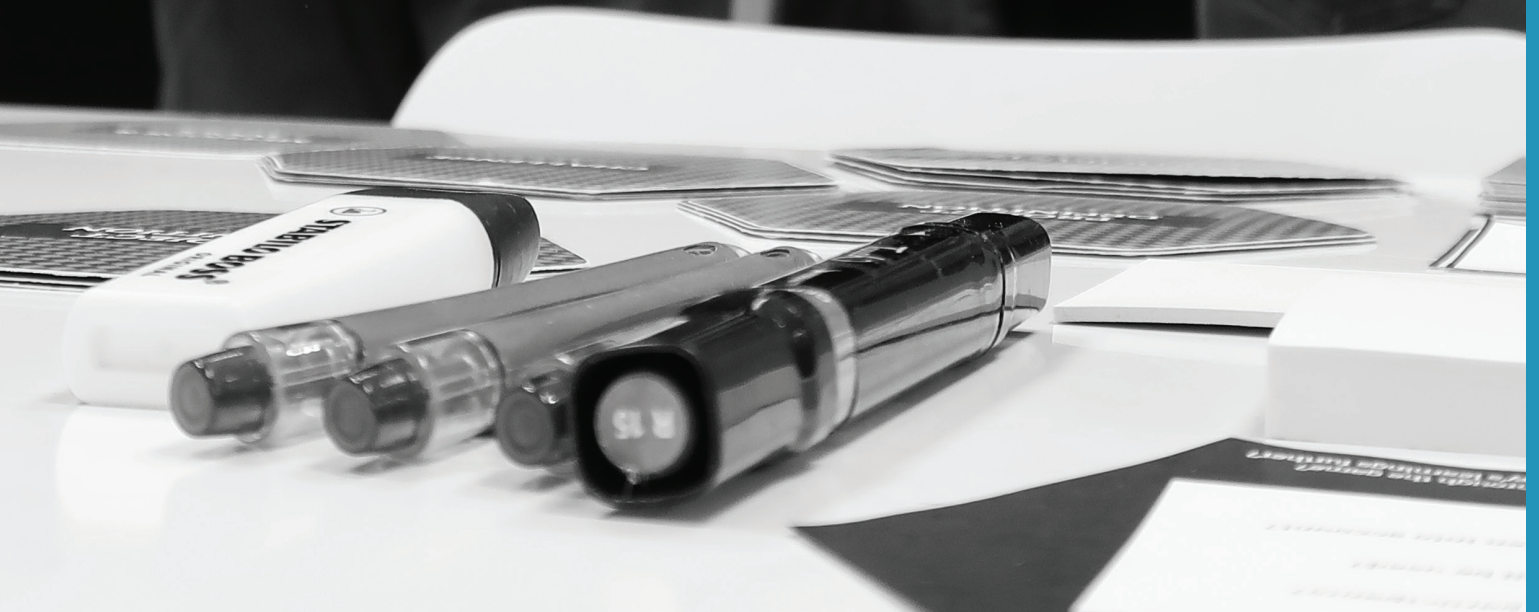


# NEW COMPETENCIES FOR CIVIL SERVANTS

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and Design for Government course at Aalto University



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# THE BRIEF & REDEFINING IT

The project Civil Servant 2.0: Future Work of Civil Servants was commissioned by The Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Employment, Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The original project brief given by the ministries stated that civil servants' work practices, cultures and roles need to be transformed to better suit the changes happening in our society. The original brief was very broad and brought up various issues and possibilities for different kinds of approaches. From the beginning it was clear for us that we would not be able to answer the multitude of important questions proposed in the brief. Therefore our first task was to reframe the brief into something a bit more manageable that could be researched.

To help us get a grip of the brief and what was expected of us, we conducted an ATLAS workshop together with the other student group working on the Civil Servant 2.0 -project and project stakeholders from the ministries. ATLAS is a design game that was created in the ATLAS research project in Aalto University (Hannula 2014). It is meant for planning service co-development and can be used for example for creating project drafts and common goals among participants (Hannula 2014). We slightly modified the game to suit our purpose, which was to gain a better understanding of the project brief.

After debriefing and analysing the insights from the workshop and going over the brief several times we decided to focus mainly on collaboration.

# THE BIG PICTURE

## Why do we need to rethink civil servants' work?

The biggest reason for rethinking the work of civil servants is that the world has changed but the ministries have not. The current organizational structures of the government and the working methods of civil servants were built in a society that no longer exists, the society of the 20th century. The siloed and individualistic working styles common in the ministries are falling behind in solving the challenges rising in the 21st century society.

So what is the society of the 21st century like? According to Castells (1996), after the industrial or modern age, we have moved to the "Information Age" where key social structures and activities in societies are organized around networks. Castells calls the society of the 21st century the Network Society. Beck (1986) described the key characteristic of the contemporary society as risk. Even though it has been three decades since Beck's Risk Society, one can hardly call it outdated. In some ways it could be argued that it is more relevant than ever: contemporary societies face the huge global risks of climate change. On a slightly smaller scale populist political movements are rising in many western countries and the economy in the EU has been a nightmare for almost a decade.

These theories and terms, Network Society, Information Age or Risk Society, have differences, but what they have in common is the notion that the contemporary society is more fragmented, faster paced, more interconnected and harder to predict. And this means that in this new society also societal problems are more interconnected, sudden and harder to predict. As digitisation and automation evolve further, most likely at an accelerating speed, it's not likely that societal problems would become any easier or simpler.

These new more complex issues make policy making more complex and hard because they don't fit neatly into existing ministries and departments or in the existing hierarchical and individualistic structures. Complex problems cannot be solved in one department with people from one area of expertise.





# METHODS





## Research Questions

To dig into the life of civil servants we started gathering insights from their current working life. In order to find out what are the things that need to be changed in the government and how civil servants should work in the future, we need to know how civil servants work now and what do they think and feel. Our research questions were:

1. How does collaboration between different ministries and departments work currently?
2. What kind of problems and challenges do civil servants encounter when trying to collaborate? How could these be solved?

## Interviews

To answer to our research questions we conducted semi-structured interviews focusing on current working methods and challenges. We interviewed 25 civil servants to gain understanding of their experiences. The interviews were mainly conducted together with the other student group working on the same project. In most interviews we had a representative from each group, one leading the interview and one taking notes. The two groups' research interests were slightly different but similar enough that doing the interviews together benefitted both groups. Each group had their own interview templates with some mutual topics. Approximately half of the interviews were done with our group's template and half with the other group's.

We interviewed different kinds of civil servants with different levels of experience and different backgrounds. The different levels included experienced and new employees, managers, specialists and one intern. Initially we got some possible interviewee contacts from our ministry stakeholders after which recruiting was done by snowballing: after each interview we asked the interviewee for possible contacts. Since the interviewees had quite different backgrounds

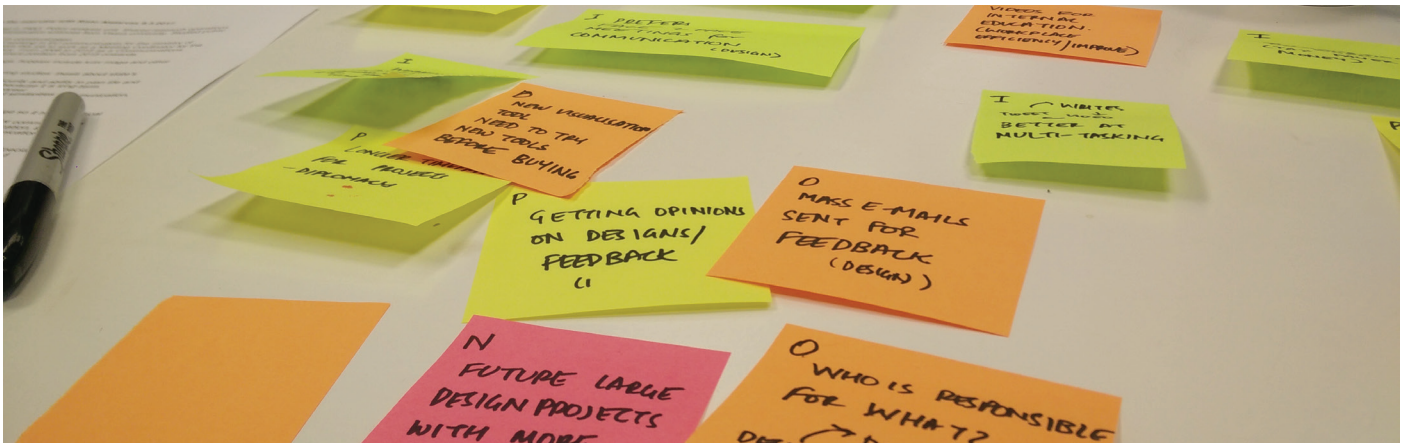
and levels of experience the interview template was slightly modified for different interviewees. We also modified the template roughly halfway through the interviewing process after analysing the data we had so far.

## Workshops

In addition to the interviews we held 3 workshops, with a total of 15 participants to get further insights and test our ideas. The first workshop was the already mentioned ATLAS workshop for gaining a deeper understanding of the project goals. In the second workshop the aim was to understand how things get done in the ministries. The civil servants chose an imaginary project and then played out how this project would be carried out in the ministries: who would do what, what would be the barriers, which ministries or units would need to be involved, how would contact be made and would there be collaboration between different parties. To help them we had cards with for example different ministries, teams and characters.

The third workshop was for testing our two initial proposal ideas. We made storyboards of each idea and divided the civil servants into two groups to work on one proposal idea. The civil servants were then presented with the proposal idea they would be working on. After this we asked them to point out problems or gaps in the proposal storyboards. The civil servants were then asked to vote on which problems were most crucial. After agreeing which problems to work on, the civil servants started ideating how to solve these problems. The ideation was done with the snowballing method: each participant was given a note and asked to write a solution idea on it. Next the participants were asked to hand the note to the person sitting on their right who had to criticize the idea. After this the note was handed once more to the person on their right, who read the initial idea and the critique and improved the solution idea based on the critique. The civil servants were then asked to discuss the

solutions and how well they would solve the problems found in the proposal. After this, the civil servants were asked to create a new and improved storyboard with the help of printed out pictures of personas, arrows, different tools etc. In the end the two groups were brought together to present their work to each other and to discuss the pros and cons of each proposal.



# ANALYSIS: AFFINITY DIAGRAM



Although the interviews were done together with the other student group, the interview data was analyzed by each group on their own. The method used for the analysis was affinity diagramming. We did three affinity diagrams in different stages of the project. The first one was done in class with course teachers guiding us in the process and with only a few interviews done at that point. The second affinity diagram was done shortly after the first at which point we had conducted 8 interviews. The third affinity diagram was done at the end of April when all 25 interviews had been done.

Affinity diagramming is a method for analyzing large amounts of qualitative data. It can be used for several purposes including analyzing data, creating user profiles, problem framing and idea generation. (Lucero, 2015) In the first two affinity diagrams we focused on making sense of the gathered interview data and analyzing it. In the third and final affinity diagram, in addition to analysing findings from the interviews, we also focused on problem framing and idea generation.

Our team followed Lucero's (2015) process of affinity diagramming. According to him, the affinity diagramming process has four stages: writing affinity notes, clustering the notes, walking the wall and documentation. Writing the affinity notes means going through data individually and taking notes. (Lucero, 2015) In our case at least two people did a POINT analysis of each interview. POINT stands for problems, opportunities, insights, needs and themes.

The second stage of affinity diagramming is clustering the notes. First team members read each other's notes in silence. After this people start picking up notes that raise important issues and putting them on the wall. Notes related to the same issue are put close together forming clusters. The team will then name these clusters and form larger groups that consist of several clusters. (Lucero, 2015)

The third stage is walking the wall. After most notes have



been put on the wall in clusters, the team starts discussing whether there is some findings that are not in the clusters yet or if some clusters overlap and should be merged or even removed from the wall. When the team agrees on the clusters they can start drawing connections and hierarchies between clusters and groups. (Lucero, 2015)

The final stage of affinity diagramming is documentation. This includes digitising the affinity diagram i.e. writing the contents of clusters and groups on a computer, taking photos of the affinity diagram on the wall and finding relevant quotes from the data. (Lucero, 2015)

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

We could see that there are already civil servants who are very passionate about developing the working methods of civil servants, but we learned that it's a relatively small group that is actively working on this. One interviewee even described these people as "lone wolves" which describes quite well how small this group is and also how they see themselves.

Some described a division of civil servants into those who advocate for change and to those who resist it and want to do things the way they are used to. Especially younger and relatively new civil servants mentioned this in their interviews. This division is also related to our second insight which is that there is a big group of people who feel like they will not gain anything from changing how they work.

We heard some moving experiences of how some people feel that they have no power over how they work. For example we heard of some people being moved to an open office space that has no personal desks without considering the effects this will have on the quality of their work and their wellbeing. Even civil servants whose jobs require a high degree of concentration such as translators, had been moved to open offices. Considering these experiences, it's not very surprising that when asked why she thinks changes in working methods are being made she bluntly stated: "The goal is to just save money."

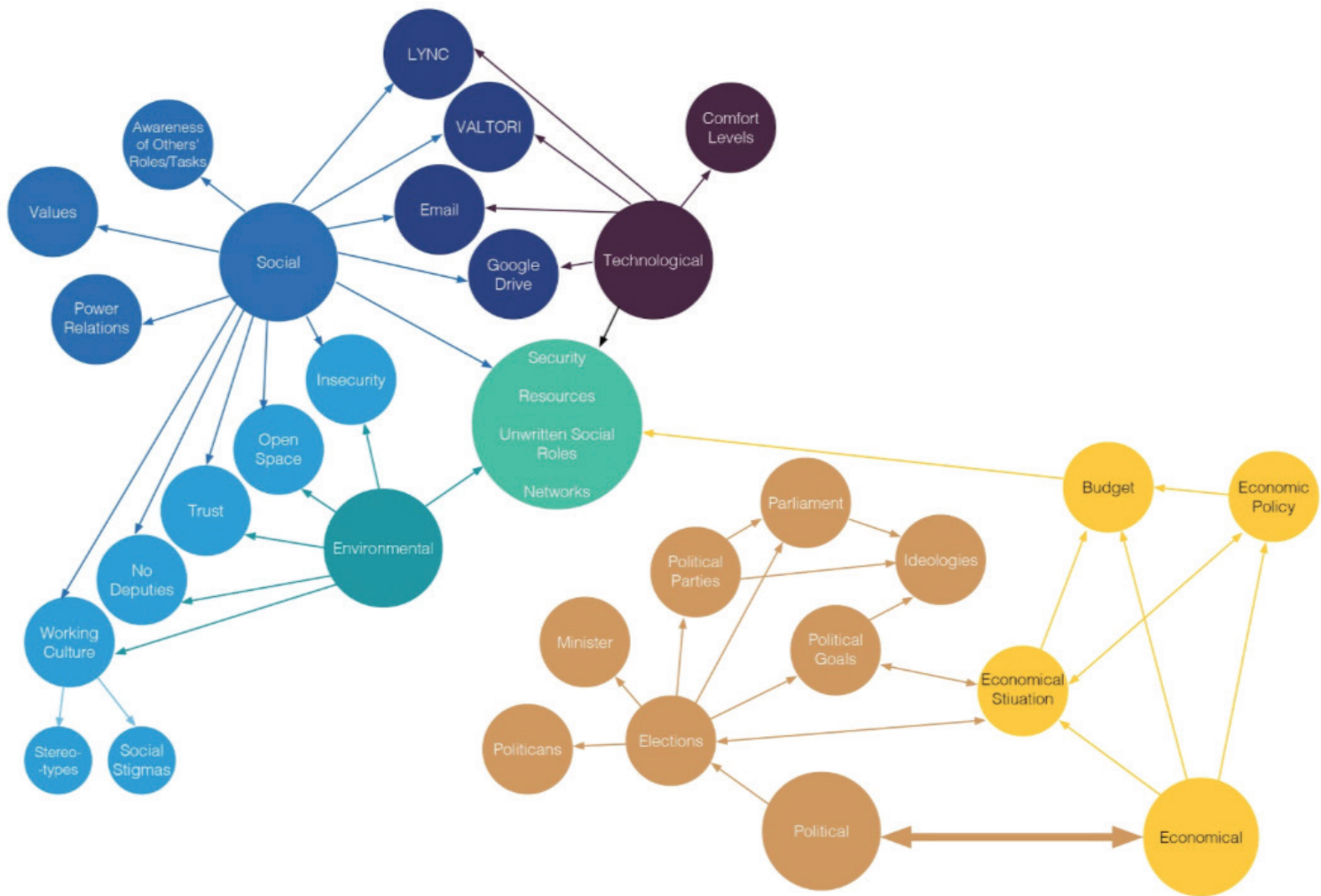
Our third key insight is the importance of networks in civil servants' work. From our interviews and workshops it was clear that having personal networks makes civil servant's work much easier and faster. There is an official way of doing things, and then there is the easy way which is that you know someone and call them and ask them to help you. However, when asking how civil servants gained their personal networks a very common answer was: "I have been working here for a long time so I have a lot of networks". Currently networking happens through work tasks and working in different teams and departments grows your network. This means that the only way to currently become

very efficient is to work in the government for many years.

Currently collaboration and building networks are not prioritized in the government. This means that there is no established and common ways to collaborate or build networks. There is also no allocated working hours for these activities which in many cases leads to collaboration not happening at all because more urgent matters constantly keep coming up. From our interviews we learned that many civil servants can use working hours quite freely for participating in seminars or learning new things. However, only a lucky few have the time to do this. Self-development and collaboration are something "extra" and most civil servants are so busy they never get to the extra part.

# SYSTEMS THINKING





System thinking is method to help in defining and locating problems and understanding problematical and complex situations. This is done by creating maps and models of systems which are used to structure thinking and aid discussion. (Checkland & Poulter, 2006) The aim is to create high-leveraged, well-reasoned and desirable changes on a systemic level. (Jones, 2014)

In order to locate problems and find out creative solutions, we used system thinking models to help structure our thinking. System thinking models help to reveal leverage points for social, material or immaterial intervention. It is both documentation and communication. It is also a tool that can reveal new possibilities, priorities and gaps.

We focused our on identifying interrelations of different actors in the government and to get a holistic picture of the challenges. We reviewed the affinity diagram and combined our previous data with our second workshop's data into a new system map. We analysed the system from five aspects: environmental, social, technological, political and economical. They are separated but also connected with each other in some parts.

For example, in the environmental category we have open office spaces which is also highly connected to social aspects. The instant messaging tool LYNC is connected to both social and technological. In addition, political and economical always interact with each other: political goals impact the economic situation, and the economic situation impacts political goals.

From the systems thinking map, we figured out some points which we would more focus on, for instance, the importance of the emotional level of civil servants like insecurity, trust and awareness of others' roles and tasks. A very important finding was how in these issues the social aspects are often connected with the environmental and technological aspects.

**CHOICE**

**ARCHITECTURE**

**how to affect people's behaviour  
with design**

Choice architecture affects people's decision-making by designing how information is presented to them. It challenges the idea of human beings as rational creatures who make deliberate choices. Instead, we are often irrational and have biases that unconsciously affect our decision making processes. Choice architecture is about recognising these biases and even taking advantage of them. (Thaler & Sunstein, 2012)

One of the key concepts of choice architecture is 'nudging'. Nudging means steering people to make a desired decision with seemingly small means. One popular and funny example of a nudge is putting fake flies in men's urinals to decrease spilling. (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008)

In the context of the Design for Government course, it is interesting to think how choice architecture can be used to address societal problems by incorporating it into policy making. One of the best known actors who use behavioural science and behavioural economics in policy making is the Behavioural Insights Team, that has for example managed to increase the UK's tax revenue by 210 million pounds just by rewriting tax-reminder letters (The Behavioural Insights Team, 2013).

Some critics say that nudging is basically manipulating people into making decisions that they wouldn't otherwise make. Nudging, like any method, can of course be used for both good and evil. Some might even criticize the very idea that someone decides for you what is the "good" that you should be nudged towards. However, it's important to remember that nothing human-made is ever completely neutral. Our designed environment is always nudging us in some direction, even if it's not intended to do so (Thaler & Sunstein, 2013). If behavioural aspects are not considered, we might end up nudging people to making decisions that are not good for anyone. Because of this choice architecture and nudging were also important to consider when creating the proposal. Moreover nudges needed to be included in the making of the proposal to make sure it is viable and that there are motivations for civil servants to use it.

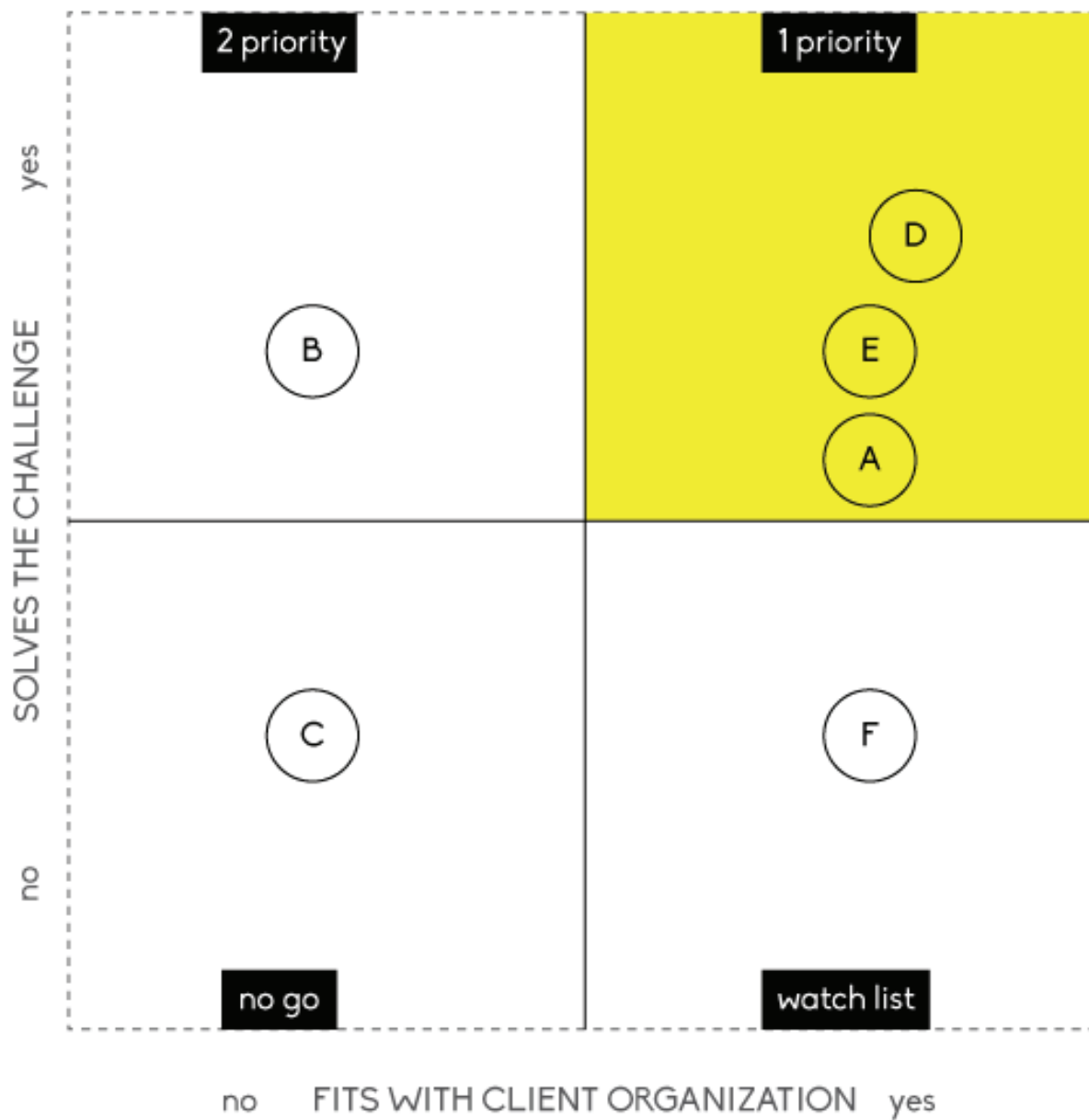
**IDEATION**



We started the ideation process in class with a lecture and a workshop led by Juha Kronqvist. According to him, an ideation process should have two phases: divergence and convergence. In the first phase, the aim is to be creative and come up with as many ideas as possible and not to care if they are wild and crazy. In the second phase, you bring reasoning in the mix and start thinking about which of those crazy ideas are actually do-able. So, in class, we focused on divergence with the help of different ideation exercises such as brainstorming, 'snowballing' and analogies and metaphors.

After the feedback we got from the mid-review and some initial ideas, we decided to revisit our data and did the third affinity diagram. As mentioned before, in the third affinity diagram we also focused on problem framing and idea generation. After making the third affinity diagram, we were able to evaluate some of our initial ideas for the proposal based on how well they solve the issues we have found in our research.

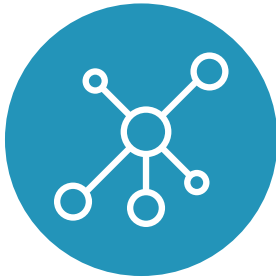
We evaluated our ideas on a scale of how well they solve the challenge and whether they fit in the client organization. The first is about the challenges presented in the brief and found in the research and the second is about whether the proposal is do-able considering both organizational structure and culture. The better a solution fits with the client organization and the better it solves the problems, the higher priority the solution idea gets.



# PROPOSAL

The Kyky Program

We have established that complex issues can't be solved with just one area of expertise. Instead we need to increase skill recognition and skill development, make collaborative and agile work methods beneficial to everyone and help civil servants expand outside established networks. Furthermore, these things need to become a priority. To answer to these needs, we are introducing the Kyky Program. Kyky is a skill sharing and skill development program, which enables civil servants to share their skills and collaborate across ministries.



At the core of Kyky is the idea of Civil Servants collaborating across departments and ministries. In Kyky Civil Servants could go help another civil servant in a different department or ministry for a short period of time by offering them their skills and area of expertise. This will help civil servants establish networks, create trust and build a more open working culture while learning from their colleagues. It also helps civil servants to recognize their own skills and gives them a chance to utilize the skills which they don't use in their work on a daily basis.



Kyky helps civil servants recognize their own skills and gives them a chance to utilize the skills which they don't get to use in their daily work. This also opens a possibility for colleagues to acknowledge each other's skills. Kyky will also help civil servants to define better which skills are needed for each task. This enables work to be organized in a smarter way.



On a more personal level, Kyky helps civil servants achieve personal growth. It gives a chance to grow self-awareness through job variation and helps achieve career goals with in-work opportunities to elaborate on the learned skills. It gives civil servants the opportunity to show their full potential and use their entire skillset. In addition, working for short periods with various people helps to gain perspective about what kind of roles other civil servants have in their ministries.



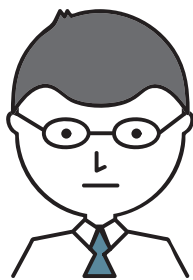
In the Kyky program, all civil servants would have 10 % of their working hours allocated to flexible Kyky activities. This is to make sure that all civil servants have chance to use the Kyky Program and it doesn't get pushed to the bottom of an endless to do list. The Kyky activities include sharing your skills with your colleagues by helping them using your area of expertise and Personal skill development. If your Kyky hours haven't been spent on helping colleagues, you can use your 10% for learning new skills. This could be done for example by taking online courses or enrolling in other kinds of education.



Everyone's skills are gathered on a skill pool with a user profile, which is shared between all the ministries. The skill pool is where civil servants can sign up their competencies and also search for the skills that are currently lacking in their teams or projects but would need in order to succeed. The skill pool exists on a digital platform. There are many existing digital tools available for collaboration, networking and skill sharing, but they remain unused or are not utilized well. That's why Kyky aims to make the usage of such an already existing tool successful.

**KYKY  
THROUGH  
THE EYES OF  
POTENTIAL  
USERS**

To describe the operation of Kyky Program, we take a look at it through the eyes of potential users. The leads of this story are Antti Asker and Hanna Helper.



**ANTTI ASKER**

Antti is a specialist in the ministry of employment and economic affairs and has been in the department for 7 years.

Antti is what you would call a typical civil servant. He is an efficient worker and ensures his work gets done in good time. His days are filled with paperwork and meetings. But being efficient also means that he keeps getting more and more work. Most days he doesn't even get the time for a short coffee break. This can lead to his work life being quite stressed, leaving him with not that much time to build his own network and focus on learning new skills.



**HANNAH HELPER**

Hanna on the other hand is a young new communications coordinator in the Prime Minister's Office. Hanna is very ambitious and wants to develop a good network within the ministries, so she can learn more and also reach her career goals quicker. But she's not sure how exactly to do this. She knows she has skills she can offer to others that are not fully utilised in her job role.



KYKY



Antti has a new task at work. He is working on a project about developing working life and needs to get a better understanding of stakeholder needs. He has realized that the best way to do this, would be by organizing a workshop involving stakeholders from different areas. The problem is that Antti does not really have the time or the expertise to plan such a thing. He's so busy all the time, that he can't go about asking his small network if someone could help him and he certainly can't spend hours searching for instructions online.

However with the Kyky program being implemented, he knows that there is a tool online where he can quickly go find somebody with experience in designing and conducting workshops. Hanna Helper, in her eagerness to offer her skills, she has also signed up on this tool. With a quick search of his needs, Antti finds that Hanna has taken a facilitation course and is much better equipped to deal with this task. Hanna and Antti are soon connected and discuss how they can go about doing the workshop. And thanks to Kyky, Hanna knows she has some working hours left this month so they are able to schedule the tasks and timeline accordingly.

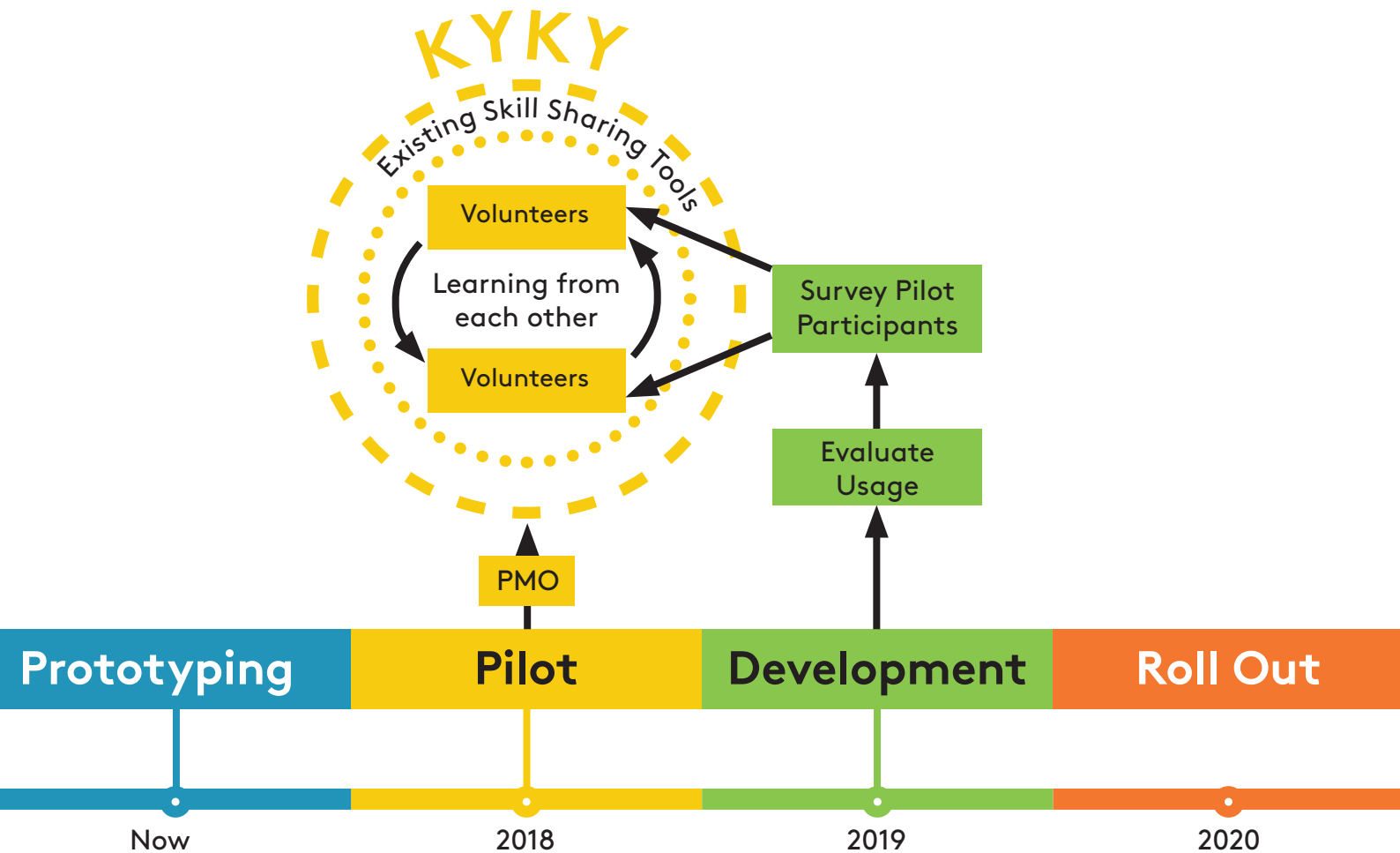
The project is only considered complete once both have agreed that all the requirements and project goals they set in the beginning have been met. Once the project is completed Hanna and Antti do a mutual evaluation on the online tool to record the success and failures of the project. This evaluation and timeline of skill development will be recorded in the online tool and it in turn can be used by superiors to evaluate job performances. This would be



another motivation for civil servants to actively engage with the program.

Kyky makes it easier to have a system that encourages skill sharing and network building. It gives us a more defined purpose to use one of the plethora of tools available. It helps us work in a new and exciting way that could very well be the future of a civil servant's or anybody's work life.

# IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS



The Kyky Program is now on its' prototyping stage. The next step during the prototyping process is to choose a suitable digital platform as a base for the skill-pool. To move forward, we suggest the following plan be used for implementing Kyky.

#### Ownership and piloting

We propose the Kyky Program to be commissioned to the Ministry of Finance in the office of Government as Employer, or in the Prime Minister's Office. These both options offer centralised location for the program, and from where the program can be later on applied to other ministries.

By the year 2018 the piloting could start from, for example the Prime Minister's Office from where those interested in volunteering their skills can sign up in the recommended digital tool. As part of Kyky, volunteers will be guided through a process of understanding and evaluating their own skill sets to decide what could be useful for others.

### Developing and scaling up

When the pilot phase has been run for a year, the next step would be future development of the Kyky program. The usage would need to be evaluated based on the following success parameters:

1. How much was the Kyky Program used? Does Kyky improve efficiency and quality of work?
2. How has performance evaluation been done before the usage of Kyky Program, and compare how it can be done with Kyky
3. Does the work that needs to be done get done? If 10% of working time is used for Kyky activities, do other tasks suffer?

In addition, we propose a user survey being circulated for the pilot participants to get feedback during the piloting process. The gathered feedback data will be used for evaluation in the developing phase.

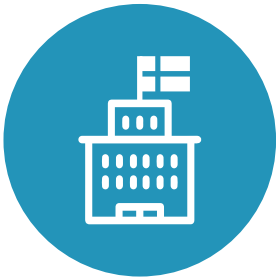
By the year 2020 Kyky program can be scaled up to get more ministries involved. The end goal is to get all ministries participating to the Kyky Program, and make the program operate across ministries.

**CONCLUSIONS**

So to conclude, with Kyky we hope to have the following effects



Personal Skill Development - It will help civil servants identify their own skills which would help with their own career development



Increase collaboration and Crack the Silos - Working with different people across ministries is bound to put some cracks into the current existing siloed structure



Can be used by HR to Fill Skill Gaps - HR of various departments can use the online tool that is part of the Kyky program to identify what skills are most in demand and hence actively look to hire more people like that or even hire skills that may not exist in the ministries at all!

Kyky increases competencies at a personal and at an organizational level which makes us achieve our goal: the multi-skilled civil servant.

There are still some questions that remain unanswered though. Like how do we know which skills are needed? Are they searched for based on the project at hand? How does one recognize their own skills?

Another key thing to keep in mind is that different ministries have different budgets as well as varied salary systems. How does Kyky address this issue for projects where civil servants work across ministries?

Answerd to these questions can hopefully be found during the Pilot phase of the project.

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