HORSEPLAY

Play and Playfulness in Adults

by Nelita Olsson

Horseplay, play and playfulness in adults

by Nelita Olsson

LUND UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

The intention was at first to design a toy with support and feedback from Brio and so on a visit to their head office in Malmö took place in the beginning of the project. After the visit and further reading about the subject, the project took a different turn. The most interesting aspect of toys became play and the feeling of it; playfulness.

The focus hence became on an emotion instead off an object. Further research was done through reading articles and books within the subject. To get get personal views and thoughts interviews were conducted. The research was then summarized in findings that came to use when beginning the ideation phase.

The goal of the project was, after the research, to design an object that would awake the emotion of playfulness with adults.

The choice of beginning the ideation phase by choosing a location was made. Thereafter ideas of objects, for the purpose of awakening the feeling of playfulness in a sophisticated and adult way, came up by sketching and brainstorming. The object of interest was at this point a swinging park bench. The project took a turn when the decision of letting the final design be fully about a play and to inspire adults to play like children. The final object therefore became a spring swing designed for adults.

CONTENT

INTRO

This project was initially started off with Brio as supervisors and so the initial thought was to design for children, as that is what Brio does (see appendix). The project started off with a visit at Brio and thereafter a plan and expectations of the project were defined. As the research began, reading about children and their behaviour, the focus of interest shifted. The research steered the project into play and playfulness and not only with children in mind, but also adults. At this stage the need of having Brio as supervisors felt less necessary and because of the Corona crisis the contact with the company became quite sporadic. Even though, Brio lead me into the path of playfulness and the designers at the company have been very friendly and helpful, so it felt necessary to give them a mention in the introduction of this project. The personal motivation, initial plan, research on the history of Brio and a summary of the visit can be found in the appendix of this documentation.

BRIO → CHILDREN → TOYS → PLAY → PLAYFULNESS → ADULTS

The theme for this project is playfulness. To be able to come up with a brief, research within the subject has been done. This, to get an understanding for what it is. Personally I think it could be a subject that will be hard to look at from an objective point of view. As with emotions, they are personal and my initial hypothesis is that playfulness is very much connected to emotions.

The initial research plan is to cover the subjects of toys, play and playfulness, as the belief is that they are connected. It is interesting how they are subjects that both children and adults have in common, but also something that differentiates us.
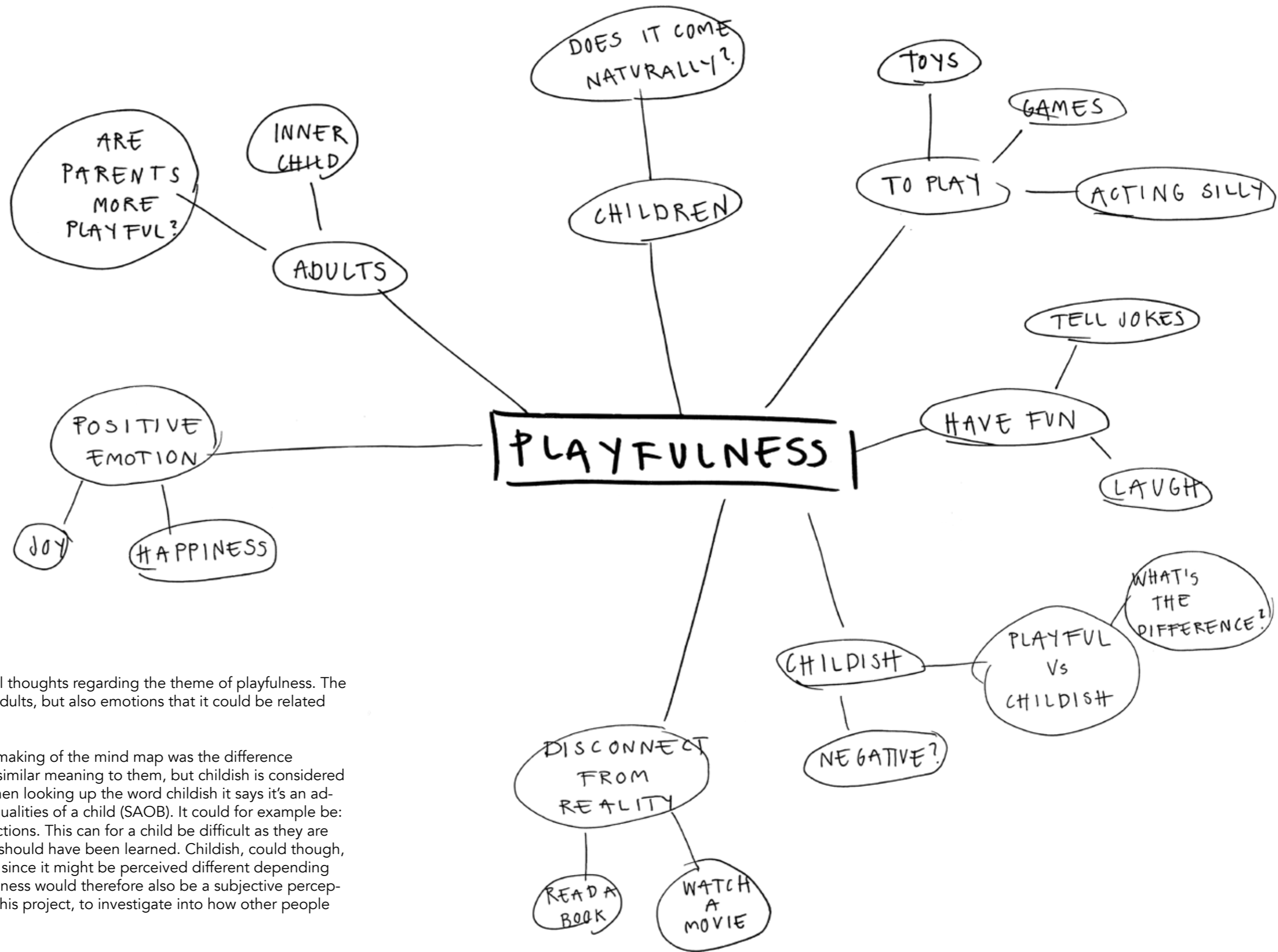
INITIAL THOUGHTS

A mind map was done based on personal thoughts regarding the theme of playfulness. The main thoughts were about children and adults, but also emotions that it could be related to, such as joy and happiness.

An interesting thing that came up in the making of the mind map was the difference between childish and playful. They have similar meaning to them, but childish is considered a negative trait and playful a positive. When looking up the word childish it says it's an adjective describing a person that has the qualities of a child (SAOB). It could for example be: not seeing the consequences of you're actions. This can for a child be difficult as they are not fully developed, but for an adult this should have been learned. Childish, could though, be a quality hard to objectively point out since it might be perceived different depending on personal perception or culture. Playfulness would therefore also be a subjective perception and so on it would be important, in this project, to investigate into how other people might perceive it.

The opposite word of playfulness is hard to define but could be things such as seriousness or grave. Acting serious is something often done by adults and it is an important quality to possess. The ability to be serious helps us to do things less enjoyable because we can see the consequences of not, for example, paying bills.

TARGET GROUP

Thinking about the theme of the project and also discussing it with others the conclusion is that children are a big part of playfulness. What would be interesting is to look at are adults, how they play and use playfulness and if there are benefits? Therefore the chosen target group for this project are adults.

It might also be important to define what type of adults that should be considered, as the target group for now is quite big. Further on, things such as surroundings and scenario could also be something that needs to be considered. At this point more research needs to be done to be able to make decisions like these regarding the project.

There will be a continuous comparison between adults and children. Children are to nature very playful and therefore it would be a good reference to use.

TOYS

↓

PLAY

↓
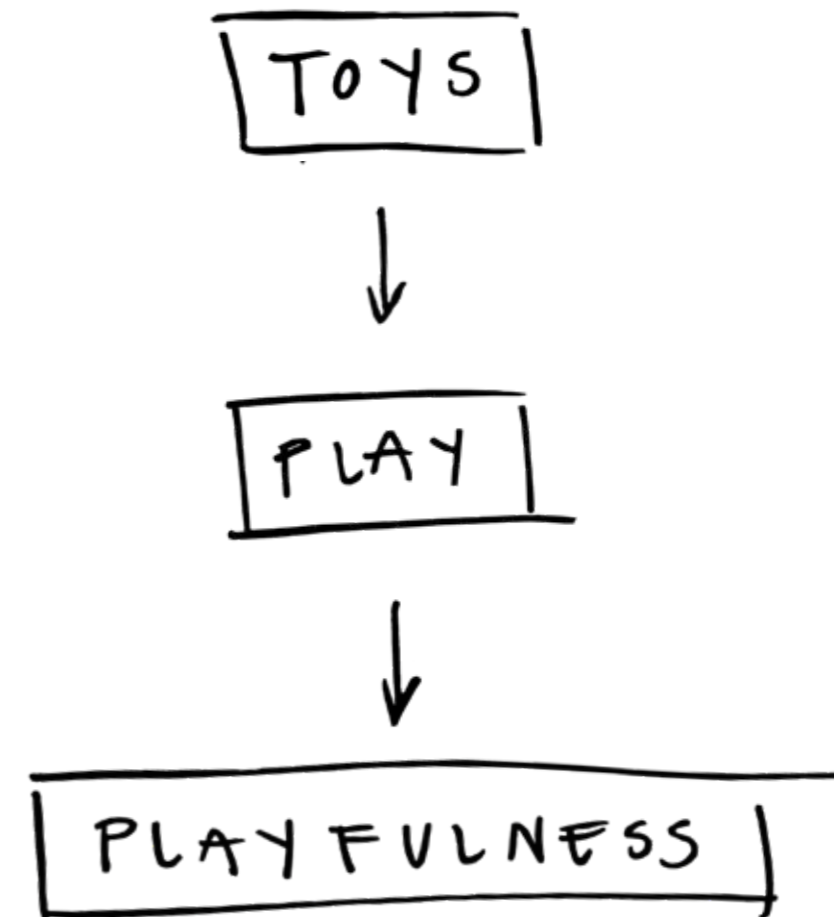
PLAYFULNESS

RESEARCH PART 1

WHAT IS A TOY?

To start off the research in this project I wanted to define more clear my initial thoughts on how I started with toys and then got into playfulness.

The first question asked was: What is a toy? According to Merriam- Webster a toy is something for a child to play with and the same explanation of the word is given in Nationalencyklopedin. So, in theory anything can function as a toy as long as children in play use it. Observing children you realise this is quite true, for example a bowl can function as a hat or a broomstick can become a horse. Looking at the object itself when not used by children in play, the object has another use, which it was originally intended for and is no longer a toy.

By doing a quick Google image search on toy you get a different answer to the question. The result is images of teddy bears, different types of building kits and various' of smaller objects in the form of cars and figurines from children's movies. These object are used in play by children but the main difference between Google's answer and the previous one is that these objects intended use is for playing and stays a toy even when their not in the hand of a child.

Another thing that is quite interesting when talking about toys is the fact that some things are not toys. Do you remember your parents ever saying "Dont play with that, it's not a toy!" This I think, comes from the fear of something breaking or that some things are not to be used in the context of play.

It's a hat!

It's a bowl!
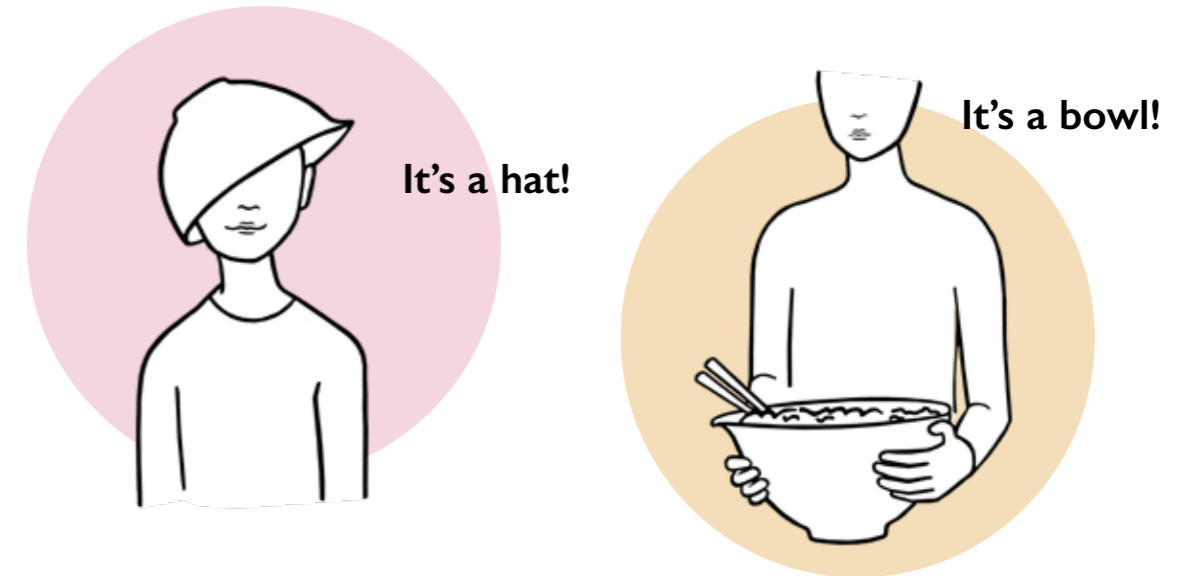
WHAT IS PLAY?

Observing children you can see that play is very often connected to real life. The games vary between children, some enjoy more quiet play and others prefer the wild running-around type of play. Sometimes I get a bit surprised by their imagination and wonder if they think the game is actually fun? Pretending to be a dying person does not seem very enjoyable. In the context of children, playfulness does not have to be laughing fun and sometimes playing a dead serious game is joyful for them.

Imaginary play stands children apart from adults. Seeing adults play horse or cook food in a sandbox is not a very common sight, if not in the company of a child. Imaginary play is a necessity in children's development as it is a way for them to process experiences, learn how to interact and understand the surrounding reality (Vårdguiden, 2018). So, it is not hard to see why imagination is so important for children. The needs of adults are different and I guess that is also why adults don't play in the same way.

What we think differentiates us from children might also be something that makes us alike. Adults tend to play games that are considered more sophisticated and complex consisting of rules and framing difficult to understand for children. However, these games can also be seen as an intricate version and development of games that we played when being young. (Chick, Yarnal & Purrintong, 2012) For example, take any type of play where you run around in teams trying to catch one another, such as cowboys and Indians or cops and robbers and this can easily be translated into adult versions such as paint ball or laser doom. The main thing different is the complexity of the set up and the props.
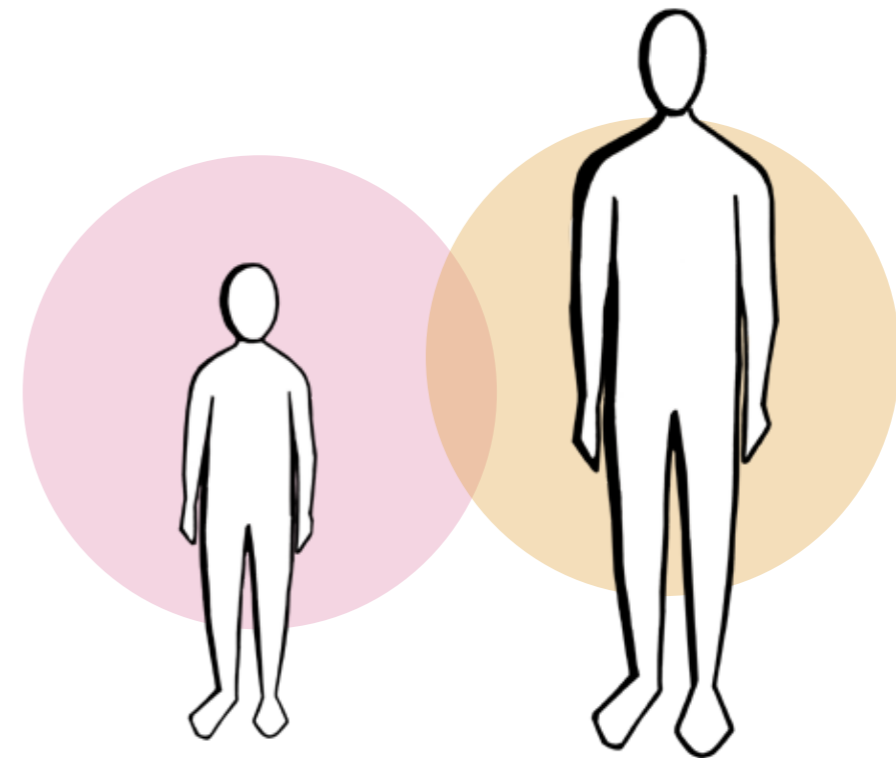
OBSERVATIONS

One thing done early in the project was an observation of a school yard. On the school yard there were children and teachers. As expected the children ran around impulsively and adults kept an eye on them by either sitting down or standing up. Occasionally you could see some of the teachers joining in on the play for a short while, to the joy of the children.

From personal experiences from working as substitute teacher on and off for the past ten years, joining in on the play as an adult is popular amongst the children. Playing gets you tired, especially if it is some sort of a running around type of play. The reason why I would occasionally do this is for the sake of the children and not for myself since I don't get very much out it.

The most interesting thing noticed in the observation was the movement and how much it differs between children and adults; children move and adults stay still. On of the reasons is probably because adults don't have the same energy levels as children and also be because the joy of it is lost.
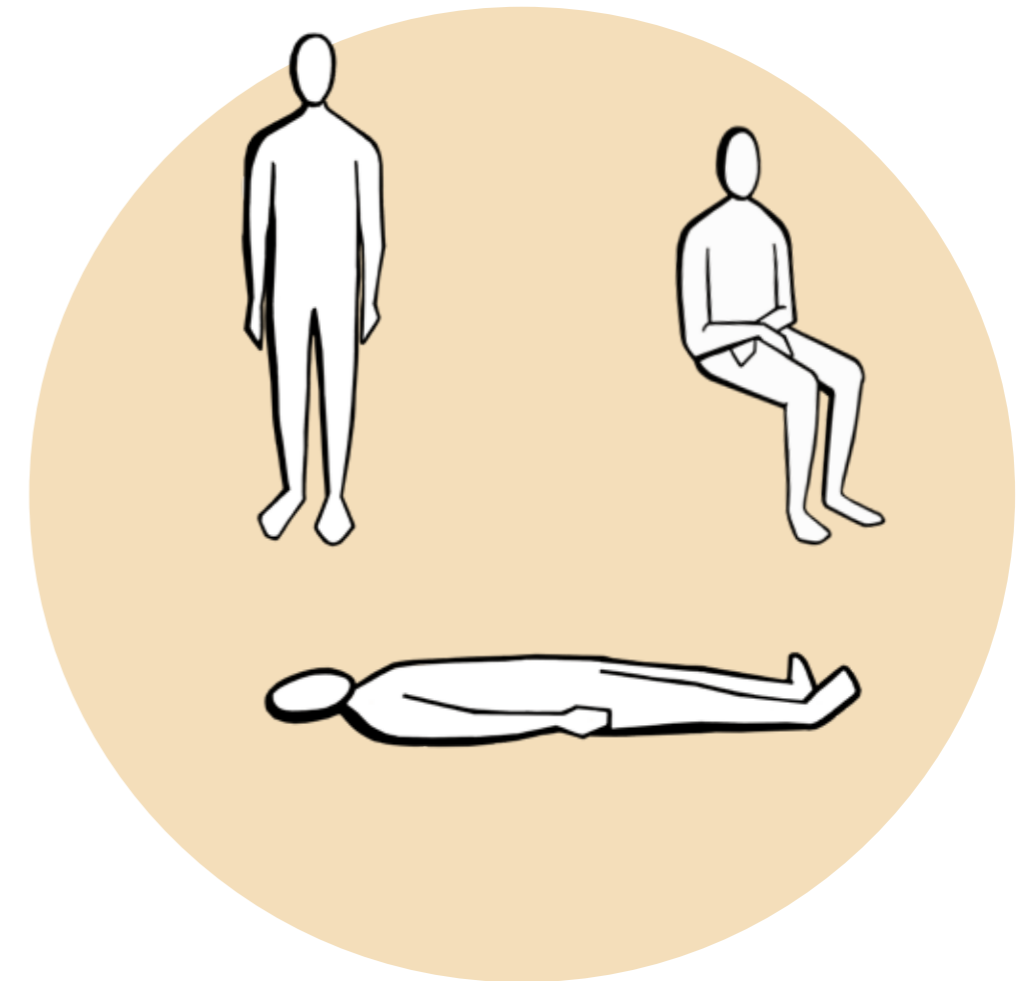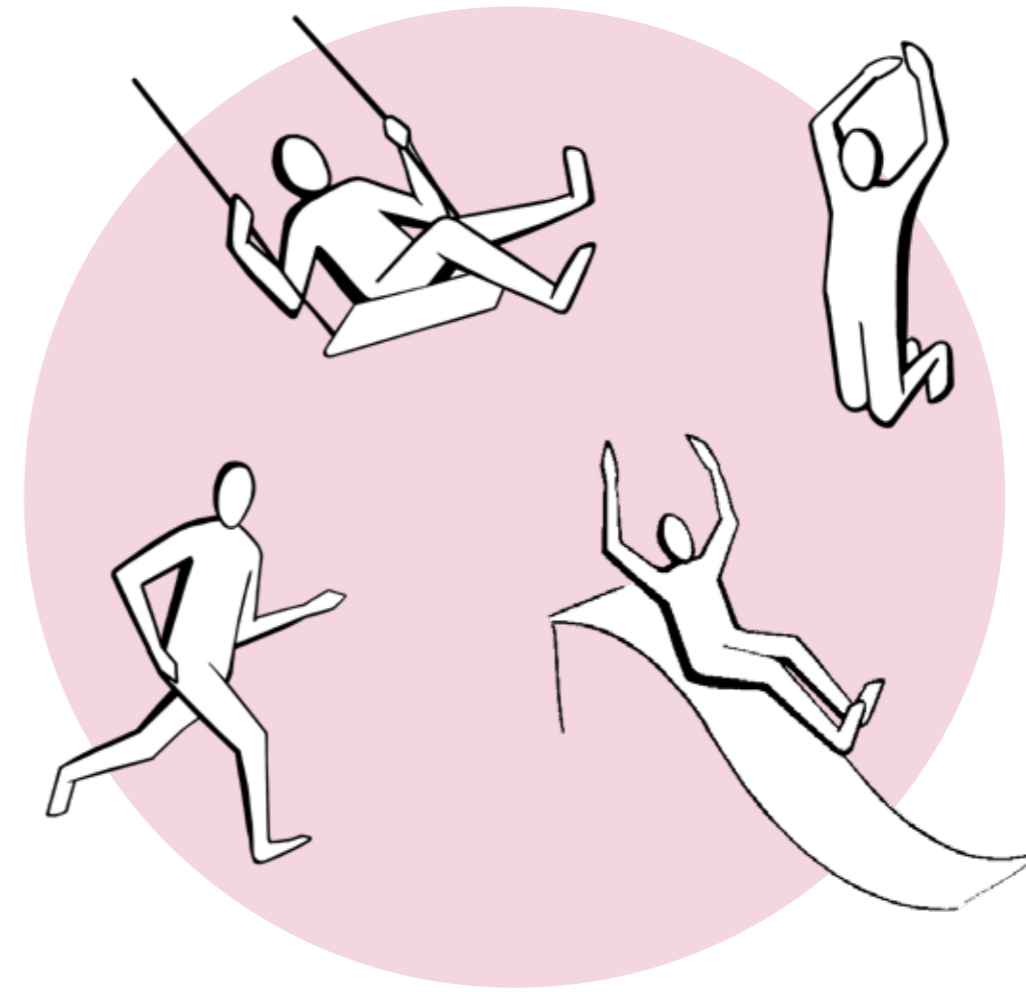
INTERVIEWS

To get other peoples perception of play and playfulness and to get a broader view on the topic interviews were done. Some of the interviews were conducted in groups and it was interesting to see how the mood changed when talking about play. Even after the interview was finished the talk about fun things to do continued. So to awake playfulness an easy thing to do is maybe just to talk about it?

15 people were asked what they do when they play, what they consider play to be and what playfulness is to them. The questions were not asked in a classical format but in more of a discussion form. Following are a few quotes taken from the discussions.

When do you play and how do play?

''Yesterday when me and my boyfriend were out walking in the woods, we pretended that the sticks and needles on the ground were lava. We jumped around on rocks and roots trying to avoid them''

''I recently started playing music in a band''

''In the summers, I enjoy building sandcastles on the beach.''

''The only time I play is with my dog, throwing balls. I also play with my nephew.''

''Sometimes I play board games with my friends.''

''I would say swimming, playing soccer, volleyball. It's borderline sports but I would also say it's a lot of play if you don't do it in an organized fashion.''

What is play to you?

''I think I play when I don't get anything out of it, when it's just for fun. That's when I consider myself to be playing. So that would be like laying puzzles. I also like escape rooms, that's just for fun and laughing and I guess some sort of role play.''

''I have a confession, I really like playing games and specifically games like Hide and Seek. But I feel like there's so many people that think they're grown ups so they don't play with me and I hate it. Make them play with me!''

''Paintball is in some aspects also play, it's just that it hurts.''

What do you think playfulness is? If you see it as an emotion, what is it to you?

''For me, when I think of playfulness I think of silliness.''

''Playfulness makes you feel free in a way.''

''There is no judgment in something that is playful.''

''It doesn't have a specific purpose to it other than enjoying it. It's not you performing a task. Like playing with Lego but not doing it by the blue print. Playfulness to me is doing something without a real set and goal.''
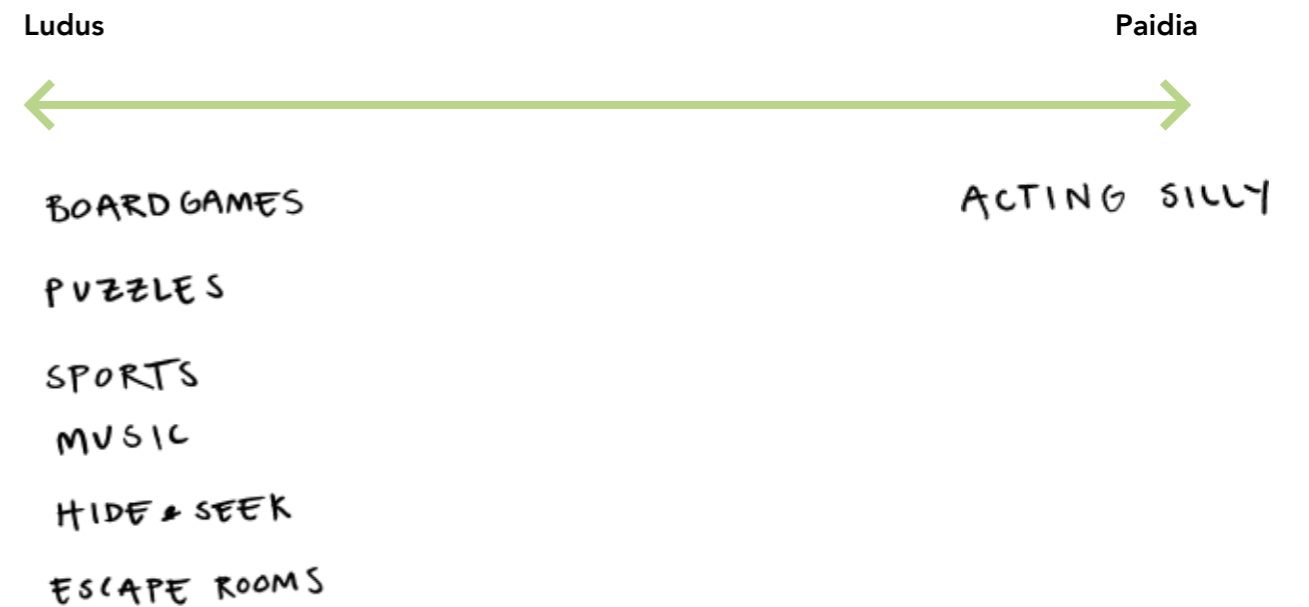
''I think when you play you focus more on the process than the result. It's an activity full of interactions with other objects, other people or just with yourself. You just enjoy the interaction in the process.''

''It's creative, right? I think we play a lot in our work (design), but other people don't really do that.''

PLAY AND PLAY (interview analysis)

What was interesting when asking people this question was the difference in language. Asking a non-Swedish speaker the question was: When do you play? And asking it in Swedish the question was: När leker du? The verb **to play** can, in Swedish, have two meanings, either **spela** or **leka**. The word **spela** is used for games that have rules, such as board games or sports, as well as activities that are not games, such as playing a role in a theatre or a musical instrument. **Leka** is the word used for activities that are more child-like and does not have a meaning or a goal. Hence, I believe, that this is the reason to why the answers, depending on language, were different.

Robert Caillois, a French sociologist introduced terms for the two different types of play in his book Man, Play and Games. **Paidia**, which is the carefree and impulsive game without rules, is the most similar to the play that in Swedish is called lek. On the opposite side is **Ludus**, which is the term for games that consists of rules and acquires skill and ingenuity. Ludus could be seen as the equivalent of the Swedish term spel. (Caillois, 1958/2001)

Ludus　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　**Paidia**

BOARD GAMES　　　　　　　　　　　ACTING SILLY

PUZZLES

SPORTS

MUSIC

HIDE & SEEK

ESCAPE ROOMS

From the interview, I placed the mentioned games on the scale Ludus to Paidia. You can clearly see that most of the games mentioned are Ludus-type games that consist of rules and guidelines. Playing music, which some might not consider being a very play-like activity, has many rights and wrongs. If music is not played on key or by the correct rhythm, the musician is not considered to be very talented. On the contrary, if the instrument is played without conception of what is right or wrong and the goal is to just make sound, it can be placed further towards Paidia on the scale.

Acting silly is placed by Paidia hence the difficulty to define what the activity consists of. Acting silly would be the opposite of being serious, and could therefore be things such as making jokes, having play fights, making odd noises or role-playing etc. It is hard to name games that are Paidia since they are not commonly defined or have names. So of course, if asking someone what they do for play, the answer will be activities that are easily described.

When asking people what they consider playfulness to be, I got answers that described emotions of a mental state such as the feeling of freedom, no judgment and no specific purpose. It gave me the perception that many people think that playfulness does not have to be a certain activity, but is more linked to the emotions that an activity awakes. This question moved the research into trying to figure out what exactly playfulness is and if it somehow can be defined.

WHAT IS PLAYFULNESS?

The word playful is an adjective, used to describe a person, animal or object. It is one who gladly plays, make jokes, is happy, rambunctious and cheerful. As a person can make jokes and an animal can play, the definition of the word, retrieved at The Swedish Academy's Dictionary (SAOB), is better suited for living creatures. For an object, which also can be described as playful, this quality must then lie in the eyes of the beholder and so awake the emotion of playfulness within the person.

WHY PLAYFUL?

As the word playful is seen as a positive personality trait, presumably the benefits would be positive. Chick, Yarnal and Purrington (2012) mention in their article that play, from a Darwinistic perspective, must have benefits otherwise it wouldn't have remained a trait. As noted, earlier research shows clearly how playfulness and play is beneficial for children, but how does it affect adults?

According to Magnuson and Barnett (2013) there is evidence that suggest that some people are naturally more playful than others and that this quality is embedded in their personality. Playfulness also relates to other personal characteristics such as higher intellectual, curiosity and creativity as well as qualities of lower strengths of self-control and restraint. Playfulness within adults could also be an enabler for other positive emotions. (R. Proyer, 2013)

If positive emotions come with playfulness there must be many benefits of spending time in this state of mind. Depression and stress are common factors of many adults today and reading articles regarding the outcomes of play and wondering if it has positive impact on these problems the question was answered. Research show that people that have higher personal qualities of playfulness experience less stress and find it easier to deal with such matters. (Magnuson & Barnett, 2013) Feeling mentally well and having a greater satisfaction with life is also related to playfulness. (R. Proyer, 2013)

PLAYFULNESS AND HUMOUR

In the current, very serious situation of Covid-19 that the world is in right now, it has been easy to see how people in bad times tend to be drawn to humour, especially through social media. According to Magnuson and Barnett (2013) playfulness has a comedic element to it, which might not be hard to see. Comedy and humour is having fun and laughing and for adults play is also closely related to this.

With humour we communicate common values with each other and laughing at the same things creates a feeling of belongingness. The need of belonging is in time of crisis especially great. Making jokes about difficult things is also a way to create distance to difficult thoughts and gives lighter perspective on what's troubling. (Strandberg, 2020)

As mentioned, playfulness and humour are related, and therefore the benefits of being humorous must fall under the same category of benefits of playfulness.

PLAYING AND BUILDING

At the interviews the word undemanding was heard many times when asking what play is. From this, a question arose, what happens if you try and make something without having any demands or conceptions on what the outcome should be? In other words, have fun and try to be as a child in a play context.

By scrap materials I made a few objects without purpose or function. The hope was that this would somehow be helpful for the continuing research, but unfortunately it wasn't. The conclusion of this is the importance of framing, even when designing for playfulness.
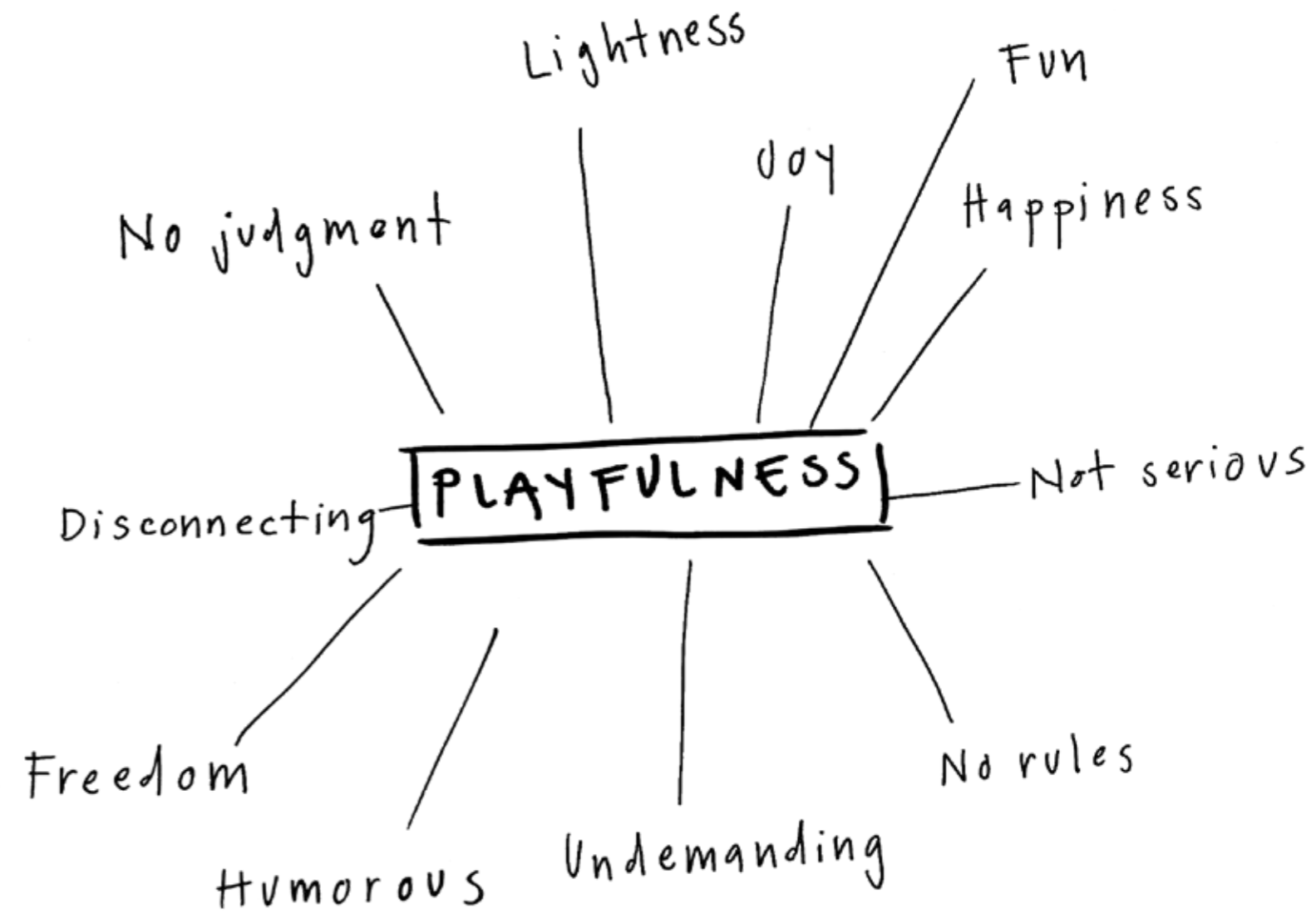
One thing interesting that did come out of if was not the actual built objects, but the reactions of the people I showed it to. Figure nr 3 from the top on the neighbouring page gave the most reactions. When clapping it together it makes a sound and someone said it would be good to use at a concert instead of your hands. So somehow, it does show that sometimes undefined object can awake creativity in usage

1

2

3

4

CONCLUSION PART 1

At this point of the research it was easier to define the concept of playfulness. As mentioned before, playfulness is a subjective perception and therefore it is important to emphasize the fact that the summary of the research in this project cannot be seen as a general view on the topic. The findings are based on a personal analysis of the research and interviews done so far.
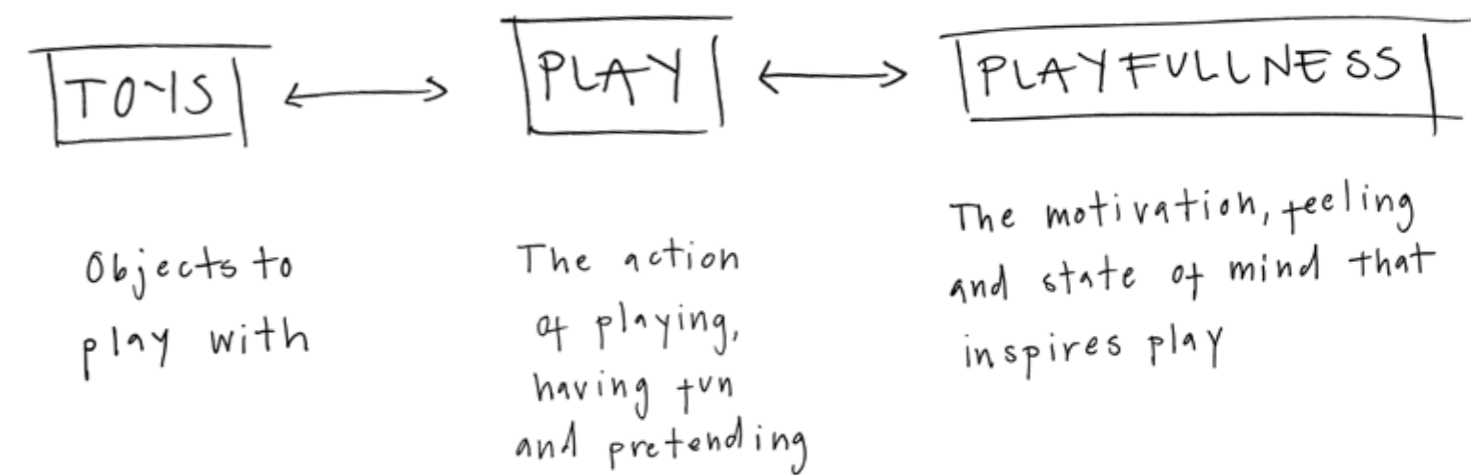
The conclusion at this point is that playfulness is very much connected to certain positive emotions, illustrated in a mind map on the neighbouring page. To be able to narrow down the focus of the research and so on move the project forward and start the ideation, a brief has to be written.

Lightness

Fun

Joy

Happiness

No judgment

PLAYFULNESS — Not serious

Disconnecting

Freedom

Humorous

Undemanding

No rules

BRIEF

To awake the emotion of playfulness within
an adult through an object.

The goal for this project is maybe not to design an object that is playful,
but awake the emotion of playfulness within a person. It could either be
through usage or just observation. So the question is now, how do you
awake this mental state? How do you awake a specific emotion through
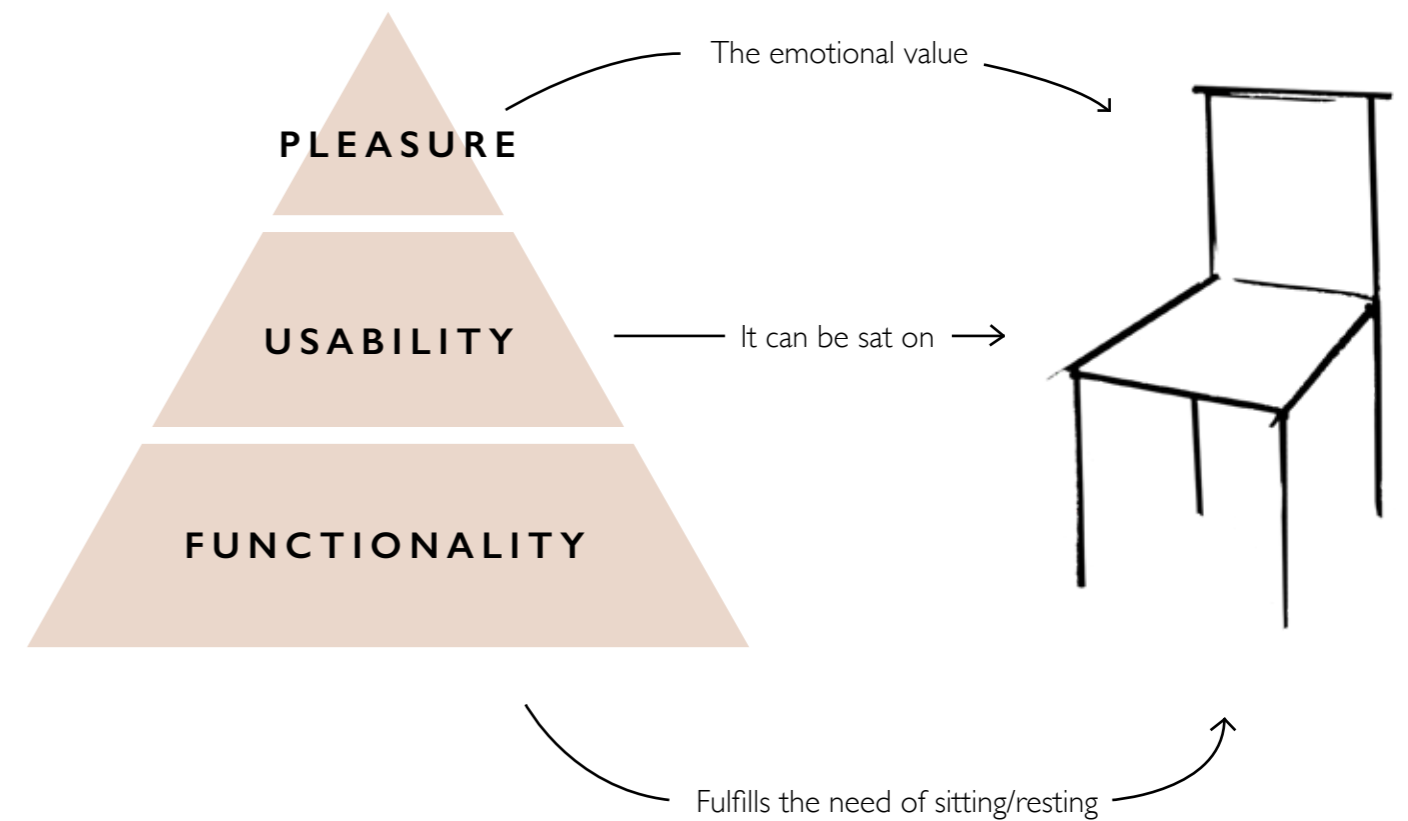an object?

TOYS ←——→ PLAY ←——→ PLAYFULLNESS

Objects to
play with

The action
of playing,
having fun
and pretending

The motivation, feeling
and state of mind that
inspires play

RESEARCH PART 2

EMOTIONAL OBJECTS

In Jordan's hierarchy of consumer needs, the emotional aspect of an object lies in the pleasure it gives the consumer. To further explain this theory a chair has been taken as an example.

Level one explains the importance of functionality with a product, and in the case of the chair the functionality lies in the fulfilling the need of sitting down. If the product has functionality you can then consider level two, the usability. The chair should be easy to sit down on, not break or be frail. For level three in the hierarchy Jordan explains the need of pleasure and this is where the emotional value of the product lies. Pleasure is a subjective emotion and in the case of the chair, the pleasure might not exist for some merely because they don't enjoy the aesthetics or might be very present since it was inherited from their grand mother.

For this project the most interesting aspect of an object is when playfulness is perceived by the consumer. Playfulness would be placed in the pleasure category in Jordan's hierarchy of consumer needs. If playfulness can be described as the mentioned emotions, a playful object or product would awake these emotions within the user. So, the question is: how do you design such an object?

PLEASURE — The emotional value

USABILITY — It can be sat on

FUNCTIONALITY — Fulfills the need of sitting/resting

PLAYFUL EXAMPLES

OBJECTS

Below are a few examples of existing designs where playfulness is present, but in different ways.

The bench gang designed by Phat Design, is an example where the playfulness lies in the form of the object. The benches are functional and usable, and by adding an angle to the legs they also become playful. It looks like the benches are in movement, an unexpected quality of furniture made for sitting.

The roll collection is a collection of outdoor furniture designed by AKTTEM. This is an example where the playfulness lies in the function of the object, hence difficult to see in the picture. The seat is made from rotatable aluminium pipes giving the action of sitting another dimension as it is possible to easy slide side to side. Again this is an example of where playfulness comes in the unexpected quality of furniture.

The pizza cutter bike is the example that stands out the most from the three. The reason is the usability. By giving the tool an unexpected shape, to make it playful, the consequence becomes lack of usability. To be able to use this type of tool for what it's intended for you need the handle to be tangible which the shape of a miniature bike does not fulfil.
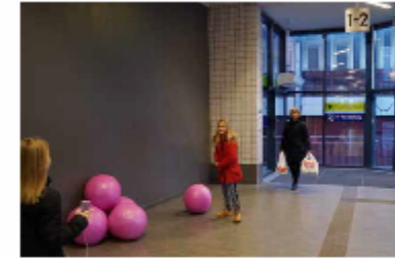
EVERYDAY CONTRASTS

This project was made by a student at IKDC in 2015 and the goal for the project was to give people a break from everyday life and the stress that comes with it. By placing out pink inflatable balls in a waiting hall at a bus station she wanted to see what reactions she could awake with the passer byers. People walked up to the balls to touch them, children started playing with them and some stood and looked at them. The reactions where more than what she expected and the most interesting thing was the smiles she managed to provoke. The balls became, for most people, a pause, even if just a short one. I think this projects shows clearly how contrasts in everyday life can interrupt routines and serious matters and become a break. It's a way to relax and disconnect if just for a short while.

It would have been interesting to see how and if the reactions would change during time. Would people get used to the pink balls and the effect of them slowly wear off?

MOOD CONFLICTS

Another thing read in the book Emotional Design, even if it was just a short mention, became interesting for this project. Norman talks about music and how it sometimes can annoy if it's too loud and feel intrusive if the mood it conveys conflicts with the listeners mood.

I think you can draw a parallel from this to playful aspects of objects and also to people. To demonstrate this I've taken a door as an example and tried to do alterations to it to make it playful. The playfulness is in this case is based on the theory of everyday contrasts earlier mentioned. By making the door handle over dimensioned it looks different from what you're used to seeing a door look like and for some this might be considered funny. Passing by the door it could be a playful add to something ordinary but for the person that have to use the door it would probably get annoying after a few times. The handle would make it harder to open and close the door and for that reason the playfulness will intrude on the function of the door.

On the far right door a second handle has been added, also a playful add to something ordinary. First time using the door you would probably be a bit confused but you will eventually remember what handle to use. In this case the playful add of an extra handle does not intrude on the doors function.

When it comes to people, I believe that throwing a ball at someone who is feeling stressed or not in the mood of playing would not be the best of ideas. Doing the same to someone who is susceptible to play you would possibly get a more playful reaction. Though this statement goes against the earlier theory based on the "pink balls", where the goal was to give people a break from stress, I think the success of that project lies in the subtle type of playfulness the balls convey; you could easily choose to ignore them because they are not thrown at you.

I think this is important for objects when designing for playfulness. Playfulness should not intrude on the function of an object or on the mood of a person and sometimes a subtle type of playfulness has the best impact on people.

CONCLUSION PART 2

By doing research many questions get an answer and this gives a clearer view on the topic. It also gives you a good base to stand on when moving into the ideation phase. Ideas does not come from nowhere, but from conclusions and findings in the research. Depending on the project the ideation can be based on found facts but also on personal analyses. The importance now is to narrow down and pick out the things that are found interesting and can come to use.

FINDINGS

To be able to create some sort of framing for the idea generation the most interesting findings of the research were summarized.

- Playfulness is a personality trait that follows us from childhood to adulthood, but in the latter takes on a different form. How you play changes and become more complex often consisting of rules and strategy.

- Playfulness is not one single emotion, but a cluster of different positive emotions. It varies from person to person but the one thing in common is the feeling of positivity.

- Research shows that playfulness has a positive impact on negative emotions, often experienced by adults, such as stress. A playful person has better coping mechanisms to deal with this.

- To experience playfulness a little bit of input could make a difference.

- The playful input can come through an object, by its aesthetics or function.

- Contrasts and unexpectedness in everyday life can also be a form of playful input.

- A subtle type of playfulness could be more effective on some people. Otherwise it could be experienced as intrusive or childish.

IDEATION

CHOSEN PATH

From the research I got a good list of things to think of when designing for play for adults and also things to avoid. It also answered the quite important question of why and so on there's a reason to designing within the theme.

It is quite impossible to design an object that covers all of the research and therefore you pick out, sometimes tiny, things from the research and move forward from that. Research can therefore be seen as an inspiration for ideas.

From the research done in this project the most important realization was that either the design is something that speaks like and to adults (option 1) or it can be something that goes in the direction of luring out the inner child within adults (option 2).

Option nr 1 would be an easier choice as research shows quite clear in what way adults prefer to play. Choosing this path could therefore result in very obvious objects such as board games or brain puzzles, which exists in abundance on the market. On the other hand, it could be seen as a challenge to think and design differently but still stay within the existing market of playful design for adults.

Option nr 2 would be more difficult since the way we play differs in many ways from the way children play. On the other hand, as this type of design is not present in everyday life of an adult, it could also be more interesting and different. It might also be the type of design that we need, the more carefree type of play that children often do.

Of course, there are many more ways to go but these paths were the most obvious ones and they also represent the way most of the research were conducted; children vs. adults. The chosen path was option nr 1, also mentioned as "luring out the inner child". The reason was that this path seemed like a more fun challenge and would hopefully result in something that could challenge the view of how adults play. Still, it is important to have the "no go's" in mind when taking this path.

Harder, more unexpected

Easier, obvious
Already exists on the market
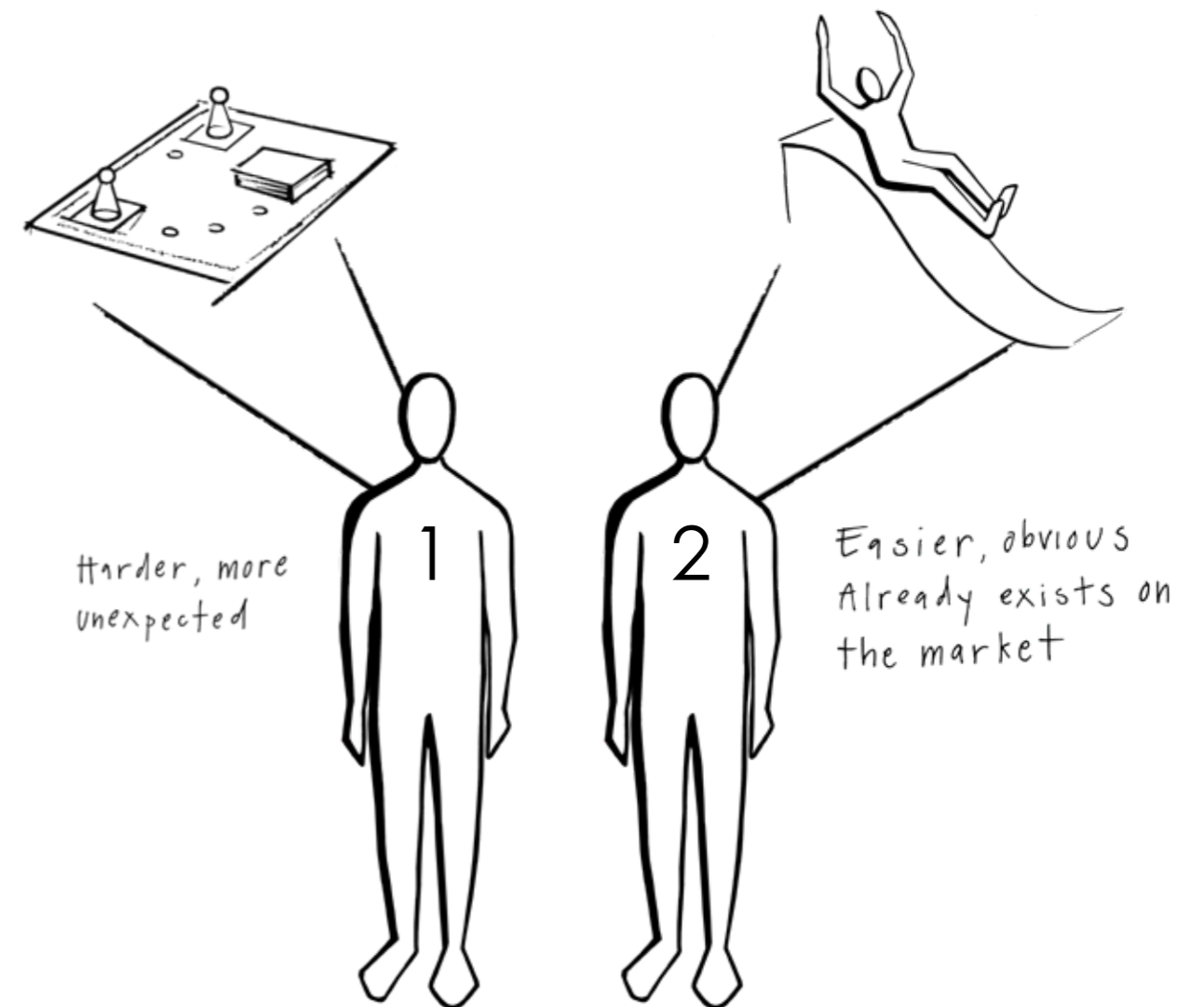
To further narrow things down three questions needs to be answered. When should we make adults play? Where should they play and how should they play? Best suitable for this project, as the brief is quite fluid, was choosing to answer the when and where-questions first as the how-question would be answered by the final design concept.
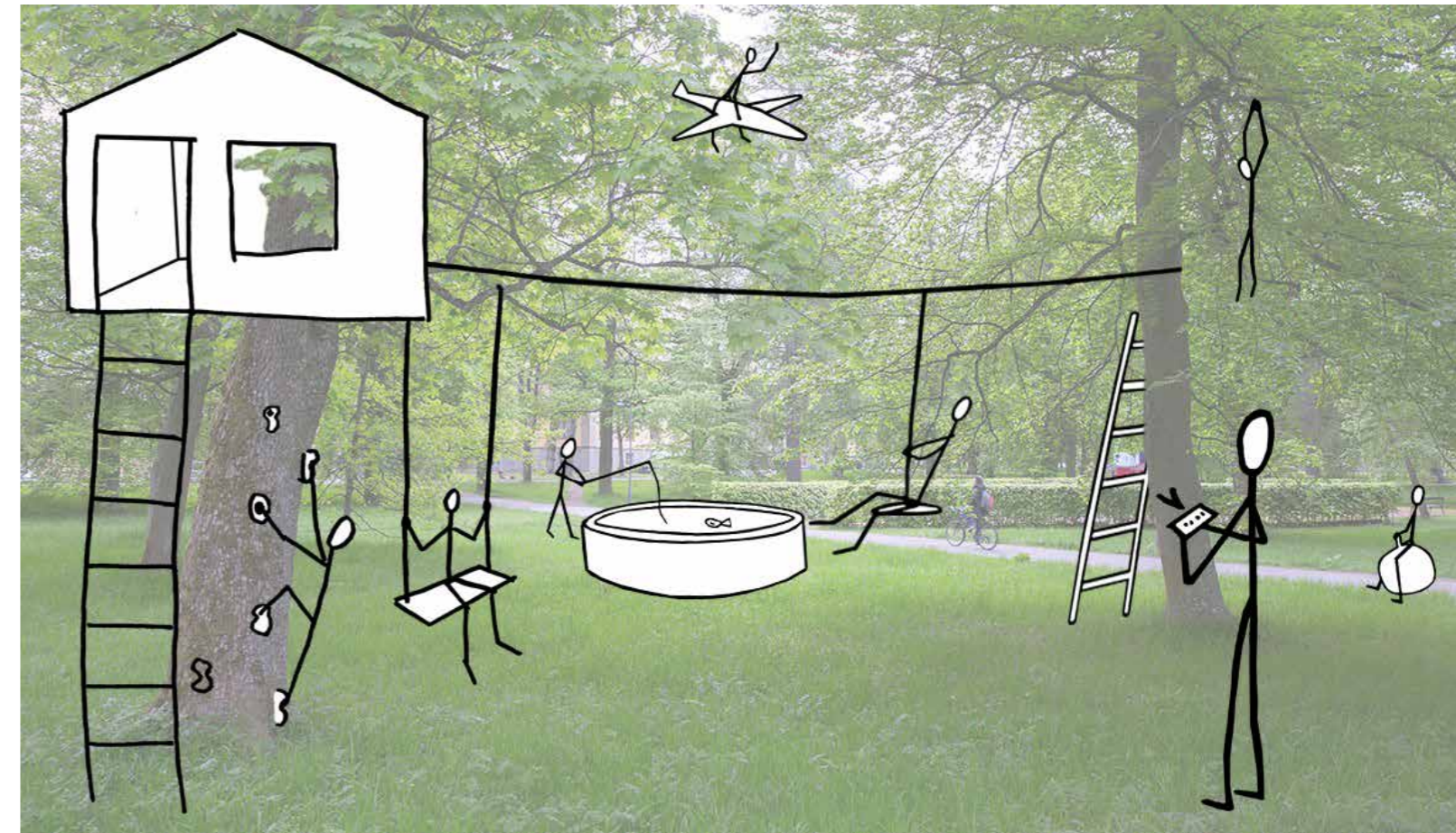

LOCATION

Lately I have been playing a board game called Ticket to Ride with my family. The first two times it was quite entertaining, but now after playing it five times it is not as fun anymore. The same thing goes with hearing a joke, the first time you laugh because you thought it was fun but what happens the second or third time you hear it?

As the brain naturally adapts to repeated experiences, which can be good but in the context of playfulness less so, I believe that playful objects have a bigger impact in environments where you might not be everyday. So choosing for example the home as a location would probably fit less well considering this. Placing a playful object in a home, would mean that the person in possession of it will eventually get used to how it functions and the playful value gets lost.

Another thing to also have in mind is the susceptibility of play, which raises another question; When would this object have the best impact? For example a train station is a place where people are usually in a rush heading somewhere and the same thing goes with many other places; they are not a destination but a place that you pass by on a mission of going somewhere else. Being susceptible to play is probably less likely when you have other things in mind and more likely when you actually have time for it.

Based on these arguments the park was chosen as the most suitable location for this object. The park itself is a destination and many people go there when the weather allows it. It's a place for relaxation and socialization. A playful object in this context would probably be where it would be most appreciated.

IDEA GENERATION
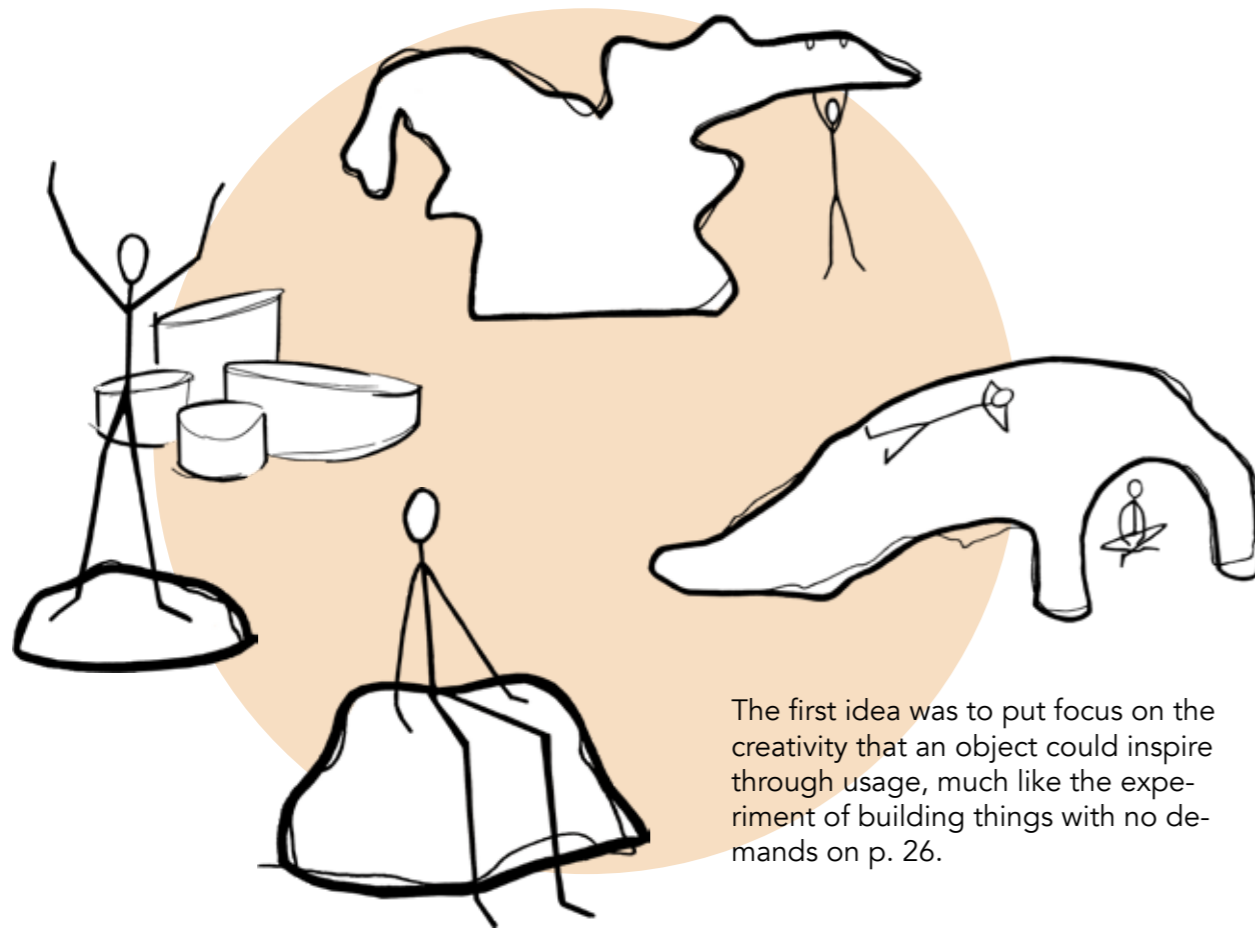
The first idea was to put focus on the creativity that an object could inspire through usage, much like the experiment of building things with no demands on p. 26.

On the other hand it felt like an object such as, could be too difficult for some to use and the point of it would therefore disappear.


The idea was then to create something similar, but with a more clear language of usage. Even though it would for some be fun to find ways to climb up on it, the following activities of sitting or lying would not be playful.
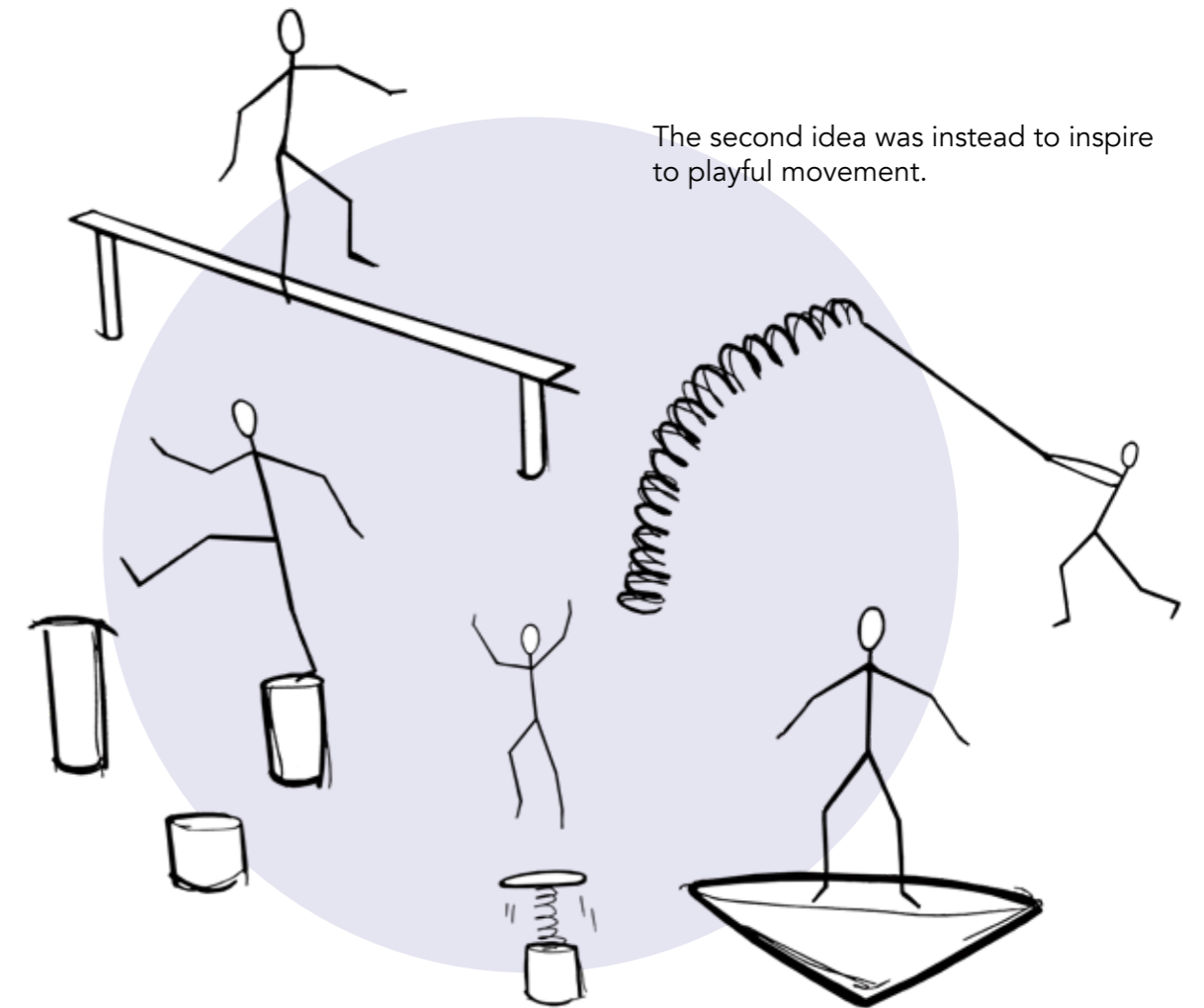
The second idea was instead to inspire to playful movement.

The worry became that such an object would be seen as a tool for work out and that is not the goal for this project.

Then the idea of toning down the acquired energy that has to be put in to create playful movement came about. But again, I did not want to create an object for relaxation, which a hammock is. Which means that the line between the two is quite fine.
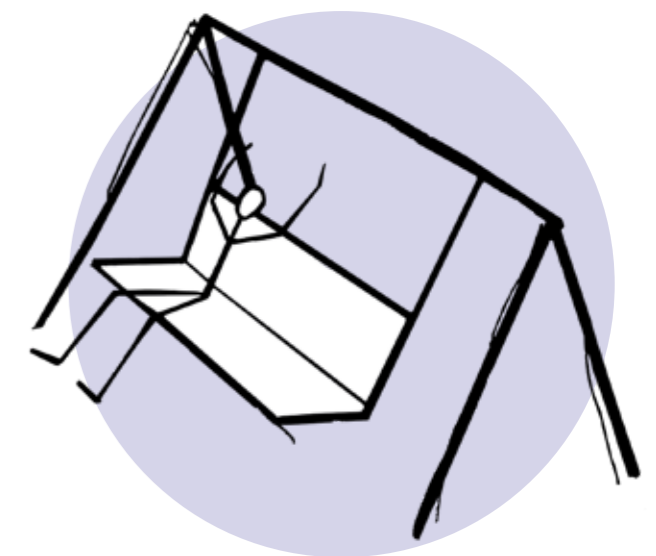
So, the idea was to create a design where you would sit down and play at the same time. This type of movement would be created using your legs and so on consume less energy. This type of play could be more appealing to adults as sitting down is the way adults usually play. It is also how we spend most of our time in comparison to children who prefer to be in movement.
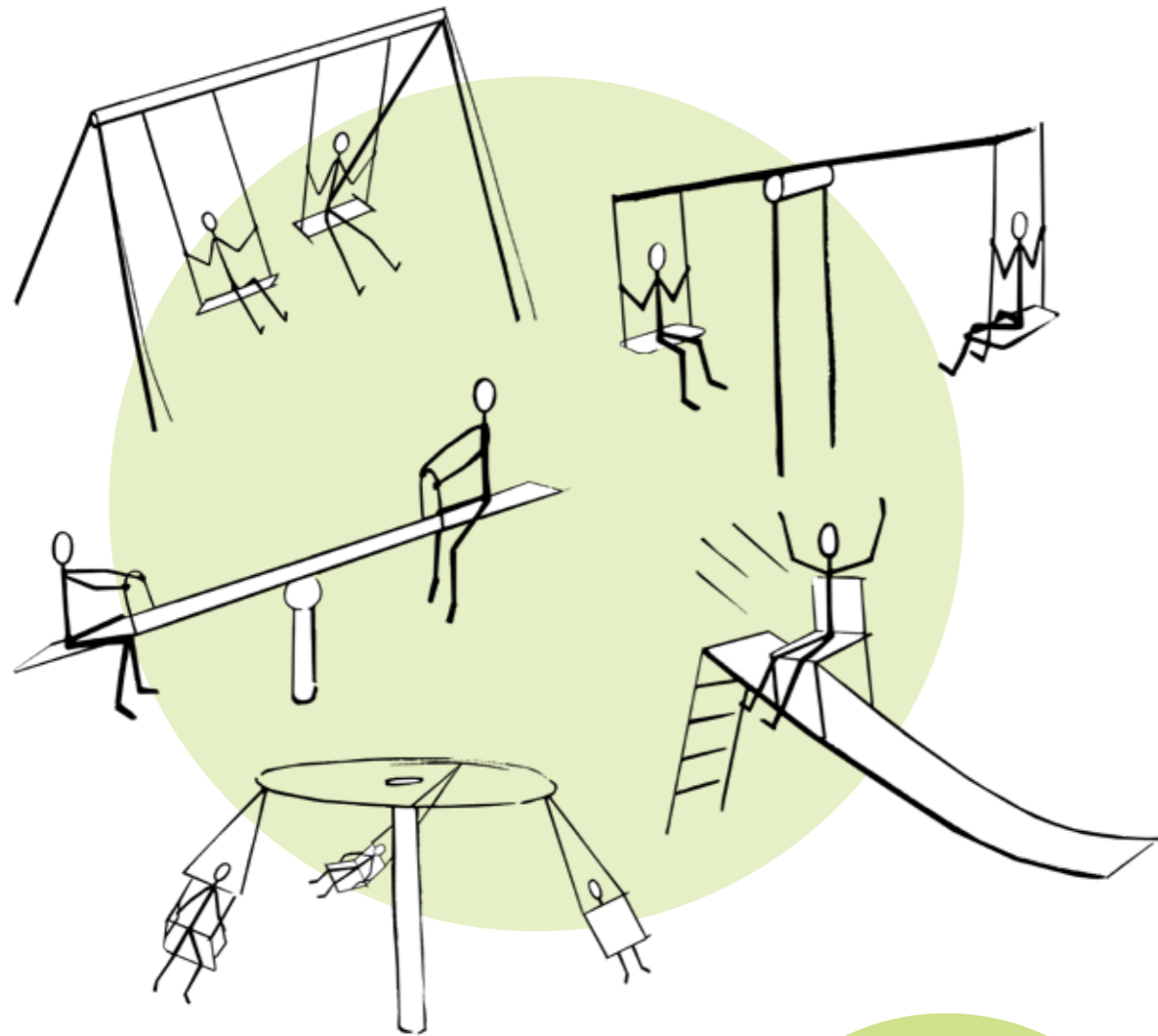

On the other hand, an object like the ones above might be too reminiscent of children's playground and therefore less likely not to be used by adults. The focus therefore became to combine the two, familiarity and playfulness.

FAMILARITY

Considering the hesitations of the concepts so far, the decision of designing a more familiar object that could be set in playful movement was made. The reason to why familiarity is seen as important is that people should not feel too hesitant to use it. Playfulness should be for everyone and not only the ones who are brave enough to try out new things.

In a park, outdoor furniture are a familiar sight and therefore the idea of altering the common interaction with these came about. The furniture are usually for sitting, eating or resting, but what happens if you add an extra dimension to it?
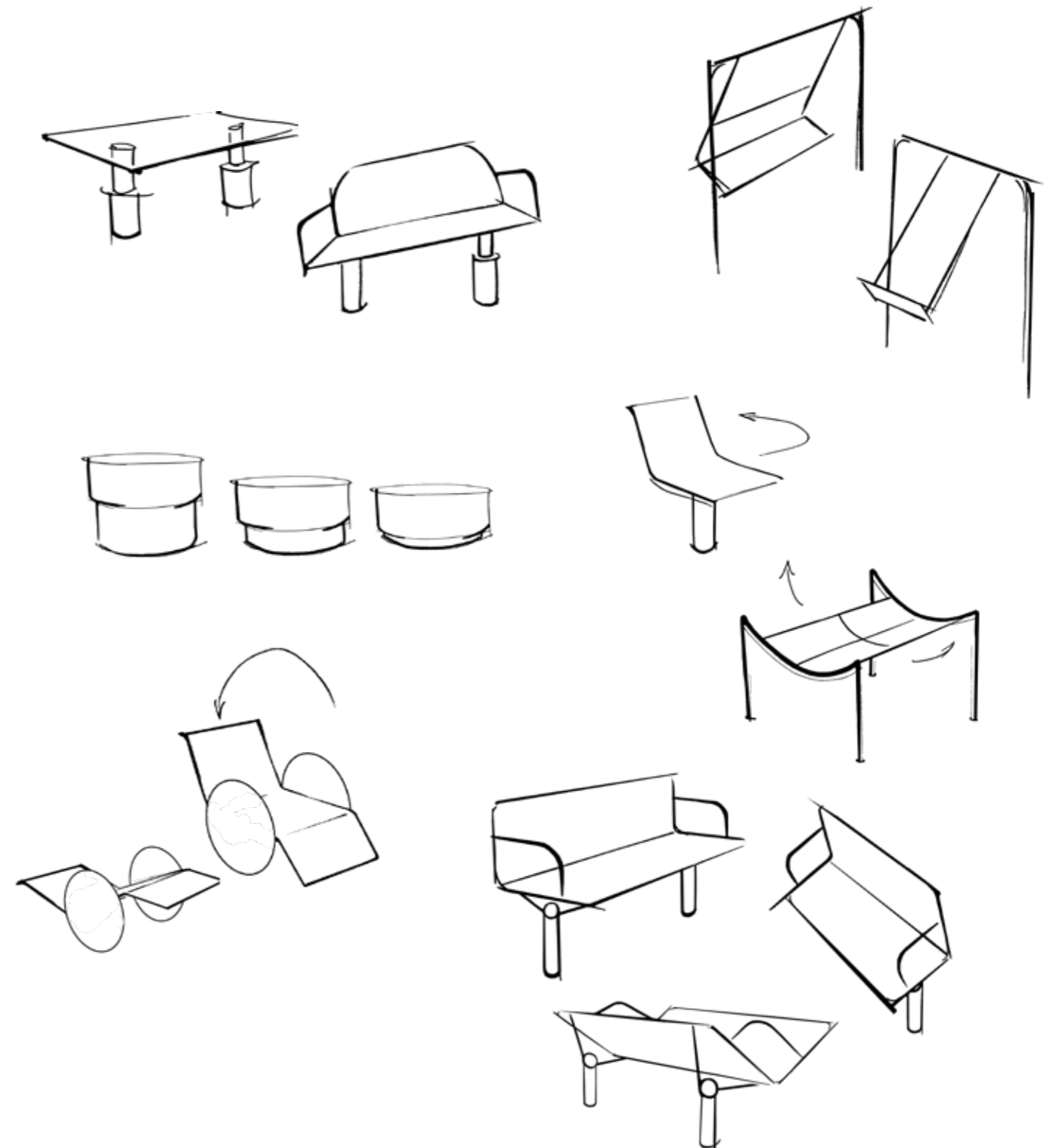
MEMORIES
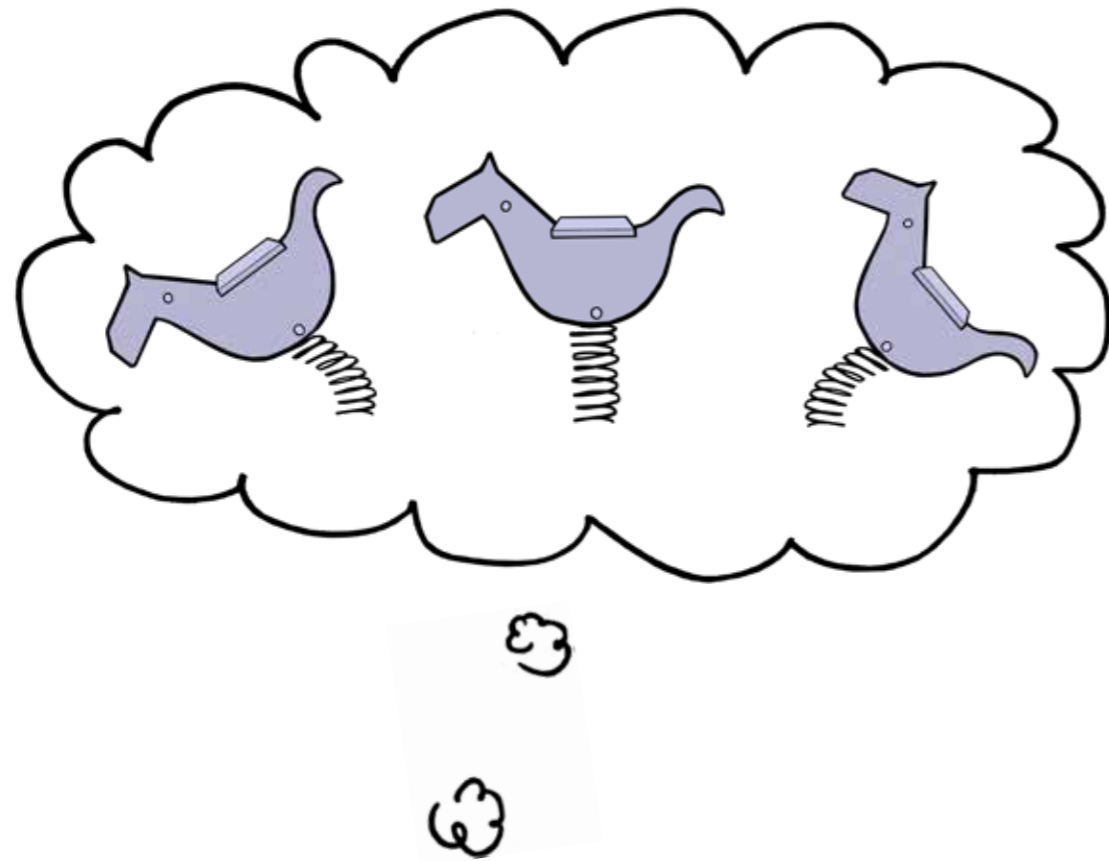
In the middle of the idea generation a memory of my old kindergarten came up. On the yard there was a toy picturing a horse that was attached to the ground by big spring. When sitting on the horse you could swing back and forth and also side to side. To further investigate this toy I went back to my kindergarten and found similar ones.

When trying them out, you can easily tell that the springs are not made for the weight of an adult. So the effect you get from distributing your weight in different directions on the swing is quite intense, but wouldn't be hard to change depending on the strength of the spring.

What was appealing with the spring swing was the degree of freedom. You are not bound to the same type of motion, like with a normal swing going back and forth, but you can move in any direction of choice. First thought was to maybe redesign this object and do an adult version of it.

MOCKUPS
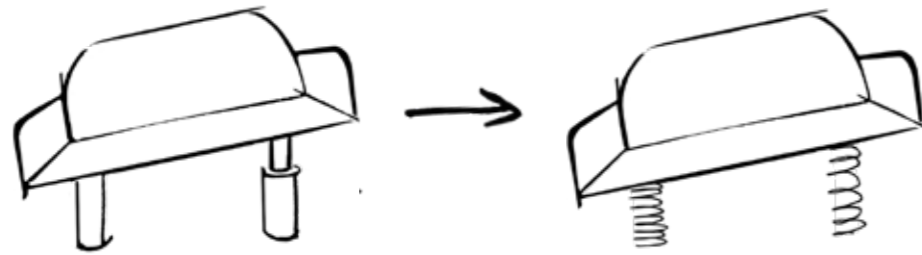
But again the thought of that adults don't play like children occurred. Therefore the decision of combining the idea of outdoor furniture with the spring swing was made. The most logic choice of furniture in combination with the spring was the bench. A bench communicates clearly that it is to be seated on and the spring gives it the extra dimension of playfulness.

Mockups in cardboard and small springs were made in the hope of getting an idea of how such a furniture would function. It was hard to get a realistic perception of how a spring would function with the weight of a human. Unfortunately because of the on-going pandemic I had no access to a proper workshop, which at this point felt necessary to get insight. The continuing guessing through cardboard mockups was therefore the only way to go.


As seen above it was hard to get a proper understanding of how a larger and stronger spring would work. These small springs have a tendency of bending and stretching very easily. Therefore, support for the spring was added in hope for it to act more like a bigger spring.


The conclusion of the model making was that two springs would give the best effect. The movement would not be too intense as with one and not too little as with four.

SKETCHES

For one person?
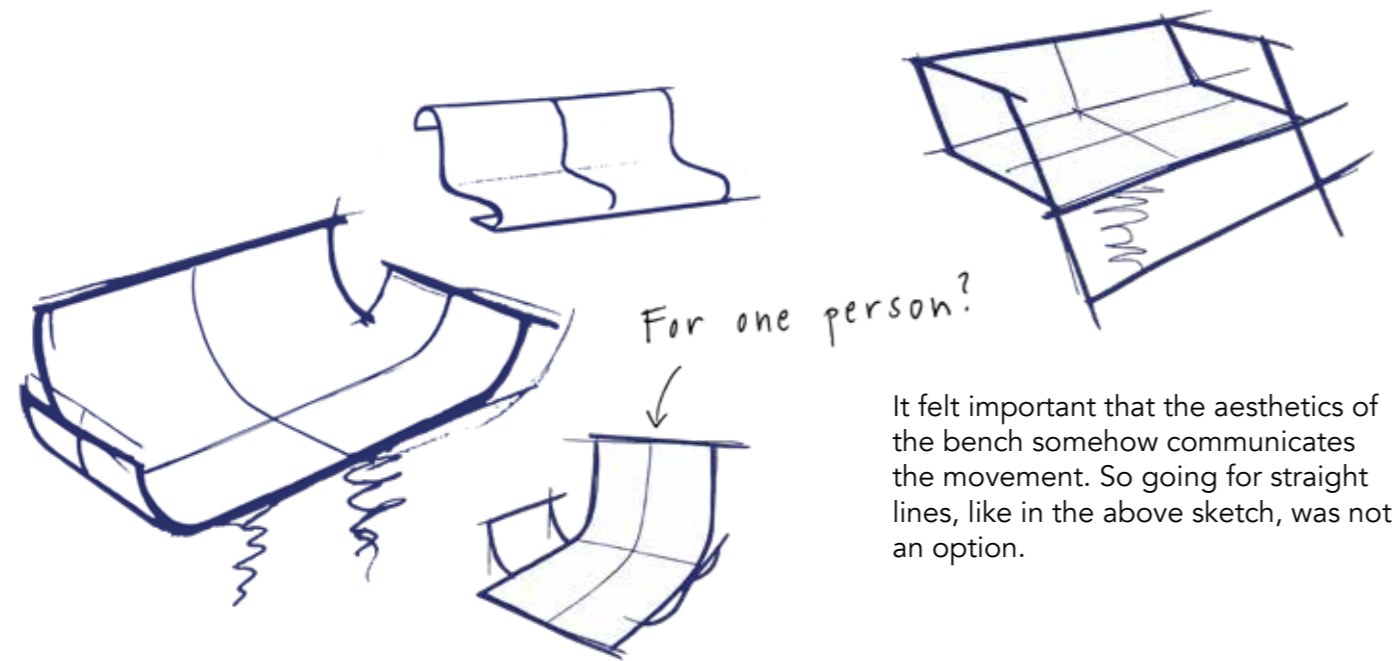
It felt important that the aesthetics of the bench somehow communicates the movement. So going for straight lines, like in the above sketch, was not an option.

Armrest integrated in form

Make it as round as possible?

Somewhere to put your feet
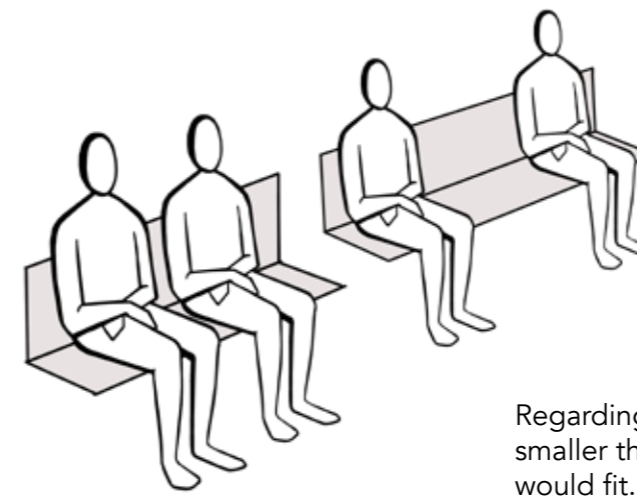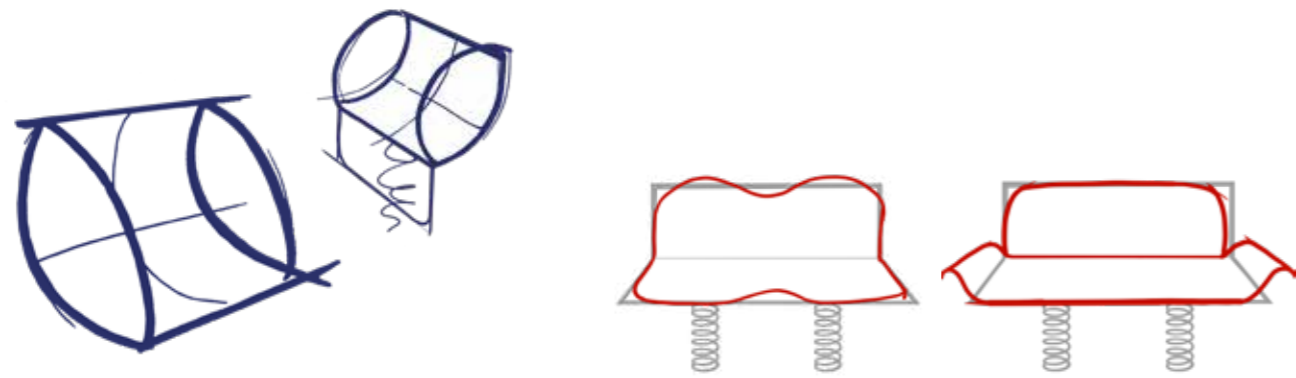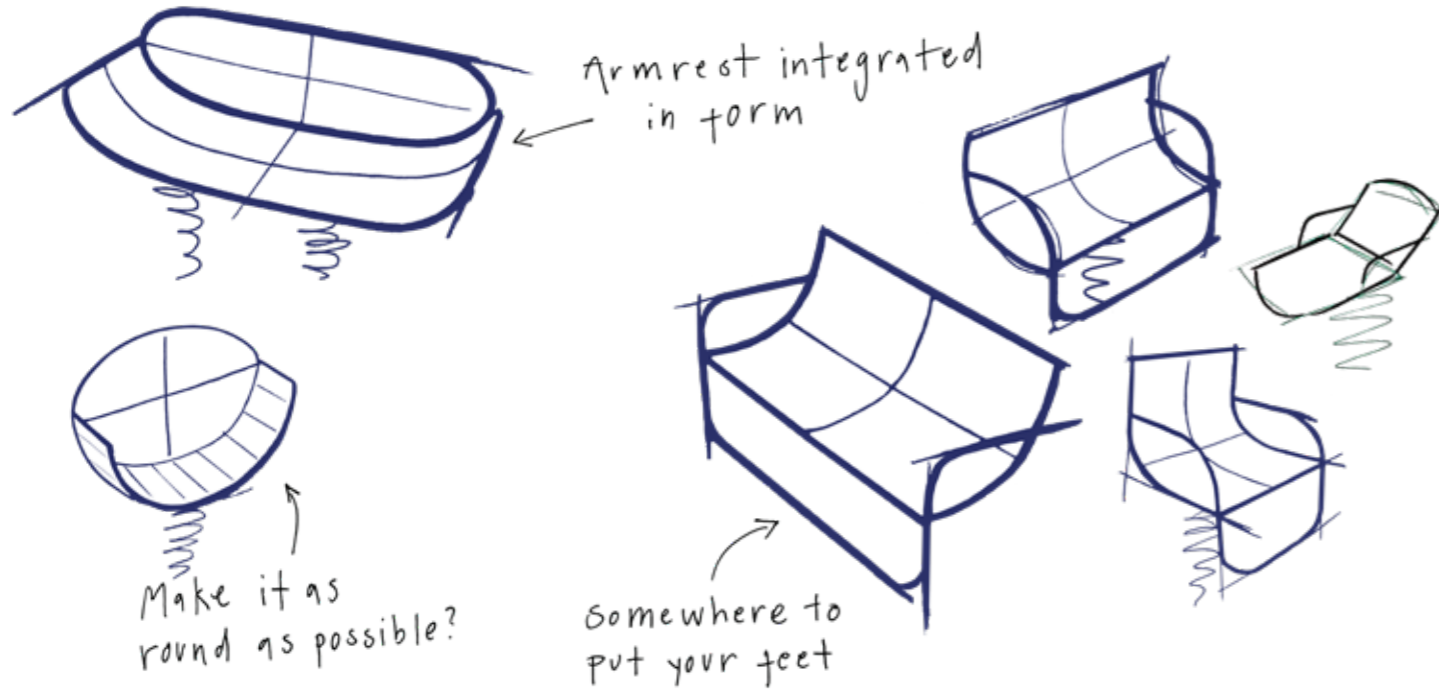
Regarding the width of the bench the idea was to make it smaller than a conventional one, so that only two people would fit. The reason is the hypothesis of that sizing it down would make it possible to move the springs closer to the middle and so on get a better swing effect. It would also be a way to make it look less like an ordinary park bench, which it is not.

Wooden boards for park bench look
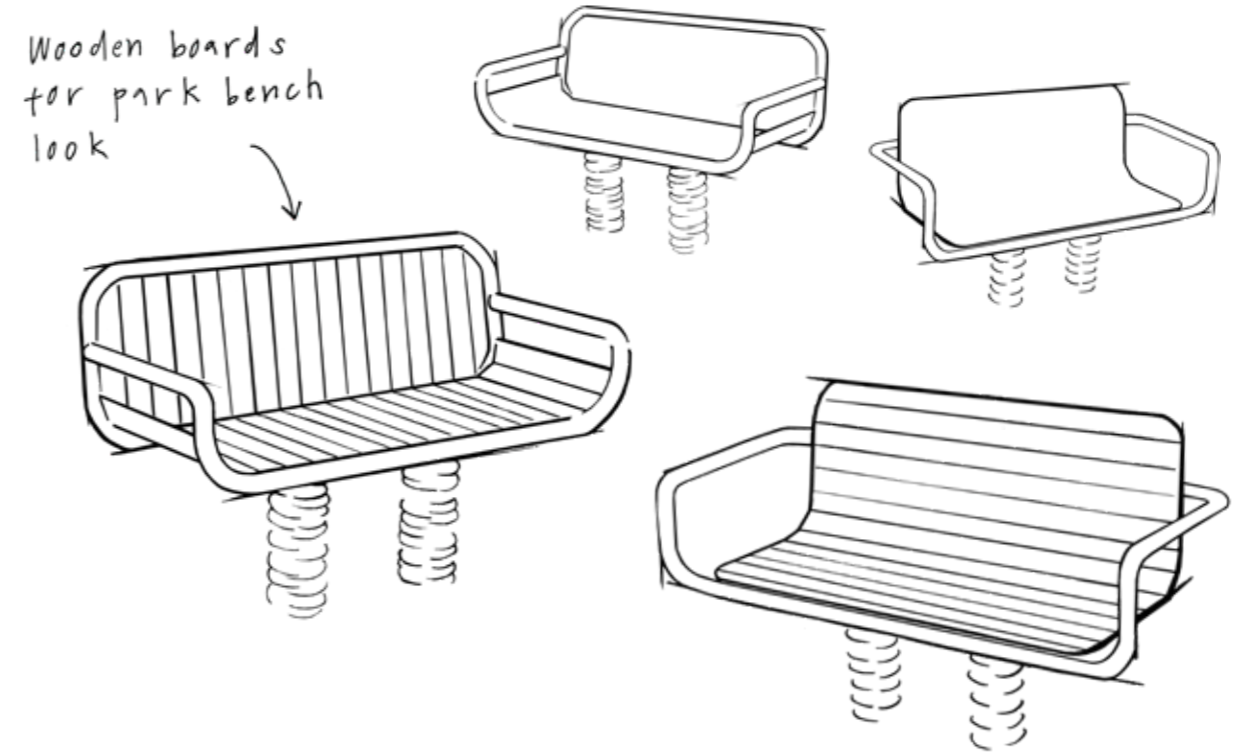
To get a better understanding for the shape a few simple 3D-models were made. The look of models in combination with last minute feed back from my supervisor the idea of the concept took a turn.

LAST MINUTE CHANGES

Changing the concept last minute can be seen as not a great idea; the time that you will have to do detail work of the design will go lost and things have to be done in a hurry. As in many projects, outcomes can't be foreseen and sometimes revelations come late in the process. When changing the concept in a project last minute, I believe, the pros have to outweigh the cons.

Earlier, it has been mentioned that children don't play like adults and this is the reason to why the spring swing turned into a bench. Sometimes opinions and perceptions are to be challenged, and as a student and designer you have the possibility to do so. In this case, the choice of doing so was made. I wanted to challenge people's perception of how playing as an adult should be done, and therefore the bench was removed as the final concept.

It's common for toys to be smaller versions of adult everyday object. As mentioned earlier, children play to develop and become adults. Pretending to talk on the phone, cook food or to be a parent are common games for children. Objects to fit into these games and make them more realistic are therefore produced as "children's objects".

But what if we would turn it around and make children's objects more suitable for adults? In this case you would have to find something that doesn't exist in an adult version. One example, and a very good one, are playgrounds. Playgrounds are created for children, their play and playful movement, and is an excellent place to go when letting you children do nothing but play. Learnt from the research playing and playfulness has a positive impact on adults, especially regarding stress and depression. In this way an adult playground could be seen as a new way to relax and recharge, inspired by children's way of being.

REDESIGN

Even though the project has taken a turn all work is not lost. Designing a playground could have been done if the idea came up earlier in the process. It was therefore decided that focus now would be on designing one object for the playground. As the inspiration for the idea started with the spring swing and work has been put into this object the focus will be to redesign the spring swing.

Footrest/pedal?
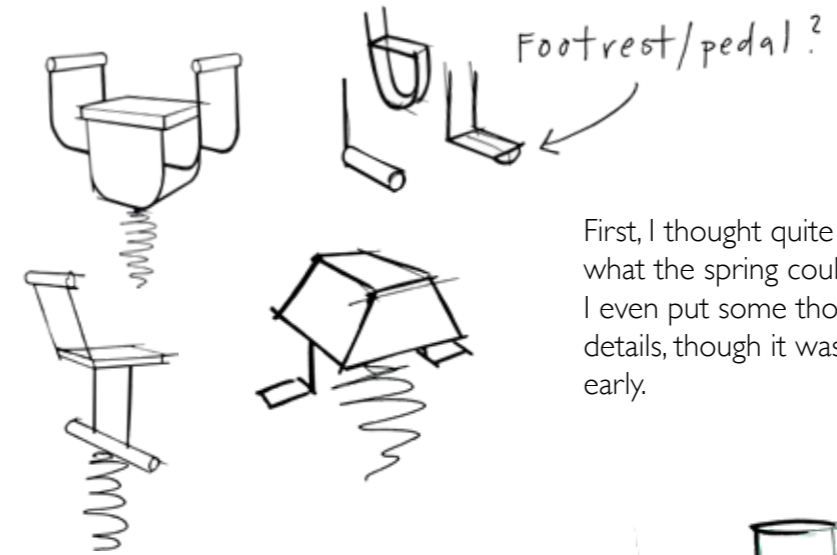
First, I thought quite roughly of what the spring could look like. I even put some thought into details, though it was way too early.
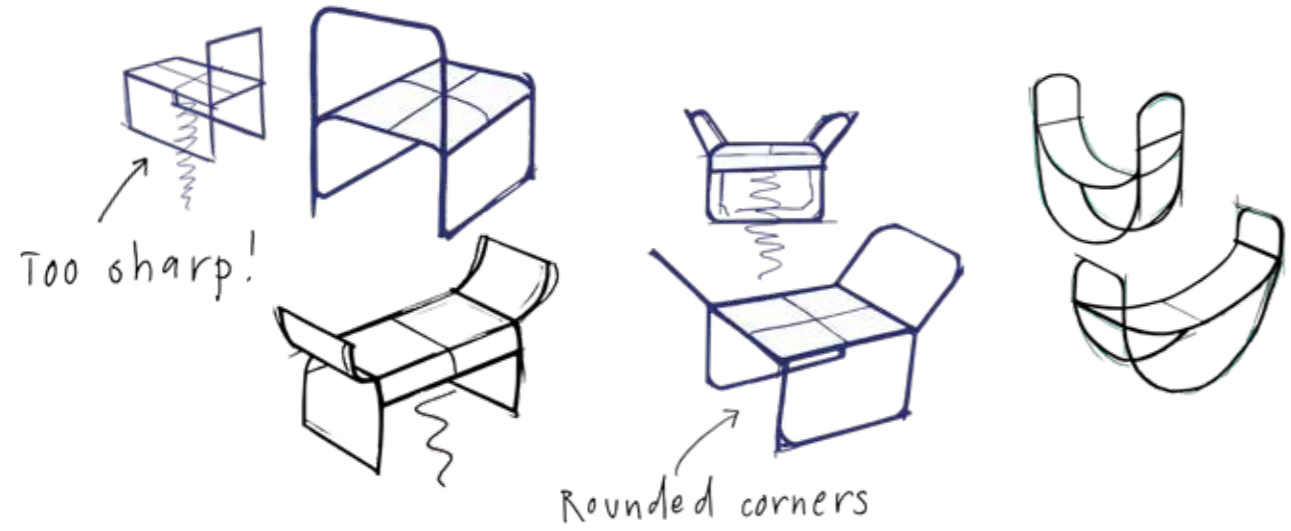
There was also an idea of the swing being suitable for more than one person.

For two or more?
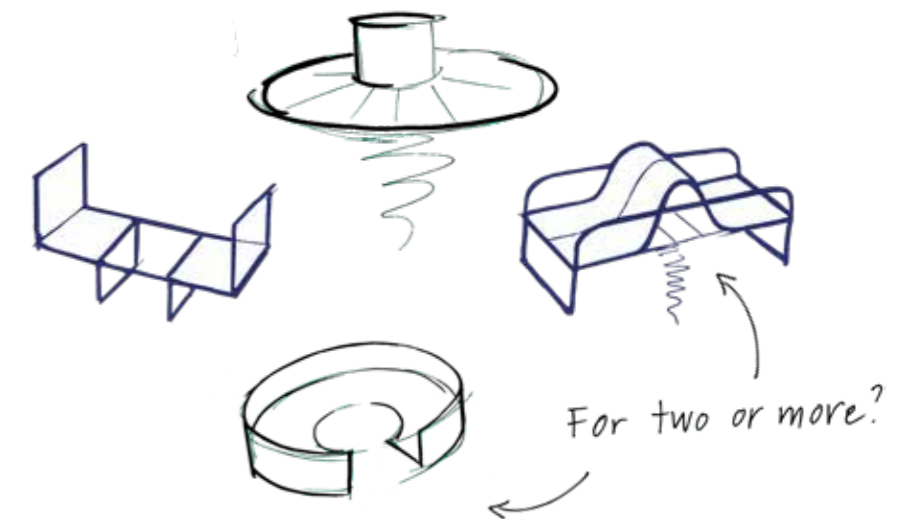
It was decided that the swing should only be for one person as you should be able to play on it on your own.

There should also be two different sitting positions to make it more flexible and suitable for more people.

Legs across   Legs on same side

Too sharp!

Rounded corners
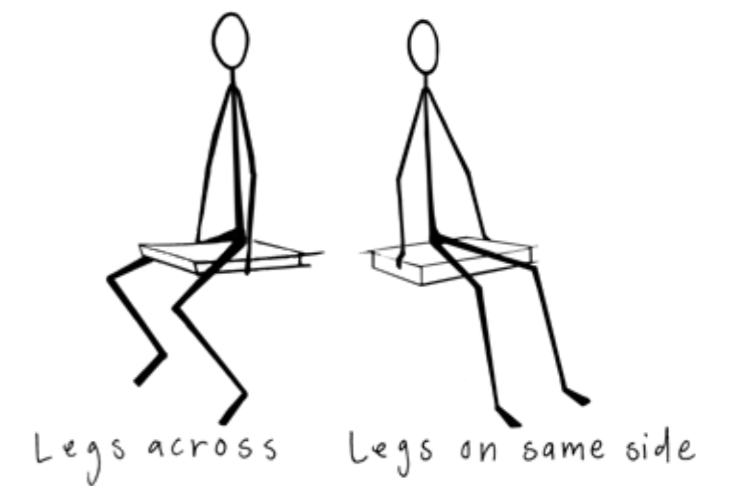
Through sketching there were revelations and thus focus was on how the shape could facilitate the two sitting positions.

oval shape

cylinder w. flat top
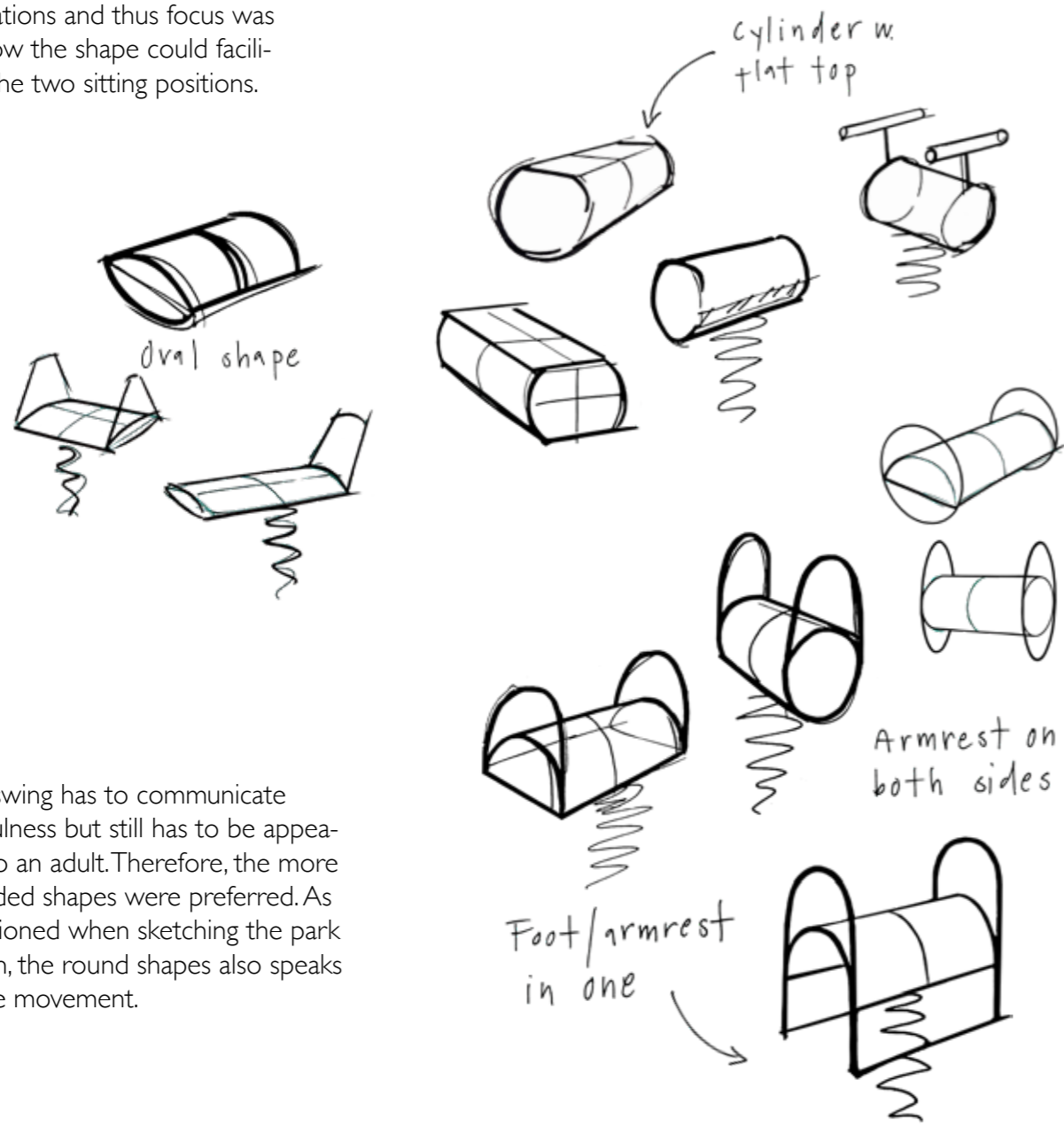
The swing has to communicate playfulness but still has to be appealing to an adult. Therefore, the more rounded shapes were preferred. As mentioned when sketching the park bench, the round shapes also speaks of the movement.

Armrest on both sides

Foot/armrest in one

By doing a sketch exploration, a few necessary qualities of the design were found.

- Form should speak of the movement
- Feet and hands need something to hold on to.
- Seat should make two sitting positions possible

Based on the necessary qualities a few of the designs were chosen for further development.
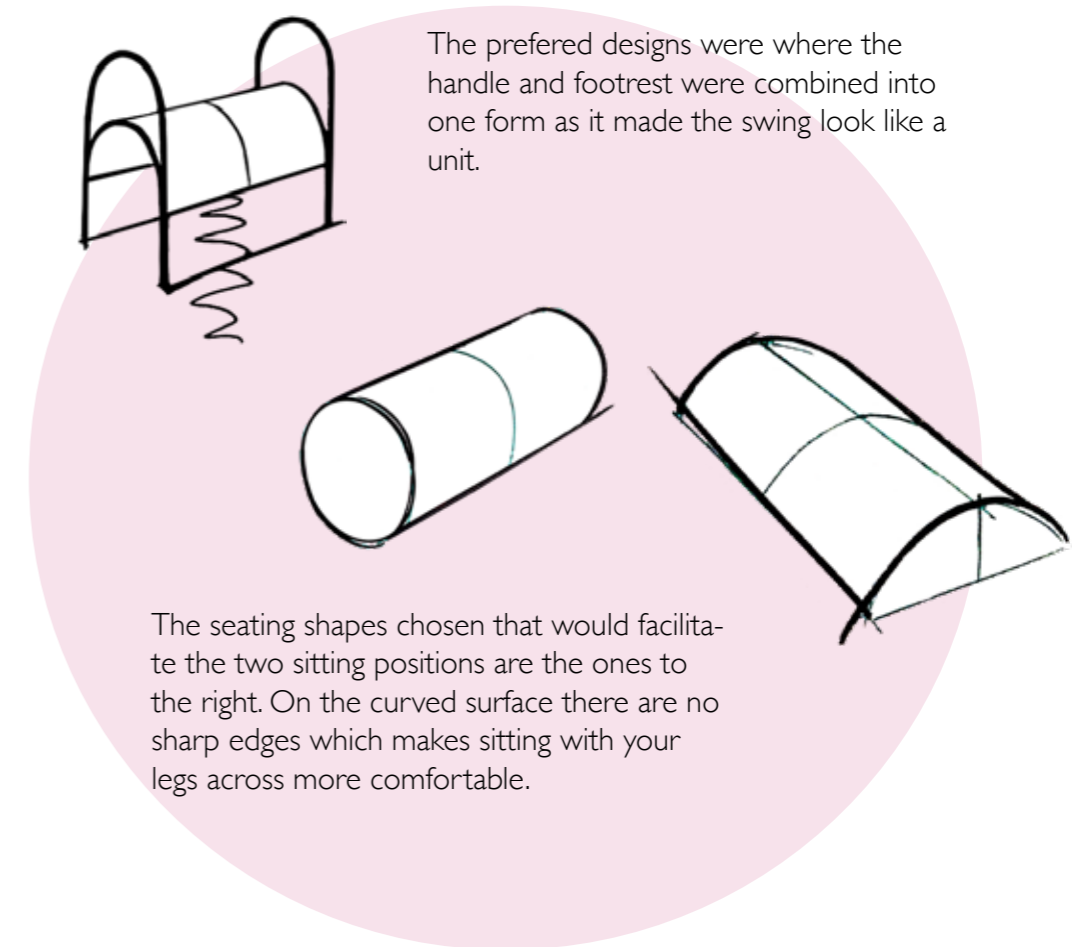
The prefered designs were where the handle and footrest were combined into one form as it made the swing look like a unit.

The seating shapes chosen that would facilitate the two sitting positions are the ones to the right. On the curved surface there are no sharp edges which makes sitting with your legs across more comfortable.

FINAL CONCEPT

The chosen final concept was a design not far from how the sketching started. As the deadline approached fast decisions had to be made, but even though the final concept didn't feel wrong or rushed in any way as it ticked many of the necessary boxes.
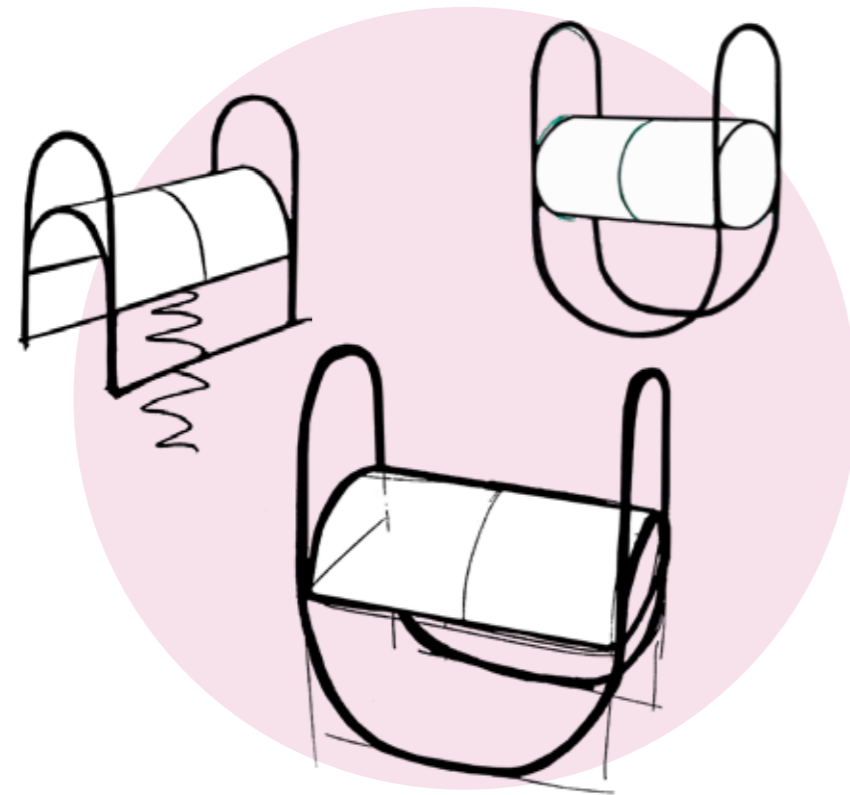
At this point it, during normal circumstances, more intricate models would have been built. By either using 3D- printing or the university workshop, more realistic small-scale prototypes could have given some insight, but during the pandemic sketches and digital models were the only way forward.

The spring of the swing acquires attachment and preferably this would be somewhat hidden on the spring as it can disturb the overall form. By going for the half-cylinder seating, it was possible to add this underneath and still let the spring have space to move around when in use. Therefore, the half cylinder became the shape of choice.
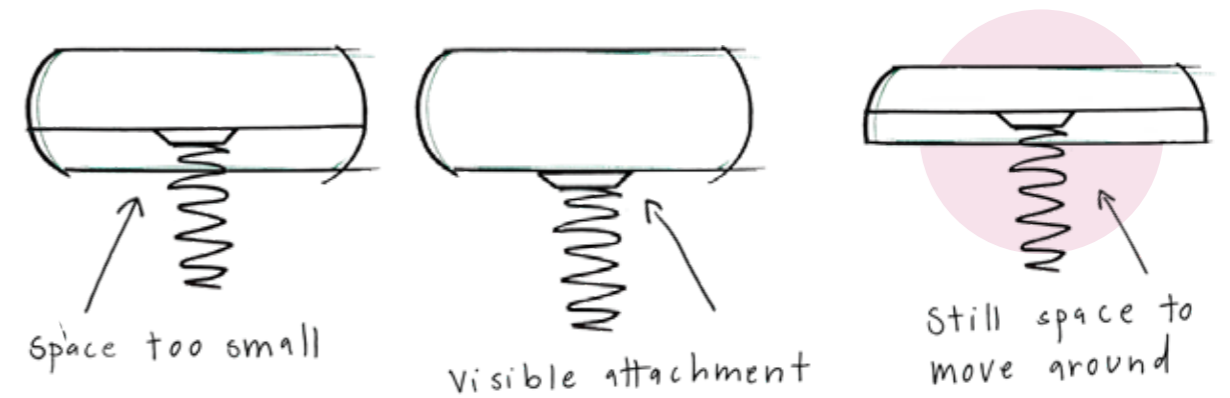
As mentioned before the softer, more round shapes are the ones preferred as they speak better of the movement of the swing. Even though, there are different types of soft forms and they have to go well together with the shape of the seating as that will be a part of the overall design.
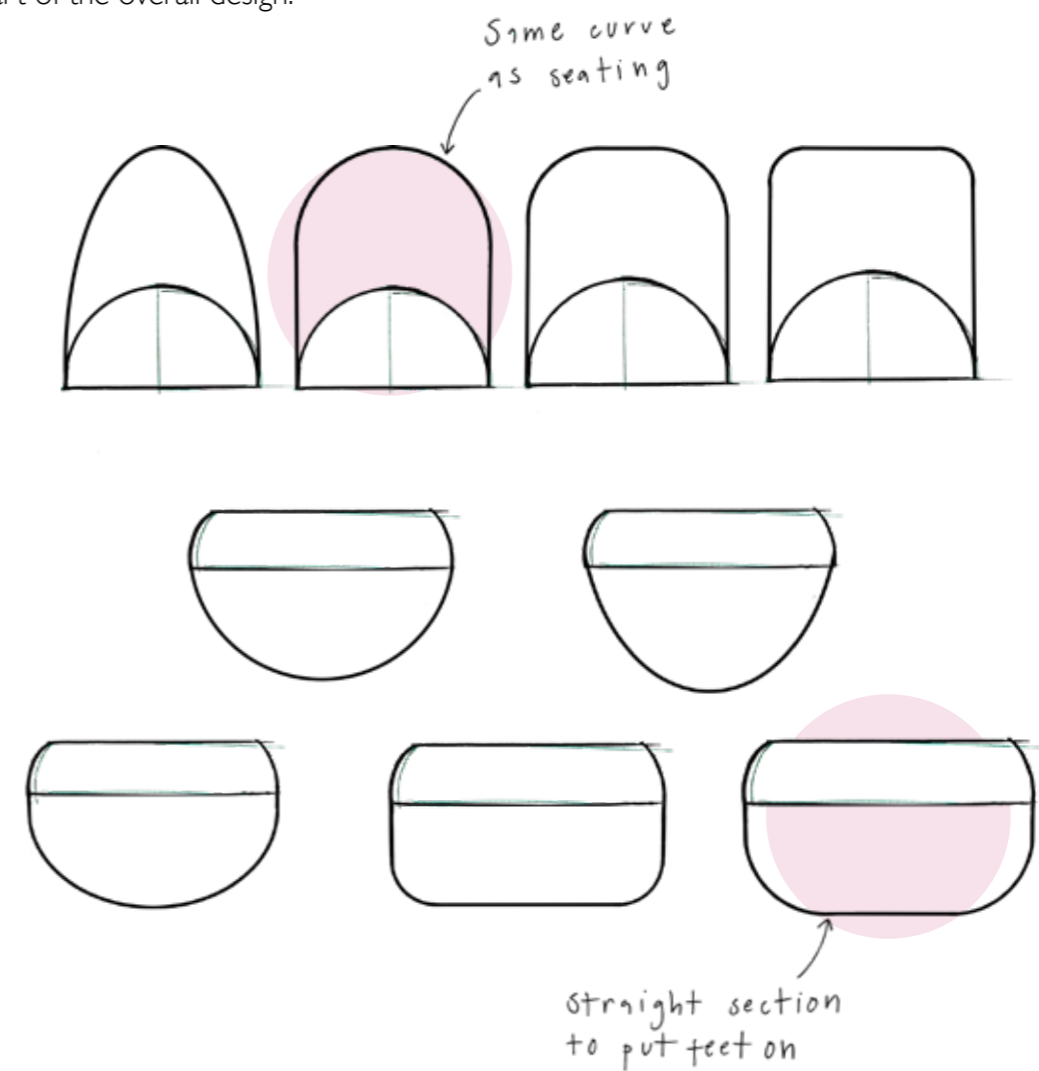
After further thinking and feedback from supervisors regarding the seating of the swing it was decided that the top part of the curve should be flattened. This, for the users to feel more in balance when sitting on it like you would on a chair. If keeping the curve, the risk would be to fall backwards.

To get a better look on the differences in the changes quick 3D-models were made. At this point the curved seating was still preferred, but the flattened top had more benefits regarding usage. They don't differ too much in look and as many decisions, regarding exact curvature and materials, has not been made there will still be room for improvements.
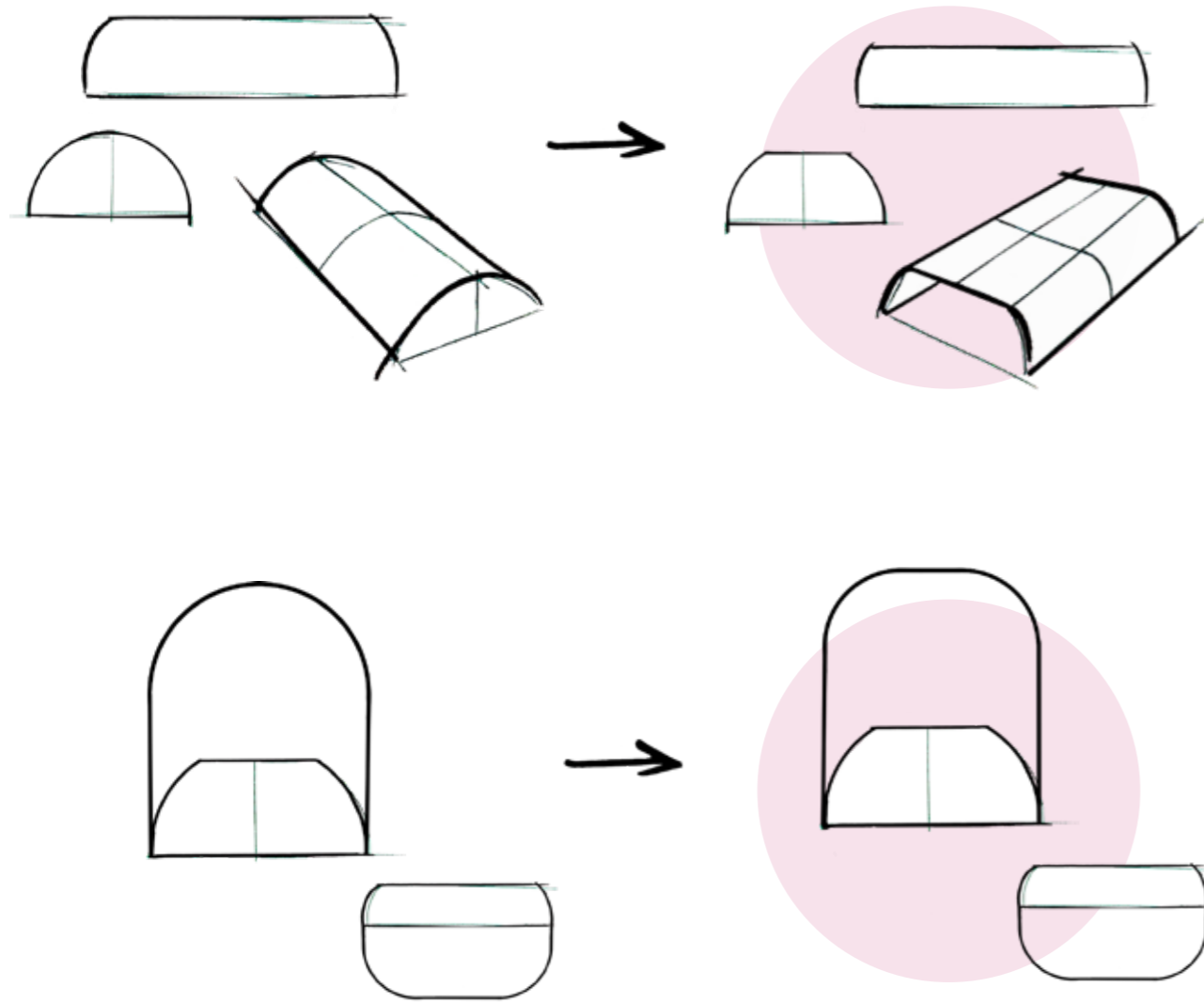
Because of the change in choice of seating the handle was also changed. The flat top on both forms make the shapes go better together and the footrest would be like an elongated version of the handle.
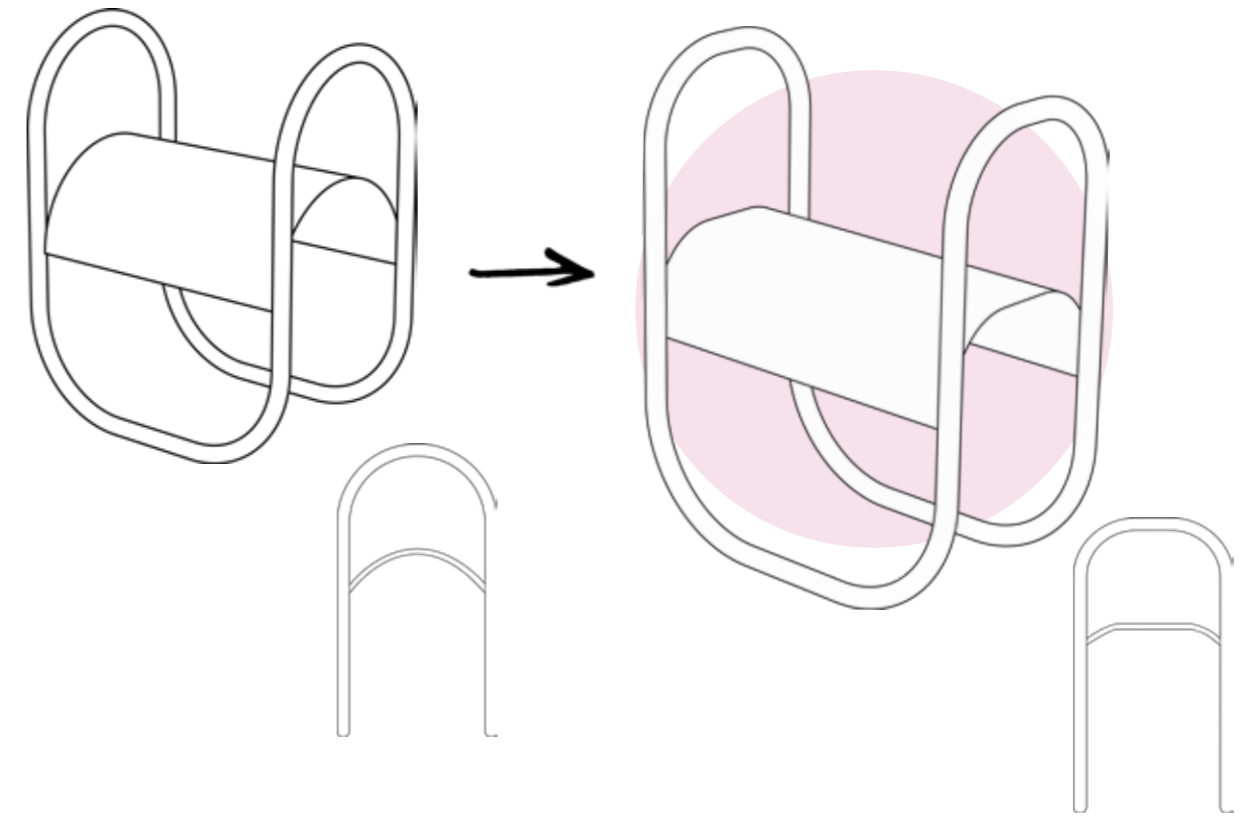
MATERIAL

To acquire the desired shape of the seat, there were different ideas on how it could be done. Three of the options were in metal to match the chosen material for the frame and to be weather and wear resistant. The seat could either be a solid piece of metal sheet bent into the desired shape, or metal pipes placed horizontally along the curve, or bent metal pipes across the seat.

In these options the metal looks quite harsh and the pipes reminded me of prison bars. Metal can be powder coated in any colour, and this could help with both issues. Idea number three would be too complex to produce and also gives the same look. There has to be a surface where the seat could be attached to the frame, which is non- existing in this option. The last option, with wooden boards, was different in comparison the other ones, and made the swing look softer and more like a playground object. Wood is not as weather and wear resistant as metal, but easy to replace if breakage occurs.

Based on these arguments wooden boards where chosen for the seat. A common type of wood used outdoors as it stands weather well is pressure impregnated pine but this material has been questioned from an environmental perspective. Untreated pine is quite resilient but as you want to prolong the time of usage treatments are to be preferred. There are other, more environmentally friendly ways of treating pine to make it resilient and such a treatment would be the choice of usage in this case.

Expensive to produce?

If breakage occurs: hard replace parts

Too complex
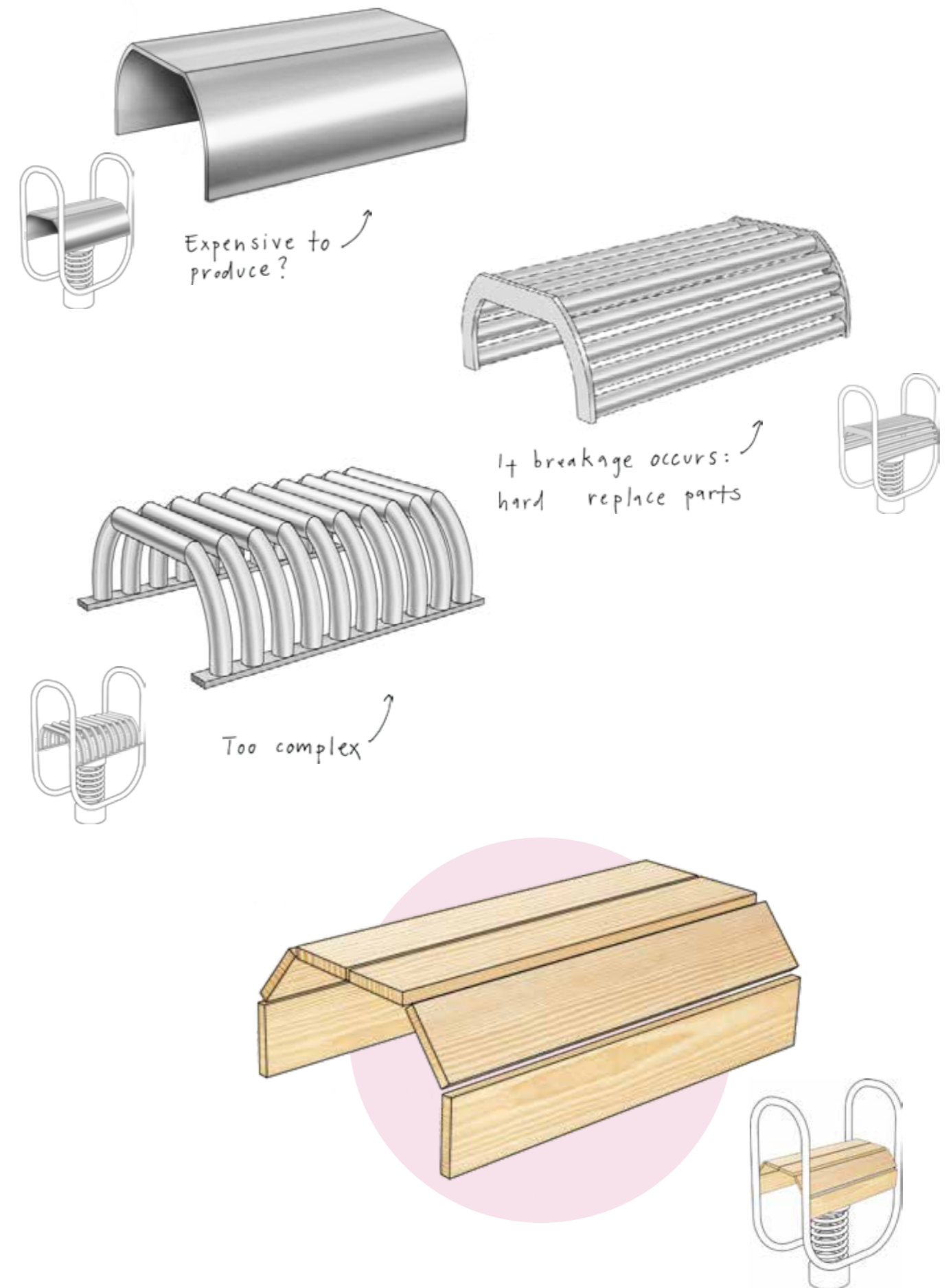
CONSTRUCTION

The rest of the swing would be in steel as that would give the swing a sturdy base. It is also the only material that the frame could be made of as it needs to be able to stand the weight of an adult person. The weight of the user will affect the swing effect, but still has to hold without breakage up to approximately 120 kg.
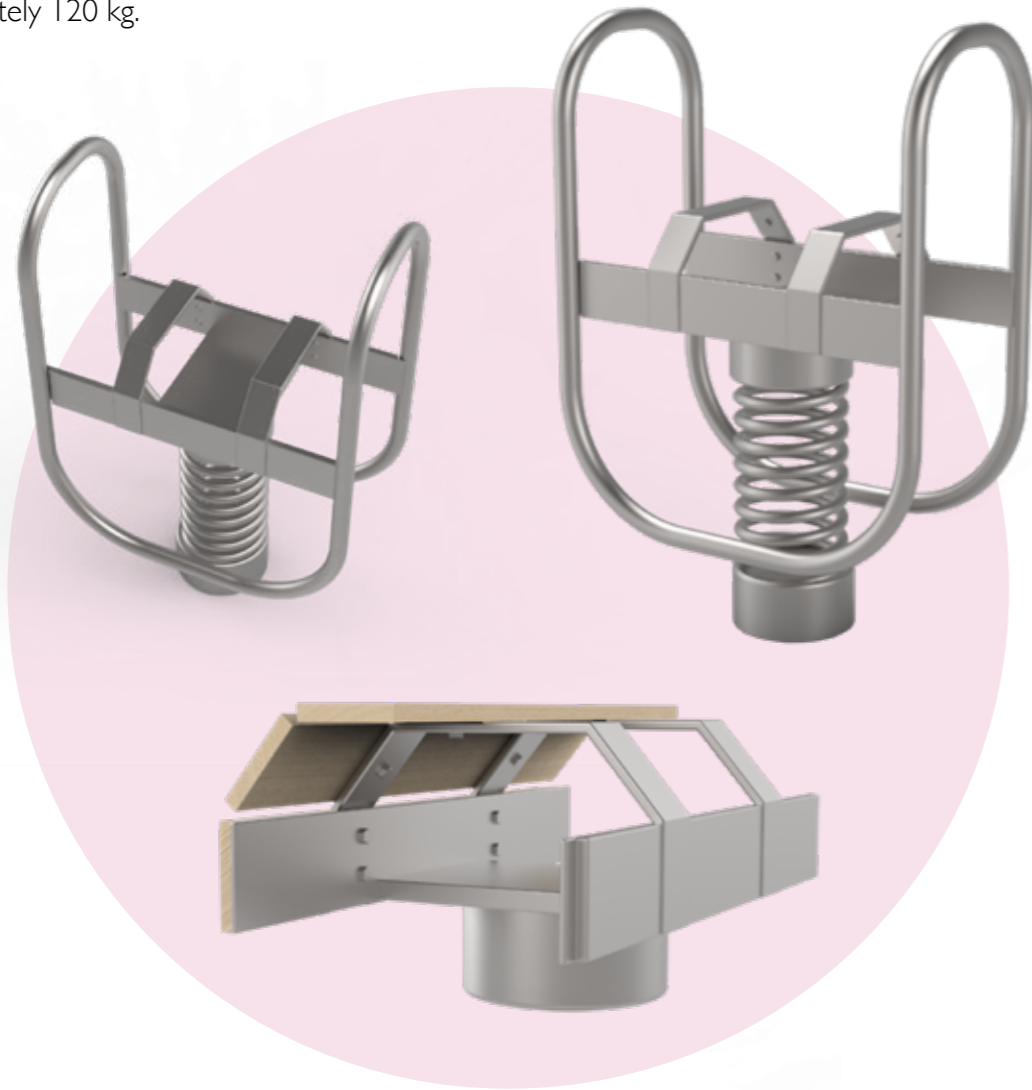

For the construction, the steel support for the seating would be connected to the pipe frame by welding and the boards attached by bults from underneath. For the spring, it was hard to get in contact with someone who had more experience and that could guide me into what needed to be done, both construction wise and sizing. So, for the spring I had to leave it at a simple rendering without attachments and a guessed sizing. Not making a physical prototype can be difficult when trying to design a construction, as when building there are more than often new discoveries regarding the design.

COLOUR

Colour is a powerful tool of giving an object emotion and if done right the playfulness could speak even louder. Colour is also, in my perspective, a difficult thing as there are many different aspects you have to have in mind, especially when designing a not so common object for adults.

Powder coating gives the metal a protective layer from wear and weather and such is necessary regarding the use. For this project there were three different options; either you keep the natural colour of the steel, you powder coat the steel in one colour, or you highlight the spring with colour to emphasize the function.

For the final presentation the swing was presented in a greyish blue colour, seen here on the page, but when writing this documentation, the choice of colour became more doubted. The choice of colour was not made based on research or by comparing colour samples, but only by clicking on the screen in a rendering programme. Another thing that was not in mind when making the decision was that wood ages and changes in colour. As time goes by the colour of the steel might no longer go well together with the wood. One way of making sure that it would match would be to compare colours to different stages of change in colour of the wood. But as this project was conducted in isolation, due to the pandemic, this would have been difficult. Therefore, as for now, the chosen option is to keep the natural colour of the steel.

#697c93

e.g. #8c4685
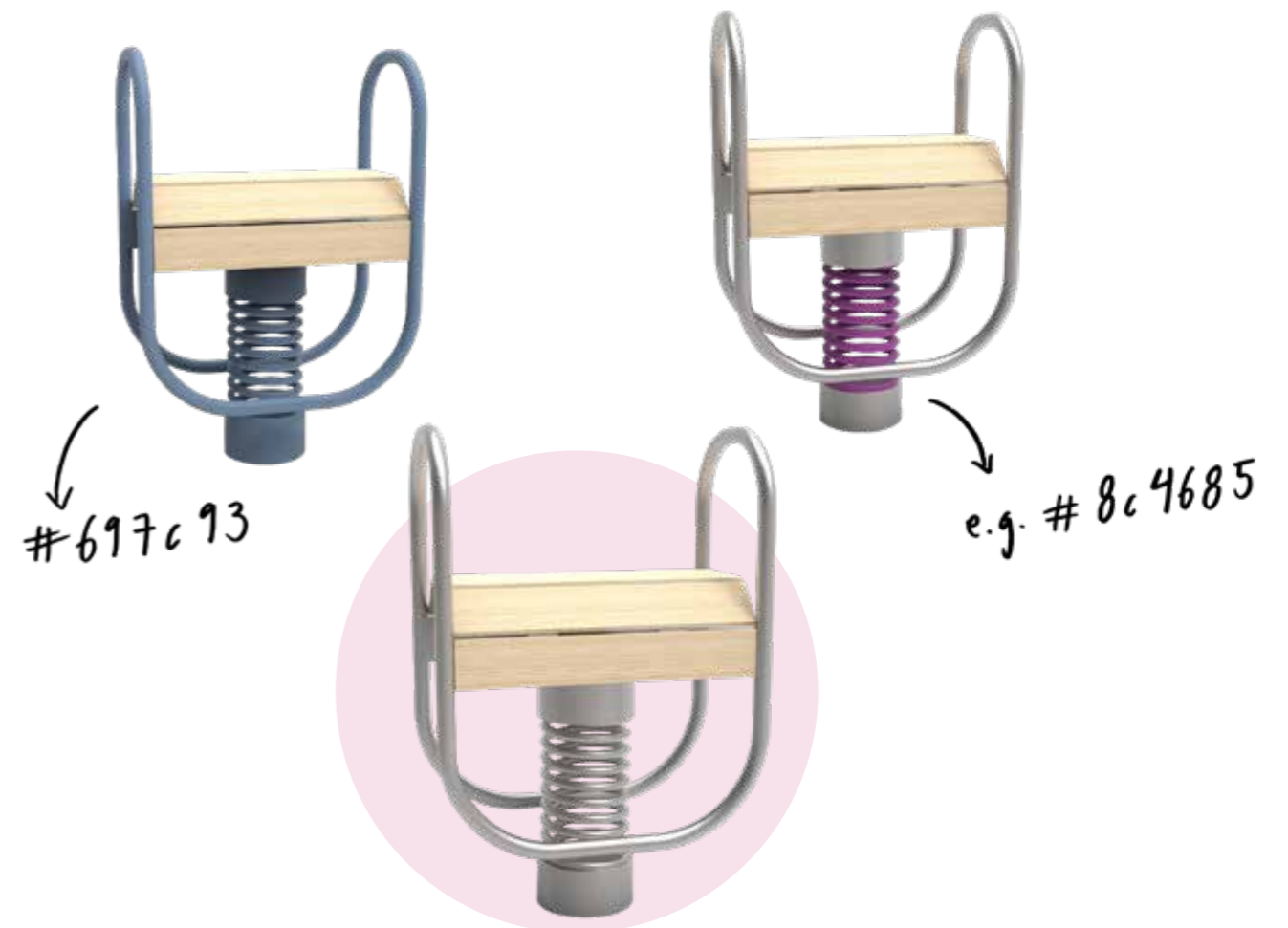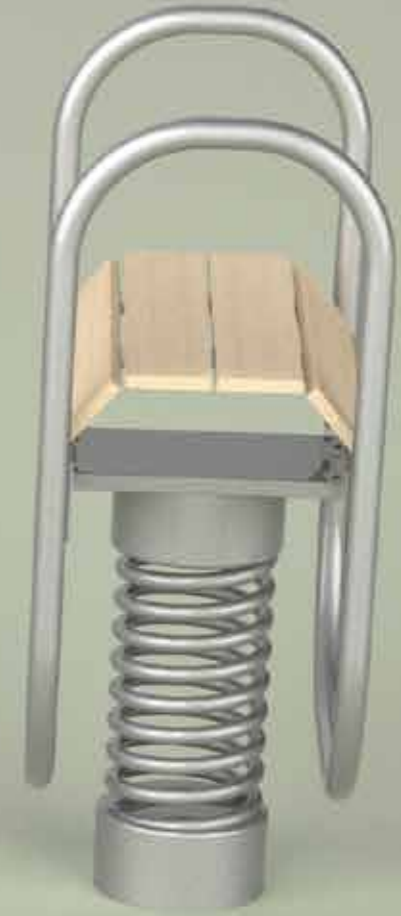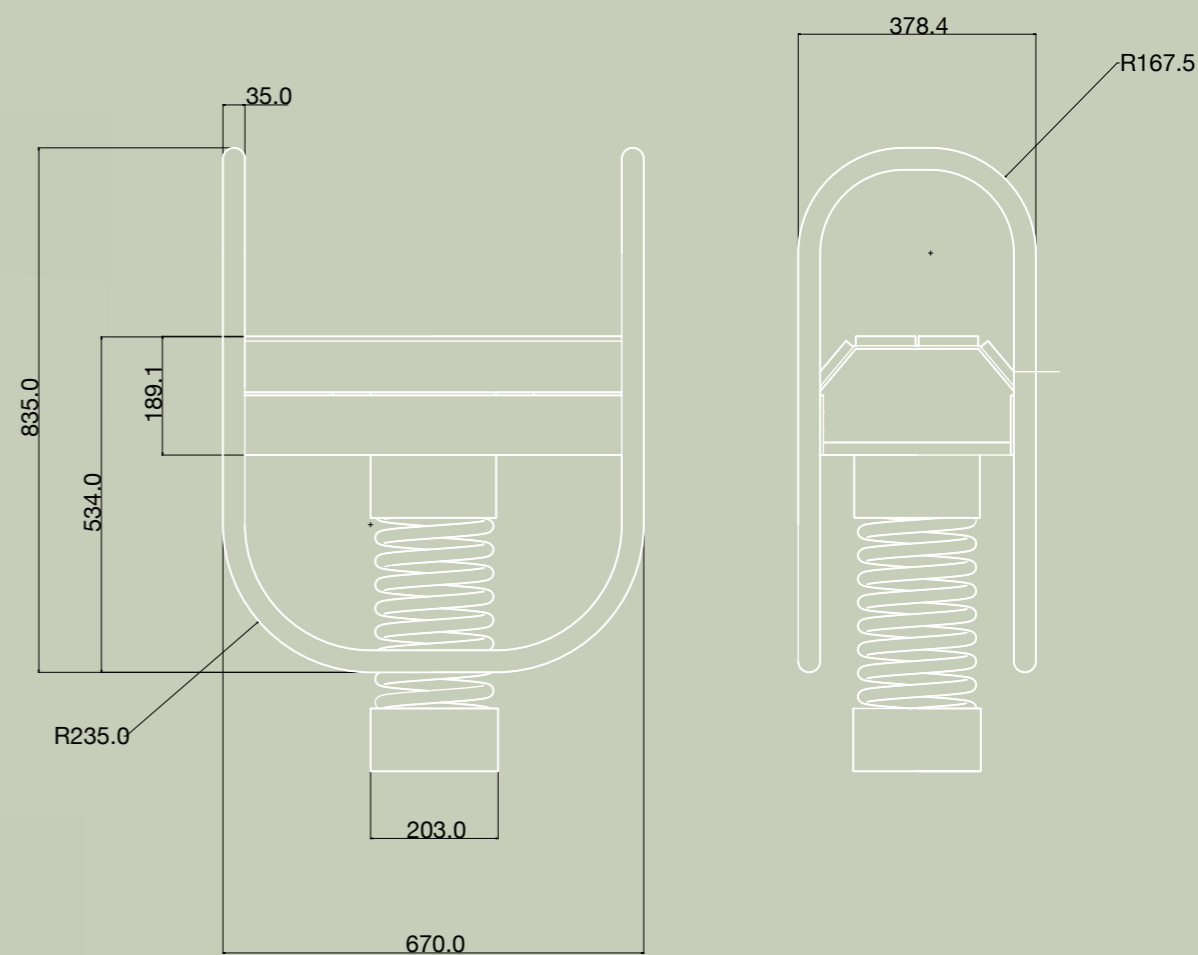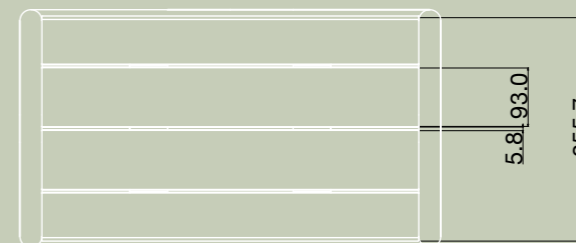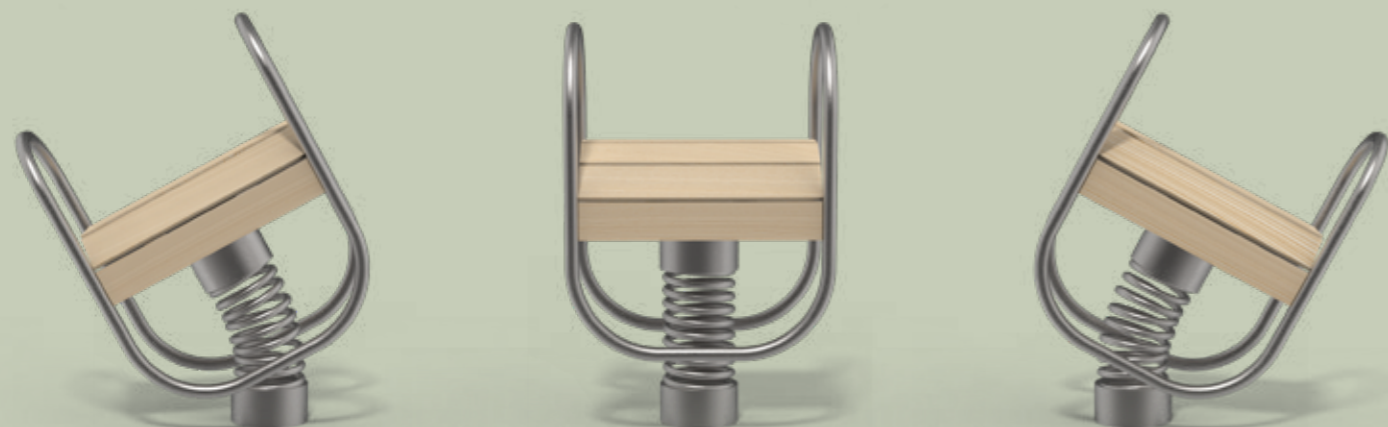
REFLECTION

When conducting this project fast decisions in the ideation phase had to be done in order to get a final product ready for the presentation. This due to the choice of changing direction late in the process. When writing this documentation there has been no stress of getting it done and so on, I have had the chance of thoroughly going through earlier decisions. Also, there has been time to present other ideas and compare them with prior decisions. If, there would have been other better ideas, changes could have been done to the final product. The only change at this point has been the change of colour. For me, this has been somewhat of a relief as now I know that fast decisions are not always bad ones. This can be seen as a confirmation of that spending five years of studying industrial design has given me enough knowledge to trust my decisions even the fast ones. Of course, having time to think and reflect is never a bad thing and by doing so you always have counter arguments for those who question and criticize.

It would have been great fun to see a physical prototype of the swing and try it out. Often this is the highlight of a design project, going from ideas, thoughts and sketches into the workshop and building. Because of the pandemic this has not been possible and if that wouldn't have been the case, I think the time and effort of building a 1:1 scale prototype still would have been difficult. Certain things such as the making of a suitable spring would have had to have been outsourced to a knowledgeable company, and that usually takes time and cost money, which as a student you are usually deficient of. So, the option would have been to make a smaller prototype.

In a dream world the final result of this thesis would have been the design of a full playground with all the necessary playground objects. Preferably been done in a decided place with advice and input from landscape architectures. For now, this master thesis can be seen as a beginning or an inspiration for a future project.

REFERENCES

Jordan, W. P. (2000). Designing Pleasurable Products [Electronic resource]. Retrieved from https://books.google.se/books?hl=sv&lr=&id=0s3el8sDjHsC&oi=fnd&pg=PR6&dq=-designing+pleasurable+products+jordan&ots=jFEJnTYTjt&sig=U_wz9ftFKsRp093lQh-CuuBVSQdl&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=designing%20pleasurable%20products%20jordan&f=false
10/3 2020

1177 Vårdguiden. (2018). Så utvecklas barn av att leka. Hämtad 2020-02-28 från https://www.1177.se/Skane/barn--gravid/sa-vaxer-och-utvecklas-barn/barnets-utveckling/barnets-utveckling-1-2-ar/

1177 Vårdguiden. (2018). Så utvecklas barn av att leka. Hämtad 2020-01-24 från https://www.1177.se/Skane/barn--gravid/sa-vaxer-och-utvecklas-barn/lek-och-sagor/sa-utvecklas-barn-av-att-leka/

Skolverket. (2020). Lek i förskoleklass. Hämtad 2020-02-28 från https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/inspiration-och-stod-i-arbetet/stod-i-arbetet/pedagogik-i-forskoleklass/lek-i-forskoleklass

Socialstyrelsen. (2013). Barn och unga- Deras roll och betydelse förr och nu. (Underlagsrapport till barns och ungas hälsa, vård och omsorg). https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/artikelkatalog/ovrigt/2013-5-52.pdf

Nelson, A., & Svensson, K. (2005). Barn och leksaker i lek och lärande. Stockholm: Liber.

Norman, D. (2004). Emotional Design. New York: Basic Books.

Caillois, R. (1958/2001). Man, Play and Games. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois. [Original title: Jeux et les hommes].

Chick, G., Yarnal, C., Purrington. (2012). Play and Mate References: Testing the Signal Theory of Playfulness radiation. Retrieved from the website of American Journal of Play: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ985599.pdf?fbclid=IwAR34CXSg2uasqRFdmRbec01T-ZobR67F1kn2SUqYFCb0NGO16frRV2-3UYHk

Cale D. Magnuson & Lynn A. Barnett (2013): The Playful Advantage: How Playfulness Enhances Coping with Stress, Leisure Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 35:2, 129-144

René T. Proyer (2015). The well-being of playful adults: Adult playfulness, subjective well-being, physical well-being, and the pursuit of enjoyable activities. (Master's thesis, University of Zurich, Zurich). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254256930_The_well-being_of_playful_adults_Adult_playfulness_subjective_well-being_physical_well-being_and_the_pursuit_of_enjoyable_activities?fbclid=IwAR0lEFOIIICn_kMRK-ZK0siTe-tr-TbLj7usj6GfVMRfMU0CJUGkFLTujWGc

Strandberg, S. (2020). Därför drar vi oss till humorn i kristider. Retrieved 2020-04-21 from https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/darfor-vander-vi-oss-till-humorn-i-kristider

**Appendix:
First Steps**

Personal Motivation

This is the final project of my five years of studying design, and choosing a theme was therefore a challenge. I could either go for a subject of interest or challenge myself and do something completely different, either or, I believe there is always something to learn.

On a spur of the moment I contacted BRIO to see if they were interested in a collaboration, and as it turned out they were. BRIO, which is well known company in Sweden, has a long history of creating toys. BRIO will, during this project, only function as supervisors and has not given me a set brief. Even though I have to come up with the brief and theme of the project myself, having a company in mind is a frame to originate from and a source from where to find inspiration.

The reason to why I chose Brio was because of an earlier project where I designed aluminium toys. The project was quite short so there was no time to dig deep into the subject, but designing for this type of target group was, to me, new and interesting. I also have prior experience working with children as a substitute teacher, and during my ten years doing this on and off, I've gotten to be a part of the world of children. To explore this in the context of design, I hope, will be a playful way to end my five years of studying.

Personally I don't feel very interested in toy design, but I find it motivating to design playfully. Hence this project does neither goes under the category of challenge nor interest, but maybe somewhere in between the two.

Initial plan

I believe that with older companies much of what they produce is closely related with their history and therefore my initial plan for this project is to start of with making research on the company. What is the history? How have they become successful? How do you keep such an old company up to date with the changes in society? What I find interesting with BRIO is that the form language and range of variety in toys has not changed much since the company was founded. They have somehow managed to stay modern but with simple products made from basic materials. In this stage it is important to not make assumptions on the company and try to not let my own relationship with the products steer the project to fast into a certain direction.

The expectations of this project is to design with the form language of Brio, but try to find an interesting and maybe different perspective of what you would expect Brio to produce. This expectation could be seen as an initial brief of the project, but will during time change depending on the results of the research.

As for my project I think the most important thing is to create something with the soul of BRIO but also try to find my own angle of incidence. To find this, broader research has to be made, not only on the company but also on facts regarding children's development, child's play and on the curriculum of kindergarten and school.

As well as doing research on children's behaviour it is equally important to take into consideration that children have parents or care givers who play a big role in a child's life. What impact do they have on the children? What are the struggles and joys of an up bring from an adults perspective? How do adults view children's products.

History of Brio

Brio is a Swedish company founded in 1884 in Osby and has today grown into a global company with distributors around the world. (Brio, n.d.)

At 18 years old, Ivar Bengtsson started selling woodchip baskets in Denmark, and from the profit was able to continue doing so when moving to a village close to Osby with his wife Sissa, in 1884 (Brio, n.d.). The company was doing well during this time, selling not only baskets but also other goods produced in the region (Länsstyrelsen, n.d.) and in 1902 they moved to Osby where the company expanded. In 1907 the product catalogue contained 170 products, where one of them was the very first toy of the company, also known as the Osby horse.

In 1907 the three sons of Ivar and Sissa took over the company, and the following year BRIO was founded. BRIO, which is an acronym for the Ivarsson brothers of Osby, expanded even more when they started importing goods and by this time the assortment included products such as glass, ceramics, textiles and prams (Länsstyrelsen, n.d.), but toys were the essential part of the company (Brio, n.d.).

In 1952 the son of one of the brothers took over the company and succeeds in taking it international. Many of the most popular toys, such as the modular railway, which is still produced today to fit the original one, and the dachshund, were made in 1958 (Brio, n.d.).
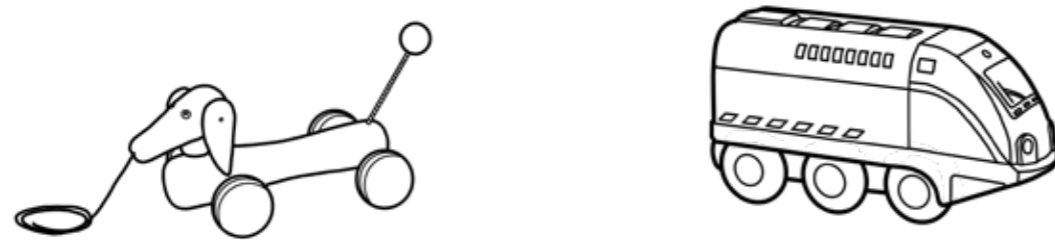
BRIO was converted into an incorporated company in 1937 (Länsstyrelsen, n.d.), but was run by the Ivarsson family up until 2004 when Proventus Invest AB became the majority stockowner and later Ravensburger Group acquired BRIO AB (Brio, n.d.).
Today BRIO's head office is located in Malmö and the manufacturing is done in China (Sandberg, 2008). In the old warehouse located in Osby a museum dedicated to toys opened in 1984 to celebrate the 100 years of BRIO, which today is run as a stand-alone foundation (Brio, n.d.).

Since the 1940's BRIO has been a Purveyor to the Royal Court of Sweden.

A Visit to Brio

As a kick off for this project I visited Brio at their head office in Malmö on the 9th of January. I was shown around and given information on how they work and think regarding design for children. As someone who is not in use of toys in the present it is easy to think of toys as they where when last being in close touch with them. The visit at Brio was an eye opener and gave me a broader understanding for the present toy design industry.

Brio and Technology

The first thing noticed was the development of the toys and how Brio has adapted them to today's society without removing the soul of the company. The modular railroad still looks the same and newly designed parts are compatible with original parts from the 50's. At the visit they told me that, for them, it is important to keep up with society and its development. Since we live in an age where we are moving even further towards digitalism toys have to be adapted. Therefore digital play is important for children to get an early understanding of how it works and to get a balanced relationship with it.

An example of how technology has been integrated in the toys at Brio is the Smart Locomotives with Action Tunnels. The train has an inbuilt sensor that reacts when entering the tunnels and either stops (red tunnel) or change direction (green tunnel).

The second example is an app through which you can drive your electric locomotive on the train tracks. It can also be controlled by pressing buttons on the top of the locomotive or driven analogously with your hands.

The third example is the Brio World App where you digitally build your railroad and then drive the train. This example differs from the others since it's only app-based. Mentioned at Brio was how some children play with it and find inspiration for how to build their own analogue railroad.

From Wood to Plastics

The strong focus of Brio has for many years been using wood as a material, but for many reasons the use of plastic has become more frequent. Environmentally plastic is seen as a material that should be less consumed since it derives from unrenewable resources. Unfortunately I did not ask as many questions regarding this matter at the visit as I wish I would have. The information that I did receive was the reasons behind the choice of using plastics, which was still very interesting.

When choosing plastic as a substitute for wood was in one case for the train washing station. A big flat piece of wood has a tendency to over time bend and not stay flat which leads to it not fitting the modular train tracks.

The second example is this loading tractor. The plastic scoop has a pivot axis making it movable and able to carry objects. According to Brio a wooden scoop would make it harder to get the movement in the axis.

The third example is this rescue train. Using plastics makes more accurate detailing possible, which in turn creates possibilities for designing more perceivable concepts.

The ears of their classic dachshund are an area more exposed to damage and for preventative purposes plastic is a better material.

Brio and Parents

The strong focus of Brio has for many years been using wood as a material, but for many reasons the use of plastic has become more frequent. Environmentally plastic is seen as a material that should be less consumed since it derives from unrenewable resources. Unfortunately I did not ask as many questions regarding this matter at the visit as I wish I would have. The information that I did receive was the reasons behind the choice of using plastics, which was still very interesting.

Final Initial Thoughts

Reading further about toys you get across sayings such as "Toys can be seen as a reflection of our world in a smaller format" (NE) and "The world of toys…reflects most of the human and societal dimension (Nelson, Svensson).

When I was little I used to play a game called Tjejsnack (Girl's Talk) with my friends. In this game you were given tasks, for example tell your deepest secret, prank call your crush or say what you would like to change with your appearance. Looking at it today, the game feels out of date, especially considering how far we have come regarding equality and feminism. Why would this game only be for girls and why encourage young girls to put thought into their looks? Perhaps this could be seen as an indication of how society has moved forward as the game is no longer in production.

Today the toy industry has a global revenue of 700 billion kronor. In the book Children and Toys in play and education (Barn och leksaker i lek och lärande) Nelson and Svensson (2005) refers to a study made at the Nordic Centre for Research in Toys and Educational Media where children at this time owns around 500 toys each, toys meaning objects only produced for play. Comparing it to children born between 1910 and 1940 who had around 3 toys each it is easy to see that something has changed. It could be a result of how the general habits regarding consumption are different and also how the view of children, both in society and in the home, has improved (Socialstyrelsen, 2013).

Not only how general consumption or how the view of children has changed can be seen when reading about toys, but also the development of everyday products. In toy stores you can find many different types of everyday objects, often stylized, simplified and scaled down to suit children, for example, small kitchens, cars and phones. In children's graves dated back to 3100- 2600 B.C clay figurines portraying carriages and draft animals have been found. To implement everyday objects and pretending to be a part of the adult world doesn't seem like a modern phenomenon.

When summarizing the initial part of the project is where it took a turn. The most interesting area became the one where adults and children meet. The natural quality of playfulness with a child is reflected in the objects that they interact with, which engage them in play. Adult also possess the quality of playfulness, why don't we express it more often?