

Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



Graduation Plan: All tracks

Submit your Graduation Plan to the Board of Examiners (Examencommissie-BK@tudelft.nl), Mentors and Delegate of the Board of Examiners one week before P2 at the latest.

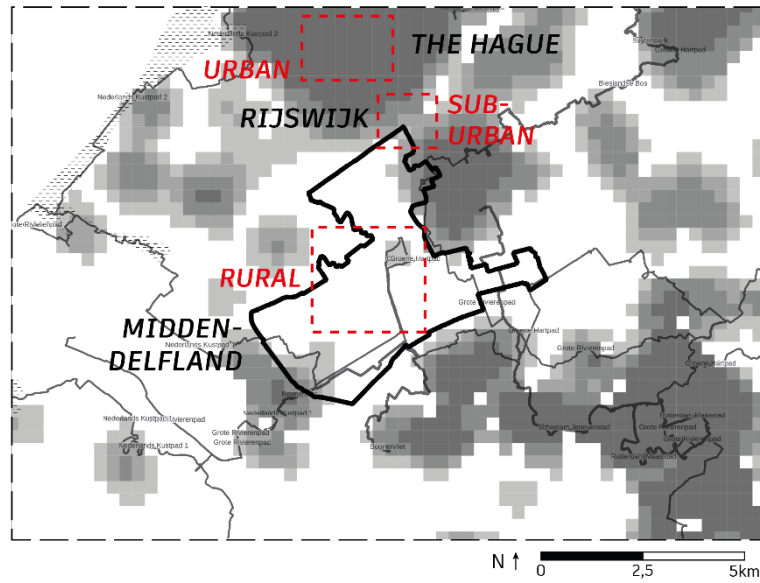
The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

| Personal information | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Name | Arjanne van der Padt |
| Student number | 4851005 |

| Studio | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Name / Theme | Planning Complex Cities | |
| Main mentor | Thomas Verbeek | Urban Studies Section of the Urbanism Department |
| Second mentor | Zef Hemel | Spatial Planning and Strategy of the Urbanism Department |
| Argumentation of choice of the studio | For my graduation, I will research how walking can contribute to a slower, healthier, and more inspiring urban life. In my research, this topic will be placed in the context of mental and physical health, overpopulation & urbanisation, the right to the city, and the city-rural relationship. The graduation studio Planning Complex Cities has a human-centred, multi-scalar, and research-based approach, which aligns perfectly with how I want to approach the topic of walking in a broad sense. The multi-scalar approach of the PCP studio, ranging from planning and policy, linked with people's personal experience, will give the project meaning in an institutional and social context. Additionally, the studio's focus on justice offers a chance to deepen my understanding of its relevance in urban design and planning, an area often overlooked in practice. | |

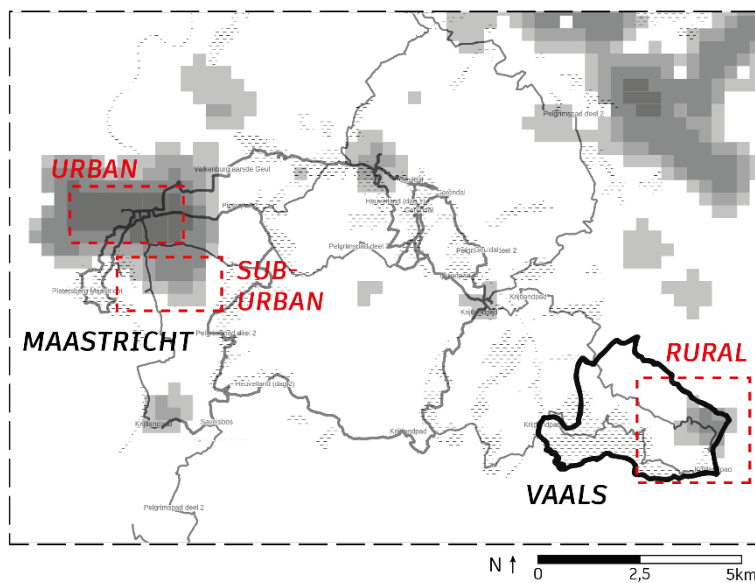
| Graduation project | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Title of the graduation project | Steps towards Slowness Planning and design to promote walking for well-being in a post-growth future in the Netherlands |
| Goal | |
| Location: | The Netherlands, with 3 case study areas, each encompassing a rural, urban and suburban area, chosen based on the existing official slow cities of the Netherlands: |

MIDDEN-DELFLAND, RIJSWIJK AND THE HAGUE

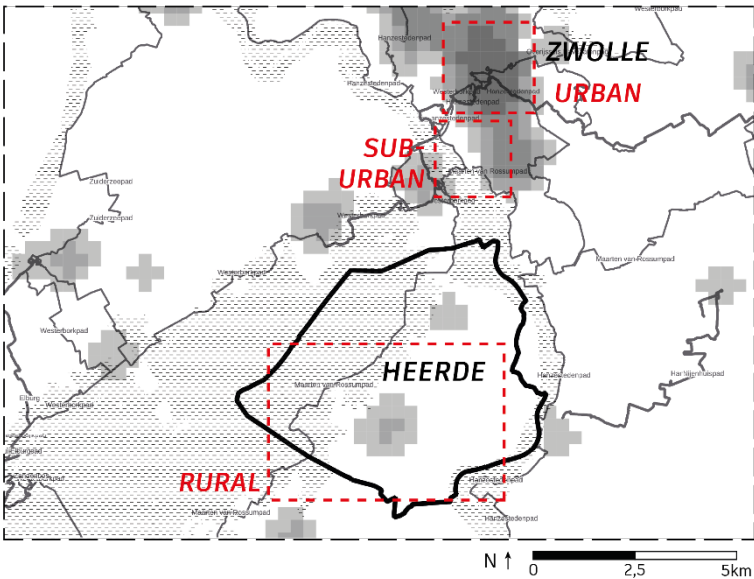


- Midden-Delfland, Rijswijk and Den Haag

VAALS AND MAASTRICHT

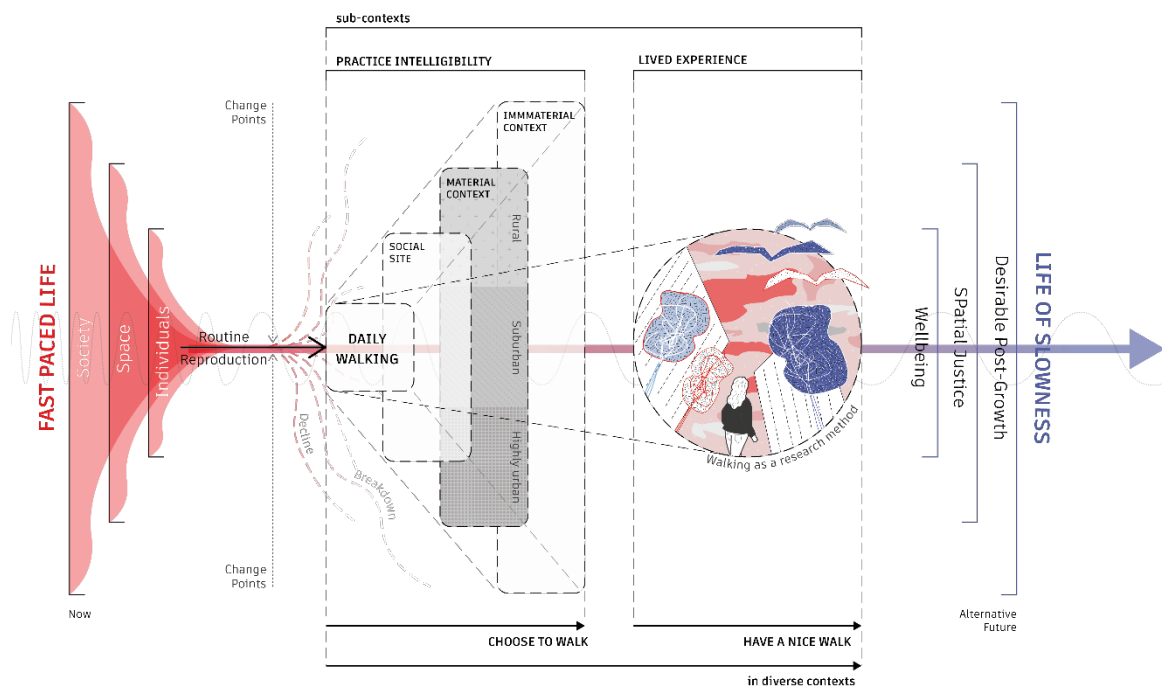


- Vaals, Maastricht

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| | <p style="text-align: center;">HEERDE AND ZWOLLE</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">- Heerde, Zwolle</p> |
| <p>The posed problem,</p> | <p>This project addresses the problems of fast paced life. The fast paced society proves to be unhealthy, unsustainable and unjust. Fast paced life contributes to alarming numbers of inactivity and chronic stress, as well the global climate emergency, with its increasing land use and emissions related to human activities, and disparities between the 'slow' and 'fast world', across scales. This presents an urgency for change. In the Netherlands this is apparent: levels of physical activity are declining (currently only 45% of the population meets activity guidelines), the population has monotonous sitting habits (on average 9 hours a day) and mental health in declining (40% of the population experiencing feelings of anxiety and depression) combined with capacity problems in the mental health care sector (waiting lists of over 100.000 people). Additionally, the Dutch lifestyles cause alarming levels of greenhouse gas emissions and need vast amounts of space, which, combined with a growing population in an already densely populated country, presents a real challenge. Lastly, there are evident disparities between regions such as the urbanized Randstad and the rural Regio and cases of unequal access to current fast paced systems, such as fast transportation systems, while certain groups are 'left behind', as they cannot keep up with the fast pace of life.</p> <p>An in-depth exploration of theories around walking, slowness, post-growth and Practice theory provides the approach of the proposed problem with a narrowed research scope, approach, methodologies and a vision of a future to work towards.</p> <p>The project aims to propose an inclusive transition towards an alternative, desirable post-growth future of wellbeing. This future becomes probable with an approach that is by proposing grounded and realistic strategies, which are not merely spatial, but also social and political. To shift towards slowness, these strategies should aim to encourage more walking in general, and enhance the quality and pleasure during walks.</p> <p>Based in practice theory, the project will propose trans-disciplinary and daily life based strategies. Researching diverse, lived experiences can ensure quality and pleasure in</p> |

walks. Inclusivity is ensured by considering diverse contexts, such as rural and urban areas, and the differences in barriers to adopting the practice of walking or walking experiences they bring. Additionally, the practice of walking invites people to inhabit their environments in an alternative way, opposed to formal citizenship, providing them and inviting them to the 'right to the city', while Practice Theory approaches citizens as active practitioners, instead of passive consumers. Walking as a research method further encourages this with citizen participation, while it also ensures the research practices what it preaches: a slower, grounded approach to change.

These conclusions are summarized in the conceptual framework:



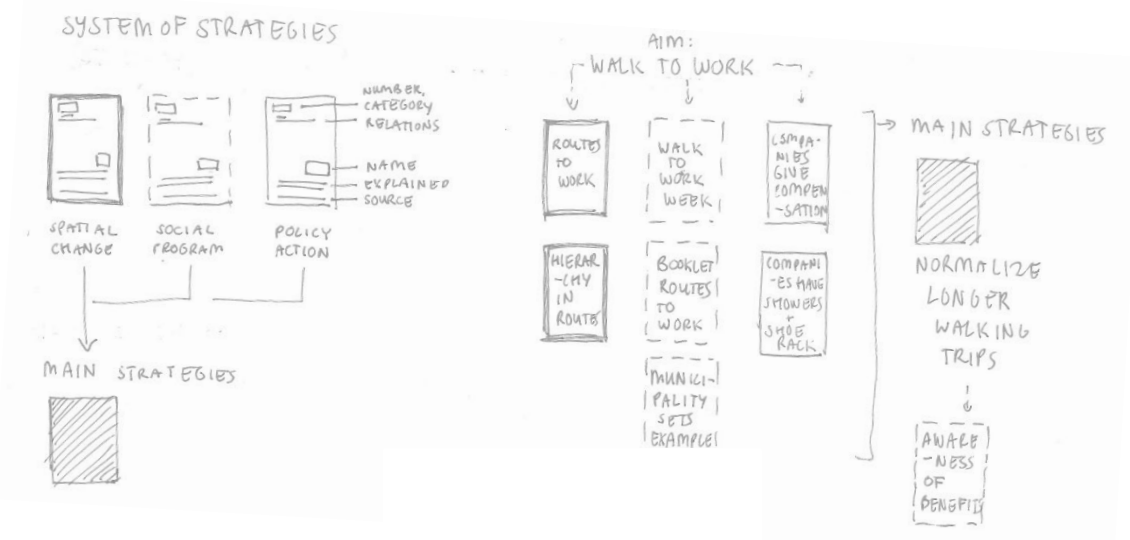
research questions and

Main Research Question:

"How can planning and design interventions enhance both the quality and quantity of walking in urban, suburban, and rural contexts in the Netherlands, to promote slowness, improve wellbeing, and support a just transition to a post-growth society?"

Sub-Research Questions:

1. How does the current state of walking as a practice—both its performance and the practice-as-entity—inform the development of spatial and socio-political strategies to promote walking in the Netherlands, in contrast to existing approaches?
2. Which spatial and socio-political strategies to encourage the choice to walk while discouraging alternatives, can be proposed based on potential change points in daily life and their associated social contexts?

| | |
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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Which spatial and socio-political strategies that foster enjoyable and inclusive walking experiences can be proposed based on individual and shared experiences of walking in diverse environments? 4. How do the material and immaterial characteristics of highly urban, suburban, and rural contexts in the Netherlands inform and propose priorities in spatial and socio-political strategies to promote walking? 5. What is the role of urban design in strategizing to promote walking in the Netherlands in a rural, suburban or urban context, especially related to political or social interventions? |
| <p>design assignment in which these result.</p> | <p>The project has the following expected outcomes:</p>  <p>^ expected outcomes: system of strategies (by Author)</p> <p>The project will develop a comprehensive strategy of spatial interventions, social programs, and policy recommendations tailored to rural, urban, and suburban contexts. These interconnected, context-specific strategies function like a pattern language, addressing the challenge of balancing inclusivity and applicability across diverse settings. The strategy connects theory, practice, and design across scales, emphasizing collaboration and integration between spatial design and socio-political initiatives, as the figure above displays.</p> <p>A design proposal for one case study area will be made, either on a local scale, addressing only one of the sub-contexts, or on a regional scale, addressing all three sub-contexts (rural, urban and suburban). Where the diversity of daily walking experiences will be explored, through a psychogeographic representation or storytelling.</p> <p>The project findings will be summarized in a practical manual for actors, for example policy-makers and social institutions, which include the steps for fostering walking practices, and "how-to" walk pamphlets tailored to different contexts (e.g., walking the suburbs, towns, or cities).</p> |

- Translating abstract theoretical concepts, particularly those derived from Practice Theory and theories of Nuanced walking, into tangible and actionable design interventions.
- Ensuring that spatial design is effectively complemented by social and political actions, to achieve a cohesive and impactful strategy, whilst leaving the system of strategies open and adjustable, to address the uncertainties of future challenges.
- Balancing the need for inclusivity of diverse preferences and experiences and applicability across diverse contexts with the necessity of generalization and structuring for workability and real-world application.

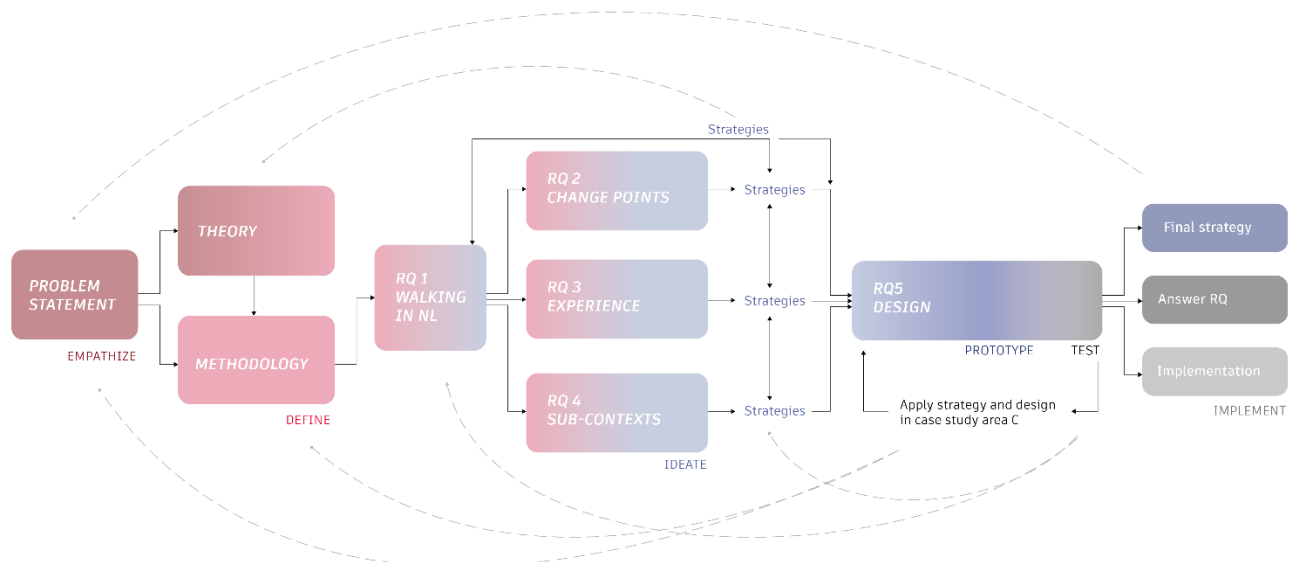
The methodology, explained further below, will address these challenges. The methodology is structured around 'design thinking', to illustrate the non-linearity of the process, enable moving fluidly between theory, practice, design and varying scales of intervention and address the challenges inherent in this project, such as transitioning from abstract theoretical concepts to tangible, real-world interventions through design.

The definition of the problem has to be significant to a clearly defined area of research and design.]

Process

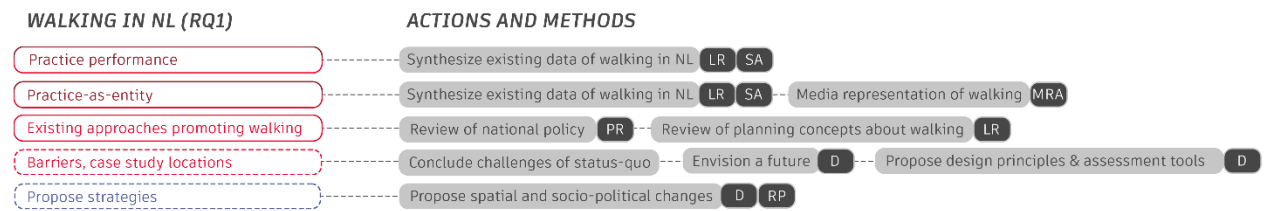
Method description

Methodology flowchart:



Methods for each research question:

RQ 1



This research question investigates the current state of walking in the Netherlands via the framework of Practice Theory, to develop informed strategies to promote walking. This aim is to both understand the context in which the change initiatives will be enacted, and understand the context the project aims to change.

The question firstly assesses the current performance of walking as a practice, which includes analysing the amount and types of walks, the demographic that walks and the patterns across space of walking, which will inform the choice of case studies simultaneously.

Additionally, the question explores walking-as-entity in the Netherlands, reviewing the material and immaterial contexts shaping walking practices. Key resources include the beforementioned data on walking, the "Nationaal Masterplan Lopen" (2024) and media representations, such as books. The immaterial context involves analysing shared cultural values, barriers, and assumptions about walking, while the material context examines spatial and personal barriers.

This analysis examines the performance and entity aspects of walking as a practice to identify barriers, disparities, and opportunities for change, and propose interventions based on those conclusions. It also evaluates existing national policies and planning approaches and identifies the concepts related to promoting walking that are used (such as STOMP, 15-Minute City, and Cittaslow), to assess their comprehensiveness compared to the newfound barriers and opportunities.

Based on these insights, the first strategies for changes are proposed, which will be further reviewed, adjusted and expanded in RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4. A proposal for 'main strategies' and aims is made. Envisioning a possible, alternative future, which the strategies should make probable, is an essential step to proposing the strategies. We also link back to the theory and the problem statement, to propose design principles and assessment tools to test strategies and design during the project. The link back to theory will ensure assessment tools that focus on sustainability, wellbeing and inclusivity. Especially the inclusivity is still underdeveloped in the project. The project will look into 'the right to the city', commons and spatial justice, as well as groups with walking limitations.

Limitations:

- Data gaps: There is a limited amount of data available about walking in the Netherlands, compared to other modes of transport. Most of the data is nation-wide, and therefore might not reflect localized behaviour. Additionally, the study will need to synthesize insights from organizations studying recreational walking, typically focused on areas outside of cities, and institutions which view walking as part of mobility, predominantly examined in urban areas. For this, the research will combine data from CBS (Central Bureau of Statistics), IenW (Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management), KiM (Institute for Transport Policy Analysis), and Stichting Wandelnet (Recreational Walking).
- Scope of policy review: The policy review will not be all-encompassing, but rather focussed on examples, mainly due to time constraints.

- The nationwide perspective overlooks smaller-scale, localized disparities. This will be, partially, addressed in RQ3 and 4.

RQ2



This question examines opportunities to integrate walking into daily activities by identifying change points in daily life, and their social sites. The methodology includes literature research to grasp the daily activities of the Dutch population and identify where walking can become a viable choice: the change points. These will be informed by the research on the benefits of walking examined in the Theoretical Framework. This leads to proposing strategies that enable and promote walking in more parts of life than merely as occasional transport or leisure, and proposes new aims that structure the system of strategies, such as walking during worktime or walking as a workout.

Moreover, we will review the social site of walking at these change points, identifying the main alternative practices, such as car use or sitting, and reviewing the performances of these practices as well as the practices-as-entities, in literature. The project will identify competitive and symbiotic practices, as well as opportunities to integrate practices, and propose strategies accordingly.

Together, these insights lead to the proposal of spatial and socio-political strategies that frame and promote walking as the logical choice at many points during the day. The strategies are informed by reference projects and are integrated into the system of strategies developed across RQs 1, 2, and 4.

The approach to promoting walking is society-wide, generalized 'daily life', exploring different challenges inherent to daily activities and change points, but the scale stays society wide. RQ3 informs the strategy more about all the personal differences. Also informed by walks of RQ3, both my daily walks, especially trying to walk as much as possible for a week, informed by change points research, but moreover, the walks with others might bring other issues to light that literature can't see.

The approach to promoting walking adopts a society-wide perspective, focusing on the generalized context of 'daily life' and addressing various challenges inherent to everyday activities and transitional moments. Therefore, the proposed strategies and conclusions will be reviewed and expanded with insights from RQ3 and RQ4, where diversity between people, places and sub contexts, in a real-world context, are taken into account.

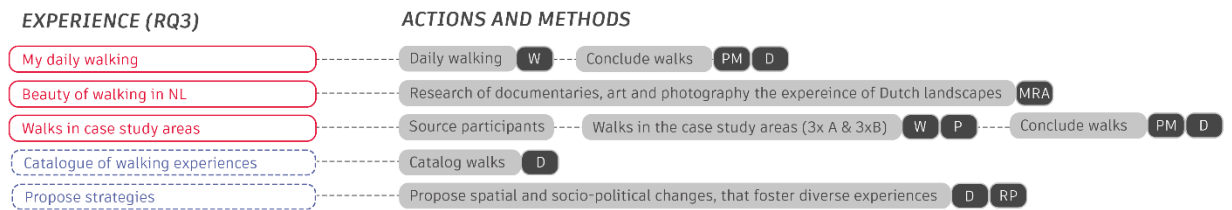
Limitations:

- Generalized approach: The research adopts a society-wide perspective on "daily life," which may oversimplify the diverse experiences and routines of individuals across different socio-economic, cultural, and geographic contexts. Due to time constraints, the extent to which we can thoroughly address and ensure inclusivity remains uncertain.

Nice-to-haves:

- Reviewing daily walking during COVID lockdowns, to identify how the social site changed during these years and at which change points walking was introduced

RQ3



This question explores how to create enjoyable and inclusive walking experiences, through a focus on walking as a research method.

Walking as a research method involves conducting walks in my daily life and organized walks with participants in urban, suburban, and rural sub-contexts of case study areas. The 1-2 participants per walk will be recruited through local institutions (libraries, community centres, Cittaslow representatives) and personal networks. They will guide the walks, from their front doors, which are framed as collaborative explorations rather than interviews. These walks aim to capture diverse preferences and experiences.

The walks are concluded in psychogeographic maps, which synthesize subjective, eye-level experiences with spatial movements. In order to create workable and applicable outcomes, the walking experiences are generalized into different types of walking experiences, organized by the elements of a walk as introduced in the theoretical framework (setting, place, duration and focus). This catalogue integrates the insights of the walks, aided by an exploration of Dutch landscapes as represented in media, such as photography, art and documentaries about walking in the Netherlands.

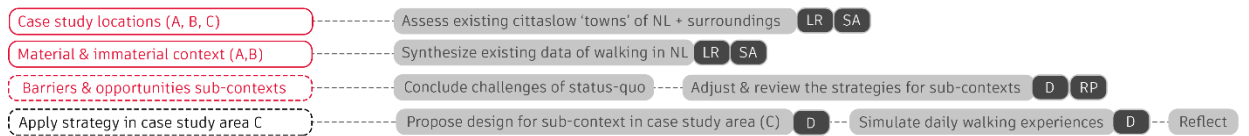
The catalogue is used to propose and review the spatial and socio-political interventions, contributing to the system of strategies as it evolves through RQ 1, 2 and 4.

Limitations:

- Subjectivity: especially the autoethnography of my daily walks, is highly subjective. This is the aim, gaining knowledge of qualitative, personal experiences, but it needs to be recognized and handled carefully.
- Limits to generalization: due to the time limits of a thesis, there will be only 6 walks. The research question attempts to generalize the experiences of the participants, to make the data workable. However, this will not be representative of the Dutch society.
- Variety of participant selection: with only 6 walks, the variety of participants will be limit. Additionally, if recruitment through local institutions is unsuccessful, walks will be made with participant derived from my personal networks, which might limit the variety of participants even more.

RQ4

SUB-CONTEXTS (RQ4)



This question evaluates how diverse contexts influence walking and shape tailored strategies. The case study selection involves choosing three areas, based on the official Cittaslow towns of the Netherlands and their surroundings. This choice is informed by RQ1. Each case study areas includes a urban, suburban, and rural context. Selection criteria for the Case study areas include finding diversity in population size, walking prevalence and material and immaterial context, as well as feasibility for fieldwork.

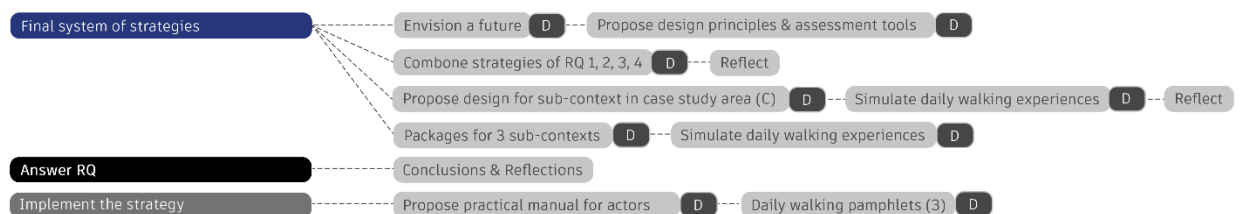
After the selection of case studies, context-specific analysis examines the material and immaterial aspects of walking in two of the case studies (A and B), using methods from RQ1. Barriers and opportunities are identified for each sub-context, providing reflections on the applicability of proposed strategies across contexts.

Limitations:

- Case Study Scope: The study examines only two case study areas in depth, which may limit the ability to draw broader conclusions about diversity in contexts.
- Generality of Context-Specific Insights: findings from the selected Cittaslow towns may not be fully applicable to other contexts. Additionally, there are many more typologies and sub-contexts to consider.

RQ5

DESIGN (RQ5)



The project proposes iterative review of strategies, informed by the Dutch status-quo and society-wide, eye-level and sub-contexts specific insights. In these rounds of reviewing and adjusting, the strategies will be structured by aims, and main strategies are identified.

Lastly, in this research question, the strategy is informed by real-world application, which consists of proposing a design in case study area C. This aids in defining the strategies, especially the spatial interventions, more precisely. Additionally, it proves an opportunity to create a more comprehensive strategy, which takes real-world components that indirectly steer walking behaviour, for example housing. The design proposal is reviewed with the previously proposed assessment tools based on the vision and theory (RQ1). Simulating walking experiences in the design proposal will be an essential step to reviewing the spatial qualities.

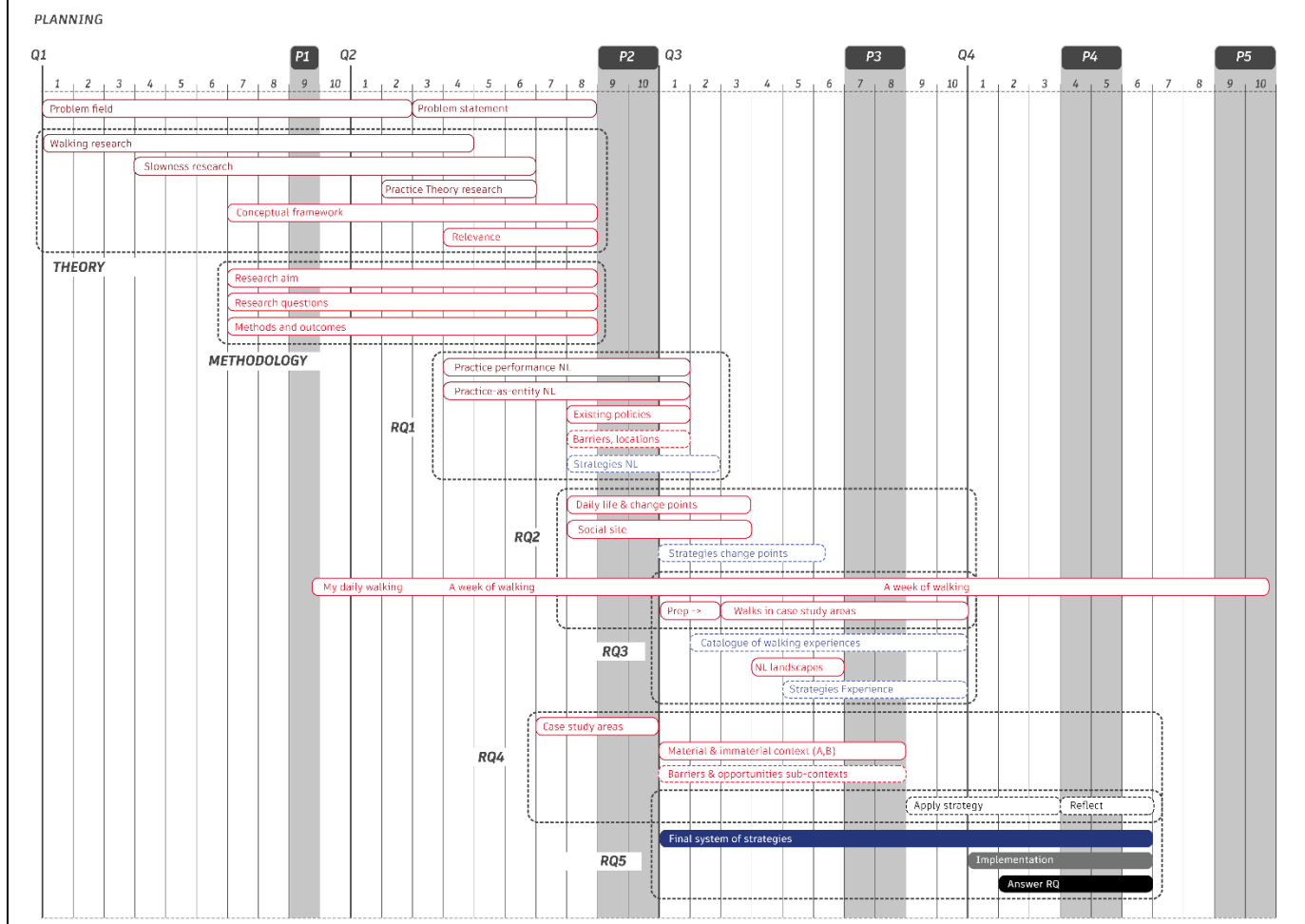
This design step also clarifies the role of spatial design, and its relations to socio-political interventions and changes.

For practical applicability, the strategies , research and design are translated into a short manual for policy makers. For this, the main strategies and aims which structure the system will be essential. Additionally, we can activate practitioners by designing small walking guides or pamphlets. These can be shared with the participants of the research as a thank-you.

Limitations:

- Iterative Process Complexity: the iterative review of strategies depends heavily on the depth and quality of insights from previous RQs. Gaps or weaknesses in earlier stages may affect the robustness of the final strategies.
- Design Specificity vs. Generalizability: while the design proposal provides concrete insights, its context-specific nature may limit its generalizability to other areas.
- Practical Application: translating strategies into actionable tools for policymakers involves simplifying complex findings, which could result in the loss of nuanced insights. This has been identified as a general design challenge as well.

The project timeline:



Literature and general practical references

Most important literature for the project:

- Soper, K. (2020). *Post-Growth Living*. Verso Books.
- Knox, P. L. (2005). Creating Ordinary Places: Slow Cities in a Fast World. *Journal of Urban Design*, 10(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574800500062221>
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The full bibliography for the Problem definition, Theory (Slowness, Post-Growth and Wellbeing, Practice Theory and Walking), the case of the Netherlands and Walking strategies (practical references) are provided at the end of this document.

Reflection

1. What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

For my project, I wanted to approach walking in a multi-scalar way, and include both the eye-level experience and broad societal processes related to it. This aligns with the focus of PCP the studio, which extends beyond spatial design, encompassing planning (policy, governance) and theory and literature. Moreover, this allowed my project to develop organically: starting with a broad exploration of the topic, before rooting the project in theory to eventually bringing the abstract theories and concepts into space. This approach, while enriching, also presented challenges, as the spatial components, crucial for enhancing the eye-level walking experience, were developed later in the process.

The studio's focus justice-oriented urbanism was particularly relevant to my work. I wanted to explore this in my graduation project to deepen my understanding of its relevance in urban design and planning, as I had not engaged with extensively during the master track. Furthermore, in relation to the master track in Urbanism, my project explores the edges of the discipline of urbanism and urban design, questioning the conventional methods of desk-research, proposing and testing an alternative of walking as a research method. Additionally, the project explores the relationships between spatial and socio-political interventions and

limits of isolated urban designs, proposing necessary coherence and collaborations across sectors such as planning, design and policy.

Finally, in the context of the MSc Architecture, Urbanism, and Building Sciences programme, my project aims to embody the core objective of designing concrete, understandable, actionable, real-world strategies and interventions.

2. What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional and scientific framework.

Scientific relevance

- The project contributes to understanding of promoting walking, by not seeing it merely as a mode of transport or leisure, but framing it both in a broader societal context, the fast paced society, and as a qualitative, highly personal experience. The project combines theories and concepts of the social sciences, such as Practice Theory and Lived experience, into a new approach to address the complexity of the challenge of promoting walking and to gain practical design knowledge. Additionally, the project will contextualize and test these theories and concepts in the Dutch context. All in all, this will contribute to the understanding of walking and promoting walking as a means to plan and design for desirable, healthy and sustainable futures.
- A methodological innovation will also be explored in the project, by using walking as a research method, to bring a qualitative, real-world experiences into scientific research and design.
- Several concepts related to spatial planning will also be reviewed. Most importantly, the limitations of the Cittaslow Charter are explored, and additions, especially to the Dutch version of the charter, will be proposed. Additionally, the project will address certain walking-related concepts, like the 15-minute city and STOMP, reviewing their impact and relevance within the project approach.

Societal Relevance

- The project aims to challenge and change societal values and norms, to contribute to tackling many real-world challenges related to the fast pace of life, such as inactivity, declining mental health, the global climate change and disparities between 'slow' and 'fast' worlds. In this I take a position, a future I view as good, and propose strategies to bring real-world change, towards a future of wellbeing, slowness and post-growth. Walking is proposed as a accessible and widely applicable solution. This asks for caution in not excluding certain groups for whom walking is hard or impossible, and leave no one behind in the transition towards an alternative future.
- The project will propose strategies that inform planners and designers, especially by transforming abstract theories and concepts (such as Practice theory, Post-growth and 'lived experience' of walking), into actionable and understandable strategies. Additionally, the project aims to influences the perspectives of citizens on their daily practices by building awareness, and even activate them to adopt new practices.

Bibliography:

Problem definition:

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