

Youth perspectives  
on street harassment

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Master thesis Design for Interaction  
Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering  
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# Street Exploration

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## Preface

Welcome to this report, Hi!, Psst hey you, Fakka!, Yo.

I am Robin, and thank you for showing interest in my graduation report! I have really enjoyed working on this project and studying at the faculty of Industrial Design Engineering over the past years. I proudly present to you this report as the outcome of my journey as a student. The project has not only had an impact on my student career, but also on me personally. The topic is both meaningful and sensitive, addressing sexual misconduct and the ways we learn about it, which can evoke strong emotions.

This project has taught me so many different things. But it has personally affected me by appreciating the beauty of interactions between strangers more. I hope maybe, in some way, it can inspire you to do the same. While heightened awareness of potential dangers in public spaces can sometimes make us feel more unsafe (is every person a potential threat?), I hope this project offers a more hopeful perspective. One that makes you smile at strangers in the street.

Working on this graduation project was certainly an adventure, and I couldn't have done it without all the amazing powerful people around me. Jallo, Ster, Jim, Kate, B49, Mamas, Yrsa, Stien, Loes, IOF38, Huize Betty, Kafee50, iedereen aan de witte tafels and friends both here and in other places of the world: Thank you so much for helping me, giving tips and listening to my endless stories and complaints about men (not all men, but always men). In a way you all contributed to this project, and having you around me is what I am certainly most proud of.

Has this project changed me? It certainly changed my perspective on youth. And I met new people that changed my perspective of both others and myself. Through this journey, I've become more aware of my own role and influence: on the street, in interactions, and as a designer.

I hope you enjoy reading this report as much as I did working on it.

Best,

Robin Smits

## If you are interested in...

### Street harassment:

- Chapter 2** will tell you about the research on the topic
- Chapter 3** will elaborate on what is happening in Rotterdam
- Chapter 4** will show how youth is involved
- Chapter 6** will tell you what this project found about youth perspective
- Chapter 8** will show you the final design contributing to prevention

### Youth participation:

- Chapter 1.2** will tell you about the collaboration in this project
- Chapter 1.4** show you where in the process youth participated
- Chapter 5** will elaborate on how youth participated in creative sessions
- Chapter 9** will evaluate and reflect on the participation

### The design:

- Chapter 1** will introduce how the project was initiated and carried out
- Chapter 5** will elaborate on the designed creative sessions
- Chapter 7** will show the ideation process
- Chapter 8** will present the final concept Street Exploration
- Chapter 9.2** shows the flow chart made as reflection on participation

# Summary

This project is the graduation thesis of Robin Smits and was commissioned by Healthy Start, a convergence of TU Delft, Erasmus University and Erasmus MC.

In this project, an interactive installation was developed that allows you(th) to explore with the impact of your voice: Street Exploration. Depending on what you say to the installation on the wall, your projection changes size and colour. Positive comments make you grow, while negative ones make your shape shrink.

Research shows that 50% of young people between the ages of 12 and 25 experienced street harassment in 2020/'21. The problem contributes to a system where harm towards others is accepted and exists on a spectrum of harmful behaviours such as sexual violence, discrimination and homophobic and racist abuse. Street harassment happens within the physical space as well as online and in practice it is often unclear what 'counts as' street harassment. Women adapt their behaviour to prevent harassment from happening to them. However, these coping mechanisms are unlikely to change the behaviour of the harassers, thereby not solving the issue. Making street harassment illegal, as done in the Netherlands since July 2024, is a good start but will not solve the problem.

The roles people have in a context are fluid and influenced by a complex interplay of contextual factors and stereotypes. Someone might be a harasser in one situation, yet become a target in a different group dynamic. The role of harasser is one that anyone could take. Therefore prevention efforts must address both gender-based violence and intersecting social dynamics, targeting peer groups. While existing interventions challenge social norms, these efforts fail to effectively involve youth.

Street harassment is known to be an issue in the city of Rotterdam and young people have a critical understanding of the challenges in their community. The goal of this graduation project was to understand how youth perceive street harassment and to create a design intervention in the context of Rotterdam. The design approach used is Research through Design, combined with participatory moments and feminist theory, like the use of the matrix of domination for analysis and concept evaluation.

"Creative sessions" were organised, collaborating with youth through a youth hub in Rotterdam and school in Delft. The focus of these

sessions was to understand the perspective of potential harassers, rather than focusing on personal experiences. Working with youth revealed the reasons for this particular group to engage in street harassment.

Between the ages of 12 and 17, they focus on exploration as part of identity development. In order to do so, youth is looking for boundaries and crossing them. On the streets they can explore their identity independently and this freedom is therefore crucial to establish individual, social and societal belonging. They feel tension due to different expectations of different parties and push back, which can lead to harassing behaviour. The following design goal emerged: The design should enable youth to explore with their social identity without harming others.

Having their social norms still in development, they are in a critical stage and it is important to involve young people in research. But youth participation can be challenging. It was found within this project that youth perspectives and practices do not always align with what researchers want to know. Barriers exist in working together with youth hubs & schools and therefore researchers should be mindful in their approach.

The design "Street Exploration" contributes to the prevention of street harassment by giving direct feedback of youth opinions, showing their perspective to society and vice versa. It challenges the societal norm, showing the users projection bias, and encourages positive interaction with others within the public space. The installation includes mirrors created by youth showing examples of street harassment and it can be exhibited at events while leaving a lasting mark on the neighbourhood.

## Samenvatting

Dit afstudeerproject van Robin Smits is uitgevoerd in opdracht van Healthy Start, een samenwerkingsverband van de TU Delft, Erasmus Universiteit en Erasmus MC.

Voor dit project is een interactieve installatie ontwikkeld waarmee jongeren de impact van hun stem kunnen verkennen: Straat Exploratie. Een projectie op de muur verandert van grootte en kleur afhankelijk van wat je zegt tegen de installatie. Positieve opmerkingen laten je groeien, terwijl negatieve je vorm laat krimpen.



50% van de jongeren tussen 12 en 25 jaar heeft in 2020/'21 te maken gehad met straatintimidatie. Het probleem draagt bij aan een systeem waarin wangedrag wordt geaccepteerd en is onderdeel van een spectrum van schadelijk gedrag zoals seksueel geweld, discriminatie en homofobie en racistisch misbruik. Straatintimidatie gebeurt zowel in de fysieke ruimte als online en in de praktijk is het vaak onduidelijk wat 'telt' als straatintimidatie. Vrouwen passen hun gedrag aan om te voorkomen dat intimidatie hen overkomt. Het is echter onwaarschijnlijk dat deze copingmechanismen het gedrag van de daders zullen veranderen, waardoor het probleem niet wordt opgelost. Straatintimidatie illegaal maken is een goed begin (zoals in Nederland sinds juli 2024), maar lost het probleem op zichzelf niet op.

Er is niet één type dader. De rollen die mensen hebben in een context staan niet vast en worden beïnvloed door een complex samenspel van omgevingsfactoren en stereotypen. Iemand kan in de ene situatie een dader zijn, maar in een andere groepsdynamiek een target. Preventie-inspanningen moeten daarom zowel gericht zijn op gendergerelateerd geweld als op sociale dynamieken en intersectionaliteit van het probleem. Daarnaast is het belangrijk dat preventie zich richt op groepen leeftijdsgenoten. Hoewel bestaande interventies de sociale normen ter discussie stellen, slagen ze er nog niet in om jongeren effectief te betrekken.

Straatintimidatie is een bekend probleem in de stad Rotterdam en jongeren hebben een belangrijke blik op de uitdagingen in hun buurt. Het doel van dit afstudeerproject was om te begrijpen hoe jongeren tegen straatintimidatie aankijken en om een ontwerp-interventie te creëren in de context van Rotterdam. De gebruikte methodologie in het project is Research through Design, gecombineerd met participatieve momenten en theorie uit het feminisme, zoals het gebruik van de matrix of domination voor analyse en concept evaluatie.

Via een jongerenhub in Rotterdam en een school in Delft is er samengewerkt met jongeren doormiddel van "creatieve sessies". De focus van deze sessies lag op het begrijpen van het perspectief van potentiële daders, in plaats van te focussen op persoonlijke ervaringen. Het werken met jongeren liet de reden zien voor deze specifieke groep om deel te nemen aan straatintimidatie.

Tussen de 12 en 17 jaar richten jongeren zich op exploratie als onderdeel van identiteitsontwikkeling. Om dit te kunnen doen, zoeken ze de grenzen op en gaan ze eroverheen. De straat is een belangrijke ruimte waar ze zelfstandig hun identiteit kunnen

ontdekken en deze vrijheid is daarom cruciaal om je plek te vinden in de maatschappij. Jongeren voelen spanning door verschillende verwachtingen van verschillende partijen en duwen terug, wat kan leiden tot intimiderend gedrag. Daarom was het design doel voor dit project: Het ontwerp moet jongeren in staat stellen om hun sociale identiteit te verkennen zonder anderen daarmee pijn te doen.

Omdat ze op een kritieke leeftijd zijn en hun sociale normen in ontwikkeling zijn, is het belangrijk om jongeren te betrekken bij onderzoek. Jongerenparticipatie kan echter een uitdaging zijn. Uit dit onderzoek bleek dat de perspectieven van jongeren niet altijd overeenkomen met wat onderzoekers willen weten. Er bestaan barrières in het samenwerken met jongerenhubs en scholen en daarom moeten onderzoekers bedachtzaam zijn in hun aanpak.

Het ontwerp "Street Exploration" draagt bij aan de preventie van straatintimidatie door directe feedback te geven over de mening van jongeren, hun perspectief aan de samenleving te laten zien en vice versa. Het bevraagt de maatschappelijke norm en eigen vooroordelen, terwijl je wordt uitgenodigd om positieve interacties aan te gaan in de openbare ruimte. De installatie bevat door jongeren gemaakte spiegels met voorbeelden van straatintimidatie en kan worden tentoongesteld op evenementen en een blijvende indruk achterlaten in de buurt.

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**Figure 1:** Street Exploration, an installation for & by youth (ref: prompt 1)

## Meet the design

If you are as nosy as me, you might want to see the outcome before getting into the full report: Street Exploration is an interactive installation allowing youth to explore the impact of their voice on the street (figure 1). This exploration contributes to preventing street harassment by involving youth in the discussion and encouraging exploration with positive interactions with strangers in the public space.

The installation consists of a visual representation of a person projected on the wall and mirror installation providing information around it. The projection changes in size and colour based on what you say to it. The social norms concerning street harassment are blurry and it is often unclear what behaviour is acceptable or not. This project has researched youth perspectives on street harassment and closely involved youth to develop the installation to be fitting to their worldview. Street Exploration makes youths' voices visually and literally heard.



# Positionality

Within ethnographic research and feminist theory, positionality is a term for recognising one's perspective as a researcher based on one's background, lived experiences, and social position. This self-awareness is of importance for designers, since a design is shaped from a perspective and therefore a subjective embodiment of my values (Birney et al., 2019). Especially within the topic of street harassment, where the experiences of youth are primarily based on their position on the streets, my role and perspective might heavily influence this project. Therefore it is important to be aware of my assumptions before and throughout the process to stay critical of potential biases and limitations (Sybing, 2022).

I don't think I have ever felt harmed in an experience with street harassment. At least not that it made such an impact that I felt consciously unsafe in my environment. This might be correlated with the areas that I lived in. I grew up in Leiden, and later moved to Delft. Like many girls, I was raised being taught preventive safety measures women often take, like not walking home alone at night, not looking men in the eyes on the streets, and avoiding passing groups of youth.

However, I always lived in neighbourhoods where my own culture was the dominant culture and I have always felt like I belonged there. Both of my parents were born in the Netherlands and could afford for me and my sister to go to university and travel the world for new experiences. This also defines my social circles and perspectives: studying in a technical university, mainly white friends, mainly Dutch men and women with progressive left wing opinions. This background could make it more difficult to connect with youth from diverse cultures other than my own. In addition, my lack of experience with, for example, street language, other cultures and my position as a white young woman could make them less likely to feel comfortable with me or to be vulnerable. I am extremely privileged and youth will probably perceive me that way.

When I got older I learned that this environment I grew up in was also not entirely a coincidence. I am raised by two moms. Out of their fear of harassment or bullying towards their child, me, they carefully selected an environment and school that they knew would be accepting towards children with gay parents.

Another thing that these two strong moms taught me from a very young age, is that women are at least as important as men, even

though society might sometimes show otherwise. This upbringing shaped my strong belief in equality, particularly in addressing gender-based issues like street harassment. While this value drives my commitment to the project, I have experienced discomfort throughout the project, when confronted with opposing opinions that do not match my values.

To ensure the design represents diverse perspectives, I will continue to reflect on my role. Within this project I did this by actively engaging participants in open and respectful dialogue and involving experts and my project team for critical reflections.



# n1

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## Introduction

- 1.1 Definition of terms
- 1.2 Project collaboration
  - 1.2.1 Collaboration with youth
  - 1.2.2 Stakeholders
- 1.3 Design approach
  - 1.3.1 Research through design
  - 1.3.2 Participatory design
  - 1.3.3 Feminist lens
- 1.4 The process: a systemic design hurricane

Street Harassment continues to impact the lives of women and minority groups in the Netherlands. In 2020/'21 two out of three women aged 12 to 25 reported having experienced harassment (CBS, 2022). From being catcalled to unwanted sexting by a stranger; unfortunately, it is still common behaviour in our society.

This project contributes to the prevention of street harassment by focussing on the potential harassers' behaviour. The research and design presented in this report are the final master project of Robin Smits and was carried out in collaboration with Healthy Start, a convergence programme bringing together three universities for one goal: healthy physical, mental and social development of children and youths. Healthy Start focuses on positive development of youth in Rotterdam. Street harassment is known to be an issue in this city and youth with diverse backgrounds have a critical understanding of the challenges in their community (Crone et al., 2024).

**The goal of this graduation project is to understand how youth (12-17 year olds) perceive street harassment and to create a design intervention in the context of Rotterdam.**

In doing so, this project contributes to knowledge about how youth perceives the issue.

The specific objectives of this project are to (appendix A):

- Understand how youths in Rotterdam perceive street harassment
- Create a design intervention to contribute to prevention of the behaviour

To achieve these objectives, youth was collaborated with through participatory design moments. Creative sessions with youth were designed and held as an engaging way of involving youth in the societal issue of street harassment. A close collaboration with youth was critical for a better understanding of their use of the streets. Ultimately this project has resulted in a concept that can be introduced in context, based upon the research insights and co-creation with youth. The design goal for this concept was:

The design enables youth to explore their social identity in the public place without harming "others".

This report will show the research done within the project, the creative sessions that were conducted and how it evolved into the concept: Street Exploration.

**First**, the project collaboration and design approach will be introduced, together with the process of the project. The **second chapter** of the report will outline the problem and the actors involved in the behaviour of street harassment. **Chapter three** will zoom further in on what it means in the context Rotterdam. **Chapter four** will elaborate on why it is important to involve youth and with the creative sessions as explained in **chapter five**, the report will show the results of the research. **Chapter six** will connect all insights showing the perspective of the groups with whom the creative sessions were done. Better understanding their perception of the public space and why it is such an important breathing space for them, the project will dive into how, from the design goal, ideation resulted into the concept. The idea development is explained in **chapter 7** and **chapter 8** presents the final design: Street Exploration. **Chapter 9** will evaluate the youth participation within this project before closing off with the recommendations in **chapter 10** and the final personal reflections.

This project seeks to bridge the gap between youths' perception of the problem and society, creating an intervention with positive societal impact that contributes to the prevention of street harassment.

# 1.1 Definition of terms

Before diving into the research, it is important to clarify how specific terms are used due to the sensitivity in (stereotypical) assumptions in the topic. For example, when someone talks about a deprived neighbourhood, one might associate it with poor living conditions, where others associate it with an open atmosphere. Certain terms are used interchangeably in literature and practice or chosen differently to avoid societal implications. The purpose of this section is to prevent ambiguity and specify the choices made to avoid assumptions in words.

**Men** = How men are (or a man is) perceived socially and what consequences that given role and stereotype entails. Thus not about their internal relationship with their gender.

**Women** = How women are (or a woman is) perceived socially and what consequences that given role and stereotype entails. Thus not about their internal relationship with their gender. (Jansen & Van De Pol, 2023).

## Roles in street harassment

This project will strive to use the gender neutral terms 'harasser', 'target' and 'bystander' instead of positioning street harassment as something that is done by men towards women. However, gender inequality is an important factor from the positionality and within the behaviour of street harassment (as will be seen in chapter 2.1.2). Therefore part of the research will evolve around gender inequality.

**Harasser** = person who performs the interaction perceived as street harassment (Dutch: dader)

"Harasser" was chosen over "perpetrator," as street harassment may not always be illegal, which the term "perpetrator" implies. This project considers any person that harms or triggers distress by others in public a "harasser" (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2004).

**Target** = person that is being targeted in the interaction perceived as street harassment. (Dutch: target) (Betz, 2022)

Often the terms "victim" or "survivor" are used, yet highly debated in literature (Fohring, 2018; Papendick & Bohner, 2017; Schwark & Bohner, 2019). In my work the term "target" was chosen since this term does not depend on the harassed person's perception and awareness of the intent or seriousness of the interaction, thus avoiding contributing to victimization while remaining applicable regardless of the individual's experience.

**Bystander** = person present within the situation, but not directly involved in the street harassment. They can be part of the group dynamics, knowing either the harasser or target, or neither. (Dutch: omstander) (Fileborn, 2017)

**Design** = Design is all around us and involves creating something substantial, which can be about a product but also about systemic changes or interactions (IDE, n.d.)

**Participatory** = thinking along, co-deciding or self-organising within society or within a design process. (Visser, Van Popering-Verkerk en Van Buuren, 2019).

**Feminist approach** = a lens through which to approach how benefits and burdens are distributed throughout a system (Costanza-Chock, 2018; Dideriksen et al., 2024).

Intersectional = referring to the interconnectedness of social categories (Dideriksen et al., 2024).

**Wicked problem** = a problem that is difficult or impossible to solve due to many interdependent factors (The Interaction Design Foundation, 2024).

**Transdisciplinary** = insights, methods and collaborations are integrated and cross disciplinary boundaries. Focuses on a socially relevant issue, approached from different disciplines together with social partners (Van der Bijl-Brouwer, 2022).

## Involved stakeholders

**Youth** = young people between childhood and adulthood, in development of their life and social norms (Eriksons, 2024). For this research, I chose the age group 12-17 because they are still in school and youth hubs typically target 14-18 year olds.

**Youth worker** = professional who works for a welfare organisation to provide low-threshold support to youth (NJI, z.d.)

**Boa's** = special investigating officers from the municipality who have similar low-threshold connection with youth on the streets as youth workers (Gemeente Rotterdam, n.d.-a).

**Youth hub** = location in the city where a youth worker offers a space to youth to hang out as opposed to being on the streets and where activities are organised to promote the positive development of youth (Gemeente Rotterdam, n.d.-b).

(Street language) (Straattaal Woordenboek, n.d.)

**Snap** = Short for the application of Snapchat

**Bro**= Brother, used between friends

**Wazza**= short for: What's up?

**Kkr**= short for the Dutch "Kanker" which is considered a bad swear word

**Throwing fire** = used as showing disrespect (dissing) ("vuren" in Dutch)





Figure 2: The collaboration project team

## 1.2 Project collaboration

This master thesis, completed at the faculty of Industrial Design Engineering at TU Delft for the MSc Design for Interaction, is commissioned by Healthy Start. As a convergence programme, Healthy Start focuses on improving health, wellbeing, and participation for future generations through a transdisciplinary approach. The project falls under ambition #6, “Youth participation and involvement,” and contributes to Charlotte van Tuijl’s PhD research: Adolescents’ right to the city: The role of youth participation in understanding and addressing street harassment.

Van Tuijl’s research explores how youths’ involvement can contribute to a greater sense of feeling heard, through looking at the case of street harassment. Charlotte van Tuijl will relate to this project as the client, being a researcher from the Erasmus University Rotterdam. Working closely together for this graduation combines different perspectives from the field of social sciences and design.

Also closely involved in this project is the supervisory team consisting of Milene Guerreiro Gonçalves, both as my graduation Chair and as ambition Co-lead of Ambition 6: Youth participation and involvement, at Healthy Start. Sofie Dideriksen was the mentor of this project and is an expert on the feminist approach as a PhD candidate at the AI Futures lab of Industrial Design Engineering, Delft University of Technology (figure 2).

Juliëtte van Driel simultaneously carried out a graduation project within the same collaboration and context. For her master’s degree in Strategic Product Design she has taken a more systemic approach towards the topic with a focus on the age group of 15-22 years old (Van Driel, tba). Several activities were carried out in collaboration with Charlotte van Tuijl and Juliëtte van Driel and some results were therefore found collectively (figure 4).

To strengthen the design tools and validate the understanding on how design can approach such a complex topic, design agencies and senior designers were consulted throughout various stages of the project. Figure 3 shows a visual overview of all the above mentioned collaborated partners.



# 1.2.1 Collaboration with youth

The scope of this project is the perception of street harassment of youth on the streets from their perspective, thus close collaboration with youth was essential. In order to access this group, a collaboration with SOL was established, a youth organisation with several locations in Rotterdam (SOL, 2024).

Youth hubs are places in the city where a youth worker offers a space to hang out as opposed to being on the streets. In this way, welfare organisations provide low-threshold support and build connections within the neighbourhood (NJI, n.d.). This is similar to the community places called 'Huis van de wijk'. However youth hubs are specifically aimed at 14-18 year olds. Through this social infrastructure, youth hubs support adolescents in their development and organise activities for and with them. The municipality of Rotterdam has 33 youth hubs around the city, all unique to their neighbourhood (Gemeente Rotterdam, n.d.-b). Targeting the Dutch concept of “hangjongeren”, the aim of a youth hub is a preventive approach to youth in Rotterdam losing hope in the system and potentially ending up in criminality (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006)(Jongerenhub, n.d.). One youth worker from the organisation SOL was willing to closely collaborate on this project and therefore the youth hub in Bloemhof was chosen.

In addition, it was possible to work with third grade (13-15 year old) students at a high school in Delft. The students collaborated with were from a senior general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO). Through my voluntary position as a sex education facilitator at this school, I had the opportunity to build non-obligatory relationships with students and address street harassment in class topics. Several activities for this project were integrated into the educational programme of two groups of students.

Figure 3: Collaboration of the graduation project

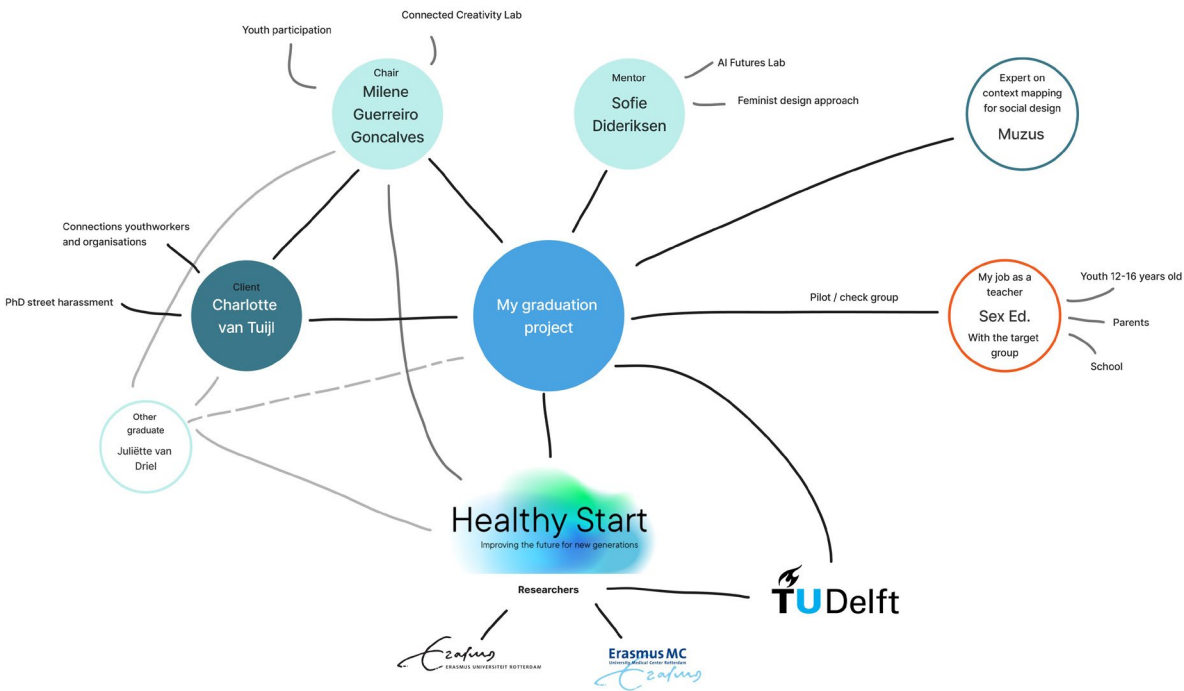
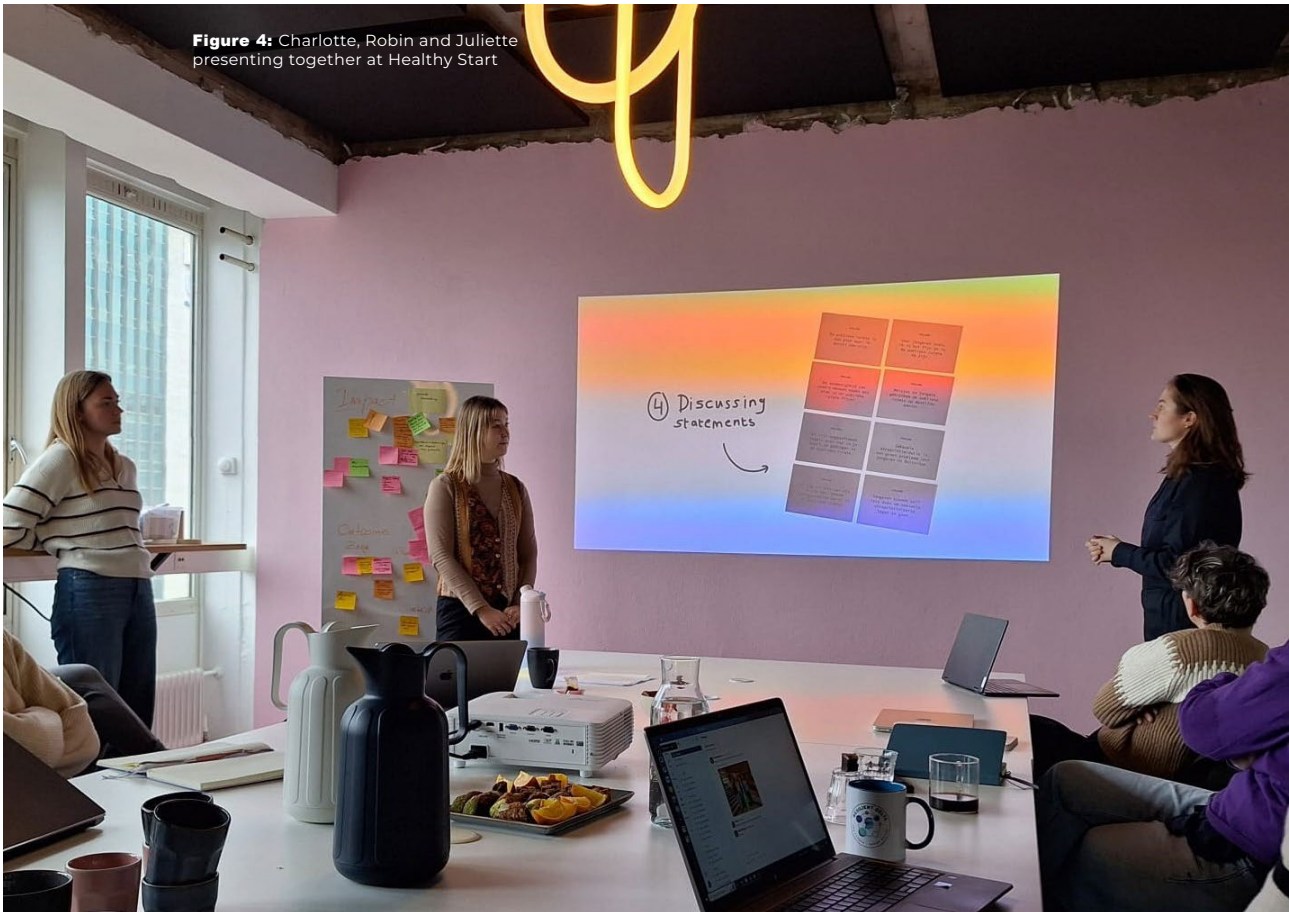


Figure 4: Charlotte, Robin and Juliette presenting together at Healthy Start



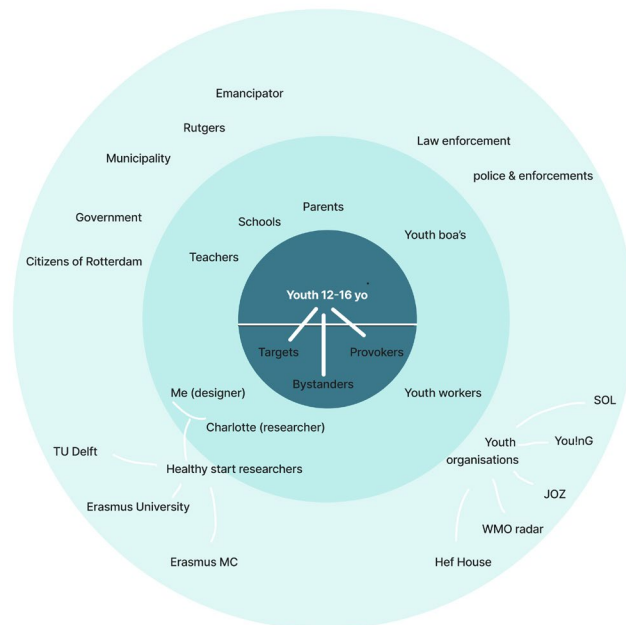
## 1.2.2 Stakeholders

Throughout the project, a wide range of stakeholders were involved and consulted extensively (figure 5). As street harassment is a societal issue that is deeply rooted in our society, it is crucial to consider the full system (Systemic Design Lab Lab, 2021).

Stakeholders include the target group of this project (youth), the collaborating partners, but also other organisations that aim to counter street harassment: like the municipality or educational institutions. Another important aspect is those who enforce public order on the streets: the police but also the laws that apply and how street harassment is enforced.

All stakeholders were addressed in different ways to provide a complete view on the topic of street harassment. For example the view on the law was integrated by interviews and observations in court. The perspective of the municipality and citizens was taken into account by attending various events organised in the context of Rotterdam. Other organisations, such as Emancipator, were collaborated with by for example accompanying a training day on street harassment given by the organisation.

This immersion within the topic created a better understanding of different perspectives. The project's approach and a detailed overview of the activities that were carried out will be elaborated on in chapter 1.4.



**Figure 5:** Stakeholdermap of involved people within the topic of this project

## 1.3 Design approach

Design can be a powerful tool for societal issues like street harassment. In times of rapid change and an emerging technological world, social issues become more difficult to understand and address. The complexity of the problems that we face ask for new perspectives. Design, as a method and mentality, has the power to open up space for new solutions and perspectives (Schaminee, 2018). The overarching methodology for this project is research through design. From my positionality and to fit the project, various approaches and methods were combined to match the topic.

This section will address the key aspects of the approach:

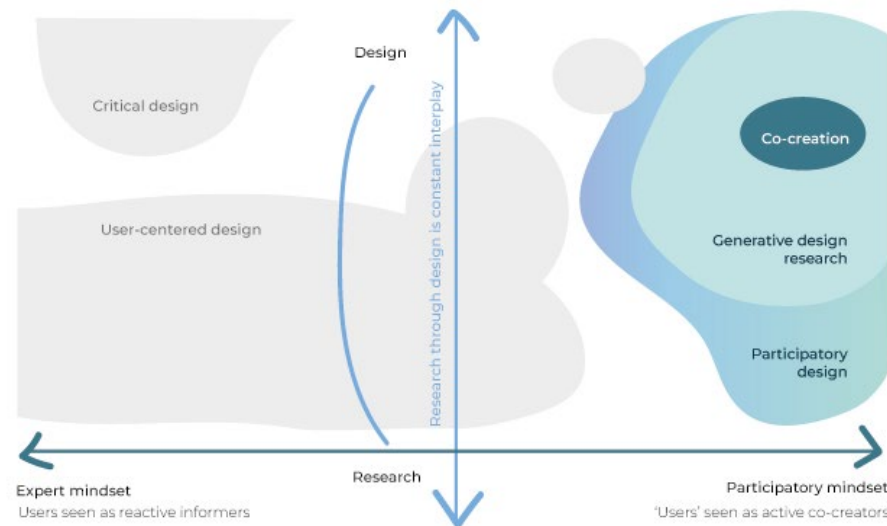
- Research through design: discovering new things through creating and iterating
- Participation: creating participatory moments involving stakeholders in the process
- Feminist lens: looking at the system through feminist theory

These aspects and how they are used in the project will be explained before elaborating on how they were combined into the process. This chapter will conclude with the process of all activities done for this graduation.

## 1.3.1 Research through design

The project is executed through what is called 'research through design': a methodology in which design activities are carried out and iterated on, while generating knowledge (Stappers & Giaccardi, 2014). For complex societal issues, like street harassment, this interplay between design and research can create a better understanding of the context and interactions.

Within both design and research activities, the users can be considered from an expert view (reactive informers), or from a participatory view (active co-creators) (figure 6). Since the goal of this project is to generate better understanding of how youth experiences street harassment, generative design research and tools were chosen to provide insights on their perspective.



**Figure 6:** A landscape of design research (adapted from Sanders & Stappers, (2013))

## 1.3.2 Participatory design

Within the landscape of participatory design, generative design is an empowering way for people to create alternatives to the current situation. Participation in general revolves around thinking along, co-deciding or self-organising within society or within a design process. Youth participation is the core value of Healthy Start's ambition 6, that initiated this project and therefore an important aspect of the process. Participatory design is an approach that attempts to actively involve the users in the process to help ensure that the designed product/service meets their needs (Sanders & Stappers, 2013). Applying design to the project allows for continuous visual feedback.

It is important to be mindful of the term participatory design. Often it is used whenever citizens are involved or consulted, while participation only occurs when influence and/or control is transferred to participants (Visser et al., 2019). The ladder of participation (Arnstein, 2020) illustrates levels of citizen involvement in decision-making, ranging from non-participation (e.g., manipulation) to tokenism (e.g., consultation) to citizen power (e.g., partnerships and control). For design, it emphasizes how much influence users or stakeholders have in shaping outcomes.

For this graduation project, participative moments were created: having sessions with participants using creative methods to unravel the issues as perceived by the youth and make design interventions together. Throughout the project the use of participation and value for participants was continuously reflected on. A big constraint of the amount of participation for this project was time: the project had a limited duration in which it had to be completed. In chapter 9 I will reflect on the limitations in this project.

[Reflective thought]

Co-creation and participation are often confused with each other. Before entering this project, I myself also thought that if you give feedback after co-creation sessions and really take the input on board, then your process is participatory. However, this is too simplistic: participation is also about being able to make decisions in the process.

In co-creation the aim is to learn, working with people to gain more insights on an issue, design directions or the solution conceived. But for participation the aim is to make the decision-making process more democratic and transfer decisions to the target group. For designers this is challenging, since their design ego might get in the way: as designer you want to show that your design is the best and that everyone wants to buy/have what you produce! This is how designers are educated and trained. Especially when working on a graduation project in which you want to convey your abilities, skills and personality as a designer, it can feel very difficult to leave the process to others.

Being a bit of a perfectionist, I felt this tension. On numerous occasions I wanted to give youth the power to make steps within the design process, but due to constraints like them not showing up, I moved forward with the process. Therefore I needed to take directions I found most important, not being able to have youth in charge of the design and decisions.

### 1.3.3 Feminist lens

The feminist approach can be described as a lens to examine systemic power imbalances and the distribution of benefits and burdens within the system (Costanza-Chock, 2018). For this project feminism is used as an inclusive and equity-oriented design lens, seeking to address traditional power dynamics, criticise the status quo and create solutions that are aware of diverse lived experiences. Within the topic of street harassment, it is often women and minorities who are harmed because of street harassment. Therefore equality is an important aspect of the problem.

However feminism does not focus solely on benefits for women (UN Women, 2020). The project follows feminist movements that are intersectional, referring to the interconnectedness of social categories (Bilge, 2010; Gouws, 2017; Dideriksen et al., 2024). Our cultural narratives have been shaped by different “-isms”, like racism and a history of colonialism (The Ohio State University, n.d.). Consequently people do not fall into one category. For example, someone may be more vulnerable to street harassment because they are female (gender), Moroccan (racism) and between the ages of 12 and 25 (ageism). Due to the multicultural context of this project it is important to deliberately recognise and acknowledge these influencing actors. This is done through for instance the use of the Matrix of Domination as a tool for analysis (Chapter 2.3).

#### [Reflective thought]

When designing for socially complex problems, it is sometimes difficult to analyse and observe the impact of a design (Dorst, 2015; PONT, 2025). As the design field moves from product design to social design, the approach that best fits the design process is also changing.

In the field of Industrial Design there are many methods and tools developed to measure the desirability, feasibility & viability (Van Boeijen et al., 2014). For product design, the design quality of a toaster can be measured by the quality of the toast, comparing it to other toasters, the user experience of making the toast with for example user tests and the opinions of potential users. This helps the designers to assess how good they do their job. However, with our design field shifting, not all these methods can be directly applied to the big societal transitions designers often find themselves designing for nowadays. Or as a friend asked me: “Are you planning to fix street harassment with your skills drawing toasters?”. Due to the complexity in societal issues the “user” is often unclear, stakeholders have different interests and people’s opinions don’t change overnight, making it hard to measure if your design is reaching its goal.

I think the feminist lens and matrix of domination, as used within this graduation project, helped me to critically evaluate the design. The matrix of domination can be a valuable method to assess the probability of systemic change and impact. With the topic of street harassment, the feminist approach was a logical choice. Just like the participatory approach, it came from the brief, but strongly resonated with my position and values as a person.

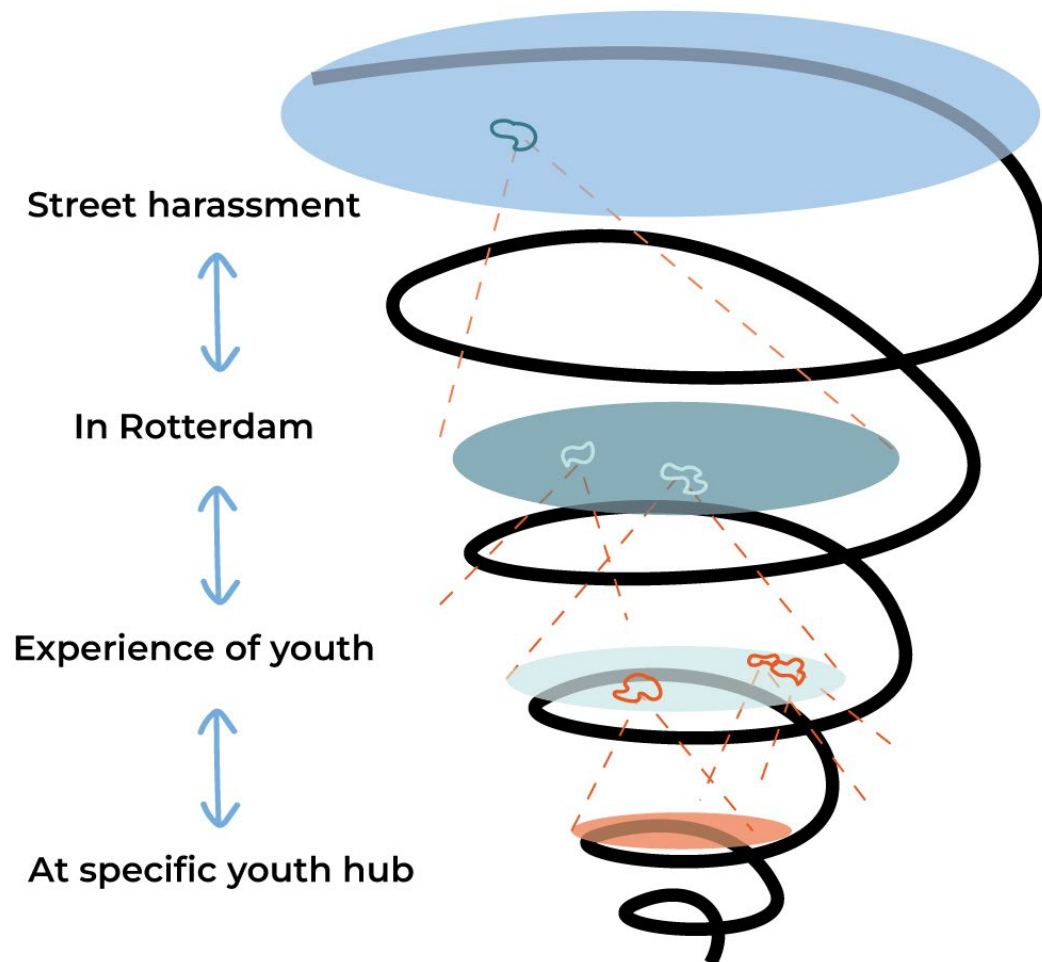


## 1.4 The process: a systemic hurricane through different layers of the system

Combining the methodology of research through design with participative and feminist values, the topic presented different levels of complexity that influenced the process. Using this transdisciplinary approach, it became possible to integrate different types and levels of knowledge, which is important for considering ethics and societal impact of design (Van Der Bijl-Brouwer, 2022; Vermaas et al., 2014).

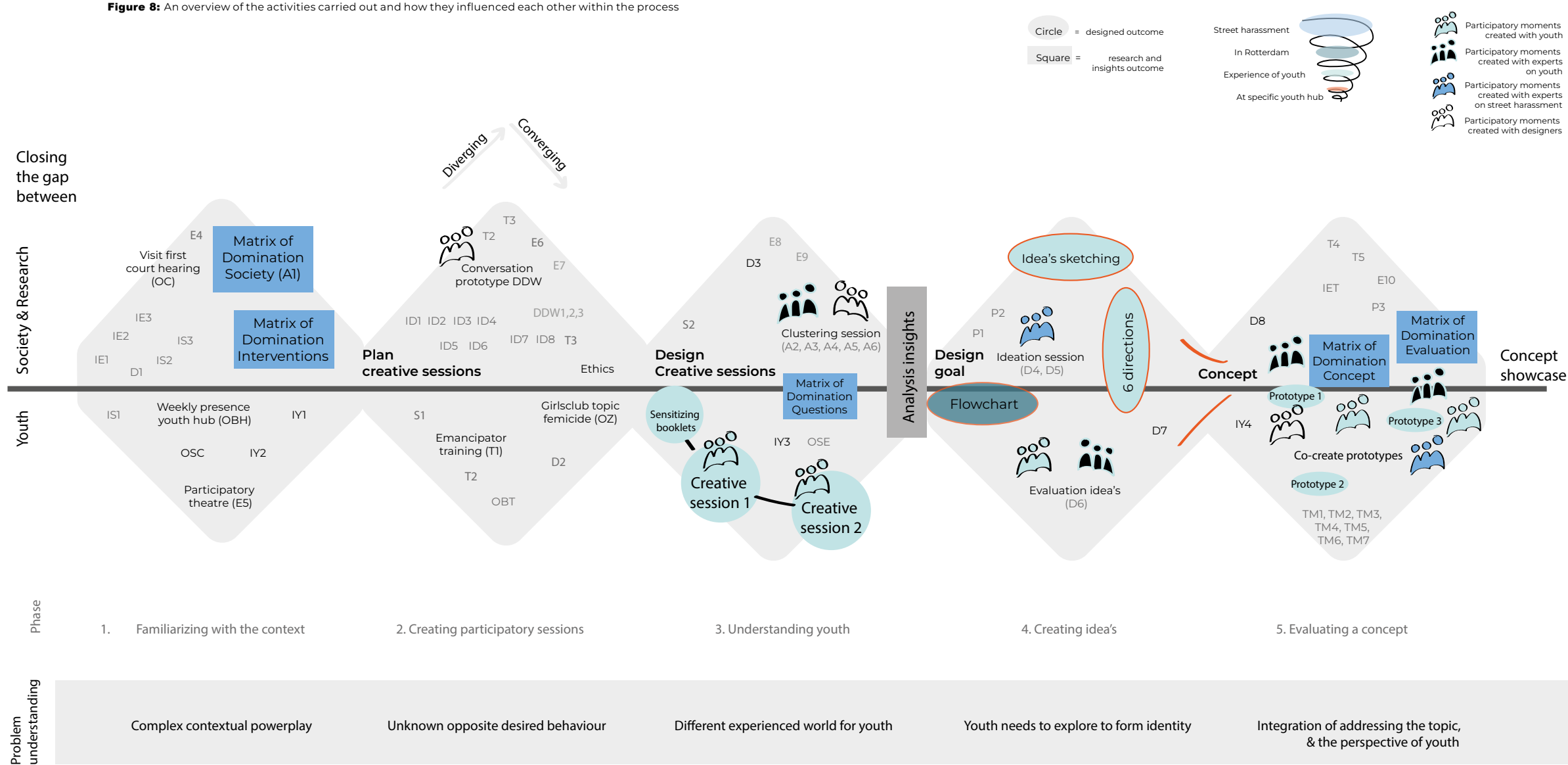
The approach of this project can be described as constantly shifting between various levels of the system, iterating through perspectives within a “systemic hurricane.” Figure 7 illustrates how small pieces of the meta layers were employed to zoom in and explore deeper experiences and interactions people have. For instance, in the light green layer, which focused on the experiences of youth regarding street harassment in Rotterdam. In this case, the project worked with three distinct groups of youth: one from Rotterdam and two from Delft. The sessions in Delft provided insights that could be combined with findings from youth hubs and also extended the scope to cover a broader understanding of the problem in our society.

This iterative process of zooming in on details and zooming out to gain a broader understanding was essential for reaching a full understanding of the topic and creating a concept that fits. Throughout the process, activities on different levels are constantly carried out to make connections between the layers on which the problem has an influence. Figure 8 shows the process over time constantly combining new information from the world of youth and the world of society and research. The colours in figure 8 correspond with the levels of the systemic hurricane on which certain activities mostly occurred (For example: the matrix of domination is looking at the problem on an abstract, high over level and therefore blue). The chapters of this report simultaneously correspond with these colours.



**Figure 7:** My systemic design hurricane through the process

**Figure 8:** An overview of the activities carried out and how they influenced each other within the process



The project follows an iterative process diverging and converging insights and ideas. Throughout different design phases, research & design techniques and methods are applied (Van Boeijen et al., 2014; Heijne & Van Der Meer, 2019).

In total 74 activities were carried out. Different activities were for example:

- Interviews (N=18, usually lasted from 30 minutes up to two hours): These interviews were used as expert information on the aim of the phase as can be seen underneath the diamonds in figure 8.

- Observations shadowing youth workers (N=25 (including while prototyping and other activities were carried out))
- Observing trainings about sexual assault (N=5)
- Theatre performances (N=2) Presentations given to stakeholders (N=3)

A full overview of the activities , insights and how they connect to other activities, can be found in appendix B.

Looking at the process over time, we can distinguish how, in 5 different stages, the understanding of the problem shifted:

1. While familiarizing within the context, the contextual power dynamic in public spaces that make street harassment so complex became apparent.
2. The project integrated these insights into the development of two creative sessions with youth to discover their perspectives. Creating these sessions revealed that the flip side of street harassment is unclear: what is the desired behaviour?
3. The sessions with youth reshaped the understanding of the problem learning about their perception and experience.
4. The problem was reframed and from the design goal the final concept was created and evaluated with all different stakeholders in numerous loops throughout the last phase of the process.

For the final concept, data, insights and methods from earlier activities, for example the creative sessions, were reused in new ways and integrated into the concept. This report and designed concept are the end result of this graduation project, addressing street harassment through the eyes of youth, and attempting to build bridges between the different layers of complexity

The deliverables are:

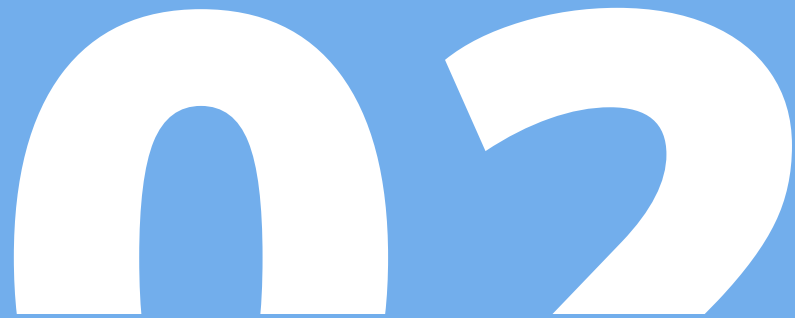
- This report and the insights on the topic for the client
- The creative sessions as designed and delivered for further research (chapter 5)
- The flowchart as information for other researchers and designers (chapter 9.2)
- The design intervention created as final design of the graduation (chapter 8)

#### [Reflective thought]

My messy design hurricane! The whole process was messy, making it hard to maintain focus. I can be a bit of a chaos sometimes. Without a course schedule and assignment, it is good to be aware that I need structure because otherwise I can get lost in all the exciting fun diverging activities. The triple diamond that once worked so well in my studies, was not giving me a well fitting structure for this project, due to the different layers I wanted to take into account and the different timelines required to involve different stakeholders throughout the project.

Interestingly, in activity T5, Andree Schaminee highlighted precisely chaos as an important factor to be able to face the big transitions of today's society. So maybe messy is what I needed as well to combine layers of a complex societal problem. Schaminee described chaos as a creative act that opens up space to the current state of the art. Therefore the chaos could be enhanced by the topic. Letting go of the structures and safety of the double diamond might have been what this project needed and therefore an important learning lesson for me as a designer.

However.. probably it is also just my way of working and character, which I could improve to be a bit less messy. A balance should be maintained: in chaos creative solutions can be found, but the methods and iterative process learned during my studies can give support and structure. Using them can unravel new possibilities rather than drowning in the complexity of problems. While the way of working was not the most organised one, I was able to discover and design a wide variety of things and learn a lot and most importantly: enjoy the process.



# Street harassment in society

## 2.1 The problem

### 2.1.1 An unclear definition

### 2.1.2 Harassers & Targets: dynamic roles

## 2.2 The harassers motivations

## 2.3 Matrix of Domination

### 2.3.1 The law against harassment



Street harassment is an ambiguous term without clear boundaries of what counts as street harassment and what does not. In street interviews done by Omroep West (Omroep West, 2022), an elderly Dutch man expressed this complexity in his contradicting expressions.

When asked his opinion about street harassment, he immediately replied:

*"It breaks my heart! That all of that [misbehaving towards women] is simply possible and can happen."*

However, this heartfelt sympathy quickly gave way to a different tone only seconds later. When the interviewer asked if he himself whistled to women, he immediately replied:

*"I am allowed to whistle, am I not?!"*

On the follow-up question where the boundaries lie of what should be acceptable, he answered:

*"How am I supposed to know? Each woman is different."*

This man captures the essence of the nuances in interpretation that we deal with in street harassment. When is behaviour acceptable, when is it harmful or even illegal?

This chapter will start by outlining the problem and attempt to explain the causes of the behaviour through literature. Through the matrix of domination it will examine how the problem is rooted in our society, showing why street harassment is a wicked problem.

## 2.1 The problem

Street harassment is a worldwide occurring problem, with research indicating that 80%–100% of women globally have experienced some form of street harassment (e.g. Beswick, Desborough & Weldes, 2023, 2018; Fahmy et al., 2014; Kearl, 2010, 3; Adams et al., 2020). Yet, it is a topic that is under researched and a few large-scale studies are done. The largest research was in 2014 among 37 countries. Also in 2016, a global survey on street harassment compared different cities. Some of these results can be seen in figure 9 (Stop Street Harassment, 2016).

Focussing on the Netherlands, this report mainly relies on the insights from the survey conducted in Rotterdam by Fischer & van der Veen (2022) and CBS' first nationwide street harassment survey (2022). These studies found that in the year 2021/22, 73% of women have been sexually intimidated in public in the Netherlands. This section will start with how street harassment is defined, elaborating on why it is a problem that should be tackled in our society and who causes the problem.



**Figure 9:** Girls' Safety in Cities across the World (Adapted from Plan International (2018))

## 2.1.1 An unclear definition

There are a lot of forms of public disturbance, intrusions on (sense of) public safety and violence against women and minorities. Street harassment is an umbrella term, commonly defined as unwanted attention in public towards a stranger, which is usually of sexual nature (Fairchild, 2023). This can be verbal, non-verbal or even physical. In the Netherlands the term 'sexual' street harassment is often used to distinguish it from other forms of intimidation (Slachtofferwijzer, 2024).

However, critics argue that the term 'street harassment' is not consistent and used for several forms of unwanted behaviour. A limitation of the term is that harassment puts the focus on the recipient's reaction, rather than the intruder's intentions. Moreover, some debate that this term is lacking since the definition limits to 'the streets', whereas harassment can occur in all environments within society (Vera-Gray, 2016).

Interactions with strangers can also occur in the online environment. Online sexual harassment is a growing concern, particularly due to social media's influence on young people. This includes cyberbullying with sexual comments, unwanted sexting, and sextortion (blackmail involving nude photos) (Kent, 2024; Helpwanted, n.d.). Recent statistics from the Central Bureau show that 54% of online harassment cases involve strangers, with a 20% increase in reported incidents within the last 12 months between 2020 and 2022 (CBS, 2023). As digital spaces increasingly become public environments, the online harassment should not be ignored in this project, but due to the scope, the focus of this project will be on the physical space.

### Adaptive behaviour

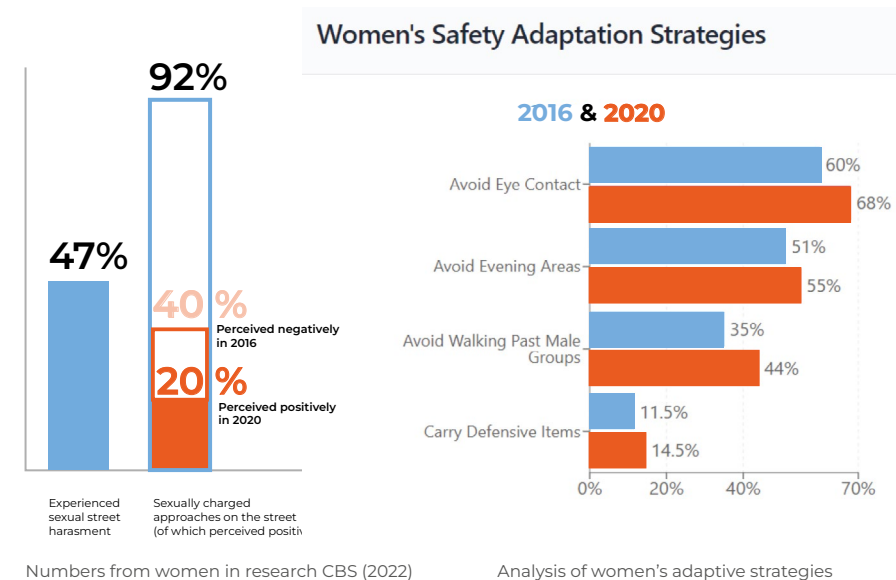
In practice it is often unclear for individuals what 'counts as' street harassment and what is accepted in society. This is visible in the numbers by comparing the percentage of women who report having experienced sexual street harassment, 47%, with the percentage who experienced 'sexual approaches' being 92%. This is striking, given the same research found that women increasingly perceive these sexual approaches as negatively (figure 10). An explanation given by research is that women do not see themselves as victims or 'normalise' the phenomenon. In other words, they see street harassment as something that is simply part of life in the big city (Fischer & Vanderveen, 2020).

Women also adapt their behaviour to avoid harassment from happening to them or prevent escalation of situations (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Farmer & Smock Jordan, 2017). This can include not making eye contact with men or boys (68%), avoiding certain places in the evening (55%) and not walking past groups of men or boys (44%). As can be seen in figure 10 women use these strategies increasingly (Fischer, 2022). They teach them to themselves based on past experiences, but also to others, from generation on to generation. Yet these coping mechanisms will likely not change the behaviour of the harassers, thereby not solving the issue.

As a 14 year old girl said in a television interview:

*"It doesn't matter if you are wearing long clothes or revealing skin. Boys need to learn that it is not okay from a young age"*

[Omroep West, data].



**Figure 10:** Statistics from the research done by CBS (2022) and analysed by Fischer & Vanderveen (2020)

## Contributing to harm

Not only do women adapt their behaviour, but street harassment also causes the target mental and physical harm. Mentally targets feel unsafe and research found that street harassment also has psychological effects like significant associations with anxiety, depression and sleeplessness (Thornton et al., 2023). Moreover, street harassment also contributes to broader harmful structures. While harassment might not (always) cause immediate physical harm, it indirectly contributes to a system where harm towards others is accepted. The pyramid of male (figure 11) violence shows that when often exposed to certain levels of sexism, these situations are normalised, indirectly contributing to more serious forms of violence (Emancipator, 2024). The normalisation of seemingly innocent behaviour can thus contribute to heinous crimes.



Figure 11: The pyramid of male violence (Emancipator, 2024)

While often sexual in nature, street harassment is not exclusively so. It exists on a spectrum of harmful behaviours that primarily affect women (Fileborn, 2013; Vera-Gray, 2016), but also intersects with multiple forms of discrimination. It is impossible to draw hard lines between sexual violence and homophobic, transphobic, racist and ableist abuse, as will be further elaborated on in chapter 2.3, and it is not only effecting women, but also men.

## Potential of the public space

Public space is not only an environment that can endanger our daily lives. It is also a space that could open up opportunities. The street is a place where you have no say in who you meet: neighbours, an old friend, your future boyfriend or complete strangers. Strangers routinely ignore each other, out of the mistaken belief that seeking solitude or remaining lonely is the better, safer, option (VPRO tegenlicht, 2024; SMELT, 2021). However, social science studies show that even the smallest social interactions lead to a greater sense of well-being and 'belonging somewhere' (Epley & Schroeder, 2014).

In our society that is becoming increasingly individualistic, where more people feel lonely, polarisation is increasing and mental health continues to deteriorate, meeting new people and connecting with others is an important factor to increase our happiness.

***"A place where individualism can turn into collectivism: Isn't that supposed to be the streets?"***

- Sunaida, 19 year old living in Rotterdam  
Comment during participative theatre YoungIns (appendix B, activity E5)

Therefore the streets are a space with a lot of opportunities, as a girl in Rotterdam during activity E5 highlighted, perhaps it could turn individualism and collectivism.

This power opportunity space of the street also knows a duality. As the girl pointed out the municipality wants more collectivism, but at the same time she felt that she is not allowed to hang out on the streets because then she and her friends are perceived as "hangjongeren", causing riots and unrest in the public space.

It might therefore be important, when trying to tackle street harassment, that the solution does not shut down the potential



benefits of interacting in the public space. Street harassment is endangering the interactions on the streets, limiting people from being happy through small meaningful interactions.

## 2.1.2 Harassers & targets: dynamic roles

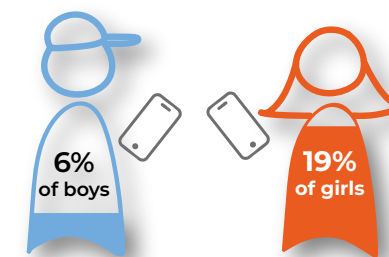
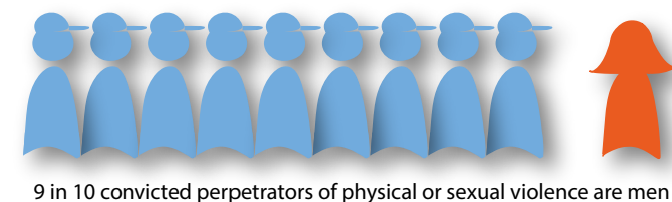
In this report the terms harassers and targets are used, rather than men and women. This section will elaborate on the roles that people have within the behaviour and why these roles are dynamic.

Even though street harassment is affecting both men and women, figures repeatedly show that women are significantly more likely to be targeted (figure 13) (Reep et al., 2022). Another group that is considered more vulnerable to be targeted by street harassment is the LGBTQ+ community. According to the European Fundamental Rights Agency (2014), 50% of people from the LGBTQ+ community avoid certain public places for the fear of being attacked, threatened or harassed because of their sexuality.

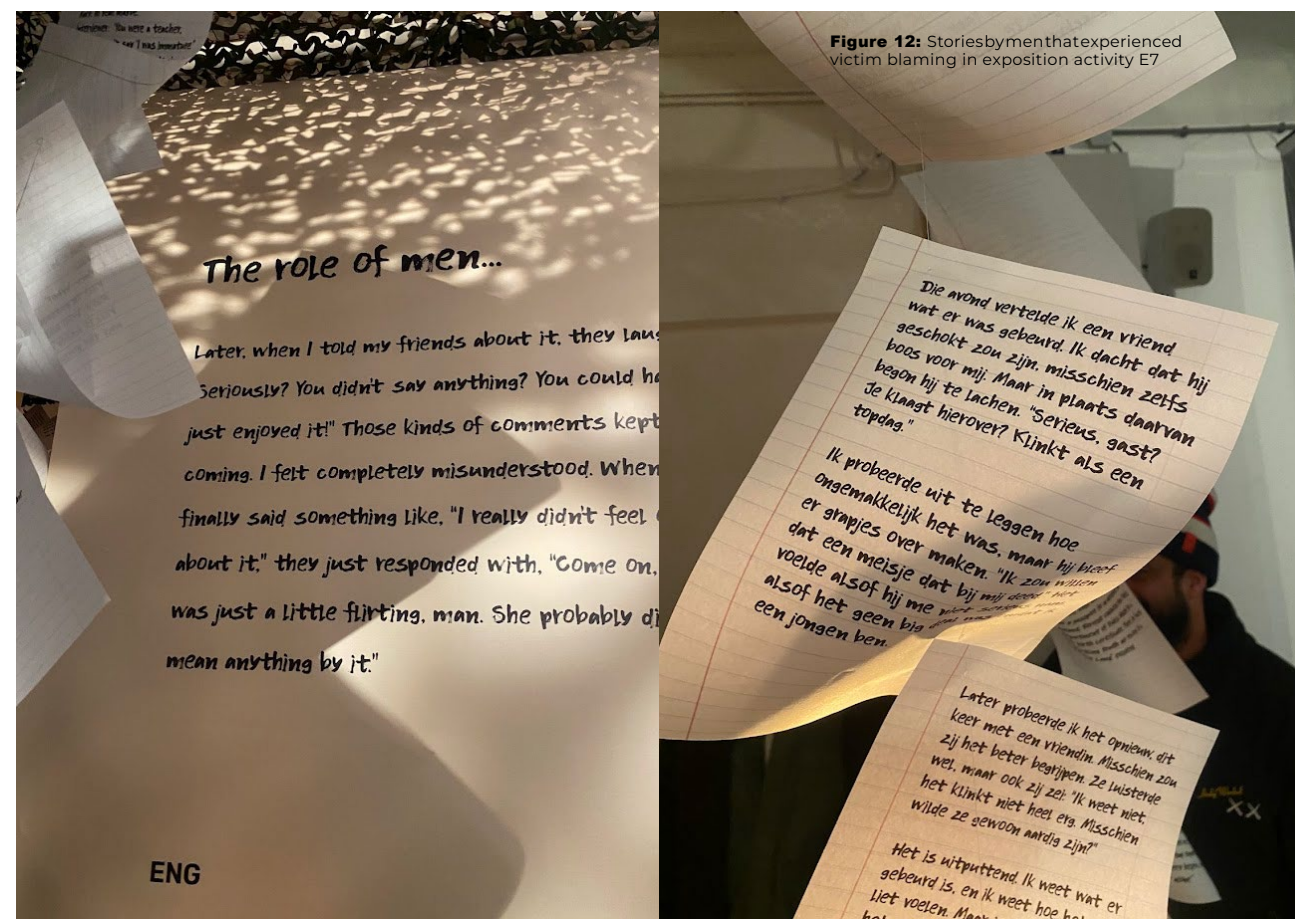
But the fact that figures show that men experience less street harassment does not directly mean that men are less affected by the problem. Another explanation between the experiences of men and women could be found by the lack of acknowledging or recognising street harassment as such by men. Some predict that more men experience street harassment, but do not name it as such due to their social role and norms on what street harassment looks like (Vera-Gray, 2016). Similar patterns are found in an underreporting of sexual assaults by male victims (Bullock & Beckson, 2011).

This is also supported by research that men have more difficulty expressing their emotions. Therefore it is harder for them to communicate that certain behaviour is unpleasant and perceived as harassment (APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men, 2018). Men experience a double stigma: in addition to victim blaming (responsibility for harm is unfairly placed on the target rather than the harasser, often discouraging victims from speaking out due to fear of judgment or stigma, there is also the stigma on their masculinity (Bullock & Beckson, 2011) (figure 12, appendix B, activity E7). Therefore it is very plausible that the number of men that experience unwanted attention in public or other forms of sexual harassment might be higher than statistics show (Filemon, 2017; Harush et al., 2021). Thus it is important to take into account that stereotypes can be damaging, and men can also be a target of street harassment.

Figure 13: The role of men and women in numbers



Reported having experienced sexual harassment over the internet (Age 12-18)



The same accounts for the role of harasser. Even though research shows that nine in ten harassers of sexual or physical violence are male (McCloskey & Raphael, 2005), street harassment also takes place from women towards other women (Chicks and the City podcasts, n.d.).

So women are often, yet not always the target. Simultaneously men are not always the harasser. However it cannot be denied that sexism is an important factor in regards to street harassment and as Dekker (2024) points out: even though not all men may be perpetrators of sexual violence, all men can have an influence on the culture and environment in which violence is committed.

The roles of harassers and targets are also not set per individual. Within each context people can take up different social roles (Chekroun & Brauer, 2002; Nwoko, 2025). Regarding street harassment this means that someone can be a harasser in a certain setting but a target of bystander in another: these roles differentiate within the situation and shift as groups define “in-group” vs “out-group” dynamics. Individual behaviours are known to change according to the group setting. Van Tuijl’s systematic literature review (tba) shows that while individual drivers causing the behaviour of harassers’ are studied, their mechanisms and interplay remain understudied. Therefore this project will focus on the perspective of potential harassers.

To conclude, street harassment is a widespread problem influencing the lives of women and minorities and contributing to a system of serious harm, obstructing opportunities for positive influence on the streets. The term ‘street harassment’ is ambiguous and as it is hard to define, the boundaries are unclear. Targets take adaptive strategies, which are not affecting the behaviour of the harassers. Thus it is important to understand the root causes of the behaviour from the harassers perspective. The next section will dive into who the harasser is and what, according to literature, causes the behaviour.

- In the Netherlands 73% of women have been sexually intimidated in public in the year 2021/22.
- Street harassment is commonly defined as unwanted attention in public towards a stranger, which is usually of sexual nature.
- The definition is ambiguous and has no clear boundaries of what is accepted.
- Street harassment happens in the physical public space as well as online. The focus of this project will be on encounters on the streets. It is known that women adapt their behaviour to prevent street harassment from happening to them and normalise the phenomenon.
- Street harassment is a problem of feeling unsafe, but also contributes to a system where harm towards others is accepted and exists on a spectrum of harmful behaviours like sexual violence, discrimination and homophobic and racist abuse.
- Strangers routinely ignore each other, out of the mistaken belief that seeking solitude or remaining lonely is the better, safer, option, but studies show that even the smallest interactions lead to more happiness. Thus while trying to tackle street harassment the potential benefits of interacting in the public space should not be shut down.
- Not much is known about the harasser and most research focuses on the target. This project focuses on the harassers perspective.
- The roles people take are dynamic: Within each context people can take up different social roles. Women are often, yet not always the target. Simultaneously men are not always the harasser.

#### [Reflective thought]

As part of my research, I participated in a broad spectrum of different events such as observing a training from Emancipator about sexual violence, given at the Hogenschool of Amsterdam (appendix B, activity T1). Despite these activities taking up a lot of my time, it helped me to go beyond statistics and understand street harassment in a way that I could feel it in a way I could not have done from behind my desk.

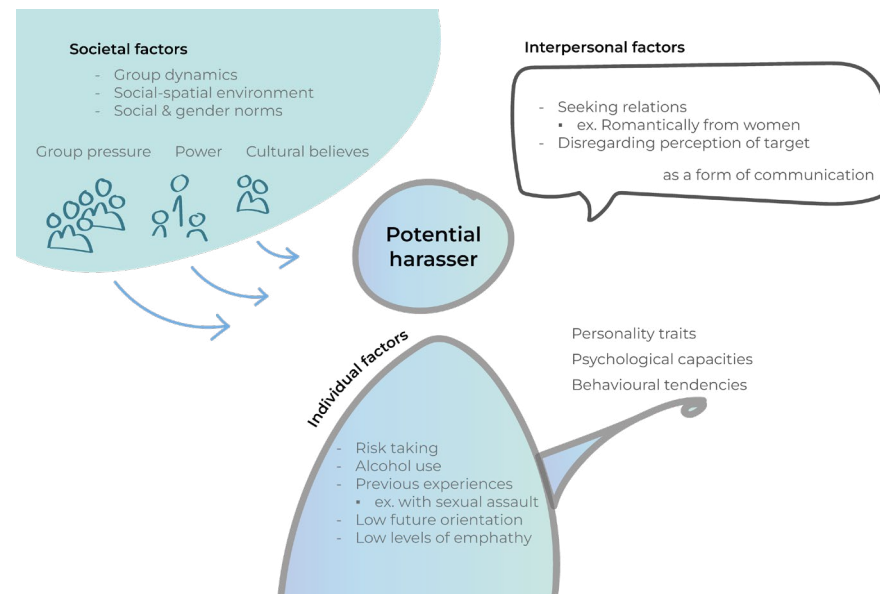
For example during the training of emancipator, a young boy stepped forward during the training to highlight the importance of men being stereotypically portrayed as harassers, not victims, due to his own history being a target of sexual assault. This vulnerable moment made a big impact on me, which I took with me as important throughout the whole project.

## 2.2 The harassers motivations

In the current state of street harassment research, several reasons for the behaviour can be identified. This section will explore these reasons through the literature.

### Contextual factors

As van Tuijl (tba) highlights, there are a lot of other contextual factors that play a role in the behaviour of street harassment. The factors that are known to influence the behaviour of the harasser can be split up into societal factors, interpersonal factors and individual factors, as can be seen in figure 14.



**Figure 14:** Factors that influenced the behaviour of the harasser, as found by Van Tuijl (tba)

On an individual level, previous experiences play an important role. People that practiced other forms of violence, such as physical violence, sexual violence and bullying others in the past were found to be associated with provoking sexual harassment at a later stage (Ménard et al., 2003; Stroem et al., 2021). This corresponds with the pyramid of male violence (chapter 2.1.1), showing that if you are often exposed to and normalise certain levels of sexism, you are indirectly contributing to more serious forms of violence.

### It is just trying to flirt right?

Looking at the interpersonal factors, it is often argued that street harassment is a form of experimenting with flirting, to show that one finds the target attractive. This is highlighted both by literature (Perry et al., 1998; Walton & Pedersen, 2022) and the preliminary findings of interviews with youth workers (appendix C). Moreover, research shows that men are more likely to interpret situations concerning street harassment as 'flirting', whereas women can interpret the same situations as unpleasant (Kara & Toygar, 2018; Knapp et al., 2019). The reasons given for harassers to show the behaviour are both uncertainty about how to flirt, or using harassment as a sexual solicitation tactic without seeking further romantic connection (sociosexuality) (Bendixen & Kennair, 2012).

Few studies have directly asked harassers why they sexually harass others in public spaces. Studies that used this approach found that harassers genuinely hoped for a positive reaction (DelGreco et al., 2020; Ekblad, 2016). Research by Walton & Pedersen (2021) shows that 85% of the men hoped that the women who they targeted would smile in response. Therefore limited knowledge of flirting or room to experiment with making sexual contacts could be considered a solution space.

However, this reasoning for the behaviour can be questioned by a rapid shift towards escalating behaviour when no response is given by the target. Often in street harassment there is an unpredictable shift in attitude from "flirting" comments towards aggressively cursing and violent behaviour if the target does not show interest (Slachtofferwijzer, 2024). Professor de Jong, from Leiden University (TEDx Talks, 2016), argues that this sudden shift in behaviour could be explained by a sense of rejection. If the comments made by the harasser on the street stem from a feeling of exclusion in society or exclusion by the other sex, the sense that the target fears them could trigger the perception of being rejected.

These studies address a much deeper rooted problem than the ability to flirt. Therefore while knowledge of how to flirt could contribute to more positive interactions with strangers, it is not exclusively an explanation of the behaviour.

### Reclaiming control: the powerplay of men

Another study that directly asked harassers for their motivations for performing the behaviour was carried out by Henry (2017), in Egypt. This study was done by observing men in a square and, if they were observed harassing someone, approaching them to ask if they wanted



to be interviewed. The study found that Egyptian men engaged in street harassment as a way to push back against their own feelings of social oppression. Normalizing the act of street harassment, they blamed women for it, giving cultural justifications. This suggests that the behaviour of the harasser does not even have the intent to influence the target (other-centered), but instead is self-centered (figure 15).

Street harassment could thus be an activity to contribute to self-gratification and feel empowered. Some studies found that young men used street harassment to assert their control over a space and show others, including girls, that it was “theirs” (De Backer, 2020). Masculine group bonding and peer pressure are identified as causes of street harassment (Wesselman & Kelly, 2010) and it is known that status games form the collective attitudes towards gender among schoolboys (Abraham 2008; Pascoe 2012). It could therefore be argued that street harassment might be a power play between men and their own feelings, of which women and minorities become a victim (appendix B, activity IS2), highlighting the societal factors.

In conclusion, street harassment consists of a complex interplay between different factors and the context of the harasser. Even though knowledge of flirting could contribute to prevention of street harassment, it is not the direction that this project took to tackle the problem, due to behaviour showing deeper rooted complexity. The influence of different contextual factors, and dynamic roles that individuals have in different contexts (chapter 2.1), demonstrate how harassment cannot be understood solely through the actions of harassers, but must be researched as group dynamic. The next section will use the matrix of domination to further address this sense of oppression and how the problem is deeply rooted in society.

## Key insights:

- Uncertainty about how to flirt, or the use of harassment as a sexual solicitation tactic without seeking further romantic connection, are reasons given for harassment.
- Street harassment often involves an unpredictable shift in attitude from ‘flirtatious’ comments to aggressive swearing and violent behaviour if the target does not show interest, addressing a sense of regaining control.
- Harassers may take out their anger on women as a means of self-gratification.
- Motivations of harassers are deeply rooted in society and different contextual factors influence the harassers behaviour. These factors can be split up into: individual, interpersonal and societal and consist of a complex interplay.

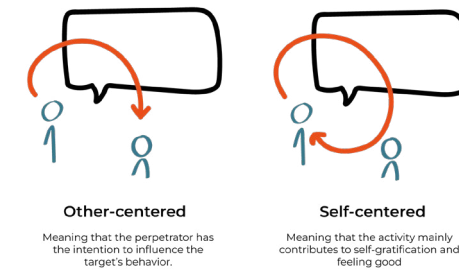


Figure 15: Other-centered and self-centered behaviour

## 2.3 Matrix of domination

To analyse the power dynamics of street harassment, the matrix of domination is used. This matrix is a framework introduced by sociologist Patricia Collins (1990) and consists of 4 domains: the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic & interpersonal (figure 16). Analysing street harassment within these domains and their intersections helps to explain how various forms of oppression shape people's experiences. Using the matrix of domination can help to understand how street harassment is rooted in society.

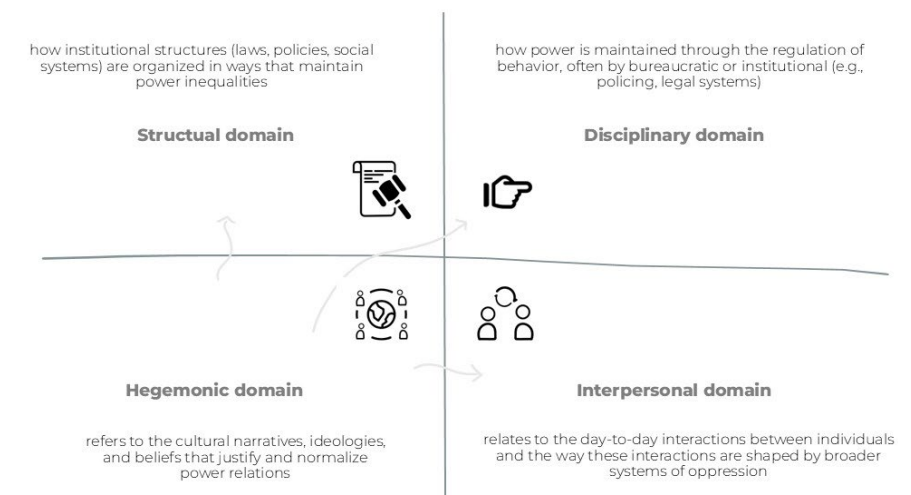


Figure 16: The matrix of domination and its four domains

**The structural domain** refers to laws and policies in place. And for street harassment, there are not many. In only five jurisdictions worldwide, certain forms of street harassment have been made illegal (Wikipedia, 2025). The Netherlands has been amongst them since July 2024.

The lagging of these laws is related to the fact that the subject is understudied, as mentioned in chapter 2.1. Both are grounded in sexism, as demonstrated for multiple disciplines and fields of research by Criado-Perez, in her book *Invisible Women* (2020). Street harassment is a problem many in positions of power (often men) have simply never encountered and were normalised, therefore not having a necessity of paying attention to laws or enforcement. Dismissing women's experiences and prioritising male-dominated issues perpetuates the problems: if there is no research into the problem, and no universal understanding of the problem, then the problem will not be addressed at all levels of society. As a result, laws will fail to pass, and by failing to pass laws, the problem will not be structurally addressed and recognised.

Due to the complexity of street harassment, enforcement of the law within **the disciplinary domain** also becomes inherent. Different opinions on what should be considered acceptable and what should not, make it unclear when to intervene for both authorities and bystanders and therefore regulating this law is highly racism and sexism sensitive (Volkskrant, 2024).

As for sexism, the lack of clarity of boundaries perpetuates inequality because different values apply to men and women. Expectations of how men and women should behave are adopted in enforcing the law. If a man is harassed by a woman, it is less likely to be seen as harassment (Harush et al., n.d.). The same goes for how handsome or attractive someone is found to be (Rotundo et al., 2001).

As for racism, street harassment is popularly associated with men of colour and underprivileged areas (Lieber, 2021). Despite that, research shows it occurs in all levels of society: there is no significant association with neighbourhood-level, gender equality, stable housing, crime rates or other socio-demographics (Mumford et al., 2020). Therefore it is not possible to sketch a specific environment or persona of 'the harasser'. Thus it should be treated as a role many could take (Van Tuijl, 2025).

Cultural differences also play a role in how the law is applied. By focussing on behaviour occurring on the street, certain groups, those who spend more time on the street, may be more vulnerable to being unfairly targeted by this law. This could be an explanation why

street harassment is often associated with builders whistling towards women. Some people also spend more time on the streets due to their religion or culture. For example the Islamic conceptualisation of the streets is largely contextual: the inside houses are the domain of women and the streets the public world of men (De Backer, 2020; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2001).

Thus street harassment can manifest in ways that are sexualised, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, Islamophobic, and so forth. Precise forms can shift across different groups and contexts (Fileborn, 2021). All these influences make certain people more prone to be targeted by enforcing the law than others.

**The hegemonic domain**, sometimes also referred to as the glue between all domains, addresses these cultural beliefs and societal norms. Here the concept of intersectionality is important. In many societies, media, and advertising, women are pictured as objects of desire, often dehumanising or reducing them to their physical appearance: they become objectified. This normalises the idea that

women's bodies are public property and that men have the right to comment on, touch, or evaluate them, thus contributing to street harassment (Davidson et al., 2013).

On this level, the influences from different cultures become apparent. Muslim participants from a research conducted in Brussels explained that the Shariaa (Islamic Law) predicts that women should not walk the street unaccompanied by a male family member and if they do, this justifies exposing them to street harassment (Henry, 2017). This shows that behaviour in the public space is influenced by cultural habits. In interviews with youth workers they explained that women of Antillean culture would be offended if they were not being catcalled (appendix B, activity IS1; appendix C), considering attention from men on the street as appreciation of their appearance. These differences in cultural beliefs and power imbalances can especially cause tension and conflicts in environments where a lot of cultures mix.

**The interpersonal domain** relates to the day-to-day encounters between individuals. This domain is particularly significant as it demonstrates how larger systemic inequalities manifest in daily life through interactions between individuals. Internalization of the problem plays an important role within this domain. Targets interpret harassment based on their accumulated experiences. Therefore, what might appear as a simple comment to one person may trigger significant fear or trauma responses in another, due to their lived experiences with harassment or assault (Brown, 2020). The fear of



escalation and potential harm affect the target, making it very hard to assess the impact on a person objectively. Therefore also justifying sentences in the structural and disciplinary domain are difficult.

Many targets remain silent or passive in a street harassment situation, due to fear of what could happen next. They internalise their response as a survival mechanism. This connects to the strategies women use to prevent street harassment from happening to them as explained in chapter 2.1.

As can be seen by the matrix of domination, the complexity of the deeply rooted power imbalances and cultural, social and personal differentiation of social norms make street harassment a wicked problem. To dive further into the effects of the law on society and how power structures can currently be examined within the Netherlands, the revised law will be analysed more thoroughly with the matrix of domination.

### 2.3.1 The law against harassers

On the first of July 2024 the Dutch government installed a revised law that makes street harassment legally an offence. The law defines the offence of street harassment as sexual approach in the public space and online (Wet Seksuele Misdrijven, 2024).

Despite this law being a step towards changing the social norm, a law alone will not cause systemic change. Making something illegal doesn't stop it, as seen with drug laws failing to eliminate drug use (Studium Generale Universiteit Utrecht, 2022).

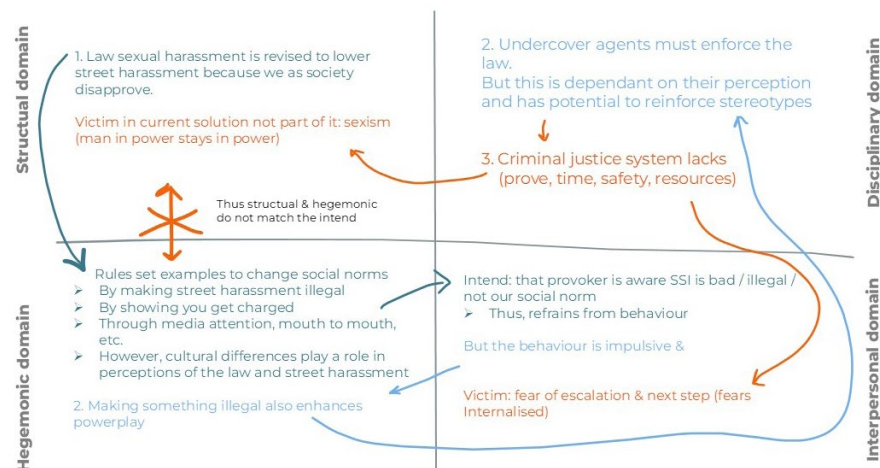


Figure 17: Analysis as done for the law through the matrix of domination (read from green > blue > orange)

Moreover, legal equality doesn't guarantee equal opportunities (Criado-Perez, 2020, p.286). In a patriarchal society, men often dominate political, economic, and social systems, perpetuating control over women's behavior and appearance. But besides the legislation itself not being the solution, the matrix of domination shows a mismatch between the intervention introduced in **the structural domain** and the intended social change in the hegemonic domain.

By introducing a law that makes street harassment illegal, the criminal justice system aims to signal that such behaviour will lead to punishment, hoping this will deter people from engaging in it. However, street harassment is often impulsive behaviour, with unclear indication what "counts" as street harassment and what does not (chapter 2.1), meaning that in the moment, harassers are unlikely to pause and consider whether what they are doing is legal. In the case of street harassment, criminalization may even backfire, potentially reinforcing the behaviour, considering the feeling of being in power that the harasser seeks (chapter 2.2).

Looking at the practical application of this law, a significant flaw lies in the lack of **disciplinary mechanisms** in place. To enforce this law, the municipality of Rotterdam mobilised undercover boas. These officers are trained to recognize street harassment and go to locations where harassment is known to be an issue. Next to this approach being sexism and racism sensitive, as highlighted before, it also raises questions on the safety of officers themselves. For example, with the first case brought to court (figure 18) it became apparent that the undercover boas did not feel safe enough to approach the harasser when the dispute occurred; they had to wait for police officers to come to the scene before they had the opportunity to step in.

Due to officers being undercover, victims are largely excluded from the process. Even when someone is caught, the victim is often unaware of any consequences or justice served, weakening the law's impact and leaving victims disempowered. Research in Rotterdam South shows that the perception of 'eyes on the street': especially the visibility of service providers present, contributes to an increased perception of safety (Schram et al., 2024). Research by Amaral (2023) underlines that seeing officers in person is one of the only things that directly affects the safety on the streets. Therefore undercover agents will not affect the target's feelings, whereas in uniform they might actually make a difference. But in the current system, the pressure on the police is already problematic (Politie.nl, n.d.), so if undercover agents are the only way to commit an offence under Dutch law, this is a major flaw.

Technological advancements could help to gather more proof. However, research also shows that while men feel safer with technological enhancements, women prefer a personal contact and cameras could contribute to an environment feeling dangerous (Criado-Perez, 2020, p.60; Schram et al., 2024). So a full surveillance system might not be an inclusive solution for the perception of safety.

Looking on the flip side, if the law is able to arrest harassers and put them on trial, it could set examples and therefore raise awareness affecting the **hegemonic domain**. If trials and arrests get spread by the media this addresses the societal norm. Marking a crucial recognition that street harassment is a serious issue that deserves legal attention, it can be a catalyst for cultural change.

But something else is happening around the execution of the law with the focus on harassers. Current arrests are failing. In November 2024 (Volkskrant podcast), explained the current practice through this real case as an example:

*Ter Hall, a project manager of the police force in Utrecht, witnessed an incident while on undercover street harassment patrol. At night he saw two girls being followed by two boys out of the bicycle shed. One of the boys called after the girl in Arabic, making 'fuck movements' and making 'a gesture of: I'm going to fuck you' with his tongue between his fingers. Ter Hall, who was not a boa himself, called in a colleague. The latter observed how the situation escalated until the boys had closed in on the girls so they couldn't move. After the boy also grabbed his crotch again and further entrapped the girls, the boas decided to intervene. They had 'sufficient constituents' for the official report and so proceeded to make a stop. And that's where things still went wrong. As it turned out, the boy was not yet 18. And the agreement with the public prosecutor's office is that underage suspects are only given a corrective call and a warning for the time being.*

- (Volkskrant, 2024).

Within the first months of the new law, 5 out of 6 cases in Utrecht have failed to result in prosecution because the suspects were under 18 years old. This shows that prosecution of the law finds youth to be involved in street harassment in the role of harassers. By law it is agreed upon that minors, in the case of street harassment, can only get a preventative conversation.

Figure 18: Observations from the court hearing

# My reflection on current practice

Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Wednesday 2 October 2024

## COURT HEARING VISIT

### THE FIRST STREET HARASSMENT LAWSUIT

By Robin and Juliëtte

It has been three months and one day after the new law "seksuele misdrijven" (sexual crimes) was initiated. Within the first month of this law, one case has been drawn up and taken to court. The night of the violation (not a crime), two groups of two undercover 'boas' (special investigating officers) walked through Rotterdam. Trained to spot street harassment. They observed how Asmerom kept approaching a woman, walked up to her, touched her and grabbed her hips. This violation is punishable by the new law as street harassment, as long as it is 'fear-inducing, humiliating, offensive or degrading'.

man, originally from Eritrea, is sitting on a couch looking at all the press gathered for the hearing. Asmerom asks the judge: "Who invited all these people?!". He wants a lawyer, but his request gets denied and the judge repeatedly explains that the press is not here for him, but because this is the first time someone is convicted under this new law.

**"Ironically, he is deeply intimidated by the attention that his behaviour gets"**

Perhaps you can feel sorry for this man, in his slippers and sweatpants, looking so powerless in this situation. Not speaking the language, relying on the interpreter present, not understanding the society and rules he is in. However, my empathy quickly vanishes after learning that in the 10 years that he now lives in the Netherlands,

he was convicted of, among others, sexual assault and public violations. And even though Asmerom says he doesn't understand what he has been convicted for, evidently he has received the summons in multiple languages, including his native language. This was sent to him through the information linked to his civil number.

Asmerom calls the judge a liar and for the rest of the hearing he invokes his right to remain silent. When the judge has given the verdict of 100 euros, he walks out of the room after clearly shouting: 'Motherfucker'. The boa who made up the case is slightly disappointed. They could have given him a fine for public drunkenness or urinating, then his sentence would have been twice as high.

**An intimidated offender**

As a big media team gathers, everyone has to wait until the interpreter arrives. One black



Though imperfect, the law is a step in the right direction toward addressing harassment and acknowledging its harm. It is also clear from this analysis that the law has its most positive impact through awareness-raising, and therefore prevention, rather than through intervention, proves to be an important aspect in the battle against street harassment. [For this project prevention was therefore identified as having the greatest potential for intervention of street harassment.

#### [Reflective thought]

Being present in this court hearing triggered my reflection on the impact of our criminal justice system and the way we try to tackle street harassment. Especially looking at the man that in this case was present in court. He fled here from Eritrea, described as the North-Korea of Africa, ten years ago. Refugees here often still face the long arm of the Eritrean regime. They are intimidated and extorted, so they do not feel safe in the Netherlands either (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland, n.d.).

How will this verdict impact him? Is he now merely used to send an awareness message about street harassment into our society?

Working so hard and for so long to make a legal case that will last in court, the boys were a bit disappointed with the amount of money the man got fined. Nevertheless, this hearing has probably made more impact on this man than a sum of money (that probably gets him in more trouble) or time in prison (that will make him feel even more disconnected from society) ever will.

Even the boys had to relocate themselves, since the men started to intimidate them initially, but since that would be legally conflicting for a case, they had to wait for someone else to be the victim, who they also could not include in the arrest as mentioned before. So what purpose does this justice then serve? The victim went home feeling unsafe. Unaware that there were people in place trying to help, but not contributing to that feeling of safety in the moment.

In conclusion of this chapter, street harassment is a difficult complex system that perpetuates inequality and needs systemic change within all domains. There is no persona of “the harasser” and the problem occurs on all levels of our society. It is a wicked problem, having multifaceted complexity that cannot be solved by a single solution. Efforts targeting the prevention of the harassers behaviour have potential to challenge the status quo.

- The lagging of the laws for street harassment can be explained by the fact that the subject is understudied and rooted in sexism.
- It is not possible to sketch a specific environment or persona of ‘the harasser’, because there is no significant association with neighbourhood-level, gender equality, stable housing, crime rates or other socio-demographics. ‘The harasser’ should thus be treated as a role many could take.
- Street harassment can manifest in ways that are sexualised, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, Islamophobic, and so forth. Precise forms can shift across different groups and contexts.
- Differences in cultural beliefs and power imbalances can especially cause tension and conflict in environments where a lot of cultures mix.
- Internalisation of the harm by the target makes it very hard to assess the impact on a person objectively.



# nr

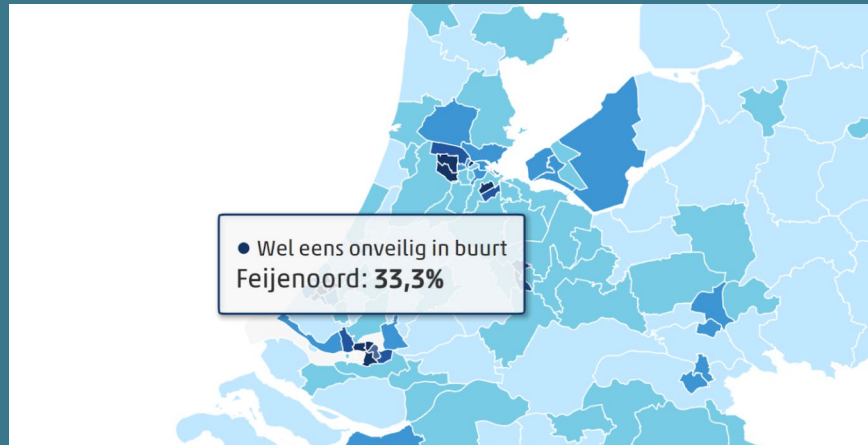
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## Street harassment in Rotterdam

### 3.1 Current Interventions

This chapter will examine the context of this project, Rotterdam, and what they have currently done to counter street harassment. The analysis of current interventions will further underline how current strategies fail to take into account all domains within the system.

Street harassment is known to be a significant issue in the city of Rotterdam. The research mentioned before, by Fischer and Vanderveen (2022), compared a survey between 2016 and 2022 and specifically targeted the evaluation of the approach of Rotterdam on the matter. Generally, Rotterdam is not perceived as the safest environment to be in. The city ranks in the top 3 municipalities where residents feel least secure in their neighborhoods (CBS, 2024). Given street harassment influences this perception of safety, the context of Rotterdam is a relevant fit for the project, next to being the focus area of Healthy Start.



**Figure 19:** Safety perception in the Netherlands, with Feijenoord in Rotterdam as “unsafe hotspot” (CBS, 2024)

Rotterdam is also a raw city: young and unpolished, positioning itself as the city of initiative and innovation. With its 178 different nationalities, it is culturally diverse and a world harbour city with an open mind. This is reflected in their approach to tackle street harassment. In 2017 the municipality initiated a local ban on street harassment, known as the ‘sisverbod’, together with the city of Amsterdam. One man was brought to court, but the law did not hold a stance on freedom of speech (De Rechtspraak, 2019). Nowadays Rotterdam organises a yearly “week against street harassment” to raise awareness for the issue (Gemeente Rotterdam, n.d.-c).

Rotterdam therefore provides a good context, facing significant challenges regarding street harassment and simultaneously having an open approach and willingness to tackle the issue.

## 3.1 Current interventions

Acknowledging street harassment as one of the city’s problems, the municipality of Rotterdam has taken different approaches to counter the issue. Numerous campaigns and awareness programs have been tried within a broad action plan. Yet no decline in incidents was found between 2016 and 2020, in which this plan was rolled out (Fischer & Vanderveen, 2022). This section will elaborate on the current interventions through the matrix of domination, to determine where these interventions are lacking and what possible directions for interventions are.

Interventions can focus on the behaviour from different perspectives: focussing on the harasser, the target, or bystanders (see chapter 1.2.2). Examining these interventions through the matrix of domination shows how these interventions are embedded in the power structures of society. This is done in various ways: campaigns, apps, awareness workshops, etc. (Fischer & Vanderveen, 2022), mostly focussing on targets and bystanders. Currently the law, as elaborated on in the previous chapter, is an important newly revised intervention, aiming directly to tackle harassers.

Numerous campaigns in Rotterdam have promoted interventions and created awareness for the interventions or street harassment in general (Gemeente Rotterdam, n.d.-c). VR expositions and online questions (“wat zie je”) have addressed the normalisation of the problem and called out for revising the social norm.

Other interventions within the context are for example the StopApp. This application is an initiative by the municipality of Rotterdam, which allows targets and bystanders to report street harassment, aiming to gather data for enforcement in specific city areas (X). While initially popular, usage declined due to the lack of immediate benefits for reporters (Fischer & Vanderveen, 2022). The app can be criticized for shifting responsibility onto victims, contributing to victim-blaming, and reinforcing stereotypes and insecurities, without addressing the law or helping to take immediate action towards harassers effectively. The analysis in appendix D1 highlights the importance of linking interventions to direct, meaningful impact for the target group and addressing root causes of harassment at a structural level.

Table 1 shows the analysed interventions through the matrix of domination and strengths and weaknesses of the intervention within society. In appendix D, the full analysis for each of these interventions is elaborated on. As the table shows, often interventions fail to address all domains and integrate the powers in place to enable change within society. Embracing all domains and acknowledging where more attention is needed is therefore important for new interventions to be effective.

**Table 1:** Interventions analysed with the domains of the Matrix of Domination: Structural domain (S), Disciplinary domain (D), Hegemonic domain (H) & Interpersonal domain (I).

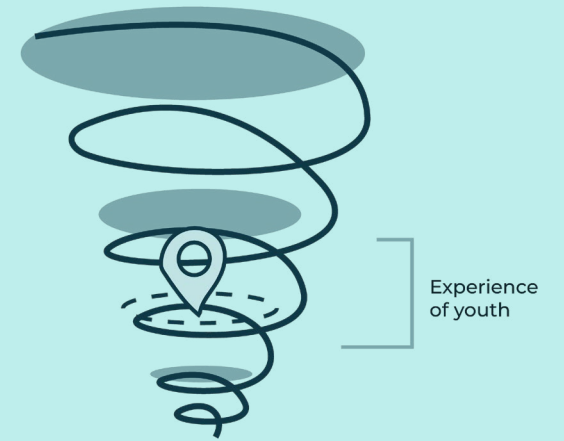
| Intervention                                | Role                 | Insight through the matrix of domination  | Elaborated on in.. |
|---|----------------------|---|--------------------|
| The law sexual offences                     | Harassers            | Substantiating the fact that street harassment is a serious crime, thus addresses the social norm (S)<br>Making the behaviour illegal may only fuel the powerplay. (H)<br>The disciplinary domain is lacking and failing to involve targets. (D)  | Chapter 2.3.1      |
| The stopApp:                                | Targets & Bystanders | Might help the disciplinary domain for enforcing the law. (D)<br>Inclusive and very accessible via an app. (I)<br>Does not empower targets nor bystanders, nor does it take away power from the harasser. (I)<br>Does not show any immediate effects. (I)   | Appendix D1        |
| Resilience training                         | Targets              | Gives support to targets. (I)<br>Places the responsibility with the target thus enforcing the idea that their behaviour change can fuel a solution and contribute to victim-blaming. (H)  | Appendix D1        |
| Cards against harassment (outside of scope) | Targets              | Empowering the target in the situation. (I)<br>Direct power challenge might trigger escalation due to feeling of societal rejection. (I)<br>Relying on the capacity for the target to act, while often the offence happens unexpectedly.(I) Leading to more fear. (H)   | Appendix D2        |
| 5D method                                   | Bystanders           | Shifts responsibility of prevention away from individual targets and onto the broader community. (H)<br>Literature shows great opportunities and effects:<br>By arming potential bystanders with intervention skills, they may take steps when they observe street harassment (I)<br>Use of celebrities to spread to a broad audience (H)<br>Barely addressing the structural or disciplinary domain. (S+D)<br>Relies on capacity of bystanders to acknowledge the situation and react. (I) | Appendix D3        |

In conclusion, while Rotterdam has actively made efforts to counter street harassment, many interventions fail to address multiple domains of the matrix of domination together and often fail to align especially with the structural and disciplinary domain. Even though campaigns seem effective in raising awareness about the problem the whole system should be taken into account considerably.

The introduction of the revised law, as discussed in Chapter 2.3, presents promising opportunities to effectively target harassers across all domains. In general very little campaigns and interventions target the harasser or address group dynamics. Therefore, this project is particularly significant in the current context.

As touched upon before, not much is known about the harasser and focussing on the harasser, target and potential bystanders at the same time is a potential gap for future interventions. Having looked at the challenge of existing solutions, future design directions that will be developed within this project will also be explored under the same terms, to evaluate them.

- Rotterdam is a city facing significant challenges regarding street harassment and simultaneously having an open approach and willingness to tackle the issue, as a frontrunner with efforts such as a local ban against street harassment and an annual week against street harassment.
- Numerous campaigns and awareness programs have been tried within a broad action plan. Yet no decline in incidents was found between 2016 and 2020, in which this plan was rolled out.
- The StopApp can be criticized for shifting responsibility onto victims, reinforcing stereotypes without showing immediate effect for the user
- A lot of interventions fail to integrate all domains of the matrix of domination, especially not addressing the structural and disciplinary domain. Thus failing to take into account all powers in place to enable change within society.
- For the concepts of this project it is important to keep the domains and current interventions in mind and contribute to them



# The experience of youth

4.1 Youth & the streets

4.2 Recognizing the issue

4.3 Interventions among youths

This research focuses on youth from 12-17 years old, a phase in which people are in the development of their identity and social norms (Eriksons, 2024). This chapter will elaborate on why this age group should be involved in addressing street harassment: at this age new values could be shaped, and at this age they also start experiencing street harassment. Does youth recognize this problem and how do current prevention methods approach youth?

## 4.1 Youth & the streets

In the fast development of their lives, youth are discovering boundaries independently from their parents, searching for their own values and they begin to shape their own social norms under the influence of all actors around them (Ciranka & Van Den Bos, 2019). This age group has not yet fully formed their social identities and as such, are in a critical stage for setting norms. By involving youth in this project, it reaches a target group that starts to explore their social norms and presence in public spaces.

Research shows that for youth, the public space is not just a functional area of transport, but the third most important environment of their lives (Matthews et al, 2004). It is a place for interaction with friends and strangers, and a place where they can withdraw from the sight of adults (Lieberg, 1995; Matthews, 2004).

Looking for this independent space, the environment and the context plays an important role. The behaviour outside differs amongst groups: while boys tend to hang out in their own neighbourhood, girls, when and if they leave the house, leave the neighbourhood entirely and go to a friend's house or hang out in the city centre (figure 20, De Backer, 2020). This spatial behavior pattern reflects underlying safety concerns and social dynamics, affecting the way that youth use the public space.

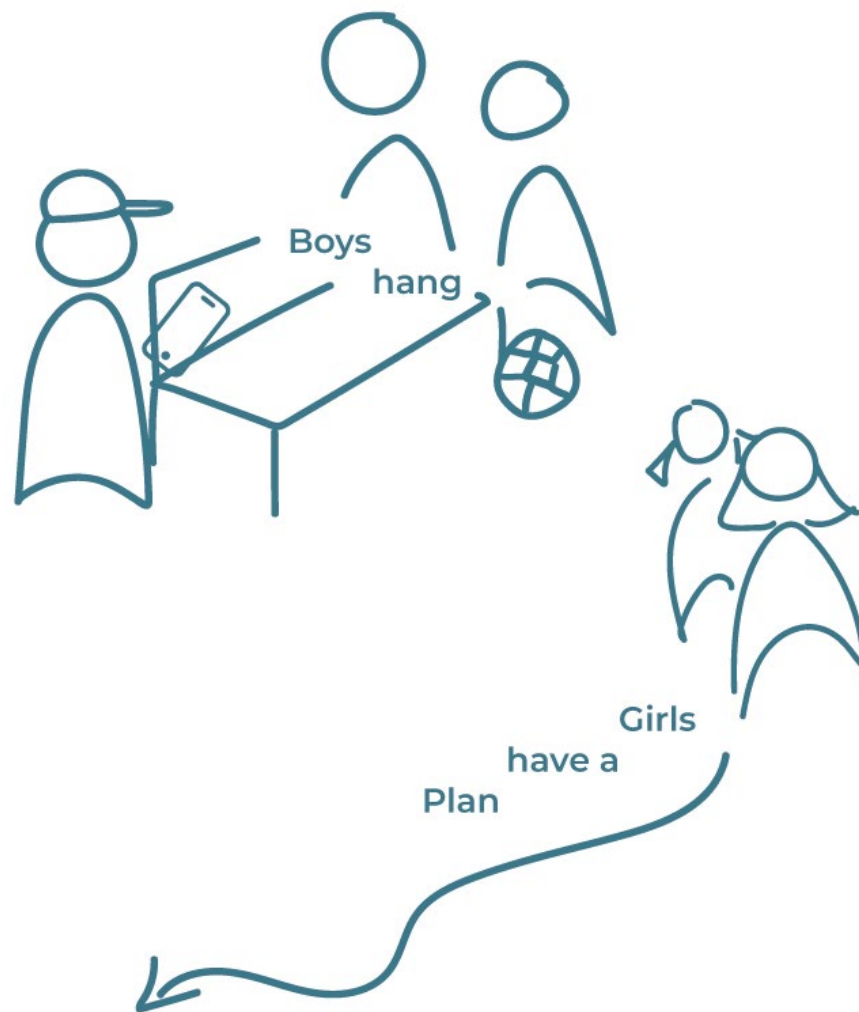
Youth workers highlighted in interviews (appendix B, activity IS1, appendix C) that modern youth navigate three distinct social personas: one at home, another on the streets, and a third online (Interview JB01). Social media was a recurrent theme in almost all interviews with youth workers. Not only as an extension of public space, but as a place on which young people learn what is considered normal and what is the highest attainable status.

*“And that’s the crazy thing. They (youth) have, say, two personalities, at home and on the street. It’s two different things. And another one online.”*

- Youth worker Rotterdam

This suggests that how youth experiences and engages in street harassment is probably affected by their social behaviour and fulfilling an important role in their lives, as they start to seek the public space as a way to be independent.





**Figure 20:** Differences in behaviour on the streets

## 4.2 Recognizing the issue

Statistics from the 2020/'21 research, elaborated on in chapter 2.1, reveal that 50% of all youth have experienced street harassment (CBS, 2022). Women aged 18 to 21 report this experience most frequently. Among men, 1 in 3 have faced street harassment, with younger age groups reporting it more often than older ones. The most common age to experience street harassment amongst boys is the age 12–13. Thus, focusing this project on youth aged 12–17 targets an age group known to first encounter these challenges.

But do young people recognize the problem? Recognition of the issue within one's own group or social environment is crucial—particularly for young men—to mobilize them as active participants in preventing street harassment (Berkowitz, 2002; Barthe, 2017). However, the latest Gender Equality Index (February 2025) indicates a concerning trend: young European men now show increased normalization of sexual violence. They tolerate violence against women more than older men—a reversal of previous patterns (Pointer, 2025).

Moreover, if street harassment is normalised by youth themselves and the people around them, the issue and social norm will not be addressed. This also becomes evident from interviews with youth workers and boas in Rotterdam. While some indicate that youth face street harassment on a daily basis, other youth workers in the same context indicate that it does not play a significant role (appendix B, activity IS1, appendix C). The lack of a universal definition of street harassment makes it difficult to recognise it as a problem and thus find appropriate prevention methods, fitting to a universal perspective of the problem. If youth perceives and recognizes certain behaviour as street harassment is relatively unknown and will be further unpacked within this project for youth in the context of Delft and Rotterdam.

## 4.3 Interventions among youths

Prevention-focused training programs with youth groups further highlight the nuanced and sensitive perceptions of the issue. Boys' acknowledgement of street harassment as "their problem" is shaped by sexism and racism. It depends not only on their stance toward feminist values but also on intersectional factors such as race and class. For example, Decker's 2024 research compared boys' responses to training programs across different neighborhoods in Paris, uncovering two distinct patterns:

1. Racial dynamics in underserved communities: Youth of color often viewed trainers as representatives of an oppressive system. Some deflected responsibility by attributing women's negative reactions to racism rather than their own behavior, saying, "It's just because I'm Moroccan that she reacts badly."
2. "White innocence" in affluent areas: White boys in wealthy neighborhoods often distanced themselves from the issue, associating street harassment with cultural "Others." This "stranger danger" narrative (Ahmed, 2017; Chenier, 2011) allowed them to express sympathy and solidarity with girls while avoiding personal accountability.

In both scenarios, youth deflected the issue, failing to see street harassment as their responsibility or a problem within their sphere of influence. As a result, assessing whether youth genuinely recognize street harassment as a problem remains a significant challenge. While such a study has not yet been performed for prevention programmes in Rotterdam or the Netherlands, the context appears to be similar: youth boas and youth workers in interviews in Rotterdam highlight cultural influences as an important factor in the perception of street harassment (appendix B, activity IS1, appendix C) :

*"Yes, I must say, it is a social problem, quite a big one (street harassment),*

*because many cultures are used to doing that and it was always accepted, ....*

*And Dutch young man.*

*I'm curious to know how it goes with them. How do they think about it, do they talk about it, because I don't see them very often in Rotterdam South."*

- Youth boa 02 Rotterdam.

If not recognized as a problem, prevention of the issue will likely not be effective. Current prevention methods seem to have largely been developed by experts without the involvement of youth themselves. As a result, these interventions reflect adults' understanding of "right" and "wrong" behaviour and do not fit the lived realities of youth, according to youth workers. Both current interventions as the new law criminalizing street harassment focus on what youth cannot do, a strategy largely ineffective for this target group and appears to fail to effectively counter street harassment for this group (Verbeek et al. [preprint]).

### Preventive conversations with harassers

In chapter 2.3.1, the Dutch law against street harassment was analysed and critiqued on its disciplinary approach. Through recent arrests it became apparent that youth is involved in street harassment in the role of harasser. Currently minors do not receive punishment for harassing someone but, in the case of street harassment, they get a preventative conversation. Training programs [Emancipator] as well as youth workers and officers [interviews] often indicate that when preventively talking to potential harassers, they use questions like: "What if someone would do this to your mom?" or "What if someone would approach your sister like this?". As they explained, their goal of these questions is to make boys empathise with women. Often triggering mixed, strong and complex reactions in men, from 'I would knock him down if he did that to my sister' to "I don't care at all" (appendix B, activity IS1 & IS3 , appendix C). From their experiences this technique is indeed effective in provoking an emotional response.

However I might argue that this reaction could be due to emotions other than empathy or understanding. The boys in this case could speak up because of deeper patterns of socio-cultural norms: men deeply feel that by society they are perceived as protectors of these women (their mom/sister) and see themselves as such (Young, 2003). Their emotional response could therefore be triggered by a deeply rooted protective response rather than an understanding of how women should be treated.

Based on the motivations behind the powerplay as highlighted in chapter 2.3, the question could also tap into the boy's own position of power being questioned, which can trigger a protection reflex that does not necessarily promote empathy, regardless of loved ones' gender. Therefore it could be questioned if this approach elicits empathy for the target or if there is a risk in such questions to enforce power structures. Despite being well-intentioned, the use of these questions as a preventative strategy could therefore lead to reinforcing traditional gender roles rather than challenging them.

To verify these assumptions they were discussed with Patrick Engels as an expert on the behaviour of boys within training programs and indicating he used these questions before. Patrick (appendix B, activity IS3) acknowledged that this could be an issue, and in response thought of better questions that would circumvent the described effect. He proposed to instead use questions that emphasise mutual respect and dignity, without taking the relationship as the starting point. A question such as "How would you want each person around you to feel in a public space?" focuses on the values of respect and safety for each individual.

All in all, the topic remains relatively understudied and more research is needed on the effectiveness of methods and interventions. This chapter has shown the need to revisit policies and approaches to address youth involvement in street harassment effectively.

The findings of the study by van Tuijl (tba) call for targeting peer groups, rather than individuals in prevention programs, due to influence of societal factors. Especially the study of Jewell & Brown (2013) showed that perceived social norms within a group can say a lot more about possible provoking behaviour than their personal attitudes. Dialogue is important to question the group norms and address the root causes of street harassment. It is important that this is done in a culture-sensitive way, considering the context specifics of the target population. Prevention efforts must address both gender-based violence and intersecting social dynamics of race and class to be effective (Dekker, 2024).

These insights are used to create sessions to discover the perspective of youth on street harassment. How youth participated in this project will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

To involve youth is important because:

### Key insights:

- Forming social norms, the public space is the third most important environment of their lives, where interaction with friends and strangers happen and they can withdraw from the sight of adults
- Youth experiences street harassment, but young men have increased normalisation of sexual violence and it is unclear if they recognize street harassment as a problem.
- Youth could deflect the issue of street harassment, both through the narrative of 'stranger danger' and racial dynamics
- Current prevention is developed without the involvement of youth and appears to fail to effectively counter street harassment.
- The use of questions like: "what if it were your mom?" as a preventative strategy can lead to reinforcing traditional gender roles rather than challenging them, thus working counterwise.
- The study by van Tuijl (tba) calls for targeting peer groups, rather than individuals in prevention programs.



## Creative sessions

### 5.1 Participants

#### 5.1.1 Safety plan

### 5.2 Session generation

### 5.3 Sensitizing

#### 5.3.1 Results sensitizing

#### 5.3.2 Limitations sensitizing

### 5.4 Creative session 1

#### 5.4.1 Results creative session 1

#### 5.4.2 Limitations creative session 1

### 5.5 Creative session 2

#### 5.5.1 Results creative session 2

#### 5.5.2 Limitations creative session 2

### 5.6 Conclusion creative sessions

Initial research and literature reveal that street harassment is influenced by a complex interplay of numerous contextual factors. Street harassment cannot be solved through a “single solution” but requires systemic change across all domains of the matrix of domination (structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal). While existing interventions challenge social norms, these efforts often fail to embed themselves across all power domains and frequently do not focus on the harasser.

To gain a further understanding of how youth perceive street harassment within their social environment, creative sessions were organized. The “creative sessions” as referred to in this report mean the two sessions that were designed and executed as will be elaborated on in this chapter. These activities took place in phase 3 of the process as can be seen in chapter 1.4.

**The goal of these sessions was to understand how youth perceive street harassment from the perspective of potential harassers, rather than focusing on personal experiences.** The creativity of the sessions can be found in the diverse exercises and materials that ask participants to give their input in various ways.

The sessions were organised with three different groups of youth with the aim to explore the group dynamics and factors that may influence engagement in street harassment. Due to the fluidity of roles people have in different contexts, as highlighted in chapter 2.1.2, no separation was made between boys & girls or harassers & targets. Bringing different groups of youth together in these creative sessions, created the opportunity to observe group dynamics that would have remained hidden in individual interviews.

This chapter will elaborate on how the sessions were organised, designed and executed. The next chapter will dive further into the analysis and insights of these sessions.

## 5.1 Participants

The creative sessions were organised in collaboration with different partners, as elaborated on in chapter 1.2.1. They were held with three different groups:

- 6 youths of 14-17, at a youth hub in Bloemhof, Rotterdam (2 girls, 4 boys)
- 13 pupils in 3 Vwo, at a high school in Delft (5 girls, 8 boys)
- 7 pupils in 3 Havo, at a high school in Delft, (3 girls, 4 boys)

Participants in Rotterdam were recruited by the youth worker working at the youth hub. To ensure effective communication about the creative sessions, relationships with youth workers were established beforehand, and time was spent building trust (see chapter 1.4). A flyer (figure 21) with detailed session plans was sent to the youth workers to inform them and youth workers were consulted on the design and approach (appendix B, activity IY1, IY2, OBH). The participants were contacted through already existing Whatsapp groups of the youth hubs via the youth worker. Full responsibility for collecting participants was taken up by the youth worker. Through collaboration with schools/organisations that were already closely involved with the participants, a familiar environment was created for them. The youth worker in Bloemhof and the teacher in Delft were also actively present in the sessions, and seen as a trusted adult.

In this research both working with schools and youth hubs could be compared as well as two culturally different neighbourhoods. The cultural diversity in Delft was a lot lower than in Bloemhof (table 2).

Preferably, more groups from different neighbourhoods in Rotterdam would have participated. However, due to the limited timeframe, existing collaborations and relations built were selected and used for this graduation project.

**Table 2:** Participants cultural background

| Group                 | Parents Dutch or partly Dutch                                | Parents non-Dutch                       |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Bloemhof              | 1 Marokkaans-Nederlands                                      | 3 Marokkaans, 2 Turks, 1 Turks-Albanees |
| Delft group Vwo (DP)  | 4 Nederlands   | 1 Marokkaans, 1 Turks, 1 Egyptisch      |
| Delft group Havo (DH) | 9 Nederlands, 1 Nederlands-Grieks, 1 Nederlands-Indonesisch, | 1 Russisch                              |



While working with youth in Bloemhof provides valuable insights about life in the city of Rotterdam, it does not fully represent the experiences of youth across the entire city. To maintain clarity and transparency, Bloemhof is used as the reference point for Rotterdam throughout this project. Within the collaboration in Delft, participants were not from specific neighbourhoods. Therefore, there is disparity in naming these groups throughout the report, focusing on just one neighbourhood in Rotterdam in relation to an entire city, Delft.

### [Reflective thought]

To develop a relationship with both youth workers and youth to organise the sessions proved to be much more difficult than previously thought. Not only was youth often unexpectedly absent, but youth workers also frequently did not respond to emails, apps or phone calls. Only when I physically showed up in front of them, they suddenly replied enthusiastically: “oh yes, I was going to call some more youth for you! Let me do that right now. How many do you want to talk to?”

This delay in the process meant that it took so much time to mobilise 1 youth hub that collaborations with other youth hubs were not feasible anymore. In chapter 6.2, there will be further elaboration on the gatekeeper function that youth workers fulfill, which I think hugely impacts this establishing of contact. The dynamic way of working of the youth hub will be elaborated on in chapter 9.

## 5.1.1 Safety plan

The safety of participants is a vital aspect in doing research on a sensitive topic with a sensitive target group, such as under-age youth. To ensure the safety of participants, a safety plan was created beforehand and HREC approval was obtained.

The topic of street harassment in general, might be triggering past negative experiences for some participants. The presence of multiple responsible adults throughout the whole process provided an environment with more (emotional) safety both for the participants and the researchers themselves. The sessions were conducted with multiple adults present:



Figure 21: Whatsapp flyer made to communicate the sessions to youth workers

- Facilitator: researcher/designer (in all sessions this was me)
- Observer: researcher (Charlotte & Juliëtte when Charlotte was absent)
- Trusted adult: a youth worker in Bloemhof and another teacher from the school in Delft

At the start of the session the scene was set and ground safety rules explained (appendix G). This involved emphasizing the importance of participants' opinions and ideas, ensuring that all input would be received by the researchers without judgment. Moreover, they were able to take a time-out and get immediate support from a trusted adult if needed.

Street harassment is generally associated with youth with a migration background (Lieber, 2021). To limit the risk of making participants feel uneasy, the reason behind the behavior and how this behaviour can

be transformed were emphasized. The topic of street harassment was approached through its potential root causes, to prevent blaming any individual. This was done using scenarios and statements that participants can agree or disagree on, rather than speaking from their own experience. However, their lived experience will be reflected in their answers and opinions.

To ensure the right tone for the sessions, ethics and child & youth participation experts, as well as with youth workers, were extensively consulted (appendix B, activity IE2, IE3, ID3, ID4, ID5, ID6, ID8, IY1, IY2). Meanwhile, over the two-month time span, weekly contact was made with the participants by being present in the environment of the sessions, thus building low-threshold relationships before the start of research. The importance of building this initial trust came forward in the research by Aussems et al. (2020). Especially when working with youth, it is important to know them to find the right tone for discussing a topic. One youth officer expressed (interview IS1):

***“The tone makes the music. Everyone knows that, but in this profession, that is the most important thing there is.”***

- Youth boia in Rotterdam

The participants, who were mostly under the age of 16, received an informed consent form to give permission to participate. Youth under the age of 16 additionally needed approval from a parent or legal guardian. Within this informed consent form, numerous other post-participation care helplines were referred to, such as the Alles Oke support chat and to the Kindertelefoon.

To give room for group building and opening up a space for getting things off their chest if necessary, time was created to have food together after each session. A debrief was held with all facilitators of the session to reflect on first results and to discuss the safety.

#### [Reflective thought]

Despite being an independent discussion leader at the school, my connection with the participants may have had an influence on the sessions, both positive and negative. At least I know that some girls in the evaluation phase came to help me test prototypes because they knew me. However, I don't really know how participants experienced the power relations: were for example my duties to follow the school's rules influencing the sessions?

One group in Delft (DH), did not appear motivated to contribute within the session. My relationship with this group had prior history because they all didn't turn up for the first compulsory lesson and therefore got detention. This relationship may have influenced their motivation to participate in the session. This was also the only session where there was no trusted adult present other than the facilitator (me as their teacher) and the second researcher (unknown to the participants).

Another aspect that I would like to revise is that all persons who were in facilitating roles, except for the youth worker in Bloemhof, were women. Preferably that would have been more diverse since research shows that you feel more at ease with people that look like you (appendix B, activity T2) (Rutgers, n.d.).

## 5.2 Session generation

In order to put the sessions together, different design criteria are addressed in the creation of these sessions (appendix E). The design process shows how numerous activities influenced the way the sessions were organised. For example, interviews with experts like (social) designers (figure 22; appendix B, activity ID1, ID7, DDW1) and tools for conversation from lessons and workshops (appendix B, activity DDW3, E5, T1, OZ, OSC). The sessions were designed with knowledge from the design field, and incorporated multiple methods for creative facilitation (Heijne & Van Der Meer, 2019). All these insights were combined to iterate on the sessions, as can be seen in figure 23. This section will address each element of the sessions, showing how it was conducted and the results that are found.

The creative sessions as referred to in this report consisted of three elements:

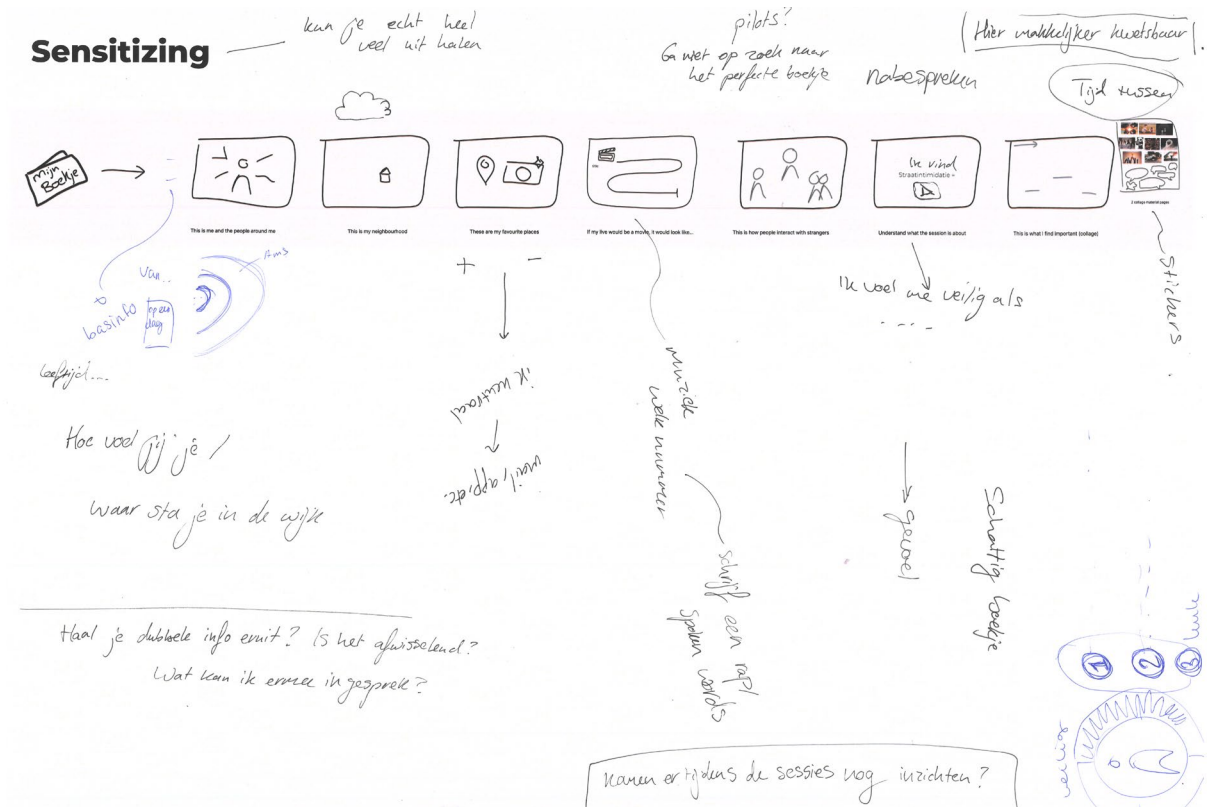
- Sensitizing:  
Priming to start thinking and reflecting on the topic
- Session 1:  
What is street harassment according to youth and where are the boundaries?
- Session 2:  
What interventions can we create within the context?

Each element will be elaborated on, showing the choices for its design and the results of the sessions. All the findings and results will be discussed in chapter 6.

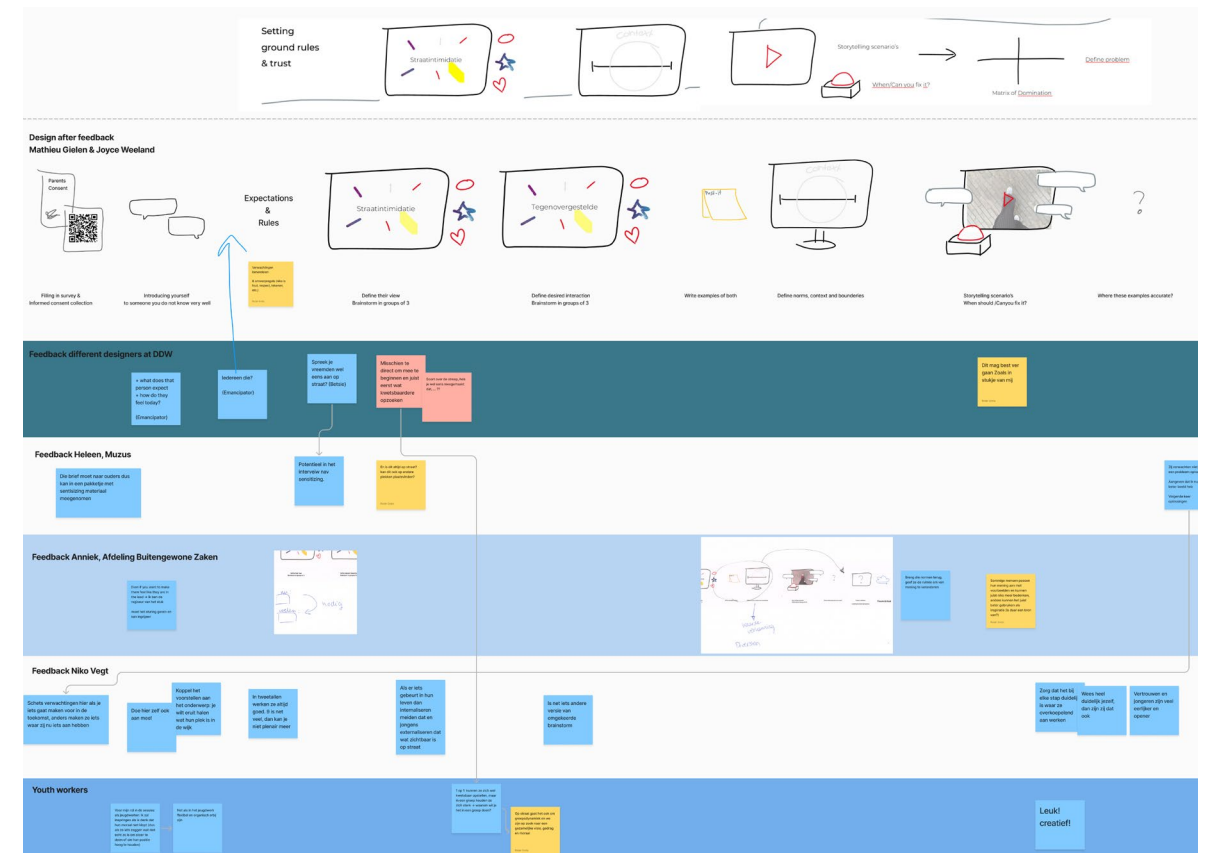
## 5.3 Sensitizing

The sensitizing booklets were given to the participants a week in advance. The goal was to give them an assignment to start thinking about the topic, thus not directly to collect data for insights. In the booklet both words and images have been selected to trigger associations. Visual triggers were deliberately selected to be different: positive, negative, different visual styles and objects. Some triggers were chosen to not be ambiguous, so that the participants could start by choosing recognizable stimuli that relate directly to their context (for example feyenoord soccer player) (Sanders & Stappers, 2013).

**Figure 22:** Printed sheet with the sessions design for expert input (appendix B, activity ID7)



**Figure 23:** All feedback from experts underneath the different steps, iterating on the design for the sessions



Each envelope contained the booklet, two sticker sheets, and the consent form which they had to give to their parents. The booklet was designed with 7 exercises that indicated it could be executed over 5 days, each day approximately 10 minutes.



Figure 25: The sensitizing booklet

### 5.3.1 Results sensitizing

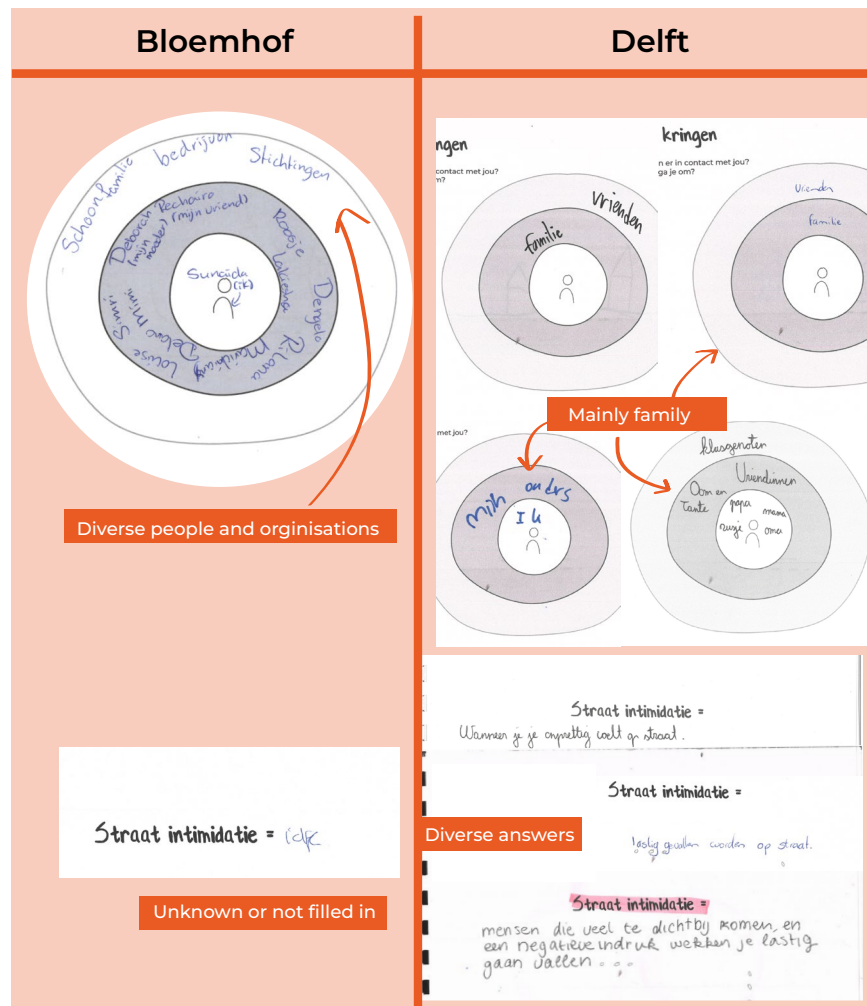
While the sensitizing booklets were not meant as research data, but for the participants to start thinking about the topic, the results did give us a first feeling of the participants' understanding of street harassment and their personality. At the beginning of session 1, each participant was briefly asked some individual questions about their booklet, while occupied with filling in a survey. The questions were asked to show our interest in their work and make personal contact. The results of the booklets provide too little data to draw concrete conclusions, since most booklets were not, or not completely filled out. However, assumptions that we gained based on the booklets were taken into account in the second session and verbally confirmed therein.

- From our first impressions of the booklets and during session 1:
- » Participants in Delft seemed to have a smaller closer circle of people around them than in Bloemhof, where they wrote down more contacts within their circles and more variety of friends, familie and even strangers, as highlighted in figure 26. Therefore it could be assumed that participants in Bloemhof have more interactions with people in the neighbourhood.
  - » As can be seen in figure 27, participants in Delft drew their neighbourhood mostly limited to their house/street, even sending a picture from the neighbourhood from inside. Bloemhof included more social aspects like eating places and shops. This could indicate that their perception or interaction with their neighbourhood is different.

|             |   |   |  |  |   |  |  |   |
|-------------|---|---|--|--|---|--|--|---|
| Aim of page | <div>Welkom!!<br/>Voor het start van de sensibiliserende sessie en de sensibiliserende booklet. Het is belangrijk dat je weet wat de bedoeling is van de booklet. Het is belangrijk dat je weet wat de bedoeling is van de booklet. Het is belangrijk dat je weet wat de bedoeling is van de booklet.</div> | <div>Dit ben ik:<br/>Schrijf de naam van je naam en wat je het leukst doet.</div> | <div>Mijn kringen<br/>Wie staan er in contact met jou?</div> | <div>Dit is mijn buurt<br/>Wat is er allemaal in jouw buurt?</div> | <div>Hier wel, daar niet<br/>Maak teken van plaatsen in de buurt waar je het leuk vindt en waar je het niet leuk vindt.</div> | <div>Ewa stranger!<br/>Hoe ga je om met mensen die je niet kent?</div> | <div>Huh, straat weet?<br/>Wat ga je doen in de straat? Wat ga je doen in de straat?</div> | <div>Dit vind ik belangrijk<br/>Wat vind jij belangrijk in de buurt? Wat vind jij belangrijk in de buurt?</div> |
|             | Day 0:<br>Providing information about the research & booklet  | Day 1:<br>Who are you?<br>Easy start  | Day 1:<br>Who are you in contact with?                       | Day 2:<br>What do you define as your area/neighbourhood?           | Day 3:<br>Thinking about the good and the bad   | Day 4:<br>How do you interact on the street                            | Day 4:<br>Introduction to the problem  | Day 5:<br>Start thinking about your personal values   |

Figure 24: The sensitizing booklet



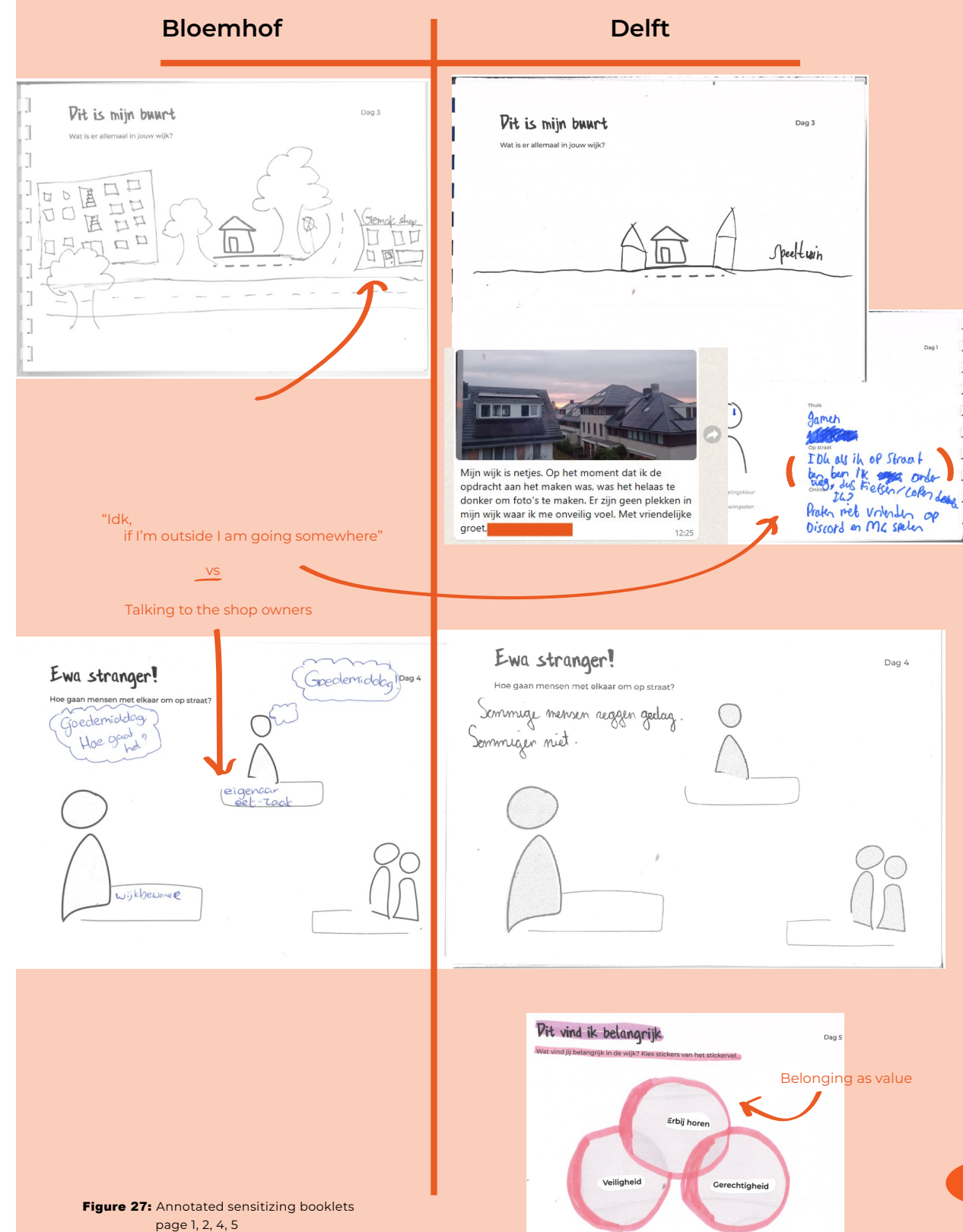


**Figure 26:** Annotated sensitizing booklet page 3, 6 & 7

- » Both groups wrote down different definitions of street harassment and also defined things as street harassment outside of the definition by law or literature, as can be seen in figure 26. This could indicate that they either do not have a lot of knowledge of the topic or that their perception of the topic is broader.

### 5.3.2 Limitations sensitizing

Distributing and collecting the booklets from participants prior to the session proved challenging. Nevertheless, the initial contact established during this process contributed positively to the sessions' overall quality. Future implementations should allocate sufficient time for the distribution and retrieval of booklets to ensure effective preparation.



**Figure 27:** Annotated sensitizing booklets  
page 1, 2, 4, 5



## 5.4 Creative session 1

The aim of the first session is to discuss the topic of street harassment and the factors that influence the behaviour in an engaging way. The aim of different elements from the session can be found in figure 30.



**Figure 28:** Participants in the session in Rotterdam (left) and Delft (right)

For the creation of the “Stop op de knop” video's three different scenario scripts were written based on victim experiences from youth from initial research activities (Stop straatintimidatie, n.d.). These three scenarios were:



**Video 1:** Cycling, group following, unclear if target is girl or boy



Video 2: Sitting  
(public transport),  
distance towards  
strangers, freeze  
or flight, touch



**Video 3: Walking / stalking, within group comments, boundaries given, physical violence**



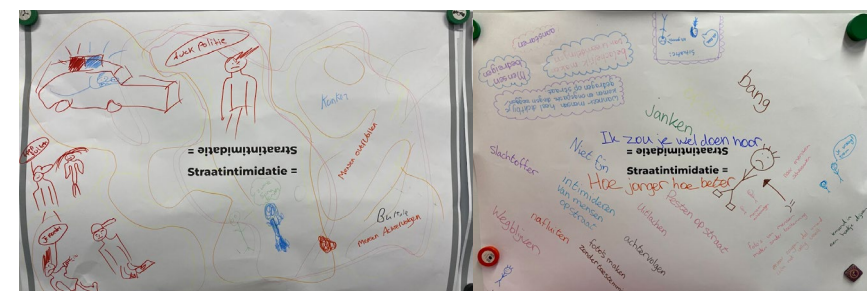
The full storyboards of the videos can be found in appendix F.

All videos were filmed and created from the perspective of the harasser to open up conversations about the behaviour of the harasser rather than feelings of a target. The script was given to three guys (Dutch, Croatian and Moroccan, aged 17) who did the voice-over with their own interpretation of the script.

### 5.4.1 Results session 1

The first sessions created a big amount of rich data of which some direct insights will be highlighted here. A full overview of the insights can be found in appendix H and will be examined in the next chapter. Some results that stood out were:

- » Participants have a broad interpretation of what is considered street harassment and many different examples were written down (figure 29). Also their perspectives were sometimes different from our initial interpretation. For example, participants drew a police car. However they did not see the police as enforcers of public order, nor did they perceive them as intimidating. Participants explained that “they” (youth) could intimidate police if they would scream swear words at them (figure 29), indicating that police were the target of street harassment.



**Figure 29:** brainstormed sheet 1: street harassment =  
(created by group boys in Bloemhof (left) and girls in Delft (right))

- » The results show that boundaries for youth are unclear, since they indicate often within groups behaviour is accepted, that could be considered street harassment. They indicate it is very dependent on the situation and different actors. However, they are also questioning what should be accepted. Often disagreeing but no one having a “correct” answer or being sure about their answers.

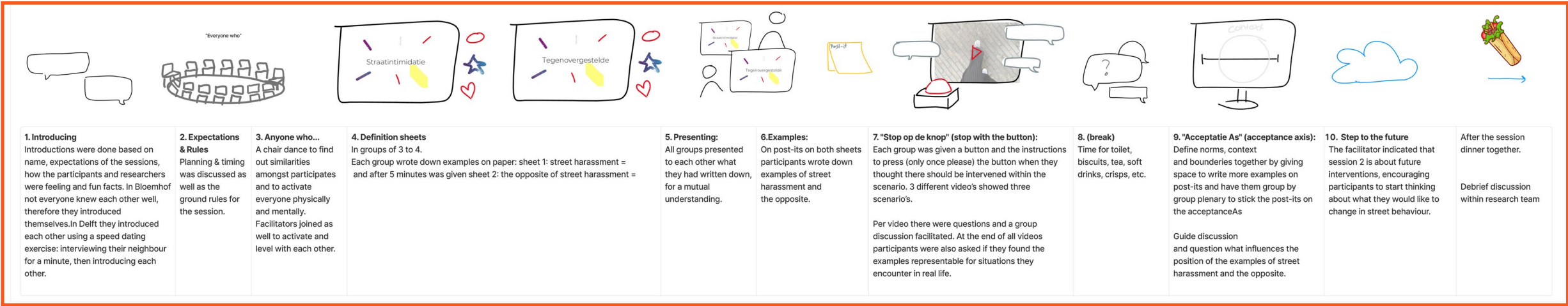


Figure 30: The steps of creative session 1

Participant (boy) in Bloemhof:

*"Straatintimidatie kan ook gewoon als vrienden.  
Zeg maar ik kan hem uit uitschelden,  
maar het is niet persoonlijk ofzo,  
dus het is niet dat ik hem buiten sluit, ook al is het  
een grote groep  
en we vuren één iemand zeg maar."*

*"Street harassment can also just be done as friends.  
Say I can scold him,  
but it's not personal or anything,  
so it's not like I'm shutting him out, even though it's  
a big group and we're firing one person so to say"*

» Snapchat is mentioned as a recurring theme and way of getting in contact with someone: both positive and negative. Youth explained that if you want to get in touch, you ask someone's "snap", but it is also often asked as a challenge, under group pressure.

» Delft wrote a majority of examples of street harassment directed to women, where Bloemhof wrote more examples concerning racism. With the participants in Bloemhof being more culturally diverse, this could indicate that racism plays a more important role in their daily life and thus their comments reflect that (figure 33,34,35,36).

Table 3: Post-its with sexist and racist examples on the definition sheets

| Examples addressing..  | Bloemhof | Delft |    |
|--|----------|-------|----|
|  |          | DP    | DH |
| Sexism (Gay included): directed towards women and minorities | 7        | 12    | 18 |
| Racism: directed towards culture and skin colour             | 10       | 1     |    |
| Other  | 6        | 6     | 15 |



» For the “stop op de knop” exercise no overall difference was found between what guys and girls between when an intervention had to be made. In Delft, it was mostly the girls who pressed at the very first words. However in Bloemhof this was the other way around. Also the youth worker in Bloemhof pointed out that it was interesting how quickly the boys pressed the button.

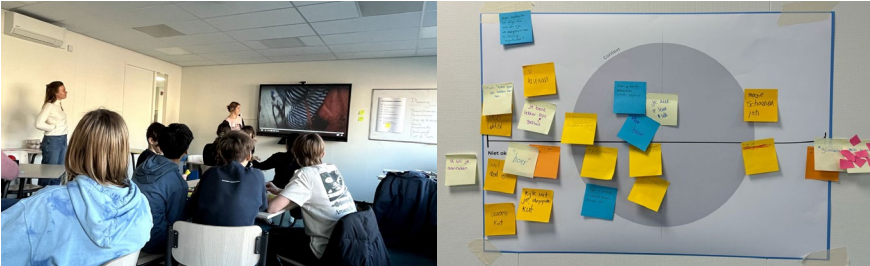


Figure 31: Watching the video's during “stop op de knop” (left) and the “Acceptatie As”(right)

» Also in the examples written down on the acceptance axis no common themes or differences could be discovered in the answers by girls compared to boys. The difference could be seen by giving girls a different colour post-it than guys Light yellow is girls, orange is guys, blue is researchers notes during discussion in the session).

» Youth in session DP wrote down that “being blind” was the opposite of street harassment and in session DH participants wrote down “not talking” multiple times as a solution in the ideal world. This points towards avoidance strategies perceived as a solution for youth.



Figure 32: The dream world future scenario with written on it: “Saying nothing”

» In one of the sessions in Delft a boy got frustrated that the harassers in the videos were: “always moroccans”. Despite our attempt to keep the videos neutral and show a diverse range of voices yet no faces, it was unpleasant that the participant experienced the videos as such. His response clearly shows how deeply embedded racism is within the topic and could indicate behaviour as found in the earlier mentioned paper ‘how boys deflect’ (Decker,2024).

» In the survey filled in by participants, 44% indicated that they have performed street harassment/ been a harasser in the last two months. From the boys this was 65% of the participants. This is the case both in Delft and Bloemhof (table 4).

Table 4: Results from the survey how many participants indicated harassing someone

| Group                 | Boys who indicated to have performed street harassment | Girls who indicated to have performed street harassment | Most common forms of the behaviour                                 |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| Bloemhof              | 2/5  | 0/2   | nastaren (2), filmen (2), naroeppen (1)                            |
| Delft group Vwo (DP)  | 6/8  | 1/5   | nastaren (6), filmen (2), naroeppen (2)                            |
| Delft group Havo (DH) | 3/4  | 0/3   | Nastaren (3), filmen (1), naroeppen (1), volgen (1), insluiten (1) |

[Reflective thought]

The boy’s response to having “always moroccans” in the videos raises the question if such videos can be racism and sexism neutral? We tried to not frame anyone as a harasser, by filming “from the eyes of” the harassers. However the voices that you use, the places where you film, all have an influence on how youth perceives the videos.

Next to the participant factually being incorrect (the videos did not all contain Moroccans, 1 of the 3 boys who did the voiceovers had a Moroccan background), it was unpleasant that he experienced this. Could and should I as designer have done something different to prevent this from happening?

Or is looking for this tension also sometimes necessary to open up discussions about taboo topics and address themes such as racism? In my opinion we showed a diverse range of diversity and not all emotional responses on the topic could and should be denied, while it should be taken into account consciously. It is thus important to stay mindful of to what extent we can permit ourselves to involve our participants into that tension.





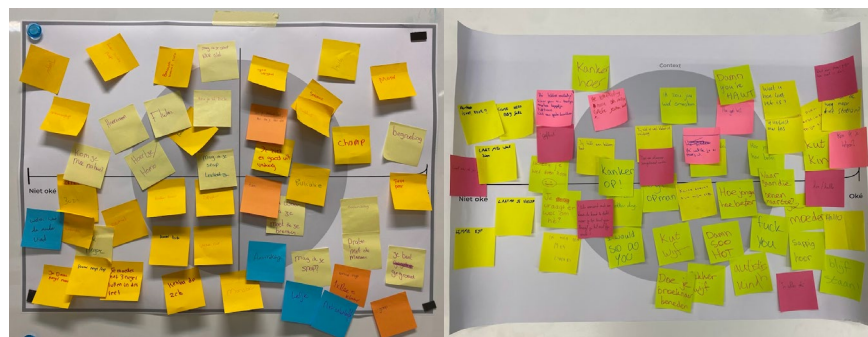


## 5.4.2 Limitations creative session 1

Limitations from the first session were:

- » Conceptualizing what street harassment is proved to be hard for some participants (especially in Bloemhof). Writing examples helped to formulate their thoughts, however some showed resistance and facilitators had to help them write things down. While it was emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers, participants in Bloemhof were still reluctant to present what they wrote down which could have been due to the feeling that the conceptualization is either right or wrong
- » On the post-it's with examples, non-verbal forms of street harassment were largely missing while especially some girls did note it down during the conceptualization exercise. This could be explained by the instruction of the facilitator to write down examples of what people can say to each other on the street. This could be adapted to better capture also non verbal forms of harassment. However, in the 'Stop op de knop' exercise video 2, participants very clearly indicated that any form of physical touch is definitely crossing lines and for words the boundaries are more unclear, thus perhaps the discussion on words was more insightful for this reason.
- » We felt that participants were just filling "The Acceptance axis" out, influenced by where there was available space rather than consciously paying more attention to how bad something was or why (figure 37) (This became apparent in the conversation about the post-its where people kept saying that it needed to be more to the left or right).
- » In the session there was a majority of boys compared to the two girls that showed up, which impacted the group dynamics.

The take-aways from the limitations will be discussed in more depth in chapter 9.1



**Figure 37:** The Acceptation Axis with post-its distributed over the sheet from Bloemhof (left) and Delft (DP) (right)

## 5.5 Creative session 2

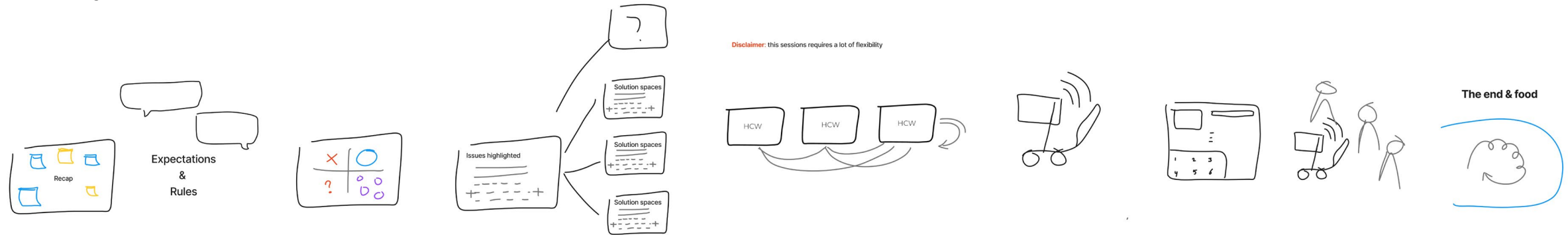
The aim of the second session was to create interventions within the context to reveal where youth sees possibilities to challenge or change the status quo. Therefore civic prototyping was used: experimenting with creative solutions to improve the world around us. These created prototypes are no direct solution, but a representation of the deeper values of the participants (Jaskiewicz, 2021; appendix B, activity ID2).

The materials present in the second session were selected to consist of both ambiguous and well known items and were accessible and approachable, yet not obstructive or steering. Based on theory of convivial toolbox (Sanders & Stappers, 2013) and activities and expert interviews (as mentioned at the start of this chapter) the session consisted of the elements as can be seen in figure 39.

The preparation for the second session began with an analysis of insights gained from the first session (appendix B, activity A2). This analysis resulted in the creation of an analysis sheet containing key statements (figure 40). These statements were created to verify insights with participants in the second session (step 3). Five primary insights were presented on separate pieces of paper, formatted to be answered as either true or false. Additionally, potential design challenges were noted alongside these statements to provide a foundation for further exploration during the session.

For the civic prototyping exercise, two objects were chosen: a backpack and a vehicle. As materials could never be entirely neutral, the objects and materials were deliberately chosen to align with the public environments of Delft and Rotterdam and steer to avoid cliché designs. This conscious decision ensured that the prototyping would fit the context while giving the freedom to come up with new functions and meaning for the objects. A backpack and vehicle were selected because they are common in public spaces and familiar to youth, offering a relatable starting point for ideation, yet leaving enough space for imagination. To make the prototyping process more accessible, these objects were assigned to groups, a method informed by the expertise of Tomasz Jaśkiewicz (appendix B, activity ID2).



**Figure 39:** Creative session 2**1. Recap**

We asked what they remembered from last session and if there is anything they would still like to add.

**2. Expectations & Rules**

Planning & timing was discussed and the ground rules for the session were repeated.

**3. Analysis sheet**

Insights from session 1 were shown as statements. With participants analysis statements were moved and discussed to verify the insights and added statements or insights where necessary.

**3. Problem definition**

Through dot voting (Heijne & Van Der Meer, 2019) the most important finding to focus on for the session was chosen.

**4. Ideating**

In groups of 2 to 4 a rotating brainstorm was done of ideas to fix parts of the problem using the "How might we?" method (Van Boeijen et al., 2014)

**5. Civic prototyping**

Each group was given an object from the public space which they had to make an intervention with.

**6. Presenting**

All groups created a poster about their idea, further thinking of its implications. The groups presented to each other what they had made, why and how it would intervene in street harassment

After the session dinner together.

Debrief discussion within research team

## 5.5.1 Results session 2

Some results that stood out will be highlighted here. A full overview of the insights can be found in appendix H and will be examined in the next chapter.

- » Discussing the insights from the first session further, showed overlap between bullying behaviour and street harassment. Regarding the insight "street harassment is being excluded, as an individual or as a group", participants indicate sometimes comments were made to make a joke of each other:

Researcher: "So it's not really to exclude [from the group], but as a joke?"

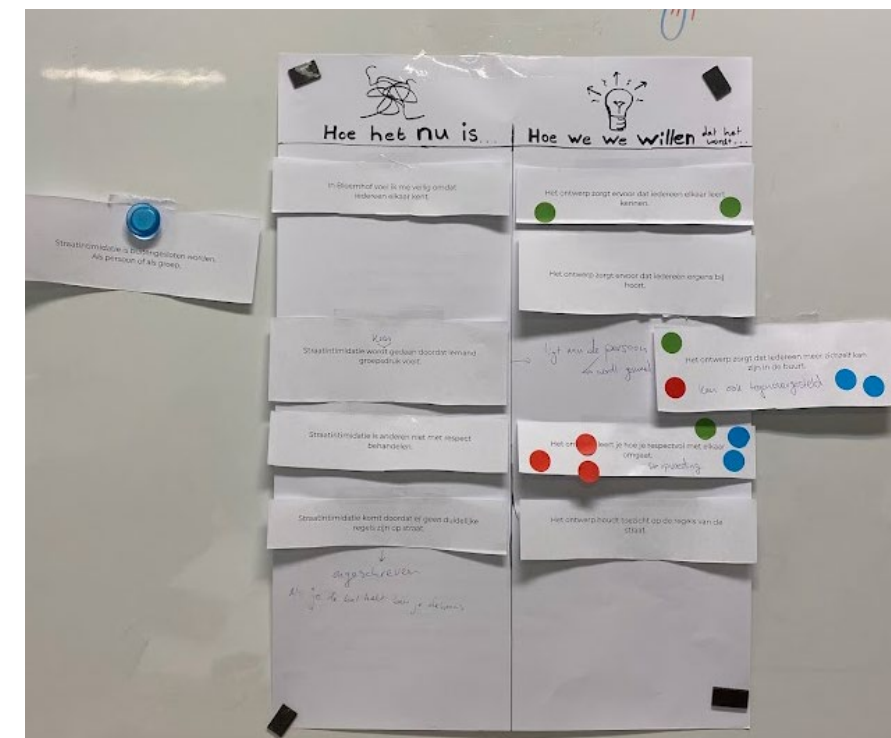
Boy 1: "It's just as a joke."

Boy 2: "Yes, I just think that one is insecure. He wants to show himself."

- » Street harassment is not only performed because of group pressure but participants expressed it comes from within the person themselves. Regarding the statement "Street harassment is done because someone feels peer pressure", they expressed:

Researcher: "And that's not because of the group, you say?"

Boy 1: "Both. It could be because of the group. It can't be down to the group either. Depends on whether that [target] is fired [bullied/harassed] a lot."

**Figure 40:** Analysis sheet discussed with participants and problem to focus on dot voted

Boy 1:

"But sometimes you're just so busy doing it yourself, it's not because of peer pressure. Then they are just like that themselves."

- » Participants do not see the streets as a place where rules exist, but it is more about respect. They explained this in response to the statement card “street harassment is because there are no clear rules on the street”.

Researcher: “*Who actually makes the rules for the streets?*”

Boy 2: “*I think the municipality?*” [Boy 1&2 laugh]

- » Participants collaboratively disagreed that street harassment was about status, voting red on this statement card. However later in the session explained that you respect someone who has status thus will not harass for that reason which could contribute to prevention. This was an interesting contradiction within their own opinion.



Figure 41: Creative session 2 in Bloemhof: ideation (top) and statement cards (bottom)

Two design directions were chosen to focus on based upon the dot-voting on the statements: the design teaches you how to treat each other respectfully (artifact 1) & the design allows everyone to be more themselves in the neighbourhood (artifact 2). Through the process as described in figure X, the following two artifacts were created (step 5):



Figure 42: Artifact made by boys

Artifact 1 as explained by participant:

Boy 1: *Look if you have an Audi, a good Audi, we [youth] will look at it. We look from: he how he got that Audi. Get it. So he's going to recognise us, going to explain to us how he got that Audi, then we are going to respect him. For his hard work, you understand. And that's also how we learn to give respect. [laughs]*

Researcher: *So the Audi is going to ensure respect?*

Boy 1: *Yes. And for status too. Because he works hard for it. Yeah, then you respect him.*

*If the person in that car says of uh, do your best? Get along, then you do learn that from someone, because that person has an Audi and you don't, so he does know.*

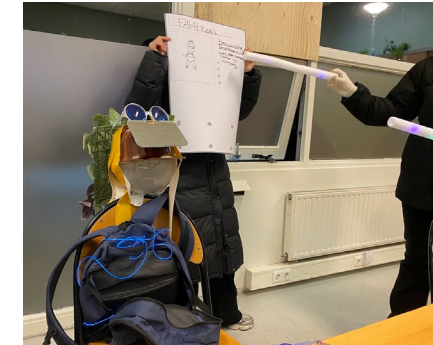


Figure 43: Artifact made by girls

Artifact 2 as explained by participant:

Girl 1: *This is Fatih zollo and that is a forest ranger to watch people how they behave because some people are just Wajong and... To watch what he all, what these people do. Respect or disrespect. Just saying like that.*

*Those glasses are like that, that can see who, who, what when they are going to start, say hitting people and so with that feeling. You can learn that feeling from people. And these lights are of his clothes.*

*and this [mirror] is just to show people uhm yes...Yes, themselves how they are ugly say.*

*He is around to see how people are doing and he's helping at the same time. Yes, and this is just Wajong. Because people are stupid, have disabilities and so on.*

## 5.5.2 Limitations creative session 2

In Delft, the second session was voluntary to participate in given the limited time in classes. Despite not expecting many youth to show up, several had indicated they would drop by, especially if snacks were available. However, no one showed up for the session. Two girls did come later to give further feedback and therefore steps 2 and 3 (the analysis) from the second session could still be discussed with them. Important to mention here is the difference in remuneration participants received for the sessions: in Bloemhof 15 euros per session (1,5 h), but in Delft it was not possible to give participants vouchers for their participation because of the cooperation with the school.

But in Bloemhof, too, attendance was a struggle. The second session, youth arrived 45 minutes late, making the session more rushed than planned. Also, 1 participant quietly left the group halfway through the session to watch football in the room next door.

The take-aways from the limitations will be discussed in more depth in chapter 9.1

### [Reflective thought]

Why did the second sessions not work as I had planned? I felt a lot of hesitation with youth, not entirely sure where it came from: my own rush because we did not start as planned? Or could there be more behind it?

Was it maybe that youth felt like they were approached for the topic since they perceived the problem? Sometimes participants referred to “WE just do XYZ because of XYZ”, which might indicate that they thought they were seen as harassers. If they have felt like I was trying to tell them how to behave, it is understandable that they did not understand why they had to build something to counter the problem. Did I ask the problem to fix itself?

Or is it because I became so used to doing creative sessions with other design students, that a group without the intrinsic motivation to create things was very different? Did I struggle to convey the assignments perhaps? The answer of probably a combination of factors and even though it did not go as planned, it was an important learning moment for me.

## 5.6 Conclusion creative sessions

This chapter has shown how the creative sessions provided rich data on youths' perspective on street harassment. Insights on two different fronts emerge from the results of the creative sessions:

Firstly, the results show insights on how researchers interact with youth, especially within youth hubs. The analysis in the next chapter will elaborate on the understanding of the dynamics between youth, youth workers and ‘the system’: government agencies, researchers and outsiders.

Secondly, their explanations on street harassment show overlap with group dynamics among youth, connecting their behavioural structures to street harassment. Insights on youth dynamics within the creative sessions would probably not have been visible in for example individual interviews, thus showing the value of the creative sessions as a means of research.

How the group dynamics and results link with other research will be elaborated on in the next chapter, that connects all the results through an analysis of the data.

After all sessions were completed, regular presence at the youth hub and school was maintained and insights linked back to offer further participation where youth were open and willing to invest more time in the project, as will be elaborated on in chapter 7.4



## **Connecting all results**

- 6.1 Analysis approach
- 6.2 Insights on approach youth participation
- 6.3 Connection of identity exploration
- 6.4 How youth engages in street harassment
- 6.5 Conclusion analysis



To connect insights and results across different levels of the system and design hurricane, data immersion was important to integrate all insights for a deeper understanding of the system (Sanders & Stappers, 2013; Jones, 2014).

This chapter elaborates on the conclusions drawn from the results as described in the last chapter and shown in appendix H.

Within this chapter insights on two different fronts emerge from the analysis of the creative sessions:

Youth participation and the approach of researchers  
 Youths development and their behaviour  
 Youths' opinion on street harassment.

This chapter will show how for youth, the street is both a breathing space, a place to explore one's identity, but also a place where they need to protect themselves from dangerous situations.

Finally, this analysis led to the design objective for the developed concept, that will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

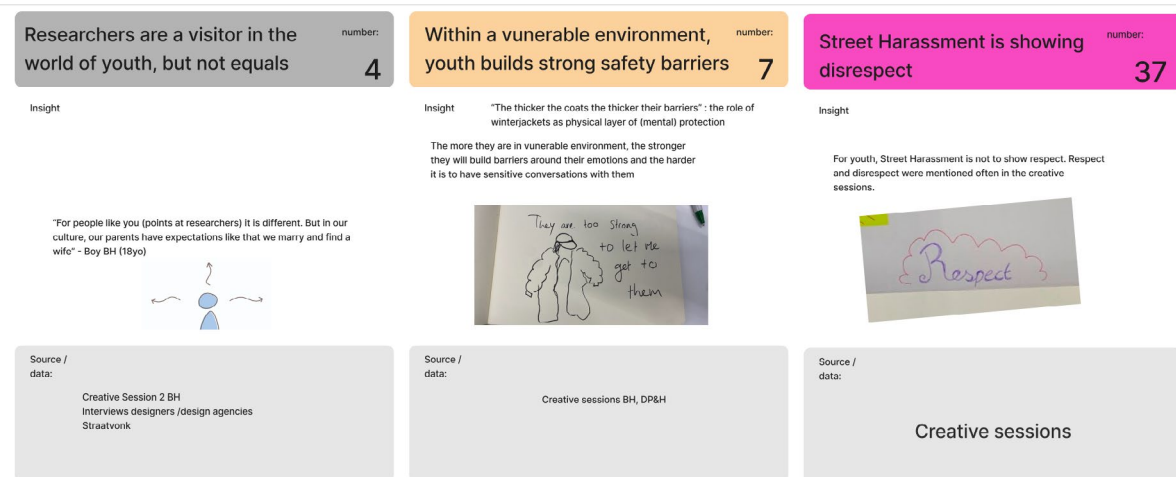




## 6.1 Analysis approach

The analysis was conducted by consolidating findings from creative sessions and earlier research into context mapping cards (see figure 44). Context mapping is an effective method for understanding complex contexts collaboratively and combining different forms of insights onto a wall (quotes, observations, drawings, etc.) (Sanders & Stappers, 2013). The printed context cards were used in physical collaborative clustering and mapping sessions (appendix B, activity A4, A5, A6). Additional blank cards were provided to capture reflective insights during these activities. Within this project it was found to be a useful tool to collaboratively connect both continuously and unconsciously gathered insights and create an overview of the complexity.

The context mapping cards were created using the method of reflexive analysis, adhering to its guidelines through immersion in raw data, systematic tagging, creating cards with one insight each, and multiple iterations of reflection (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Byrne, 2021). This method justifies the analysis emphasizing the researchers self-awareness and critical reflection. The analysis was further validated by consulting youth and experts during phase 4 (chapter 1.4) (appendix B, activity A4, A6) (Schon, 2008). Additionally, the credibility of the method is reinforced by the three separate clustering activities, in which different collaborations extracted the same patterns and drew the same conclusions. The analysis was further supported by literature that will be elaborated on within this chapter.



**Figure 44:** Example of insights on context mapping cards with their corresponding cluster colour (figure 45)

**Figure 45:** Clustering physical within different settings

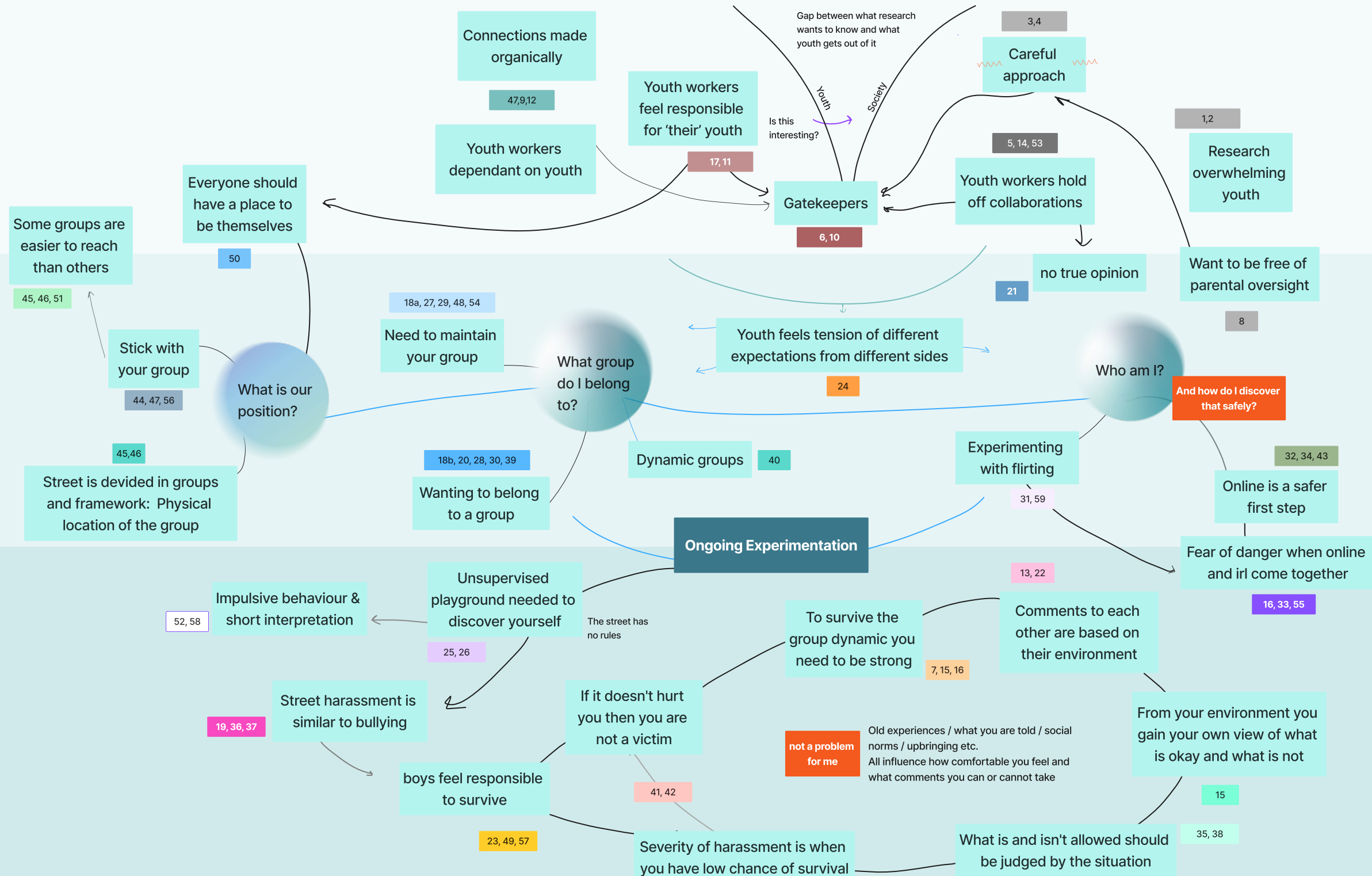


Figure 46: Clusters of insights

Youth participation

Identity Exploration

Street harassment behaviour





## 6.2 Insights on approach youth participation

\*The findings of this chapter will refer back to the clusters and corresponding insight numbers from figure 46, which can also be found in appendix H. Numbers in the text can have different configurations, since they are derived from three separate overviews (appendix B, activity A4, A5, A6), as can be read in appendix I.

### Youth worker as gatekeeper

In working together with youth hubs to organise the creative sessions (chapter 5), it was found that while it's great to tap into the trust that youth workers have already built and use their relation with youth (6, 10), important barriers exist. Within this context, **Youth workers have an intricate relationship** with their youth - they guide them (10, 12), but also feel responsible for their development (11, 17) and they really depend on keeping a good connection with them (9). This complexity is also highlighted by youth themselves, as for example in the interview (appendix B, activity IY3).

*"A lot is being done for youth, but at the same time it is not. The reason why I say it is because there is a lot being done for the by the youth workers, but again the youth workers have to be a bit lucky to get it out of the youth as well (access and willingness)"*

- Sunaida, youth representative

As a result youth workers shift between talking along with youth, speaking their language, and showing clear boundaries when in their opinion someone crosses a line in their behaviour or what they say.

Due to their close relationship with youth, youth workers can act as a valuable connection towards youth for researchers. Youth workers are part of the system and in contact with a lot of different parties (1,2,17). However, the access through youth hubs should not overwhelm youth with different researchers, especially when the topic is not directly contributing to their interest and surroundings (1,2). For example, during one of the sessions a boy was hanging around in the youth hub showing interest in the topic. When I casually invited him to participate, he answered:

*"No [youth worker] already has some other research that I have to help with"*

Due to the high demand of different parties that want something from this group of youth and participation not being an intrinsic motivation for them, youth workers might hold off collaborations (53,14,13). Youth hubs act as an extension of the streets where youth should be able to be free from expectations from different parties. To achieve this safe space for everyone, organisations separate groups into age and gender and try to keep track of who is where (46,50,51,56). Connections are made by chilling and "hanging" a lot together and when a lot of time is shared more vulnerability is shared as well (6, 12, 10, 47). Researchers should be careful in their approach (3,4) and consider that a youth hub is a place where all youth should feel comfortable.

Therefore youth workers are the **gatekeeper** between research and government organisations and youth.

### Gap between researchers and youth

Despite youth workers being open to connect parties to youth, youth themselves might not be aware (yet) that their voice matters within the system and could make an impact (5,16,53). Due to long waiting times of **feedback of what is done with their input**, it is not always visible that they are heard (figure 47). Youth workers try to get them involved in the system and society, and they and youth are constantly assessing what might be interesting for them (3,10,11). Research often does not align with the perception youth has on the world (1,17,11) and youth feels this gap (14), as can be seen in the following quote (appendix B, activity IY3):

Sunaida (youth representative) about youth participation:

*"And it's just: ".. we determine that for you [that participation is necessary] and this is how you have to accept it". But we [youth] are not asked like: "Hey, what do you need?"*

*And if it is asked, then again, it has to have the underlying reason. Because then, often another project is already ready and they're [researchers] just checking:*

*"Can we add youths' wishes to it a little bit?" And that's what I just prefer no longer to have."*



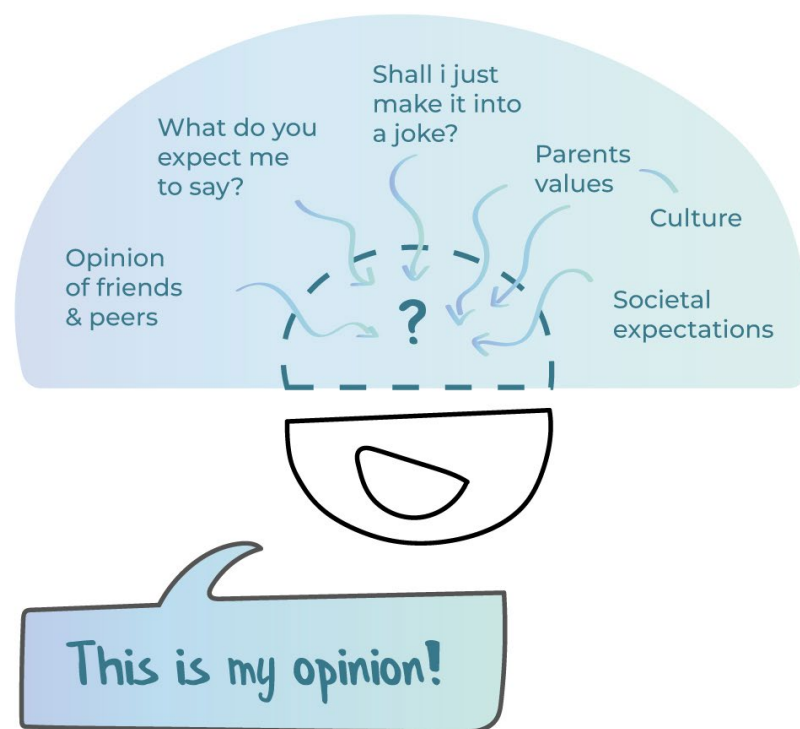
Figure 47: No feedback of participation taken seriously



### True opinion collection

There is not only a gap between what researchers want to know and what youth gets out of it (4,2,5,19,53,54), but also in the information they provide and what researchers seek. This becomes apparent in differences and shifting of opinions from youth within a very short timespan in the creative sessions. For example take insight 21: In the second creative session (chapter 5.2.3), participants clearly stated that street harassment was not about achieving status. However the prototype they built to prevent street harassment was a car, because as they explained: "if you have an Audi, people respect you and you can get girls... [without harassing]"

They have not settled on their "true" opinions yet (21), and their perspectives can therefore be fluid (18ab,20,54). From observations in the sessions, combined with conversations with youth workers and previous findings it became apparent that their attitude is often influenced by factors such as social conformity and survival strategies (24, 25) (figure 48). These insights have similarities with the levels of knowledge as defined by Sanders (2002), but what is happening on the tacit and latent levels of youths' knowledge is shifting since their values and norms are not yet defined. There is no "true" underlying opinion that can be collected.



**Figure 48:** Youths answers might not be their own opinion: no true voice

## 6.3 Connection of identity exploration

\*The findings of this chapter will refer back to the clusters and corresponding insight numbers from figure 46, which can also be found in appendix H. Numbers in the text can have different configurations, since they are derived from three separate overviews (appendix B, activity A4, A5, A6), as can be read in appendix I.

Next to youths' opinion, their identity is still taking shape as well. Between the ages of 12 and 17 youth focusses on exploration and opinion formation as part of identity development (21,14,24). They seek independence from their parents' opinions and their path is characterized by ongoing experimentation with societal positioning, remaining undetermined (29, 28, 27, 26, 30).

Looking at the literature this is in line with Eriksons (1959) different stages of psychosocial development. This exploration can involve trying out different social roles, engaging in new activities, or adopting various belief systems to see what resonates personally. While managing various expectations about how they "should be", this results in different faces shown to different parties: school, parents, friends, etc. (25,30,38,54).

What became apparent in working closely with youth over a longer period of time, is that they constantly feel tension due to different parties pulling them in various directions with expectations. These expectations come from for instance parents, school, social media and friends around them, as can be seen in figure 49. Especially in less affluent neighbourhoods, like Bloemhof, different cultural standards and multifaceted problems can create extra tension in youths' lives and the expectations of other parties perceived by them. And where this tension is felt, it is logical to assume that youth wants to push back.

### Feeling tension & looking for tension in exploration of expectations and identity.

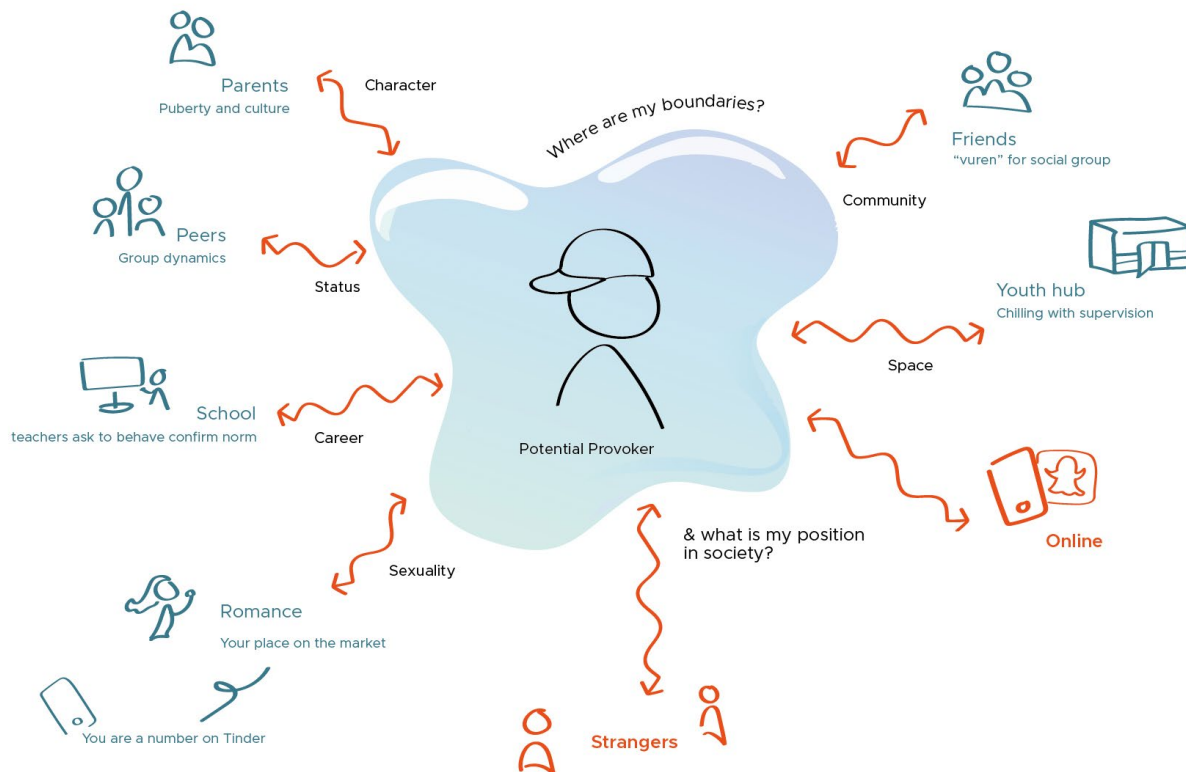


Figure 49: Youth is feeling and responding to tension based on expectations

### Firing for group dynamics

This exploration phase is also a time of heightened risk-taking and impulsivity (58) (Eriksons, 1959). Within groups this can cause boundary crossing behaviour on a wide spectrum ranging from teasing, playful amongst friends to seriously bullying peers.

In the sessions in Delft and Bloemhof youth themselves explained this as the phenomenon of constant "throwing fire" at each other: This firing is the reason for their mutual group dynamics and "throwing" comments at each other (29).

***We are used to constantly throwing fire at each other. It doesn't matter if you're the group leader or if you're just like the youngest, Everyone is throwing fire("vuurt") and gets fired ("gevuurd")***

- boy BH

In this context to fire, is used as showing disrespect ("vuren" in Dutch).

Youth is examining their own position and finding their place in society. Their street attitude therefore reflects others' expectations of their behavior (4,23,43,49). Amongst each other they can be harsh, and especially in Bloemhof, they show heightened resilience and emotional guardedness due to this constant threat of being challenged by others (7,15, 16). They are not taking their thick coats off afraid to show themselves and brag about behaviour to come across more though.

For example:

Girl (14yo) proudly uses that her **"VOG is still clean"** as a way to argue that her fights with other girls are not that bad.

Therefore they are hesitant to open up towards others, thus this requires a lot of time and trust is not easily gained (3,11).

## 6.4 How youth engages in street harassment

\*The findings of this chapter will refer back to the clusters and corresponding insight numbers from figure 46, which can also be found in appendix H. Numbers in the text can have different configurations, since they are derived from three separate overviews (appendix B, activity A4, A5, A6), as can be read in appendix I.

The in-group behaviour of crossing boundaries has overlap with street harassment. The insights from the analysis show that youth's exploration seems to centre around two key questions:

Who am I?

What group do I belong to?

The first question is elaborated on explaining the identity forming exploration phase of youth. This section will show how youths' behavioural structures link with their opinions about street harassment and what this says about their understanding of the problem.

When boundary crossing behaviour is found very normal amongst each other, lines quickly become blurry. With the public space as an environment where youth wants to push back from expectations, this behaviour can happen towards less familiar "others" or strangers: which can be perceived as street harassment. This also becomes apparent from youths' own broad perspective on street harassment as mentioned in chapter 5.4.1.

***"Then again, if you say street harassment, that's not street harassment to me. Because it's (sometimes) just an inside joke for us. It is something that has been discussed among ourselves, that has been going on for a long time, but I quite understand that it can come across as street harassment to another person."***

- Sunaida,  
youth representative (activity IY3)

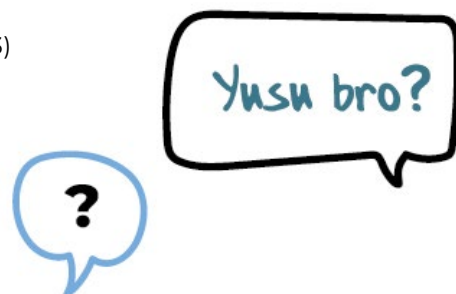


Figure 50: Youth comes across differently

Their need to find group belonging and how it intersects with street harassment, can be seen in the following conversation between two boys during a creative session (appendix B, creative session 1) (30):

Boy 1: ***"I really had that a lot by the way."***

Boy 2: ***"That a chick went up to you to ask your Snap?"***

Boy 1: ***"No, look. There were a couple of boys and uhh one "such" a chick with .... And then that chick, of those guys, had to go up to me to ask.."***

Boy 2: ***"And then?"***

Boy 1: ***"Then I just said I have a girlfriend. That's really the best tactic ever bro."***

Boy 2: ***"Why don't you just accept that snap bro?"***

Boy 1: ***"Brooo it was a foreigner with a headscarf!"***

Youth is actively assessing which groups they belong to and who does not belong to their group. These aspects of identity and belonging are dynamic and they are constantly looking for where they stand towards others and society (21,28,40,45,46).

### Group formation

Friend groups form along gender (46,50) and cultural lines (29,54), with behaviour indirectly shaped by sexism, racism, and social norms (13, 15, 22, 23,57). As elaborated on in chapter 4, this influences how different individuals and groups use the streets. Different groups also maintain distinct norms and values, with physical location determined by group membership (30, 45, 46, 48). This is shown in the following quote, from context card 48 (appendix H):

Boy at youth hub: "I don't think people are going to come today, because I walked past square X and the older boys weren't there and on square Y the younger boys weren't (hanging out) there as well"

So how the public space is used depends on gender, age and socioeconomic status (46,47,48). While boys often "hang" in public spaces. Girls navigate with a plan: from A to B and towards different activities. Literature highlights that girls are often less visible in public spaces due to concerns about safety, leading to their needs being overlooked. Research such as "Ruimte voor Meiden op Zuid" (Schram et al., 2024) shows that specific locations have distinct social meanings, including areas perceived as "dating spots" where visibility can be undesirable. Addressing youth behavior in public spaces requires a nuanced understanding of these dynamics.

Besides trying to find their friend group, youth is also starting to experiment with romance and figuring out who might like them (31,59). This is reflected in their group dynamics during the creative session as well as comments made:

Two boys (13&14yo) who were coming up with opening sentences to say to girls (31):

***'Are you a football field?  
Because I do want to play 90 minutes  
in 11 different positions with you.'***

### Contact with strangers on the streets & online

This behaviour does not only occur in the physical streets, but social media plays an important role in establishing first contact and building interactions in real life (32,33,34). Growing up with social media, they are cautious of what they share of themselves online, since youth knows from their own experiences that once something is online it cannot be erased. Therefore they feel it is best to stay as anonymous as possible towards strangers, to avoid misuse of for example pictures as images (55). This could indicate why youth was hesitant to be in pictures and might explain their heightened resistance towards informed consent forms, as also indicated by van Gielen in an interview (appendix B, activity ID6).

Restraint on privacy is assuming contact with strangers is made at all, because youth indicates that they hardly interact with strangers outside. During the creative sessions youth often indicated you should not talk to strangers, even pointing out not talking on the streets as a solution to prevent street harassment (chapter 5.2.3) (figure 51). Enhancing their safety barriers, youth might avoid interactions with strangers unless they feel the need to push back tension as described in chapter 6.3.



**Figure 51:** Youth might avoid interactions with strangers

If youth meets people on the street, depends on how much time they spend outside (44,45). They do not see a need to interact with strangers and due to complexity of interactions, in their opinion it can only lead to negative impact on your life (35,36,37,44). Establishing first contact is dangerous and therefore safer done online, where someone is not physically able to harm you (31,32,34,44). If it is desired that positive interactions happen on the street, it is therefore important that youth does not feel afraid to explore with positive behaviour towards strangers.

### The intersection with street harassment

In public spaces, youth establish their own, unwritten, rules, free from parental oversight (8). According to research, the interactions in the public space contribute to shaping their identity and trying out that identity in relation to both each other and adult norms (Hil & Bessant, 1999; Lieberg, 1995). However, this newfound freedom on the streets can also lead to boundary-crossing regarding feelings and social norms, causing harmful situations.

The acceptability of verbal expressions depends on societal position, personal values, and boundaries. As mentioned for group belonging and formation, youth is aware that what is being said within their group is sometimes unacceptable, yet it is normalized that they make inappropriate comments. In response, youth construct strong safety barriers against vulnerability (7, 29, 39, 40, 42). This creates a vicious circle in which toughening up to avoid becoming a target also causes them to be tougher towards each other, thus perpetuating the tone.

As explained in the last section, to find a sense of belonging within a group, youth tries out different roles that fit the groups and this behaviour can be impulsive (18ab,19, 27,48). Acknowledging this also reveals the value that the behaviour has for youth:

**A reason for this particular group to engage in street harassment is to explore their positioning in society and experiment with their own social norm.** This freedom is therefore crucial to figure out who they are (24,25) and also shows why an intervention like the Stopapp (chapter 3.1, Appendix D1), could be so harmful for youth. Controlling them from a societal perspective of right and wrong will limit their identity formation and a lack of purpose and belonging could potentially only make things worse (appendix B, activity E10).



Regarding street harassment, youth indicates that what is accepted or not is a contextual framework that fluently changes per situation (35, 36, 37,38,40, 52). How severe the harassment is, is up to how the target perceives their comment (41, 42, 43) and the chance of survival is an important indicator for the severity (41). The comments that can be made are based on the appearance of a stranger (52) and originate from influences of racism and sexism out of their environment (49, 13, 22, 23, 49). Their own behaviour is based on their perception of themselves. Their interactions are based on their perception of interpersonal relations with this person (25,52). So their behaviour is based upon these perceptions and boundaries of what should be accepted are unclear and crossed.

This confirms that street harassment is a system deeply rooted in society, as found in the literature, and cannot be fully understood without considering the interplay between context, individual perception, societal influences, and interpersonal dynamics.

Youth's engagement with street harassment is deeply rooted in their identity exploration and quest for group belonging, operating within fluid social boundaries that shift based on context and group dynamics.



**Figure 52:** Youth behaviour is based upon the reflection of themselves and others, with unclear boundaries of what counts as street harassment and what does not

## 6.5 Conclusion analysis

The goal of this research was to get a better understanding of how youth (12-17 year olds) perceive street harassment to create a design intervention in the context of Rotterdam. Initial research and literature revealed that street harassment is influenced by a complex interplay of numerous contextual factors. Street harassment cannot be solved through a “single solution” but requires systemic change across all domains of society.

This analysis shows how street harassment among youth is intertwined with their search for identity and belonging. Young people constantly navigate between expectations from parents, schools, and peers, using the street as a space to explore boundaries through what they call “firing” at each other. The street functions as both a breathing space for identity exploration and a testing ground for social norms. Thus a design intervention has to be explorative and freely accessible for youth, without enforcing them to act a certain way.

In working with a school and youth hub, it was found that two key aspects play an important role considering their behaviour: the questions “who am I” and “what group do I belong to?”. The complex dynamics of youth identity formation and group belonging significantly influence how they engage in or perceive street harassment. The reason for youth to engage in street harassment as found in this research, is connected to the exploration of their identity.

- Youth workers serve as gatekeepers between researchers and youth.
- Due to the interplay of tensions pulling on youth and the influence this has on the need to push back, it is very important that the design should not be another tension forcing youth to behave a certain way.
- Youth hubs & youth workers have an intricate relation with youth and researchers should be mindful of their approach. This will be elaborated upon and reflected on in chapter 9.
- A gap exists between research approaches and what youth find meaningful. Not only in approach but also in the understanding that society has on behaviour tolerance and youths perspective on the topic: street harassment.
- The boundaries of what behaviour is accepted and not are unclear and dependant on youths perception of themselves and others.
- Design should encourage to also undergo positive interactions, while not limiting or forcing youth into these interactions.

# 07

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## Idea development

7.1 Design goal

7.2 Ideation

7.3 The concept

7.4 Prototyping

7.4.1 Prototype 1

7.4.2 Prototype 2

7.4.3 Prototype 3

7.4.4 Prototype 4

7.5 Conclusion ideation

The first part of the graduation project focused on creating a better understanding of youth perspectives on street harassment. The creative sessions, as explained in chapter 5, are developed for the client, as a tool for further research. In the second part of the graduation project a design is created based on the outcomes of the research. This chapter will describe the iterative process from the design goal to coming up with ideas, evaluating the solution direction and coming up with the concept. Several prototypes were made to evaluate the concept that led to the design. The chapter describes the activities of the 'creating idea's' phase (4) and 'developing a concept' phase (5) ( process overview in chapter 1.4).

## 7.1 Design goal

Based on the analysis, a design goal was formulated to guide the ideation (figure 53).

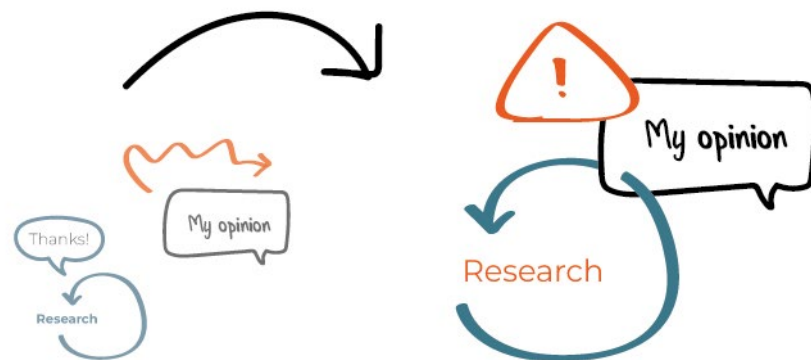


**Figure 53:** The design goal

According to our insights to prevent street harassment amongst youth as discussed in chapter 6, it is important that youth can explore their social identity while not contributing to harmful behaviour towards others.

According to our insights to prevent street harassment amongst youth as discussed in chapter 6, it is important that youth can explore their social identity while not contributing to harmful behaviour towards others.

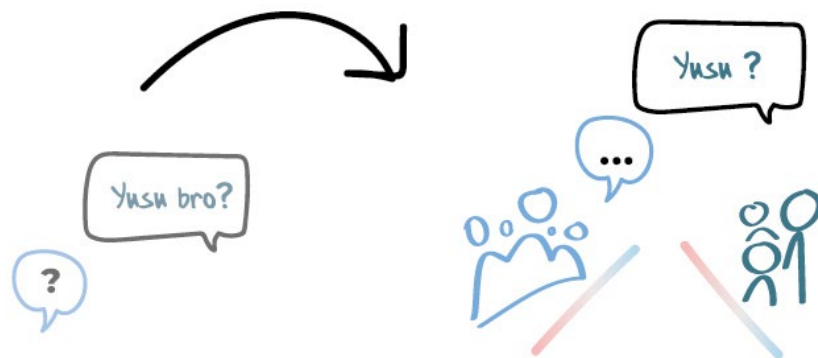
Additionally, based on the analysis, four subgoals were identified:



**Figure 54:** Giving direct feedback from participation

#### - Feedback of participation:

To show youth the value of participating in our research and that their voice matters, the design should show youths participation and give feedback within a short timespan.



**Figure 55:** From different perspectives to mutual understanding

#### - Gap society and youth:

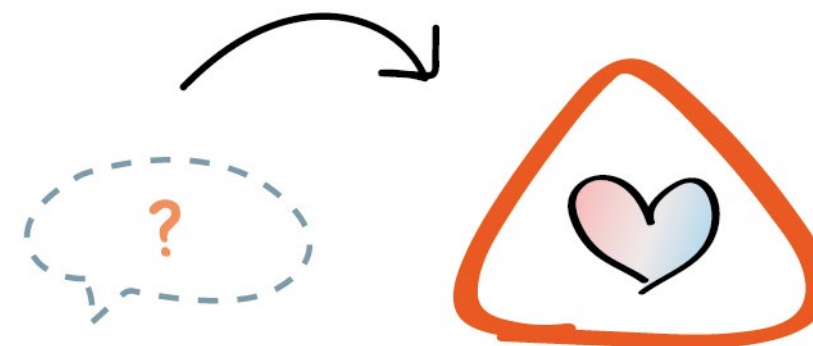
The design should communicate both how society perceives street harassment and the perspectives of youth on the topic.



**Figure 56:** Challenging the problem of street harassment

#### - Challenges societal norms:

The design should address the deeply rooted power structures within our society to contribute to challenging the social norm concerning street harassment.



**Figure 57:** Encouraging positive interactions

#### - Provokes positive interactions:

The design should encourage positive behaviour and interactions with others in the public space.

Furthermore the design should not be another tension for youth or be too patronizing. As discussed in chapter 6, that might enforce the behaviour rather than preventing it from happening. To prevent the topic from becoming another to-do for teachers or schools, the design should preferably be freely approachable within the public space. Yet the streets should remain a breathing space. These criteria and more criteria were included in the list of requirements and wishes for the design, as can be found in appendix L.



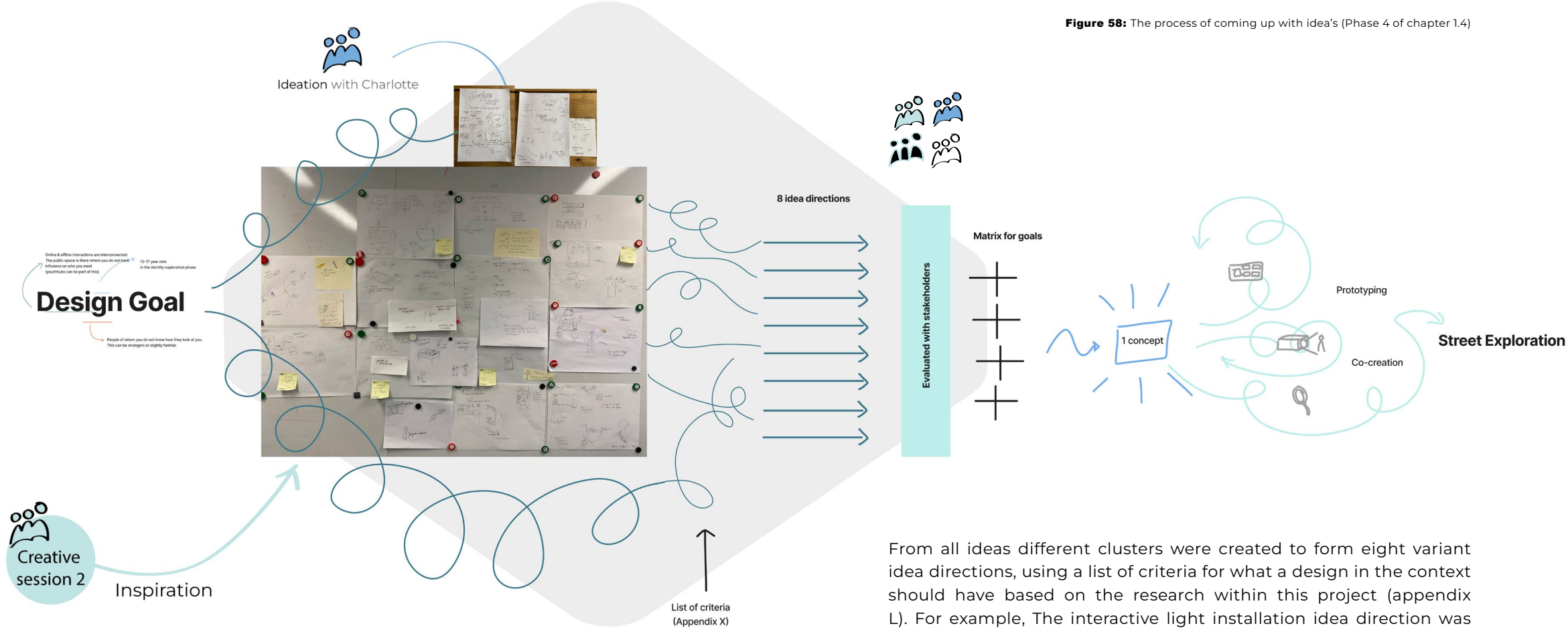


Figure 58: The process of coming up with idea's (Phase 4 of chapter 1.4)

# 7.2 Ideation

This section describes the iterative process of coming up with the concept from the design goal. A representation of the process of coming up with ideas that led to this concept is shown in figure 58. Diverging into a wide range of possible interventions from the design goal, six potential directions were combined to discuss with stakeholders. Eventually leading to one concept.

From the design goal, a wide range of ideas was generated. Methods used were individual brain-sketching, hitchhiking on different directions and ideas (Van Boeijen et al., 2014) and an organised ideation session (appendix B, activity D4). How this planned ideation session was conducted can be found in appendix J. The intervention artifacts as made by youth in creative session 2 (chapter 5.5.1) were not directly integrated as ideas, but the reflective material both groups used for their artifact was used as inspiration.

From all ideas different clusters were created to form eight variant idea directions, using a list of criteria for what a design in the context should have based on the research within this project (appendix L). For example, The interactive light installation idea direction was based on several ideas involving screens that showed the impact of your voice and interactive LED objects in the public space. All eight idea directions can be found in appendix K.

Examples of idea directions included:

“Project Wijkkracht” is a neighbourhood initiative by youth, for youth, based on the principle of “hijte voor karweitje”. On a challenge day youth is exploring different places with different people in the community. This prevents street harassment by having positive interactions, making everyone in the environment a non-stranger, increasing social cohesion and positive interactions.

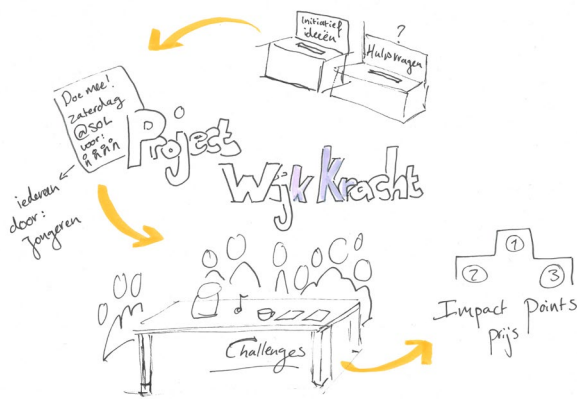


Figure 59: Idea direction “Project Wijkkracht”

“Overlevend Strategisch” (Surviving strategically) is based on the Dutch game of Capture the flag, a strategic game that can be played in public spaces. Everyone gets a card with their role, which has their position in society on it. If you tap a stranger you both have to show your card and the person with a higher power card wins and gets the card from the other.

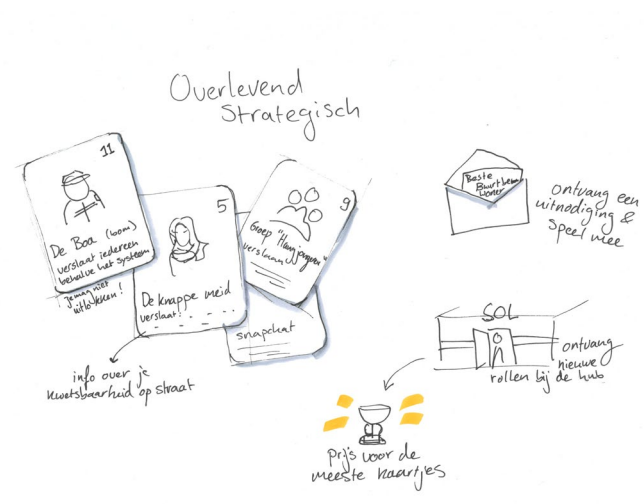


Figure 60: Idea direction “Overlevend Strategisch”

“Proefkonijn” (target bunny) is a person in a reflective bunny suit to whom youth is allowed to say anything they want. The bunny will hand you a red, yellow or green card with explanation how acceptable your expressions were in response.



Figure 61: Idea direction “Proefkonijnen”



Figure 62: Evaluation of stakeholders on idea directions

The eight idea directions were discussed and evaluated with stakeholders. All insights from these evaluations were gathered within an overview as can be seen in figure 62.

For the decision on which concept to focus, the idea directions were mapped on different axes, creating a matrix, based on decision matrices from design thinking methods (Van Boeijen et al., 2014).

The axis represented the sub design goals (chapter 7.1):

- Feedback of participation: Shows how participants input was taken into account for research feedback.
- Gap society and youth: In this case measured if it would be attractive for youth to be involved in, being a societal intervention.
- Challenging societal norm and therefore status quo of street harassment
- Provokes positive interaction with “others”

Feasibility was added as an extra axis. In this case feasibility represents if enough was known through this project to make the concept and realise it and estimating how feasible it would be to realise the concept. This did not include if the concept was buildable within the time-frame of this graduation.

Comparing the matrices, “Reflected Voices” scored highest on challenging societal norms and being attractive for youth and did not score in the red area for any of the other goals and was therefore chosen as the concept to work further on.



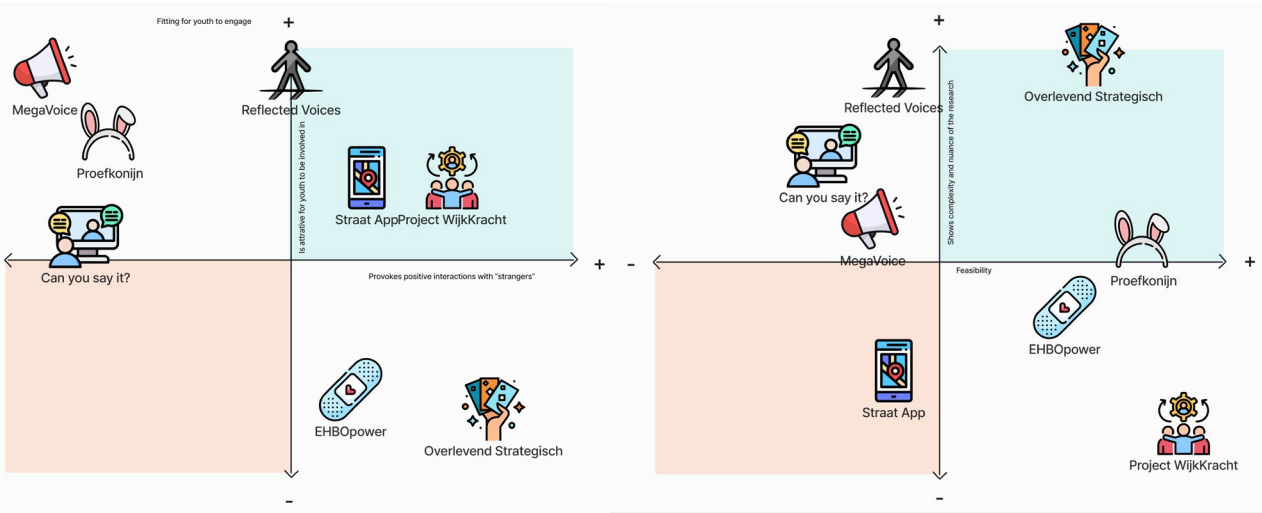
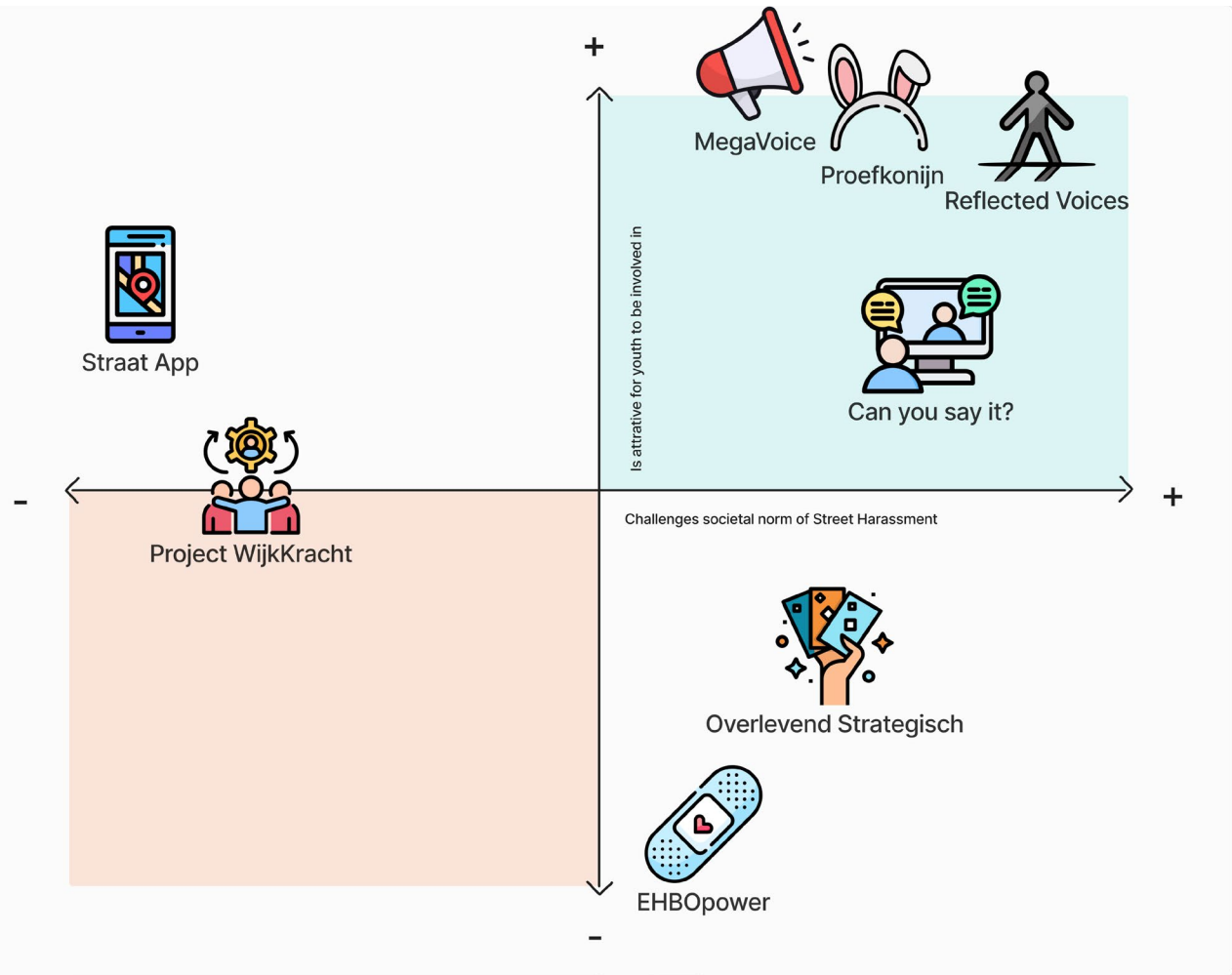


Figure 63: Decision matrices for choosing the idea direction based on stakeholder input

# 7.3 The concept

The chosen idea direction, Reflected Voices, is an interactive projection in the public space that changes based on your comments. This section will explain the steps that were taken to further iterate on the concept, before introducing the final concept Street Exploration in chapter 8.

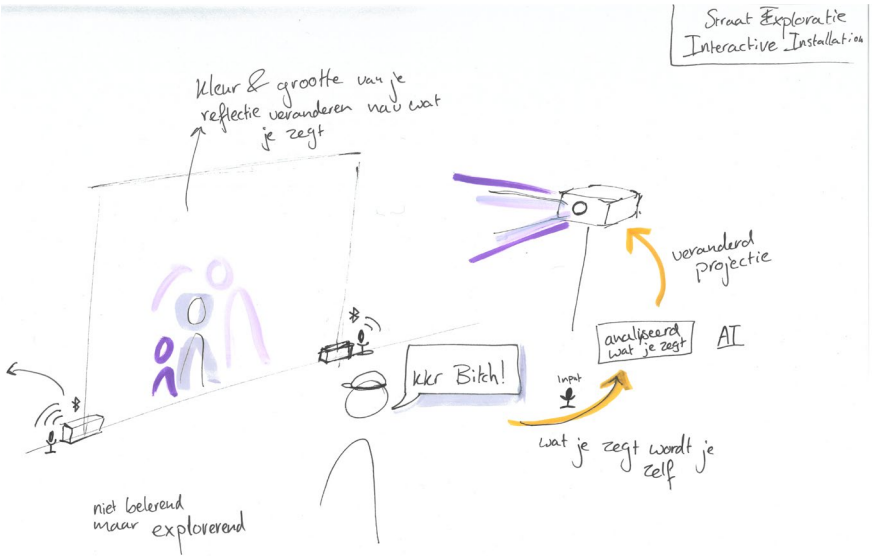


Figure 64: Idea direction sketch Reflected voices

For further development from the design direction into a concept, the feedback from stakeholders as shown in figure 62 was taken into account as well as analysis done with the matrix of domination (appendix M). The feedback on this concept from figure 62 can be seen in table 5.



Figure 65: AI generated images for brainstorming the concept (Prompt 2)

Table 5: Feedback on the idea direction from stakeholders

| Stakeholders    | Strengths of the concept   | Weaknesses of the concept  |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Project team    | Confronting directly<br><br>Cool if you could do it with multiple people!<br><br>Could work as a great conversation starter  | How does it allow for exploring nicer interactions?<br><br>Many ideas seem to be about individual testing rather than meaningful connections.<br><br>Is it feasible? |
| Youth workers   | This is really cool for 15+ as well as younger youth   | Where and when could it be applied?<br><br>Will it only be displayed during events or also leave a substantial change behind?  |
| Youth Rotterdam | Super realistic<br><br>Very impactful to get a better understanding of what happens to someone else if we say something<br><br>Really cool for events where youth are and activities that are already organised for us | Too personal<br><br>Feasibility  |
| Teachers Delft  | Super cool!  | Is it possible to realise?   |

For development of the concept the idea direction is also evaluated with the matrix of domination. As elaborated on in Appendix L, especially the structural domain could be more integrated. To address the structural and disciplinary domain more, the installation should have more information about street harassment (and the law) around the installation in a way attractive for youth. With current prevention strategies failing, this concept could address a gap including the disciplinary domain.

To encourage youth to say positive things and have positive interactions with others, more incentives should be given. Based upon this analysis I decided that the projected shadow should become too small if a lot of negative comments are given. This would limit the possibilities in the interaction with the projection and therefore it is necessary to also say positive things to keep interaction with the installation.

To make the installation attractive for youth, inspirations was drawn from their artifacts during creative session 2 (chapter 5.51), and the

idea direction “proefkonijn”:  
Within the creative session youth used reflective materials like mirror paper. I decided that this concept would also include mirrors, on which more examples and information could be provided. Also information from your position in society like from the idea direction “Overlevend Strategisch” could be integrated as information on those mirrors.

For further evaluation of the concept, a poster was sent to all participants from the creative sessions (chapter 5.1) inviting them to give feedback directly through Whatsapp or during one of the planned moments that were organised in the environment of either the school or youth hub. These evaluating moments were integrated with testing moments for prototyping.



Figure 66: Invitation for feedback was send to all participants of the creative sessions (Chapter 5.1) with testing moments for personal contact within their environment



## 7.4 Prototyping

Prototyping within this phase of the project (phase five, chapter 1.4) was a mix between co-creation and prototypes that were tested. Prototyping, co-creation and evaluation of the concept were used flexibly to cater for what was possible to do with youth in that moment. As will be reflected in chapter 9, this was found necessary for a good collaboration with youth.

Prototypes are early artifacts or models of the concept that simulate its design and functionality to test and iterate further on (The Interaction Design Foundation, 2025). Co-creation means a collaborative creative action, event or artifact, which can be testing a prototype, but within participatory design is more suitably used for creating design aspects together. Often a mix of prototype options and material was brought to a testing moment. Therefore the prototypes were often, yet not always co-created. For reporting purposes we will hereafter call each activity in which physical artifacts were created and tested for the final concept, a prototype.

The separate prototypes and how they were combined in different testing moments are described in appendix N (prototypes) & O (testing moments). This section will reference those prototypes and testing moments, as can also be found in the activity list in appendix B.

### 7.4.1 Prototype 1: Roleplay the projection

Prototype 1 is the projection of different visuals, low-fi animated and roleplayed, with the aim to test the interaction and intention of the concept (appendix N).

#### Setup:

With powerpoint different visuals were made and simply animated to roleplay what the interaction with the projection could look like, projected on a wall.

#### [Reflective thought]

I needed a lot of patience and flexibility to reach the target group and be able to test the prototypes within the short timespan at the end of my graduation.

For example, when I agreed to test Prototype 4 with a youth worker, I asked him whether it would be best to test with the young people that afternoon or the next day. He explained that the boys would be there earlier because of Ramadan, but when I arrived at Bloemhof, no one was there. After half an hour, the youth worker called me back to tell me that no one was coming anymore and he himself was also in Afrikaanderwijk. I quickly moved, having the prototype with me. Therefore, I was able to test Prototype 4 with three girls, first introducing them to the concept as I had never met them before. After providing very valuable input, they had to leave quickly and I could make my way back.

A lot of determination on my part and a constant effort to reach the target group made this work. However, with this flexibility I often had little control over the results and planning myself, which sometimes felt very uncomfortable. At least I have learned that it is important to take school holidays, as well as cultural events (like Ramadan) into account in the beginning of a project, especially when working with youth from different cultural backgrounds.

Figure 67: IDE students testing the projection



The prototype showed several important implications for the final design during testing moments (TM) of appendix O:

- Clear instructions are necessary around the projection (TM1,2). This could for example be achieved by decorated mirrors surrounding the projection.
- The installation needs to clearly indicate that you are interacting with a projection, otherways bystanders not involved in the interaction would think a crazy person was screaming at a wall, thus more information around the installation is a necessity. (TM2,3)
- That the reflected shape is getting bigger for positive comments and smaller for negative is intuitively logical and does not need further explanation. (TM1,4,6)
- All participants indicated the colours used should have meaning (TM1,3,4). Bright colours for positive and dark for negative (TM2,4). Interestingly one boy pointed out that he would perceive a colour like red or yellow as positive, since it is light. Perhaps he has a positive association with red, which most people could perceive as negative (equals wrong), due to Feyenoord. (TM2) It is important to take into account that each individual could interpret colours differently and there are no clear boundaries for street harassment as seen in the analysis.

**Figure 68:** Prototype 1&2 available at the same time in youth hub Bloemhof with youth worker



**Figure 69:** Prototype 1&2 at school in Delft with IDE student as fellow facilitator

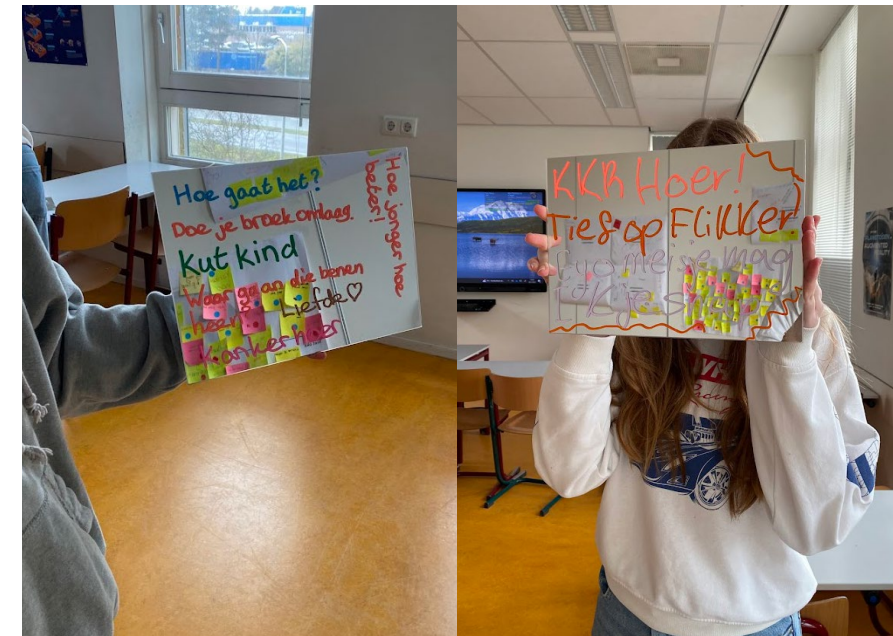


## 7.4.2 Prototype 2: Mirrors

The aim of the second prototype was to discover what added value mirrors could bring to the concept and additionally give youth a fun activity to which they might show up.

### Setup:

Markers, mirrors, collage materials were put on a big table. Youth was encouraged to decorate mirrors either for themselves or for the project and allowed to decorate multiple mirrors if they wanted to.



**Figure 70:** Mirrors created by participants in Delft during test moment 4

The prototype showed several important implications for the final design during testing moments (TM) of appendix O:

- Within the use of prototype 1, youth indicated (TM2,3,4) that examples were important to guide the user what comments could be explored (otherwise they did not know what to say).
- Therefore youth created mirrors using the input they gave themselves in the creative sessions.
- Some girls had not been part of the creative sessions, and started adding more post-its to the sheets of the session, feeling the need to add more of their own perspective. Another function of the mirrors according to youth was to give instructions on how the installation works.



### 7.4.3 Prototype 3: Visual projections

The aim of this prototype was to discover how youth wants the installation to look and feel.

#### Setup:

P5.js workshop showing how coding works, followed by collages made by youth that participated earlier in the project. Their view on how the projection should look and feel was put into visual mood boards, based on the test of prototype 1. Collage material and pictures were printed of different shadow shapes and visual styles (mixed with random collage material) and provided to test and evaluate which styles would appeal to youth (Appendix N).

The prototype showed several important implications for the final design during testing moments (TM) of appendix O:

- Projection shape should be a bit realistic, but not too realistic (TM4,5): If the outline is very abstract it is unclear whether it should visualise the person themselves, but if it looks too much like someone else then again it is not yourself at all but just a stranger)
- The visual of fire appealed to youth. (TM5)

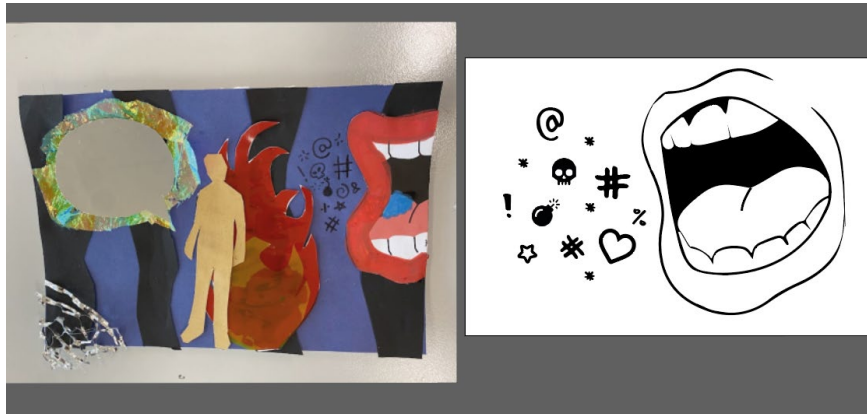


Figure 71: Collage as created by youth (left) and visual for next prototype (right)



Figure 73: Mirror created based on participants input





## 7.4.4 Prototype 4: P5.JS interaction

Through coding in P5.js and the wizard of Oz method (Van Boeijen et al., 2014), interacting with the visuals on a wall was made possible to test the engagement of the interaction. The code for the visuals can be found in appendix P. Throughout the creation of the prototype, youth stayed involved via a self created Whatsapp-group as can be seen in figure 76.

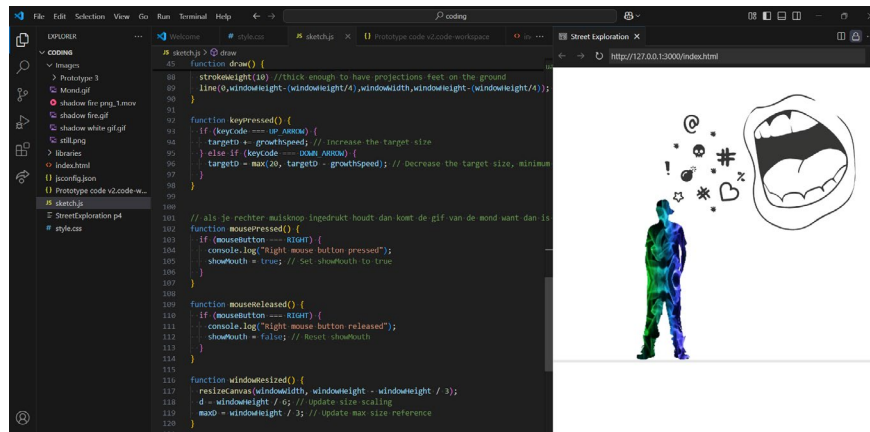


Figure 74: The code within P5.js (full code in appendix P)

The prototype showed several important implications for the final design (appendix O, TM6):

- Participants genuinely enjoyed the interaction and indicated especially youth would interact with the design, evaluating and sustaining the concept. Expressed they would want the projection in the neighbourhood for at least a week, so that they could tell others about it
- The fire within the visual was made too complex to understand.

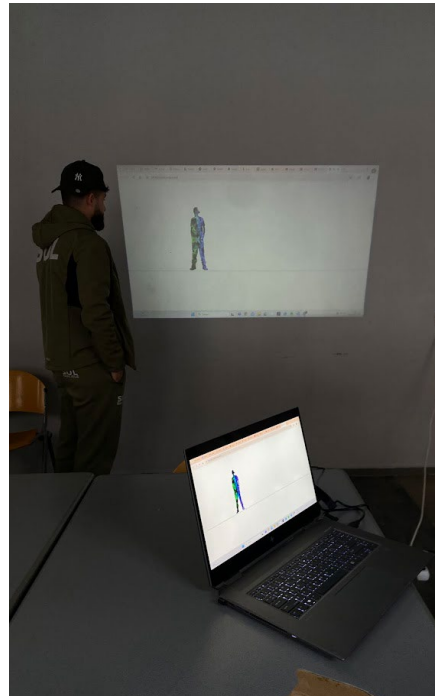


Figure 75: Testing the prototype at the youth hub

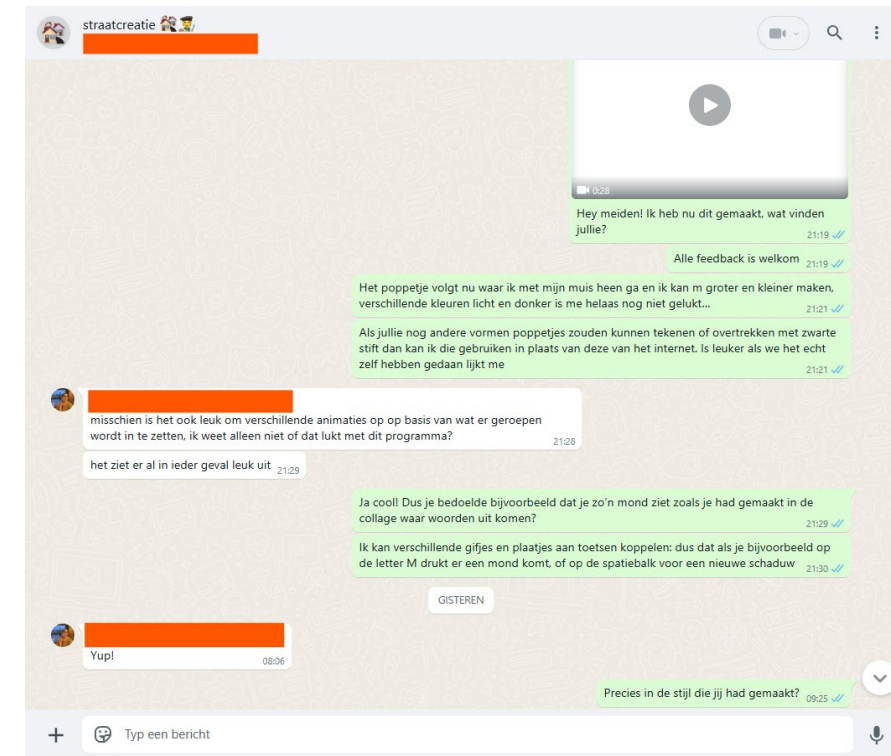


Figure 76: Feedback from co-creation and further development through Whatsapp

- The interaction provokes group participation: After the projection became smaller, the participant screamed: **"Ow no!"** The other girls also started to shout things to bring the projection back up.
- Participants indicated they would say different things if this shadow shape was a women or if it was a man:

Youthworker: ***"It would be inappropriate if I said something negative to a girl"***

Girl: ***"I wouldn't say something positive to a guy, but I would easily give a girl projection a compliment"***

This could be an interesting aspect and potential to integrate different factors of society and context within the design.

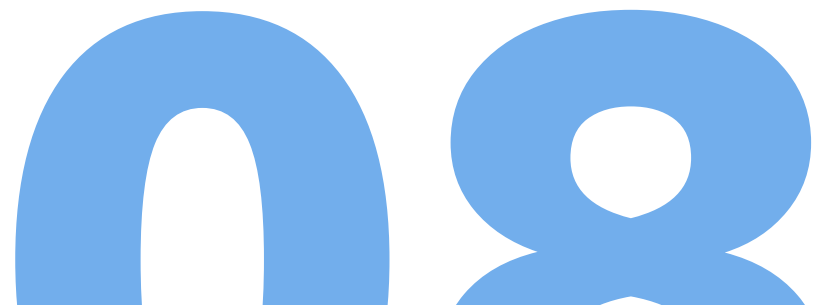
- According to the female participants in TM6, guys especially would just say negative things, using cancer in every comment, however they expressed they already perform this behaviour all the time on purpose anyway. In their experience guys have nothing to say but cancer where, that's what you are as a girl to them by default.



## 7.6 Conclusion ideation

The concept, an interactive installation, projects your reflection and changes based on your voice. The design evolved from the design goal and through the process of coming up with ideas led from one of the six design directions to this concept. The idea direction Reflected voices was chosen as the concept for the final design. Multiple aspects were integrated and iterated based on evaluation with stakeholders, analysis with the matrix of domination and co-creation and prototype iterations with youth. From four prototypes that were created and tested with, the concept was improved. These iterations led to the final design: Street Exploration, as will be elaborated on in the next chapter.





# The design

## 8.1 Street Exploration

- 8.1.1 The impact of the intervention

- 8.1.2 Use of mirrors

- 8.1.3 Components

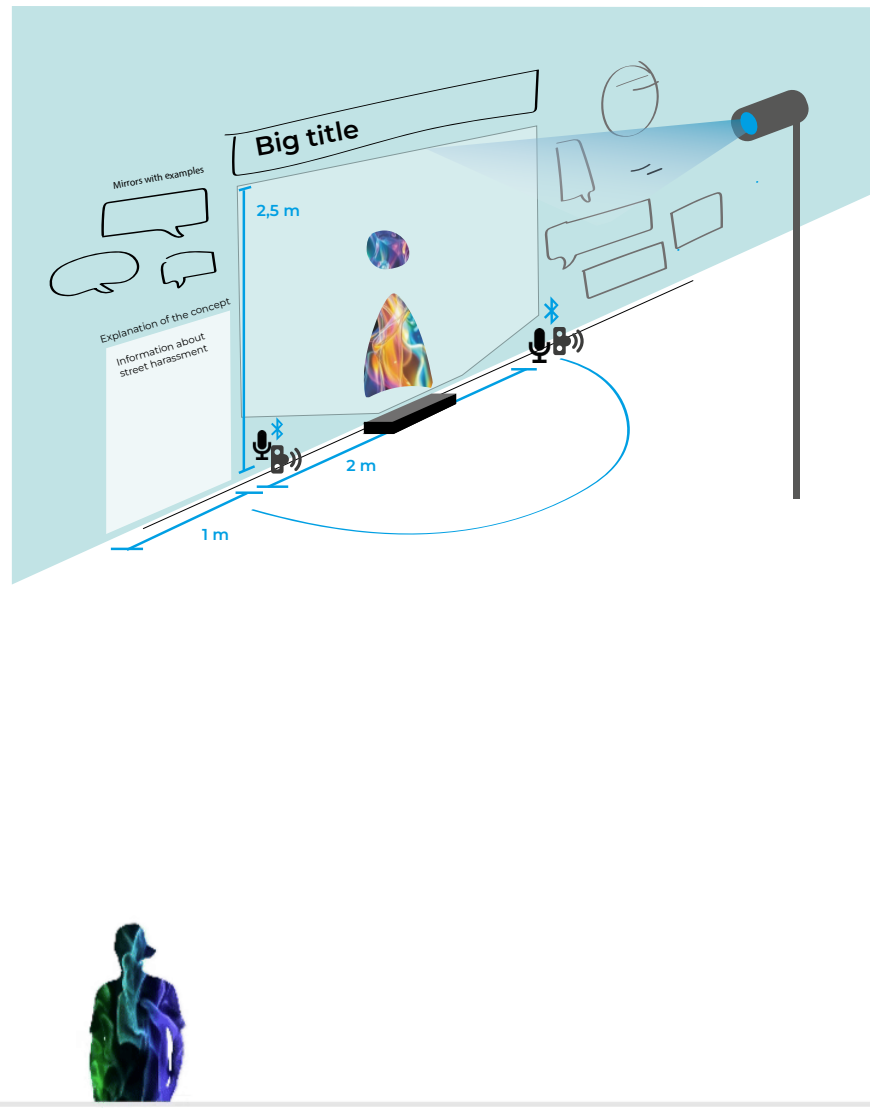
- 8.1.4 Feasibility

## 8.2 Evaluation of the concept

This chapter shows how the design contributes to the prevention of street harassment. The concept resulted from the design goal as explained in the last chapter: the design enables youth to explore with their social identity in the public space without harming others.

This chapter will introduce the design explaining how the interaction works, followed by why this solution is so powerful, the benefit of the use of mirrors and the feasibility for implementation. To conclude, the concept will be evaluated based on input from youth and the matrix of domination.

**Figure 77:** The setup of the installation

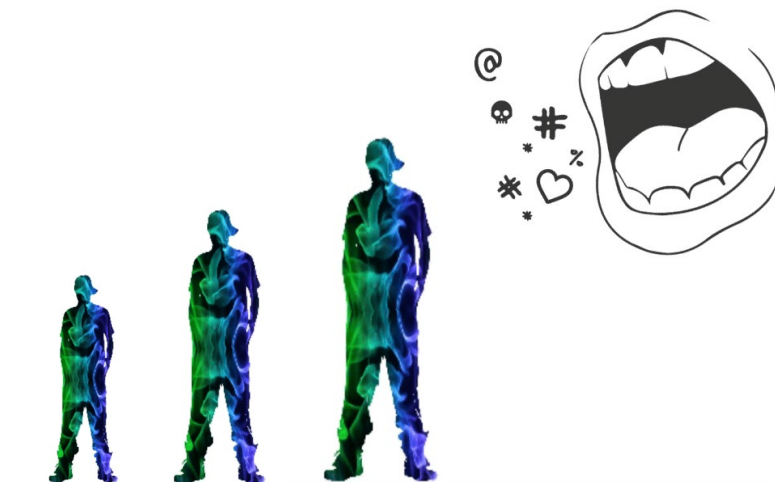


## 8.1 Street Exploration

Street Exploration is an interactive installation that allows you(th) to freely explore with the impact of their voice. Comments are captured and based on the nature of the comment, your reflection changes: The reflection becomes smaller and darker when something negative is said and bigger and brighter when a positive comment is made. This is done through sound recording, proximity sensors and a projection. If a lot of negative comments are given, the reflection becomes too small to interact with.

Street harassment is an impulsive behaviour, crossing societal norms. Therefore it is hard to intervene within the moment that it is happening and the problem is deeply rooted in our society. Thus it is important to target potential harassers with preventative interventions fitting to their experiences. In the exploration phase youth is looking for boundaries and in the case of street harassment the boundaries are blurry. Therefore this design can contribute to better awareness of what one's own behaviour does to others and ultimately behavioural change.

Another important condition for the design was that it should not become another factor of pressure or put even more pressure on young people who may already be looking for how to take the pressure off themselves. In this design the street is not a complete playground of throwing remarks at others. It is also a free space where you treat each other with respect. Showing others how "hangjongeren" use the street, and why it is an important breathing space for them to develop their identity, is an important aspect of this project.





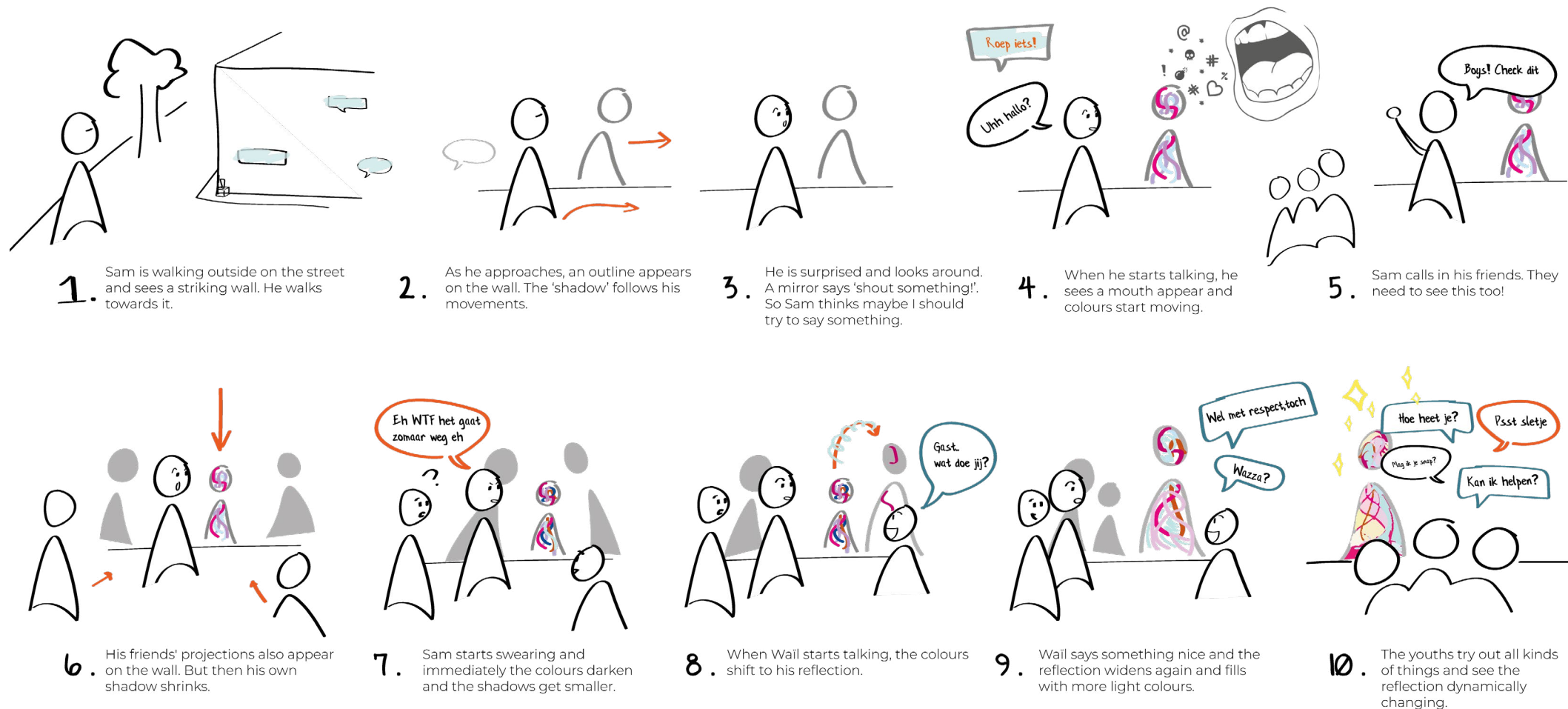


Figure 78: Storyboard of Street Exploration

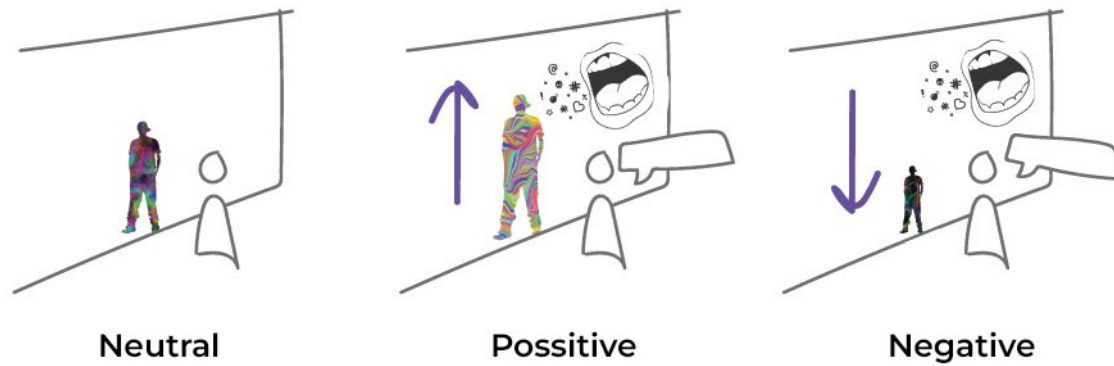
The storyboard (figure 78) shows how the visual representation of a person on the wall changes in size and colour, allowing youth to explore the impact of their words on strangers.

With motion sensors and a projector, the shape of a person is reflected on the wall: representing both a stranger, or other, as the person interacting. Recording devices detect voices and when you talk a mouth appears, giving feedback of the detected audio. Using a machine learning model, words can be distinguished and the visual changes accordingly (figure 79):

- being neutral= no response in size of the person shape
- positive = the reflection grows
- negative = the reflection shrinks

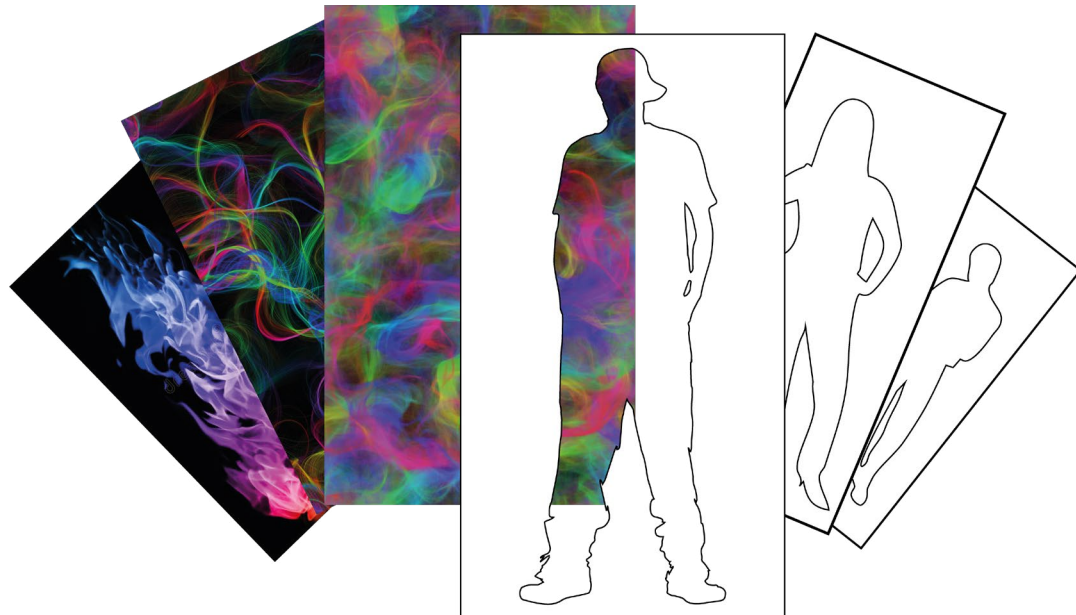
For the boundaries between negative and positive the sheets created by youth as input of the creative sessions is used (chapter 5.4).

Different outline shapes could be created representing different youth to interact with. These shapes could be created by youth themselves, drawing inspiration from installations as for example 'Sketch Aquarium' by Teamlabs (2013). Shapes can easily be adjusted with different layers and clipping masks as can be seen in figure 80.



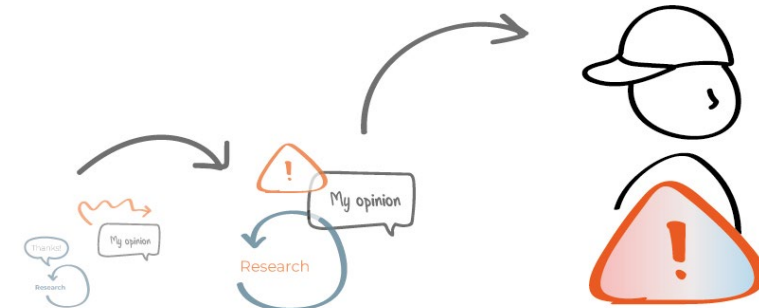
**Figure 79:** Impact on the size of comments that are neutral positive or negative, positive

**Figure 80:** Different layers coded with clipping masks



## 8.1.1 The impact of the intervention

This design has the potential to create a positive impact through different aspects:

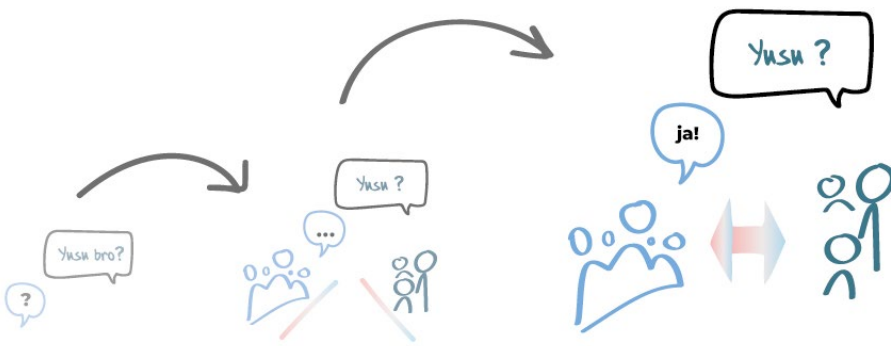


**Figure 81:** The process from problem unheard (chapter 6) > subgoal 1 feedback (chapter 7)  
> the design prevention targeting youth

### Prevention targeting youth

Current interventions targeting youth in the prevention of street harassment have largely been developed by experts without the involvement of youth themselves and failing to effectively counter street harassment (chapter 4.3). As a result, these interventions reflect adults' understanding of "right" and "wrong" behaviour, while for youth these lines are blurred and street harassment has no clear boundaries (chapter 5). This design gives direct feedback of youth opinions, also showing the participants of the research how their voices have made an impact (subgoal 1, chapter 7.1).

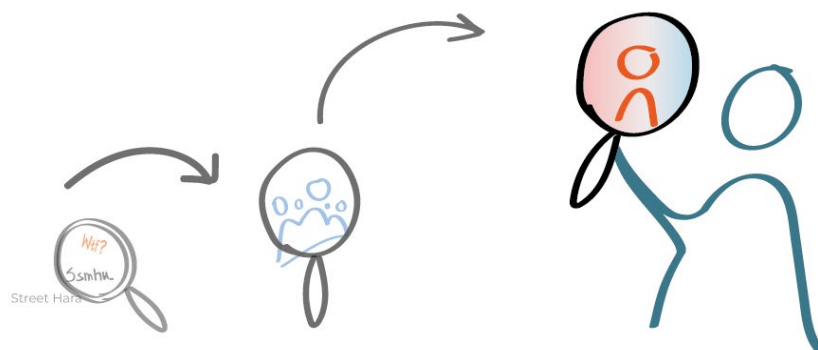
Moreover, both current interventions as the new law criminalizing street harassment focus on what youth cannot do, a strategy largely ineffective for this target group. As we have seen in chapter 2.3.1, this new law does affect youth on the street more and preventive conversation strategies currently used might even strengthen stereotypical norms (chapter 3). By including youths' opinion and voice concerning the topic, their voices are visually and literally heard. The design is the first initiative within the context that designs prevention of the problem together with youth and engages them through creative methods, resulting in an innovative way of showing the outcomes and allowing youth to explore with new behaviour.



**Figure 82:** The process from different perspective (chapter 6) > subgoal 2 gap (chapter 7)  
> the design bridging the gap

### Bridging the gap

Even though it is important that there are laws in place against street harassment, youth need a breathing space to explore their identity and social belonging. The design aims to create mutual understanding between organisations determining the rules on the street and what this public space means for youth. While everyone can use the installation, the co-development with youth makes the installation reflect their interest and opinion and challenges the communal social norms being present directly in the public space. Therefore the design aims to bridge the understanding of society and youth on the topic, showing different perspectives (subgoal 2, chapter 7.1).

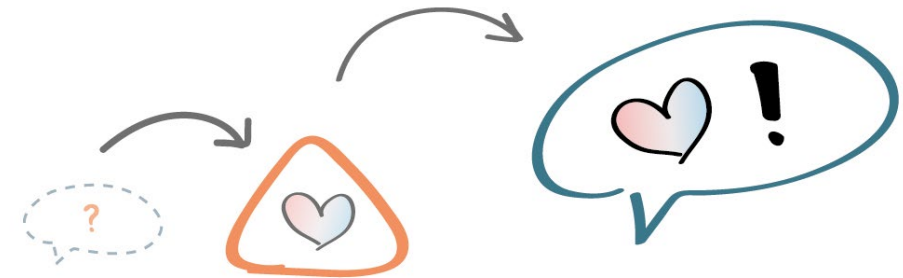


**Figure 83:** The process from blurry definition (chapter 6) > subgoal 3 address societal norm (chapter 7)  
> the design based on projection bias

### Projection bias

Papers on projection bias might underline why this concept could be very effective in addressing street harassment. Projection bias is a cognitive bias where people assume that others' feelings, preferences,

or beliefs are more similar to their own than they actually are (Criado-Perez, 2020). By visually showing how their behaviour changes and impacts others, the projection has the power to confront users with their biases, thus challenging the societal norms and deeply rooted power structures (subgoal 3, chapter 7.1).



**Figure 84:** The process from blurry definition (chapter 6) > subgoal 3 address societal norm (chapter 7)  
> the design based on projection bias

### Encouraging positive interaction through exploration

The design encourages users to experiment with words freely, providing the freedom to say anything while offering incentives for positive behavior. It aims to demonstrate that it is okay to initiate conversations or comments in public spaces, fostering confidence in making real-life connections. This is important to prevent the design from patronizing or giving youth restrictions.

At the same time, it educates users on respectful and appropriate ways to engage, using a fun and engaging approach to prevent fear of social interaction while promoting positive communication. This impact is further achieved by the use of mirrors as will be elaborated on in the next section.

## 8.1.2 Use of mirrors

Around the installation, decorated mirrors with text are placed on the wall. These mirrors were created together with youth and may remain on the wall after the projection is taken away, to provide a substantial legacy of the project for the neighbourhood (chapter 7.3).

Next to this substantial legacy the mirrors have two other functions: providing guidance on how to use the interaction and steering towards how to positively interact with strangers.



Negatief

**ZEG MAAR WAT!**

check de spiegels voor  
voor bedden

Negative is & positieve- :)

Positief

KKR Hoer!  
Tief op Flikker!  
Eyo meisje mag  
Ik je snap





These speech bubbles have the opportunity to address the law, by for instance a QR code that links to more information (figure 86). The incentives on the mirrors contribute to the conversation of what is and is not acceptable in our society. The balance between both showing boundaries of acceptance and not being patronising or impeding is inspired by the freedom with which youth workers interact with youth in the youth hubs (appendix B, activity OBH, OBZ, OSE).



**Figure 86:** The three functions of the mirrors: substantial legacy, guidance of interaction & positive behaviour nudge

### 8.1.3 Components

The installation consists of the following components:

#### Beamer

What projector should be used hugely depends on the location of the installation. Less light makes the beamer better projectable thus within a dark context a cheaper beamer could be used as compared to outside during the day. A darker environment is therefore preferred but depending on the beamer used is not a prerequisite. A short throw beamer would be a good option as this could project up under the wall in the set-up. However, there are also beamers on the market that are integrated into public spaces (LUMITRIX®, 2020; LM3X, 2025), however these are currently €25.000,-. Different options can be found in appendix Q.

#### Sensors

A sensor box, like Kinect Xbox, has all sensor input to make the interaction interactive and responsive to the user: a proximity sensor, microphones and connection with other components (Xbox Support, n.d.).

#### Title, information & mirrors

The mirrors around the installation and big title above it draw

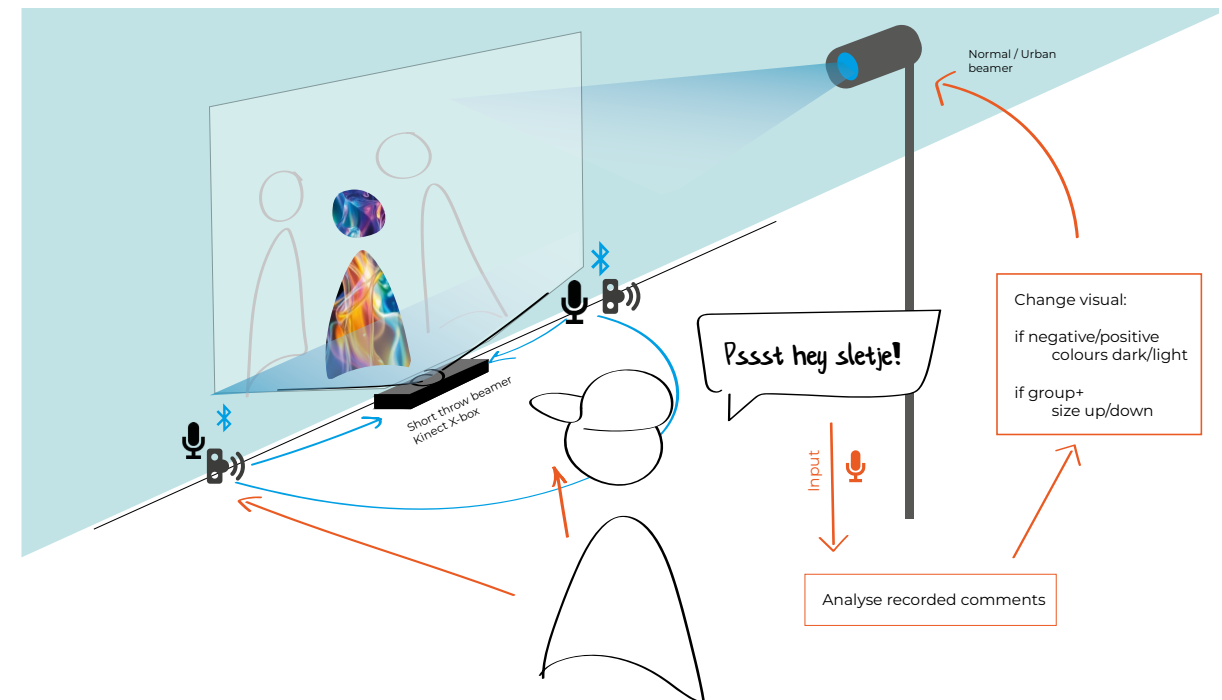
attention to the wall and show bystanders that a person is interacting with something and not just screaming at a wall (chapter 7.4.1).

If fitting to the type of environment where the installation is exhibited, more mirror paper and markers could be provided to invite users to add to the wall of examples.

## 8.1.4 Feasibility

For the feasibility of the technology behind the concept, an expert was consulted and sustained its feasibility (appendix B, activity IET). Different options for components and its feasibility can be found in appendix Q. For the development of the projection, the software Touchdesigner could be used (Touchdesigner, n.d.). This software has all the capabilities to build the installation, connecting the audio and proximity input with visual output (figure 87).

For a LLM (Language Learning Model, AI) to respond to the specific Dutch words as found positive and negative within this project, an additional library should be coded. A computer scientist could develop such a library to be implemented within the system. For a simpler version where this library is not required, the installation could be human controlled if comments are perceived negatively or positively.



**Figure 87:** The installation with components combined and two beamer options

Within the context, the municipality of Rotterdam recently used other projection setups in public spaces to raise awareness for social good, making this installation a valuable addition. For example the projection of rats on trash cans to draw residents' attention to not leaving their rubbish lying around. This shows that municipalities are willing to invest in such digital interventions.



**Figure 88:** Projection of rats in the public space by the municipality of Rotterdam (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2025)

### Costs

For the implementation of the installation there are two types of costs to consider: costs of further development and costs per installation.

The development includes costs for more design iterations and programming with a skilled coder, estimated at a minimum of €4.500,-.

Next to the further development, the highest expense is the rental of a short throw beamer (€1.600,- for two days). Depending on the frequency of the use of the installation, it could be beneficial to invest in a beamer, therefore being a one time investment. It is estimated that if the installation would be used over 8 times (in days) it is advised to purchase a good beamer instead of rental. For each event, the costs should be flexibly adjusted to the environment that the installation will be in. An estimation of the budget can be found in appendix R.

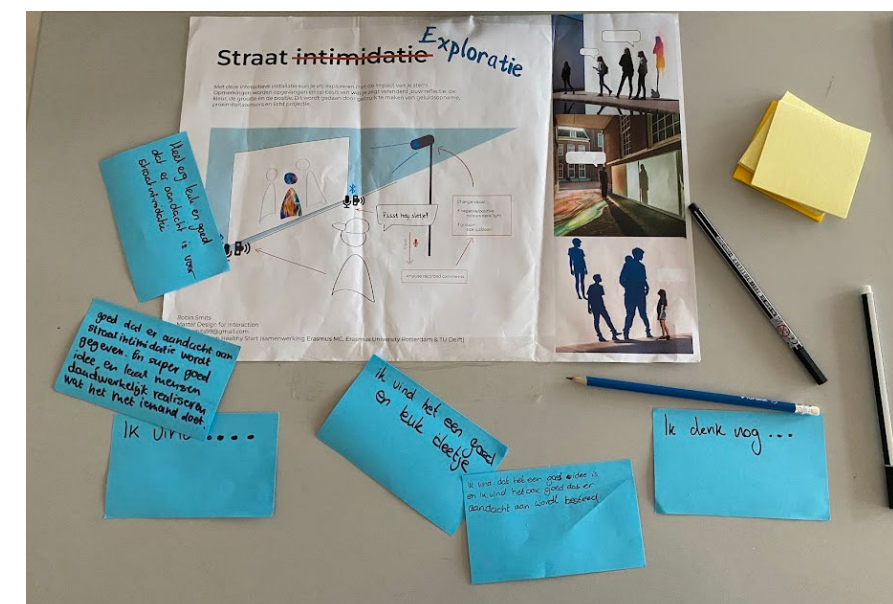
### Implementation occasions

The cost also highly depends on the occasion and location on which the installation will be shown. The design can be implemented on events, in collaboration with neighbourhood initiatives, or for other exhibiting occasions like for example the night against sexual violence (Plan International, n.d.). It can be used both inside and (preferably) outside within the public space. The design gives Healthy Start a visible output of how their research activities are given back to society and the collaborated youth.

## 8.2 Evaluation of concept

The second objective for this research was to create a design intervention to contribute to prevention of the behaviour by potential harassers. This section will evaluate if the design achieved this aim and the design goal.

Evaluations were done simultaneously to the prototyping sessions during the testing moments as described in chapter 7. Participants were directly asked their opinion on the concept and additionally to leave anonymous feedback on post-its as can be seen in figure 89. These first evaluations of the design indicate that the design appeals to youth and engages them freely, giving space for exploration. This can for example be seen in youth trying out different things together during prototype testing and indicating they would want the installation in the neighbourhood for at least a week so that they could tell their friends (test moment 6, appendix O). Thus the installation enables youth to explore with their social identity within the public space as stated in the design goal.



**Figure 89:** Participants were asked to leave anonymous feedback on post-its in the classroom



Looking at the subgoals and how the design addresses them as explained in section 8.1.1, the following feedback was given evaluating the intervention:

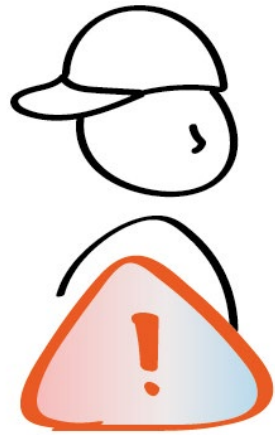


Figure 90: Prevention targeting youth

The first subgoal was to show youths participation and give immediate feedback (figure 90).

The following quote from this evaluation also shows youth feels like the design fits their perspective:

***“Do you think this is something everyone wants to use?” (me)***

***Girl 1: “No I think this is something really for youth”***

***Girl 2: “Yeah I think especially youth will enjoy trying this out”***

Showing youths participation could be integrated more by using their own drawn reflections.

The second subgoal was to bridge the perspectives of youth and society.

On the side of society, organisations like the week against street harassment and the municipality of Rotterdam have shown interest in the topic and expressed they want to use the concept for several occasions.

This shows that the installation has the power to contribute to bridging the perspectives of youth and society.

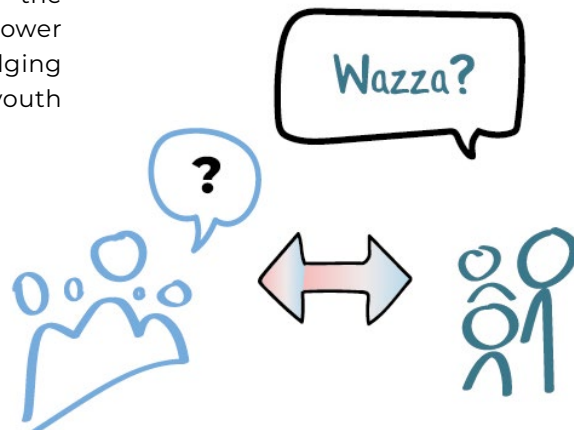


Figure 91: Bridging the gap

The third subgoal was to challenge the problem. Eventually the design does so by addressing projection biases. The positive impact of this projection bias on youth is highlighted by a participant in TM5 (appendix O):

***‘.. A super good idea and makes people genuinely realise what it does to someone.’***

The last subgoal was to encourage positive behaviour, which is hard to evaluate if the design actually does this. Should it not benefit, then at least it should not harm. If the design does not harm others could be further researched and debated.



Figure 92: Projection bias

However, within testing (TM5&) participants also indicated that some of their peers say negative things all the time anyway and thus this design would not negatively impact what they said. Therefore the design would potentially only open up opportunities for positive interaction rather than enforcing negative interactions.



Figure 93: Encouraging positive interactions

Throughout this project the matrix of domination is used as a tool to evaluate interventions. Looking at the final concept through these four domains (chapter 2.3, appendix S), Street Exploration primarily targets **the hegemonic domain**, making street harassment visible from youth perspectives. It opens up public dialogue, being present in the streets and transforms abstract discussions into tangible experiences that challenge prevailing social norms.

However, while the intervention avoids reinforcing stereotypical norms that current prevention strategies tend to strengthen, it is important to stay aware of the framing of “positive” and “negative” comments. The installation might unintentionally reinforce certain cultural values without accounting for diverse communication styles. A key consideration for future development is how the installation addresses intersectional experiences of harassment across dimensions of identity and context factors (chapter 11).

In **the interpersonal domain**, the installation aims to build youth awareness of the impact of their behaviors while maintaining their agency in public spaces. It shifts the exploration from others towards the wall, creating a free environment without harmful consequences. This approach may not only target potential harassers, but also establish clearer social norms that empower potential bystanders to recognize problematic behaviors. Within this domain, further development of group interaction capabilities would strengthen the installation's impact.

The design challenges the narrative that youth need external control, instead promoting engagement and self-regulation. By integrating youth voices directly into the design it provides immediate feedback.

The mirrors with information (figure 94) show potential to integrate the **disciplinary and structural domain**, while remaining engaging to youth. The projection challenges the blurriness of right and wrong behaviour, publicly questioning both the law and its execution. However, while the structural and disciplinary domain are acknowledged, stronger connections could be established, such as direct feedback about acceptable behaviour to enforcing authorities. Thus, like most interventions, enhancement in these domains could be made (chapter 3.1). Further testing in the public space is recommended to determine how these domains can be more effectively incorporated into the design and how the mirrors could be designed to do so.

More recommendations can be found in chapter 11.

Street Exploration enables youth to explore with their social identity within the public space and turns potential dangers into smiling strangers. A video was created to show the concept, of which the storyboard can be found in appendix T.

### Street Exploration

From potential dangers,  
to smiling strangers



Figure 94: The installation drawing attention in the public space



# **Evaluation youth participation**

- 9.1 Learnings for youth participation
- 9.2 Flowchart for youth participation



This chapter will reflect on youth participation through limitations and learnings within this graduation project. The approach was evaluated by reflecting on experiences by the project team (chapter 1.2) and feedback from the collaborated youth worker in Bloemhof.

The first part of this graduation project focused on creating a better understanding of youth perspectives on street harassment. Therefore the creative sessions were developed for the client. Based on these sessions, youth participation and the approach was also reflected upon on a broader level. This chapter will discuss what we found in collaborating with youth, schools and youth hubs. As a result of these reflections, a flowchart containing reflections was created to show our experiences and communicated to (social) designers and people who either are or want to be involved in youth participation.

## 9.1 Learnings in youth participation

Reflecting back on the limitations and collaborations within this project, several learnings about youth participation will be elaborated on in this section. From intensively collaborating with youth in a school and youth hub, my learnings were:

### 1. The importance of time investment and relationship building

Establishing trust and building strong relationships takes significant time, particularly when working with youth. To foster meaningful connections, weekly contact was maintained with participants over a two-month period by being present in their environments. This consistent presence built low-threshold relationships before the research began, creating a foundation of trust. Especially when working with youth, it was found to be very important to find the right tone for discussing a topic, therefore learning their language is of high importance, literally and figuratively.

Furthermore, youth often does not hold the research in high regard, so they might occasionally not show up or follow agreements. Thus it is important to take extra time into account for these inconveniences and send reminders right beforehand several times to for instance bring sensitizing booklets or consent forms back.

A strong bond may only develop through sustained engagement or in very small groups where trust can flourish and is dependent not only on the researcher's approach but also their positionality.

### 2. Facilitators diversity and roles

For effective facilitation, where all participants feel comfortable and heard, a diverse team is preferred consisting of at least three facilitators, including a facilitator, an observer, and a trusted adult.

Diverse includes:

- Gender diversity, with at least one man and one woman, to reflect varied perspectives.
- Cultural diversity to resonate with participants' backgrounds.
- Inclusion of one person familiar to the youth and one outsider unconnected to their daily lives, balancing familiarity with impartiality.

Within this project it could be reflected that it was easier to establish relations with participants (girls) in Delft, due to my appearance and being a girl from Delft myself. The conversations about racism during the creative sessions would have probably been different if participants could connect with researchers from a different cultural background (chapter 5.2.2). However if this is not possible, it would be good to start the session by addressing the facilitators positionalities. As social design experts highlighted (appendix B, activity DDW1), to be able to understand each other, you also need to be able to make yourself vulnerable as a researcher or session leader. Therefore it is useful to start by explaining who the facilitators are, where they are from and from what perspective they approach the topic.

### 3. Considerate active involvement of youth worker or teacher

Giving youth workers an active role in the facilitation could be crucial for research, but requires careful consideration. In Bloemhof, the youth worker remained mostly in the background but occasionally intervened when participants provided socially desirable answers. This highlighted their potential to help youth open up more when actively involved. Ideally youth workers would take up a role as a third facilitator instead of being an extra participant or fly on the wall.

However, active participation requires a long-term partnership and alignment with the youth worker's motivation and ambition. Some youth workers expressed that street harassment was not a pressing issue compared to armed violence or criminal behavior, while others viewed it as an essential topic (appendix B, activity IS1, IY1). Intrinsic motivation for the subject is essential for meaningful collaboration, especially since youth workers may not receive extra compensation for their time.

### 4. Flexibility youth hub

If working together with a youth hub, it should be taken into account that you need to be more flexible and have less control over the process. Within a youth hub, everyone can walk in and out continuously, which had several implications for the sessions:

- Distractions of external factors, like the TV that was on next to our creative session 2, where peers were playing fifa
- Youth could change their attitude, experiencing different group dynamics. Extra pressure can arise due to for example, adults walking in to 'check' what the youth were doing. This happened during the presentations of the artifacts of

creative session 2 in Bloemhof, which might have made youth more closed to tell about their creations.

- Contact with youth is made flexibly and often very last minute, making it hard to plan when you want to collaborate with youth

For the same reason (the open space of a youth hub) the age group was less controlled. In a youth hub you have no control over who comes in and who goes out thus youth might be older or younger than expected. Even in schools, if you target a specific year group, there are big differences between how developed young people are at that stage of their life: so 12 years old can be very mature or still a child. Age says less than the stage they are in. Looking back at our collaborations I feel that this stage was broadly consistent among the participants and representative of the youth we wanted to target.

### 5. Recruitment participants

Within this project we left the recruitment to the youth worker and school. However it is important to note that in Bloemhof, there were not enough girls present. At first one girl turned up and did everything she could to still get friends to join her. She clearly felt uncomfortable being outnumbered. She also spoke out less during the sessions because of the boys present. Afterwards, she indicated in the survey that she knew more about the subject than she had been able to express. In the literature, this is consistent with research showing that in group composition of men and women, at least as many if not more women are needed for girls to speak up during meetings (Criado-Perez, 2020, page 28). The importance of having a majority of women should thus be taken into account in recruitment of participants and beforehand it should be checked how many girls are known to participate.

### 6. Delicate interactions

Each group has their own preferences. Be delicate in for example taking pictures. It can easily make youth feel uncomfortable. Rather ask a trusted adult or youth themselves to take the pictures. If you really want pictures of what is done ask one of them if they could take a picture of something with your phone.

When you ask something of someone (for example the sensitizing booklet to fill in) show interest in their work and learn about who they are as a person. Especially in asking vulnerability from participants, it is important to build trust and be vulnerable as facilitator/researcher as well

## 7. Carefully think of the value for them

What's in it for them? Or even more: how is it engaging, fun and relevant for youth? To assess this properly it is again necessary to know youth. They are not animals and won't be lured in just by food. For the prototyping collaborations some participants were enthusiastic because they valued spending time being creative and the materials that were provided to create. A lot of participants created mirrors to take home and put in their room. During another prototyping session I taught them how to code within P5.js and some participants were interested in my field of studies, therefore collaborating with me.

## 8. Have close contact with the ethics committee

Our research resulted in numerous ethics considerations. For these unexpected situations and changes, a good contact with an ethics committee is advised. Within Erasmus University we had a meeting in real life, which was very valuable. If possible, this would be advised to discuss situations where ethics could be questioned.

For example, in Bloemhof youth switched to Turkish or Moroccan language any time they wanted to say something without the researchers understanding. But within the transcript, could that be translated, having their (parents) permission to make a recording? And what if youth that did not sign a consent form walks into the session and starts giving their opinion?

Within this project ethics were elaborately discussed with other researchers as well (appendix B, activity T6, P1, P2).

Concluding, these learnings highlight the complexities of working with youth and youth workers in a sensitive and contextually grounded manner. Doing research at schools or youth hubs relies on the time investment, diverse and empathetic facilitation teams, and a commitment to building trust.

As evaluated with the youth worker, our approach of close involvement was appreciated, though not the standard norm or prerequisite:

Youth worker (figure 95):

*"Yes I personally find it, how you too, your way, I also just like better. [] Because, you know, more involvement.. So then I also really see **that you guys are sincerely** uh...yeah.*

*Look, if you guys also just showed up, then I would have participated as well. **I wouldn't have minded that but I like this better.**"*



**Figure 95:** Youth worker helping in the session in Bloemhof



# 9.2 Flowchart for youth participation

Next to the limitations and learnings found within the current approach of youth participation, the behaviour of youth in and around the creative sessions resulted in opportunities how research could best approach youth. As a reflection of our collaboration and findings, a “beslisboom” was created. The Dutch concept of a decision flowchart that can be used to absurdist decisions with humorous outcomes. The audience for the flowchart is (social) designers and people who either are or want to be involved in youth participation. The goal is not to get more youth participation or provide clear advice, but to show our experiences and with a bit of humour reflect on how youth could best be involved in (design) projects. This flowchart was distributed to social designers and researchers through LinkedIn and within numerous activities (figure 96, appendix B, activity P1, P2, T5).



Figure 96: Presentation at Afdeling Buitengewone Zaken, activity P2

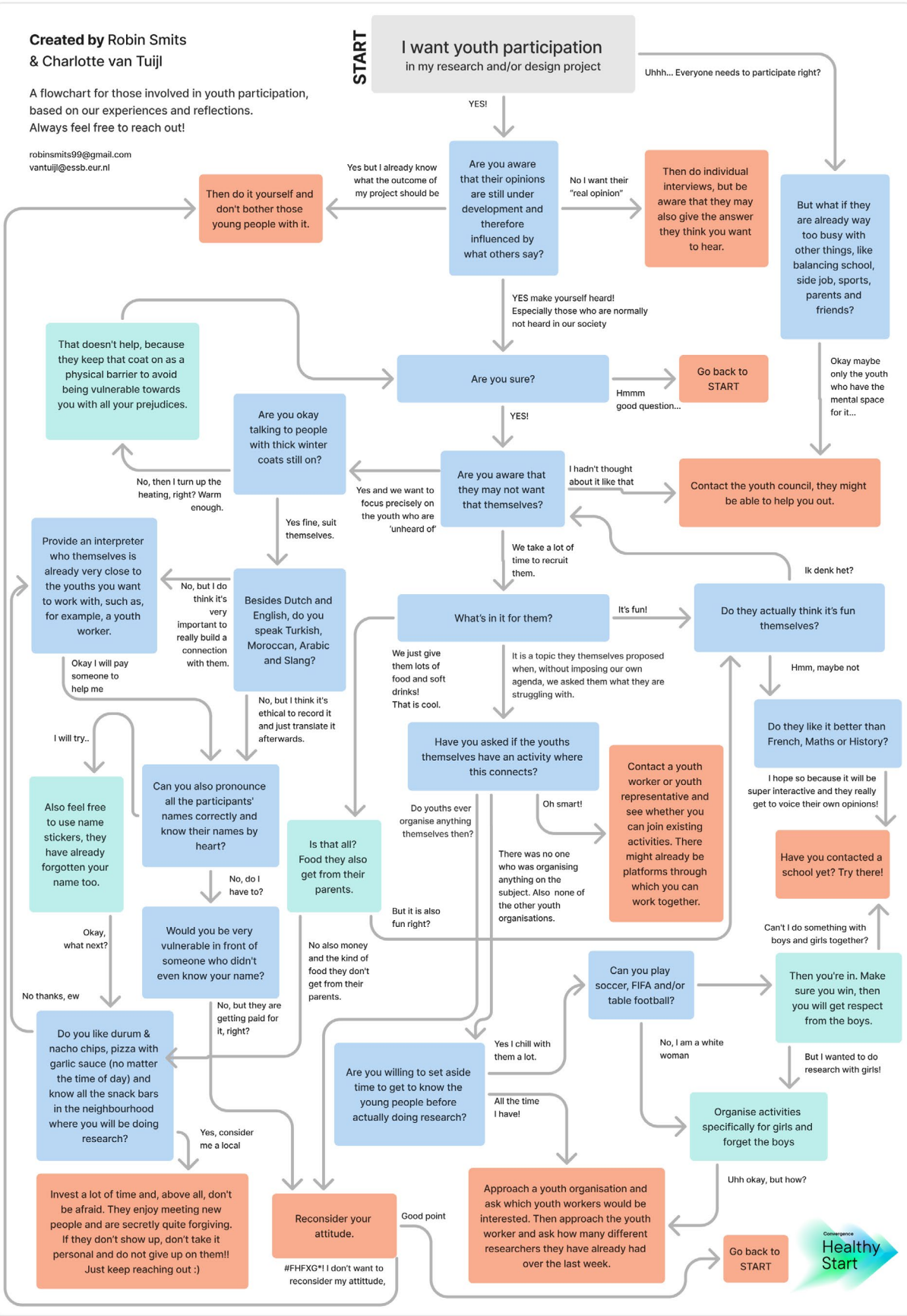


Figure 97: Flowchart on youth participation

# 10

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## Conclusion

10.1 Recommendations  
Final reflection

**The goal of this graduation project was to understand how youth (12-17 year olds) perceive street harassment and to create a design intervention in the context of Rotterdam.**

In doing so, this project has contributed to knowledge about how youth perceives the issue.

The specific objectives of this project were to (Chapter 1, appendix A):

- Understand how youths in Rotterdam perceive street harassment
- Create a design intervention to contribute to prevention of the behaviour

This project has successfully achieved these goals by gaining more understanding of the engagement of youth in street harassment, especially from the perspective of the harasser. With the creative sessions it was found that an important reason for this group to engage in street harassment is connected to the exploration of their identity. For youth the street functions as both a breathing space and a testing ground for social norms. They cross boundaries to offload the pressure they feel of who they should be and take up different roles and personalities in exploration of their identity.

The created design intervention, Street Exploration, is both addressing the problem and engaging for youth, inviting more positive interactions in the public space. Since street harassment is influenced by a complex interplay of numerous contextual factors, it cannot be solved through a “single solution” but requires systemic change across all domains of society. The Matrix of domination was found a useful tool to critically address the power dynamics within design interventions.

The project has resulted in the insights as described in this report, the creative sessions that could be held with more groups of youth, the design intervention that could be applied in the context and a flowchart as reflection upon youth participation.

The creative sessions opened up the opportunity to collaborate with youth on the topic and prevailed group dynamics that might have stayed hidden in individual interviews. The project found that researchers should be careful of their approach when doing participatory design with youth. It is important to assess the value for youth in participating in research and invest a significant amount of time in relation building.

## 10.1 Recommendations

This project has resulted in multiple deliverables, of which two designed outcomes: the creative sessions and Street Exploration. For further research and development of the concept several points could be looked into.

### Recommendations for the Creative Sessions

For implementation of the creative sessions the following recommendations are given:

1. **The second session** could be approved to better fit research rather than coming up with design interventions. This could for example be done by incorporating roleplay into the second session to enhance engagement. This should be done by a researcher and designer, facilitating more sessions.
2. **Context factors** and other influences could be better captured within the first session and integrated within the second session in a more dynamic and interactive way. For example by giving youth “controls” over different factors. This should be done by a researcher and designer, facilitating more sessions.
3. The sessions show potential for adaptation to promote positive behaviors, transforming them into valuable **tools for prevention**, research, and education. This could be further investigated by researchers or designers.
4. The sessions and used **materials**, like the videos, could be improved, co-creating them with youth, youth workers and researchers or designers.

### Recommendations for Street Exploration

For implementation of the final concept within the context the following recommendations are given:

1. **Testing** with prototypes within the public space could assess how much the design encourages for positive interactions and public dialogue. The information that should be provided should be developed, for instance connecting more to the structural and disciplinary domain. This should be done by a researcher and designer, facilitating more sessions.
2. A consideration for future development is to investigate how the installation could address **different context factors and intersectional experiences** of harassment across dimensions of identity. This could be explored by researchers and designers.



3. It is recommended to experiment with **group-mode** interactions, since this could have a valuable impact for the installation. Focusing on technical feasibility, this should be done by a programmer and designer.
4. **Developing** the visual impact and code further. For example, with algorithms like Perlin noise, dynamic fire visuals within the shadows could be created, with color shifts driven by word inputs and a library should be created to respond to negative and positive comments (by programmer).
5. Creating **different shapes by youth**: To enhance the impact, diverse reflection shapes and shadow effects could be explored and further co-created with youth.
6. **Partnerships** and initiatives on different systemic levels should be collaborated with to increase awareness and engagement of the installation: like Rotterdam's "Week Against Street Harassment," youth hubs, and exhibitions such as Dutch Design Week. This should be done by the facilitating team and Healthy Start.



**Figure 98:** (from left to right) Juliëtte, Robin & Charlotte at Dutch Design Week

## Final reflection

This was my first project using a participatory approach within the social design domain, and I must say, I initially underestimated the complexity of the topic.

I really wanted youth to participate, and work with them as much as possible. However, it quickly became clear that youth themselves sometimes did not feel the need to participate with me. Building relationships took time, therefore we could only collaborate with a small group of youth during a few participatory moments. Although I would have liked to involve more neighbourhoods in Rotterdam, the question remains whether it is more valuable to build stronger relationships with a smaller group of youth, or, as a researcher, to gather similar information from a larger number of participants.

From my experience with youth, I know that a long-term relationship is needed to get accurate information instead of the socially-just answer. I think that particularly with this target group and in the context of societal dilemmas, a higher level of engagement, such as establishment or contribution in the triangle of engagement (May, 2007), is more valuable than haven spoken to a lot of youth.

I am also amazed by how much we could unpack in a small setting with a small group of young people. The classroom and youth hub operated like a tiny society, full of sexism, racism, social behaviour and interesting dynamics.

During this whole project the close collaboration with Charlotte was especially valuable for me (figure 98). We often worked on the project like a team rather than a designer and company client. Within this team we had very different perspectives: a design view and a researcher of social sciences. I think especially in social design projects, having this collaboration can be crucial for acknowledging the nuances and being sensitive towards the different influencing factors, while still implementing new interventions. Working together with Charlotte, I was more aware of all influencing parts of the system that I was intervening in, instead of over-enthusiastically picking something up and reframing it.

In the emerging design field of social design, experimenting should be handled with more sensitivity than in product design. Evaluating cannot be simply done using a Harris Profile or checking boxes. In this project I used the matrix of domination as a tool to evaluate interventions. The feminist lens helped me to see other nuances in the intersectionality of street harassment and the many people involved

in the problem. However, feminism can be super critical and it is hard to intervene in deeply rooted problems. I often felt frustration of not being able to solve the problem, but at least doing something helped. What I take away from this project into my future career is that a difficult target group or a difficult problem to solve should not be an excuse to try and change or design for it. As Perez said about women inequality ((Caroline Criado Perez, 2021):

*"It is not the examples, it's the excuses that are being made for them that make me very angry"*

-Caroline Criado Perez

In my opinion, the beauty of design is that it can make small changes tangible. It gives the opportunity to directly show insights back to participants. Within participatory design, this feedback is very important to show the participants that their input is taken seriously and into account. Even though not everyone feels the need to engage in solving social issues, if they participate, they should see how their valuable time contributed to something, otherwise they will feel unheard.

As highlighted in an interview done by Charlotte:

*A lot of people and not even necessarily just young people, but also just residents themselves. That they are like, we come to these things, but we see nothing, nothing happens.*

- (SOL youth worker, Beverwaard)

However it is important to also hear from people that do not feel intrinsic motivation to participate. Because while they might not feel the need to solve the problem, they might be part of it. I think I felt this friction often in the project: if you ask a (potential) problem to solve itself then it is unlikely to respond enthusiastically to that.

Initially the problem of street harassment was picked by us (Charlotte & me). Perhaps the problem did not directly resonate with the issues youth finds important. In the creative sessions, at least, they did not see much of a need to come up with solutions to the problem. To make this project fully participatory would have required giving the participants more power in the process. Transferring decisions to them would have required closer involvement over a longer time period. However, despite the project not being fully participatory, it went beyond hosting a participizza night (where people are asked to give input in exchange for a piece of pizza).

I invested a serious amount of time building relations with the youth (figure x), as well as youth workers, and lost over 20 games in table soccer from them (but won 2 and it was always close in my offence!).

Even though a single intervention might not solve the problem, together they have the power to challenge the social norms and step by step work on improvement. I am asked to build and present Street Exploration for the week against sexual harassment in Rotterdam. The location that we got assigned is the Doelen, which is a building at the square where the man on trial in the first court hearing, the one I attended in the first weeks of my graduation, committed street harassment and was arrested for it. I am super proud and happy with this full circle.

This graduation project was my individual work, but I often felt so privileged with the amazing team around me. We could talk about the topic, insights, things that we saw happening on the streets or how we felt that week. Thank you Charlotte, Milene, Sofie and Juliëtte and all youth and youth workers I collaborated with for making this project so special!



Figure 99: Losing at the youth hub



# AI statement

During this project, I have used various AI tools to navigate and explore directions for my texts, code and images. These tools, known as Language Learning Models (LLMs), were particularly helpful in saving time when writing and reformulating content.

While integrating these LLMs into my workflow has significantly improved my efficiency, I also encountered instances where they had too little sensitivity or nuance on the topic, or did not match my view on the topic. Being a bit stubborn, this led to a tendency of me thinking I knew everything better than Chatgpt. Therefore no text was ever directly copied and pasted, and no image was immediately considered good enough without further refinement (within the programme itself or Photoshop).

## LLMs used for tekst:

I used ChatGPT and Claude for navigating sources, generating quick translations or synonyms, providing brief summaries and helping me formulate critical questions. For example: I used it to reformulate my insights from the matrix of domination towards easier understandable questions for youth that could be used as statements in session 2.

## LLMs used for coding:

I used ChatGPT and Claude to debug my code or integrate new functions. I asked the LLMs to give me tutorials on what should be changed rather than copying the full code (figure X). I used this method so that I would still be able to understand the full code and therefore what other changes could be made.

## LLMs used for images:

Additionally, I experimented with other AI tools for image generation. Chatgpt, Replicate, and MidJourney were used for brainstorming and creative inspiration as well as generating the images that will be referenced in the next section.

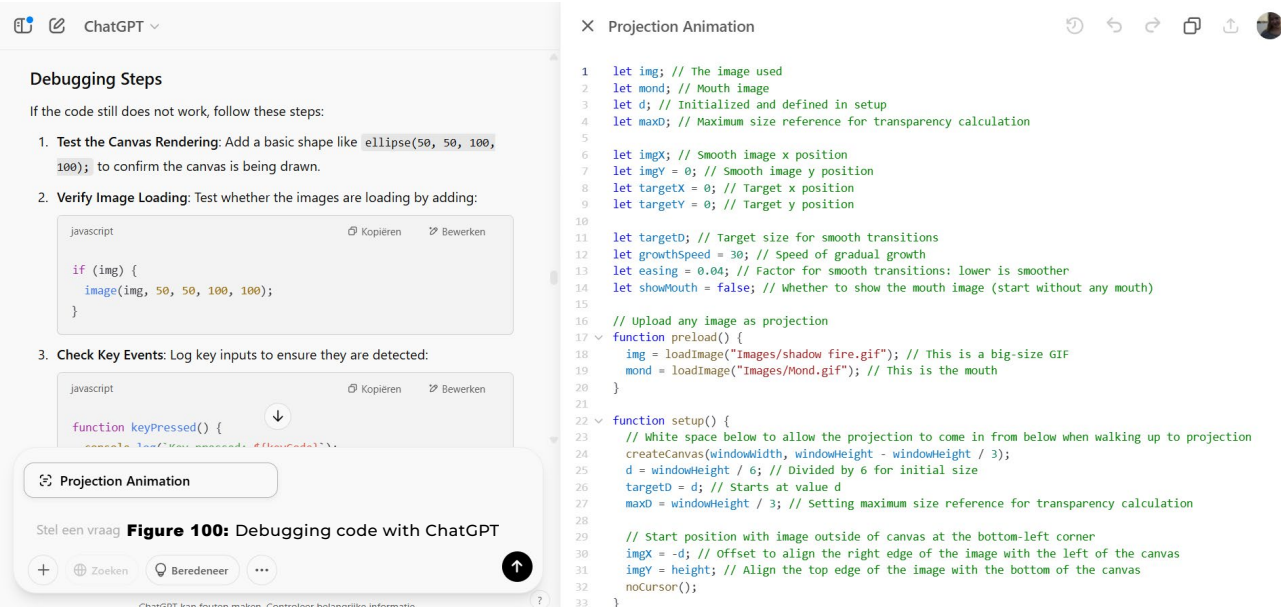


Figure 101: Image as generated with ChatGPT, adjusted in Photoshop

Maak een afbeelding: Prompt:  
"An urban street in a Dutch neighborhood with a white wall featuring mirrors shaped like speech bubbles. The setting is modern and lively, with subtle urban textures like bricks, graffiti, and small details reflecting city life. Two teenagers are facing the wall, one standing close and interacting with it as if speaking. A precise projection outlines the silhouette of the closer teenager onto the wall, with vibrant and dynamic colors filling the shape of the silhouette but staying strictly within its boundaries. The speech-bubble mirrors reflect fragments of the surroundings, enhancing the creative and interactive vibe of the scene."



Made with the old version of image generation. New images coming soon.

Hier is de afbeelding die je hebt gevraagd. Laat het me weten als je meer wilt aanpassen of andere ideeën hebt!



# AI Image References

## Prompt 1:

Prompt created by Chatgpt, image generated by Chatgpt (chatgpt.com) (figure X)  
Edited with Photoshop (Adobe, 2025)

"An urban street in a Dutch neighborhood with a white wall featuring mirrors shaped like speech bubbles. The setting is modern and lively, with subtle urban textures like bricks, graffiti, and small details reflecting city life. Two teenagers are facing the wall, one standing close and interacting with it as if speaking. A precise projection outlines the silhouette of the closer teenager onto the wall, with vibrant and dynamic colors filling the shape of the silhouette but staying strictly within its boundaries. The speech-bubble mirrors reflect fragments of the surroundings, enhancing the creative and interactive vibe of the scene."

## Prompt 2:

Prompt created by Claude (claude.ai) based on sketches (see image),  
image generated by Replicate (https://replicate.com/)

"A minimalist Dutch street scene with three teenagers in front of a white wall. Their shadows are reflected as silhouettes containing colours on the clean white wall, but uniquely, one shadow contains colours in swirling gradient (like oil on water), perfectly contained within the shadow's edges. The teenager is reaching toward their own magical reflection while saying something, while their friend watches in amazement. The wall is flat and features two modernist windows above. Shot in crisp contemporary style, strong natural lighting creating defined shadows, 8K resolution, photorealistic detail. The magical effect is ONLY within the shadow projection, not in the physical wall structure."

## Prompt 3:

Prompt created by Chatgpt, image generated by Chatgpt (Chatgpt.com)



"A figure in a metallic pink bunny costume with mirror-like properties standing face-forward on a wet Rotterdam street. The costume material is primarily bright pink but has a high-gloss reflective finish, like rose-gold chrome or pink metallic car paint, creating subtle reflections while maintaining its pink base color. Full-body shot with tall upright ears, the suit's surface catching city lights and environmental reflections without losing its dominant pink hue. Documentary-style photography, shot on Kodak Portra 400. Background shows modern glass high-rises mixed with traditional Dutch architecture. Moody evening atmosphere with wet cobblestones. The suit's fabric has the properties of pink chrome or metallic candy paint, creating a dimensional sheen that shifts and gleams while staying distinctly pink. Natural composition with subject centered in frame. Photojournalistic approach, standing pose, direct engagement with camera. Deep shadows and high contrast, slight film grain texture. Shot at eye level. 4K

resolution, hyperrealistic detail.

Style keywords: street photography, documentary, urban realism, direct portrait, photojournalism

Technical aspects: pink chrome finish, metallic reflection, candy paint effect, high gloss pink, dimensional sheen, sharp focus, natural lighting, wet surface reflections

Figure 102: Prompt generation for image within Claude



**R** I want to make an illustration to AI generate an image. It should represent a street with a person standing in front of a wall and the shadow of this person reflected on the wall in colours. One reflection in the same size as the person and a dark colour, one same size and mixed colours and one bigger than the person and very light colours. The setting should be outside in the public space of the Netherlands and I want the image to look like the illustration that I sended here and have the setup of the sketch.

Give me a prompt that will generate exactly this illustration

I understand you want to create a prompt for an AI image generation system to create an artwork similar to the interactive art installation concept shown in your reference images, but adapted for an outdoor Dutch street setting. Here's a detailed prompt that aims to capture what you're looking for:

"A minimalist urban street scene in the Netherlands, featuring characteristic Dutch architecture with clean brick walls. In the foreground, a single person stands as a silhouette against a plain wall. The wall displays three overlapping shadow projections of the figure: (1) the first shadow is true to size and rendered in deep indigo blue, (2) the second shadow is also life-sized but appears in swirling, psychedelic colors reminiscent of oil on water - mixing purples, teals, and magentas, (3) the third shadow is 1.5x larger than the person and appears in ethereal, pastel hues of

Reply to Claude...

+

↻

Claude 3.7 Sonnet 

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# References

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# Appendices

The full appendices document containing all appendices can be found on the repository of Delft University of technology:  
[www.repository.tudelft.nl/](http://www.repository.tudelft.nl/)

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[Appendix C: Snippets from interviews Charlotte \(activity IS1\)](#)

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