor. It becomes a topic to

discuss, and the people involved in the discussion seek a new position. From there, more people begin to move and change the position of their legs.

While waiting that everyone finishes to eat, people start to share pictures and memories from their mobile phone, and to try to interact more with others. Even those who were initially outside the group of acquaintances start to interact more. **ID14**

Slowly, now that they no longer have to hold fork and plates in their hands. People start to change the position. Those who can lean, lean on the wall with their backs, perhaps holding their glass in their hands. **ID4; ID11; ID13; ID14**. After 56 minutes, a person gets up to go to smoke and, in doing so, jumps because he no longer feels his legs. The others follow him and when they get up, they too show similar symptoms by making little screams and touching their legs.

After 1 hour, everyone finished eating.

After 1 hour 5 min we put away the dishes.

The tea arrives and the fun part begins. For Iranians it is something traditional to drink tea. I remember, when I, as a good Swiss, took my cup of tea and put milk in it. They let me do it only because I am "charegie" (foreigner) but my cousin, with whom I spent so much time, was scolded in secret if he did.

First of all, the tea is kept in a particular container which is the Samovar **ID9** which is divided into two: on the top there is the Ghoori, the tea pot that contains the concen-

trated tea, and then the part below, the Ketri, which contains the boiling water to dilute the tea. In every family it is important to have as many glasses as possible, so that it can be offered whenever there are guests. The glasses have a particular shape and must be transparent, so that you can understand the concentration of tea from its color. The book "Pardiz – A Persian food journey" also mentions that the glasses must all be the same, so that no one feels out of place having a different glass¹⁵. With the glass of tea there is also the saucer of tea, on which is put a piece of sugar that should be put between the teeth while sipping tea or dipping it a little in tea, sucking it and then drinking tea.

Obviously, when in the restaurant they served the tea with the piece of sugar, the first thing everyone did is to take the sugar and throw it in the tea, take the teaspoon and turn it all over.

Meanwhile, the conversations continue, and people take advantage of the free soffre to finally stretch their legs **ID11** but were picked up by the waiter because it is bad manners.

¹⁵ Darling-Gansser M.; 2019; London; Pardiz – A Persian food journey; Hardie Grant Book. (p.117)

CONCLUSION

I did an experiment without giving myself an expectation, and for this reason it is now difficult for me to analyze in detail what happened. It was pure curiosity to see how my guests would behave in a situation unrelated to theirs. Many points have emerged, there are many parameters to take into account, among which there are the less variable ones, such as the absence of chairs and the most variable, which are people. You can see all these parameters that I categorised and analysed in the map in the background, with the aim of understanding which element was causing what kind of behaviour.

From here I extrapolated what I found most valuable during the evening. The first value to take in consideration is for sure is **time**. This is important specially to build the unspoken rules around the group. Moreover, I realized that the moment where people interact the most is after consumed the food, and not in the meantime.

Another value that I carry with me is the **absence of physical barrier** like chairs or table, which leads to more movement and physical and psychological closeness to your mates. The last values are the inconvenience and the **discomfort**, which leads to help, to share and to care about others like leaning on each other becoming each other's backsides or passing dishes that are too far apart.



ID1



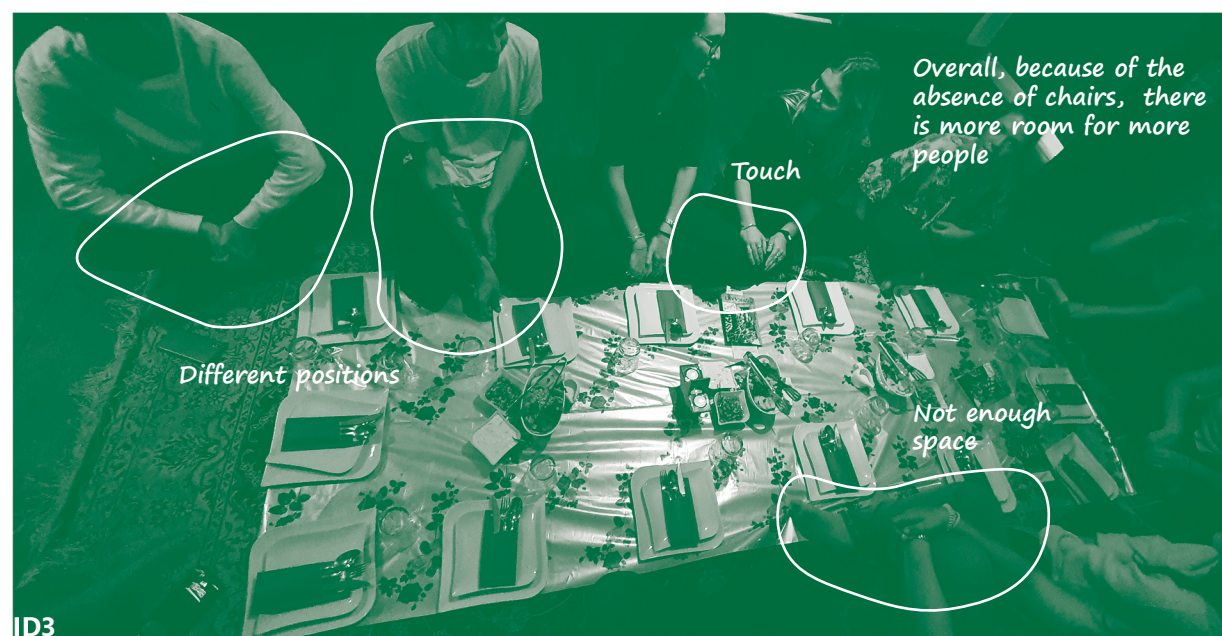
ID2



ID8



ID9



ID3



ID4



ID10



ID11



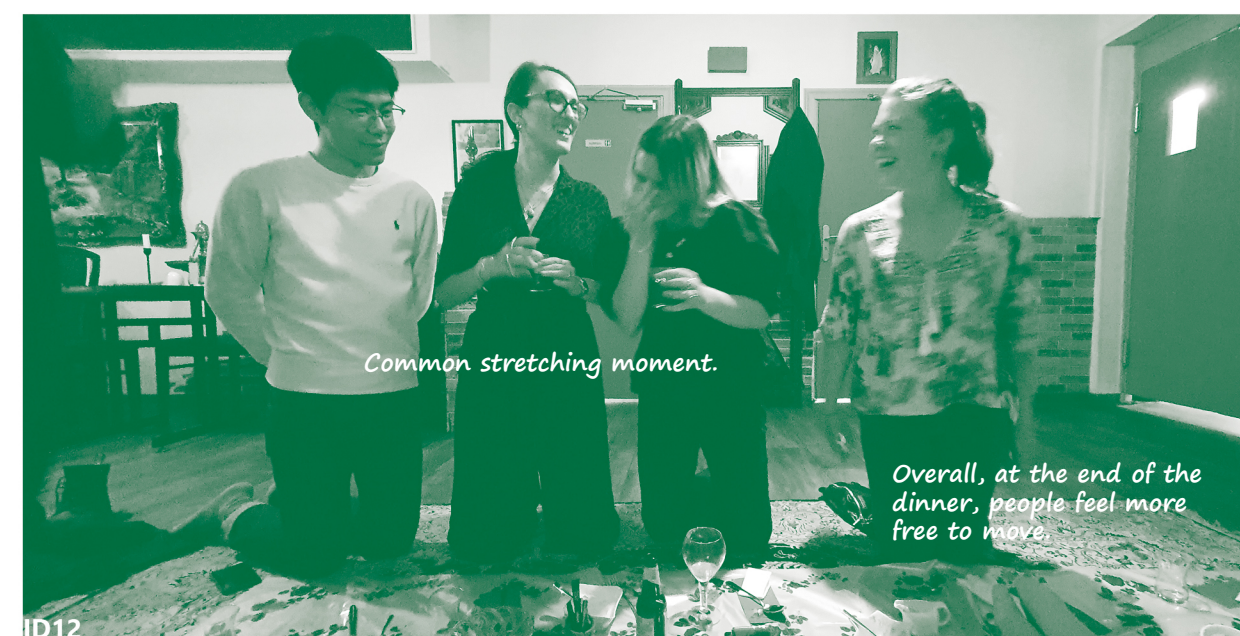
ID5



ID7



ID13



ID12



ID6



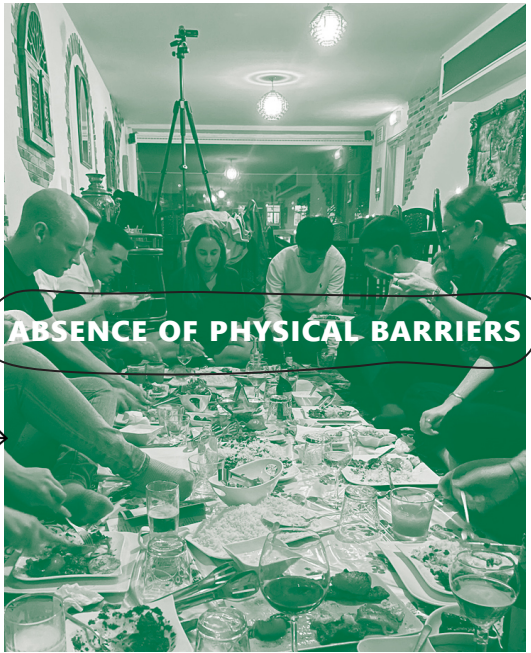
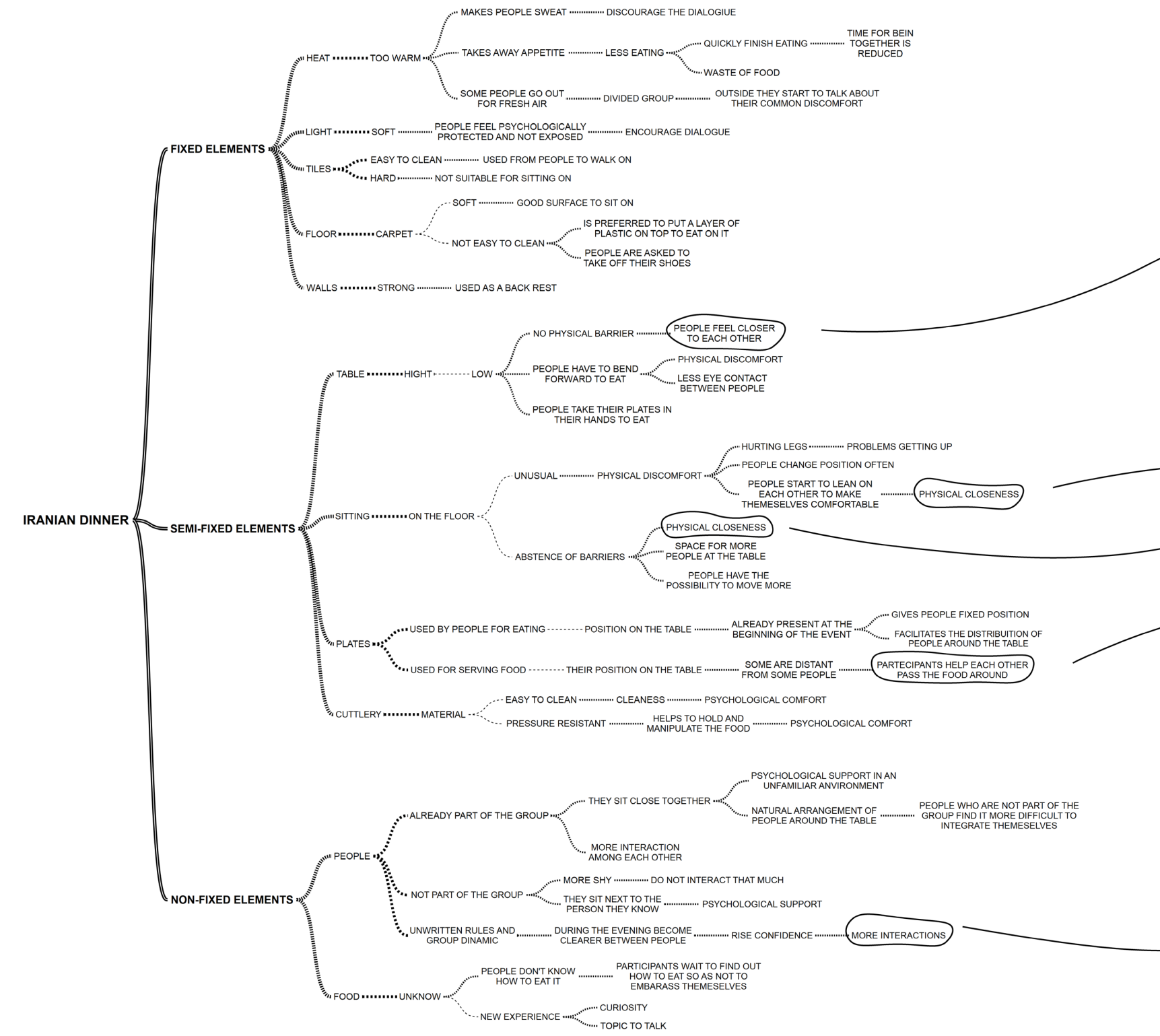
ID14

WORKSHOP INVENTORY

Causes and effects

Value

All the elements noted before are categorized in an inventory of causes and effects. The aim of the inventory is to understand what elements caused what kind of result during the evening. The elements are divided into fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed design.



LEGEND

Category	Elements	Features	Specific	Result	Value
=====		- - - - -	<u>Value</u> ~~~~~>

NON-FIXED ELEMENTS
Those are the elements that are constantly changing during the workshop and can not be controlled by the participants.

FIXED ELEMENTS
Those are the elements present during the workshop that the participants could not change, move or adapt during the event.

SEMI-FIXED ELEMENTS
Those are the elements present during the workshop that the participants could adjust or control during the event.

THE RIGHT PIECE OF
THE PUZZLE

FOOD AS MEDIATOR

I usually feel to belong with my classmates, but during the Iranian dinner, I felt to be an outsider. Even being in a familiar context and there were elements such as food, sofreh and carpet that reminded me of home, I felt embarrassed because I didn't know all the ingredients of the food, I couldn't speak Farsi and, I didn't know a lot about the traditions. Moreover, I saw that the guests were uncomfortable in a situation, like sitting on the floor, where I was comfortable with, so the connection with the group was also missing.

It wasn't in my cultural origins that I could find sense of belonging. Also, because, I don't have only one.

But let's go back in our analysis on what sense of belonging means, and how we can relate it with food and design, because that is what it interests us.

Well, as Franco Angeli says in his book "Food is relation"¹⁶. After all, if we think about it, food is not just a matter of identity and culture. The ritual of food also allows you to relate to people. I personally use it as a way to connect with others and create a deeper bond by inviting them to dinner or sharing my food. It is my way of taking care of them and showing them that I love them. Indeed, I see the food as the strongest tool to bring people together. Nowadays, food is always present during most of our relational moment. We need only

think of the importance in our social lives of inviting someone important in our private or professional lives to dinner, or of getting together with friends for a pizza. Love stories, work contracts, friendships, almost always arise around a laid table. The food is always there and creates bonding.

In this case, the food symbolic meaning prevails over the cultural one.

*"We still remember that breaking bread and sharing it with friends means friendship itself, and also trust, pleasure, and gratitude in the sharing ... food in general, becomes, in its sharing, the actual bond which unites us"*¹⁷.

So, I see food as a mediator to bring people together. Is the starting point, a catalyser to build up sense of belonging. But what next?

Already explaining the definition of sense of belonging, is not easy. Just for the fact that is a feeling. Someone once said, *"it's easier for me to understand when I don't belong, instead of figuring out when I do belong to a group"*.

¹⁶ Corposanto, Onion, Food cultures – Elements of sociology of food sharing (Milan: FrancoAngeli placeholder image placeholder image, 2018) (p.12)

¹⁷ Corposanto, Onion, Food cultures – Elements of sociology of food sharing (Milan: FrancoAngeli placeholder image placeholder image, 2018) (p.3)

PART OF THE SYSTEM

There are those who define sense of belonging: "*hunger for affectionate relationship with people in general, namely, for a place in his group or family*"¹⁸, or "*happiness felt in a secure relationship*" (Word Net, 2003)¹⁹. Or, again "*the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment*" (Hagerty, et.al., 1992, p. 173)²⁰, which have been then further described "*as humans need to find acceptance, recognition, and be valued/appreciated by groups of people*"²¹.

For researchers, the latter would seem to be the best definition. On the basis of it an instrument has been developed, the best and most widely used so far, which allows a general measurement of whether a person feels to belongs or not. I am talking about the SOBI-P (Sense of Belonging Instrument)²² questionnaire developed by Hagerty and Patusky (1995). It is a questionnaire of 18 personal questions that one has to level off from 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum).

Jones, Sense of belonging and its relationship with quality of life and symptom distress among undergraduate college students (Oklahoma, 2009) (p.7)

Jones, Sense of belonging and its relationship with quality of life and symptom distress among undergraduate college students (Oklahoma, 2009) (p.9)

Jones, Sense of belonging and its relationship with quality of life and symptom distress among undergraduate college students (Oklahoma, 2009) (p.13)

Jones, Sense of belonging and its relationship with quality of life and symptom distress among undergraduate college students (Oklahoma, 2009) (p.13)
<https://bmccgeriatr.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12877-021-02115-y>

1) I often wonder if there is any place on earth where I **really fit it**.

2) I am just not sure if I **fit** with my friends

3) I would describe myself as a **misfit** in most social situations

4) I generally feel that people **accept** me.

5) I feel like a piece of a jig-saw puzzle that doesn't **fit** into the puzzle.

6) I would like to make a difference to people or thing around me but I don't feel that what I have to **offer** is valued.

7) I feel like an **outsider** in most situations.

8) I am troubled by feeling like I have **no place** in this world.

9) I could disappear for days and it wouldn't **matter** to my family.

10) In general, I don't feel **a part** of the mainstream of the society.

11) I feel like I observe life rather than **participate** in it.

12) If I died tomorrow. Very few people would come to my funeral.

13) I feel like a square peg trying to **fit** into a round hole.

14) I don't feel that there is any place where I really **fit** in this world.

15) I am uncomfortable that my background and experiences are so **different** from those who are usually around me.

16) I could not see or call my friends for days and it wouldn't **matter** to them.

17) I feel **left out** of things.

18) I am not **valued** by or important to my friends.

By analysing the questionnaire, the words to fit, acceptance, participation and appreciation pop up.

What I especially like is the image of the puzzle and with it the feeling to be the right piece of it. I think that with this sensation in mind, you can really understand the feeling of sense of belonging.

Everyone with their own shape is an essential piece to complete the puzzle and make it stable.

Such a feeling and dynamic I found in the workshop 'Extraordinary dinner'.

The ritual of food also allows you to relate to people. I personally use it as a way to connect with others and create a deeper bond by inviting them to dinner or sharing my food. It is my way of taking care of them and showing them that I love them. Indeed, I see the food as the strongest tool to bring people together.

Well, as Franco Angeli says in his book "Food is relation".

"We still remember that breaking bread and sharing it with friends means friendship itself, and also trust, pleasure, and gratitude in the sharing ... food in general, becomes, in its sharing, the actual bond which unites us".

It wasn't in my cultural origins that I could find sense of belonging.

In this case, the food symbolic meaning prevails over the cultural one.

So, I see food as a mediator to bring people together. Is the starting point, a catalyser to build up sense of belonging. But what next?

"the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment"

"as humans need to find acceptance, recognition, and be valued/appreciated by groups of people".

or "happiness felt in a secure relationship"

Someone once said, "it's easier for me to understand when I don't belong, instead of figuring out when I do belong to a group".

What I especially like is the image of the puzzle and with it the feeling to be the right piece of it. I think that with this sensation in mind, you can really understand the feeling of sense of belonging.
Everyone with their own shape is an essential piece to complete the puzzle and make it stable.

SOBI-P (Sense of Belonging Instrument) questionnaire developed by Hagerty and Patuský (1995).

TESTING DESIGN AND BEHAVIOUR

Iranian dinner workshop

START

This time my aim was to explore and analyze how people behave when there are no spatial rules that suggest how to move and how to behave around the ritual of food. What kind of natural space are they going to create? What kind of connections between participants will be created? How?

For this reason, I tried to find a place outdoors, where there were no walls or particular atmospheres, where there were no chairs and dishes to indicate where to sit. I have asked each one to bring 3 ingredients from their family history, 1 object or material that can help them in cooking and 1 object or material that can help them eat. I brought the fire, the element that in my opinion is important for cooking. It was therefore important to find a place where you could do the BBQ and I found, thanks to the site of the municipality on the Hague, a place in Westbroekpark in The Hague (go there if you have the chance, it's a paradise).

NOTES

I tried to arrange all the objects in as dispersed way as possible **ED1**, so to stress even more the inconvenience and then understand how the guests would react. I had 3 grills, 1 a little bigger with feet, which I use at home, and two disposable ones bought at Albert Heijn **ED5**. The larger grill I put in the middle of the grass, while the other two, for fear of ruining the grass, I placed them on a metal trapdoor that was there, a few meters away. The food, instead, I put it on a bench, also this a few meters away from the grills, so that they did not use the bench to sit and keep the food protected from insects and dirt. **ED3**.

The workshop started at 19.00, we did a little warm up in telling us the story of the objects and ingredients we brought and then we started cooking starting, all together, to understand how to light the fire **ED7**. One part of the group started to turn on the disposable grill and the other the grill with the feet. I was amazed how immediately everyone started collaborating. In 10 minutes, a part of the group lit the fire, others went to get the food that was on the bench and placed it on the metal surface near the two disposable grills, others began to cut and in all this it was decided which ingredients to mix and how to cook them for dinner **ED13**.

CONCLUSION

I found interesting to see how everyone gathered around the metal surface which then became our table and we continued to cook and, in the meantime, to eat. Everyone helped to do everything, and the height of the "table" helped to have a greater view of what was happening. It was also interesting to see that no one felt uncomfortable even though the position they sat was the same as that of the previous experience, "the Iranian dinner". The food was delicious and the invited and I felt part of the group.

I categorized the elements present during the workshop into the "ED workshop inventory" map to analyse them and understand the causes and effects and which of these I see a value to be carried out in my research:

- **Importance of light.** As we saw, it was a focal point where we gathered around and helped us in the darkness.
- **Importance of the contribution.** With tools and food with their history but also with the skills as for example making the fire.
- **The memory of the object and its function.** For example, the metal surface that with its shape and surface reminded a table and we used it like that.
- **The shape of the table.** As I said it was low and permitted everyone to have an eye over everything and so see when help was needed, plus it was small, so everybody was close to each other.

- And the last one, which I think is the most valuable one, is the **common challenge**. This activated imagination, conversation, sharing moment and fun. I think it really connected everybody.

From here on, for the next workshops, I wanted to stress and analyse the values that in my opinion had the most impact on the sense of belonging and connection between people. Analysing both the Iranian dinner and the extraordinary dinner, the most interesting values were undoubtedly discomfort and common challenge. These have created moments of interdependence which, by definition, is when people are "mutually dependent"²³. So, from now on, I will design interdependency scenario through design, to see how people behave and to test if it is really the base to create sense of belonging.

²³ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/interdependent>;

Q U E S T I O N N A I R E *

*Questionnaires are one of my research tools that are still in development. Each questionnaire has different questions depending on the participants and my final goal. The aim is to understand the feelings of the participants, especially the sense of belonging.

SUBJECT 1

TITLE

Find how to eat

HOW DOES, IN YOUR OPINION, DESIGN INFLUENCE PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOUR?

Already having tools and sort of plates helped a lot! I would say the most interesting part was where we actually started eating, cooking, sittings. Was spontaneous and authentic.

DID YOU EXPERIENCED SOMETHING UNEXPECTED/ NEW?

I didn't expect the food to be so good

ANY OTHER COMMENT?

thanks ari

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 HOW HOW MUCH YOU FEEL CONNECTED WITH THE PEOPLE THAT YOU HAD A DINNER WITH.

vote 5

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 YOUR LEVEL OF HAPPINESS IN THIS MOMENT.

vote 4

SUBJECT 2

TITLE

cozy dinner in outside.

HOW DOES, IN YOUR OPINION, DESIGN INFLUENCE PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOUR?

practical perspective : with unfamiliar tools, i have more time to think and be careful. Ritual point, with unfamiliar tool, feel more special and more prepared. With squared ceramic cooker, feel new experience and excited. Because i dont have any info what i can/get result with it.

DID YOU EXPERIENCED SOMETHING UNEXPECTED/ NEW?

Yes, new combination; sea weed and tomato :) i had never tried, but it was enjoyable.

ANY OTHER COMMENT?

interesting experience and experiment as well. Tried different tools and ingredients. Also was fun to make something together and share.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 HOW HOW MUCH YOU FEEL CONNECTED WITH THE PEOPLE THAT YOU HAD A DINNER WITH.

Around 4 and 5

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 YOUR LEVEL OF HAPPINESS IN THIS MOMENT.

4/5 so cute and funny exp:)

SUBJECT 3

TITLE

I bring, you bring, we cook

HOW DOES, IN YOUR OPINION, DESIGN INFLUENCE PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOUR?

design allows us to eat and collect. Starting from the metal plate we set on, instead of the grass. We ate with forks and spoons, we ate with bowls and tupperware. In our society design is essential and everything is designed, we can't escape it.

DID YOU EXPERIENCE SOMETHING UNEXPECTED/ NEW?

it was nice and cozy, light and fire and warmth gathered us around them, or better we gathered around them. It was nice to see that there doesn't need to be a fixed plan on what to eat and cook before, because something will be made anyway.

ANY OTHER COMMENT?

no further comments.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 HOW MUCH YOU FEEL CONNECTED WITH THE PEOPLE THAT YOU HAD A DINNER WITH.

I don't necessarily feel more connecting, but the act of eating together for me is always very bonding and special.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 YOUR LEVEL OF HAPPINESS IN THIS MOMENT.

It was a very cute. The way it took place and happened it was very chill and easy.

SUBJECT 4

TITLE

A tavola con gli dei

HOW DOES, IN YOUR OPINION, DESIGN INFLUENCE PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOUR?

as designers we are trained to solve problems, as we met tonight we used different tools and ingredients and we organized ourselves so that we could puzzle all the pieces together, solving the problem of individuality, sharing a space - a moment, creating conviviality by sharing. Design guides us to become one thing all together - not to be a part from each other.

DID YOU EXPERIENCE SOMETHING UNEXPECTED/ NEW?

I didn't expect that something so good could come out from a lack of agreement and organization between us (I mean that we weren't instructed to think ingredient that we could have cooked together) I am surprised by the flow of the group and how smooth everything went.

ANY OTHER COMMENT?

You are very able to look further.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 HOW MUCH YOU FEEL CONNECTED WITH THE PEOPLE THAT YOU HAD A DINNER WITH.

vote 5

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 YOUR LEVEL OF HAPPINESS IN THIS MOMENT.

how can you count happiness? You count it through the little tiny moment you can share with others.

SUBJECT 5

TITLE

Improvisation, Experimentation, Degustation

HOW DOES, IN YOUR OPINION, DESIGN INFLUENCE PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOUR?

Design of Tools can guide/limit you in your way of creating your meal, the space does the same, not with the food but with the people. How many people can be active with food (cutting, cooking etc.)? Is the space deciding people into groups? Like cooking and table preparation or uniting everyone?

DID YOU EXPERIENCED SOMETHING UNEXPECTED/ NEW?

The food preparation/process was more important than WHAT we ate.

ANY OTHER COMMENT?

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 HOW HOW MUCH YOU FEEL CONNECTED WITH THE PEOPLE THAT YOU HAD A DINNER WITH.

vote 4

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 YOUR LEVEL OF HAPPINESS IN THIS MOMENT.

vote 4

SUBJECT 6

TITLE

afterwards, enjoying

HOW DOES, IN YOUR OPINION, DESIGN INFLUENCE PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOUR?

learning smart ways to use limited kind of materials is always a good brain exercise

DID YOU EXPERIENCED SOMETHING UNEXPECTED/ NEW?

I didn't know about the contemporary use of "bricks"

ANY OTHER COMMENT?

to consider about the rest of the food

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 HOW HOW MUCH YOU FEEL CONNECTED WITH THE PEOPLE THAT YOU HAD A DINNER WITH.

vote 5

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 YOUR LEVEL OF HAPPINESS IN THIS MOMENT.

vote 5

SUBJECT 7

TITLE

Amazing dinner fun.

HOW DOES, IN YOUR OPINION, DESIGN INFLUENCE PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOUR?

The spaces divides the people as you have a table in-between or stand next to each other

DID YOU EXPERIENCED SOMETHING UNEXPECTED/ NEW?

This random ingredients fitted very well - the cultures where visible/ tastable

ANY OTHER COMMENT?

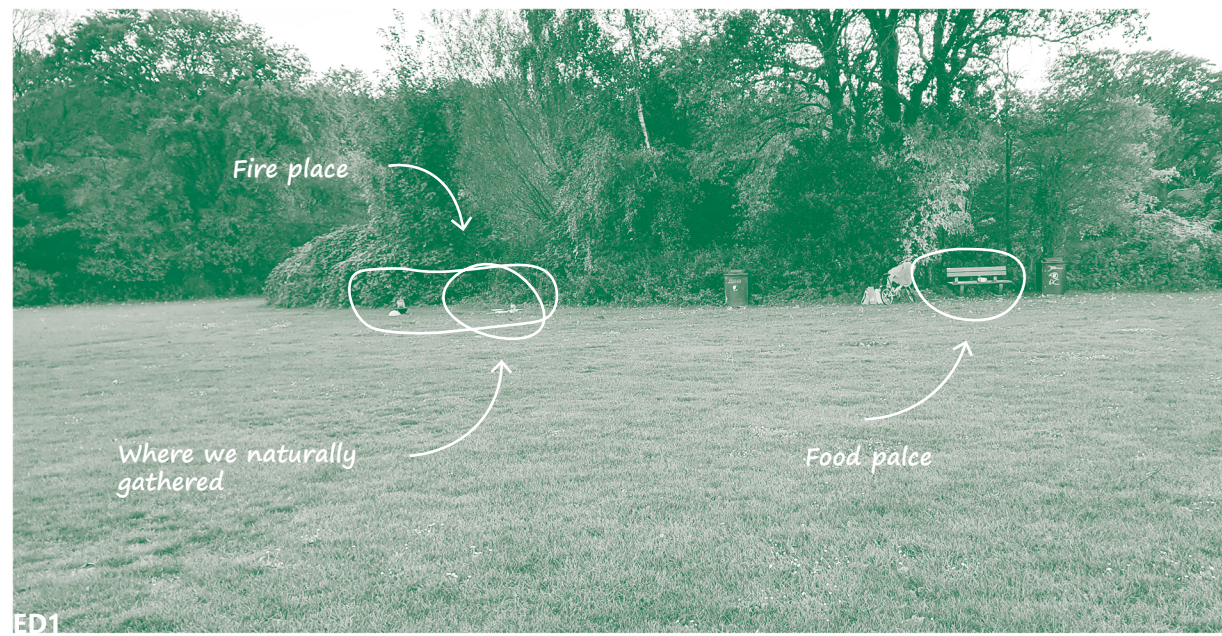
It was very delicious - didn't expect it to be so great

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 HOW HOW MUCH YOU FEEL CONNECTED WITH THE PEOPLE THAT YOU HAD A DINNER WITH.

Vote 4: we had to interact communicate and discuss and ofcourse eat together.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5 YOUR LEVEL OF HAPPINESS IN THIS MOMENT.

Vote 5



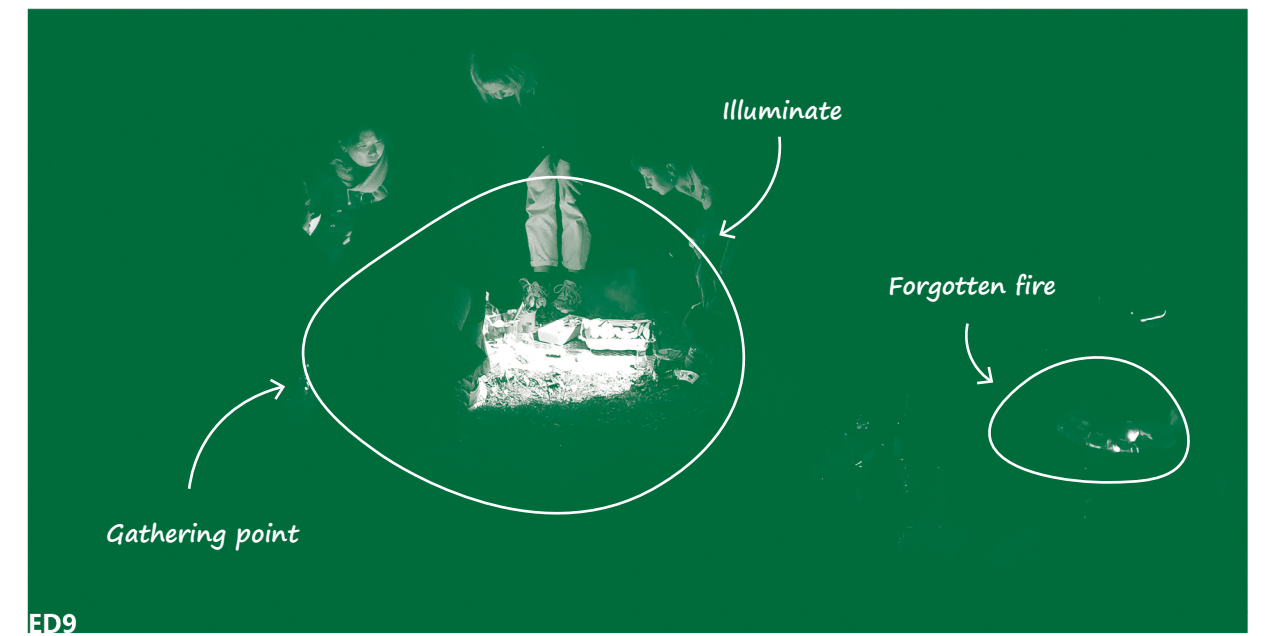
ED1



ED2



ED8



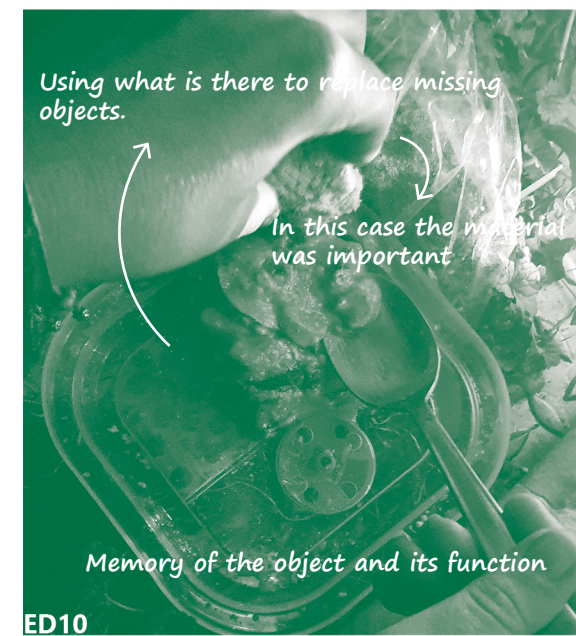
ED9



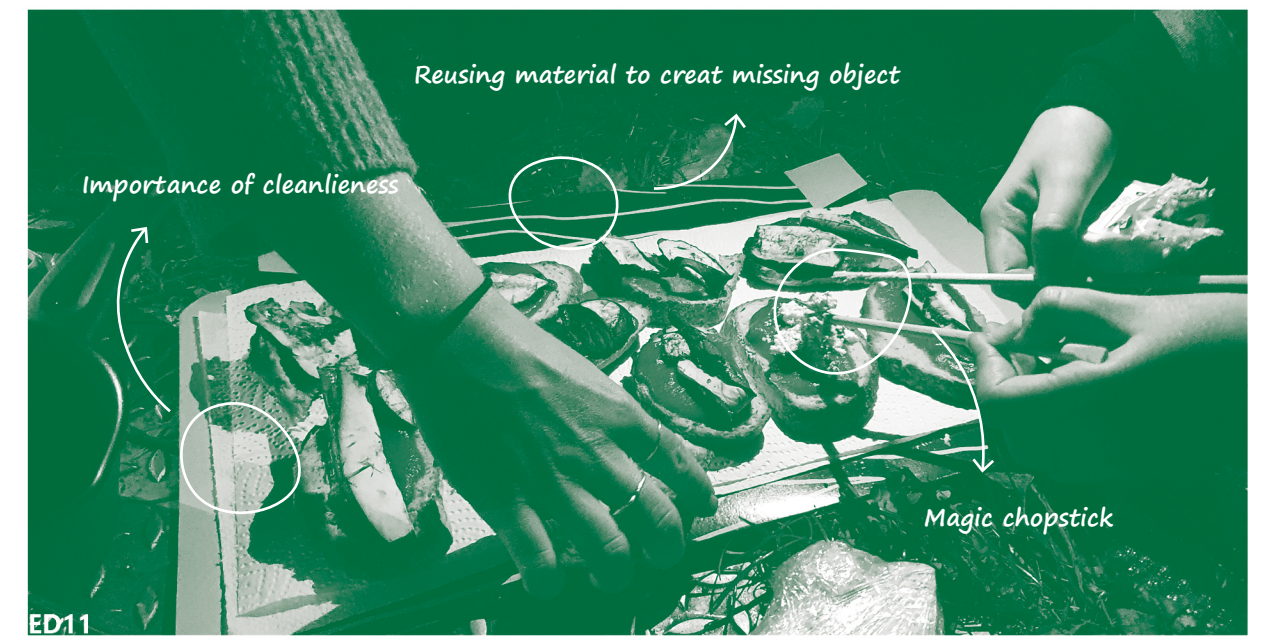
ED3



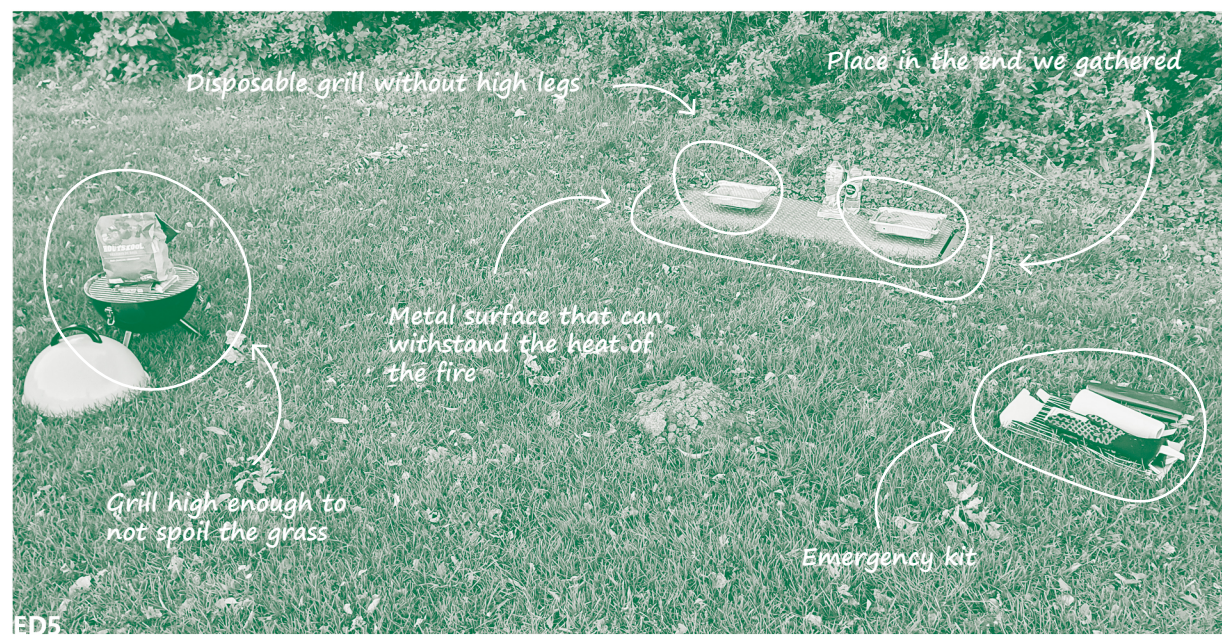
ED4



ED10



ED11



ED5



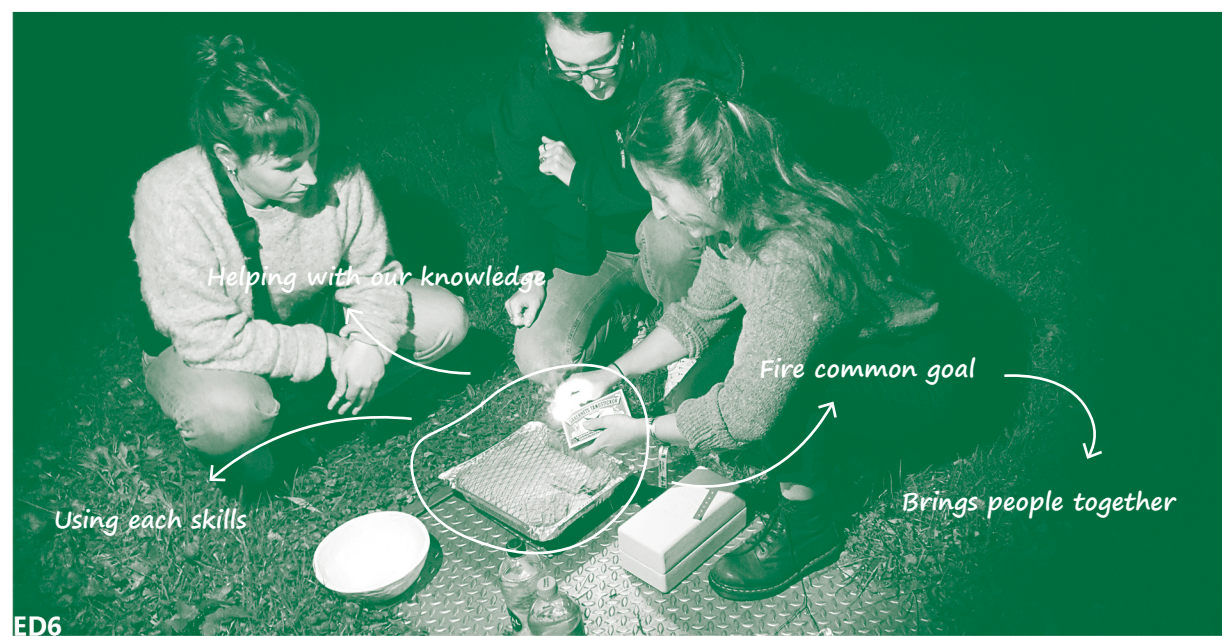
ED7



ED12



ED13



ED6



ED14



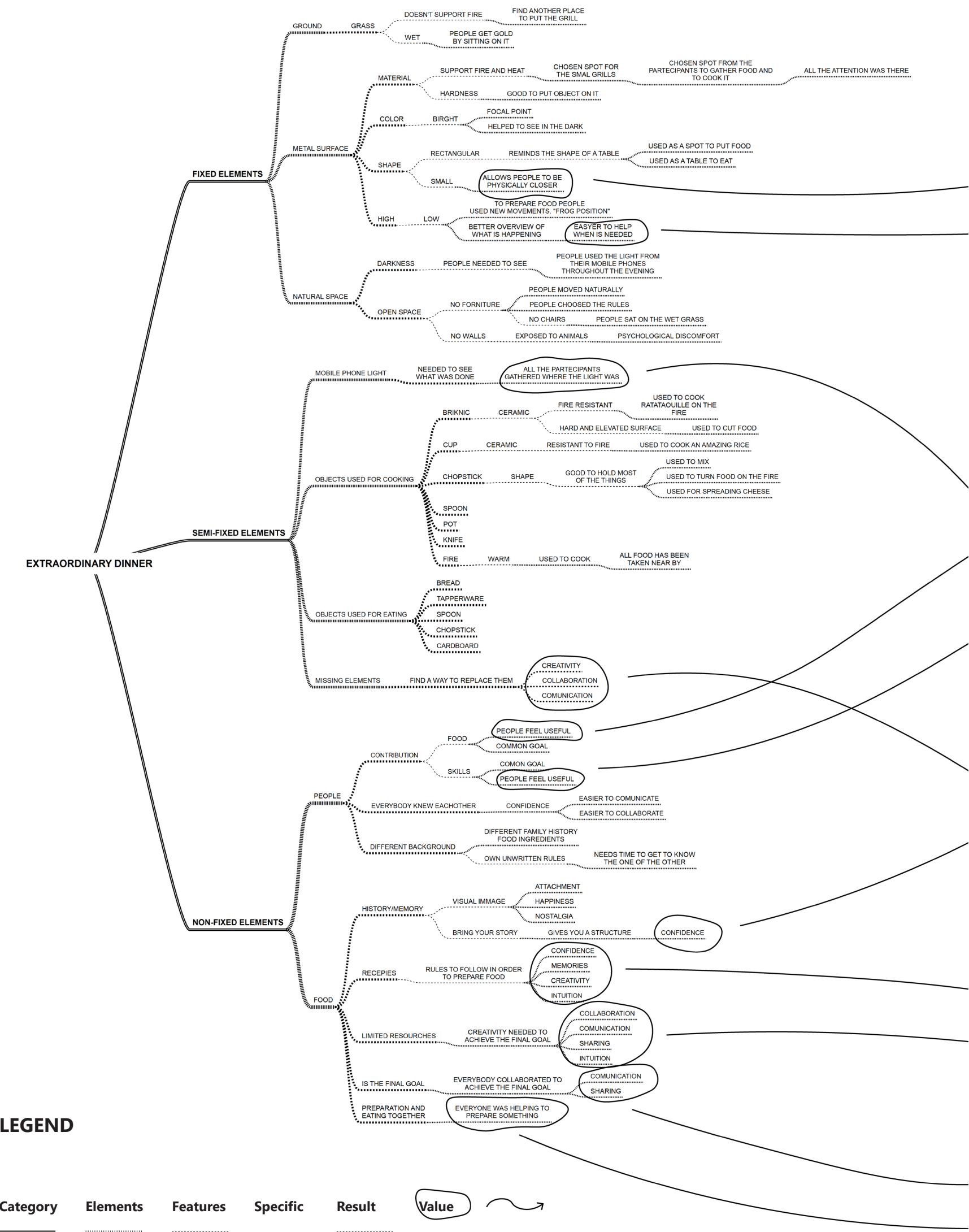
ED15

WORKSHOP INVENTORY

Causes and effects

Value

All the elements noted before are categorized in an inventory of causes and effects. The aim of the inventory is to understand what elements caused what kind of result during the evening. The elements are divided into fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed design.



TESTING INTERDEPENDENCY

Workshops

IF YOU EAT, I CAN NOT WORKSHOP

After the first two workshops, I find myself with clearer ideas about the direction in which I want to go, or at least, I have some the basics to follow. As I had already described, I noticed that discomfort and common challenge leads people to find comfort and to do this, most of the time, people helped each other by caring for each other, creating moment of interdependence. So for my next experiments that's what I'm going to analyze. Is it really the discomfort and the common challenge that leads to the feeling of belonging around the ritual of food?

START

In my head the event had to be a moment of mutual attention, where everyone had to look at the needs of others and take care of them. That's the reason why I asked everyone to be the table structure so that while one ate the other would have to keep the table and then have to stop to allow the others to eat. Everything had to be done in turns, and, as the title says, if you eat, I can not.

I invited 6 department mates for a shared lunch (an almost impossible mission as it would seem that time is increasingly precious for everyone. I had to insist). I asked everyone to bring their own food from home and I provided a solid wooden surface of 95cm X 120cm, so that they were all quite close to each other. I also created an aseptic space, white, without atmosphere, in a space of 200cm x 300cm and 265cm high, so that the parameter to be analysed would only be the table and the discomfort.

NOTES

It all went much smoother than I expected. Immediately from the beginning, a subject saw that everyone had a food that required only one hand to eat, then from there the idea of holding with one hand, all together, the table, and with the other hand eating. So it was. Only sometimes someone did ask for a few seconds if he/she could use both hands to prepare food or put it away. In these moments, from the feedback I received, people felt guilty. They felt uncomfortable that someone else had to carry weight for them.

At this point the challenge I had imagined had been transformed, and now, instead of having to take turns to be able to eat, the challenge was to be able to keep the table balanced and at the right height for everyone. Surprisingly they enjoyed trying to do it. It had become an element of communication and shared play, which, as one of the participants said "is fun only in this context, if it had been during a party it would not have been the same thing". The conversations had gone fluently throughout the course of the lunch, which lasted a maximum of 20 minutes (much faster than I expected), and everyone had a good experience.

CONCLUSION

Even if everybody enjoyed the experience, the balance of the feeling of belonging was 3.5. So I haven't reached my goal yet. The experience was fun but nothing more. I think time affects a lot. In 20 minutes is hard to build this feeling. In addition, there wasn't a real challenge where you had to share, watch and communicate. It was too simple. One of the participants suggested to create a larger table so that the challenge could be more accentuated. So I did.

Q U E S T I O N N A I R E *

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SUBJECT 1

GIVE A TITLE

Flying table.

HOW DID YOU FELT DURING THIS EXPERIENCE?

It was a fun experience. I expected it as something social, as an activity about eating. It made me feel happy.

WHAT DID YOU NOT APPRECIATED THE MOST?

It was a bit short, I would have liked it to be longer, with desert.

WHAT DID YOU APPRECIATED THE MOST?

That all of us had different heights. That made it more challenging for finding the right stabilisation for the table.

THINKING BACK TO YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE, DO YOU THINK YOU BEHAVED IN DIFFERENT WAY DURING YOUR FOOD CONSUMPTION AS YOU NORMALLY DO WITH OTHER PEOPLE DURING A NORMAL LUNCH?

I also enjoyed the conversations and intern jokes about loosing the table. No one in a different setting would understand it, and it would probably not be so fun telling it afterwards because most likly most people can't relate to the experience.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5, WHERE 1 IN THE MIN. AND 5 IS THE MAX., HOW MUCH YOU FEEL TO BELONG TO THIS GROUP AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE?

Vote 5

OTHER COMMENTS?

I got to know one of the partecipants better. I think it would be another experience if it was with another group of people that I didn't know. But I do believe that such an activity can also help to get to know new people more easily because this activity already worked pretty well as a conversation starter.

SUBJECT 2

GIVE A TITLE

Is something missin? Nice we are fine

HOW DID YOU FELT DURING THIS EXPERIENCE?

I felt good and safe, with the support of the others I was able to have my lunch as usually.

WHAT DID YOU NOT APPRECIATED THE MOST?

Nothing

WHAT DID YOU APPRECIATED THE MOST?

The teamwork, everybody was willing to hold the table.

THINKING BACK TO YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE, DO YOU THINK YOU BEHAVED IN DIFFERENT WAY DURING YOUR FOOD CONSUMPTION AS YOU NORMALLY DO WITH OTHER PEOPLE DURING A NORMAL LUNCH?

Maybe a little bit since you have to ask for permission if you want to use two hands.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5, WHERE 1 IN THE MIN. AND 5 IS THE MAX., HOW MUCH YOU FEEL TO BELONG TO THIS GROUP AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE?

Vote 4

OTHER COMMENTS?

SUBJECT 3

GIVE A TITLE

Flying table

HOW DID YOU FELT DURING THIS EXPERIENCE?

Relaxed, it was a good atmosphere and we had a lot of fun. The table was not really disturbing - it gave nice conversation.

WHAT DID YOU NOT APPRECIATED THE MOST?

My salad without dressing.

WHAT DID YOU APPRECIATED THE MOST?

How relaxed it was to carry the table all together

THINKING BACK TO YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE, DO YOU THINK YOU BEHAVED IN DIFFERENT WAY DURING YOUR FOOD CONSUMPTION AS YOU NORMALLY DO WITH OTHER PEOPLE DURING A NORMAL LUNCH?

In general not. Of course there was more organization needed. We also played around the table, what we would not do normally.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5, WHERE 1 IN THE MIN. AND 5 IS THE MAX., HOW MUCH YOU FEEL TO BELONG TO THIS GROUP AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE?

Votre 4.

OTHER COMMENTS?

Nice time, better than boring lunch alone.

SUBJECT 4

GIVE A TITLE

Table carrying lunch.

HOW DID YOU FELT DURING THIS EXPERIENCE?

I felt akward when I wasn't holding the table and helping others with the weight of it. It was also nice, because I got to talk with people who are not from MAPS lol.

WHAT DID YOU NOT APPRECIATED THE MOST?

My hands got tired :(.

WHAT DID YOU APPRECIATED THE MOST?

The conversation that unfolded.

THINKING BACK TO YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE, DO YOU THINK YOU BEHAVED IN DIFFERENT WAY DURING YOUR FOOD CONSUMPTION AS YOU NORMALLY DO WITH OTHER PEOPLE DURING A NORMAL LUNCH?

I wasn't eating, because in the end wasn't hungry. But I think I would have felt more awkward about it, because someone has to hold the table for you. Also kiwis can be messy to eat lol.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5, WHERE 1 IN THE MIN. AND 5 IS THE MAX., HOW MUCH YOU FEEL TO BELONG TO THIS GROUP AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE?

Vote 3.

OTHER COMMENTS?

Strange but nice experiment. Probably won't hold the table while eating again!

SUBJECT 5

GIVE A TITLE

The Floating Desk

HOW DID YOU FELT DURING THIS EXPERIENCE?

Good, actually not as different tha usually when eating together.

WHAT DID YOU NOT APPRECIATED THE MOST?

The standing, I think we could also have been sitting down.

WHAT DID YOU APPRECIATED THE MOST?

continuously talking.

THINKING BACK TO YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE, DO YOU THINK YOU BEHAVED IN DIF-FERENT WAY DURING YOUR FOOD CONSUMPTION AS YOU NORMALLY DO WITH OTHER PEOPLE DURING A NORMAL LUNCH?

maybe more interaction

RATE FROM 1 TO 5, WHERE 1 IN THE MIN. AND 5 IS THE MAX., HOW MUCH YOU FEEL TO BELONG TO THIS GROUP AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE?

Vote 4.

OTHER COMMENTS?

SUBJECT 6

GIVE A TITLE

Table body

OTHER COMMENTS?

Fun, Try more variations.

HOW DID YOU FELT DURING THIS EXPERIENCE?

Curious about the new person joining the table. Keeping balance of the table

WHAT DID YOU NOT APPRECIATED THE MOST?

Unbalanced table.

WHAT DID YOU APPRECIATED THE MOST?

The right height.

THINKING BACK TO YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE, DO YOU THINK YOU BEHAVED IN DIFFERENT WAY DURING YOUR FOOD CONSUMPTION AS YOU NORMALLY DO WITH OTHER PEOPLE DURING A NORMAL LUNCH?

Conversation were as usual, but were intervened with conversation about the table. Became much more shared experience.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5, WHERE 1 IN THE MIN. AND 5 IS THE MAX., HOW MUCH YOU FEEL TO BELONG TO THIS GROUP AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE?

Vote 3.

UNCOMFORTABLE DINNER WORKSHOP

START

Here I really went extreme. I tried to stress the interdependency as much as possible.

The goal was to make the experience so uncomfortable that the participants had the desire to leave the dinner. I invited 6 stranger KABK student and we met at 18.00 at INSIDE department, room DS.002 on the ground floor, where I built the table we were going to use.

As soon as the invited understood what was going to happen, they regretted accepting the invitation.

As I said, I tried to exaggerate the discomfort. I kept the idea of having to keep the table, but I added other factors: the addition of the act of cooking, the increase in the size of the table (370cm X 235cm), the absence of tools or usual objects for cooking and eating, I only provided alu paper, spatulas for plastering, rubbish bags, a rope (all specially thought out objects because they do not remind of anything clean). I didn't even bother to get a tablecloth, because otherwise the table would have looked too neat and clean. The arrangement of the food was also not put in an inviting way. I had arranged everything in such a way that it looked like tools that they had to use. As if it was an exercise and not a dinner. The whole aspect of beautifying, taking care of the guest was missing. Even the lights I left on purpose to not create a feeling of protection but rather of exposure (usually the lights are lowered to create a more relaxed atmosphere, more protected from glances). In fact, in the

comments they wrote that they felt observed, judged, as if they had to perform. In addition, as if that were not enough, two people did not show up, so the challenge was even more pronounced. I gave in to temptation and made myself available as a joker to hold the table on the condition that they would tell me what to do. I would not intervene.

NOTES

To begin with, they agreed that we would take turns: one would cook and when someone couldn't manage to keep the table any longer, they would swap. The first thing I noticed was that everyone tried to do everything in a hurry, so that everything could be finished as quickly as possible (the potatoes weren't even cooked). Conversations were practically non-existent. On asking, they confessed to me that they were too focused on holding the table and therefore their focus was all there and not on interacting with others, some were so annoyed by the situation that they were not even interested in taking care of others and interacting with them. In fact, they were asking each other, "can you do it?", "are you OK?" but they didn't really look if someone was in need. So I noticed that often someone was in difficulty, they didn't dare to say it and therefore the mutual attention was not present.

Since I was the person they knew the most, because I was the one who had invited them, it was easier for them to communicate with me rather than with each other. At the end of the evening they also told me that they would have liked some phrases to stimulate the discourse because they all felt psychologically uncomfortable cooking and eating in silence. From what they say, they usually talk a lot more even with strangers. Not being able to converse was very annoying for them. Silences are the thing that embarrassed people the most. In the lunch the day before, everyone was happy that the conversation

was flowing and there were no awkward silences and everybody really enjoyed that part.

Another person, before starting to eat, also said that she would not eat because everything was not hygienic. She saw that they were cooking on the raw wood and that in some parts there were even shoe marks that someone (me) had left.

As I said, the timing was very fast. The change of the chef was about every 6 minutes. I could see that they were struggling and that there was tension in the air. So I gave in to the temptation to help and after 20 min I suggested we sit on chairs and hold the table with our legs (I don't know if that was a good move). After 23 minutes the food was ready, in 7 minutes everyone had finished eating and then there was a discussion for about 13 minutes. In all, the event lasted 43 minutes. The Iranian dinner and the extraordinary dinner took 2.30 hours. In short, I succeeded in my intention to make people run away. In fact the comments were not positive and the sense of belonging was at level 2.

CONCLUSION

I think what went wrong was definitely the extreme discomfort and the fact that there were no solutions to solve it. I am still convinced that having a common goal and being able to achieve it all together is important in building a sense of belonging, even if only for that moment. However, I think that for the next time I will have to work for a softer discomfort, which does not require too much physical effort and certainly give elements that they can use to find solutions.

Also, the distances between people were too much. This leads to a harder connection between people. They see each other more hardly, they hear each other more hardly. You have less control over what happens as you have to look into a larger space.

Q U E S T I O N N A I R E *

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SUBJECT 1

AGE

18

DEPARTMENT

Preparatory year

GIVE A TITLE

Wierd table dinner

HOW DID YOU FELT DURING THIS EXPERIENCE?

I felt I was being tested and that I had to really think about what I was going to say. I also didn't want to make others hold the table.

WHAT DID YOU NOT APPRECIATED THE MOST?

The silence during eating. I felt really socially akward. I thought holding the table was not that bad.

WHAT DID YOU APPRECIATED THE MOST?

I felt releaved when we could sit down. Also the falafel was really good.

THINKING BACK TO YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE, DO YOU THINK YOU BEHAVED IN DIF-FERENT WAY DURING YOUR FOOD CONSUMPTION AS YOU NORMALLY DO WITH OTHER PEOPLE DURING A NORMAL LUNCH?

I was maybe more quite than I would have been during a

normal dinner.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5, WHERE 1 IN THE MIN. AND 5 IS THE MAX., HOW MUCH YOU FEEL TO BELONG TO THIS GROUP AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE?

Vote 2

OTHER COMMENTS?

I found it a really interesting expereince.

SUBJECT 2

AGE
20

DEPARTMENT
LAFD

GIVE A TITLE
Half warm potatoes.

HOW DID YOU FELT DURING THIS EXPERIENCE?
Annoyed but still feeling the pressure to help each other, conversation wasn't smooth so i felt like "walking on egg shell" with everything I said. I did instantly become attentive to what was going on with the table and the others around it, because there obviously was the chance of the table falling down. You see others struggling and feel the need to help them. But providing help when being annoyed yourself, proves to be hard. Border between un-common & uncomfortable.

WHAT DID YOU NOT APPRECIATED THE MOST?
2 people not showing up. Table should have been lighter/ smaller for 4 people at least, and it COULD have been enjoyable.

WHAT DID YOU APPRECIATED THE MOST?
Iteresting to see what my instinct/reaction are to other womens when, out of nowhere, being taken out of your

comfort zone.

THINKING BACK TO YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE, DO YOU THINK YOU BEHAVED IN DIF-FERENT WAY DURING YOUR FOOD CONSUMPTION AS YOU NORMALLY DO WITH OTHER PEOPLE DURING A NORMAL LUNCH?
Definitely. There was a certain pressure present during the whole thing, and it make me totally lose interest in small talk. Normally I love having good conversation during dinner, but now I wasn't even seriously interested in the others. The food couldn't be enjoyed in silence either, since I didn't know th eothers, and I felt physically uncomfor-table.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5, WHERE 1 IN THE MIN. AND 5 IS THE MAX., HOW MUCH YOU FEEL TO BELONG TO THIS GROUP AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE?
Vote 2.

OTHER COMMENTS?

SUBJECT 3

AGE

28

DEPARTMENT

Photography

GIVE A TITLE

Pain

HOW DID YOU FELT DURING THIS EXPERIENCE?

Uncomfortable, a bit angry that I agreed to participate.

WHAT DID YOU NOT APPRECIATED THE MOST?

That nobody asked me about my physical condition - I have problems with my spine so I think I will have bad morning tomorrow and few days after. The table was just too heavy.

WHAT DID YOU APPRECIATED THE MOST?

Curiosity and the idea it self

THINKING BACK TO YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE, DO YOU THINK YOU BEHAVED IN DIFFERENT WAY DURING YOUR FOOD CONSUMPTION AS YOU NORMALLY DO WITH OTHER PEOPLE DURING A NORMAL LUNCH?

Yes, when I was cooking for example I was feeling sorry that everyone around me had to hold this huge table and

when I was holding I was thinking only about my back and hands.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5, WHERE 1 IN THE MIN. AND 5 IS THE MAX., HOW MUCH YOU FEEL TO BELONG TO THIS GROUP AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE?

Vote 2.

OTHER COMMENTS?

Good luck with your experience!

SUBJECT 4

AGE

22

DEPARTMENT

Photography

GIVE A TITLE

Workout dinner

HOW DID YOU FELT DURING THIS EXPERIENCE?

Not awkward nor uncomfortable in any mental way, yet uncomfortable in a physical sense oh faving to carry a heavy weight. One's focus being on carry stead of conversing.

WHAT DID YOU NOT APPRECIATED THE MOST?

The heaviness of the table.

WHAT DID YOU APPRECIATED THE MOST?

Meeting new faces and the food.

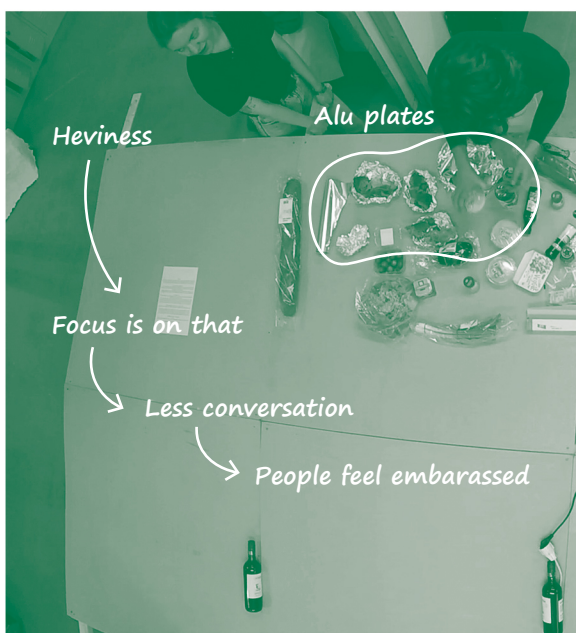
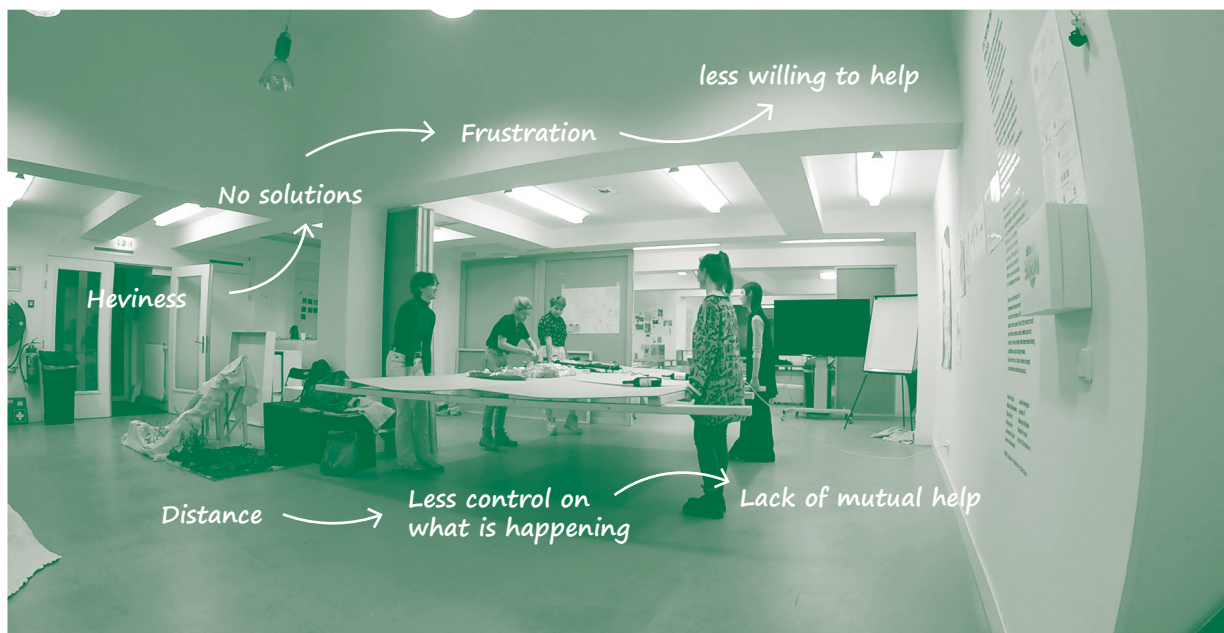
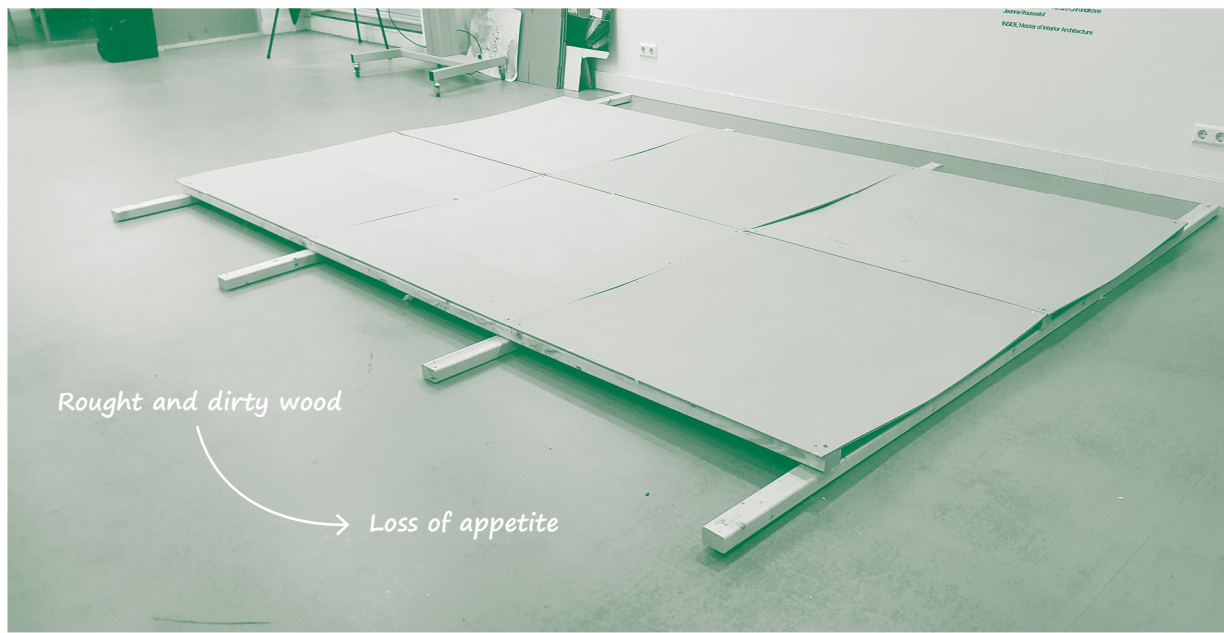
THINKING BACK TO YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE, DO YOU THINK YOU BEHAVED IN DIFFERENT WAY DURING YOUR FOOD CONSUMPTION AS YOU NORMALLY DO WITH OTHER PEOPLE DURING A NORMAL LUNCH?

Yes. I was less focused on conversing and more focused on carrying.

RATE FROM 1 TO 5, WHERE 1 IN THE MIN. AND 5 IS THE MAX., HOW MUCH YOU FEEL TO BELONG TO THIS GROUP AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE?

Vote 1.

OTHER COMMENTS?



THE ROLE OF DESIGN

COMFORT VS. INTERDEPENDENCY

During the workshops I have so far managed to organise, I have played with different parameters that can be found around the ritual of food, thus disrupting the etiquette that a person is used to while preparing or consuming food. At this point in my journey, I am even more convinced of the role of design in influencing human behaviour. It dictates the rules to follow and the movements.

What I found very interesting is when you take away elements, thus leading to interdependence between the guests, which evoked communication, collaboration and caring for others. Everyone had to be part of the puzzle to make things work. This makes me think about the role of design. What if this is the key to create sense of belonging through design?

I went home, and I made an inventory of the objects that I use to prepare and consume food. I noticed that I have a lot of objects, each of them for a specific use. Moreover, they are all objects designed only for one person and to make she/him comfortable in its actions with interacting with food. An example can be the fork, that thanks to its material and its shape allows us to consume food without getting dirty and without burning ourselves. Plus it is not releasing substances into the food, as a sharp piece of wood could do. Or the chair, designed to sit and be comfortable while eating.

So, where is the social aspect? Where is the design that promotes connection with others in our daily life?

MY DESIGN CHALLENGE

With these experiences and questions, I conclude my first step of the thesis.

I started with my love of food for its colours, smells and the important role it plays in my social life. From here I began a journey through culture, design and behaviour that served me to understand where I, a person with a multicultural background can really belong.

We have seen that food has a great power and plays a great role in the cultural aspect, each with their own etiquettes²⁴ and values that remind us of home. But it also has a great value in the social aspect allowing to create new bonds regardless of the type of culture.

The latter is the aspect I focused on to answer my question "What are the environmental and architectural elements that can influence the mind and behaviour of people during the ritual of food? And which of them encourage sense of belonging?".

Living in a multicultural world, it is difficult to look for a sense of belonging in food itself. Food, being a representation of the culture itself, automatically forms etiquettes that are part of that culture and a person's memories.

They are sensory aspects that trigger memories and emotions that are personal to each of us. They can be shared with others but, being in a multicultural context, you cannot feel part of the group as it happened to me in the Iranian dinner. So, for my research, food was used as a vector to bring people together.

²⁴ conventional requirements as to social behavior; proprieties of conduct as established in any class or community or for any occasion. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/etiquette>

To understand how to find a sense of belonging, I therefore organized workshops where I cancelled all etiquette through the absence of the design that we are used to have during food rituals. These experiments and their analysis allowed me to find several interesting aspects that are important to consider. To name a few, we have seen how important the presence of light is, a source of attraction and necessity for understanding what one is doing; the absence of physical barriers such as tables and chairs to make people stay and feel closer to each other; time as an icebreaker: the more time one is together the more one is able to create bonds, noting also that the moment during which one interacts the most is after eating. It is also interesting to see how we behave when we are reminded of an object and its function, such as the metal surface used as a table at the extraordinary dinner workshop. And finally, the common challenge and discomfort.

In the latter, I found value in recreating connection between people and evoking a sense of belonging through interdependency. A concept that I find missing in our daily life design. We have everything for every function. We don't need others for our daily actions. Could this be one of the reasons why it is so difficult to feel part of a group, as Maslow's research has shown?

I have therefore started and am continuing my research into stressing interdependency, and understand how to evoke it through discomfort and common challenge. Two concepts that can be manipulated with design, that I still must continue to analyze during my design research phase and understand more deeply. "What kind of discomfort does it take to create enough interdependence to make everyone feel the right piece of the puzzle?". And I would still be curious about "What would the objects and spaces we use to prepare and consume food look like if the ultimate goal is to evoke interdependence with other people? Those are the new question I'm embarking on my new design journey with.

Are all objects designed only for one person and to make she/him comfortable in its actions with interacting with food.



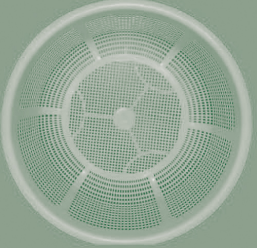
Space for one person

So, where is the social aspect? Where is the design that promotes connection with others in our daily life?

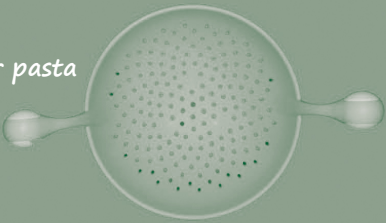


There is no time. Just heat

For rice



For pasta



Different cutlery for handling different food



One single handle



Different glasses for different uses

Hot water



Coffe



We have everything for every function. We don't need others for our daily actions

For aperitiev




For cake




Are all objects designed only for one person and to make she/him comfortable in its actions with interacting with food.

For my cereals




for my beloved spices




Only for one person

For dry food




For liquid food




Different cutlery for handling different food


For liquid food




Food storage




Alu paper to store food



For ice qube



baking paper to avoid dirt



Only for one person



Different pots for different kind of food





Food storage




We have everything for every function. We don't need others for our daily actions


So, where is the social aspect? Where is the design that promotes connection with others in our daily life?




Cut board to cut




under plate to avoid to dirt.



Pot heat protector



So, where is the social aspect? Where is the design that promotes connection with others in our daily life?



Only for one person



"How would the objects and spaces we use to prepare and consume food look like, if the ultimate goal was to evoke interdependence with other people?"



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IMAGE LIST

1. Maslow Pyramid

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

2. Robert Waldinger

<https://manoa.hawaii.edu/inouyechair/portfolio-item/rober-waldinger/>

ID1; ID9; ID13: Pouya, Setare restaurant's waiter

ID8: Caterina Tioli

ED4: Ilaria Palmieri

All other photographs were taken by me.

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