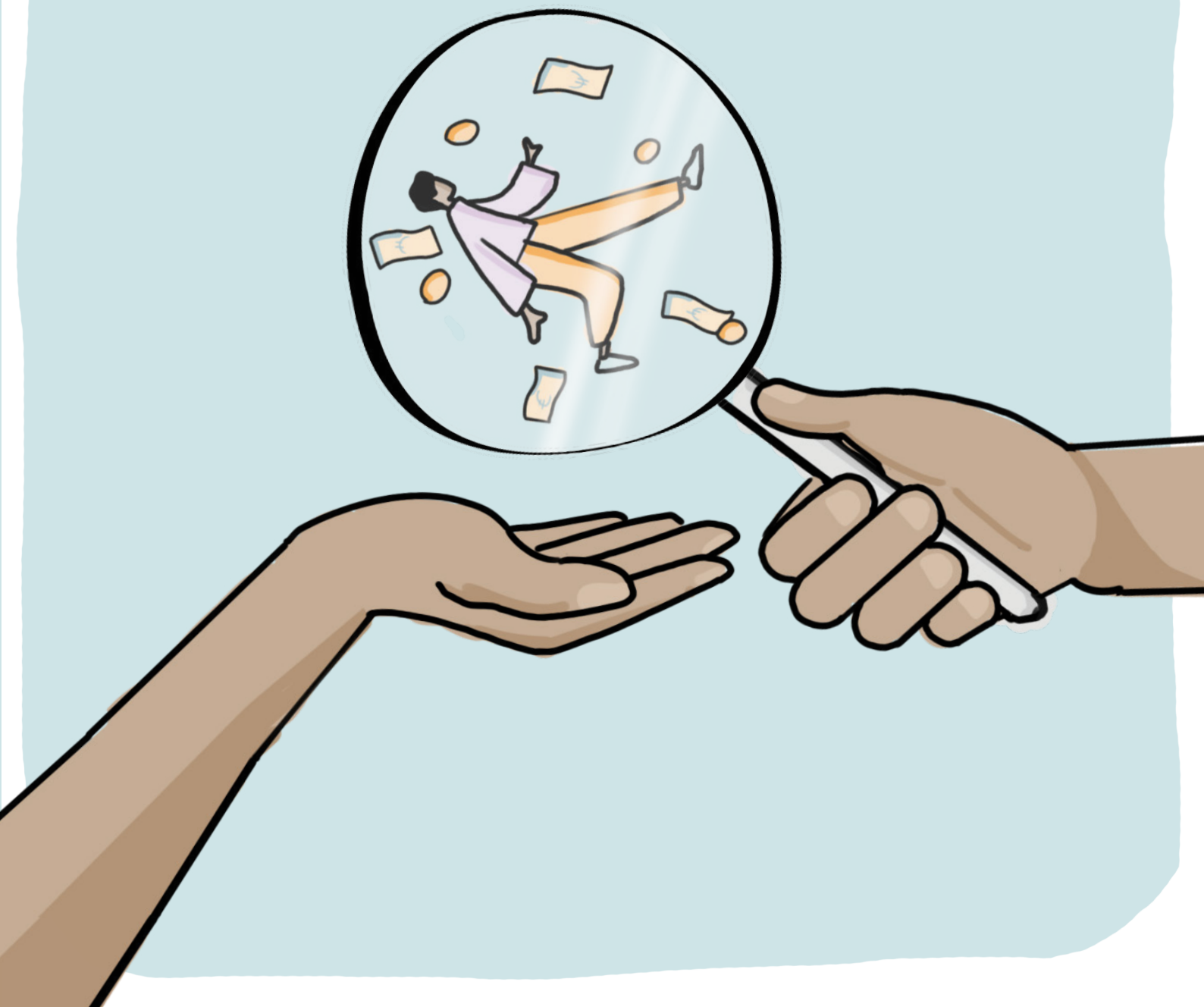# Towards accessible poverty support for the people of Utrecht

Master thesis I Luc van Calmthout I 2022
Design for Interaction I Delft University of Technology

Towards accessible poverty support for the people of Utrecht

Master Thesis
Luc van Calmthout
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Design for Interaction
Industrial Design Engineering
Delft University of Technology

In collaboration with
Gemeente Utrecht
Stichting Al Amal
Buurtteams Utrecht

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Executive summary

In 2019, close to one million Dutch citizens lived below the low-income threshold. Their monthly income averaged below €2.110 for a family of four (SCP, 2019). Many poor citizens struggle to improve their situation, with almost half of them remaining in poverty for more than four years on-end (CPB, 2019).

Luckily, Dutch national- and local governments and their supporting organizations are continuously trying to support citizens in poverty. These parties offer financial and qualitative aid, coming together in "the poverty reduction system".

However, the municipality of Utrecht has identified that this system does not always sufficiently support citizens. The system can be complex and bureaucratic, making it inaccessible for some citizens. Cognitively challenged women with a non-Western migration background are extra vulnerable to the complexities of the poverty reduction system. They struggle with low-literacy, communicative skills, and cultural barriers. The Municipality of Utrecht, Stichting Al Amal, and Buurtteams Utrecht want to improve accessibility of the system for this group. This project is the result of that collaboration.

In this project, I aim to design an intervention that makes Utrecht's poverty reduction system more accessible for cognitively challenged women in poverty with a non-western migration background. Throughout my research, the experiences of citizens and the social workers supporting them have been the focal point. I explored the cause of the target group's non-participation in the system through multiple creative sessions, interviews, and context explorations.

From my research, I learned that the issues already start before these women come in contact with the system. The target group refrains from requesting help altogether because they feel overwhelmed by the many available options, lack clear information about their options and rights, mistrust the authorities, do not feel that their situation is urgent, or feel ashamed. They let their financial struggles go untreated because of these factors, often making their situation progressively worse with time.

I focused my design activities on this early stage, looking for ways to improve accessibility early on. This was a co-evolutionary process, where learnings from design explorations inspired new directions to chase after. In this search, two themes arose. First, the theme of 'motivating growth' allowed me to explore alternative ways of making the target group rediscover their own aspirations to improve their situation. How can we make people believe in their own potential again? Through this exploration, a new theme arose: "Opening up". I found how the target group pushes the topic of poverty away. However, the network of people around them could probably be of great help. All this knowledge and support could be unlocked if people just opened up towards each other. I challenged myself to find a way to let these people open up about their experiences, in a way that felt comfortable to them.

The concept that came fort is "a tea box full of stories" (figure 1). This concept is a low-threshold conversation starter that motivates citizens to open up about poverty-related experiences during tea time. The tea packets have questions and quotes printed on them, inviting the users to start a conversation about these topics over a pot of tea. The quotes, which are written by other Utrechters, show them that these problems are universal, and that being vulnerable is okay.

The tea box unlocks and activates an informal network of knowledge and care, where friends, neighbors, and family together explore how they can support one another. It shows citizens that they do not have to carry the burden of their troubles alone. The tea box also offers multiple different links to U-Centraal; an organization that can help citizens find the right professional support once they are ready for it.

Al in all, the tea box offers a first low-threshold stepping stone towards a more accessible system. Firstly through an activated community that shares knowledge and support, and secondly by offering professional support in a pro-active yet unforced manner.

Fig 1. A tea box full of stories is a low-threshold conversation starter that motivates citizens to open up about poverty-related topics and share their experiences.

Preface from the author

When I started my studies in Delft over six years ago, I could have never imagined under which conditions I would be doing my graduation project. Who would not want to start the biggest challenge in their academic career amid a global pandemic? Sounds lovely to me! This project has been far from easy, but for that exact same reason something I am very proud of. Social design has always been both my best friend and worst enemy. While I love to connect all the abstract dots in a context, the complexity of a topic like poverty can also make me feel like I am drowning. Luckily, I had some rescue swimmers by my side to help me stay afloat.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my chair, Mieke van der Bijl-Brouwer, and mentor, Froukje Sleeswijk Visser, for their contagious enthusiasm, tireless energy, and brain-teasing feedback. You have inspired me to dig deep into this subject and made me grow as a designer.

A big thanks to my project clients, Caroline Sarolea, Lisa Hertman, and Stevien Gardenier, for all the time and energy you put into helping me dive deep into Utrecht's poverty reduction system. You have made me feel very welcome and appreciated these past months.

Thank you, Anissa, Housnia, Nicole, and all the other amazing social workers and participants that have helped me bring this project to the next level. I truly believe Utrecht is lucky to have you guys work so passionately for such an important cause.

Thanks, Yade, Mirjam, Meike, and Eva, for being my IDE partners in crime whenever I got completely lost in a million thoughts I had about this project.

Thank you Vin, Jur, Sean, and Manon, for taking my mind off things whenever I was stressing myself out again. I owe you all!

Thank you Lynn, Mieke, and Tijn for always being there.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to Riet, my grandmother, who has always lovingly supported me in my educational career and personally. To her, education was a privilege that she wanted me and my sister to enjoy fully. Unfortunately, she is no longer here to see me graduate, but I am sure she would be very proud.

Luc

Fig 2. The designer sketching solution ideas

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Reading guide

This report concludes a six-month research and design process. Due to the size of this project, different research activities were often happening in parallel. This report structures these activities logically, collecting and connecting data into one common thread towards a final design proposition.

This project had a co-evolutionary nature: the definition of the problem- and solution space could change at all times based on insights from the latest activities. This means that some of the activities I did, are not directly represented in the final work. Only activities that in some way influence the course of the larger project are described in this report.

Detailed workshop- and creative session plans, interview guides, and more extensive analyses of information can be found in the appendix, which is added to this report as a separate document.

Throughout this report, you will find few pictures of participants in tests or activities. This has two reasons: due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of my activities took place online, meaning there is no photographic evidence of them. Secondly, because of the sensitive nature of the subject, participants were often not willing to be photographed.

Glossary

Cognitively challenged citizen
Rather than the stigmatizing "mild cognitive disability (licht verstandelijk beperkt)", this thesis uses the term "cognitively challenged" to describe the main target group of the project. Where the label 'disabled' highlights the inabilities of an individual, 'challenged' emphasizes the power they have despite the disadvantages they might face.

The poverty reduction system
The national and regional parties that support citizens in poverty together form the poverty reduction system.

Financial poverty support
Allowances (toeslagen), benefits (uitkeringen), settlements (regelingen), remissions (kwijtscheldingen), and the social assistance benefit for citizens who's earnings are below a certain level.

Qualitative poverty support
Non-financial poverty support, such as guidance, schooling, or the food bank.

Social worker
People who work in the poverty reduction system and are in direct contact with citizens are described as social workers.

Policy maker
An employee at the municipality who is responsible for the creation of its policies.

Policy officer
An employee at the municipality who is responsible for the execution of its policies.

0

The project

This chapter outlines the initiation and context of this project.

The first subsection describes the project brief and relevance of the project. The second section explains how the project came to be and which parties are involved. The third section outlines the design approach for this project, followed by a description of the design process in subsection four.

0.1 Project initiation

Even though the Netherlands is a wealthy country, poverty is still prominent within its population. In 2019, close to one million Dutch citizens lived below the low-income threshold (SCP, 2019). Poverty knows many forms and can affect people in all aspects of their lives. The stress of a problematic financial situation can lead to a temporary loss of up to 13 IQ points (Mani et al., 2013). Because of this cognitive decline, many citizens living in poverty struggle to improve their situation without the help of external parties.

Luckily, Dutch national- and local governments and their supporting organizations continuously help citizens living in poverty. These parties offer many forms of financial and qualitative support. This support comes together in "the poverty reduction system". However, the municipality of Utrecht has identified that this system does not always sufficiently support citizens. The means are there, but the ecosystem that connects the different stakeholders can be complex and bureaucratic, making it inaccessible for some citizens.

Cognitively challenged citizens are more vulnerable to the complexities of the poverty reduction system. These people can have, among other issues, trouble reading, writing, communicating, getting along digitally, and performing practical daily tasks (Kenniscentrum LVB, 2021). Not only do these cognitive challenges increase the risk of these people ending up in poverty, but they also influence their ability to access support and outgrow their situation in a durable way (Movisie, 2020).

Some parties in Utrecht's poverty reduction system have attempted to make support more accessible to cognitively challenged citizens. However, the Municipality of Utrecht believes that further improvement is needed. Therefore, the municipality has started a collaboration with Stichting Al Amal, Buurtteams Utrecht, and the Industrial Design Engineering faculty to identify what keeps the poverty reduction system from reaching its full potential. They hope to inspire meaningful innovation by looking at the topic from a fresh, design-driven perspective.

In the context of this collaboration, Johan Vreeburg has dedicated his 2020 Strategic Product Design graduation project at the Delft University of Technology to researching poverty, Utrecht's current poverty reduction system, and the parties involved. His research has resulted in the design of a strategy that can help the different stakeholders to work towards more accessible, integral, preventive, and personal support, based on a trusting relationship between social workers, civil servants, and citizens (Vreeburg, 2021).

My project functions as the continuation of Johan's research. It adds to his work from a human-centered design perspective, involving stakeholder experiences thoroughly in the search for opportunities to innovate. Ultimately, this project aims to take Johan's strategy and the additional research as input for an implementable design proposition represented by a high-level prototype. I defined the initial design goal for this project as:

Design goal:
Design a product or service that increases the accessibility of integral poverty support for cognitively challenged Utrechters.

Fig 3. Utrecht's Stadskantoor, next to Utrecht Centraal, houses all the services of the municipality.

0.2
Organizational context

This chapter describes the organizational context in which my project takes place and the parties involved as project clients.

This project is an initiative from the municipality of Utrecht's Work & Income unit (Werk & Inkomen, or W&I). It is part of the Get-by and Debt-free (Rondkomen en Schuldenvrij) program, which unites different parties in Utrecht's poverty reduction system. The Get-by and Debt-free program aims to define room for intervention, innovation, and collaboration in Utrecht's poverty reduction system. The program centers around the belief that the poverty reduction system should support citizens beyond mitigating poverty-related problems and offer opportunities to sustainably outgrow financial struggles (Gemeente Utrecht, n.d.).

The parties in this program have managed to make significant steps in modernizing the poverty reduction system. However, some of the problems in the system have seemed "unsolvable" through traditional means. Certain groups of citizens are still not being reached by the available poverty support. Therefore, the Municipality wants to explore the potential of design methodology as a novel problem-solving technique. By looking at the topic from a fresh design-driven perspective, they hope to inspire meaningful innovation.

The municipality is undergoing this exploration in collaboration with Stichting Al Amal, Buurtteams Utrecht, and the Industrial Design Engineering faculty of the Delft University of Technology. W&I, Al Amal, and Buurtteams Utrecht will often be described as "the project clients" in this report. Each project client is represented by a contact person for the duration of the project. These contact persons will also be involved in research and design activities repeatedly. This section gives a short introduction to each client.

0.2.1 The municipality of Utrecht

W&I, the Work and Income Unit from the municipality of Utrecht, is the initiating client for this project.
W&I is responsible for the municipality's policy regarding poverty support. It includes both policymakers and executive officials.
Besides direct financial support through benefits and allowances, W&I also provides funding for supporting organizations in the poverty reduction system.

W&I is currently going through a culture change: it aims to create more citizen-centered and efficient policies than before (Gemeente Utrecht, n.d.-b). The design-driven exploration in this project is part of this new, open way of thinking.

Fig 4. Al Amal's Kanaleneiland location is situated in the center of the neighborhood. Here, citizens can walk in for support, activities, and advice. ▶

0.2.2 Stichting Al Amal

Al Amal is an independent organization that aims to stimulate the participation of women with a non-Western migration background in Utrecht. They direct their support towards those who struggle to find their way in Dutch society independently. Al Amal has locations in Utrecht Zuilen, Overvecht, and Kanaleneiland (figure 4).

Al Amal organizes activities, educative workshops, and walk-in events to help citizens with questions about practical topics that bother them. By doing so, they build a bridge between the Dutch care system and those who have trouble accessing its impact (Al Amal, n.d.).

Al Amal's way of working revolves around the presence approach (Baart 2002), which puts the relational balance between citizen and social worker as the base for support. Social workers initiate close, relatively informal connections with clients to make maximum impact.

The Municipality of Utrecht funds Al Amal on a project basis.

0.2.3 Buurtteams Utrecht

When Utrechters experience problems that they cannot independently solve, they can request help from the Neighborhood Teams (Buurtteams). These teams consist of generalist social workers who can assist clients on a broad range of topics in various life domains. These teams cover issues with housing, education, finances, reintegration, and domestic violence (Buurtteams Utrecht, 2020). Neighborhood teams use their expertise and network of specialized care institutions to help Utrechters build towards self-reliance. The teams work together with schools, consultation offices, police, and housing associations (Buurtteams Utrecht, 2020).

Buurtteams Utrecht is an initiative from the municipality of Utrecht and functions as an independent foundation under the name of Lokalis.

0.3
Design approach

This chapter describes how I tailored my approach for this project to the context, project brief, and client wishes.

In this project, I implement design as a method for creative problem solving and as a method for translating research into an implementable product or service proposition. Before elaborating on specific research and design activities in the next subchapter, I will outline the general approach.

I tailored my design approach to the design goal and project context in several ways:

Human-centered design

I take a human-centered design approach that puts cognitively challenged Utrechters and other stakeholders at the center of research and design activities. By designing with stakeholders rather than for them, I aim to create a product or service that offers real value in their context. Creating an understanding of user needs and experiences is essential in achieving this. Stakeholder interviews, co-creative sessions, and ideation sessions function as tools for stakeholder involvement.

Reframing

This project exists in a context where traditional problem-solving techniques have sometimes proven insufficient. The context calls for new ways to look at the existing problems. Therefore, this project adopts the Frame creation method (Dorst, 2015). This approach is particularly fitting for today's open, networked, complex, and dynamic problems. It focuses on creating new approaches (frames) to the problem before generating solutions (Dorst, 2015). Chapter 0.4 more thoroughly describes the ways in which I implemented this method throughout the project.
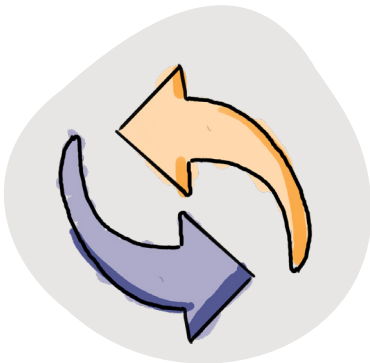
Co-evolution

Classic problem-solving strategies often take a linear approach, moving directly from the problem space to a solution. This project is better described through the principles of co-evolution (Dorst & Cross, 2001). In co-evolution, the chosen definition of the problem space inspires solutions, after which evaluation of these solutions again inspires new ways of defining the problem space. Ideas are bridges between the problem and solution space. Going back and forth between the two teaches us how the problem- and solution space best click together. Throughout the project, this process of trial and error will translate into the design goal being regularly adjusted and sharpened to reflect the insights from that phase.
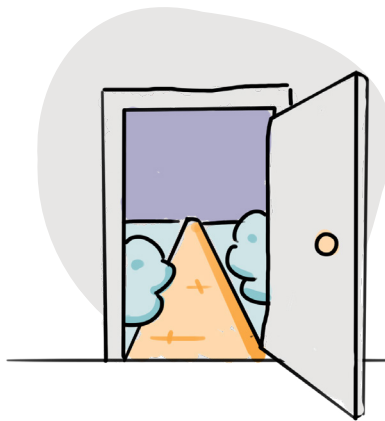
An introduction to design

The municipality, Buurtteams, and Al Amal are relatively new to design as a potential problem-solving technique. I tailored all materials throughout the project to be as accessible as possible to non-designer audiences. This translates into a visual communication style, where drawings and visualizations inspire open conversations with the clients, taking them along in the process.

Implementable design

Since the goal for this project is to get to an implementable design concept, design activities aim to get to that level of detail. This, for example, includes rapid prototyping explorations that function as a means of communication with the project clients and a way of testing design ideas.

0.4
Design process

I planned out a six-phase research and design process based on the project brief and design approach. Through these phases, I worked towards the design goal: 'design a product or service that increases the accessibility of integral poverty support for cognitively challenged Utrechters.' The process aims to inspire new, innovative ways of reaching this goal.

My design process leans on the Frame Innovation method by Kees Dorst (2015). This method is specifically fit for solving open, networked, complex, and dynamic problems. The "unsolvable" problems in the poverty reduction system fit this level of complexity. I supplemented Dorst's method with various activities from the Delft Design Guide (Boeijen et al., 2014) and Google's Sprint method (Knapp, 2016). The next two pages show an overview of the steps in this process and my main design activities. The first phases of my process centered around research to explore the problem's context. I then made a reframing step, looking for new ways to approach the problems. In the latter phases, I then took my insights from the first phases to design applied solutions, working towards a single concept proposition. Although visualized linearly, research and design activities from the different phases sometimes took place in parallel in a process of co-evolution.

Phase 1 - chapter 1
Exploring the context

In the first phase, I set the stage for the rest of the project by defining its context. I outlined this project's definition for poverty, described the current poverty reduction system, and identified the main target group. My research in this phase generated a basic understanding of the context through four sub-questions:
1.1 What is poverty?
1.2 What resources can Utrechters in poverty fall back on?
1.3 Which parties are involved in the poverty reduction system?
1.4 Which factors characterize the target group?

Phase 2 - chapter 2
Experiencing the poverty reduction system

Next, I explored the defined context through qualitative research on stakeholder experiences to get an understanding of what is currently going right and wrong in the poverty reduction system and what makes it so hard to solve these problems. I explored the experiences and perspectives of the different stakeholders through interviews and creative workshops. Insights from this research inspired the focus for the remainder of the project and safeguarded a good fit between the proposed solutions and stakeholder needs in the later design steps.

The main research for this phase question is:
2.0 'What keeps Utrecht's poverty reduction system from being more accessible to cognitively challenged women with a non-Western migration background?'

This question is answered through multiple sub-questions.
2.1 What are barriers to receiving proper poverty support?
2.2 What is the experience of cognitively challenged women with a non-Western migration background who interact with organizations in the system?
2.3 What is the experience of social workers and policymakers in the system?
2.4 What are current developments that are aiming to improve the system?

Main activities

Desk research on poverty & Utrecht's poverty reduction system.

Desk research on cognitive challenges, and the implications thereof.

Desk research on non-Western immigrants in Utrecht.

Literature research on previous work by Johan Vreeburg.

Initial interview with policy makers from W&I on the current system.

Interviews with social workers to define what poverty is and how cognitive challenges play a role therein.

Main activities

Observation of the target group's context by visiting the neighborhood and touchpoints in the poverty reduction system.

Interview with policy makers from W&I on the current poverty reduction system on their perception of the strengths and weaknesses in the system.

Interviews with social workers and experts from different organizations in the poverty reduction system about their experiences.

Context mapping session with the target group, exploring their experiences, hopes, dreams and wishes.

Participating in demo sessions from organizations that are already offering relevant innovation to the context.
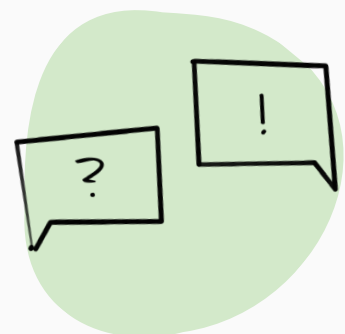
Phase 3 - chapter 3
Reframing accessible poverty support

In this project, I aim to develop inspiring and innovative ideas for bettering the poverty reduction system. To do so, I tried to look at the problems that I discovered in the first phases in new ways by creating new 'frames' in phase 3. Reframing allowed me to develop novel solution ideas in the later phases of the project. Central to this reframing step was the frame creation workshop. In this workshop, I analyzed insights from the research phases and distilled the factors that form the basis for the stakeholder's needs, motivations, and experiences. I then analyzed these so-called "themes" to translate them into potential frames that approach the original problem situation in a new manner.

Phase 4 - chapter 4 & 5
Creative ideation & design

In phase 4, I moved forward with the most fruitful frame, playfully exploring new solutions that bridge the gap between the problem and solution space. Here, co-evolution of problem and solution are steered by the insights from different stakeholder sessions and quick tests. Through several creative sessions, I then converged towards a final concept idea. I further iterated on the chosen idea through multiple tests and sessions with experts from the field to better fit the final concept to the context, problems, and target group.

Phase 5 - chapter 6
Evaluating the concept

I created a high-level prototype of the concept, which I then used to evaluate the final idea in context. Here, I investigated whether the concept sparks the intended interactions and effects. Furthermore, a final evaluation of the prototype with experts in the field helped pinpoint further improvements. Together, these evaluations inspired a final iteration on the concept and a reflection on how the concept could potentially be further improved. This final reflection functions as input towards a list of recommendations, which will be discussed in the final implementation phase.

Phase 6 - chapter 7
Implementation & recommendations

In the final phase, I reflect on the necessary steps to take the final concept proposition towards an implementable level. In this phase, I gathered advice for the project clients to develop the idea further. Furthermore, I looked into the additional research activities needed to further evaluate the concept's effectiveness in context. Finally, I gathered a list of recommendations for the project clients that arose throughout the project.

Main activities

Frame innovation workshop with designers to define underlying themes in the problem field.

Analyzing the uncovered themes to come up with potentially interesting frames.

Exploring analogies that can help to apply the frame in the following phases of the project to come up with potentially interesting solution ideas.

Main activities

A creative session with designers to enrich the ideation process.

Multiple rounds of ideation with the use of different creative methods.

Prototyping sketches of promising ideas.

Creative sessions with project clients & experts to evaluate ideas.

Interview with experts on chosen idea to detail the design.

Main activities

Creating a high-level prototype of the concept.

Testing the prototype in context to see what works and what does not.

Evaluating the prototype with experts in the field to pinpoint important improvements.

Reflection on the evaluation.

Main activities

Sessions with stakeholders to outline proper implementation steps and strategies for keeping the concept "alive" in the client organizations after the end of my project.

Summarizing recommendations from throughout the project.
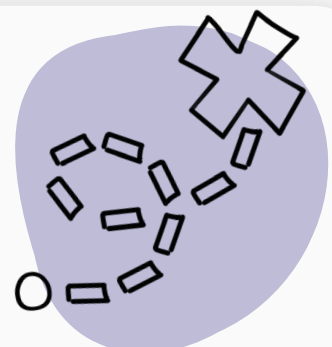
1 Exploring the context

This chapter sets the stage for the project, defining the context. It paints a picture of the current poverty reduction system, it describes what poverty is, and what cognitively challenged citizens experience.

The first section describes the research steps that were taken to establish this outline. Section two describes the definition for poverty as it was used throughout this research. Section three elaborates on the support that is available to Utrechters in poverty, and the role different parties have in this support. Section four describes the target group this project is aimed at.

1.1 Research approach

The previous chapter describes the context for this project and the project clients that are involved. This chapter digs deeper into the context through literature research, supplemented by a series of interviews with social workers and policy officers from Utrecht's poverty reduction system.

The aim of this first research is to explore the topic of poverty, the set-up and leading principles of Utrecht's care system and the target group for the project. Four research questions lead this research:
1.1 What is poverty?
1.2 What resources can Utrechters in poverty fall back on?
1.3 Which parties are involved in the poverty reduction system?
1.4 Which factors characterize the target group?

The literature research includes papers and research reports on above topics, as well as Johan Vreeburg's preceding thesis. The interviewees referenced in this chapter are:

IM1 Interview with four policy officers from the municipality's Work & Income unit.

IA1 Interview with Al Amal's Caroline Sarolea; management, relations, and communication.

IA2 Interview with Al Amal's Housnia El Mimouni; project coordinator women's- and youth activities.

IB2 Interview with Buurtteam Leidsche Reijn's Nicole Boers, Gezinswerker.

Interview guides for above interviews can be found in appendix B.

1.2
Defining poverty

Before diving into the context of the poverty reduction system, it is essential to define what this project sees as poverty. The definition set in this chapter determines which Utrechters and stakeholders are part of the context. This subchapter answers sub-question 1.1: What is poverty?

1.2.1 A financial definition

"People are poor when they do not have the resources to foresee in the basic goods and services that are considered as minimally necessary in their society" (SCP, 2019).
This definition of poverty centers around access to primary resources such as housing and food. It measures poverty by citizens' income level (SCP, 2019).

The municipality of Utrecht sets the poverty line at 125% of the legal social minimum (wettelijk sociaal minimum) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2020). The legal social minimum is determined by the ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid) as the minimum income required to survive (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2020).
Utrechters with an income below 125% of the social minimum can apply for allowances, benefits, or other forms of additional income. Around 18% of all Utrechters fall in this group (Armoedecoalitie Utrecht, n.d.).

1.2.2 Beyond the financial

However, poverty is more than a financial issue alone. It is often a symptom of more complex, interconnected, underlying problematics (World Health Organization, 2010). A poor financial situation increases citizens' chances of health issues, mental issues, and coming in contact with crime (CBS, 2019a). It negatively influences kids' performance in school and raises their chances of being bullied (de Kinderombudsman, Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2013). Poverty is generational, influencing people's chances in life from a young age (CBS, 2019b).

Poverty influences people in all domains of life (figure 3), leading to a downward spiral where their problems can become progressively worse and more complex over time (Plantinga et al., 2018). Financial support alone will not break this downward spiral (Vreeburg, 2021), and a purely financial definition of poverty will therefore not properly represent the affected population.

1.2.3 A social definition

Poverty is not just about a lack of access to basic goods and services. When an individual's financial situation does not allow them to fully participate in certain parts of society, this can also be described as poverty (CBS, 2019a).

People who cannot fully participate in society due to a lack of money risk becoming socially isolated (CBS, 2019a). A feeling of shame about their situation can strengthen this sense of isolation (Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, n.d.). This social isolation, in turn, limits their opportunities to outgrow their situation, putting them at risk of further sinking into poverty (CBS, 2019a).

Most organizations in the poverty reduction system agree that poverty goes beyond income and basic material needs. They aim their services at people below and around the not-much-but-sufficient budget (nvmt, niet-veel-maar-toereikendbudget). This budget also considers minimal costs for relaxation and social participation (Goderis et al., 2018). Examples are a subscription at a sports- or hobby association or a short yearly holiday. These expenses are not strictly essential but are generally considered highly desirable (Goderis et al., 2018). The budget is still modest; luxury goods such as a car are not included. Around 6% of all Dutch citizens, or 939.000 people, have an income below this budget (CPS, 2019)

This project adapts this broader definition of poverty as a problem of lacking the resources to participate in society fully.

'Poverty is a lack of resources needed to fully participate in society and support oneself in all life domains.'

1.2.4 Key insights

• Traditionally, poverty is seen as having an income below the legal social minimum. This definition falls short when you consider that poverty is more than a lack of income.

• Poverty is not just about a lack of access to basic goods and services; it is about lacking the resources to fully participate in society and support oneself in all life domains.

• Organizations in the poverty reduction system agree on this more social definition of poverty. They go by the "niet-veel-maar-toereikenbudget" as a benchmark to determine who needs support, also including people who struggle to finance relaxing activities, or other forms of social participation.

1.3
Utrecht's care system

The previous chapter outlines a definition of what poverty is. This chapter dives into the care system that the national government, the Municipality of Utrecht, and its supporting organizations have put in place to help troubled citizens. This subchapter answers sub-question 1.2: What resources can Utrechters in poverty fall back on? And sub-question 1.3: Which parties are involved in the poverty reduction system?

1.3.1 Financial governmental poverty support

The Netherlands is a welfare state; citizens are responsible for their livelihood. However, if they cannot upkeep their livelihood, the government is obliged to support them (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2014).

Utrechters who struggle financially have access to a multitude of allowances (toeslagen), benefits (uitkeringen), settlements (regelingen), remissions (kwijtscheldingen), and the social assistance benefit (bijstand). The municipality of Utrecht provides these aids and discounts together with the national tax authorities (Belastingdienst) and the UWV. The municipality alone offers over sixty regulations (IM1). These financial aids are put in place to grant all citizens a basic income. The system is progressive: the amount of financial support granted is relative to the citizen's income.

As described in chapter 1.2, poverty is more than a financial problem. Financial stimulation alone will not solve the often-complex underlying problematics experienced by citizens (Vreeburg, 2021). Therefore, a multitude of organizations support Utrechters in different domains of life. The structure of this supportive system will be described in this subchapter.

1.3.2 The three-track model

The 2015 social support act (Wet Maatschapelijke Ondersteuning, or WMO) has tasked all municipalities in the Netherlands with the support of citizens that cannot be considered self-reliant.

Municipalities must provide these citizens with the additional care they need to live independently for as long as possible. Care must be personal, fitting, and provided with urgency when necessary (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2021). Each municipality may organize the support for its citizens as it seems fitting.

The municipality of Utrecht has organized its care system in three tracks, dubbed 'het Utrechtse Zorgmodel' (Gemeente Utrecht, n.d.-b). This model brings together organizations that support Utrechters in all life domains, of which finances is one. Some of these organizations are independent, and others receive funding from the municipality. The three tracks can be seen as gears that can be put into place whenever the situation of a citizen requires it (see figure 5). "Gear 1", the social base, is always there for all citizens. The other two "gears" can be put into place for citizens with problems that transcend everyday situations. The upcoming sections describe each track in more detail.

Track 1: The social base

The social base includes all parties that create a strong foundation for Utrechters in everyday life. Some of these organizations are accessible to all citizens, and some focus on a specific target group. Al Amal, for example, targets its services at women with a non-Western migration background who struggle to participate in society.

Care from the social base is organized in citizens' daily lives, aimed at strengthening their network and supporting daily activities. This track includes education, sports facilities, culture, public healthcare, neighborhood activities, community centers, food banks, and more. Services in this track together build a city where everyone can participate as much as possible and live as independently as possible. The better the services in this track function, the lower the chances are that citizens need specialized care later (Gemeente Utrecht, n.d.-b).

Organizations and people in this track are relatively close to citizens, sometimes even on a friendly basis.

"Our social workers are on a friendly level with clients. People feel that we are really listening."
-IA2, Activity coordinator Al Amal

In the domain of poverty support, this track contains organizations that offer products (such as groceries), services (such as support with financial administration), and financial support (such as funds for sports supplies).

Track 2: Basic care

When Utrechters experience problems that are too big to solve independently, despite the efforts from the social base, they can request basic care from track two. This care is provided by Utrecht's Neighborhood Teams (Buurtteams). Social workers from the neighborhood teams are professionals with a broad specialization. These teams cover problems with, among others, debt, domestic violence, or impending eviction.

Citizens' problems are often complex, touching upon multiple interconnected domains. Because of this complexity, clients often stay with their Neighborhood Team for an extended period. The teams work together closely with schools, consultation offices, police, housing associations, and organizations from track 1 to slowly get the citizen back to independence.

Utrecht's 18 Neighborhood Team locations are open to walk-ins for any citizen. If the Neighborhood Team is the proper party to assist in the citizen's situation, an in-depth onboarding takes place. The result of this hour-long conversation is a long-term action plan that describes the steps to be taken by the citizen. Care is highly personalized and takes place either at the Neighborhood Team office or at the client's home (IB2).

Track 1: The social base
A strong foundation for all Utrechters.

Track 2: The basic care
Professional care for Utrechters who experience problems too big to solve independently.

Track 3: Additional care
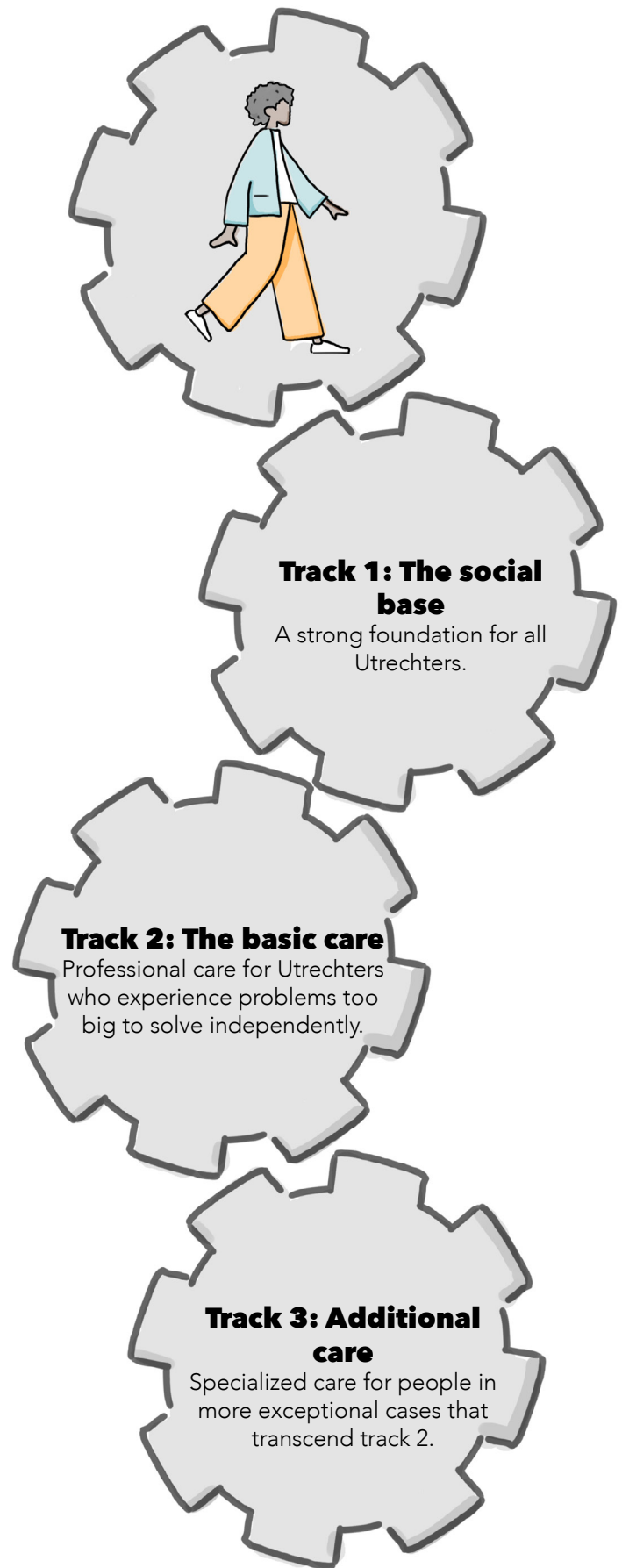Specialized care for people in more exceptional cases that transcend track 2.

Fig 5. Utrecht's care system is divided in 3-tracks. Gear 1, the social base, is always there for all citizens. The other two "gears" can be put into place for citizens with problems that transcend everyday situations.

Track 3: Additional care
When the problematics of a case transcend the possibilities offered by the Neighborhood Teams, the teams redirect a client towards specialized support. This level of care is not accessible without a referral by the Neighborhood Teams. Care in this track can, for example, consist of specialist youth care, psychiatric care, protected living, or full-time day support for the elderly. These are all tailor-made solutions in collaboration with the municipality's close partners.

The line between tracks 1 and 2 is not always black and white. Some organizations in track one, such as Al Amal, also offer more specialized care over an extended period. The main difference is the generalist stance of the Neighborhood Teams; they aim to help any citizen with any problem. These teams are appointed by the municipality as the first line of support in case of trouble and are therefore often the first line of referral for other organizations whose clients need support. Because of this, they also have large partners throughout the city, such as housing associations, schools, consultation offices, and police.

Fig 6. Utrecht is overflowing with social initiatives that support citizens in all domains (jekuntmeer.nl).
▼

Generally, organizations in the first track, like Al Amal, have a smaller mission and provide more "informal" care. They support specific groups of citizens in specific situations. In some cases, the Neighborhood Teams also collaborate with organizations like Al Amal to better reach specific groups, such as immigrants.

1.3.3 Connecting the care system
In the three tracks combined, there is a lot of care available to citizens. The social map of Utrecht's supporting organizations shows over 400 involved parties (jekuntmeer.nl, n.d.) (figure 6). There is something for everyone, but these organizations must work together to use their strengths fully (IB2).

"Sometimes, another party has better access to a certain group or a better entrance to a trusting relationship with a client that requests help with us. For example, Al Amal helps us with clients with a migration background."
-IB2, Nicole Boers

This need for collaboration has led to the initiation of the Poverty Coalition (Armoedecoalitie). This collaboration creates a platform where large care organizations, small initiatives, social workers, peer supporters, educational institutes, healthcare providers, and housing corporations together counteract social exclusion and strengthen the position of financially vulnerable Utrechters (Armoedecoalitie Utrecht, n.d.). The Armoedecoalitie gives organizations, large or small, a voice in the creation of policy and execution thereof. It closes the gaps between the different tracks in the system, inviting organizations that might typically exist far from one another to connect their strengths.

1.3.4 Care policy principles

The municipality of Utrecht has put in place six leading principles that fuel how support is provided to citizens, which will be honored throughout this project. The municipality aims to offer citizens better, more efficient care through these principles (Gemeente Utrecht, n.d.-b).

1. The citizen's personal environment forms the basis for support and policy development.

2. The system offers personalized care in collaboration with the citizen's own network. Flexibility is more important than uniformity.

3. There is space for the considerations and decisions of professionals.

4. Care is adapted to the opportunities of citizens and their environment, normalizing their situation rather than problematizing it.

5. Organizing care close by, customized to the citizen

6. Simplicity is key, creating a transparent, compact system with less bureaucracy.

1.3.5 Key insights

• Citizens can gather a basic income through a series of allowances, benefits, settlements and remissions. This is the financial part of the poverty reduction system.

• On the qualitative side, organizations are organized in three tracks. All citizens come in contact with the first track, where organizations provide a strong base for citizens. The second track is for Utrechters with problems that can't be solved independently. Here, the Buurtteams come to the rescue. In track three, citizens with severe mental, physical, or social issues are supported.

• The better the services in the first track function, the lower the chances are that citizens need specialized care later.

• Collaboration between different parties in the system is essential to its functioning. Only then can the strengths of the different parties end up with the right citizens. This philosophy is gaining more momentum, partially due to the efforts in the Armoedecoalitie.

• The municipality has defined six leading principles that aim to make care more accessible and personal.

1.4
The target group

The design goal (chapter 0.1) focuses on increasing the accessibility of poverty support for cognitively challenged citizens. This subsection further specifies and elaborates on this target group, while answering research question 1.4: Which factors characterize the target group?

1.4.1 Specifying the target group

in this project, i aim to get to an implementable solution that fits the needs and expectations of the target audience through a human-centered approach. Direct access to the group is essential to involve and understand the target group effectively. Only then will it be possible to interview, test, and evaluate with them. The participating partner that has such ready access is Al Amal. Their open structure allows for direct involvement of their clients. This entrance will be used by involving their primary target group, women with a non-western migration background, as the primary target group for this project. At the end of the project, potential solutions can be tweaked to fit a larger target group wherever possible.

The following subsections break down the target audience and its characteristics.

Cognitively challenged...

Cognitively challenged people are at increased risk of ending up in poverty (Movisie, 2020). Their challenges make it hard for them to independently access support and outgrow their situation (Movisie, 2020). This project, therefore, aims its resources at this group.This section outlines the definition for "cognitively challenged" as it has been used throughout this project.

The Dutch definition for cognitively challenged individuals includes anyone with an IQ between 50 and 70, or anyone with an IQ between 70 and 85 who cannot be considered socially self-reliant because of their cognitive challenges (Kenniscentrum LVB, 2021a). This does not include people with more severe cognitive challenges. According to this definition, approximately 1,1 million Dutch citizens are cognitively challenged and might struggle with the accompanying limitations (Kenniscentrum LVB, 2021b).

A cognitively challenged person is limited in their cognitive development and social adaptability. These limitations can affect performance in the following domains (Kenniscentrum LVB, 2021a):

- Conceptual skills, such as reading, writing, and making calculations.
- Social skills, such as communication with others and resolving social issues.
- Practical skills, such as digital literacy and using public transportation services.

The main target group:
Cognitively challenged women in Utrecht with an non-Western migration background who live in poverty and do not seek or cannot find assistance with their situation.

You can speak of significantly limited social adaptability when an individual's development in these domains does not meet the cultural standards for their age (Dekker et al., 2002).

It is important to mention that each cognitively challenged person is different and that their challenges in different domains might differ in severity. Not every cognitively challenged person experiences limitations because of their challenges, nor needs professional support (Dekker et al., 2002). Furthermore, cognitive challenges are not always visible. They do not necessarily have a physical manifestation. Many people in this group are socially strong but struggle with conceptual- and practical skills (IA1). This can lead to their challenges going unnoticed.

...women with non-Western migration background...
In the Netherlands, the term 'non-Western migration background' describes anyone who has, or whose parents have, immigrated from a country in Africa, Latin America, Turkey, or Asia (except Indonesia and Japan) (CBS, 2019a).

As described in subchapter 2.4.1, this project mirrors Al Amal's primary target group. Within the group of non-Western immigrants, Al Amal mostly targets its resources at women with an Arab-speaking or Turkish cultural background (see figure 7). My project will follow Al Amal's focus. Statistics for this specific group are hard to come by because reports do not clearly distinguish between different ethnicities within the group of non-Western immigrants. This section, therefore, looks at the position of the group of non-Western immigrants as a whole in Utrecht.

Non-Western immigrants make up over 24% of Utrecht's population (Utrecht monitor, 2021a). Non-western immigrants are relatively overrepresented in the poverty support system in several ways. 32% of households where the primary breadwinner has a non-Western migration background live below Utrecht's norm of 125% of the social minimum, against an average of 15% of all households in Utrecht (CBS, 2019). 8,5% of women in the group are unemployed, against 7,9% of men and against a city-wide average of 4%. (Significant Public, 2021).

Fig 6. The target group for the project are women with an Arab- or Turkish speaking migration background
▼

Not only are people in this group more likely to live below the poverty line or to be unemployed, but they also make less money per worked hour. For example, women with a Turkish migration background make 29% less an hour than average (CPB, 2019). This difference can only partially be explained through differences in educational level. Factors such as fluency in Dutch and discrimination on the job market also play a role (CPB, 2019). Furthermore, people with a non-Western migration background more often work under flex contracts (CBS, 2019c), putting them at high risk of losing their jobs in economically poor times. This, amongst other factors, puts the group at increased risk of ending up in poverty. Families with a first-generation non-Western immigrant as the primary breadwinner are five times more likely to end up in long-lasting poverty than families without a migration background (CBS, 2019c). It is therefore important to provide this group with accessible and fitting care whenever needed. The group is thus an interesting case study for this project.

...who live in poverty and do not seek or cannot find assistance with their situation.
This specification follows the definition for poverty from chapter 1.2: 'Poverty is a lack of resources needed to fully participate in society and support oneself in all life domains.' The project brief is about improving accessibility to the system. Therefore, the target group is specified to women who do not yet seek or cannot find assistance with their situation due to the current inaccessibility.

Looking at this group from the municipality's perspective, accessibility might seem like not much of an issue. The reach of most of the municipality's allowances, benefits, settlements, and remissions is between 80% and 95% (Polman et al., 2017). However, when you flip this number, 5% to 20% of people in a potentially problematic financial situation do not receive the full support intended to provide them with a stable livelihood. Chapter 3 further elaborates on the reasons why these people experience this inaccessibility.

Fig 7. One of Al Amal's activities is a weekly walk with women from the neighborhood. Next to being a way of exercise, these walks also function as a moment were they together discuss their highs and lows of the week. A social worker from Al Amal guides these groups. ▶

1.2.4 Key insights

• An estimated 1,1 million Dutch citizens could be described as cognitively challenged. These people are limited in their cognitive development and social adaptability. This makes them struggle with reading, writing, communication, and digital literacy. These challenges put them at an increased risk of ending up in poverty.

• Each cognitively challenged person is different. Not all of them struggle with all of the above issues, and their challenges do not always show.

• 24% of Utrecht's population consists of non-Western immigrants. This is group, and especially women in this group, is more likely to be poor, unemployed, underpaid, and at-risk to become poor than citizens without a migration background. The group, therefore, requires extra attention in the search for qualitative poverty support.

Experiencing the poverty reduction system

2

This chapter adds to the previous research by exploring the experiences and perspectives of the different stakeholders in the poverty reduction system.

The first section discusses the set-up of my research activities and how they helped me understand the stakeholders' experiences. The subsequent subchapters discuss the insights and conclusions from these activities. Chapter 2.2 presents insights into the challenges citizens might face when enrolling in the current poverty reduction system. In chapter 2.3, the experiences of cognitively challenged citizens in this system are described. 2.4 adds insights into the experience of social workers as essential stakeholders. Chapter 2.5 looks at current developments in the poverty reduction system. Section six summarizes takes some of the most important insights as input towards a further specified focus for the remainder of my project.

2.1
Research approaches

Chapters 1 and 2 describe the goal of this project and the context it exists in objectively. In this chapter, I explore the stakeholders' subjective experiences in this context to better understand what they believe is currently going well, what is going wrong, and where there is room for improvement.

The main research question for this chapter is:
2.0 What keeps Utrecht's poverty reduction system from being more accessible to cognitively challenged women with a non-Western migration background?

Four sub-questions lead the research in this phase:
What are barriers to receiving proper poverty support?
2.1 What are barriers to receiving proper poverty support?

2.2 What is the experience of cognitively challenged women with a non-Western migration background who interact with organizations in the system?

2.3 What is the experience of social workers and policymakers in the system?

2.4 What are current developments that are aiming to improve the system?

This first sub-chapter describes the setup of my research activities. Results and conclusions can be found in the upcoming chapters 2.2 through 2.6.

Fig 8. The Buurtteams Leidsche Rijn location is open for walk ins. I visited their front desk to get an idea of what this experience is like. ▼

2.1.1 Research activities
To better understand the experiences, struggles, and wishes of the target group and different stakeholders, I researched their context through multiple research approaches.

1. I observed and explored some of the first touchpoints that citizens interact with when reaching out for support. This way, I got to see which barriers they might experience.

First, I explored digital touchpoints by searching for available support online. I researched the findability of organizations like W&I, U-Centraal, and Buurtteams and how they offer support. I also tried to apply for a social assistance benefit to better understand the level of complexity in these procedures.

As described in subchapter 1.4.1, the target group is known not to be very digitally literate. Therefore, I also visited two touchpoints in the neighborhood which play an important role in the accessibility of support. The goal was to see where citizens can physically go to get help, how they are received, and what they might experience when visiting these locations. I visited Al Amal's location in Kanaleneiland, where they hold multi-weekly open houses where citizens can request support. Next, I visited the Buurtteams Leidsche Rijn location (figure 8). Here, citizens with more severe issues can walk in to request help or information at the front desk.

2. I visited the Overvecht neighborhood and local Thursday market to get a first understanding of the context in which the target group lives. Overvecht is one of the neighborhoods where Al Amal mainly operates and where relatively a lot of Utrecht's non-Western immigrants live (Alle Cijfers, 2022)). I tried to get a first impression of the social culture of Overvecht by walking around the neighborhood and the local Thursday market (figure 9). I talked to some market vendors and visitors to get a basic insight into the daily context of the target group.

3. I interviewed social workers and policymakers who work for or closely with the target group. These interviews discuss their methods, motivations, and experiences with cognitively challenged citizens. The interviews had a semi-structured format, allowing us to go deeper into any topics that came up. Each interview was recorded.

As described in chapter 2.3, Utrecht's poverty reduction system involves a lot of different organizations. These interviews attempt to provide a representative look at the experiences in this system by interviewing social workers who represent different relationships with citizens. Some have close bonds with them, and others work on a more legislative level. The goal is to get a general sentiment of their experiences and goals.

The interviews I conducted will be referenced as:

IM1 Interview with four policy officers from the municipality's Work & Income unit.

IM2 Interview with a senior executive employee from the municipality's Work & Income unit (anonymous).

IB1 Interview with Buurtteam West's and Lunetten's manager Lisa Hertman.

IB2 Interview with Buurtteam Leidsche Reijn's Nicole Boers, Gezinswerker.

IA1 Interview with Al Amal's Caroline Sarolea; management, relations, and communication.

IA2 Interview with Al Amal's Housnia El Mimouni; project coordinator women's- and youth activities.

IA3 Interview with an activity leader at Al Amal.

IE1 Interview with an expert from the social field (anonymous) who runs an organization similar to Al Amal.

Interview guides for interviews IM2, Ib1, IB2, IA1, and IA2 can be found in appendix B. The other interviews had an open structure. All interviews were recorded for further analysis.

Fig 9. I visited Overvecht's Thurday market to experience the atmosphere in one of Utrecht's poorest neighborhoods.

4. I organized a context mapping session with the target group to learn about their environment, their social connections, the products and technology they use, their self-image, and how their cognitive challenges could obstruct their daily functioning.

Traditional interviewing and observation techniques give insight into explicit and observable knowledge, information that the interviewees themselves are aware of and can express by answering a direct question. However, these interview questions often do not suffice when the goal is to gain information about someone's deeper needs, values, motivations, and wishes. People are not always aware of this knowledge and thus unable to express it in a simple answer. Generative interviewing techniques like context mapping come into use when looking for this information. Here, participants talk and explain about their lives by expressing themselves creatively (Sleeswijk Visser et al, 2005).

In the case of my research, I did a context mapping session with four clients from Al Amal that represent the target group. The women are from the neighborhood Zuilen, and all have different ages. The session took place during one of the weekly workshop afternoons Al Amal organizes in its Zuilen location. During the workshop, I asked each participant to create a collage of the most important people, places, and products in their lives using a range of arts and crafts materials. Figure 10 shows the session plan. Appendix C shows the steps, materials, and results of the session more in-depth. The session was designed to be accessible to cognitively challenged citizens, avoiding complex reflective questions and using low-level text (figure 11). The result of the session are four colorful peeks into these women's lives (figure 12) that give me an insight in their position in their neighborhood, the social connections they cherish, and the products they use.

Results from the session will be referenced as:

CC1 Creative session with five citizens from the target group.

Session plan

15 min **Introduction**
Meeting and explaining my plan

10 min **Ice breaker**
Draw yourself

10 min **Add people to collage**
Using crafting materials and images

10 min **Add products to collage**
Using crafting materials and images

10 min **Add places to collage**
Using crafting materials and images

5 min **Define your superpower**
What is your favorite skill or trait?

Fig 10. Session plan for the creative session with citizens.

Toestemmingsformulier gesprek Al Amal 21 oktober 2021

	ja	nee
Ik wil meedoen aan dit gesprek	○	○
Ik begrijp wat we gaan doen tijdens dit gesprek	○	○
Ik heb vragen kunnen stellen over dit gesprek	○	○
Ik weet dat ik op elk moment mag stoppen met dit gesprek als ik dat wil	○	○
Ik weet dat ik geen antwoord hoef te geven op vragen als ik dat niet wil	○	○

	ja	nee
Ik weet dat dit gesprek wordt opgenomen	○	○
Ik weet dat er tijdens dit gesprek soms foto's van mij gemaakt worden	○	○
Ik snap dat mijn gezicht nooit te zien is als deze foto's gebruikt worden	○	○
Ik snap dat foto's en opnames alleen voor dit project gebruikt worden	○	○
Ik snap dat wat ik vertel alleen voor dit project gebruikt wordt	○	○

Mijn naam: _____   Mijn handtekening: _____   Datum:
                                                              21 oktober 2021

Naam onderzoeker: _____   Handtekening onderzoeker: _____   Datum:
                                                                          21 oktober 2021

Fig 11. I created a simplified consent form for the creative session with citizens, to make it more understandable to them.

Fig 12. In the creative session, clients from Al Amal showed important places, people, and products in their lives in a collage.

5. I attended multiple demo sessions from two innovative initiatives in the field of poverty reduction to get insight into current developments that are taking place. Apart from these demo sessions, further desk research into current innovation helped to broaden my view on the topic. An example of a researched initiative is utrechtsegeldzoeker.nl.

The demo sessions will be referenced as:

DV1   Demo virtueel inkomensloket

DV2   Demo voorzieningenwijzer

Demo Virtueel Inkomensloket
I attended bi-monthly update sessions from het Virtueel Inkomensloket. This initiative, which is backed by the municipality of Utrecht, is building an application that allows citizens to apply for all available allowances, benefits, settlements, and remissions in one place. Citizens would only have to gather the appropriate documentation once a year, after which the tool automatically selects and applies for the appropriate national and local arrangements (figure 13).

Demo Voorzieningenwijzer
Furthermore, I attended a demo session from de Voorzieningenwijzer. This tool can be used by social workers to, together with their clients, get an overview of the client's financial situation (figure 14). Based on a series of questions about the client's situation, the tool can then advise how to save money by, for example, recommending a more fitting health insurance. The tool can also recommend allowances and benefits the client might qualify for.

Utrechtse Geldzoeker
This website (figure 15) provides an overview of financial funding sources that social workers can use to more easily find fitting support for their client without needing to learn all intiatives by heart.

2.1.2 Analyzing insights
I took out important quotes and insights from all observations, interviews, recordings, and session materials. I then combined them into one extensive analysis using a digital whiteboard (appendix D). This method, often called "analysis on the wall" (Sanders & Stappers, 2013) allows to see larger clusters, returning elements, and the link between different topics. The insights from this analyisis are discussed in the next subchapters.

Fig 13. Het Virtueel Inkomensloket is a new application that helps citizens apply for all regulations they qualify for in a few clicks.

Fig 14. Social workers can use de Voorzieningenwijzer to get an overview of their client's financial situation. The tool also advises them on ways to save money.

Fig 15. The Utrechtse Geldzoeker lets social workers search for financial funding through an easy interface. This way, they do not have to know all regulations by heart.

2.2 Enrolling into the system

I explored different touchpoints in the poverty reduction system and interviewed a series of social workers and policymakers (chapter 2.1.1) to better understand the barriers citizens might face in the process of reaching out for support. This chapter describes the main insights from this exploration and tries to answer sub-question 2.1: What are barriers to receiving proper poverty support?

My insights are divided into three sections in this chapter, chronologically following citizens' process when reaching out for help.
1. Orientation: searching for available support.
2. Application: applying for fitting support.
3. Receiving support: receiving support from an organization or social worker.

2.2.1 Orientation
There are so many organizations and regulations that it can be overwhelming to figure out which support you qualify for.
There is something for everyone. The municipality alone offers over sixty financial regulations for people in poverty (IM1). Social maps, like the on jekuntmeer.nl, show over 400 organizations in Utrecht alone (jekuntmeer, n.d.) (figure 16). Online, this information is often shown in long lists or big maps. With all the rules and exceptions in place, finding the support that fits your situation can be challenging when you do not know where to begin, even more so for people who struggle with (digital) illiteracy like a large part of the target group.
"Some Utrechters qualify for over 50 regulations. Finding and applying for these regulations is a lot of repetitive and often complex administrative work."
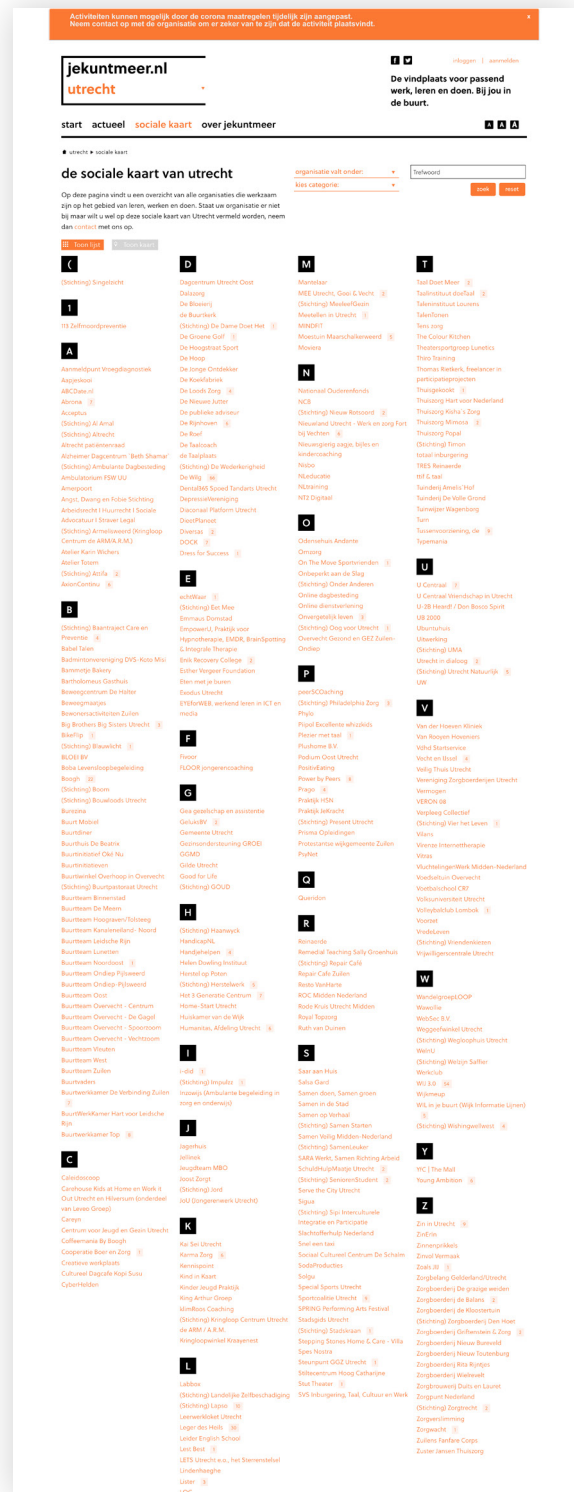*-DV1, Demo Virtueel Inkomensloket*

Fig 16. jekuntmeer.nl shows a list of all initiatives in Utrecht. The amount of choice can be overwhelming.

An increasing part of the poverty reduction system is heavily digitized, making it abstract and invisible. The target group is not used to finding their information online (IA3). They need physical points of information to come in contact with potential support.

"Some of our clients do not even understand how to use an OV-chipcard. These people can't keep up with the current digitization of the system."
-IA1, Manager Al Amal

Luckily, open-door policies lower the threshold to reach out significantly. Buurtteams and organizations like Al Amal increase their accessibility by allowing citizens to simply walk in for information or direct support (figure 17). This touchpoint drastically lowers the thresholds to explore the possibilities with a social worker and allows for a more open conversation with the client. However, walking in does require trust in these organizations from citizens.

"By opening our doors, decorating the lobby nicely, having an emphatic attitude, the process can often be a lot quicker. We get a much more thorough understanding of someone's situation because of this contact."
-IB2, Gezinswerker Buurtteams

Fig 17. Buurtteams locations are open for walk-ins, making them a low-threshold touch point for citizens to request help. ▶

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2.2.2 Application

Application procedures can be complex.
Citizens must often provide a lot of personal information and clarification to apply for support. This makes application procedures complex and time-intensive. For example, the application form for the social assistance benefit spans over 19 steps. Each step consists of several very detailed questions, requiring the citizen to deliver multiple forms of extra documentation such as bank statements and social security numbers of family members (figure 18). These are steps that can, once again, be complex for digitally illiterate citizens. Furthermore, one could argue that these procedures impact citizens' privacy.

The human measure is missing. Standardized, online application procedures often do not allow citizens to clarify their specific situation. Citizens in more complex situations might not qualify on paper when they still require support. Furthermore, these forms leave no room for error. Some questions are rather complex; mistakes are easily made, leading to potentially unjust rejections.

"It has happened that citizens submit incomplete applications over and over, which we have to reject. It can take months before we find out that this happens because they are cognitively challenged. All this time, the person did not receive the support they were qualified for because they could not manage to fill in the proper forms."
IM2, senior executive employee W&I

Fig 18. Filling out the online application form for the social assistance benefit takes about an hour. In 19 thorough steps, the personal situation of a citizen is questioned.

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2.2.3 Receiving support
Once you are in, you are often in good hands.
When citizens find their way towards fitting support, the professionals at these organizations are generally capable of figuring out their request for help and underlying complexities.
"When we help someone with a practical question, we always dig deeper. Is there anything else we can help with? Any topics that trouble them? We always go the extra mile."
-IA2, Activity coordinator Al Amal

However, it is important to offer support that incentivizes citizens to outgrow their situation autonomously. Offering citizens the financial peace to handle their situation is good, yet this support should be accompanied by qualitative initiatives that help them outgrow their situation. Simply taking over their financial control takes away their autonomy and motivation to outgrow the situation. It is essential that citizens receive support that allows them to grow in their own way.
"The current system keeps itself alive. People become completely reliant on financial support and are not offered many chances to outgrow the situation in a way that suits their passions, dreams, and values."
-IE1, Social worker

2.2.4 Key insights

• There is support available for anyone in any situation, but this paradoxically makes it hard to find the support that is right for you. Finding your way towards fitting organizations and regulations can be time and labor-intensive.

• Much of the poverty reduction system exists online, making it inaccessible for digitally illiterate citizens.

• Organizing care in the neighborhood, accessible through open-door events, highly increases the accessibility of support for the target group.

• Application procedures for support are often complex, lengthy, and standardized. The human measure is missing, leaving no room for citizens to tell their story and why they need help.

• Once you are in, you are in good hands. The provided support is often thorough and fitting. Citizens are supported in different domains over an extended period.

• It is important to offer support that incentivizes citizens to keep growing. Just offering financial aid can make citizens reliant on support.

2.3 The target group and the system

This chapter aims to answer research question 2.2: What is the experience of cognitively challenged women with a non-Western migration background who (try to) interact with organizations in the poverty reduction system?

2.3.1 Cultural mismatches between care and the target group

In the interviews and the creative session, it became clear that cultural differences in the definition of poverty and poverty support might keep social workers from providing the appropriate support.

Women in this group have a vital caregiver role in their network. Pushing them to find paid work could disrupt their context. During the creative session, all women expressed how much of their daily activities consisted of caring for their household, parents, grandkids, and neighbors (CC1). On paper, they might be unemployed, but they do a lot of valuable informal labor at home and in their neighborhood. At the same time, the focus of a large part of the poverty reduction system is on reintegrating citizens into the job market. This condition to receive support clashes with these women's important position in their context.
"A lot of social workers push citizens to become 'self-sustainable', but we should accept that some of these people will always need support."
-IA1, Manager Al Amal

The system sometimes imposes Dutch cultural values on these women. Their perception of poverty can be very different from what might be considered socially normal in the Netherlands. For example, sending their kids to swimming- or music classes is not something they usually do, so offering them financial support for these services mismatches their needs (IE1). Rather than imposing certain forms of support on their situation, it is better to collaboratively determine how these women would like to see their situation develop.

"These women do not describe themselves as poor. They would not say they fall short of anything. Imposing products and services that you consider necessary will not have a long-lasting effect. When you offer them opportunities to grow and learn: that is when you see they are activated."
-IE1, Social worker

2.3.2 Cognitive challenges and the target group

Cognitive challenges are sometimes not, or not timely recognized, hindering proper support. Many social workers are not trained to recognize these challenges, and some clients are unaware that they experience them. Furthermore, non-Western cultures often do not acknowledge these challenges properly, making them go undiagnosed.
"Cognitive challenges are often seen like someone is crazy. We try to reframe it as 'thinking differently'. We want to show that it is okay to receive help for that."
-IA1, Manager Al Amal

Social workers end up overestimating the capabilities of their cognitively challenged clients because their challenges stay undiagnosed. They end up giving them tasks that they are unable to perform. Clients then get stuck, not following up on advice. The social worker must understand that altered communication methods for this group are necessary.
"Sometimes, I only discover their challenges after months. Only then do I understand why my help is not effective."
– IB2, Gezinswerker Buurtteams

On the other hand, clients who do have a diagnosis are sometimes underestimated by social workers and peers. People see them as their condition rather than ordinary people with emotions, opinions, and goals. Finding alternative ways of challenging these people can motivate them to work on their situation.

"No one ever challenges these women. I see how they glow when we do."
-IA3, Group mentor Al Amal

It should be accepted that part of the target group will always need a certain level of support. The current system revolves around getting people to be self-reliant. Not all clients are capable of ever getting to a level of complete independence (IA1).

"Some people will always need help with, for example, their financial administration. They do not have the people in their network to do that for them eventually. We want them to know that it is okay to ask us for this help."
-IA2, Activity coordinator Al Amal

2.3.3 Postponing requests for help

Some of the interviewed social workers expressed that they often see cognitively challenged women put off their requests for help until their situation worsens. Multiple factors influence this behavior:

The child allowance affair (kindertoeslagenaffaire) has damaged the target's group trust in the government. With non-Western immigrants being disproportionally targeted in this affair (College voor de Rechten van de Mens, 2021), many people in the poor neighborhoods of Utrecht know someone who was duped (IA1). According to Al Amal and Buurtteam social workers (IA1, IA2, IB1, IB2), this has worsened the relationship between this group and the government. Organizations like Buurtteams and the municipality are all seen as part of this affair and therefore mistrusted, even though they could provide essential support.

"Some people do not trust us anymore. They think we take your kids away or that we take control over your whole life."
-IB1, Manager Buurtteams

Fig 19. The child allowance affair has made groups of citizens distrust governmental institutions, making it harder to offer support.
▼

People are ashamed of their situation, keeping them from seeking help. Poverty is a topic that is hardly discussed by the target group (Mustapha). Therefore, it can feel as if their situation is unique and something to be ashamed of, causing them to not reach out for help.

"Sometimes women do not even dare to enter our building because they are so ashamed of their situation. I wish we could make asking for help something cool, making you proud to enter."
-IA1, Manager Al Amal

Low self-esteem, caused by repetitive rejection by "the system" and exclusion by society takes away the motivation to work on their situation. They believe that the system is not for them.
"I was always put in the back of the classroom; people told me I was dumb. If that's being said constantly, you'll start to feel dumb"
-Vera, taalambassadeur Stichting lezen en schrijven.

Poverty is not always perceived as urgent.
Some citizens have managed to create a decent life for themselves with the limited resources available to them. They do not feel the urgency to improve their situation and do not feel addressed by campaigns about support. At the same time, they could be at risk of dropping into a worse situation. It is important to see how this group can be targeted before their situation worsens.
"Someone's situation can suddenly get worse. It is important that we proactively use existing touchpoints in their context to check in with people who are at risk on a regular basis."
-DV2, demo Voorzieningenwijzer

The welfare trap (armoedeval) is demotivating citizens to work on their situation. This trap is caused by the fact that people with a low or no income will lose welfare benefits such as their housing subsidy once they gradually improve their

situation. Accepting a low-paid job, or working a few hours, will not improve their financial situation because of their disqualification from these subsidies. The incentive to act is therefore small for citizens at the bottom of the income scale (de Mooij, 2006). One of the interviewed social workers argued that the system should provide citizens with more incentives to grow financially and personally:
"Our system is keeping citizens poor, because it is making them dependent on their allowances and benefits, without providing an incentive to outgrow their situation and do something with their lives. The boundaries to make a real change are too high."
-IE1, Caregover

2.3.4 Inaccessibility of support
Application procedures can be inaccessible to those who struggle with reading, writing, digital illiteracy. These procedures often ask for extensive paperwork and elaboration thereon. A mistake is easily made, potentially leading to unjust rejections.
"I often see applications where something is clearly wrong. Cognitively challenged people sometimes fail to apply without the help of a social worker, friend, of family member."
–IM2, Senior executive employee W&I

The target group experiences language barriers, preventing them from learning about support. A large part of the information about and application procedures for support is only available in Dutch and is heavily text-based. Communications by the municipality have, until recently, always been exclusively in Dutch (IM1). Several employees from Al Amal (IA1, IA2, IA3) point this out as a problem. Clients get into trouble because they wrongly interpret information and struggle to find help because it is not accessible in their language. Financial and legal lingo and abbreviations make this an even bigger problem.

Fig 20. Ulu Camii is the biggest mosque in Utrecht and an important meeting place for muslim citizens.

2.3.5 The neighborhood as a source

The target group is often strongly connected to their neighborhood. The participants shared several stories that emphasized that public spaces such as the local market and mosque are important social places for them (CC1). They enjoy going here and get valuable information from these places.

"I am so happy with the mosque in my neighborhood. It is an important place for me. I go there every day."
-CC1, Citizen

2.3.6 Key insights

• Support for the target group should consider their context and cultural preferences. Force-fitting Dutch standards onto non-Western immigrants will not lead to durable support.

• Diagnosing and handling cognitive challenges can be a challenge for social workers, causing support sometimes to mismatch the abilities and needs of the target group. The group sometimes needs additional guidance but should not be underestimated in their abilities.

• The target group often postpones their request for help because of shame for their situation, distrust in the government, or a lack of knowledge about their own situations and the available support. This can lead to their situation becoming worse over time.

• When the group does want to reach out for help, they struggle to do so because of trouble with reading, writing, Dutch and digital literacy. Because so much of the system exists online, these barriers can prevent them from reaching out altogether.

• Public places in the neighborhood are a vital source of social contact and practical information for the target group.

2.4 The social worker perspective

This chapter explores subquestion 2.3: What is the experience of social workers, policy officers, and policy makers in the system?

2.4.1 Gaining trust
Pushing protocols harms the relationship between social worker and client. Citizens are often presented with strict bureaucratic protocols that do not consider personal factors when they reach out for help. This makes them not feel heard and not be open about their situation.
"People have to fill in form after form before they get any help. This makes them hold back: there is no trusting relationship yet, so they do not want to give all this information. You have to listen and show that you can help first for them to trust you with their whole story."
-IA2, Activity coordinator Al Amal

Showing compassion so that clients feel free to be honest and open.
"You can only hold up a mirror to a client if you shown them openness and love."
-IA2, Activity coordinator Al Amal

2.4.2 Finding intrinsic motivation
All interviewed social workers agree that **support will never be effective if the client is not intrinsically motivated** to change their situation. Sometimes clients come in without a clear idea of what they are there for. Social workers believe that these people sometimes need a little more time to reflect on their situation to become ready for change.
"Sometimes, people drop out of our programs because it is just not the right time to help. They are not ready for the necessary behavior changes to grow. They then often come back later when they have thought-through their situation a little better."
-IB2, Gezinswerker Buurtteams

Paradoxically, **citizens must be supported in becoming aware of the severity of their situation early on.** The downward poverty spiral (chapter 1.1.2) can make their situation worse if the appropriate care is not offered in time (Plantinga et. Al., 2018). The support that is then necessary is often much more complex and drastic (IB2). Some citizens currently do not have the tools or network to realize this in time.
"We have some clients that were victims of the Kindertoeslagenaffaire and were not even aware of it. They received letters from the municipality, inviting them to come to talk about compensation, but they did not understand these."
-IA2, Activity coordinator Al Amal

2.4.3 Offering customized care
Different parties in the system should work together to offer the appropriate care. Rather than sending away a person who is requesting help at the wrong location, organization, or regulation, a warm referral to the appropriate resources could make a vast difference. Harsh rejections or complex referrals can often demotivate citizens to seek help again, increasing the risk of them postponing the necessary steps.
"Sending people away often leads to them postponing or refraining from another request for help. We must facilitate warm referrals to the correct care providers to avoid this from happening."
-DV2, demo Voorzieningenwijzer

Social workers at W&I express that they do not always have time to offer this personalized care or a warm referral. W&I receives tons of applications every day; policy officers express that they do not have enough time to offer additional support to all people that get rejected.
"I think it is good that we try to offer more and more personalized care, but this leads to a much higher workload. We cannot always handle this".
-IM2, Senior executive employee W&I

Organizations that do have the resources for this extra support, like Buurtteams and Al Amal, could take away this pressure from W&I. If citizens find these parties more quickly, all organizations involved could better carry out their strengths.
"Sometimes citizens that get rejected later apply again with the help of a social worker from, for example, Buurtteams. If this person had found this help earlier, that would have saved time on all sides."
-IM2, Senior executive employee W&I

Even social workers lack an overview of the available financial and qualitative support.
There are so many rules and exceptions, and a central place where all available qualitative and financial support is collected is missing. Social workers have to know much of it by heart, putting the stress on them to stay up to date in the ever-changing system.
"The Netherlands wants to arrange everything so neatly that the system sometimes becomes overwhelming. This puts all faith in the direct knowledge of social workers. How can they ever know everything?"
-DV2, demo Voorzieningenwijzer

2.4.4 Appreciating social workers
It is important to provide social workers and policy officers with a sense of appreciation for their work.
Some of the interviewees expressed how the issues in the poverty reduction system sometimes translate into unpleasant interactions with citizens. It is important that social workers feel appreciated so that they can keep positively affecting citizens in trouble.

Not all interviewed parties feel valued in the poverty reduction system. Organizations, however small, want to feel appreciated for the impact they are making. The municipality plays a leading role in this as the main organizer of the system.

2.4.5 Key insights

• Social workers following strict protocols keep clients from telling their whole stories. It is essential to first build a trusting bond so that the client feels comfortable sharing all essential information.

• Support cannot be pushed: intrinsic motivation is essential to achieve the behavior change needed to outgrow poverty. However, it is vital to spark this motivation before problems get out of hand.

• Different parties in the poverty reduction system should collaborate to offer citizens the appropriate care. Citizens must be able to find the right entry points more easily for this to happen.

• Some parties and social workers in the system feel under-appreciated. A basic level of appreciation is essential to maintaining an open and positive attitude in the system.

2.5 Developments in the system

Multiple initiatives and policy changes are already targeting some of the issues in the system. This chapter looks into sub-question 2.4: What are current developments that are aiming to improve the poverty reduction system? This analysis will tell me more about topics that are already being covered, and the yet-to-be-targeted room for improvement.

For this exploration, I atteded demo's of the Virtueel Inkomenslokat and Voorzieningenwijzer. Furthermore, I looked into Jekuntmeer.nl, de Utrechtse Geldzoeker (chapter 2.1.1) and other digital initiatives that are trying to make poverty support more accessible.

2.5.1 Focus on the financial, digital and integration
Current innovations have a focus on financial aid. Either through simplified application procedures or accessible private funding on deutrechtsegeldzoeker.nl, these innovations promise to make financial support more accessible. However, as discussed in chapter 2.2, poverty is more than financial alone. **Therefore, it is important to also increase accessibility to the parties in the system that provide more qualitative (non-financial) care.**

Most current innovations are heavily digital. In a world that is already rapidly becoming more inaccessible to those who struggle with digital illiteracy (IA1), **there is a need for innovation in citizens' daily, physical context.**

Some of the researched initiatives function as an addition to the poverty reduction system. Since the system's previous expansion has made it more complex and inaccessible, **it is important to integrate innovations into the existing system as much as possible.**
"More and more initiatives, allowances, and organizations are being added to the system. Unfortunately this only makes it more of a mess."
-DV1, demo Virtueel Inkomstenloket

2.5.2 Policy changes
The municipality, Buurtteams, and their supporting organizations are busy **making the poverty reduction system more citizen-centered.** Accelerated by the Kindertoeslagenaffaire, these parties have realized that a fraud-focused policy is not the way to go. This can most of all be noticed in the attitude of W&I emplyees.
"The child support affair has made us as a society more aware of the impact of poverty and has changed the way we want to treat people in poverty."
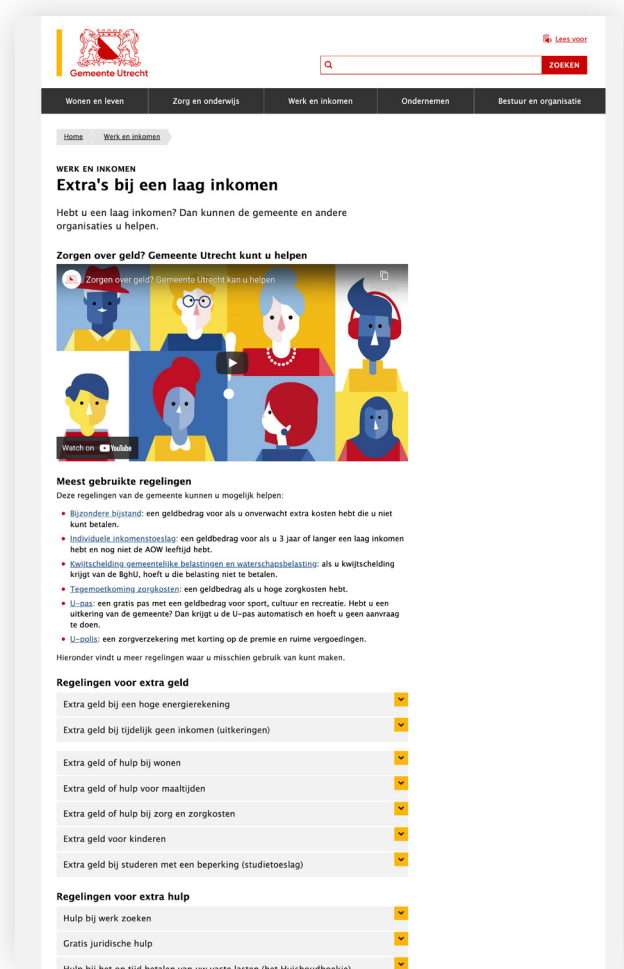*-IB1, Manager Buurtteams*

Fig 21. W&I's website has been made more accessible with animations and simple text.

Furthermore, **information about poverty support is increasingly offered below the B1 language level, accompanied by visuals and videos** (figure 21). The municipality has installed a proofreading committee that checks if all communications are below B1-level (IM2). Furthermore, websites from the municipality feature more and more videos. Some pages feature a function that reads text aloud to make content accessible to those who struggle with reading.

A more recent development is that **the municipality is also starting to communicate in different languages.** The need to effectively inform citizens about COVID regulations has made the municipality realize the importance of multilingualism.

"The municipality policy was to only communicate in Dutch. Because of the whole covid situation, they saw the power of multilingual communication."
-IA1, Manager Al Amal

2.5.3 Key insights

• Current innovations in the poverty reduction system focus on the accessibility of financial support. This is great to offer a more accessible financial basis, but it is important to also take accessibility to other forms of support into account.

• A lot of innovations are highly digital. To fit the limitations of the target group, it is important to also look at more low-tech solutions.

• The municipality and its supporting organizations are going through a culture change to make care more human-centered. Their attitude is more citizen-focused, information is made easier to read, and videos and visuals make information more accessible to those who struggle with the language.

2.6 Specifying the project focus

The insights discussed throughout chapter 2 will inspire the upcoming design process, whilst safeguarding a good fit between the target group, stakeholders, and potential solutions. Furthermore, some of the insights helped me further specify the focus for my project. This subchapter provides an overview of some of the most important insights that inspire this further focus.
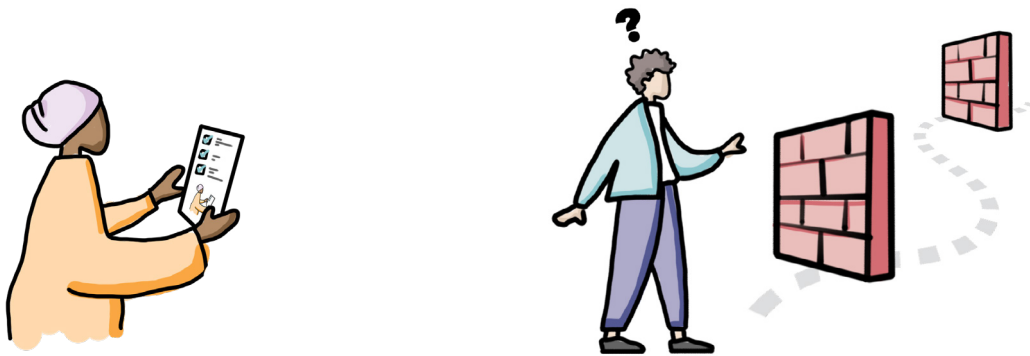
Accessible application procedures

In the current problem field, inaccessibility of the poverty reduction system is often approached as a problem caused by complex application procedures and ill-fitting regulations. This has resulted in an attitude change at the municipality and its supporting organizations, which are becoming more citizen-centered in the design of their policies. More personalized regulations and care, together with lower-level information and easier application procedures, are welcome steps to make the system more accessible.

Accessibility early-on

However, the problem of inaccessibility often already starts before the point of application. My research shows that part of the target group does not find its way to the system altogether. This can be caused by (a combination of) different factors:

- There is an overwhelming amount of support offered through different channels. For citizens, it can be hard to know where to look for proper support, especially for those who struggle with the Dutch language or digital literacy. The municipality offering more and more individual regulations has not made this process easier.

- Support and information about support are not offered in the daily lives of the target group. The system mainly lives online, while the group often relies on information from parties and peers within the neighborhood.

- The system is rather passive, waiting for citizens to approach it rather than reaching out to them with support.

- Part of the target group actively avoids the system because of fear or a lack of trust towards the authorities. This makes it increasingly difficult for care organizations to offer proper support.

- Poverty is not always urgent. Not all poor citizens feel the need to change their situation, even though they might be at risk of getting into more trouble. Others might be unaware of the severity of their situation.

- Shame and taboo surround the topic of poverty. People do not want to admit to needing help or feel shame for not independently sorting out their situation.
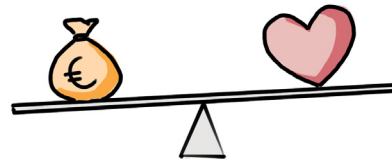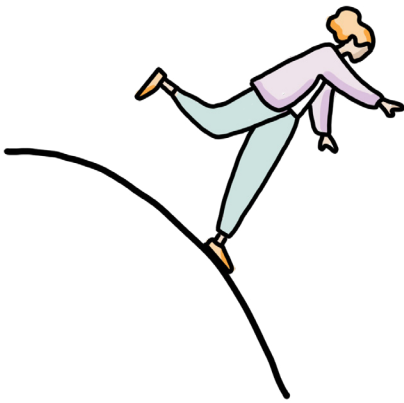
Beware the "dip"

These factors lead to some citizens in poverty postponing their requests for help. They miss out on financial and qualitative support that could significantly improve their quality of life. In some cases, they do not reach out for help at all, or not until a "dip" takes place: their situation spirals down and becomes so urgent that they can no longer sustain themselves at all. Waiting for citizens' situation to reach this low point often makes the situation much more complex to solve and the done damage more severe. This can ultimately lead to them being forced into the system by parties like housing associations, creditors, or tax authorities, which is to be avoided.

A specified focus

With current innovations already covering large chunks of the problems in the application step (chapter 2.5), I decided to further specify the focus of my project to the phase that precedes this. I will be targeting currently unreached citizens through more proactive interventions, preventing them from waiting for the "dip" to happen.

Innovative steps are already being taken in the financial field.

However, poverty reaches beyond the financial; I will therefore apply more focus on the accessibility of qualitative care.

Many of the promising developments take place online, mismatching the needs of the target group. I will focus on solutions that fit more in the daily lives of citizens.

My specified focus leads to a new design goal:

Design a product or service that proactively increases the accessibility of integral, qualitative poverty support in the daily lives of cognitively challenged Utrechters.

Reframing accessible poverty support

3

The previous chapters describe the poverty reduction system as it is now. They explore stakeholders' experiences, what goes well and what does not, and what is currently already being improved.

As discussed before, this project exists in a context where traditional problem-solving techniques have sometimes proven insufficient. The context calls for new ways to look at the existing problems: new frames. This chapter describes the process of arriving at these new frames.

Subchapter 3.1 describes how the frame creation approach (Dorst, 2015) was put to use to set up a frame creation workshop. 3.2 describes the main underlying theme that came forth from this workshop. Lastly, subchapter 3.3 describes how this theme inspired new frames, which will be used in the ideation process in the next chapter.

3.1   Frame creation
3.2   The main theme: motivating growth
3.3   A new frame: Next level group

10. ARCHEOLOGY
↳ wat hebben we al geprobeed/ged...
om dit probleem om te pakken?

Wat is b...

- beeldverisol leren/...
- Voldoening uit werk
- Verschil maken / Nuttig zijn
- Nuttig zijn
- Trots op wat je doet/ bereikt
- Respect
- Zorgen voor je omgeving
- Zorg
- Helpen
- Zorgplicht uitvoeren
- LVB Utrecht in armoede ...
- buurtteam
- Al Amal (begeleiden)
- gemeent Utrecht beleidsmedewerker
- gevoel van rust
- gevoel van zekerheid
- vertrouwen dat je het tot een goed einde brengt
- Paniek
- media journalisten
- Scholen
- Scorende kinderen
- Blijven bestaan
- Zekerheid over persoon
- nieuws kunnen maken
- genoeg (goed) personeel
- Bestaansrecht/waart-wording
- Een weg hebben
- Bije kinderen
- welbevinden
- Gezondheid kinderen
- Rust
- veilige omgeving
- Status quo behouden/ stabiliseren
- Continue zorg leveren
- Toegankelijk zijn
- Goede bereikbaarheid
- Recht-vaardigheid
- kennen verbinden
- Moreel tegengaan
- Excellen voor ... (regulatie)
- Leren/ kijken
- reputatie
- gued plek in omgeving ...
- Reputatie
- Sensatie
- Informatie verspreide
- gelijke onderwijs

3.1 Frame creation

As described in chapter 2, the poverty reduction system knows some problems that limit its accessibility to the target group. The municipality, guiding organizations, and social workers are aware of this and are making a continuous effort to improve the situation. However, traditional problem-solving techniques have in some cases proven unsuccessful in providing more accessible poverty support for the target group. As discussed in the project initiation in chapter 0.1, the approach of my project is to therefore use designerly techniques to come up with new ways to look at the existing problems: new "frames." These new frames can then inspire alternative ideation directions.

Designers use several different methods to create new frames. In this project, I adapt the frame creation approach from Kees Dorst's Frame Innovation (2015). The frame creation method is particularly fitting for today's open, networked, complex, and dynamic problems (Dorst, 2015), like those in the poverty reduction system. In this project, I apply the method in a pressure-cooker workshop.

"Frame creation focuses not on the generation of solutions but on the ability to first create new approaches to the problem situation itself." (Dorst, 2015, Front cover).

The basics of the frame creation method are explained in section 3.1.1. The setup of the workshop is discussed in section 3.1.2 and appendix E. The results from the workshop are discussed in subchapters 3.2 and 3.3.

3.1.1 The frame creation method

Rather than going from problem to a solution linearly, the Frame Creation approach challenges designers to first search for "themes" that are underlying the everyday needs, motivations, and experiences of the different stakeholders in the field of a problem (Dorst, 2015).

Themes are the 'structures of our experiences' (van Manen, 2017) and are closely related to shared human values and meanings (van der Bijl Brouwer, 2018). 'Trust', 'security', and 'living a meaningful life' are some examples of themes that came to the surface in this project (Appendix E). Themes are generally universal and drive human experiences in any given context, making it possible to explore them outside a project's original problem context (van der Bijl Brouwer, 2018). Positive qualities from these other contexts can then be translated back to the original context to see how they might help solve the original problems.

3.1.2 A frame creation workshop

In this project, a frame creation workshop is central to applying the Frame creation Method (Dorst, 2015). This pressure-cooker workshop goes through the frame creation process in an accelerated manner to quickly move from research insights towards inspiring frames. Figure 22 shows the planning for the workshop. Appendix E shows the full setup and results.

I conducted this workshop (figure 23) with my two coaches for this project, who are both design professors from the Industrial Design Engineering faculty. In the workshop, we went from the original problem to themes by together exploring the underlying needs, motivations, and experiences of the different stakeholders. I then took more time to further explore the themes we found and translated them into promising frames in the days following the workshop.

Workshop planning

10 min
Archeology
Discussing a summary insights from my research to get a shared understanding of the problem and its history.

10 min
Paradox
Pinpointing the underlying paradoxes that make the problem so hard to solve.

10 min
Context
Mapping out the inner circle of stakeholders that are involved in possible solutions.

15 min
Field
Expanding the context with potentially interesting stakeholders to involve. Then noting down needs, values and aspirations of the most interesting stakeholders.

60 min
Themes
Clustering the needs, values, and aspirations from the broader field in search of common themes and analyzing what fuels these themes.

next days
Themes & frames
In the days following the workshop, I individually dove deeper into potentially interesting themes, exploring which potentially fruitful frames they inspired.

Fig. 22 Planning for the frame creation workshop

Fig 23. In the frame creation workshop, I looked for underlying themes that might inspire interesting new frames together with my coaches for this project. ▶

3.2 The main theme: motivating growth

The previous subchapter describes the setup of the frame creation method as my coaches and I implemented it in a Frame creation workshop. Multiple themes arose from this workshop when looking at the larger field's needs, values, and aspirations (Appendix E). After the workshop, I analyzed the most interesting themes and played around with potential frames that could come from them. I decided to move on with the theme that inspired the most fruitful frame: growth. The following section describes this theme and why it could move the original problem forward. The resulting frame is discussed in the next subchapter.

3.2.1 A new theme: motivating growth

Growth is inherently bound to the poverty reduction system and shared by several parties in the field (Appendix E). The municipality, guiding organizations, social workers, and other parties in the system are constantly working to help economically disadvantaged citizens outgrow their situation, change their behavior, or better themselves towards a certain societal standard. This is, in theory, a good thing. It would be logical to reason that anyone in a poor financial situation would like to improve that situation. However, when looking at the ways we are trying to realize this growth, there is clear room for improvement.

The organizations and social workers in the poverty reduction system are trying to make growth easier by offering tailor-made regulations, more accessible information, and easy application procedures. However, an essential ingredient to growth is overlooked: intrinsic motivation.

The path into the poverty reduction system can be made as easy as possible. But, if citizens never get the motivation to really make a change, they will never outgrow their situation. The word "intrinsic" is key here: some organizations in the system tend to take away citizen's autonomy, determining for them what they should grow towards. It is important to respect the citizens' need for autonomy and allow them to determine how, when, and in which directions they would like to grow. As one social worker I interviewed said:

"We should not force people into a process. That will never result in durable improvement of their situation."
*-IB2, Gezinswerker Buurtteams*

The main motivator that is now present in the system is distress when the citizen's situation is no longer viable at all. As discussed in chapter 2.6, it is better to interfere before citizens arrive at this low point.

Instead of seeing the problems in the poverty reduction system as an issue of inaccessibility of the information and touchpoints in the system, it should be seen as a problem of lacking intrinsic motivation to grow. Intrinsic motivation is often missing in this group (chapter 2.4). These citizens are ashamed to ask for help, feel like they are societally excluded, have low self-esteem that keeps them from trying, are stuck in a welfare trap, or lack insight into the severity of their situation (chapter 2). These are all reasons that keep them from undertaking action to improve their situation. Intrinsic motivation should thus be addressed as an essential ingredient of an improved poverty reduction system.

Design goal:
Design a product or service that sparks intrinsic motivation to grow for cognitively challenged women with a non-western migration background in poverty.
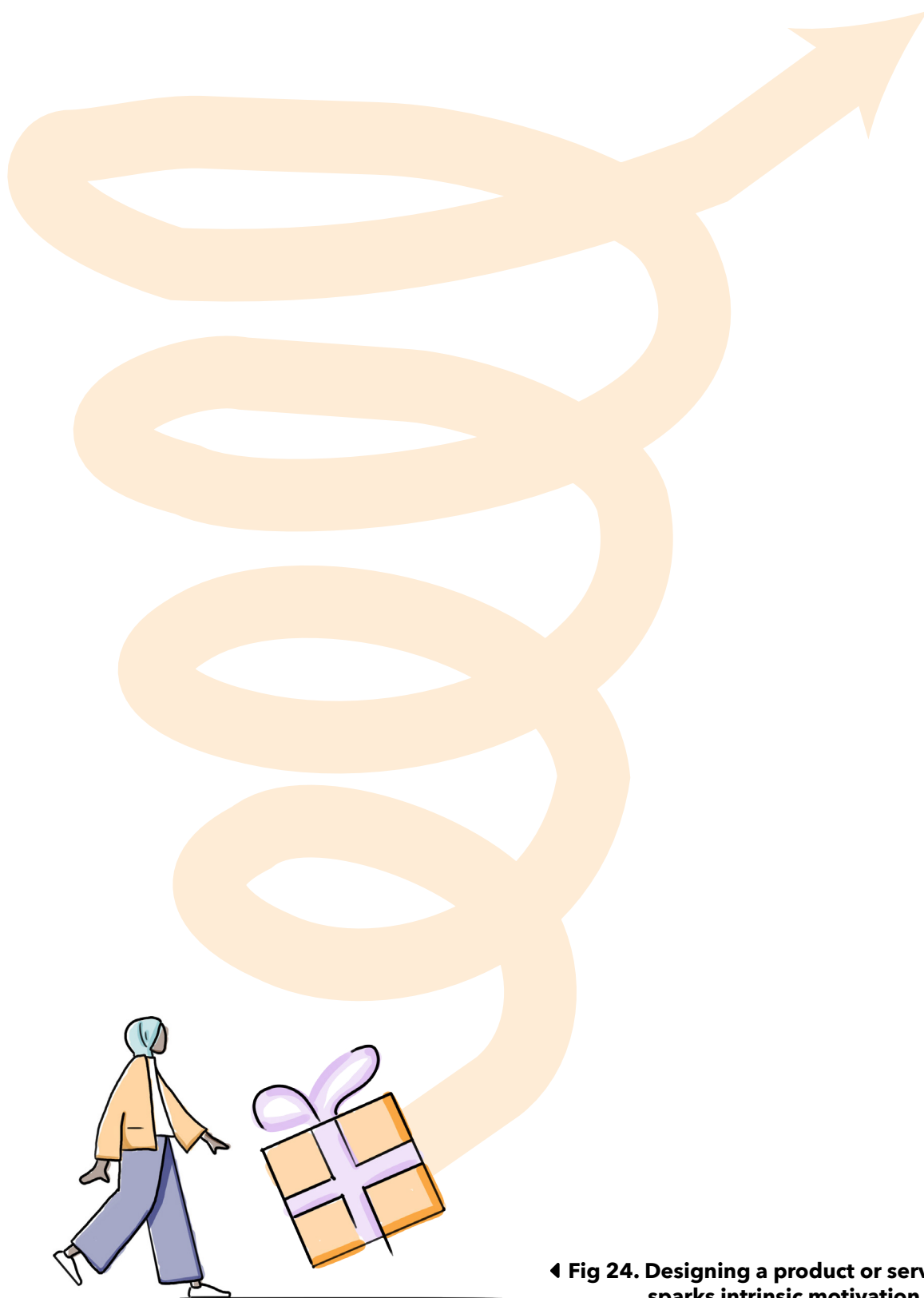
◀ Fig 24. Designing a product or service that sparks intrinsic motivation to grow

3.3 A new frame: Next Level Group

Following Dorst's frame creation method (2015), the chosen theme leaves us with the following method to explore potential frames:

"If the problem situation of the poverty reduction system is approached as if it is a challenge of sparking intrinsic motivation to grow, then we should..."

Finishing this statement will provide us with a frame: a new way of approaching the problems in the poverty reduction system. In this project, I try to supplement these statements by using analogies and metaphors (Dorst, 2015) (figure 25). I searched for other contexts or situations where growth and intrinsic motivation are sparked positively. This is a playful creative process where I explore how potential frames could inspire realistic and viable solution ideas later on. The goal is to find a "fruitful" frame: does the frame inspire a promising direction where I can generate multiple sensible solutions later on in the process (Dorst, 2015)?
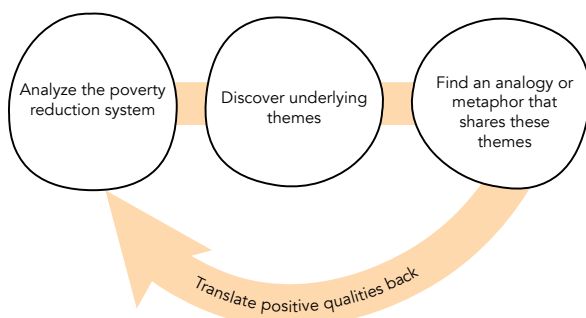

Fig 25. Exploring new frames with analogies

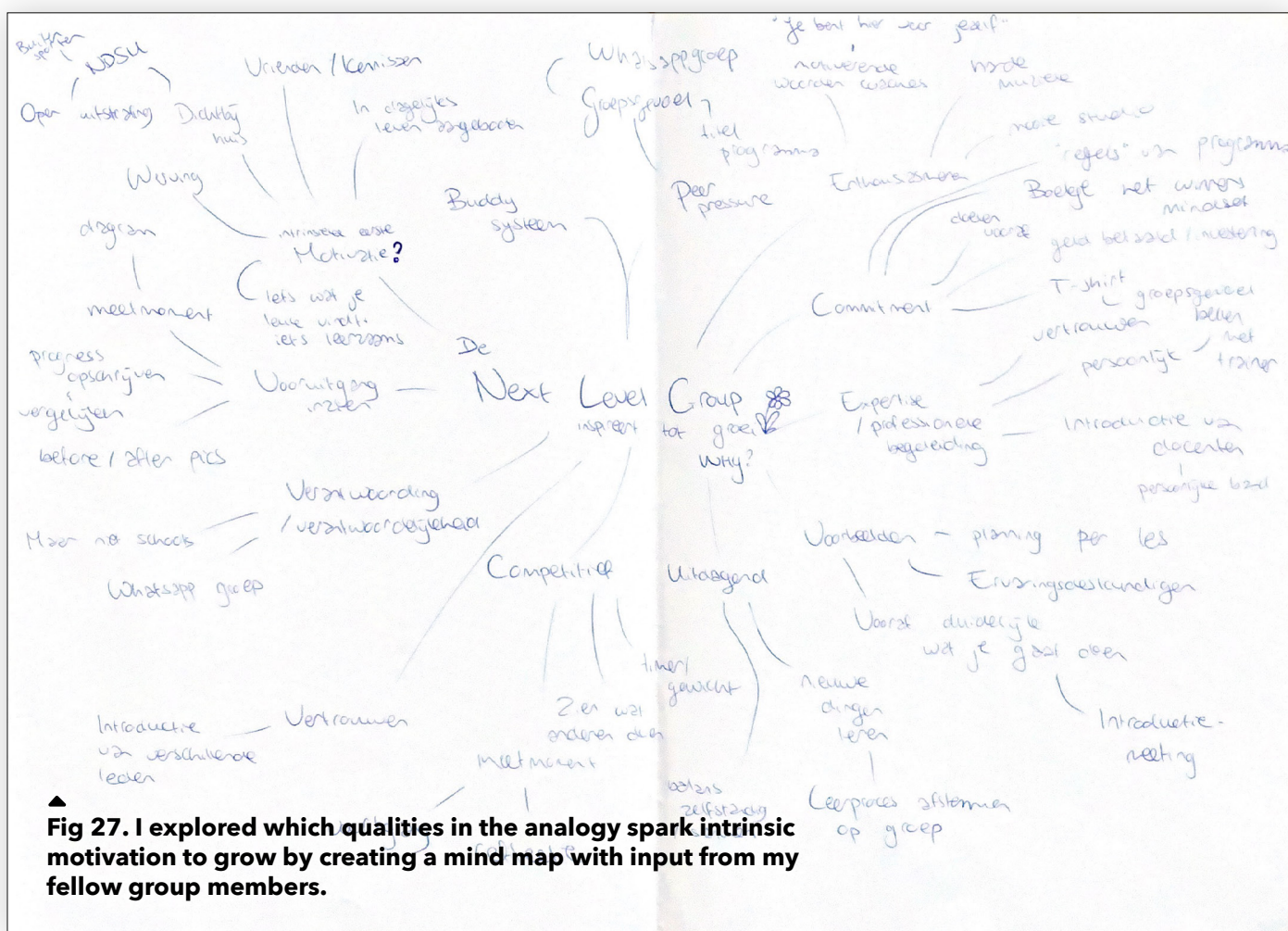### 3.3.1 A new frame: The Next Level Group

After a brief exploration, I arrived at the following new frame: "If the problem situation of the poverty reduction system is approached as if it is a challenge of sparking intrinsic motivation to grow, then we should design it like a Next Level Group."

Now: what is a Next Level Group? This sports program, which I was not-so-coincidentally enrolled in at the time of this reframing step (figure 26), challenges people to become a better version of themselves. With a fixed group, you learn about food, exercise, and personal care. This might feel like it could not be further away from the poverty reduction system, but I saw an interesting link that immediately inspired many initial ideas. In both situations, growth leads to an improved version of yourself, and in both situations, most people are somewhat aware of this. However, in both situations, people often lack the motivation to enroll in the honestly rather unpleasant growth process. This particular program took two months and was honestly really tough. This made me wonder: what had made me want to do this? What was keeping me doing it? And how could this inspire my search for motivation in the context of poverty?

To further analyze this frame, I made a mind map (figure 27, Appendix F), exploring how this program inspires growth and intrinsically motivates people to work on themselves. I further expanded this mindmap by talking to my buddies in the program. Some of the qualities that arose are the sense of competitiveness, the way it makes growth tangible, the freedom it gives to determine your own goals, the use of reachable role models and ambassadors, the group feeling, and the way it breaks down a big process into smaller chunks. All resulting qualities are gathered as input towards my further ideation process, where I look how to translate these qualities back to the original problem context. This process is described in the chapter 4.

If the problem situation of the poverty reduction system is approached as if it is a challenge of sparking intrinsic motivation to grow, then we should design it like a Next Level Group.

Fig 26. The Next Level sports group motivated me to grow. Which qualities from this experience could I translate back to the poverty reduction context through design?

Fig 27. I explored which qualities in the analogy spark intrinsic motivation to grow by creating a mind map with input from my fellow group members.
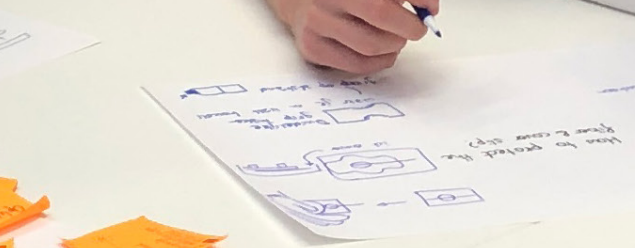
Ideation & design

Now that I have established a new frame, it is time to put it to use to come up with concrete solution ideas. This chapter provides an overview of my co-evolutionary ideation, prototyping, and design activities.

The first subchapter describes my first step in the diverging stage of the ideation process: a creative session with fellow design students. The second subchapter describes my further ideation process. Here, I diverge to many solution ideas through individual brainstorming activities. In the third subchapter, I converge towards five idea cards, which function as a conversation starter with the stakeholders. The fourth subchapter discusses three focus groups that I organized to further develop these ideas and select promising directions. Subchapter five describes an important step in the process of co-evolution, where I redirect the frame of 'growth' to a new theme: 'opening up'. Subchapter six describes the newly developed idea resulting from this reframing. Subchapter eight through 10 describe an iterative process, where I take the design to a more detailed level through tests and creative sessions.

4.1 Creative session with design students

4.1.1 Approach

By now, I had been working on this project for about three months. To start my ideation phase with a fresh view, I started my creative process by inviting two fellow Design for Interaction students for a creative session to generate solution ideas together. I organized an hour-long creative session at the faculty of Industrial Design Engineering (figure 29).

Session goal:
Explore the Next Level Group frame with a fresh view and creatively enlarge the solution space.

In this session, I doubled as a facilitator and as a participant. I prepared a session plan (figure 28) based on ideation methods from Delft Design Guide (Boeijen et al., 2014) and Google's Sprint method (Knapp, 2016). Using different templates with "how-to"-questions, we quickly generated a lot of ideas in a fast-sketching exercise. "How-tos" are a good way to break more complex questions into smaller pieces, making it easier to develop ideas (Boeijen et al., 2014). Each how-to was derived from a quality in the Next Level Group analogy. An example of a how-to we used is: "How to motivate people through ambassadorship."

The emphasis of this session was on the generation of many ideas, whilst suspending judgment. Resulting are many initial idea sketches (figure 30 on the next page) which I used as input towards my further ideation process. The full detailed session plan, as well as the session results, can be found in appendix G.

Session plan

10 min	**Presentation**	Project context
5 min	**Introduction**	Explaining crazy-8's & How to's
30 min	**Brainstorm**	Three rounds of xrazy-8's
5 min	**Clustering ideas**	Into concept directions
10 min	**Develop concept**	Detail one favorite idea
10 min	**Present**	Present the main concept to each other

Fig 28. Session plan

After the session, I took some time to explore the ideas generated with the crazy 8s to get inspired for my further ideation process, which is described in the next subchapter.

Fig 29. I started my creative ideation process with a fresh view by involving other design students in a creative session where we diverged towards many initial ideas

Fig 30. Resulting from the session were tons of fresh ideas that I could use as inspiratio in my further ideation process.

Sheet 1 (top left)

⑤ WENS BOOM

creatieve uitvoering voor in de boom in buurt

⑥ PARTNER CHALLENGES
"Game"
haaitspel

...y 8's:
...n door creatief uit te dagen?

⑦ WAAR BEN JY goed in?
koken van Roti
nagels lakken
schoon maken

straat activiteiten
ieder huis staat voor eigen (creatieve) kracht

⑧ MEMORY
met alle mogelijke banen die laagdrempelig zijn
om in weg te dromen

Sheet 2 (top middle-right, Crazy 8's)

korting / voordeel voor nieuwe mensen die al ergens bij zitten de anderen erbij halen

Alle voordelen laten zien door gesprek te openen

Hermans brood: een deel doorgeven en zelf wat mee maken.

#movement
Een 'beweging' van maken waar mensen bij kunnen aansluiten. Miss. letterlijk: wandelroute

Crazy 8's:
Hoe kunnen we participatie stimuleren via ambassadeursschap?

T-shirts: zichtbaar maken, mensen zich onderdeel laten voelen.

Doorgeef cadeau.

Iets in je huis doorruilen naar / voor iemand anders dat meer waarde heeft: △ → ○ — → ▢

Sheet 3 (middle left)

prijs-uitreiking

Reward System
1 ref   2 ref   3 ref

...8's
...leren via ambassadeursschap?

Lintje voor special efforts

cultuur per stukje land
Jode
Cultuurtuin

Sheet 4 (middle middle-right, Crazy 8's)

① melding in bank app BV. ING
maak je het al gebruikt?
pling!
"meer geld overhouden?"
check welke [hier] toeslagen je al hebt?

② BIJ DE HUISARTS
FLYER met afscheurbare stookjes
of beeldscherm
QR-code

③ HEY JY!
pakkende RECLAME bushalte

④ TEGELS op het schoolplein
met inspirerende boodschap
moment van reflectie & actie

Crazy 8's:
Hoe kunnen we het zorgaanbod op een toegankelijke manier aanbieden?

⑤ theezakjes spreuk

⑥ POST door de brievenbus met mogelijkheden voor individuen
actiepunten

⑦ BANKJE in het park
met boodschap

⑧ BOODSCHAPpentas
Met een BOODSCHAP
HOE BETAAL JY JE BOODSCHAPPEN?
QR code

Sheet 5 (bottom left)

tussen recepten bord in Supermarkt/ bij je boodschappen liggen

aanbellen bij mensen langs de deuren gaan

...8's:
...en toegankelijke manier aanbieden?

reclame bord langs weg

Clue: Speeddate

Sheet 6 (bottom middle-right, Crazy 8's)

Toneelavonden organiseren

Wijkwedstrijd → gedeeld doel
#mooiste straat#

Prijsvraag in lokale media
teken een boom!

Speeddaten met mensen in de buurt

U2 2021 Crazy 8's:
Hoe kunnen we groei stimuleren door creatief uit te dagen?

Bereid presentaties voor
Vertel wat over je leven

Taartenbak-wedstrijd
tussen wijken

self-mapping
teken jezelf

Creatieve markt organiseren
zelfgemaakte meuk

4.2 Ideation

Inspired by the ideas from the creative session, I started with the further ideation process. First, I gathered all the ideas that I had noted down throughout the project that were still relevant by drawing small idea sketches onto a big roll of paper. Especially in the process of creating frames, a lot of initial solution ideas had come to my mind. Next, I took the mind map of the Next Level Group analogy and used the found qualities to break up the problem into smaller pieces, again using how-to's. How to motivate demotivated people? How to make growth fun? How to show progress? I clustered some of the answers to these questions into solution ideas and sketched them onto the same roll of paper as the initial ideas. Lastly, I started further brainwriting, inspired by the earlier ideation activities and analogy, pushing out as many creative ideas as I could. The result was an overview with more than thirty drawings of initial ideas, which are ingredients for potential concepts (figure 31 & 32 on the next page) (appendix H). The next subchapter describes the process of moving from these initial ideas to five main idea directions.
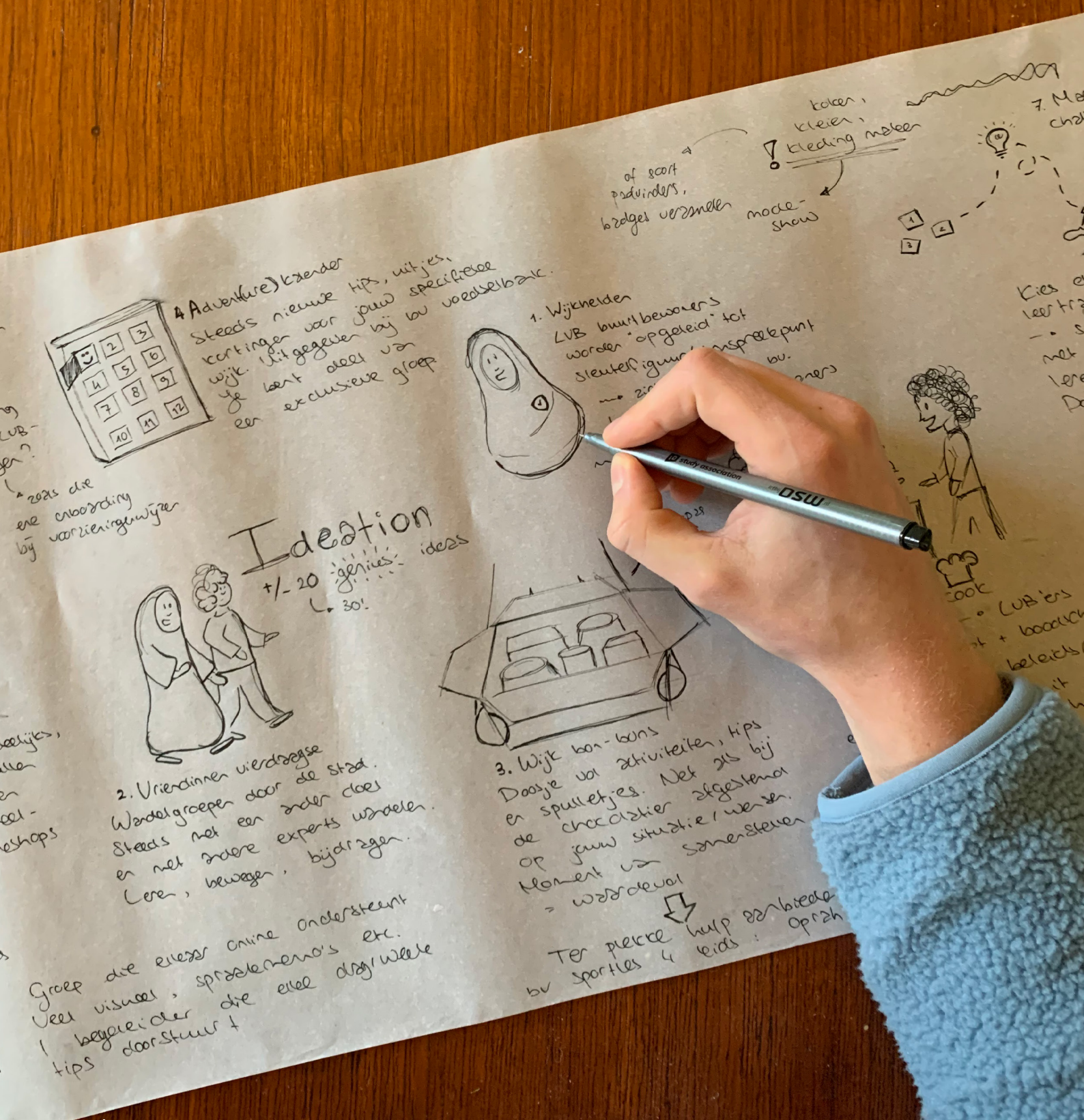
of soort
padvinders,
badges verzamelen

token,
kleien,
kleding maken
mode-
show

7. Ma
chat

4 Adventure) kalender
Steeds nieuwe tips, uitjes,
kortingen voor jouw specifieke
wijk. Uitgegeven bij bv voedselbank.
Je bent deel van
een exclusieve groep

1. Wijkhelden
LVB buurtbewoners
worden "opgeleid" tot
sleutelfiguur/aanspreekpunt

Ideation
+/- 20 'genties' ideas
L 30'

2. Vriendinnen vierdaagse
Wandelgroepen door de stad.
Steeds met een ander doel
en met andere experts wandelen.
(leren, bewegen, bijdragen.

Groep die elkaar online ondersteunt
Veel visueel, spraakmemo's etc.
1 begeleider die die elke dag/week
tips doorstuurt

3. Wijk bon-bons
Doosje vol activiteiten, tips
en spulletjes. Net als bij
de chocolatier afgestemd
op jouw situatie/wensen.
Moment van samenstellen
= waardevol
Ter plekke hulp aanbieden
bv sporties 4 kids. oprah

Kies
leertr
net
lere

cook
CUB'ers
beleids

Fig 31. I gathered all ideas I had come up with throughout the project and started further ideating taking inspiration from the Next level group analogy and creative session with students.

Fig 32. Resulting from my ideation process were over thirty initial solution ideas.

(Adventure) kaander

steeds nieuwe tips, uitjes,
kortingen voor jouw specifieke
wijk. Uitgegeven bij bv voedselbank.
je bent deel va
een exclusieve groep

of soort
padvinders,
badges verzamelen

koken,
kleien,
kleding maken

mode-
show

7. Maand-
challenge

1. Wijkhelden

LVB buurtbewoners
worden "opgeleid" tot
sleutelfiguur / aanspreekpunt
→ zichtbaar met bv.
badge. werven bewoners
→ eervolle functie

Kies elke maand een
leertraject / workshop
→ samen aan de slag
met research, maken,
leren → verdeel rollen
Doel presenteren

Ideation

+/- 20 "genius" ideas
└ 30!

...egse
de stad.
...der doel
...ets wijdelen
...bijdragen.

...dersteunt
...s etc.
...dag/week

3. Wijk bon-bons
Doosje vol activiteiten, tips
en spulletjes. Net als bij
de chocolatier afgestemd
op jouw situatie / wens.
Moment va samenstellen
= waardevol

Ter plekke hulp
bv sporties 4 kids:

5. Communij - cook
Samen koken → LVB'ers
bereiden recept + boodschappen
voor. Nodigen beleidsmakers
en hulpverleners uit ~
laagdrempelig inzicht in
elkaar, ieder eigen rol;
financiën, plannen, communicatie etc
Of: koken voor inloopmoment / buurth... ...'s

... bredere
oprah → netwerk: doordeweeks briefje uit...

10. Take me to the candy shop
Een "snoepwinkel" met
al het aanbod overzichtelijk
en fysiek. Template voor
aanbieders om services duidelijk
te markeren.

14. Wervings-pakket
Praat-pakket: hoe
ga je om met
de doelgroep en
zet je voor hen
goede (bv.) workshops
op

31 Strippenkaart
tegoed
voor *iets*

g'ratis
Advies

11. Groeiboek
Visueel doeboek
waarin je doelen
vastlegt, groei
registreert en
op een toegankelijke
manier vervolgstappen
opstelt.

Resultaat: poster?

of voor
hulpverleners:
hoe ga je om
met situaties?
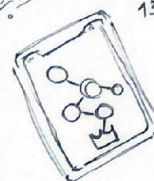
13. Do-olingo
gamified leren over
zelfondersteuning
en groepsvorming.
Challenges met
buurtbewoners
via punten. Ver-
schillende activiteiten

g. Koopl... +
Plek op market waar
experts je helpen
met tips over hulp-
verlening in de wijk

8 Koopl...
Plek op de market
om te verzamelen
babbelen, community-
building.

12. Map-je-context
Leuke mapping workshop
om zelfinzicht te creëren
over verzenten en verbeter-
punten. Door gestuurde
reflectie inzien dat je
goed bezig bent en nog kunt groeien

soort bordspel
maken

4.3
Prototyping scenarios

Until now, the ideation process had been about diverging, coming up with many ideas while suspending judgment. It was now time to converge and work towards tangible, feasible idea directions. I took my initial idea sketches and started clustering together ideas that I thought would spark the target group's motivation to grow. The result of this selection and clustering step are five idea directions. These directions take different approaches to the problem, solving different sub-goals that contribute to sparking motivation to grow in different ways. For each direction, I created an idea card (figure 33 through 37), each presenting a roughly developed idea scenario.

**Prototyping goal:
Further iterate on the ideas, translating them into more detailed and realistic scenarios. Present the ideas in such a way that they can spark creative conversations with clients and stakeholders.**

I chose to add drawn visualizations to steer towards a more open conversation with the clients and stakeholders. The idea cards are presented on the following pages. Each card contains an explanation of the idea, and some information about the way it applies the frame.

4.3.1 Community cooks

In the Next level Group, working on a shared goal together with a group is an important factor for success. Doing something challenging together makes it easier to keep going. Sharing knowledge and experiences with other members before, during and after the sessions is an important bonding experience. The community cooks idea plays into this idea of togetherness.

Fig 33. Many people in poverty flatline: they no longer see how or believe that they could improve their situation. Community cooks shows citizens their potential to take action by letting them organize a monthly cooking event in collaboration with a supporting organization. Cooking and eating are moments of connection, where participants can share their experiences, worries, and life lessons. By inviting more people from the neighborhood to come eat with them, these events unite the power of neighbors, showing them they can help each other. Community cooks functions as a stepping stone that brings citizens into contact with support in a fun manner, opening up room to later offer help in different domains.

Communitykeuken

Every month, women from the neighborhood organize a cooking night. They each get their individual responsibility: someone comes up with a recipe, makes shopping lists, and does the shopping. A visual task card helps them organize it all.

On the night of the event, the women can invite guests who help them cook. These can be neighbors, family members, or even officers from the municipality and social workers from organizations in the city. While cooking, they get to know each other and share stories and experiences.
Finally, they all eat together. This is a comfortable moment of connection, shared through food.

These nights strengthen the bonds in the neighborhood and give utrechters with different backgrounds a space to connect, giving insight into people you usually do not often speak with. Furthermore, this is a stepping stone towards more support. By introducing women to support in a fun manner, more thorough steps can be taken once they feel comfortable.

4.3.2 Neighborhood heroes

I personally got introduced to the Next Level Group by a friend who had participated before. I was a little bit awkward about enrolling at first; was this really for me? My friend telling me what the program was about and what it had brought them convinced me to go for it. The program plays into this ambassadorship by asking participants to recruit their friends and by giving them a nice jersey with the next Level Group logo, making it a real club to be a part of. These qualities inspired the neighborhood heroes idea.

Fig 34. Neighborhood heroes makes use of informal networks in the neighborhood to lower the threshold to request support. Many citizens feel a large distance to "the system" and feel uncomfortable requesting help. By asking women from the neighborhood who are already making use of support to become visible ambassadors in the neighborhood, citizens that normally fall out of reach of the system get in contact with the available options in a comfortable manner.
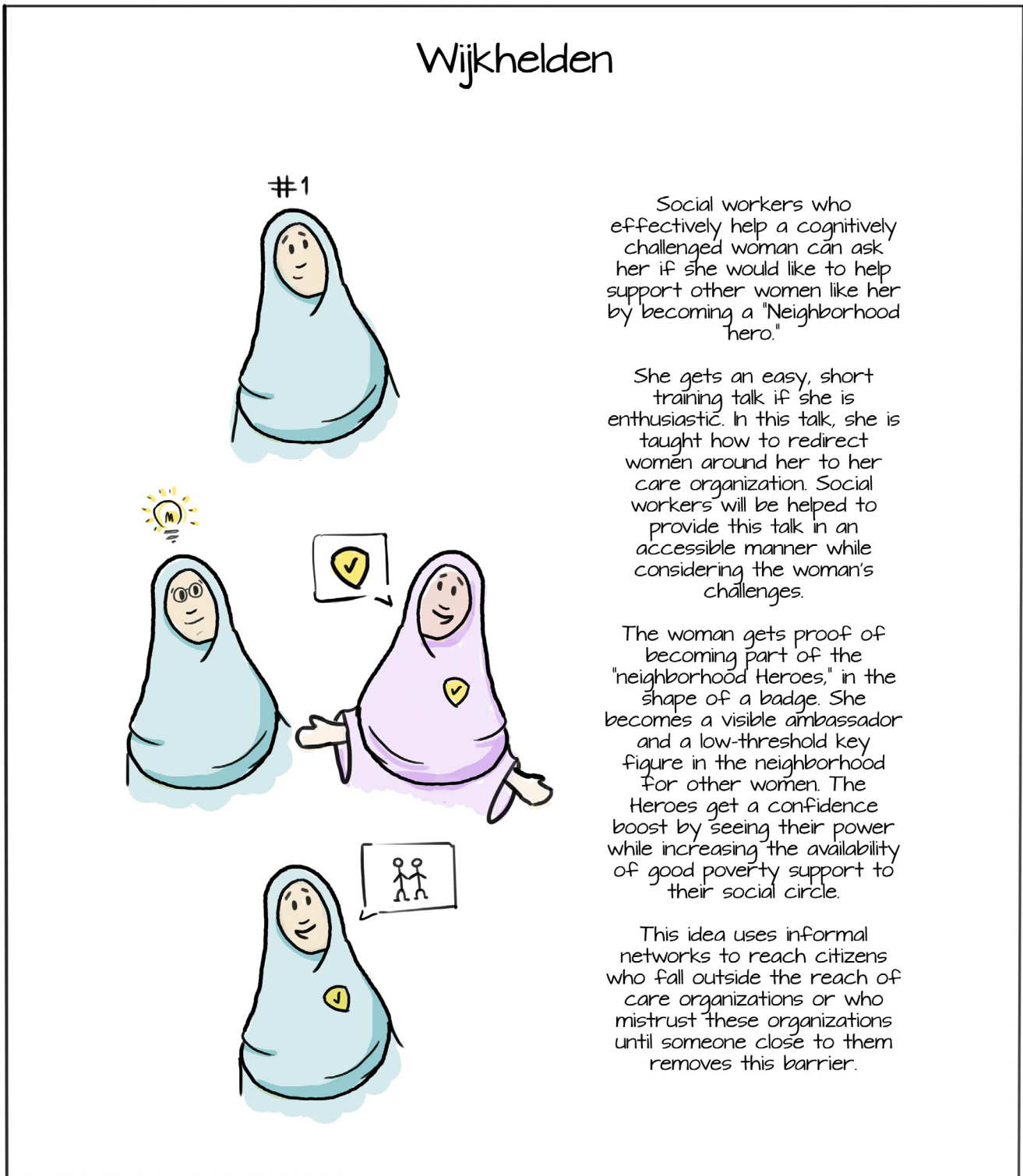
4.3.3 U-Atelier

Working out is often seen as something you do only when you have some new years resolutions to prove. The Next Level Program flips this around: it frames itself as something fun, that you do for yourself. It is a little present to yourself, making growth fun and something you can be proud of. I translated this quality to the poverty reduction system in the U-Atelier idea.

"No one ever challenges these women. When I challenge them creatively, I see them glow up". - IA3, Project coordinator

Fig 35. U-atelier shows citizens who have "flatlined" what they are capable of by challenging them creatively. By facilitating a new form of expression for these people, I want to inspire them to see their potential. U-atelier functions as a stepping stone that brings citizens into contact with support in a fun manner, opening up room to later offer help in different domains as well.

U-Atelier

Women with suspected cognitive challenges are invited to a creative atelier. Here, they can let their creativity loose in any way they like. Artists from the neighborhood teach them creative techniques.

Art made by the citizens will be shown at their own exhibition so that all Utrechters can enjoy it. Any profit from sales will go to the artist.

Next to a creative workplace, the atelier is also a place that policymakers and social workers can visit to meet the artists and get a feeling for the target group. Here, they can start a conversation in a low-threshold environment, where the citizen is the boss.

The atelier challenges citizens in a way that they are not often experiencing. By creating a safe space where they can express themselves, showing them what they can accomplish and make, we open the door towards further growth in a fun way while uniting people from the target group.

4.3.4 U-box

Before participating in the Next Level Group, I had been wanting to start working on my fitness for some time. I just did not know where to start. The promise that a professional would help me analyze my situation, and then translate this into clear action points was something that really motivated me to enroll. I translated this sense of being taken by the hand by a professional to get a kick-start into growth into the U-box idea.

Fig 36. U-Box is a service where a professional composes a box with information based on the personal situation of a citizen. The service can, for example, be offered at the market. Clients give some basic information about their life, family situation etc. The professional then puts together a box with information about a select number of initiatives that fit the needs of the specific citizen. It is almost like a box of chocolates: a little present tailor-made for you, framing support positively. Rather than having to search for help from scratch, U-box is a quick way to find fitting initiatives.

▼

U-Box

Variant A: Marktkraam

A stand on the market makes the support offering in the neighborhood visual. Where the U-Pas, for example, can be much too abstract for citizens, this stand shows support tangibly. We help affiliated organizations to show their offering visually.

The professional in the stand chooses a few exciting initiatives with the client. To do so, they ask a few general questions about their situation, such as their family composition. The chosen initiatives are handed to the citizen in a fun box. This way, the offered support becomes a fun present that is tangible for the citizen. This lowers the threshold to make use of the benefits. Citizens see the options in their neighborhood and feel welcome to participate in them.

Variant B: Whatsapp buddies

An alternative way of more actively offering support is "Whatsapp buddies." A professional moderator shares fun, fitting initiatives every week in these WhatsApp groups. They do this with supporting visuals and audio to make it accessible to anyone. Groups in different languages can also be started.

4.3.5 Challenge of the week

The Next Level group plays into a certain competitive element by offering different measuring moments where contestants solidify their progress. In these moments, fitness and strength are quantified in a timed "fit-test". In these moments, growth is made fun by playing energizing music and the contestants hyping each other up. This visualization of progress really made me push myself to reach the goals I had set for myself. I tried to translate this competitive element towards poverty reduction with the "challenge of the week" app.

Fig 37. The challenge of the week app activates cognitively challenged citizens to learn about valuable topics surrounding finances, daily life, and available support. By gamifying this process, they gather knowledge in a fun and accessible manner. Challenges and rewards motivate them to keep learning in a fun, low-threshold manner. Periodical meet-ups allow them to discuss the challenges. Next to practical information, this new-found knowledge might inspire participants to take actions in fields they think they could improve on.

Challenge van de week

week 1:
buren

#1 meest ingelogd

meeste vragen goed

geldkenner

Cognitively challenged citizens are invited to participate in an educational game app. They receive weekly challenges with questions, educational videos, or physical exercises. Each challenge only takes a couple of minutes.

These tasks can be about finances, daily tasks, giving insight into available support initiatives, and getting to know specific social workers.

The app's goal is to generate knowledge and introduce citizens to the system in a playful manner. We create a fun, challenging environment by showing them their progress in a gamified manner and rewarding them for participation.

Periodical meetups allow participants to meet each other and discuss the topics from the challenges. This way, we build a community that challenges itself to develop.

4.4 Focus groups with clients & experts

4.3.1 Focus group setup

I organized three focus groups to discuss the five idea cards. Two of these sessions involved the main project clients from Al Amal, Buurtteams, and the municipality. In the third session, I spoke with other professionals who work in Utrecht's poverty reduction system and who come in close contact with the specific target group.

Session goal:
Discuss the five idea directions, select and detail the most promising directions, and generate support for the ideas with the project clients.

These session will be referenced as:

CP1 Creative session with project clients from Al Amal and Buurtteams

CP2 Creative session with project client from the municipality

**CE1** Creative session with experts from Al Amal & de Armoedecoalitie

Due to the covid restrictions at the time, these focus groups took place online (figure 38). The session plan for these sessions is shown in figure 39. The full session setup and results can be found in appendix I. Session CE1 was slightly longer because it involved an introduction to the project since the participants had not been involved in the process before. We discussed each idea and wrote down aspects of the ideas they liked (keep), disliked (kill), and would improve (build) using a Miro whiteboard (figure 38).

Session plan

15 min **Project recap**
Updating on progress

5 min **Introduction**
Explaining session rules

40 min **Discuss the 5 scenarios**
Writing down keep, kill, build's (40 min)

5 min **Cluster**
Choosing and combining favorite directions

Fig 39 Session plan for the evaluation sessions.

Fig 38. I discussed the idea cards with the project clients and professionals from the field to see which directions were promising. ▶
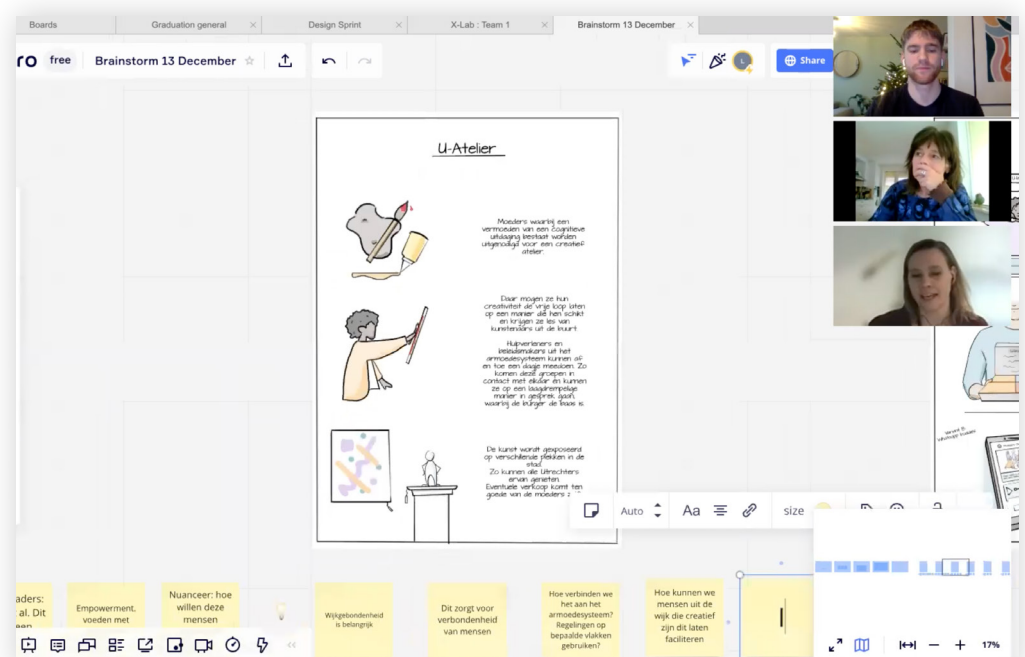
4.5 Selecting an idea: Wijkhelden

4.5.1 Choosing a direction

After the focus groups, I gathered all the "keeps," "kills," and "builds" to get a general overview of the preferences that came forth. The time had now come to choose one idea direction to further detail. To support the selection process, I set up a checklist to see which idea scored best:

1. The idea sparks the enthusiasm of the stakeholders.
2. The stakeholders believe the idea will stimulate the "growth kick-start" of citizens.
3. The idea can be brought to a testable level within the timeframe of the project.
4. The idea can benefit from my involvement as a designer.

The idea that came out at the top of the list, is "Wijkhelden" (Neighborhood hero's) (figure 41). This idea was inspired by the ambassador role that Next Level Group-participants get once they enroll in the program. Participants talk with the people around them about their experiences and the benefits of the program, making them a low threshold source of information and accessible role model for people that would normally not know about or dare to join the group.

The idea of Wijkhelden is to motivate citizens to reflect on their personal situation and take action wherever necessary by giving them explicit, reachable role models in the neighborhood. These role models, called Wijkhelden, are women who are currently already receiving support and showing significant growth. Social workers can ask them if they would like to pass on their enthusiasm, offering them a short introduction about becoming a Wijkheld. This introduction tells them how they can share their peer knowledge with their social network. This creates a snowball effect through an informal network of peer supporters, which reaches groups that are out of reach for most organizations. At the same time, this new role for these women is also a pat on the back for their achievement. It is a moment of accomplishment where a social worker makes their growth explicit and asks them to spread that enthusiasm.

#1

Social workers can ask women in the system who are doing well to spread their enthusiasm
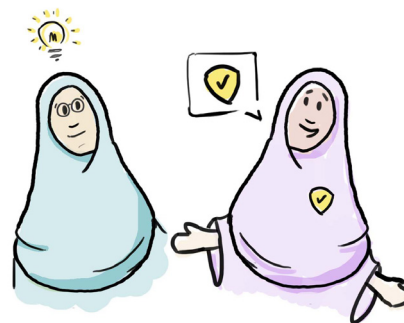
A social worker tells them how they can share their knowledge and experiences in their own private network

Normally unreachable parts of the network now get information about the available care from Wijkhelden throughout the neighborhood

Fig 41. Wijkhelden turns citizens into ambassadors who make poverty support more accessible to the people around them

4.5.2 Developing the direction

Wijkhelden was still at the idea level. To bring it to reality, I wanted to further learn from stakeholders within the system. How do I design the interaction between the Wijkheld and the social worker? And the one between the Wijkheld and a peer? What should the Wijkheld know and do? To answer these questions, I decided to talk to more professionals who were familiar with the topic of ambassadorship and with the target group.

I talked to two experts who are both in a covid key-figure group. This group communicates the newest information about the pandemic to citizens that struggle to understand information through the usual channels. They do this by inviting key figures from different backgrounds with different connections throughout Utrecht, using their informal networks in the neighborhood to inform people. Learning about this alternative form of ambassadorship might help me develop my own idea.

The interviews took a semi-structured form (interview guides in appendix J). I prepared some questions to take the idea further and left enough room for them to express their expertise.

Interview goal:
Discuss the Wijkhelden idea, further conceptualizing the idea and the necessary resources and partners.

IE1   Interview with one of the covid key figures who is also an expert from the social field (anonymous) and runs an organization similar to Al Amal.

IE2   Interview with the initiator of the covid key figure group from the municipality of Utrecht, who specializes in connecting networks within the neighborhood.

4.5.3 Key interview insights

The interviews and previous sessions taught me the following about Wijkhelden:

Keep
• It is good to make use of informal networks to reach citizens outside of the system's bubble.

• It is good to make undiscussed knowledge in the community discussable, showing people that they share problems and are surrounded by people that want to help.

• These can be sensitive topics; facilitating these talks in citizens' own context, without an organization pushing its policy is a good way to reflect and grow intrinsic motivation.
"People are often pushed into programs, telling them what to do and change. I think it is better to let that decision come from within." -IE1, social worker

• It is a positive approach to the topic, making requests for help okay.

Kill
• The concept asks a lot from the Wijkheld, maybe even too much. What information do we want them to transfer? And how do we help them with this?

• It is possible to make a nudge towards a certain action, but this idea takes full control over an action that should be natural. We cannot push this conversation to be fruitful.

4.5.4 Redirecting the direction

In the light of co-evolution, these interviews made me rethink the direction I had chosen. Maybe the idea that I had chosen did not effectively address the needs in the context. I learned that too much responsibility is put on the shoulders of the Wijkheld, while a fruitful interaction is not guaranteed. It made me take a step back: which mechanisms in the idea had made it an exciting direction? Moreover, how could these mechanisms be translated through a more fitting idea than the Wijkhelden one? This new analysis led to a slightly altered direction for the remainder of the project. This direction is discussed in the next subchapter.

4.6 Refitting the frame

Until now, motivating growth had been the driving theme for my solution exploration and ideation. Through the different interviews and sessions with stakeholders, I learned that a slightly adjusted focus might lead me to a more fitting solution. This subchapter describes this new focus.

4.6.1 Opening up

From the Wijkhelden idea, I learned that strengthening knowledge exchange about poverty in informal networks is a fruitful mechanism. However, for this exchange to work, it should be nudged more subtly, leaving a more natural interaction between the different participants. This made me rethink the underlying theme I was sourcing. The intended interaction is more about allowing people to open up about their problems, experiences, and needs.

Opening up about these topics could help people reflect and become more aware of their situation, how they see it themselves, and what they would like to do about it. Furthermore, alleviating the taboo-based barrier can show people that they are not alone in their troubles and experiences. The knowledge, lessons, and support that is locked away because of taboo could make a vast difference when shared more openly. Opening up could show people that they may share their burdens, and carry them together.

Opening up can be scary. For one because it is confronting: going along with your troubles in auto-pilot mode might keep you afloat, but it does not solve your problems. Furthermore, sharing these experiences makes you vulnerable to judgment. How can I design something that allows people to be comfortable to open up?
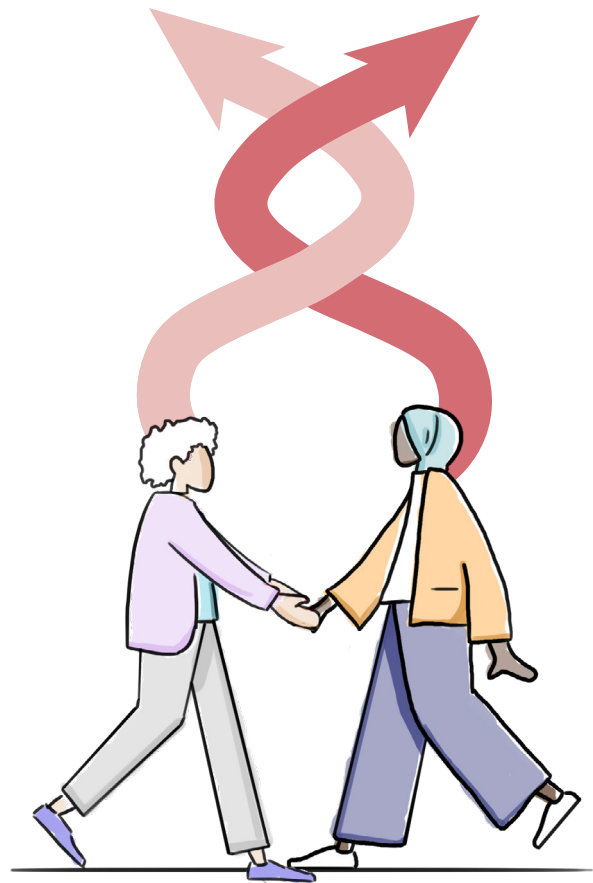
Design a product or service that motivates cognitively challenged women with a non-western migration background in poverty to open up about their troubles and share their experiences with the people around them.

4.7 A new idea: a tea box full of stories

4.7.1 Another round of ideation

Now that I had defined the essence of the direction I was taking, I did another round of ideation to look for solutions that better fit this essence. I asked myself: how could I motivate these women to open up about their worries and experiences? What could be a more natural context for this interaction to take place in? How could I create a comfortable yet valuable moment where they see the knowledge they can share and the support they are willing to give to one another?

I quickly moved in the direction of conversation starters that could help the target group to open up in a conversation about topics that are usually hard to discuss. Nudging them into the right direction might help starting a sensitive conversation. I looked for different ways of doing this and stumbled upon multiple games that do something similar. The "Steekje los?" game, for example, makes it easier to discuss mental health with different questions and exercises that players do together. "Taboedoorbrekers", by Schuldhulpmaatje, does the same. However, I did feel like the interaction of a game was unfit for the target group. Do these women ever play games? Would they have to change their whole attitude in one game session? Would a game become a very forced interaction? This made me further explore how I could fit the conversation-starting principle

into a more natural context for the target group. The result is a series of idea solutions (figure 42 and appendix K). I selected the idea that I believed to be the most fitting: a tea box full of stories.

4.7.2 A tea box full of stories

In search of fitting solutions, I thought back to the creative session that I did at the beginning of the project (chapter 2.1). The women I had spoken to in the creative session at Al Amal (CC1) had given me a peek into their lives through the collages they made. Where and when could a moment of opening up take place?

It was something that was happening outside of the session that inspired my final idea. The participating women were visibly a little bit nervous about participating. There was one moment when they seemed to relax: drinking tea. They refilled their and my glass time after time. I noticed how this was a moment of relaxation for them, where they took the chance to talk a little and laugh about the session they were in. Could I translate this into a vessel for my goal of opening up?

Inspired by Pickwick's teatime bags, I came up with 'a tea box full of stories'. This box is a conversation starter in the daily lives of Utrechters. See the idea card for my new idea in figure 43 on the next page.

Fig 42. I did another round of ideation: how could I motivate these women to open up about their worries and experiences with a conversation starter?
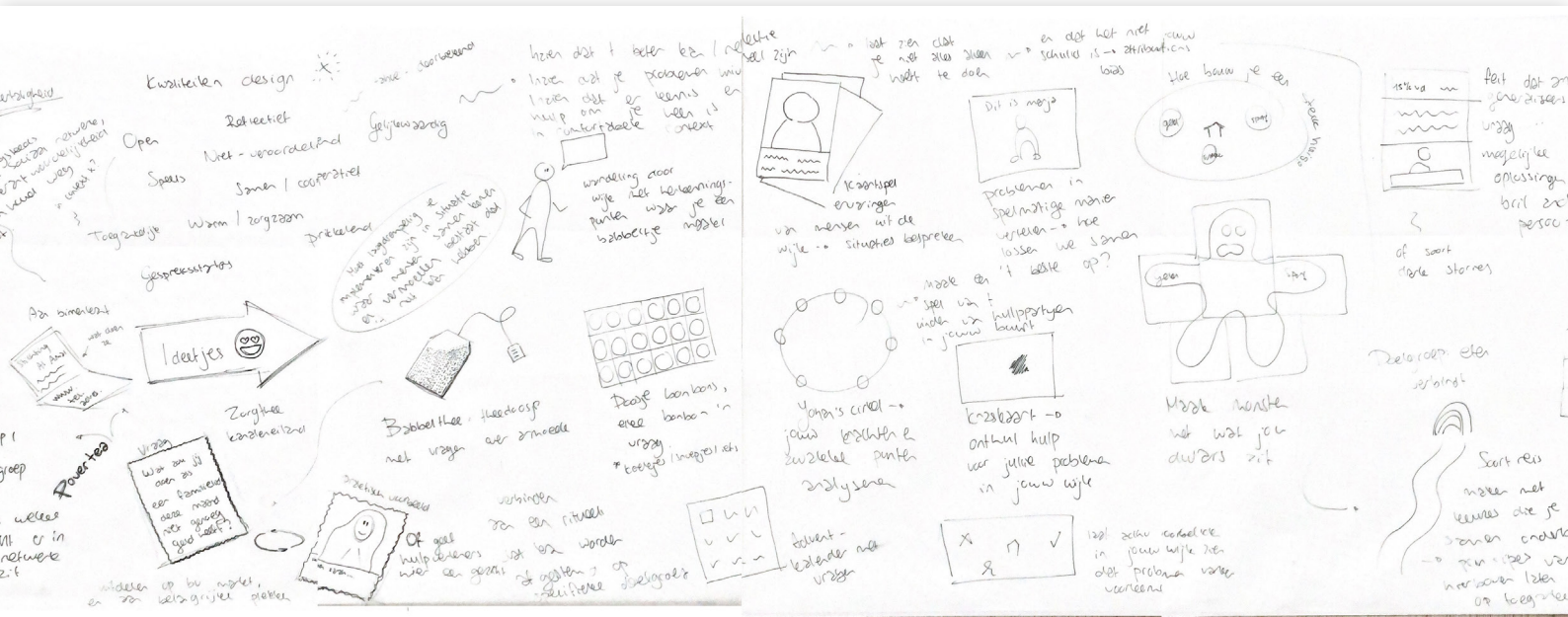
Fig 43. A tea box full of stories is a low-level conversation starter that nudges citizens to open up about their experiences of poverty-related topics together with the people around them. The box contains packets of tea with questions that make you think about your quality of life, whether you would like to change anything about that, and how the people around you might be able to help. The tea box is a first, safe step at making people more aware of their relationship with poverty, while activating an informal network of knowledge and care that is present around the person.

Een theedoos vol verhalen

Utrecht is filled with organizations that support economically disadvantaged citizens. Unfortunately, many Utrechters do not know that they qualify for this support. Others experience a high threshold to apply because of shame or a lack of overview of the available support. Again others are unaware of the severity of their situation.

Poverty is a topic that is hardly discussed, even though the people around us, like friends, family, and neighbors, might be able to offer valuable information, insights, and support. I want people to open up about their troubles and experiences and reflect on their situations together. Would they want things to be different? Do they have dreams they need help with acquiring? Are there people or organizations around them that might be able to help?

The tea box full of stories motivates people to open up. The box is filled to the brim with bags with questions and statements that nudge people to reflect on and open up about their relationship to poverty-related topics.
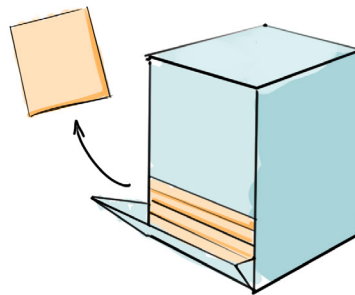
There is a question or statement on each tea packet that makes you think about poverty or a related topic. The questions can be discussed with the people around you or kept to yourself if you are not yet ready to do so. Each packet contains enough tea for a can of tea to share. This way, the bags are used in a moment where multiple people can discuss the topics together.

The tea boxes will be handed out to Mosques, neighborhood houses, and Utrechters on the market. This way, topics surrounding poverty are brought into a private context to have a moment of reflection in a trusted environment.

By reflecting on your situation with people you trust, we can make the shared experiences explicit and show each other how we could support one another, activating an informal network of knowledge. The effect is spread out over an extended period, planting tiny seeds that make people think about what they would like to improve about their lives and what role the people and organizations around them could play in supporting them.

Waar zou jij graag extra geld voor hebben?

4.8
Iterating the idea

4.8.1 Initial idea tests

To get a first impression of the effectiveness of the proposed interactions in this new idea, I organized a short roll playing exercise. I created a quick prototype of my idea (figure 44) and invited a friend over. We poured ourselves a cup of tea and discussed the questions on the bags.

Test goal:
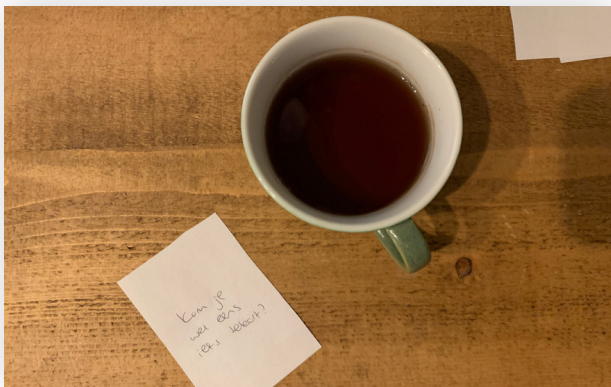### Test if the idea is a comfortable nudge to open up about the questions on the tea packets.

Fig 44. A quick prototype to test if the concept nudges us to open up.

4.8.2 Key test insights

• The questions turned out to be an interesting method of sparking an informal conversation. Even when the question did not apply to one of us, we could still discuss the topic.

• The specific tone of voice of the questions is important to consider. Some questions were a bit too harsh, making the conversation too forced.

• The bags are pulled out of the box blindly. Once or twice, this led to a question being rather confronting, and the participant being forced into a position to answer it.

• A clear action step would be nice to add. Once we were done talking, we thought it would be nice if we would have had a way to put our conversation into action.

4.8.2 First iterations

Based on the insights from this first test, I made three alterations to the design:

A new box
I altered the box design so that participants no longer blindly grab a bag. In the new design, they have an overview of all the questions (figure 45), so they can choose which questions they are comfortable with answering in the context they are in at that moment.

Telling personal stories
The goal of my tea box is to motivate citizens to make a first step in opening up about their troubles. Opening up can be sensitive, and the fear of feeling judged can hold people back from actually doing so. This made me look for ways to show people that their vulnerability is okay. How could I ground the questions in an emphatic manner?

I got inspired by an exposition about depression in a nearby shopping center. In the exposition, posters showed pictures of people who struggled

Fig 45. A new box design allows users to pick a question they feel comfortable with.

with depression, each with a quote in which they opened up about their experience (figure 46). I noticed how this triggered me to think about how I related to the stories told. After a short literature study, I discovered that this is often referred to as 'narrative communication,' a mechanism that I believed to be useful in my concept.

Narrative communication uses personal stories and accounts as a method to persuade and motivate people to adopt specific beliefs or behavioral changes (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007). Narrative and storytelling are our basic modes of human interaction and a primary way of obtaining information in our daily lives (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007). It is a comfortable and familiar way of giving and receiving information, allowing recipients to relate to the storyteller. A narrative's content, real or fictional, can be adapted to be relevant to a specific target group, making the technique useful to develop stories that are easily understood by low-literate populations (Ranjit et al., 2015), like the target group for this project.

Narrative communication can take many forms. One that has been used a lot is role model experiences (Jäckel, 2003). Confessionals of personal experiences allow readers to relate more intimately to a subject. The presentation of personal stories and accounts is perceived as

more persuasive and believable than the more traditional use of statistical evidence, probability, or logic to motivate people to adopt behavioral changes (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007). Slater, Buller, Waters, Archibeque, and LeBlanc (2003) found how narrative evidence can increase participants' self-efficacy to engage in behaviors similar to those shown by the individuals in different narratives.

I wanted to use this persuasive, relatable power of narratives in my design. I thought it could be an exciting method to make citizens feel more comfortable opening up about their troubles and taking appropriate action based on this experience. I expanded my design by adding pictures of Utrechters on the back of the bags, each with a short quote linked to the question on the front (figure 47 on the next page). By showing these short peaks into the experiences of everyday people, I hope to show that it is okay to be vulnerable and that they are not alone in their problems. Secondly, it is an opportunity for people who do not (yet) feel comfortable opening up to discuss the topic by starting a conversation about the external experience of the person in the quote rather than their own. Lastly, it is an opportunity to show concrete examples of how others in similar situations have approached their problems or taken action, speaking to the self-efficacy of citizens to do the same.

Fig 46. Narrative communication is often used in campaigns to make a message more convincing or relatable.

Fig 47. I put narrative communication to use in my design by adding short quotes about experiences of other Utrechters on the back of each tea packet.
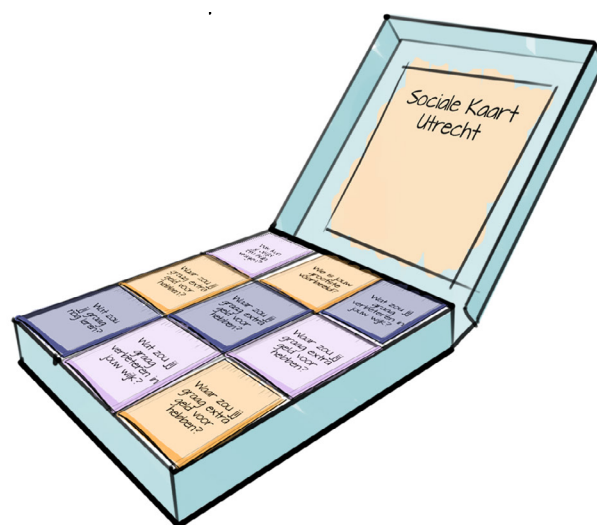

Fig 48. The added social map of Utrecht provides a more concrete action step to citizens that are inspired to make a change.

Adding a social map

Narrative communication teaches us something else: offering motivational messages without also supplying the environmental conditions that support and reinforce the desired change can lead to frustration. (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007). Motivating people without a clear chance to translate motivation into action is not fruitful. I also saw this in my initial test: we were missing a clear next step once we had talked our experiences through.

I decided to add a more clear action step to the design, to offer Utrechters that want to act on their situation clear directions to do so. In search for a way to offer this action step, I got in contact with the communications director from U-Centraal. U-centraal is an organization that offers information and workshops to Utrechters with questions or troubles about care, housing, money, personal development, and social contact. Professionals

and volunteers think along with citizens and offer practical care (U-Centraal, n.d.). U-Centraal offers integral care, in all life domains, and is an impartial party that can refer any citizen to proper support. Because of this interesting position and relationship to citizens, I believed U-centraal to be an interesting party to refer activated citizens to.

U-centraal's communications director explained that they are making a new, physical social map of Utrecht that can be handed out to show the available care in a more accessible manner. This map is aimed at providing clear action points, rather than a long list of organizations you could reach out to. In the new iteration, I added this social map to the box (Fig 48) to provide users with a clear action step for if they decide that they want to make a change in their lives, or help others around them.

4.9 Evaluation & content creation

4.9.1 Creative session with clients

With the new iteration of the idea, I organized a creative session with the project clients and one social worker. With them being the experts on the topic of poverty, I wanted to evaluate the idea with them and involve them in the creation of the exact content on the tea packets. I also invited one social worker to get the perspective of someone that works with the target group more closely.

CP3 Creative session with project clients Caroline Sarolea, Stevien Gardenier and Gezinswerker Nicole Boers from Buurtteams

**Session goal:
Evaluate and iterate on the idea, and together come up with fitting content for the tea packets.**

I prepared the session with a series of digital templates in Miro (Appendix L). I first gathered input on the idea from the participants using keep, kill, builds. Next, we together came up with a bunch of questions to print on the tea packets. The questions that the experts came up with (Appendix L) will be used in the evaluation of the concept through a high-level prototype. This subchapter describes how we came up with suitable content (section 4.9.2), and which further alterations were made to the concept based on insights from the session (section 4.9.4). The full session results can be found in appendix L.

Session plan

5 min	**Walk-in**	Waiting for participants
10 min	**Recap**	Of the process, introducing the new idea
15 min	**Evaluate and iterate**	keep, kill, build
30 min	**Design**	Discussing tone of voice and questions

4.9.2 Coming up with questions

To create inspiring questions, I proposed using the different domains of wellbeing. As described in chapter 1.2, and by Johan in his earlier research (Vreeburg, 2021), poverty affects people in all domains of life. If the issues Utrechters have are to be properly addressed, these questions should also target these different topics. I proposed this structure in the session and used it to inspire different question directions (figure 49).

"I think it is smart to use the different domains, so that we help people with different struggles" -CP3, social worker Buurtteams

Considering the cultural background and cognitive challenges of the target group, the language level of the questions should be accessible to low-literate people. After the session, I took the questions we came up with and made them fit the B1-language level using a B1-test tool.

Apart from coming up with specific questions, I also discussed what the experts thought the tone of voice of the questions should be, and what would be necessary next steps for development.

Fig 49. We came up with questions for the tea bags in a creative session. We generated questions in all domains of life to offer an integral approach.

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4.9.3 Insights creative session

All participants were enthusiastic about the idea direction. They thought that the ritual of drinking tea is a great entrance way to a low-key conversation, which can be implemented in many different contexts. A few insights helped to further iterate on the idea.

• It is good to offer a clear action step, but the social map of the neighborhood might quickly become outdated. Also, a map again asks a lot of initiative and work from the citizen. Linking to a more flexible and proactive point of referral might work better.

• Offer a clear action step in different forms. For example a QR, website and phone number, so anyone knows what to do when they get inspired to take action.

• Having to take action with others present might be sensitive. It would be nice if you could sneak something with you with a phone number or link to support, so that you can look up if you get home.

• Choose a positive tone of voice, framing it as poverty-tea is not inviting.

• It is a good idea to offer the boxes in multiple languages. Cultural nuances that are bound to each language could be implemented by further involving citizens from that specific group in the creation process.

• Keep an eye on the language level for the target group.

4.9.4 Second iteration

Based on the insights from the creative session, I made four alterations to the design:

More and time-resistant calls-to-action
The social map will be replaced by some more time-resistant action steps. With the ever-changing social field, the map would age quickly. Furthermore, finding your way to the right parties could still be overwhelming or confusing.

In consultation with the experts in the session, I decided that it would be better to provide links and a phone number to a party that can actively refer citizens to fitting support. It would be best to reference an organization that has a broad referral function. U-Centraal would, instead of their social map, still be a fitting party to do so. A pro of U-centraal is that they have a rather neutral stance. Where Buurtteams and the Municipality are sometimes mistrusted by citizens (chapter 2.3.3), U-centraal has a much more open image. U-centraal employees give advice and facilitate warm referrals to the appropriate care for any type of problem. Their website U-gids makes available support easier to navigate by organizing it per topic and per neighborhood.

The links will be added to the box in multiple forms, QR-codes, websites and phone numbers, to have an option for everyone.
"Everyone has their own skills and tricks, offering call-to-actions in different forms will cater to these different skill levels." -CP3, manager Al Amal

Sneak one with you

Discussing the topics on the tea bags is one thing, but admitting that you want to get help might be harder for some people when they are in a group setting, or it might simply not be the good time to explore this option. Multiple experts in the session expressed that it would be nice if users could take something with a link or phone number home with them when they see the tea box at a friend's house or public location.

"I've lived in poverty myself and if I would have seen this box then, I would have wanted to be able to sneak something into my pocket." -CP3, Social worker Buurtteams

I decided to also add CTA's to the tea packets. When the tea is being made, these might lie around on the table, giving people the chance to put one in their pocket to look at when they are home. Tea box owners always have the links on the tea box as well.

Multilingualism

Dutch is not the mother tongue of the target group. However, it is the language that at some level unites people from different backgrounds within the target group. The tea packets take their proficiency in Dutch into account by using only simple language below the B1-level. In session CP3 it was mentioned that, in the long term, offering the boxes in multiple languages would be nice. This would make the design more accessible to people that struggle with the language. This would also allow for cultural nuances in the specific questions asked, playing into topics that are more and less applicable to certain cultural groups.
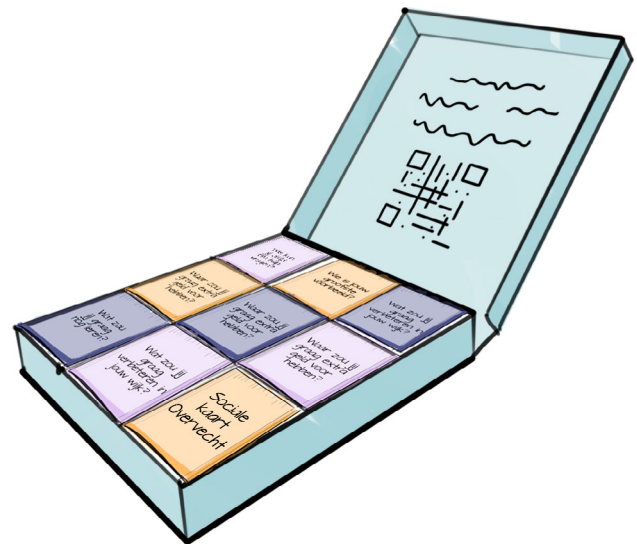

Fig 50. The social map will be replaced by a link, QR-code and phone number to U-centraal to make the action step easier and more time-resistant.

Fig 51. A CTA will also be printed on the bag, so that tea drinkers can take the information with them when they come across the box in a public space.

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4.10 Towards the concept proposition

4.10.1 Third iteration

Based on the general insights from the explorations of the tea box concept, I decided to make three more alterations to the design before moving to the testing phase.

theedoosvolverhalen.nl

The quotes, or stories, on the back of each tea bag give a short glimpse of people that might have gone through something similar as the reader. This way, I intend to make the topics more grounded, human, and to comfort the reader that they are not alone in their struggles.

This glimpse might be enough for some readers to feel inspired or take action, but for others the gesture might be too small to make a real change. In narrative communication theory, this is called identification: the level at which the recipient of a narrative can empathize with the storyteller. The persuasive qualities of a narrative are partially linked to the level at which a narrative fosters identification (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007).

The small space on the back of each tea packet only offers space for a quote. To also offer a platform for readers who want to further engage with these stories and need a higher level of identification, I decided to add a website to the design. On theedoosvolverhalen.nl the stories are told in more detail. Here, citizens can listen to the experiences of others like them, and the way they handle their situation. The website features the same CTA's as the box, to redirect visitors that want to take action.

Ordering a box

To spread their effect, the tea boxes will be handed out to mosques, neighborhood houses, other public organizations, and people on the street. Apart from people being at the right place at the right time to receive a box, I also wanted to make it possible to order one for people who want to. This could, for example, be nice for people who see a friend struggle but do not now how to address the situation. Furthermore, people who see the box in a public space and want one for themselves can order it this way. The box can be offered through the same site as the stories.

From leafs to bags

Originally, I wanted to fill the packets with loose tea leafs. Culturally, I assumed this to be what best fit the target group. However, in a later talk with three colleagues from Al Amal who have the same cultural background as the target group, I was told that tea bags are used more often. Furthermore, bags are easier to use in any situation, for when a tea filter is not at hand. I thus decided to make my design more fit for implementation by swapping the loose tea for bags.

Fig 52. theedoosvolverhalen.nl shows videos of the citizens on the tea packets where they tell their story in more detail. The site contains the same CTA's as the box. The box can also be ordered through here.
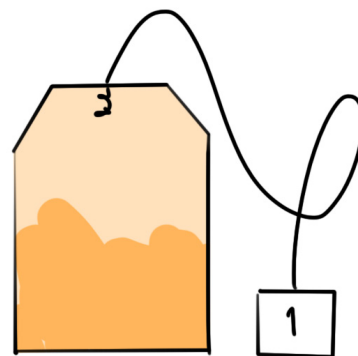
Fig 53. The loose tea leaves in the box are replaced by bags, to make the concept easier to use and implementable in more contexts.

A city-wide campaign

The goal for the tea box full of stories is to help people open up about their relationship to poverty and show them that it is okay to be vulnerable about this topic. This way, they can share experiences with the people around them, activating the informal network of knowledge and care that is always present. The effect is spread out over an extended period, one tea bag at a time. To further activate people's reflective process during this time, the initiative can be made present throughout the city in the form of a media campaign (figure 54). This helps extend the message to open-up on a city wide basis, and makes the initiative better known around the city, raising the curiosity of passers-by. This also allows the initiative to reach an even bigger part of the target group.

4.10.2 High-level prototype

After the three iterations, it was time to detail the design into a high-level prototype. The goal is to make the box something that people are happy to receive and put on the table in their house. I looked for a graphic style that fits the target group's identity and would invite them to embrace the tea box. The final design and accompanying interactions are described in the next chapter.

Fig 54. A city-wide campaign will help to widely spread the initiative and nurture a mind-shift change throughout the city, for all audiences. Making people curious about the message of opening up about poverty.

4.10.3 Conclusion

I started this phase by ideating using the 'growth'-frame found in the previous chapter as a starting point. Through this ideation, multiple idea directions were developed. In the process of evaluating these directions, I learned that the frame had to be slightly adjusted to 'opening up'. A second ideation session led to the idea for 'A tea box full of stories'. I further iterated this idea through a series of tests and expert interviews. The resulting concept proposition will be made into a high-level prototype. The proposition is discussed in the next chapter.
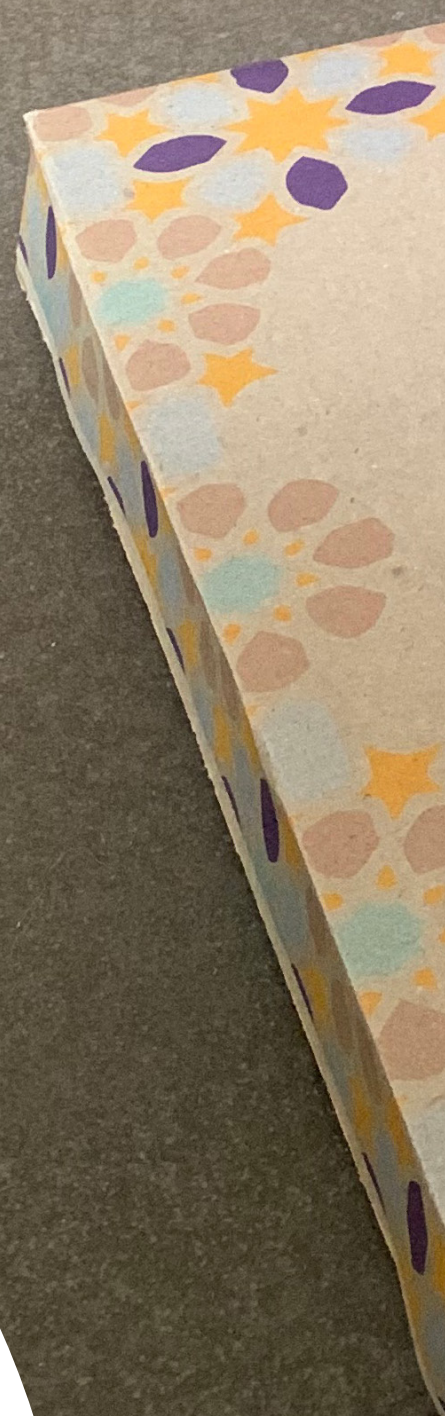
5 The concept

The previous chapter describes the iterative ideation process that has lead to the final concept idea for a tea box full of stories. This chapter describes the proposed concept in more detail, using a prototype.

5.1 A tea box full of stories

Editie Overvecht

EEN THEEDOOS VOL VERHALEN

Vragen en verhalen om over na te denken bij een kopje thee

5.1 A tea box full of stories

The previous chapters describe the development of a new frame for the problem situation and the accompanying iterative design process. The result is a final concept proposition that I detailed into a prototype. This chapter describes this proposition, consisting of a tea box design, a website, and an accompanying campaign.

5.1.1 Tea that makes you think

Money is something we do not often talk about. As a result, we are stuck with our own worries and problems whenever our financial situation gets rough. Reflecting on and talking about this topic can be relieving and useful: the people around us might be able to help us a lot more than we ever thought. By opening up, the knowledge around us is unlocked and might help us take the next step in improving our situation. Furthermore, opening up about our problems and experiences can help us process and reflect, thinking what we think of our own situation or that of the people around us.

Opening up about money, poverty, and related issues can be hard. 'A tea box full of stories' is a low-level conversation starter that helps Utrechters open up and reflect on how they see their financial situation in the safe context of drinking tea.

Questions that matter

The tea box can be put on the table at home, in the mosque, or at the community center. The box contains 27 packets of tea, each enough for a delicious jug to share. On the front of each packet is a question about poverty or a related topic. The question invites the tea drinkers to together open up about their experiences related to the question while having a cup of tea (figure 55). The questions are short and straightforward, nudging citizens to start a conversation and reflect on their own experiences with that specific topic. The questions are always without judgment and approach the topics positively.

Fill a jug with hot water and together pick a teabag to discuss. The person preparing the tea can also pick a bag whenever the box is not placed in the public eye. Pour yourself a cup of tea, sit down, and discuss the question on the packet together. What are your experiences relating to this topic? Do you share these with the other person or people at the table? Would you want to change anything for yourself? Do you need help? This conversation can go any direction, depending on the tea drinkers' comfort zones. The goal is to make them at least reflect on these topics that are

Fig 55. Each tea bag has a question that falls in one of the domains of wellbeing.

Fig 56. The tea drinkers can pick a question that they feel comfortable with at that moment.

often locked away in taboo and see the potential network of knowledge and support around them.

Poverty touches upon all domains of life: finances, mental health, physical health, quality of life, societal participation, social life, work, studies, and daily activities can all be influenced by a poor financial situation. The questions on the tea bags discuss struggles in all these domains, offering an integral approach to the topic.

A slow but steady reflective process about your position towards these topics begins by discussing different topics, one tea gathering at a time. Is there anything you would like to improve? Are there people you know that might need help with some of these topics? By talking about these topics with the people around you, you activate a previously invisible knowledge and support network. Sharing experiences, advice, and a growth process: what would you like to see changed? By going through this reflection in a low-level conversation in an environment where you feel comfortable, we allow for valuable conversations to happen about topics that often stay undiscussed. Rome was not built in a day: with each question discussed, we make a small step in exploring the topic and opening up towards ourselves and the people around us.

We might not always feel comfortable discussing more personal parts of this domain with everyone. The box caters to this by offering both low-level and more profound questions. By showing the different packets in a grid-like manner, the tea drinkers get to choose which question they feel comfortable with answering at that time.

Tales of the city
The back of each packet shows a picture of a Utrechter, accompanied by a quote about their experience with and approach to the question's topic (figure 56). Showing the experiences of these "role models" can help tea drinkers feel comfortable to also open up and discuss the topic. The goal is to make them realize that everyone struggles somehow and that it is okay to open up about that and request help when necessary. The stories help kick-start the reflective process by showing reachable role models and how they approached their problems.

The role models can be peers who have hands-on experience with poverty and the related problems. Al Amal, Buurtteams, and the municipality already use so-called key figures who have personal experience with the topics to help struggling citizens. These key figures can also be asked if they want to talk about their experience on the tea packets. The people represented on these packets should be from a diverse demographic so that different people from within the target group can identify with them by seeing their stories.

theedoosvolverhalen.nl
Tea drinkers who want more insight into the storytellers' experiences before taking action themselves can find more extensive stories on theedoosvolverhalen.nl. This website, which accompanies the concept, features videos of the role models from the tea packets talking about their experiences. A link to the website is on the box and will be used in communications about the initiative.

Scan this QR-code to visit theedoosvolverhalen.nl ▶

Fig 57. The role model stories help the tea drinkers feel comfortable to also open up and discuss the topic

5.1.2 Let's get to work

The questions and stories on the packets invite people to reflect on their own situation with the people around them. This might lead to them wanting to make a change and take action. Some might have enough support within their own network. The tea box aims to activate people to use this network by opening up. Others might need some more external help to approach their problems. The box and tea bags show multiple calls to action to provide them with the appropriate leads to fitting support.

U-Centraal
On the inside of the box is a short explanation of what exactly the tea box is intended to do. At the end of this explanation, there are multiple leads towards U-Centraal. U-Centraal is an accessible organization with a neutral image that offers citizens warm referrals to the right support. Utrechters can call U-Centraal with any issue related to any topic. An employee at U-Centraal will give them advice and help them with a warm referral to the appropriate support channels when needed. They will keep in active contact with citizens who request their help until they find the right form of support. U-Centraal also offers classes and workshops on different topics. U-Centraal's

U-gids is a daily updated website that makes it easy to navigate the available support per topic. By linking to this website, we also offer a CTA for people who are not comfortable giving a call. The U-gids website then also offers multiple channels to contact their support team.

Some for everyone
The references to U-Centraal are offered in three different ways: a phone number, a link to u-gids, and a QR-code that links to u-gids.nl. By offering different calls to action, we make the design accessible to anyone with any preference or level of skill. Not handy with QR-codes? Try giving a call. Not comfortable calling? Browse the U-gids and explore your options. The theedoosvolverhalen.nl website also features this phone number and a link to U-Gids, for people that approach help through this channel.

Sneak along
It might be hard for some people to make this action step when they are in a public setting. They might not want others to see that they reach out for help. That is okay; the links to the supporting organization are also on each tea bag. Just snatch one along and explore your options when at home.
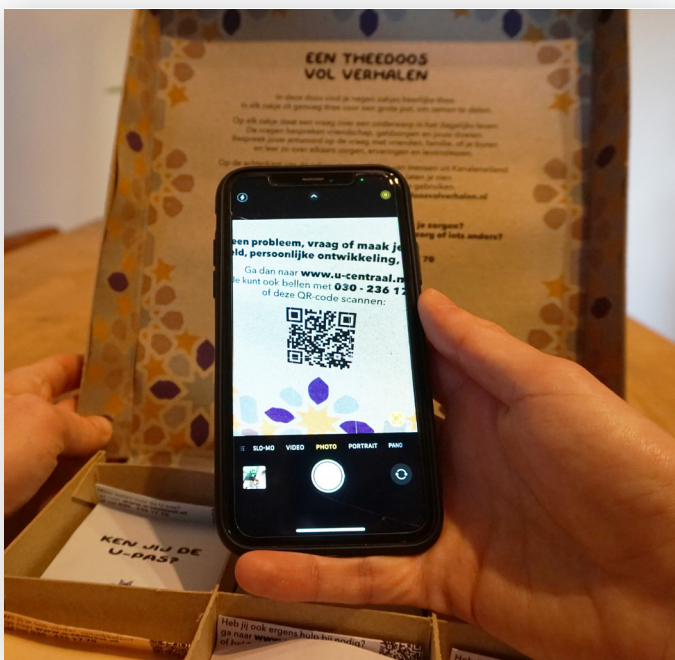
Fig 58. Links inside the box help tea drinkers reach out to U-Centraal

Fig 59. The links are also on the packets, so a shy tea drinker can sneak one with them to reach out at home.
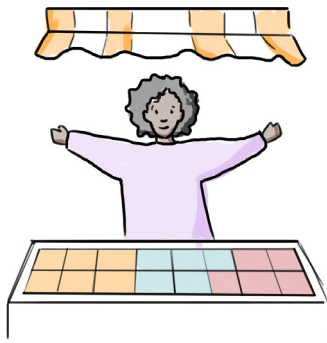
Fig 60. The boxes will be handed out for free throughout the city. On markets, for example

5.1.3 All around Utrecht

The tea box full of stories will be distributed widely throughout the city so that as many Utrechters as possible get in touch with it. This way, all passers-by are nudged to open up and think about these topics and their relationship to them.

Free for all

The boxes will be handed out for free at local markets, shops, and shopping centers to spread them out into even the furthest nook and cranny in the city. We especially want to reach citizens that normally fall out of reach of the system's campaigns by offering the boxes in their daily context. Here, it is important to see which places the target group visits most to offer the boxes where they can have the most impact. By offering the box for free, in public places, we frame it as a little present. Something you get to take home and explore.

Better together

Furthermore, the tea boxes will also be sent out to mosques, community centers, and other public organizations where citizens get together. By putting the boxes on the table in public spaces, the effect of network activation is further stimulated. Especially in places where a community comes together often, the tea boxes could help people open up about poverty and support and inspire one another.

Order your own

With the tea boxes being spread out around the city, some people who come across one might want one for themselves or their organization. Worried, but not sure how to start a conversation about it? Or do you know someone who could benefit from some help but do you not know how to bring it up? Just curious? The teaboxes can also be ordered for free at theedoosvolverhalen.nl to offer boxes to anyone who does not bump into the give-away actions.

Campaign

The tea box full of stories will be rolled out in a campaign-like structure. Spreading the boxes around the city, even to places and people that normally stay out of reach of the poverty reduction system or that do not think about these topics by offering the product in public places they visit. This rippling effect, which activates people all

Fig 61. A city-wide campaign raises awareness for the initiative and challenges all passers-by to have a moment of reflection on the topic.

throughout the city to together open up about poverty, will be further strengthened with an advertisement campaign. Posters and banners that are put up around the city present some of the questions and peer quotes in the public eye (figure 61). These graphic outings grasp the attention of passers-by, activating them and nudging them to think about this topic in daily life. People that have no direct personal link to poverty are also activated to think whether they might know someone who needs help or how they can be of better support to their community. For those who are interested, a link and QR code to theedoosvolverhalen.nl can help them to dive into what the campaign is about further. They can then also order a box of their own on the website.

5.1.4 Access for all

The tea box's main target audience are cognitively challenged, non-Western immigrants. The stories and questions are all presented in a clear, low-level language to make the content accessible to this group as well as any other Utrechter. All language is at least below B1-level. The content is presented in a clear, informal tone of voice. For the same reason, the website tells the stories in video format to keep them accessible.

The box and website will also be made available in Turkish and Arabic to increase accessibility for citizens with a non-western cultural background. Videos will be subtitled. This also allows for the implementation of cultural nuances in the content.

Evaluating
the concept

This chapter describes the evaluation process of the concept proposition and prototype.

The first subchapter explains the evaluation approach for the concept proposition. The second subchapter outlines the most important research insights. These insights are translated into final design recommendations in the third subchapter.

6.1 Evaluation approach
6.2 Evaluation results
6.3 Final design recommendations

EEN THEEDOOS
VOL VERHALEN

KEN JIJ DE U-PAS?

WAT IS JOU... DROOMBAAR...

WAT DOE JI... ALS JE JE RO... VOELT?

MAAK JIJ... WEL EENS ...ORGEN OV... ...ELD?

VOEL JIJ JE WEL EENS EENZAAM?

WAAR ZOU JI... GRAAG WAT EXTRA GELD VOOR HEBBEN?

WAT ZOU JI... NOG WILLEN LEREN?

WELK CIJFE... GEEF JIJ JE LEVEN?

WAAR WOR... JIJ GELUKK... VAN?

6.1
Evaluation approach

I made a high-level prototype of the tea box. The goal of this prototype was twofold: testing it in context and fostering a conversation with experts about their opinion on the concept and its effectiveness. Unfortunately, the two-week spring break overlapped with the planned in-context testing period. I was going to test the tea box with clients from Al Amal, but their facilities were closed during this period, and the responsible activity coordinator fell ill after that. This test is, therefore, still ongoing at the time of writing this report. This chapter will describe the setup of this test, of which the insights will be gathered later. Two talks with experts on the prototype did go through. The results of these interviews will be described in subchapter 6.2. A final set of recommendations based on these interviews will be described in subchapter 6.3.

6.1.1 Testing with citizens
To evaluate whether the concept has the intended effect and what might still be improved, I organized a user test with the target group using a high-level prototype. This test takes place at Al Amal's Kanaleneiland location at one of their weekly groups.

Test goal:
Does the concept motivate citizens to open up about the topic of poverty, share experiences, and potentially take action based on this interaction?

The aim of this test was to see how the target group interacts with the tea box and if it reaches the intended goal of them opening up about their worries and experiences towards one another. Because of the sensitive nature of this interaction, I could not personally be present at the test. Being there, as an outsider, would limit the chances of participants feeling comfortable enough to be vulnerable about this topic. Therefore, I worked together with one of Al Amal's group leaders to organize the test. The test was set up so that a project leader could do it in a decent amount of time at the start of a meet-up.

Session plan

5 min **Explore**
Put the tea box on the table and select a question together.

5 min **Discuss**
Make tea while seeing if a conversation about the bag starts up.

5 min **Gauge reactions**
Briefly discuss what the tea drinkers think of what they just did

This test can then be repeated with multiple groups to gather as much initial data as possible. After each test, I would then contact the activity leader for that group and ask them a series of questions in a semi-structured interview (interview guide in appendix M).

This test is the very first step at evaluating the concept's effectiveness. It is limited because it is short, completely qualitative, the data is acquired "second-hand" from an activity leader, and the subject group is very small. It only evaluates if the tea box allows people to start a conversation. The effects of reflection, opening up, and connection can not be effectively tested in this initial setup. Suppose the concept were to be taken further into development, more thorough testing should be done to effectively evaluate if the tea box has the intended effect and how it should be further improved. A recommendation for this testing is described in chapter 7.2.

As described before, the results from this initial test were not yet in when writing this report. Test results will be reported back to the project clients in my final thesis presentation.

6.1.2 The Expert perspective

In order to still get feedback on the effectiveness of the concept, I organized two different evaluation sessions with stakeholders from Al Amal and U-Centraal. As experts in the field of supporting the target group, their opinion should be a valuable first step in evaluating whether they think the concept would be effective in-context and which changes still need to be made to the design. The high-level prototype helped us to have a detailed conversation. These interviews took a semi-structured form (interview guides in appendix N). The interviews will be referenced as:

EA1   Evaluation session with a group leader and two managers from Al Amal.

EU1   Evaluation session with the communications expert from U-centraal and U-gids.

Interview goal:
Do experts working with the target group believe the concept would motivate citizens to open up about the topic of poverty, share experiences, and potentially take action based on this interaction?

The next subchapter describes the main insights from these interviews.

Fig 62. A prototype of the tea box is now at Al Amal, where it is being tested by group leaders during their group sessions.

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6.2
Evaluation results

Generally, the experts I spoke to were very enthusiastic about the concept proposition and prototype.

"The goal of this project was to make people who do not use poverty support right now aware of their options. I think this is a good, low-threshold step to take that can at least make them aware of their situation and the fact that there are options."-Caroline

"I think it is a beautiful idea. My colleagues love it too. I think it lines up really well with what we are trying to do with the U-gids; making everyone aware that they can get help." -EU1, communications director U-centraal

This subchapter describes the results from the interviews I had with them, where I asked what they liked, disliked, and would like to see improved about the concept. The next subchapter describes the final iterations made to the design based on this feedback, and the accompanying recommendations.

6.2.1 Questions that matter

Al Amal's experts think **the questions are a good way to nudge their target group into a conversation.**
"I always answer those questions on the pickwick bags. Even when I'm alone. it think this could really work for our clients." -EA1, Operational manager Al Amal

Also in already existing social gatherings, **the tea boxes could help kick start citizens to open up about these topics.**
"I think it would also work wonders for people who already come together. I know a lot of informal initiatives where women support one another in all kinds of gatherings. A box like this would really

help to make this topic live there, in a place they trust." -EU1, communications director U-centraal

They do believe that the questions should be carefully chosen, and a balance between deeper personal questions, and more light-weight general questions so that people can answer a question they feel comfortable with at that time.
"I think some of these are very personal. There should be a balance between more and less personal questions, so that we guarantee a safe environment." -EA1, Group leader Al Amal

Fig 63. The questions should be carefully chosen to spark meaningful conversations without causing uncomfortable situations

▼

Al Amal's experts, two of whom have the same cultural background as the target group, think **the box's design will help to make it something people like to put on their table.** They think this look will help with the group's acceptance of the design.
"I really like the pattern and the design, it totally fits the target group." -EA1, Operational manager Al Amal

The prototype had one question about a specific regulation: "Do you know the U-pas?". The experts thought it was good to ask a question about such a general tool as the U-pas, but that **topics about more specific regulations should be avoided**, since not everyone would qualify for these. This is also not the goal of the box: opening up and redirecting, not informing about specific regulations.
"I think it is good to ask some questions about the available options, like U-pas, so that people get curious what their options are." -EA1, manager Al Amal

"But we should not add questions about specific regulations, because not everyone qualifies for these. Once they see a professional, they can help them apply for those." -EA1, Operational manager Al Amal

6.2.2 Tales of the city
The role model stories are a good way to comfort the target group in their troubles, showing them that it is okay.
"I think that reading these quotes can really help these women get the feeling that they are not alone in their problems." -EA1, Operational manager Al Amal

The stories can help the target group recognize themselves. For this to work, we should look for representative storytellers.

Öznur
"Als ik me slecht voelde, ging ik shoppen, terwijl ik daar geen geld voor had. Van een brief van de belastingdienst kon ik al dagen balen. Een hulpverlener heeft me uiteindelijk van mijn probleem afgeholpen."

Fig 64. The role model stories could help comfort the tea drinkers to open up. It could be tough to find people that want to tell their stories.

"These women might recognize themselves in these stories. That's a good thing to offer." -EA1, Group leader Al Amal

It could be tough to find citizens that are willing to tell their stories on the bags, due to the shame surrounding the topics. However, **peers that have outgrown poverty might be willing to show how proud they are of their hard work.**
*"It is very hard to get our target group into the picture, almost impossible. But I do think that the key figures and peer mentors that we often work with that have had similar experience would be willing to talk about them." -EA1, manager Al Amal*

"People that outgrow this situation have worked hard. I think they would be willing to show that off in a story like this." -EA1, Operational manager Al Amal

Adding a video-format extension to the stories on the website would work well for the target group. We should however make sure that the website is easily accessible for them.
"I think it is smart to further detail the stories in a video, that works better for this target group." -EA1, Operational manager Al Amal

Fig 65. The inside of the box was still very textual, overshadowing the CTA's. The experts expressed that, to fit the target group, som etext should be removed. ▶
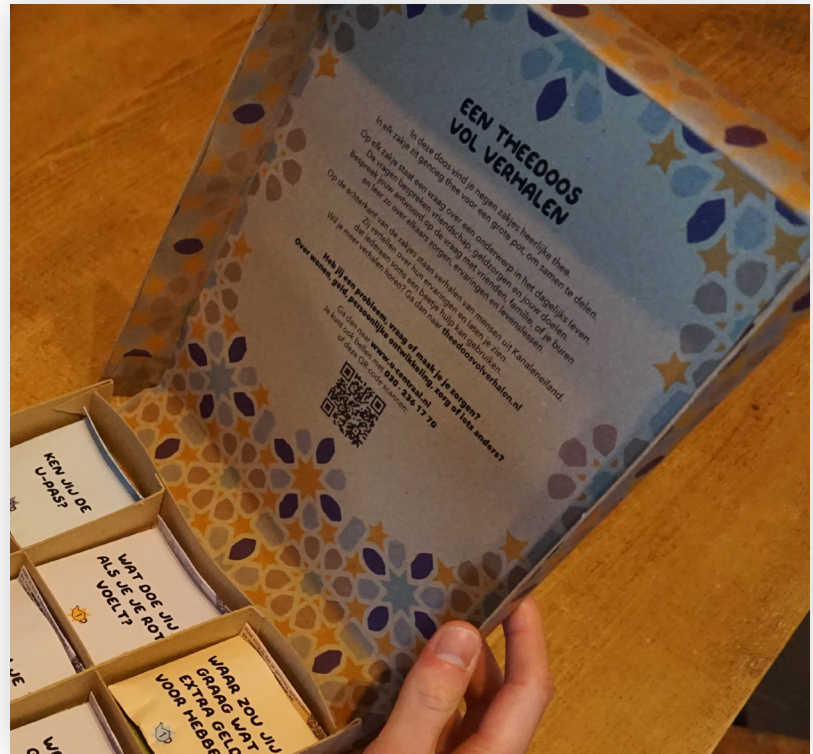
6.2.3 Taking action

The link, phone number, and QR-code are good ways of showing people a path to action. It is worth wile exploring which other options work well.

"No one ever uses the chat on our site. We get a lot of questions via WhatsApp, on the other hand." -EU1, communications director U-centraal

The experts from Al Amal think the questions and links to support would work, but **they would like to further test and expand it.**
"I think the crux is in asking the right questions and offering the right links to support. I would like to further test that after this project." -EA1, manager Al Amal

The calls to action could be made clearer. Quite some reading is necessary to know what to do now.
"We always keep our messages really short and to the point. The action should be clear right away." -EU1, communications director U-centraal

U-centraal is a nice, open link for a part of the target group. However, **the experts do believe that for some people U-centraal might be too far outside of their usual context.**

"U-centraal does great work, but it is far away for some people. A link to something closer by, like Al Amal, would be a nice addition. Adding both would be good"-EA1, manager Al Amal

A language barrier could be an important factor here. Part of the target group might struggle or be hesitant when requesting support in Dutch. The touch points should cater to this.
"When there is a language barrier, I do everything I can to still help. With some patience I always manage to figure it out. If not, we would ask a colleague that speaks the language to call the client back." -EU1, communications director U-centraal

6.2.4 All Around Utrecht

The interviewees were in favor of an even further expansion of the tea box's reach. They vowed for an active outreach to any location in Utrecht where tea drinking rituals happen.
"I know some people opening their own social tea cafe. I bet she would love to have these there too." -EA1, Operational manager Al Amal

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6.2.5 Discussion

The interviewed experts were enthusiastic about the concept and had some valuable notes, some of which will me translated into recommendations for the further development of the concept in the next subchapter. However, it must be noted that these interviews are only just a very first glimpse at an evaluation of the concept. Based on these, no real conclusion about the effectiveness of the concept can be drawn. To effectively evaluate the concept and specific content, more testing should be done in-context. The quotes and questions are the main drivers of the concept. The experts are enthusiastic about them, but it is almost impossible to make a grounded judgment without testing this interaction with different users in different contexts. This way, a solid proof for the concept's functioning can be sought out to defend why it should be further developed. Secondly, further evaluation could help specify what content works, and what does not. I wrote out a first proposition for this further testing in the next chapter about implementation.

6.2.5 Key evaluation results

Generally, the experts I spoke to were very enthusiastic about the concept proposition and prototype. Some learnings were gathered:

• The experts believe the questions to be a good way to nudge the target group to open up. However, we should be careful to balance personal and more light-weight questions to avoid uncomfortable situations. Regulation-specific questions are to be avoided so that people do not get confused whether they qualify or not.

• The experts believe the use of role model stories to be a good way to make the topics more human and relatable. It could be challenging to find these role models. Peers with past experiences might be a way to find storytellers.

• U-centraal is a good first organization to link to, but might not suit all parts of the target group. Adding a link to, for example, Al Amal might help.

• The CTA's could be clearer, making sure the users have to read less and know what to do right away.

• Further in-context testing is required to effectively determine the concept's effectiveness and value. This should be done before moving forward with the project to make sure the design takes the right approach before bigger investments are made.

• Offering videos with more extensive stories on a website fits the target group well.

• The CTA's are likely to help citizens find their way to support. It should be further explored exactly which channels work and should be offered.

6.3 Final design recommendations

This subchapter contains recommendations for the improvement of the design, based on a combination of insights from the last interviews with experts and prior research data.

6.3.1 Design recommendations

Further testing should be done before moving forward with the implementation of the concept. Until now, I have mainly been able to get a lot of feedback from experts, and not much from actual citizens. It is therefore too early to say whether or not the concept is successful, however enthusiastic the experts might be. The interactions, experiences, and opinions of the target group should be evaluated in some in-context user tests to get a better understanding of the actual effectiveness of the design. I made a proposition for a testing strategy in the implementation plan in the chapter 7.

In this test, the preferred CTA's should also be determined. It was mentioned that e-mail and WhatsApp are also popular channels for contact within the target group. It is important to find a balance between offering uncluttered action points, while also having an option available for anyone, with any preference or skill set. A test could clarify which channels are actually being used.
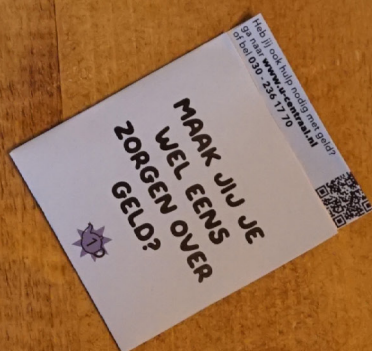
The initiating parties of the project should agree upon the organization(s) that is/are to be represented on the tea box as a referral party. Of course, representatives from each organization would like to see their details featured on the design. This might serve different sub-groups within the target group with a specific touch point, but it could also quickly become confusing and overwhelming. Adding phone numbers, links, QR-codes and more of multiple parties could be counterproductive. The final design should feature a party that has a positive image with the target group, and that is easily accessible to them. Whether or not U-centraal should be that party, like I proposed, could be determined through a target group research.

The chosen referral party should be able to scale up to have enough capacity to service a potential increase in clients. Right now, U-centraal only has one person manning the phone at a time. When the tea box turns out to be effective in motivating citizens to reach out for help, this would not be sufficient. The required capacity can be determined in the different phases of the implementation (chapter 7): first seeing if the calls to action are actually being used. If the pilot shows a significant increase in traffic towards U-centraal, the option of scaling up their capacity could be argued.

The multilingualism of U-centraal should be further strengthened. Although they always make an effort to help anyone, no matter their mother tongue, it would be worth while to make sure that someone that speaks Arabic or Turkish is always present. This considering the size of this population and its relative representation within the target group.

Ideally, a physical touch point should be created at the referral party. At this time, U-centraal can only be reached on-line or by phone. Having a visible, physical touch point in some different areas in the neighborhood would highly increase the accessibility of this action step for some citizens.

MAAK JIJ JE
WEL EENS
ZORGEN OVER
GELD?

Heb jij ook hulp nodig met geld?
ga naar www.u-team.nl
of bel 030-236 1770

THEEDOOS
VOL
VERHALEN

EEN

Vragen en verhalen om over na te
denken bij een kopje thee

Editie Overvecht

7 Implementation

With the first evaluation being done, this chapter describes the proposed steps for further implementation of the concept idea.

The first subchapter shows an overview of the proposed implementation plan. Subchapter two, three, and four then describe the three steps of this plan. The last subchapter describes some general recommendations that were gather throughout the project.

7.1
Implementation plan

In the past chapter, I have proposed a concept design and carried out an initial evaluation of this design. The project clients are enthusiastic about the direction, so the next step would be to see how the tea box could be further developed to eventually be taken into production. This chapter outlines the proposal for a three-step implementation plan. In each step, the concept will be evaluated, and further worked out to fit the level of refinement for that step.

Implementation phase 1 - chapter 7.2
Test and iterate

The first step is to further test the concept in-context. In this phase, the actual effect of the concept is evaluated on a small scale to validate the continuation of the project towards the different stakeholders. We try to answer the question:
1. Does the tea box motivate the target group to open up about their troubles and share their experiences with their peers?
We answer the question by evaluating whether the box and quotes spark meaningful conversations between peers.

Implementation phase 2 - chapter 7.3
The pilot

If the initial tests are successful, a larger-scale pilot can be organized to further evaluate its impact. Now, first steps will be made to prepare the concept for actual production, testing the pilot product on a larger sample of citizens, in a less controlled environment. The research questions are:
1. Does the tea box help the target group to open up about their troubles and share their experiences with their peers in a comfortable manner?
2. Does the tea box make the bonds in the informal network of citizens explicit?
3. Does the tea box motivate the target group to seek support for their problems?
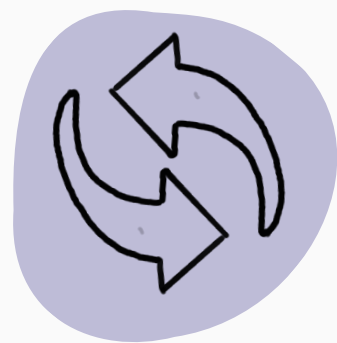A social impact measurement tool should be developed to measure the results.

Implementation phase 3 - chapter 7.4
Implement

If the pilot is successful and the stakeholders are all on board, the tea box can be taken into production. The website can now be designed and developed in detail, and the accompanying campaign designed and set up. The production line can be matured and partners and channels for distributions have to be found. Also in this phase, the impact measurement tool should be used to evaluate the impact.

Main activities

Create momentum for the project
Secure funding
Create content for the packets
Test whether the intended interactions are sparked by the design
Iterate based on the insights from this test.

Main activities

Set up a first production line for the concept
Develop a social impact measurement tool
Set up a pilot study
Execute the pilot study
Iterate based on the insights from this pilot

Main activities

Mature production line
Design and develop website
Design and set up campaign
Look for partners and channels for distribution
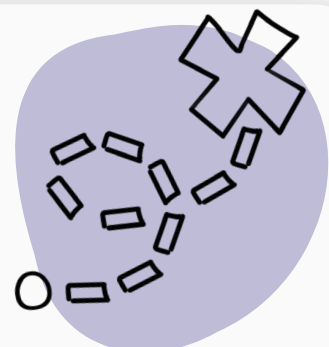
7.2 Step 1: Test and iterate

7.1.1 Finding momentum

The first step has been taken: representatives from Al Amal, Buurtteams, U-Centraal, and the municipality are enthusiastic about the concept and believe it could bring value to the context (chapter 6). Now, it is time to keep this momentum going and find the right support from within these organizations to bring the concept to reality. Two factors are important here: it should be made clear who is or are responsible for the continuation of the project, and it should be clear how a potential continuation of the project will be funded. The source and amount of funding should be made clear right away, so that we know which part of the concept can be worked out when, by whom, and to what level.

7.1.2 Iterating on questions

Due to the limited time frame for this project, I have not had the chance to thoroughly test the tea box and website. To guarantee its effectiveness and further detail the design, further testing should be done before deciding whether the project should be moved into the next phase. To make the concept ready for these further test, the project clients might want to first further develop the content on each tea packet.

I developed the questions that were used in the prototype in creative session CP3 (chapter 4.9, appendix O) with professionals from Al Amal, the municipality, and Buurtteams. In order to offer a strong set of questions, the participating parties should involve citizens and professionals to further ideate on the questions they want to see represented in the box.

One general requirement, for all content related to the concept that users get to see, is to always keep in mind the accessibility of the concept to all Utrechters. In the context of this project, this mainly refers to accessibility for cognitively challenged citizens, and citizens with a non-Western migration background. This at least means to keep any textual content below the B1 language level. Furthermore, based on my research throughout this project, the questions should at least adhere to the following requirements:

> **The questions should consider all domains of well-being** in order to offer an integral approach to the topic. These domains are: finances, mental health, physical health, quality of life, societal participation, social life, work, studies, and daily activities.

> **Both deeper personal, as well as more general light-weight questions should be offered** to allow for a comfortable interaction in any context.

> **The questions should be open and judgment-free,** not judging or discrediting the readers, their feelings, or the conversation that they might be about to have.

7.1.3 Finding real stories

The prototype that I made features stories told in the Quiet 500. This Dutch magazine gives quiet poverty a face by letting economically disadvantaged citizens tell their stories. These stories could be used for further testing, but they should match potential new questions to make the link between question and quote clear. If the time and budget allows it, the participating parties could also use their network to find stories by actual Utrechters. Addressing the peer experts and key figures that Al Amal, Buurtteams, and the municipality already work with would be a good and accessible starting point to find participants. The participants are then interviewed and photographed. Agreements should be made with them about the use of this content throughout further phases. The interview with a view of the participant should also be video taped so that it can be used for the videos on theedoosvolverhalen.nl.

"We can make use of our network of peer experts and key figures to find which people might be good to show and want to be shown on the packets." -Manager Al Amal

Based on my research throughout this project, and the theory on narrative communication, these stories should at least adhere to the following requirements:
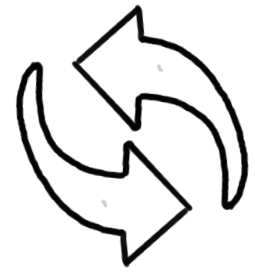
> The stories and storytellers should be a diverse representation of the target group, so that any citizen can recognize themselves in at least some of the content.

> The story should carry out a positive message about the storyteller and be told in first person form, inspiring readers in a positive sense. (Slater et. al., 2003).

> The stories should consider all domains of well-being in order to offer an integral approach to the topic. These domains are: finances, mental health, physical health, quality of life, societal participation, social life, work, studies, and daily activities.

> The stories should have some connection to the question on the front of the tea packet to inspire citizens to open up about the question's topic as well.

7.1.4 theedoosvolverhalen.nl
The stories filmed when interviewing the storytellers can be edited into short videos and published on the website. At this stage in the project, further developing the website is too big of an investment. Since the main goal for this first in-context testing phase is mainly whether the questions and stories help citizens open up, an optimized website is not the main focus.

7.1.5 User testing
With the new content on the tea packets, the concept can then be further tested to evaluate its effectiveness and improve the design based on learnings from these tests. I did start an initial user test at Al Amal, providing them with a prototype which they can collect feedback on in their group sessions. This test was mainly intended to test the basic functions of the concept: does it help users open up about their worries and share experiences with the people around them? This evaluation can be carried through with a prototype with the new content to gather a better understanding of what works about the concept and what does not. This way, we can test the suitability of specific questions and stories. This initial test could also include project client Buurtteams, to get insights from somewhere other than Al Amal. In this phase, it is important to test in a context where a social worker can report back about their insights on the test.

The experiences of the participants in these tests should also be collected, whenever possible. The main question is:

1. Does the tea box motivate the target group to open up about their troubles and share their experiences with their peers?

The following factors are important:

> Do the questions on the tea packets spark a conversation between the users? This general evaluation determines whether the concept is successful and could function as proof towards potential partners to support the project.

> Are there questions that work well, and ones that do not? Evaluating what content generates the wanted response can help to later define the most fitting questions.

> Do the quotes on the tea packets help spark a conversation between the users? This general evaluation determines whether the concept is successful and could function as proof towards potential partners to support the project.

> Are there quotes or storytellers that work well, and ones that do not? Evaluating what content generates the wanted response can help to later define the most fitting stories.

> Would the target group really use the calls to action? Evaluating this helps us understand if and how the group would approach support, and whether changes need to be made to the CTA's.

In a small-scale user test like this, long-term effectiveness can not yet be determined. Here, we can only see if the intended interaction happens, and what could be improved about the content and design. Further impact evaluation will take place in the pilot, which is described in chapter 7.3.

7.1.6 The next step
Based on the insights from these evaluations, alterations can be made to the concept before potentially moving into the next phase. It is time for a go/no go: will the involved parties go through with the development? If the answer is yes, the next step is to prepare the concept for a pilot. In this pilot, the concept will be tested on a slightly bigger scale to get more feedback on its functioning. The next subchapter describes the process of taking the design from the current concept level to a pilot-ready product.

7.3 Step 2: The pilot

The goal of this pilot is to evaluate the actual effect of the tea box on a larger scale: does it actually help people be more open about these topics? Does it help strengthen the bonds in these informal networks? And eventually; does it lead to more traffic towards U-Centraal? To properly evaluate this, the design needs to be worked out into more detail and produced in a limited quantity. This way, it can be tested without too much of an investment. The research questions are:

1. Does the tea box help the target group to open up about their troubles and share their experiences with their peers in a comfortable manner?

2. Does the tea box make the bonds in the informal network of citizens explicit?

3. Does the tea box motivate the target group to seek support for their problems?

A social impact measurement tool should be developed to measure the results. It is not just about output (how many boxes have been picked up), but also about impact (have the boxes had the intended effect). Both should be considered to determine whether the concept works, and should be taken into further development.

7.2.1 Goal & budget
The preparation for the pilot starts by deciding on a pilot goal and budget: what do we want to know about the concept before deciding if we go into full-on production, and what resources can be devoted to this? These decisions determine the size of the pilot and the level to which different elements of the concept can be worked out. The cardboard box makes production relatively cheap.

7.2.2 Pilot method
It is difficult to measure whether there is a linear effect between the distribution of these boxes and an improved sense of openness, connectedness, or ability to take action in the population. The initiating parties should, together with a suitable research agency, create a social impact measurement tool that can be used to evaluate the outputs, outcome, and impact of the pilot and potentially also the implementation phase. The pilot should look at both short- and long-term

effects of the tea box on the participants, using both qualitative and quantitative measures to evaluate their experiences. Some impact indicators could be:

> When asked, do recipients feel like the box has helped them be more open about their issues towards themselves and others?

> Do we see an increase in traffic towards U-centraal that can be ascribed to the pilot?

This list should be further expanded before starting the pilot phase to determine the exact method and data that is to be collected.

Measuring impact
The effects of the pilot can partially be measured through easily accessible metrics. For example, the usage numbers of the QR codes placed on the packaging and the number of visitors to the website can be tracked. Furthermore, if the pilot is of a large enough size, U-centraal can measure if they see an increase in clients contacting them during the duration of the pilot. U-centraal could also start asking their clients how they found the organization, to screen which channels are most effective and whether the tea box seems to be one of them. By tracking which channels tea box recipients use, we can later adapt the used CTA's in the final design. Further data points should be explored.

Furthermore, recipients of the boxes should be interviewed about their experiences with the box, to get a better understanding of a potential change in behavior or mindset. This can be done through a questionnaire, or an in-person interview. It is important to keep in mind that this is a sensitive subject and a sensitive target group while designing these research activities.

7.2.3 Producing the tea box
For the pilot, the tea box itself needs to be made into a finished product that can be printed and distributed to the participants. Suppliers need to be found for both the production of the tea box, tea, and tea packets. Setting up this small supply chain in a way that can be scaled up later will allow the same supplier to be used when the concept were to be fully implemented. Another option

would be to first make the production into a "work project", where people with some distance to the labor market help produce the boxes. This would be easier to set up, but would require for a new supply chain to be planned once larger quantities are to be produced.

"This could be a nice project for the 'werkwinkel'. That could make it into an even more social project." -Manager Al Amal

The box is made of cardboard, to be relatively easy and cheap to produce. The final cost per box in this stage of the project will depend on the sample size of the pilot study and the chosen method of production.

7.2.4 Building the website
Depending on the available budget, theedoosvolverhalen.nl needs to be further developed towards a finished product. First of all, the website's domain needs to be transfered to the party that leads the further project, like the municipality. Next, the website and its contents need to be further developed. At this stage, the story-telling and referring functions of the site are most important. Since the actual tea box campaign is not yet part of this pilot, the site does not yet have to offer an ordering environment. The online presence of the site should be optimized through SEO-optimization.

7.2.5 Preparing personnel
Now that the project is becoming larger, U-Centraal employees should be up to date about the pilot that is happening so that they can monitor and report back on whether they learn or notice anything about the pilot through calling clients or other channels.

7.2.6 The next step
Based on the results from the social impact measurement tool, the initiating parties can evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot. These parties can then decide whether they want to move towards the implementation phase. It is important to document the results of these test well, to be able to present them to potential partners. Learnings from the pilot are used as input towards a final design which can be taken into larger-scale production.

7.4 Step 3: Implement

If the pilot is successful and the stakeholders are all on board, the tea box can be taken into production. The design can now be finished and the production scaled up.

7.3.1 Amping up production

Now that the actual campaign is starting, the production line can be matured. A lot of costs could be saved by finding the right partners that already make similar products, so that their production line can be used. It could be interesting to look for sponsors here. A socially conscious tea-harvester might for example be interested in sponsoring the project.

7.3.2 Finish the website

Now that we are involving more citizens in the mix, we should make sure that theedoosvolverhalen.nl is optimized and stable. Utrechters should now also be able to order a tea box through the website for their own use, or company.

7.3.3 Expand the hotline

In the pilot, the final CTA's will be determined based on the results of the conversion tests. The capacity of the touchpoints behind these CTA's should be made ready for a potentially increased amount of traffic. It is also important to account for multilingualism of these touchpoints.

7.3.4. Spread the word

With the boxes going into production, the accompanying campaign can be designed and set up. Partners and distributors for the boxes should be found to get the boxes to the right demographic.

7.3.4. Keep evaluating

Also in this stage, it remains important to continuously test and evaluate the boxes. What works, what does not, and how can the concept be further improved? Setting up feedback points, for example on the website, could help gather valuable input.

7.5 General recommendations
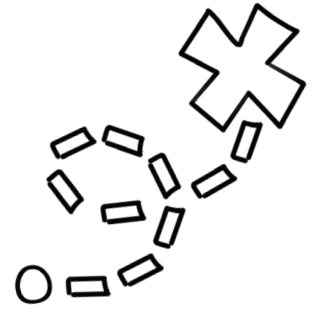
Based on my experiences, research, and insights throughout this project, I set up a list of general recommendations for the client organizations.

7.4.1 General recommendations

The focus of the poverty reduction system should steer away from the financial and offer valuable opportunities to grow. Over the years, the problem of the "poverty trap" has become evident. The available support does not invite certain citizens to take action, even if they would like to. It would be a big improvement to offer more qualitative chances to develop while listening to their needs and wishes.

Any organization in the poverty reduction system should think radically from the citizen's point of view in the design of policy and offering of services. From language level to visuals and tone of voice, make sure that the message is clear and that people feel comfortable and heard. The system is not there to maintain the system but to improve people's livelihood.

Building a more proactive poverty reduction system that reaches out to vulnerable citizens can prevent their situation from getting worse. Moving services off-line into citizens' daily lives, for example, through more visible walk-in locations in the neighborhood, could help prevent much harm.

Organizations in the system should work more in unity to supplement each other's strengths. Different supporting organizations seem to have a negative image of one another, disapproving of each other's methods. If I have learned one thing, citizens should be supported by the system to move fluidly between the right social workers and organizations.

Online, the complete offer of services, regulations, organizations etc., in the system should be organized clearly in one place. The discoverability and usability of online information should be improved.

The new multilingual attitude of the municipality should be continued and expanded. It makes information and support radically more accessible to large groups of Utrechters.

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