

Eva Migayrou
MSc Thesis - Design for Interaction
Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering
Delft University of Technology



Convenient by design:

A systems design exploration of
youth food literacy in Curaçao

Supervised by:
Natalia Romero Herrera
Marina Bos-de Vos



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Graduation committee
Natalia Romero Herrera
Marina Bos-de Vos

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Preface



Photograph by the author
Curaçao, Nov. 2025

Food as a graduation topic was not something I would ever see myself choose given my own complicated history with food. But when this opportunity came on my path, more than a year ago now, it felt right. This project started as an ambitious quest to combine my own interests, such as local cultures and cultural differences, seasonal produce and a sustainable lifestyle with the obesity epidemic Curaçao has been facing. However, during my field research I faced several challenges that structurally limited my project. I had no local supervisor at the time and the current state of food literacy showed that focusing on culture and agriculture was not the way to go. Changes and interventions were required on a more systemic level first.

This process taught me a lot about suddenly changing course and adapting a project to a context instead of forcing views on it. It showed me the challenges of field research in a foreign country but also highlighted the importance of staying curious, asking the questions and observing. All throughout this project, I tried taking the time to reflect on my own position as a Dutch student in a postcolonial region. The conversations I had with the local population have shaped my perspectives and are something I truly value and hope to carry with me throughout my career.

I would like to thank my supervisors Natalia and Marina for the support during this project which was not always the easiest. I would like to thank the Learning Community for trusting me with this opportunity, and especially Barbera for the guidance and the access to her network.

On a more personal note, there are some more people I would like to acknowledge. My parents and siblings for supporting me and even visiting me during my time in Curaçao. My flatmates from Willemstad with whom I got to explore the beautiful island of Curaçao and go on fun adventures with. And to all my friends in the Netherlands, especially Maartje, thank you for being there for me, making me laugh and making the graduation process lighter.

Eva

Executive summary



Photograph by the author
Curaçao, Nov. 2025

This thesis explores how youth food literacy in Curaçao is shaped by systemic conditions and how design can contribute to healthier food practices. Rather than approaching childhood obesity as an issue of individual behaviour, this research frames it as an emergent outcome of interconnected social, cultural, and environmental dynamics. Using a research-through-design approach, the project investigates how these dynamics manifest in everyday food environments and how they might be reconfigured to support healthier practices.

The study combines contextual research, system mapping, cultural probes with youth, and design exploration. A decolonial perspective informed the research, emphasising local knowledge, lived experiences, and the historical context of Curaçao's food system. Building on an adapted food literacy framework, the research examines cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of food literacy in relation to everyday environments.

Findings reveal that youth food practices are shaped by three reinforcing systemic loops: institutional neglect shaping public food literacy, convenience-driven obesogenic environments, and school environments reinforcing unhealthy food narratives. These loops are mutually reinforcing and rooted in fragmented governance and historical dependencies, creating a system in which unhealthy food practices are normalised and sustained.

The research demonstrates that food literacy cannot be understood as an individual competency alone. Instead, it emerges through repeated interactions with everyday environments such as schools and supermarkets. In these contexts, convenience plays a central role in shaping food choices, often reinforcing unhealthy practices due to limited availability, affordability, and time constraints.

Schools are identified as a critical leverage point within this system. As structured environments where food practices are enacted daily, they offer opportunities to shift conditions and enable new food narratives. However, current school food environments often reproduce unhealthy norms due

to a lack of regulation and alignment with broader systemic drivers.

In response, the project proposes an envisioned system in which healthy food practices are supported through environmental conditions that make them more convenient. A roadmap is developed to guide systemic change across governance, school environments, and everyday food contexts. Rather than prescribing a single solution, the design work functions as a research activity that explores how enabling conditions, such as convenience, can initiate shifts in practice and perception.

This thesis contributes to design research by framing food literacy as a systemic and situated phenomenon, and by demonstrating how participatory and context-sensitive methods can be integrated into systemic design approaches. For stakeholders in Curaçao, it offers a structured understanding of the food system, identifies leverage points for intervention, and provides a foundation for collaborative efforts toward healthier food environments.

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Lexicon

Convenience: The extent to which food practices can be enacted within the limited timeframes of the school day, the cognitive load of having to make food choices, and the financial appeal of certain foods. Convenience is about allowing students to eat with minimal disruption to their routines and embodied comfort.

Creolization: According to Garth (2013), this refers to the creation of a new hybrid culture under colonial conditions of inequality. In food, this means African, European, and Indigenous ingredients, techniques, and knowledge blending into cuisines that still shape Caribbean identity today.

Food environment: The set of time-based, spatial, economic, social, and cultural conditions that shape everyday food practices. In Curaçao, unhealthy food environments reinforce convenience-based habits and low food literacy, sustaining an unhealthy status quo.

Food literacy: One's understanding of the nature of food and what it means to you, and having the ability to gain information about food, analyse it, and act upon that.

Food narratives: According to Swan et al. (2018), food narratives are stories about food, including experiences, perceptions, memories, and cultural meanings, that structure events, actions, and relations around food. They shape how individuals and communities understand how food is, why it matters, how they eat, and how eating practices connect to identity, culture, and health.

Obesogenic environment: Refers to the physical, social, and institutional conditions on Curaçao that systemically make unhealthy food choices easier, cheaper, more visible, and more socially normalized than healthy ones, thereby reinforcing youth obesity (Swinburn et al., 1999).

SIDS: Small Island Developing States; a grouping of developing countries that are small island countries and small states that tend to share similar sustainable development challenges (FAO, 2012).



Photograph of Plasa Bieu,
taken by the author
Curaçao, Oct. 2025

1. Introduction

Curaçao, like many other Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean, is facing a growing concern with youth obesity during adolescence. Around 28% of youth (13-20 years old) report being overweight (Verstraeten, 2015), [EM4.1]contrasting with the Netherlands, where around 19% of the 16-20 years old are overweight (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2025). This pattern is linked to a complex interplay of social, environmental, political, historical, and economic factors specific to Curaçao. This research builds on the systems thinking framework by Guariguata et al. (2024) that describes the drivers of rising childhood obesity in the Caribbean. Some of these drivers are the presence of unhealthy school environments, social norms accepting of childhood obesity, or commercial determinants driving poor health. While these drivers are general for the Caribbean, this research aims at understanding to what extent they play a role in Curaçao to paint a picture of the Curaçaoan food system and food environments.

Curaçao is a unique island with a colonial history closely tied to the Netherlands. Its position as a slavery and trade hub during the colonial era shaped its land, population, and culture. Before diving into research and design, it is important to get a full grasp of how this history has shaped the local landscape and communities. Being a Dutch research student, I adopted a decolonial mindset throughout this project by being mindful of my origins, researching the local history, and focusing on integrating local experiences and knowledge. Decoloniality is about analysing in which ways coloniality continues to shape modern political, economic, cultural, social, and knowledge systems. Such a lens is necessary to tackle global and local inequalities that also play a role in the Curaçaoan food system (Bhambra, 2014).

Building on an adapted food literacy framework from DeWaters and Powers (2012), this research explores how youth engage with their local food environments and how it translates into food narratives. This framework offers a holistic view of food literacy as being built on three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioural, fitting the

systemic nature of childhood obesity. Obesity serves as the societal concern motivating this study. The focus is, however, on how food literacy shapes food practices that can, in term lead to obesity. I adopted a research-through-design practice to integrate youth food literacy into an envisioned system that no longer reinforces childhood obesity. I will answer the following research questions:

- What key systemic drivers shaping youth food practices in Curaçao can be identified and mapped?
- How do Curaçaoan youth experience the food system, and how does it influence their food literacy?
- What systemic configuration would better support Curaçaoan youth food literacy, and through which leverage points could movement toward this configuration be initiated?

The first part of this thesis dives into the history of the island and how colonialism has impacted its food environments. Next, it explores how an adapted food literacy framework can map the current practices of Curaçaoan youth. The next phase describes the field research that resulted in a system map of the current food system, as well as a diagram representing the food literacy of the youth. Insights from both these outputs were translated into an envisioned system that I explored with a probe, setting the ideal conditions for healthy food practices. Finally, an expert session allowed me to refine the envisioned system map into an actionable roadmap.

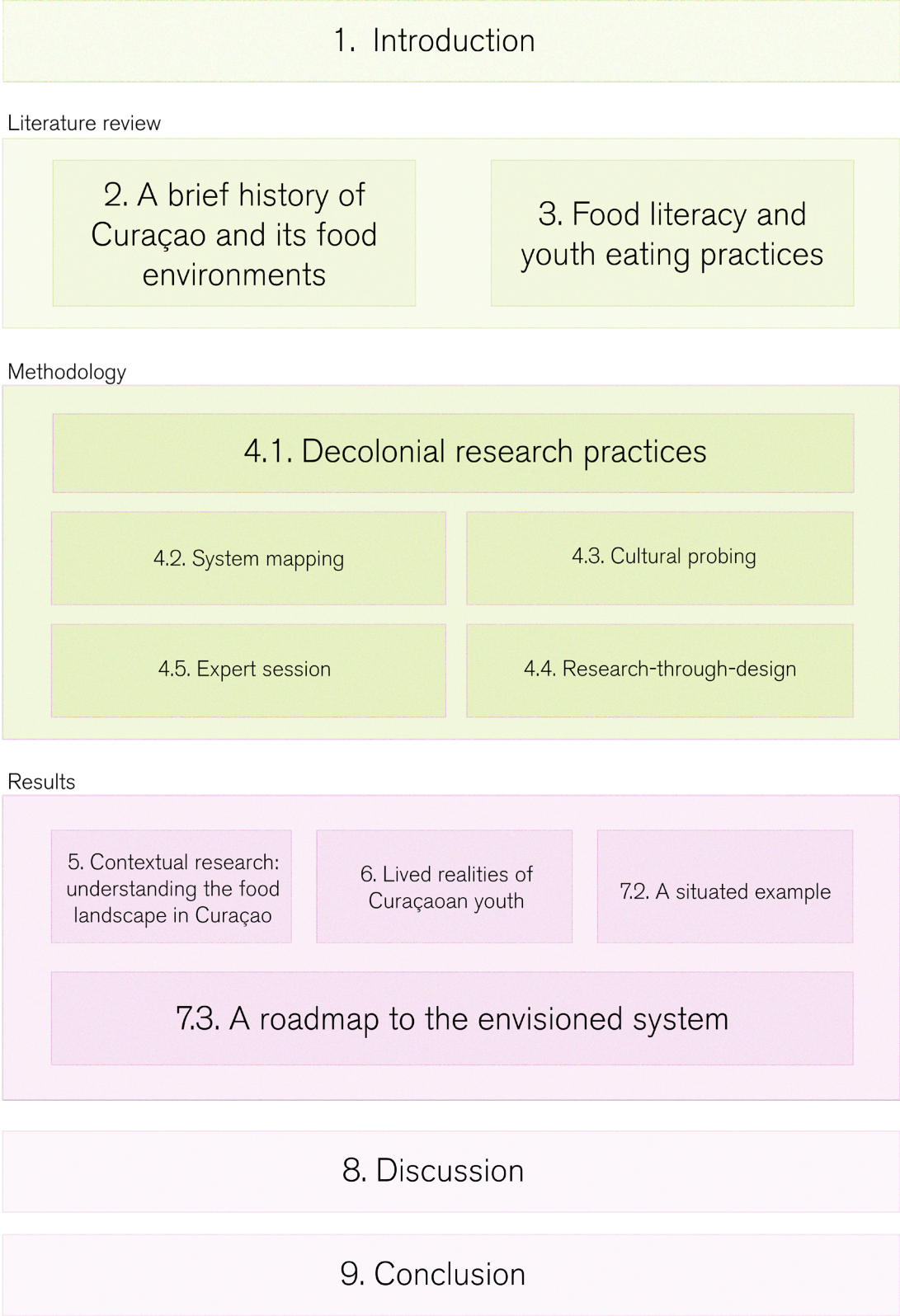


Figure 1: Structure of the thesis report

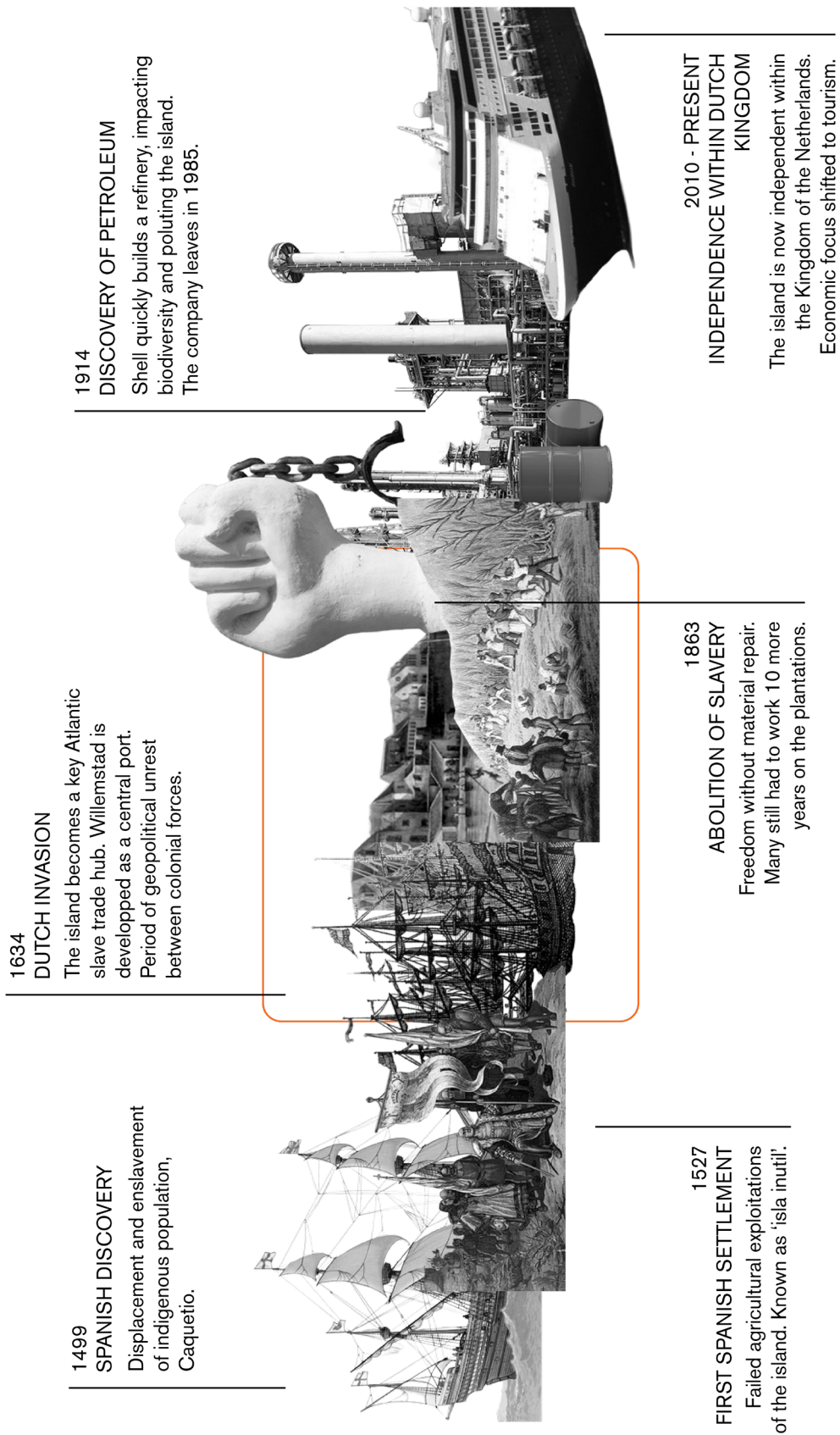


Figure 2: Historical timeline of Curacao from 1499 until now (Canon van Curaçao, 2020)

2. A brief history of Curacao and its food environment

This research takes place on the island of Curaçao, one with a long colonial history tied to the Netherlands. Before diving into the exploration of the current food system of Curacao, it is important to get a better grasp of the island's history and how it has impacted the current culture, habits, and lifestyles. Postcolonial literature in the Caribbean was explored to understand how colonialism has shaped current food systems.

2.1. Colonial history of Curaçao

Curaçao is located just above the coast of Venezuela in the Caribbean. This region was Europe's first site of colonial extraction. Spanish, English, French, and Dutch powers imposed plantation economies that highly impacted biodiversity and decimated Indigenous populations. This involved the involuntary displacement of enslaved people from Africa and Asia, bringing along their culinary traditions to the Caribbean. The social and physical interactions between all these different cultures led to the 'creolization' of the region (Garth, 2013). This refers to the creation of a new hybrid culture under colonial conditions of inequality. In food, this meant African, European, and Indigenous ingredients, techniques, and knowledge blending into cuisines that still shape Caribbean identity today.

Curaçao's unique location turned it into a strategic slave trading hub of the triangular trade. Figure 2 shows a glance at the history of the island, from the Spanish discovery in 1499 until the present day. The information is based on research done by the University of Curaçao (UoC) (Canon van Curaçao, 2020). This timeline highlights the position of Curaçao more as an object of exploitation rather than a piece of land with its own agency and free will. From its discovery onwards, it has always been under the control of one of the colonial powers, whether it was Spain or the Netherlands. This commodification of Curaçao, its land, and its inhabitants has set in place different mechanisms which impacted the food system.

These mechanisms are visualised in Figure 3. It shows how the plantation economies meant agricultural intensification with the large-scale plantation of crops, benefiting global trade. Curaçao was not particularly fit for large plantations; local manual labour mostly relied on enslaved and displaced groups, starting the process of creolization of the culture and basically creating a local culture from scratch. After the collapse of these economies at the start of the 20th century, the focus was not on revitalizing local agriculture and fisheries but rather on developing a regional oil refinery with the

presence of Shell until 1985, and later a focus on mass tourism (Canon van Curaçao, 2020). This reflects ongoing colonial logic, privileging external markets over local sovereignty. Not only did this impact the agrobiodiversity of the islands, but the continuation of colonial priorities in the Caribbean also impacted the diets of local inhabitants. Under Dutch colonialism, enslaved people were forced to eat 'slave crops' that were socially devalued within colonial food hierarchies (like plantains or yuca) (Wilk, 2006). The abolition of slavery expanded autonomy over their diets, leading to local communities favouring food choices symbolising freedom and status. In this context, imported foods came to be culturally revalued as symbols of status. Over time, imported goods have even become preferred (Marrero et al., 2023; Van Den Dungen & Graaf, 2025). These tend to be highly processed and energy-dense. Such shifts reflect what Hawkes (2006) describes as an "uneven dietary development," in which colonial and postcolonial trade structures accelerate a nutrition transition characterized by declining reliance on local staples and increasing dependence on imported, energy-dense processed foods. These structural shifts have reshaped the everyday food environment in which Curaçaoan youth make their dietary choices. Within this context, approximately 28% of adolescents (13–20 years old) report being overweight (Verstraeten, 2015).

2.2. Global food environment and interventions on Curaçao

First, it is important to have a general understanding of the consequences of Curaçao being a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) on its food environments. A food environment describes the set of time-based, spatial, economic, social, and cultural conditions that shape everyday food practices (RIVM, n.d.). According to the United Nations (1992), SIDS face a host of challenges partly due to their remote geography, which results in high import costs and a dependency on externally driven industries like tourism. Curaçao is part of the Caribbean region, characterized by high poverty related to high levels

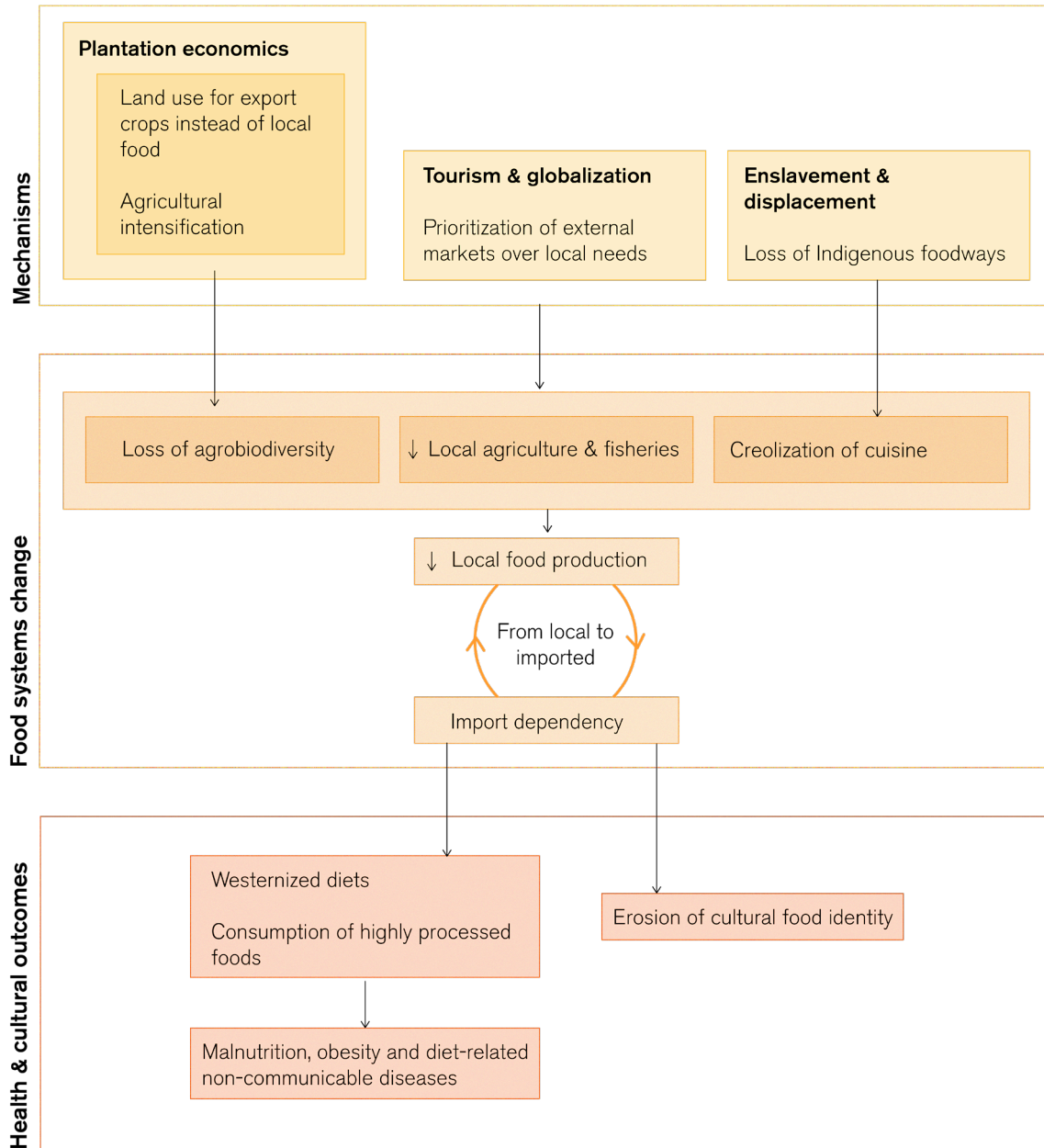


Figure 3: Visualisation of the colonial mechanisms impacting the food systems on Curaçao, adapted from Tak et al. (2025)

of unemployment. The region also faces a decline in the agricultural sector due to an ageing agricultural population, inadequate investment by both public and private sectors, and the increased scarcity of natural resources increased by climate change. An emergence of the retail sector offering highly processed, energy-dense, and micronutrient-poor foods is observed (FAO, 2012).

All of this impacts the global health of SIDS citizens with growing rates of nutrition-related non-communicable diseases. A systemic review of diet-improving interventions in SIDS by Haynes et al. (2022) highlighted that multifaceted approaches are likely the most effective. Examples are the combination of educational and practical skills to support the long-term effectiveness of these interventions.

But what does this mean for Curaçao? As of October 10th, 2010, Curaçao has become an independent state within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This means that the Curaçaoan

government is responsible for its own internal affairs, like governance, education, economy, and healthcare. Certain things are handled by the Kingdom itself, like defense, foreign affairs, and Dutch nationality. It also safeguards the respect of human rights. The Curaçaoan rights system is also strongly based on the Dutch one (Statuut voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden, 2010). This contrasts with the status of, for instance, neighboring island Bonaire, which is a 'special municipality' and thus receives much more financial support than Curaçao. Curaçao is responsible for its own budgets and finances, which highly impacts intervention subsidies and policies if governmental agendas are not aligned on certain topics like healthy food practices, for instance. Therefore, Curaçao is responsible for tackling the challenges previously described of being a SIDS, like import and tourism dependency, and the increase of nutrition-related non-communicable diseases due to an unhealthy retail sector.

Curaçao's political and economic status has the following consequences for its food environments.

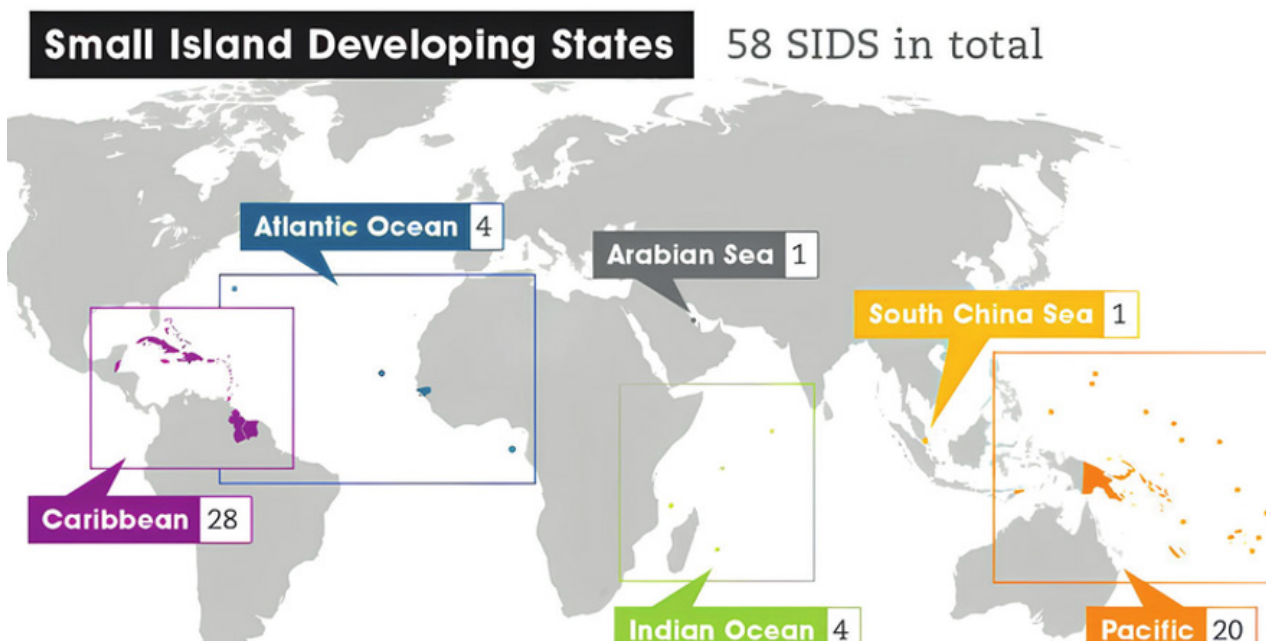


Figure 4: Overview of the SIDS in the world, from: <https://thesustainableagency.com/blog/climate-change-and-small-island-developing-states-sids/>

Table 1: Overview of local food security interventions (Rutenfrans, 2021)

Project name/location	Method
Kunukito di kas i di bario	Teaching residents of the 4 poorest neighbourhoods how to garden
Brievengat	Communitygardens
Kunukito di skol	Garden on school terrain
Syntropic farming course	Online
Otrabanda, Fleur de Marie, Seru Fortuna, Coral Specht	Communitygardens
Santa Barbara	1 ha for neighborhood garden
Hofi Cas Cora	Familiarizing people with local foods grown from their own garden

When it comes to the affordability and accessibility of food, Curaçao is highly reliant on import: 90% of the consumed food is imported. Consequently, Curaçao is very dependent on worldwide price fluctuation and supply disruptions. Recent market reviews also report a long tail of small shopping outlets like minimarkets or toko's, shaping price, proximity, and assortment for households. Many of these outlets sell a limited variety of products and are dependent on imported packaged goods (Fair Trade Authority Curaçao, 2022). However, consumer behaviour is equally essential. As previously described in Section 2.1, the colonial legacy has led consumers to prefer imported goods rather than locally produced ones, which does not contribute to the increase of local production, further normalizing import dependency and externally oriented food environments. For example, according to the Curaçao Global School-based Student Health Survey (Verstraeten, 2015), 21.2% of students between the ages of 12 and 18 report eating at fast food outlets 3 or more days a week. This project will dive deeper into why the youth are attracted to

these outlets and what influences these behaviours.

Several grassroots and institutional efforts have attempted to strengthen local food security and dietary awareness. Especially during COVID, the reality and the consequences of Curaçao's heavy reliance on imports impacted the entire island. It suffered an extended hiatus in tourism and a global disruption in its economy. Many inhabitants saw a significant drop in their income and struggled with groceries (Channa et al., 2023). The table above shows an overview of some recent initiatives.

There has not been an update on the results of these projects since 2021, which is partly due to their dependence on political prioritization to finance them (Rutenfrans, 2021). They are dependent on funding and subsidies from the government. There is little continuity at the moment. It is also unknown whether these projects have had a lasting effect. Many of these projects involved educating locals about how to garden in order to provide for themselves. But as Haynes (2022) explained,

tackling nutrition through interventions in the SIDS demands a multifaceted approach. Inhabitants might not have the time to tend to a garden or even to follow a course due to financial reasons or simply having different priorities or values.

Food practices are more than just skills; they also encompass culture, knowledge, norms, and routines. According to Swan et al. (2017), they are shaped by food narratives that guide how people interpret food and enact eating in everyday contexts. Most of these projects do indeed offer locally grown fruits and vegetables and skills, but that alone is not enough to reconfigure the narratives. Figure 5, from Swan et al. (2017) shows how food narratives are created all throughout one's life and shape practices. An example of food narrative is the transmission of values and practices through food during childhood. Experiences with non-processed food paired with positive parent-child interactions can act as a vehicle for passing on practical (for example, cooking skills) and cultural (for example, family recipes) food practices. For this reason, interventions should not

only focus on practical skills and knowledge but also fit the place that food practices take in people's lives.

This highlights the current mismatch between interventions and eating practices. Consequently, it is important to understand how eating practices are formed and what factors influence them through a systemic research approach that still dives into individual lived experiences.

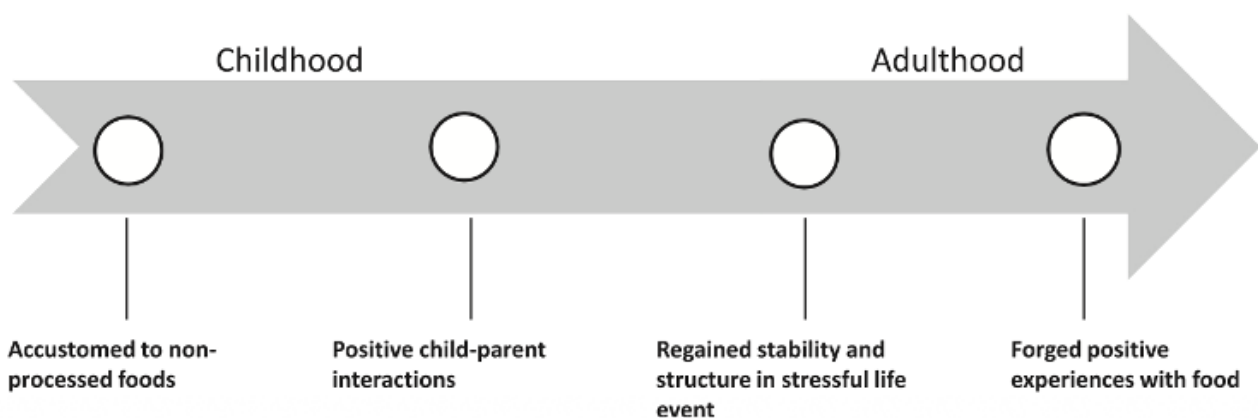


Figure 5: Overview of food practices impacted by food narratives, by Swan et al. (2017)

Key takeaways

- Curaçao's current food environments are shaped by its colonial legacy, import dependency, and externally oriented development, resulting in obesogenic environments and growing obesity rates.
- Existing grassroots and institutional initiatives primarily focus on practical skills and local production but insufficiently address the cultural, narrative, and systemic dimensions that shape everyday eating practices.
- The current mismatch between structural drivers, intervention strategies, and lived food practices calls for a multidimensional analytical framework to understand where opportunities for change may lie.



Photograph of Little
Curaçao, by the author
Curaçao, Nov. 2025

3. Food literacy and youth eating practices

The previous chapter explored how Curaçao's colonial history and status as an SIDS have shaped the food environments and eating practices of its inhabitants. The next chapter introduces DeWaters & Powers' (2012) literacy framework, which emphasizes how cognition, affection, and behaviour all shape one's literacy regarding certain topics. This framework is combined with Cullen et al.'s (2015) definition of food literacy to answer the need for a systemic and individual approach.

3.1. Food literacy framework

Cullen et al. (2015) define food literacy as understanding the nature of food and what it means to you, and having the ability to gain information about food, analyse it, and act upon that. It enables a more profound knowledge of the food system by understanding not only how food is produced but also its nutritional value and how to prepare it. Following DeWaters and Powers' (2012) framework, literacy can be described in three dimensions: cognitive (knowledge and problem-solving skills), affective (awareness, values, and sense of responsibility), and behavioural (participation and action skills). For food literacy to be achieved, all three dimensions should be considered. When adapting this framework to Cullen et al.'s (2015) definition of food literacy, we get the following indicators for a food literate person:

Cognitive: What someone knows

- Understands how food is produced, processed, distributed, and consumed.
- Understands how choices impact health, culture, environment, and economy.
- Recognizes that historical and systemic forces (colonial legacies, globalization, markets) shape today's food environments.

Affective: What food represents to someone

- Experiences food as part of identity, belonging, and cultural pride.
- Feels responsible for choices that support both personal health and community resilience.
- Emerging values surrounding food practices

Behavioural: What someone does

- Acts on this knowledge and attitude with practical skills (e.g., cooking, gardening, budgeting, critical evaluation).
- Engages in practices that strengthen sustainable and fair food systems, such as supporting local producers, reducing waste, sharing, and community initiatives.

This food literacy framework was used throughout this thesis to gain a better understanding of the

experiences of the youth surrounding their eating practices. This adapted food literacy framework fits Swan et al.'s (2017) vision of food practices through its three dimensions. The framework addresses behaviour and cognition which stand for practical skills and knowledge on a personal level and on a more systemic level. The third dimension addresses the most personal aspect of food practices that are shaped by food narratives: values through affection. Food narratives are about the lived experiences people have with food. They shape how people eat, what food represents, and create emotional connections with food (Swan et al., 2017). The affective dimension addresses just that. Together, these three dimensions give a holistic view of food literacy and could help reshaping food narratives.



Figure 6: Representation of food literacy and its dimensions

3.2. Dutch youth health interventions in schools

On Curaçao, recent food health interventions only partially focus on increasing food literacy. In the following section, I investigated Dutch youth health interventions in schools regarding food and how these can be used as a reference system for the Curaçaoan context, and to what extent they address the different dimensions of food literacy.

In the Netherlands, the rates of overweight and obesity are also advancing amongst the youth (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2025). Organizations such as the Voedingscentrum or Gezonde School work towards creating school food environments that enable and promote healthier food practices. The Gezonde School works with a 'whole school' approach. This means that all drivers of unhealthy practices are tackled to make viable change through education, environment, signaling of issues, and policies. (Wat Is Gezonde School? | Gezonde School, n.d.). Interventions should tackle both behaviour and information in contexts that enable the desired practices. An example is to tackle the canteen offer by promoting healthy food swaps and offering a range of healthy food. The students are informed about the swap and can then buy the swapped item directly. Together with the Voedingscentrum, lists of healthy food items, recipes, and menus are put together to help guide schools and canteens towards breaking the unhealthy food environments.

The general guidelines are as follows (Voedingscentrum, n.d.):

- Replace unhealthy snacks with healthier alternatives with fewer calories, salt, and fat
- Replace fried snacks with whole-grain toasties or paninis
- The fewer snacks are available, the quicker students choose something healthy when they are hungry

When looking at the 'whole school' approach from the Gezonde School from the perspective of food literacy, we can see that it addresses both the

behavioural and cognitive dimensions. It creates food environments that enable healthy food practices and raise awareness through knowledge. The affective dimension is tackled by letting the students participate more actively through activities and classes with the aim of creating new food narratives. The extent to which that is possible within school constraints is debatable, but the main goal of this approach is to facilitate environments where food literacy can grow and evolve towards healthy practices.

However, it is important to note that these programs rely on a high degree of institutional alignment, where policy, governance, and operations are coordinated across national and school levels. This raises the question of whether Curaçao already has the governmental scaffolding necessary to support such initiatives.



Figure 7: Overview of the Gezonde School approach taken from: <https://www.gezondeschool.nl/over-gezonde-school/wat-gezonde-school>

Key takeaways

- An adapted version of the food literacy framework can be used as an analytical tool to identify where cognitive, affective, and behavioural gaps exist within the current Curaçaoan youth food context.
- The affective dimension of food literacy is shaped by food narratives embedded in cultural identity and everyday practices.
- Dutch food health interventions at school implicitly address much of the food literacy framework and will be used as inspiration in this project, but they do require a high degree of institutional alignment.

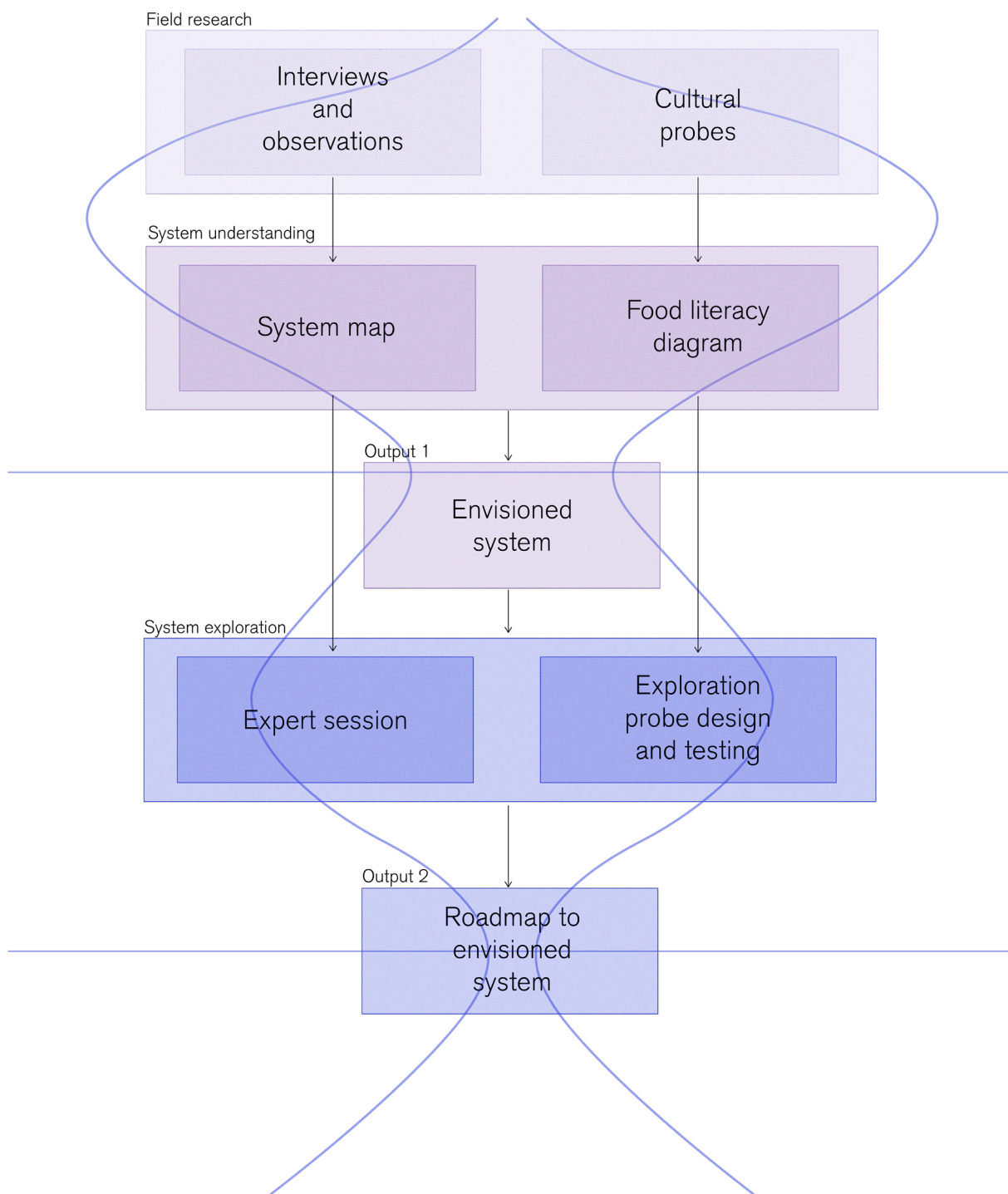


Figure 8: Visual representation of the methodology in the double diamond diverging/converging approach

4. Methodology in Curacao's unique context

This graduation project was set up as a double-diamond research-through-design project. The first phase was in the field to gather as much data as possible to map the current food system and the state of food literacy of the youth. The outcomes were synthesized in an envisioned system. The pathways towards that system were then explored to design a final roadmap towards that system.

4.1. Decolonial research practices

As previously highlighted, the colonial legacy of Curaçao creates a unique set of drivers that impact the food systems. As a Dutch design student having never set foot in the Caribbean before, I was aware of the need to enter this context with caution and curiosity. Yost (2018) argues the importance of integrating local knowledge and human experience into design and development processes in the Global South. They mention an example in Colombia where a village was donated agricultural equipment. Years later, that same equipment had remained untouched. This example highlights how transfer technologies (transferring pre-determined technologies or information into communities for the purpose of development) is not an effective approach if it does not match the actual lived experiences of the communities. It gives a false sense that local challenges can only be solved through charity, creating long-term dependence (Bunch, 1982, as cited by Yost, 2018). It shows the importance of working together with the communities and valuing their perspectives and knowledge before coming up with solutions. Although not part of the Global South per se, Curaçao's status as an SIDS does come with socio-economic, environmental, and developmental challenges that resemble those of the Global South. Another example is explored by Smith (2020), who worked together with the Gitxaala Nation, a First Nation in Canada that still experiences the lasting effects of colonization on their food systems with high rates of food insecurity, diet-related health issues, and barriers to the transmission of cultural knowledge around their Indigenous foods. Much like me, they were an outside researcher exploring food literacy in a local community. Smith dove deep into the community and resided there for a while to observe and learn in the field. They learnt more about their values and beliefs surrounding food. Through participatory processes, they concluded that enhancing engagement of students with hands-on activities that integrate local, Indigenous language and knowledge, they were able to make food literacy stronger among the community. Smith's role became that of a facilitator between local values and broader

food system aspirations, allowing change to emerge through the process.

These examples show how design processes in a postcolonial context need close collaboration with the local communities, an integration of the local values, needs, and habits, and an exploration of the lived experiences. All the while, it is important for the researcher to stay self-aware of their position and biases. Research in this setting is more about the co-creation of knowledge through a reciprocal relationship with the local community (Omodan, 2025). However, I am a Dutch student from the TU Delft, which, regarding the history and relationship of the island with the Netherlands, might make it challenging to overcome certain biases due to the colonial history between both countries. To overcome those challenges, I tried to reflect on my own positionality and biases. I also discussed the topic with local people I encountered during my field research to integrate their views on colonialism and the Netherlands into this project. Decolonial research is not only about reducing bias, but about recognizing power asymmetries and fostering reciprocal knowledge creation. However, this project is part of a Learning Community between the TU Delft and the University of Curaçao, promoting a long-lasting collaboration between both institutions. The longevity ambition of this community allows for even more decolonial work to be done by fostering a reciprocal relationship and moving beyond simply knowledge extraction.

These examples shaped the following methodological section of the field research. Rather than coming in with predefined ideas and concepts, I kept an exploratory and participatory stance to produce knowledge in which the local communities recognized themselves.

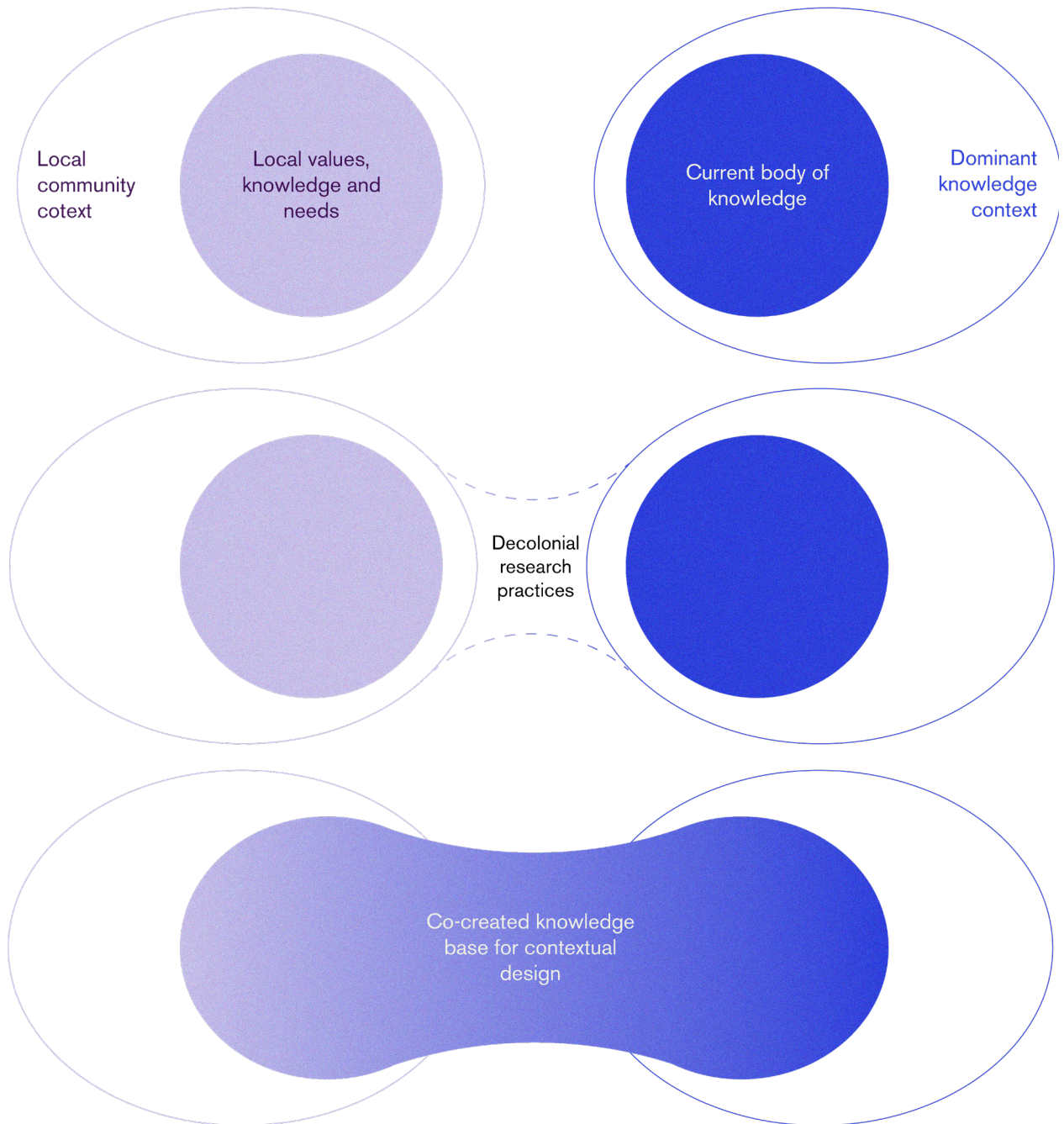


Figure 9: Overview of the approach op decolonial research practices

4.2. System mapping: understanding the food system and its stakeholders

The first step of the field research was to develop a systemic understanding of the current food system and what the drivers are for childhood obesity. The aim was to visually represent the complexities of the system to understand the different components, their interrelationships, and dynamics, and to finally identify opportunities for interventions.

4.2.1. Participants and selection

I selected interviewees based on their knowledge of the local food and health system, their relationship to the target group, and their knowledge of food literacy and interventions. To prioritize situated knowledge, 7 out of the 8 interviewees were locals from Curaçao. I interviewed the following people:

- Nutrition and Lifestyle Counsellor at the Ministry of Health, Environment, and Nature
- General Practitioner and Lifestyle Advisor
- Dean of a local high school

- Biology teacher at a local high school
- 2 founders of local food initiatives
- Food and sustainability PhD candidate

Each of them gave me insight into different levels of the system, as you can see in Figure 10. Macro is defined by the institutions and the government, meso stands for the communities, and micro stands for the groups closest to the target audience, youth.

4.2.2. Protocol and data collection

To make the system map, I used the following data collection methods:

- Semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders and experts
- Desk research
- Research observations

Desk research was used to gather policy documents, reports, datasets, and literature on Curaçao's food system, obesity, and institutional context. Research observations were conducted during field visits

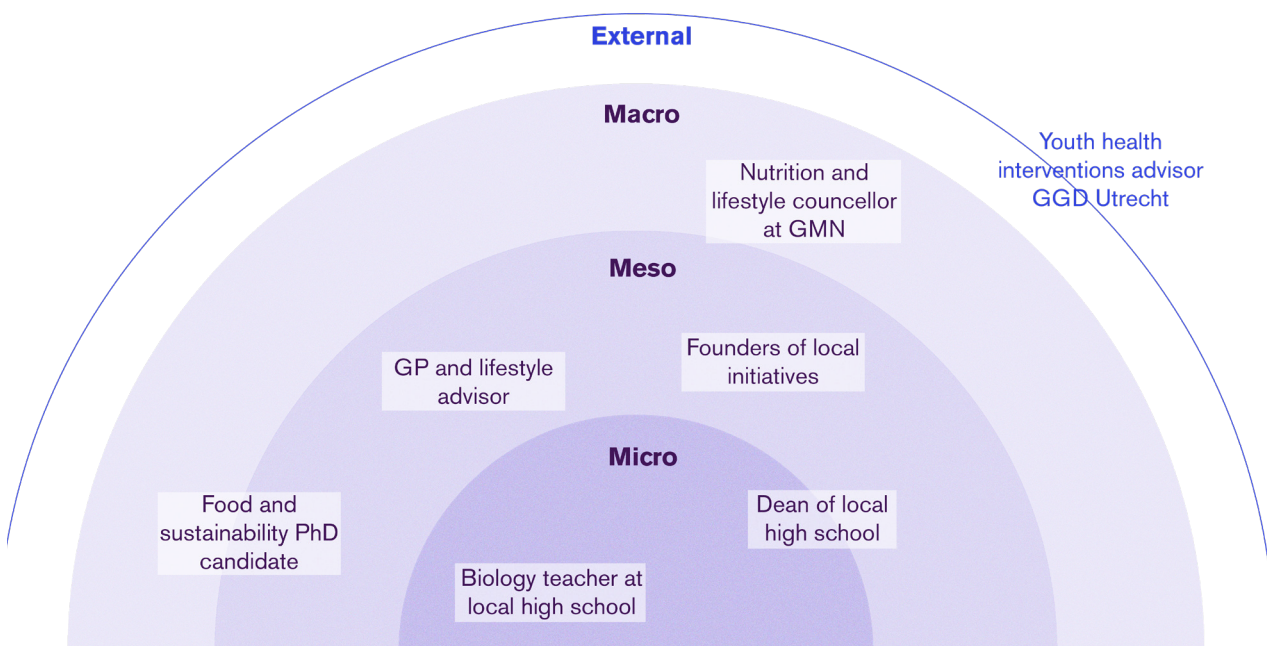


Figure 10: Overview of interviewees and position in the system

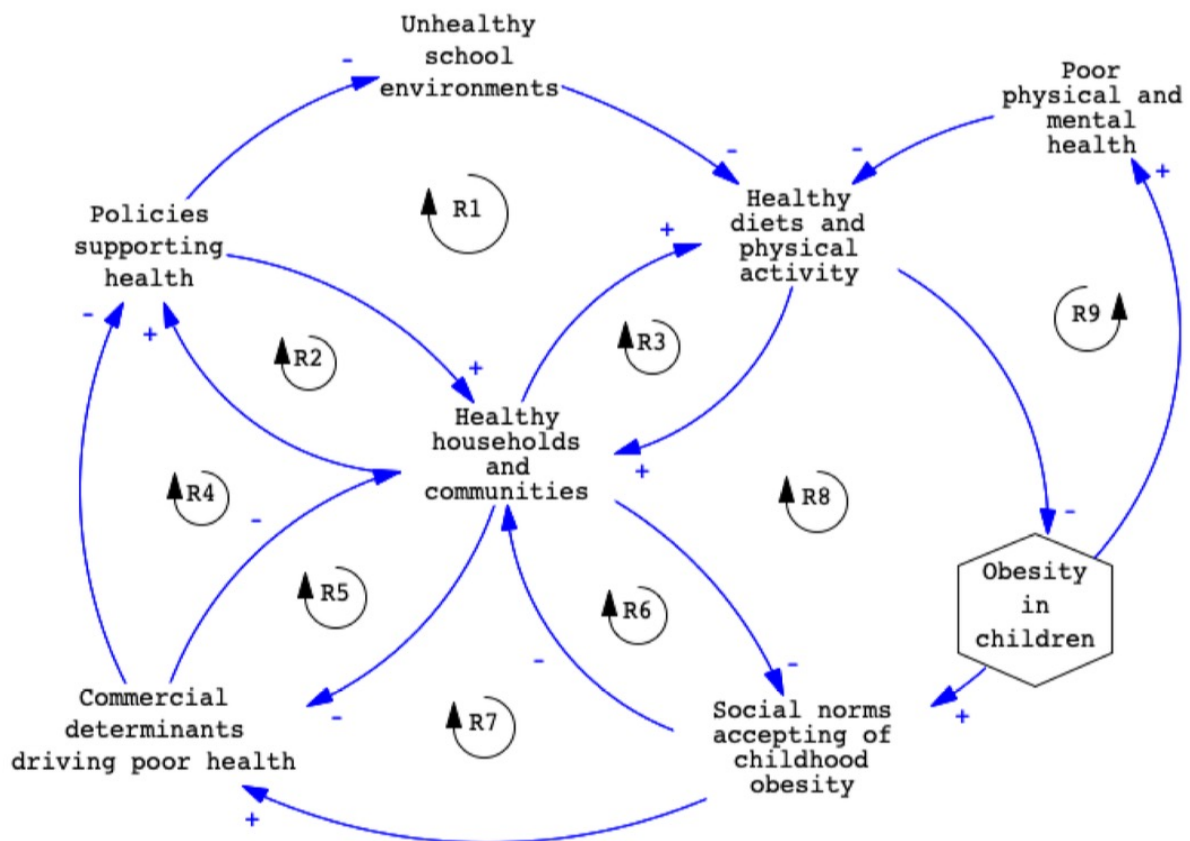


Figure 11: Systems framework reinforcing childhood obesity, from Guariguata et al. (2024)

to schools and food-related environments to note spatial, social, and behavioural patterns relevant to the system map.

The interviews uncovered how different stakeholders in Curaçao experience and navigate the local food environment, and how cultural, institutional, and economic dynamics influence food literacy and youth obesity.

The interviews were semi-structured to gain in-depth qualitative data. I asked about their backgrounds, their view on childhood obesity, and more field-specific questions. I had a set of guiding questions that still allowed for flexible and conversational interviews since the aim was explorative. All of them lasted around 1 hour, and 5 were recorded on my phone and then transcribed for easier analysis. I took notes of the other 3 interviews. Their consent to record and use the interview data was systematically asked for at the start of every interview. All of this resulted in approximately 5 hours of audio

recordings and 45 pages of transcripts and notes. The set-up for the interviews of the GP, nutrition and lifestyle counsellor, and the dean can be found in Appendix A.

4.2.3. Analysis plan

After transcribing the interviews, I conducted an analysis on a Miro board. I re-read each transcript carefully and highlighted relevant passages. I used Guariguata et al.'s (2024) system framework for childhood obesity in the Caribbean as a basis for emerging themes like for instance school environments, diets, policies supporting health or social norms as described in Figure 11. I looked at passages revealing the lived experiences and perceptions of Curaçaoan youth, their parents as well as the interviewees' experience around the local food system. I looked for connections to broader systemic factors, especially regarding institutional and governmental dynamics. I looked for indicators of food literacy and agency. And lastly, any comment regarding food environments and how these

environments shape their choices. Each highlighted fragment was turned into a note and visually arranged on the Miro board. The related notes were grouped around emerging themes such as school environment, cultural food identity, financial constraints, policy, and governance. Through this iterative process, patterns and connections started to surface. Rather than treating those themes as isolated categories, I looked for interconnections between them based on the narrative from the interviews to show how each node of the system influenced the others. This was an iterative process as each new connection revealed new dynamics. The system thus emerged from the data, reflecting how interviewees themselves described the relationship between actors and processes in Curaçao's food system. The final step was to translate these dynamics into the system map. This map then allowed me to identify three reinforcing loops that systemically keep childhood obesity in place on Curaçao. The resulting system map and the reinforcing loops will be further detailed in Chapter 5. The system map was then reviewed by 2 interviewees to counter confirmation bias and verify my interpretations. These interviews were recorded and analysed in the same way as the first ones. Minor adjustments were made based on their feedback regarding causal relationships and importance of certain drivers.

4.3. Cultural probing: understanding the individuals

The goal of the cultural probes was to explore how Curaçaoan youth experience everyday food practices and to identify values, routines, and contextual factors shaping those practices.

4.3.1. Probes as a tool to bridge gaps

Cultural probes have been used since the 90's as a generative method for design opportunities. It allows access to environments that are difficult to observe directly, and it helps capture the lived experiences of the users (Van Boeijen et al., 2013). They take the form of creative packages sent to the target group, allowing them complete freedom when completing the tasks. Gaver et al. (1999) explored cultural probes as a way of gathering 'inspirational' data for their exploratory design project about elderly people. It provided opportunities to discover new pleasures, new forms of sociability, and cultural forms. Cultural probing gave them an insight into the lived experiences of the elders they worked with by bridging cultural, geographical, and generational gaps. Another example is a project that explored community needs for disaster shelters in Puerto Rico (Chauhan et al., 2022). It highlighted how probes can help expand the design space by bringing forth a broader set of considerations. The researchers identified themes that were rarely considered when designing disaster shelters (e.g., mental health, skills, and resources of the community...). By highlighting the lived experiences of the community, it revealed how resourceful they already are. This is particularly relevant for this project, considering its context with strong colonial history and working with Curaçaoan youth who have a very different lived experience than mine. I wanted to explore whether the youth are really the ones who want to eat unhealthy goods or if that expectation is placed on them. The probes helped me identify themes that may be overlooked but still play an important role.

4.3.2. Cultural probing with young people

When designing a cultural probe pack for adolescents, it is important to keep in mind certain things. After research on children's educational

interests, Wyeth and Diercke (2006) came up with the following recommendations:

- The probe pack should include five or six self-contained activities. All the necessary materials for the activities should be provided to lower the threshold for completion as much as possible.
- The activities should focus on topics of direct interest to the participants.
- Each activity should be clear and easy to differentiate from the others.
- The completion time for each should not be too long.
- The activities should allow for open-ended and creative responses. They can be playful while still including a supporting framework.

These recommendations were considered when designing the cultural probe package for the project. To achieve that, the probes were designed so as not to be too childish or condescending but rather to elicit playful thinking in an abstract way. They should also feel not too professionally finished to make interacting with the probes as appealing as possible. As Gaver et al. (1999) explained, the aesthetics of the cultural probes package are also a way of bridging the gap between me, the group, and the topic. The probes had a simple design with clear colour codes for each section. The instructions were short and simple but with an inspirational tone. The prompts were kept open-ended to allow more creative freedom.

The packages were all handmade to make sure they did not look 'too perfect'. The probes were gathered in a craft envelope in which they could also be returned. Once returned, the probes were first discussed with the class to gather first-hand reactions and reflections from the participants.

The results of the probes were not used to directly design the next phase of my research, but rather to serve as an inspiration for my design direction. It gave insights into the lived experiences of Curaçaoan youth surrounding food and their environments. The probes were central to my understanding of the topic, but will not directly lead to my design.

4.3.3. Participants and selection

Youth can be a very specific and sensitive target audience. To mitigate risks within this research, only participants over the age of 16, the legal age for informed consent in the Netherlands and Curaçao, were recruited. Throughout adolescence, the autonomy of children increases. At the age of 16, they are well able to make their own food choices, even though these can be heavily influenced. The aim of this research was to find out what drives these choices and implement those drivers in the design direction. During both phases of this research, the same group of Curaçaoan adolescents participated. Participants were selected from two different educational institutions: the Radulphus College (a local high school) and the University of Curaçao. The aim was to have a diverse group in terms of age, social background, and varied lived experiences. Ages ranged from 16 to 19.

The recruitment was done through teachers and professors. However, I was aware that both these groups are, socio-economically speaking, not completely representative of the Curaçaoan youth. The Radulphus College is a more prestigious school, and the UoC is attended by only a limited number of students. Due to the exploratory and participatory nature of this research, statistical analysis was not the aim, but rather to obtain in-depth qualitative insights about the context. These insights were a foundation for my research. Further interviews and research helped connect these insights to the actual context of the island.

4.3.4. Probe materials

The probe package consisted of several activities that were all designed to give insight into the cognitive, behavioural, and affective aspects of food literacy. A complete overview of the probe activities can be found in Appendix B.

The first probe is a food diary, which explored the dietary habits of the students by tracking their meals in playful ways. This probe gave insights into daily behaviours and the reasoning behind them.

- Food location tracker (behaviour): The first page of the diary was a map of the schoolground

with the question to record where and what the student ate during a school day.

- Road to home (behaviour): The second page was a record of their post-school activities. They were tasked to draw or describe their afternoon and evening from school to their homes. They also had to describe what and where they eat.
- Taste of the day: The third page allowed them to give the overall sentiment of their day through the analogy of food taste (sweet, sour, bitter, salty, and spicy). They were then asked to describe why it tasted the way it did.
- Their perfect meal: The final page asked them what their ideal meal at school would be if they could choose anything they wanted.

This probe helped me get a better understanding of how Curaçaoan youth eat, and what their habits are. I was especially curious about the food location and the reasoning behind it. All of these explore, to a certain extent, what values (affective dimension) play a role in the behaviour of the youth. What drives them to make certain choices outside of the external drivers?

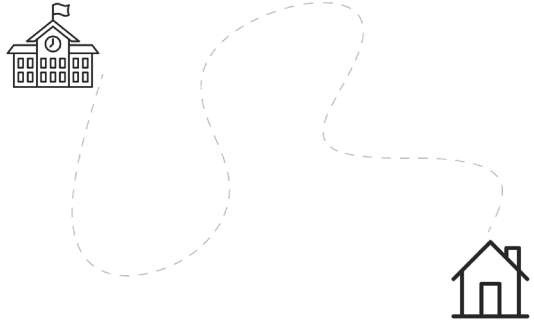
However, since I was working with 2 different groups with 2 very different schedules, I made a second version of the diary for the UoC students. This version only consisted of a day tracker, the taste of the day, and perfect meal pages.

The second probe was a food world map on which the students were asked to locate the origin of common supermarket food. The aim was not to be correct but rather to reflect on the place of imported products on Curaçao and how big a market it is.

The final probe was a set of postcards with reflective questions on the back. The participants could select how many postcards they wanted and answer the question. The images on the postcards represented different scenes surrounding food in a direct manner as well as in a more subjective way. The images were selected in a way that at least a few appeal to each student. They communicated places of food and togetherness and gave me insight into how the affective dimension of food literacy ties into the



Lief dagboek, dit is mijn weg van school naar huis. Ik was met deze mensen en ben hier en daar geweest. Teken het allemaal hier. Je mag de stickers als gids gebruiken. Laat ook weten als je iets hebt gegeten en waar.



Wat vind je hiervan?

Figure 12: Pages from the cultural probes (food diary and worldmap)



Figure 13: Full probe package

sense of place and belonging.

Together, this set of cultural probes helped gain a better understanding of the food literacy of the youth by allowing them to show their own food narratives.

4.3.5. Protocol and data collection

I gave a first batch of 7 probes to students from HAVO 4 at the Radulphus College. A group discussion was held with the whole class when picking up the probes. The aim of that group discussion was to find out more about the reasoning behind certain choices the students described in the probes. I let them describe to their peers and me what they did and how they reflect on it now. I also asked the other students to reflect on the probes shortly. This discussion was recorded for further analysis.

The second batch of 7 probes was delivered to students of the UoC. They have slightly different backgrounds than the students from Radulphus, which allowed me to extend the field.

4.3.6. Analysis plan

I picked up the 14 probe packages, of which 13 were filled in. Cultural probes are not designed for a systematic analysis. However, certain themes or topics emerged from the probes. Once again, I analysed the data on a Miro board. I went through each probe package separately and noted down any interesting or relevant insights. The following themes were identified: youth engagement, eating habits at school, social value of food, systemic knowledge, and healthy eating patterns. These themes were triangulated with the insights from the interviews and used in the system maps. Notes from the class discussion were treated in the same way.

The insights of the cultural probes were used to map out the food literacy of the Curaçaoan in a spider diagram. As described in section 3.1 of this thesis, the food literacy framework describes one's ability to gain information about food, analyse it, and act upon that. It consists of three dimensions: cognitive, behavioural, and affective, which all work

together. The diagram in Figure 14 served as a visualisation of the research results. Each coloured quadrant represents a dimension of the framework: purple for cognitive, orange for affective, and green for behavioural. It is not a quantitative visual for each dimension of food literacy; it shows which dimensions are currently stronger than others and helps to identify which opportunities arise.

Validating the insights from data collection

The cultural probes were a way of collecting data to map out the contextual drivers and lived experiences. To counter confirmation bias and to make sure my interpretation was as close to the actual lived experiences of the youth, a final test was required to validate the insights with regard to the food literacy framework. This was done using a Mentimeter, which is known to be a more engaging method when working with groups and with limited time. The aim of this quiz was to validate how the values that were identified (status, pleasure, and comfort/ease) relate to the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of the framework. Each of the 8 questions sketched a scenario with four reactions that all hinted at a possible value. Here is an example:

1. When I do not really know which food is healthier, I usually choose the option that...
 - a. Looks good
 - b. Is quick and easy to get.
 - c. Tastes best.
 - d. What my friends are choosing.
 - e. Other.

The complete list of questions and answers can be found in Appendix C.

The aim of this was to validate insights and not to collect data. For this reason, the students were faced with a closed set of possible answers, all relating to the insights of my research. However, every question had the option to answer 'other' if no other answer felt fitting. After each question, answers were discussed with the students, and they could explain certain answers.

The Mentimeter was done with the students of the

University of Curaçao, as they had already done the probing and were familiar with the topic. These students were also generally more responsive than the students of Radulphus, giving me richer details. I gathered responses from 15 participants.

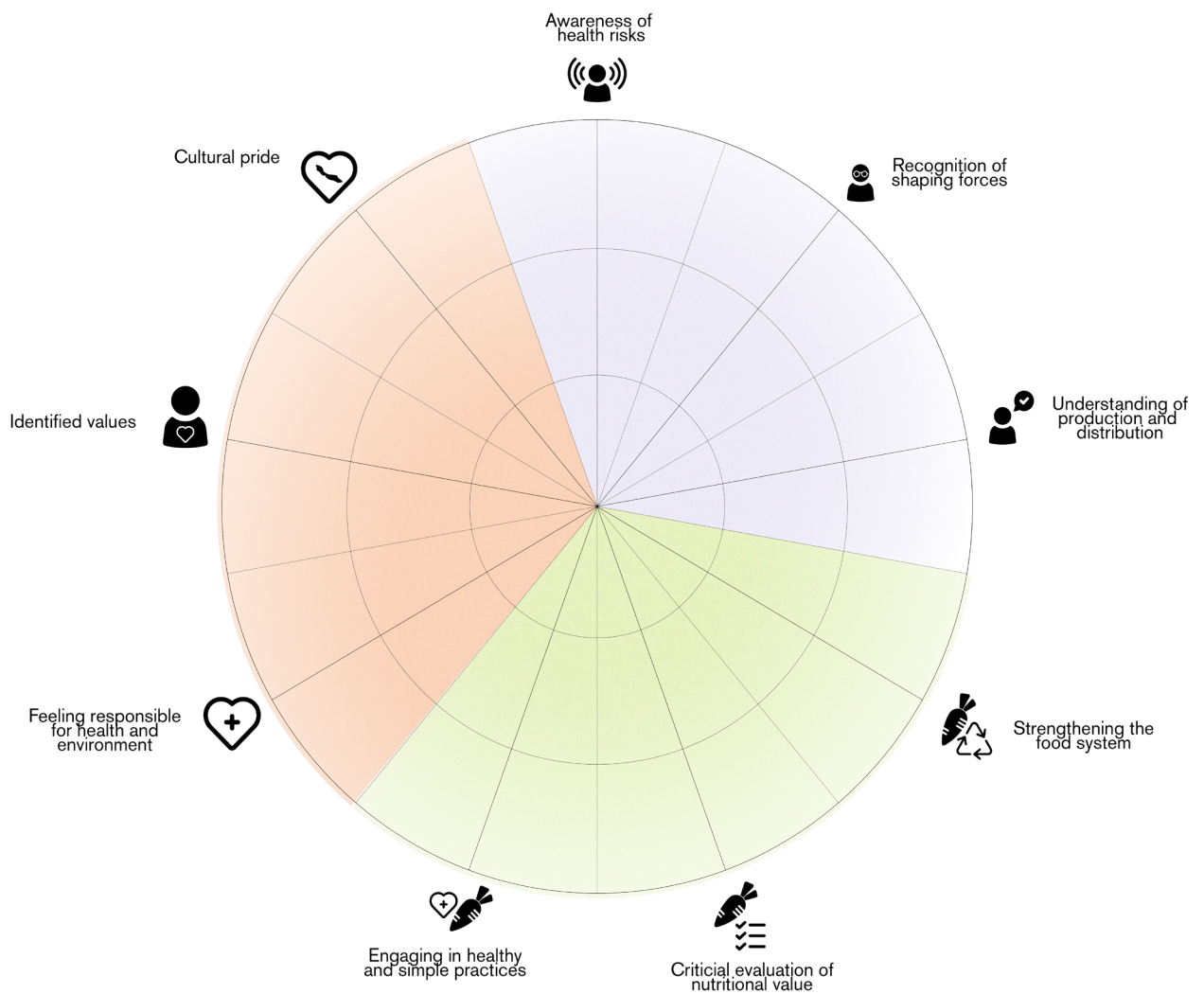


Figure 14: Diagram used for the visualising of the food literacy, developed by the author

4.4. Research-through-design: understanding the path to the envisioned system

The previous activities gave insights into the current system and how it is experienced by the Curaçaoan youth. Based on the opportunities identified, a probe was designed to explore those opportunities in a real context and observe how applying the identified affective value to that probe could possibly help in increasing overall food literacy. The probe was informed by earlier exploratory research into youth food practices and school food environments (see Chapter 6). The goal of the probe was to explore how the affective value of convenience could enable healthier food practices in everyday school environments. The design of the probe is explained in detail in Section 7.2. The insights of this research activity were used to inform concrete steps towards change in the system.

4.4.1. Participants and selection

The probe was tested in a similar high school context in the Netherlands. Due to the timeline of the field research, I was unable to perform this research activity in Curaçao. The differences in food literacy between Dutch and Curaçaoan youth were considered when analysing the results of this activity.

The tests took place at two high schools in Rotterdam, the Libanon Lyceum (LL) and the Rudolf Steiner College (RSC). These schools are not perfect representations of Curaçaoan schools since healthy eating is already a larger societal topic in the Netherlands. However, they are acceptable as a proxy since these tests aim at observing youth behaviour with the probe.

4.4.2. Protocol and data collection

For both, I was set up in the aula during either of these two slots: 10:00 – 13:30 or 12:00 – 15:00. This setup allowed for a more diverse range of students and sorts of interactions (lunch break, morning craving etc). At the first school, the aula is located more to the side of the school. The second school's aula is right in the centre, like the Radulphus.

To evaluate the intended interaction, I observed the actual interactions of the respondents with the intervention. I took note of whether it caught the attention, if fruit was taken, if they looked at the screen, and what reaction the provocations prompted (e.g., a conversation with peers). These observations were used to examine whether the interaction unfolded in line with the opportunities from the food literacy framework.

I drafted a short questionnaire (Appendix I), which I printed so that interested students could fill it in, since they are not allowed to use their phones at either school. Given the dynamic nature of the location, informal interviews were also conducted with curious students.

The first test at the LL served as a pilot and informed me of certain details to improve the second test at the RSC. At both schools combined, more than 70 students aged between 11 and 18 years old interacted with the stand, and 18 responded (aged 16 and up) to the questionnaire.

4.4.3. Analysis plan

The answers to the questionnaire were digitized in an Excel sheet to extract quantitative data from it. The research observations and notes were also digitized in Miro. The notes were clustered, and emerging patterns were compared with the questionnaire results. These findings informed the further development of the envisioned system map, highlighting convenience (financial, physical, and cognitive) as a key driver for enabling healthier practices.



Figure 15: Aula of the Libanon Lyceum, test location 1



Figure 16: Aula of the Rudolf Steiner College, test location 2

4.5. Expert session

I developed a first version of the envisioned system, where I defined the ideal role for each stakeholder in the current system, with possible actions they could undertake towards said system. The expert session was set up with the aim of expanding, challenging, and concretizing the pathways. It was a co-reflection to operationalise the envisioned system into a roadmap.

4.5.1. Participants and selection

To have a broad view of the possibilities for the system, I recruited two experts from different backgrounds:

- Youth Health Interventions Advisor at the GGD Utrecht: This expert has vast knowledge on health interventions in schools in the Netherlands and on what works and what doesn't.
- Policy Advisor at the Ministry of Health, Environment & Nature (GMN) of Curaçao: This expert has a broad knowledge of the Curaçaoan context, anchoring the envisioned system in the local context and reality.

I recruited only two experts for this session to keep the insights condensed and allow for more in-depth discussion during the session, which was done online. The knowledge of these experts was complementary due to one having a local policy perspective and the other having expertise on school and youth health interventions. During the session, I took on the role as a facilitator as well as a participant (but only during the open conversation), given my acquired knowledge on the topic.

4.5.2. Protocol and data collection

Given the online nature of the session, the interactive tool I used was Miro. The Miro template I developed can be found in Appendix J. This allowed the participants to actively engage with the session and to share their ideas. The session of 1 hour followed this structure:

- Quick introduction of each participant (5 min)
- Short introduction of my project insights to make sure everyone had the same level of knowledge

on the topic (5 min): current system map, food literacy framework, and the envisioned system statement

- Defining the pathways (10 min): for each stakeholder, I showed the current and envisioned role with the question 'What actions, policies, or programs could help this stakeholder evolve from their current role to their intended role?'. The aim of this exercise was to make the steps towards the envisioned system as concrete as possible for each stakeholder.
- Open conversation about the pathways (30 min): we went through each stakeholder and discussed the examples, current barriers, and possible opportunities to make the envisioned system possible.
- Final reflection (10 min): I asked a final question to the participants, to reflect on the envisioned system and the possible pathways towards it. 'If all these actions took place, how would the current system change?'

The online meeting was recorded and transcribed. Resulting in an audio recording of 1 hour and a transcript of around 42 pages.

4.5.3. Analysis plan

Since the aim of the session was to define the pathways towards the envisioned system. The session was documented in a shared Miro board. It generated a set of potential actions, policies, and stakeholder responsibilities that could support the transition towards the envisioned system. I clustered them into different pathways towards the new system: policy, legislation and regulations, reconfiguring food environments, economic and institutional support, and shifting food narratives. These clusters emerged from the data of the session. Based on the discussion, I was able to define a step-by-step roadmap towards the envisioned system. I also further refined the role of each stakeholder in the new system based on the discussions during the session. I visualised that system and how each stakeholder can contribute to the envisioned system.

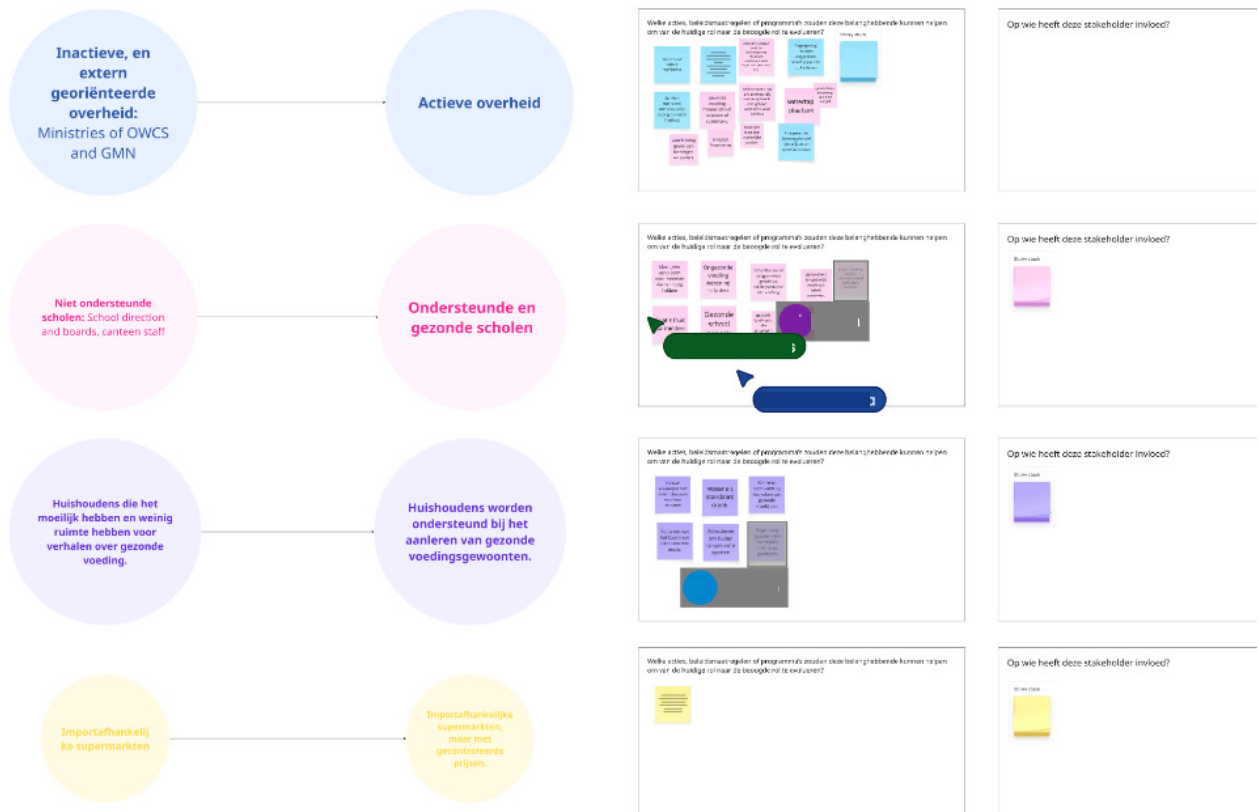


Figure 17: Screenshot of the Miro board during the session

Key takeaways

- This research followed an exploratory qualitative approach in Curacao, grounded in decolonial research practices that prioritize situated knowledge and reciprocal collaborations.
- The research-through-design approach was divided into two phases: understanding the system (field research and cultural probes) and exploring the envisioned system (expert session and probe exploration). Both these phases helped develop the roadmap towards the envisioned system.
- The lived experiences of the youth were explored using cultural probes designed to activate all the dimensions of the food literacy framework. The activities were tailored to the youth.



Photograp by the author
Curaçao, Nov. 2025

5. Understanding the food landscape on Curaçao

This chapter synthesizes the results and insights from the research activities. The methods allowed me to map out how Curaçao's food system operates and why unhealthy food practices persist among youth. The system map reveals interdependent loops between governance, culture, and everyday behaviour that all influence the food literacy of young people on Curaçao, leading to childhood obesity. While the food literacy framework highlights the cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of eating practices, these cannot exist in isolation from the wider system in which the food choices are made.

5.1 A system reinforcing childhood obesity

The following section describes the reinforcing loops that emerged from the system, of which an overview can be seen in Figure 18. The system map is an interpretive synthesis of the interviews, desk research, and observations. The following chapter introduces reinforcing loops as well as the main stakeholders present in the system that have been identified through recurring patterns across data. These loops highlight what dynamics are interconnected and what drivers keep reinforcing childhood obesity on Curaçao. The full-sized system map can be found in Appendix D. Each loop has been extracted and shown to its core.

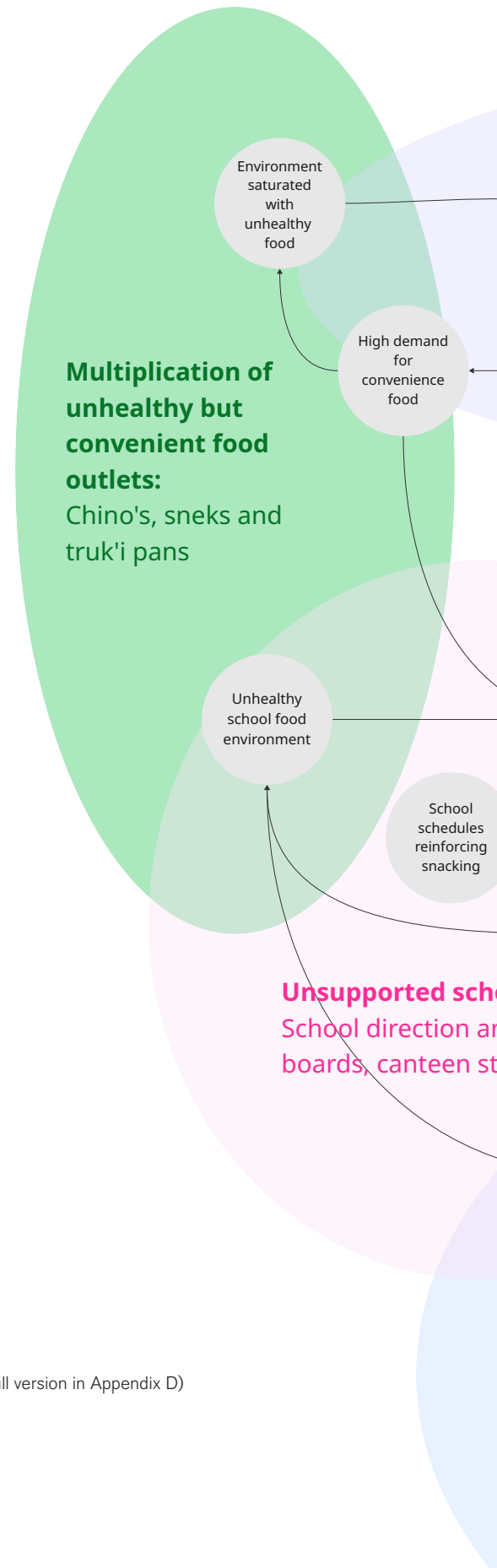
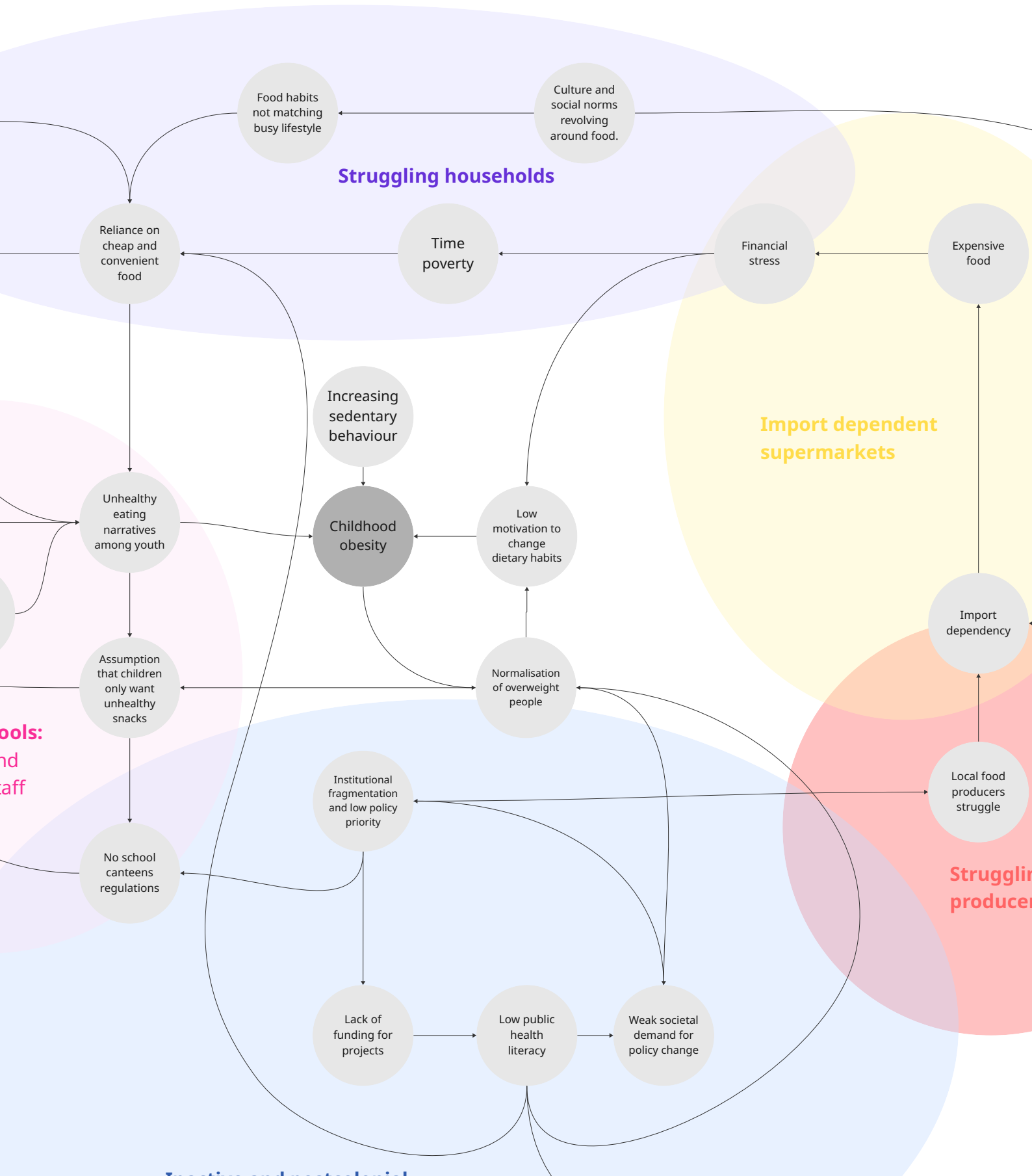


Figure 18: Map of the current Curaçaoan food system and how it influences childhood obesity (full version in Appendix D)



5.2. Reinforcing loop 1: Institutional neglect shaped by low public and political awareness

The first reinforcing loop describes institutional neglect shaped by low public and political awareness of the health risks associated with obesity. This lack of awareness is caused by deeply rooted cultural values found within institutions, communities and families, and in individual behaviour.

The low awareness can already be seen on the governmental level and is the start of the reinforcing loop. An interview with a nutritionist and lifestyle counsellor at the Ministry of Health, Environment and Nature (abbreviated as GMN), revealed that the ministry does not currently have the fight against obesity and the obesogenic environment as a priority. Instead, it focuses on chronic illnesses while neglecting that overweight and obesity are key risk factors for many noncommunicable chronic diseases (PAHO/WHO, n.d.). Much research has been done on the topic by the government. For instance, a flyer has been made to help people improve their diets with a simple overview of how much of each food group they should include and the importance of daily movement. However, during my research, I only came across that flyer once, when the nutritionist gave it to me. Much of the research done by the government sets a strong basis for possibly impactful initiatives. However, the lack of transparent, accessible, and efficient government policies makes it difficult to set up these projects and reveals a lack of awareness of the public health issue that is obesity on an institutional level. When digging further to understand the governmental inaction, a reaction I heard twice was that healthy eating is not a topic amongst Curaçaoans. 'Healthy food is not talked about here.' It is not something that is discussed or part of daily life. This reveals deeper cultural patterns at play. A local PhD student explained that food is something to be enjoyed and that should bring comfort. Providing plenty of food is telling of status and of hospitality, which are shared values in Curaçao. These values further decrease public health literacy and thus increase the normalization of overweight people.

The normalization of overweight bodies and obesity reinforces the low motivation for change and keeps the public health literacy low since there is a weak societal demand for policy change. Hereby feeding back to the low institutional awareness and prioritisation.

To synthesize, the loop shows how a deeply culturally rooted stance with regard to food impacts governmental inaction with regard to promoting healthful eating. As the normalization of childhood obesity and unhealthy food practices increases, it strengthens a weak societal demand for public interventions in a fragmented governance, further amplifying the normalization. This creates a reinforcing loop where low public health literacy remains in place.

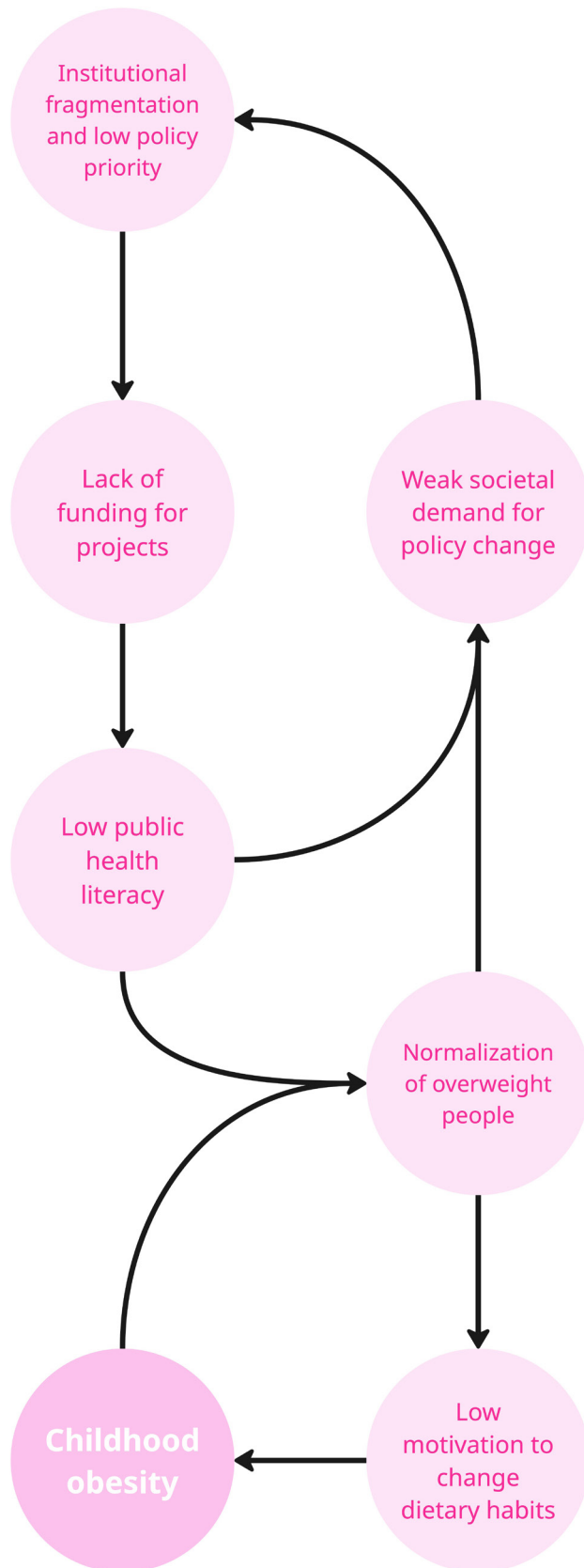


Figure 19: Reinforcing loop 1 - Institutional neglect shaped by low public and political awareness



Figure 20: Photograph of the price of apples (21,49 ANG is approximately 10 EUR for 1,3kg of apples), from <https://www.curacao.nu/nieuws/economie/51476/prijzen-groenten-en-fruit-op-curacao-bijna-drie-keer-hoger-dan-op-aruba-en-bonaire>

5.3. Reinforcing loop 2: Convenience-driven obesogenic environments

A second reinforcing loop in the system addresses the unhealthy food environments on Curaçao. This loop investigates how the obesogenic environment enables certain behaviours amongst youth and within their families on Curaçao and how the previous reinforcing loop (RF1) keeps it in place.

RF1 not only impacts public health literacy and the normalisation of overweight bodies, but it also impacts the physical environment. The lack of stricter policies on food and economic prioritisation enables a proliferation of cheap fast food with food trucks, chinós, and sneks. In supermarkets, we see a strong import dependency with expensive products, especially regarding fruits and vegetables. According to the FTAC (2022), Curaçaoans pay around 300% more for these items. This can be described as an obesogenic environment, defined as an environment promoting weight gain and obesity by Swinburn et al. (1999). These environments saturated with cheap,

energy-dense foods make unhealthy choices the default.

On Curaçao, around 40% of adults eat fast food weekly. This consumption pattern is often linked to the socio-economic status of adults. Households with a lower education level have more trouble making ends meet and rarely meet the daily fruit and vegetable intake (Volksgezondheid Instituut Curaçao, 2019a). With around 80% of the population earning less than 3000 NAF (around 1500€) monthly (Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao, 2020), we can assume that a large chunk of the population relies on these unhealthy and convenient food options. This normalises the frequent consumption of these convenience foods, thus lowering the demand for change even more and strengthening the reliance on the obesogenic environment. The low public awareness only worsens this problem. An interview with a general practitioner and lifestyle coach gave insight into how the culturally driven household patterns regarding food practices and narratives. Many patients are unaware of the

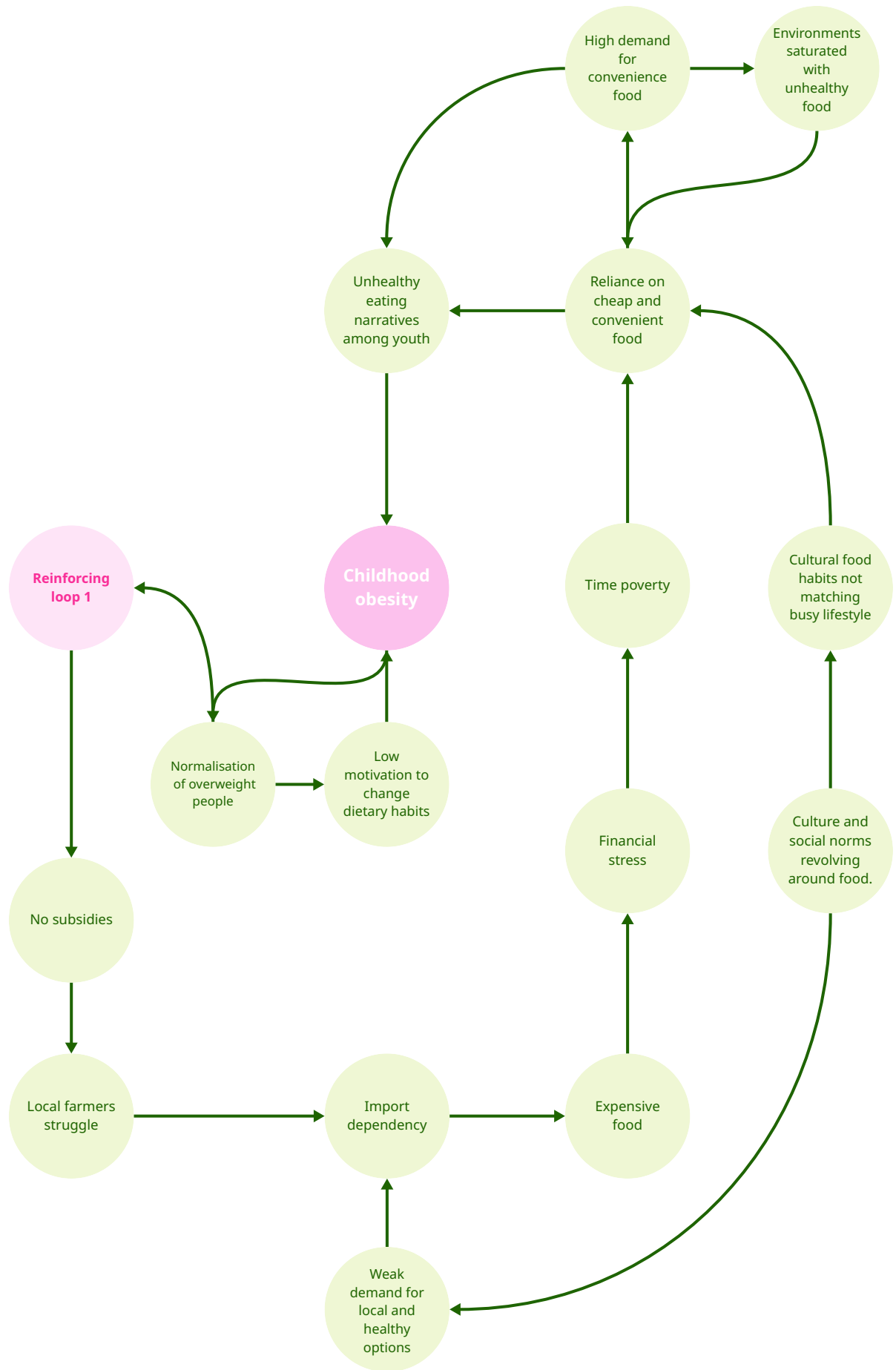


Figure 21: Convenience-driven obesogenic environments

health risks associated with an unhealthy diet and being overweight, while around 65% of adults on Curaçao are overweight (Overgewicht en obesitas volwassenen in Curaçao, 2018).

Patients faced with this problem often do not know how to tackle the issue due to the many factors that contribute to it (diet, stress, sedentary lifestyle, etc). The GP mentioned that patients come in being overweight but do not see the problem or are unaware of it. Patients often attribute being overweight to heredity (“we are a fat family”) rather than to modifiable behaviours, which limits perceived agency for change. Their children are also not the ones who usually make food decisions. So, they eat what their parents give them, which can lead to childhood obesity, further reinforcing the idea that they are a ‘fat family’.

But how does this impact the youth’s eating behaviour? Children eat what their parents provide or what their daily environment provides, such as school supplies. On Curaçao, seven out of ten students eat fast food weekly, and two-thirds drink soda daily (Volksgezondheid Instituut Curaçao, 2019b). This eating pattern can directly be linked to childhood obesity. The Curaçaoan social scene revolves highly around the food truck culture, placing truck’i pans as key locations for socialisation. This also participates in normalizing unhealthy eating practices amongst youth, reinforcing unhealthy eating habits. The GP explained that among youth, taste preferences are increasingly aligned with fast-food norms, suggesting that globalized food cultures have redefined local understandings of what constitutes ‘good’ or desirable food. This only reinforces the demand for food trucks and unhealthy eating habits.

As consumption becomes normalized, public demand for healthier infrastructure remains low, reducing political pressure for regulation and perpetuating the same environment. Children are constantly surrounded by unhealthy food options, making resisting temptation difficult. Especially surrounded by peers who tend to imitate each other’s behaviours.

To synthesize, as reliance on cheap and convenient food increases, feeding the obesogenic environment due to economically related drivers, it further normalizes unhealthy eating habits amongst youth, further amplifying the reliance. Changing habits and behaviours in obesogenic environments is challenging, creating inertia within this loop.



Figure 22: Photograph of a Truk'i Pan, from <https://nemahcuracao.com/savor-the-authentic-flavors-of-curacao-at-truck-di-pan-a-culinary-guide-for-nemah-guests/>

5.4. Reinforcing loop 3: School environments reinforcing unhealthy food narratives

This final reinforcing loop describes how the school food environments also play a role in reinforcing childhood obesity through unhealthy eating narratives amongst youth. Through its inactive state, RL 1 also prevents the creation of school canteen regulations. The dean of a local high school explained how the canteen staff was under the assumption that the youth would only want to buy foods like pastechi's, candy, or soda. This assumption exists partly due to the actual food practices the youth show. However, as RL 2 showed, these behaviours are induced by household practices and the obesogenic environment. An example can be found in Radulphus, who is faced with a Subway and a chino right at the exit of the school. The canteen offers only further strengthens the obesogenic environment of students' daily lives. At the same time, schools are environments where food

practices are repeatedly enacted during formative years, shaping their food narratives. However, the daily food environment of the students does not help them in making healthier choices when given the chance to choose their own food. This pattern creates a state of inertia, where students are not even given the option to make healthy food choices, thus normalizing the consumption of unhealthy foods. In turn creating a reinforcing loop between assumptions about behaviours that only strengthen those exact behaviours.

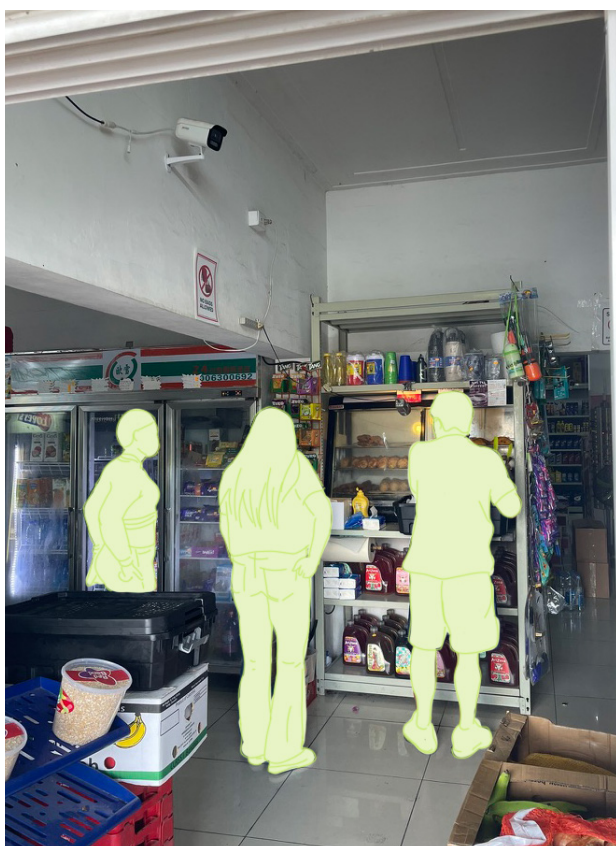


Figure 23: Chino (small local supermarket) selling fried snacks right next to a local high school, taken by the author



Figure 24: Fastfood chain, right across a local high school, taken by the author

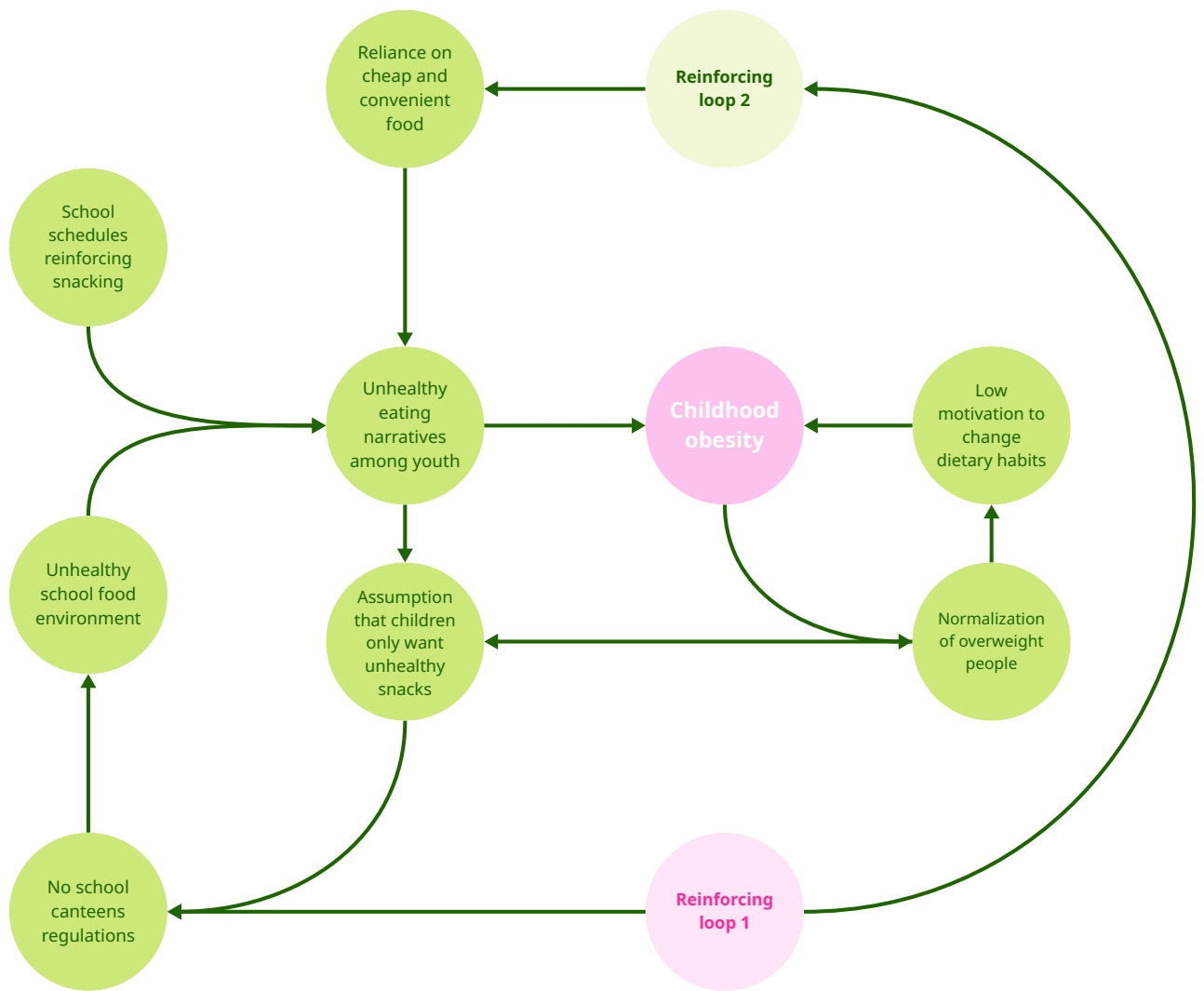


Figure 25: School environments reinforcing unhealthy food narratives

5.5. An interconnected system

Together as well as separately, the reinforcing loops work towards creating a system where childhood obesity is kept in place. Figure 26 shows how governmental inaction reinforces and is reinforced by cultural and socio-economic factors in Curaçaoan households. Together, these loops shape the daily environments of the Curaçaoan youth, especially in schools. That can be seen in the unregulated canteens or the assumptions about student demand.

At schools, students are faced daily with food narratives shaped by household habits and routines, their peers, and most importantly, their environment. These narratives do not remain confined to the school setting; they reinforce household expectations, shape consumption demand, and contribute to the normalization processes described in RL1 and RL2. In this way, schools function as active sites in the reproduction of the broader system. Following Smith's (2020) approach, I

positioned schools as a crucial site for food literacy work. Schools are one of the few institutional spaces where intergenerational, cultural, and political dimensions of food are connected. By intervening at this level, I seek to challenge the normalization of convenience-driven, unhealthy food practices that are kept in place by governmental inertia.

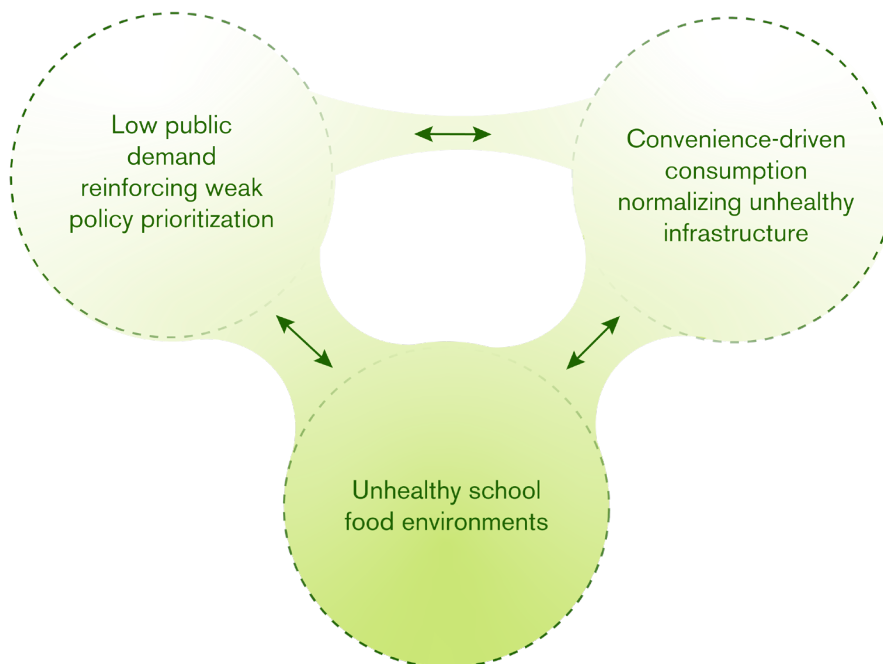


Figure 26: Visual of how the reinforcing loops are connected

Key takeaways

- Childhood obesity in Curaçao is maintained by systemic feedback mechanisms rather than isolated behavioural choices.
- Institutional neglect acts as a foundational driver that enables the obesogenic to persist.
- Obesogenic environments shape everyday practices by making unhealthy food options the most accessible and socially reinforced choice.
- The normalization of being overweight sustains the system by reducing the perceived urgency of change, keeping in place unhealthy practices.
- Schools emerge as leverage points because they reproduce, and can potentially disrupt, these systemic dynamics.



Photograph from <http://nab-bv.com/portfolio-item/radulphus-college-curacao/>

6. Lived realities of Curaçaoan youth

The following chapter dives into how Curaçaoan youth experience the previously described system. Through the case study of a local high school, I explored what the systemic drivers of childhood obesity look like in youth's daily lives. Then, the results of the cultural probes show how this reality is experienced by the youth. This chapter aims to further explore the role schools play in this system through the case study of Radulphus College.

6.1. Radulphus College: A case study of Curaçaoan school food environments

Radulphus College is a local high school in Curaçao. It is known as a school for socio-economically privileged children. It is situated in a wealthy neighbourhood on the island. However, it faces many challenges regarding healthy food practices. And if even a relatively privileged school faces such challenges, that suggests that structural limitations of school-based food environments are systemic rather than operational, aligning with the drivers identified in the previous chapter. Such challenges are probably also present at other schools. The main difference between Radulphus and other Curaçaoan high schools is the socio-economic status of students. This mostly influences food practices outside of school and might reinforce unhealthy food practices, which are cheaper and more convenient even more. In this section, I focused on the food environment of the school as well as the daily food practices of Curaçaoan high school students.

6.1.2. The food environment

On the school grounds, there is a canteen where

students can buy snacks and other unhealthy foods. From 11:00 on, there is also a food truck selling fried snacks. There are no healthy food options for the students. Figure 28 represents photographs of the canteen and the menu. Nowhere on the school campus can they obtain fruit, for instance. The school grounds are very green and offer a vast array of space for students to sit together and enjoy their break. The physical environment supports lingering, social interaction, and comfort, while the food offered within this same environment is limited to quick, energy-dense snacks.

It is, however, key to note that the canteen staff also need to make a living out of selling the food. This is their livelihood. For this reason, the menu mainly consists of items they are sure will sell to make as much profit as they can.

Outside of school grounds, the school is in a residential neighbourhood, and there are still many fast-food and other convenient food outlets around the corner. They are easily accessible by car after school, especially when parents are in a rush to pick up their children during their own break.

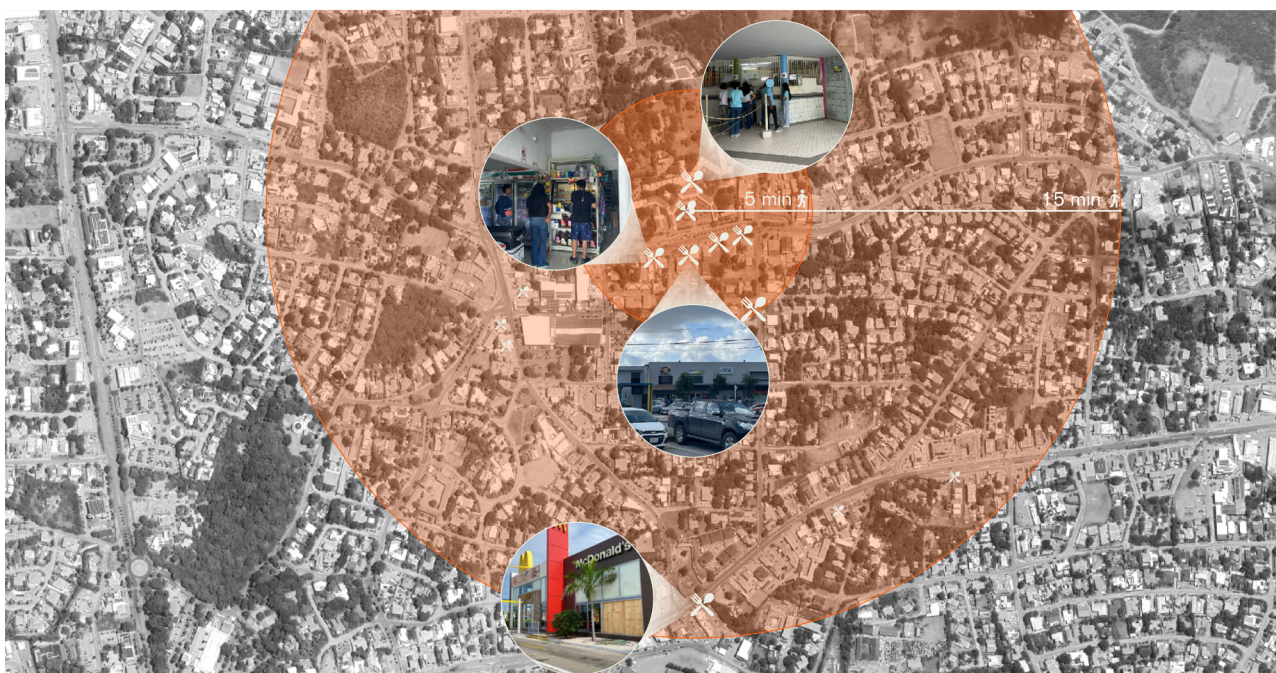


Figure 27: Map of the Radulphus and nearby food outlets

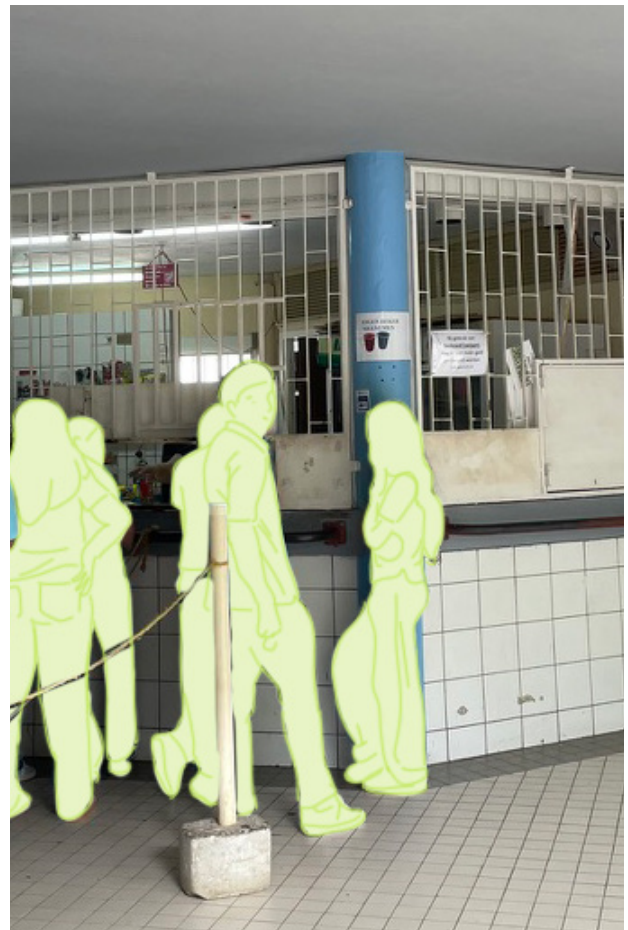
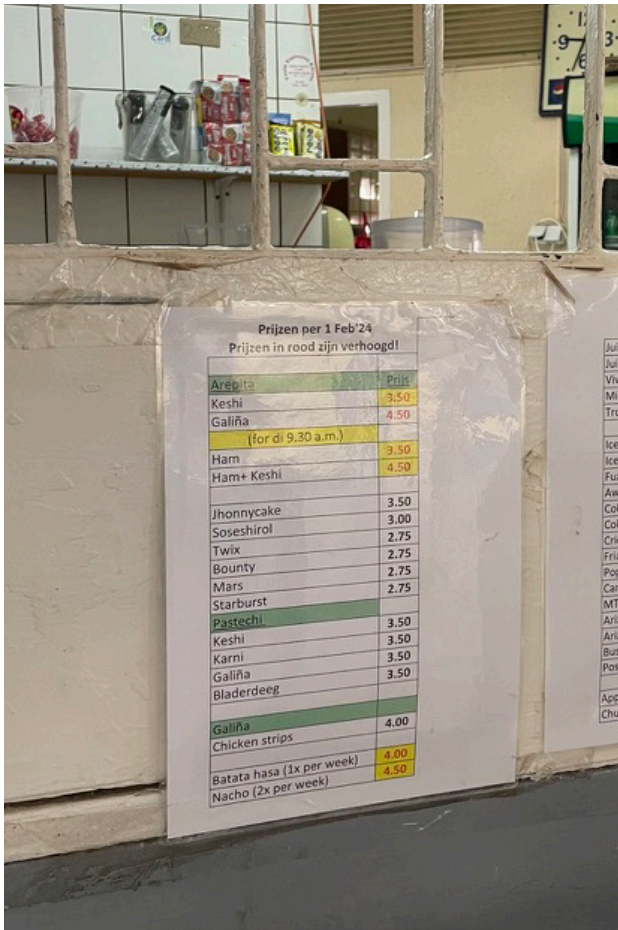


Figure 28: Photographs of the central location of the Radulphus College and the canteen, taken by the author

6.1.2. Plotting students' daily school routines

The school day on Curaçao is also quite different from most Global North schools due to the tropical climate. Schools start very early and end around noon. In the afternoon, children are either brought to after-school daycare and tutoring by a parent or go back home. This creates a rush hour around noon, when many parents drive their children around during their own lunch break before returning to work. The time constraints make it difficult to have sit-down lunches, which are common in Curaçaoan culture, where warm lunch is the norm. Many parents resolve to stop at nearby food outlets on their way, which are often fast-food or food trucks, which usually are not the healthiest options. These practices normalize the consumption of convenience foods multiple times a week.

Figure 29 depicts food practices of Curaçaoan youth during their school day. These practices are based on observations at the school and conversations with a teacher and the dean. It shows the different snacking practices during the school day. The early

mornings make it difficult for certain students to always have breakfast or prepare snacks for school for certain students. During school time, it is not uncommon to eat during classes or to buy snacks in between classes because the early mornings can make hunger strike at around 10:00 already for certain students. As depicted in Figure 29, the school day is quite packed. Each class is around 35 minutes long, and they all have a 20-minute break around 10:30. Students must rush to get to classes, and during the break, there is usually a queue at both food outlets (canteen and food truck), especially since these are the only food places at the school. After school, students tend to buy snacks at nearby food outlets while waiting with friends for their parents or the bus. The timeline in Figure 29 does not further depict the afternoons of students since there is a lot of variation from student to student, with some going to after-school tutoring and others going home.

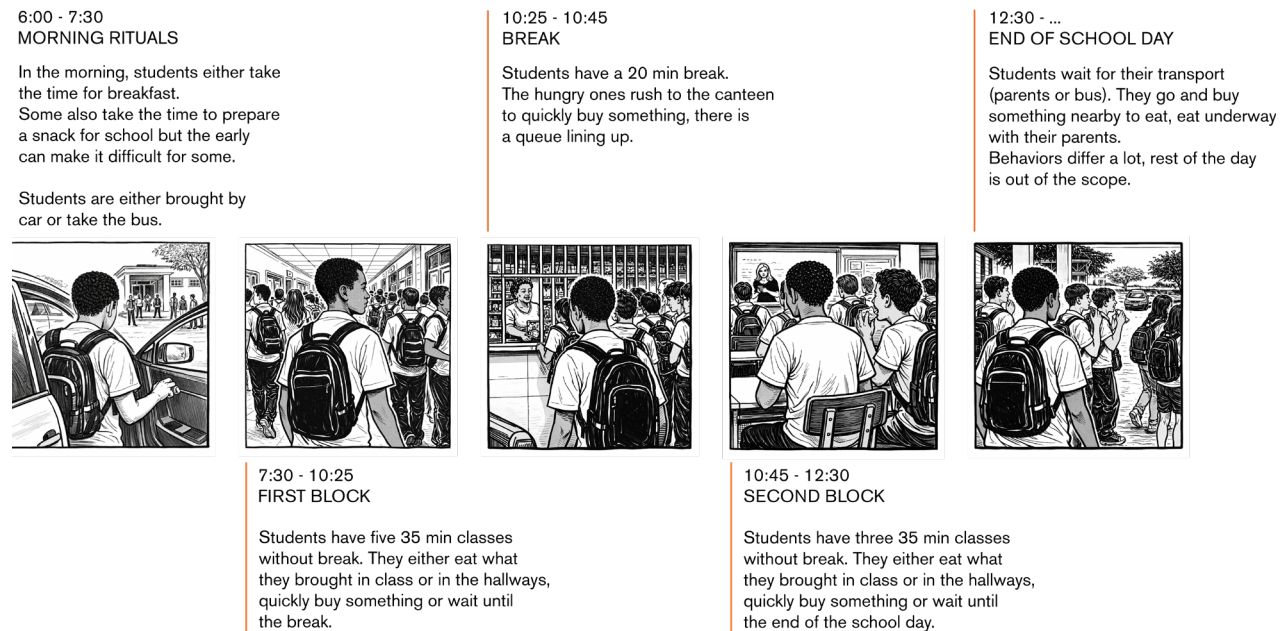


Figure 29: Timeline of a Curacaoan high school student's day, based on research observations and cultural probes. Visuals generated by ChatGPT

6.1.3. Political and board-level inertia

When zooming out, the political inertia identified in section 5.2. is also reflected in the school food environments. There are currently no policies safeguarding the promotion of healthy food practices in schools, even if they are facing financial limitations. This is seen in the presence of mostly unhealthy school canteens. The Radulphus is part of the Stichting Rooms Katholiek Centraal Schoolbestuur (RKCS), a school board of 48 schools all around the island. Despite multiple attempts, I was unable to reach them during my field research, but the dean of the Radulphus explained how the board oversees the finances of the school. Currently, the Radulphus has strictly no budget for such initiatives. For instance, teachers who want to print extra material for their classes must pay for it themselves, making it difficult to find motivation to make the curriculum more exciting for the students. Another example is an initiative by the student council, where students would sell healthy alternatives to the canteen items during the school break. However, this was time-consuming for the students, and the school had no way of paying for an alternative. Even though the project was positively received by the students, the pilot had to stop. The canteen staff repeatedly mentioned that they did not want to sell healthy food because they believed that students would just buy the unhealthy stuff elsewhere. On Fridays, the students can get free popcorn during the break to celebrate the end of the week. All these examples highlight how the promotion of healthy food practices is not a topic of conversation.

It is important to note, however, that the school does have a class on general health where students are taught about healthy alternatives and behaviours. But it is difficult to put them into practice in such food environments as the Radulphus. This duality between knowledge and environment is key to this research thesis. It is reflected in the intent in infrastructure that does not support said intent.

To conclude, this case study of Radulphus highlighted how the absence of promoted healthy food options, combined with the proximity of unhealthy food outlets and a highly compressed

daily schedule, leaves little space for reflection on food choices within everyday school routines. It shows the structural constraints within the school food environments. But how do students experience this and navigate these food systems? The next section dives into probing the lived realities of the Curaçaoan youth to see how they experience this.

6.2. Engaging the youth: Probing the lived realities

The unique food landscape of Curaçao poses many different challenges for the food literacy of the youth. This is influenced by political, economic, historical, and cultural drivers. The next step was to dive deeper into the lived experiences of the youth and let them actively reflect on their food environments through a creative process. The first step was to understand what shapes their choices, which was done with cultural probing. These insights inspired the design direction and highlighted certain topics or themes that needed attention.

6.2.1. Results

The probe packages were given back with a high rate of shallow answers and reactions. The group reflection was also difficult to facilitate, as attention was disparate and students were shying away from answering questions. Nevertheless, the results from the probes did provide actionable insights. These shallow results suggested that discussing food and health might not be an everyday practice for the youth. Most students mentioned that their mothers were the ones cooking and taking them to food places. Together with a surrounding flooded with unhealthy and convenient food outlets, students might not realise the importance of making decisions when choosing food and how these decisions can impact their health and wellbeing.

Each activity from the packages focused on one of the aspects of food literacy. The next section discusses the results and insights for each of those aspects.

The food diary

The food diary allowed students to visualize what they did in a typical day, and the role food played in it. Both groups were in the middle of their exam period and spent most of their time either studying or with their family. In Curaçao, a school day is from around 7:00 until around 13:00 with no lunch break to avoid the heat. This means that students tend to prefer convenient food that is easy and fast to eat, most turning to snacks (pastechi, candies, cookies).

"Sometimes I buy junk food at school to eat." – Student from Radulphus

Some students do bring food from home, like crackers or sandwiches. After school, students report being 'very hungry' and going to a fast-food chain or taking out is quite ordinary. However, some students do mention a wish for healthier options at school, like fruit for instance.

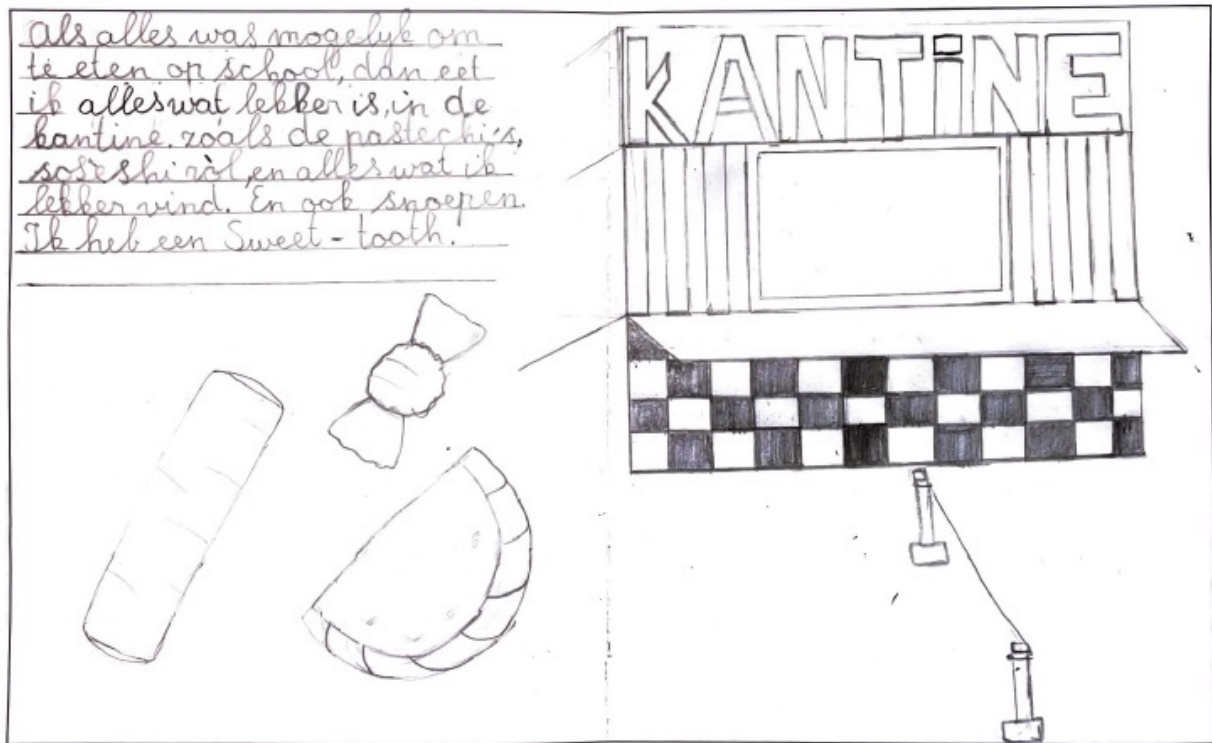
"I would love to have a platter of all kinds of fruits [...], low-calorie juices, and pizza. Having a balance between meals is the key." – Student from the UoC

When asked what they wanted to eat if anything was possible, most students described snacks and candy, or any food they really enjoyed. This highlighted a first value in food practices: pleasure. Food should be tasty. This value appears both in what the students choose and in what they want. This shows to some extent that even though there is a general, though quite low, knowledge of healthy food practices, context and pleasure drive behaviour quite a lot.

"If anything was possible in the canteen, I would choose the things I enjoy most, like pastechi..." – Student from the Radulphus

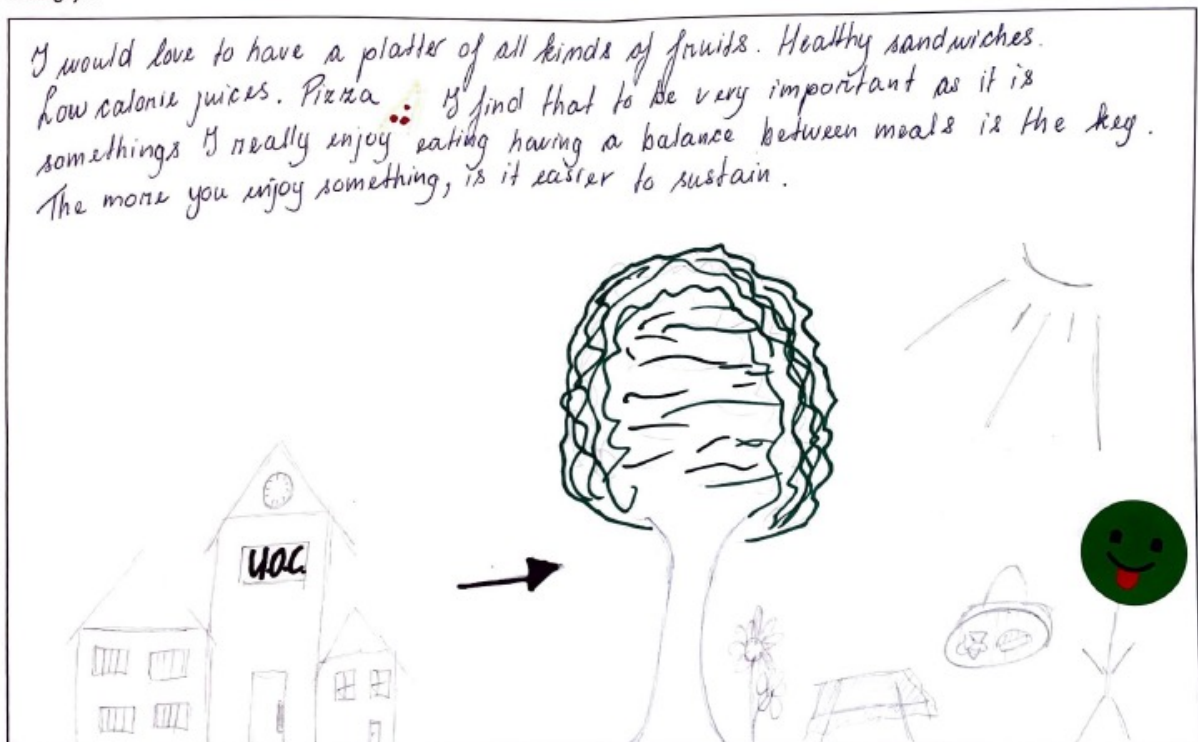
The food diary revealed that the eating habits of Curaçaoan youth are heavily constrained by school schedules and food availability. They tend to eat what is available without questioning health or nutrition too much. An implication is to make healthy options the quickest and closest options to students as well as more pleasurable.

Lief dagboek, eten op school is heel erg anders dan thuis. Stel alles was mogelijk geweest op school dan zou ik dit graag willen. Beschrijf hier wat je het liefst op school zou willen eten als alles mogelijk zou zijn. Teken ook waar dat is en met wie je bent. Waarom vind je dit belangrijk?



Bedankt lief dagboek voor het luisteren!

Lief dagboek, eten op school is heel erg anders dan thuis. Stel alles was mogelijk geweest op school dan zou ik dit graag willen. Beschrijf hier wat je het liefst op school zou willen eten als alles mogelijk zou zijn. Teken ook waar dat is en met wie je bent. Waarom vind je dit belangrijk?



Bedankt lief dagboek voor het luisteren!

Figure 30: Selected results of the cultural probes, food diary

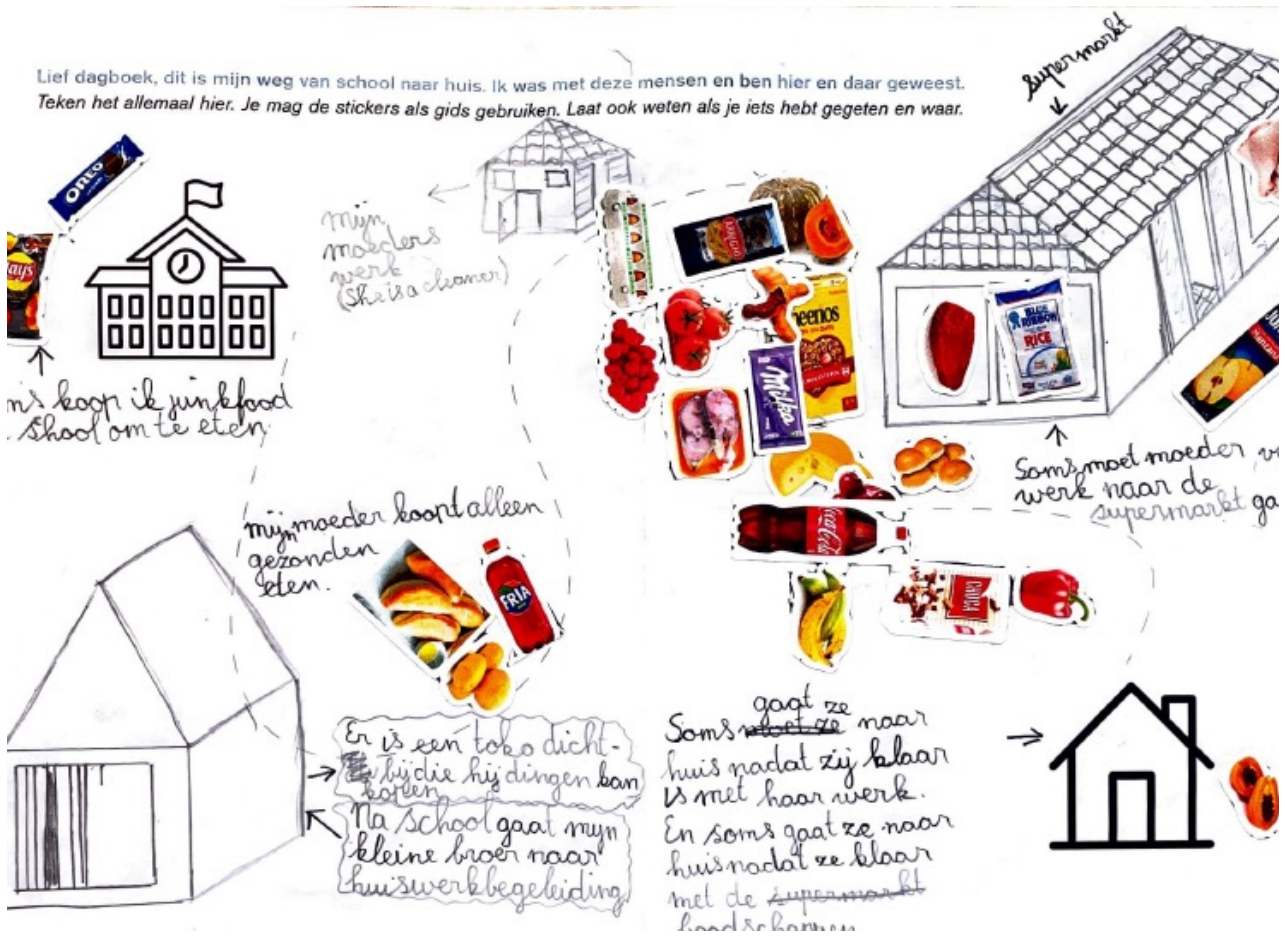


Figure 31: Selected results of the cultural probes, food diary

The food world map

All the world maps, except for one, seemed to be randomly filled in. The ingredients were placed randomly on the map. This reveals that students overall have very limited knowledge of the origin of their foods. During reflection, they also did not reveal caring a lot about where their food comes from. This highlights a limited view of the larger food system. This can be linked back to how healthy eating and food origin in general are not topics of discussion in Curaçaoan society.

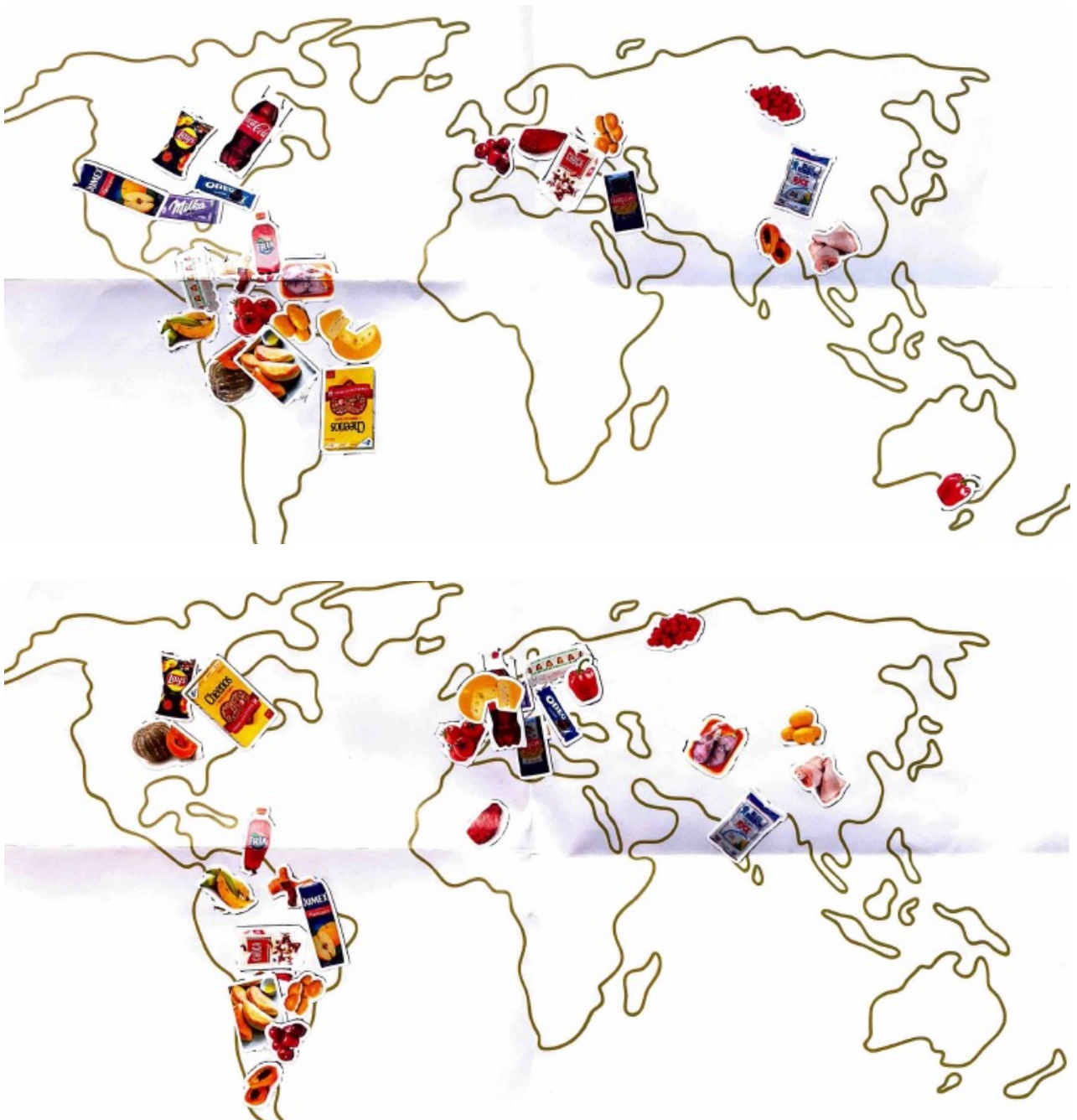


Figure 32: Selected results of the cultural probes, worldmap

The postcards

The reactions to the postcards gave insight into the affective dimension of food practices, fitting with the local culture revolving around food and food locations. Students go to food places to hang out together. The climate also plays a role in this, since restaurants typically have air-conditioning. The island currently has a limited offer of such places, which are not a mall or a restaurant. The postcards reveal the importance of eating together with friends and family for young people on Curaçao.

"When I eat with friends, it becomes nicer than when I eat alone. [...] You socialise more." – Student from the Radulphus

But most importantly, they highlight a second value in food practices: ease. Food practices should be easy and convenient due to the climate as well as financial constraints. This value appears in where and what students choose to eat, as well as their description of social settings.

"Q: What makes a place nice for having lunch?

A: When you are with someone, and it is cold." – Student from the Radulphus

Recurring values in youth food practices

The cultural probes also gave us insight into recurring values that unconsciously impact their food practices. The first one is pleasure, which can be seen in taste preferences guiding food choices, choices in snacks, the ideal meals that were described, and the overall fast-food appeal. This value is about enjoying what you eat and how you eat it. Popular cultural foods are mostly quite unhealthy and tend to be unbalanced but are perceived as tasty by many. A second value is ease, which is driven by busy school schedules, the warm climate, time pressure due to financial stress, and the availability of food. All these conditions make it important in Curaçao to do things the easier way. The system is also built around this idea of ease, with convenience food on every street corner, for instance. A final, more implicit value emerging from the data is status. This one shows up in habits of

Wat maakt een plek fijn om met je vrienden te zijn? Waar ben jij het liefst et je vrienden?

de omgeving en hoe de plek er uit ziet bij Subway of burger haus

2

Wat maakt een plek fijn om te lunchen?

als je kan met iemand en als het koud is

1

Wat speelt er door je hoofd als je iets kiest om te eten?

If I enjoy it or not. Whether it is unhealthy or healthy I don't care at that moment.

Wat maakt eten met vrienden anders dan alleen eten?

Wanneer ik met vrienden eet, wordt het meer gezellig dan wanneer alleen aan het eten bent. Er wordt veel gossip vertellen en wanneer er gossip is wordt het prettiger. Als je alleen aan het eten bent, gebruik je je telefoon meer, maar als je met vrienden eet ~~also~~ socialiseert je meer.

Figure 33: Selected results of the cultural probes, postcards

eating out, preferring imported over local due to the idea of better quality and the norms of abundance in hospitality. Together, these values point to emerging food narratives about what eating should feel like in everyday life: pleasurable, easy, and socially meaningful. These narratives are partly cultural and partly reinforced by the wider food system.

To conclude, the cultural probes gave insight into the lived experiences of Curaçaoan students and their food practices. Like adults, students showed partial knowledge about health (e.g., recognising fruit as healthy) but almost no awareness of food origin or production. They showed unhealthy daily food habits and highlighted values that play a role in food practices: pleasure, comfort, and status.

6.3. Validating cultural probe insights

Given the limited responses to the cultural probe, validating activities were necessary. The aim was to further refine my data and check for interpretative blind spots and confirm whether the emerging results could be observed in everyday food practices.

For the session, I used a Mentimeter with questions structured around the food literacy framework to explore which values of status, pleasure, and ease played the largest role in the different dimensions of food literacy. The full results can be found in Appendix C. The main driver of food practices being called out most was the taste of food. Meaning that pleasure seems to be the biggest driver among youth food choices. Some other things that were mentioned quite often were food prices, time constraints, and energy levels. One student did mention paying attention to eating healthily but highlighted how time-intensive it was for her. She did it anyway because she knew it was better for her.

She was the only student in class having such food practices.

“Healthy food is expensive, and I don’t have time for it.”- Student from the UoC

“I do prepare healthy lunches in advance, but I plan a week in advance.” – Student from the UoC

This all relates to the value of ease as well. Once again, for most students, healthy food is not a topic of conversation. This reflects the general trend in Curaçaoan society. Status, on the other hand, was not necessarily mentioned or reflected in the results.

Cognition

Responses to questions addressing the cognitive dimension of food literacy revealed limited engagement with the broader food system. When students were asked to reflect on what constitutes healthy food, cost emerged as a dominant consideration, with healthy food frequently

Als ik tussen lokale en geïmporteerde producten moet kiezen, kies ik sneller voor...



Figure 34: Results of the Mentimeter

associated with being expensive. In prompts inviting reflection on food origin, production, or the distinction between local and imported products, students primarily referred to taste and convenience rather than where food comes from or how it is produced.

Although fast food was recognized as unhealthy, this awareness did not extend to reflections on the systemic conditions shaping food practices. References to policy, history, or the structure of the food environment were absent from the discussion, even when questions explicitly invited such considerations.

“If I had to choose between a Venezuelan tomato or a local one, I would just choose the one I find prettiest.” – Student from the UoC

Behaviour

When students reflected on their everyday food practices, convenience consistently shaped what they ate and where they ate it. Eating out or buying food at school was often described as the easiest option, especially during busy school days, rather than as a choice motivated by health or food quality. Preparing food in advance was mentioned by several students, but mainly to save time or money, not because it was considered healthier.

Healthy food practices were rarely described as part of students' daily routines. One student described consistently preparing healthy lunches despite time constraints, explaining that this required planning meals a week in advance. This practice stood out from the rest of the group, where health was seldom mentioned as a reason for making specific food choices.

When talking about food choices at the canteen or nearby outlets, students mainly evaluated options based on taste. Whether food was expected to be enjoyable played a larger role than nutritional value or longer-term health considerations.

Affective

While none of the questions were specifically

targeted towards verifying the affective dimension directly. The answers did point to certain directions with regard to values, responsibility for health, and cultural pride. Pleasure was clearly the greatest driver of most food choices, closely followed by ease. This explains the strong preference and regular consumption of convenience food.

To conclude, the validating activities highlighted what values play a large role in food practices. It validated my previous insights from the cultural probes and bridged those with the food literacy framework.

6.4. Reframing food literacy in the Curaçaoan food system

The next chapter synthesizes the system and the cultural probe results to inform the design phase. The system map informed us on how the system creates food environments where childhood obesity is highly prevalent. Some main drivers are institutions' misaligned priorities, unhealthy food environments, and colonial legacies still influencing current practices and values. The cultural probes gave us insights into the lived experiences of the youth within this complex system. These experiences are not only shaped by material constraints but also by food narratives that are reproduced through repeated exposure to specific food environments and routines that shape knowledge, behaviour, and values. In the next section, I connected these findings to the theoretical framework of food literacy that was developed in Chapter 3 to uncover opportunities and leverage for impact.

It is, however, important to reframe this framework within the broader food system in Curaçao. The original framework assumed that individuals hold meaningful agency over their food choices. However, in Curaçao, agency is structurally constrained by historical, political, and economic drivers. In the case of youth, food practices are shaped less by internal literacy and more by busy school schedules, parental work rhythms, and the high prevalence of fast-food chains. This requires revisiting each dimension of the food literacy framework and evaluating how it aligns or misaligns with the realities of Curaçaoan youth and the broader system.

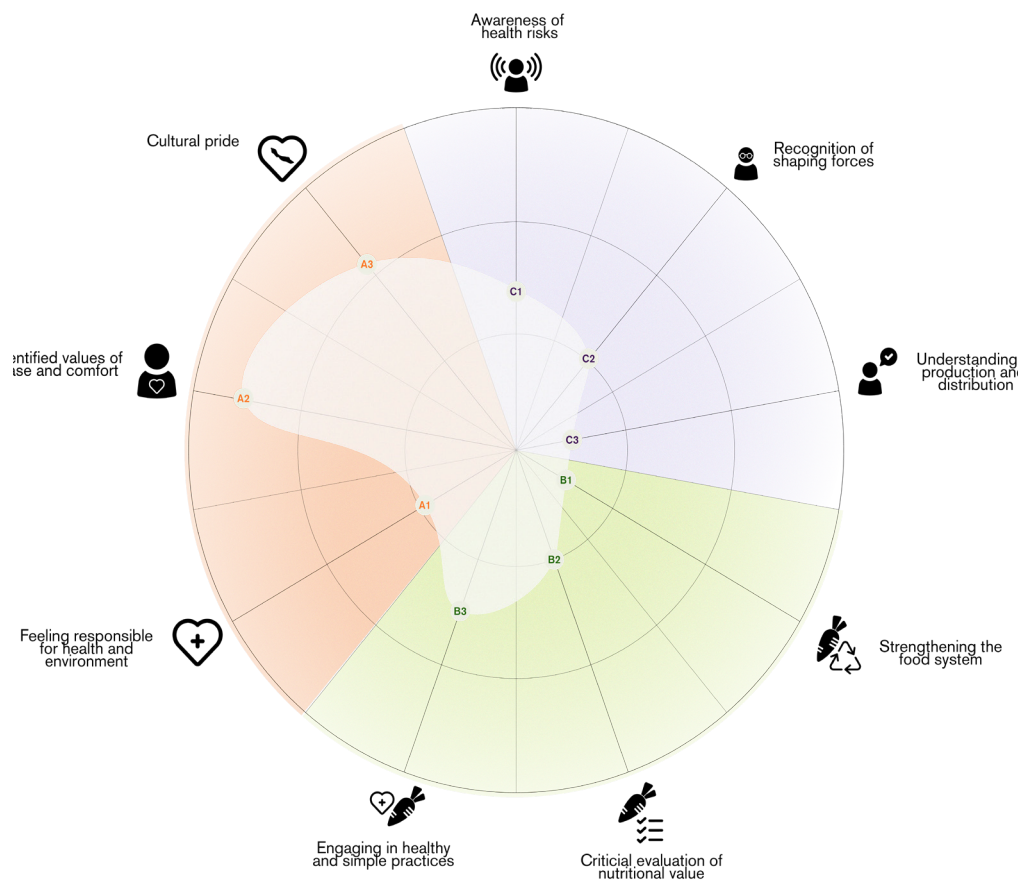


Figure 35: Curacaoan youth food literacy based on research insights

6.4.1. Affective literacy as structurally conditioned rather than individually held

The affective dimension of food literacy explores how awareness, values, and a sense of responsibility play a role in daily food practices supporting personal health and community resilience.

A3: The findings indicate that youth do, to some extent, experience food as a social and emotional practice. They enjoy eating with family and with friends, and spend time in air-conditioned food environments. Sharing food during social gatherings does point to the presence of affective attachments to food and food-related places. These affective attachments are not evenly distributed across everyday food practices but are concentrated in

specific social and climatic contexts where time, comfort, and togetherness are available. However, it is important to note that most of these are not daily food practices like the ones happening in schools, where, according to the results, the social affective dimension plays a much smaller role, and food is more about being convenient. There is also a certain pride in local Curaçaoan cuisine, even though it is not the healthiest cuisine. That pride translates to a preference for local snacks and foods, and not in, for instance, the support of local food producers.

A2: According to the final validating tests, the values that drive youth food practices are pleasure and ease. These two values, by definition, do not keep them from making healthy food choices. It is

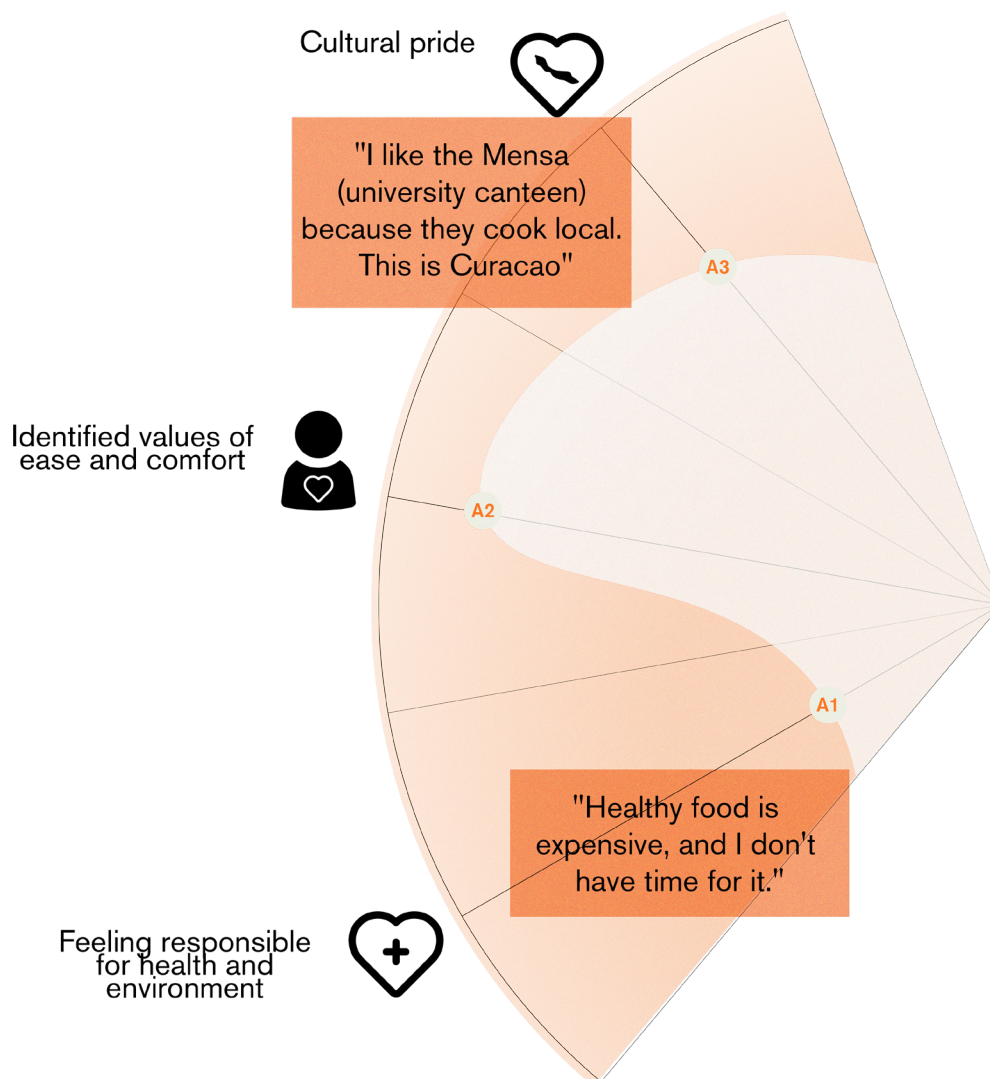


Figure 36: Curaçaoan youth affective food literacy

when looking at the broader system that we can see how these two values keep unhealthy daily food practices in place and are strengthened. The food environment on Curaçao is inherently obesogenic, with unhealthy food options at every street corner and easily reachable by car. The busy schedules of parents due to the need for two-income households in an expensive import-dependent island lead to parents making the convenient choice. Governmental inaction and an absence of clear policies promoting healthier food practices keep the system as it is in place and make change difficult, especially in a postcolonial culture that normalizes being overweight and creates a compensating stance towards food. Thus, we can say that the values of pleasure and ease function as adaptive responses to structural constraints. Over time, they become normalized through repetition and reinforcement, forming food narratives about what everyday eating looks like. As such, pleasure and ease no longer merely respond to the system, but begin to actively sustain it by shaping expectations of what food practices should be like. In this way, values from the affective dimension strongly impact the cognition and behaviour of Curaçaoan youth. Pleasure and ease are not neutral preferences but system-conditioned values that have been normalized through repeated exposure to limited alternatives. As an interaction designer, however, the distinction between pleasure and ease is critical. Pleasure is tied to acquired tastes, cultural norms, and social meanings around food. They are socially and culturally embedded, which are hard to impact through design. Ease translates itself at school into behaviours favouring convenience. In this project, convenience is understood as the extent to which food practices can be enacted within the limited timeframes of the school day, the cognitive load of having to make food choices, and the financial appeal of certain foods. Convenience is about allowing students to eat with minimal disruption to their routines and embodied comfort (Bogard et al., 2024). It determines default behaviour under constraints. Pleasure is not excluded but is expected to follow practice rather than precede it.

A1: Examples of the system-conditioned values of

pleasure and ease impacting the affective dimension can be found in preferring air-conditioned fast-food places to hang out with friends to avoid the warm climate or buying fried snacks during short breaks at school because that is the only thing available. The systemically high availability of the 'unhealthy' options, paired with a low sense of responsibility or motivation in the affective dimension of food literacy, makes it difficult to change practices and increase food affection.

All three affective components suggest that the affective dimension of food literacy among Curaçaoan youth is present but has limited agency in decision-making. Affection is experienced through cultural pride and a sense of belonging created by the consumption of local foods, yet they are structurally displaced by the practical demands of convenience, time pressure, climate, and availability. As a result, affective food literacy does not function as the primary driver of behaviour and cognition.

6.4.2. Cognitive: underutilized knowledge of the food system

The results of the cultural probes especially highlighted what Curaçaoan youth know and do not know about food and the larger food system.

C1: The results showed a general low awareness of the health risks associated with obesity and unhealthy eating habits. Some students did mention having a basic understanding of certain foods being healthier than others, and stressed the importance of eating healthily. This shows that, even though not on the top of their minds, a healthy diet is something they recognise as something to prevent obesity. They described their food from home as being healthy, showing an understanding that household cooking is healthier than eating out. However, this understanding does not translate into behaviours most of the time. Based on the final validating test, cognition is mostly driven by pleasure and ease.

C2 & C3: Empirical results suggested that students did show a lack of systemic-level understanding of food production and distribution. Throughout the results, there was little mention of systemic-level

thinking regarding the food system. They did not really recognise historical or systemic forces and how these shape their food environments. This absence should not be read as disinterest, but as a reflection of how systemic forces remain largely invisible in everyday food environments and in the dominant food narratives surrounding eating practices.

However, it is important to place the results of these cognitive components within the broader context of Curaçao. The system map showed that healthy eating has low visibility in everyday conversations and practices, leading to passive behaviour in the government and institutions, even though there is certain awareness about the health risks and high prevalence of obesity in Curaçao. This is strengthened by remnants of historical patterns of colonialism, leading to a preference for imports and the cultural meaning of food abundance and normalisation of the obesogenic food environment.

This pattern is observed among youth who possess partial knowledge but lack contexts that support reflection or action. In the long run, it can still be interesting to make the health risks of obesity more visible in Curaçaoan society to strategically impact contextual drivers. The absence of translation of knowledge into behaviour challenges the idea in the food literacy framework that knowledge leads to action when the context does not allow it. It is especially visible when looking at the behavioural dimension.

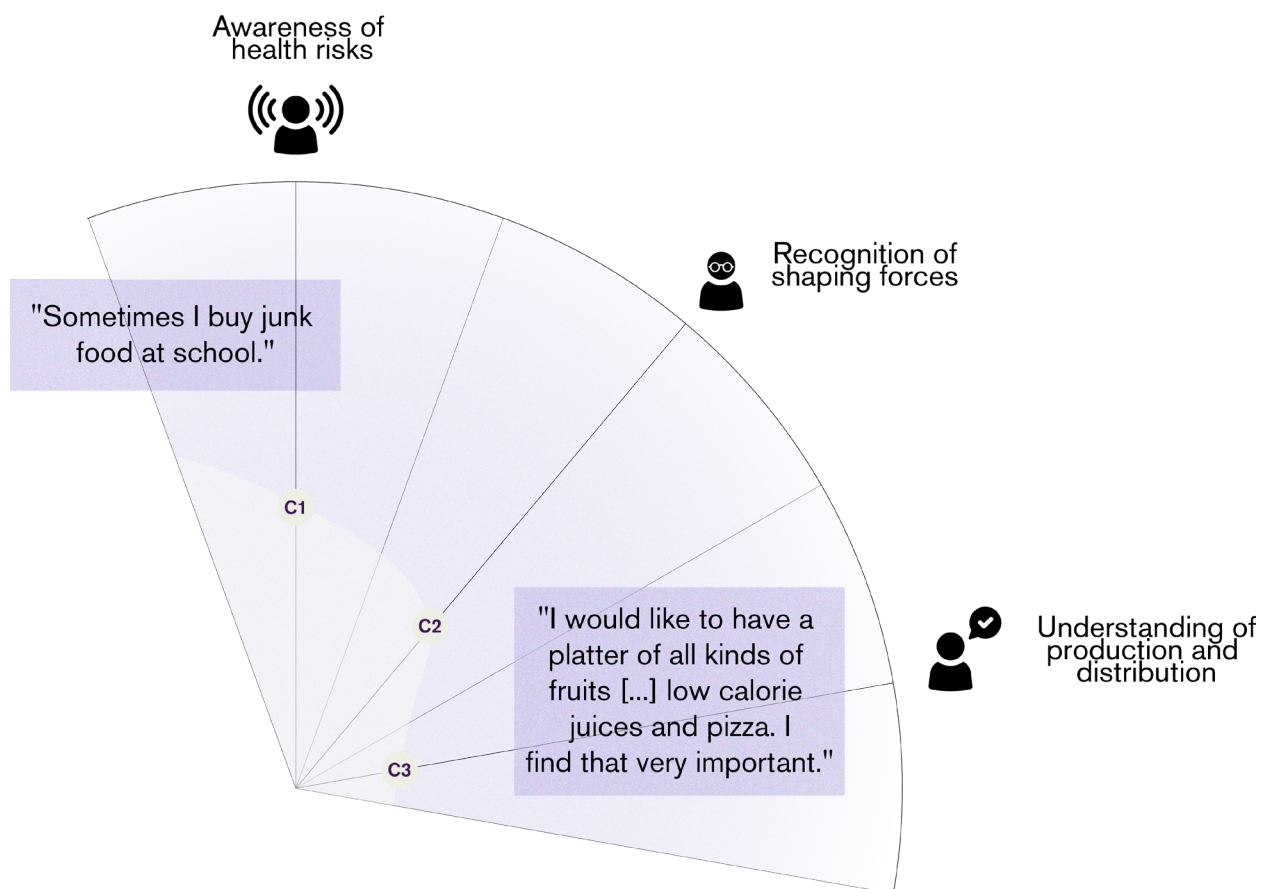


Figure 37: Curacaoan youth cognitive food literacy

6.4.3. Behavioural: not an individual choice

Even though certain students recognize the importance of healthy eating, this is not or is only partially visible in their daily food practices.

B2: Their behaviour reveals limited critical evaluation regarding nutritional value when choosing foods. Most students still want sweets or snacks when given complete freedom at school. However, we can question whether that is due to the environment not confronting them with other, healthier options. The pilot done by the student council showed that students would, in fact, buy healthy snacks if available. At home, students eat what their parents prepare or decide. But, once again, the busy work schedule leads to more convenient food choices. And food is also a moment for socialising when friends meet up at restaurants, fast food, or cafés with air conditioning due to the warm environment. Surrounded by peers, it may be complicated to resist temptation. All these systemic drivers shape the youth's behaviour.

B1: Like the cognitive dimension, few behavioural patterns work towards strengthening the food system. For instance, few food choices support local food producers, which is also because they are scarcely found in the food environment.

B3: Once again led by the values of ease and comfort, there is limited engagement in healthy and simple practices that support food literacy. Things like preparing meals in advance or swapping soda with water are not that mainstream. This also highlights a striking asymmetry. Food, in a social setting, is at the centre. Generosity toward guests is prioritised. But individual, daily eating tends to be pragmatic, and it needs to fit a busy life, instead of adjusting the schedule around it. It is important to note that this pattern needs to be viewed in a postcolonial context, where food scarcities shaped norms. In Curaçao, taking care of others seems to be at the core of the culture.

All these practices reveal how the behaviour surrounding food choices of Curaçaoan youth

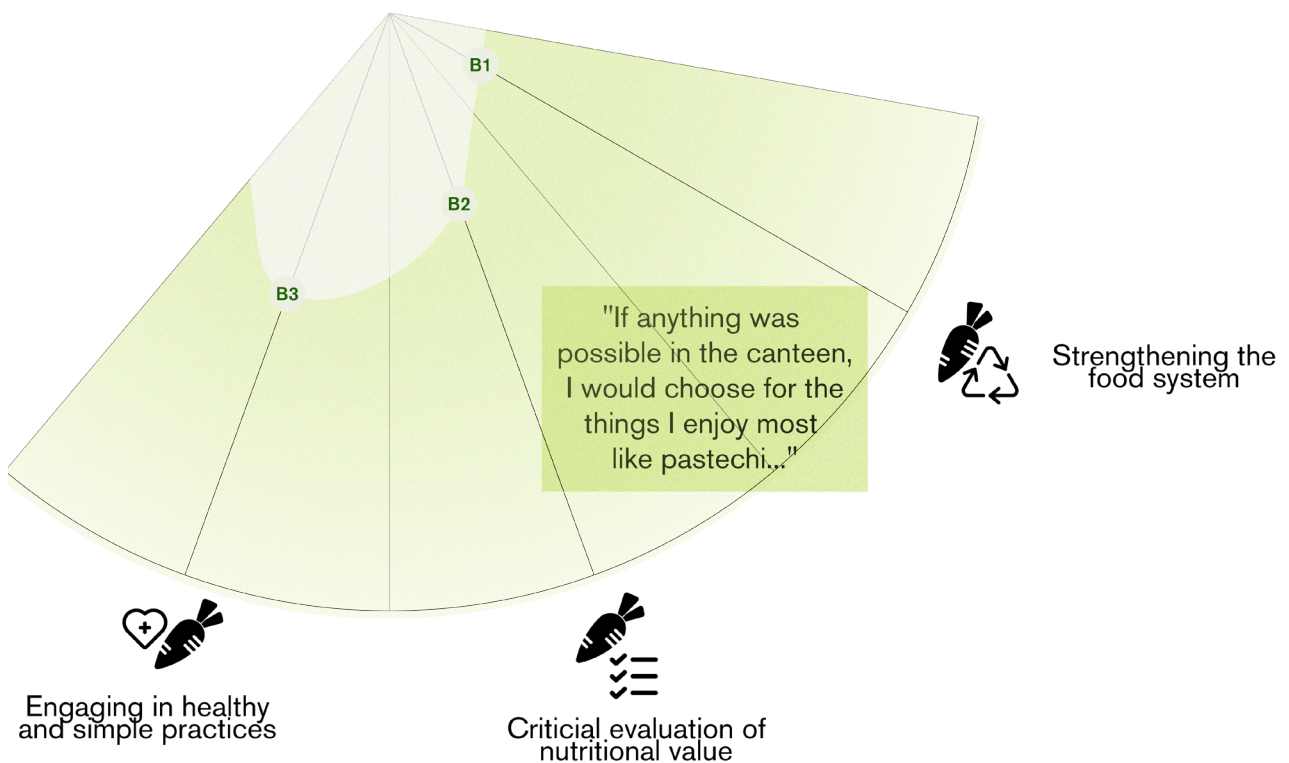
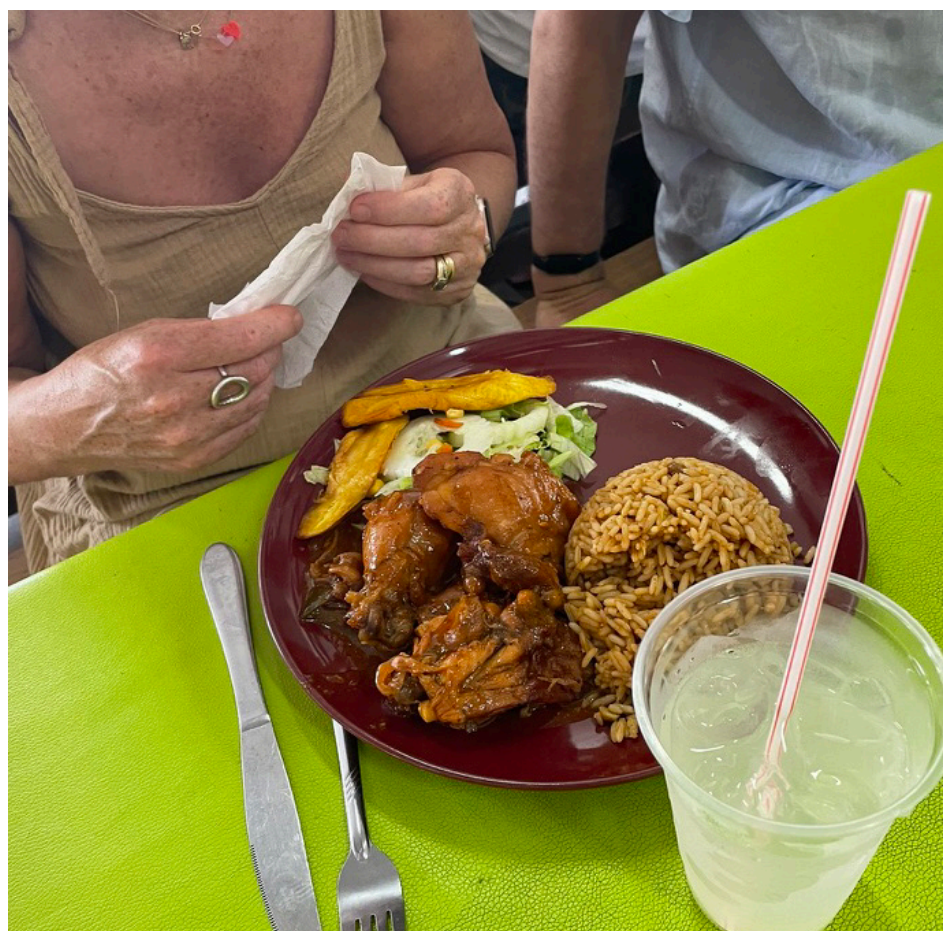


Figure 38: Curacaoan youth behavioural food literacy

is heavily dependent on the context. It is not an individual choice. Whether this is through environment, peers, or family depends on the situation. This also contradicts the food literacy framework, where behaviour reflects internal literacy. A leverage point for this project would be to enable critical evaluation during food choices as well as increase engagement in simple and healthy food practices. The idea is not to impose healthy food choices on Curaçaoan youth but to reshape the environments in which choices are made so that healthier practices can emerge and gradually influence everyday food narratives.

Key takeaways

- Even in a socio-economically privileged school, the food environment structurally promotes unhealthy food practices.
- A mismatch exists between health knowledge and the environments in which youth make food choices.
- The shallow probe responses suggest that food and health are rarely topics of explicit reflection in everyday youth practice.
- Pleasure and ease (convenience) are the dominant values shaping food practices, while status appears more implicit.
- Youth show partial health knowledge but limited awareness of food origin and systemic drivers.
- Food literacy in this context is structurally conditioned rather than individually held.



Photograph by the author
Curaçao, Nov. 2025

7. Envisioning a food literacy supporting system

The previous chapters highlighted the current food systems and their drivers, as well as the food literacy of the Curaçaoan youth. In the following chapter, I connected the findings to establish an envisioned system statement and explored how a roadmap towards that system.

7.1. Envisioned system statement

7.1.1. Identifying value-driven leverage

As described in the system map, the problem of youth obesity is held in place on a systemic level through governmental inaction that creates obesogenic environments in schools and surrounding environments, and that are kept in place by socio-cultural food narratives and economic drivers. In the previous chapter, I showed the food literacy of Curaçaoan youth. In this next section, I identified which leverage points exist within the context and the food literacy of Curaçaoan youth.

Many systemic drivers are intertwined, creating a context where large-scale transformation is difficult. However, as shown in Section 5.5, schools emerge as an interesting leverage point by sitting at the intersection of governmental policy, socio-cultural food narratives, and youth's daily lives. At Radulphus College, for instance, we see an unregulated canteen, proximity of fast-food outlets, and low awareness, reinforcing convenience-driven choices. Through such routines and infrastructures, schools do not merely reflect the food system; they actively reproduce it.

At the same time, schools are environments where food practices are repeatedly enacted during formative years. In this way, institutional neglect becomes materially embedded in the everyday formation of food literacy. Precisely because of this embeddedness, schools also present an opportunity: altering these environments may interrupt the reproduction of dominant food narratives and create conditions for systemic change.

Figure 39 overlays the identified food literacy opportunities (in pink) onto the spiderweb diagram introduced earlier. These different opportunities reinforce each other: enabling simple practices creates conditions for agency, in turn raising awareness and a sense of responsibility. Although broader systemic themes in food literacy, such as 'Strengthening the food system' or 'Understanding the production and distribution', are crucial for long-term transformation, these themes did not resonate

with most of the respondents. Given the dominance of pleasure and ease, these opportunities focus on practice enablement and narrative formation rather than abstract system critique.

Condition for opportunities (O): One condition for the following opportunities to work is that they align with the identified value of ease. To systemically achieve this, a top-down approach from the government and other organisations is necessary in the promotion of healthy food practices. These should become the easiest and most accessible way to strengthen youth food literacy. This project, therefore, proceeds under the assumption that top-down action is required to create the structural conditions in which youth can engage in healthier food environments. Scalability and long-term impact depend on governmental action.

Opportunity 1 (O1) - Allow engagement in simple and healthy practices: The first opportunity lies in reducing the gap between healthy food practices and everyday food practices at school. Currently, the school food environment limits the ability of students to engage in even the simplest healthy practices. This asymmetry between practices and reality highlights an opportunity to create conditions in which these healthy food practices can be enacted within the constraints of the school day. Repeated practice can lead to a normalization of that practice within the school environment, and over time, through the creation of healthier food narratives, healthy choices become the default choice. The normalization of the practices in the culture puts pressure on institutional actors to structurally support these practices.

Opportunity 2 (O2) - Strengthening critical evaluation of nutritional value of foods: Given the high prevalence of unhealthy food options in Curaçao and how embedded they are in local culture, removing them altogether is not the way to go. It is important to support students to critically evaluate nutritional value while operating in any food environment, and this starts at school. As criticality towards food environments increases, acceptance of unregulated, unhealthy environments decreases. This

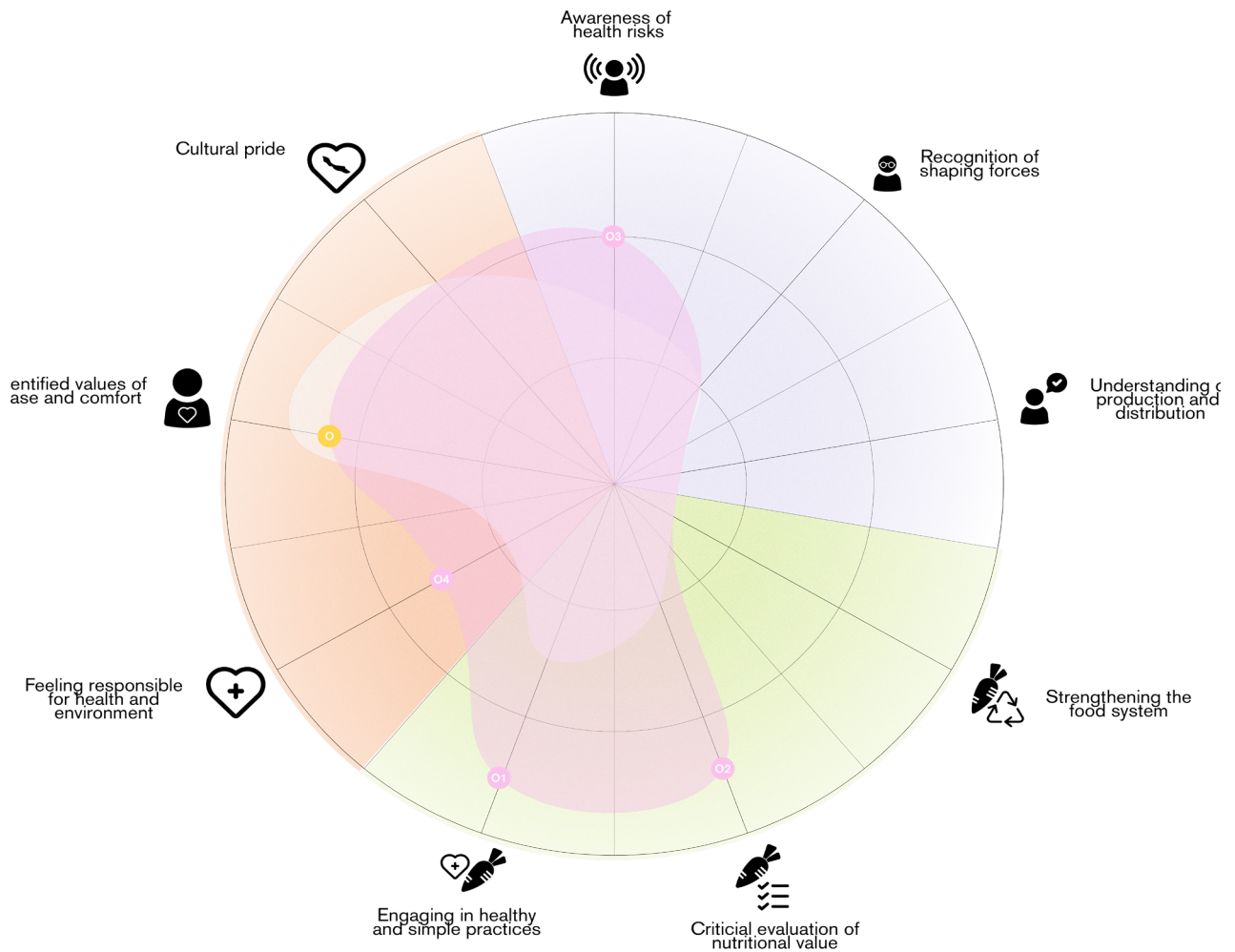


Figure 39: Food literacy based design opportunities

creates a need for policy intervention to regulate the obesogenic environment.

Opportunity 3 (O3 & O4) - Gradually strengthening awareness of health risks and fostering a sense of responsibility for personal health: Awareness of health risks related to obesity and a feeling of responsibility for personal health currently play a limited role in shaping daily food practices. Rather than focusing on raising awareness, an opportunity lies in letting it emerge gradually through engagement in practices. Awareness and responsibility become reinforcing outcomes instead of triggers. When they become socially shared rather than imposed, they become part of the conversation, which currently they are not.

7.1.2. Envisioned system statement

The opportunities work together in creating a new food system, as stated below:

Curaçao has a food system where healthy practices are the most convenient ones, enabling their repeated enactment, fostering new food narratives, and strengthening the food literacy of Curaçaoans in their daily food environments.

This statement was used as a basis for developing the exploratory probe, which embodied the envisioned system, and it was also used as a guideline during the expert session.

7.2. A situated example

To create a bridge between the lived experiences and the system, I designed a probe, Fruta?, which explores the opportunities for strengthening the food literacy of Curaçaoan youth. It is an experiment in convenience within the envisioned system. A full description of the design process (ideation, refinement, and peer validation) of this probe can be found in Appendix E. This probe follows the same logic as the opportunities for food literacy: first creating an environment where simple and healthy practices can be made before working on cognition and affection.



Figure 40: Render of Fruta? in the school, generated with ChatGPT

7.2.1. Probe design

The probe, 'Fruta?', is a food intervention embedded in everyday food practices of the school day. It enables a low-threshold, non-instructional engagement with food practices by offering free fruit and reflective messages, called provocations. 'Fruta?' is a fruit stand located at the heart of the school. Students pass by this location in between classes and gather there during break or buy snacks at the canteen. Students can take a piece of fruit for free and continue with their activity. Convenience was explored through several dimensions identified in the food literacy of Curaçaoan youth: financial convenience (free fruit), physical convenience (central placement in circulation space and quick), and cognitive convenience (low-effort interaction during the school routine and the counter highlighting peer participation).

Intended interaction

To attract the attention of the students, a large screen calls to the students with a question: 'Hey, you over there! There is free fruit here,' and a counter

below it showed how many students have already taken some.

When a piece of fruit is taken, a message appears on the display. The message's aim is to trigger more cognitive and affective engagement with the act of taking fruit as a snack. The messages are not educational but rather elicit reflection by presenting concrete dilemmas, questions, and facts related to everyday food practices to avoid youth disengagement. By keeping the provocations short, recognizable, and open-ended, the intervention aimed to make healthy food practices more part of daily life. It can become a topic of conversation, and the messages feed those conversations. The messages are concrete and relate to everyday situations that students can recognize. To be playful, a different message appears every time a new piece of fruit is grabbed. The messages range from 'Would you rather' dilemmas to reflective questions and facts, which are easy to mentally respond to or discuss with peers. Figure 42 showcases a scenario of the intended interaction.

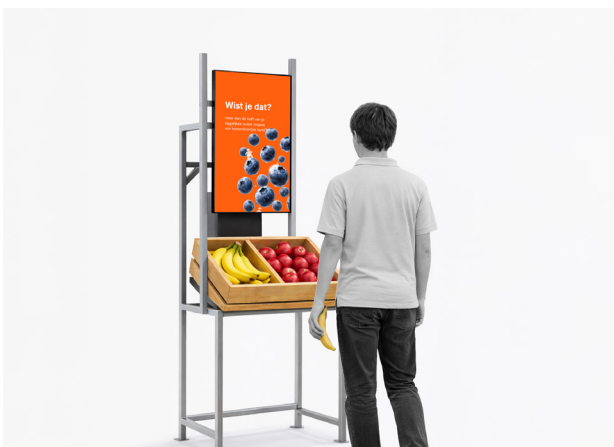
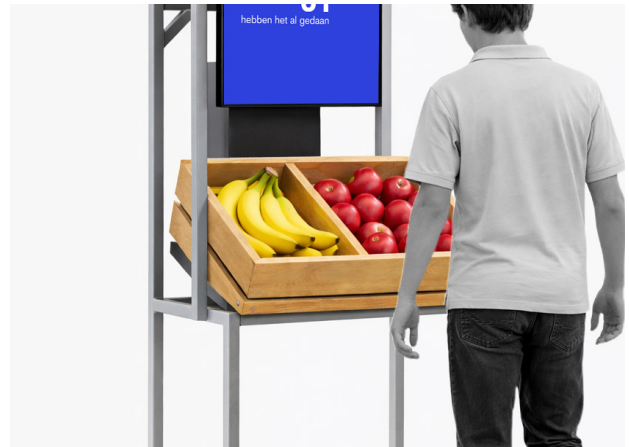


Figure 41: Display home screen

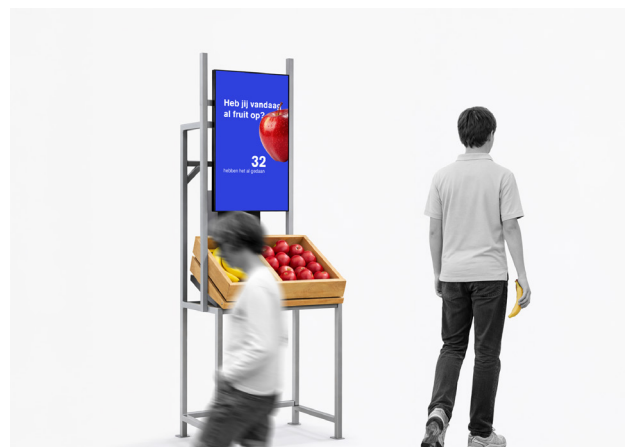
During the break, students walk around. It is busy.



A student notices the display and wants to grab some fruit.



Suddenly the screen changes and a provocation appears. The student reads it.



He walks off with his fruit and the provocation fresh in his mind. The counter on the display goes up.

Figure 42: User scenario of Fruta?

Design rationale

In Section 7.1, I identified different opportunities that need to be tackled to enable stronger food literacy among Curaçaoan youth. In this section, I described how Fruta? explores each opportunity.



Exploring opportunity 1: Allowing engagement in simple and healthy practices

As described in the current state of food literacy, cognition and affection are currently seldom translated into behaviours due to obesogenic food environments. Fruta? deliberately starts with enabling behaviour and not straight to reflection. It attracts interaction first by making the simple and healthy practice attractive and available. The fruit is openly available and placed in a central location. It requires no explanation or commitment by the students. A fruit counter was added to the display to explore social convenience, making participation visible and signaling that peers are also engaging with the healthy practice. Fruta? tested whether removing financial and physical barriers, thus increasing convenience, of a simple and healthy practice, really increases engagement with it during the school day. The probe then allowed observation of whether engagement with the practice created openings for the other opportunities.

Wist je dat?

Meer dan de helft van je
dagelijkse suiker inname
van tussendoortjes ko



Exploring opportunity 2: Strengthening critical evaluation of nutritional value

This opportunity is not about educating or teaching. It is about showing different alternatives and activating independent reflection on which choices are healthiest in the moment. For this reason, the provocations Fruta? displayed were questions, dilemmas, or facts. They did not evaluate food as good or bad but simply presented the students with information that they could judge for themselves. The provocations did not instruct students on their behaviour. Fruta? did not aim to produce correct answers; it aimed at normalizing nutritional evaluation as a practice. Fruta tested whether these provocations started conversations and were a convenient way of easily and playfully enabling cognitive activation regarding healthy food practices.



Exploring opportunities 3 and 4: Gradually strengthening awareness of health risks and fostering a sense of responsibility

To gradually strengthen awareness of the health risks of unhealthy food practices, this intervention did not focus on creating a cognitively heavy intervention. The provocations were short and changed often. The design assumed that a daily repetition of the healthy food practice, paired with the exposure to the food practice provocations variation, could potentially help with the long-term emergence of awareness. For this reason, Fruta? had a large display and had to be placed in an area with much traffic to make sure students were often confronted with it. Students could freely engage with the probe, taking on their own responsibility. This probe explored which environmental interventions could impact work towards creating new food narratives through repeated exposure and the emergence of new moments around food to increase awareness and create a sense of responsibility.

Provocations selection

The content of the provocations focuses on different mechanisms that all relate to the different dimensions of food literacy: forced comparison between food practices (behavioural and cognitive), drivers of long-term health (cognitive), and the tension between convenience, health, and social influence (affective). The content of the messages is informed by Dutch guidelines (from the Voedingscentrum.nl) and translated into situated, non-instructional provocations that fit the school context. The provocations follow a specific tone of voice that has been crafted to fit the age range. Different tones have been tried (see Appendix G), but according to Rollnick et al. (2008), adolescents disengage when they feel talked at, corrected, or morally evaluated. They engage when language supports autonomy, curiosity, and self-definition. The provocations should not be too humorous or cheeky because teens tend to quickly find that cringy or annoying, especially under daily exposure. These guidelines were used to select the most fitting tone of voice: autonomy-supportive, provocative. Since the intervention is in a public space, it is important for the language to be non-judgmental, light, and not too personal to avoid students feeling ashamed or called out. The provocations have a respectful tone, elicit reflection or self-awareness through questions or facts.

Forced comparison between food practices:

- Would you rather have to eat fruit every day, or never eat candy again?
- Would you rather only be able to drink water or only soda?
- Would you rather have to eat vegetables every day, or give up fries completely?
- Some snacks, like nuts and fruits, give more energy than sweets.
- Popcorn keeps you full longer than chips.
- Dark bread keeps you fuller longer.

Drivers of long-term health

- Eating fruit and vegetables every day lowers the risk of getting sick later in life.
- More than half of daily sugar intake often comes from snacks and drinks, not meals.

- Most weight-related health problems do not come from one bad choice, but from repetition.
- Drinking one soda a day adds up to more than 300 sodas a year.
- If someone drinks soda 5 days a week, is that still “sometimes”?

Tension between convenience, health, and social influence

- What is worse, eating a lot of unhealthy snacks once a week, or a little bit every day?
- Did you eat fruit or vegetables today, or not at all?
- Are you giving your body what it needs, or what it wants?
- Would you rather eat for taste, or eat so your body stays strong?
- Would you rather always eat what your friends eat, or always eat what you think is better for you?
- If you could eat anything you wanted right now, what would it be?

The possibility of repeating the interaction daily increases the chances of giving healthy food practices a greater position in daily life and, in the long run, affecting cognition and affection.

Wist je dat?

Elke dag groente en fruit eten, **risico op ziektes verkleint?**



Dilemma

Nooit meer **fruit** of nooit meer **snoep** eten?



Wat vind je?

Als iemand **elke dag 1 keer frisdrank drinkt**, is dat nog steeds **'af en toe'**?



Wist je dat?

Meer dan **de helft van je dagelijkse suiker inname** van tussendoortjes komt?

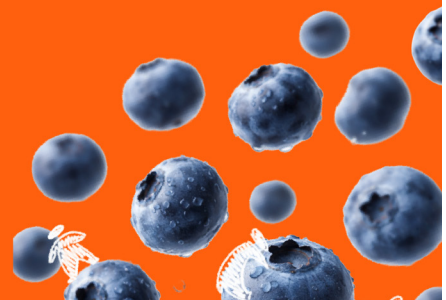


Figure 43: Examples layouts of the provocations

7.2.2. Testing the exploration

Following the methods described in Section 4.4, this design exploration was tested to gain insight into each opportunity exploration. I looked at engagement with the practice, reactions to the provocations, and how convenience played a role in all of this. The tests explored how the exploration of different dimensions of convenience influenced engagement with the healthy practice. The intervention was prototyped using my laptop as the display and the crate of fruit in front of it, as pictured in Figures 46 and 47.

Observations and informal interviews

At both schools, the intervention was quickly noticed and taken advantage of. Students seemed excited about the free fruit. At the LL, mostly the fruit was noticed, while at the RSC, students walking past noticed the screen, reading its contents aloud to their peers. The location of the intervention played a role in this, since at the RSC, the aula was also an area with more traffic throughout the school day, and not a specific destination for students to go to, like at the LL. However, the counter was rarely accounted for when the students approached the intervention. Only the first at the RSC seemed very excited that he got to be number 1.

At both schools, the free fruit was very well received. The kids were excited about it and often went back for seconds, and informed their peers about it:

“Look at the apples there. Let’s go!” – student at the LL.

The financial aspect played a very big role, with most students (85% of respondents) indicating that they would not have taken it if they had to buy it, even for a few cents

“I barely have 2 euros; I don’t want to spend it on fruit.” – student at the RSC

As far as interacting with the intervention itself, students often only took the fruit and quickly walked away. However, the quick change in the display when taking fruit did attract some attention, with

students turning around when noticing after walking away. Some students also clearly reacted to the provocations. When faced with a fact:

“Oh, I had no idea.” – student at the LL

Or they discussed the outcome of a dilemma with their peers:

“Can you imagine waking up at night and having to drink soda?” – student at the RSC

Overall, the dilemmas prompted reactions most often.

Questionnaire

Given that more than 70 students took fruit at both schools combined and only 18 students filled in the form, it is not a clear reflection of the whole body of respondents. The responses do give some insights into how the students experienced the intervention. The full responses can be found in Appendix I.

Most respondents took the fruit because it was free (33%), and 85% said they would not have taken fruit if they had to pay for it. And for only a few (22%), it served as a healthy alternative to a snack they were seeking during their break.

41% of the respondents had not seen the counter on the display. For those who did see it, it was not the main motivator behind taking a piece of fruit (for only 18% did it motivate them).

All the respondents expressed positive initial reactions to the intervention, such as joy, satisfaction, or fascination. This matches the observations I had with the students being excited about the free fruit, and a few were curious about the display.

The provocation did make 2/3 of the respondents think, but only a few connected it to their own eating practices (only 22%). Half of the respondents indicated that the provocations felt like a confirmation of knowledge they already had.



Figure 46: Photograph of the set-up of the pilot test at the Libanon Lyceum



Figure 47: Photograph of the set-up of the pilot test at the Rudolf Steiner College



Figure 44: Photograph of the test at the Libanon Lyceum



Figure 45: Photograph test at the Rudolf Steiner College

Limitations of the tests

The tests did, however, have some limitations which are important to highlight before interpreting the results. My presence at the school with the intervention created quite the novelty effect, with students being curious and excited about the free fruit. The fact that I was standing close to the fruit and would ask a few questions to some students might have made some students feel uncomfortable and not want to linger longer around the display. It is also important to note that Dutch high school students have a different food literacy than Curaçaoan youth. Healthy eating habits are already a much more prominent topic of conversation at schools, with many interventions taking place already at a young age. For this reason, it is difficult to assess the effect of this intervention on the cognitive dimension of food literacy. Lastly, food literacy evolves over a long period of time. These tests only measure a very short and limited period and do not account for familiarity with the intervention, which does impact behaviour.

Interpretation of test results in light of the design opportunities

The results showed that the intended interaction was different in context than expected.

Opportunity 1: Engagement in simple and healthy practices

First, the tests showed the importance of the location. At the RSC, the open location with more traffic meant that the fruit and especially the display were noticed much more often than at the LL. At the LL, the free fruit attracted students, and the screen was only noticed later. These differences suggest that positioning and visibility play an important role in whether students even engage with an intervention, and thus highlight the importance of physical convenience.

Second, the counter was barely noticed, and when it was, its role seemed unclear and not really motivating the behaviour. The test set up did play a role in this. The display was much smaller than it would be in reality. However, the financial convenience of the intervention, together with the

novelty, was probably the main driver of the fruit taking. This suggests that the counter as a social motivator may require better visibility and repetition for it to work. These insights showed again the importance of physical convenience for engagement with healthy food practices.

Lastly, the dominant driver of the fruit taking was the financial convenience. A very large majority of the respondents indicated that they would not have taken fruit if they had to pay for it. This finding shows that structural conditions are necessary for behavioural activation. This aligns with this thesis's argument that food literacy is shaped by environmental and systemic conditions.

Opportunity 2: Strengthening nutritional value evaluation

The results showed that, when noticed, certain provocations did elicit responses. The responses and reactions to the dilemmas suggested that they could be a playful way of reflecting on your habits and sparking conversations. This insight shows that interactive triggers are more engaging than informational ones.

Opportunity 3: Gradually strengthening awareness of health risks and fostering a sense of responsibility
Regarding the affective and cognitive dimensions of food literacy, several respondents indicated that the provocations did make them reflect, but not on their own eating practices. This highlighted the limited self-applicability of the provocations in their current form. This might have been due to them being too general and not relatable enough, especially the facts or the reflective questions that were tailored to Curaçaoan youth.

Overall, the probe highlighted those multiple dimensions of convenience that shape engagement with healthy practices. Financial convenience emerged as the strongest driver in this short experiment, while physical placement and cognitive load reduction slightly influenced visibility and interaction dynamics (O1). The tests showed very early signs of strengthening critical evaluation of nutritional evaluation (O2) through certain students

choosing fruit because it is healthy. However, its effect on awareness and feeling of responsibility was limited (O3 and O4), which required further iterations and familiarity with the intervention to have more effect. The findings suggested that the probe had a limited direct effect on food literacy in this short testing period. However, they provided important insights into how convenience shapes engagement with healthy food practices.

How do these tests inform the roadmap towards the envisioned system? What these tests really highlighted was the importance of changing structural conditions to make the simple and healthy practices possible. That convenience, mostly financially but also physically and cognitively, as a guiding principle, works towards setting the first steps. The remaining challenge was how such practices could become structurally embedded in school environments so that they could contribute to new food narratives among youth.

7.3. A roadmap to the envisioned system

In this final section of the chapter, I described how the expert session led to the development of a redesign of the conditions within which healthy food practices could become the most convenient in Curaçao's food system.

7.3.1. Expert session insights

The expert session revealed several key insights for the roadmap towards the envisioned system. The ideas and insights were generated and discussed during the session. Participants recognized the relevance of the envisioned system and supported the focus on convenience.

"I like seeing that you emphasize the healthy choice as the convenient choice."

Overall, it was stated that a key element was to tackle the food environments (as defined in this thesis) before change can be realised. During the session, we went over each stakeholder and detailed what role they could play in this new system and what actions could lead to that.

Government

In the envisioned system, the government should start by focusing on its Health in All Policies approach even more to make sure all the ministries are aligned when it comes to health. They are currently starting to do that, but chronic understaffing makes it challenging, as well as a lack of existing regulations on the island, complicating the implementation of large-scale health policies.

"We started with Health in All Policies [...] there are currently so few regulations on the island, health has very little priority."

Participants emphasized that changes in food environments were a necessary starting point for systemic change. Several suggestions were made regarding how different stakeholders could contribute to this shift.

Schools

The schools also play a large role in this system. In the envisioned system, the experts highlighted schools as an important setting where healthier food practices could be made more convenient for students. This would demand reshaping its food environment:

"That whole revenue model at schools of an external caterer should simply be abolished or at least switch to caterers who have healthy options."

Policies and programs like the Gezonde School should help support those changes and have already been proven successful at a pilot school on the island.

Households

When it came to the households, the consensus was that the first step was to support caregivers since an obesogenic household is usually due to many different socio-economic factors, such as time constraints, food prices, and limited health literacy. Supporting the households in making healthier choices could be achieved through changes in the food environments (healthier food banks, community support, price regulations...), but improving health literacy among caregivers was mentioned as an important supporting measure.:

"I think you shouldn't assume that those parents have sufficient health skills and that there could really be support for that."

Supermarkets and producers

Supermarkets, paired with local producers, could also play an important role. First, in shaping the pricing and attractiveness of healthier food items and whole foods through targeted item placement or deals. Second, collaborating with schools was explored to shape the offer at school, but also in shaping new food narratives regarding local food production.

“That’s a positive side of what a supermarket sometimes does, or provides healthier food to schools at a reduced price. Or maybe they could be of some help in that regard.”

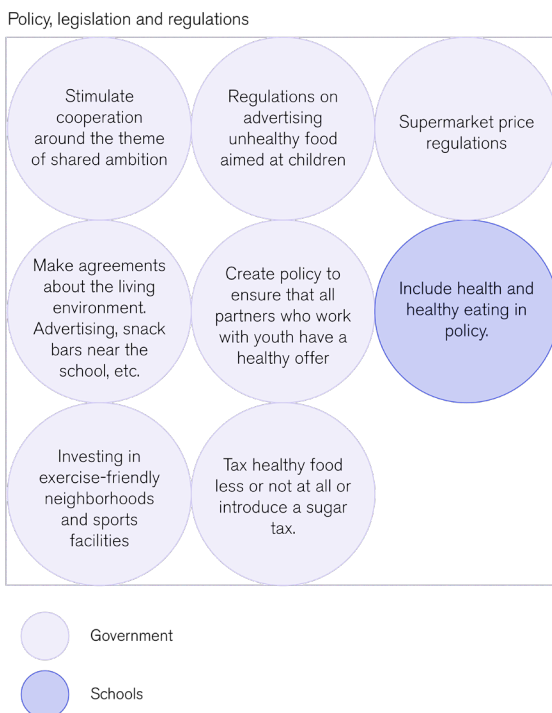
Additional stakeholders

Lastly, additional stakeholders were identified as potentially playing an important role, such as local initiatives and churches that play a large role within communities. The healthcare system was also mentioned. These actors were mentioned as important intermediaries that could support households and reinforce healthier food practices within communities.

“The churches play a large role here.”

7.3.2. Synthesis of insights into pathways to the system

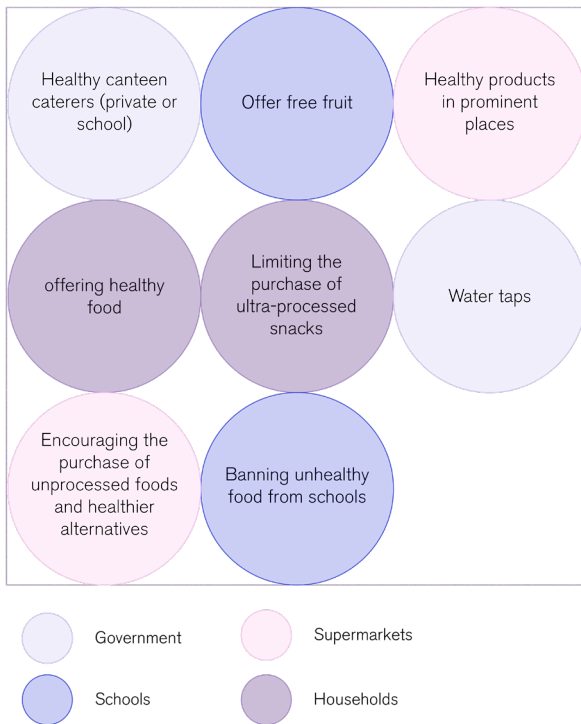
Before transforming the insights into the roadmap towards the system, I clustered the different actions, policies, and project examples from the session into different pathways. Each pathway stands for a different systemic mechanism through which the stakeholders can contribute to the envisioned system.



This first pathway focuses on creating the context within which the envisioned transformations can happen. These should not only happen at the governmental level, but schools also play an important role in setting rules and regulations to promote healthier eating practices. These policies work internally (school policies or inter-governmental collaboration) as well as externally by impacting the surrounding food environments (supermarkets or living environment).

Figure 48: Cluster 1 - 'Policy, legislations and regulations' from the expert session

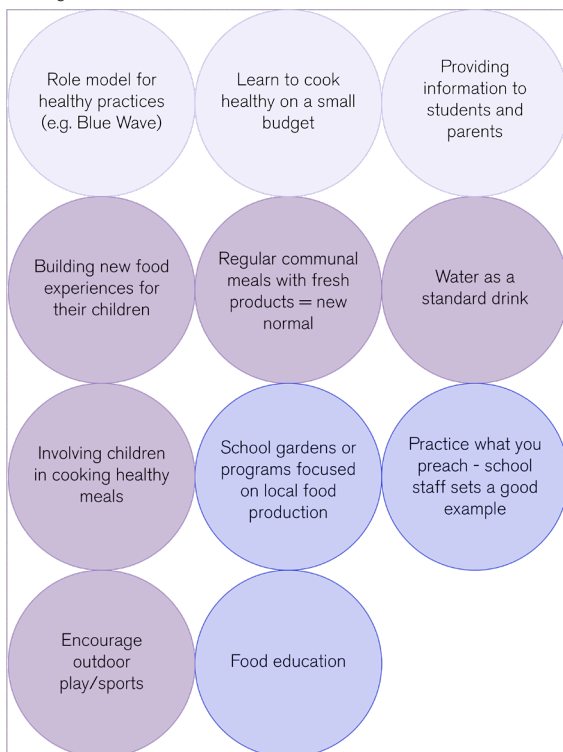
Reconfiguring food environments



This pathway is targeted at changing the food environments to make them healthier through different mechanisms such as changing the food offer (healthy canteen), creating incentives to opt for the healthier option (unprocessed foods at the supermarket) and have the healthy options be more prominent in the environment (water taps). These changes affect the everyday food environments of youth and households and involve actors such as schools, supermarkets, and local producers.

Figure 49: Cluster 2 - 'Reconfiguring food environments' from the expert session

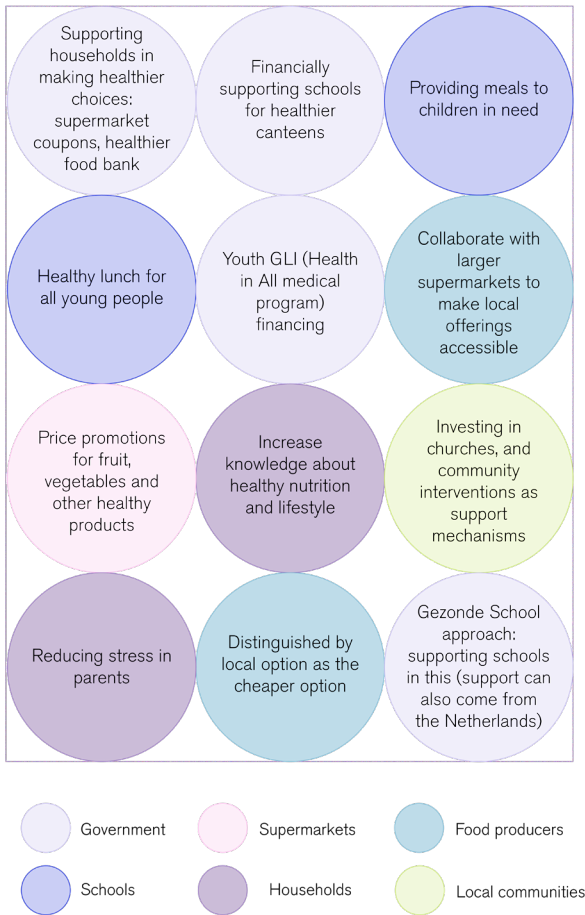
Shifting food narratives



As healthier practices become more convenient in everyday environments, new food narratives can gradually emerge. This pathway focuses on reinforcing those practices through information, experiences, and programs that reshape norms, routines, and expectations around food. This pathway targets practices, routines, and habits and enables their transformation into healthier ones. Providing information, changing the standards, supplying new experiences, and programs all aim at changing the way the youth interact with food and their views on healthy food practices.

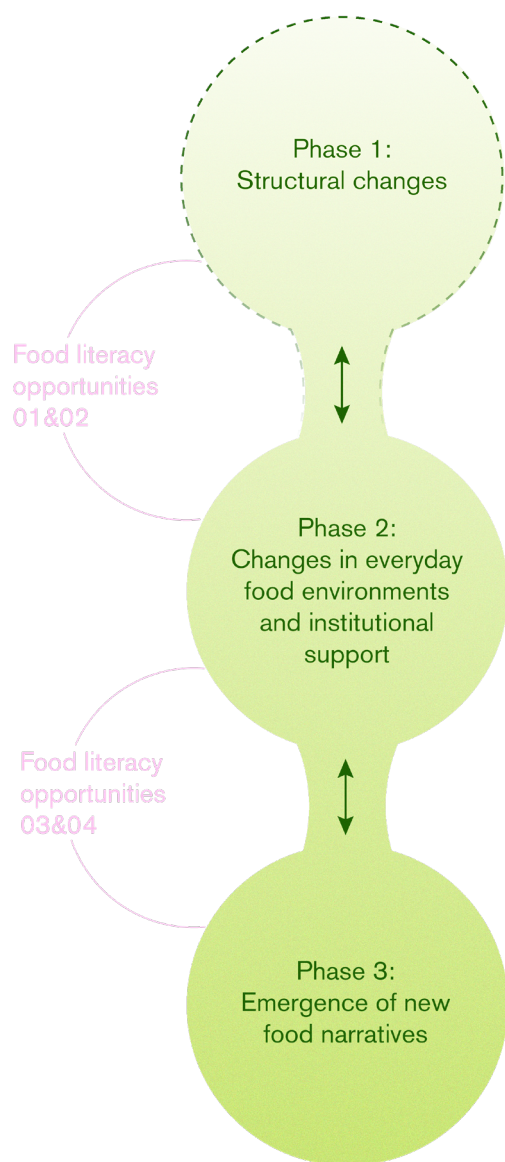
Figure 50: Cluster 3 - 'Shifting food narratives' from the expert session

Economic and institutional support



Lastly, for many of these shifts to take place, the session strongly highlighted the importance of providing economic and institutional support to the different stakeholders in making those changes (investing in communal support for households, financial and educational support for schools wanting to make a change...).

Figure 51: Cluster 3 - 'Economic and institutional support' from the expert session



7.3.3. Designing the conditions for healthier food practices

In this next section, I described the final roadmap towards the envisioned system. Through different phases, the stakeholders evolve towards a system supporting convenient healthy food practices. Rather than attempting to change individual behaviour directly, the roadmap focuses on gradually redesigning infrastructures within which food practices take place to make them as convenient as possible. The roadmap builds on the identified opportunities of the current youth food literacy identified in Chapter 6. The first phase of the roadmap focuses on structural changes to reshape the food environments. This aligns with opportunities 01 and 02, which allow the engagement with simple and healthy practices and the critical evaluation of nutritional values. Once these conditions are in place, the roadmap focuses on strengthening awareness and fostering a sense of responsibility (opportunities 03 and 04) by enabling the emergence of new food narratives that allow healthy food practices to become part of daily lives. To illustrate each phase, I use an example showcasing how system change unfolds across the phases. The example is that of introducing school meals at lunch.

Figure 52: Visual of the phases from the roadmap

Phase 0: Political alignment

Based on the expert session insights, the Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach is currently already being explored in the Curaçaoan government. The World Health Organization (2014) defines HiAP as ‘an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies, and avoids harmful health impacts to improve population health and health equity.’ It is about creating long-term and meaningful inter-governmental collaboration to foster health for the population across all domains.

of South Australia, 2019). This approach works towards resolving the first reinforcing loop (Section 5.2) currently keeping childhood obesity in place in the Curaçaoan food system.

Figure 53 depicts the steps towards putting HiAP into practice. The implementation of HiAP is an ongoing governance strategy needing several years of implementation through different phases of maturity. Research has shown that setting up a dedicated inter-governmental team is more common than having a dedicated budget since the approach takes people skills and rather than budget (Global Network for Health in All Policies & Government

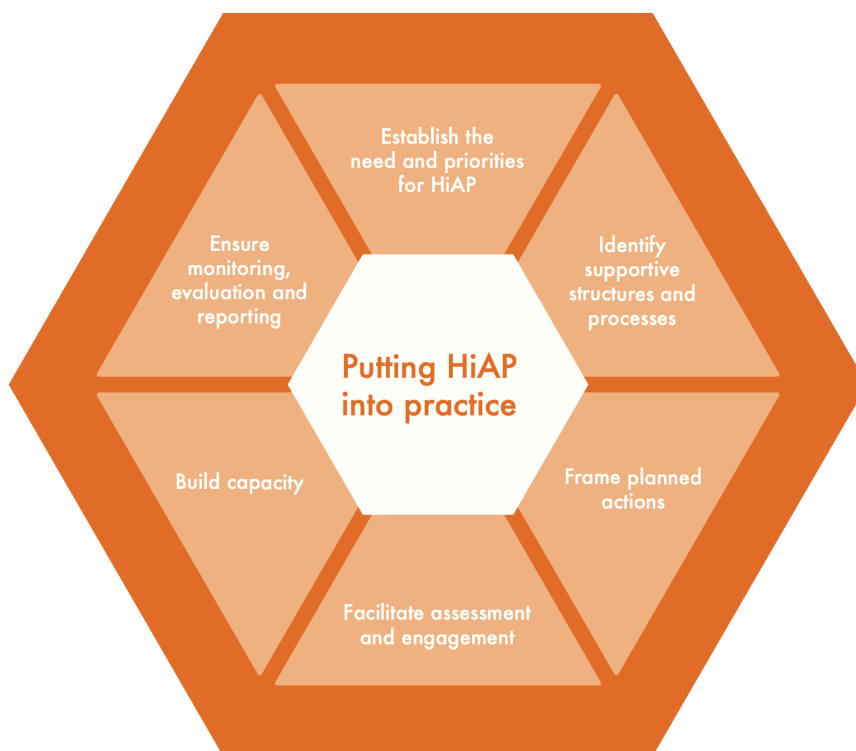


Figure 53: Key components of implementing health action across sectors (Global Network for Health in All Policies & Government of South Australia, 2019)

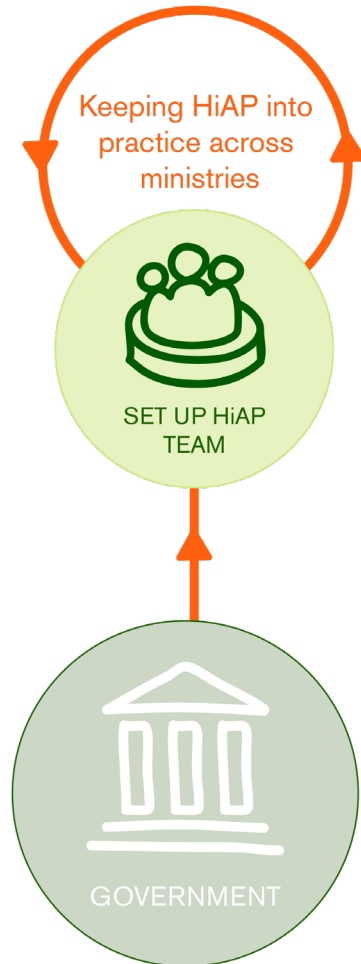


Figure 54: Phase 0 - 'Political alignment'

Phase 1: Policies and regulations

As the HiAP approach begins to take shape, phase 1 focuses on developing policies and regulations that move the system towards the envisioned food environment. This first phase focuses on setting up different policies and regulations to work towards the envisioned system. First, the government focuses on strengthening local food production by subsidising local agriculture. New regulations for supermarkets make sure food pricing aligns with healthy choices by regulating prices of whole and local foods, making agreements with supermarkets on food placements, and exploring the introduction of a sugar tax in the supermarkets. The aim is to transform the supermarkets into healthier food environments, making the healthy choice more visible and financially convenient to the consumers.

When it comes to schools, the government can't force policies; it can focus on building capacity for creating healthier school food environments. The guidelines offered by the Dutch Gezonde School approach (as highlighted in Section 3.2) can serve as a basis for setting new policies and regulations. The government could provide ready-to-apply frameworks for schools as well as specific training and knowledge to make the implementation of healthier practices easier. The introduction of recognition labels, such as the Gezonde School label, could be explored to make schools more attractive to parents by providing the assurance that certain schools are indeed healthier than others, in turn making it more attractive to schools to take on the approach. Furthermore, the HiAP approach can benefit from monitoring and reporting. This means

that close collaboration with schools taking on the Gezonde School guidelines and policies could serve as feedback for the governmental policies.

The illustrative example of providing meals to students starts in this phase. When schools decide to take on the Gezonde School approach and integrate it into their policies, they need to change certain internal structures, for instance, their privately owned canteens. Schools adopting the Gezonde School approach would need to reconsider existing canteen arrangements. In many cases, this could mean restructuring privately operated canteens so that healthier snacks and meals become the default offering or integrating meal preparation into school services for families that opt into the program.

Together, these policy measures reshape the structural conditions of the food system, helping actors such as schools to reshape the everyday food environments.

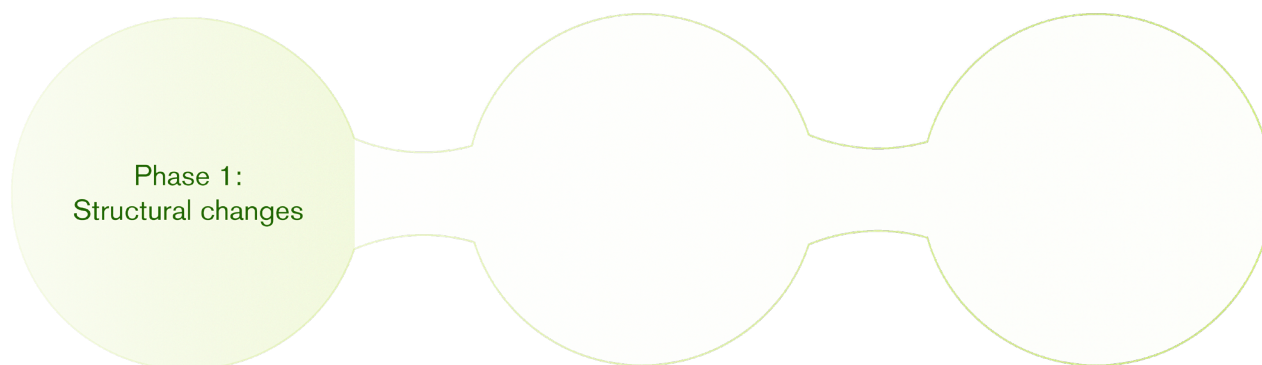


Figure 55: State phase 1

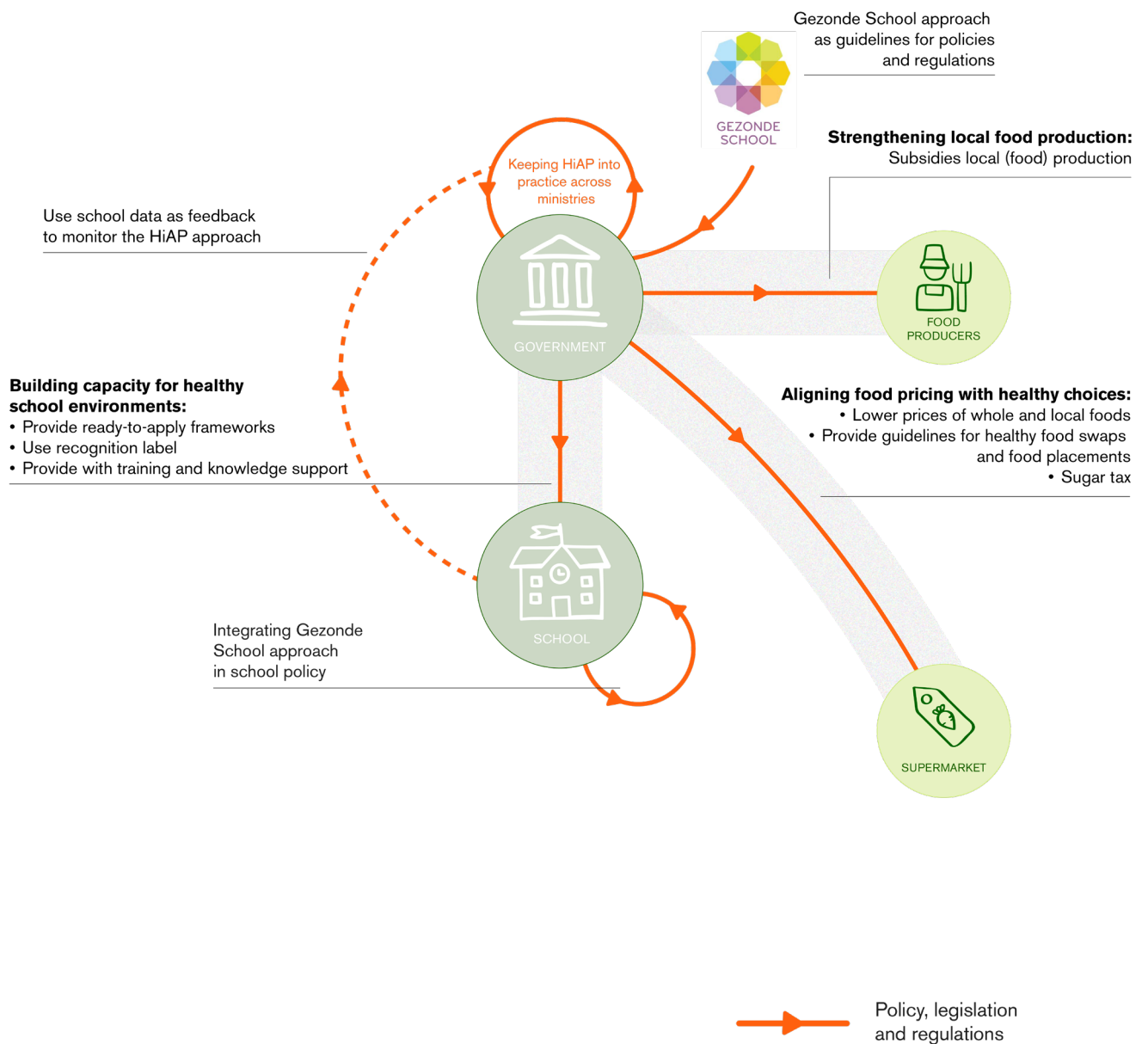


Figure 56: Phase 1 - 'Policies and regulations'

Phase 2: Everyday environments where healthy food becomes the easiest option

The second phase towards the envisioned system is about setting up economic and institutional support towards reconfiguring food environments. First, a strong collaboration between supermarkets and local food producers should be fostered. This would positively affect supply and demand. It could work towards impacting the narratives about local agriculture that are currently still quite negative. Furthermore, this collaboration would help in reconfiguring supermarket food environments that would emphasize healthy, local, and whole products in offering and placement. A campaign, such as healthy food swaps, could also be introduced to further facilitate the decision-making for households in the supermarkets. By increasing the visibility and financial attractiveness of healthy foods, supermarkets can help in the transition towards healthier households. Local communities, such as the church or local initiatives, could also play a similar supporting role with the support of the government, such as funding or providing necessary knowledge to those communities.

Finally, schools play an important role in reconfiguring the food environments. Once the Gezonde School approach has been integrated, concrete steps such as adding water taps, changing the canteen offer, and offering free fruit can be made. Paired with that, Schools could also play a supportive role by identifying students who may benefit from additional guidance and connecting families with relevant health services. Next to that, setting up the healthy meals for students can help

lower the mental load certain caregivers might carry and ensure that students get at least one healthy and balanced meal a day, and prevent parents from having to visit convenient food outlets when driving their children. In such a food environment, healthy food is the most convenient.



Figure 57: State phase 2

Support local and trusted community networks:

- Fund community events or initiatives
- Provide knowledge and guidelines for healthy food practices

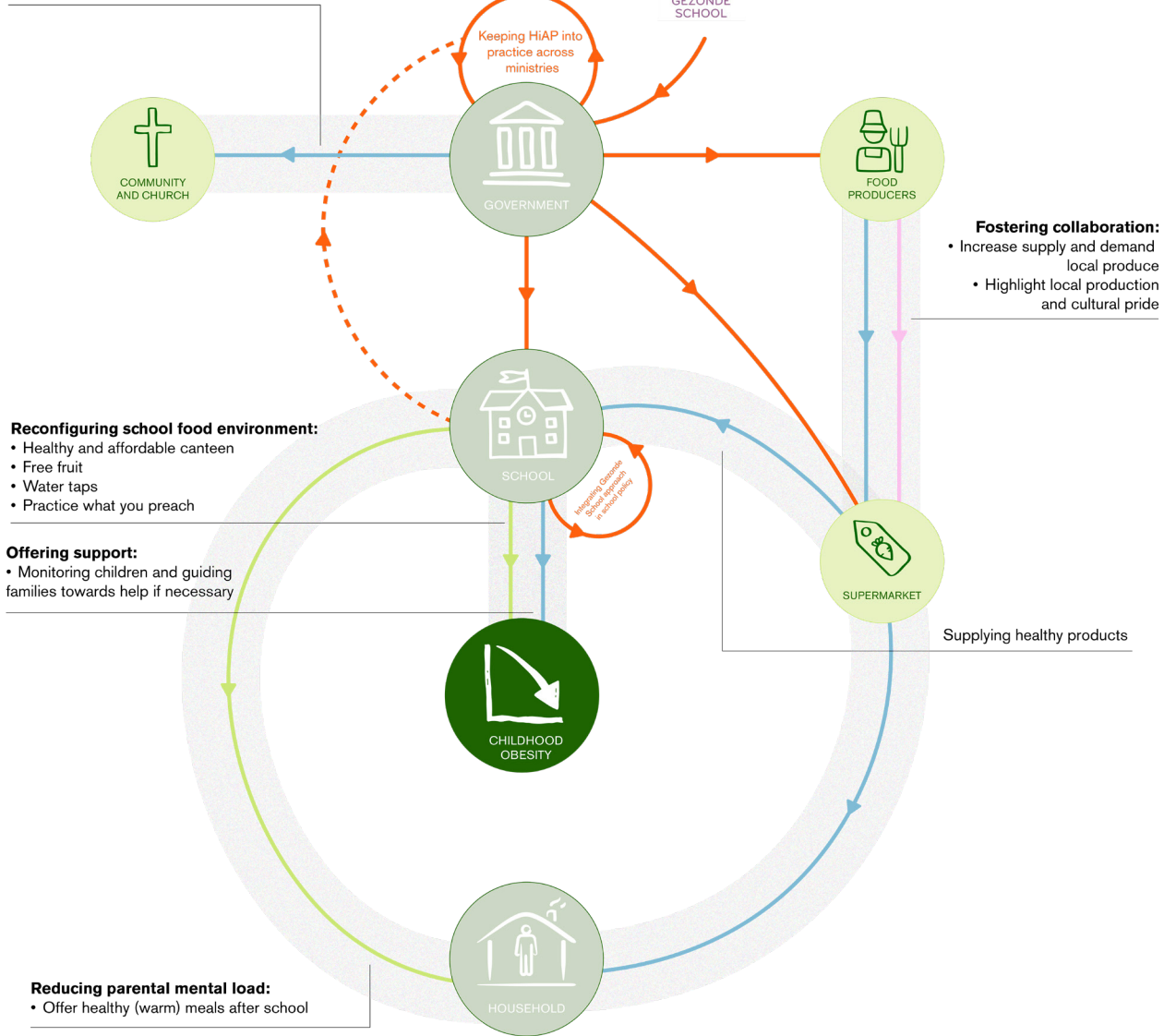


Figure 58: Phase 2 - 'Changes in everyday food environments and institutional support'

Phase 3: Emergence of new food narratives

In this final phase, the structural and environmental changes introduced in earlier phases begin to translate into new food narratives. As healthier practices become easier to enact, they are gradually normalized within communities, households, and schools. First, the government-supported local communities and churches help in fostering and normalising healthy communities. This is achieved through the organisation of events around healthy food practices and setting up or strengthening local initiatives such as cooking meals together, community gardens, or supporting healthier food banks. Support can also take the form of educating on easy and healthy food practices that caregivers can easily recognise and find in supermarkets. By creating a communal normalization of healthy food practices, the first steps towards changing the norm for convenience are made.

These new practices further evolve within the households, first by reconfiguring the home food environments with parents focusing on purchasing healthier snacks and foods, which is now facilitated. Another small shift could be to standardise the consumption of water. All of this should fit within a practice-what-you-preach mindset to work together with the youth on creating healthier practices and new food narratives. This can be achieved by cooking and sharing healthy meals or having students extend practices from school back at home. For instance, by asking to buy specific items they enjoyed at school.

The meals provided by schools also help in fostering

new food narratives by having parents rely less on convenience food. It also helps shape students' taste in food and discover new and healthy ways of preparing food, which could also be implemented in the emergence of new food narratives.

Through these repeated practices across schools and households, healthier ways of eating gradually become embedded in everyday life. In this way, the system starts to reinforce itself: healthy food practices not only become possible, but increasingly normal and convenient within Curaçaoan food environments.



Figure 59: State phase 3

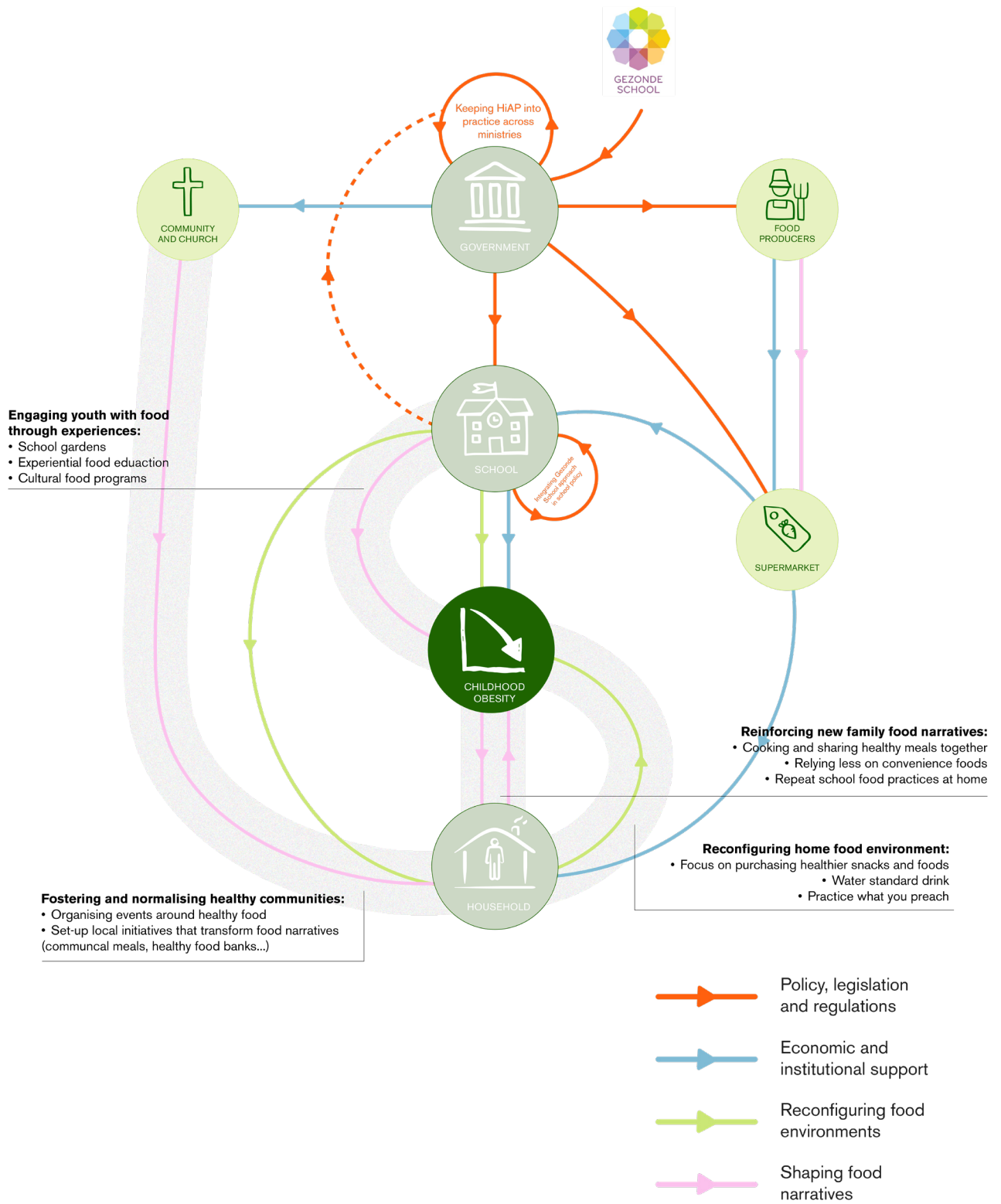


Figure 60: Phase 3 - 'Emergence of new food narratives'

Conclusion

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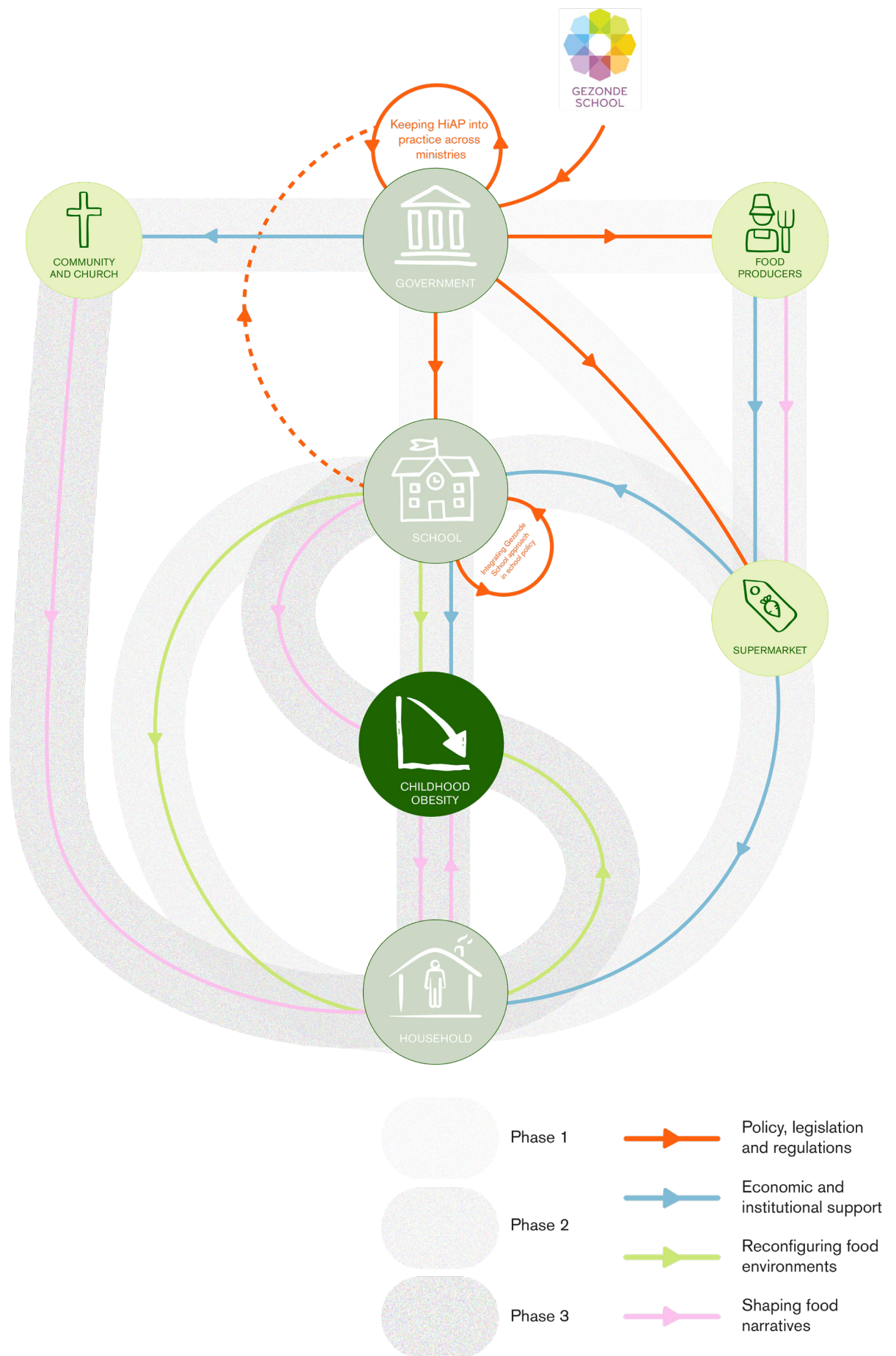


Figure 61: Complete system map of the roadmap

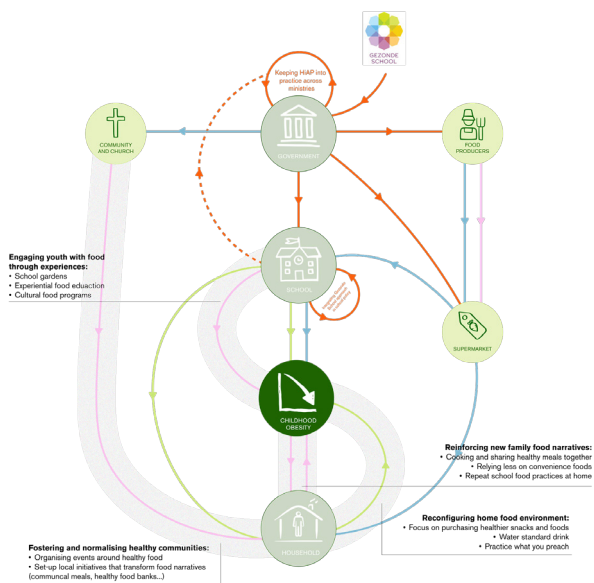
To translate the roadmap into a format that can support discussion among stakeholders, I designed a complementary booklet describing the different phases of the transition and the potential roles of each actor. It provides examples of fitting initiatives and links to relevant sources such as the Gezonde School website. The booklet presents these phases in Dutch and Papiamentu and functions as a boundary object that can facilitate conversations between policy makers, school boards, and local actors about possible pathways toward healthier food environments. The full booklet can be found in Appendix K.

FASE 3: NOBO KUSTOMBER DI KUMINDA

Den e fase aki nobo kustumber di kuminda salú ta kuminsá keda mas normal den bida di tur dia. Pasobra eskoho salú a bira mas fásil, nan ta bira cada biaha mas komun.

FASE 3: NIEUWE VOEDSELGEWOONTEN

In deze fase beginnen nieuwe gewoonten rond gezond eten zich te verspreiden. Doordat gezonde keuzes makkelijker zijn geworden, worden ze steeds normaler in het dagelijks leven.



	<p>GOBIËRNU Ta sigui sostené iniciativanan i komunidatnan lokal. Ta stimula aktividad ku ta hasi kuminda salú mas visibel i normal den sosiedat.</p>	<p>REGERING Blijft lokale initiatieven en gemeenschappen ondersteunen. Stimuleert activiteiten die gezond eten zichtbaar en normaal maken in de samenleving.</p>
	<p>SKOLNAN Ta sigui stimula kustumber di kuminda salú na studiantnan. Ta yuda studentnan deskubri nobo sabor i manera salú di prepara kuminda. Paketenan di les riba nutrisjon, konstrukshon di un hofí di skol...</p>	<p>SCHOLEN Blijven gezonde eetgewoonten stimuleren bij leerlingen. Helpen leerlingen nieuwe smaken en gezonde maaltijden te ontdekken. <i>Lespakketten over voeding, schooltuin bouwen...</i></p>
	<p>KAS DI FAMILIA Ta hasi mas eskoho salú ora nan ta kumpra di prepara kuminda. Ta integrá kustumber salú den bida di tur dia, manera kueh i kome huntu of bebe awa.</p>	<p>THUIS Maken vaker gezonde keuzes bij het kopen en bereiden van eten. Nemen gezonde gewoonten over in het dagelijks leven, bijvoorbeeld samen koken en water drinken.</p>
	<p>KOMUNIDAT I IGLESIA Ta organisa aktividad rondó di kuminda salú. Ta yuda komparti i fortalece kustumber di kuminda salú den komunidad.</p>	<p>GEMEENSCHAP EN KERK Organiseren activiteiten rond gezond eten. Helpen om gezonde gewoonten te delen en te versterken binnen de gemeenschap.</p>

Figure 62: Spread of the booklet



Figure 63: Render of the booklet



Photograph of Playa Lagun
taken by the author
Curaçao, Oct. 2025

8. Discussion and limitations

This thesis showed how Curaçaoan youth food practices shape their food environments and explored how systemic changes could structurally reinforce food literacy and food narratives. This was a result of answering the following research questions: What key systemic drivers shaping youth food practices in Curaçao can be identified and mapped? How do Curaçaoan youth experience the food system, and how does it influence their food literacy? What systemic configuration would better support Curaçaoan youth food literacy, and through which leverage points could movement toward this configuration be initiated?

Understanding youth food practices

The system map highlighted three key reinforcing loops that enabled and amplified childhood obesity: institutional neglect shaping public food literacy, convenience-driven obesogenic environments, and unhealthy school food environments shaping food narratives. The findings suggested that these loops are interconnected and together reinforce governmental inaction, further amplifying the obesogenic environment. It is important to note, however, that the lingering effects of colonialism have also deeply affected these governments and environments. These insights coincide with the systemic framework Guariguata et al. (2024) developed in understanding childhood obesity in the Caribbean and offer a more specified and situated example with Curaçao. However, my project adds an extra layer to this framework with the decolonial lens I applied throughout the research. As explained in the brief history of Curaçao, the island was, all throughout its colonial history, used by colonial forces. This impacted the environment, but most importantly, the culture and populations. Even now, with the oil industry, import dependency, and tourism-reliant economy, the island is still in an outward dynamic and reliant on external factors, much like other post-colonial territories.

The system map revealed that the food literacy in Curacao is structurally constrained by the environment. The findings from the food literacy framework did highlight how much the youth are influenced by the environment. Healthy behaviour was practically never enabled by the environment, making it extra difficult to measure the cognitive and affective dimensions taking place during healthy practices. The absence of healthy food as a topic of conversation in most households made it difficult to reach that level within the results and demanded extra interpretation which I attempted to counter through extra validating steps of the findings. This insight brought along an interesting finding of this research, which was that the food literacy framework cannot be understood without the systemic environment. This does raise the question if affection and cognition can even develop if structural conditions such as healthy food environments are

absent. Or does food literacy need those conditions to strengthen and express itself? It is important to note, however, that this research focuses on youth food literacy; as youth have limited agency in food choices, these practices are largely mediated by caregivers and environmental conditions. Further research could dive into the food literacy of Curaçaoan adults and verify if the role of the food environments plays as big of a role as for the youth.

Designing conditions for healthier food practices

The roadmap aims to create the conditions for the envisioned system where healthy food becomes the most convenient option by reshaping daily food environments and narratives. However, this roadmap does demand a lot of initial motivation and change, such as the implementation of a HiAP approach and setting up a vast array of policies and regulations. As one of the experts explained, the current government is facing chronic understaffing, which complicates the process and makes setting up new initiatives very demanding. Just like many other systemic health interventions, the roadmap requires governance capacities that SIDS, such as Curaçao, struggle to sustain. But the data does show the emergency the island is facing regarding childhood obesity, and throughout this project, I have met enough people motivated enough to make a change on the island. This roadmap should be considered as a possible pathway to change through a phased approach.

The structural limitations of the local government challenged a train of thought I had regarding the involvement of the Netherlands. The Dutch government could, in theory, financially and structurally support the implementation of this roadmap. External support may provide the necessary resources and expertise. However, given the complicated history between both countries, external support might only risk reproducing decolonial patterns of dependency and undermining local ownership. This thesis does not aim to resolve this dilemma; rather, it seeks to foreground it within similar projects and to critically raise the question of local ownership.

The roadmap not only demands a lot from the government but also a lot of motivation from the different actors, such as the schools or the supermarkets. Given that healthy food practices are not a topic of conversation in general in Curaçao, setting such a roadmap in motion would need to activate the motivation of the actors and support from the government. This is one of the reasons why the roadmap focuses on changing environments first, unlike most public health strategies that focus on education, awareness, and individual behaviour. If the food environment reflects a new norm for convenience and health, perhaps food literacy could benefit from that change. This argument is rooted in the findings from the food literacy framework as well as the power of social normalization in Curaçao that I observed and discussed with locals during my field research.

Lastly, the roadmap relies heavily on schools as a leverage point; however, my research did show that these are also institutions with limitations, such as limited staff capacity or resources. Other actors, such as the healthcare system, could be explored as additional support in the transformation towards the envisioned system. However, during the expert session, the current healthcare system of Curaçao was briefly discussed. It was described as having its own limitations and burdens. This thesis places schools as a more immediate leverage point that reaches youth daily, structures their routines, and has the potential of being healthy daily food environments, even though the roadmap is not immediately in action. The healthcare system would also benefit from a systemic transformation, with the fight against obesity and non-communicable diseases central.

Research limitations

This research project did, however, face certain limitations regarding methods, data, and interpretation, scope, and positionality. First, I used an array of methods fitting the decolonial context of Curaçao to make sure this project also worked towards creating shared knowledge. One method specifically was met with mixed results: the cultural probes. I collected shallow answers for the cultural

probes, which served as a basis for the food literacy findings. I did not pilot the packages, and my own personal cultural biases played a role. However, the shallow answers themselves were used as a result as well. They highlighted how food is not a consciously discussed topic in youth environments, indicating limited reflection. Furthermore, the adapted food literacy framework was not verified and validated before application in this research. This limits any claim on possible impact through this framework. Given the impact of systemic drivers and structural constraints on the framework, an iteration should be made taking them into account.

Furthermore, the findings of this research were interpretative in nature, which, given my position of external researcher, limits the validity of the interpretation of the insights. The system map is based on the synthesis of multiple perspectives, which makes the system and its reinforcing loops interpretations of the context. I mitigated that by validating the findings with local actors who confirmed, discussed, or reframed my interpretations.

Also, this research was based on a collaboration with a limited number of stakeholders, which, given the speculative nature of the roadmap, limits the viability claims of this project. Further research and grounding are necessary to validate the roadmap as actual steps towards systemic change. The roadmap assumes alignment and capacity, which, as this research project showed, is currently not the case.

Reflections on research approach and recommendations

This research project has highlighted certain recommendations for similar systemic projects in Curacao. When working with the youth, more time is necessary to build a more familiar bond with them. This fits the decolonial lens I tried to apply, where constructing a reciprocal project is key. Participatory design in postcolonial contexts requires more relational groundwork than this project did. Short-term engagement limited the depth of results and insights. Furthermore, language was not considered to be a possible barrier to this project, given that Dutch is commonly spoken and is the language

of education on Curaçao. However, given the personal and familiar aspect of the research topic, switching to Papiamentu could have aided the youth in expressing themselves and perhaps reaching more of the cognitive and affective dimensions of food literacy in the research insights. Doing the research in Dutch also unconsciously reproduced colonial patterns. A final recommendation is to focus on identifying driving values when working with behavioural patterns and understanding where they come from. This helps with getting a better understanding of said behaviours.



9. Conclusion



Photograph of Playa Kanoa
taken by the author
Curaçao, Sep. 2025

To conclude, this research project aimed at mapping the food system and food literacy of the youth on Curaçao and deriving a roadmap to an envisioned system supporting healthier food practices. It exposed three reinforcing loops for childhood obesity: institutional neglect shaping public food literacy, convenience-reinforced obesogenic environments, and school environments reinforcing unhealthy food narratives. These loops originate in governmental inaction that is kept in place by those loops themselves. Currently, youth food literacy is limited by obesogenic food environments that do not support the enactment of healthy food practices. The cognitive and affective dimensions are under-represented and rarely translates itself into healthy behavioural patterns. This research showed that to increase food literacy through the emergence of new food narratives, it is important to tackle the system and the food environments it creates. Through this project, I developed a roadmap outlining how systemic interventions across governance, schools, and daily food environments such as supermarkets could gradually shift these dynamics towards an envisioned system where healthy becomes more convenient.

The core insights of this project were:

- Childhood obesity is sustained by a self-reinforcing system rather than individual behaviour. Institutional inaction and fragmented governance allow for the obesogenic environments to persist and further reinforce unhealthy food practices. The repetition of these practices has led to the social normalization of overweight bodies across households, schools, and institutions through the emergence of unhealthy food narratives, further reinforcing the unhealthy patterns.
- Food literacy is not only an individual competency but is shaped through everyday food environments. Youth food practices at school highlight this even more, with practices determined by schedules and availability. This suggests that improving food literacy requires more systemic interventions at the level of environments rather than only focusing on knowledge or skills.

- Convenience shapes youth food practices and reinforces the obesogenic environment. Across the research, convenience emerged as a core value for food practices among youth and within households. The obesogenic environments reinforce the convenience-driven food practices that are not the healthiest practices. Convenience also shapes the food narratives for many households, where socio-economic difficulties also make convenience a default.
- Schools play a critical role in reinforcing unhealthy food narratives among youth. As an everyday environment where food practices are repeatedly enacted, schools strongly influence how youth perceive and engage with food. However, the absence of regulations and the normalization of unhealthy food offerings within school environments contribute to the reproduction of unhealthy food narratives rather than supporting healthier practices.

Contributions

This project contributed to multiple stakeholders within the Curaçaoan food system.

For policymakers and public health actors in Curaçao, this research provided a visualization of the systemic drivers sustaining childhood obesity, including reinforcing loops between governance, environments, and social norms. This project provided insights into youth food practices and offered a food literacy framework to understand how values, behaviour, and cognition shape these practices and how these are related to the environment. It positioned convenience as a central structuring mechanism in youth food practices. This work can support collaboration between actors working toward healthier food environments on the island.

For schools, this project highlighted their critical role as everyday environments in which food practices and narratives are formed and reinforced. It showed that improving food literacy requires changes in the conditions under which food choices are made. Schools can positively impact food literacy by changing the food environments in which their

students make food choices and shape their food narratives at a critical time in their lives.

For design researchers, this project offered a systemic understanding of food literacy as an emergent property of everyday environments rather than an individual competency. It also showed how individual lived experiences can be integrated in a systemic design approach and help identify key leverage points through methods such as cultural probes. Furthermore, it reflects on a decolonial design research stance in Curaçao by focusing on local knowledge, in-context collaboration and iterative validations with local stakeholders.

For all these stakeholders, the roadmap and accompanying booklet translate these systemic insights into a phased design proposal that identifies leverage points across governance, school environments, and everyday food contexts. Rather than presenting a validated solution, they function as a research-through-design exploration of how shifting convenience and environmental conditions could enable new food practices and narratives over time.

Childhood obesity in Curaçao is very far from solved, but the first steps towards understanding where it comes from and what drives it have been made. Even though the roadmap has not been empirically tested, it can already serve as a conversation starter in a context where healthy food practices are not commonly discussed. Rather than focusing on changing individual behaviour through education or awareness campaigns, the project illustrated how designers can approach food literacy by reshaping the environments and infrastructures within which food practices take place. Through repeated exposure to healthier food environments, the roadmap outlines how new food narratives could gradually emerge and reshape youth food literacy.

AI statement

For this research project, I used AI tools to support me with different tasks. I used the LLM ChatGPT for the following things:

- Generation of visuals to support ideas (explicitly indicated in image captions) and to increase the resolution of certain images
- Grammar and spelling check of text
- Summarize meetings with supervisors
- Discuss the internal logic and structure of the narrative and arguments of the thesis
- Summarizing certain papers to assess their relevance before reading the full text

I used Turboscribe to transcribe the recordings of meetings and interviews before reviewing the data. Finally, I used Grammarly to check the spelling and grammar of the final thesis.

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Photograph by the author
Curaçao, Dec. 2025

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Appendix



Photograph of Westpunt
taken by the author
Curaçao, Dec. 2025

Appendix A: Interview scripts

Here is a set-up of the interviews I did with experts. Some interviews (like with the founders of local initiatives or the teacher at the high school) were more casual and explorative. For these I had not prepared a set of questions but rather themes I wanted to discuss.

Appendix A1: Nutrition and Lifestyle Counsellor at the Ministry of Health, Environment and Nature

Introduction

- Ask for consent
- Introduce myself
- Explain the purpose of the research and the interview

Ministry of GMN

- What exactly is your role within the ministry?
- How are the figures on obesity and overweight among youth in Curaçao viewed at GMN?
- Are they taken into account in policy making?
- Are there any initiatives or programs currently running within the ministry?
- During my research, I have come across many local initiatives, but I notice that they mostly operate separately from one another. Would centralizing these programs already be a step in the right direction?
- In your opinion, does the (built) environment play a role in the health of young people? In what way does it, or does it not?
- What is the ministry's perspective on this?
- Is there collaboration with other ministries or parties regarding this topic?
- One idea I am currently exploring is designing a public space where young people can go in their free time. I was considering locating it near an area with a high concentration of schools. Are there already comparable projects? Or people within the government who are working on something similar?

Nutrition and Lifestyle in Curaçao

- Food plays a major role in the culture of Curaçao. How do you approach this as a nutrition and lifestyle expert?
- Do you think that cultural pride or place-based identity, for example local dishes and traditions, could play a role in encouraging healthier eating?
- Despite food having an important cultural role, people often choose convenience in daily life. What do you think explains this?
- What do you see as the main causes of overweight among young people in Curaçao?
- Do you think this is mainly related to diet, physical activity, culture, or something else?
- What is, in your opinion, the role of parents, schools, or the broader environment?
- Are there certain trends or developments you have noticed regarding food?
- Are people eating healthier? Or not?
- And what about physical activity among young people?
- Are there examples of successful local initiatives or projects that, in your opinion, truly make a difference?
- What makes those initiatives successful?
- If young people themselves were involved in thinking about solutions, for example through creative or participatory projects, how would you view that? Do you think this could have value for policy or awareness?

Appendix A2: General Practitioner and Lifestyle Advisor

Context

- Do you see many young people with overweight in your practice?
- How do you notice this, do they come on their own, or are they referred by parents or schools?
- What are the usual complaints they present with?
- How do you approach this as a physician? Do you follow a fixed protocol, or does it differ per case?

Awareness and Motivation

- Do you feel that young people, or their parents, are aware of what healthy eating and physical activity entail?
- What do you notice about their motivation to change?
- In your opinion, where does it often go wrong?

Causes and Social Factors

- What do you see as the main causes of overweight among young people in Curaçao?
- Do you think this is mainly related to diet, physical activity, culture, or something else?
- What is, in your opinion, the role of parents, schools, or the broader environment?

Policy

- Do you think enough is being done by the government or schools to address this issue?
- Are you aware of specific programs or campaigns that are effective, or ineffective?
- To what extent do these initiatives involve physicians or local communities?

Healthy Lifestyle in Curaçao

- What does a healthy lifestyle in Curaçao mean to you?
- How do factors such as heat, work rhythms, transportation, and food prices influence what is realistically achievable for people?
- Are there things you observe that make it easier or more difficult to live healthily?
- In my research, I explore how young people, by co-designing their own environments, for example at school, can develop more agency and knowledge about healthy eating.
- How do you view this from your professional experience?
- Do you think greater ownership over their environment, such as school or neighborhood, could help?
- In your opinion, what would be necessary for such an initiative to succeed?

Appendix A3: Dean of high school

I had two meetings with the dean.

First meeting

- Who are you? What is your role within this high school?
- How long have you been working there?
- Are you originally from Curaçao? Have you ever lived somewhere else?

Overweight on the Island and at School

- Had you already noticed that a large percentage of young people in Curaçao struggle with overweight and even obesity? Has this increased or decreased in recent years?
- Do you feel that enough is being done on the island to address the issue?
- You mentioned that the school canteen mainly offers unhealthy options. Do you feel that the school is

addressing the issue in other ways, or not at all?

- Students also complain about the food provision. Do you have an idea why that might be, for example related to health concerns or a desire for more diverse food options?

Second meeting

Goal: Validate insights

Introduction: Over the past few weeks, I have conducted extensive research into the eating behaviour of young people and how it is influenced. Today, I would like to review my insights with you regarding youth food literacy here and the role of the school in this context.

Food Literacy

I use a framework to assess food literacy. It is structured along three dimensions: cognitive, which relates to knowledge; behavioural; and affective, which relates to values. Based on all the interviews and the small study I conducted with the students, I have identified the following insights.

(Show sheet with post-its, take notes together)

- Are there certain things that stand out to you?
- Do you agree with all of it? Where do you agree, and where do you not?
- Are there elements that you feel are missing?

Role of the School

In my research, I also looked at the broader system and the role the school plays within it. What stood out to me is that the food environments of young people do not always make it easy to make healthy choices. By food environments, I mean the combination of physical, economic, political, and socio-cultural conditions that influence food choices.

Appendix B: Cultural probes

This appendix includes the full set of cultural probes distributed to participants.

Appendix B1: Food diary for the students of the Radulphus College



Lief dagboek, dit is mijn weg van school naar huis. Ik was met deze mensen en ben hier en daar geweest.
Tekent het allemaal hier. Je mag de stickers als gids gebruiken. Laat ook weten als je iets hebt gegeten en waar.



Lief dagboek, vandaag had mijn dag deze smaak.
Geef aan welke smaak je dag had.



Zoet



Zout



Zuur



Pittig



Bitter

Wat maakte dat vandaag zo smaakte?


Lief dagboek, eten op school is heel erg anders dan thuis. Stel alles was mogelijk geweest op school dan zou ik dit graag willen.
Beschrijf hier wat je het liefst op school zou willen eten als alles mogelijk zou zijn. Teken ook waar dat is en met wie je bent. Waarom vind je dit belangrijk?

Bedankt lief dagboek voor het luisteren!

Appendix B2: Food diary for the students of the University of Curaçao

Lief dagboek, dit heb ik vandaag allemaal gedaan.

Laat op de tijdlijn zien wat je vandaag allemaal hebt gedaan. Je mag het tekenen, de stickers gebruiken etc... Geef aan waar je bent geweest, wat je hebt gedaan en vooral wat en waar je hebt gegeten.

Ochtend Middag Avond 

Lief dagboek, vandaag had mijn dag deze smaak.

Geef aan welke smaak je dag had.



Zoet



Zout



Zuur



Pittig

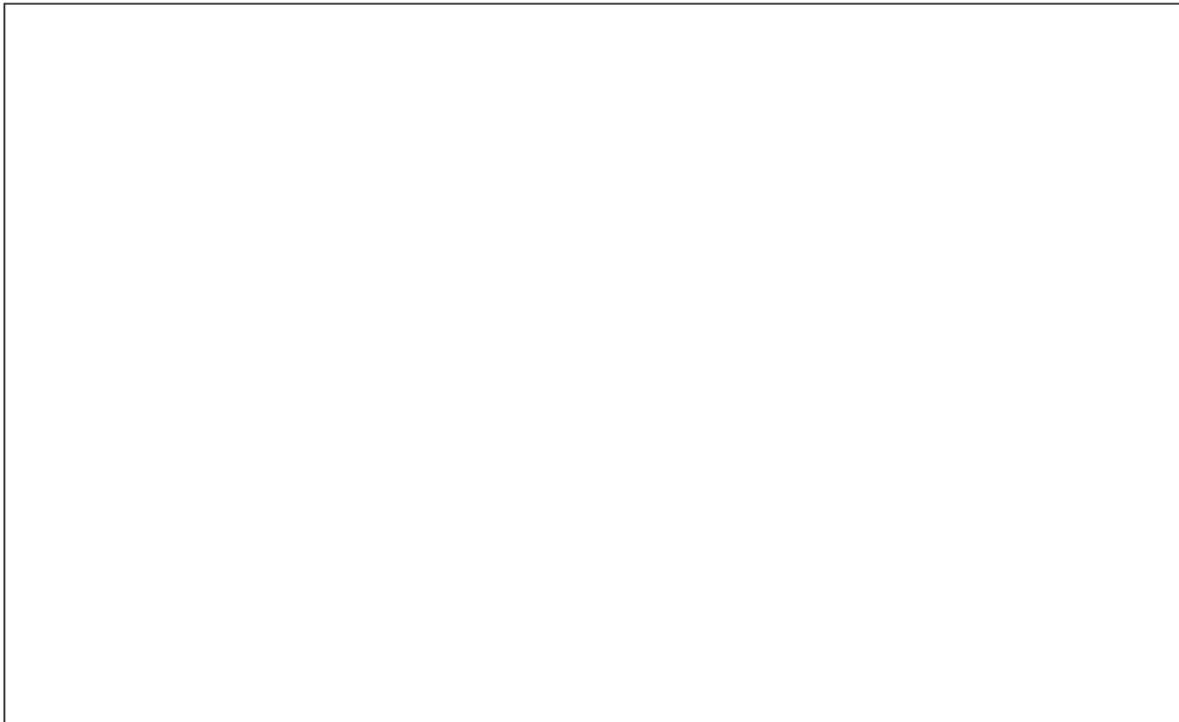


Bitter

Wat maakte dat vandaag zo smaakte?

Lief dagboek, eten op school is heel erg anders dan thuis. Stel alles was mogelijk geweest op school dan zou ik dit graag willen.

Beschrijf hier wat je het liefst op school zou willen eten als alles mogelijk zou zijn. Teken ook waar dat is en met wie je bent. Waarom vind je dit belangrijk?



Bedankt lief dagboek voor het luisteren!

Appendix B3: Food worldmap and stickers



Wat vind je hiervan?



Appendix B4: Postcards with their questions



Welke moment van het avondeten voelt het meest als thuis? Het voorbereiden, eten of het opruimen? En waarom?



Welke kleuren en geuren associeer jij met gezond eten?



Wat speelt er door je hoofd als je iets kiest om te eten?



Wie kookt er meestal bij jou thuis? Wat maakt hun eten bijzonder?



Is er een plek op het eiland waar je het liefst eet? Wat maakt die plek bijzonder?



Wat maakt eten met vrienden anders dan alleen eten?



Beschrijf de laatste keer dat jij iets hebt laten groeien? Hoe voelde jij je?



Wat is je lievelingstraditie op Curaçao? Waarom is dat?



Hoe voelt het om samen met je gezin te eten? Beschrijf het in geur en kleur!

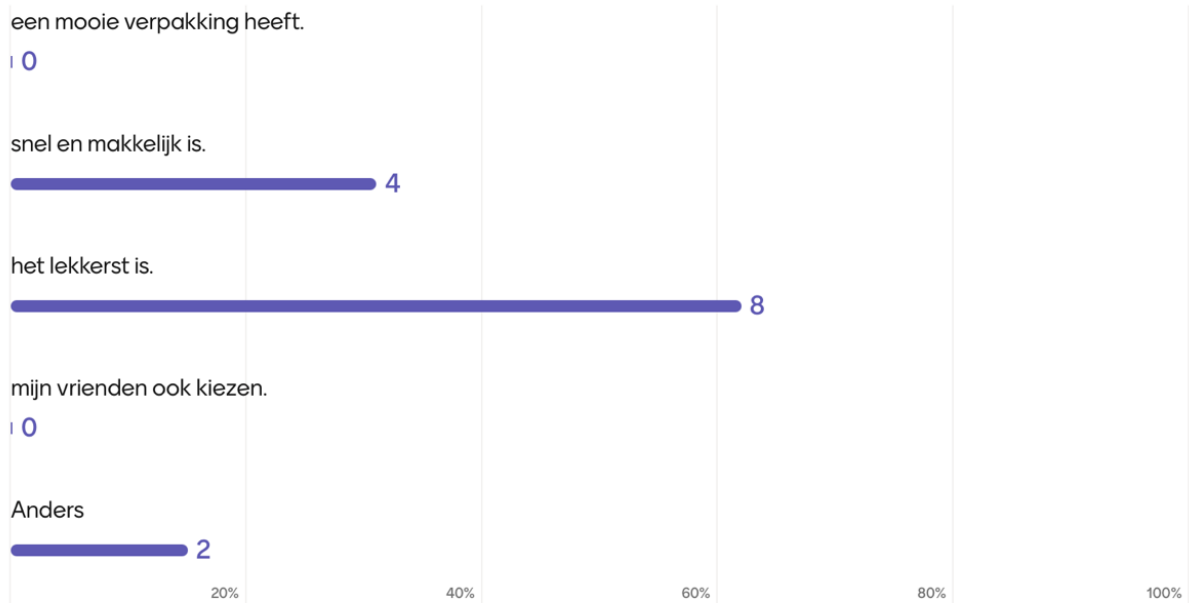


Wat maakt een plek fijn om met vrienden te zijn? Waar ben jij het liefst met je vrienden?

Appendix C: Mentimeter questions and results

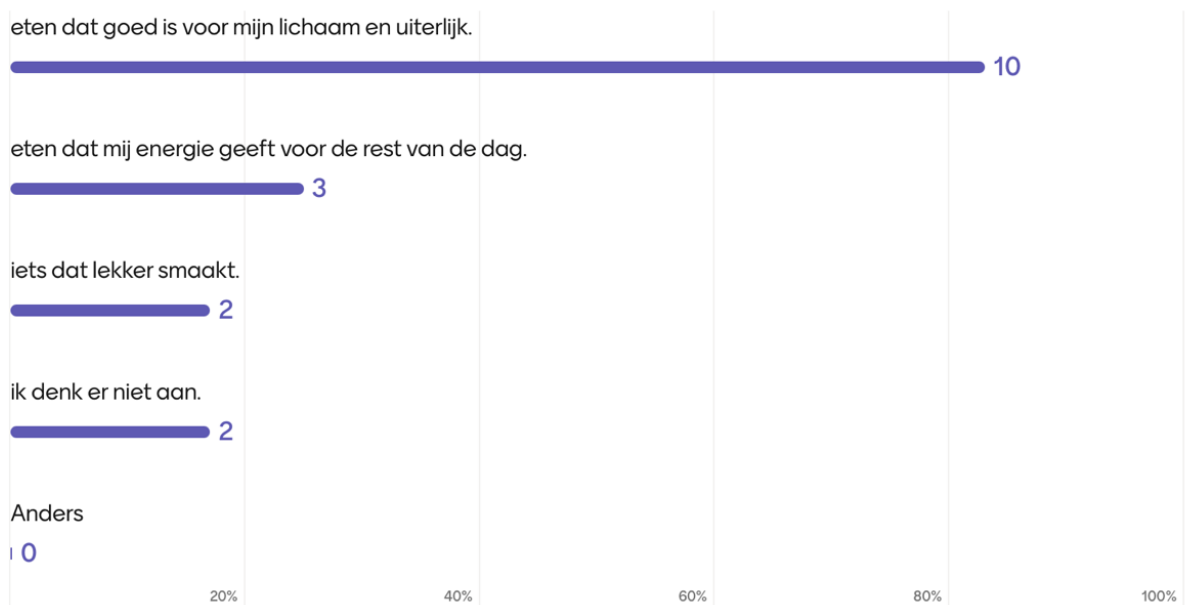
Als ik niet weet welk eten gezonder is, dan kies ik de optie die...

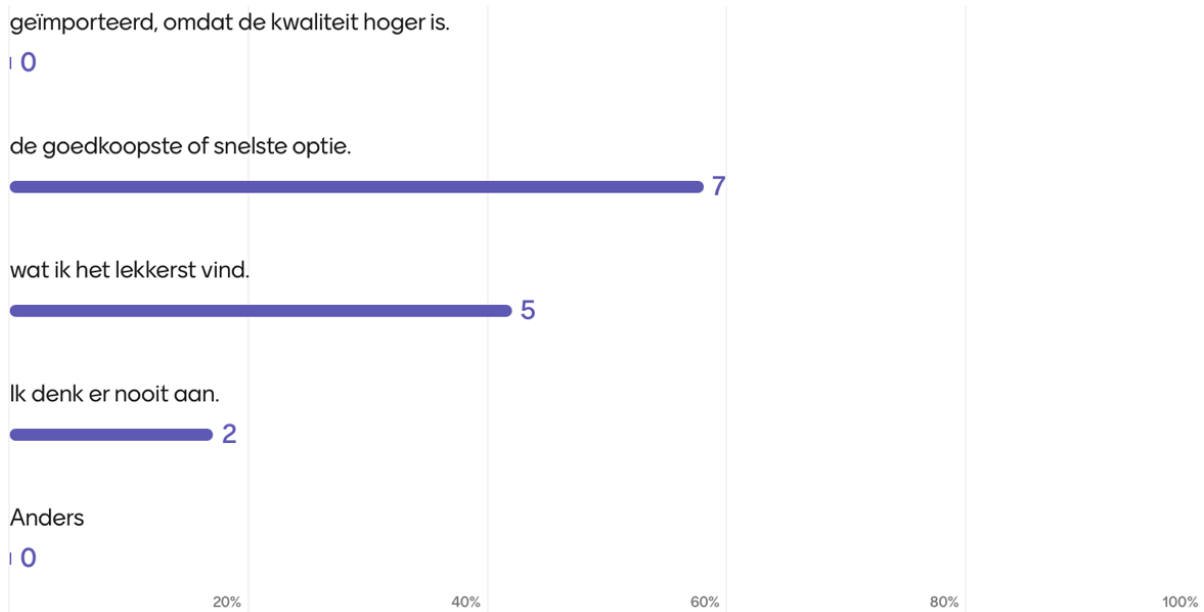
13 / 15



Als ik aan 'gezond eten' denk, denk ik aan...

12 / 15



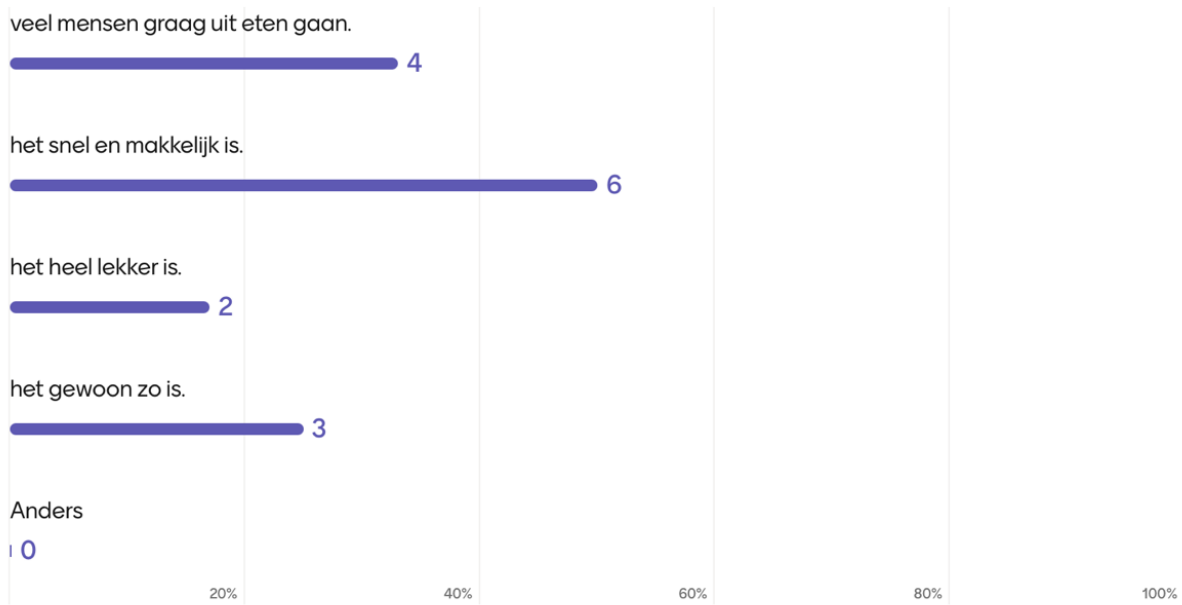


Wat vind jij het belangrijkste als je aan eten denkt?

mi tin hamber awor
goed balans en nutitions
lekkerheid
good flavour
een goede balans hebben
dat het gezond is
lekker is
ik heb honger real
dushi birria tacos
gani bebe matcha awo
lekker dat het lekker is djusssss smaak
foodgassmmmm ki mensa tin awe
lekker en niet te ongezon
lust ik het wel vandaag

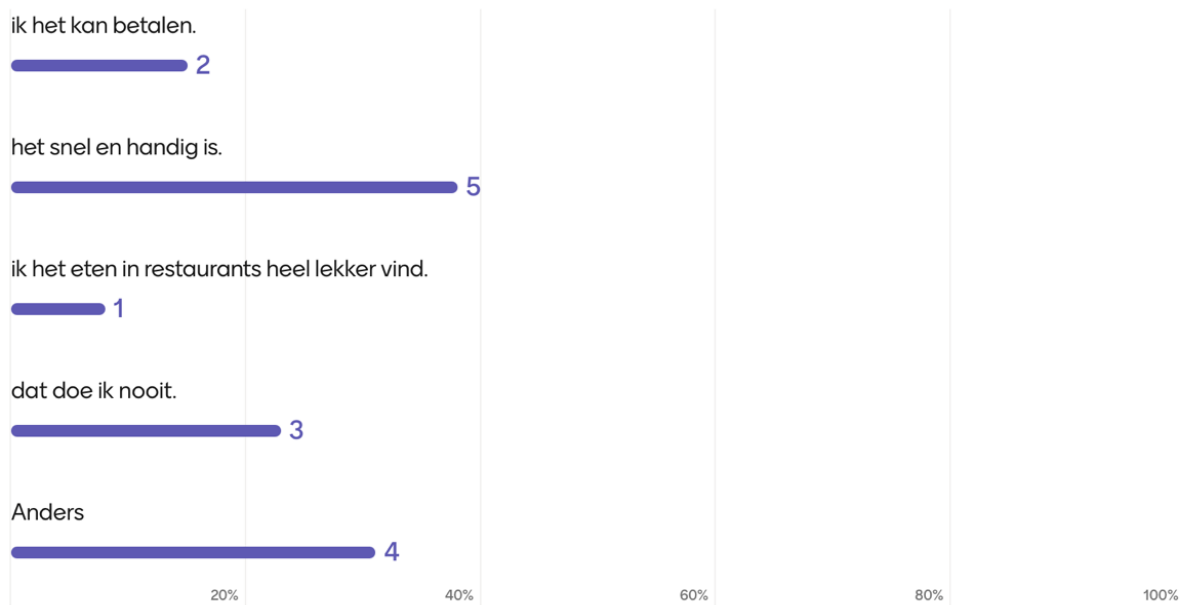
Er zijn veel fast food en snack opties op Curaçao omdat...

12 / 15



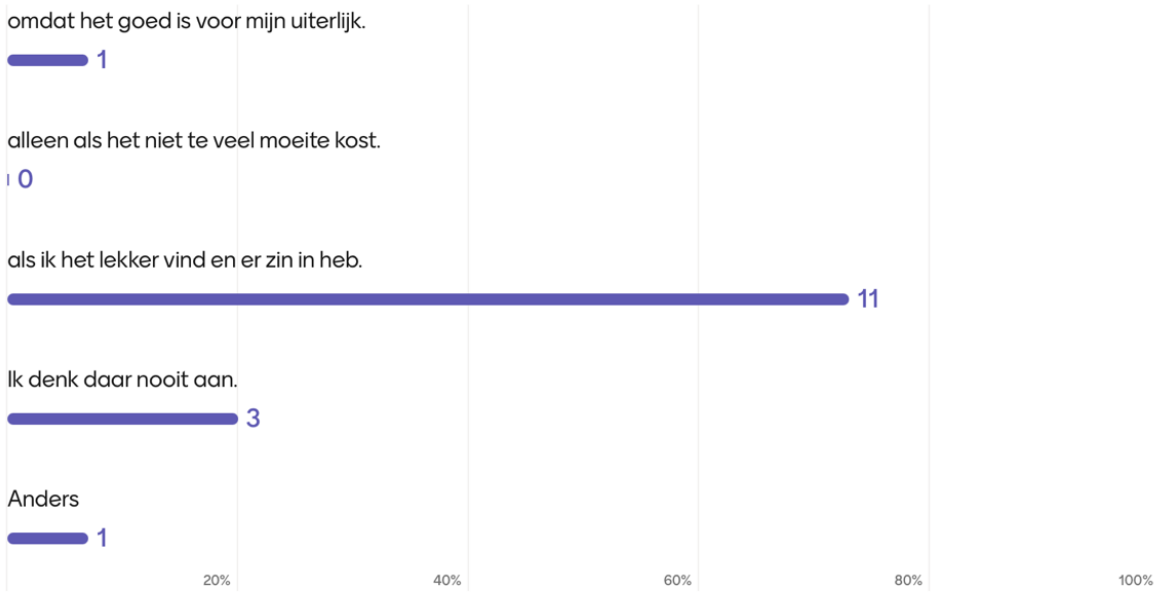
Als ik 's ochtends naar school moet, eet ik in de middag in een restaurant of fast food omdat...

13 / 15



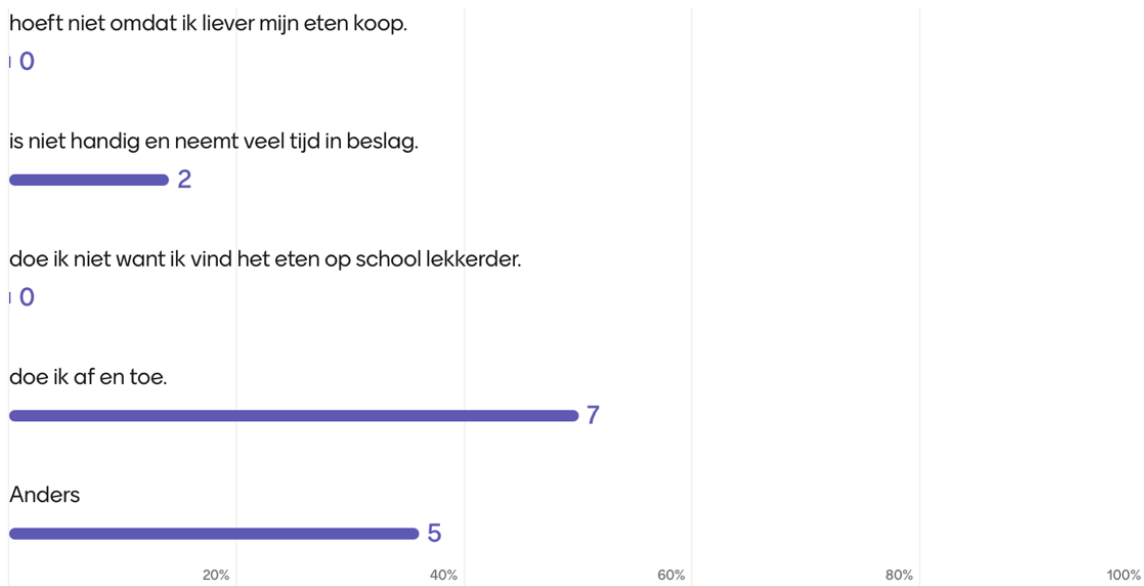
Ik kies gezond eten in de mensa...

15 / 15

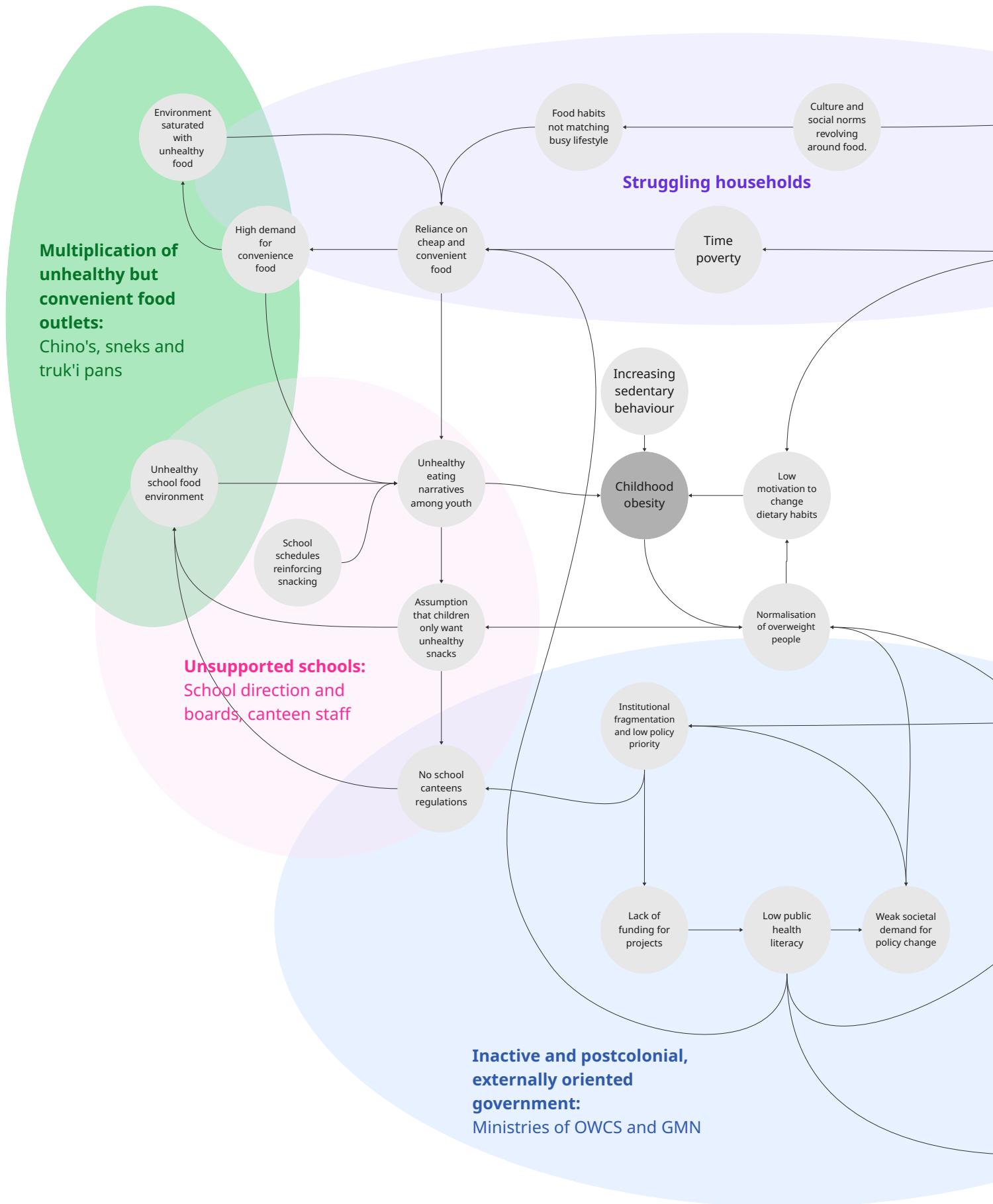


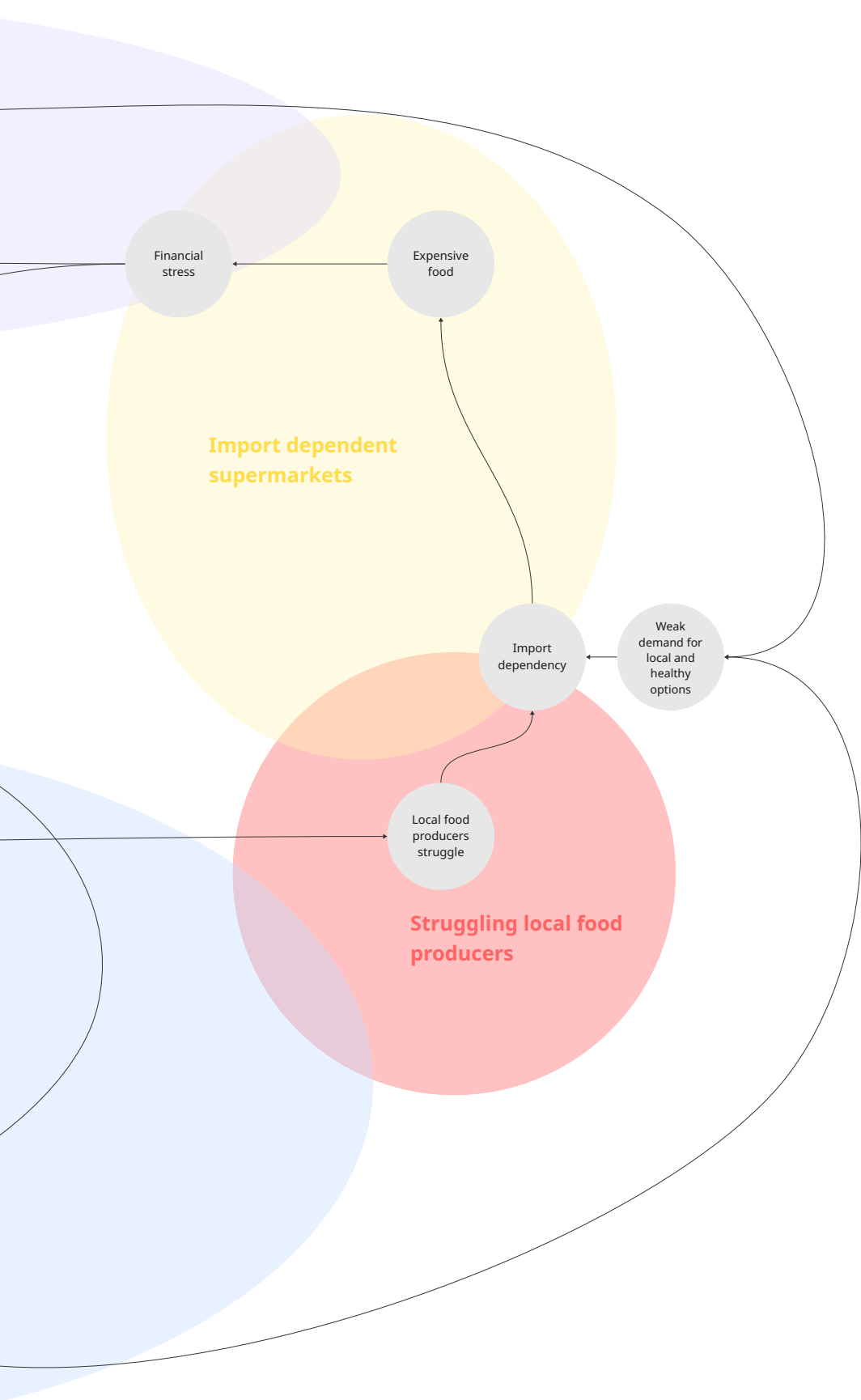
Mijn lunch de dag van tevoren voorbereiden...

14 / 15



Appendix D: Full-sized system map





Appendix E: Probe development

Design statement

To guide the next steps in the design process, I will follow this design statement as a guide:

Creating Curaçaoan school-based food environments that support the convenient enactment of healthier food practices within the routines of the school day.

This design statement is rooted in exploring environmental and behavioural interventions instead of focusing on strictly educational material. The findings suggest that cognitive deliberation plays a limited role in adolescents' everyday food choices in Curaçao. Convenience, in this sense, is not about informing better choices but about reducing cognitive load when faced with said choices. The cognitive dimension of food literacy is therefore not directly addressed through explicit instruction, but indirectly through repeated exposure, availability, and situated experience. This design direction aligns with principles found in initiatives such as the Gezonde School program in the Netherlands that were described in chapter 3.2, which similarly emphasises environmental conditions alongside education and signalling, rather than isolated instructional interventions.

Interaction vision

Next to a design statement, this project also benefits from an interaction vision. This method is used for designing for experiences or services that focus on the experiential effects a product should have on the user (Pasman et al., 2011). Since this project focuses on creating new food environments rooted in making healthy food practices more convenient, it is important to identify what experiences these environments will elicit for the students and how these can be achieved. Creating an interaction vision starts with an analogy for the desired interaction.

“Strolling through a beautiful garden”

The interaction vision that I will use to describe the qualities of my final design is “strolling through a beautiful garden”. This describes a moment where you can walk around a beautifully crafted and well-curated garden. You have the time to look around and enjoy your surroundings. You are free to go as you please and stop to look at whatever you might find interesting. The garden invites you to walk around along a path, following the rhythm you desire. Following this path is unconsciously the most convenient and does not strip the interaction from begin an enjoyable experience. The qualities of this interaction are “inviting”, “open” and “intuitive”.

- **Inviting:** This quality translates the idea that you are free to participate if you want. It is inviting through its attractiveness, ease and general low stakes like walking through a garden.
- **Open:** This quality is about how it allows easy access. There are no confining barriers, and you are free to stay as long as you like. There are no limits, no final goal.
- **Intuitive:** This final quality describes the ability to understand without any proof of evidence. Like following a carved path in a garden. It is clear

you must walk along this path without anyone telling you to do it.

These qualities will pose the basis for the interaction of the design solution. This interaction vision will not directly be translated into a design solution but rather be used as an inspiration.

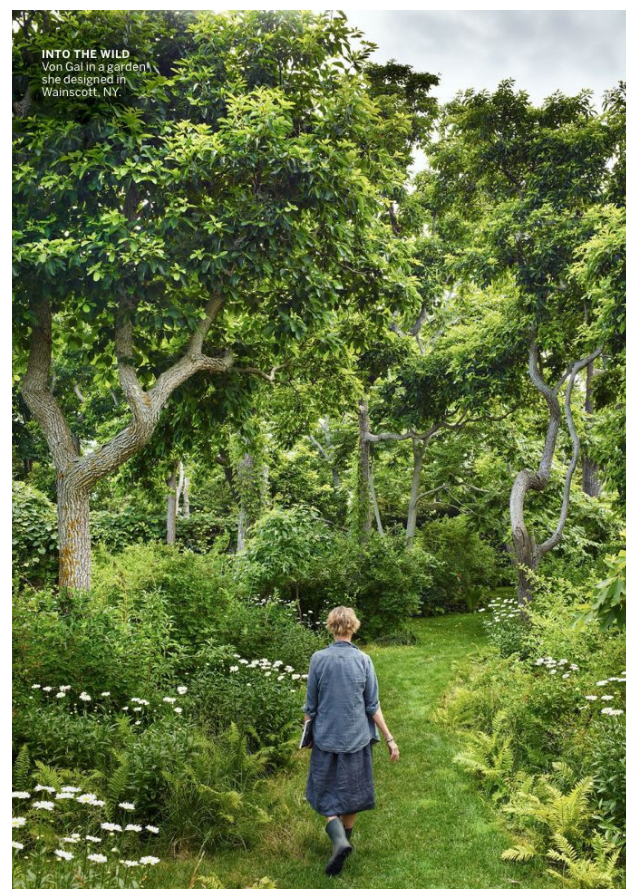


Figure 64: Visualisation for interaction vision

The design space

The next step was to define the design space. This helped define the boundaries within which the design solution can be designed and operated. These conditions are structured on three levels: from concept to interaction and finally implementation.

Conceptual level

These conditions define what the concept can look like, and within what boundaries it can exist.

Location

- The intervention should take place on school ground.
- It needs to work in the environmental conditions of Curaçao: warm and humid.
- It should still provide the same level of comfort as the school environment does in the environmental conditions: provide shade or be placed in a shaded area and allow for a breeze.

Policy constraints

- Align with all policies regarding food, health and education.

Cultural constraints

- Align with socio-cultural food practices: warm lunches, convenience
- Prioritize healthy behaviours instead of increasing cognitive load.

Ethical

- The intervention must not restrict access to existing food choices.
- The intervention must not rely on sanctions, moral framing, or surveillance.

Scalability

- The intervention should be transferable under similar condition to more Curaçaoan high schools.

Temporal

- The intervention will be embedded in the high school's food environment.
- It needs to allow for daily and repetitive usage.

Interactive level

These constraints define what the interaction between product and user should look like.

Stakeholders

- The intended users of the intervention will be high school students. The intervention needs to align with their schedules, values and needs.

Interaction qualities

- The intervention should elicit the following interaction qualities.

Food literacy framework

- Reduce cognitive load while still providing information on health impact of the intervention. It should reinforce existing knowledge.

Implementational conditions

These conditions describe what needs to be taken into account for further development and implementation of the concept.

Financial

- It should work even with a tight and limited budget.

Maintenance

- Maintenance of the intervention should be embedded in the school's routine maintenance schedule.

Material and infrastructure

- Where possible use recycled and sustainable materials.
- It should fit within the school's infrastructure.

Governance/ownership

- The intervention is governed and maintained at the school board level.

Concept direction: enabling healthier snacking practices

This project's concept direction narrows the project's focus to snacking practices during the school day. The possible interventions will focus on creating convenient food environments for enabling healthy snacking behaviour of the students at school and exploring how the conditions of the renewed canteen could be used. As shown in the timeline in figure 23, snacking happens all throughout the school day. This behaviour is due to the early mornings and busy schedule disrupting traditional eating patterns (breakfast, followed by lunch around noon). This behaviour takes on many different shapes and impacts the student dynamics and movement at school like snacking during a class, having to buy something during a packed break, waiting hungrily for a parent after school... It is a key everyday practice that shapes a great deal of the daily food intake of the Curaçaoan youth. Alternate food practices such as breakfast, lunch after school or beverage consumption were not pursued partly due to my research focusing mostly on food practices at school and the very large scope of different behaviours happening outside of school. School snacking on the other hand, is a more actionable starting point for increasing food literacy by partly reducing dependency on families, it can easily be impacted by food policies and government and schools are controlled environments. Tackling snacking offers the highest design leverage.

Concept exploration

The following section explores different intervention concepts. These concepts were developed based on iterations on different interventions focusing on enabling behaviour while remaining as convenient as possible. Each of these focus on a different aspect of the snacking behaviour of the students at school.

The fruit wall

The fruit wall intervention is located at the heart of the school, where there is much student traffic between classes and during the break. It is a construction with fruit that is displayed and free for students to snack on. Whenever a piece of fruit is taken, a counter on top goes up.

This intervention addresses the behaviours of choosing and acquiring snacks by enabling students to have access to healthy snacks in between classes. It presents itself as an alternative to the canteen especially when it is busy or the students are in a rush. It changes what is closest, easiest and fastest to acquire. The intervention adds a social layer with the counter. It creates social feedback and normalizes the consumption of fruit as a snack. Social normalization plays an important role in Curaçao. Seeing the counter go up during the day could help create traction and motivate more students to take fruit.

This intervention would require some extra work from the canteen staff which would keep an eye on the fruit stock during the day. However, it does not require behavioural enforcement or active supervision.



Figure 65: Visual of the fruit wall



Figure 66: Visual of the car snack box

Car snack box

The car snack box is an addition to the car that parents can purchase at school. It is a box that can be placed inside the glove box of the car. When the glove box is closed, a label sticks out from it with a reminder for the student leaving the car to open the glove box and grab a snack to go. When purchased, the box is filled with healthy, nutritious and non-perishable snacks like nuts, dried fruit or granola bars. Parents can refill the box as they want.

This concept addresses the behaviours of having to buy snacks or taking the time to take snacks from home by enabling students to easily access healthy snacks before school. It reminds students to bring a healthy snack to prevent them from having to buy something at the school canteen which takes time or to buy something unhealthy outside of school. This gives students more time to enjoy their break together with peers. Thus, opening a window for further exploration with additional interactions that can take place in the free time.

It is important to note, however, that this intervention does affect the convenience of the caregivers; it is placed inside their cars, and they are responsible for resupplying the box. It requires upkeep and financial investment from the caregivers.



Figure 67: Visual of the fruit of the month

Fruit of the month

Fruit of the month is a campaign targeted at promoting the snacking of fruits in different forms. Every month, a new fruit is chosen and highlighted by the canteen through different simple and easy recipes. For instance, watermelon cubes or watermelon juice during the watermelon month. Those specific snacks are also cheaper than the regular offer to be even more attractive. Recipe cards of the snacks are also available for students to take home and show their caregivers. The campaign is visible all over the school and especially close to the canteen to transform it into a topic of conversation during the queue. It addresses the behaviour of having to choose a snack by highlighting one healthy choice above the others financially and visually.

This intervention does require quite some logistical effort from the canteen staff. It implies a regular change in the snack offer, the development of new recipes and the set-up of new posters and other materials.

Comparative reflection and selection

To select one of the three design directions, I used convenience as a selection lens. As a reminder, the definition of convenience is the extent to which food practices can be enacted within the limited timeframes of the school day, cognitive load of having to make food choices and the financial appeal of certain foods. I looked at how each concept impacted students on the following dimensions of convenience:

- Time: How much does the intervention improve the acquisition and consumption time of the targeted snacking behaviour?
- Cognitive load: How much does the intervention reduce cognitive load of the targeted snacking behaviour?
- Financial: How does the intervention financially compare with the current situation for the acquisition of food?

It is important to note that each intervention does also impact to some degree other stakeholders like the school, canteen staff or the caregivers. However, this first selection focuses solely on the impact on the students and on their behaviour. When further refining the selected idea, I included the other stakeholders.

I plotted each concept on the dimensions of convenience by how much it positively impacts said dimension. The closer to 0, the less impact it has on that aspect of convenience.

The fruit wall dramatically improves convenience for the students on each dimension.

- Time: Students can grab whenever they pass by, no need to stand in line. Between classes as well as during break.
- Cognitive load: the wall has only one offer which is fruit and is thus always healthy, students do not need to think whether what they are eating

is healthy bro not

- Financial: it is free (subsidised by school, perhaps), no economical barrier for students.

The car snack box does improve overall convenience to some extent. It does require cognitively a bit more effort because students do need to remember to take something from the car and financially their caregivers (or themselves) are responsible for supplying the snacks and making sure they are healthy.

- Time: It reduces time at school to get a snack which can save time between classes as well as during the break.
- Cognitive load: Students do not have to think about having to bring something to snack to school, it is already in the car.
- Financial: Students do not have to buy anything at school.

The fruit of the month campaign concept impacts the convenience of students the least. It does not reduce the acquisition time compared to the current situation and only slightly improve cognitive load and financial burden by highlighting certain snacking options and improving their pricing.

- Temporal: Little change compared to current situation.
- Cognitive load: One clear and healthy option stands out.
- Financial: The fruit of the month option is slightly more affordable than the rest, making it an attractive choice for the students.

To conclude, I decided to select the fruit wall concept as an intervention. It positively impacts the convenience of snacking behaviour by enabling students to easily acquire healthy snacks in their busy environment. This concept also opens up a window of opportunity to create new interactions

strengthening the other dimensions of food literacy. In this design direction, convenience serves as precondition to create engagement, ultimately targeting the other dimensions of FL. These will be explored in the next section.

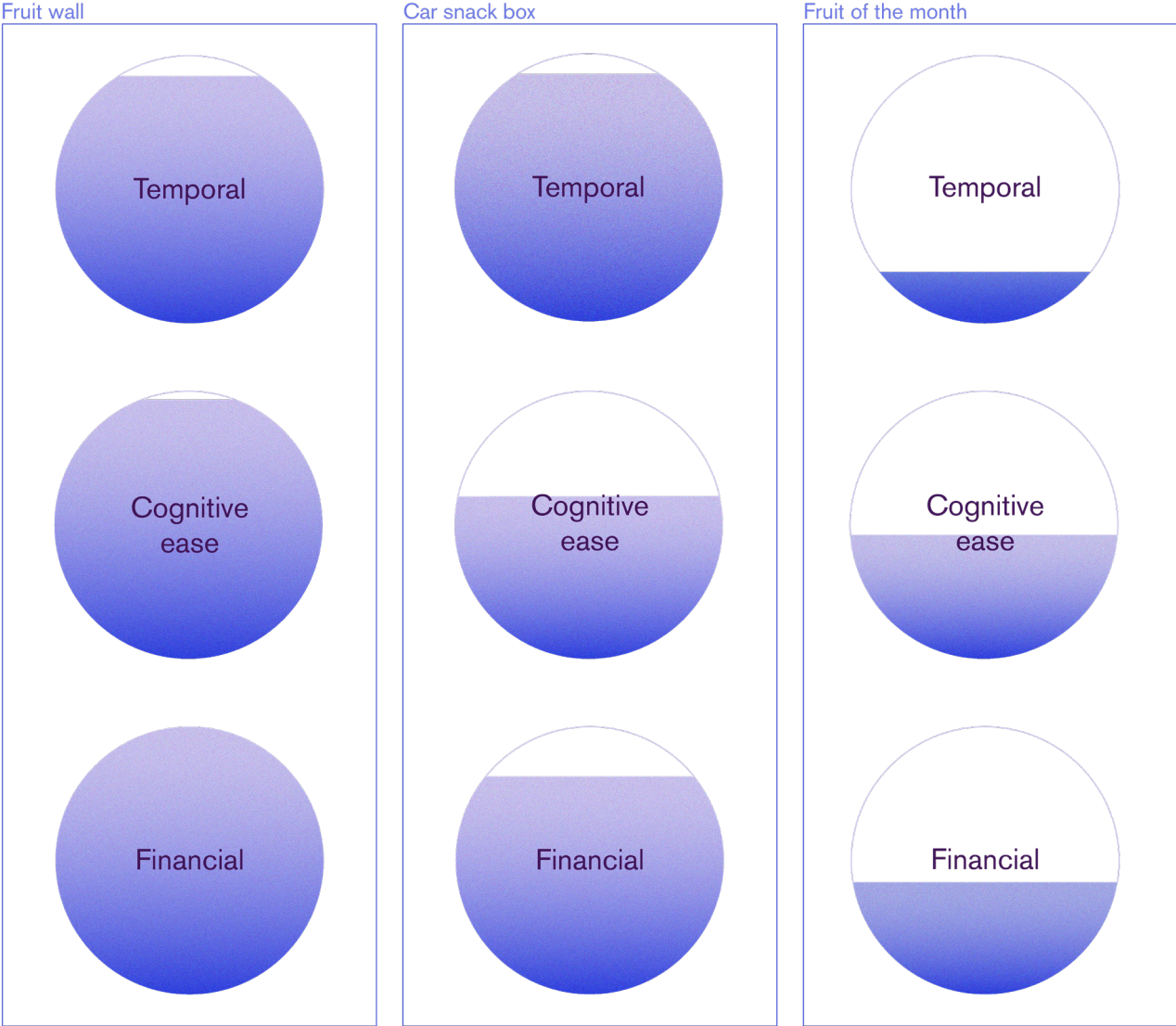


Figure 68: Rating of the three concepts on the different aspects of convenience

How does Fruta? fit within the design space?

Location

- The intervention should take place on school ground: Fruta? is located at the heart of the school where students pass by during their breaks and in between their classes.
- It needs to work in the environmental conditions of Curaçao: The intervention is placed in the shade, and the crates can be removed to store the fruit when the school is closed.
- It should still provide the same level of comfort as the school environment does in the environmental conditions: The intervention does not interfere with the current school comfort.

Policy constraints

- Align with all policies regarding food, health and education: To be verified during the expert session

Cultural constraints

- Align with socio-cultural food practices: It does not interfere with the practice of warm lunches. However, it does align with the value of convenience but making fruit the most financially attractive and easy to obtain.
- Prioritize healthy behaviours instead of increasing cognitive load: The first thing the intervention enables is the healthy food practices. Cognition and affection are only enabled afterwards.

Ethical

- The intervention must not restrict access to existing food choices: The canteen still exists within this concept.
- The intervention must not rely on sanctions, moral framing, or surveillance: Students are free to participate, there is no sanction or surveillance attached.

Scalability

- The intervention should be transferable under similar condition to more Curaçaoan high schools: In its current form, similar installations could be placed in other schools.

Temporal

- The intervention will be embedded in the high school's food environment: The intervention is located close to the canteen, where students pass by anyways if they want a snack.
- It needs to allow for daily and repetitive usage: This intervention would stay for a longer period.

Stakeholders

- The intended users of the intervention will be high school students. The intervention needs to align with their schedules, values and needs.: The intervention was designed with that in mind.

Interaction qualities

- The intervention should elicit the following interaction qualities: open, intuitive and inviting. The intervention has been designed with these qualities in mind: A large screen and a central location to make

it open and inviting. The interaction is simple and automatic and has no stakes, it only takes picking up fruit. The text on the display is also designed with intuitiveness in mind.

Food literacy framework

- Reduce cognitive load while still providing information on health impact of the intervention. It should reinforce existing knowledge: The intervention first enables behaviour and then targets affection and cognition with the provocations.

Peer evaluation

The aim of the peer evaluation was to compare design variants of the two states of the display: the default display and its counter and the provocation screens. The focus was limited to layout clarity, visual hierarchy, tone-of voice fit and overall attractiveness. For the default display, I looked at whether it caught the attention, if adding an interaction around the counter was interesting and whether the wording fitted the tone of voice. For the provocation screens, I looked at the layout and hierarchy structure, the composition with the fruit and the colour combinations. During the tests, I showed different variation combinations of the displays. First for the default display and then for the provocations. During the session, I asked them to comment on each design element I tested and to point out which combination they preferred. The tested variants and the results can be found in the next pages.

The peer evaluation highlighted certain elements that worked and that did not work for both screen states and helped make design decisions as shown in figure 45. For the default screen, the direct formulation of 'Hey, jij daar!' (translated to: Hey, you over there!) drew the attention and prompted curiosity. The additional interaction of the multiplication of apples paired with the counter was positively received. It is a fun and playful way of promoting the consumption of fruit. The colourway of white on blue was preferred and perceived as less clinical than the reverse.

For the provocation screens, the bright backgrounds all caught the eye first and remained visually engaging over longer viewing. The fruit imagery helped anchor the messaging in nutrition and health. Explaining what the provocation was about also helped with keeping the attention of respondents.

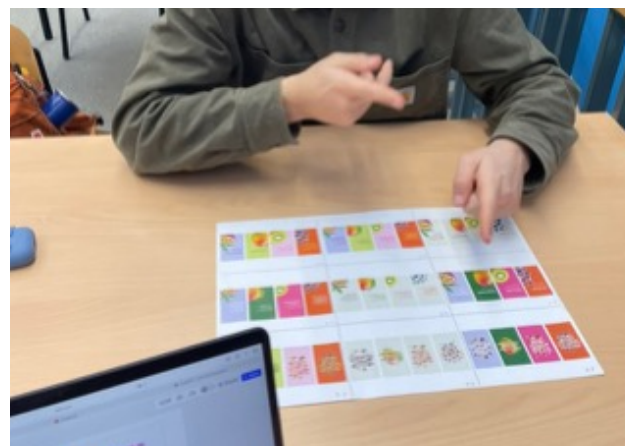


Figure 69: Photograph of one of the peer evaluations

Direct and catchy opening, makes you curious

Hey, jij daar!
hier ligt gratis fruit

Focus on free fruit

Message reworked to better fit the tone of voice: autonomous and non-judgemental

5
mensen zijn
je voorgegaan

Counter clearly in sight

Less variation in font sizes, balancing the layout

More balance in negative space



Bright background with high contrast to attract the eye

Dilemma
Nooit meer **fruit** of
nooit meer **snoep** eten?

Explanation of what the provocation is, to attract attention

Combination of bold and light fonts to bring focus

Harmony between explanation and provocation to keep the attention

Balance with negative space



Fruit is kept for attractivity, but to the side for readability

Figure 70: Visual of changes made to display screens after peer evaluation

Peer evaluation of displays

Templates for the tests



<p>Wist je dat? Een kilo suiker is 10 keer zo zwaar als een kilo fruit.</p> <p>Wist je dat? Elke dag groente en fruit eten is nu een van de beste manieren om gezond te blijven.</p> <p>Eentje kiezen Meer eten, maar niet meer snoep eten?</p> <p>Eentje kiezen Als iemand elke dag fridrank drinkt, is dat nog steeds 'af en toe'?</p> 	<p>Wist je dat meer dan de helft van je dagelijkse suiker innamen van snacks komt?</p> <p>Wist je dat elke dag groente en fruit eten risico op ziektes verkleint?</p> <p>Liever nooit meer fruit of noot meer snoep eten?</p> <p>Als iemand elke dag, 1 keer fridrank drinkt, is dat nog steeds 'af en toe'?</p> 	<p>Wist je dat? Een kilo suiker is 10 keer zo zwaar als een kilo fruit.</p> <p>Wist je dat? Elke dag groente en fruit eten is nu een van de beste manieren om gezond te blijven.</p> <p>Eentje kiezen Meer eten, maar niet meer snoep eten?</p> <p>Eentje kiezen Als iemand elke dag fridrank drinkt, is dat nog steeds 'af en toe'?</p> 
<p>Wist je dat meer dan de helft van je dagelijkse suiker innamen van snacks komt?</p> <p>Wist je dat elke dag groente en fruit eten risico op ziektes verkleint?</p> <p>Liever nooit meer fruit of noot meer snoep eten?</p> <p>Als iemand elke dag, 1 keer fridrank drinkt, is dat nog steeds 'af en toe'?</p> 	<p>Wist je dat meer dan de helft van je dagelijkse suiker innamen van snacks komt?</p> <p>Wist je dat elke dag groente en fruit eten risico op ziektes verkleint?</p> <p>Liever nooit meer fruit of noot meer snoep eten?</p> <p>Als iemand elke dag, 1 keer fridrank drinkt, is dat nog steeds 'af en toe'?</p> 	<p>Wist je dat meer dan de helft van je dagelijkse suiker innamen van snacks komt?</p> <p>Wist je dat elke dag groente en fruit eten risico op ziektes verkleint?</p> <p>Liever nooit meer fruit of noot meer snoep eten?</p> <p>Als iemand elke dag, 1 keer fridrank drinkt, is dat nog steeds 'af en toe'?</p> 
<p>Wist je dat meer dan de helft van je dagelijkse suiker innamen van snacks komt?</p> <p>Wist je dat elke dag groente en fruit eten risico op ziektes verkleint?</p> <p>Liever nooit meer fruit of noot meer snoep eten?</p> <p>Als iemand elke dag, 1 keer fridrank drinkt, is dat nog steeds 'af en toe'?</p> 	<p>Wist je dat? Een kilo suiker is 10 keer zo zwaar als een kilo fruit.</p> <p>Wist je dat? Elke dag groente en fruit eten is nu een van de beste manieren om gezond te blijven.</p> <p>Eentje kiezen Meer eten, maar niet meer snoep eten?</p> <p>Wat vind je? Als iemand elke dag fridrank drinkt, is dat nog steeds 'af en toe'?</p> 	<p>Wist je dat meer dan de helft van je dagelijkse suiker innamen van snacks komt?</p> <p>Wist je dat elke dag groente en fruit eten risico op ziektes verkleint?</p> <p>Liever nooit meer fruit of noot meer snoep eten?</p> <p>Als iemand elke dag, 1 keer fridrank drinkt, is dat nog steeds 'af en toe'?</p> 

Annotated templates from the peer evaluations

Annotations for the first row:

- Makes you question if you actually did it or not, feels like a reminder
- Question here is a bit more 'punitive' because it does suggest a norm
- Hierarchy feels nice, lots of negative space
- White background makes it look clinical and less attractive

Annotations for the second row:

- The question quote grabs the attention
- Free could be made clearer
- This composition reads as most comfortable
- 'Hey jij daar!' is not negative either
- Sentence structure needs to be reviewed
- Fruit overload makes it easy to see evolution at a glance
- The apple really catches the attention

Annotations for the third row:

- Makes you feel a bit guilty at first glance, number is very big
- Idea that it becomes more positive than the apple getting eaten
- Playing with an extra interaction is a fun addition and makes it exciting
- Lay out wise, this one is nicer, less messy
- Nice to play around with the fact that it is a screen and it can be playful. Important when working with youth.

Annotations for the fourth row:

- Too general for kids
- The apple really catches the attention
- Half eaten apple does not look that appetising
- Connect the interaction to a goal, like a 100 apples need to be eaten, and you can slowly see the advancement

Annotations for the top row:

- Nice that the tone of voice is a bit more serious than the previous screen. It would feel like too much.
- Adding fruit in the composition makes sense, it quickly shows that we are talking about nutrition
- 'I really like dilemmas so I would be excited to see that there is one'

Annotations for the second row:

- Less contrast makes it a bit difficult to read
- But composition is very nice
- At second glance, this one is attractive too with the big title
- However, too little contrast unlike 1.1
- Caught the attention the most
- Saturated colours, like the pink for instance, feel more gender-neutral
- 'Eentje kiezen' -> 'Dilemma'

Annotations for the third row:

- Prettiest background colours
- Question on top, makes the message very clear and attractive. When reading it, you are curious to see what is below.
- Having the fruit as the centre of attention feels random but still quite nice
- Feels like too much text
- Caught the attention the most
- A lot of white space, appealing and bright colours
- A lot of white space, appealing
- Question does not elicit reading who is underneath, wants to know the message right away

Annotations for the bottom row:

- Attractive colours
- All the same size, easier to read
- White background make the fruit pop way less

Appendix G: Iterations tones of voices for the provocations

Humorous and direct version of the provocations

Forced choices (no escape possible)

What would you choose: eat fruit every day, or never eat candy again?

Only drink water, or only drink soda for the rest of your life?

Daily vegetables, or say goodbye to fries forever?

Did you know nuts and fruit often give you more energy than candy?

Popcorn keeps you full longer than chips. Yes, really.

Whole grain bread: not sexy, but keeps you full for longer.

Small habits, big impact

Eating fruit and vegetables every day reduces your chances of getting sick later in life. Boring, but true.

More than half of the sugar you eat does not come from meals, but from snacks and drinks.

Health problems usually do not come from one bad choice, but from repeating the same one over and over.

One soda per day? That is more than 300 per year. Let that sink in.

If you drink soda five days a week... is that still "once in a while"?

Convenience, health and peer pressure

What is worse: going all in on snacks one day a week, or eating a little bit every day?

Did you eat fruit or vegetables today? Or zero, nothing at all?

Does your lunch give your body what it needs, or mostly what you felt like having?

Do you eat for the taste, or so your body actually benefits from it too?

Always eat what your friends eat, or eat what you actually think is better?

If you could eat anything you wanted right now, what would it be? No judgment... yet.

Playful and rebellious tone of voice

Forced comparison between eating practices

Would you rather eat fruit every day, or never eat candy again?

Yes, you have to choose.

Would you rather only drink water, or only soda?

There is no third option.

Would you rather eat vegetables every day, or completely stop eating fries?

One of the two.

Some snacks, like nuts and fruit, give you more energy than candy.

Surprisingly enough.

Popcorn keeps you full longer than chips.

Even if it does not feel that way.

Whole grain bread keeps you full for longer.

Not exciting, but true.

Long-term health drivers

Eating fruit and vegetables every day lowers your chances of getting sick later in life.

Not today. Later.

More than half of your daily sugar intake comes from snacks and drinks.

Not from your actual meal.

Most weight problems do not come from one bad choice.

But from repeating the same one.
One soda per day is more than 300 per year.
Do the math.
If you drink soda five days a week...
is that still "once in a while"?

Convenience, health and social influence

What is worse: one day of eating a lot of unhealthy food, or a little bit every day?
Did you eat fruit or vegetables today?
Or not at all?
Does your lunch give your body what it needs?
Or mostly what you felt like having?
Would you rather eat for the taste, or so your body stays strong?
Would you rather eat what your friends eat?
Or what you think is better?
If you could eat anything you wanted right now...
what would it be?

Confronting and reflective tone of voice

Forced comparison between eating practices

Would you rather have to eat fruit every day, or never eat candy again?
Would you rather only be allowed to drink water, or only soda?
Would you rather have to eat vegetables every day, or completely stop eating fries?
Some snacks, such as nuts and fruit, give you more energy than sweets.
Popcorn keeps you full longer than chips.
Whole grain bread keeps you satisfied for longer.

Drivers of long-term health

Eating fruit and vegetables every day lowers the chance of getting sick later in life.
More than half of daily sugar intake often comes from snacks and drinks, not from meals.
Most weight-related health problems do not arise from one bad choice, but from repetition.
One soda per day adds up to more than 300 sodas per year.
If someone drinks soda five days a week, is that still considered "once in a while"?

Tension between convenience, health and social influence

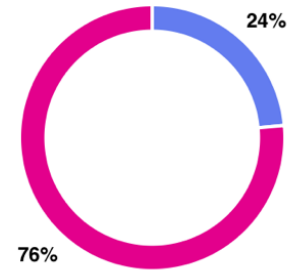
What do you think is worse: eating a lot of unhealthy snacks once a week, or a little bit every day?
Did you eat fruit or vegetables today, or not at all?
Do you think your lunch gives your body what it needs, or mainly what it wants?
Would you rather eat for taste, or eat so that your body stays strong?
Would you rather always eat what your friends eat, or always what you think is better for you?
If you could eat anything you want right now, what would it be?

Appendix I : User interaction questionnaire and responses

2. Welke school?

[Meer detail](#)

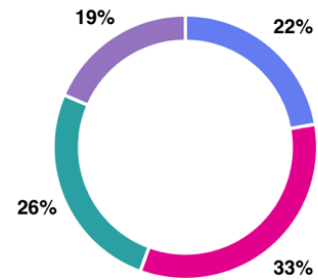
● Libanon Lyceum	4
● Rutger Steiner College	13



3. Waarom heb je een stuk fruit gepakt?

[Meer detail](#)

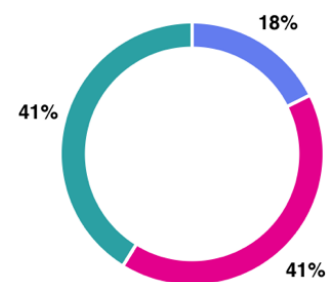
● Ik was op zoek naar een tussendoortje	6
● Omdat het gratis is	9
● Omdat het gezond is	7
● Andere	5



4. Wat deed de teller met je?

[Meer details](#)

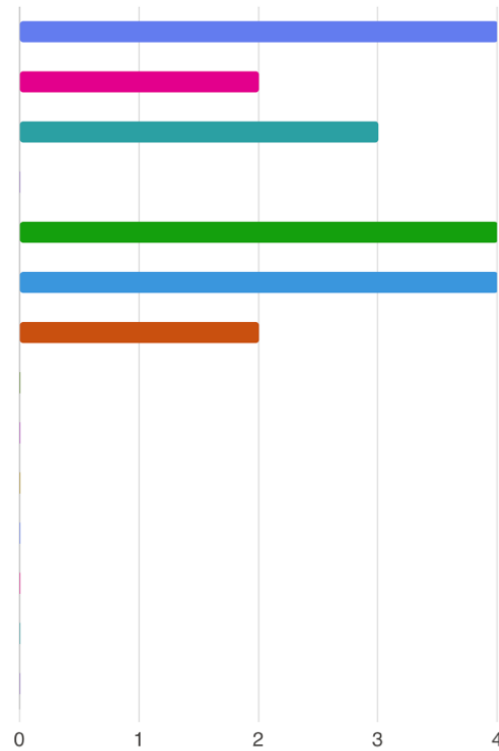
● Ik kreeg zin om iets te pakken	3
● Ik had het niet gezien	7
● Ik had het gezien maar voelde er niks bij	7
● Andere	0



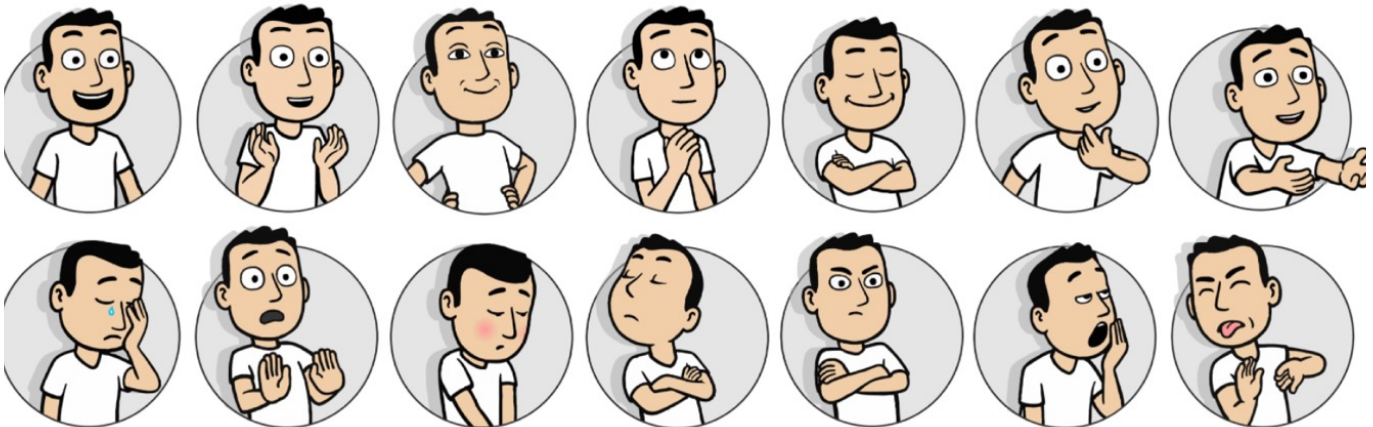
5. Hoe voelde jij je toen je de tekst zag, na het pakken van fruit?

[Meer details](#)

- Optie 1 4
- Optie 2 2
- Optie 3 3
- Optie 4 0
- Optie 5 4
- Optie 6 4
- Optie 7 2
- Optie 8 0
- Optie 9 0
- Optie 10 0
- Optie 11 0
- Optie 12 0
- Optie 13 0
- Optie 14 0



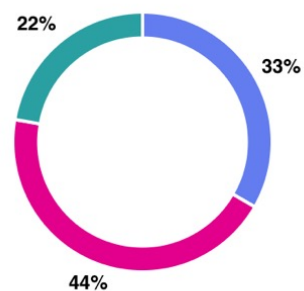
(each option references to the image below, from left to right)



6. Wat deed de boodschap met je? Het zette je aan het denken...

[Meer details](#)

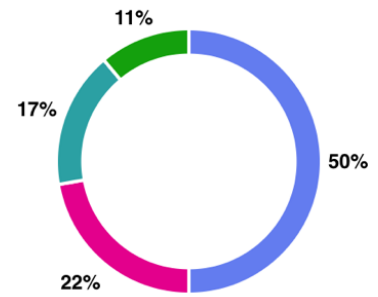
- Nee 6
- Ja, maar niet over mijn eetgewoonten 8
- Ja, kort over mijn eetgewoonten 4



. Het gevoel dat het opriep was vooral...

[Meer details](#)

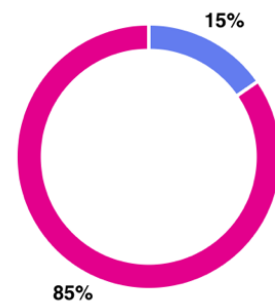
● Een bevestiging van wat ik al wist	9
● Dat ik iets nieuws leerde	4
● Een verantwoordelijkheidsgevoel	3
● Ongemak of irritatie	0
● Andere	2



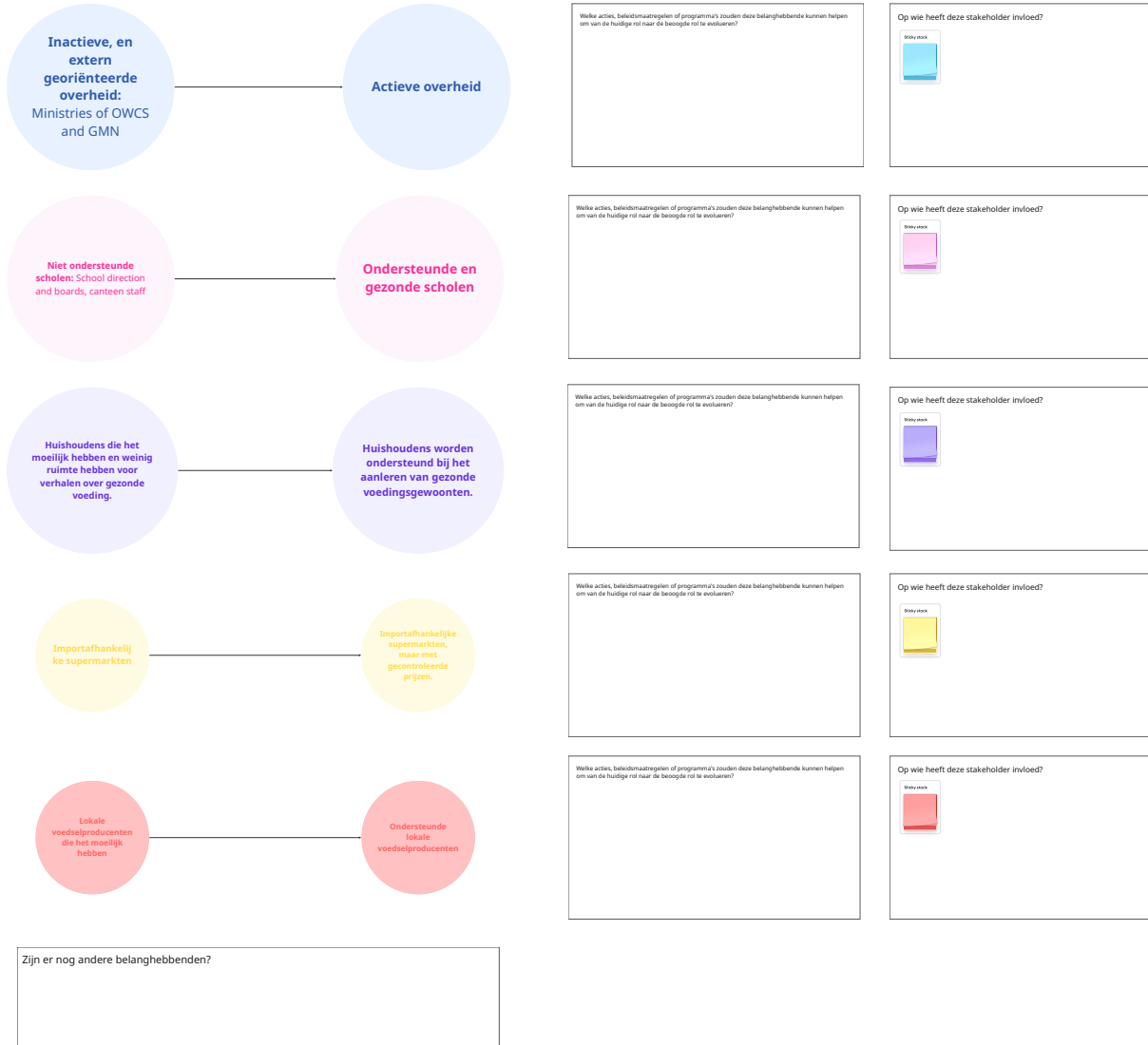
. Had je fruit gepakt als je had moeten betalen? (max 0,5 cent)

[Meer detail:](#)

● Ja	2
● Nee	11



Appendix J: Template Miro expert session



Appendix K: Roadmap booklet main spreads



TRABOU HUNTU PA UN KÔRSOU MAS SALÚ

Na Kòrsou hopi hóbén tin sobrepeso. Mas o ménos 28% di hóbén entre 13 i 20 aña tin sobrepeso. Eeaki ta pasa pa diferente faktornan, manera ambiente di kuminda no hopi salú na skol, hopi fastfood den bario i poko atenshon pa kuminda salú. Hopimentu eskoho no ealú ta simpelmente e opehon mas fásil i mas akashibel pa hóbén.

SAMEN WERKEN AAN EEN GEZONDER CURAÇAO

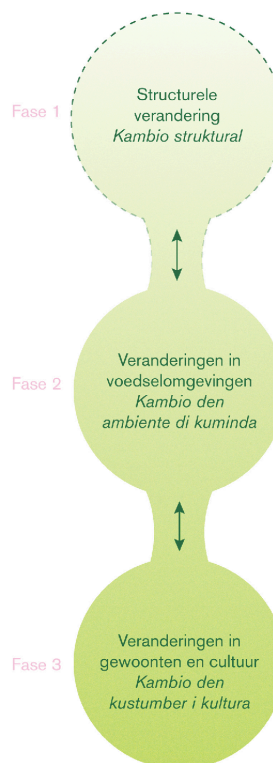
Op Curaçao heeft een groot deel van de jongeren overgewicht. Ongeveer 28% van de jongeren tussen 13 en 20 jaar heeft overgewicht. Dit komt door verschillende factoren, zoals ongezonde voedselomgevingen op school, veel fastfood in de buurt en weinig aandacht voor gezonde voeding. Vaak zijn ongezonde keuzes simpelweg de makkelijkste en meest toegankelijke optie voor jongeren.

UN FUTURO KAMINDA ESKOHONAN SALUDABEL TA E ESKOHONAN MAS FÁSIL

E ruta aki ta deskribi un posible futuro pa Kòrsou: un sistema di kuminda kaminda eskoho di kuminda salú ta e eskoho mas fásil pa hóbén. Den un sistema asina, skolnan, gobièmu, mayoran i produkto lokal ta trabou huntu pa krea un ambiente kaminda kustumber di kuminda salú por krese di forma natural. E pasonan den e ruta aki ta enfoká riba kambia ambiente di kuminda, pa eskoho salú bira cada biaha mas fásil i mas natural. E kambio no ta sosodé di un biaha. P'esei e ruta ta mostra diferente fase di kambio. Kada fase ta traha riba e fase anterior i ta mostra ki paso diferente aktornan por tuma. Den e siguiente página nan e fasanan lo wordu splika mas detaya.

EEN TOEKOMST WAARIN GEZONDE KEUZES DE MAKKELIJKSTE KEUZES ZIJN

Deze routekaart beschrijft een mogelijke toekomst voor Curaçao: een eiland waar gezonde keuzes de makkelijkste keuzes zijn voor jongeren. Scholen, overheid, ouders en lokale producenten bouwen samen een omgeving waarin gezonde eetgewoonten vanzelf kunnen groeien. De stappen in deze routekaart richten zich op het veranderen van voedselomgevingen, zodat gezonde keuzes steeds makkelijker en vanzelfsprekender worden. De verandering gebeurt niet in één keer. Daarom laat de routekaart verschillende fases van verandering zien. Elke fase bouwt voort op de vorige en laat zien welke stappen verschillende actoren kunnen nemen. Op de volgende pagina's worden deze fases verder uitgelegd.

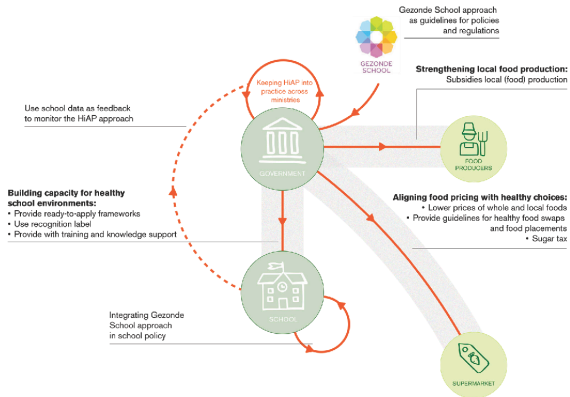


FASE 1: HASI ESKOHO SALÚ MAS AKSESIBEL

Den e promé fase aki ta krea politika i akuerdonan pa yuda krea un ambiente di kuminda mas salú. E gobièrnu ta pone e base pa kambio i ta yuda otro organisashon pa hasi eskoho salú mas fasil.

FASE 1: GEZONDE KEUZES TOEGANKELIJK MAKEN

In deze eerste fase worden regels en afspraken ontwikkeld die helpen om een gezondere voedselomgeving te creëren. De overheid legt de basis voor verandering en helpt andere organisaties om gezondere keuzes makkelijker te maken.



GOBIÈRNU

Ta desaroya politika ku ta stimula kuminda salú.
Ta hasi produkto salú i lokal mas aksesibel i mas atraktivo.
Ta sostené skolnan i otro organisashon pa krea ambiente di kuminda mas salú.

Enfoká riba desaroyá e aserkamentu di HIAP

REGERING

Ontwikkelt beleid dat gezonde voeding stimuleert.
Zorgt dat gezonde en lokale producten toegankelijker en aantrekkelijker worden.
Ondersteunt scholen en andere organisaties bij het creëren van gezondere voedselomgevingen.

Focus op ontwikkeling HIAP aanpak



SKOLNAN

Ta kuminsá adepte nan politika di kuminda.
Ta traha pa un ambiente di skol kaminda eskoho salú ta mas facil pa muchanan.
Ta riba guia i sosten pa implementa e kambionan aki.

Aplikando e guianan di Skol Saludabel

SCHOLEN

Beginnen met het aanpassen van hun voedselbeleid.
Werken aan een schoolomgeving waarin gezonde keuzes makkelijker worden voor leerlingen.
Ontvangen ondersteuning en richtlijnen om deze veranderingen te kunnen doorvoeren.

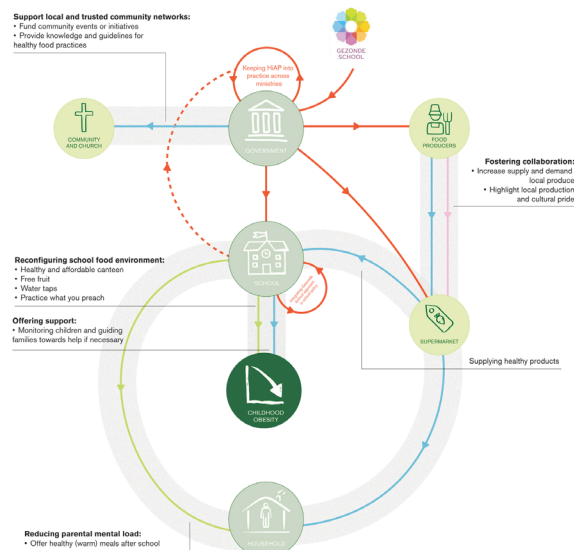
Gezonde school richtlijnen toepassen

FASE 2: ESKOHO SALÚ DEN BIDA DI TUR DIA

Den e fase aki e ambiente di kuminda di tur dia ta kuminsá kambia. Ku kolaborashon entre diferente aktornan, produkto salú ta bira mas visibel, mas atraktivo i mas fasil pa skohe.

FASE 2: GEZONDE KEUZES IN HET DAGELIJKS LEVEN

In deze fase veranderen de dagelijkse voedselomgevingen. Door samenwerking tussen verschillende actoren worden gezonde producten zichtbaarder, aantrekkelijker en makkelijker te kiezen.



GOBIÈRNU

Ta sostené iniciativanan ku ta stimula ambiente di kuminda mas salú.
Ta kolaborá ku organisashon i komunidad pa hasi e kambionan aki posibel.

Finansiamentu di eventonan relashoná ku alimentashon saludabel, sostené organisashonnan ku konosementu...

REGERING

Ondersteunt initiatieven die gezonde voedselomgevingen stimuleren.
Werkt samen met organisaties en gemeenschappen om deze veranderingen mogelijk te maken.

Evenementen financieren rondom gezond eten, organisaties ondersteunen met kennis...



SKOLNAN

Ta kambia e ambiente di kuminda na skol pa hasi eskoho salú mas fasil pa studiantnan.
Ta ofresé opshon salú i ta sostené studiantnan i famianan ora ta nesesario.

Kantina saludabel, fruta grátis, kranchi di awa, almuerzo saludabel pa un i tur...

SCHOLEN

Vooranderen hun voedselomgeving zodat gezonde keuzes makkelijker worden voor leerlingen.
Bieden gezonde opties aan op school en ondersteunen leerlingen en gezinnen waar nodig.

Gezonde kantine, gratis fruit, water taps, gezonde lunch voor iedereen...



SUPERMERKADONAN PRODUKTOÑAN DI KUMINDA

Ta hasi produkto salú i lokal mas visibel i mas atraktivo.
Ta kolaborá ku produkto lokal pa ofresé mas produkto salú.

Produktonan saludabel klaramente i mas barata, resaltando produktonan lokal...

SUPERMARTEN EN VOEDSELPRODUCENTEN

Maken gezonde en lokale producten beter zichtbaar en aantrekkelijker.
Werken samen met lokale producenten om gezonde producten vaker aan te bieden en mogelijk ook aan scholen.

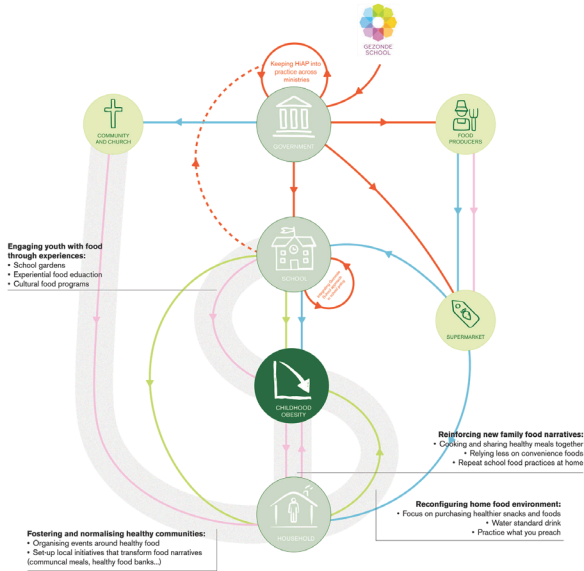
Gezonde producten duidelijk en goedkoper, lokale producten uitlichten...

FASE 3: NOBO KUSTUMBER DI KUMINDA

Den e fase aki nobo kustumber di kuminda salú ta kuminsá keda mas normal den bida di tur dia. Pasobra eskoho salú a bira mas fásil, nan ta bira cada biaha mas komun.

FASE 3: NIEUWE VOEDSELGEWOONTEN

In deze fase beginnen nieuwe gewoonten rond gezond eten zich te verspreiden. Doordat gezonde keuzes makkelijker zijn geworden, worden ze steeds normaler in het dagelijks leven.



GOBIÈRNU
Ta sigui sostené iniciativanan i komunidadnan lokal.
Ta stimula aktividat ku ta hasi kuminda salú mas visibel i normal den sosiedat.

REGERING
Blijft lokale initiatieven en gemeenschappen ondersteunen.
Stimuleert activiteiten die gezond eten zichtbaar en normaal maken in de samenleving.



SKOLNAN
Ta sigui stimula kustumber di kuminda salú na studiantnan.
Ta yuda studiantnan deskubri nobo sabor i manera salú di prepara kuminda.

SCHOLEN
Blijven gezonde eetgewoonten stimuleren bij leerlingen.
Helpen leerlingen nieuwe smaken en gezonde maaltijden te ontdekken.

Paketnan di les riba nutrishon, konstrukshon di un hòfi di skol...

Lespakketten over voeding, schooltuin bouwen...



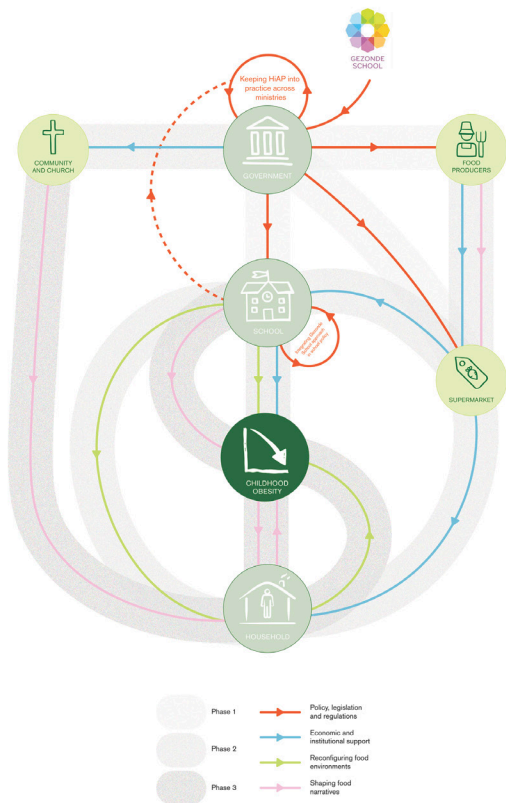
KAS DI FAMILIA
Ta hasi mas eskoho salú ora nan ta kumpra of prepara kuminda.
Ta integrá kustumber salú den bida di tur dia, manera kueh i kome huntú of bebe awa.

THUIS
Maken vaker gezonde keuzes bij het kopen en bereiden van eten.
Nemen gezonde gewoonten over in het dagelijks leven, bijvoorbeeld samen koken en water drinken.



KOMUNITAT I IGLESIA
Ta organisa aktividat rondó di kuminda salú.
Ta yuda komparti i fortalese kustumber di kuminda salú den komunidad.

GEMEENSCHAP EN KERK
Organiseren activiteiten rond gezond eten.
Helpen om gezonde gewoonten te delen en te versterken binnen de gemeenschap.



E ruta aki ta mustra kon Kòrsou por traha paso pa paso pa un ambiente di kuminda mas salú. Dor di kambia politika, ambiente di kuminda i kustumber di tur dia, eskoho salú por bira mas fásil pa hòben.
Ku e kambionan aki den politika, ambiente i komportashon, kuminda salú por bira poko poko e nobo norma na Kòrsou.
E ruta aki ta un propuesta basá riba investigashon. Ta nesario mas kolaborashon i eksperimento pa mira kon e pasonan aki por wordu realisá den praktika.

Deze routekaart laat zien hoe Curaçao stap voor stap kan werken aan een gezondere voedselomgeving. Door beleid, voedselomgevingen en dagelijkse gewoonten te veranderen, kunnen gezonde keuzes steeds makkelijker worden voor jongeren.
Door deze veranderingen in beleid, omgeving en gedrag kunnen gezonde eetgewoonten langzaam de nieuwe norm worden op Curaçao.
Deze routekaart is een voorstel gebaseerd op onderzoek. Verdere samenwerking en experimenten zijn nodig om te onderzoeken hoe deze stappen in de praktijk kunnen worden uitgevoerd.

Pa mas informashon tokante guianan i aserkamentunan spesifiko, bishitá e siguiente wèpsaitnan:

Voor meer informatie over bepaalde richtlijnen en aanpakken, bezoek de volgende websites:

<https://www.voedingscentrum.nl/>
<https://www.gezondeschool.nl>
<https://actionsdg.ctb.ku.edu>

Appendix L: Original project brief



Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Name student Eva Migayrou

Student number 5,056,047

PROJECT TITLE, INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM DEFINITION and ASSIGNMENT

Complete all fields, keep information clear, specific and concise

Project title Harvesting Change: Co-Creating Food Futures with Curaçaoan Youth

Please state the title of your graduation project (above). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

Introduction

Describe the context of your project here; What is the domain in which your project takes place? Who are the main stakeholders and what interests are at stake? Describe the opportunities (and limitations) in this domain to better serve the stakeholder interests. (max 250 words)

Curaçao, like many other Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean, is facing a growing concern with youth obesity during adolescence. Around 28% of the youth (13-20 years old) report being overweight which contrasts with the Netherlands where around 19% of the 16-20 years old are overweight. This is due to a mix of social, environmental, political and economical factors inherent to Curaçao. These include: environments that put limited emphasis on physical activity, affordability and accessibility of healthy and unprocessed foods, unhealthy school settings due to a lack of regulations and policies as well as low awareness of health-risks associated with unhealthy diet (Guariguata et al., 2024). When it comes to the affordability and accessibility of food, Curaçao is highly reliant on import. Around 90% of the consumed food is imported (Fair Trade Authority Curaçao, 2022). Consequently, Curaçao is very dependent on worldwide price fluctuation and supply disruptions. This impacts food safety which is defined by supply availability, access, use and stability of food (Van Den Dungen & Graaf, 2025). Increasing local production can help increase food safety. However, consumer behavior is equally essential. Many consumers tend to prefer imported goods rather than locally produced ones which does not contribute to the increase of local production. But Curaçao, like many other SIDS, possesses a wealth of food traditions with the potential to connect people, culture, knowledge and the natural environment (FAO, 2012). An example of this the small but passionate network of local growers, Soltuna. Key actors include schools, parents, youth, local growers and cooperatives as well as the local government. Promoting consumption of locally produced foods, especially fruits and vegetables, can be key to changing the consumers' mindset. Research argues that frequent interactions with nature and environment during childhood, promotes healthier behaviors during adulthood in relation to the local environment (Rosa & Collado, 2019). This opens a window of opportunity to co-design participatory interventions in the physical space with the different stakeholders to let Curaçaoan youth actively make healthier food choices rooted in their own culture and environment.

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introduction (continued): space for images

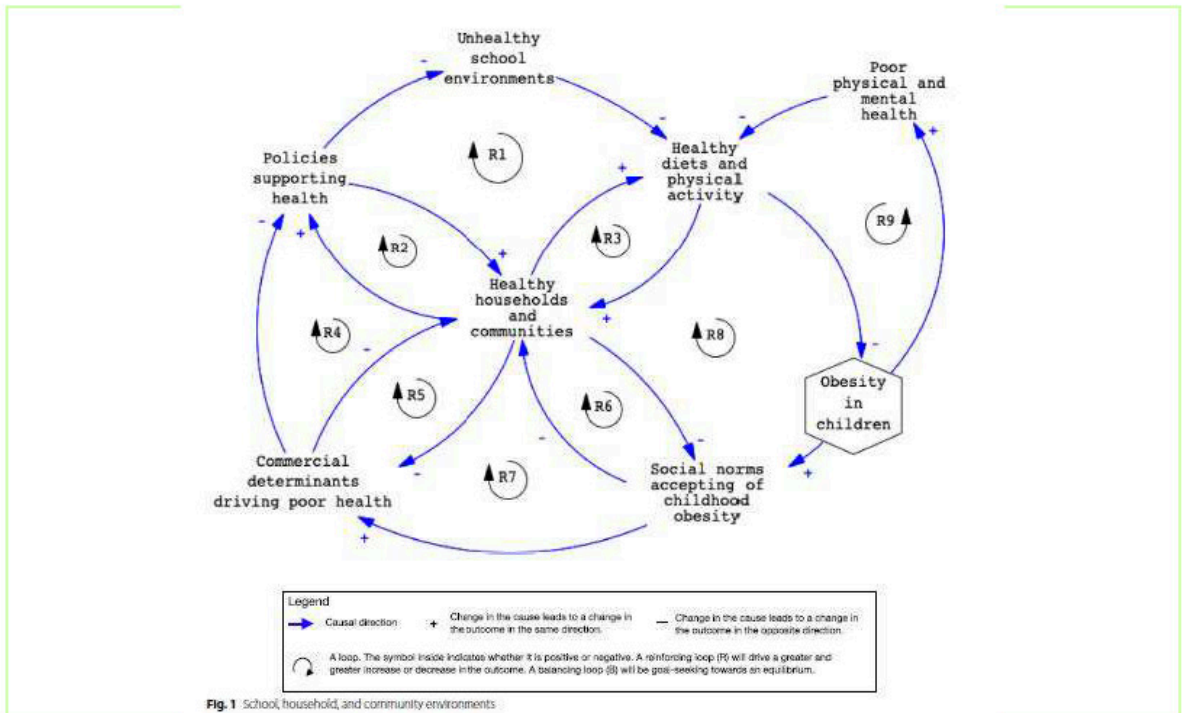


image / figure 1

Tabel: percentage scholieren naar beschrijving van eigen lichaamsbeeld, 2015

	Totaal	Jongens	Meisjes
Licht of sterk ondergewicht	14,9%	16,4%	13,3%
Het juiste gewicht	56,5%	59,7%	53,7%
Licht of sterk overgewicht	28,6%	23,0%	33,0%

Bron: Global School-based Student Health Survey Curaçao, 2015

image / figure 2

Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Problem Definition

*What problem do you want to solve in the context described in the introduction, and within the available time frame of 100 working days? (= Master Graduation Project of 30 EC). What opportunities do you see to create added value for the described stakeholders? Substantiate your choice.
(max 200 words)*

The opportunity I would like to tackle is the strong disconnect of Curaçao youth with local agriculture and nature. Low awareness of healthy food consumption and the high availability of imported goods drive the high rate of unhealthy food choices, which in turn lead to growing youth obesity on the island. I would like to show the value of Curaçao's rich and diverse agriculture and food culture through an intervention in the physical space. Hands-on learning and time spent in nature during childhood can reinforce healthier and more pro-environmental behaviors during adulthood. This also offers local growers a chance to share their knowledge and show what Curaçao has to offer when it comes to food, with children acting as a bridge to parents and families. Examples of similar interventions are community gardens, food forests and edible landscapes.

To guide my research, I will explore: What cultural, economical, environmental, and policy systems influence food sourcing choices in Curaçao? How do Curaçao's food traditions, cultural values, and local practices connect with current patterns of production, distribution, and consumption? What role do physical and urban spaces play in transmitting food traditions, cultural pride, and healthy food choices? And how can these insights be translated into design rules for interventions that strengthen youths' connection to local food culture and environment, illustrated through a specific example?

Assignment

This is the most important part of the project brief because it will give a clear direction of what you are heading for. Formulate an assignment to yourself regarding what you expect to deliver as result at the end of your project. (1 sentence) As you graduate as an industrial design engineer, your assignment will start with a verb (Design/Investigate/Validate/Create), and you may use the green text format:

Co-design an intervention that strengthens Curaçaoan youths' connection to local food culture and environment, supporting them in making healthier food choices.

Then explain your project approach to carrying out your graduation project and what research and design methods you plan to use to generate your design solution (max 150 words)

During the first three months of my project I will be on Curaçao. I will focus on exploring the local culture and iteratively working on design solutions together with stakeholders. I will also review literature to answer my research questions and compare my findings to existing knowledge.

I will use the following methods:

- Cultural probing (e.g. photovoice) to investigate values and habits around food choices of young consumers at home and at school.
 - Ethnographic research through observations and informal conversations during field visits to schools, markets, and other relevant spaces to capture how environments influence choices.
 - Co-creation sessions with youth and local farmers to explore and test possible interventions. Interviews with key figures using artifacts and visual prompts to validate design directions.
 - Exploring physicality through scaled prototypes and spatial experiments that test engagement in real contexts.
- Back in the Netherlands, I will focus on visualizing and reporting the project.

Project planning and key moments

To make visible how you plan to spend your time, you must make a planning for the full project. You are advised to use a Gantt chart format to show the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings and in-between deadlines. Keep in mind that all activities should fit within the given run time of 100 working days. Your planning should include a **kick-off meeting, mid-term evaluation meeting, green light meeting and graduation ceremony**. Please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any (for instance because of holidays or parallel course activities).

Make sure to attach the full plan to this project brief.
The four key moment dates must be filled in below

Kick off meeting	11 sept 2025
Mid-term evaluation	6 nov 2025
Green light meeting	22 jan 2026
Graduation ceremony	11 feb 2026

In exceptional cases (part of) the Graduation Project may need to be scheduled part-time. Indicate here if such applies to your project

Part of project scheduled part-time	<input type="checkbox"/>
For how many project weeks	
Number of project days per week	

Comments:

Motivation and personal ambitions

Explain why you wish to start this project, what competencies you want to prove or develop (e.g. competencies acquired in your MSc programme, electives, extra-curricular activities or other).

Optionally, describe whether you have some personal learning ambitions which you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project itself. You might think of e.g. acquiring in depth knowledge on a specific subject, broadening your competencies or experimenting with a specific tool or methodology. Personal learning ambitions are limited to a maximum number of five.

(200 words max)

I chose to work on this project on Curaçao due to my profound interest in different cultures. Having a bi-national background myself, I have always been very curious about cultural differences and how these influence lifestyles and choices. I really wanted to do my graduation project abroad since I haven't had many opportunities to explore this topic during my master. Furthermore, I have had, for a long period of my life, a difficult relationship with food. I have fully healed now and this chapter is behind me now. However, I have been brought up in a household where we eat following the seasons and as locally as possible. Having the opportunity to graduate on the subject of food feels quite symbolic to me. I aspire, through this project, to spread my interest and love for food and how it can connect people.

Some personal ambitions of mine are:

- To gain more in-depth knowledge on how physical spaces can impact and influence people.
- To grow more confident in the skills I have developed during my masters and internship: qualitative research methods, organize and facilitate workshops and activities, design meaningful interactions.

