

Embody Brave Space for Value-Centered Discussion

Support multi-stakeholders in navigating
value tensions through facilitation

Yi Hua Wang
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to support participants in navigating tensions
in value-centered discussion

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Acknowledgement

As I reach the end of this thesis, I am filled with gratitude and happiness. Despite the many ups and downs throughout the journey, I feel incredibly lucky to have gone through it. This project helped me discover a passion for my topic and revealed the powerful role that Brave Space can play in value-centered discussions.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my two supervisors. Marina, as my chair, welcomed me into the Joint Value Creation tool development team and empowered me to observe stakeholder collaboration from the frontlines. Even when I struggled in the early stages to grasp the abstract concepts, her timely guidance and trust in giving me freedom helped me refocus, find the blind spot, and eventually develop a direction I was truly passionate about.

I am also deeply grateful to Katrina. Her class on creative facilitation first sparked my interest in this field, and as my mentor, she provided continuous support and encouragement. I still remember before agreeing to mentor me, she asked “*What are your strengths and weaknesses in design research? And where do you think you might need the most help with in the graduation journey?*” In order to grow, we don't only take initiatives but also need to know what support we need and how to ask for feedback. This project challenged me and pushed me beyond my comfort zone, into Brave Space, and helped me better understand both my capabilities and my recurring struggles. During our discussions, Katrina always listened patiently and helped me work through the complexity of the research process.

Throughout this project, the intersection of value, facilitation, and my interest in psychology and embodied design sparked exciting moments of insight. Working with fuzzy, abstract, and tacit knowledge at the front end of design gave me a unique opportunity to explore value and stakeholder dynamics through a strategy-driven, experience design lens. This project, in many ways, became an inspiration for “brave collisions” in future design practice.

I also want to thank those who worked with me along the way. To the JVC team, especially Bernhard, for sharing valuable literature and compliments on my exploration of this topic when I just started, and to Johan for the mutual support early in our research work. I am grateful to Alice for the close collaboration in designing and running the Climate Fresk workshop together. Thanks all workshop participants, interviewees, and friends who helped me with observations and cheers, Vidhi, Jade, CPC.

Though I cannot name every stakeholder involved in this journey, I want to thank those who shared their practical experience with me during early conversations and interviews. Their insights helped me believe in the potential of Brave Space within value-centered discussions. Special thanks to Gilbert, whose encouragement meant a lot to me. I hope that the outcomes of this thesis can give back to future designers and facilitators, offering practical inspiration for this meaningful and evolving topic.

*yihua
Wang*
Amy 2025

Executive Summary

When stakeholders from diverse backgrounds collaborate, value conflicts often remain hidden beneath polite agreement. These tensions, shaped by cultural, institutional, or ideological differences, can hinder joint understanding and meaningful dialogue. This research explores how facilitation design can intentionally embody the concept of Brave Space, which reframes discomfort and constructive conflict as necessary conditions for transformation.

To investigate this, I adopted a design-oriented, iterative methodology combining Research through Design and Action Research, structured through a spiral process. The process began with a literature review, followed by observations of multi-stakeholder workshops to frame the problem and opportunity space, and the development of a liminality-based Brave Space framework. This informed three micro-experiments, serving as Minimum Viable Prototypes (MVPs) that tested facilitation strategies for helping participants surface value tensions and navigate them constructively.

Building on these insights, the micro-experiment was then embedded into a longer Climate Fresk workshop as a viability test for contextual adaptation. The findings showed that embodying Brave Space is not about imposing a dramatic leap on participants, engaging in Brave Space is a gradual process, cultivated through deliberate, well-designed moments of gentle provocations, emotional invitations, and the gradual building of familiarity and trust.

Rather than proposing Brave Space as a fixed method, this study presents it as a tangible, designable lens for facilitating value-centered discussion. It clarifies the conceptual relationship between Safe Space and Brave Space, consistent with the psychological safety theory. This research offers both theoretical grounding and practical strategies for designers, facilitators, and researchers aiming to create deeper, more courageous group dialogue.

Keywords

#Brave Space #Psychological Safety #Liminality
#Value-centered Discussion #Facilitation
#Qualitative Study

Project Scope

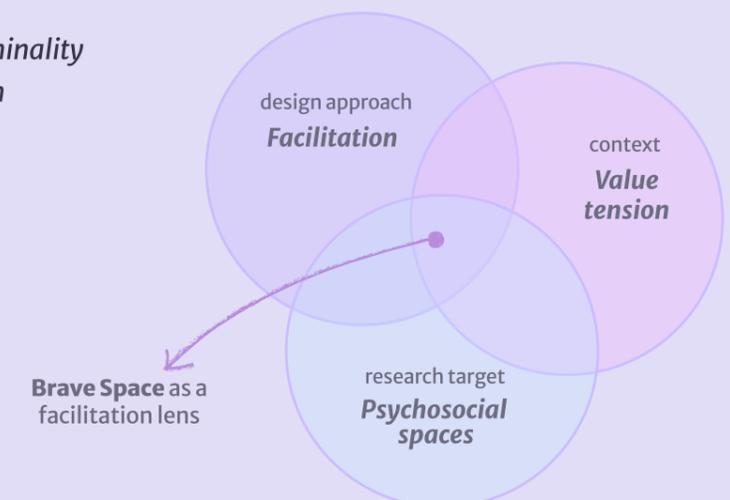


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01 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context: Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue And Value-Centered Discussion

1.2 Project Goal, Approach & Deliverable

1.1 CONTEXT: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE AND VALUE-CENTERED DISCUSSION

In previous years, the discussion of value derived from the need to evaluate project success (Green and Sergeeva, 2019), especially from the organizational aspect. There's a longstanding debate about how to assess project success, which results in a prominent shift in emphasis from "product creation" to "value creation" (Winter and Szczepanek, 2008).

Adopting Green and Sergeeva's (2019) perspective, this research accepts that "value" is a discursive construct open to multiple interpretations, involving interactions and identity formation among project participants. In line with this, Schormair and Gilbert (2021) propose that multi-stakeholder dialogue should include a "discursive sharing process" that accommodates the plural value perspectives of affected stakeholders.

However, when stakeholders come from diverse cultural, professional, or ideological backgrounds, they must establish at least a minimal level of joint understanding to engage in productive dialogue. In the context of collaboration and value-centered discussions, common ground refers to the baseline of shared understanding necessary for effective communication. Communication scholars like Herbert H. Clark (1996) defined it as the "sum of mutual, common, or joint knowledge, beliefs, and suppositions" shared by different parties. Without some common ground, stakeholders risk "talking past one another", using the same words but attributing different meanings (Green and Sergeeva, 2019).

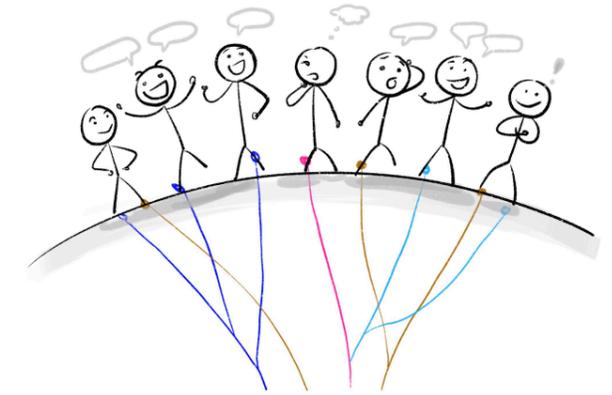


Figure 1. Values underneath the surface of a dialogue

Notably, common ground is not static or given; it is often built through interaction. Early work in organizational studies, such as *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems*, frames collaboration as a process where stakeholders actively work toward mutually determined solutions to shared challenges (Kramer, 1990). Beyond linguistic perspectives, **multi-stakeholder dialogue** can be seen as a **process of dynamic social interactions by which individuals and groups collectively create, contest, and negotiate meanings, values, and realities** (Green & Sergeeva, 2019). Thiry (2002) describes this as an **emergent, participatory process**: people must become aware of their assumptions, engage in sensemaking, and co-create meaning through context (Varela et al., 1991).

These theoretical perspectives offer a foundation for understanding value not as a fixed goal, but as something to be built together. "Value" is not inherent but emerges through interaction and negotiation, grounded in shared yet evolving understandings. Thus, in this research, I shifted from a cognitive focus of the literature towards the relational, reflective, and emotional aspects in participatory, multi-stakeholder settings.

1.2 PROJECT GOAL, APPROACH & DELIVERABLE

PROJECT GOAL & RESEARCH SCOPE

The main question to address in this thesis is:

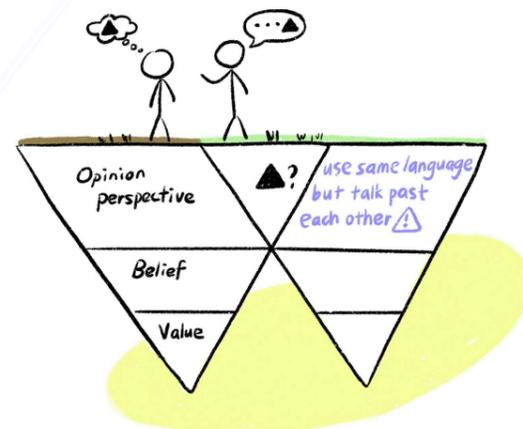
How can facilitation intentionally embody Brave Space to support participants in navigating tensions in value-centered discussion?

This question arises from the exploration of multi-stakeholder collaboration. When diverse stakeholders come together to discuss project goals and collaborate, challenges frequently emerge during the conversation. Participants often have different backgrounds, which can result in a **lack of common ground and shared understanding**, leading them to “talk past each other.” Additionally, achieving productive dialogue can be challenging because **the underlying values that shape their perspectives and beliefs are rarely acknowledged or discussed**. Value, however, is embodied and highly emotional, in a way beneath the iceberg of purpose, goals, decisions, strategies.

This research is motivated by a core challenge: **value tensions often remain unaddressed**, and when they do surface, they are frequently viewed as obstacles or avoided in the interest of consensus. **It is only when discussions about values are openly addressed, and tensions are made explicit, that they can transform into constructive conflict**. This process can foster collective understanding and create opportunities for productive dialogue. I was driven with a specific interest in exploring the relational and emotional aspects of value-centered discussion.

Therefore, I focused on the context of value-centered discussions to explore interactions where individuals engage in this discursive and participatory process, investigating how a Brave Space can assist participants in navigating tensions and shaping healthy group dynamics.

While the concept of “Brave Space” has gained visibility in educational and activist settings, its application in value-centered discussions within participatory and multi-stakeholder contexts remains underexplored. This thesis therefore sets out to translate Brave Space into a tangible and actionable facilitation lens, particularly within the context of value-centered collaboration. Trying to bring the theoretical concept of Brave Space tangible, and move to a designable level. **The research goal is to investigate how Brave Space can be embodied through facilitation, and to illustrate when it becomes necessary in group discussions involving diverse perspectives and hidden value tensions.**



To meet this goal, the project had three main objectives:

O1 Theoretical Foundation And Concept Development

This research draws on cross-disciplinary theories and seeks to clarify the conceptual relationship between Safe Space and Brave Space, and supports the findings with empirical evidence. It aims to develop a framework that makes the Brave Space concept tangible, informs design decisions. The framework illustrates the designable transition from Safe to Brave Space in terms of an individual's psychological state, group dynamics, facilitation, and ground setting. (Chapter 3)

O2 Design Action In Response To The Identified Challenges

Addressing the identified challenges (Chapter 2.2) by using the framework as a practical tool. This involves creating modular interventions and facilitation tactics. Developing micro-experiments can serve as a minimum viable prototype (MVP) within organizational settings, helping to address challenges from key moments of value-centered discussions. (Chapter 4)

O3 Test The Transferability Of The Design With Contextual Adaptation

The design of the framework and design action should be feasible in the target scenario, while also being viable to bring meaningful change in the relevant context. Therefore, I apply and evaluate the transferability of the framework and the modular design (micro-experiments) in a real-world setting, specifically, through a Climate Fresk workshop with external collaborators. (Chapter 5)

O4 Transfer Learning Into Portable Knowledge

To tangibly address the question, "How to intentionally embody Brave Space?" it is essential to transform my theoretical and practical insights into portable knowledge. To be able to “design” and “embody”, it is important to know “how” to do it and understand the knowledge behind it. Those are the portable knowledge valuable to my target audience, which includes facilitators, designers, and others, helping them understand how to apply it in practice. A handbook will provide vital information for target audiences with strategies and guiding examples they should know when they want to bring Brave Space into practice, meeting the desirability and usability criteria. For the non-academic readers, this would be seen as the main project result. (Chapter 6)



The deliverables of this project include:

O1 A Safe-Brave-Panic liminality framework grounded in psychological safety, liminality work, field research analysis, and facilitation study

O2 Tested workshop design for value-centered discussion, including **Micro-experiment** (3 exercise modules- 1 hour) and a larger scale, 1 **contextual adaptation of Climate Fresk collaborative workshop** (3 hours)

O3 One handbook: "A Field Guide to Embody Brave Space" for design practitioners and facilitators, including the following content:

1. Portable knowledge that is transferred from research findings (summarized theoretical and empirical insights of this project into an accessible package)
2. Liminality framework as a design compass to support participants in stepping into Brave Space
3. Practical example and facilitator guide for each activity of micro-experiment
4. Facilitation strategies (integrated learning and findings into strategy)
5. Suggestions for contextual adaptation

This structure bridges conceptual development with applied practice and informs the following section, which introduces the overall research design and spiral development approach.

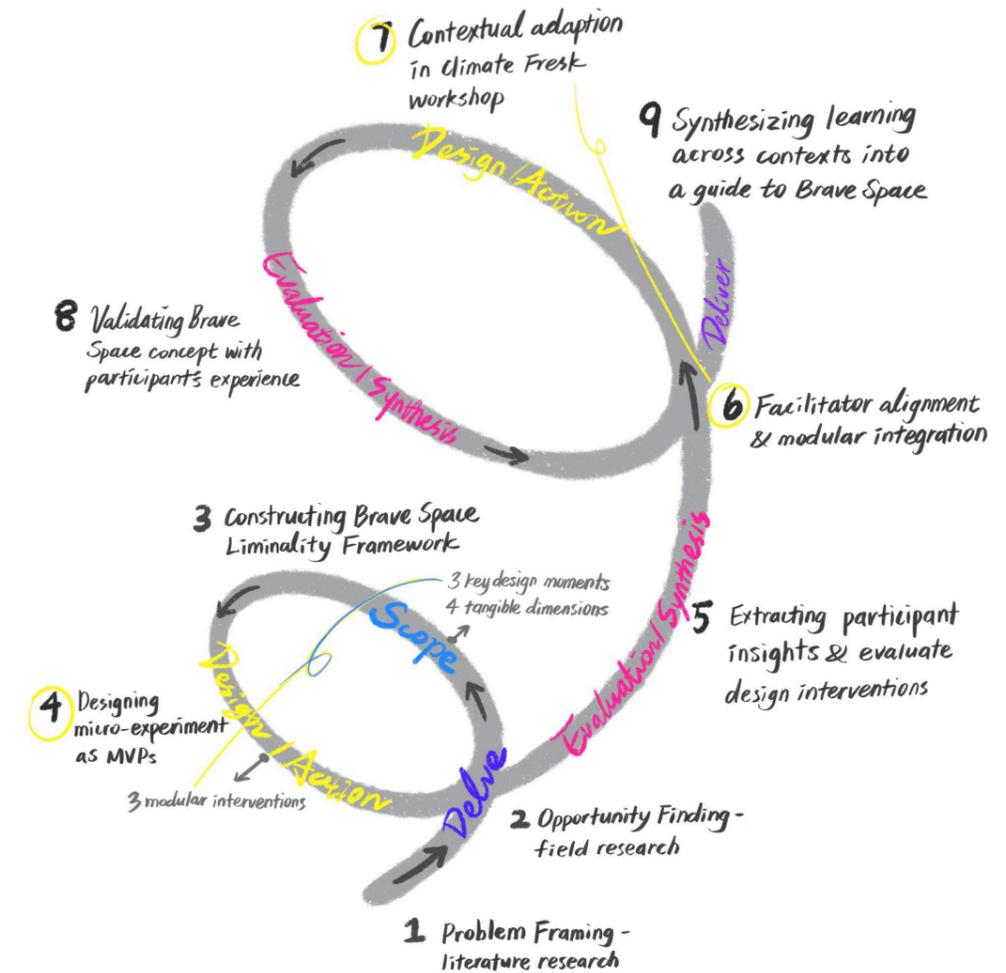


Figure 2. A cyclical and spiral process combining RtD and Action Research

PROJECT APPROACH

This research adopts a **design-oriented, iterative methodology** that combines principles from both **Research through Design (RtD)** and **Action Research**. Rather than progressing linearly from theory to application, the project unfolds through a **spiral process**, cycling between observation, framework construction, prototyping, participant engagement, and contextual adaptation. This approach allows for continuous learning and refinement, guided by both reflection and real-world stakeholder's engagement.

Importantly, literature in this project is not treated as a static, front-loaded ingredient.

Rather than listing all theoretical concepts upfront in Chapter 1, I allow some literature to unfold in dialogue with each stage of the research process. For instance, facilitation-related theories and cross-disciplinary studies on discomfort were brought in later (e.g., Chapter 3.1.1), once field observations had established the experiential ground for comparison. My iterative approach reflects the design- and action-based nature of the research: theory and practice were in continuous conversation, with literature informing the design and interpretation of interventions, and empirical insights re-shaping what literature became relevant.

The spiral process of design and inquiry was unfolded as briefly described below. The detailed method and specific steps of each stage can be found in the related chapter.

The spiral structure of this research facilitated emergent learning, where each cycle builds on the previous one, allowing the design to evolve while staying grounded in real-world contexts. Insights gained from micro-experiments informed a more contextualized intervention: the embodiment of the Brave Space and integration of value-centered discussion in a Climate Fresk workshop.

Climate Fresk is a collaborative workshop initiated by a French non-profit organization that aims to raise public awareness about climate change by introducing the fundamental science behind it and empowering individuals to take action. This collaborative case provided an opportunity to contextualize and evaluate the transferability of Brave Space practices. While a one-size-fits-all solution is not feasible, replicating the entire workshop is not the objective of my research. Instead, I adjusted the workshop structure and co-designed the flow with the volunteer facilitator from Climate Fresk.

This collaboration enabled further exploration of how facilitation strategies and modular interventions could be adapted in partnership with external facilitators to address the specific challenges such as climate dialogue.

Through this journey, both the concept of Brave Space and its facilitation strategies evolved in close dialogue with context but validated by participants' experience, supporting the articulation of the whole Brave Space story.

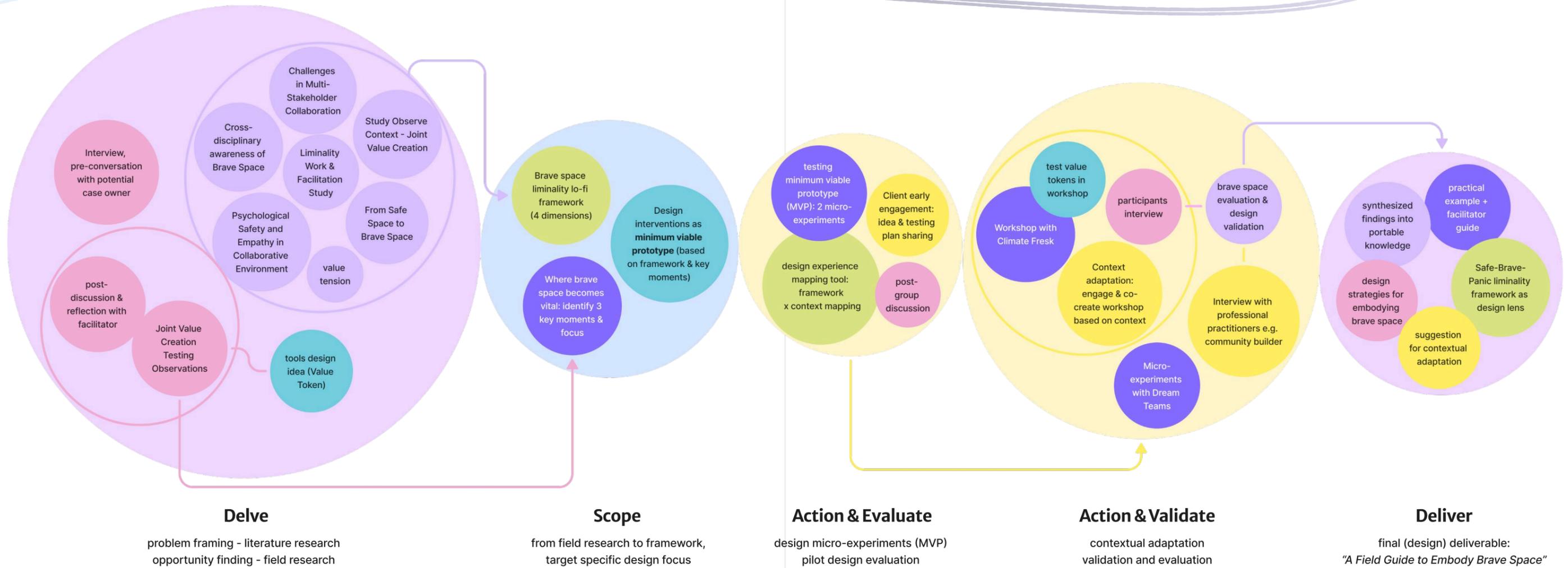


Figure 3. An unfolded overview of the process of graduation project

02 PROBLEM FRAMING

2.1 Research Method

2.2 Identifying Challenges In Value-Centered Discussion

2.3 Studying Psychosocial Spaces And Psychological Safety

2.3.1 The Importance Of Safe Space & Why It May Not Be Enough

2.3.2 From Safe Space To Brave Space

2.3.3 Psychological Safety And Empathy In Collaborative Environment

2.1 RESEARCH METHOD

DELVE | PROBLEM FRAMING – LITERATURE RESEARCH

This research began with an exploratory literature review aimed at framing the design inquiry around value-centered discussions in multi-stakeholder collaborations. Rather than applying a fixed theoretical lens from the outset, the review was conducted iteratively—shaped by emerging sub-questions and design tensions encountered during early fieldwork and reflection. The process was not about building a single unified theory, but about assembling conceptual anchors that could illuminate the relational, emotional, and facilitative aspects of value-centered discussion.

The first area of inquiry focused on the nature of value: how it is defined, constructed, and negotiated in group dialogue. Drawing on literature from value creation, project management, and social construction theory, I began to see “value” not as a fixed entity but as something co-produced through narrative, interaction, and evolving stakeholder relations. This led to investigations into how stakeholders build common ground, and how joint value creation depends on continuous coordination, meaning-making, and sometimes even confrontation.

As the research progressed, I began to notice a recurring pattern: value discussions often broke down not because of disagreement itself, but because of a lack of safe conditions for disagreement to unfold. This turned my attention to the role of emotional and psychological safety in collaborative spaces.

I drew on the widely cited concept of psychological safety, defined by Edmondson (1999) as a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. This concept provides a foundation for learning, contribution, and collaboration, especially under uncertainty, and connects to the discourse on safe space and brave space as developed in educational and social justice contexts.

The work of Arao and Clemens (2013), who introduced the idea of transitioning “*From Safe Space to Brave Space*” was especially influential. Their framework prompted me to examine how facilitation might move beyond protection and toward active engagement with discomfort. However, I found the binary distinction between safe and brave space somewhat limiting, as real-world group interactions rarely fall into such clear categories.

This realization led me to draw on the concept of liminality. The work by Soekijad et al. (2025) on how innovation consultants perform “liminality work” offered a useful lens to understand transitional, ambiguous states where participants confront uncertainty and re-negotiate meaning. I began to conceptualize brave space as a form of liminal experience—a space where people stretch their comfort zones without entirely losing psychological safety.

This literature exploration thus served multiple functions: it informed the theoretical foundation of the framework, it sensitized me to the socio-emotional dynamics of collaborative design, and it positioned tension, discomfort, and uncertainty not as problems to be resolved, but as productive spaces for design intervention. Table 1 on the next page summarizes the sub-questions and emerging keywords that structured this process.

Sub-questions for literature Review	Emerging Keywords
How to define value? How to approach value dialogue?	Value creation Project Management Narrative, Social Construction
How to bridge between diverging groups in multi-stakeholders dialogue?	Building Common Ground Multi-stakeholders Initiatives Organization Joint Value Creation Sense-making
What are the challenges in multi-stakeholders discussion?	Social Relations Hierarchy Stakeholders Relationship
How to explore beyond the duality of Safe and Brave Space? What is the relationship between? Is there an empty or in-between space lurking here as a third leap with complex relations?	Psychological Safety Brave Space in Social Justice Liminality Work Constructive Discomfort, Constructive Conflict Connected Learning, Learning Spaces Comfort Zone, Fear Zone (in Education, Law School, Entrepreneurship, Experience Learning, Sport, and Resilience Training)
How to creatively facilitate diverse groups in a participatory scenario?	Facilitator, Innovation Consultant Case Study Diverging Groups & Networks Tacit Knowledge Design with Social Communities

Table 1: Explanation of the brief process of iterative literature review

DELVE | OPPORTUNITY FINDING – FIELD RESEARCH

Following the initial literature review, field observations were conducted during the Joint Value Creation (JVC) workshops which were developed by and featured a new tool designed by Bos-de Vos, M., De Jager, S. L. & Mulder, I. J. (2025). The workshops enabled me to build upon the insights and design targets by observing involved both intra- and inter-organizational multi-stakeholder collaboration (background details provided below). In addition to theoretical inquiry, these observations enabled a close examination of the challenges and tensions that emerged in value-centered dialogues between stakeholders. These insights informed potential design opportunities in the later stages of the project.

I closely observed how participants interacted with each other, responded to the design interventions (such as tools and workshop structure provided), and engaged with facilitator guidance throughout the sessions. Observation notes and direct quotes were used to capture moments of visible tension, engagement, and facilitator-participant interaction.

Observation Method

- Both workshops were observed by two researchers (myself and another PhD student). The workshop involves participants discussing in two groups and occasionally in plenary sessions. Observers were seated separately on opposite sides of the room, each focusing on one group, and sometimes also keeping an eye on plenary exchanges.
- The observers acted as “flies on the wall,” refraining from interfering with the discussions and only responding to participant questions when addressed. Observers were introduced at the beginning of the workshop by the facilitators, after which they focused solely on documenting the session.
- Notes were taken in the form of direct transcripts and descriptive accounts of reactions and interactions; no interpretation was made during the sessions.
- My observations focused not only on the design of tools or the sequence of activities, but more critically on the following aspects:
 - (1) the dynamics and interactions between participants,
 - (2) their responses to tools and facilitation cues,
 - (3) how and when facilitators intervened in the conversation, and
 - (4) the overall level of engagement and group synergy.
- Observation notes from both researchers were later merged and structured according to the workshop activities, ensuring that key moments were recorded and perspectives from both groups were included. Photographs were taken during the session; no audio or video recordings were made.

Workshop Background: Joint Value Creation With Multi-Stakeholder

Joint value creation (JVC) is the collective process of co-creating value among multiple stakeholders, emphasizing that long-term collective goals are balanced with short-term individual interests. It emphasizes how value is not only collaboratively generated but also envisioned to be fairly distributed among a network of stakeholders for the benefit of all (Bos-de Vos, Martinsuo, & Loots, 2025).

Unlike traditional value creation models, JVC requires continuous negotiation and alignment among all stakeholders, who pool resources and share both benefits and costs based on a shared vision (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022; Freudenreich, Lüdeke-Freund, & Schaltegger, 2019). In JVC, relationships between stakeholders extend beyond transactions into multi-directional value flows, where actors both contribute to and benefit from shared value (Bos-de Vos, Martinsuo, & Loots, 2025).

As Lundgren, Morrison, and Sung (2024) clarified, meaning is co-created, and learning emerges in space and through social relationships between facilitators and participants. Engaging participation is a key component in JVC; the aim is to enact a collective process of learning whereby participants converge on an emergent understanding (Thiry, 2002). Research on JVC suggests that value-centered dialogue among stakeholders can be initiated not only through top-down (such as by governments or institutions) but also through bottom-up efforts driven by individuals or communities. This highlights the broad applicability of value-centered collaboration across diverse societal and organizational contexts.

Session Information

O1 Intra-Organizational

The first workshop was an intra-organization setting, and set as a learning session for the participants to get insights from the Joint Value Creation session. Thirteen participants were guided under a main team but actually work on independent projects in several sectors; some of them are project managers, some are program developers, living lab coordinators, team lead, professional educator, etc. The workshop was facilitated by one facilitator, the education lead from the main team, and took up 2 hours.

O2 Inter-Organizational

The second workshop was an inter-organizational setting, and took up 3.5 hours. Stakeholders were gathered together to discuss collaboration related to sustainability transitions. Most of the participants had never met each other before, but a few of them had a cooperative relationship with the main organizer of this workshop (problem owner). The participants of this meeting mainly come from academia, consulting industry and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), covering fields such as climate psychology, environmental sustainability, energy and biodiversity. However, what was interesting was that although they focused on different issues, they all shared a common concern for environmental resilience, energy transition and human rights impacts, and had similar levels of attention to issues. Understanding this background can greatly help us infer the observed results.



Image 1: 1st JVC workshop in intra-organizational setting: The workshop involves participants discussing in two groups and sometimes plenary



Image 2: 2nd JVC workshop in inter-organizational setting: Two groups of the people were then discussing separately

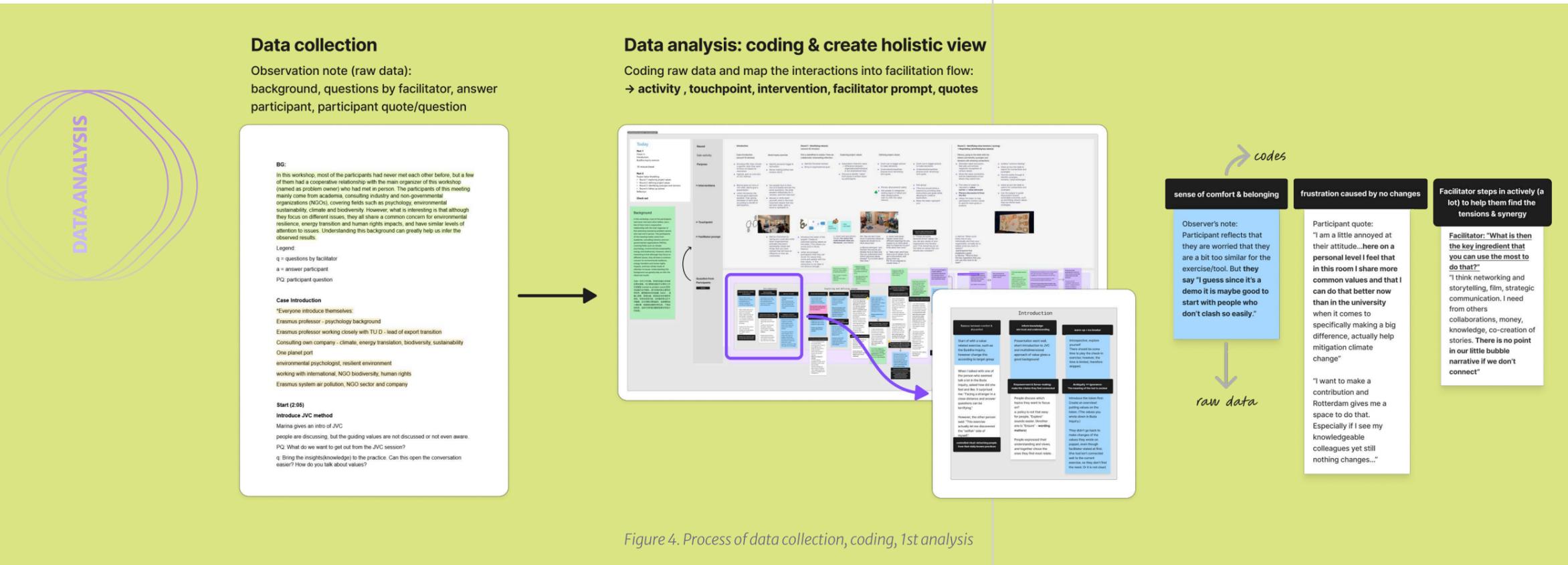


Figure 4. Process of data collection, coding, 1st analysis

Observation Focus

- 01** the dynamics and interactions between participants,
- 02** their responses to tools and facilitation cues,
- 03** how and when facilitators intervened in the conversation,
- 04** the overall level of engagement and group synergy.

Documenting Form

Direct transcript of quotes

Insight & Fact Check

Observation notes → Workshop flow analysis → Reflection together with facilitator

Data Analysis

Right after field research, I first went through the observation notes to mark some important observations. First I made a map of “workshop facilitation flow” (as an example shown in the graph above) to create a holistic view of the participants’ journey of the workshop. The main content includes the elements are shown in table 2; for instance, what kind of facilitation techniques the facilitators used, what kind of interactions happened, and what was the touchpoint designed in the activity? Did the touchpoints (tools/tokens/inspiration sheet...) trigger the participants’ interactions, or not react at all?

The key aspects of the workshop flow overview were determined with service design thinking, where the entire workshop experience is viewed as a participant's journey. By considering each phase of the workshop as an interaction point, I was able to highlight the crucial moments where stakeholders faced difficulties, formed lasting impressions, and influenced their engagement.

What aligns with service design thinking is that the value-centered discussion involves multiple stakeholders. Their engagement is influenced not only by the tools used but also by the people they interact with (the touchpoints) and by the interventions, structure, and guidance provided by the facilitator (throughout the journey).

Activity / Sub-Activity	The activities that were arranged in the agenda. And the small exercises designed by the research team.
Purpose	The purposes and objectives of the designed activities helped me understand how each activity contributes to the overall goals and whether it serves as a prerequisite for subsequent activities.
Interventions	Facilitator's set of actions to improve the group functioning.
Touchpoint	A point of contact or interaction, in this case it indicates the interaction between the participants and tool.
Facilitator Prompt	Correlating to “Interventions,” this part records the questions asked by facilitators to improve the group functioning.
Questions, Quotes From Participants	As the core findings from the observation, this section includes quotes generated by participants, observer notes, and the emerging themes.

Table 2. Key aspects of content in the workshop flow analysis

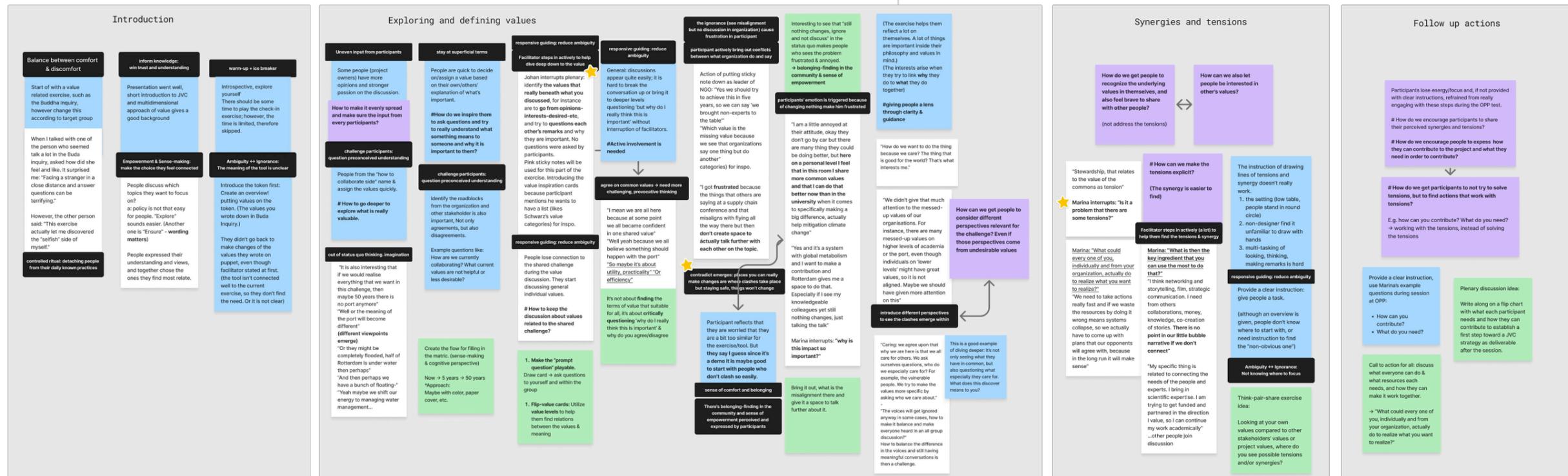


Figure 5. Example of data analysis-coding: First, filtering quotes (facilitator prompt, participants' questions, etc.) & observation notes and map with related activities. Second, coding.

Afterwards, I contacted the facilitators of both sessions to discuss my observations and reflect on the sessions together. This process ensured that we all had a shared understanding, minimizing the potential for bias in observation or blind spots from the facilitator's perspective. Additionally, it provided me with deeper insights into the interactions between the facilitator and participants during the sessions by allowing us to discuss the reasoning behind decisions.

The process was an open discussion. In the interaction like below:

I asked the facilitator, "In the activity of exploring and defining values, I noticed that people from one side didn't give input evenly. For instance, the problem owner shared more of his personal thoughts and opinions. Did you notice and agree on this observation?" We agreed on this group interactions, and formed a question like, "How to make it evenly spread and ensure the input from every participant?"

Another example like, "You stepped in several times at the same stage, asking them 'identify the values that are really beneath what you discussed', and 'why is it important to you?' 'Take a rest, and if you have a lot of values, try to get to the bottom, and group them up.' What did you notice that makes you step in so many times with different prompts?"

And then the facilitator replied, "People from the 'how to collaborate side' name & assign the values quickly." "They discussed a lot of individual values but it's time to move them back to shared challenges." We noticed that it's hard to guide people to discuss values without some hints, and to improve this, we have to think about "How to push people deeper to explore what is really valuable."

After the discussion, I proceeded with the data analysis - filtering and coding process, as shown in Figure 5. Here I kept the important observations, marked the codes (in black) and raw data (observer notes in blue, quotes transcript in white), design implications like 'How might we' questions (in purple), and last but not least, identified opportunities for improvement (in green).

2.2 IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES IN VALUE-CENTERED DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter, I explained the first phase of data analysis. After discussions with facilitators from both sessions, I prioritized the identified problems and synthesized them into collective insights, supported by annotated observation notes and participant quotes. I paid particular attention to how group composition, tool affordances, and facilitation style influenced interaction dynamics.

In this chapter, we will explore three key challenges that emerged during the value-centered discussions. Each challenge will be illustrated with critical moments from the Joint Value Creation workshop. While there were minor adjustments in the sensitizing activities and interventions employed by the facilitators, the discussion process can generally be categorized into a few phases. It began with the introduction of a shared challenge and mission, followed by raising awareness of personal values and collectively defining the project values, ultimately leading to actionable steps based on those values. (Since the tool is in the process of preparing publication, my research will need to maintain some confidentiality regarding the details.)

O1 Shared Values, Missing Voices: When Safety Becomes a Barrier to Change

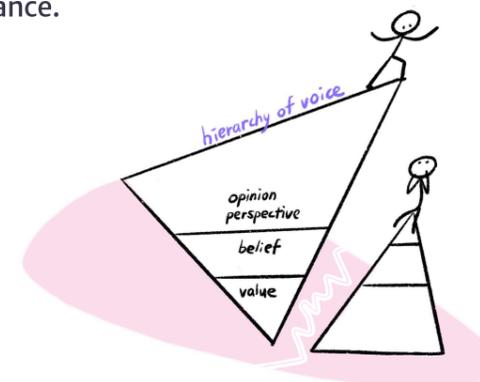
During the second JVC workshop for promoting sustainability transition, the discussions happened among people from different organizations, while they were all experts in the sustainability field (participant background can be traced back in the last chapter, session information). In the phase of bringing in awareness of own values & tensions, one participant revealed the institutional inertia, sharing his feeling of frustration when he thought of value tensions and stakeholder inaction—a lack of response to climate issues and unwillingness to contribute to the movement.

He said, *“It’s a system with global metabolism, and I want to contribute, and here gives me space to do that.” “I am a little annoyed at their attitude.....there are many things they (the university) could be doing better, but here on a personal level I feel that in this room I share more common values and that I can do that better now than in the university when it comes to specifically making a big difference, actually help mitigation climate change. Especially if I see my knowledgeable colleagues, yet still nothing changes, just giving the talk. This made me frustrated.”*

Afterwards, participants reflected that they are worried that they are a bit too similar for the exercise/tool. They mentioned it would be important to consider having minor people and community representatives who really get influenced by the decision, *“There are other people that should take part in this discussion, but they were not in the room”*. But on the other hand, there was another voice, *“I guess since it’s a demo it is maybe good to start with people who don’t clash so easily.”*

From an observer’s perspective, these conversations expose a central tension: while the workshop created a safe space where participants felt affirmed and found resonance in shared values and vision, it simultaneously lacked the frictions that arise when truly divergent perspectives meet.

According to the participants from the session, the absence of stakeholders, for instance, the local citizens living near the port, who are directly affected by the decisions, are less empowered to participate in discussions, but they are often at the front line when the policy or initiatives are implemented and enacted. Nonetheless, added by the participant, citizens are the true experts, as they have firsthand experience of what occurs in the field. It highlighted a deeper issue of representational imbalance.



Another related argument came from the **interview with a community builder/knowledge broker**, who is dedicated to connecting the voices from academia, government, and local neighborhood. He mentioned challenges such as **research fatigue for the neighborhood, disconnection between thinking and doing, hierarchical relationships and lack of empowerment** which resonate with the context discussed in the session.

What is worth noting is that people in the neighborhood experienced "research fatigue;" the current approach to include local stakeholders often involves university students conducting interviews and research in the neighborhood, then returning to the university to analyze the findings without necessarily presenting the outcomes back to the neighborhood. This creates a sense that their input leads to no visible change or influence.

The community builder also highlighted a growing “gap between talking and writing reports and writing strategies and writing policy, and doing something in the world”. As the community builder said, *“some people in higher education or policy-making roles, remain in their ‘comfort zone’ of thinking, making policy right, rather than ‘stepping out and connecting with the living world and seeing what really happens”*. The talk implied that while interviews might gather information, the insights often remain within the "system world" and do not translate into real-world impact.

There is a need for a fundamental shift in the relationship between institutions (like universities, local government, and professional organizations) and the neighborhood. Currently, these institutions often act as "the all-knowing expert in the ivory tower". The community builder argued that the people living in the neighborhood are "experts of their life, experts of their environment, experts of their neighborhoods," and their role needs to be "elevated" to an "equal level" with professional stakeholders. **The thought-provoking conversation in the workshop session and my interviews all pinpointed a call from the world with a multi-directional value discussion among stakeholders, and inviting diverse voices into the room, even though it implies value clashes and tensions.**

This contradiction reinforces a critical insight: change rarely occurs within safety/comfort zones alone. We need a space that is not just about managing disagreement, but about actively inviting it. When stakeholders who might disagree, resist, or bring in unfamiliar worldviews are excluded from the room, the discussion stays safe and aligned at "same-level" but might still be underpowered. Thus, designing moments that deliberately introduce difference, such as contrasting perspectives, value dissonance, and lived tensions, is not a disruption, but an important next step in this session. With this challenge, I asked myself a question to this research:

? How might we create a psychologically secure environment that invites diverse voices (that were originally outside of the room) in the collaborative process, with an equal stage for all stakeholders to be heard?

O2 Challenging the Illusion of Agreement: From Surface Terms to Real Value Meaning

During the phase of raising awareness personal values and defining project values that plays a role in the second JVC workshop, facilitators stepped in actively to help dive deep down to the value. During the conversation, I noticed that the conversation began drifting toward general individual values, detached from the shared challenge. At one point, a facilitator paused the plenary to offer a reflective nudge:

"Identify the values that are really beneath what you discussed, for instance are to go from opinions-interests-desired-etc, and try to question each other's remarks and why they are important." The facilitator introduced a A4 sheet with words for value inspiration because the participant mentions he wants to have a list of example.

In the post-reflection with one of the facilitators, we reflected on this recurring pattern: while value conversations begin smoothly, they rarely reach depth without intentional disruption. Participants often default to terms that feel broadly agreeable, easily agree on common values—such as efficiency, sustainability, or practicality—without unpacking what these values mean in context or why they matter to them personally. As one exchange showed:

"I mean we are all here because at some point we all became confident in one shared value."

"Well yeah, because we all believe something should happen with the port."

"So maybe it's about utility, practicality."

"Or efficiency."

This moment revealed an important insight: value conversations do not deepen automatically. Without prompts, most groups tend to settle for surface-level consensus and risk talking past one another, even when using the same terms, as noted by Green and Sergeeva (2019). It's not merely about finding a "right" value label that is suitable for all; rather, it's about critically questioning "Why do I think this is important?" to co-create the common ground of understanding values. Pausing long enough to ask:

"Why do I really think this is important?"

"Why might you see it differently?"

"Why do you agree or disagree?"

In this context, the facilitator should help stakeholders resist the urge to reach a premature consensus. The facilitator's role is to continually re-center the discussion by focusing on the shared challenge. This involves exploring the relational and reflective aspects of value-centered discussions, encouraging participants to share their personal feelings and collective vision. The facilitator must also prevent the group from drifting into vague agreement, falling back on preconception, or taking a big leap to conclusions too early.

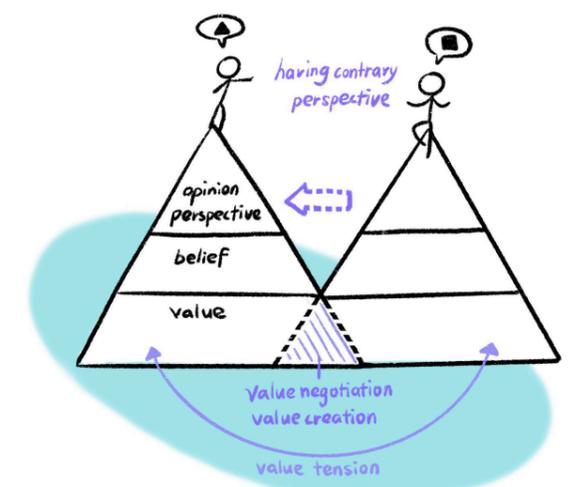
A contrasting but equally powerful moment emerged in the first workshop. Two participants expressed differing long-term visions and diverging reflections on what their team had achieved over the past decade.

While their perspectives clearly clashed, they acknowledged the disagreement with mutual respect, recognizing that their views were shaped by rich but differing work histories. One of them remarked that their perspectives were "okay and valid," and the conversation continued with a shared willingness to listen.

This example highlighted that **explicit disagreement, when held properly, can become a space of respectful recognition** rather than rupture. Participants didn't seek alignment but sought to understand. This reinforced a crucial design insight: collaboration is built not only on shared values but also on the ability to work with those who disagree, rather than rejecting them.

These insights raised another design question that later also informed my design direction:

? How might we create a space where participants from diverse backgrounds feel secure enough to express authentic (even contrasting) perspectives without fear of clashes/disagreements, allowing these differences to be respectfully recognized, even sparking interest in the values beneath them?



O3 How to Make Value Tensions Explicit: From Stuck Conversations to Collective Possibilities

During the phase of turning values into action, the facilitator had an aim to guide participants explore synergy and surface value tensions. However, what became clear through observation was that while synergy emerged early, often in the form of shared goals or compatible values, value tensions appeared much later, and only under specific conditions. Participants acknowledged that tensions were essential to address, yet they rarely surfaced naturally in conversation. Much like the earlier insight around value discussions, tension does not emerge by default; it must be prompted and facilitated into visibility.

From the observer's perspective, I noticed that people felt stuck at the points when they raised a perceived problem but felt like it didn't lead to a new break point; during the activity surrounding a low table with a map, participants appeared lost or disengaged. They were asked to connect the value tension and synergy by drawing the line with green and red markers. It was only when the facilitator intervened with a simple but provocative question, "Is it a problem that there are some tensions?" that the conversation shifted. This was followed by prompts asking "What could every one of you, individually and from your organization, do concretely to realize what you want to realize?" These questions created a turning point. Participants began articulating what they needed from others, what they could offer, and what stood in their way.



Image 3&4: activity of "turning values into action".
Facilitator combined constellations and puppet tokens, asking participants to draw the relationship of values (green: synergy, red: tension).

What emerged was not just an inventory of actions, but a clearer sense of the invisible negotiations required for future collaboration: "We have to come up with plans that our opponents will agree with..." or "I think networking and storytelling, film, and strategic communication...Other collaborations, money, knowledge, and co-creation of stories. There is no point in our little bubble narrative if we don't connect." These moments revealed that value tensions, when openly explored, can become starting points for shared strategy in actions, not just problems.

Afterwards, facilitators prompted further, "What is then the key ingredient that you can use the most to do that?" It raised the plenary conversation between participants. People shared aloud what actions they can take and what the obstacles are out there. For instance, "My specific thing is related to connecting the needs of the people and experts. I bring in scientific expertise. I am trying to get funded and partnered in the direction I value..." It actually also brought out what their resources are, in a way, creating the possibility for value exchanges.

This illustrates an important facilitation insight: synergy is often easier to notice than tension, just as agreement is more comfortable to express than an undesired or contrary viewpoint. Yet in value-centered collaboration, it is the productive use of tension that pushes the conversation toward deeper understanding. **Making tension explicit— naming the roadblocks, acknowledging value clashes, and perhaps mapping resources can create the ground for more grounded and realistic collaboration.**

To wrap up here this moment raised the third critical design question:

? **How might we help participants surface tensions explicitly? And instead of resolving them as conflicts, guide participants to see tensions as meaningful signals that deserve to be held and worked with?**

These How Might We questions from Chapter 2.2, Identifying Challenges in Value-Centered Discussion, informed my design targets, and together with Chapter 3.3, Constructing the Liminality Framework: Safe-Brave-Panic, formed my design criteria for the design of micro-experiments. All these will be disclosed in Chapter 3.5, Design Implication- Where Brave Space Becomes Essential.

Reflection

These early observations resonated with some findings from the literature review about value discussion among multi-stakeholders. Additionally, having respectful disagreements to acknowledge diverse perspectives, seeing the absent voices, and the importance of making value tension explicit, also motivated me to understand the environmental conditions that support sensitive value-centered discussions and help participants navigate these tensions.

In the next chapter, we will explore the theoretical foundation of the psychosocial space (Safe Space, Brave Space) and psychological Safety, uncovering the environmental factors that foster open communication.

2.3 STUDYING PSYCHOSOCIAL SPACES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

These bodies of literature offer complementary perspectives on how individuals navigate risk, expression, and vulnerability within group settings, especially in contexts that require both openness and productive tension.

2.3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFE SPACE & WHY IT MAY NOT BE ENOUGH

As discussed in the introduction and the previous chapter, challenges in multi-stakeholder dialogue emerged. Some problems identified in the literature became more explicit as participants engaged in conversations centered around values. Though previous researchers such as Green & Sergeeva (2019) noted, “Value is not fixed, but dynamically emerges and evolves through stakeholder interaction, identity formation, and narratives,” this collaborative process seemed to miss an environment that can hold the tensions inherent to value-centered discussions. Grimm and Reinecke (2024) similarly emphasize the facilitator’s role in cultivating common ground as a prerequisite for meaningful stakeholder dialogue. Thus, this is the time to confront these challenges and explore the environmental factors that influence group interactions.

A very useful practice that facilitators often use is to set ground rules, establish a Safe Space—an environment of **trust, openness, and support** that enables participants to share openly, where people feel accepted, heard, and free from judgment. In these contexts, safety often centers on both **emotional security, empathy, and confidentiality** (NASTAD, n.d.).

For instance, we can often hear in the facilitated group settings in which the facilitator says, “be comfortable and speak openly and freely about your feelings, challenges, and emotions as they arise” in the group.

Safe space often refers to a physical or relational environment in which **“everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule, or denial of experience”** (Graham, 2021; Heierbacher, 2007). Such environments are designed to encourage openness and reflection. For instance, in the Joint Value Creation workshops I observed, safe space principles allowed participants to share honest perspectives and engage in thoughtful reflection.

However, in value-centered discussion involving multi-stakeholder—marked by unfamiliarity, high diversity, underlying value conflicts, or unequal power dynamics—safe space may not be enough, as we miss the space where challenges are allowed and encouraged. To be more specific, over-emphasizing emotional comfort might unintentionally suppress the tensions that need to be surfaced for meaningful dialogue to occur. In these settings, the absence of structured discomfort may lead to premature consensus or shallow agreement, hindering the depth of value negotiation.

Over the past two decades, the idea of safe spaces has been contested, particularly within educational and dialogic contexts.

Scholars have pointed out the limitations of idealizing safety, arguing that prioritizing comfort and avoiding conflict may dilute the potential for learning, critical engagement, and personal growth (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Boostrom, 1998).

Boostrom’s influential essay (1998) argued that the metaphor of a totally safe classroom is misleading, since genuine learning inherently involves risk and discomfort. He suggested that meaningful growth often requires “the pain of giving up a former condition in favor of a new way of seeing things” (Boostrom, 1998; Arao and Clemens, 2013). In other words, if teachers and facilitators try to eliminate all tension or conflict (in the name of safety), they may also be eliminating the productive struggle through which critical thinking and insight emerge.

2.3.2 FROM SAFE SPACE TO BRAVE SPACE

According to the issues pointed out in the last chapter, many educators now argue that **some level of discomfort, tension, or even risk is not just inevitable but desirable for meaningful dialogue**. The shift toward this view marks a fundamental rethinking that supports my hypothesis that facilitators can play a pivotal role in building Safe Space, but even going further, to a supportive and active role to prompt participants in stepping out of their comfort zone, which might be even more helpful for them eventually.

To clarify this transition, it is crucial to both **distinguish and connect** the concepts of Safe Space and Brave Space.

Arao and Clemens (2013) introduced the term Brave Space in the context of social justice education, framing it as an environment where participants are encouraged to engage in serious, respectful, and empathetic conversations, even when such dialogues might be uncomfortable.

They challenged the traditional ground rules associated with safe spaces, evolving them to promote a more constructive dialogue; rather than “agreeing to disagree”, in the Brave Space, students are encouraged to “respond to controversy with civility”. Additionally, **rather than “not taking things personally”**, it emphasizes **“own your intentions and your own impact on others”**.

Scholars such as Boler (1999) and Rosenberg (2019) advocate for what they term a “pedagogy of discomfort” or “productive discomfort”—a deliberate design of emotional or intellectual unease that invites critical reflection. Rosenberg, for instance, writes, “I eschew safe space rhetoric... in favor of a pedagogical practice I call ‘productive discomfort’,” arguing that grappling with discomfort is a prerequisite for critical thinking and deeper understanding.

This view suggests that effective dialogue requires more than safety—it requires courage. Brave Space thus reframes discomfort not as a failure of facilitation but as an **intentional and constructive feature** of the interaction. It recognizes that conversations around race, power, values, or justice are inherently uncomfortable and asks participants to stay engaged through that discomfort (Arao and Clemens, 2013).

2.3.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND EMPATHY IN COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Psychological safety, defined as the belief that individuals can take interpersonal risks without fear of judgment or negative consequences (Edmondson, 1999), plays a pivotal role in fostering open communication and creativity within teams. As highlighted by Devathanan and Damian (2025), psychological safety enables participants to share ideas, engage in reflective discussions, and build trust. The ability to take interpersonal risks and demonstrate empathy is essential for fostering positive team experiences, especially for minority team members (Pedersen et al., 2022).

However, achieving psychological safety is not without challenges, particularly in diverse teams where differences in perspectives and experiences can slow its development. For instance, team members may struggle to voice opinions or contribute meaningfully until psychological safety is firmly established. Though primarily rooted in learning environments, these findings are applicable to value-centered discussion between multi-stakeholders, where similar dynamics involving diverse groups and minority stakeholder representation exist.

Devathanan and Damian (2025) highlighted interdependence as a critical factor in supporting performance within diverse teams, building on earlier work by Horwitz (2005). Interdependence fosters higher levels of psychological safety (Dusenberry & Robinson, 2020; Devathanan & Damian, 2025) by encouraging team members to rely on one another, which naturally opens the door to communication.

This aspect is particularly beneficial in complex projects, as such projects encourage collaboration rather than a divide-and-conquer approach.

Moreover, effective leadership plays a pivotal role in mediating idea-sharing sessions, significantly enhancing both team creativity (Huang et al., 2014) and levels of psychological safety (Mehmood et al., 2022). The interdependence among team members strengthens trust and psychological safety within the group, highlighting the importance of encouraging team-building and a collaborative approach during discussions centered on creating value, rather than merely talking without the opportunity to work together.

Lundgren et al. (2024) further elaborate on the qualities of a “Brave Space.” Facilitators should move beyond the illusion of a completely safe environment and embrace the unpredictability of collaborative settings. This includes recognizing and managing moments of “contestation”, “agonistic deliberation,” and perceived loss of control (Grimm et al., 2024; Arenas et al., 2020; Dawkins, 2021; Schormair & Gilbert, 2021; van Buren et al., 2021).

Such environments encourage participants to step out of their static knowledge bases and positions to co-create common ground. This perspective aligns with Green and Sergeeva (2019), who suggest that diverse viewpoints, rather than opposing paradigms, can serve as complementary “ways of seeing”, enriching the value creation process from a narrative perspective.

Take Away

A safe space allows people to show up; a Brave Space encourages them to be honest, vulnerable, and courageous. Although the discussion emerged and asked for attention to shift focus to Brave Space, I’m also asking myself whether I can find an in-between space between the duality. And the idea of **psychological safety** gave me a new perspective to investigate the relationship of these two concepts, finding out they remain interdependent. Psychological safety, as defined by Edmondson (1999), supports this idea:

a shared belief that one can take interpersonal risks without fear of punishment or humiliation.

This foundation is a prerequisite for Brave Space, as a non-defensive attitude to disagreement and bravery to respond to the “call-in” of challenges are established on openness, full participation, and trust.

Interestingly, these are also a psychological foundation that Safe Space provides for collaboration and healthy communication. The common ground in between, psychological safety, gave me a new perspective, a crystal clear explanation of the overlap between Safe Space and Brave Space.

I realized a crucial insight: **Brave Space must be built upon safe space, not positioned against it.** While the emergence of Brave Space in the literature might lead people to discard the old in favor of the new, a more nuanced reading shows that they are complementary.

Only when psychological safety is established can participants step out of their comfort zones and into the productive discomfort required for thought-provoking discussion and real transformation.

The exploration of literature regarding Brave Space, psychological safety, and Safe Space have illustrated a direction to address the How Might We questions. It highlights the need to establish psychological safety while also encouraging individuals to engage with challenges and navigate constructive discomfort. However, to answer the question: How can facilitators intentionally embody a Brave Space in response to the conditions that value-centered discussion needs? It is necessary to understand the differences in the facilitation of Safe Space and Brave Space, and to make the conceptual relationship of these spaces tangible. In the next chapter, I will continue unfolding the literature review with these questions below, and explain how I synthesized the field research and literature into my design of liminality framework.

03

FROM COGNITIVE TO TANGIBLE – PROPOSING LIMINALITY FRAMEWORK

3.1 From Binary To Liminal States

3.1.1 Cross-Disciplinary Awareness Of Brave Space

3.1.2 Stretching With Support: Brave Space As Constructed Discomfort

3.2 Facilitator's Role In Enhancing Group Dynamics: Invisible Designing In Collaboration

3.3 Towards A Framework: Synthesis Into Tangible Dimensions

3.4 Constructing The Liminality Framework: Safe–Brave–Panic

3.5 Design Implications: Where Brave Space Becomes Essential

3.1 FROM BINARY TO LIMINAL STATES

3.1.1 CROSS-DISCIPLINARY AWARENESS OF BRAVE SPACE

The binary framing doesn't seem right to describe the interdependent relationship shared between Safe Space and Brave Space. This was often presented as comfort versus challenge, security versus risk, but seemed too rigid to describe the emotional complexity I encountered in value-centered discussion. This led me to a series of questions:

Is there a spectrum that better illuminates the relationship between Safe Space and Brave Space?

If stepping into Brave Space is essential, what defines its threshold?

And more importantly, what happens when participants are pushed beyond that threshold—too far, too fast?

To address this puzzle, I turned to the concept of **liminality**. In contrast to binary logic, liminality describes transitional states, moments of being “*in between*” (Turner, 1969). Recent literature extends this idea into creative and collaborative domains. In particular, Soekijad, Laurey, Berends, and Huysman (2025) in their study *How Innovation Consultants Perform “Liminality Work” in Helping Others to be Creative*, examine how consultants intentionally design and manage liminal space, where consultants **stretch participants beyond familiar patterns by encouraging experimentation** while also **providing guidance and structure** when needed. It helps clients explore uncertainty, suspend judgment, and reframe habitual thinking.

Their work is not just to introduce new tools or methods, but to hold people at the threshold, skillfully navigating this dynamic to empower clients and enhance their creative capacities.

Additionally, I believe the redefinition of Brave Space is supported across many disciplines beyond the design field, in similar terms. In education, for example, discomfort has long been acknowledged as a condition for deep learning. Bolter (1999) frames this as a “pedagogy of discomfort”, where students are invited to critically examine their assumptions through emotional and cognitive unease. Similarly, Rosenberg (2019) rejects the idea that safety is always desirable, instead advocating for “productive discomfort” as a condition for transformation.

These pedagogies align closely with the idea of Brave Space not as a static zone, but as a designed encounter with uncertainty. Educators construct this discomfort carefully, not to harm, but to help students face what is difficult, contradictory, or unknown, while offering support and reflection to sustain the stretch.



Figure 6: Finding Your Challenge Zone (2024)

A similar logic can be found in physical training and psychological resilience practices. In sports and endurance training, the notion of “progressive overload” suggests that growth only occurs when individuals push slightly beyond their comfort zones — enough to create strain, but not so much as to cause injury. Ultrarunner James Stewart (2016), reflecting on his experience with intentional discomfort, describes how *“pushing your self-imposed boundaries expands the playground.”*

In psychological therapy, techniques such as exposure therapy follow a similar principle: incremental encounters with discomfort allow individuals to build emotional tolerance and eventually reframe what they perceive as threatening. Across these practices, the ability to stretch without breaking is cultivated through carefully moderated, relationally supported challenges.

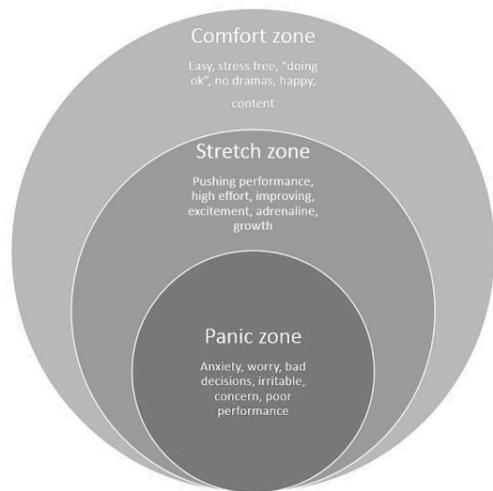


Figure 7: Find the outer limits of your comfort zone
– James Stewart (2016)

These parallels reinforced my growing hypothesis: that Brave Space is not an emotional destination, but a designed liminality experience. It is not a place where people are constantly brave and feel tension, but rather a setting where they are encouraged to take risks in the presence of others and facilitation.

Just as in learning or training, the goal is not to remove discomfort, but to ensure it remains constructive, to maintain a level of challenge (sustain the stretch to Brave Space) just long enough for transformation to take root.

3.1.2 STRETCHING WITH SUPPORT: BRAVE SPACE AS CONSTRUCTED DISCOMFORT

Based on this synthesis of theory and current findings, I developed a three-zone framework to conceptualize how participants move through emotional states in value-centered collaboration. Rather than viewing Brave Space as a fixed or a binary concept contrast to safety, this framework positions it as a liminal state, situated between psychological comfort and emotional overwhelm.

The framework consists of three experiential zones, as shown on the right side:

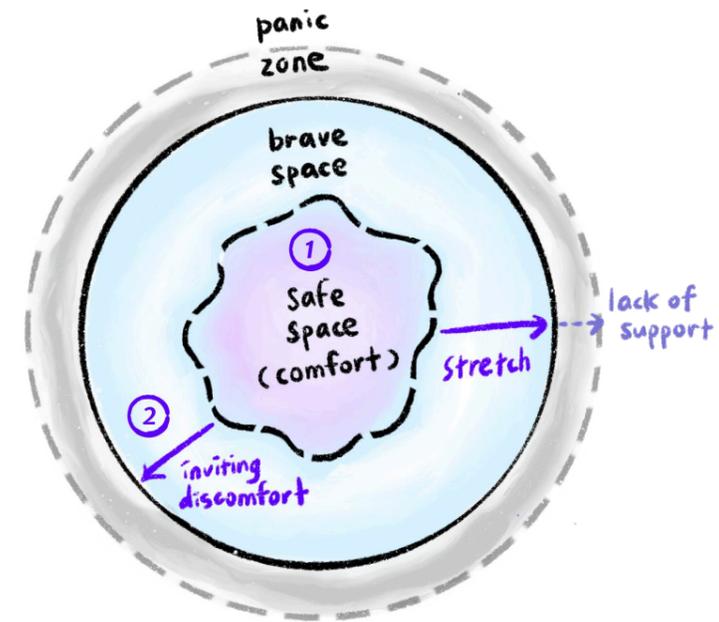


Figure 8: Cognitive Model of Brave Space Liminality Experience:
The fluidity nature of Safe, Brave Space

Safe Space (Comfort)

Environments where individuals feel emotionally secure, accepted, and unthreatened. This space allows people to express themselves without fear of judgment, rejection, or harm. It is essential for building trust and encouraging initial engagement. However, if overemphasized, it can become excessive comfort — participants may remain polite but disengaged from deeper tensions, avoiding the emotional risks necessary for growth or value confrontation.

Brave Space (Constructive Discomfort)

Learning environments that encourage individuals to engage with controversial issues directly, emphasizing honesty, sensitivity, and respect. It encourages respectful disagreement and equal participation, without personal attacks. Participants are invited to stretch beyond their comfort zones, like taking risks and engaging with challenges, vulnerability, or uncertainty.

Panic Zone

It may happen at the moment of a psychological state of overload and a lack of emotional safety. When participants feel attacked, exposed, or unsupported, their coping capacity is exceeded. This may lead to classic stress responses — freezing, shutting down, defensiveness, or withdrawal. Unlike Brave Space, discomfort here is uncontained and disorganizing. Rather than fostering learning, it drives participants toward self-protection and disengagement.

3.2 FACILITATOR’S ROLE IN ENHANCING GROUP DYNAMICS: INVISIBLE DESIGN IN COLLABORATION

Before discussing how facilitators can embody Brave Space through design, I conducted a literature review to understand the facilitator's role and the tactics they employ in facilitating participatory scenarios, as illustrated by case studies shared by previous scholars. In the previous chapter, we discussed research on organizational behavior and psychological safety. Specifically, team psychological safety, which encourages interpersonal risk-taking, is positively correlated with learning behaviors and creativity (Edmondson, 1999; West, 2002). Therefore, exploring the related field of creativity could also suggest the tacit knowledge of fostering psychological safety and creating a Brave Space.

I was curious what it takes for people to think differently, more boldly, more critically, more creatively, especially in group settings? That question led me to capture the underlying connection between the space for fostering creativity and the environment needed for courageous engagement, trying to identify the invisible design and tacit knowledge out there.

In the creativity field, it is shown that Bravery is also connected to creativity. Richards (2010) offers a compelling framework distinguishing two types of bravery that are inherent in the creative process:

O1 Bravery within is described as **the challenge of confronting oneself, overcoming mental blocks, and being non-defensive and open**. It involves accessing and integrating inner material, including unconscious content or aspects of the *"shadow"* and rejected past, for greater balance and integration.

O2 Bravery without relates to **taking a stand and challenging the status quo in one's environment and the world**. It is contrasted with mindless conformity. The everyday creative person is described as being able to resist such pressures because they are open to experience, non-defensive, **non-conforming, courageously questioning, alert, and aware**.

It showed the underlying similarity between fostering a creative environment and creating a Brave Space where transformation and new way of thinking are fostered to emerge.

Bravery is not just a mental state that one passively owns, but can be a deliberate choice to take; it involves potential discomfort with the action of confronting, and a very individual work of the inner dialogue to accept new things. These insights helped me recognize a shared psychological basis between creative practice and Brave Space facilitation. Both require individuals to take risks: to speak honestly, to engage discomfort, and challenge preconception. Both depend on environments that support this process, what Richards calls a *"rich, safe, and accepting outer environment"* that values mistakes, developing and accepting inner mental processes and varied states, fostering two types of bravery, and encourages openness to difference.

Rasmussen (2003) underscores the facilitator's role in multi-stakeholder collaboration by highlighting the value of fostering creativity and cooperation. He introduced the metaphor of *"boyish playfulness,"* characterized by **spontaneous, informal interactions that promote innovative collaboration**. This approach creates a collective flow where participants feel free to explore ideas without fear of judgment, aligning with the principles of psychological safety and empathy critical to building a brave space.

Kolb and Kolb (2022) offer a compelling perspective from experiential learning, demonstrating how facilitation techniques can support participatory practices. They advocate for an *"inside-out"* approach, in which facilitators tap into learners' intrinsic motivations and prior experiences. Rather than transmitting knowledge, facilitators create environments that foster reflection and meaning-making. These settings allow participants to engage deeply with their experiences, promoting both personal and collective growth. Similarly, previous educational studies suggest that structured reflective practices can significantly improve empathy levels, thereby strengthening team dynamics (Chen & Forbes, 2014).

Drawing on these ideas, I defined a few characteristics that may support embodying a rich, safe, and accepting outer environment that Brave Space calls for:

Engagement With Discomfort	Encourages participants to lean into challenging conversations, recognizing that discomfort can be a catalyst for growth.
Challenge By Choice	Individuals are invited to challenge themselves beyond their comfort zones but also are empowered to decide their level of engagement and participation.
Own Your Intentions And Impact	Participants are asked to be mindful of their words and actions, taking responsibility for both intent and potential impact.
Boyish Playfulness	Highlights the value of spontaneous, informal interactions in promoting creative collaboration. Creates non-judgmental, exploratory group dynamics that foster trust and psychological safety for taking risks.
Inside-Out Facilitation/ Introspective	Advocates tapping into learners' intrinsic motivations and experiences to support reflective learning. Aligns with the participatory approach of value-centered discussion by centering participants' voices and enabling sense-making.
Reflection & Empathy	Reflective practices significantly improve empathy and strengthen team dynamics. Supports the empathetic and relational foundation of Brave Space.

Table 3. Summarize findings of the facilitation tactics that support embodying Brave Space

Just as creativity collaboration benefits from diverse backgrounds and open environments, Brave Space also calls for respectful recognition of difference. I believe the way groups are composed and facilitated matters in value-centered discussion. It raised my curiosity to investigate how facilitators foster a space where diverse experiences are seen as essential to meaningful collaboration. The work by Soekijad et al., (2025), allowed me to explore this through understanding how consultants help others engage creatively.

The case studies featured scenarios of collaborative work between multiple stakeholders, offered both theoretical grounding and practical insights into how facilitators actively create in-between spaces where participants suspend assumptions and co-create something new.

This facilitation study provided not only inspiration but a bridge toward reframing Brave Space as a designed space for transformation, linking courage, discomfort, and creativity through intentional facilitation. I summarized the facilitator's tactics from the case study, articulates how it was effective in the case, and discusses my reflection on the approaches in the following points.

O1 Create a community and shared responsibility

In the case study, the innovation consultant emphasized the importance to **create a community and shared responsibility**, as described, *“We need to have clients that are not only part of the project when it is important, but who feel co-ownership during the entire project.”* The innovation consultant changed participants **from passive roles to co-owners** by reinforcing the importance of participants' contribution by sense-making and letting participants do *“action, actually go and make it.”*

My learning from this example is that people are more likely to foster a sense of ownership, creating their own meaning through shared experiences due to emotional investment and hands-on engagement.

O2 Continuous alternate challenging and construct unfamiliar settings

As discussed previously, there is an underlying similarity between fostering a creative environment and creating a Brave Space. One significant example is that they both emphasized challenges as important factors. Not only facilitator's guidance, but also the ground setting can be an entry point for the challenge.

For instance, creating a challenging scenario for participants, asking them to step out of their comfort zone. As the innovation consultant noted, *“We do not allow scientists to present from a podium at a scientific institute – their own context – they have to present in a ‘new setting’ which is a bit strange and unfamiliar to them.”* What comes after the first challenge is the continuous provocation: *“After the presentations, others are challenged to criticize the expert’s perspectives.”*

In this case, I noticed that innovation consultants continuously **challenge participants and design tasks to push them out of their comfort zone with unfamiliar settings**. In contrast, the rest of the people are given power to challenge experts, which **equalizes the hierarchy that exists in the group composition**.

Although it is not discussed in the case study, I see it as a designed condition that the facilitator offered, which stretched and supported both sides to be courageous. It displays a critical attitude to perceived limitations, questioning preconceived notions, and inviting others to do the same.

O3 Responsive guiding and role changing

The final case that inspired me was the importance of being a responsive facilitator. Depending on the phase of the workshop and the nature of the activities, facilitators need to remain neutral and attuned to the participants' needs in order to make appropriate adjustments. In this example, the innovation consultant reduced his or her involvement by shifting back to a facilitator's role at the end of the discussion. Specifically, taking on the role of a "community manager," focusing on community building, while also ensuring that responsibility remained with the client.

In this scenario, the same person adapted his role in response to the group's needs. This not only involves knowing when to step in and when to step out, but also how to present their role in front of the participants. It is essential to create space for participants to take responsibility for their results or to be more involved and provide guidance as needed.

Create A Community And Shared Responsibility	Fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility through collaborative effort and community work.
Continuous Alternate Challenging And Construct Unfamiliar Settings	Creating a new scenario encourages people to leave old patterns, stepping out of their comfort zones to complete tasks and interact with one another.
Responsive Guiding And Role Changing	Facilitators tailor engagement and guidance to meet participants' needs, fostering co-ownership and shared responsibility by allowing space for mistakes and knowing when to intervene or withdraw.

Table 4. Summarize findings of the facilitation tactics that support embodying Brave Space

In this section, I began to develop a clearer understanding of the facilitation approach that guided the embodiment of Brave Space based on my learnings. The next chapter will present a comprehensive overview, integrating insights from field research and theoretical studies into a cohesive view and concept diagram.

3.3 TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK: SYNTHESIS INTO TANGIBLE DIMENSIONS

SCOPE | TRANSITION EARLY FINDINGS TO DESIGN REFERENCE

In the previous section, I started to develop a clearer understanding of the facilitation approach that informed the embodiment of Brave Space based on my insights. In this upcoming chapter, I will provide a comprehensive overview that integrates findings from field research and theoretical studies into a cohesive concept and diagram. After continuously exploring additional aspects that need to be brought to light, it is time to converge the findings and introduce the design framework later on.

In value-centered discussions, it is rarely the tool alone that can create transformation and reforms in how people express themselves. More often, it also has to do with the structure provided, when the facilitator asks questions and provides guidance, the timing of a question, the tone of a prompt, and the presence or absence of silence, which shapes the environment for participants to speak with courage. Additionally, it is not only the characteristics and disposition of the participants that influence their willingness and readiness to take risks; the group's responses, the facilitator's ability to manage tension, and the overall social and emotional safety of the space also play significant roles. These elements are the conditions that determine whether participants are willing to step out of their comfort zone.

To make these conditions more tangible and actionable, I identified four key dimensions that consistently appeared across field observations and theoretical studies. In the following paragraph, I will explain how the data analysis is conducted (also as shown in Figure 9), and how it supported the generation of these four dimensions.

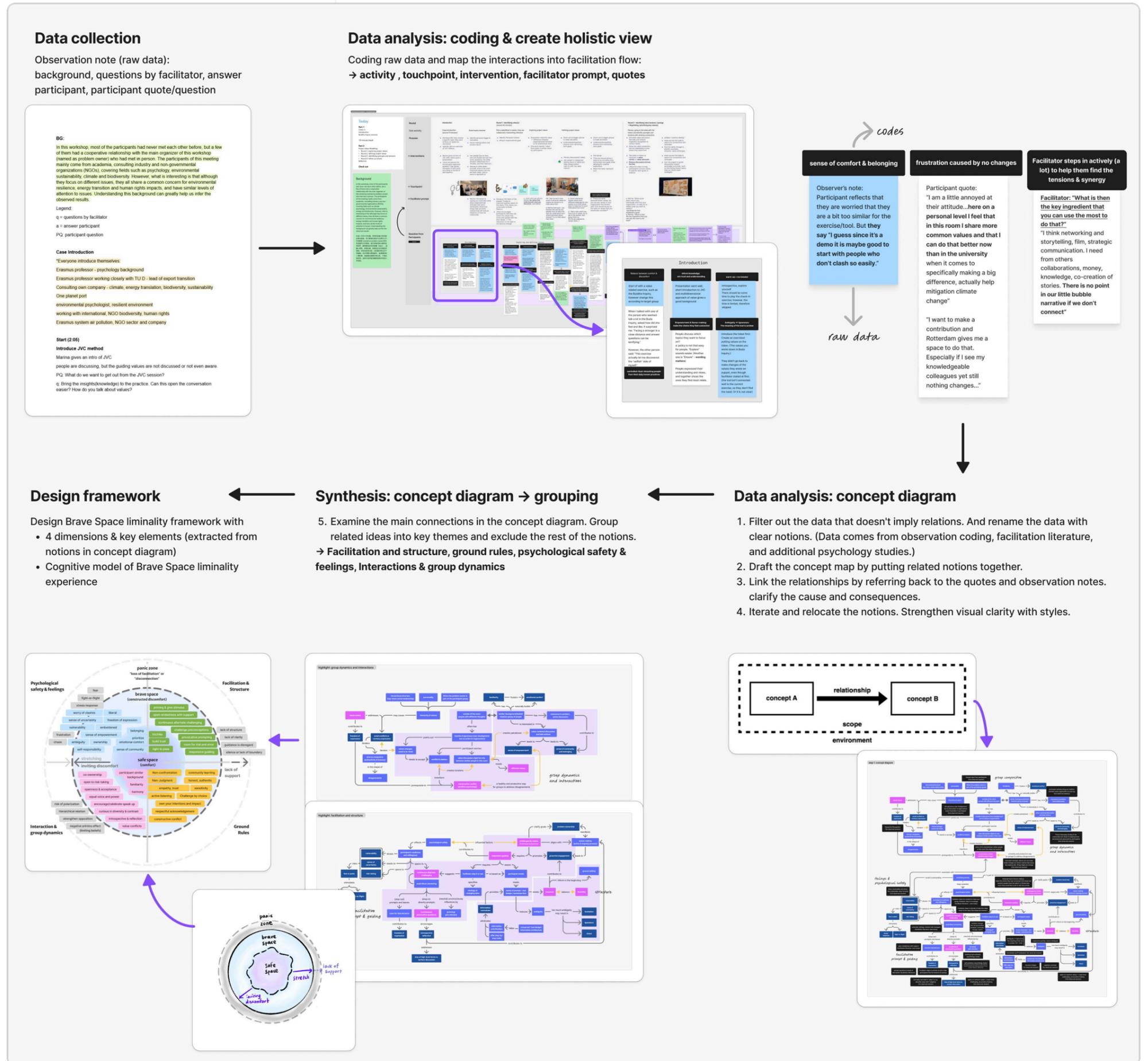


Figure 9: Process of data analysis (Design Framework will be discussed in the next chapter)

Due to the complexity and vast amount of qualitative data, I adopted concept diagrams as a visual analysis method to illustrate how different notions and ideas relate to one another. A concept diagram is a visual representation of interconnected ideas that clarifies meaning for both the designer and the audience (Wodtke, 2021).

While qualitative analysis inherently involves interpretation, concept diagrams help make the researcher's mental model more transparent by externalizing relationships between ideas. In this way, they can reveal how a system is perceived or experienced by its users (Jarango, 2018).

The process of creating concept diagrams was highly iterative. It began with a few initial notions, linked together using verbs to represent relationships. As more content was added, the diagram expanded, often becoming overly complex or chaotic, which signaled the need for iteration.

This method was particularly useful in my case for communicating complexity because it embraces incompleteness: the diagram can remain open-ended and expandable as new insights emerge from the data. Figure 10-11 shows how I started with a single connection to a holistic collection of relationships.

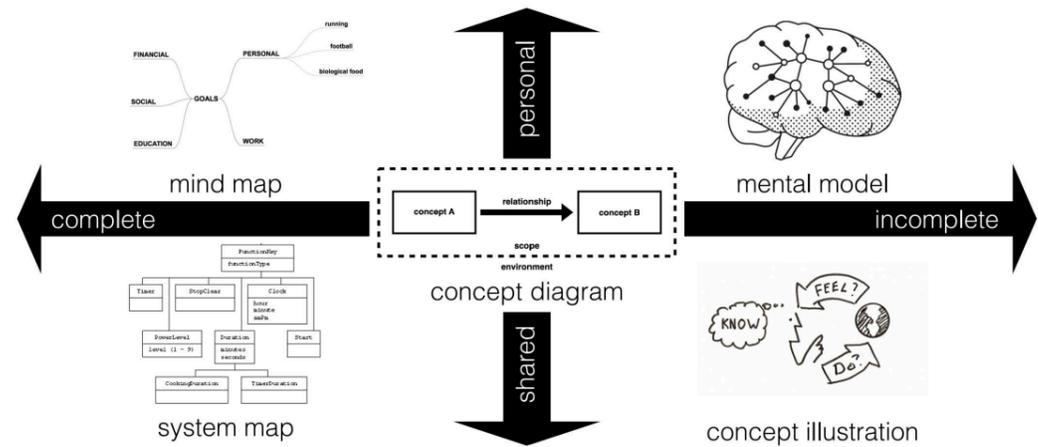


Figure 10: Comparison of different diagrams – adapted from a workshop presentation by Peter Boersma (UX camp, 2025)

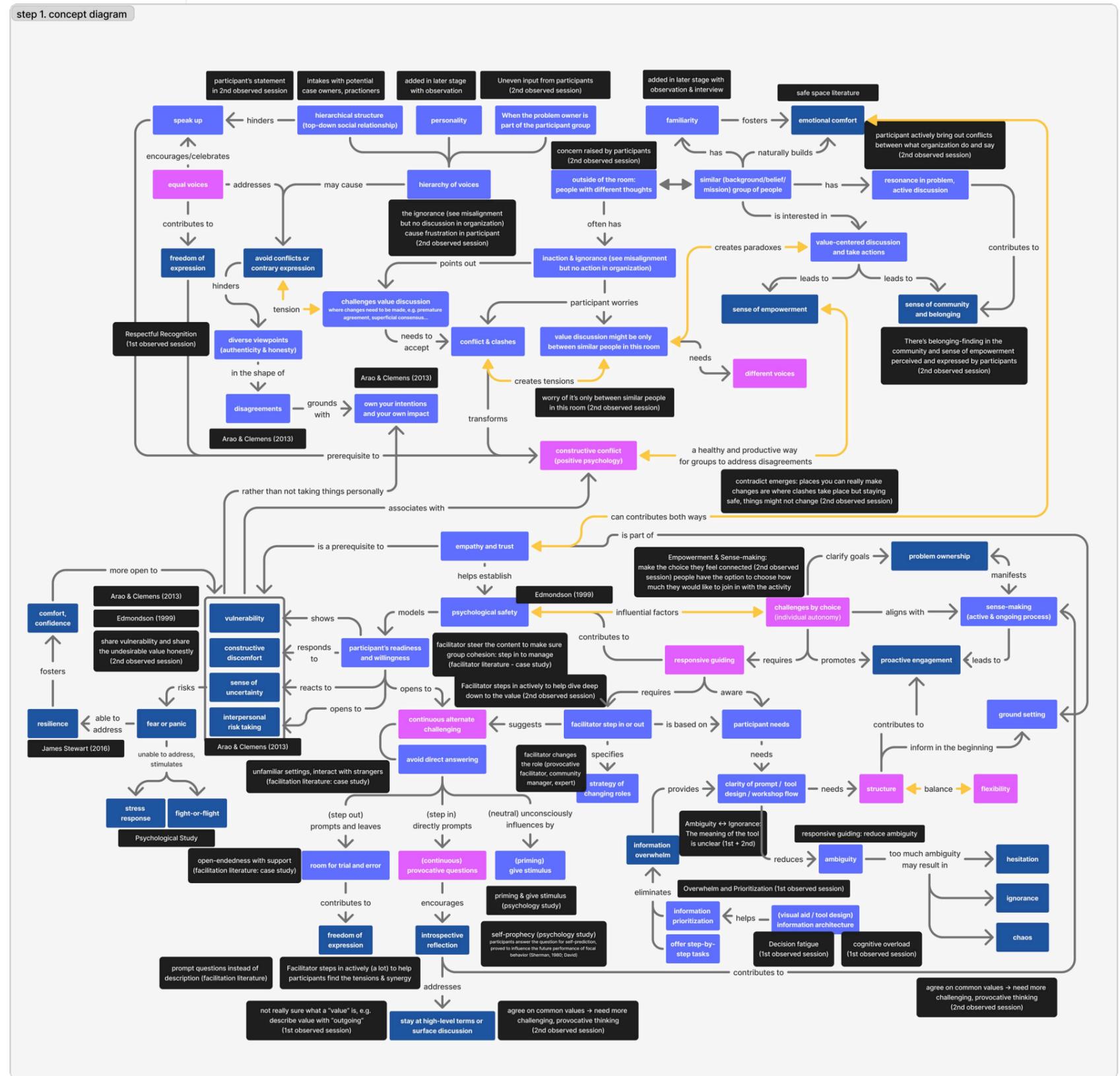
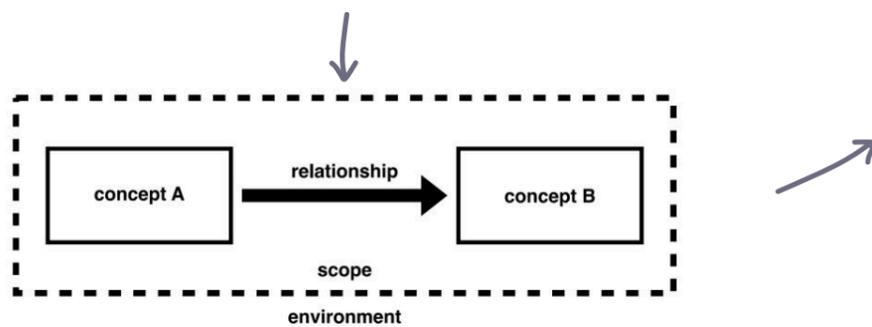


Figure 11: Process of drafting the concept map (codes in black: some original sample of the codes, inspiration from theoretical studies, e.g. facilitation case study, additional psychology theories)

My process of making concept diagram are described below:

O1 Filter & Translate

Filter out the data that doesn't imply relations. And rename the data with clear notions. (Data comes from observation coding, literature review, case studies, and additional psychology theories.)

O2 Draft the Concept Map

Draft the concept map by putting related notions together. Link the relationships with “verbs”, refer back to the original quotes and observation notes. Clarify the cause and consequences.

O3 Iterate & Styling

Iterate and relocate the notions. Strengthen visual clarity with styles.

O4 Share

Examine the main connections in the concept diagram. Group the related ideas that are in the scope into key themes and exclude the rest of the notions. This action of “zooming in” and “grouping” can highlight the partial landscape and enable others to understand your story.

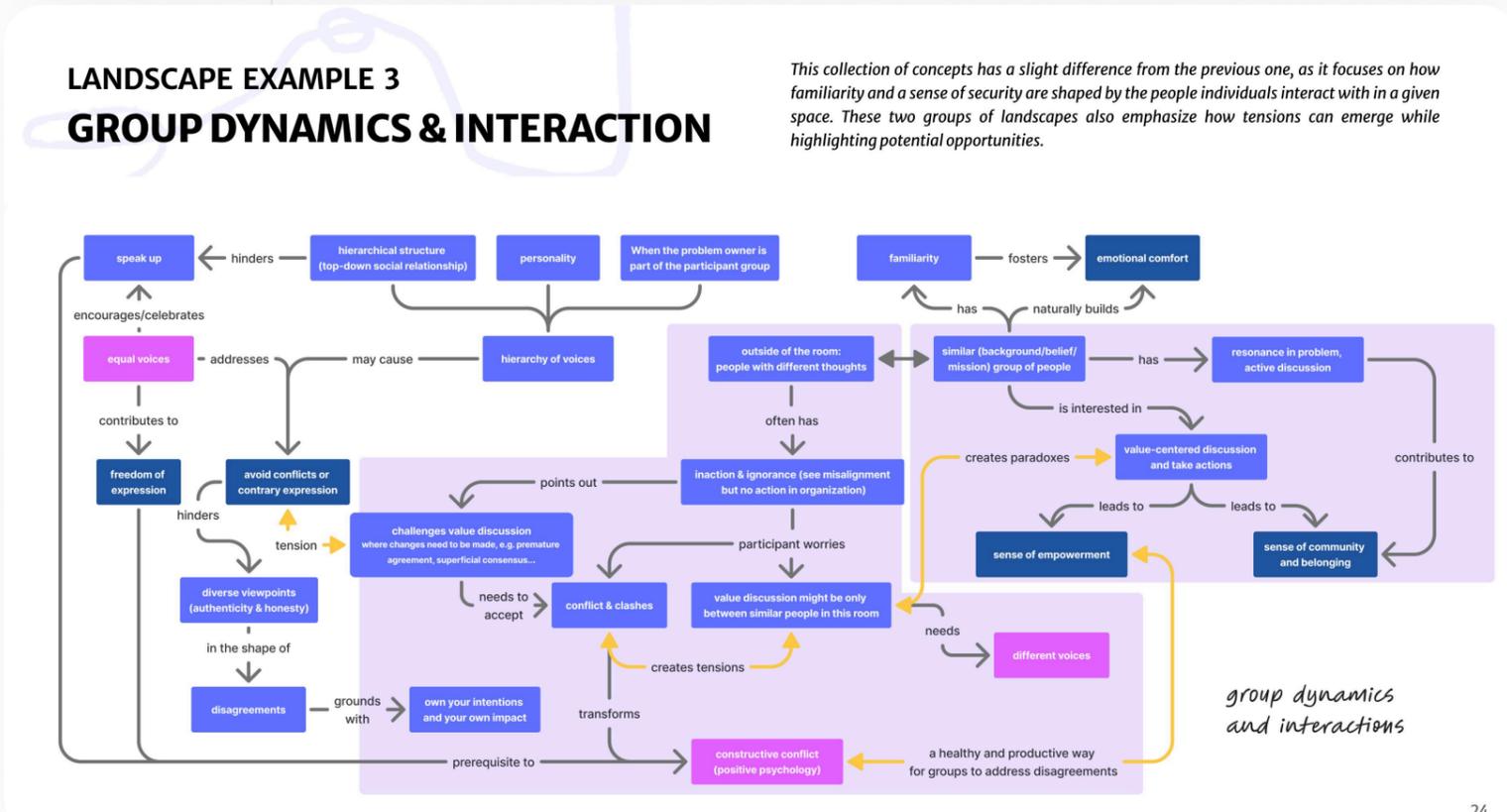
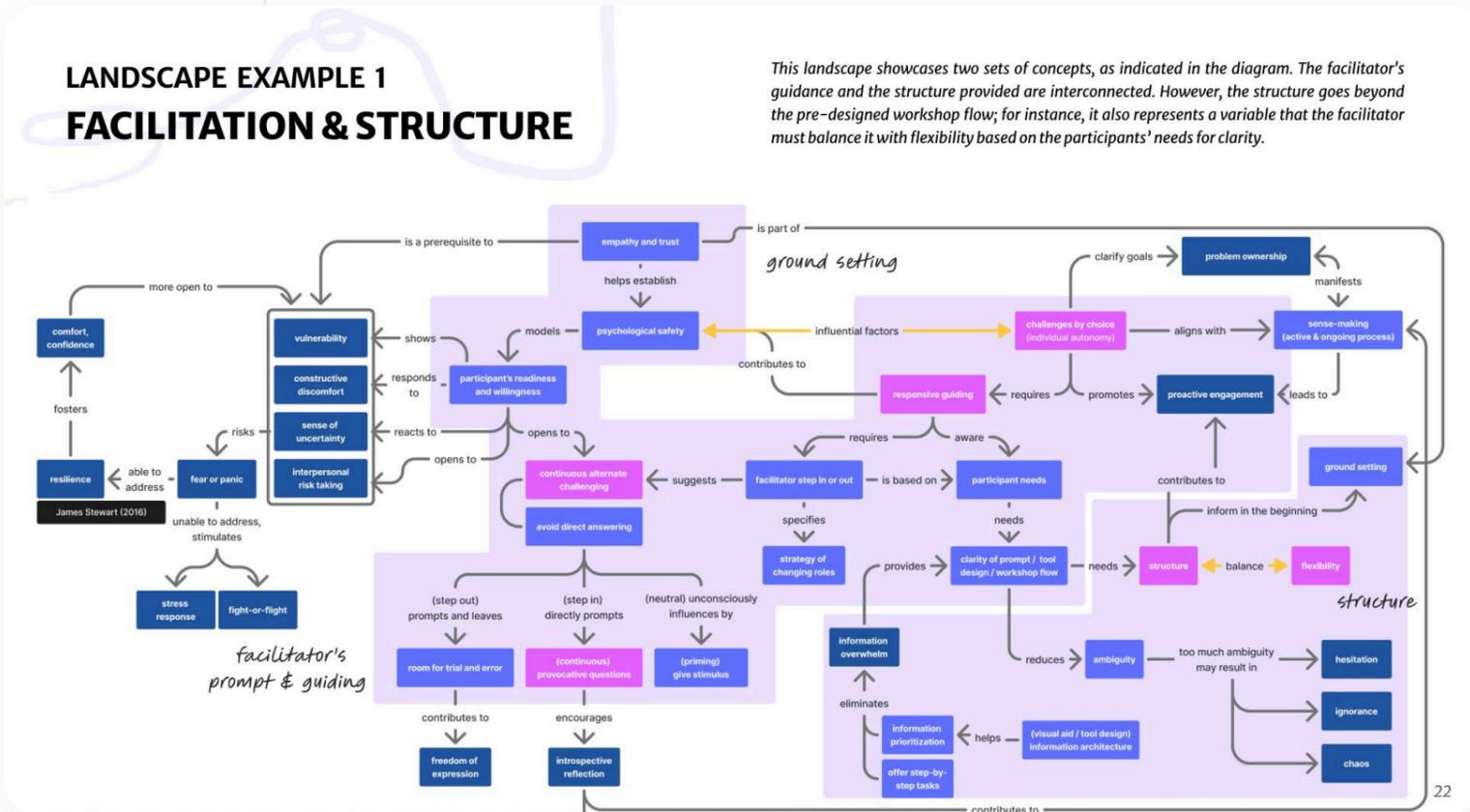
Transitioning from the initial data coding and analysis (the board of facilitation flow) to the second and third data filtering and analysis (concept diagram), I integrated the two observations and insights from literature studies into a systemic understanding of the concept relationships. While it can be expanded continuously and even iteratively co-designed by multiple people, at this stage, it became clear to me what kinds of factors can be influential in the design phase, and how to advance it to the next stage.

Echoing Jarango (2018) and Wodtke (2021), I view the concept diagram not only as a process of convergence and analysis but also as a reusable storytelling tool. It informs users about the interdependence and connections among various concepts. I believe this approach effectively showcases the logic behind the findings and creates a meaningful “landscape” that highlights both the relational and emotional aspects of the system, as I emphasized at the beginning of my research. In my final design handbook, titled “*A Field Guide To Embody Brave Space*,” I also included an explanation of how to read and utilize the concept diagram, complete with examples.

As illustrated in the graphs on the right side, I extracted key themes from the concept diagrams and categorized them into four dimensions. These dimensions represent significant factors that shape group interactions and discussions surrounding values.

Figure 12–13: Categorizing notions into meaningful “landscapes” – example pages from the final design handbook

The four dimensions are: (1) facilitation and structure, (2) group dynamics and interaction, (3) feelings and psychological safety, and (4) ground settings (ground rules). These dimensions not only define the scope of Brave Space but also assist facilitators and designers in diagnosing and reflecting on what influences a participant's readiness to engage in difficult conversations. Collectively, they provide a framework for examining the relational and emotional architecture of collaboration.



Dimension	Definition	Relevance to Brave Space
Facilitation & Structure	The way activities are framed, paced, and guided — including use of language, silence, and emotional provocation.	Shapes the emotional rhythm of the session and participants' readiness to step into discomfort safely.
Group Dynamics & Interactions	How participants relate, listen, disagree, or hold power — both verbally and nonverbally.	Influences whether individuals feel socially supported or threatened when expressing divergent perspectives.
Feelings & Psychological Safety	The internal emotional states participants experience throughout the session.	Determines how Brave Space is felt from within — whether one feels secure, fear of confrontation, or feels engaged and open to challenge, etc.
Ground Settings (Ground rules)	The explicit and shared agreements that guide participation and social interaction.	Affects the perceived legitimacy and safety of speaking up, especially when expressing unpopular or risky ideas.

Table 5: Explanation of the 4 key dimensions synthesized with the concept diagram

While each of these dimensions may seem independent, it is their interplay that matters, as the concept diagram shows. For example, a powerful facilitation prompt might fall flat if the group dynamic is hierarchical or if psychological safety has not been established. Conversely, even a well-structured session can lead to panic if emotional cues are ignored. Thus, Brave Space is not merely the result of “good process”; it is an emergent condition built through strategy that includes deliberate design conditions, active emotional attunement, constructive collaboration, and responsive guidance.

This perspective may challenge some traditional facilitation approach, which tend to prioritize procedural clarity and structure without addressing underlying emotional fluency. If Brave Space is rooted in psychological safety, as previous researchers have indicated, then the emotional states of participants should be regarded as primary data—signals to be interpreted rather than noise to be managed. Making Brave Space possible requires more than just managing a sequence of activities; it involves reading the room, adjusting the tempo, and knowing when to pause, push more, or step back from discussion as a flexible facilitator.

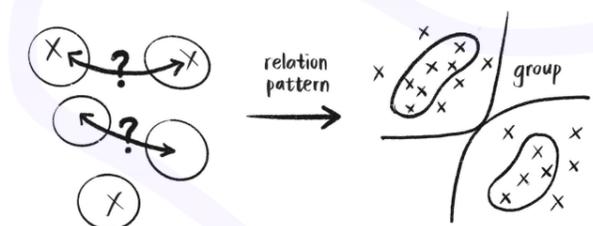
By articulating these four dimensions, I aim to offer not a checklist, but to invite facilitators and designers to pay closer attention to the invisible forces that shape a group's capacity for bravery. In the next chapter, I will dive into each dimension to elaborate on the signals that facilitators and designers can be aware of. Likewise, you could take them as design parameters that can be designed when you prepare your workshop session, or evaluated afterwards.

3.4 CONSTRUCTING THE LIMINALITY FRAMEWORK: SAFE–BRAVE–PANIC

The **Safe–Brave–Panic liminality framework** was developed by integrating theoretical concepts and synthesizing findings introduced in the previous sections. It began with an inquiry into the nature of Brave Space, followed by the construction of a cognitive model that captures the liminal experience participants navigate between states of comfort and panic. Through clustering themes from concept diagrams, four key dimensions were synthesized, which informed the foundation and structure of the framework.

Brave Space, characterized by constructed discomfort, is conceptualized as a psychological and relational threshold—the in-between zone where participants move beyond safety but have not yet reached panic. The framework visualizes this as a continuum of three zones—Safe, Brave, and Panic—shaped dynamically by both facilitator interventions and participants' subjective perceptions.

Importantly, this framework goes beyond being a mere map of emotional states; it is intended as a design compass for facilitators and designers. It supports the evaluation of group emotional dynamics and guides the creation of appropriately challenging experiences. Specific design parameters and behavioral signals relevant to value-centered discussions are mapped onto the framework, offering actionable insights for designing and adjusting guidance or intervention in real-time.



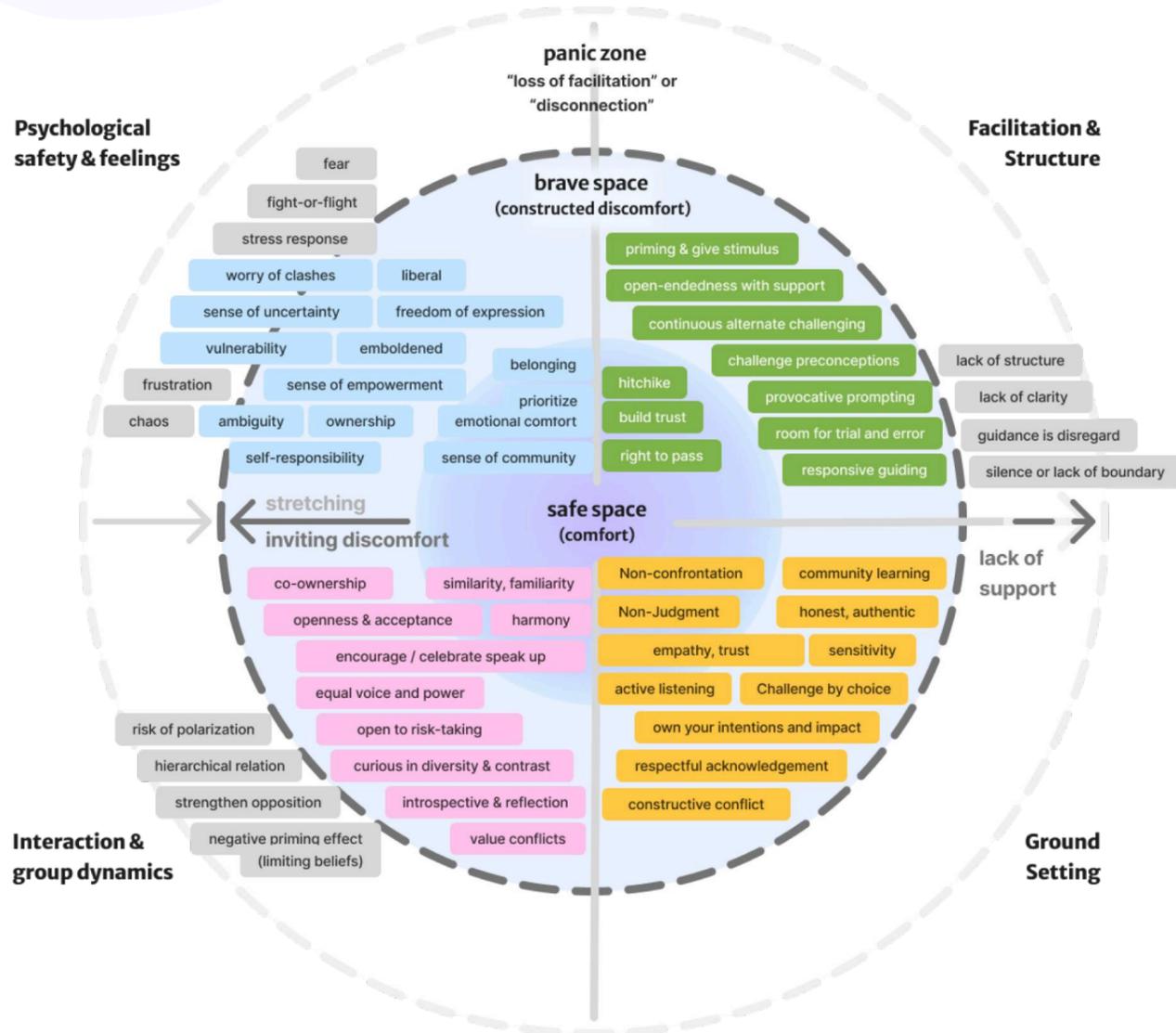


Figure 17: Safe-Brave-Panic Liminality Framework: Brave Space as a designed liminality experience

The development of the Safe-Brave-Panic framework was not intended as a theoretical work, but as a practical lens to guide design. The next question stands with a reason: **we need to target the design goals, not merely defining what Brave Space is, but when and where it becomes essential.** This highlights the importance of evaluating situations in practice and pinpointing specific design touchpoints where intentional interventions and facilitators' active guidance are needed.

3.5 DESIGN IMPLICATIONS: WHERE BRAVE SPACE BECOMES ESSENTIAL

SCOPE | IDENTIFYING DESIGN LEVERAGE POINTS

Through close observation of joint value creation sessions, three key moments emerged where participants experienced friction during discussions centered on value. These moments serve as design indicators for when a Brave Space should be utilized. In Chapter 2.2, we highlighted the main challenges encountered in value discussions, and in Chapter 3.2, we explored the facilitation tactics employed to encourage participants to step out of their comfort zones and engage with the necessary challenges for change.

In this chapter, we will discuss the “How Might We” questions that I proposed previously (the initial opportunity-finding phase), and illuminate how to use Brave Space liminality framework to leverage the challenges into design opportunities.

Brave Space embraces the concepts of constructive discomfort and constructive conflict. It reframes moments of tension, disagreement, and emotional unease not as obstacles, but as a natural transition that enables transformation. The three guiding “How Might We” questions, each centered around a critical challenge identified during field research.

These questions were then distilled into key design goals and several criteria that need to be met to address the challenges. I also explained who will benefit from these conditions, providing a clearer understanding of their relevance to the participants.

Furthermore, the design goals were described as both tangible and intangible:

The intangible design goals can be achieved through various aspects such as ground setting, facilitation and structure, and fostering healthy group dynamics. More details were provided using the design parameters extracted from the Safe-Brave-Panic liminality framework.

On the other hand, the tangible goals were achievable through design interventions (activities), each targeting a key moment of the challenges. Throughout the field research process, I observed three recurring moments where facilitators played a critical role in sustaining value-centered discussion and supporting group dynamics. These patterns revealed these three pivotal moments where Brave Space proved not just useful, but essential to the design and collaboration process.

These three moments—(1) deep dive into values, (2) holding the clash of perspectives, and (3) flipping the tension—form the conceptual backbone of the micro-experiment designs presented in the following chapter. Each represents a liminal threshold, a psychological edge where comfort meets challenge, and where meaningful transformation becomes possible, if the space is intentionally designed to support it.

? *How might we create a space where participants from diverse backgrounds feel secure enough to express authentic (even contrasting) perspectives without fear of clashes/disagreements, allowing these differences to be respectfully recognized, even sparking interest in the values beneath them?*

O1 Deep dive into values

The first moment happened when the group started to talk about and identified values. Many participants initially stayed at the surface, agreeing on familiar words like “sustainability” or “community” without probing what those values truly meant to them. It was only when challenged by a facilitator’s prompt, a peer’s story, or a reflective pause that they began to move from shared terminology toward personal interpretation. This shift—from comfort to Brave Space—is where deeper honesty begins: Why do I think this matters? Why do you see it differently? This moment requires the psychological readiness to be questioned and to question others with care.

? *How might we create a psychologically secure environment that invites diverse voices (that were originally outside of the room) in the collaborative process, with an equal stage for all stakeholders to be heard?*

O2 Holding the clash of perspectives

The second moment arises when differing perspectives are introduced into the conversation. This can happen through contrasting stakeholder interests or divergent worldviews. While participants often recognize these differences on an intellectual level, they rarely engage with them on a relational level. Brave Space becomes critical here. It creates a container for perspective clashes to unfold without immediate resolution, allowing participants to stay with disagreement long enough to see what new understanding might emerge.

? *How might we help participants surface tensions explicitly? And instead of resolving them as conflicts, guide participants to see tensions as meaningful signals that deserve to be held and worked with?*

O3 Flipping value tensions

The third moment is when tensions become visible. The instinctive action for most will be to try to resolve or smooth over the conflict, and might originally take it negatively. But by making tension explicit, there's room to think about how to work with it, instead of ignoring or solving it. Brave Space reframes value tension not as a threat, but as a neutral signal, helping people recognize its nature, which consists of two important values that people collectively acknowledge, though it may contradict each other in some situations. The question becomes not how do we fix this? but how do we flip the situation as the signal shows up?

Design Goals and Participant Needs

Intangible

• **Main criteria:** Participants feel brave to express their perspectives without fear of clashes/disagreements
Invites participants deliberately step into Brave Space or stretching them into Brave Space with facilitating support.

Who benefits from it?
Everyone in the room

Tangible

• **Main criteria:** allow differences to be respectfully acknowledged & spark interest in the values beneath the opinions
Recognizes the core values behind different perspectives fosters a shared/collective understanding among individuals.

Who benefits from it?
Everyone in the room

Intangible

Main criteria: a psychologically secure environment
Encourages team interdependence, which naturally opens the door to communication (Dusenberry & Robinson, 2020; Devathanan & Damian, 2025).

Who benefits from it?
People might have different levels of mental readiness. Creating a psychologically secure environment can support people in expressing themselves, and prepare the ground for stepping out of their comfort zone (with higher openness to challenges, vulnerability, sense of uncertainty and taking interpersonal risk).

Secondary criteria: an equal stage

Who benefits from it?
Prevents some participants from being marginalized and not feeling like expressing themselves or speaking up. No matter their expression types, personalities, and knowledge base.

Tangible

• **Main criteria:** invites diverse voices
Creates “boyish playfulness” “non-serious” role-playing exercise to promote perspective-changing. Includes perspectives of stakeholders who are originally outside the room.

Who benefits from it?
direct/indirect stakeholders whose values might not easily be heard and discussed.

Tangible

• **Main criteria:** surface value tensions explicitly & navigate tensions
Supports all stakeholders in engaging in constructive conflict, prioritizing values, and then identifying value tensions. (Tension consists of two values that are both considered essential, but might create conflict with each other.)

Who benefits from it?
It can help all stakeholders to understand the value tension, and clarify the next-step action to work with the tension.

Design Parameters

Facilitation & Structure:
(considering individual distinctiveness & group interaction)

- Responsive guidance
- Alternative challenging & provocative prompting
- Encourage speaking up & reflection
- Information prioritization / step-by-step guidance (depends on level of ambiguity)

Ground setting:

- Own your intention and impact
- Challenge by choice

Focusing moment:
This happened when the group started to talk about and identified values. Many participants initially stayed at the surface, agreeing on familiar words like “sustainability” or “community” without probing what those values truly meant to them. It was only when challenged by a facilitator’s prompt, a peer’s story, or a reflective pause that they began to move from shared terminology toward personal interpretation. This shift—from comfort to Brave Space—is where deeper honesty begins: Why do I think this matters? Why do you see it differently? This moment requires the psychological readiness to be questioned and to question others with care.

Ground Setting:

- Clarity of workshop flow / goals
- Clarity of ground rules (feel safe to share everything, no judgement, challenge by choice...)

Facilitation & Structure:
(considering individual distinctiveness & group interaction)

- Responsive guidance
- Encourage speaking up and/or introduce silence response...
- Room for trial and error / allow mistakes (Less structure, more flexibility)

Group dynamics:

- Group acceptance & openness
- Individual's openness & readiness to challenge/risk-taking/uncertainty/vulnerability

Focusing moment:
When differing perspectives are introduced into the conversation. This can happen through contrasting stakeholder interests or divergent worldviews. While participants often recognize these differences on an intellectual level, they rarely engage with them on a relational level. Brave Space becomes critical here. It creates a container for perspective clashes to unfold without immediate resolution, allowing participants to stay with disagreement long enough to see what new understanding might emerge.

Focusing moment:
The final moment is when tension becomes visible. The instinctive action for most will be to try to resolve or smooth over the conflict, and might originally take it negatively. But by making tension explicit and naming it, there's room to think about how to work with it, instead of ignoring or solving it. Brave Space reframes value tension not as a threat, but as a neutral signal, helping people recognize its nature, which consists of two important values that people collectively acknowledge, though it may contradict each other in some situations. The question becomes not how do we fix this? but how do we flip the situation as the signal shows up?

04

TAKING THE LENS OF BRAVE SPACE – DESIGN MICRO-EXPERIMENT

4.1 Goal Of The Micro-Experiments (MVP)

4.2 Design Method

4.2.1 Design Interventions And Value Tokens

4.2.2 Context-Mapping Tool Design: Experience Mapping

4.3 Reflections On Findings Of Micro-Experiments

4.1 GOAL OF THE MICRO-EXPERIMENT (MVP)

To answer my research question—how facilitation can intentionally embody Brave Space to support participants in navigating tensions in value-centered discussion—I focused on the key challenges identified in Chapter 2.2. In response, I developed three guiding questions and applied the Safe-Brave-Panic liminality framework as a practical lens to guide both design decisions and facilitation strategies, as shown in the last chapter.

The micro-experiment consists of three exercise modules, each designed to address a specific pivotal moment as defined in the earlier explanation regarding tangible design goals and focusing moments.

I hypothesize that the design of the intervention embodies the concept of Brave Space itself, aiming to achieve the tangible design goals outlined in the previous chapter. At the same time, intangible factors—such as facilitation, management of group dynamics, and establishment of ground rules—play an equally important role in supporting participants during the session. This, in turn, allows for the acknowledgment of diverse values and the productive navigation of tension. As illustrated in Figure 18, conducting micro-experiments enables me to test the tangible design interventions while also evaluating the effectiveness of the intangible facilitation approaches.

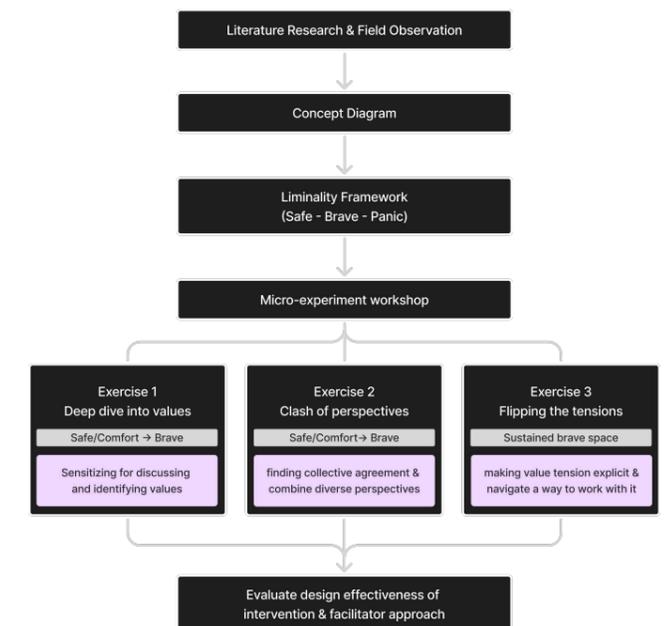


Figure 18: From theory to tested interventions. Each exercise targets a distinct liminal threshold to examine how Brave Space can be embodied and refined

The three exercise modules were connected to the key moments, and grounded in the liminality-based Brave Space framework, which highlights the importance of transitions—from comfort (Safe Space) to constructive discomfort (Brave Space)—as critical moments for learning and collaboration. Each exercise was designed to activate this transition: a **moment of stretch that invites participants to step across a psychological threshold into Brave Space.**

The workshop was structured with a purposeful sequence, **from sensitizing participants to reflect and talk about value authentically, to directly confronting the conflicts, and collaboratively creating a collective understanding of diverse perspectives, and eventually surfacing the real value tension all together.** The last step, the final goal of navigating tensions, would not happen if people didn't understand and try to identify what the essential values are to them.

This sequence was informed by my learning from field research, which revealed that people cannot effectively navigate value tensions without first being aware of the most essential values. The Brave Space framework supports this journey by holding space for discomfort, making it easier for people to face conflict, and recognizing the diverse values behind each perspective.

Table 6 shows the details of the focus of each exercise, how it is connected to the transition of the Safe-Brave Space, and the connection to the pivotal moments.

Exercise	Design Focus	Target Transition	Anchor Moment
1. Deep Dive into Values (Start with reflection)	Helping participants connect with their values and speak authentically. Testing participants' ability to question their own assumptions and articulate layered reasoning.	From Safe/Comfort → Brave (from "what I believe" to "why I believe it")	When the group started to talk about authentically and identified values: Why do I think this matters? Why do you see it differently? This moment requires the psychological readiness to be questioned and to question others with care.
2. Clash of Perspectives (Introduce contrast)	Creating space for disagreement & perspective clashes. Testing how participants handle contrasting values and how they react to purposeful conflict/discomfort when stepping into opposing roles.	From Safe/Comfort → Brave (holding multiple realities in tension. stepping outside my own role, realizing "where I stand depends on where I sit".)	When differing perspectives are introduced into the conversation. This can happen through contrasting stakeholder interests or divergent worldviews.
3. Flipping the Tension (Navigate value tension)	Guiding participants to recognize deeper value tensions from the diverse and conflicting views, and work with the tension. Test participants' ability to stay with tension, reframe it, and find constructive insight from it.	Brave Space (reframing conflict and discomfort into insight)	The instinctive action for most will be to try to resolve or smooth over the conflict, and might originally take it negatively. But by making tension explicit and naming it, there's room to think about how to work with it, rather than ignore or solve it.

Table 6. Explanation of Design Context

For example, the first activity asked participants to reflect on a particular value they find most important in project collaboration and share why this truly mattered to them. The second one prompted them to respond to a bold or divisive statement. Afterwards, identifying value tensions with the shared understanding of all perspectives. These exercises were designed to surface reactions to discomfort, challenge habitual thinking, and illuminate differences in perspectives.

4.2 DESIGN METHOD

ACTION AND EVALUATION | PROTOTYPING BRAVE SPACE THROUGH MICRO-EXPERIMENTS

This chapter explains how the three exercises in the micro-experiments were designed and how the overall workshop journey unfolded (see Chapter 4.2.1). These micro-experiments were positioned as **Minimum Viable Prototypes (MVPs)**:

- Small, low-risk experiments used to test the core hypotheses of the Brave Space framework and facilitation approach
- Designed to generate early feedback before scaling to real-world applications
- Functioning as a bridge between theoretical concepts and facilitation practice

By focusing on short, high-intensity moments rather than open-ended dialogue, the workshops allowed me to observe how people react and feel when they are prompted to step outside of their usual way of thinking or when they are placed in situations that create tension or reveal differences.

And through participants' reflections and discussion, I could verify if they identified themselves engaging in Brave Space experience through my design interventions.

From the Safe-Brave-Panic liminality framework to the practical design of micro-experiment, it served as an example to future designers and researchers to evaluate if Brave Space can be intentionally embodied and the difference can be recognized.

To capture participants' lived experiences and assess the impact of the design interventions, I developed an **experience mapping tool** inspired by context-mapping methodology. This tool enabled participants to reflect on their psychological states throughout the workshop. The methodology and structure of this mapping process will be explained in Chapter 4.2.2.

The resulting maps revealed when participants felt safe, brave, or in panic, offering insights into how different interventions may have influenced those states. While it is not yet fully clear what specific factors triggered each transition, a concluding group discussion was conducted at the end of each workshop to collect further reflections on how participants perceived and responded to the interventions.

4.2.1 DESIGN INTERVENTIONS AND VALUE TOKENS

The workshop was framed around a fictional collaboration scenario in which participants took on roles from different sectors of an organization. (See Scenario on the right side for details.)

However, they were asked to claim and phrase a role that they found strongly connected to their experiences or future self-identity (example of roles is provided, but they are encouraged to name a character that they feel really aligned with their identity). This narrative setup aimed to provide simulated settings while still enabling authentic reflection on value tension and dialogue.

Workshop Setting

- Two workshops were conducted in IDE, with students from three tracks.
- The participants had been re-allocated according to their familiarity with each other. In order to simulate the real scenario where people work together in different sectors and barely know each other. This is also for eliminating the deviation if the group starts with an advantage that they stay in their comfort zone.

Two observers were recruited and helped with the sessions while I facilitated the workshop. This helps reduce the facilitator bias when claiming double roles.

The following paragraph is a brief scenario to guide you through the storyline. You can find the full version of the **facilitator script** in the facilitator handbook.

Scenario

Before the first exercise, they are introduced to a scenario where the collaboration takes place in an organization.

"Imagine that you all play different roles in an organization. You work together on a project but represent different sectors."

(Additional notes for the readers: The same exercises were so conducted with a few groups of participants from the Dream Team of TU Delft. Dream Teams are student groups that work on various collaborative projects with several business partners. While it is outside of the main research, it proved workable in the settings with real stakeholders. In these cases, there is no need to introduce a fake case, but to introduce their real roles and responsibilities in the team.)

The second exercise comes with a scenario where people heard a bold statement from another colleague from the team. They hear the bold statement and have to show their genuine on it:

"Moving fast matters more than being inclusive and delivering good experiences. If the project takes more years to be ready, it's dead. Nobody will have confidence in this anymore."

People will then individually react to the bold statements with changing perspective exercise. At the end of this exercise, the script is introduced again:

"During the meeting, another person raises the questions again, and the project owner decides to allow any of you to equally share your thoughts and feelings on this topic."

It encourages people to discuss with groups with a prompt like, "This is for the mutual success of this project; we need to have your collective understanding." Accompanied by actions of categorizing all ideas from the groups, and finding similarities or differences. This also includes the process to let them discover if these ideas are opinions or values. And if they can find the values underneath the different viewpoints.

The important collaborative values defined will then be brought to the final exercise to discuss an unavoidable value tension.

Throughout the workshop, I embedded specific facilitation tactics, such as role-switching, silent reflection, which are applied for shaping the dynamics, creating chances to include marginalized voices, and also based on time limitation (Details can be found in exercise 2). The session was structured in three escalating phases:

O1 Deep Dive into Values

Participants were invited to identify their core value and were then challenged to defend it through layered questioning. Provocative prompts encouraged participants to explore internal contradictions or hidden assumptions behind their stated values. Participants are asked to ask each other questions repeatedly, "Why this value is important to you" and "In what conditions might this not be the most important value?" After they take turns, they will again ask each other a more provocative question. For instance, "If transparency slows down decision-making, do you still prioritize it?" The facilitator should let them understand that "We are here to help each other to think deeper by challenging, not meant for doubting."

To support them in identifying individual and collaborative value, I design a set of value tokens based on Framework as a basis for designing for divergent values (Bos-De Vos, M., 2020). The value tokens are designed as a playable tool and inspiration guide, emphasizing the importance of the "value level." By value level, I mean the big categories and the associated value words around each category. For instance, autonomy is a big category. Still, I might be able to clarify exactly under a specific context with a more concrete example: I find it important. I often prioritize fulfilling my needs for positive affective experiences, having an exciting life. This is because when people express what is important, they are more likely to express their personal experience and choices rather than directly point out a specific value.

	TYPE OF VALUE	MOTIVATIONAL GOAL	VALUE EXAMPLES		
VALUES AS GUIDING PRINCIPLES <small>Influence strategic decisions related to value co-creation and value capture (Petrova & Netem, 2017)</small>	OF INDIVIDUALS <small>(e.g. Schwartz & Brady, 1987)</small>	Human values	Enjoyment: pleasure, self-fulfilment, gratification, sensuous enjoyment, happiness at work, ... Security: physical safety, psychological / mental health, integrity, ... Achievement: achievement, competence, success, ... Self-Direction: autonomy, self-sufficiency, independence, intellectualism, ... Restrictive-conformity: conformity to social expectations, ... Prosocial: altruism (e.g. acting in best interest society/other), benevolence, kindness, love, ... Social power: dominance, status, influence, social control, power, leadership, authority, ... Maturity: wisdom, tolerance, faith in one's convictions, deep emotional relationships, appreciation for the beauty of creation, ...		
		OF GROUPS <small>(e.g. Schwartz, 2008)</small>	Cultural values	Autonomy: intellectual autonomy, broadmindedness, curiosity, creativity, ... Embeddness: affective autonomy, pleasure, exciting life, varied life, ... Egalitarianism: social order, respect for tradition, security, obedience, wisdom, ... Hierarchy: equality, social justice, responsibility, help, honesty, ... Harmony: social power, authority, humility, wealth, ... Mastery: world at peace, unity with nature, protecting the environment, ... Ambition: success, daring, competence, ...	
			FOR PEOPLE <small>(e.g. Becker et al., 2010; Ravasi et al., 2012; Scherer, 2011)</small>	Use value	Utility: functionality, convenience, usability, efficiency, durability, time management, acceptability, appropriateness, compatibility, ... Well-being & development: health, comfort, safety, growth, knowledge development, ... Symbolic meaning: expression of identity, signal of social status, prestige, status, ... Emotional meaning: historic value, brand value, political value, aesthetic value, ... Fun/joy, pleasure, appreciation, ...
				Social value	Social propriety: human health, safety, security, justice, privacy, ... Social wealth: minimized labor exploitation, fair living wages, maximize opportunity for workers, efficiency, ...
				Economic value	Money: income, profit, wealth, affordability, rents, economic sustainability, ... Other economic value: reputation, competitive advantage, innovation, commercial relationship, ...
	FOR PLANET <small>(e.g. Becker et al., 2013)</small>		Ecological / environmental value	Preservation of the planet: emission regulations / reduction, product safety, re-use of existing material, sustainability, long lasting responsibility, ...	

Figure 19. Framework as a basis for designing for divergent values. (Bos-De Vos, M., 2020)

To support value discussion, I realized that it is vital to guide people in a way that fits their thinking style, thus successfully bringing values to their forefront.

The value tokens have three simple but effective features, (1)By prioritizing the information into two sides of the value tokens, it minimizes the cognitive load for participants. (2)The form of tokens creates accessible and "I am allowed to mess them up" feelings like a broad game setup, encouraging active interactions compared to a full list of values. (3)The color of the cards and icons refers to the "type of values" which provide a visual guide for researchers that want to know what values have been discussed; however, it doesn't create extra distraction for the participants. (whole card set can be found in Appendix A)

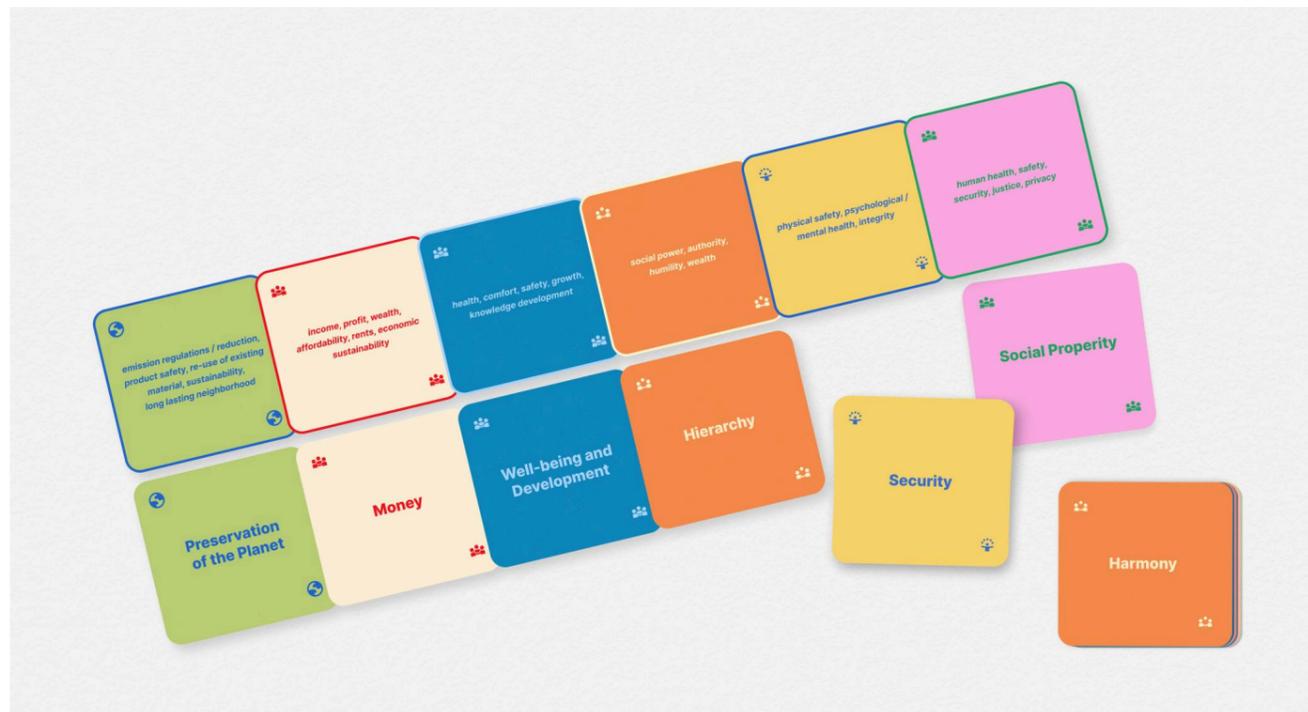


Image 5: Example of value tokens (front side and back side)

O2 Clash of Perspectives

A bold, controversial statement was introduced to trigger disagreement. Participants responded silently from their assumed roles, and later switched roles to respond again—inviting them to step outside of their perspective and inhabit conflicting positions. This structure created opportunities for constructed discomfort and emergent tension.

This activity is happening on a shared board, featuring role-switching play. It is composed of four rounds: (1) silent writing - write from your current role, (2)silent writing - write from swapped role's perspective, (3)pair & discuss - revisiting all ideas & clustering, (4) plenary sharing - take the ownership and express your thoughts to the bold statements with the group.

The facilitation tactic of silent writing fosters transparency and creates a Brave Space for participants. Participants are encouraged to challenge or build upon/hitchhike others' ideas when they write down their perspectives, but without direct confrontation and thinking aloud contrasting opinions, they will feel safe to tell the truth and disagree. And when they cluster ideas, the shared board is mixed with diverse perspectives from all actors. It creates transparency needed for constructing a collective understanding, while it also creates ambiguity that is beneficial for speaking up with an anonymous overview.



Image 6: Silence Writing

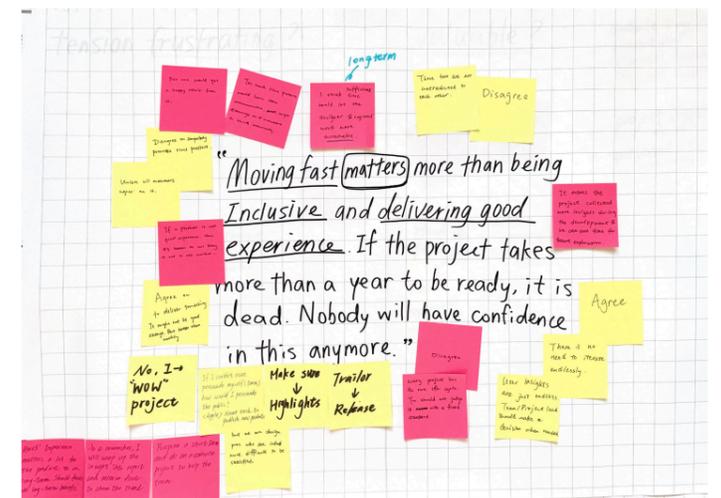


Image 7: Silent Writing (yellow-original role, pink-switching role)

O3 Flipping the Tension

There was a smooth transition from the second exercise to the final one, which involved pairing up and revisiting what had been written. To help participants move from conflicting perspectives to identifying the underlying values, I provided more structured guidance to encourage deeper thinking about the values represented in the various perspectives on the big board.

The first step was to group or cluster similar ideas and discuss them with the group. This was initiated with the prompt: "Can you see any similarities or differences between these ideas?" Other prompts I used included:

- "Are we seeing opinions, values, or beliefs?"
- "What are the essential values that we see here? Can you identify the tension between two values?"

In the final stage, participants named the tensions they experienced and reflected on them. Instead of "solving" the conflict, they were asked to reframe it: What would be lost if the tension disappeared? What action could emerge if we work with it, rather than against it?

This activity is called quick-fire reflections, guided by two questions:

- What makes this tension frustrating
- What makes this tension valuable?

After the first question, and then flip it the other way.

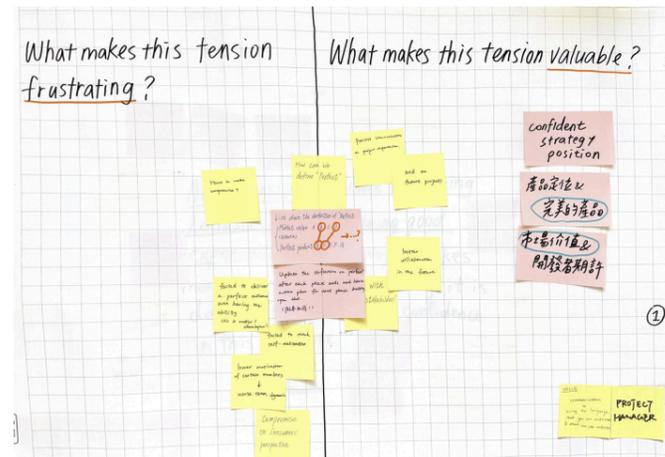


Image 8: Flipping the tension – discuss thoughts on tension and come up with action ideas (middle pink post-its)

Preparing the ground: Establishing psychological safety through role identification

As a starting point, participants were asked to choose a role within an organization that resonated with them—based on past work experience, project involvement, or future career aspirations. While example roles were provided, they were encouraged to define their own and explain their personal connection to it, as well as what the role represents in teamwork. (They were then asked to put the sticker with the roles on their chest in the session. Exchanging the sticker with one another during the changing perspective exercise.) Before the session began, they would also introduce themselves to the rest—what is my role, and what does it do and represent in the team, why do I feel connected to this role?

In the workshops hosted for the Dream Teams, I asked this question instead: "What makes you feel energized to work in this role?" So that they feel encouraged to share more about the things that make them happy or motivated. The rest of the people can also get a taste of what their job is about. This exercise established a foundation for participants to think and speak from a specific role, fostering deeper engagement with the scenario.

A critical component in fostering psychological safety within workshops is enabling participants to adopt roles that resonate with their experiences or aspirations.

This approach allows individuals to engage in discussions by challenging ideas without feeling personally attacked, thereby maintaining a respectful and open environment that facilitates three key determinants of organizational learning: speaking up, collaboration, and experimentation (Nembhard, I.M., & Edmondson, A.C., 2011).

Setting ground rules that emphasize critiquing ideas rather than individuals is essential in this process (Control, 2024). Such practices have been shown to enhance psychological safety, encouraging participants to express their thoughts and engage in constructive dialogue without fear of negative repercussions.

By encouraging participants to step into roles that align with their responsibilities and goals, facilitators create a psychological distance that helps individuals separate themselves from the ideas being discussed. This separation is crucial in preventing feelings of personal confrontation and supports a culture where diverse perspectives can be shared openly. Research indicates that such strategies not only promote psychological safety but also enhance team performance and innovation by allowing members to challenge each other's thinking constructively (Psychological Safety in Meetings, n.d.).

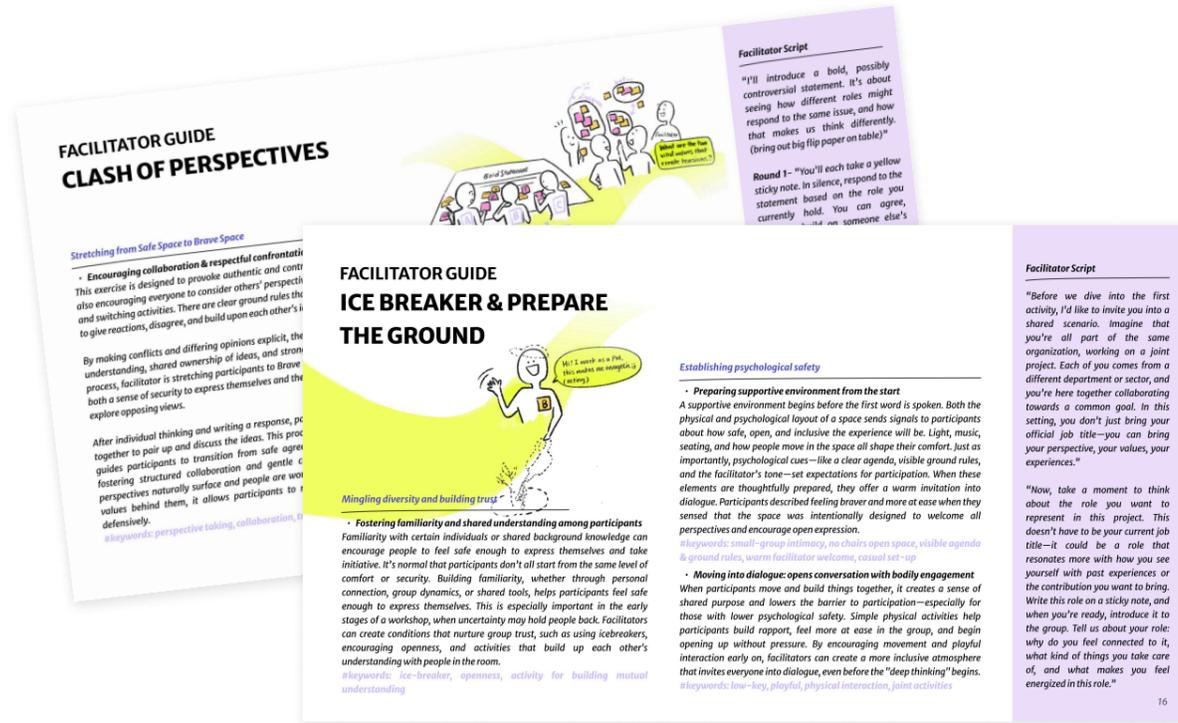


Image 9: Facilitator guide for the workshop: examples from the final design handbook

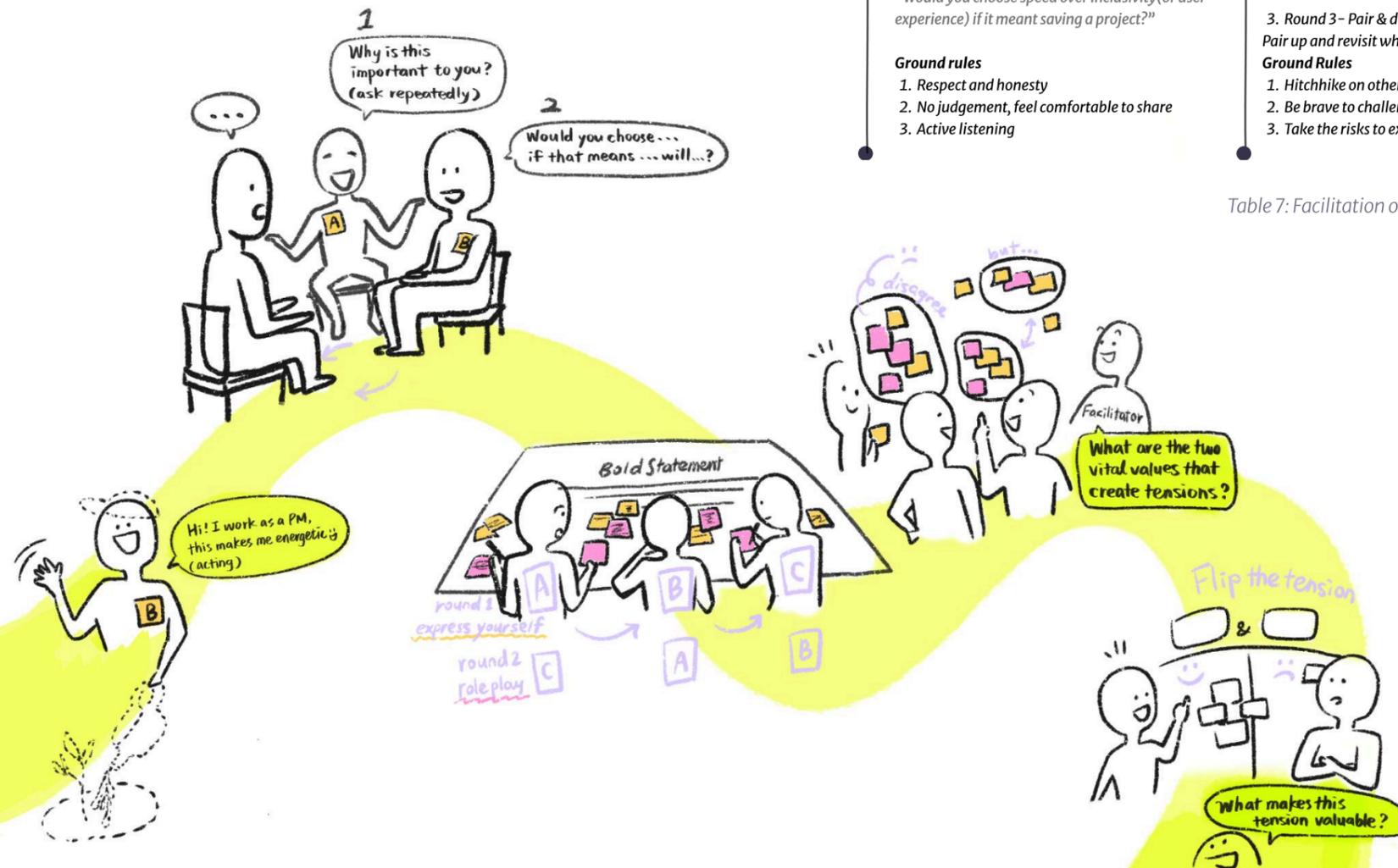


Table 7: Facilitation overview - workshop structure

1	2	3
<h3>DEEP DIVE INTO VALUES</h3> <p>Guide</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write down a value that you believe is most essential for project collaboration, based on your role (3-5 mins) 2. In pairs, challenge each other by asking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is this truly important to you? (ask the same question repeatedly) • Under what conditions would this NOT be the most important value? →(talk 2 mins) Take turns and ask the same questions to another person. 3. Ask each other one provocative question based on his/her proposed value (1 min each), e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “If transparency slows down decision-making, do you still prioritize it?” “Would you choose speed over inclusivity(or user experience) if it meant saving a project?” <p>Ground rules</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Respect and honesty 2. No judgement, feel comfortable to share 3. Active listening 	<h3>CLASH OF PERSPECTIVES</h3> <p>Guide (Facilitator introduce a bold statement)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Round 1 - Silent writing from current role: (3 mins) Everyone grabs a marker/yellow sticky notes, responds silently to the bold statement on a shared board/poster. What you can do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree/disagree • Add a new thought • Build on / challenge other responses • Speak from your current role 2. Round 2 - Switch roles, write again: (4 mins) (Participants take off the role sticky note from their chest, and swap it with a neighbor, or the role that is different) Everyone grabs pink sticky notes, responds silently to the bold statement on a shared board/poster from the new perspective. 3. Round 3- Pair & discuss (6 mins) Pair up and revisit what's been written. Cluster ideas. <p>Ground Rules</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hitchhike on other's ideas 2. Be brave to challenge the ideas 3. Take the risks to express your thoughts & feelings 	<h3>FLIPPING THE TENSION</h3> <p>Guide</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take ownership & speak up what to prioritize: Now, everyone returns to your own perspective, what do you see? (5 min) *Prompt: Are they opinions, values, or beliefs? What are the essential values that we see here? Can you identify the tension between two values? 2. Name a tension that emerged in the last discussion. Which one do you think is most important and we couldn't ignore? (5 mins) 3. Quickfire Reflection- share with group (5 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes this tension frustrating? • What makes this tension valuable? <p>Ground Rules</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It's ok to speak up 2. Respect and honesty 3. Co-create our understanding 4. Make tension visible

Before session started
Ice-breaker (energizing & community building activity)
Role claiming (clarity of the role throughout the session)

Tool suggestion
value inspiration cards, post-it, pens, flipchart paper (A1), Agenda

Environment (designing for power balance)
small private room, casual room setting, sitting close but able to move: easily looking at each other while talking, (optional) provide some snacks

4.2.2 CONTEXT-MAPPING TOOL DESIGN: EXPERIENCE MAPPING

At the end of the session, I introduce the context-mapping exercise, which is a way to involve users as “experts of their experience” in design processes (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). It is a design research method used to uncover people's latent needs, values, experiences, and emotions by engaging them in reflective and expressive activities. It is especially useful when the design challenge is complex, sensitive, or highly contextual (Visser, Stappers, Van der Lugt, & Sanders, 2005).

I designed my own experience mapping tool (Appendix B) grounded in context-mapping principles, allowing participants to self-assess their emotional experience across the workshop phases. The tool can provide a tangible measurement and visual context to support researchers in investigating what participants feel and how it was triggered, by asking further questions based on participants' experience, and diving deeper into the reasoning.

The tool visualizes each sub-activity along a liminality spectrum—safe, brave, or panic—and invites participants to identify their experiences accordingly. In addition to this moment-by-moment mapping, participants were also asked to reflect on key feelings and interaction dynamics, such as vulnerability, empowerment, co-ownership, and a sense of risk-taking. Those are the elements that I identified in early research and synthesized into the signals of Safe-Brave-Panic experiences.

This dual-layered approach enabled me to gather both localized reactions to the intervention of each activity and overarching emotional patterns throughout the session. In the first and second micro experiments, I compared the patterns of participants' transitioning experiences within the entire group. I also asked certain participants why they identified with the Panic Zone at specific moments, which will help me provide better support to participants in the future. To summarize, by conducting two micro experiments as a pilot study, I aimed to understand what happened during the journey and learn from the feedback to further responsibly adapt my facilitation approach. More insights are detailed in the next section.

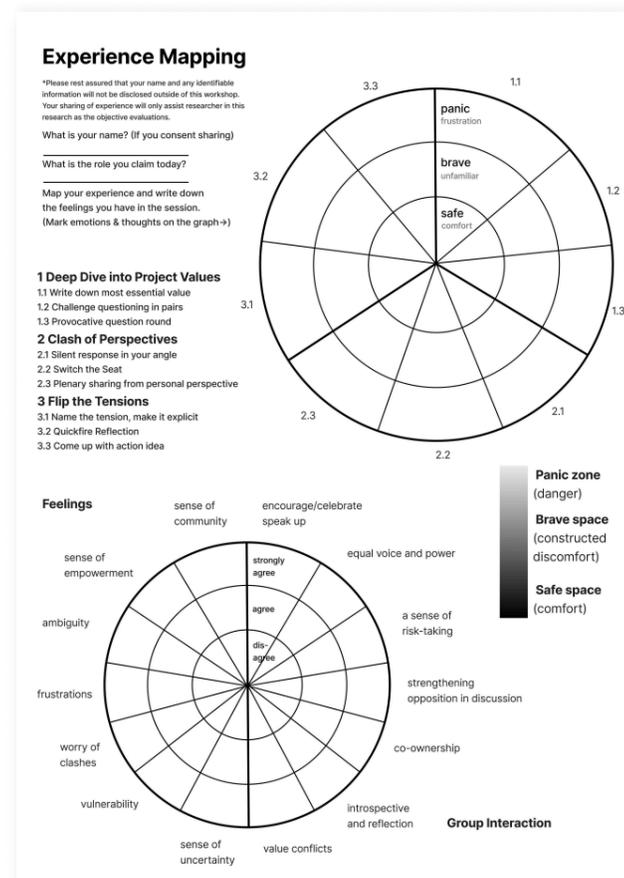
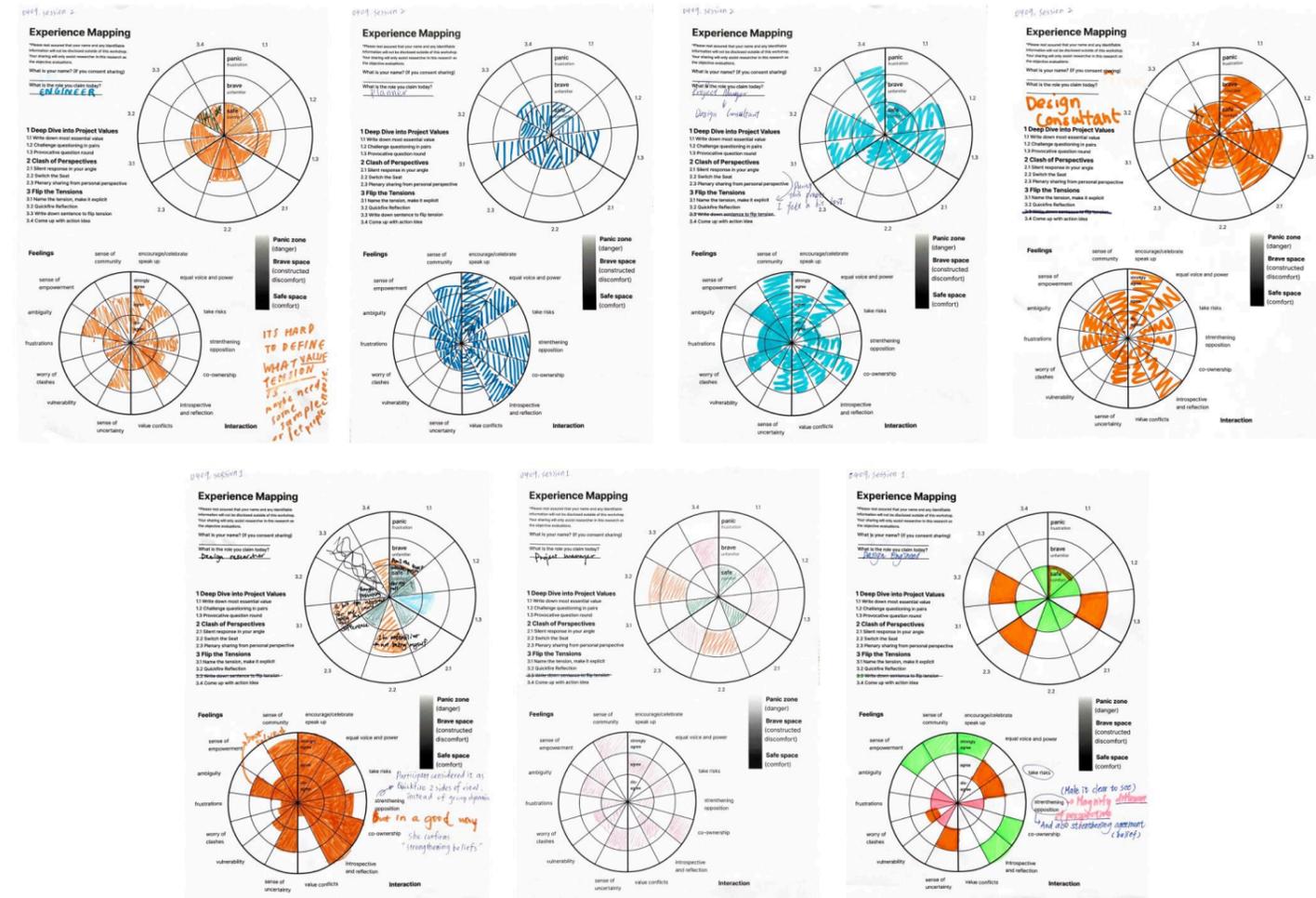


Figure 20. Experience Mapping Tool

Image 11: Results of the experience mapping from 7 participants in 2 micro-experiments

4.3 REFLECTIONS ON FINDINGS OF MICRO-EXPERIMENTS

In addition to the visual insights from the experience maps, I conducted a **short post-workshop group discussion** with participants to evaluate how they experienced the interventions. The purpose was to explore how facilitation influenced their ability to engage with constructive discomfort, and whether their sense-making of values shifted through collective discussion, and identify places where facilitators might need to step in actively.

The discussion began with prompts such as:

- How did you initially see this tension? Was that negative, neutral or positive?
- Did the flipping perspective change your view? Why?
- Is there any feedback on the exercises?

(Note: The group discussion is not a formal semi-structured interview, so the questions were formed as initial prompts that were easier to answer; however, after the conversation unfolded, there were more open-ended questions asked to understand the reasons behind their answers.)

In this chapter, I will share these insights with the categories of activities.

DEEP DIVE INTO VALUE: ESTABLISHING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND EXPANDING REFLECTION

The activity “Deep Dive into Value” served as a preparatory and sensitizing step. It helped participants establish a sense of psychological safety before engaging with more challenging conversations.

By gradually inviting reflection, instead of demanding immediate confrontation, it allowed people to warm up and mentally prepare, prevent them from taking a big leap. As one participant noted,

*“Starting with a deep dive was helpful. Because it already **gave us a sense of where others’ boundaries lie**, and what values might be non-negotiable.”*

Another participant shared how this process shaped her internal dialogue:

*“During the process of thinking about how to answer the questions, we start to **reframe how we see our values and the tensions we face**. I give up something that I don’t necessarily need to insist on, but I **don’t see it as a compromise**. You still keep truly important values.”*

This phase encouraged people to **loosen their grip on fixed positions**. Through group discussion, participants began to **take a more reflective and neutral stance toward their own beliefs**:

“When you think a value is important, you’ll find any kind of positive reasons to support your statement. But when people keep asking why, you will start questioning, maybe you are too stubborn about some of your ideas? Or are there areas where you can compromise? Or listen to the opinions of other roles.”

The participant added, *“Though I think I still keep it and not give up my values directly, I will **reflect and not only use a positive way to view my values**.”*

The workshop of the value-centered discussion also helped one of the participants making new meaning to her value:

“My understanding of one value expands into different angles. e.g., When I talk about ‘balance’, it stems from balancing project objectives, but I realize that it also works well with the tension between ‘perfect product & market expectations’.”

CLASH OF PERSPECTIVES: FROM CREATING CONTRAST TO SHARED COMMON GROUND

During the “Clash of Perspective” phase, participants began to adopt different stakeholder perspectives. This helped highlight how values and priorities shift depending on one’s position within a system. One participant who claimed to be a product manager, reflecting on the difference between roles, shared:

*“There is a very **big difference in values and prioritization from these two roles (PM and designer)**.”*

Initially, this contrast created friction. Participants found it difficult to agree on how to evaluate ideas because they were still anchored in their own role perspectives. However, the turning point came when one participant shifted the framing entirely:

*“If the team doesn’t have a good experience, it is **hard to create a good user experience**.”*

This comment resonated with others and marked the start of a shared understanding. From there, the group explored the tension that emerged from the bold statement, eventually reframing the conversation through the lens of collective identity. (from the surface of speed and inclusivity, to the underlying values that matter to them: company’s goal (profit, competitiveness) and employees well-being.)

In their final reflections, participants prioritized values not from individual or functional roles, but from the standpoint of shared experience—*“we are all employees.”* This shift enabled them to reach common ground through difference.

It’s noticeable that agreement and disagreement are both manifested when a standpoint shifts. Role playing broadens the perspectives, while in contrast, moving from different standpoints to mutual standpoints can foster common ground. The aim of this intervention is also to create a Brave Space where diverging perspectives can co-exist. This detour actually helps create deeper conversation, foster collective understanding, and develop a mutual consensus.

FLIPPING THE TENSION: MAKING DISCOMFORT DISCUSSABLE

In the final activity, participants were invited to identify and reframe value tensions. Initially, many found the term “value tensions” abstract and confusing. In one session, participants struggled to define what the project should prioritize. I stepped in to guide the process, asking, **“Do you find any similarities and differences between all these ideas?”** This prompted one participant to stand up proactively and said, *“Maybe we should cluster them.”* From there, the conversation gained clarity and got smoother.

What I learned as a facilitator was that participants benefit from having **small “mental ladder”** to help them move past obstacles. Providing just enough structure at the right moment made the discussion more fluid and accessible.

Out of my expectations, in this discussion, most participants viewed tension as a neutral thing, some noted the value of engaging with it directly:

“The process of noting tension is meaningful. Because if there's room to talk, there is a chance to find a solution to it. Perhaps due to my cultural background, discussing that is actually positive.”

Another person added, *“It’s good to discuss things in the company so that people can understand each other’s perspectives.”*

*This highlighted a key insight: when properly facilitated, discomfort can lead to clarity and alignment. But it requires a space where disagreement is not only allowed, but invited, with the proper **structure** to ensure participants don’t feel lost in ambiguity or feel overwhelmed.*

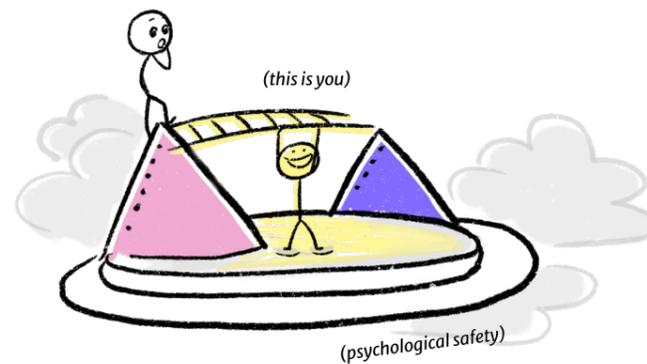
Reflection

When I first introduced the metaphor of the mental ladder, it stemmed from the facilitator’s role in providing guiding structures and prompts to help participants reflect more deeply. However, this concept reemerged later in the analysis of the research findings in Chapter 6—this time with a different emphasis. **The mental ladder was not only seen as a cognitive scaffold, but also as a way for the facilitator to embody brave space and support participants’ transitional experience from safe space.**

This interpretation moved beyond simply “providing structure” and highlighted the significance of **“building a sense of security to be brave”** and **“practicing responsive facilitation”** to accommodate the varying levels of mental readiness and psychological safety of different individuals throughout the process.



What you originally imagine about stepping into Brave Space



In reality, this is your steps to invite participants into Brave Space

Figure 21. Facilitators should prevent participants from taking a big leap; instead, support them with the “mental ladder”

05

CONTEXT ADAPTATION- EMBODYING BRAVE SPACE IN REAL LIFE CONTEXT

5.1 Design Transferability: Embed Brave Space In Climate Fresk Workshop

5.2 Validation Goal And Interview Guide

5.1 DESIGN TRANSFERABILITY: EMBED BRAVE SPACE MODULE IN CLIMATE FRESK WORKSHOP

Building upon the micro-experiments introduced in Chapter 4, the second iteration of the workshop was designed as a longer-format session that embedded value-centered discussion into a different context: climate change. Rather than creating an entirely new sequence, this design modularized the three core activities from the earlier experiments and integrated them into the Climate Fresk workshop.

This shift from prototype to application had two primary motivations. First, as discussed in Chapter 3.5, the design of the micro-experiments was based on identifying critical moments when Brave Space is most needed. These moments inspired the formulation of three design modules, each with a clear goal, that collectively advanced participants' ability to explore value tensions. The micro-experiment thus featured time-boxed, streamlined, and feasible, but was able to meet the design goals; it functioned as a Minimum Viable Prototype (MVP) that will enable testing Brave Space facilitation in highly focused value discussion, and make informed decisions for future development.

Second, a key insight from earlier field research and practitioners' intake was that **one size doesn't fit all**. Value-based collaboration is context-sensitive. **A single, fixed formula often fails to match the variety of real-world challenges. What proved more viable was the idea of a modular, adaptable approach—one that enables facilitators to select, combine, and adjust design elements according to the needs of a specific group or context.**

With this in mind, during the second loop of the spiral process, I sought an external collaborator and successfully extended the Brave Space design to a different context. While keeping the three foundational elements of the micro-experiment intact, I iterated the structure and facilitation techniques based on the lessons learned from previous experiments. Additionally, this time, the overarching goal of fostering value-centered discussion was shared and co-developed with the client, who was a volunteer facilitator from organization Climate Fresk. Climate Freak is a workshop created by a French NGO that introduces climate science and motivates participants to take collective action. (You can find them on [their website](#)) In our preparation discussions, we identified three recurring challenges in climate workshops that aligned closely with the goals of Brave Space:

01 Premature Action Bias

The action bias refers to our tendency to act impulsively, often treating action itself as a default response—even in the absence of sufficient reasoning or clarity (The Decision Lab, n.d.). In value-centered collaboration, this bias manifests when participants prematurely jump into solution mode, saying things like “*we should do this and that...*” before engaging in emotional reflection or value clarification. In such moments, the facilitator often steps in to slow down the pace, reminding the group: “*Wait! The action comes later.*” My collaborator emphasized the importance of **creating space for participants to express emotions and surface deeper values, openly and bravely, before moving into action planning.**

O2 Hidden Values Beneath Opinions

According to the experiences of the Climate Fresk facilitator, she noticed that even when participants seem outspoken and share many opinions, **they may not recognize the deeper values or emotions behind their statements.** These deeper layers remain implicit and undiscussed, even though they always co-exist in the conversation and one's attitude.

O3 The Triangle of Inaction

There is a common dynamic in which stakeholders blame each other for the lack of progress on climate action, such as citizens blaming the government, the government accusing businesses, and vice versa. This dynamic strongly resonated with my research aim: to help participants see the full value landscape and understand the roadblocks and driving forces different stakeholders might have.

The goals of introducing diverse perspectives and making tensions explicit, which are central to the concept of "Brave Space," provide an ideal entry point for addressing this lack of action.

This collaborative alignment allowed me to explore whether a more structured and provocative facilitation approach, rooted in Brave Space, could help participants explore the values that trigger personal emotions, uncover tensions across perspectives, and begin forming a shared vision.

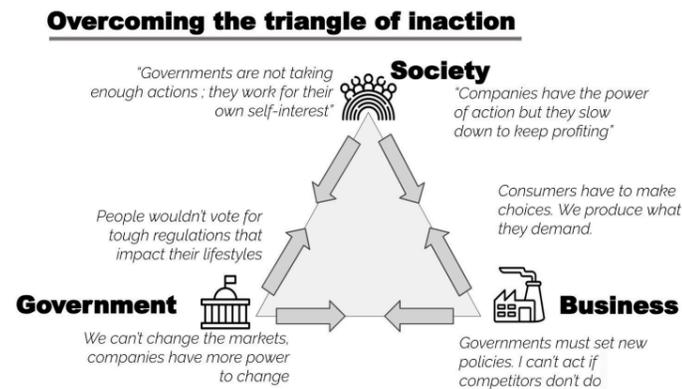


Figure 22. Example of triangle of inaction (Sutton, 2023)

Workshop Information

This workshop lasted 3 hours and was held at TU Delft. There were 4 participants in the workshop: one first-year student and three alumni, all from different departments and faculties. Session details can be found in page 80–81 (Table 8).

This workshop emphasized an overarching goal, covering the following key points in addition to the design criteria described in the micro-experiments:

Relational Understanding

To explore how different people's values connect, diverge, or come into tension with others. I also focus on how individual differences and group dynamics shape the value discussion in Brave Space.

Psychological Safety and Acknowledgement

To create an atmosphere where individuals feel psychologically secure to express their values and emotions, while recognizing and respecting the diversity in how others may experience or prioritize them.

Figure 23 provides a structural overview of the Climate Fresk workshop and its connection to the earlier micro-experiment modules. It illustrates how the value-centered discussion activities were embedded and outlines the goal of each stage. This workshop was conducted as a three-hour session.

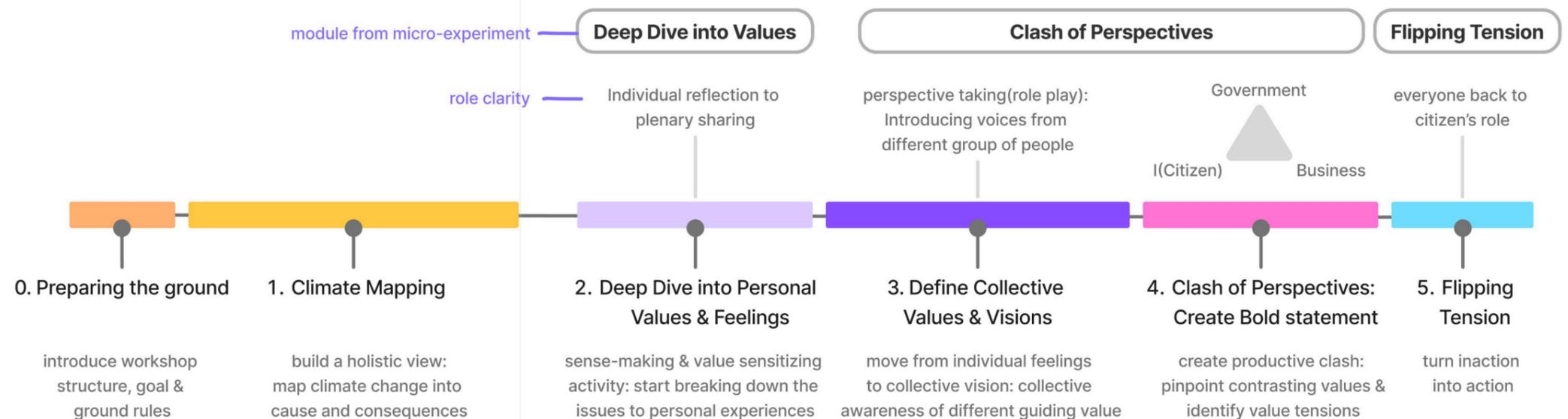


Figure 23. Structure overview of the collaborative workshop with Climate Fresk

SESSION PLAN & WORKSHOP DESIGN

Table 8: Overview of the session and workshop design

Time	Phase	Goal	How Does It Work?
3 – 5 mins	0 Ground Preparing Welcome Clarify the goal and expectations Overview agenda and ground rules Clarifying roles & responsibilities Ice-breaker	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give participants a clear idea of what to expect 2. Building familiarity and common agreement 	Workshop Setting <i>My collaborator was taking the main facilitator role in the first half of the workshop, and I joined the second half (in the end of 2nd exercise) as a co-facilitator. There was another observer in the room throughout the session. Three of us had a post-meeting to share the observation of the workshop to avoid bias.</i>
50 mins	1 Climate Fresk	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Map climate change into cause and consequences, creating a holistic view. This activity and tool is designed by Climate Fresk 	There are 5 card sets where participants have to work together to map the cards in the specific order.
5 – 7 mins	Break		
5 mins – <i>(individual)</i> 18 mins – <i>(plenary) sharing individual view</i> total: 25 mins	2 Deep Dive into Personal Values & Feelings 2.1 Write down the emotion and core values 2.2 Plenary sharing with the rest	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sense-making and reflection 2. Becoming aware of your values (and tensions) 3. Feel brave to express their perspectives without fear of disagreement or judgment 	Identify and flag the emotions that arise when you consider the causes and effects of climate change. What aspects resonate with you personally, and why? This exercise encourages individuals to express their feelings and serves as a sensitizing activity to help break down the issues into personal experiences. People are encouraged to elaborate more on the value they chose.
5 mins – <i>(group) pick a business based on ideas of climate mapping to do role-playing</i> 15 + 15 minutes – <i>define collective values and visions with business & government roles</i> total: 35 mins	3 Define Collective Values & Visions 3.1 Silent writing from “I” perspective 3.2 Role-switching to Business & Government side 3.3 Pair-share: Identify synergy (shared feelings/visions) & differences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collective awareness of values that other people may hold 2. Be bold in exploring conflicting perspectives through role-playing and informal activities like “Boyish playfulness.” 3. Practice perspective-taking 	Three voices: I, Industry organization (Business), Dutch Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose one organization in the industry that you will like to incorporate at the moment. • Think-pair-share: Think alone for the “I” column: “How do we want to feel about our society?” (Now / in 5 years / 50 years) Follow structure, discuss and write down ideas for the other two.
5 mins – AB group exchange, share the roles they took and summarize the perspectives 5 mins – identify values from it (A→B/B→A) 3+3 mins – <i>(group) come up with bold statements for business/government</i> 7 + 7 mins – <i>(plenary) share bold statements</i> total: 30 mins	4 Clash of Perspectives : Create Bold statement 4.1 Find the values for different actors (A guess B answer: Is that what you thought about?→ take turn) 4.2 Create bold statements 4.3 Plenary sharing of bold statements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invite diverse voices of different group of people 2. Create an equal stage by the structured game <p><i>“A bold statement is not rude or extreme—it’s just specific, opinionated, and not something everyone would easily agree on. It should make someone want to say: ‘Wait, I don’t see it that way.’”</i></p>	Facilitator explains the connection between values & bold statements. Prepared examples for inspiration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We care about climate, but we can’t ignore _____.” • “We should prioritize _____, even if it delays sustainability efforts.” • “Citizens expect too much when they don’t understand _____.” Write down bold statements for different perspectives. (Business, Government)
10 mins – <i>(plenary) Together thinking as citizens: identify 1 value tension.</i> 10 mins – Flip the tension and discuss actions total: 20 mins	5 Flip the Tensions 5.1 Find out tension together (citizens) 5.2 Quickfire Reflection (two questions to write down ideas and discuss) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes this tension frustrating? • What makes this tension valuable? 5.3 Come up with action idea	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seeing the valid reasons behind a perspective “Where I stand depends on where I sit” 2. Identify value tension 3. Build a shared understanding and then come up with action to work with the tension 	Plenary: Two sides of the table show their bold statements on the table. And then they will share with the rest: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What’s your first reaction? Agree? Disagree? • What value do you think is hidden behind this statement? • Can we identify a value tension that cannot be ignored and we want to talk about it today? The rest step continues like the micro-experiment.

5.2 VALIDATION GOAL AND INTERVIEW GUIDE

ACTION & VALIDATE | EVALUATE BRAVE SPACE WITH PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE

To better understand participants' experiences within the Brave Space framework, I combined experience mapping with individual interviews. While the experience mapping exercise revealed variations in how each participant perceived the activities, it did not provide sufficient insight into what they actually experienced or why those experiences emerged. To address this limitation, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper understanding of participants' emotional journeys and to evaluate which design strategies were effective as intended. The interviews were guided by a set of core questions that reflected the research focus.

First, I sought to clarify what participants personally identified as **brave feelings**—when and where they experienced such feelings, and what triggered them. Understanding the emotional markers of bravery was essential to evaluate how Brave Space manifests in practice.

Second, I aimed to investigate **how participants experienced the designed activities**. This involved identifying the key elements that contributed to their emotional responses—whether these elements were tangible, whether they corresponded to specific design stimuli, and whether unintended or external factors also played a role in shaping their experience. This line of inquiry allowed me to assess the alignment between the intended design and the participants' lived experiences.

Third, I explored **what design features successfully triggered them step into Brave Space and are open with the constructive discomfort**, a condition that I deliberately created. I asked what motivated participants to step out of their comfort zones, and whether they felt supported or facilitated in doing so. Understanding whether and how they perceived the space as Brave—and **whether this environment was helpful**—provided critical insight into the effectiveness of the interventions.



Image 12: A glance into the session environment: visible ground rules and agenda, snacks, two big tables, and standing space enable smooth activity transition and bodily engagement

Following the interviews, several reflective questions emerged. I considered whether the strategies and elements identified could be transferable to other contexts or participant groups. More importantly, I reflected on whether I had gained a more nuanced understanding of the liminal Brave Space experience from the participant's perspective. These reflections, together with the findings were presented in next chapter.

The interview questions were slightly adjusted based on the participant's reply in experience mapping. For those who might be interested, a set of core questions/the interview guide can also be found in Appendix C.



Image 14: exercise 4, "Clash of Perspectives: Create Bold Statements"



Image 13: Moving from individual sharing and reflection to exercise 3 "define collective values and vision." Participants used value tokens to help thinking.

06

A GUIDELINE TO EMBODY BRAVE SPACE: PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES AND DESIGN STRATEGIES

6.1 Why Brave Space is Important

6.2 Stepping into the Brave Space: Participant Pathways and Design Levers

6.2.1 Designing Encounters: Facilitation and Interventions for Brave Space

6.2.2 Group Dynamics: Trust, Dialogue, and the Social Conditions of Courage

6.2.3 Individual Pathways: Stretching Comfort Zones in Personal Pace

6.3 The Evolving Brave Space

6.4 Final Design of a Field Guide to Embody Brave Space

6.5 Discussion

6.6 Conclusion and Reflection

6.1 WHY BRAVE SPACE IS IMPORTANT?

Can we feel Brave Space? What kind of feelings and interactions did the participants trigger when they stepped into Brave Space? In the last chapter, let's listen closely to their voices, tracing how they described the shifts in their inner state and social engagement when they found themselves crossing the threshold into bravery.

Before delving into these accounts, we start by asking: How is Brave Space perceived and experienced? To explore this, I invited participants to reflect on their overall experiences and position themselves along the safe-brave-panic spectrum at key moments throughout the process. I also conducted follow-up individual interviews where participants spoke candidly about their so-called "brave moments." They shared what triggered these moments, how they felt internally, and what actions or reflections followed.

Rather than offering a single answer, participants described an evolving process that often begins in a sense of safety. This process stretches into bravery, occasionally touches on feelings of panic, and ultimately returns with greater self-awareness. Through their descriptions, we start to see that Brave Space is not static; it is experienced as a fluid concept influenced by various factors, including group dynamics, the workshop design and facilitation, and the individual participant's mental readiness. I will put this into several categories to discuss in the next section 6.2.

"Brave Space is helpful because it fosters resilience. When you first test your limits in uncomfortable situations and find that you can handle them, you gain confidence. This experience allows you to better predict your ability to manage future challenges."

- anonymous participant

In this account, **bravery is a willingness to accept discomfort and challenge, to take initiative in the face of uncertainty. And that will gradually build an individual's confidence and sense of comfort.** For many participants, entering a Brave Space involved speaking up without the fear of judgment, questioning implicit norms, and allowing vulnerability to emerge in a collaborative environment. At the beginning of this study, I emphasized the need to support participants in entering Brave Spaces, not merely staying in the surface level of group harmony or shared opinions, but encouraging them to go deeper into emotion and value-centered inquiry. Eventually, this participant-centered lens provided empirical support for the theoretical clarification of Brave Space.

Brave Space not only challenges the perspectives of others but also confronts one's own boundaries of psychological safety and fear. It involves expressing honest views in unfamiliar or uncertain conditions — in other words, meeting differences without retreat. It involves intentionally encountering friction, discomfort, or disagreement. It is about overcoming the inner fear of the unknown to discover where perspectives intersect beneath the surface, to discover the underlying commonality.

Brave Space, then, becomes most visible not in the absence of fear, but in how participants respond to it, whether they retreat, freeze, or step forward. It also depends on whether they feel accepted by the group despite taking a stand that may differ from others or be less dominant. In multi-stakeholder collaboration, this matters profoundly. Because value-based discussion is not merely an intellectual task, but an emotionally charged acknowledgement of differences. And it is precisely in these emotionally complex spaces that Brave Space offers the most benefit.

6.2 STEPPING INTO THE BRAVE SPACE: PARTICIPANT PATHWAYS AND DESIGN LEVERS

This section summarizes the findings from the Climate Fresk workshop and presents three overarching themes for those wondering how this concept can inspire their approach. The findings reveal that participants feel brave, emboldened, and empowered, whether they are invited into a courageous space or intentionally stepping out of their comfort zones.

Their experiences of bravery, engaging in constructed discomfort, and the underlying triggers for these feelings provide valuable insights for designers and facilitators. In my final design, I synthesized the project findings and practical learnings into portable knowledge in a facilitator handbook: *A Field Guide to Embody Brave Space*. Chapter 6, however, includes the complete findings from which the strategies are derived. Understanding these aspects will help you empathize with your audience and encourage you to explore various approaches to transform experiences of courage in your own context. Chapter 6.2 contains several sub-chapters, each addressing different dimensions of the liminality framework, which will help you gain insights and strategies to embody Brave Space through the voices of real users.

6.2.1 Designing Encounters: Facilitation and Interventions for Brave Space

6.2.2 Group Dynamics: Trust, Dialogue, and the Social Conditions of Courage

6.2.3 Individual Pathways: Stretching Comfort Zones in Personal Pace

6.2.1 DESIGNING ENCOUNTERS: FACILITATION AND INTERVENTIONS FOR BRAVE SPACE

Bravery doesn't arise by chance; it can be cultivated. In this section, we will further explore how a deliberately designed brave space supports participants in engaging in meaningful discussions and challenges. And reflect on how a responsive facilitator can foster a sense of security that empowers individuals to be brave.

Step 1. Design The Activities And Interventions

Preparing simple interactive and playable tools

Designing simple, intuitive tools that are playable and tangible. Providing examples and a clear guide to the participants can help explore various aspects and ensure all participants have an equal and concise voice.

You might be wondering why leveraging a tool is relevant when discussing values and how it contributes to ensuring equal participation among participants. During the workshop, the climate cards and value tokens were remembered a lot by most participants because they are "most tangible one" and have a "lot of visuals". They enabled physical interaction and deeper discussion among participants. On the other hand, people automatically play the tokens on the table and find inspiration to express the abstract thoughts in their mind.

One participant noted that this support helped her think and express her thoughts, as it was a common language shared by others. She noted, "*The value tokens especially help with voicing feelings and conveying your approach and your point of view to others. Of course, I have my opinion, but before seeing the value cards, I wouldn't be able to express and pinpoint that concisely.*" "It makes sure that everybody is *on the same level of knowledge and kind of even ground.*" Another participant said, "*I found 'value' to be a somewhat abstract concept. So I referred to the back of the cards and used them as a guide to question myself if that links to my feelings.*"

In the early phase of my research, I focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the tool in facilitating value-based discussions. By effectiveness, I mean "whether the tool is designed in a way that participants can understand and interact with it". If the tool's meaning is unclear and lacks clarity, it is likely to be ignored, which undermines its purpose in promoting discussion and ideation. Therefore I reflected, as designers, we have the ability to determine what we want readers to notice. It's important to emphasize how they will perceive the information and to prioritize its presentation. I believe that the tool should be designed to be **playable and actionable**, encouraging interactions that are **simple, specific, and clear**—so intuitive that users won't have to think about how to use it. The goal of the tool is to assist with the main tasks (in my case, making values the central focus of the workshop) rather than distract participants. By restructuring the long value list and creating an information hierarchy, it becomes a tangible guide that is more accessible to participants with varying levels of familiarity with value language.

Inviting participants into Brave Space by playing perspective-taking

Being asked to stand on the viewpoint of the other roles was identified as a moment where the participant felt most brave, particularly because they were not so familiar with this perspective. Stepping into different roles and coming out again was generally associated with feeling brave.

One of the core design interventions is role-playing; people were asked to switch their perspectives and challenge their bold statements afterwards. First of all, the participants started from their feelings at present and then identified themselves 5 to 50 years into the future. Then it is the role-playing activity which allows them to play a role from the business/organization side, and lastly, the Dutch government. We predetermined the triangle (I, business, government), emphasizing the importance of all three in social movements. Participants could choose which organizations and roles to represent in the exercise.

One participant said, *“when thinking from a long-term perspective, the points we considered became very different. Role-playing helped me look beyond my own position. I spent quite a bit of time reflecting—like when judging values, I realized that some values I personally didn’t think were important actually mattered a lot to others.”*

It created an *“extra permission”* as a participant described, letting them express more boldly, *“A possibility to say something that you wouldn’t say at any other time. But you know that it’s true.”* **The brave part of it is that changing perspective isn’t equal to agreeing. In contrast, it creates a room for people to emphasize each other but recognize the differences in their thoughts.**

The playful approach to perspective-taking involves adopting a role that allows for a less rigid and *“less serious”* approach. This enables **bolder and more controversial genuine expressions within a safe structure of the exercise.**

Step 2. Facilitate A Workshop And Execute Design

Preparing supportive environment from the start

A supportive environment begins before the first word is spoken. Both the physical and psychological layout of a space sends signals to participants about how safe, open, and inclusive the experience will be. Light, music, seating, and how people move in the space all shape their comfort. Just as importantly, psychological cues—like a clear agenda, visible ground rules, and the facilitator’s tone—set expectations for participation. When these elements are thoughtfully prepared, they offer a warm invitation into dialogue. Participants described feeling braver and more at ease when they sensed that the space was intentionally designed to welcome all perspectives and encourage open expression.

Before the workshop, the facilitator prepared ground rules on flip paper, workshop agenda, setting environment (including removing the chairs, providing snacks) and waiting for the participants to arrive. At the outset, the facilitator introduced the ground rules of Safe Space and gave a clear idea of the things that participants would be doing.

When participants were asked what made them feel safe in the workshop and what the specific moments, the participants mentioned, *“I think the setting of the activities, like the environment, is quite important because if we imagine the workshop to be held in the big lecture room, then it’s another environment. I think for me, it’s safer to have a small discussion.”*

“And then very important that you mention, Ohh, please feel free to express your opinions and also your point of view.” *“Right in the beginning, I already see the ground rules on the whiteboard. So you already thought that you could just say everything. I don’t mind if there’s a contradicting point of view, just make sure our discussion here is safe. I think that already helps a lot.”*

The chosen environment provided participants with a sense of intimacy and support, enhanced by the facilitator’s encouragement and visual cues. These elements contributed to a **freedom of expression**, which all participants identified as one of the main reasons for feeling brave. More details can be found in **Chapter 6.2.3 Individual Pathways: Stretching Comfort Zones in Personal Pace.**

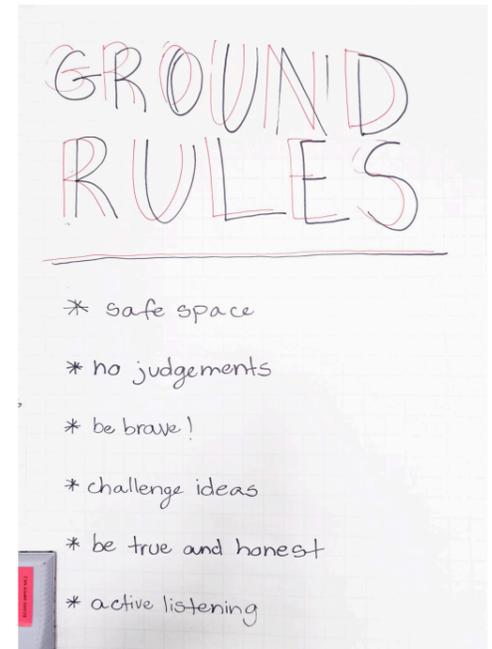


Image 15: ground rules

Moving into dialogue: how bodily engagement opens conversation

When participants move and build things together, it creates a sense of shared purpose and lowers the barrier to participation—especially for those with lower psychological safety. Simple physical activities help participants build rapport, feel more at ease in the group, and begin opening up without pressure. By encouraging movement and playful interaction early on (maybe already doing this in the beginning), facilitators can create a more inclusive atmosphere that invites everyone into dialogue, even before the "deep thinking" begins.

Initially, the Climate Fresk facilitator introduced an ice breaker that allowed participants to introduce themselves through acting. Afterward, participants engaged in the first activity, climate mapping, which involved both physical activities and interactions.

One of the participants highlighted the most memorable aspect: *“The way we interact with other participants, having physical interaction, and sharing our cards while presenting them in our hands. At this stage, we aren’t using deep thinking as much because we’re simply trying to describe what each card is trying to say.”*

Quieter participants are often less likely to speak up at the beginning, especially when they’re still processing information or getting used to the group. Both facilitators and the observer noted that inviting bodily engagement early on—such as standing up, moving around the room, or placing cards on a shared map—naturally helped open up the space. These actions created a more relaxed atmosphere and encouraged spontaneous conversations.

For example, instead of starting the session with standard name introductions, try a warm-up activity that uses the body and imagination. One effective approach: ask each person to silently act out “What gives me energy at work” and let others guess. Acting replaces words, lowering the pressure to speak while still inviting expression and interaction. These kinds of **low-key, playful** activities help participants ease into the workshop, break the ice, and begin building familiarity to talk.



Image 16: Everyone holds two cards and takes turns reading them. They work together to determine where each card should be placed based on cause and consequence.

Based on these observations, I argue that planning activities that involve joint physical engagement can significantly support participation, **especially for individuals with lower levels of psychological safety**. Activities that encourage movement, tangible interaction, or spontaneous engagement offer an alternative entry point to dialogue. They serve as both sensitization and inclusion strategies, setting the tone for a Brave Space.

Encouraging collaboration and respectful confrontation

Use structured activities to foster collaboration and respectful disagreement. This creates space for participants to explore contrasting values, deepen shared understanding, increase participants' awareness of how values shape their viewpoints, and build shared problem/solution ownership.

“There was a debate, but there was no moment of ‘No, no, no. I am right. You’re wrong.’ So being kind of having a good structure provided. Then just being open within it.” one participant remarked. Based on my observations during several workshops, participants displayed a strong interest in collaborating with others, even when they did not know each other.

In the Climate Fresk workshop, one participant, expressed her satisfaction with the outcomes when I asked about it. (I was worried if the workshop kind of ended in a rush because the whole schedule delayed.) She described the workshop as having achieved a **“collective outcome”** and referred to it as the **“culmination of everything.”** She recognized how **step-by-step, the thoughts, feelings, and knowledge of participants from diverse fields were distilled into one final conclusion**. While participant could think about climate change independently, she stated that she *“wouldn’t have probably arrived at the same conclusion”* because the key was in **“coming together.”** This experience made collaboration feel very impactful.

Another participant found it valuable to listen to contrasting viewpoints between one participant and the majority. She noted, *“When another participant has a differing opinion, even if they present it from a completely different angle, I think it is really good.”* She felt that role-playing and considering others' perspectives sparked new insights and helped her move beyond her own position. She observed, **“It required trying to understand the other person’s stance. I had to interpret their values through their statements. I’d love to explore further why they framed their values that way.”** This indicates that inviting individuals into a Brave Space through thoughtful interventions positively affects participants, encouraging them to be curious about the values and reasoning behind opposing perspectives.

Such exploration was central and established participants' readiness to engage in disagreement, as designed for the “Clash of Perspectives: Create Bold Statements” activity, designed to **surface tensions while grounding interaction in mutual respect**. Through structured design like **role-switching and shared ground rules**, participants were invited to engage in **constructive conflict and the contrast created by different perspectives**. The facilitator’s role was to **gently stretch participants beyond their comfort zones into Brave Space, while ensuring psychological safety and inclusive participation**.

Ultimately, the Brave Space enabled a productive shift by intentionally holding space for difference, and participants were encouraged to reflect critically. In doing so, they not only deepened their understanding of others but also strengthened the collective ownership of shared outcomes.

Step 3. Reflect Facilitator's Role And Responsive Guidance

Prompting and gentle provocation

Another way to empower expression involves presenting challenges. Facilitators can play a crucial role not only by providing hints but also by challenging their thinking and prompting participants provocatively. It is even more effective when they are challenged to dive deeper instead of quickly moving forward from the abstract or surface-level consensus.

For instance, when a group of two participants seemed hesitant at starting with the business point of view when they processed to the second exercise. *"We were still deciding what kind of company or organization we wanted to use as our case. Another group quickly picked Shell, but we were still discussing. Even though we'd said it was a 'building organization,' the different viewpoints, e.g. social enterprise, public sector, commercial business, made things complex."* And at that moment, I prompted a question that encouraged them to clarify their thoughts and dive deeper into the exercise.

"You mentioned that our group's emotional sharing was generally optimistic. Maybe it's interesting to pick a contrasting stance. So I suggested to the participant that we choose a profit-driven company that would challenge us more. If we picked another environmentally conscious social enterprise, it would be too similar to our personal views. We wanted some creative friction there."

Simultaneously, another brave action occurred when I asked participants to clarify their role in their invented company. Another participant from this group mentioned the moment as a *"simulation of setting up a company and representing a board member,"* *"I think that's the moment that I came out of my comfort zone, not only discussing the academic knowledge but also different kinds of social behaviors in the bigger picture."*

This gentle provocation worked quite well to the group that slightly needed more prompts from the facilitator, but the other group didn't really need the prompt since the activity design itself, particularly the role-playing exercise where participants had to think from others' perspectives, already served as a provocation. Taking the perspective of a potentially controversial entity, like Shell Corporation, was described by participants from another group as a *"brave moment,"* to say bold or controversial things she wouldn't say otherwise, such as *"Fossil fuels are great"* from the Shell perspective.

Giving freedom and room for trial and error, allowing making mistakes

When participants are given space to engage and think along, it encourages a sense of responsibility and ownership over the discussion. And by making time for them, and allowing them to make mistakes, this contributes to a high energy level, and they feel encouraged to speak up.

In the climate mapping exercise, the Climate Fresk facilitator always keeps a nice distance from the group discussion. Though it has the right answer of how the final climate mapping (cause and consequences) should look, the facilitator gave the group freedom to try it out, and sometimes prompted in ways that *"allowed participants to discover issues themselves."* This method promotes independent thinking and group exploration, enabling the process of working through ideas without immediate interference. *"The facilitator's role in providing guidance and space without being overly directive,"* said the participants who felt appreciated.

It's important to consider the complexity of the topics, as some subjects have inherent ambiguities that create opportunities for various interpretations and approaches. Since conducting field research, I have sought to understand the impact of ambiguity on participants and discussions apart from my main research focus. To delve deeper into this, I explored literature regarding the balance between structure and flexibility, specifically looking for insights on liminality. It is indeed a challenging task for facilitators to determine how much freedom to allow participants and how much control to exert.

However, throughout this experience, I was inspired that **a certain degree of ambiguity can empower participants, giving them more Brave Space to explore without fear of mistakes, and form connections that they hadn't thought of before.**

As two participants noted respectively: *"I think a good amount of ambiguity is healthy and necessary, especially in complex topics like climate change."* *"The best example is when we're doing the climate mapping, everyone has a different opinion of where to place each and every card. It is ambiguous because option A is also right, and option B is also right. Sometimes you just don't have to argue so much, because if both of them make sense."*

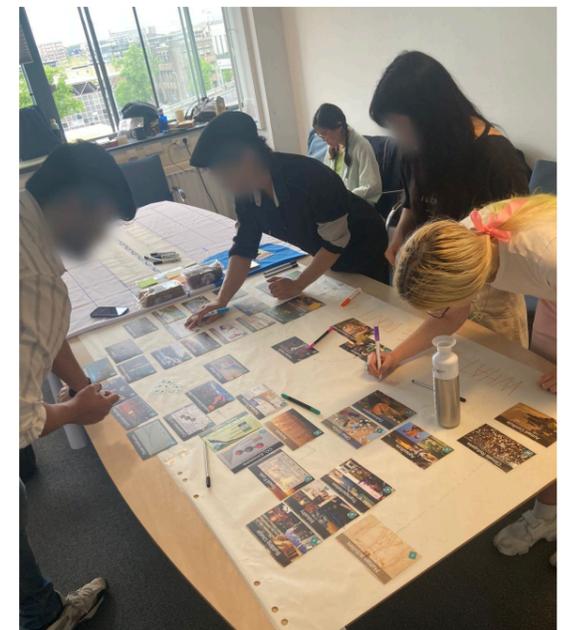


Image 17: Participants worked together on climate mapping

Step 3. Reflect Facilitator's Role And Responsive Guidance

Managing the subtle hierarchy of voice

While formal power dynamics were not a reported issue in this workshop, the natural variation in participant personalities significantly impacts who speaks and how much, emphasizing the crucial role of facilitation in cultivating a space where all voices can contribute equitably, particularly when considering more diverse contexts.

In this workshop, we did not encounter any situations where a power hierarchy existed among participants. However, it was still clear that individual personalities and communication styles could impact the balance of voices within the group dynamics. In a broader context, where stakeholders come from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, the potential for imbalanced hierarchy and the importance of ensuring equal voices are both significant considerations.

Ensuring that a dominant voice does not overpower others, rather than allowing a monologue from one person, contributes to equal participation. Providing opportunities for individual contributions helps quieter or more introverted individuals be heard.

6.2.2 GROUP DYNAMICS: TRUST, DIALOGUE, AND THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF COURAGE

Bravery is also influenced by social factors. It often develops when individuals observe others being authentic, feel respected, and see diversity embraced with openness. Engaging with differing viewpoints, without facing rejection, fosters trust and encourages speaking up. When people share genuinely and acknowledge diverse opinions, they recognize underlying commonalities despite apparent differences. This section highlights various levers, discussing significant environmental and social factors as well as key mechanisms that can enhance psychological safety and help people to become braver.

Lever 1. A Space To Be Heard: Healthy Group Dynamic

Feeling empowered by being listened to and accepted

Giving participants a space where their voices are heard and respected is foundational to Brave Space. The key is to nurturing a group atmosphere where open dialogue empowers people to speak up. Early in the session, establishing that every voice matters. This strategy fosters psychological safety and agency. It helps participants own their perspectives, feel empowered, and be willing to challenge ideas and engage more boldly.

All of the participants mentioned that the presence of open dialogue and a space to be heard laid the foundation for them to be brave in speaking up. One participant specifically noted that he felt empowered by being listened to.

He emphasized the importance of distinguishing between being *"too bold"* and being *"brave."* **Being brave means standing your ground, even when others disagree with your views.** However, this doesn't mean clinging to your position rigidly, as that attitude can be unhealthy in a corporate environment.

The key difference in feeling empowered and broadening one's perspective is that participants listened to each other with an open mindset. Some individuals felt brave because of the atmosphere, which included participants *"accepting your thoughts and not contradicting it aggressively."* This respectful environment fostered a judgment-free space where *"everyone could share their views openly"*, contributing to feeling less nervous as the discussion progressed. This psychological safety encourages individuals to deliberately create a Brave Space, since it allows for the expression of opinions, including those that may be challenging.

Growing psychological safety with group openness despite unfamiliarity

The familiarity plays a vital part when the session starts. People tend to have uncertainty and need to be prompted and invited into Brave Space. When individuals are unfamiliar with each other, they may stick to surface-level conversations to avoid conflict. However, as openness to listen and share increases, it contributes to a greater sense of psychological safety.

When we reflect on where the session starts, familiarity seems to play a significant role to the participants. It is directly supported by an extrovert participant, who states, *"Sometimes I feel I can only be brave if I know some of the people in the room"* He mentions that the familiarity (knowing the facilitators) made him feel *"quite comfortable speaking up"* and *"a bit more comfortable and a bit more brave"*. He suggests that for him, familiarity or getting to know people better through things like icebreakers helps him be braver from the start.

Another participant also notes that at the beginning, she *"wasn't very familiar with others,"* which contributed to feeling nervous. *"At first, there's uncertainty and hesitation"*, she specifically mentions that the **"initial uncertainty"** played a big role in her feeling of risk-taking. But after, she felt *"guided to step out of her comfort zone."* She highlights specific actions, like the facilitator giving everyone a chance to speak individually (e.g., handing out paper slips) which *"encouraged us to write down our thoughts comfortably"* and *"stimulated deeper sharing later on"*. Apart from that, **the openness plays a big role, "during discussions, everyone was open and willing to listen. So by the middle or end of the workshop, I felt less nervous."**

The interviews made me aware of the shift in participants' feelings and highlighted that **familiarity—whether with the person, the topics, or the environment—greatly influences each individual's level of psychological safety. However, this sense of safety can change based on group dynamics, which are closely tied to how individuals perceive the atmosphere in the room.**

In summary, participants felt "very secure and safe," allowing their bravery to overcome any apprehension related to unfamiliarity. Key factors contributing to this sense of safety included the perceived competence and openness of the facilitators, a clear structure in the discussions, and the acceptance of other participants who listened without contradiction.

Lever 2. Mingling Diversity And Building Trust

Fostering shared understanding among participants

Familiarity with certain individuals or shared background knowledge can encourage people to feel safe enough to express themselves and take initiative. Building familiarity, whether through personal connection, group dynamics, or shared tools, helps participants feel safe enough to express themselves. This is especially important in the early stages of a workshop, when uncertainty may hold people back. Facilitators can create conditions that nurture group trust, such as using icebreakers, encouraging openness, and activities that build up each other's understanding with people in the room.

As previously discussed, familiarity can be an influential factor for the participants. Additionally, it's normal that participants don't all start from the same level of comfort or security. However, this does not mean there is nothing that can be done about it.

One participant described himself as naturally outspoken or *"ambivert"* leaning towards an extrovert person, comfortable breaking the ice and speaking first. This contrasts with another participant's experience, where she mentioned feeling initial hesitation and fear of disagreement when unfamiliar with others, despite knowing she could share anything. She felt less nervous later as the discussion progressed and people were open.

During the interview, one participant directly linked the facilitator's role in helping participants get to know the room better, perhaps through icebreakers, to increased bravery. This process, he explained, creates familiarity or an understanding of the other participants and facilitators. Most of them suggested that the icebreaker helped with the initial unfamiliarity. There's one participant who shared that the value cards specifically helped with *"voicing feelings and kind of conveying your own approach to others."* This puts everyone *"on the same level of knowledge"* and *"evens out the playing field,"* leading to shared immediate thoughts, which also lead to the second point explained below.

Finding underlying commonality in differences

One participant raised how she discovered the underlying commonality between differences. This happens because everyone is authentic in sharing their voices. She realized that even with differing feelings or perspectives, participants shared the same fundamental thoughts or wanted to achieve the same goal, see the same future.

This aligns with my initial expectations regarding the research results. The process fosters a diverse recognition based on mutual respect and appreciates the value of differences among individuals from a broader perspective. By acknowledging the diversity of viewpoints, we can collaborate with a collective understanding of our values and find ways to work together based on common ground.

Regarding the ultimate benefits of creating a Brave Space, it's rewarding to see participants open their minds to one another and cultivate curiosity about each other's positions and the important values that shape their viewpoints. Additionally, during the discussion process, the diverse backgrounds and knowledge of the participants enable us to build a more comprehensive understanding of the context and broaden our perspectives on the topic.

Take one specific example from the previous workshop on micro-experiments. When participants are invited to speak honestly and feel respected, **it becomes possible to uncover shared intentions that may be hidden beneath differing perspectives.** In a session I facilitated, one participant reflected that despite experiencing contrasting emotional reactions and views, the group was still striving toward the same future.

Another participant mentioned how, as both a designer and a product manager, he encountered conflicting perspectives. However, they managed to find common ground by considering their roles as employees within the organization. This realization sparked curiosity instead of conflict, leading to **more empathetic dialogue** and a deeper understanding of different values on this topic.

6.2.3 INDIVIDUAL PATHWAYS: STRETCHING COMFORT ZONES IN PERSONAL WAYS

Participants experienced bravery in diverse ways, influenced by their personality, prior experiences, and cultural backgrounds. Most individuals need to establish a sense of security before entering a Brave Space, while others feel comfortable speaking up and thrive on challenges and differing perspectives. As discussed in the previous section, not everyone starts with the same level of psychological safety. It is the facilitators' responsibility to recognize each individual's uniqueness, foster a sense of familiarity and understanding, and provide responsive guidance. The following section will explore participants' feelings about bravery from their perspectives and offer various considerations for facilitators.

Common Brave Feelings

Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is considered the trigger of brave feelings. Taking bolder steps or expressing more challenging views or vulnerable thoughts without fearing to be judged.

Feeling free to share one's opinion, especially when it might be different from others or potentially unpopular, was a key brave feeling. A participant explicitly defines brave feelings as **"feeling free to express your opinion without being judged."** Another felt emboldened to share her less optimistic view precisely because others were more optimistic, wanting to see if people would understand her position. She described stepping into a Brave Space or feeling brave and emboldened, *"very much came from kind of the atmosphere that was there, coupled with the fact that I felt very like secure"* *"I didn't feel at any moment that I couldn't speak up about my feelings or my impressions of anything"*, linking it directly to the open and supportive environment. They noted that the acceptance of differing thoughts without aggressive contradiction, even during debates, was crucial.

Embodied and liberating feeling

The sense of security laid the foundation for the feelings of bravery, being emboldened and liberated. Anonymity and psychological distance enhance the courage.

During the perspective-taking exercise, two participants who chose to adopt the viewpoint of the Shell Corporation experienced a sense of bravery that they described as *"kind of liberating."* They found that the exercise provided them with *"extra permission"* to express potentially controversial or challenging opinions that aligned with that role. This activity created a psychological distance because perspective-taking involves a certain degree of force-fitting, allowing participants to empathize with the role while also maintaining the understanding that what occurred in the workshops remains within the workshop environment; that is what can make me feel braver. *"Tell it on face and then move on,"* they don't fear negative repercussions or judgment outside the room based on what they said or did.

Taking risks under uncertainty and unfamiliarity

Bravery is linked to facing the unfamiliar and challenges. This showcases a liminal gap between safety and bravery, since to some extent, safety is established with familiarity with the topics, which increases one's confidence in decision-making and liberally speaking up something really bold. This also highlights that courage toward uncertainty/making mistakes is needed because there is always something that you don't know and familiar with.

One participant directly links feeling brave to taking risks, *“if still you're able to take your stand to some extent, even if the whole room is against you”*. Choosing a company with a controversial stance in the context of a climate workshop, like Shell, was perceived as a bold move and taking a risk. Another participant also resonated with the same feelings, *“I used my own words to express my views in front of people who might have different stances.”* She also described proposing a provocative punchline (“What if we don't care” – a punchline to advocate climate awareness and summarize the results of climate mapping) when the rest are still taking a more conservative voice as stepping out of her comfort zone and a bold phrase that received agreement. A less outspoken participant also felt safer having ground rules that encouraged not minding contradicting points of view, enabling a safe discussion where bravery could occur.

From an observer's perspective, there is a noticeable intertwining of courage and confidence among participants. Participating in discussions where individuals hold differing opinions, challenge each other's perspectives, or share their views despite expecting disagreement can foster a sense of bravery. However, **when people feel accepted despite their differing opinions, it boosts their confidence and encourages them to be braver in that environment.**

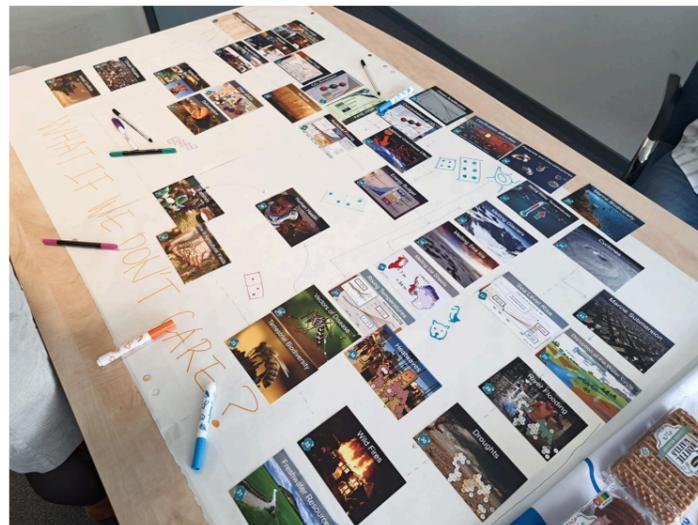


Image 18: “What if we don't care”

Co-ownership and partnership of facing challenges

Seeing themselves in the problem can create a problem's ownership. They feel brave to face the challenges and responsibility to contribute, but also feel supported when partners provide a sense of common ground, understanding, and mutual assistance, making it easier to navigate uncertain terrain and take bolder steps together.

Participants connected with the challenges on a personal level, which fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility. One participant explicitly stated, *“I see myself in that problem and that's why I feel like I own the problem.”* He directly linked owning the problem to also *“owning the solution”* and being motivated to create one. This sense of personal relevance to the climate issue fueled his willingness to contribute.

One participant felt that participating in the exercise where they imagined their company taking action for climate change is a chance *“to simulate himself owning a company”* and *“take a step in to go for climate change,”* which felt like stepping out of his comfort zone. This suggests taking responsibility for defining a role or contributing to action felt brave.

I observed the brave feelings in the workshop emerge, not only from situations where participants felt a personal stake in the challenges while also being enabled by the support and shared context provided by their partners and the group.

There is a powerful example of **bravery rooted in partnership and shared responsibility** for the task. The participant felt brave when trying to help the partner, who was less familiar with the Dutch Government, ensuring the discussion reached a sufficient level. The participant mentioned his belief derived from his experience of the hometown protest, where a shared goal (“take care of our friends”) provided clarity and enabled brave actions despite the chaos. In the workshop, this common ground was likely the emerging collective vision and the collective effort they put into reaching a shared understanding during this participatory process.

Perceiving Individual Distinctiveness

Considering strategic time manipulation and stress response

As participants enter Brave Space, facilitators also need to ensure it's not a false fall into the panic zone. Due to individual differences, people perceive time constraints in various ways and may experience different feelings and stress responses to the same situation. For example, when faced with panic or stress from time pressure, some individuals may become bolder and assertive as they confront the challenge, while others may initially feel overwhelmed by emotional stress but then quickly adjust their behavior.

When I interviewed one participant who identified himself in the panic zone on experience mapping tool, he mentioned, *“Actually I don’t remember I felt panic, maybe sometimes it’s stressful to read the information and also rest. But I think it occurred just before or even simultaneously with the brave moments.”*

It is often influenced by factors such as limited time for decision-making and information processing, and thus they need to *“take a leap”* before the opportunity passed. In this instance, the participant feels *“a bit stressful”* rather than experiencing full-blown panic. This is likely due to the time he requires to adapt to his role and the pressure he places on himself to contribute.

In contrast, another participant showed a rather positive reaction at the same moment. When considering what could foster even more bravery, she noted that time pressure in the final section compelled participants to *“say it right now, or never. Time pressure pushed me to be bolder and just say it.”* She concluded that *“Some kind of manipulation with the time actually works”*. For instance, I used some common techniques that lots of facilitators may find useful in their experiences, such as *“You have one more minute to write down two additional ideas,”* or *“Please finish your final thoughts, and we will move on.”* It’s essential to discuss the “timing and pacing strategy” as part of this process.

Even though it is a short amount of time for ending the workshop, the participant seemed satisfied with what they concluded, because it helped her solidify her acceptance of the ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding climate change. *“I don’t know if having more time would be more beneficial because I feel like it’s a question, you know, a thesis. Or like an essay that you can work on for a long, long time.”* Reflecting on the learning from workshops, I believe that time management and the varying effects on different individuals are important to consider. We might design time strategies by taking the following into account:

1. Creating time-boxed moments that gently push for action
2. Framing short time limits not as tests, but as opportunities to contribute boldly
3. But also allowing flexibility where emotional & thinking processing or group pacing varies

Creating equal stage for quiet people to be heard

To ensure that every participant had an opportunity to speak individually, I designed interventions that encouraged participation. These strategies helped create a comfortable environment for participants to share their thoughts and stimulated deeper discussions, ensuring that quieter voices were heard.

In the workshop, there will inevitably be participants with varying personalities and different expression style. Designers must ensure that everyone has the opportunity to express their thoughts and that **all voices are valued equally**. This approach helps prevent more outspoken or influential participants from overshadowing others. Additionally, if participants perceive that only one or two individuals dominate the discussion or if there is a power imbalance in the room, they may hesitate to speak up or feel reluctant to express their opinions.

Personality differences mean participants start with varying levels of comfort in speaking up. One participant specifically noted that in typical discussions, the loudest voice often dominates, making it seem not worthwhile for more reserved individuals to speak. While encountering this, the role of the facilitator and the design of the workshop are seen as crucial in making the silent participant speak and ensuring everyone has an opportunity to contribute. In the workshop discussed, several elements contributed to **creating a more equal stage**. First of all, the attitude of the other participants, whether they show active listening and acceptance. Second, creating a safe atmosphere. Third, the activity design encourages individual contribution.

In the micro experiments and Climate Fresk workshops, I used facilitation techniques to ensure everyone could share their thoughts. For example, by distributing sticky notes for individual writing or having participants read cards aloud, quieter or more introverted individuals were given a comfortable opportunity to express their thoughts. Participants expressed their appreciation for this method, with one person mentioning, *“It gave quieter or more introverted people a chance to be heard.”*

Different needs of individuals: “inviting” and “stretching” into Brave Space

Some participants—typically those who are more extroverted or outspoken—naturally engage in Brave Spaces with minimal prompting. In contrast, others may need more structured support to step forward. Bravery, in practice, is not a fixed characteristic; it depends on the context and is influenced by individual temperament and the supportiveness of the environment. Effective facilitation should recognize these variations and provide tailored invitations that help each participant access their courage.

I have noticed that some participants, particularly those who are extroverted, outspoken, and direct in their communication, can easily step into a Brave Space when they are “invited.” This invitation can come from the design of activities, established ground rules, and the open-mindedness of other participants.

In the Climate Fresk workshop, participants with more extroverted and outspoken personalities felt comfortable speaking up, demonstrating a very open and positive attitude toward challenging different perspectives and expressing contrary opinions. As a participant noted, *“I really like to challenge perspectives...I always try to stay a bit on the other side. Like in a workshop, we can go and I can openly say that. I feel that's where innovation comes from.”* Another participant reflected on a specific moment when they deliberately stepped into Brave Space and triggered the feeling of bravery, *“to share a potentially contradictory or ‘stirring the pot’ view, like being less optimistic than others.”* *“There was a paradox or something that I felt very emboldened.”*

In contrast, those who are more introverted often require additional support. They may need more time to think through questions before responding. For these participants, facilitators should play a more active role in prompting and guiding discussions. By using more effective facilitation methods, we can encourage these individuals to stretch their comfort zones, be more courageous, and embrace challenges, even in situations of uncertainty and unfamiliarity.

6.3 THE EVOLVING BRAVE SPACE

As designers, we often ask ourselves: Was the journey enjoyable? Did we create something positive for the user? These questions are valid and often necessary. However, they also reveal a default assumption embedded in many design processes, that positive emotions are always desirable, while negative ones are to be minimized or avoided. Recent design research has begun to challenge this binary perspective.

I argue that the nature of Brave Space, a constructed discomfort established on the basis of psychological safety, can also deepen the quality and uniqueness of experience. From thrill-seeking activities like horror films and roller coasters to long-distance marathons or mountain hikes, many meaningful human experiences are not smooth or easy. They are demanding, even painful, but often remembered as powerful, transformative, and worthwhile.

In these cases, the end goal is not constant positivity, but a kind of emotional resolution through challenge. The same principle applies when we design for value-based collaboration. The aim is not to keep participants comfortable at all times, but to create the right conditions for them to stretch cognitively, emotionally, and socially, in a way that supports the group to identify and navigate value tension, finding a way to work together.

In this research, I initially conceptualized Brave Space as an intentionally created environment that holds emotional tension while remaining safe enough for participants to stay engaged and included. What I could not fully predict, however, was how this discomfort would actually be felt by different individuals, and how their own experience of Brave Space would shift throughout the process. Through interviews and experience mapping, it became clear that **Brave Space is not static but an evolving experience.**

It's notable that some participants experienced **bravery as a “gradual process,”** starting with initial uncertainty and hesitation giving way to increased comfort as discussions progressed. As one of the participants noted when I asked *“Can you give an example of when you felt brave during the workshop? What triggered it?”* The participant's answer begins by describing feeling afraid others would disagree at the beginning due to unfamiliarity with the group composition, she then explained that as discussions progressed and people were open and willing to listen, she felt less nervous, mentioning a specific valuable contrast in viewpoints with another participant. She concluded,

“I feel like bravery is a gradual process. At first, there was uncertainty and hesitation when I talked, but as the discussion progressed, I became more comfortable. Some moments I feel brave, but then gradually, even though we are still making bold steps or expressing ourselves freely, I become more comfortable with that as well, so that I don't even think of it as ‘very brave’ anymore.”

This aligns with the liminal framework, where participants first venture into a Brave Space. This practice also helps them train their “psychological muscles,” gradually feeling easier and expanding their comfort zone.

Some participants described entering Brave Space early on, when asked to speak about a controversial topic or share a personal stance. In these moments, they reported a mix of hesitation, risk-taking, and vulnerability to some extent. Others remain comfortable stepping into Brave Space deliberately and only need to be invited to take a small step toward challenges. **And the most common result is people moving between zones multiple times (safe to brave, and back to safe), as the participant described.** The evolving nature of Brave Space emphasizes the importance of timing, pacing, and supportive step-by-step scaffolding to go deeper in facilitation.

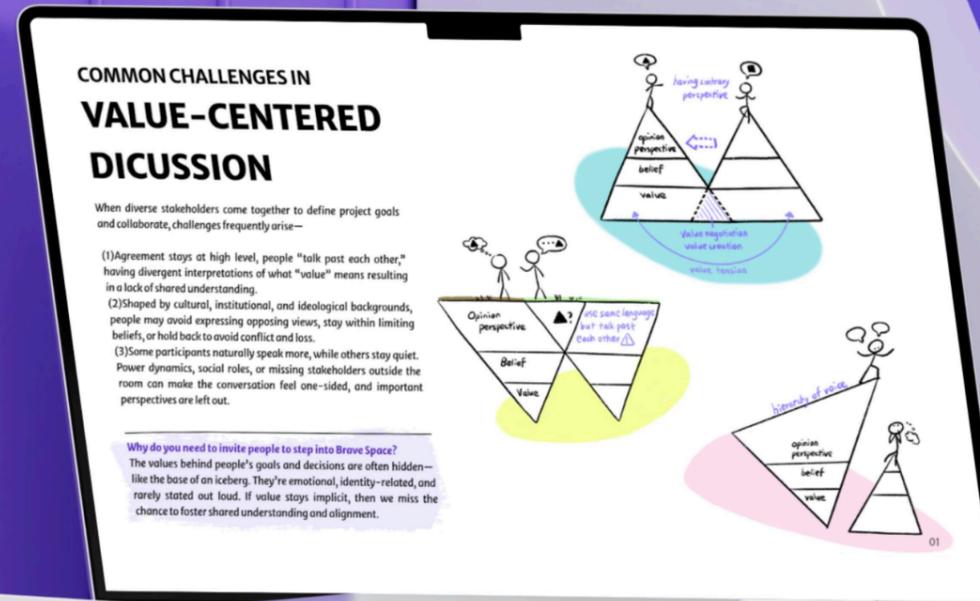
“*Embodying a Brave Space is not about imposing a dramatic leap on participants. Rather, it should be cultivated through deliberate, well-designed moments of gentle provocations, emotional invitations, and the gradual building of familiarity and trust. Together, these design strategies support participants to go a little further every time they step into Brave Space.*”



In reality, this is your steps to invite participants into Brave Space



Image 19: An access to facilitator handbook



6.4 FINAL DESIGN: A FIELD GUIDE TO EMBODY BRAVE SPACE

This project aims to address my research question, “How can facilitation intentionally embody Brave Space to support participants in navigating tension in value-centered discussions?” I guided the reader in Chapter 6.2 to explore the design levers available for this purpose. In Chapter 6.3, we examined the evolving and transitional nature of the Brave Space experience, which reinforced the empirical support for existing theoretical knowledge about psychosocial spaces.

To give an answer to the project inquiry, and be able to “design” and “embody”, the project is wrapped up with a facilitator handbook: *A Field Guide to Embody Brave Space*, transforming the portable knowledge valuable to my target audience, which includes facilitators, designers, and others, helping them understand how to apply it in practice. This handbook provides vital information for target audiences with strategies and guiding examples they should know when they want to bring Brave Space into practice, leaving a starting point for the readers to think along.

The handbook will guide you under the following logic:

1. Recognizing the challenges in value-centered discussion
2. Buckling up to understand the psychosocial spaces and their relationship
3. Giving you a compass to support participants in gradually stepping into Brave Space (liminality framework)
4. Explaining the logic behind the tool (how to read the concept map and use the tool)
5. You can take the lead and guide participants on the journey you have designed! (facilitator guide)

6.5 DISCUSSION

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

This thesis puts emphasis on **embodying Brave Space in value-centered discussion**, especially **supporting participants in navigating value tensions** and discovering the dynamics of values. These values can be redefined, collectively understood, and authentically shared by all stakeholders. Personal values and the real motivation are discovered through constant provocation and inquiry; people recognize their guiding values and acknowledge diverse perspectives during the process.

The project began by identifying Brave Space as a missing yet necessary condition in multi-stakeholder collaboration, particularly where value conflicts, emotional discomfort, or perceived disagreement arise. My research question was formed to solve this puzzle. This thesis explores Brave Space not as a fixed theory or context-specific method, but as **a designable facilitation lens that helps navigate complex, value-based discussion or collaboration**. Rooted in the concept of liminality, the research repositions Brave Space as a transitional zone between comfort and panic, **requiring intentional facilitation to sustain constructive tension and discomfort**.

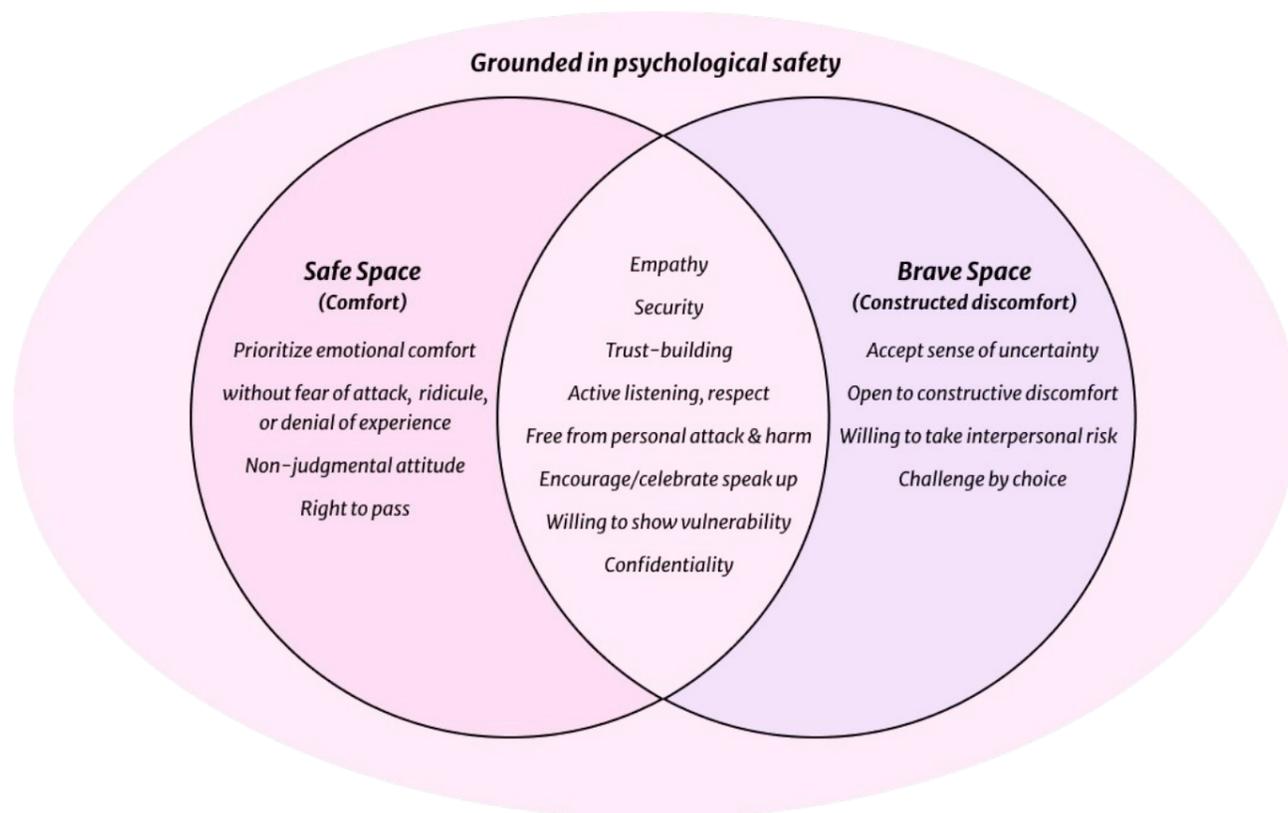


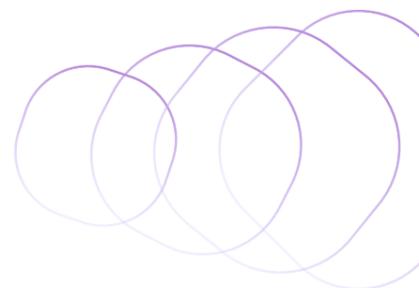
Figure 24: Complementary relationship and distinctions between Safe and Brave Space

The findings transcend the binary notion of Safe Space and Brave Space, viewing them as **complementary** concepts (Figure 24) that evolve and transform the behavior and experiences of participants. Through individuals' experience and perception of bravery, it further echoed how Brave Space is **established on psychological safety** with the illustrated explanation of design practice. Through design practice and spiral inquiry, this research further illustrated how facilitation can intentionally, step-by-step, stretch or invite participants into Brave Space and cultivate a positive environment for the group. Rather than prescribing a universal methodology, this study focuses on making Brave Space tangible and actionable through the design of modular facilitation strategies. It proceeds in three layers of contribution:

Contribution	Description
Conceptual	Reframing Brave Space as a liminal experience grounded in psychological safety, not the binary opposite of Safe Space.
Design-oriented	Developing the Safe–Brave–Panic framework and four facilitation dimensions, turning Brave Space into a generative lens.
Applied	1. Testing modular designs in micro-experiments, and later adapting them to a climate dialogue setting (Climate Fresk) to evaluate their contextual viability. 2. Transferring project results and learning into portable knowledge– A <i>Field Guide to Embody Brave Space</i> .

Table 9: Summary of research contribution

Instead of evaluating whether Brave Space works in every situation, the research treats contextual adaptation as a form of reflection. Transferability is not seen as generalization (whether my method can be copied and directly moved to another context), but as an opportunity to test whether Brave Space concept can be reshaped, applied to creative guidance in other contexts, inspiring and aligning with other practitioners and stakeholders, without losing its core purpose.



RECOMMENDATION AND LIMITATION

Design Learning For Practice

O1 Treat value discussion as a designed journey

This research adopts a service design mindset that views value-based discussions not as spontaneous, but as carefully designed journeys with multiple interaction points. For instance, in this research, I focus on three key moments that are identified vital in the value-centered discussion. The exploration of participants' experiences further indicated the journey that they went through, and what factors trigger their reactions and feelings.

O2 Plan for emotional safety using physical and creative interactions

The Climate Fresk case highlighted the unplanned but effective role of embodied and physical activities in establishing early psychological safety. Future workshops could deliberately incorporate non-verbal or low-stakes interactions to help participants accommodate to the group setting and feel more secure to engage and connect with some extent of vulnerability.

O3 Expect and design for individual differences in psychological readiness

Not all participants step into Brave Space at the same pace. As this research suggests, it involves various factors such as the individual distinctiveness, group interactions and composition. Facilitators should pay early attention to participants' expressive styles, preferred ways of engaging, and potential hesitations. Incorporate different facilitation tactics that fit different people and help fostering familiarity, such as giving options for reflection (individual vs. group), can help accommodate these differences. It's also a way to create a more inclusive environment to enable freedom of expression.



Figure 25: The process of engaging in value-centered discussion with the support of Brave Space

Suggestions On Contextual Adaptation

O1 Identify the right entry point for value reflection

Before embedding Brave Space or adapting micro-experiments into a new context, designers should observe and ask: “Where are values staying implicit and being overlooked? Is there any value tension in this context that has been ignored?”

For instances, in my project, I integrated micro-experiment but redesigned exercise for Climate Fresk workshop. Before I designed, I noticed a few resonance that has been discussed in Chapter 5, including (1) **Premature Action Bias** (2) **Hidden Values Beneath Opinions** (3) **The Triangle of Inaction**. These insights strongly resonated with my aim: to help participants see the full value landscape and understand the roadblocks and driving forces different stakeholders might have.

In different settings, the entry point for meaningful value discussion varies. I recommend to **first start by identifying critical moments** where values are shaping decisions, underneath the surface but remain implicit —these are potential points that trigger value reflection where you can embody Brave Space and embed the activities to deep dive into values. Then you can design subsequent discussions and guidance from these moments.

Additional suggestions

Prepare some flexibility for intervention and bring ownership to the actors

Find a starting point for participants to think together and “own resonance to the problem”. For example, where disagreements arise, discussing future agreements, or redefining a seemingly consistent goal statement, is a good opportunity to enter a value discussion. These touchpoints can initiate deeper reflection and become the key moment to invite Brave Space.

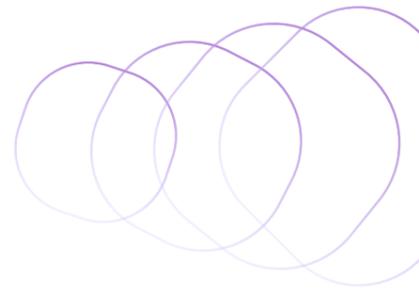
O2 Design gradual progression—from individual to collective vision

As discovered in Chapter 6.3, Brave Space is not something participants leap into on command. It unfolds as a step-by-step journey, moving from comfort to constructive discomfort, and back again.

The experience begins with provocative personal reflection, moving into sharing and diverse group engagement, and ends by helping each person define how they might act on their roles & values (Figure 25). This “**mental ladder**” helps participants build **psychological readiness and clarity before addressing complex value tensions**. From gentle prompts to constructive provocations, the key is to scaffold engagement step-by-step. Think of it as an emotional temperature ladder, each phase needs its own facilitation support and structural design.

Additional suggestions

Expect & design for individual differences in psychological readiness (as discussed in page 110)



O3 Build bridges of trust among stakeholders

Even though Brave Space encourages challenging each other's views, its essence is not strengthening opposing views, but rather promoting better collective understanding by respectfully acknowledging diverse values and perspectives. I recommended establishing a clear agreement at the beginning of the workshop, emphasizing: this is a space for equal dialogue. No matter who you are, everyone can challenge ideas (not judge people) and propose questions, but remember everyone **"owns both their intention and impact"** to ensure that this is **secure to hear different voices and be authentic**.

O4 Designing for Power Balance

In the common challenges in value-centered discussion, one critical aspect of the hierarchy of voices may come from the power dynamics between participants. Power dynamics, social roles, or missing stakeholders outside the room can make the conversation feel one-sided, and important perspectives are left out. The limitation of my research is that it did not directly design and evaluate Brave Space under conditions where group members had clear interpersonal or institutional hierarchies. In the future, researchers and design practitioners who work with multi-stakeholders could explore how Brave Space functions when some participants have more authority or visibility, and how to foster equitable expression in those settings.

Just as individual distinctiveness in personality and expression style, I believe, power dynamics don't disappear when people walk into a workshop. However, designers can soften their impact and design with awareness. How to enable equal voices and equal stage is one of the essential design criteria for embodying Brave Space. Apart from the intervention design and the 4 dimensions discussed in the liminality framework, another tangible factor, the decision of a physical environment, can also influence the starting point of psychological safety. This point will lead to the next page: **Opportunities for future research**.

Opportunities For Future Research

O1 Group hierarchy and voice distribution

This thesis did not directly test Brave Space under conditions where group members had clear interpersonal or institutional hierarchies. Future studies could explore how Brave Space functions when some participants have more authority or visibility, and how to foster equitable expression in those settings.

O2 Scaling Brave Space to system-level collaboration

The current experiments were conducted in small group settings. A potential next step would be to explore how the principles of Brave Space could be scaled or adapted to larger, more complex environments involving a wider range of stakeholders collaborating around shared challenges or opportunities. However, as my research noted, the intimacy of the room and the small group format contributed to participants' sense of comfort to some extent. This raises important considerations for future applications: how many stakeholders can effectively engage in a value-centered discussion, and how to balance the inclusion of diverse perspectives with the need to maintain a coherent and manageable facilitation dynamic.

O3 Value dynamics with the interaction of different roles

Take the intra-organizational scenario of micro-experiment for example, some roles have shown bigger value conflicts than others, and it also influenced how value shifts in the conversation. The contrast in professional roles (e.g., product managers vs. user experience designers) or national cultures presents both value tension and potential richness. Future work could build scenarios where Brave Space explicitly aims to uncover value conflicts between identities, not only within individuals, but between social positions. This will be established on the clarity of roles and the clear understanding of the stakeholders' composition.

Future researchers can further investigate: What kind of dynamics would emerge if this conversation involved new stakeholders? What kind of voices are not here yet, but it's important to be invited? This will be a continuous inquiry, especially when it involves long-term collaboration, a complex system of stakeholders, and slow project progress.

6.6 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

This project set out to investigate how facilitation can intentionally embody Brave Space to support participants in navigating value tensions during value-centered discussions. At its core, the design intention was not to resolve tensions, but to create the conditions for participants to stay with discomfort, engage deeply, and move toward shared understanding.

To address this, the project adopted a design-led, iterative approach, combining theory-building, prototyping, and critical reflection. Rather than treating Brave Space as a fixed method, the research explored how it can be intentionally designed and enacted in collaborative contexts where value differences matter. The Safe-Brave-Panic liminality framework and its four facilitation dimensions enabled the development of modular interventions that scaffold transitions between comfort, constructive discomfort, and foster openness to challenge and freedom of expression.

In response to the title “*Embody Brave Space for Value-centered Discussion*”, this project aimed to understand and strategically create Brave Space and design collaborative journeys that support participants in stretching beyond their comfort zones, engaging with unfamiliar perspectives and tensions, and ultimately reaching a deeper connection through difference. The intended impact is progressive, relying on the cultivation of psychological safety and the design of gradual transitions into Brave Space.

The design of Brave Space does not rely on dramatic leaps, but on layered, intentional invitations that make discomfort discussable and transformation possible. It is important to acknowledge the individual distinctiveness and group dynamics, responsibly “stretching” or “inviting” participants to engage and express authentically on an equal level. However, the effects of Brave Space in the context with power and social hierarchy cannot be evaluated within the scope of this project. The evaluation, demonstrates the effectiveness of facilitation strategies, interventions, and design levers, illustrating the potential of embodying Brave Space across other value-centered contexts.

Reflecting on the entire project, it was challenging to work with the ambiguity of psychological concepts and to navigate the implicit dynamics of value-centered dialogue, especially in scenarios involving diverse stakeholders. Especially when proposing solutions, a designer has to transform the insights into tangible output, and also articulate the rationale behind them to align and persuade stakeholders, and creatively answer the core question, “How can Brave Space be embodied?” This project empowered me to explore my interests at the intersection of design as strategy, psychology, and value-centered collaboration, an intersection that continues to feel increasingly relevant across different scenarios in modern society.

Overall, this project tried to establish a foundation for this evolving practice and offer a facilitator handbook to wrap up the portable knowledge, while inviting future iteration, context-specific experimentation, and continued dialogue with those who facilitate, participate in, and design for value-centered collaboration.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: VALUE TOKENS

Front Side



Back Side



Corresponding Value List

	TYPE OF VALUE	MOTIVATIONAL GOAL
OF INDIVIDUALS	Human values (e.g. Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987)	Enjoyment Security Achievement Self-Direction Restrictive-conformity Prosocial Social power Maturity (cannot be actively attained)
	Cultural values (e.g. Schwartz, 2006) e.g.: • teams • organizations • economic sectors • nations	Autonomy Embeddedness Egalitarianism Hierarchy Harmony Mastery
FOR PEOPLE	Use value (e.g. Bocken et al., 2013; Ravasi et al., 2012; Ekstrom, 2011)	Utility Well-being & development Symbolic meaning Emotional meaning
	Social value (e.g. Boradkar, 2010; Den Ouden, 2011)	Social prosperity Social wealth
	Economic value (e.g. Bowman & Ambrosini, 2000)	Money Other economic value
FOR PLANET	Ecological / environmental value (e.g. Bocken et al. 2013)	Preservation of the planet

APPENDIX B: EXPERIENCE MAPPING TOOL

Experience Mapping

*Please rest assured that your name and any identifiable information will not be disclosed outside of this workshop. Your sharing of experience will only assist researcher in this research as the objective evaluations.

What is your name? (If you consent sharing)

What is the role you claim today?

Map your experience and write down the feelings you have in the session. (Mark emotions & thoughts on the graph→)

1 Deep Dive into Project Values

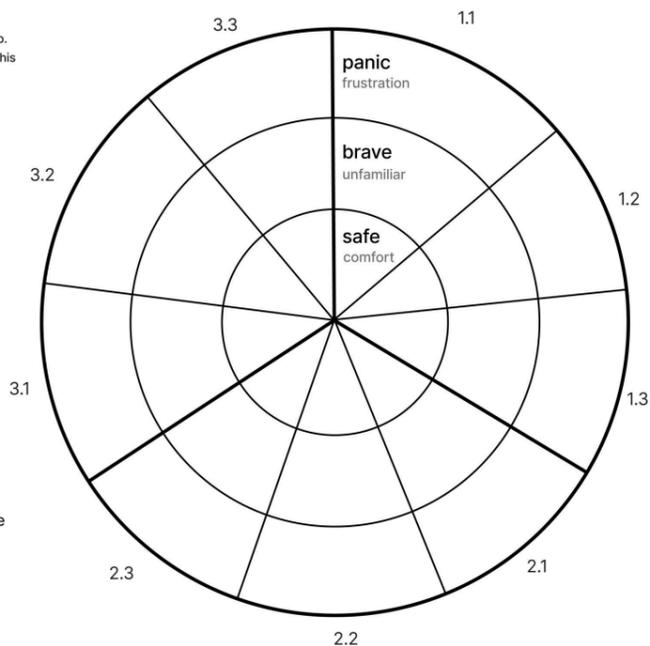
- 1.1 Write down most essential value
- 1.2 Challenge questioning in pairs
- 1.3 Provocative question round

2 Clash of Perspectives

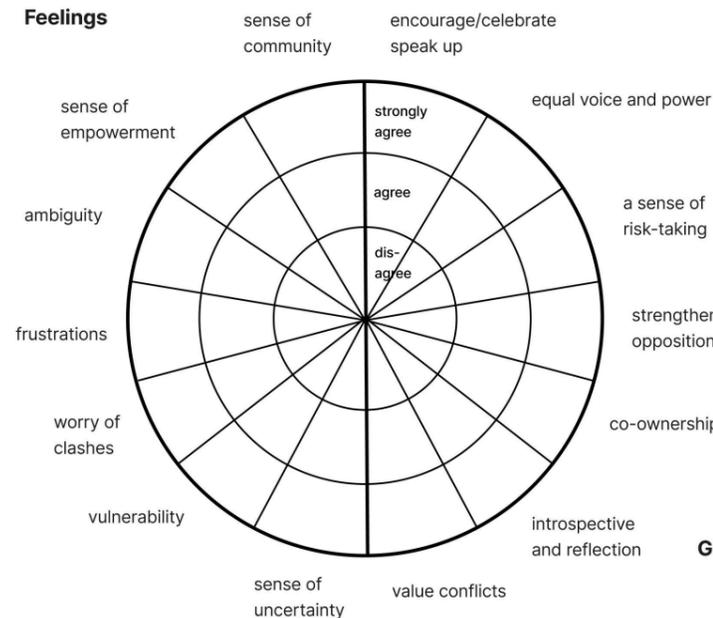
- 2.1 Silent response in your angle
- 2.2 Switch the Seat
- 2.3 Plenary sharing from personal perspective

3 Flip the Tensions

- 3.1 Name the tension, make it explicit
- 3.2 Quickfire Reflection
- 3.3 Come up with action idea



Feelings



Group Interaction

Experience Mapping

*Please rest assured that your name and any identifiable information will not be disclosed outside of this workshop. Your sharing of experience will only assist researcher in this research as the objective evaluations.

What is your name?

Map your experience and write down the feelings you have in the session. (Mark emotions & thoughts on the graph→)

1 Climate Mapping

Map the cause & consequence of 48 topics

2 Deep Dive into Values & Feelings

- 2.1 Identify the emotion and core values
- 2.2 Plenary Sharing

3 Define Collective Visions

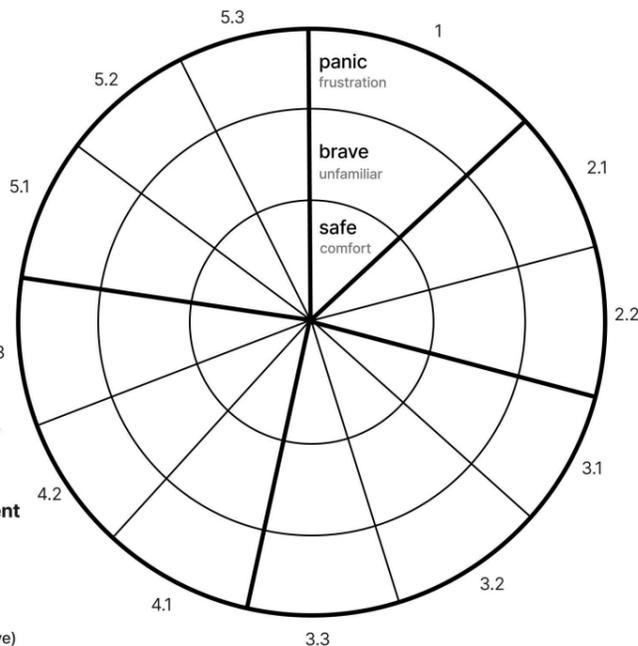
- 3.1 Silent writing from "I" perspective
- 3.2 Role-switching to "Business"&"government"
- 3.3 Pair-share: Identify synergy (shared feelings/visions) & differences

4 Clash of Perspectives: Bold statement

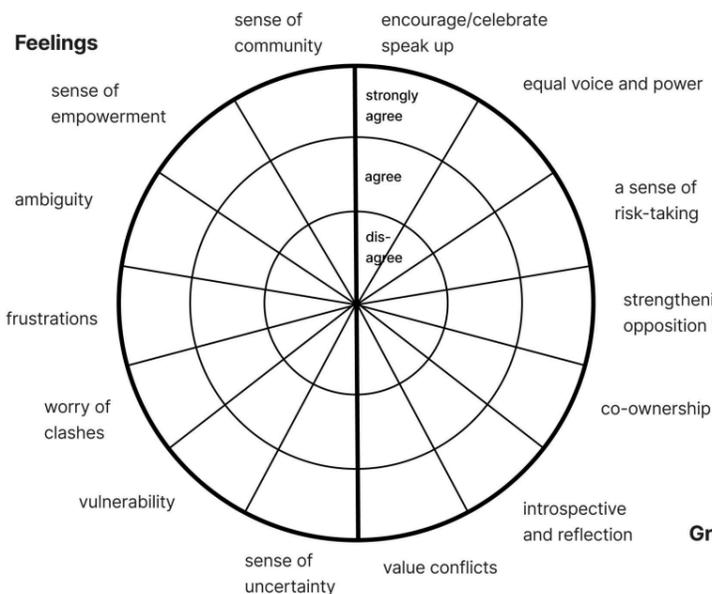
- 4.1 Find the values for different actors
- 4.2 Create bold statements
- 4.3 Plenary discussion

5 Flip the Tensions

- 5.1 Find out tension together (citizen perspective)
- 5.2 Quickfire Reflection (2 questions)
- 5.3 Come up with action idea



Feelings



Group Interaction

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GOAL & QUESTION GUIDE

The experience mapping shows the difference in how every participant experience the activities, but it is not sufficient to know what exactly do they experience and why. To really understand the reasons behind, I decided to conduct the interviews to emphasize the real users.

The goal of participant interview

1. What is their brave feelings exactly?
 - Where do they feel brave, and what do they feel brave about?
2. To understand how they experience the designed activities.
 - What is the core elements that make them experience certain feelings?
 - Are these elements tangible?
 - Is those "stimuli" what I designed in purpose?
 - Are there other factors that set as an addition or destructive factors?
3. Successful triggers in the design approach
 - What makes them be willing to engage in *Constructed Discomfort*? If they step out of their comfort zone deliberately, what is the reason behind?
 - When they feel facilitated & supported to step into brave space (and also aligned to what I design deliberately), how do they feel?
 - Is brave space helpful?

Additional thoughts after the interview

1. Can this elements and approaches transferable and be adopted to different cases?
2. Do I know better of the brave space liminal experience from participant's perspective now?

Interview Guide

Opening

During our interview, you can feel free and be honest about everything you have experienced in the workshop, and I'd give you the space and time to share your thoughts.

General Understanding

- When you look back at the workshop, what do you remember the most? And why?
- Overall, you feel very safe. During some parts of the workshop, you feel brave as well. Can you give me some examples of where you feel really brave at that moment? What triggers you to feel brave?
- What makes you feel safe in the workshop? If you remember a specific moment, could you give me an example of what happened then?
- Can you tell me where in the workshop that you step into the Brave Space yourself deliberately? Why do you feel like you want to do that?
- There are specific moments that you feel danger and a sense of fear, could you share with me what happened?
- What do you need to feel braver?
- Is stepping into Brave Space for you a good thing? Do you feel that is helpful, or is it a limitation instead?

In Depth Inquiry

Now I want to ask you some questions to understand your experience for specific activities & moments when you received some guidance during the game.

- In activity....you mentioned.... What makes you feel that way?
- How do you experience interacting with this group of people? Would you describe specifically the experiences you have in the workshop that come to your mind?

APPENDIX D: PROJECT BRIEF



IDE Master Graduation Project

Project team, procedural checks and Personal Project Brief



In this document the agreements made between student and supervisory team about the student's IDE Master Graduation Project are set out. This document may also include involvement of an external client, however does not cover any legal matters student and client (might) agree upon. Next to that, this document facilitates the required procedural checks:

- Student defines the team, what the student is going to do/deliver and how that will come about
- Chair of the supervisory team signs, to formally approve the project's setup / Project brief
- SSC E&SA (Shared Service Centre, Education & Student Affairs) report on the student's registration and study progress
- IDE's Board of Examiners confirms the proposed supervisory team on their eligibility, and whether the student is allowed to start the Graduation Project

STUDENT DATA & MASTER PROGRAMME

Complete all fields and indicate which master(s) you are in

Family name	Wang	7575	IDE master(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> IPD	<input type="checkbox"/> Dfl	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SPD
Initials	Y.H.		2 nd non-IDE master			
Given name	Yihua		Individual programme (date of approval)			
Student number	5953758		Medisign	<input type="checkbox"/>		
			HPM	<input type="checkbox"/>		

SUPERVISORY TEAM

Fill in the required information of supervisory team members. If applicable, company mentor is added as 2nd mentor

Chair	Marina Bos-deVos	dept./section	DOS/MOD	! Ensure a heterogeneous team. In case you wish to include team members from the same section, explain why. ! Chair should request the IDE Board of Examiners for approval when a non-IDE mentor is proposed. Include CV and motivation letter. ! 2 nd mentor only applies when a client is involved.
mentor	Katrina Heijne	dept./section	DOS/CP	
2 nd mentor				
client:	AMS institute			
city:	Delft, Amsterdam	country:	The Netherlands	
optional comments				

APPROVAL OF CHAIR on PROJECT PROPOSAL / PROJECT BRIEF -> to be filled in by the Chair of the supervisory team

Sign for approval (Chair)



Digitally signed by Marina Bos-de Vos
Date: 2025.02.21 21:14:18 +01'00'

Name Marina Bos-de Vos

Date 21-02-2025

Signature _____



Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project



Name student Yihua Wang Student number 5953758

PROJECT TITLE, INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM DEFINITION and ASSIGNMENT

Complete all fields, keep information clear, specific and concise

Project title Building Courage for Joint Value Creation. Foster the social construction of value by embodying a "brave space" within multi-stakeholder dialogue

Please state the title of your graduation project (above). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

Introduction

Describe the context of your project here; What is the domain in which your project takes place? Who are the main stakeholders and what interests are at stake? Describe the opportunities (and limitations) in this domain to better serve the stakeholder interests. (max 250 words)

Joint value creation is best conceptualized as a collective process that involves social construction, emergent from the interactions and shared narratives of stakeholders (Green and Sergeeva, 2019). This process is inherently discursive, requiring the co-creation of meaning and values within collaborative settings. My research focuses on the role of creative facilitation in this dynamic, particularly how it can foster "brave spaces"—environments that encourage openness, dialogue, and mutual respect among team members (Arao and Clemens, 2013). Drawing from sense-making theory (Weick, 1995) and narrative theory (Bruner, 1991), I argue that creative facilitation acts as a catalyst in the social construction of value, helping teams navigate complex, multi-stakeholder dialogues.

This research aims to examine the role of "brave spaces" in enhancing joint value creation, identifying how these environments can support the co-construction of value. Given that the concept of "brave spaces" remains underdeveloped in the context of JVC, this study seeks to advance creative facilitation strategies that manage the complex dynamics of multi-stakeholder collaborations.

This approach aligns with the idea that narratives serve as frameworks through which individuals and groups interpret their experiences and co-construct values (Green and Sergeeva, 2019). By creating "brave spaces", facilitators can enable participants to share and negotiate these narratives, thus driving joint value creation. This perspective expands the discourse on value creation from a traditional economic or outcome-based view to a joint, engaging process that is more inclusive, process-oriented understanding, where the journey of co-construction is as significant as the outcome itself.

This research is going to be conducted in research through design method. I will join the testing session with Marina and help facilitate the session. Apart from that, the method will also be applied to the case collaborated with AMS institute. The experimental setup provides the necessary scenarios for observing and evaluating idea-led techniques, which helps to observe the process of value construction in real time.

→ space available for images / figures on next page

APPENDIX D: PROJECT BRIEF

introduction (continued): space for images



image / figure 1 Testing JVC method with volunteers from different companies and organizations



image / figure 2 One side of the JVC prototype, participants leave their ideas on the co-creation board



Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Problem Definition

What problem do you want to solve in the context described in the introduction, and within the available time frame of 100 working days? (= Master Graduation Project of 30 EC). What opportunities do you see to create added value for the described stakeholders? Substantiate your choice. (max 200 words)

In multi-stakeholder dialogues, joint value creation (JVC) is essential for aligning diverse interests and achieving collaborative outcomes. However, the process is often hindered by misaligned perspectives and a lack of common ground. Despite the critical role facilitators play in bridging diverse viewpoints, there remains a gap in exploring how creative facilitation can specifically support the social construction of value. Traditional facilitation methods focus on structured and linear dialogues, but they may not sufficiently foster the dynamic interactions required for effective joint value creation; that is where the creative facilitation coming into play. The goal of creative facilitation is often to explore possibilities, generate innovative ideas, or inspiring new ways of thinking. Creative facilitation encourages practitioners to adopt various methods which help engage stakeholders and co-create the outcome. Additionally, it can stimulate participants' creativity with its playful and experiential nature.

This research aims to address the gap by examining how creative facilitation can foster the social construction of value through the embodiment of "brave spaces" within multi-stakeholder dialogues. It is inevitable that risk and painful process of abandoning a former perception exist in collaborative and learning environment. Bravery is claimed to help people better understand the challenges of genuine dialogue on diversity and societal issues. Its core elements, psychological safety and empathy, are hypothesized to be critical in enhancing sense-making and narrative sharing among participants. They are expected to reshape participant relationships, foster evolving team values, and ultimately drive a more inclusive and collaborative approach to JVC.

Assignment

This is the most important part of the project brief because it will give a clear direction of what you are heading for. Formulate an assignment to yourself regarding what you expect to deliver as result at the end of your project. (1 sentence) As you graduate as an industrial design engineer, your assignment will start with a verb (Design/Investigate/Validate/Create), and you may use the green text format:

Investigate and develop a creative facilitation framework/process for Joint Value Creation that fosters "brave spaces" to support the social construction of value within multi-stakeholder dialogues.

Then explain your project approach to carrying out your graduation project and what research and design methods you plan to use to generate your design solution (max 150 words)

In this project, creative facilitation(CF) is approached as a narrative and sense-making method to evaluate its impact on fostering joint value creation (JVC). The research will follow an action research methodology, incorporating participatory workshops.

Phase 1: I will observe JVC sessions involving stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, collecting observational data and participant feedback to gather initial insights.

Phase 2: Using these insights, I will design and facilitate an adjusted or new JVC pilot session. This phase will test the process adjustments and facilitation techniques.

Phase 3: The pilot session's outcomes will be evaluated through various approaches, including interviews, analysis of observatory data, short audio survey from the participants, etc. Iterative improvements will be made based on feedback, refining the workshop settings or design interventions. The CF process and intervention will be part of the outcome for future design practitioners to enhance joint value creation.

APPENDIX D: PROJECT BRIEF

Project planning and key moments

To make visible how you plan to spend your time, you must make a planning for the full project. You are advised to use a Gantt chart format to show the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings and in-between deadlines. Keep in mind that all activities should fit within the given run time of 100 working days. Your planning should include a **kick-off meeting, mid-term evaluation meeting, green light meeting and graduation ceremony**. Please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any (for instance because of holidays or parallel course activities).

Make sure to attach the full plan to this project brief. The four key moment dates must be filled in below

Kick off meeting 2/11

Mid-term evaluation 4/14

Green light meeting 6/16

Graduation ceremony 7/24

In exceptional cases (part of) the Graduation Project may need to be scheduled part-time. Indicate here if such applies to your project

Part of project scheduled part-time	<input type="checkbox"/>
For how many project weeks	<input type="text"/>
Number of project days per week	<input type="text"/>

Comments:

Motivation and personal ambitions

Explain why you wish to start this project, what competencies you want to prove or develop (e.g. competencies acquired in your MSc programme, electives, extra-curricular activities or other).

Optionally, describe whether you have some personal learning ambitions which you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project itself. You might think of e.g. acquiring in depth knowledge on a specific subject, broadening your competencies or experimenting with a specific tool or methodology. Personal learning ambitions are limited to a maximum number of five. (200 words max)

I am deeply interested in the role of creative facilitation in enhancing collaborative processes within multi-stakeholder environments. My passion for this topic stems from my previous experiences working on complex design projects diverse perspectives often led to communication challenges. And I find the importance in societal topics where voices from minority stakes are necessary to be heard. With the increasing complexity of projects involving multiple stakeholders, the ability to foster joint value creation (JVC) is more important than ever. Stakeholders are encouraged to discover the current value conflicts and tensions among them, and to build a common ground connecting to the shared vision.

I believe that creative facilitation holds significant potential to address these challenges by guiding participants to view issues from different perspectives and encouraging open dialogue in "brave spaces." This approach can foster more inclusive and effective conversations, which are crucial for tackling various societal issues. Beyond commercial interests, I find it also interesting to explore JVC in contexts that consider the perspectives of nature stakeholders, from a more-than-human design perspective.

This project represents a significant step in my professional development, aligning with my aspiration to become a proficient facilitator capable of navigating complex stakeholder dynamics. By developing strategies that enhance JVC, I aim to contribute valuable insights to the field of strategic design and help practitioners create more collaborative and innovative environments.