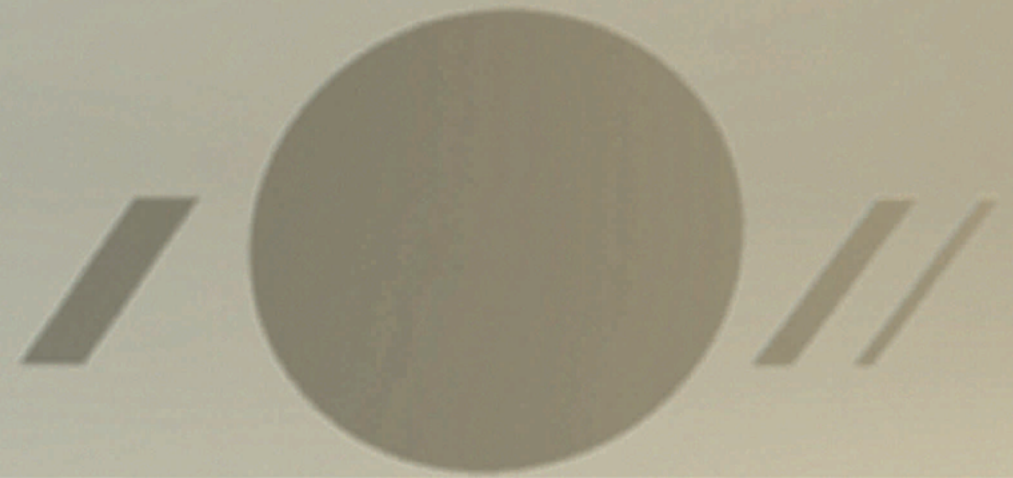# A design perspective on the future of sustainable welfare

David Yepes
OsloMet

A design perspective on the future of sustainable welfare

Master thesis by David Yepes

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Department of Product Design
OsloMet - Oslo Metropolitan University

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Supervisors:
Bente Skjelbred
Nenad Pavel

Abstract

Work and welfare are changing rapidly because of politics, technology, and economics, and the impact of the pandemic has accelerated this process of evolution.

In the future, the quest for purpose in work and the satisfaction of non-material needs is going to be more relevant to people, and welfare institutions should play a massive role on this.

The objective of this project was to explore how in a prospective scenario, the Norwegian welfare institution (NAV), could help people achieve a more complete wellbeing, satisfying material needs as it do now, as well as non-material needs.

To create a design conversation about these scenarios, two prototypes of digital services were developed. The first one, tries constantly to collect information about the general wellbeing of the person that uses NAV services. To achieve this, a set of short questions related to topics like mental wellbeing and motivation, are asked every timetime the person wants to access the digital services of NAV. It is planned that NAV services are going to be centralized in one platform, in which a questionnaire like these can be included to collect this information. The main goal of gathering this information is enabling the institution to track possible problems in the wellbeing of the person. The chance to have this constant monitoring allows the institution to prevent instead of reacting .

Purpose is a key concept for the idea of complete wellbeing. If people are happy doing what they do in their lives, the welfare state becomes stronger. Though purpose is a personal answer of every individual, welfare institutions can help people to achieve it in different ways, being motivation one of them.

In institutions like NAV, long processes like finding a job rely much on keeping motivation, that is why the second service goal is to try to help in this task. The service uses gamification elements to create a visual feedback for the activities the person does. An avatar is created by the person, which is fed by a system of points, in which the person uploads all the activities done daily dependingon the activity, the system and the user grant a certain score to each task. The more points the user gets, the happier the avatar will be, less points equal a sad avatar. The points system work as a visual reward that to remind people of the impact of each task they do in their lives. It is expected that the emotional feedback given by the avatar to the user will help to sustain the motivation to reach the desired final goal.

Abstract

Arbeid og velferd endrer seg raskt på grunn av politikk, teknologi og økonomi, og pandemiens innvirkning har eskalert denne prosessen.

I fremtiden vil søken etter mening i arbeidet og tilfredsstillelsen av ikke-materielle behov bli mer relevant for mennesket, og velferdsinstitusjoner bør spille en massiv rolle i dette.

Prosjektets mål var å undersøke hvordan Arbeids- og velferdsforvaltninga (NAV) i et prospektivt scenario kunne hjelpe folk til å oppnå en større grad av fullstendig velferd og tilfredsstillelse av materielle behov slik det gjør nå, så vel som ikke-materielle behov.

Prototyper av to digitale tjenester ble utviklet for å skape en designsamtale om disse scenariene. Den første prototypen forsøker hele tiden å samle informasjon om den generelle trivselen til personen som bruker NAV-tjenester. For å oppnå dette stiller plattformen noen spørsmål angående mental velvære og motivasjon hver gang personen ønsker å få tilgang til NAVs digitale tjenester. Det er planlagt at NAV-tjenester skal sentraliseres på en plattform, der et slikt spørreskjema kan inkluderes for å samle inn denne informasjonen. Hovedmålet med data innsamlingen er å gjøre det mulig for institusjonen å spore potensielle problemer i personens velvære. Sjansen for å ha denne konstante overvåkingen gjør at institusjonen kan forhindre i stedet for å reagere.

Meningsfylt er et nøkkelkonsept for ideen om fullstendig velferd. Hvis folket er fornøyd med å gjøre det de gjør i livet, blir velferdsstaten sterkere. Selv om hva som er meningsfylt er et personlig svar fra hver enkelt, kan velferdsinstitusjoner hjelpe individer til å oppnå det på ulike måter, der motivasjon en av dem.

Prosessen med å finne en jobb kan være lang, og i institusjoner som NAV er det derfor viktig å holde brukernes motivasjon oppe. Dette er bakgrunnen for den andre tjenestens mål der tjenesten bruker gamification-elementer som gir en visuell tilbakemelding om aktivitetene personen gjennomfører. En avatar blir opprettet av personen, som mates av et poengsystem der personen laster opp alle de daglige aktivitetene, og avhengig av aktiviteten, gir systemet og brukeren en viss poengsum til hver oppgave. Jo flere poeng brukeren får, jo lykkeligere blir avataren, desto færre poeng tilsvarer en trist avatar. Poengsystemet fungerer som en visuell belønning som skal minne individet på virkningen av hver oppgave de gjør i livet. Det forventes at den emosjonelle tilbakemeldingen gitt av avataren til brukeren vil bidra til å opprettholde personens motivasjon for å nå ønsket endelige målet.

Abstract

El trabajo y los beneficios sociales otorgados por el estado están cambiando rápidamente a cause de la política, tecnología y la economía, y el impacto generado por la pandemia ha acelerado su evolución.

En el futuro, la búsqueda de propósito en el trabajo y la satisfacción de necesidades no materiales cobrará mayor relevancia para las personas, y las instituciones de ayuda social deberían tener un rol importante es esto.

El objetivo de este proyecto es explorar como en un escenario prospectivo, el instituto de beneficios sociales de Noruega (NAV), podría ayudar a los ciudadanos a alcanzar un bienestar más completo, mediante la satisfacción de necesidades materiales como se hace actualmente, además de las necesidades no materiales.

Para crear una conversación de diseño acerca de estos escenarios, se proponen dos prototipos de servicios digitales. El primero, trata de recolectar información constantemente acerca del bienestar general de la persona que utiliza los servicios de NAV. Para lograrlo, se le hace a la persona una serie de preguntas cortas relacionadas con bienestar mental y motivación, preguntas que se le hacen al usuario cada vez que desee acceder a la plataforma de NAV. Hay planes de centralizar los servicios de NAV en una sola plataforma, por lo que aprovechando este desarrollo se puede incluir este cuestionario digital. El objetivo principal de poder recolectar esta información es permitirle a la institución detectar posibles problemas en el bienestar de la persona y así poder anticiparse en vez de reaccionar una vez los problemas ya hayan ocurrido.

El propósito o sentido en la vida, es un elemento importante para obtener el bienestar completo. Si las personas son felices en sus actividades diarias, el estado de bienestar se fortalece. Aunque el propósito es una búsqueda personal, las instituciones de beneficios sociales pueden ayudar a las personas en esta búsqueda de diferentes maneras, siendo la motivación una de ellas.

En instituciones como NAV, procesos largos como buscar un trabajo dependen mucho de mantener un cierto nivel de motivación, y ese es el objetivo del segundo servicio planteado en este proyecto. El servicio usa elementos de gamificación para crear una retroalimentación visual de las actividades que la persona hace. El usuario crea un avatar que es alimentado por un sistema de puntos, en el cual la persona anota las actividades que hace a diario y dependiendo de cada actividad, el sistema y el usuario dan un puntaje a cada una de ellas. Entre más puntos anote la persona, el avatar estará más feliz, menos puntos significan un avatar desmotivado. El sistema de puntos funciona como una recompensa visual que le recuerda a las personas del impacto de cada actividad diaria en su vida. Se espera que la retroalimentación emocional que el avatar brinda permita al usuario mantener un cierto nivel de motivación para alcanzar la meta final que se espera.

Ackownledgements

To my family and friends. Thanks for the love and the support.

To my classmates and teachers, whom with a lot of patience explained and translated Norway to me.

Og til Norge, for å være så unik.

Mamá llegamos lejos :)

Larga vida a Diomedes Díaz.

Sdre.

Table of content

Introduction

For some time, I have become passionate about politics, economics, and the functioning of the public system and how government could help citizens live a better life. Since coming to Norway, I started to blend all those interests with my work as designer.

The welfare state of the Scandinavian countries is an example of how governments should take care of its citizens and put them and their wellbeing as a priority. Of course, Norway being a country with a big wealth and a small population can create a strong net to support its citizens, but beyond the availability of resources, there is a will by government and society to take care of its people.

I would say the research for this project has been done in the 2 years of duration of the masters. Researching about integration of immigrants into the labor market in Norway, working with one of Oslo's district in trying to use design as a social development tool, and finally this work with NAV,

that started in 2020 in the Design for Complexity class, and in which the collaboration of Andrés, Elaheh, Camilla, Linda, Silje, Tore and Birger, led to a number of interesting discussions and work around what is the present state of welfare in Norway and what its future should be and what role could design play in all this.

One thing I would highlight from Norway is the real openness to innovation. Before arriving here, I never imagined that designers could play such an important role in the development of better public institutions. NAV is one of the biggest institutions in Norway, and even with the economic, political and social importance it has in the country, it is amazing to see that there are designers working to re-think it and help it evolve.

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country, it is amazing to see that there are designers working to re-think it and help it evolve.

The project became a little bit more reflective because of the lockdowns and the difficulties that created in communication with other people. Still, valuable discussions from last year and this one, and my personal experience working with NAV as an intern at Oslo Kommune, helped to gather a lot of information that helped in the construction of the project.

This also created the need to find new ways to develop the project, as the usual participatory resources and methodologies were not possible to be used in its traditional way, new solutions emerged.

Methodology and ethical standards

The project was based mostly on literature research and interviews done through digital channels. Given the conditions of the lockdown and the difficulties that brought to the project, those were the most suitable methods to develop the project. This led to the elaboration of two concepts of digital services. For one of them it was possible to receive feedback through testing with one user, while the other got an assessment through showing images and a description of how it worked.

For all the interviews conducted on this project, no personal data or information of the interviewees was stored, and their names and participation were stated in the project document with their consent. For the prototype testing no personal data was asked neither stored.

Research question

From a design perspective, how the Norwegian Welfare Institution (NAV), can measure and satisfy non-material needs of the people that uses its services in a prospective scenario?

CHAPTER 1
THE FUTURE OF WELFARE:
DESIGN & THEORETICAL RESEARCH

How did the project started?

The idea for the project started with the course Visualization of Complexity, held by OsloMet and AHO in the autumn of 2020. During the course, a collaboration with NAV was held, in which we discussed how to use the ongoing job crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic to think the way NAV performs its tasks.

Through literature review, discussions about the present and future of NAV and welfare in general, we focused on all the complexities that surround the welfare system in Norway and the impact the pandemic had on it, with special attention to the relation the institution has with its users, especially young people, as they are the ones entering the workforce and the future NAV users.

How the Covid pandemic is transforming the job market?

Human work has evolved through intellectual, technological, technical, economic, and political advancements of humanity. What we do and how we do it has changed constantly with certain times in our history in which those changes accelerate.

One can talk about the industrial revolution, the World Wars, the appearance of mass communications channels like internet, and now with globalization and technological advancements like AI we are starting to see a very rapid change in labor around the world, change that was boosted even more because of the pandemic.

Industries like service and retail stopped almost completely, while industries that were dependent on technology were able to adapt and continue during the pandemic period. According to data from OECD, 14% of jobs are at risk because of automation (Scarpetta et al., 2021), number that has a bigger impact in low-educated workers, but there is also a big number of high-skilled

works that are starting to be at risk because of the arrival of AI (Lane et al., 2021).

But other reports suggest the contrary, that in fact automatization of jobs is not going to replace human labor in the short term (Economist, 2021). Sales by one of the largest automatization companies in the world declined as well as the import of such machines to the US in the last year.

Some people have called out those reports about AI destroying jobs as propaganda to induce fear on machine development inside labor markets (Economist, 2021). The fact is that automatization of many jobs seems still a long-distance goal; even when the technological advances increase by the day, adjusting these machines to the specific needs of many economic sectors, as well as the big investment that buying these robots implies for companies, can make this transition to automatic labor more distant than it appears. Only time will tell which predictions will become true.

Independently of the speed of job automatization, we are seeing changing times in the labor market as it has happened previously in human history, which means the end of some types of works and the creation of new ones. But during this process, the possibility of thousands or millions of people losing their jobs and having difficulties to find new ones or get the education to get a new work is a challenge that could create social instability.

Governments and policy makers should create the environment for a good transition for most people. A collaborative work between universities who educate the youth, welfare systems supporting people when they become vulnerable, and policy makers creating strong laws and policies that defend the wellbeing of citizens, is imperative for creating a sustainable future for work.

In the immediate term, because of the pandemic there will be also changes in the work conditions. When society was forced to close and many people lost their jobs and students coming out of universities find a hard time to get one, our perception of how we perceive work will change as there will be a sense of gratitude for many that can secure their current job or land a new one.

The pandemic also showed us the importance of those so called "front line workers", jobs that before were considered "second class", maybe because they did not require big studies or because of their poor return in wages, but the resignification of many of those activities could create a new way in which people perceive different activities (Grant, 2020).

Wellbeing of employees as well as equality in work will become highly appreciated. There is a stronger feeling among company leaders about the importance of sharing benefits because this can increase productivity in the workplace as there will be a sense of appreciation and equality among employees, but also for employees there is a stronger power while choosing a place to work. Companies must offer good work conditions to employees if they want to retain their talent (Grant, 2020).

Currently in the United States there is a huge public discussion about the difficulty to recruit new employees in different economic sectors as many open positions remain vacant, which, some believe will harm the recovery of the US economy after the pandemic.

Some political and business leaders argue that this shortage of workers is caused by the monetary help that the government started to give to people because of the lockdowns, which cause that many Americans do not feel the need to go to work as they can cover their basic needs with that money they receive from the government. Other people argue that this type of help just showed how poorly remunerated labor was in the US.

This type of discussion has its origins in the idea that governments taking care of people make them lazy and they stop working because they have enough money to buy food and pay rent. This of course is another type of culture and discussion than the one that exist in Norway around work and welfare, but it opens a question that is universal: is money the only priority we have when we go to work?

Work as a human need

Manfred Max-Neef, proposed in the 1980's a definition of basic needs that we have as humans living in a mostly modern capitalistic world. These needs are pretty much the same for all the humanity, but the way they are satisfied changes between countries and cultures (Max-Neef et al., 1989).

Many of the ways in which we measure growth in modern societies, are based on numeric models measuring things like GDP or power of consumption by people, but other indicators that focus more on the overall wellbeing of people have been overlooked.

In this wellbeing, employment has a big role to play. Long periods of unemployment might create feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, and marginalization (Max-Neef et al., 1989). Often, unemployment is related to the flows in economy, but when situations outside the economic spectrum like fast automatization or a global pandemic generate a critical point, unemployment stops being an issue of economics and becomes a problem that should be solved from an interdisciplinary perspective (Max-Neef et al., 1989).

The pandemic affected people's work life in many ways. For some, it was a time to take a break from stressful or boring routines, for others a time to reflect on their careers and look for a change, and for others it created a negative feeling as they were not able to attend their daily routines. As Max-Neef mentioned in his human needs scale, work has different values to human life beyond the economic retribution.

Societies in which there is a fair economical retribution for the work done by its citizens and choose to focus also on those non-monetary factors of work, could help people achieve their personal purpose. Purpose is one of those personal and very abstract questions that humans have asked to themselves for centuries, and in the modern society, even when money and consumption have become the main objective in life of the general society, the question remains, and its answers could help in the development of better welfare systems for the future.

How do people understand welfare?

As a society we had to endure many types of crisis during our existence. At the current moment it is a global pandemic that has stopped a big portion of the world for almost two years, but for example the crash of global markets in 2008 or the constant instability in oil prices show us that economic and social crisis like those can come very quick and be very common.

In a more connected world than ever, a local crisis quickly can become a regional, continental, or global one, so as society we must ensure that we are ready to be prepared for the next large-scale crisis.

But in terms of unemployment, how can we be prepared for a big and rapid loss of employments like the one we had during this pandemic, also, how can we start to get ready for the slow but steady change that automatization and AI bring.

Norway, as every other country in the world, saw a surge in the unemployment rates of its population due to the impact of the pandemic in the normal development of economic activities.

This led to an increase in the number of people seeking assistance from NAV, many who had previous experience with the institution and others that were being laid off for the first time and because of the circumstances had their first experiences with Nav during this time of crisis.

This variety of personal backgrounds and visions of what NAV is and how it should work, appeared in a report made by the NAV design team in summer of 2020.

In the report, called "Koronaledige-Historiene Bak Tallene" (Lerfald et al., 2020), Nav showed the cases of some users and how their personal situation with the institution at that moment was, what led them to look for help to NAV and what outcome they were expecting.

Although it did not contain a high number of responses, the detail of its data can help us paint a very detailed picture of the thoughts of the people about the Norwegian safety net during the pandemic time.

First, people have different levels of trust in Nav. As people have very different types of relations with Nav, depending

on their personal situation and the help they are asking to the institution, the opinions this creates about the system are mixed.

For some people with good income and good savings, Nav became more of a burden than a real help. To go through its requirements to receive the unemployment benefits was a liability for some.

Others just were more focused on their personal problems, whether to rethink their careers, find a new job or retain their current one, and were not thinking too much about Nav and its requisites. Others did not trust completely how the system work and were just there to get the help offered by the state.

The mixed opinions about the experience with Nav are caused by many different factors that are in Nav's control, but also, they highlight the uniqueness of each case.

A tour guide working for a travel agency that need to rethink his career after losing his job because of the pandemic does not have the same necessities as a middle-class woman that let the government know that she was unemployed but has enough savings for some time, or as a refugee woman with two kids trying to integrate into the society and the labor market during the pandemic times.

So, how a welfare system can respond in the best and most efficient way to all these types of different needs?

The fifth social revolution: The need to rethink welfare.

Social designer Hillary Cottam has proposed that currently we are experiencing a fifth technological revolution, and therefore she has suggested the idea of a fifth social revolution in response to the social and ecological issues we are facing today. This concept, she describes, asks for the transformation of many current paradigms we have now in our society, like work and education (Rawsthorne, 2020).

This goes in hand with the call made by several figures in the economic, technological, and productive sector around the world about the need to rethink our capitalistic model of society, a creation of more equal opportunities for people, better labor conditions and stronger welfare systems.

Cottam mentions that design has an important role to play in the shifting of these paradigms in our society, both as creatives and enablers of creativity. She also mentions four groups of actors that combined need to take part in this change. The first, she called them organic intellectuals, which are people inside and outside of the academy that have ideas that can connect people.

The second group, organized civil society, are movements organized around different causes all over the world. They can vary from groups demanding racial equality, labor unions asking for better working conditions, or groups of young people demanding actions to mitigate the environmental damage we are causing on the planet.

A third group of people are the new industrialists. According to the author, these are people in the head of big businesses that have understood that some change is needed. These ideas of change have very different reasons behind them, some are because of philanthropic ideas, some are caused because companies believe that a better wellbeing of employees means more productivity and more growth to their business. In both cases, according to the author, this group of people should be part of the conversation about changing those paradigms.

Finally, she mentions the fourth stakeholder, the government. Agreements made in different sectors of the society should be enabled and supported by the policies designed by the government. This is where parts of the functioning of the government like the welfare system come to play. The author mentions that the idea behind these fifth social revolution is to enable a sustainable growth for the society, in which there is a connection inside communities between people and the environment.

All this was highlighted in the pandemic; the need to make welfare safety nets bigger to tackle inequalities, but also to think further and make these structures big enough to allow people the possibility to grow.

In time, if governments give all the elements to people for them to grow, welfare state can be more resilient to crisis like the one faced during the pandemic. Allowing people to follow and achieve their personal purpose can create a stronger welfare system. So, how a welfare system can respond in the best and most efficient way to all these types of different needs?

Purpose as a creator of resilience in welfare

While reviewing the human needs postulates by Alfred Max-Neef, we touched slightly those other elements beyond money that make work an important part of human existence.

But what if those elements are not only important for humans as individuals but are also key for the collective growth of society?

Purpose is one of the ideas around the social revolution proposed by Cottam. According to her, allowing people to achieve their purpose means stronger welfare systems.

The question of the meaning of purpose is very large. For practical matters we will limit purpose in relation to the activities in our society we consider as work.

We work because we need to earn a living. The consumeristic ideas in our capitalist society have created a fiscal focus on work (Cantone, 2016).

The focus of workplace has been mostly money, which then arises the question if our only objective while going

to work is getting that monetary reward. Some would say that industrialization relieved our material poverty at the cost of spiritual poverty (Cantone, 2016).

But with all the effort made by people on their daily work routines, do they really feel the reward of their work? Some people claim that modern work environment is not that positive, as stability and longevity no longer exist in many job positions (Cheney, 2007).

While consumeristic behavior still drives most of the choices we made in our career and we live with fear of unemployment because it poses a risk to our wellbeing, more people now think about unemployment also as a moment of pause in which we can have an opportunity to re-think our careers (Cheney, 2007).

A big crisis like the Covid pandemic can be also a big call to stop and ask questions. The way we see work is one of those questions that are being asked around the world as many people lost, changed jobs, or experienced work in a different way. We found that work, beyond its monetary value, is also something that help us connect to something bigger than our personal goals.

Research mention four main non-material attributes that can help us understand that other side of work: The sharing of individual and collective purpose, the act of balancing work and values, the unity with colleagues and the good relationship with customers or people outside our normal work environment. These four elements are what create the idea of meaningful work (Cheney, 2007).

That meaning in work can be categorized in two moments: an interior and an exterior one. The exterior is the impact we have on society with our work, while the interior is the personal development we have when we do the tasks in our job (Cheney, 2007).

And although meaning is subjective, the working system should help the person to be able to identify those meaningful contributions that create the sense of purpose. If a worker can recognize the impact and significance of its actions in work, purpose and meaning and therefore wellbeing will be easier to reach for the person.

If purpose in the life of people is a key element for having a strong welfare system, how to achieve it? And, if people do not know where to find for purpose, what can the welfare system do to help?

No employment and no purpose

Cheney mentioned that unemployment can become a moment of reflection to re-think a career and find a new direction.

But what happens when there is no purpose, no job and nowhere to find both? Extreme cases like these can help to understand the abstract and complex situations of this purpose-job-welfare relation and help in the creation of tangible solutions for the problematics.

As with the pandemic and the lockdowns, and not working completely together with Nav, it became hard to find people in a situation whom I can talk to understand all these abstract concepts in a more realistic way. That is why instead I chose to review the news to look for those stories. One thing I found positive of the journalism in Norway compared to other countries is that it can have a more personalized focus, as the size of the population is not big in the country, the news often can be developed around few key people.

That is why I made a review of the newspapers, trying to find unemployed people that shared their stories with the media to use that information to connect the theory with the reality. As the unemployment situation can be analyzed from many different angles, I searched for stories that tried to focus less on the material issues that unemployment brings and more into the non-material problems attached to not having a job.

First, the case of Sabina, a student from Lyngdal going to Bergen to start her studies in the middle of the pandemic in 2020. The lockdown and the government order to study from home affected her ability to socialize, which also affected her focus on studying and her daily routines (Fløo, 2020).

Although there are no further details on her story apart from her stating that she wants to persevere for some time, it allowed us in the first part of the research last year to set the foundation of a story with our colleague Camilla Dahl, Nav worker who knew similar cases in different contexts.


Studentar kjenner seg einsame: – Eg veit så vidt namna på dei eg studerer med

Både studentpsykologen og helsestasjon for ungdom fortel om auka pågang i haust. Førsteårsstudent Sabina Abrahamsen (24) i Bergen seier at situasjonen ikkje går i lengda.

Julianne Fløo
Journalist

Publisert 22. sep. 2020 kl. 14:00

The story of Sabina, which showed how vulnerable youth can be in these crisis-type situations.

In a short film made about the story, the character studying away from home and not having friends and job, tries to continue while her mental health deteriorates because of the stress. Nav intervene with the usual rhetoric of taking people back to work, but finally the depression and sadness originated in her loneliness, causes that she cannot comply with Nav mandates to keep receiving help and must quit her studies.
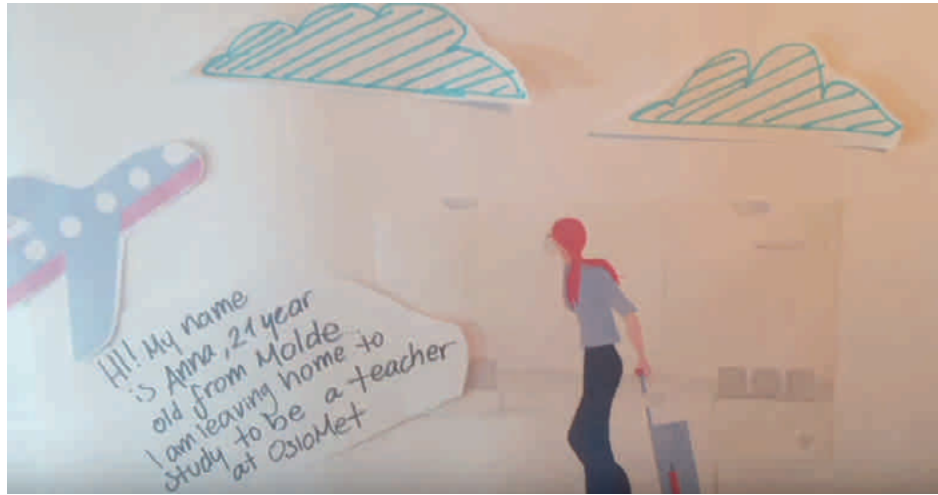
Some frames of the story of Anna, which was inspired by the case of Sabrina and other stories that have happened inside Nav. Showing the cases in this way highlighted problematics in different moments in the relation between Nav and users like Anna.

This short film of an extreme case helped us understand in a very visual way the importance of the mental factor in relations welfare-citizen. In our movie, the welfare system prioritized the economical part of taking back the person to work, while her emotional condition was restraining her from being able to work and study properly.

While Nav collaborates with mental health services, detection of those problematics can be difficult and sometimes late, which was also a discussion we had with our peers in Nav last year.

A second case, Tor Erlend, a 28-year-old living in Molde and who at the time of the report had been for almost a year without work because of the pandemic, mentions the feeling of being trapped in a bubble, while at the same time not contributing at all to society.

He does many things to stay occupied, from attending courses to helping friends when they need him. In the same report, a representative of Nav is asked for an opinion about the case, and the response is advice to him

to become more attractive to possible employers (Rasmussen & Brunstad, 2021).

Har vært permittert siden april: – Å tvinge fram et smil gjør underverker

MOLDE (NRK): Tor Erlend Kirkhaug elsket jobben sin. Nå lurer han ofte på hvorfor han orker å stå opp i det hele tatt. – Permittering er nedbrytende for mange, sier psykolog.

Idun Aalbu Rasmussen
Journalist

Sissel Beate Brunstad
@SisselBrunstad
Journalist

Publisert 8. feb. kl. 08:01

Tor Erlend story showed that for individuals work is much more than earning money. Also questions the view of work we have as society, only objective of work is to create economical value?

In a situation like these, there are many things to assess. The job market might not feel that his skills are needed at the time, so he must become more attractive as Nav says and change something in his career to please the job market? Is his value to society only measured by the economical input he brings as an employee? Even when

he does a lot of things that generate some impact in his own and others lifes, is not that enough to society because these are not activities that create a monetary retribution?

In Japan, the concept of "Hikkikomori" has become more relevant in recent decades. Hikkikomoris are people that because of different cultural and psychological reasons, isolate themselves completely from the outside world, most of them to the point that they stop going to work completely or barely go out to buy groceries. In the most extreme cases these people die after months or years of loneliness and malnutrition (García-Campayo et al., 2007).

The increase in cases of Hikkikomoris in recent years is a trend that worries Japanese authorities, which are dedicating more resources to help them and are using work as a way to bring them back from isolation. In that case, work has lost any monetary value, the government pays them to do tasks that might be pointless, like repairing books or just playing baseball with other people in similar situation (NHK World Japan, 2021).

This highlights the importance of that central idea in Nav to bring people back to work, although in this extreme case of Hikkikomoris is motivated by other reasons, whereas in most of the welfare systems clearly one could say that economics is the main motivation behind this idea of bringing people back to work.

As we can see, there is a big question there about the value and meaning of work and people's activities, both inside and outside of the general sense of work. Should a welfare system give value to activities a person does, even if they do not generate any apparent economic profit? When dealing with a case, what is considered as success by Nav? What is the meaning of "the safety net bringing back a person to the society"?

The success of Nav

A conversation was held with Gro Magnussen, NAV worker at Bydel Grorud and whom I had the chance to collaborate and learn from while being there as an intern with Oslo Kommune.

Reading the point of view of Nav users about their experience with the institution during the pandemic, I wanted to know the perspective of the person who is working on the field for NAV and must work alongside people to reach the goals set by the welfare system. My main interest was to know both for workers and Nav as an institution, what is considered as a successful case and how the internal procedures of Nav work to achieve that success.

She started by mentioning that the main goal for NAV is to bring back people to work as fast as possible, because she believes that everyone can work and give something back to society, even if it is just working on a 20% basis.
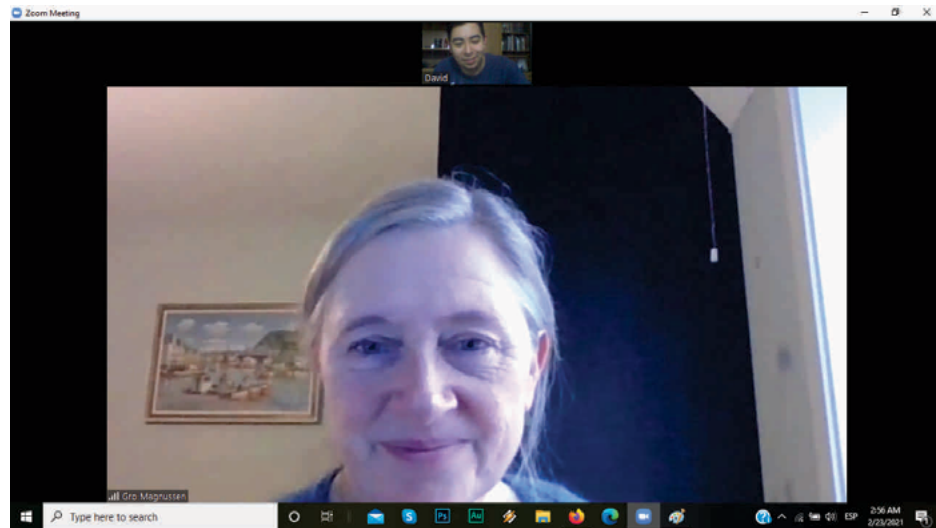
A digital interview with Gro, whom I have the chance to collaborate and learn from. Alongside her, I learnt different aspects of Norwegian welfare and was that work that helped me to be interested in the role of design in public services.

When asked about the procedures inside NAV, she mentioned that case workers can handle between 20 to 300 cases, depending on the experience of the NAV worker. Handling these cases starts with a personal interview, dedicating more time for those who need greater support and trying to make the correct start to the process.

She considers that the introductory questions asked to people are very good, but information can be lost if a case is moved from one case worker to another; also, communication issues might exist between case workers and users, hindering their relation and the co-work they perform to take the person back to employment.

But she acknowledges that it is not an easy task this one-off taking back people to work. Pushing people is difficult, and long periods of unemployment make it harder for people to go back to work.

"Every person that works in NAV, knows that motivation is the prime", she mentions; but sometimes, some case leaders forget this or find it difficult to transmit motivation.

Inside NAV, there is a network of case workers, giving motivation between themselves to keep pushing and stay constant with the work, but frustrations or difficulties in the cases are transmitted to case handlers, and this makes the process more difficult.

Finally, she mentioned that helping people was the big motivator for her when she got into the job. Her motivation since then has remain the same, trying to change lives of people.

Speaking to her, one of the main aspects that got my attention was how she mentioned motivation for both case handlers and users as a very important aspect of the work NAV performs. Also, it felt that the whole fact of taking people back to work was like a long-distance marathon, a race in which people has to stay motivated to achieve a goal that seems very far away and for which they have to persist and keep working without pause.

The policies of the future of Nav

When thinking about the future of Nav, factors like the economic and political factors, both inside Norway and globally should be considered.

One of the biggest points of discussion related to welfare in different countries, which gain a lot of boost during the pandemic, is the universal basic income. In an interview with Kristian Heggebø, researcher on the relations between welfare, health, and society in Norway, he mentioned that the universal basic income should not be seen by politicians as an economical burden, but instead as an upgrade to some of the help schemes that Nav currently offers to people in vulnerable situation.

He points out that in Norway a test should be carried out in the short future to allow researchers and policymakers to understand how this idea of universal basic income could work, and the effects it could have.

Comparing it to the same experiment already done in

The fact that the municipalities hold bigger political powers might influence that, as they can be more autonomous in developing a project like this.

Another point touched in the interview was other type of issues affecting welfare, like the mental health status of people while interacting with Nav, as the current state of the institution might not help positively people all the time. One early result shown by the Finish universal income experiment, was the improvement of overall mental health in people as well as more attachment to the labor market. Again, the experiment being not too ambitious, did not allowed these results to be more conclusive. But during the pandemic, some evidence showed the positive impact of economical support policies in mental health of people.

Another public health crisis, the SARS outbreak in 2003, elevated the rate of suicides in countries like South Korea, tendency that also is common in countries that suffer economic recessions. Many researchers feared that with

the stress and financial insecurity caused by the global pandemic, suicide rates would increase. What preliminary studies have shown, is that in countries that adopted monetary schemes to support its population, suicide rates even went down compared to previous years. In contrast, countries that did not adopt these types of measures found in many cases that suicide numbers increased (The Economist, 2021).

This data highlights the importance for governments to develop welfare related policies that put the wellbeing of people above economic interests or political discussions.

Finally, Kristian mentioned some little concerns about the future of Nav. In a report published by the institution, it is mentioned that they have set a goal of being 15% more efficient by 2030 (NAV, 2019). Of course, there is still a big question of how to achieve that goal in less than 10 years, and what would that mean for Nav users around Norway.

Currently inside Nav, there is a big prioritization of the objective of taking people back to work, so one of the things that according to him should be looked in the

future is giving workers more freedom when deciding their own future.

But overall, his feelings about Nav and its current direction are very positive. According to him, it needs some minor adjustments to make it work even better than how it is performing at the present time.
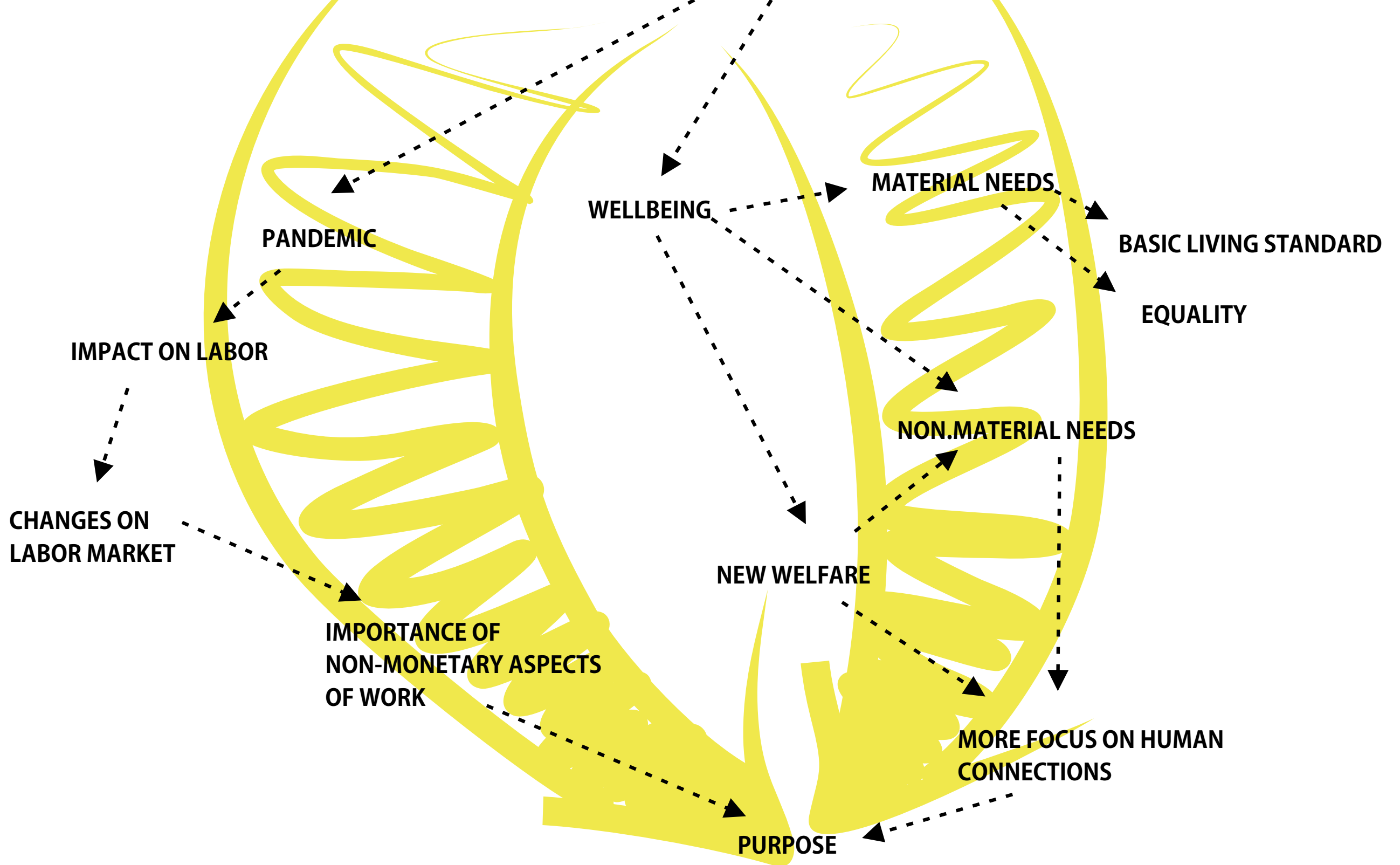
Of course, the future depends on the upcoming new political picture in Norway. In the short time a new head of government will be elected, and whether the actual government or a new one with new ideas come to the power, the results of these elections will have an influence on how Nav will be in the short time future and will also set the context for designers that already work and plan to work in the future with the welfare system of Norway.

So, what are the key points of the future of welfare?

Welfare in Norway

FUTURE

PANDEMIC

WELLBEING

MATERIAL NEEDS

BASIC LIVING STANDARD

EQUALITY

IMPACT ON LABOR

NON.MATERIAL NEEDS

CHANGES ON
LABOR MARKET

NEW WELFARE

IMPORTANCE OF
NON-MONETARY ASPECTS
OF WORK

MORE FOCUS ON HUMAN
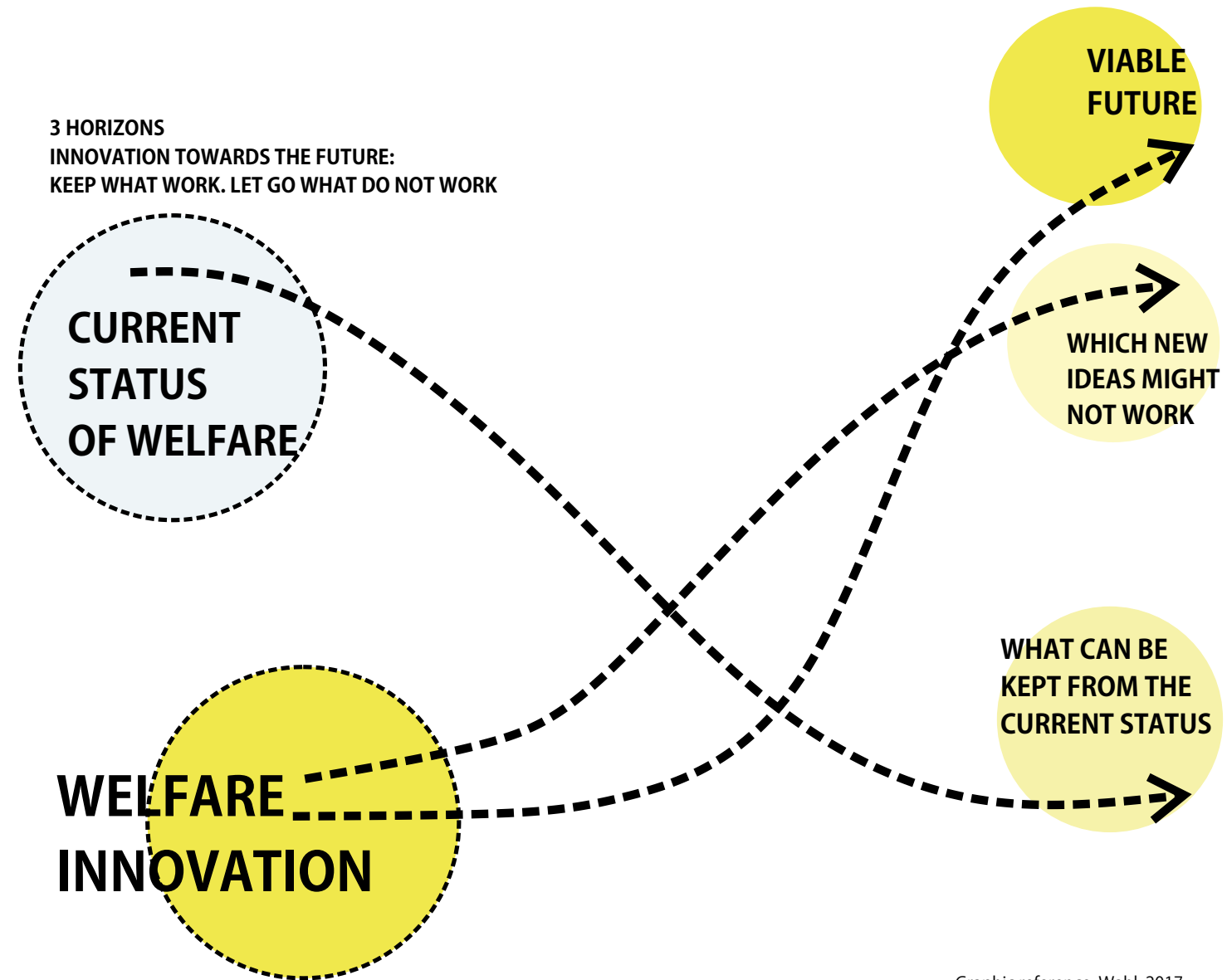CONNECTIONS

PURPOSE

Where we are and where we want to be

We have read and reflected about jobs and unemployment in the pandemic and the future, purpose, and welfare, and we want to do something in Nav with all these elements and research. How do we do it from a design perspective?

The Three Horizons is a framework developed to help create solutions that point to the future based in the present. The main idea of it is to think about the scenario we want to be in the future, the ideal scenario.

We also think about what can take us to that scenario, and finally, in which state are we at the present time and what is worth keeping from the present when thinking about reaching the ideal future scenario (Wahl, 2017).

We are in a moment of pandemic, high unemployment, lockdown, economies recovering, and the ideal scenario, is one of a strong and resilient welfare systems that helps people to achieve purpose to sustain that strength. Now that we know where we are and where we want to be, the exploration for how to go from the present to the future starts.

3 HORIZONS
INNOVATION TOWARDS THE FUTURE:
KEEP WHAT WORK. LET GO WHAT DO NOT WORK

VIABLE FUTURE

CURRENT STATUS OF WELFARE

WHICH NEW IDEAS MIGHT NOT WORK

WHAT CAN BE KEPT FROM THE CURRENT STATUS

WELFARE INNOVATION

Graphic reference: Wahl, 2017

CHAPTER 2
DESIGN & WELFARE:
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Creating changes in the welfare system to achieve to a desirable future can be done in various ways, and as we saw it can be done from the perspective of different disciplines as it is a very complex system. With the goal of delivering a design response to the problematics I found, I decided to focus on two specific topics.

First, the influence mental health has on the relation between users and Nav. With the case of Linda and the movie we made building it from other cases, we found that it is indeed an important need that welfare institutions pay more attention to how the mental wellbeing of people impact in their capacity to fulfill the requirements made by the welfare to get help.

The second point of focus is the purpose conversation. If purpose is so important for creating a strong welfare system, how can design come with a proposal for that matter.

**WELFARE SYSTEM
+DESIGN
+PROSPECTIVE SCENARIO**

· · · · · · · · · ▶

FIRST DESIGN CONCEPT

DEVELOPMENT

The influence of psychological wellbeing in the relation between Nav and its users is clear. Whether is depression that might make it difficult for people to find a sense of direction in their lives or lack of motivation that might make more difficult the process of finding a job.

That is why when we discuss the future of welfare, we talk about complete wellbeing, which means that non-material needs become as important as material ones. Giving money to people should be as important as supporting them mentally and spiritually.

But to achieve these goals, some important questions must be asked before. As it is now, the main goal of NAV is to bring people back to work. This is a metric that is easy to measure: the number of people that need NAV services and the number of people that at the end of a period are involved in a paid activity.

NAV currently works with mental health, especially in youth, collaborating with experts when a specific case needs it, but it is not something that the institution takes charge of.

There are some instructions or tips on how to handle cases of people that are affected by drug consumption (Rus og psykiske helseproblemer (ROP), 2019) and some guidelines about mental health focused to young population from some years back (NAV Drift og utvikling, 2010). But with situations like the one with the COVID pandemic that had an impact on many lives, it becomes a necessity to revisit these guidelines.

But the way Nav intervene in these cases is a reactionary one. Only when a problem has occurred, the institution helps. This is caused by many factors: the fact that some people might hesitate or do not want to ask for help, the lack of resources to follow cases closely (as we have seen

with the number of individual cases a case leader might handle at the same time). So, NAV does the best they can with what they have.

Therefore, the question now is how to create a way in which Nav can act before something happens?

For a person or an institution, to be able to anticipate, there must be an adequate and constant follow up of the situation. If the institution can get enough feedback or data from the situation of a person, it can know when things start to change and therefore anticipate to any problematic situation that might occur.

So, one of the key elements for Nav to be able to anticipate to any situation is the possibility of having a constant monitoring of the state of the person. This of course open multiple questions in different areas.

For example, the privacy issue, what should and can be measured or monitored by Nav and what information should remain out of touch by the institution?

Understanding that because of costs and efficiency there is a tendency in Nav towards digitalization in all its services, how the set-up of the service could be? how a service that asks people about their mental health, which is something very personal, could work in a digital environment?

The set-up

One of the biggest inputs from the research done in Nav is that each problem is individual and unique, and how it is managed, and its solutions should be unique as well. This of course presents big limitations.

In an ideal world, each person that needs help from Nav would have a case leader dedicated just to that case This of course is not possible because of costs and personnel availability. So, when thinking about measuring mental health, reaching the biggest amount of people with less resources is the ideal scenario.

Digital platforms offer this possibility, but this also comes with different challenges. Norway is a country with a high degree of digitalization in its public services. This is done to increase inclusivity in these services, as it becomes easier for a big part of the population to access a specific service through a digital platform. Also, there is the cost convenience, as digital services can be expensive for a

start but tend to be a cheaper solution in the long term. But there is as well a portion of the society that do not have the technological literacy to use these digital services (Kassotakis, 2020).

In a research done in this master for a project about integration of immigrants coming to Norway, one of the aspects found that caused difficulties for people of some places to fully integrate into Norwegian society was the high level of public digital services the country has. Not many countries in the world have yet reached this level of digitalization in their government services, and still rely on physical offices for people to interact with the authorities. When they come to Norway, they face a barrier as they might not fully understand how the digital public system in Norway works.

According to the European Commission, there is still a 9% of the European population that has never used internet, and there is a huge gap between the use of internet between young and elderly population. Just 3% of the

population between 16 and 24 years do not use internet, while 23% of people between 55 and 74 and 26% of people over 76 have never used internet (European Comission, 2020).

Age, language, background, gender, education level, all play an important role in how people can use digital services.

In the Norwegian context the tendency for an increasing digitalization will go further, and NAV as one of the biggest public institutions in Norway is no exemption.

So far, we know that the possibility of a service that checks on general wellbeing of people should have constant interaction with the person to have enough information to prevent any possible issue and it should be digital, as it allows a more convenient way to reach a bigger amount of users.

Getting information from people through digital channels can be done in different ways. Asking people directly about what we want to know, or track everything they do while doing a specific online activity. The second is done by almost all major public and private digital services, but when talking about wellbeing, things should be done transparently, and also to get really good information, the best way is to ask directly to the people what we want to know.

What to ask and how to ask it? When talking about complete wellbeing there are many dimensions and factors that should be taken into consideration. Based on the human needs scale developed by Alfred Mx-Neef, in that moment in the project, I tried to condensate the more relevant factors to welfare: The presence of economical issues, unemployment, mental health, physical health, and motivational issues.

Now the next step was to try to think how to get information about these topics, which can be very different in the way they are measured.

As stated before, the service must ensure constant feedback in time. This can be achieved if the service can make people get attached to it or if they must go through it even if they do not want to it. Dedicating a platform on its own might be one option, but people might not prioritize answering questions about their wellbeing, so they might not be completely interested in participating. The choice of attaching the service to another one that people find more relevant to themselves seems like a better option at this moment of the exercise.

One option that appears suitable is using the ODIN platform (Kassotakis, 2020). This is a project developed by former OsloMet student Michail Kassotakis with the collaboration of Nav and Oslo Kommune.

In this project they developed a digital service that aims to centralize all Nav related activity in one place, so both NAV users and employees could have an overview of the information related to their cases or services in one platform. Education, money, health, all could go in one place, making it more convenient for users that must interact with Nav. This is a project that is still in development.

So having a specific digital service that people should use every time they want to access Nav, can be the ideal place to ask them about their wellbeing every time they want to access it.

ODIN platform (Kassotakis, 2020)

A digital service that aims to centralize the different wellbeing services offered by the state.

Users can have a better control of employment, finance, health, education and housing related issues.
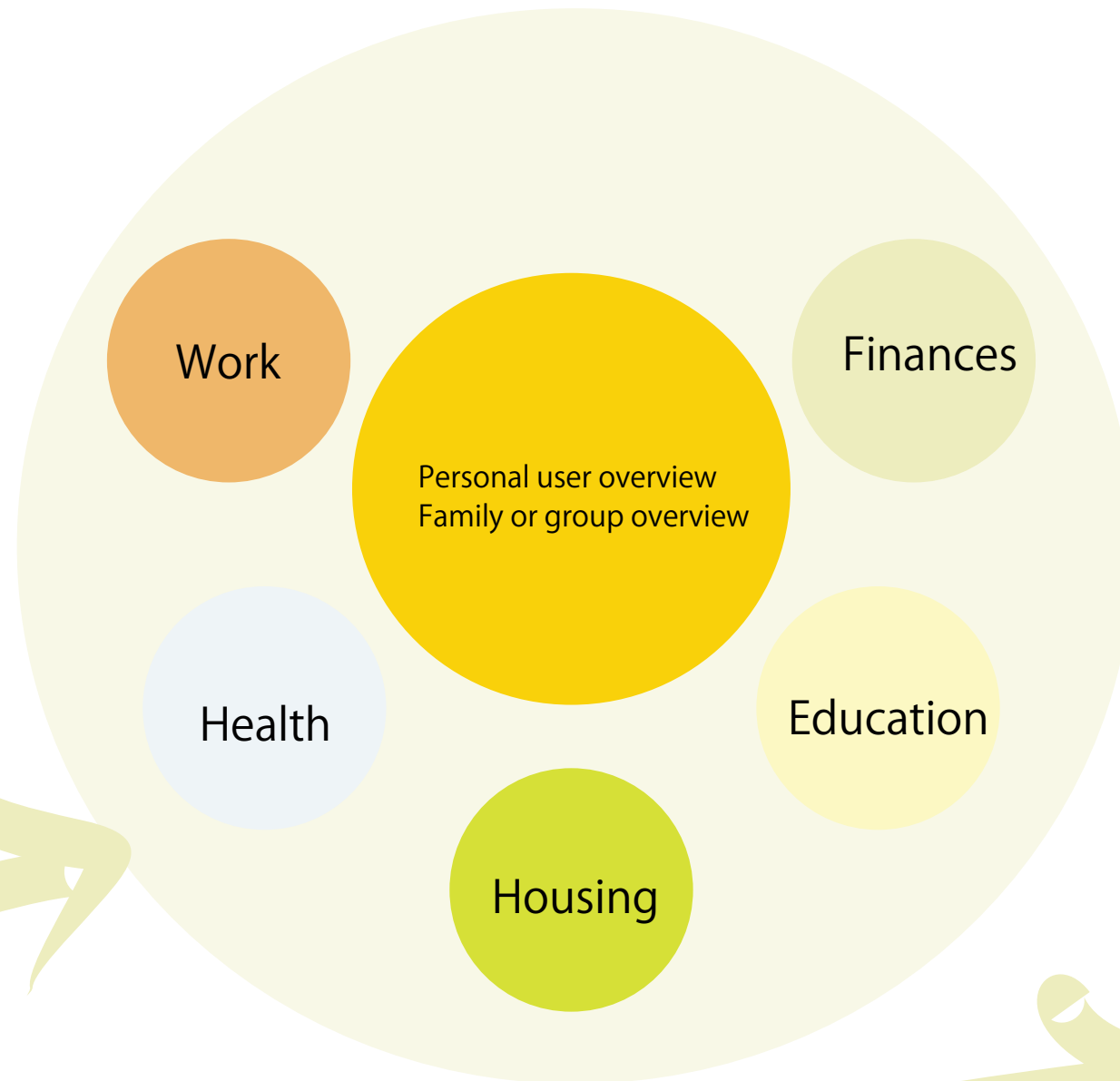
Still under development, will require the coordination of different institutions and services, but will bring a better communication between state and citizens.

Work

Finances

Personal user overview
Family or group overview

Health

Education

Housing

In the future all Nav users will have to go to a place like this to interact with the institution

So, how can it be used to set-up the service I am developing

How to measure wellbeing

We know we must get feedback from people on certain aspects of their wellbeing. So, what are the aspects we are going to measure?

The principal focus of all this were the mental health issues that could undermine people going back to work or concentrating in their life. But mental issues might be originated from different causes, therefore we must also try to measure another type of factors.

At this point of the project, I chose to measure five different aspects: Unemployment, mental health issues, physical health issues, motivational issues, and monetary issues.

This was the preliminary phase of the service, so I started to test out different sets of questions that could allow the service to get information in an efficient way about these topics. The idea at this point was not to create a service

that could give a diagnostic to any specific problem.

The service does not want to replace any professional service that could diagnose or treat any of the issues that were being monitored. The goal is to have feedback from the person and enable the welfare system to get this constant feedback to detect possible patterns of something not being fine in the wellbeing of the person. So, we want to know about the situation of the person related to these five aspects, it was time to start developing the way to ask and measure this.
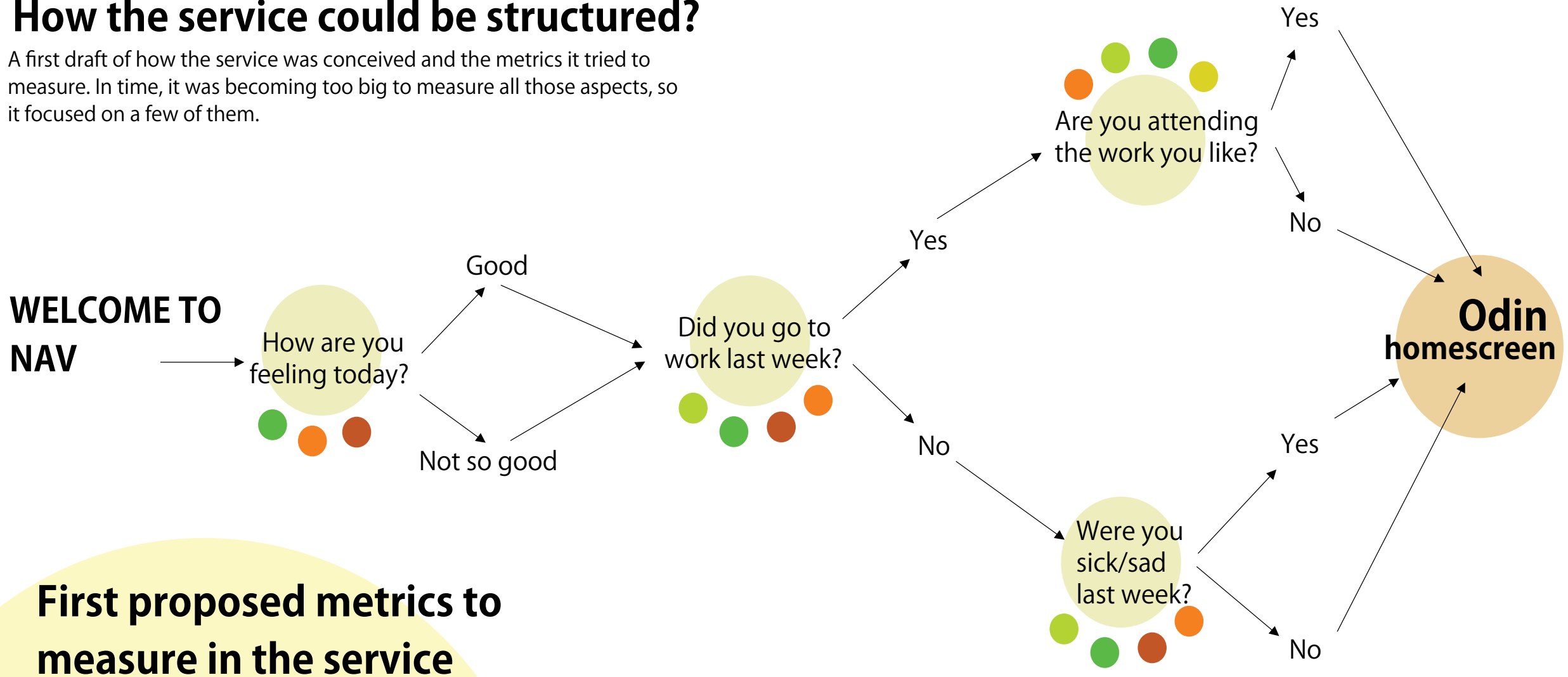
I started to create some questions about those five parameters and some service diagrams to see how to use those questions. Some interrogations about the functioning of the service started to appear.

When thinking about something as personal as wellbeing, I started to think how willing people would be to share those personal details with a welfare institution, because of privacy and because of perception of public

How the service could be structured?

A first draft of how the service was conceived and the metrics it tried to measure. In time, it was becoming too big to measure all those aspects, so it focused on a few of them.

WELCOME TO NAV → How are you feeling today?

Good / Not so good

Did you go to work last week?

Yes → Are you attending the work you like?

Yes / No

No → Were you sick/sad last week?

Yes / No

Odin homescreen

First proposed metrics to measure in the service

Unemployment ⟶ ●
Monetary issue ⟶ ●
Mental health issue ⟶ ●
Phyisical health issue ⟶ ●
Motivational issue ⟶ ●

institutions. Also, when thinking about having a service that would ask these types of questions persistently for a long period of time, could that constancy make people get tired of getting asked those questions? Or on the contrary might generate an effect of openness by the person?

Finally, the main questions, would people respond to those questions?

Asking about wellbeing through a digital service so Nav can know if people are feeling fine seems like a bet. But I do think that the bet is worth for many reasons, but mainly because the objective is for the state to try and give even better living conditions to its citizens.

I set a prototype of the service and I send it some friends, one of them a psychologist, so they could give me feedback on their perception of how the service worked.
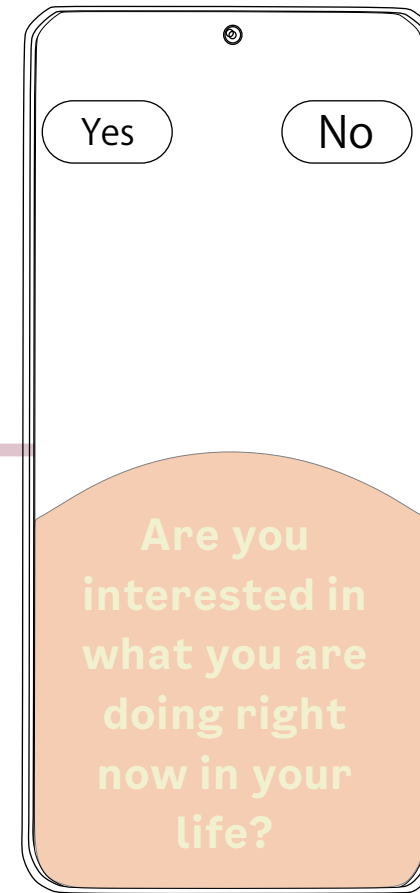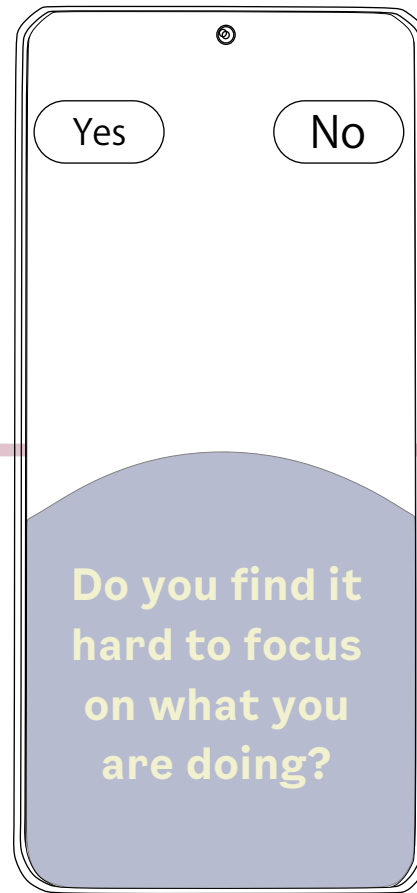
Most of the commentaries were directed to how the questions were written, and how people expected to respond to them. In general terms, the reception of the idea for the project was overall good. It was just a matter of use the correct language.

Also, I did a review of other types of services, one that tries to help people with meditation and stress relief, which pointed out about the need to focus a lot on the visual language of the service, and another service developed by a hospital in Colombia which also tried to measure mental health through online questions and then giving advice to people if they needed help (Fundación Santo Domingo & Fundación Santa Fe de Bogotá, 2020) (Headspace Inc., 2021).

I kept developing the prototype, dropping some of the aspects I was trying to measure and limiting to just three, as it was becoming too big to find the questions to measure all those factors in one service, and I tried to pay more attention to both the written and visual languages of the prototypes.

Welcome to Nav

Odin Platform

Good   Bad

How are you feeling today?

Yes   No

Do you find it hard to focus on what you are doing?

Yes   No

Are you interested in what you are doing right now in your life?

In the first prototype the first questions were tried. One of the main issues to correct was the use of the language as well as how the user would respond to them.

The problem of language: how to create trust?

Having a discussion with Nenad, my supervisor in this project, I showed him the results of the prototype. He pointed that one of the most probable outcomes of a person facing those questions in that way, would be of reluctancy and maybe negativity towards the service.

First, I was dealing with a language problem. Language barriers can be a serious issue in the development of any design. Misinterpretations or misunderstandings might occur if there is not a correct use of language. This highlighted one issue with doing projects in lockdown, as not having enough feedback prevented the project to gain insights on these mistakes.

There is also another problem regarding language and cultural barriers and is the perception people might have of the government and specifically an institution like Nav. In Scandinavian countries there is a general support of their governments. This trust into the public system has

been built over many decades, and it allows the government to work better, because when there is trust in government, people tend to support and comply to the policies it creates (Hetherington, 2018).

But not all the population might feel the same levels of trust in the government and specially in institutions like Nav. Personal experiences shape the way people feel about a specific institution, and if someone might feel the bureaucratic system has not worked in his or her favor, that person might not have a good opinion of the institution and the levels of trust might not be good.

There is also the background factor in relation to government and public institutions. Not all the countries in the world are famous for having a good relationship between its government and its citizens. Democracy do not work very well in many parts of the world, and people coming to Norway as refugees or immigrants bring that background with them, ideas that reflect on the way they perceive government in general, including the

Welcome to Nav

Odin Platform

Ha en fin dag!

Ja   Nei

Så du på sport i helgen?

Hadde du en fin uke?

Ja, jeg har hatt det hyggelig

Jeg har hatt bedre uker

Just ok

An approximation of how the final service could look. A more moderate language, using levels of trust.

government of the country they arrive at.

Finally, the cultural aspect when it comes to personal issues like mental wellbeing. Every culture around the world is different in the way they express or share personal feelings to strangers. In some cultures, it is easier for people to talk about those personal issues, while in others, people in vulnerable situations might find it more difficult to open to a stranger, and if that stranger is a big public institution like Nav, this might make it even harder for people to communicate effectively.

After this feedback, I decided to go back to correct some aspects of the service. First, I corrected completely the use of colors in the service, which was something that Nenad pointed out to me.

Also, I spoke to one of my Norwegian classmates to ask her about the cultural aspects when answering personal questions like those. She mentioned that while might be true that some people might feel not comfortable when

answering those types of questions, it is also could be good to challenge them. That just made me realize that without a proper user testing in different conditions, it could be hard for me to know how people would react to the service.

So, for the final moment, I decided to finish the last prototype focusing on how the questions were asked, using a softer way of asking them, and giving more options of response than my previous prototypes. Also, I tried to work a little in the creation of trust part and changed the way the service works.

Knowing that many people could not feel too close to Nav to answer personal questions, I tried to think about a way in which time people can feel that the institution is close to them. I developed some levels of trust creation, so the service in its first contacts with the user would not ask any questions at all, instead, it will greet the user. With time there will be a slow progression, the service will start mixing greets with questions, and at the end, the service will be purely dedicated to ask the questions to measure the wellbeing parameters.

Trust is a big part of the relation between citizens and government. The most trust there is, the more support there will be of policies by citizens. A service like this is also affected by this premise, so how can we create trust?

Using greetings and questions, the service might gain the trust of the user in time.
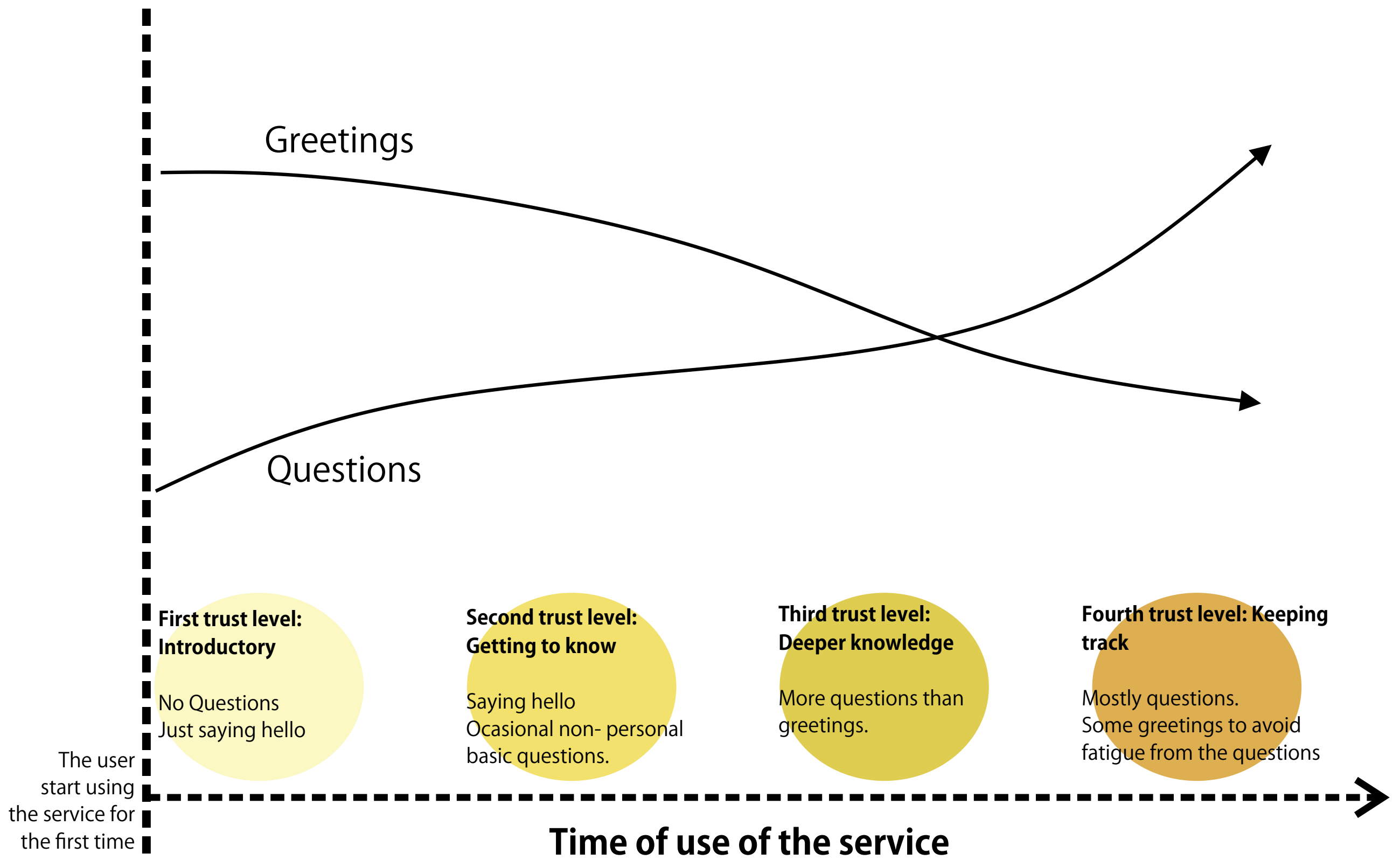
Greetings

Questions

First trust level: Introductory

No Questions
Just saying hello

Second trust level: Getting to know

Saying hello
Ocasional non- personal basic questions.

Third trust level: Deeper knowledge

More questions than greetings.

Fourth trust level: Keeping track

Mostly questions.
Some greetings to avoid fatigue from the questions

The user start using the service for the first time

Time of use of the service

Further development

There are two things that should be tested in the short and long term. First, in the short term, the visual and written language of the service. How do people interact with the interface, and what is their immediate reaction to the statements and the questions in it. Second, how trust creation works.

Can people develop a personal trust relationship with a public institution such as Nav through a digital service? That is one of the main questions that need answer, as from this depends on the fact that welfare institutions can create a more holistic wellbeing.

Whether institutions like Nav will help to take care or not of mental health of people is one thing, but with increasing digitalization, the discussion is also pointed at how people will perceive government and public institutions as the relationship that will exist between them and citizens will become less personal, especially when personal mental factors like motivation or depression might influence this relationship.

There are plenty of discussions needed about the roles and how the government should work in the digital era.

SECOND DESIGN CONCEPT

DEVELOPMENT

One of the biggest conclusions of the research phase done in the Visualization for Complexity course, was the fact that welfare in general should move to a situation in which allows a more complete wellbeing for the person.

During this research we were reviewing the current paradigm of welfare, set as a safety net that aims to catch people when they fall from the system. When the project was presented to us in 2020, the person showing it change the image of that paradigm, proposing that welfare should be a climbing rope instead of a net. This climbing rope could support and guide the person to climb the mountain, which is translated as reaching personal goals and development.

But still, one of the main inputs of that research was the

sense in many people that they needed to sacrifice some personal freedom in their goals just to do what Nav asked them to do, so the paradigm of the climbing rope can be seen as that, Nav guiding the person to where they are expected to be, but not necessarily where the person really would like to be.

At the end of that research phase, we take it even further and we propose that the paradigm of welfare should be one of a gardening situation. In a garden, a welfare system would provide the people with all the nutrients so the person can grow freely in the way he or she wants to grow.

But how to enable this process of free growing in the context of welfare?

Desgin and complete wellbeing

One of the design solutions we were contemplating last year when developing the research phase, was the creation of the role of job designer within the welfare system.

As purpose is deemed as one of the key elements that could create a more sustainable future for welfare, there was a question of how to bring this purpose into the welfare work. One idea of course is to re-signify current tasks people do in their jobs.

Without getting too much into the philosophical debate of what is and what is not purpose, one common aspect shown by the research made about the topic was that purpose could be summarized in the idea of "having an impact on the greater good". The concept of greater good can have different meanings, but the sense of creating impact on people is one of the key aspects of purpose.

That is why a musician gets addicted to fame when he or she fills a stadium with 50.000 people. The amount of people listening to the musical work of that artist is an instant feedback of the impact of those songs, highlighting the purpose of that musical career. On the other hand, an office worker that beyond work colleagues might not have too much human contact in a normal daily work routine, might feel this lack of purpose based on the fact that he or she might not see the immediate impact of the tasks performed in the job.

So, in theory re-signify work can bring purpose back to many different activities. During the pandemic, many jobs that once were socially classified as not-too important works, became essential jobs from one day to the other. Those activities, mostly labeled as "low-skilled" activities, were branded in this way because for a person to work in them did not require any special academic degree.

Also, with the appearance of the social idea of "essential workers", more people today are choosing careers in

which they feel they have an impact on society, prioritizing that aspect over wealth accumulation. According to a research in the UK, two thirds of British millennials are choosing careers based on altruistic goals (The Economist, 2020).

An example of this trend is 80.000 Hours, a nonprofit organization created by a group of Oxford University researchers in which they give career advice to people that want to prioritize social impact in their careers. They use a method in which they list a number of global challenges that need to be resolved, and they give advice to people to study or work for companies that contribute to solve those problematics.

But giving career counseling is one thing, while re-designing a job requires longer work and deeper reflection, because it is not just the person tasks that are being redesigned, it is also the work inside an organization to create that possibility of change in what people do so they feel they can have a bigger impact, not

to mention the high degree of personalization the service must have because every person's need is unique.

Finally, even if the research I did about purpose was mainly focused on its relation to work, I do not think that the search for purpose in life should be solely associated with work, therefore limiting purpose to a job design service might skip important elements of the life of the user.

With the limitation of time in this course, the project tried to focus on other ways to bring a design response to such challenge of purpose from the perspective of welfare.

The long distance run in Nav

Speaking to Gro Magnussen, the Nav worker, the word motivation was highlighted in the discussion as something important in the functioning of Nav, both for the case leaders and the users. She mentioned how people that were a long time in unemployment situation might start losing motivation towards finding a job, and therefore become difficult cases for Nav to handle.

While she was describing the Nav processes, I was thinking that the description was like how an athletic long-distance run is done. An athlete that must train every day, doing repetitive tasks, and must keep motivation to reach a final goal. Seems a lot like the process that people must go through in Nav to go back to employment, or we can even compare it to the quest of finding purpose.

In those long processes, how athletes keep their motivation? I wanted to find inspiration about it, so I did a literature review on sport and e-sport psychology.

According to the research, athletes face two types of motivation, an intrinsic one and an extrinsic one (Cristina & Grosu, 2021).

The intrinsic one is caused by autonomous behaviors of the person; it comes from the person. As time passes by, this type of motivation becomes more fragile and can be lost. That is why in modern sports, individual athletes seek for professional help to maintain these levels of motivation (Rooney et al., 2021).

The other type of motivation, the extrinsic one, comes from the elements in the environment. Basically, this is competition, goals, and rewards. It is developed by our human needs for achievement, power, and sense of belonging. Therefore, this type of motivation can be developed as an individual but also as part of a group.

Finally, García-Lanzo et al., mentions how in electronic sports (e-sports), players can be categorized according to

the type of motivation. These types of categories are related to the personal interest of players when they choose or play a videogame, because from that interest is where a lot of the motivation to keep playing the game is derived.

Understanding motivation, one final element of my research for this specific service was games. Some months before starting to work in this project, I wanted to research how game and democracy could work together, so I started to research about games.

In the book "Why games make us better and how they can change the world", the author makes a comparison of different elements that compose videogames, and explains why as humans we become attracted and, in some cases, addicted to games, while many of the tasks or activities that we do in our daily routine do not inspire the same feelings in us.

Having discussed about Nav, welfare and purpose, I found

two aspects of her games-focused work that could have been used to create the design response I was developing. One is the feedback. In games we can have tangible feedbacks when we achieve something, whether it is a "congratulations" screen for achieving something in the game, to a sound reaction when we complete a small task while playing.

In the real life this type of feedback is something we do not have. When we achieve something, we rarely get a notification or a message of congratulations. Only in unique occasions, like earning a university diploma, we get to know that we achieved something important.

The second element mentioned by the author is the existence of points and goals and the concept of winning, which is connected also to the extrinsic motivation that athletes have when they compete. Both sports and videogames share this dynamic of competition and earning rewards for specific goals. This is an element that has been used in marketing campaigns by different

companies, using systems of points in which consumers earn points for being loyal to brands and then getting rewards for these points earned.

Building purpose: the game

One of the first questions that emerged about all this quest for purpose was, should welfare help people achieve purpose? Or should it provide purpose?

After studying game elements, motivation, and purpose I started to think how the best possible solution could be.

I decided to explore two ways in which to help purpose achievement, motivation via social competition or motivation through earning rewards.

Exploring the social competition, I found that one secondary effect that it might have is that competition instead of a motivator becomes a factor for stress.

While in videogames the competition can create a fun social atmosphere inside the game, it also can become a pressure factor, as not everybody reacts in the same way to competition, and if we are having people in vulnerable situations like users in Nav, adding a factor that can create

AVATAR DEVELOPMENT

When thinking about the service, one of the main inputs from the research was the need of the design response to have a high degree of customization. As every case that Nav handles has unique characteristics, the use of avatars give a visual representation of that uniqueness and can help on other different factors.

## Individuality towards the government

In general, when we face a big institution, whether is private or is public, we are just a number more. Our individuality defines us, and this could be a way for users to show individuality when interacting with the public sector.

Representation

A matter of representation. As people live their lives more and more digitally, they want to feel that the activities done in the screen reflect what they are or who they would like to be. In this case, as we pretend to generate a link with real-world activities, the service want to allow the user to show that real-world personality to build a link.

Connection with the service

Can be a factor to create attachment to the service

Emotional feedback

The use of facial expressions to give feedback to the user can be an important factor. In this way, we can highlight the emotional importance inside welfare.
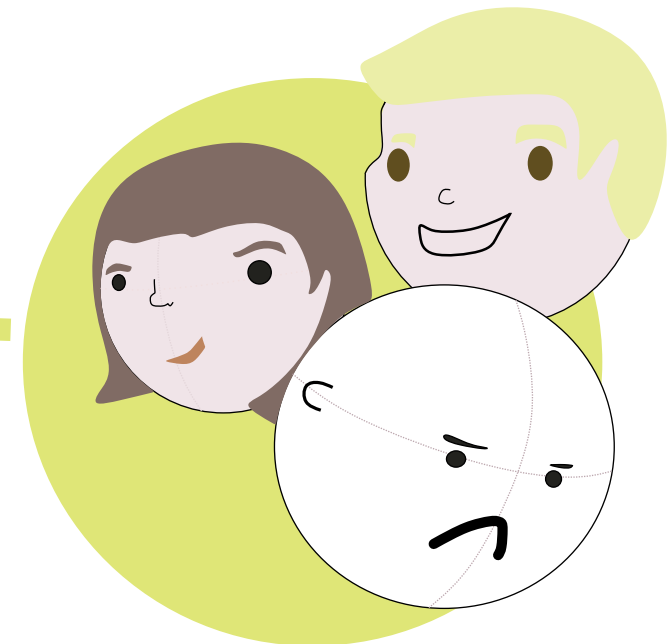
more problems instead of solving them seems like not a good solution.

So, I decided to keep exploring the idea of purpose and rewards. But what type of reward should the service or experience give to the user. Physical rewards? Symbolic? And rewards for doing what?

I started to build the structure of a videogame, trying to understand how it could work in the context of purpose and Nav, and finally I reached the development of a concept in which purpose is the final reward the user or player can earn.

The first important element of the game is the use of avatars. The use of these avatars in different contexts including video games is increasing and is in an important part of creating a strong connection between the user and the service. One of the main inputs of the discussions around Nav was the fact that the needs of each person were unique, so that any service developed would need a high degree of customization.

Through using avatars that can interact inside this Nav service, the user can feel both a sense of individuality inside the system and attachment to the character and help to develop attachment to the use of the service.

Once the user has created the avatar, the main input of the service is to earn points while getting feedback for real world activities done. So, basically the user will upload to the service activities he or she likes to do, and both the system and the user will grant a score to the user for those done activities.

The character will use those scores to give a visual feedback to the user in form of sad or happy expressions. If the user is earning enough points with activities he or she enjoys, the avatar will show a motivated and happy expression. On the contrary, if the user is not earning enough points, the avatar will be shown with expressions of discontent.

GAME STRUCTURE

CHARACTERS
Personality
Attitudes
Appearance
Life cycle: Eat, grow, sleep, die

STORY
Scenario
Frame
Time
Characters
Problematic

FEEDBACK SYSTEM
Visibility of achievements
Points system
Visual congratulations

TOOLS
Possessed abilities
Available abilities
Tricks
Traps
Technique
Community help

GOALS
Winner/loser:
Person vs person
Person vs system
Team vs team
Team vs system

TASKS
Instructions
Goals
Obstacles: Personal,
environmental,
competition
Collective work
Help
Decisions and results
Rules

PRIZES
Medals
Trophies
Points
Table of points
Prizes: tangible, intangible
Next level: more difficulty

CHARACTER

Personal avatar
Community impact of tasks
Personal impact of tasks

TASKS

Make the character grow
Go on missions (daily life)
Learn new tricks
Meet partners
Connect with job market

Purpose as the ultimate prize

Personal satisfaction derived from the daily routine

Treasure hunt: Different tasks in order to achieve the major final prize

STORY

Get a job the person likes

Start a personal project

GOAL

Highlight the activities the person enjoy using emotional feedback and a visual points system

FEEDBACK SYSTEM

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

As with the concept trying to measure wellbeing parameters, the lack of testing makes it hard to draw conclusions about the viability of such a concept.

Developing a service like this takes time, so by now beyond developing the concept, some visuals about how it could look were created.

Having a discussion with Nenad, my supervisor, he mentioned that maybe people would not want to use time to upload activities to the service to earn points, and we were discussing possibilities of how the service could do it without the user having to use its time, just like for example smart watches measure many aspects of the life of people without the need of them to upload those metrics by themselves. Another argument might be that in fact having people taking some time to upload the activities might create attachment to the service.

In any case, these discussions make part of the further development of the concept, which needs to be developed and tested in a long-term basis, as being purpose the final achievement of the service, it is only after some time of using it that we can measure if it works or not.

HOW THE SERVICE WILL WORK

Swim with friends

Paint a picture

Watch a whole series on tv

Talk with mom on the phone

Had a coffee on the park

Walk in the forest

Ice hockey training
Cooked lunch

Went to the museum

30 pages of a new book

AVATAR

The user will build an avatar. What we want here is resemblance to reality, as the connection between digital and real world is important.

UPLOAD ACTIVITIES

After creating the avatar, the user starts to play, uploading to the system the activities he/she enjoy the most.

EMOTIONAL FEEDBACK

The avatar will show how happy is with the score.
The more points gained, the happier the avatar will be shown. Less points will make the avatar look in discomfort.
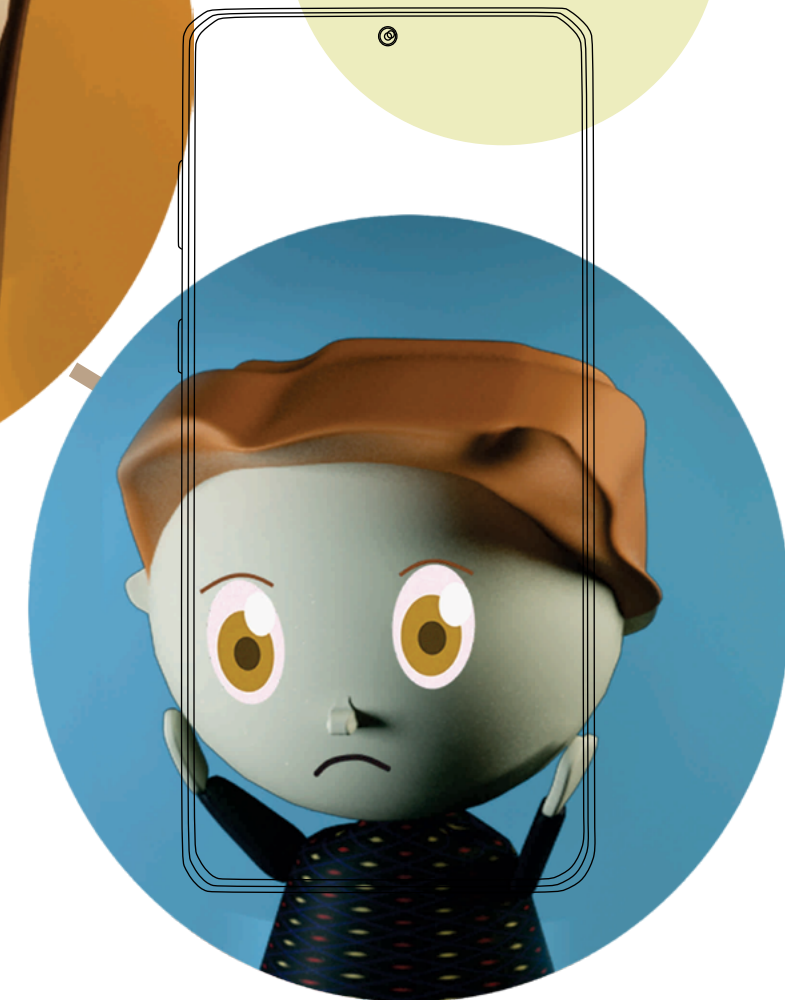
+10 SOCIAL POINTS
+25 ART POINTS

POINTS SYSTEM

Both the system and the user will grant a score to the activities that are uploaded. This points will feed the avatar.

Where will the game stop?

Will purpose be achieved?

Will the people use the service continuously or they will get tired of uploading their activities?

Should it be completely autonomous, or should a Nav case worker intervene in the process?

Can competition and the creation of teams help to sustain the interest in the game? Or will it add extra pressure that is not needed?

Plenty of questions remain about the viability and development of a service like these in the context of welfare.

Personal reflections about the development of the project

Doing this project was a unique challenge in many ways. First, adjusting how the work was being done with the pandemic and the lockdowns. We were very fortunate in the fall of 2020, to be able to have some physical lectures, both in OsloMet and AHO for the Complexity for Design class. This allowed a much richer discussion about the topics concerning Nav and welfare. I would say it was a moment I enjoyed, both because of the complexity of this topic, and because of the big number of possibilities it offers to work as a designer.

But as time progressed and teaching become exclusively digital again because of the lockdown, discussions were less frequent, and the project started to become more of a personal reflection. At the start of this final course of the masters, I decided to leave Norway. So, then my work was about Nav, while I was in another country miles away from any Nav office.

I had the personal chance to work prior as an intern at Bydel Grorud and working alongside Nav gave me firsthand experience of how people interact with the Nav system. I did not have the chance myself to try and test Nav experience as a user, but both my work as an intern, and the many discussions I held with people inside and outside my school, helped me to build a big and detailed picture of how this institution works.

Being far away from Norway allowed me to be more critical and to have deeper reflections about the whole welfare system in the project. The resources and information were big, and I still knew a lot of people that I could ask if there was any doubt about anything Nav-related. It also served to me as a reflective exercise to think about the role of design beyond Nav and the Norwegian public system.

HOW THE PROJECT WAS DEVELOPED

DESIGNING FROM HOME

One of the main difficulties to develop the project, was the lack of space to work properly.

With the school and public spaces closed due to lockdown, the work had to be adjusted to available space. Mixing home with work in some cases is fine, but when design work goes out of the computer screen and needs more space to write, map or prototype, the difficulties on the work become more evident.

Heftige sammenstøt i Colombia:– Ekstremt brutal fremferd

...stes brannbomber og det skytes mot demonstranter. Minst 2... ...drept i brutale sammenstøt i Colombia.

SOCIAL INSTABILITY

During the final weeks of the project, a massive social protest broke in my homeland. Trying to overcome the anxiety generated by the risk to the wellbeing of friends and family there, I started to reflect even more in the role of design inside democracy.

Latin America is well known for the lack of connection between governments and citizens. Inequality and authoritarianism have created a rise of mass social protests in different parts of the continent, phenomenon that has been going for some years now Even when economies show good numbers in many countries, prosperity is not reflected to the people and the complete disconnection between government and its citizens, has thrown a nation like mine into chaos.

TRAVELER RICH DESIGN SPACE

Because of personal reasons I changed of country 3 times during the project: When the project started, I was in Norway, then went to Colombia and finally to Usa.

In all these trips I had to carry all my maps and notes. I had to create a portable rich design space that I could put in my bag and move it quick to another country.

Being a foreigner with no prior connection to Norway, one question always remained in my head: all these that we are doing, how it can be done in countries like mine, with bigger populations, less economic resources and more political and social instability, and what role should design play in all this?

In Latin America, we often have looked at the so called "first world countries" for inspiration in how to solve our problematics. I do not think the answers for countries like Colombia rest in places like Norway, but I do think that collaboration and sharing experiences is vital for both cultures.

The reason that I am writing the abstract of this projects both in Norwegian and Spanish besides English, is because of the fact I believe these types of discussions should be widely available for anyone interested in this, disregarding language barriers. In Norway I became a passionate about how design can make the public system help citizens live a better life, and I believe design and designers must start to play big roles in government in the future, for a number of reasons: our ability to handle complex systems, inter-disciplinary cooperation and the fact that our work basically responds and work with the problematics people face, thus creating solutions that can have both a direct or a bigger impact.

As I finish this thesis, a political and social crisis develops in my land of birth. The images of violence in the streets of the city I was born, while I am thinking about how to solve challenges in the welfare system in a peaceful Norway are a big and surreal contrast that make me think even deeper about our position as academics and my personal position as a designer in this world.

I am deeply grateful of having the chance to carry out these discussions, as a foreigner, about one of the most sacred and fundamental institutions in the wellbeing of the Norwegian society. There are challenges that must be addressed, but I believe the conversations will continue and the correct solutions will be found.

I remember asking once to a colleague designer and a mentor to me in my internship, Eva Hugenschmidt, "why do people work in Norway?". Coming from where I come from, many people work to be able to find the means to survive one more day. In Norway I was not seeing this, I was not seeing people trying to collect some cash to buy a meal for the day and I just thought that the majority of the people could live without working thanks to the help of the welfare system. But I understand now that this is beyond money. This is about human equality and dignity, both in my country and in Norway. The contexts might be different, and the needs might be different, but allowing people to live a decent life while pursuing their passions in life is the basis for a strong society that respect human and natural life.

This project is also a call to my fellow colleagues in the design career to keep asking questions. Not everybody is into politics or social projects, but as designers we are all into trying to create a more sustainable human world, and

each one of us in our design careers should always keep in mind that our actions and our work have an impact, and hopefully this impact is for the good, and questioning ourselves and our surroundings is a good way to understand whether what we are doing is having a good impact or not.

I would have wished for a closer cooperation with users and stakeholders during the development of the project but given the conditions and difficulties that the pandemic has brought, I think there is a good base of reflections and a desire to keep developing and researching on this in the future.

What direction should welfare point into the future?

Knowing that an institution like Nav is in road to become even more digital in order to gain efficiency when interacting with users and spend less resources in its functioning, new questions emerge from this.

The evidence shows that the satisfaction of non-material needs is going to become more important in welfare, therefore if for example we are talking about something like mental well-being and at the same time we are talking about reducing human contact and increasing digitalization, we need to think carefully how these digital tools are going to be used in a way that people do not feel away from the institution or that we create more barriers than the ones existing now.

The evolution of Nav must prioritize the understanding of its users. Before any economic or political decision, is the cultural and social factor that come into play. We see how

in many parts of the world the distance between governments and citizens increases, which leads to apathy and people not trusting the public institutions. Norway is a country that has kept tight relations between government and people, and public institutions must ensure the situation continues like this, both from the policy perspective and the daily relation the user has with the institution.

This project tried to highlight the complexity of the welfare system from the point of view of design. I know the design team inside Nav is getting bigger and stronger, and in general many designers are working inside and outside with different organs of the Norwegian public sector, which I believe is a good symptom, because as I have seen in the work done by colleagues and in the research for this project, the user-centered way of thinking of design will bring more positive ideas to the public sector.

In terms of the concepts, the complexity of the system also

showed the vast number of ways to interpret the elements that form it and the big variety of new ideas that might help to solve issues that welfare has. Complexity breeds creativity.

Being disconnected in this final phase from the Norwegian and Nav context, served to me as a way to think both about the issues I found in Norway and issues developing around the world, and which the Norwegian context might inspire to find solutions.

Both the concepts created need a lot of development and further testing and user input if a service like that is to be developed. The way they are presented definitely is not the final answer to the problematics found, but overall, the main intention of the project was achieved, to understand the context and its complexities and to use design to bring ideas that could kickstart a conversation about the future of welfare in Norway.

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