

Workplace experience

How it is changing the world of work

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Abstract

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>This thesis has been created in cooperation with the Finnish furniture manufacturer ISKU. The topic “Workplace Experience – How it is changing the world of work” has been chosen to make more people aware of this way of working. It deals with the new requirements, such as hybrid work, desk sharing, flexible workplace, and much more, which have become one of the main topics since the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>The first sections of the thesis focus on the company ISKU, the introduction to the WX-topic as well as other well-known companies. To get an internal insight into the ISKU working environment, a survey was sent out in which everyone could express their individual ideas and suggestions.</p> <p>After evaluating all the employees’ comments and researching the current trends, a possible concept was created. In which on the one hand there is an open space of-fice, and on the other hand there are separate areas for undisturbed work.</p> <p>In the end, various ideas and approaches are listed to provide a better overview of the evaluated survey and the research in the individual areas.</p>		
Keywords Hybrid work, Workplace, Office design		

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1 Introduction

As this thesis is written in cooperation with the company ISKU, the history and values of the Finnish furniture manufacturer are mentioned at the beginning. On the one hand, this gives the reader a good insight into the company and, on the other hand, a good introduction to the following topics.

For a general overview of “Workplace Experience”, the most important information is described, based on research. In addition, various topics such as how a purposeful workplace can be implemented in the best possible way and how to make the best use of a space, that is covered. As a conclusion to this chapter, a table of different advantages and disadvantages has been created. This should give the reader a quick overview of what has been listed before.

In order not to report only about the ISKU company, the following section provides an insight of two other companies. Both are not originally from Finland but known worldwide and therefore give an insight into different ways of working from different countries.

The first is the Austrian company Red Bull, which is known all over the world for its various energy drinks and sponsorships of individual athletes and entire sport teams. The other one is the American technology company Google, which, everyone knows and is probably used as a search engine every day.

Both companies are very different and therefore have different approaches to work ethics, how they take care of employees, what they offer, and how employees are generally satisfied with their work. For this very reason, these two world-renowned companies have been chosen to provide a diverse insight into the world of work.

One of the most important areas of this thesis is based on the survey of ISKU employees. This gives a diverse and individual insight into the company as well as the spirit internally. Based on the evaluated answers regarding wishes and suggestions for a better working environment, a design concept has been developed.

Nevertheless, to bring in the current trends and modern technical provisions, research about office trends and concept developments has been worked out. This provides general information on office design as well as 3D planning.

Finally, various ideas and possible restructuring within the company are listed. This can offer some ideas for ISKU which originally came from the survey of the employees and from general sources which got adapted.

1.1 Company introduction of ISKU



Figure 1. ISKU Logo (About ISKU.)

About ISKU

ISKU is one of the leading companies in terms of Finnish know-how, quality, and industrial innovation. One of the companies most important characteristics is to put sustainability and love of nature at the forefront of furniture design. The individual designs are based on inspiration from the Finnish forest, raw materials, and environmentally friendly manufacturing methods.

The companies main goal is to inspire high-quality, responsible produced furniture and to bring health, happiness, and creativity into everyday life. To provide future generations with a safe, functional, and inspiring environment to learn, work and live in, circular thinking and taking action are mandatory.

Facts about ISKU (as of 2020):

- 600 employees
- Turnover €138.3 million
- A benchmark for responsible production
- International in 68 cities

(About ISKU.)

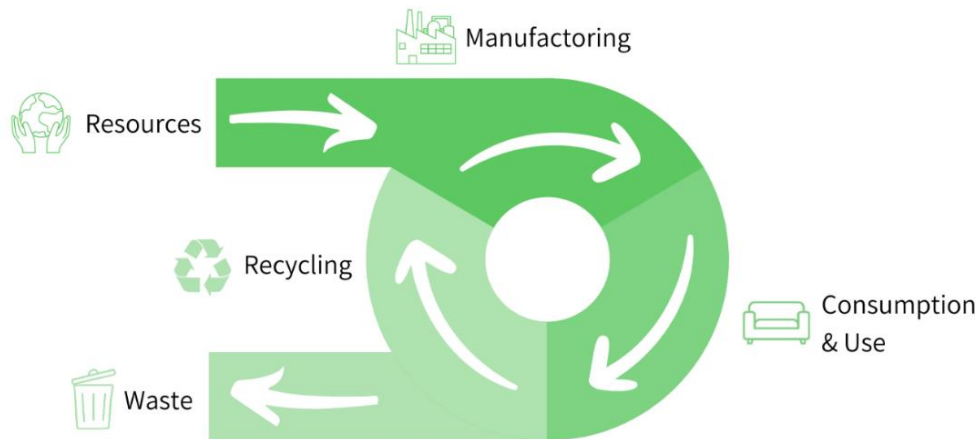


Figure 2. Example of circular economy (About ISKU.)

The ISKU factory has the most advanced production technology in the world, such as the Grada line. This refers to the combination of thermoformed wood panels with robot technology and machine lines. These speeds up the furniture production by 60% and reduces the lead time from 90 to 9 minutes. Even the most advanced technology requires a human touch, craftsmanship, and knowledge of materials. ISKU, therefore, employs around 400 specialists who have the necessary expertise and check the quality of every single product.

(World-class furniture solutions from Finland to all over the world.)

Company values

Inspiroiva (Inspiring)

Suomalainen (Finnish)

Kuunteleva (Ready to listen)

Uudistuva (Evolving)

(Values, vision and mission.)

History

ISKU is the largest Finnish supplier in the furniture industry, which still has its headquarters in Lahti, Finland. The company, which was founded by Eino Vikström and his partner Matti Metso in 1928, started as a registered joint-stock company and only specialized in the production of office furniture in the 1930s. Matti Metso sold his share in the company after only one year and since then it is owned by the Vikström family for three generations.

(ISKU story.)

Overview of the timeline:

- Around, **1950**, the ISKU brand developed more and more, so they built a new factory site, which is still located in Mukkula in Lahti.
- In **1992**, ISKU received the ISO 9001 certification for a quality management system and became active in sustainability. In addition, the company was the first furniture company in the Nordic furniture industry to receive the ISO 14001 certificate for its original environmental system in 1997.
- In **2005**, Isku Oy was divided into different companies with four separate business areas: Isku Koti Oy, Isku Interior Oy, Isku Invest Oy, and Isku Keittiöt Oy (Kote = home, Keittiöt = kitchen).
- In **2013**, ISKU obtained PEFC certification, which has now expanded to cover all of the production to expand the business to include occupational health care. The company renewed its brand identity in 2016 and converted part of the ISKU factory building into a campus with a modern learning environment for 5000 LAB students. Between 2014 and 2021, ISKU invested more than 100 million euros in Lahti.

Through the Second World War, the international oil crisis in 1973, the Great Depression in the early 1990s, as well as the financial crisis in 2008, ISKU has repeatedly faced major challenges. Nevertheless, they always made it out of these difficult times and are still one of the most important and famous furniture manufacturers in Finland.

(ISKU story.)

1.2 Target of this thesis

The target of this thesis is mainly to provide ISKU with possible suggestions and proposals for a new way of working within the company. It is intended to show how the topic workplace experience is handled and how important it is to keep up with the times. As in this work, mainly different internet sources of companies and people from all over the world were used, it underlines the importance and the individuality of what this topic entails.

It is also intended to encourage the individual reader to incorporate the various sections and research areas, either in their work, or in their private life. As already mentioned, the workplace experience is a new topic for many people and should therefore be informative for everyone.

2 Workplace experience

2.1 Introduction

Working from home, in the sense of home office and/or hybrid work, has now come to an end in most companies – at least full-time. Now it is time to get employees back into the office and create a workplace that people enjoy.

Whether and how employees return to work depends on the quality of the workplace experience that the companies offer.

In general, this can be divided into three sub-areas:

- Facilities and spaces – The physical surroundings in which employees do their work
- Technology system and tools – The systems and tools employees use to do their jobs
- People, communication, and culture – The relationships, policies, and cultural standards that impact how work is done

(Kirkham 2022.)

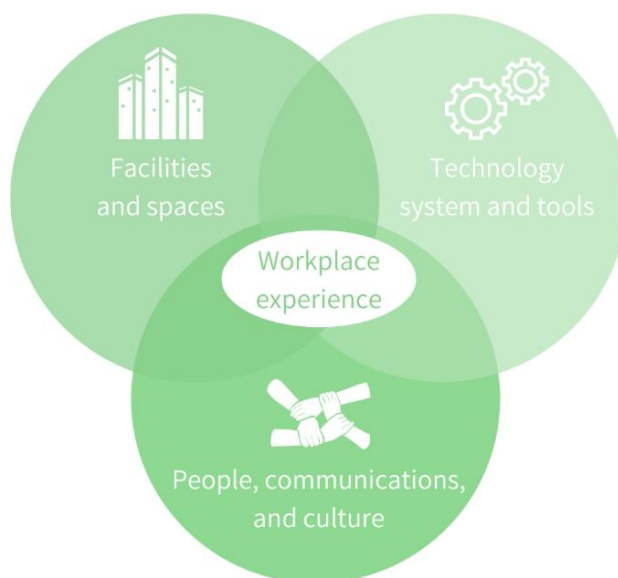


Figure 3. A holistic approach to workplace experience (Kirkham 2022.)

These three core elements above are analysed in the topic of workplace experience to achieve a better business result in general. In addition, there are a few other important issues such as employee engagement, reducing real estate costs and retaining talent.

(Kirkham 2022.)

Why is it important?

The workplace experience is the key to a successful working model and, by conclusion, a profitable business. It therefore makes no difference whether it is a hybrid working model or a 100% physical presence on site. Even if many workers in a hybrid-work-model are not in the office every day, the workplace should still provide a purpose, an opportunity and a space for people to work in.

Many of the benefits that make a great workplace can emerge in:

- Improve employee experience
- Increase employee engagement and productivity
- Optimize your workspace
- Reduce real estate costs

(Kirkham 2022.)

Different Models

In general, there are four different ways to divide working at home or in the office. This usually depends entirely on the employer or the company leader. To get a better overview of these areas, the following diagram describes the individual models in more detail.

(Schmidt 2023.)

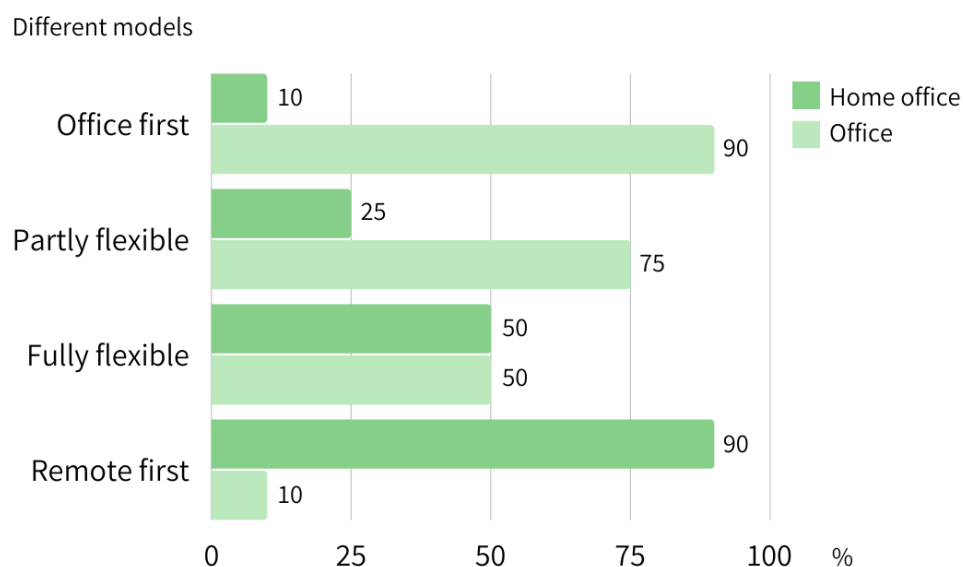


Figure 4. Model explanation (Schmidt 2023.)

It shows, based on percentages, the individual models with their main points of emphasis. For example, in the Office First model, the main place of work is the office, and only in individual cases is the home office permitted.

(Schmidt 2023.)

Example of workplace experience

This example of meetings in the company can be used to look at the approach to optimization. As mentioned, the workplace is made up by technology, space and people. Therefore, it is important, for the overall success, that each component is carefully considered and executed by specialists. For meetings, the workplace and facility teams are responsible for the design and operation of conference rooms. The information technology (= IT) department provides the video conferencing software and equipment and the human resources (= HR) department sets guidelines for culture and communication.

It is important to ask staff for their feedback and honest opinions. This is the best way to get to the heart of the various concerns and problems and ensure a good working environment for all.

(Kirkham, 2022.)

For a better workplace experience, it is essential to work towards providing a safe and welcoming environment for all the employees, the management team, and the boss. To make this reality, there are a few key points to keep in mind, for example:

- Build a relationship with employees
- Provide food at the workplace
- Organize regular events at the workplace
- Involve employees
- Follow the 5S system

(Park 2022.)



Figure 5. The 5S system (Park 2022.)

2.2 Space management

Many companies have created flexible working models since the pandemic, which means that employees no longer need to be on site all five days of the week. Regardless, space management is key to a pleasant working environment and efficient use of space.

Space management involves reviewing, tracking, and managing the physical space in an organization. Starting from space planning, to the design of meeting rooms, and the arrangement of desks.

The benefits of space management are:

- Significant cost reduction
- Better productivity
- Constant improvements
- Greater adaptability

- Time savings for workplace management
- Thriving corporate culture

(Akhter and Akhter 2022.)

2.3 Purposeful workplace

Tony Vargas, Head of Global Workplace at Sprinklr, addresses one of the most important questions about coming back to the workplace. In his view, a purposeful workplace is one of the most important elements to get people excited about working on site again.

As employees have become more flexible in terms of work availability over the last few years, companies now need to adapt to this. Working patterns and how they affect the decisions of the employees, are one of the first issues to look at.

There is also the rhythm of work, which should be set for the individually. This rhythm determines the tempo of the work to be done and the organization behind it.

(Newell 2022.)

2.4 Create a space people love

Many employees want a hybrid form of work, that offers them more flexibility. This includes a better work-life balance as well as increased productivity. The following six ideas are ways to improve the workplace:

- Create productivity zones
- More space for collaboration
- Optimizing space for mental health and well-being
- Host company events
- Plan social activities
- Provide snacks, drinks, and meals

(Stein 2022.)

In the following table, various problems are listed which are mainly responsible for the fact that employees no longer want to come to the office. Possible approaches or solutions are given on how to counteract these problems.

Why employees no longer want to return to the office		
Problems	Description	Possible solution
The commute is too long and too expensive	Instead of commuting every day or being stuck in traffic jams, the time could be used for work, meeting friends and family or resting.	Flexible work schedule (later to work/earlier home to avoid traffic jams), car-pooling
No flexibility in working days	Workers no longer want the traditional 9-5 weekday.	Hybrid working
Slow or outdated technology	No good Wi-Fi connection, no way to book meeting rooms, check.in process is outdated.	Check workplace technology and make improvements
Colleagues are too chatty	Many workers have become used to silence and quickly feel distracted and cannot concentrate.	Provide quiet areas in the office (phone boxes, individual meeting rooms)
Colleagues are not on site		Put all employees schedules online to facilitate collaboration via online platforms.

Table 1. Examples of problem management (Akhter and Akhter 2022.)

2.5 Advantages and disadvantages

Advantages:

Employees want hybrid work, and there is a good reason for that. But what advantages does this way of working offer the individual workers?

One of the most important points is the flexibility that comes with it. The independent arrangement of working hours enables employees to have a better work-life balance. This is a great encouragement, especially for parents with children. Of course, it does not only offer a better advantage to people with children but applies to everyone. In general, this concept encourages individual employees to work independently, which makes them more motivated.

If people are not sitting in the office with their colleagues every day, there can sometimes be less communication among them. But this does not have to mean anything negative. The individual conversations among colleagues are automatically upgraded and the most

important topics are filtered out. This results in more meaningful and beneficial topics regarding work or private life.

(Blog 2021.)

Disadvantages:

Hybrid work offers not only positive sides, but also potential disadvantages.

One of the most obvious difficulties is the dispersed location of individual employees. Since they all work from different locations or in different time zones, managers have more work to coordinate the team. This can sometimes lead to difficulties in meetings.

As mentioned above, communication and interaction between employees can suffer because it increasingly takes place only via email or virtual platforms. This can have a negative impact on the sense of unity within the team.

To be able to provide functioning equipment and virtual systems for everyone, it is necessary to invest a lot of money in the beginning. However, this pays off in the long term.

(Schmidt 2023.)

To get a better overview, the advantages and disadvantages are listed in the next table. This gives a brief insight into the negative and positive thoughts of the respective views.

Summary of various starting positions		
From	Advantages	Disadvantages
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + More flexibility + No commuting + Calmer environment + Work & family balance + Better work-life balance + More self-determination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Distractions – Less social contact – Much self-discipline – No clear boundaries – More difficult cooperation – Less sense of togetherness
Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Lower costs + Fewer failures + Positive image + Increased productivity + Positive working atmosphere + Advantages in the "war for talents" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less control - Data security - Lack of visibility - Less identification - More difficult management - Unequal (technical) conditions

Office work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Easier exchange + Better equipment + Creative collaboration + Productive atmosphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less sleep - Distractions - Potential for conflict - Time for commuting
Home office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Concentrate fully on work + No way to and from the office + Much more flexible in terms of time + Meetings are shorter and more effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less conversation - Too much screen time - Too much flexibility = more effort - No separation between private and professional life

Table 2. Advantages and disadvantages summarized (Superman.)

3 Other leading companies

In order to list more than one company regarding the workplace experience topic, the Austrian company Red Bull and the American technology company Google are presented in the next two sections. The reason for this is, that both companies are known worldwide and have a high status in terms of company standards.

Since workplace experience is still a very new area in most companies, it is accordingly difficult to obtain internal information. Most of them do not want to disclose their company secrets in order to build up their own image. Therefore, the following information comes from various internet sources and individual comments from current and former employees that are publicly available online.

Even though there is a general overview of the companies and the views of the workers, it should be kept in mind that these sources mostly show the positive and the good sides of the companies. Regarding the workers comments, one should also be aware that each person has an individual idea of the “perfect work” or the “perfect working conditions”. Nevertheless, the next two sections give an all-round view of the working conditions as well as the satisfaction of the employees.

3.1 Red Bull GmbH



Figure 6. Red Bull Logo (Red Bull Logo, symbol, meaning, history, PNG, brand 2023.)

Company description

The Austrian company Red Bull is still the worlds market leader in energy drinks. It was founded in 1984 by Dietrich Mateschitz with the help of the Thai entrepreneurial family Yoovidhya. Up until his death last year in 2022, Mr. Mateschitz was the CEO and the richest Austrian citizen. The headquarter is located in Fuschl am See in Austria and, as of 2022, employs up to 15,779 people in 175 countries. The companies annual turnover in 2020 was 6.31 billion euros.

(Das Unternehmen Red Bull.)



Figure 7. Red Bull headquarter (Red Bull GmbH-Salzburgwiki.)

Red Bull gained worldwide fame through the companies diverse presence. On the one hand, the focus is on the different types of energy drinks, which are known everywhere through their slogan “Red Bull gives you wings”. On the other hand, Red Bull is a major sports sponsor in all kinds of areas. They are investing in 15 different athletic teams in 11 different sports from their successful Formula 1 team to their ice hockey and football team. Their sponsored athletes are one of the best in the world.

In 2016, the Trendence Institute in Berlin conducted a survey of the top employers among 37,000 business students. Red Bull was ranked 26th, ahead of Amazon, Deutsche Bank, Pro Sieben and SAT 1 and one place behind Microsoft.

(ISPO.com 2022.)

Working at Red Bull

In general, the Red Bull company offers all kinds of jobs. However, salaries can vary greatly depending on the department. For example, the average salary of a marketing employee is around €86,877 of an HR manager around €98,534 and the highest average salary is for a sales employee at around €140,185. Of course, it always depends on the position in the different departments. Red Bull also offers a so-called “Student Marketeer” – a position in which students in the field of sales and marketing are prepared for a future job in the company Red Bull while studying. This automatically assures a competent and loyal employee for the future.

The main focus is on the entrepreneurial mindset of the employees, as well as the included freedom for their own ideas and challenges.

Among the most important and best attractions to work for Red Bull are the additional benefits. These vary depending on the position and the team, but in general they provide everyone:

- Insurance: medical, dental, and vision
- Commuter benefits
- Paid time off: 20-30 days of holiday and paid time off every year
- Retirement plans: offers 401K programs
- Discounts in various areas

(Burns 2023.)

Employee comments

Comments from individual employees		
From	Strengths	Improvement opportunities
Anonymous employee in Elsbethen (5/5)	Super flexibility and trust in the staff. It never gets boring and you always learn something new.	There is actually little to improve. Lunch is free, coffee and fruit free. Maybe the communication between the departments could be better.
Anonymous employee in Sankt Ruprecht an der Raab (5/5)	A common behavior with colleagues and also the philosophy that is set by those in charge.	In every area where I work, no change is needed at the moment. The success also speaks for itself.
Anonymous Administration employee in Salzburg (5/5)	The work-life balance, the opportunities for promotion, the professional environment and what the employer has to offer are outstanding.	Not much, the density of applicants is very high but that is good for the company.
Anonymous IT employee in Fuschl am See (4/5)	Many many additional benefits such as pension scheme, food, training courses and more. You actually have to worry about almost nothing.	There is actually nothing I would change. Of course, the salary could always be higher, but in general, everything is top.

Anonymous employee in Elsbethen (4/5)	Flexibility, international contacts, many training opportunities, working time models, countless employee benefits, a wide variety of premises, great working atmosphere, good image, and social benefits.	Better work-life balance, improved employee communication within the team, not just all-in contracts, too high employee turnover, and improve HR.
Anonymous employee in Fuschl am See (3/5)	Good benefits such as free lunch, drinks, company pension, additional payment for bicycle purchase, etc. Nice working environment and there is no skimping on equipment.	Micromanagement is widespread. Most of the people who are promoted are those who are well connected and not those who are actually professionally and personally suited for the job. The jovial, family-like atmosphere that prevails on the outside only exists on the inside in a few departments.

Table 3. Comments from Red Bull employees (Red Bull GmbH Bewertungen.)

3.2 Google LLC



Figure 8. Google Logo (Eva 2023.)

Company description

The subsidiary of Alphabet Inc., Google, was founded in 1998 by Larry Page and Sergey Brin. Google is a search and advertising service provider on the Internet but also covers many other business areas such as platforms and advertising. It also includes, for example, Google Search, Google Chrome, Google Drive, Google Maps, Gmail and YouTube. The company's headquarter is in Mountain View, California, USA. The American company is also represented in Europe, the Asia-Pacific region, Africa, and the Middle East.

In 2021, the company's annual turnover was projected at USD 256.7 billion, and the number of employees was 85,000 worldwide.

(ShieldSquare Captcha.)



Figure 9. Google headquarter (SEO-Analyse 2022.)

Working at Google

For many people, working at Google is a dream. But why is that the case?

Google advertises that, as an employee, you do not just sit bored at your desk, but you can use and enjoy a wide variety of leisure activities on the side. For example, playing table tennis or billiards, enjoying a free massage, eat and drink for free, or take a short nap between your working hours.

In addition, the company offers many job positions where the application process is rather secondary to grades and experience but focuses more on the overall image and knowledge of the candidate. The application process consists of several interviews where you may talk to future colleagues, managers, or cross-functional staff. This shows how employee-friendly and proactive Google really is as an employer.

(Frede.)

On the official website “Life at Google” employees give an internal view of the working world, what they love about it but also what difficulties there are at the moment. The topics range from top opportunities for woman, environmental protection up to research.

To lighten up the work environment from the beginning on, the teams that work at Google are divided into three categories:

- Build cool stuff (for example, engineer)
- Sell cool stuff (for example, sales manager)

- Do cool stuff (for example, employees in the legal department)

(Dämon 2015.)

Employee comments

Comments from individual employees/former employees		
From	Pros	Cons
Software Engineer in New York (5/5)	If you're a software engineer, you're among the kings of the hill at Google. It's an engineer-driven company without a doubt (that is changing, but it's still very engineer-focused)	It is becoming larger, and with it comes growing pains: Bureaucracy, slow to respond to market threat, bloated teams, cross-divisional tension.
Employee in Mountain View (5/5)	You can't find a more well-regarded company that actually deserves the hype it gets. You'll work on cutting project/solve important issues that impact your community and the world.	I live in SF so the commute can take between 1.5 to 1.75 hours each way on the shuttle – sometimes 2 hours each way on a busy or rainy day. That means being on the bus for 3-4 hours PER DAY.
Former Program Manager in Mountain View (4/5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food (15+ cafes on main campus), snacks, drinks, free breakfast/lunch/dinner - Benefits/pers: Free gym access (24/7), free self-service (laundry) 	Work-Life balance: They keep you at work and they help you to be more productive. I've never met anybody at Google who actually time off on weekends or vacations.
Former GBO in Detroit (4/5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Great salary, benefits, and equity - Amenities are wonderful, when you can use them - Great people, your peers are truly folks that care - Visibility, I knew what was happening for Google as a company through frequent e-mails from our CEO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hard to get work accomplished cross functionally, misaligned OKRs - Too many priorities make it confusing for your Googlers to truly understand what is important.
Former Senior Software Engineer in Kirkland (3/5)	Good pay. The Roth IRA backdoor is nice if you've got the extra money to save. Looks great on a resume afterwards! Work/Life Balance is good. Only out of hours work if you are on-call or need to have a meeting with someone on another continent.	Projects were all simple. I never felt challenged my entire time there. My org's management was absurd. They tried to grow our team by 10x in two years and got the integration problems you'd expect.

<p>Android Engineer in Seattle (3/5)</p>	<p>I've been at Google a long time, so the financial benefits still outweigh any cons. The people I work with are still mostly great, especially of MA management chain (though one or two are no-ops).</p>	<p>The company was founded on psychology safety, don't be evil, hire smart creatives, etc.... Today, the company has grown so fast and so large that now the majority of people seem to be typical tech industry employees.</p>
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Table 4. Comments from Google employees (Google Reviews: What Is It Like to Work At Google?)

4 Survey with ISKU employees

4.1 Explanation

The following survey was created for the company ISKU in purpose to give the individual employees an opportunity to anonymously express their need and suggestions on the topic of “new” working. A total of 78 people took part in the survey, mainly from the departments. The survey was sent and answered in Finnish on the ISKU company intranet, as this made it easier for the employees to complete the survey.

The first questions regarding gender or age were therefore included to get a general overview of which group of people is interested in this survey or is willing to express themselves. It is very clear that most of the employees want to deal with this topic and have already done something.

One of the most important and crucial questions is the question with a free answer field regarding innovations for a better environment at work. The ISKU employees had the opportunity to give a free expression of their personal needs and ideas for improvement. The individual answers were divided into nine subgroups to get a better overview of the answers.

4.2 Survey results

In total: 78 participants

Which age group do you belong to?

- Under 30 years old (6)
- Under 45 years old (44)
- Under 60 years old (22)
- Over 60 (6)

To which gender do you feel you belong?

- Male (42)
- Female (33)
- Without specification (1)
- Diverse (0)
- Other (2)

In which area/position do you work?

- Manager (2)
- Department manager (13)
- Employee at certain department (56)
- Factory worker (3)
- None of the above (4)

How many years have you been working at ISKU?

- Under 1 year (3)
- 2-5 years (28)
- 6-10 years (11)
- More than 10 years (36)

Is it possible to work from home in your position at ISKU?

- Yes (63)
- No (14)
- Not specified (1)

How useful do you find the concept of home office or hybrid work? (Assuming two days per week working from home)

- Very useful (57)
- Rather not useful (10)
- Not useful (5)
- Not specified (6)

Do you feel more productive at home than in the office?

- More productive at home (32)
- More productive at the office (18)
- Both the same (28)

Is it important for you to build/have a good relationship between your work colleagues?

- Important (72)
- Not important (3)
- No opinion (3)

What innovations could you imagine to create a better environment at work?

The individual answers were first divided into subgroups, which in turn are explained by examples of the staff answers. Some of them are self-explanatory and are therefore not explained further.

- Regarding home office/teleworking (17)

Some of the employees think that a large part of their work can also be done in the home office. Accordingly, they would like to work from home more often to concentrate on work effectively and save themselves the commute to and from work.

- Office work and equipment in general (16)

This subgroup is partly related to the open-plan office answers, as the individual furnishings within the offices lead to adapting the interior design of the company. Primarily, very individual answers were given here, such as an additional screen for easier working, a more comfortable chair, or more soundproof booths.

- Open-plan office (12)

In general, people are very satisfied with the open-plan office. Nevertheless, sometimes they would like to reduce the disturbing background noise of ongoing meetings or workers conversations a little and make the work quieter.

- I don't know/no answer (12)

- General work ethic (7)

For example, many employees want more internal workshops to learn new information in a collegial way, but also to increase and strengthen the working atmosphere and team spirit.

- More detailed (5)

Some of the employees gave very individual answers regarding their needs. This could be discussed internally with the relevant boss or head of department to find a solution together.

- Temperature in the office (4)

A few people think that it is sometimes too cold in the office in winter and too warm in summer. For example, this problem can be solved very easily with an adapted air-conditioning system.

- Satisfied (4)
- Cleanliness (2)

All in all, do you think it is important and helpful to introduce hybrid work, with pre-defined rules, in companies?

- Very important (49)
- Would be worth a try (26)
- Not important (1)
- Not specified (2)

4.3 Summary

The survey was a general success, as everyone provided good suggestions and good points for improving the way people work. It also became clear that many employees want a specific change as soon as possible. Even if it is just a better chair, it is important to take the voice of the individuals into account and accommodate them all.

Of course, a survey does not suddenly change the whole working environment, but it is still possible to filter out when and where changes should be made. One of the main goals is to have satisfied employees who like to come to the office and can also work from home to some extent. This automatically increases the willingness to work as an individual and therefore a positive work spirit between themselves and with clients.

5 Development trends about concepts

5.1 A modern space concept

The terms such as “open space office”, “desk sharing”, “co-working” and “flexible workplace” are no longer unknown words, especially since the Covid pandemic. The spatial concept of the working world has changed significantly in recent decades. The strict assignment of workstations or offices for individual employees is outdated. The trend is more and more towards open-plan offices without fixed working stations. This means that new demands are being made on office planning and room layout.

In addition, hybrid working is more and more preferred. Since employees are no longer tied to a fixed working location due to today's digital possibilities, office planning must also be adapted accordingly.

(Raumkonzepte: Moderne Büroplanung für den Arbeitsplatz.)

Advantages of open space offices with desk sharing:

- Optimal space utilization and therefore cost reduction
- Flexible adaption to daily changing tasks
- A sense of community and more social interaction
- Creative enhancement through togetherness
- Focus on the task to be completed, as there are no distractions from private matters
- More cleanliness and structure, as each employee clears the workplace daily
- Flatter hierarchies thanks to equal workplaces
- Adaptation to projects and acute need through flexible room design

(Raumkonzepte: Moderne Büroplanung für den Arbeitsplatz.)

Disadvantages of open space offices with desk sharing:

- Impersonal workplaces with less of a feel-good atmosphere
- Scramble for the best seats
- Distraction due to high noise level and busy environment
- Bullying through group formation and exclusion of individual employees

- Hygiene problem: For example, a cold or flu spreads quickly in an open office with changing workstations. Regular air exchange and disinfected desks are essential
- Conflict potential: Hardly any opportunities for isolation in the case of antipathies, rapid irritability due to permanent company

(Raumkonzepte: Moderne Büroplanung für den Arbeitsplatz.)

5.2 Smart furnishing and equipment in the office

Due to increased home office, flexible furnishing concepts are imperative. Many companies have employee absences and need to cut costs accordingly. In order to be able to ensure healthy, effective and safe working, an app for coordinating room distribution, for example, could be a good prerequisite. Not only for the distribution of workplaces, but also for a smart implementation in terms of hygiene and certain number of people in the rooms. In addition, there is a ventilation system in the open-plan offices, which provides further hygienic safety.

In general, the office and the readiness of individual employees to work is enhanced by high-quality functioning technology. Although this is an expensive investment at first, but it pays off in the long run.

Different materials can be used to create a certain cosiness in the office, as well as to define the individual areas of work. To ensure that employees are not permanently surrounded by noise due to the open-plan space, acoustically damped quiet zones and places of retreat are also part of the concept. For an even more acoustically dampened workspace, the flooring should also be carefully selected.

With adapted room planning, one can always create new possibilities for use. Depending on the project and the situation of the day, employees can use the adjustable walls and separations for an optimal way of working. In addition, individual office zones or desks, that are not currently being used, can be rented out to external people or companies as co-working stations. This primarily contributes to cost savings for the company.

(Raumkonzepte: Moderne Büroplanung für den Arbeitsplatz.)

To ensure an ideal and uncomplicated way of working for the employees, the technological possibilities should be used in the best way possible. These allow individual expertise to be stored online for all digitally networked colleagues and can be accessed regardless of time and place. Additionally, it is impossible to communicate and network with all experts in the required field from any location.

To meet these new demands, it requires a high degree of willingness to change and the right mindset from each individual.

(New Work. New Roles. Old Office?)

Quiet zones and retreats

The direct exchange between employees in an open-plan office creates many benefits in terms of efficient working. Nevertheless, not every person copes equally well with constant noise and distractions in the workplace.

If the company decides to go for an open-plan office concept, the employer should think about different places of retreat.

These zones can be standardized for different companies in the following ways:

- Regular workstations (freely selectable or permanently assigned)
- Waiting area for guests and customers
- Meeting rooms of various sizes for undisturbed conversations and conferences
- Options for undisturbed phone calls
- Retreats in the office for quiet work
- Quiet zones for relaxation
- Areas for eating
- Facilities for active breaks (library, pool table, or game console)

(Ruhezonen und Rückzugsorte im Büro einrichten: So geht's!)

Color concepts

The trend in terms of color choice tends more and more to courageous and playful intensities and no longer in the neutral and cool direction. The reason for this is, that people are becoming more adventurous in their choice to express themselves better. This is not only applicable to their own home, but also offers a great opportunity to make the offices of companies more comfortable and inviting.

According to the Pantone Color Institute, it is important to use colors in the best possible way, as they have an impact on people's mental health and well-being. An important approach to choosing colors is not to use them in excess, but only as accents or eye-catchers.

(DiMarco 2023.)

A suitable concept should not be underestimated, because the individual shades can be used in a targeted and appropriate manner and therefore create increased concentration and efficiency of the employees.

(Farbkonzepte: Gestaltungsmöglichkeiten durch Farbe im Raum.)

Sound exposure and room acoustics

Another important point regarding the design of workplaces is good acoustic planning. This prevents poor noise levels and the associated effects on performance and productivity of the employee. After all, too high noise levels can go to the point of damaging health.

To prevent this in the best possible way, the guidelines should be regularly adapted according to the state of the art, occupational medicine and scientific findings.

For optimal acoustic planning in the office, it is important to determine the individual work structures. This means that the following questions should be asked: Where does the work require change public traffic or spontaneous meetings? Are other people working simultaneously on tasks that mainly require silence? Are there specific times for quiet activities or communication?

To reduce the noise level as much as possible, smart furnishing and sound absorbing materials offer technical possibilities to improve the acoustics.

Further ideas would be for example:

- Floor covering for noise insulation
- Soundproof furniture
- Acoustic panels for walls and ceilings
- Sound absorbing movable walls
- Plants and moss

(Akustikplanung fürs Büro: Schallbelastung & Raumakustik.)

Office plants

According to a recent study, plant in offices not only serve as decorative objects, but also significantly increase the well-being of employees. In addition, they clean the air and humidify the indoor climate. This has a positive effect on the mood and helps to reduce the bacterial load in the office. According to several studies, it has been proven that employee performance grows about 15% in green offices.

When properly placed, plants in open space offices can be used as soundproofing and natural room dividers. Some appropriate plants would be the bow hemp, lucky feather, rubber tree and birch fig.

(Büropflanzen: Warum Grün am Arbeitsplatz sinnvoll ist.)

Office decoration

Attitudes towards office decor have changed a lot in recent years. In the past, people put small vacation souvenirs, framed family pictures or neglected plants on their desks. This is hardly possible nowadays, since the era of desk sharing is becoming more and more widespread, and no unesthetic/unnecessary objects should be placed in an open space office.

However, this does not mean that no more decorations are allowed. On the opposite decorative elements in the company colors create an individual identification and, at the same time, say a lot about the companies orientation. It is mostly useful, especially in open-plan offices with impersonal workplaces, to give the decorations a meaning and purpose. A few examples would be: Bulletin boards, lightning, storage, waste baskets, calendars/schedules, and desk utensils.

(Bürodeko: Welche Dekoration eignet sich für das Büro?)

Ergonomic furniture

The daily work routine as well as the associated demand on modern office furniture has changed a lot. Since many companies work with an open space concept and desk sharing, the individual office furniture should be flexible and easily adaptable. The focus here is mainly on functionality, personal taste is not decisive.

Among other things, high-quality office furniture is characterized by good ergonomics as well as durability. In addition, they offer various flexible solutions, which you can combine with each other and expand in case of need.

(Moderne Büroeinrichtung: Ergonomische Möbel fürs Büro.)

6 Concept for offices

6.1 Introduction about possible concept for an office

To get a better overview or a logical connection of the office concepts and designs, a 3D model was created. To show how the individual need of the employees can be realized and therefore create a collaborative and relaxed working environment. In addition, there is the modernized way of planning an office, such as the digital reservations of workstations and the desk sharing option.

The next section shows how an office like that can be designed. The following office was planned for about 20 employees, but also can be scaled up to the desired number of employees. For example, three silent boxes were planned for this building to work in a quiet zone. If there are 50 employees, there should be about six to seven individual boxes.

6.2 Sketches and plans

The office building is generally divided into two floors. The basic dimensions of the building were based on the principle of the ISKU BtoB showroom in Helsinki.

First floor

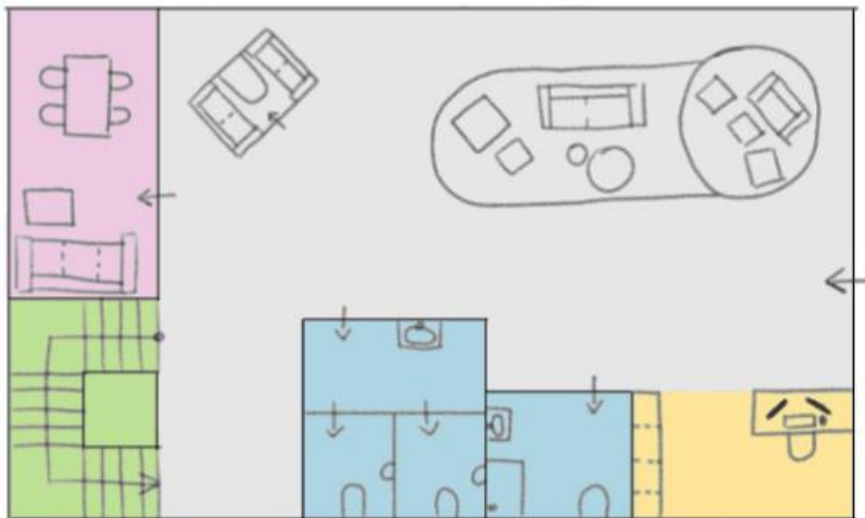


Figure 10. Sketch first floor (Maria Matetschläger 2023.)

On the ground floor, right next to the entrance on the left, is the reception and toilet facilities. On the opposite side is a showroom, which can be adapted in terms of color and theme depending on the new products. In this example, two different product series were exhibited and color coordinated. Added to this are the suspended ceilings with hanging plants, which create a sound-absorbing and comforting atmosphere.



Figure 11. Reception (Maria Matetschläger 2023.)



Figure 12. Showroom (Maria Matetschläger 2023.)

In the back of the ground floor, an office has been set up that can be used as a workplace as well as a meeting room. There is a tablet at each door or entrance with a digital display to register on an online platform and reserve a room for a certain period. This gives a general overview of which workstation is available. Next to the office is one of the three silent boxes to offer employees an undisturbed area for online meetings or phone calls.



Figure 13. Silent box with office (Maria Matetschläger 2023.)

To reach the upper floor the U-shaped staircase or the built-in elevator can be used. Below this staircase is the technical room, which is responsible for all necessary electrical requirements as well as additional storage space.

Second floor

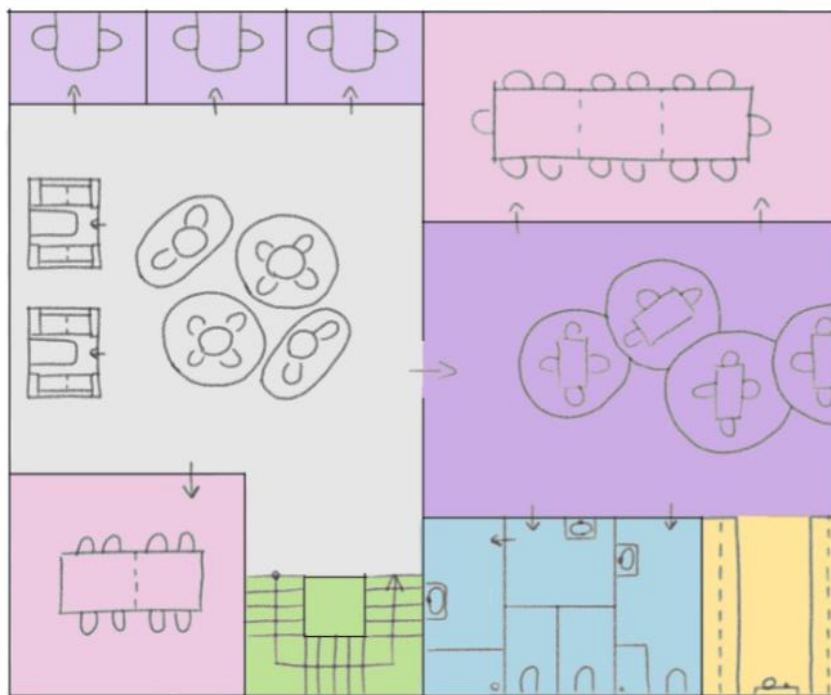


Figure 14. Sketch second floor (Maria Matetschläger 2023.)

When entering the upper floor, the lounge and working area is located right in front of the staircase. This is furnished with ISKU furniture and is intended to offer employees a comfortable alternative to their office desks. The space is planned very openly, to give people a chance to interact on a daily basis. If people still want to withdraw while working, they can

either use one of the silent boxes or the work booths, which each offer space for two people. To absorb some of the sound, suspended ceilings with plants have also been installed, like on the lower floor.



Figure 15. Lounge and workspace (Maria Matetschläger 2023.)

On the left-hand side of the lounge area is a small office, which offers space for eight people. This can be used for individual work on the one side and for a group meeting on the other. In addition, the attached screen, speakers, and cameras provide the ideal equipment for online meetings. This equipment can be found in each of the offices, as well as high-quality equipment in the other rooms and workplaces.



Figure 16. Small office (Maria Matetschläger 2023.)

Across the floor is mainly the dining area as well as the kitchen. This was kept simple in terms of color and decoration, as the suspended ceiling with lamps and plants is intended to provide a relaxing and calming atmosphere.



Figure 17. Canteen (Maria Matetschläger 2023.)

Opposite to the kitchen is a large office space which can be used for fourteen people. In case anyone does not need that much space on a daily basis, a possible room partition has been planned. This can be easily moved in and out, turning one large room into two individual offices. In addition, all glass walls can be moved, and the separated office and cafeteria area can be made into an open area for everyone.

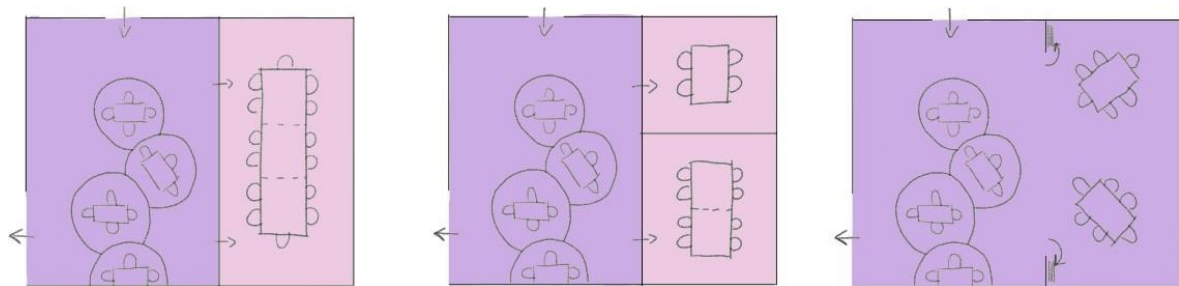


Figure 18. Sketches for alternatives (Maria Matetschläger 2023.)

7 Development ideas

General

This chapter gives the employees of ISKU, as well as any other interested person, a good overview of the entire range of topics of a better way of working.

In order to list and describe as many efficient ideas as possible, individual details are taken from the internet as well as from the employee survey evaluation. This gives a good mix of public and current ideas and the direct thoughts of employees.

Since the topic of this thesis is workplace experience, the employees should first gain an overview and research the most important points regarding the own company community. It is important to start with the basics of the most important features and changes in order to filter out the individual approaches and potential opportunities.

In order to get the best possible overview of all these individual possibilities and to see which ones are the best received by the employees, it would be useful to start with a survey or a meeting with the entire staff. This shows that the manager wants to take care of everyone and is willing to address the problems internally.

When problems are mentioned, there can be a wide range of possible dissatisfactions. For example, some employees are not very good at working or interacting in groups and this can lead to some tension among themselves. Furthermore, some prefer to work alone at home rather than sitting in the office. This is usually not with the intention of avoiding colleagues but may be due to the quiet environment and the concentration of the individual. Everyone has different views of the best possible and most productive working method, and this is exactly what should be addressed. Of course, rules need to be set and followed in the company to generally get the work done on time and in the best way possible.

Regarding ISKU

Now the individual ideas for a better working community will be discussed. As mentioned above, the first thing to do is to hold a meeting with all employees to talk about the most important points. For example, everyone can give their opinion on individual feelings within the company community, list the possible tensions and problems with the way of working (too many working hours, inaccurate information on projects and so on) and contribute their own ideas for improvement. No one should be ashamed of having too much work and feeling overwhelmed. In order to be able to see exactly how the individual staff members deal with everything, whether it is an internal conflict or too much work, this meeting is very

important at the beginning. In addition, it is a closed round, which means that everyone should feel safe and be able to talk freely to each other without any arguments.

However, if people feel that they cannot talk openly about certain things, it is recommended that they set up an anonymous suggestion box for everyone. For this, individual volunteers would have to come forward to take care of it and to make sure that the messages are taken seriously and implemented. In this respect, many ideas from employees on certain topics can be brought into the daily work and it is, therefore, a benefit for the whole company.

One of the more frequently mentioned ideas of ISKU employees is to make workshops available to everyone or to organize more of them. Since the company arranges events in certain areas, the employees are automatically confronted with a certain topic together as a group. This helps a lot to strengthen the group dynamic and to get to know each other better. It is possible to advertise the courses for everyone who wants to deal with this topic can participate. This way one does not only have the effect that the individual departments stay among each other, but also get to know the other colleagues better.

Regarding possible activities with colleagues, the first thing to do is to check the companies budget. This way individual activities can be planned that fall within this budget. These ideas can take place during the whole week, but it should still be ensured that work is not put in the background. In the following listing, different ideas with a certain budget have been listed.

(Almost) Free ideas:

- Bring board games from home
- Movie night/afternoon in the company
- Cooking together (everyone can bring something from home)
- Billiard or table tennis (an investment in the beginning, but worth it in the long run)

Costly ideas:

- Visiting museums
- Joint excursions or city tours
- Going to a restaurant or a bar
- Visiting an Escape Room, Bowling, Cinema

8 Summary

The focus of this bachelor thesis is on the Workplace Experience and how it can be further developed in connection with the Finnish furniture manufacturer ISKU. First, it is important to understand and analyse the company and the general information that goes along with the WX concept. In this way, all the important components of the topic are explained and divided into different subject areas.

In order to not only list the positive aspects of the present working world, the negative aspects have also been included. This helps employers to weigh up whether and to which extent it is worth investing in this concept. A general overview of all the important issues that are necessary to create a positive place to work and feel good, for all employees, is given.

Initially, it was considered to conduct several interviews with other companies on this topic. This turned out to be very difficult, as the individual companies prefer to carry out the way of working internally and usually do not want others to copy their ideas and views. Each company has different priorities in this regard and each employee or employer deals with it differently. As a result, two other companies, apart from ISKU, were mentioned and described in the best possible way with the help of various sources. To gain an internal insight, several employee comments on the topic of work were listed for both companies.

One of the most crucial areas of this work was the survey. Everyone from the company could participate and give their views and needs. This proved to be a great help and a good source of information about the internal problem and concerns of each employee.

After analysing all the comments and researching the current trends in offices, a three-dimensional representation of a possible office concept could be created. In this context, it is not only important to consider all the comments of the ISKU staff, but also to know the current trends worldwide and to combine everything together. This helps to include all possible details such as plants or the noise insulation, which were implemented with the help of the ceiling panelling. It can be seen how to combine an open space office with individual quiet zones and shared offices/rooms in the best way possible.

Another important point is to give different options and ideas for the ISKU staff and any interested private individual. Several ideas were contributed by the staff themselves, such as holding workshops for everyone and in addition to those, other activity ideas with different budgets were listed.

However, it should not be forgotten to ask the employees for their individual views on those ideas. As mentioned above, every company and every person is different but should be taken into account.

This way of communicating can be a great help to the employer and provide a new perspective in all aspects.

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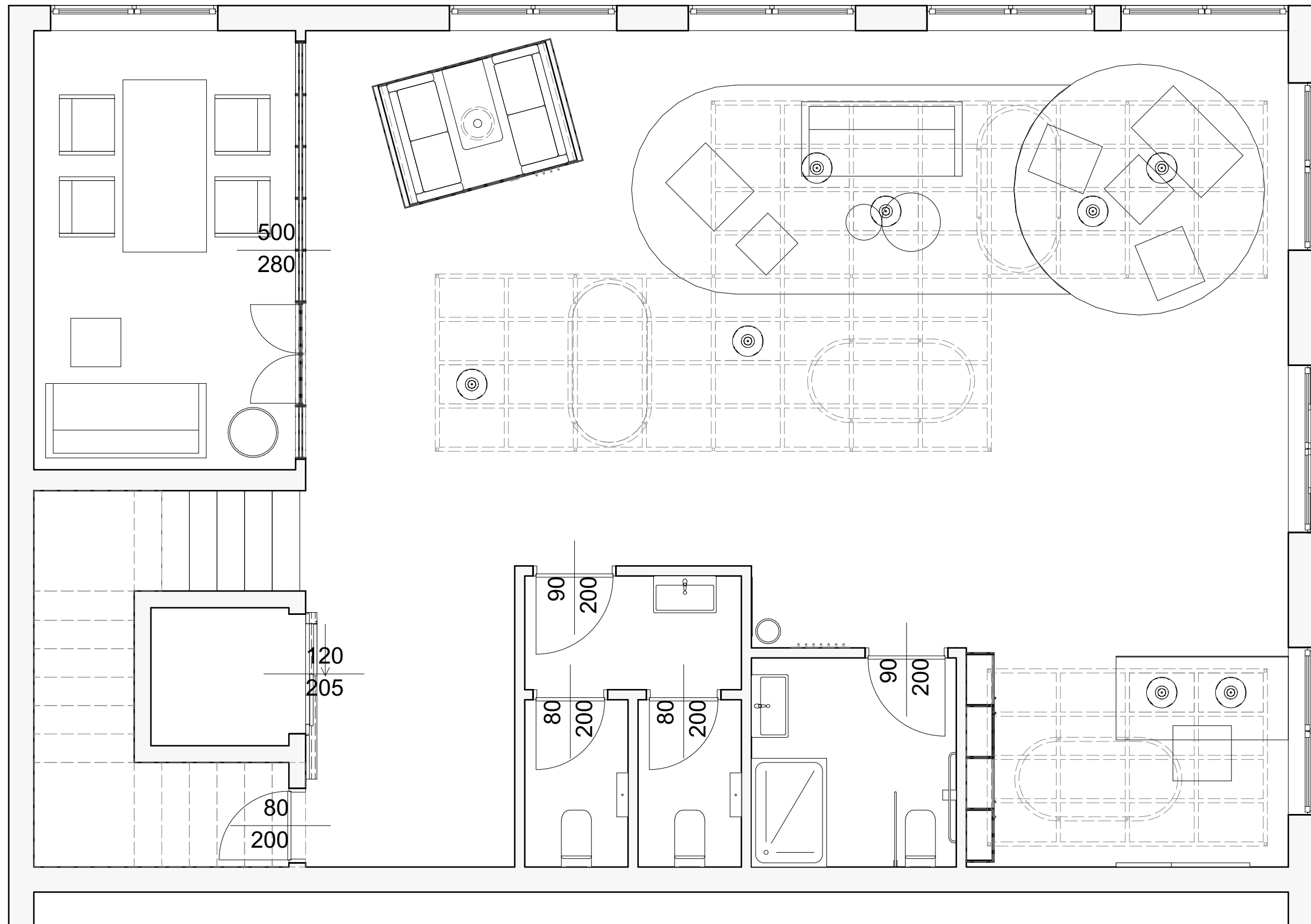
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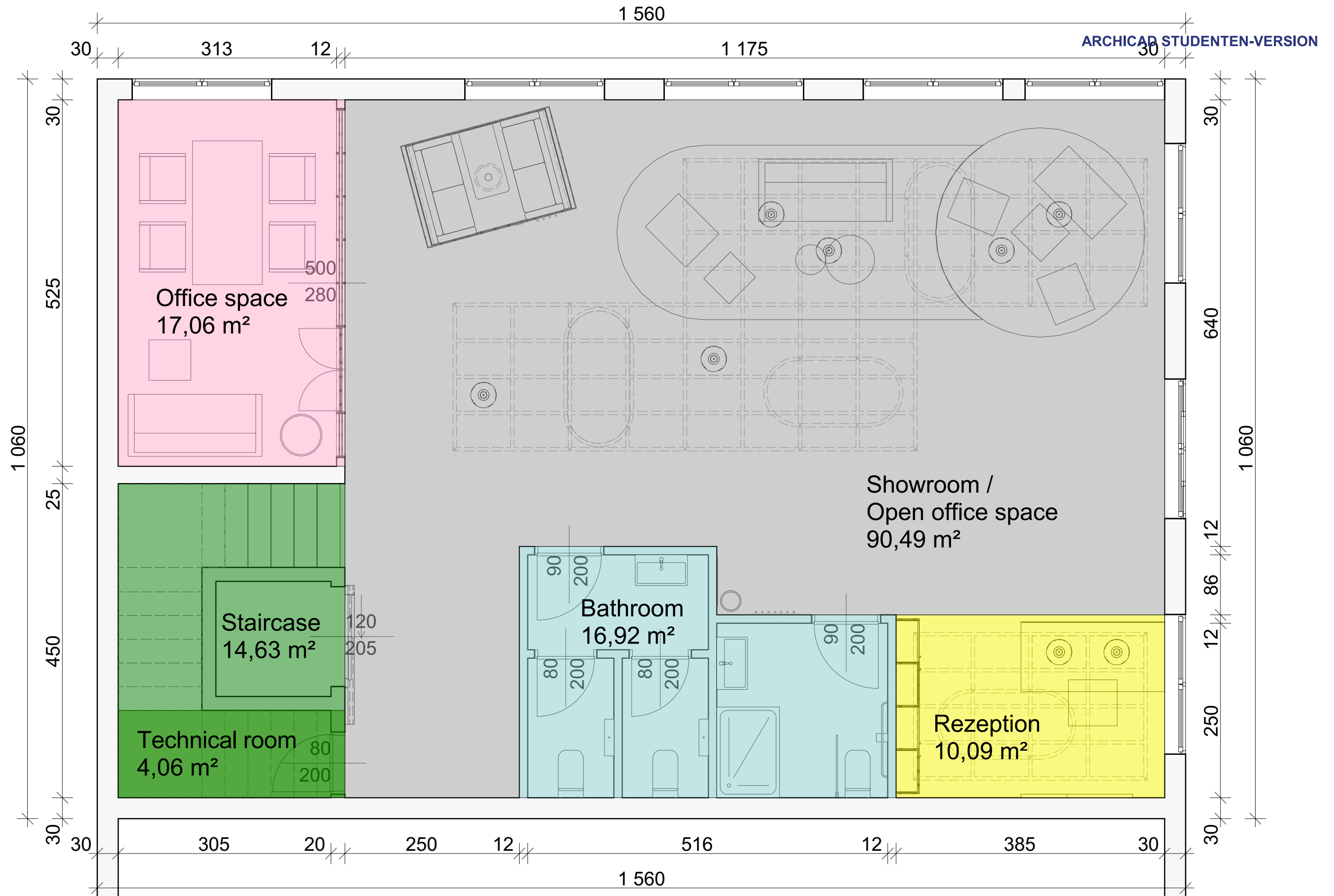
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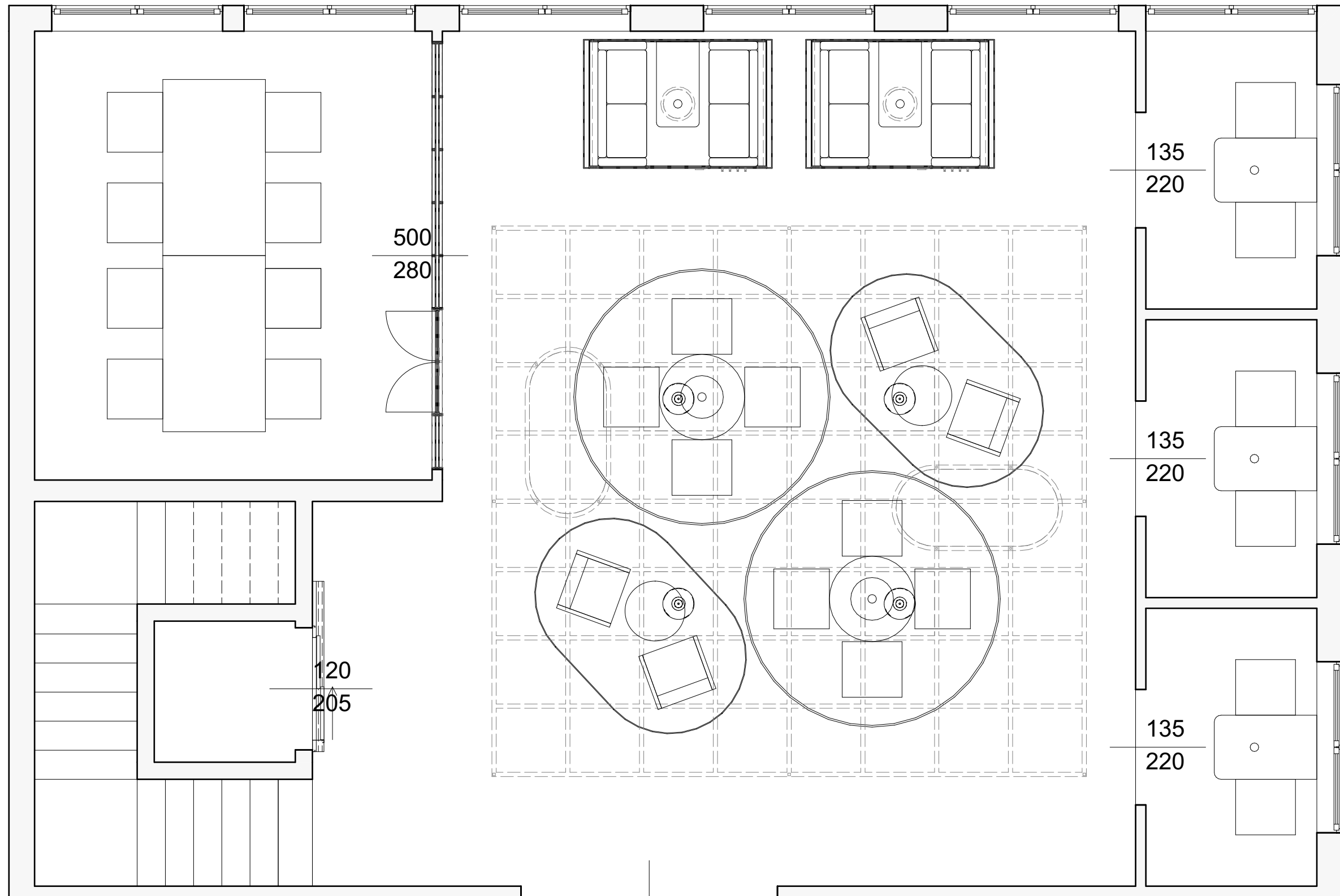
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FIRST FLOOR
MARIA MATETSCHLÄGER



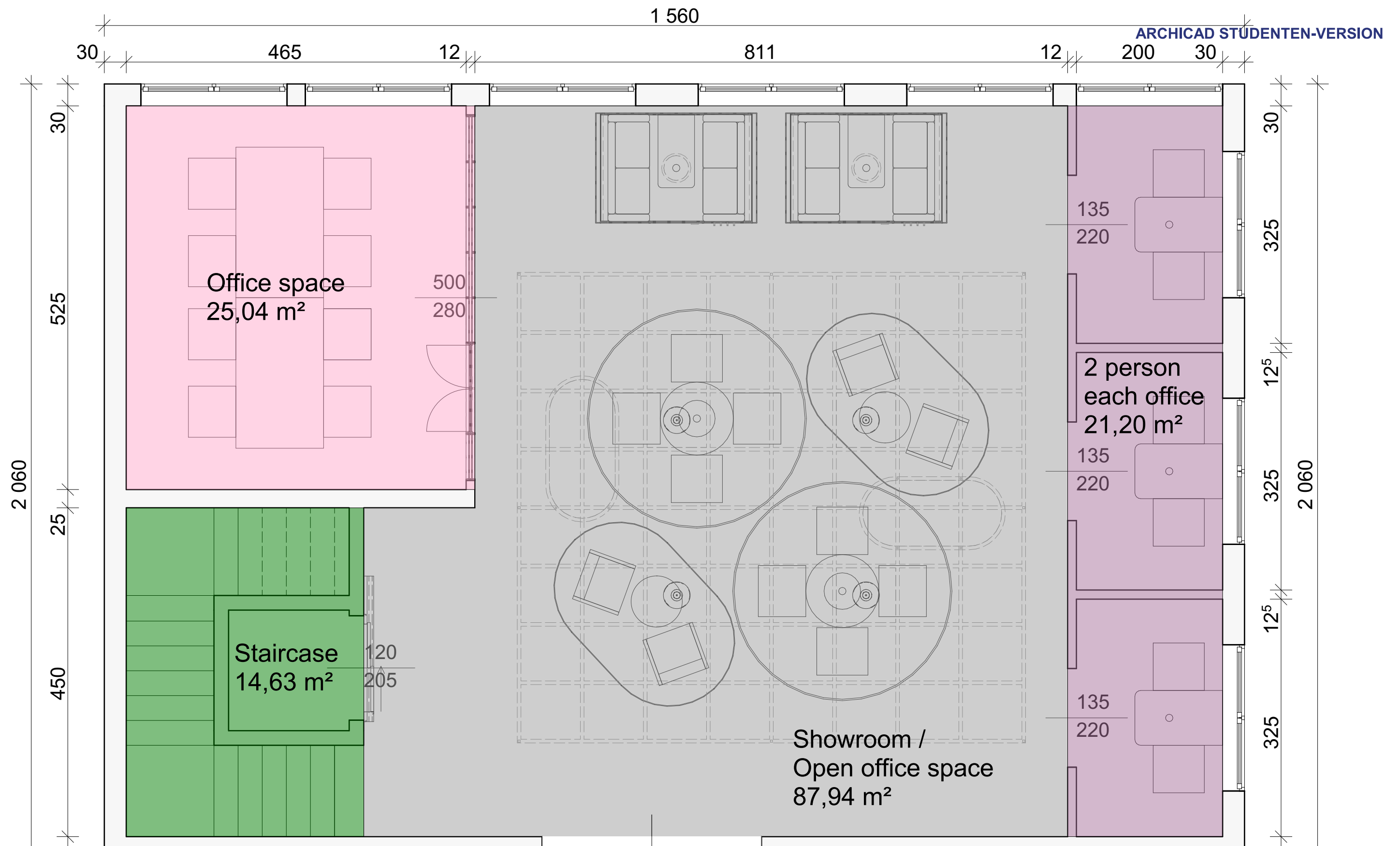
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FIRST FLOOR dimensioned
MARIA MATETSCHLÄGER



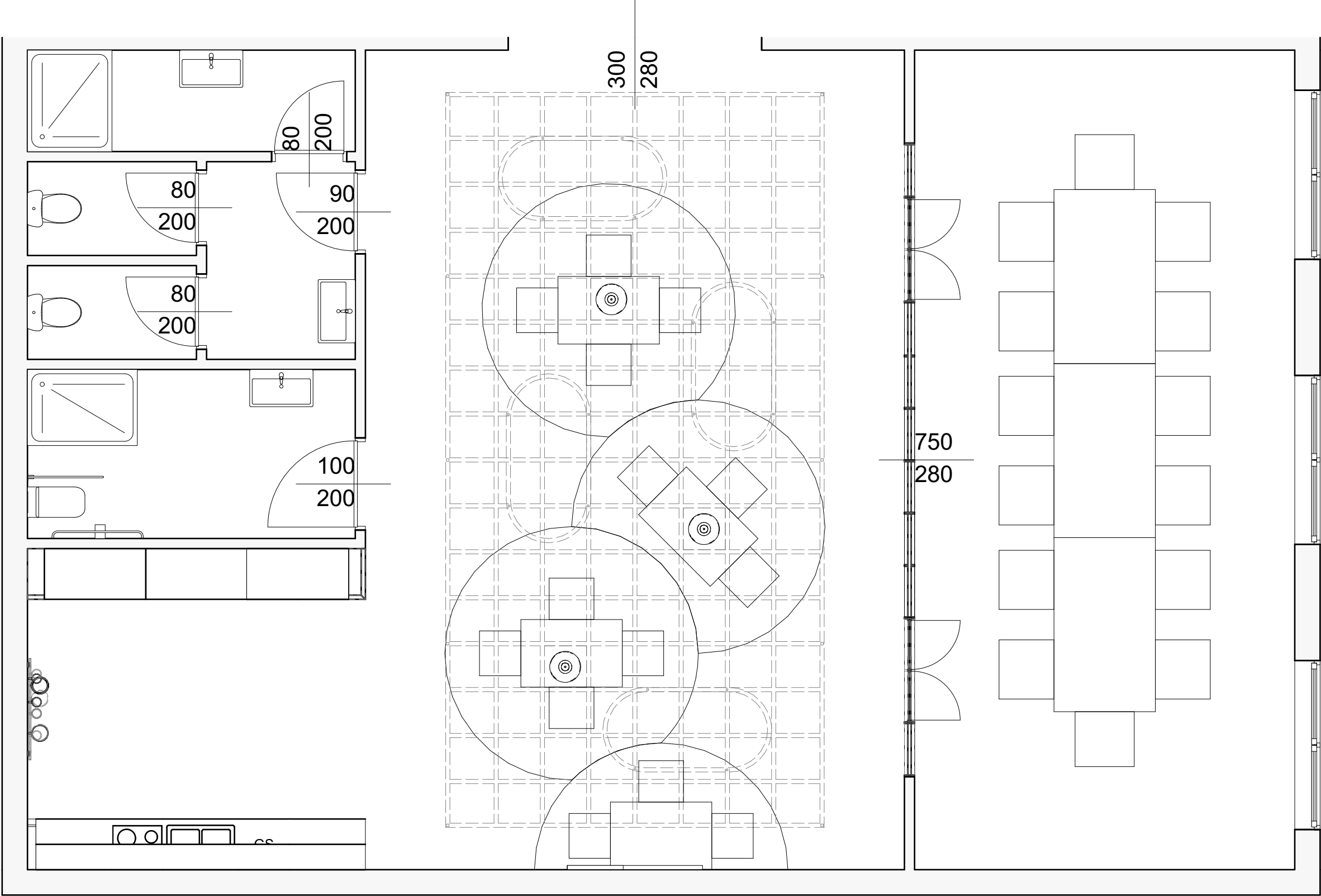
Scale
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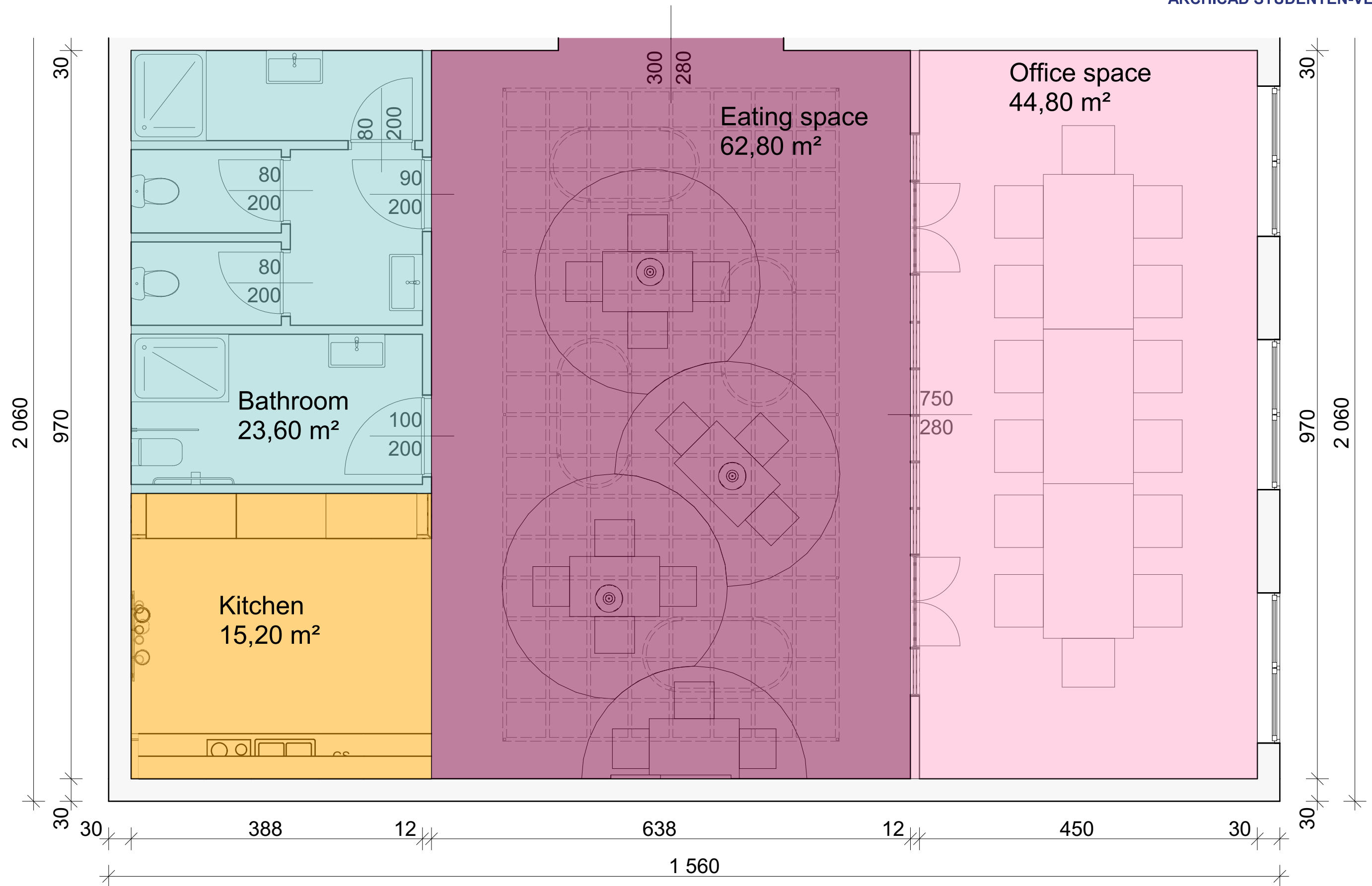
SECOND FLOOR 1/2
MARIA MATETSCHLÄGER

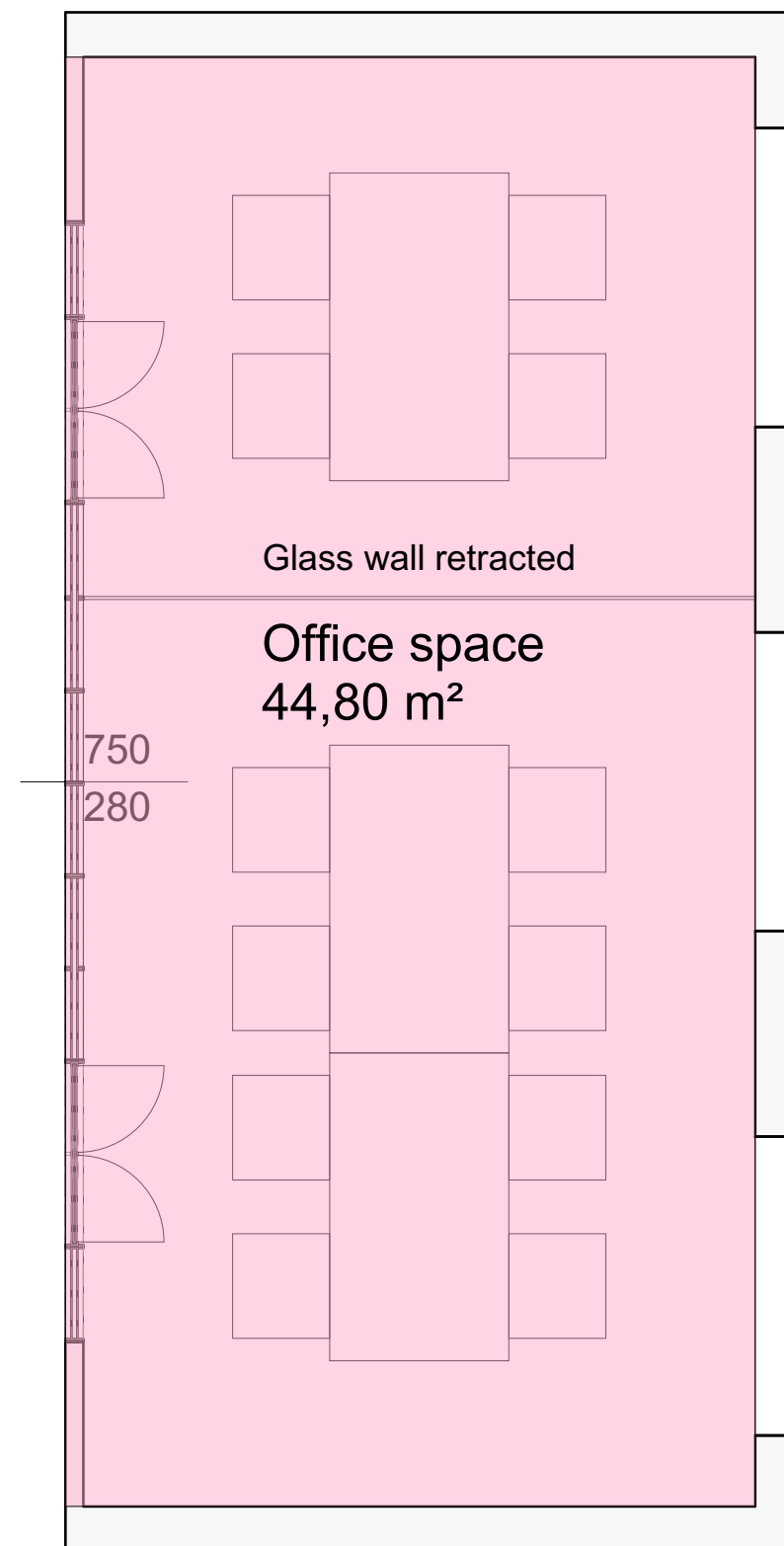
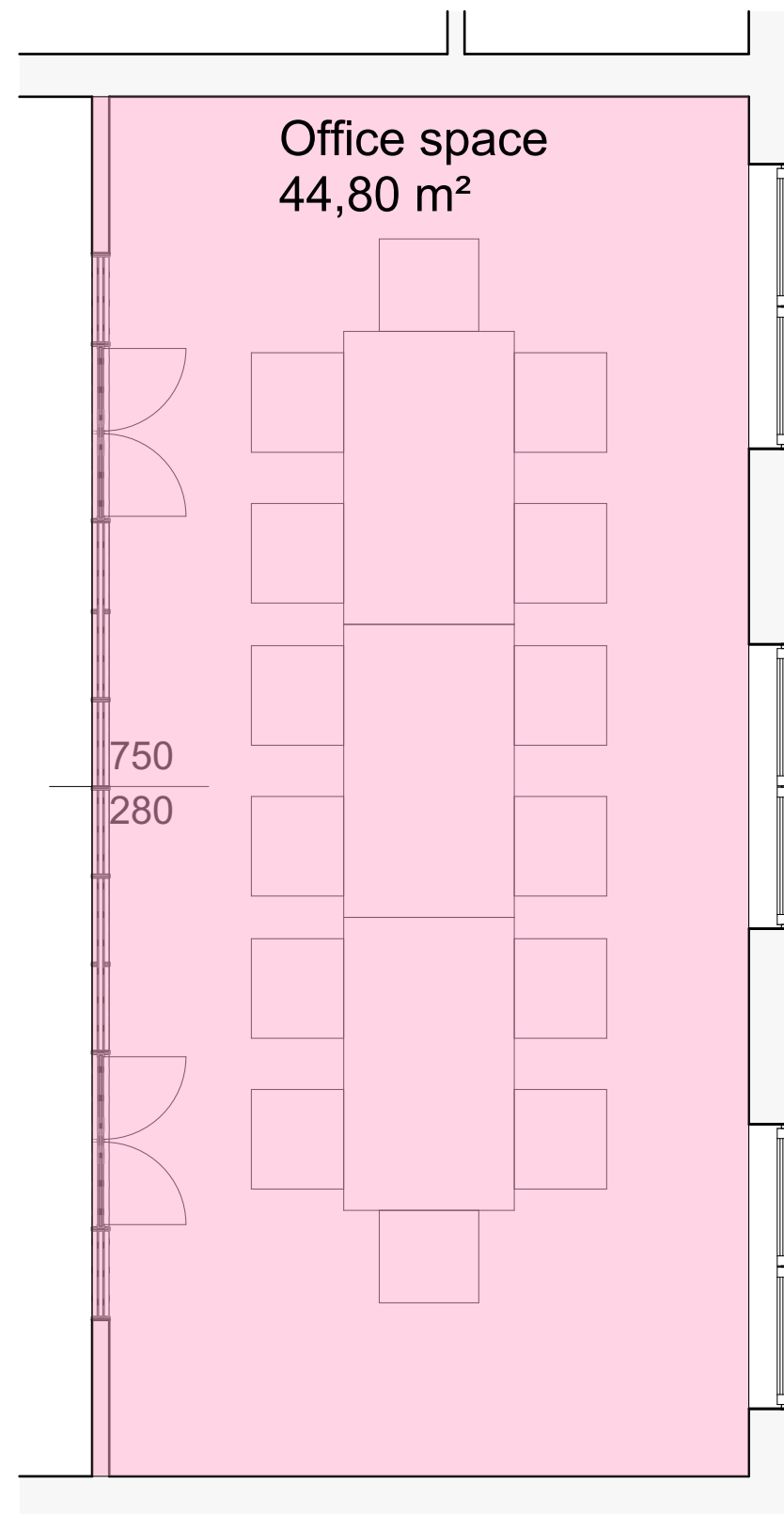


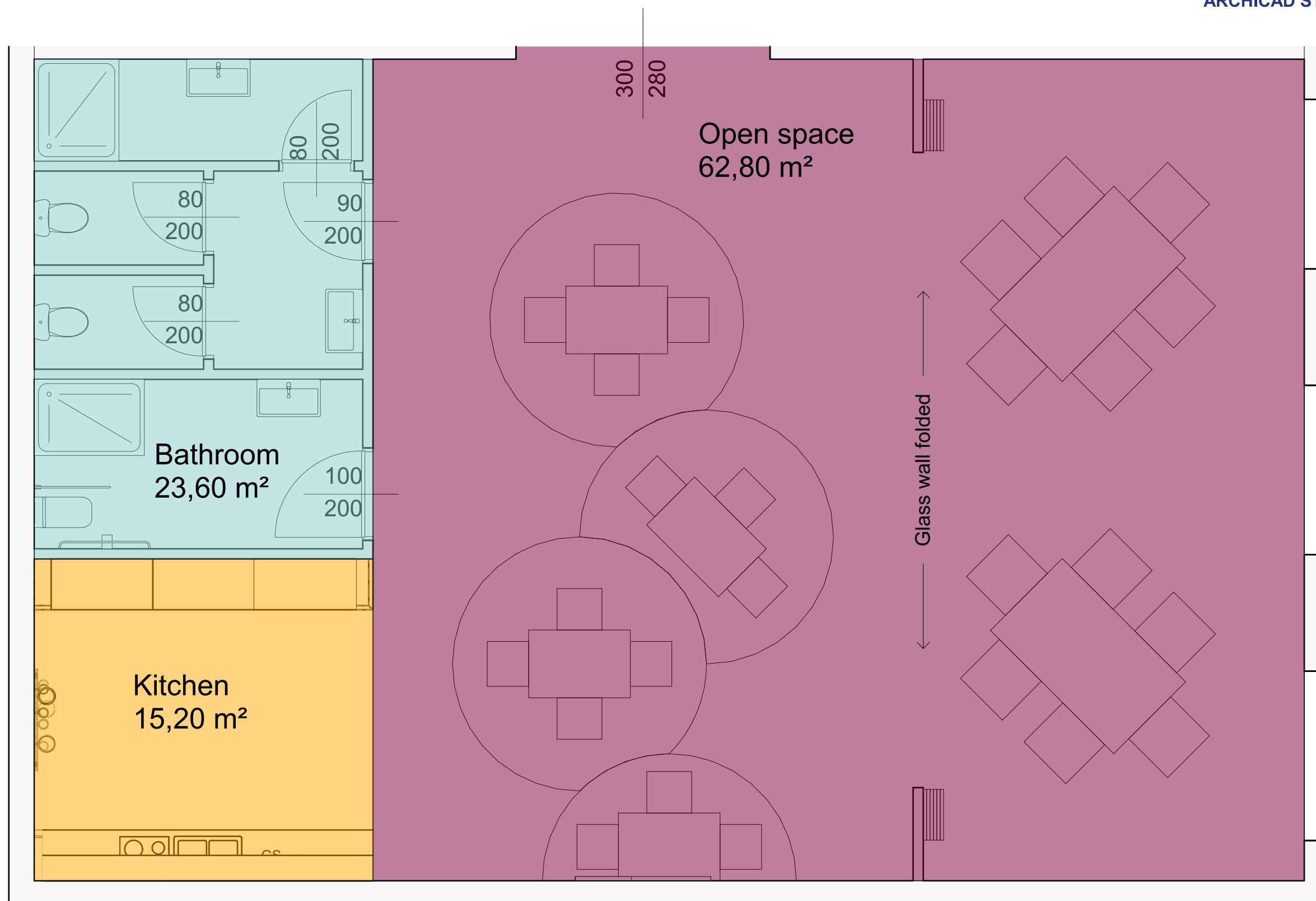
Scale
1:50

SECOND FLOOR 1/2
MARIA MATETSCHLÄGER









Scale
1:50

SECOND FLOOR - open space
MARIA MATETSCHLÄGER

Reception - First floor



Silent box with office - First floor



Showroom 1/2 - First floor



Showroom 2/2 - First floor



Lounge/work space - Second floor



Silent boxes - Second floor



Small office - Second floor



Work booths - Second floor



Canteen - Second floor



Canteen with kitchen - Second floor



Large office - Second floor



View to lounge space - Second floor

