

Designing towards restorative experience of home: emancipating the source of the chaos when leaving from home

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Abstract

In this thesis, I researched homes as restorative environments and what hinders neurodivergent people from experiencing homes as restorative environments. One context, when the home becomes a container of chaos rather than a restorative environment, is the process of leaving home. This thesis emancipated some of the reasons why the process of leaving home escalates into chaos. The aim of this study was to enhance the knowledge related to restorative environment design in a holistic way.

I chose this topic because I wanted to explore opportunities that I as a designer could add to this discussion of designing solutions for restorative homes. I personally have had a special interest in improving homes and their role in our wellbeing. Also, the mental health problems have increased in Finland even though Finland has been the happiest country for multiple years in according to World Happiness Report. COVID-19 pandemic partly worsened the situation and highlighted the importance of homes for our lives. Therefore, in today's world, the need for restorative environments, especially homes, has increased.

The research question in this thesis was: *what happens in the person's inner world when the process of leaving home escalates into chaos and prevents them from experiencing home as a restorative environment?* The research answered this question with autoethnographic and ethnographic research. I chose to study this phenomenon through autoethnographic research, because I as a researcher have personal experience on the chaotic process of leaving home. To gain wider understanding and make sure that the research was not too subjective I also used ethnography as a research method. The data was collected through five semi-structured interviews, observations, spontaneous discussions about the topic, and my own reflections. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis.

The study resulted in a collection of six mindsets. Those mindsets are full lifer, preparer, extreme risk mitigator, time optimizer, resource optimizer, and analyst. These mindsets may be present in people's lives and be highlighted in the process of leaving home. If these mindsets do not work together and/or one of them becomes too rigid, the process starts to escalate into chaos. This research also identified some symptoms that may also emerge in the process of leaving and further complicate the flow.

This study suggests that becoming aware of these mindsets is the first step to improvement. There are also strategies to reduce chaos such as a moment of silence, having a clear goal and principles, and talking out loud. Further improvements can be achieved through deepening self-awareness.

Keywords: restorative, home, neurodivergent, experience, process, chaos

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Tiivistelmä

Tässä opinnäytetyössäni tutkin koteja restoratiivisina ympäristöinä ja sitä, mikä estää neuromoninaisia ihmisiä kokemasta kotia restoratiivisena ympäristöinä. Yksi konteksti, jossa koti muuttuu ympäristöksi, jossa kaaos tapahtuu, sen sijaan, että se olisi restoratiivinen ympäristö, on kotoa lähtemisen prosessi. Tämä opinnäytetyö teki näkyväksi syitä, miksi kotoa lähteminen eskaloituu kaaokseksi. Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli lisätä tietoa restoratiivisten ympäristöjen holistiseen suunnitteluun liittyen.

Valitsin tämän aiheen, koska halusin tutkia, mitä voisin suunnittelijana lisätä tähän keskusteluun. Olen henkilökohtaisesti ollut erityisen kiinnostunut kotien kehittämisestä ja niiden roolista hyvinvoinnissamme. Lisäksi mielenterveysongelmat ovat lisääntyneet Suomessa, vaikka Suomi on ollut maailman onnellisin maa usean vuoden ajan World Happiness Reportin mukaan. COVID-19-pandemia pahensi osittain tilannetta ja korosti kotien merkitystä elämässämme. Siksi nykymaailmassa restoratiivisten ympäristöjen, erityisesti kotien, tarve on lisääntynyt.

Tämän opinnäytetyön tutkimuskysymys oli: *mitä tapahtuu ihmisen sisäisessä maailmassa, kun kotoa lähtemisen prosessi eskaloituu kaaokseksi ja estää häntä kokemasta kotia restoratiivisena ympäristönä?* Tutkimus vastasi tähän kysymykseen autoetnografisella ja etnografisella tutkimuksella. Valitsin tämän ilmiön tutkimiseen menetelmäksi autoetnografian, koska minulla on tutkijana omakohtaista kokemusta kaaottisesta kotoa lähtemisen prosessista. Saadakseni laajempaa ymmärrystä ja varmistaakseni, ettei tutkimus ole liian subjektiivinen, käytin tutkimusmenetelmänä myös etnografiaa. Aineisto kerättiin viiden puolistrukturoidun haastattelun, observoinnin, aiheeseen liittyvien spontaanien keskustelujen ja omien reflektioideni kautta. Aineisto analysoitiin temaattisella analyysillä.

Tutkimuksesta syntyi kuuden ajattelutavan kokoelma. Nämä ajattelutavat ovat: täyden elämän eläjä, valmistelija, äärimmäisten riskin lieventäjä, ajan optimoija, resurssien optimoija ja analytikko. Nämä ajattelutavat voivat olla läsnä ihmisten elämässä ja korostua kotoa lähtemisen prosessissa. Jos nämä ajattelutavat eivät toimi yhdessä ja/tai jostain niistä tulee liian jäykkä, prosessi alkaa eskaloitua kaaokseksi. Tämä tutkimus tunnisti myös joitain oireita, jotka voivat esiintyä kotoa lähtemisen yhteydessä ja monimutkaistaa prosessia entisestään.

Tämä tutkimus ehdottaa, että näiden ajattelutapojen tiedostaminen on kehityksen ensimmäinen askel. Kaaosta voi myös vähentää erilaisilla strategioilla, kuten hiljaisella hetkellä, selkeyttämällä tavoitteita ja toimintaperiaatteita, sekä puhumalla ääneen. Lisää parannuksia voidaan saada aikaan syventämällä itsetuntemusta.

Avainsanat: restoratiivinen, koti, neuromoninainen, kokemus, prosessi, kaaos

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Prologue

Already when I was a child living in my childhood home, I learned that keeping a house requires quite a lot of work. When I was living with my parents, I was responsible for keeping my own room clean and organized, vacuuming one floor of the town house we lived in once a week, cleaning the kitchen a few times in a week, and some additional housework. Often when I was doing these housework tasks, I was annoyed because the process was not flowing. One of the key causes of friction was the number of possessions. For example, to be able to vacuum the ~100 square meter floor properly, it required about one hour of work to prepare the whole floor to be vacuumed. There was a lot of stuff that needed to be moved away before proper vacuuming was possible. There were a lot of moving items out of the way and then back to their place. It felt like those games where the player is trying to get one piece out of the puzzle, but to do so, the player needs to move other pieces in the process of creating the way out for the one piece – but not in a pleasant, gamified way. I was greatly irritated by the piles of stuff that was on the floor, on the tabletops, and everywhere. Even though the stuff was not trash, the amount felt overwhelming.

Also, the rugs annoyed me deeply. They were heavy and difficult to move when vacuuming. Plus, not directly linked to vacuuming the rug but to the context of life we were living, we were living with cats. And every cat owner knows what the most suitable location for a cat is to throw up – it is always on the rug. The vacuuming and keeping the rugs clean were not a satisfying, flowing process in my opinion.

I often used to think that when I finally had my own place, I would not want to accumulate a lot of stuff. My goal was to possess only items that would genuinely make my life easier, rather than causing unnecessary friction in my daily routines. I also knew that I wanted to live with cats. Knowing their way of behavior, I decided that when I have my own place, I will not have many rugs due to the struggle described earlier.

I envisioned creating a living space that did not suffer from the problems associated with excessive possessions, which I had observed in my childhood home and many others. I also wanted a living environment which allows daily processes that flow smoothly. Therefore, I made a deliberate choice to design my home with ease of cleaning and maintenance in mind and considering the typical behaviors of cats. Instead of denying the reality, I wanted to face it and chose to see it as an inspirational starting point to solve the right problems.

Now years later, I am writing this, my master's thesis, and I can confirm that the annoyances of young Inka related to unsatisfying and stagnant processes at home were not random, but part of a bigger phenomenon. I am not the only one who has experienced this kind of stress at home and felt that the daily processes at home do not support restoring my mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual energy well enough, but rather are an additional load to my overall capacity.

And for those reasons, I have chosen to research designs of homes, and more specifically the restorative factors of homes. I will be exploring the opportunities that I as a designer could add to this discussion of designing solutions for restorative homes.

1.2 Motivation

During my studies, I have been learning about service design, empathy, and user centricity. I am interested in different inner worlds and mental processes of individuals; how people experience the world and how can I better their experiences as a designer. I also have a passion for improving homes to serve their inhabitants better and am often drawn to discussions related to the built environment. This interest guided me to attend Rune & Berg's online talk about the work environment of the future 2022 (Rune & Berg Design, 2022). In that webinar, I encountered the word restorative for the first time in the context of design work. I had been thinking a lot the restoring practices during my studies to create better balance in my life but had not heard the word restorative before. Learning this new word unlocked a new research area for me to explore.

Alongside my studies, I am an eager audiobook listener. I enjoy learning about different disciplines and widening my world view. One book I have recently listened to is *Ilmaista rahaa kaikille ja muita ideoita, jotka pelastavat maailman* (original name: *Utopia for Realists*) by Rutger Bregman (2020); and I got familiar with the concept of mental bandwidth. Bregman explained that one discriminating factor in this modern world is the differences in mental bandwidth.

People with less money often have narrower mental bandwidth because they need to use more mental energy in daily decisions such as how to get home from work, what to buy in grocery stores, and when to go to see a doctor. They cannot simply make decisions based on what would be the most flowing process for them, instead they need to compromise a lot due to tight budgets and make decisions based on what option requires spending the least amount of money. While people with higher levels of income do not need to use so much mental energy on these kinds of daily decisions. They can simply choose the most suitable transportation option, buy what they need from the grocery store, and go to meet the doctor

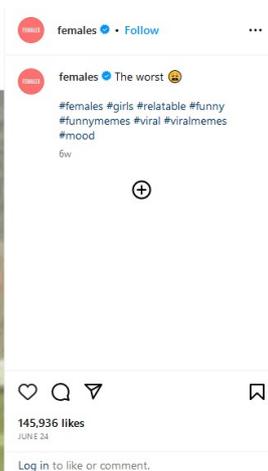
when they need to. All this because they simply have more money to spend, which allows them to make their decision based on their own convenience rather than based on limited financial resources. (Bregman, 2020)

This has led me to think about the concept of mental bandwidth, the reasons what narrows it down, and the factors that impose a substantial cognitive load. What are the moments in daily life that load the cognition heavily and narrow the mental bandwidth? Are there repeating patterns that seem to cause recurring stress?

From my own life I have noticed that I often get overwhelmingly stressed in the process of leaving home. For some reason the chaos of everyday life seems to always happen at that moment even though I have tried to make proper preparations to avoid the hassle. This has been the pattern in my life for as long as I remember. It has not mattered if I wake up 4 hours or 15 minutes before I need to leave, chaos always happens. And due to the chaos happening, the moment of arriving home can also be stressful because I need to face the chaos I left behind in the home. In addition, often when I arrive home, I am tired. At that moment the chaos I left behind seems to be an even more overwhelming reality to face. Only recently I have learned some supporting strategies for those moments, and I think it is because I recently completed my 3 years long psychotherapy journey.

I have talked about this struggle with other people and noticed that I am not the only one who has been struggling with this. Many of my friends are struggling with this too. I also have heard from parents of young children that leaving home is always such a hassle. Also, some people without children have said that the process of leaving home is always such a hassle for some unidentified reason. The relatability of this kind of chaos related to leaving home is further highlighted in the popularity the meme shared by Instagram account *females* has got.

Me coming home to the mess I made when I was getting ready



(Females Instagram, 2023)

In turn, I have observed that some people do not have this hassle. For example, I have never seen my partner having this kind of chaos when leaving home. They seem to simply take the stuff they need with them and go out the door. They are rarely late from anywhere and their energy is calm and not to the extreme limit of the capacity of their nervous system like my energy sometimes is. Why is that? Why do some people have this struggle and others do not? Is there something inherently different between those people? Have some people learned some crucial strategy to make the process of leaving home smooth, but those other people have not? I want to understand what this phenomenon is about.

I also have a keen interest in exploring how the environment can improve an individual's ability to thrive in life. I am fascinated by the design of homes and its potential to foster well-being and support one's soul's purpose to be manifested into reality. I believe there is a lot of potential for environments to support restoring people's energy and thus widen their mental bandwidth. Therefore, the ultimate motivation for this thesis is that I believe improving the restorative factors of homes would be crucial help for some people in their everyday life to reduce chaos, allow them to experience ease of life, and use their energy to more meaningful activities.

1.3 Why design restorative homes?

Modern society is deeply entrenched in a consumerist culture, where the accumulation of material possessions is often equated with success and happiness. However, this pursuit of acquiring more and more possessions comes at a cost. Homes, which were once intended as sanctuaries of peace and tranquility, have now become cluttered warehouses filled with stuff. While the exact number of items in households can be debated, it is evident that the struggle of maintaining many possessions is real, as reflected in the existence of an entire industry and profession dedicated to organizing home possessions.

The significance of this challenge is further highlighted by the growth of the home organizing industry. Various sources, including Peysakhovich (2022), Closet Factory (Closet Factory, n.d.), GlobeNewswire (Globe Newswire, 2023), and Business Wire (Business Wire, 2019), indicate that the industry has experienced substantial expansion. Market sizes ranged from approximately \$11.4 billion to \$12.7 billion in 2021 – 2022, and it is projected to continue growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.6% to 3.8%. By 2030, the industry is estimated to reach a value of \$15.9 billion. The growth of the industry underscores the widespread need for assistance in managing and decluttering our homes.

In addition, the global phenomenon of organizing and decluttering homes gained significant attention with the release of Marie Kondo's book, "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up,"

in 2014. This phenomenon only grew larger with the release of the Netflix series, "Tidying Up with Marie Kondo," in 2019. Marie Kondo truly stirred our reality and started a movement. Many have followed her lead and became a professional organizer and have started a business around it. There are already 572 certified KonMari consultants listed in Marie Kondo's website (KonMari Media, 2023); over 40 thousand organizers currently employed in the United States according to Zippia (Zippia, n.d.); and even in our small home country, Finland, has its own association for professional organizers called Suomen ammattijärjestäjät ry (The Finnish Association of Professional Organizers). All this is emphasizing the recognition and demand for such services.

I watched the Finnish reality series *Kaaoksen kesyttäjät*, that is based on British Sort Your Life Out in Seven Days TV format (Rabbit Films, 2022). It was evident how strongly the number of possessions negatively affected the quality of people's lives. The overwhelming presence of belongings in our living spaces not only clutters our physical environment but also has a profound impact on our well-being. Research (e.g., Fuller, 2022; Roster et al., 2016) have shown that excessive clutter and disorganization in our environment is connected to increased stress, anxiety, and a sense of feeling overwhelmed. The constant visual and mental stimulation from the abundance of possessions can hinder our ability to relax, focus, and engage in meaningful activities. Moreover, the time and energy spent managing and maintaining our material possessions detract from our overall quality of life, preventing us from fully embracing our dreams and aspirations.

Sitra (Sitra et al., 2023) states that one of the megatrends is the growing challenges of well-being. Even though the physical health of Finns has improved, the expectation of healthy years of life has increased, and we are also the happiest nation in the world for the fifth year in a row, according to the World Happiness Report (WER) commissioned by the UN (World Happiness Report, 2023), the mental health problems have increased. More than half of disability pensions are based on mental health (Mieli, n.d.). The increase in mental health problems has been particularly high among young people. The corona pandemic has partly worsened the situation, but it is also affected by individualism and the pressures set by society, social media, and general uncertainty about the future. (Sitra et al., 2023)

The COVID-19 pandemic showed us how an important role homes play in our society. We were guided to stay home as much as possible. Home represents the primary place of safety. But even though covid initially forced us to stay at home, it eventually gave us the option to spend more time at home, for example through working remotely. Thus, as a positive result of COVID-19 there are more opportunities to spend time at home. And as mentioned earlier, homes originally had sanctuaries of peace and tranquility. So, we could imagine that the opportunity to spend more time at home would be beneficial for our mental health restoring.

Unfortunately, sometimes the experience of home can be a lot different than that. The so-called home can also be a container of stressful experiences where the mental bandwidths narrow down due to the chaos happening. Thus, I believe that in today's world, the need for restorative environments, especially homes, has increased.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis is the following. In chapter 1, Introduction, I establish the research context, motivations, and significance of designing restorative homes. This chapter sets the stage for the thesis by explaining why restorative home environments are important and what inspired this research. I also discuss the background and personal motivations that led me to choose this topic for my thesis. Chapter 2, Background Research, presents existing approaches to designing restorative environments and identifies the challenges in the current approaches. This chapter provides a comprehensive literature review, highlighting how home design has been approached so far and where it falls short in designing restorative environments.

In Chapter 3, Research, I define the research gap, aims, objectives, scope, and research questions. This chapter articulates what is missing in current research and practice, and sets goals for the study. It also outlines the scope of the research, detailing what will and will not be covered, and presents the central research question guiding the research. Chapter 4, Methodology, details the emancipatory and multi-method research approach used in this study. This chapter explains the research design, including the use of autoethnography and ethnography, and how data was collected and analyzed. It provides a rationale for the chosen methods and discusses the steps taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the research.

The results of the study are presented in Chapter 5, Results: Mindsets. This chapter introduces the identified mindsets that influence the chaos experienced when leaving home. It explains how these mindsets manifest and their impact on individuals' experiences. In Chapter 6, Suggestions, I offer strategies to increase awareness, reduce chaos, and enhance self-awareness. This chapter translates the research findings into practical recommendations for designing experience of restorative home environment. Finally, Chapter 7, Conclusions, I discuss implications for future research, present final reflections on this thesis, and outline the limitations of the study.

1.5 Glossary of the key terms

ADHD (*Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder*) – neurodevelopmental abnormality, which characteristics include three core features: inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity (Neuromoninaiset, n.d.-a).

ASD (*Autism Spectrum Disorder / Autism*) – Autism is a neurodevelopmental difference that affects how people communicate, behave, learn, and interact (Marschall, 2023).

Chaos – An uncontrolled sequence of events with no clear structure or plan. Things do not go according to plan, and accidents and unexpected events occur, complicating and/or disrupting the process.

Experience – a particular instance of personally encountering or undergoing something (Dictionary.com, n.d.-a)

Home – a house, apartment, or other shelter that is the usual residence of a person, family, or household (Dictionary.com, n.d.-b).

Neurodivergent person – Person whose brain function differently in one or more ways than is considered standard or typical (Resnick, 2023). A person belonging to a neuro minority, human on neuro spectrum (Neuromoninaiset, n.d.-b). In this thesis, neurodivergent people refer mainly to people who have formal ADHD and/or ASD diagnosis or have self-recognized themselves to have ADHD and/or ASD.

Neurodiversity – Neurodiversity means people experience and interact with the world in various ways, with no single "right" way to think, learn, or behave. Differences are not seen as deficits. The term encompasses all people but is often associated with autism, ADHD, and learning disabilities. (Baumer & Frueh, 2021)

Neurotypical person – someone whose brain functions, behaviors, and processing are considered standard or typical (Resnick, 2023). A person belonging to a neuro majority.

Restorative – having the potential to re-establish one's energy mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Restorative environment – An environment that supports people's well-being. Among other things, it reduces mental fatigue, improves productivity, and helps to recover from stress (Korpela, 1999). The terms healthy, revitalizing, healing and therapeutic environment can also be used to describe a restorative environment (Ulrich et al., 1991).

Restorativeness – the quality or state of being restorative, which means having the potential to re-establish one's energy mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

2.0 Background research

Design of homes aiming to foster well-being is not a new thing. Design itself is a discipline that aims to improve various things for the beneficiaries and designing the living environment to improve well-being has been the objective in many cases. Schweitzer et al. (2004) refer to a text which states that already in ancient Greece, there were temples designed to restore harmony and promote healing through nature, music, and art.

2.1 How the design of a home has already been approached?

To gain a deeper understanding of how the design of a home has already been approached when the aim has been to make the home more restorative, I discussed the matter with Artificial Intelligence (AI) ChatGPT-4 as a starting point for further research. Even though using AI is not yet a standard practice in the research context, it has started to be feasible in many other applications. For this reason, I wanted to give AI a chance to help me and provide for science community an early experiment of collaborating with AI in research setting. At the end of our discussion, I evaluated the answers I got based on my judgment as a design student. Through the lens of my design studies and based on my other experience in the field, these perspectives provided by the AI (ChatGPT, 2024) seem to convincingly summarize the various potentially relevant approaches of designing a restorative home as follows:

Designing homes with the aim of making them more restorative focuses on creating environments that promote well-being, reduce stress, and enhance the overall quality of life for occupants. This approach integrates several key elements and strategies that cater to physical, emotional, and psychological needs. Here's how modern home design has been approached to achieve these goals:

- 1. Natural Elements:** *Incorporating natural light, plants, water features, and natural materials like wood and stone helps connect the indoor environment with the natural world outside. Research has shown that connections to nature can have a calming effect, improve mood, and reduce stress levels.*

- 2. Ergonomic Design:** Furniture and spaces are designed to support human body mechanics, minimizing physical strain, and enhancing comfort during use. This includes adjustable furniture that fits a variety of body types and activities.
- 3. Flexible Spaces:** Homes are designed with adaptable spaces that can change function according to the occupants' needs, whether for work, relaxation, or socializing. This flexibility helps ensure the environment remains supportive and useful over time.
- 4. Mindful Decor:** The use of color, texture, and materials is carefully considered to evoke a sense of calm and tranquility. Soft, neutral colors are often favored for their ability to create a peaceful ambiance.
- 5. Air and Light Quality:** Good ventilation systems and the strategic use of windows can significantly improve air quality and ensure ample natural light, both of which are crucial for physical health and mood enhancement.
- 6. Acoustic Design:** Soundproofing and the thoughtful arrangement of spaces can reduce noise pollution, which is important for creating a serene environment that supports rest and concentration.
- 7. Personal Spaces:** Designing homes with areas designated for personal use, like reading nooks or meditation rooms, allows individuals to have private retreats for relaxation and rejuvenation.
- 8. Biophilic Design:** This approach goes beyond simply adding plants; it involves integrating nature into the design in a more fundamental way, such as through living walls, indoor gardens, and the use of natural patterns and shapes.
- 9. Technology Integration:** Smart home technologies can be used to enhance comfort and convenience, from automated lighting systems that mimic natural light cycles to advanced heating and cooling systems that maintain optimal environmental conditions.
- 10. Sustainable Practices:** Using eco-friendly materials and sustainable building practices not only reduces the environmental impact of a home but can also contribute to the well-being of its occupants by ensuring healthier living spaces.

By prioritizing these elements, architects and designers aim to create homes that are not just places to live, but sanctuaries that actively contribute to the well-being of their occupants. (ChatGPT, 2024)

Many academic papers and other sources have similar claims as the AI made above. Multiple studies show the positive effects of nature on wellbeing. Pilot study by Beil & Hanes (2013) finds that natural environments reduce stress more effectively than urban settings, especially for females, suggesting nature's restorative perception may play a key role in its stress-lowering impact.

A literature review by Berto (2014) states that natural environments play a pivotal role in enhancing recovery from stress and mental exhaustion, aligning with the concepts of Stress Recovery Theory and Attention Restoration Theory. The review highlights how nature effectively shields individuals from the impacts of environmental stressors and surpasses urban environments in fostering physiological, emotional, and cognitive rejuvenation. The act of engaging with natural vistas is linked to a reduction in negative mood states and an increase in positive emotions, alongside aiding the recuperation of cognitive functions, especially those impacted by stress. The body of work emphasizes the critical need to integrate restorative natural areas into the fabric of urban design to bolster community health and well-being. (Berto, 2014)

Similarly, according to the report *Natural Thinking* by Bird (2007) contact with nature has extensive benefits even beyond restoration. It can effectively support treatment for ADHD and poor self-discipline, aid in managing stress and anxiety, including for surgical and cancer patients, reduce crime and aggression, enhance elderly and dementia care, improve concentration in children and office workers, support stress relief, foster healthy cognitive development in children, improve hospital settings, strengthen community bonds, and boost overall well-being and mental health. (Bird, 2007)

In addition, Craig et al. (2021) found that integrating restorative environment research, particularly involving nature, into the home workspace can effectively enhance productivity and mental health for individuals working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite mixed results, simple and cost-effective strategies such as taking breaks in nature or incorporating elements of nature into the workspace are suggested to mitigate negative psychological effects associated with social isolation and teleworking. (Craig et al., 2021)

Also, the findings of a study by Felsten (2009) suggests that large nature murals in indoor study areas can help restore attentionally fatigued students when actual nature views are not available or sufficient for restoration. A study by Gullone (2000) found that substantial evidence supports Wilson's biophilia hypothesis, indicating humans have an inherent affinity for nature, which contributes to psychological well-being. This is evidenced by the positive effects of exposure to natural environments on well-being and the strong, instinctive fear responses to natural threats as opposed to human-made dangers. (Gullone, 2000)

When natural elements become a central part of the living environment, we refer to it as biophilic design. According to Kellert & Calabrese (2015) biophilic design aims to improve human habitats in modern structures, focusing on health, fitness, and well-being. It also supports natural systems' productivity and resilience. Its successful implementation leads to diverse benefits: physically, it can boost fitness, lower blood pressure, and enhance well-being; mentally, it may increase motivation, reduce stress, and foster creativity; behaviorally, it encourages better social interactions and reduces aggression. (Kellert & Calabrese, 2015). Correspondingly, literature review by Gillis & Gatersleben (2015) found strong evidence that biophilic design, especially through direct contact with nature elements like plants and natural light, boosts health and well-being by lowering stress, improving mood, and enhancing cognitive abilities.

Ergonomics also impacts positively on people's wellbeing. There are many products that are ergonomically designed to reduce physical strain such as adjustable chairs, electronic tables, and ergonomical computer peripherals, e.g. mice and keyboards. In the context of designing restorative environments, the emphasis is on sensory ergonomics.

According to Nousiainen et al. (2014) sensory ergonomics refers to approach where all the senses have been considered meaningful way in the design of the environment. These senses are vision, hearing, smelling, and touching. Babies also use tasting, but this is not the most important sense to experience the environment. Thus, vision, hearing, smelling, and touching should be considered when designing restorative environments. The restorative environment means for vision that the environment is clear, relaxing, harmonic, and interesting; for hearing, it means acoustic environment is soft and pleasant; for smelling it means that the scent environment is mild, pleasant, and clean; and for touch it means that the touch environment is grainy, warm, and natural. (Nousiainen et al., 2014)

Additionally, flexible spaces can have positive effects on wellbeing because they help to meet various needs. Many spaces must serve different users at the same time, for example, schools are learning environments for students but working environments for the teachers; and these groups of people might have different needs. Flexibility and transformable spaces enable the best conditions for different user groups. (Nousiainen et al., 2014)

Also, air and light quality play a role in physical health and mood enhancement. According to (Nousiainen et al., 2014) improving indoor air using natural materials, effective ventilation, and indoor plants can lead to significant health benefits, including reduced allergy symptoms and better overall physical health. The authors further discuss the interplay between indoor air quality and mental well-being, highlighting how a well-designed indoor environment contributes to stress reduction and cognitive function improvement. By prioritizing light and air quality in design and construction, spaces can become not only more comfortable but also

more conducive to productivity and relaxation. Nousiainen et al. advocate for a holistic approach in architecture that considers the health impacts of building materials and indoor climates, underscoring the need for sustainable practices that ensure the longevity of both human and environmental health. (Nousiainen et al., 2014)

Certain kinds of decorative choices in interior design can also have restorative effects. For example, Gao & Zhang (2020) found that inpatients experienced better restoration when surrounded by warm-colored rather than cold-colored or white walls. Nousiainen et al. (2014) found that visually interesting, calm, and harmonic visuals and positive stimuli, such as art, nature, music, or activities are important when creating a restorative environment. While, seeing devices, wires, mess, dazzle, and indistinctiveness are considered stress-inducing elements (Nousiainen et al., 2014).

The decoration can also be bright, colorful, and playful and still have at least short-term positive effects on mood. This kind of approach is called *dopamine décor*, which is a rising trend from 2023 in making homes happier places. There are thousands of videos in TikTok about this new trend under the hashtag #dopaminedecor. It has also been written about by many medias such as Architectural Digest India (Gopal Rao, 2023), Forbes Home (Garaffo, 2023), Real Simple (Dawson, 2023), and Homes & Gardens (Hatton, 2023). In dopamine décor the idea is to décor home in a way that it gives the instant dopamine hit of happiness, for example with bright colors and cute decorative items. However, the dopamine décor does not have much scientific research to back it up so it can be just another strategy to boost consumerism by commercial marketers.

Moreover, having space for personal use and privacy can positively affect wellbeing and recovery. For example, in study by Tegnestedt et al. (2013) single room nursing stations appeared to exhibit less frequent disruptive sounds, which can affect negative to the recovery. So, personal spaces can be preferable in some cases to avoid sound pollution and thus improve wellbeing.

Finally, technological integrations have also been said to improve people's lives and wellbeing. One rising smart home technology is automated lighting systems. For example, Philips (Philips, n.d.) offers products to create lighting that support wellbeing. They have lighting systems designed to mimic sunrise to provide soft awakening, smart light to makes it easier to keep work and free time separate when being at home office, and lighting that supports wellbeing by communicating to body when start to relax and prepare for a good night's sleep (Philips, n.d.).

There is scientific research that supports the claims made by Philips. Philips has listed the following research for their claims: Viola et al., 2015; Gabel et al., 2013; Giménez et al., 2010;

Manber et al., 1996; Schlangen, 2014; Santhi et al., 2012; and Lucas et al., 2014. Viola et al. (2015) found that morning light exposure can significantly lessen harmful changes to heart function experienced by healthy young men upon waking, especially under high sleep pressure; thus, dawn simulation light in the morning could help protect heart health during the critical morning hours. Gabel et al. (2013) states that exposure to artificial dawn light in the morning improves mood and cognitive performance without affecting the body's internal clock, making it an effective way to counteract the negative effects of mild sleep restriction. Giménez et al. (2010) found that using an alarm clock with artificial dawn light reduces sleep inertia in early risers without altering their circadian rhythm, suggesting benefits stemming from the light exposure itself, not changes in sleep or biological clock timings. Manber et al. (1996) findings indicated that regular sleep-wake schedules reduce sleepiness and improve alertness and sleep efficiency, compared to sleep without a regular schedule. Schlangen (2014) emphasizes that adequate exposure to natural and appropriately timed artificial light is crucial for synchronizing our circadian rhythms, improving sleep, reducing sleep deprivation, and enhancing overall health, mood, and well-being. According to Santhi et al. (2012) evening light at home impacts our body clock and sleep, suggesting adjusting artificial light's spectrum could lessen these effects, with implications for managing sleep and circadian rhythm disorders. Lucas et al. (2014) are of the opinion that light significantly influences human physiology and behavior, recommending increased natural light exposure during the day and managed artificial lighting to enhance sleep and health.

There are also other companies that sell products for smart home systems, such as IKEA, Telia, and POWER. IKEA (n.d.) says that the products are designed to make everyday life more convenient, efficient and a little more magical. Telia (n.d.) claims that their products would make life more convenient, more fun, easier, and so on. And POWER (n.d.) says that with their products 1) you do not have to spend time and effort on small tasks in the home, such as adjusting the lighting or temperature; 2) their smart home technologies help to reduce unnecessary energy consumption and saves costs, and 3) these smart home products provide more security and flexibility for life. However, these claims sound more like promotional exaggerations because no scientific evidence has been provided for these claims.

2.2 Challenges of the existing approaches

The common nominator in these approaches is the focus in building, designing, and modifying the *physical* environment that is separate from the human. So, we are only focusing on the external factors when aiming to improve the wellbeing and foster restorativeness. In this paradigm the frame is: when the human is not thriving in its living

environment, the environment needs to change. This makes sense until we are faced with insurmountable obstacles and perceive a dead end.

There are multiple reasons why changing the external environment may be too difficult, too slow, or even impossible when aiming to create a more restorative environment. Firstly, it can be too slow to change the physical home environment in relation to the speed of the dynamism of the human's inner world. By that I mean that the physical environment cannot respond to all internal changes, impulses, and growth as a person simply because the changes happen inherently slower in the physical world (i.e. external world) than in the inner world (i.e. in the mind). Secondly, there may be restrictions related to constructions, such as rules and regulations, building permits, space limitations, structural limitations, and others which can set limits to the possibilities for changing the environment. Lastly, there are usually some kinds of limitations set by financials, time available, materials available, and technical and practical know-how. This set of limitations often impinges right from the beginning of the process of changing the physical environment and prevents the process from progressing. Thus, the physical environment cannot always be the solution to improve the inner experience and wellbeing.

In addition, only modifying the physical environment and keeping it up to recent trends and design innovations may also have adverse effects. Constantly updating the physical environment may foster overconsumption, which is unsustainable for nature and unsustainable for individuals' satisfaction with life. Nature simply cannot keep up with the speed of consumption. The unsustainability from the individuals' point of view is a bit more complex. We might think that advancing our physical environment would make us happier, more satisfied with life, and would make the home more restorative, but for some reason that is not always the case. I think this happens because when making the physical environment more advanced, it causes more things to maintain, more complexity to administer and thus causes more unpleasant tasks for the individual; even though the aim was to make the life easier, reduce the number of chores and errands, and eventually improve the possibilities to restore our energy.

In conclusion, when aiming to create a more restorative environment, the focus has been only on changing the external environment. When it is not possible to change the physical environment, humans can be seen almost as powerless victims of their environment. If modifying the physical environment is not possible, what can we do? To see beyond this kind of view I think we need to question the dynamic between a human and the environment and change the point of view.

3.0 Research

3.1 Research gap

As shown in the background research, most of the research focuses on changing the physical environment, but in some cases, including myself, it has not been ideal solution to create the experience of restorative home. Therefore, we need to change the approach of how we design restorative experience of home. There is a need for understanding what happens in the person's inner world and how it prevents them from experiencing home as a restorative environment.

3.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of this thesis is to enhance the knowledge related to restorative environment design in a holistic way. There are a lot of people who could benefit from a more holistic way of designing restorative environments. Two main groups of people who could benefit from this are 1) professional designers designing restorative environments, and 2) people whose struggles have not been acknowledged by designers and society at large in this matter. To professional designers, this thesis aims to deepen understanding of the inner processes of people who experience chaos when leaving home and provide opportunity to gain deeper compassion toward them. To people who personally experience the chaos when leaving home on a daily basis, this thesis aims to provide validation and experience of finally being seen, and ultimately advocate for their needs. To fulfill these aims, I have set the following objectives: 1) emancipate the source of the chaos stemming from the human's inner world when leaving a home, and 2) create description of the mental processes that happens when leaving a home and causes the escalation into chaos.

3.3 Scope

I am going to limit the scope of this thesis to cover only the context of home as a restorative environment. I have chosen this limitation because as explained in the introduction, the home plays a key role in our wellbeing. So, I believe that by researching home, I can find meaningful insights within the size of the research as a master's thesis.

Further, I have limited the scope of the people involved in this study to people who have similar situations as me. I am 27 years old woman, born on 1996 (i.e. at the transition between Generation Z and the Millennial generation) without kids, living in Finland. I have self-recognized myself as neurodivergent (even though I do not have any official diagnosis) and I have had difficulties in the process of leaving home for most of my life. Thus, people who I ended up including to the interviews were people who: 1) are diagnosed or identifies as neurodivergent, 2) are only responsible of themselves (i.e. not responsible of other people, e.g. children), 3) lives in Finland, 4) recognizes chaotic process of leaving home as a repeating pattern in their life, and 5) is generation Z or millennial.

3.4 Research Question

I formed the following research question to guide this study: *what happens in the person's inner world when the process of leaving home escalates into chaos and prevents them from experiencing home as a restorative environment?*

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Emancipatory and multi-method research

This research is emancipatory research. *Emancipatory research is a research perspective of producing knowledge that can be of benefit to disadvantaged people* (Noel, 2016). In other words, emancipatory research makes visible some perspective that has stayed hidden because the studied people are somehow marginalized. In this thesis the research aims to emancipate the perspective of neurodivergent people whose struggles of leaving home have remained hidden and have been disregarded due to lack of knowledge about neurodiversity and its manifestations in everyday life.

In this research I used a multi-method approach, which means I used multiple different research methods. These methods contained two qualitative methods: autoethnography and ethnography. I chose autoethnography because I had chosen to study phenomenon which I have personal experience with. Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that combines the tenets of ethnography and an autobiography (Ellis et al., 2011). According to Muratovski (2016) ethnographic research is a method of qualitative research which provides rich and holistic insights that help us to understand people's views, actions, and the environment that is surrounding them. It is typical in ethnographic research to be very close to the researched people and for example, live, eat, and work with them. In those cases, the researcher is an 'insider' who actively engages in the daily activities of the group that is being studied. The researcher can also be an 'outsider'. In that case the data is gathered through careful observation, interviewing, and listening. The strength of ethnographic research is that it enables us to see closely what actual patterns occur in people's daily lives and behaviors. (Muratovski, 2016). In autoethnography the prefix "*auto*" refers to personal experience (Ellis et al., 2011). Thus, autoethnography is "*a qualitative, reflexive, ethnographic method where the researcher is also the subject of inquiry*" (Deitering, 2017, p. 2).

I chose to use these two methods to research the processes happening in the inner world from different perspectives. Autoethnography allowed me to gather data as a person who also has first-hand experience on the chaos happening in the moment of leaving home and thus allowed me to bring more personal perspective to the study. In turn, ethnography, and conducting it from the position of an outsider, allowed me to gather data from sources outside of myself and thus provided a more objective point of view on the studied subject.

Even though in ethnography the researcher aims to be empathic and understand the people who they study from the studied people's point of view, I believe that their research findings are always partly distorted by their own subjectivity. So, ethnography is always partly also an autoethnography. In turn, autoethnography is also always partly ethnography because the person is living within the world with other people and is affected by other peoples' thoughts, opinions, emotions, experiences, et cetera. So, their reflections are not fully just their own but rather are always partly distorted because of other people.

I also believe that combining these two methods enabled me to gather higher quality data than using only one method could have for the following reasons:

- 1) the interviewees were able to discuss internal processes more freely and without fear of judgment, since I, as a researcher, was also a peer to them.
- 2) the interviewees did not need to translate their experiences but were able to describe them as they truly are, trusting that I, as a researcher, would understand their descriptions beyond mere words, with true empathy.

4.2 Discussions with AI

In this thesis I have used ChatGPT by OpenAI to support me in the writing process. With ChatGPT 3.5, I engaged in a variety of tasks aimed at refining the language and clarity of my thesis. For instance, I frequently sought the AI's assistance in finding more precise words or terms, such as when I needed a word that extended beyond 'multidimensional,' and the AI suggested 'hyperdimensional.' This capability was particularly helpful in distinguishing closely related terms, enabling me to choose the most accurate expressions for the context. I also relied on ChatGPT to rephrase colloquially written text into a format more suitable for academic contexts and to assist with grammar corrections. Furthermore, the AI helped me reformulate unclear sentences into clearer, more comprehensible versions and condense longer passages that I had difficulty encapsulating succinctly. Additionally, I sometimes asked the AI to clarify complex concepts, such as explaining the differences between 'aims' and 'objectives' in research, which aided my understanding of these fundamental aspects of the thesis and helped me explain things in right sections.

Transitioning to ChatGPT 4.0 and later also to ChatGPT 4o, I began to use the AI more as a collaborative partner, akin to a peer with whom I could discuss obscure ideas and receive feedback. This interaction was useful when initiating research from scratch seemed daunting. The AI functioned like a colleague, helping to spawn ideas or suggest perspectives and search terms for locating relevant studies and literature. Additionally, I tasked ChatGPT

4.0 and ChatGPT 4o to point out and summarize certain parts, for example key findings and insights from existing research, based on abstracts and/or the article I provided. This process accelerated the background research and helped me to familiarize myself with the literature more efficiently. In the writing process the AI has been like an editor who supports me as an author to create clear, coherent, and easily understandable academic text. Thus, AI has been an important tool for me, allowing me to organize this complex research process into a coherent text document. Despite the generally good quality of the AI's answers in my opinion, I always critically assessed its suggestions, just as I would with any human collaborator and when reading articles. A part in which I have not used the support of AI at all is the abstract (maturity test) since it is a part where Aalto University has explicitly prohibited the use of language models.

4.3 Data collection

The data was collected through multiple sources: 1) from five semi-structured interviews, where the data was co-produced through dialogue, 2) from observations, 3) from short spontaneous discussions about the topic, and 4) from my own reflections. The interviews were 2-3 hours long and were held in Finnish since all my interviewees were Finnish speaking. Two of the interviewees I recruited from my own network. The other three interviewees I recruited via TikTok, where I posted a video asking if there were people who experience the chaos when leaving home and would be interested in participating in my research.

The interviews of the two interviewees I recruited from my own network were conducted in the person's home and the interviews were voice recorded and a few pictures were taken as notes. In these in-location interviews the interviewees were able to refer to the actual environment where the process of leaving happens when describing their process. The rest of the three interviews were conducted via zoom because the interviewees lived outside the Helsinki metropolitan area, and I was not able to commute to their places. Those interviews were video recorded through zoom's own recording feature. Even though the interviews were held via Zoom, the interviewees were still able to refer to and show certain areas of their home because they were instructed to be at home during the interviews.

In the interviews I asked them to describe their experiences when leaving home and I was especially interested in what happens in their inner world and the reasoning behind their way of thinking and actions. The semi-structured interview guide and interview information form are attached in the appendix section. The guide worked as a loose structure for the dialogue, and it was encouraged to go also sideways to allow more rich dialogue.

In the interviews the data was co-produced through dialogue. This means that I as a researcher did not only ask questions, but also told my thoughts and experiences of the process of leaving and used my own experiences to enrich the context of my questions. The setting of the dialogue allowed both of us, the interviewees and I, to share thoughts, ideas, and experiences that would not have come to mind without the dialogical setting.

I also have observed people when I have naturally been in the moment of leaving home with other person who tend to experience this kind of overwhelming chaos. In addition, I have talked about this phenomenon with people when the difficulty of leaving home has become part of the conversation, for example due to being late for the meeting we have had.

Moreover, my own reflections have been part of the collected data through the dialogical interviews as described earlier and when I have reflected on why my own struggles to leave home. That reflective data I have gathered by journaling, taking written notes and recording voice notes right after I have had an overwhelmingly chaotic process of leaving home.

4.4 Data Analysis

I analyzed the data through thematic analysis. According to Braun & Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within data, which is extensively utilized in psychology and beyond. It involves a detailed and flexible approach to qualitative data, allowing for the organization, description, and interpretation of data sets. Thematic analysis is particularly valued for its theoretical freedom, meaning it can be adapted to various theoretical frameworks, making it a versatile tool across different fields. The strengths of thematic analysis lie in its flexibility, accessibility, and its foundational role in developing core skills for other qualitative analysis methods. It allows researchers to handle data in a manner that is independent of theoretical and epistemological commitments, providing a rich, detailed, and complex account of the data. (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

I chose to use thematic analysis because I believe that in the context of design, thematic analysis is especially suitable due to its ability to generate insightful and actionable findings from qualitative data. I used thematic analysis in this research by focusing on identifying different mindsets present in the process of leaving home. I concentrated on recognizing various recurring thought patterns and thought processes seeking to understand what causes chaos within these patterns. In practice, I made extensive notes based on interview recordings and other data I collected, and then categorized it into various themes using the widely used online whiteboard tool Miro.

5.0 Results: Mindsets

The gathered data revealed that the process of leaving home is a large and complex phenomenon, even though the sample size of this study can be considered small. The reasons why, for some people, the process of leaving home escalates into chaos seem to be rooted in positive intentions, such as a genuine desire and interest to do multiple things in life, a high sense of responsibility, and an aim to optimize their processes to excellence.

Through my research, I have identified a collection of mindsets that emerge throughout people's lives. These mindsets encapsulate the diverse thoughts and values that guide their actions. Their effects become particularly evident during the process of leaving home. These descriptions emancipate the aspects of individuals' inner worlds, which can often escalate into chaos and prevent them from experiencing home as a restorative environment.

5.1 Full lifer

The person with the Full lifer mindset embodies a wide range of roles and responsibilities. Driven by a genuine passion and interest in various areas, these individuals juggle multiple commitments, for example regarding school, work, hobbies, volunteering, student organizations, family, and social relationships. The act of leaving home for the Full lifer is a complex, multidimensional process that requires meticulous planning and organization.

Upon departure, the Full lifer must prepare for multiple roles simultaneously, as their packed schedule does not allow for a return home to switch gears or "change hats."

Everything needed for a day's worth of varied roles — from educational materials and work documents to sports gear and volunteer uniforms — must be gathered and ready to go at once. This preparation is not merely physical but also mental, requiring them to anticipate and strategize for each commitment's needs.

The complexity of this preparation is considerable. Every activity's requirements must be remembered and planned for in a single effort because there is no opportunity to come home and recalibrate in between. Forgetting or overlooking an item can trigger a chain reaction of complications, potentially disrupting not just one, but several engagements.

The Full lifer often finds it difficult to decline requests and suggestions, frequently responding affirmatively. This tendency is further fueled by others who, recognizing their

involvement and enthusiasm, often invite them to participate in various initiatives. Consequently, their calendar fills rapidly, sometimes stretching their capacity to its limits. In essence, the Full lifer's lifestyle is one of dynamic diversity, marked by a constant balancing act of roles that demands both high energy and exceptional organizational skills. Their ability to manage this complex life structure is both a testament to their commitment and a challenge to their personal limits.

5.2 Preparer

The Preparer mindset emerges not only in those with a multitude of roles and responsibilities but also in individuals who prioritize their personal comfort and readiness over reliance on external circumstances. This mindset is characterized by a deep sense of responsibility towards ensuring comfort both outside and upon returning home.

Preparers are meticulous in their approach; they prefer to have everything in order before they leave home. This preparation allows them to fully engage in activities outside without the burden of pending tasks at home. For a Preparer, every aspect of their departure is carefully planned, from ensuring the house is tidy — dishes washed, bio waste emptied, and lights appropriately set for their return — to packing essentials like reusable bags, hand cream, hand sanitizer, and perfume to avoid discomfort or the need for unexpected purchases.

In addition to preparing for their own needs, Preparers often extend their thoughtful planning to others they will spend time with outside the home. They may devote significant mental energy to preparing snacks, packing extra water bottles, and ensuring overall comfort also for their friends. This level of preparation not only consumes time but also demands considerable mental capacity, as they anticipate and manage not just their own needs but also others'.

This extensive preparation is driven by the desire to return to a home that is completely 'ready'—a place where they can relax without facing additional tasks. Their preparation is not just about physical readiness but also mental readiness. They operate like sprinters, focusing intensely on completing one 'sprint' of tasks so they are entirely prepared for the next. This forward-thinking mentality ensures they are always a few steps ahead, and often preferring to secure future comfort over present convenience.

However, this future-oriented planning can sometimes detach them from enjoying the present. The Preparer lives in anticipation of future comfort, often overlooking the joys and

satisfaction of the current moment. This can lead to a paradox where they may feel perpetually behind schedule, even though they are usually ahead.

The challenge for the Preparer is to balance their strategic foresight with the ability to live in the moment; and may need to learn to appreciate the immediate benefits of their efforts and find joy in the present. This mindset, while beneficial in creating seamless future experiences, falls into traps of over-preparation and the resulting frustration of feeling that they never genuinely enjoy the fruits of their efforts.

5.3 Extreme risk mitigator

The Extreme Risk Mitigator operates under a near-constant awareness of potential disasters, driven by a deep-seated fear of the unexpected. This mindset is not just about being cautious; it is an intense preoccupation with safeguarding against any conceivable emergency, no matter how unlikely.

Extreme Risk Mitigators are characterized by their belief that catastrophe could strike at any moment — convinced that the one time they forget to turn off the washing machine or dishwasher could be the exact moment a water damage occurs, or that leaving a straightening iron plugged in might cause a fire. They may even worry about less dangerous scenarios, such as returning home to find an infestation of fruit flies from an unemptied bio waste bin or discovering spoiled food in the refrigerator.

Their anxiety extends to seemingly improbable events, preparing even for rare natural phenomena like ball lightning. This mindset leads to behaviors like unplugging all electrical devices before leaving home for extended periods, driven by fears such as an extension cord left on possibly starting a fire. When leaving a pet at home, they might obsess over ensuring no small food items or dangerous objects are left within reach, fearing ingestion, injury, or other accidents.

However, the dynamic shifts significantly when someone else remains at home after their departure. In this scenario, the Extreme Risk Mitigator experiences a notable reduction in their preparatory behaviors. Knowing that someone is there to oversee and react to any potential issues brings them considerable relief. This presence allows them to leave without performing the usual exhaustive checks and mitigations. The presence of another person acts as a buffer against their fears, as they trust that this individual can handle emergencies, thus simplifying the departure process.

Reassurances from others typically do little to alleviate their anxiety when alone, as their fears are often born from internal narratives and heightened by stories they've heard — such

as kitchen fires while cooking, which they extrapolate to more severe incidents even if they've never personally experienced such extremes.

In summary, the life of an Extreme Risk Mitigator is dominated by the urge to prevent any possible mishap. Their heightened sense of vigilance prepares them for scenarios that might never occur but feel all too real in their minds. However, the presence of another person at home can ease this burden significantly, allowing them a simpler, less stressful departure. This difference highlights just how deeply their fear of the unforeseen shapes their daily existence and how dependent their peace of mind can be on the presence of others.

5.4 Time optimizer

The Time Optimizer views time as a precious and limited resource that must be meticulously managed and utilized to the fullest. For them, every minute saved is an opportunity to do more, leading to a lifestyle where efficiency and productivity are paramount. When they finish tasks more quickly than anticipated, instead of taking a moment to relax, they immediately use the extra time to tackle additional tasks, perpetuating a cycle of busyness. This habitual rush, driven by the desire to maximize every second, creates a sense of urgency even after achieving their initial goals.

This mindset stems from the belief that optimizing time allows them to experience more of life in quantitative terms. The number of tasks completed often becomes a yardstick for a meaningful existence, overshadowing the depth of experiences or the quality of presence, which could offer more meaningful measure of life's quality. Time Optimizers often struggle with the concept of unplanned or unexpected events, living in what they perceive as a state of 'time poverty', where there is never enough time to do everything, they desire.

As a result, life for the Time Optimizer is akin to a constant race against the clock. They have honed their skills to perform tasks with maximum speed and efficiency, yet this relentless pace leads to schedules that are invariably too tight and leaves little room for error. This approach, while efficient, often fails to acknowledge that not every task can or should be completed with 100% efficiency and without mistakes.

One critical blind spot for Time Optimizers is failing to distinguish between the amount of time in which it is possible to complete a task and the amount of time in which completing the task is pleasurable. For example, while a Time Optimizer might be capable of taking a shower in just two minutes, spending ten to fifteen minutes might significantly enhance the enjoyment and relaxation of the experience. This lack of distinction can transform eustress

(i.e. positive stress) into distress (i.e. negative stress), as the relentless pursuit of speed often does not yield a pleasant way of experiencing life.

Moreover, Time Optimizers rarely have a clear understanding of why they are so driven to save time. Without a specific goal or purpose for their efficiency, the act of saving time becomes the goal itself rather than a means to achieve something greater. This mindset also leads them to avoid potential boredom at all costs, packing their schedules to the brim and beyond, which can prevent them from truly experiencing and enjoying the moments.

In essence, the Time Optimizer's life is a testament to their commitment to efficiency, but it also poses the question of whether they are truly *living* life or merely *performing* life. The challenge lies in finding balance, recognizing when speed and efficiency serve their well-being, and when it may be time to slow down and appreciate the journey itself.

5.5 Resource optimizer

The Resource Optimizer operates from a deeply ingrained value of sustainability, often acting as an activist for environmentally friendly practices. This mindset drives them to minimize resource use at every turn, whether it is unplugging devices to save electricity, ensuring all lights are off when not needed, or always remembering to carry reusable bags to avoid unnecessary waste.

A core belief of the Resource Optimizer is that less resource usage equates to better outcomes for both the environment and their personal footprint. This can manifest in behaviors like needing to take out all the trash, returns all the bottles that have sometimes accumulated over weeks or months, on the same trip when going to the grocery store. Those extra tasks are seen as “just tiny extra tasks” that are easier to do with other tasks; and the resource optimizer sees themselves as lazy if they did not have energy to do those “tiny tasks.” However, their pursuit of ultimate efficiency can sometimes lead to overload, as they attempt to manage too many tasks in one go, and those “tiny tasks” becomes quite big effort when done on top of other tasks. This can create a sense of being overwhelmed, leading them to feel stuck in their routines and possibly turning daily life into a series of tasks to be completed rather than experiences to be enjoyed.

Another aspect of this mindset is a strong aversion to the throwaway culture. This perspective may lead them to collect and hold onto a wide variety of items, especially those that could be reused or repurposed. The thought process is that owning these items is more economical and ecologically friendly than purchasing new ones repeatedly. This can make it difficult for them to part with possessions, as they believe these items might be needed again.

However, this mindset has its challenges and blind spots. The Resource Optimizer often lacks the recognition that some amount of spillage or waste is normal and that 'tuition fees' in the form of mistakes or inefficiencies are part of the learning process. They struggle to accept that not everything can be done with 100% efficiency, and that sometimes, spending more time on an activity can be more fulfilling than rushing through it. The emphasis on quick, panic-driven efficiency, like rushing through tasks in 15 minutes, often undermines the potential joy and engagement found in taking a more measured approach, such as enjoying 45 minutes of flow in an activity.

5.6 Analyst

The Analyst mindset involves a deep appreciation for data collection and analysis to optimize decisions and actions in every aspect of life. Those with this mindset view situations from multiple perspectives and angles, ensuring that all possible variables impacting outcomes are considered. However, a challenge for individuals with this mindset is their tendency to treat all data as equally important, often struggling to prioritize what is most relevant in specific contexts.

A typical scenario for someone with an Analyst mindset might include meticulous planning around environmental conditions, such as ensuring their attire is suitable for varying temperatures inside and outside. This mindset can lead to anxiety if the available options do not meet every potential need. Concerns about practical details, like whether headphones will last through the day, also exemplify this mindset's focus on thorough preparation.

A significant obstacle for the Analyst mindset is recognizing the saturation point in data gathering and analysis. The inclination to accumulate more information than necessary can sometimes lead to "analysis paralysis," where an overload of data causes more confusion and indecision rather than clarity for making decisions.

This mindset is characterized by a high degree of inquisitiveness, with frequent questions aimed at understanding the full context of a situation and all its potential variables. This is driven by a desire to minimize surprises and ensure thorough preparedness. However, this can become problematic when the flow of questions is so continuous that it overwhelms the ability to respond, or when there is a difficulty in accepting that not everything can be anticipated in advance.

Ultimately, the Analyst mindset is about meticulous preparation and forethought, with the goal of controlling and predicting outcomes as much as possible. While this approach can significantly reduce the likelihood of unforeseen challenges, it also necessitates a balance

between the need for comprehensive information and the ability to act without complete certainty. Learning to embrace some level of unpredictability and developing flexibility to cope with surprises are essential for those with the Analyst mindset to navigate life more effectively and with less stress.

5.7 Symptoms from the struggle to hold it all together

When the process of leaving starts to escalate into chaos, different kinds of symptoms may also start to emerge and can cause even more difficulties to leave home smoothly. Here are examples that the interviewees mentioned:

- 1) **Indecisiveness:** difficulties in choosing which mindset to follow and decide what to do and what not to do because there are not clear priorities.
- 2) **Hurry-based multitasking:** doing many things at once to catch up on schedule, for example, needing to eat breakfast while putting makeup on, because there is sense of hurry.
- 3) **Postponing tasks:** there is an idea that the future self would somehow have more mental energy, time, and overall capacity to do tasks that cannot be done at this moment, but there is no strategy or plan to have more capacity in the future.
- 4) **Getting fixated:** fixating on a thought or idea that something must go a certain way, for example: *"I must find the sunglasses or I cannot leave"*, *"I have to find that access card"*, *"Where did I put them [e.g. phone and keys], and why aren't they here right now when I'm in a hurry and this is the last time things should be missing?"* while being in panic. The one idea becomes a number one priority and there is no critical thinking about if there was another way.
- 5) **Getting immersed:** falling into some activity, e.g. drinking coffee, deeply and losing the sense of time. This sometimes leads to spending too much time on the activity and then not having enough time to do other necessary things needed for smooth process of leaving home.
- 6) **Getting attached:** difficulties leaving home due to some emotional connection, e.g. toward home. Even though one would *want* to leave, some emotion, e.g. sadness, makes it too difficult to leave.
- 7) **Getting distracted:** something in the environment catches attention, which interrupts the process of leaving and hampers focusing on relevant action.
- 8) **Fumbling:** different kinds of mistakes happen due to a sense of hurry. For example, coffee or smoothie spills and causes mess which needs to be cleaned before leaving.

9) Lagging: feeling like the brain is in error and cannot take the needed action.

10) Being in “a waiting mode”: just waiting and thinking through if everything needed is done, and only when there is this intuitive feeling that everything is done, it is possible to leave home. And sometimes during the waiting mode, one remembers something that was forgotten, goes to do that thing, but then starts to wonder horror scenarios what could have happened if they did not remember to do the thing. This may cause anxiety and even further complicates the leaving.

5.8 Why has there not been a change?

In the interviews, we also discussed why there has not been a change even though the struggles of leaving home are recurring and often overwhelming. The main reasons were:

1. The process of leaving home is often quite private, so we usually do not physically see how others go about it. Even when we do, we cannot see inside their minds. Therefore, there has been little to no social feedback from others, and thus no opportunity to compare and reflect on our own processes in contrast to those of others.
2. As a result of the previous, these individuals had not considered that the process of leaving home could be anything other than overwhelming chaos.
3. There is also a lot of shame linked to these struggles, so people may mask them from others. For example, one interviewee shared that they had a new friend staying overnight, and in the morning, they pretended to have a calmer process of leaving home to impress the friend and hide their authentic process.
4. Even when the struggles have been evident, they still have not been taught suitable strategies and have not been able to figure them out independently.

The suggested strategies have usually been very surface level such as buying a calendar, just leaving a bit earlier, and making necessary preparations in the evening before. The struggle that escalates into chaos is often seen only as a time management issue, lack in ability to plan and prepare properly, or even as inability to do things fast enough. It might sound like that from the outside, but the reality is far from that.

These people often do use a lot of energy on scheduling, they make plans and prepare things, and can be very fast at doing tasks “*I can take shower in two minutes*” like one of the interviewees said. So, if the issue were as practical as simply not realizing that tasks could be planned and scheduled in a calendar, many would have already solved these problems. Therefore, it is underestimating people to offer these well-worn solutions that just do not

work. If a calendar truly were the solution, no one would have any challenges with managing oneself when leaving home.

I believe that the core reason why there has not been solutions to these struggles is because these people have been looked through ableist framework. In that framework neurodivergent people have been seen as flawed versions of neurotypical people rather than simply different. They have not been seen as people whose brain works differently, has different needs, have different capabilities, and different ways of navigating through life. Instead, they have been seen as “*less than*” and if they just learned to be, behave, and live like neurotypicals, their struggles would disappear. But I do not believe that anybody’s life can become sustainable better by rejecting themselves and forcing themselves into a box that was designed for someone else.

5.9 What is the core of the problem then?

As pondered in the previous section, the neurodivergent people have been looked through ableist framework. So, I questioned if I also have been looking at the struggles with the ableist lens and problematized something that is not really a true problem. To make sure I utterly understand the core of the problem, I asked every interviewee if this is even a real problem. Because it can also be only my subjective view to problematize this kind of chaos that happens when leaving home.

Based on the answers from the interviews I learned that inconsistency in the process of leaving home is not the problem and can even be a positive source of novelty and thus make the process more pleasurable. It also seemed that none of the mindsets alone were the problem either and all of them have such a beautiful aim behind them. What was the problem then? The common nominator of the core of the problem that emerged from the interviews was the overwhelm that often takes over the whole inner experience. This overwhelm sometimes even paralyzes the person and the struggles of leaving home begin to limit their life.

So, the problem is that the process of leaving home becomes a hyperdimensional experience that takes the whole mental bandwidth. This happens when 1) one mindset becomes too rigid with their goals and aims to perfectionism, and/or 2) there are multiple mindsets in the inner experience at the same time and those mindsets do not work together nor support each other. Instead, multiple mindsets create inner conflicts. It feels like there were multiple people yelling all the same time without structure, collaboration, nor leadership. The process of leaving home becomes a hyperdimensional experience that takes the whole mental

bandwidth and can lead to such a high level of anxiety, which makes it impossible to function.

6.0 Suggestions

6.1 Becoming aware

The very first step towards a more restorative experience of home is to become aware of one's own role in the process of leaving home that escalates into chaos, and to recognize that this is not the only way it can be. I truly believe that it is possible that the process of leaving home is not the overwhelming hyperdimensional experience as described earlier where all different inner voices yell at the same time. The subtle signs of the benefits of becoming aware emerged already during the interviews. Some of the interviewees said that the interview itself helped them to recognize some things they were not aware of before. So simply talking about this phenomenon and reflecting on our own experiences related to this topic can be helpful. Also, some concrete strategies emerged from the data, which I will discuss in the following section.

6.2 Strategies to reduce chaos

1) Moment of silence. I asked the interviewees if there have been any strategies that have helped to reduce the amount of chaos when leaving home. One interviewee said that they always forget something if they are listening to music during the very last minutes before they go out the door. The interviewee explained that they usually have music or TV open while they are getting ready so if they switch the “background noise” straight to their headphones they usually forget something, which complicate the process of leaving home. They reflected that switching the background noise instantly from speakers to headphones takes away the short moment of absolute silence to focus on thinking through if they have done and remembered everything needed. For this reason, they have created a rule for themselves that they are allowed to put music on their headphones only when they have already gone out the door and are outside. So, this kind of short moment of absolute silence being ready to leave and already being outside could be an effective strategy to manage the process of leaving home in a way it does not escalate into chaos.

2) Clear goal and principles. Another interviewee explained that the situations when their process of leaving home is not chaotic is when they are on duty with the volunteer fire brigade and an emergency call comes in. In that moment, it is clear what they need to do, and the principle is to be as fast as possible. They have their gear in one closet, and they just

need to put them on and get out the door. In that process their mind is clear and there is no chaos. Based on this, one possible strategy to improve the process of leaving home could be to have a clear vision of what is the goal and what is the most important principle to follow in the process.

Similar ideas emerged also from short discussions I have had with people who do recognize that their process of leaving home is a bit chaotic but does not escalate into overwhelming chaos. For example, one person said that they manage their process because they have one core principle: to be on time. So, if they forget something or something unexpected happens, they still make sure they are on time and compromise on other things or come up with creative solutions, for example, they forgot to take towel to the gym, they used their t-shirt for drying after showering.

3) Talking out loud. One concrete strategy I personally have found effective is talking out loud to myself in the process of leaving home. Speaking out loud makes it clearer what voice I am supposed to listen to at the current moment because I physically can only speak with one mouth. This helps me to slow my thinking and clarifies what I am doing and what do I need to do next. The effectiveness of this strategy may be attributed to private speech. According to (Alderson-Day & Fernyhough, 2015), private speech (i.e. talking to oneself) serves as a valuable self-regulatory and motivational tool.

6.3 Deepening of self-awareness

The strategies mentioned above can be worth testing, but ultimately, I believe sustainable improvements are integrated into a person's life through deepening self-awareness. So, I believe the most critical part that needs to be focused on, to make it possible to experience home (and other environments) as a restorative environment, is the mental environment that contains the consciousness. I believe that the mental environment is often so occupied with thoughts, ideas, emotions, and beliefs that no longer serve us, and which ultimately prevents us from experiencing any environment as restorative environment. So maybe the answer is not adding something to the physical environment but rather getting to know oneself better and to let go of some things in the inner world. I once channeled a short letter for those moments, and I want to share it here:

What if you already had everything you ever needed? And the only thing missing was the release? The relief of letting things go. What if the answer was not more but releasing the things that once served you but no longer do? What if you let those things go and released the cry you have been holding for so long? What if you said, "thank you for being part of my journey, I loved

every moment but now is time to let go". Maybe the peace and freedom is on the other side of the release.

So, I think in the process of deepening self-awareness, it is a lot about releasing things that no longer serve in life. In that process the person gets to know themselves better and becomes more capable of creating strategies that make sense within their mental environment.

Other people's strategies to reduce the chaos when leaving home can serve as inspiration, but I believe that true change cannot happen by listening to other people's advice and copying their way of behavior. Everyone needs to implement strategies that dynamically consider their unique situation and I believe the only person who can understand one's situation the best and is able to come up with strategies that work for them is the person themselves. Thus, I as a designer cannot give step by step guide on how to reduce the amount of chaos when leaving the home to experience home as a restorative environment, but I believe I can give some keywords and ideas that could be starting points in the journey of deepening self-awareness; and I will introduce them in the next section.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 Starting points for future studies

As identified at the end of the previous chapter, providing opportunities to deepen self-awareness is crucial part to focus on when aiming to holistically design restorative experiences of homes and other environments. During this thesis process and earlier in my life, I have encountered and personally tested many different concepts that have nudged me towards deeper self-awareness. These concepts may be useful also for others in the journey of deepening self-awareness and could be starting points for the future studies of designing experiences of restorative environments:

1. Ajattelun ajattelu (thinking about thinking)

Esa Saarinen talks in his *Filosofia ja systeemiajattelu* (Philosophy and systems thinking) lectures (available e.g. via bonks.fi, Saarinen (n.d.)) about thinking about thinking and its possibilities to create a space where novel thoughts and insights may emerge. I took the *Filosofia ja systeemiajattelu* course back in 2020. Since then, I have more consciously thought about my thinking and been interested in other people's ways of thinking. I have found thinking about thinking useful concept in deepening self-awareness. It also has helped me to notice pitfalls of my own way of thinking and thereby helped me to navigate life more confidently.

2. Awakening

Awakening have been popular approaches in the self-development scene and other fields aiming for better life. One big name in the scene is Anthony De Mello, who taught about awakening (e.g. in de Mello & Stroud (1992)). In my understanding awakening in a nutshell means making space between the consciousness that observes the human self and learning to not identify with the labels that are attached to the human self. I personally have learned about awakening when I was in psychotherapy journey, and it has been truly life-changing for me in the journey of deepening self-awareness.

3. Parts work: self-acceptance

According to Shafir (2023) parts work is based on the idea that the self consists of different parts that can conflict or support each other; and it involves various therapies aimed at resolving inner conflicts to facilitate healing. As recognized in the results, sometimes there can be multiple mindsets that are present at the same time in the mind and the struggles stem from the conflicts between them. I personally

have benefitted from identifying different sides of me (i.e. parts) and aimed to build collaboration between them rather than trying to eliminate certain mindsets from my consciousness.

4. Abundance mindset

Abundance mindset is another popular concept in the self-development scene, especially in the context of building financial success. I learned about this mindset first time from YouTuber Bria Jones (2021). The core of abundance mindset is to focus on and appreciate what already is and use that energy to attract more blessings into one's life. The opposite of abundance mindset is scarcity mindset where the focus is on what is lacking. I think an abundance mindset can be beneficial in the journey of deepening self-awareness because it allows one to see what they already have and therefore help to notice the resources one already has within themselves.

7.2 Final reflections

7.2.1 Internalized capitalism and lack mentality

While doing this thesis I have been thinking about where these mindsets originally came from. Why there is such a strong aim to do so much, be so fast and efficient? I think this is linked to broader structures of the society we live in and may be partly caused by internalized capitalism. According to Dastagir (n.d.), a political science professor Anders Hayden has said that internalized capitalism is “*idea that our self-worth is directly linked to our productivity*”. In my understanding capitalism aims to create profit and therefore create more resources to raise the standard of living. Unfortunately, productivity and raising the standard of living does not always mean a happier life but rather even worsens the sense of lack, which then leads to stress and more unpleasant chaos.

It feels paradoxical that how can we feel more lack if we are all the time creating more resources. But if we ask mystics and spiritual people who understand the vibrations and energies, they tell us of course you are creating lack because you are operating from lack. The energy you operate from manifests into physical reality. Why would you have a need to create more if you already had enough? So, the desire to make more comes from the idea that there is not already enough. If you operate from lack, your reality will reflect the lack back to you. In turn, if you operate from abundance and choose to see the world as abundant, your experience will be filled with abundance. However, it is likely that capitalism would not thrive in its current form if we collectively had a sense of having already enough, and maybe that is the reason why we are collectively living in sense of lack.

7.2.2 From passive receiver to active co-creator

Another insight that I discovered during this thesis was the dynamic between humans and their environment. The dynamic has often been framed in a way where the environment sets the limitations for the experience a human can have. If we want to change the human's inner experience, which in this thesis's context was the experience of a home as a restorative environment, the physical environment (i.e. the home) needs to change. So, in simplified terms, the dynamics are seen as unidirectional:

physical environment → the inner experience the human has

But as argued in section 2.2, Challenges of the existing approaches, modifying the environment is not always possible or appropriate. So, when seeing the dynamic as this kind of unidirectional cause-effect relationship, there is not much we can do to improve the inner experience if we cannot change the physical environment. So, the person has not been taken into consideration as an active co-creator of an experience but rather as a passive receiver of the experience that the physical environment provides, fosters, and/or allows to have.

It has not been considered how the person's subjective inner world contributes and co-creates the experience of an environment for them. I believe that the human's inner world also affects the physical environment, and thus co-creates *with* the physical environment the experience of a restorative environment. By this I mean that yes, the physical environment does affect the inner experience the human has, but the person's inner world does also affect the physical environment. Thus, I think the dynamic between the environment and the human is bidirectional rather than unidirectional:

physical environment ↔ the inner experience the human has

I believe that there is an inseparable, bidirectional synergy between a person's inner world and their physical environment. Therefore, when aiming to create better physical environments, we also need to understand what the state of the inner world of those who we are designing for is. The subjective perception about the physical environment and the dynamic processes in the person's inner world critically affects the design process and the perceived value of outcomes of the design process.

7.2.3 Autistic inertia, PDA, and ADHD task paralysis

In the context of designing for neurodivergent people, there often is too little understanding of their inner world and their differences. When there is a lack in understanding of these differences, the perspective to design is inherently ableist because there has not been enough

or, in the worst case, any consideration on how people can be different from each other. Hopefully, this thesis has provided useful knowledge to fill some part of the gap in understanding.

Furthermore, some factors that might be linked to the challenges in the process of leaving home faced by the individuals studied in this thesis may include autistic inertia, PDA, and ADHD task paralysis. According to Rapaport et al. (2023) “*autistic inertia*’ is a term used by Autistic people to refer to difficulties with starting and stopping tasks”. According to (Neuromoninaiset, n.d.-c) PDA (*Pervasive Drive for Autonomy*) is currently considered a subtype of autism and is a form of neurodiversity. Core characteristics of PDA include the need to resist and avoid demands, requests, and/or everyday tasks. Demands can be actual demands such as direct commands and requests or perceived demands such as self-imposed expectations that are experienced as demands. Perceived demands may also be entirely invisible to others, such as feelings of thirst, hunger, and fatigue. (Neuromoninaiset, n.d.-c). PDA abbreviation stands also for *pathological demand avoidance*, which is originally a concept introduced by Elizabeth Newson in the 1980s (Suomalainen Lääkäriseura Duodecim, 2023). However, the concept of pathological demand avoidance has been criticized for undermining autistic self-advocacy and neglecting anxiety's potential role as an underlying cause (Kildahl et al., 2021). ADHD task paralysis is the inability to start or complete tasks, leading to delays, zoning out, or repeating tasks, which can result in spending hours on simple jobs (Laub, 2023).

I think there should be at least some understanding of these phenomena and other characteristics of neurodivergence when the designing for people on neuro spectrum. Ideally there would be neurodiversity specialists in the team when designing for neurodivergent people. Fortunately, there have started to be more people talking about these things and providing consultations such as Cheyenne Järvinen and Karita Viitanen from Neuromoninaiset (neuromoninaiset.fi), and Riikka Seppälä from Toivon tiellä (riikkaseppala.fi).

7.3 Limitations

This thesis has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings:

1. **Sample size:** Even though the sample size revealed a lot about this hidden phenomenon, the sample size of this study can be considered small, which may have affected the depth of the findings. A larger sample size could have provided richer data and a broader understanding of the phenomenon. Larger sample size could also

have helped to define interconnections better and potentially led to more concrete findings and added practical knowledge about the studied topic.

2. **Subjectivity:** As I, as a researcher, was also a participant, there is a potential for subjective bias. While autoethnographic approaches can provide deep insights into the hidden phenomena, it may also introduce personal biases that could affect the interpretation of the data.
3. **Scope:** The study focused exclusively on the home environment as a restorative environment. This narrow focus likely does not capture the full range of factors affecting individuals' experiences and the complexity of their interactions with different environments. However, I believe this scope was appropriate for a master's thesis, as a broader focus could have weakened the study's focus.
4. **Cultural context:** The research was conducted in Finland, and the findings may be influenced by cultural and societal norms specific to this context. Thus, the applicability of the results to other cultural contexts might be limited.
5. **Neurodivergence:** The thesis specifically addresses neurodivergent individuals, including both those with formal diagnoses and those who have self-recognized as neurodivergent. This inclusion of both formally diagnosed and self-recognized individuals introduces an additional variable that may have influenced the results and the generalization of the findings to all neurodivergent people. Also, all people interviewed in this thesis have been able to live independently, which implies that they have so called "low support needs". Thus, the findings should not be applied as such to neurodivergent people with high support needs.
6. **My professional background:** I do not have formal education or experience as a psychologist, neuroscientist, human behavior specialist, or healthcare professional, but I am a designer with a particular interest in these subjects. Therefore, the study may lack depth from these perspectives and could be considered too superficial from such viewpoints.

7.4 Closing words

This thesis explored the intricate, often chaotic process and inner experience of leaving home for neurodivergent individuals aiming to design more restorative experience of home. Despite the relatively limited sample size and my background in design rather than in psychology, neuroscience, human behavior, or healthcare, the study has yielded significant insights into this complex phenomenon.

The findings reveal that the challenges faced by these individuals are deeply rooted in their inner worlds and different ways of interacting with their environments. By focusing on the

home as a restorative environment, this research underscores the importance of designing spaces that also cater to the unique needs of neurodivergent individuals. The study highlights the necessity for a holistic and empathetic approach in design to create truly restorative and supportive spaces.

While the scope of this thesis was intentionally narrow to maintain clarity and depth within the constraints of a master's level research, the insights gained provide a valuable foundation for future studies. Expanding the research with a larger sample size and interdisciplinary collaboration could further enhance our understanding and lead to more concrete strategies and solutions.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the design of restorative environments. It advocates for greater awareness and consideration of the needs of neurodivergent individuals, promoting a more inclusive and compassionate approach to design. By continuing this line of research, we can work towards creating environments that not only accommodate but are truly designed for those who navigate the world differently.

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Appendix

Information form for the participants

Projektin nimi ja aihe: Master's thesis: Designing for restorative home – understanding the chaotic internal process when leaving home, Aalto-yliopiston taiteiden ja suunnittelun korkeakoulu, syksy 2023

Tapaamisen kuvaus: Maisterityön data kerätään semi-strukturoidun haastattelun ja siitä johtavan keskustelun avulla. Lisäksi keskustelemme arjessa syntyvästä kaaoksesta kotoa lähtiessä ja sen esiintymisestä käytännössä. Haastattelu äänitetään osallistujan luvalla. Lisäksi kodin yksityiskohdista voidaan ottaa kuvia ja videoita, mikäli ne havainnollistavat oleellisella tavalla kodista lähtemisen prosessia.

Tapaamisen tarkoitus: Tavoitteena on ymmärtää millaiset sisäiset prosessit ja tapahtumaketjut aiheuttavat arjen kaaosta, sekä ymmärtää millaisia vaikutuksia näillä prosesseilla ja tapahtumaketjuilla on osallistujan elämään fyysisesti, psyykkisesti ja sosiaalisesti.

Aikasitoomus: Osallistuminen vie maksimissaan 3 tuntia.

Vapaaehtoinen osallistuminen: Osallistuminen on täysin vapaaehtoista. Sinulla on oikeus vetäytyä tapaamisesta milloin vain antamatta erityistä syytä.

Osallistujan oikeudet: Osallistujana sinulla on seuraavat oikeudet: oikeus tietoihin, joita sinusta säilytämme, oikaista väärää informaatiota, vastustaa antamasi informaation käsittelyä, poistaa kyseinen informaatio ja jättää vastaamatta haastattelukysymyksen. Voit perua suostumuksesi tapaamiseen milloin vain.

Tiedon keräys: Haastattelu tullaan äänittämään muistiinpano- ja reflektointitarkoituksessa. Myös havainnollistavista kuvia ja videoita voidaan ottaa kodin yksityiskohdista, mikäli ne havainnollistavat oleellisella tavalla kodista lähtemisen prosessia. Näitä kuvia ja videoita voidaan käyttää lopullisen kirjallisen tuotoksen havainnollistuskuvina. Tällöin kuvat muokataan sellaisella tavalla, että osallistujan yksityisyys pysyy suojassa. Data on vain haastattelijan (Inka Mattila) kuunneltavissa. Kaikki data poistetaan viimeistään kuukauden päästä maisterityön valmistuttua. Valikoidut anonyymit lainaukset haastattelusta sekä havainnollistavat kuvat/videot voidaan säilyttää osana projektia.

Master's thesis: Designing for restorative home – understanding the chaotic internal process when leaving home, Syksy 2023

SUOSTUMUSLOMAKE

Olen suostunut osallistumaan haastateltavaksi Aalto-yliopiston opiskelijan, Inka Mattila, toimesta projektin: *Master's thesis: Designing for restorative home – understanding the chaotic internal process when leaving home* käyttötarkoituksiin.

Tutkimuksen tarkoitus on esitetty minulle kirjallisesti. Ymmärrän osallistumiseni olevan täysin vapaaehtoista ja voivani keskeyttää tapaamisen halutessani ilman seuraamuksia.

Annan luvan haastattelun äänittämiseen, sekä kuvien ja videoiden ottamiseen. Ymmärrän voivani pitää taukoa tapaamisesta milloin vain. Minulle on tehty selväksi, että voin esittää tarkentavia kysymyksiä tapaamisesta, jolloin opiskelijan tulee selventää minua koskevat tapaamisen periaatteiden yksityiskohdat ja prosessin tulokset.

Ymmärrän, että anonymiyteni tullaan varmistamaan käsiteltäessä tietojani, tapaamisen osapuolet ovat haastateltava ja haastattelija Inka Mattila. Olen ymmärtänyt minulle tarjotun materiaalin, ja että tietoni kerätään vain Master's thesis -projektiin, joka voidaan julkaista työnäytteenä osana portfolioa ja jota voidaan käyttää pohjamateriaalina muissa hankkeissa. Ymmärrän myös, että valmis maisterityö on julkisesti saatavilla yliopiston arkistosta.

Olen lukenut ja ymmärtänyt tämän suostumuslomakkeen.

Annan suostumukseni ja vahvistan osallistuvani tähän vapaaehtoiseen tapaamiseen joko suullisesti haastattelun alussa tai vastaamalla sähköpostiin, jonka liitteenä tämä suostumuslomake on minulle toimitettu.

Semi-structured interview guide

Ennen varsinaista haastattelua:

- Olen Inka Mattila, tiktokissa nimellä Inkeri Mark
- Kiitos, että olet tullut mulle haastateltavaksi.
- Tähän varattu 3h, mutta ei välttämättä mee sitä koko aikaa. Katotaan miten paljon tulee juttua :)
- Mikäli haastattelun aikana tulee jokin kysymys, johon et halua vastata, voit sanoa vaan, että "en halua vastata", "ohi", tms.
- Jos jokin kysymys on epäselvästi aseteltu tai jotenkin muuten mielestäsi liian ohjaava tietynlaiseen vastaukseen, voit sanoa mikä mielestäsi olisi oleellisempi kysymys ja vastata siihen.
- Voit myös kysyä minulta kysymyksiä, tavoitteena on keskustelumainen haastattelu
- Kaikki tunteet saa kuulua ja näkyä, eli ei haittaa jos sanoo jotain kiusallista tai noloa. Minä en ole täällä tuomitsemassa. Ei ole väärää vastauksia. Vastauksia ei tarvitse mitenkään kaunistella (masking)
- Ja voi ottaa taukoja miettiä asiaa, että ei haittaa ollenkaa jos kestää vastata jos haluaa kerätä ajatuksia ensin vähän kasaan.
- Oletko kirjolla?
- Voidaan pitää myös taukoa haastattelussa esim. Tunnin jälkeen / puolivälissä
- Jos tuntuu et mennä liian nopeesti tai liian hitaasti, voidaan säätää tahtia
- Suostumuslomake oli läpi käyty ja suostumus saatu
- Onko tässä alussa mitään kysyttävää tai jotain mikä mietityttää
- **Aloita tallennus!**

Haastattelu:

- Kerro alkuun millaista arkea elät, jotta saadaan ymmärrystä kontekstista
- Kun näit videoni, jossa rekrytoin haastateltavia, mitä sinulle tuli ensimmäisenä mieleen kun käytin sanaa arjen shit show?
- Millainen mielikuva sinulle syntyi arjen kaaoksen -ajatuksista? Miltä se näyttää ja tuntuu sinulle?
- Mitä erilaisia lähtemisen hetkiä elämässäsi on? Arjessa ja arjesta poikkeavissa hetkissä
- Kerro, millainen prosessi kotoa lähteminen tyypillisesti sinulle on.
 - Mitä fyysisesti tapahtuu?
 - Mitä teet?
 - Mitä tapahtuu sisäisessä maailmassasi?
 - Mitä tunteita koet lähtemisen prosessissa
- Millaisia vaikutuksia kaaoksella, joka syntyy kotoa lähtemisessä, on elämääsi?
 -  Mitä nämä vaikutukset ja seuraukset aiheuttaa elämääsi?
- Kuinka usein koet kodista lähtemisen olevan kaaos, ja kuinka pitkään tämä on ollut haasteena elämässäsi?
- Kerro viimeisimmästä kotoa lähtemisestä, millainen prosessi tuo oli. Minne olit menossa?
- Mitä lähtemisen kaaos aiheutti päivääsi (fyysisesti, psyykkisesti, sosiaalisesti)?

- Onko kohteella vaikutusta kaaoksen syntymiseen? Millaisia?
- Onko tiettyjä tilanteita tai olosuhteita, jotka tekevät kaaoksen todennäköisemmäksi kodista lähtiessäsi? Voisitko antaa esimerkkejä?
- Mistä kaaos alkoi syntyä? (fyysisesti, psyykkisesti, sosiaalisesti)
- Minkä uskot olevan tyypillinen syy arjen kaaokseen omalla kohdallasi?
- Miten kaaoksen tunteesi vaikuttavat suhteisiisi tai yhteisöösi? Onko se vaikuttanut esimerkiksi työhön tai koulunkäyntiin?
- Miksi et ole tehnyt muutosta tilanteeseesi? Mikä muutoksen tekemisestä tekee haastavaa?
- Minkä uskot olevan esteenä lähtemisen sujuvuudelle?
- Oletko saanut neuvoja/strategioita kotoa lähtemisen sujuvoittamiseen? Miten ne ovat toimineet?
 - Minkälaiset neuvot tai strategiat ovat toimineet sinulle kaaoksen hallinnassa?
 - Ja jos eivät ole toimineet, minkä uskot olevan syynä tähän?
 - Mitä mieltä olet teknologiasta ja sen roolista kodista lähtemisen prosessissa? Käytätkö esimerkiksi älylaitteita tai sovelluksia apuna tässä?
- Onko sinulla rutiineja tai valmisteluja, joita teet kodista lähtiessäsi? Jos on, kuvaile niitä.
- Onko arjen kaaoksessa myös jotain hyötyjä (secondary gain)? (Onko esimerkiksi haasteista puhumisella sosiaalista arvoa esim. huomion saannin muodossa?)
 - Olet maininnut mahdolliset hyödyt kaaoksen kokemisesta. Voisitko avata tätä lisää? Mitä saattaa olla positiivista kaaoksen kokemisesta?
- Oletko huomannut muilla ihmisillä vaastavanlaisia haasteita? Kerro niistä.
 - Olet maininnut muiden ihmisten haasteet. Voisitko kertoa esimerkkejä, miten olet huomannut heidän kohtaavan samankaltaisia haasteita?
- Oletko puolestaan huomannut, että joillakin ihmisillä ei ole samanlaisia haasteita? Mistä uskot sen johtuvan?
- Mitä mielestäsi tarvitsisi tapahtua, jotta kotoa lähteminen voisi olla sujuvempi kokemus?
- Millainen sujuva kotoa lähtemisen prosessi näyttäisi?
 - Millaisia tunteita tai ajatuksia herättää mahdollisuus sujuvammasta kodista lähtemisen prosessista?
- Voisitko jakaa ajatuksiasi kodista lähtemisestä ja sen vaikutuksista yleisemmällä tasolla, jos ei ole vielä tullut esille?
- Mitä haluat sanoa tähän loppuun?
- Tuleeko mieleesi vielä jotain aiheeseen liittyvää, joka ei ole toistaiseksi noussut keskusteluun?
 - Onko jotain muuta, jonka haluaisit lisätä tai kertoa aiheeseen liittyen?
- Onko sinulla kysymyksiä minulle?
- Onko sinulla kysymyksiä tai huolia liittyen haastatteluprosessiin tai projektin käytäntöihin?