Participatory design processes can entail involving individuals, groups, and communities in joint inquiry to deliberate on their current situation, imagine alternative futures, and forge possible collaborations. Relational sensitivity – drawing attention to relations in a given situation – is important when staging (i.e., organising and designing for) and facilitating joint inquiry. It is a valuable concept with which to illuminate and discuss contingent circumstances that may arise and, more generally, to support participation in joint inquiry.

This PhD thesis explores and develops views of and a vocabulary for discussing relational sensitivity so as to support practitioners in staging joint inquiry. The thesis includes both a literature review and practice-based studies, applying a research through design approach to discuss relational sensitivity. The results include three perspectives from which to understand relational sensitivity when staging joint inquiry: sensitivity to self (e.g., reflexivity, self-awareness, and embodied awareness), sensitivity to intersubjective dynamics (e.g., attunement and responsiveness to group dynamics, affect, emotions, values, trust, and power dynamics), and sensitivity to materiality and process (e.g., the roles of materials, artefacts, and activities in reflection, social cohesion, and diverse contexts, and the role of the body in power dynamics).

Overall, this research contributes to the research fields of innovation and design and of participatory design by developing knowledge of relational sensitivity and its role in staging situations for joint inquiry. It provides insights into how practitioners can develop, discuss, and study their relational sensitivity and support participants in participatory design processes.

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RELATIONAL SENSITIVITY IN PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

THINKING AND MAKING TOGETHER THROUGH JOINT INQUIRY

Laura Gottlieb

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School of Innovation, Design and Engineering
RELATIONAL SENSITIVITY IN PARTICIPATORY DESIGN
THINKING AND MAKING TOGETHER THROUGH JOINT INQUIRY

Laura Gottlieb

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Fakultetsopponent: Professor Emerita Christina Mörtberg, Linnaeus University
Abstract

Participatory design processes can entail involving individuals, groups, and communities in joint inquiry to deliberate on their current situation, imagine alternative futures, and forge possible collaborations. Relational sensitivity – drawing attention to relationships in a given situation – is important when staging (i.e., organising and designing for) and facilitating joint inquiry. It is a valuable concept with which to illuminate and discuss contingent circumstances that may arise and, more generally, to support participation in joint inquiry.

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The results include three perspectives from which to understand relational sensitivity when staging joint inquiry: sensitivity to self (e.g., reflexivity, self-awareness, and embodied awareness), sensitivity to intersubjective dynamics (e.g., attunement and responsiveness to group dynamics, affect, emotions, values, trust, and power dynamics), and sensitivity to materiality and process (e.g., the roles of materials, artefacts, and activities in reflection, social cohesion, and diverse contexts, and the role of the body in power dynamics). While relational sensitivity is primarily discussed in relation to practitioners – i.e., those staging joint inquiry – this thesis also discusses the importance of cultivating participants’ awareness of the self and others when staging joint inquiry to collectively support participation.

Overall, this research contributes to the research fields of innovation and design and of participatory design by developing knowledge of relational sensitivity and its role in staging situations for joint inquiry. It provides insights into how practitioners can develop, discuss, and study their relational sensitivity and support participants in participatory design processes.
Abstract

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Overall, this research contributes to the research fields of innovation and design and of participatory design by developing knowledge of relational sensitivity and its role in staging situations for joint inquiry. It provides insights into how practitioners can develop, discuss, and study their relational sensitivity and support participants in participatory design processes.
**Sammanfattning**

Participatory design-processer används för att engagera individer och grupper i samhällen i *joint inquiry*, att diskutera sin nuvarande situation, föreställa sig alternativa framtidsscenerier och möjliga samarbeten. *Relational sensitivity*, som riktar uppmärksamheten mot relationer i en given situation, är viktig vid iscensättandet (organiseringen, utformningen) och facilitering av joint inquiry. Det är ett värdefullt begrepp med vilket man kan belysa och diskutera förändringar och möjliga omständigheter som kan uppstå och mer allmänt stödja deltagande i *joint inquiry*.


Genom de litteratur- och praktikbaserade studierna diskuterar avhandlingen två forskningsfrågor: ”Hur kan relationell sensitivitet förstås vid iscensättandet av situationer för joint inquiry?” och ”Hur kan studien av relationell sensitivitet informera praktiker när de iscensätter situationer för joint inquiry?” Forskningsmetoder inkluderar användning av fältanteckningar, journalanteckningar, kollektiv analys, ljud- och videoinspelningar och frågeformulär.

Resultaten inkluderar tre perspektiv för att förstå relationell sensitivitet vid iscensättandet av joint inquiry: *sensitivity to self* (t.ex. reflexivitet, självmedvetenhet och kroppslig medvetenhet), *sensitivity to intersubjective dynamics* (t.ex. uppmärksamhet och lyhördhet för gruppens dynamik, affekt, känslor, värderingar, tillit och maktdynamik) och *sensitivity to materiality and process* (t.ex. rollen för material, artefakter och aktiviteter för reflektion, social sammanhållning, olika kontext, och kroppens roll i maktdynamik). Medan relationell sensitivitet i första hand diskuterar i relation till praktiker – det vill säga de som iscensätter joint inquiry – diskuterar denna avhandling också den stärka deltagarnas medvetenhet om sig självt och andra i joint inquiry för att kollektivt stödja deltagande.

Sammanfattningsvis bidrar denna forskning till forskningsfälten innovation och design samt participatory design genom att utveckla kunskap om relationell sensitivitet och dess roll vid iscensättandet av joint inquiry. Den ger insikter i
hur praktiker kan utveckla, diskutera och studera relational sensitivity, och med hjälp av detta, stödja deltagare i participatory design-processer.
To Chrille, my brother and most amazing human
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List of Papers

This thesis is based on the following papers, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.


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Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the research area, aims, and focus of this PhD thesis.

Design for thinking and making together

In my research and design practices, I explore ways to support reflective and conversational processes through design. I have an interdisciplinary background in Philosophy and Information Experience Design (Royal College of Art 2023) and have been interested in combining these disciplines by exploring how designerly practices can support reflection and conversation on existential questions. This interest started with my own desire and imagination for cities and otherwise commercialised high streets to be places that engage people in more meaningful reflections and intimate encounters with others. My design practice has not focused on designing finished and commercial products. Instead, through design experiments, I have been working with design as a material and experimental practice to explore, test, and imagine possible futures. This type of design practice aligns with the idea of “design as inquiry” (DiSalvo 2022), which explores alternative practices, commitments, and possibilities of design, through design experiments.

Figure 1. Chalking Thoughts, writing philosophical questions on pavements on Stockholm high streets with chalk, 2013.

In the early design experiment Chalking Thoughts, I moved through the high streets of my hometown Stockholm, writing the question “What makes you, you?” in chalk on the sidewalks. In another design experiment, Philosophical Teatime (Fig.2), I invited exhibition visitors to afternoon tea, where the ritual, teacups, tea, and cakes were designed to
introduce existential topics on death and meaning through playful activities and tangible artefacts. What has been significant for me in these design experiments is how these materials and experimental practices opened up possibilities for encounters with others and deeper conversations. Making and testing things, in a research through design approach (Stappers and Giaccardi 2017), has continued to be central to my design and research process, to observe interactions and explore how design can support reflective and conversational processes.

In this PhD research, I have continued to focus on design as a practice to support reflective and conversational processes by focusing on joint inquiry – where people reflect on their current situation, imagine alternative and desired futures, learn together, and potentially collaborate in common endeavours. Joint inquiry, one originator of which was John Dewey, describes conversational processes of making practical knowledge (by sharing concrete practices and experiences with each other) and promoting collaboration, in order to improve one’s situation (Dewey 1938). Such processes can be compared with participatory design (Steen 2013), in which individuals, groups, or communities collaboratively define and work towards common issues and interests.

A central thread in my design and research practice has been exploring the role of material artefacts and activities in supporting the initiation of joint inquiry. These material practices are common approaches in participatory design when staging, that is, coordinating, inviting into, and designing material artefacts and activities, and often facilitating
conversational and collaborative practices in participatory design (Agger Eriksen 2012). The material artefacts and activities are intended to support people in reflecting and collaborating together (Sanders 2000). In my own staging practices, I have designed and used “playful triggers” (Loi 2007), which use ordinary artefacts in extraordinary ways as ice-breakers, and “generative tools” (Sanders and Stappers 2012), which involve activities of making things. I have explored ways in which the use of material artefacts and activities could support the initiation of joint inquiry, for example, by stimulating humour and encouraging people to contribute their perspectives. In my Licentiate thesis (Gottlieb 2020), I developed a conceptual tool intended to support the design and evaluation of material artefacts and activities in relation to joint inquiry.

My decade-long practice of exploring ways in which design can help people think and make together has emphasised to me the highly contextual aspects of designing for and facilitating joint inquiry. For instance, in Philosophical Teatime, each session had different dynamics between participants as well as with me as the facilitator. This contextual aspect necessitated my own development of communication and facilitation practices, to be better prepared to step into these contingent and relational situations. I therefore trained in facilitation and communication practices outside of academia, as these had not been part of my philosophy and design education, practices such as Philosophical Enquiry (The Philosophy Foundation 2023, Worley 2011), Bohmian dialogue (Bohm 2004), and Zen-informed facilitation practice (Hamilton 2013) (see more on p. 31). My design practices have therefore not only focused on designing and using material artefacts and activities, but also on developing important qualities and competencies for navigating relationships and intersubjective dynamics within conversational situations.

In this thesis, I focus on the importance of relational sensitivity for practitioners in the context of staging and facilitating joint inquiry. By relational sensitivity, I refer to drawing attention to the relations within a given situation, the connections between people and things. This involves a “sensitivity to relations”, being attuned and responsive to small moments of intersubjective nuance (Akama and Light 2018, pp. 2–3), such as paying attention to who is or is not speaking and to whether there is tension or cohesion between participants. Relational sensitivity includes drawing attention to how staging and “setting the scene” with material artefacts and activities transpires, and to how people and materials participate.
I would like to illustrate the importance of relational sensitivity with the example of a workshop at a design conference that I participated in. The designer and facilitator had set the table with carefully prepared artefacts and materials and introduced the workshop by saying that everyone was free to talk and that they would not actively facilitate the conversation. This open invitation meant that only three of the fifteen participants were actively engaging in the conversation, setting the topics and sharing their perspectives. I do not mean to say that this is wrong, but that it is important to draw attention to what is happening in a situation, how the workshop design and facilitation affects how the conversation evolves, who participates and how. Furthermore, if the workshop design is intended to encourage everyone to contribute to the conversation, more active facilitation might be needed. The practitioners, by which I mean those staging and possibly facilitating situations of joint inquiry, need to be attentive and responsive to what transpires in a situation so as to support participation in the conversation.

In participatory design research, there is an emphasis on the importance of relational “expertise” or the characteristics of designers and practitioners involved in participatory design processes (Akama and Light 2018, 2020; Dindler and Iversen 2016; Light and Akama 2012; Tjaha and Yee 2020). However, more attention is needed in participatory design research to the practitioners who enact the participative methods, rather than merely focusing on the tools, techniques, and methods (Akama and Light 2018, 2020). Light and Akama (2012, p. 61) contended that “it is not meaningful to separate the designer from method since we cannot know participative methods without the person or people enacting them”.

Furthermore, considering that designers commonly take the role of facilitators in participatory design processes (Manzini 2015), a literature review on design facilitation has concluded that it is unclear how designers are trained in facilitation during their education (Mosely et al. 2021). Akama and Light (2018) described how training in “sensitivity to relations” is important for the facilitation and negotiation of “matters of concern” yet is missing from formal design education. Further transparency in research is needed to understand how practitioners navigate relational and contingent situations of joint inquiry and develop relevant competences.

By focusing on the practitioners in this thesis, I am not suggesting that only the practitioners’ relational sensitivity is important or that they control the joint inquiry process. I consider everyone who is participating to be important in shaping the conditions of joint inquiry, including the materials. The focus on practitioners acknowledges their prevalent role...
Introduction

of staging and facilitating joint inquiry in participatory design processes and the necessity of relevant characteristics and competences.

Aims, research questions, and studies

The aim of this research is to explore how design practices can support reflective and conversational processes. To support this aim, the objective of my PhD thesis is to integrate and develop perspectives on the relational sensitivity involved in staging and facilitating situations of joint inquiry. To develop perspectives on relational sensitivity, this thesis will answer the following research questions:

RQ1. How can relational sensitivity be understood when staging situations of joint inquiry?

RQ2. How can the study of relational sensitivity inform practitioners in staging situations of joint inquiry?

This thesis draws on both a literature review and my own practice-based studies, in which I am involved in staging situations of joint inquiry. In all these situations, joint inquiry has involved reflecting on current situations and possible desired futures between participants in various contexts. The practice-based studies include the participatory design processes of the Blivande Project (p. 49) and Samverket Workshops (p. 63). In the Blivande Project, the joint inquiry involved a participatory design team planning a project and conducting workshops with students and researchers to collaborate and develop ideas for a new communal space, a “container village”. The second participatory design process was the Samverket Workshops, in which joint inquiry involves professionals from the public sector exploring shared practices and rituals in a co-working space and possible collaborations. In the Blivande and Samverket contexts, these conversations occurred within contexts aimed at stimulating collaboration between the participating groups.

This thesis also reflects on relational sensitivity in the context of the design experiments presented in my Licentiate thesis (Gottlieb 2020), in which joint inquiry involved students and researchers in academia, and a participatory design project with youth and researchers at a museum. The topics of the design experiments entailed reflecting on relational values (i.e., compassion, love, and community) in connection with climate change, as well as reflecting on collaborative practices between university and municipalities, businesses, and industry.

To develop perspectives on relational sensitivity, this research takes its starting point in the related concepts of poise and punctuation developed
from Akama and Light’s (2018, 2020) long-standing practices in participatory design. I have developed these perspectives along with other concepts and examples from participatory design research and my own practice-based studies. I have also used and tested the I, We, and It perspectives in the Ofman (2013) model, which encompasses a perspective on materiality, to discuss relational sensitivity, as materiality is relevant for staging practices in participatory design.

Through this research, I aim to contribute knowledge to practitioners in participatory design and educators preparing future designers for facilitating and staging joint inquiry. Since processes of joint inquiry and workshops for collaboration extend beyond participatory design, this research could also contribute knowledge in other contexts.
Previous research

In this chapter, I describe my onto-epistemological framing and my understanding of the concepts of participatory design, joint inquiry, staging, and relational sensitivity.

Relational perspectives

My onto-epistemological commitments include relational perspectives emphasising interdependence, embeddedness, and partial and situated knowledge. These commitments are influenced by Bohmian dialogue (Bohm 2004, 1980) and Zen-informed facilitation (Hamilton 2013) (see p. 31), which emphasise the interconnectedness of all entities, which are continuously reconstituted through relationships. Bohmian dialogue, for instance, encourages individuals to recognise the inseparability of internal thought processes and the external world, to develop self-awareness and an understanding of oneself as part of a larger ecology (Bohm 2004). My practices and onto-epistemological commitments motivate me to explore design practices that support relational perspectives and promote a deeper understanding of one’s embeddedness in an ecology, as well as one’s partial and situated perspectives.

Other design researchers, such as Yoko Akama (2015), Ann Light (Light and Akama 2014), and Arturo Escobar (2018), have further spurred my interest in relational onto-epistemological perspectives intended to rethink design practices “towards other ontological commitments, practices, narratives, and performances” (Escobar 2018, p. 15). Inspired by their work, I explore design in relation to deepening people’s attention and sensitivity to their relations with others and their embeddedness in an ecology. I focus on design practices that encourage people to “reflect on, challenge, care for, and respond to the relationships [they] are part of” (Frögård 2021, p. 217). This focus reflects a perspective of “responsibility” (Haraway 2016), an ability to critically and practically respond to situations in which one engages in. By focusing on relational sensitivity, I aim to contribute to participatory design practices in which people care for and are responsive to the relationships they are part of.

Participatory design

In this thesis, I explore relational sensitivity in some studies in the context of participatory design processes. Participatory design can be
understood as the involvement in the design process of people who will be affected by its outcome (Ehn 2008). Such processes involve “investigating, understanding, reflecting upon, establishing, developing, and supporting mutual learning between multiple participants in collective reflection-in-action” (Simonsen and Robertson 2013, p. 2). In its Scandinavian origins in the 1970s (e.g., Nygaard and Bergo 1975), the focus of participatory design was to support trade unions, with the ambition to democratise workplaces and decision-making. This heritage of participatory design has a politically grounded ideology that highlights the principles of equalising power relations, democratic practices, situation-based actions, and mutual learning (Kensing and Greenbaum 2012). A prominent focus in the field has been the design of information communication technologies, to support people in “engaging with, and making their voices heard in interdisciplinary networked design efforts, thus shaping technological developments” (Bossen et al. 2010, p. 149). However, participatory design projects have also expanded beyond the focus on technological development, towards working with communities and supporting social change (Akama and Light 2014; DiSalvo et al. 2013; Light 2019).

Participatory design processes do not always need to result in tangible outcomes, i.e., the design of things or artefacts. Instead, participatory design can be understood as social processes, working with communities, people, things, and structures to encourage inquiry, collaboration, and relationships in order to reimagine futures and practices. In the article, “Structuring future social relations: The politics of care in participatory practice”, Light and Akama (2014) gave examples of the role of participatory design processes in communities in the “opening up of spaces to re-examine relations and enable participants to address pressing concerns for how they live” (p. 158). Similarly, DiSalvo (2022) deliberated on the possibilities of design practices in relation to making worlds more just, sustainable, and democratic, by being an endeavour of reflecting on conditions that might make such worlds possible, desirable, or not. In this way, “designing becomes a way to care, together, for our collective futures” (DiSalvo 2022, p. 2). The focus on such participatory design practices is then not on the outcome in the form of a material thing, for example, a technological development, but could be on new ways of conceiving one’s situation and new relations, such as between people in a community and the land or the future.

The term “empowerment” is used to describe participatory design with communities, and refers to people’s ability to express their issues and practices, make sense of their concerns, connect and act with others, and unlock their knowledge and resources to achieve design tasks (Toker 2007). While my design practices align with these goals of participatory design, I refrain from using the term “empowerment” to describe my
design research practice. I aim to take a modest position to explore the role of design without assuming that it empowers. Some design practices claiming to empower can reinforce the status quo or have ambiguous and limited effects (DiSalvo 2022, p. 7). While I consider that some of my projects and design experiments have resulted in the “empowerment” of those involved, not all have. Therefore, I avoid framing my design research as “empowering” to maintain a modest position regarding how various processes and outcomes can vary.

**Joint inquiry**

As in my Licentiate thesis (Gottlieb 2020), I continue to use the notion of *joint inquiry* in this PhD thesis to describe situations in which people can deliberate on their issues, matters of care, and concerns to imagine futures and stimulate collaboration. Based on Marc Steen’s (2013) reading of John Dewey (1938), joint inquiry describes processes in which people reflect on their situation and practices to develop practical knowledge to improve their existing situation. Steen (2013) saw a parallel between Dewey’s (1938) joint inquiry and participatory processes in design, as both share the democratic aims of empowering people through practical knowledge and collaboration to influence their lives.

Joint inquiry is distinguished through several non-linear and iterative stages, including: (1) identifying indeterminate situations that are problematic (i.e., that seem amiss); (2) defining a problem; (3) creating a hypothesis aimed at addressing the problem; (4) critically evaluating the proposed solution; and (5) implementing and testing the proposal (Steen 2013, p. 22). Other research fields, for example computer-mediated communication in distance education (Wanstreet and Stein 2011), have defined aspects that create the conditions of joint inquiry. I have found these aspects useful in relation to designing and evaluating artefacts and activities to support conversational processes aimed at creating mutual knowledge (see Fig. 10 on p. 41).

The above phases can be understood as an ideal framing of joint inquiry, and they may look quite different in participatory design processes when collaborating with communities. Not all participatory design processes result in further collaborations in which groups define and implement common goals and evaluate their impact. However, some do. In my study of Samverket (see p. 63), the primary aim was to foster relationships among a community of professionals, which led to continued collaboration to define common goals, to implement, test, and evaluate various processes in their organisations. Therefore, I continue to use joint
inquiry as an indicator of the different phases that could be involved in the participatory design process, particularly in a research context.

**Staging**

Commonly used terms, concepts, and practices describing the engagement of people in participatory design are *setting the stage* or *staging* for participation (Bødker et al. 1991). The act of staging often revolves around event-driven processes in participatory design (Agger Eriksen 2012). Staging can involve coordinating the process, inviting participants, designing materials and experimental artefacts, and facilitating events. The stage metaphor highlights designing as performing and suggests that staging is performed in experimental, interventionist, and participatory ways (Binder et al. 2011).

A common approach in staging is to explore various materials and formats in which materials, artefacts, and activities are used to support collaboration and engagement (Agger Eriksen 2012; Sanders and Stappers 2012). Participatory design practitioners use various experimental processes to support participation, such as tea parties (Light et al. 2013), patch-work and embroidery (Lindström and Ståhl 2014), design games (Agger Eriksen et al. 2014), and “generative tools” such as collages (Sanders and Stappers 2014). These material and experimental approaches are highlighted in the design research literature as supporting the inquiry process and interpersonal dynamics, such as building trust (Clarke et al. 2019) and safety (Bustamente Duartea et al. 2021), promoting togetherness and conviviality (Brano et al. 2017; Akama and Light 2014; Ramírez-Galleguillos et al. 2022) and exposing tension and opposing perspectives (Buur and Larsen 2021). Material and experimental artefacts and activities have been important in my staging practices to support reflection and dynamics in groups (Gottlieb 2020).

Although *staging* is a common concept in participatory design, scholars criticise the extensive focus on facilitated events in participatory design research. Scholars argue that *staging* can idealise facilitation as pivotal in participatory design processes instead of accounting for the wider complexity of the emergent and social processes (Mosleh and Larsen 2020). There are other relational and “back-stage” processes involved outside of the facilitated events (Agger Eriksen 2012; Didler and Iversen 2014), and there are limitations as to what facilitators and practitioners engaged in staging can influence. While I agree that complex social processes are involved, I have chosen to use *staging* to describe a prevalent focus of my work on relational sensitivity in facilitating and
designing situations (i.e., workshops and meetings) for joint inquiry. Event-driven processes are common approaches in the participatory design process for inviting different groups to think and make together, and these are important contexts in which to understand and develop one’s relational sensitivity. On the other hand, in my study Back-stage Process (p. 49), I extend the focus from facilitated workshops to include other situations of joint inquiry that can be significant in staging practices. These situations involve joint inquiry between a participatory design team initiating a participatory design process and preparing for engagements with students in a design process.

Relational sensitivity in participatory design

Staging is “a complex, subtle and very material practice” (Agger Eriksen 2012, p. 391), and practitioners need certain abilities to navigate the emergent, social, and relational processes of participatory design (Akama and Light 2018; Didler and Iversen 2014; Mosleh and Larsen 2020; Petrella et al. 2020; Tjahja and Yee 2021). For instance, Agger Eriksen (2012, p. 391) described how staging practitioners need abilities to listen, respect others’ practices, and share responsibilities. This necessity to navigate collaborative and communicative practices, including joint inquiry, has led me to the topic of relational sensitivity by way of Akama and Light (2018) and Akama (2015).

Participatory design processes are contingent, and in them needs emerge which are continually reconstructed depending on the interested contributors (Akama and Light 2018; DiSalvo et al. 2013). In relation to this, Light (2015) wrote that “it is more important to be attuned to relations and ready for anything in these flexible and evolving circumstances than it is to have an action plan” (p. 91). To participate in these contingent and evolving circumstances, practitioners require “readiness for contingency”. Readiness signifies “drawing on who [one is] as part of the preparation for designing” (Light 2020, p. 19), as one’s background, culture, personality, and commitments are part of one’s participatory design practices.

Akama and Light (2018) have described relational sensitivity in the context of readiness for attuning and responding to evolving conditions of participatory design processes. These scholars discussed this term in connection with the practitioner’s “embodied knowing [that] shifts from moment to moment, often in response to the intersubjective nuances of the group” (Akama and Light 2018, p. 2). They also discussed the term in relation to the practitioner’s attunement to “invisible, subtle, and complex dynamics, and how these are shaped and conditioned by our
upbringing, culture and society” (Akama and Light 2018, p. 2). Akama and Light’s (2012, 2018, 2020) research draws attention to embodied and personal aspects, i.e., the personal and felt experiences and backgrounds of practitioners involved in participatory design. I use Akama and Light’s work as a starting point for my study of relational sensitivity, and use the term to look at the attention to the relations of a given situation, to how things and people are connected.

Furthermore, they have criticised the dominant focus in participatory design research on methods, tools, and techniques for developing information communication technologies, which evade disclosure of the embodied and personal dimensions (Akama and Light 2018, 2020; Light and Akama 2012). Examples can be seen in research (e.g., Bustamante Duartea et al. 2021; Halskov and Dalsgaard 2007; Taylor et al. 2022) focusing on tools and techniques used in processes of designing with others that omit the personal accounts of the people enacting the methods. In relation to Lucy Suchman’s work (1987, 2002), Light and Akama (2012, p. 61) have contended that “it is not meaningful to separate the designer from method since we cannot know participative methods without the person or people enacting them”.

The concepts of poise and punctuation were developed in relation to Akama and Light’s (2018, 2020) own participatory design practices to describe important aspects of readiness needed by participatory design practitioners. Poise “stresses characteristics of self-awareness, of being emplaced and a contemplation of how one is and acts” and punctuation is “a consciousness of working with and immersing in the flow, gaps and rhythms of change” (Akama and Light 2018, p. 2). The concepts are connected, like “two sides of the same coin” (Akama and Light 2018, p. 2), highlighting different aspects of a practitioner’s readiness. These readiness aspects are described as important for practitioners, for example, in nurturing respectful relationships and building facilitation skills.

Poise and punctuation differ depending on the person’s background, culture, commitments, and personality, all of which influence how sensitive they are to themselves and their surroundings. To illustrate poise and punctuation, Akama and Light have drawn on autoethnographic research and empirical examples from their own participatory design practices, to demonstrate how the concepts can be understood differently depending on the practitioner. Akama (2015) has exemplified poise in relation to her cultural heritage and the Japanese concept of “Ma”, in which relational sensitivity is towards in-betweenness, towards negative spaces, potentiality, and atmospheres.
This describes Akama’s ways of participating in collaborative design practice, involving a heightened presence and participation in transient, everyday encounters, which supports the nurturing of respectful relationships. Light has exemplified punctuation through her practice as a design facilitator (with a training and background in drama) in which she is attuned to and immersed in collaborative dynamics. Being attuned to the “flows, gaps, and rhythms of change” (Akama and Light 2018, p. 10) helps Light to respond to the emergent dynamics and to adapt activities in the design situations. Such attunement is described as an embodied knowing that shifts from moment to moment, often in response to the intersubjective nuances of the group (Akama and Light 2018, p. 2).

I have found poise and punctuation to be useful starting points for describing and reflecting on one’s situatedness and the collaborative dynamics when staging and facilitating situations of joint inquiry. In this thesis, I have sought to broaden these notions to encompass a material perspective in connection with relational sensitivity, as materiality plays a large role in staging (Agger Eriksen 2012), and in my own design research practices. I have also sought to broaden and integrate other concepts and aspects of relational sensitivity in participatory design research, considering that poise and punctuation were developed in relation to Akama and Light’s own practices. For instance, poise has similarities to concepts such as reflexivity, which also emphasises self-awareness and accounting for one’s subjectivity – one’s emotions, personal stories, and values – and its ethical and methodological implications for a participatory design process (Akama et al. 2019; Bustamante Duarte et al. 2021; Malinverni and Pares 2016; Pihkala and Karasti 2016; Spiel et al. 2020; Steen 2013; St John and Akama 2022). Punctuation bears similarities to participatory design practitioners’ attention to power dynamics in workshops with participants (Taoka et al. 2021; Agid and Chin 2019; Kelly 2019; Bellini et al. 2019; Sandman et al. 2020). These perspectives on materiality and related concepts from participatory design research are used to develop an understanding of relational sensitivity.

Furthermore, the development of perspectives and a vocabulary for discussing relational sensitivity in participatory design could be used in design education. In a review of the design facilitation literature, Mosely et al. (2021) concluded that there is a lack of knowledge of how design education prepares design students for facilitation. Yet, facilitation is a common role taken by designers in participatory processes (Manzini 2015). Other scholars criticise the lack of training in body-related awareness in design education in academia, a type of awareness
important for reflexivity, self-awareness, sensitivity to relations, and facilitation (Akama and Light 2018; Malinverni and Pares 2016; Simonsen and Jensen 2016). Developing an understanding of relational sensitivity could inform design education of ways of preparing practitioners and designers for staging and facilitating participatory design processes.
Approaches and methods

In this chapter, I describe my approaches and methods for staging and research. I also give an overview of the research studies and present the analytical model used to collect and analyse the empirical material in the studies.

Research through design approach

Design research approaches vary between contexts. Through my Master’s degree in Information Experience Design at the Royal College of Art, London (Walker 2018), I have explored and adopted design research approaches centred on doing research through one’s design and artistic practices. Coined by Christopher Frayling (1994), the term “research through design” has been developed to explain a design research approach in which knowledge is developed through the practice of designing (Stappers and Giaccardi 2017). This approach differs from other design research approaches that focus on researching design processes or outcomes (“research into design”), and design research that focuses on developing knowledge for creating a design (“research for design”) (Baerenholdt et al. 2010). Although these approaches overlap, and my design research practices relate to all of them, the distinctions among them help demonstrate the variety and breadth of design research.

Research through design centres on practice-based research and practical experimentation. This involves developing and testing artefacts, creating “the possibility for people and products to engage in interactions that were not possible before, and these [interactions] can come into existence – indeed, become observable – through the design” (Stappers and Giaccardi 2017, 43.1.2). Experimentation is an important component of research through design and is part of defining one’s research focus and interests (Agger Eriksen and Bang 2014). Developing and testing artefacts and methods have been a central part of my design research practice. In both my Licentiate and PhD thesis research, I have designed and tested artefacts and activities for engaging groups in joint inquiry. In relation to developing and testing the artefacts, I have explored the topic of relational sensitivity in these contexts.

Just as there are different approaches to design research, there are also different understandings and uses of theory in design research. Johan Redström’s “transitional theory” in his Making Design Theory (2017) has been influential for my understanding of theory in this PhD work.
Transitional theory centres on design practice, in which knowledge is developed from practice in order to support practice. Recognising that design practices are situated and vary depending on context, transitional theory does not aim to be a universal, stable, and unchanging theory. Rather, transitional theory serves as an abstraction and articulation of design practice that could be useful across situations and contexts. As design practices differ across contexts and evolve over time, transitional theory is also adaptable and open to change. This explanation of design theory bears similarities to the “weak” form of theory, which “refuses to extend explanations too widely or deeply” (Gibson-Graham 2008, p.619).

In this thesis, I articulate and develop abstractions concerning relational sensitivity in connection with my practices of staging situations of joint inquiry and I conduct a literature review. Like transitional theory, these articulations do not aim to be unchanging and comprehensive, but rather to be adaptable to contexts and to evolve over time in order to be useful for various participatory design practices.

**Staging approaches and methods**

This thesis project included studying 27 situations of joint inquiry, both workshops and meetings. *Workshops* refers to events in which I and/or others designed and used material artefacts and activities to deliberate on various questions or topics with participants. In total, nineteen workshops were studied; I had the role of facilitator (or co-facilitator) in fifteen workshops and designed the experimental and material artefacts and activities in sixteen workshops. *Meetings* refers to the “back-stage” process of organising and coordinating events, as opposed to the “front-stage” of the actual event – a distinction developed by Agger Eriksen (2012). Meetings for joint inquiry were held in the study Back-stage Process, in which practitioners (including myself) coordinated and planned the participatory design process.

**Material artefacts and activities**

As part of my material staging practices, I use generative tools, which are commonly used to facilitate joint inquiry in participatory design processes (Sanders and Stappers 2012). These artefacts can include a wide range of materials and objects, such as 2D collages, maps, 3D mock-ups (e.g., clay, foam, or Velcro), props for scenario-making, and custom-made cards. Generative tools involve participants in creating artefacts to express their feelings, thoughts, and dreams (Sanders 2000). Elizabeth Sanders (2000), a pioneer of generative tools, has described how visual tools facilitate more effective collaboration by giving people the time and space to listen to each other. Making things is part of the
meaning-making process among the people involved, helping them explore concerns and opportunities (Sanders and Stappers 2014). Generative tools, which participants use to express themselves through making, play an important role in my staging practice. My workshops have involved participants making wire sculptures (Fig. 3), movement sequences, tea blends, and collages using various materials (e.g., paper and fabric shapes, food, and pre-designed elements). I have also made or used cards – KT Cards (Paper I) or postcards – that participants can use to create stories and reflect on a topic.

Another kind of material artefact and activity that I have worked with and developed in my staging practice is “playful triggers”. Playful triggers describe the use of ordinary artefacts in extraordinary ways or contexts to stimulate metaphors, multiple interpretations, play, wonder, and social connection. This type of tool was developed by Daria Loi (2007), who drew inspiration from “cultural probes” (Gaver et al. 1999) and Sanders’ (2000) work on generative tools. Playful triggers are described as “breaking the ice” (Loi and Prabhala 2008) by using ordinary artefacts in unusual ways.

A common way I have designed and used playful triggers is in the context of commensality, in which people share food. I have explored tea
rituals to reconstruct the use of artefacts that one would find in a tea setting to use in surprising and playful ways. I have been developing this method since my Master’s studies and *Philosophical Teatime* (Gottlieb 2015), in which I used the teatime setting – the cups, tea, sugar, milk, and cakes – to introduce keywords and existential ideas inspired by my readings of Heidegger (1927/1996). For instance, we drank “the Nothing” tea, which represented the fragility of existence and could add sugar (representing “chatter”) and milk (representing “trivia”) to distract us from “the Nothing”. The baked cakes also represented different philosophical ideas that participants consumed and interacted with to represent philosophical ideas (Fig. 4 and 5).

**PHILOSOPHICAL TEATIME**

*Tea, Cake and Existential Questions*

**THE NOTHING TEA**

Deep and rich tea with tones of reflection about the Nothing, the fragility of our existence. Originating from Heidegger’s ‘Das Nicht’, the tea promotes us to seek more authentic and meaningful lives by acknowledging the Nothing.

**CHATTER | TRIVIA**

Comforting chatter and trivia to sweeten the cup of the Nothing. Although, diverging our attention from the Nothing thereby living less authentically.

**ESSENCE BREAD**

This tear and share bread is filled with a delicious essence. It reminds us that there is an essence to who we are, whether from our upbringing, moral values or biological make-up. The essence limits our freedom to invent our own purpose in life and identity.

**EXISTENCE CAKE**

This make-your-own cake gives you the freedom and choices to shape it anyhow you want. It corresponds to the existentialist idea that we are free to choose our own purpose in life and identity through choosing to do different things in the world. The cake that you make is your own responsibility and freedom.

*May contain traces of nuts.

Figure 4. *Philosophical Teatime* menu, Royal College of Art, London, 2015.
Since *Philosophical Teatime*, I have continued to use the teatime setting and artefacts to introduce ideas in tangible, surprising, and playful ways. The method involves choosing keywords concerning the chosen topic and embedding these in or on the tableware or foods in various ways. For instance, in *Museum Teatime*, keywords were embedded in the teacups with food colouring, which was dissolved by the tea and then consumed (Fig. 6). The tea ritual in Samverket Workshop S1 used the participants’ imagination to imbue the tea with a quality that they desired in work practices. I also used teatime artefacts to visualise a topic, by specifically choosing or decorating cakes (*Cookie Teatime*, Fig. 7, *Philosophical Teatime*, Fig. 4), or “setting the table” with fabric shapes on the tablecloth (*Fabric Landscapes*, Fig. 8).

Furthermore, later in my PhD research, I collaborated with scholars and dancers who used methods focusing on movement and engendering awareness of the body. In Samverket Workshop S1 (p. 64), I explored Bohmian dialogue practice (Bohm 2004) to influence the relationships and communication in the group through embodied awareness of thoughts, feelings, and sensations (Simonsen and Jensen 2016).

![Figure 5. Philosophical Teatime, Royal College of Art, London, 2015.](image-url)

Figure 7. *Co-production Teatime*, Mälardalen University, 2018.
Facilitation and communication approaches

Two facilitation and communication approaches have been significant for my staging and facilitation practice and my research focus on relational sensitivity. The first approach is a Zen-informed facilitation practice (Hamilton 2013) focusing the facilitator’s attention on what is happening in the moment, to attune and respond to subtle intersubjective dynamics. During my PhD research, I underwent two years of training with facilitator Diane Hamilton, who is also a Zen teacher and mediator. An aim of this facilitation practice is to support the group in taking on multiple and diverse perspectives. This facilitation process involves navigating both cohesion and differences in a group, which are both important when working with diverse and sometimes opposing perspectives.

Another communication approach that has been influential in my research and design practice is Bohmian dialogue practice, developed by quantum physicist and philosopher David Bohm (2004). Like the Zen-informed facilitation in which I was trained by Hamilton, Bohmian dialogue emphasises attention to what happens in the conversational situation. The purpose is to “suspend judgement” to become more open to others’ perspectives. A central part of this practice involves noticing
one’s own thinking processes, sensations, and emotions, which can both reject and affirm various other perspectives. Bohmian dialogue is a process of encouraging self-awareness of one’s partial perspectives, in order to deeply listen and encourage openness to other ideas. Both the Zen-informed facilitation and Bohmian dialogue directed my own staging and facilitation practices towards drawing closer attention to intersubjective dynamics, one’s own thought processes, and to work with multiple perspectives.

Overview of studies

To research relational sensitivity, I studied 27 situations of joint inquiry and conducted a literature study. In this thesis, I present and discuss the following studies:

- Nine design experiments from the Licentiate thesis (thirteen workshops)
- A literature review on relational sensitivity
- Back-stage Process in the Blivande Project (eight meetings)
- Blivande Workshops (three workshops)
- Samverket Workshops (three workshops)

Not all the studies are covered by the papers of this thesis. The design experiments are described in the Licentiate thesis (Gottlieb 2020), four of which have been developed into papers I–IV. The Back-stage Process and literature review have been developed into papers V and VI, respectively. The studies from the Blivande and Samverket Workshops have not yet been developed into papers, but are described in this PhD thesis.

Research methods

Various methods have been used throughout my Licentiate and PhD thesis research, including journal notes, field notes, collective analysis with participants, questionnaires, observations, audio- and video-recordings, interviews, analysis of visual material, and a literature review. The following table distinguishes which methods were used in which studies.
Table 1. Summary of research studies, focus, methods, framework, and publications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Research focus</th>
<th>Research methods</th>
<th>Analytical frameworks</th>
<th>Publication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design experiments</td>
<td>The role of materiality and tools in supporting the initiation of joint inquiry</td>
<td>Audio- and video-recordings, observations, questionnaires, interviews (different methods depending on design experiments, see Gottlieb 2020, p. 37)</td>
<td>A framework developed in the Licentiate thesis (Gottlieb 2020), which joins the communities for inquiry model (Wanstreet and Stein 2011) with the Agger Eriksen (2009) categorisation that I use to define tool</td>
<td>Papers I–IV, Licentiate thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Relational sensitivity in participatory design</td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Wilber’s four-quadrant model (2000) and Ofman’s model (2013)</td>
<td>Paper VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back-stage Process</td>
<td>Relational sensitivity when staging joint inquiry</td>
<td>Journal notes (eight pages), audio-recorded collective analysis (40 minutes)</td>
<td>Ofman’s model (2013)</td>
<td>Paper V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blivande Workshops (C1–C3)</td>
<td>Relational sensitivity when staging joint inquiry</td>
<td>Journal and field notes (C1–C3), video-recorded observations (C3), and collective analysis (C1)</td>
<td>Ofman’s model (013)</td>
<td>PhD thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samverket Workshops (S1–S3)</td>
<td>Relational sensitivity when staging joint inquiry</td>
<td>Questionnaires, journal and field notes, and audio-recorded collective analysis (70 minutes)</td>
<td>Ofman’s model (2013)</td>
<td>PhD thesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following is an overview of the methods used in this thesis. The methods used in each study are described in greater detail in the following chapter and in the respective papers.

**Journal notes, field notes, and collective analysis**

I have drawn on methods from autoethnography, including journal notes and field notes, to study relational sensitivity in the Back-stage Process, Blivande Workshops, and Samverket Workshops. Autoethnography comes from social science and involves studying and revealing personal experiences of being in relationships and situations (Ellis 2007). Recordings of personal experiences become part of the empirical material and are then used to explore cultural practices (Holman Jones et al. 2013). Since the topic of relational sensitivity concerns personal experiences, which are not necessarily observed in a video-recording or transcript (Akama 2015), I have recorded my own and collaborating practitioners’ first-person experiences of staging situations of joint inquiry.

By field notes, I mean notes that I took during a situation of joint inquiry. The notes were taken on my phone or notebook in relation to the *I, We*, and *It* perspectives (Ofman 2004) from the chosen analytical model. When having a facilitator (or co-facilitator) role, I wrote down keywords of things that I found notable from the *I, We*, and *It* perspectives, i.e., documenting my experiences and impressions of the collaborative dynamics, and added further explanations to my notes during the breaks or at the end of the workshop.

By journal notes, I mean notes taken after the situation of joint inquiry. The journal notes were written as first-person fragments that highlight moments of significance for the practitioners’ relational sensitivity when staging situations of joint inquiry. This brief but vivid narrative can have value by omitting details so as not to divert attention from the main issue (Mason 2002, p. 57). As described by Akama (2015), the fragments are a means to “bring attention to the liminal, ambiguous in-betweens of designing – things that are often left out in the reporting, but can be just as profound in our understanding” (p. 265). In the Back-stage Process, I took journal notes after each session on the same day.

The journal notes in the Back-stage Process and the Samverket Workshops were made by me and collaborating practitioners who were staging and facilitating the situations of joint inquiry to study relational sensitivity in the context of staging situations of joint inquiry. I then conducted collective analysis to make sense of our experiences of staging
and facilitating. Such collective analysis can be compared to “interactive interviews”, which are a means to test one’s experiences against others’ in order to understand differences and similarities (Ellis 1993, p. 725; Bylund et al. 2021).

Embodied awareness, the awareness of thoughts, emotions, and sensations (Simonsen and Jensen 2016), has been an important aspect of introspection when taking field and journal notes. My facilitation and Bohmian dialogue practice have been important for developing embodied awareness, to draw attention to my experience. This form of noticing is described as marking in John Mason’s (2002) *Researching Your Own Practice: The Discipline of Noticing* – a heightened attention and commitment rather than casual attention. Embodied awareness and a heightened form of noticing to record situations have been important in my studies of relational sensitivity.

**Audio- and video-recordings**

In the design experiments, I used audio- and video-recordings to study the interactions between participants and tools in joint inquiry. I also used audio-recording in the design experiment, Coffee Compositions, to record and then transcribe three semi-structured interviews with people staging and participating in a situation of joint inquiry. In the studies focusing on relational sensitivity, i.e., Back-stage Process, Blivande Workshops, and Samverket Workshops, I used audio-recordings in the collective analysis between the practitioners. I also used video-recording in Blivande Workshop C3 to test ways to study relational sensitivity.

**Questionnaires**

I used questionnaires in the design experiments and Samverket Workshops to allow participants and practitioners to express their experiences of the joint inquiry situation. The questionnaires were valuable for gathering their impressions right after the workshops. The questionnaires were designed differently for each design experiment and for the Samverket Workshops. In the Samverket Workshops, the questionnaires were used to compare participants’ experiences with the practitioners’ journal notes and field notes. The questionnaires were designed in relation to the *I, We*, and *It* perspectives (Ofman 2013) (see example on p. 68).
**Literature review**

A literature review was done to explore and draw together perspectives on relational sensitivity in participatory design research. The literature review procedure is described on p. 45 and in Paper VI.

**Ethics of consent**

To collect and analyse the empirical material, I used various practices of consent. Consent forms were used in situations in which I made audio- and video-recordings and administered questionnaires. The consent forms informed participants of the research purpose and of how the empirical material would be collected and disseminated. The participants were further informed that their identities would be kept confidential and not be disclosed in the handling and dissemination of results, and that they could refuse to consent and even withdraw their consent, as set forth in the GDPR (2016/679). I have only used research participants’ real names when they consented to this and played major roles in the staging processes and research.

In situations in which I collected empirical material through my own field notes and journal notes (and did not use audio- and video-recordings and questionnaires), I asked for verbal consent. In Blivande Workshop C2, I informed participants through email and at the start of the workshop of my intention to make field notes as part of my research. I invited people to ask further questions and raise any concerns before or during the workshop.

**Method discussion**

The research through design approach in this thesis has meant that I take multiple roles in the studies – as facilitator, designer of workshop artefacts and activities, researcher, and research subject. It has been important to study relational sensitivity in the context of my own processes of staging joint inquiry, to reflect on these practices first hand and how they relate to previous research in participatory design. However, such processes of noticing and taking notes depend on what I am aware of and what I consider important to take note of. This method can be limiting in several regards, including that memories may not necessarily be accurate, as one’s memories can construe a given situation in different ways (Levine and Pizarro 2004).

Nevertheless, a situation itself is also not “absolute”; rather, it is interpreted and experienced by those in it, and can change with time and through the stories told about it (Mason 2002, p. 228). I have
therefore found it important to compare my experiences and my journal notes and field notes with those of other practitioners through the collective analyses. Furthermore, the literature review was important in helping me understand what other participatory design researchers have attended to when describing interactions with participants, to compare these with my own observations.

A limitation of my study of relational sensitivity is that I did not include participants in any deeper analysis besides the questionnaires. The questionnaires were limiting in terms of understanding deeper views of others’ experiences. I would have liked to include participants in a collective analysis, focus groups, and interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the various interpretations of the situation of joint inquiry. Although this was the intention at the start of the research process in the Blivande Workshops, the process needed time to establish relationships with participants, and it was interrupted before this could happen. The collective analyses were enabled due to the longer collaborative processes and established relationships with the practitioners.

**Analytical model**

To explore and develop perspectives on relational sensitivity, I used an adapted version of Daniel Ofman’s (2013) four-quadrant model for the collection and analysis of my empirical material. I chose the Ofman model because it bears similarities to poise and punctuation (in relation to the I and We perspectives) while also including the It perspective through a focus on materiality and process. The use of material artefacts and activities has been a focal point in my staging practices and research, and is an important aspect of staging practices in participatory design processes (Agger Eriksen 2012; Sanders and Stappers 2012). I therefore consider the materiality perspective important to explore in connection with relational sensitivity – a perspective that is not explicated through the concepts of poise and punctuation (Akama and Light 2018). Furthermore, I found the Ofman model (Fig. 9), shaped like a Venn diagram, interesting as it visualises the overlaps and relationships among the I, We, and It perspectives.
The Ofman model highlights three different perspectives – I, We, and It. The I perspective in the model refers to the **subjective**, which I interpret as focusing on one’s individual experience, such as thoughts, emotions, memories, and sensations. I associate an awareness of the I perspective with *poise*, which focuses on the awareness of self. The We perspective refers to the **intersubjective**, which I interpret as what happens between individuals – interactions, dialogue, common values, relationships, and cultures. The awareness of the We can be likened to *punctuation*, which focuses on an awareness of the various dynamics of a collaboration. The It perspective refers to the **objective** and includes what I interpret as the observable and measurable, such as material things, observable activities, and behaviours. The I, We, and It perspectives are interconnected and are part of any given moment.

Ofman developed this model from Ken Wilber’s (2000) four-quadrant model, a model I introduce and test in Paper VI. While Ofman’s model was developed from Wilber’s (2000) model, the two display important differences. The four-quadrant model is part of Wilber’s (2000) integral theory, which aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of reality. The four-quadrant model as part of Wilber’s theory has been criticised for making overreaching claims about what exists and for reducing the external quadrants to the perceptibility and experiences of humans, thereby excluding other levels of ontological reality (McFarlane 2000). In contrast, Ofman’s model is not designed to provide a comprehensive explanation of reality. The Ofman model was developed for and is used within the context of organisational development to support awareness of different processes involved in organisational change – individual,
cultural, and procedural changes. By using the Ofman model, I explore the I, We, and It perspectives in connection with relational sensitivity without making all-encompassing claims about reality.

To my knowledge, the Ofman model has not previously been used in research studies, unlike Wilber’s four-quadrant model, but is used in practice in organisational development. This lack of use in previous research means I cannot compare my findings with other findings and ways of using the model. My research has tested ways of using the model as part of collecting empirical material to reflect on relational sensitivity in the context of situations of joint inquiry and participatory design. I considered Ofman’s focus on fostering awareness of change processes to be suitable for joint inquiry and participatory design, which also focus on change processes in collaborative contexts. I used the Ofman model in the Literature review, Back-stage Process, Blivande Workshops, and Samverket Workshops to draw together the literature, make field and journal notes, design questionnaires, and conduct the collective analysis among practitioners. The model was used differently in the different studies and is described in the next chapter.
Studies

In this chapter, I describe my research studies including contexts, situations, research purposes and processes, results, and discussion in connection with relational sensitivity. The studies are presented in chronological order.

Design experiments

Nine design experiments done in the first half of my PhD research contributed to developing the research focus and questions on relational sensitivity addressed in this thesis. The research through design approach involved creating and testing “tools for joint inquiry” and reflecting on the work with participants who tested these material artefacts and activities. These design experiments were presented in the proceedings of the European Conference for Game-Based Learning 2017 (Paper I), Participatory Innovation Conference 2018 (Paper II), Design Research Society Conference 2018 (Workshop), Participatory Design Conference 2018 (Workshop), and International Conference for Engineering Design 2019 (Paper III), in The Design Journal (Paper IV), and in my Licentiate thesis (Gottlieb 2020).

The material artefacts and activities were designed in relation to the MDU Living Lab, an arena in Mälardalen University focused on supporting collaborations between academic and external partners. The design experiments include: Knowledge Triangle Cards (Paper I); Wire, Collaborative Landscapes (Paper II); Paper Landscapes (Paper III); Cookie Teatime; Tea Compositions; Coffee Compositions; Fabric Landscapes; and Museum Teatime (Paper IV). The design experiments describe different material artefacts and activities created to initiate joint inquiry on various topics in research seminars, conferences, participatory design workshops, and student courses. The material artefacts and activities included: cards and card-sorting activities, tea rituals, abstract collage activities, wire sculptures, and coffee- and tea-blending activities. I created and tested these material artefacts and activities for graduate and post-graduate students and teachers (two design experiments), researchers and teachers (five design experiments), industry–academic collaborators (one design experiment), and youth and researchers (one design experiment).

In this PhD thesis, I do not explain each design experiment and study in depth but refer the reader to the Licentiate thesis (Gottlieb 2020, chapter 3) for greater detail. Instead, I focus here on how the results of the design experiments contributed to the research focus and questions on relational sensitivity.
experiments contribute to addressing my research questions on relational sensitivity.

**Research process**

Different research methods, including video- and audio-recordings, questionnaires, and interviews, were used for each design experiment. To analyse the empirical material, I developed a framework that joins the communities for inquiry model (Wanstreet and Stein 2011), which identifies indicators for joint inquiry, and Agger Eriksen’s (2009) categorisation, which I used to define what constitutes a tool. This framework allowed me to connect indicators for joint inquiry in relation to different aspects of the tools (Fig. 10).

![Figure 10](image-url)

Figure 10. Tools for joint inquiry framework of Laura Gottlieb.

The research purpose of the Licentiate thesis and papers I–IV was to explore the connection between the designed materials, artefacts, and activities and how they supported and hindered joint inquiry. To reintegrate the results in the PhD thesis, I have selected the results from the Licentiate thesis and papers I–IV that describe relational sensitivity (i.e., attentiveness to relations in a given situation) in connection with the I, We, and It perspectives (Ofman 2013).
Results and discussion
The following results of the design experiments are relevant in connection with relational sensitivity.

Supporting and hindering joint inquiry
The design experiments indicated various ways in which facilitators and participants supported or hindered joint inquiry, highlighting the role of participants and facilitators in enabling each other’s participation. In Museum Teatime, participants and facilitators contributed to each other’s self-disclosure and emotional expression, and encouraged contributions (indicators of joint inquiry in the framework shown in Fig. 10). Participants described the teatime in the questionnaires as both an experience of both vulnerability and safety (five participants) and said that they felt free to share anything (three participants) and felt listened to (five participants). One youth wrote:

It felt like we could talk about things that made you vulnerable, but that everyone could receive this and we got some kind of connection. It felt like we could talk on a deeper and more personal level for the first time. (my emphasis)

The transcripts reveal ways in which the facilitators and participants encouraged contributions and self-disclosure by asking follow-up questions about the participants’ drawings, which encouraged participants to reflect on and develop their stories (see, e.g., Table 2).

Table 2. Follow-up questions in relation to drawings on teatime placemat menus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F: Facilitator</th>
<th>R: Researcher</th>
<th>Y: Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R: I think the way you draw makes it look like the people are proud to be there.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Other examples from the design experiments indicated ways in which participants hindered joint inquiry. For instance, in Tea Compositions, one participant was dominant in the conversations, being quick to assert their reflections, leaving little room for other participants to speak. In Museum Teatime, one participant wrote in the questionnaire that a dominant participant limited their sense of togetherness during the teatime session (in response to a question about their experience of togetherness). These results about how participants and facilitators supported and hindered joint inquiry indicated ways in which the whole group played an important role in each other’s participation, by making room for others to speak, by listening, and by encouraging contributions.

**Materials, artefacts, and activities for reflection**

When designing and studying material artefacts and activities for joint inquiry, my own and the participants’ attention was on how the materials and visualisations supported or hindered the reflection process. In design experiments, I tested different materials and activities to reflect on “co-production” through making visualisations with various materials: foods (Cookie Teatime), geometric paper shapes (Collaborative Landscapes, see Fig. 11), and fabric shapes (Fabric Landscapes). When staging, my attention focused on how the material artefacts and activities prompted humour and inspired new metaphors with which to reflect on a topic. This included attention towards how various details affected the reflection process, such as timeframes (KT Cards, Paper I), glue and scissors (Collaborative Landscapes, Paper II), and remaking other people’s collages or starting from the geometrical shapes (Fabric Landscapes).

This attention to materiality also extended to how these materials hindered reflections on a topic. For instance, participants’ feedback and behaviours demonstrated that they struggled when using the static materials and visualisations to talk about dynamic and contingent processes of co-production. In the Fabric Landscapes, one participant rebelled against the material, by breaking the threads on the sides of the
fabric shapes and spreading the shapes out on the table. Other participants in these sessions suggested instead using movement and dance to represent the dynamic collaborative practices. Hence, my and the participants’ attention was on the relationship between material artefacts and activities and how this supported or hindered reflection.

Figure 11. Collaborative Landscapes, collage-making at the Participatory Innovation Conference, 2018.

Context dependency

The studies of the material artefacts and activities also revealed sensitivity to the context in which they are used. Initially, I had intended to create “tools” that could be used in multiple contexts. However, throughout the design experiments, I realised how much I was adapting the artefacts and activities or designing new artefacts and activities for different situations. Participant feedback also reiterated the context dependency of the tools. For instance, in Coffee Composition, participants from two organisations described the playful trigger as appropriate on work trips (like the one in which the playful trigger was tested), but not in their everyday work. In Tea Compositions, a participant claimed that industry collaborators could be too busy to engage in such a playful trigger. This indicates the importance of sensitivity to the context when designing material artefacts and activities. I therefore started to move away from creating tools for broader contexts such as collaborations among academia, municipalities, and industry, as I had intended with the KT Cards, Collaborative Landscapes, Fabric Landscapes and Tea Compositions.
Literature review

Between May 2021 and September 2022, I conducted a literature review and wrote a journal article on relational sensitivity in participatory design (Paper VI). The purpose was to draw together different perspectives on relational sensitivity as described in the research literature on participatory design, considering what it is, in what contexts it is used, who is relationally sensitive, and why it is considered important. Through the literature review, I wanted to broaden my understanding and further develop the concept of relational sensitivity.

Research process

The literature review took its starting point in Akama and Light’s (2018) and Akama’s (2015) use of the concepts of relational sensitivity, poise, and punctuation. The scholars developed these concepts in relation to their own participatory design practices, and I aimed to integrate and develop them with other perspectives from participatory design research. In the literature review, I selected and analysed 56 articles focusing on attuning and responding to relations in participatory design processes. I used the four-quadrant model (Wilber 2000) and the Ofman (2004) model to map (Fig. 12) and interact with the literature and to integrate perspectives on relational sensitivity. To read more about the process of the literature review, see Paper VI.

Figure 12. Mapping aspects of relational sensitivity on the four-quadrant model (Wilber 2000).
Results and discussion

My literature review resulted in an overview (Table 3) of aspects of participatory design research that exemplify attunement and responsiveness to relations, for example, with people, things, land, and self. These aspects were predominantly found in practice-based studies in different contexts and participatory design processes. In some cases, the aspects were based on interview studies involving participatory design practitioners (Tjahja and Yee 2021) or on theory (Steen 2013; Shaw 2010). The following table summarises these various aspects.

Table 3. Aspects of relational sensitivity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects</th>
<th>Why important</th>
<th>Whose relational sensitivity</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
<td>To foster awareness of ethical and methodological decision-making, situated judgements, inherent power imbalances, and diverse ways of doing and being</td>
<td>Designers, researchers, and facilitators</td>
<td>Malinvernì and Pares 2016; Steen 2013; Bustamante Duarte et al. 2021; St John and Akama 2022; Akama et al. 2019; Akama and Light 2018, 2020; Gottlieb 2022; Speil et al. 2019; Barcham 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poise</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>To support genuine participation and reflexivity</td>
<td>Participants, designers, researchers, and facilitators</td>
<td>Akama and Light 2018; Malinvernì and Pares 2016; Simonsen and Jensen 2016; Gottlieb 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embodied awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Embodied empathy</td>
<td>To support the building of relationships, trust, and sustaining collaborations, which can be disrupted by designers’ natural attitudes and lack of sensitivity to partners’ or users’, designers’, and design researchers’ ways of being and doing</td>
<td>Designers, researchers, and facilitators</td>
<td>Steen 2013; Petrella et al. 2020; Ho et al. 2011; Light and Akama 2014; Tjahja and Yee 2021; St John and Akama 2022; Hakio and Mattelmäki 2019</td>
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<td>Sensitivity to relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Openness to diverse ways of knowing and doing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexibility of roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Power dynamics</td>
<td>To foster awareness of</td>
<td>Design researchers,</td>
<td>Speil et al. 2019; Kelly 2019; Bellini et al. 2019; Sandman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural differences</td>
<td>power dynamics, to balance or counteract power imbalances, and to encourage and not hinder participation</td>
<td>designers, and facilitators</td>
<td>et al. 2020; Branco et al. 2017; Del Gaudio et al. 2020; Pitt and Davis 2017; Agid and Chin 2019; Van Mechelen et al. 2014; Taoka et al. 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of diverse and dominant worldviews</td>
<td>To decolonise design and shift practices to include plural and relational ways of being and understanding the world</td>
<td>Design researchers and designers</td>
<td>Barcham 2021; Akama 2017; Akama et al. 2017; St John and Akama 2022; Akama, Hagen, and Whaaga-Shollum 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective awareness</td>
<td>For the group to engage in and contribute to the collective, emergent process</td>
<td>The whole group</td>
<td>Hakio and Mattelmäki 2019; Agid and Chin 2019; Bratteig and Stolterman 1997; Shaw 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersubjective awareness</td>
<td>To attune and respond to what is happening in a group in emergent processes, to thereby encourage or discourage participation and sense of belonging</td>
<td>Designers, researchers, and facilitators</td>
<td>Mosleh and Larsen 2021; Akama and Light 2018, 2020; Light and Akama 2012; Ehren and Hollett 2016; Hakio and Mattelmäki 2019; Branco et al. 2017; Détienne et al. 2012; Wilson and Morrissey 2022; Petrella et al. 2020; Balaam et al. 2019; Sandman et al. 2020; Zhang et al. 2022; Tjahja and Yee 2021; Agid and Chin 2019; Iversen et al. 2012; Gottlieb 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective orientation</td>
<td>To prevent power imbalances and support communication processes in design</td>
<td>Designers, researchers, and facilitators</td>
<td>Speil et al. 2019; Agid and Chin 2019; Bustamante Duartea et al. 2021; Tenenberg et al. 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>The role of the body (e.g., posture, size, and clothes) in power dynamics and communication</td>
<td>To support intersubjective dynamics among the participants in a process</td>
<td>Designers, researchers, facilitators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On one hand, I consider these aspects to be useful as they exemplify relational sensitivity and relations that practitioners draw attention to in interactions with participants. On the other hand, given the limited space of a journal article, I found it difficult to contextualise and describe all of the aspects to make them more situated and concrete. In this way, I ended up with the opposite of an embodied and personal perspective, which Akama and Light (2018, 2020) had demonstrated through their use of poise and punctuation. This highlighted the drawbacks of trying to bring different aspects together to deliberate on relational sensitivity, a situated and embodied process.

Nonetheless, mapping and listing these aspects connected to relational sensitivity gave an overview of the relations that practitioners consider important to attend to in interactions with participants when staging participatory design processes. Such an overview could be useful in order to learn more about the various aspects in the participatory design literature, and to expand the literature search to explore further aspects. As a development of this work, I would like to contextualise these aspects with further descriptions and examples, to make them more accessible to other practitioners. Furthermore, in the process of testing both Wilber’s and Ofman’s models, I also deliberated on the limitations and benefits of using these models (see Paper VI). I considered the Ofman model (2013) to be more appropriate, as it visualises the interconnection between the I, We, and It perspectives as a Venn diagram, and does not make all-encompassing ontological claims about reality. I continued using the Ofman model and the aspects in Table 3 in my practice-based studies to reflect on relational sensitivity.
Back-stage Process in the Blivande Project

After completing the design experiments and my Licentiate thesis (Gottlieb 2020), I continued with projects and practice-based studies in the Blivande Project. I chose to collaborate with Blivande (2023) to contribute to a context that I was part of and to enable continuity in my research studies that is not present in one-off design experiments.

Blivande is a community and physical space consisting of a large red house and a container square on its parking lot (Fig. 13) at an industrial harbour in Stockholm. It houses a co-working space, makerspace, and a community place, and acts as a hub for participatory culture and art. Blivande is home to a community that organises participatory festivals (including the annual Borderland festival) centred on co-creating, imagining, and exploring alternative ways of being and collaborating. Many of its members, including myself, have emphasised Blivande and its participatory festivals as having a central role in creating a sense of community, by exploring closer interactions and connections with others in relation to practices of co-creation in projects and events.

Figure 13. Containers at Blivande, Frihamnstorget (photo: Diana Monsberger).

In the context of Blivande, my research has been in relation to a project that I will refer to as the Blivande Project. In this project, a team from
Blivande was commissioned by a Swedish real-estate company to build a similar communal space, i.e., “container village”, on a university campus in Sweden. The team at Blivande proposed to the real-estate company that this new container village could be built on participatory principles similar to those of the Blivande container village, where the members of the communal space build and maintain the space. The project was thereby initiated by the real-estate company’s interest in a container village and Blivande’s interest in exploring how to invite people into building participatory culture. Blivande was granted five years of funding to manage the process of building a new communal space on the campus by involving students in a participatory design process.

The Blivande team consisted primarily of two people who were coordinating the process, with backgrounds in participatory arts. My role in the project, between May 2021 and March 2022, was to provide support in planning the participatory process with the students, designing and facilitating workshops, and writing a research application. The three of us were involved in staging the situations of joint inquiry in relation to planning, coordinating, and facilitating workshops. The research focused on exploring practitioners’ relational sensitivity and ways to study this.

During the early phases of the Blivande Project, we examined the “backstage process” in the Blivande team staging the participatory design process (as opposed to the “front-stage process” of leading workshops) to explore the dynamics in our team and how inclusive we were. Our assumption was that the current dynamics in our team would influence how we invited others, i.e., the students, into the design process. We chose to study a process that involved making something together through joint inquiry. This making process involved the three Blivande team members (including myself) in writing a funding application and planning the participatory design activities. This research process did not focus on the writing but rather on how we collaborated and communicated in the making process, and how our joint inquiry meetings were realised. We wanted to explore how we enacted our intentions and values of inclusivity, before involving the students more deeply in the design process. The purpose of the research was to explore relational sensitivity and how to study this within our staging process and joint inquiry meetings. We also wanted to test what happens when we cultivate transparency around subjective experiences and intersubjective dynamics. This research was developed into Paper V and was published in the proceedings of the Participatory Design Conference 2022.
Research process
The research process involved studying eight joint inquiry meetings in which the members of the Blivande team created a plan for the project and negotiated the text drafts. Each member of the team took journal notes after each meeting to reflect on their experiences and on the intersubjective dynamics of the joint inquiry. My journal notes totalled five typed A4 pages from the eight meetings. An audio-recorded collective analysis (90 minutes) was conducted at the end of the Back-stage Process by the three members. The purpose was to discuss the journal notes and to collectively elicit important themes of our collaborative process. We used Ofman’s (2013) model to reflect on our journal notes from the joint inquiry meetings. The model was drawn on a shared large paper, and we made notes on the model throughout the discussion. At the end of this discussion, we wrote down themes that we considered important for our experiences from the Back-stage Process. After the collective analysis, I listened to the audio-recording, took notes about the content, and transcribed passages in relation to the themes discussed.

Results and discussion
This study resulted in the following reflections on relational sensitivity.

Embodied awareness
My embodied awareness, i.e., awareness of thoughts, sensations, and emotions (Simonsen and Jensen 2016), was an important aspect of my relational sensitivity, i.e., noticing my own experiences and to the diverse values and perspectives present in the group. Noticing tensions and confusion in myself prompted the negotiation of diverse perspectives. For instance, coming from different professional fields and considering different aspects important for the application process, we used diverse vocabularies and emphasised different things as important in the process (e.g., theoretical perspectives and writing quickly). In these cases, my embodied awareness played a significant role in noticing tensions in myself in relation to the group, and expressing these led to the negotiating of perspectives and the identification of common directions.

This perspective on the role of embodied awareness in participatory design processes coheres with Simonsen and Jensen’s (2016) notion of “genuine participation”. In their research, these scholars have emphasised the important role of participants’ embodied awareness in understanding and sharing their genuine interests and values. Since participating and collaborating around common interests is central to
participatory design process, embodied awareness could indicate that a body-related competence is needed for people to participate “authentically”. Simonsen and Jensen (2016) illustrated the role of embodied awareness by giving examples of the participatory design practitioners’ (rather than participants’) embodied awareness and of how this informed their actions. Similarly, embodied awareness has been significant in my own staging practice, helping me notice and negotiate divergent interests in the collaborative process. This has been influenced by my background in Bohmian dialogue, which involves developing embodied awareness in order to draw attention to one’s thought process and related emotions and sensations.

Collective deliberation

A difference between the Back-stage Process in the Blivande Project and Simonsen and Jensen’s (2016) descriptions of their research is that our process involved explicitly sharing experiences and impressions of intersubjective dynamics. This process of “making the internal external” was part of becoming sensitive to our own perspectives and values and how these related to each other. When openly discussing our experiences and impressions of the intersubjective dynamics, such as tensions and confusions, two of us described feeling a sense of clarity about our own values and perspectives. Discussing and distinguishing our perspectives were important in the process of clarifying our differences and own points of view. This collective and explicit process of sharing experiences was part of relational sensitivity, i.e., noticing what was happening in the group and in ourselves. I found that there was trust and safety to share our experiences and impressions of collaborative dynamics. This could have been a result of the group’s previous interactions in participatory festivals and background in communication practices such as “authentic relating” (Kestano 2022), which encourages expressing one’s experiences.

The above-mentioned relational sensitivity through embodied awareness and the negotiation of perspectives, however, did not result in group members feeling included in the process and outcomes. Despite our intention to support the inclusion of our diverse perspectives and interests in the joint inquiry, we found that two of the three members felt excluded from the process towards the end. One of the members, for instance, explained in the collective analysis that he felt left out, having different interests from the other two and noticing that conversations had been taking place without him outside of the joint inquiry meetings. This experience contributed to his distancing himself towards the end of the process.
Relational sensitivity as a means to include diverse perspectives was not successful as intended, as different interests and needs were not met. This indicates the complex social relations involved in participatory design processes and illustrates how these processes evolve outside the designated meetings for joint inquiry (Mosleh and Larsen 2020). The collective analysis at the end of the process was important in order to become aware of the collaborative dynamics, emphasising the need for multiple points of view from which to evaluate the quality of collaboration (Détienne et al. 2012).

**Models to reflect on relational sensitivity**

Lastly, I found the Ofman (2013) model useful in the collective analysis and for explaining my focus on relational sensitivity to the other team members. At the beginning of the Back-stage Process, I introduced the concepts of *poise* and *punctuation* (Akama and Light 2018) to discuss and justify our attention to self-awareness and intersubjective dynamics. However, the other members struggled to remember these terms and their meanings. The Ofman model instead provided a simpler, visual explanation drawing attention to experiences and collaborative dynamics in the joint inquiry process. The model was efficient to use in the collective analysis to discuss the journal notes and write down discussion points on the shared paper. I therefore continued exploring and using the Ofman model in my later studies.
Blivande Workshops

The following studies are also part of the Blivande Project (context described on p. 49) and involve three exploratory workshops aimed at initiating collaborations and creating ideas for the container village. Two of the workshops were with students from a sustainability group and one workshop involved four researchers interested in collaborating in the Blivande Project.

Exploratory workshop with researchers (C1)

In September 2021, two members of the Back-stage Process (including myself) and two other researchers met in an exploratory workshop to discuss potential collaboration. The aim was to explore our work and possible crossovers in greater depth, which could feed into the Blivande Project. The joint inquiry involved sharing our research interests and experiences to ideate and brainstorm how we could connect these and collaborate. My role in the workshop was part of staging the Blivande Project, while another researcher designed and facilitated the workshop. Although this workshop was not initially intended to be part of my research process, I included this workshop as it was significant for my reflections on relational sensitivity.

One of the researchers, Nina, designed and facilitated the workshop for exploring potential collaboration among the four researchers. Held in the library at Blivande (which contained many curious artefacts), the workshop involved using artefacts to map and connect our research interests. At the start of the workshop, all participants wrote down their research interests on pieces of paper, and then labelled artefacts in the room with these papers (Fig. 14). The researchers presented their labelled artefacts, introducing their research interests. In the second part of the artefact exercise, the group moved the artefacts and labels around in silence, creating an exhibition that connected and brought the research interests into relation with each other. At the end of the workshop, we made a list of areas for potential collaboration between the researchers.
Research process of workshop C1

To reflect on this workshop, I made a journal note on my experiences afterwards. In a collective analysis, I also asked Nina, who had designed and facilitated this situation of joint inquiry, for her perspectives on my journal note. The collective analysis was conducted in connection with analysing the Samverket Workshops and was audio-recorded (70 minutes).

Results and discussion of workshop C1

During the workshop, a moment occurred that became part of my reflections on relational sensitivity when staging situations of joint inquiry. The following reformulated journal note describes this moment:

After creating our exhibition of artefacts, we go around the group discussing the artefacts and placements. I start to feel a tension in Pan, who also seems somewhat resigned from the exercise.

Rather than sharing my reflections on the exhibition, I put words to the tension and resignation that I feel in relation to Pan. Pan confirms this and expresses his need for concrete outcomes that the group can work towards. I also feel this need for outcomes.
Hearing Pan’s needs and desires, Nina responds by quickly switching the exercise. Instead, we start to make a list of concrete things we could collaborate on – research papers, projects, research questions, and topics. (Reformulated journal note from workshop, September 2021, Blivande)

**Collective deliberation**

As in the Back-stage Process, the above anecdote illustrates a process of sharing experiences and impressions of the intersubjective dynamics. This example highlighted to me the role of the group in navigating emergent needs by sharing and responding to experiences and impressions of the intersubjective dynamics. For instance, when I and Pan sensed and voiced impressions of the intersubjective dynamics, the facilitator Nina could adapt the workshop activity to suit different needs, i.e., more concrete outcomes. This was a collective process in which, as a group, we sensed, expressed, and adapted to various needs in the workshop. This collective process of relational sensitivity is different from examples in which the focus is on the facilitator’s sensitivity to the nuances of the group and on adapting the design activities (Light and Akama 2018).

This example highlighted for me the importance of relational sensitivity as a collective process, rather than as a solitary process of the staging and facilitating practitioner. These reflections on relational sensitivity as a collective process recall the focus on “collective awareness” in the work of Hakio and Mattelmäki (2019), in which the process focuses on all participants’ attentiveness to the group and process. The journal notes from Blivande Workshop C1 highlighted for me the important role of the group in sensing and directing the process, to accommodate different needs.

**Navigating through tensions**

In the collective analysis with Nina, we discussed the role of tension in the study of relational sensitivity. We discussed how feeling and explicating tension provided an occasion for the group to become more relationally sensitive, learning about the group’s diverse needs and adapting the process. We furthermore discussed the role of tension when studying relational sensitivity, in which moments of affective intensity can become memorable (as was the case for Nina and I) and thereby be recorded in journal and field notes. This discussion introduced the question of what one is aware of when researching relational sensitivity, and whether tensions could be privileged over other sensitivities that we take for granted.
Moreover, Blivande Workshop C3 highlights how participants can have different experiences of working with material artefacts and activities in workshops. Whereas some participants value exploring topics through the use of materials in workshops, others may want more “concrete” activities. It could be important to notice tensions in the group and be responsive to various preferences when staging and facilitating joint inquiry. Following the workshop, Nina and I continued our collaboration over shared interests in material and experimental methods in the Samverket Workshops (p. 63)

**Workshop with students by students (C2)**

The second exploratory workshop in the Blivande Project happened in November 2021; in it, students from a sustainability group and the Blivande team started collaborating on the container village. The Blivande team, which was staging the participatory design process, asked the students to design the initial workshop and set the agenda for joint inquiry, to distribute the power of the Blivande team. In this way, the idea of the Blivande team was that the students could share their knowledge of sustainability and influence the initial stages of the container project.

The joint inquiry in the workshop centred on identifying sustainability issues in the container designs and creating initial ideas for the designs. The research purpose was to test the Ofman model as a means of studying relational sensitivity in the situation of joint inquiry. In the workshop, my role was as a participant, researcher, and part of the staging team.

Five students and three team members from Blivande (including myself) attended the three-hour workshop, which was held in a classroom in the students’ campus. The workshop was organised and facilitated by one of the students and centred on developing key performance indicators (KPIs) so that the container village would align with sustainability measurements, while coming up with ideas for the container designs. The workshop primarily involved sitting in the classroom in two small groups (mixed students and Blivande team members), developing KPIs on a joint online whiteboard. At the start of the workshop, all group members briefly introduced themselves, and the facilitator introduced the rules of communication (e.g., not interrupting others) and the workshop’s focus on KPIs. We also briefly went outside to look at the planned site of the container village. At the end of the workshop, after working in small groups, the teams presented their ideas to each other, while the facilitator made notes about these on a physical whiteboard.
Research process of workshop C2

To record the workshop, I took field notes using the Ofman (2013) model, drawing my attention to the I, We, and It perspectives and their interrelatedness. I used a notebook to make the field notes, with a Venn diagram drawn on the paper. Note-taking involved heightened attention (Mason 2002) and recording my impressions of the situation in relation to the model. As I was not facilitating the workshop, I could take notes while participating in the small-group discussions. In the car ride back from the workshop, the Blivande team discussed their experiences of the workshop, which were covered in the field notes.

Before the workshop, I emailed all the participants to introduce myself and explain that I would be conducting research alongside the collaborative process and workshop. At the start of the workshop, I explained that I would take notes during the workshop, and received verbal consent to take notes and use them in my research. After the workshop, I digitised my field notes drawn as a Venn diagram.

Results and discussion of workshop C2

The following is a synthesis of the field notes from the workshop:

It’s the first time the two groups have met to initiate collaboration and elaborate on ideas for the design of the container village. The Blivande team that I am part of is coordinating the project and workshops for the design of the container village. For this encounter, we have invited the student group to design and facilitate a workshop to initiate the collaboration, to contribute perspectives and influence the project early on.

Sitting in a class in rows of desks, we spend most of the workshop in small groups. Each person is bent over their laptop, discussing and adding ideas to a joint Miro board. Someone mentions ventilation systems, another mentions reusable cups.

I’m feeling tired, not energised, wondering if others feel the same. In my field notes, I repeatedly ask the question “Energy?” “Energy?” “Energy?” I reflect on how this is the first time we have met, and I don’t know anything about the people that I am in a small group with. The online whiteboard, each person looking at their laptop, the rows of desks, the classroom, and the task do not seem to help us get to know each other.

During the online whiteboard exercise, I suggest to my small group that we take a coffee break in the café. There, I learn a bit more about the people in my small groups – where they come from, what
they study. Moving outside the classroom, I feel my energy reviving. I reflect on the participation materials and formats that are part of this meeting and how a walk outside the classroom and the café enabled other types of interactions.

On the way home in the car, a Blivande team member shares reflections on the importance of enthusiasm and dreaming together at the start of collaboration, rather than focusing on measurements. I find that the four-hour car ride is a useful time for me and the others to talk about the project and get to know each other better. (Blivande Workshop C2, November 2021)

The role of materiality for intersubjective dynamics
The above synthesis highlights my attention to the use of materials, activities, and space in relation to my own experiences and impressions of the intersubjective dynamics. Being part of staging the participatory design process, I was attentive to ways of supporting the collaborative relationships, and to how materiality was part of this. In the field notes, there are reflections on “energy”, “getting to know each other”, and how these relate to the materiality and activities – the classroom, laptops, and KPIs. I considered that each participant looking down at their laptop (even though sitting in a group) and focusing on KPI measurements did not help the group get to know each other.

I considered the Ofman model to be useful for focusing my attention to reflect on the overlaps, i.e., how these different dimensions were interrelated. My attention and notes focused on the in-between spaces, deliberating on the intersections among materiality, my own experiences, and intersubjective dynamics.

Attention to power dynamics when staging
In the Blivande team, we reflected on the power difference between us and the students. Although our intention was to distribute power by inviting the students to design a workshop, the Blivande team ultimately had the power to make decisions about where to go next, i.e., to design another workshop that would focus more on imagination and getting to know each other. This inherent power difference in staging the workshops became clear to me after Blivande Workshop C2. I also considered the value of keeping the responsibility within the staging team for organising and facilitating workshops at the start of the collaboration, particularly as the Blivande team had important experience of co-creation processes and facilitation.
Workshop with students by the Blivande team (C3)

In Blivande Workshop C3, the Blivande team invited the students for another workshop to develop the designs of their own containers. After several delays due to the Covid pandemic, the students came to Blivande in March 2022. I was involved in planning and facilitating the workshop, doing so in collaboration with the other two members of the Blivande team. This time, I suggested that the students visit the container village at Blivande to inspire their own designs. In response to the Blivande team’s reflections from Blivande Workshop C2, I wanted to put more emphasis on getting to know each other, and on excitement at and inspiration for the design process for the container village. The research purpose was to continue to explore the use of the Ofman (2013) model to study relational sensitivity.

Four students from the sustainability group attended a four-hour workshop at Blivande (two of whom had participated in Blivande Workshop C2), together with the same three members of the Blivande team. The workshop started by eating lunch together outside in the sun in the container village, and then touring the containers in Blivande, including containers with a sauna, restaurant, 3D printing and metalworking workshops, etc. After the tour, the workshop continued inside the co-working space at Blivande with an introduction to my research and to the importance of communication within a design process (saying “yes, and …” to build on each other’s ideas). An “ice-breaker” activity was then held in which participants drew portraits of each other without looking at the paper. These portraits were used in a round of presentations in which each workshop participant introduced themselves and a personality trait represented in their portrait.

After the presentations, the design process proceeded with the students describing activities they were already doing in their sustainability group and making Post-it notes about them. I then guided an imagination exercise in which students, with closed eyes, imagined the container site – how it looked, felt, and what they did there. The ideas were then drawn and written down individually and shared with the whole group. A discussion followed on initial ideas for the student group’s containers. At the end of the workshop, students were asked to write a brief project and budget proposal for their containers after talking to the rest of the sustainability group.

Research process of workshop C3

I took field notes from the I, We, and It perspectives (Ofman 2013), drawing my attention to choices I was making when facilitating the
group, including impressions of the group dynamics, materiality, and my own experiences. The notes primarily comprised keywords capturing impressions of the workshop, which I was simultaneously co-facilitating. I video-recorded the workshop when inside the co-working space (75 minutes), to observe the workshop and my role as a facilitator. After the workshop, I watched the video and annotated my perceptions of the group dynamics and of my facilitation, and compared these with my field notes. All the participants gave consent to be recorded for research purposes and signed a consent form at the start of the workshop.

Results and discussion of workshop C3
The following reflections were made in connection with relational sensitivity.

Attention to intersubjective dynamics to support inclusion
In both the field notes and video observations, my approach to facilitation focused on inclusivity, to make participants more comfortable and give them opportunities to contribute to the conversations. This focus was in relation to the participants taking different amounts of “space” in the conversations. Two of the students were more vocal, while two were more reserved. One of the more vocal participants was the founder of the student group, which I considered could have played a role in the group’s dynamics. I attempted to include the more reserved participants by asking impromptu questions to shift the conversation to different participants and by speaking to more reserved participants in the breaks to make them more comfortable. This is not to say that participation only happens through speaking. Nonetheless, my attention in this workshop was directed towards group dynamics and trying to make participants more comfortable in sharing their perspectives.

Reflections on methods
The Ofman model was less useful in this workshop than in Blivande Workshop C2. As I was facilitating, I found it hard to reflect more deeply on the model, other than just noting down quick impressions of the intersubjective dynamics and of my decision-making as a facilitator. These brief notes nonetheless reflected my focus on and attention to inclusion when facilitating, capturing differences in participation between the students. I did not find that the video-recording added further perspectives to my field notes concerning relational sensitivity, and in the future I could further test other methods of video analysis that might be informative regarding this topic. The video-recording was
instead useful for observing and reflecting on my own facilitation practice.

**Navigating various commitments**

At the end of the workshop, the participants were tasked with coming up with a proposal for their containers after talking with the rest of the student group. However, once they got back to the Blivande team with a proposal, the Blivande Project came to a sudden end due to a failed building permit application. This sudden end prompted me to reflect on the dilemmas of engaging participants early on in a design process. On one hand, the Blivande team intended to include the students in the early phases to influence the container village, and, on the other hand, this meant taking people’s time and building expectations for the project that might not be realised, given that it had no building permit. This situation also pointed to a commitment to deliver results, such as the student workshops, to the real-estate company to show the progress of the project. Towards the end of this project, I felt conflicted by different commitments to both students and the real-estate company in staging the workshops, and regarding the ethics of involving participants in a design process that might not be realised. In hindsight, the student invitations to participate in the workshops and collaboration could have been more transparent in regard to the building permit issue.
Samverket Workshops

The other research context in the second phase of my PhD research was Samverket, a co-working space for the public sector in Sweden. This co-working space opened in December 2021 with the aim of supporting organisations in the public sector to collaborate and develop innovative solutions to complex societal issues that address citizen needs (Samverket 2023). At the time of this study, Samverket was composed of members from 35 public-sector organisations, such as municipalities, regions, and national agencies.

At the time of my participation in Samverket, between December 2021 and December 2022, I was involved in staging a series of workshops open to members of Samverket (three of whom were included in this research). The workshop series was called “Shaping the Samverket community through self-leadership and trust-based Leadership” (translation from the Swedish, “Forma Samverkets community genom självledarskap och tillitsbaserad ledarskap”). The purpose of these workshops was to help members get to know each other, explore shared practices at the co-working space (in relation to self- and trust-based leadership), and stimulate collaboration. The workshops addressed themes related to participatory, horizontal structures of organising (inspired by Laloux’s *Reinventing Organisations*, 2014), to explore a future public sector that works closely with citizens, in which work is purpose-driven and leadership is shared among employees.

This workshop series was organised and run by Nina Bozic (a researcher from Blivande Workshop C1) and me at Samverket, where Nina was a member. In the three workshops, both of us were staging the process by planning, designing artefacts and activities, and facilitating the workshops. Nina and I also invited artists and scholars to collaborate in designing and facilitating the workshops. During these workshops, my research focus was on how to understand relational sensitivity when staging workshops and its role in supporting joint inquiry.

The workshops were held in the co-working space at Samverket, in different areas depending on the activities: a space with benches arranged in a circle imitating a campfire site, or open areas with tables, chairs, and sofas. The workshops took place in these areas and lasted a whole working day, from 09.00 to 15.30. I first describe each workshop, including its topic and activities, and then describe the research methods, results, and discussions from all workshops.
Self-Leadership Workshop (S1)

In March 2022, the first workshop in the series took place and featured the theme of self-leadership, to reflect on individual and shared purposes and needs in a purpose-led organisation. The joint inquiry focused on reflecting on and discussing participants’ values, purposes, and passions, and on how these could be translated and designed into shared practices and rituals at Samverket. This involved “prototyping” concrete rituals and practices that the members could initiate at Samverket to support their individual and collective values and goals.

There were eighteen participants in this workshop, and eleven stayed until the very end. Nina and I started the workshop with a “tune-in”, for the group to settle in; it included a brief meditation, poetry reading, and the introduction of the workshop theme. The participants then each picked a postcard with contemporary art as a prompt to help them reflect on a personal value, which was briefly discussed in pairs and then the whole group. A “personal canvas” template was designed by Nina and me for the participants to work on individually, to reflect on their individual values and purposes, including those they would like to share with others at Samverket. Alongside the personal canvas template, the participants were given coloured papers, pre-designed elements, scissors, pens, and glue to make collages (Fig. 15) representing their own canvas to inspire thinking-through-making and so they would have visual reminders and memorabilia after the workshop. I made the pre-designed elements for the canvas to influence the aesthetics of the collages. The canvases were discussed in pairs and were then exhibited to the whole group. To discuss any questions raised, I introduced David Bohm’s (2004) dialogue practice and some basic techniques in dialogue (e.g., sensing the group and whose turn it is to speak), while reflecting on self-leadership.

After lunch, rituals of self-leadership were introduced as a topic to prompt discussion of ways of designing intentional practices to support individual and shared values and purposes at Samverket. I demonstrated a tea ritual that involved serving tea to the participants using a big metal teapot usually kept at the Samverket “campfire” site. I asked the participants to imagine that the tea contained a quality that they wanted or needed more of in their life, such as calmness. The ritual involved my pouring the tea and participants drinking it in silence to allow for reflection on their desired quality.
After the tea ritual, the participants did an exercise in which they sketched an “ideal work week” (on another pre-designed canvas), which could incorporate a ritual supporting their values and purposes. After individual reflection, groups of three or four participants worked on designing a shared ritual that could be implemented at Samverket, to support the group’s common values and goals. The workshop ended with the group members sharing their designed rituals, filling out questionnaires, and taking turns expressing a “take away” from the workshop and an action from the personal canvas and rituals they would like to implement. The participants were invited by the facilitators to mingle after the workshop and find a “buddy” at Samverket – someone to be accountable to and follow up the implementation of the personal or shared rituals.

**Caring Leadership Workshop (S2)**

In April 2022, the second workshop in the series took place, on the theme of caring leadership. This workshop focused on the importance of communication in building participatory cultures and horizontal organisations, and during the workshop we discussed and tested different communicative practices, including forms of listening and feedback, and reflected on how our personalities were part of shaping relationships with others. This topic was intended to inspire reflection on
relationships at work, in Samverket and the participants’ own organisations.

There were eleven participants and three co-facilitators in the workshop. Nina and I collaborated with a dancer/choreographer to use movement exercises throughout the workshop. The workshop started with a short meditation, a poetry reading, short participant presentations, and the introduction of the workshop theme. Three movement exercises were facilitated by the dancer/choreographer throughout the workshops to inspire listening, facilitate the sensing of space, observe the body language of others, and attune participants to each other so they could move as a group (Fig. 16). During the workshop, I introduced the core quadrants model, another model of Ofman (2004), to explore how our personalities are involved in shaping our relationships with others. We connected these exercises to sensing emotions and sensations in our bodies, and to observing others’ emotions and body language, in order to practise more subtle aspects of communication.

Figure 16. Movement exercise, Samverket, Stockholm, 2022. (photo: Nina Bozic)

**Playful Leadership Workshop (S3)**

The Playful Leadership Workshop was the last workshop of the Samverket series described in this thesis. This workshop focused on the themes of playfulness, creativity, and experimentation in the workplace. Joint inquiry focused on exploring processes and concepts of playfulness and creativity and how these relate or could relate to the work practices
in the participants’ workplaces and at Samverket. Sixteen participants and three co-facilitators attended this workshop. Nina and I designed and facilitated this workshop with a researcher/musician to explore the workshop themes from different perspectives – innovation, dance, design, and contemporary jazz. Along with the theme of the workshop, we intended to explore emergence and flexibility in our facilitation, to adapt our structure in relation to what we sensed was needed by the group.

We designed the workshop activities in relation to three concepts related to playfulness and creativity – decomposing/reframing, listening, and inviting chance – that we connected to our approaches. Taking turns, the three co-facilitators designed, facilitated, and presented ideas and activities in relation to these topics. A script exercise was led by Nina to explore everyday movements and habits at work, and ways to reframe/decompose these habits (Fig. 17). A voice dialogue exercise was led by me as a way to explore different states of being, i.e., the listening, active, and playful selves, and how these influence our experience and participation in dialogue. The researcher/musician led an exercise of “sounding” together, to explore how we can invite chance through an emergent process of using our voices together. At the end, we designed our own scripts to play with our everyday work habits. In two groups, we took turns performing our scripts to each other. To finish the workshop, we filled in questionnaires and co-created an improvised poem.

Figure 17. Samverket workshop on Playful Leadership, Stockholm, 2022. (photo: Nina Bozic, which I have blurred for the sake of participants’ confidentiality)
Research process of workshops S1–S3

The purpose of this research was to reflect on the practitioners’ relational sensitivity when staging and facilitating situations of joint inquiry. The research has therefore primarily focused on relational sensitivity from Nina’s and my own perspectives, since we were organising the process and designing and facilitating the workshops. During the workshops, I took field notes on paper and my phone from the I, We, and It perspectives (Ofman 2004), recording my experiences, impressions of subjective dynamics, and the materials and methods used. After each workshop, Nina and I journaled about our experiences of staging and facilitating using questionnaires. These questionnaires were given to participants at the end of each workshop, to allow us to compare the experiences of the facilitators and participants. Questions were designed in relation to the I, We, and It perspectives (Ofman 2013), and some questions concerned the workshop topic and related challenges and opportunities in the participants’ workplaces (see Table 4). Consent forms were signed by participants at the start of each workshop.

Table 4. Example of a questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions in Samverket Workshop C3 questionnaire</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did you feel during the workshop and what were the questions that came up for you? [I perspective]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you already playful at work? [workshop topic]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are (internal/external) hindrances to your playfulness at work? [workshop topic]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could you help yourself and others to be playful at work? [workshop topic]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you experience the group dynamics in this workshop? [We perspective]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you think about the structure, methods, artefacts, and room used in the workshop? [It perspective]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I digitised and compiled all the questionnaire answers. Nina and I read the compiled questionnaires after each workshop to inform the design of the next workshop. At the end of the workshop series, Nina and I jointly analysed our experiences of staging and facilitating the workshop series using the table presenting the aspects of relational sensitivity that I developed in the literature review (Table 5). The purpose was to discuss
whether the aspects from the literature review were relevant to our staging practices and, if so, how. We furthermore compared our own experiences of staging with those expressed in the participants’ questionnaire answers to explore whether there were similarities and differences between our experiences and the participants’. This collective analysis was audio-recorded (70 minutes) using an automatic transcription program. I read through the transcript, highlighted the examples from our practices, and compared these with the participants’ questionnaire responses.

Table 5. Aspects of relational sensitivity from the literature review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of relational sensitivity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embodied awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embodied empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to diverse ways of knowing and doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility in roles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of diverse and dominant worldviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersubjective awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attunement and responsiveness to group dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of body (e.g., posture, size, and clothes) in power dynamics and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material artefacts and tools for intersubjective dynamics (e.g., spatial arrangement, design board games, poetry, reusing designed artefacts, forum theatre, art installations, and walking interviews)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structures and methods for attunement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results and discussion of workshops S1–S3.
The following aspects of relational sensitivity were discussed in relation to our staging and facilitation practices:
Reflexivity

Reflexivity was considered central to our staging practices, which involved reflecting on how the workshop series was going and how to develop it, as well as on our own expectations and roles in the process.

For me reflexivity is a crucial quality in the way we work in the sense that it’s built into the process of designing ... I think, when you work with design, artistic methods, and participatory action research, you always start with reflexivity ... Asking yourself ... Why am I here? ... How do we go about this? ... How did it go? How did I feel? What do we need to change next time? In that sense, I would say reflexivity is very much part of this way of holding space. And I was a bit unsure how [the participants] would respond to this [process] because I knew it would probably be different from what they’re used to. (Nina, transcript from collective analysis)

Deliberating on our expectations and the value of the workshops was part of the reflexive process. For example, in Samverket Workshop S1, we designed the material artefacts and activities (e.g., templates, collages, and the tea ritual) so that the participants could prototype and implement shared practices and rituals in the co-working space. At the end of the workshop, participants were asked what they would implement and to find an accountability “buddy” to follow up the implementation of the rituals. However, early on we realised that the participants did not continue with these designed practices and rituals at Samverket, and that the value of our process was to build relationships in the new community. Nina reflected on this in the collective analysis: “I very quickly found that actually the main point of our work in this series was really to build a solid base for these people to meet and explore themselves and each other together. So there was no instrumental goal”. Through ongoing reflection, discussions, and feedback after each workshop, we deliberated on the value of the workshops, how to develop them, and our expectations.

Vulnerability and methods

Vulnerability, in sharing our personal selves and participating in the activities, was discussed as important in our facilitation approach, particularly as we were inviting participants to be vulnerable. As Nina was a member of Samverket, we considered that there was less of a distance between us and the participants, that we were all exploring the topics of inquiry and building the community. As co-facilitators, we took turns facilitating and participating in all the activities.
In the collective analysis, we discussed how the artistic and experimental methods used were important for the vulnerable and personal ways that people participated in the workshops.

I think that “authenticity”, “vulnerability”, and also “embodied empathy” are the things that the artistic methods really strengthened, in a way. I felt it was very present in our process that people were very personal or that they dared to share much more, like thoughts about themselves, than maybe in the usual professional workshops. (Nina, transcript from collective analysis)

The participants reflected on similar perspectives in the questionnaires addressing the impact of the methods on the connection and communication between participants. After Samverket Workshop S2, involving the movement exercises with the dancer/choreographer, participants reflected in the questionnaires on how the methods contributed to trust between participants (three participants), vulnerability (two participants), opening up and connecting with others (three participants), being playful and daring (one participant), and being equal because everyone was out of their comfort zone (one participant).

The following are comments from the questionnaires (some of which have been translated from Swedish, and some which were written in English) concerning how the methods influenced communication between the workshop participants:

It opened up in a way that I did not believe at first. It brought another level to the conversations.

(Original: Det öppnade upp på ett sätt jag inte trodde på först. Det gav en annan nivå på samtalen.)

I became more present and vulnerable. I connected my breathing to my mind and body. So I slowed down and became conscious of the space around me.

Good, it became a faster process to get closer to each other and give in. The body is rarely a tool at work – except for some people.

(Original: Bra, det blir en snabbare process att närma oss varandra och ge efter. Kroppen är sällan ett verktyg på jobbet – utom för somliga.)

The personal and vulnerable qualities addressed in the workshops were important in relation to our own ways of participating as facilitators and to the methods that we designed and used. Participants’ feedback on the methods’ influence on communication was coherent with our purpose,
which was to stimulate and build relationships within the Samverket community.

**Participants’ communication challenges in workplaces**

During the workshops, participants identified relational and communication challenges in their workplaces and teams. In Samverket Workshop S2, the answers from participants’ questionnaires covered the following communication problems in the participants’ workplaces: dialogue and really listening to each other (two participants), seeing how one affects the group by not listening (one participant), prestige and hierarchy (three participants), too much focus on delivery and the social becoming “instrumentalised” (three participants), and not meeting enough (one participant).

Participants in Samverket Workshop S2 suggested ways to address these challenges, such as using Bohmian dialogue or movement exercises in their organisations to raise awareness of how groups are communicating. The following are examples from the questionnaire responses to the question “What could you do to address these challenges, and could the practices from today’s workshop in some way support that?":

To practise “dialogue” in one of the teams I work in, to make people aware, taking time to tune in, see each other before we work together.

Including the movement exercises in the group’s meetings would be interesting in itself. We in the team need to start talking about how we relate to each other among the members of the group, and not just how we produce together. Dialogue would be interesting to practice.

(Original: Bryta in med övningar, [rörelse övningarna], i gruppens möten skulle vara intressant i sig. Vi behöver i teamet börja prata om hur förhåller oss sinsemellan medlemmarna i gruppen, och inte bara hur vi producerar tillsammans. Dialog skulle vara intressant att praktsera.)

We need to communicate more and more often to understand each other and build trust. I think the exercises from the day could build trust between the teams.

(Original: Vi måste kommunicera mera och oftare för att förstå varandra och bygga tillit. Jag tror övningarna från dagen skulle kunna bygga tillit mellan teamen.)

I am trying to get more people to dare to raise [that not attuning to and seeing others] is not okay...
The dialogue and movement exercises were relevant to the communication and relational challenges in the participants’ workplaces. Some questionnaire answers suggest the importance of bringing awareness to others in the groups and of ways to communicate. Participants from Samverket Workshops S1 and S2 tried to set up a dialogue group at Samverket, to keep exploring Bohmian dialogue (Bohm 2004) in order to address communication challenges at work. However, only one dialogue meet-up occurred, which could be due to the participants’ lack of time.

**Sensing and responding to intersubjective dynamics**

Nina and I reflected on becoming more flexible in our facilitation throughout the workshop series, to build stronger trust and relationships with the group of participants. In Samverket Workshop S3, we explicitly made flexibility part of the workshop design, and my role as a facilitator was to sense the group dynamics and propose changes to the activities in relation to the intersubjective nuances of the group. For instance, the co-facilitators of Samverket Workshop S3 had planned too much content for lectures, which needed to be reduced during the workshop for the sake of time and to keep participants engaged. Participants’ feedback on the workshop methods given in questionnaires (S3) also indicated the importance of breaking up the lectures and of being attentive to intersubjective nuances of the group:

I loved it all. Super interesting way to combine play with concrete experience. Beautiful combo of body and intellect. Would have loved to have a bit more participation during the presentations.

Mostly excellent and appropriate – I appreciated Laura’s interventions to break up long periods of speech with interactive exercises – perhaps aim for no more than 20 minutes of speech at a time? Tell participants there will never be more than 20 minutes at a time?

I love them. Maybe some more experience-based practices in between the dialogues. Especially after lunch when the “sleepy” digestion mode starts.

Being adaptive and flexible as facilitators in relation to the workshop plan was important, in case one planned too much of an activity and had to be responsive to the groups’ needs and engagement. Since there were three workshop facilitators who had not all worked together before,
there were added challenges in flexibly adapting the workshop structure. In some situations, I prioritised making room for all facilitators by not breaking up presentations, rather than proposing changes in relation to my impressions of the participants’ engagement.

Furthermore, while sensing the intersubjective dynamics was important in our facilitation practice, this did not mean that we always interpreted these dynamics correctly or responded appropriately. In one example, I thought that one of the participants wanted to speak during a dialogue exercise (Samverket Workshop S2). My response was to ask her twice in the group whether she might want to share anything, which she declined. At the end of the workshop, the participant was crying in another part of the co-working space. I realised that I might have misinterpreted her emotional process as her wanting to share something with the rest of the group. Group dynamics can be misinterpreted, and in this example I could have responded more carefully so as not to put a participant on the spot.

**Context and experimental workshops**

The experimental nature of the workshops, which included artistic and movement methods, was new to some participants and was in contrast to the people sitting in meetings in nearby office spaces, visible through glass walls. During Samverket Workshop S2, participants attempted to interact with people in a nearby meeting while doing a movement exercise. However, the people in the meeting appeared to be ignoring them, according to the participants. The workshop discussions focused on the contrast between the workshop activities and “everyday work”, as well as on the challenges of implementing such activities in the workplace. Samverket Workshop 3 specifically identified challenges to being playful at work, including concerns about being perceived as “not serious” (one participant), norms and habits (six participants), lack of time (six participants), venue and space (two participants), mind-set (two participants), and fear of judgement and penalties (two participants). The context dependency of the workshop methods was a recurring discussion point, and how to implement the methods in the workplace was also addressed in the workshops.

Despite the contextual challenges, participants demonstrated the desire to continue to use the workshop methods in their life and work. For instance, participants responded to the question “How did you feel during the workshop and what questions came up for you?” in the following way:
Inspiring. The brain has been refreshed. How can we get more of such relationship-based learning activities in my organisation? (S1)

(Original: Inspirerande. Hjärnan har blivit uppforskad. Hur kan vi få mer av sådan relationsbaserade lärande aktiviteter i min organisation?)

It was inspiring and it aroused a desire to explore more, for example, meditation, dialogue. (S1)

(Original: Det var inspirerande och väckte lust att utforska mer t.ex. meditation, dialog.)

I felt really well. One question was how I can do more of this. One reflection is that I did not think so much, I just acted. (S2)

I became more and more present. The feeling of safety, connection, and trust was strong. My question is how we can create this condition every day in everyone by starting with small rituals. (S2)

(Original: Att jag blev mer och mer närvarande. Känslan av trygghet, gemenskap och tillit var stor. Min fundering är hur vi kan skapa detta tillstånd varje dag hos alla genom att börja med små ritualer.)

Amazing, love it, liberating. Can we do this really big in the public sector? It would make a total change. (S2)

Very happy, joyful and playful. How can I really take this into the organisation? Feeling totally at ease in the trust-based environment created by the facilitators and participants. (S3)

I felt good and relaxed curious. How can I explore, understand, and test more of this, and also turn it into practice to show alternative ways to think and act in my agency and the broader public administration? (S3)

Despite the identified challenges of using the methods and implementing self-leadership and trust-based leadership in everyday work contexts, participants were motivated to keep exploring these methods and topics. This motivation resulted in ongoing collaboration between Nina, me, and a group of workshop participants in writing a funding application. Two purposes of the funding application were to continue joint learning and to develop self-leadership and shared leadership in public-sector organisations.
Summary of studies and results

The following table summarises the results of the studies.

Table 6. Results of the studies included in the thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Selected results concerning relational sensitivity when staging situations of joint inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design experiments</td>
<td>- The role of the facilitator and participants in supporting joint inquiry (encouraging contributions, emotional expression, and self-disclosure) through listening and follow-up questions, or in hindering joint inquiry (assertive and dominating participation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Attention to how materials, artefacts and activities can support or hinder reflection in joint inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Context dependency and appropriateness of staging using experimental material artefacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>- Developing three perspectives and associated aspects of relational sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A collective process to sense and share experiences and impressions of intersubjective dynamics was important for relational sensitivity, to understand multiple points of view and needs in the meetings for joint inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Despite the intention to promote inclusion through relational sensitivity, there was exclusion. The collective analysis was important in order to understand these experiences and collaborative dynamics.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The Ofman model was useful in the collective analysis. The collaborators struggled to use the terms poise and punctuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Embodied awareness, i.e., sensing tensions, was important for me in noticing and negotiating different interests and perspectives in the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Relational sensitivity as a collective process was important in order to become aware of intersubjective dynamics and adapt the workshop to various needs (C1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blivande Workshops</td>
<td>- Affective intensities, i.e., tensions, were remembered and journaled, to study relational sensitivity (C1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C1–C3)</td>
<td>- My focus in staging and facilitation was on using materiality and space to support interpersonal relationships (C2 and C3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- When facilitating, my attention was on including every participant in the conversation, noticing that some participants spoke more and others less (C3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- There were conflicting commitments when staging, such as to including students early in the container design process although the building permit had not yet been issued (C3).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Samverket Workshops (S1–S3) | Reflexivity was important for the practitioners when staging the workshop series, in order to reflect on and adapt our own expectations to outcomes and to participant feedback.  
- Participants were introduced to activities to draw their attention to how they should participate in relation to others, such as through Bohmian dialogue. Such exercises were considered important in the participants’ workplaces, so participants could better listen to others and be aware of ways of communicating.  
- Participants said that the movement exercises deepened their connection and communication with each other.  
- Being attentive and responsive to intersubjective dynamics when facilitating was important in order to adapt the workshop plan when too much of an activity had been planned and in relation to participants’ needs and engagement.  
- The context dependency of the workshop methods was a prevalent discussion point throughout the workshops. |
Summarising discussion

In this chapter, I will discuss the results of my practice-based studies in relation to previous research on participatory design. In this way, I will discuss my research questions and how this research contributes to the body of knowledge on staging situations of joint inquiry.

Perspectives on relational sensitivity

The following perspectives on relational sensitivity are based on the \( I \), \( We \), and \( It \) perspectives of the Ofman (2013) model, and the literature review identified various aspects with which to discuss these perspectives. Using these aspects, I discuss my own practice-based studies, in the context of RQ1: “How can relational sensitivity be understood when staging situations of joint inquiry?”

**Sensitivity to self**

The first perspective that I discuss as a way to understand relational sensitivity when staging joint inquiry is *sensitivity to self*. This perspective focuses on the practitioners’ and participants’ awareness of themselves in relation to others and the joint inquiry process, and is encompassed in the \( I \) perspective (Ofman 2004). Practitioners, in this thesis, refers to those staging situations of joint inquiry, which involves organising, designing for, and possibly facilitating situations in which people deliberate on their situations, explore alternative futures, and imagine possible collaborations. The \( I \) or “subjective” perspective refers to individual experiences, such as thoughts, emotions, memories, and sensations.

**Practitioners’ reflexivity**

*Reflexivity as sensitivity to self* has been a key aspect of my later studies, specifically in the literature review, Back-stage Process, and Blivande and Samverket workshops. In this context, reflexivity denotes attentiveness to one’s assumptions, values, commitments, and embedded power in situations that are implicit in methodological and ethical decision-making (Pihkala and Karasti 2016). In the Samverket Workshops, the practitioners identified reflexivity as a crucial aspect of their staging practice to reflect on and adapt the design and processes of joint inquiry within the workshops. For instance, we discussed how the prototyped rituals and practices in Samverket Workshop S1 were not implemented by the participants at Samverket as we had expected. Instead, we adapted our expectations and workshop designs so as not to focus on...
implementing rituals, in response to the observations and feedback from participants.

Similarly, in the Blivande Workshops, the practitioners’ reflexivity involved considering the power relations between practitioners and participants and adapting the workshop design accordingly. For instance, the practitioners asked students to organise and facilitate Blivande Workshop C2 with the intention of distributing responsibilities and the power to influence the early stages of the container village design. Reflecting on power relations when staging influenced our coordination of the workshops, while also recognising the inherent power imbalances. In Blivande Workshop C3, reflexivity involved critically evaluating practitioners’ conflicting commitments of wanting to include students early in the design process of the container village while also not taking people’s time and building expectations for a project that might not be actualised due to not having a building permit.

The focus on reflexivity in the above studies coheres with research from the literature review that highlights the ethical and methodological implications of practitioners’ situated judgements and decisions-making (Akama and Light 2018; Barcham 2021; Malinverni and Pares 2016; Pihkala and Karasti 2016; Speil et al. 2019; Steen 2013; St John and Akama 2022; Tjahja and Yee 2021). In both the Blivande and Samverket workshops, the practitioners’ relational sensitivity entailed reflecting on their role in the joint inquiry process and on the related issues of power, expectations, and commitments that are part of decision-making. These deliberations informed the practitioners’ choices in the design of the workshops.

Moreover, in my studies, reflexivity also involved the practitioners’ reflections on their ways of being and how they influence building relationships with participants. In the literature review, the researchers identified important ways of being for practitioners, in order to build ethical and long-term relationships in participatory design processes. These ways of being include: openness to other ways of doing and being (Hakio and Mattelmäki 2019; St John and Akama 2022; Tjahja and Yee 2021), embodied empathy for others’ experiences (Ho et al. 2011), and vulnerability for cultivating mutuality and reciprocity (Petrella et al. 2020) (see Paper VI, on p. 9). My practice-based studies, for example, Museum Teatime and the Samverket Workshops, emphasised the practitioners’ vulnerability in situations of joint inquiry in relation to revealing their personal selves and participating in activities that involve self-disclosure. Although this may not be the case in all contexts, in Samverket, we considered vulnerability to be important to our ways of
facilitating, by participating in the activities and openly sharing our personal stories, in relation to establishing more equal hierarchies and relationships with the participants.

Relational sensitivity, when viewed from the perspective of sensitivity to self, can involve practitioners engaging in ongoing reflection on their role, expectations, commitments, power dynamics, and ways of being that impact the design of the workshops and the relationships among facilitators and participants. The insights into reflexivity mentioned above were obtained in my later studies, which could be due to my methods, including field notes, journal notes, and collective analysis, used to reflect on personal experiences and intersubjective dynamics. These insights also signify a progression in my staging practice from my Licentiate thesis (Gottlieb 2020), towards placing a greater emphasis on the persons who enact the methods and tools when staging joint inquiry.

Participants’ awareness of self and others

In my studies, I deliberate on the role of participants in shaping conditions of joint inquiry to support or hinder people’s participation and social cohesion. Although I do not focus on participants’ relational sensitivity in my studies, the present observations question the role of practitioners in supporting participants’ awareness of self and their impact on others. For instance, in my studies, assertive participation was observed to allow limited opportunities for other participants to speak (Tea Compositions) or was experienced by a participant as hindering the emergence of a sense of togetherness (Museum Teatime). In other examples, participants can be understood to have supported joint inquiry, where participants expressed feeling listened to and that participants and facilitators supported their vulnerability and trust (Museum Teatime and Samverket Workshop S3). These results indicate a role for participants in shaping conditions in which others have an opportunity to speak, be personal and vulnerable, and feel listened to in joint inquiry.

Considering the role of participants in shaping conditions of joint inquiry, it could be relevant for practitioners to design and facilitate joint inquiry processes that support participants’ awareness of and abilities to shape conditions of joint inquiry, for example, noticing their participation and impact on others. For instance, reflecting on assertive and dominating participation in my studies (i.e., Tea Composition, Museum Teatime, and Blivande Workshop C2) informed my staging practice to test methods that could support embodied awareness through noticing sensations, thoughts, and emotions (Simonsen and Jensen 2016). In Samverket Workshop S1, I introduced Bohmian dialogue (Bohm 2004)
to encourage participants to notice their ways of participating and impulses to speak, and to take a “step back” and listen to the group to see if anyone else wanted to speak. The participants in this workshop described the importance of such practices in their workplaces, where their meetings involved assertiveness and not listening to each other. The participants expressed a need for greater awareness of how they communicate and listen to each other. It could therefore be important to consider ways to support participants’ awareness of self and their impact on others when staging joint inquiry, to foster shared responsibility for shaping conditions of joint inquiry.

This focus on participants’ self-awareness was part of the literature review, in relation to Simonsen and Jensen’s (2016) work on embodied awareness. These scholars claim that embodied awareness is important for participants’ “genuine participation”, so that they can understand and express their authentic interests and needs in a participatory design process. Their empirical research, however, focuses on the practitioners’ embodied awareness. Similarly, in the Back-stage Process, my empirical material focuses on my own embodied awareness as a practitioner in relation to expressing and negotiating diverse interests in the situation of joint inquiry. To develop this research, future research could further explore staging practices focused on participants’ embodied awareness and its role in identifying interests and needs in joint inquiry.

**Sensitivity to intersubjective dynamics**

The second perspective that I discuss concerning relational sensitivity when staging joint inquiry is *sensitivity to intersubjective dynamics*. In my studies, this perspective focuses on the practitioners’ awareness of group dynamics and is encompassed in the *We* perspective of the Ofman (2013) model. The *We* or “intersubjective” perspective in this thesis refers to what happens between individuals, i.e., their interactions, dialogue, common values, relationships, and cultures.

**Practitioner’s sensitivity to intersubjective dynamics**

In my studies, relational sensitivity involves the practitioner’s *sensitivity to intersubjective dynamics* to support inclusion. For example, in Blivande Workshop C3, some participants were more reserved and some were more talkative. By noticing these dynamics, my response as a facilitator was to ask impromptu questions to involve more reserved participants, and to talk to them during breaks to help them feel more comfortable and included. Supporting the inclusion of participants in joint inquiry also involved noticing and responding to tensions in the group. In Blivande Workshop C1, I noticed and addressed tension in the group,
which led to identifying a different need for the workshop and to the facilitator adapting the workshop plan. Relational sensitivity in my staging practice thereby involved being attentive and responsive to intersubjective dynamics to support the inclusion of participants in the situation of joint inquiry. This type of relational sensitivity is similar to Akama and Light’s (2018) description of attuning to intersubjective nuances of the group, to respond to the emergent dynamics and adapt activities in design situations.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the practitioner may not interpret dynamics correctly or manage to include everyone’s perspectives. For instance, in Samverket Workshop S2, I misinterpreted a participant as wanting to speak during a dialogue exercise. In the Back-stage Process, despite the practitioners’ intention to include diverse perspectives in the joint inquiry, members felt excluded due to their divergent interests. Given that intersubjective dynamics require multiple perspectives and cannot be understood from a single vantage point (Détiéenne et al. 2012), it could be important to collectively deliberate on and evaluate collaborations to develop sensitivity to intersubjectivity. The collective analysis (Back-stage Process) and the explicit sharing of impressions of the intersubjective dynamics (Blivande Workshop C1) were important in order to deepen group awareness of the various experiences and to adapt the workshop. Such processes of collective evaluation, however, may not be suitable in all contexts and situations, some of which may require a higher level of safety and trust.

Sensitivity to various aspects of intersubjective dynamics has been highlighted by other researchers. These aspects include emotions (Balaam et al. 2019), affect (Ehret and Hollett 2016), shared values (Agid and Chin 2019), trust (Hakio and Mattelmäki 2019; Petrella et al. 2020; Sandman et al. 2020; Tjahja and Yee 2021; Zhang et al. 2022), and power dynamics (Agid and Chin 2019; Branco et al. 2017; Bellini et al. 2019; Del Gaudio et al. 2020; Kelly 2019; Pitt and Davis 2017; Sandman et al. 2020; Speil et al. 2019; Taoka et al. 2021; Van Mechen et al. 2014). Power dynamics, in particular, is a recurring theme in participatory design research, highlighting power imbalances between participants or between practitioners and participants with diverse worldviews and cultures.

**Sensitivity to materiality and process**

Lastly, the third discussed perspective on relational sensitivity when staging joint inquiry is *sensitivity to materiality and process*. This perspective focuses on the practitioners’ and participants’ awareness of
materiality and process and on how they affect the subjective and intersubjective dynamics. This perspective is encompassed in the *It* perspective (Ofman 2013) and refers to the “objective”, including the observable and measurable, such as material things, observable activities, and behaviours.

**Materials, artefacts, and activities for reflection**

The results of the design experiments reported in my Licentiate thesis (Gottlieb 2020) indicated ways in which both participants and practitioners were sensitive to how materials, artefacts, and activities supported or limited reflection on a topic. In Collaborative Landscapes, Fabric Landscapes, and Cookie Teatime, I paid attention to how the materials used in collaging activities encouraged reflection on the topic of “co-production” by prompting diverse metaphors. This attention to materiality to support reflection included testing different time frames, formats, additional utensils (e.g., scissors and glue), and various materials (e.g., paper, fabric shapes, and food). The sensitivity to materiality and process also involved drawing attention to how materials and metaphors limited reflection. Participants in the above design experiments said that the static materials limited their abilities to visualise the evolving nature of co-production. They suggested using more flexible materials or modes of expression, such as malleable 3D visualisations (Fabric Landscapes and Cookie Teatime) or the body in dance (Fabric Landscapes).

This sensitivity to the design of material, artefacts, and activities is demonstrated in participatory design research that emphasises the role of different kinds of tools, techniques, and methods in supporting reflective processes (Sanders and Stappers 2012). This includes considering ways to design different types of artefacts and activities for different topics, such as tools for dreaming, mapping, feeling, visioning, or storytelling (Sanders 2000). Relational sensitivity when staging situations of joint inquiry can involve drawing attention to the relationships between the materials, artefacts, and activities, and to how these support or hinder reflections on a particular topic.

**Materiality and activities for intersubjective dynamics**

*Sensitivity to materiality and process* involves recognising how these materials and activities can support social cohesion, such as by providing an opportunity for each participant to be heard and encouraging participation and deeper communication. For example, in Cookie Teatime and Collaborative Landscapes, creating ambiguous visualisations of co-production resulted in laughter, metaphors, and
follow-up questions among participants. The Samverket Workshops also had an impact on building trust and deepening communication between participants, as noted by both participants and practitioners. In Museum Teatime and Blivande Workshop C3, participants utilised generative tools to create drawings on placemats and portraits, respectively, allowing them to present their artefacts and be listened to by others. As described by Sanders (2000), presenting and making things using generative tools gives participants an opportunity to introduce themselves and be heard. The attention to how materiality and process relate to social cohesion is also explored in participatory design research studies, in which workshop designs incorporating commensality, poetry writing, and spatial arrangement are used to foster trust, safety, togetherness, and conviviality (Clarke et al. 2019; Bustamante Duartea et al. 2021; Branco et al. 2017; Akama and Light 2014; Ramírez-Galleguillos et al. 2022).

While the above findings focus on how materials and activities stimulate social cohesion, materiality can also refer to the human body and its relation to power dynamics. Other participatory design researchers have explored how the use of design games and bodily postures can accentuate power differences (Agid and Chin 2019; Agger Eriksen 2014; Bustamante Duartea et al. 2021; Speil et al. 2019). Researchers describe being attentive to their own body positioning and even clothing in interactions with participants to mitigate power differences (Agid and Chin 2019; Bustamante Duartea et al. 2021; Speil et al. 2019).

**Context dependency of materiality and process**

Another aspect of sensitivity to materiality and process is the attention to context and the appropriateness of materials, artefacts, and activities when staging situations of joint inquiry. In Samverket Workshops S1–S3, Tea Compositions, and Coffee Compositions, participants discussed how the workshop methods’ appropriateness depended on the context. Participants described difficulties applying some of these methods in their everyday work, but found them to be more successful in experimental situations such as work trips (Coffee Compositions) or at Samverket, an experimental arena of collaboration. This context dependency of materiality and process explains why I remade and adapted materials and activities in each design experiment and workshop. This issue of the context dependency of artefacts has also been discussed in other studies, such as those of Star and Griesememer (1989) and Zamenopoulos et al. (2019).
Summary of perspectives

The following diagram brings together the three perspectives and associated aspects that have been discussed in the summarising discussion (Fig. 18).

Supporting practices of staging

I will now discuss ways in which these perspectives on relational sensitivity could support staging practices, answering the second research question: “How can the study of relational sensitivity inform practitioners in staging situations of joint inquiry?” By exploring, integrating, and developing perspectives on relational sensitivity, I propose that this study of relational sensitivity could support practitioners in staging joint inquiry by providing an overview of significant perspectives:

Sensitivity to self

- Self-awareness and reflexivity in relation to one’s own assumptions, values, behaviours, commitments, intentions, situated judgements, and their ethical and methodological implications
• Ways of participating and being, for example, being vulnerable, and how this influences relationships in joint inquiry
• Supporting participants’ awareness of self and their impact on others, to collectively nurture people’s participation in joint inquiry

Sensitivity to intersubjective dynamics
• Different intersubjective dynamics and how to respond to these, for instance, power dynamics, affect, trust, and interpersonal tension
• Using collective processes to interpret intersubjective dynamics with participants and practitioners, as intersubjective dynamics are not understood from a single vantage point

Sensitivity to materiality and process
• The supportive or limiting role of materials, artefacts, and activities (and the metaphors they enable) in reflecting on a topic
• The role of materials, artefacts, and activities in supporting social cohesion and intersubjective dynamics
• The role of the human body and materials in shaping power dynamics
• The context dependency and appropriateness of using materials, artefacts, and activities

By integrating and developing various perspectives on relational sensitivity, I contribute an overview of various aspects that can be important when staging and facilitating joint inquiry. This overview expands the original perspective from poise and punctuation (Akama and Light 2018), bringing other researchers’ practices, including my own, into dialogue and by deliberating on the perspective sensitivity to materiality and processes.

Another way in which this study of relational sensitivity could support practitioners’ staging is by illustrating the use of the Ofman model to draw attention to various relations in a given situation. Using the model to take field notes and journal notes in Samverket Workshops S1–S3 and Blivande Workshops C2–C3, I found it helpful in drawing attention to various dynamics in the collaboration. The model, presented as a Venn diagram, also drew my attention to ways in which the I, We, and It perspectives overlap when taking field notes (Blivande Workshop C2). I therefore propose that the Ofman model can be useful when staging in
order to reflect on different relationships in connection with situations of joint inquiry.

Moreover, I propose that the Ofman model could be useful in collectively deliberating on experiences and collaborative dynamics when staging joint inquiry together with practitioners and participants. In the Backstage Process, I found the model easy to use in the collective analysis to reflect on collaborative dynamics with the group staging the participatory design process. Initially, I used the concepts of poise and punctuation to discuss awareness of self and intersubjective dynamics in our work, but my collaborators in staging found these terms difficult to remember and understand. Using the model with the I, We, and It perspectives was, on the other hand, effective for discussing different collaborative dynamics. Based on my experiences, I would therefore suggest that the Ofman model could be useful to support practitioners in drawing attention to and discussing different experiences and dynamics in a collaboration.

It is, however, important to recognise that our personal background, training, personality, history, and commitments influence our sensitivities in various situations. This idea is highlighted in Akama and Light’s (2018, 2020) concepts of poise and punctuation. Even when using categories from a model, different people could be sensitive to different things. For example, my attention to materiality in Blivande Workshop C2 – to the room and shared material artefacts – was also a result of my professional practice of staging situations of joint inquiry and focusing on the role of material artefacts in my research. Therefore, my own training and practices play a significant role in why I am interested in and drawn to materiality in situations of joint inquiry, and not solely because I am using a model in my field notes.

The aspects (Table 7) that I have drawn together in the literature review of participatory design research can be useful for reflecting on one’s own staging practices. These aspects have constituted a basis for reflecting on and drawing together insights into relational sensitivity in my studies. These aspects were also useful in the Samverket collective analysis as a starting point for my collaborator and me to reflect on examples from our staging practices.

Table 7. Aspects of relational sensitivity from the literature review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of relational sensitivity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Embodied awareness</td>
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</table>
Similar to transitional theory (Redström 2017), my conceptualisation of relational sensitivity is intended to explain and be useful for design practices. This conceptualisation is not intended to be an all-encompassing framework, but rather represents perspectives that I have found significant in my own staging practices and in my literature review of participatory design research. Other perspectives could complement these, such as an attention to history and how it shapes power relations (Torretta 2022). By illustrating perspectives on relational sensitivity through the aspects from the literature review, I highlight various relations within staged situations in joint inquiry. Such an overview could be of significance for practitioners and design students, helping them develop an understanding of different perspectives on relational sensitivity.
Conclusion

The findings on relational sensitivity reported in this thesis highlight the importance of practitioners being attentive to relations in a given situation, to be able to respond to contingent situations of joint inquiry. This focus emphasises that practitioners are not separate from the methods that they enact when staging and facilitating joint inquiry, but play an influential part in how people deliberate on their current situations, imagine alternative futures, and collaborate.

In relation to my first research question, “How can relational sensitivity be understood when staging situations of joint inquiry?”, I offer three perspectives on relational sensitivity useful in discussing how practitioners can support staged situations of joint inquiry: (1) sensitivity to self (e.g., reflexivity, self-awareness, and embodied awareness), (2) sensitivity to intersubjective dynamics (e.g., attunement and responsiveness to group dynamics, affect, emotions, values, trust, and power dynamics), and (3) sensitivity to materiality and process (e.g., materials, artefacts, and activities for reflection, social cohesion, power dynamics, diverse contexts, and the role of the human body in power dynamics). While relational sensitivity is mostly discussed in relation to the practitioners – those staging and facilitating joint inquiry – my studies also highlight the importance of the participants’ awareness of themselves and their impact on others.

In relation to the second research question, “How can the study of relational sensitivity inform practitioners in staging situations of joint inquiry?”, I propose that the above perspectives and aspects concerning relational sensitivity provide a useful vocabulary and overview with which practitioners can reflect on their own staging and facilitation practices. Using Ofman’s (2013) adapted four-quadrant model, individually and with collaborators, could further support drawing attention to various relations in connection with joint inquiry. In my studies, I found this model to be more effective to use with collaborators than were Akama and Light’s (2018, 2020) concepts of poise and punctuation.

An interesting avenue for future research would be to extend this research to include participants’ relational sensitivity and its impact on joint inquiry. This topic would be valuable to explore at workplaces in public-sector organisations, where participants in my studies identified a need for better communication, especially in meetings. This research would be evaluated using interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and collective analysis. In this way, I aim to explore design and research.
practices that encourage people to care for, and be responsive to, the relationships they are in.
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