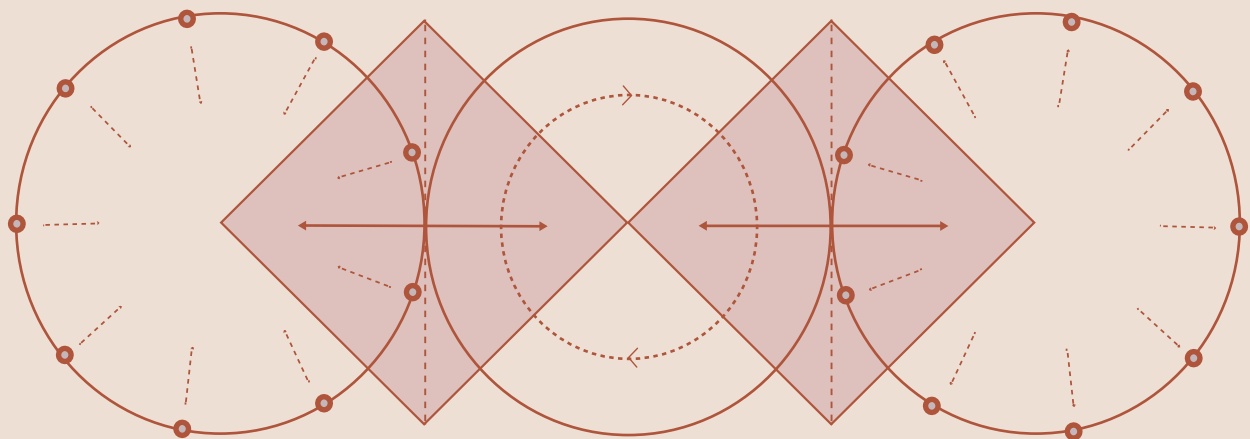


# Organizational context alignment in service design projects

Creating a framework for exploration of the organizational context to unlock the transformative impact of service design projects



### **Organizational context alignment in service design projects**

Creating a framework for exploration of the organizational context to unlock the transformative impact of service design projects

### **Master Thesis**

Rotterdam, June 2021

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Co-founder  
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## **Preface**

*Dear reader,*

*You are reading the final deliverable of my graduation project of the master Strategic Product Design at the Delft University of Technology. Seven years ago, I started at the faculty of Industrial Design Engineering very excited, but not knowing what exactly I could expect. One thing is for sure: I would never have expected to graduate almost entirely from my own bedroom in Rotterdam, sometimes even in quarantine for days. Graduating during the current pandemic has been quite a journey, but I am proud to present my final thesis. I could not have done it without the help of certain people.*

First of all, I would like to thank Koos for providing me with this assignment and trusting me with this complex topic. Although it has definitely been difficult, I could not have asked for a more interesting topic and a cooler, more fun company to work with! Thank you Marieke, for guiding me through the project week by week, listening to my thoughts, insights and uncertainties on a weekly basis, opening doors for me where you could and keeping me on track. It has not been easy, but I could not have done it without you. Thank you Jules, for allowing me to take up this challenge and supporting me throughout the process. Thank you for always being enthusiastic, continuously “wearing the Koos-cap” and bringing in your perspective on the project from your endless experience. Thank you Hidde, for reminding me throughout the transformation squad meetings how complex this topic is, and how much value there was in my findings. Thank you Nathalie, Jette, Stefanie and Nynke for making time in your busy schedules to help me out when I was stuck, listening to me and reminding me of what I had already achieved. And of course, thank you to everyone who participated in my interviews, sessions, casual chats and validation moments.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my

supervisory team, Marina and Giulia, who continuously supported me throughout the journey and challenged me in all the right ways. I really appreciate your guidance and kindness, especially when I was going through tough times. Thank you Marina, for always listening with full attention, answering my questions in so much detail and giving me the feeling I could and should be proud of my findings - even though it did not always go as planned. I really appreciate how much you gave me the feeling you cared, and were always there for support, even when your leave had already started. Thank you Giulia, for your sharp feedback and your kind and calming words. Thank you for your flexibility when I needed more flexibility myself, and continuously assuring me that everything was going to be ok. I would not have gotten through this without your trust and support. Additionally, thank you Sijia for helping out by stepping in as a replacement for Marina while she is on her leave.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family for being there for me throughout this journey. Thank you to my roommates, who were always there for me and made me smile whatever the situation. Thank you mom and dad for endlessly listening to my stories and taking care of me with open arms when I needed it the most. Thank you Christof, for taking so much time to really understand my complete project from scratch, proofreading chapters and giving-spot on advice, without any experience in the field of design. And most of all, thank you Wibren, for listening to my stories and doubts over and over again whenever I needed it. Thank you for always succeeding in making me feel calm, always believing in me and reminding me of my talents and capabilities. You definitely pulled me through!

I hope you will enjoy reading!

Anna Westland  
22-07-2021

## Executive summary

Our world is changing rapidly in various ways, forcing organizations to engage in continuous change to stay relevant. Therefore, it has become an essential capability of organizations to engage in and attempt to manage change to remain successful and sustain their existence (Stouten, Rousseau & de Cremer, 2018; Coughlan, Suri & Canales, 2007). Due to the increasingly fast-changing market demands, organizations recognize the need for a more outside-in approach in order to increase their resilience. This is why the customer-centric approach gained popularity (Ambaram, 2013). In order to become customer-centric, organizations need to enhance their customers' experiences. As service design offers the means to improve customer experience, service design has become a capability that many organizations attempt to acquire (Ostrom et al., 2015).

### Initial assignment

A few years ago, Koos developed their service design maturity model: a model that describes different growth phases an organization can go through while trying to embed service design within their organizations, and the elements that affect this process. In order to realize the ambition of becoming a more strategic partner that guides organizations through customer-centric transformations, Koos feels having a solid maturity model could serve as a backbone. The expectation was that the model could both serve in order to predict in what way an organization should change, but also to "sell" the transformation proposition. Therefore, the main objective of this thesis assignment was to validate and improve Koos' maturity model, and identify how the model could be servitized by Koos.

### Reframed assignment

However, initial exploration through interviews with experts and Koos' designers, combined with findings from literature, pointed out that the key stakeholders may have made the assumption that a maturity scan is what they need in order to concretize their transformation offer. However, Koos' service designers and interviewed experts pointed out a more fundamental problem: the feeling that Koos might be missing skills that are essential in order to be able to help organizations transform. On top of that, literature research made clear that creating maturity models that accurately indicate how an organization might need to transform, or indicating

how "mature" an organization is, is impossible since every organization is different and requires a unique approach.

Therefore, the new problem statement, formulated as a question, became:

**What does Koos need to do differently in order to enable organizations to become more customer-centric through service design, in order to form a more strategic, long-term collaboration with clients?**

### Opportunity gap

to focus more on exploring the organizational context elements to understand clients' as-is situation, instead of trying to assess the context elements to indicate a maturity level. In that way, they can secure better implementation and thus enable clients to become slightly more customer-centric project by project. This will help Koos to concretize their transformation proposition in three ways:

First, exploring the as-is state of the organizational context will enable Koos to improve chances of implementation, and

thus make a more transformative impact. Secondly, having the as-is state made explicit will also enable Koos to express the transformative impact of service design to clients after a project has been implemented. Thirdly, more experience with implementation and organizational change on project scale will give Koos the expertise, the organizational sensitivity and credibility needed to serve as transformation consultants in the future.

### Organizational context framework and Miro

Based on findings from 4 case studies compared with findings from literature and a co-reflection session with 24 of Koos' employees, it was decided to design a framework that would explain which organizational context elements service designers should take into account in order to secure better implementation, and when and how they should embed exploration of these context elements into their double diamond design approach. This resulted in the Organizational Context Framework as shown in figure 1. The framework shows how designers should address implementation from day one, by performing 3 different actions regarding the organizational context: exploring, aligning and anchoring. In order to enact the framework, the Organizational Context Reflection Miro has

been designer. This Miroboard serves as a living document, in which the design team goes through a weekly reflection of all three organizational context actions. In that way, continuous alignment between the organizational context and the project approach is being stimulated, so that the project outcomes and required changes can be anchored and implemented within the organization successfully.

### Change process Koos

The most important outcome of this project is not the organizational context framework or the reflection Miro, but rather the fact that this project set a change process in motion at Koos internally. Through the findings of this project, it has become apparent that Koos' service designers need to extend their skill set and start approaching their projects in a more impact-minded, flexible manner. The framework and the Miroboard serve as artefacts that stimulate this change, but pointing out the blindspot Koos had, and starting the change process required to solve it is bigger and more important, and should make lasting impact long after this project ended.

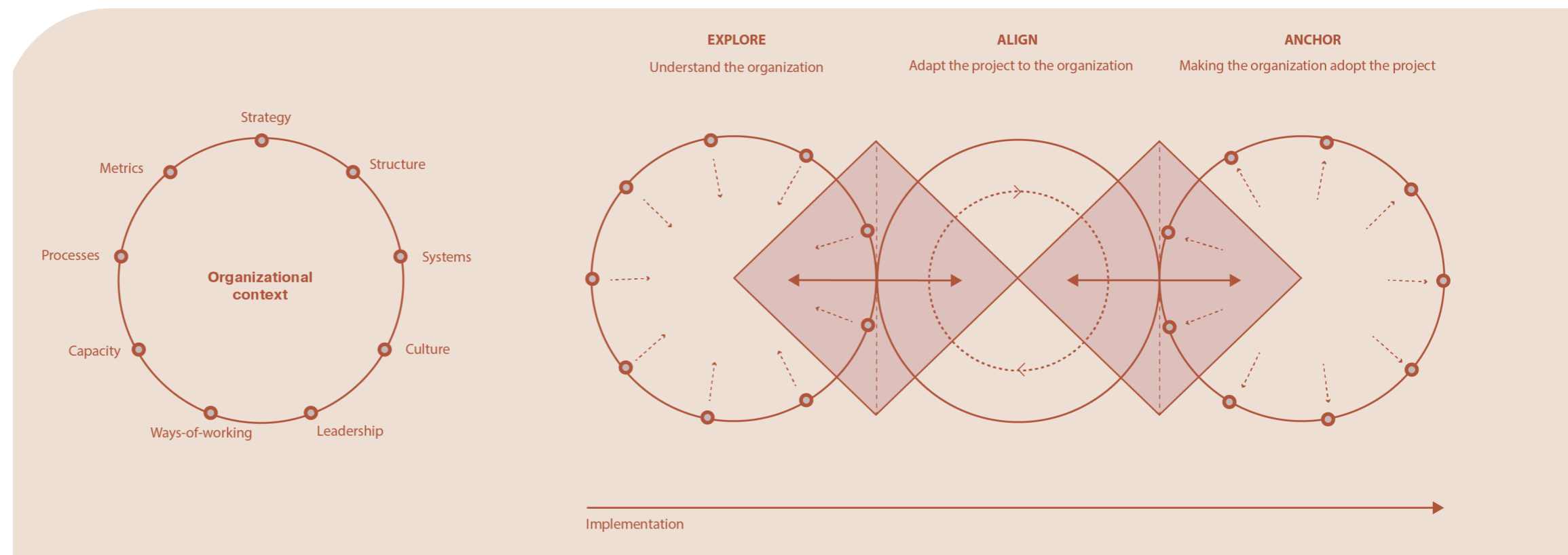


Figure 1 | The organizational context framework

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# 01

## **Introducing the project**

This chapter will introduce the project, stakeholders and the initial assignment. Furthermore, it will explain the approach taken during this project and the structure of this report.

## 1.1 Introduction to the project

*Our world is changing rapidly in various ways, forcing organizations to engage in continuous change to stay relevant. Therefore, it has become an essential capability of organizations to engage in and attempt to manage change to remain successful and sustain their existence (Stouten, Rousseau & de Cremer, 2018; Coughlan, Suri & Canales, 2007). Due to the increasingly fast changing market demands, organizations recognize the need for a more outside-in approach in order to increase their resilience. This is why the customer-centric approach gained popularity (Ambaram, 2013). In order to become customer-centric, organizations need to enhance their customers' experiences. As service design offers the means to improve customer experience, service design has become a capability that many organizations attempt to acquire (Ostrom et al., 2015).*

This project is executed in collaboration with Koos, a Dutch service design agency. Initially, Koos used service design in order to execute stand-alone innovation projects for their clients. However, Koos noticed that many organizations nowadays recognize that CX management and journey management are becoming crucial skills (Koos, 2020). The projects that clients request from Koos are no longer just to execute stand-alone projects, but to contribute to embedding service design as a way of working. Therefore, Koos aims to grow partnerships with clients in which service design or UX projects are part of a bigger transformative perspective that help clients to become design-led and customer-centric.

### Initial project assignment

A few years ago, Koos developed their service design maturity model: a model that describes different growth phases an organization can go through while trying to embed service design within their organizations, and the elements that affect this process. In order to realize the ambition of becoming a more strategic partner that guides organizations through customer-centric transformations, Koos feels having a solid maturity model could serve as a backbone. Therefore, the main objective of this thesis assignment was to validate and improve Koos' maturity model, and identify how the model could be servitized by Koos. The initial project brief can be found in appendix 1.

Therefore, the initial assignment of this thesis was twofold. The initial research question (IRQ 1) was to validate the maturity model based on literature, and accordingly improve the model. The expectation was that the model would not need too much change. However, since new maturity elements were still discovered recently, there was a need to establish that the model covers all relevant aspects of service design maturity once and for all. *The second part (IRQ 2) of the assignment was to give recommendations for new applications of the maturity model.* In the words of one of the key stakeholders, there was a need to "figure out how to servitize the model". A suggestion was to make the model into a quantified scan that could help Koos to more adequately assess a clients' service design maturity. This would be beneficial for Koos' ability to make transformation into a concrete, monetary offering.

**However, initial exploration in the first phase of this project brought to light that there were more fundamental unclarities about Koos' transformation ambitions. Although Koos has a strong feeling that they have potential to get a more prominent role in organizations' transformation efforts, they have not yet specified what their transformation proposition would look like. Key stakeholders and several service designers from Koos expressed their concerns regarding Koos' ambitions to guide organizations through customer-centric transformations with the resources they have right now.** The fact that service design as a method/approach offers the means to become work in a customer-centric way, does not automatically mean that service designers have all it takes to guide this transformation.

These more fundamental unclarities about Koos' proposition turned out to be of big influence for the initial assignment. In order to identify in what way the maturity model should be improved (IRQ 1), it is actually key to know the purpose of the model (IRQ 2). However, since Koos' transformation proposition turned out to be unclear, deciding on the purpose of the model turned out to be difficult as well. Therefore, the main assignment of this thesis has iteratively changed into an exploration of what it takes to transform organizations and the role service designers could have in these efforts. This resulted in neglecting IRQ1 en IRQ2 and formulating two new research questions. This will be further elaborated in the approach section (section 1.2) and throughout the rest of this report.

### Stakeholders

Several stakeholders take part in this project. A division between the different stakeholders can be made: the primary stakeholders from Koos and the stakeholders from TU Delft. From Koos, the main stakeholders are Jules Prick (the founder of Koos), Marieke Maas (business developer at Koos) and Hidde Burgmans (UX Lead & senior service designer at Koos). Together, those three stakeholders form Koos' transformation squad, which as a group functions as the problem owner of this thesis. The goal of the transformation squad is to enable Koos as an organization to live up to its ambition to increase Koos positive impact by transforming organizations into customer-centric organizations. Their objectives are to servitize transformation, develop the methodology needed for transformation and develop and acquire skills needed for transformation.

From TU Delft, Giulia Calabretta and Marina Bos de Vos are the supervisors of this project.



## 1.2 Project approach

This project can be seen as both a design process and a change process in one. For the design process, an adapted version of the Double Diamond approach has been used. For the change process, Kotters' (1995) model for change has been used. These approaches will now further be explained.

### The design process

The double diamond is a design process in which four phases can be distinguished: discover, define, develop and deliver. (Design council, 2004). In the original double diamond model, the discover phase aims to understand the problem in a holistic manner. The second phase, define, aims to formulate the problem in a challenging way. The third phase, develop, aims to generate multiple answers to the clearly defined problem statement in a co-creative manner. Lastly, the deliver phase aims to test out the different solutions, reject the ones that don't work and improve the ones that will (Design council, 2004).

However, due to the fuzzy nature of this project, an adapted version of the double diamond has been used: the tripple diamond (Nesta, 2016). In the extra diamond at the beginning of the process, a first set of diverging and converging actions has been carried by exploring the context in order to figure out the real problem in this assignment. However, it was an iterative process that could only in hindsight be fitted into a linear process as the process shown in figure 2. There was constant iteration, exploring sidepaths and going back and forth between phases.

### The change process

The most important result of this project is that going through the design process has started a process of change within Koos internally. Therefore, the whole design process in itself is part of the solution of this thesis. Additionally, several actions have been undertaken in order to generate change within Koos. Kotters' (1995) model for change has served as the backbone of this change process. This model consists of 8 steps:

- 1) Creating a sense of urgency
- 2) Forming a guiding coalition
- 3) Creating a vision
- 4) Communicating the vision
- 5) Removing barriers and empowering others to act on the vision
- 6) Formulate and generate short term wins
- 7) Build on the change
- 8) Make it stick

Step one till three aim to create the climate for change, step four till six aim to engage and enable the organization and step seven and eight aim to implement and sustain the changes.

Throughout this project, step one till 5 have been executed and step 6 has been prepared, as visualized in figure 2. Step seven and eight were not considered feasible within the scope of this thesis.

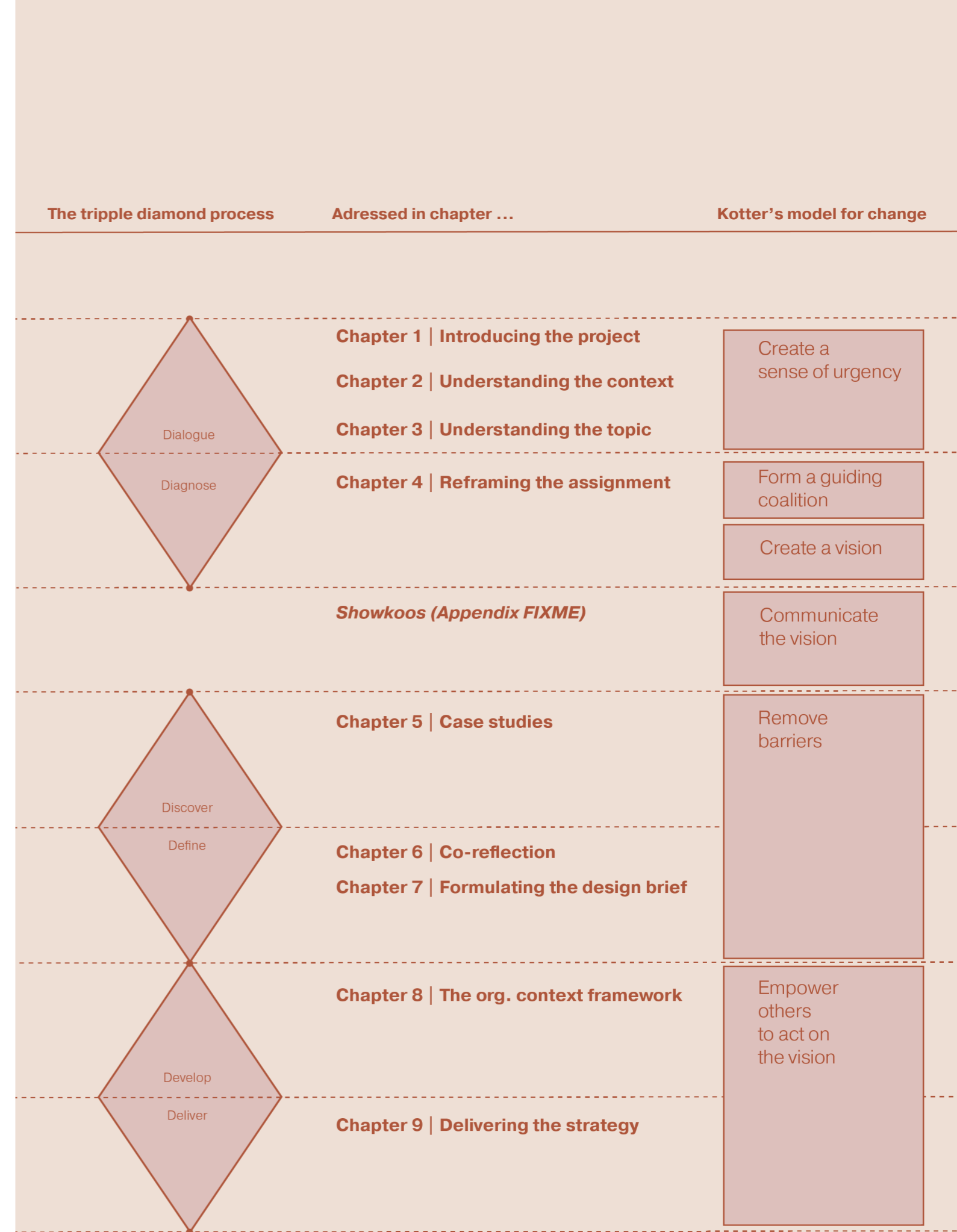


Figure 2| Project approach

# 02

## **Understanding the context**

This chapter will give an overview of the exploration of the context of this project. That means this chapter will introduce Koos and the maturity model. After presenting the findings from exploratory interviews with designers and experts reflecting on Koos' current maturity model and transformation ambitions, the chapter will conclude with the problem definition of this thesis.



## 2.1 Introducing Koos

In order to understand the context of this project, it is important to understand Koos' current proposition. Therefore, this section aims to introduce Koos' service offering. Since the focus of this project is the CX transformation category of Koos' proposition, this chapter explains the status quo of Koos' CX proposition.

Koos is a service design agency founded in 2009 by two graduates from the faculty of Industrial design engineering from the Delft University of technology. Now, 12 years later, Koos has approximately 40 employees and has two offices: one in Amsterdam and one in Lisbon.

### Koos' proposition

Koos' current proposition consist of four main categories: service design, UX design, Academy and CX transformation.

As shown in figure 3 these four categories can be divided into two parts. The first part consists of service design and UX design, which aim to support organizations to develop services that customers love. Here, Koos uses their service design approach in order to work on specific projects for clients. Here, service design is meant to help organizations to come up with service concepts, and UX design can help to develop the concepts into user-friendly interfaces.

However, due to the increasing interest of organizations to become customer-centric, Koos recognized that clients want (or need) to embed the service design way of working in order to be able to continuously respond to change. Therefore, Koos has extended their service offering with the academy and CX transformation

- as shown in the bottom half of figure 2. The academy offering consists of masterclasses, introducing organizations to service design skills.

As a next step, Koos aims to become more strategically involved over a longer period of time in order to help clients go through a customer-centric transformation. CX transformation is the service that has most recently been added to Koos' portfolio and will be the part of Koos' service that will be the focus area of this thesis. Throughout this project, it became apparent that Koos does not yet have a concrete proposition for the CX transformation offering. This has had a significant impact on this project, as will become clear throughout the rest of this report.

### The transformation squad

Koos is organized as an holacracy (Robertson, 2015), meaning that there is a system of self-supporting teams rather than a vested management hierarchy. Each of those teams has their own accountabilities and objectives. One of these squads is the transformation squad, which consists of one of the co-founders of Koos, one business developer and one senior service design/UX designer. Together, this team collectively serves as the problem owner of this thesis.

The goal of the transformation squad is to enable Koos as an organization to live up to its ambition to increase Koos positive impact by transforming organizations into customer-centric (purpose-driven) organizations. Therefore, their objectives are to servitize transformation, develop the methodology needed for transformation and develop and acquire skills needed for transformation.

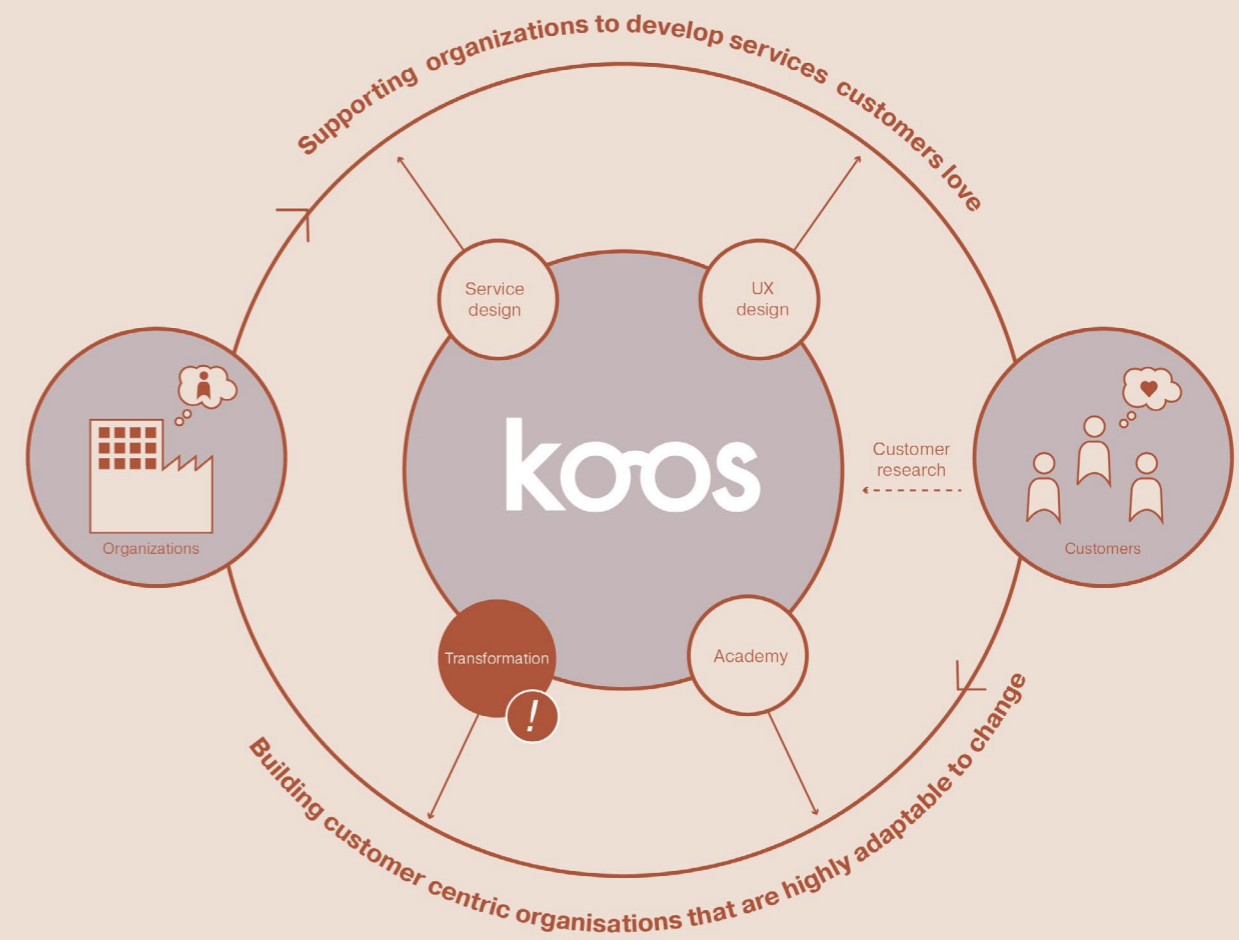


Figure 3 | Visual overview of Koos' current proposition. For this thesis, the focus is on the transformation part.

## 2.2 Koos' project approach

In order to understand Koos' way of working, the following chapter aims to explain Koos' project approach, the involved roles and the tools and methods used. This will form an important basis for further insights throughout this thesis.

### Roles in the team

In projects, there are three main involved actors from Koos: the account manager, the project manager and the project team members. The account manager is responsible for the budget of the project, and maintaining the relationship with the client. The project manager is in charge of making sure the project runs smoothly and the project stays in line with the clients' goals and the project team is responsible for generating the content and running the project.

### The design process

Making the proposal and hand over to the project manager  
Proposals are usually made by the account managers or sales representatives from Koos. Afterwards, the account manager hands over the project to the project manager and the rest of the team. Ideally, the project manager that will run the project will be included during the sales.

### Internal kickoff

During the internal kickoff, the project planning and objectives are discussed with the whole team, including the account manager. Also, the roles within the team are divided during the internal kickoff.

### Kickoff with the client

During the kickoff with the client, all stakeholders from the clients' side and the Koos team together kickoff the project. Every project manager has his or her own style in setting up the kickoff - there are no fixed guidelines on what a kickoff meeting should contain. Most designers make sure to address the expectations of all involved

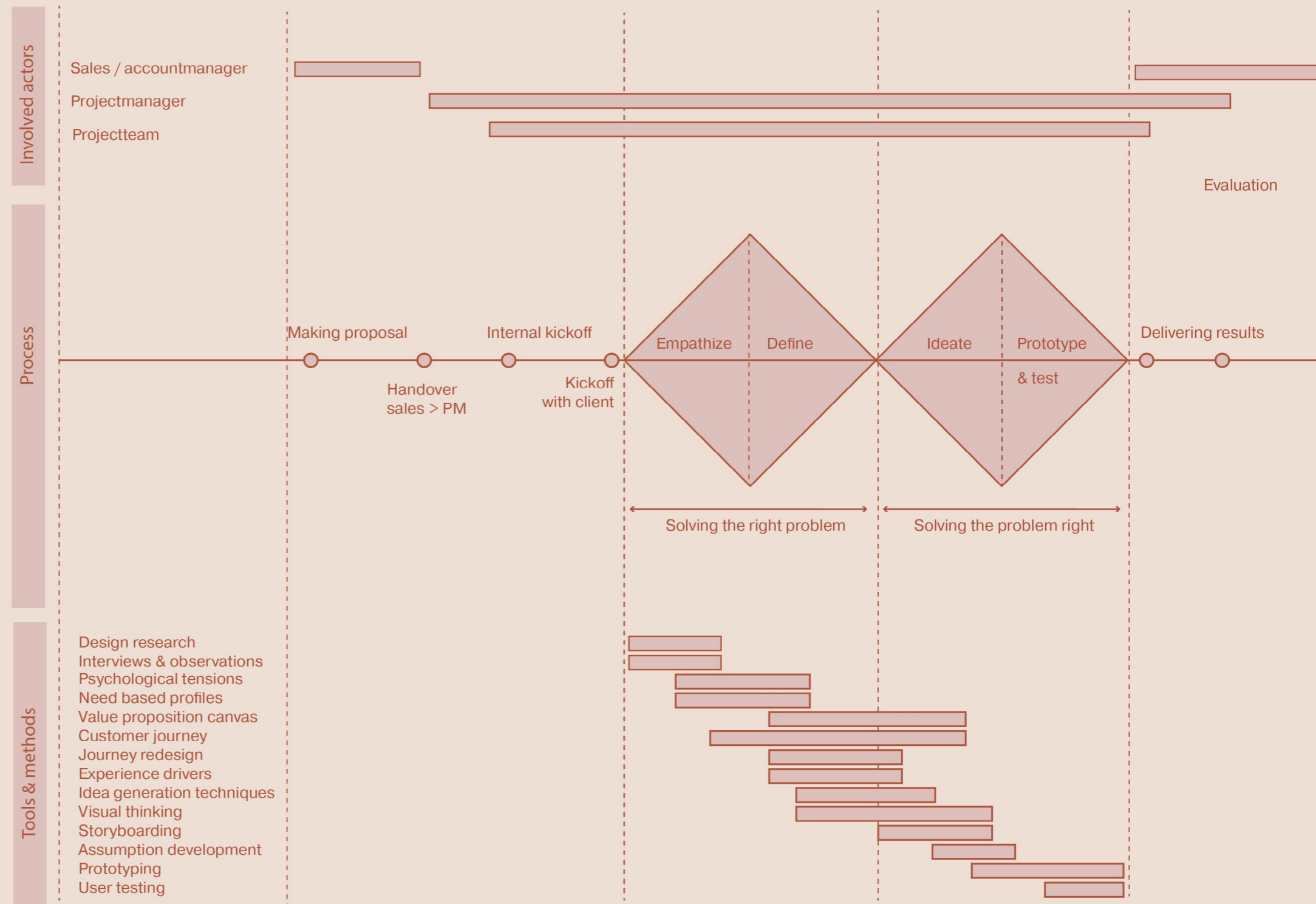


Figure 4| Visual overview of Koos' current design process, the roles involved and the tools & methods used

stakeholders by asking them what success of the project would look like for them, and what barriers they expect could pop up.

#### **Double diamond process**

Koos approaches its project through an adapted version of the double diamond approach from the Design Council (2004). In the first diamond, they empathize with users and accordingly define the problem to be solved. In the second diamond they do the ideation and accordingly prototype and test the concept. Most project Koos does are research heavy, and thus have the focus on the first diamond. However, Koos is actively focussing on improving the ideation process and incorporating experiment design within their approach in order to improve the prototype & test phase.

#### **Final presentation**

Delivering results is done through handing over a report, one or multiple final presentations and any type of prototypes or additional materials if applicable. Depending on the project, Koos sometimes does the presentation themselves, but sometimes also does the presentation together with the client in order to foster ownership and implementation probability. Here, it is considered how the project aligns with the clients' goals, and next steps are suggested.

#### **Evaluation**

Right after finishing a project, the accountmanager and projectmanager together with the client reflect on the project and the collaboration. Also, possibilities for follow-up collaborations are discussed here.

## 2.3 Introducing the maturity model

### History of the maturity model

The maturity model is a model that was designed by Koos three years ago as a reaction to the shift in requested projects. Whereas earlier projects were mainly focused on designing and improving services, projects now tend to take shape as strategic endeavors that enable clients of Koos to design and improve services on a continuous basis. After reflection on multiple of these projects, Koos started to see patterns and similarities in these projects. For example, they got requests from CX departments asking for toolkits that would enable other departments to start working in a more customer-centric way through service design tools and methods. However, after delivering the toolkit, it became apparent that the other departments of this clients' organization had no interest in working with these tools.

*"We spent lots of work and effort on a toolkit [which was the clients' request], and it turned out to be all for nothing. That's when I decided for myself: i' never want to be in this situation ever again."*

- Sr Service Designer

[insight: the model was initially caused because clients could not implement Koos' solutions, not because they wanted to transform"]

Therefore, a group of a few senior service designers from Koos gathered and started making sense out of the learnings from past projects: what factors enable SD adoption in their clients' organizations and what kind of barriers occurred, limiting the impact that the SD deliverables made. They started reading more about design transformation and design maturity

and talking with ex-clients in order to reflect on the projects. Through an iterative process, eventually, the maturity model (figure 5) came to life.

### The maturity phases and elements

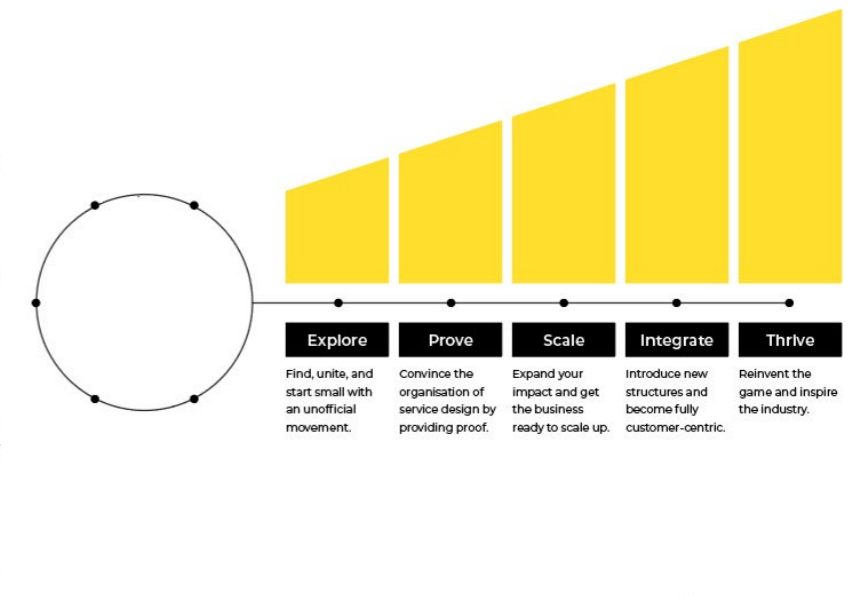
At the moment of writing this, the model consists of 5 growth phases (explore - prove - scale - integrate - thrive) and 5 elements (purpose, tools & capabilities, leadership & mindset, organisational design and strategy & metrics).

A short introduction to the elements and growth phases can be found in figure 5. In addition, the maturity matrix in figure 6 gives a more detailed understanding of how the maturity elements define the different growth phases.

### 5 key elements

- Why**  
A strong purpose from a customer perspective that activates and energises people. Why are we doing this?
- Tools and capabilities**  
The extent to which people have the right skills, tools and methodology to apply all aspects of service design.
- Leadership & mindset**  
The adoption and mindset throughout the entire organisation. Do we see the right leadership? Are we reflecting together? What is our behaviour?
- Organisational Design**  
The way the organisation is designed to operate; customer-centric, cross-silos and in multidisciplinary teams. What processes do we follow? What is our way of working? Do we have the right infrastructure?
- Strategy & Metrics**  
What is our plan to fulfill our why? Do we have a strong CX vision? Do we work with supporting KPI's & metrics?

### Levels of service design maturity



koos service design

Figure 5 | Koos' current maturity model, with the maturity elements (left) and maturity phases (right)

	People and Resources	Tools and Capabilities	Beliefs and Behaviors	Organisational structure and systems	Metrics and Deliverables
Explore	There are some service design enthusiasts, but the majority is not involved. There is no budget, time and facilities dedicated to service design.	Knowledge of service design is scattered throughout the organisation, mostly self-acquired through books, articles or trainings.	Dominant beliefs are business-focused and risk averse. There is little collaboration and creativity and decision-making is driven by	hierarchy. Generally, there is a siloed organisational structure. No systems and responsibilities regarding service design have been assigned.	Customer centric metrics and deliverables are non-existent.
Prove	First project team of enthusiasts is formed, often in collaboration with a design agency. Budget and management buy-in are still missing.	First capabilities (sometimes adjacent to service design) are being bundled in the project team, mostly coming from multiple people.	Beliefs about customers have a predominant functional focus. The value of a holistic view and collaboration are being established.	The first multidisciplinary team is being formed. First initiatives are taking place, regardless of organisational structure.	First project often creates first deliverables, like a customer journey map. First measurable results are often lacking.
Scale	Increasingly more people get involved and incidental budgets are created for service design projects. Rooms and facilities are being hijacked.	Capabilities are spreading outside of the initial team. First employees start to specialize and a CX / SD department is being formalized.	Beliefs around the customer are mainly transactional. Decision-making is increasingly based on empathy and customer centricity.	Interference with the existing way of working is felt. Silos starts to suffer under the demands of multidisciplinary teams.	Project results are becoming increasingly apparent. First customer centric KPI's are set, specifically for the CX / SD department.
Integrate	The majority of people is engaged with service design and teams have dedicated service design budgets and facilities in place.	The company has a unified methodology and aligned capabilities. The capabilities are now decentralised, and are present within each team.	There is an emerging experiential focus on the customer. Experimentation is cultivated through a strong customer centric vision.	The silo-breaking structure is fully institutionalized. The teams have ownership and mandate over their (part of the) service.	Customer centric KPI's go company-wide, which stimulate a multidisciplinary culture. Customer centricity is now represented on C-level.
Thrive	Everyone is involved in service design and is aware of his / her impact on customer experience.	Methodology can be let loose, as employees act from the right beliefs and mindset.	Focus on the customer is now relational, where customer obsession is evident on all levels across the organisation.	The new organisational structure allows for close co-creation of service experiences within and across teams.	Each initiative is tied to customer centric metrics that contribute to a better customer relation. It is important for the entire C-suite.

Figure 6 | Koos' maturity matrix, showing the relationship between the growth phases and the elements. The maturity elements represent elements from a previous version of the maturity model, and thus differ slightly from the model in figure 3. However, the descriptions presented still remain valid.



## 2.4 Evaluating Koos' current maturity model

*In order to figure out in what way Koos' maturity model could be improved, and why having an improved maturity model and a maturity scan is so important as a first step for Koos' CX transformation proposition, initial interviews with 10 of Koos' service designers and 4 external experts were conducted. These 10 service designers were selected based on their seniority or affinity with either the maturity model or CX transformation. During these interviews, it was discussed how designers currently use the model in their practice, what they like and dislike about the model and how they feel about Koos' transformation ambitions in general. In addition, 4 external experts with expertise in management consultancy, transformation and change management have been interviewed. Together, the interviews pointed out that the way in which this thesis assignment is framed might not be solving the actual, underlying problem Koos' service designs face. For the list of interviewed participants, please see appendix 2.*

### The value of the model to designers

Due to the changing nature of the projects, the service design maturity model resulted from reflecting on the complexity that came along with the more organizational transformation-related projects (as explained in section 2.2). Koos' designers noticed that they were sometimes solving the wrong problem, and the model was supposed to prevent that from happening. This implies that the elements embedded in the model are taken into account during projects in order to make sure the right problem is being solved.

Surprisingly, however, this is not how the interviewed service designers currently use the maturity model. When asking about the current

use of the model, most designers explained the purpose of the model as being a sales tool to win some trust and credibility as a consultant from the client at the beginning of the process, or as an explanatory tool to explain to clients what it takes to embed service design. Comparing that to the different types of maturity models as explained in section 3.1, **the maturity model mainly has a descriptive purpose that is useful to clients, but it does not have prescriptive content that actually guides service designers in enabling clients to become more service design mature.** One interviewee said:

*"The model says what should be there, but it doesn't say anywhere what we, as Koos / service designers, should learn or do. SD has changed: back in the days, we were asked to make journeys for marketing departments, but now we're asked to change organizations. That is some specific knowledge that we also do not necessarily have."*

- Senior Service Designer

This is something that was also mentioned by one of the interviewed experts when talking about the value of making the maturity model into a scan:

*"It is super valuable to give a score on each of the five elements, but then there should be some sort of growth plan along with that. You score badly on your organizational structure, and as a first step this and this should be what you have to work on before you can move on"*

-Former Koos designer, now Lead CX & Service design at a big telco

These steps have been formulated regarding what organizations need to do, as can be found

in appendix 3. However, these do not indicate how service design or service designers can help in taking these steps. **This leads to the insight that there is a need for prescriptive content for service designers on how to use their own service design capabilities in order to change organizations.**

### The value of the model to clients

Although it became apparent that the model is not used by Koos' service designers very often, also the value for clients is not completely clear. Out of the interviews it became clear that most clients of Koos are currently in the prove phase, and some in the scaling phase. This means they usually want to do some first service design projects in order to prove the value to the rest of the organization. As one of the interviewees explained, those clients usually do not think in terms of transformation yet:

*"Clients do not really ask for transformation. Often, they want to either improve the user experience of their services or they want to do a bit more with service design and train their people, but that is not the same as asking for transformation."*

-Senior service designer / sales lead

Multiple interviewees mentioned that showing the model can sometimes scare clients away:

*"I don't often show the model to clients because most of our clients are only in the prove phase. If I show them the model and they realize there is still a long way to go, it will only scare them away. They're not yet ready to think about any transformation, they just want to try out service design in a project."*

- Senior service designer / sales lead

Multiple service designers expressed their confusion about the fact that the model seems to have "service design maturity" as the desired end state. According to them, service design is the means towards customer-centricity rather than the goal itself:

*"The maturity model is very inside-out: Koos wants to bring SD into the company, so what do we need to do in order to do so? However, for the organization, SD is not the goal but the means"*

- Initiator of the maturity model

*"Service design is the means, not the goal. If organizations want to change, they hire externals, but if it's through SD, agile or lean doesn't matter to them, as long as it is clear how one or more of them are going to contribute to their ambitions."*

- Senior service designer

As has become apparent from these insights, most of Koos' clients are in the prove or scale phase. Interestingly, clients in these stages are often not prepared yet to think in terms of transformation. This implies that having a better model or a maturity scan, the initial objective of this thesis, would not be solving the needs of Koos' current clients. Rather, a more advanced model or scan could attract a new category of clients that consciously aim to go through a full-scale transformation. These are the clients that would be interested in an advanced maturity scan. **However, helping organizations go through a transformation requires skills in change management and organization design that Koos currently does not have yet, as will be further discussed throughout this chapter. Therefore, the question remains whether**

**an improved model or maturity scan is what Koos needs the most at this point.**

### **The relationship between change, implementation and the maturity model**

Because of the initial assignment of this thesis, the topics of the interviews were design maturity and transformation. Surprisingly, however, the topic of conversation naturally flowed more in the direction of implementation in multiple of the interviews. When asking about the way in which clients “grow” through the model, multiple interviewees pointed out that Koos focuses too much on the desirability for the end-user, but not enough on feasibility and viability for the client organization. Therefore, it happens that projects end up not being implemented, and likewise, not “proving” the value of service design to the rest of the organization.

*“A better maturity model could be very useful to make ideas less risky. We’re often asked to solve customer problems, so we tend to focus on desirability. Only afterward, we start looking at feasibility and viability, but we often forget that the client has stakeholders and has to sell the idea to his boss.”*

- Senior service designer

*“How do we help the client to implement? If we can make sure our ideas get implemented more often, we also provide more proof that service design and this way of working actually works.”*

- Senior service designer

**This leads to the insight that most clients of Koos want Koos to prove the value of service design. However, a lack of focus on**

**implementation might be preventing Koos from making this happen.**

This lack of focus on implementation seems to align with the observations of one of the interviewed experts, a change consultant, who has collaborated with Koos a couple of times.

*“Koos enters client organizations as a troop of yeti’s, determined to do something cool. However, there could be more awareness of the fact that you’re entering an organization in which everything has to land as well. They [the client organization] have to realize: hey, we should implement this because it really adds value. In order to secure a proper landing, you already have to ask the right questions during the first contact, make sure to involve the right people, make sure to also give back the right things and share observations. Make sure to already invite certain people to the final presentation, and sit down with people one-on-one to discuss the value service design could bring to them personally. That’s where big changes are needed within Koos, to embed such an approach.”*

- Interviewed change consultant

The interviewed change consultant explained that focussing more on securing proper landing and implementation in the organization can get a first ball rolling, which could lead to transformation. **This is an interesting insight, because this would mean that Koos does not need a maturity scan in order to servitize transformation. Actually, every project could be the potential start of a transformation, if there was more focus on implementation.**

### **The role of service designers in organizational change**

She explained that the need for change arises in organizations when they see the value that change could bring. Koos is often asked for specific product or service related problems, but through their practice they could spark the need for change:

*“Organizations come to me when they already have a need for change - I am not the one who brings the need for change. Koos, however, is there when those needs arise. Organizations ask them because they have the need for a certain product or service, but along the way, they start seeing the value: wow, this is something that everyone in our organization should know.”*

**Clients might not necessarily come to Koos for change, but the need for change might arise due to Koos’ efforts.** If Koos would embrace that as a secret power, this could lead to transformation from the bottom up. The same interviewee mentioned that in order to use this potential of service design to bring the need for change, service designers should change their practice:

*“It is important to start working on changing mindsets from day 1, and making people aware of that. If you’re at the end-presentation of your design project, and you can make people aware of the change that they’ve unconsciously made since the beginning of the project, you’ll prove your value. Service design doesn’t cost money; it results in more value and more money. That’s what Koos doesn’t do yet. They think what I do is very interesting but at the same time they think: what*

*a lot of hassle - why don’t these organizations just do what I say?”*

- Interviewed change consultant

**This gave the insight that Koos’ positioning regarding organizational transformation does not necessarily have to be that Koos guides organizations through a whole transformation. Koos’ aim could also be to spark the need for transformation through showing the value of service design, and highlighting how effective service design requires change.**

### **Service designers’ own maturity**

This need for service designers to know more about organizational change in order to enable customer-centric transformation and service design maturity was also mentioned by multiple of the interviewed service designers themselves. For example, one designer mentioned the need for knowledge about change management and organizational design:

*“Maturity is about change management and organizational design. That is something Koos does not know much about yet. It would be very cool and we have great skills to build on, but I wouldn’t know where to start.”*

- Senior service designer

Another service designer mentioned the need to better understand how to convince different organizational actors in their clients’ organizations in order to spread customer-centricity:

*“I do not think that becoming customer-centric*

means that everybody has to become a designer [service design mature]. However, we have to make sure that relevant organizational actors understand enough. Management has to allow certain people to practice service design, and many involved actors have to understand the basics in order to collaborate. We, as design consultants, have to understand how to make that happen in order to make organizations customer-centric. But that asks different skills from us than just service design.”

- Senior service designer

This is supported by the insight from a former service designer from Koos, now lead of a CX department in a big Telco. Reflecting on Koos’ transformation approach with his current experiences, he notices that scaling service design and customer-centricity requires years of intensive work, and not just a large scale training program:

“What you see is that when clients go from the prove to the scale phase, Koos starts doing large scale training programs. That’s why we trained multiple 100 people at [client]. However, it takes much more than just training - it involves embedding service design within the existing way of working. This is a slow process and it takes a lot of time.”

-Former Koos designer, now Lead CX & Service design at a big telco

## Take aways

From these initial assignment, it became apparent that there are two unclarified tensions when it comes to the maturity model and Koos’ transformation proposition: a tension between implementation and transformation and a tension between organizations’ service design maturity and service designers’ own service design maturity.

### Implementation vs transformation

Initially, the maturity model was made because Koos noticed clients could not implement their service concepts.

However, Koos does not actively use the maturity model in order to secure better implementation. They mostly use it as a sales tool or explanatory model to show clients the growth path towards customer-centricity. However, service designers still point out that projects are often not being implemented. Therefore, this raises the question whether and how implementation and transformation are related, and in what way the maturity model could best be used.

### Clients maturity vs Koos’ maturity

The interviewees pointed out that in order to help clients become more service design mature, also service designers themselves might need new skills. In order to help clients transform, they feel the need to know more about change management. This raises the question whether the focus of this project should be on a maturity model explaining the maturity of client organizations, or the maturity of service designers themselves?





## 2.5 Problem definition

As explained in section 1.1, Koos has recently added customer-centric transformation to their service offering because Koos' management feels they have the ability to make more impact through design by enabling clients to build their own service design capabilities and become customer-centric. In that way, the focus shifts away from delivering one-off projects and staying involved with clients for a longer time to enable clients to continuously improve their own services. The purpose of this chapter was to figure out in what way Koos' maturity model could be improved, and why having an improved maturity model and a maturity scan is so important as a first step for Koos' CX transformation proposition. However, the initial interviews led to the insight that the need for an improved model might not be what Koos really needs in order to concretize the transformation proposition. The initial interviews brought two ambiguities in Koos' maturity model and transformation ambitions to light, which offered a new perspective on the relevance of this thesis assignment. Therefore, this section will present the problem definition for the rest of this project.

The first ambiguity is the fact that the maturity model was once initiated because the project could not be implemented by clients. However, the way in which Koos uses the model currently is not in order to secure better implementation, but to explain and communicate transformation

possibilities.

Another ambiguity is that the model shows how clients need to transform in order to become customer-centric, whereas service designers pointed out that in order to help clients transform, they are lacking knowledge on implementation and organizational change themselves as well. Therefore, the transformation proposition might also require Koos to mature as a service design agency and go through a transformation themselves.

The problem seems to be that Koos has made the assumption that a maturity scan is what they need in order to concretize their transformation offer. However, Koos' service designers and interviewed experts pointed out a more fundamental problem: the feeling that Koos might be missing skills that are essential in order to be able to help organizations transform. As a matter of fact, Koos points out most of their clients are in the prove phase, and some in the scale phase. The fact that clients are in those phases means Koos already has clients that are in transformation, although it may be in lower stages. However, designers point out they have the feeling that there is limited implementation, and limited focus on feasibility and viability of projects. This seems contradictory to the promise of "proving" and "scaling" service design, as this requires actual results and actual changes in the organization..

This lead to the insight that Koos should learn how to help clients in the prove or scale phase become more customer-centric through projects, rather than aiming to guide full-transformations.

Therefore, the problem statement, framed as a question, is formulated as:

**What does Koos need to do differently in order to enable organizations to become more customer-centric through service design, in order to form a more strategic, long-term collaboration with clients?**

In order to answer this question, more knowledge on the topics of customer-centricity, organizational transformation, service designers' roles in organizational transformation and maturity models is needed. In that way, the ambiguities regarding implementation, transformation, service design maturity for clients and service design maturity of designers can be clarified. Therefore, these topics will be further explored through literature in the next section.

# 03

## **Understanding the topic**

The initial interviews pointed out there are fundamental unclarities about the purpose of Koos' maturity model and the transformation proposition. More specifically, there is unclarity about the relationship between implementation and transformation, and the need for service design maturity of client organizations versus Koos' own service design maturity. Therefore, this chapter aims to clarify how these different topics are related to each other, in order to find a relevant focus area for this thesis.

## 3.1 Maturity models

*In order to be able to identify the problem regarding Koos' maturity model, it is first needed to get a thorough understanding of what maturity models are, how Koos' maturity model compares to other maturity models and how the model is currently being used. Therefore, this chapter explores the above-mentioned questions. Finally, this chapter concludes with research questions that form the basis of the rest of this thesis.*

### The purpose of maturity models

A maturity model is usually a model with a sequence of levels or stages that show the path from an initial state, which indicates an organization's current (or desired) capabilities regarding a specific discipline, towards a desired end-state within that specific discipline (Rosemann and de Bruin 2005, Pöppelbuß & Röglinger, 2011). There are 3 types of maturity models, which differ in the purpose that they serve (Pöppelbuß & Röglinger, 2011; Otto, Bley & Harst, 2020):

- > descriptive maturity model: These describe the current situation and are used as a diagnostic tool.
- > Prescriptive maturity models: These indicate how to identify desired levels of maturity and give concrete, actionable steps towards improvement.
- > Comparative maturity models: These serve the goal of internal or external benchmarking. When a large number of participants is assessed, the maturity of similar participants can be compared.

### Critique on maturity models

Although maturity models are popping up everywhere, there is also quite some critique on the effectiveness of maturity models, Pöppelbuß & Röglinger (2011) gathered different critiques from multiple sources, which lead to several arguments on why maturity models might not always be so effective. For example, maturity models are accused of being step-by-step recipes that oversimplify reality and they would neglect the possibility of multiple paths that can lead to the same, desired end-state. Furthermore, it is suggested that maturity models should be more modular because internal and external characteristics can cause them to be useless in a standardized format. Additionally, there is the argument that there shouldn't be a focus on sequence towards an end-state. The focus should be on the factors that drive the change in itself (Otto, Bley & Harst (2020).

### The impossibility to measure transformation

According to Klitsie (2017), creating an absolute indicator for transformation is impossible in itself. It cannot be said that a company is in stage 5/10 of transformation, because every transformation is different. Scoring 8/10 on customer-centricity might mean something else for a bank than it does for a government. Klitsie (2017) exemplifies this with a comparison to measuring happiness. If one person says he is feeling 9/10 happy, this does not mean that this person is feeling the same way

as when another person says he is 9/10 happy (Gilbert, 2009). Likewise, measuring customer-centricity cannot be done on an absolute scale. However, we could measure whether someone has become happier, or whether an organization has become more customer-centred than they were before. However, this requires that you measure the as-is state as a baseline, make a strategy and then track whether an organization is changing towards the desired end-state (Klitsie, 2017)

## Take aways

If we look at how Koos' current model came to existence, the purpose of the model was mainly descriptive: it helped to make sense of the current situation of the clients' organization, in order to define what elements should be considered to make sure the SD project would make the intended impact. A maturity scan aiming to more thoroughly identify the maturity phase of a clients' organization would still be descriptive. However, if the goal is to help clients transform - the focus is no longer just on identifying the status quo but on what is needed in order to grow through the model. This would mean the model would need prescriptive content on how to drive change.

Additionally, measuring transformation is impossible on an absolute scale because every organization and thus every transformation is different. In order to measure transformation, you have to make sure you express the status quo of the organization, express a custom transformation strategy for that specific organization and then measure the progress on that scale as you go. Therefore, it is concluded that Koos should use the maturity elements in order to learn about the current as-is state of the client, rather than trying to just put a maturity label on the organization based on a checklist.

## 3.2 Customer-centricity

*In order to understand the context Koos is trying to extend its service offering into, this chapter aims to give an understanding of what customer-centricity is and what it means for organizations to go through a customer-centric transformation.*

### The need for change

Our world is changing rapidly in various ways, forcing organizations to engage in continuous change to stay relevant. Some of the most important factors that form our changing environments are the constant introduction of new and disruptive technology, competitive pressure, quickly evolving demand patterns from customers, partners and regulators, accelerating digitization, and a changing workforce (Lee (2016); Aghina et al., 2018; Stouten, Rousseau & de Cremer, 2018; ). Where business models and organizational structures used to work for decades, they now turn out not to work so well anymore for the highly dynamic environment they're part of. Therefore, it has become an essential capability of organizations to engage in and attempt to manage change to remain successful and sustain their existence (Stouten, Rousseau & de Cremer, 2018; Coughlan, Suri & Canales, 2007). This need for change can also be called the need for resilience: the combination of flexibility, adaptability, and foresight (Lee, 2016).

### Customer-centricity

For years, organizations were driven by a product-centric approach, meaning that the offered products and their advantages were in the spotlight and efficiency and decreased margins were the primary concern of organizations. However, due to the increasingly fast changing market demands, organizations recognize the need for

a more outside-in approach in order to increase their resilience. This is why the customer-centric approach gained popularity (Ambaram, 2013). A customer-centric approach sees the way in which products or services meet customers' needs as the main value. Rather than driving innovation from the inside out through new product development and trying to sell as many products to whoever will buy, the focus is outside in - understanding the customers and their needs and gaining their trust and loyalty (Shah et al., 2006). In that way, organizations have the opportunity to better adapt to the changing environment of today's world.

### The change of organizational elements

Organizations attempting to adopt a customer-centric approach face an organization-wide transformation, affecting core elements like their culture, structure, and metrics. Table 1 gives an overview of elements impacted or required for a customer-centric organization, suggested by different sources. The elements proposed by Shah (2006), Ambaram (2013) and Livework (2020) are mentioned explicitly for the goal of becoming customer-centric. The model by McKinsey (2008) applies for customer-centric transformations, but the model was made for any type of organizational transformation in general. A division can be made between soft, people-related elements like culture, mindset and leadership style and hard elements like the strategy, structure and systems that an organization has (McKinsey, 2008). McKinsey (2008) mentions all these elements are connected, and when one of them changes, the other ones have to be reconsidered as well.

### Cultural change

Especially culture is an element that is very

resistant to change (Shah, 2006; Livework, 2020) as it relies on a change in behavior, which requires a change in fundamental norms and values about the organization. A norm is a shared belief about how someone is expected to behave. Values represent a deeper level of culture and express enduring preferences of what is regarded as important (Shah, 2006). In a customer-centric organization, a constructive norm for customer-centricity can be the belief that all employees are advocates of the user, and thus are willing to share all information about the customer with other departments to enable the whole organization to fulfill the customers needs better. Conversely, in a product-centric organization, the customer is often "owned" by marketing or sales, preventing employees from being willing to share information (Shah, 2006).

Ambaram (2013)	Shah (2006)	McKinsey (2008)	Livework (2020)	Explanation
Strategy		Strategy	Customer vision and strategy	Becoming customer-centric requires that customer-centricity is part of the overall strategy of the organization
Leadership	Leadership	Style		Leadership that believes and supports the importance of a customer-centric perspective is required
Operating model	Structure	Strucutre	Design operating model	The operating model should provide for collaboration across the organization in order to contribute to end-to-end customer experiences, rather than having silo's work on only one part of the experience individually
Rewards and	Financial metrics		Insights and	There should key performance indicators that outline the customer, business, and operational outcomes the organization tries to achieve, and a framework of metrics that can be used to measure against them
	Processes			In line with the structure, organizations need to align their processes horizontally in order to contribute to value creation for the customer
Systems	Systems	Systems		There is a need for systems that allow for collaboration across the organizatoin, allowing centralized customer data and information exchange
Change and	Continuous improvement			As customer needs change continuously, customer-centric organizations need to be able to continuously adapt to change
Culture	Culture	Shared values	Customer-centric mindset	The whole culture of the organizatoin and the mindset of all employees should be focussed on delivering value for the customer
		Skills	Design excellence	Customer-centricity requires that people in the organization have the skills to work in a customer-centric way. This requires different people to understand and master different skills.

Table 1 | Overview of organizational elements required for customer-centricity, as suggested by different sources

## Take aways

Customer-centricity requires organizations to not just change their driver of innovation, but also requires changing core elements of their organization. There are many models describing the organizational elements that need to be present in order to have a well-functioning, customer-centric organization. However, literature highlights the difficulty of shifting from a

product-centric to a customer-centric way of being organized. One element especially mentioned as being difficult to change is the culture of an organization. Being customer-centric requires all people in an organization to change their own behaviour, their norms and their values. This is something that cannot be changed overnight.

### 3.3 Organizational transformation

The previous chapter has explained what customer-centricity is, and how becoming customer-centric requires organizations to change. Koos' intended proposition is to offer customer-centric transformation. Therefore, this chapter will explore what transformation is, how it differs from change and how actors can help organizations change and transform.

#### Transformation vs change

As explained in previous sections, transforming an organization's approach from product-centric to customer-centric requires change. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the difference between transformation and change.

Change involves assessing past situations, comparing them to the present, and defining a future, desired state. To make this change, change management is needed in order to execute this adequately defined shift in the ways things work (Ashkenas, 2015; Fannin, 2021). In order to create, capture and deliver a project that delivers

value for customers, an organization might need to change. However, a customer-centric transformation is not about creating, capturing and delivering value once. A transformed organization is an organization that has the capability to make these changes over and over again (Klitsie, 2017). There is no finite, properly defined change but a portfolio of overlapping changes that depend on each other. Therefore, transformation is more unpredictable, experiential, and iterative (Ashkenas, 2015; Fannin, 2021). Furthermore, this means that transformation is dependent on change, but in order to transform requires more than just change.

#### Top-down and bottom-up

Transformation can happen from two different starting points: top-down or bottom-up (Kotter, 1995; Minnaar en de Morree, 2020). Top-down change or transformation would be when management decides the whole organization is changing from (in this case) a product-centric way of working to a customer-centric way of working.

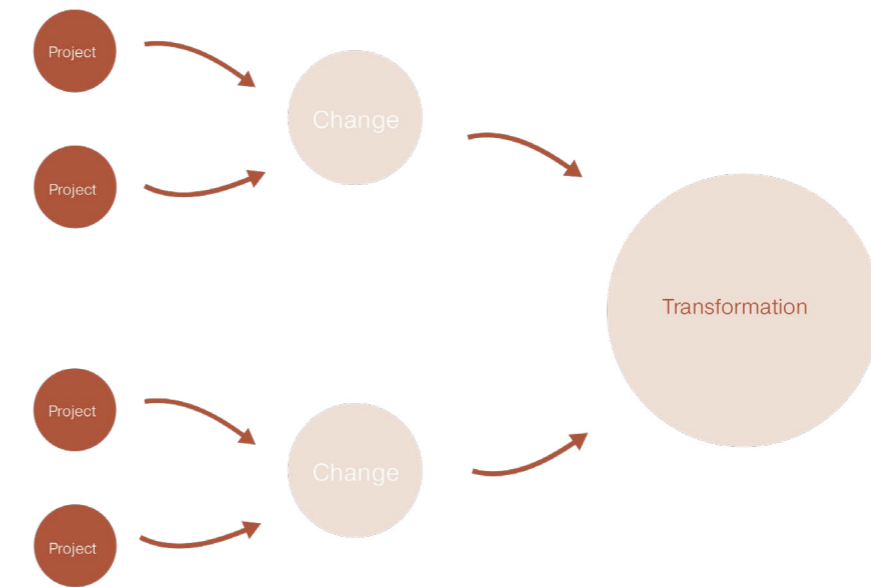


Figure 8 | The relationship between projects, change and transformation

This would mean they'd change the vision, set up a new incentives system, rethink structures and enable employees to start working in this new way (Minnaar en de Morree, 2020); for example by training them all in service design.

Bottom-up transformation occurs when the initiative starts somewhere lower in the organization. An example could be when a small group of employees starts experimenting with service design, proves its effectiveness, and eventually scales this new way of working up until it might even transform the way of working

of the whole organization. Minnaar en de Morree (2020) argue that starting small somewhere in the organization, proving the results and making sure they go viral and inviting everyone that is enthusiastic about the movement to participate as well is the most effective way for organizations to transform. However, they do acknowledge the fact that at some point, both top-down and bottom-up approaches are needed simultaneously. Without orchestration of change initiatives and strong leadership, transformation efforts are not likely to succeed (Kotter, 1995; Minnaar en de Moree, 2020).

### Take aways

Transformation and change are not the same thing. Changing means improving a past situation into a preferred situation, whereas transformation means setting a vision for the future and completely changing into a new state. However, in order to transform, change is inevitable.

In order to change, organizations can not simply decide to do things differently. One of the most difficult things of changing an organization is to make sure the newly introduced change, like a customer-centric way of working, fits with the

existing way of working. Otherwise, people might stick to their old patterns. Therefore, it is important to figure out why people are working in the way they do before trying to figure out how you can change them.

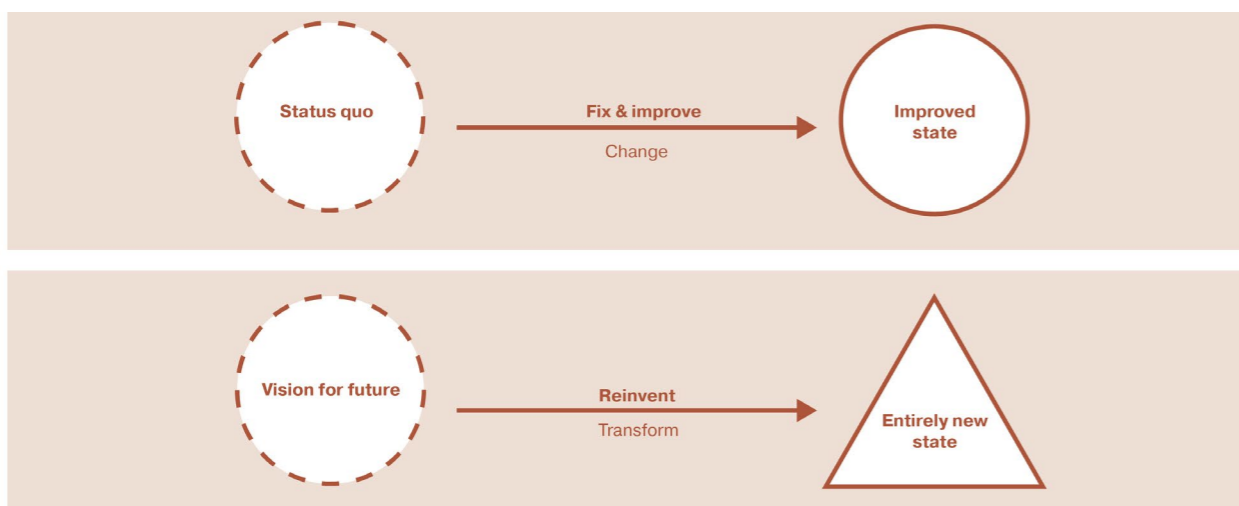


Figure 7 | The difference between change (top) and transformation (bottom)



### 3.4 Service design

Now that we understand what it means for an organization to become customer-centric, this chapter will explain what service design is and how it has changed over the years. Furthermore, Koos has pointed out that they noticed service design has changed. Therefore, this chapter also aims to explain the different conceptualizations of service design and how these have developed over the past years.

#### The definition of service design

As introduced in chapter 1.1, customer-centricity is becoming an important aspect for organizations in order to gain a competitive advantage (Karpen et al., 2017; Vink et al., 2021). In order to become customer-centric, organizations need to enhance their customers' experiences. As service design offers the means to improve customer experience, service design has become a capability that many organizations attempt to acquire (Ostrom et al., 2015). There are many definitions of service design, all with overlapping elements, but also all slightly different. Therefore, there is value in going through multiple ones in order to become aware of the different perspectives on what the goal service design is. Figure 9 shows a selection of definitions.

It is interesting to notice that older definitions of service design, like the one by Moritz (2005), show a clear focus on services being the result of service design, whereas newer definitions, like the one by Koos (2021), Mager (2020), and Fayard et al. (2016) emphasize the process, application of service design methods and tools, with improved services being one of the beneficial results, but not the only one.

#### Principles and practices of service design

Although there are different perspectives on the end-goal of service design, there is a general consensus on the principles and practices that characterize service design. Based on a mix of literature, service design can be seen as a collection of 5 principles.

According to these principles, service design is human centred, co-creative, holistic, experimental and transformative (Karpen, Gemser & Calabretta, 2017; Stickdorn et al., 2018; Arico, 2018). These principles are further explained in figure 9. The way service designers enact those principles, is through the practices of conducting design research, ideating, visualizing, prototyping and sequencing (Stickdorn et al., 2018; Arico, 2018)

#### Service design conceptualizations

As the different definitions of service design suggest, service design has gradually changed in terms of its conceptualization over the past 35 years. One of the major shifts has been the shift from service design understood as "the design of services" to a conceptualization in which service design is understood as "designing for service" (Vink et al., 2021). In order to understand this shift, it is first key to understand the difference in the meaning of services versus service. In the conceptualization of "design of service", a service is seen as a different form of product. Seeing a service in this way, its design materials are touchpoints (the contact points between service providers and customers) and interfaces (the way in which intangible service elements are made tangible through physical materials and bodily perceptions) (Vink et al, 2021). Developing this type of service is a phase in new service

#### (Moritz, 2005)

*Service design helps to innovate (create new) or improve (existing) services to make them more useful, usable, desirable for clients and efficient as well as effective for organizations. It is a new holistic, multidisciplinary, integrative field.*

1\_Human centred: it considers the experience of all people affected by the service

#### (Fayard, Stigliani and Bechky, 2016)

*Service design is an emerging occupation in which practitioners aim to understand customers, organizations, and markets; develop new or improved services and customer experiences; translate them into feasible solutions; and then help organizations implement them*

2\_ Co-creative: stakeholders of various backgrounds and functions should be actively engaged in the service design process

#### (Mager, 2020)

*[Service design] is a comprehensive approach in which user orientation, explorative and creative approaches, visualisation, prototyping and co-creative development play a central role. Service design is on the one hand a process, on the other hand a systematic and methodically supported approach. But above all, it is an attitude that can have a profound influence on the cultures and structures in companies*

3\_ Holistic: Services should sustainably address the needs of all stakeholders through the entire service and across the business

#### (Koos, 2021)

*Service Design is the practical and creative application of design tools and methods, with the goal to develop or improve services. It is the activity of orchestrating people, infrastructure, communication and material components of a service in order to create value for all stakeholders involved, build a distinctive customer experience and maximise business potential*

4\_ Experimental: Needs should be researched in reality, ideas prototyped in reality and intangible values evidenced as physical or digital reality.

5\_ Transformative: Service design acts as an agent of change that enables us to understand complex changes and problems, and to turn them into something useful



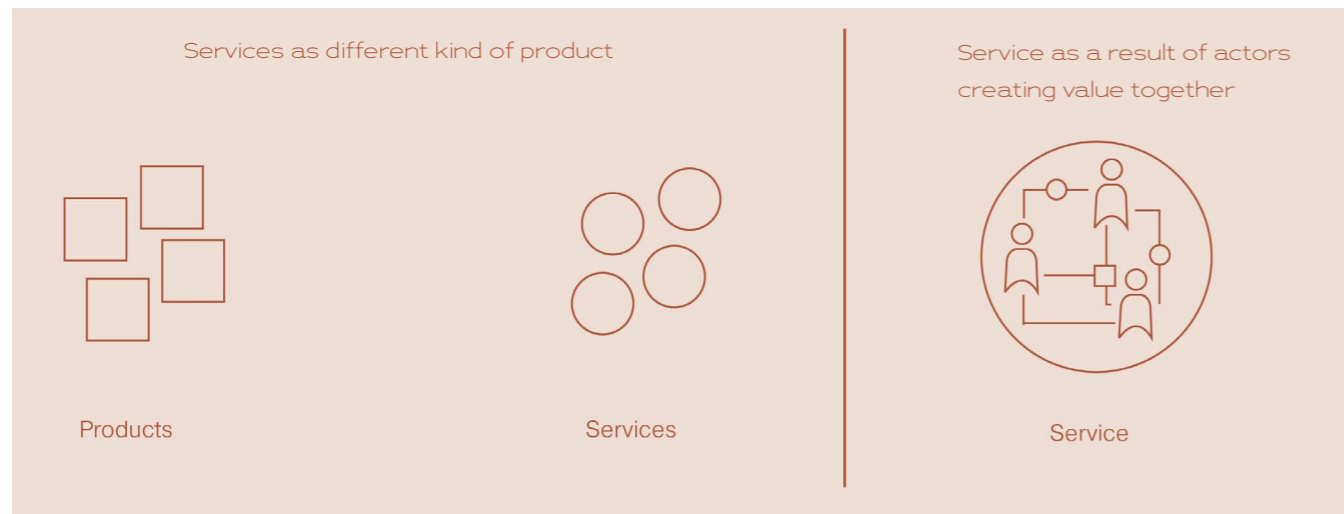


Figure 10 | The different understandings of what service means

development, in which professional designers serve as the experts who execute this phase.

However, service (rather than “a” service) can also be understood as a result of actors creating value through interacting with each other (Vink et al., 2017; Raun, 2020) (see figure 8). This perspective argues that you cannot design a service, like you can design goods. You can only design value propositions in order to create the prerequisites for service delivery to happen (Raun, 2020). In this understanding, the sociomaterial configurations are seen as the design material. This means the . In this conceptualization, the end-goals is not a “thing” to be designed (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017). Rather, the ongoing process of designing is one of the goals already - regardless of the outcomes. In this conceptualization, both the service providers (the employees of a client organization) and the users are involved through co-design by professional designers (Vink et al, 2021).

The third conceptualization is the conceptualization of service ecosystem design. Whereas “design of services” and “design for service” both still focus on outcome-oriented projects, service ecosystem design takes a more system-oriented perspective and focuses on embedding the rules, norms and mindsets from service design in service ecosystems - for example organizations (Vink, 2021). Service ecosystem design focuses on redesigning the institutional arrangements of an organization - which are the social structures that determine how things go in (in this case)

organizations, and are formed by actors’ cognitive beliefs (Vink, 2019).

### Design as a tool

Since the delivery of service depends on the ability of the organization to deliver that service (Hambeukers, 2017), organizations do not only need service designers to design, but also to engage the organization, visualize and demonstrate the value of change and read and interpret the organization itself (Junginger & Sangiorgi, 2011). Therefore, there is a shift from the service design outcomes being the goal towards using the service design process in itself as a tool (Lu, 2020). This is supported by Kimbell (2011), who explains the difference between seeing service design as a problem solving approach or as an exploratory inquiry. When using service design as an exploratory inquiry, the desired outcomes cannot be determined in advance, meaning that problem and solutions co-evolve (Raun, 2017; Dorst & Cross, 2001).

Klitsie and Wegener (2020) recognize that service design projects are increasingly becoming of complex nature because they require organizational change. Based on studies on organization design, they argue that in order to realize organizational change, service designers need to use service design in an inquiring manner. This means continuous reflection and experimentation is needed so that problem and solution can co-evolve.

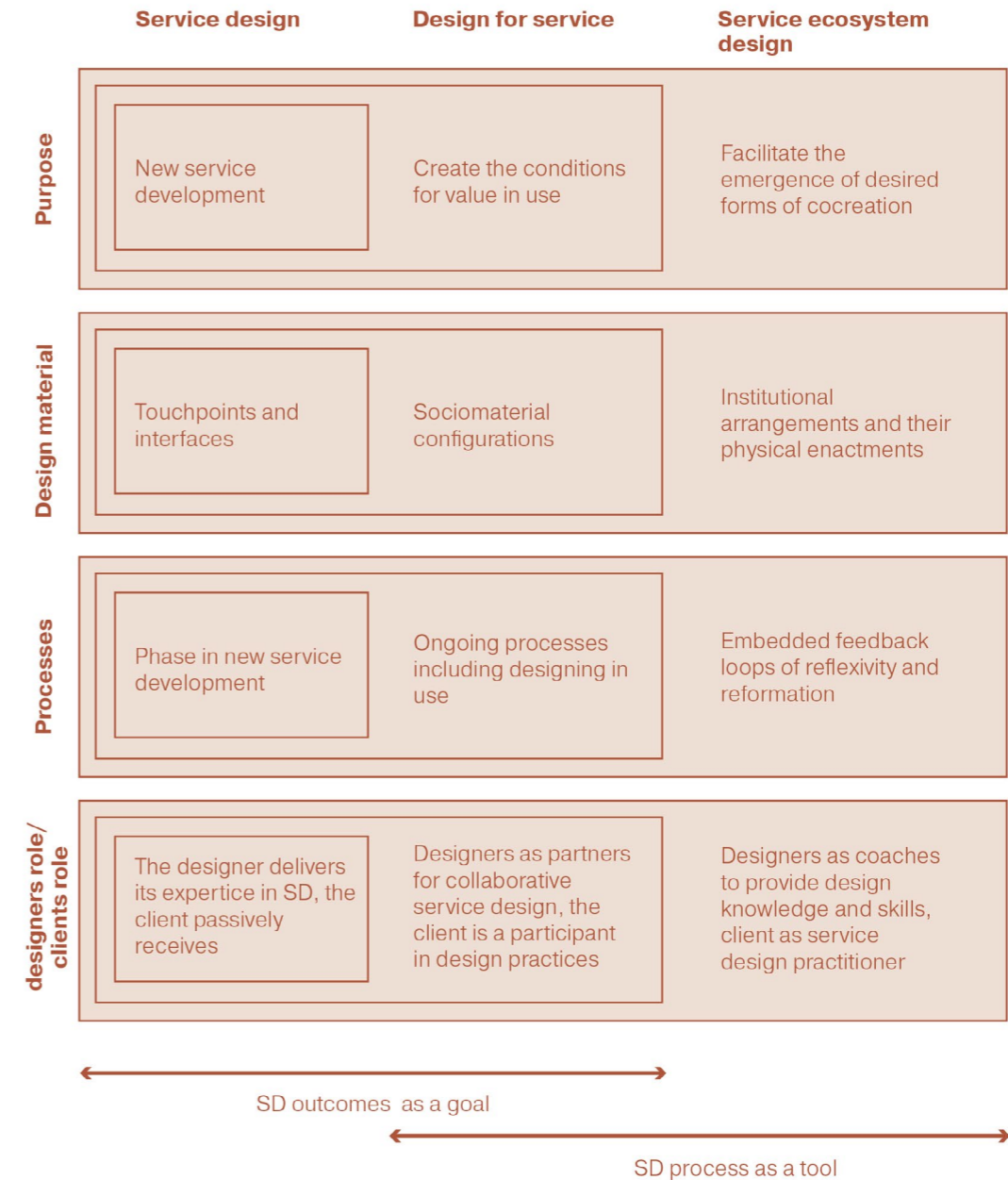


Figure 11 | The different conceptualizations of service design and its different purposes, design materials, processes and designer/client relationship

## Take aways

Service design has changed over the past 30 years. Whereas service design projects started as one-off projects as a phase in new service development, service design projects now also serve to create the right conditions within organizations for service to happen, and even to facilitate the emergence of desired forms of co-creation (Junginger & Sangiorgi, 2011). Therefore, service designers are not only delivering service design project outcomes as a goal, but also use

the process of service design as a tool to uncover the real problems an organization faces and improve ways of working.

## 3.5 Service designers and organizational change

*This section will show the importance for service designers to understand how organizational change works, and what this means for their practice.*

### The need for knowledge about organizational change

As the conceptualization “design for service” expresses, service design requires creating the circumstances for service to happen - rather than designing a service itself. This is why Mager (2020) argues that for the future of service design, it is necessary for service designers to become active advocates for organizational change. In order to deliver services, organizations need to change. Therefore, service design needs to happen in the real context of the organization with a good understanding of business, IT and cultural complexities (Hambeukers, 2017; Mager, 2020).

*“Service Design is not about the ability of a Service Designer to design a service, but about the ability of an organization to deliver that service.”*

—(Hambeukers, 2017)

### Design legacies and organizational logics

In design for service and transformation design, designers’ goal is not just to deliver results but also to enable the conditions for service delivery by the client organization. Junginger (2015) argues that although many organizations do not use proper design approaches and methods, they do make services. In other words: all organizations are designing as a core activity, they just do not always know how to do it right. Recognizing service design as a core activity of organizations means that service designers should not focus on “embedding” service design, but connecting

service design to the existing “design legacies”. The design legacies represent an organizations’ purpose and vision, the organizational design approach (e.g.: human-centred) and the design practices.”

Arico (2018) adds to this by arguing that service designers should not just be aware about the existing design values, approaches, and practices (the design legacies) but of a wider set of elements that describe the organizational context as a whole. Importantly, Arico (2018) highlights the importance of understanding the “organizational logics” that are at play in a client organization. According to Spicer & Sewell (2010), organizational logics are the assumptions of what is considered legitimate and effective for an organization within a certain context. Within one organization, different logics can be present. For example, Arico (2018) gives an example of a big telco where there are three different logics: the logic being a telc solutions provider, the logic being a digital service provider and the logic being a customer-centric service provider. In order to implement and embed service design within such an organization, it is important to understand the different logics at play, and make a strategy on where in the organization to introduce design, and how to approach it in such a way that concepts can be implemented (Arico, 2018).

### Understanding organizations

This asks from service design that they do not only know how to express the strengths of service design but also make a case for how service design relates to the strengths and weaknesses of existing ways of working (Junginger, 2015; Yu & Sangiorgi, 2018; Arico, 2018):

*“The challenge for service designers is to show how a human-centered design approach can integrate an organization and generate a ‘fit’ with existing systems while introducing new processes, generating new cost savings and addressing lingering problems with novel solutions. To shift an organization’s design approach demands from service designers that they can articulate, visualize and communicate the strengths and weaknesses of these (and other) different approaches.”*

- Junginger (2015)

### Changing organizations

Although designers’ skills and capabilities in empathy, holistic thinking, storytelling and visualisation enable designers to fulfill their new roles in new designer-client relationships, they have to make changes in the way they apply their skills and abilities (Eweremann & Persson, 2018; Sangiorgi, 2018). In order to use service design as a transformative power, designers have to start using their sensibilities not only to understand user

## Take aways

Literature shows that engaging in organizational change is not something that service designers should consider to do as an addition to their current practice, but rather something they must do in order to make sure projects are actually being implemented and make impact. Even when implementation is not part of the scope, it is designers’ responsibility to understand the organizational context and prepare concepts for survival.

needs for ideation or concept generation, but also to understand the client organization for service implementation and system change (Sangiorgi, 2018, Mager, 2021). In order to fulfill their new partnering and facilitating roles, they need to be more knowledgeable of organizational contexts, practices, processes and culture (Sangiorgi, 2018).

*For the future of service design, this means that service design needs to take an even more active role in advocating and supporting organisational change, but it also means that the classic concept of service design, isolated from organisational change, has become arbitrary. Service design needs to happen in the real context of the organisation, and with a good understanding of business, IT, and cultural complexities. We must stay optimistic, yet also realistic going forward and consider the challenges described above in our daily work to break the glass ceiling.*

## 3.6 Service design implementation

This chapter will explain the relationship between organizational change and implementation, and the importance for designers to understand organizational change in order to make impact in organizations.

### Change through implementation

As has been explained in the previous sections, service design depends on the ability of the organizational actors to deliver service. In other words: in order to implement service design concepts, organizational change is inevitable (Kurtmollaiev, 2018).

However, this requires for service designers to improve their skills.

*“Designing for impact means designing for implementation. Because the implementation of new concepts requires organisational and cultural changes for the client organisation, techniques from the areas of systemic organisational development and management consulting can be particularly valuable.”*

- (Weisser, 2020)

However, service designers have been criticized for lacking implementation competence, causing them to sometimes develop service concepts that fail to lead to actual change (Almqvist, 2020), which is a topic getting increasingly more attention in research (Overkamp & Holmlid, 2017; Yu & Sangiorgi, 2014). Clients often ask for service design projects without realizing what it will take to get output out of the results (Ewerman and Perssons, 2018). This is a problem, because the real value of service design is in its implementation (Mager, 2020); if a service design project ends up not being implemented, it has added little value.

Therefore, it can be concluded that if service designers aim to make an impact, they have to focus on implementation and prepare the organization for organizational change.

### Implementation starts on day one

In most cases, organizations do not come to service design agencies in order to transform. Usually, service designers start in organizations for one specific project. However, as established in previous sections, most service design projects require changes in the organization. Although clients might not realize this upfront, it is the responsibility of a service designer to already think about implementation from the start of the project. Although implementation is often seen as a phase that comes after the concept development phase (Sleeswijk et al, 2020), implementation can and should be addressed from day one in order to be successful (Overkamp & Holmlid, 2017; Weisser et al., 2018).

*“When implementation is separated from the design scope, it is all the more important to understand the organizational environment and prepare concepts for survival”*

- Ewermann & Persson (2018)

*“Within traditional development projects, design has been fixed upon time-dependent, solution-focused, and tangible project outcomes. Such activities may result in innovative and creative solutions, but they may also fall short of connecting with organizational cultural change. Without continued organizational support, the use, implementation, and ultimate effectiveness of design are limited.”*

-(Lee & Evans, 2012)

### Prerequisites for implementation

According to Weisser et al. (2018), every project should start with assessing whether the prerequisites for implementation are present, or clarify at what level they are. If these prerequisites are not present, the project has to be either changed to a form which the key prerequisites do align with, or the prerequisite factors have to be worked on before the start of the project. These prerequisites are maturity of both the client and designer regarding implementation of this type of project, sponsorship/permission to devote time on the project without conflicting with business or other commitments, implementation management throughout the phases, a temporary project organization with a common language, resources, and enthusiasm, inter-divisional involvement of relevant stakeholders and enough personnel capacity to work on the project without interfering with day-to-day work.

After assuring all prerequisites for implementation are in place and the project has taken off, it should be key part of the project to not just understand the end-user, but also the client organization and business have to be discovered (Weisser et al., 2018).

### Changing people

As Senge (2006) explains, organizations cannot change, only individuals can. As one of the common barriers for implementation and change is that actors don't know how to fit the new way of working with the way things work in their current context (Kurtmollaiev, 2018), understanding current contexts and being able to balance adapting to the context and making changes to the context is an important aspect for service

designers aiming to make impact.

In order to successfully implement a concept, it is important that a concept can feasibly and viably be implemented within the current organization, seen as a system (Raun, 2019). However, it is also important that designers address the people aspect of implementation. This means: addressing the fact that people have to make the change happen, and thus have to change their own thought and practices.

Changing people requires to create understanding for the change. As Kahneman (2017) describes, Lewin, the maker of a very popular change model (unfreeze - change - refreeze) approaches change in the following way:

*“Instead of asking how can I get him or her to do it, it starts with a question of why isn't she doing it already? Go one-by-one, systematically, and you ask ‘What can I do to make it easier for that person to move?’”*

- Kahneman, 2017

Actors are not simply embedded in their organizational context, they also collectively construct this context themselves. This means that in order to change the organizational context, they do not only need to change something “out there”, but they also need to change their own mental models (micro) that contribute to the macro level institutional arrangements (Vink, 2019). This is illustrated by the following quote:

*“If a factory is torn down but the rationality which produced it is left standing, then that rationality will simply produce another factory. If a revolution destroys a systematic government, but the*

*systematic patterns of thought that produced that government are left intact, then those patterns will repeat themselves in the succeeding government. There's so much talk about the system. And so little understanding"*

-(Pirsig, 1974)

In order to change organizations, it is key to understand that an organization is not a static system which can be changed based upon a plan, but rather a living organism that changes continuously due to interacting with it (Raun, 2020; Wegener, 2021).

## Take aways

In order to secure implementation, service designers have to understand how to change system elements, but also how to change people. Literature explains that in order to change an organization, one of the most important things is to make sure the people in the organization understand and support the change, and thus implementation. Otherwise, change will most likely not succeed.

This means that service designers have to make sure they do not just work on a project, separate

from the bigger organizational context.

Rather, they have to try to learn about this bigger organizational context in order to figure out how their project and practices can be adapted in order to fit the context. In that way, feasibility and viability will be increased, and willingness for people to make the changes happen can be created. In that way, exploring the organizational context can help secure better implementation.



### 3.6 Concluding the literature research

The aim of this chapter was to get a better understanding of the context of this project in order to build a theoretical foundation that could help clarify some of the uncertainties and ambiguities regarding Koos' transformation proposition. From initial interviews with key stakeholders, experts and Koos' service designers, it became apparent that Koos' service designers and key stakeholders of this project did not agree whether Koos' transformation ambitions matched with Koos' capabilities and preferences. Through literature research, it was explored what it takes to transform organizations, what it takes to build a useful maturity model and what role service designers could play in organizational transformation.

Customer-centric transformation is about enabling organizations to continuously respond to changing market needs by adopting an outside-in perspective throughout the organization. The word "continuously" is important here, because it indicates that an organization needs to be able to keep doing this over time - rather than just once. Therefore, customer-centric transformation demands changing core elements of an organization, like the culture, its structure and the strategy. Transformation programs usually take multiple years and require multiple, aligned change initiatives and heavily depend on change management. Since every organization is different, each transformation program requires a unique approach.

For that reason, maturity models have been criticized for making transformations seem like step-by-step recipes, where in reality every organization is different and requires a unique transformation approach in order to become customer-centric. Therefore, literature argues the focus should not be on the growth-path or the desired end-state, but rather on the factors that drive the change itself.

Service design is an important skill for

organizations that aim to become customer-centric. However, this does not automatically mean that service designers have all the capabilities required to guide organizations through a full transformation. In general, service designers have been criticized for lacking implementation skills and failing to drive organizational change. **This seems to indicate a problem. If service designers cannot implement one-off service design projects and drive required organizational change themselves, it seems unlikely they will be able to advise organizations how to do so on a continuous basis.**

To conclude, service designers might not naturally have all the skills required to be in the lead of top-down transformation efforts. However, service design can have a transformative impact on organizations. In order to unlock that potential, service designers should make sure to focus more on implementation and the organizational change that is required for successful implementation. Seeing service design as "designing for service" emphasizes that service delivery can only happen if the circumstances for service to happen are created. This stresses the importance for service designers to empathize with the client organization as much as with end-users, and embracing implementation as a key part of the design process rather than a phase that comes afterwards.

Rather than using a maturity model that prescribes how end-state certain organizational elements should transform into, implementation requires service designers to be aware of the organizational elements as they are, how to fit concepts to this context and how to make required organizational change happen - both by fitting design projects and approaches to the system and the people in it. Figure 12 shows implementation turns out to be the overlapping topic of interest between service design and customer-centric transformation.

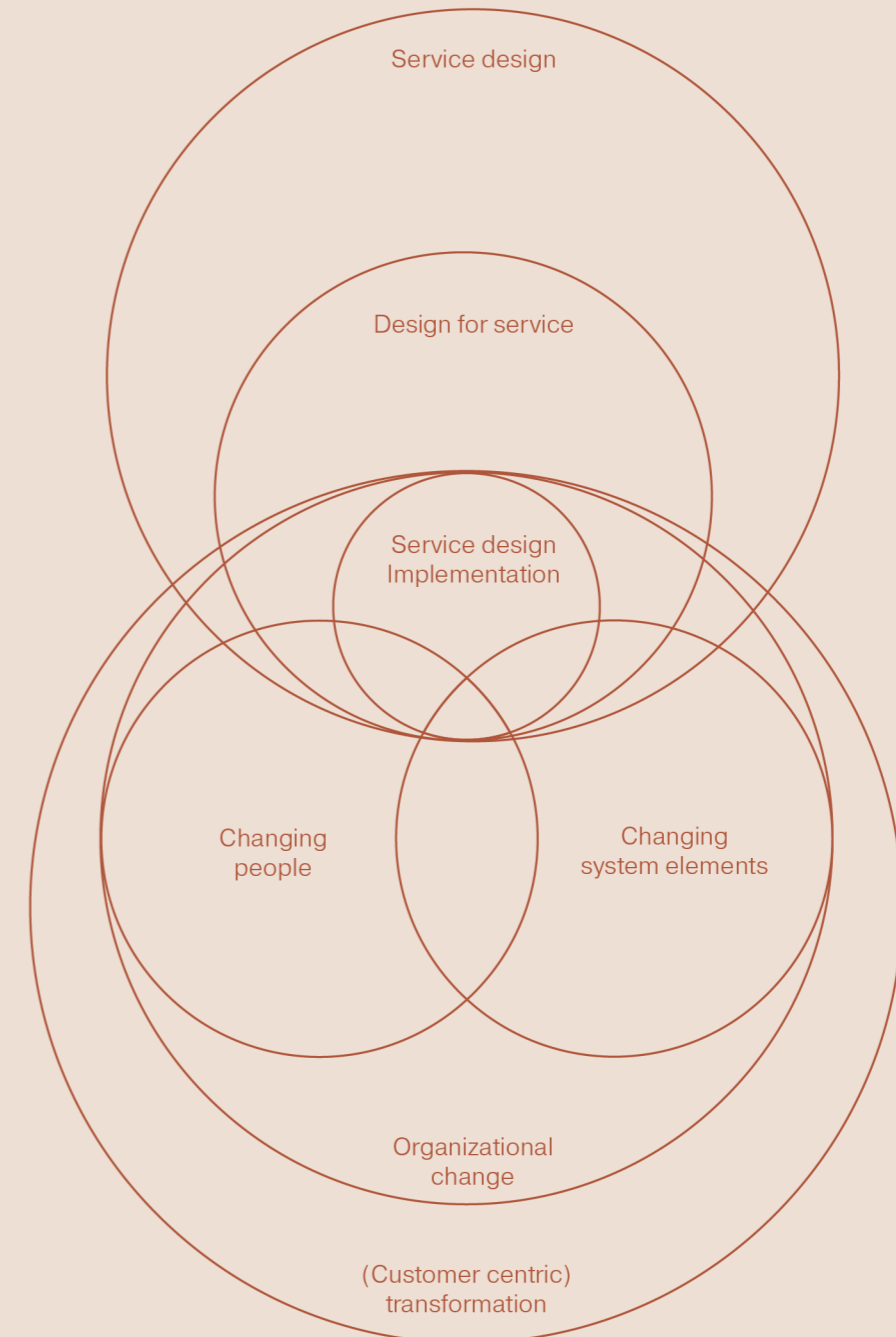


Figure 12 | Visual overview of the different topics discussed in the literature research

# 04

## **Reframing the assignment**

Initial interviews showed that the initial assignment of this thesis might not be addressing the real, underlying problem that Koos has. Through literature research, a holistic exploration of the topics related to this assignment has led to a new perspective on the initial assignment. This chapter will present the opportunity gap identified in past chapters, and present the reframed assignment for the remainder of this thesis.

## 4.1 Opportunity gap

The aim of the literature research was to explore the theoretical context of the problem definition. Through literature research, it was found that service designers can have a transformational impact on organizations if they focus more on implementation and organizational change and take the organizational context into account throughout projects. Through comparison of findings from literature research and findings from interviews and continuous validation with the transformation squad, an opportunity gap for Koos has been identified.

Literature pointed out that every organization is different, and thus every organization is different. Therefore, it is impossible to create an absolute indicator of transformation. Literature also suggested that for the same reason, maturity models are too oversimplified versions of reality. The focus should be on showing the factors that can drive change, rather than showing a sequence towards a desired-end state. This indicates two problems: Currently, Koos' maturity model tries to assess the context elements of an organization compared to a desired, customer-centric end-state, which literature suggests is impossible. Furthermore, Koos' service designers have the feeling their concepts often aren't implemented and thus do not drive change, whereas expressing how service design can drive change should be the most important part of a maturity model. Since transformation heavily depends on change, this indicates that Koos misses expertise that is required to guide organizations through a transformation.

### Exploring the organizational context as baseline to make impact explicit

However, Klitsie (2017) explains that although you can't objectively measure transformation, you can describe the as-is state as a baseline, make a strategy and then track whether an organization is

changing towards the desired end-state (Klitsie, 2017). Therefore, if Koos would use the maturity elements to learn about the organizational context of their clients, rather than use them as an assessment for maturity, they could use them to set a baseline, create a strategy and express the transformative effect of their projects.

### Exploring the organizational context for improved implementation

Through literature on the evolution of service design, it became clear that exploring organizational contexts of clients is actually key for service designer who aim to make impact. Since all service design requires change, service designers have to learn how to connect to the existing organizational context to make sure the concept is not just desirable, but also feasible and viable to implement. By making sure concepts fit the current context, willingness among organizational actors can be created in order to make required changes in their way of working and context.

### Exploring the organizational context to grow organizational sensitivity and acquire change expertise

In order to make sure to address the right problem, solve the problem right and make sure projects make impact, literature pointed out service designers need more understanding of organizational contexts, how to change them or how to align with them. If designers consciously do these things during projects, this might lead to increase organizational sensitivity and experience with organizational change.

### Opportunity gap

To conclude, the opportunity gap for Koos is to focus more on exploring the organizational context elements to understand clients' as-is situation, instead of trying to assess the context

elements to indicate a maturity level. In that way, they can secure better implementation and thus enable clients to become slightly more customer-centric project by project. This will help Koos to concretize their transformation proposition in three ways:

First, exploring the as-is state of the organizational context will enable Koos to improve chances of implementation, and thus make a more transformative impact.

Secondly, having the as-is state made explicit will also enable Koos to express the transformative impact of service design to clients after a project

has been implemented.

Thirdly, more experience with implementation and organizational change on project scale will give Koos the expertise, the organizational sensitivity and credibility needed to serve as transformation consultants in the future.

In that way, exploring the organizational context elements of clients and focussing more on implementation will help concretize Koos' transformation proposition.

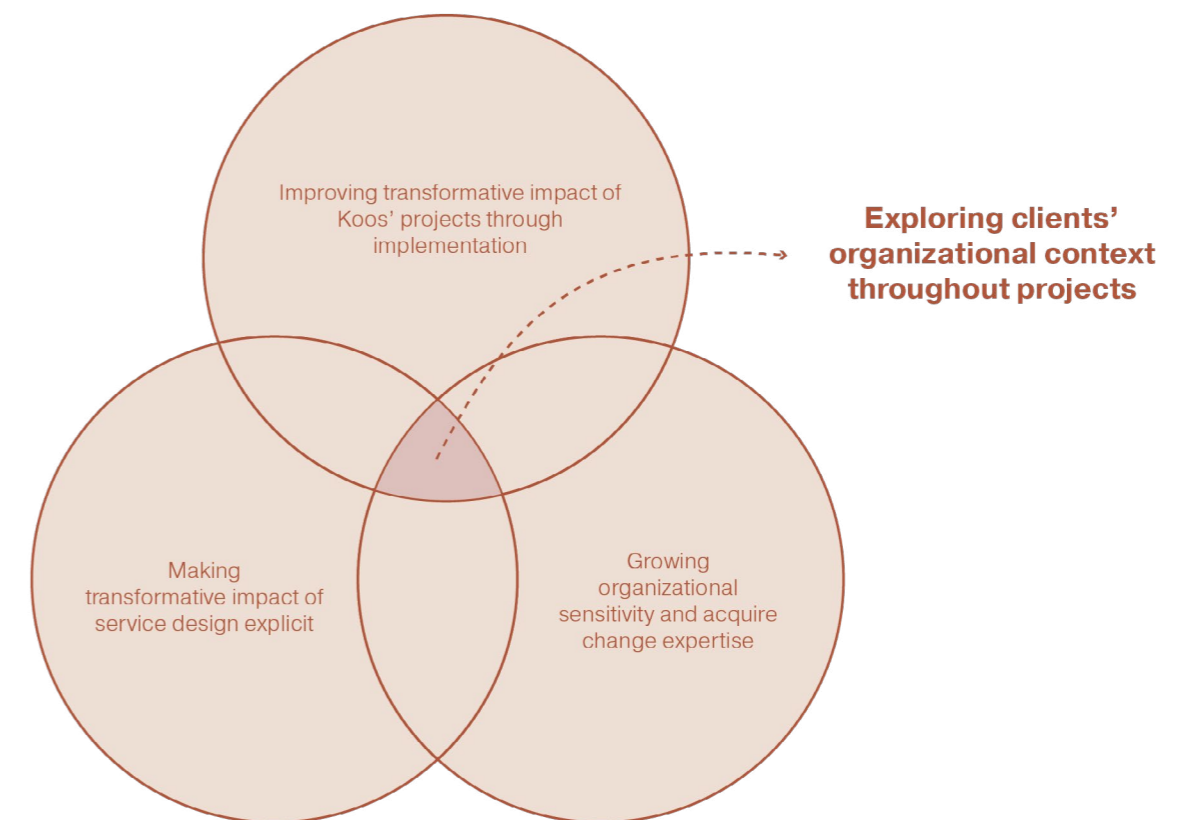


Figure 13 | The opportunity gap identified



## 4.2 Reframing the assignment

*The initial assignment of this thesis was twofold: how can Koos' current maturity model be improved based on literature, and how can the model be applied by Koos in order to concretize the transformation proposition. The initial suggestion was that the model could be made into an assessment tool that could help more accurately assess a clients' service design maturity.*

*However, initial interviews with service designers and experts led to the insight that there is a more pressing need for Koos to acquire skills and expertise required to help organizations go through a transformation. Therefore, in chapter 2.4, the problem statement was formulated as: What does Koos need in order to help organizations to become more customer-centric through service design, in order to form a more strategic, long-term collaboration with clients? In order to understand this new problem, literature research was performed. The findings from literature led to a research gap, which in turn has led to reframing of the assignment. The reframed assignment and research questions will be discussed in this chapter.*

### Opportunity gap

Through comparing findings from literature research with the case studies on past projects of Koos, an opportunity gap was identified. The opportunity gap shows that another first step towards realizing the transformation proposition

could be for Koos to focus more on the organizational context of their clients. In contrast to what the maturity model aimed to do, the focus will be to explore the organizational context as it is, rather than comparing the context to a desired end-state.

Therefore, RQ1 is formulated as:

**Which organizational context elements should Koos explore in order to improve chances of project implementation?**

### Reframing the assignment

Since the organizational context is so abstract and sometimes implicit, it is impossible to understand the whole context all at once, or to just ask what the context is like. Rather, service designers have to use their time with the client to extract information on the organizational context while doing their design work at the same time. This means that each service designer from Koos needs to become more aware of the importance of understanding the organizational context, and embed this within their way of working. This can not be done by just designing a tool or a model, but mostly has to change in service designers' mindset and behaviour - which actually is a transformation in itself. Therefore, the aim of

this project is reframed from being just a design project to being both a design project and a change process at the same time.

In order to do so, the assignment for the rest of this thesis is to succeed step 5 of Kotter's (1995) change model: remove barriers and empower others to act on the vision. This means that barriers that hold service designers from exploring the organizational context of their clients and focussing more on implementation have to be identified, and something has to be designed that empowers designers to act on the new vision.

The research question related to this part of the assignment, RQ2, is formulated as:

**How can exploration of the organizational context be embedded within Koos' designers current way of approaching design projects?**

# 05

## **Case studies**

In order to find out which organizational context elements Koos should consider in order to improve chances of project implementation (RQ1), case studies of past projects of Koos have been executed. This chapter will present the findings from these case studies .

## 5.1 Case study approach

*In the initial interviews in chapter 2.3, service designers pointed out that Koos often does not know whether service concepts have actually been implemented by the client. Therefore, Koos does not know if they have any transformational effect on their clients, and also does not know what factors they would need to consider in order to unlock the transformational effect. To get an in-depth understanding of what factor may have affected implementation of past projects of Koos, qualitative research is conducted with several clients of Koos.*

### Research goals

The goal of this empirical research is to get an understanding of the implementation of projects done by Koos. Since Koos usually leaves before the implementation phase of a project and usually does not check up on the implementation, there is limited knowledge whether projects have actually been implemented, and what may have been barriers or enablers during implementation. Therefore, it was aimed to create a foundational understanding of the bigger context of projects. A better understanding of the initial desired goal of the project for the client, the implementation process and the achievement of the goals will help Koos to get a better understanding of what organizational factors might have to be taken into account during projects in order to secure implementation. This exploration would also help to create a sense of urgency (Kotter, 1995) and convince key stakeholders (Kotter, 1995) for the change process that is part of this project (as will be further elaborated upon in chapter 8.1).

### Research questions

The research questions that were aimed to answer through the case studies were:

- > Was the concept delivered by Koos implemented by the client organizations?
- > (How) did the organizational context affect implementation of the project?
- > What factors may have enabled or blocked implementation?
- > What was the goal for the client to do a project with Koos?
- > Was the goal achieved through the project with Koos?

### Method

The main part of the case studies were the interviews with clients. Additionally, all cases were discussed with an involved designer from Koos, and archived project materials and evaluations were studied. The interviews with clients were semistructured, in order to go in depth on the topics of interest. However, there was room for wandering off, because the point of these interviews was to find blind spots in Koos' understanding of the effect of organizational context on implementation of projects related to transformation. All interviews lasted one to one and a half hours, took place online and were recorded. Afterwards, all data was transcribed manually and taken through a first round of coding. Afterwards, the data was analysed and clustered on recurring themes in Miro. With the initial clusters, a data modelling workshop was hosted at Koos, at which two members of the transformation squad and one external change-consultant were present. The goal of the workshop was to get the stakeholders of this project familiar with the data, refine the clusters and eventually

brainstorm on concepts to make a framework out of the data. The interview guide, initial data clusterings and workshop templates can be found in appendix 4, 5 and 6 respectively.

### Case selection

The cases for the case study were a reputational sample, meaning that the sample was based on exploratory conversations with multiple, senior designers from Koos. After explanation of the research goal, they summarized the process and outcomes of multiple different cases, on which the final case sample was based. Their recommendations were based on extremes: cases where the organizational context was either particularly part of the project or where outcomes were less successful because the context had not been taken into account. Due to the focus on effects after Koos had 'left', only finished projects were considered. However, how long ago the project had been finished varied, depending on the scope of the project.

## 5.2 Case study findings

The goal of the case studies was to get an understanding of the implementation of projects done by Koos. The case studies gave an insight in which specific organizational context factors have affected implementation in the four cases studied. These findings will be further explained in this section. Another important role of these findings is that they had an important role in creating a sense of urgency and acceptance of the change of project direction among the key stakeholders of this project. However, this result will be elaborated upon later in chapter 8.1.

All four clients interviewed for the four different cases expressed that their collaboration with Koos was very successful. All clients were very happy with the outcomes of the projects. However, asking about how the implementation of the project had gone, and if and in what way the project still had impact today, it became apparent that only the client in case 4 was positive about how implementation went. In case 1 till 3, the clients pointed out that there had been many barriers making the implementation of the project outcomes difficult. A concise summary of the goals, outcomes and main insight per case can be found in figure 14. Now, the categories of barriers that recurred throughout the case studies will be discussed individually.

### Strategy

Through the case studies, it became apparent that the success of implementation is related to the fit of the project within the bigger strategy of the organization. In case 2, it became apparent that the customer-centric perspective that the project owner tried to communicate to the organization, of which the project with Koos was a part, was

not recognized as being relevant for the overall strategy and the day-to-day problems that the organization was facing. This made it difficult to get support for customer-centricity and get any recognition for the service design efforts:

*“There is a lot of focus on short term cost cutting, operational cost cutting. In addition, a lot goes wrong in the process, so there are many ad hoc problems to be solved. And in the somewhat longer term, the energy transition and all the technical challenges that entails. If you’re stuck in daily operational problems, it also makes a lot of sense that there is no room for another perspective. And I would say: another perspective? It is actually a way of working that would help reach the strategic goals. But that is a message we haven’t been able to communicate.”*

- Interviewee case 2

In contrast, the strategy of the organization in case 4 was much focussed on the customer since the organization had gone through a huge agile transformation earlier. Therefore, project results were easier to implement, because people recognized how service design made it easier for them to realize the strategy:

*“We went through a huge agile transformation a few years ago, which is why customer-centricity is already an important part of our strategy. Therefore, service design mostly offers the practical steps and tools to make customer-centricity concrete and easily comprehensible for everyone. It helps us realize the strategy.”*

- Interviewee case 4

### Case 1

**Goal of the project:**  
Proving the value of service design to management

**Outcomes:**  
Two very successful SD projects that have the potential to make a lot of impact - both for the user and the business.

**Insight:**  
The project results have a lot of potential, but cannot immediately prove SD's value because both are dependent on changing systems, which will take years. Taking the context of the organization into account, it would have made more sense to pick one project that could have the biggest results and one that proves SD effectivity on smaller scale immediately.

### Case 2

**Goal of the project:**  
Prove SD and standardize CX way of working for non-CX departments through projects and a SD toolkit

**Outcomes:**  
An improved journey with proven business value and an extensive, customized SD toolkit

**Insight:**  
There were great outcomes of SD projects, but because of troubled dynamics between the CX department and other departments, the value of the projects didn't reach the rest of the organization. Therefore, cultural & political institutional work would have been needed in order to make any effect of service design stick.

### Case 3

**Goal of the project:**  
Gain first-hand experience with service design as part of setting up a CX department from scratch

**Outcomes:**  
Lots of learnings on how to integrate SD into the way of working. However, the organization eventually reorganized and eliminated the whole CX department.

**Insight:**  
The CX department was too busy trying to evangelize customer centricity and service design in order to convince the rest of the organization, but in hindsight they realized it would have been more effective to connect to the existing problems in the organization in order to show the value of service design.

### Case 4

**Goal of the project:**  
Create an unambiguous approach for service design for agile mission teams, after a full agile transformation

**Outcomes:**  
Teams slowly start to recognize the value of service design and start utilizing the service design approach for the problems they have

**Insight:**  
This organization already has gone through a huge, agile transformation, which means that service design only brings clarity and a hands-on approach which already fits within the way of working.

Figure 14| The goals, outcomes and insights from the four case studies

### Leadership

Having the strategy is one thing, but in order to realize the strategy it is important that there is also appropriate leadership that allows for people throughout the organization to live up to that strategy. In case 4, management really embraced customer-centricity and service design, making it easy to get Koos' efforts implemented:

*“It helps that management has decided to make the agile principles key part of the organization, and service design fits with that perfectly. So in that sense, management really embraced service design as well, and really supports these efforts.”*

- Interviewee case 4



In case 2 on the other hand, the interviewee pointed out that the managers said they valued customer-centricity and would support the service design efforts. However, that is not what they communicated through their actions and priorities:

*“We also had talks with the managers and with the CEO. The managers thought, what is the use of this anyway? They said: yes, go ahead, but in the meantime they didn’t steer people to actually act upon it. That is no surprise, because this is also how the CEO was acting. He said: I do think the customer is important but it’s really only in place 5 or 6, so please align with what the business is doing. At some point, we just sort of ran out of steam.”*

- Interviewee case 2

### Structure

The case studies also showed the importance of understanding the structure of the client organization, and more specifically, where in the organization the project is happening and what part of the organization the different stakeholders are part of. In case 4, the interviewee explained that in general, the structure of the organization caused some difficulty in the customer-centric way of working now and then:

*“And that, of course, is what happens anyway - regardless of Koos or service design - but simply how the organization is structured now. We have the creation teams on the one side and the data care on the other side, and that doesn’t quite match up now and then.”*

- Interviewee case 4

In case 1, however, the interviewee was very aware of the difficulty of figuring out the structure and all different stakeholders for external consultants. Therefore, from the start of the project, he made sure to fulfill that task and try to make it easy for Koos to reach the right people:

*“I also made sure that the link with corporate was made, so that they were aware of what we are doing and why, and I made sure that I got the right people on board throughout the rest of the organization as well. Of course, it’s hard for outsiders to oversee how the whole structure is put together and who needs to be involved from different angles, so to speak, to get into the implementation phase.”*

- Interviewee case 1

### Systems

Also the systems an organization uses have a big influence on the likeliness of service design outputs to be implemented. Interviewees pointed out that system changes are usually big, expensive, long-term efforts that cannot be made overnight, just to be able to implement project outputs Koos proposes:

*“The experiments we, together with Koos, decided to do... maybe that was a mistake. These very quickly touch upon a system limitation that we have, because we are working with 3 different systems and working on integrating them into 1 in the future. That is such a high priority that we are not going to say: we are going to change everything for 1 system to meet the wishes that came out of Koos’ experiments. Actually, it would be good to do because it would help the customer today. But we are in a tricky phase when it comes to systems”*

- Interviewee case 1

This is something that was already going on before Koos started, so it would have been good if Koos and the project stakeholders would have been more conscious of the fact that designing things that require system changes would not be feasible because of the system change within a few years.

In case 3, ICT capacity was known to be a problem in general. The interviewee acknowledged this is a bigger problem going on in the organization,

which often forms a barrier to projects like the service design project with Koos:

*“The ideal solution then often required all kinds of system modifications which then immediately became a huge long-term project. Corporate always has a shortage of ICT capacity in some strange way. And then nothing happens.”*

- Interviewee case 3

### Metrics

Another topic that came up often throughout the case studies is the relevance of the project, or customer-centricity, to the KPI’s that the organization is trying to achieve. If a project does not align with the metrics an organization is trying to achieve, and if there are no proper metrics for customer-centricity, it is difficult to prove the value of implementing service design project outcomes. In case 1, the interviewee pointed out their current metrics for customer-centricity did not quite work.

*“Our main KPI for CX is NPS. I’m not a fan of that because no one is going to have an extremely positive experience of WCrolls. [...] They also expected: okay the NPS has to change within 3 months. But that’s, it doesn’t happen that quickly”*

- Interviewee case 1

However, he also pointed out that in order to show the value of service design, designers should be more aware of the metrics that are present and make sure to address those:

*“Still, it’s important to prove results, and therefore I think designers should make sure they’re connecting to the KPIs that do exist. I have the idea - this is an assumption - that service designers find it dirty to talk about saving money or making a profit. That comes across as less noble than purely being customer-centric. But in the end, you can only help the customer if you also get the business on board.”*

- Interviewee case 1

### Processes

Participants from the case studies also mentioned the importance of recognizing the current processes that are present within an organization. The interviewee from case 3 explained that during the project with Koos, but also in the bigger CX movement they were trying to create, they did not acknowledge the complexity of current processes enough:

*“We were so busy emphasizing where clients were experiencing pain and how things should be improved, rather than also recognizing how complex the whole environment is in which people were working. [...] It just helps if other people in the organization realize : okay, you want to hear my story, my processes and pains, too. Instead of us being busy telling our story and desired journeys.”*

- Interviewee case 3

Another example from case 1 is that the goal of the experiments was to show the value of service design to convince management. This implies that actual results have to be generated from the project. However, the participant explained that there would never have been budget to also go through with implementation, because the process for getting budget did not allow for enough budget to do so:

*“There wouldn’t have been room in the budget for implementation. You actually have to request budget and get approval at the end of the year for the next year before you can use that.”*

- Interviewee case 1

### Capacity

A quite practical barrier to implementation seems to be capacity in terms of e.g. having enough skilled people, having room on the backlog and having ICT capacity.

*“It is a recurring problem in projects that you are short of things to actually make changes happen. So there is always the danger that you think: ahhh we will go for MVP for now and then we will develop it further later, and then it stagnates. Then you often end up with a MVP and then you’re already working on the next thing.”*

- Interviewee case 4

*“We set a certain deadline for Koos, because at a certain point we also had other projects that required a lot of time and attention. However, we did things quite fast, sometimes too fast, so we didn’t have enough time to make good decisions or review work.”*

- Interviewee case 2

*“Corporate always has a shortage of ICT capacity in some strange way. And then nothing happens.”*

- Interviewee case 3

### Culture

Throughout the interviews, a recurring topic was the effect of the culture on the acceptance of service design or customer-centricity in general. An example is the quote below, in which the interviewee from case 3 explained how customer had historically never been enough important in the organization, which is why it is difficult to all of a sudden make people think from a customer perspective:

*“[Company X] is traditionally a very technical and process oriented company. Very much focused on its own technical possibilities and impossibilities, on its own process and its efficiency, and the customer was a bit far away from everyone’s bed. We don’t really have customers - in the sense that people don’t have a choice to buy a product. As soon as you [...] in our service area you’re stuck with us. So there has never been a need in that sense to really care about what customers think. That’s the mind\*\*\* that everybody has.”*

- Interviewee case 3

Another example from case 2 illustrates how the relationship between different departments was,

which had just grown to be like this over many years. There was a resistance to the customer and market department which had become part of the culture, although nobody specifically knew why or when that arose.

*“There was a huge resistance to the customer and market department, something that has just historically grown. When I came to work there, I already got the feeling: I’d better not say that I’m from Customer and Market because then I’d be looked down upon immediately. People were laughing about the department for years and all the managers weren’t really taken seriously. Really quite intense.”*

- Interviewee case 2

In case 1, the interviewee explained how he noticed a difference between the strategy and the culture as it was.

*“Our vision is to have a healthier and safer future, to digitize and always be customer focused. But that reveals a difference, right. Saying you can do it, saying you are and it and actually being it. That’s a very big difference.[...] And you notice that we do want to go in that direction, but if you dig deep, profit is still the most important thing. And it’s just ingrained in the culture of the top managers. So the cultural shift has started and I think that we have shown what we want with services design on CEO level, but it is not there yet.”*

- Interviewee case 1

### Ways-of-working

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that one of the barriers to implementation was misalignment between the way of working required for service design or customer-centricity, and the way of working that people in the organization have right now. This is exemplified by the following two quotes:

*“The customer belongs to sales and marketing. They are very much convinced that they are already working extremely from the customer’s point of view, but: they just aren’t, still aren’t.”*



Figure 12 | The identified organizational context factors relevant for implementation of projects

*“Because they’re very much concerned with their 5 or 6 p’s and filling them out the best they can. In order to do so, they test all their assumptions and hypotheses with customers, but they pick out of the tests exactly what they like. Doing real empathetic research, or exploratory research, that just doesn’t happen.”*

- Interviewee case 3

*“And the process consultants found it very complicated because they were very used to using a lean methodology, they were also convinced that lean in itself was sufficient. I still think: it could be if you really include the customer, which doesn’t happen.”*

- Interviewee case 2

## 5.3 Conclusions

The research question that was aimed to be answered through these case studies was to find out which organizational context elements Koos should consider in order to improve chances of project implementation (RQ1). The case studies performed aimed to answer this research question have led to three insights, as will now be discussed.

### Organizational context elements

Through clustering the data from the case studies, the categories of barriers or enabling factors for implementation were identified: Strategy, structure, systems, culture, leadership, ways of working, capacity, processes and metrics. In alignment with what literature in chapter 3.2 suggested, these categories match with the factors that are needed for customer-centricity.

The case studies showed that if a service design project aligns well with the organizational context, implementation might be easier. **Through modelling the data with key stakeholders, this led to an insightful discussion. With Koos' current perspective on design maturity, cases like these were said to not be implemented "because the client wasn't mature enough", whereas this can also be blamed on the designers who did not align with the context enough.** Either the necessary changes should have been addressed, or the concept should have been adapted to a form that

could be implemented within the current context. During the case studies, one of the interviewed clients advised Koos: *"If you want your clients to have more attention for their customers, you should do so yourself. If you want your clients to be more flexible around changing customer needs, you should work in that way yourself as well."* Through clustering the data with the key stakeholders, this piece of data was decided to be an eye-opening insight of the case studies, since actively exploring clients' organizational context and looking for problems outside of the direct project scope usually isn't part of Koos' approach.

**Therefore, the main finding of the case study isn't necessarily the categorization of the organizational elements, but rather the fact that designers should actively explore the organizational context they're designing within.**

### Implementation and strategy

Through analysing the results of the studied cases, it was found implementation does not automatically mean that a project has transformative impact. If the organizational context isn't considered from a strategic perspective during the briefing and execution of the project, it can happen that the project doesn't address the real problem, like in case 2. In that case, implementation of a project still does not make the intended transformative impact. Therefore, besides implementation, also the strategic value of projects should be

considered from the beginning of the project onwards.

### Evaluation and reflection

An indirect insight from the case studies was that doing these kind of reflections on the impact of a project, a while after the project has been delivered, is something that Koos usually does not do. However, these kind of reflections and evaluation are needed in order to find out if, and in what way, a project may have had a transformative impact - and what factors may have turned out to be barriers to implementation. As a result, this gives Koos the opportunity to identify what this organization might need in order to become more customer-centric, and thus may help to make first steps towards concretizing the transformation offer.



# 06

## **Co-reflecting on Koos' current way of working**

In the previous chapter, it has been concluded that often, the organizational context is not being taken into account throughout the design process by service designers. Therefore, this chapter aims to co-reflect with Koos' service designers in order to find what they would need in order to start taking the organizational context into account.

## 6.1 Barriers to embed organizational context exploration within the process

In order to find out how to get Koos' service designers to take the organizational context into account throughout the design process, a co-reflection session with 24 employees from Koos was hosted. The co-reflection session started with a presentation on the findings from literature research, interviews and case studies so far. Thus, the vision to focus more on implementation through exploring the organizational context of clients throughout design projects. Through the presentation, it was explained that this would serve as a first step towards building transformation capabilities within Koos. Through this session, barriers Koos' employees experience that withholds them from taking the organizational context more into account throughout the process, and needs they have in order to do so were established.

From the co-reflection session, 4 main categories have been identified within the barriers that Koos' service designers foresee: Koos' positioning and strategy, Koos' time management and planning and Koos' current design process and project approach and knowledge about business and organizations in general. In figure 14, the main categories are presented, shortly explained and backed-up by some illustrative quotes. For an overview of the co-creation templates and complete data clustering, please see appendix 7 and 8 respectively.

Figure 15 | Visual overview of the barriers service designers foresee, withholding them from exploring the organizational context.

Barrier	Insight	Explanation	Supporting quotes
<b>Positioning/ strategy</b>	There is not enough mandate to reach the right people in clients' organizations	Because of hierarchy and bureaucracy, it can be difficult to reach the right people in the clients' organization. This is easier in projects where designers work fully detached, but this is not standard procedure oos.	<i>We often can't reach the right people in the organization</i>
	The client does not hire Koos to do internal research about the organization	In order to better implement projects, Koos must do things they currently do not do to explore the organization and the business. However, this is not what clients think they hire Koos for with Koos' current positioning.	<i>We should better communicate our strategic capabilities. As strategic designers, we can do this.</i>
	There is no direct incentive for Koos designers to focus on implementation or impact	On the short term, Koos does not notice if a project ends up properly implemented or not. Besides the vision being to make more impact, there is no direct incentive to make this actually happen.	<i>We aren't steered on accomplishing clients' long-term goals</i>
<b>Planning/ time</b>	Projects are planned too tightly	Projects are planned very tightly, meaning all sessions with clients are very short and efficient, leaving little time to diverge.	<i>Sessions are often very short in time, leaving no time to diverge</i>
	Koos' agenda is not flexible enough	Projects can only be halftime or fulltime at Koos. However, this makes it difficult to stay involved with a client for a longer time after the project has finished. Also, the tight planning leaves no time to reflect after a project.	<i>Because of the lack of flexibility, you can't stay involved over a longer period of time for low-key coaching</i>
<b>Design process/ approach</b>	There are no dedicated hours sold to explore the organizational context	Usually, there are no dedicated hours to explore the organizational context and business model of a client, unless this is specifically what the client asks for.	<i>We should have a better look at internal processes and how decisions are made, but we don't plan for that</i>
	If implementation is considered, it's only at the end of a project	Implementation is usually not considered until the end of a project. However, this is usually a quick advice rather than an actionable plan.	<i>We should hand over a plan on how to work with the results that we deliver. Sometimes, we mention it, like "here is a poster, you should hang it in the office", but there should be a plan along with that that explains e.g. people should use the poster in a weekly meeting to check up on progress</i>
	There is too little structure in setting up briefing, kickoff and project	There is no structure in how to set up the briefing, kickoff or project planning for a project, meaning everyone does this a little bit differently. Usually, exploring the organization and business context is therefore forgotten or not considered.	<i>It would be good to have more structure in properly setting up the briefing, kickoff and project</i>
	There is too little structure in and use of different roles within project teams	There is unclarity about roles in the project team. The project manager has too many hats, the account manager is not involved enough and the balance between being a designer and a consultant is difficult.	<i>We are designers, consultant and PM at the same time, but there is no concrete division in tasks</i>
	Project deliverables are fixed up front, making it hard to change the project later on	Project approach and deliverables are fixed in the initial offer. Often, this offer is iterated upon couple of times, and then the offer is signed by the client. Therefore, project managers find it hard to totally change the plan halfway the project.	<i>During projects, we don't reflect enough whether our approach still makes sense</i>
<b>Skills / knowledge</b>	There is too little knowledge and experience with business & organizations	Many of Koos' designers started as juniors at Koos after finishing their design degree, so they have not been educated on business / organizations, and also do not have experience with that	<i>I often do not know what information is relevant to ask for</i>
	There are no dedicated tools or processes to explore organization/business	There is knowledge on which tools or methods could be useful to explore business models and organizations in general. However, it is just not part of Koos' current toolkit.	<i>It would be good to have a clear structure or process so that we know what to do, why and when</i>

## 6.3 Conclusion

*From the co-reflection session, 4 categories of barriers have been identified: Koos' positioning, Koos' project approach, Koos' time management and agenda and Koos' skills and knowledge about business and organizations. In order to enable Koos to improve their implementation process, it is needed to solve these barriers. This chapter will conclude which barriers have been decided to focus on for the rest of this project.*

Through the co-reflection session, 4 barrier categories have been identified which need to be resolved in order to enable Koos' designers to explore the organizational context and secure better implementation:

### **Koos' current positioning and strategy does not stimulate designers to explore the organizational context to design for implementation**

Since changing Koos' positioning and strategy is a decision that is bigger than the scope of this project, this barrier is not considered feasible to solve. However, this barrier will be taken into account in delivering the strategy in chapter 8.1, and in the future recommendations (chapter 8.2).

### **Koos' project planning and time management is too tight to explore the organizational context of clients**

This barrier is solvable, but in order to know how to optimize the planning and time management of projects, this first requires better understanding of the desired project approach. Therefore, this barrier is considered feasible only after first resolving other barriers.

### **Koos' current project approach does not allow service designers to explore the organizational context and design for implementation**

This barrier aligns with findings from literature in chapter 3.6, where it was found that implementation and exploring organizations should be part of designers' project approach from day 1. Designers point out there is not enough time for dedicated research on the organizational context at the beginning of a project. However, literature in chapter 3 pointed out that service designers aiming to make impact should empathize with their client organization as much as they do with end-users.

Secondly, designers point out that there is too little flexibility to change projects half-way, because the proposal signed by the client before the project already has a project approach and fixed deliverables set in stone. This is a problem, because literature in chapter 3 explained that implementation requires organizational change, and organizational change is complex. This means the solutions can not be predicted up front, and have to be found along the way using the design process as an inquiry (Klitsie and Wegener, 2019). Account managers point out they are in the position to have a strategic conversation with the client to change the proposal half-way, however, then they need to be included in the project by the project team, and get a better understanding of what the organizational context of the client is like.

Thirdly, service designers point out there is limited focus on feasibility and viability of projects, and if implementation is considered, it is only at the end of a project. However, the real impact of service

design is only realized if the changes and concepts proposed by the design team are actually realized and implemented after the project is finished (Weisser, 2020). Literature in chapter 3 pointed out that in order to secure feasibility and viability and secure implementation at the end of the project, the organizational context should be considered and worked on from the start of the project onwards.

Therefore, it makes sense to focus on redesigning Koos' project approach. This barrier will thus be taken into account during the next phase of this thesis.

### **Koos needs additional knowledge on organizations and businesses**

This barrier mostly requires training and experience from working with the improved project approach. Therefore, this barrier will be considered both as a next step and as a result from solving the project approach.

As a conclusion, the design phase of this thesis will be focussed on redesigning Koos' project approach by integrating exploration of the organizational context into Koos' existing design process.

# 07

## **Formulating the design brief**

This chapter forms the transition between the research phase and the research phase and the design phase of this project. First, the insights of previous chapters will briefly be discussed. Then, the design brief for the design phase of this thesis will be formulated, and design requirements will be presented.

## 7.1 Setting direction

*This chapter describes the transition between the research phase and the design phase. All research efforts discussed in the previous chapters have led to this point, where we are able to define the design brief. Therefore, this section will summarize the findings leading to this point.*

The outcomes of the previous chapters together form the starting points for the development of the design vision. In chapter 2, the problem was defined as: Koos needs to optimize their own design process in order to enable client organizations to become more customer-centric through service design. In that way, they can form more strategic, long-term partnerships with clients. In chapter 3 and 4, an opportunity for Koos was identified: focussing more on exploration of the organizational context of clients, in order to secure better implementation of projects. In that way, projects start making more transformative impact in organizations by actually being implemented, and Koos acquires expertise and skills on project scale, which can form the foundation required for skills to change and transform organizations on bigger scale in the future. In chapter 5, in-depth understanding exploration of the context was done through case studies with clients and continuous interviews with Koos' designers.

### Co-reflection session

Having gathered the outcomes of chapters 1 to 5 as described above, it was time to start the design phase of the project. This was done through hosting the co-reflecting session, of which the first part of the findings, the barriers, have already been discussed in chapter 5. Besides the reflection on barriers that Koos' designers see

if they would have to explore the organizational context of their clients more, the co-reflection also aimed to identify a design direction for the remainder of this project. The setup of the co-reflection session can be found in appendix 7.

### Outcomes of the session

After having been split up in 4 smaller groups, there was a collective discussion with all 24 present designers. Throughout this discussion, it was agreed upon that it would be good to have a more structured approach to help designers explore the organizational context of their clients, and make implementation part of the design process from day one onwards. It was discussed that this is not something you can just "design" and then start doing. Exploration of the organizational context means growing organizational context sensitivity and business acumen, which requires a behavioural change and knowledge extension for each of Koos' service designers. However, it was concluded that it would be good to have some guidance in how to make a start.

Based on this conclusion, a design brief has been written, which forms the backbone for the design phase.



## 7.2 Design brief

Together with the key stakeholders of this project, the members of the transformation squad, a design brief was formulated based upon all previous findings and the co-reflection session. The brief includes a recap of the problem statement and strategy. Additionally, design goals were formulated and a design statement that sums up the design goals was made. In order to guide the design phase, some specific requirements for the framework were formulated.

### Problem and strategy

Koos' vision is to make the world better by design, and thus the mission is to make more positive impact. Therefore, Koos wants to help organizations become more customer-centric in order to help them become more resilient to change on the long term. In chapter 4, it was concluded that in order for Koos to be able to guide organizations through such transformation efforts, Koos should acquire more skills in and knowledge of implementation and change management.

Therefore, as concluded in chapter 4, a first step will be to start unlocking the transformative impact of service design through implementation in order to become familiar with organizational change on project scale first.

### Design goals

As discussed in the co-reflection session with 25 of Koos' service designers, it was encouraged to come up with a more structured approach regarding implementation. In agreement with the key stakeholders of this project, this need was translated in to a design statement covering several design goals. These design goals are: The framework should guide service design consultants in exploration and involvement of the organizational context throughout projects (1), in order to grow organizational sensitivity and understanding of organizational change among service design consultants (2) and secure better implementation of projects (3) in order to live up to Koos' vision of making more positive impact (4).

### Design statement

In order to realize these design goals, a design statement was formulated (see figure 17). Inspired by the brand positioning statement (Berghuis, 2019), it was decided the design statement should communicate the target audience, product category and the functional benefits. Instead of emotional and self-expressive benefits (Van der Vorst, 2017), it was decided to include strategic benefits. The product attributes (Berghuis, 2019) have chosen to be left out of the design statement, and have been formulated as separate design requirements as will be discussed in the following section.

### Design requirements

In addition to the design statement, a set of design requirements has been formulated. These design requirements formed the basis for the development of the framework, which will be presented in the next chapter. The following design requirements are formulated:

### The framework to be designed should ....

1\_ be realized through simple visual that service design consultants can understand and easily remember

2\_ Should include the organizational context elements identified in chapter 5

3\_ Should communicate the fact that there should be a balance between adapting the project to the context, and changing the context through the project

4\_ Should communicate the non-linearity of complex organizational problems (chapter 3.4)

5\_ Should come with guidelines on how to use the framework throughout a project

### Design statement

"Design a design process **framework** for **service design consultants**

that **stimulates** them to take the organizational context of their clients more into account, and **clarifies** when and how these insights should be used throughout a design process

In order to increase the likeliness of projects being **implemented and creating organizational change** as a first step towards Koos' ambition **to build customer-centric organizations that are highly resilient to change**"

Figure 17 | Design statement inspired by the brand positioning template (Berghuis, 2019)

# 08

## **Organizational context framework**

Combining the insights from previous chapters, a framework on how to embed exploration of the organizational context into Koos' project approach has been designed. This chapter will present the framework and a tool for Koos to put the new project approach into action.

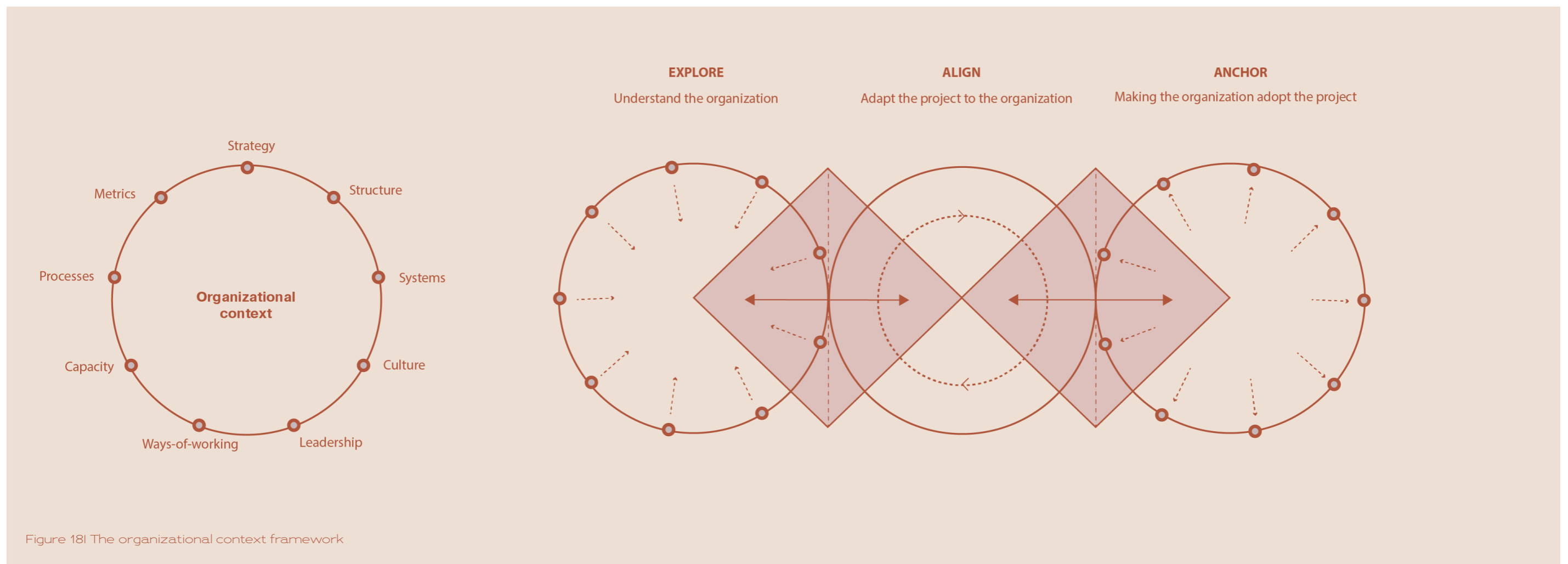
## 8.1 Introducing the organizational context framework

Initial interviews with Koos' service designers and experts, literature research, case studies and the co-reflection have all resulted in insights on how the organizational context can be explored through design, how implementation should be addressed throughout design projects and what Koos' current design process and barriers look like. This chapter will give an overview of how these different insight, through an iterative process, led to the development of the organizational context framework.

As concluded from literature in section 3.6 and expert interview 4, implementation of service design requires change of organizational elements. However, in Koos' current project approach, mainly based on the double diamond model (Design council, 2005), exploration of the organizational context is not taken into regard enough. Rather, the research and exploration activities are mainly focussed on the end-user of the client. In order to make sure service design projects make actual impact within organizations, it is important to start working on the organizational change process

simultaneously from the start of the project. In order to anchor the changes in the organization, the design project should include exploration of the organizational context and continuously align design decisions with the context. Therefore, a new project approach has been captured in the framework shown in figure 18. The main element of the framework is the organizational context circle. This circle represents the organizational context, which includes the context elements that have been identified through literature research in chapter 3 and case studies in chapter 5.

The purpose of the framework is to show that in order to favour the succes of implementation, the organizational context of the client should be adressed from before the start of the project until after the project has finished - and all the way throughout. The actions required to adress the organizational context throughout the project changes, which is why there are three different organizational context circles in the framework: explore, align and anchor. These will further be explained in the next section.



## 8.2 Explaining the organizational context framework

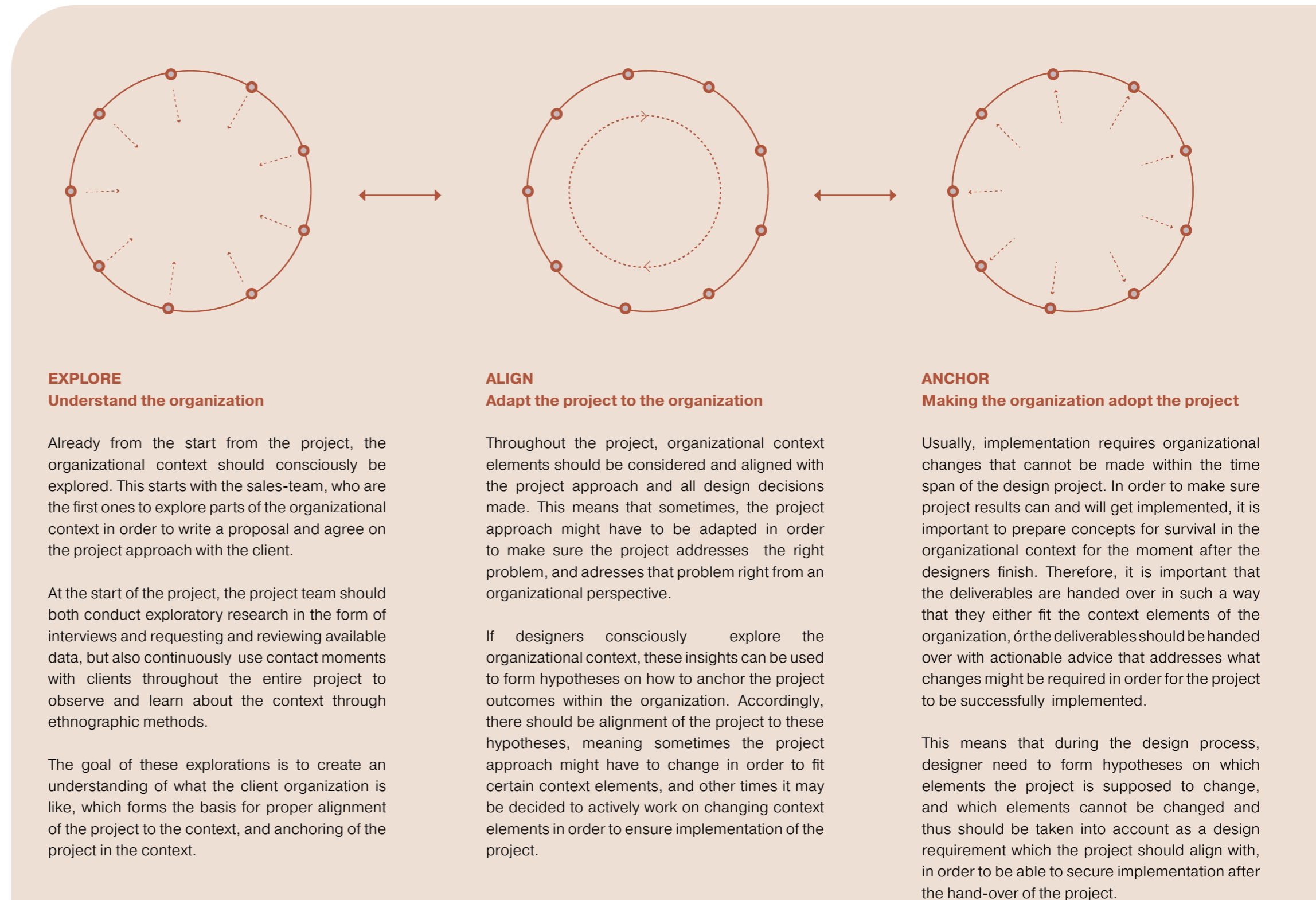
As introduced in the past section, the framework includes three different circles representing different actions regarding the organizational context and the project. In this section, these three actions will be explained.

The three actions are explore, meant to understand the organization, align, meant to adapt the project to the organization and anchor, meant to make the organization adopt the project in order to keep implementation going after the moment Koos leaves.

Although the sequence of the actions will always start with exploration, followed by alignment and ended with anchoring, these are not meant to be mistaken for phases that start when the previous phase ended. This is due to the fact that organizational change is not a linear, complicated process, but rather a complex project where the problem cannot be overseen up front, and where the solution cannot be predicted up front (Klitsie & Wegener, 2019). Therefore, the design process itself functions as a tool to explore the organizational context and work on identifying the accurate problem and the solution at the same time. Thus, the problem and solution co-evolve. (Klitsie & Wegener, 2019; Raun, 2019)

Therefore, as the arrows between the actions show, designers should use the design process to **explore** the organizational context and form hypotheses on how to **anchor** the project outcomes. Accordingly, designers need to continuously **align** their project approach in order to make sure the project solves the right problem and solves that problem right from the organizational perspective

Now, the three different actions will be further explained.



## 8.3 Introducing the organizational context reflection Miro

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the actions of exploring, aligning and anchoring aren't activities that should be done once at a specific moment in the design process, but rather they should be done continuously throughout the project. The reason this continuity is important is because the process of implementation requires organizational change. As Klitsie & Wegener (2020) point out, service design projects concerned with organizational change tend to be complex, rather than complicated. This means the solution cannot be seen upfront, and problem and solution have to co-evolve. In order to do so, designers need to use their design process not just as a problem-solving approach, but as an inquiry into the organization (Klitsie & Wegener, 2019; Raun, 2019). Wegener (2019) argues that this requires service designers to engage more in reflection-in-action (during activities) and reflection-on-action (after activities), and change the project approach accordingly. Therefore it is important to include regular reflections on the fit of the project and the organizational context throughout the design process.

### Embedding reflection within existing routine

Continuous reflection on the project approach, in order to integrate exploration, alignment and anchoring within a service design project approach, requires service designers to change their existing project routine. Literature suggests that in order to redesign and change routines, physical artefacts can help to lock in events that are really required (Pentland & Feldman, 2008). However, it should be noted that these artefacts should be seen as tools to learn, rather than tools that prescribe the ideal state of a routine. Artefacts should help the actors to enact a new routine, learn from that, and accordingly help actors to adapt the routine to their insights and

make it their own.

Therefore, the decision has been made to create a Miroboard which functions as a living reflection document, to be used by designers throughout the design project. This section will introduce the organizational context reflection Miro, and explain its different components.

### Miro as the dedicated place

Miro is an online whiteboard, allowing teams to easily collaborate in a visual way. Due to the current pandemic, Miro has become one of Koos' main tools for (online) collaboration, but also for sharing and storing project data. Therefore, using Miro was both functionally and practically a logical option.

### Weekly reflections as fixed moments

In order to make sure designers stay aware of the fit between their project and the organizational context, the Miro tool should be used weekly

during a 30 minutes session with all team members present. The main setup of the Miroboard can be seen in figure 19. Each week, all three actions included in the organizational context framework will be discussed and reflected upon.

During this reflection session, the project team will share and discuss their findings from exploration activities and observations, reflect on the implications of these insights on the anchoring approach, and accordingly decide whether any changes should be made in the project approach or any missing information should be further explored.

### Involved actors

Already during sales, the sales representative and/or account manager should make sure to fill in their insights on the organizational context in the Miro. Afterwards, the Miroboard would mainly be used by the project team, and whenever needed, the accountmanager can use the board

to get familiar with all insights. In that way, the Miroboard serves as a hand-over document between the account manager and the project manager whenever needed.

### Living document

As mentioned in the introduction, the Miro tool should function as an artefact that can help build a routine. However, this does not mean that the Miro tool and its current structure and contents should be regarded as a set in stone template. Rather, the tool should be used as an experiment. Therefore, the Miro board should be seen as a living document. Through enacting the routine, new learnings on how to effectively reflect on insights, which questions to explore, which topics to discuss will arise, and should be used to improve the Miroboard and meeting's setup.

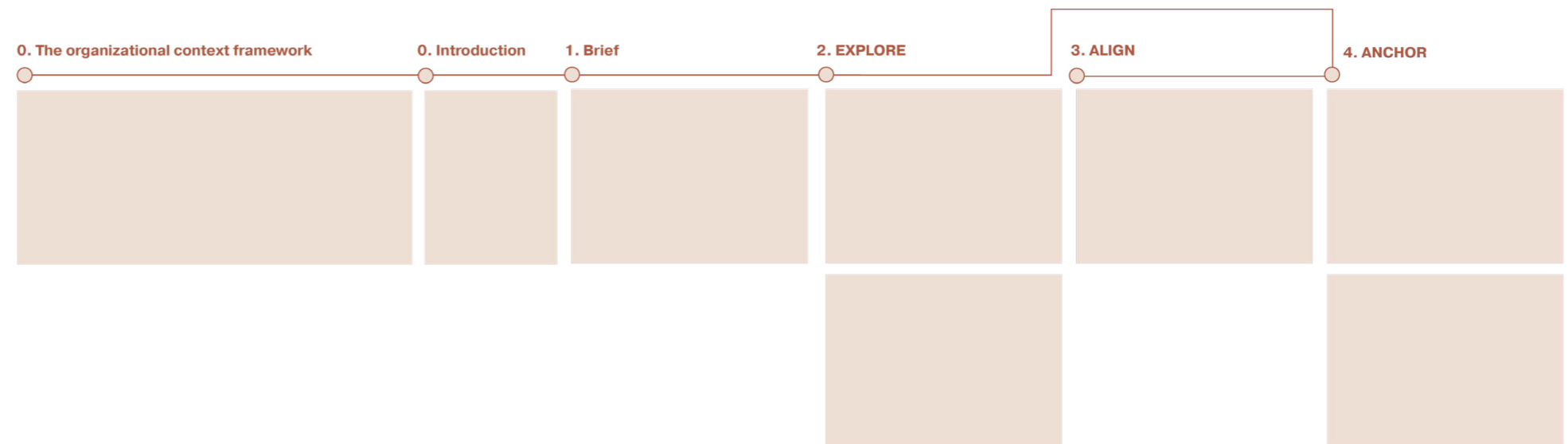


Figure 19 | Setup of the different canvasses aimed to help enact the organizational context framework in the organizational context reflection Miro



## 8.4 Explaining the different canvases

In this chapter, the 5 canvases included in the first version of the reflection Miro will be introduced and explained. The questions and assignments in the canvases were chosen based on the insights from the case studies, co-reflection and continuous interviews with Koos' service designers. Two feedback sessions with respectively one senior service designer and two of the key stakeholders have been used to iterate upon the canvases. However, it should be noted that these canvases serve as a probe to get service designers thinking, rather than as a set of assignments that will result in perfect exploration, alignment and anchoring.

### Canvas 1 | The brief

As explained in figure 20, this canvas serves as a reminder for service designers to stay critical of the problem that is being addressed in the project.

In the project evaluation of many projects, it is noted that the actual problem that the client wanted to solve was implicit, and was not explicitly mentioned during the formation of the proposal. Considering the fact that the co-reflection session led to the insight that the approach in the proposal is often regarded as "fixed", the real, implicit problems and goals are often not solved and realized during service design projects.

Therefore, discussing the underlying problems and implicit goals during the weekly reflection is considered important.

**Brief**

**Make sure we are addressing the right problem**

*In order to make impact, it is important that we address the right problem. Aiming for successful implementation almost always means that we have to expect complex organizational change-related problems might pop up throughout the exploration of the organizational context. Therefore, we should be aware that the way we understand the brief might also change multiple times throughout the project. Therefore, we need to continuously keep reflecting whether we are still solving the right problem and aiming for the relevant goals.*

**Write down the rationale for the project and the desired goals the client would like to accomplish through this project**

*Note that the real rationale and goals may not be the same as the first rationale and goal a client might mention*

Client name <input style="width: 90%;" type="text" value="[fill in]"/>	<b>When or why did the need for this project arise?</b> <i>Are there problems, changes circumstances or other factors that you know of?</i>	<b>What are the explicit goals of the project?</b> <i>Try to also think in terms of strategic goals, rather than just project-deliverables</i>
Project name <input style="width: 90%;" type="text" value="[fill in]"/>		
Team members <input style="width: 90%;" type="text" value="[fill in]"/> <input style="width: 90%;" type="text" value="[fill in]"/> <input style="width: 90%;" type="text" value="[fill in]"/> <input style="width: 90%;" type="text" value="[fill in]"/>	<b>Have there been earlier attempts to solve this same problem or fulfill the same need? How did these go?</b>	<b>Are there also more implicit goals that we know of?</b> <i>E.g. hidden agenda's, certain stakeholders to be convinced, financial outcomes to be met, etc.</i>
Start date <input style="width: 90%;" type="text" value="[fill in]"/>		
End-date <input style="width: 90%;" type="text" value="[fill in]"/>		

Figure 20 | Canvas 1

## Canvas 2 | EXPLORE

As explained in figure 21, this canvas serves in order to trigger exploration of all organizational context elements, and create an overview of what the design team knows about the organizational context.

During the co-reflection session, multiple designers pointed out they would like to have a list of questions that might be relevant to ask. Therefore, relevant questions to ask gathered from literature in chapter 3, the expert interviews from chapter 2.4 and reflection with key stakeholders have been put into this canvas as inspiration. It should be noted that there could be many more relevant questions to ask. This will also be discussed later on in chapter 9.2.

## EXPLORE

### Understand the organization

*In order to increase our understanding of the organization, it is important that we consciously explore the organizational context elements. Some example questions we should ask ourselves are shown on the canvas below. Try to acquire as much information on each element as possible, both by conducting research (interviews, asking for materials, etc.) and by continuously observing the client during contact moments. Try to attune yourself to be surprised: how do people work? What do people ask? How do people react to us? What do they value?*

### Explore the organizational context elements of the client in order to understand how this organization works

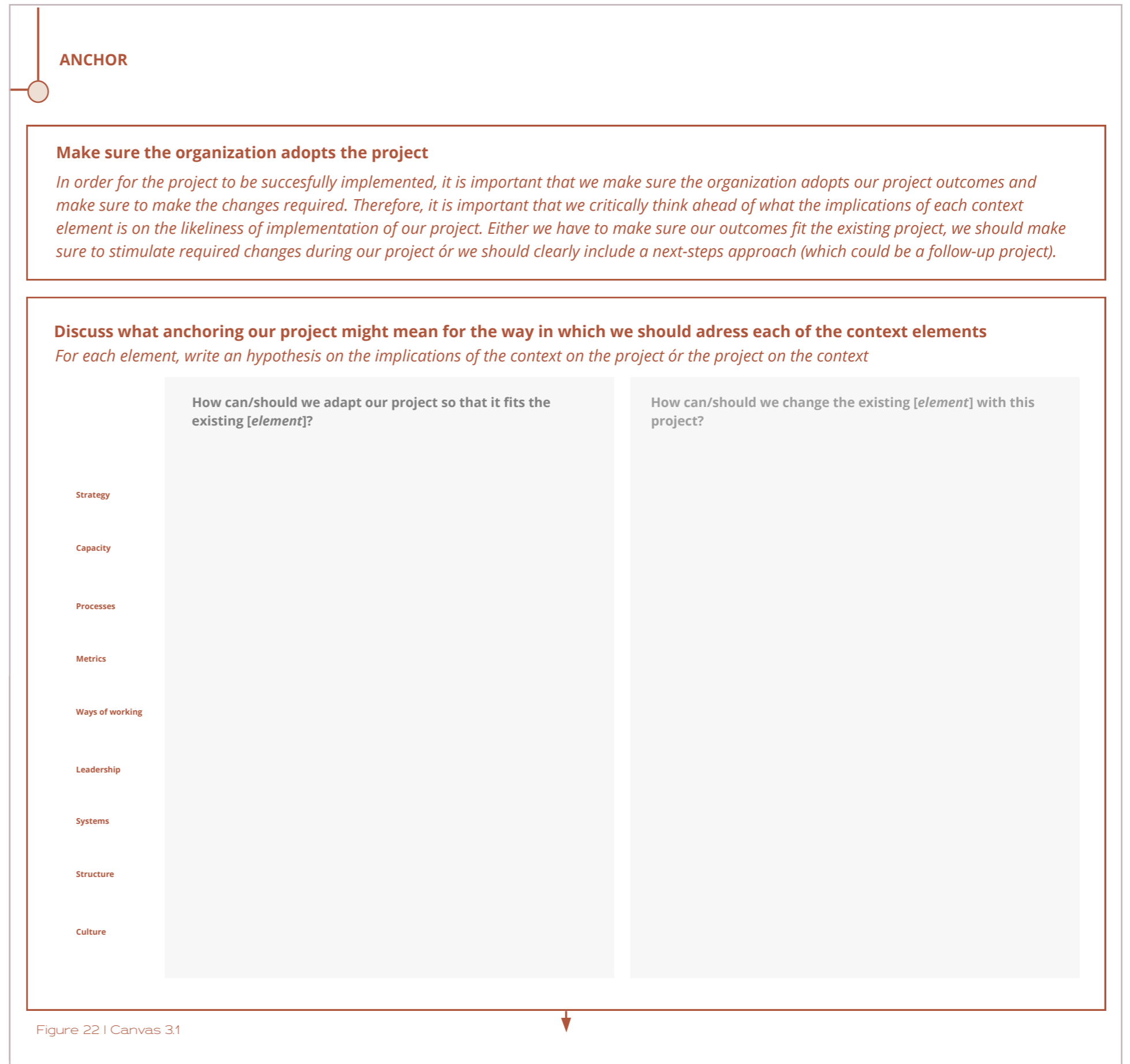
*Write your insights on each context element on a post-it and put them around the box they belong to.*



### Canvas 3.1 | ANCHOR

After having reflected on the exploration, the next step is to think about what these insights might mean for anchoring. As figure 22 explains, it is important to formulate hypotheses for each context element. The goal of this is to make service designers aware that in order to make sure the project properly fits the organization in order to be implemented, the project should either be adopted to the context, or changing the context should be addressed during the project.

The assignment to write insights down in the form of hypotheses was the result of the validation session with the two stakeholders of this project. In that way, designers will be forced to think about the implications of the organizational context on the project. By coming up with these hypotheses, awareness of know knows, unknown knows, known unknowns and unknow unknowns will be created. This will be further discussed in the next section with canvas 3.2.



### Canvas 3.2 | ANCHOR

As mentioned in the previous section, the hypotheses formulated in canvas 3.1 can be divided into 4 clusters: know knowns, known unknowns, unknown knowns and known unknowns.

Making this explicit can help service designers become aware of what information they may be lacking, and in what way they can use their knowledge in a strategic way.

These insights can be used in order to align the project approach so that all the context elements are being addressed properly.

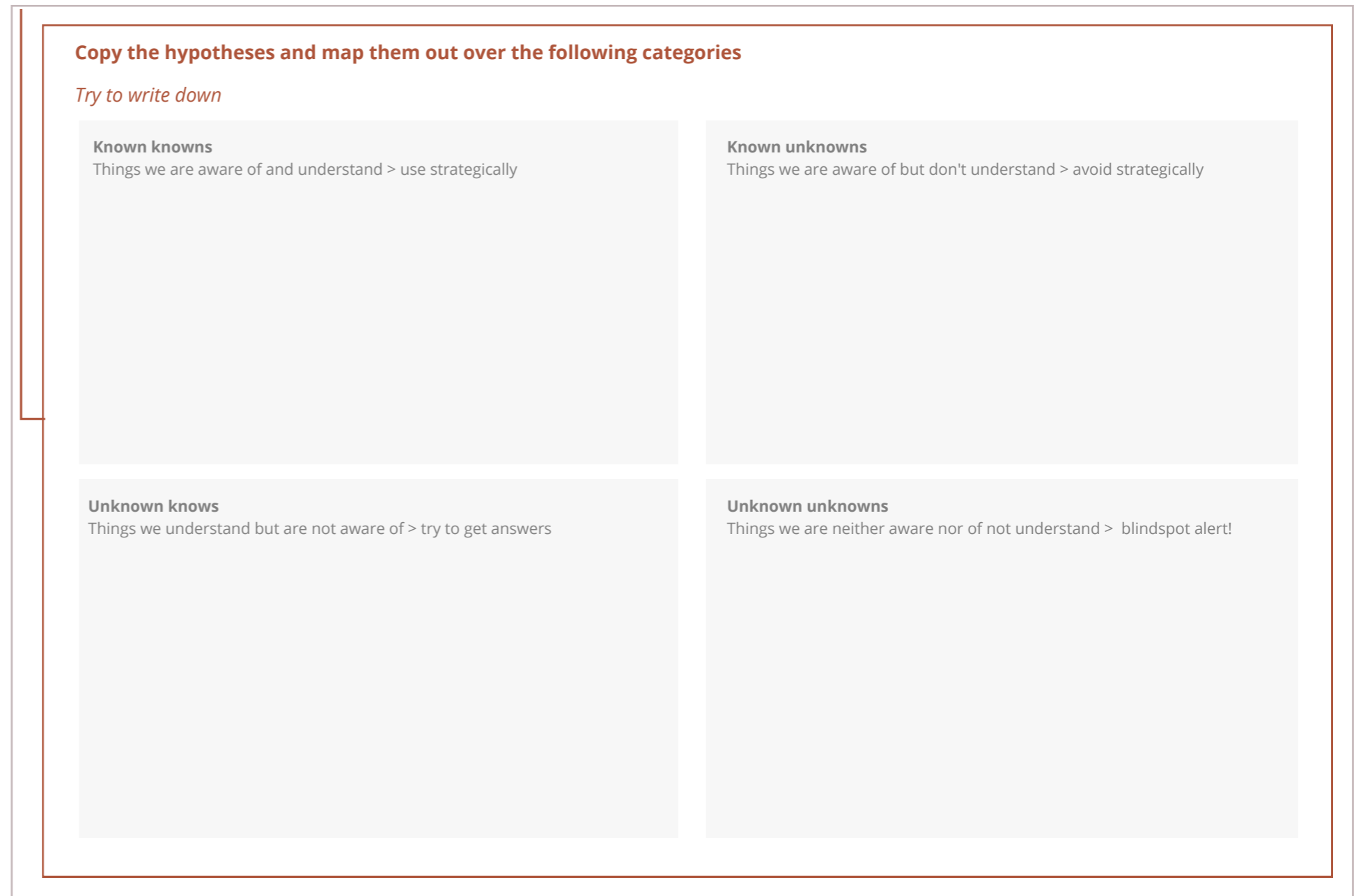


Figure 231 Canvas 3.2

#### Canvas 4 | ALIGN

Having reflected on the knowledge that we have gathered about the organizational context in the explore canvas and having formulated hypotheses about the effect of the organizational context on the project - it is now time to reflect on how these insights may require changes in the chosen project approach. Therefore, canvas 4 (figure 24) only consists of two simple questions: what missing knowledge may we have to explore, and do we need to make changes in our project approach?

If this reflection leads to the insight that a change of approach might be needed, all the materials in the Miro reflection board can be used in order to communicate the situation to the account manager. In turn, the account manager can have a strategic conversation with the client to change the proposed, "fixed" project approach and deliverables.

During the co-reflection session, it was found that service designers often have the idea that changing the fixed project approach is impossible. However, account managers point out they have time and dedicated hours to have such strategic conversations. However, if there are not being kept in the loop on the project and if project teams do not inform them changes might be needed, these conversations never take place.

Therefore, this canvas will serve as a reminder that changing the project approach is possible.

#### ALIGN

##### **Adapt the project to the organization**

*In order to make sure our project can and will get implemented and anchored within the organization, it is important that we use our insights on the organizational context to be critical in what way we can best approach this project. Try to be critical of decisions we have already made or will have to make in the near future, and think about things we may need to explore or things we might have to change in our project approach. If the approach needs change, make sure to contact the account manager to have a strategic conversation with the client.*

##### **Brainstorm and discuss what implications context insights might have for on this project and our approach**

*Consider the relevance of our project within the bigger context, define actions and divide tasks*

What missing knowledge may we have to explore?

Do we need to make changes in our project approach?



## 8.4 Use cases of the Miroboard

*Now that we have a thorough understanding of how the Miroboard should be used, it is time to discuss the different use cases of the board. Although the main function of the board is to build a new routine of continuous reflection on alignment between the organizational context elements and the project approach, the Miroboard can also be used to solve other problems identified throughout this thesis. These different use cases will now be discussed.*

### **Routine artefact**

The main function of the framework and the Miroboard is to stimulate designers to continuously explore the organizational context and align the project to the context in order to foster implementation. The main function is to build a routine, which may become a second nature after a while. However, as long as continuous reflection-in-action is not embedded within the second nature of all Koos' service designers, weekly reflections using the Miroboard is recommended.

### **Organizational insights archive**

The second use, however, shows how having the Miro has added benefits over just being an artefact to build a routine. Weekly writing down insights on the organizational context, and storing all supporting materials in the Miro as well, will create an archive of all insights and information on the organizational context of a certain client. This can be very valuable when multiple projects are done for one client, which is the case for most of Koos' clients. By going through the Organizational context Miro of the finished (or running) project, new project teams can easily make a jumpstart in their understanding of the organizational context, which can be beneficial in order to quickly

determine how to effectively approach the project for this specific client.

### **Hand-over document**

Related to the previous use case, the Miroboard can serve as a hand-over document whenever the accountmanager wants to quickly make him- or herself familiar with the observations of the projectteam in this specific organization. This can help when the accountmanager needs to have a strategic conversation with the client, or when a new proposal has to be written for a new project for the same client.

### **Backbone for reflection**

Although the main function of the Miroboard is to stimulate continuous reflection-in-action, the Miroboard can also form the backbone for reflection-on-action after the project has finished. By going through the insights and hyposthesis documented throughout the project, it becomes easier to specifically reflect on the question whether the right decisions have been made throughout the projects. During the validation session, one of the senior service designers mentioned that the evaluation at the end of a project often stays on a shallow level because it is difficult to discuss every single decision made. She argued that going through the Miroboard before evaluating with the client might help to come up with more specific questions, leading to more insightful evaluations and reflections.

# 09

## **Delivering the strategy**

This chapter serves to explain the bigger strategy of which the design of the framework and Miro form just a small part.

## 9.1 Change process Koos

As mentioned in the project approach, the main result of this project is not the design of the framework or the reflection Miro, but rather the fact that reframing the problem led to the identification of a blind spot in Koos' approach: the lack of focus on implementation, which is key for transformation and realization of Koos' vision to make positive impact through design.

Focussing more on implementation requires organizational change within Koos itself, such as increasing organizational sensitivity and shifting the mindset of all Koos' designers towards more focus on implementation throughout all design decisions.

Therefore, Kotters' model for change (1995) has been decided to use as a backbone throughout the design activities of this project, in order to create lasting change. This section will explain which actions have been undertaken to go through the change process, and list the chapters belonging to the specific change step.

### 1 | Creating a sense of urgency

Help others see the need for change through a bold, aspirational opportunity statement that communicates the importance of acting immediately (Kotter, 1995).

2.3 Evaluation of Koos' current model  
2.4 Problem definition  
3.5 Service designers & org. change  
3.6 Service design implementation  
4.1 Opportunity gap

Initially, the assignment was to improve Koos' maturity model and design an additional

maturity assessment tool. However, not all key stakeholders and service designers from Koos saw the urgency of having a maturity assessment tool, and did not share the opinion that Koos was able to guide organizations through a customer-centric transformation.

Through literature research, an opportunity gap was identified. Although there might not be an urgency to measure an organization's service design maturity, there is an urgency to understand the organizational context of clients. Without understanding of the as-is state of the organizational context of an organization, both measuring transformation is impossible, and concepts often end up not being implemented. Since transformation consists of many overlapping change initiatives, not having enough knowledge of how to create actual change through one project is a problem. Therefore, there is urgency to focus on implementation if the ambition is to do transformations.

Initially, the relationship between implementation and transformation was not recognized by one of all key stakeholders. However, after continuously sharing findings from literature and connecting them to findings from the case studies, all stakeholders agreed upon the urgency of improving Koos' implementation capabilities as a part of realizing the transformation ambition.

### 2 | Forming a guiding coalition

Identifying the effective change leaders in your organizations and also the key stakeholders, requesting their involvement and commitment towards the entire process (Kotter, 1995).

2.1 Introducing Koos  
4.1 Opportunity gap  
4.2 Reframing the assignment

As the transformation squad had already been formed before the start of this thesis project, the guiding coalition was already there. However, as explained in the previous section, the transformation squad turned out not to share the same opinions and ambitions. Through step 1 and identification of the opportunity gap, this project has been redefined.

As a result, the transformation squad is now referring to itself as the implementation squad, and has reconsidered the squad goals.

### 3 + 4 | Creating and communicating a vision

Determining the core values, defining the ultimate vision and the strategies for realizing a change in an organization (Kotter, 1995).

Appendix 9: Showkoos slides

The identified opportunity gap could be reframed into a vision that describes a first step towards improving Koos' transformation capabilities: *improving Koos' own maturity in order to continuously learn about clients' organizational*

context, so that Koos can make more impact through implementation. Figure 25 (page 109) shows how the visual representing the changed proposition of Koos when transformation is not seen as something to actively offer, but rather as a result from focussing more on implementation and strategic use of design. In order to communicate the vision, all findings from interviews, literature research and case studies were bundled in a presentation and shared during a ShowKoos in the 14th week of this project: a presentation for all employees of Koos to showcase the findings of this project up till that point. For the slides of the ShowKoos, please see appendix 9. The vision was received with great enthusiasm and recognition from Koos' employees. Afterward, a lively discussion emerged and multiple designers indicated they would like to be involved in further realization of the vision.

One of the main effects that this presentation had was that service designers were confronted with the contradiction of telling client organizations to be customer-centric and solve the real problems their customers have, but that Koos itself does not always listen carefully to their own clients' real problems.

## 5 | Removing barriers and empowering others to act on the vision

Ensure that the organizational processes and structure are in place and aligned with the overall organizational vision (Kotter, 1995).

- 5.2 Case study findings
- 5.3 Case study conclusions
- 6.1 Identifying barriers in current approach
- 6.2 Barriers conclusions

In order to find barriers and needs related to exploring the organizational context and improving implementation, a co-reflection session with 24 service designers was hosted. The session took 1 hour and consisted of 6 parts: a recap of the ShowKooS presentation, an energizer, 3 short assignments in teams and a concluding discussion with all participants. The findings from the co-reflection session have been discussed in chapter 6.2. Through the co-reflection session, KooS' current positioning, design and timemanagement, project approach and knowledge and skills were identified as barriers to inclusion of context exploration in the design process, and increasing the implementation of projects. Based on the scope of this project, the project approach has been identified as main focus. The positioning, time management and skills and knowledge will be further discussed in the strategy (9.1) and recommendations (9.2).

In order to empower others to act on the vision, the organizational context framework has been created as a backbone of KooS' implementation approach. This framework should serve as a visual reminder for service designers to become more organizational context aware. Additionally, the context exploration Miro board serves as an artefact to help enact the framework and keeping an overview of organizational context insights and implications.

## 6 | Formulate and generate short term wins

By creating short term wins early in the change process, you can give a feel of victory in the early stages of change (Kotter, 1995).

9.2 Recommendations for next steps

## 7 | Build on the change

Achieve continuous improvement by analysing the success stories individually and improving from those individual experiences (Kotter, 1995).

9.2 Recommendations for next steps

## 8 | Institutionalize the change

Discuss the successful stories related to change initiatives on every given opportunity. Ensure that the change becomes an integral part in your organizational culture and is visible in every organizational aspect (Kotter, 1995).

9.2 Recommendations for next steps

Due to the fact that step 6 couldn't be finished within this projects' approach, logically, step 7 + 8 were also not considered feasible during this thesis assignment. Building on the change and making it stick requires KooS' service designers to experiment with the Miroboard and make themselves familiar with the framework. As explained in chapter 8, the Miroboard serves as an artefact that should enable designers to enact a new routine. However, it is key that designers learn from using the artefact, and accordingly iterate upon this routine and make it their own. From experimenting with the initial Miroboard presented in this thesis, first successes may be achieved and weaknesses in KooS' implementation approach may be identified, leading to new objectives for change.

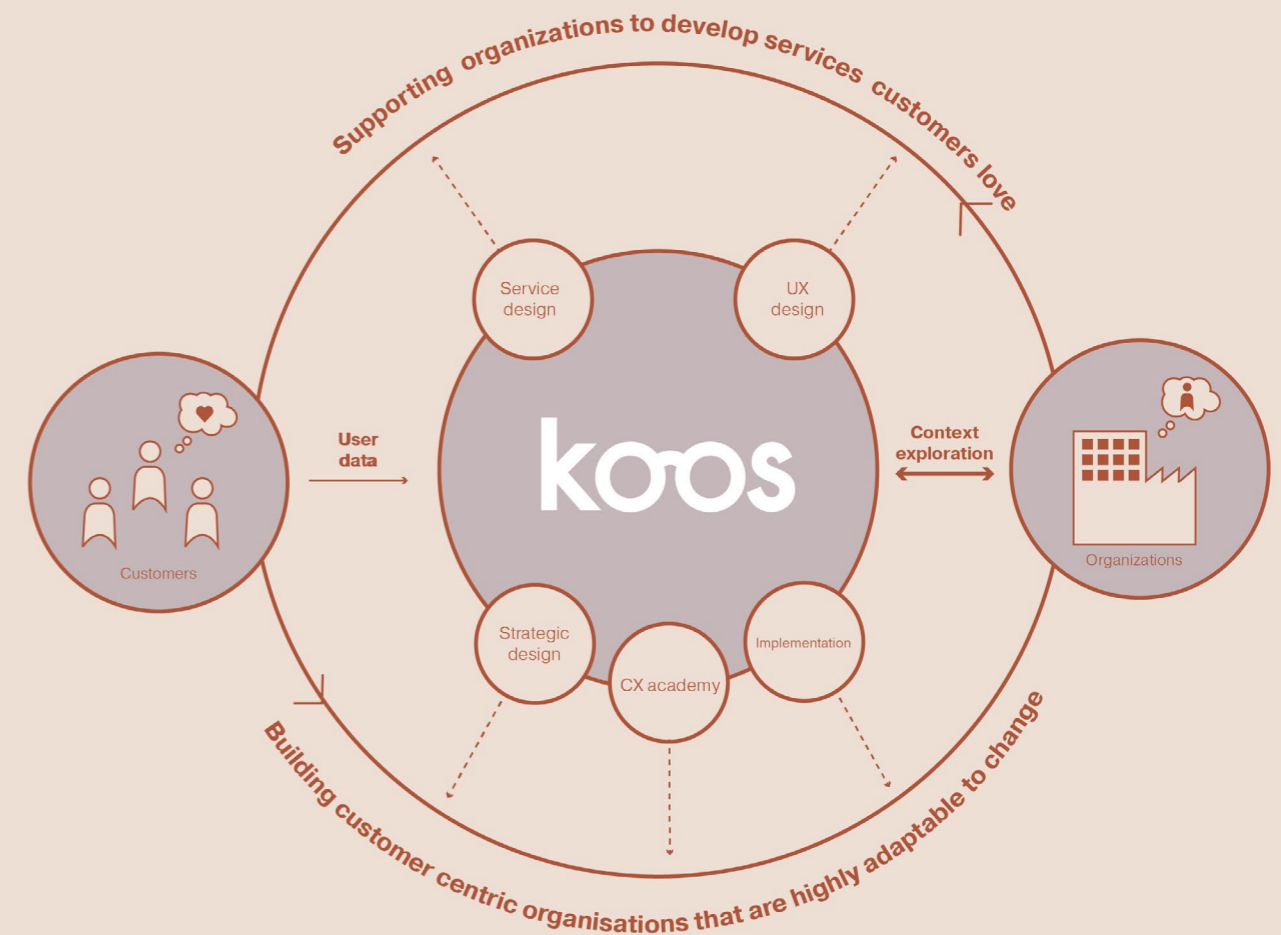


Figure 25 | Adapted version of the visual in chapter 2.1 representing KooS' current proposition. Through this visual, it is communicated that transformation is no longer seen as something to "sell" as an offer, but something that results from implementation of SD/UX projects, the CX academy and strategic use of design combined.

## 9.2 Recommendations for next steps

The previous chapter has explained how the main outcome is not necessarily the framework or the Miro, but rather the fact that a change process has started within Koos. However, it has also been explained that step 6, 7 and 8 of Kotter's (2005) change model have not been considered feasible to solve within the timespan of this thesis. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the recommendations for further development. The recommendations are based upon continuous validation throughout the project and 3 dedicated validation moments in which the outcomes of this project have been discussed with the 2 main stakeholders, 2 of Koos' employees most experiences with organizational change and 1 external change management expert. Furthermore, the outcomes of the co-reflection sessions in chapter 6 resulted in a set of 4 barriers designers foresee if they imagine designing with more focus on implementation and taking the organizational context into account. For the design phase of this thesis, improving the project approach was considered most suitable. However, the other barriers: the skills, time management and strategy, should also be addressed in order to create lasting change. These barriers are considered throughout this chapter.

### Formulate and generate short term wins

Since the objective of this thesis is to increase the likeliness and success of implementation for service design projects, the most logical short term win would be to validate if projects in which the organizational context is considered through application of the framework have actually successfully been implemented. As concluded from the initial interviews in chapter 2.4, Koos normally does not ever hear if a project has been implemented, unless a client happens to

come back for a follow up. In order to validate implementation effects, it is necessary that Koos checks up on finished projects after (at least) a few months. For the validation, it is important to do further research into how implementation effects can successfully be "measured". One suggestion is to use the organizational context data gathered in the Reflection Miro as a "baseline" measurement of what the organizational context elements looked like before and during the project, and compare this to the strategic goals defined in the project brief. This is similar to the suggestion by Klitsie (2018) to measure transformation (see chapter 3.1).

### Build on the change

As already mentioned in previous chapters, the Miro board is meant to be seen as a living document, and both the template itself, the meeting rhythm and the meeting approach should be iterated upon based on continuous learning. However, one improvement that can already be suggested is to identify and test exploration tools that might help understand each individual organizational element. For example, it has been suggested during the validation session to start making process maps in order to understand the processes and structure of client organizations better. It is recommended to start experimenting with tools like these, share experiences and make sure all tools known are gathered somewhere in a list that is accessible to all Koos' designers. One designer mentioned, during the co-reflection session, that there is already a lot of knowledge and experience among Koos designers, but they often just do not have an overview of what tools or knowledge is already present and known.

### Institutionalize the change

In order to institutionalize the change, it has to be ensured that other necessary changes in the organization are made in order to enable the new situation to perpetuate (Kotter, 2005). The findings from the co-reflection session pointed out that in order to do so, the project approach, skills and knowledge, agenda and time-management and the overall strategy have to be aligned with the increased focus on implementation.

### Project approach

Optimizing the project approach was chosen as the focus of the design phase of this thesis. As a result, the organizational context framework and the organizational context reflection Miro have been designed in order to experiment with a more reflective and flexible project approach. Awareness of the importance to include the organizational context from the start of the project onwards, the need for more flexibility and guidelines on how to approach the continuous reflections are expected to successfully make a first step towards an optimized project approach. However, more changes to Koos' current project approach are needed in order to enable service designers to design for implementation.

One of the recommendations that resulted from co-reflection in chapter 6 is to reconsider the roles within service design teams. Multiple designers mentioned it might be good to make more specific guidelines for the tasks you have being a designer and the tasks you have being a consultant. In line with this, it might be good to standardize project roles, which give every team member a specific focus, e.g.: one team member that is specifically responsible for the alignment between the bigger,

strategic objectives of the clients' organization. Additionally, the current role of the account manager is not being leveraged enough. Account managers express they are often not kept in the loop on the details of the project, so that they cannot have strategic conversations with the client to optionally change the project approach mid-way the project. In order to establish what different roles might be needed, critical reflection of the current roles and analysis of past projects is needed.

Additionally, service designers expressed the need to have more guidance in the different possibilities of setting up the kickoff meeting in order to more effectively retrieve implicit information on the goals and objectives of the client, and explore the organizational context of the client. The organizational context reflection Miro offers a set of questions that could inspire service designers to ask different questions. However, more specific research on this topic and gathering existing experiences and approaches of Koos' service designers in one, shared place is recommended in order to properly define an optimized kick-off approach.

### Skills

In order to make sure all required skills for implementation and organizational change are there, Koos should make sure to extend the skill set of service designers through experimentation and training. From the co-reflection session and validation sessions, service designers and stakeholders pointed out that currently, there is limited understanding of what questions to ask and what tools to use in order to effectively explore the organizational context. The organizational



context framework and reflection Miro can be useful in order to create a routine and stimulate the growth of organizational sensitivity among service designers, but additional training is needed in order to further grow the understanding of organizations and business.

#### *Agenda and time management*

During the co-reflection session, it was mentioned multiple times that Koos' current time management does not allow for exploration of the organizational context. The fact that projects can only be strictly halftime or fulltime and the fact that projects are planned so tightly upon each other does not allow for spending time on context exploration, reflection and changing the project approach. Since exploration of the organizational context, reflection and adoption of the approach are key for successful implementation, Koos should reconsider how to approach their time management in order to allow for this new way of working. A first step could be to experiment with some "free" hours to explore the organizational context, but as a next step, extra hours have to be included in proposals in order to account for proper exploration, alignment and anchoring of project outcomes.

#### *Strategy*

Designing for implementation, organizational change and eventually transformation does not only mean Koos has to change its proposition, but also other aspects of its strategy. One of the things mentioned in the co-reflection session was the fact that there is currently little incentive to spend hours on context exploration or reassuring that project outcomes can be implemented. This

is something that Koos should align its own KPI's and incentive structure with. Secondly, it was mentioned by one of the interviewed experts in chapter 2.4 that in order to be able to form strategic partnerships that last over a long period of time, Koos should reconsider its business model. Now, the main business model is focussed on design teams working full-time on short projects, whereas organizational change and transformation ask for involvement and coaching over a longer period of time. This might ask for new business models that allow Koos employees to be detached to work within a client's organization for a longer period of time.

#### **Roadmap**

In order to show how the different recommendations should be considered over time, a roadmap had been created (See figure 26, page 114). The roadmap consists of 3 horizons. In the first horizon, Koos can experiment with the framework and the Miro reflection tool offered in this thesis. By doing this, Koos can learn about organizational contexts and what it takes to generate lasting organizational change for implementation. Secondly, this will give insight in how to adapt the approach and what resources to invest in, in order to strengthen Koos' implementation and change ability. Positive results from increased focus on implementation can be used to communicate the effectivity of service design for customer-centric change in order to increase credibility. In the third horizon, the next step will be to adopt the approaches and skills in order to start orchestrating multiple change initiatives throughout organizations in order to guide top-down and bottom-up transformation activities.



Figure 26 | 3 Horizons towards Koos' ambition of building customer-centric organizations

# 10

## **Concluding the project**

This chapter aims to reflect on the assignment, the strategic relevance of the project and from a personal perspective.

## 10.1 Discussion

*The original design brief formulated by Koos did not include a problem. Rather, there was the assignment to improve Koos' maturity model. However, the overall goal was to find a way to make concrete transformation offers, so that Koos can make more impact through guiding organizations through centric transformation. Through initial interviews, a problem was identified in a surprising direction. Rather than a problem related to weaknesses in Koos' current maturity model, the problem that presented itself turned out to be of a higher order, concerning misalignment between Koos' mission (making more positive impact through design, of which organizational transformation was regarded an important aspect) and the actual abilities Koos has to generate lasting change and implementation of projects. Therefore, the problem was defined as a question in the following problem statement: "What does Koos need to do differently in order to enable organizations to become more customer-centric through service design, in order to form a more strategic, long-term collaboration with clients?". In this section, the results of this thesis will be critically discussed.*

### Discussion of the initial assignment

Through extensive research, an opportunity gap was identified that could help Koos to both start making a first direction towards helping organizations in customer-centric transformation efforts, while at the same time also increasing the impact Koos can make with any project they already do: embedding exploration of the organizational context of clients into the standard design approach, in order to deliver project outcomes that are more likely to be implemented and thus make impact. This will both result in

more experience with organizational change for Koos' service designers, more proof of the effectivity of service design in order to resilient through customer-centricity by building up bigger portfolio of implemented projects and give Koos the opportunity to build more long-term, strategic partnerships with clients by identifying relevant follow-up projects by analyzing what root problems organizations might be facing. The importance of this focus on implementation, both in order to live up to the mission of making more positive impact and as a first step towards creating a transformation proposition had not been considered before, and has thus been a blind-spot for Koos that has been revealed through this project.

### Discussion of the design statement

In order to increase Koos' implementation capabilities, it was identified through literature research that a focus on exploration of the organizational context throughout a design process is necessary in order to be able to identify the right problem and find a way to solve that problem right from an organizational perspective. Therefore, the design statement was to design a framework that would stimulate service designers to take the organizational context of their clients into account, and clarify when and how these insights should be used throughout the process. Both the framework and the reflection Miroboard to guide service designers in how to apply the framework have been evaluated very positively by the key stakeholders.

However, a limitation of this study is that the context elements included in the framework and the assignment deemed relevant to include in the

reflection Miro are only based on 4 small case studies. Each of these 4 case studies resulted in such different insights on the relationship between the organizational context and implementation of the projects, that it is impossible to properly compare data and draw significant conclusions on what context elements are most important for implementation. However, the findings were in line with findings from literature and positively validated by change management experts. which is why the findings are still valid.

### Discussion of the approach

As discussed in chapter 1.2 and chapter 9.1, this project has been approached both as a design project using the double diamond model, as well as a change process approached through Kotter's (2005) eight step model for change. The decision to approach the project as a change project was made because initial exploration and literature research pointed out there was a need for a new project approach which would affect the way of working for each of Koos' service designers. As pointed out in chapter 3.5, changing ways of working requires changing people's mindsets and behaviour, which demands a change process rather than just a designer artefact. However, change processes take much time, and it is impossible to completely change a way of working within the scope of one 5-months thesis project. Because of that, it has been decided to go through steps 1 until 5 of Kotter's change steps. This means that actual experimentation with the Reflection Miroboard was not possible within the available time, and thus it cannot be said whether the framework and the Miroboard will have the intended effect on designers' context awareness and the adaptation

of the project approach. Reflecting on that now, it may have been too ambitious to both want to manage a change process and thus e.g. spend considerable amount of time on preparing and hosting activities like the ShowKoos (appendix 9), while also aiming to finish a design project.

## 10.2 Relevance of the project

Since this project had taken many twists and turns, the outcomes of the project have been discussed and validated in a sessions with two main stakeholders from Koos. During the session, the initial assignment, reframed assignment and the final outcomes of this project have been discussed in terms of relevance. This chapter will discuss the outcomes of the validation.

### Initial vs reframed assignment

As explained in chapter 1.2 and 9.1, the main result of this project had been the identification of a major blindspot for Koos, leading to reframing of the assignment. Where the initial assignment was fully focussed on the maturity model, how it could be improved and how it could be made into a tool that could help servitize the transformation offer, the initial exploration led to the insight that it might

not just be clients that want to increase their design maturity, but also Koos needs to become more mature in its design approach if designers want to have a transformative effect in organizations. This difference in how the problem was framed initially, and how it was approached eventually is shown in figure 27. The main stakeholders expressed that the identification of this blind spot is huge, because increasing Koos' capabilities and becoming more mature as a design consultancy will make a lot of impact. The ways in which this project adds direct and indirect value will be further discussed in the following sections.

### Making more impact through service design

Koos' mission is to make positive impact through design. However, in the initial interviews in chapter 2.4 it was identified that many of Koos'

projects end up not being implemented, which is problematic because that means they do not make much impact. Therefore, increasing the likeliness of implementation through exploring the organizational context does not only solve the problem of this thesis regarding the first steps towards the transformation proposition, but also enables Koos to live up to their new mission.

### Creating more opportunities for strategic partnerships

As concluded from literature in chapter 3.3, implementation most oftenly requires organizational change. However, when clients come to Koos for a certain, specific outcome, this specific contact person might not be the person that can allow Koos to start solving organizational problems that were not part of the initial brief. Therefore, this gives Koos the chance to make sure they adapt their project outcomes to the existing organizational context so that the outcomes can be implemented, and then use the insights on the deeper, root problems the organization might face regarding customer-centricity in order to contact the client for follow-up projects. If Koos manages to keep the client coming back for new projects, this can grow into strategic partnerships, which might eventually even become transformation projects.

### Identifying lacking skills and resources for the transformation proposition

At the beginning of this project, Koos had the ambition to do complete customer-centric transformations with clients. However, research in chapter 2 and 3 pointed out that Koos is lacking essential skills regarding implementation and organizational change, which are crucial in order to handle transformation programs. Therefore,

the scope of this project was to increase Koos' understanding of implementation and organizational change. However, designing more for implementation means that Koos will acquire more experience with organizational change. This gives Koos the chance to experiment, and see what skills and resources they might be missing regarding organizational change and transformation on bigger scale.

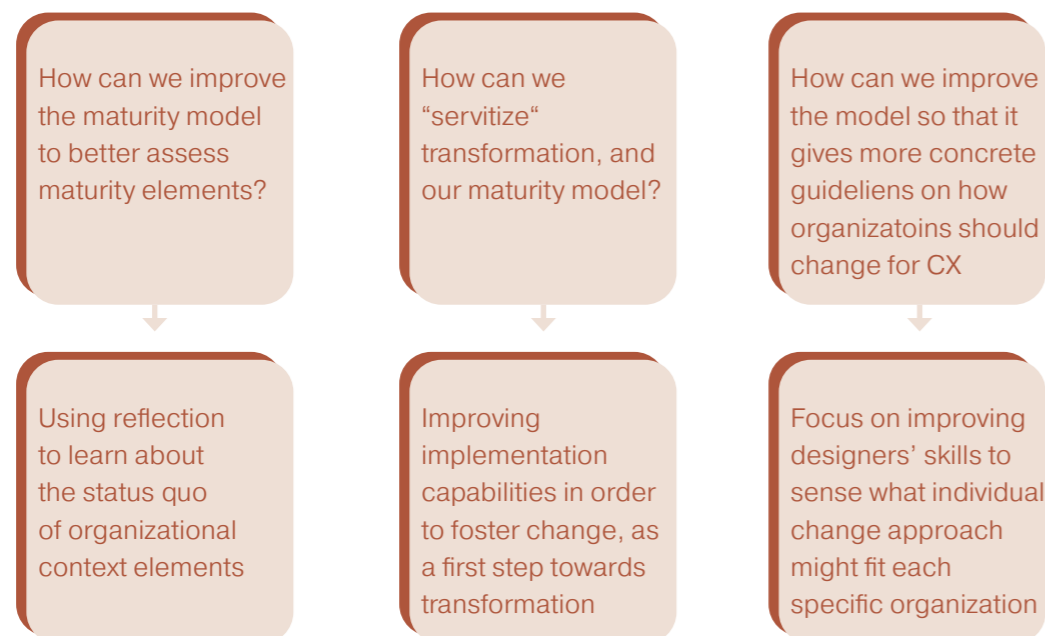


Figure 27 | Above, the old questions representing the initial assignment, and below, the way in which these questions were eventually approached



## 9.3 Personal reflection

*The past year of my master, and thus the elective space of this masters program, has been an interesting one. The plan was to take my electives in Melbourne, and afterwards start my graduation project in September. Never could I have expected my exchange would already end after 5 weeks, forcing me to take my electives in the middle of the night due to the time difference with Australia. Afterwards, I started a graduation assignment in September. However, again the pandemic got in the way because this assignment required lots of physical presence which was not considered realistic seen the second wave of COVID-19. However, I could not have been luckier to have found this project opportunity for Koos only a few days after ending the previous assignment. One of the coolest and most fun design agencies offering an assignment exactly in my field of interest: application of design in order to change and transform organizations. Although it has been quite a tough ride now and then, and the pandemic still has not ended, my graduation project has come to an end. Therefore, the time has come to reflect on the past 6 months and the learnings I got from this graduation.*

### Strategic mindset

Immediately at the start of the project, one of the stakeholders from Koos said: "Please challenge us, and do not do what we asked you to do". I remember feeling pressure from that, because knowing how many time and effort had already gone into the maturity model and the transformation plans, by people who had exactly the same background as I do but then with many years of experience on top of that - how was I supposed to challenge them? However, thinking strategically and reframing projects into unexpected directions had always been one of the aspects of designing that I considered as one of my strengths, so I did want to prove myself

right. Reflecting on the project now, I do feel proud to have identified a blind spot for Koos by questioning the strategic relevance of my initial assignment, and pointing out the importance of focussing on implementation, rather than just improving the maturity model. However, I now realize that I could have been more confident and bold with this finding, bringing me to my next point: trusting intuition and making choices.

### Trusting intuition and owning expertise

Already early on in the project, I got the feeling that there might be more strategically relevant problems to solve rather than improving the maturity model. Therefore, I read a huge amount of literature in all kinds of different directions, in order to back up my feeling with proof. However, by doing that, I have made things unnecessarily difficult for myself. Going so broad in literature caused me to get lost in all possible directions I could take the project. Reflecting on that now, I realize I could have shared my intuitive hypotheses way earlier on, validated them with Koos or other experts, and in that way make choices for the final direction earlier on. Rather than first coming up with an air-tight rationale backed up with proof from literature, I should have trusted more on my own expertise that resulted from all my research efforts and dared to make choices and test them earlier on.

This goes hand in hand with the learning that I should own my expertise more, and dare to speak up. Reflecting on meetings I had with all stakeholders, I realize that sometimes I did not dare to express certain doubts about Koos' strategy, approach or proposition because I felt that that was not my place, being only a graduate student. However, I realized later on that exactly the fact that I had an outside perspective being a graduate student is what is valuable for Koos.

Eventually, not thinking in the same patterns that had already been done by others before me has led me to reveal a blind spot, of which I am proud.

### Making impact

My main criterium for finding a graduation assignment was that I wanted to do something that could make actual impact. I did not want to do lots of research on something that would end up being a pretty, interesting report but would most likely end up on a shelf. Looking back on what I have achieved over the past six months, I feel I have managed to actually change some things at Koos which will stick. It is great to already have heard multiple designers come to me saying that they have used my insights in many ways already. A big compliment was that one of Koos' senior designers, working on a new project aiming to redefine Koos' proposition, said that the fact that I pointed out Koos should be more customer-centric towards their own clients had come up many times. Furthermore, one of the key stakeholders noted that during the yearly strategy days, which were held two weeks ago, all groups mentioned the importance of implementation in their visions. Although I feel I maybe could have done more if I had been more bold, decisive and certain, I am proud to hear that I did live up to my own wish to make lasting impact.

### Working from home

This past half year made me realize how much design is a team sport, and how much I also enjoy the social aspect of design. Being able to discuss, challenge each other and quickly validate thoughts with others is what makes design fun and brings out the best results. Doing research on your own without sometimes sharing thoughts and perspectives makes it more likely to drown in the overload of information, and lose direction.

Additionally, getting to know all stakeholders purely online and understanding the organizational context is not always easy when the only way to quickly ask or validate things is by scheduling a meeting.

The 3 days that I could work at the Koos office made me realize how much more you get done in one day with other designers around to spar with, and how inefficient working on your own in your bedroom is. Although there are endless online communication options, the spontaneity of randomly bumping in to someone or quickly having a coffee together is something that I missed a lot these past months.

### Keeping your cool

There have been a tough couple of weeks in which I completely lost confidence in the project itself, but also in myself as a designer. I got to a point where I did not feel like myself anymore, and got completely overwhelmed. This is something I did not expect, as I have never experienced anything like that ever before. Usually, I am confident of my own abilities, and do not immediately start second-guessing myself when a project gets tough. The fact that this happened to me now first upset me, but I think this has resulted in one of the most valuable lessons of this whole journey. I have learned that keeping yourself healthy, sticking to work-hours as much as possible and not setting unrealistic goals for yourself is the most important thing. If you start blaming yourself and lose your confidence, thinking creatively and coming up with cool results will only become harder.

To future design students graduating in these challenging times, I would like to say: do not be too hard on yourself and take enough time off. A happy mind brings the best results!

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