

Welcome to Helsinki playgrounds!

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STARTING POINT:

The city of Helsinki has almost 70 playgrounds, where all Helsinki families with young children and school-age children are offered guided, open, and free play activities located in outdoor and indoor spaces.

Project in short

Pentagon Design acted as a partner of the city of Helsinki in a service design project, the aim of which was to increase the **accessibility and attraction of playgrounds** from the perspectives of different citizen groups. The goal of the project was to **improve the integration of families with immigrant backgrounds** and promote more equal urban development by developing playgrounds.

The end result was a **set of solutions for the holistic development of playground services, communication and service areas**, such as indoor and outdoor spaces and different communication channels and signs. The entity won the Silver prize in the Vuoden Huiput 2021 competition in the Services category.



Image: Vesa Laitinen

Challenge

- Families with an immigrant background do not use playgrounds to the same extent as native Finnish families - and at the same time they miss out on opportunities to participate in activities that would promote integration and the well-being of families with children.
- Even many native Finnish families don't know about how Helsinki's playgrounds operate and that the services are open and free of charge.
- Communication is not always accessible, attractive or understandable, especially from the point of view of city dwellers who speak different languages. Good practices are not shared enough between playgrounds.
- Playgrounds are not recognized in urban environments and are confused with, for example, kindergartens.



Image: Aleksii Poutanen

Goals

- To develop playgrounds into a service that attracts all families and increases the well-being of individuals and the community.
- To develop playgrounds into recognizable and attractive places in the urban environment.
- To promote pleasant meetings between different demographic groups and attachment to the residential area, as well as the integration of immigrant families.
- Reduce regional segregation and increase the attractiveness areas of suburban renewal in the eyes of all families with children.



Image: Jussi Hellsten

Creative solution

Through cooperation with the citizens and between different divisions of the city of Helsinki, we created a set of solutions based on insight for the development of the service environment, operation and communication of playgrounds.

Identified development areas:

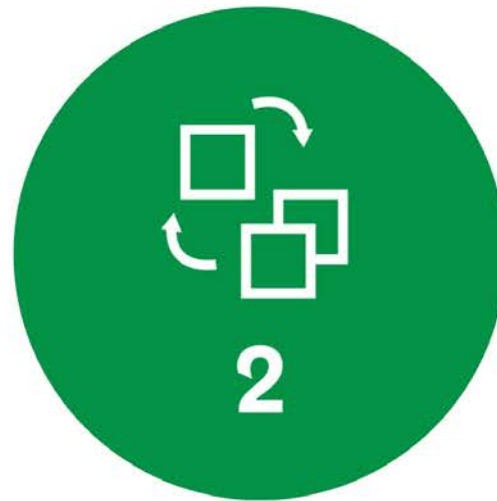
- Indoor and outdoor spaces of the playground.
- Communication in the playgrounds: recognizability, common game rules/use instructions, other communication about the services.
- Attractive and accessible communication in different channels accessible to city dwellers.



User understanding was collected and the solution set was co-developed using several methods



An online survey carried out in the Kerrokantasi service, which was answered by 558 city residents



Two co-development workshops organized for users and playground instructors in two playgrounds



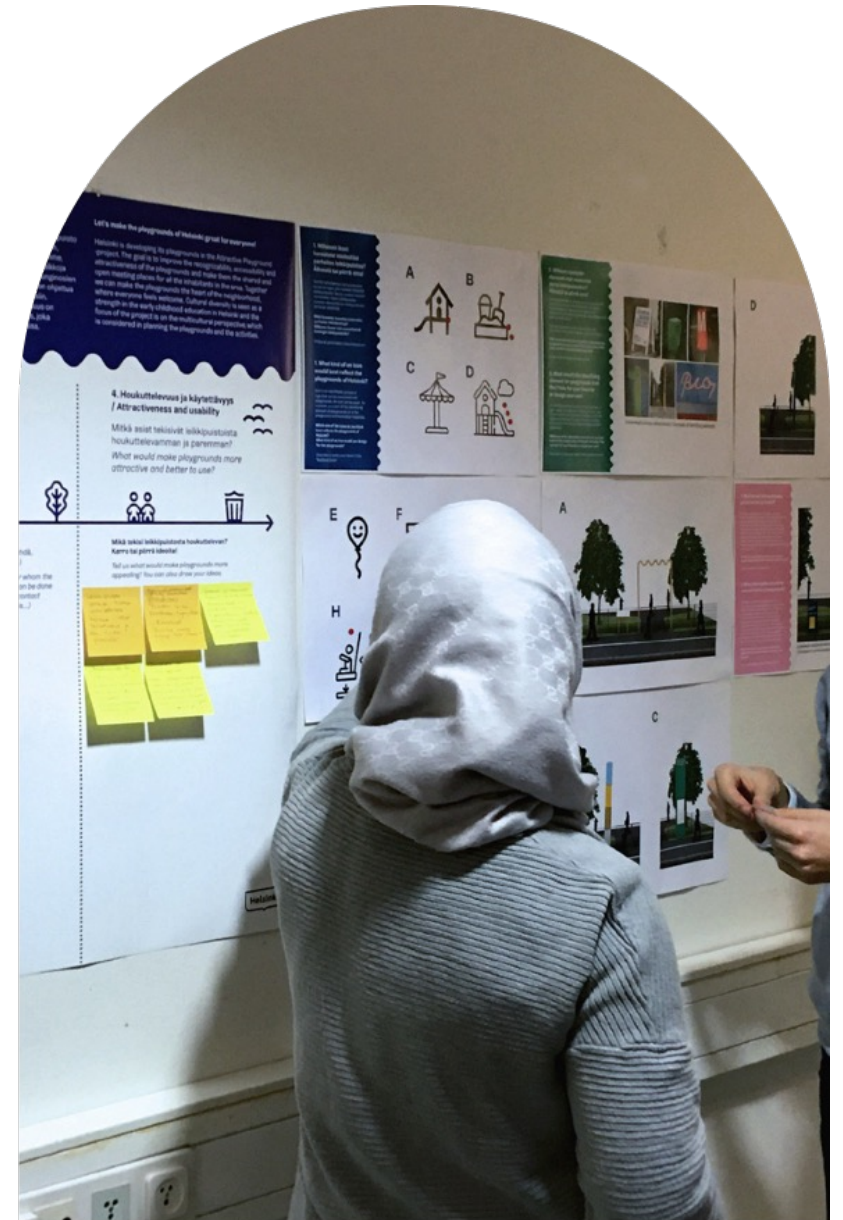
22 stakeholder representatives and 20 city residents interviewed



Four virtual workshops for representatives of playgrounds and the city's various industries

”Welcome’ in different languages, explaining that the park is free and open for everyone, and general mentions of the indoor spaces and guided activities. These are good information for everyone.”

- A citizen's answer to the question "what kind of information would be good to communicate in a playground"

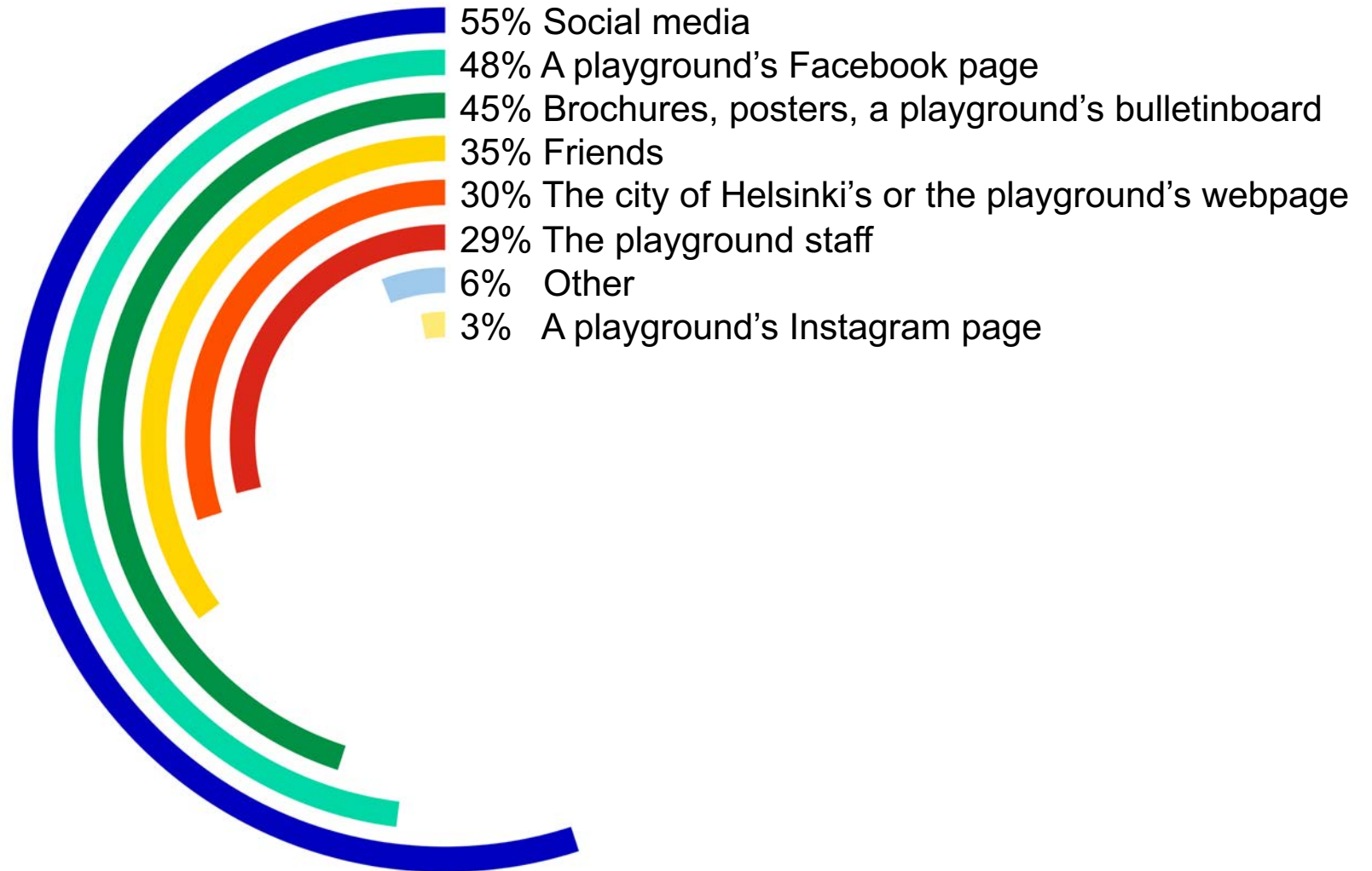


Based on the research findings, we identified communication in playgrounds as a key area of development

To the citizen, playgrounds should appear as a **unified service both in urban environment solutions and interaction with personnel**, as well as in the digital channels of different playgrounds.

In order to achieve the goals, **multilingualism and comprehensibility of communication should be developed**, the roles of channels should be clarified, and the quality, visibility and reach of communication should be increased in all stages of the identified customer path.

This is how the survey respondents had received information about the operation of the playgrounds



Prioritized customer groups



A family with their first baby



An immigrant family with many children



An immigrant parent with small children at home



A new family in the area



Teenagers (especially 11 to 13 year olds)



Desired change

The facilities and activities of the playground are developed separately from each other



A model for cooperation that crosses different city branches

The services of the playgrounds are not known and they aren't recognized as places open to everyone



Increased recognizability of the playgrounds and the communication of the activities will be developed in different channels

Uncertainty about how multiculturalism and multilingualism would be better taken into account in operations and communication



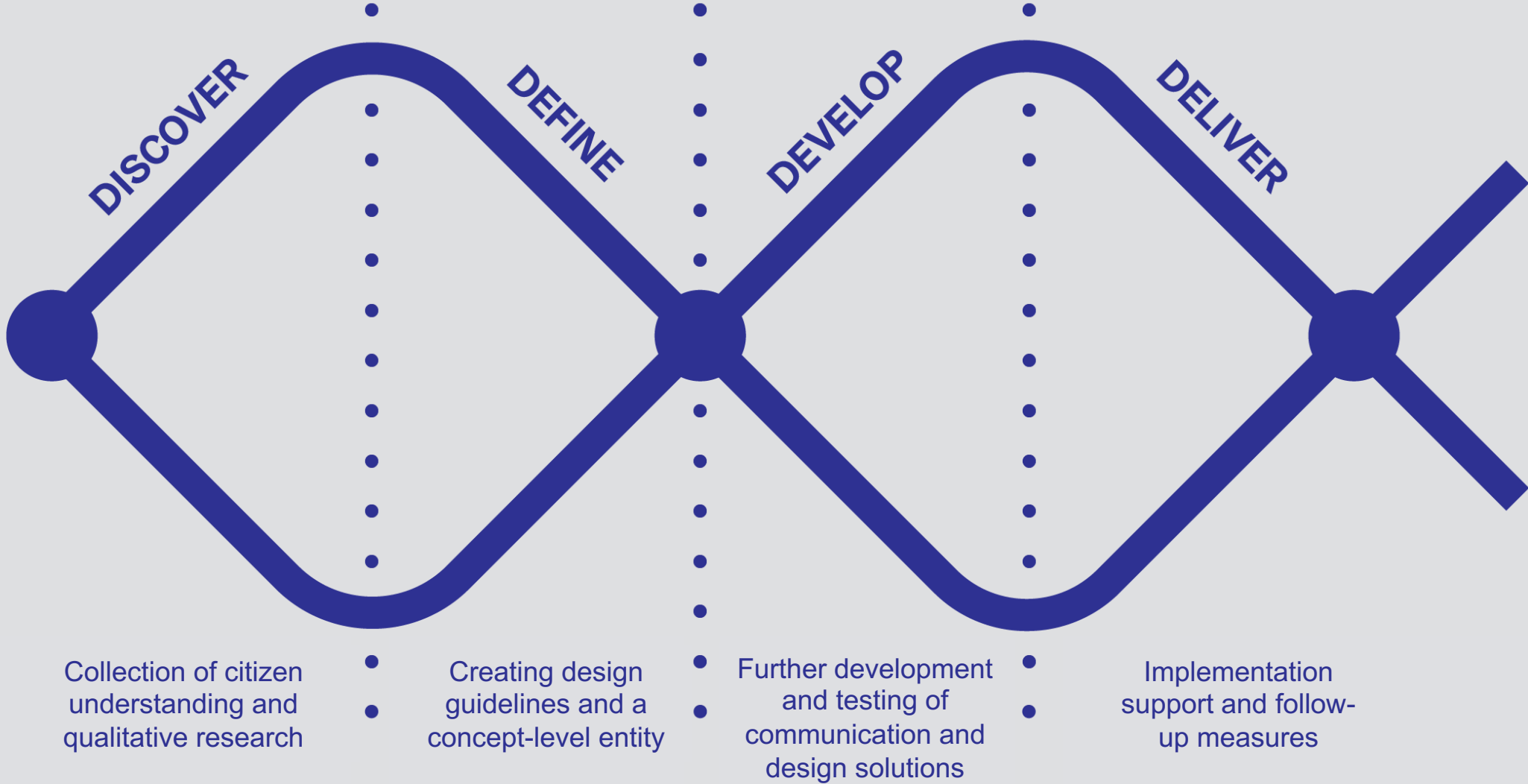
Guidelines based on research, the role of communication with pictograms and illustrations and ready-made templates to develop multilingual communication

Information about playgrounds is scattered, hard to find and not always up-to-date



Playground communication guide, staff workshops and a toolkit for developing playground-specific communication and clarifying the roles of different communication channels

Design process



Factors creating an attractive and accessible playground



1. Communication that reaches target groups and speaks to them



2. Easy to find and attractive playground environment



3. A safe, comfortable and clean playground



4. Distinctive, activating and high-quality themed playgrounds



5. Up-to-date and accessible communication in the playground environment



6. Comfortable facilities which are also available for independent use



7. Low-threshold services which take into account different customer needs



8. Warm, professional staff and guidance



9. Partner network and family services accessible



10. A welcoming, inclusive, and diverse community

Customer journey

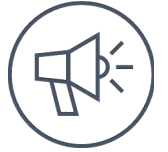


IMPLEMENTATION:

As a result, we produced a comprehensive set of solutions for the development of communication, environment and operation of playgrounds.

Solutions to be placed in playgrounds are currently being tested in five pilot playgrounds located in areas of suburban regeneration.

Illustrated window communication



INSIGHT:

Citizens do not know that

- The playground's buildings are open to use for everyone
- There are activities inside
- The use is free of charge

SOLUTION:

- Illustrated window communication which is understandable for people of all languages.
- Illustrations promote recognizability and findability of playgrounds, and communicates the services



Image: Maarit Mustonen

Recognizable identity elements for playgrounds



INSIGHT:

The park does not stand out as a playground.

SOLUTION:

Distinctive playful elements, such as arches with the graphic wave shape from Helsinki's graphic guidelines and branded signposts in the entrances.



Attractive and adaptive content in communication



INSIGHT:

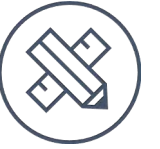
The communication about the parks does not reach non-native speakers

SOLUTION:

Digital screens with image and video content that shows what the activities are like and also shows people from diverse backgrounds



A new icon for playgrounds to increase recognition in different channels



INSIGHT:

Helsinki's playgrounds didn't have a common visual element or a logo to unify them or to be used in communication.

SOLUTION:

The playground icon that serves as the logo of Helsinki's playgrounds and is used, for example, in the Leikkipuistot Helsinki mobile application and in communication solutions for the urban environment.



Design guidelines for creating attractive playgrounds



INSIGHT:

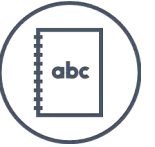
- There weren't unified guidelines for planning and creating playgrounds.
- There was little structured cooperation between different branches of the city organization.

SOLUTION:

The design guidelines were created for the city-oriented co-development of the playground environment and services.



A guide to implementing accessible and attractive communication



INSIGHT:

The communication about the different playgrounds was often unstructured or neglected.

SOLUTION:

The communication guide was produced together with the parties planning the communication of the playgrounds. Its purpose is to clarify the roles of communication channels and to empower personnel to make high-quality and accessible communication.



A playful stepping stone element as a tool for multilingual communication



INSIGHT:

Many families didn't know they are welcome or feel that this playground is for them to use.

SOLUTION:

The jumping stone element is one of the urban environment solutions designed by the client based on the findings and concept proposals of the project.



Image: Kaisa Kuusniemi / Lappset

“As a result of the collaborative process the playground Kiikku was renewed to be more inviting. It was very inspiring to participate in the design process and develop the service and activities with the staff to make them even more attractive. Hopefully, the resulting guidelines will be used for a long term.”

- NN, leading playground supervisor

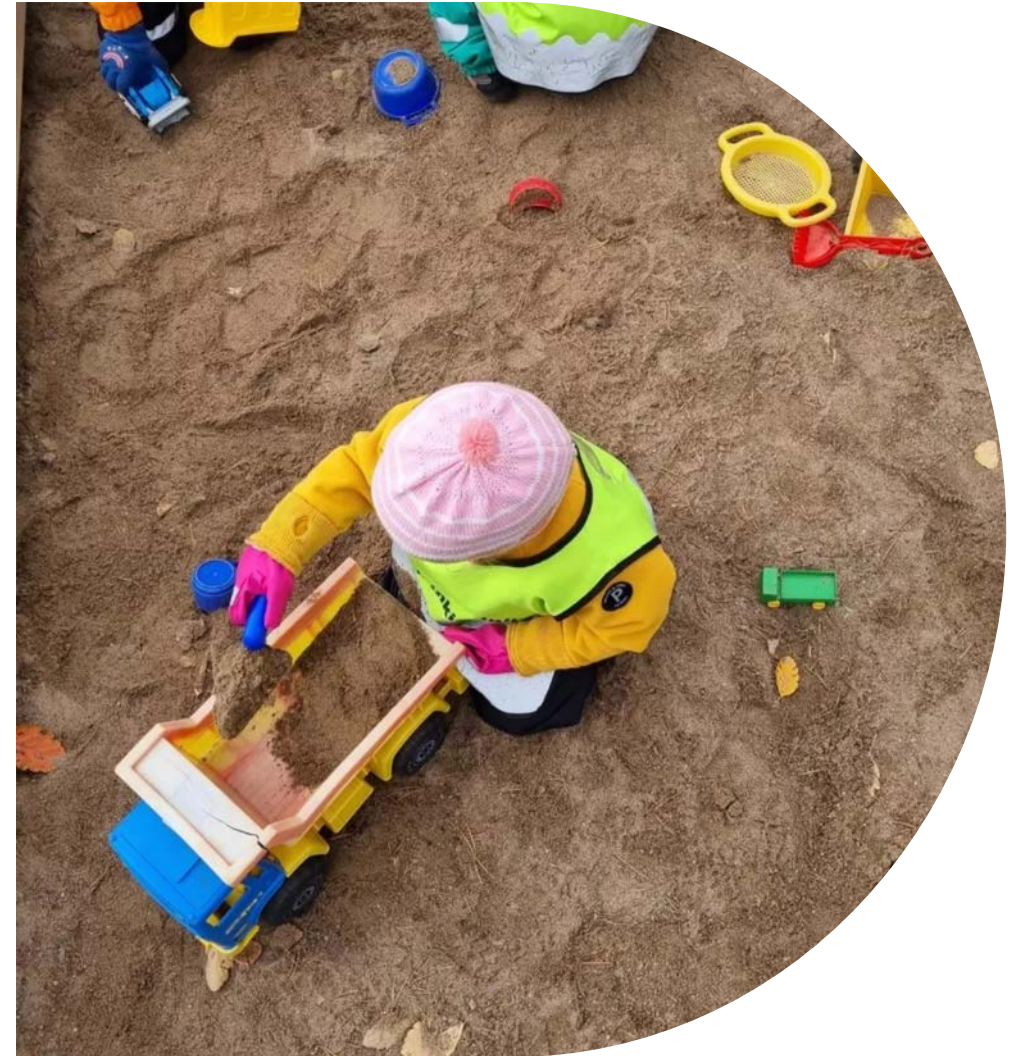


Image: Playground Kiikku, Helsinki

Reflection

Key takeaways from the point of view of service design practitioners:

- **Building ownership and commitment in the client organization across organizational levels is essential** – in big organizations there should be a strong ownership and interest to continue the work to achieve the desired change and impact.
- **Big societal challenges typically require systemic solutions and plans for longer term transformation** - in addition to creating ambitious goals that require time and perseverance, smaller and faster tasks, and hence results, should be planned and generated to motivate the organization for the transformation.
- **Aim to find allies across the client organization**, you will need them. Service design projects typically raise issues that require new ways of working, new type of leadership and people that are committed to the change on all organizational levels.

Thank you!

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