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Please cite the original version: Lydén, H., Suoheimo, M., Leminen, A., and Miettinen, S. (2023) Immigrant Integration through Codesign – A Journey Map of integration into working life, in De Sainz Molestina, D., Galluzzo, L., Rizzo, F., Spallazzo, D. (eds.), IASDR 2023: Life-Changing Design, 9-13 October, Milan, Italy.

doi: 10.21606/iasdr.2023.294

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.21606/iasdr.2023.294>

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Immigrant Integration through Codesign – A Journey Map of integration into working life

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doi.org/10.21606/iasdr.2023.294

The shortage of workforce in several sectors has created a desperate need for immigrant workers in Nordic countries. However, integrating into the local work-life can be challenging for people moving to the region. To address these challenges, this paper explores the use of service design, social design, and especially codesign as approaches to easing immigrant integration into the labour market. Our case study consists of 11 codesign groups, comprising immigrants, potential employers, and various integration support professionals or volunteers, who participated in seven virtual and four on-site workshops. Through these workshops, participants shared their experiences and perspectives on immigrant employment and developed an employment/recruitment journey map that combined the immigrants' employment processes with their employers' recruitment processes. The resulting journey maps provide a representation of the various stages and milestones of employment, highlighting the barriers and enablers encountered in each stage and the different actors involved in the integration process. Our study demonstrates the value of codesign as an approach towards more effective and inclusive integration initiatives. We argue that a designer needs to act as an orchestrator for the whole ecosystem around the integrating individual to facilitate a holistic understanding of their whole life situation, such as their social situation, family, skills, health, or housing. By doing so, we can move from focusing solely on a single aspect of integration, such as employment status, to a more comprehensive approach, which in turn allows for a better chance of wellbeing and integration in a new country.

Keywords: *codesign; immigrant integration; employment; service design*

1 Introduction

There is a need to find better ways of helping immigrants integrate into their host societies, starting from policy making all the way to the onboarding of a new employee. On one hand, entry into the work-life is particularly challenging from both the immigrants' and the potential employers' point of view. On the other hand, there is a mismatch between the jobs available and the unemployment of immigrants. For example, many European regions struggle with finding work force in certain areas,



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particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lack of qualified workers has become a problem in most Nordic countries (Andreassen, 2022). From the potential employers' perspective, there are difficulties and risks when hiring immigrants, even though their input in the working life would be crucial. These risks include difficulties in assessing the skills that the immigrants possess, both in terms of (formal) qualification, previous professional experience and, more generally, in understanding their abilities and motivation.

To mitigate these extremely complex and intertwined challenges, a simplistic problem-solving approach is not enough. The idea of social design, i.e. using design to address social problems, dates back to as early as 1970, as highlighted by Margolin and Margolin (2002). Since then, there have been various design programs aimed at addressing different social needs, such as those of disabled individuals, the elderly, and the poor.

Service design is an effective approach to many areas related to integration and support for integration, especially when developing services aimed at newcomers. However, addressing social conditions may also require supporting community resources, changes in individual thinking, learning specific skills, and so on. This is better affected by a social design approach. We need to affect the whole network of phenomena in a hopefully positive direction, instead of trying to "solve immigrant integration", which in itself would be an impossible goal.

Dorst (2019) has proposed complex social challenges could be better influenced by a holistic and participatory approach to design. We attempt this by practising a codesign approach, by which we mean inviting all the potential stakeholders into the design process and fostering an atmosphere of sharing expertise and ideas across dividing lines.

Social codesign is a particularly suitable approach to create socially responsible, sustainable, and inclusive practices to improve the situation of excluded or marginalised individuals, because it involves the actual people whose lives we are attempting to affect instead of treating them as mere subjects or passive service users. Young (2012) has proposed that service designers play a crucial role in codesigning such practices, while Tunstall (2013) argues that design innovation is essential in fighting global inequality, as it embraces the principles of respectful engagement with people's values through inclusive codesign practices.

However, in scholarly research (as we will elaborate later in this section), design is still largely underused and understudied in the context of immigrant integration. Thus our main research question was:

- How can codesign, influenced by social design and service design, be used in order to enable the process of immigrants' integration to work life?

In this paper, we will first define immigrant integration and service design, social design and codesign in this context. Thereafter we will present the methodology and approach used in our study, as well as the codesigned journey maps for immigrant integration. Finally, we will analyse and discuss the main findings and their significance to the field of study.

By immigrant integration we mean the process in which the individual's wellbeing is formed in a new environment after migration. Integration is the process in which a person negotiates between the cultural systems, social interactions, beliefs, values etc. of their original culture and of the host society.

The depth of integration can be categorised in four levels: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation. (Hiitola & Vuori, 2018; Turtiainen & Sapir, 2021; Lydén, 2019; Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö [The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment], 2021; Vuori, 2015.)

The Finnish official term for integration, "*kotoutuminen*" (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö [The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment], 2021) can be translated as the process of gaining a sense of being at home in a new environment. It does not classify the level of integration but does imply a deep level of integration and a sense of belonging. Thus, while we would like to adopt new and more accurate terminology, such as calling this process of being at home in a new country "homing" or something similar, we have chosen to use the phrase integration in this article as a term to describe the process of "*kotoutuminen*".

During the process of integration, the newly arrived person gains new knowledge and skills needed in their new society, which in turn is altered and transformed by learning alongside the new arrivals. This process happens on several different levels. According to Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016), the first level of integration concerns the integration of the individual, both as a member of the immigrated community and of the host community. Its dimensions include, for example, residence status, socio-economic integration, and status in terms of measures of success (such as housing, working, education and health). These statuses are often considered to be the indicators of integration, although already Ager & Strang in their groundbreaking research (2008) have pointed out that all the indicators are also the means through which integration happens.

The second level of integration is the level of communities or organisations. The communities of those who have immigrated to the country can be partners in the joined learning process with the host communities. They can direct the community's resources and movement towards the receiving community and its communities as part of a functioning civil society. There are many different social structures and organisations in the host community. These social structures could be, for example, workplaces, non-profit organisations such as sports teams, language groups, or religious communities. The level of openness of these organisations, i.e. the willingness to include newcomers in the activity, is an important factor influencing integration. In this study, we have included NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and individual employers in our codesign groups from this level. (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas 2016, 17.)

The third level in integration is the level of institutions, structures, or the services provided by these institutions. Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016, 17-18) outline two different forms of institutions, one of which is the structures of the host society, the other the immigrants' own institutions or institutions formed especially for them. In terms of integration, essential institutions in the receiving society are, for example, the structures of the political system, the structures of working life, of providing housing, education, and health or social care, as well as structures to enable cultural and religious diversity, such as religious communities. In this research we included in our codesign groups some relevant public institutions and structures, such as municipal support for integration or employment officials and educational institutions.

Finding sustainable solutions to integration is essential, since immigrants are a less competitive group in the working life and have a lower rate of employment compared to natives in a European country of arrival. In Finland, for instance, immigrant women, on average, have a 17% lower employment rate than women with Finnish background. The integration of immigrants, and refugees in particular into

the labour market is still an understudied area (Fasani, Frattini, and Minale 2018). It has been estimated that refugees' outcomes generally lag significantly behind those of other immigrant groups with otherwise similar characteristics. According to the OECD 2022 report, especially refugees have difficulties entering the local working life, having employment rates 23% lower than peers who have come as labour migrants (OECD, 2022).

Although it is essential, finding these sustainable solutions to support integration might be difficult. The process could be hindered by various barriers such as the lack of trust, power imbalances, a mismatch in language proficiency, and divergent cultural norms. There has also been a rise in anti-immigration rhetoric and hateful speech towards immigrants even in the Nordic countries, especially in 2023 in Finland where this research took place, and a tendency towards more exclusionary policies. Vulnerable communities thus have several reasons to mistrust service providers or researchers and designers coming from outside of their own communities. It remains to be seen how this will affect trust in the future. (Huslage et al., 2021.)

Already a decade ago Junginger (2012) pointed out how service design is used in implementing public policies. There are now several laws or ad hoc decisions such as temporary accommodation of refugees or allowing the Ukrainian refugees to start working immediately in several European countries (BBC, 2022) that has not been possible before. These issues regulate the public services accommodating immigrants that shape the way services can be designed. According to Junginger (2012, p. 19) "the role of services in fostering trust, social inclusion and a sense of social justice is increasingly being recognized". Service design takes the bottom-up role to interpret the needs of the user, the immigrant and translates them to the services or even better to policies.

Although service design and immigration services have not yet been to a great extent combined in scholarly research, we found a window of opportunity to join them together. In Nordic countries many public services are responsible for the many fragmented parts in integrating refugees and immigrants. Some examples are the social services, health services, police, and tax office, to name a few. They are all government agencies and have the responsibility to help immigrants when they arrive and settle in a country. Making a Google Scholar search with words "immigrant integration" and "public services" and "service design" there were only 45 publications. Although there is not much academic literature in the field of combining immigrant integration and public services in the field of service design, there is plenty of literature on how service design is applied in designing complex public services (Suoheimo, 2019, 2020; Suoheimo & Miettinen, 2018).

For this study, we have adopted the approach developed by Miettinen and Vuontisjärvi (2016) to foster trust among study participants. Their approach focuses on service design within the context of peripheral or marginalised communities and organisational development. This approach enables development work at two levels: 1) strategic level, where service design can be used to facilitate the empowerment process; and 2) participatory development process, which involves stakeholders and communities in a social innovation process. Both levels are based on the idea that any services or processes that would be implemented require engagement and participation from communities and stakeholders. This approach is particularly useful in workshops with stakeholders and community members through practical engagement and design activities (Stickdorn et al., 2018). These two levels of design work together to enable transformational change, making it an essential tool in creating socially responsible and inclusive community practices.

Because immigrants can metaphorically be seen to progress towards employment through various steps and milestones, we used journey maps as both a design tool and a research tool. While journey maps are a common tool in service design, less is known about how to apply them for immigrant integration as a form of codesign or research data collection. For instance, performing a Google Scholar on "service design" and "immigrant integration" and "service journey" resulted in a single master's thesis. This master thesis used service journeys to gather better insights on immigrant integration (Winberg, 2017). Another Google Scholar search with words "service design" and "immigrant integration" and "journey maps" resulted in only five results, demonstrating that this research area is still quite novel within the field of service design, especially in the context of immigrant integration.

It is important to note that social codesign requires pluriversal thinking, by which we mean an approach that recognises and values the diversity of perspectives, knowledge systems, and ways of being in the world without privileging the dominant culture in a society (Carvalho & Riquito, 2022). Cultural sensitivity and respect are essential when working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Duan et al., 2021).

2 Codesigning with Immigrants: Methodological Approach and Tools

Our case study presents research through design (Frayling, 1993; Zimmerman et al., 2007). By that we mean that in our research, design is an integral part of the process, providing us with both the data for the research and the practical codesigned artefacts, i.e. the journey maps of work life integration. In using research through design, we gain a dual benefit: the codesign process, along with the codesigned artefacts, helps us to better understand both the process of immigrants integrating into the Nordic working life or of employing immigrants, and using codesign as a method of improving these processes and services related to the issues.

According to Gummesson (2017, p. 6), case study is a research methodology, whose objective is to examine the complexity of the "real" world. In case studies the data can be collected in various forms, such as researcher memos, field notes or workshops (Gummesson, 2017; Suoheimo & Lusikka, 2020). Our case study is influenced by the interpretive (social constructivist) paradigm, which posits that truth and the phenomena under investigation are socially constructed through collaboration (Jennings, 2019; Ponelis, 2015). We have used data triangulation and several design tools to gain deeper insights into the complex issue of immigrant employment.

The aim of the codesign groups was to create a comprehensive understanding on the processes of immigrants' integration into the Finnish working life, including identifying possible obstacles and good practices in the process. Our research began by a series of five virtual workshops, where the participants codesigned the first version of an immigrants' journey map towards work.

The results of the virtual codesign group were complemented by two other codesign groups, one comprising mainly immigrant participants and service providers in a small Finnish city and the other comprising recruiters and employers within the service industry. This formed a continuum where the picture became clearer and more detailed in each codesign working session. According to Bekhet and Zauszniewski (2012), this triangulating approach can be helpful in research to increase the credibility and validity of findings by using multiple methods, sources, and data. This approach can help researchers and designers overcome the limitations and biases of individual methods, and to obtain a

more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Triangulation can also enhance the generalisability of findings, thus increasing confidence in the results.

2.1 Participants

The codesign groups presented a total of 75 individuals. Approximately half (37) of the participants were immigrants. Among these about a third (13) were perceived to be female and the rest were perceived to be male. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 55.

The other half (38) consisted of non-immigrant participants from NGO's (5) and educational (12) or municipal service providers (7) or recruiters (16) as they are a part of the ecosystem accommodating immigrants. Some underaged participants were present during the codesign group activities 2a, but their input has been eliminated from the study. The educational background of the immigrant participants ranged from no formal education prior migration to a tertiary education in the country of origin. Some participants had only recently gained literacy. A detailed description of the codesign groups (CDG) and design tools used with each CDG is in Table 1.

Table 1. Codesign groups, participant details and tools used in this case study

Codesign groups	Description	Participants	Tools	Time
CDG 1a-e	Miro - virtual codesign groups	22 individual participations	Immigrant job seeker personas and their employment journey map	5 x 2 hrs
CDG 2a	Immigrants in a small city	31, mainly refugees (first session)	Employment journey map	3 hrs
CDG 2b	Immigrants in a small city	8 early-stage Finnish learners (second session)	LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®	3 hrs
CDG 2c	Municipal workers in a small city	2 immigrants' integration support service providers	Stakeholder map and interview	2 hrs
CDG 3a	Virtual codesign group, large business in the service sector	15 recruiters and HR professionals from Central and Southern Finland	Recruitment journey map, padlet	2 hrs
CDG 3b	Virtual codesign group, large business in the service sector	6 recruiters and HR professionals from the Helsinki Metropolitan area	Recruitment journey map, Miro	2 hrs
Total:		75 individual participants		22 hrs

3 Journey Maps of Immigrant Integration: Results and Findings

This section describes the research results and findings obtained from three codesign groups (CDG) that were conducted. The first codesign group, virtual group, consisted of five open innovation sessions that produced four immigrant job seeker personas and their employment journey maps. The second codesign group, immigrant journey maps, involved immigrants and people offering support to them. The third codesign group consisted of potential employers.

Because our approach is research through design, the images in this section are not merely illustrations, but a part of the design process and thus part of the research data.

3.1 Virtual CDG 1

We started the codesign process by inviting members to participate in a virtually held open innovation space. The invitation was circulated through several existing networks, including a local network of public integration services consisting of five city councils, a wider network of the local Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for integration actors, and directly to various stakeholders the facilitators/researchers worked with or had previously worked with on integration related issues.

The open innovation space was created in a digital collaboration platform called Miro. Five codesign workshops were held using Microsoft Teams online meetings and Miro for simultaneous cocreation. A few participants took part in all the five workshops, the majority participated in more than one workshop, but a few participants took part in only one workshop. The participants did both individual and group work, discussing and producing virtual sticky notes on various templates created by the designers involved in the process. An example of this is shown in Figure 1. Between the workshops the designers analysed the findings, made visual summaries and compiled the previous workshops' findings so the next workshop built upon the previous work.

The virtual codesign group created four immigrant job seeker personas and their employment journey maps. An example of the personas and their journey map is translated and shown in Figure 1. These were used in the following virtual codesign groups as a starting point.

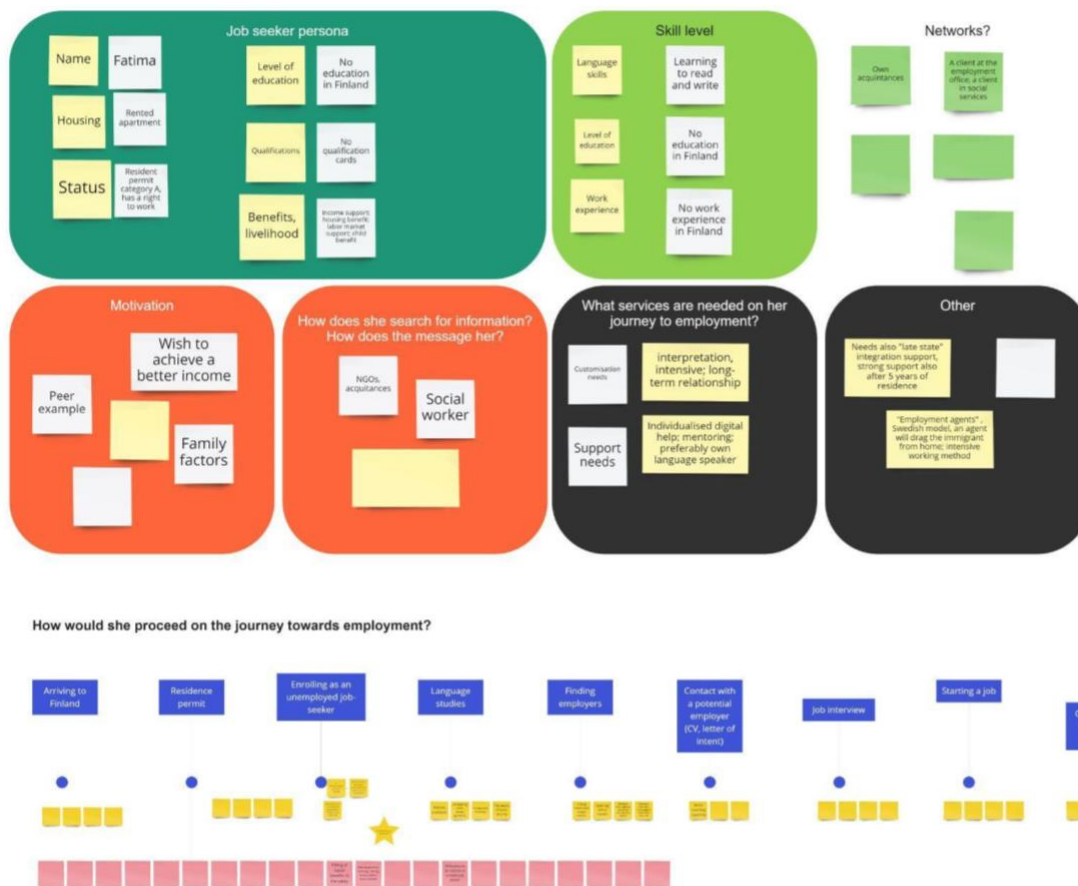


Figure 1. Example of a job seeker persona & immigrant employment journey map, translated and extracted from the Miro board (Hansen & Lydén, 2022).

The main finding of this codesign group was that an individual needs support during integration into worklife. The services and support needed depends on the skills, experiences and desires of the individual. Some immigrants need a longer period of support, some integrate very fast. Even good language skills or a Finnish professional certificate are not enough, if the social network of the individual isn't strong.

3.2 CDG 2 immigrant journey maps

The second codesign group consisted of immigrants and their service providers. There were two workshops and one interview session.

The first workshop held 35 mainly Arabic speaking participants, who live in a small Finnish city and have been residing in Finland for 1-5 years. The participants' personal background or immigration status was generally not known to the facilitator/researcher. The invitation to participate was sent by the city's immigration coordinator to the Arabic speaking clients of the immigration support services. The group was held in a local community centre, which is familiar to the participants and easily reached and at a time when a local organisation usually offers a weekly meeting place for refugees and other immigrants. The codesign group was conducted by a Finnish speaking facilitator/researcher (female) and an Arabic-Finnish bilingual facilitator (male), who also acted as an informal interpreter.

The participants were given Finnish-Arabic visual journey map templates, shown in Figure 2, and invited to describe their prospective working life goals, what helps in becoming employed and what

hinders employment. The journey map concept and the template were explained to the participants. The participants were asked to fill in the template using written language either in Finnish or Arabic or drawing in the empty space provided in the template between the images below and the given headings or topics, such as “things speeding me up”.

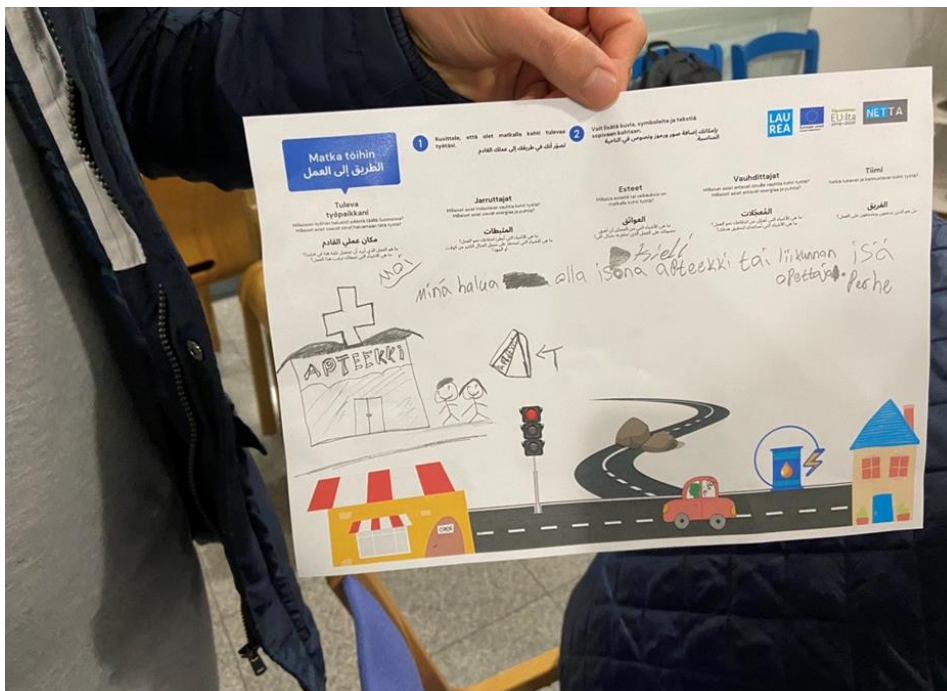


Figure 2. Example of an immigrant employment journey map (Lydén, 2022). Translated text: Hi; When I grow up, I want to work at a pharmacy or as a P.E. teacher. [Barriers] language [Team] father; family.

In total 17 maps were documented, but four were excluded due to underage participants. Participants listed family members, immigration services workers, social workers, teachers, and the employment office as their support team. Few participants filled out the "Things speeding me up" section, mentioning school, work experience, hobbies, and social networks. "Things stopping me" included language skills, health problems, and lack of a residence permit, fuel costs, and distance from potential workplaces. "Things slowing me down" included difficulty with language skills, professional certification, and planning for the future. Participants had diverse desired professions ranging from hairdressing to law enforcement.

The main finding of this workshop was that the participants identified language skills, health problems, lack of a residence permit, fuel costs, and distance from potential workplaces as barriers to employment. Family members, immigration services workers, social workers, teachers, and the employment office were identified as their support team.

3.3 CDG 2 LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®

The second workshop for this codesign group had partly the same participants as in CDG 2a (five same participants) and four new participants. This workshop involved beginner level language learners. The workshop 2b was carried out by the same facilitator/researcher as the first workshop, and a facilitator specialised in art-based methods. Also a Finnish language teacher participated in the workshop.

The workshop was carried out by using an adaptation of LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® (LSP). LSP is a structured method used to facilitate a creative environment, where the participants use LEGO® bricks

to explore and express complex issues or concepts by building a metaphorical model of the concept, and then tell a story about their model. (McCusker, 2020; Warburton et al., 2022)

The storytelling in itself was often a participatory activity, where understanding was formed in a joint process. The participants shared their stories partly in their own language, which was jointly interpreted using several translation applications and supplemented by for example gestures, words and guessing by the whole group. In some cases the conceptual model was the story. The facilitators would ask the participants questions to ensure they understood the story correctly. An example of a model is in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Example of an immigrant's metaphorical employment model. (Kivistö, 2022)

Several participants were frustrated by the bureaucracy and the need to have a “paper” for showing their skills through formal qualification:

Facilitator: Is this your home where you paint?

Participant: Yeah. This electricity, in electricity, electricity. Finland is difficult. Finland is difficult.

F: But is electricity easy? Electricity is easy, Finnish difficult?

P: Yes, [country of origin] easy, Finland difficult.

Teacher: We talked earlier that he can do electrical work. He knows all the connections, the different colours, everything. But there are a lot of rules in Finland.

P: A lot.

F: Yes. And you always need paper. Papers are needed for everything in Finland. In everything.

P: Yeah, yeah.

The facilitating researcher made summaries of the stories. The original stories and the summaries were analysed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying patterns and themes in the models. The analysis revealed that the participants' journeys towards employment were not only influenced

by their skills and qualifications, but also by their personal and social circumstances. A key finding of this workshop was that even though the participants were asked to describe their journeys towards employment, the participants' models covered all aspects of immigrant integration such as, for example, their families or hopes of one, their health, their age and housing.

3.4 CDG 2 Stakeholder map

The final workshop for this CDG consisted of the integration service providers of the city, where the immigrant participants in the CDG are residing. The service providers explained in an interview their views on how the services are offered in the city and the key barriers and enablers that immigrants encounter in each stage on the journey towards employment. Flexibility of services, close cooperation between actors, and the resilience of the service providers was seen as a big enabler, as well as a client centred perspective.

A stakeholder map was drawn during the interview as a tool for visualisation. A translated version of the map is shown in Figure 4.

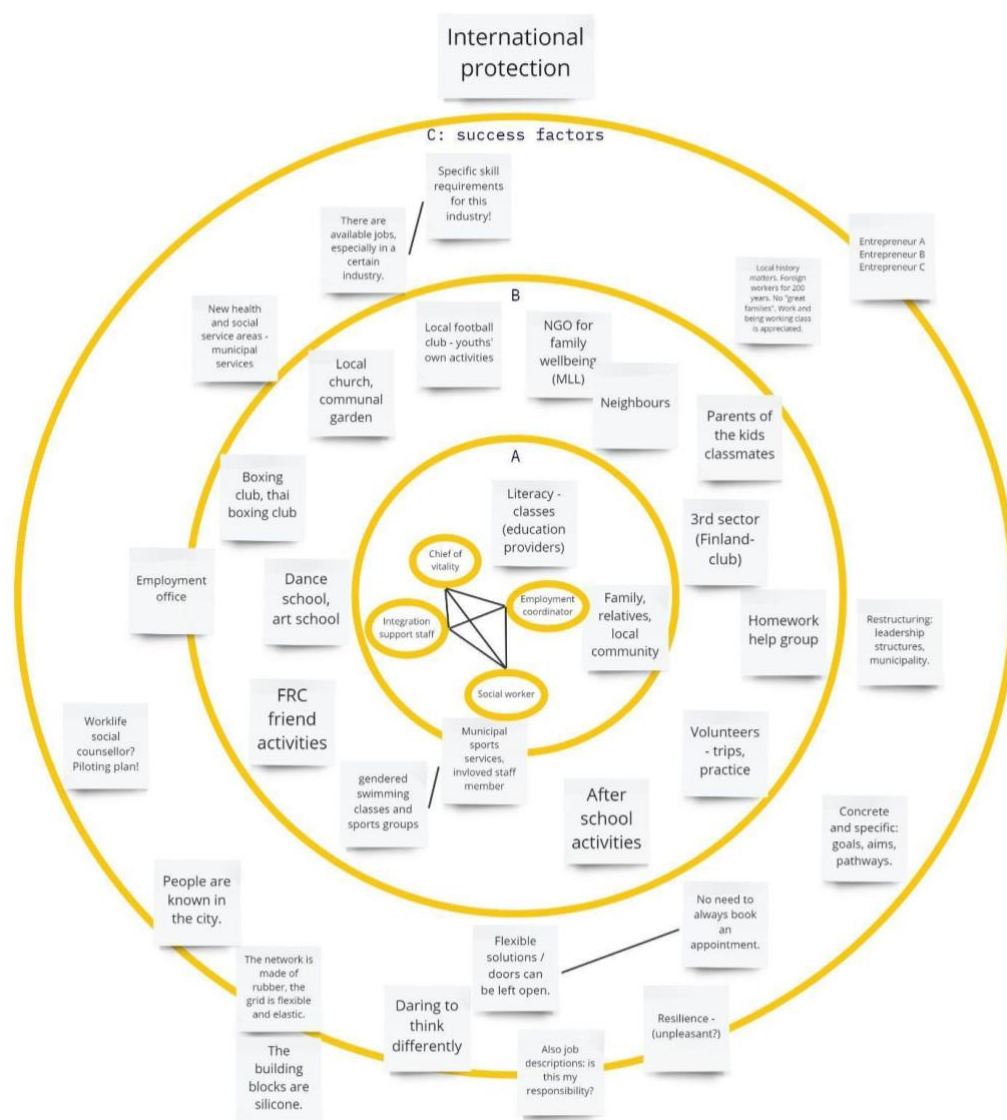


Figure 4: Stakeholder map transcribed and translated. (Lyden, 2022)

3.5 CDG 3 Recruiting Journey map

The third codesign group consisted of recruiters and HR personnel of a large Finnish company operating in the service sector. The recruiters were asked to provide an outline of the recruitment process beforehand and identify the biggest challenges along the process. These outlines were added to the employment journey map created with the virtual CDG.

Because the HR managers of the company estimated that Miro would be too challenging to work with, a Padlet -template was created for the workshop. The participants at the workshop were asked to add to the journey map the missing steps and after that to identify “pain points” and “gain points” along the way. Also some preliminary “pain killers”, or solution ideas, were ideated. The biggest challenge identified in this codesign group was employee retainment. A significant amount of potential employees “drop out” of the process along the way and too many resign in the first weeks.

This data was complemented by a second follow-up workshop for a selected group of recruiters with most experience of recruiting immigrants. Using Miro, the second workshop for this CDG was aimed towards finding solutions for engaging employers for longer periods. The solution ideas from the first workshop were transferred to sticky notes and after an introductory discussion and presentation of good practices the participants were divided into smaller groups to ideate more solutions. All the identified solutions were then evaluated in a matrix where the axes were their expected benefit and required effort. A translated version of the evaluation is shown in Figure 6. The best benefit-effort ratio was evaluated to be a “Concrete and detailed orientation”.



Figure 5: Evaluation of ideas in the Miro-board for recruiters, translated. (Halmetoja, Kivistö & Lydén, 2022.)

Finally the participants made a roadmap towards the desired outcome, a “Concrete and detailed orientation”. The roadmap is translated and shown in Figure 6.

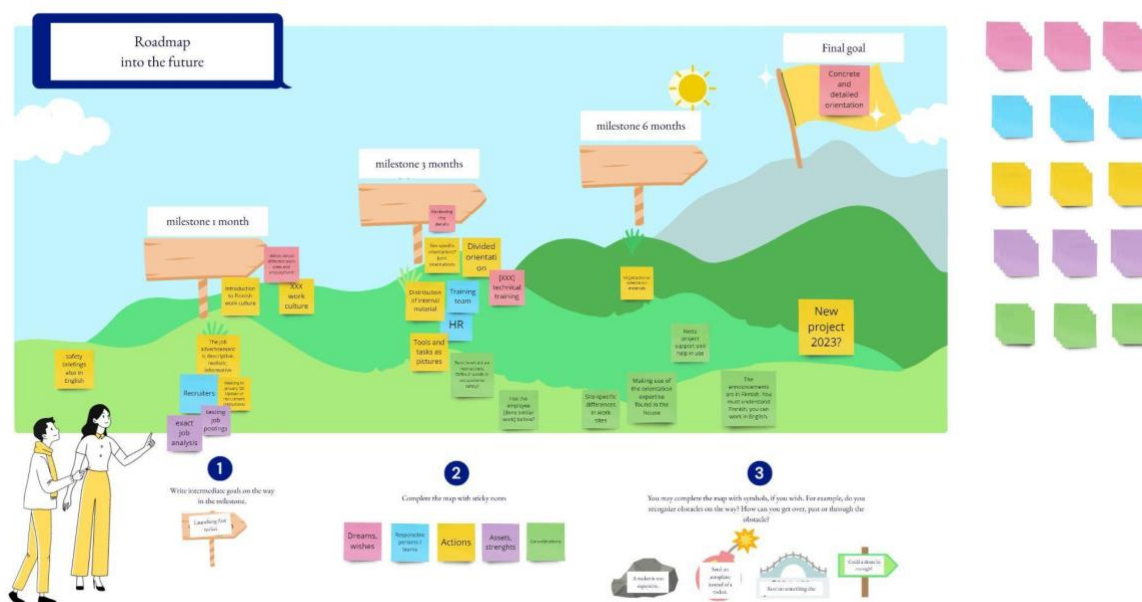


Figure 6: Roadmap into the future in the Miro-board for recruiters, translated. (Halmetoja, Kivistö & Lydén, 2022.)

4 Discussion

Our research aim was to form a clearer understanding of immigrant integration into the host country’s working life by using codesign. The codesign groups (CDGs) produced a very detailed image of immigrant integration into the Nordic worklife, which might not have been the case with other research methods. For one, typically used research methods for this topic of research, such as surveys, interviews or even focus groups, are often based on verbal or written expression. These methods have grave weaknesses especially when the study participants operate in a language they may not be completely fluent in, come from a culturally different background than the researcher, or are in some respects in the margins of the society. (Glaw et al., 2017; Krueger et al., 2020; Seppälä et al., 2021).

Another reason codesign works especially well for enabling the process of immigrants’ integration to work life is that the codesign process does not only attempt to describe a situation. In a codesign process participants actively seek solutions and test different ideas in order to create a positive effect.

There are, however, limitations to our codesign process and the subsequent research. The CDGs provided information in a specific context of one small Finnish city and one large Finnish service company. Even though the virtual CDG consisted of a more heterogeneous participation, qualitative research seldom results in a definite truth that is applicable in all situations. If the participants and researchers would be fluent in each other’s language, the insights gained would have been even more robust. As it is, we relied on translation and nonverbal facilitation when communicating with the most recent immigrants. There is a chance of misunderstanding or misinterpretation in our results. Since the codesign groups did a large part of their work communicating with each other, it is possible there have been some power structures we as researchers are not aware of. Also, in a codesign process the

results are always unique and the results of another days' work might be completely different. (Long & Godfrey 2004; Suoheimo, 2020).

What initially surprised us as designers and researchers was the consistency with which all the CDGs included all aspects of integration into their results. Even though all CDGs were asked to describe a path towards a successful employment, they also elaborated on skills, health, general wellbeing, social situation etc. that affect integration. This aligns with previous immigration research (Ager & Strang 2008), but the congruity of the answers was unexpected. Without several different codesign groups the resulting journey maps would have not presented such compelling evidence that integration happens in a complex network of phenomena.

The main observation of our research is that language and professional skills are seen as necessary for integration, but they are not the only aspects. The participants described the need to take the integrating individuals' whole life into account. Our study emphasises the importance of inclusive design practices in creating effective, holistic, and user-centred integration programs and services that meet the diverse needs of immigrants and their host communities. A holistic view, by which we mean taking into account all aspects of the integrating individual's whole life, is essential in all integration efforts, policies and even in employment/recruitment.

Our research suggests recommendations at various levels of integration, as proposed by Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas (2016). While we aimed to include immigrants' perspectives in our research, our own background and experiences limit our viewpoint. Therefore, our suggestions primarily focus on host communities rather than immigrant communities or immigrated individuals.

On the individual's level, it is necessary to provide a wide range of services that accommodate various stages of integration and other needs. These services need to be flexible and resilient. Service providers, such as immigration coordinators, social workers, and teachers, are identified as key members of the support team for immigrants. On the level of communities or organisations, our research suggests there needs to be close cooperation between actors. A client centred perspective eases the often very complicated journey towards integration.

Recruiters and HR personnel have an important role in the integration process. Challenges in employee retention were identified as significant, with many potential employees dropping out or resigning in the initial weeks. To address this, employers should consider adopting solutions such as a concrete and detailed orientation process, which can help engage and retain immigrant employees for longer periods. Employers should also be aware of the unique challenges immigrants face, including bureaucratic hurdles and the need for formal qualifications and paperwork, and strive to seek out flexible solutions.

Our research suggests that on the institutional level, there is a need for streamlining the current systems. Rather than creating obstacles for individuals trying to integrate, having better processes in place to have qualifications recognised, more comprehensive healthcare regardless of immigration status, easier access to language studies irrespective of immigration status, and facilitating easier family reunification would facilitate the integration of immigrants and increase the chances of finding employment. European countries, including the Nordic region, are actively competing for skilled immigrant workers like trained nurses (Helsinki Times, 2021). However, if the path to employment for immigrants remains unnecessarily complex, the Nordic countries may face the risk of losing in this competition. Thus, adopting a holistic or comprehensive approach as outlined in our research, and

implementing well-designed processes for immigrant integration as we have explored, all levels of society would benefit.

5 Conclusions

In this paper, we have explored the use of codesign, influenced by social design and service design, in order to enable the process of immigrants' integration to work life. Using journey mapping as our main tool of design, we have shown that codesign can offer valuable insights to all stakeholders engaged in immigrant integration.

The virtual codesign group (CDG) resulted in four immigrant job seeker personas and their employment journey maps. These personas and journey maps served as a foundation for the subsequent CDGs. The findings highlighted the importance of individual support during the integration process into worklife. The specific services and support required varied based on the individual's skills, experiences, and desires. The study emphasised that even individuals with good language skills or professional certifications might struggle without a strong social network.

The CDG of immigrants in a small town Journey maps and LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® were used to facilitate creative and participatory discussions. The findings were discussed with service providers, who in a stakeholder and success factor mapping session highlighted flexibility, cooperation, and a client-centred approach as key enablers to immigrant integration.

The final CDG involved recruiters and HR personnel of a large Finnish company operating in the service sector. They identified employee retention as their biggest challenge. They described potential employees dropping out of the process along the way, with many resigning in the first few weeks. The solution they evaluated to have the best benefit-effort ratio was a "Concrete and detailed orientation", which was then incorporated into a roadmap for the desired outcome.

Further research in this area is recommended based on the limited literature available regarding the use of design tools and design thinking, such as journey maps, to support immigrant integration. We believe that such studies can offer valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of individuals regarding all aspects, stages and levels of integration. There is a need for further research on codesign tools and methods that help facilitators/researchers and participants overcome language proficiency mismatches. These could include nonverbal communication and codesign tools.

There is also a need for more research and action that will help individuals overcome barriers or obstacles identified in our research. We hope that following research on the topic will include a futures design approach, which might prove to be beneficial. We also suggest exploring the concept of wicked problems in this context. Service design, or the process of designing and improving services, is not enough on its own to bring about significant changes in the process of integrating individuals into a new society. A successful integration outcome requires a multi-faceted approach that involves various factors such as community resources, political influence, individual empowerment, and skill-building. These additional efforts are necessary to address the complex challenges that arise during the process of integration both for the immigrated individual and their host society.

We believe that designers, working closely with other professionals, communities and individuals and orchestrating the ecosystems of integration, can create significant social change. Having design

thinking combined to community based approaches and empowering approaches will, we hope, turn out to be a game changer for this crucially important issue.

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Acknowledgement: The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Maija Hansen, Sanni Halmetoja, and Marika Kivistö for their invaluable assistance in setting up the workshops during the data collection phase of this study. The authors would like to extend their heartfelt appreciation to Linda Hart and Berenice Rivera-Macias for their help and insightful suggestions during the editing phase of this paper. The research was partly funded by the EU through the European Social Fund (ESF) as a part of the NETTA-project at the Laurea University of Applied Sciences.