

# AUTONOMY FOR IN WITH AND DESIGN

Incorporating the meaning of autonomy in the design process



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## Colophon

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# Summary

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This thesis set out to explore the meaning of autonomy and use this knowledge to create a tool for designers to communicate the complexity of the concept with their clients. In today's society, we value autonomy and we strive to ensure that everyone can lead their life as autonomous as possible. In fact, we view autonomy as ultimate independence and freedom from outside influence. But by insisting so hard on independence and personal responsibility, it can feel like failing if you do not manage to do everything on your own. From the research done in this project, it was found that autonomy is more than being able to do everything yourself. Autonomy actually means making decisions and doing things in a way that you like or need. This can also mean that you do not want, can or should do it alone and that you need or want to be supported by the world around you. You decide yourself, as an individual, who or what can provide that support. The relationships you are part of are part of the context you are in and which can support you the way you want.

The insights gained throughout the project are boiled down into a comprehensible framework explaining the different components of autonomy: the individual, important relationships, boundaries of support, and the context. Exploring the framework with designers revealed that the framework could be implemented throughout the design process in different capacities. As the first step to designing with autonomy is understanding what autonomy is, the choice was made to come up with a design for the first phase of the design process. The framework has served as the foundation for the development of a toolkit for designers. The *Autonomie voor/in/met/en* Design toolkit supports designers in communicating the importance and complexity of autonomy with their clients at the start of a project, by providing tools to uncover assumptions the client might have regarding the autonomy of their target group. While the toolkit is designed for the first phase of the design process, it is the first step to putting autonomy higher on the priority list of designers and clients.



# Acknowledgements

If you are reading this thesis, that means that I made it. For a year I have been working on this project and it has been an incredibly interesting, complex and sometimes even difficult journey, which I luckily did not have to take on completely alone. I would like to thank everyone who has helped me in tackling this project.

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Daan, my unofficial second company mentor. As IDE alumna and Ideate service designer you helped me navigate both the academic and the company side of the project while always reminding me that everything would work out. Thank you for that!

Everyone at Ideate, thank you for making working at the office so much fun that I was always looking forward to working in Amersfoort. Thank you all for joining the creative session and being truly interested in helping me with my project.

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The logo for 'Coasje' is written in a stylized, orange, cursive font.

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0.



# The project

This chapter introduces the topic of this project, as well as the scope and frame in which this project will be executed. The initial research questions are formulated and the setup of the project as well as this report are explained.

# 0.1 Introduction

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In today's society, there are unprecedented opportunities available to us, which has resulted in us as a society becoming more materialistic and individualistic. One of the results of this is that we value autonomy and strive to ensure that everyone can lead a life as autonomous as possible. In fact, we view autonomy as ultimate independence and freedom from outside influence. But by insisting so hard on independence and personal responsibility, it can feel like failing if you do not manage to do everything on your own. Meaning we are actually achieving the opposite effect of what we want: people living their best lives by being autonomous. However, one thing that is missing is what is actually meant by autonomy. It seems that different people have different interpretations of the concept, though this is not often discussed. Autonomy is seen as the ultimate goal without questioning its meaning. Therefore, this thesis sets out to explore the meaning of autonomy and use this knowledge to create a tool for designers to communicate the complexity of the concept with their clients.

This project was originally introduced by Ideate in the following way:

*Whether it concerns the energy transition or a healthy old age, we as a society attach great importance to the importance of autonomy. In practice, this means we do a lot of work to encourage citizens to make healthy or sustainable choices by themselves. However, behavioural change is very difficult to achieve if you only focus on your own responsibility. An 'orchestration' of regulations, influencing behaviour and enforcement is sometimes*

*already more effective. And sometimes some guidance from others is needed. But how do you do that, what is realistic in this and for whom or what does that apply?*

*For example, Ideate is a design agency that often works on projects in which autonomy and direction play a major role. In much of their work in health they see that the autonomy of the citizen is put above all else. So, one may choose to live an unhealthy life. Without wanting to discuss that, you can still question it. To what extent is it a conscious choice? What plays a role in this? And, to what extent is there room to take over part of the direction? By whom then, what are the factors in this?*

An example of a project Ideate has been working on, ROF Friesland, in which autonomy plays a role, is introduced on the right.

This thesis is built up of seven chapters. Chapter 0 introduces the project, as well as the scope and frame that this research will be executed in. The initial research questions and project process are introduced. In Chapter 1 an understanding of autonomy is created through theory and translated into a framework of autonomy. Chapter 2 explores possible uses of the framework in practice with end users and clients, which lead to a design exploration with Ideate and a revised version of the framework in Chapter 3. The design goal and requirements are set up and in Chapter 4 the framework facilitates the design of an autonomy toolkit. This toolkit is evaluated in Chapter 5 and the results of this thesis are then discussed in Chapter 6, along with the

## ROF - Friesland

The elderly like to participate in society in the same way everybody else does. One of the conditions for this is to be able to get where you want to be, thus 'mobility'. In what manner you get there does not matter, as long as you get there. Getting older comes with certain flaws, for example not being able to drive your car or ride your bike. We would like to see that people stop using a certain mode of transport before it becomes dangerous and instead make use of different modalities that allow them to travel safely. The range of available modalities is wide, with multiple types of public transport as well as the option to ask friends and family for help.

The goal is to gain a better picture of the process of this transition between modalities. The current hypothesis is that the broader the range of modalities that a person is familiar with, the longer that person will stay mobile. It does not matter if that person is dependent on things or other people, as long as they have access to mobility.

limitations and possible recommendations for further research and design activities.

## 0.2 Scope

To further scope the project, the target group for the final design of this project is defined as:

*Service designers working at service design agency Ideate.*

As Ideate is the client for this project, it makes sense to focus on their designers as the main target group for the final design of this project. This also allows for easier access to designers to participate in creative sessions for research purposes and evaluation of the design.

Besides narrowing down the target group for the final design, the choice has been made to research the meaning of autonomy in the context of Positive Health. Narrowing down the context in which research will be executed limits the width of research to be done into autonomy, making the project more manageable within the available time frame. Positive Health will be further explained in Chapter 1.3.

## 0.3 Framing the project

As a service design agency Ideate works for clients in four different sectors: health, mobility, energy, and learning and developing. Most of the time, the project clients are not the end users of the design intervention Ideate develops. For this project, this means there are multiple frames in which autonomy can be explored. The following three frames have been identified:

### 1. The end user

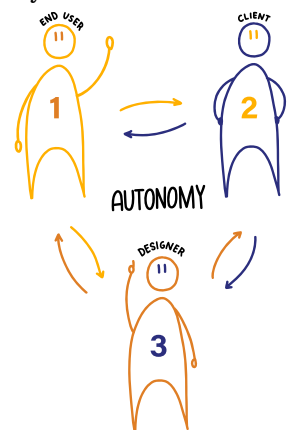
Make end users aware of what autonomy means to them and use that information to support them (in finding a solution for their problems)

### 2. The client

Make clients aware of what autonomy means to them and what it could mean to end users.

### 3. The designer

Make the designer aware of what autonomy consists of in order for them to understand the autonomy of the end user. Thereafter make the designer conscious of what use this understanding could have for the problem-owner/client.



### Project frame

For this project, the main focus will lay on the third frame, the designer, as they are often the connecting factor in design projects. In addition, the designers in this project are a constant factor, namely the designers at Ideate. Their clients and end-users are different in every project, making it difficult to come up with a design solution that would suit every type of client or end-user.

However, to explore autonomy to the fullest, some research will also be done regarding the other frames.

## 0.4 Research questions

The main research question for this project was formulated as:

**How can the meaning of autonomy be incorporated in the design process?**

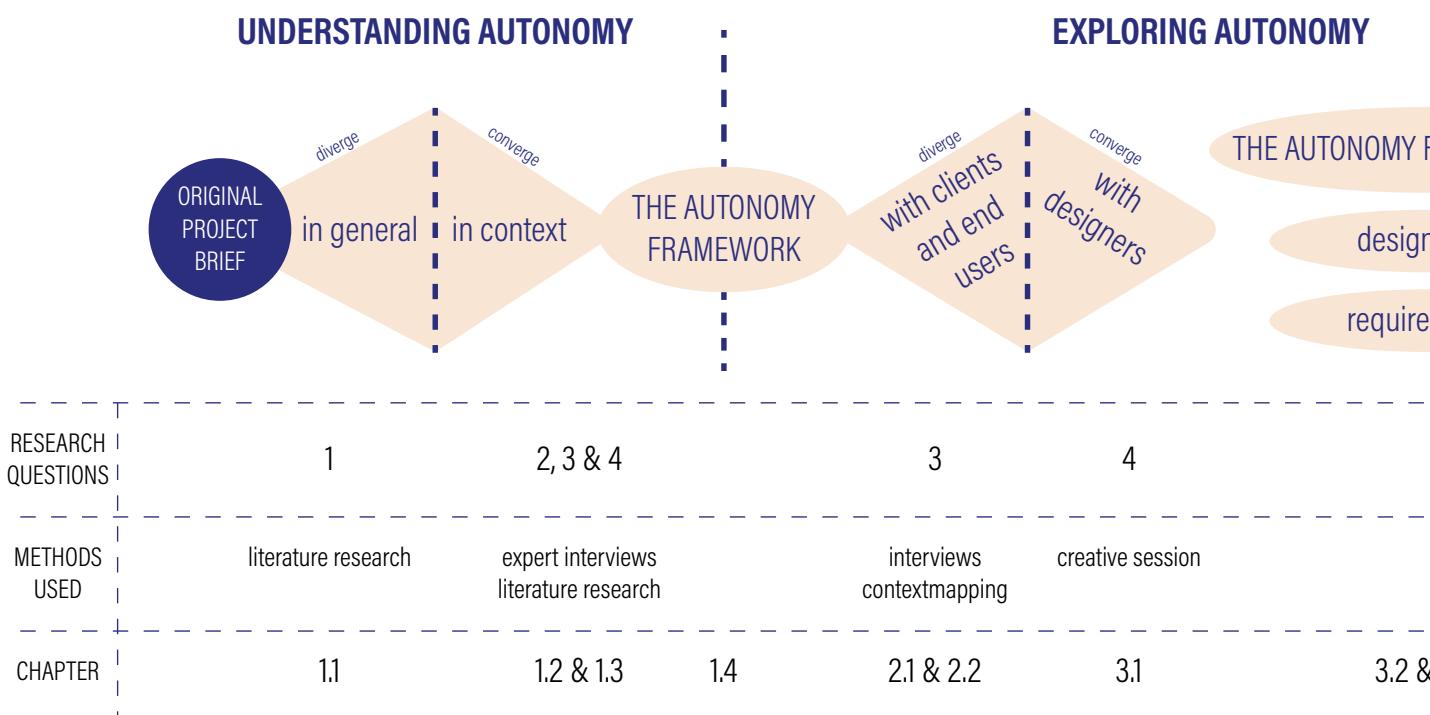
To answer the main research question, additional research has to be conducted. For this research, the following sub questions were formulated:

*Q.1: What is autonomy?*

*Q.2: What is the role of autonomy in service design?*

*Q.3: What is the role of autonomy in healthcare?*

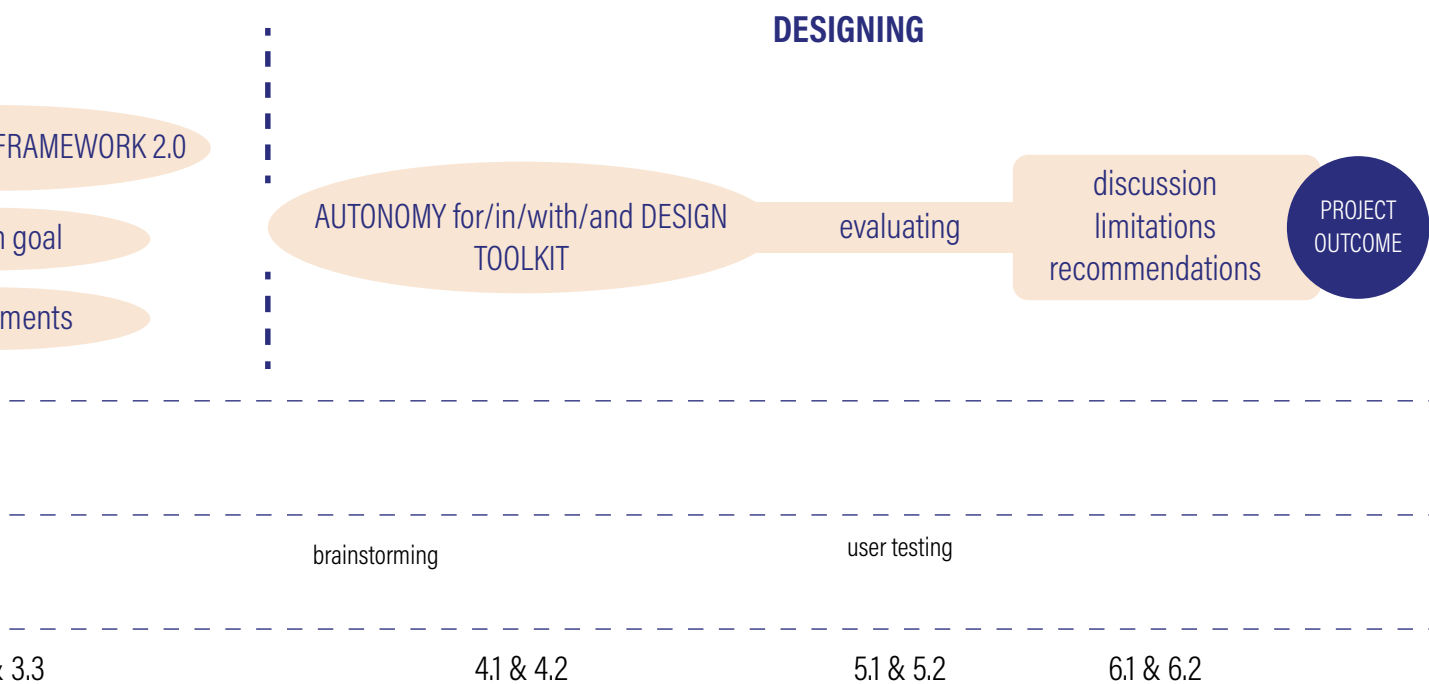
*Q.4: What do designers need to be able to incorporate autonomy in the design process?*



## 0.5 Process

The first part of the project is dedicated to understanding autonomy and the context of the project: service design and Positive Health. Multiple different methods, such as literature research and expert interviews, are used to answer the previously stated research questions. The outcomes of this research leads to the development of the autonomy framework, which in turn is evaluated through contextmapping with students and expert interviews with health care professionals. The outcomes of this evaluation serve as the starting point for a creative, explorative session with designers at Ideate to explore the possibilities of using

the framework in practice. The insights from this session in combination with the previous research lead to an improved version of the autonomy framework as well as a design goal and design requirements. The framework, design goal and design requirements serve as the starting point for the design phase, in which inspiration is found in existing design tools. A concept is developed and evaluated through user testing with an Ideate designer. In this case the concept is a toolkit to support designers with uncovering assumptions their clients might have regarding the end users autonomy. Finally, some recommendations are made for the improvement of the design as well as further research.



# DÖSSLER | Autonomie

Booth

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# Understanding autonomy

In order to be able to design for or with autonomy, we first need to understand what autonomy is. In this chapter the following research questions will be answered:

- *What is autonomy?*
- *What is the role of autonomy in service design?*
- *What is the role of autonomy in healthcare?*
- *What do designers need to incorporate autonomy in the design process?*

# 1.1 What is autonomy?

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If we look up autonomy in the dictionary, we find 3 definitions: (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

- 1 : the quality or state of being self-governing especially : the right of self-government  
// The territory was granted autonomy
- 2 : self-directing freedom and especially moral independence  
// personal autonomy
- 3 : a self-governing state

## 1.1.1 Definition of autonomy

The *concept* of autonomy is often referred to as self-determination, but also as freedom and free will. An individual's *capacity* for autonomy is mostly identified with (critical) reflection and rationality, often along with individuality, responsibility, and assertiveness. It is a concept with many different meanings and one that, if not clearly defined, can mean nothing or everything at the same time. (Bosselaar, 2011)

According to the Greek origin of the word autonomy –auto meaning self and nomos meaning law– something autonomous makes its own laws. The word was originally used to express a city-state's right to political self-determination. Nowadays autonomy is also used to describe an individual's right to self-determination,

*personal autonomy*. From here on out, in this report whenever autonomy is used it will refer to personal autonomy.

Autonomy and freedom are often used interchangeably but are also connected. Freedom enhances autonomy, autonomy presupposes freedom. Isaiah Berlin (1966) distinguished two types of freedom: positive and negative freedom. Berlin described positive freedom as the freedom to act according to your own free will, making your own choices and opportunities, whereas negative freedom refers to the freedom to act without coercion or interference from others. It can be said that positive freedom is about the *presence* of something, such as self-determination or control, and negative freedom is about the *absence* of something, such as obstacles, constraints or interference from others.

**"I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men's, acts of will. I wish to be a subject, not an object, to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes, which are my own, not by causes which affect me, as it were, from outside." (I. Berlin, 1969)**

## 1.1.2 The history of autonomy

To gain a better understanding of autonomy as it is currently understood, a short exploration of its history is in order. As mentioned before, the word *autonomy* finds its origin in ancient Greek. More specifically in ancient Greek philosophy when Plato and Aristotle were first exploring the concept of autonomy as not being dependent on external conditions or others. (Dryden, 2010) In the 18th century Immanuel Kant further explored autonomy, subscribing to the interpretations of his Greek predecessors. Kant described autonomy as having authority over one's own actions: a person should be obedient to their self-imposed laws, rather than external laws or religious rules. (Hill, 1989) Kant classified a person's emotional responses and tendencies as external forces, as they are subject to the deterministic laws of natural causality.

After Kant, the Romantics emphasised particularity and individuality as part of autonomy. In contrast to Kant however, the Romantics believed emotion and passion to play a big role in autonomy and in order for a person to be autonomous they had to fully develop their unique self. Where Kant believed autonomy to be something that was similar for every person, the Romantics saw autonomy as something that could differ per person based on their individual emotions and passions.

This shift from *universal* autonomy (as Kant perceived it) to *individual* autonomy (as the Romantics described it) was followed by a more relational perspective on autonomy in the past forty years. Not only do recent theories agree with the Romantics that emotions influence autonomy, they also describe how some external influences, mostly social and cultural, can actually work with autonomy. This is contrary to

the old philosophers who believed a person could only be autonomous if they did not let external influences guide them.

## 1.1.3 Recent and current theories on autonomy

This more relational perspective on autonomy describes that some external influences might play a role in a person's autonomy. For this project it is crucial to explore what these different influences are or could be, as they can lead to a more complete understanding of a person's autonomy, which in turn can help with coming up with a suitable design solution.

Multiple theories around this relational perspective on autonomy have emerged which will be explained in the following paragraphs.

According to Dove et al. (2017) instead of independence, interdependence is at the core of relational concepts of autonomy: the social environment and relationships we are a part of enable us to thrive and develop a strong capacity for self-determination and identity formation. For example, children can take over behaviours and rituals displayed by their parents which develop into personal ways of doing things, without being able to critically think about where those behaviours came from later on in life. (Herman, 2011)

Physician and philosopher Alfred Tauber (2005) describes two conceptions of being-a-person, namely the individual and social self. He argues that the individual self falls short in describing the social framework one is embedded in. Tauber therefore opts for a view on autonomy that reflects "relational ethics". In his opinion, the individual image of autonomy (as backed by

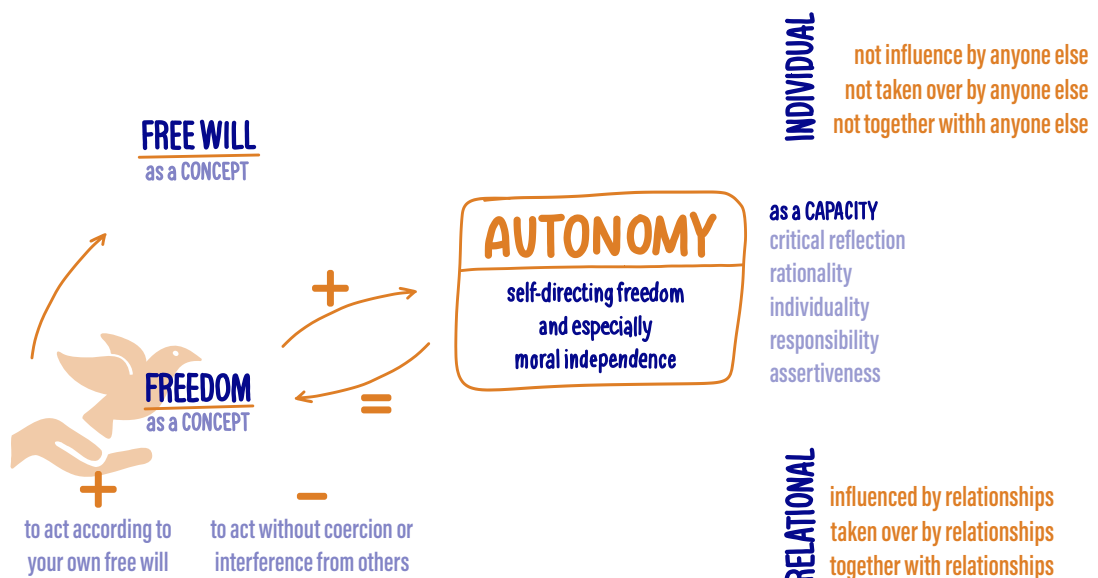
Mill) has important moral consequences, as it holds values such as self-determination and self-actualization higher than principles such as trust, friendship, loyalty, care, and responsibility. Individual autonomy regards values related to social practices and relationships, such as cooperation and interdependence, as a threat to the freedom of the “independent individual”. Dove et al. (2017) agree with Tauber and describe this individual understanding of autonomy as essentially a means to protect individuals against interference by others, which in turn holds up the idea that people are independent decision-makers. In practice, this usually takes the form of minimal autonomy, where just being able to practice individual choice is seen as autonomous choice.

Tauber’s response to this individualistic image of man is the introduction of the person who is the product of “the meeting of the other”, in which individuality is formed in relationships. He also argues for a form of autonomy that is a reflection of relational ethics. According to Tauber, moral choices are determined by the nature of these relationships. Moral knowledge is built and developed in relationships with others and forms the identity of man. As people develop their

sense of self and shape their abilities and life plans through the relationships they become a part of, Dove et al. (2017) argue that relationships, responsibility, care, and interdependence are essential features of relational autonomy.

In agreement with this, Tauber describes autonomy as making decisions within a relational context, in which the identity of individuals is formed. These decisions are to be made without coercion and after reflecting on possible choices, in such a way that they arise from oneself and one is willing and able to take responsibility for this choice.

In line with Tauber’s and Dove et al. , Anderson and Honneth support the relational view on autonomy, but emphasise that autonomy as a capacity can only exist in the context of social relationships that support this capacity and only if it goes together with the internal belief of being autonomous. One can only develop into an autonomous adult in the context of social relationships that allow us to gain confidence and self-esteem in what we do and can. (Anderson & Honneth, 2005)

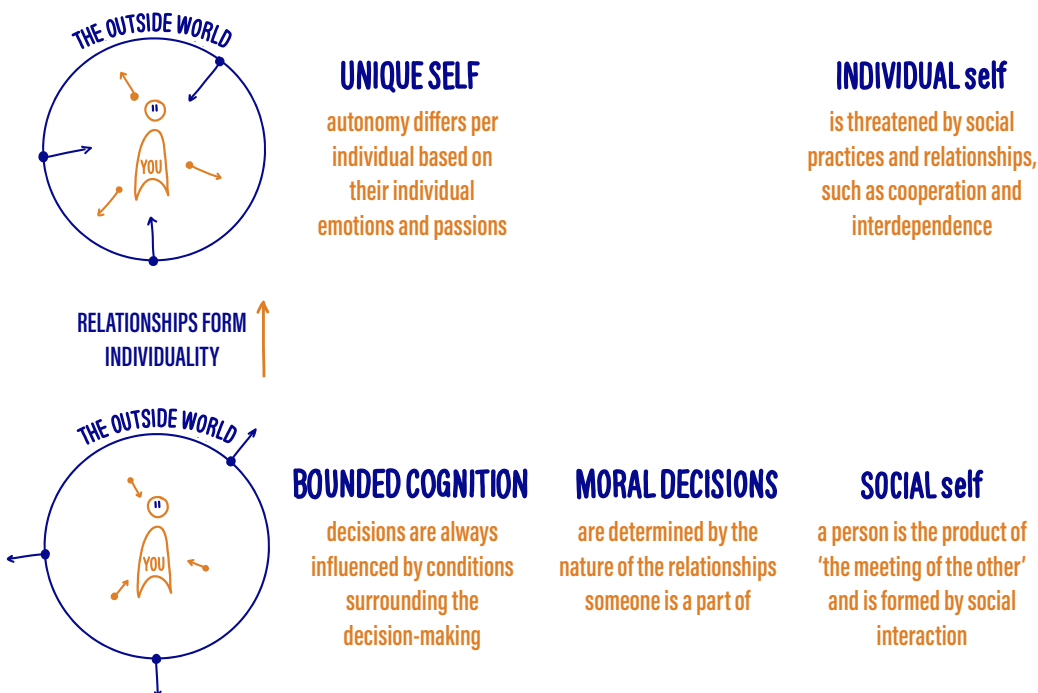


### Formal versus effective autonomy

Formal accounts of autonomy, such as those described in the history of autonomy, are divided into two camps: procedural and substantive. Procedural accounts define autonomy as the following of certain procedures: if a person making a decision follows the proper procedures, their decision is autonomous regardless of the content of the result or the qualities of the person. (Schwab, 2006) Substantive accounts on the other hand do not deal with procedures, but rather with perspectives and characteristics. No matter what procedures are followed in making the decision, if the decision-maker is not aware of the relevant norms they cannot be autonomous. (Benson, 1987) However, it remains unclear what is meant with these ‘relevant norms’: who decides what norms are relevant or right? If any person gets to decide what norms to respond to, anyone will be able to execute any action by ignoring the norms they do not want to respond to.

As a response to these formal notions of autonomy, Schwab introduced ‘effective autonomy’, which requires formal autonomy, but goes further by paying attention to

the background conditions that allow people to more accurately reflect their desires through the decisions they make. A crucial part of effective autonomy is the reduction of biases that result from bounded cognition. Bounded cognition means that although people attempt to make optimal decisions, those decisions are always influenced by the conditions surrounding the decision(-making). For example limited access to information or awareness of relevant criteria, as well as time constraints and limits of memory. (Simon, 1957) Research has shown that these conditions bias human decision-making in a predictable way, with one of the key concepts being heuristics. Heuristics are rules of thumb and allow people to make decisions easier under certain conditions. They remove the need for extensive research, which does allow for certain mistakes in decision-making. (Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky; 2001) For effective autonomy to work, the biases that result from bounded cognition and heuristics need to be evaluated and reduced, so that the decision-maker has ample time, space, and resources to make an autonomous decision.



# 1.2 The current role of autonomy in service design

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As I will be looking into how the meaning of autonomy can play a role in design, I first need to understand what role autonomy currently plays in (service) design. The first step to understanding the role of autonomy in design is to understand design projects themselves. Since this project is being conducted on behalf of Ideate, the focus in this section will lie on the type of projects Ideate executes, instead of design in general. Following the research into the design projects, the current role of autonomy in the design is explored. This part of the research is expanded through literature research as well. In short, this section aims to answer the following questions:

**What type of projects does Ideate take on?**

**What is the role of autonomy in (service) design?**

## Method

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with two service designers at Ideate. One of the interviews was conducted in person at the Ideate office, the other interview was done online. The main topics discussed in these interviews were: the type of projects Ideate does; how Ideate approaches these projects; the role of the client in the projects; the understanding of autonomy; and the current role of autonomy in design projects.

A list of interview questions was prepared beforehand (see appendix B for these questions) and used during the conversations, but there was room for elaboration and examples, as well as questions the interviewees might have. The main task in interviewing for qualitative research is to understand both explicit and implicit meanings of what the interviewees say, according to Kvale (1996).

The choice to interview only two designers was made for two reasons, the first being the limited time available for this project. Secondly, as Ideate is a relatively small and close-knit design agency, the assumption was made that all the designers would explain the company's design process in a similar way, which made interviewing all service designers seem unnecessary.

To analyse the interviews, notes were taken during both interviews. Both interviews were recorded and the recordings were summarised afterwards. The notes and summaries combined served as the main source of insights gathered.

To support and expand the findings from the interviews, some findings from literature have been included.

### What type of projects does Ideate take on?

Ideate takes on projects in 4 different domains: *health, mobility, energy, and education*. Both designers gave examples of projects they were coworking at the moment or had worked on in the past. Interestingly enough, as they both were aware of the fact that autonomy is the main topic of this thesis, they noted in what way autonomy had come up in these projects, even though they had not thought of it in that while working on the projects.

#### Walk and Talk

Walk and Talk is the outcome of a project for Chiesi, in collaboration with the Amsterdam UMC. Through conversations with nephrologists about the domain of kidney transplants, it came to light that many patients develop health problems after a kidney transplant because there are many lifestyle changes they should make but do not. Patients felt as if there was a gap after surgery, where they were expected to do things they had gotten little to no information about before.

The solution to the uncovered problem is a rehabilitation program in which lifestyle information is provided at a suitable moment: Walk & Talk, a walking group for transplant patients. The walks are set up by a Kopleper who is supported by someone from the hospital and gets training to set up a Walk & Talk. Doctors, dieticians and physiotherapists can also join the walks to have conversations with patients and answer questions. It is also a way for patients to share experiences with peers.

In regard to autonomy, Walk & Talk takes away some of the responsibility for patients to change their lifestyle after a transplant. Where patients were first solely responsible to come up with and stick to ways to change

their lifestyle, they are now provided with a handle to take charge of their own health while being supported along the way. They still have the choice to join, but the outline for change is there and supported.

#### Self-scan driving skills older drivers

This project is about safe driving for elderly drivers. A self-scan to check up on your driving skills was already made but was not being used by those who might need to use it the most: elderly who are certain about their driving skills even though they might not be driving safe anymore. Instead of hoping these drivers would look up the scan themselves, Ideate thought of ways to bring the scan to these people in ways that suit them.

When it comes to autonomy, most of the elderly drivers saw the car as a crucial part of life without which they would have to give up travel. Instead of taking away this autonomy by telling them they are not allowed to drive anymore or should start considering other modes of transport, it was about appealing to their autonomy. This is done by encouraging the drivers to see themselves as responsible drivers who take charge of their driving skills by brushing up on them every once in a while.

### What is the role of autonomy in (service) design?

In the interviews, the designers could not necessarily pinpoint what the role of autonomy in design is. However, when explaining projects they had worked on, they noted that autonomy had played a role in all of the projects, but not always in the same way or to the same degree. They explained that as a designer they are not there to force someone to do something, as that would take away someone's autonomy. They want to come up with design solutions and interventions that support people in doing what they want to do without coercion.

Desmet and Fokkinga see autonomy as one of 13 fundamental needs for human-centred design. These fundamental needs are the basic requirements for human functioning, and a source of meaning and happiness. The relevance of design depends on the extent to which it satisfies these fundamental needs. If all needs are satisfied, people can fully develop into the person they want or need to become. Desmet and Fokkinga describe autonomy as a fundamental need as

**“being the cause of your actions and feeling that you can do things your own way. Rather than feeling as though external conditions and other people determine your actions.”**

- Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020

This description of autonomy is expanded with sub-needs that match the individual view of autonomy as described in the previous chapter. These sub-needs are: freedom of decision, individuality, creative expression and self-reliance. Two other fundamental needs Desmet and Fokkinga describe are community and relatedness, which both refer to social interactions, but these are viewed as separate needs from autonomy. In the relational view of autonomy however, social interactions are actually seen as a part of a person's autonomy.





# 1.3 The current role of autonomy in (mental) health care

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As autonomy is such a broad concept, it was decided to research autonomy in the context of Positive Health in (mental) healthcare to make the research manageable within the timeframe of this project. In order to validate research insights and decisions further on in the process, it is important to gain a better understanding of the role of autonomy in (mental) healthcare and Positive Health.

The aim of this section is to answer the following question:

**What is the role of autonomy in (mental) healthcare?**

**What is Positive Health?**

**What is the role of autonomy in Positive Health?**

## Participants

**Malou Timmers**, *advisor at the Institute for Positive Health*

The Institute for Positive Health (iPH) was founded in 2015 by Machteld Huber. The philosophy of the iPH is Positive Health, which is defined by Huber as a broader definition of health than just health problems and diseases. Positive Health emphasizes people themselves,

their resilience and what makes their lives meaningful. At the iPH they set out to accelerate and strengthen the movement around Positive Health, by educating those interested in the topic, as well as further developing the concept of Positive Health through research. (Institute for Positive Health, 2020)

**Jan Berndsen**, *GGZ ambassador at the Institute for Positive Health*

GGZ stands for geestelijke gezondheidszorg, which translates to mental healthcare. It is an applied science that deals with the psychological health of people. In addition to research and study, GGZ also encompasses the application of that knowledge to promote and/or restore people's mental health and quality of life. GGZ Nederland is the branche organization for mental healthcare and addiction care in the Netherlands. There are many different GGZ organisations in the Netherlands of which around 90% are part of GGZ Nederland.

Jan Berndsens role and goal as GGZ ambassador at the IPH is to encourage the implementation of Positive Health throughout the whole GGZ-system in the Netherlands.

**Christien Muusse**, *scientific collaborator at the Trimbos Institute*

The Trimbos Institute is an independent knowledge institute for substance use and mental health. The institute focuses on identifying, investigating and developing applicable interventions and is a driving force behind the social agenda with regard to mental health and substance use. They develop knowledge about these topics and translate these into useful applications.

### Procedure

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted online with three professionals in the field of (mental) healthcare and Positive Health. The main topics discussed in these interviews were: the understanding of autonomy; the role of autonomy in healthcare; the role of autonomy in Positive Health; and possible opportunities for redefining the meaning of autonomy in healthcare.

Although some interview questions were prepared (see appendix C) and used during the conversations, the participants were free to respond in any way they felt was right. This led to more personal and interesting responses which deepened the insights gathered from the conversations.

The choice for a small number of interviewees was made mainly due to the time limit for this project. However, because of this limitation, care was taken to find professionals with knowledge based in (mental) healthcare as well as Positive Health, but all from a different perspective. As all three interviewees have distinctly different functions within different companies, no two of the interviews were the same and questions differed slightly between the interviews. This has led to some questions only being answered by one or two of the professionals, which is reflected in the findings of this research.

To analyse the interviews, notes were taken during all three interviews. Audio and video recordings were also made, which were summarised afterwards. The notes and summaries together served as the main source of insights gathered.

In order to expand and support the findings from the interviews, some findings from literature have been included.

### What is the role of autonomy in (mental) healthcare?

When asked to describe their own understanding of autonomy, both Jan Berndsen and Christien Muusse referred to autonomy as being relational. A person's autonomy is influenced by the people, things and circumstances around them.

**"People are part of a network, not only with people but also with things. Those things shape the situation, they can make for a different experience. Also in a way you might not expect."**

- Christien Muusse

So if one wants to enhance, support or change the autonomy of a person, they need to take into account all relations this person is a part of and how those relations influence or are influenced by their autonomy. Jan Berndsen explained this through the example of a healthcare worker providing a child with training to increase their assertiveness. The healthcare worker informs the child's parents that the sessions might have made their child a bit more bold than usual, as that is something she will be practising. One could imagine that the parents are sceptical about the involvement of this healthcare worker, as they have only made their child more bold. Within the GGZ, many clients receive training to increase their resilience, self-reliance and assertiveness, which are all good to practice individually. However, actually trying out

these newly trained skills in your own living environment is a different story, as the environment might not be as open and welcoming to your new skills as you are.

This relational view on autonomy is quite opposite of the view most healthcare professionals have, as was revealed in all conversations. There seems to be a misunderstanding: healthcare workers put a lot of effort into increasing the autonomy of their client. In itself not a bad goal, but it will only work if they involve everyone who has something to do with the autonomy of the client.

**“Autonomy in healthcare is too often boiled down to the autonomy of the person with the problem, while a person always has autonomy in relation to those around them.”**

- Jan Berndsen

Not only does there seem to be a focus on the autonomy of only the individual, but there is also a fear of being patronising. This is in line with research done by Davies and Elwyn in 2008, about the role and understanding of autonomy in healthcare. At that time, autonomous decision-making was considered as an individual's responsibility to make decisions in their own healthcare without the help of others. (Schneider, 1998) This notion of autonomy as self-reliance has led to an increasing appeal for independent decision-making to become mandatory in healthcare settings. This view of autonomy as mandatory can be explained as patients having a duty to themselves, society, and the medical system to make decisions on their healthcare independently. A major part of mandatory autonomy is informed choice, where patients are provided with information to make decisions but have to make the decision themselves. (Charles et al., 2006) The main argument made for informed choice and thus mandatory

autonomy is self-protection: protection from clinicians' possible own interest in the matter and influences on the decision. (Davies & Elwyn, 2008) This fear comes from the idea that some healthcare workers have that there are only two options: relying on a person's autonomy or taking over everything. However, Jan Berndsen does believe it might sometimes be necessary to take over (part of) a client's decisions or actions, thus limiting their autonomy, without limiting their freedom. Clients could actually benefit from certain things being taken over by a person with more knowledge and experience instead of having to do everything themselves. Davies and Elwyn describe a similar approach, called *optional autonomy*, in which the main focus is *shared decision-making*. In shared decision-making, the goal is that authority and information are shared between the patient and the physician. It involves the assessment of the patient's understanding of their condition, as well as describing relevant options and supporting patients' decisions when treatment options are similar. Optional autonomy will enable people from less powerful social, cultural, and economic groups to contribute to decision-making and also support those who may feel left behind by being forced to take decisional responsibility, which are concerns Davies and Elwyn have with mandatory autonomy. Research suggests that those most in need of care are often the least successful in actually claiming and using it (Williams, 1983). Often people from deprived backgrounds do not access care until their condition has gotten to a state that they cannot execute the work and caring duties they were concerned to lose by getting care in the first place. (Dixon et al., 2003) Therefore, although people from these groups have potential choices, their circumstances (either social or economic) often keep them from actually being able to make these choices.

Jan Berndsen sees this as a result of the implementation of DTC (Diagnosis Treatment Combination) in the Netherlands around 15 years ago. DTC is an American healthcare finance plan in which the diagnosis is the guiding principle for the treatment. This financial plan has led to the focus of healthcare shifting away from the context surrounding the patient and toward focussing solely on the individual, as health insurance only covers treatment for the individual. In this case, it does not make sense financially to include others in the care for the individual. Fortunately more and more healthcare workers are nowadays advocating that the only way to help a client is to view them as part of a system.

### What is Positive Health?

Viewing a client as part of a system is the crux of the philosophy of the Institute for Positive Health (iPH).

**“Positive Health is a broader perspective on health, elaborated in six dimensions. This broader approach contributes to people’s ability to deal with the physical, emotional and social challenges in life. And to be in charge of their own affairs, whenever possible.”**

- Institute for Positive Health, 2020

Through the iPH, healthcare professionals from different institutions are being trained to implement Positive Health in their field.

### What is the role of autonomy in Positive Health?

An example of how the iPH works is the My Positive Health tool, which is used to outline a person’s health in the six dimensions of Positive Health: *bodily functions, mental well-being, meaningfulness, quality of life, participation, and daily functioning*. By answering a set of statements pertaining to each of the dimensions a visual representation is made of a person’s health at that moment (see Figure 1).

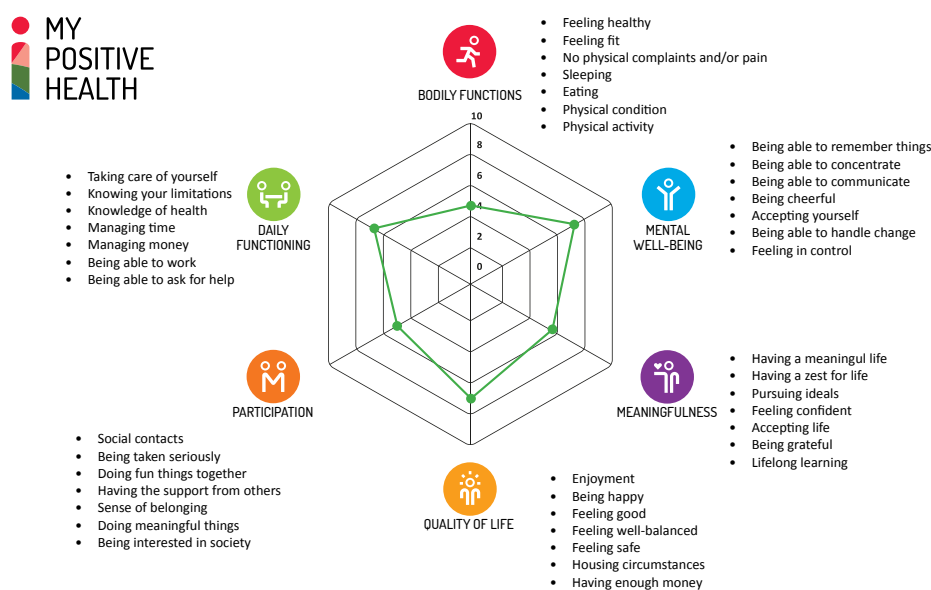


Figure 1. Example of an outcome of the My Positive Health Tool, also known as the ‘spider web’

This representation, also known as the 'spiderweb' can serve as the starting point for a deeper conversation with a healthcare worker about a person's health. For the healthcare worker the goal of this conversation is to help the client to uncover areas of improvement and come up with solutions by themselves. The role of autonomy in healthcare is not being there to tell the client what to do, rather to support them in solving their problems on their own. Figure 2 is a visualisation of the use of the My Positive Health tool. Malou Timmers describes the support in Positive Health as encouraging intrinsic motivation: rather than solving the problem for the client, they encourage the client to find a solution they are comfortable with trying. To find this solution, the 'action wheel' can be used. The action wheel is a series of questions one can ask to help the client come up with a solution. The action wheel can be seen in Figure 3.

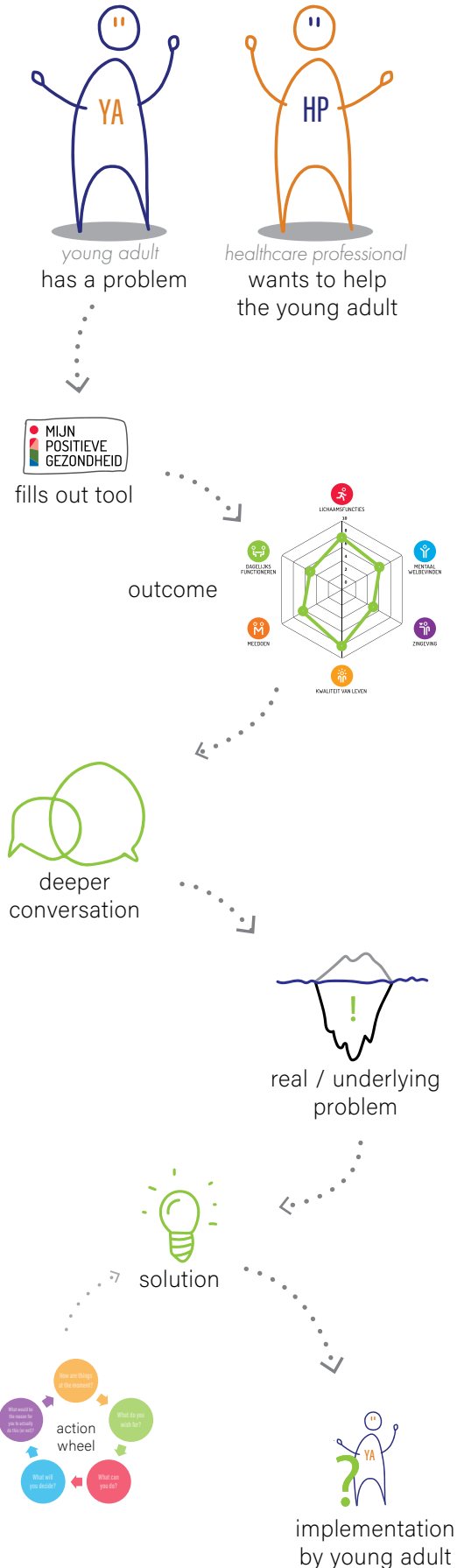


Figure 2. Journey when using the My Positive Health Tool

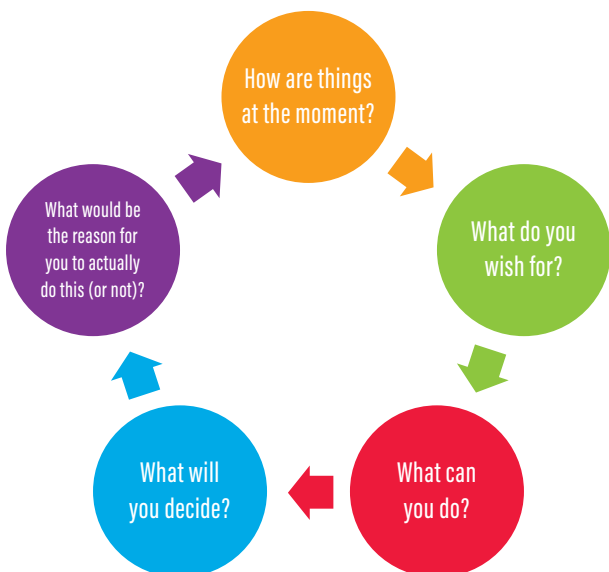


Figure 3. The Positive Health 'action wheel'



# 1.4 The autonomy framework

From the research done in this chapter, it has become clear that autonomy is made up of many different factors and cannot be simply described in just a few words. In order to get a more comprehensive overview of what autonomy is made up of, I have clustered all insights gathered from the research. The clustered insights can be found in appendix D. This clustering has led to the development of the autonomy framework.

The autonomy framework consists of nine factors describing different parts of autonomy, in the individual as well as the relational perspective. These factors are: *it starts with yourself, important relationships, understanding the whole person, boundaries of support, helping each other, attention for the network, only for the 'elite', me, myself and I, and genetics cannot be controlled.*

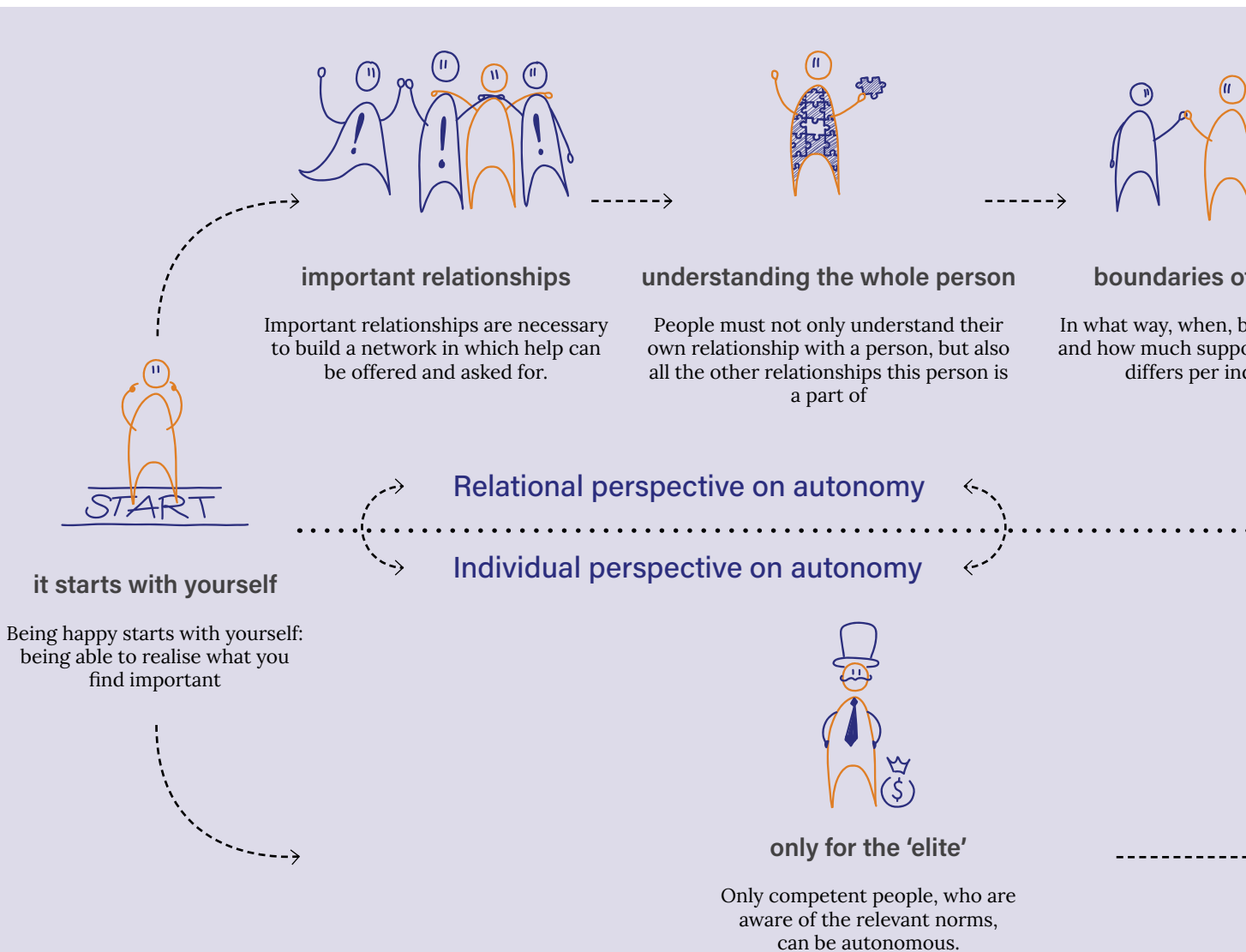
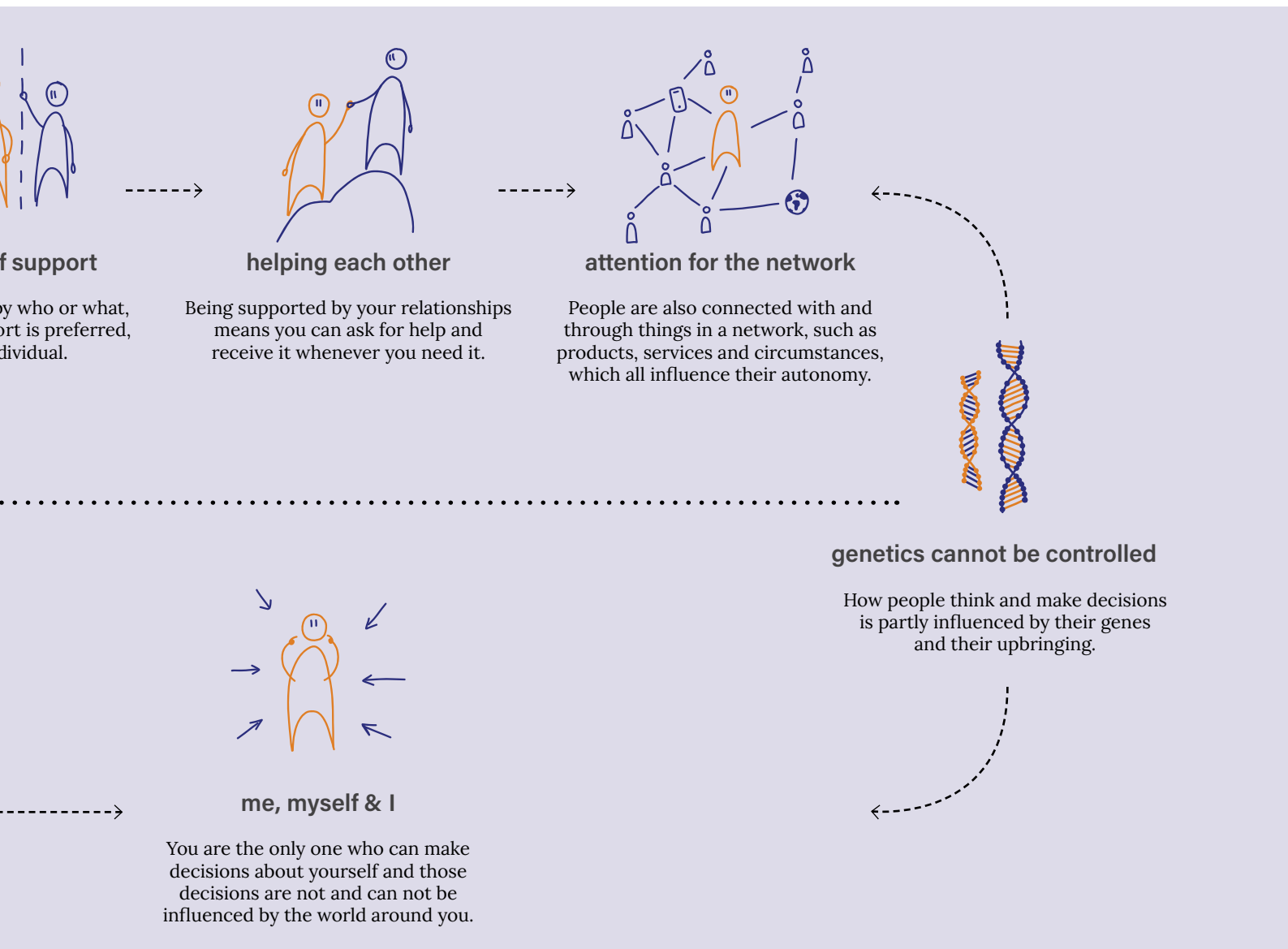


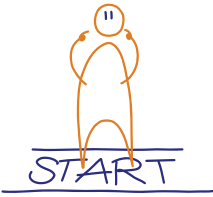
Figure 4. The Autonomy Framework



All factors are equally important and relate to each other in one way or the other. The framework is split into an individual and relational side, representing the two perspectives on autonomy. Even though the view on autonomy has shifted towards a more relational one over the years, it has not replaced the individual perspective but rather added to it. Plus, both perspectives influence the other: individuality influences relationality and vice versa.

The autonomy framework can be found below (Figure 4) and each of the factors will be explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.





### It starts with yourself

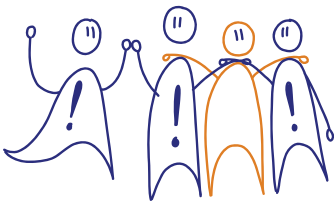
Being happy starts with yourself: being able to calm yourself down, being able to realise what you think is important; your plans, your dreams, your deepest desires. That all starts within yourself.



### Understanding the whole person

For the people around you, it is important to understand you as a whole person to be able to support you, meaning they need to understand not only their own relationship with you, but also your relationships with others.

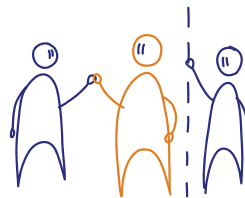
This does not only apply to close relationships, but also those with 'outsiders' such as healthcare or youth workers. They need to understand the relationships you are a part of, to understand the people that support you, in order to be able to help and support you as well. But this will also help them understand or identify which relationships might not be beneficial for you and to be able to help you with those.



### Important relationships

In order to be happy with themselves, people need important relationships to create a network that can help them and in which they can ask for help. Those relationships are there to support us in our autonomy and to support us throughout our lives, with the decisions we make and with every situation we are in.

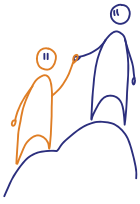
It starts from what we want as individuals, but we gather people around us to help us achieve what we want in life.



### Boundaries of support

*"A person's autonomy can be guided or supported without actually reducing someone's freedom" - J. Berndsen*

Individuals differ and how much support is needed depends on what they want and how they view support. In what way, when, by who or what, and how much support is preferred differs per individual.



### Helping each other

Being supported by your relationships means being able to ask for and access help whenever you need it. People should be able to be helped to be responsible or make the right decisions. By helping each other, we can make the best out of any situation or achieve the best possible.

Taking responsibility or being forced or pushed to take responsibility might make a person less autonomous, instead of helping them become more autonomous. By taking away the opportunity to ask for help, a person is left to take action by themselves instead of being supported to learn to eventually do something by themselves.

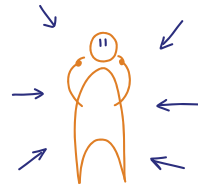


### Attention for the network

Not only are people connected to other people in a network, they can also be connected to and through things in a network, such as products, services, even circumstances, that all influence their autonomy.

Think of class, culture, economic circumstances, but also health-applications, products, and campaigns that are aimed at influencing people's decisions and habits.

This complete network can make it easier or harder to be(come) an autonomous person and the network is different for different people, but can change over time.



### Me, myself and I

The other view on autonomy. You are the only one who can make decisions regarding yourself and those decisions are not and should not be influenced by the world around you. No one can tell you what to do and you are not or should not be dependent on others. Others are only there to provide you with the information you need to make the right decisions yourself, but they should not help you make those decisions.



### Only for the 'elite'

Because decisions and actions cannot and should not be influenced by others, only those who are competent are able to be autonomous, those that are aware of the relevant norms. This also means limited freedom and fewer resources for less powerful groups / people from deprived backgrounds, as they do not have the education and means to gather the necessary information to become autonomous.



### Genetics cannot be controlled

There are also factors that one cannot influence, but that do influence their autonomy (and life in general). Inherently, people are built to think and to make choices, and that is partly influenced by our genes and our upbringing.

# Conclusion chapter 1

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The phenomenon of autonomy has changed a lot throughout history. Research is still being done and new notions and understanding of autonomy are still being developed. The main insight of the research done for this project is that the understanding of autonomy has been shifting from individual autonomy, where individuals make their decisions regardless of their surroundings, towards a more relational view on autonomy, where an individual's decisions are affected by the web of relations and conditions they are situated in. However, relational autonomy has not replaced individual autonomy, but rather added to it. Figure 5 shows the main takeaways from the research.

## What is the role of autonomy in (service) design?

**"being the cause of your actions and feeling that you can do things your own way. Rather than feeling as though external conditions and other people determine your actions."**

- Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020

The Ideate designers explained they are not there to force someone to do something, as that would take away someone's autonomy. They want to come up with design solutions and interventions that support people in doing what they want to do without coercion.

## What is the role of autonomy in (mental) healthcare?

Autonomy plays a big role in healthcare and is often put on a pedestal. Most healthcare workers have a fear of being patronising in caring for a client which has led to a reliance on the autonomy of the client instead. The focus is on letting individuals make their own choices whether or not they are capable of doing so. Next to that, the take on autonomy in healthcare is very individual as a result of the implementation of the DTC. Most treatment plans are set up to only focus on the individual and do not involve an individual's environment and relationships.

## What is Positive Health?

Positive Health is a philosophy rather than a measuring instrument, viewing a person as more than their illness or condition by looking at the bigger picture.

## What is the role of autonomy in Positive Health?

Positive Health is a broader definition of health that takes every aspect of a person's life into account. The goal of Positive Health is to encourage clients to come up with and implement their own solutions, thus relying on the autonomy of that person.

## The autonomy framework

Finally, the research gathered about autonomy was reframed into the autonomy framework, which is made up of 9 aspects that play a role in autonomy, divided into relational and individual aspects.

## INDIVIDUAL perspective on autonomy

## RELATIONAL perspective on autonomy

people are independent decision-makers

a person can only be autonomous if they act according to certain moral laws

the mere ability to exercise individual choice = autonomous choice

social surroundings and relationships are crucial for developing autonomy

decision-making is guided by an ethic of care and moral responsibility

the context of social relationships must go together with the internal belief of being autonomous

### mandatory autonomy

choices are supposed to be made by an individual; it's their own responsibility

informed choice: a patient is provided with information, but the decision is still theirs to make

### optional autonomy

decisions are always made in the context of culture, class and family relations, economic circumstances and practical logistics

shared decision making: authority and information are shared between patient and clinician

### formal autonomy

a person should follow certain procedures to be able to make an autonomous decision

a person should be 'competent' –know what norms are valid– in order to make autonomous decisions

### effective autonomy

bounded cognition: people attempt to make optimal decisions but those are affected by the conditions under which they are made

biases influence decision-making and need to be reduced

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Figure 5. Main takeaways research

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# Exploring autonomy

In this chapter the autonomy framework is used as the foundation for exploring ways to uncover and map a person's autonomy through sessions with possible end users. The results of this exploration will then be discussed with possible clients.

# 2.1 Exploring autonomy with end users

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The goal of this section was to explore ways to gain insight in the autonomy of end users. The autonomy framework served as the base for the set up of multiple sessions with TU Delft students. These sessions had two goals. First, the sessions served as an evaluation for possible ways to uncover a person's autonomy. Next to this evaluation, I also wanted to see if, with the outcomes of the sessions, it was actually possible to map out a person's autonomy.

## Participants

9 students from the TU Delft, ranging in age from 20 to 25 years old, both bachelor and master students from different faculties. As a result of the limitations due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all participants were found through an invitation shared in Whatsapp groups I myself was a part of. This resulted in all participants being people I knew (quite) well.

## Procedure

Around two weeks before the sessions I invited each of the participants individually to a one-on-one online introductory meeting. In these meetings I briefly explained the subject of my graduation project. Next to that, I introduced the sensitising materials and asked the participants to fill out their personal information on a digital whiteboard on Miro.com. This allowed me to gather some additional information about each of the participants, such as age and study, but also allowed the participants to get familiar with using Miro. Lastly I shortly explained the set up of the session and answered any questions the participants might have had. Each participant received sensitising materials to be done over the course of 5 days and to be finished before

the sessions. The sensitising material was an online booklet with reflective exercises regarding their relationships, their daily decisions, the involvement of relationships in decision-making, and their wishes regarding involvement. The sensitising booklet can be found in appendix E and filled out sensitising materials can be found in appendix F of the confidential appendix. After the preparation period, each student participated in one of three sessions, with 3 students in each session. In these sessions the students were presented with specific scenarios about responsibility and asked how they would act or what they would do in these scenarios. As a group they also explored what makes an ideal and flawed mentor when it comes to sharing or supporting decision-making. Finally they were presented with a scenario in which the responsibility presented was taken over completely by an outsider and the students were asked to explain how this made them feel and what they would like to see differently. The session materials can be found in appendix G and the raw results of the sessions can be found in appendix H of the confidential appendix.



## 2.1.1 Uncovering autonomy

This section will go through the insights gathered about the use of the sensitising materials and the sessions as a way to uncover a person's autonomy. These insights will be explained per exercise of the sensitising materials and sessions.

### The sensitising materials

The first day of the sensitising materials consisted of two exercises. The first was a 'fill-in-the-blanks' mostly about demographics. This information relates to 3 aspects of the autonomy framework: *genetics cannot be controlled, attention for the network, and only for the elite*. Although these questions themselves do not provide all the information needed to create an understanding of how a person has grown up, what their living environment looks like and to what socioeconomic class they belong, the answers to these questions can serve as a starting point for a deeper conversation about their influence on that person's autonomy. Due to time constraints for this project and the fact that I am not a professional equipped with the knowledge to interpret the answers to these questions, I did not have conversations with the students about their answers. The

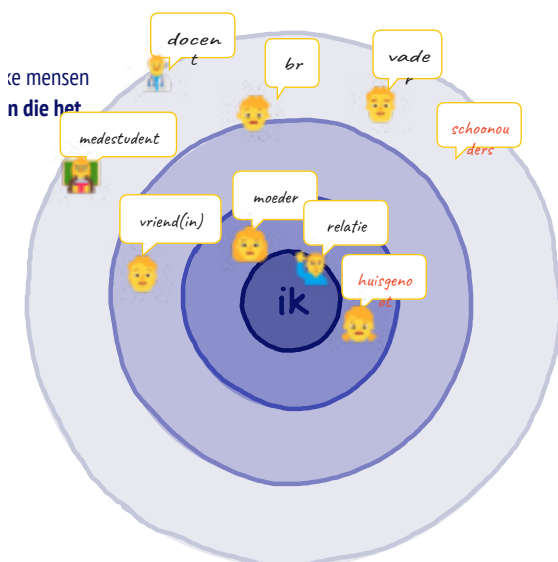


Figure 6. Example of one of the filled out relationship overviews

use and relevance of these questions still needs to be validated with professionals.

The second exercise was to create an overview of the relationships that are a part of their daily lives, visualising the extent of their involvement by placing the relationships closer or further away from themselves (Figure 6). This overview relates to important relationships and could serve as a great starting point to explore the extent and nature of the involvement of these relationships, for example in a one-on-one conversation, as the visualisation provides a clear and simple overview.

Day 2 and 3 focused on daily decisions. As a large part of autonomy is about making decisions, the students were asked to make a timeline including the decisions they face to make throughout the day and explain which of these decisions they made themselves and why these were either easy or hard to make. For each person these explanations revealed different types of decisions they found easy or hard to make by themselves. For example, one of the students found three very different decisions easy to make alone, but all three explanations were that she had to make these decisions every day. The decisions she found harder to make were all last-minute decisions she had not been able to think about beforehand.

"[The decision was] **What am I going to wear?** [I had difficulty making this decision myself because] **I didn't know for sure what I could expect from the weather and how I should dress for that!**"

For another participant the explanations for hard-to-make decisions all included the consideration of other people's opinions, which can be interpreted as that hard-to-make decisions for this person are those that affect others.

**“[The decision was] Where and with who will I have dinner? [I had difficulty making this decision myself because] plans and opinions of multiple people play a role in this. Also the combination of planning far ahead or very spontaneously and coordinating this with everyone makes it a complicated process.”**

These exercises related to the *it starts with yourself* and *me, myself and I* aspects of the framework, as they were all about what the students (feel that they have to) decide by themselves.

On day 4 the students had to describe how they made 3 recent big decisions with long-term effects. For each decision the students described by whom the decision was made: by themselves, by themselves with help from something or someone, or by someone or something else, and why this was. This relates to *helping each other* as it says something about if help is needed, offered and/or used with these decisions, to *boundaries of support* as it reveals who is allowed to help if help is needed, and to *attention for the network* as there might be some services used to help make decisions. The intention behind this exercise was to see if differences could be found between big decisions and daily decisions. For example, the person who struggled with daily decisions that included considering other people’s opinion, actually preferred discussing big decisions with other people to be as informed as possible.

**[About buying a motorcycle] “After some doubts and looking around, it turned out that it was going to be difficult with my budget. My father and my boyfriend helped me realistically estimate monthly costs because I had no idea.”**

The last day was about people that are allowed to take over decision-making

(partially). First the students needed to come up with characteristics those people should have. Afterwards, they had to reflect on the relationships they had put in their overview on day 1 and explain which of these people had (some of) these characteristics and why that meant they were allowed to (partially) take over decision-making. When going through the answers that the students had put down, it appeared that the wording of the exercise was unclear as barely any of the students related the reason a relationship was allowed to make a decision to the characteristics they possessed but rather to other reasons. However, the answers that were given still provided sufficient insight into how they view those relationships and more clarity about the role of characteristics could be discussed in a conversation discussing the materials.

The main goal of the sensitising materials was to prepare the students for the session they would be participating in. However, the filled out materials also provided insights into how the students look at decision making and help from other people as individuals, as the sessions focus more on the students as a group. As I did not discuss the sensitising materials with the students after they had completed them, it could be that I have interpreted some of the answers differently than the students had intended. If these materials were to be used in a different project, I would suggest discussing the result of the materials with the students to get even more detailed insights.

### The sessions

Each session consisted of 3 parts, each part relating to a different set up of aspects of the autonomy framework. During the session the students were presented with a certain scenario and answer each question as if they were the person in that scenario. These scenarios were based on

the article 'Daan' that Ideate has created as an example for how they make personas. A copy of this article can be found in appendix G. The choice for a scenario was made because these sessions were not part of a design project with a defined target group and subject. Each session had a different scenario describing a different problem. The first was about a student not attending lectures and failing their classes, the second was about a student studying too much and neglecting their social life, and the third scenario was about a student eating unhealthy and gaining weight. Some of the students had difficulty pretending they were the student in the scenario as they had not ever faced the same problem. Occasionally this would influence how they responded to questions during the session as they would not express what they would do themselves, but what they thought someone in this situation might do. Therefore, if I were to execute these sessions in a different project, with participants that are part of the target group, I would spend some time coming up with a scenario that relates to the topic of the project and is familiar to all participants.

The first part of the session, under the heading **Who am I?** related to *it starts with yourself, me, myself and I, only for the 'elite' and genetics cannot be controlled*. In this part the students were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a statement based on the presented scenario. They were all asked to explain their choice, but also give some reasons for the other side. For example, a presented statement was *In this scenario I am solely responsible for staying in bed instead of attending my lectures*. One of the participants agreed and said:

"In the end, hopefully you'll just do the studying for yourself, so you'll go to your lectures for yourself and not for someone else."

But a counterargument she gave was:

"If you have friends at your studies, you could say that it is kind of a group responsibility of your group of friends to motivate each other to be on time for lecture and thus pull each other out of bed."

Next to explaining their view on the matter, they were asked to explain where this reasoning came from. The idea behind this was to see where their beliefs came from: were they taught by their parents, were they made over time, were they beliefs shared with friends or something else. This related to the *it starts with yourself* as well as the *genetics cannot be controlled* aspects of the framework. One example:

"That you have the idea that, I should be someone who should be able to do this, because that is the image you create for yourself based on what you have done in the past."

This part of the session provided insight into the personal beliefs and views in the scenario. However, because there were multiple students in the session and there was limited time, it was not possible to ask more questions about what certain arguments or beliefs were based on. An option would be to invite each participant to a reflective talk about what was done in the session or do the session with one person instead of a group to allow for more time to go into detail.

**Flawed and Ideal mentor**, the second part of the session, was somewhat similar to the final day of the sensitising materials and related to *important relationships, understanding the whole person, and boundaries of support*. First, the students were asked to come up with the characteristics of a person they

would trust the least to take over their responsibility in the presented scenario, the flawed mentor. This exercise was done as a group to encourage discussion about the reasoning behind the choice for each characteristic. Next, they had to come up with ways this flawed mentor would take over the responsibility. Finally, each student had to choose the three characteristics that they see as the worst for a flawed mentor and then explain which person in their lives they see as a flawed mentor, in this scenario. For the ideal mentor, the students went through the exact same steps but now described the person they would trust the most to take over their responsibility.

Through these exercises the differences and similarities between each of the students became more clear. Mostly during the discussions differences were revealed in the interpretation, but also importance, of some of the characteristics.

[About the flawed mentor] "I would find detached very difficult. I think that I would feel more at ease when I feel that people like me. Sounds very pathetic ..."

[About the ideal mentor] "Involved but not controlling. I think it's in there. I also like it if someone is organised, I think, because then you know what to do with someone..."

However, the most interesting thing about this part of the session to me were the insights gained into their personal preferences. Even though the students were almost similar in their choice of most defining characteristics as the others in their session, their description of those characteristics in people in their own life was often quite different. For example, in the last session two students chose unreliable, unknowing and aggressive as the worst characteristics for a mentor

to have. This is what they said about the flawed mentors in their lives.

"A friend of mine, because he never gains weight regardless of what he eats and therefore cannot empathise with me."

"My mom, because she doesn't really know what I like and what I don't like to eat. Which is because she is not very good at listening to what I want and she thinks she's always right."

Again, for this part of the session it would have been nice to go deeper into the choice and meaning of the characteristics with each of the student individually, which is definitely a recommendation for future use.

In the third and final part of the session, **Versus the System**, the students were presented with a second, made-up scenario through the use of guided fantasy (Heijne & van der Meer, 2019). In a guided fantasy the participants are asked to listen to a second person story with their eyes closed while imagining the story is about themselves. The scenario explained an extreme situation in which an outside organisation took over the responsibility as presented in the first scenario of the session. For example, the university took over the responsibility to get students to attend their lectures by sending teachers to wake up the students and walk with them to class. The students were then asked to explain how this scenario made them feel and to come up with other ways this outside organisation could help with or take over responsibility.

This final part, based on *helping each other* and *attention for the network*, focused mainly on what the influence of an external organisation could be on the autonomy of these students and their openness to outside help. The choice for

an extreme scenario was made to surprise the students, but mostly to get them to think about their boundaries regarding help from outside organisations. The hope was that these scenarios were so extreme that it would allow the students to more easily come up with plausible alternatives that are within their boundaries, which actually worked. The students were quite shocked by the presented scenarios and had many ideas about how it could be approached differently.

"I'm not good at meditating anyway, that doesn't work for me, so it wouldn't help me at all, but I admire the ambition that the CoffeeStar is taking on a role in this [helping students destress]."

## 2.1.2 Mapping autonomy

Next to the insights gathered about the use of the sensitising materials and the sessions, the answers given in those materials were used to try and create an overview of the student's autonomy. As some parts of the sessions were done as a group, I decided to create an overview of the shared insights of the group as well as an overview of the individual's autonomy along with a more detailed explanation. Below the shared insights of the group can be seen (Figure 7). This overview includes the scenario as presented in the session, as this is what all insights are built upon. On the righthand side of the overview the group's shared views on responsibility in

the scenario are summarised, as well as shared opinions on what a good mentor should be able to do, and the shared views on the extreme scenario of, in this case, the university taking over responsibility. At the bottom are the flawed and ideal mentors with the characteristics that the group attributed to them.

Next to the overall view and similarities within the group, the students are of course individuals with their own views and opinions. An attempt has been made to reflect this by creating separate summaries for each of the students based on their filled out sensitising materials and individual answers in the sessions. The overview of Emma's answers will be used as an example (Figure 8, next page).



Figure 7. Overview of group insights of one session.

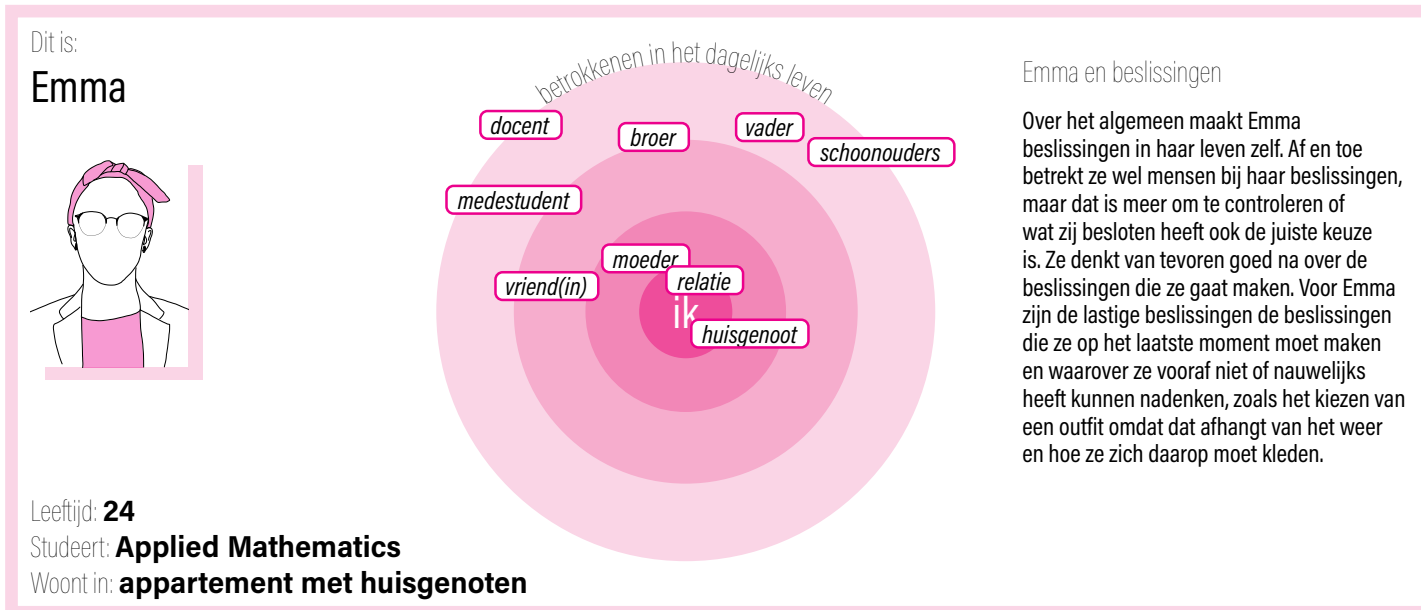


Figure 8. Example of a summary

Some basic information is included about Emma to get familiar with her. The circle represents the relationships in Emma's daily life and the extent of their involvement. The closer to the middle, the more often involved the relationships are. Next, a short summary of how Emma makes decisions: what is easy for her and which kind of decisions she struggles with. This part of the overview is based on the sensitising materials and therefore does not relate to any specific scenario. It provides some insight into who Emma is and how she makes decisions in general.

The right part of the overview (above) relates to the scenario presented in the session. As the insights are related to a specific scenario, there was no good way to extrapolate these insights to a general picture of the autonomy of each student. As has become clear through the research and the is also reflected in the framework, there are many aspects that make up and influence a person's autonomy. On that account, a person could respond differently in different situations, resulting in their autonomy being different per situation.

**EMMA**

Over het algemeen maakt Emma beslissingen in haar leven zelf. Af en toe betreft ze wel mensen bij haar beslissingen, maar dat is meer om te controleren of wat zij besloten heeft ook de juiste keuze is. Ze denkt van tevoren goed na over de beslissingen die ze gaat maken. Voor Emma zijn de lastige beslissingen de beslissingen die ze op het laatste moment moet maken en waarover ze vooraf niet of nauwelijks heeft kunnen nadenken, zoals het kiezen van een outfit omdat dat afhangt van het weer en hoe ze zich daarop moet kleden.

De personen die Emma vertrouwt om beslissingen voor of met haar te maken moeten georganiseerd, begripvol, behulpzaam, rustig, flexibel en bereikbaar zijn. Het is voor haar belangrijk dat deze personen het beste met haar voor hebben en haar goed kennen. Daarnaast geeft ze de voorkeur aan personen die haar in het verleden al eens eerder hebben geholpen met het maken van beslissingen, zoals haar moeder en haar vriend.

"Ik ben wel zelf verantwoordelijk"  
Emma heeft een meer individuele insteek in dit scenario. Zij vindt dat zij zelf verantwoordelijk is om 's ochtends op te staan en naar college te gaan, omdat ze studeert voor haarzelf en niet voor iemand anders. Wel is zij van mening dat haar vrienden mee zouden kunnen delen in deze verantwoordelijkheid. Ze gaan samen naar college, dus als Emma er een keer niet is, zouden haar vrienden haar kunnen motiveren om toch te komen.

Emma's gebrekkige mentor  
Emma's gebrekkige mentor is eigenlijk haar tegenpool. Aangezien zij zelf juist vaak de persoon is geweest die anderen uit bed heeft gehaald 's ochtends, ziet zij de gebrekkige mentor als iemand die het compleet anders zou doen dan zij. Deze persoon is vooral chaotisch, afwachtend en meegaand en voor Emma betekent dat dat deze persoon niet het beste met haar voor heeft en diens verantwoordelijkheid niet serieus neemt. Deze persoon maakt haar niet op tijd wakker, wacht af tot Emma toch niet misschien zelf uit bed komt en gaat mee in eventuele smoesjes die ze zou verzinnen om niet op te staan. Aan de andere kant is deze persoon ook zo koppig dat die niet voor rede vatbaar is en Emma uit bed sleurt als ze er echt niet klaar voor is of een goede reden heeft. In haar leven ziet Emma een vriendin van haar als gebrekkige mentor, omdat ze iemand is die zelf eigenlijk wel een goede mentor kan gebruiken en ook Emma wel eens heeft gevraagd om levenskeuzes voor haar te maken.

Emma's ideale mentor  
Emma's ideale mentor is iemand die het beste met haar voor heeft en weet wat er speelt in haar leven. In tegenstelling tot de gebrekkige mentor is deze persoon georganiseerd en maakt Emma elke dag op tijd wakker. Ook is deze persoon streng in de zin dat deze persoon niet zomaar wegloopt nadat deze haar gewekt heeft, maar blijft staan tot Emma echt wakker is of na een paar minuten terugkomt om te kijken of ze op is. Eigenlijk is Emma deze persoon zelf en de ideale mentor in haar leven is dan ook iemand die zij erg op haar vindt lijken. Deze persoon is net als Emma georganiseerd en gedisciplineerd, maar ook realistisch en begripvol. Als Emma een goede reden heeft om niet uit bed te komen, zal deze persoon haar niet dwingen.

Verantwoordelijkheid van buitenaf  
Voor Emma is het iets te onwennig om de decaan voor haar deurt te hebben staan om haar 's ochtends wakker te maken. Ze kent deze persoon niet en de afstand tussen haar en deze persoon is voor haar ook te groot om op zo'n persoonlijke manier met elkaar om te gaan. Ook voelt ze zich opgejaagd omdat iemand haar vertelt wat ze allemaal moet doen. Aan de andere kant zou Emma het wel oké vinden als het iemand zou zijn die dichtbij haar staat, zoals een medestudent of iemand van de studievereniging. Een werknemer van de TU geeft haar het gevoel dat haar ouders haar wakker maken en dat is precies wat ze niet wil. Emma ziet liever dat de TU het aantrekkelijker maakt om naar college te komen, door bijvoorbeeld persoonlijker benaderd te worden door docenten, die doorhebben als ze niet bij een college is geweest en bij haar checken of het goed met haar gaat. Een strengere manier zou zijn om de colleges niet op te nemen, zodat je wel naar college moet gaan om het vak te kunnen volgen. Emma gebruikt zelf 's ochtends een wake-up light, dus zij denkt dat als alle studenten er eent zouden krijgen van de TU, meer mensen op tijd op zouden staan en naar college zouden gaan.

Figure 9. Example of a more complete explanation for the summary

Ik ben er zelf voor verantwoordelijk dat

## ik in bed blijf liggen in plaats van naar college ga



So this overview is a summary of how Emma (re)acts in the scenario of being a student who stays in bed and does not attend her lectures. Emma's arguments about the responsibility in this situation are more on the individual side, as she believes that you choose to study for yourself, not for other people. She also believes that getting out of bed is her own responsibility. On the other hand, if you have friends, Emma believes there should be a shared responsibility amongst the friends, which is a more relational argument.

Where arguments lie on the scale between individual and relational is not something that can be easily measured. As so many factors come into play when talking about autonomy, making a measurement system would be nearly impossible. Therefore, for this review I have assessed the arguments in two ways. Firstly, whether they assume own responsibility or involve other relationships. In addition to this, I compared the arguments given with the arguments provided by the other students in the session. With the autonomy framework in mind, it was mostly done by feeling and interpretation the arguments.

Below the scale of arguments are Emma's flawed and ideal mentors with their most prominent characteristics. This gives a quick glimpse into Emma's boundaries when it comes to someone taking over responsibilities.

All together this overview summarises Emma's autonomy in this situation. Nevertheless, autonomy is a more complex than just this overview. For that reason a more complete explanation behind the overview is also provided (Figure 9). It is important to note that even though autonomy can be mapped in this way, it is not a representation of a person's autonomy in general, as it is specific for the presented scenario. Next to that, with all the complexity of autonomy, many differences between individuals can be found which might make it nearly impossible to create types of autonomy within a user group. As the scenarios presented in the sessions were all different and the number of participants was small, I have not tried to create personas based on the outcomes of the explorations. If this were to be considered, additional research should be done to explore the possibilities.

*The complete overview of the outcomes of this session can be found in appendix I.*

# 2.2 Exploring autonomy with possible clients

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In this section the use of the autonomy framework is discussed with health care professionals in the field of Positive Health, as they could be possible clients of Ideate. The goal of these conversations was to find out what the use of the autonomy framework could be within Positive Health.

## Participants

**Bert van Rixtel**, nursing specialist uro-oncology and trainer Positive Health at UMC Utrecht, ambassador at iPH

**Vera Haafkens**, nurse and specialist, and trainer Positive Health at KleinGeluk

**Cisca van der Meijs**, quartermaster and trainer Positive Health at the Levanto Group

## Procedure

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted online with three healthcare professionals from different companies that all work with Positive Health. Each interview consisted of a conversation about the meaning of autonomy and a discussion about the outcomes of the exploration of autonomy with end users. When discussing the meaning of autonomy the participants were shown the autonomy framework as well as the conclusion of the literature research. To support the explanation of the end user exploration, the participants were shown the templates for the sensitising materials as well as the sessions. Next to that, the visual summary of one of the sessions was shown to explain more in depth what type of outcomes could be expected from the materials. All materials used in these

interviews can be found in appendix J.

To analyse the interviews, notes were taken during all three interviews. Audio and video recordings were also made, which were summarised afterwards. The notes and summaries together served as the main source of insights gathered for this exploration.

## Key findings

As explained in Chapter 2.3, the goal of Positive Health is to encourage clients to come up with and implement their own solutions, thus relying on the autonomy of that person. Each of the interviewees explained the role of autonomy in Positive Health in a similar way, explaining autonomy is all about action perspectives. If someone wants or needs to change something in their life, the goal is to find out what they want to change and why, and how they will take the first and next steps to achieve this change. The role of the health care professionals in this situation is to ask the right questions to allow and encourage the individual to take responsibility for their own actions.

All interviewees believed that the content of the autonomy framework fits in well with Positive Health as it describes autonomy as



all aspects that influence a person and not just the problem or illness they are dealing with. Cisca van der Meijs noted that:

**“Having fears can hinder your autonomy, that you no longer dare to do something because of something you have experienced”**

- Cisca van der Meijs

Vera Haafkens and Bert van Rixtel also believe that good care requires attention to previous experiences and how those can influence the rest of life.

Bert van Rixtel speaks to many people who are diagnosed with cancer, and by asking them how they have coped with earlier big moments in their lives, he tries to gain insight into what these people need to deal with this diagnosis and further steps. By asking about previous experiences and showing an interest in how people live their lives, Vera Haafkens tries to create a trust that allows her to better help and support her clients.

Regarding the use of the framework within Positive Health, it was seen as a conversation starter or a tool to delve deeper into what is behind the way people take responsibility and make decisions, as well as what they find important in life. The health care professionals would mostly use the framework to start the conversation about autonomy with their

colleagues, as many healthcare workers want to provide care for what is bothering you, so encouraging thinking independently is subordinate to many professionals.

However, sometimes understanding more about who a person is instead of focusing on the problem the person has, can help solve their problem easier and quicker.

It turned out that most of the questions asked in the sensitising and session materials of chapter 3.2 were questions already being asked in the frame of Positive Health, but not yet connected to autonomy specifically. The interviewees did note that the way these answers were gathered in the overview of a person's autonomy, I should be aware not to make it a measuring tool, and not to try to categorise people. Therefore, they would rather use the questions in the way they see fit than have a tool or guide to use them. The fact that autonomy was now presented to them from the viewpoint of design allowed them to think about it differently and encouraged them to have more conversations about autonomy with their colleagues.

**“You have really made me think because you approach the subject from a completely different angle than I have dealt with it until now and it makes it more tangible to me what I need to talk about with my colleagues in the field.”**

- Bert van Rixtel



Figure 10. Impression of one of the online interviews

# Conclusion chapter 2

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Possible uses of the autonomy framework to uncover and map individuals' autonomy were explored through sensitising materials and sessions with students from the TU Delft. The materials used in and outcomes of these explorations were then discussed with health care professionals from the field of Positive Health. These explorations have revealed the following insights.

## Uncovering autonomy

A person's autonomy can be uncovered by asking the right questions, but some information needs to be further explored and interpreted by professionals, for example information about demographics.

An overview of involved relationships can serve as a starting point to explore the extent and nature of their involvement, as well as the individual's feelings towards this involvement.

Exploring how a person makes decisions, big or small, can give an idea of what type of decisions this person struggles with and which they find easy to make. In addition, it can reveal if they want to be helped with these decisions and who is allowed to provide this help.

Creating ideal and flawed mentors by discussing their characteristics provides insight into the boundaries a person sets when it comes to support from others. Presenting extreme scenarios of involvement by organisations uncovers where a person sets boundaries when it comes to 'strangers' interfering.

Overall, a person's view on responsibility and involvement of others depends on the context and situation that is being researched. The way a person responds in one situation is not necessarily an indication of their response in a different situation. Therefore the researched situation should be familiar for the participant of the research, to get the most reliable outcomes.

These ways of uncovering autonomy could be used as a deepening tool for healthcare workers in Positive Health to uncover underlying needs, beliefs and reasons behind problems and behaviours.

## Mapping autonomy

The outcomes of the exploration can be used to map out a person's autonomy, but it is unique for each individual and for the chosen situation. The complexity of autonomy makes for a large amount of variables that would make the creation of personas a difficult feat. However, the creation of personas has not been explored in this research, so the possibilities still need to be researched if the use of personas is considered.

## 02. Exploring autonomy

3.



# Design and the autonomy framework

In this chapter the insights gathered the use of the autonomy framework is explored with designers at Ideate. The outcomes of this exploration, in combination with the insight gathered in previous chapters, lead to a revised autonomy framework, as well as a design goal and design requirements for the next phase of the design process.

# 3.1 Exploring autonomy with designers

In this section the final research question will be answered: what do designers need to be able to incorporate autonomy in the design process?

## Procedure

In order to answer this research question an explorative session was conducted with designers at Ideate. In his session the designers explored the autonomy framework and its possible use. This was done by means of the following questions:

What are the designers' current understandings of autonomy?

Is the autonomy framework clear?

Where does autonomy currently play a role?

Can the autonomy framework be of use in Ideate's projects? If so, in what parts of a project could the autonomy framework play a role and how?

In what form would the designers like to use the autonomy framework?

A detailed report of the session can be found in appendix K and the used materials in appendix L.

## What are the designers' current understandings of autonomy?

Discussing the designers' understanding of autonomy it became clear they all had a more individualistic interpretation of autonomy. One of the designers described autonomy as the right and duty to make your own decision, which could lead to loneliness as one has to do everything on their own. Another described autonomy as the will and ability to feel space and have the confidence to set one's own course. To me it was clear that in the designers' understanding of autonomy the relational view was lacking, but not completely absent. For example, two of the designers described autonomy as the illusion of being independent of anyone, which in turn could lead to loneliness. Their solution to this would be to dare to be dependent on others.



Figure 11. Impression picture of the session at Ideate

#### Is the autonomy framework clear?

The short and general introduction of the framework sparked quite a few questions, which were mostly directed toward the group instead of me. These questions led to interesting discussions in which the designers tried to forge a group understanding of the framework. For instance, one of the designers wondered whether how a person experiences autonomy is the same as how autonomous this person is. Another answered that this is not the case, as the question remains whether or not it is possible to create a factual standard for the extent to which a person is autonomous or experiences autonomy. This question was immediately answered with 'no' as well, since the degree of autonomy is always relative and aspects that influence this perceived degree of autonomy differ per person.

#### Where does autonomy currently play a role?

After introducing the autonomy framework and shortly explaining each of the 9 aspects, the designers also realised their initial views on autonomy were lacking the relational view. They started relating the aspects of the framework to their current projects and noticed that many of the aspects were actually being addressed, even though they had not yet related them to autonomy. For example, one of the projects was about therapy compliance among teens. In this case a question that kept on coming back was the conflict of which responsibilities were becoming those of the teen and which were still those of other educators. The designer related this to the important relationships as well as the boundaries of support aspects of the framework.

When asked if they could tell me where autonomy plays a role in their design process, the designers could not come up with one, concrete answer. However, after some discussion and deliberation among the group, the conclusion was drawn that all aspects of

the framework had been addressed during the research phase, albeit not all to the same extent or in the exact wording of the framework. For example, Genetics cannot be controlled was not addressed in the sense of genes, but attention was paid to attributes people could not change easily. The final design would therefore take into account accessibility for those with low literacy and those with disabilities. Aspects that turned out to be most relevant or important regarding the content of the project were further explored throughout the process.

It has become clear that the aspects of autonomy are currently being addressed and explored throughout the design process, though the designers were not aware that many insights actually pertained to autonomy. The introduction of the autonomy framework encouraged the designers to look at their projects through the lens of autonomy, which sparked new and interesting insights.

#### Can the autonomy framework be of use in Ideate's projects? If so, in what parts of a project could the autonomy framework play a role and how?

As all aspects could be explored in the research phase but do not necessarily come back throughout the entire project, the framework could be used in different capacities throughout the different phases of a project. One of the designers explained this as follows:

**"Roughly, the aspects of autonomy are part of the research, understanding the target group. What does their autonomy look like and what plays a role in this? And when designing, it [the framework] is more like a check: are people able to use our design? Or do we make our design dependent on the power of action that people have or do not have?"**

This same designer explained that he envisioned autonomy as a circle consisting of the different aspects of the framework. Each of the aspects is represented in the circle as a segment and the smaller the circle, the smaller the freedom to act. During the research phase the size of the circle and the reasoning behind it are determined. During the design phase the size of the circle is leading for the design outcome. An interpretation of this visualisation can be seen in Figure 12. On the one hand this circle view of autonomy helps boil down the complexity of the subject into a comprehensible visualisation. However, it also means quantifying the different aspects of autonomy in order to create a more tangible result. I believe that by simplifying and quantifying the complexity of all that autonomy is, we lose sight of the reasons and explanations behind a person's autonomy, which actually are the most interesting and insightful in a project. I do however also believe that visualising autonomy in this way could serve as support for explaining research outcomes in a simple way to other parties, such as the client, though one must not forget to keep the reasoning behind the visualisation in mind.

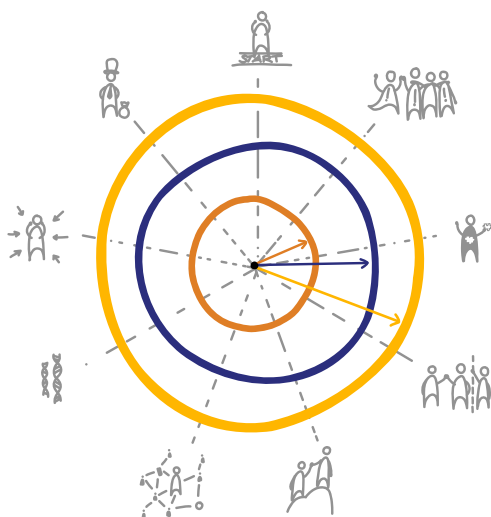


Figure 12. Visualisation of autonomy as a circle, as one of the designers described it.

Another of the designers commented that the framework could not only be used to evaluate generated design outcomes, but also to evaluate existing interventions. For example, a client may have an intervention that doesn't work, but they can't figure out why. Then the framework could be used to find out why the intervention is not working and then explain this to the client. For the final design of this project, this could mean that it becomes something that can be used in any order throughout the design process, not restricting the designers to conform to any set process.

To use the framework during the research phase of a project, the designers mentioned that having some general example questions for each of the 9 aspects could be a way to implement the framework. This way, they would have a starting point for coming up with research questions regarding autonomy that are more specific to the subject of the project. Next to that, these general questions could also serve as a reminder to explore all dimensions of each aspect of the framework, without the need to go through all the background information, simplifying the use of the framework. The designers came up with the questions on the right, that should be considered to be included in the final design.

#### In what form would the designers like to use the autonomy framework?

For the framework itself, the designers classified the aspects as conditions to check off a list in order to compile a person's autonomy, while keeping in mind that the extent of the presence of these conditions differs per person, per situation and per context. They did mention they would like to have the possibility of reading a more detailed description of each of the aspects of the framework as well as some additional background information, as an



#### Important relationships

How many relationships is the end user a part of?

How helpful are the relationships?

What is the social norm?

#### Understanding the whole person

What is the end user's goal?

What are the end user beliefs?

Are those beliefs helping or hindering?

#### Boundaries of support

Can the end user do it themselves?

To what extent are others allowed to help the end user?

#### Helping each other

Does the end user feel room to ask for help?

How do others help or hinder the end user?

Which people provide (un)solicited help to the end user?

How sensitive is this subject for the end user?

#### Attention for the network

Which rules, circumstances and services are helpful or not?

Which laws, systems and rules influence how we view autonomy in this theme?

Which organizations are involved and how?

#### Me, myself and my

To what extent does the end user think they should be able to do it themselves?

To what extent does the end user want to receive help?

#### Only for 'the elite'

What is the "minimum" that the end user must have to participate?

What resources does the end user need?

What competencies does the end user need?

#### Genetics cannot be controlled.

How did this go for the end user in the past?

Which skills help or hinder?

in addition to the short explanatory texts in the visualisation of the framework itself.

The framework in combination with the questions the designers came up with were compared with the Behavioural Lenses toolkit they use regularly in their projects. This is a toolkit regarding design for behaviour change, consisting of 5 'lenses'. Besides an overview of all the lenses in relation to behaviour, each of the lenses is explained separately in quite some detail. Next to that, for each of the lenses a series of questions is developed that can be used as starting points during research for a project. As Ideate is very familiar with this toolkit, it will serve as inspiration for the final design.

It was also suggested to use these questions as a way to measure autonomy within a project. A suggestion was to come up with an assessment to score the answers to the questions on a scale of 0 to 10. For example, when researching the perceived autonomy of a civil servant who is intrinsically motivated to make changes but is hindered to do so by many different laws and rules, one could say that on the aspect of *attention for the network* the score would be 0, as the circumstances are hindering this person's actions. This could mean that a design solution for this scenario should focus on the circumstances surrounding the civil servant. This again seems to be a way to quantify a person's autonomy, which as explained earlier in this report section might lead to losing sight of the complexity of the reasons and explanations behind a person's autonomy. For this reason, this will not be specifically implemented in the final design.

One of the designers mentioned she views autonomy as a ladder that currently stands upright: our society is organised in such a way that the more autonomous a person is, the better. However, autonomy should be viewed as a horizontal ladder, a sliding scale in which there is no better or worse, just differences between people and contexts (Figure 13). She would like to use the framework to explain the tilting of this autonomy ladder to clients. Someone added that there are many implicit beliefs that no one questions anymore, such as that all elderly people want to live independently for as long as possible and so on. The framework has the potential to serve as a conversation starter between designers and clients to come to a shared understanding of autonomy.

Lastly, the designers explained that in their projects they do not use most of the tools exactly according to how the tools

were intended to be used, such as the Behavioural Lenses. As they are familiar with the tools, they have the information mostly memorised and implement parts of the tools that fit the project best. If necessary, they refer back to the tool for some extra information. Because of this, they feel that the 9 aspects of the Autonomy framework are a bit too many to memorise and easily implement in their design 'routine'. A suggestion was made to group some of the aspects together to create a framework consisting of just 4 aspects, which can be seen in Figure 14 below. I agree with this clustering, as some of the aspects of the framework have some overlap in their contents. By reducing the amount of aspects, the framework is more easily memorised, but it also allows for a more elaborate and complete description of each aspect by combining information from different parts of the framework.

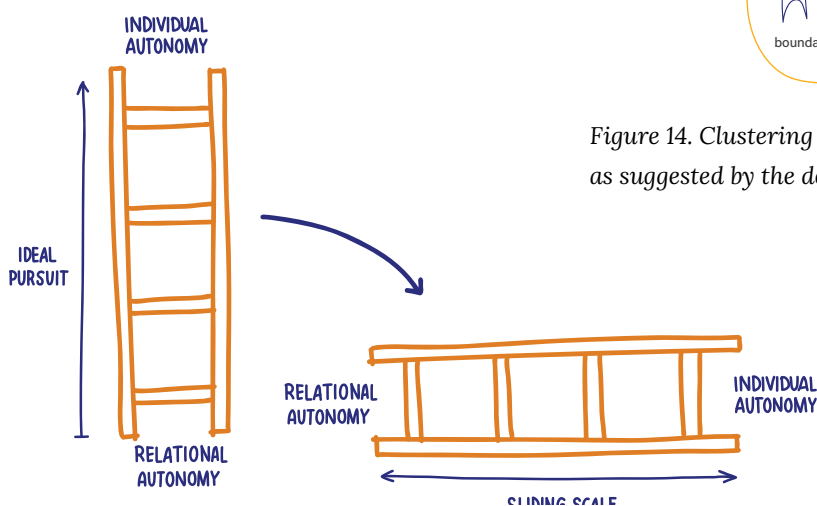


Figure 13. Visualisation of the 'autonomy ladder'

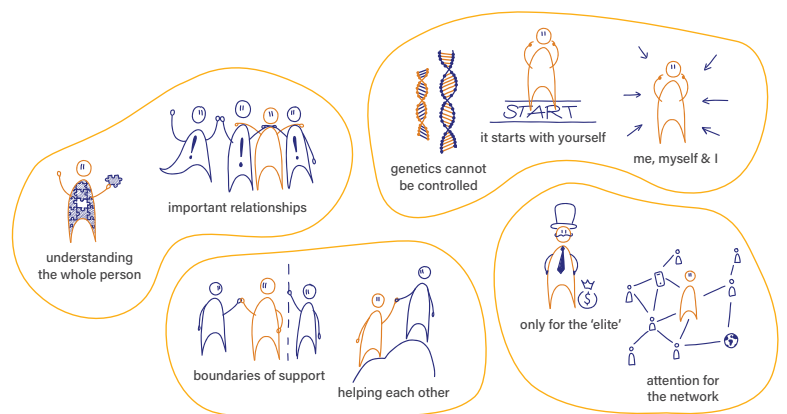


Figure 14. Clustering of the framework aspects, as suggested by the designers.

#### Conclusion

This study has shown that the autonomy framework can serve multiple purposes throughout the design process. It can be used as a conversation starter about the understanding of autonomy, between designers in a team as well as between the design team and the client. During the research phase the framework can serve as the foundation for research questions to gain insight in the role and importance of autonomy in the context of a project, as well as an evaluation tool for existing design interventions. When designing, the framework can serve as a checklist for the implementation of the research outcomes in the design. Finally, the framework can also serve as justification for design decisions.

For the designers the ideal implementation of the framework would be a kind of design tool that includes all the aforementioned purposes. Next to these purposes, more detailed descriptions as well as additional literature should be made available for all aspects of the framework. Finally, it should be considered to combine aspects of the framework to make it easier to remember.

# 3.2 The autonomy framework 2.0

As explained in the previous subchapter, the idea of simplifying the framework was forth by the designers at Ideate. I agree that by reducing the number of aspects of the framework from 9 to 4, the framework is easier to remember and explain to others. The 9 aspects have been clustered as can be seen below (Figure 15)

Cluster A contains the aspects relating to everything that influences an individual's autonomy and comes from within. Therefore, this cluster will be named *the individual*.

Cluster B refers to the network of relationships an individual is a part of and connected with. Thus, this cluster will be named *important relationships*.

Cluster C relates to the boundaries that are in place when it comes to receiving support from the relationships. This cluster will be called *boundaries of support*.

The final cluster, D, refers to external aspects that influence a person's autonomy and are not other people. Think of products and services, but also circumstances and regulations. This cluster will therefore be named *the context*.

These 4 'new' aspects of autonomy and their connections are captured in the framework on the right (Figure 16), the Autonomy Framework 2.0.

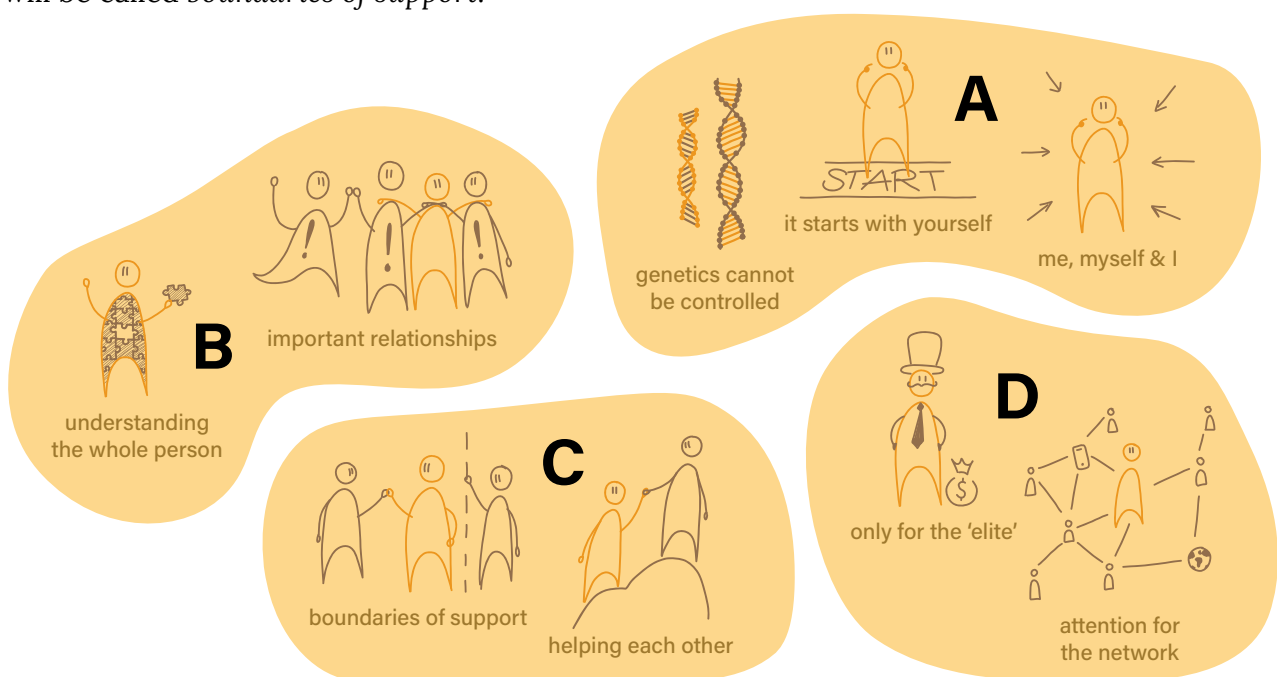


Figure 15. Clustering of the framework aspects, as suggested by the designers.

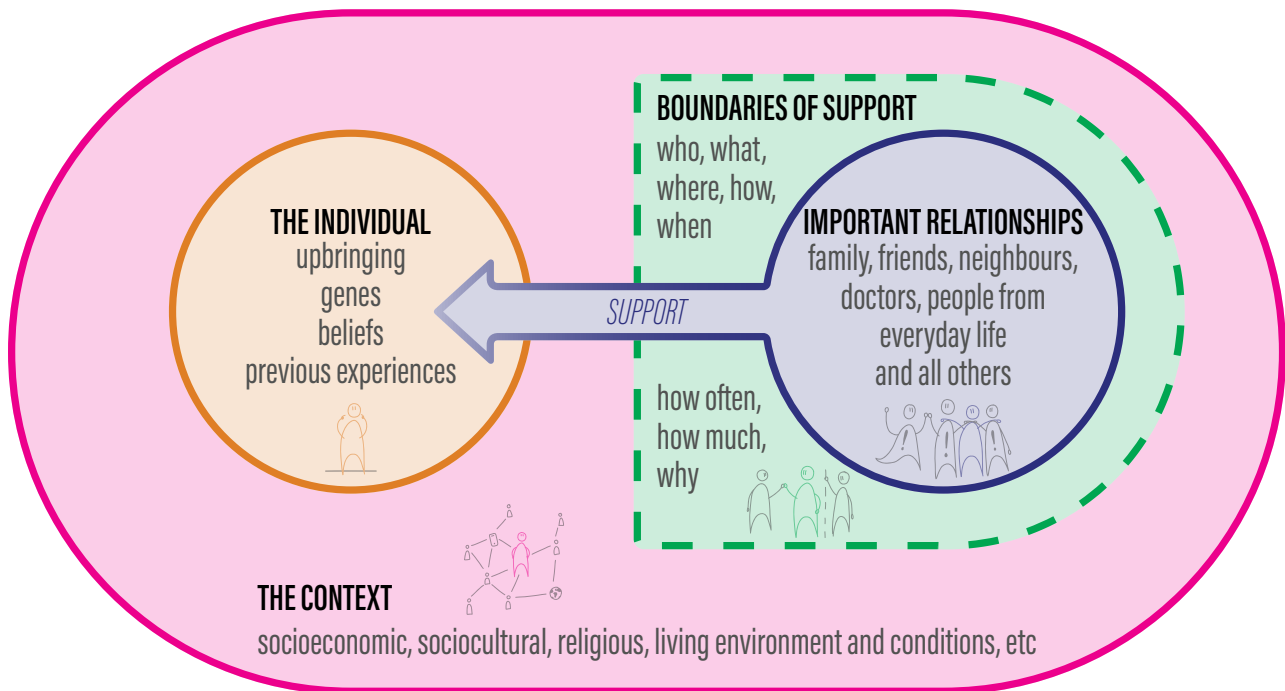


Figure 16. The Autonomy Framework 2.0

### The individual

Everything you do, choose and want to achieve comes from within. So this can mean that you are the only one allowed to make decisions and choices regarding your life, without influence and interference from the world around you. The only things that (subconsciously) influence you are factors that you cannot change, such as your genes, your upbringing and your previous experiences.

### Important relationships

People need other people to feel connected and to lead meaningful lives. The relationships you are a part of create a network in which you can ask for help and support. This network can support you in making choices and living your life. It is important that these relationships understand not only their own relationship with you, but also the other relationships you are a part of and how those can affect you and your life. Think, for example, of family and friends, but also doctors and teachers or employers.

### Boundaries of support

Being supported by your network means you can ask for help and support and get it when you need it, for example when you need to make responsible or right choices. This also works the other way around, you being there to support those in your network. Which relationships may help and when, to what extent and with what, differs per individual. Your view of support is not necessarily the same as someone else's, including your relationships.

### The context

As a person you are not only connected to other people, but also to things such as products, services, and circumstances. All of these things can affect how you live your life, sometimes without you even knowing it. For example, your socioeconomic status and your living environment can influence the amount of information or resources you have access to to live your life the way you want to.

# 3.3 Defining the direction

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## 3.3.1 Towards a design goal

From the explorations done in previous chapters it has become clear that the autonomy framework can be used in different capacities throughout the design process. Similar to the structure of this report, in the design process one would need to start by understanding autonomy. At the start of a project the meaning and complexity of autonomy should be explored and discussed to create a shared understanding within the project theme of designers, clients and possible other stakeholders. Once this shared understanding of autonomy is in place, the role of autonomy in the context of the design project can be explored during the research phase. The outcomes of the research can then be used as a foundation of coming up with a design and evaluating it. Finally, reflecting on the role of autonomy throughout a project might lead to new insights that can be taken into account in future projects.

For each of the different phases of the design process, visualised in the overview on the right (Figure 17), the autonomy framework could serve a different purpose and be used in different capacities. However, as it is most important to first understand the complexity of autonomy before one can look into it further in a design process, I will be focussing on the first phase of the design project and will try to come up with a design that allows a design team to explore and understand the meaning of autonomy.

As also has become apparent throughout this project, is that the first step to understanding autonomy is uncovering the assumptions one might have regarding autonomy. Different people have different ideas of what autonomy is and what it means to them, but also what they think autonomy might mean to other people.

Through many iterations, as a result of insights gained and conversations had throughout the project, the design goal has been formulated as follows:

**“I want to support Ideate designers in communicating and exploring the importance and complexity of autonomy with their clients at the start of a project, by providing them with tools to uncover assumptions their clients might have regarding the autonomy of the target group.”**

### 3.3.2 Design requirements

Following the design goal and the insights gathered from the previous chapters, there are four requirements that will serve as guidelines for the rest of the design process.

#### Understanding autonomy

Designers should get a better understanding of the complexity of autonomy and everything it entails.

#### Ease of use

The concept should be easy to understand and use for both designers and non-designers.

#### Communicating the importance

The concept should support designers in communicating the importance and complexity of autonomy with their clients at the start of any project in any context.

#### Uncovering assumptions

The concept should provide designers with the tools to uncover assumptions clients might have regarding the autonomy of the target group.

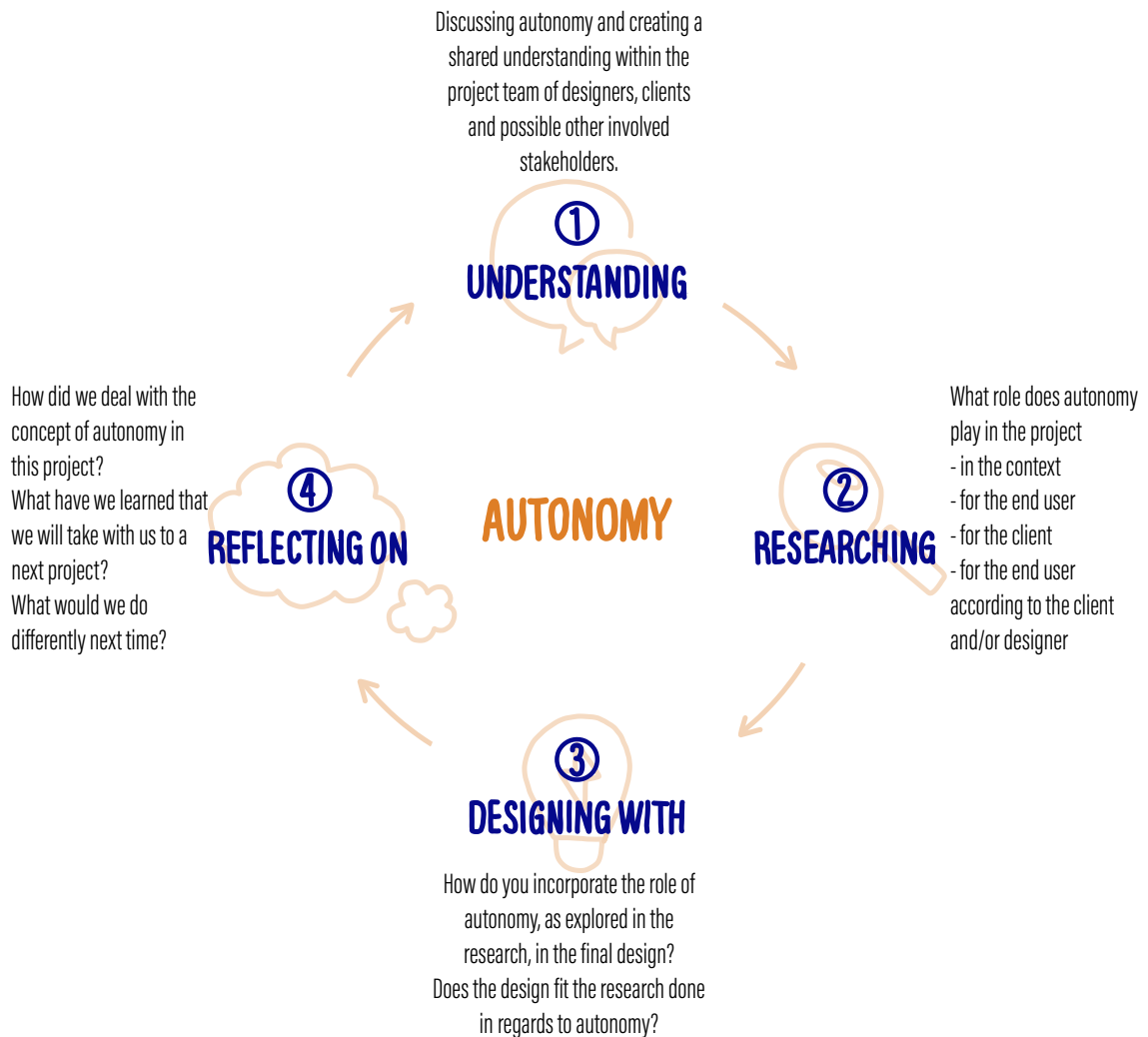


Figure 17. Overview of the different phases of the design process regarding autonomy

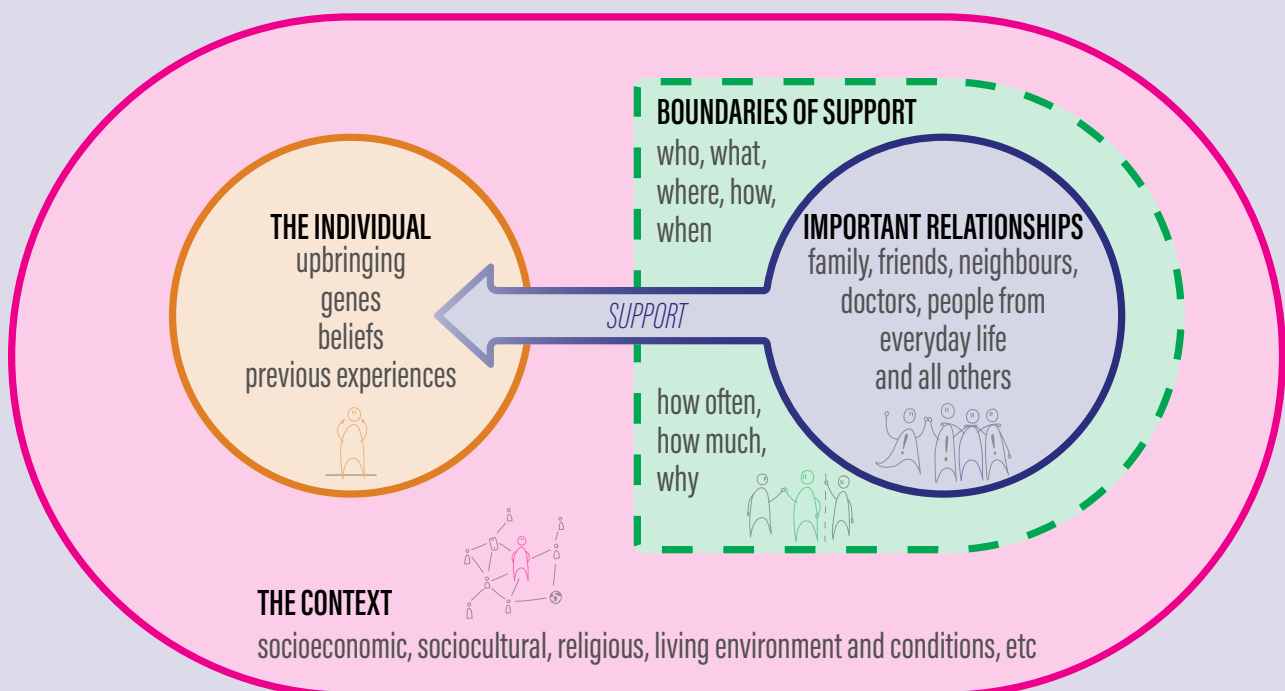
# Conclusion chapter 3

At the start of this chapter the final research question, what do designers need to be able to incorporate autonomy in the design process, was answered.

This question was answered by exploring the possible use of the autonomy framework with designers at Ideate. In conclusion, designers mostly need information about autonomy in order to incorporate autonomy in the design process. The framework itself could serve multiple purposes throughout the design process, after being reiterated to be more compact and easier to remember. The decision was made to focus the design phase of this project on the first phase of the design process. Based on the explorations done with the Ideate designers, the design goal and design requirements emerged.

The design goal:

**“I want to support Ideate designers in communicating and exploring the importance and complexity of autonomy with their clients at the start of a project, by providing them with tools to uncover assumptions their clients might have regarding the autonomy of the target group.”**





## The design requirements

### Understanding autonomy

Designers should get a better understanding of the complexity of autonomy and everything it entails.

### Ease of use

The concept should be easy to understand and use for both designers and non-designers.

### Communicating the importance

The concept should support designers in communicating the importance and complexity of autonomy with their clients at the start of any project in any context.

### Uncovering assumptions

The concept should provide designers with the tools to uncover assumptions clients might have regarding the autonomy of the target group.



# 4.

**GRENZEN VAN ONDERSTEUNING**

Ondersteund worden door je netwerk betekent dat je om hulp kunt vragen en hulp kunt krijgen dat is een tijd kostend, wanneer je bijvoorbeeld ondersteuning of hulp zoekt moet om de voorwaarde te stellen dat jij er bent om de ondersteuning te bieden en steunen. In welke vorm kan dat zijn? Het kan zijn dat je bijvoorbeeld een netwerk wilt creëren of wilt uitbreiden. Het kan ook zijn dat je wilt weten hoe je kunt worden ondersteund door je netwerk. Het kan ook zijn dat je wilt weten hoe je kunt worden ondersteund door je netwerk. Het kan ook zijn dat je wilt weten hoe je kunt worden ondersteund door je netwerk.

Wat zijn de grenzen van ondersteuning?

Wat zijn de grenzen van ondersteuning?

Wat zijn de grenzen van ondersteuning?

Wat zijn de grenzen van ondersteuning?

Wat zijn de grenzen van ondersteuning?



# Developing the tool

This chapter describes the design activities that lead from the design goal to the final concept. In this case the concept is a toolkit consisting of an informational poster and a set of question cards to be used to uncover assumptions clients might have regarding the autonomy of the target group.

# 4.1 Ideation

In a conversation with one of the designers at Ideate on how to translate the autonomy framework into a design tool for the first phase of a project, he explained that the most important to him was that the information about autonomy should be conveyed in a clear and simple way. The exact format of the design did not matter to him, as he would incorporate the proceed information in a project in such a way that it fits the subject and context of that project, as different projects require different approaches. With this in mind, I looked into other design tools that provide insight into complex concepts as inspiration for the format of the final design.

## Behavioural Lenses

As mentioned earlier in this report, designers at Ideate make use of the *Behavioural Lenses* often in their projects. The Behavioural Lenses are a toolkit regarding design for behaviour change, consisting of 5 'lenses' (Figure 18). Besides an overview of all the lenses in relation to behaviour, each of the lenses is explained separately in quite some detail. Next to that, for each of the lenses a series of questions is developed that can be used as starting points during research for a project.

The physical toolkit consists of a poster displaying the overview of the 5 lenses with a short description of the most important insights, a booklet about designing for behavioural change explaining the research behind the toolkit, a booklet with several pages per lens with information and questions relating to the relevant lenses (Figure 20 and Figure 19)



Figure 18. The 5 Behavioural lenses (source: gedragsontwerp.nl)



Figure 20. Example of one of the lenses (source: gedragsontwerp.nl)



Figure 19. The Behavioural Lenses booklet (source: gedragsontwerp.nl)

### A Social Designer's Field Guide to Power Literacy

As part of her graduation thesis, Maya Goodwill created the *Social Designer's Field Guide to Power Literacy* as a tool for designers to learn more about power dynamics in design projects. The guide is a workbook for designers to develop power literacy by building up their knowledge,

reflexivity and interpretation skills to better understand the power dynamics and forms of power that might come up in a design project. The exercises in the field guide are meant to be done once and afterwards serve as a way to refresh the knowledge gained through the guide whenever it feels necessary. (Goodwill, 2020)



Figure 21. A Social Designer's Field Guide to Power Literacy (source: graduation report M. Goodwill)

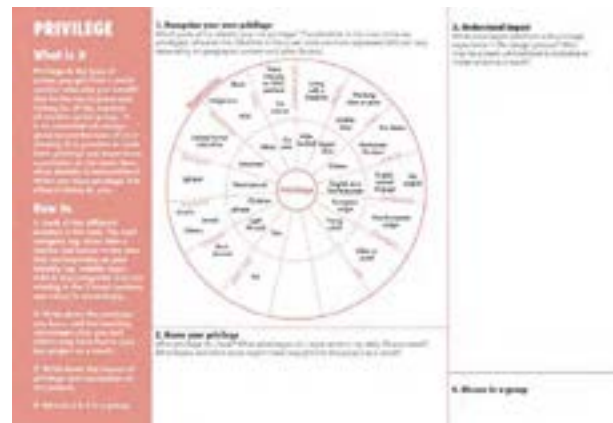


Figure 22. Example of a exercise in the Social Designer's Field Guide to Power Literacy (source: graduation report M. Goodwill)

## Design for Happiness Deck

The *Design for Happiness Deck* is a tool designed by the Delft Institute for Positive Design that can be used to explore the potential of lasting wellbeing. It allows you to break down the phenomenon of happiness into manageable components that can be of use when coming up with design ideas or when analysing a design project. The tool itself is based on the Positive Design Framework by Desmet

and Pohlmeier and consists of 3 card decks that pertain to three aspects of designing for happiness. Each card deck consists of 24 cards that display potential manifestations of happiness. (Delft Institute for Positive Design, 2017) The toolkit comes without instructions for use, allowing for explorations of happiness in any part of the project, whenever it seems necessary or interesting.



Figure 23. Overview of the Design for Happiness Deck (source: [www.diopd.org](http://www.diopd.org))

## Ethics for Designers

The *Ethics for Designers* toolkit was designed by Jet Gispen as part of her graduation thesis. The toolkit can be used by designers to better understand and incorporate the role of ethics in design whether this is in design practice in general or within a specific project.

The toolkit consists of templates relating to 3 different ethical skills, that can all be used separately. There is no set way to use the templates, nor a specific moment in the design process when each of these tools should be used. (Gispen, 2017)



Figure 24. Screenshot of [www.ethicsfordesigners.com/tools](http://www.ethicsfordesigners.com/tools)

### Perspectief op Participatie

Besides executing design projects for clients, Ideate also shares insights gathered throughout their work on their website. An example of this are their articles about participation, *Perspectief of Participatie*. In 3 separate blogposts, they share insights and information about different perspectives on participation. Each of the blogposts contains a template for a worksheet that serves as an example of how to use the information provided in a part of the design process. (Ideate, 2021)

### Conclusion

Each of the previously presented tools address a different complex concept and each in different ways. As the goal for the final design is to support designers in communicating the meaning and complexity of autonomy by providing tools to uncover assumptions the client might have, it seems that the final design should be something that can possibly be used in conversations with clients in its final form, without designers needing to rework the contents to fit the conversation. Similar to the Design for Happiness Deck and the Ethics for Designers Toolkit, the final design of this project will be based on a framework consisting of multiple parts. Both of these examples explore the different parts of their frameworks in smaller, more manageable pieces, which is something I will keep in mind.

As assumptions are to be explored through the use of the final design, it should include questions or reflexive exercises for the user to complete, to uncover their own or others' assumptions, similar to the exercises of the Social Designer's Field Guide to Power Literacy.

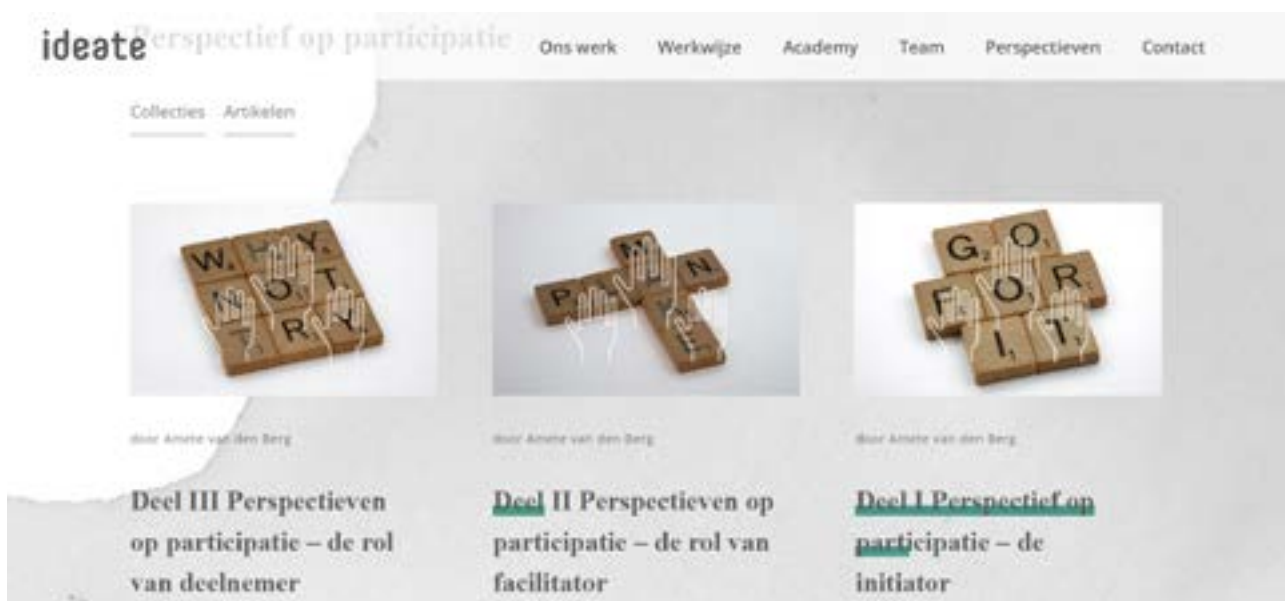


Figure 25. Screenshot of [www.ideate.nl/perseptief-op=participatie](http://www.ideate.nl/perseptief-op=participatie)

## 4.2 Conceptualisation

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Using the framework as a foundation, I created a design with the intent to support designers in communicating and exploring the importance and complexity of autonomy with their clients at the start of a project.

The design is a toolkit consisting of two parts. The first part is a poster displaying the autonomy framework and detailed explanations for each part of the framework, as well as an introduction to the importance of understanding autonomy. This poster is meant as a guide for designers, but also clients and anyone else interested, to understand the foundation of autonomy.

The second part of the toolkit is a card deck with question-cards pertaining to each part of the autonomy framework, five to seven questions per part. Each question is formulated as 'What do you think ...', as

a way to explore assumptions the client (and the designer) might have regarding the target group. The questions on the cards are based on the questions the designers at Ideate came up with during the creative session described in chapter 3.1.

Each card has a question on the front, while on the back more information about the question is given, such as extra questions to ask or the reasoning behind the question.

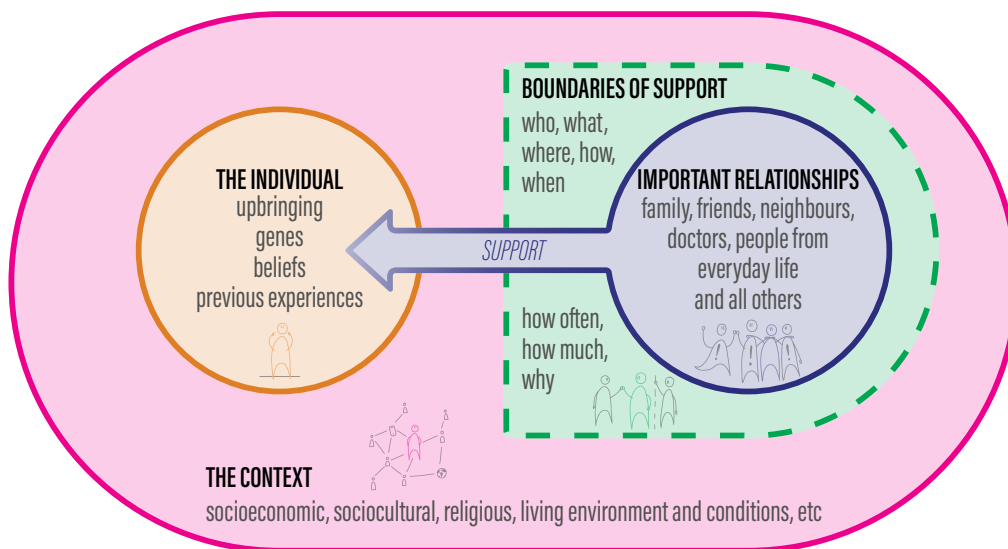
Next to the question-cards, the deck includes 7 other cards. One card shows a visualisation of the autonomy framework,





# THE PARTS OF AUTONOMY

In today's society, we value autonomy and we strive to ensure that everyone can lead their life as autonomous as possible. In fact, we view autonomy as ultimate independence and freedom from outside influence. But by insisting so hard on independence and personal responsibility, it can feel like failing if you do not manage to do everything on your own. That is why it is important to understand that autonomy is more than being able to do everything yourself. Autonomy actually means making decisions and doing things in a way that you like or need. This can also mean that you do not want, can or should do it alone and that you need or want to be supported by the world around you. You decide yourself, as an individual, who or what can provide that support. The relationships you are part of, are part of the context you are in and which can support you the way you want.



## THE INDIVIDUAL

Everything you do, choose and want to achieve comes from within. So this can mean that you are the only one allowed to make decisions and choices regarding your life, without influence and interference from the world around you. The only things that (subconsciously) influence you are factors that you cannot change, such as your genes, your upbringing and your previous experiences.

## IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS

People need other people to feel connected and to lead meaningful lives. The relationships you are a part of create a network in which you can ask for help and support. This network can support you in making choices and living your life. It is important that these relationships understand not only their own relationship with you, but also the other relationships you are a part of and how those can affect you and your life. Think, for example, of family and friends, but also doctors and teachers or employers.

## BOUNDARIES OF SUPPORT

Being supported by your network means you can ask for help and support and get it when you need it, for example when you need to make responsible or right choices. This also works the other way around, you being there to support those in your network. Which relationships may help and when, to what extent and with what, differs per individual. Your view of support is not necessarily the same as someone else's, including your relationships.

## THE CONTEXT

As a person you are not only connected to other people, but also to things such as products, services, and circumstances. All of these things can affect how you live your life, sometimes without you even knowing it. For example, your socioeconomic status and your living environment can influence the amount of information or resources you have access to to live your life the way you want to.

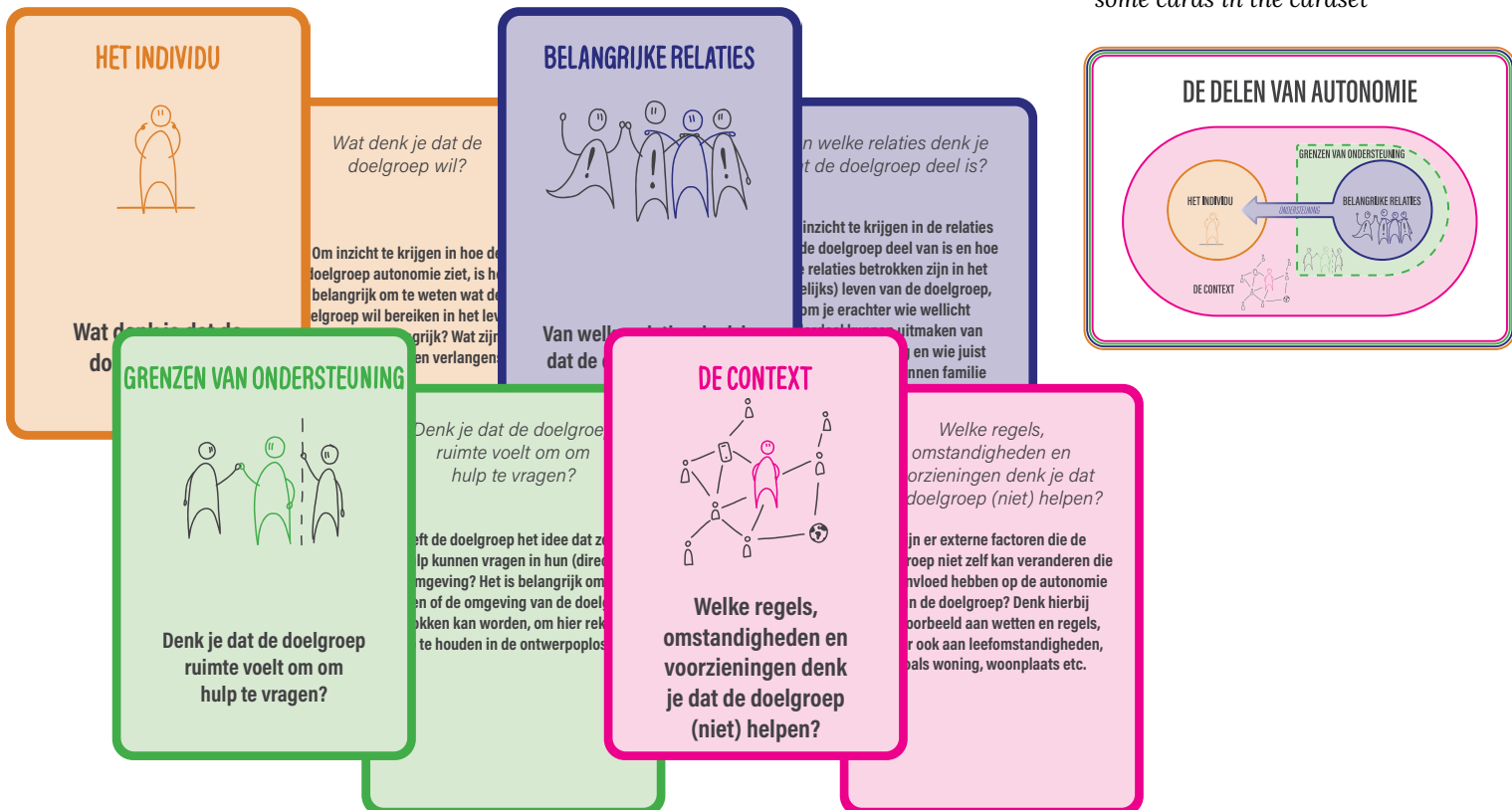
Figure 26. The framework poster

four cards each explain one part of the framework, one card provides some explanation as to why autonomy is important to discuss and understand, and the last card shows how the cards can be used. Examples of different cards can be seen here (Figure 27). The inclusion of these general cards allows for the card deck to be used without having the poster present as well.

The choice for a card set is inspired by the Design for Happiness Deck and the Behavioural Lenses, as explained in the previous subchapter (4.1). As the cards only contain questions and extra information, they can be used in whatever way a designer sees fit. They can either use the cards directly in conversations with clients, or choose to use the questions as a foundation for setting up an interview or session.



Figure 27. Examples of some cards in the cardset



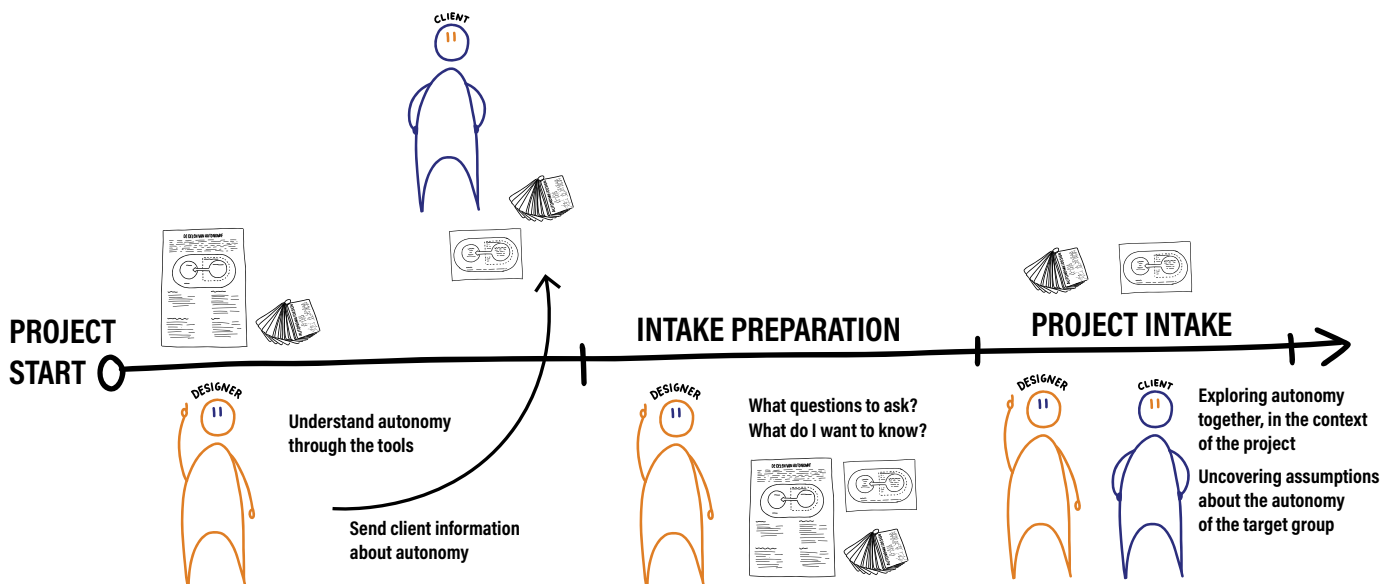
### Use scenario

The framework poster can be used at any time by anyone. I imagine that a designer would thoroughly read it once and then put it up somewhere on a wall or keep it on their desk to refer back to when necessary.

However, in combination with the card deck I imagine the framework poster and deck to be used during the intake conversation with a (new) client. A designer would refer to both in this conversation if they are interested in uncovering the assumptions the client (and themselves) have regarding, for example, actions, thoughts and wishes of the target group. In this conversation the designer would first briefly go through the framework with the client, explaining the importance of autonomy and the different parts it is made up of.

Then, they would go through the questions together, with the designer asking the questions. For each answer they are encouraged to ask follow-up questions, for example ‘what is your answer based on?’ or ‘who do you think of when you think of the target group?’, to find out if assumptions are based on facts or just something the client thinks is true. Gathering these answers allows the designer to uncover what research needs to be done to gain a better understanding of the target group and especially the differences between what the client thinks about the target group and who they actually are.

On the other hand, the designer can make the client more aware of their assumptions about the target group by asking these questions, allowing the client to challenge their own thoughts.



# 5.



# Evaluating the design

In this chapter the design will be evaluated through user testing with designers at Ideate. The results of these tests will lead to a final intervention proposal.

# 5.1 User testing with an Ideate service designer

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In this section the concept will be evaluated by means of user testing with designers at Ideate. The goal of the user test is to find out if the design goal is achieved through the concept. Does the tool allow designers to uncover the assumptions their clients might have regarding the autonomy of the target group? And does this support them in communicating the importance and complexity of autonomy with their clients at the start of a project?

The user testing was carried out with one of the service designers at Ideate and consisted of three parts. First, the designer was asked to prepare the use of the toolkit in a conversation with a client. This preparation was done in collaboration with another designer and I was present during this preparation to answer any questions the designer might have regarding the use of the toolkit, and observed how they set up the conversation. Secondly, the designer had two separate conversations with two clients: one a possible client, the other a client from a previous project. During these conversations I observed how the toolkit was used and answered any questions the designer and client might have at the end of the conversation. Finally, I discussed the conversations with the designer to uncover any last insights regarding the use of the toolkit as well as the format of the toolkit itself. In the following sections the insights gathered from the user test will be discussed.

## Preparing the conversations

I explained to the designer that they were to have a conversation with a client about the role of autonomy in their work. Their goal for the conversation should be to uncover assumptions the client might have regarding the autonomy of the target group. I handed the designers the toolkit and asked them to explain how they would set up the conversation.

First off the designers decided that they could not start the conversation by immediately introducing the toolkit, but rather set up the conversation by having the client introduce themselves, their company and their role in the company. After this introduction, the designer would ask the client what their thoughts about autonomy are, in general and in the context of their work, as a setup for introducing the autonomy framework. Their next step would be to introduce the framework. It became apparent that it was not completely clear whether or not there is a set order in which to explain the autonomy framework.

**“Is there a specific order in which to explain the framework? It feels logical to start with the individual as the other parts refer back to it.”**

It would be good to consider making the order of the parts of the framework a bit more clear on the poster in the toolkit, while still maintaining the adaptability of using the framework however one sees

fit. While going through the framework, it was also mentioned that the whole poster contains too much textual information to show a client during a conversation. The designers would rather only have the visualisation of the framework on a separate piece of paper to show during the conversation. A separate visualisation of the framework is included as a card in the card set, but the designers preferred a larger image to refer to during a client conversation. As the designers were not yet completely familiar with the framework, they decided it would work best to come up with an example of a person whose autonomy they could explain by going through each part of the framework. During the preparation they explained the framework to each other by using an example target group from previous projects. For example:

"The individual would be the middle aged fat man at the Albert Heijn, who was raised with the belief that a brown cheese sandwich is healthy. Therefore, he is confused that people are now saying that is not the case and has decided to stick with the beliefs he was raised with. He does not feel that he has to change his eating habits. His close relationships are raised with the same beliefs, look similar to him, live similar lives, which does not help this man change the way he lives. This man is someone who is sure of what is best for him and does not want to be helped by outsiders. He does not care for anyone interfering in his life. There is a lot of noise from the context he lives in that he should start living a healthier life, but on the other hand there is also a lot going on in the context that is not conducive to actually achieving this. Think of his socioeconomic status, the supermarket that is constantly advertising unhealthy food, and many other factors."

The information provided in the framework allowed for handles to create a clear example of what the autonomy of a person could look like. The designers suggested that they would ask the client to come up with an example from their context, so they would have a clear example to refer back to during the conversation.

This led to the next preparatory step: how to use the question cards. The designers decided that they would let the flow of the conversation dictate which questions to ask by laying the question cards out in front of the client, instead of preparing a set list of questions beforehand or structurally going through them all.

### Conversations with clients

During the conversations the designer had with the clients I was able to observe whether or not the design goal is achieved through the use of the toolkit. The insights gained will be explained in relation to the two parts of the design goal.

#### Communicating the importance and complexity of autonomy

In the two conversations the designer asked the clients to explain what autonomy means to them, as a way to lead up to the introduction of the autonomy framework.

"When it comes to autonomy, I think of the self-determination theory. Being allowed to make choices and being able to make choices. Having the right knowledge, skills and opportunities to be able to make the choices you make."  
- Client 1

When introducing the autonomy framework, the design asked the clients to share their thoughts on the framework. Whether or not they agreed with the content or thought if anything was missing. Both clients noted that the

simplicity of the overview allowed them to interpret the role of autonomy in their work. They had some doubts about the visualisation of the connection between the individual and important relationships.

**“Support can go too far and be too little. Support can go both ways, but you don't see that reflected in the overview.”**

- Client 2

**“It says support here, but could that also be connection? Support assumes a passive role, but connection can also be that you are in contact with each other.”**

- Client 1

**“I see a movement going here [from important relationships to the individual], which is held back by some degree of contact. For some people, those boundaries will be much closer.”**

- Client 1

However, these doubts allowed the designer to further investigate autonomy with the clients and explore the framework together. The remarks the clients had, served as starting points for new questions to try and gain a shared understanding of what autonomy means within the context the clients are a part of.

**“Around the context there may still be satellites that you normally don't have to deal with, but that are there. Such as, for example, a pension fund or an occupational health and safety service.”**

- Client 1

In the end, the designer asked both clients if the toolkit had changed their view on autonomy.

**“It made me think differently about the importance of autonomy. That it is kind of an important underlying motivation**

**behind everything. It has managed to get it higher on my priority list.”**

- Client 2

#### Uncovering possible assumptions

While going through the question cards it became apparent that the questions were not being answered as intended. As both clients were not actual clients, but in similar roles to the designer in their work, they looked at the questions as if they were to use them in their work themselves. Therefore, this valuation did not uncover if the questions are suitable for uncovering assumptions. However, other valuable insights were gathered in the possible use of the card set.

**“It's a mean question. There is nothing more dangerous than making assumptions, filling things in for others. I actually think you shouldn't do that, because then you will quickly come to a judgement. ‘What do you think the target group knows?’ You have to ask the target group.”** - Client 1

**“Reflection questions for you as a designer where you can get answers from the data.”**- Client 2

The clients noted that the questions were a way to gain insight in their target group in a different way than they normally would, as the questions are set up through a different lens than their own worldview.

**“These are extremely interesting questions to get a grip on who the individual is. ‘To what extent do you think the target group wants help?’ If they are severely limited in the things they want to do, they will have a large demand for help.”** - Client 1



“The questions leave no room for the surface. That you ask a question, you get an answer and you are satisfied with it. You really put yourself in the shoes of the target group.” - Client 1

“I miss the aspect of if you want something as an individual, or and how those other layers show resistance. For example, the fact that I want to eat healthy, but my partner is reluctant to do so. I would be interested in finding that back in some way.” - Client 2

These comments on the question cards revealed that, although the intention was to uncover assumptions clients might have, the cards can be used in many other ways. This fits the adaptability of the concept, allowing the user of the toolkit to implement the contents in a way they see fit.

### Final discussion with the designer

From a final casual conversation with the designer about the use of the toolkit the following insights were gathered.

#### Building familiarity with the tool

In order to truly be able to evaluate the usefulness of the toolkit, the designer said that they would first need to use it in an actual new project, during the initial setup of the project with a client. They would need to figure out what works and what does not through trial and error in different contexts with different clients.

#### Autonomy experts

To provide some credibility to the theory behind the content of the toolkit, the designer suggested appointing autonomy experts within Ideate. He referred to the behavioural lenses toolkit and the team of different experts behind the creation of the tool. Whenever someone would want to know more about the tool, they can contact the experts.

#### Content of the toolkit

During one of the conversations, the client took quite some time to read the explanations provided on the backsides of the question cards. The designer was asked whether or not they thought that the cards contained too much information to discuss with the client. They stated that the card set should be able to function standalone, meaning one would not need to refer to this thesis report to understand the theory behind the framework and card set. According to the designer, the amount of information, although quite text heavy, is crucial for the card set to be used standalone. However, they would probably share the card set or a summary of the theory with the client beforehand to familiarise them with the theory on autonomy. This will allow for more time during a conversation to focus on getting answers to the questions as the client is already somewhat familiar with the theory behind them.

#### Format of the toolkit

As had come up during the preparation of the conversations, the toolkit would benefit from having a separate poster with just the visualisation of the autonomy framework that can be laid out in front of the client. In addition, the designer indicated that he would prefer the card set in a fan. By keeping the cards together, with the option to remove cards from the fan, the designer has the possibility to choose which cards are discussed in a conversation with the customer. For example, you could browse through the fan, but you could also select a number of cards from the fan and omit the rest. The designer prefers this as they are familiar with this format through the behavioural



## 5.2 The final toolkit

As a result of the user testing, some adjustments to the toolkit have been made. In this section, the final design of the toolkit will be shortly summarised.

The Autonomie voor/in/met/en Design toolkit contains tools for designers to actively include autonomy in their design practice. The following paragraphs will explain the goal and use of the toolkit.

### Goal of the toolkit

The toolkit provides designers with the tools to uncover assumptions clients might have regarding the autonomy of the target group. This will support designers in communicating the importance and complexity of autonomy with their clients at the start of a project.

### Components of the toolkit

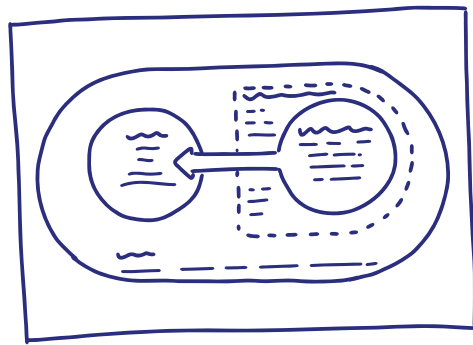
This toolkit consists of three separate tools that can be used all together or separately. The various tools will be briefly explained below.

#### Poster (appendix N)

The A2 poster displays the autonomy framework and contains an explanation of the importance of autonomy as well as explaining the four different parts of the autonomy framework. Designers can use the poster to get familiar with the topic of autonomy, as well as share it with their clients to provide them with the necessary information on autonomy.

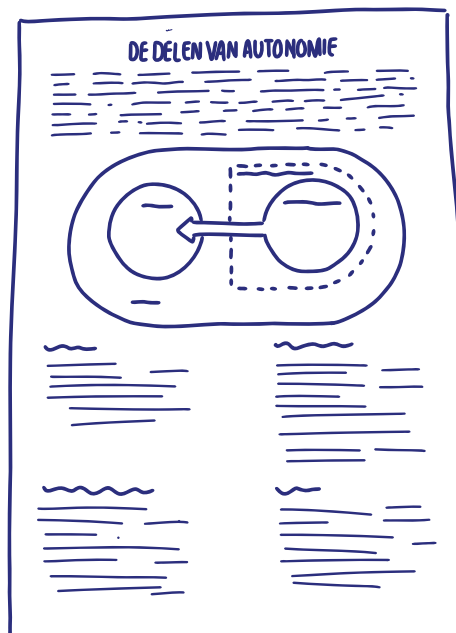
#### Overview (appendix O)

The A4 overview of the autonomy framework is a simplified version of the poster that can be used as a visual guide to refer to when discussing autonomy with a client.



#### Cardset (appendix P)

The card set contains 23 cards with questions linked to the different parts of the autonomy framework. These questions can be used to uncover any assumptions the client might have regarding the autonomy of the target group.



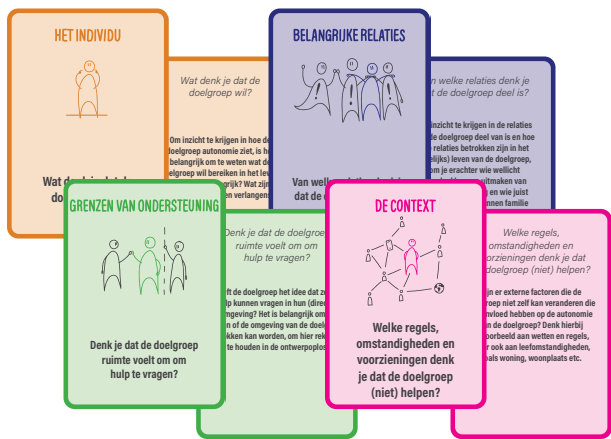
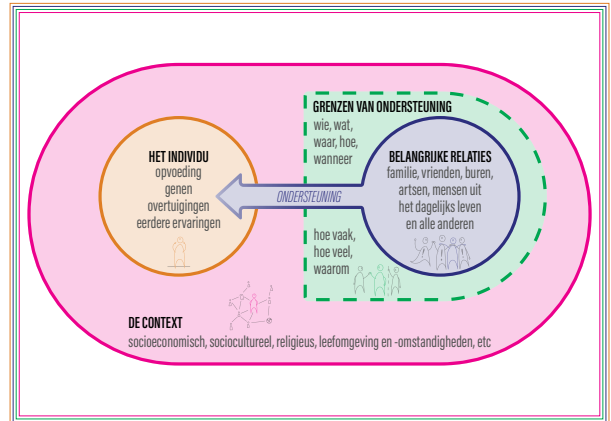
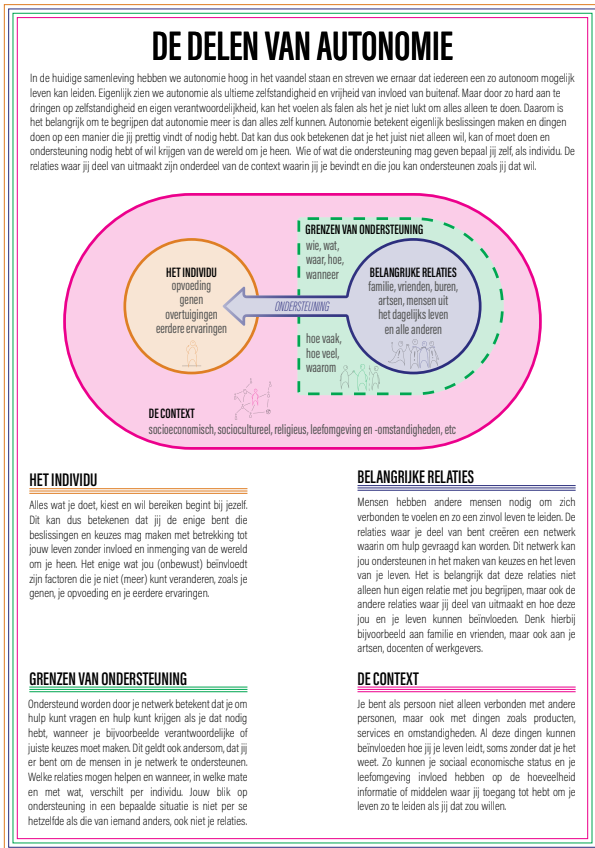


Figure 28. The different tools in the toolkit



6.

# Discussion and reccomendations

This final chapter contains a discussion of the project activities as well as the project output. Some limitations are describes and recommendations will be given for further research into the topic as well as further development and testing of the final toolkit.

# 6.1 Discussion and limitations

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This project set out to get a better understanding of the complexity of the concept that is autonomy, before coming up with a way to implement this in the practice of service design.

The initial research question was:  
How can the meaning of autonomy be incorporated in the design process?

Throughout the project it became apparent that the meaning of autonomy consists of multiple aspects that are not generally acknowledged. Instead of incorporating the meaning of autonomy in the design process, this project evolved into creating awareness of the assumptions people have about autonomy and the importance we place on it without knowing what it fully well means.

## Scratching the surface

Autonomy is such a complex concept that in this thesis has been researched through the lens of design. A lot more can be found about autonomy and I am fully aware that the research in this thesis is far from complete to fully grasp the concept of autonomy. The autonomy framework that has been created in this thesis is therefore not leading and is open to any changes, discussion or adaptations based on more extensive research.

## The toolkit in context

It must be noted that at the time of the evaluation conversations (chapter FIXME) Ideate was not starting any new projects, thus we were not able to evaluate with actual new clients. The first conversation was with an acquaintance of the company who pretended to be a

client. The second conversation was with a behavioural specialist who was part of the design team on a previous project and who was interested in exploring the topic of autonomy with us. During both conversations, no actual or fictional projects were discussed, but rather the topic of autonomy in their respective workfields. We were therefore unable to fully evaluate the design on the uncovering of assumptions regarding the autonomy of the target group. Many other insights about the use of the toolkit were gathered, but to fully understand the use of the toolkit in uncovering assumptions a client might have, the toolkit needs to be evaluated during the start of an actual new project.

## Covid-19

This project was executed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Although we are nearing the end of the pandemic with restrictions being recently lifted, most of the research, interviews and creative sessions took place during various lockdowns and were conducted online. As I had the opportunity to work at the Ideate office, all conversations with Ideate designers could take place in person. However, interviews with experts and sessions with students had to be done online, which came with challenges due to technology issues and lack of personal interaction. Especially during the context mapping sessions with students, where it would have been beneficial for the students to interact in person, it was now hard for these students to get to know each other and feel comfortable to speak up.

# 6.2 Recommendations

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This section will focus on recommendations for further improvement of the toolkit as well as possible areas for further research.

## Improvements

As the concept was evaluated in Chapter 5, the Autonomy for/in/with/and Design toolkit has been improved on some aspects. However, due to some limitations in the evaluation process, there are still some aspects that can be further improved.

- The questions on the question cards as well as their explanations have not been evaluated yet. This should be done through repeatedly using the toolkit in actual projects and gaining familiarity with the questions. This way the toolkit might also be expanded or changed by adding new questions or changing existing questions.
- As previously discussed in 6.1, the use of the toolkit to uncover assumptions has not yet been fully explored. The toolkit could be pilot tested in a new design to see if assumptions can actually be explored through the use of the toolkit.

## Autonomy in the entire design process

Some explorations have already been done in this thesis about the role of autonomy in further stages of the design process, such as the context mapping session with students and the interviews with healthcare professionals in the field of Positive Health. The used materials for these activities are an example of how autonomy can be explored in the research phase of a design project, but have yet to be explored further in different contexts. This could be a next step when implementing the toolkit in the design process.



## 6.3 Personal reflection

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During this project I have often been asked the question “why did you decide to research autonomy?”. My answer has been the same every time. I had no clear vision for a graduation subject, but when I came across this assignment it intrigued me. Most of the projects I have done during my studies were projects of which the outcome was somewhat, or sometimes even fully, known at the start of the project. But with this project, there was no clear outcome. I had always been interested in taking on a more abstract project. The fact that I would be working with a design agency was also a great opportunity to get to know more about the world of service design, a world that I had heard a lot about but did not yet completely understand. At the end of this project, I still stand by my answer, but I have also found out that I had more interest in autonomy than I had thought at the start. Researching such a complex subject that we deal with everyday was quite confronting at times. During your graduation project you are on your own. That is how it feels at times anyway. Already at the start of this project I knew the biggest hurdle to overcome during this time would be that I would not be working in a team. I have always preferred working with others on a project, because I feel the safety of others being as invested in the project as me. I have discovered that I am more capable of working on my own than I had thought, especially because I was never actually truly alone. Sure, I was responsible for my project, but I could always count on my supervisors, Ideate colleagues, peer students, friends and family to support me when I needed it, and even sometimes when I did not know I needed it.

The complexity of autonomy was definitely a huge challenge to sort out, especially because there is so much information to be found. Every person I spoke to about the subject had their own thoughts and ideas about it, each of them offering me more reading material and exposing me to different lenses through which I could look at autonomy. During the research phase I have gotten lost quite often, because of the openness of the assignment and the complexity of the subject. I found myself looking into psychology and philosophy, constantly needing to remind myself to refer back to design. I am thankful for my supervisors for guiding me in setting boundaries and seeing when it was time to move on to the next part of the project. I have definitely improved in making important decisions when it matters most, now the only thing I need to get better at as well is writing them down. With so many interesting conversations to be had, which all need preparation, I had a knack for putting off writing. This resulted in having to report after the fact, when some things were not as clear in my memory anymore.

Even though the end of this project is nearly there, I am definitely not done thinking about autonomy. I would love to follow up with Ideate in using the toolkit in practice, as well as chatting with all the experts I have met through this project to hear their thoughts about it.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this thesis and if you ever want to chat about autonomy, I would love to hear it!





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