

Service Design

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1. Project description

1.1. Icebreaker

At the beginning of the fall semester I joined the project “Icebreaker”. The purpose of the project is to enable individuals to easier meet new people and be better prepared for making the first step. After a few weeks into the work, we decided to focus exclusively on the context of dating. Social media and dating apps make it more and more difficult to connect in real life and set expectations through filters and photo editing that can never be fulfilled in a real-world situation. This semester we researched the topic of meeting new people to have a solid understanding and be able to create an encouraging and back-to-earth solution for dating in the future.

1.2. Team



Altug
Research
PM



Batuhan
Research
ID



Leon
Research
PM



Blend
PM
Research



Eva
Research
ID

As a group of five we from the beginning pulled in the same direction and soon became a well-functioning team. Altug and Leon originally are Software Engineering students, Blend is a Product Management student, and Batu and I are Interaction Design students, but for the stage, the project is in we had to define new roles. After our first get-together, the responsibilities were set clearly and everybody had their area of focus. Even though everybody had their main topic, we did a lot of the work during team meetings and in deep collaboration with each other. We defined our roadmap based on the first diamond of the double-diamond framework. The goal for the fall semester was to reach the end of the synthesis phase. Specifically, my role during the semester was to direct the team through the

research process and set my knowledge of the double diamond from earlier projects to practice. Also, every one of us did secondary research in a specific area, conducted interviews, and developed key insights. We met once a week to unify our findings and make sure we are all on the same page and have the same foundation and understanding to start next semester with the second diamond.

1.3. Service Design

With “Icebreaker” we want to challenge already existing dating apps like Tinder and Bumble. From the beginning it is clear that the solution probably won’t just be a digital one. To be successful, we can’t look with blinkers but have to see the whole ecosystem, that we want to change. Service Design provides the team with an awesome toolset to achieve our goal. “The tools can spark meaningful conversations; create a common understanding; make implicit knowledge, opinions, and assumptions explicit; and stimulate the development of a common language.” (Lawrence et al., 2018, 21) Furthermore, since we all come from different backgrounds and have different expectations and experiences, we see Service Design as a cross-disciplinary language. “[It can be seen as] ‘the glue between all disciplines’, offering a shared, approachable, and neutral set of terms and activities for cross-disciplinary cooperation.” (Lawrence et al., 2018, 22) Finally, it can also be a mindset because “it looks for a balance between technological opportunity, human need, and business relevance” (Lawrence et al., 2018, 21), which is exactly the attitude we wish for as a team.

2. Methods

2.1. Personas

There are four different types of Personas.

- Goal-directed Persona, which focuses on which goal the user wants to achieve.
- Role-based Persona, which focuses on the role the user has in the product environment (e. g. inside the company, a family, a club, etc.).
- Engaging Persona, which focuses on the experience the user has when engaging with the product.

- Fictional Persona, which is the only one to be based on assumptions instead of real data and is used mainly during the research phase of projects. (Friis & Yu, 2022)

All of them are built on primary and secondary research except for the Fictional Persona. The Persona method is used to visualize the collected data and make it possible for the whole team to empathize with the user. Since we started the semester in the research phase and are still not building an actual product for actual users, the only type relevant for us is the Fictional Persona.

This semester we decided to not work with that method. They are meant for the team to empathize with. In our case since the Persona would be based on assumptions instead of collected data, it can influence the outcome of the research. When having a specific picture of the user already in mind, the researchers could be biased already. Even without us realizing the brain works with stereotypes. Therefore the main reason for not creating a Fictional Persona was to keep our minds as open as possible.

Starting the next phase in the next semester, I think a Goal-directed Persona, which is based on our research data, can help us to build an awesome product.

2.2. Secondary Research

To start our project off, every one focused on a specific research question to do secondary research. The main topic we wanted to gain information about was:

Why don't people dare to make the first approach in social situations?

We split the team up and I researched the following two questions:

What makes social connections easier?

What are the effects of loneliness?

I read some research papers that I found online and noted down the key insights on Notion. During our weekly meeting we then brought together our individual information and created a collection on Miro. In the picture below you can see my findings on the effects of loneliness as an example of how we noted down everything.

- Lonely individuals also have a 50% (up to 80% for chronically lonely) higher all-cause mortality rate than individuals with healthy social relations
- increased risk of certain mental health problems, including [depression](#), [anxiety](#), [low self-esteem](#), [sleep problems](#) and increased [stress](#), [high blood pressure](#), [heart disease](#), [obesity](#), a weakened immune system, [cognitive decline](#), [Alzheimer's disease](#), and even death.

Loneliness during Covid:

1. increase because of social distancing, lockdowns, home office orders
2. demographical risk factors: younger age, being a woman, low household income, and being a student
3. alternative communication options (technology) do not have the same positive factor as real face-to-face communication
4. being **younger** was associated with **more loneliness** at the time of the **lockdown**

LONELINESS ACTS AS A FERTILIZER FOR OTHER DISEASES," DR. COLE SAID. "THE BIOLOGY OF LONELINESS CAN ACCELERATE THE BUILDUP OF PLAQUE IN ARTERIES, HELP CANCER CELLS GROW AND SPREAD, AND PROMOTE INFLAMMATION IN THE BRAIN LEADING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE. LONELINESS PROMOTES SEVERAL DIFFERENT TYPES OF WEAR AND TEAR ON THE BODY.

We kept working on the same Miro board for the entirety of the semester, to not forget the outcomes of the research. Therefore we would always clearly see what we brought together when opening the board.

2.3. Interviews

At this stage of the project we already collected some insights about getting to know new people and making first approaches in social situations. Batu and I prepared a interview guideline each, which we then merged together to one final version. The first two questions can be seen in the image below:

II. Questions

1. Can you remember the last time you started a conversation with someone you had no contact with before?
 1. How/What did you feel before doing so?
 2. Why did you feel that way?
 3. How did it turn out?
 4. How/What did you feel afterwards?
 5. Why did you feel that way?
 6. What do you look for when first making contact (initial conversation)?
 7. *If not*
 1. *Can you remember a moment where you wanted to approach someone but you did not?*
 2. *Why didn't you?*
 3. *How did you feel about it?*
 4. *Why did you feel that way?*

2. When was the last time someone randomly approached you? Do you remember a particularly good experience?
 1. Where did it happen?
 2. How did you feel about it?
 3. What did you think about the other person?
 4. Why?

Everyone on the team then conducted two to five interviews based on the guideline. The word describes its purpose really well because it was ment as a guide for the interviewee. To collect insightful information from the participants, we had to be flexible and able to react to certain situations. On the other side for the interviews to be comparable, it was important to at least follow the defined questions to a certain extent. Also we agreed to not interview friends or people from Code, to be as unbiased as possible. Some of us focused exclusively on dating and some opened the questions, after realizing that the interviewee had no recent or relevant experience.

I ended up conducting three interviews. My decision to do them in German was based on the fact, that it was everyones mothertongue and I did not want to miss any deep insights because of the language barrier. I then also analysed the German transcripts of the interviews and generated the key insights out of them like in the example below.

Speaker 1 [00:02:41] Ja, das glaube ich. Es war sehr schwierig. Ähm, du meintest, es gibt diese Hürde, die nicht da ist, wenn man betrunken ist. Ähm. Kannst du dich erinnern an eine Situation, in der du nicht betrunken warst und die Hürde trotzdem überwunden hast, jemanden anzusprechen? Vielleicht auch noch mal direkt in den Bezug Dating. So in die Richtung.

Speaker 2 [00:03:10] Ich habe eine Freundin, deswegen habe ich die letzten drei Jahre nicht mehr irgendwie da andere Mädels angequatscht. Deswegen ist das jetzt nicht aufgetreten, aber jetzt generell einfach. Wenn man so aus dem nicht Dating Kontext guckt oder nicht mit der Intention dahinter steht, sind ja auch interessant, sondern es ist einfach glaube ich sehr Typ abhängig. Also für mich, ich bin ich da irgendwie gut darin auf andere Menschen zuzugehen und sie ansprechen. Und da ist dann **eventuell eine Hürde, wenn ich einer größeren Gruppe da stehen**, dass man da dann rein platzt. Aber wenn man jetzt irgendwie jemanden anspricht und der steht allein oder zu zweit, da ist die Hürde nicht mehr so groß. Aber ja, genau diese Hürde ist halt einfach das Fremdsein, **dass man nicht weiß, wie die andere Person reagiert**.

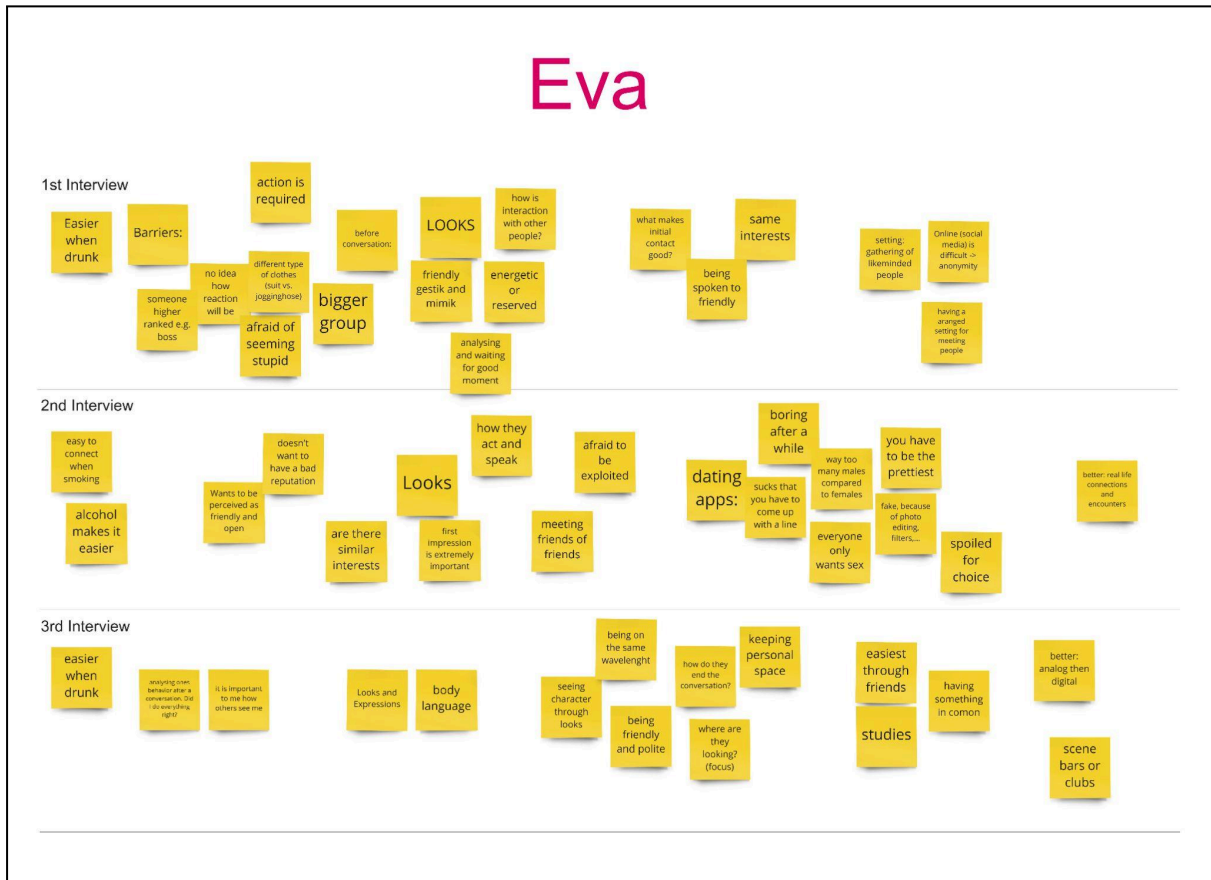
For the sake of the assignment, I translated the transcript with DeepL. It is no perfect translation, but it shows roughly how I approached the questions. Following this link, you can see my initial guideline, our merged and final guideline, the German transcripts and the translated versions. I also will hand everything about the interviews in as a PDF document.

[Link to Interview document](#)

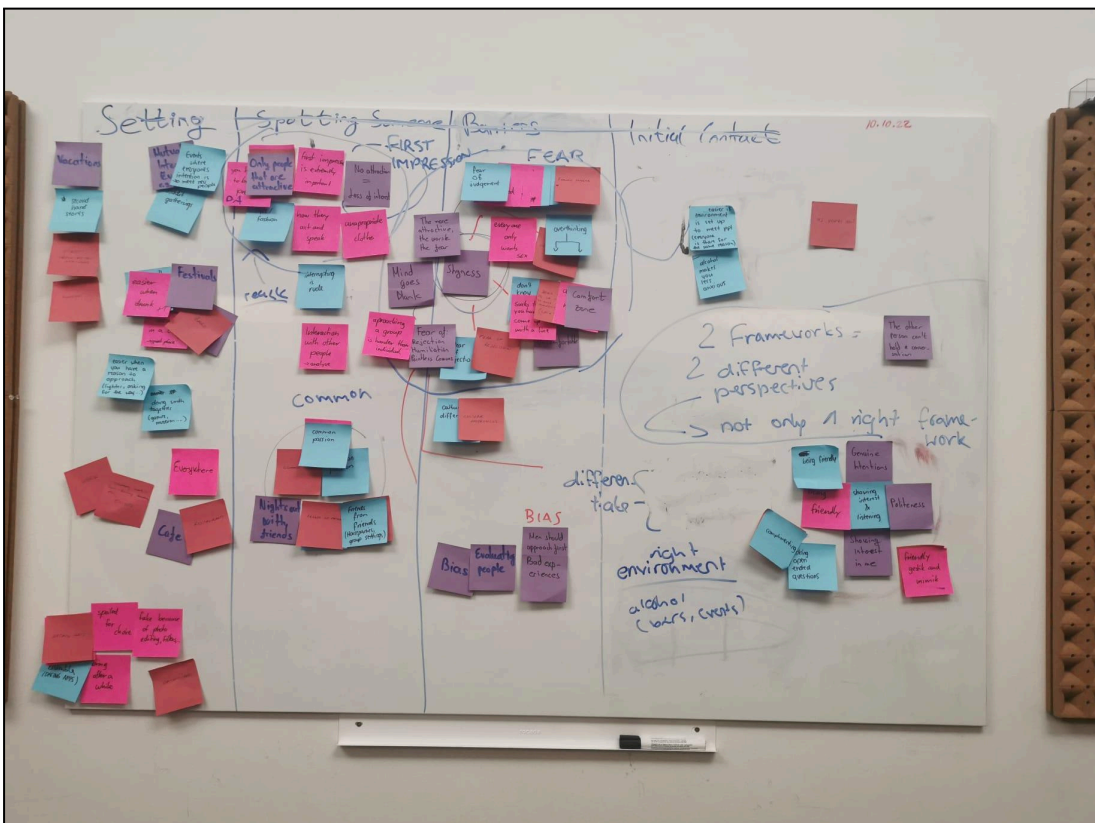
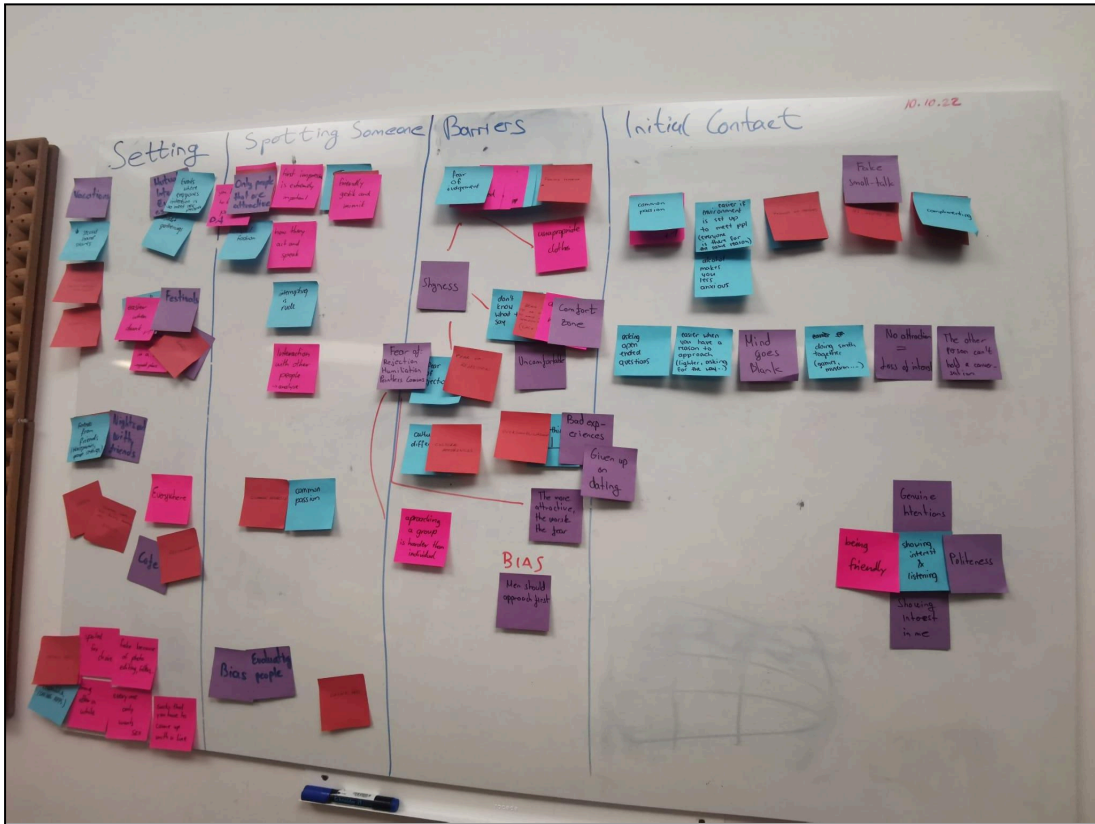
After reading through the interviews, I learned that in the future I could ask more about real life experiences, instead of imagined scenarios. Also, I could have gone deeper into some situations that are most valuable to our research. In the end though, I think I did a good job and gained some awesome key insights during the approximately 45 minutes each interview took.

2.4. Research Wall

Every team member worked with their taken interviews and generated key insights from them. Here is an image of all the sticky notes I created from my transcripts.



In one of our weekly meetings, we all sat together and put our digitally taken notes on analog sticky notes. We then all put them on a wall in our project room. We arranged them in different ways to find different ways of clustering the data we generated. I took some pictures of the two most important arrangements, which I integrated in the document here.



In the best possible szenario we would have kept the research wall in our project room, but unfortunately we had to share the space with some other teams, which also needed the white board. Therefore we also digitized the information and kept it on our Miro board, to have the opportunity to always come back to the key insights through the remaining time in the research phase.

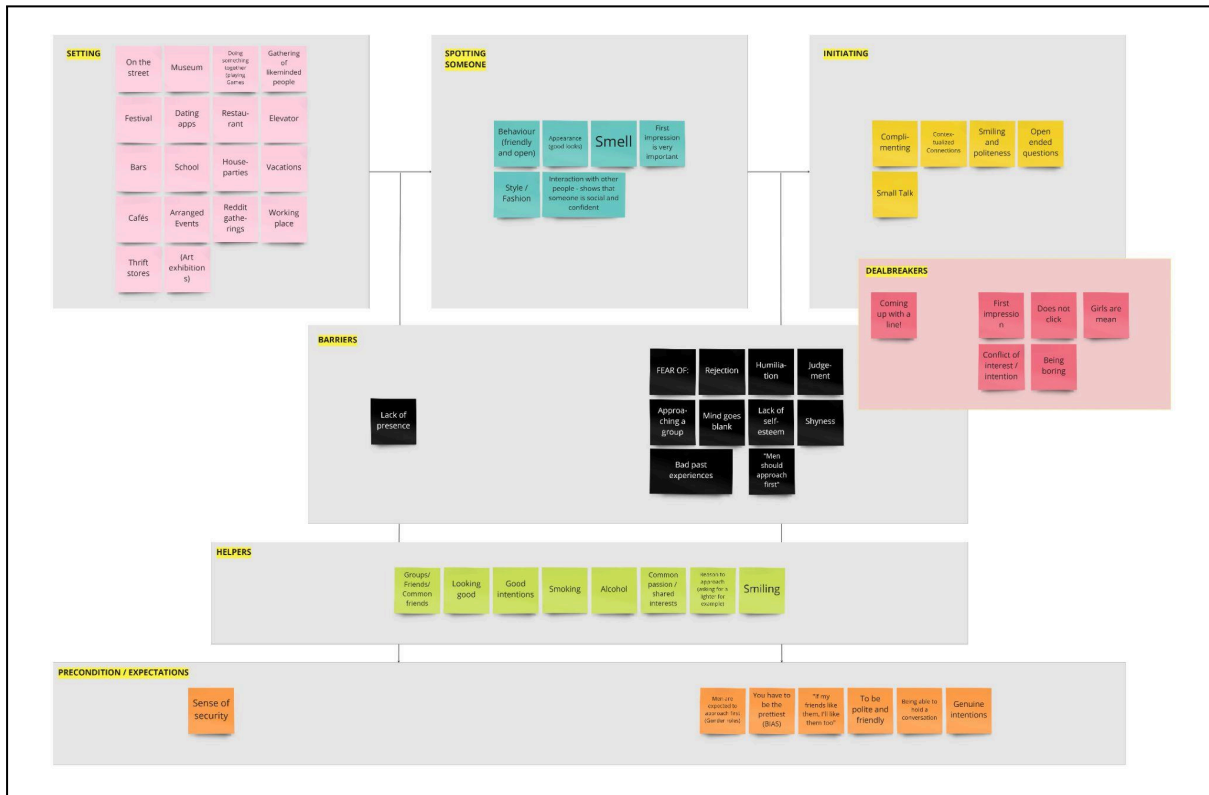
2.5. Journey Map

While I flipped through the book “This is service design doing”, I found the method Journey Map and applied it to our research. I defined the steps *being somewhere*, *spotting someone*, *deciding ot approach them*, *initiating contact* and maped them with the emotions felt in the situation, possible problems and I drew a storyboard as you can see in the following image.

	Being somewhere	Spotting Someone	Deciding to approach them	Initiating Contact
Emotions				
possible problems			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of rejection • Shyness • Lack of self-esteem • bad past experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No topics to talk about • unfriendliness, unpoltiteness • no genuine intentions
Storyboard				

The outcome was clearly that the most problems occurred during the decision making to approach someone. Almost everybody described a fear of rejection, being too shy to make the first step or having a low self-esteem or bad past experiences. If focused on these feelings, the “main actor” would not initiate contact. The person then would never experience a possible positive outcome. We could definitely focus on this part of the process and ideate on finding a solution to help peers overcome the fears.

We not only saw problems but also got a lot of insights in what it needs to catch someones attention or what people are looking for in a potential individual to approach. For Experience and Behavior Design we came up with the following clustering, which also includes all the collected insights from our interviews.



Combining the Journey Map and the Clustering, it was obvious for us to from now on focus on the barriers that stop someone from initiating contact.

2.6. Ideation

The focus we had during the fall semester was mostly on generating a solid understanding of the problem. We are at a stage where we all have the same understanding of the environment we are focusing on.

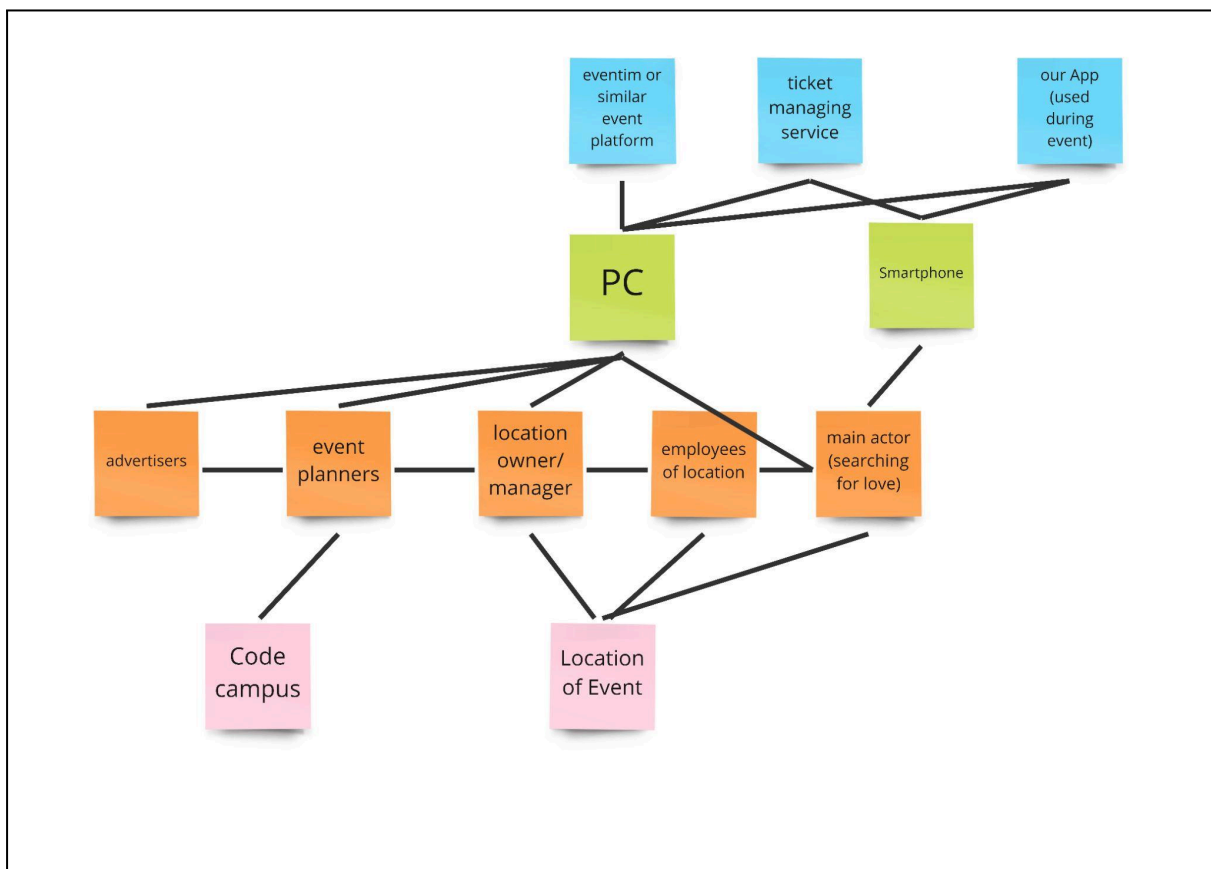
In the next semester we will ideate and iterate on prototypes. For the modules we anyway did a small ideation session where we came up with following idea:

Planning events for singles with the purpose of meeting new people and potential future partners. On this events provide a service, possibly an app, with which a person can signal interest in another person or even see common interests to start a conversation. This will help gaining courage in making the first step and having something to talk about.

Again, this is not a set in stone solution, but our first draft.

2.7. Ecosystem Map

For the idea I mentioned, I created an ecosystem map to see the scope of the problem. Once again I used the book “This is service design doing” as a guideline. I wrote all the involved actors aka humans, interfaces, devices, platforms and systems on sticky notes.



In the picture you can see how that could look like. The pink notes are locations. They are connected to the stakeholders in orange. The location of the event for example is connected to the location owner, the employees like bar tenders or wardrobe workers as well as the participants of the event. The stakeholders then use different devices. I used green for them. Through them they interact with different platforms like the app used during the event or an event organisation platform where the event planners provide tickets and the main actors buy them. Starting into the next semester this can help to keep an overview of all the parties involved.

3. Next steps

3.1. Prototyping in Service Design

The obvious next step would be to prototype our idea. In general prototyping in Service Design is going through iterations and generating more and more insights to develop the product into an always improving version of itself. For us that could mean to start simple with advertising an event and seeing how many people are interested to participate. We could test different versions of an ad, focusing on different key aspects, e. g. once focusing on helping the participants to connect and once on just the event. If the event arouses interest, we could organize a simple event for singles at first with no provided help at all and ask them for feedback afterwards. The next step could be to organize an event where every participant wears a list of conversation topics around their neck, and so on.

3.2. Outlook for the project

I am confident that we will come up with an awesome idea and prototypes in the next semester. The team is motivated and the project is about a topic that is very important for me personally. This semester has shown me how important it is to really understand the future users and to empathize with their problems to be able to create a fitting solution. When we start the next phase, we could use some more Service Design methods like Personas or a Business Model Canvas. I am glad that I bought the book, that Pras recommended to me and that I mentioned also in this assignment "This is service design doing" and I will keep working with it.

4. Reflection

I learned a lot during the module Service Design and the project Icebreaker. Looking back, I think we could have designed our roadmap a bit more flexible. The semester was compact, which gave us a limited amount of time for the research phase. We managed anyway to work together as a team, even if sometimes one member was out of town or sick as it simply happens. Other than that I think we could have narrowed our research further down to dating

exclusively already at an earlier stage and maybe even from the beginning on. What worked very well was our weekly meeting. We always prepared something for it each and then combined our findings and outcomes during these team workshops. That is something I want to keep doing during the next phase as well.