

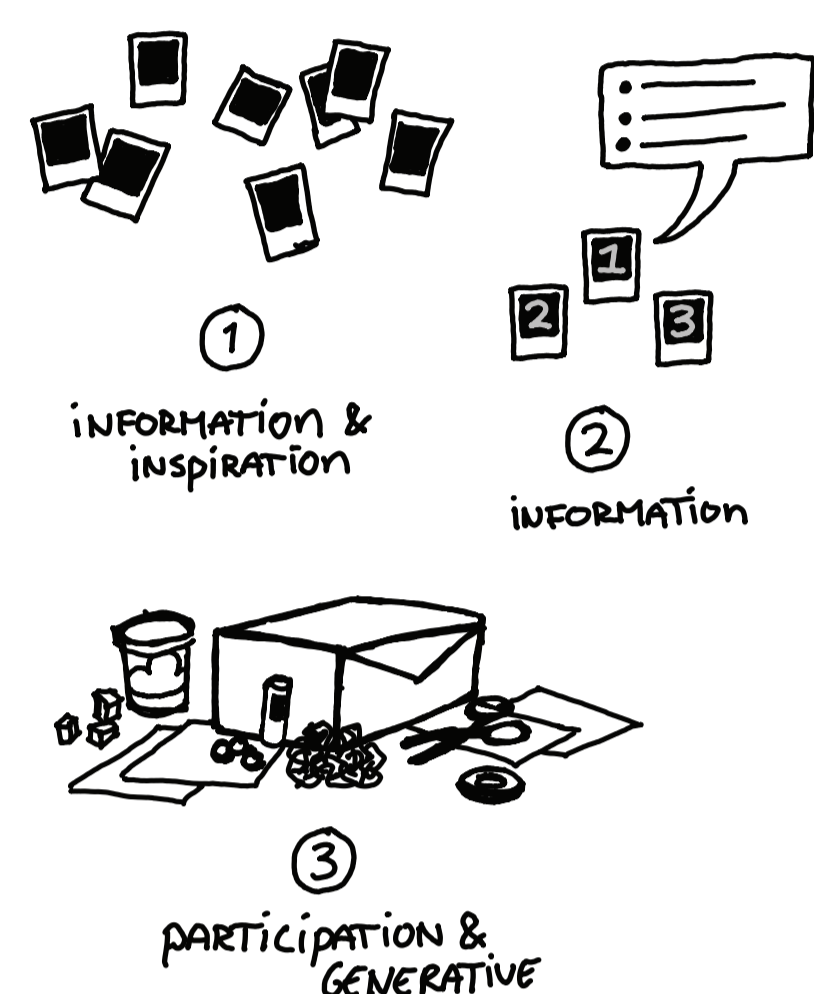
# Living Spaces Design Oriëntatie

How can I, as an interaction designer, design 'living' spaces for creative collaboration?

## Design Probes & Living Atlas.

The second method I tried in my explorations of different participatory design methods is called 'design probes.' A probe aims to generate inspiring responses from people to better understand them and their personal context. To record these responses, I used a third method called 'living atlas.' An atlas is a physical carrier in which connections between (research) questions to participants (in this case the probe tasks) are collected via a scenario created by the designer.

Probes can be designed for different purposes: inspiration, information, participation, dialogue and generative. To experience the breadth of these goals, I designed multiple probes, all of which cover the same subject: *the spaces that students choose for their creative collaboration.*



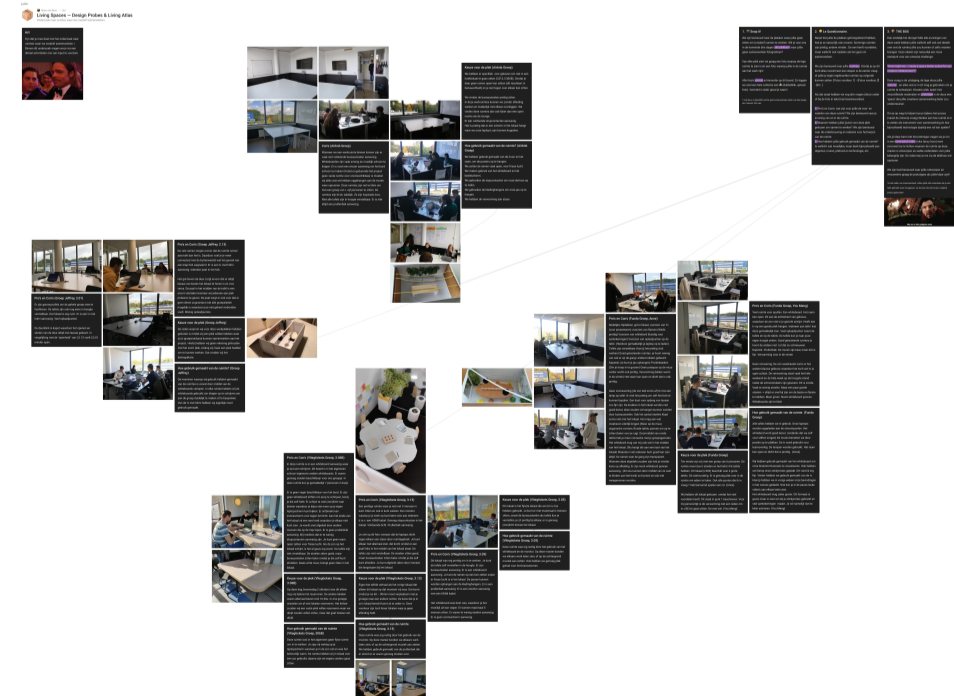
The design-probe study consists of three consecutive probes.

The first probe aims to 'collect' these creative spaces in photos and as a result provides insight into which spaces they choose for their collaboration. The purpose of the second probe is to collect preferences and considerations from participants through a short questionnaire and then provide insights into 'what's on their mind' when they reflect on their creative space. The third probe intends to involve them creatively by giving them a design challenge and materials to prototype a space that is better suited for their creative collaboration.



As part of the third probe, participants received a box packed with materials, objects and tools.

To shape my direction and communication during the study, I used a *living atlas*. With the probes as a starting point I designed a *scenario* to facilitate a temporary space in which action, reaction and possibly discussion can take place. In addition, I designed a virtual collaboration space as an *instrument* to both share the probes and collect the answers. During the study this board gradually got filled with content open to all participants and by rearranging and linking the individual content, connections could be made visible.



Students were asked to collect all their results on a virtual collaborative space or living atlas.

Reflecting on both methods, it feels like they complement each other very well (at least in my case). Yet there are considerations that I would like to take into account for possible subsequent iterations. For example, the data obtained from probes is always very subjective, and to give myself the opportunity to discuss considerations, more dialogue needs to be created.

## Introduction.

As part of setting up my design research, I explore and try different methods for participatory design. This poster summarizes the approach, results and insights of this orientation. A complete and more detailed narrative can be found on my research blog. You can reach it via the code on the bottom left.

## Conversation Piece.. or Space.

The first method tried in my explorations is called 'conversation piece' and uses objects as a starting point for conversations with participants. To learn about spaces and how they affect creative collaboration, I chose to make *space* the *object* to talk about. To maximize the possible effect space has on the conversation or collaboration I looked for awkward spaces for creative collaboration like elevators, stairwells or even toilets. The goal of my designed activity was to get into some form of creative collaboration within this non-regular space and start dialogue on the experience afterwards.

A few things I learned:

- less formal settings resulted in more engaged conversations
- people do not consciously use space
- it feels like a given, rather than something they can consciously influence
- not top-of-mind

In regard to the method I found my designed activity to be too structured for unexpected stories or insights to emerge and too 'small' for actual creative collaboration to happen. And because this method can be applied to find insights in everything from serendipitous stories to very practical goal-oriented solutions, it is important to critically reflect goals and questions.



One of our participants shows us how she uses some of the safety features on her phone while discussing new ideas.

## Practical Matters Prevail.

What considerations do my students have when choosing their creative space? How do they see, experience and use these spaces? Or more generally: *What do students think of when they think about their creative space?*

Well, the first thing that stood out when looking through their answers: they mention *objects* and related *practical matters* remarkably often!

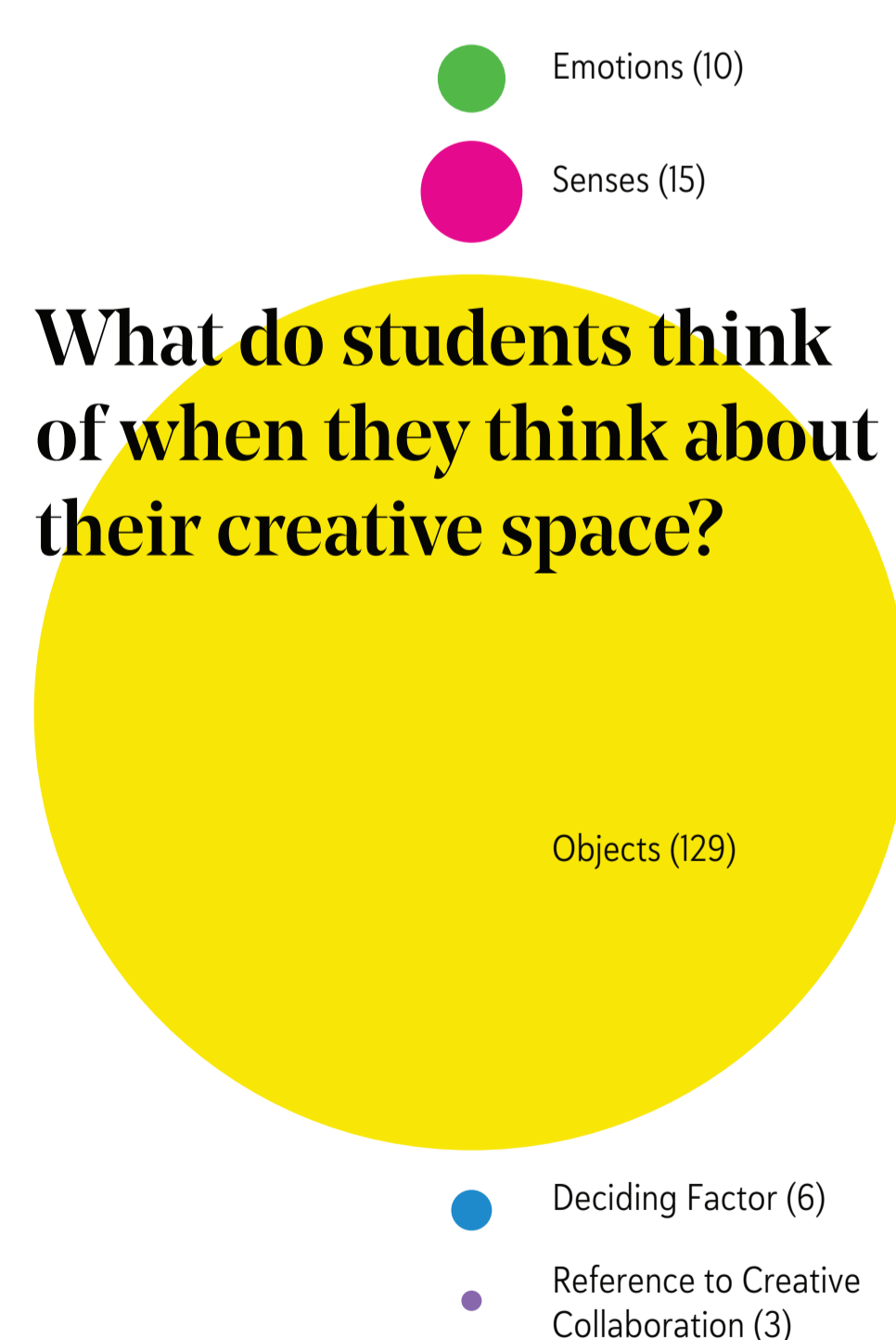
To map their thinking, I started highlighting these *objects* together with references of *emotions* or feelings and *senses* such as seeing, hearing, feeling. I was also curious about decisive *factors* for choosing a space and *references* to creative collaboration. By literally exposing this content and expressing it one after the other, a 'string of thoughts' is created and subsequently converted to the *thought ticker* shown below.

THOUGHT TICKER ● Voldoende Licht ● Prullen

A news ticker, is used as a metaphor for showing the string of thoughts passing through the students brains.

Although there were references to emotions or feelings in the answers, there were not many. In the image below, the size of the circles refers to the number of attributes and clearly shows that, in relation to the other categories, objects and practical matters prevail in the students' thinking.

Despite the fact that motivations and opinions were asked, the results mainly provide insight into explicit knowledge. That may be a logical outcome for an information driven questionnaire, but I nevertheless expected the students to provide more specific insight into their emotions and feelings, or tacit knowledge. As a follow-up to this activity, it would be interesting to have a conversation and expose the substantiation more.



## What do students think of when they think about their creative space?



## Prototyping Spaces in Boxes.

What happens if I give my interaction design students a box packed with different materials and challenge them to design a space that is better suited to their creative collaboration?

To elicit inspirational ideas about what a creative space could (or should) bring them I designed a probe called 'The Box'.

Each of the four students who participated in this part of the design-probe study received a box (artefact) with craft tools and materials. The (empty) box is meant to be their canvas and everything in it can be used to design the space. After collecting their prototypes and pitch videos I edited the material to be able to present their spaces in a similar way. Scan the code on the bottom left to view the spaces they came up with.



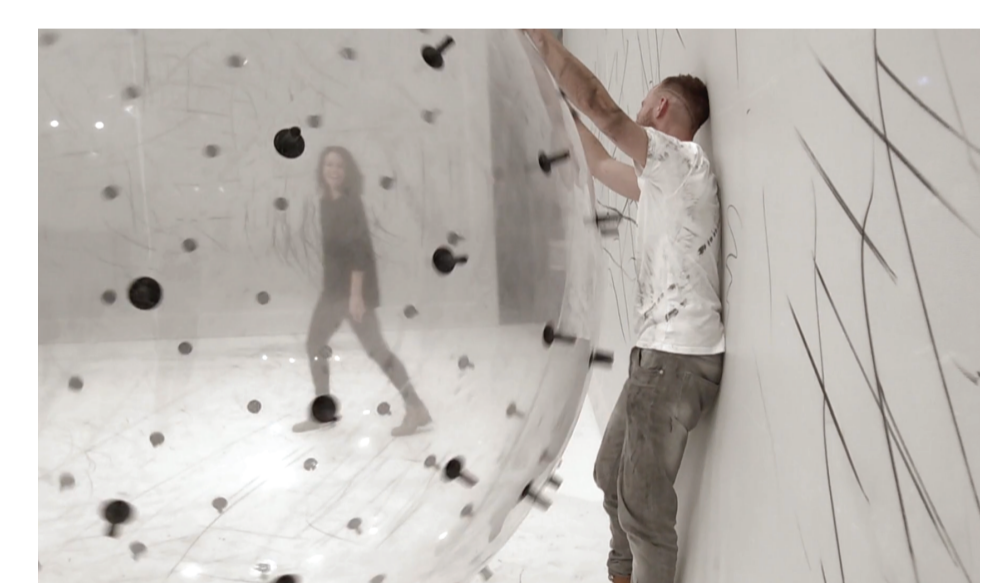
## Information in Movement.

During the workshop Embodied Design Research I learned about the idea that participants also contribute a lot through the way in which they physically and expressively participate in iterations. The workshop taught me through the Embodied Design Research approach to deepen the insights that you can get through bodily awareness.

To practice this bodily awareness, I chose to use the framework to analyze "ADA", an interactive work of art by Karina Smigla-Bobinski. ADA is a globe filled with helium and spiked with charcoals that leave marks on the walls, ceilings and floors. The three dynamic dimensions are immediately reflected in the movements of the object (physical resource) and the visitors who (try to) control it.

The workshop and analysis of the video helped to roughly put down a number of initial ideas for using the method in my own research.

For example, I could have architects and interaction designers discuss the concept of a 'living' space by portraying it with their bodies. They can use movement, space and objects to explain possible actions and interactions. Capturing this creates an 'explain to be' prototype that can be used for further exploration or discussion.



"ADA – analog interactive installation / kinetic sculpture / post-digital drawing machine" by Karina Smigla-Bobinski.

## Moving Forward.

While my design research is taking shape, I notice certain movements in its direction. Instead of an approach on the topics of collaboration, spaces and technology, I now choose *making space*, *using space* and *sentient space* as possible research trails. In the following iterations, I would like different participants to explore and discuss the concept of a "living" space. I see the methods *conversation piece*, *explorative prototyping* and *embodied design research* play an important role in this and expect it to bring me closer to my original research question.

