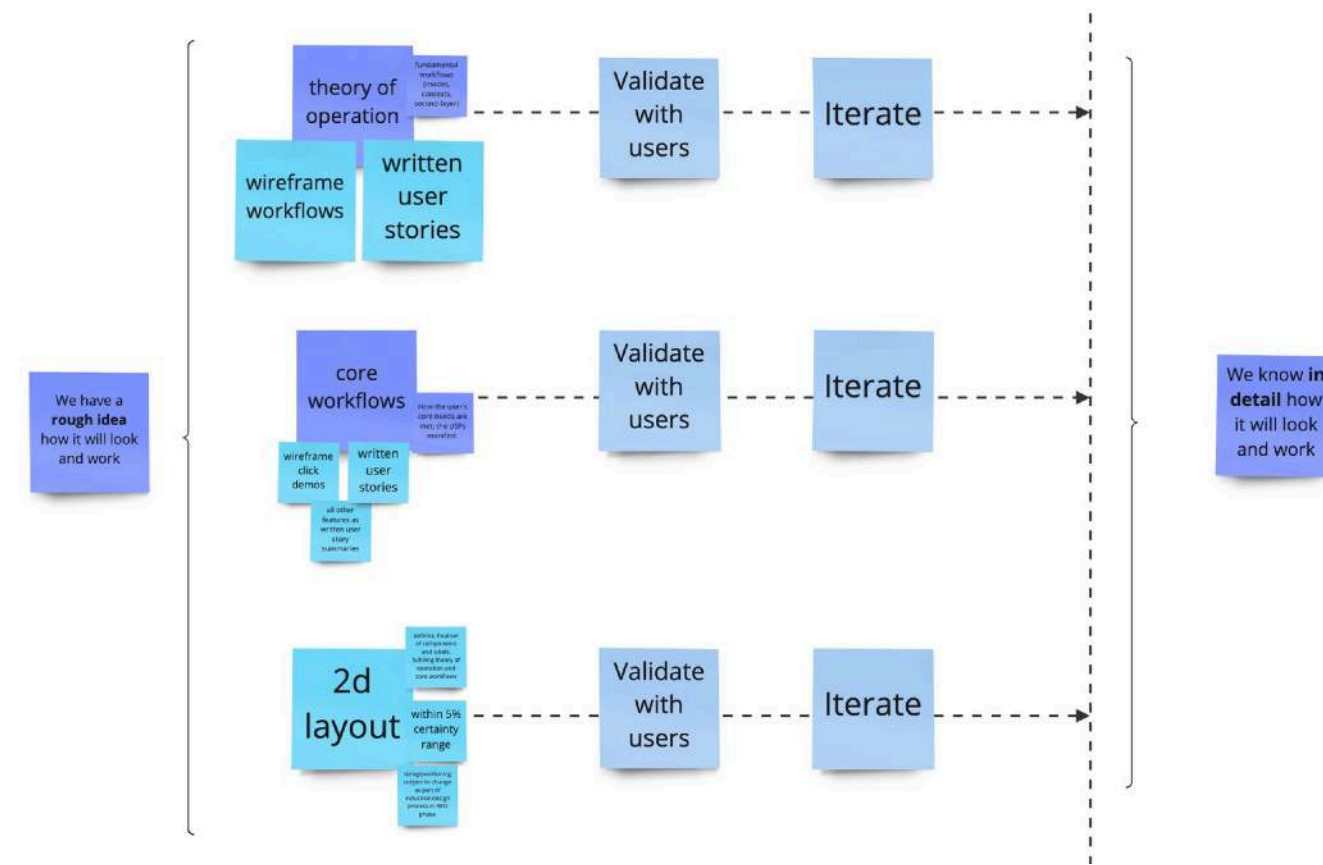


HW/SW Product/UX Design @ Native Instruments

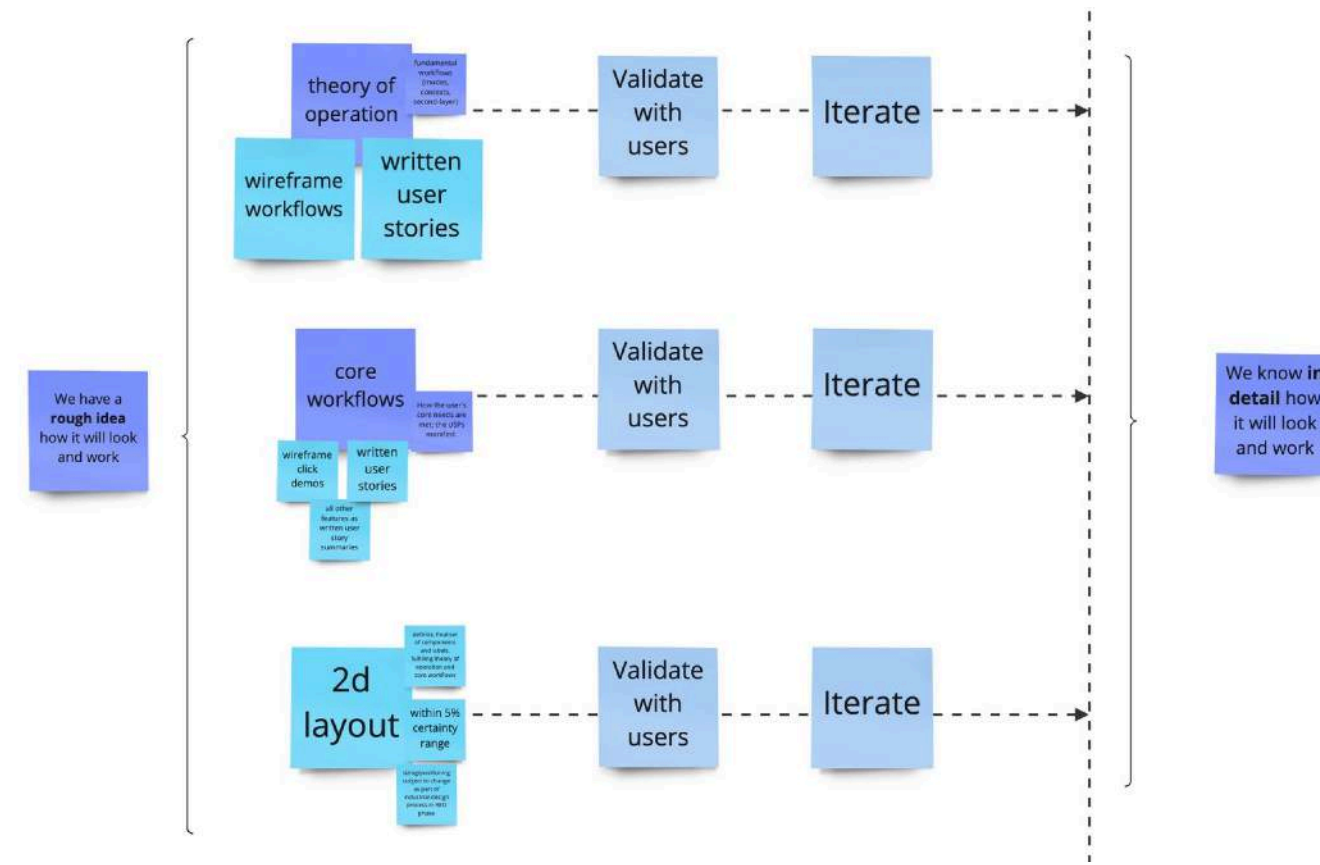
Ant Orant x reMarkable 2023

(Product context) MASCHINE is an all-in-one music production and performance system





1. Product concept ideation roadmap

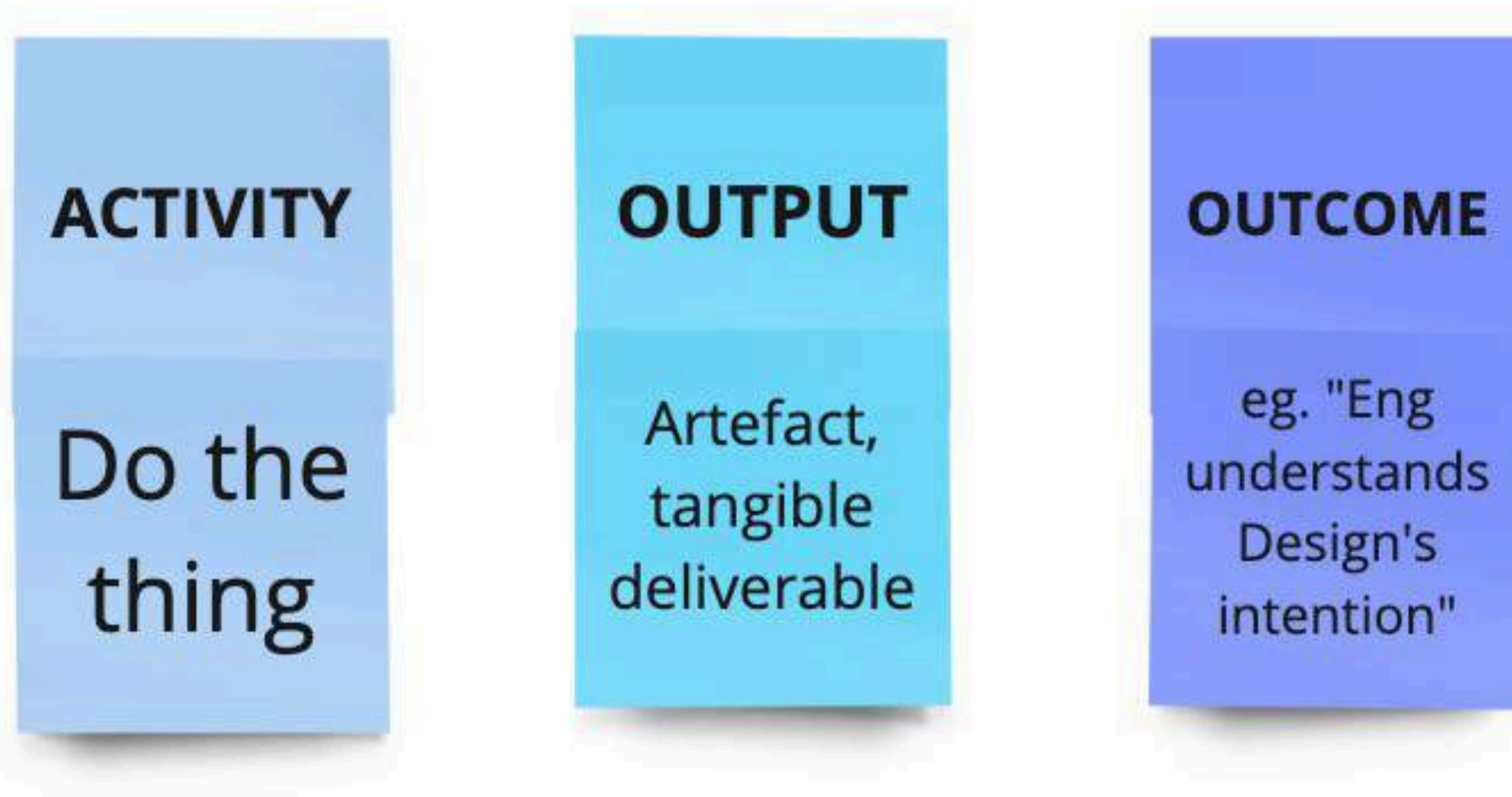


With the Product team concluding an improvised, engineering-centric ideation phase, about to begin work on the next product, the designers needed to define and sequence the key milestones in order to deliver a strong concept within a much tighter deadline.

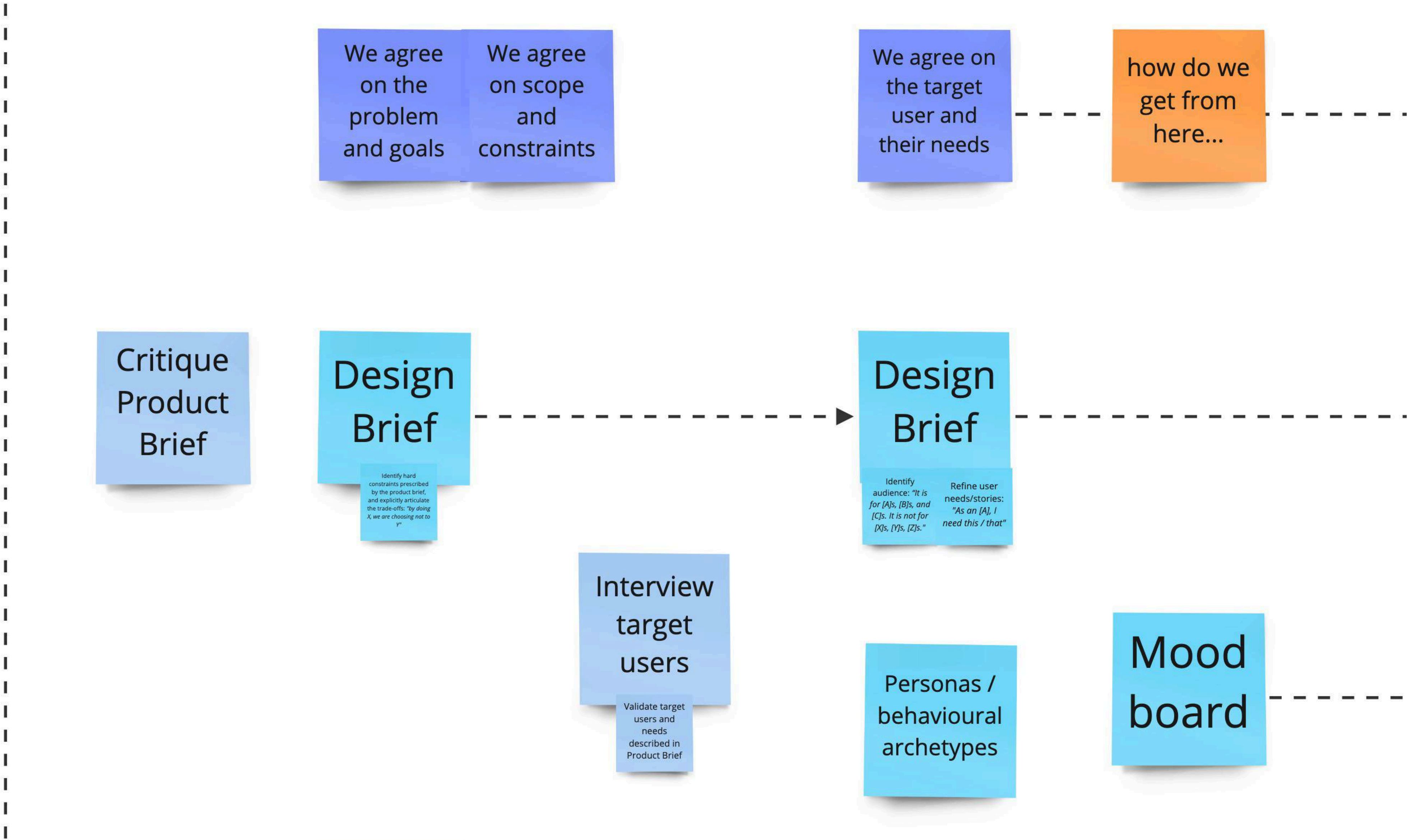
I reviewed assets and communication from the previous cycle, identified the core artefacts and activities, then grouped and ordered them chronologically.

The Design team entered the next cycle with clear priorities and realistic goals.

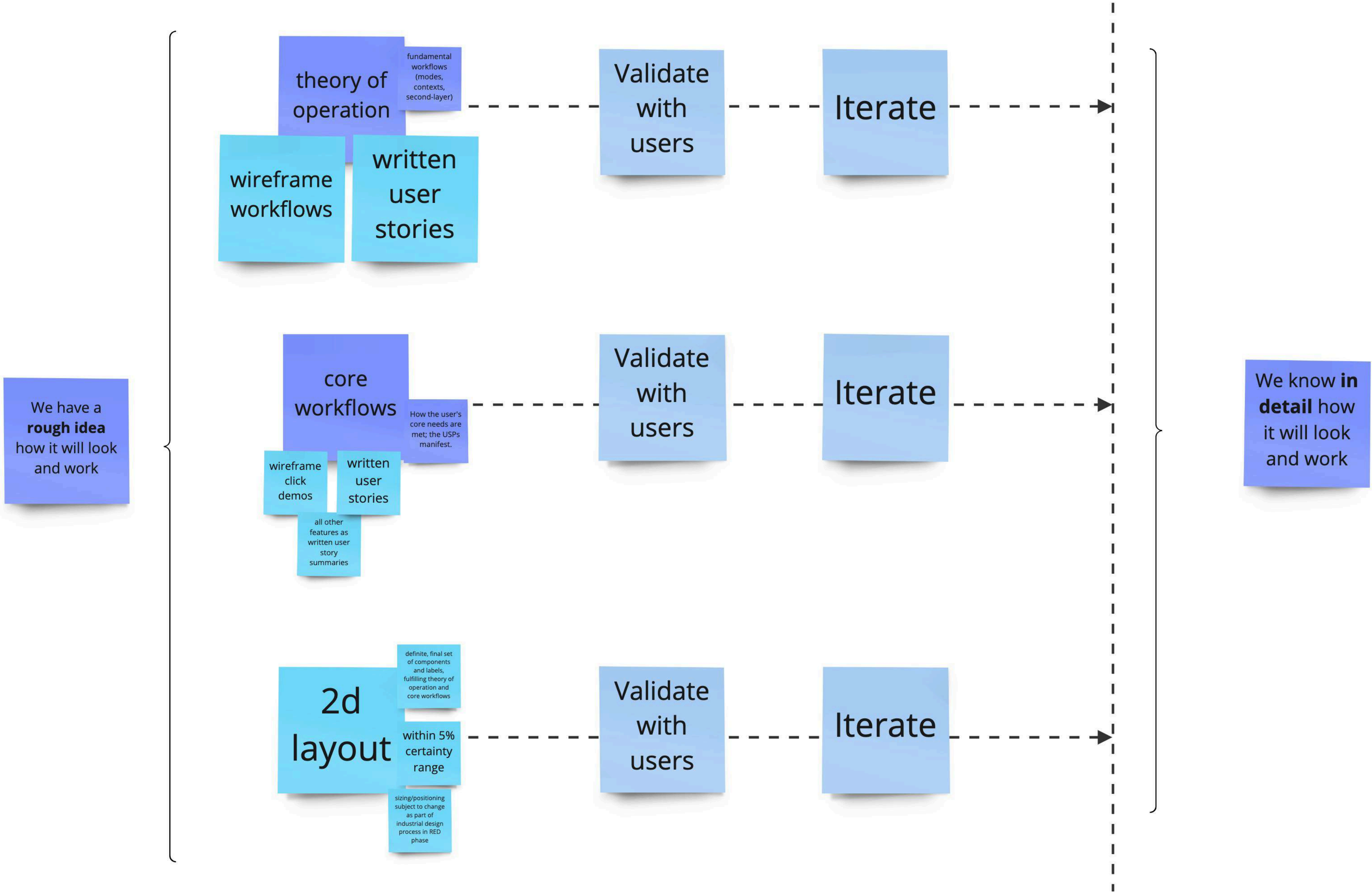
“Outcomes over output”



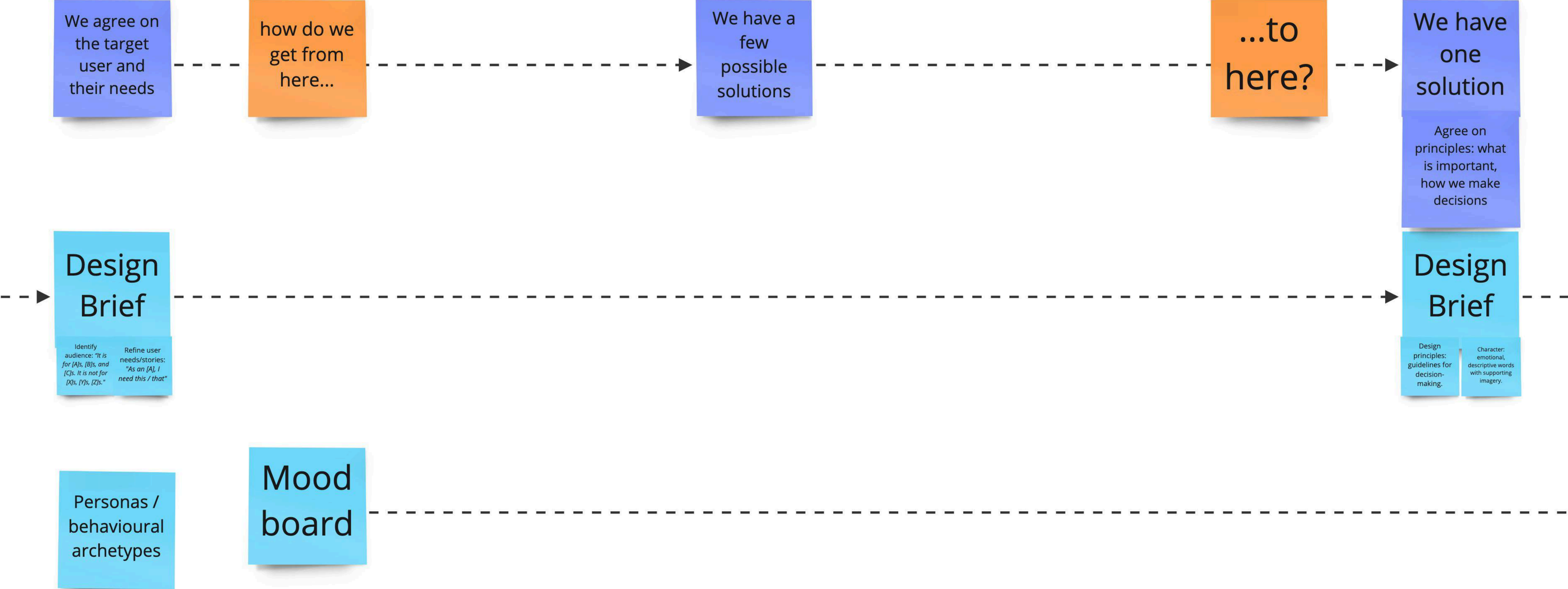
Kickoff.....



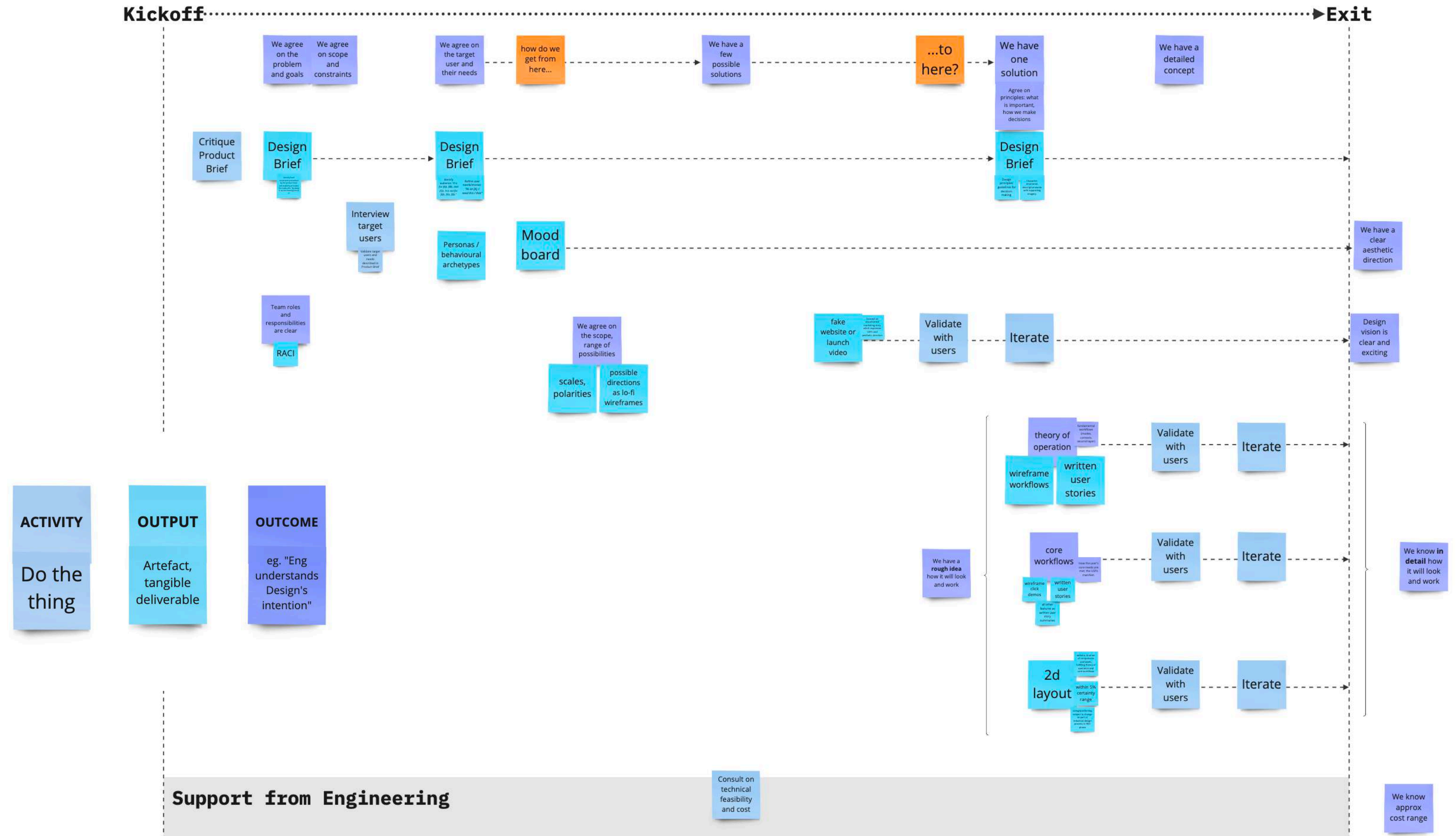
Iterative shaping of core concept

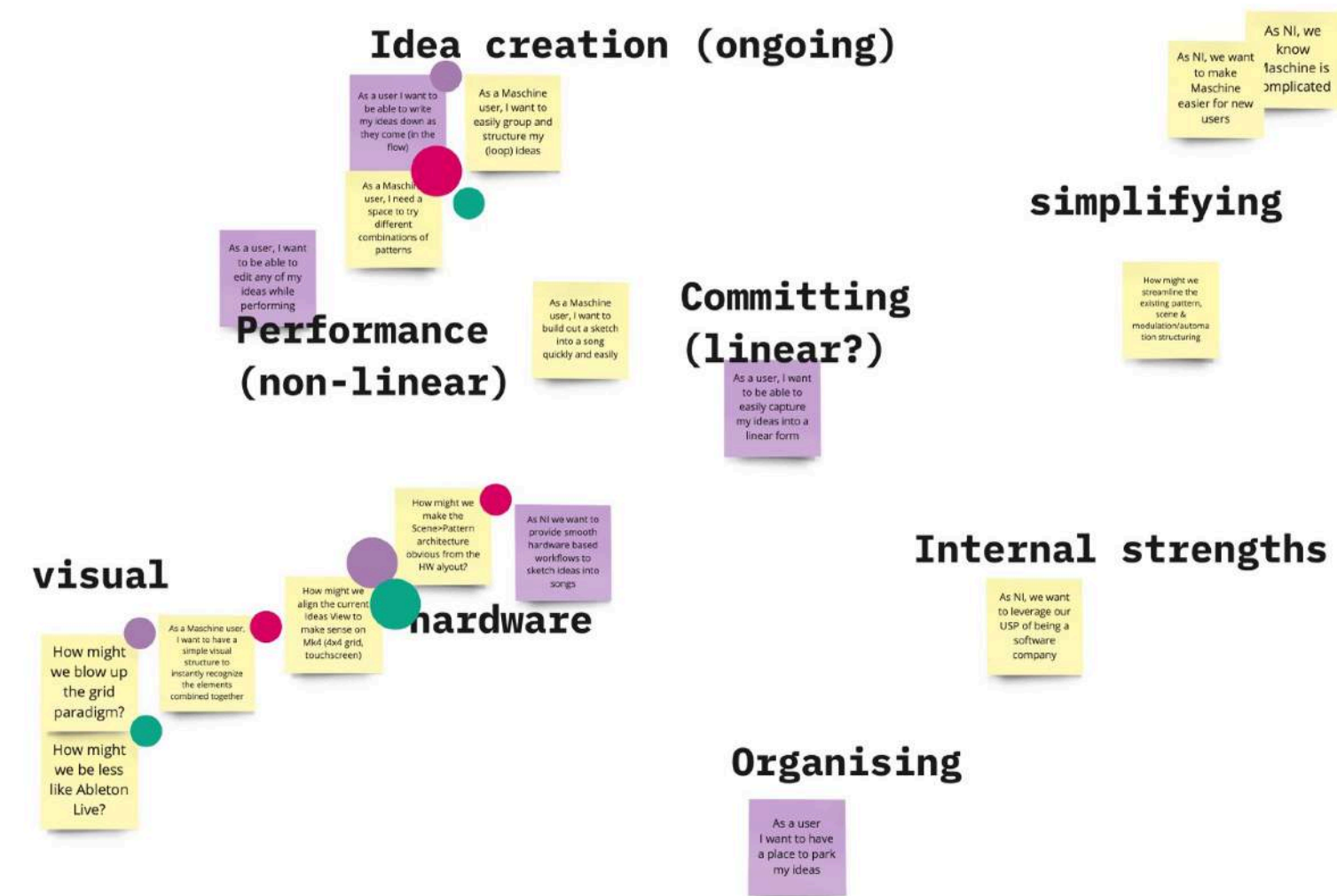


Mapping conceptual development

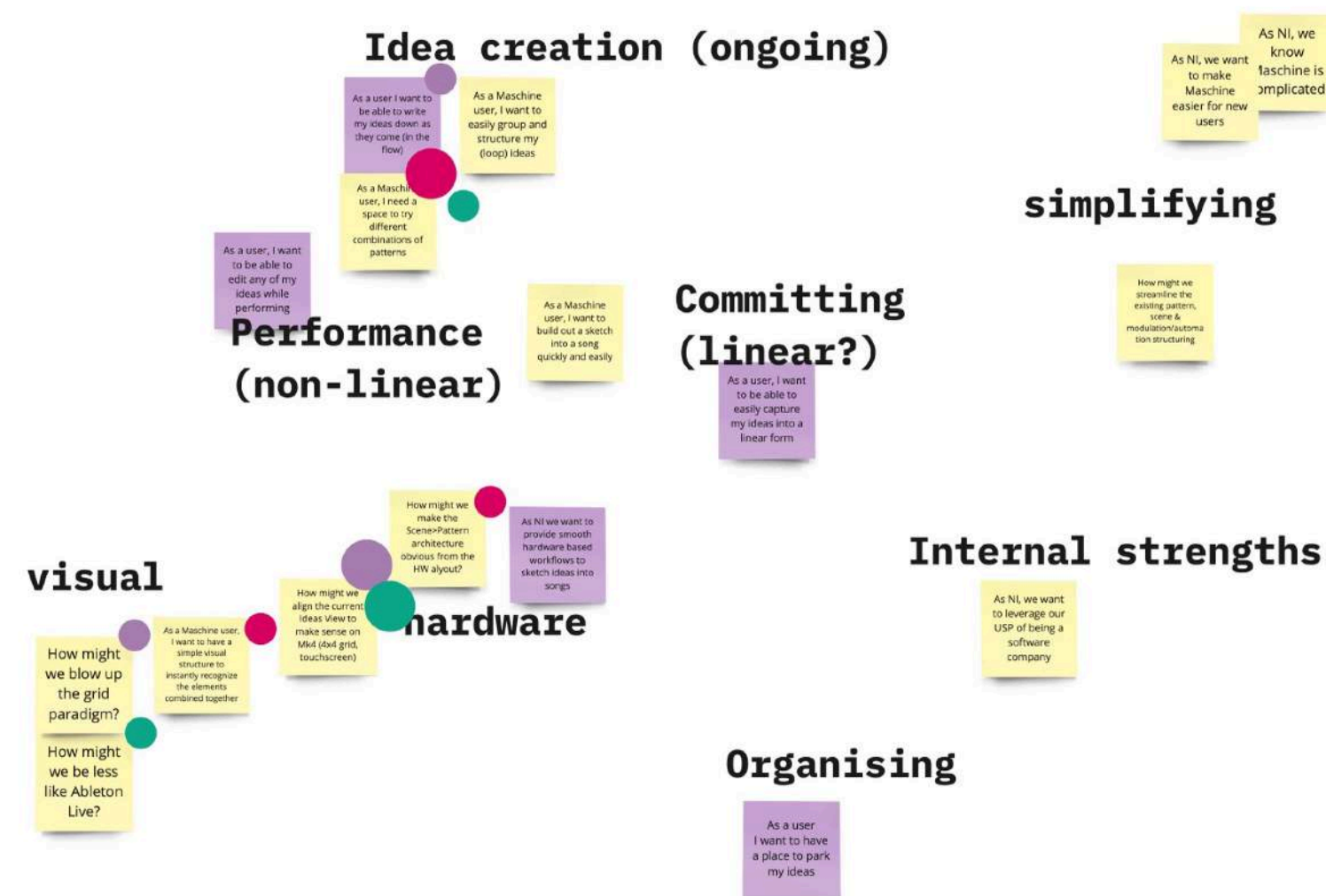


The entire concept ideation phase





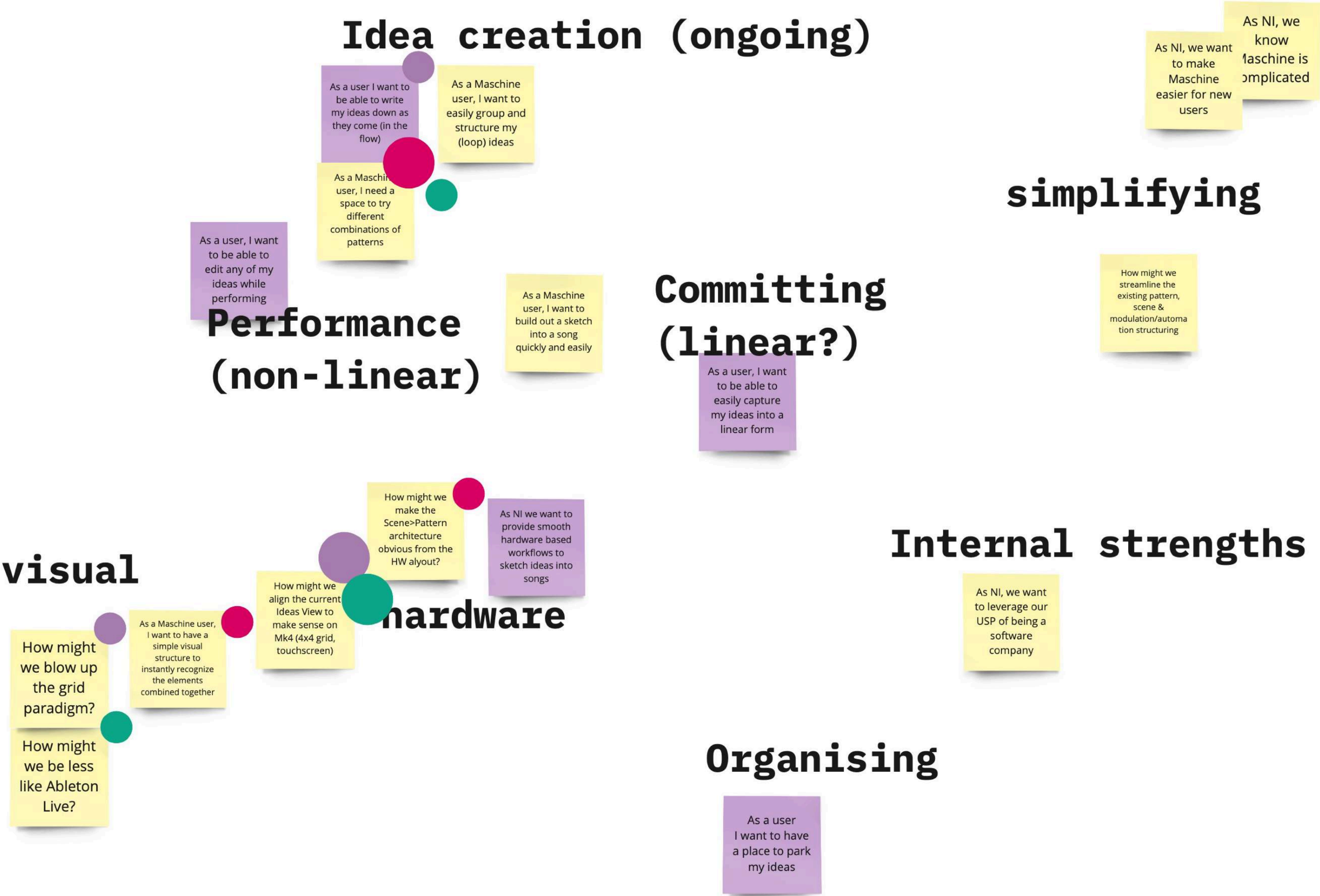
2. “Ideas” view exploration sprint



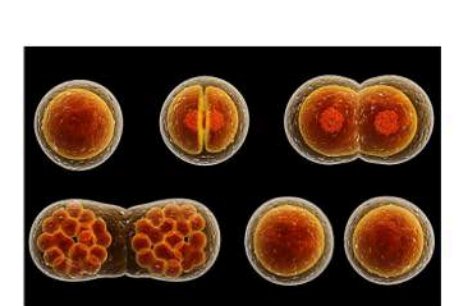
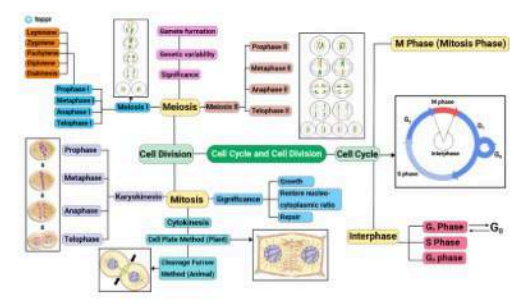

Approaching ideation exit with a long wish-list of features and limited engineering resources, the team informally identified the “Ideas” feature as a critical UX improvement, but with a lack of clarity around scope, effort and feasibility.



I led a two-day workshop with key product team members, with the goal of capturing and structuring the various concerns, advocacy, and technical considerations, then quickly exploring the range of possible changes.


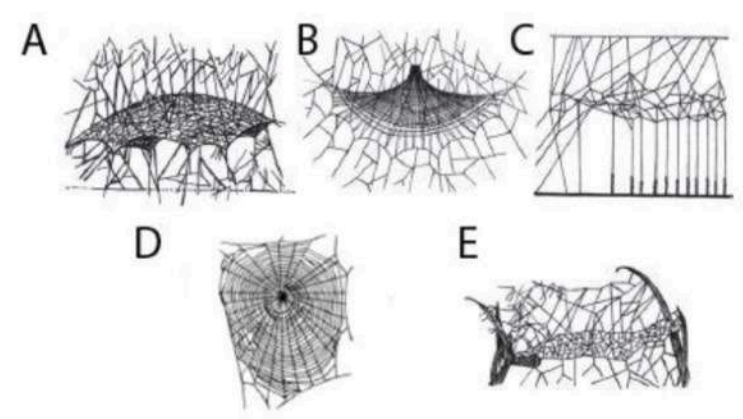
The problem context and detail were documented in a shareable format, with potential solutions shaped and scoped, prioritised by confidence and effort, leading to a clear decision.

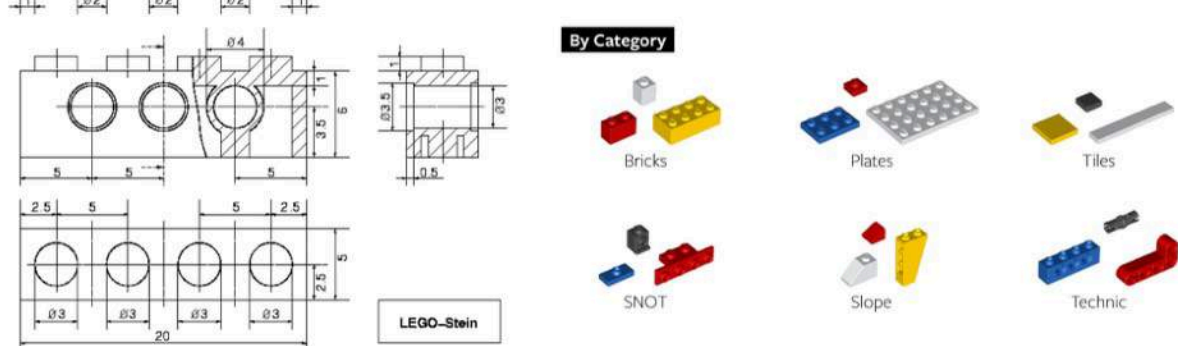



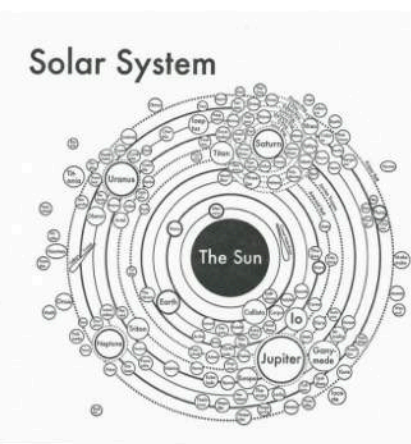
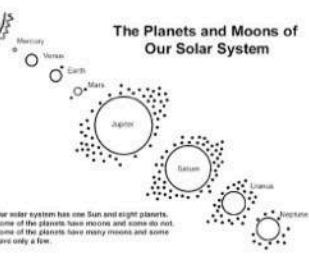
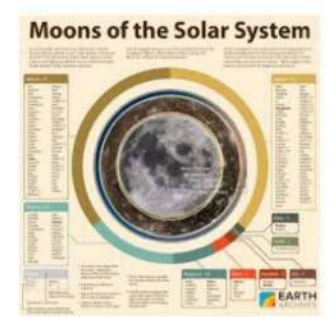
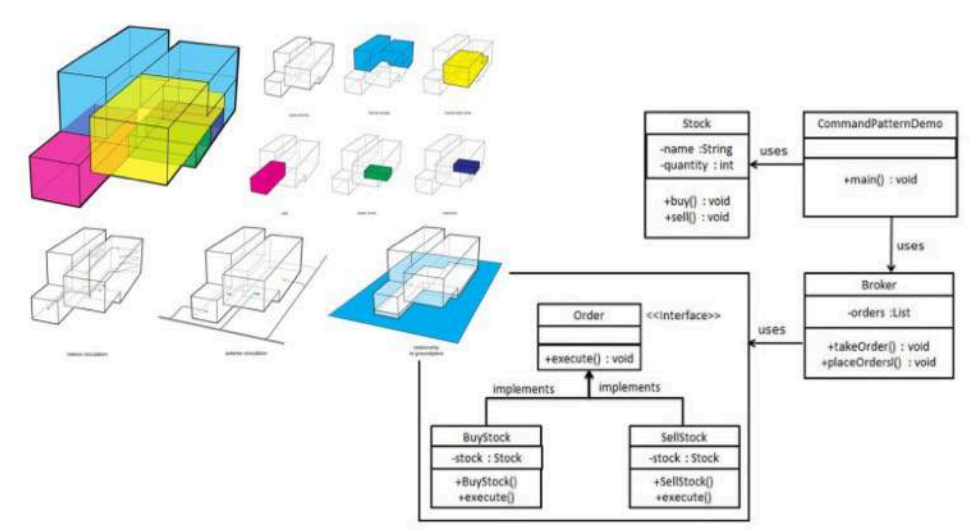
Exploration, benchmarking, rapid ideation

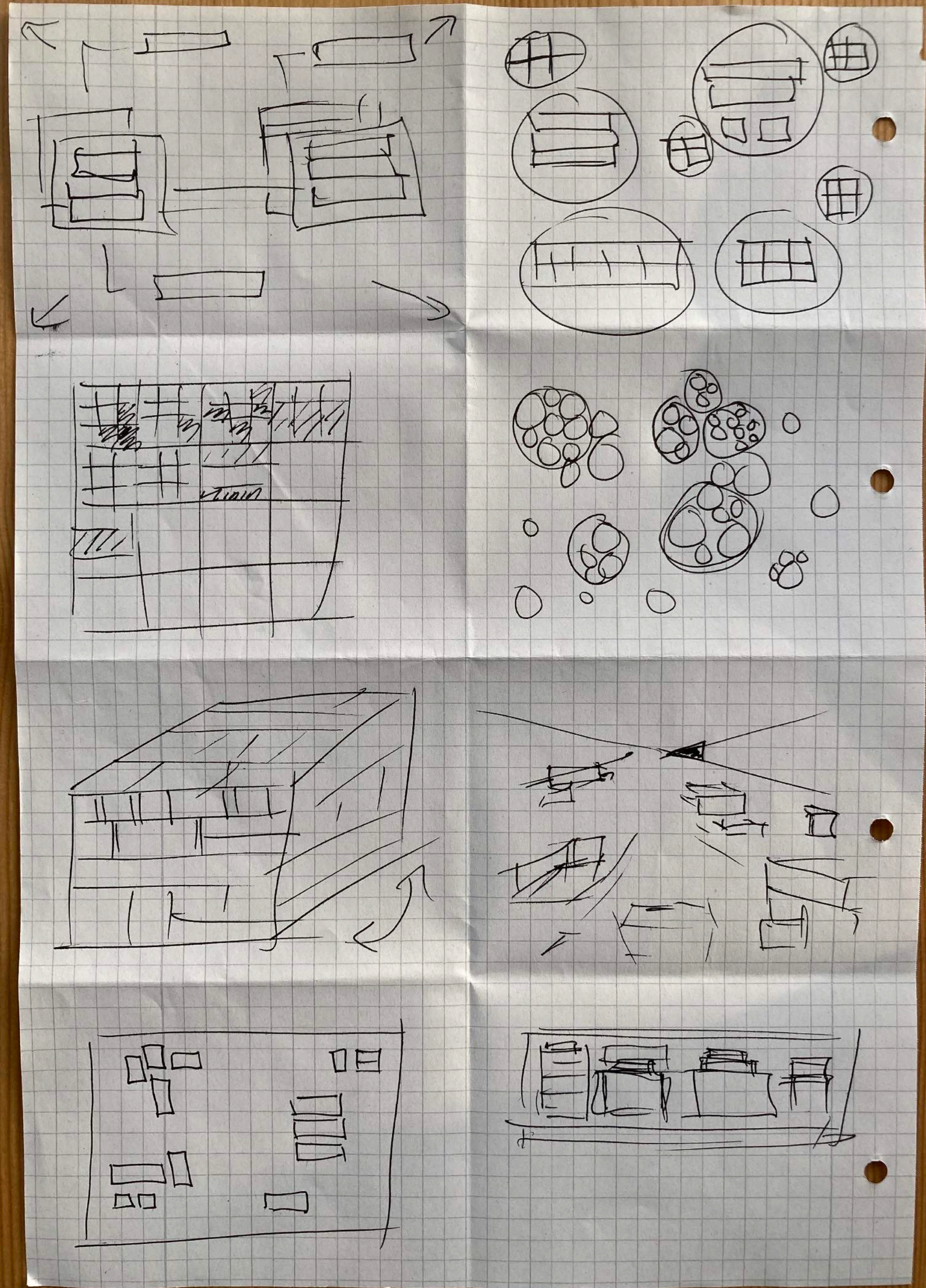




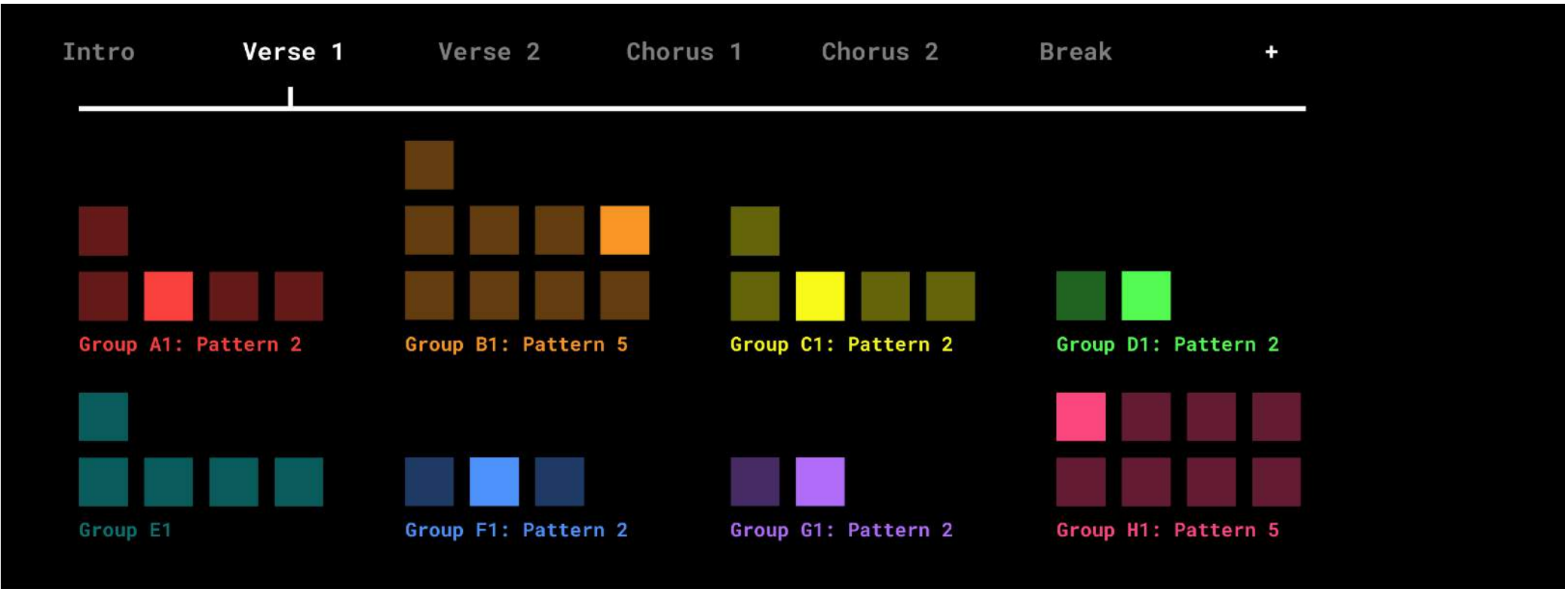
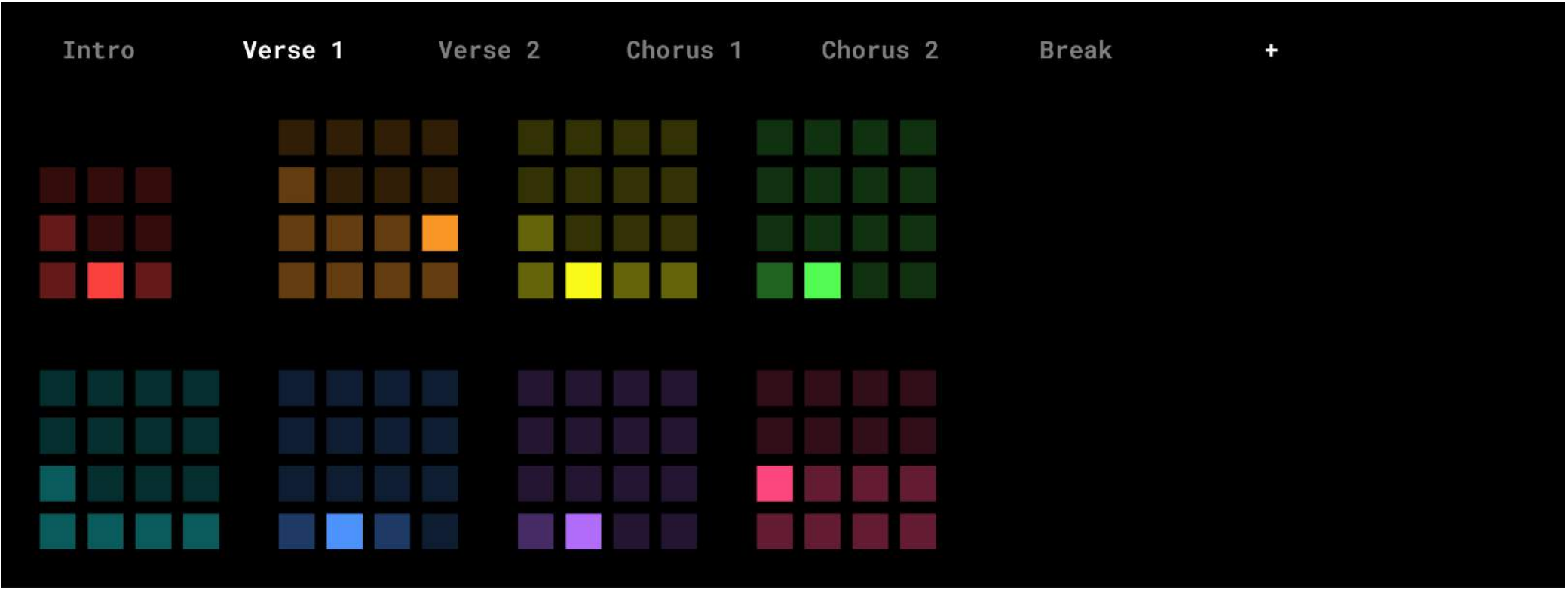
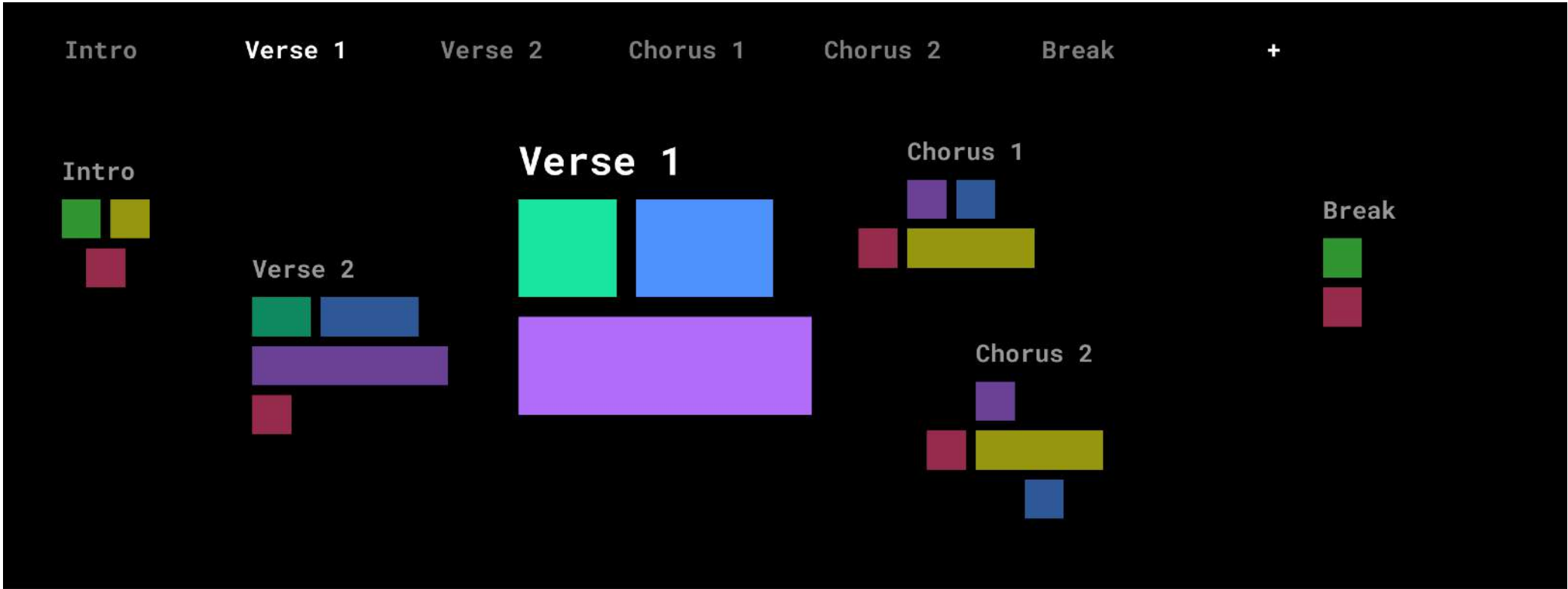
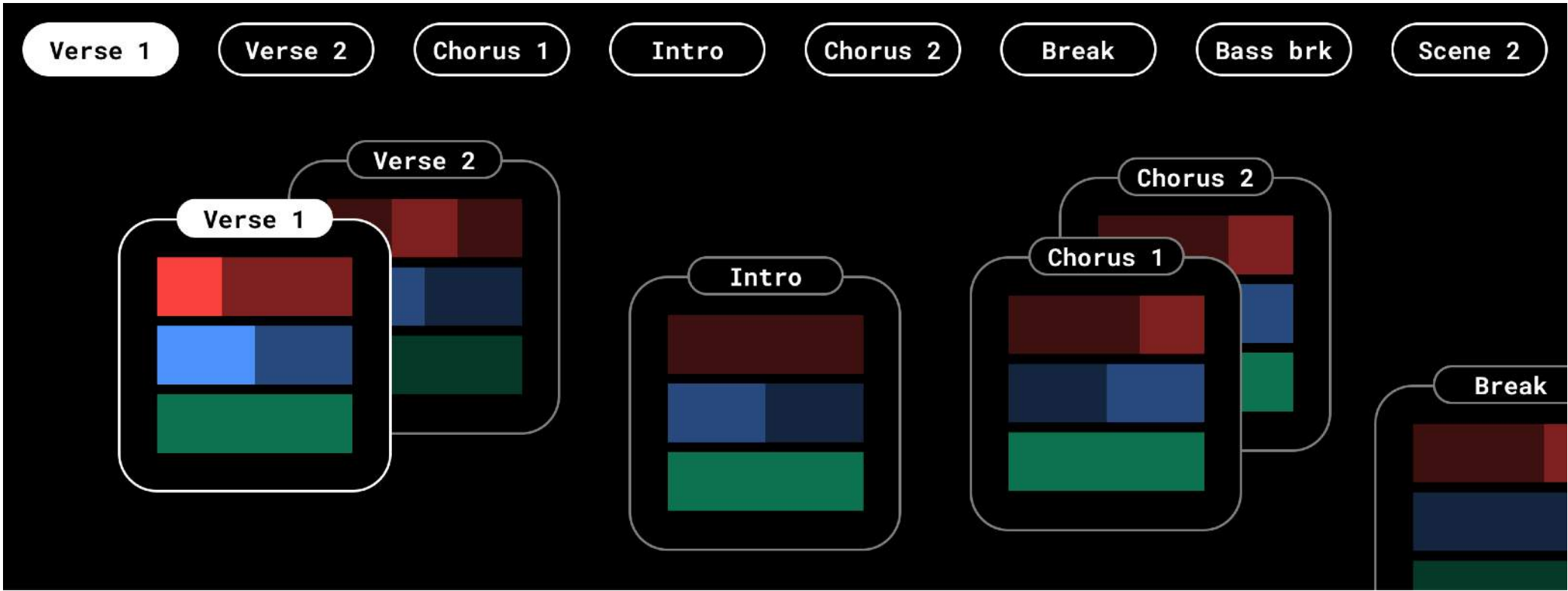








UI exploration



Outcomes scoped, prioritised by team confidence and effort

Ideas View Design Sprint

Outcomes

User benefit

Next steps / action items

Effort (h/d/w)
(time needed for one person to build a detailed pitch or testable prototype)

Confidence 1-3
"I think this will be a significant improvement to the product"

Small improvements we can test now

Change the axes of the Ideas view?
Groups are horizontal rows, Scenes are columns



Take Scenes slightly off the grid?



Ideas view is easier to understand?

hi-fi screen design

test on MK3/+

possible to create intuitive mapping to Ask path?

How do I change a Pattern?

2 days

1d

[1.5d]

3

3

[7]

Difference between scenes and content Groups is clear?

How will this look in Maschine desktop software?

hi-fi mockups of MK3/+ screens

UI / Lumen check-in

1days

1d

[1d]

3

2

[6]

Significant improvements requiring deeper exploration

Distinguish Scenes visually from Groups and Patterns:
Take Scenes further off the grid?



Distinction of Scenes from Patterns and Groups is clear?

Machina universe is visually more interesting

Loops double meaning of colour

what are the limits of feasibility?

would these visual changes be better applied to Lock Scenes

does it make Scenes more intuitive?

how does it look in Maschine Desktop

1 weeks

2 weeks

[1.5w]

3

2

[6]

spatial arrangement

how will this work without touch?

how does focus/pops on/scroll work?

how are shapes formed? (logic)

circles/ clustering

fits brand aesthetic?

how to mirror on HW layout

stick with these columns or try reordering, clustering?

1

geometric shapes (triangles etc)

fits brand aesthetic?

what are the elements, ingredients?

does colour have a meaning?

naturalistic forms

fits brand aesthetic?

what are the elements, ingredients?

does colour have a meaning?

2

Distinguish Scenes visually from Groups and Patterns:
Take Scenes more into the grid?



will pads have multi LEDs?

How will multi coloured path look? (usability?)

How (straight) would shapes be formed?

does it make Scenes more intuitive?

1 weeks

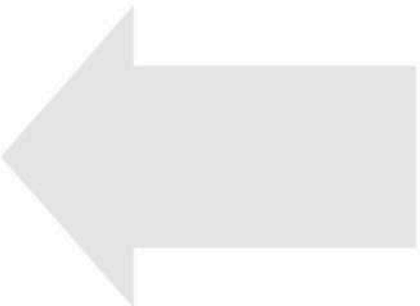
1 week

[1w]

2

1

[4]



Let's try these quickly

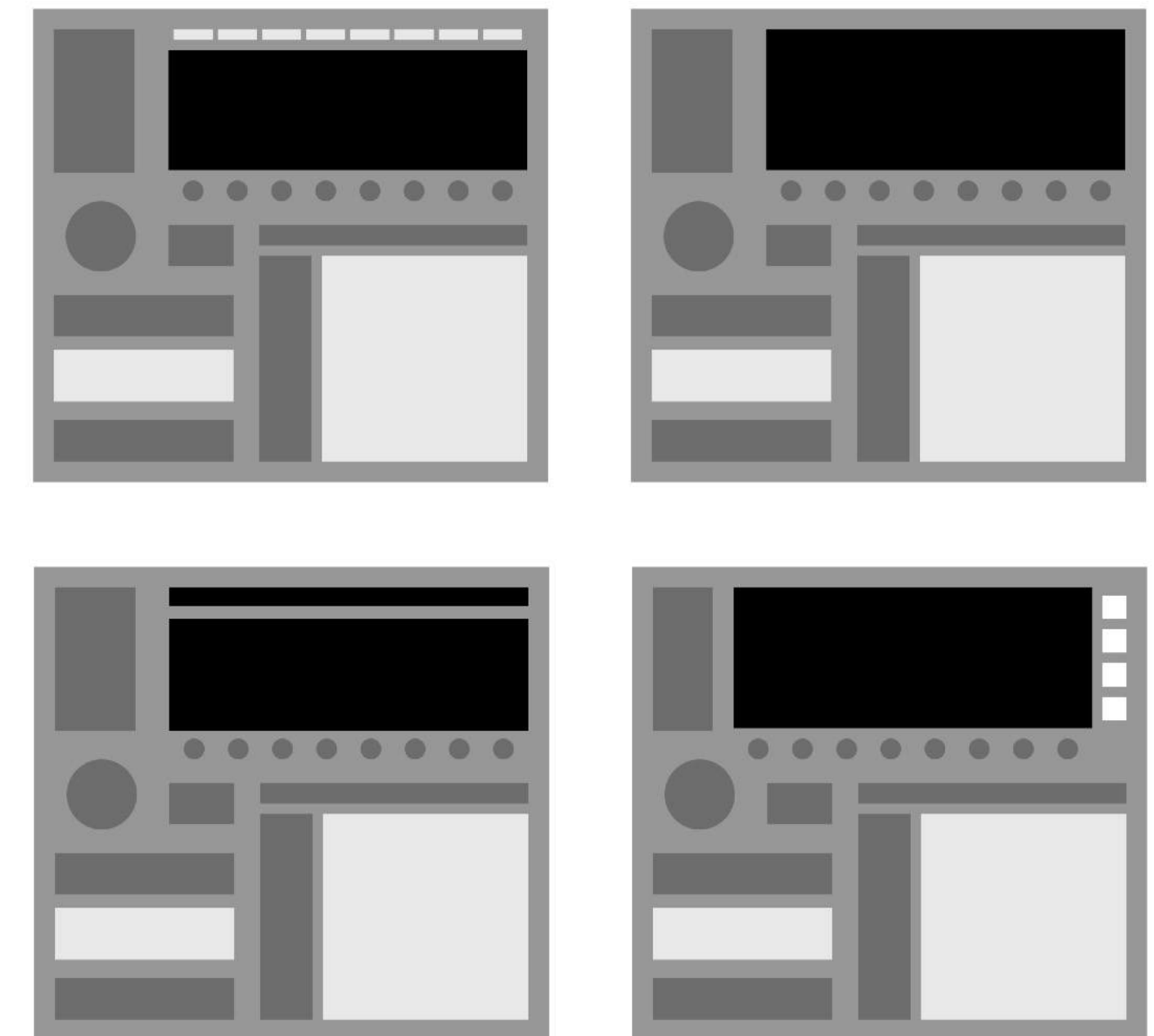


3. Lean feature/workflow discovery:
Context menu / OPTION button

With the Product team close to finalising a concept, committing to a new hardware layout with significant changes to core interactions, an engineer (and power user) strongly advocated for a change to the navigation and organisation of features which would drastically simplify the workflow architecture and improve discoverability.

The topic appeared abstract to people with less hands-on experience using the product. I took on the task of channeling the engineer's advocacy, validating the perceived problem and shaping the proposed solution, aligning the potential value with the essential product story.

We turned disparate conversations into impactful, shareable artefacts, and convinced the wider team to commit to the feature.



What?

The Context Menu is a third layer of access to functionality (after direct and SHIFT)

Conceptually, it's similar to a right-click on a computer, or a long-press on an iPhone: it gives me access to functionality which isn't directly accessible from the main interface.

Background

Maschine has two layers of functionality: the main/top layer "direct access", and the Shift layer.

Generally, each hardware button corresponds to...

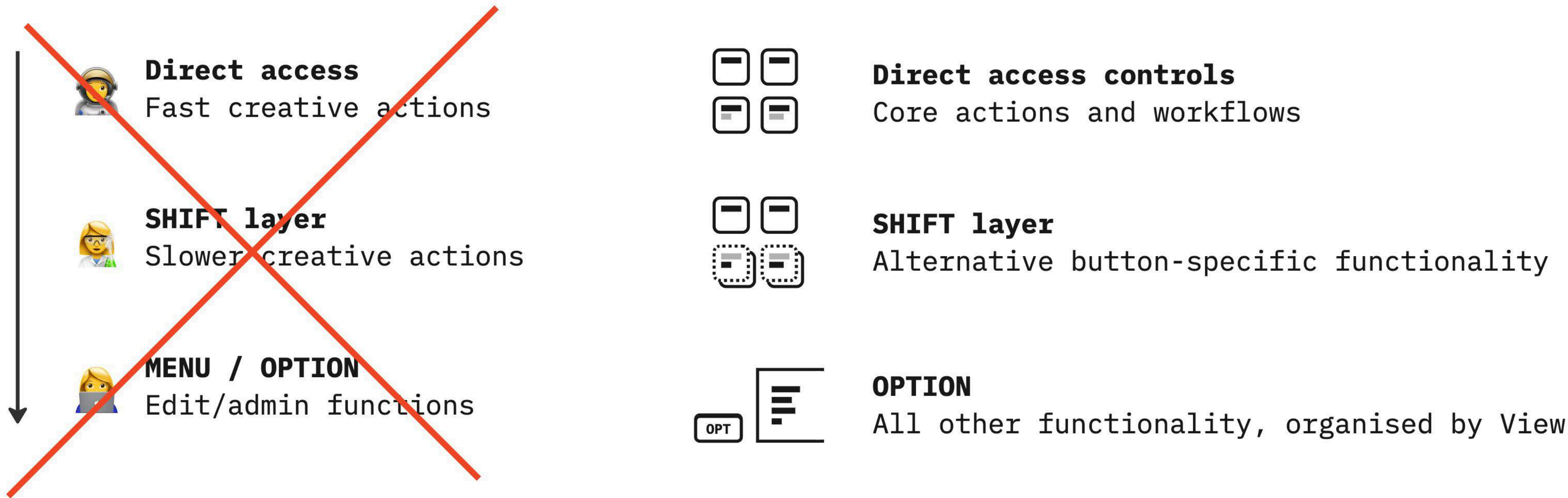
- a *view* (Ideas, Settings, Scene, etc)
- a *mode* (Pitch, Perform, Keyboard, Step, etc)
- or a *global action* (Play, Rec, etc)

For every View and Mode there are specific actions or settings. These are accessible on the eight soft buttons above the screen.

Why introduce a Context Menu?

1. Some hardware buttons are only used for global settings (eg. Swing). If only set or adjusted once or twice per project, they don't require direct access - they'd more logically live under project settings. These **hardware buttons could be removed or assigned to more creative functions.**
2. Some views could logically be merged into other views (eg. Channel: Input/Output into Mixer view, and Groove into Plugin view). This would **simplify the architecture** (less views) and **free up hardware buttons** for more creative functions.
3. We only have maximum 16 slots per View/Mode for contextual functionality.
(ie. screen buttons: 8 direct access, 8 shift layer). Both creative/flow actions and more admin functions exist in these slots, and the placement is inconsistent. A context menu would be the default location for all non-creative/non-flow actions, opening up the **soft buttons for only creative/flow actions**, with consistent placement.

Aligning interaction design principles with workflow architecture



How do I open the Context Menu?

Option 1:
Press a [MENU] button
(we add a new button)



where should the button be?

means heavy commitment to Context Menu feature.

muscle memory

Option 2:
Press a combination of (existing) buttons
SHIFT + Select?



saves us from heavy commitment to Context Menu feature

should be close for one-hand operation

muscle memory

natural progression from Shift layer

Option 3:
Touch the screen
Two/three-finger tap?
Swipe from edge/corner?



relies on touchscreen

could be an additional way, as well as button(s)

Proposal 2023-05-27

In a nutshell / as a user:

- I press SHIFT to access secondary functionality of hardware buttons and screen buttons.
- I press OPTION to access further functionality and settings relating to the current View.

Decision / commitments at this point:

- We keep the SHIFT layer and button.
- We call the context menu OPTION.
- The OPTION layer functionality is View-specific (not element specific).
- We **do** add a new hardware button for OPTION, but add a SHIFT function to a nearby button (propose: Select)

Known open questions / work to do / rabbit-holes:

- UI (at design-system level) for OPTION layer.
- Structure of OPTION list - vertical/horizontal, groups, nested, etc.
- Use/role of touch interactions for OPTION layer.
- How does current focus (eg. Scene, Pattern) respond to or influence OPTION-layer functionality.
- Make second-layer functionality more visible/discoverable in general, across the design system (concerns Kontrol also).
- Press-and-hold might also be a viable interaction to activate the OPTION layer.
- We still need to list the extended functionality and settings for each View.
- We are not yet sure exactly what the consequent structural changes will be.





Thanks !

Detail/case studies on request
→ ant @ ajo.design