Advisory Report

Relax, you’re at work.

Aniek C. Elliott
6th of June 2017
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Clients: Jan Gerard Hoendervanger and Justin Timmer
Glossary

The following glossary shows a few terms which are frequently used throughout this advisory report and how the writer interprets them in the context of this research.

**Biophilia:** An innate and genetically determined affinity of human beings with the natural world and other lifeforms.

**Biophilic Design:** Architecture and interior design that connects humans to nature. Biophilic design incorporates natural materials, natural light, vegetation, nature views and other experiences of the natural world into the modern built environment.

**Design:** To conceive a concept and make or draw plans for it.

**Healthy Workplace:** A healthy workplace supports and encourages healthy behaviors in its employees, making healthy choices the easy choices. In healthy workplaces employees are typically stimulated and supported to exercise, eat nutritious foods and cope with stressors.

**Integrated:** Combining or coordinating separate elements (1) Relaxation Room and 2) NoorderRuimtes Corporate Culture) to provide a harmonious, interrelated whole.

**Living Lab:** Living lab means a real-life laboratory, a practical research and test environment for developing new services. NoorderRuimte conducts research in their Living Lab in order provide stakeholders with insights and information about how to improve their services.

**Relaxation:** Abatement or relief from bodily or mental work, stress and anxiety. Activities or recreations that could provide such relief include meditation, diversion and entertainment.

**Relaxation Room:** A Relaxation Room is a room which stimulates relaxation in people. Typically, there are two types of Relaxation Rooms, the quiet and calming type (meditation/diversion) and the social and merrymaking type (diversion/entertainment).

**Success(fully):** Achievement of an action within a specified period or parameter. Success can also mean completing an objective or reaching a goal. See Chapter: 5 for the denotation of successful outcomes for the Relaxation Room.

**Workplace:** Establishment or facility at a particular location containing one or more work areas.

**Work Environment:** Involves the physical geographical location, as well as the entire facility and the immediate environment of the workplace.
Executive Summary

Did you know that taking relaxing breaks will make you more productive? Not only that, taking breaks can boost creativity, one’s ability to deal with stressors and one’s overall health! Still, not any old breakroom will stimulate this. It ought to be a room which is properly researched, tailored to the needs and desires of the people and facilitated. In other words, it ought to be an optimal Relaxation Room.

This research report shows how one can aim to advance the health and efficiency of employees through reducing stress by means of a Relaxation Room. This research was conducted in assignment of NoorderRuimte Research-Centre. Among other topics, the organization conducts practice orientated research about the Healthy Workplace. This research is piloted in the company’s own Living Lab meaning they experiment in their own workplace. As stress is a rising concern, gradually more organizations are offering their employees Relaxation Rooms to combat it. In the near future, NoorderRuimte would like to study the effects of a Relaxation Room in their own Living Lab. Therefore, preliminary research ought to be conducted into how this can be realized. This report gives answer to how a Relaxation Room can be designed for- and integrated into- NoorderRuimtes workplace. It gives insight to how other knowledge-work organizations have designed their Relaxation Rooms, how a room can be designed to stimulate tranquility, what activities can motivate serenity, how the Relaxation Room can be integrated into the workplace and how its impact can be measured. All information is tailored to suit the needs and desired of NoorderRuimtes employees.

The research methodology used to complete this report consists of a combination of data collections. The primary research comprises three qualitative, semi-structured interviews with field professionals, 44 qualitative and quantitative questionnaires with NoorderRuimtes employees, and a semi-structured focus group session with NoorderRuimtes employees. The secondary research conducted throughout this report consists of literature studies, desk research and otherwise – made up by a seminar and an excursion. The aim of this methodology was to design and realize a Relaxation Room based on scientific research and tailor it to incorporate the desires and needs of the users.

The data collected through primary and secondary research was consistent and corresponded agreeably with one another. This shows, that although this research was specifically directed to NoorderRuimtes employees, its basics can be applied to other knowledge-work organizations as well. The results of the research have visually be analyzed, concluded and formed into a fitting advice. The final advice is a design of the optimal Relaxation Room, shown and explained in a floorplan, and a change plan which step-wise demonstrated how the Relaxation Room can be integrated into NoorderRuimtes workplace and how its impact can be measured once implemented.

If this research, once implemented into NoorderRuimtes Living Lab generates insightful or positive results, this will be shared with NoorderRuimtes stakeholders. They can then choose to follow up on this research and act upon the findings to optimize their services.
Preface

This Advisory Report has been written by Aniek Elliott, International Facility Management student at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen. The report serves as a thesis and the final requirement to graduate with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. The aim of the Advisory Report is to provide NoorderRuimte with an advice on how they can realize a Relaxation Room in their Living Lab, to study the effects it will have on their employees and share the generated data with their stakeholders. Desirably, this research will prove Relaxation Rooms can decrease stress-levels of employees and stimulate other organizations to support their employees this way as well, to enhance their quality of life. The report gives preliminary advice on how a Relaxation Room can be designed for- and integrated into- NoorderRuimtes workplace in a successful manner.

The report has been written for Jan Gerard Hoendervanger, client and supervisor to the research. Mr. Hoendervanger is researcher at the NoorderRuimte, specializing in the Healthy Workplace. In addition, he is a lecture of Facilities Management at the Hanze University as well. Justin Timmer is also a supervisor of the research and a senior employee at the NoorderRuimte. Furthermore, this report has been written for Mark Kierans, Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Facilities Management, graduation tutor of the student and primary assessor of the graduation report. The secondary assessor for this report is Jaap Wijnja, Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Facilities Management. To end with, this report has been written for all with an interest in the importance of relaxation at work.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my client Jan Gerard Hoendervanger for providing me with this insightful and interesting research, my supervisors Jan Gerard Hoendervanger and Justin Timmer for sharing their knowledge with me, and my tutor Mark Kierans for guiding me through this graduation semester and being a valuable source of advice when needed.

Relax, sit-back and enjoy the following advisory report!

Aniek C. Elliott, Groningen

6th of June 2017
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1. Introduction

“Relax, you’re at work. Pour yourself a cup of tea, jibber-jabber to your colleagues about your weekend or put your feet up and unwind in the Relaxation Room. You look quite stressed; I think it is best you take a short break”. When was the last time your boss told you to take a break? Chances are, it has been a while. Companies striving to succeed in the 21st centuries economy are dynamic and upbeat. Stereotypically, there is no time to waste in Western organizations before accumulating deadlines approach, and if there is, it is likely one will be encouraged to spend that time more wisely by getting started on new tasks. This diligent and hardworking mindset has accounted for some great yet temporary achievements in the past. Temporary because there is a burden that arises from distributing continuous workloads without breaks. A burden that diminishes employee productivity, motivation and presence at work. It is currently the biggest health-risk to employees in the workplace and simultaneously causing companies extensive losses in efficiency and billions in revenue (Pazzanese, 2016; Armstrong, Statista, 2016). This burden is of course stress.

Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain (Stress, 2017). Work related stress occurs when employees are presented with demands and pressures that do not match their abilities (WHO, 2005). Though stress sounds unpleasant, it is not the root or all evil. It has a natural and biological function which provides us with the energy and motivation needed to meet our daily challenges (McGonigal, TedX, 2016). Still, this response is only desirable in small and occasional doses. To ensure stress does not occur consecutively, and as a result negatively affect individuals and organizations, relaxing intervals are essential. Relaxing intervals can offer employees temporary relief from bodily or mental strains (Relaxation, 2017). Nevertheless, taking breaks is not only an effective way to combat stress. Research suggests taking breaks can boost productivity, creativity and happiness as well (Goleman, 2013). Ernest Lawrence Rossi, PhD and writer of the 20 Minute Break suggests this is due to peoples natural Ultradian Performance Rhythm (UPR). His research found that people’s energy levels rise and fall in sequences of 90 minutes. Approximately every hour and a half, one ought to take 20 minutes to regenerate energy, concentration and productivity. Employees who (have to) ignore their bodies biological needs tend to get tired, lose mental focus, make mistakes and get irritable as a result (Rossie, 2002). Fortunately, progressively more organizations are recognizing the importance of supporting relaxation and mental wellbeing at work. According to CBRE’s Research report on Wellness in the Workplace, one of the largest organizational trends of 2016 was the growing awareness of stress and mindfulness in employees. Moreover, 80 percent of employees stated that (mental) wellness programs would be crucial to attracting and keeping them at their jobs for the next 10 years (Fabiano, 2016). It is due to these recognitions that this research report was initiated.

Research-Centre NoorderRuimte aspires to implement a Relaxation Room into their workplace as an experiment for their Living Lab. A Relaxation Room is a room in which employees can unwind, de-stress and take their mind off work. It serves as a distracting and comforting interval. The philosophy behind a Relaxation Room, at least for corporations, is that employees will be more productive when they feel well and unstressed, consequently creating a better work-environment and healthier culture. In theory, it makes sense, however NoorderRuimte wants to find out whether a Relaxation Room will generate the desired results in practice as well. In order to do so they must first learn what the optimal Relaxation Room looks like for their employees and how its usage could be incorporated into their company culture. This research report gives answer to these preliminary research requirements.
2. Research Report

The following research assignment has been conducted for the research-center NoorderRuimte. NoorderRuimte conducts practice orientated research about build environments in the north of the Netherlands. The research fields are divided into four themes; Earthquakes, Sustainability, Health & Wellbeing and Krimp. The theme Health & Wellbeing supports research conducted into the Healthy Workplace. This research is piloted in NoorderRuimtes Living Lab. Meaning, practical research and tests are carried out in NoorderRuimtes own workplace. In total the organization employs 62 part-time senior researchers, 8 full-time senior employees, and 61 junior / graduate employees from the Hanze University of Applied Sciences. The NoorderRuimte is a non-governmental institute and is privately funded by its shareholders. Shareholders fund the research-center to support knowledge expansions and gain noteworthy insights of enquiries which could affect or improve their organizations (Organization, 2017).

2.1 Purpose

Stakeholders of NoorderRuimte have expressed their interests to find out the effects a Relaxation Room could have on the stress-perceptions and productivity of their employees. Therefore, they would like to see a Relaxation Room generating results in NoorderRuimtes Living Lab. However, before this can be achieved, an effective Relaxation Room will have to be designed, implemented and integrated into NoorderRuimtes workplace. The problem is, that there is currently no information available about the design of an optimal Relaxation Room for NoorderRuimtes employees nor about how they can be encouraged to make use of it once implemented. If the room is not used sufficiently, researchers will not be able to accurately study its effects. Therefore, Jan Gerard Hoendervanger, senior researcher of the Healthy Workplace at NoorderRuimte, requested preliminary research and advice on this matter.

2.1.2 Objective

For this reason, the objective of this report is to provide the clients with advice on how the ideal and most efficient Relaxation Room is designed for NoorderRuimtes employees and how the Relaxation Room can be integrated into NoorderRuimtes workplace in order to ensure adequate usage once realized. Since the client is asking for a preliminary research report, no detail can be given to the implementation plan as that requires practical information which is not available at present.

2.2 Central Research Question

Based on the purpose and objective of this report, the following research question was formulated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>How can an idyllic Relaxation Room be designed for- and integrated into- NoorderRuimtes workplace?</td>
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With the aim of answering the main research questions holistically, five essential sub-questions have been identified which ought to be attended to afore. These sub-questions are as followed:
Sub-Research Questions

1. How have other knowledge-work organizations designed their Relaxation Rooms?
2. How can a room be designed to inspire optimal relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees?
3. What activities in a room can contribute to a greater sense of relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees?
4. How can a Relaxation Room be integrated into NoorderRuimtes workplace to ensure its use?
5. How can the impact of the Relaxation Room be measured?

This report systematically gives insight to each of the sub-questions. Accordingly, the outset the report looks at what other organizations have researched, found and experienced so far by instigating similar rooms. Thereafter an insight is provided into the effective design features of a Relaxation Room, activities that can contribute to a greater sense of relaxation, how employees can be stimulated to make usage of the room and how the impact of the Relaxation Room can be measured once realized.

2.3 Methodology

The research design of this report is flexible. General decisions on how to realize this research project came from preliminary explorations. In the beginning of this research a roadmap was created to give the research a general direction. Nevertheless, the course of the research was not specified to great detail as it greatly hinged on the results gathered throughout data collection. Moreover, the approach of this project is action research. Meaning, the research aims to bring about change whiles directly involving researchers and participants in the process. The research model below shows how the data was collected, which sub-questions it gave answer to, how it was analyzed and how it was shaped into an advice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collect data</th>
<th>General Relaxation Room Requirements</th>
<th>Employee Relaxation Room Requirements</th>
<th>Integration Strategies</th>
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<td>Interviews: SQ3</td>
<td>Questionnaires: SQ3</td>
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<td>Literature Studies: SQ1, SQ2, SQ3</td>
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<td>Desk Research: SQ1, SQ2, SQ3</td>
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<td>Literature Studies: SQ4, SQ5</td>
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<td>Focus Group: SQ5</td>
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<td>Analyze</td>
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<td>Analyze and combine general Relaxation Room requirements and employee Relaxation Room requirements.</td>
<td>Analyze strategies and tools for integrating and measuring change.</td>
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<td>Advice</td>
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<td>Design of Relaxation Room</td>
<td>Change Plan</td>
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Table 1: Research-Model
The research methods used to collect the data consisted of primary and secondary research. The primary research was gathered through interviews, questionnaires and a focus group session. The secondary research was collected through a heap of literature studies and desk research. Moreover, information was also used from excursions and seminars. The intention of this methodology was to design and realize a Relaxation Room based on scientific research and tailor it to incorporate the desires and needs of the users. Each method of data collection is elaborated upon below.

Primary Research

**Interviews:** With the intention to gain insight on practical matters, three qualitative, semi-structured, interviews were conducted. The first interview was accompanied by Bart in ’t Veld - advisor for Housing and Wellbeing at Menzis. Menzis strives to be the healthiest employer in the Netherlands. They are in the process of implementing Relaxation Rooms in all their headquarters and have a lot of experiences with instigating changes. This interview was used to amplify SQ1, SQ4 & SQ5. Secondly an interview with Jannie Pattiasina-Beekelaar - Activity Coordinator at Hanze Fit, gave insight to what the Hanze University is doing to stimulate mental well-being at work. And finally, an interview with Millie van der Heijden - Vitality Coach and Consultant, gave insight to how health interventions can successfully be implemented in organizations. This interview also touched upon what relaxing activities can be done at work and how the success of a change can be measured. This interview was used for SQ3, SQ4, SQ5.

**Questionnaires:** 44 Both, qualitative and quantitative, questionnaires were used to find out what the ideal Relaxation Room looks like for the employees of the NoorderRuimte and why. Half of the respondents were senior employees at the NoorderRuimte and the other half were junior employees. The questionnaires were distributed via an online service named Survey Monkey. Through this website, the data, results and patterns of the questionnaires could directly be calculated and highlighted. The questionnaire was used to give answer to SQ6. **Focus Group:** To elaborate upon the findings of the questionnaire, a semi-structured focus group was organized with employees of the NoorderRuimte. The focus group consisted of three junior employees, one senior employee and a focus group coordinator. The session took approximately 45 minutes. The session gave answer to what an ideal and feasible Relaxation Room would look like for employees of the NoorderRuimte and how they could be encouraged to make use of the room once implemented (SQ6).

Secondary Research

**Literature Studies:** Firstly, a literature study of CBRE’s “Wellness in the Workplace” was refer to for SQ1. SQ2 was heavily based on a literature study named “14 Patterns of Biophilic Design, Improving Health and Well-being in the Build Environment” by Terrapin Bright Green. Also “Blue Mind” by Nichols J. Wallace, Ph.D. was addressed to provide insights to SQ2. A literature study called “Take a Nap! Change your life” by Sara C. Mednick, Ph.D. was accessed for extra understanding of relaxing activities, SQ3. Lastly, the book “Learning to Change: A Guide for Organizational Change Agents” by Caluwé & Vermaak was used to answer SQ4 & 5. **Desk Research:** Also, general desk research was used to help give adequate and reliable answers to various sub-questions. The desk research was conducted through plentiful websites on Google, Internet. In total this research method added valuable information to SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ4 and SQ5. **Other:** Whether it is considered secondary research is debatable but the following two sources also contributed to this research report. Firstly, a seminar presentation of “Healthy Office Research” by Elizabeth Nelson PhD, at the Hanze University gave insight to SQ1, SQ4 and SQ5. Also, a presentation about “changing offices” by Anicee Bauer - Environmental Psychologist and specialist in healing offices at D/DOCK architecture, gave answer to how their measure the impact of their projects (SQ5).
2.3.1 Models
The models used to help complete this research are the “The 8-Step Process for Leading Change” by Dr. Kotter - Professor at Harvard Business School for SQ4. As well as NIATx’s model for “Measuring Change for Improving Health and Recovery”. NIATx is an easy to use model of process improvement designed specifically for behavioral health. These models have been chosen due to their relevance to the sub-questions and their academic reliability.

2.5 Validity and Reliability
To safeguard the validity and reliability of the methodology, all steps have been carried out with caution and have been documented carefully. All interviews and the focus group session have been recorded, replicated and stored in different places to make sure there is always evidence and backup of the shared information. To increase the reliability of the research, the interviews were conducted from a neutral point of view, as to not influence the interviewees behavior. The validity of the research questions and methods have been checked by the projects client. Also, the questionnaires had been checked and piloted by two external actors so that ensure it was clear for the participants, and generated the desired data for the research. The desired information to be conducted from the interviews and focus group session were thoroughly assessed prior to the event and transformed into a checklist. This ensured as much as possible valid information was gathered.

2.6 Ethical and Legal Considerations
The questionnaires, interviews and focus group session were all conducted in a fair and honest manner. No one was involved in the research without their consent and a complete understanding this research and the consequences of participating in it. No one was participating in the research against their will and no one had been caused physical or mental stress as a result of contributing. The privacy of the participants was also addressed prior to being involved in the research. Everybody willingly agreed to having their conversations recorded. Interviewees have been sent a transcript of records to ensure they approve of it.
3. Findings

This following chapter gives systematic insight to the findings of each of the 5 sub-questions. At first this chapter will look at how other knowledge-work organizations have designed their Relaxation Rooms. Then it looks at how a room can be designed to stimulate optimal relaxation and what activities can contribute to feeling more relaxed in a room. Thereafter the findings are shown of how a Relaxation Room could be integrated into NoorderRuimtes corporate culture and finally how the success of the Relaxation Room could be measured.

3.1 How have other knowledge-work organizations designed their Relaxation Rooms?

The numbers of knowledge-work businesses investing in Relaxation-rooms, programs and initiatives are on the rise according to an article by the Financial Times (Gelles, The Mind Business, 2017). Unsurprisingly, as a lack of relaxation - accompanied by stress – is currently the leading risk factor to one’s health at work. Without a place to relax, becoming overworked and strained has never been this easy. Stress causes a decrease in employee productivity, motivation and health, resulting in substantial losses to an organizations revenue over time (Stress Statistics, 2016). Therefore, businesses are trying to combat or completely evade this burden by offering their employees a Relaxation Room. Nonetheless, not only businesses are investing in Relaxation Rooms, many universities are too. They do this to support their students to work better and more efficient. This is a significant initiative as recent studies suggest that student millennials, otherwise known as generation-stress, are the most stressed age group in the world (Loria, 2015). The following chapter takes a look at the designs and styles of Relaxation Rooms in such organizations.

3.1.1 PwC

First up is PricewaterhouseCoopers (or PwC). PwC is an insurance, tax and consulting firm operating in 157 countries around the world. The organization recently redesigned their headquarter in Basel, Switzerland. Their aim was to support their employees to deliver to the best of their abilities in a healthier manner. The new office is designed to stimulate the well-being of their employees on four imperative pillars; activity, attitude, rest and nutrition. Through communicating with their workers, the organization learnt that their employees desire 3 types of workplaces. A focus space: where they can sit at a desk and concentrate. A team space: where they can work in groups and interact energetically. And a quit zone: where they can retreat, calm down and unwind without being disturbed by others or their phones. PwC facilitates this need as they too believe that employees will be more efficient and healthier if they can transit between these spaces throughout the day. (PwC Offices – Basel, 2016).
Since employees working at PwC tend to work long days while dealing with dense work pressures, the quite zone (Relaxation Room) has especially been designed to support their mental health. The room unveils various green tones and white. Research has shown that these colors have a calming effect on people. The green planted wall, triggers one’s senses and makes the room appear, feel and smell fresh like nature (more on the relaxing effects of nature in chapter 3.2). The room has dividing yet vaguely see-through curtains which gives the employees a sense of privacy, shelter yet still connection. Lastly, the room has a profound noise reduction system to ensure the quite zone lives up to its name. This was especially added as PwC’s employees identified sound as the weightiest stressors in the workplace (PwC Offices – Basel, 2016).

3.1.2 CBRE

CBRE is an American real-estate corporation with over 370 offices around the globe. CBRE is one of the world’s leading organizations when it comes to researching and working in the healthy workplace. They use their own headquarters as a living labs to conduct experiments, interventions and research (About CBRE, 2016). CBRE speculates that in the near future, Relaxation Rooms will be present in all office buildings and will be designed and utilized as followed. Employees can freely reserve the Relaxation Room once a day for 30 minutes. On entrance the room looks bright and clean. It is equipped with comfortable furniture and mats. Once in the room, the employee encounters a high-resolution screen. The employee can alter this screen to play their favorite soothing sounds and visuals. For instance, the scenery of a beach and the soundtrack of waves. Once the employee has settled in, the screen will suggest several yoga movements the employee could practice based on their mood, physical state and energy levels. This will support one to briefly relax optimally (CBRE, 2016).

CBRE’s current Relaxation Rooms are similar to those of the future, yet not as high-tech. According Elizabeth Nelson, PhD researcher at CBRE, their current Relaxation Rooms are already quite popular at present. Their research shows that since the implementation of the Relaxation Rooms, employees have improved in productivity, coping with stressors and mental health. Nevertheless, Ms. Nelson is confident that this is not solely due to their Relaxation Rooms, but to the organizations overall holistic approach to workplace health.
3.1.3 Google

Google Inc. is the company accountable for the biggest search engine in the world. The company has over 68 headquarters around the globe. One of Google’s strongest features is their progressive and innovative way of working. Relaxing at work is quite conventional and even stimulated at Google. The organization too believes that being stress-free can improve creativity and productivity, thereby strategically advancing the company’s top and bottom-line (OnlineMBA, 2017). Google offers their employees three types of rooms in which they can relax. 1) The quiet and calming type for meditation or other quite distractions, 2) the social and merrymaking type for entertainment and active diversions and 3) the functional type where stress can be massaged out of one’s physical state. Google recognizes that their employees are distinctive individuals for whom one size does not necessarily fit all. Offering their employees a choice setting in which they can relax, which aligns with their personal preferences, is the most efficient and effective way to stimulate a less stressed workplace.

The first image, 1) shows a room in which employees can lie down, put their feet up, shut their eyes or be sooth by the view of sinuous fish in the aquarium. Water is one of the most relaxing substances known to mankind. Its sound, view and feel can bring people to an almost instant calm state (Niller, 2014). As a result, the color blue commonly also has this effect on people (more on the relaxing effects of water in chapter 3.2). The second image, 2) shows a playful and energetic room which Googlers call their recreation room. Offering employees distraction from work pressures and stress is likewise an efficient way to inspire a relaxed work environment. In this room employees can watch movies, play games, hang out and simply unwind. Lastly, the third image, 3) shows a setting in which (physical) stress can literally be massaged out of employees. Some Google headquarters used massages as a form of rewarding. They basically hand out a professional and extremely satisfying, pat on the back for good work (Manager, 2015).

3.1.4 Yelp

Yelp is an online platform that connect consumers to local businesses and visa-versa. The organization facilitates both parties to engage in safe transactions. Yelp has multiple headquarters spread across the globe and is employer to over 4000 employees. The company has found that their employees perform most effectively and contently when they work in an environment that listens to their needs (Alioto, 2012). Therefore, to help their employees cope with their work pressures, Yelp created a Relaxation Room which employees can make use of for 30 minutes a day. The room looks like that of a massage parlor, it smells of lavender and vanillin and is lit by flickering candles. In the middle of the room there is a comfortable massage chair, which one can adjust to massage certain areas with specific
pressures that feel pleasurable to the user. In addition to the relaxation room, the company offers their employees a games room where employees can unwind in a social setting.

3.1.5 Several Sample Universities

Most universities across the U.S. already offer their students stress counselling as part of their standard services. However, gradually more universities such as Pace University, Andrews University and John Carrol University are now also offer their students the services of a Relaxation Room. The design of the Relaxation Rooms in these universities is parallel to the following. Students can book the room for 30 minutes as a time. The room is furnished with a massage-chair, soft lighting and soothing music. The students can turn on the Seasonal Affective Disorder-SAD lamp which reduces mood-swings, winter depressions and improves sleeping. The students can make use of the bio-feedback machine as well, which enlightens one about the foundations of stress and how it can be managed. Moreover, the rooms are supplied with bookshelves filled with literature about stress prevention, managing stress and relaxation techniques. In addition, yoga, meditation, mindfulness, breathing and muscle relaxation trainings are also offered. If students want to practice this by themselves, this is possible too in the universities quite rooms with yoga mats (The Relaxation Room, 2017; Relaxation Room (Westchester Campus), 2017; The Relaxation Room, 2017).

The University of Michigan, Morgan State University and Savana Collage offer their students similar perks and Relaxation Rooms. However, they additionally provide their students with facilities to nap on campus as well. Students can book a private nap-pod or room for 30 minutes a day to unwind, reboot and become more energized. Before these were introduced students would fall asleep in the library or go to home to nap but never return to campus to study. This accounted for discomfort and a loss in productivity which resulted in more stress among the students. The nap facilities have increased the comfort and work output of the students.

3.1.6 The Hanze University

The Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen has likewise devoted a share of its resources to ensure their students and employees are offered a place to relax. Two examples are taken from facilities on the Zernike campus. The first example, is the student lounge in the Life Science and Technology building in the van Dooreveste. This relaxing setting is designed as followed. Students can visit this place any time of the day to put their feet up or socialize. There are comfy couches to sit on and a sports-like bar to sit at. The student can listen to jazz music, play pool or simply hang out with others. The walls are decorated with colors, trophies, pool-sticks and dartboards. On Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, students can even enjoy a cold beer after 2pm. The room was initially created for the use of a student association only, however nowadays the room is open to all students and employees at the Hanze University. The second example is next door, in the van Olst Toren, the Business Administration faculty. In this building there is a small meditation and relaxation room that can be used by all students, guests and employees of the Hanze University. The room is meant for praying, meditating or resting. It is small (a few square meters), neutral and minimalistic with little on display besides a cabinet, a sink, a Bible and a Koran. Though the room can be used for all purposes mentioned above, practice has shown that the primary use of the room is for religious practices.

According to students of the university, both settings are currently not being used optimally due to their lack of openness and invitingness. Many students still believe the student lounge only welcomes people of the association and the meditation only those whom need it for praying. The meditation room feels too uncomfortable and small for actual relaxation and yoga practices. The students have indicated this would be something they would be interested in to see in the future (Lounge, 2017).
3.2 How can a room be designed to inspire optimal relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees?

*Ever wondered why hospitals are always light and decorated blues and greenery?* This is because research has shown patients heal faster when surrounded by nature and its colors (Maller, 2005). Architects and interior designers have been influencing peoples’ moods, feelings and behavior since the beginning of time (Anthes, 2009). The design of a room can impel one to act in a certain way, colors on the wall can induce certain emotions, the smell of one’s environment can revive old memories and the touch of an interior can determine whether one feels comfortable or not. Most of the time people are not aware of the fact that their surroundings are swaying their senses. If one’s intentions are to use this power to stimulate employees to feel relaxed, the key is to listen to peoples biophilia desires. The following chapter elaborates upon how a room can be design to stimulate optimal relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees.

3.2.1 Biophilia

In order to understand the needs and desires for the Relaxation Room of the employees of NoorderRuimtes, they were asked to fill-in an online survey (Appendix: 3). In total 44 employees responded, which is arguably representative for NoorderRuimtes employee base. When participants were questioned what they currently do at work to relax, 51% answered with “going outside and surrounding themselves by nature”. This was an open-question which made the results increasingly interesting. The employees were asked another question which addressed whether they wanted to be alone in a room to relax or with others, a number of participants answered that they did not want to be in a room because they would rather relax outside. These results confirmed the theory of biophilia. The term was first invented in 1960 by Erich Fromm, psychoanalyst (Biophilia, 2017). His research found that people have an instinctive and evolutionary connection to nature and that when they are surrounded by it, they feel most calming and relaxed. Biologist Edward Wilson, described it as “the natural pleasure that comes from being surrounded by living organisms”. It is due to this finding, that the course of this sub-research question was directed to biophilic design.

3.2.2 Biophilic Design

Biophilic design is a way of connecting humans to nature though architecture and interior design. It incorporates natural materials, natural light, vegetation, views of nature and other experiences of the outdoor world into modern built environments. There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that biophilically designed workplace can reduce stress, enhance creativity, clarify thoughts, and improve our well-being and expedite healing (Terrapin, 2017). Biophilic design is made up by six distinctive features. Visuals of nature, presence of water, non-visuals of nature, non-rhythmic sensory stimuli, thermal & airflow variability, and light, shadow & shelter. Each aspect will be elaborated upon in the following paragraphs.

![Image 4: Six Features of Biophilic Design](image.png)
Visuals of Nature
A study by Edward Wilson shows, that if people are asked to describe their ideal place to work or live, most will define a place with extensive views over nature or valleys. The theory behind this is that humans instinctively value safety and control above all. From a historic point of view, this is offered through far outlooks as people will be able to see danger coming before it arrives (Stone, 2012). Moreover, views of nature are relaxing since they provide a sense of space, time, weather and connection to other living beings. Research shows that individuals working in an office environment with windows and views, typically reduce their heart rate 1.6 times faster after a stressful interval, then individuals working in an office without windows or views (Kahn, 2008). These employees generally have lower blood pressures and smoother heart rates as well (Terrapin, 2017). Despite the fact that biophilic design works best with real views of nature, it also works remarkably well with fake ones (this applies to all features of biophilic design). The illusion of nature is enough to lower blood pressures and heart rates, and consequently de-stress. This can be achieved through displaying large sceneries of nature on walls and by placing varieties of plants, flowers or other natural elements, such as water and fish, in the Relaxation Room (Terrapin, 2017).

Presence of Water
The presence of water works similarly to the visuals of nature. Author of Blue Mind; Dr. Wallace Nichols’s research demonstrates that the sound, feel and view of water can draw people to a nearly instant mindful state. This is why people go on vacations near the sea, take hot baths after a long day or go fishing on the weekends. His research also shows that people living by the sea collectively live longer and happier lives (Niiiler, 2014). Once again, it is speculated that this connection to nature can be traced back to mankind’s ancient instincts; where there is water, there is live and as long as there is live, people are safe (Water, 2012). Altogether research suggests the presence of water can reduce stress, increase moods, positivity and tranquility, whiles lowering heart rates and blood pressures (Terrapin, 2017). Although this is a perfectly valid reason to flee the city and buy a house by the sea, it is yet again not necessary in order to benefit from natures calming effects. The sight and sound of moving water in anyplace has a relaxing effect on people. Therefore, one can consider adding a fountain, aquarium, water-piece or a wave simulator into the Relaxation Room. If possible, take advantage of life’s natural resources through letting raindrops tick against the windows or glass roof.

Non-Visuals of Nature
Non-visuals of nature refer to the sounds, aromas and textures that are reminiscent of being outdoors. For one thing, the smell of plants and flowers can have a relaxing effect on people. Research suggests that the scent of vanilla beans can ease muscle tension and stress (Warrenburg, 2005). Likewise, the smell of lavender can stimulate calmness whiles reducing anxiety, agitation and aggression. The smell of lavender can slow down one’s nervous system which results in a relaxer body and mind (Gentry, 2013). Moreover, sound can too play a profound role in provoking relaxation. Research shows that when people are exposed to the sound of waves, they unconsciously synchronize their breaths with the sequences of the waves. This results in one taking deeper breaths which lowers heart rates and blood pressure as well (Treasure, 2009). Again, the sounds of birds singing and water flowing account for relaxation as a result of peoples prehistoric instincts; once the birds stopped singing, danger was coming and if the water stopped flowing, people were out of supply (Treasure, 2009). Research shows that people working in offices with sounds of nature, recover 37% faster after a stressor, then people working in an office with urban noise (Alvarsson, 2010). The last non-visual that can relax people is the feel of nature. Natural ventilation, wind and breezes evocative the sense of being in nature, as well as feeling natural textures and materials such as stone, wood and fur. Overall, adequate biophilic design
with these aspects can reduce ones systolic blood pressure and level of stress hormones (Terrapin, 2017). In order to stimulate this in the Relaxation Room, one can firstly apply an isolating system to diminish urban-noises and purchase a high-quality sound system and scent distributor. Ideally windows account for natural ventilation however if this is not feasible due to sound-pollution, temperature control or other factors, a modifiable air-conditioner system is a noteworthy substitute. Last of all, the furniture, walls and decorations in the room ought to consist of natural textures and designs.

**Non-Rhythmic Sensory Stimuli**

Non-rhythmic sensory stimuli, symbolizes the random movements of ones surroundings. A space with natural non-rhythmic sensory stimuli is interesting, fresh to the eye and allows for brief moments of distraction. In nature these stimuli are views of floating clouds, rustling plants, babbling water and moving living organisms (Terrapin, 2017). These incentives are particularly desirable in office environments to obstruct people from looking at screens for too long. This causes ones eye-lens to contract and tighten the muscle. If this muscles stays contracted over twenty minutes without intermissions, this can cause headaches and sore eyes. Therefore, if the Relaxation Room will have screens, should facilitate a few faintly distracting stimuli as well, to briefly capture people’s attention on regular intervals and direct them away from the screen. If the there are no window views in the room, this can otherwise be achieved through projecting movements or patterns on the wall or placing an aquarium in the room with dainty fish. Collective research suggests that non-rhythmic sensory stimuli can have a positive impact on one’s heart rate, systolic blood pressure and activity of one’s sympathetic nervous system (Terrapin, 2017).

**Thermal & Airflow Variability**

Temperature and airflow variability represents natures natural fluctuations. Research shows people are most gratified, concentrated and comfortable when they are in a room with slightly wavering temperature and airflow. A room that does not facilitate this can lead to boredom and even arouse passive behavior (Orians, 1993). According to Karin Verkuijlen, occupational-hygienist at Arbo Unie, the best office temperature for the productivity of employees lingers around 21°C (Huijgevoort, 2016). Most studies suggest similar temperatures of between the 21°C and 23°C (Adams, 2016). Still, it is important to note that thermal preferences differ per person and subjectively depend on ones gender, fat index and age (InfoNu, 2012). If one is too cold, their body will spend a lot of its energy on reheating it. This can cause physical stiffness and psychological tension (Hedge, 2004). If one is too warm, they will become psychologically lazier and their performance will decrease (Cornell, 2015). The ideal situation would be to offer people a degree of control over the temperature and airflow in their direct surrounding through facilitating system controls, window operability and cross ventilation per room.

**Light, Shadows & Shelter**

This feature refers to the way light, shadows and shelter can account for relaxation. To start, research shows that natural daylight has a calming effect on people and can improve their moods (Terrapin, 2017). According to Elizabeth Nelson, PhD researcher from the University of Twente, this is due to mankind’s ancient circadian rhythm. When the light inside replicated natural light; mellow yellow in the morning, to bright white in the afternoon, to warm red in the evening, people feel more even tempered and stress resistant (Nelson, ‘A Healthy Office: The Shocking Truth’, 2017). In addition to circadian lighting, natural shades have a pleasing effect the people as well. Natural shadows are playful and interesting to the eye. They provide a sense of time, depth and movement. A large bright room without shadows can feel unpleasant and artificial due to its sterile appearance (Terrapin, 2017). As a final point, research shows that when given the choice where to sit, people will habitually choose a
place where they are slightly sheltered (Freeman, 2011). Shelter provided people with a sense of safety and privacy. To conclude, with the intention of creating this experience in the Relaxation Room, one can try to lit it with natural daylight only or additionally implement a circadian light system. Shadows can be shaped through placing plants or other graceful objects in front of lights. To offer people a comfortable and safe sensation, one can use plants or other dividers of natural materials to create smaller settings or corners.

3.2.3 Color Psychology
The scientific psychology of color shows a close relationship to biophilic design. According to the Feng Shui Society the colors that have a relaxing and calming effect on people are green, blue and white. Green is a color that we seek to soothe us when opposed by stressful circumstances (FSS, 2016). Green represents our natural environment. It helps one practice emphasis towards other living beings while providing a blanket of comfort, calmness and space. Light blue is cooling and makes one quiet and serene. Dark blue symbolizes the nights, in which people lay down, unwind and sleep. And white is a color of purity. It helps people reflect and it gives an open responsiveness. Too much white however, can make an environment feel cold and isolating. The right combination of these colors, as seen in biophilic design, can soporifically influence one’s cognitive state of mind (Maier, 2014).

3.2.3 Looping Back to Employees
To visually capture the full essence of biophilic design and its features that can stimulate optimal relaxation, a mood board was created (Appendix: 1). This mood board was showed and explained in a focus group session with employees of the NoorderRuimte (Appendix: 4). The focus group consisted of three junior employees, one senior employee and a session coordinator. The group reacted with great eagerness to the design and confirmed these interior features would make them feel relaxed. Moreover, when the participants were asked to choose a color pallet that they liked best and which made them feel most relaxed. The majority opted for color pallet 5 (Appendix: 5) which shows colors which are closely related to those of biophilic design and color psychology.

3.3 What activities in the Relaxation Room can contribute to a greater sense of relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees?
Relaxation increases when mental or bodily stressors and tensions decrease. Therefore, the best way to relax is by letting go of ones worries and fears. Classically, there are two ways through which this can be achieved. One can train their mind to cope with stressors, or allow for their mind to be distracted from their concerns. Some people unwind effectively in a quiet setting, others forget about their worries better in a social one. What works best, depends on the individual. Either way, it is not always easy. The following chapter first takes a look at activities that can generally contribute to a relaxing frame of mind in the Relaxation Room, after which a look is taken at which activities employees of the NoorderRuimte would specifically like to practice in the room.

3.3.1 Meditation, Mindfulness and Yoga
Meditation, mindfulness and yoga are three practices of self-love that overlap in their philosophy and techniques. Their foundations all rest on the aim to find inner peace, calmness and relaxation. Their corresponding way to achieve this is through the art of inhaling and exhaling. In 1975, M. Dr. Herbert Benson from Harvard Medical School found that people can control their physical and mental state
through their breathing technique (Herbert Benson, 2017). In other words, through breathing people can switch between their psychological “fight and flight” and “relaxation” response. For instance, if danger approaches peoples automatic response is to breath shallowly or hyperventilate. This is their “fight or flight” response. Shallow breaths will cause their heart to beat faster, sending signals to their brain to prepare for something drastic to happen. This is an evolutionary and valuable response as it provides people with the energy and adrenaline to handle quickly. It makes us feel stressed. Though this response is useful, it ought only to be produced from time-to-time when needed. If there is no danger and no need for stress, people ought to deepen their breaths again and slide back into their bodies main response, the “relaxation” response. This can simply be achieved by taking deep breaths which will allow for more oxygen to flow through one's bloodstream and lower their blood pressure (Chiesa, 2009). This will send new signals to their brain that it is safe to relax so it will stop producing stress hormones (McGonigal, TedX, 2016). Still, in today’s hectic and upbeat society, a lot of people are constantly breathing shallowly which is leaving them stressed. Through meditation, mindfulness and yoga practices one can regain control over their breaths. Collectively, research suggests that meditation, mindfulness and yoga can improve cognitive functioning, performance, moods and physical health (Dienstmann, 2016). The following paragraphs takes a closer look at each of the practices.

**Meditation** is the practice of “thoughtless awareness”. It trains one’s mind to become tranquil and still. Meditation can teach one to recognize the patterns of their mind, gain control over them and alter them to become more supportive and positive (Meditation and Thoughtless Awareness, 2017). This practice can be performed in different surroundings and positions such as lying, sitting, standing or walking. It depends on what the individual prefers and it trying to achieve. As long as the person is able to look inside themselves and breath without directly being disturbed.

**Mindfulness** is the act of being “aware”. Being aware of one's surroundings by stepping out of their mind and thoughts, to simply be present in the moment. Many people are accustomed to carrying out daily routines on automatic pilot whiles mentally concentrating on other things. Mindfulness can teach one to focus on one thing at a time whiles breathing deeply. It also instils one to accept everything as it is, without having the urge to intervene (Staff, 2013). The term *mindfulness* was invented by John Kabat-Zinn, an American molecular biologist. He discovered that the practice could help patients with chronic pain and illnesses cope with their conditions better (Kabat-Zinn, 2017).

**Yoga** is perhaps the most common relaxation practice in western countries. Yoga follows similar mind-techniques as meditation and mindfulness however it does not only strengthen one’s mind but also one’s physical state. Yoga fortifies and tones one’s body through stretching, twisting and turning whiles simultaneously performing mindful breathing exercises. The philosophy of yoga is that by teaching one to gain control over their body and mind “on the matt”, they will be able to behold better control of their body and mind “off the matt”. Allowing their physical performance, as well as their mental ability to cope with stressors, to improve in daily life (Mishler, 2016). The University of Duke started offering yoga classes to their employees for one hour a week, and found that soon already ⅓ of their workers experienced a reduction in stress levels (Gelles, the Mind Business, 2012).

### 3.3.2 Napping and Snoozing

According to Jennifer Ackerman, author of *Sex Sleep Eat Drink Dream*, napping can reduce stress and lowers the risk of heart attacks, strokes, diabetes and excessive weight gain (Ackerman, Napping: the Experts Guide, 2009). Dr. Sara Mednick, Professor at the Department of Psychology at the University
of California, discovered that napping at work can increase productivity, creativity, memory, ability to learn and boosts skills (Mednick S., 2017). Napping at the right time is essential to revitalize the body and brain. With the aim of helping people understand at what time their biological clock needs a break, Dr. Menick created a nap-wheel which calculates exactly at what time one should take a nap depending on what time they woke up. An article by The Wall Street Journal suggests that the ideal duration for a nap at work is between the 10 and 60 minutes depending on the activities one needs to perform afterwards. 10-20 minutes of sleep will increase alertness and energy, whereas sleeping for 60 minutes can advance remembering facts and concentration. Napping for 90 minutes can improve moods, emotions and creativity thought this is generally not advised at work. Experts recommend keeping power-naps short and sweet. This because if one sleeps for more than 45 minutes at a time, it will take quite some time to recover from sleep drowsiness which temporarily decrease ones productivity (Ackerman, Napping: the Expert’s Guide, 2009). Either way, it is important not to wake up in the middle of ones sleep stages, since awaking during peoples slow-wave-sleep can cause one to a feel groggy or hungover (Reddy, 2013).

3.3.3 Listening to Music
Research suggests that gentle music can reduce stress levels of patients before and after surgery, that it can lessen the sensation of chronic pain, and it can increase the self-esteem of elderly (Collingwood, 2016). Gentle music usually has a rhythm of 60 BPM, which is approximately the same rate as a relaxed heartbeat. By listening to this music, one’s breathing will unconsciously synchronize (similar to with waves), lowering one’s pulse, heart rate, blood pressure and levels of stress hormones (ShortList, 2016). Besides this, music can also distract and release the tensions of bothering thoughts. Research suggests that songs with familiar melodies with chimes, water and birds are most relaxing to mankind. Scientists have identified the most relaxing song ever made as “Weightless” by Marconi Union (ShortList, 2016). Allegedly, the song’s specific tunes, rhythms, tones, frequencies and intervals perfectly cause one’s brainwaves and heart rates to synchronize to a deep and calming state. An underlying bass tone comforts the listener whiles a low whooshing sound with a trans like quantity moves the listener to an even deeper serene sensation. Perhaps not everybody’s cup of tea, but there are countless other relaxing songs which stimulate the same effect. Again, it depends on the taste and preferences of the user. One will need a degree of control over which music to listen to in order to unwind.

3.3.4 Working Out
According to a publication by Harvard Medicine, exercise can reduce stress, anxiety and depression (Publications, Exercising to relax, 2011). Exercise can counteract stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol by producing endorphins. Endorphins are natural painkillers and mood elevators and they are produced through movements, efforts and workouts. As the intensity of the workout increases, so does the quantity of endorphins produced. This gives people feelings of optimism and relaxation. Besides the scientific explanations of why exercise relaxes, there numerous psychological explanations as well. For instance, when someone works out on a regular basis, they will not only improve their bodily functioning but also their body image. This has a positive influence on their confidence and self-esteem which resultantly increase levels of composure. Exercising is also an effective way to distract oneself from worries or troubling thoughts. The best exercises to stimulate relaxation are a combination of aerobic and autoregulation exercises, thus practices for both body and mind. Aerobic exercises include jogging, body-fit, steps, swimming and so likewise. Outdoor activities and activities involving water are even more effective due to peoples biophilia. Autoregulation exercises advance one’s mental strength and could include breathing practices and meditation. A combination of both
exercises, either *moderately* for 45-50 minutes a day, or *actively* for 15-20 minutes a day, can decrease ones stress perception and increase feelings of relaxation (Publications, Exercising to relax, 2011).

### 3.3.5 Eating and Drinking
Food is the oldest remedy in the book. It can help reduce stress and endorse relaxation through various helpful nutrients, vitamins and minerals. The nourishments that have the most calmative effect on people are as followed. Firstly, 1) **complex carbs** such as oatmeal, brown rice, beans and nuts, can help the brain produce serotonin. Serotonin is a natural antidepressant which can lift our mood or make us feel calm (Alice, 2017). 2) **Omega-3 fatty acids** which can be found in salmon, can help reduce the negative effects of stress hormones through its anti-inflammatory properties (Team, 2015). 3) **Cacao** can be found in chocolate. Is full of antioxidants that can trigger the walls of one's blood vessels to relax. This causes a decrease in blood pressure and improved circulation. Cacao also reduces cortisol, helping the body fight stressors and stress related free radicals (Health, 2017). And perhaps most enjoyably it contains unique natural substances such as anandamide and phenyl-ethylamine which triggers the release of endorphins and activates a sense of love and happiness (Superfood, 2017). 4) When a body is stressed it uses up a lot of **magnesium**. A lack of magnesium, which can be found in banana’s, can make one feel futile and more stressed. Therefore, during tense times it is important to consume enough of it (Heijden, 2017). 5) **Vitamin D**, from warm milk, produces serotonin. Serotonin is known to induce a feeling of pleasure along with helping in sleep (Revolution, 2014). 6) **Green tea** contains flavonoids, apigenin and chrysin which have a sedative effect on people. Yet all tea’s black, herbal or green, have the ability to produce relaxing hormones (Relaxation, 2013).

### 3.3.6 Social or Singly Distraction
In a nutshell, relaxing is about distracting one from stressful thought or activities. Some people find reading an effective way to take their mind of matters, others prefer watching TV or escaping into the world of 3D. Again others might enjoy the distraction of social connections, playing games, eating and drinking or simply talking about the day thus far together. According to a study by Harvard Medical School, good social connections are healthful as they can help reduce stress levels and thus reduce the risks of physical and psychological illnesses. Social and caring behavior also activates the release of stress reducing hormones in the brain, making stress less perceptible and relaxation more accessible (Publications, The Health Benefits of Strong Relationships, 2010). Still, once more, it is important to recognize that all users of the Relaxation Room are unique individuals for whom a one-size-fits-all approach might not work. The users ought to be provided with choice and means to unwind in a way that feels natural to them. Therefore, the Relaxation Room ought to be multi-functional and adaptable till a certain degree.

### 3.3.7 Looping Back to Employees
In short, there are many activities that can contribute to a relaxed sensation. In order to find out what the employees of NoorderRuiimte would like to do in the Relaxation Room, the same questionnaire was used. The results show that the desired use of the Relaxation Room, in terms of activities, differs widely per participant (Appendix: 3). In the graph below, one can find an overview of the different activities and the percentage of participants whom would like to do so.
The activities can be divided into two categories; activities to be performed alone whiles in a quiet setting and activities to be performed with others in a social setting. The survey correspondingly revealed that 25 percent of participants would like to be alone in the Relaxation Room, 36 percent would like to be with others, and 27 percent would like to have the choice of being alone or with others depending on their mood. It is challenging to combine all desires in one room as they are diverse and therefore likely to disturb one another. With the purpose of determining how to proceed, whiles holistically attending to the desires of all employees, these results were discussed in a focus group. Through discussing this delinquent situation, the following insight came to light. Firstly, The participants did not think it was possible to combine both social and singly activities in one room. Curtains or room dividers would not withhold the social-noise and placing little private-rooms into one larger Relaxation Room would induce claustrophobia. Also, the idea of dividing one desire from another though the use of virtual reality head systems did not appeal to the group. They believed they would not find it relaxing to wear or use. Therefore, a choice had to be made between the two settings. The group decided that despite the majority of respondents asserting they would like to socialize and play games in the Relaxation Room, it is not needed as there are already various settings in the work environment that facilitate this. Instead, they decided a focus should be laid on offering the employees whom needs and desires have not been met yet, a choice to relax in peace or elsewhere with others depending on their mood. As a result, the decision was made to create a quiet Relaxation Room in which employees could partake in singly calming activities such as lying down, snoozing, doing yoga, meditation, mindfulness, reading, watching videos- and listening to music- through headphones.

3.4 How can a Relaxation Room be integrated into NoorderRuimtes workplace to ensure its use?

Wouter Oosting, senior director of workplace strategies and design at CBRE Nederland, believes that in order to successfully integrate a change - such as the use of a Relaxation Room – into a company,
the organization will need a cultural shift to make the new feature part of people’s daily routines. This enquires a proper change management program which is tailored to one’s office. He states: “if we are asking people to change their behavior, we have to help them do so” (Fabiano, 2016). Two interviews with Millie van der Heijden, Vitality Coach and Organizational Consultant, and Bart in’t Veld, Housing and Wellbeing Advisor at Menzis, confirmed this as well. Accordingly, with the aim to ensure adequate use of the Relaxation Room through a change plan, Kotter’s “8-Steps of Leading Change” is expounded in the following chapter. Additional information on how to stimulate the use of the Relaxation Room has been collected from the book *Learning to Change* by Caluwé and Vermaak, two field professionals and NoorderRuimtes employees themselves.

### 3.4.1 Change Management

Many professionals have dedicated their careers to researching effective and lasting change management programs. Though most programs differ somewhat in methods and activities, there is a strong correlation between the main phases of a change process; 1) Prepare the change, 2) plan the change, 3) implement and manage the change, and 4) reinforce and sustain the change (Wanner, 2013). Each phase consists of certain activities which have been illustrated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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| Prepare for the Change | 1. Clarify objectives for the change in “people” terms and ensure a “compelling case” for change.  
2. Assess stakeholders (i.e. those impacted by the change) for their readiness and support.  
3. Obtain necessary resources and organize to manage the change.  
4. Align executive sponsors to build a network (coalition) of sponsors.  
5. Conduct an analysis to define the specific impact of the change on each stakeholder. |
| Plan the Change | 1. Develop formal plans, integrate those into the overall project management plan.  
2. Executive sponsor activities.  
3. Communications and training.  
4. Resistance management.  
5. Events and Interventions. |
| Manage the Change | 1. Collect feedback to measure results and the adoption of the desired changes.  
2. Take corrective action to close any gaps and seek continuous improvement.  
3. Embed the change into systems, processes, and policies, and deliver consequences to sustain the change. |
| Reinforce and Sustain the Change | 1. Manage the implementation of the change based on the change management plan.  
3. Realize actions.  
4. Perform change controlling.  
5. Manage resistance. |

Table 2: The Four Phases of Change

As illustrated above, each phases consists of certain activities. However, John Kotter, Professor of Leadership at the Harvard Business School, has created an 8-step process for leading change which aligns with the four phases and systematically elaborates upon the activities (Millenaar, 2012). These 8-steps act as a roadmap to get from the current situation to the desired situation. The 8-steps are; 1) create a sense of urgency, 2) form a powerful coalition, 3) create a vision for change, 4) communicate the vision, 5) empower employees to act on the vision, 6) create short term wins, 7) hold the gains and build on the change, and lastly 8) anchor the change in the corporate culture. In the figure below, one will find an illustration of these steps and how they relate to the four phases of change.
The following sub-chapters go into more detail about each of the phases and the activities that need to be undertaken in regards to integrate and stimulate the use of the Relaxation Room.

**Phase 1: Prepare for the Change**

The first phase of change starts when a trigger for an intervention has been identified. This report is evidence that the first phase has been initiated. The time and resources spend on the preparation phase depends on the scope and importance of the change. The person(s) responsible for starting this phase is called the initiator and is responsible for identifying the need to change and transitioning it to the organization's agenda. This phase consists of two steps, creating an urgency and forming a powerful coalition with sponsors.

**Step 1: Create Urgency**; Firstly, it is essential to make the employees believe the change is somehow desired or they will be redundant to the process. Resistance or a lack of interest can obstruct the effective implementation of the change. To create an urgency one ought to analyze the organization's current situation and determine the desired situation. Calculate what can happen if this change does not come. In NoorderRuimtes case, make the Relaxation Room personally influential and beneficial to the health and performance of the employees. **Step 2: Form a Powerful Coalition**; Once there is an urgency and the message is clear, it is time to form a powerful coalition and gain the support needed to realize the change. In order to do so, one will have to identify the key-players (or actors) in the organization which can influence the change. The book *Learning to Change*, by Caluwé & Vermaak, identifies seven actors involved in a change process (Léon de Caluwé, 2010). The following paragraph offers a short elaboration of these.

1) **Initiator**: The person who identified the change and put it on the next meeting’s agenda. 2) **Sponsor**: The initiator ought to find a sponsor who will use its (in)formal power to legitimize the change or at least confirm it will be considered. Sponsors are typically directors or managers with decision-making authority to activate the change. 3) **Orchestrators**: The sponsor will appoint an orchestrator.
Orchestrators are those who get the primary responsibility to integrate the change. They prepare, implement and monitor its progress. Orchestrators can come from internal or external sources. **4) Champions:** are actors who are in favor of the change and have a certain degree of accountability over the change as well. They are involved in drawing up and coordinating the change plan with the orchestrators because they are well familiarized with the company. **5) Supporters:** are actors who are in favor of the change but have no responsibilities for implementing it. Typically they help out here and there because they believe it will also personally benefit them. **6) Implementers:** are partially or wholly responsible for executing the change plan (fashioned by the orchestrators and champions). Implementers typically actors whom are responsible for one or more teams of change subjects. **7) Change Subjects:** are the actors for whom the change plan has been made. They are primarily affected by the change.

All actors must have a mutual understanding of the change plan and its urgency before the next phase. According to Millie van der Heijden, one of the main obstacles when implementing change in contradicting interests (Heijden, 2017). If the actors whom play a role in directing, managing and leading the company and its change do not have aligning priorities or understandings of the initiative, this can cause complications, and so a loss in efficiency and effectiveness.

**Phase 2: Plan the Change**

In the first phase an urgency for change was identified by the initiator and a powerful coalition with the sponsors was formed. In this phase the orchestrators and champions appointed by the sponsors start planning the change. The time and resources allocated to plan the change once more depends on the scope of the change and the time and resources appointed for it. In this phase the orchestrators can interact and embroil with all actors necessary to plan the change adequately.

**Step 3: Create a Vision for Change:** In the first step, a need was identified. In order to plan the change, this need ought to be translated into a company vision. The vision expressions the positive influences the change aspires for in the future. Make the vision compact, clear and memorable. Once the vision has been voiced, its realization ought to be planned. Collect relevant information to the implementation of the change. For instance, if ones vision is have all employees utilizing the Relaxation Room in order to measure the impact, conduct research on how this can be realized. According to Millie van der Heijden, change is most effective when the change subjects see the need for change, are aware of what is going happen, can contribute to the process and believe their input is taken seriously (Heijden, 2017). Thus, involve the employees in this phase and ask them personally what can motivate them to use to Relaxation Room.

Once one has the required information, it is time to start planning the realization of the vision through creating an especially tailored change- and a communication plan. These plans ought to be framed with attention to detail and thoroughness to leave no space for assumptions. A change plan is “a detailed listing of activities, costs, expected difficulties and schedules that are required to achieve the objectives of the strategic plans” (BusinessDictionary, 2017). It confirms whom is responsible for what, when, where and how. Moreover, it elaborated upon preventative matters such as how to deal with resistance, complications and other impediments that can arise. A change plan serves as a roadmap throughout the next phase of managing the change. A communication plan on the other hand, is “an approach to providing stakeholders with information about a project. The plan defines who should be given specific information, by whom, when that information ought to be delivered and what communication channels will be used to deliver the information” (TechTarget, 2015).
Phase 3: Manage the Change
This phase serves as the implementation of the preparations and plans made in the previous phases. The orchestrators and champions will now share their instructive change- and communication plans with those involved with the change. This phase embarks upon four steps; 1) communicating the vision, 2) empowering employees to act upon the vision, 3) creating short-term wins and 4) holding the gains and building on the change. Each of the steps is elaborated upon below.

Step 4: Communicate the Vision; For a second time, it is essential all directors, managers and leaders involved with the change come together to validate a mutual understanding of the change vision, change plan and communication plan. The plans ought to be clarified along with the expected time, money and resources necessary. In right order, this ought to be accepted and agreed upon by all before proceeding to involving the change subjects. Once this has been realized, one ought to communicate the vision to the change subjects, otherwise known as NoorderRuimtes employees. Millie van der Heijden states that the best way to do so is through creating awareness about the need for change (Heijden, 2017). Communicate this to the employees through a fun and memorable way. For instance, organize a fun, informative and memorable opening event for the Relaxation Room. Elaborate upon the progressive reimbursements the room has to offer. Focus on the positives, as research has shown that positive psychology is consistently more effective than negative reinforcement (Heijden, 2017). If needed provide extra coaching to help employees understand and cope with the changes.

Step 5: Empower Employees to Act Upon the Vision; Once the change plan has been kicked-off and the change subjects are involved, it is time to steer towards the cultural shift. According to field professionals, the most effective way to change one’s employees is through leading by example (Veld, 2017; Heijden, 2017). Otherwise known as the oil-stain technique. Recognize and approach supporting actors or ambassadors whom can influence the behavior of others within the organization. If one can get them to frequently make use of the Relaxation Room, others will prospectively follow in their footprint. Once enough people have changed their behavior towards frequent use of the room, it will gradually become part of NoorderRuimtes culture. In the meanwhile, one ought to organize additional activities such as workshops or teambuilding activities which will keep the rooms use on the agenda. One can for example organize yoga workshops in the room or weekly meetings. Employees will feel empowered to change when they have a say in how to do so, therefore involve the change subjects by asking them what kind of events they would like to see in the room. One could do this through interviews, questionnaires, presentation, focus groups and pilots-trails.

Step 6: Create Short-term Wins; By creating short term wins one can actively and positively keep employees inspired to stick with their changed behavior. One way to achieve this is through introducing a fun mindfulness app which reminds employees to take breaks. One can also involve the employees to stick by the room by encouraging them to provide feedback and ensure them the room is continuously optimizing their services based on their input. Likewise, try to always have the next happening in the Relaxation Room planned, so it will continuously be on the people’s agenda. This way it will frequently be a topic of conversation and people will get accustomed to its use. This will making the next step easier.

Step 7: Hold the Gains and Build on the Change; In this step one takes everything they have achieved throughout this phase thus far, and sustain the positive results and furtherly foster other aspects where necessary. Continue to encourage ambassadors or supporters to lead by example and bring together periodical events in the room. Employees ought to remain interested, enthusiastic and
talkative about the Relaxation Room and to be reminisced of the benefits it use can offer. What’s more, listen to the comments and feedback of the employees. They are a valuable source of information when it comes to making the change sustainable in NoorderRuimtes workplace. If they are having difficulties adjusting, help them manage the resistance and provide extra coaching where needed. Take their knowledge and input into account, continue to measure the effectiveness of the change and build on it.

**Phase 4: Reinforce and Sustain the Change**

In this phase one will continue to collect information of the employees’ change progress, however in a more attentive manner. Collect feedback and analyze the results of the change and its effectiveness. One could do this through feedback-boxes, interviews, questionnaires, focus group sessions etcetera. Determine whether the change has been successful or at least in part, and how the potential gaps could be sealed. Do not stress if the results of the change are not as faithful as expected. Bart in’t Veld, explains from practical experiences that: “In theory the practice makes sense, but the theory does not always make sense in practice” (Veld, 2017). This is simply the way change management works. In order to ultimately have a successful change, one has to be flexible, optimization-orientated, and prepared to learn from failures. It is a continuous process.

**Step 8: Anchor the Changes in the Corporate Culture**; If the practices of step seven are sustained, the use of the Relaxation Room will become a daily routines in the company over time. Still, it is important to continuously improve and support its progress until it is gets there. If the change is having difficulties settling in to the company’s culture due to organizational barriers, this must be addressed. For instance, if employees desire to use of the Relaxation Room but feel they are not getting enough time allocated to do so, this can be discussed with NoorderRuimtes management, its policies and internal structures. Evidently it is not as simple as pointing it out, nevertheless identifying the problem and engaging in a conversation to solve it, is the first step. Furthermore, to anchor the changes for good, ambassadors ought to steadily carry on leading by example and periodic activities in the Relaxation Room ought to be standardized.

3.4.2 Looping back to Employees

In the focus group session, the group also discussed how they personally could become motivated to use of the room once implemented. This resulted in the following information. They believe it is very important for them personally, to have people lead by example. If their supervisors or bosses do not do use the room, they can be hesitant to do so as they do not want to be perceived as slackers. They also stated that the implementing the room ought to be prepared suitably. They too recommended organizing an informative opening-event for the room to explain its benefits and motivate people to use it. However, perhaps more importantly the group specified that they believe there ought to be clear rules and guidelines about the usage of the room for them to be encouraged to use it. If there are no rules, the participants believe this will cause annoyances which will withhold them from coming back. Therefore, the rules ought to clearly be defined and illustrated on entrance. In addition, the group agreed that there ought to be fixed yoga hours a week. This will make the people practicing yoga more comfortable and they will not distract others. Lastly, the participants were positively captivated by the idea of hosting monthly meetings in the Relaxation Room to stimulate and normalize its use.

The information gathered throughout this chapter, will serves as a base for the advice given in the change plan (Appendix: 11)
3.5 How can the impact of the Relaxation Room be measured?

Perhaps the best part of implementing a change, is finding out it has positively impacted the work and lives of those involved. One can speculate upon the results and probably gain a fair share of insight through word-of-mouth however in order to be quantitatively and qualitatively certain of the success or impact of the change, one needs to measure it. The following chapter elaborated upon how this can be achieved through NIATx’s model for Measuring Change.

3.5.1 NIATx’s Model for Measuring Change

There are plenty of tools, models and programs created by dedicated professionals which can assist with this. Although every model has its own distinctiveness, most of them show similar steps in the process of measuring change. The model below created by NIATx, a provider of models for improving health and recovery, gives a compact but clear illustration of these steps (NIATx, 2017). The model measures change according to the following six steps; 1) define the measurements, 2) collect baseline data, 3) establish a clear aim, 4) consistently collect data, 5) chart the progress and lastly 6) evaluate the change and make further improvements. To achieve optimization, this process should be applied in a continuous manner.

![Diagram of NIATx Model for Measuring Change]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Define Measures</th>
<th>Collect Baseline Data</th>
<th>Establish a Clear Aim</th>
<th>Consistently Collect Data</th>
<th>Chart the Progress</th>
<th>Evaluate &amp; Improve</th>
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**Define the Measurements:** The first thing one ought to do is analyze the company’s new vision and mission. Determine what it is one aims to achieve and how this can be measured. One could for instance aim to measure; 1) the rooms impact on the subjective stress-perceptions of the employees, and 2) the rooms impact on the objective stress responses of the employee’s physical state. These are but two examples which in theory could determine the impact of the Relaxation Room. However, other practical factors could also be identified once the Relaxation Room has been introduced to NoorderRuimtes Living Lab. Moreover, the means one will use to measure the impact of the change and the frequency in which this will take place ought to be clearly defined. Make sure there is enough data available and that it can consistently be collected over a period of time. Once one believe they have determined the measurements, reflect by questioning whether the defined measurements will compute what one intends to measure.

**Collect Baseline Data:** Change experts stress that collecting baseline data or set-point measurements, are the most essential measures for calculating the impact of a change (Heijden, 2017). At D/DOCK, an architect agency which specializes in designing healing offices, the baseline data is collected through extensive questionnaires for the stakeholders, covering all aspects relative to measuring the impact of the change (Bauer, 2017). Baseline data can also conveniently be collected through the organization’s database. Files concerning the attendance, work-related-illness, stress, incidents, and likewise could all be relevant to the baseline data. Once again, when collecting data one ought to ask themselves whether these measurements are valid to their research.

**Establish a Clear Aim:** Once one has defined the measurements and has collected baseline data, it is time to analyze the current situation and determine the desired situation. This becomes the interventions aim. The aim must be SMART meaning Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Reasonable,
and Time-bound. For instance, if one desires to increase the usage of the Relaxation Rooms after collecting baseline data, set a clear aim on how to do so. E.g. a 50 percent increase in the occupation rate of the room over a six months period. Likewise, if one’s intention is to decrease the mental or physical stress perceptions of employees after collecting baseline data, set an aim to decrease experiences of stress by 25 percent by next month. An aim ought to be agreed upon with a certain degree of flexibility. Remember, theory and practice are two ends of the same stick.

**Consistently Collect Data:** A crucial aspect of measuring the impacts of change, is being able to consistently measure data over a period of time. Without a harmonious collection of data one will not be able to accurately detect patterns, correlations or results generated from the change. The simplest way to collect consistent data is through computer- or other technologically automated tools, channels or systems. Naturally it is also feasible to collect consistent data through non-automated means such as interviews, on the spot questionnaires and word-of-mouth. Nonetheless it does take more time and effort to translate these findings into data and its reliability is bound by influential factors. Either way, one ought to determine in which periodical frequencies data will be measured and collected.

**Chart the Progress:** Once one has defined the measurements, collected baseline data, established a clear aim and collected consistent data throughout the change process it is time to translate the results of the enduring change process into charts, graphs and tables. This is useful for comprehension- and motivational reasons. Charts can visually represent the impact a change has over time, it shows data of the pre-change phase, change phase and post-change phase. The post-change phase comes once the change has been sustained within the organizations corporate culture. It shows the correlation between the variables of each phase, sending a message and creating awareness of the **hopefully beneficial and otherwise insightful** impact the change has had.

Before the charts are made three things will have had to been clarified; whom is responsible for collecting the data and from whom? How often should the data be collected (e.g. on a daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly basis)? And whether besides the obvious, are there other aspects that need to be measured or considered which could influence the change? Once this has been explained and executed, one can start creating the chart, graph, table or other visual. The visual should show the aim, the definitions of the measurements, the projects time-line and its phases, and what has been tested thus far. To show what one has tested thus far, one can make use of the PDSA model for improvement as shown in Appendix: 7 (Network, 2012). PDSA stands for plan-do-study-act. This will show the change subject a sense of honesty, openness and involvement. Finally, also highlight other interesting findings or successes when illustrating the visual change to encourage employees to keep up the good work.

**Ask Questions:** The last step in measuring the impact of a change, is by no means the end of the change progress itself. Even after the change has been sustained within the organization, one should look at the generated data and ask the question; **what does this tell me about the organization?** If the change was successful, act on it. Find out what the critical success factors were and use these to furtherly optimize (other) processes in the organization. If the change was unsuccessful ask oneself why. Talk to the stakeholders, analyze correlations and provide answers. **Why did the employees not use the room? Why did their stress levels not decrease? Do we need to redesign?** For this reason, it is also advised ones conduct a pilot phase before implementing drastic changes. Either way, success is a continuous process with the constant drive to improve. Use valuable feedback or results to repeat the PDSA cycle and optimize the health, happiness and productivity of one’s employees.
4. Analyze

The main research question yields the answers for two pieces of advice. What the ideal Relaxation Room looks like for NoorderRuimtes employees, and how it can be integrated into NoorderRuimtes Living Lab to encourage employees to make use of it. The research, conducted through interviews, surveys, focus groups, literature studies and desk research, generated the following findings. An overview of the main results are shown in keywords in the figure below. Beneath that, each finding will shortly be explained, reasoned and elaborated upon.

Based on the questionnaires and focus group session, it can be determined that NoorderRuimtes employees opted for the Relaxation Room to be a quiet place, where they can calm down in a singly setting, since they believe there are already enough amenities in NoorderRuimtes work environment that facilitate unwinding in social settings. Desk research shows that effective relaxation activities in a quiet room include doing yoga, meditating or napping, and distracting oneself through reading, listening to music or watching video’s. The surveys show that NoorderRuimtes employees also partake in such activities to unwind. As there are multiple relaxing activities one could practice, and the effectiveness of each activity depends on personal preferences, employees ought to have a choice of what they want to do. Therefore, the Relaxation Room ought to be multi-functional. Furthermore, the room ought to have a biophilic design. This is based on the findings in the questionnaires which showed NoorderRuimtes employees have a strong connection to nature, and desk research which suggests that biophilic design has a relaxing effect on mankind. The focus group also confirmed that this design was most desirable and calming to them. The room will be furnished and decorated with tints of blues and greens as illustrated in Appendix: 8. Again, most the focus group participants opted for this pallet since they believed it was most interesting and refreshing. In addition, color psychology studies show these colors have a calming and quieting effect on people.

Field experts suggest that to successfully integrate a corporate change, such as the use of a Relaxation Room, change management based on a detailed change plan is most crucial. Change experts suggest that Kotter’s 8-Steps of Leading Change model, is an effective tool to manage the change. In addition to which, a change plan ought to be set up which shows a detailed listing of activities, costs, expected difficulties and schedules that are required. As well as whom is responsible for what, when, where and how. Also needed, is a communication plan defining who should be given specific information, by whom, when and how. Once implemented, the room ought to have house rules. In the focus group, the participants stated this would be a crucial term to encourage them to make frequent use of the Relaxation Room. Lastly, to measure the impact the room has had on the organization, desk research suggests one can make use of Niatx’s model for Measuring Change.
5. Conclusion

This research report has been written with the purpose to give a holistic answer to the main research question; How can an Idyllic Relaxation Room be designed for- and integrated into- NoorderRuimtes workplace? With the aim to do so, five sub-questions were identified. The following chapter concludes each sub-question in a nutshell and highlights the most relevant findings.

1. How have other knowledge-work organizations designed their Relaxation Rooms?

Organization such as PwC, CBRE, Google, Yelp and plentiful universities including the Hanze University, have all designed and implemented different types of rooms into their organizations to help their employees and students relax. Research shows, that there are generally two types of Relaxation Rooms, one is which people can relax alone and in tranquility, and one in which people can unwind socially and distractively. The tranquil Relaxation Room typically offers a place where someone can snooze, do yoga, meditate, read, or do other singly and quiet like activities. The active Relaxation Room commonly offers their employees a place to play games, watch TV, socialize, eat and drink, and distract themselves and unwind. Some companies also offer their both rooms in separate settings.

2. How can a room be designed to inspire optimal relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees?

Most of NoorderRuimtes employees go outside when they feel the need to relax at work. This has to do with the fact that when they are surrounded by nature, they are better capable of unwinding and calming down. Scientific research shows that biophilic design can incorporate these desires into a room. Biophilic design replicated people’s natural environment and integrates it in the architecture or interior of a structure. The six features that are imperishable to biophilic design are; 1) visuals of nature, 2) non-visuals of nature, 3) natural sensory stimuli, 4) thermal and airflow variability, 5) presence of water, and 6) light, shadow and shelter. These features have proven to be relaxing to mankind, this is believed to be due to our prehistoric instincts. Moreover, color psychology studies also confirm blues, greens and natural whites, have calmative effects on people. This is the foundation of the Relaxation Rooms design. Furthermore, NoorderRuimtes employees opted for a Relaxation Room design which served quiet, calming and singly use.

3. What activities in the room can contribute to a greater sense of relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees?

Research suggest the following activities are relaxing; 1) meditation, mindfulness and yoga are three practices which teach one to clear their mind, embrace the peace and quiet, accept everything as it is, and become mentally and physically strong. 2) Taking naps can reenergized people and make them more stress resistant. 3) Listening to music with calmative tunes can lower one’s heart rate, blood pressure and levels of anxiety. 4) Working out can distract people and thereby help them unwind whiles producing endorphins. Endorphins are natural mood elevators that stimulate pleasure and tranquility. 5) Consuming certain foods or drinks can help reduce stress and endorse relaxation through various helpful nutrients, vitamins and minerals. 6) However, overall, relaxation is about being able to de-stress and take one’s mind of straining thoughts. Distraction plays an important role. Still, what works best depends on the individual’s characteristics and personal preferences. NoorderRuimtes employees opted for a Relaxation Room in which they can do quiet and soothing activities such as yoga, meditation, napping, listening to music and watching video’s (through earphones).
4. How can a Relaxation Room be integrated into NoorderRuimtes workplace to ensure its use?

“If we are asking people to change their behavior, we have to help them do so”. To successfully integrate a new feature into an organization - like a Relaxation Room - the company will need a cultural shift to make it part of people’s daily routines. This requires a change management program which is tailored to the company. The main phases of change management are; 1) prepare the change, 2) plan the change, 3) implement and manage the change, and 4) reinforce and sustain the change. Kotter’s 8-Step Process of Leading Change goes into systematic detail about certain steps that need to be undertaken in each phase. The 8-steps are; 1) create a sense of urgency, 2) form a powerful coalition, 3) create a vision for change, 4) communicate the vision, 5) empower employees to act on the vision, 6) create short term wins, 7) hold the gains and build on the change, and lastly 8) anchor the change in the corporate culture. Change experts recommend involving NoorderRuimtes employees in the change process as it will encourage them to use the room once implemented. Moreover, the employees expressed that they are more likely to use the Relaxation Room if there are user rules, to diminish annoyances, and if their superiors use it, as they do not want to be perceived as slackers.

5. How can the impact of the relaxation room be measured?

To see whether the Relaxation Room has had a positive or negative impact on NoorderRuimtes workplace, it ought to be measured. NIATx, a provider of models for improving health and recovery, gives a compact but clear overview of how this can be done in six steps. 1) Define the measurements, what do you want to measure and how? 2) Collect baseline data, what is the current situation? 3) Establish a clear aim, what is the desired situation? 4) Consistently collect data, daily, weekly, monthly, etc.? 5) Chart the progress, measure and analyze the correlations. 6) To conclude, evaluate the change and make further improvements, how did the change go, what went well, what could go better, and what still needs to be done? This process ought to be applied in a continuous manner for the change to be optimized. The impact of the Relaxation Room can for instance be measured through one of the following examples; 1) the rooms impact on the subjective stress-perceptions of the employees, and 2) the rooms impact on the objective stress responses of the employee’s physical state.

To conclude, this report shows how other knowledge-work organizations have designed their Relaxation Rooms, what the ideal Relaxation Room looks like for NoorderRuimtes employees, what use it ought to serve for them, how it can be integrated into the workplace through change management to ensure adequate use and how its impact can be measured once implemented. This information attends to provide a holistic advice to the main research question and desires of the client.
6. Advice

“How can an idyllic Relaxation Room be designed for- and integrated into- NoorderRuimtes workplace?” The main research question yields for two pieces of advice. What the design of the room ought to be and how it can be integrated into NoorderRuimtes workplace to ensure utilization. The following chapter provides an advice on both matters based on the holistically researched sub-questions. The advice is given in a theoretical sense since there are currently no certainties or agreements required for the implementation of the Relaxation Room. As a result, some advice could not be provided with attention to detail or accurateness.

Design

Ideally, without time-, resource- and financial- restrictions, NoorderRuimtes Relaxation Room will be designed as followed. The room will have a biophilic design. The furniture, decoration and equipment in the room ought to be made from natural materials which will consist of natural green, blue and white tones as illustrated in appendix: 8. The room will have circadian lighting in order to duplicate natural day/sunlight, an airflow/thermal system which accounts for a variety in temperature and breezes, well isolated walls to diminish industrial sound nuisance, a quality sound system to softly chime sounds of nature and a scent distributor which spreads natures aromas.

Image 5 below, shows on a theoretical floorplan how the Relaxation Room could be designed. In the center of the room, a large square cushion is placed on the floor. This cushion is comfortable to lie and sit on but it is also functional as it can easily be moved or placed against the wall to make space for yoga mats during yoga hours. Also in the center of the room, is an Egyptian light bulb. This light bulb accounts for captivatingly formed shadows which serves as a natural stimulus to the eye. On the right side of the room, four restful and laid back chairs are positioned. These chairs allow for one to put their feet up and relax comfortably. These chairs are ideal for snoozing with sleep masks and blankets, but one could also simply lay back whiles listening to music, reading or meditating. To provide users with a sense of privacy and shelter, bamboo dividers have been placed between these chairs. Users who prefer to unwind in a more upright position, can contentedly sit on the corner couch or in the blue chairs. The corner couch is made of natural leather and the blue chairs are made of bamboo and cotton. The couch has a pouf and cushions which allow users to put their feet up and lean against softness. To facilitate comfort and distraction, the room is equipped with a closet. This closet is filled with blankets, reading material, news, crosswords and Sudoku’s. Next to the closet, hangs a yoga mat rack which is used during yoga hours. During these hours, a projector displays an online yoga class on a white wall. The rooms other wall displays a large view over nature through pictured wallpaper. Overall, the room is extensively and fruitfully decorated with various types of plants, flowers and natural centerpieces. An additional feature which is optional to use, in agreement with the other users, is the wave simulator. This projects the soothing sequences of waves on the ceiling.

To ensure a pleasant coexistence among users whiles in the Relaxation Room, the room will be subjected to some rules. Firstly, the room is intended for quiet, calming and singly relaxation. Users ought not to speak and may only listen to music or video’s through earphones. This is to ensure users will not disturb one another. Furthermore, twice a week, on Tuesday and Thursday from 12:00 - 13:00 the room is reserved for those whom wish to practice yoga. After using the room, one must leave it in a tidy and its original state. Eating is not allowed in the room as potential nuisance may occur due to smell, sound and messiness. Drinking non-alcoholic beverages is permitted. These rules will be illustrated on a sign next to the entrance. Users who fail to comply with these rules will be exposed to sanctions. The person responsible for the Relaxation Room will be in charge on handling this.
Relaxation Room
NoorderRuimte Living Lab 0.1

COLORS, PATTERNS AND MATERIALS

FURNITURE AND DECORATION

Leather corner couch
Shadow light
Various types of plants
Comfy laid back chair
Blue bamboo chair
Bamboo divider
Wave Simulator
Yoga mat rack
Entertainment shelf
Floor cushions
Picture wall

Image 5: Advice Relaxation Room
The costs of this design and the realization of it is approximately seven thousand euro’s. The Relaxation Room will however generate a positive return on investment. For a detailed overview of the costs and calculations used to determine this, please see Appendix 9: Finances of the Relaxation Room. This investment also influences and indorses the organizations legal responsibilities. For more information about the legal consequences of the room, please visit Appendix 10: Legal Consequences.

Integration
To integrate the change into NoorderRuimtes workplace, a change management program of at least 12 weeks is needed to make it sustainable. A change management program consists yields for a detailed change plan. Appendix: 11, beholds a tailored change plan to integrate the Relaxation Room into NoorderRuimtes Workplace. The change plan provides an introduction, management overview, implementation support and a chapter about costs and financial consequences. The plan offers an elaborative description of the tasks and activities needed to integrate the Relaxation Room into NoorderRuimtes workplace.

Once the Relaxation Room has been implemented and integrated, its impact can be measured through using the NIATx model for measuring change. Two examples of how the impact of the Relaxation Room can be determined are; 1) the rooms impact on the subjective stress-perceptions of the employees, and 2) the rooms impact on the objective stress responses of the employee’s physical state. The steps taken to measure each example are explained in the following paragraphs.

1. The rooms impact on the subjective stress-perceptions of the employees; First, define how one will measure the impact. E.g. through questionnaires, apps, surveys, feelings scoring systems or likewise? Then collect baseline data through these means. What are the subjective stress-perceptions of the employees before the Relaxation Room is implemented? Then analyze the collected data and set a realistic aim. E.g. a 50% decrease in subjective stress perceptions of employees. Collect data through the chosen mean over a chosen period of time (whiles organizing interventions). Then analyze the collected data, chart it and determine whether the Relaxation Room has had a positive or negative impact on the subjective stress-perceptions of the employees. Question why the results have turned out as they have and what it tells about the change. Use this information to continuously optimize the change.

2. The rooms impact on the objective stress responses of the employee’s physical state; First, define how one will measure the impact. E.g. through heart- and blood pressure monitors or other technological devices which can measure the physical symptoms of stress and relaxation. Then collect baseline data through these means. What are objective stress perceptions of the employees before the Relaxation Room was implemented? Then analyze the collected data and set a clear and realistic aim. E.g. a 50% decrease in objective stress perceptions of employees. Collect data through the chosen mean over a chosen period of time (whiles organizing interventions). Then analyze the collected data, chart it and determine whether the Relaxation Room has had a positive or negative impact on the objective stress-perceptions of the employees. Question why the results have turned out as they have and what it tells about the change. Use this information to continuously optimize the change.
7. Discussion

This chapter gives insight to the writer’s interpretation of the research conducted, its results and possible links. Thereafter the writer discusses the validity and reliability of the research. Finally, since the research topic was quite broad, the last paragraph is dedicated to sharing some ideas for future research which could nicely extend the reach of this report.

Research & Results

This report was based on scientific research and tailored to incorporate the desires and needs of NoorderRuimtes employees. The information collected from desk research and literature studies had already been discovered. Still, the primary research conducted confirmed its validity soundly as it correlated and complimented the secondary research. Unfortunately, as this is a preliminary research, it was not possible to give an amply detailed advice, although this report does explicate how this could be realized in the future (Appendix 10: Change Plan). Also, looking at the main research question and the research conducted, I believe it might have been too broad for one advisory report. Firstly, the main research question already yields the necessity for two pieces of advice, in addition to which each sub-question was reasonably broad. Therefore, not each topic could be given the full attention it deserves. Nevertheless, I still believe this report brings a holistic and original advice which is useful to the NoorderRuimte and its stakeholders.

In my opinion, one of the most interesting findings was that employees of the NoorderRuimte had such extensive desires to be surrounded by nature whiles relaxing. This confirmed that not only external and secondary research suggests that people have biophilic longings, as internal and primary research proposes this too. Another interesting finding was that although the Relaxation Room ought to be implemented in NoorderRuimtes Living Lab, their employees generally do not feel very stressed. This could potentially impact the results generated by the Relaxation Room once implemented into NoorderRuimtes Living Lab.

Validity & Reliability

Personally, I believe the validity and reliability of the desk research is sufficient as it has been broadly researched and continues to generate consistent results. Furthermore, information gathered through the interviews was compatible to information collected through desk research, as well as the research collected through questionnaires and the focus group. Still, I believe the information congregated through the questionnaire and focus group, could be less consistent if conducted again with other or more participants. The questionnaire received 44 respondents which is reasonable representative for NoorderRuimte, however 50% of respondents were junior employees. Meaning they will leave office soon to graduate, they will not actually make use of the room. If this questionnaire would be conducted with the next batch of junior employees, this could generate different results. It is also difficult to determine the reliability of the results, as it also depends on who replied; full time senior employees or part time senior employees. This cannot be traced in hindsight.

Moreover, the focus group was a great way of clarifying the questionnaires results, however for the information conducted from the focus group to be more reliable, it ought to have been conducted in multiple sessions, with multiple sample groups and with a variation of functions. Unfortunately, due to a lack of time, this was not possible. Once again, the junior employees whom participated will not be the end users, thus perhaps their desires and wishes do not correlate with those of the end users.
Future Research

As mentioned before, this researched touched upon multiple topics which alone could serve as a research thesis. Unfortunately, this research cannot be expanded due to a lack of time and the maximum length a thesis can be. Thus perhaps future junior employees at NoorderRuimte can give these topics the full attention they deserve. To start, though the eventual direction of this report headed towards a quiet and singly relaxation Room based on the unfacilitated needs of the employees, a lot of employees were also interested in the active, social and playful Relaxation Room. Even though these needs have already been met till a minimalistic extent, they could benefit from being optimized. Therefore, future research can be conducted to see how this can be facilitated in NoorderRuimtes work environment. Another idea for future research arose when discussion virtual reality in the focus group. The participants were hesitant to the idea as they had too little experience with it and my knowledge of the subject was limited. Nevertheless, CBRE predicts virtual reality will play a big role in the Relaxation Rooms of the future. Therefore it would be interesting if someone researches the matter so that one day, also the effect of virtual reality can be measured in NoorderRuimtes Living Lab. Lastly, this report was initially going to touch upon how the success of an intervention can be measured as well. This was changed to measuring the impact of an intervention, as defining and measuring “success” is exceptionally broad and a research thesis on its own. In addition, the preliminary research was too theoretical to determine applicable measurements.
Bibliography


Kabat-Zinn, J. (2017). *Founding Executive Director of the Center for Mindfulness*. Retrieved from Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society: http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/About-Us/people/2-Meet-Our-Faculty/Kabat-Zinn-Profile/


Appendix 1: Mood Board Biophilic Design

Presence of water, a view, variety of plants, natural smells, natural materials, natural light and shadows, refuge and shelter.
Appendix 2: Transcript of Interviews

Millie van der Heijden

13th of April 2017
13:00 – 14:00

Interviewee: Millie van der Heijden – Vitaliteits- en Lifestylecoach

About: Mrs. Van der Heijden is a lecturer and advisor of vitality-management. She offers training programs and coaching sessions to organizations to optimize the health and wellbeing of employees. She does this based on three pillars; nutrition, exercise and relaxation.

Interviewer: Aniek Elliott – Junior Employee, NoorderRuimte Research Centre

Aniek: Hello Millie, I’m glad we still got the opportunity to call!

Millie: Yes of course!

Aniek: I have already told you a bit about my research through email however I thought I would just shortly elaborate upon that to start with.

I am a junior employee at the NoorderRuimte Research-Center. The center conducts research on various themes including the “healthy workplace”. My research is part of the theme healthy workplace and its aim is to reduce stress and burnouts at work through the use of relaxation rooms. The research assignment originated as a result of the increase of stressed and burned-out employees worldwide. This is not only a huge burden to the individual but also to organizations and society as a whole. Therefore we want to design and implement a place where employees can unwind and relax every once in a while to counteract the constant strain of stress.

Millie: Nice!

Aniek: Yes, well I was searching the internet for organizations who have already done research in the field of healthy workplace and who have experiences with implementing it in practice when I came across your company. I was very impressed by your work and thought it would be a great opportunity to talk with you about it.

Millie: Yes, that is good. I am in the car so I do not have all my papers with me but feel free to ask away and I will answer your questions as thoroughly as possible.

Aniek: Oke, great! I saw on your website that you have completed a multitude of studies, courses, workshops and projects making you an expert in various fields. So how would you describe your profession and what do you do exactly?

Millie: In principle I am a vitality and lifestyle coach. I help people on the grounds of improving their diets, exercise pattern and ability to relax. I always take a holistic approach, so if someone’s relationship or living situation is a barrier to achieving their goals than I will also focus on improving that as it goes hand in hand with their ability to become healthier. Thus I am a
one on one coach. But besides that I am also a teacher of lifestyle, diet and behavior at the university. And together with my business partner I own a consultancy firm which helps businesses improve the vitality of their employees. Thus sustainable employability. We work mostly with organizations which have employees who sit a lot and will have to work till their 70s. These organizations are especially interested in finding out what is needed to keep their employees fit, healthy and vital. We offer them special programs.

Aniek: Interesting, what do those programs look like?

Millie: That always dependent on the organization, the program gets adapted to their needs, desires, and organizational culture. Some organizations need help because their employees are stressed due to reorganization, other due to employees with aches and pains because of their work-style.

But in general we start by creating awareness in an organization. Depending on their needs we might do one on one coaching, group coaching, workshops or trainings. Organizations mostly opt for workshops however doing a workshop by itself is rarely effective. People need awareness which is good for workshops but they need coaching too otherwise not much will change. We also give coaching to the management and provide them with a whole communication plan. The communication plan might involve creating posters, posting on the intranet or sending emails.

How much we do really depends on the desires of the organizations. Some organizations just want one workshop about the dangers of stress. We can do it, but it is really not enough to stop people from becoming stressed. And usually when we give these workshops people are already stressed which makes the workshop useless. In that people really need coaching and support.

Aniek: I understand. Changing behavior seems difficult, is that so?

Millie: Haha yes! Nice question, it is extremely difficult. People tend to think that if they are aware of their behavior, that they will be able to change their behavior. But we see that knowing something is one thing, and actually changing your behavior is another. This is due to the fact that 95% of the things we do, we do on automatic pilot. We are not thinking about what we are doing. We can only change with that 5% of awareness and that is very difficult. That is why long term change plans are always more needed to make a lasting change. We recommend a minimum of 12 weeks with a coach session every other week.

Aniek: I never knew we do so much on automatic pilot but it makes sense. How do you get people to change who are resistant?

Millie: When people are resistant coaching is the only option. You have to find out why someone is being resistant. Everybody has their own reasons and you do not see them on the surface. For example they might be having trouble at home and therefore find it difficult to deal with changes at work. These are things that can be solved but not if they are not addressed.

Aniek: Could you unconsciously nudge people to change their behavior?
| Millie | Well people do not react accepting when you try to nudge them too obviously. But the best way to get people to change their behavior is through showing an example. We call this the “oil-stain”. People need to see someone, or multiple people, in the organization lead the way. The more people start doing it the more it will spread. The person to start it should be an ambassador, manager or a leader who is motivated. They should be involved in every step of the change plan as they are the ones people will follow. |
| Aniek | I understand! But I guess a nudge could also be some kind of reward. Do you ever work with rewards? |
| Millie | Yes we do! We work with all kind of rewards. The most popular one is the point system. For example a competition who can take the most steps on a day. Employees will get an app on their phone which shows them how much they have exercised and through that they can compete with their colleges. Often the person that has exercises the most over a period of time will get some kind of reward. It is quite engaging and popular. But a reward can also be the simple acknowledgement that someone is doing a good job. It could be a tap on the shoulder from your manager or a compliment for good work during a meeting. These rewards as engaging but often overlooked. Another thing many organizations do is have their employees partially pay for our health trainings. If the employees participate well and have reached their goals, they will get their money back from their employer. This motivates employees to participate and better themselves which is beneficial for both the individual and organization. |
| Aniek | I bet that is motivating! So besides you, who are the most important people to be involved with making a change? |
| Millie | The most important person to be involved is the person the change is for. So if employees need to change you have to make it all about them. But in order for them to change they need support, from me, but also from the management, their fellow colleagues and the people in their personal life. Just like I mentioned before, you can have people supporting you at work but once you go home to re-energize for the next day, you need support too. Because if you are in a really bad relationship and spend the whole evening stressing, you will be worse at work the next morning. So the more people there are to support you, the more effective our work will be. And yes! Back to the management. Managers tend to think that once we are helping them, they do not have to help us anymore and the problem is solved. But that is not the case. We need them to be leaders and sometimes we have to remind them of that. Only if they lead, their employees will follow. |
| Aniek | That makes a lot of sense. Which brings me to my next question; what is the main obstacle you encounter when trying to make a change in an organization? |
| Millie | Two words: contradicting interests. Often two parties in the organization who have to work together, have different priorities. Take for example the directors and managers. Without the director’s real change cannot be
realized. We had a client, who was a manager, and who was entitled to a certain amount of money from the organization to spend on helping his employees. But this money had to come from one of the departments directors. If the money was not spend through the employees, departments director was allowed to keep the money and spend it on something he found important. So it was almost impossible for the manager to help his employees because the money had to come from someone who had different interests than him. The department's director was not interested in the employees not the manager and did not stimulate them to use the money.

Aniek Wow, that seems difficult and a bit unfair really. How do you deal with these obstacles?

Millie This is a bit of a political game. We get the key players, thus directors, managers, leaders and sometimes employees, to sit around a table and get their priorities straight. It is so important that everybody is on the same page and has a mutual understanding of the essence of the change, and the time and money allocated to it in order to realize it. It is almost like setting up a contract with certain terms and conditions. But honestly it is very difficult to change someone's mind when they have fixed norms and values, and this approach does not always work.

Aniek I can imagine. But let’s say everyone has a mutual agreement that something needs to change. What does the typical change plan look like?

Millie Oh is really diverse, it depends on the type of change you want to achieve and the multitude of it. But generally let’s say we are trying to get employees to take a group of 100 employees to take more breaks. The first thing we usually do is kick off with a workshop. This can be in a group of 100 but it can also be split into smaller groups. After the first kick-off workshop we start coaching. We do coach individually but we also coach in groups, it depends on the desires of the client. In large organizations we mostly coach in groups, but no bigger than 15 people because otherwise employees get shy or afraid to speak their mind.

Individual coaching takes 1 - 1,5 hours per person and group coaching usually takes around 3 hours per session. A session takes place every other week for a period of 12 weeks. After a session people get tips, tricks, means and tools to act differently and have to practice that the next week. After that week they come back to us and we discuss how it went.

Coaching in small groups works well because people like the interaction. It is also a social thing, employees like to talk about their progress together, they keep each other updated throughout the week and motivate each other to keep up the good work. They continue to motivate each other after we are gone and that is the most effective way to change.

Aniek That does sound great, a change of culture! If this works, why do people still get individual coaching? Do people often get personal coaching?

Millie We see it more and more nowadays that people request individual coaching. As mentioned before workshops are not always enough and in many cases the concerns of people are too personal to open up about in groups so the only way forward is individual coaching. Especially when it comes to employees who are stressed or burned-out, here the harm has
often already been done. People do not always dare to open up about this in groups thus they need personal guidance.

**Aniek**  
*Understand, stress is a difficult problem to handle for everyone. You offer guidance on the grounds of nutrition, exercise and relaxation. Do you find one has more animo than the other or are they all equally important?*

**Millie**  
Well, stress is getting a lot of attention nowadays. Not because it is more common than before but because people used to be too afraid to admit it. No one wanted to lose their job in the recession, so though they did feel stressed they would not alarm the manager with in the fear of being replaced.

But to answer your questions, the three aspects nutrition, exercise and relaxation go hand in hand. When someone is stressed it is extremely important they get rest and are able to sleep. You can learn to rest through coaching and yoga however in order to sleep you need something called metaline and you can only get metaline from foods. So in order to rest you also need to eat well. In addition if someone is stressed this takes a lot of magnesium from the body, so in order to refuel your body you will have to eat foods high in magnesium. There are power-foods which strengthen and support the body, and there are stress-foods which damages the body’s performance and strength. And lastly to beat stress you will also have to practice regular exercise as this releases endorphins which are natural mood lifters and it is good for one’s self-image. Also important during stressful periods. So we have to look at the whole pallet and not only at aspects of them, they all influence one another.

**Aniek**  
*Ah wow that is super interesting. This holistic approach is also the approach I am taking to my research. I am looking at all the things that can influence the relaxation levels of the employee, so this is very valuable information to me.*

**Millie**  
I’m really glad to hear that, that makes me happy. Yes it is not just putting down a yoga mat and expecting things to change. There are so many important aspects that play a role, and alone they might not look like much but together they stand strong.

**Aniek**  
Exactly! But with so many factors to consider, how do you measure the success of your health intervention programs?

**Millie**  
The most important thing is to know where you started and where you've ended. Thus you always have to take start-measurements and end-measurements. I do this using the KOWADIE tool. First you hand out questionnaires to all employees in which they have to answer a wide variety of questions about the organization. And after the intervention you do this again, then you compare the differences and look at the progress you have made. The KOWADIE tool can also help you show what you offer and what you can save by using your intervention program.

**Aniek**  
Oh great, I will have to Google that later. It seems useful! So what are your critical success factors when making a change?

**Millie**  
Firstly it is extremely important to have commitment from the directors. They have to be involved in allocating money and time to this project. Without their support it is very difficult
to get things done and simply not efficient. Secondly managers and directors have to show an example. Employees need a role-model to know how to act after the change, you cannot expect them to figure that out themselves and change the organizational culture bottom-up. No one wants a director telling them they need to move more and eat healthy whiles all you ever see him do is sitting behind his desk eating McDonalds. This will not motivate. And lastly communication is KEY! You can have a fantastic relaxation room but if no one knows of its existence or how to use it, no one will use it and it will be useless. You have to make a solid communication plan which shows the timeline and means on how to implement and promote it. You have to make people enthusiastic about it before it is done so they will look forward to it coming. I think 80% is communication and only 20% is the actual product!

Aniek: Wow 80% is a lot! And you are right about the director. You will need someone to show the right example. However at the NoorderRuimte we do not have one leader. Do you advice for me on how I can promote the relaxation room?

Millie: Make sure you organize a kick-off! Have a special event for the opening of the relaxation room and make sure people are looking forward to it coming. And once it is there keep the people updates about the events or changes happening in the room on a regular basis through posters of the intranet. You can also make it a place for monthly relaxation workshops or so.

But before you even do this, you need a clear communication plan. The plan should thoroughly describe the time and resources you need to realize this. And involve people, do not offer something they have no use for. Make it personal and involve them with the design. This way they are more likely to use it. Also once the relaxation room is there, start it off with a pilot group. This is very important because things can look perfect on paper but completely different in practice. So do not be afraid to try some new things out if the original does not work. And lastly, make it fun, be enthusiastic and focus on the positives. Positive rewards always work better than negative punishments. No one feels motivated after a cynical preach.

Sub-Research Questions
1. How have other knowledge-work organizations designed their Relaxation Rooms?
2. How can a room be designed to inspire optimal relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees?
3. What activities in a room can contribute to a greater sense of relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees?
4. How can a Relaxation Room be integrated into NoorderRuimtes workplace to ensure its use?
5. How can the impact of the Relaxation Room be measured?
Interviewee: Bart in ‘t Veld – Menzis Advisor of Housing and Wellbeing

About: Mr. in ‘t Veld is Housing and Wellbeing advisor at Menzis. Menzis is a health insurance provider and strives to become the healthiest organization in the Netherlands. Mr. in ‘t Veld advises Menzis on how to realize this and conducts regular experiments in the workplace to find out what makes their employees happy, healthy and productive.

Interviewer: Aniek Elliott – Junior Employee, NoorderRuimte Research Centre

“In theory the practice makes sense but in practice the theory does not make sense”
- Bart in t Veld.

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<tr>
<th>Aniek</th>
<th>How important is it for you to have healthy employees?</th>
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<td>Bart</td>
<td>Practice what you preach! Imagine you call Menzis because you have health problems, and you call to our call center, let’s say that person at the call center is reasonably overweight, I am not saying the quality is lesser because of it, but I am saying it is quite ironic that we are an organization that encourages people to have good health whiles lacking in healthfulness in our own organization. In order to take care of other, you will have to take care of yourself too. So we have to take care of our own people in order to take care of other people too. I believe that if you are healthy, you are fit and you feel good, you will show a certain quality of service and people will find you more credible. It also has to do with image and imago. We do earn from people being sick, but at the end of the day we only want healthy customers.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Aniek</th>
<th>Do you think that your employees will work better if they are fitter?</th>
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<td>Bart</td>
<td>I think our employees at the call-center provide quality services no matter their health. However I do think they will work happier if we help them improve their health. I also think it will make them more connected to the organization. We want to offer our employees a dynamic environment with all the bits-and-bobs that stimulate health and movement. I would say we are acting preventive instead of reactive.</td>
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<th>Aniek</th>
<th>Are you doing this with the aim to decrease work related illness or simply to improve your employees quality of life?</th>
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<td>Bart</td>
<td>Both! I don’t think you can see them separately from each other. 70% of money spent in an organization goes to the people’s salaries, or more. The other 30% or less goes to the building, materials, etc. Thus it is extremely important to invest in your people by for example hiring a coach to help people handle stress or health problems. Fixing your building</td>
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is a lot easier than fixing someone's health. And you can quickly fix a broken part of a building but you cannot quickly fix a person, that takes months, or longer.

But still we do invest in our work environment and building because we believe that if you offer people a well facilitated and looking environment people will be more connected to their work and have more pleasure in their job. They will also work harder but it is very difficult to measure. There are so many factors influencing the workplace thus it is difficult to see what is responsible for what.

Aniek  

So what have you done so far to stimulate and improve health in the workplace?

Bart  

2 or 3 years ago, we had someone come into the organization for general health advice and to measure where we are now and where we want to be regarding health in the future. We then made the transition to living-power organization. It is not an actual term but it is something we created to name our way of working. Thus we aim to work with the power of living. We do this through helping our employees set realistic health goals and actually help them achieve them, either with their team-leader or an external advisor.

From a real-estate perspective we have looked at what we can do to make the environment workable, livable and moveable. But we have learned: you can create something oh-so-beautiful, give people sit-stand desks, relaxation rooms, 3D glasses and so forth however if it is not in the organizations culture to use it, it is useless. So it is really about changing behaviors first, and then changing the environment. At the end of the day in our organization we have to look at whether people are being facilitated to work to the best of their abilities.

The people in our organization are not very willing to change, we are now working towards moving into open spaces however that is not easy. People are not used to it but they are also the type of people who are awkward about working closely. For example if one person is calling, the others might be bothered by it because he is making a lot of noise but they are not the type of people to say something about it, because they do not like the confrontation and do not want others to think they are starting trouble. So they probably will not say anything and slowly crop all these frustrations up until they won't enjoy their work anymore. The people really want a manager and someone to tell them what to do and how to do it. But we are trying to make the transition to a more open and flexible workplace. So this is very difficult.

Aniek  

Would you say that the most difficult thing to change in an organization is the culture?

Bart  

Yes, conditioned behavior is the most difficult thing to change. The use of a room is determined by someone's conditioned behavior and that is something we are struggling with. Also with the relaxation room because we think it is important for people to have a choice to relax there, but people do not dare to make that step yet. This is because it is not in our culture and when people do make use of the room, others tend to giggle about it which is a shame because them people are discouraged to make use of it again. So the culture we have right now is hindering this progress. In Japan it is normal to take naps though, they are very focused on being relaxed and zen. But in the Netherlands we do not have that culture yet.
Aniek: How do you try to stimulate people to change their relaxation culture?

Bart: We need to take it slow and in steps. So we do have a relaxation room, but we have to give it time for people to make use of it. We also do not want to force it. It is likely that in Groningen people are more open to making use of the relaxation room, we also have a really nice relaxation room there, however in Enschede I do not see people making use of the relaxation room anytime soon. There slogan is: ‘Just act normal, then you are acting weird enough already’.

Aniek: What does your Relaxation Room look like in Groningen?

Bart: I will send it to you over the email (see email). It is multi-functional, maybe we will put some workout equipment in there, but we have not desired that yet. We have ideas but we have to find out what our employees want otherwise people will not make use of it. So if no one wants to do yoga, then we won’t put a yoga mat in. At the moment we have quite a non-intercultural employee base so there is very little animo for praying areas.

We are still looking what we want to put on the walls exactly but definitely a large wall-picture or painting with natural features. At the moment the room is quite small and tucked away somewhere in the back of the building. This is due to the fact that we do not expect a lot of people to make use of it. Maybe if we put it somewhere more prominently in the building people will make more use of it though. Thus we are still experimented. We are still decided which look and activities in the room to go for. Maybe active relaxation with pictures of woods or calm relaxation with pictures of clouds. It is still undecided.

Aniek: Once you decide which look and activities you want, who will then be involved in the implementation of the room?

Bart: Well the IT, facilities and real-estate departments are responsible for the design and the implementation of it. P&O has to stimulate the use of the room, it is again about behavior change and about changing culture. Because at for now, the people working in the call-centers will never be able to use the room because they do not get the time to relax even though they are the people who probably need it most. Thus management also has to get the opportunity to offer it to their employees. So we do not want to force anybody to use it but we do think they need to be provided with the time and means to use it if necessary.

Directors have to support it too. For this you have to make it clear that relaxing does not only cost time but it also generates productivity and health. Thus you have to sell it as a way to invest in your employees and fight work-related-illness and costs. Involve all stakeholders.

Aniek: What have you done with virtual reality thus far?

Bart: We have not implemented it yet but we will. It is meant as a mean to relax. You can put the glasses on and then you will be transferred to a place where you can swim with dolphins. Through the glasses you will also be able to hear the bubbles of the water. There are also other things you can do with the 3D glasses such as walking among the dinosaurs and being chased by sharks however swimming with dolphins is considered the most relaxing setting. We will provide all our facilities in different cities with one of these glasses and the idea
behind it is to give employees a brief experience of 5 minutes when needed to escape reality and relax. We can also use the glasses to show the employees what their new and open workplace will look like to get them prepared and accustomed to it.

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<tr>
<th>Aniek</th>
<th>Do you ever experience people getting a bit nauseous from the 3D glasses?</th>
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<td>Bart</td>
<td>Well, I did get a bit sick from the rollercoaster setting but that’s not surprising. Besides that we do not know if people will get dizzy from this, it is only for a few minutes so that might make it less intense and the more relaxed settings should be fine.</td>
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<td>Bart</td>
<td>Btw, I’m curious, have you heard of the book Juriaan van Dill, Centre for Facilities Management, Workplaces today?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aniek</td>
<td>No, I’ve never heard of it.</td>
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| Bart  | I think we have always have a form of relaxation rooms or re-energize rooms, but we didn’t use to call them so. I believe we used to unwind over in the coffee-corner but because the world is so health-trending that we have given these unwinding places a new name and design. Today we believe we really have to facilitate it however before it would just happen naturally. I think this would be an interesting book for you, it also has nice pictures and maybe you could get some inspiration out of it. The book gives insight into where we come from and where we are heading in the workplace. 

Remember what Fransisco of the D/DOCK architecture organization said: you can use it for your research. Look at your space, and the look through your biases about the space. There is not one good way to use that space, it depends of the desires and the inspiration of the people. You can put a table in that space, but one person might use that table to work at others to lie on. Thus you have to see things not for what they are meant but for what they could do. For example, the healthiest office in the world is in Melbourne, their relaxation room is not a room but a vegetable garden. So keep an open mind. |
| Aniek | How do you measure the success of change? |
| Bart  | Oh that is the whole research of Anicee. So we first do start-measurements through an extremely thorough questions to measure how we are performing now. On the base of that questionnaire we can see what we need to improve and then we make a detailed, time and action bound plan to do so, and then 12 months later we conduct the same questionnaire and measure which aspects we have improved and whether we have reached our goals. |

Sub-Research Questions

1. How have other knowledge-work organizations designed their Relaxation Rooms?
2. How can a room be designed to inspire optimal relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees?
3. What activities in a room can contribute to a greater sense of relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees?
4. How can a Relaxation Room be integrated into NoorderRuimtes workplace to ensure its use?
5. How can the impact of the Relaxation Room be measured?
Appendix 3: Questionnaire & Results


Mijn missie is om een kamer te ontwerpen waar mensen heen kunnen gaan als ze tijdens het werk behoefte hebben aan een ontspannende pauze, om hun gedachten even op nul te zetten, en om stress gehaltes en hartslagen weer onder controle te krijgen. Ik noem deze kamer the relaxation room.

Om deze kamer te kunnen ontwerpen moet ik een idee krijgen van hoe medewerkers van het NoorderRuimte het liefst ontspannen. Ontspannen is namelijk een multi-interpreteerbare term wat verschillende bekentenissen kan hebben voor verschillende individuen. Graag zal ik hier meer inzicht in krijgen door u een paar vragen te stellen in de hier beneden betreffende questionnaire.

Alvast onszettend bedankt voor uw medewerking!

The questionnaire served as a mean to find out the current perceptions of NoorderRuimtes employees in regards to stress, relaxation, taking breaks, relaxing activities and the effect an environment has on their spirit and behavior. To conclude the results of the questionnaire, almost no respondents consider working at NoorderRuimte very stressful. Most respondents take 30 - 45 minutes in breaks a day, still, almost half of them do not think they take enough time for breaks. A quarter of the respondents want to relax by being alone, more than a third of respondents want to relax with others and almost a third wants to have the choice to relax by themselves, or relax with others, depending on their mood. The respondents have a strong connection to nature as more than half of them like to go outside to relax. Furthermore, other activities respondents want to do in order to relax are broadly diverse. Please see the following appendix for visual elaborations upon each question.

What is your function at NoorderRuimte?

- Lecture 4%
- Researcher 30%
- Project worker 5%
- Program worker 5%
- Junior Employee 45%
- Other 11%

Other: Communication worker; researcher and coach; student helper; staff member.
Other: I don’t know; I do not work at the NoorderRuimte office; not stressful; it depends on the weather, generally I work better from home because its quieter and I have more space but sometimes is it useful to work at the NoorderRuimte because there are lecturers around who can help me.

Other: I would go for a nap it I could; do some stretching; I only go outside if it is good weather; leave the workplace for a while; go home; go to the toilet; call somebody.
On average I take ... minutes of breaks a day.

- >30: 32%
- 30 till 45: 34%
- 45 till 60: 20%
- 60 till 75: 5%
- 75 till 90: 2%
- <90

I think I take enough time for breaks at work...

- I agree: 51%
- I disagree: 49%

I think of a Relaxation Room as a place where I can...

- Be alone: 25%
- Be with others: 36%
- Be alone and with others depending on my mood: 27%
- I do not know: 7%
- Other: 5%

Other: I do not need a Relaxation Room; it could be anything.
Other: there are enough places to meet people already, it should be a quiet place; I do not want to work out at work because it will make me dirty; it has to be relaxing for my body and mind, thus comfort is important; I do not want to be inside; I am not looking for a Relaxation Room; I would like a beach chair with the sounds of waves and birds please.

Other: I do not know; I like to see calm color at work like green and blue; I think a good view is important; I do not think the interior is as important as the indoor climate and air quality.

Other: I do not care; I don’t know; I don’t need control over the environment but I want a choice is where I work, thus where I want to sit to concentrate, have a meeting, or relax; It depends, I like to be able to work in my own way like I would at home but I do not want the NoorderRuimte to become like home. I also do not think I could ask that from my manager and colleges because there are more people who want to make use of the office.
Appendix 4: Transcript of Focus Group

11th of May 2017
14:30 – 15:15

Focus Group Coordinator: Aniek C. Elliott, Junior Employee NoorderRuimte

Participants: Gea Posthumus; Senior Employee. And Daniel Koning, Seline van Keulen, Marcel Juistenga; Junior Employees.

Purpose: for employees of the NoorderRuimte to elaborate and discuss upon the finding of the questionnaires. The focus group session is essential to give direction and determine the final design of the Relaxation Room, the activities it ought to facilitate, how it ought to be used and how they can be stimulated to make use of it once implemented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aniek</th>
<th>Welcome all. Thank you for coming. I would like to start by asking you; Do you know what my research is about?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everybody</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aniek</td>
<td>Most people know, but I will shortly recap it anyway. My aim is to improve relaxation at work through Relaxation Rooms. My research is about what such a Relaxation Room looks like and how we can implement it into NoorderRuimtes workplace. Approximately one and a half months ago, I asked you to fill in a questionnaire. In the questionnaire I asked you what your ideal relaxation rooms look like, and what you would like to do in them. This generated very interesting findings, which today I would like to further discuss with you. I will first address the interior of the room, then I would like to address the activities, and thereafter I would like to see if we can combine to results into one nice design. If you have any questions or remarks, you can interrupt anytime. In the survey, one of the most interesting findings arose when I asked if people want to be alone in the relaxation room, with others or otherwise. A lot of people answered otherwise, namely that they did not want to be in a room but outside. So I was wondering; what do you think of this?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Everybody discus</td>
<td>(Gea) I completely understand. You will be out of the room, out of the work processes and in the fresh air. I think that is really important. I find that if you go outside on a regular basis, you will stay fresh till the end of the day. If I sit inside all day, I will feel less fresh and fit. So I see the advantages of being outside but I guess that is not always possible. In that case I would like a room inside in which I can retreat and find peace. (Daniel) I want both, I want to be outside with others or outside alone, or inside with others and inside alone. (Seline) I have the same, I want to be outside. But I think I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
especially want to be outside for longer periods of time. And if I can only take a short break, I will probably look for a place inside for a moment.

**Aniek**

*So what is it about outside?*

**Everybody**

(Marcel) It’s the space, and not having a closed feeling. (Daniel) think it is the fresh air. (Others) agree. (Daniel) I like being in the nature. At least I think that is what I like but I don’t really know. (Gea) I really need daylight. I always sit close to daylight in a space, at home I do that as well.

**Aniek**

*This is quite interesting. It is due to this that I made the connection to biophilic design. Biophilic design basically designing a space to replicate our natural environment and stimulate life. Research suggests people are most relaxed in such an environment. Here I have an example of biophilic design features in an environment (show mood board, appendix: 1). Take a look. What do you think of it?*

**Daniel**

Firstly, I would like to say something about the sound of water. I can concentrate really well when I hear it. I used to always study in bath. But I do not like it when there are too many things happening around me because then I will focus on that.

**Aniek**

*But let’s say you would like to relax?*

**Everybody**

(Daniel) Oh right, yes I think I would really like that. Also, I really like green plants on the wall, it has something relaxing. (Marcel) I have a different example. I heard of a company that also played the sound of water to relax their employees, but they stopped because they constantly had to go to the toilet. It stimulated needing the toilet. It was not a success. (Daniel) but that’s good right, then their employees will get more exercise. (Gea) I know water as a relaxation tool as well. My children used to not be able to sleep because they were not relaxed enough, so I would put a water CD on and they would be gone within no time. (Marcel) Yes, I use that as well. Still works for me. (Daniel) I don’t like that. I do not like fake sounds, knowing it is not real or having a bad sound system makes me stressed.

**Aniek**

*So you do not like artificial sounds of nature?*

**Everybody**

(Everybody) No. (Daniel) I was at Schiphol the other day and there they have nature sounds because it is supposed to relax people, but I was so surprised by how bad it was. (Gea) Don’t think about it too much. (Marcel) I think if you want to do that kind of stuff, it has to be subtle and on the background.

**Aniek**

*Oke, so we are going into quite some detail now. That’s good. But I would like to know in general, looking at the biophilic design mood board; would this relax you?*

**Everybody**

(Everybody) Yes. (Gea) This would make me very happy. (Seline) I think I would feel a lot more comfortable that I do now. Maybe because it is also a bit more informal. I don’t know. (Gea) Yes, but I also think is isolated noise pollution really well. That really helps. (Daniel) I do think this room will be quite expensive to facilitate and uphold. But still, I would love it. (Gea) Yes, but you should also look at what it will generate. (Marcel)
At least it will not be as clinically white as it is here. (Daniel) Yes, I would love it but still... (Gea) But there is also research which shows that nature does not always have to be real to make us relaxed. You could use fake grass or plants even. Won’t be that expensive to realize. (Daniel) Yes, but it would still generate quite some dust and the cleaning costs of the room will rise. (Gea) You are very much looking from the facilities side though. I get that. I also think it, but looking at what relaxes people in the long term might generate more money than the cleaning costs. But yes. This room gives a pleasant and nice feeling, I would love to be there.

Aniek

Great! So I also researched color psychology, this related very closely to biophilic design. Colors that relax us are blue, mainly blue, and calm of green and white. I have some mood boards here with various pallets of blues, greens and white (show color pallets, appendix: 5). I would like you to take a look at it and discuss which colors make you most relaxed? You do not have to look at the imagines, it is purely about the colors. Oh and, if you are missing a relaxing color, you can point it out on this general color pallet.

Everybody

(Gea) Oh I know it straight away. (Seline & Marcel) Yes, me too. (Gea) In the first four color pallets, I miss the nature. But the last pallet, number 6, I find too green. Thus I opt for color pallet 5, a nice combination of both. (Daniel) I agree, I like that color pallet most as well. (Seline) I actually feel color pallet 4 will make me calmest. But you are right, there is no green in there. (Daniel) I like color pallet 5 because it shows more earth tones such as beige and dark green. (Marcel) Yes, I think these are the most natural colors. You could assemble them within no time if you step outside. (Gea) Yes, and I think that this should be the idea behind the design. It feels like to are surrounded by nature even though you are inside.

(Daniel) I like these ideas, but I think I would also like to be surprised by something new. I think that would relax.

Aniek

Can you explain that or name an example?

Everybody

(Daniel) Not really. (Gea) Do you mean your physical environment should show a visual challenge? To stimulate you to think about stuff so you head won’t focus on stress but on other things? (Daniel) Yes, I think so. But I already kind of get that through this color combination.

Aniek

Ah oke! Do the rest also want to be visually challenged by their environment or by something interesting?

Everybody

(Seline) Well, I was just thinking that it depends on how I want to relax. Because if I want to relax by doing activities I might like that but if I want to relax through chilling and laying down. I’m not sure. (Everybody) Yes I agree. (Gea) Yes, because a poster of usher could be quite relaxing because it takes you out of your normal thoughts. However, I’m not sure it will be quite as relaxing if you are trying to snooze. So it depends on what kind of relaxation you want. (Everybody) I agree.
Aniek: Well, that brings us to the next topic! But before doing so, I would like to shortly conclude: 3 people prefer mood board 4 and one person prefers mood board 3, is that correct?

Everybody: (Everybody) Agreed.

Aniek: But, what do you think of mood board one?

Everybody: (Marcel) Too clinical and white. It reminds me of an office and that’s not what we want. (Daniel) But I think it can be combined nicely. It could also depend on the choice of materials used. A white polished piano always looks nice. (Gea) Yes, you could make a room which shows different visuals. For instance, if you are look at one side of the room it is all blue and green, and if you look at the other it is white or beige.

Aniek: I understand. Good ideas, we should take that into consideration with the next topic and this is where I truly need your help. Because the opinions about the activities to do in the room were very diverse. I have the statistics here and made another mood board to illustrate what people wanted to do and how. 25% of people wanted to relax alone, and these were the activities they wanted to do. 36% of people wanted to relax actively through socializing and playing games. And 27% of the people wanted a combination of both. So it is quite diverse (show mood boards, appendix: 6). What do you want, and how do you look at this?

Everybody: (Seline) I think I want a combination or at least a choice. (Everybody) Yes, I agree. (Marcel) Yes, I think it is very dependent on your mood and what you desire in the moment. (Gea) I agree, it depends on the moment. Sometimes you need to get rid of energy and distract yourself through activities, and other moments you just want to lay down without all those impulses and stressors around you. Just nothing. And sometimes you need some social time. So I believe we should look at what needs to be facilitated and what there is already. If you look at social relaxation, well the basics have already been facilitated by means of the cafeteria. Perhaps it is not decorated as you would like to see it but imagine that space full of plants and pool tables, etc. It is quite easily fixed and then you will have already in theory facilitated one need. But if you want to facilitate the other needs, well, there is nothing that does so yet because there are no quiet spaces. So you need to make the choice, what is needed more?

Aniek: I understand, how do the others feel about that?

Everybody: (Daniel) Yes, I agree. I do not feel like there is a place where I can be alone yet to meditate or so, and that is what I do desire sometimes. (Gea) would you use it if a special space would be designed for that? (Daniel) I don’t know if I can because it is so hectic at the Hanze. So many people.

Aniek: Do you think it is possible to have one room which facilitates both desires?

Everybody: (Everybody) Haha, no. (Gea) From a practical point of view, you can’t have a quiet space where people are also allowed to talk. Or you will have to put a wall in between the
room to divide it into two. But still, the (glass)wall will have to strong enough to withhold the noise of the social room. Bulletproof.

**Aniek**

*And what do you think of dividing the two needs through a virtual reality headset which isolates noise?*

**Everybody**

(Everybody) No, not really. (Daniel) I don’t know, I do not have experience with 3D. (Marcel) I do, it does not make me relaxed. (Seline) I read a research from Roos Pals, which showed that people do become more relaxed from it and they even heal faster. (Daniel) I think that 3D could work in the future, but they would have to innovate their resolution and services. Right now it still looks very artificial. Also, I am imagining myself in a comfy chair watching virtual reality and I am just thinking; what if my boss walks by. What would that make him think of me?

**Aniek**

*Are you worried about how you will be perceived by others?*

**Everybody**

(Daniel) Yes, I think that is a very important aspect for this to work. It has to be part of the company culture and generally accepted. (Marcel) I agree, I think people will judge you.

**Aniek**

*Aha, and do you think people will judge quicker in a quiet room than in a social room?*

**Everybody**

(Daniel) Yes, because if you are in a quiet room, you choose to step out of the group. And then everybody will speculate. (Gea) But it is also a matter of getting used to it. Ten years ago, if you saw someone listening to music at their desk, people also thought they are weird. It is also a matter of getting used to these changes. But I agree, we also used to have a massage chair in the NoorderRuimte and you always felt quit looked at if you were in it because you would be relaxing. And people thought that was strange in a workplace. So I agree, there is a pressure of the group. (Marcel) I noticed that as well with my research. HR managers keep having to tell their employees to move places and take breaks but they are so accustomed to working 9 to 5 that they find it difficult to do so. In that culture, it is also a bit not-done to not work.

**Aniek**

*That is quite interesting. So just to conclude this topic; you do not believe the two activities can be combined into one room. Also as there are already enough facilities in the NoorderRuimte that facilitates relaxing in a social and active setting, (eating, drinking, playing pool, sitting together), thus you would therefore like to have a relaxation room that facilitates quiet relaxation?*

**Everybody**

(Everybody) Right. I agree. (Gea) If you want to serve a need that does not exist yet and for which there is a desire, you should facilitate the quiet Relaxation Room. Where it is light, there is no noise and you can simply be in peace. (Everybody) Yes, agreed. (Gea) Although, apparently there is a meditation room around here somewhere but it is not facilitated well. (Daniel) Oh right, that is a tiny room with a reed mat. Its functional for praying but besides that it is not a pleasant place to be. Also, you hear everything including people just walking by without even talking. Not very relaxing. (Gea) So yes, we are missing a good, sound proof, comfortable, Relaxation Room.
(Daniel) But I am worried, that because it is needed everybody will use it and it won’t be relaxing anymore. (Everybody) I don’t think that will be a problem. We are only with 30 people at NoorderRuimte usually and it is not like people will spend their whole day in there. Otherwise they should just go to the Noorderplantsoen. Haha!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aniek</th>
<th>Haha true. So now we know the function and design of the room, I have one more question. Once the room would be implemented, how can you be stimulated to use it?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everybody</td>
<td>(Marcel) A good introduction. (Gea) Clear rules and agreements of how to make use of it. (Daniel) that it will be clean with a good indoor climate. (Seline) I agree with a good introduction. Also it should be promoted well and people should get regular updates from the room to keep it happening and on the agenda. I think that that would help me at least.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aniek</td>
<td>What do you think of the idea to host a meeting in the Relaxation Room once a month?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everybody</td>
<td>(Daniel) Oh, I think that is smart. I would also like to add to the previous question that I think a good introduction with exchanging knowledge about the benefits of the room is also essential. Give people the ability to progress with that knowledge. Furthermore, it is just really important that there are clear rules, that it is socially accepted and that the room will be used for its purpose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aniek</td>
<td>Oh, I just remembered; I can imagine if people want to do yoga, it might be quite distracting for others. What do you think?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Everybody</td>
<td>(Marcel) I think there should be certain yoga hours a week. (Everybody) Yes, good idea. (Gea) Just put a sign on the door so everybody knows the room is being used for yoga. That way people will also not feel awkward being the only one stretching. (Marcel) Yes, and if they want extra privacy, you could offer dividing or sheltering assets. That would perhaps make it more comfortable. (Everybody) I agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aniek</td>
<td>Great! Thank you all for your help. You have given this research a new direction and it has been very beneficial. I appreciate it! I will send you the transcripts of focus group soon. For those whom are interested in the end product, I can also send my research report once finished!</td>
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Sub-Research Questions

1. How have other knowledge-work organizations designed their Relaxation Rooms?
2. How can a room be designed to inspire optimal relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees?
3. What activities in a room can contribute to a greater sense of relaxation for NoorderRuimtes employees?
4. How can a Relaxation Room be integrated into NoorderRuimtes workplace to ensure its use?
5. How can the impact of the Relaxation Room be measured?
Appendix 5: Color Palettes – Focus Group

1) Natural White

2) Pastel Greens and Natural Tones

3) Pastel Blues and Natural Tones
4) Tints of Blues

5) Tints of Blues and Greens
6) Natural Blues and Bright Greens

7) Natural Materials
BRIGHTS collection
A RAINBOW OF HAPPY saturated colours in updated hues for playful, fun projects

- PAGE 82 -

SUBTLES collection
SOOTHING, LIGHTER SHADES of some of our colours baby soft and yet sophisticated

- PAGE 83 -

REGALS collection
DEEP, IMPRESSIVE TONES for richness and warmth must-have colours for any project

- PAGE 84 -

NEUTRALS collection
FLAWLESS FOR ACCENTS yet impressive as a base palette of colours

- PAGE 85 -
Appendix 6: Mood Boards – Focus Group

Relaxation Room: Combination of Peaceful and Social

27% of respondents stated that they would like to be able to relax in a quiet or social setting depending on their mood. The activities they want to undertake also depend on their mood. Thus flexibility is important.
Relaxation Room: Social and Active Place

36% of respondents favor relaxing with others - 17% like to eat or drink together, 12% would like to play games together and 11% would like to undertake active activities.
Relaxation Room: Peaceful Place

25% of respondents favor relaxing on their own - 13% would like to have a lie down or snooze, 11% would like to read, watch TV or listen to music and 6% would like to practice yoga or mindfulness.
Appendix 7: Model for Improvement Diagram

THE MODEL FOR IMPROVEMENT DIAGRAM

QUESTION 1
WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?
By answering this question you will develop your goal

QUESTION 2
HOW WILL WE KNOW THAT A CHANGE IS AN IMPROVEMENT?
By answering this question you will develop measures for tracking your goal

QUESTION 3
WHAT CHANGES CAN WE MAKE THAT WILL RESULT IN IMPROVEMENT?
By answering this question you will develop ideas for change

DOING PART

PLAN
- Describe the idea
- What, who, when, where
- Make predictions
- Define data to be collected

STEP 4
ACT
- What next?
- Implement change or try something new
- What idea will you test next

STEP 3
STUDY
- Analyse data
- Compare data to predictions
- Summarise & reflect on lessons

STEP 2
DO
- Carry out the plan
- Record data

THINKING PART

Try another PDCA cycle for this idea

Test a new idea
Appendix 8: Chosen Color Pallet and Materials
Appendix 9: Finances of the Relaxation Room

The following table provides an indication of the costs for implementing the Relaxation Room. The costs are based on the scenario that the room will be 40M², the same size at the floorplan in the advice. All prizes have been determined through the markets average value.

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<th>Other</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blankets</td>
<td>5x</td>
<td>€ 10,-</td>
<td>€ 50,-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga Mats</td>
<td>5x</td>
<td>€ 15,-</td>
<td>€ 75,-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep Masks</td>
<td>4x</td>
<td>€ 2,50</td>
<td>€ 10,-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books &amp; Magazines</td>
<td>1x</td>
<td>€ 30,-</td>
<td>€ 30,-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singly Games</td>
<td>4x</td>
<td>€ 5,-</td>
<td>€ 20,-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>€ 185,-</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total Investment: €6,980

Based on this scenario, the total costs for implementing the Relaxation Room will linger around the seven thousand euro’s. The lifespan of each investment varies per longitude and depends on its size and quality. All together, the Relaxation Room is expected to have a 10 year life-span with little to no, residential value. The monthly depreciation is therefore approximately €58,-.

Return on Investment

A literature review from the European Risk Observatory showed a report prepared by Matrix (2013) which examined the cost-effectiveness of different types of interventions focusing on mental health promotion and mental disorder prevention in the workplace, including improvements in the work environment, stress management and psychological treatment. The findings based on figures obtained in selected European countries show that every €1 of expenditure in promotion and prevention programs generates a net economic benefits over a one-year period of up to €13.62 (Work, 2014). If this is so for NoorderRuimtes Relaxation Room, the return on investment (without maintenance costs and small replacements) could be calculated as followed;

- ROI = (Gain from Investment – Cost of Investment) / Cost of Investment.
- Gain from Investment = (€6,980, x €13.62) x 10 years = 950,676,-
- ROI = €950,676,- – €6,980,- / €6,980,- = 136,2%

This would generate a positive return on investment before the end of the rooms 10 year life-span. This calculation is based on assumptions, as it is somewhat unmanageable to determine the exact numbers with preciseness at this point in time, since the rooms success is also subject to the effectiveness of the implementation plan, the change plan and other interventions within NoorderRuimtes Living Lab that might influence the results.
Appendix 10: Legal Consequences

Legal consequences that could affect NoorderRuimte and other organizations if they do not support their employees relaxation needs are austere. The following laws highlight the importance of researching and implementing a Relaxation Room into NoorderRuimtes workplace, to reduce stress and promote psychological health.

According to the Dutch Ministry of Employment Services, approximately one third of employees is affected by work strains. Therefore they are seriously addressing this issue by monitoring and intervening with organizations that foster this. In alliance with the Arbo-Law (chapter 1: psychological work strains), employers are obligated to take counteractions to reduce or diminish work-related psychological strains. This demand can be found in department 4, article 2.15. If work-related stress does occur, employers must create a risk-intervention- and evaluation-report in which they state how they intent to resolve the issue in a plan of approach. Employers must also inform their employees about the risks of work-related psychological strains and the measures one can take to reduce them. In addition, the Civil Code also protects employees from work pressures. According to Article 7: 658, *the employer is obliged to take care of the safety of the work environment and must take such measures to prevent injury to the employee in the performance of his work.* If the employer does not comply with this law, the SZW inspection will enforce a fine (Arboportaal, 2017).

These laws show that that if employers do not address their employees de-stress and relaxation needs, it can have regretful consequences for both employer and employee which consequentially also results in a loss of time, money and efficiency. These laws make this research report, and the research conducted at NoorderRuimte about the Healthy Workplace, arguably more important and meaningful.
Appendix 11: Change Plan

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1. Introduction
The following plan serves as a roadmap to how NoorderRuimte could in theory integrate a Relaxation Room into NoorderRuimtes workplace successfully. The plan focusses on how the change can be implemented to ensure employees will make regular use of it, so that its impact can be measured once realized. It does not focus on how the Relaxation Room can be implemented into the physical environment as such a space, in addition to time and resources, have not been facilitated yet.

1.1 Relaxation Room
A Relaxation Room is a place at work that employees can visit throughout the day when they need a break to take their mind off work, unwind and de-stress for a moment. Chapter 6: Advice, gives a detailed recommendation of what the Relaxation Room ought to look like based on the needs and desires of NoorderRuimtes employees and secondary research. For an organization, the philosophy behind implementing a Relaxation Room into their workplace is that employees will be more productive when they feel better and less strained. This creates a pleasanter working environment and a healthier culture. The room therefore serves a support system to help employees cope with stressors and work pressures. This will reduce stress-related absenteeism and increasing ones mental and physical health, as well as their overall performance at work.

Assumptions and Constraints
As for now, this plan has been written in a theoretical sense. As for now, no space has been allocated within NoorderRuimtes Living Lab which could be transformed into a Relaxation Room. Therefore, time and resource-wise little indication can be granted to the realistic scope of the project. As a result, this plan will be based on numerous assumptions which consequentially also causes various planning constraints. The constraints in this plan consist of the schedule, the budget, the available resources and the software and other technological systems needed.

2. Management Overview
The following chapter serves as an activity, responsibility and time based overview of how the Relaxation Room can be integrated into NoorderRuimtes Living Lab. This section consists of a description of the implementation, points-of-contact, the major tasks and the implementation schedule.

2.1 Description of Implementation
The implementation of the Relaxation Room and the realization of the cultural shift, will be executed in six phases. Phase 1: Create Awareness, Phase 2: Realize the Relaxation Room, Phase 3: Organize the Opening Event, Phase 4: Get Employee Accustomed to the Room, Phase 5: Evaluate, Improve and Hold the Gains, and lastly Phase 6: Anchor the Change. Only one phase will be executed at a time and in systematical order. The change will take approximately 12 weeks. Each phase shows an indication of how long it ought to take and who ought to be involved. These indications are speculations and might be subject to change throughout the actual implementation.

2.2 Points-of-Contact
To implement the Relaxation Room and a cultural change efficiently, the key players and points of contact have to be acknowledged. At present, it cannot be determined which individual will be responsible for what but it can be determined which actors will play key role in implementing the
change. Those roles are 1) sponsor, 2) orchestrator, 3) champions, 4) supporters, 5) implementers and lastly 6) the change subjects. In the table below one will find an overview of their names or functions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name / Function</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor</td>
<td>Jan Gerard Hoendervanger</td>
<td>+31 50 5952193 <a href="mailto:j.g.hoendervanger@pl.hanze.nl">j.g.hoendervanger@pl.hanze.nl</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestrator</td>
<td>Project/Program Manager</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champions</td>
<td>Team of the Project Manager</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporters</td>
<td>Ambassadors of the Change</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementers</td>
<td>Of the room: Builder, Painter, Electrician Deliveryman, Moving Manpower, Maintenance, Gardener, Cleaner</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of the cultural change: Project Manager</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Subjects</td>
<td>NoorderRuimtes Employees</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 Major Tasks

The major tasks are divided into six phases. Each phase states how long it will approximately take, who will be involved and how the tasks can be achieved. The table below provides a clear overview of this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Key players:</th>
<th>Create Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Orchestrator, Champions and Change Subjects</td>
<td>Before the Relaxation Room is created, an event ought to be organized to inform NoorderRuimtes employees of what is to come. Provide informative and memorable evidence of how the room will be beneficial and essential to one’s mental and physical health. The event ought to be pleasurable so that its realization will be associated with positive experiences and people will look forward to its arrival. Tasks: For instance, request to hold an interactive presentation during one of NoorderRuimtes weekly lunch gatherings. This is not only the busiest day at the office but employees also typically keep their agenda’s clear to attend these weekly presentations. Prepare a PowerPoint and engage the employees with the topic. In addition, create awareness for the opening of the Relaxation Room through informative emails, handing out flyers and hanging up posters in NoorderRuimtes workplace. Make sure to mention that the employees themselves have contributed to the final design of the room through filling in the questionnaires and participating in the focus group session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Orchestrator,</td>
<td>Realize the Relaxation Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Address the advice provided. Prepare and purchase the materials, resources and manpower necessary. Plan 2 – 5 days to adequately implement the advised design depending on the scope of the room, renovation needed, available time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Champions and Implementers and resources allocated to create the room. Preferably construct the room on day(s) which are not too busy at NoorderRuimte to avoid nuisance.

**Tasks:** Plan which activities need to take place in logical orders. Typically, it takes place in the following sequence: empty the room → reconstruct the room (if necessary) → clean the room → paint the room and let it dry → install optional technological devices such as airflow and thermal system controls, circadian lighting, additional lighting, screens, scent distributors, etc. → deposit the main pieces of furniture in the room and lastly → add decorations, plants and other smaller additions to the Relaxation Room. The layout and design of the room is created in advance. Still, one can make alterations to the layout or product placement if it is reckoned to look nicer.

| Phase 3: Organize the Opening Event | Week 4 |
| Key Players: Orchestrator and Champions |
| Organize the Opening Event |
| Once the Relaxation Room has been prepared, implemented and people are eager to see the results, it is time to organize its opening event. The opening event once again shines light on the importance of relaxing and the benefits it can offer one at work. It also provides information about the room, how it can be used, which activities will be organized in it and which house-rules apply in the Relaxation Room. |
| **Tasks:** An opening event for the Relaxation Room could for instance be a yoga, meditation or mindfulness workshop, a meet and greet with relaxation experts, training on how to use the room, or a team building activity in the room. If one find it difficult to decide what activity to organize for the opening event, it is always possible to ask the employees themselves. One could do this in the course of **Step 1: Creating Awareness** for instance. |

| Phase 4: Get Employees Accustomed to the Relaxation Room | Week 5-8 |
| Key Players: Orchestrator, Champions and Supporters |
| Get Employees Accustomed to the Relaxation Room |
| To ensure the Relaxation Room will be used with frequency and adequacy, always have the next event planned on the agenda. |
| **Tasks:** Establish weekly relaxation activities in the room such as Tuesday and Thursday yoga hours from 12:00 till 13:00. Or plan NoorderRuimtes (weekly) gatherings in the Relaxation Room once a month. In this step ambassadors of the Relaxation Room will too be encouraging employees to actively make use of the room. Also, suggest employees download a mindfulness app on their smartphone which tells them when to take mindful breaks. This will keep them attentive to using the Relaxation Room. Note if there is resistance and if so, handle it adequately (Implementation Plan, Chapter 3). |

| Phase 5: Evaluate, Improve and Hold the Gains | Week 9-11 |
| Evaluate, Improve and Hold the Gains |
| By this phase employees will already have had a few weeks to get accustomed to the Relaxation Room and the cultural change. Most employees will have a clear idea of what they like about the room and what they dislike. It is important |
**Key Players:** Orchestrator, Champions, Supporters and Change Subjects

to take this opportunity to collect feedback and to advance where possible and necessary. It is also valuable to gain insight on what is going well so one can keep up the good work.

**Tasks:** To do so one can make use of online surveys which the users of the Relaxation Room will receive over their work email. Another way is by placing a feedback box in the room with a pen and papers next to it. This way the users can write feedback when they spontaneously think of something whiles using the room. Another way of collecting feedback about the room is by asking employees on NoorderRuimtes weekly gatherings. Again, one can take this opportunity to interact with the users of the Relaxation Room on a larger scale. During this event one could even brainstorm with the users about how certain concerns could be improved. This shows one is listening to their input which could also stimulate users to return to the room as they are aware that the hitches are being solved.

In the meanwhile, one should also keep up the initiatives of phase 4. Activities in the Relaxation Room should continue to be a hot topic on the agenda and ambassadors should carry on stimulating employees of the NoorderRuimte to use the room and the mindful app. Revive their memories once more of why relaxation at work is beneficial and act upon the resistance to help it out of the way.

---

**Phase 6:**
**Week 12**

**Key Players:** Sponsor, Orchestrator, Champions and Change Subjects

**Anchor the Change**

Lastly to ensure the cultural shift towards the Relaxation Room will be long term it is important to reinforce and sustain the final touches of the change into NoorderRuimtes corporate culture, policies and internal structures.

**Tasks:** To realize this, agreements must be made about fixed activities in the room and regulations about taking breaks. Make it company policy to offer yoga hours every Tuesday and Thursday from 12:00 till 13:00. Likewise make it a company policy to host a weekly gathering in the Relaxation Room every first Thursday of the month. Also, if the previous phase affirmed that employees cannot make optimal use of the room due to organizational restrictions, such as opening hours, work pressures or limitations on breaks, determine whether and how this could be amended in NoorderRuimtes internal structure.

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### 3. Implementation Support

The last chapter of the implementation plan gives insight to how the implementation of the Relaxation Room can be supported. It shows how one can manage resistance, monitor the Relaxations Rooms performance and what the acceptance criteria is for the room. Finally, this chapter also identifies the risks of the implementation and how they ought to be addressed in case they arise.
3.1 Coping with Resistance
Involving the employees in the change process from the start whiles communicating clearly and thoroughly with them about the essence of the Relaxation Room, is already half of the work. Still, if employees are falling behind on adapting to the new behavior, the first step is to identify the problem. Detect the roots causing the resistance to change. It could for instance be due to a lack of awareness of why the change was being made, the impact it has on their work or a lack of visible support and commitment from managers. Once the root has been identified one should if required, engage the "right" people. Discuss the blockage with those involved. Try to, in cooperation, determine how it could be solved. Empower the employee(s) to contribute to this process. When engaging with employees it is important to listen, be understanding and be honest. At last, inquire whether they believe the problem is solved now and either way; why. If needed, make agreements or provide further coaching.

3.2 Performance Monitoring & Acceptance Criteria
The performance monitoring of the actual change will be monitored in three ways. Through 1) assessing the employees’ subjective feelings of the change and the implementation of the Relaxation Room, 2) the occupancy rate of the Relaxation Room, 3) the number of resistant subjects. These three aspects are furtherly explained below. Their explanations consequently also show the acceptance criteria for the change plan.

1) The subjective feeling of the employees towards the change and Relaxation Room can be identified through online surveys, a feedback box or the by asking employees on NoorderRuimtes weekly gatherings. – E.g. if more than 75% of employees are “very pleased” with the room this can be considered a success, still one ought to strive for pleasing all through continuously collecting feedback and improving. 2) The occupancy rate can be measured though room sensors, a list at the door on which employees can write their time of arrival and departure or an app in which they can keep track of how often and long they use the room for. It is difficult to measure the success of the room based on the occupancy rate as days at NoorderRuimte differ in terms of busyness. Still, one can measure the success of the room by the percentage of people at NoorderRuimte who make use the room and how often they do so. – E.g. if 70% of the employees at NoorderRuimte use the Relaxation Room for once a day, when they are at work, this can be considered a success. 3) The number of resistant subjects can be measured through the amount of interventions one has had to organize for one or more individuals. – E.g. if less than 10% of employees at the NoorderRuimte needed an intervention to make use of the room, this is considered a success.

3.4 Risks and Contingencies
There are several risks attached to this change plan and the implementation of the Relaxation Room in general. Below the four main ones are addressed and explained.

Risk 1  Firstly, it is a possibility that the actual Relaxation Room might turn out below par due to a restricted budget, lack of space/facilities for the room and limited time, resources and expertise.
Risk 2  It could also prospectively turn out that the new junior employees coming next semester feel no connection to the room and favor other types of relaxation.
Risk 3  In relation to that, it might occur that the change management plan was not detailed enough which accounts for a lack of support when initiating the change and insufficient use of the Relaxation Room.
Risk 4  Lastly it might turn out that the practice makes sense in theory but the theory does not in practice. Meaning that the room does not account for relaxation.

The first risks is difficult to counter as for now there is relatively little information available about this matter. Still in case of all risks, the model for improvement diagram ought to be applied which can be found in Appendix: 7. This model provisions one with the steps to analyze the situation and find a way to improve it when encountered with difficulties.