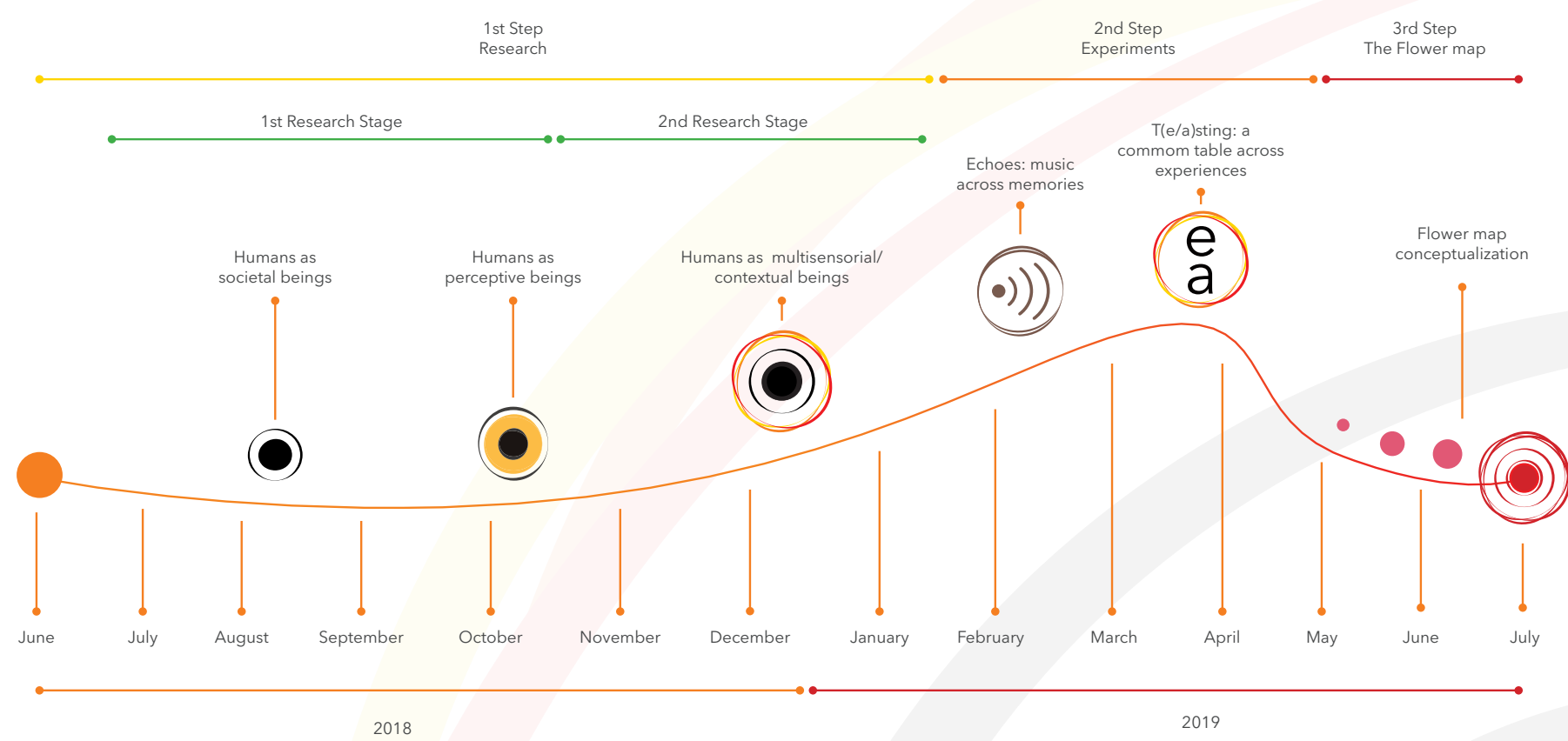# Perceiving Us

Exploring senses, memory and experiences

Summary:

Since the moment we are part of a community, group or society, we adopt their traditions, expressions and therefore, their culture and the manifestations of it. This process was happening (and still is happening) to each one of us. This phenomenon affects an important aspect of what makes us living beings: Senses. The goal of this research is to understand how our sensorial memory, shaped by the societies we belong to, can be used to understand our interactions, dynamics and attitudes towards different experiences.

Research questions:

- How we can understand experiences and expressions using senses and sensorial memory?

- How sensorial experiences mold societies and vice versa altering the way people process and interpret experiences around them?

Timeline:
Project's story

1st Step — Research
1st Research Stage
2nd Research Stage

2nd Step — Experiments
Echoes: music across memories
T(e/a)sting: a common table across experiences

3rd Step — The Flower map
Flower map conceptualization

Humans as societal beings
Humans as perceptive beings
Humans as multisensorial/ contextual beings

June | July | August | September | October | November | December | January | February | March | April | May | June | July
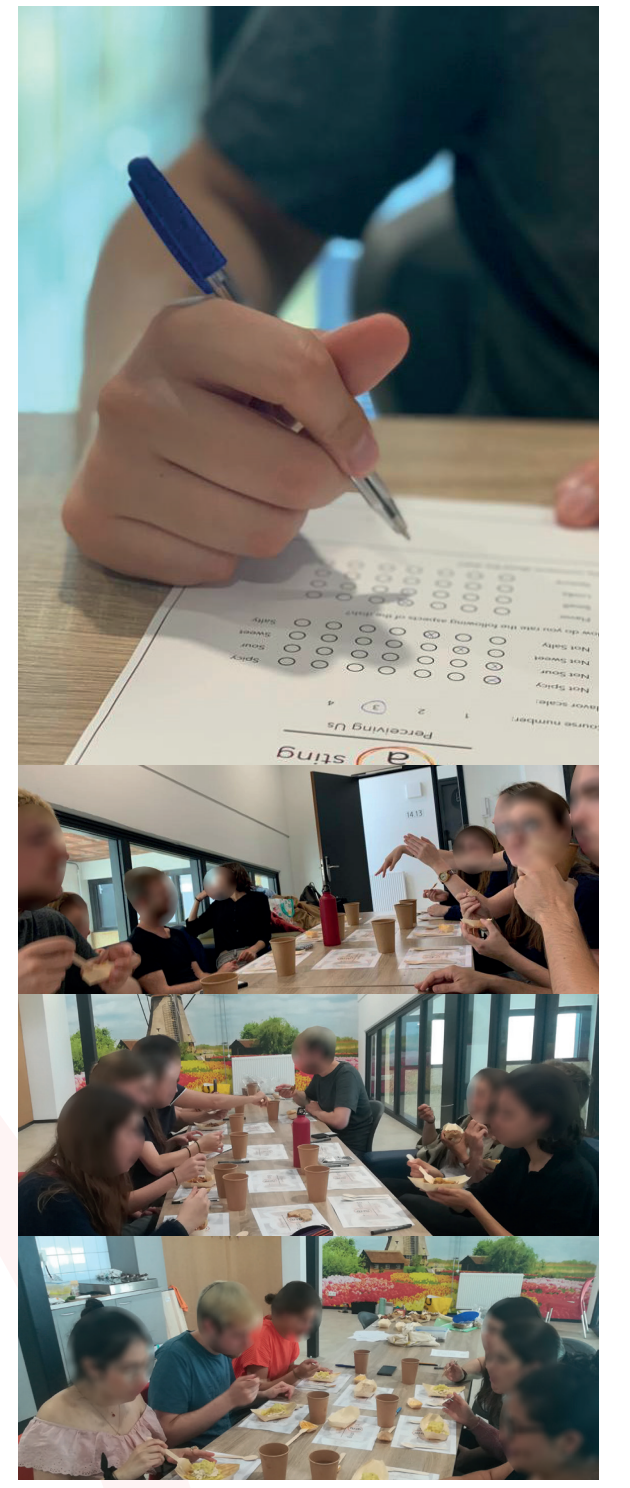
2018 — 2019

Experiments:

Echoes | Music across memory

The first experiment was proposed during March of 2019. As it was mentioned, the goal of this first experiment was to discover if participants were able to identify the technique and medium that elaborates expression based on their different contextual backgrounds. The experiment was formulated with a qualitative approach to achieve the goal. For this experiment, it was decided to use a musical piece as the expression, and by consequence focus the experiment in echoic memory.

T(e/a)sting | A common table across experiences

The second experiment is based on the insights gathered from the previous one. It was executed during the third week of April of 2019. For this experiment, the goal was to discover how the participant's different contextual backgrounds can influence the perception of the same expression. While the previous experiment an experience used musical instruments as the tangible artifacts/ mediums and the way they were played as the intangible aspects of the experience/ technique, for this experiment it was decided to use another socio-cultural experience: Gastronomy and its most representative expression: Cooked food.
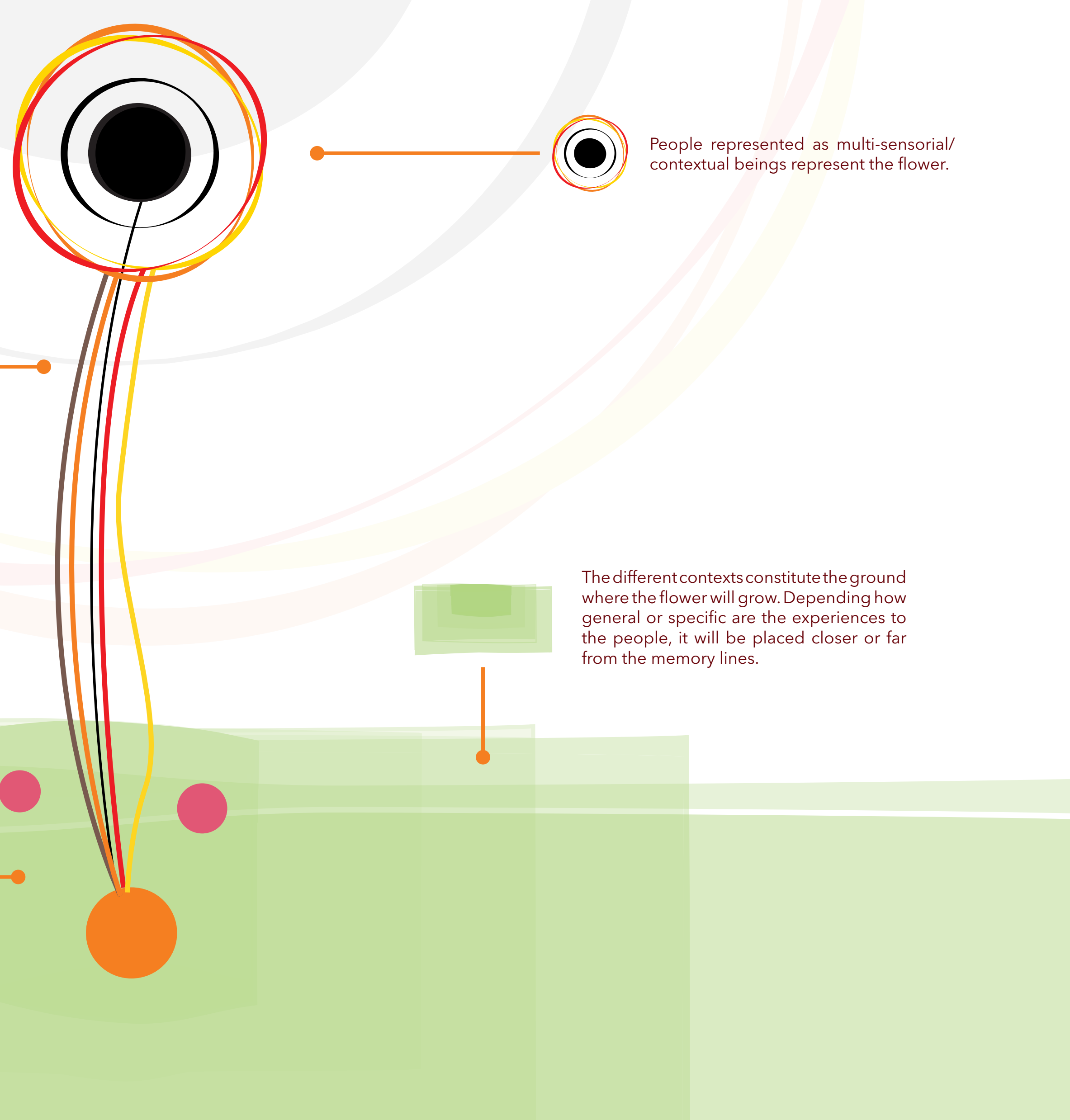

Outcome: The Flower Model

A visualization tool that allows its users to map how different experiences are linked with the people through their different types of sensorial memory: Iconic, Echoic, Haptic and Flavour. These links are distorted by the presence of other different in the different context that people are part of. The purpose and value of this tool are to help practitioners or researchers from different disciplines, where people are at the centre of a research, to understand not only the "user" but also how the user is perceiving its surroundings. With this idea in mind, the tool is proposed to be used as a complement of other tools and methodologies.

From a design perspective, one of the aspects that it was addressed during the development of the map was the possibility to use it for triggering questions: What could be designed by looking at the levels of contexts? What relations between the existing elements across the contexts and the user can be used as guidelines for the design process? Where the design proposal could be placed among the levels of contexts? What other experiences can affect the interaction between the design proposal and the user? Are some of the questions that could be originated by using this tool.

Related to research, the tool can be used to understand what is happening with people with certain experiences. With this approach, the entire process of using the map can have a personal approach towards people: a very intrinsic relation can be unveiled through sensorial memory. The insights obtained with the map can be part of an emotional research approach, societal research approach or anthropologist research approach.

People represented as multi-sensorial/ contextual beings represent the flower.

The four types of sensorial memory: Iconic, Echoic, Haptic and Flavour represent the stem.

The different contexts constitute the ground where the flower will grow. Depending how general or specific are the experiences to the people, it will be placed closer or far from the memory lines.

Two types of experiences: In orange, the one that we are interested in connect with the people through the memory lines; in pink, the experiences that distort the lines with their presence.

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