

HELLO!

I'm Hertje, a Berlin-based design expert who connects the dots between humans and systems. I welcome full-time or freelance opportunities in Design Leadership, Experience Strategy, Service Design, Product Design, or Systems Design.



HOW I GOT HERE

An unexpected turn after getting an M.A. in humanities led me to the field of user experience. For the past 18+ years I've worked for small design studios, lauded agencies, ambitious start-ups and blue-chip organizations. I enjoy tackling complex challenges that allow me to combine my design expertise with strategic and systems thinking and follow a servant leader approach to build engaged and effective teams.

1999 - 2006



NORTH AMERICAN STUDIES;
CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Magistra Artium (M.A.)

2006 - 2007



DIGITAL CONCEPT
DESIGNER

Entry level

2007 - 2010



INFORMATION
ARCHITECT

Mid-level

2010 - 2013



USER EXPERIENCE
ARCHITECT

Senior level; lead UX

2013 - 2020

Freelance

EXPERIENCE STRATEGIST
& UX CONSULTANT

Principal level; interim lead

2020-2023



HEAD OF PRODUCT
DESIGN (MARKETPLACE)

People manager

[View full CV on LinkedIn](#)



MISSION

WHAT I DO

Great user experiences don't just happen. They are designed with intent. But as the world grows more complex, making deliberate, informed, and ethical decisions becomes more complicated. This is where I come in.

I'm a strategic thinker with a human-centered mindset and a hands-on approach. My ambition is to identify and solve real problems, with results that empower organizations and serve the people I design for and work with.



EXPERTISE

HOW I CAN HELP



PEOPLE MANAGER

As team lead I build diverse teams that create exceptional products. I practice servant leadership and put the growth of individuals first.

Head of Product Design

Interim Team Lead

Servant Leader

People Management



EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

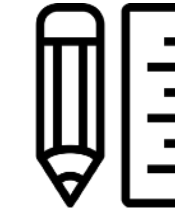
I use research, co-creation and other creative methods to arrive at holistic, tangible and prioritized strategies for your products and services.

Experience Strategy

UX Strategy

Strategic Design

Design Strategy



UX & SERVICE DESIGN

My human-centered mindset puts user needs first. At the same time, I ensure that business requirements and system constraints are considered.

Service Design

UX Design

Information Architecture

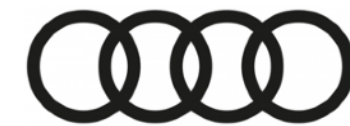
Product Design



SELECTED CLIENTS

BRANDS I'VE WORKED FOR

Versatility is one of my core strengths — I've worked in fashion, automotive and mobility sectors as well as for tech companies and finance, lifestyle and dating brands, both on the B2C and B2B side.

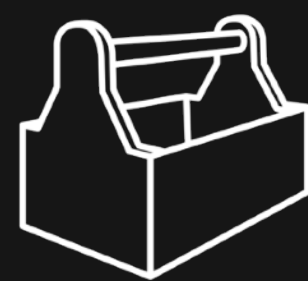


SELECTED AGENCIES AND DESIGN STUDIOS

PARTNERS I'VE COLLABORATED WITH

I often support design studios and agencies in their client projects, so I've had the privilege of working with some of the smartest, most dedicated and lovely people at the forefront of the creative sector.





APPROACH

My expertise covers the design process from research to implementation, from big picture thinking to the little details.

WHAT TO EXPECT

HOW I WORK

I like complexity and enjoy untangling things until connections and patterns are revealed within products, organizations, and their larger context.

I am versatile and deliver high-quality work in a hands-on manner that best solves a problem, supports the team and moves the project forward.

I'm driven by curiosity and the promise of a good challenge, and flourish in human-centric teams that are comfortable questioning the status quo.



EXPERTISE EXAMPLES

WHAT I OFFER



UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

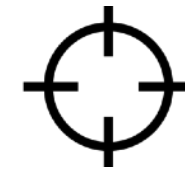
Gather relevant information

Primary & desk research

Competitor analysis

Gap analysis

Journey analysis



FRAME THE PROBLEM

Identify problems worth solving

Analysis & synthesis

Hypothesis generation

Scenario planning

Stakeholder comms



CHART THE COURSE

Conceive and communicate a plan

Mission & purpose

Persona creation

Roadmapping

Prioritization



SUPPORT EXECUTION

Turn strategies and ideas into reality

Maps & blueprints

Flows & wireframes

Qual/quant research

Experience principles



MENTOR & LEAD TEAMS

Build a happy and productive team

1:1 Chats

Structure and rituals

Maturity growth

Coaching & mentoring



UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

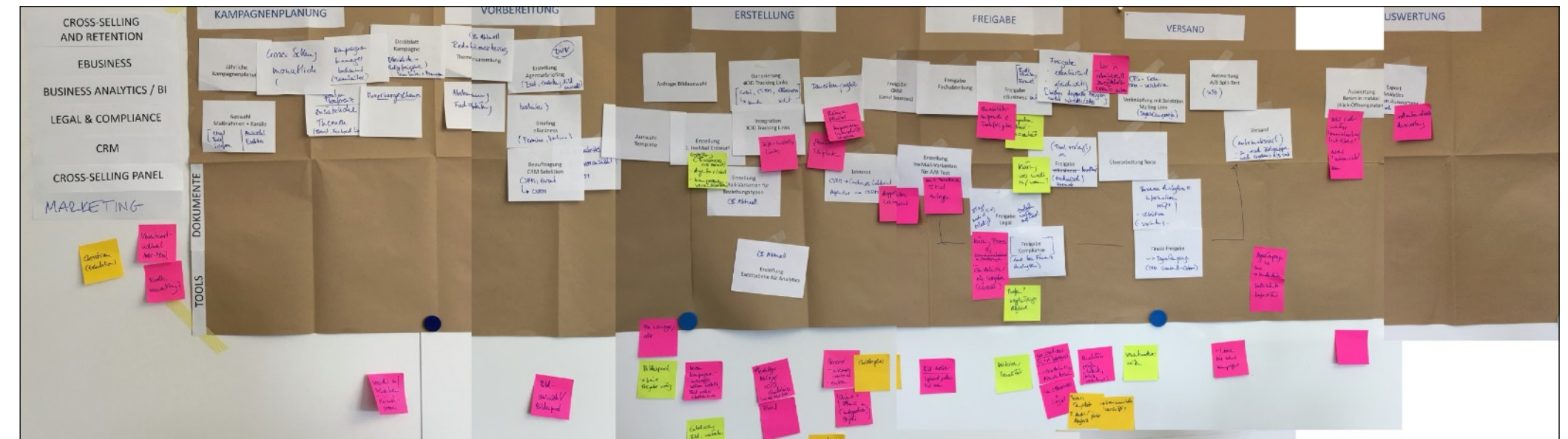


I use a systematic approach to understand the status quo and to identify knowledge gaps and blind spots. This forms the basis for informed and sustainable decision-making.

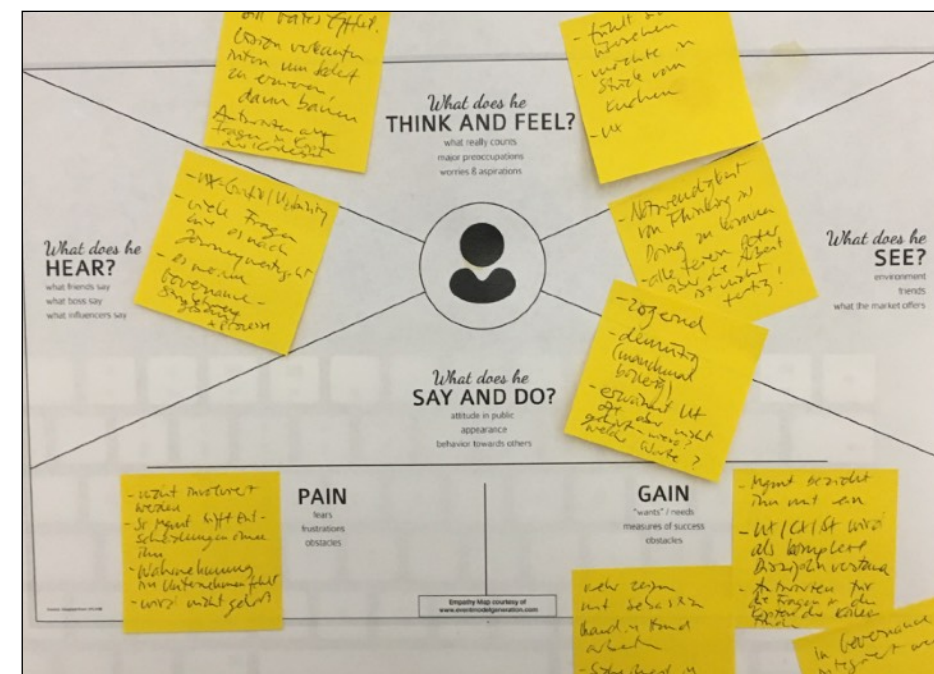
After all, the important part of strategy and design happens long before a first slide, flow or wireframe are ever sketched. Only by taking a step back and understanding the larger context can we make realistic plans for the future.

Bezeichnung	Ziele & Aktivitäten	Ergebnisse	Dauer	Wer
Agenda	Alle TeilnehmerInnen, DAYONE vorstellen Wo TeilnehmerInnen DAYONE stehen und wer Kern-Speaker/Thema, die Agenda wie sie die größte Prägnanz hat und welche Themen?	TeilnehmerInnen orientiert, welche Aktivitäten bzw. Agendapunkte am Tag stehen	15min	Alle
Agenda-Workshop	DAYONE wird Agenda des Workshops vor ICH-ICH ICH-ICH ICH-ICH von 12-13:30 am Freitag und gemeinsame Ziele und welche Aktivitäten in welchem Raum stattfinden werden und die Diskussionsgrundlage, Abfragen mit "Wo ist?"	Strukturplan-Präsentation erstellt	1h	DAYONE-Team
1. STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS	Ergebnisvorstellung			
Summary	DAYONE stellt Highlights aus Stakeholder Interviews vor Übersicht der wichtigsten Ergebnisse	Teilnehmer verstehen, was für gemeinsame Herausg. ist, was es Unternehmen gibt und was Handlungsfelder gibt, welche Lösungen	15min	DAYONE-Team
2. Fokus WÄRMEN	Kernthema: Stakeholder verstehen, was Stakeholder erwarten, welche Erwartungen haben, die wir eigenständig erfüllen müssen. Lösung: Was genau wollen Stakeholder eigentlich? Wer ist die Zielgruppe?			
3. Insights Zielgruppe	DAYONE skizziert die Zielgruppen Kernthema: Wer sind die Zielgruppen? Wo stehen sie? Kernthema: Wer sind die Zielgruppen? Wo stehen sie? Kernthema: Wer sind die Zielgruppen? Wo stehen sie?	Strukturplan-Präsentation erstellt	15min	DAYONE-Team
Übung Kundenerleben	Teilnehmer verstehen Kundenerleben Kernthema: Wer sind die Zielgruppen? Wo stehen sie? Kernthema: Wer sind die Zielgruppen? Wo stehen sie?	Teilnehmer verstehen sich in die Perspektive des Kunden und reflektieren, wie eine gute Produktentwicklung aussieht.	20min	Stargruppe
Ergebnisvorstellung	Teilnehmer stellen Ergebnisse vor Kernthema: Wer sind die Zielgruppen? Wo stehen sie? Kernthema: Wer sind die Zielgruppen? Wo stehen sie?	Teilnehmer verstehen Ergebnisse für eine gute Customer Experience	15min	Stargruppe
3. Fokus WÄRMEN	Kernthema: Stakeholder verstehen, was Stakeholder erwarten, welche Erwartungen haben, die wir eigenständig erfüllen müssen. Lösung: Was genau wollen Stakeholder eigentlich? Wer ist die Zielgruppe?			

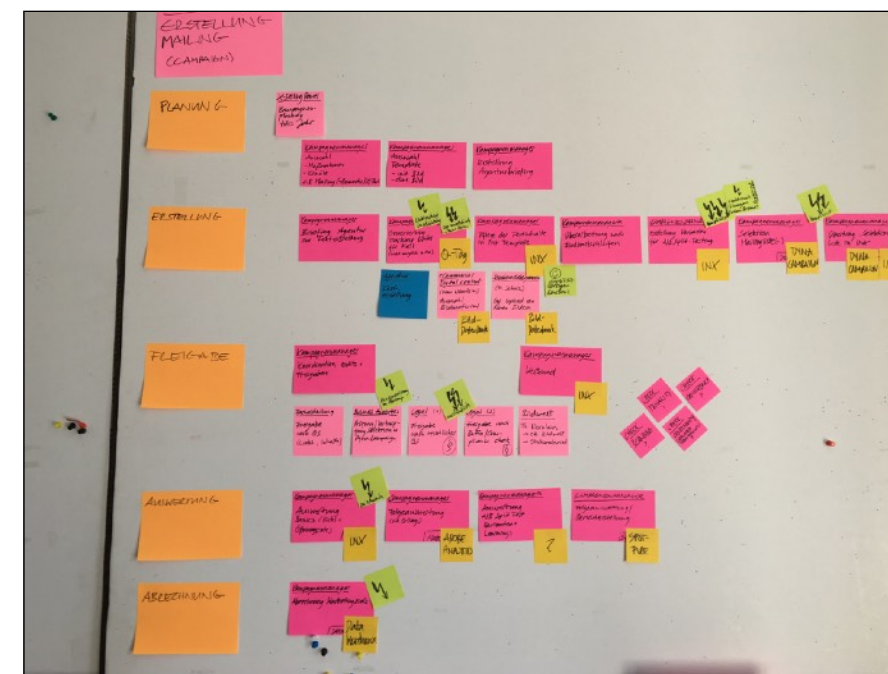
Planning a workshop



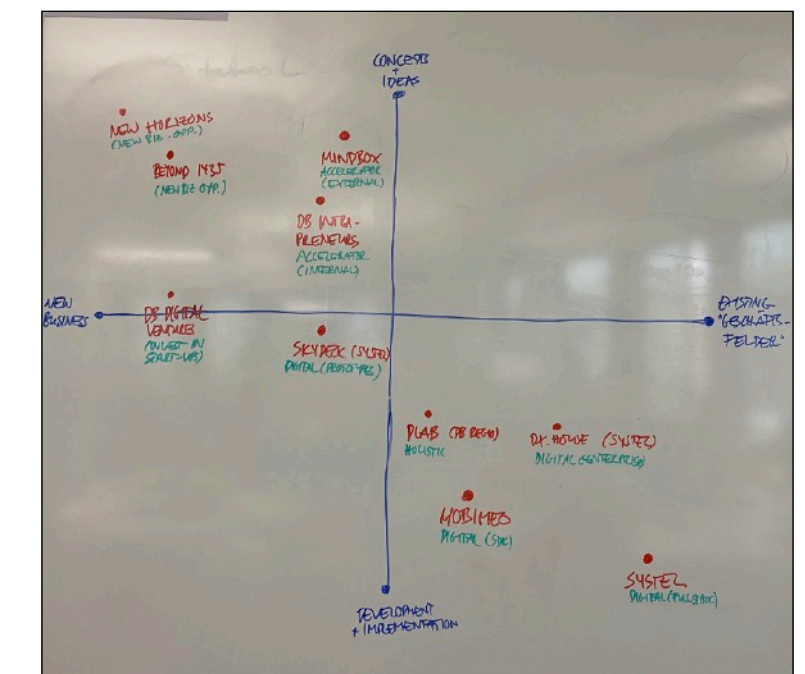
Conducting a stakeholder workshop to identify areas of improvement in workflow



Stakeholder empathy map



Post-workshop workflow analysis



Rough competitor analysis

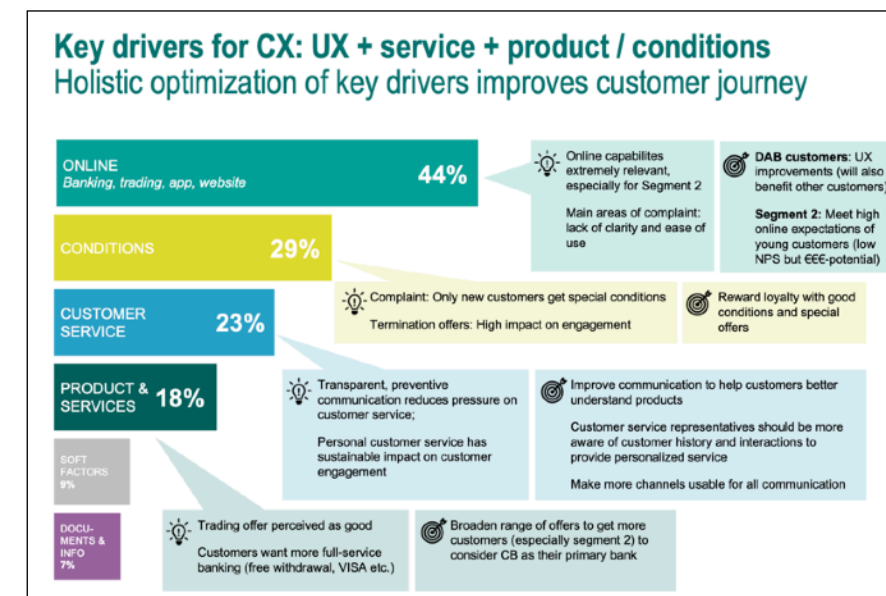


IDENTIFY A PROBLEM WORTH SOLVING

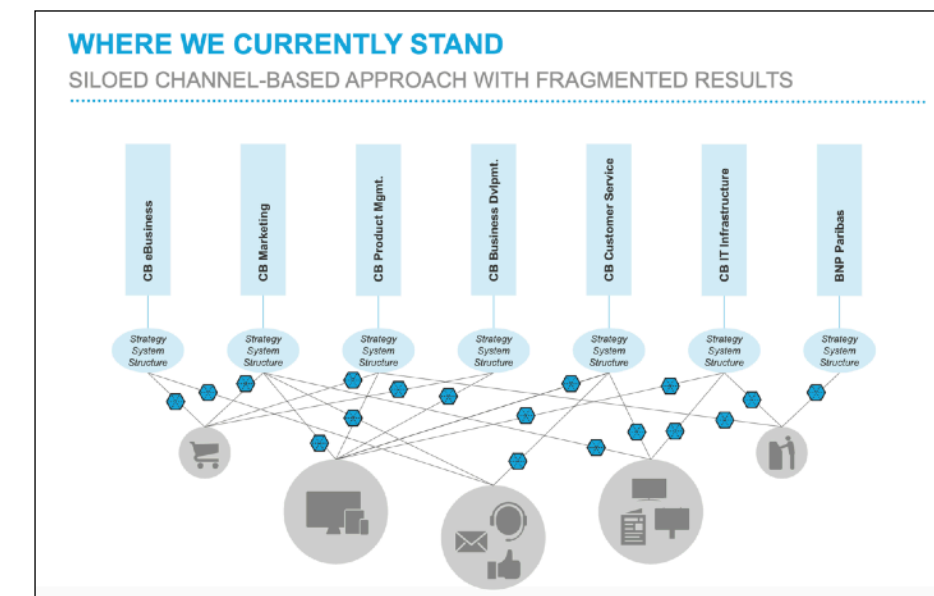
FRAME THE PROBLEM

🎯 *Spot on, scalable solutions require clarity, so I dedicate time to look at problems from all angles. A fuzzily defined, vaguely framed problem means that the team is less focused, so solutions take longer and are less effective.*

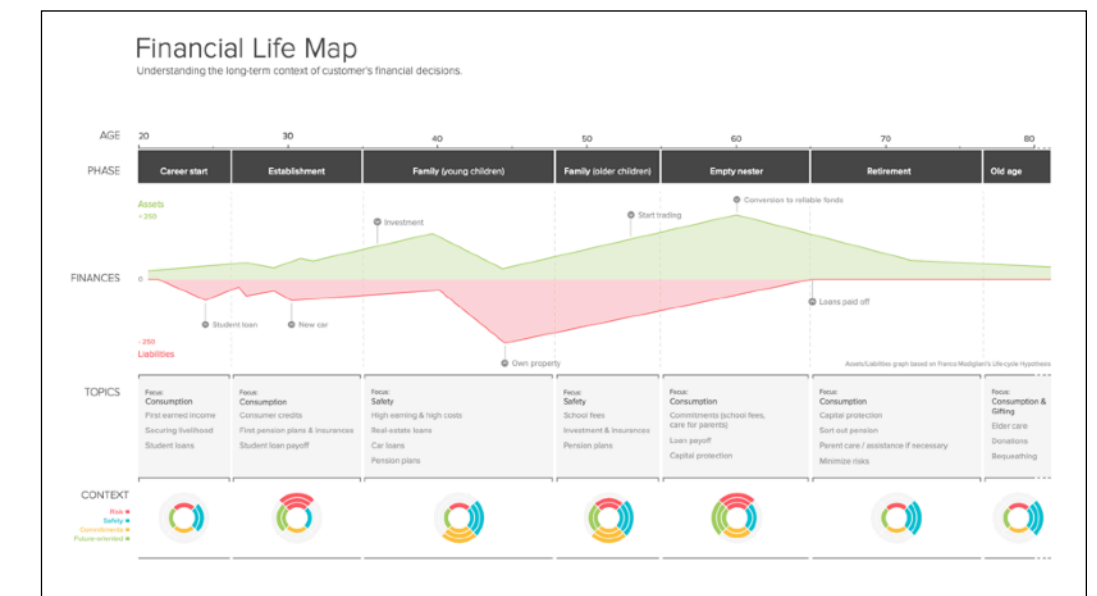
Therefore, I go through several steps to find out which problems to prioritise and think about possible outcomes, unintended consequences, blind spots etc.



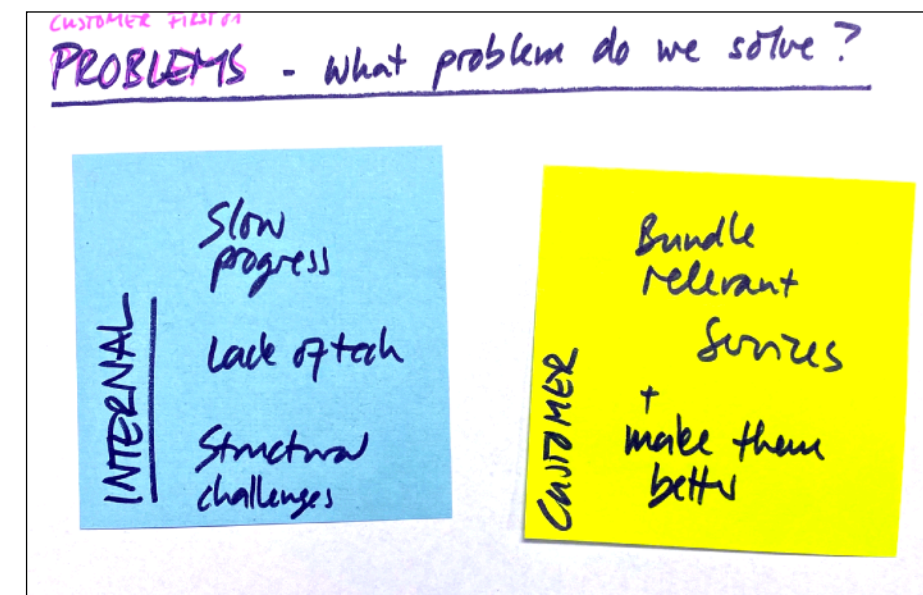
Analyzing drivers for customer happiness



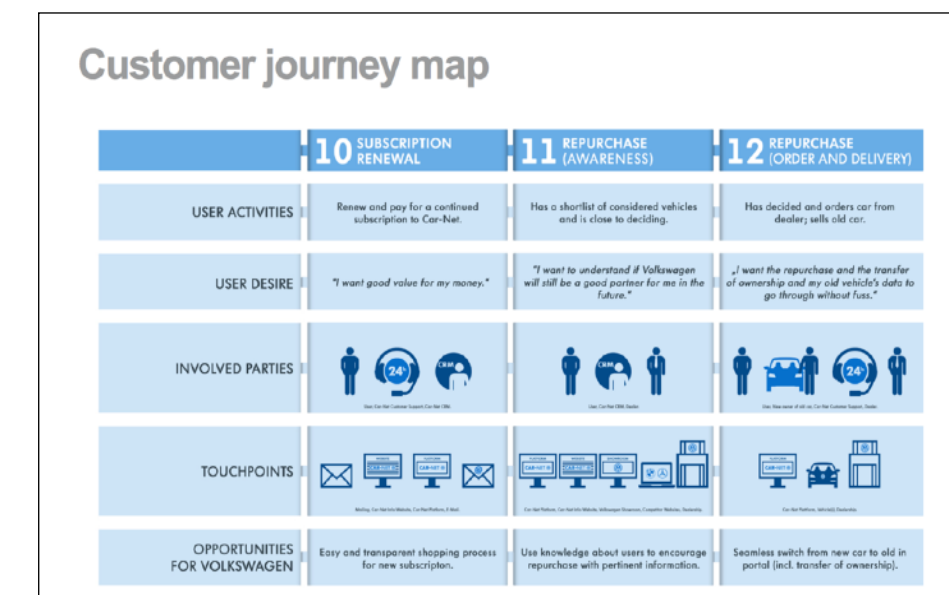
Communicating organizational restrictions



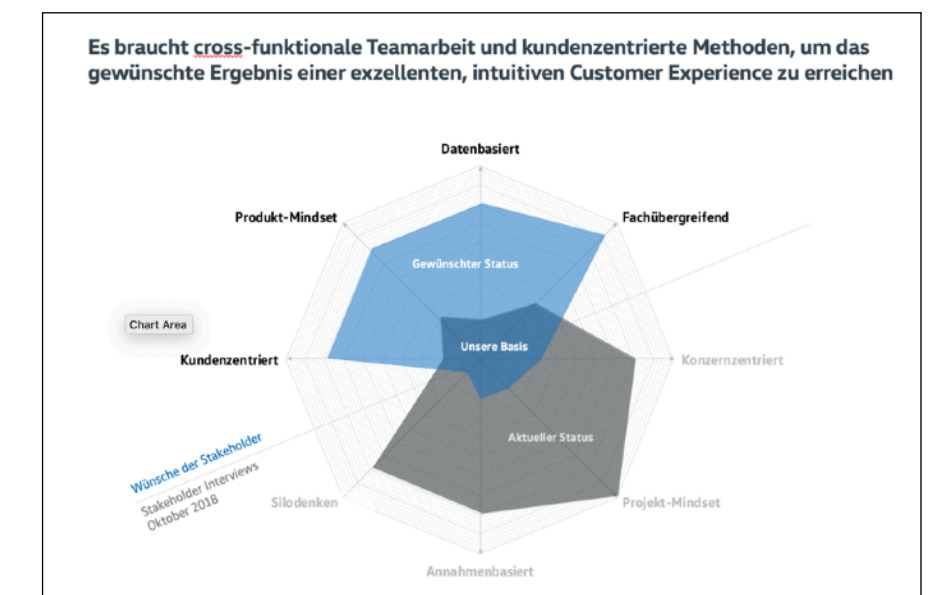
Understanding customer life events



Sketching out different problem types



Mapping the journey for car buyers

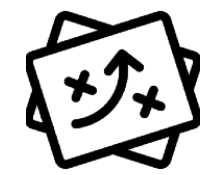


Understanding stakeholder needs



MAKE AND COMMUNICATE A PLAN

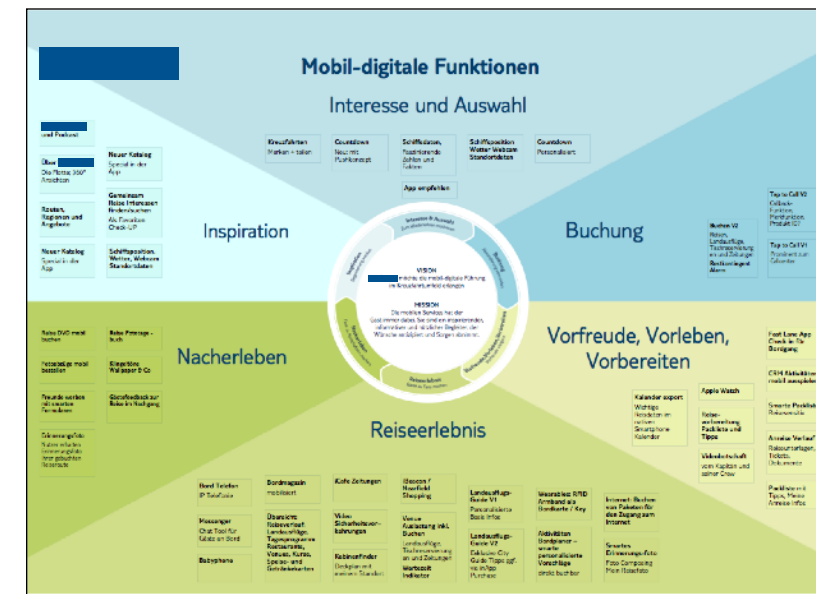
CHART THE COURSE



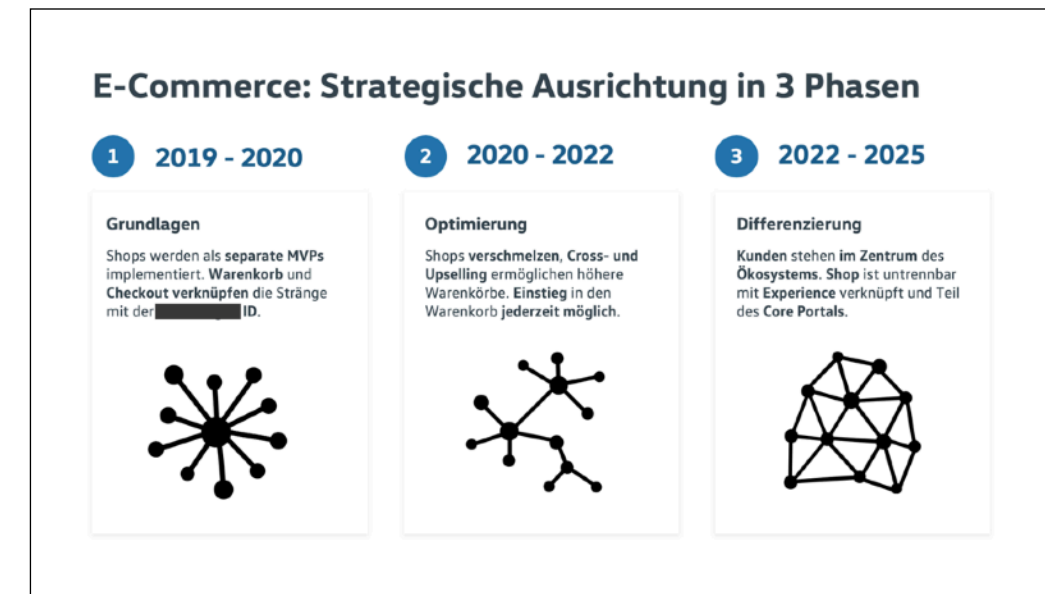
Due to my UX background I

complement conventional strategy with a human-centered mindset and related tools. My aim is to identify the delta between customer goals, business goals and product strategy — and define the steps required to close the gap.

I further cross-functional collaboration whenever possible and work closely with stakeholders to make strategies resonate within the company.

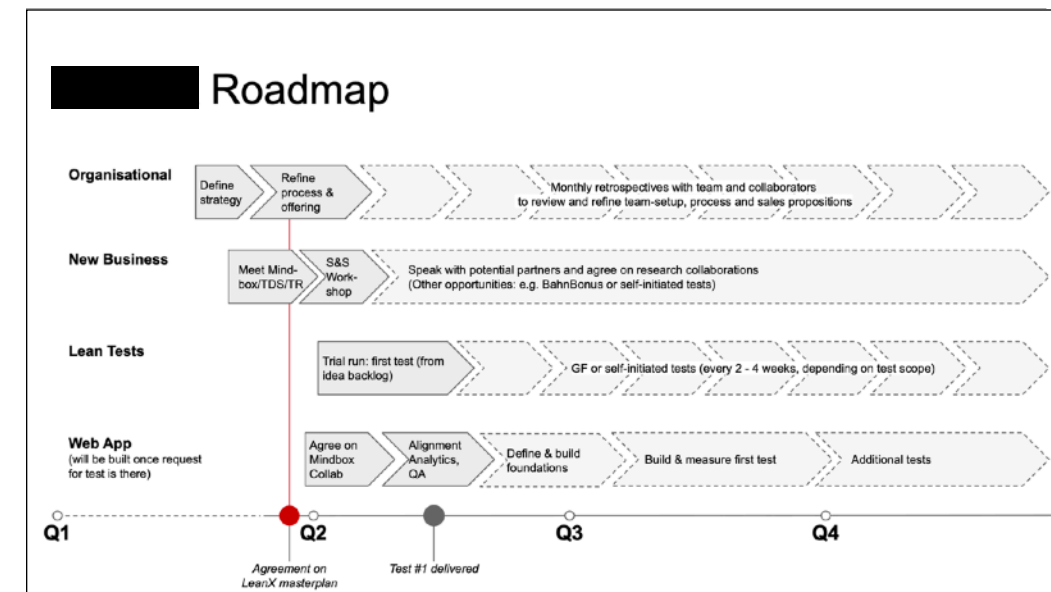


Mapping features to life cycles

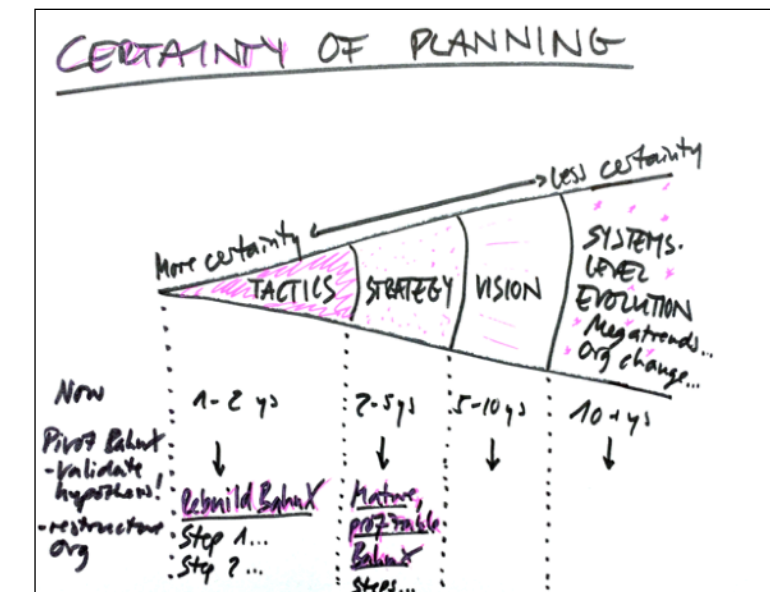


Communicating high-level strategic goals

Developing research-based personas



Creating a high-level game plan



Communicating strategic certainty

Market Segment	NPS
5 €€€€	5
4 €€€	14
3 €€	16
2 €€	-7
1 €	26

Mapping programs to customer groups



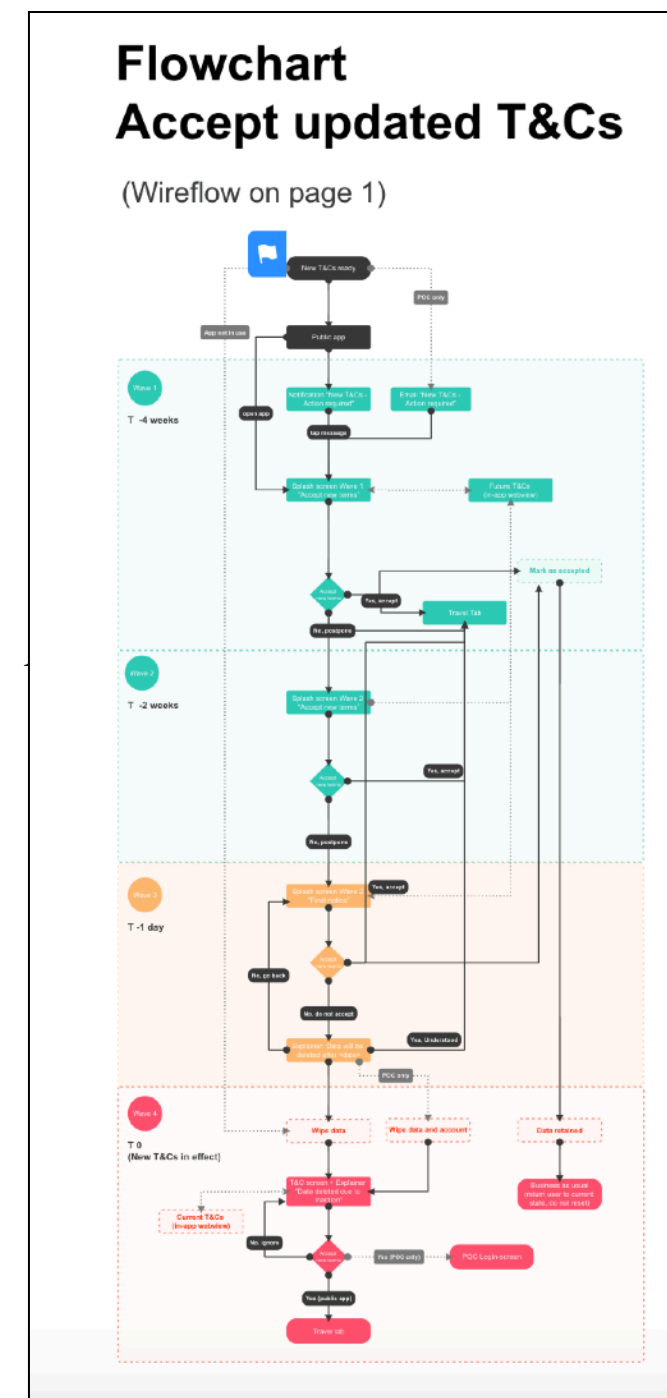
SUPPORT EXECUTION



As a principal-level UX Designer I'm well-versed in iterative, research-based design methods and tools that lead to seamless journeys and useful products.

I work cross-functionally to ensure that the whole team's expertise is reflected in the product, and to contribute to making the team more effective.

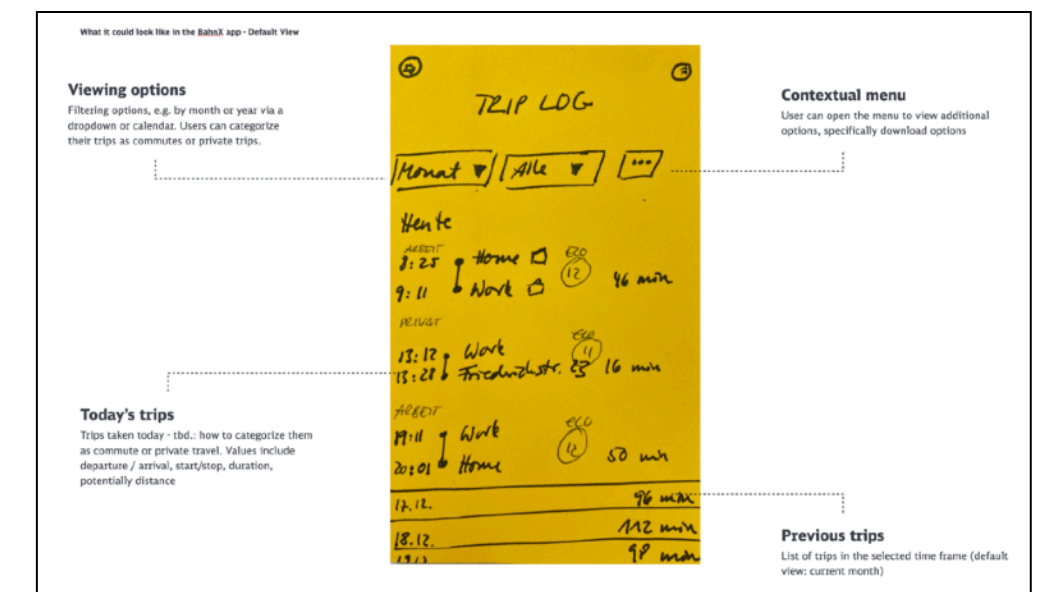
I don't get hung up on formalisms and favor pragmatism as long as it can be achieved with integrity.



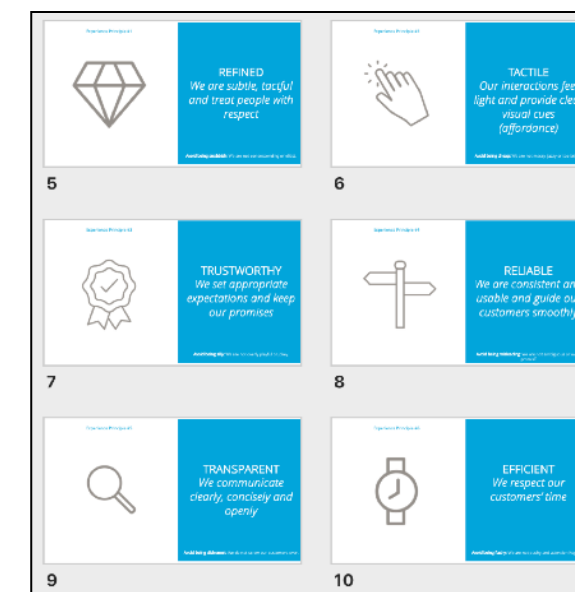
Visualizing multi-stage flow



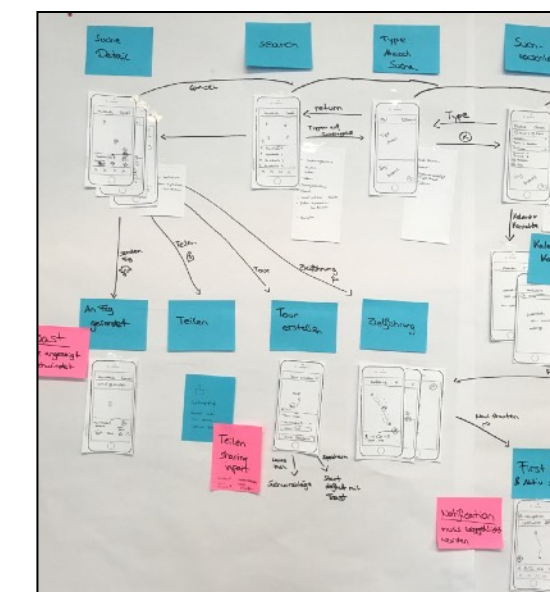
Conducting an interface inventory



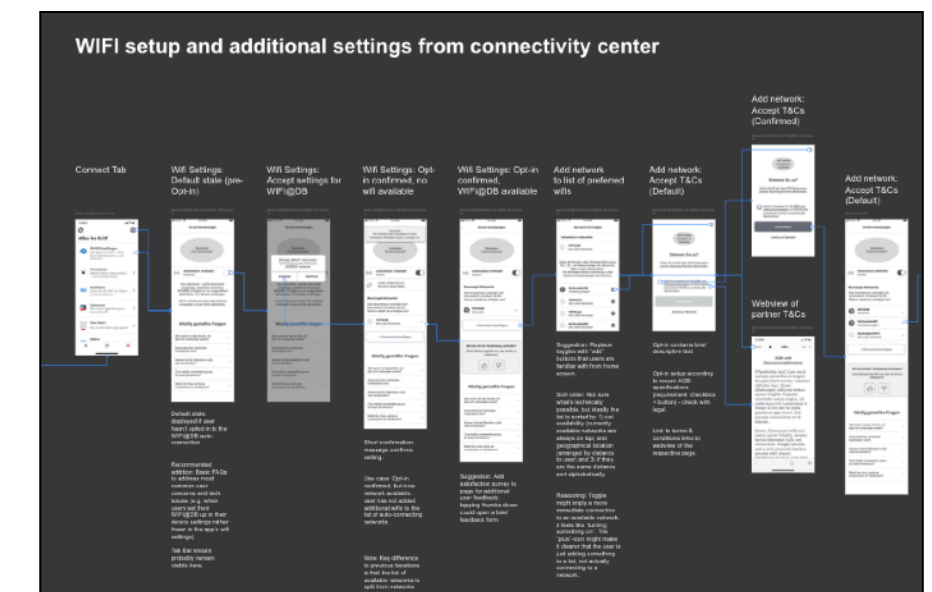
Sharing ideas via annotated paper prototype



Defining UX principles



Planning UX work



Prepping wires and specs for the dev team



BUILD A HAPPY AND PRODUCTIVE TEAM

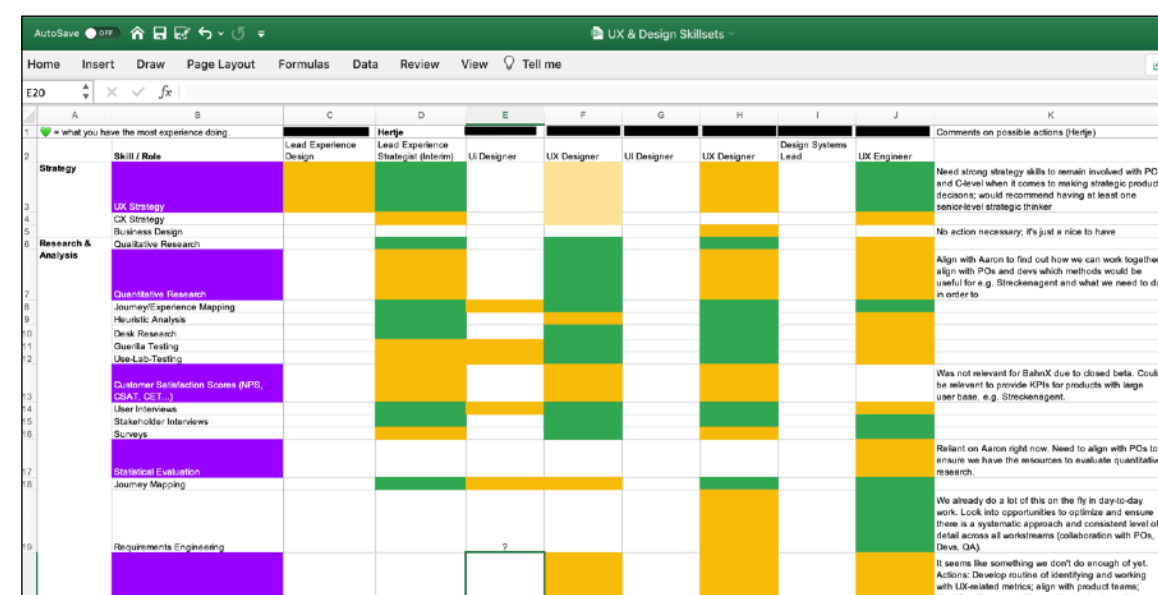
LEAD & MENTOR TEAMS



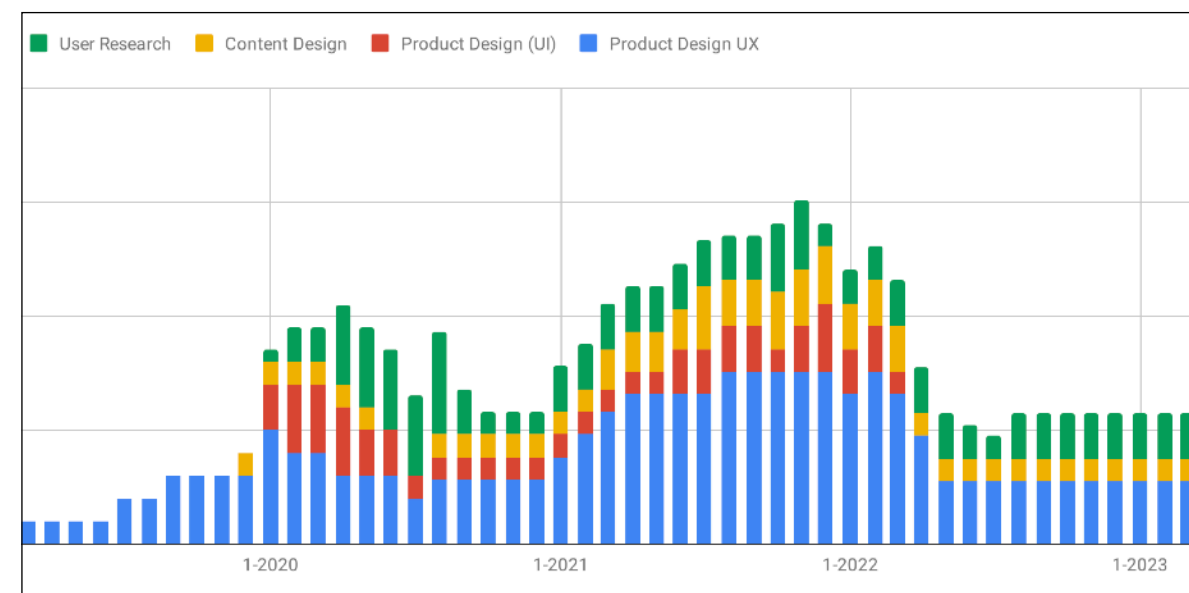
As a people lead I focus on building resilient teams with a high level of psychological safety that empowers them to do their best work, celebrate highs, and support each other during lows.

I strive for coherence, trust, and ethical behaviors in the organization I work in and the products and services we build.

I build cross-functional relationships to advocate for design and it's benefits for internal and external audiences.



Assessing gaps in the UX/UI team with a Skill Matrix



Scaling a team — and keeping it stable and healthy during economic turmoil and capacity constraints.

Question Bank
These example questions provide general guidance and help remember the different capability dimensions for product designers and UX writers to explore during the interview. Therefore:
• Feel free to vary
• Don't feel pressured to ask every single one, as long as the areas are covered
For Principal and Management candidates (high C7/C8)
Usually, the Presentation Interview, which follows the Deep Dive, focuses on Leadership and Community & Team Effectiveness. You won't need to dig too deep into these dimensions. Unless you're doing a Deep Dive during Hiring Days, when the Presentation Interview is skipped.
Project-specific Example Questions
Context When did you do this project? How long did it take?

Standardizing job interview materials

Remaining product design capacity in 2022
~ 139 days aka 28 weeks aka 7 months
(excl. vacation days and 20% buffer/development time)
Design effort estimated for MUST projects in 2022
S = 11x or ~ 2 - 11 months
M = 3x or ~ 3 - 9 months
L = 5x or ~ 15 - 30 months
TBD = 8x -> unknown effort
Total estimate: 20 - 50 months
(we'd need 3 to 7 additional designers to cover it all)
-> We need to prioritize ruthlessly*

Putting design topics on the product roadmap

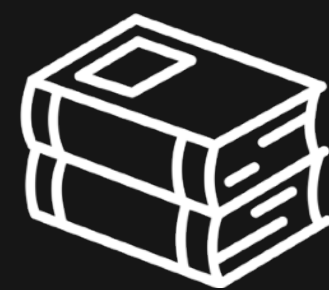
What team professional achievement(s) are you most proud of from the last 2 years?
3 min to add, 30s each to explain
A collection of colorful sticky notes and icons representing team achievements and reflections.

Frequent retrospectives to check in with the team

Partner Services
Knowledge as a product
Author: Hertej Brodersen
Audience:
Date: 21 Sept 2022
1. Background
Relevant content to guide, support, and educate partners (1) is a significant hygiene factor for the partner experience (2) contributes to more cost-effectiveness in Partner Care, (3) provides a means to engage partners and helps them grow their business and (4) has the potential to be a differentiator for Zalando's partner brand.
The amount of content that is produced within Partner Services is continuously growing. However, right now we are not set up to produce, deliver, and maintain content at scale, or to evolve our content offering in an evidence-based manner.

Putting design topics on the product roadmap





WORK TALES

I took on several interim lead roles in the past years, so rather than showing pretty pictures, the next three pages outline my approach for each project.

HEAD OF PRODUCT DESIGN / FASHION E-COMMERCE (FULLTIME)

WELCOME TO THE ROLLERCOASTER

COMPANY *Zalando*
ROLE *Head of Product Design*
PRODUCT *B2B2C Marketplace Portal 'zDirect'*
DURATION *September 2020 - October 2023*
LOCATION *Berlin*

CONTEXT

I joined as Design Manager during a growth spurt and focused on quickly scaling a team of senior-/principal-level Product and Content Designers from 0 to 6.

1.5 years later I was promoted to Head of Design and led Product Design, Content Design, and User Research. An economic downturn necessitated frugality and a revision of the team strategy. A lengthy business transformation brought restructuring and layoffs.

APPROACH

Initially I focused on hiring and supporting the then-Head of Design in scaling the team while also creating an open and safe team culture despite our quick growth.

We worked on integrating designers and researchers in the product development process, including the new role of Content Designer. We also sought to connect our team with the wider design community, in the B2C space but especially in the B2B/B2E environment.

As the economic situation changed, so did team's capacity. Our product peers needed to adjust their expectations of the team, so communication and roadmap alignment became key. The design team experienced a lot of stress, so the focus became working effectively while also maintaining team engagement and mental health.



MANAGING UX AMIDST CHANGE

CLIENT *Leading German mobility company and Dayone*
ROLES *Interim UX Lead, Experience Strategist, UX Designer*
PRODUCT *Mobility app (no longer online)*
DURATION *November 2019 - April 2020*
LOCATION *Berlin*

CONTEXT

I joined during a transformation period when the unit changed from innovation lab to corporate crew. Formerly focussed on building a mobility app, the team now faced a complicated setup of new strategies, business goals and structures, topped off by the arrival of COVID-19.

My brief was to keep the small UX team productive and aligned with other work streams, product owners and developers during this transitional period.

APPROACH

My main focus was to keep the UX team motivated and effective during a constant state of flux. But I also set myself the goal of increasing UX maturity and internal acceptance of UX in order to leave things a little better for the new permanent lead.

As UX lead, I supported the UX designers in their daily tasks and worked with the wider UI/UX team to improve collaboration with developers, POs, BI and other work streams. During crunch time I also supported with the occasional hands-on UX work for complex flows.

As strategist I sought the alignment of strategies from different work streams and supported the POs in developing a strategy and product portfolio for a new B2B innovation unit.



CREATIVE LEAD AND STRATEGIST FOR AUTOMOTIVE E-COMMERCE (INTERIM/FREELANCE)

THE TAMING OF THE FLOW

CLIENT *Dayone (for a leading German car brand)*
ROLES *Interim Creative Lead, Experience Strategist, UX Designer*
PRODUCT *Online new car shopping experience (not yet launched)*
DURATION *September 2018 - July 2019*
LOCATION *Berlin*

CONTEXT

Dayone's client, a leading German car brand, is in the process of setting up an e-commerce platform to sell new vehicles online. Sounds like a no-brainer, until one takes a closer look at the complex business, legal, and technical structures as well as stakeholder relationships.

I worked with the client's e-commerce business owner to develop strategies and provided UX leadership. Within Dayone, I led a small team of UX and UI designers.

APPROACH

I was involved in several e-commerce-related projects. In order to connect them through a shared vision and purpose I worked closely with business and product owners to create a strategy and roadmap with clear priorities, based on stakeholder, dealer, and customer research.

A key project was the design of the user flow for buying build-to-order cars online. Cars are complicated products, and there were many constraints to consider. I worked closely with business stakeholders as well as UX and UI designers to streamline requirements.

For the designers, this was a new level of complexity and scrutiny. They rallied, and produced a flow that worked within all constraints and was documented in detailed specs for the client's developers.



INTERIM PRODUCT DESIGN LEAD FOR DATING COMPANY (INTERIM/FREELANCE)

DESIGN SYSTEMS, ACTUALLY

CLIENT *Spark Networks SE (global dating company)*
ROLES *Interim Product Design Lead*
PRODUCT *Several dating apps and websites*
DURATION *Feb 2018 - April 2018*
LOCATION *Berlin*

CONTEXT

Spark Networks offers dating apps and websites for educated, religious, and senior singles. A merger shortly before I joined offered new opportunities, but also brought challenges, e.g. how to efficiently run several distinctly branded dating products alongside each other.

I was brought on board as interim product design lead to support a small team of product designers who had been without a dedicated UX or UI lead for a while.

APPROACH

I wanted to understand the complicated setup of brands and workflow and tech, so I began talking to stakeholders in order to understand product and tech strategy and to evaluate UX maturity, strengths and weaknesses.

To start with, I made sure that product designers had routines and felt more engaged, which resulted in an improved workflow. I also mentored the team so they would feel more empowered and were able to be proactive in collaborations with developers and product owners.

In order to pursue a more efficient and systematic way of handling various brands, I initiated a universal cross-brand design system that would leave room for brand customization. Finally, I evangelized UX internally to foster a better understanding of design capabilities.





PUBLIC SPEAKING

I enjoy sharing what I have learned as much as I love connecting with and learning from others. Reach out if you'd like me to speak at your event, either on location or remotely.

I TALK ABOUT ...

PEOPLE, PATTERNS AND SYSTEMS

I can be found at conferences and meetups on user experience, information architecture and other digital topics. In my 'Big Picture' talks I dive deeply into topics I'm curious about.

My presentations describe patterns that shape the world we work and live in. I want the audience to leave the event with the ability to detect those patterns in their own workplaces and lives, and apply new perspectives to their processes and interactions.



SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUS TALKS

Interaction Conference

Zürich, 2013



[Video](#)

Euro IA Conference

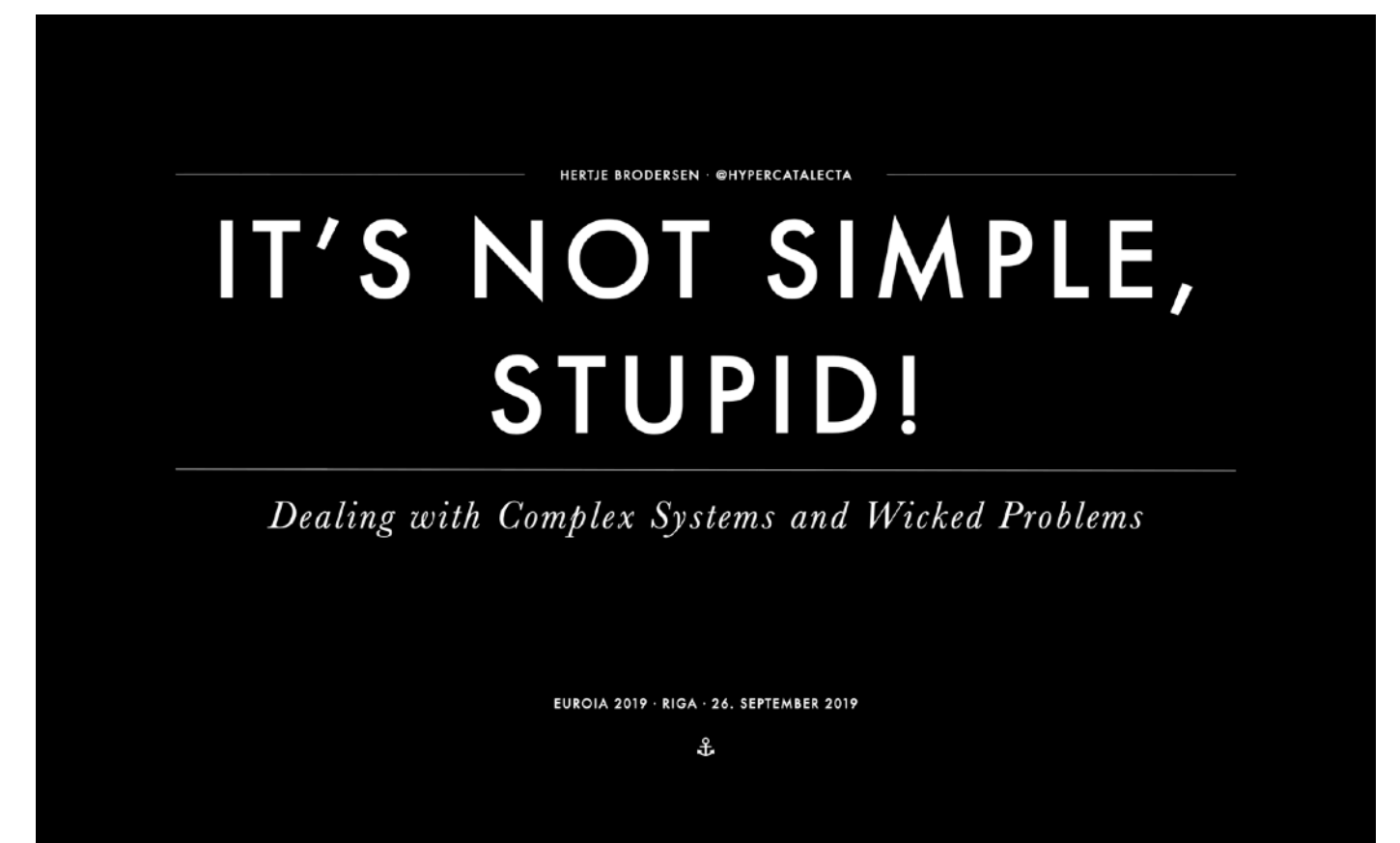
Online, 2020



[Video](#)

EuroIA Conference

Riga, 2019



[Video \(requires login\)](#)



SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUS TALKS

IA Konferenz

Berlin, 2018



Slides (in German)

Interaction Conference

Lyon, 2018



Video

* STRATEGIC PRAGMATISM:
UX BETWEEN IDEALISM AND MONETIZATION





TESTIMONIALS

Some of the talented and lovely people I've been privileged to work with were kind enough to write down what they like about working with me.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING



Bill Spingarn · 1st

Product Design Leadership and Strategy, Head of Product Design @ Zalando
August 7, 2023, Bill worked with Hertje but on different teams

Hertje's expertise in her craft is well-founded in a wealth of academic knowledge. I've often been impressed by how she effortlessly references great books, conferences, and talks that inspire her work, demonstrating her commitment to continuous learning and improvement. However more fundamentally what separates her apart is the human connection she fosters within her teams. Rarely have I encountered a leader in this industry who embodies such kindness and empathy. Hertje's approach to leadership is characterized by genuine care and understanding, making her a beacon of support for her colleagues and a source of motivation for achieving collective success.



Katia Musiolek · 1st

Co-Founder and Partner bei The Next Now
June 16, 2018, Katia worked with Hertje on the same team

All LinkedIn members

On



I had the pleasure to work with Hertje on several projects. In her work she combines strategic thinking and doing. With many years of experience in the field Hertje can call on knowledge from many different industries; at the same time, her approach to each new project is creative, open and with a notable determination to seek out the best possible solutions.

Hertje combines meticulous analysis of underlying structures and patterns with a healthy pragmatism when it comes to communicating and applying her findings. She is a great team lead who knows when to listen and when to challenge herself and the team to rethink solutions. It is always great fun working with Hertje on a project.



Philippe Schott · 1st

Freelance Product Designer
April 4, 2022, Philippe reported directly to Hertje

Hertje was my design lead at Zalando. She leads her team with strategic vision and great attention to detail at the same time. Most of all Hertje has a wonderful sense for people and their needs. Together with her colleague Robert Kortenoeven, she managed to form an outstanding team spirit characterised by collaboration, trust and lightness. She is always approachable and eager to find solutions to challenges big and small. It was such a great pleasure to work with Hertje and her team at Zalando that I was more than happy to extend the collaboration time and time again. Thank you Hertje for the good times and all the great work we did together! I'm already looking forward to our next joint project.



Maria Meermeier · 1st

Business Partner Strategic Foresight & Innovation at different | Feminist
May 22, 2018, Maria managed Hertje directly

All LinkedIn members

On



I had the pleasure of working with Hertje for several months on various service and organisation design projects for the financial sector. Hertje is distinguished above all by the great combination of high analytical thinking and a great love of detail. Hertje finds understandable descriptions for the most complex issues, and thus manages to really bring projects forward. Hertje is a great team player due to her open, clever and funny manner and has grown very close to all of us over time.

[Read more on LinkedIn](#)





BONUS TRACK

*Still here? Glad I held your attention.
Hop to the next pages to get the inside scoop. Or just say hi!*

INFREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q ROCK STARS, UNICORNS, SUPER POWERS... WHAT MAKES YOU SO SPECIAL?

A I see the whole as well as the particulars, both in projects and in the environment I work in. Moving between strategy and tactics, deep thinking and pragmatism comes easy to me. I'm dedicated to making work a psychologically safe space for everyone. Above all, I'm curious and never stop learning.

Q WHAT KIND OF DESIGNER ARE YOU?

A I agree with László Moholy-Nagy that 'Design is not a profession, but an attitude.' That said, these are hats I've worn: Information Architect, Service Designer, Product Designer, Experience Strategist. I've worn titles like Head of Design, Creative Lead, Principal Designer. I've dabbled in Content Design, Organizational Design, and Systems Design.

Q WHY DO YOU LIKE BEING A DESIGNER?

A I like Paola Antonelli's definition of Design as a 'renaissance attitude that combines technology, cognitive science, human need, and beauty to produce something that the world didn't know it was missing.' It resonates because I deeply care about designer-y details, yet am particularly invested in the overall impact on humans and the ecosystem, as well as the shared path that leads to it.

Q IF I WANTED TO HIRE YOU FOR A GIG, WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU SAY YES?

A I enjoy working on complex problems and welcome opportunities to practice systems thinking in a multidisciplinary environment. Topics that speak to my inner idealist are welcome, as is anything that allows me to expand my horizon.

Q WOULD YOU DITCH THE FREELANCE LIFE FOR A PERMANENT ROLE?

A Sure! Depends on the company, of course. I value self-aware and humble organizations that give equal attention to bottom line and their people culture, build products and services with purpose, embrace an interdisciplinary approach.

Q WOULD YOU RATHER BE A PEOPLE LEAD OR AN INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR?

A I've enjoyed both, and also welcome lead roles as a hybrid 'player-coach.'

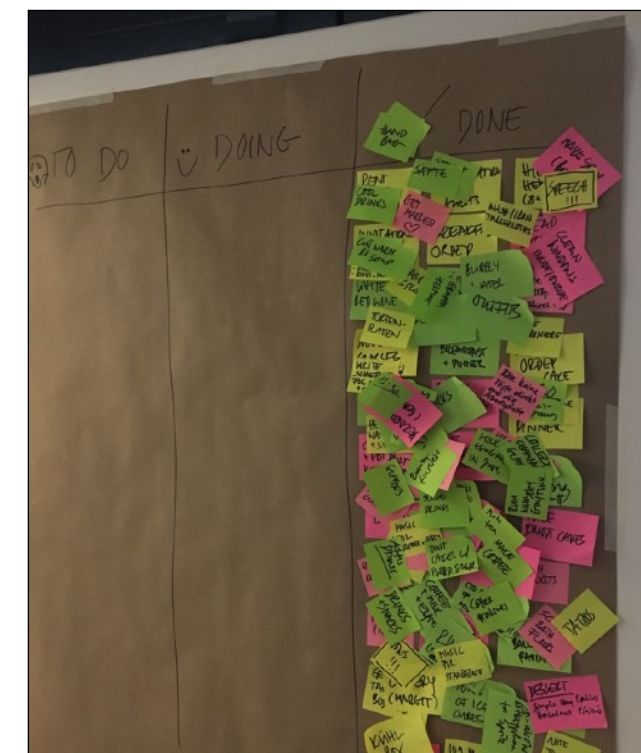
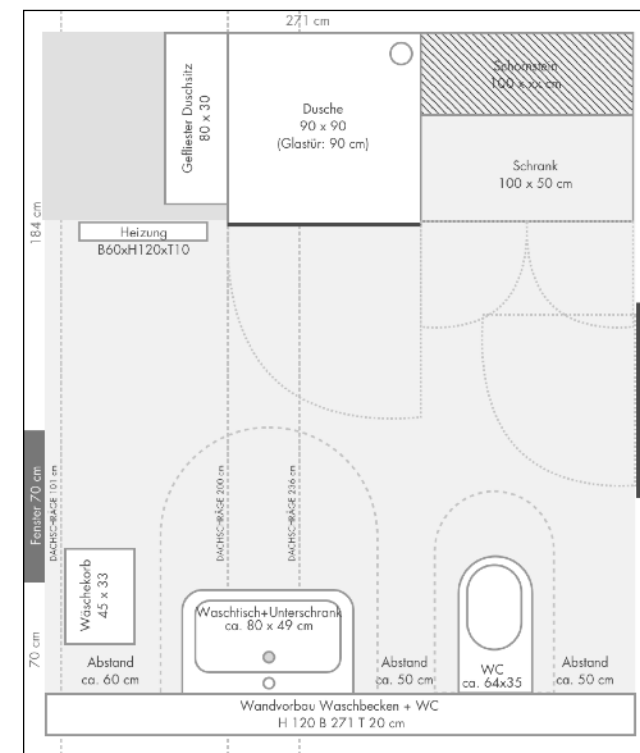
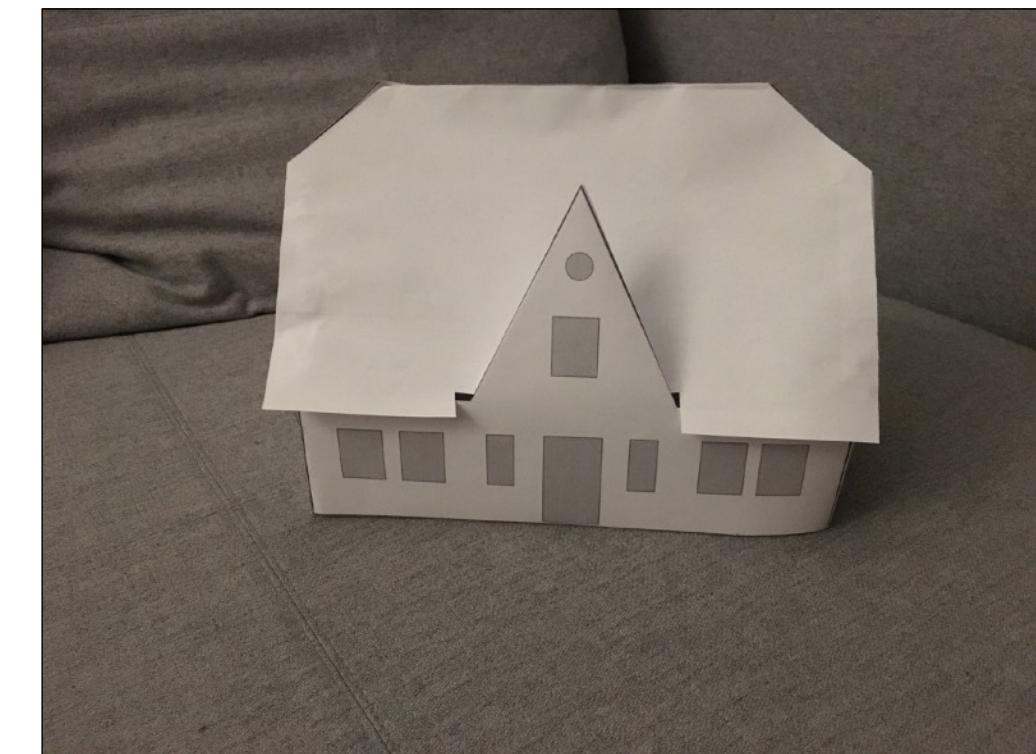
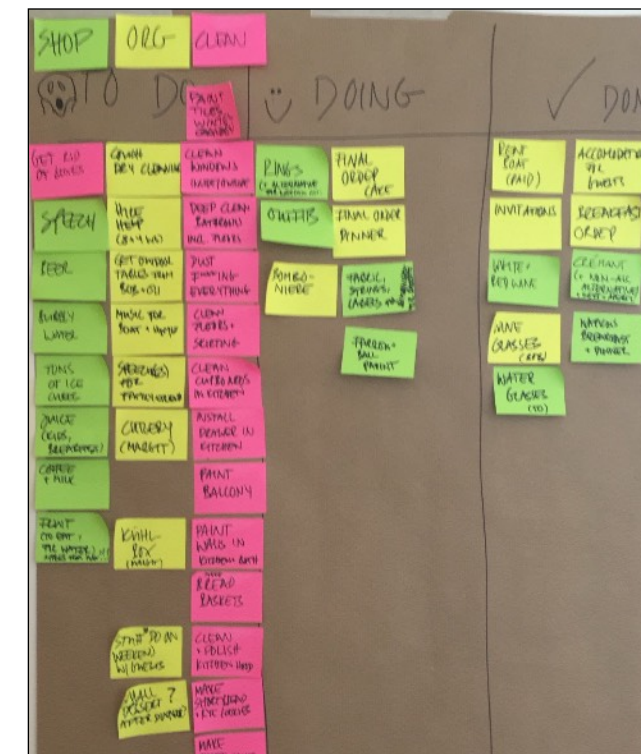
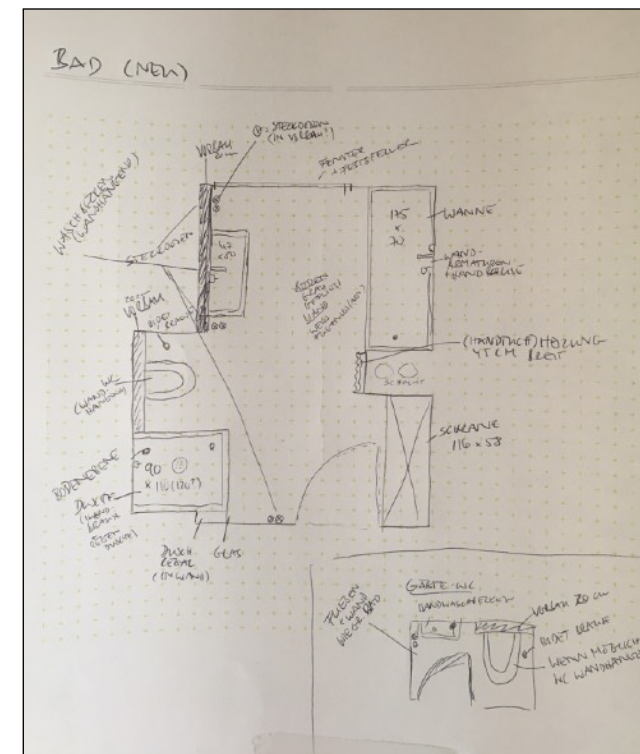
Q ANY RANDOM FACTS I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOU?

A I've taken pictures of abandoned chairs in the street since the early 2000s. You'll find them on [Instagram](#) as [#misplacedchairgallery](#). I've also recently taken some time off and spent parts of it as an intern in a sourdough bakery.



I TAKE THIS STUFF VERY SERIOUSLY

IT'S NOT A JOB, IT'S A MINDSET



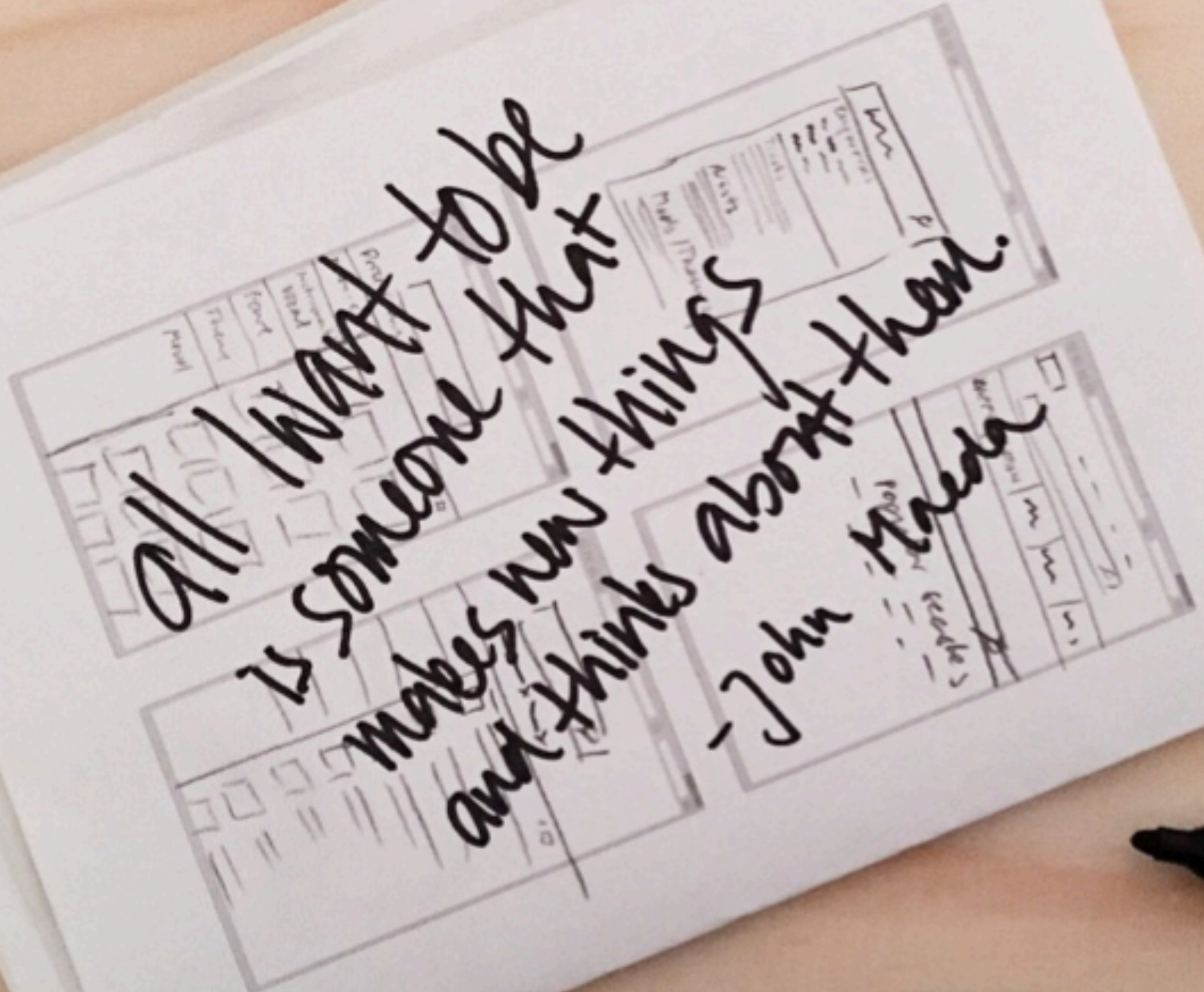
Like any self-respecting information architect, I like labelling and sorting things (not people)

If you can draw a wireframe you can renovate a house

Kanban-type boards are so great, I used one for my wedding

Prototyping is essential (note to self: gingerbread is thicker than paper)





All I want to be
is someone that
makes new things
and thinks about them.

John Maeda



HERTJE BRODERSEN

THE END.

ICONS from thenounproject.com

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