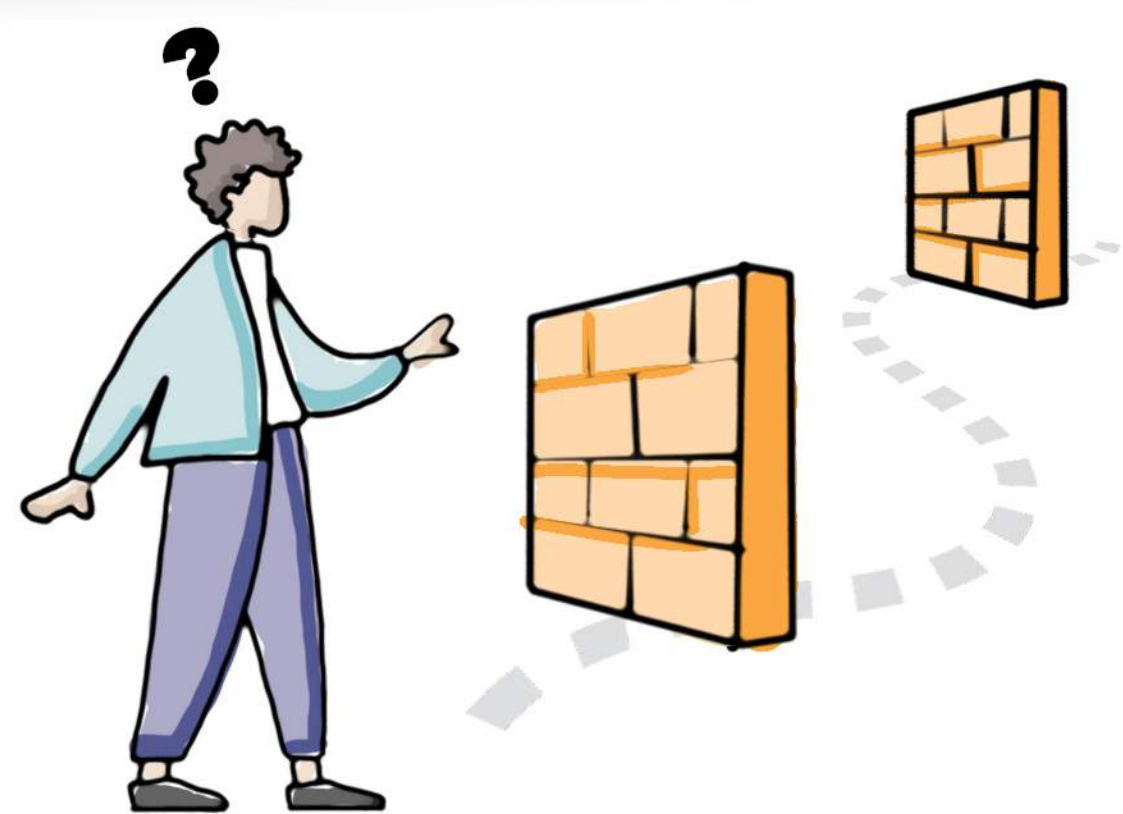


A TEA BOX FULL OF STORIES

Designing a low-threshold conversation starter that motivates citizens to open up about poverty-related experiences during tea time. The tea box full of stories unlocks and activates an informal network of knowledge and care, where friends, neighbors, and family together explore how they can support one another.



Over 23.000 households in Utrecht live in poverty

The municipality of Utrecht and its supporting organizations are continuously trying to support citizens in poverty. However, the poverty reduction system can be complex and bureaucratic, making it inaccessible for some citizens. Cognitively challenged, non-Western immigrants are especially vulnerable to these complexities. They struggle with low-literacy, communicative skills, and cultural barriers. The aim for this project is to design an intervention that makes poverty support more accessible to this group of Utrechters.

Shame and mistrust keep Utrechters from finding support

The target group refrains from requesting help because they feel overwhelmed by the many available options, lack clear information about their options and rights, mistrust the authorities, or feel ashamed. They let their financial struggles go untreated, often letting them get progressively worse with time.

In search of a fitting approach to this problem, the theme of 'opening up' arose. The target group pushes the topic of poverty away, even though the network of people around them could probably be of great help. All this knowledge and support could be unlocked if people just opened up towards each other. The challenge is to find a way to let these people open up about their experiences, in a comfortable way.



A tea box full of stories helps people open up about poverty

The resulting concept is a low-threshold conversation starter that motivates citizens to open up about poverty-related experiences during tea time. The tea packets in the box have questions and quotes printed on them, inviting the users to start a conversation about these topics. The quotes, which are written by other Utrechters, show them that these problems are universal, and that being vulnerable is okay. The box also offers multiple different links to U-Centraal; an organization that can help citizens find the right professional support once they are ready for it.


The tea box unlocks and activates an informal network of knowledge and care, where friends, neighbors, and family together explore how they can support one another. It is a first low-threshold stepping stone towards a more accessible system, offering professional support in a pro-active yet unforced manner.



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