

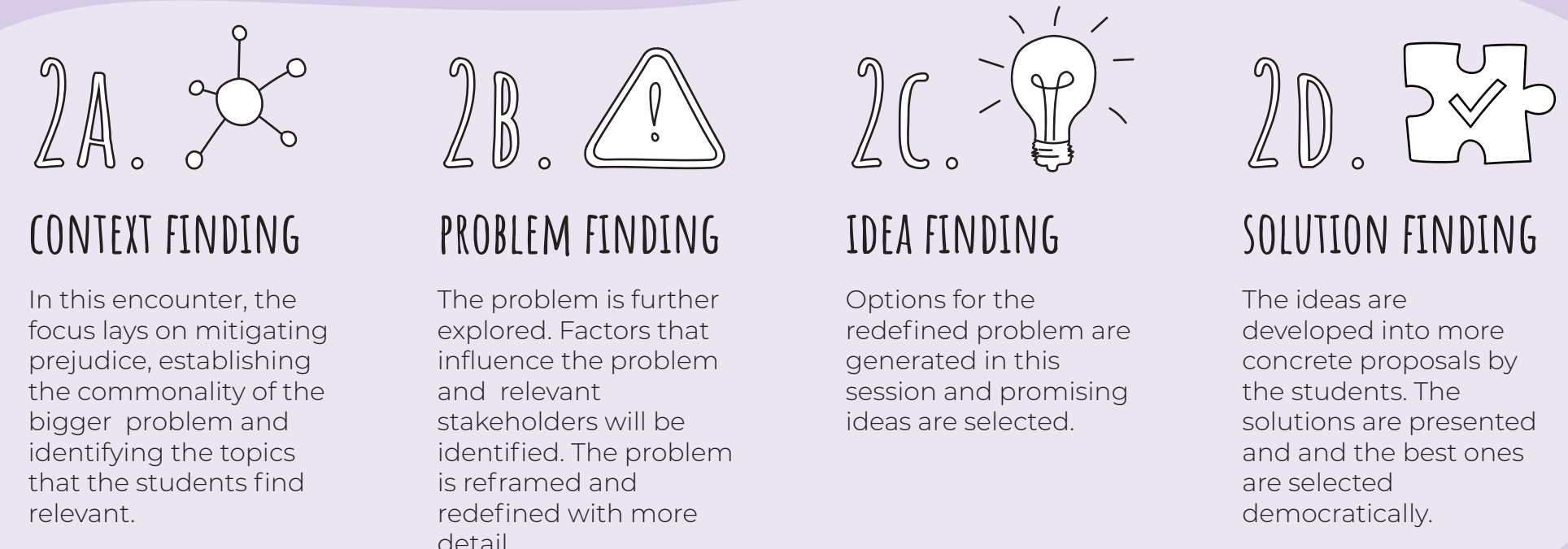
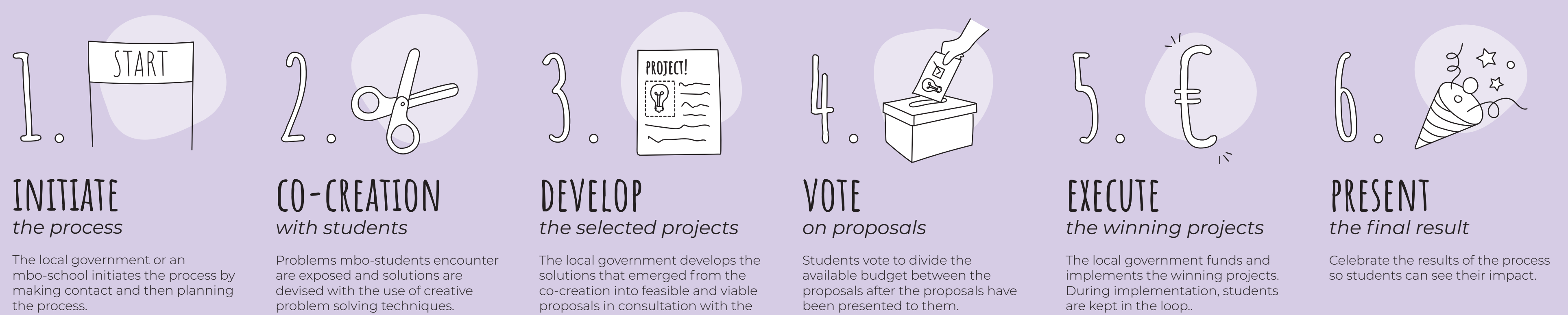
Rake Praat

Designing for the political participation of mbo-students

Mbo-students hardly participate in local politics.

The political participation of adolescents is very low and involved adolescents are often formally educated. This is not representative of society, as the majority did not receive formal education. This imbalance in representation can result in inequalities for those who do not sufficiently bring up their concerns, and is harmful for the legitimacy of our democratic system. Therefore, it is paramount to involve mbo-students (secondary vocational education) more in (local) politics.

The lack of participation of mbo-students is a rather complex problem with many causes. There is a gap between politicians and mbo-students, and the current system does not fit students' needs. They have a hard time formulating opinions autonomously and do not know how to translate these into action.



'Rake Praat' facilitates conversations between politicians and mbo-students.

The process of participatory budgeting (where a municipality allocates a section of the annual budget to be spent by citizens) has been altered to more accurately represent the needs and wishes of mbo-students. Their experiences form the foundation for the process. With the use of integrated creative problem-solving techniques, students and politicians define potential projects together.

The project design is based on four sessions, each with its own focus. In this way, mbo students and politicians navigate together from problem to solution. A session plan can be designed by the municipality and schools with the use of the Activity Cards. These describe different types of (creative) activities, allowing the participants to go through the different stages of the creative process: diverging, reverging, and converging. The activities are shaped so that the creative facilitation does not require experts, allowing students and politicians to go through the process autonomously.

The design makes creative problem-solving more accessible to non-designers, providing policymakers and politicians with the means to shape contacts with mbo-students. Simultaneously, the toolkit gives students the opportunity to express their views directly to people who can make a difference. This is necessary for both groups to understand each other better.

In the long term, this understanding allows politicians to address the issues of mbo-students, making politics more inclusive. Participating in the entire process can contribute to mbo-students feeling heard. These projects are essential, as they will help raise the political awareness and representation of this 'lost' group of students.

