

empowerment of youth through design in youth initiatives

— a graduation report by jana sinitsova

empowerment of youth through design in youth initiatives

Master thesis, March 2021

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executive summary

Youth care in the Netherlands has faced quite some problems in the past years. It is organised only by adults who mostly have nothing to do with it, and it shows — both youth care workers and youth themselves have had enough.

Every solution to the youth care problem in the Netherlands leads to new problems, making it a wicked problem which does not have one apparent solution which works. Therefore, the best solution to tackle it is to work with bottom-up organisations.

De Garage2020 is such a bottom-up organisation, working in multidisciplinary teams all around the country to design innovations which focus on youth care prevention. They work together with youth to get to the best solutions, but unfortunately that still leaves a gap between them and youth they are designing for, especially because they themselves are adults and they still make the decisions. Therefore, de Garage2020 Rotterdam wants to start a new youth initiative, completely led and executed by youth: the JongerenGarage (translated to English as 'Youth Garage'). The goal of the JongerenGarage would be to design for the utopian youth care in the Netherlands. This thesis is aimed on providing insight into how and if design can facilitate the empowerment of youth in youth initiatives.

In this thesis, I am presenting a framework which shows the complex mechanisms that take place. Through this framework, concepts are presented, from which a prototype is developed and used as a case study of a trial youth initiative. This trial went differently than expected, which shows that the perception of what is good and what is bad differs between youth and adults, but also between a non-designer and a designer. Therefore, two things can be concluded: The first is that when designing for the empowerment of youth, an adult cannot expect youth to behave like adults. Youth go through several developmental phases and therefore may have a complete different view on what is right or wrong in terms of working and communication.

Second, when conducting a diffuse design process, in which a designer enables others to co-design together, a designer cannot expect non-designers to go through the design process as the designer intended, as they have far less experience.

All in all, both of these conclusions imply the same: Expectations have to be let go when designing for others' processes. This can be done through constant reflection and self-awareness.

acknowledgements

This graduation project marks the end of my six year long study at the Delft University of Technology. I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to study here, and to graduate on such an interesting, complex topic. It has been quite a rollercoaster ride, so before we get into it, I want to thank some people who have had a great positive influence on this thesis.

First and foremost, thank you, **Peter** and **Froukje**, for the sometimes vague conversations, pushing me to do better, always believing in me, and encouraging me when I lost sight of things. I could never have done it without your constant support and advice.

Thank you, **Donna**, and the **rest of Garage2020**, who have always been ready to help me in recruiting, brainstorming, or just to have a nice chat.

Thank you, my dear **housemates**, who have had to put up with me and my emotional yo-yoing, while always being there for me both mentally, but also physically, by providing me with snacks and drinks during my sometimes long nights.

Thank you, my lovely **friends and family**, for supporting me, having faith in me and my thesis, and having endless (boring) conversations about my struggles during this project.

Lastly, a big thank you to **all the youth** I could interview and who have participated in my sessions. You were great, gave me energy, and most of all you brought realness and meaning to this whole project. This is for you!

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0. introduction

assignment

Garage2020 Rotterdam is part of Enver, which is an organisation that helps parents and children in having an optimal upbringing.

Research has shown that youth care in the Netherlands has a lot of room for improvement on a systemic level (Janssens, 2015), but instead of focusing on redesigning the inner structures of youth care, Garage2020 designs directly for youth, to ultimately make youth care redundant — so essentially it is youth care prevention. With multiple 'Garages' located all over the country, Garage2020 works together with healthcare workers, youth, psychologists, designers, and philosophers (to name a few) to be able to execute each project from multiple angles.

To involve the target group during a project, Garage2020 generally makes use of interviews and surveys. However, the team in Rotterdam had found that this level of participation of the target group might not be enough for the outcome of the designs to be optimal. Therefore, Garage2020 would like to involve youth more, by increasing their participation to the extent that they can make their own decisions and hold agency over their process. In order to do so, they were planning on adding something new to Garage2020: the JongerenGarage ("Youth Garage"). The JongerenGarage would consist of a group of youth, coming together every once in a while to plan and execute an entire design process independently. Their ultimate design goal would be to design the ideal, utopian youth care in the Netherlands. It was my job to determine how this can be set up ideally.

Garage2020 wanted the JongerenGarage to be independent, or at least hold agency for what they do. Therefore, a challenge lied in balancing the stakeholders involved in a way that the youth held agency over the project (without adults taking over), but did not lose the other stakeholders during the process — or researching if this balance even exists. Up until now, there had been quite some research about co-design with children or

adolescents (Jones et al., 2020) and about how non-designers can be taught to design, but not about how non-designer youth can design themselves.

This meant that there was a chance that the JongerenGarage will not exist in the way Garage2020 had envisioned. On the other hand, this also meant that the outcome of this project could contribute to design research in general.

Another challenge lied within the group of JongerenGarage itself. Here, a lot of hurdles had to be overcome or addressed: Group dynamics, power/agency relations and (participatory) design methodology. The youth who would be involved had a very large influence on the effectiveness of the to be designed method. My hope was that I could develop something that would be suitable for different groups in different places, so that it can be used in other Garages as well.

approach

This project was split up in four phases, all marking different explorations. Rather than following the standard double or triple diamond method, in which a designer converges and diverges, I have approached this project in a somewhat more reflexive way, by constantly switching between abstraction and concretion and iterating on the way, as seen in figure 1. This was needed, because throughout the project, initial plans had to be changed due to several factors. The yellow parts in the figure indicate where I involved youth in the process, providing for these iterations from theory to practice to take place. These parts are also marked yellow on the sides of the pages.

The first exploration was a **contextual exploration**, in which I did desk research and afterwards interviewed youth about youth care in the Netherlands. This provided me with on the one hand a theoretical view of what youth care is or what it is intended for, and on the other hand a more realistic view of what it is and how it is experienced by youth.

Next, I began the second exploration, a **design exploration**, where I conducted a literature research to dive deeper into the concepts behind youth initiatives, to then strengthen the found concepts by interviewing experts on the matter. To evaluate the findings with youth, I did a contextmapping session, providing for more concrete and practical completion of the theory. This gave me enough insights to set up a theoretical framework of interactions within youth initiatives.

The next **design exploration** was where I translated the theoretical framework into a concrete design goal with an interaction vision and appropriate design guidelines. From this, I could develop a concept which I could test in practice to see if my framework provided for the right interactions within youth initiatives. I then developed a prototype and did a case study of a mini-youth initiative using my prototype, from which I could draw interesting, unexpected conclusions on the idea of

designing for co-design, and, especially, designing for youth's empowerment.

Lastly, a **reflective exploration** was done in order to draw an overall conclusion of this project and the things I have encountered and experienced. This resulted in a thorough discussion, recommendations for Garage2020 and further research, limitations of this project and a personal reflection.

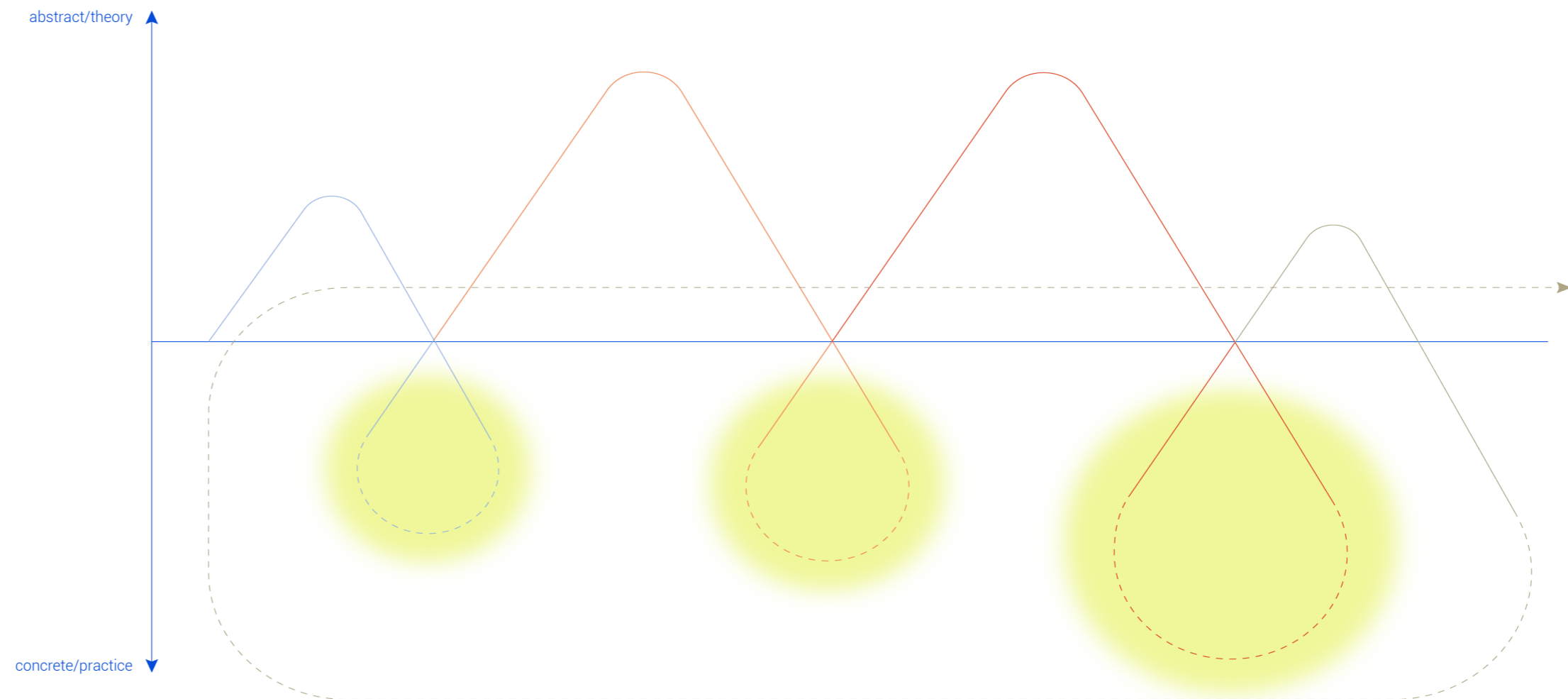


Figure 1: A graphical representation of the process



1. orientation on the subject

A background analysis was done in order to get insights into what youth care in the Netherlands is, how it is organised and how youth who have been in youth care have perceived this. By having done this, I could define the scope of my project.

This chapter contains:

- 1.1 Youth care in the Netherlands
 - 1.1.0 The definition of youth
 - 1.1.1 The definition of youth care
 - 1.1.2 Problems in youth care
 - 1.1.3 Solving wicked problems: Bottom-up
 - 1.1.4 De Garage2020
 - 1.1.5 De JongerenGarage
 - 1.1.6 Key takeaways

- 1.2 What does youth say?
 - 1.2.1 Setup
 - 1.2.2 Results
 - 1.2.3 Key takeaways

- 1.3 Conclusion

1.1 — youth care in the Netherlands

In order to get a clear view of what the background of the problem is, I conducted an exploratory desk research to get an idea of the youth care system in the Netherlands. Moreover, I looked at where the problems lie, and how these problems could best be solved. This helped me to understand the background behind the idea of the JongerenGarage, and therefore, to come up with a suitable design approach for it.

1.1.0 — definition of youth

According to the World Health Organisation, youth are people from 15 until 24 years old (United Nations, 2020). However, the term 'youth' is also something which you can identify with or not — I, for one, see myself as an adult, because I have certain responsibilities and have to take care of myself instead of being taken care of. This is mainly because being an adult — or any other 'life phase' you should be in, for that matter — is a social construct which takes different forms depending on the society and culture you are in (Pitti, 2017). Moreover, the life phase you are in also depends on how you feel or identify yourself. I can imagine that if you compare me, a student, to someone of the same age who has been working for three years already and has kids, I am less mature and therefore do not live the real 'adult life'. I could therefore not have too many things in common with that person. On the other hand, I could have a lot in common with my friend who is 30 and also studies at IDE. This illustrates that age may not be the first and foremost thing by which you can classify youth — it is rather a life phase you can identify yourself with, or not.

1.1.1 — definition of youth care

Youth care in the Netherlands is organised aid for children between 0 and 18 years old, with certain types of aid reaching youth with a maximum of 23 years old. Youth care is dictated by the youth law, and is classified in youth aid, youth protection and juvenile rehabilitation, youth aid being the most common one, that is often referred to as youth care itself. This is also the type of care which is done by youth care workers and -organisations, whereas the other forms are more specialised and regulated by certified instances (NJI, 2019). All these forms of care, however, have the same, clear goal: the safe upbringing of children and youth, while preventing them from getting in unsafe or abusive situations (Jeugdzorg, 2020). Summarized, youth care is there for the overall wellbeing of youth in the Netherlands.

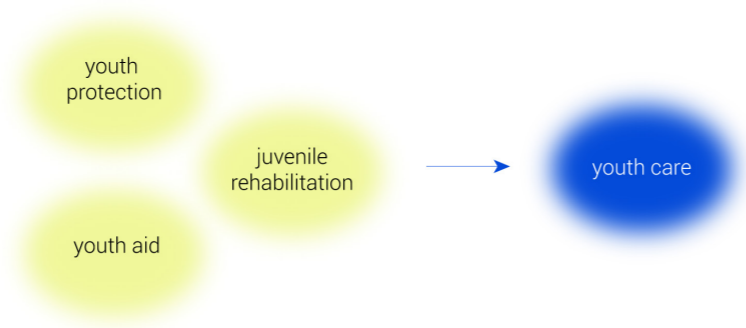


Figure 2: What youth care in the Netherlands entails (adapted from NJI, 2019).

1.1.2 — problems in youth care

Youth care is organised on three levels, each varying in the speciality of the aid. The 0th level consists of, among others, schools and daycares, in which staff has to have minimal pedagogic competences in order to recognise if the children they are dealing with need help from one of the higher levels. On the 1st level are then for instance general practitioners, people who give parental aid and youth advisors. If this is not enough to solve the problem, youth is redirected to the 2nd level, which entails youth assistance, youth mental health care, youth rehabilitation, care for mentally challenged youth and specialised education. On each of these levels, problems were already detected a while ago — problems on the 0th and 1st level being mainly that youth were redirected to the next level either too early or too late. But next to that, especially on the 2nd level, which can be seen as one of the most important ones because it deals with the most unstable youth, there are organisational problems which inhibits the system of operating like it should (Janssens, 2015). The main issue, up until 2015, was that youth care on the 2nd level was organised by the province and divided into several departments which in turn all had different people or organisations responsible — and all were financed differently. This resulted in the lack of a central point of contact, and moreover, a very 'split' youth care, in the sense that if a family or a child needed care from multiple departments this was either not recognised or very hard to establish (Janssens, 2015). As a first attempt to tackling these problems, the government decentralised youth care by making the 2nd level organised per municipality. But, unfortunately, this gave rise to other, new problems.



Figure 3: Protestors in the Hague (NOS, 2019a)

For the third year in a row, youth care workers have protested in The Hague because of the problems in youth care. The workload is too high, there is not enough financial help from the government, and they lose time doing administrative tasks which should not be necessary or could be done by other people (Eenvandaag, 2020). In other words, the system is too stuck in its current ways, and the infrastructure around it does not provide for any room for user-centered innovation. This results in a decline in staff in youth care — this year, there are 30% less new youth care workers as opposed to the year before (CBS, 2020), which makes the workload even higher for the people who stay, evidently making the problem worse. The less staff there is available, the less places there are for youth to receive the needed care, and therefore, the longer the waiting lists.

Moreover, municipalities claim to not have enough money to spend on youth care. The money they do get, is mostly spent on youth care centres which are not certified to be good – which is not surprising, as in the past six years, 6000 youth care centres have been established (Mensen en Gedrag, 2019). Because of this, there is no financial room to find the right solution in time (NOS, 2019b). Fortunately, this problem is already seen and finally recognised by the government, who want municipalities to work together financially (NOS, 2019a), but youth workers have their doubts about the effectiveness of this solution, being afraid that it will only lead to more disagreements between the different municipalities, and therefore to an even longer waiting list for the youth itself (Mens en Gezondheid, 2019). This example very well depicts the large gap between the government, their power and the people which it actually influences.

As a last point, youth care in the Netherlands has been known for mistreatment such as violence and sexual abuse. In 2019, a report has been written by the Committee for Research on Abuse in Youth Health Care, named 'Not Protected Enough'. The report was written as an answer to a prior research which concluded that abuse in youth care is not so rare, and consists of both field and literature research on abuse in youth care in the Netherlands from 1945 until now (Commissie Onderzoek Geweld in Jeugdzorg, 2019). In the end, this all leads to even more unstable youth – youth care being part of the problem instead of the solution. The amount of youth in youth healthcare has also risen to almost one in ten, and it will most probably keep rising (Jeugdzorg Nederland, 2020). This is problematic, as the youth care system is still unprepared for this incremental change. The waiting lists will be even longer, the workload for staff will remain high, the money will remain low. The problem of youth care has evolved into a loop. How can this loop be interrupted?

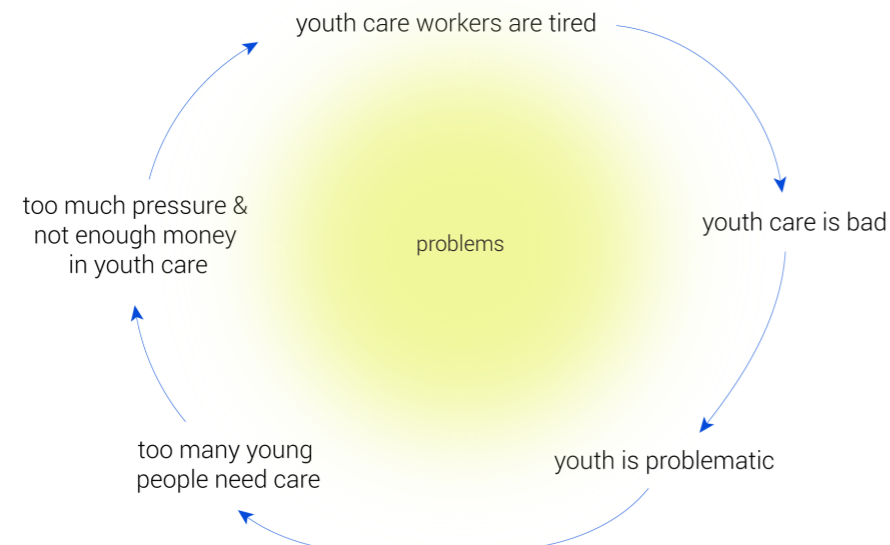


Figure 4: The cycle of problems within youth care

1.1.3 — solving wicked problems: bottom-up

When a problem does not have one definition, and also no specific solution – or at least not one that is 'right' or 'wrong' but rather 'good' or 'bad', in the sense that it can only solve part of it – we speak of a wicked problem (Rittel & Webber, 1973). In this case, as I have illustrated in the previous section, the problem itself is hard to grasp, as it consists of multiple subproblems which are all causally interlinked and contribute to the bigger picture. In addition, the solutions proposed by the government were not 'good' enough to actually be of help in the situation. In fact, Rittel and Webber actually propose wicked problems as being insolvable, at least not by a rationalist, closed approach, or the incremental step-by-step approach which is handled by the government in the case of youth care (p. 165). Instead, they argue, there should be more room for more democratic, open processes.

These open processes can be referred to as bottom-up processes. In top-down processes, there is only one, linear approach to a specific solution, most likely coming from a government or a certain policy (or both). It is one solution which applies to everybody involved. As can be seen on the illustration below, this is exactly what is going on – the most power is dealt to those who have no visible consequences on their actions. Bottom-up, however, is when problems are addressed by for instance citizen initiatives, by using collaboration. Fischer (1993) has researched that through participatory

policy, wicked problems can be tackled, under the condition that action research is applied and supported by (scientific) researchers (p. 182). This means that in order for the democratic, user-centered, collaborative approach to wicked problems to work, there has to be a systematically led process in order to actually understand the problem which is going to be solved, by bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical issues. A good example of this would be user-centered design research, as explained by Sanders & Stappers (2014). This is backed by a more recent research by Head and Alford (2015), who state that, among other things such as collaboration, a more holistic approach to the problem analysis is needed in order to start exploring solutions to wicked problems (p. 723). In other words, bottom-up initiatives could lead to good solutions, if these processes are initiated and led in a systemic matter.

Luckily, there are quite some organisations present in the Netherlands who try to understand and solve the broad issue of youth care through a bottom-up approach. Many of those are focused on the wellbeing of youth – which essentially, as mentioned before, is the whole idea of youth care in the first place. One of these organisations is de Garage2020, for whom I am doing this graduation project.

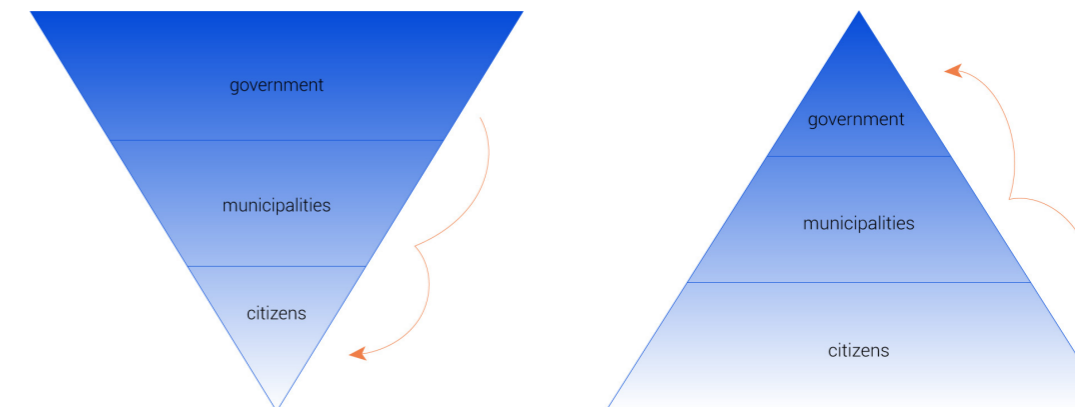


Figure 5: The difference between a top-down approach (left) and a bottom-up approach (right)

1.1.4 — de garage2020

Garage2020 is a group of multidisciplinary design teams, located in different cities throughout the Netherlands. Each of the Garages are linked to a local youth care organisation which supports them financially (as youth care in the Netherlands is decentralised and managed per municipality).

Their way of working is very much in line with the approach to wicked problems described above — collaborative working, viewing the problems in a different, more holistic light, and bridging theory and practice by multidisciplinary research, guided in a systemic matter by researchers. Their vision is to support youth in their maturing process by the design interventions that they design, to ultimately prevent the traditional forms of youth care present now.

The Garage I have designed for is de Garage2020 Rotterdam. They have lots of successful design interventions in their portfolio — one of which is even awarded by the Dutch Design Award for Service & Systems: Seev, an app which helps youth to manage their finances to keep them out of debt — and thus, out of other problems accompanied with it (de Garage2020, 2021). The other interventions range from apps to card games — but an overarching theme is that each intervention is there to be used by youth itself, and is also designed in participation with youth. This participation, as they described themselves, is however limited by the definition of participation itself: participating implies that you work together with someone else on their project, instead of working on your own. This mentioning about participatory design is also backed by Robertson & Simonsen (2012), who state that in participatory design, the design researcher in the end has the agency over the project, as he or she may subjectively decide on what is important and what not. This means that, in the end of their design process, in the context of the problem, Garage2020 is another organisation — consisting of adults — dictating what happens to this youth.

1.1.5 — de jongerengarage

As Garage2020 already noticed their prevalent power within their design processes, they have come up with a new project: the JongerenGarage (translated to English as 'youth garage'). The JongerenGarage should essentially be a group of youth who do almost the same as Garage2020 does, which is designing for youth care in the Netherlands. Garage2020 has already created the idea over a year ago and already have some ideas about what it should entail:

- The goal of the youth at the JongerenGarage is to design the utopian healthcare — so instead of focusing on solving the problems, which is fairly difficult and hard to measure, it is more focused on contributing in a positive way.
- The youth should form a multidisciplinary team and go through their own design processes with the help of both design agencies to help them design, and other stakeholders to help them understand the problem better.
- As Garage2020 sets up the initiative and manages resources such as the office space, the youth of the JongerenGarage should be in contact with Garage2020 as well, but Garage2020 does not want to take the lead in the project, as the JongerenGarage then surpasses its goal.

Based on the last two conditions and the aforementioned analysis, I have derived three forms of interaction within a youth initiative such as the JongerenGarage: interactions between youth within the group, interactions between youth and the organiser of the initiative, and interactions between youth and other stakeholders who may be involved in the design process, depicted in figure 6. In the case of the JongerenGarage, the organiser is Garage2020, and other stakeholders may involve designers, end users and experts. In the next chapter, I have defined what these interactions entail by doing thorough literature research.

1.1.6 — key takeaways

- Youth is a broad term which can be interpreted in multiple ways. When speaking of youth, you are not speaking of an age group, but rather a life phase you can identify yourself with;
- Youth care in the Netherlands has huge problems on a systemic level. There is a large discrepancy between the people organising youth care and the youth and youth care workers who experience it;
- As the problem of youth care in the Netherlands has so many aspects, it can be classified as wicked;
- Bottom-up initiatives can solve wicked problems, provided if they are organised from a scientific viewpoint with a clear predetermined structure;
- De JongerenGarage, the idea of a youth initiative from de Garage2020, can be such bottom-up initiative;
- A youth initiative can generally be categorised into three interaction levels: between youth, between youth and the organising party, and between youth and other stakeholders involved, seen in figure 6.

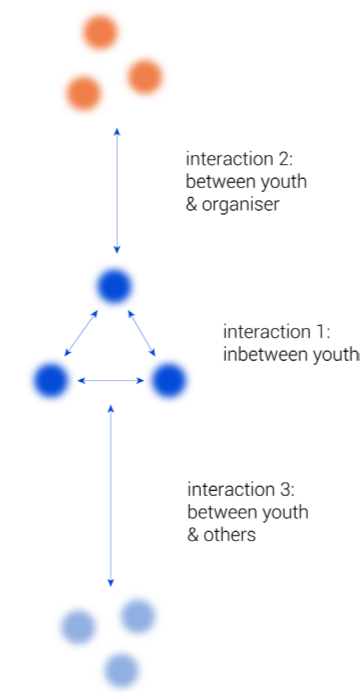


Figure 6: A graphical representation of the different interactions within a youth initiative

1.2 — what does youth say?

Next to desk research, orientating interviews were done with three girls who have been in youth care before, in order to get an insight into their experiences within the youth care system in the Netherlands. In addition, I was curious to understand how they experienced ExpEx: experience experts within youth care -- an initiative which apparently works very good for youth. But why? I was interested in the difference between talking to fellow youth and talking to adults, and why this difference exists. Results from these interviews gave me an insight into how the youth actually perceives the problems in the youth care system, how they experience it, and the gap between youth and adult youth care workers.

1.2.1 — setup

Participants

The interviewees were three girls, all retrieved via the ExpEx organisation, as they could give me the best insights on both their experiences within youth care and their experience with talking to experience experts. One was already out of youth care, Anna, and two were on the edge of youth care and adult care, Bella and Charlotte (names are feigned). Anna was working as an ExpEx buddy, which means that she supported somebody in youth care through her own experience. Bella and Charlotte both had a buddy like Anna, and were aspiring to become a buddy themselves in the future, to help others.

Goal

The goal of the interviews was to get a more tangible idea of how youth experiences youth care, and the perceived difference between receiving help from an adult as opposed to fellow youth.

Method

All three girls were interviewed using the same questions in a semi-structured interview setup. They were interviewed separately, by telephone. All interviews lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. They were recorded and transcribed, and analysed altogether by clustering quotes into overarching themes. See appendix I for the highlighted transcripts.

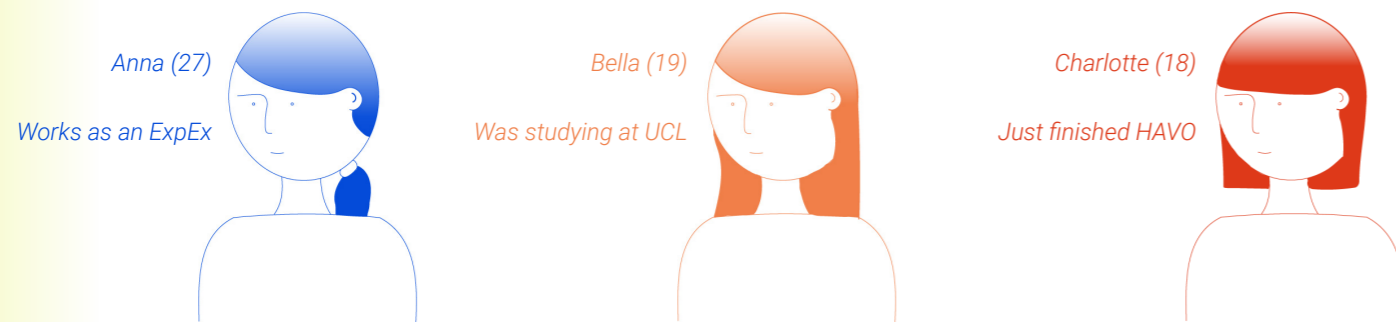


Figure 7: The participants I interviewed

1.2.2 — results

Not relating

Anna said that by being an ExpEx, she is supporting a girl in her mental health issues, and sees that her aid works a lot better than the aid of regular youth care.

*"I don't even do much more than just listening and thinking along. I do not have the feeling that I do something special. How come I, as a volunteer, can help her better than a professional?"*¹

Most likely, this is because the girl she is helping can relate to her. Anna has had a therapist who was a lot older than she was at the time, and she remembers that she though by herself: 'when were you 14?'. This resulted in no connection being present. Both Charlotte and Bella stated that they see a lot of similarities in their buddy and themselves, and that they therefore relate to her as well.

Next to the relatedness, Anna stresses that someone has to have genuine interest in you in order for you to feel heard or seen — that someone wants to know you, and not your problems. This also includes mutual information exchange; so not only the person with a 'problem' talking, but also the other person, making it a two-way interaction. Anna gave an example of one of her buddies with whom she talks a lot about drawing, because that is their mutual hobby. Bella also likes to talk with her buddy about other things than her own problems, by also getting to know her.

*"This shapes the trust."*²

Just professional, or too distant?

Bella further argues that you need to feel the honesty of the interest that others have in you.

"(...) sometimes youth care workers are on holidays and do not contact you for a while, or they were supposed to call you and then they don't — while you were waiting on them to call the whole day. It's the little things which make you doubt if you're important enough."

Charlotte backs this by talking about how it is important that you stay human.

"I understand that youth care workers are professionals, but sometimes I miss the 'humanness'. (...) I sometimes just need someone who comes close to me and supports me, instead of giving me professional advice."

She also stressed that she needs informality instead of professionalism when talking about tough subjects. Bella also agreed on that, saying that there are way too many rules and protocols that have to be followed, instead of just listening to the person talking.

Support through others

Charlotte said that she likes having friends who share her experience and friends who do not, but did point out that she does not like to share personal problems with the latter group because of some prior reactions.

*"I'm happy that they don't understand me — it's a good sign. I'd rather keep it fun with those friends, instead of talking about my problems all the time. (...) Sometimes, I like to just feel normal."*³

She did also say that it is sometimes nice to have multiple perspectives on a problem — both from a blank point of view and a more understanding point of view. Thus, something tells me that if her non-youth care friends would have reacted otherwise before, she would talk to them about her problems sometimes as well, just to get that other perspective on the situation. She also stressed how important it is to have a safe

[1] Annoyed, showing that as somebody in youth care, you do not need that much — but for some reason, youth care workers still fail to deliver even that.

[2] 'This' being the fact that you exchange information instead of it being a one-way street. The fact that somebody trusts you too.

[3] Implying that if you have had negative experiences during your childhood or youth, it is not normal. For some reason, these experiences appear to remain taboo.

space when you talk about rough subjects, giving the example of the TV show “Over de streep”, in which youth from a school come together in the auditorium for one day to share their deepest feelings with each other.

Understanding the situation

The first and foremost thing that all three girls agreed upon is that their time in youth care was not positive — even though they were there to get help, they did not experience it that way. There were quite some rough stories, which stresses even more how these youth are the only victims of all the problems in youth care, and how their opinion should come first.

All girls, however, even though they did not like the way they were treated during their period in youth health care, still understood the struggles the youth care workers were dealing with at the time. Every one of them had pointed out multiple times that they do not blame the youth care workers for acting the way they did (even if it was outrageous), which shows that they are very open towards mistakes — as long as there is room for communication as to where the mistake came from.

“I am not someone who holds grudges against people.”⁴

Powerless

Anna pointed out that she found it very annoying that she does not have influence on the youth care as a volunteer without having a diploma.

“I do have an enormous mental health-file.”
(laughing)⁵

She would like to feel more heard, even though she is not a professional. The same thing goes for Bella. She was labeled with a wrong diagnosis, even though she pointed out multiple times that she thought it was wrong. She thinks that that is because of her age as well.

“As a younger person you are less listened to. When

my parents were there, suddenly they became much more alert.”

Making a change

However, despite the fact that they do not feel heard and seen, Anna, Bella and Charlotte are determined to help change the youth care.

“If it was out of principle, I wouldn’t want to help. But I’m helping these girls, and that’s what counts.”⁶

They also all agree on the fact that they would like to use their own, negative experiences, and transform them into something positive: To help others.

“Then I don’t have the feeling it was all for nothing.”

“It gives me a good feeling as well, when I know that I’m helping somebody else with my experiences, making it a reciprocity.”

Charlotte also added that there needs to be more awareness around the subject of youth care in the Netherlands.

“When I was going to the mental health clinic, my grandma told me to have fun and asked me if there was a pool.”⁷

1.2.3 — key takeaways

- Youth can often not relate to adults, as they feel like they do not understand them or do not take them seriously. In order to change this, adults should take interest into youth as they would with fellow adults;
- A balance is needed between having a professional relationship with your youth care worker and being treated from an empathic viewpoint instead of restricted by rules. When interacting with each other, it should go naturally;
- Support from fellow youth is always nice, even if they do not share your problems or may not understand you. They can give you another perspective on the situation;
- Youth in youth care can have pretty bad experiences, but nevertheless they can put it in perspective and understand that the situation for youth care workers is bad as well;
- Youth in youth care feel frustrated that they cannot change the situation or give any advice, the system is too rigid for that;
- Youth who have been in youth care are often determined to do something about the youth care system by helping other youth, so that they did not go through it for nothing.

[4] Thus, she would not want to go back and shame the people who hurt her. Instead, she would want to prevent it from happening in the future.

[5] Indicating that experience, in this case, may be more valuable than a diploma based on only theory — but she cannot prove it.

[6] It is only due to the other youth struggling within the system that she is still involved in youth care — she hates how the system works and it frustrates her daily.

[7] Implying the frustration of others not being aware of what youth care is, how serious it is, and how awful these clinics actually can be.

1.3 — conclusion

youth care: expectations versus reality

From both the desk research and the interviews with youth who have been in youth care, it has become clear that there is a huge discrepancy between what youth care is intended for and how it is experienced by youth and youth care workers. This discrepancy can be explained by the fact that it is, for the most part, led by adults who do not understand the needs and values of youth. This, in turn, leads to an even larger misunderstanding between adults and youth. See figure 8.

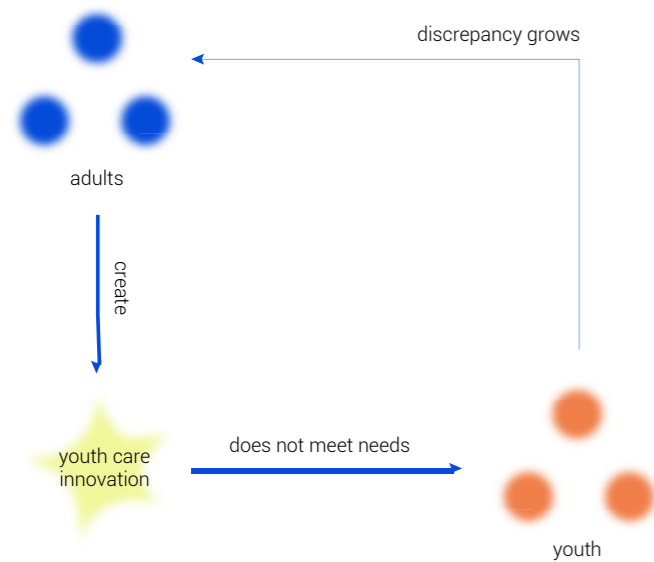


Figure 8: How youth care is organised; a vicious cycle of misunderstanding.

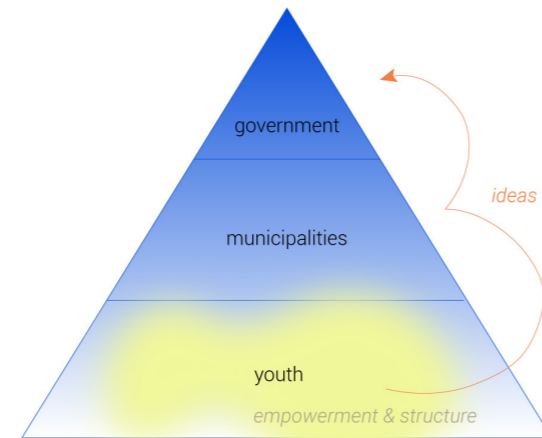


Figure 9: How a bottom-op movement might break the cycle

aligning the intentions through youth initiatives

Youth care should protect, empower and help. Instead, it creates and feeds this gap between the adults in power and the youth which are influenced. The top-down approach does not work: it cultivates frustration from above onto every level of power, which in turn all abreact this on the level under them – youth being the victim of it all. When turned around, as a bottom-up approach, youth would be in power of what protocols and rules to make, which in turn can be communicated to the higher levels to execute the plans. Instead of the lowest level of power being the victim, the lowest level is now the executer. But, as stated above, a bottom-up approach cannot work if it is not organised. Therefore, there is a solution needed for this youth to be empowered to start this bottom-up initiative in the right direction and with the right structure.

de jongerengarage as a youth (design) initiative

De JongerenGarage, therefore, is a great example of a youth initiative which can start as a bottom-up approach to tackle the problematic system of youth care in the Netherlands, by using design as Garage2020 does right now. Derived from the desk research, based on Fischer (1993), it has become clear that this youth initiative does need some form of structure, but from the interviews it has become clear that there also needs to be a sense of agency and the feeling that youth is listened to instead of bossed around. Therefore, a challenge lies in balancing guidance and structure on the one hand, and agency and empowerment on the other.

Viewing this issue from the perspective of the aforementioned interactions within the JongerenGarage itself, it is thus interesting to design for the empowerment and guidance of youth within each of these interactions.

“The mistake [youth] care workers make, is that they do not realise that the one in need of help is still able to be in control. That there is some kind of incompetence linked to it. We need to get rid of that.”

— *Narita Derks, experience expert*
(*Wij zijn spraakmakers podcast, 2019*)



2. setting up the framework

After the initial analysis, I have started to set up a framework for the different levels of interaction which take place in a youth initiative. I did so by doing thorough literature research, interviews with experts, and a contextmapping session with youth. This way, I could identify what exactly was needed to constitute these interactions, to further design for them.

This chapter contains:

- 2.1 Literature research
 - 2.1.1 How can a youth initiative be defined in my project?
 - 2.1.2 What interaction mechanisms occur within a youth initiative?
 - 2.1.3 Can youth be autonomous within a youth initiative?
 - 2.1.4 Key takeaways

- 2.2 Experts' views
 - 2.2.1 Setup
 - 2.2.2 Results: Daphne Daalhof
 - 2.2.3 Results: Marleen ten Vergert
 - 2.2.4 Key takeaways

- 2.3 What does youth need?
 - 2.3.1 Setup
 - 2.3.2 Results session 1
 - 2.3.3 Results session 2
 - 2.3.4 Results session 3
 - 2.3.5 Overall observations
 - 2.3.6 Key takeaways

- 2.4 Conclusion

2.1 — literature research

As a designer, it is important to recognise my own role and contribution in the aforementioned challenges, in order to understand how design is going to help in this issue.

According to Manzini (2015), designing is the art of problem solving as well as sense-making, by providing pragmatic solutions and giving meaning to these solutions by making them accessible and understandable for people — providing for implementable innovations. But just like for instance running or cooking or any other specific activity, is something that everyone can learn, but not everyone can or will have as their profession (Manzini, 2015). If this is the case, we can define design as diffuse design and expert design. Diffuse design is when other people come together and design, for instance in social innovation projects — such as neighbourhood initiatives or other co-design processes which are not necessarily led by designers. Expert design, however, is when people specialise in design professionally. This means that they are equipped with a certain perspective from which they can act and facilitate co-design processes (and, with that, also diffuse design). In doing so, expert designers can contribute to design knowledge: knowledge that is relevant and useful to other expert designers, helping the field of design research grow and develop. In this project, I am the design expert, and what I will try to evoke and support is diffuse design, through giving the youth at JongerenGarage and the other stakeholders the tools to co-design together — while keeping the balance between agency and guidance. This resonates with the aforementioned theory of solving wicked problems by Fischer (1993).

Viewing any youth initiative as a collaborative organisation, which is defined as “(...) a group of people who have an idea about how to achieve something and who collaborate to put it into action” (Manzini, 2015, p. 165), what it needs to function without the designer (me) having to facilitate the process the whole time — and thus they can work independently — is an enabling solution (ibid, p. 169). This enabling solution should provide the group with certain tools and resources, together with an environment in which their achievements and ideas can actually come to life. Next to that, an enabling solution provides for such an easy involvement, that the barrier to join becomes less, and therefore the level of participation is not solely based on motivation (since everybody can feel less or more motivated in a project overtime).

On the one hand, it entails the effective collaboration group itself, but on the other hand it should also entail collaborations with other parties in order for the final result to actually work — in other words, it should provide for successful collaborations on all three levels of interactions within the youth initiative. But in order to design this enabling solution, I have to determine what I have to enable. Therefore, I have defined three important questions that I need to answer first:

1. [How can a youth initiative be theoretically defined in my project?](#)
2. [What interaction mechanisms occur within a youth initiative?](#)
3. [Can youth be autonomous within a youth initiative?](#)

2.1.1 — how can a youth initiative be theoretically defined in my project?

For a group of youth to design together as a youth initiative, it is key to first understand how they come together prior to designing. A good starting point for this is to view it as a community, as a community is “a comprehensive network of individual relationships that express common interests and act to meet the general needs of the locality” (Brennan, 2008, p. 58). In other words, people come together from all kinds of different backgrounds to work towards a common goal. This resonates with the vision of what a youth initiative for youth care should entail; namely that it is a diverse group of people, both consisting of youth and sometimes adults, gathering to collaborate on the same problem.

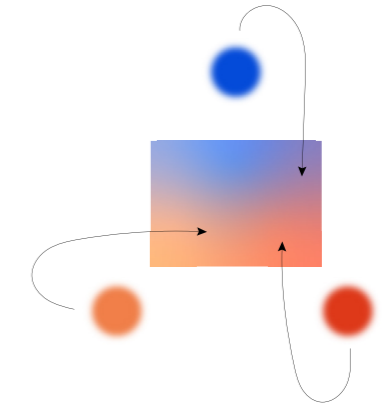


Figure 10: Different people come together and have their own input on the domain

Community of practice

Viewing a youth initiative as a community, a good framework which explains what a community is is the idea of ‘Communities of Practice’, in which people who share the same goal, vision and tools gather and collaborate (Wenger et al., 2002).

An interesting viewpoint to use this framework in is to zoom in on each of the three interactions mentioned earlier. As there are different groups working together, we can speak of different communities which emerge, from which some can be temporary (when gaining knowledge from one specific stakeholder), and others are more long-term (between the youth within the initiative itself, and between the organiser and the youth initiative). What has to be noted is that the youth forms the core of the other communities as well: they, as a community, will have contact with all the other stakeholders, forming temporary communities around the core. Factors such as time and space are crucial in the success of these communities, as these will greatly determine how the interactions between each community take place.

Next to that, there are three things which always constitute a Community of Practice, and therefore have to be present at each level of interaction:

1. A domain

In the case of a youth initiative, this domain will be defined by its core members — so, the youth — who decide to join the initiative from their own, intrinsic motivations. A good example of where this motivation can come from is a problem or issue which everybody in the group experiences (ibid, p. 32), so it is something you share with others. This can be interesting to explore further within the group.

When this domain is clear to all the core members, it is also easier to carry out the message to other parties, who thereby easily understand what the group wants and stands for (ibid, p. 32). So in this case, the youth within the youth initiative should have an easier time connecting to all other stakeholders, because they can articulate their vision clearly. If these others have a vision of their own which they can communicate as well, e.g. based on their interest in helping the youth initiative flourish, this can create a new, temporary common ground, and thereby a base for a (temporary) new community.

The main goal of the design project JongerenGarage will execute is, in essence, to design the utopian healthcare, but what motivates people to actually do so and join the process can still be different. This is what the domain is about. It is fluid and can therefore also shift overtime — so it is therefore important that every member in the community at that moment agrees on what the domain is or will become.

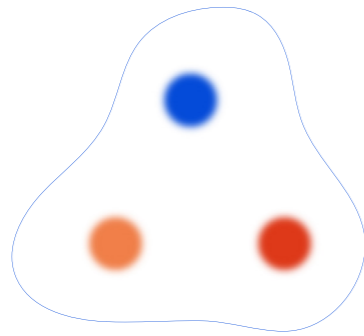


Figure 11: A community holds different people together

2. A community

It is, as Wenger describes, 'the social fabric of learning' (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 28) in which members feel encouraged to share, ask questions and learn together. Each community of course has a goal that it is working towards, but next to working towards the goal the members build up their relationships, making the community stronger and therefore the workflow towards the common goal better (ibid, p. 34).

The interesting thing in a community is the homogeneity of the group because they share the same domain, but also the heterogeneity of the group because of all the individual differences which can each bring something new to the table. Leonard-Barton and Swap argue that a group working together is best to be diverse, because the differences allow for creativity, richer learning and more interesting relationships (Leonard-Barton & Swap, 1999).

The constitution of intergroup relationships in diverse groups is also described by Allport (1954), who stated four conditions for this to be able to flourish: an equal status among all members, common, defined goals, visibility of your skills and the skills of others, and shared norms, values and support (Allport, 1954). Both in the youth initiatives itself and the (temporary) communities around it, therefore, a diverse group needs to be put together. Then, within these diverse groups, the flourishing of relationships and learning spaces have to be empowered, in order to develop and determine the similarities between the individuals.

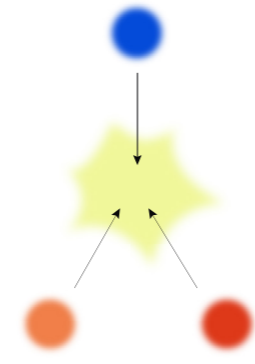


Figure 12: A practice is something different people collaboratively do

3. A practice

This is an interesting point, as the practice, in the first place, may be seen as limited to the goal that the community wants to reach. But, looking at the sections above, describing that a domain has to be established by sharing and a community by learning and building relationships, a practice is much more than that. It is a shared knowledge, both based on prior knowledge from the past and future knowledge the community might obtain (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 38), decoded in a way of behaving within the domain. This can be either implicit or explicit – the community may decide this for themselves. However, it is important that these practices are documented, as documentation is the life of a community (ibid, p. 39). This makes sense, because in order to join a community, one has to be up-to-date with what is already established; otherwise it is impossible for an outsider to join if a community is already existing for a longer period of time.

For each temporary community within a youth initiative, each practice is different, because the knowledge they share with each other is different. The core of the community, so the youth itself, will share other practices with each other than they do with their support organisation or other stakeholders.

Resilience in a community

Building further upon the question asked above – about how the group comes together – an important notion is that of actually staying together. The idea of a youth initiative is that it consists of youth and is also led by youth, in order to surpass 'just participating'. Therefore, it should be able to act and grow independently – i.e. they can ask for support or help from others, but they are not dependent on it.

A youth initiative, like everything and everyone, is naturally situated in a certain context. This context may and most probably will change overtime, which means that this initiative, as an independent community, has to adapt itself to the new context. This may cause disadvantages or negative hurdles, because things may not be going according to the initial plan. In order for the group to respond to this accordingly, it should be prepared for this. But how?

These negative hurdles can take place on two levels: on the one hand, within the community itself (a conflict), and on the other hand by the influence of an external factor.

To solve interpersonal conflicts, Wenger et al. argue that a solid community base is the most important (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 37). These conflicts can then even be translated into a deeper relationship between the members, which only makes the community stronger. For this, it is important that there is room for safely providing critique and feedback.

To act as a response to an external, unexpected factor, the community should be resilient (Gilligan, 2007). A couple of factors which may contribute to community resilience through the active participation of youth are illustrated by Brennan (2008) as follows: (1) an established local social support structure, (2) the increase of interactions between members – physically as well as socially, (3) the empowerment for youth to make their own decisions, and (4) presenting youth with personal growing skills to motivate them to participate. This is in line with the above presented idea that a youth initiative should have a balance between guidance and empowerment.

2.1.2 — what interaction mechanisms occur within a youth initiative?

Now that it has become clear what constitutes a youth initiative, the next step is to determine happens inside this initiative. Looking back at the previous section, there are a few things which the members of a resilient community of practice should do: they should be able to collaborate within different temporary communities, they should share knowledge through practice, and they should maintain a reflective approach so that the domain, community and practice are always updated and commonly shared.

As these things depend very much on the composition of the community, I will describe each activity per interaction below — first being the interactions between youth within the initiative, second being youth and the supporting organisation, and third being youth and other knowledgeable stakeholders.

Collaboration and participation

As Manzini describes, the world is full of collaborative encounters. Collaborative encounters occur when people come together in order to experience an interaction to create value (p. 105). In the case of a youth initiative, this is what happens as well — at each kind of interaction within a new temporary community, some value exchange takes place between the different people involved. Therefore, I will use Manzini's explanation of the different sorts of collaboration in order to be able to design for them.

Collaborative encounters can be divided into four different factors: active involvement, collaborative involvement, social tie strength and relational intensity. Active involvement is the degree in which both parties participate in the collaboration, whereas collaborative involvement shows the degree in which the parties work together (Manzini, 2015, p. 106). Then, social tie strength depicts the way in which the two parties are bonded socially — including the amount of time they spend together and the rigidness of their encounters. Lastly, relational intensity is the more empathic view on bonds between parties, when people get to know each other and build trust (ibid, p. 108).

All these factors contribute to the interaction which takes place at such encounter, and mapped together, they form

two matrices with each four quadrants for collaboration: the participant involvement matrix and the interaction quality matrix. These matrices can help me to define the collaborations which reside at each kind of interaction, which then can serve as design guidelines.

The first interaction level is between youth. In the participant involvement matrix, they will be in quadrant C — for them, it is very important that they all work together and are actively involved in an equal way. Of course it can be argued that sometimes some members will participate less than others, and this is inevitable, but overall the mindset of all members should be that they participate actively within the community. In the interaction quality matrix, the youth will also be in quadrant C. Being the core of the community and developing a domain, the members will have a strong social tie strength because they will come together regularly, and a high relational intensity because they will constitute a resilient community — which can only take place if there is trust and safety among all members. See figure 13 below.



Figure 13: IQ and PI map of the first interaction

The second interaction level, between youth and their supportive organisation, is a bit more tricky. As the supporter provides youth with the needed resources for their process and gives it structure without bossing around, in the participant involvement matrix, they will be in quadrant B, with a high collaborative involvement but a less active involvement. They are managing the process together, but in the end, it is the youth that will execute the design practice within the process. As for the matrix of interaction quality, the youth and their supporter will be somewhere in between B and C. This is because the organisation will support the youth initiative throughout the whole project — so the relational intensity is quite high because they get to know each other well, and in order to provide structure without radiating authority, their relationship needs to be informal and friendly. The social ties are a bit weaker, because they do not get together as much as the youth does, and so the commitment of the supportive organisation is less. See figure 14 on the right.

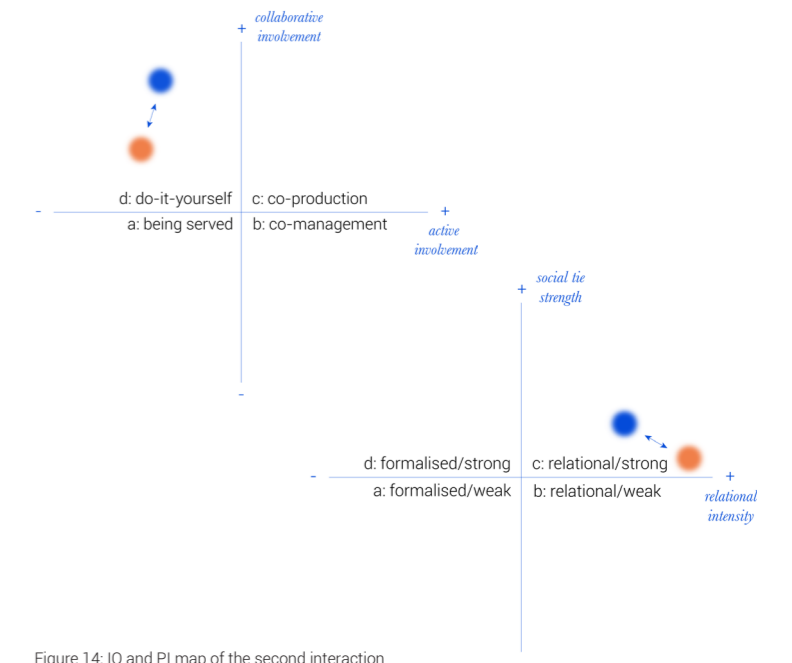


Figure 14: IQ and PI map of the second interaction

The third interaction level, between youth and other stakeholders, is the only collaboration which is of a relatively shorter timespan, but nevertheless, in the participant involvement matrix, they will be in quadrant C as well. Both the stakeholder and the youth will have to actively participate and collaborate in order to exchange knowledge. This is the case for process-based stakeholders as well as content-based stakeholders.

In the interaction quality matrix, they will be in between quadrant A and B. As the stakes of the collaboration are less high for both parties involved and their collaboration period is shorter, the social tie strength is weaker than for the other levels of interaction. Because of this shorter period of time, the relational intensity is lower as well — but still on a level of informality, friendliness and safety, in order to maintain the community feeling and resilience. See figure 15 on the left.

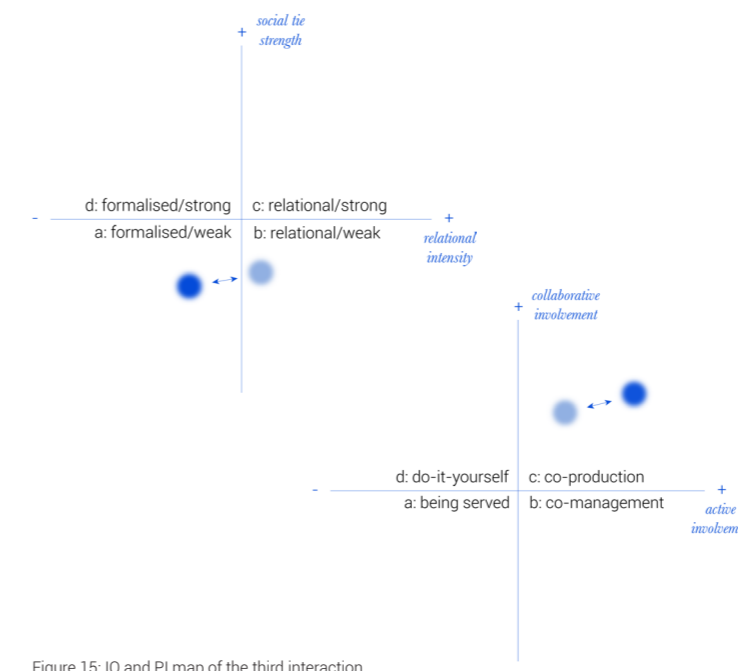


Figure 15: IQ and PI map of the third interaction

Knowledge sharing and boundaries

As described in the theory of communities of practice, the practice of a community greatly revolves around creating a platform of shared knowledge. Next to that, the community itself is constituted by learning from each other. Gilligan (2007) also argues that communities are the best spaces in order to learn and develop yourself. It is therefore very clear what kind of value any youth initiative should create or exchange while collaborating – albeit with each other, or with other stakeholders: knowledge. However, each interaction holds different kind of knowledge and therefore will also require a different kind of exchange. To be able to differentiate between the different kinds of knowledge, I have used the notion of boundaries and boundary objects.

“All learning involves boundaries”, state Akkerman and Bakker (2011, p. 132). Boundaries can be seen as an invisible, intangible limit of knowledge – knowledge being the widest form of its definition. They are defined as sociocultural differences between groups, which can cause discontinuities or misunderstandings in communication between these groups. Boundaries are therefore always present around communities, as they share forms of mutual knowledge. However, I would personally like to argue that boundaries can be around an individual as well; as your own thoughts, ideas, experiences and skills constitute who you are, and your knowledge and thereby worldview can be very different from others – causing discontinuities as well. Viewing knowledge as boundaries, the act of knowledge sharing can be defined as boundary crossing, and artifacts which may help in doing so are called boundary objects (Star, 1989). In the theory of boundaries, it is also important to note that boundaries are there to be crossed, and the differences between boundaries are opportunities to learn. This is a paradox, which reminds me of Schrodinger’s cat: boundaries exist to be crossed, and when they are crossed, they are not boundaries anymore.

To illustrate this in a less abstract way, let us imagine a person A and a person B, two friends, who come together for a coffee and a to catch up. Person A is very fond of football, while person B is does not know anything about it. Person A has a lot to tell about his football game of last weekend, but as he is talking, he notices that person B does not understand him. This shows the boundaries they both have: their knowledge does not overlap, which causes a discontinuity in their interaction. Then, person A thinks of something: he grabs a piece of paper and draws the football lineup on a field, to then use arrows to illustrate how passes are made and how the game works. This drawing is the boundary object, which makes it easier for person B to understand the other person, learn a bit about football, and catch up with the story. The boundary is crossed!

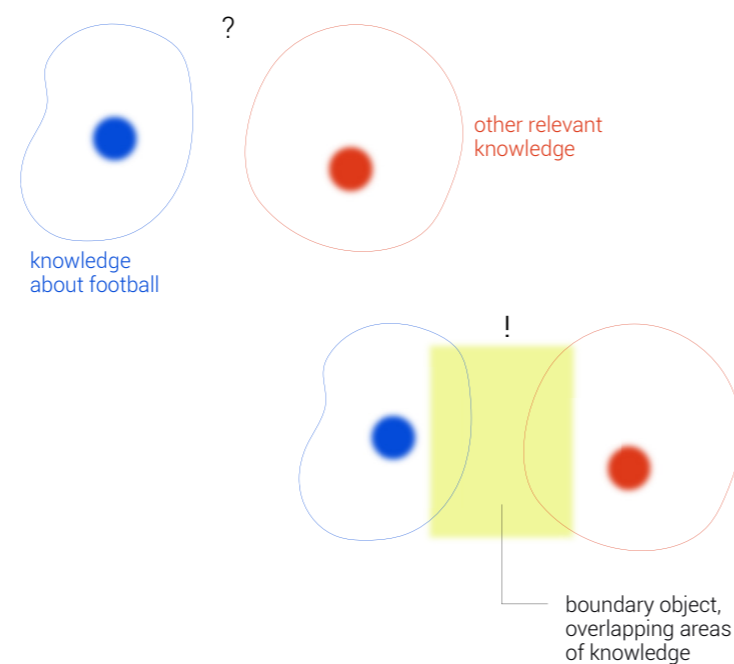


Figure 16: A boundary object works as an overlapping tool for knowledge boundaries

An interesting notion by Akkerman & Bakker (2011) is, however, that this learning on boundaries is different from linear education – i.e., I teach you something and you listen. Instead, the boundary can be crossed at two different sides, meaning that if person B knows something about tennis, he can draw this on the same piece of paper as well, which may even result in person A gaining a different perspective on football. This is called dialogicality: the ability for a person to communicate and learn about different realities by mutual engagement (Markova, 2003).

In this dialogicality, there are different forms of dialogical learning on boundaries (Akkermans & Bakker, 2011). For each of the levels of interaction within the JongerenGarage, I will explain what form of dialogical learning will take place.

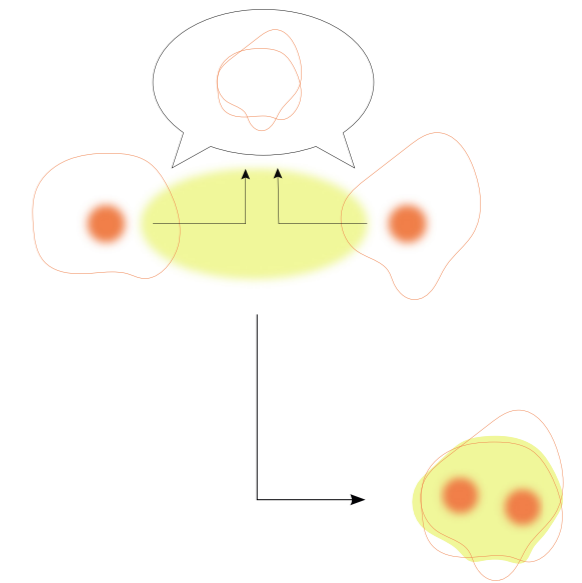


Figure 17: Through a boundary object, a common ground can be found

The first interaction level, between youth, the boundaries which are crossed are mostly individual. The dialogical learning mechanism which takes place when crossing these kinds of boundaries would then be identification (Akkerman & Bakker, p. 142). In identification, the different boundaries are taken into account and reflected upon in terms of similarities and differences. Next, all parties (in this case, individuals) involved admit to and recognise the co-existence of these different boundaries and how they relate to each other, thereby forming their own identities based on the relation to others (Timmons & Tanner, 2004). For instance, somebody can be ‘the quiet one’ in one group, but ‘the loud one’ in another. This relativity of your own identity is important when coming into a new group. By identifying boundaries they can be reconstructed and thereby, in my view, can open up a space for a new, common boundary – creating a strong domain for a community. This is in line with the fact mentioned earlier: that the youth of a youth initiative should construct the core of the community by creating strong relationships.

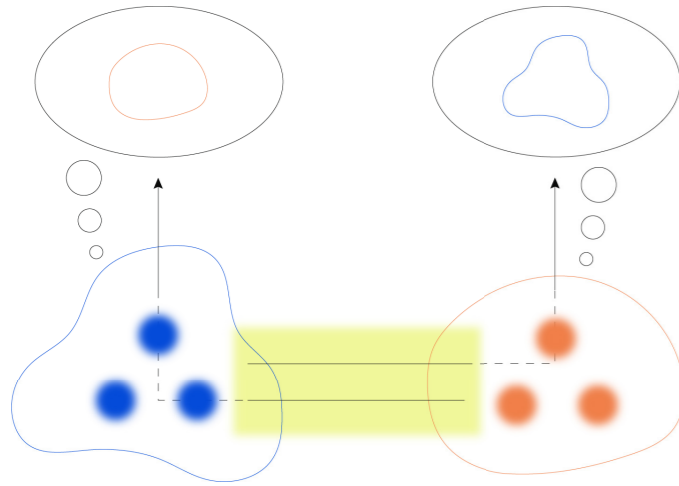


Figure 18: Here, a boundary object facilitates knowledge about each other's boundaries

Then, on the second interaction level, the boundaries which are present are the ones between the youth and the supportive organisation (hereby discarding individual interactions – only looking at interactions between the two communities, within their new temporary community). As they both go through design processes, but different ones, what they need to establish is a common form of communication and structure in order for the supportive organisation to be able to provide the needed support. In dialogical learning, this mechanism will be coordination (Akkerman & Bakker, p. 143). Coordination takes place when a boundary object is used in order for the work which is done by both parties to go smoothly. In this case, the boundary object is very important, making for a structured means of communication shared between the two parties (J. K. Christiansen & Varnes, 2007). By using this boundary object, boundaries should become more permeable, in the sense that the collaboration runs so smoothly that both parties involved do not have to think about crossing boundaries (Star, 2010).

This is important in the collaboration between youth and the supportive organisation, as they will not work together that often, but on a long term, requiring routinisation of the collaboration (i.e. we will come together once a month, or once a week). Next to that, as the organisation will provide a supporting role in the design process of the youth a but the youth will still be the owners of the process, crossing boundaries by coordination can help to balance the structure of the process between being too rigid and too loose, by having a boundary object which allows for communicating the needs and expectations of both parties in the process. By coordinating, boundaries are overcome rather than reconstructed, allowing for a new, but weaker, community.

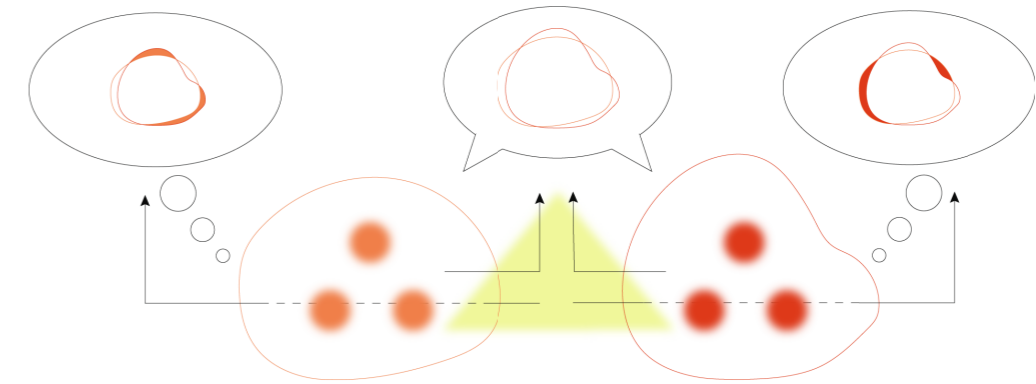


Figure 19: A boundary object here helps to identify your own knowledge gaps

Lastly, on the third level of interaction, between youth and other stakeholders, the most obvious way of knowledge sharing takes place: when the youth of the youth initiative will try to learn something from another stakeholder. This applies for both process-based stakeholders and content-based stakeholders. When this happens, the dialogical learning mechanism on this boundary is transformative (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011).

All literature about transformative learning show that transformation can only and will always start with a confrontation in which a problem or issue at the boundary is detected. In this case, both the stakeholder involved and the youth share two 'problems'; first, the knowledge gaps which exist on their boundaries (which is most likely the reason why they get in touch), and second, the problem of the youth health care in general (which is the reason why the stakeholders agree on working together).

The chances are big that only the youth, when contacting a stakeholder for help, will experience this former mentioned gap and will have to learn something new, and the stakeholder involved can provide them with certain information – so the stakeholder does not experience a gap in the first place. However, when both parties come together, gaps on the boundary of the stakeholder can also come to light, and they can learn a lot from the youth as well, as they probably have other perspectives on different matters. In addition, it can of

course also happen that a stakeholder contacts the youth initiative for a certain piece of advice or knowledge, instead of the other way around. Here, the same thing will happen: the youth will share what they know, but by doing so, also learn other things themselves.

Next to these identified gaps, the shared problem which connects the parties, can lead to the synthesis of new in-between practices (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011, p. 148). In other words, the fact that both parties come from different backgrounds – and thus have their own practices – but want to solve the same problem, leads to new ways of solving this problem, outside of the prior knowledge from both parties. This applies more explicitly to process-based stakeholders rather than content-based stakeholders, as these stakeholders will probably be designers or other experts sharing their knowledge and practices around the process of designing or problem solving in general, thus very much focused on methods and doing. However, it applies to content-based stakeholders as well, as they might have more implicit ways of dealing with the problems in youth care, for instance. By sharing this with the youth, and the youth sharing their perspective on the matter, a new perspective in the form of a new, in-between practice may emerge.

There are three ways of boundary crossing: (1) syntactic, in which both parties learn to share the same language to communicate; (2) semantic, in which both parties recognise their different perspectives and interpretations on this language in order to learn more, and (3) pragmatic, in which both parties not only share and acknowledge these differences but also use those in order to transform known knowledge (Carlile, 2002). Within the youth initiative, each boundary crossed will both bring latent needs and tacit knowledge to life and develop new forms of knowledge or practices, which means that the boundary is always crossed in a pragmatic sense. This also implies that, because knowledge is transformed, the boundary objects involved in this transformation will have to reflect these differences in knowledge and depict the new knowledge involved. In order to do this and create a common language for this knowledge, as “(...) words naturally mean different things to different people” (Akkermans & Bakker, 2011, p. 135) and so everybody may have a different interpretation of the same thing, best would be if the boundary objects were actually created by both parties involved, instead of just used. This shows that the creation of boundary objects is actually similar to using generative tools in design research, which also is built upon the creation of objects and artifacts rather than using words to express yourself. The making of boundary objects, therefore, is inherent to designing.

Mutual learning

Referring back to the first chapter, in which I showed that the problem of youth care in the Netherlands is wicked, research has shown that in order to design for the complexity of wicked problems a useful approach is through a bottom-up approach. In addition, other research has been done on the effectiveness of transdisciplinary co-production in wicked problems. The strength of this transdisciplinarity lies, among others, in the fact that it does not only take into account disciplinary knowledge, but also other, tacit types of knowledge – which are essential to the understanding and solving of complex problems (Scholz & Steiner, 2015). In addition, the focus of a transdisciplinary process is shifted towards learning instead of reaching a certain goal (i.e. a solution to the problem) (Baumber et al., 2019), which is in line with the development of practices of

communities.

Polk, in her literature about transdisciplinary co-production, argues that in order to transform knowledge together – especially when the parties involved come from different backgrounds – there is a certain sequence of steps which have to be taken: (1) formulating the problem; (2) generating solutions, and (3) evaluating these results and the process as a whole. This can be viewed as a very simplified design process, meaning that transdisciplinary co-production takes place in design processes as well. But, in addition to this, in order to keep all parties at the same page in every stage of the process – and Polk’s research has shown that this is important as everybody shares the same responsibility and it is therefore crucial that everybody stays as motivated and included – there needs to be reflexivity during the process (Polk, 2015, p. 114). Van der Bijl-Brouwer et al. (2019) argue that this reflexivity is also of great importance because the context in which this transdisciplinary co-production takes place is and will always be changing, so in order to steer the process according to these changes, you have to reflect on what is happening and what is needed in that specific situation (van der Bijl-Brouwer et al., 2019) – reinforcing the earlier mentioned theory about resilience. The concept of learning is thus understood here as a transformational process through which individuals and groups develop new views and, consequently, new ways of acting (Merizow, 1997).

Polk & Knutsson (2008) elaborate further on this importance of reflexivity, stating that for successful transdisciplinary co-production to happen, different value rationalities and power relations need to be taken into account. With this, they mean that for different people, certain knowledge can mean different things, and can be of different value based on their own perspective and interests, e.g. one participant can be more focused on finances, whereas another one on personal wellbeing. Next to that, the process of transdisciplinary learning always brings certain roles and levels of participation with it, which can differ depending on where in the process the participants are situated. For instance, if one of the participants is good at prototyping, he or she may have a greater leading role in the prototyping phase, but a less important role in the prior research (of course, it can be argued that this person

could do both, but this is a simplified case to illustrate what is meant).

In order to make these value rationalities and power relations explicit, Polk & Knutsson introduce the concept of mutual learning, which is defined as “(...) informal exchanges of knowledge and experiences based on reciprocity and reflexivity, all of which are foundational to producing legitimate and socially accountable knowledge” (Polk & Knutsson, 2008, p. 646). In this mutual learning process, the emphasis is laid on a double-loop learning process instead of single-loop – so instead of a linear process in which rules, norms and strategies are taken as truth and followed, these rules, norms and strategies are constantly questioned and reflected upon (Argyris, 1990). So, summarised, this reflexivity in the process should be both focused on the process of participation or co-creation itself, and on the information which is created and shared.

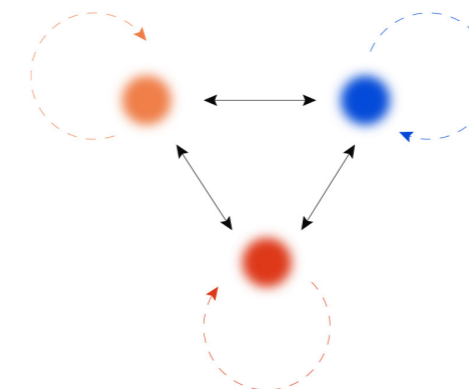


Figure 20: Through interacting, you also constantly reflect

Because we are dealing with a wicked problem and therefore there is not one apparent solution, it is important that the goal of the youth initiative is really emphasised towards learning instead of creating or thinking of a solution. Snowden and Boone (2007) write that in complex problems, the only way to find out what works to solve it and what does not, is by experiments which are ‘safe to fail’ (Snowden and Boone, 2007). Here, as well, the emphasis is laid on learning from these experiments instead of coming to an actual solution to the problem. This is an interesting and important point, as the goal of the project will greatly determine if a project is deemed successful or not – i.e., if the goal is reached, the project is successful, but if it is not, did it fail? What outcomes does one measure the value and success of a project upon?

When a certain participatory design project is carried out, there are always clear objectives that the design (i.e. the outcome) should meet, but in addition to that, there can also be secondary outcomes which contribute to the value of the project. This means that on the one hand, the project may have failed, but on the other hand, it could have provided the participants with new skills, knowledge and relationships, which still makes the project fruitful and valuable (Lundmark, 2018). In a youth initiative, I think this safeness to ‘fail’ (which in my opinion is again a paradox, as failing could lead to great learnings and therefore is not considered failing anymore) is crucial. By reflecting and learning, the youth initiative can be used as an experiment to shape it for future generations and, therefore, also contribute to creating the utopian youth care. In addition, by framing the goal of the youth initiative in this way and making way to fail, the pressure on the youth to perform is also less, providing for a more positive and fun experience, instead of something pressured and stressful.

2.1.3 — can youth be autonomous within a youth initiative?

As described in chapter one, there is a large discrepancy and misunderstanding between adults and youth, especially when they have to collaborate: Power levels shift to only adults, and youth feels unheard and not taken seriously. In order to understand why this mechanism occurs and what to do against it, I have reviewed literature on adult-youth interactions within collaborations. In addition, I have delved into literature on empowerment and agency, in order to clarify what empowerment is and how it relates to agency within a design process. As it is important that youth is both guided and feels autonomous in a youth initiative, a clearer definition of both agency and empowerment can help in designing for this balance.

Adults and youth

When adults and youth collaborate, there are different kinds of collaboration between them, according to Jones & Perkins (2004). Other than the ladder of participation by Hart (1992) or the pyramid of youth involvement by Mitra (2000), they have focused on what interactions between youth and adults take place in these different kinds of collaborations, instead of focusing only on the role of youth (Jones, 2004). The different kinds of collaborations are placed on a continuum, called the 'Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships', in which the leadership is shifted from adults to youth in each stage, with a mutual partnership in between.

In adult-centered leadership, adults and youth collaborate in a way where adults will always have the last say in what is being done. An example given by Jones (2004) is if youth were to participate in a church youth camp, but had no say or input in its implementation.

Adult-led collaboration does focus a bit more on youth interaction, in the sense that youth can be asked to give their opinion sometimes, but still within the framed space provided by adults.

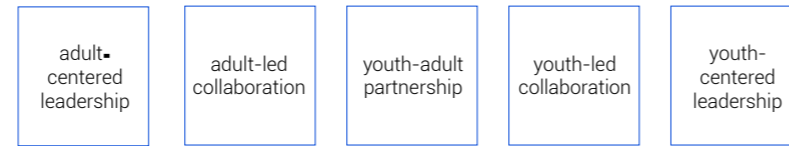


Figure 21: The continuum of youth-adult relationships, adapted from Jones (2004)

When having an adult-youth partnership, both adults and youth share the same level of responsibility and accountability in the process. They both equally participate in decision making, implementation and utilising their own skillset. A partnership usually evolves after a collaboration — both adult- or youth-led.

In youth-led collaboration, youth initiates and leads certain tasks in the process, but they can still ask adults for help or support when needed.

Lastly, we speak of youth-centered leadership when youth organises and executes an entire project independently, with little or no adult involvement. This does not occur that often, as adults usually can provide some help in terms of resources, which makes the leadership shift to a youth-led collaboration. As youth is completely independent and uncontrolled, youth-centered leaderships can have negative consequences, such as gang formation (Jones, 2004).

Ideally speaking, a youth initiative should be a youth-led collaboration when working with other stakeholders. However, when allocating these different levels of youth-adult collaborations, it has not to be forgotten that the perceptions of these collaborations may vary between adults and youth. For instance, Jones & Perkins (2006) have found that in a youth-adult partnership, adults perceive the participation of youth higher than the youth perceive it themselves. This can be illustrated by the fact that adults take on a leading role naturally, leaving youth with nothing to say and thinking that

adults know it better anyway (Jones & Perkins, 2006), which is an example of the natural discrepancy and misunderstanding between youth and adults. This discrepancy can best be explained through the fact that adults and youth both have negative preconceptions about each other, which influences the collaboration negatively from the beginning (Guzman et al., 2003).

Thus, even though we can be theoretically speaking of a certain type of collaboration between youth and adults, in practice it may turn out differently — or at least in the eyes of the youth. This is a very important note for a youth initiative, as in this collaboration, the youth should feel empowered and to make their own decisions — otherwise the initiative loses part of its purpose; namely to give youth a voice in the process of youth care innovation.

To assure that the collaboration between youth and adults is optimal and equal, therefore, two things can be done: (1) the perceptions of youth should be reflected upon throughout the entire collaboration, and (2) the discrepancy between adults and youth should be taken into account in the beginning, in order to start the collaboration with a clean slate and/or equal expectations (Jones & Perkins, 2006).

Agency and empowerment

Feeling empowered literally means that one feels the power to perform a certain action. In recent years this definition gained more attention in sociological and organisational research, in which its definition can be applied in a more practical sense. Zimmerman & Perkins (1995) explain that there are two different things when studying empowerment: processes and outcomes. As I have already reviewed some literature which describe empowerment as a condition to something else, empowering processes are most relevant for me to study.

A general definition of an empowering process is given by Maton & Salem (1995), who have created this definition based on their own literature research. They describe empowerment as a process which enables people to reach their personal (life) goals through collaborating and participating with others. Thus, it is something that occurs through and with other people (external) rather than by yourself (internal). This is complementary to community theories described above, in

which the greater good is more important and influential than an individual. In addition, it implies that participatory design can also serve as an empowering process, in which people work together to reach a certain, common goal. However, this does not necessarily mean that when a community is constituted, people automatically feel empowered. Next to being in a loose, voluntary organisation such as a community, it is also due to the conditions in which this community operates and the interactions which take place between its members. For instance, Cornell Empowerment Group (1989) define empowerment as something being present when the members of a community care for each other, have mutual respect, have critical reflection upon each other, and all participate actively within the community. These conditions somewhat overlap with the earlier reviewed theories on communities of practice, (transdisciplinary) collaboration and resilience, showing us that empowerment and community belonging are two important keys to success in (youth) design initiatives, reinforcing each other.

As to agency, Eteläpelto et al. (2013) have found that "professional agency is needed especially for developing one's work and work communities, and for taking creative initiatives. It is also needed for professional learning and for the renegotiation of work-related identities in (changing) work practices" (p. 62). This agency, however, again has multiple definitions spread over multiple areas of research. On the one hand, agency can be seen as something which is not only limited to humans, but also to objects and resources (Latour, 1996). This means that, theoretically speaking, it is not a only a human who can have agency over a certain process or activity; it can also be an object. Latour illustrates this by showing that when a shepherd places a fence to herd his sheep, he is still herding them, but he is not directly in control — nor is there a clear physical resemblance or connection between him and the fence. This is Latour's notion on interobjectivity — when objects play an equal important role when humans interact. For me, as a designer, this is a very interesting perspective: it can imply that when designing something for others to use, the agency is actually in hands of the design instead of at the user. If this is the case, it is more logical to look at when people

actually feel like they have agency instead of if they actually have it.

On the other hand, the term agency holds a variety of definitions, all loosely describing concepts as “(...) active striving, taking initiatives, or having an influence on one's own life situation” (Eteläpelto et al., 2013, p. 46). These are all subjective and personal concepts, at least in terms of how they are measured — a very assertive person may feel differently about taking initiatives than somebody who is very shy. This brings us back to the point that it makes more sense to look at people's feelings and experiences around agency than to look at the actual extent to which somebody holds agency over a certain matter. An example of this is how Anna, Bella and Charlotte were eager to help others through being ExpEx: They were feeling empowered because they felt like they were taking control over their past by using it for the better, while in fact, obviously, they did not have any control when it happened.

2.1.4 — key takeaways

- A youth initiative can be classified as a community of practice, in which the main practice is to share different kinds of knowledge with one another;
- Resilience in these kind of communities is important so that they stay together. This resilience can be obtained through building a solid community base, and balancing support and empowerment within the community;
- On each interaction level, different gradations of participation and collaboration take place. This is important to consider when designing for these interactions, as they are not all as intense;
- Knowledge sharing can be viewed as crossing knowledge boundaries by using boundary objects. Designing something to help create these boundary objects should therefore result in easier knowledge sharing;
- Knowledge boundaries can be crossed by different types of dialogical learning mechanisms depending on what the nature of the interaction is;
- Mutual learning can be obtained by reflective practice during a certain process, especially in diverse groups of collaborating people;
- The feeling of agency and empowerment is subjective, so it is not possible to design for general empowerment. Instead, it should be measured by reflection on perception.

2.2 — experts' views

As the last subchapter was focused solely on theoretical frameworks, I decided to go into the field and interview two experts on the one hand youth collaborations, and on the other hand constituting a community in a neighbourhood in Rotterdam. This provided me with richer insights on how the read theory relates to practice, and insights which could perhaps only be gotten from experience rather than only theory.

2.2.1 — setup

Participants

I interviewed Daphne Daalhof, the coordinator of ExpEx in Rotterdam, on youth collaboration and how to coordinate that. Besides, I interviewed Marleen ten Vergert, who is the project manager of the BoTu12 community building project in Bospolder-Tussendijken, a neighbourhood in Rotterdam.

Goal

The goal of interviewing Daphne was to get a better view of how youth work together in practice, and what her experience is in supporting and guiding a collaborating group of youth. Marleen was interviewed about her project at the municipality of Rotterdam, where she worked on setting up a community for neighbourhood participation in Bospolder-Tussendijken. The main goal of the interview was to understand the differences between theories about communities and how it works in practice, together with some practicalities such as recruitment and maintaining.

Method

Semi-structured interviews were set up for both the interviews. Daphne was interviewed via Skype, Marleen via telephone. Both conversations lasted around half an hour. They were analysed by clustering main themes. For the highlights of the transcripts, see appendix II.

2.2.2 — results: Daphne Daalhof

Recognition

One of the things she has noticed is that for youth to be motivated to do something, whether in a group or not, they need recognition. It does not matter if they get paid to do something or not, for them it matters that their voice is heard and someone cares about their opinion. Youth often feels unseen and unheard in this society, also by each other — the rise of social media has resulted in a lot of taboos around difficult topics. They need to listen to each other too.

In addition, their intrinsic motivation can also be very high. This is mostly dependent on what they get out of it — they like to learn and develop themselves for the future, so that it is something that they can carry further with them on the longer term, next to being involved in and thinking about societal issues. But, in this, it is again important to let them see the impact that they actually have — otherwise, their motivation will decrease.

Structure and clarity

Then, in order for a group of youth to work independently together, it is very important for them to have a clear idea of what they are going to do. Youth always seeks for a certain structure and clarity, so if the task that they need to perform is evidently framed, it makes it easier for them to commit to it. This is why the youth initiative would need a 'backbone': a set of rules, expectations and agreements. Next to helping youth to plan their activities accordingly, this backbone can also provide for a plan if something goes wrong — for instance

if somebody does not feel like participating anymore. Because, according to Daphne, chances are quite big that youth can fall out of the project because they deal with stress from other, non-voluntary activities, such as school and work. Therefore, their motivation, again, is extra important.

Safety

Another crucial factor which helps youth collaborate is a feeling of safety. Hooking on the concept of recognition and structure, a feeling of safety creates a space where youth can be open to share their experiences and thoughts — like Charlotte said. This needs time to create, it does not happen instantly — Daphne says in practice, it takes approximately three months for youth to really feel comfortable around each other. Then, when this safe space is formed, there will be times that the youth will struggle with themselves or within the group. When this happens, it is important to have one person which they can turn to in order to reflect and understand what is happening. This can be an outsider, such as Daphne is for the ExpEx, but it can also be someone within the group — as long as this role is assigned explicitly.

A pitfall of having this safe space, however, may be that it turns into a support group rather than a comfortable environment. Therefore, within the JongerenGarage, it is essential to frame the time which is spent on this and in what shape these talks will take place.

Dealing with diversity

Lastly, how a group of youth functions is very much dependent on which people are in the group and what their personalities are like. Daphne has experienced a lot of different dynamics between girls themselves and boys themselves, or certain groups of 'nerds' and 'youth from the street'. Diversity within a group is good, especially in a youth initiative, because they can learn things from each other, but it is crucial that there is enough time and effort spent on getting to know each other. Next to that, they need to reflect on certain feelings they have towards each other, to overcome possible preconceptions or negative associations.

2.2.3 — results: Marleen ten Vergert

Bring people together over something fun

At BoTu12, they work with the principle of Asset-Based Community Development by Cormec Russel. This puts the focus of a community on something positive: "focus on what's strong instead of what's wrong." This basically means that in order for a community to grow and flourish, they should be aware of their own strengths, passions and what makes them excited. That is, according to Marleen, the key for a start of a community. That is what has to be there first: people who come together just to share what they are passionate about.

"One person may be like; 'my niece has a handicap', so then she knows about that and can share it. And then someone else knows a lot about the neighbourhood he lives in, and someone else knows a lot about sports. They can share that with each other."

The basis of a community, therefore, is sharing knowledge — the rest will come later.

Marleen also stresses that the activities they will do are not too specified. It should be specified to some extent, but in the end the community has to have the power to decide what they will focus on. The design brief of JongerenGarage, therefore — to design the utopian healthcare — is perfect.

Diverse recruitment

In order to recruit the group, Marleen suggests to keep it as diverse as possible. She says that it is best to not pick people based on a certain profile, because that limits other people's chances, and that is not what one would want to do when starting an open, accessible community representing the voices of everyone. The more people you recruit, the higher the chances will be that the group will be diverse in personalities as well — in every group, there will always be leaders, mediators and followers. This allows the group to have a corrective ability of itself — to reflect on what is happening in case a conflict or disagreement emerges.

Then, while recruiting, it is also important to keep a balance between accessibility and transparency: when putting up an advertisement, the recruitment is very transparent, but it may be less accessible for people who do not think too much of themselves — and precisely these people can be of great value for the community, and have a lot of potential to grow themselves. In addition, when recruiting via other channels such as employers, they should not only suggest the people who stand out for them, but also the people with the most potential within.

Lastly, the people who want to participate should get something in return, or at least an offer of getting something in return. For the members of BoTu12, three things were promised: a modest amount of volunteer salary, a broad network of people, and assistance to personal needs. An example of the latter may be that somebody would need an internship or a reference for a new job. In the end, it seemed, these returns often were not needed or asked for later.

Keep the members motivated

Maintaining a community is easy when two things are abided by, says Marleen. First, they have to have a certain acknowledged position, so e.g. they get a budget that they might spend on something, or a strong voice in decision making. They need to have the feeling as if their work is having an impact. Second, they need to have the space and time to do something fun together! They can organise trips to other cities or countries, or visit a relevant company — fun things can be relevant for research too. This helps the members to bond and stay motivated.

Another factor for maintaining the community is, as mentioned before, the corrective ability. Sometimes, this corrective ability must come from somebody else, an objective outsider. Somebody who can support the group when they need it, to shine light on different situations, is perfect. In the case of the JongerenGarage, this will be Garage2020.

Refresh and continue

One of the great challenges Marleen has faced when working with communities is the 'end' of one. When people join a community initiative to improve certain things, they can stay

in the community for years — but that takes up the space of other people who would also like to share their opinion and think along. Marleen therefore suggests that there should be a maximum amount of time that people can be inside a community initiative, to support the flow of different people. She does stress that this is something which is quite hard to achieve in practice, because you cannot just 'kick people out' of the community — especially not if they are very motivated and are of great help and influence.

What can be done instead of renewing, is that the community grows. In this, it is difficult to deal with the boundaries of the community: when a community becomes stronger it develops norms and sets of rules overtime, which makes it harder for outsiders to join. Thus, there needs to be an equilibrium between a strong community and openness to the outside, which is hard to control or maintain.

2.2.4 — key takeaways

- For youth to be motivated to take their own initiative within a collaboration, it is important that they feel heard and are taken seriously;
- When working on a project, youth should know what goal they are working towards. Moreover, they need structure in order to commit to something;
- Youth needs a safe space in which they can share whatever they feel like, but there has to be a balance between sharing personal stuff and the conversation becoming a counselling group;
- Diversity in a group is good because youth can learn from each other, however, it is crucial that reflection on each other's differences take place in order to prevent miscommunications;
- Communities need to be built over something fun rather than a problem, so when starting a youth initiative about youth care, the problem of youth care should not be the focus point
- Recruitment of diverse people is key so that you give everybody an equal opportunity and do not rule people out beforehand;
- A reward, teambuilding activities and fun trips may help to keep members of a community motivated;
- After a maximum of two years a community needs to be (partly) refreshed in order to give others an opportunity to join and let their voice be heard. It is then important that these new people can blend in easily, as the community was already constituted.

2.3 — what does youth need?

Now that I had enough insights for a good basis of the framework, I decided to strengthen this by working together with youth. I did so by organising three sessions — each session would focus on one specific level of interaction. In order for the participants to understand what they would want in the future by joining a youth initiative such as the JongerenGarage, I used contextmapping, as it makes use of the path of expression, seen in figure 22. The path of expression is a term used by Sanders & Stappers to show that by reflecting on the present and past, a participant can envision what he or she would like in the future (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). In addition, it provides for tacit knowledge and latent needs, resulting in richer data than when conducting an interview, for example.

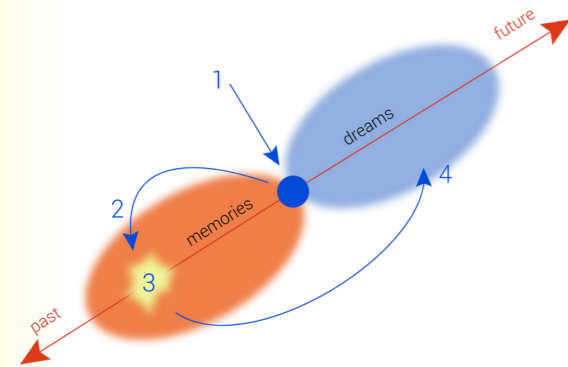


Figure 22: The path of expression, adapted from Sanders & Stappers (2012)

2.3.1 — setup

Coronavirus

Because I was focusing on interactions, I found it very important for the sessions to take place offline rather than online (while it was still possible). Luckily, Garage2020 provided me with their office key, so that we could do the sessions there. I wanted the participants to feel comfortable during the pandemic we were in (no lockdown at this point yet), so I decided that there would be a maximum of five participants, excluding me and the note taker, so that we could keep distance within the office. There was disinfectant as well, and I made sure that every participant had his or her own tools to work with. In terms of doing certain assignments together, I facilitated a clear role division each time so that the distance could be maintained.

Participants

I managed to recruit four people, depicted in figure 23. Except for the twins, nobody knew each other. I used Garage2020's resources to recruit, as it was difficult for me to get in touch with youth during the pandemic. Unfortunately, during each session, one person was absent — in the first two, it was someone who had tested positive for Covid-19, and in the last one somebody had to work. Nevertheless, the sessions worked fine with three participants as well.

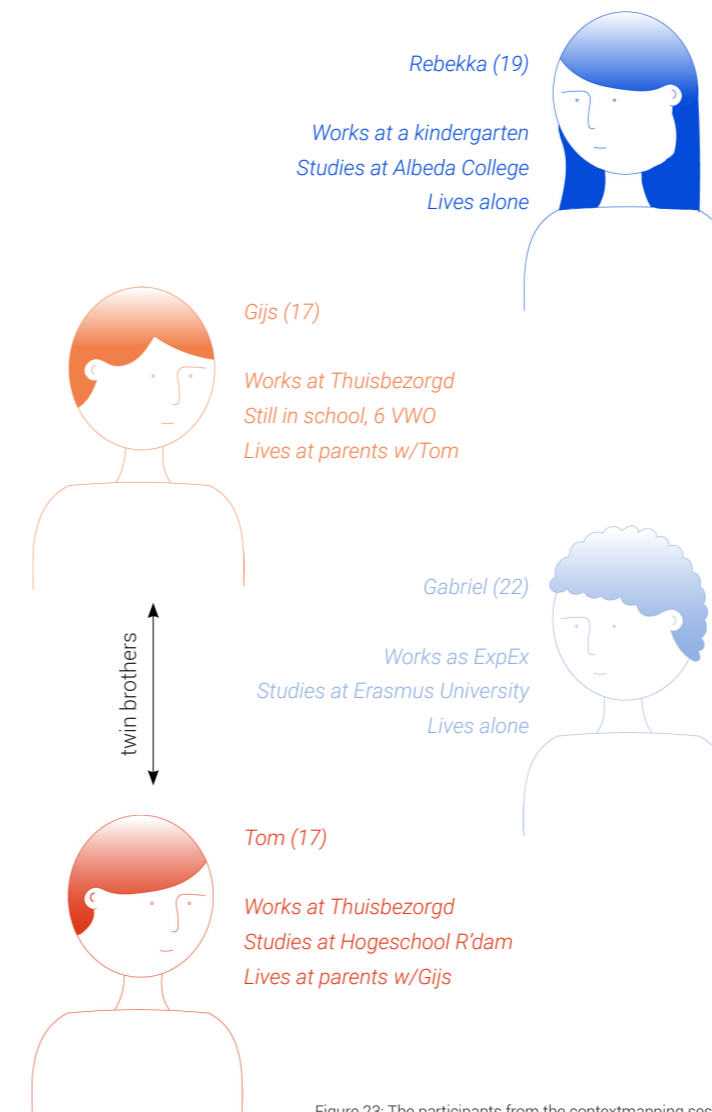


Figure 23: The participants from the contextmapping session

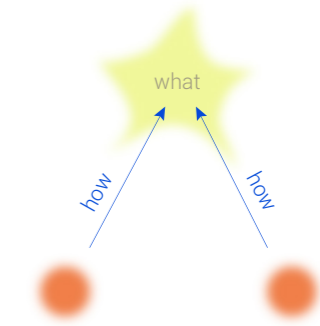


Figure 24: The path to a practice ('what') is the 'how'

Goal

For each session, I had made up two research questions based on the interaction levels mentioned in chapter 1, and on the dialogical learning mechanisms mentioned in chapter 2.2. I wanted to explore what these dialogical learning methods could entail and how youth perceives them, both in their function and in their nature of interaction. Thus, the contextmapping session was aimed on exploring the 'how' and the 'what' for each interaction level (see figure 24), which resulted in the following structure:

First level (youth with youth):

How does youth want to share?
What does the youth like to share (or not) with each other, in order to bond?

Second level (youth with supporting organisation):

How can youth best be supported in a youth initiative?
What is needed to create support?

Third level (youth with other stakeholders):

How can knowledge best be shared between adults and youth?
What kind of information can be shared between stakeholders and youth?

Method

Because I was using contextmapping, each participant was sent a sensitising booklet he or she had to fill in prior to each session. These booklets were made to be filled in by using Adobe Acrobat or printed out and filled in by hand. See figure 25. The booklets also consisted of three parts, of which each part was to be filled in prior to that session (so part 1; session 1, part 2; session 2, part 3; session 3).

Then, during each session, the path of expression was followed, by first discussing the booklets, then making a collage based on experience and in the end a co-creative assignment, see appendix III. The sessions lasted in between 1,5 and 2,5 hours each. A friend of mine helped me during the session, by documenting while I was facilitating.

Results were obtained by reading through the documented notes of each session and listening to the recorded audio, picking out the most relevant quotes and using those for an 'analysis on the wall' (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). The relevant quotes were gathered, put on post-its on the wall, and clustered and re-clustered until logical correlations were found, see figure 26.



Figure 26: Clustering the insights using Post-Its on the wall

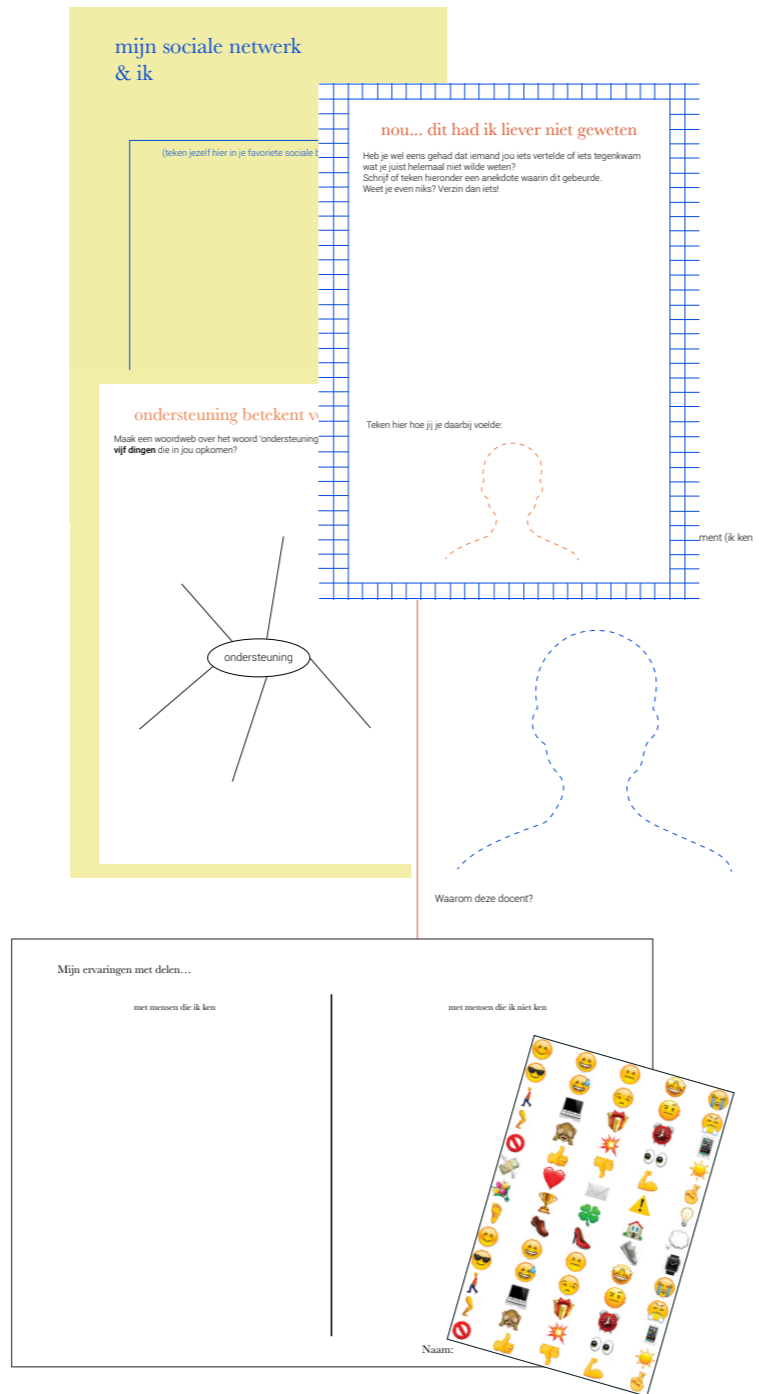


Figure 25: Some of the material made for the contextmapping session

2.3.2 — results session 1

The first session was mainly about breaking down boundaries and creating a space where you can get to know each other and share stories and experiences. It was very interesting, as we reflected on sharing in a group while sharing in a group, providing for very sincere and accurate answers. While doing my analysis, I noticed that the research questions I have made for the first level of interaction have a causal relationship: the what partly depends on the how, because it involves the physical space they are in. Therefore, the how has to be constituted first.

How does youth want to share?

Physical space

Everyone mentioned that there were certain activities or places where they shared more than usual. For Rebekka, for instance, this was when she felt as if she was home — by taking off her shoes and sitting on a soft rug on the floor. She also told us that she likes to sit on the couch while sharing with someone.

"It does not even matter where that couch is, as long as it's a couch." ¹

Gijs and Tom agreed on this homey feeling, by adding that they feel comfortable within their basketball team. In the locker room, lots of conversations are held, it is always an open environment.

When creating the ideal physical space to share in, plants, a soft rug, and a semi-chaotic, artistic wallpaper were made. This represented the homey feeling, the fact that there is room to make mistakes and say whatever you like, and 'just a nice vibe'. Tom and Gijs also made a basketball and a football, illustrating that it should have this team-feeling, but also that it should be a space you can share or do what you love and what makes you happy.



Figure 27: The safe space the participants created during the first session

The activity — a routine

Moreover, Gijs disclosed that he used to share a lot with his friend while he was biking home from school.

"It felt like we were in a secluded space, so we could talk about everything." ²

The feeling of a secluded space provided for a safe environment to share. It also has a form of ritual: this happened every time they were biking and became a routine. Tom likes to share with his mom when they walk the dog together, making it this same ritual. For Rebekka, the ritual is to share on the couch. Thus, there may be an object or activity which you can associate with sharing personal information.

[1] Implying that when you are comfortable physically, it does a lot for your mental comfort too.
[2] Sometimes, you do not want others to overhear your conversations.

What does the youth like to share (or not) with each other, in order to bond?

The context

Rebekka said that in a group with people she does not know well, she is always anxious about how she comes across. When Rebekka shared her personal story at the beginning of the session, it opened up the space for Tom and Gijs to share personal stories as well.

Rebekka was happy it worked, because she always does that – talking about her youth breaks the ice for others to say something as well.

“Everybody has something.”³

Therefore, it is important to have someone within the group who takes the lead in this and feels okay by sharing things, and sets the tone.

Gijs is sometimes a bit hesitant to share deeper feelings with people he knows well, because he is afraid they will think differently of him. Therefore, a new group provides a clean context for you to share whatever you would like. Then, people get to know you in that certain context, and it is not strange to share things you would otherwise not share. This also showed during the session: everybody was very open.

“I never even told my friends the things I told here today.”

Gijs did also mention that if you do not know each other yet, the other people might need some more context around your story. This is something to keep in mind when you share something – you might want to tell a little more than you are used to.

Next, time is also an important factor when sharing with others. With people you know and you are comfortable with, there is no time limit in sharing, which makes the ambience more open as well.

“And when you spend time together, strangers will not be strangers anymore.”

If there is no time to share something, you do not feel like there is an opportunity to share what you would like. Time is thus a crucial element for sharing.

Dependent on the reaction of others

How others react to the thing you have just shared is important for you to feel comfortable.

Rebekka later said that she was happy Tom and Gijs reacted the way they did because she would have regretted it otherwise.

“I’m happy that there was no awkward silence.”

Tom and Gijs mentioned that they sometimes do not like to share things with their mother because she will worry about them. Rebekka feels the same way about a friend of hers. Next, Gijs said that he shares more personal information about himself with people who have a sense of empathy.

“I have a friend who I have known for a long time, but he is too socially awkward to share something personal with.”⁴

This shows that how good you know the person does not necessarily play a big role in if you feel comfortable with that person or not – rather, his or her reaction. Rebekka reacted on Gijs’ story about the unempathic friend by saying that she sometimes prefers someone who is not that empathic so that there is “less drama”. Thus, how you would like people to react when you tell them something is dependent on the person, and the reaction of a person can determine what you want to share with him or her. It might be something that the person can communicate beforehand.

All participants agreed upon the fact that sharing needs to take place physically instead of online, so that you can see the reactions of others better by for example reading their body language. During the pandemic, therefore, they need to either be able to come together and keep safe distance, or the JongerenGarage should be postponed.

Agreements

Lastly, there needs to be space for negative and positive things to share.

“(…) When somebody only shares what he has done best, there is no room for things that go wrong.”

You have to be able to share your weaknesses as well. Positive things can give a distorted view of a situation, but it can also just be nice to share something you have done over the weekend. It is therefore important to make clear from the beginning that both positive and negative things will be shared. Besides, it can be quite annoying if you want to share a lot, but someone else does not do that.

“My dad doesn’t share anything with us, it drives me crazy.”⁵

It is hence good to make agreements beforehand on what is shared and what not, and communicate with each other where the personal preferences lie.



Figure 29: The participants very busy with crafting

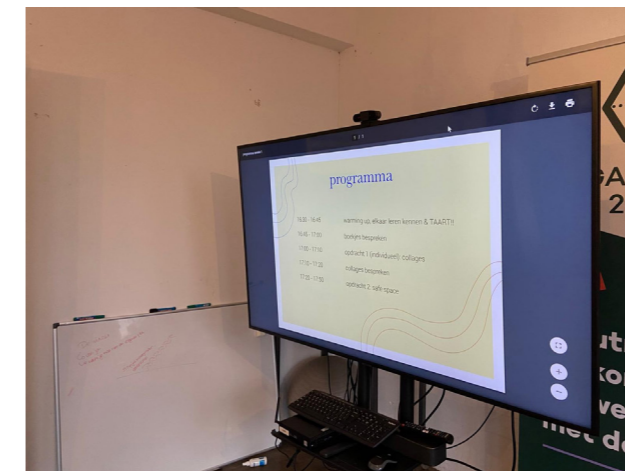


Figure 28: An agenda of the day was shown during the entirety of every session



Figure 30: The space all sessions were held in

[3] Saying that what she has gone through does not make her any different than others; everybody has had their own struggles in life.

[4] So there is a certain ‘code of conduct’ when sharing personal information between youth as well.

[5] This was mentioned during a story about Gijs en Tom’s dad who does not share his feelings, but does express them. Tom and Gijs were talking about how important it is to communicate these sorts of things to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretations.

2.3.3 — results session 2

In this session, I explored how youth views support, their likes and dislikes about it, and if they really need support from Garage2020 during their own design process — or if they think it nullifies their agency over the process.

It became evident that the participants had a clear idea of how support should look like, and how they would like Garage2020 to be involved in their process.

How can youth best be supported in a youth initiative?

Receiving VS giving

There is a difference between giving and receiving support. When giving support by helping others, you feel like a hero.

“When I help my mom with the iPad — it’s something super simple, but for her it’s very hard.”

It is fulfilling to see the effect of your help on others. Thus, it is nice to make this visible. Next, you feel appreciated when you support others. Rebekka works with children, and she loves how they find everything what she does amazing. That is why working with children gives her so much satisfaction. Gijs sometimes coaches kids, and he agrees. There are almost never situations in which you would not like to help someone.

“I can’t imagine that someone doesn’t want to help someone else. Except for if that person is just very egocentric.”

Another situation everyone agreed upon is when you have the feeling that someone does not deserve your help.

“If somebody wants to copy my homework, I only allow it to friends, not strangers.”

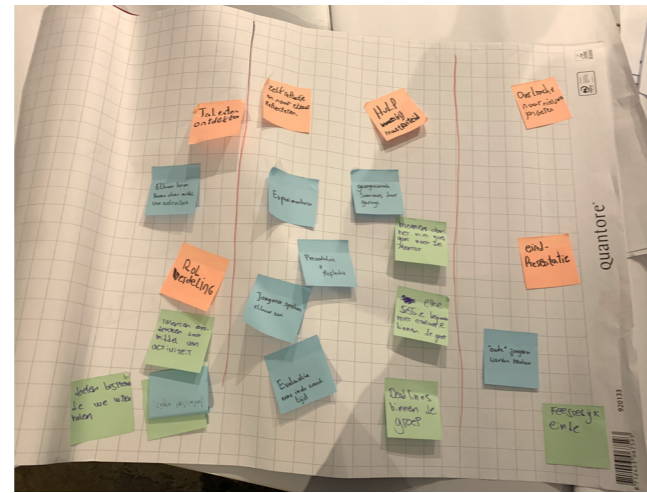


Figure 31: An overview of the process the participants created during the second session

Thus, the aforementioned safe space and reflective communication can help in this, when supporting each other. On the other hand, receiving support is mostly viewed as negative. It can be annoying if you did not ask for it. Tom and Gijs mostly recognise this in their parents.

*“I’m not 2 anymore.”*⁶

Receiving support when it is not needed thus results in a feeling of dependence and childishness. Rebekka relates to this feeling in another situation — when she does not feel so well and people try to help her.

“It comes from worrying, so I understand it, but it really does not help.”

So, even if it is with all good intentions — it is very important to just listen to the person and ask if the support is really needed, or even better, just wait for the person him or herself to ask for it.

Another negative aspect of receiving support is when someone is very supercilious and arrogant when providing the help. You have to really want to give the support unconditionally, instead of expecting something back.

Positive results

Tom and Rebekka did mention that they like to receive support when you really see the effect of it.

*“I want to see the result of the support I receive.”*⁷

Another positive result of receiving support is that you see that people care.

“It feels nice that people are there for you.”

Reflecting can help in this, by making visible what the exact effects of the given support are — both practically, but also emotionally, so what it does to your relationship.

Do it yourself

Support is not always about taking someone by the hand, it is also about letting someone go to figure it out themselves. There has to be a balance in that, though.

“I want to learn to do things myself, but I do need a guideline as to what to do.”

Gijs agrees. The best mentors he has had during high school were the ones who just let him do his thing. The pitfall of this is of course that there has to be a level of trust between the supporter and the supported; that the supported will really do what the supporter suggests. In the end, however, it is the responsibility of the supported to do something with it, as it helps him or her. This mutual trust can provide for an extra incentive to do it.

*“When I like my mentor, I do feel guilty if I did not do something that she suggested.”*⁸

Personal preferences

What you need in terms of support, is very personal. Rebekka for example likes to be supported emotionally, but Gijs hates being emotionally supported. Rebekka understands this, and has had this before as well — before she noticed that she really cannot do it herself. Tom thinks that this is because Rebekka is a bit older and is in a complete other phase of her life. Furthermore, some people just need more support than others, or they have a hard time admitting that they need support and need to melt down a bit before feeling comfortable. Gijs never asks for help, not even to a mentor; Tom and Rebekka sometimes do.

*“That’s what a mentor is for, right? I’m different than Gijs in this matter.”*⁹

These personal preferences need to be considered as well.

What is needed to create support?

Before the design activity

The participants all agreed on the fact that the youth first need to get to know each other first. Then, it is time to explore practicalities about each other.

*“To give youth the feeling of responsibility, they need to assign roles.”*¹⁰

Next to this feeling of responsibility, this can create a balance in the group — some people say more than others, and this way everybody can have an equal say in things. Tom suggests organising an activity in which you can explore your talents and skills, an escape room for example. This way, the youth can support themselves and each other. Then, it is time to involve Garage2020. One person from Garage2020 has to be assigned as the mentor and point of communication. This person has the role of a counsellor as well as someone who helps with practicalities, but only when the youth asks for it. Then, the goals and expectations of both parties can be discussed together — but no deadlines. These will follow later, and will be made by the youth themselves. In

[6] Gijs said this when his dad doublechecked if he had packed everything for his trip. This was apparently interpreted as an insult rather than support.

[7] If Gijs sees the result of the homework he did in a good grade, it will motivate him more to do it. Otherwise, he will probably slack off.

[8] So when there is a certain likeability involved, or an understanding that the person in question is only trying to help, shame can be evoked when not listened to.

[9] Here, Rebekka already began reflecting on her personality in relation to Gijs’ herself, showing she is rather reflexive herself already.

[10] Roles in the context of what everybody’s strengths and weaknesses are, implying that is important to know in order to feel responsible.

addition, agreements can be made between Garage2020 and the youth, for instance, when they want to do evaluations and how often.

During the design activity

As said before, the youth needs to be left alone in their process. If there are any conflicts within the group, they will first try to solve in themselves — and if it is unsolvable, they will contact the mentor from Garage2020.

*“The youth is responsible for their self-reflection to others.”*¹¹

In order to keep everyone on the same page, Rebekka suggests to start each day with a mini peer evaluation about the collaboration. Gijs adds that in this evaluation, it is good to involve the goals made at the beginning: where are we now, what do we want to do next?

There also needs to be space for the youth to experiment and just do things to find out how it works — without having an actual result.

In order to see if the goals are reached or not, there will be planned evaluations between Garage2020 and the youth. In these evaluations, it would be appreciated if Garage2020 also shows what they have been up to, in order to keep the relationship equal.

Rebekka further put forward that Garage2020, or other experts for that matter, can give seminars every now and then, about self-development, collaboration and other interesting subjects.

*“This way, they can show you, hey, this is another way to do it, but not the only way.”*¹²

Gijs agrees that this is different from unsolicited support, because they do not tell you to do something; they just provide you with information.

After the design activity

All participants agreed that the end of the process needs to be celebrated with everybody. Next to that, they would like to give a presentation of their end result to Garage2020, so that they

can show exactly what they did and how they have reached their goals.

Then, there needs to be an handover to the new youth — this will be done by the youth themselves as well. Rebekka suggests that one person from the old group can be a mentor in the new group, in order to be even more independent from Garage2020. Gijs and Tom agree, adding that the first group will have to figure everything out themselves, but after that it will go more smoothly without the help of adults.

2.3.4 — results session 3

The third and last session was all about learning and teaching. Luckily, the participants had a very strong opinion on good and bad ways of teaching, which made it easy for me to analyse the results into solid insights. However, while analysing, I also tried to read in between the lines — was it only the teacher's fault that somebody did not like him? Or did the youth have a say in this as well? This duality was interesting to see.

How can knowledge best be shared between adults and youth?

No pressure

When learning something, it is not nice to feel pressured by somebody else. Hence, all youth agreed on the fact that learning something yourself is more safe and enjoyable compared to somebody teaching you. Moreover, when you learn something very quickly, and only because you have to, it does not really stick to you.

*“I’ve learned a lot this past test week, but I also didn’t learn anything.”*¹³

This illustrates that time pressure and ‘having to do it’ do not contribute to a safe learning environment.

Equality

The most hated teachers were teachers who did not seem like human beings. “She was far too strict — we couldn’t do anything.” Some factors that can contribute to that feeling, is for example saying ‘u’ instead of ‘jij’ (the Dutch version of the German Sie and du, or the French vous and tu). According to Gijs, this results in a feeling of inequality — somebody standing above you, instead of next to you. This can also show when teachers do not have any empathy for you, and only abide by the rules instead of looking at specific cases (when you have not done your homework, for instance). This is also a reason Gijs mentioned that he feels more comfortable with female teachers as opposed to male — they are more empathic. Furthermore, it is important that the person teaching you

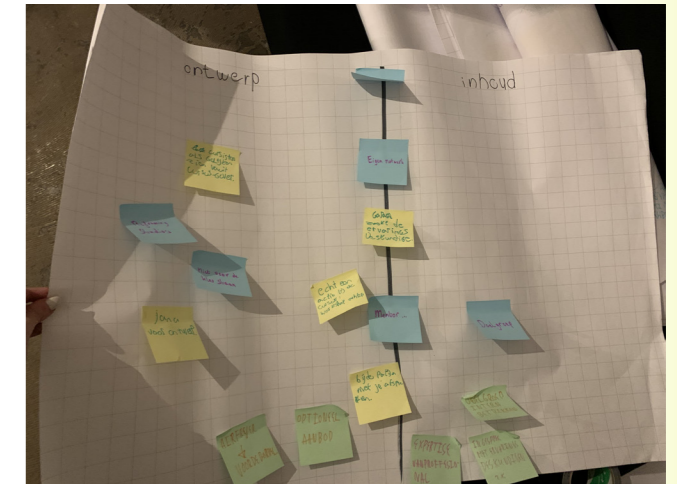


Figure 32: An overview of the knowledge the participants might need during the process

something is also open to talk about other subjects next to the thing he or she teaches, in order to constitute a more informal and personal relationship. A sense of flexibility or unpredictiveness was also mentioned to make teachers more humane and accessible.

“One day, my teacher brought a sword to school. I will never forget that!”

Openness from both sides

When somebody teaches you something, he or she must be passionate about what he or she teaches and also radiate that when talking about it.

“Some teachers seem to be there just for the money.”

Moreover, it has to be evident that the teacher does his or her best, otherwise you do not have the motivation to learn something from that person.

“I have a math teacher who only reads the answers aloud... I don’t learn anything from that.”

[11] Here, Tom meant that Garage2020 should not intervene if a conflict takes place. First, the participants should try to solve it themselves. That is their responsibility.

[12] Implying that the way things are asked or said already have a huge influence on how it is perceived (and that apparently, this tone is not used that often).

[13] Gijs meant that he did not learn anything he thinks he will need (in school), so he will probably forget it soon. No new skill or such.

On the other hand, it is also in the hands of the one who is learning. For instance, Gabriel mentioned that he had a chemistry teacher that he did not like – but he also did not do any homework or assignments for chemistry when he needed to. In hindsight, he thinks that this has contributed to his relationship with the teacher as well. Gijs also has a teacher that he does not like. When asked what exactly she does wrong, the answer was that she handles an approach which does not fit Gijs – learning small bits in between instead of doing everything last minute. Gijs was not open to her way of teaching as well, and he should be, because she only wants him to learn. Consequently, the teacher herself has to accept that her approach does not work for Gijs and just let him face the consequences of doing everything in the last minute himself. Rebekka backs that, saying that that if you are the one who wants to learn something, you have to accept that and be open to somebody teaching you that.

Doing by learning

Another thing which contributes to a positive learning experience, is being able to do it yourself. Rebekka and Gijs both disclosed that they are proud of themselves when they learn something on their own – so the feeling that they have done it themselves is important. The other advantage of doing it on your own is that you can do it on your own pace, without feeling either pressured or restricted. “I’m always a bit impatient when somebody else teaches me something.” So, for instance, instead of reading something or sitting in a classroom, you can do fun things which make you learn something, such as creative assignments or group work. This also relates very closely to the aspect of giving support when needed and in doing so, letting the youth do it themselves.

What kind of information can be shared between stakeholders and youth?

With experts

When needing to talk with an expert, the participants agreed that it would be ideal if Garage2020 could help with finding resources, next to using their own network. Because they will then contact that person themselves and talk to them

themselves, it does not minimise the agency – it is just more convenient to do it that way, because of the connections Garage2020 and Enver have. The downside of this is that the youth cannot decide who they talk to – so it might turn out that the person in question is not nice or it does not click. When this happens, Rebekka suggested that the youth can contact the mentor from Garage2020 and indicate that this is not a match, and they would like to speak to somebody else from that same expertise.

Rebekka would like to involve the target group of the design as well. These people they can try to contact themselves. The target group has to be involved internally – so different from experts – more in a sense of co-creating together, instead of just interviewing, for instance. Methods for involving these stakeholders can be provided by designers.

With designers

When working with designers, the participants mentioned the same as above – Garage2020 would provide them with the needed resources, and the youth would contact them themselves. If this is for example Reframing Studios or Afdeling Buitengewone Zaken, it would be useful if, after the youth have contacted them, they would provide them with optional offers that they can help with. It has to be optional, so that the youth does not feel obliged to ask them things if they can figure it out themselves. Moreover, it could be that there is a designer among the group, and then this expertise might not be needed. The JongerenGarage should therefore communicate that with the designers involved.

Furthermore, when working together with designers who teach you quite a lot, it is important that the teaching does not take shape in the form of a class.

*“It would be desirable if it is more like, ‘hey, this is what we know, what do you guys know, and what do you think?’”*¹⁴

In other words, what they share with each other can be determined by means of sparring at the beginning. This can also be combined with the aforementioned optional offers.



Figure 33: Facilitating the first session

[13] Just like in quote 12, implying that the way things are presented are very important.

2.3.5 — overall observations

Diversity within the group

The group itself was diverse, but not as diverse as I would want it to be. For instance, Rebekka was the only girl involved, which made me afraid that the boys would overshadow her, especially since Gabriel was not coming the first two sessions and Gijs and Tom knew each other very well, as they are twins. In terms of gender, I do not think there was a difference or disbalance, but in terms of knowing each other, there was. It was not too bad — Rebekka did stand her ground and always had something to say, but my friend who was taking notes did notice that the first time, the twins were talking a lot with each other, leaving Rebekka behind. The next sessions, therefore, I tried to involve her more actively sometimes by interrupting the twins and asking for her opinion. This is of course also due to the fact that there were only three people, but it does imply that if a majority of people know each other they might overshadow the rest.

On the other hand, the fact that the boys already knew each other well did break the ice a bit. I also think they motivated each other to participate more, as in the last session when Tom was absent and Gabriel present, Gijs seemed a bit more unfocused and sometimes bored.

So, as Marleen ten Vergert mentioned, it might be an idea to let the already participating youth recruit others, but knowing this, there must be a limit as to how many people know each other within the group, in order not to overshadow others and not have a 'preliminary common ground', so to say, excluding others.

Motivation and incentives

I also asked the group, prior to every session, why they came, and what their motivation was to sit in the same room altogether. The first session, it turned out that Tom and Gijs were promised sushi by their mom who recruited them for me (at least they were honest). Next to that, however, they were curious, and mentioned that working for youth care is important since "youth is the base of the rest of your life", and "youth understands each other better." This shows that even if you are not involved in youth care at all, you still might want

to join the JongerenGarage, because youth feels collectively responsible for each other.

For Rebekka, the reason was different — she has a background in youth care, so that is why this drew to her. Next to that, however, she was also promised ECTS by her teacher. Just like Tom and Gijs, she was promised a small reward.

Then, the sessions that followed, the incentives for the participants to come changed — they knew better what to expect from the sessions, and therefore their motivation was higher. They also got to know each other better, and Tom mentioned that the first session was very 'gezellig' and he came back because of that as well. Other motivations were to see where the sessions would go or how they would end, and honour existing commitments.

In the end, Rebekka joined the JongerenGarage as the second member. Tom and Gijs still hesitated, because they are both very busy. This does show that for Rebekka, the stakes simply feel higher, as she has experienced youth care and really wants to change it. It is thus interesting for me to dig deeper into the motivations of non-youth care-youth to join the JongerenGarage.

2.3.6 — key takeaways

- The participants like to share in an environment which feels homey, because it adds a certain atmosphere and association to that place;
- To be on the same page as to what is being shared, it is good to make agreements with each other what the purpose of the sharing to prevent negative reactions;
- Most participants like to help others, but they generally do not like when others help them, except when the results of that help are made visibly clear;
- Helping can also be in the form of supporting somebody in making the right decisions instead of only telling that person what to do;
- In what way or with what somebody wants and needs support really depends on that person, so it is good to communicate that beforehand;
- In a youth initiative, before the design activity, it is important that the participants get to know each others' strengths and weaknesses and to set a common goal;
- In a youth initiative, during the design activity, participants need to be responsible for their own process, but they can have somebody from outside as a mentor for if it goes wrong, and somebody sometimes providing them information they may or may not use;
- Besides, it is important to evaluate how the goals are going and if the deadlines are met;
- After the design is finished, it has to be documented and handed over to the next group — and celebrated;
- When learning, it is important that there is no pressure in the thing to learn and it is okay if it goes wrong;
- When teaching somebody it is important that he or she is treated like equal and that the relationship between the teacher and pupil is amical and open;
- All participants agreed that learning is more fun when you can do it yourself, meaning there are practical exercises;
- In a youth initiative, the agency can lie at youth when they make the decisions in who to contact and what to do, but that does not mean that others can give them suggestions or ideas — as long as they can choose from them;
- In a group where some participants knew each other and some did not, the balance was surprisingly good — but that was also due to Rebekka's and Gabriel's personalities. In another group, this might be different, and it is therefore good to design something to keep all participants as involved and equal;
- As a first incentive, the participants were promised a reward, but then the sessions itself became rewarding enough to show up.

2.4 — conclusion

This design exploration has helped me to identify what a youth initiative is in theory and how it can be shaped in practice. From the viewpoint of the three levels of interactions which were identified at the end of chapter 1, I explored how these three interactions take place and what happens within these interactions.

Each interaction has a function, a nature in which this interaction takes place, and an outcome. In general, the outcome of each interaction is that it results in a (temporary) community of practice, by the sharing of knowledge. This knowledge sharing can be done across so-called boundaries, being fictitious boundaries of your knowledge or experiences. Boundary crossing can sometimes be difficult, as you may not clearly understand somebody as he or she is explaining something you do not know of. Therefore, boundary objects can be created, through which this communication is easier. When this boundary object is used, the boundary is crossed, and a common ground of knowledge is built. This is what I envision to the base of a community: a common ground of knowledge and experience. Thus, through crossing boundaries, communities can be created. Facilitating the creation of these boundary objects can be a possible design direction to go into when designing for a youth initiative.

For each interaction, the boundaries crossed are different, and thus so are the function and nature of the interaction. The differences are explained in the next paragraphs.

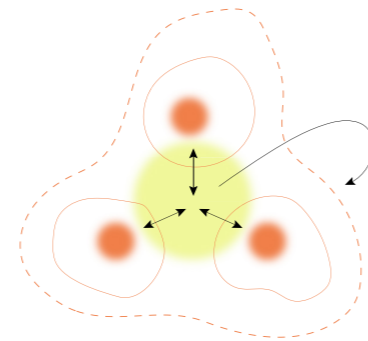


Figure 34: Boundary object A creates the core of the community

For the first level of interaction, the participants of the youth initiative share personal knowledge with each other by the creation of boundary object A. This personal knowledge may entail anything they want to share, but it is important that agreements are made beforehand on what the context of sharing is. For instance, you do not want to share that your dog has died in the middle of a casual conversation about what people like to do in their free time.

The nature of this interaction is amical, loose and personal, and comes from both ways equally. Youth from within the youth initiative will see each other often and build strong relationships with each other. The ambience around the sharing should be homey and comfortable for every participant involved.

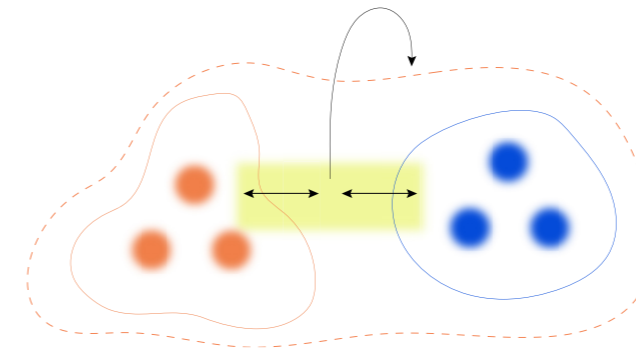


Figure 35: Boundary object B creates a new community between communities

On the second level, the participants and the organising party of the youth initiative share process-oriented knowledge such as goals and expectations. They can do so through the creation of boundary object B. This boundary object helps align the goals of both the organising party and the participants, as they may have different ideas about this. They can make agreements and discuss and evaluate the process overtime.

The nature of this interaction is amical and loose, but less personal than the participants have with each other. It is important that both the adults and youth involved are seen as equal, but they do not build such a sustainable relationship. It is also crucial that the participants of the youth initiative always initiate the contact they have with the organising party, as it is their process and they will thus come together on their terms.

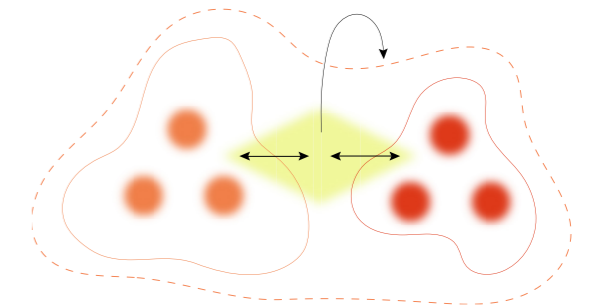


Figure 36: Boundary object C creates a new community between communities

Lastly, on the third level of interaction, the participants of the youth initiative share knowledge with other stakeholders they might need during the process. This can be either designers or people they interview, for instance. The knowledge is mostly shared from the side of the stakeholder, but in order to keep it dialogical and equal, the participants may share their way of working or view on things as well. This is all done by the creation of boundary object C.

The nature of this interaction is a bit more formal, as the interactions are less intense and probably will not take place that often. Just as with the second level of interaction, the youth from the youth initiative initiates all contact.

3. the framework: interactions within youth initiatives

In this chapter, the final framework for interactions within youth initiatives is presented, from which I derived guidelines to eventually translate into a design.

This chapter contains:

3.1 *The outline of the framework*

3.2 *The activities of the framework*

3.1 — the outline of the framework

As mentioned in the last chapter, the three different levels of interaction all form different temporary communities through different dialogical learning mechanisms and crossing boundaries. In order to make this more concrete and let it serve as guiding steps for a design approach, I have made a framework for interactions within youth initiatives.

By clustering all data from the creative sessions, the literature review and the interviews, I tried to tie all the concepts together into a general view of what interaction mechanisms occur within a youth initiative, and how to design for them.

When speaking of a community of practice, what constitutes it are a community, a practice and a domain. Viewing the participants of the youth initiative as the core of the community, they will constitute this domain and communicate that to others. The practice, then, becomes the practice of boundary crossing through creating these boundary objects, which, in turn, will result in a resilient community — a group of diverse people who can withstand rough winds. In my opinion, that is exactly what we need when thinking of youth initiatives.

A graphical representation of the mechanisms can be seen in figure 37 on the right. See appendix IV for prior sketches.

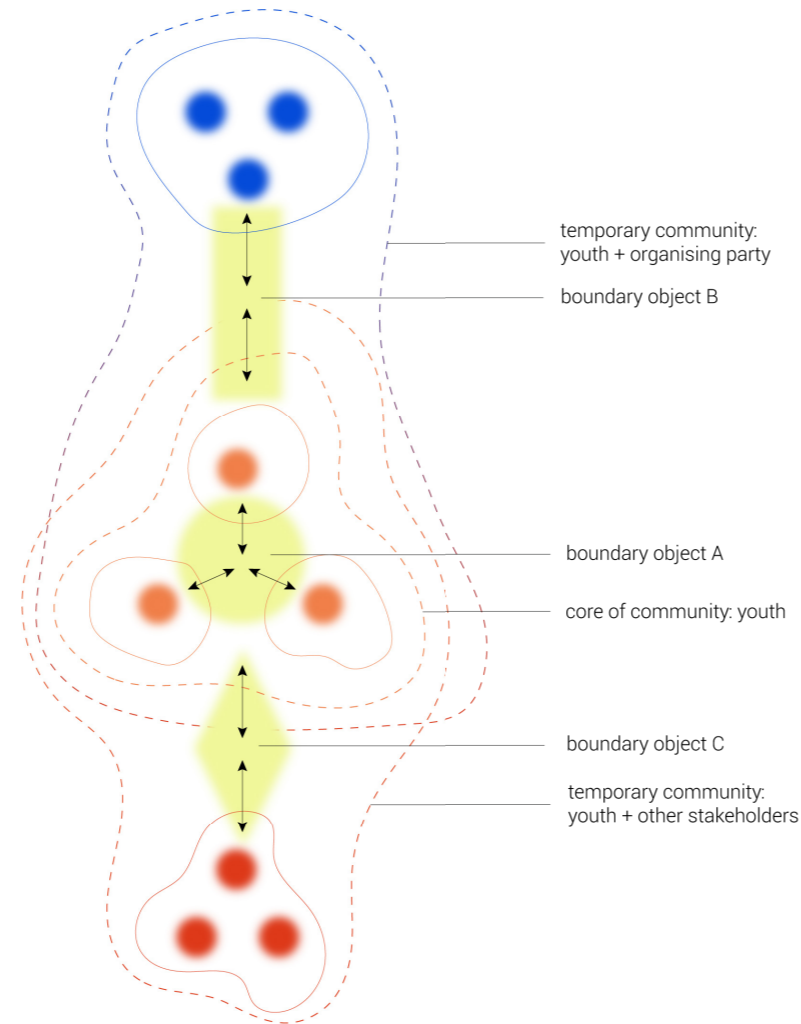


Figure 37: The interaction mechanisms taking place inside a youth initiative

In order to build a bridge to what this means in real life, when people and certain spaces are involved, I tried to incorporate time and space into this outline. To help me in doing this, I have created a scenario, shown below in figure 38.

From this scenario, it became evident that the first and foremost thing to happen was for the participants of the youth initiative to find a create a common domain, a common ground, so that they could use this to communicate with the other parties on the other interaction levels as well. A metaphor I used for that is a large surface that one can invite others on to, providing that they adapt themselves to fit that surface — much like a country you can visit with a specific culture.

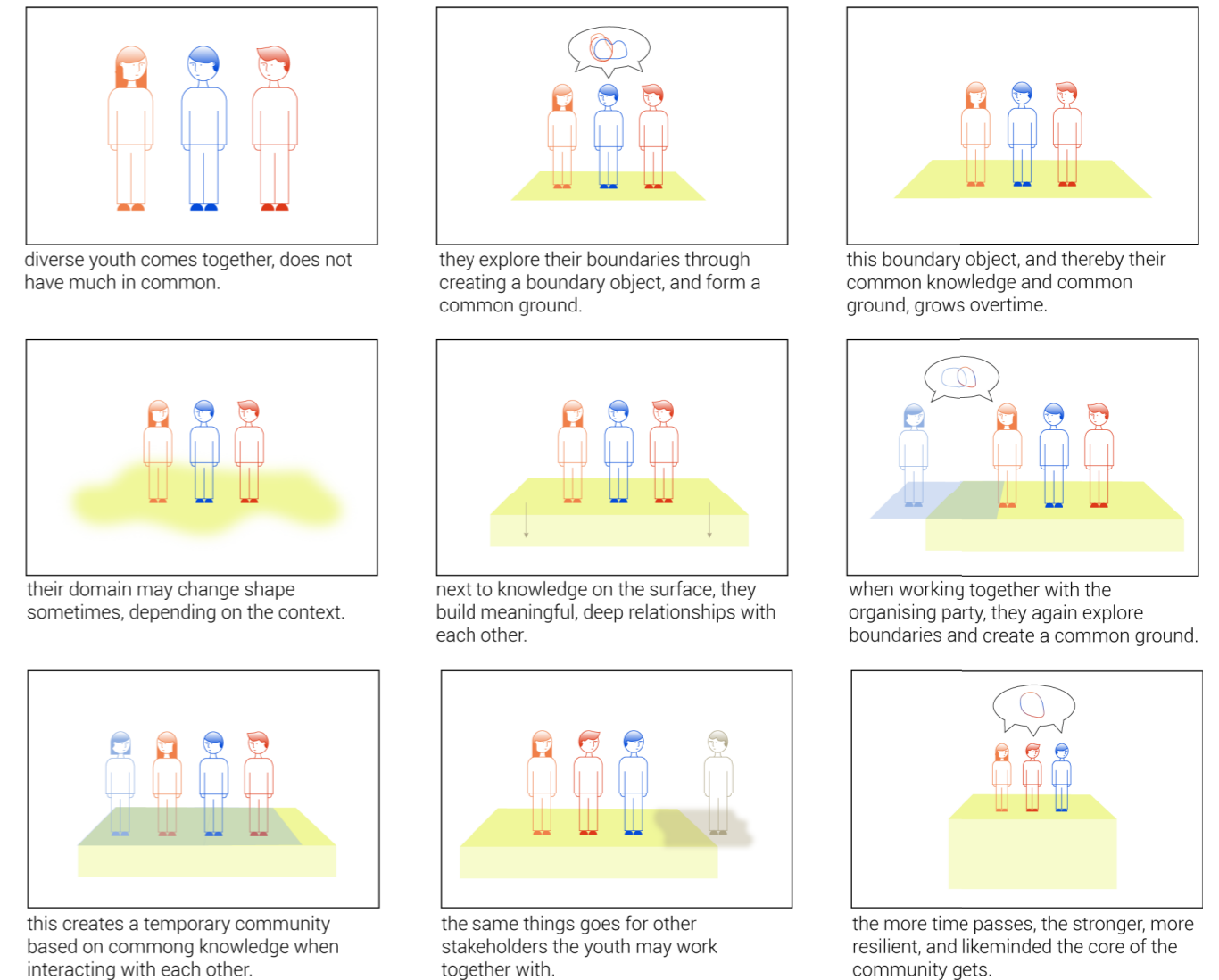


Figure 38: A scenario of a youth initiative showing each mechanism in a time-bound sequence

3.2 — the content of the framework

Now that there was an element of time and space in the interaction mechanisms, the only thing left to do was to translate the different dialogical learning mechanisms into concrete activities which could be undertaken by making the boundary objects at each level of interaction. This resulted in a five-phase 'interaction roadmap', shown in figure 39 on the next page.

In this 'interaction roadmap', the orange bits are information which is shared through the creation of boundary object A (this can of course contain multiple objects, but as the boundaries are crossed with the same function, nature and outcome, I have named it as one). These activities will thus result in bonding between the youth participating in the initiative.

The blue bits are the knowledge shared through the creation of boundary object B, between the participants of the youth initiative and their organising party. These activities will result in active communication, understanding and support around the design process within the youth initiative.

The red bits are what is shared through the creation of boundary object C. This may be whatever knowledge that the participants of the youth initiative need to know from other stakeholders, while also sharing knowledge themselves in order to get the right information. This will result in mutual learning and obtaining and transforming knowledge.

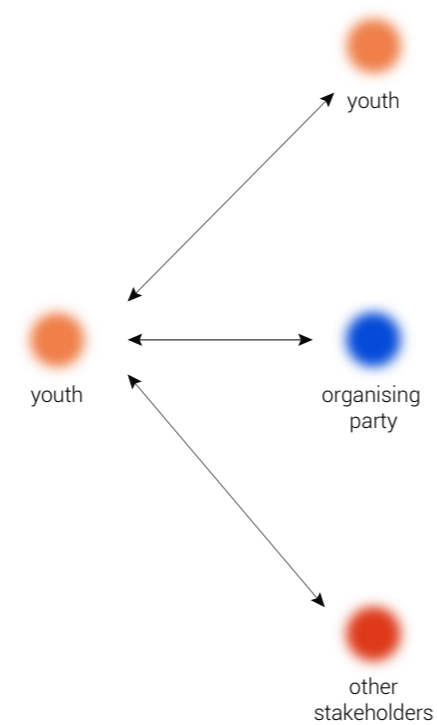
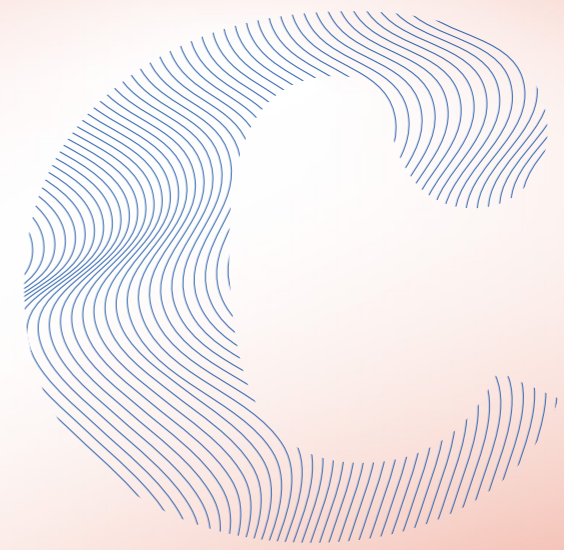


Figure 39: The activities which fit into the framework on each level, divided in phases



4. design space within the framework

In order to build a bridge between a framework and a concept, I translated the framework from chapter 3 into a design goal and an interaction vision, ultimately resulting in design guidelines. This could help me in testing how design could help in designing for youth initiatives.

This chapter contains:

4.1 *Design goal*

4.2 *Interaction vision*

4.3 *Design guidelines*

4.3.1 *Experience guidelines*

4.3.2 *Activity guidelines*

4.3.3 *Functional guidelines*

4.1 — design goal

Looking back at the research done in the previous chapters, it became evident that there is a need of a youth initiative in the Netherlands which can begin to tackle the problems within youth care through their own (design) processes. As Manzini (2015) describes, a designer can facilitate diffuse design through an enabling solution. This enabling solution would not only dictate which steps to take, derived from the framework, but could also help empower youth to make their own decisions. Next, as I identified youth initiatives to be communities of practice which cross boundaries by using boundary objects, the enabling solution would result in the form of boundary objects. This means that for each level of interaction, a boundary can be crossed through this enabling solution. The question then immediately became whether these different boundaries could make use of the same boundary object. Logically speaking, the different boundaries crossed are of different nature and therefore could not be crossed by the same boundary object. Thus, the enabling solution will consist of multiple boundary objects in order to cross different boundaries on different interactions.

The design goal would then be:

designing a reflexive, documentative and routinised enabling solution which kickstarts the constitution of a youth initiative through facilitating the creation of boundary objects, in order to empower youth to design for a change in the youth care system.

4.2 — interaction vision

It was of great importance that the interaction with the concept would not feel forced or in any way limiting, as it was only intended as a tool to create yourself. Therefore, I decided to use an interaction vision (Pasman, Boess & Desmet, 2011) in order to guide myself to design a guiding concept, without taking away the feeling of freedom or agency.

The interaction with the design should feel like...

... using a map to get from where you are now to another, known point on the map while hiking.

Matching qualities of the concept are therefore:

- *Free* → *Numerous paths to take in order to arrive*
- *Safe* → *Knowing you can turn around when lost*
- *Autonomous* → *Using no navigation*
- *Excited* → *Seeing new places*
- *Adventurous* → *Climbing mountains, doing cool stuff*

With matching affordances:



Figure 40: An image of the interaction vision

4.3 — design guidelines

To make the ideation easier, I decided to translate the interaction vision from previous subchapter and my framework from chapter 3 into concrete guidelines. The interaction vision provided for experience guidelines based on the affordances that accompany it, while the framework resulted in concrete activity guidelines (so what activities the concept should facilitate). Lastly, property guidelines were added, to give some restrictions to the embodiment of the concept, as it would hypothetically be used by Garage2020 and therefore must be practical.

4.3.1 — experience guidelines

Based on the interaction vision, the concept should be...

... *ambiguous* — There should be multiple ways in which the sequence of the activities can be interpreted

... *not aimed on succeeding or failing, just doing* — Goals can be set, but there is not a clear structure of activities per goal; rather doing everything at once and reflecting afterwards

... *not too instructive* — The activities mentioned should be in the form of tips, not in mandatory to-do's

... *explorative* — The lay-out of the design should be inviting and unconventional, in order to make the experience with it even more fun

... *clear about the end goal* — As much as the design is not aimed on succeeding, it is important for the users to know what they are working towards

4.3.2 — functional guidelines

Based on prior research and my own interpretation, the concept should be...

... *easy to distribute* — In order for an impactful bottom-up movement to start, multiple youth initiatives have to be present. The design should therefore be easy to obtain for organisations who wish to start their own youth initiative; e.g. other Garages in the Netherlands

... *easily accessible* — Next to being easy to distribute, it is important that the design can be replicated and used with e.g. post-its, a whiteboard, a printer, etc., so that the burden of getting the design is less high

... *simple!* — Containing not too many elements, not too much text, not too sleek of a design: This contributes to the ease of use as if it is an everyday object instead of a fancy toolkit

... *equipped with a central space to document, reflect and share*

4.3.3 — activity guidelines

Based on the framework and the design goal, the design should facilitate several activities per phase, per level of interaction.

Phase I: the bonding of youth

After the group is assembled, the first interaction will take place: relating to each other's boundaries, and thereby forming a strong bond, a domain which can be communicated, and a solid base of the community.

The concept for this phase, on this level, will entail...

... *guidelines for creating a safe and open (physical) space* — It needs to be inviting, provide for a secluded and safe feeling

... *a routinised activity* — The sharing can take place during a specific activity (which I can design), instead of just talking

... *an element to shape the context which is shared in* — Who starts? What is being discussed? What level of openness are we on now? (This can evolve overtime)

... *an element to make agreements as to what is being shared* — Both positive and negative things need to be present, and balance it out!

... *an element to communicate desired reactions* — As some people might expect different things from others, it is important to map this out somewhere, in order to contribute to the resilience and the corrective ability of the group

... *guidelines on how to explore strengths/weaknesses and assign roles* — As it is too dependent on the people involved, I will only provide the group with guidelines so that they can figure it out themselves

... *a reflective element* — Something showing how the group grows in terms of the relationships and collaboration, but also the things they learn overtime

Phase II: the start of the design process

When the youth feels stable enough coming together as a group, they can begin their actual assignment. In this, the organising party is involved as a means of support — but the youth will support themselves as well. The concept for this phase, on the first level of interaction, will thus entail...

... *an element for youth to map out their personal preferences in terms of support* — What are the strengths and weaknesses talked about in the first phase, and how does support fit here?

... *a template for the youth to set up their goals and ambitions* — This is the domain which will be communicated to other parties when working together, and therefore can be used in the third level of interaction as well

... *an element for youth to choose a mentor from the organising party and communicate this to that person* — Here, youth can decide if they want one person with the whole group, or that everybody chooses their own mentor, all dependent on the support they like (established earlier)

... *an element for youth to start the day with a small evaluation* — This way, they can set small goals for the day, and on the longer run set deadlines based on their loose planning they will make with Garage2020

... *a template to show resources which can be contacted from their own network* — This way there is an overview of all resources/contact persons

Then, when the organising party gets involved and the second level of interaction takes place, the concept for this will entail...

... *guidelines for the organising party on how to support youth before, during and after the design process* — letting youth do stuff themselves, letting them go, experiment and make mistakes, and viewing youth as equal

... *a template for the organising party and youth to set goals and make a rough planning for the project together* — Based on the domain the youth have established, the youth and the organiser can transform this into a clear non-time-based planning, roughly following the framework by Polk (2015): problem formulation, idea generation and evaluation

... *an element for the organising party and youth to make agreements together* — For instance, in terms of evaluations and having a big stick just in case

... *a list of resources/experts for the JongerenGarage* — This overview will be an addition to their own network, so that they have a broad range of contacts both in terms of the content and the process

... *a reflective element* — How is the collaboration going, is the

youth still in charge, or does the organiser involve themselves too much (or too little)?

Phase III: during the design process

In this next phase, the actual design process starts, which means that there will now be a third level of interaction involved. On the other levels of interactions, some reflective activities are still going on. On the second level of interaction, there is one new element in the concept:

... guidelines execute evaluative meetings — This must also involve an update from the organising party, so that this interaction is mutual and equal

On the third, new, level, the youth will form a new collaboration and temporary community with other stakeholders, which may help them execute the design process. As the youth is already provided with a list of potential stakeholders, they can contact them, and then use the concept to collaborate, which will entail...

... guidelines for the design agency to work with youth, but also vice versa — As mentioned above, for the adults, guidelines to being equal to youth and not taking agency, and letting the youth learn by doing, and for the youth, guidelines to being open to other knowledge without having the feeling of losing control over the process

... a template on which the designers can show what they offer — With this, the youth knows when to contact the designers for questions, and have a general idea of a design process as a whole

... an element which provides for a structured sparring session between the designers and the youth, to shape the way of learning — Here, it can be established what exactly the youth wants to know, and how the designers can provide this

Phase IV: the end of the design process

The last phase is when the design process has ended, meaning the last stage of the design process is finalised, and the set goals are reached. In this phase, the interactions take place on the first and second level. On the first level, the concept has to

provide for...

... an element of handover for the next group of youth to join — This will most likely be based on the reflections throughout the whole process, what they have learned, and what the new group should look out for

On the second level, the concept should entail...

... a template for the final evaluation — Used by both the youth and the organising party, this template will ensure a fruitful end of the process

... an element of festivity — This last evaluation should be accompanied by something fun, so this could be a game, for instance, or an activity

5. concept in theory

In this chapter is described how I used the design guidelines from chapter 4 to design a number of concepts which could help guide the interactions within a youth initiative on each level.

This chapter contains:

- 5.1 Ideation
- 5.2 Concept
 - 5.2.1 Collaboration roadmap
 - 5.2.2 Guide #1
 - 5.2.3 Guide #2
 - 5.2.4 Reflection toolkit

5.1 — ideation

The concept was based on the framework, so the four phases mentioned in the framework and its accompanying guidelines are the red thread of what the design should entail.

Derived from the preceding design guidelines in chapter 4.3, it became evident that the design should, in every case, facilitate a form of communication. Therefore, I will facilitate communication among participants which involves:

1. **Agreements**
2. **Personal information: preferences, goals, other**
3. **Knowledge and insights**
4. **Planning**

Three overarching requirements were to document, reflect and have a routinisation of activities, which resulted into an overarching concept component: An object on which everybody can cross the boundaries — so the boundary objects which are going to be made in order to cross the boundaries, should be made on this object. Consequently, this object should support the aforementioned communications in an understandable and intuitive way, by following the interaction vision. Eventually, this object was defined as a large, physical platform with divided parts, supported by extra tools. These tools, according to the design guidelines, should be very accessible: thus, the platform should be easily replicated onto a whiteboard or empty wall. The reason I chose for one, central platform instead of multiple is because the group of youth will probably never be bigger than twelve people (as Marleen suggested in chapter 2.2), and the JongerenGarage will be conducted in the office of Garage2020 anyway, so it is convenient to have all information there.

For each of the communication forms, general structures were made on this platform, which could be filled in according to the specific activity. These general structures were made following the guidelines of the interaction vision. Then, especially the personal information deemed to be very important, as this contained the most activities and was also the thing that would be reflected on most and could therefore result in community

resilience — and thus reach the design goal. Therefore, this element was one of the main things the physical platform should facilitate. The tools to support the use of the platform evolved to be not tools, but rather an intuitive, visual guide for the youth involved, based on the functional guidelines (as I wanted to keep it as simple as possible). Thus, the tools the participants would eventually like to use to create their boundary objects could be chosen by themselves (i.e. post-its, photos, etc.). In addition, in order to give a clear overview of the whole process for everybody involved, a large poster on which the whole project with all its phases was visualised was added to the concept.

As this concept will be used by Garage2020, it was also crucial that they would know how to organise their youth initiative (de JongerenGarage). Thus, another part of the concept was a guide for the organising party to understand how to recruit, maintain and support their youth initiative, next to providing more information on how to use the elements on the platform, and set up the platform on a wall or whiteboard.

In terms of the interaction vision, both the guide for youth and the platform had to have a non-linear structure in order to give them the feeling of freedom as to what to choose. Several methods of non-linear communication were considered, resulting in pictograms placed in a random order with a corresponding guide.

5.2 — concept

The concept I ended up with consisted of four main elements: a collaboration roadmap for all people involved in the process, a communication guide for youth, an organisation guide for the organising party (Garage2020, in this case), and a reflection platform. Each element of the concept is designed with a certain subgoal serving the design goal, ultimately providing for reaching the design goal when used altogether. In the next subchapters, each element of the concept is elaborated on.

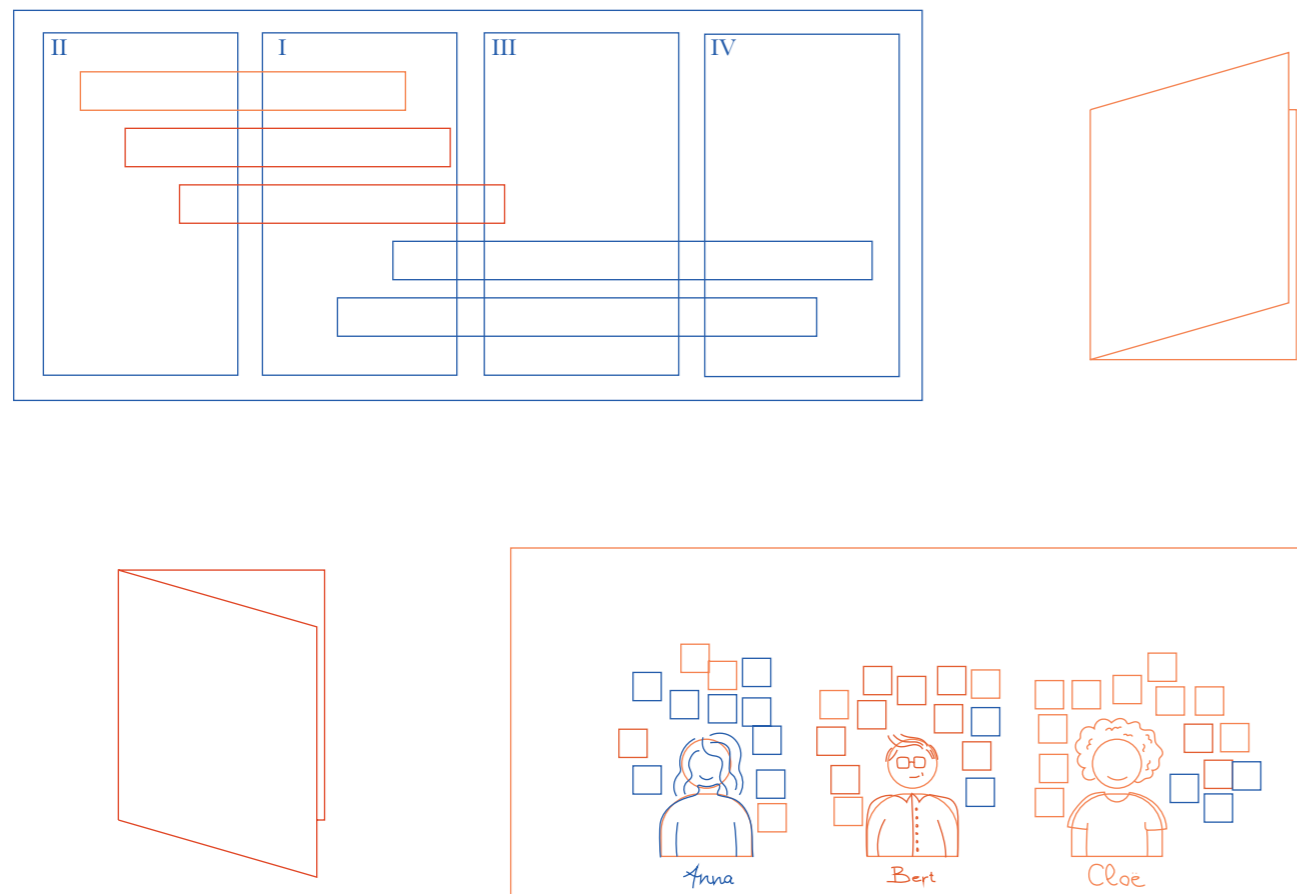


Figure 41: An overview of the elements of the concept

5.2.1 — collaboration roadmap

Goal: keeping the structure and overview of the project for everybody involved.

The communication roadmap should be a timeline with all communications involved in the design process of the youth initiative, based on the interaction roadmap shown in chapter 3.2. By using different colours, different parties are depicted between who the communication is taking place. It is meant to be printed out on A1 or A0 and hung up somewhere

in the space where the youth initiative comes together with other stakeholders. It is corresponding with the first and second guide, owned by the youth of the youth initiative and the organising party (Garage2020 in this case).

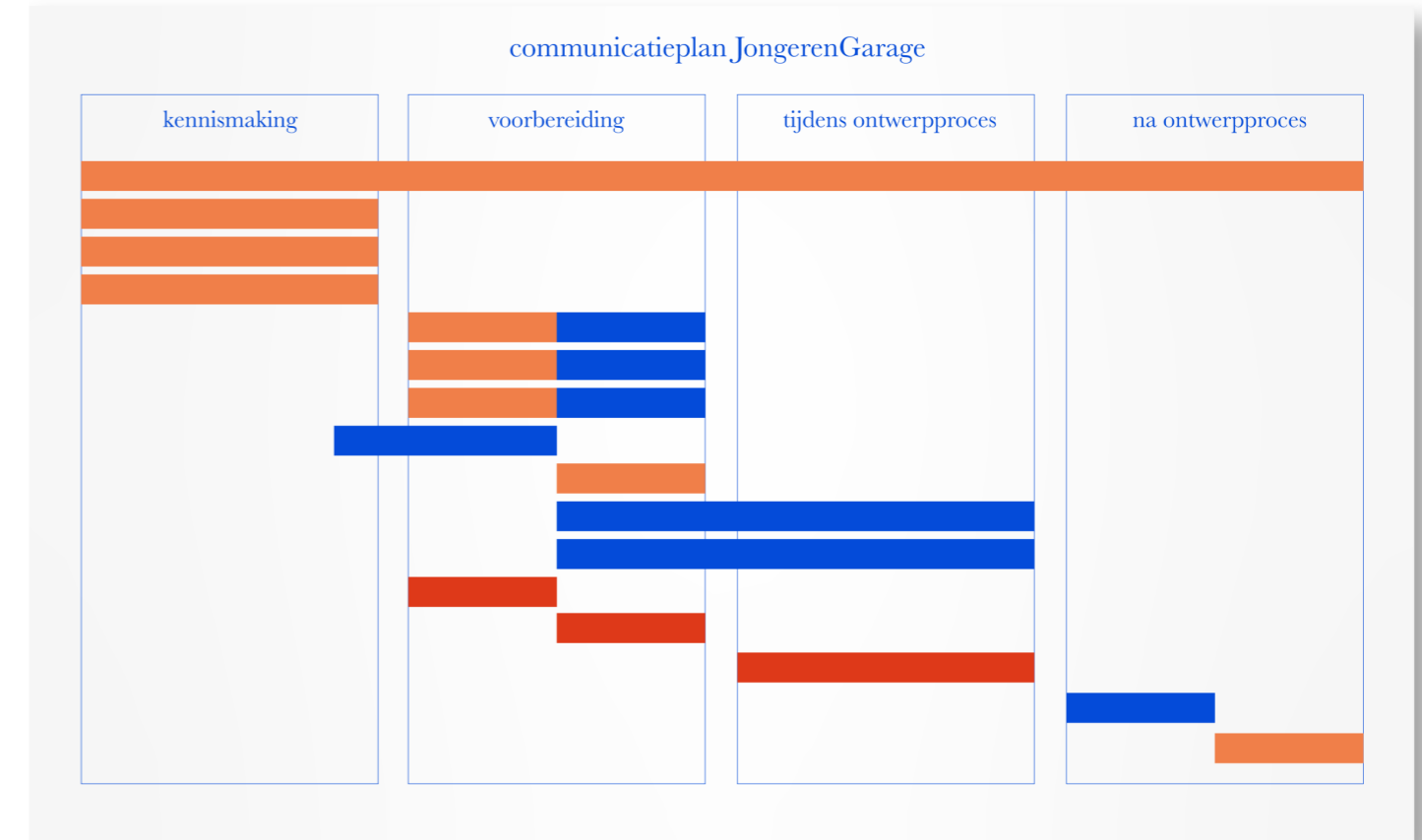


Figure 42: A sketch of the collaboration roadmap

5.2.2 — guide #1

Goal: Giving the organising party (Garage2020) a tool to organise the youth initiative.

In this guide, the organising party, in this case Garage2020, will have an overview of the activities they have to partake in and how a youth initiative is constituted and organised. This is documented in a guide so that the organising party knows how to collaborate with youth without taking the lead too much. In addition, the guide can be altered by them by experience, so that the guide can be handed over if there are any new members to the youth initiative from their side.



- 1: How to use this guide
- 2: What is a youth initiative?
- 3: Youth and adult collaboration
- 4: Structure and support
- 5: Setting up the reflection platform

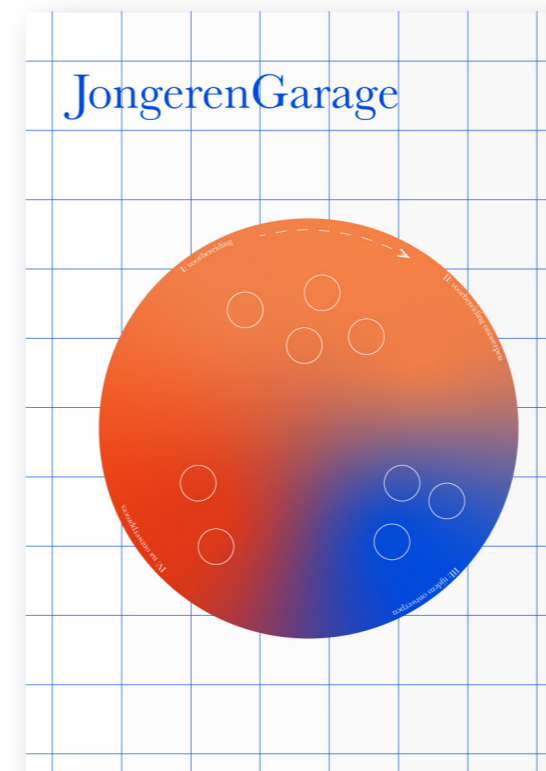
Figure 43: A sketch of what guide #1 might look like

5.2.3 — guide #2

Goal: Giving the youth of the youth initiative the structure to work with the reflection platform and initiate collaboration.

This guide will only be used by the youth itself. It acts like a structured thread of all the activities that have to or can be done shown on the collaboration roadmap, while giving them enough freedom to plan everything on their own. Next, it provides youth with reflexive assignments corresponding to the reflection platform.

The guide is non-linear, meaning that there is no right sequence in doing each assignment. This is done so that the youth can decide for themselves what to do first and what to do after; keeping it like a treasure box of resources out of which things can be pulled out whenever needed. This is visualised by the front of the booklet, which is round with pictograms spread randomly.



- 1. How to use this guide
- 2. Orange part: communications in the group
- 3. Blue part: communications with Garage2020
- 4. Red part: communications with everybody else

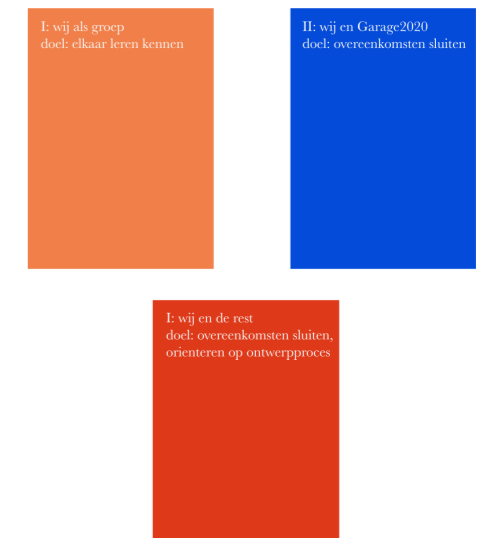


Figure 44: A sketch of what guide #2 might look like

5.2.4 — reflection platform

Goal: supporting active documentation and reflection.

The reflection platform is a space where the activities from the second guide can be carried out on and made visual. The foremost idea is that it is a central place where everybody involved in the youth initiative can write down his or her thoughts, to later be reflected upon. It can be drawn on a wall or a whiteboard. By using post-its instead of written text with a marker, everything can always be changed, added or moved, resulting in a certain openness and option for growth and change, without having to wipe everything out at once.

The platform is divided into four areas, based on the categories the activities were sorted into. In the biggest area, the team working in the youth initiative is presented. Every person can print out an A5 template of a portrait and draw his- or herself according to his or her liking. Then, during the introductory activities and the activities of phase I, post-its can be added to these portraits — by that person, or by somebody else. During the rest of the project, other qualities or knowledge about everybody can come to light. This can always be added to the portrait, thereby showing the growth happening within the group. Because everybody has his or her own colour post-it, it can clearly be seen who added what on the board.

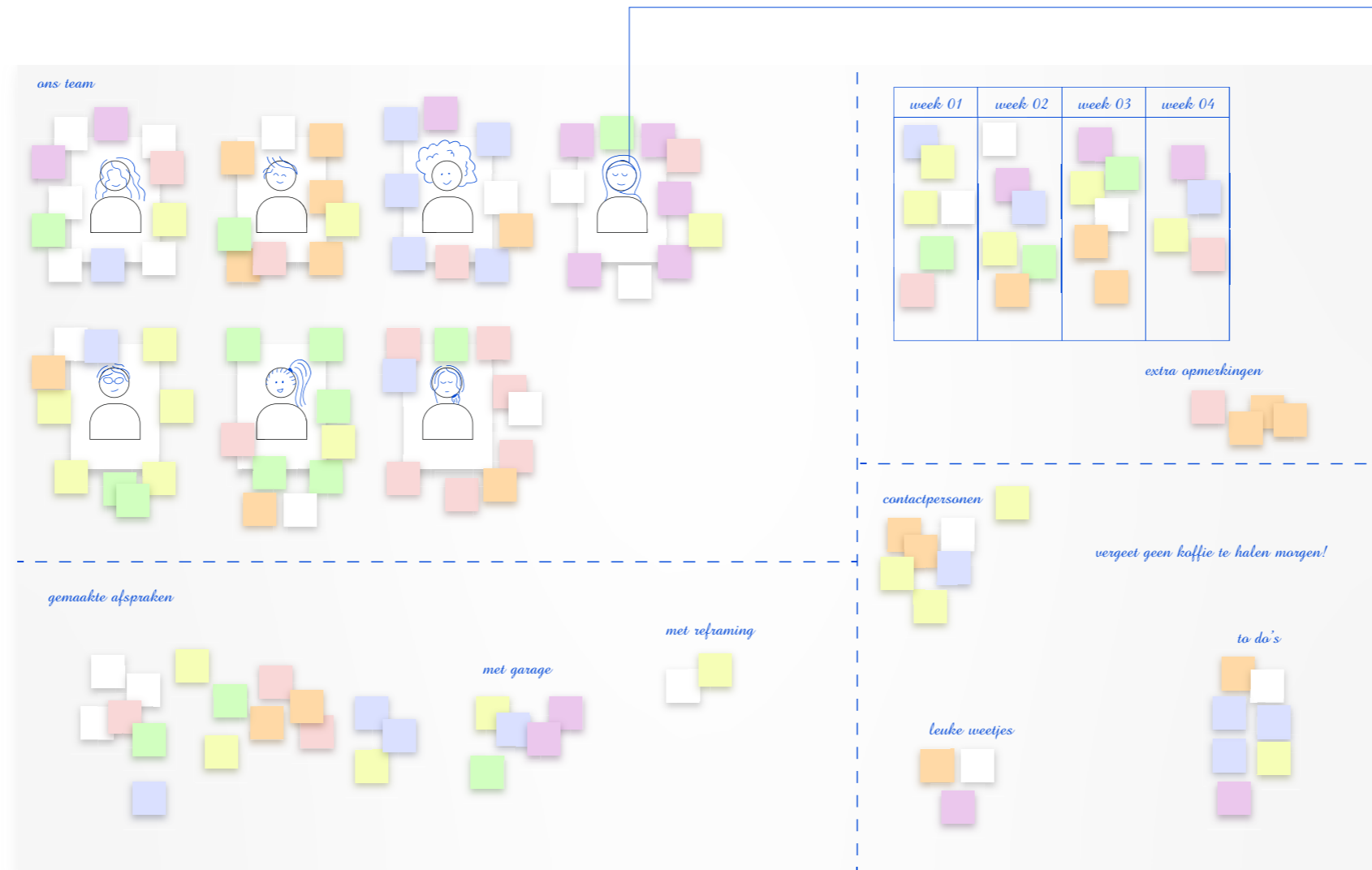
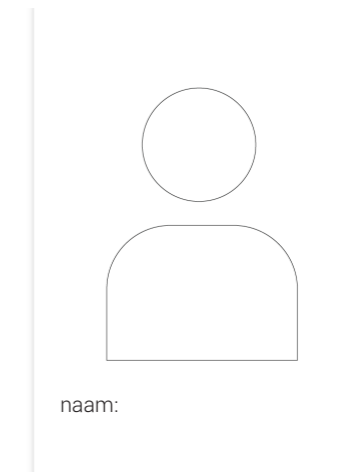


Figure 45: A sketch of how the reflection platform might look like



The other areas on the platform are the planning, agreements and other knowledge that may come to light and needs to be written somewhere. If the platform is drawn on a large whiteboard, other comments may be added as well — for example, to not forget to buy coffee. These areas do not require extra printed tools, as they are already clearly described in the second guide and I did not want to make it too rigid (i.e. a pre-determined template of a planning may imply that it has to be per week, whereas the group may prefer to do it per month or day).

6. concept in practice: a case study

In this chapter is shown how I used the concept from chapter 5 to conduct a case study with a group of youth by using a prototype. Because the conditions in this use case were quite different from the ideal conditions to test a youth initiative, the prototype was quite different from the concept. Nevertheless, it provided me with interesting insights about how youth collaborates and how they take up responsibility within a group.

This chapter contains:

6.1 *Prototype*

6.1.1 *Differences original concept*

6.1.2 *Use case*

6.1.3 *Final prototype*

6.2 *What does youth do?*

6.2.1 *Setup*

6.2.2 *Results: Observations*

6.2.3 *Results: Interviews*

6.3 *Conclusion*

6.1 — prototype

To test my design approach to the concept, I made a prototype so that I could conduct a use case with youth. This prototype turned out quite different from the original concept, due to time and space (because of Covid-19) issues. Eventually, the prototype was a set of online templates, resembling a more structured version of the reflection toolkit, in combination with a guide for youth to use it.

6.1.1 — differences original concept

Something to bear in mind was that the prototype and test setup would be quite different from the original concept and idea. This was due to several reasons and could potentially have an impact on the results of the test. In addition, these factors have to be designed for in the prototype as well. Thus, these factors should be made explicit beforehand, so that eventually, the results of the tests could be analysed from a realistic viewpoint, with a prototype which fits the situation, thus determining if the results were generalisable for the final concept as well.

Space: Online/offline

Since we were in a pandemic and in a lockdown at the moment of validation, schools were closed, and it was therefore not responsible to meet in real life. Thus, the validations should take place in an online environment instead of in the office of Garage2020.

From the prior generative sessions described in chapter 3.1.2, everybody agreed on the fact that they were far more motivated and feel more bonded when meeting offline instead of online, so a great challenge lied in making the environment as safe and comfortable online as it would be offline.

In order to succeed in this, I decided to use both Zoom, a video call platform, and Mural, a creative collaboration platform, in order to try to mimic a real life environment as much as possible. Regarding the fact that from the generative sessions, it became clear that the physical environment the youth is in greatly determines the ambience and context youth shares in, I

involved an activity in which they could build their own physical space, which they could afterwards set as their background on Zoom, so that it would seem that they were together after all. In addition, I added some reflective questions on how the physical space shapes their way of working, in order to let the youth reflect on that and hopefully emerge themselves in their ideal environment online. However, this did not change the fact that the youth was not in each other's presence, and therefore could have a harder time reading each other's reactions and feelings (as Gijs described in chapter 2.3), resulting in a lesser bonding than what otherwise could have been the case.

In addition, as it is part of my research to observe how youth works, I have to be there as a silent observer, which could also influence the bonding of youth because they may feel restricted in their language or behaviour.

Time: Different timespan

From the interviews with experts in chapter 2.2, it was concluded that community building often took some time — it could not just happen in a day or two. The longer the community spends with each other, the better they get to know each other, and so the stronger their bond. This was also backed by the outcomes of the generative sessions.

In the case of my prototype, it was not possible to test for more than three weeks due to my graduation deadline, which, if setting up a community, is fairly short. When joining this trial, therefore, the burden is much less high because the commitment is less as well — resulting in possible demotivation or dropout. This could have consequences on the outcomes of the trial, as this could again result in a lesser bonding.

Goal

When joining a youth initiative such as the JongerenGarage, the goal of the initiative would usually be connected to some sort of bigger problem for which you, as an individual, have a passion or interest in solving. Consequently, in this trial, the case of the pandemic was used as a primary incentive to join, as this would be something that a lot of youth can struggle or identify themselves with. I chose for this instead of the problem of youth care in the Netherlands, as that is a lesser known and experienced problem for most youth, in order to increase chances of recruitment for this trial, especially in this shorter timespan. If the youth was to solve the problem of youth care, they would probably also need more time to understand what the problem is, while solving the problem of youth in the pandemic would be easier to grasp and design for. However, because the goal of this trial is different from the goal in the original concept, it is not entirely in line with my design goal.

6.1.2 — use case

It was not feasible to have all parts of the concept evaluated — as some elements required more time and more intensive interactions than were suited under the circumstances we were in. Therefore, I had chosen to only focus on what is most important and relevant from the perspective of Garage2020: the beginning of the JongerenGarage. Garage2020 is planning on starting the JongerenGarage as soon as possible (if the pandemic allows for it, at least), so for them it was important that they can start immediately. From my framework scenario in chapter 3.1, it became evident that in order to constitute a community, the beginning, so bringing together a group and making them feel comfortable, safe and motivated, is the most important part. The rest of the activities can follow later and can be determined more loosely, using for instance reflective practice within the group itself.

Thus, the elements which would be tested and evaluated would be the ones from phase I in the design guidelines; the constitution of the group. This meant that both guide #2 and the reflection platform were to be prototyped and tested.

Sample group

As the trial would be conducted online, suddenly there were no restrictions anymore in terms of how many people to recruit because of Covid-19. But as twelve people seemed a bit optimistic regarding how difficult it was to recruit last time, I did some research into what the minimum amount of people ideally should be.

According professor Mueller from Warthon University Pennsylvania, in group collaboration, it is crucial to have a balanced number of participants in order to not make the group feel awkward and prevent the Ringelmann-effect — better known as 'social loafing' (Knowledge @ Warthon, 2006). With this, she means that the more people are involved in a collaboration, the lesser responsibility and influence an individual may feel, and therefore the group as a whole will function less. This tipping point lies at approximately five people, although it is also argued that an even number serves better collaboration. Around six people should therefore be

perfect — however, Mueller does disclose that that is also very dependent on the situation. In this situation, when a group of youth comes together to design something as a youth initiative, it could also be wise to follow the advice that Marleen gave in chapter 2.2. — around twelve people in a group, in case there will be dropouts. Thus, I was aiming at recruiting a group from six to twelve people.

In terms of who to recruit for this trial, I stuck to the notion of youth in chapter 1.1.0 — whoever felt addressed by the term 'youth', or whoever identified with being youth, could join. I wanted to not have any restrictions as to gender, age or profession/school, except that, again, I preferred people not knowing each other, so that I could measure the bonding of the group better.

Activities

As I would be setting up a youth initiative, logically, the main activity of the prototype is to organise meetings and come together. In these meetings, other activities will be done, which are determined by the design guidelines of the first phase of the youth initiative, shown in chapter 4.3.

However, in order to give the meetings a tangible goal (which made recruiting easier, as this way, youth would know what exactly they would do), more activities were added to give the meetings structure and more of a purpose.

So instead of only bonding, reflecting and sharing, which are the core components of activities in phase I, another part was added: a design objective (designing for youth in the pandemic). By using this design objective, sharing and reflecting became a means rather than a goal, providing for a more easy-going ambience — instead of a heavy support group, it was a group with a purpose of designing for their fellow youth, by using their own experiences to fuel their imagination.

The activities were sorted into four parts, each representing a general theme: I, preparation (consisting of agreements, planning and personal information), II, situation sketch (consisting of a storytelling activity to map how everybody experiences the pandemic; extra), III, reflection (consisting of a reflection of both the storyboard and the meetings themselves), and IV, the design (being a problem statement, first ideas, end advice/recommendations, extra).

6.1.3 — final prototype

The final prototype consisted of a guide in PDF-format, on which all activities were shown visually with a guiding text, and a platform to complete these activities on Mural, divided into the four parts. The idea was that the participants could decide for themselves what activity to do when, but keeping the structure by still dividing it into phases which do have a certain sequence. In some parts, cards were added with guiding questions and/or assignments, in order to inspire the participants in what they should or could do. The participants could click on the cards and look at its comment in order to 'flip it'. I decided not to make too many cards, to keep the activities simple and not too demanding, but I did want to see if these kind of interventions work.

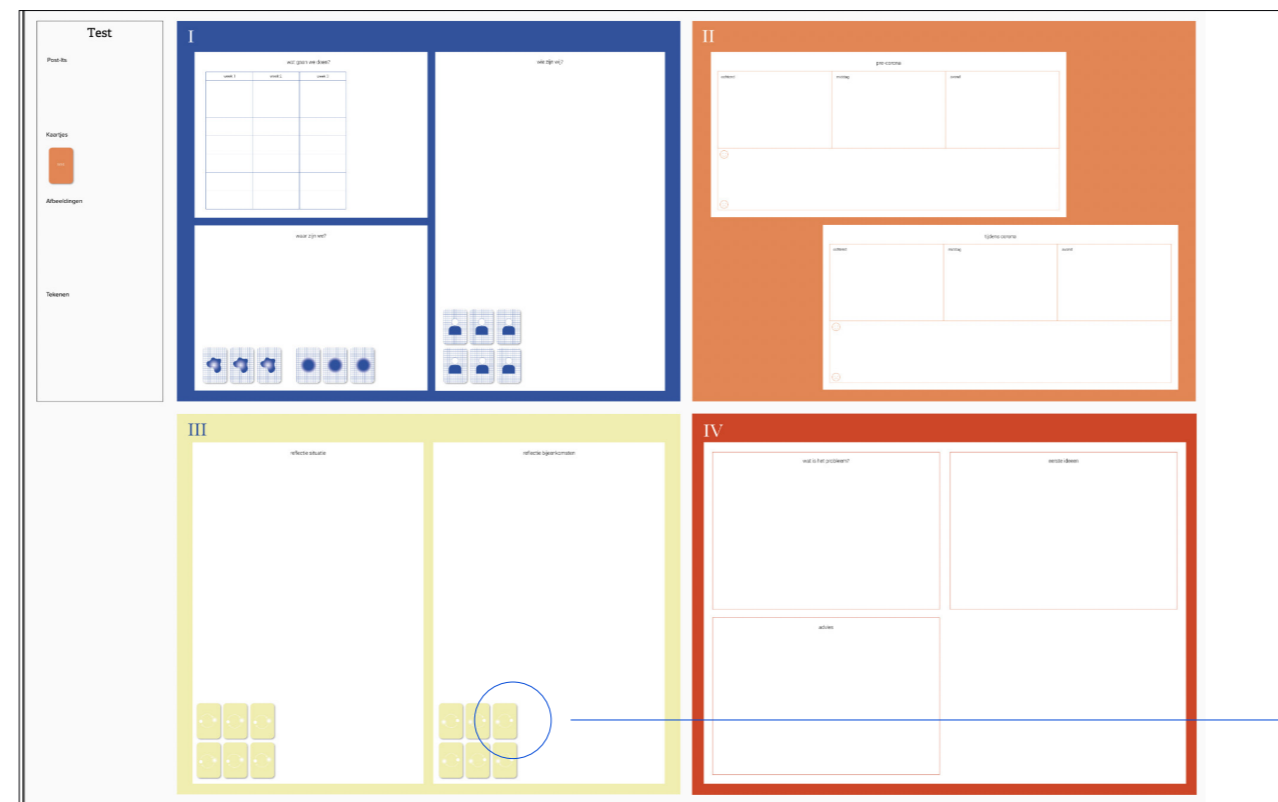
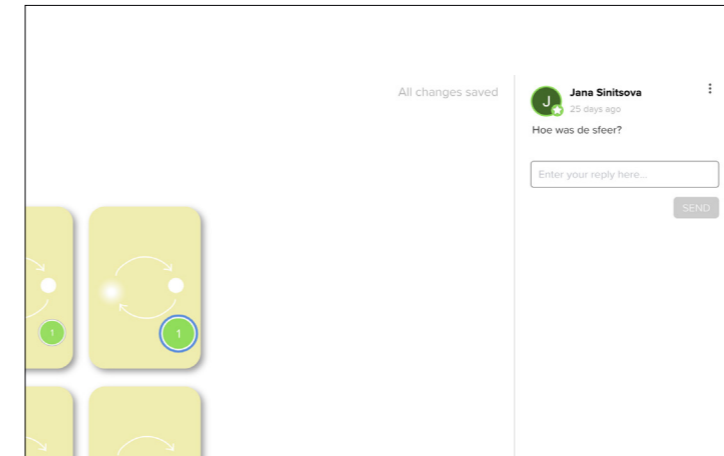


Figure 46: A screenshot of the prototype in Mural

The four phases I divided the trial into were spread over four quadrants in Mural, with each having a concrete goal. Of these quadrants, I and III were based on the reflection platform of my concept, and II and IV were added as design tools to give the initiative and end result the youth were working towards.

The intention of this prototype was that it could be used by the group autonomously, meaning that they would not have to run to me for questions. It should be self-explanatory, so the guide I provided was very thorough, but (aimed to be) not too complicated. Moreover, nothing in the whole trial was mandatory, which I would make clear at the beginning of the trial, during the introduction. The introduction further entailed an introductory activity, an explanation of Mural and a general explanation of the goal of the project. Other than this introduction, I was a silent observer during all meetings — a fly on the wall, and the participants would be made aware of that. My camera and microphone would be turned off, because I did not want it to seem like I was there, so that they could behave like they would normally do. In addition, I did not want it to seem like I was there to answer questions or to facilitate anything.

Next to Mural and Zoom, I would also make a Whatsapp group, in order to easily communicate with the participants and enable them to communicate with each other easily too (as they might not have each others' numbers initially).

In Mural, the prototype consisted of the following: Quadrant I was the preparation. The participants could make a planning, get to know each other, and/or make agreements on the context of sharing by creating a 'physical' space and discussing what makes a nice working space in terms of ambience. Cards were added including questions or assignments to share personal information about yourself on the platform by using post-its, and guiding the making of a 'physical' space with the right ambience by making a collage and discussing what was needed if it were to be in real life. In the guide it was then encouraged to screenshot this ambience and set it as their background in Zoom, as a playful way of connecting the participants through 'being in the same place'. In addition, the participants could also make agreements on the

emotional aspects of the space, by for instance determining what they wanted to talk about and what not.

To have a base of the personal drawings as used on the reflection platform, I used the introductory activity as an icebreaker where everybody had to draw somebody else. They could then make a picture of their drawing, send it in the Whatsapp group, and I would upload it to Mural.

All these activities were based on the guidelines of phase I in chapter 4.3.

Quadrant II, the situation sketch, was based on storytelling through design. I chose for this because I was searching for a fun, playful way to discuss experiences during the pandemic, as these experiences could be negative or dreadful. I thought it was important for the participants to share this somewhere so they could reflect on it and eventually design for it, contributing to the outcome of the trial.

Here, the participants could make their collective storyboard by using a template for a simple storyboard about their normal weekday before the pandemic, and during the pandemic. This was based on Design is Storytelling by Ellen Lupton, in which is described that the best storytelling happens through the telling of emotions, actions, situation, context and timeline (Lupton, 2017). Therefore, all these factors were integrated into this template.

Quadrant III, the reflection, was layered. Firstly, the participants could reflect on their experiences of the pandemic discussed in quadrant II. They could use these discussions to form an overall understanding of what fellow youth might need as an intervention to make the pandemic more bearable.

Moreover, the participants could reflect on their experiences of the meetings and getting to know each other. The latter was based on the reflection platform, and so some questions asked on the cards were suggested to be answered in quadrant I, where everybody's personal information could be found. This way, they could add post-its to the drawings of themselves, as was intended for the reflection platform too, which would hopefully result in more bonding.

Quadrant IV, the final design, was a sort of pressure cooker design assignment, in which a problem had to be formulated using the made reflections, first ideas could be brainstormed about, and a final advice could be given – loosely based on Polk's aforementioned literature on transdisciplinary co-production. This part was made in order to give the participants a clear end goal of the meetings, and to have a feeling that they have worked towards something and were 'done' with it. In addition, it could provide for more reflection by putting their own experiences into perspective, when looking at their experiences as something which could help other youth.

The guide I provided the participants with had a non-linear structure and was designed to be as intuitive as possible. Colours were used to make each part correspond with the section on Mural, and pictograms were placed in a random order to indicate that the participants were free to choose what to do when. On the other side of the visual, there was a legend and a short introductory text, summarising everything I would tell the participants prior to the start of the trial, so that they could go back to it again if they were to be confused or forgot something.

See appendix V for the entire template and guide.

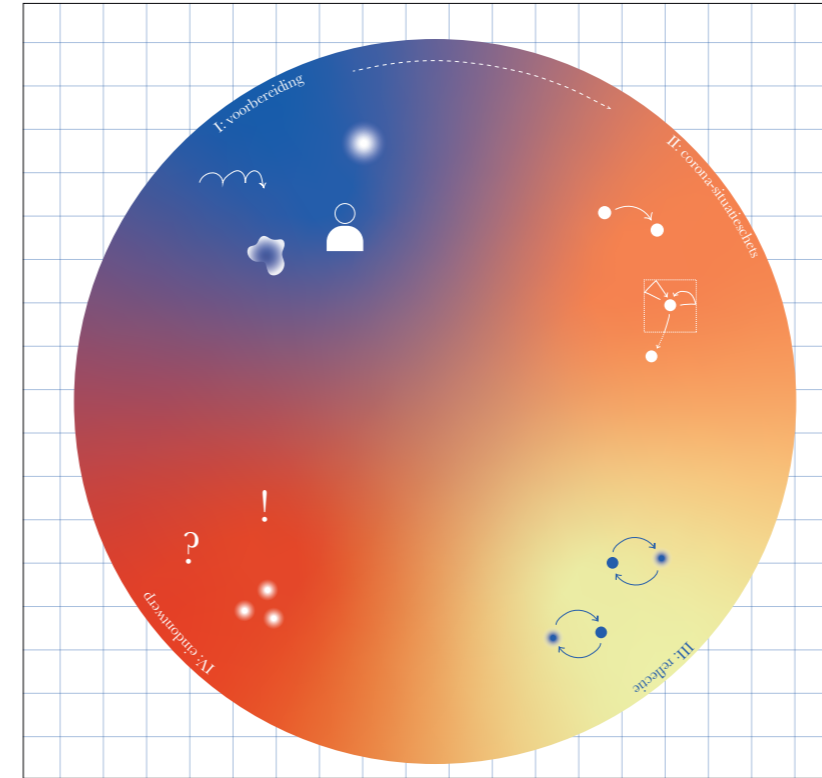


Figure 47: The guide the participants received to accompany the Mural

legenda
(niet op volgorde)

Vul de planning in die jullie zien in het Mural bord. Als jullie kijken in het overzicht, hoeveel tijd denken jullie dan nodig te hebben, en hoeveel tijd willen jullie eraan besteden? Wat zijn data en tijden dat iedereen kan? Hier kun je alvast afspraken maken. Andere dingen die jullie willen plannen? Dan kun je de lege plek ernaast gebruiken.

Trek omstebeurt een kaartje en lees wat er op de comment staat. Beantwoord deze vraag dan handop voor jezelf, schrijf je antwoord op een post-its (dubbeltik en type) en plak het bij jouw tekening. De rest doet hetzelfde. Zo ontstaat er van iedereen een iets duidelijker beeld wie en hoe diegene is.

Jullie komen natuurlijk nu online bij elkaar, maar hoe zou het zijn als jullie fysiek bij elkaar zouden komen? In deze template kunnen jullie ideale omgeving samen ontwerpen. Trek telkens samen een kaartje en beantwoord die ook samen. Zo kunnen jullie ervoor zorgen dat jullie op één lijn zitten. In de afbeeldingssectie op Mural, links in het menu, kunnen jullie zoeken naar afbeeldingen en die erin plakken. Als de collage af is, kunnen jullie een screenshot maken en die als achtergrond instellen in je Zoom-meting. Zo lijkt het toch nog een beetje alsof jullie allemaal samen zijn!

Aangezien jullie elkaar nog niet (goed) kennen, kan het verstandig zijn afspraken te maken zodat de sfeer veilig en aangenaam blijft. Trek samen telkens een kaartje en beantwoord samen handop de vraag. Schrijf op post-its alle antwoorden, en plak die waar jullie vinden dat ze het beste passen.

Gebruik de drie vakjes om een situatie te schetsen van een doordeweekse dag in deze pandemie. Jullie situaties zullen vast verschillen, maar probeer toch een algemeen beeld te schetsen van de ochtend, middag en avond. Je kunt afbeeldingen gebruiken via de afbeeldingssectie op Mural of tekenen. Onders kun je een langfristiek maken van je emoties in de loop van de dag; bovenaan is positief, onderaan is negatief. Gaat de lijn heel erg op en neer, of is hij constant?

Gebruik de drie vakjes om een situatie te schetsen van een doordeweekse dag toen alles nog normaal was. Jullie situaties zullen vast verschillen, maar probeer toch een algemeen beeld te schetsen van de ochtend, middag en avond. Je kunt afbeeldingen gebruiken via de afbeeldingssectie op Mural of tekenen. Onders kun je een langfristiek maken van je emoties in de loop van de dag; bovenaan is positief, onderaan is negatief. Gaat de lijn heel erg op en neer, of is hij constant?

Hoi!
Wat tof dat je meedoet aan deze bijeenkomsten. De bedoeling hiervan is het creëren van verbintenis in tijden van isolatie, door middel van een aantal tools die ik ontwikkeld heb voor mijn afstudeerproject. Deze tools staan straks klaar in Mural om gebruikt te worden, en in deze gids vind je meer over wat de bedoeling is de komende weken.

Deze 'gids' is opgedeeld in vier delen, met voor elk deel een bepaald doel: de titel. Dus bijvoorbeeld, deel I is voorbereiding, dus het doel daarvan is jullie voorbereiden. Jullie bepalen gezamenlijk de volgende waarin jullie de activiteiten van elk deel doen, en ook zelf of het doel wel of niet behaald is - met andere woorden, jullie kunnen er zo lang doen als jullie willen, en het is niet verplicht om alles in te vullen. Staat er bijvoorbeeld een activiteit in de gids die iemand niet leuk vindt, of waarvan jullie denken dat het niets toevoegt? Dan sla je het lekker over! Het is jullie proces, ik heb slechts een paar dingen aangereikt om structuur te bieden. Als die dingen niet werken, dan werken ze niet - dat is aan jullie. Uiteraard staat het jullie dus ook vrij om zelf dingen erbij te bedenken om te doen.

Reflecteer op jullie ervaringen van deze bijeenkomsten. Trek telkens samen een kaartje en beantwoord samen de vraag die erop staat. Schrijf het antwoord/de antwoorden op post-its en plak die in het vak.

Reflecteer op jullie ervaringen van deze coronapandemie, door gebruik te maken van de gemaakte scenario's. Trek telkens samen een kaartje en beantwoord samen de vraag die erop staat. Schrijf het antwoord/de antwoorden op post-its en plak die in het vak.

Hebben jullie al eerste ideeën om de pandemie voor jongeren makkelijker te maken? Teken of schrijf dit in het vakje voor de eerste ideeën. Wie kan het idee uitvoeren, en op wie heeft het effect? Wat is de essentie van ieder idee?

Als jullie een advies willen schrijven naar iemand die het probleem van de jongeren in de pandemie volgens jullie kan oplossen, kunnen jullie dat doen in het vakje voor advies.

Wat is nou precies het probleem van jongeren in de pandemie? Middels jullie reflectie kunnen jullie dit misschien makkelijker aanduiden. Is er überhaupt wel een probleem? Wat is er eigenlijk aan de hand? Gebruik het vakje voor probleemstelling om deze vragen te beantwoorden.

6.2 — what does youth do?

To be able to observe how youth would react to an intervention like this, I set up a trial of a youth initiative in which the participants would use the prototype shown in the previous subchapter. This trial would have a duration of three weeks in which the participants were free to schedule their own meetings (online). By using my prototype they would be able to, in the end, come up with a solution for youth in the current pandemic.

During this trial, I observed how the participants interacted with the prototype and with each other, and afterwards, I interviewed them and sent them a survey in order to do thorough research and draw adequate conclusions for the final recommendations.

6.2.1 — setup

Participants

Five participants were recruited, from which three were participating in the prior sessions as well (Gabriel, Tom and Rebekka). A new girl, Megan, was recruited via Jacqueline from Garage2020, and a new boy, Maas, was recruited by Tom. I tried to recruit by going to a school, but this has proved yet again that recruiting works better through others.

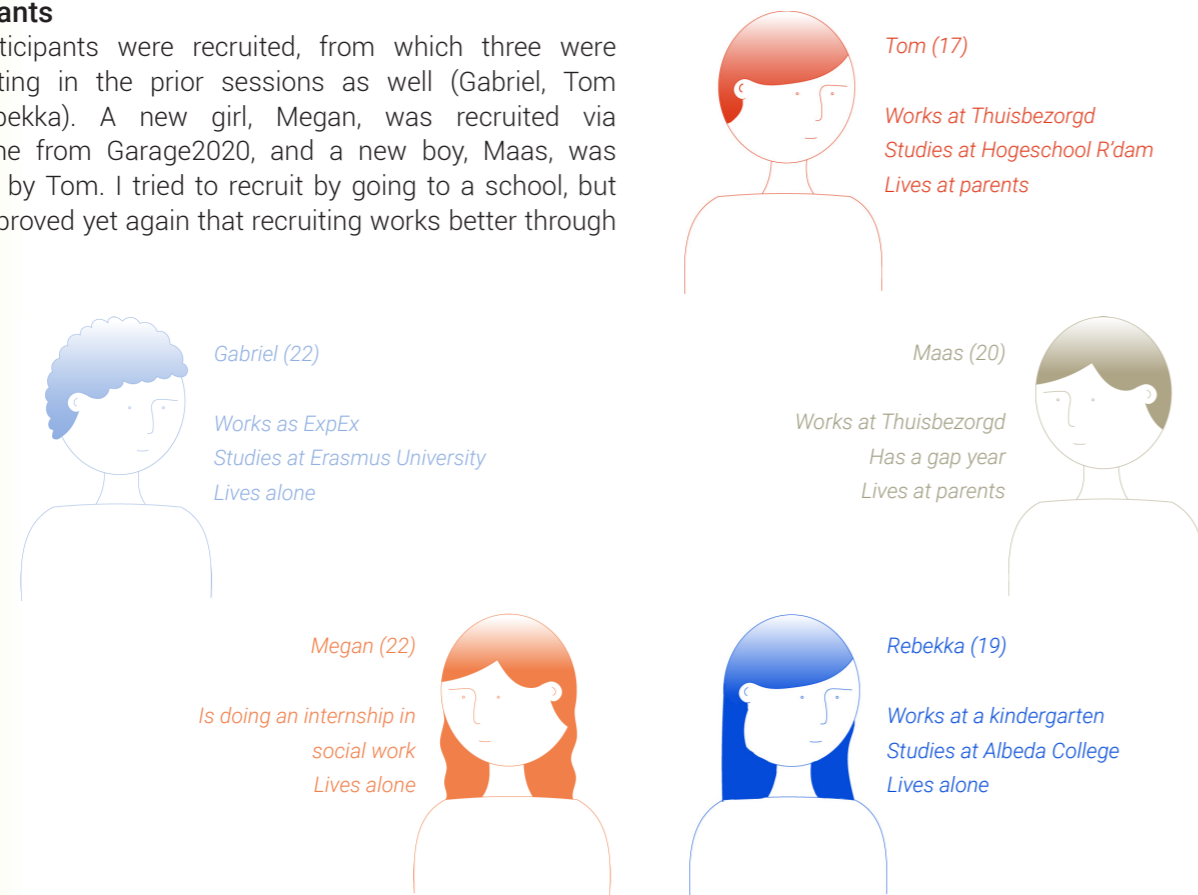


Figure 48: The participants of the trial youth initiative

Goal

The goal of the youth initiative trial was not to test the usability of the prototype, as the prototype was different from the initial concept itself. Instead, the trial was aimed on getting insights about the framework as a whole and how the concept fits into it. The assumption was that the concept successfully constitutes a youth initiative by creating a solid community base, and thereby empowers youth to independently go through their own (design) process. The implicit assumption within this assumption is that the framework in practice works for youth, and that the criteria and tools that in my perspective deem to be successful for bonding and structure are equally successful and important for youth.

Things which were interesting for me to pay attention to were:

- How my observations and interpretation would differ from the experiences of the participants;
- The differences in experience and participation per participant and what that depends on.

Method

First, the participants were gathered into a group chat on Whatsapp, which served as a central point to discuss and agree on things. I gave a small introduction on what the idea was and initiated the first meeting, so that I could do an introduction and facilitate the beginning.

In this introduction, we did an ice-breaker where everybody had to draw each other. Then, I showed the participants how to work in Mural and sent them the guide.

After this introduction, it was up to the participants to initiate their own meetings. My role in this trial was solely to provide the participants with the tools to set up their own mini-youth initiative. This included the creation of Zoom links for meetings (as I could do that for free due to my TU Delft account) the first couple of times.

This refers back to the notion of what the new role of a designer should be: Providing an enabling solution without the need of intervening again.

I did join every meeting to observe, as mentioned before, but my camera and microphone were turned off. I did not record the meetings as I was afraid it could influence their behaviour, and moreover, it was more interesting to observe how they worked

in Mural and the things they said during that rather than how they looked on Zoom. Instead, I took notes while observing. Observations were a bit harder to do online than they would be to do in real life, because facial expressions or body language were not easy to see. Nevertheless, the actions taken in Mural together with said comments could be observed, noted and analysed. In-between observations were also made, such as reading the messages in the Whatsapp group.

Because my observations and the conclusions I draw from it are biased by my own expectations and perspective on collaboration in general, I decided to interview the participants to ask them about their experience during the trial. So, in addition to the observations, interviews were scheduled for after the trial. The interviews were done one-on-one, by following a semi-structured outline, in order to get the most honest, and therefore valuable, results. In these interviews, the participants were asked to give their opinion on the trial, share their experiences of the trial and give recommendations for a next time.

The outcomes of both the observations and interviews were compared in order to see what differences were in my perception and theirs. Next, I could see whether there were any correlations between the participants' behaviour and their experiences. I did so by clustering all insights by doing an analysis on the wall.

From this, conclusions could be drawn which could provide for a richer insight on how youth views a successful collaboration with each other, and thus, how a youth initiative can be further facilitated by design.

See appendix VI for the initial use case, raw data of the observations and the interviews and the clusters.

6.2.2 — results observations

Overall

The participants met online four times, out of which two times were (partly) facilitated and planned by me, because it was the introduction which ended up being split up, and two by themselves. Not all participants were present at all times, see figure 49. The assignment in Mural was completely finished, all activities were done, except for two questions from the 'who are we' section, as it got interrupted and I suppose they forgot.

Meeting	1	2	3	4
Rebekka	X	X	X	X
Maas	X	X	X	X
Tom	X	X	X	X
Megan	O*	X	-	-
Gabriel	X	X	-	-

*O = was there, left earlier

Figure 49: Presence participants

Key moments and reflections

First meeting – 45 minutes, 29/01/21, 16:00

- This meeting only consisted of a small introduction by me, showing the activity guide they had and how Mural worked.
- Megan was in a car with her mom. She told the group that she just got a house and she had to go sign the contract. She had to leave earlier, so she communicated that to the rest.
- Everyone was a bit later than anticipated because of technical difficulties with Zoom.
- Maas and Tom were present together. Sometimes, when

they talked to each other, they muted their microphone. Nobody said something about that.

- I explained Mural to the group, they all understood it pretty quickly. Megan had already left at this point. Therefore, we collectively decided (but I suggested) to leave the rest of the introduction to the next meeting, so that Megan could participate in the ice breaker and was not left behind.
- Rebekka asked if there could be a more in-depth introduction where they would get to know each other better. I explained that that was going to take place next meeting.
- Gabriel initiated a Datumprikker for the next meeting so that everybody could be there. Everybody filled it in right away, except Megan, who was not there.
- Later, in the Whatsapp, Megan was reminded by both Maas and Gabriel to fill in the Datumprikker and to pick a date and time for the next meeting. In the end, she filled it in, but nobody still picked a date. Eventually, I set up the next meeting by intervening in the group Whatsapp, because I wanted to finish the introduction first to see if that made any difference to their involvement.

Second meeting – 50 minutes, 03/02/21, 18:15

- The introduction, which I facilitated, was finished during this meeting. After this, I turned my camera and microphone off and the participants filled in the 'who are we?'-activities on the first quadrant of the canvas.
- Everybody was late except for Rebekka. I could see she was annoyed by it.
- When doing the icebreaker, Tom suggested that it would be more fun to guess who drew who instead of just presenting it to each other, which was the first time somebody took the lead in something. Everybody agreed and it worked well.
- Maas and Tom were apart now, but this time Tom's twin brother Gijs joined him. They were whispering to each other sometimes. Rebekka made a comment about it, asking them what they were talking about, after which they stopped. Furthermore Gijs was not too active in the conversation, he was mostly making fun of Tom.
- Maas was engaging a lot with Tom and Gijs as they are

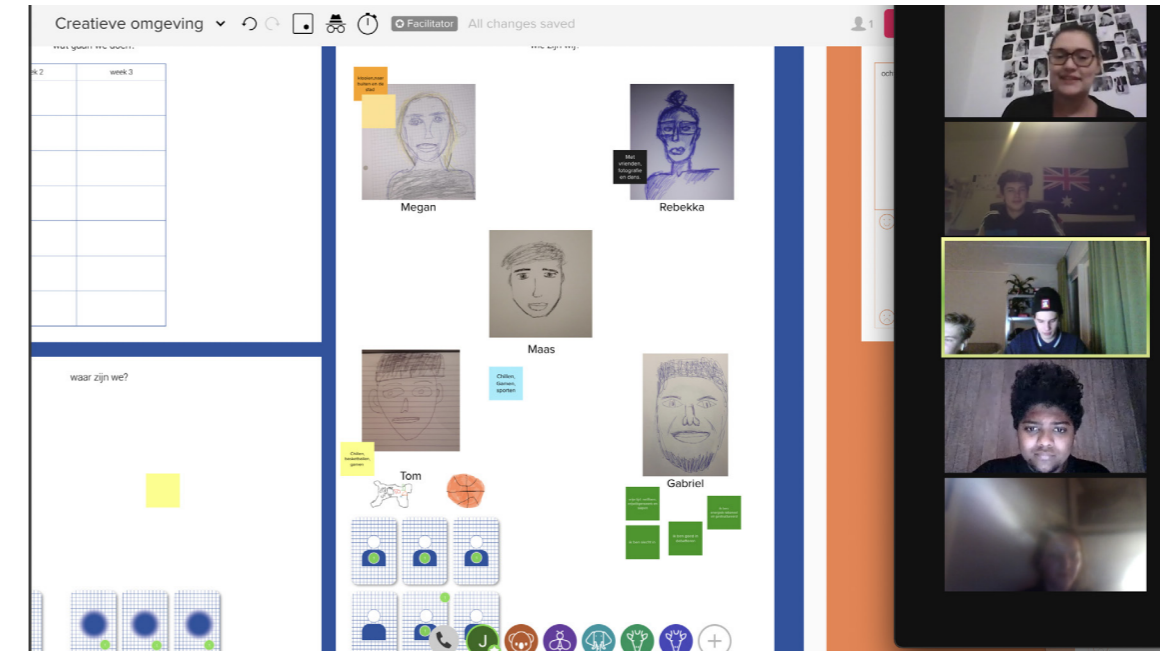
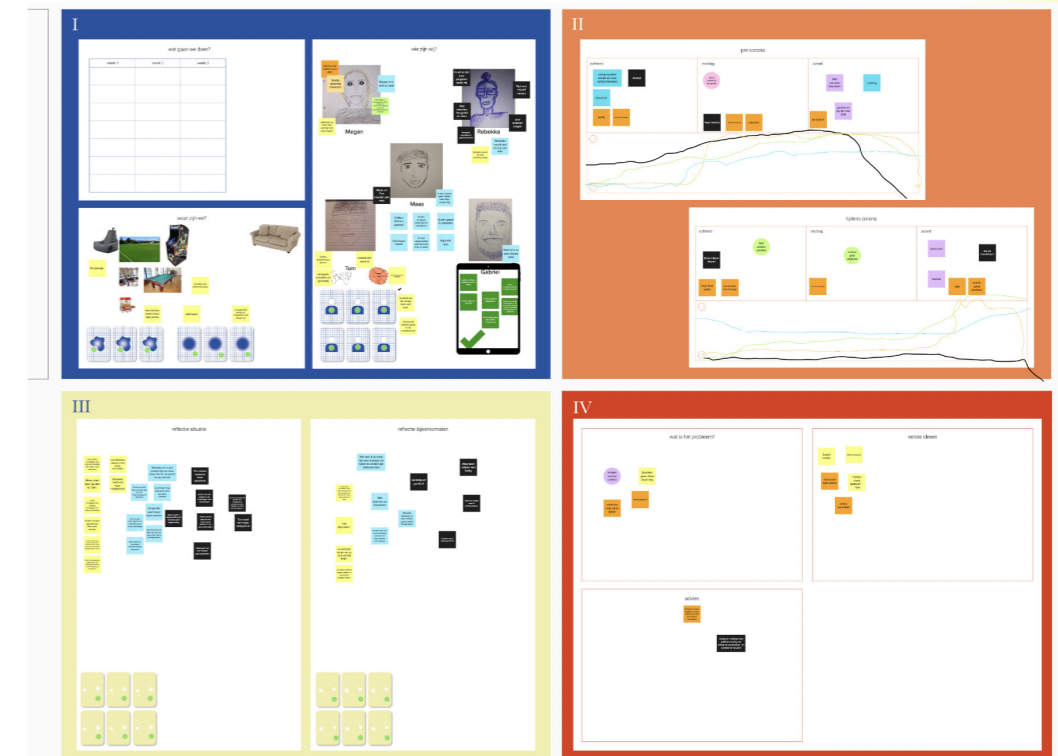


Figure 50: Screenshot from the first session of the trial (up)

Figure 51: Screenshot from the finished Mural board (right)



good friends. A lot of inside jokes were made. Sometimes the other participants could laugh about it, sometimes there was no reaction.

- Rebekka took the lead in the 'who are we' activity, by asking the questions on the cards.
- The participants created their own structure: first answering the question with everyone, then answering them one by one and picking the next one to answer. They sometimes asked questions to each other based on what they wrote on the Post-Its – especially Rebekka and Tom, but later on also others. Some answers sparked a whole conversations.
- After a while, while doing the activity, the participants started to call each other by their names when asking questions or making comments. This, to me, indicated a more personal approach to each other.
- The longer the meeting was, the more questions and comments were made by everybody.
- When Gabriel told the group about the voluntary work he does, all participants seemed very impressed and were applauding him. Gijs joined the conversation here as well, since he knows Gabriel from the prior creative sessions.
- Megan's Zoom did not work that well which resulted in her leaving and joining the group a couple of times. In addition, Gabriels internet connection was unstable. This lead to people sometimes talking through each other or freezing on the screen.
- When Tom and Gijs were called for dinner, they stayed until their mom had to call them two times more again. Were they having so much fun that they did not want to go?
- When talking about personal things in the first quadrant, Rebekka said something which was quite vulnerable, namely that she does 'not like her own company'. Nobody responded, which I found was a bit awkward and rude. On the other hand, it could be that people felt a bit overwhelmed by it, or did not notice the comment was quite heavy at all.
- In the end, very hasty decisions were made about the next steps, because Tom and Megan had to leave for dinner. All participants agreed to meet once per week.
- After the session, I decided to remind the participants that the deadline was in three weeks from now via the

Whatsapp group. Maas then suggested to sometimes meet with lesser people if not everybody could join. All participants agreed on that.

- It was difficult to pick a date without using a Datumprikker. Rebekka tried to initiate something via Whatsapp, but nobody responded with a clear date and time. To motivate the participants more, I sent them an article from the NOS that 4 out of 5 young people experience burn-out symptoms during the pandemic. Only Rebekka and Gabriel responded to this.
- After this, when still nobody took initiative to plan something, I decided to intervene again, this time more actively. I did want to do this in a not-too-demanding way, so I turned to my literature to look for a way to do so. See appendix VI for the intervention strategy. After this intervention, Gabriel immediately suggested to plan the next date in the Whatsapp group.
- Megan let me know via Whatsapp that she was too busy to make time for the meetings. I told her to communicate that to the rest, instead of to me.

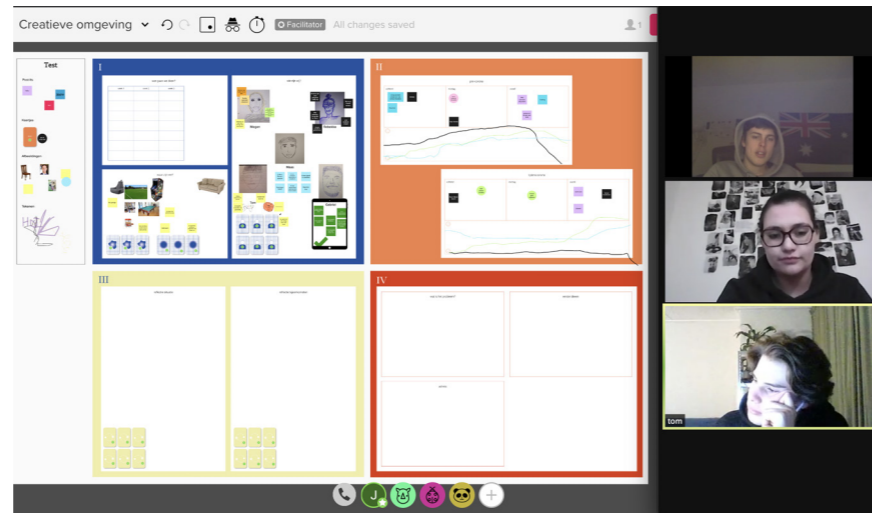


Figure 52: Screenshot from the trial with only three participants present

Third meeting – 1 hour and 15 minutes, 10/02/21, 20:00

- An hour prior to the meeting, both Tom and Maas said they could join 'quickly' in the Whatsapp group. Gabriel promised to be there, but at 20:00 he said that he could not make it.
- The last part of the first quadrant, the entire second quadrant and the beginning of the third quadrant were filled in during this meeting.
- Maas wanted to skip a lot of things, to be done quicker. Tom and Rebekka did not agree to do so, they wanted to do it well.
- The participants were doubting if they should to the other activities from quadrant I as not everybody was present. They then decided to do it so that they could be in time for the deadline.
- Rebekka suggested that next time, it would be better to not spend so much time on typing everything onto Post-Its, but just on talking about it and maybe documenting later. This way, more can be achieved during one meeting.
- All participants agreed on using Teams instead of Zoom from now on, as they were all used to using that instead of Zoom.
- Tom kept on repeating that 'they had to do this quickly'.
- When doing the 'where are we' activity, Maas and Tom agreed on that they would like to be somewhere in a physical space with each other. Tom gave Garage2020 as an example from the last creative sessions. Maas also said that that way, you can divide tasks more easily and work simultaneously on different subjects.
- The participants forgot about the guide and asked me a question about an assignment which was not clear when using only the templates in Mural. I reminded them that they have the PDF, and they said they forgot they had that.
- Sometimes the participants could get very involved into one activity, for example while making the collages. Tom then always kept it central, by saying 'okay, let's move on'.
- Maas made fun of Tom when he wrote down that 'people need to treat each other in a happy way'. Tom then changed it into 'respectful'.
- It was evident that Tom and Maas had a lot of inside jokes. Rebekka could not really relate to that, although she was

laughing about it. Sometimes, Rebekka also could provide another insight on what the other meant, so that he was not made fun of.

- During the activities from the second quadrant, Tom and Maas could relate to each other more than to Rebekka. Nevertheless, they kept asking Rebekka questions about what she does.
- When Maas said that he quit his studies, Rebekka asked why, and a conversation sparked about what they all study/studied.
- When Rebekka said that she would normally visit her foster parents who live in Belgium, Tom and Maas responded to that by asking her questions about her experience with this. It was interesting to see how communication sometimes shifted towards a more personal level.
- Rebekka asked Tom if he still works at Thuisbezorgd (she remembered it from the last creative sessions). Maas joined the conversation by asking where Rebekka works. They then talked about her job.
- Maas stressed that they needed to inform Gabriel and Megan that they need to fill in the quadrant themselves in their free time to keep up.
- After a while, the participants forgot about the guide again and were confused about the emotion timeline in quadrant two. I explained it to them.
- In the end, when talking about the results from the emotion timeline in the second quadrant, Rebekka again shared some vulnerable information about herself, to explain why she filled it in the way she did. Tom responded to it by asking if that was the reason why she showers in the evening, which was quite a comical and superficial question after Rebekka's story. She responded to it in a normal way, but the topic was finished. There were no further comments or questions asked about it.
- Again, there were some doubts about doing the reflection with only the three of them. The participants decided to skip the reflection and go directly to brainstorming (quadrant IV), just to make a small beginning.
- Even though the experiences from quadrant II of Maas and Tom were quite similar and that of Rebekka was completely different, the participants were still able to form a general

vision of what the main problems during the pandemic were. They started reflecting on their experiences without using the third quadrant, by even reflecting on these meetings and how that could relate to solving loneliness.

- The participants agreed on just picking a date and time for the next meeting and then seeing who could join and who could not, instead of taking everyone into account again. They picked a date but did not communicate this to the others.
- When I asked the participants in the Whatsapp group if the meeting was still on, it became evident that both Maas and Tom forgot. Only Rebekka and Gabriel could join, but as they did not want to do it with the two of them, they moved the meeting to Monday.
- Maas asked Gabriel and Megan in the Whatsapp group to fill in the quadrants that they missed last times.

Fourth meeting — 1 hour, 15/02/21, 19:30

- One day prior to the meeting, I asked the participants in the Whatsapp group if it was still on, so that I knew when to be ready to observe. Rebekka answered first, the other participants, except for Gabriel, followed. When Megan said she could not make it, Maas asked her to fill in the missed quadrants again. She did that.
- Tom made a Google Meet, as they agreed upon earlier.
- During this meeting, the participants present finished off the entire assignment.
- The participants started off by talking about how they did not like the fact that the others were not there again. They thought the third quadrant made less sense to do with only three of them, but did not see another option as they did not know if the rest could join them before the deadline. They decided to still do it.
- Tom and Maas had a fun dynamic with the two of them. Rebekka laughed about it. It did become evident again that their experiences were very different from Rebekka's and that they could not relate to each other.
- When reflecting on their differences, Tom and Maas both agreed that Rebekka is a lot more mature and has more responsibilities than they do. She thanked them, laughing. Apparently this was seen as a compliment.

- The participants were more busy with writing down the answers to the questions than actually discussing them. Tom wrote down something quite vulnerable about having less feelings, and Maas wrote something about writing less, but nobody asked each other questions about it.
- At some point, Maas and Tom started bickering again. Rebekka calmed them down by again giving another perspective on what the other one meant (as she already did once before).
- Rebekka remembered that Tom talked about Maas and Levi in the last creative session. This resulted in a conversation about that session again, which showed reflective ability.
- When reflecting on their perspectives on each other, the participants wrote down quite general stuff about each other, such as 'works at a kindergarten' for Rebekka. About Megan and Gabriel, Tom wrote that 'they are not present that often'. Rebekka stressed that she did not learn anything about herself she did not know before, whereas Tom and Maas did.
- The participants reflected on the meetings, where it again was brought up that Gabriel and Megan were not present. Rebekka's experience was different than Maas and Tom's, she said that she thought nobody was enthusiastic. Tom and Maas said they were, but that it was unclear as to what to do. Tom was doubting if a set day in the week would make any difference to the presence of everybody, because then people still could choose not to come.
- Tom sounded disappointed when he suggested that they could better finish off the assignment today, as the deadline was approaching.
- The final design was a website; not many things were added to the things they already proposed last time. They discussed the same ideas, but now it was a website instead of an app. When nobody could think of more ideas, the participants called it a day.
- There was no 'outro', everybody just left. Nobody communicated with the others in the Whatsapp group that the assignment was finished. When Gabriel told the group on Tuesday that he was available that day, I told him the assignment was finished.

6.2.2 — results interviews

Overall

Four out of five participants felt like this process was a positive experience. There were three overarching themes deducted from the answers of the interviews: expectations, relating to each other and responsibility/commitment. These three themes were causally related; the expectations resulted in a certain view of the responsibility/commitment and relation to each other.

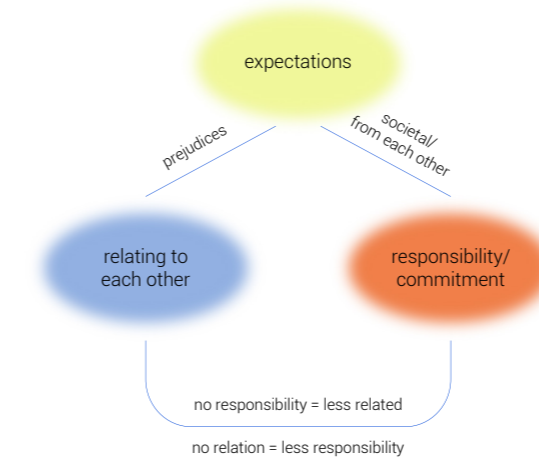


Figure 53: How the three main themes from the interviews were interrelated

Expectations

A lot of expectations the participants seemed to have of themselves in terms of performing were related to the expectations society — mostly adults — have of them. From the interviews, I derived that they are used to living up to these expectations, even if they do not want to or if they find it hard. This can result in premature demotivation caused by the fear of failure. Because of this fear, commitments are sometimes harder to make.

"Maybe at the beginning, I still thought 'ah yes, shit, the project'. But later, when you're there, it's just fun because you're just talking."

"In this project I had the feeling that we could talk and it would be fine, but with the JongerenGarage I think there really has to be a plan and something good, because we have to help the other youth." ¹

"I thought it would be rude if I would have told you I wanted to help, but then didn't. That didn't seem like a nice idea."

Then, the expectations the participants had of each other greatly influenced how they perceived their actions. These expectations differed per person. For instance, Rebekka expected the others to show up and communicate clearly, and because this did not happen, she felt like she was let down. Maas felt irritated because he felt like there was no communication.

"I don't care if you don't show up, but just tell me. Don't just not show up. We're too old for that now. If you say you'll be there, then you're there." ²

"Now it was very vague, and I thought huh, don't you feel like coming, or...? While if you just communicate, even if you don't want to talk about why you're not coming, I at least have the reassurance that you're motivated." ³

Lastly, expectations and preconceptions about the process also influenced how the participants viewed its success. Because Rebekka saw this as an opportunity to design something and have deep conversations about the issue of loneliness during the pandemic, she was quite disappointed that the conversations stayed on the surface. So was Megan. Maas and Tom, on the other hand, did not have any expectations, and just went with the flow, leaving them with a feeling of surprise.

[1] Tom here implied that in this trial, there was no pressure at all; maybe also because the final design was not presented or used anywhere.

[2] So not showing up is a sign of immaturity.

[3] Here you can see that Rebekka took it quite personally, as she wanted to be reassured herself that others were motivated.

“I think I was a bit disappointed. I really looked forward to it, but I noticed that there was not much enthusiasm. I had the idea that it didn’t go too well. I noticed that my own input attenuated because of that.”

“I actually had no expectations at all, I went in blindly. I had no idea, so it was one big surprise.”

“It was a pity that it was of such short duration, I thought it would have lasted longer, that we got more time to get to know each other... But I get it. The concept was clear, but I think it would have been better if there was more time.”⁴

These expectations about the process also came to light when discussing what influence the online aspect had on the process: all participants agreed that it would have been better or more fun offline, even though some of them have not experienced a process like this offline. This could either lead to frustration that it went differently than it would in a normal situation, or to a positive surprise that online can also be fun.

“Yeah, I thought it was a pity. It would have been much more fun and cosy in real life. I was positively surprised about how fun it was, though. Not the project itself, but to do it online.”

“I think I would have been more motivated if it would have been offline instead of online. I get more energy from interactions with people instead of with my screen.”⁵

“When we were face to face, I learned that Tom was more sensitive than Gijs, and that Gijs finds it annoying when people tell him what to do. You learn so much more from each other if you just have a chill conversation. And this... was just not it.”

Prejudices and relating to each other

The aforementioned expectations the participants could have of each other sometimes led to a feeling of disconnection between each other. For instance, the girls wanted the conversations to go a bit deeper, but nobody initiated it.

“I tried it here and there, but I was also holding back a bit because I did not want to dictate the whole conversation, like ‘this is what we’re going to do and this is what we’re going to talk about.’”⁶

“But people mostly just answered the question instead of discussing it with each other, which is logical, because you don’t really know each other.”

“I didn’t think about it. Maybe it’s because I’ve never seen them in real life. You somehow miss the bonding.”⁷

Moreover, the participants also had prejudices about each other which influenced how they viewed each other. This sometimes had to do with age or how the others came across, but it always came back to ‘matureness’. This also relates to the prior concept of disconnection, because some participants felt less bonded because they felt that they were very different.

“Yeah, it’s more I think... You sit there, between all these people who have experienced heavy things... You don’t really fit in.” (about joining the JongerenGarage)

“That you think, ‘oh, no, I really see things differently from you because I’m a bit older’, while that of course does not have to be the case.”⁸

“And so, Maas and Tom probably will not understand that I want a lot of structure.”

It also resulted in Tom not feeling comfortable in taking responsibility or the lead because he felt like he was too young.

“It feels as if it’s not my job to do. I’m three years younger and then I need to tell everybody how it needs to go. (...) Well, at some point of course not anymore, but at the beginning... It’s still that you look up to the one who’s older. And I have that a bit, too. (...) Yeah, I don’t know what it is.”⁹

Responsibility and commitment

In line with the notion of feeling ‘too young’ to take responsibility, a concept that became clear from the interviews was that there was a tendency to escape from the responsibilities of the project. Participants were more comfortable in a following role than a leading role, and insecure about their own abilities to execute a project. This also relates back to the fact that they are used to living up to adults’ expectations, and apparently to the fact that they are afraid they can not – and therefore also do not want to try too hard.

“Good question. I tried it, but nobody responded. I don’t remember what I must have thought, but it could be that I thought ‘well, if nobody responds, bye then.’”¹⁰

“You always need somebody who takes the lead. In this case, it was Rebekka. Somebody who’s not afraid to trigger people. It doesn’t need to be someone who supervises, but someone who participates.”

“A deadline is needed. I do need stress for school to actually do something. If you give me a year to finish my courses, I would do everything in the last month, that’s of course not intention, and it probably won’t work, either.”

“Yeah, if it suits me and I really had time and wanted to do some effort for it. That has to do with the circumstances I’m in at that moment. If it’s with people I like, I would never mind. But I really need to have time, physically.”¹¹

Interestingly, a contradictory idea about responsibility was also mentioned, where some participants mentioned that they like to be autonomous within a certain amount of pre-defined structure in the process.

“At Glow Up, at some point I thought ‘you don’t have to hold my hand with everything I do. I want to be mature, and do it myself.’”

“Yeah, I don’t know! I always like structure. As long as I can think of how I shape the steps, it’s fine. If it would have been a very specific target group, I would have liked it less already.”

Another part of responsibility and commitment was the planning that nobody insisted to make, but three out of five participants mentioned to be important in hindsight. On the one hand, this correlates with the feeling of disconnection between each other and not daring to propose something others might find lame or unimportant, but on the other hand also with the fact that making a planning might not be something the participants would naturally do. As this was also the only activity which was not completed, it stood out as something which ‘went wrong’, so the question also becomes if they would have thought of this if this would not be a part of the activities. It also tells us something about not wanting to commit beforehand, which might be in line with this fear of failing or not being able to live up to others’ expectations.

“I also only later heard that it had to be finished this Friday. If we would have made a planning earlier, I could have taken that into account.”¹²

“I did notice that it was hard to make agreements in the group chat... I don’t know how that could have been done better, but I do think that it would have been better to say something at the beginning, like, ‘hey guys, every Wednesday at 7’... It was postponed, postponed. There needs to be more structure and more agreements. Every time at the same time.”

[4] This expectation was probably based on her prior experience in a youth programme, Glow Up. I think she also was bummed because she was so busy these weeks.

[5] Here, implying, that there apparently was some kind of demotivation – even though he told me he was perfectly motivated.

[6] Rebekka thus was afraid for how they would react if she would have done that.

[7] This was about communicating to the group that he could not make it. Apparently it did not cross his mind.

[8] As Megan talked to me I think she realised the prejudices she had, so she reflected on it and corrected herself.

[9] I could tell I made Tom think about this – I do not think he thought about this prejudice earlier (just like Megan).

[10] Again, showing that giving up chasing everybody was not something that was done on purpose, but just unconsciously, because nobody responded.

[11] I asked if he would join a youth initiative. Here, it became very clear how much of a burden it is to commit to something, giving a hundred reasons why not to.

[12] This seems like a way to push the responsibility upon something else. The planning, or the communication about the deadline.

6.3 — conclusion

When looking at the results on the surface, one may say that the design goal is reached — the participants were documenting, the way of working was routinised and boundary objects were most certainly created. But looking at the results from a deeper perspective, the question becomes if these elements have really kickstarted the constitution of a youth initiative, and if the participants thus were empowered to design something themselves.

A youth initiative, as I have defined before, can be constituted through forming a community. This means that the participants should feel bonded enough to share personal information with each other and feel comfortable around each other. In my opinion, overall, the participants seemed comfortable, and sometimes personal issues were discussed — but comparing it to the creative sessions I did before, far less. Rebekka also noticed this, and Megan missed some depth in the conversations as well. This, for them, resulted in a lesser feeling of bonding. In contrast to that, Maas and Tom mentioned they were positively surprised by the personal conversations they were having, and had no issues with depth. Maas felt like he got to know Rebekka, but not vice versa. This shows that a feeling of bonding is relative and personal to the person experiencing it — most probably influenced by certain expectations. Therefore, this prototype has not reached its goal of constituting a community, as for a community to flourish everybody obviously needs to feel included and part of the team. There were too many personal differences in interpretation for this to have happened.

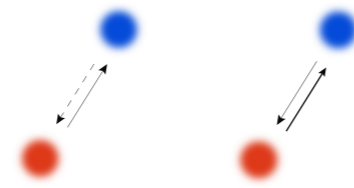


Figure 54: Sometimes bonding can be one-sided, or one perceives the bonding stronger than the other

Taking a glance at the framework again, the bonding would result in empowerment and resilience. Not everybody felt bonded, but the people who did — were they empowered?

The definition of empowerment lies in working together in an uplifting community to reach a common goal, correlating with the feeling of agency over your process. A key element for me to answer the question of whether empowerment was reached is the notion of responsibility in this process. A planning was not made, nor were any agreements, and in hindsight, all participants mentioned that this had to be done so that the process would have been more clear and more people could join. But if all participants were aware of this, why did nobody intervene? And for the participants who were not present at all times — why did they not communicate that clearly to the others? It could be that it was because I was there, and it felt more natural to them to turn to a more authoritative figure, as this of course still was my research and therefore, according to them, perhaps, also my responsibility. But when being asked this during the interview, most participants answered that it either did not cross their mind or that they felt like it was not in their place to tell people what to do. Maas and Tom both agreed on the fact that it is everybody's own responsibility to show up or not — but nevertheless, they felt let down and annoyed when people did not come. What this shows is that this prototype, therefore, did not empower the participants to take matter in their own hands, and that they did not feel like this process was theirs. Instead, they seemed to be hoping somebody else

was responsible — in this case, either somebody else from the group, or me.

Thus, the balance between empowerment and structure in a youth initiative is not the biggest challenge in a youth initiative — it is rather how youth can be empowered to make their own decisions in a process regardless of a certain amount of structure. It is about how responsibility can be handed over to youth and them wanting to take it.

However, in this conclusion, one very apparent thing is happening and has to be made explicit: I, as an adult and a designer, am the one evaluating if this process, ran by non-designer youth, was successful. In the next chapter, I have further elaborated on the concept of expectations and measuring success when working with diffuse design. In addition, I explored the different relations between the insights and what interventions could be designed in order to change some behavioural patterns in these insights.



7. discussion/conclusion

In this chapter, thoughts are shared about the project as a whole, in order to cultivate a multi-leveled understanding of what design can do in youth initiatives. This resulted in a thorough reflection of this project as a whole.

This chapter contains:

7.1 *Discussion*

7.1.1 *The terms of 'successful' youth participation*

7.1.2 *The role of a designer in diffuse design*

7.2 *Final conclusion*

7.1 — discussion

7.1.1 — the terms of ‘successful’ youth participation

The results from the interviews had shown that expectations played a large role in how the participants behaved during the trial. It then became interesting to dive deeper into where these expectations come from, and how to try to influence those to break – or at least interrupt – the cycle illustrated in figure 53.

As mentioned in the results of the last chapter, there were two sides of expectations: On the one hand, there were expectations others had of the participants, and on the other hand, there were expectations they had themselves. I noticed that almost all participants had said quotes that were oriented on ‘being mature’, or ‘being an adult’. This sparked my interest, as I did not bring up these themes myself – which illustrated that to these participants, this apparently is an important issue. At the beginning of this project I identified youth as being an identity you resonate with or not, not entirely dictated by your age. But what are the key points which distinguish youth from adults?

In my opinion, youth is exactly between being a child and being an adult. You do not feel the same as you did when you were still completely dependent on your parents, but you do not have the feeling you are ready to take on adult responsibilities, such as having a full-time job, and sustaining yourself and maybe others financially and mentally. Youth is thus a weird transition period. For children, expectations are set low: You are ‘just a child’. But for youth, sociocultural expectations are already a bit higher, and if you do not live up to them, you can get into trouble – for instance, not doing your homework, or being rude to somebody who is older than you. Part of these punishments are for the greater good, to let youth develop themselves and bring them up to be polite, respectful and responsible. Youth needs to learn how to be reliable, to plan, show up on time, or show up in general when an appointment was made – but

maybe expecting these things to happen naturally, while their brains are still developing, is not the right way to teach them that.

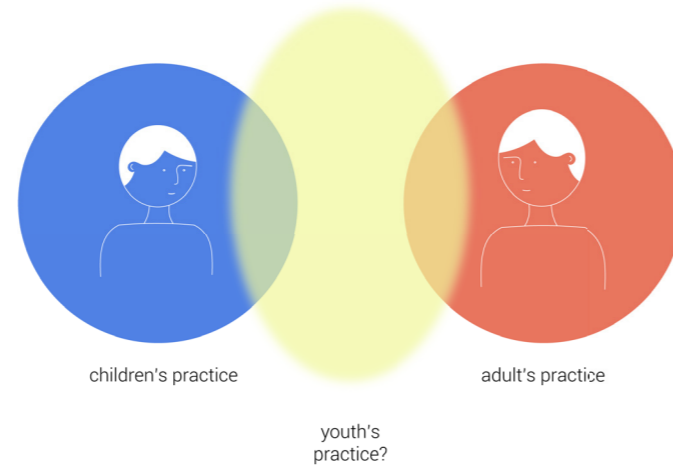


Figure 55: How youth's practice partially overlaps with children's and adult's practice

When I was conducting the trial, I automatically expected youth to do things that I would have done. I obviously did not punish them, but there was a feeling of disappointment in me, that they did not do what I thought was important. I think this feeling of disappointment is inherent to working with youth: They are often misunderstood.

Thinking of the youth and the preconceptions adults have about them, negative things often come up: They may be lazy, do not want to listen, are too stubborn – do not do things the way we would do them. When I was starting this project, these were also things I was told by people who have had a lot of experience working with youth. It is understandable and logical they did – it is always good to keep your expectations low, so that disappointment can be prevented. However, these expectations also lead to youth not believing in themselves beforehand, and sometimes expecting the same things from themselves as adults expect from them – resulting in a vicious cycle. When they cannot live up to those expectations, because their brains are wired differently, or their priorities lie elsewhere, or they do not feel comfortable doing it – they feel like they fail. Therefore sometimes, it might be easier to just not try or commit, so that this uneasy experience can be evaded. This could provide an explanation to the issue of planning and taking on responsibility in this project.

This ‘box thinking’ about adults and youth also influences how youth relates to each other: They can have certain preconceptions about a certain age group other than themselves, which results in a lesser feeling of bonding. Typically, if youth is not a child nor an adult, it means that they are still in their adolescence. As Lerner et al. (2010) describe, adolescents go through different phases at different paces, which means that there is no typical ‘adolescent’ and you are constantly developing yourself. In a group of youth, consisting of adolescents in different stages, it can therefore be hard to relate to each other, because adolescence is exactly the period you look for a definitive identity you can relate to (Erikson, 1968).

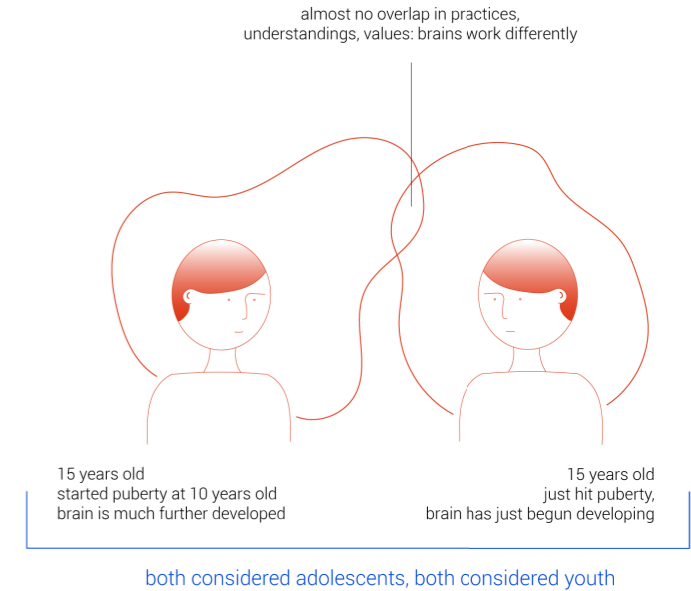


Figure 56: Two adolescents cannot find common ground due to developmental discrepancies

Next to that, immaturity is seen as negative, and maturity something to strive for. Older people can have a bigger say in things, because they must be smarter and know more. Obviously, it makes sense: Older people do have more experience and knowledge. Yet, younger people can maybe think more creatively, and can bring other things to the table, which experienced people cannot. It is important to acknowledge the advantages and unique opportunities of being young.

In line with the feeling of disconnection between each other and the different identities you can measure yourself or on try to relate to, adolescents’ brains are underdeveloped in an area that is especially responsible for their social assessment (Petersen, 1988). This means that some youth – so not all, but the ones going through exactly this phase of adolescence – may care a lot about what others think of them, even more so in a group where they do not know each other that well. This may also cause them to act differently than they would usually do, adapting themselves to behaviour they think others expect of them. An example from the trial is when Rebekka really wanted to talk about deeper subjects, but did not initiate

it that much as she did not want to dictate the conversation. This interdependent behaviour is even more complex in online sessions such as Zoom, because it is even harder to interpret how someone is feeling or what somebody really implies when saying something.

Of course, this feeling of fear of what others might think of you is not only reserved for youth — I also sometimes felt uneasy during the trial when I was asking the group when they would meet, because I also did not want to seem to force them. Adults also work in different groups with different people and different environments, where they also adapt themselves and have to scan what kind of behaviour fits that specific

situation. However, objectively speaking, adults' brains work roughly the same, so you can experience certain differences to another extent because you can empathise with each other. Besides, adults generally care less about what others think of them. Youth, and thus different kinds of adolescents, can find it harder to empathise with each other as they might be in different stages of development and therefore can have a harder time relating or understanding each other. Adapting yourself to a group is not bad and natural behaviour, but there is a difference as to why you adapt yourself. It can thus be concluded that the sociocultural view of youth, as well as their own adolescent developments, contribute to how they operate, and in turn to how adults perceive this operation.

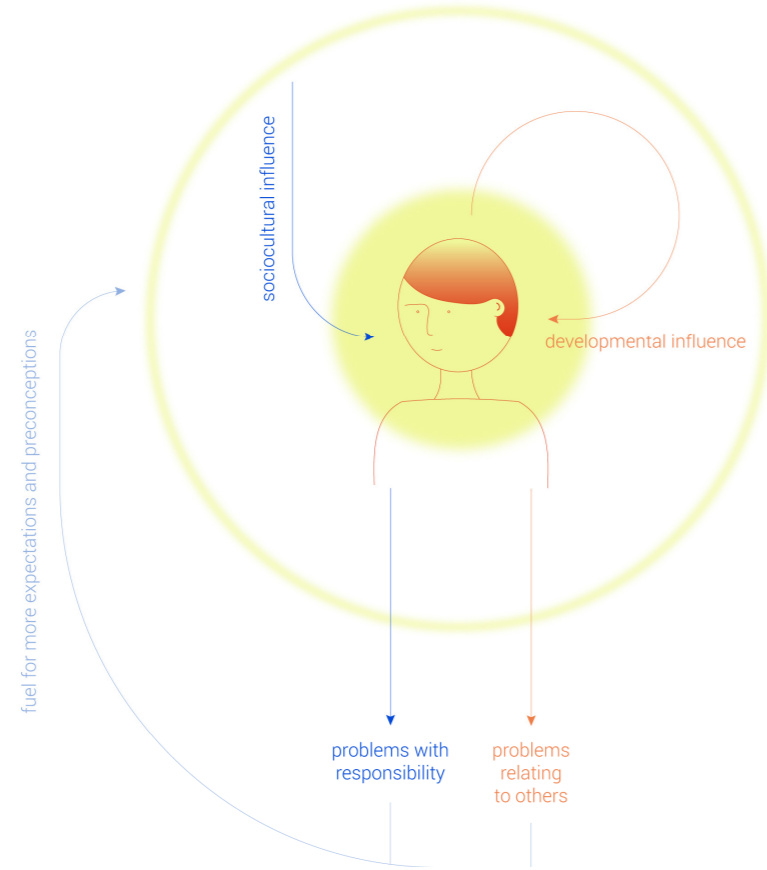


Figure 57: Both sociocultural en developmental factors influence how youth operates and how that is perceived (vicious cycle)

7.1.2 — the role of a designer in diffuse design

The above discussion about the differences between youth and adults provide for a critical perspective on diffuse design. As a designer, as somebody who identifies as an adult, I have made a framework in collaboration with youth, about collaboration with or of youth. In theory, it makes sense — like co-designing with and for a certain user. But this goes a level deeper: Instead of designing an outcome, I designed a process. I was not solely designing for another target group than myself; I was designing for their empowerment to design themselves, so designing *for* codesign. And this, I believe, was the crux of this entire project: Who decides what is successful and what is not? Is that me, the designer, who measures the success of the project by looking at it from an expert point of view, or the users themselves, who themselves determine what (positive) effect the outcome has on them and thereby its success? Let us look at this matter by comparing this diffuse design process (see figure 59) to other, regular design processes.

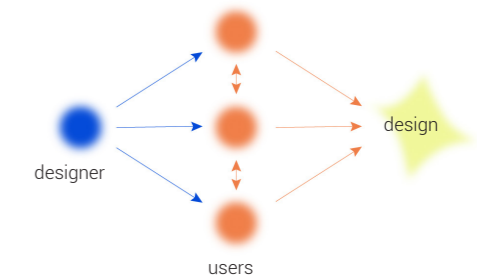


Figure 59: A diffuse design process, through which a designer enables users to design for themselves

In general, a design process consists of a design phase, an outcome, and the evaluation of this outcome. This process can be gone through a couple of times, but overall the designed outcome is always evaluated or validated by the person who has gone through the process. This person, often the designer, has had certain expectations of the outcome based on his or her research, and therefore the designed outcome has an intended use. This intended use would serve the function of the design, but not necessarily the experience. It therefore greatly depends on the purpose of the designed outcome if this intended use has to be lived up to.

For instance, imagine a medical device which has to be used in order to perform a certain surgery. Its purpose is to serve as pliers to carefully extract tissue. The designer of this device has to make sure that the doctor, the user, uses this device as intended so that the surgery can be carried out properly. You do not want the doctor to use your plier device as a cutting tool — the design will thereby lose its function, and not fulfill its purpose.

In another example, a designer may design a toy for children to play with in a sandbox. The purpose of this toy is that children find it fun to play with. Its intended use is to be filled with sand to build a sandcastle, but when testing, the designer notices that the children fill the toy with water and experience great joy in doing that. In this case, the intended use is not that important, as the designer sees that the children are happily playing with the design. The design does not lose its function, and the designer has to let go of his or her prior expectations.

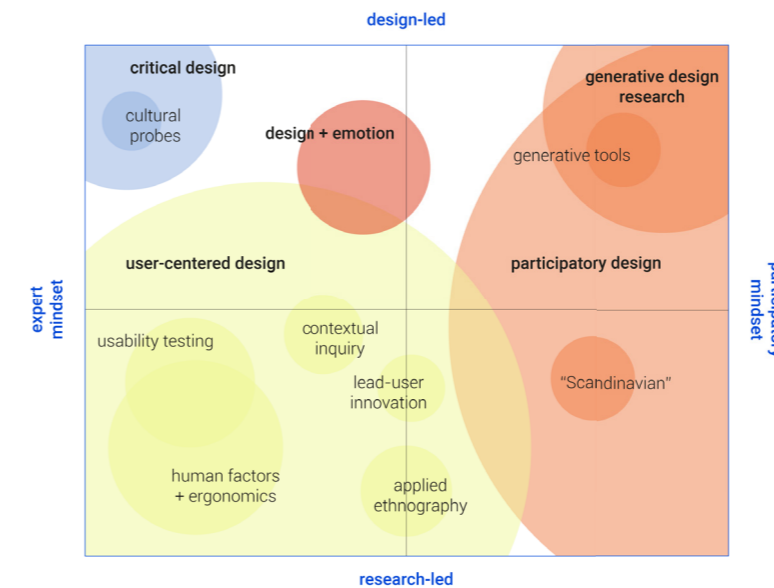


Figure 58: Different design approaches, adapted from Sanders & Stappers (2012)

In a user-centered design process, the user is merely the informer of the designer — the designer is the expert when designing (see figure 58). The users, therefore, may be seen as the ones enabling the designer to design, as they provide the designer with valuable, crucial input. Then, when the process is done and an outcome is designed, the success of this outcome is evaluated by a user test for the designer to see if it meets the needs of the user, and if its purpose is fulfilled. See figure 60.

When going through a co-designing process, the user becomes as much an expert as the designer in the process — see figure 58. In a co-design process, therefore, they participate equally and both contribute to the outcome of the process. The success of the outcome will then, ideally, be evaluated by both the user and the designer equally (although this obviously does not always happen in practice). See figure 61.

Now, when designing for the empowerment of the users to design for themselves, something interesting happens: The outcome of the process which the designer has gone through, is now the process which the users go through. This is difficult to objectively evaluate, as designers are experts on the field of design, and know, both from experience and theory, what works in a conventional design process and what generally does not. Even if the design process tends to be unconventional, the designer still to some degree has expectations of how it should go. This can be seen as an intended use as well — the designer has designed something to enable the user to design something themselves — from the point of view of what the designer thinks is a good design process. When evaluating this outcome, it is thus extra important to determine the purpose of the process, to see if this intended use is important to take into account. See figure 62.

Thus, in Manzini's literature about diffuse design, one crucial aspect is forgotten: The evaluation of such diffuse design, and who is to say what the purpose of this diffuse design process exactly is. In my project, the design goal implied that youth should be empowered to design themselves — so in this case, the purpose was that the users could undergo a design process and design something themselves, through the constitution of a community. I, as a designer, have created this purpose, so I have also evaluated if the process was gone through as I would have expected (the intended use of the prototype). It was not. Does this mean that this diffuse design therefore did not work, and that diffuse design in general is hard to accomplish if its purpose lies in going through a perfect design process? No, it does not.

This diffuse design process has led to a great deal of evaluation and reflection that otherwise would not have taken place. It has made me aware of my position in the project and how my expectations influence my interpretations of certain situations — which is extremely valuable when doing qualitative research. In addition, it has shown that in this case — and I think many other cases — the 'perfect' design process is not limited to what we, as designers, think it is.

In my opinion, the term 'design' is something which is always developing — and we constantly contribute to that development. But, in order to let it flourish naturally, we need to sometimes take a step back, look at it from another perspective, and let go of the things we know. This applies to the design process of the participants in my trial, but also to my own design process which I was not happy about — in the end, the things which may seem to go 'wrong', are the things we learn from the most.

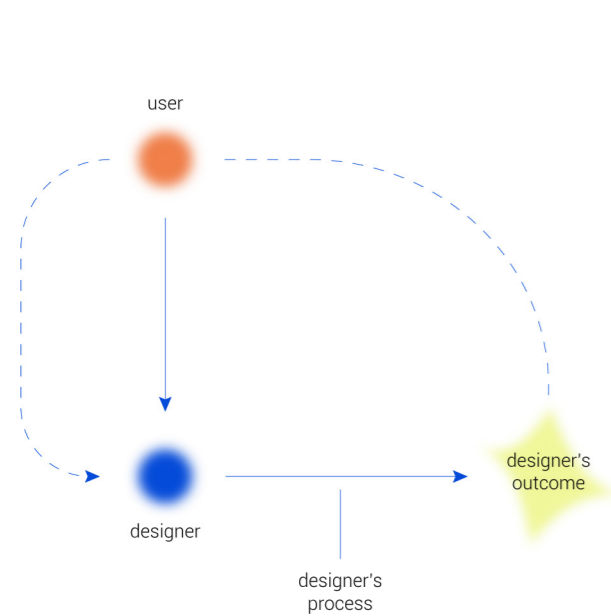


Figure 60: Validation in a user-centered design process

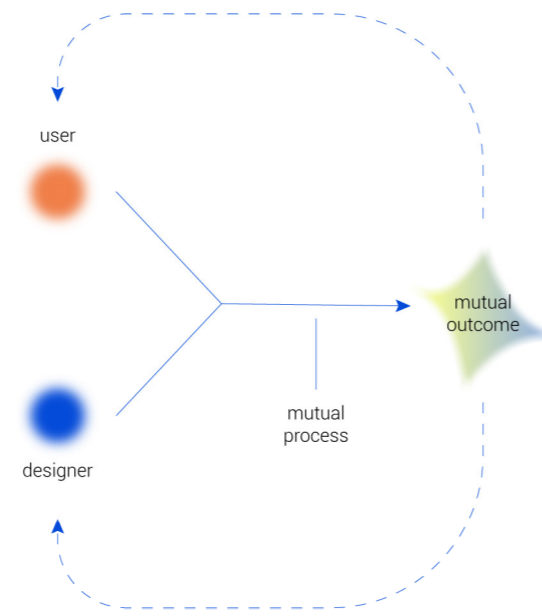


Figure 61: Validation in a co-design process

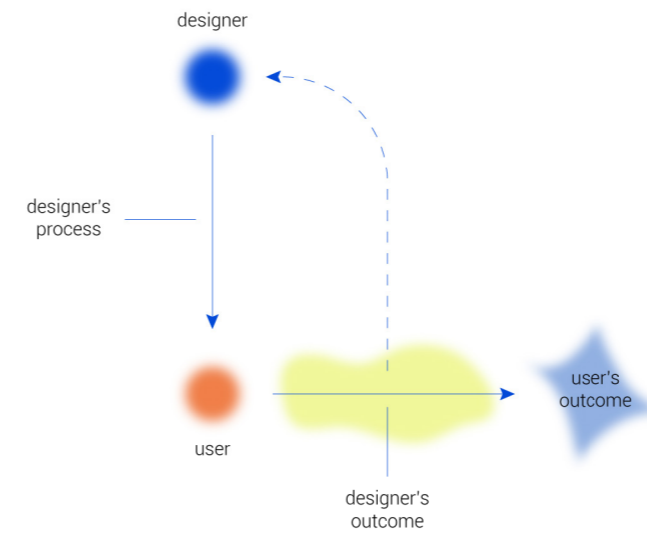


Figure 63: Validation in a diffuse design process

7.2 — final conclusion

A concluding note on this aforementioned discussion is that the framework for interactions within youth initiatives I presented is still in progress and cannot, on its own, provide for a 'successful' youth initiative per se. It is a good start for a designer to identify the different interactions and how to design for them (and thus, how to guide them in a way), but as I have noticed, interactions can never fully be guided — there are too many factors contributing to these interactions which, sadly, we cannot always have control over — especially when speaking of diffuse design. This is due to the intended use of certain design objects, automatically affording the designer to have certain expectations, and therefore a sense of failure if these expectations are not met. Besides, the experiences around interactions are personal and dependent on the participant: For one, a space might feel safe, but for another, it may feel uncomfortable. This is not taken into account in the framework.

What this project did prove, however, is that design is an excellent method for understanding these complex interactions and their interdependencies. By having used the framework and design guidelines that accompany it, a not-so-perfect picture was painted of how the different interactions unfolded and evolved overtime. In this case, the framework is a perfect base for exploring these interactions systematically.

8. wrapping up

This last chapter contains some finalising steps from this project, by translating the prior discussion into recommendations for both Garage2020 and further research. In addition, limitations are discussed, and a personal reflection can be found.

This chapter contains:

- 8.1 *Recommendations*
 - 8.1.1 *For de Garage2020*
 - 8.1.2 *For further (design) research*

- 8.2 *Final notes*
 - 8.2.1 *Limitations of this project*
 - 8.2.2 *Personal reflection*

8.1 — recommendations

8.1.1 — for de Garage2020

For de Garage2020, I have gathered my final insights to make up an advice for how to proceed with the JongerenGarage. I have identified two pathways which they can take, depending on their own priorities, depicted in the flowchart in figure 64. Below are the explanations for each step in the flowchart. These insights have been documented into a booklet which can be found in appendix VII.

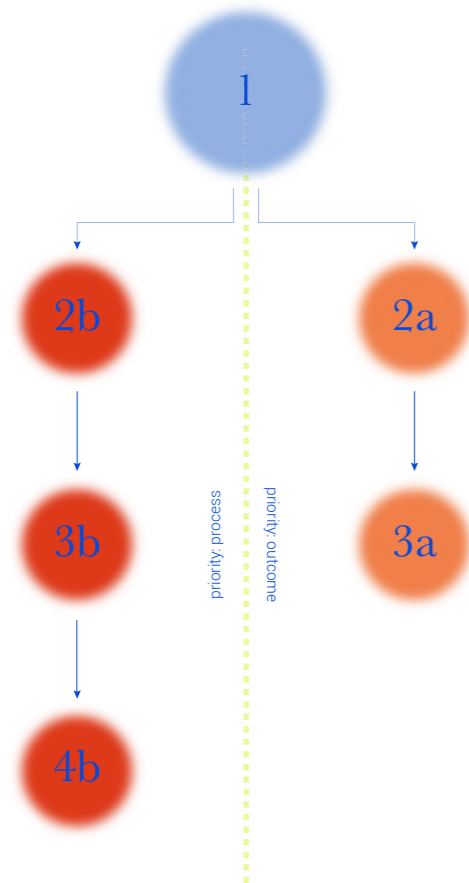


Figure 63: Pathways to different strategies for the JongerenGarage

1 Make explicit what you want to achieve. A youth initiative such as the JongerenGarage serves two purposes: On the one hand, the empowerment of youth that participates, but on the other the creation of a disruptive design for the current youth care system, made from the viewpoint of youth. In these purposes, priorities have to be made in terms of what is the most important, before the forming of the actual process can take place.

2a If the outcome of the process, thus the design, is the most important, it is best if the participants follow a clearly predetermined structure and are under supervision of Garage2020; at least at the beginning. This way, it can be made sure that the participants will deliver at the preferred or expected level. So first, prior to the start of the JongerenGarage, a planning of the entire process has to be made by Garage2020 themselves.

3a For a further structure, I would suggest that the concepts I have provided in this report are further elaborated on by co-creation with other youth. However, I would make sure that there is preceding activity added in which Garage2020 and the participants make agreements together regarding the planning, roles within the group, and who takes responsibility for what. If at some point the agreements are not abided by, Garage2020 can intervene. This can also serve as extra motivation for the participants to take up this responsibility, but also a safety net for if they do not.

2b If the priority lies in empowering youth, letting them flourish, and conducting further research as to how youth interactions take place, I would suggest to do some slight, but important, adaptations to the framework I have provided in my thesis. These adaptations consist of a couple of activities which can be added to the overall activities from the framework. Prior to the start of the JongerenGarage, it is important that Garage2020 makes all preconceptions and expectations they have of youth explicit somewhere and talk about it within the team. What do they expect youth to do, how is the design process the youth are going to lead different from how Garage2020 does it? When these changes and expectations are written down somewhere, it is easier to get a grip on them and try to let them go. That way expectations can be lowered because the sociocultural idea of what youth will and will not do is now made aware of and can be (partly) let go. Garage2020 has to communicate clearly, to each other but also to the to be recruited participants, that this is an experiment, and therefore it is no big deal if the outcome is not what was expected (or 'successful').

3b Next, following the concepts from this thesis, a loose structure for the JongerenGarage can be made by Garage2020, again, by co-creating with other youth. It is important to have at least some kind of structure so that the participants know what they are signing up for and, at least at the beginning, have some kind of guidance. Note that this structure does not involve any pre-made agreements or planning, and can contain only certain activities which can but not have to be done (similar to my prototype).

4b When the participants are recruited, Garage2020 can organise an introductory activity in which preconceptions about adulthood, being mature, and being young can be explored. This way they can form their own identity based on the group as a whole, and not on sociocultural expectations. Questions to ask are for instance: What is so special about being youth? Where does our power lie in being young? Next, this is also the perfect opportunity for them to relate to each other: Who is 'more' mature, and who is less? What does that even mean? Who are we together then? Hopefully, this helps to relate to each other better, providing for a stronger domain and thus a better basis for a community.

8.1.2 — for further (design) research

Youth's view on youth

An interesting topic for further research would be the identity around youth. What does it mean for youth to be youth, and what feelings accompany it? What are the associations youth has with themselves in terms of competence, self-worth, and success? Through researching this further, I think the relationship youth has with their own identity can be examined so that it can become clear what design can do in order to give more shape to a positive, realistic identity, instead of one based on sociocultural standards. With the massive exposure to social media, I can imagine that now more than ever youth feels incompetent by comparing themselves with others who seem to be successful in life. But what success in life is mostly viewed as now, is a superficial idea that nobody can live up to — especially not when your brain is still developing and you are struggling with that as it is.

Hopefully, by doing more research into the sociocultural influence on youth's identity, more awareness can be spread around the value of being youth, ultimately creating a new identity of youth based on positive aspects, thereby minimising misunderstandings in the future.

Boundary crossing as a subjective matter

As can be seen in my thesis, sometimes boundaries are crossed only one way. This means that boundary crossing in itself is something which is personal and subjective. How could one measure if a boundary is crossed, then? The theory of boundary crossing is written in such way that it reduces humans, with their personalities, abilities and opinions, to almost binary entities. In my opinion, this is an incomplete view of how epistemology works and takes place between humans. For instance, when transferring some kind of knowledge, there can also be a partly understanding, or another way of interpreting the knowledge but still coming to the same conclusion. It is interesting to research if that is wrong, or on a deeper level, if there is any case of wrong or right, but rather good or bad — such as solutions to wicked problems are described in the first chapter of this thesis. This could entail

new ways of teaching and learning, based on a more human, subjective scale — perhaps also taking into account that failure is a way of learning as well, and misunderstandings can lead to new, even richer insights. Design might facilitate this process.

Self-determination theory and youth

One of the things Garage2020 has struggled with is the motivation of youth. In my thesis, I have not been able to completely answer this question — although I do think that the project does have certain outcomes which may have to do with motivation of youth.

The self-determination theory is a theory which describes how intrinsic motivation in a human is established (Ryan & Desi, 2005; Jimenez, Pohlmeier & Desmet, 2015). It is argued that when three specific conditions are met, a person is self-determined to undertake whatever action in a situation, or in a broader perspective, even in life. These three conditions are autonomy, bonding and capability — autonomy being the feeling that you can do it on your own without being dependent on anyone, bonding being that you feel part of a community or group you can identify with, and capability being that you are confident that you can do it. This in some part resonates with what I have observed and concluded through my case study — youth can feel incompetent or not bonded for several reasons, thus they will not be able to fully motivate themselves from inside. There has been some research on how the self-determination theory can contribute to positive youth development, such as the research done by Hui & Tsang (2012), but most of the research is focused on hypothetical situations and hypothetical solutions, with parents and schools as the main source of intervention. I believe that in practice, it is much harder to actually get youth to be self-determined, precisely because of the reasons stated in the discussion of this thesis. Therefore, there needs to be more action research, such as research through design, into how to actually get youth to be self-determined, especially in the overly social context we live in at the moment. This could be done in combination with the research about youth's identity as mentioned earlier.

Design for failure as a rich experience

Lastly, I would propose to experiment more in how to design for failure. As discussed before, failing can be the best way to learn important lessons, yet it is almost a taboo to actually fail. Society nowadays is focused on winning, not losing, and therefore winning often equals success in a lot of people's eyes. But what if we could design to fail on purpose, seeing failure as winning and therefore as success?

An interesting approach for this might be design for rich experiences, a framework developed by Fokkinga & Desmet (2013). In their research, they argue for design for negative emotions which could eventually lead to positive ones, calling those 'rich experiences'. A rich experience in the case of failing could therefore be the combination of frustration and satisfaction ('the Challenging') or anxiety and fascination ('the Eerie') — or even a completely new one, specifically focusing on the emotions encountered when the feeling of failure arises.

8.2 — final notes

8.2.1 — limitations of this project

Covid-19

Due to Covid-19, this project has been carried out very differently than I have envisioned at the beginning. Because of this, the case study was done online, which of course led to completely different interactions between the participants than what would have been offline. It could be that because of this, the conclusions drawn are not completely accurate.

Another limitation due to Covid-19 was the difficulty of recruiting participants. I have been in contact with schools and teachers, but due to the enormous pressure that was put on teachers because of everything being switched to online, it was not possible to recruit through them. I would have hoped for a larger sample size, more different combinations of groups of participants to see how different interactions take place in different groups, but unfortunately, this was not possible. Therefore, I have mostly tested with the same people, providing for a biased outcome of the case study.

Time constraints

I would have liked to spend more time on the case study in order to be able to see a real development taking place in the interactions and relationships between the participants. I knew from the beginning of this project that I would never be able to test within the same timespan as a real youth initiative (6+ months), but it still leads to a limitation of this project. It could for instance be that overtime, youth would take on more responsibility as they got to know each other better, or as they became more comfortable in the role of their own or each others' authority figure. These are all outcomes that I sadly could not experience during this short timespan.

Bias in interpretation

Following up the earlier discussion about the role of a designer in a design project and the misunderstanding between youth and adults, this project may have had a completely different outcome if somebody else was interpreting the results. This is of course an open door, but I think that in a project like this it is especially important to acknowledge that. I am wondering how this project would have been interpreted by somebody who is 18 years old — maybe the outcome would have been completely different. On the other hand, one may also argue that it is better to have somebody from outside your bubble interpret the results as it is sometimes hard to reflect on behaviour you exhibit yourself as well. It goes both ways, but it is worth mentioning.

In addition to interpreting, the the whole project could have gone a lot differently if somebody else would have initiated it, possibly having different views on what is important and what is not. The case study with the trial of a youth initiative is a good example of that, as it could have gone very differently if I would not have chosen to interfere.

8.2.2 — personal reflection

At the beginning of this project, I have set some personal goals for myself. I wanted to learn a lot, contribute to design research somehow, delve into a difficult topic — I definitely achieved all these things. But one important lesson I have learned that I want to share here, was not mentioned in my goals — I never had enough self-reflection to know I needed it, I guess.

When I started off, I had a very clear idea of what my graduation project should look like. I wanted to do a lot of trial tests with youth, and end up with a groundbreaking, amazing, jawdropping design which would not only benefit Garage2020, but every organisation ever. In addition, I wanted to publish a paper about my clarifying project, so that I could also inspire other designers.

I think it goes without saying that this is not exactly what happened. The lockdown started somewhere in the middle of my project, which resulted in the fact that I could not recruit participants as I normally would, that I could not run trials that often, and, worst of all, that it all had to be done online. On top of this, life happened — I did not always feel as great as I would want to feel, and I started to lose motivation. I felt like I failed, and that my project had failed. And after a while, I recognised a certain pattern: Expectations not matching reality.

In the discussion of this thesis, I mention the importance of letting go of expectations because they might influence your interpretation of an outcome of a process negatively. Failing, actually, does not exist — it is merely a sign of something atypical as opposed to your expectations, and it therefore almost always will bring something new to the table. This is exactly what happened during my graduation project: It did not go as I wanted it to go, so I felt like I was doing it wrong. But what I have learned from this may be even more valuable than the 'perfect project'. Because this, of course, is a wrong way of evaluating yourself, or anyone for that matter. I think that in processes such as design, where creativity and innovation play large parts, there is no such thing as a wrong or right thing to do. There are always endless possibilities. Every step you take in this process contributes to the things you will learn from it in

the end — even if that means that your ideal outcome, or your goal, is not reached. It sounds like an open door, but sometimes you lose sight of your own expectations because they are buried in you so deeply. So by realising and acknowledging that they are there, you can try and distance yourself from them. This is what I did in the end in this graduation project as well, and I am proud of myself for doing so. I hope I will take this insight with me in my future career.

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