Nasz Wawer

Service Design Strategies for Youth Engagement in Wawer through Placemaking for Belonging

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Nasz Wawer - Service Design Strategies for Youth Engagement in Wawer through Placemaking for Belonging

I. Abstract

This master's thesis explores how Service Design can act as a catalyst for Social Innovation, supporting social connection, civic engagement, and placemaking through a case study conducted in the Wawer district of Warsaw.

In a context marked by spatial fragmentation and limited youth participation, the project envisions new forms of community infrastructure that empower young residents to co-create their environment and sense of belonging.

Drawing on extensive research – including interviews, cultural probes, and expert consultations – the study uncovers systemic barriers to engagement alongside opportunities to activate local networks.

Building on these insights, the project focuses on Falenica, one of Wawer's most peripheral neighbourhoods, proposing an initiative designed to establish the foundations for community engagement. A pretotype workshop was co-created with local stakeholders, with the goal of engaging young participants in playful filmmaking to foster a shared sense of belonging. These experiments informed the development of an inclusive service model, represented through a plan for reconfiguring existing district resources and creating bridges between public institutions, private businesses, and culture-driven organisations. The proposal is further supported by a motivational matrix, economic sustainability strategies, and a long-term roadmap for systemic transformation and gradual scaling of social innovation through local engagement.

Beyond its design outcomes, the thesis reflects on how Service Design can nurture agency, trust, and shared ownership in urban contexts where formal participation is limited. It argues that design, when combined with foresight and local collaboration, can strengthen community identity and create the conditions for sustainable change, offering a replicable model for socially driven innovation in other cities.

Keywords: Service design, Social innovation, Strategic design, Systemic change, Placemaking, Civic participation, Youth services

«Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.»

(Italo Calvino 1972, Invisible Cities)

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III. Terminology

As the project analysed in this study involves entities whose names are originally in Polish, we use different forms of these names interchangeably throughout the text. For clarity, the official Polish names are accompanied by their simplified English translations:

- Kinokawiarnia Station Falenica → Cinema-cafe
- WCK Filia Falenica → Culture House in Falenica
- Biblioteka Publiczna w dzielnicy Wawer m.st. Warszawa → Library in Falenica
- Wydział Promocji i Komunikacji Społecznej → Department of Promotion
- Wydział Kultury i Sportu → Department of Culture and Sport
- XXV Liceum im. Józefa Wybickiego w Warszawie → High School
- Warszawski Transport Publiczny → Public Transport
- Koleje Mazowieckie → Regional Rail Operator
- PKP Falenica → Polish State Railways, Falenica
- PKS Radość → Motor Transport Company, Radość
- Plaża Romantyczna → Romantyczna Beach
- Czarny Staw → Black Pond
- Garażówka → Garage sale
- SKM → Fast Urban Railway

1. Introduction

This chapter serves as the introduction to our Master's thesis, outlining the motivation behind our choice of topic and explaining the progression of our research journey. It describes how our initial interests and explorations gradually led us to the final case selection, highlighting the reasoning and key turning points along the way.

Then, the chapter provides a detailed presentation of the case itself, offering the necessary background to understand its context and relevance within our overall research and design process.

Finally, the chapter includes a reader's guide that outlines the content and structure of the book, explaining the order of the sections and how they connect to one another in order to provide an overview of the entire text.

This chapter is divided into the following sections:

1.1 Interests and motivations

1.2 Case presentation

1.3 Reader's guide

1.1 Interests and motivations

Our primary interest lies in the intersection of Service Design and Social Innovation. Coming from countries with limited investment in these fields, we were particularly motivated to explore contexts where such initiatives were more established.

Our process began with a brainstorming session where we identified pressing social issues, personal interests, and the scope of potential interventions. For reasons linked with our personal interests and backgrounds, the target group we decided to focus on, when thinking about everyday life improvement, is young people (aged 16 to 30). The initial idea came from personal experience which led us to consider the case of Rovereto, in the Trentino region of Northern Italy.

In Rovereto, and particularly among its youth, there exists a notable sense of disengagement and low participation in community initiatives. Despite access to substantial financial and intellectual resources, efforts to foster civic involvement have often been short-lived. Municipal programs designed to encourage participation frequently lost momentum after an initial wave of interest.

Initially, our project aimed to investigate how similar issues have been addressed in Denmark, especially in Copenhagen, where various community-driven initiatives have effectively promoted social engagement. Inspired by these models, we explored the possibility of adapting such approaches to Rovereto, using the Youth Center - Smart Lab as a potential focal point.

We were drawn to the Scandinavian model of community organization, characterised by its participatory structures and strong emphasis on co-created services. Our aim was to draw insights from this model to inform service design strategies that could empower citizens and foster youth engagement in Rovereto.

However, midway through our research, a field visit was conducted in Rovereto with an in-depth interview with the Smart Lab team (analysed in detail in chapter 3.2) together with some interviews with the local youth. These interactions revealed that Rovereto had already made substantial progress in areas of citizen participation and social innovation. The Smart Lab emerged as a well-designed service embedded in a vibrant ecosystem of stakeholders. It became clear that the city was already on a promising path, making it less suitable for the kind of intervention we hoped to design and implement.

At this point, we re-evaluated the direction of our thesis. Rather than limiting ourselves to analysing an existing case, we wished to use our thesis as an opportunity to create, prototype, and test a service of our own. We were motivated

by the potential to produce real-world impact and saw value in pursuing a more proactive, design-led approach.

Luckily, our prior acquaintance with Wawer (a district of Warsaw, Poland), through friends and local knowledge, gave us a connection to the district. Through numerous conversations, we learned that Wawer faced challenges similar to those we had observed in Trentino, particularly concerning youth disengagement and underutilisation of community resources.

This led to a pivotal decision: to shift our case study from Rovereto to Wawer. Importantly, much of the literature we had reviewed was still applicable, as the issues and goals remained consistent. This allowed us to make the transition without compromising the integrity of the project.

1.2 Case presentation

Wawer, the area on which our case focuses, has a population of 88,512 and covers 79.71 km², making it the largest district of Warsaw by area and the one with the lowest population density. The district is characterised by extensive forests — which account for 33% of its area, excluding private land— and predominantly single-family housing (Tomaszczyk, 2019) .

Wawer also stands out in terms of nature conservation. Key protected areas include the Masovian Landscape Park (MPK), the Warsaw Protected Landscape Area, and the “Middle Vistula Valley” Natura 2000 site designated under the EU Birds Directive. Additionally, there are two nature reserves:

- Sobieski Forest (also a Natura 2000 site) and the Zawadowskie Islands
- “Zakole Wawerskie” Nature and Landscape Complex (Gryz, 2023).

For residents, these forests play an essential role in daily life and significantly influence local infrastructure. At the same time, Wawer is considered a ‘bedroom neighbourhood’ and generally does not attract visitors from other parts of Warsaw. Young residents, in particular, often note the lack of recreational spaces, which drives the need to leave Wawer to spend leisure time in central Warsaw.

Notably, the City of Warsaw's local government adopted the ‘Warszawa 2030’ development strategy, aimed at diagnosing the city’s challenges and potentials and defining strategic goals for implementation.

During the challenge diagnosis phase, several problems particularly affecting Wawer were identified, including inadequate technical infrastructure, air pollution, poor accessibility to public transport, limited bicycle and pedestrian routes, and

disorderly or degraded spatial organization.

Unfortunately, not all of these issues were addressed through strategic or operational objectives. While the draft strategy emphasises raising the quality of life across all districts, it largely overlooks inequalities between them, with Wawer performing among the worst in terms of access to basic services, such as drinking water, gas, and sewage networks (Czerwonka, 2018).

This assessment motivated us to further explore the accumulated problems that make the district less attractive for young people. Our goal was to increase participation and foster a community capable of acting collectively on these challenges. We focused particularly on young residents, who are most affected by the district's shortcomings and are more inclined to drive change.

Our efforts centered on developing a roadmap to enhance the quality of services and activities in Wawer, transforming it into a vibrant destination not only for residents but for all Warsawians. These initiatives aim to encourage investment in the district and demonstrate its potential for further development.

1.3 Reader's guide

This work is structured in seven parts.

Part I is the introduction.

Part II presents the theoretical foundations we consider essential for understanding the project. It constitutes the literature review and situates our design work within the broader field of service design scholarship.

Part III explains our methodological approach. It describes how we framed the problem, the methods we chose to analyse it, and how we designed, tested, and represented potential solutions.

Part IV collects the analyses produced following our methodology. Using a set of selected tools (including interviews, polls, and cultural probes) this section presents both internal research on Wawer and external research (benchmarking and expert interviews), providing a comprehensive contextual overview. It also introduces the Personas and How Might We questions that serve as a bridge to the next phase, guiding the subsequent design process.

Part V outlines our design work. It details the development of requirements, the bridge built between stakeholders, the motivational matrix, and a brief economic model. This part also describes the pretotype workshop used to test our concept.

Part VI focuses on representation and strategic planning. It presents our design choices through the value proposition, the Three Horizons Model, a Roadmap, and a Theory of Change, and closes with a video pretotype illustrating our vision for Wawer 2030.

Part VII contains our discussion and directions for future development, followed by the conclusion. Here we apply critical reflection to our methodology and process and discuss the relevance of this project for service design research.

We hope you enjoy reading this work and wish you a good journey through it.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, we present a selection of the literature research that we continuously conducted throughout the entire master's thesis project.

This literature review explores the intersections between Service Design, Social Innovation, Placemaking, Community-Centred Design, and Strategic Design, with the aim of constructing a theoretical framework that grounds and guides the thesis.

By interlacing together these fields, the chapter outlines how contemporary design practices can foster community engagement, collaborative transformation, and systemic change, providing the conceptual foundation for the project's methodological approach.

This chapter is divided into the following sections:

2.1 The evolution of Service Design

2.2 Designing for Social Innovation

2.3 Systemic Proximity and Placemaking

2.4 Community-Centered Design

2.5 Strategic Design as an Integrative Framework

2.6 Conclusion

2.1 The evolution of Service Design

Service design is no longer an “emerging” practice; rather, it has matured into a recognised discipline with its own methods, tools, and impacts on both public and private sectors (Galluzzo, Fassi, De Rosa, 2018).

Early debates in service design focused on the paradigm shift from products to experiences: from designing material – technology-centred – artefacts to shaping immaterial interactions, interfaces, and strategies. Its multi-disciplinary character (drawing from ethnography, sociology, and economical and organisational studies) has allowed it to expand beyond traditional design domains (Galluzzo, Fassi, De Rosa, 2018).

Services are inherently complex and relational entities (Sangiorgi, 2011). They are systems shaped by a variety of actors and factors, operating across multiple layers of interactions, strategies, processes, and structures, and unfolding temporally and spatially (Kimbell, 2009; Holmlid, 2009). For these reasons, service design has increasingly intersected with spatial design, particularly in areas such as urban planning, workplaces, and infrastructures. This has led scholars to argue for a transdisciplinary dialogue between spatial design, with its historical grounding in architecture and interior design, and service design, with its holistic, systemic orientation (Galluzzo, Fassi, De Rosa, 2018).

Service design, defined in such a way, provides a holistic framework to understand and shape interactions between people, environments, and institutions. Mager and Sung (2011) describe service design as the integration of design thinking into service processes and systems to create cohesive, user-oriented experiences. Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011) further emphasise that service design is the design of the area where interactions between the service and the user take place, underscoring its inherently social and spatial dimensions.

This convergence frames design as shaping both artefacts and the conditions for social and cultural value-cration. Contemporary design practice must recognise that projects affect not only the physical world but also the sociocultural contexts in which they operate (Manzini, 2016). Thus, the language, methods, and strategies of design must adapt to these broader systemic relationships.

The convergence of service and spatial (S+S) design thus reflects a shift toward designing with an awareness of relationships, contexts, and communities. In the context of placemaking, design approaches allow for the creation of environments where services, spaces, and social practices merge, resulting in living systems of value co-creation that sustain community wellbeing.

2.2 Designing for Social Innovation

Parallel to the development of service design is the rise of social innovation as a critical framework for addressing unmet needs (Pierandrei et al., 2018). Social innovation can be defined as the creative recombination of assets (social capital, traditions, technologies, …) to meet social goals in new ways (Leadbeater 2007). Its processes are shaped by both incremental vs. radical innovations and top-down vs. bottom-up drivers (Manzini, 2014).

Two lenses dominate: the heroic narratives of individuals who catalyse change, and the systemic accounts that view individuals as carriers within broader movements. Both perspectives converge in emphasising the role of ideas as seeds of transformation, which spread through "S curves" of diffusion, scaling from niche experiments to mainstream practices (Mulgan, 2006). Importantly, empathy and ethnography are highlighted as key tools in identifying unmet needs, while prototyping and iteration drive the evolution of ideas into viable innovations (Mulgan, 2006).

The dynamics of failure and scaling are particularly relevant: most social innovations fail not because of inherent flaws but due to weak mechanisms for growth and institutional adoption (Mulgan, 2006). Strategies of scaling up, scaling out, and scaling down (Moore et al., 2015) are therefore central to understanding how local innovations can translate into systemic impact.

Design is increasingly recognised as a key enabler of social innovation, whether acting from above or below. In top-down strategic design, designers connect local actions to overarching visions, create enabling structures, and articulate shared meanings. In bottom-up processes, communities themselves become "creative communities", inventing new ways of living by recombining resources and building cooperative practices (Meroni, 2007; Jegou & Manzini, 2008; Manzini, 2014).

Here, professional designers take on dual roles:

- Designing *with* communities, facilitating collaboration, co-design, and shared scenario building.
- Designing *for* communities, developing enabling artefacts, platforms, or events that increase accessibility and replication of collaborative services.

The most promising processes, however, are hybrid models (called middle-out approaches) that blend bottom-up initiative with top-down support (Fredericks et al., 2016). These complex and dynamic processes often overlap with participatory design traditions (Ehn et al., 2008), where designers act not only as facilitators but

also as triggers or activists, catalysing new conversations and possibilities. In this framing, the role of the designer is not only to support but to make things happen (Manzini, 2014).

At a broader scale, participatory design has become a key instrument for engaging marginalised or underrepresented groups in social innovation. For example, Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011) describe service design as a sense-making process that supports idea generation, prototyping, and collaboration, often facilitated through new media to enable people to connect, share, and co-create. This participatory ethos underpins initiatives that engage marginalised youth and communities in processes of self-determination and skill development (Jäppinen et al., 2015; Akama, 2014).

As Akama (2014) argues, design's role extends to unlocking situated knowledge, building skills, and empowering people to shape their futures. This capacity-building dimension situates design as a transformative practice.

A key institutional driver in this field has been the DESIS Network, which links design schools and labs dedicated to social innovation. DESIS emphasises design's role in creating enabling solutions: platforms, tools, and collaborative services that support ongoing innovation rather than fixed end products (Manzini, 2015).

The DESIS approach is inherently relational, focusing on networks, socio-material contexts, institutional dynamics, and interpersonal relationships (Haxeltine et al., 2017). Its concepts of collaborative and relational services underline that social innovation is sustained through the quality of relationships fostered within communities (Jegou & Manzini, 2008).

Scalability is a core aim, as DESIS seeks to connect local "niche" innovations with systemic transformations (Moore et al., 2015). This echoes the broader concern of how design can mediate between small-scale experiments and large-scale change, ensuring that creative communities are not isolated but embedded within supportive institutional frameworks.

Mulgan (2006) describe social innovation as essential to regional development and the enhancement of human life quality. Value co-creation lies at the heart of this process, as it involves multiple stakeholders in generating, testing, and implementing solutions that address complex social challenges. However, this collaborative process also introduces new risks, such as the difficulty of sustaining long-term stakeholder engagement and managing interdisciplinary dynamics (Biggs et al., 2010; Franz et al., 2012; Freeman, 2006; Westley et al., 2006).

In this context, service design has emerged as a strategic methodology to operationalise social innovation. Tassi (2009) and Sangiorgi (2011) argue that service design facilitates value co-creation by integrating diverse resources and

stakeholders through visualisation tools and participatory activities. These tools enable communities and organization to collaboratively design services that are adaptive, context-sensitive, and sustainable.

Service design not only solves current problems but also cultivates environments that empower stakeholders to continually adapt to changing circumstances (Burns, Cottam, Vanstone, and Winhall, 2006).

Service Design methods can contribute to the essential work of “bridge-building processes” that help previously isolated stakeholders develop cooperative innovation capabilities (Brown, 2015).

Brown & Wyatt (2010) note that while many stakeholders remain hesitant to embrace change or risk failure, sustained participation and iterative design can foster transformation by building trust and ownership. Ultimately, these processes align with the goals of placemaking: enabling communities to co-produce spaces, services, and social systems that reflect their collective values and aspirations.

2.3 Systemic Proximity and Placemaking

A defining feature of contemporary design discourse is its systemic orientation. The complexity of global-local interdependencies, supported by digital networks (Sassen, 2004), has fostered the “infrastructuring processes” (Björgvinsson, Ehn, & Hillgren, 2010; Van Reusel, 2016), an ongoing alignments of actors, flows, and scales that create fertile conditions for grassroots innovation. In this view, design becomes a practice of working within distributed but resilient systems to address “wicked problems” (Manzini, 2015).

Building on this, the notion of Systemic Proximity reframes urban and community design as processes of positioning and reflexivity. Designers are called to map their own roles, identities, and influences within socio-technical systems, recognising how human and non-human elements interact (D’Ambrosio et al., 2024).

The sense of place is widely recognised as a cornerstone of community identity and well-being. The National Academy of Sciences emphasises that community and place are closely linked concepts; creating a sense of place simultaneously nurtures a sense of community among residents (Community and the quality of life, 2002). This sense of place represents a form of social capital: shaping residents’ personal identities, fostering belonging, and strengthening rootedness within their local environment.

The Project for Public Spaces (PPS, 2015a) defines placemaking as the act of strengthening the connection between people and place through the creation of public spaces that serve as focal points for community life. Placemaking thus transcends the aesthetic or functional improvement of physical environments: it aims to integrate social, cultural, and environmental dimensions into a unified community vision. According to Silberberg et al. (2013), placemaking supports a broad set of objectives, including promoting public discourse, civic pride, neighbourhood connections, community health and safety, social justice, economic development, and environmental sustainability.

Beyond its physical outcomes, placemaking is a profoundly participatory process. As Silberberg et al. (2013) note, when community members engage in the deliberative and communal processes of planning and developing public spaces, they assume a more active political voice in shaping the environments they inhabit. This involvement not only empowers individuals but also cultivates community capacity and local leadership.

The notion of co-production deepens this participatory dimension. Within placemaking, coproduction reframes citizens as collaborators rather than consumers, aligning with the core principles of civic engagement and shared ownership of local development. As Silberberg et al. (2013) argue, this participatory approach fosters a deeper connection and sense of identity between community members and their environment, reinforcing social cohesion and collective agency.

The literature also highlights its psychological and social benefits: participatory and co-productive placemaking fosters psychological well-being, civic pride, and a sense of ownership among participants (Corcoran et. al., 2018).

This approach deepens the practice of placemaking by linking it with infrastructuring, relational ecosystems, and community narratives (D'Ambrosio et al., 2024). It extends ideas such as the 15-Minute City into ecosystems of care, where services and spaces are embedded in broader social, economic, and environmental contexts (Vink et al., 2017; Vink, 2022).

2.4 Community-Centered Design

The concept of Design for Placemaking extends the philosophical foundation of placemaking by embedding design as an operative and participatory force in community development. Within this framework, Community-Centered Design emerges as the most appropriate design methodology for placemaking, scaling the tools and principles of User-Centered Design to the collective level (Meroni, 2007).

According to Meroni (2007) and Jégou and Manzini (2008) Community-Centered Design involves working with creative communities to understand their values, behaviours, and capacities, and to co-develop solutions in collaboration with the most active local actors (Cantù et al., 2012).

This perspective reframes the designer's role: rather than imposing external expertise, designers act as facilitators who draw on local knowledge and empower communities to become co-designers of their own futures. Meroni (2007) identifies two key competences required for this approach: first, the ability to gain knowledge of the community through immersion and empathetic engagement; and second, the ability to translate that understanding into co-designed tools and solutions that reflect the community's context and aspirations.

The approach depends on ethnography, co-creation, and co-design as essential tools for envisioning and implementing contextually coherent solutions. As Cantù et al. (2013) state, such approaches enable non-designers to contribute their local knowledge and professional skills to collaborative design processes, ensuring that solutions are both relevant and sustainable.

Paraphrasing LeGates and Stout (2020), design for placemaking transforms a space into a meaningful place while shaping and being shaped by the community. This cyclical process fosters collective identity, as communities infuse spaces with lived experiences, cultural values, and social practices (Sedini et al., 2023). Placemaking thus creates a virtuous cycle of mutual stewardship, where communities transform their environment, and those transformed spaces, in turn, sustain and influence community life.

Moreover, placemaking represents a democratisation of public realm design: by involving activists, scholars, and professionals across disciplines, placemaking becomes a site of social negotiation and shared authorship of the commons.

In this manner, Service Design provides a rich toolkit for civic engagement, particularly when working with marginalised groups.

One example is the "ME, ME+, ME++" framework developed in youth engagement projects (Pierandrei et al., 2018). It structures participation across three scales:

- ME: the individual, focusing on self-awareness and personal motivation.
- ME+: the immediate community, where bonds and belonging emerge.
- ME++: the global digital networks that connect youth across contexts.

By moving across these scales, design processes can translate personal stories into shared aspirations and situate local communities within a global conversation. This multi-scalar perspective resonates strongly with contemporary placemaking

approaches that link local identity with global flows (Pierandrei et al., 2018).

In this sense, Community-Centered Design serves as a bridge between placemaking and service design. The participatory methods of Community-Centered Design – ethnographic observation, workshops, co-creation, and iterative prototyping – mirror the co-productive ethos of placemaking, while also aligning with the systemic, interaction-oriented principles of service design. By enabling communities to prototype and refine services collaboratively, Community-Centered Design fosters both social learning and local innovation capacity.

Moreover, Community-Centered Design reinforces the notion that design is not merely a technical activity but a social practice. It promotes empathy, dialogue, and shared authorship, which are fundamental to sustaining social innovation

2.5 Strategic Design as an Integrative Framework

Strategic Design offers the overarching lens to situate all these practices within long-term systemic change. Strategic design rests on several pillars (Meroni, 2008):

- Designing Product-Service Systems, as integrated strategies that articulate values and identities.
- Engaging in problem setting as well as problem solving, shaping what issues are addressed.
- Enabling evolution and sustainability, orienting innovation toward social and ecological transitions.
- Fostering social innovation by recognizing bottom-up changes as prototypes of future systemic shifts.
- Building scenarios that translate visions into sharable hypotheses.
- Promoting co-design and moving from user-centered to community-centered design.
- Facilitating strategic dialogue, where designers act as catalysts for collective sense-making.
- Building capacities and platforms, empowering communities and institutions to act.

In this sense, Strategic Design provides a framework where design is understood as an interpretative process that makes sense out of chaos and contributes to systemic transformation.

2.6 Conclusion

Collectively, these concepts provide the theoretical scaffolding for this thesis. The reviewed literature demonstrates how placemaking, community-centered design, service design, and social innovation converge into a shared paradigm of participatory transformation.

Service Design contributes methods and tools for engaging people in collaborative innovation. Social Innovation provides the societal lens, highlighting the conditions, processes, and dynamics by which change emerges and scales. Placemaking and systemic proximity link these practices to the lived realities of communities and urban systems, situating design in both space and culture. Community-centered design translates this into actionable design processes grounded in empathy and collaboration. Finally, Strategic Design provides the integrative framework that binds these approaches, positioning design as a practice of sense-making, capacity building, and systemic change.

Together, these approaches reconfigure the relationship between people, place, and design. Rather than seeing design as an external intervention, they position it as a relational practice: a way of facilitating connections among individuals, communities, and environments. The reciprocal process where communities transform their surroundings and are in turn transformed by them (Silberberg et al., 2013) captures the essence of this integrated framework.

From a practical standpoint, the integration of placemaking, service design, and social innovation holds significant implications for designers, policymakers, and community practitioners. It advocates for design as facilitation rather than prescription, encouraging communities to become co-authors of their futures. In doing so, design not only improves the physical and social environments in which people live but also strengthens democratic participation, resilience, and collective identity.

In conclusion, the reviewed body of literature positions placemaking and service design as complementary facets of a broader social innovation ecosystem. Their fusion through community-centered and participatory approaches provides a powerful framework for reimagining how places and communities evolve together. By foregrounding collaboration, empathy, and systemic thinking, this integrated approach offers pathways toward more sustainable, inclusive, and meaningful forms of community development.

This literature review therefore frames design as a transdisciplinary, relational, and strategic practice, one that operates across scales, from individual self-awareness to

global systems, and across domains: from everyday services to institutional transformations. It is within this interpretative lens that the following thesis situates its exploration of the intersection between Service Design and Social Innovation.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, we present the theoretical and methodological framework that guided our research and design process.

We introduce our overall methodological approach, explain our positioning within the problem area, and outline the set of methods and mindset that informed and structured our design activities.

Through this chapter, we aim to clarify how our process moved from exploration to intervention, illustrating how theory and practice intertwined to shape our project's development.

This chapter is divided into the following sections:

3.1 Methodological Approach

3.2 Understanding Services at Different Levels

3.3 Building our Methodology

3.4 Three-Phase Capability Model

3.5 The Double Diamond Framework

3.6 Service Master Planning

3.7 An Evolving and Reflective Methodology

3.1 Methodological Approach

We grounded our approach in what Arbnor and Bjerke (2009) define as a "methodological view": a guiding perspective that shapes both how we perceive a problem space and how we act within it.

We adopted an actor-based approach, which views reality as socially constructed and shaped by human intentionality.

This ontological stance aligns with our focus on social innovation, particularly within the domain of designing for services (Kimbell, 2011). This vision conceptualises services not as fixed products or transactional exchanges, but as value-creation activities situated within complex socio-cultural contexts. It is especially suited to addressing ill-defined or open-ended problem areas, where challenges are multifaceted and require systemic thinking.

Our methodological view brings together knowledge from multiple disciplines:

- Economics, which informs value co-creation;
- Design studies, which help analyse interactions among actors in a service system;
- Socio-cultural research, which bring insights into the roles, knowledge, and norms that shape service experiences and outcomes.

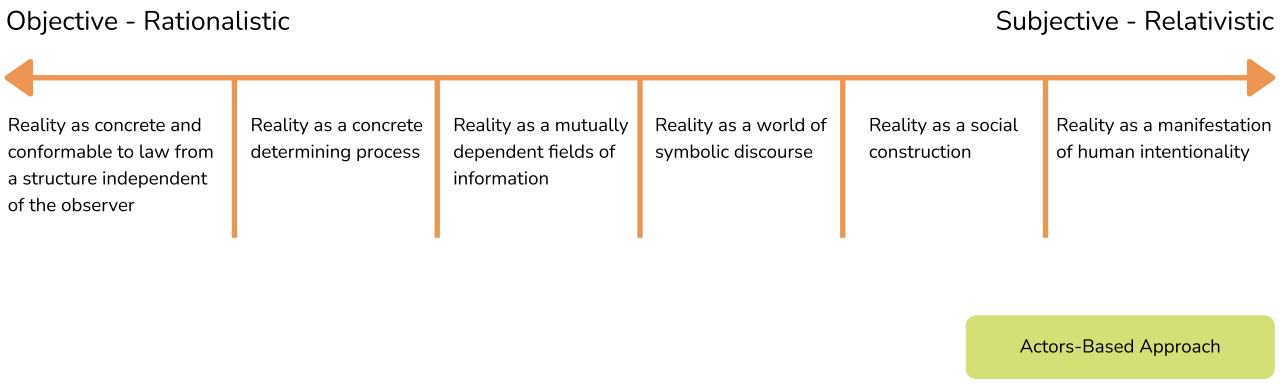


Figure 1: Methodological Approaches. Inspired by Arbnor, I., & Bjerke, B. (2009).

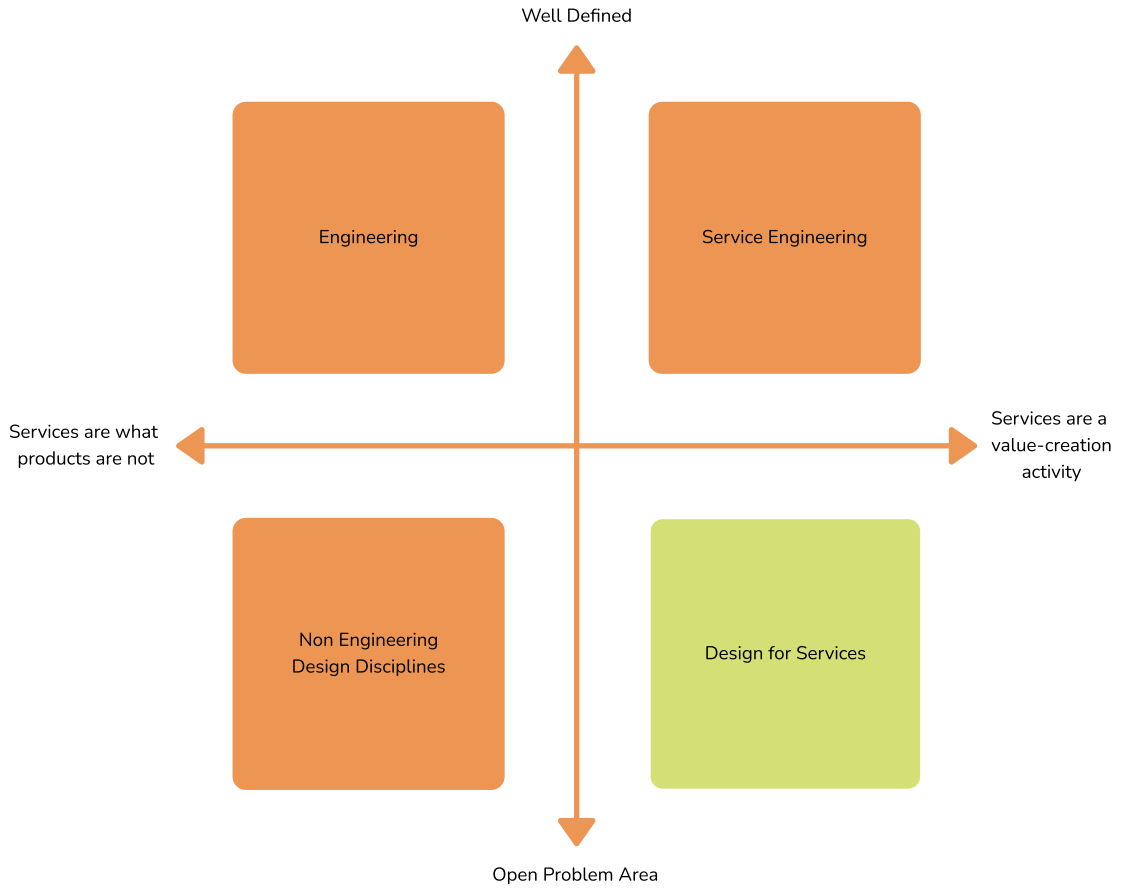


Figure 2: Approaches to conceptualising service design. Adapted from Kimbell (2011)

3.2 Understanding Services at Different Levels

Service Design, particularly in the context of social innovation, can be understood at multiple levels of abstraction (with examples from Service Design Capabilities, 2021):

- Service as Interaction: Direct engagements between people, often with asymmetrical roles (e.g., nurse and patient)
- Service as Infrastructure: The organisational and spatial systems supporting those interactions (e.g., the hospital).
- Service as Systemic Institution: The broader institutional frameworks (e.g., healthcare systems, regulations, scientific knowledge) shaping both infrastructure and interaction.

Given our focus on social innovation, the most appropriate perspective would be that of service as a systemic institution. However, due to the scope and time constraints we chose to concentrate on the creation of foundational conditions for meaningful interactions.

Our project aims at creating a form of organization that is supporting and generating (infrastructuring) small level innovation.

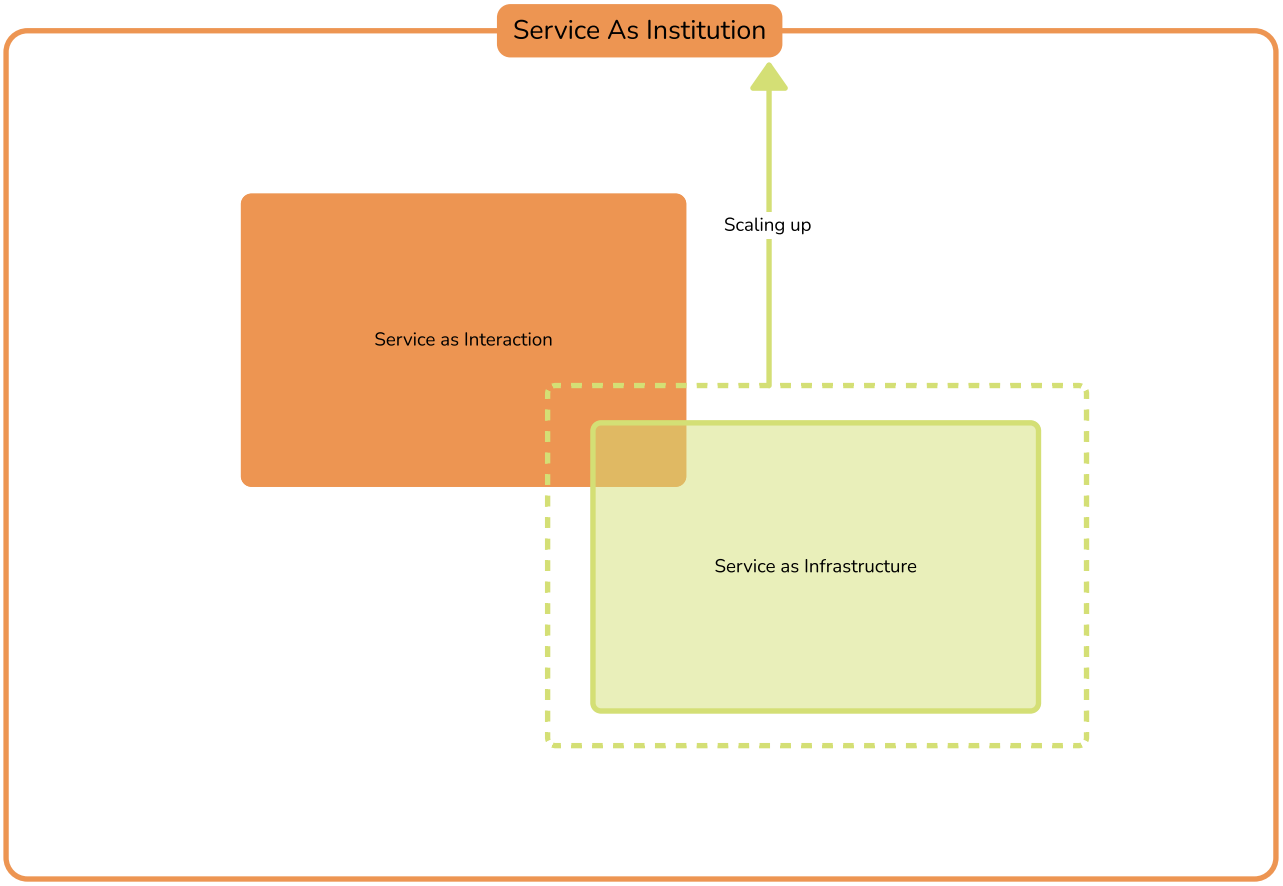


Figure 3: The value creation ecosystem. Adapted from Service Design Capabilities (2021)

3.3 Building our Methodology

Arbnor and Bjerke (2009) define methodology as the "understanding of how methods are constructed." Following this logic, we developed our own operative paradigm: a tailored methodological framework composed of selected methods, tools, and mindset that best fit our project's goals.

To visualise and structure our approach, we combined two complementary models:

- Three-Phase Capability Model (Service Design Capabilities, 2021)
- Double Diamond (Design Council, 2025)

into an overarching framework inspired from the Service Master Planning (Selloni & Meroni, 2023). This methodology combines co-design and service-centred scenario building to connect strategic, top-down actions with bottom-up activation. In our case, it provided a conceptual background for linking research and design activities to longer-term community engagement and social innovation objectives.

3.4 Three-Phase Capability Model

We organised our methodology into three sequential phases; each linked to specific design capabilities:

1. Analysing the Context
   This phase encompassed all our research activities, which we divided into “External Research” and “Internal Research”.
   These activities helped us develop the capability of “Addressing the Context”, allowing us to better understand the challenges and opportunities within our chosen setting.
2. Designing
   Here, we focused on generating and developing possible solutions. This phase emphasised “Open Problem Solving” (through continuous brainstorming and peers' confrontation sometimes supported by ideation methods) and “Moving Across Levels of Abstraction”, using systemic design tools to shift between details and overarching structures.
   The key capabilities we cultivated in this phase were “Building Logical Architecture”, “Engaging Stakeholders”, and “Modelling”.
3. Representing the Solution
   We focused on developing the capabilities of “Building Vision and Logical Architecture”.

This model allowed us to reflect on the skills and mindset we cultivated throughout the project, framing our learnings and offering a new lens on the capabilities we developed along the way. This perspective is particularly interesting in how it emphasises the evolution of our design practice and our growing ability to navigate complexity and uncertainty.

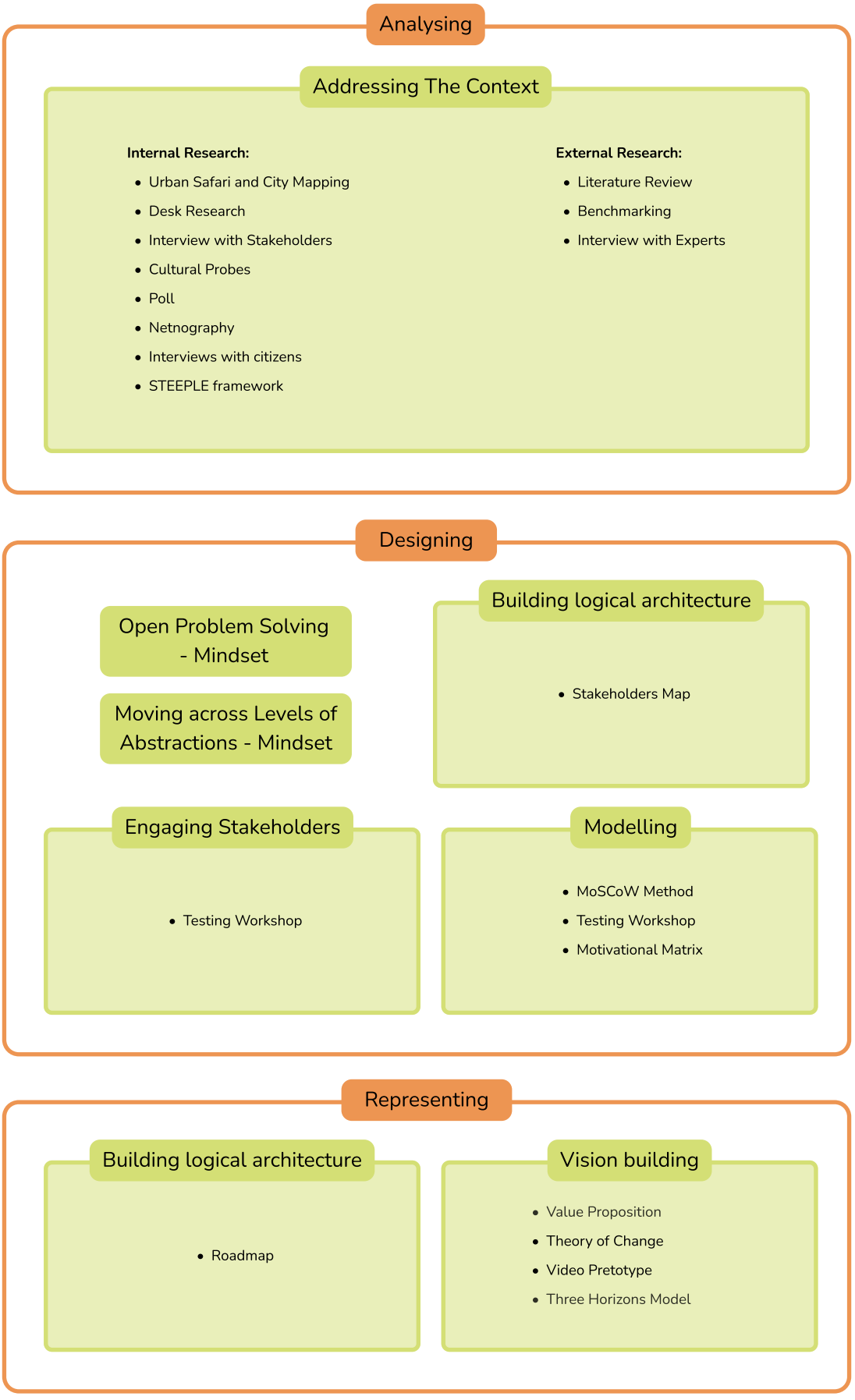


Figure 4: Three-Phase Capability Model. Adapted from Service Design Capabilities (2021)

3.5 The Double Diamond Framework

To supplement our capability-based approach with a time-based structure, we also mapped our process onto the Double Diamond model, which divides design into four iterative stages:

1. Discover
   We investigate the context beyond the initial assumptions by conducting internal and external research to identify the core problem. Our aim is to validate whether the challenges we perceived were shared by others in the community.
2. Define
   In this phase, we analyse and synthesise our research findings to frame the design challenge and identify actionable directions.
3. Develop
   We generate ideas through brainstorming and creative sessions, exploring a range of possible interventions.
4. Deliver
   Here, we prototype and evaluate the final idea, refining it into a more complete and actionable concept.

This model allowed us to track our progress over time (chronological framework) and maintain a structured yet flexible approach.

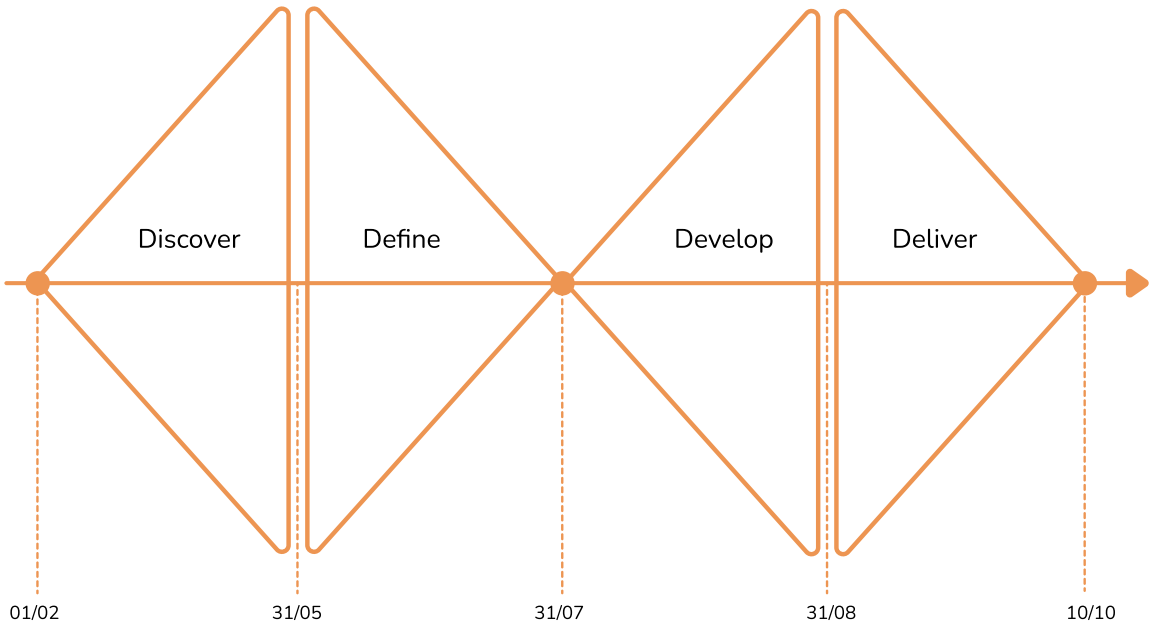


Figure 5: Double Diamond Framework. Adapted from Design Council (2025)

3.6 The Service Master Planning

After structuring our process through the Three Phase Capability Model and the Double Diamond, we applied the lens of Service Master Planning (Selloni & Meroni, 2023) from which we took inspiration to consolidate the strategic and participatory dimensions of our project.

Service Master Planning combines co-design and service-centred scenario building to facilitate top-down actions that enable bottom-up activation. It aims to co-create a shared vision for the future of a place by engaging the various actors of complex service ecosystems. Unlike traditional urban planning, which focuses primarily on physical infrastructure, Service Master Planning emphasises services and social ecosystems as the key levers for transformation.

The methodology results in a strategic document, the Service Master Plan, that outlines future scenarios rooted in contextual needs and community aspirations. Its success depends on inspiring spatial design and fostering community interest in co-producing the envisioned services.

We used our pitch, included as an attached document to this thesis, as the Service Master Plan.

Building on commoning theory (Linebaugh, 2009), Service Master Planning frames participation as a form of co-ownership of the commons, emphasising volunteerism, collective care, and shared governance. From this perspective, public spaces and social initiatives are not only designed for the community but with and through it.

Ultimately, the Service Master Plan that emerges can be seen as a strategic and operational bridge: it connects design visions with concrete pathways for implementation, prototyping, and co-production. This makes it particularly suited to initiatives where social innovation, placemaking, and collective creativity converge.

In our project, we had to adapt Service Master Planning to our reality, in which the project didn't run until the end for time reasons and we didn't manage to get to the full expression of the co-creation potential, that part as our future planning is codified into our roadmap.

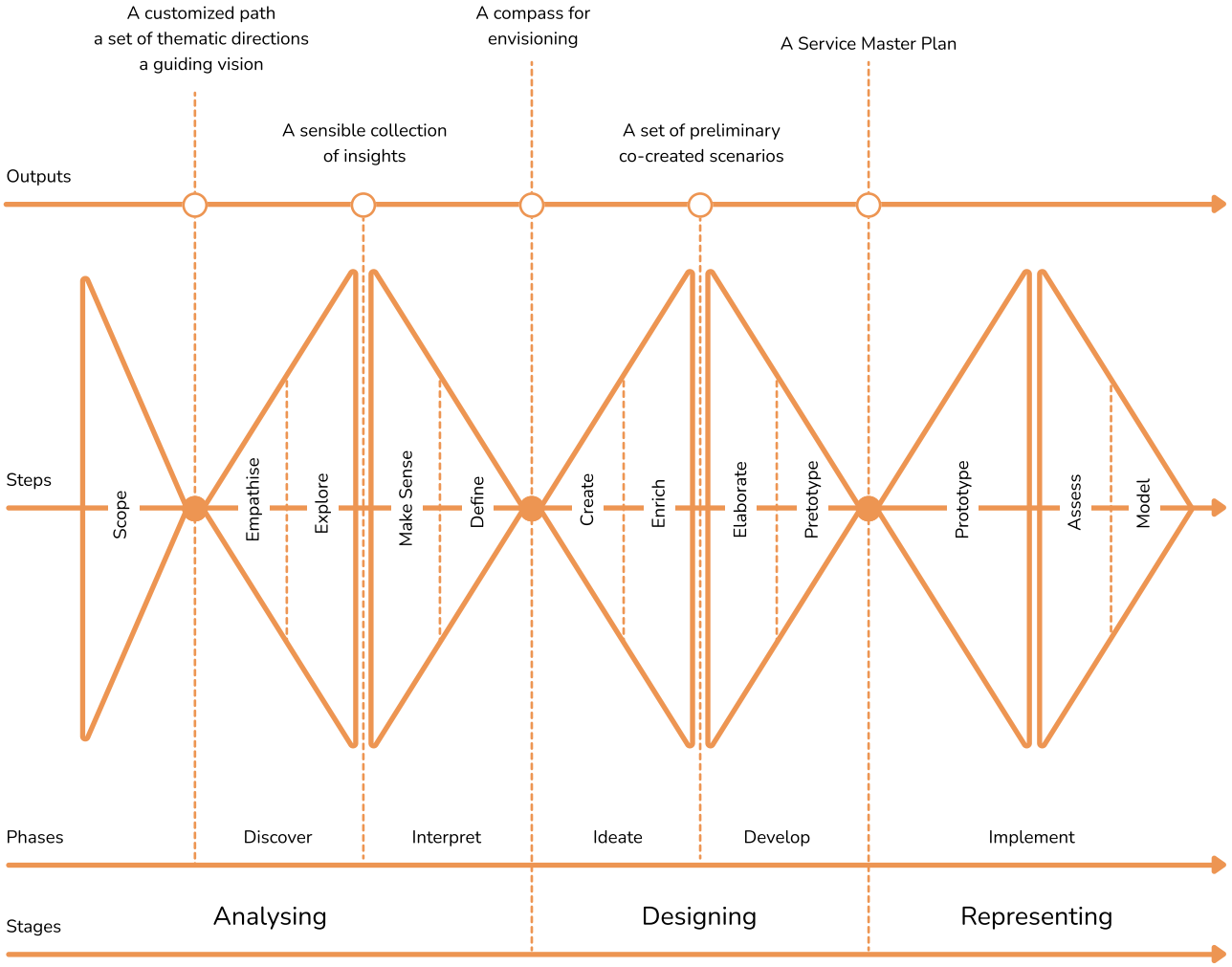


Figure 6: Service Master Planning. Adapted from Selloni & Meroni, 2023

3.7 An Evolving and Reflective Methodology

Recognising the iterative and non-linear nature of design, we viewed our methodology not as fixed, but as an adaptive framework. It evolved in response to insights, constraints, and the changing context of the project.

What proved most valuable was its ability to provide a tangible overview of our process guiding decision-making, clarifying our current stage, and keeping us oriented toward our final goal.

Ultimately, our methodology allowed us to navigate the inherent uncertainty of strategic design. By combining structured planning with flexible adaptation, we maintained a clear sense of direction while remaining responsive to new insights and emerging challenges.

4. Analysis

The goal of this chapter is to present our efforts to keep the problem area open while gathering inspiration from multiple sources, thereby increasing our chances of developing a meaningful and grounded design outcome.

In this phase, we applied a range of complementary research methods to collect high-quality data capable of driving and informing our design process.

We began by presenting our work in terms of external research, which included benchmarking and expert interviews, and internal research, which comprised mapping, a community poll, citizens' interviews, and cultural probes, complemented by stakeholder interviews. Together, these activities provided both a broad and deep understanding of Wawer's social environment and local dynamics.

In parallel, we conducted two extensive desk research explorations: one with a netnographic approach, focused on digital community insights, and another guided by the STEEPLE framework.

Finally, we synthesised the collected data through the creation of personas and transformed our insights into two "How Might We" (HMW) questions, which became the conceptual foundation and guiding direction for the subsequent design phase.

This chapter is divided into the following sections:

4.1 External research

4.2 Internal research

4.3 Desktop research and netnography

4.4 STEEPLE analysis

4.5 Personas

4.6 How Might We?

4.1 External research

Our external research was primarily based in Copenhagen (Denmark). This choice was motivated by the fact that we are both studying there, and we are convinced that it represents one of the most advanced examples of applied social innovation.

We believe that the Nordic model of addressing social issues is significantly more developed than in our home countries. This created many points of connection between Copenhagen (a capital city) and Warsaw (also a capital), which share a relatively close cultural context. We also considered Copenhagen to be a valuable source of inspiration, especially since more frequent travel and accommodation in Warsaw would have been prohibitively expensive.

Rovereto, on the other hand, was selected mainly for the reasons outlined earlier in the Introduction.

As described in chapter 2, the following activities were carried out to gain the in-depth knowledge needed for this phase of the design process:

- Benchmarking (through visits to successful initiatives):
  - In Rovereto: Centro Giovani - Smart Lab
  - In Copenhagen: Demokrati Garage, ArtHub Copenhagen, Folkehuset Absalon
- Unstructured, one in place and two remote, interviews (Taherdoost, 2022) with Experts:
  - Sara Nardi, Leading Systemic Urban Transformation and Collaboration Programs, Self-Employed
  - Signe Kongebro, Global Director & Future Resilient Design, Ramboll
  - Christina Korsbek Olsen & Bjarke Mølgaard Sørensen, Environmental Designers and Architects, Esbjerg Municipality

    The selection of experts comes from the list of participants of a conference hosted by VOLCANO, “Unlocking the Value of Placemaking in Urban Development”, and from the personal suggestions coming from Rasmus Bo Nielsen, ArtHub Copenhagen.

In the following sub-chapters we are going to summarise the insights we got from each of the different inspiration sources.

It is important to note that, even if these activities are presented ordered in categories, this research has been conducted throughout the whole of the project timeline. So, they informed us in different parts of the process and the choices made while conducting these activities were different at any given time and so their aim.

4.1.1 Benchmarking

In this part we are going to present all the research we have been doing in terms of benchmarking, and all the inspiration we got from the different places we visited. All of them had good points and faced important challenges and this analysis helped us in shaping our project, understanding all we needed to keep in mind while designing.

Demokrati Garage
The first case study we analysed, and the first place we visited, is Demokrati Garage, a civic innovation hub in Copenhagen's Nordvest district. Founded in 2020 by the social enterprise "We Do Democracy", the space was designed as a modern-day forsamlingshus (an assembly house) for experimenting with, and revitalising, democratic practices. Unlike community or cultural centers focused on art, music, or leisure, Demokrati Garage is explicitly about democracy, participation, and civic innovation.

The main findings can be categorised as following:

1. Background and mission
   The mission of Demokrati Garage is to "bring democracy under inspection." This means inventing, testing, and rethinking participatory formats in a collaborative setting. The guiding philosophy is that everyone's voice, experiences, and creativity can contribute to solving collective challenges. In this sense, the Demokrati Garage serves both as a meeting place for citizens and as a workshop for democratic experimentation.
   We Do Democracy, the organization behind the Demokrati Garage, is widely recognized in the Nordic region as a leader in democratic innovation. They specialize in facilitating citizen assemblies, participatory budgeting, and advisory processes for municipalities and organizations. Demokrati Garage is both their headquarters and their living laboratory.
2. Activities and programs
   The Demokrati Garage hosts a wide variety of events and initiatives aimed at engaging citizens in democratic life:
   a. Democracy Drinks: informal meetups for people interested in democratic innovation.
   b. Workshops and Hackathons: on topics such as participatory budgeting, civic tech, and deliberative assemblies.
   c. Public Celebrations: events around elections and Constitution Day, bringing a festive element to civic life.
   d. Residencies and Rentals: desks and meeting rooms for NGOs, cooperatives, and civic tech startup.

The space is intentionally open, flexible, and designed for collaboration. Different organisations and activists work side by side, creating a rotating ecosystem of civic actors.

3. Methods and processes
   A key part of Demokrati Garage's work is designing and facilitating deliberative processes. Their model typically guides groups of 25–100 participants through several stages:
   a. Onboarding; introducing the task, roles, and context.
   b. Exploration; building skills, sharing visions, and understanding the topic.
   c. Deep Dive; gathering knowledge and consulting experts.
   d. Qualification; aligning proposals with stakeholders and finding consensus.
   e. Decision; developing final recommendations.
   f. Outcome; presenting recommendations to the public and decision-makers.

   This structured approach helps participants move from being passive citizens to becoming active co-creators of policy ideas.
4. Organization and ommunity
   Demokrati Garage is structured as a non-profit platform that unites NGOs, entrepreneurs, public institutions, and civic initiatives. The Demokrati Garage is not just a venue but a network hub, where multiple organisations work under the same roof to advance participatory democracy.
   At the same time, the Demokrati Garage has faced difficulties. Initial funding from the municipality ended after just two years, leaving the team struggling to establish a sustainable financial model. Following the visit, the project feels "a bit like a dying initiative," still searching for stable footing.
5. Challenges
   A major challenge was identified: financial sustainability. The space relied heavily on public funding, which ended after two years, and developing a long-term business model for a civic space not linked to commercial activities proved particularly difficult.
6. Impact and significance
   Even if its long-term future is uncertain, Demokrati Garage has made an important mark in Copenhagen's democratic landscape.

Through projects like the Copenhagen Citizens' Parliament (Københavnerting), co-designed by We Do Democracy, the Garage has helped make the city one of the first in the world to experiment with a standing citizens' parliament format.
For participants, the Demokrati Garage provides a rare opportunity to engage deeply with democracy, not as voters every few years, but as active co-creators of solutions. Its role as a civic hub (where NGOs, startups, and citizens intersect) makes it a

unique experiment in rethinking what democracy can look like at the local level.

Demokrati Garage shows both the potential and fragility of civic innovation spaces. Its strength lies in its vision: a place where democracy is not abstract but lived, tested, and reshaped through direct participation. However, its challenges, particularly funding and long-term sustainability, highlight how dependent such initiatives remain on political will and public support.

This case demonstrates that fostering democracy requires not just ideas and methods, but also stable infrastructure. Without it, even the most innovative democratic experiments risk fading away.

ArtHub Copenhagen

Next, we organized a guided tour of Thoravej 29, with Rasmus Bo Nielsen, founder of ArtHub Copenhagen. That visit was enlightening in terms of the suggestions and inspiration we got. From him we got the contact of Sara Nardi, with whom we conducted a crucial interview, full of inspiring help in deciding what to do and how. Then came the advice to look deeper into placemaking practices, especially those promoted by Volcano events, as a way to rethink how spaces can foster community interaction. The emphasis was on seeing cultural hubs not only as venues but as carefully designed environments where people feel invited to connect and take part. These suggestions – checking out placemaking, learning from the Volcano experience (from which two out of the three expert interviews came up), and following up with Sara Nardi – became key directions for our next steps in shaping the project.

Centro Giovani – Smart Lab

As part of this research, we conducted interviews with the current management team of Smart Lab, a youth center in Rovereto (in the Province of Trento, Italy). Smart Lab is an innovative cultural and social space where young people and the broader community collaborate to generate cultural, social, and economic value. Established under the municipality's supervision and managed through public calls, the center has recently undergone a major transformation since summer 2023. This chapter presents the insights gathered from the interviews and highlights the strategies, challenges, and aspirations of the current team.

The interviews were conducted with the coordinators and team members currently responsible for Smart Lab's activities. The team, operating under Smart Cooperative, consists of five individuals with diverse backgrounds in journalism, philosophy, music, sound engineering, and the arts. Their testimonies provide an in-depth perspective on the management model, community engagement practices, and evolving identity of the center.

The main findings can be categorised as following:

1. Mission and identity
   The Smart Lab team envisions the center as more than a venue. Their goal is to make it a creative hub and social enterprise where young people can learn, experiment, and develop projects. Moving away from the previous “bar-centric” model, they aspire to reposition Smart Lab as a startup-like environment, grounded in passion, collaboration, and sustainability.
2. Governance and participation
   The cooperative model underpins Smart Lab’s governance. The team is in transition from being employees to becoming cooperative members, which will allow them to take part in decision-making. Their aim is to establish a horizontal structure, where individuals contribute according to their expertise, and strategic choices are made collectively.
3. Programming and engagement
   Programming is organized in six-month cycles (January–June, July–December), during which the team decides on central themes, such as music, workshops, or exhibitions, and invites collaborators. Events are designed not only to attract audiences but also to create synergies between different groups, ensuring long-term community-building.
   A strong emphasis is placed on youth involvement. The team works to reach young people early, particularly through workshops for schools, in order to make Smart Lab a familiar and accessible place by the time they reach adulthood. The programming specifically targets the 16–30 age group, positioning the center as a platform for creativity and participation rather than consumption.
4. Financial model
   Smart Lab’s revenue currently relies on three pillars:
   a. Events and the bar (still the main source of income),
   b. Room rentals,
   c. Grants and funded projects.
      The long-term goal is to rebalance these streams, reducing dependency on commercial activities and increasing income from projects and grants. To achieve this, the cooperative is establishing a Research & Development division focused on funding strategies and communication.
5. Challenges
   The team highlighted several difficulties:
   - Psychological load: the work resembles managing a startup, with cycles of enthusiasm and exhaustion.
   - Time constraints: meaningful youth mentorship requires presence and energy, which are difficult to sustain under current conditions.
   - Limited tenure: the municipal 4+4 years management model creates

- uncertainty; the team argues that longer-term partnerships (20–30 years public–private partnership) are needed to plan sustainable projects.

6. Partnerships and collaboration
   Collaboration is central to Smart Lab's strategy. Partnerships with schools, local organisations (e.g., "La Foresta"), and cultural initiatives (e.g., theater groups like "Elementare Teatro") broaden the center's reach and reinforce its mission as a community incubator. Equally important is the relationship with the municipality and alignment with youth policies, which the cooperative has started integrating into its operations since winning the tender for the local Piano Giovani.

The Smart Lab case illustrates how youth centers can evolve from static spaces into dynamic ecosystems. By adopting a startup mindset, fostering horizontal governance, and prioritising creativity over commercial activities, Smart Lab demonstrates an alternative model of youth engagement and community development. However, the case also underscores systemic barriers, particularly the instability caused by short-term management contracts and the heavy workload on small teams.

Smart Lab is in the midst of a transformative process. While challenges remain, the shift in mindset, governance, and programming has already sparked visible change in Rovereto's cultural and youth landscape. The case offers important lessons for similar youth initiatives: the value of early engagement, the necessity of sustainable funding, and the importance of collaborative governance

Absalon Folkehuset
As part of this thesis, we explored different models of youth and community centers.

Alongside Smart Lab, another valuable case study is Absalon, a community space in Copenhagen. Absalon is a privately-owned, non-profit initiative that has become one of the city's most successful community hubs over the last ten years. Unlike publicly supported culture houses, Absalon enjoys creative freedom and operates with a unique philosophy: it is designed to create human connection through carefully crafted social experiences.

The main findings can be categorised as following:

1. History and mission
   Absalon was founded a decade ago and is still directed by one of its original initiators, whose role and responsibilities have grown over time. The mission of Absalon is simple yet ambitious: to facilitate meaningful social interaction among people of all ages and backgrounds. Instead of targeting specific groups, their motto could be summarized as: "everyone is welcome."

The philosophy behind Absalon is that people need “alibis for interaction”. Social anxiety, smartphones, and everyday routines often prevent people from connecting. Absalon’s mission is to design spaces, activities, and rituals that nudge people towards interaction in natural ways.

2. Activities and design of social interaction
   Absalon offers a wide variety of activities, over 110 per week in the busiest months. The idea is that there should be something for everyone, from yoga and painting to table tennis and quizzes.
   The most famous activity is the fællesspisning (the social dinner). For 60 DKK, people can enjoy a full meal in a communal setting. The dinner is not only affordable but deliberately designed to foster social connection. Food is served in large bowls at shared tables, with bread and knives placed centrally so that people are encouraged to interact. Guests often find themselves sitting next to strangers, and small “social tools” like passing bread or serving food create a natural flow of communication.
   This principle runs through every detail: interior design, lack of signs (forcing people to ask others for directions), and activities that require cooperation. Nothing is left to chance, everything is designed to give people opportunities to interact.
3. Structure and organization
   Unlike many community houses that rely on volunteer work and collective decision-making, Absalon is run in a top-down, hierarchical structure. All staff members are paid employees, carefully selected for their friendliness, openness, and alignment with the vision. The founders deliberately avoid volunteer labor because it can lead to confusion, mixed expectations, and lack of control.
   While the organization has clear leadership, it still allows for creativity from within. Many activities originated as suggestions from staff, including bar employees. However, the leadership always keeps a tight grip on the overall vision, ensuring consistency.
   Weekly meetings between the Absalon team and the owners serve as a way to check alignment and preserve the project’s direction. The goal is not democratic participation but coherence and control, which in turn allows Absalon to deliver a seamless and reliable experience for its visitors.
4. Financial model
   Absalon is officially a non-profit, and after ten years it is still loosing money, even though losses have been reduced to minimal levels. The organization prioritizes activity and community impact over financial return. The strategy is to keep the building as full and active as possible, trusting that money will follow if the space is never underused.

The rent, while significant (about 100,000 DKK per month), is manageable because the building is owned by the same company that initiated the project. This ownership structure ensures stability.
Unlike other private initiatives, Absalon avoids membership-based models. Membership systems, they argue, are "closed" and discourage openness. Instead, they aim for accessibility, affordability, and maximum use of space.

5. Community impact and philosophy
Absalon has positioned itself as the "third place" for Copenhageners, a space outside home and work where people can feel welcome, cared for, and engaged. The house deliberately avoids affiliations with politics, religion, or lifestyle movements, focusing instead on inclusivity and ordinary, everyday people. Their approach is not about creating exclusivity or identity groups, but about offering shared experiences.
The design philosophy can be compared to a kind of "social Disneyland": every detail, from the placement of tables to the absence of signs, is thought to encourage presence, conversation, and interaction.
After COVID-19, Absalon also leaned into an anti-isolation mission, offering cheap coffee, games, and community events to help people reconnect in person. The pandemic confirmed the importance of such spaces for mental health and social life.

Absalon's model demonstrates that community engagement can be designed. By focusing on accessibility, intentional design, and paid staff aligned with a clear vision, Absalon has built one of Copenhagen's most beloved community space. Its approach contrasts with more participatory, cooperative models like Smart Lab: while Absalon is hierarchical and controlled, it succeeds by removing uncertainty and guaranteeing a consistent experience of openness and warmth.

This case shows that there is no single model for successful youth and community spaces. Absalon proves that even a privately-owned, non-profit organization with a strong top-down vision can become a vital public space if it stays true to its mission of facilitating human connection.

4.1.2 Expert interviews

In this section, we present the three expert interviews we conducted, highlighting the key aspects that guided us throughout this challenging process. Their insights played a crucial role in shaping our project, helping us understand the essential elements to consider during the design phase.

Sara Nardi
On suggestion from Rasmus Bo Nielses (ArtHub Copenhagen) we conducted an interview with Sara Nardi, whose expertise lies in participatory design, placemaking, and cultural transformation. This conversation was about gathering expert insights and methods for how to design for successful community engagement.

Her vision can be summarised as following:

1. Methods and approaches
   Sara Nardi emphasised that creating lasting spaces for participation requires methods that combine research with action.
   She described several tools, such as:
   a. Fast Urban Safaris to quickly explore and map the area.
   b. Behavioral registration to understand how people actually use spaces.
   c. Co-creation workshops and small test events to prototype ideas and learn from participation levels.
   d. The “pockets of the future” method, which introduces tangible examples of a desired future into the present, so people can experience what change could look like.
   e. The Three Horizons model as a framework for guiding long-term transitions.

   These methods highlight that engagement is not about abstract strategies but about concrete, visible, and local actions that people can relate to.
2. Design principles
   Sara also outlined several key design principles for developing democratic and participatory projects:
   a. Participatory; create immediate value for participants, whether it is free food, networking, acknowledgment, or entertainment. People rarely join “for the cause” alone; they need to gain something in the present.
   b. Tangible; link big goals (like sustainability or cultural renewal) to visible, sensory experiences that improve quality of life immediately.
   c. Local; anchor experiments in a specific place (a street, a block, a building) and use that as a test.

d. Incremental; start small, grow step by step, and communicate success stories to create ripple effects.

These principles emphasise that context and small-scale action matter far more than abstract planning.

3. Challenges and cultural context
   A recurring theme in Sara's reflections was the relation between the cultural context and the view it promotes on authority and power. Trust is fragile and must be earned, but once achieved, it can create deep and lasting bonds.
   For Wawer, this means that initiatives should not appear as top-down impositions. Instead, they should be framed as opportunities for people to express themselves, reconnect with traditions, and contribute to their community. She stressed the importance of finding a "Trojan horse"; a small, relatable entry points that make people curious and willing to engage.
4. Third places and community identity
   One of the most valuable insights was the emphasis on third places. A third place allows people to renegotiate identity, meet across age gaps, and create pride in their neighbourhood.
   She explained that successful third places need:
   a. A recognisable host or community manager, someone who is always present and acts as a trusted point of contact.
   b. Opportunities for people to be not only consumers but also producers of content and activities.
   c. A balance between spontaneous interaction and structured facilitation, ensuring sustainability over time.
5. From challenges to opportunities
   A key lesson from the interview is the need to shift perspective: stop framing the situation only in terms of "problems" and instead focus on opportunities and potential. Even failed events or low participation can be turned into learning moments if treated as stepping stones. Participation should be framed positively, encouraging people to activate their energy rather than complain about what is missing.

The interview with Sara Nardi provided not only methodological tools but also a mindset: start small, act locally, build trust, and create visible, tangible changes. The emphasis on third places, context-specific placemaking, and incremental community building offers a valuable roadmap for our project. Most importantly, the insights remind us that cultural houses and youth centers should be platforms where people can express themselves, create identity, and move from being passive consumers to active co-creators of their community's future.

Signe Kongebro

As part of the expert interviews, we spoke with Signe Kongebro, architect and partner at Ramboll, who has worked extensively on large-scale urban projects and placemaking initiatives. Unlike Sara Nardi's bottom-up and participatory approach, Signe brought a top-down perspective, emphasising data-driven strategies, bold leadership, and the ability to articulate clear visions that can convince decision-makers and investors.

Figure 7. Interview with Signe Kongebro

Her vision can be summarised as following:

1. Placemaking as value creation
   Signe framed placemaking as a measurable driver of both social and economic value. Research projects she referred to show that areas with higher placemaking scores correlate with lower loneliness, higher visitor rates, and increased property values. In practical terms, good placemaking can mean a 5% increase in housing prices while also strengthening community cohesion.
   She explained that placemaking can be broken down into three experiential elements: protection, comfort, and enjoyment. These factors determine whether people feel safe, welcome, and willing to linger in an area. In this way, placemaking is not an abstract concept but something that can be quantified, tracked, and integrated into urban development strategies.

2. Data and evidence
   For Signe, convincing municipalities, investors, and developers requires evidence-based arguments. She highlighted examples from Copenhagen, such as the harbor transformation from a polluted industrial area into one of the city's most celebrated urban assets. What was once seen as a problem became a benchmark for livability and resilience.
   To support such transformations, Signe's team has worked with surveys, property market data, and social indicators (like sense of belonging or loneliness). These metrics allow placemaking to be treated as a business case, not just a cultural or social aspiration.
3. Recommendations for urban development
   From her experience, Signe shared seven key recommendations for integrating placemaking into city-making:
   a. Combine hyperlocal functions with destinations of city-wide relevance.
   b. Support slow mobility and create small-scale plazas (around 500 m^2).
   c. Ensure a mix of rental sizes and price points to foster diversity.
   d. Diversify opening hours and uses to keep areas lively throughout the day.
   e. Align strategies with municipal planners to de-risk the process and ensure support.
   f. Define clear KPIs and principles for all placemaking activities.
   g. Explore innovative ownership models for ground-floor spaces to secure long-term sustainability.

   These guidelines show how placemaking can move beyond ideals into concrete planning and governance tools.
4. The role of the designer
   Signe stressed that architects and designers must act as influencers and leaders. In her words, design is always a kind of promise: a commitment that a new space will deliver value. To succeed, designers must be bold, charismatic, and visionary, focusing on one clear problem or "pain point" and structuring change around it. She contrasted this with purely participatory approaches, warning that too much openness can lead to confusion or diluted outcomes. Instead, she argued for a clear ambition and narrative that can guide interdisciplinary teams and citizens toward a shared vision.
5. Balancing tourism and everyday life
   One challenge of placemaking is avoiding the trap of over-tourism. Signe pointed out examples like Nyhavn, where residents no longer want to live because the area has been overtaken by visitors. To counter this, she recommended designing private courtyards or semi-public oases where residents can retreat, ensuring that places remain livable for locals even when they are attractive to outsiders.

The conversation with Signe Kongebro highlighted a different angle on placemaking: strategic, measurable, and leadership-driven. Whereas Sara Nardi emphasized incremental, bottom-up participation, Signe underscored the importance of data, clear visions, and the ability to persuade decision-makers. Her insights show that successful placemaking requires both human experience and economic arguments, and that designers must be willing to take on the role of leaders who promise and deliver change.

Christina Korsbek Olsen & Bjarke Mølgaard Sørensen
As part of the expert interviews, we spoke with Christina from Esbjerg Municipality, who, together with her colleague Bjarke, has been leading an innovative placemaking project in one of the city's most vulnerable residential areas. The neighborhood faced all the classic indicators of marginalization (low income, low education, high unemployment, and high crime) and the official state-level strategy originally prescribed demolition of housing as the only available tool. Christina and her colleague, however, sought a different path, using creative placemaking as a way to foster community empowerment and long-term social change.

The insights we got from this talk can be summarized as following:

1. Project origins and philosophy
   The project started in 2021 with funding from both the Realdania foundation and the municipality. Instead of tearing down recently renovated housing, Christina's team proposed an alternative model that combined art, culture, and placemaking as tools for renewal. Inspired by a Volcano conference presentation, they decided to experiment with bottom-up change, seeing culture not as decoration but as a driver of social dynamics.
   The philosophy was simple: real change comes not from imposing top-down masterplans, but from being present in the neighborhood, testing small ideas, and building trust step by step.
2. Methodology: iteration and presence
   Their methodology is based on yearly iterations of events, workshops, and experiments. Each cycle aims to engage different groups of residents, while gradually moving towards a point where the community can sustain activities on its own. Success is defined as reaching the stage where residents take full ownership, and the municipality can step back.
   One of the most important tools was the creation of a local headquarters inside the neighborhood. Using municipal funds, they bought one of the houses slated for demolition and transformed it into their base. This decision proved crucial: instead of expecting residents to visit City Hall, the project brought the municipality to them. The house became a safe meeting space, free of institutional intimidation, where trust could be built informally.

Over time, it turned into a lively hub even without their constant presence; already a sign of positive impact.

3. Stakeholders and partnerships
   The project operates as an umbrella network, connecting a wide variety of local partners:
   a. cultural houses (Platformen),
   b. social projects (B31),
   c. the high school and university,
   d. the local church and museum,
   e. the Danish Art Foundation,
   f. and gradually, local businesses and music ensembles.

   The municipality acts as facilitator and connector, building bridges and helping partners "hook up" with each other to spark collaborations.
4. Challenges and complexity
   Christina acknowledged that the work is messy and complex, more like spinning plates in a circus than following a linear plan. Trust takes time, and both residents and stakeholders were initially suspicious, questioning the municipality's hidden motives. Building credibility required openness, stubborn persistence, and above all constancy of presence.
   Another key lesson was the importance of cultivating a core group of "heroes", the people who are always there and who can anchor trust. Constantly introducing new faces proved counterproductive; long-term continuity mattered more than variety.
   They also had to adapt their outreach. Open invitations to workshops often resulted in no one showing up. The solution was to pair open invitations with specific targeted invitations to relevant groups, ensuring participation.
   On a political level, the project faced resistance from skeptics who did not see the value of placemaking. The support of a small but committed political group helped the initiative survive. Being tied to a national law valid until 2030 also provided protection from sudden political changes.
5. Roadmap and perspective
   The project is approved until at least 2028, and its roadmap runs on two parallel tracks:
   a. Physical, visible improvements in space and infrastructure.
   b. Strategic, long-term planning, budgeting, and political alignment.

   The boundaries of the intervention area were deliberately kept flexible ("dashed lines") to avoid identity conflicts about who belongs to the neighborhood. Starting small enabled the project to grow organically.

6. Communication and storytelling
   Communication has been central to success. From flyers and word-of-mouth to national media and conferences, the team worked hard to shape a new narrative for the neighborhood. Visibility combats stigma, builds pride, and attracts new partners. Even simple tools like public notice boards for event posters became effective ways of reinforcing community ownership.

The Esbjerg project shows how municipalities can act as brave experimenters rather than enforcers of top-down plans. By embedding themselves in the neighborhood, embracing trial and error, and connecting a wide network of stakeholders, Christina and Bjarne have turned a demolition zone into a site of cultural and social renewal.

4.2 Internal research

We focused our internal research on examining the communities of our target group in the Wawer district. Therefore, it was important to map out meeting places and communication channels considered significant by the local community. Our approach was primarily centred on obtaining results that would fully represent the needs and concerns of young people.

In total, we conducted three visits to Wawer, each lasting one week. The first two visits were mainly dedicated to researching and understanding the local infrastructure and surroundings. The final visit focused on testing our ideas and exploring the interest and potential for the development of our project.

Restrictions on our ability to stay for extended periods in the chosen area for our master's thesis prompted us to look for tools that could facilitate our research despite these limitations.

To expand our methodology, we experimented with more unconventional tools that supported area analysis and helped us acquire comprehensive knowledge, including:

- Poll and city (district) mapping
- Interviews with Wawer residents
- Interviews with stakeholders
- Cultural Probes

4.2.1 Poll and map

To better understand which places were the most frequented and with the greatest potential, we conducted a simple poll in which participants were asked to name one of their favourite meeting points in Wawer. This allowed us to map all important locations for young people and visualise them on an actual map, contrasting areas of high social activity with those that were more stagnant.

The poll was posted on a facebook page focused on Wawer and with a young audience: “Wawerposting”. 21 people replied.

The most frequently mentioned locations were:

1. Plaża Romantyczna (Romantyczna Beach);
2. the forest;
3. McDonald’s.

A common characteristic of these places was that they were often either dining spots or not specifically intended as meeting places, such as PKS Radość (Motor Transport Company in Radość) or PKP Falenica (Polish State Railways in Falenica). Many other preferred locations were nature-oriented, like Czarny Staw (Black Pond). Some participants mentioned their own homes or stated that they did not have a regular meeting place.

Figure 8. Poll results

Next, we used Google Earth, to put all the places on a map. Additionally, we mapped out places where we saw potential and were mentioned only in small quantities.

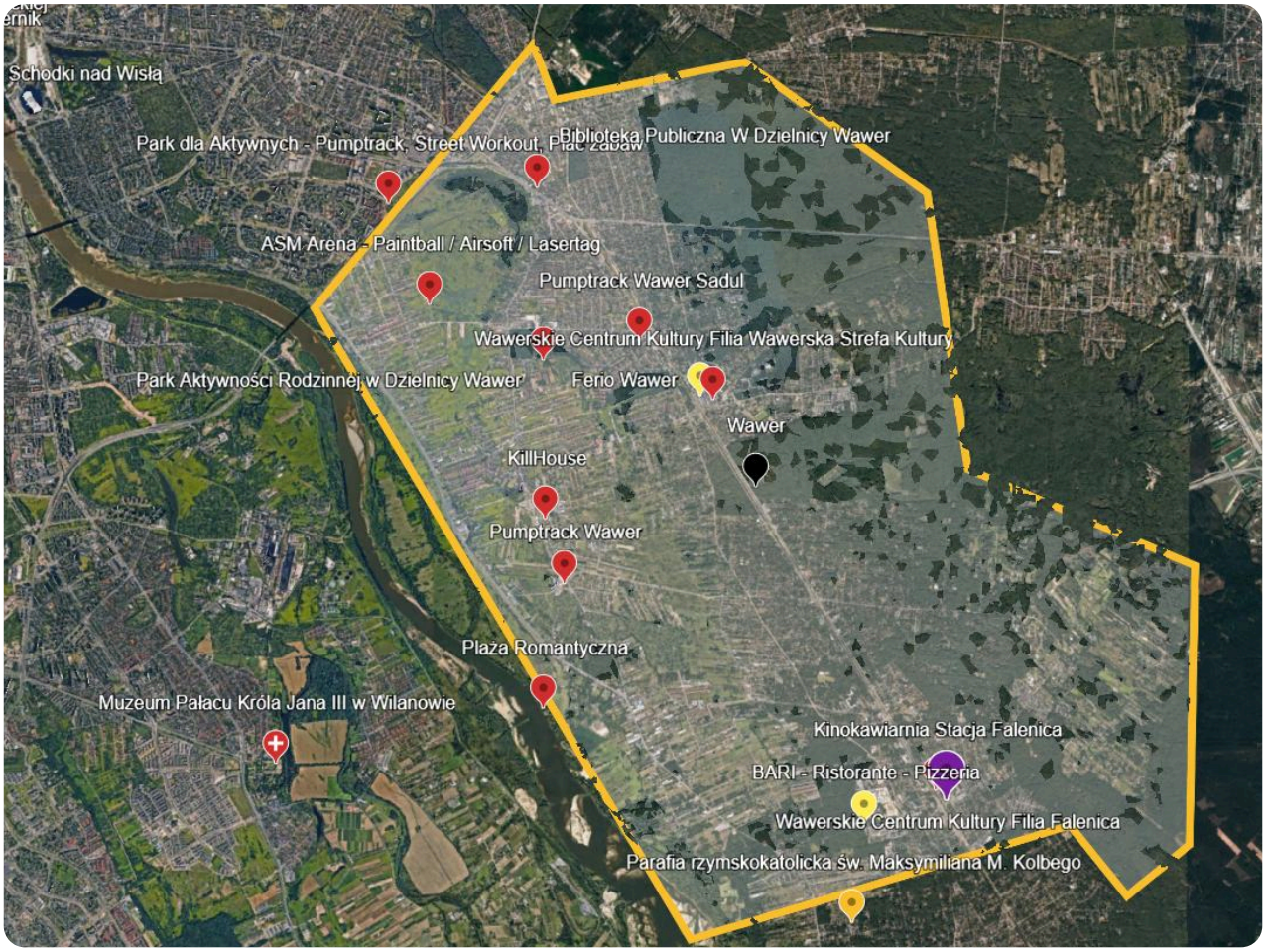


Figure 9. The map of Wawer's interest points

4.2.2 Interviews with residents

Setting interviews with residents allowed us to examine them for who they are, mapping their values and experiences.

The interviews were all in person, and mostly structured and with open-ended questions. Two of them were semi-structured and less in-depth (Taherdoost, 2022).

Patryk
The first resident we interviewed just moved out of Wawer during the making of this thesis, but lived there for over 20 years. He provided many insights into how Wawer changed over the years, complemented by its culture and lifestyle.

His insights can be summarised as following:

1. Meeting places
   The most preferred place to meet for him was outside Wawer, in the city center of Warsaw. The second most common meeting place was at his friends' houses. He also mentioned several other meeting points that aligned with the results of the poll, although he admitted that he rarely visited those places himself.
   Plaża Romantyczna (Romantyczna Beach) has been recently renovated and has successfully attracted people to spend time there. However, due to its separation from residential areas by a forest, he perceives it more as a destination for planned visits rather than spontaneous gatherings. When asked about Kinokawiarnia, he acknowledged knowing the place but noted that it is not widely recognised within the community.
2. District internal organization and activities
   He described it as difficult to lead a spontaneous social life in Wawer, mainly due to large distances and low population density. Getting around takes time and requires planning in advance.
   Some events organised by WCK in Falenica (Wawer Cultural Center) are very popular and fill up quickly, such as Dungeons & Dragons game sessions. Other activities, such as ceramics or woodworking workshops, are offered only a few times a year and often require payment. Although WCK organises numerous sports and cultural activities, most of them are targeted at children aged 3 to 15, as this group represents the main demand.
   He expressed experiencing a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out) due to living in such an isolated area. This feeling contributed to his desire to move to a more central district, one perceived as livelier and offering more opportunities. Consequently, he prefers to spend as much time as possible in the city center.
   Regarding education, he mentioned that schools in Wawer generally do not have a strong reputation. As a result, many families choose to send their teenagers to schools outside the district, which weakens young people's connection with their local area. A similar issue applies to employment, as most large companies and investments are concentrated closer to the city center. When asked to describe Wawer in one word, he responded: "bedroom suburb."
   Warsaw is divided into several districts, which are further subdivided into MSI (Municipal Information System) areas. These divisions influence residents' sense of belonging and shape social relations between people from different MSI clusters. For example, residents of Falenica do not necessarily know anyone from Międzylesie, despite both belonging to the Wawer district.

Figure 10. MSI division of Wawer

3. Culture of Wawer
   The district is considered most suitable for families, as it offers proximity to the city center while maintaining a quiet environment surrounded by nature. Most social life takes place within single-family houses, which represent the predominant form of development in the area. Nature is highly valued by the residents, and there is a general sense of disagreement with cutting down trees to make space for new investments.
   He expressed that he does not feel considered in the way the district is administrated and believes there is a lack of participatory approaches in local governance. His impression is that the district authorities do not take into account the real interests of Wawer's inhabitants. Moreover, social consultations are often organized at times when most residents are unable to participate.
4. Transportation
   As previously mentioned, transportation takes a significant amount of time when crossing the district. From his home to the city center, the commute took about one hour each way. This affected his daily routine: he had to wake up at 6 a.m. to get to school on time and often did his homework on the bus while returning home.
   Wawer faces a considerable lack of basic infrastructure, particularly in terms of road connections linking the district across the river to the rest of Warsaw. There is also a pressing need for more frequent and better-organised bus services.

August

The second resident we interviewed is 25 years old, and is currently living in an apartment building, while before he was living in a single-family house. He values Wawer's greenery, open spaces, and unique character, seeing it as a balance between the city and a suburban life. Even though he feels frustrated by infrastructure gaps and continuous changes that threaten the district's atmosphere, he still feels strongly connected with the area and wants to keep living there.

His inputs can be summarised as following:

1. Meeting places
   Most of the time, he meets his friends within the district. Since all of his friends drive, they usually start their gatherings in Wawer and then head somewhere outside the district, returning later either to eat or to go home. His favourite places are McDonald's on Wał Miedzeszyński and Plaża Romantyczna (Romantyczna Beach), as well as the nearby riverbank area, close to the nudist beach, although he pointed up that he is not interested in the nudist aspect itself. In addition to these locations, he enjoys visiting the Siekierkowski Bridge for its view of the Warsaw skyline, as well as the dunes in Falenica. What he feels is missing in the district are accessible, affordable food spots, not upscale restaurants or cafés, but rather more casual "junk food" places. In particular, he mentioned wanting more kebab and Chinese food options, especially those open late at night. Such venues used to exist in Wawer but have since relocated to other districts. These types of places, he explained, are the ones where he and his friends could meet spontaneously.
2. District internal organization and activities
   He attends organised local events such as Garażówka (a garage sale) hosted by the Wawer District Council in Międzylesie. When it comes to socialising with friends, their plans are typically spontaneous, often arranged the day before or even on the same day, and usually involve barbecues or casual outings.
   He has a strong interest in historical reenactment and LARP (Live Action Role Play), which he used to organise in the past. Together with his friends, he also participated in film recording sessions, during which they collaborated on editing and composing original background music.
   One of the main challenges he encountered while organising events was the lack of designated public areas along the Vistula River: for example, spaces suitable for barbecuing or camping. Much of this area falls under the Natura 2000 protected zone, a European Union network established to safeguard valuable and threatened species and habitats. As a result, aside from Romantyczna Beach, there is a noticeable shortage of usable public space along the river, which poses limitations for outdoor activities such as camping or social gatherings.

3. Culture of Wawer
   He enjoys living in the district and would not want to move elsewhere. Wawer offers a sense of being both close to and distant from the city center at the same time, providing the feeling of still being in Warsaw while also being slightly removed from it. Despite being administratively part of the capital, residents often perceive Wawer as separate from the rest of the city.
   He moved to Wawer at the age of 12 and initially found it difficult to adapt, particularly when transitioning from a private to a public school. His middle school, as he described, seemed dysfunctional: he recalled instances where police cars were called to remove students, which he found alarming.
   He also pointed out the stark social contrasts within the district: from residents living in poverty in deteriorating wooden houses, to middle-class suburban homeowners, and the very wealthy residing in large villas. These contrasts are especially visible near the SKM train lines, on buses, and around train stations. Among young people, however, he observed that there remains a certain degree of interaction across social classes. Children from lower-income families, middle-class homes, and affluent households often share the same schools or attend similar extracurricular activities: for example, martial arts classes at the Wawer Cultural Center. He experienced this diversity himself. Nonetheless, he noted that as people grow older, these social divisions become more pronounced, and interactions between groups diminish. Adults typically encounter one another only in shared public spaces, such as train stations, stores, or the municipal office.
4. Transportation and infrastructure
   One of the major issues he identified concerns public transportation, particularly bus line 319. Although he no longer uses it frequently, he noted that the line operates efficiently on weekdays, connecting Wawer to Ursynów via the Southern Anna Jagiellonka Bridge, with buses running every 15–20 minutes. However, the line does not operate on weekends, which makes travel extremely inconvenient. On weekends, reaching Ursynów from Wawer requires long and indirect routes involving other bridges, metro lines, and multiple transfers.
   He vividly compared the opening of the bridge to “the fall of the Berlin Wall”, emphasising how vital this connection is, and how the absence of weekend service undermines its purpose. While he acknowledged that Wawer’s public transport network is technically well-developed, he described it as “functional only on paper.” In practice, infrequent schedules make buses impractical for everyday use. He concluded that Wawer suffers from transport exclusion, especially on weekends, when service is sparse and unreliable. In his view, bus frequency should be increased, SKM (Fast Urban Railway) connections should be better synchronised with regional trains, and local bus lines should be more

effectively integrated.
In addition to transportation challenges, he criticised the lack of proper sewage infrastructure in Wawer. Despite repeated promises, many areas still rely on septic tanks, which he finds unacceptable, particularly for a district within the capital city. He compared Wawer unfavourably to smaller towns such as Józefów or Hel, which already have complete sewage systems. He described the frustration of having to monitor septic tank levels just to perform basic household tasks like doing laundry or washing his hair.
He also expressed strong appreciation for the forests and green areas in Wawer and for the Otwock railway line (which includes PKP Falenica). However, he is concerned about upcoming changes, particularly the installation of sound barriers, which he personally opposes even though he lives near the line. In his view, these barriers will ruin the district's character and physically divide the area, a change he again compared to "the Berlin Wall." Although he heard that some sections near heritage buildings such as the cinema café might be modified, he remains uncertain about the final outcome. Overall, he feels sceptical but still hopes for a more balanced and thoughtful solution.
He compared the atmosphere of the Otwock railway line to that of the Nile River in Egypt, describing it as a central artery around which daily life unfolds: with small shops, crossings, tunnels, and even the district council located along its path. He also values the number of smaller local streets in Wawer, which provide flexible routes and help drivers avoid traffic congestion.

Artur

The third resident we interviewed is 25 years old, and lived his whole life in Wawer. He considers everything he wants as reachable and he can like the fact that as a suburban area it is not too crowded.

His inputs can be summarised as following:

1. District internal organization and activities
   He enjoys visiting the Kulturoteka building and attends events there whenever possible: for example, a recent RPG event with talks the previous Saturday. As a movie enthusiast, he noticed the lack of film screenings in Kulturoteka's program and came up with the idea of proposing the creation of a movie club. He hopes that such an initiative could attract more young people of his age who share similar interests.
2. Culture of Wawer
   He observes that Wawer has a relatively low population density and is characterised primarily by single-family houses rather than large apartment buildings. This, in his view, gives the district a calmer, more suburban atmosphere compared to other parts of Warsaw.

3. Transportation and infrastructure
   He primarily uses a bicycle to get around and expressed a wish for more cycling routes, as well as additional parks, recreational areas, and gyms. These improvements, he believes, would make the district more accessible and enjoyable for its residents, especially for those leading active lifestyles.

Elina

The fourth resident we interviewed is not within the target group but still gave us an interesting perspective on the district. She moved to Wawer 18 years ago. Her main concerns are mostly around new investments in Wawer.

Her inputs can be summarised as following:

1. District internal organization and activities
   She observed that Wawer has changed significantly over the years. In the past, residents had to drive long distances to reach the nearest grocery store, whereas now such amenities are available much closer: in her case, even next to her home. Despite these improvements, she mentioned missing local cafés as potential meeting places that could foster more social interaction within the community.
2. Culture of Wawer
   According to her, many residents of Wawer perceive wild boars as one of the district's main problems. She explained that newcomers often complain about the presence of these animals and even suggest that they should be killed, which reflects ongoing tensions between the area's natural environment and urban expansion.
3. Transportation and infrastructure
   She believes that the Warsaw municipality does not invest sufficiently in Wawer and emphasised the need for more frequent public transport services. She also pointed out that the district still lacks a sewage system, which she finds unacceptable, especially when compared to nearby villages that already have one. She expressed frustration with the lack of transparent communication and genuine public consultation, noting that residents are typically informed only after decisions have already been made.
   Additionally, she mentioned that there is very low trust in developers among the residents. As an example, she recounted a situation in which a developer illegally changed traffic signs to allow heavy trucks to pass through and deliver construction materials. Local residents noticed the alteration, organised themselves to challenge it, and eventually forced the developer to stop the practice. Ultimately, the company had to pay a fine for the unauthorised sign changes.

Summary

Through in-person interviews with Wawer residents, this study explored how people perceive and experience their district. The conversations revealed recurring themes around social life, culture, infrastructure, and mobility.

Residents described Wawer as calm and green but lacking accessible meeting places and spontaneous social spaces. While events at the Wawer's Culture House are appreciated, most target children, leaving few options for adults. The district's single-family housing fosters privacy but limits community interaction. Many participants expressed frustration with limited public participation in local governance and mistrust toward developers.

Transportation and infrastructure issues were a central concern: long commutes, poor cross-district connections, and the absence of a sewage system were seen as major shortcomings. Despite these challenges, residents value Wawer's natural environment and its balance between suburban peace and proximity to the city.

Reflection

The interviews offered a deep understanding of how spatial form, infrastructure, and governance affect everyday life. Listening to residents highlighted the coexistence of pride and dissatisfaction; a love for Wawer's greenery and calm, contrasted by frustration over a feeling of exclusion and neglect.

Methodologically, the combination of structured and semi-structured interviews (Taherdoost, 2022) proved effective, even though variation in preparation influenced depth. The process underscored the value of qualitative inquiry in capturing local identity and revealed how suburban areas like Wawer embody both connection and detachment within the wider city.

4.2.3 Interviews with stakeholders

Kinokawiarnia Stacja Falenica
"Kinokawiarnia" (cinema-café), as referred to in this master's thesis, is located in a restored early 20th-century modernist train station in Falenica, Wawer. It combines film, literature, coffee, and culture within a slow cinema ethos: curating thoughtful, independent films rather than mainstream blockbusters. The venue minimises advertising, maintains a relaxed atmosphere, and offers comfortable seating with table service.

Beyond its role as a cinema, Kinokawiarnia functions as a local cultural hub, featuring two screening rooms, a bookstore, a café, and a summer garden. It also hosts a variety of workshops, events, concerts, and activities for both youth and senior audiences.

During the interview, the insights we gathered can be summarised as following :

1. Target groups
   Kinokawiarnia primarily focuses on children and seniors, while teenagers and young adults remain a less engaged audience.
   The main communication channel used by Kinokawiarnia is Facebook, as it provides the greatest visibility among their existing audience. They have not yet explored social media platforms that are more popular among youngster.
   When asked to define the main target audience for Kinokawiarnia's offerings, the manager identified women aged 30–45, families with children (including babies), seniors, and schools as their core groups. Attendance levels fluctuate seasonally, with high participation in autumn and winter and a noticeable decline in summer. Although the cinema-café organises film education programs for preschools, elementary schools, and high schools, younger children tend to participate more actively than teenagers, reflecting a gap in engagement with adolescent audiences.
2. Potentials in further development
   Kinokawiarnia regularly hosts guest lectures, Q&A sessions with directors, and talks with experts: for instance, a polar explorer was once invited to accompany a film screening about the North Pole. In addition, the venue organises concerts and outdoor events during the summer months.
   In terms of its café operations, Kinokawiarnia collaborates with trusted local suppliers, particularly for the cakes they sell. Recently, they launched a new initiative called "Green Station", which combines film screenings with food experiences. The project features vegetarian meals made with ingredients sourced from regenerative farming, inspired by traditional Polish cuisine.

3. Operations and Facilities
   Kinokawiarnia is housed in a historic train station, originally constructed around 1915 and later adapted for its current use. The venue includes two auditoriums ("Swallow" – 70 seats – and "Sparrow" – 16 seats –), as well as a multipurpose room located upstairs.
   A distinctive feature of Kinokawiarnia is its unique service model, offering food and drinks served directly to cinema seats, with popcorn available only during children's screenings to preserve the calm atmosphere of adult showings. The cinema-café operates seven days a week with consistent opening hours.
4. Obstacles and missed potentials
   Kinokawiarnia faces several operational and financial challenges that limit the full use of its facilities: the kitchen remains underused, and the workshop room often stays empty. The management expressed a desire to rent out spaces for more commercial events. The problem is not a lack of ideas or interest: they regularly receive proposals from people wishing to organise creative workshops. The real challenge lies in the financial viability of such events: despite the presence of engaging concepts and community interest, the operational costs often exceed potential income. While the café contributes to the overall revenue, its profitability remains limited, making it difficult to sustain additional programming.

Figure 11. Kinokawiarnia's interior

The Promotion and Social Communication Department of the Wawer District
This body of Wawer District Council is responsible for building a positive image of the district and maintaining contact with residents. Its tasks include providing information about the activities of the district council and council, maintaining a website and social media, organising local events and celebrations, and supporting social and cultural initiatives. The Department ensures that residents have easy access to up-to-date information and can actively participate in the life of the district.

1. District internal organization and activities
   The main events organised by Promotion Department are Garażówka (garage sale) and Picnic on Plaża Romantyczna, because those places are owned by them and don't require any rental costs. They mainly promote the events, but they don't organise themselves. The one responsible for that is The Department of Culture and Sports and they do it through a collaboration with WCK.
   Programs often target families with children; fewer initiatives are directed at teenagers or young adults. Most of these events take place in recurring parts of the district, and they are not evenly distributed throughout it. Most activities are concentrated around Międzylesie (district council area), so other neighborhoods (e.g., Marysin, Nadwiśle, Aleksandrów, Sadul, Falenica) feel underserved. It is worth mentioning that some other (e.g., Las) organise their own events successfully.
   Kinokawiarnia maintains a range of partnerships, including collaborations with yoga classes, theater groups, and various workshops. Typically, the venue hires contractors through formal tenders, though occasionally private entities propose independent initiatives, such as podcasts, book projects, or special events.
2. Relationship with the citizens
   They organise Public Consultations when there is a large investment (e.g., family activity parks, zoning plan changes, major spatial development projects). The organisation responsible for managing it is the Center for Social Communication (a city-level unit). Noticeable is that consultations are reactive, but not proactive; The city or the district typically determines the investment in advance and subsequently seeks residents' input, framing the process less as an open inquiry into their preferences and more as a request for feedback on already formulated plans.
   Since last year, the district has organized monthly three-hour meetings in different neighborhoods, providing residents with the opportunity to raise issues and share concerns. However, it remains uncertain whether these meetings lead to substantive changes or primarily serve to create a sense of being heard.
   We also explored the impact of citizens on new investments. The Participatory Budget is allocated for smaller, one-year projects, such as benches, workshops, or

kayaking activities, whereas larger infrastructure investments are funded through regular municipal budgets or external programs. In terms of budgeting and planning, the district prepares its budget proposal each August, which is subsequently reviewed and either approved or modified by the city council.

3. Basic infrastructure
   Public transport in Wawer is constrained by the district's low population density, characterised predominantly by single-family housing, narrow streets, and private gardens. Operating frequent public transport services is economically challenging compared to denser urban areas. Furthermore, as the Public Transport Authority, a city-level entity, oversees bus operations rather than the district council, Wawer has limited influence over service provision.
   The expansion of the sewage system in Wawer has proceeded slowly and remains incomplete. A primary obstacle is the predominance of privately owned land, which requires the Warsaw Waterworks (MPWiK) to obtain owner consent before construction. In some cases, landowners refuse access, causing projects to be delayed for several years. As a result, a significant number of residents continue to lack access to the planned sewage infrastructure.
   Road infrastructure is similarly complex, with streets falling under different ownership categories (private, district-owned, and city-owned).
   Public bus services operate exclusively on city-owned roads, leaving municipal roads excluded from their routes.
   Road maintenance is frequently postponed because planned infrastructure projects, such as the installation of sewage pipes within a three-year horizon, take precedence.
   Consequently, residents may navigate poorly maintained or unpaved roads for extended periods, sometimes exceeding six years. While recently renovated roads are generally preserved, maintenance efficiency is often compromised when underlying infrastructure requires updating.
   A significant portion of Wawer's territory, including sections of forested land, is privately owned. This presents challenges in identifying suitable sites for new schools and kindergartens. Land acquisition is uncommon due to budgetary constraints; in some cases, land is even sold to offset fiscal deficits.
   Infrastructure management is further complicated by overlapping responsibilities among the district, the city, private landowners, and external authorities. District employees themselves highlight the extent of bureaucratic and ownership-related obstacles, which contribute to slow, fragmented, and frequently externally constrained progress in infrastructure development.

Figure 12. Wawer District Council

Kulturoteka - Public Library in Falenica, Wawer

Kulturoteka in Wawer is an institution combining the functions of a library and a cultural centre. The Kulturoteka is home to, among others, the Public Library in the Wawer District and a branch of the Wawer Cultural Centre, which jointly carry out educational and cultural tasks. It also houses a Senior Citizens' Club, a Volunteers' Club and a scout troop. It offers access to a collection of books in an open access system, spaces for individual and group work, and a multifunctional room used for educational and artistic events.

We interviewed two employees of the library. Both interviews were online and semi-structured (Taherdoost, 2022). The first interview was held with Agata and gave us a lot of insights on the work of the library:

1. Activities
   The Library of Wawer hosts a wide variety of events directed to different audiences. One notable initiative, “Meet the Stars”, focuses on inviting authors and celebrities, attracting over 300 attendees. Another major event is “Cyber Wawer”, an annual festival exploring technology, science, culture, and society

through workshops, lectures, performances, and collaborations with institutions such as NASA and the Polish Space Agency. Each edition of the festival centers on a different theme (for example, AI or Copernicus) and, while youth-oriented, it is open to participants of all ages.
The library also provides a dedicated youth space featuring creative digital projects, the historical urban game “Falenica 1939”, and modernised lessons incorporating pop culture. Additional initiatives include the “Dad Also Reads” campaign, bibliotherapy sessions, school programs, and book clubs for adults and seniors.

2. Structure
The Kulturoteka is a shared building housing both the public library and the Wawer Cultural Center (WCK). While both institutions operate within the same physical space, they remain organizationally independent and pursue distinct programmatic goals. The WCK primarily offers paid extracurricular activities, including yoga, music, chess, and art classes, which are attended mainly by seniors, with occasional participation from younger audiences.
3. Challenges
When asked about potential improvements, the primary limitation identified was the lack of specialized staff, which requires team members to perform multiple roles spanning promotion, design, and program execution. The interviewee also highlighted the need for additional personnel to expand the institution’s capacity and enable it to undertake larger and more complex projects.

The second interviewee was Monica, who also contributed to the insights gathering:

1. Youth engagement and activities
The library primarily engages teenagers aged 13–17, offering a variety of events such as lectures, author meetings, history talks (e.g., Waga Bunda Wawerska). Beyond one-off events, the library emphasises long-term projects, which provide opportunities for deeper learning and sustained participation. A notable example is Archipelago Falenica, a program that introduces young people to Jewish cultural heritage through workshops, exhibitions, and film screenings.
2. Volunteering and collaboration
Around 208 volunteers, mostly older children and teens, are engaged in multi-level participation. They start as helpers, later taking on leadership and mentoring roles. Activities balance fun and responsibility, making volunteering attractive despite no material rewards. The library also works closely with schools, where participation depends on whether offers align with curricula. Partnerships with institutions such as ABB, the Institute of Communications, and the Institute of Electrical Engineering add a scientific and professional dimension to the offer.

3. Organization, Ideas and Outreach
   Events and projects at the library are designed based on an understanding of youth needs, which is developed through trust and personal relationships rather than formal surveys. Given limited resources, the goal is to meet young people halfway, rather than fully satisfying every expectation.
   Promotion strategies combine formal requirements, such as logos, posters, and social media, with informal but effective word-of-mouth, spread by teachers, librarians, and previous participants. Additionally, the library collaborates with other branches, sharing spaces and equipment to facilitate larger-scale events and maximize outreach.

Figure 13. Kulturoteka and its interior

Summary

Interviews with representatives of Kinokawiarnia Stacja Falenica, the Promotion and Social Communication Department, and Biblioteka Falenica in Kulturoteka revealed how local institutions shape Wawer's cultural and social life.

Kinokawiarnia, located in a restored train station, blends cinema, café, and community space. It promotes independent films and a calm atmosphere, serving

mainly women aged 30–45, families, and seniors, while younger audiences remain less involved. Despite creative projects like “Green Station,” linking film and sustainable food culture, limited funding and underused facilities restrict further development.

The Promotion Department focuses on communication, event promotion, and public consultations. However, its activities mainly target families and occur in central areas such as Międzylesie, leaving peripheral neighborhoods underserved. Visible infrastructure issues, such as fragmented land ownership, slow sewage expansion, and limited control over public transport continue to challenge district progress.

Consultations tend to be reactive, occurring after decisions are made, which falls into cathegory of “Informing”, a name proposed by Arnstein (2019) in the article “A Ladder of Citizen Participation”. In this scenario, people have very limited chances to shape or influence programs supposedly created “for their benefit.” Meetings become mere channels for one-way communication, offering only surface-level information, discouraging questions, and providing irrelevant or evasive responses.

When those in power present such processes as the full extent of participation, citizens may technically have the chance to speak and listen, but they lack any real power to ensure their views are taken seriously. Participation confined to this level has no follow-through or force behind it, and therefore offers no real possibility of changing the status quo (Arnstein, 2019).

Biblioteka Falenica provides educational and creative programs like “Cyber Wawer” and “Archipelago Falenica.” It fosters youth participation through schools and institutions but struggles with staff shortages that limit its capacity.

Overall, the research shows that Wawer’s cultural and administrative institutions are rich in ideas but constrained by financial, spatial, and bureaucratic barriers. Despite these challenges, their commitment demonstrates strong local identity and the role of culture in connecting a dispersed suburban district.

We also wanted to conduct an additional interview with Marcin, who had been indicated to us as the person responsible for volunteering, following our intuition that the existing community of volunteers could represent an important stakeholder in our project. However, due to time constraints, we were unable to organise the interview in time to include it in our process.

4.2.4 Cultural probes

Culture Probes are a qualitative research approach to gather deep, often personal insights into people's lives, values and experiences. Instead of structured interviews or surveys, culture probes provide participants with creative, open-ended materials (like postcards, maps, diaries, cameras, or tasks) that invite them to record and share aspects of their daily routines, feelings, and environments in expressive ways. (Interaction Design Foundation – IxDF, 2022; Stickdorn et al., 2018).

Given the limitations we faced in maintaining a stable presence at our project site, we decided to use this method to better understand the everyday life of young people in Wawer. Our research focused on the question: "What does a typical day look like for a young person in Wawer, particularly during the time spent outside of home, school, or work?"

To explore this question, we prepared a set of notebooks, pens, and instructions to distribute to potential pen pals. Participants were asked to keep a diary of their daily social life, reflecting on both limitations and opportunities (including those that were missed and those they were able to realise). Participants were also invited to take photos or record materials in any medium they preferred. In total, we distributed four notebooks and received back three notebooks with entries recorded.

Figure 14. Cultural Probes

Dominik

He is 28 years old, documented three days of his life in Wawer. His notebook entries reveal that he perceives the district as a close-knit community. He often spends time with his family in the garden, enjoying a calm and relaxed atmosphere.

He has a strong social network within the district; for example, he described a visit from a friend during which they rode a scooter, noting: “I felt a bit nostalgic and a sense of freedom. There wasn’t a single soul on the road. No traffic jams, no people.”

His entries also indicate that third places and sources of entertainment in Wawer are limited, with frequent visits to McDonald’s and the shopping mall serving as primary social and leisure locations.

Figure 15. Dominik giving back his notebook

Artur

He is 25 years old, recorded his diary in a continuous format, without dividing it into separate days. His entries indicate that he spends most of his time in front of the computer, while also actively participating in local events. One event that particularly matched his interests was an open day for board game and RPG enthusiasts.

He cycles daily and expressed dissatisfaction with the limited number of bike lanes. He also highlighted a lack of recreational areas, noting: “I’m lacking a bigger number of parks where that forest which was next to my house was cut out because of the Warsaw bypass (which is super loud). I’m lacking places where you can sit and rest.”

Artur frequently traveled within the district to attend movie screenings, including a showing of Moby Dick (1953) in Międzylesie at the Wawer District Council, reflecting that films are his greatest passion.

He also described visiting bazaars and Garażówka, where he interacted with local sellers. He appreciated that the bazaars offered healthy food options, while the garage sales provided opportunities to discover unique vinyl collections.

Artur concludes his diary by expressing that he enjoys living in Wawer and values the district’s distinctive character.

Figure 16. Photos taken by Artur for Culture Probes

Amelia

She is 17 years old, documented nine days of her life in Wawer. Her notes reveal that her everyday life is shaped by a combination of mobility, learning, and interaction with nature. She often cycles between Falenica, Międzylesie, and other parts of the district, as biking is faster and more reliable than public transport, which she perceives as inconvenient and time-consuming.

A significant portion of her routine involves attending private English and math lessons, highlighting the prevalence and accessibility of tutoring in the area. She also frequently visits the library and occasionally goes to the Ferio shopping center, primarily for strolling rather than shopping.

Her free time is often spent outdoors, including walking in nearby forest reserves, biking along her favourite routes, and observing local wildlife such as wild boars. She also meets friends in chain venues like McDonald's, due to the scarcity of local cafés or social spaces. Everyday frustrations include poor infrastructure (lack of sewers, broken pavements, missing benches at stops), chaotic transportation, and urban development that threatens natural areas.

Overall, Amelia's daily practices reflect a lifestyle balancing education, cycling as the primary mode of mobility, and a strong attachment to local greenery, juxtaposed with frustration over Wawer's underdeveloped infrastructure and limited social spaces.

Summary

Dominik represents a family-oriented and calm lifestyle, rooted in community and nostalgic pleasures. He values peaceful surroundings and would like to see more leisure opportunities beyond commercial chains.

Artur, in contrast, embodies a culturally engaged young adult who balances his online life with active participation in community events. His needs center on improved cultural and recreational infrastructure, more bike-friendly mobility, and the preservation of Wawer's distinctive character.

Amelia provides the perspective of teenage, with her daily routines shaped by mobility, education, and a strong connection to natural surroundings. She frequently expresses frustration with underdeveloped infrastructure and the lack of social spaces and emphasising the importance of protecting and preserving nature.

All three participants highlight the scarcity of diverse and accessible third places, such as cafés, parks, and cultural venues, as well as frustrations with transportation, bike lanes, and pavements. At the same time, they all value Wawer's greenery, calmness, and community atmosphere, though each experiences these qualities differently: Dominik through family life, Artur through local culture, and Amelia through interaction with nature.

4.3 Desktop research and netnography

To better understand the cultural context of young people in Wawer, we conducted research on the most used websites and online communities, as well as basic demographics, quality of life, budgeting, and other socio-economic factors in the district.

Online Communities
The most widely used social media platform in Poland is Facebook, and consequently, the majority of Wawer-related groups are hosted there. These groups vary in nature, ranging from official pages managed by district authorities, institutions, and businesses to user-created communities with no financial or institutional backing.

1. Dzielnica Wawer
   Dzielnica Wawer (Wawer District) is a Facebook page managed by the Wawer District Council. Its purpose is to communicate local events, community support initiatives, and public consultations. Engagement on this page remains relatively low, with a maximum of around 30 likes per post and very few comments.

   Our attention, however, was drawn to posts that generated considerable engagement, often accompanied by negative commentary. One such post, published by SWPS University titled “Summary of Residents' Diagnosis”, highlighted that 81.2% of residents do not plan to move out of Wawer and invited readers to view the full diagnosis on the official website. Despite the positive framing, many citizens criticised the post as manipulative, questioning the interpretation of the data. Examples of critical comments include:
   - “Perhaps the question should be reversed... Why are as many as 20% planning to move out of Wawer?”
   - “We are not Americans, and we do not have the custom or the money to change our place of residence frequently, so this 80% is normal. Nothing extraordinary. Do not deceive people that Wawer is the best place in the world [...]”

   Recurring critiques across other posts often focused on issues such as lack of a sewage system, infrequent public transport, and limited recreational areas. It is worth noting, however, that most posts remain neutral, and in the absence of controversial content, they generally attract very few comments.
2. Wawerposting
   Wawerposting is a website created with a humorous purpose, aiming to mock life in Wawer while attracting a large community of young local residents.

Engagement on its posts varies, ranging from around 30 to 200 likes per post.

Recurring themes often include:

- Lack of sewerage and dissatisfaction with budget allocation, which is perceived as favoring projects other than basic housing needs.
- Complaints about the 146 bus, the main public transport line traversing the district.
- Critiques of events organized by the WCK (Cultural House), often aimed at children, which young adults perceive as infantile.
- General dissatisfaction with the district council.
- Numerous memes about wild boars, which have become the website's main theme.

Notably, Wawerposting actively participated in the participatory budget process, submitting a proposal for a neon sign featuring a wild boar, which won by a majority of votes. This project was conceived as a critical counterpoint to the more conventional proposal, "Neon Sign Promoting the Wawer District", humorously titled with the addition of "[...] but cooler".

The initiative prompted the Wawer District Council to repeatedly advocate for replacing the wild boar motif with alternative symbols, such as a fox or a bicycle. Despite these efforts, the local community strongly defended the original concept, and the final installation remained faithful to the initial design.

This initiative exemplifies youth engagement in civic and cultural activities within Wawer. Operating across multiple digital platforms, Wawerposting successfully mobilised young residents to participate in the voting process, demonstrating the platform's substantial social influence.

3. Other
   We focused on identifying youth communities and initiatives active in Wawer. Due to time constraints, we were unable to contact these groups directly. Additionally, many of them either focused on youth political activism or involved youth below our target age group. Examples of such groups include SPOT Młodzieżowy Wawer and the Młodzieżowa Rada Dzielnicy Wawer.
   Our analysis also included the Wawer Cultural Center (WCK) and the Falenica Library, both located within the Kulturoteka building. The Falenica Library's website exhibits a relatively unclear structure and lacks comprehensive information about ongoing activities and events. In contrast, the WCK's online presence is more organized and coherent, reflecting a systematically structured institutional framework.

Data on Wawer district

1. Safety

   We gathered key information on life in Wawer, with a focus on residents' sense of security. According to the 2013 report "Residents' Sense of Security in Wawer", 75% of residents reported feeling safe in the district. This is slightly lower than the 79% reported for Warsaw overall, but notably higher than in Praga Północ, where only 60% of residents felt safe. Conversely, residents of Wilanów reported the highest sense of security, with 91% expressing satisfaction.

   Safety was also highlighted as one of the ten most important advantages of the district, mentioned by 11% of residents. While this ranks fifth behind green areas (43%), peace (30%), silence (28%), and good communication (13%), it remains one of the highest percentages in Warsaw, second only to Wesoła (13%).

   Among the key issues to be addressed, 14% of Wawer residents mentioned social pathologies, such as alcoholism, drug addiction, and violence. This is an average level compared to other districts, with the situation being worst in Praga Północ (41%) and best in Ursynów (4%).

   Qualitative research indicates that the quality of life for younger residents (aged 26–40) in Wawer primarily depends on:

   - A sense of security in the district
   - Access to high-quality healthcare
   - Fast and efficient public transport

   Other important factors mentioned by residents include education, cleanliness, and green areas, followed by sports, recreation, culture, and entertainment. Social assistance was identified as the least critical factor (Urząd Dzielnicy Wawer m.st. Warszawy, 2013).

   It is important to note that this study is relatively old. Based on our interviews with citizens, the situation in Wawer has significantly improved in both economic and social terms since 2013.

2. Budgeting

   In order to gain a better understanding of investment priorities in Wawer, we investigated the district's budget allocation. While seeking reliable information, we noted that publicly available data on the exact distribution of funds for individual projects is limited. This limitation was confirmed during the interview with the Promotion Department of the Wawer District Council.

   According to the available data, Wawer receives 584 million PLN, placing it 11th out of 18 Warsaw districts in terms of total allocated funding.

3. Map of potentials
   During our research, we came across a map of Wawer's potential, developed by students at SWPS University (Urząd Dzielnicy Wawer, 2024). The map synthesises findings from previous workshops and addresses the questions: "What do the residents of Wawer associate with their district?" and "What do they perceive as its strengths?" Created in collaboration with local residents, the map highlights the district's most distinctive landmarks, institutions, and locations. It was designed to serve as an informative resource for individuals newly moving to Wawer, helping them quickly understand the district's character and key features. The map has been instrumental in identifying potential meeting locations on our Google Earth platform. However, several entries appear questionable, suggesting that they may have been included primarily for mapping purposes rather than representing actual meeting sites. In addition to the map, a list of Wawer's features has also been published, most of which are specific places, with nature accounting for 9 out of 19 items.

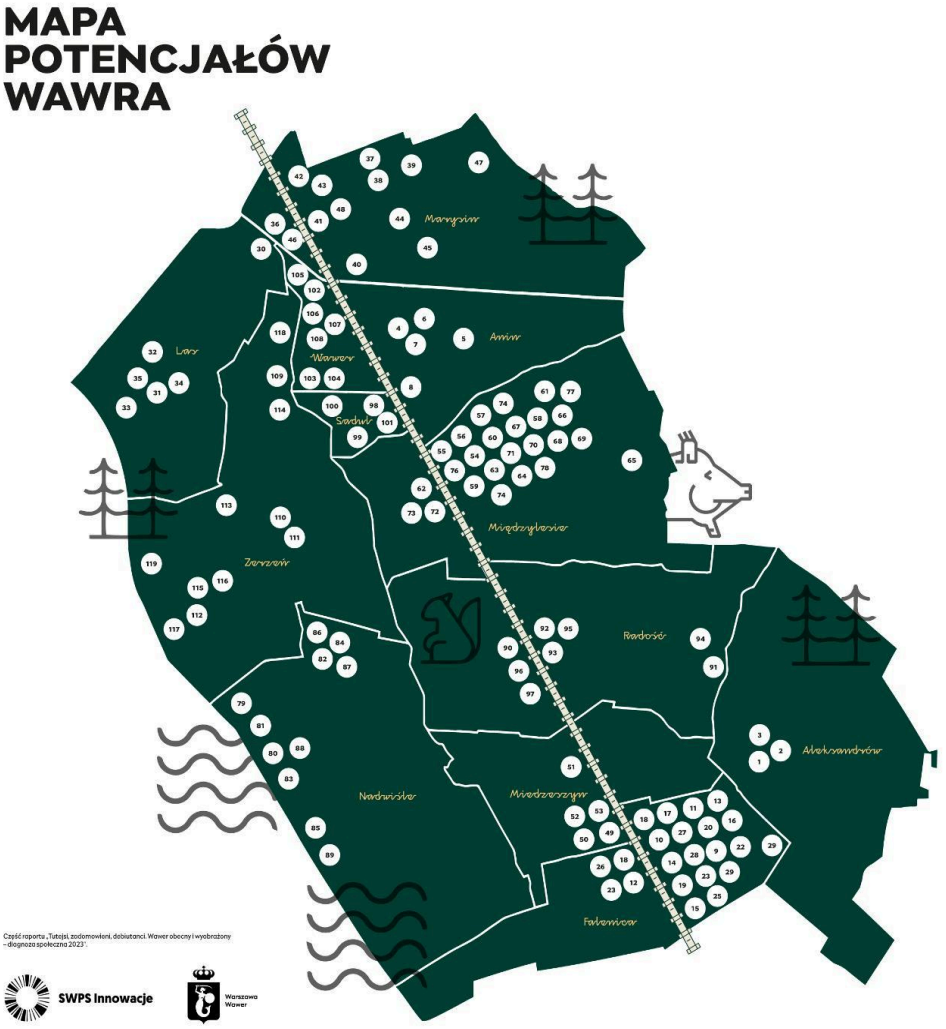


Figure 17. Map of Wawer potentials, Author: SWPS

Summary

The research on Wawer's online communities and local context reveals a clear contrast between institutional communication and grassroots digital participation. Official platforms, such as the District Council's Facebook page, maintain a formal and optimistic tone but generate limited engagement, reflecting a disconnect between authorities and residents. In contrast, the informal and humorous space of Wawerposting has become a meaningful outlet for civic expression, where irony and satire function as tools for critique and collective identity-building. Its successful participatory budget initiative demonstrates how youth engagement increasingly takes place through unconventional, digital forms, rather than traditional civic structures.

These findings suggest that most young people gravitate toward informal and relaxed modes of communication, preferring environments that feel authentic and participatory, rather than formal structures, which often fail to engage them or make them feel included. The limited transparency of institutional budgeting and the uneven quality of public communication further highlight systemic barriers to trust and collaboration. Ultimately, this study illustrates a generational shift in how community and belonging are negotiated: less through official discourse and more through shared, informal, and affective modes of online interaction.

4.4 STEEPLE analysis

The last step we did in mapping the context of our project, before creating the Personas (chapter 3.6) and formulating our HMW questions (chapter 3.7), was a second, extensive round of desktop research.

The aim was to explore potentials, limitations, and emerging dynamics shaping the context of Wawer, to identify implications that could inform and frame our design direction.

To guide this exploration, we used the STEEPLE framework (Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, Legal, and Ethical factors), following the interpretation proposed by Grzegorzek (2022).

In his approach, the STEEPLE is not simply a checklist of external factors, but a strategic mapping tool that helps identify the relationships between forces, revealing how they might act as drivers or barriers for innovation.

We decided to use this framework at this stage of the Analysis, as it helped us define the functional and informative perimeter of our project, that represents the external

conditions that shape what design can realistically do, and where it can create value.

Since Wawer is part of Warsaw, which is part of Poland, which in turn is part of the EU, while we tried to keep our research as local as possible, we decided to maintain awareness of the broader institutional and systemic forces that affect it.

Answering our guiding questions, we mapped everything that appeared relevant within each category, aiming to prioritise drivers for scoping and highlight key risks and opportunities.

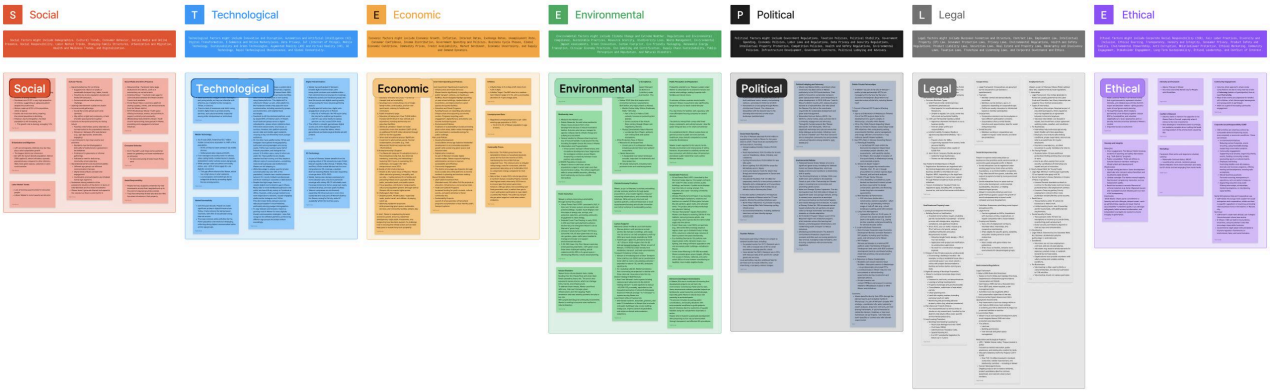
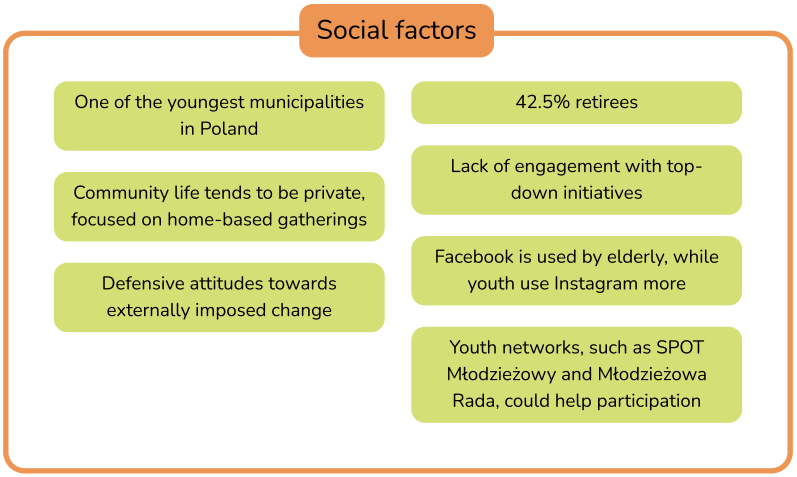
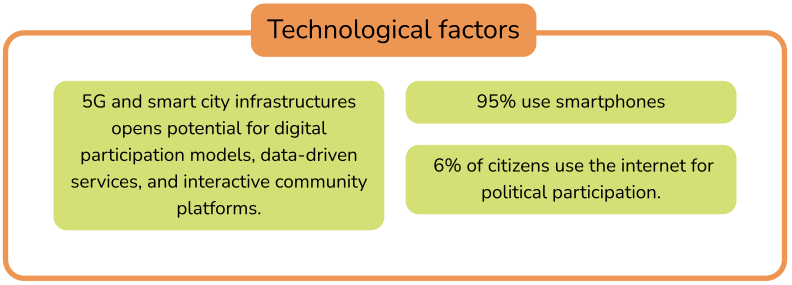


Figure 18. STEEPLE framework overview





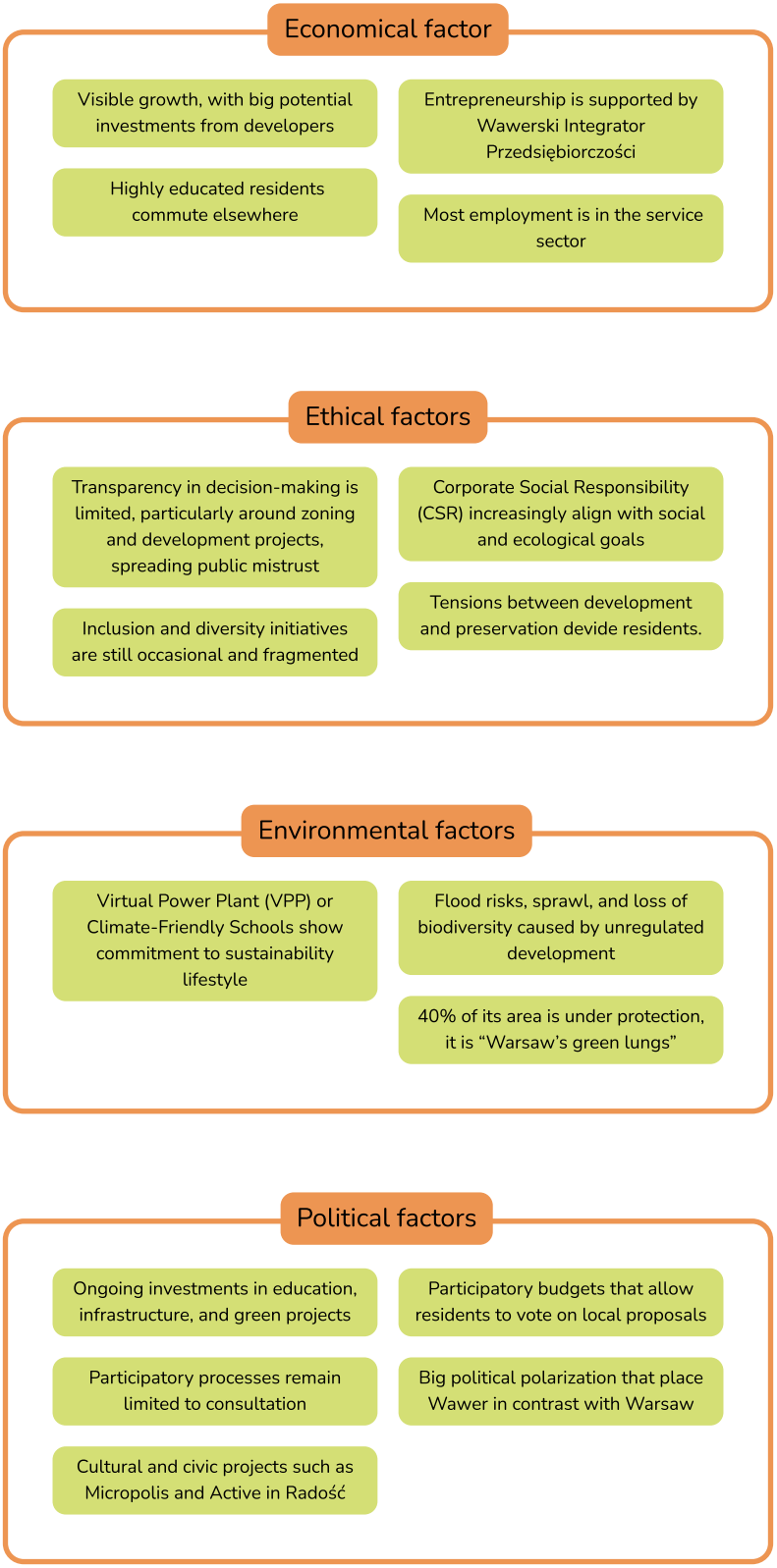


Figure 19. STEEPLE framework

Conclusion

Following Grzegorzek's interpretation, the STEEPLE analysis can be seen as a way to diagnose the external environment: to understand not only what forces act upon the project, but how they interact to define its space of opportunity.

By combining our contextual research with Grzegorzek's interpretation of the STEEPLE framework, we were able to move from a simple mapping exercise to a strategic understanding of context.

This analysis became a reference point for defining our Personas and framing our How Might We questions, as it clarified not only what challenges exist in Wawer but also where design can act, and with whom.

In this sense, the STEEPLE acted as a lens to connect macro-level shifts (political, economic, environmental) with micro-level human realities, defining the boundaries and opportunities for design to support meaningful, locally grounded innovation.

4.5 Personas

After conducting a comprehensive analysis of the project's context, we felt the need to synthesise part of this material into a set of visual and narrative representations that could meaningfully inform and guide our design process.

Although the use of Personas as a design tool has been extensively debated and often criticised for oversimplifying human diversity and reinforcing stereotypes (Cabrero et al., 2016), we recognised their potential value as communicative artefacts. Not as fixed typologies, but as evolving reflections of the data we had collected.

Our target group is broad: young people between 16 and 30 years old. This heterogeneity made it difficult to focus design decisions toward a clearly defined subject, since individuals within this age range may have entirely different life experiences, needs, and motivations.

Rather than artificially narrowing this group, we decided to construct Personas as a synthesis tool: a way to externalise and reflect on patterns emerging from our research, rather than to personify assumptions.

At this stage, we had already collected an extensive amount of data on the lives, habits, and aspirations of Wawer citizens, particularly within the 16–30 age group. We therefore decided to build our Personas directly from these findings, drawing inspiration from the Data-Driven Persona model (Cooper, 2007), which advocates grounding persona creation in empirical datasets rather than intuition or anecdotal observation.

This approach allowed us to map insights from interviews and cultural probes into two distinct yet complementary Personas. Each Persona thus became an interpretive artefact, a dynamic representation of local youth realities, intended to orient our design reflections rather than constrain them within predefined categories.

This tool became particularly effective during the Design stage, especially when developing our stakeholder maps (chapter 4.2) and shaping the design of the pretotype workshop (chapter 4.4), which we used to test our idea.

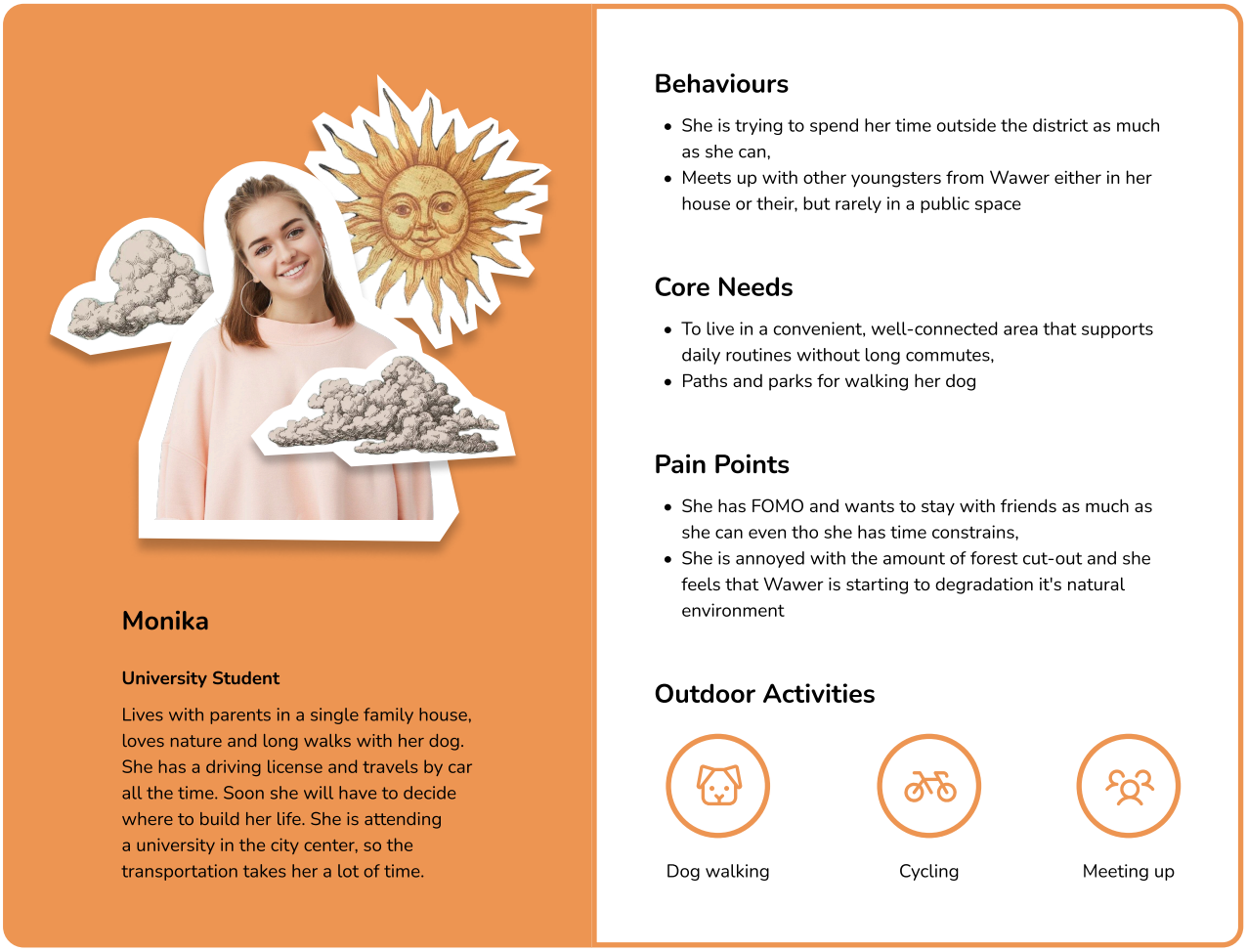


Figure 20. Persona - Monika

Artur

High School Student

Lives with parents in a single family house, has hobbies and want to find friends to share them with. Does not have a personal transportation and would like to have more available entertainment in Wawer the district he is born in and loves.

Behaviours

- His schedule is always well planned and it can't be spontaneous, since transportation take a major amount of time from the day
- He spends most of his free time at home

Core Needs

- Places in Wawer to meet without the pressure to spend money,
- A variety of service points within easy reach of his home

Pain Points

- Wawer's lack of proper sewage infrastructure frustrates him, especially during routine tasks,
- He hates the fact that during the weekends public transportation is way less frequent than during week days

Outdoor Activities

Gardening

Hiking

Photography

Figure 21. Persona - Artur

4.6 How Might We?

The final step of our Analysis stage naturally evolved into the first step of the Design stage, the formulation of our How Might We (HMW) questions.

At this point in the project, we had developed a clear understanding of what was lacking in Wawer and how Service Design could contribute to building more cohesive and participatory community structures.

Starting from our guiding research question:

> How can service design play a role in supporting and scaling social innovation projects, focusing on strong community engagement?

We brainstormed to translate this broad inquiry into an actionable design prompt.

Rather than limiting ourselves to functional objectives, we wanted our HMWs to express the qualities we envisioned for the future of the area: how the designed solution should feel, not only what it should do. We explored different combinations of words until we reached a formulation that looked neither too narrow nor too abstract:

> **How Might We...**
>
> empower local youth, increasing their sense of ownership,
> to get a more vibrant social life in Wawer?

This HMW captured the essence of our intent: to design for empowerment and belonging, using social vibrancy as both a means and an indicator of community renewal. Yet, as discussions evolved, we realised this framing was only the beginning. The “vibrant social life” we aimed for could act as the foundation for a larger systemic transformation, where youth empowerment would lead to broader forms of civic participation and place-based innovation.

To express this layered ambition, we decided to experiment with a dual HMW structure, two interconnected prompts, each pointing to a different horizon of impact. This approach allowed us to preserve strategic openness while progressively scaling our design intentions: from tangible, near-term actions to visionary, long-term change.

The second HMW was therefore conceived as an extension of the first, imagining a future that could emerge once the initial conditions were met. It relied on the scenario established by the first design direction while articulating the broader goal guiding the project:

> **How Might We...**
>
> turn a more vibrant social life into a foundation for civic participation and collective agency in Wawer?

Additionally, we decided to further narrow the scope of the project by focusing explicitly on Falenica rather than the entire Wawer district. This decision was motivated by Falenica's position as one of the farthest neighborhoods from the city center, combined with a high concentration of relevant stakeholders. These factors made it an ideal starting point for our design interventions.

5. Design

The goal of this chapter is to present the design methods we selected to guide and frame our design process. Each of these methods works as a visualisation and sense-making tool, helping us translate complex reflections into clear, actionable frameworks. Together, they served as structured checklists of questions and answers that progressively shaped our design decisions.

We begin with the MoSCoW method, which we used to define the project's requirements and set boundaries for what our solution should and should not include. The following section, Stakeholder Mapping, represents a sort of mini design process within our design process: a way to identify, reconfigure, and plan meaningful connections among key actors in our ecosystem.

Next, the Motivational Matrix is introduced as a tool to visualise both external motivations (those provided by our project) and internal motivations (those inherent to the stakeholders themselves) for participating in our initiative. Recognising that economic viability plays a crucial role for many of our stakeholders, we also developed a concise economic model outlining how our project integrates financial sustainability as a design consideration.

Finally, the chapter concludes with the description of our Pretotype Workshop, a small-scale test that helped us verify whether we were doing the right thing before doing the thing right.

This chapter is divided into the following sections:

4.1 MoSCoW method

4.2 Stakeholder maps

4.3 Motivational matrix

4.4 Pretotype: a workshop experiment

5.1 MoSCoW method

In order to design within this level of complexity, we felt the need to establish certain restrictions and guidelines for ourselves. The aim was to provide some structure to the multitude of possibilities in front of us and to support more conscious decision-making throughout the design process.

To do so, we took inspiration from the MoSCoW method, also known as MoSCoW analysis (Kuhn, 2009). Traditionally used in software development and business analysis, this method helps teams focus on delivering the most valuable and necessary elements first, ensuring that key objectives are achieved (Kuhn, 2009). It prioritises project requirements according to four categories (as reframed by us):

- “Must” (Mo): imperative requirements, without which the project would be considered a failure.
- “Should” (S): high-priority requirements, yet not critical for the project’s success.
- “Could” (Co): desirable elements that are not essential but would add value.
- “Won’t” (W): elements we intentionally decided to exclude, or ways in which we did not want our design to feel or behave.

We introduced some changes to the method, particularly in the interpretation of the final category. While the original MoSCoW framework refers to ”Won’t Haves” as features to be postponed to later releases, we reframed it as a reflective boundary, defining what our design should not embody. This adaptation allowed us to apply the method in a way that felt both meaningful and productive for our design context.

The process helped us clarify what our project fundamentally needed, what we ideally wanted it to include, which aspects could be prioritised over others, and, equally importantly, what we consciously wanted to avoid.

We also acknowledge that this tool has some limitations (Hudaib et al., 2018). One possible issue lies in the conflicts that may arise among stakeholders during prioritisation. Although no external stakeholders were involved at this stage, such divergences may emerge later, once the project enters co-design phases. Another limitation is that all elements within a given category are treated as equally important, even though, in practice, their priority may differ (Hudaib et al., 2018). Despite these shortcomings, the MoSCoW method provided us with a clear and adaptable structure that helped us frame the design phase of the project with greater focus and alignment.

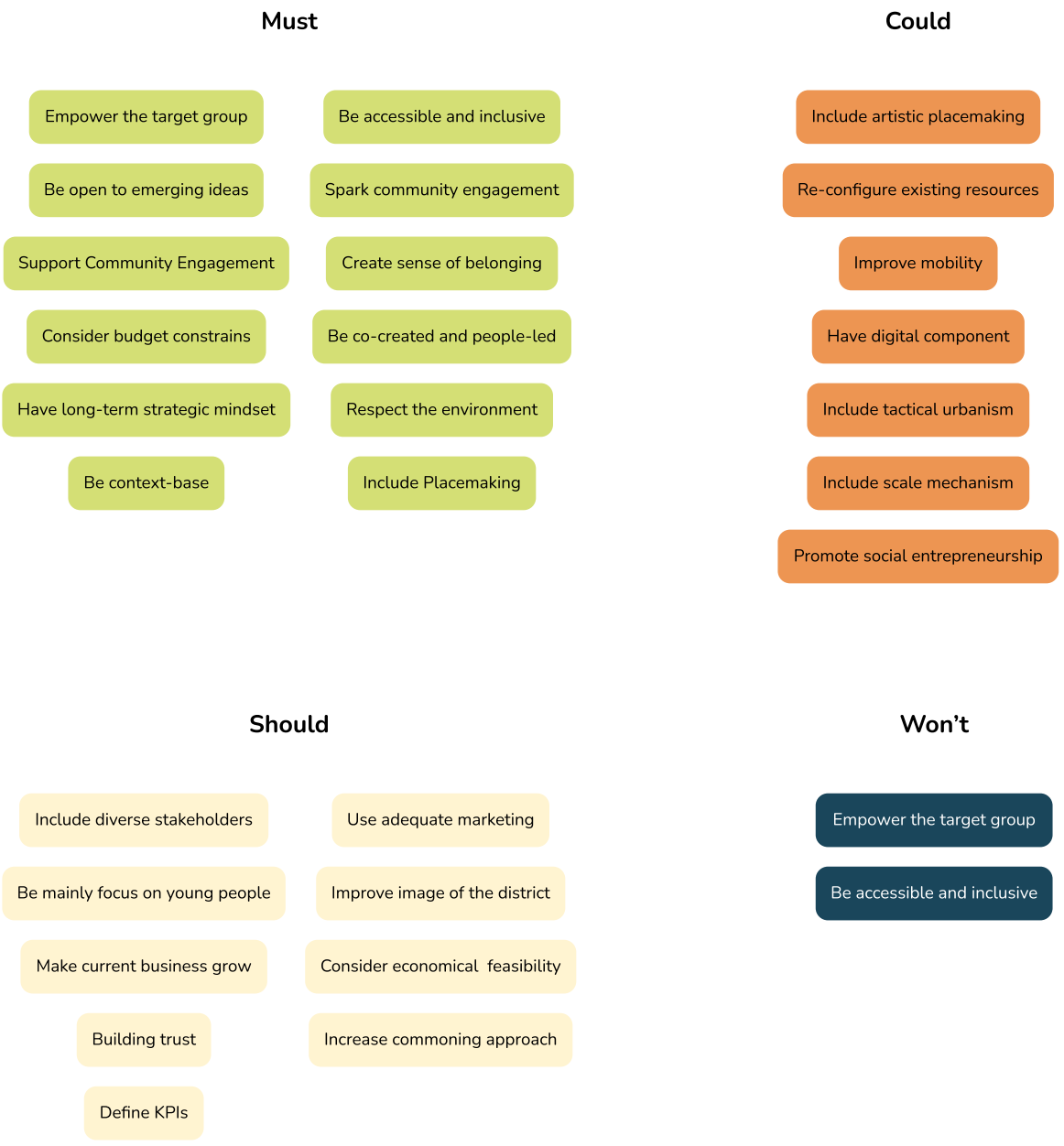


Figure 22. MoSCoW method

5.2 Stakeholders maps

After having defined the goal of our project, expressed through the HMW questions, and the corresponding requirements, established with the MoSCoW method, we moved toward developing a concrete design proposition. This stage focused on ideating a set of design choices capable of reconfiguring the existing reality of Wawer into a new and integrated Service System.

This chapter presents, as a whole, the stakeholder-related work we carried out. As can be expected, part of this process could not have taken place after some of the interviews presented in the Analysis stage. However, for the sake of clarity and narrative coherence, we decided to consolidate it all within the Design stage.

We began by mapping the Wawer area and identifying all the stakeholders currently involved in shaping the district's social life, with a particular focus on the opportunities available for young residents to spend their free time and engage with peers within the local context.

The result was a stakeholder map presented in the form of a table. A stakeholder map is a tool that illustrates the various stakeholders involved in an experience (Stickdorn et al., 2018).

We collected the stakeholders that emerged during the analysis stage and systematically gathered and organised all available information about them in order to identify weak points and touchpoints that could be revisited. This step was guided by suggestions from our expert interview with Sara Nardi.

In the table we fit the following Stakeholders:

- Kinokawiarnia
- WCK Falenica
- Biblioteka Falenica
- Sport and Culture Department of the Wawer District Council
- Promotion Department of the Wawer District Council
- XXV Liceum (High School)
- Warszawski Transport Publiczny
- Koleje Mazowieckie

We also wanted to investigate the existence and organisation of private clubs and associations (such as crochet circles, football teams, or any closed groups with activities reserved for members). However, we didn't manage to include them in this stage, since the only information we obtained indicated that they are mostly concentrated in the northern part of the district.

For each of the stakeholders we mapped out the following informations:

- Role (type of organisation)
- Group (if they are part of a bigger institution)
- Name
- Offer (on paper)
- Opening hours
- Main target group (if any)
- Already existent partnerships and collaborations with other actors
- Personal comments (from us)
- Link to website and social media, plus all other relevant pages

ROLE	GROUP	NAME	OFFER	OPENING HOURS	TARGET GROUP	CONNECTIONS	COMMENTS	LINK
Private company	_	Kinokawiarnia **(Cinema Café)**	• Cinema (+ Family Film Morning) • Café, without internal kitchen (they have it but they are not using it) • Animation workshops (periodic) • Birthday parties for children • Speeches before movie with Directors • Lectures around movies • Educational paths for students from pre-school to high school • Events and Concerts in the garden • Renting of the rooms for workshops/activities • Community breakfast • Vegan-based old polish cuisine	Mon–Fri: 9-21 Weekend: 10-22	In theory everyone (but in practice aiming towards kids and adults/seniors). They have difficulties in engaging with the youth, out target group (16-30)	• Collaboration with preschools, elementary schools, and high schools on FILM EDUCATION • Other local businesses • They collaborated with the District Council and organized "Community Breakfast"	• In Falenica • Private company • Unused potential in kitchen • Targeting young people as a considered age group • Underused workshop rooms	https://stacjafalenica.pl
Culture House	• WCK - Culture House Institution • Kulturoteka	WCK Falenica	**MISSION**: WCK Falenica is a community-driven cultural hub that fosters creativity, inclusion, and local identity, while offering meaningful ways for residents to engage, collaborate, and grow. • Events, workshops, exhibitions (painting, sculpture, photography, etc.) • Outdoor and indoor concerts and theater performances • Local history and tradition preservation programs • Art initiatives as part of the "Bliski Wawer" program • Workshops for families, especially around ecology and the environment • Intergenerational integration activities • Events such as Neighbor's Day, community festivals, and seasonal gatherings • Structured volunteer program for youth (16+) and adults	Mon–Fri: 10-21	Everyone	• Cooperation with NGOs, local schools, and community leaders • Shared space and projects with the Public Library in the same building • Joint initiatives and volunteer programs with the library	• Along "Patriotów Street" • Financed by the public --- Strategic Goals (Aligned with Warsaw 2030 Strategy) 1. Community Activation: "Together we create our city" – grassroots, collaborative projects 2. Friendly City: Inclusive local activities and workshops for nearby residents 3. Open Metropolis: Support and showcase of local creative talents 4. Volunteer Development: Ongoing expansion of a volunteer culture 5. Local Activity Space (MAL): Planned launch of a dedicated space for local civic initiatives and meetings	https://www.wck-wawer.pl https://www.wck-wawer.pl/falenica/index

Library	• Kulturoteka	Biblioteka Publiczna Dzielnicy Wawer	• Books ordering through książkomat (books parcel machine)
			• Access to books, daily newspapers, biweeklies, magazines, and journals (monthly and quarterly).
			• Modern computers and free Internet access.
			• Free membership for all residents of Warsaw.
			• Publisher of the quarterly "Między nami Aninianinami" and other works promoting Wawer's local history.
			• Cultural and Community Events:
			  • Organization of Neighbor's Day under the QRuch Sąsiedzki initiative.
			  • Participation in national events like Odjazdowy Bibliotekarz, a community bike rally for readers and library supporters.
				Monday, Wednesday, Thursday: 13-19
				Tuesday, Friday: 10-16
				Saturday, Sunday: closed
					Everyone	• Managed by Culture Houses
						• Cooperation with local non-governmental organizations.
							• Along "Patriotów Street"
							• Values: Intellectual freedom, free access to knowledge and culture, and **ideological neutrality**.
								https://bibliotekawawer.pl/nowa/wypozyczalnia-nr-25-w-falenicy-po-zmianach/

Wawer Council	Urzad Dzielnicy Wawer	Wydział Kultury i Sportu **(Sport and Culture)**	This department oversees and supports local cultural institutions, organizes district-level events, coordinates cultural education, and promotes the district's heritage through publications and preservation efforts. It offers grants, scholarships, and strategic planning for culture and sport, supports youth and inclusive sports programs, and fosters recreational activities for all residents.					https://wawer.um.warszawa.pl/-/kultura-sport
Wawer Council	Urzad Dzielnicy Wawer	Wydział Promocji i Komunikacji Społecznej **(Promotion)**	This division manages the District's online presence, local newspaper, and promotional materials to ensure clear and engaging communication. It leads marketing campaigns, coordinates with the City on branding, and fosters civic engagement through participatory programs, resident dialogue, and volunteer initiatives. It also supports the development of local community centers to strengthen neighborhood connections.					https://wawer.um.warszawa.pl/-/wydzial-promocji-i-komunikacji-spolecznej
High Schools	• Wawer High Schools	XXV Liceum. Josefa Wybickiego	• Education • Erasmus program + "School of leaders" (EuroWeek) • Regular school events like trips • Competitions (Student Olympics) • Student art exposure • Author meetings • Active student council • A school psychologist and pedagogue • Sport field • School library • Youth engagement projects focused on improving students life (with Fundacją Civis Polonus) and the school itself • https://lo25.eduwarszawa.pl/z-zycia-szkoly/wars-i-sawa	Mon–Fri: 8:00–16:30	Students 14-18 years old	Fundacją Civis Polonus (https://civispolonus.org.pl)	• Spread in the district • Not well considered	https://lo25.eduwarszawa.pl
Private Clubs	_	Specific Activity Associations	Crochet or football teams or anything that is a closed group with activities reserved for members				• More concentrated in the north part of the district	/
Public Transport	_	Warszawski Transport Publiczny **(Public Transport of Warsaw)**	Transportation service all over Warsaw	**Falenica:** Buses: 115, 142, 146, 521, 161, 213, 305, N72 (night bus), Z42 (substitute) Trains: R7, S1, R1, R3, RE3. **Blota:** Buses: 146, 521, N72 (night bus), 213	Everyone	Managed by the city of Warsaw	Through "Wal Miedzyszynski" - Bus	https://www.wtp.waw.pl
Public Transport	_	Koleje Mazowieckie **(Transportation for Mazowieckie Province)**	Transportation service for the whole Mazowieckie Province		Everyone	Managed by Self-government of the Masovian Voivodeship	• Through "Patriotów Street" - Train • Transport Company (Half Public-Half Private)	https://www.mazowieckie.com.pl/pl

Figure 23. Table of stakeholder map

This table provided us with a vast and detailed picture of how stakeholders are distributed and active in the area. It also led to several reflections, allowing us to identify potential areas for improvement. For instance, Kulturoteka (and consequently WCK Falenica and Biblioteka Falenica) remains closed during the weekend, which already poses a significant obstacle to engaging young people.

We then amplified this knowledge through the structured interviews presented in the previous stage. Our goal was to speak directly with three key actors:

- Kinokawiarnia
- WCK Falenica
- Sport and Culture Department of the Wawer District Council

To our surprise, WCK Falenica declined our interview request, showing lack of trust and openness toward outsiders. This, together with insights from citizen interviews, reinforced our impression that the institution, despite its formal mission, makes limited efforts toward genuine community engagement: much of what appears in their public communication does not seem to translate into active practice.

As the manager of Absalon noted, “cultural houses tend to be closed institutions.” For this reason, we concluded that WCK Falenica needed to be reassured first, before being included, as it did not initially demonstrate the experimental mindset we were seeking at this exploratory stage.

We faced a similar situation with the District Council, another large institution. However, this experience turned out slightly differently. We were redirected to the Promotional Office of the District Council, and this connection proved to be unexpectedly helpful. They facilitated contact with the Biblioteka Falenica, which allowed us to still make use of the Kulturoteka building, even without an official relationship with WCK Falenica, for our pretotype testing sessions (chapter 4.5).

Moreover, the interview with the Promotional Office provided valuable insights into the complexities of the district’s internal dynamics, revealing nuances that were difficult to access through other sources. Of course, during the conversation, it was important to remain attentive to when the interviewee was performing her institutional role of promoting the district’s work, rather than offering a completely candid perspective.

In the end, we successfully conducted interviews with:

- Kinokawiarnia
- Biblioteka Falenica
- Promotional Department of the Wawer District Council

These conversations helped us understand the challenges these institutions face, as

well as their genuine desire to explore new approaches to become more appealing to younger audiences. Interestingly, all of them expressed confidence in their ability to engage families and children, but admitted feeling uncertain and disconnected when it came to attracting teenagers and young adults.

We decided to build on this honest self-awareness and positive energy by proposing a new perspective: instead of addressing their challenges separately, why couldn't they collaborate to confront their common issues?

Our hypothesis was that a synergic collaboration between the public sector (represented by the District Council), public services (the Library), and the private sector (Kinokawiarnia) could generate a more inclusive and vibrant ecosystem for young people. As designers, we positioned ourselves as the bridge-builders, helping these actors overcome initial barriers and facilitating the first steps toward cooperation.

Starting from this reasoning, we decided that it was the right moment to determine who exactly we wanted to include in our project, and with which role. In order to narrow down the stakeholder map, we reinterpreted it as a Cartesian plane, where the x-axis represented "Influence" and the y-axis represented "Interest". This visualisation helped us clarify priorities and identify where to direct our attention. It also allowed us to maintain awareness of stakeholders relevant to our second HMW, while keeping our focus on addressing the first one.

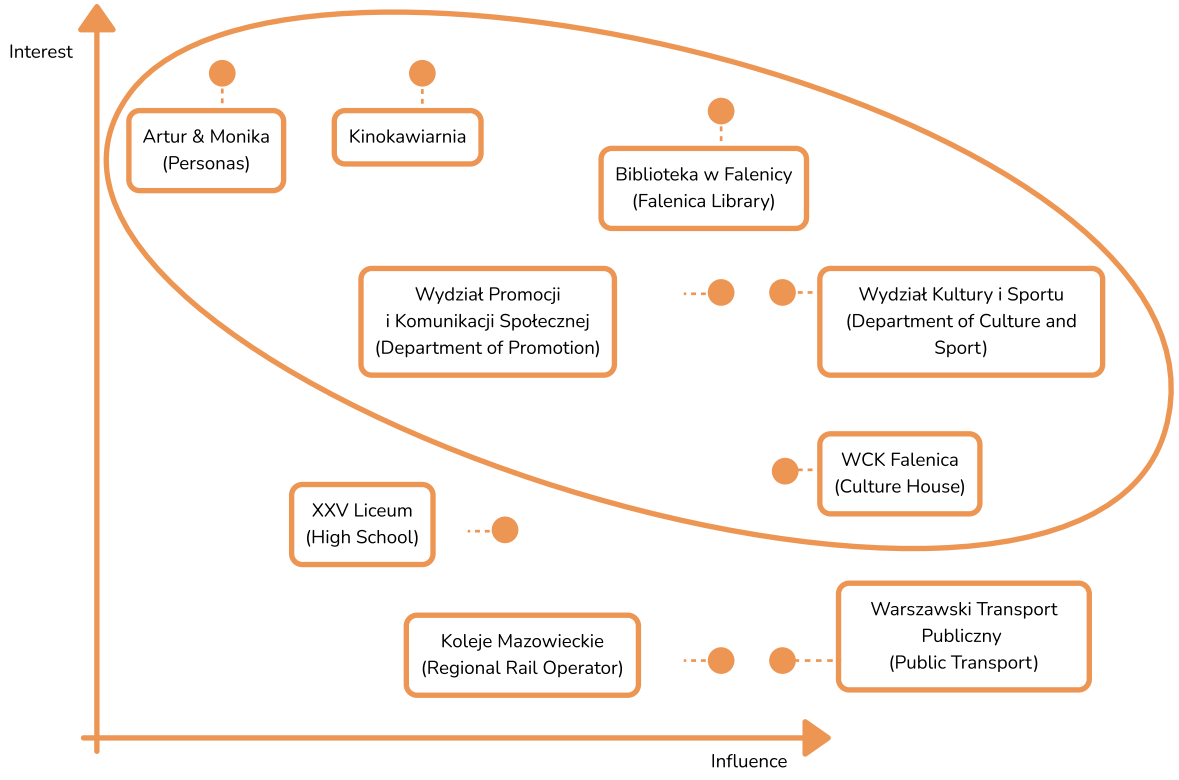


Figure 24. Narrowed down stakeholders

By using this tool, we were able to visualise the network of actors participating in, or surrounding, our service, as well as their level of interaction and influence (Giordano et al., 2018).

This exercise led to the creation of the final version of our stakeholder map, in which we represented the links and bridges that we aimed to build through our proposed service. Here, we mapped the relationships and collaborations we foresaw as essential for a change to spark and for a sustainable ecosystem to emerge.

We designed this map from our own perspective. We are aware that such an approach is not entirely orthodox, especially given that our project is around participation, but this choice reflects the actual dynamics through which the project came to life. As will become clearer throughout this chapter (and later in the Discussion), we are the ones who identified the topic, studied the context, and developed the service system. We are also the ones initiating the first connections among stakeholders and stimulating citizen participation. No one commissioned this project, and nothing would have happened initially without our active involvement.

One of the most important long-term goals of our work, as highlighted in several expert interviews, is to make ourselves as designers eventually "useless." The ultimate aim is to enable the system to sustain itself without our continued presence. However, at this stage, such autonomy is not yet achievable. The stakeholders are still interchangeable, and the citizens' needs exist independently of formal structures, meaning that our current role is that of a trigger: a catalyst that initiates connections and activates participation.

In the first level of our stakeholder map (around us), we placed the actors most relevant to the initial phase of our project: Kinokawiarnia, Biblioteka Falenica, and Artur and Monika (our two Personas). These represent the direct interfaces of our design: the spaces and people where the first interactions begin.

The second level of interaction, or sector (Stickdorn et al., 2018), includes the institutions involved in the implementation of the service. Here we find the District Council, with its Sport and Culture Department and Promotion Office, as well as the Wawerskie Centrum Kultury Falenica (WCK Falenica), the local high school, and the community of volunteers connected to the Wawer Libraries. The presence of the community of volunteers depends from our choices of using it as a starting community for our project. This level can also encompass other public and private actors who contribute by providing spaces, skills, funding, services, or experiences to the project.

Finally, in the outer level of the map, we included stakeholders who belong to the

broader ecosystem but have only indirect involvement in the early phases of the project (for instance, public transportation companies). While these actors do not directly engage with the initial stage of the project (linked to our first HMW), their role becomes increasingly significant in the long-term scaling of the service.

This level also represents the space for potential high-level stakeholders (such as administrative institutions connected to the City of Warsaw or regional policy bodies) who may join the initiative in later stages.

By structuring the map in this way, we were able to visualise not only the current configuration of relationships but also the potential evolution of the ecosystem over time: a living network that can progressively grow and adapt as new collaborations emerge.

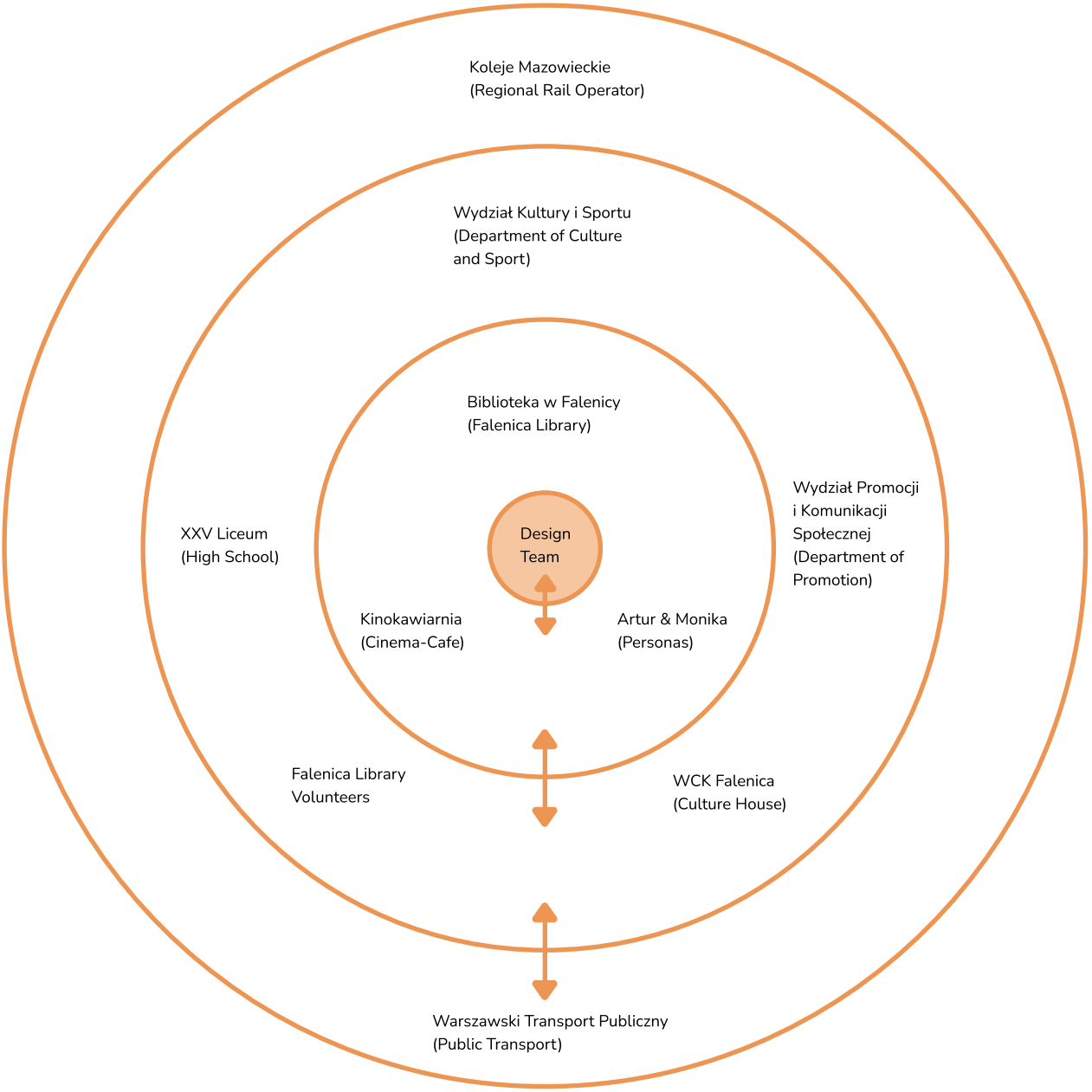


Figure 25. Stakeholder map

5.3 Motivational matrix

After defining the Stakeholder Map, we decided to deeply consider the actors involved in the system we were designing. Each stakeholder participates in a service due to specific motivations. The motivational matrix is a valuable tool for understanding these motivations and intentions, clarifying the roles and relationships among all the actors (Manzini et al., 2009).

It details what each stakeholder brings to the others, helping us understand the "why" of each actor (Morelli, 2007) and design an effective solution that positively engages all stakeholders in our new service.

The first row and column of the matrix list the same actors. The horizontal row describes what each actor gives to the other actors, while the diagonal explains each actor's intrinsic motivation to be part of the service system.

In this Motivational Matrix, the list of actors differs slightly from the Stakeholders Map due to functional priorities in using the tool. These decisions include:

- Removing the third level stakeholders (Transportation Companies) because their role is outside the scope of the first HMW (and therefore the current state of the project lacks argument/motivations for them to join). However, their role will be considered in the Representation chapter when discussing the Roadmap (chapter 5.3) and the Theory of Change (chapter 5.4).
- Merging “Promotional Office” and the “Department of Sport and Culture” into “Wawer District Council”, since motivations align pretty well.

This tool proved essential in mapping the system of actors, forcing us to consider the partnerships necessary for the system to function. It helped us account for different interests and motivations, laying the foundation for interconnected and fruitful collaborations. Additionally, it aided in visualising the new system and building the infrastructure for the solution, providing valuable insights into how it could operate effectively.

Gives to ↱	Kinokawiarnia	Biblioteka Publiczna Dzielnicy Wawer w Falenicy	WCK	Rada Dzielnicy Wawer	Artur & Monika (Personas)	Falenica Library Volunteers	XXV Liceum Józefa Wybickiego (High School)
Kinokawiarnia	• MISSION ACHIEVEMENT • REPUTATION • BUSINESS	• Teamwork in event execution → more future participants	• Collaboration • Shared events	(indirectly): • Better reputation • Trust building • Stronger impact	• Entertainment • Cultural value • Meaningful moments • Community engagement	• Space • Opportunities for events • Gathering	• Extra curricular activities
Biblioteka Publiczna Dzielnicy Wawer w Falenicy	• Teamwork in event execution → more future participants	• MISSION ACHIEVEMENT • REPUTATION • STRONGER IMPACT	• Collaboration • Shared events • Usage of shared space	(indirectly): • Better reputation • Trust building • Stronger impact	• Entertainment • Cultural value • Meaningful moments • Community engagement	• Community creation and engagements • Events • Care	• Extra curricular activities
WCK Falenica	• Collaboration • Shared events	• Collaboration • Shared events • Usage of shared space	• MISSION ACHIEVEMENT • REPUTATION • STRONGER IMPACT	• Better reputation • Trust building • Stronger Impact	• Entertainment • Cultural value • Meaningful moments • Community engagement	• Space • Opportunities for events • Gathering	• Extra curricular activities
Rada Dzielnicy Wawer	• Collaboration and help with the events organisation • Advertisement → more future clients	• Collaboration and help with the events organisation and promotion	• Money and resources • Space • Promotion	• REPUTATION • TRUST BUILDING • STRONGER IMPACT	• Knowledge and info about things happening in the district • More belonging	• Acknowledgement • Promotion	• /
Artur & Monika (Personas)	• Visitors • Money • "Word of mouth" • New target group	• Stronger impact • "Word of mouth" • New target group	• Reasons to exist • Money • "Word of mouth"	• (indirectly): • Better reputation • Trust building • Stronger impact	• COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT • EMPOWERMENT & BELONGING • DISTRICT PRIDE	• Time • Energy • Enthusiasm • Participation	• /
Falenica Library Volunteers	• Visitors • Money • "Word of mouth" • New target group	• Volunteer resources • Help • "Unpaid" labour	• Volunteering • Help • "Unpaid" labour	(indirectly): • Better reputation • Trust building • Stronger impact	• Potential community to join • Example to follow • More relationships	• COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT • MORE RELATIONSHIPS • PURPOSE	• /
XXV Liceum Józefa Wybickiego (High School)	• Collaboration to gather people • Money • Word of mouth	• Collaboration to gather people • Reasons to exist • Word of mouth	• Promotion	• (indirectly): • Better reputation • Trust building • Stronger impact	• /	• Promotion	• COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT • EMPOWERMENT & BELONGING • DISTRICT PRIDE

Figure 26. Motivational Matrix

In addition, we decided it was important to develop a simple economic model to demonstrate to the involved stakeholders how our proposals could be implemented without putting additional significant strain on their budgets.

From our interviews, it emerged that although stakeholders such as Kinokawiarnia pursue an important and socially relevant mission, they often have significant potential and underused resources. However, they lack a clear business plan to make the use of these resources for community engagement economically viable.

For this reason, we revisited our benchmarking to see if there was a simple way for us, as designers, to demonstrate that community engagement could be economically sustainable. However, what emerged from the successful initiatives we presented earlier was that it is rarely possible to combine social innovation with financial self-sufficiency.

All of these places face challenges in budget management and are constantly investing resources in the hope that, eventually, their efforts will pay off. Moreover, all of these initiatives are (or were) receiving public sector funding, which is not easily accessible to private entities like Kinokawiarnia.

From our side, we were still able to collect ideas for making this service system economically sustainable:

- The initiative would benefit from a dedicated R&D (Research and Development) role, as described by SmartLab, someone fully responsible for identifying and applying for social funding at the city (Warsaw), national (Poland), and EU levels. These funds could then be used to keep costs low for all stakeholders involved.
- Wawer currently lacks any gathering places similar to a pub, which opens opportunities to use sales from food and drinks to sustain events.
- Leveraging volunteers from existing and newly created communities could help achieve a dual goal: fostering community engagement while keeping costs low. Although Polish law restricts private companies from using volunteers, our initiative could potentially work around this limitation by not focusing solely on private businesses, making the model feasible in theory.
- The city of Warsaw currently considers itself to be supporting community engagement in Wawer sufficiently by providing funding to WCK.
  However, as we observed, these funds are not always used in the most effective way.
  It could therefore be beneficial to allocate part of this funding through WCK to support events, activities, and future plans from the proposed service system. Naturally, this would require convincing WCK Falenica to the approach.

- Having an extensive network of stakeholders involved in the initiative could also significantly reduce costs. Private citizens could be considered key stakeholders as well. For example, including landowners in the project and rebuilding trust between people would create a more collaborative atmosphere, making it easier to carry out activities. Often, time and bureaucracy translate directly into costs, as individuals are less willing to invest effort alone. If many people participate and contribute whatever they can (in terms of time, money, skills, or energy) the initiative becomes more feasible. Sharing skills increases their accessibility for others.
  For this purpose it would be important to map out the potential of each stakeholder, not just their motivation, although this is something to be explored in the further development of the project.
- Finally, we are aware that what we are proposing requires an investment. However, as Signe Kongebro highlighted during her expert interview, placemaking can make a place more profitable. It is, therefore, an investment that has the potential to enhance the local economy in unexpected ways. For instance, by making Wawer more attractive to residents from other districts, thereby increasing the customer base for local businesses.

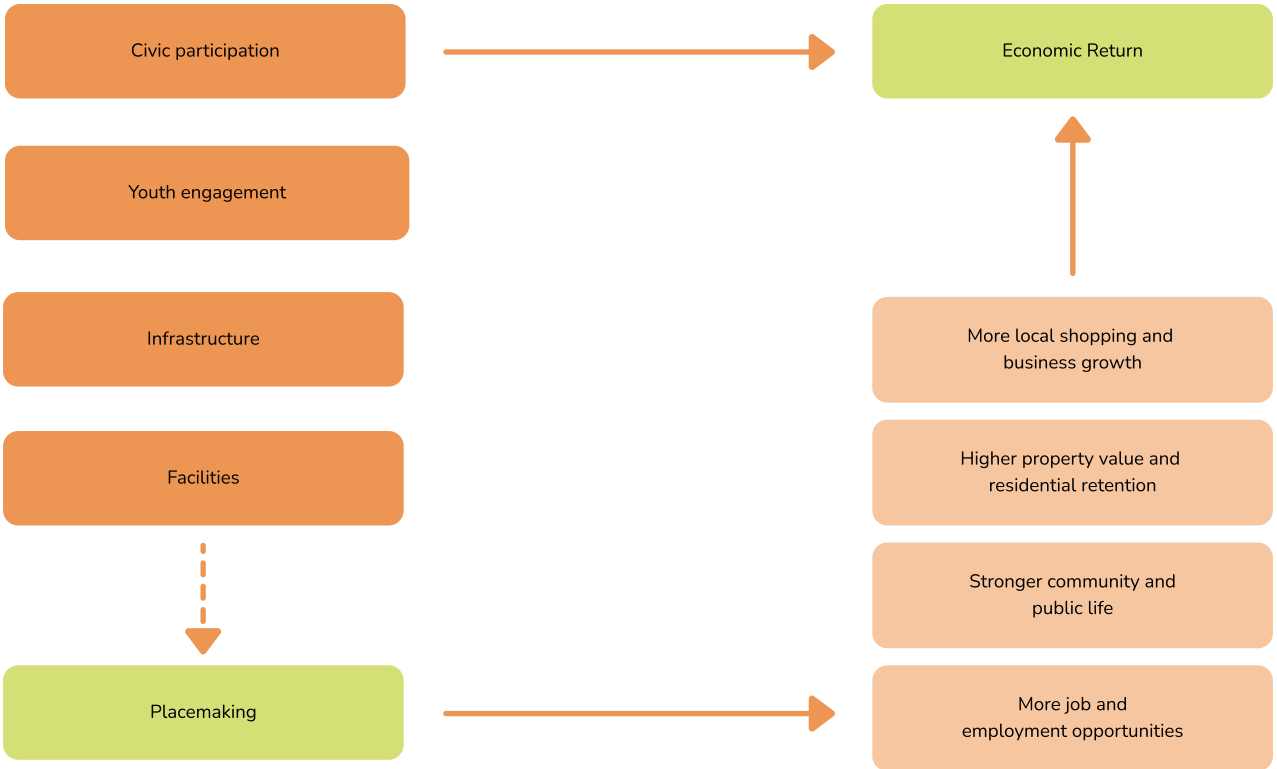


Figure 27. A scheme of Placemaking value in economical sustainability

5.4 Pretotype: a workshop experiment

Having defined the principle of our design, we decided it was time to test the concept. Specifically, we aimed to verify:

1. Whether the chosen stakeholders would be interested in our proposition.
2. Whether the target group would engage with it, questioning, for instance, if Monika and Artur were truly representative of the broader audience.

The test was designed as a Pretotype (Savoia, 2011) of a service system, conducted before committing to further planning, as presented in the Representation chapter.

The first step in creating the test was to clarify which elements were essential for the initial experience and which could be deferred to later stages of the roadmap. To support this, we revisited our MoSCoW method, ensuring we were maximising its potential.

Our approach drew also significant inspiration from the literature. We aimed for a participatory activity, offering participants something engaging and valuable in return for their time. The goal was to encourage participants to bring their personal narratives and cultural insights into a playful form, using hands-on activities and boundary objects to map and physically represent their individual experiences and visions of the district (D'Ambrosio et al., 2024).

We wanted to experiment with playful placemaking, transforming spaces into meaningful places by altering their aesthetic, physical, and social identities. Gudiksen and Skovbjerg (2020) describe "design play" as a method for creating impactful co-design experiences, while Skovbjerg and Bekker (2018) highlight its motivational qualities and the safe environment it provides for experimentation. Such experiences encourage surprise, exploration, collaboration, and competition, making play central to creative and participatory placemaking (Hamid et al., 2024).

Additionally, we identified a resident, Artur (from interviews in chapter 3.3), whose idea aligned perfectly with our test: he had planned to create a movie club. This offered a potential opportunity to design and facilitate an amateur filmmaking workshop to spark interest among participants. In practice, however, we had to design and facilitate the workshop ourselves due to the limitations discussed at the end of the chapter
This led us to develop the following Pretotype Workshop.

Preparation
The first step involved outlining a plan for cooperation with specific stakeholders. Our goal was to engage as many partners as possible to maximize each stakeholder's

contribution. We decided to collaborate with Kinokawiarnia and Kulturoteka (through Biblioteka Falenica) as the main workshop partners, while the “Promotion Office of the District Council” would have assisted with promoting the event. After initial contact and detailed back-and-forth discussions regarding possibilities and constraints, we developed a three-day workshop plan centered on amateur filmmaking.

To align with our goals, we designed the workshop to include the following elements:

- Participation is restricted to a maximum of 8 people and applications are happening through a Google Form, gathering also personal informations.
- Participants need to work in groups to ensure a collaborative experience and incorporate a co-creation component.
- The creation of the movie is guided using small, toy-like, playful tools to spark and structure participants’ creativity.
- The movie has to be recorded in Wawer, with the setting itself serving as an important element of the filmography incorporating a placemaking component.
- The movie had to be under five minutes to ensure feasibility within the very limited timeframe and to avoid placing unnecessary stress on the participants.

After designing the workshop, we prepared all the necessary materials and promotional content, paying particular attention to creating an appealing visual style for the poster. We also drafted the accompanying text for social media, which was subsequently shared on Wawerposting and the District Council’s official pages.

Four individuals registered in advance via a pre-prepared Google Form, and ultimately, three participants attended all three sessions and successfully completed the workshop, held from September 18th to 20th, 2025.

Figure 28. Social media post published by Wawer District Council

Organization

- 1st day
  The workshop opened in Kulturoteka with an icebreaker, followed by a short lecture on the theme: “McGuffin – How to easily build the main plot of a film”. Participants were then given their own McGuffins (objects around which their story would revolve). These objects were designed to drive character actions, even if their significance was not immediately apparent to the audience. Participants drew their objects from a prepared bag. Next, they wrote a brief explanation (2–3 sentences) describing the role of their chosen McGuffin in the film’s narrative.
  They were then provided with Dixit cards, Story Cubes, paper, and pens for storyboard to develop their storylines. Facilitators guided participants in using these materials effectively, ensuring everyone was prepared to construct their own film plot.
- 2nd day
  On the second day, facilitators remained available in Kulturoteka’s library and maintained continuous communication with participants. One participant took advantage of this support by involving facilitators as actors in their film production.
- 3rd day
  On the final day, a film-editing session was held in Kulturoteka for participants who wished to finalise their films. Only one participant required facilitator assistance, as the other two had completed their editing the previous day. The workshop concluded with a film screening at Kinokawiarnia, where participants’ films were projected on a large auditorium screen. An awards segment followed, recognising films in categories such as the funniest, the most artistic, and the most dramatic, accompanied by applause and prize distribution.

Figure 29. Story Cubes and Dixit cards

Figure 30. Introductory lecture and storyline creation

Limitations

The workshops were primarily organised remotely from Copenhagen, with continuous communication maintained with local stakeholders. This approach extended the organisational timeline to approximately one month, which reduced the promotional phase to just one week.

Initially, the workshop was intended to be delivered in collaboration with a Wawer resident as facilitator. However, it was not possible to secure suitable his availability during our visit to Poland.

Reflections

The workshop proceeded largely as planned and achieved the minimum expected number of participants. However, a larger sample size would have allowed for more robust observations regarding Wawer residents' willingness to engage in collaborative activities.

The decision for participants to prepare films individually, rather than in groups, also limited the reliability of the findings.

Additionally, the icebreaker presented some challenges: when asked, "What is your favourite place in Wawer?", several participants either could not answer or

responded that they did not know, with only one participant providing an answer.

At the end of the workshop, participants provided predominantly positive feedback. One participant noted that “Story Cubes” proved essential in constructing their narrative, highlighting the tool’s effectiveness. The only critical comment was related to the perceived intensity of the workshop, which had been constrained by organisational limitations.

Overall, the workshop confirmed a general interest in the topic and showed that participants were eager to engage in similar projects with an informal, youth-oriented approach.

Since the workshop was held in locations relevant to our project, we could not help but notice that Kulturoteka lacks Wi-Fi. This could become an important design consideration for future development, as it may represent a significant opportunity for teenagers to access the space. Also we got told specifically that WCK didn’t wanted us in their part of Kulturoteka (building that they share with Biblioteka Falenica). This also suggests that they may still hold reservations about the goals of our project.

The workshop also addressed our first research question regarding stakeholder involvement. All engaged stakeholders expressed enthusiasm and provided support:

- Kinokawiarnia offered a cinema hall free of charge.
- Biblioteka Falenica provided space for two days (including a weekend day when staff opened the facility specifically for us).
- The Promotion Office of the District Council promoted the workshop on Instagram and Facebook.

Finally, to fully understand the potential of these events, they would need to be carried out over a longer period, with careful planning and organisation, rather than under the tight deadlines imposed by this project.

The original plan also envisioned the workshop as the first of two testing sessions. The second session was intended to be a Charrette, in which all involved stakeholders would co-design the service system starting from feedback on this testing: a proper co-design workshop.

The challenge was that, given the time invested in organising the first workshop, there was insufficient time to coordinate a second session that required the availability of multiple stakeholders, even if conducted online.

These constraints highlight several important lessons for future participatory design initiatives. Firstly, time and local presence play a crucial role in ensuring genuine stakeholder engagement and effective coordination. Working remotely significantly

limits opportunities for informal exchange, trust-building, and spontaneous collaboration: all essential elements in participatory design.

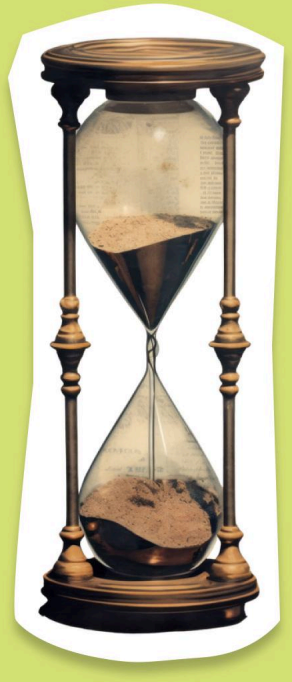
Nevertheless, the experience of organising and facilitating the workshop under these conditions was valuable. It demonstrated that even within logistical and temporal limitations, a Pretotype approach can yield meaningful insights, build early relationships, and test assumptions about stakeholder motivation and community engagement. For future iterations, longer preparation periods and stronger local partnerships could enable a more inclusive, co-creative process, strengthening both the quality and sustainability of the outcomes.

The following links provide access to the participants' creations produced during the workshop:

First Movie Second Movie Third Movie

Figure 31. One of the participant's movie

6. Representation



The goal of this chapter is to present a set of design methods selected to represent our final design concept, forming a strategic document ready to guide its implementation. Each of these methods functions as a visualisation and sense-making tool, helping us translate complex reflections into clear, actionable frameworks.

We begin by presenting the Value Proposition of our project, which defines the core of our offer and the benefits it aims to generate. Following this, we introduce the Three Horizons Model, which serves as the foundation for understanding the actions needed to prepare for the approaching future and to manage the transition between present conditions and long-term goals.

The subsequent two sections, the Roadmap and the Theory of Change, outline the concrete actions and milestones necessary for the solution to be realised and sustained over time.

Finally, the chapter concludes with our Video Pretotype, a visual communication tool designed to convey the envisioned future of Wawer and inspire stakeholders to take part in its realisation.

This chapter is divided into the following sections:

6.1 Value proposition

6.2 Three horizon model

6.3 Roadmap

6.4 Theory of change

6.5 Video pretotype

6.1 Value Proposition

After completing the Pretotype workshop, we moved beyond the design phase and began to reflect on how best to use the limited time remaining to represent our solution while simultaneously refining and improving it.

An important objective at this stage was to ensure that our mental models were aligned. To facilitate this alignment, we relied on visualisation tools, which proved especially valuable. The act of visualising a concept inherently demands a formalisation of one's understanding, translating abstract ideas into a shared, tangible form.

The effort we invested in this third stage began with a conceptual focus:

- What did we want to achieve with our solution?
- What was our service proposition?
- What value were we aiming to provide, and to whom?

To represent our common vision of the value proposition, we consulted the Systemic Design Toolkit (Design Journeys through Complex Systems Tools, 2021), where we found a model particularly suitable for our purposes. This toolkit is especially effective for representing complex systems because it offers a variety of tools that help designers express multidimensional relationships within a two-dimensional framework.

The Value Proposition template from the toolkit is structured around three concentric circles, each representing a different scale of impact:

1. The individual level
2. The organisational or ecosystem level
3. The societal level

At the same time, the diagram is divided into four quadrants, representing distinct types of value: economic, social, psychological, and ecological.

By combining these two dimensions, scale and type of value, into a single visual representation, we were able to communicate our entire value proposition within one coherent drawing. This tool proved to be instrumental in initiating and structuring the Representation phase of our project.

Having a clear and comprehensive value proposition helped us develop a more structured representation of the service system and a more strategically informed document describing the potential development of the initiative. It also proved to be valuable in clarifying our objectives for future stakeholder engagement, making it

easier to communicate what we aim to achieve through our proposition.

The concentric circles progress from the individual (inner) level to the societal (outer) level, while each quadrant is labeled according to the type of value it represents.

The full Value Proposition template is contained within the pitch document, presented as a separate component of the submitted materials.

Figure 32. Value Proposition

6.2 Three Horizon Model

After defining our Value Proposition, we wanted to further develop the mapping of our two “How Might We” statements and, at the same time, understand what elements could serve as “pockets of the future” to begin working toward the two horizons we had established. To achieve this, we drew inspiration from the “Three Horizons Model”, as introduced by Sara Nardi during our expert interview.

The “Three Horizons” framework is a qualitative foresight tool that links the present to envisioned future scenarios, highlighting potential conflicts between current realities and the imagined futures. It is based on the concept that e. g. social innovation initiatives often follow life cycles of initiation, growth, success, and decline. These cycles can be seen as successive waves of change that replace one another, forming the basis for the representation of the three horizons (Jordan, 2021).

The Three Horizons framework illustrates how systems evolve through three stages (Figure 33) and helps analyse how underlying systems, structures, and varying rates of change influence these transitions. The horizontal axis represents time, extending from the present into the future, while the vertical axis indicates the relative dominance of each pattern or system over time.

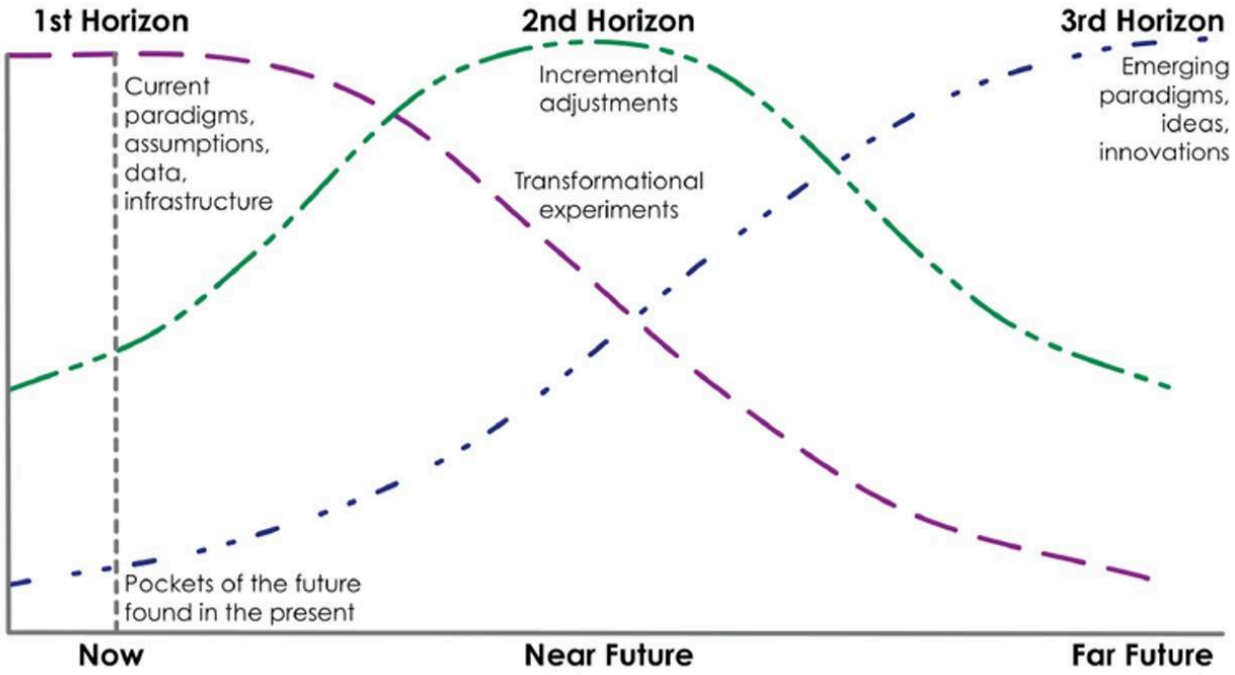


Figure 33. Three Horizon Model overview

The first Horizon (H1) is the current dominant system, which becomes less effective as conditions change, even though parts may persist in a supporting role. The third Horizon (H3) represents a future paradigm, initially a marginal idea but eventually dominant as it aligns with new realities. The second Horizon (H2) is the turbulent transition phase where experimentation creates tension between H1 and H3. This overlap highlights the need for strategic foresight to balance stability with transformation and navigate shifts effectively (Hodgson & Midgley, 2014).

The first step of this method involves understanding the present obstacles. It is essential to analyse the current situation. To do this, we mapped out the main identified current issues under "Current system" in H1, while in the section "Elements of the current system we needs to sustain," we identified and outlined what should be preserved.

Then we moved to H3, where "Pockets of the future in the present" helped us reflecting and coming up with niche initiatives, opportunities, and actions that could guide the exploration of future paradigms and innovations, ultimately shaping the "Vision."

Finally, H2 represents the emerging "short to medium-term" future. This horizon focuses primarily on areas of growth and innovation (Sharpe et al., 2016). It includes "Intermediate interventions," where we mapped actions and conditions that could progressively build toward the Vision, and "Elements of the current system we can reuse," where we explored opportunities to leverage the local community, businesses, and other potential stakeholders in Wawer who are also seeking opportunities for growth and development.

Reflections

The Three Horizons Model is a powerful framework for managing innovation and long-term growth; however, its effectiveness can be undermined by several recurring challenges. One of the main difficulties lies in the blurred boundaries between horizons, particularly between H2 and the others, which can lead to conceptual confusion.

Furthermore, cultural resistance to disruption often impedes progress, as H3 innovations may challenge existing business models and provoke opposition from some stakeholders. In addition, structural silos within organisations can exacerbate these challenges, limiting the cross-functional collaboration necessary for coherent and sustainable innovation (Blank, 2019).

We are aware this method is typically designed to be conducted collaboratively with stakeholders in co-design sessions. However, our purpose in applying it differed: rather than using it to gather insights from others and collectively map future visions, we employed it to align our own perspectives and further refine our plan,

generating new ideas for the development of the Roadmap (Chapter 5.3).

The model should be regularly reviewed and adjusted as external conditions and contextual factors evolve. By establishing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and metrics tailored to the objectives of each horizon, we can effectively monitor progress and maintain control over the outcomes achieved in pursuit of our long-term vision.

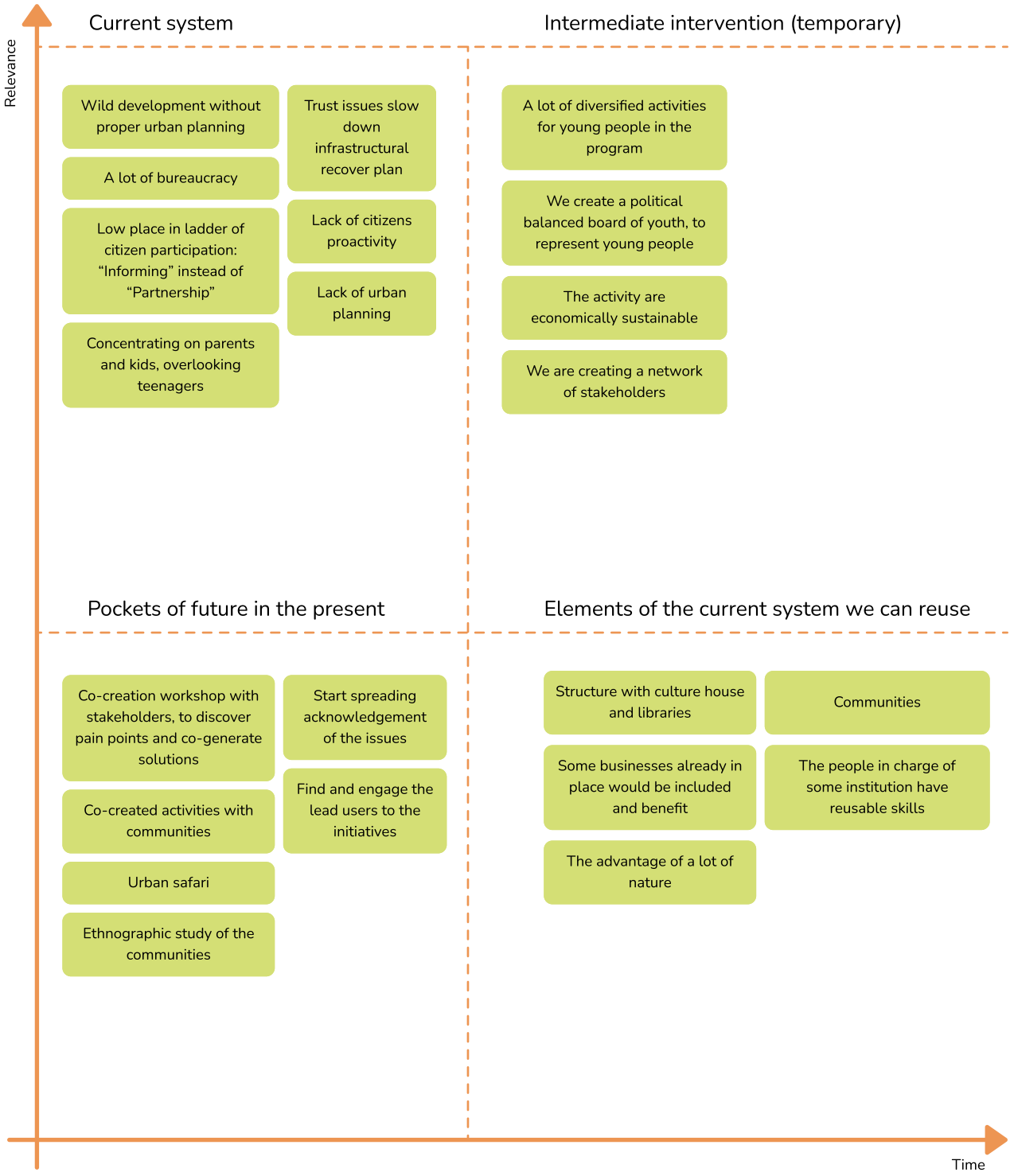
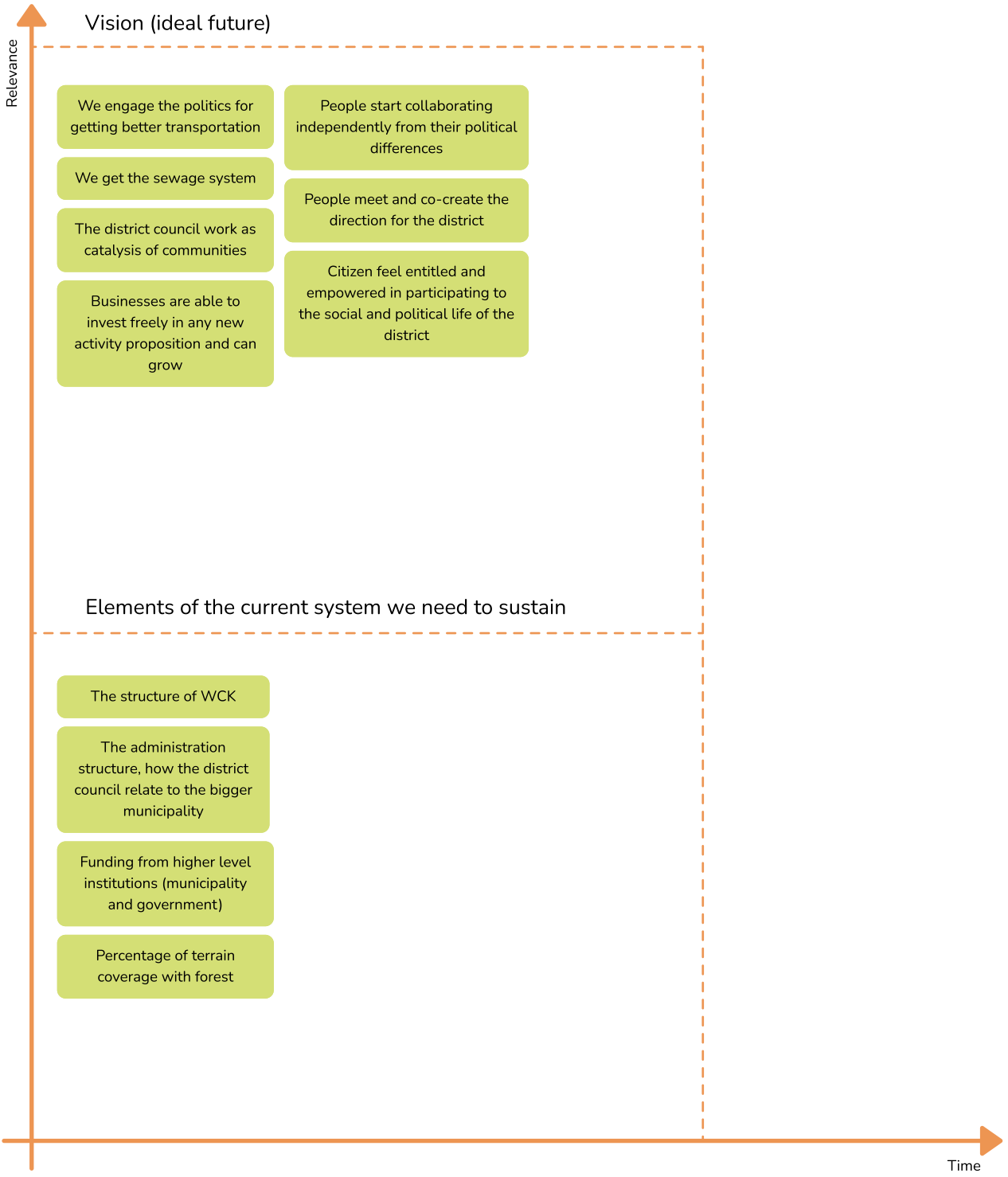


Figure 34. Three Horizon Model


Relevance
Vision (ideal future)
We engage the politics for getting better transportation
We get the sewage system
The district council work as catalysis of communities
Businesses are able to invest freely in any new activity proposition and can grow
People start collaborating independently from their political differences
People meet and co-create the direction for the district
Citizen feel entitled and empowered in participating to the social and political life of the district
Elements of the current system we need to sustain
The structure of WCK
The administration structure, how the district council relate to the bigger municipality
Funding from higher level institutions (municipality and government)
Percentage of terrain coverage with forest
Time

6.3 Roadmap

After reflecting on multiple horizons and approaches to designing across them (first through the “HMW”s and then through the “Three Horizons Model”) we had established the foundation needed to develop our Roadmap. This roadmap was conceived as a guide, potentially enabling stakeholders to continue the project autonomously.

We chose to develop a Roadmap rather than other implementation-oriented tools because of the nature of our Service Design project. Since we are designing for services, it would not have been appropriate or feasible to visualise the level of operational detail that, for example, a service blueprint might include.

The complexity and participatory nature of the project required a tool that could capture both strategic direction and adaptive development over time.

Additionally, we did not adopt any existing roadmap template. Instead, we developed a custom visualisation, designed specifically to reflect the unique characteristics and needs of this project.

Several key decisions were made during the development of the roadmap:

1. We decided to divide it into three sequential parts, each covering a different timeframe. With each transition from one phase to the next, the roadmap gradually decreases in detail and in our ability to plan with precision, reflecting the increasing uncertainty and openness inherent in long-term service development.
2. We determined that each of the three parts would end in a different way, establishing distinct relationships with time:
    a. The first phase concludes at the end of the current year (2025), covering the remaining two to three months.
    b. The second phase ends when we can observe that the project is capable of continuing independently, without our direct involvement. Based on insights from expert interviews and literature, this timeframe can vary significantly: from three to twenty-five years. We decided to take an optimistic approach and set a target completion date of 2030.
    c. The third phase is envisioned as open-ended, representing the stage in which the district operates fully independently, progressively adopting a more participatory approach to common goods and services, corresponding to the third horizon and the outer circle of our value proposition.

3. We decided to structure the roadmap along two parallel temporal lines:
    a. A physical line, covering the concrete actions and events we plan to implement.
    b. A strategic line, focusing on decision-making processes guided by reflection and adaptive thinking. The strategic line must remain aligned with the physical one while retaining the flexibility to influence and reshape it.

       This approach was inspired by insights from our expert interview with Christina, who used a similar dual-line strategy in her project in Esbjerg.

We are also aware of the potential drawbacks of our approach. The outcomes of the planning process may be difficult to measure, and the resulting KPIs may not be entirely realistic. Moreover, as the project remains in an early developmental phase, the plan could still face disruptions or even fail before the end of the year.

We also recognise that it would have been preferable to involve stakeholders more directly in this step, and ideally, throughout the entire phase. However, this was not a realistic option within the given timeframe and resource constraints. Despite these limitations, we believe that the effort invested in developing the roadmap retains significant value.

From a systemic service design perspective, this roadmap represents more than a prescriptive plan, it functions as a living framework for reflection, learning, and adaptation. It enables us to manage uncertainty and remain responsive to new insights, stakeholder feedback, and evolving real-world conditions. By treating the roadmap as an adaptive tool rather than a fixed plan, we acknowledge uncertainty not as a weakness but as an inherent and productive component of systemic change.

Due to file format constraints, the Roadmap is provided separately in the delivered documents.

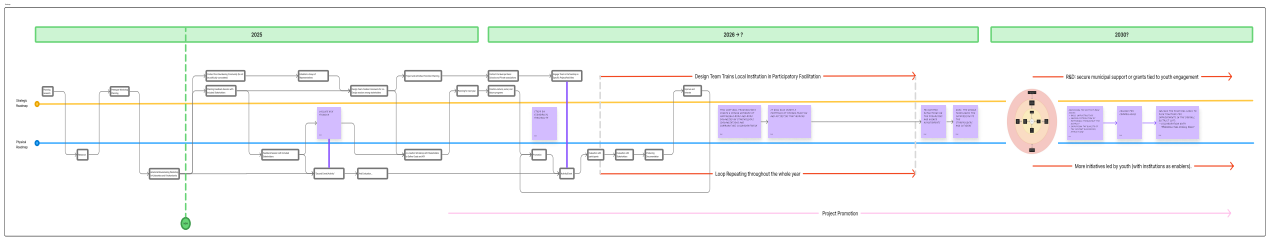


Figure 35. Roadmap overview

6.4 Theory of Change

In parallel with the definition and planning of the roadmap, we felt the need to produce a different kind of document: something that could be read in the opposite direction, backcasting from the desired future to the present. In this sense, this document functions as a complement to the roadmap, helping us understand what needs to happen now in order to make that envisioned future possible.

To guide this process, we took inspiration from the Theory of Change. This is a model of reality (Drabble et al., 2021) commonly used in design to strategically drive change. It outlines the sequence of steps necessary to achieve a long-term goal or desired outcome and offers different models for understanding how change can occur (Simeone et al., 2023).

The use of this tool helped us adopt a strategic mindset when designing our service system. It enabled us to reflect on the actions required to create a long-term and meaningful impact, rather than focusing only on short-term outputs.

We decided to apply this framework using our defined problem statement and goal, in order to test whether our proposed solution could actually generate the type of impact we envisioned, and to identify the actions and preconditions necessary for that to happen.

We approached the Theory of Change not as a fixed diagram, but as a framework for thinking: a way to continuously imagine, draft, assess, and refine our interpretation of how change unfolds (Simeone et al., 2023).

Acknowledging that there are multiple ways to visualise and structure this framework, we developed our version of the Theory of Change following a structure including the following elements:

- Context: a description of the environment we are working within;
- Problems and Opportunities: identified through our research;
- Roots of the Problems: underlying causes that must be addressed to enable meaningful change;
- Possible Actions: concrete steps required to achieve the desired impact;
- Impact: the long-term transformation we want to generate.

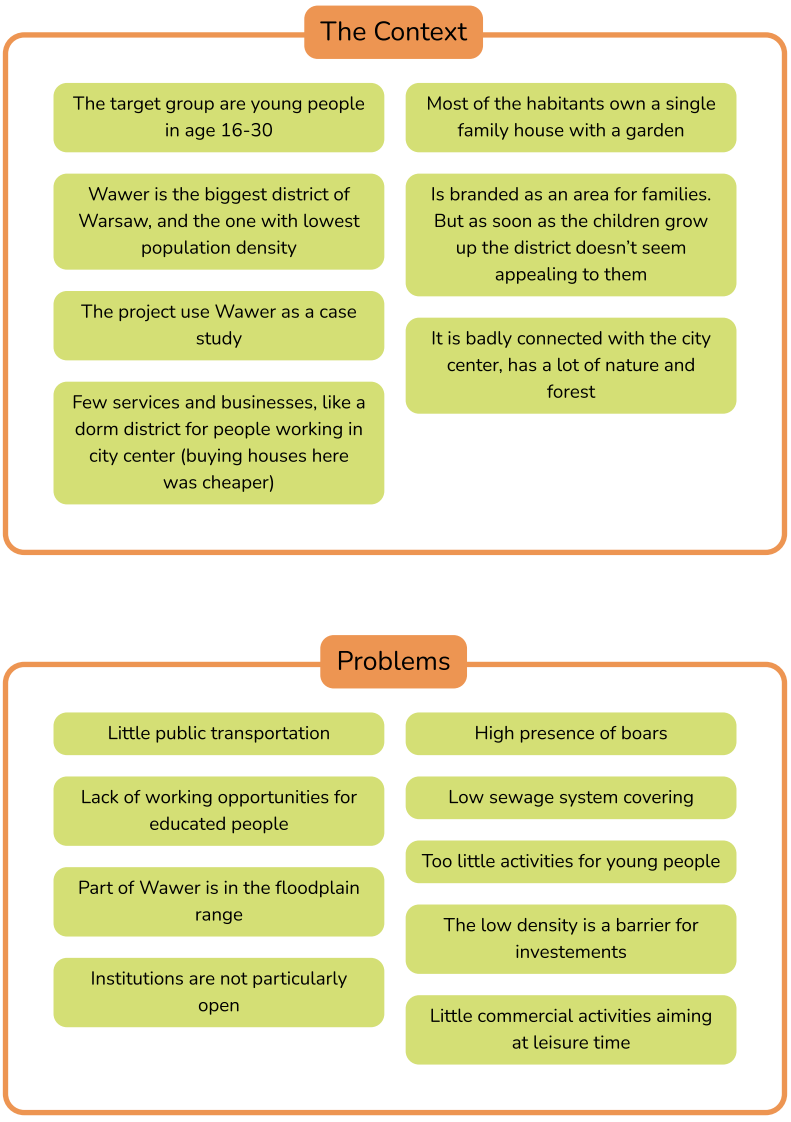
The process began with writing down the current context, followed by mapping the problems and opportunities emerging from our research. Then we analysed the root causes of those problems.

Once we clarified our desired impact, we located it within a future horizon: the year

2050. We chose this long-term perspective consciously, starting from the considerations brought up by the H3 or second HMW. While we acknowledge that this future is distant, our goal is equally ambitious, and such an extended timeframe allows for the gradual, systemic transformation required to realise it. From that horizon, we worked backwards to identify the actions that would need to be taken to reach it.

Although we applied the tool to a single scenario, the one we considered most desirable for 2050, we recognise that the Theory of Change could also be used to explore alternative futures and develop divergent strategies for each.

In this sense, the approach could be complemented by foresight methods such as scenario building (Wright & Goodwin, 2009), which allow the consideration of multiple, parallel futures. However, such an exploration was beyond the scope of our current project.



Opportunities

- High level connectivity (5G)
- Extensive greenery, tranquility, and security
- One of the youngest municipalities in Poland
- Public-Private Partnerships are an option
- Warsaw 2030, program for city development
- Social consultations
- Projects to co-develop inclusive practises (“Micropolis”)
- The Youth Council of Wawer (Młodzieżowa Rada Dzielnicy Wawer), an advisory body that represents student interests

Roots of the Problems

- Little trust among citizens and among citizens and institutions
- Activities of the citizens mainly concentrate around their household
- Very big political polarization and people division
- Citizens feel ownership on their land and don’t like any kind of intrusion
- Citizens experienced corruption from the entrepreneurs
- Mobility take big part of the day, so activities are limited

(possible) Actions

- Collaborate with different organisations to activate the district
- Progress the ladder of citizen participation, from Consultations to Partnership
- Adding “Relational” function to public and semi-public services
- Open institutions to citizens, improve transparency
- Empower the residents inspiring them with different activities
- Using Warsaw Metro 3 to connect Wawer to the city center and airport
- Progress infrastructure development with sewage system
- Create a non politicised board of young people
- Equally distribute activities in the district

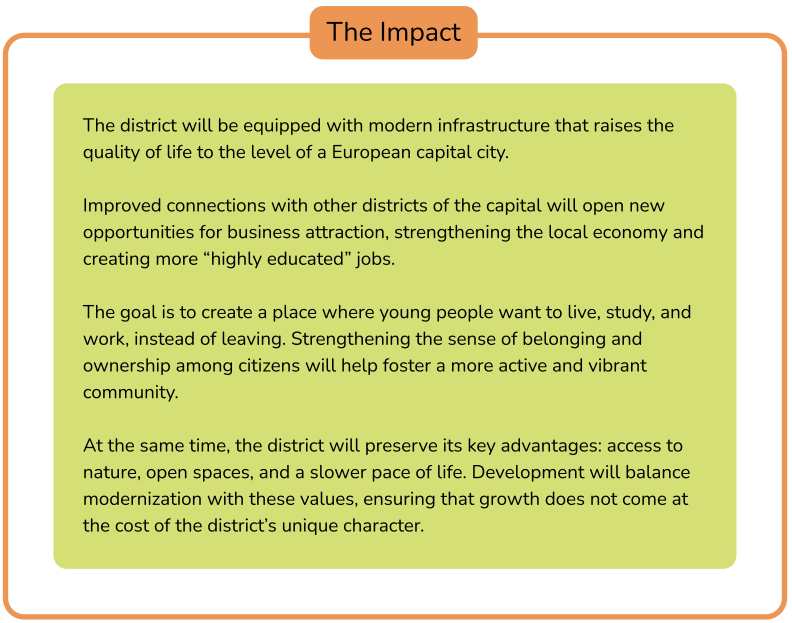


Figure 36. Theory of Change

5.5 Video Pretotype

After developing the Stakeholder System, the Value Proposition, a Roadmap to guide the service implementation over the coming years, and our Theory of Change, we decided it was the right moment to pretotype our concept (Savoia, 2011).

Here, the term pretotype is intended in a slightly different way than in the Pretotype Workshop (chapter 4.5). In this case, the aim was to represent in a tangible way what we envisioned as the outcome of our planning: a form that would be both accessible and emotionally engaging, capable of sparking curiosity and encouraging potential stakeholders to join the project.

The idea of creating a video emerged from our recognition of the medium’s potential, not only as a visualisation tool, but also as a powerful method for pretotyping, allowing us to test a concept before its actual development.

The video is meant to serve as a simulation of the service experience, offering a way to communicate the envisioned system and gather early feedback without investing significant resources.

The video was designed to be shown to stakeholders in Polish (the audio of the version presented here is in English only to ensure that the reader can gain a full understanding). This choice was made to ensure immediate accessibility and cultural resonance: this is why we also used Polish in the promotional poster that Amelia (the protagonist of our video) finds in Kinokawiarnia.

By visually depicting the service system flow, the video allows us to transmit our mental model of the system: giving others a sense not only of what the service system is, but of how we envision it to feel.

Creating the video proved to be a formative process. It forced us to provide a clear and cohesive narrative, aligning ourselves around a shared understanding of the service vision. The video walkthrough became a reference point for refining our roadmap, developing the system, and preparing for implementation.

The script-writing phase was treated as a collaborative ideation session. Together, we brainstormed and discussed various scenarios, user interactions, and service components. This process not only helped us craft a detailed and engaging script but also encouraged creative thinking and problem-solving, leading to a more comprehensive and imaginative service concept.

We began by creating a storyboard that outlined the key scenes, actions, and voice-over narration. This visual structure ensured that the final product would effectively communicate the essence of our service. Using a stop-motion technique combined with voiceovers, we were able to illustrate abstract ideas and complex interactions in a simple and accessible way: without requiring excessive resources or materials. The style was also aligned with the promotional visuals for the Pretotype Workshop, effectively beginning the development of a recognisable branding for our initiative.

The video also worked as a concept metaphor: a way to both express how we envisioned the development of the solution and convey the feeling and atmosphere we wanted the service to evoke.

We planned to showcase the video during the first co-creation workshop with stakeholders, to introduce and contextualise our proposal, and again during the testing phase, to clearly communicate our intentions to participants. Beyond this, it could also function as a communication tool: a way to attract potential collaborators and generate interest within the target group.

This approach was directly inspired by insights from our expert interview with Signe Kongebro, who emphasised the importance of developing and communicating a strong vision to bring others on board. The process of creating this video not only helps us clarify the service's goals, flow, and expected outcomes, but also ensure that everyone involved share the same understanding and sense of purpose.

The creation and the future use of the video plays a pivotal role in our design process. By leveraging video as a pretotyping tool, we are able to visualise the service journey, stimulate dialogue, and potentially gather early feedback before implementation. The collaboration fostered creativity and team alignment, creating a shared vision for the project.

Click here to see the video

Figure 37. Video pretotype

7. Discussion

The goal of this chapter is to present and discuss our reflections on the overall thesis process: from the first explorations to the final design outcomes.

We reflect on the role of Service Design within this project and critically examine our choices and learnings.

This chapter also discusses what worked well, what did not meet our expectations, and how we would approach the process differently if we were to begin again. It further includes a reflection on our overall methodology.

We also acknowledge the limitations of our work, including constraints in scope, time, and resources, and how these may have influenced the outcomes and insights.

Through this reflection, we aim to consolidate the insights gained throughout the project and outline how this experience contributed to our understanding of Service Design as a discipline capable of driving social innovation and systemic change.

This chapter is divided into the following sections:

7.1 The future of the project

7.2 Reflections on the path

7.3 Reflections on the methodology

7.1 The future of the project

With the pretotype video, our project met the deadline, and all subsequent efforts were dedicated to writing this thesis and preparing the pitch to deliver to stakeholders as our proposition.

The future of the project remains uncertain, as we lack the time and financial resources to continue beyond the delivery of these materials. Being a self-driven initiative without a formal client, envisioning a next phase is challenging. Nevertheless, we designed and planned a robust framework that has been tested and could spark interest among key stakeholders to further develop our ideas.

Another fragile point is that the thesis concludes at a critical moment, where it would be important to make the initiative recurring and to develop a framework for evaluating its results. Additionally, we cannot fully guarantee the involvement of Kulturoteka's volunteer community as the initial base for the youth advisory board we envisioned, since we were unable to organize a meeting with the responsible contact in time, as noted at the end of Chapter 3.2.3. However, we could not afford to wait, given the approaching deadline. Nevertheless, we remain optimistic, thanks to the strong relationship we already maintain with the overarching institution.

Further limitations include the fact that some institutions are either unaware of local challenges or insufficiently concerned about them, believing they are already taking the right actions, which makes it difficult to shift their approach.

At this stage, a more co-design and participatory approach would be ideal, even though such an approach would significantly change our current design as we envisioned it. While we recognize that this would likely have been the most effective approach from the start, it was not feasible within the time constraints of this thesis. Coordinating citizens and stakeholders with differing schedules and priorities is nearly impossible without a long-term temporal horizon for the project and a strong mandate from higher authorities. As Sara Nardi, who manages such projects professionally, explained, she never starts a project without a formal agreement with administrative authorities, which provides her the extended mandate to experiment while responsibly using other people's time.

7.2 Reflections on the process

It is now time for a deep reflection on our process. In particular, we aim to address what worked well, what did not, what we would change, the lessons we learned, and the challenges we encountered.

This reflection highlights some of the main obstacles we faced in conducting this project. The work was entirely self-driven, without a formal client, and our chosen methodological approach was actor-based. Combined with very tight deadlines – especially for a project that tipically unfolds over years – these factors significantly limited our ability to fully follow our methodology and adhere to what the literature generally recognizes as best practices.

We were unable to experiment extensively with co-design, as there was neither time nor resources to convince and organize people to participate in such a spontaneous initiative. This is partially due also to the fact that a sudden invitation to participate to co-design sessions can be intimidating, especially when this practise is not known to the potential audiance. This led us to design the Pretotype Workshop the way we did, with a clear value proposition: participants could engage in an activity they were genuinely passionate about, have fun, and do so for free, with the added opportunity to see their creation projected in a real cinema. This approach was the only realistic way to ensure a minimum level of participation while testing our hypothesis about the interest of both young residents and stakeholders.

Throughout our studies, we never truly managed to test any of our concepts, and we do not consider a simulated co-design workshop with our fellow designers in Copenhagen a valid replacement for proper testing.

Furthermore, half of the project took place during the summer, which significantly disrupted organization and milestones. Many local residents and key stakeholders were away or unavailable for extended periods, and the lack of coordinated schedules further limited our ability to follow the planned timeline.

Another significant challenge, perhaps the most substantial, apart from the tight deadlines, was our initial overambition. In retrospect, we attempted to address a broad and complex project within a district of Warsaw, Poland, that is genuinely facing difficulties related to the topic. Both of us live far away, and only one team member speaks the local language. Although English is widely spoken in Poland, communicating in the local language is essential for building meaningful contact and trust with citizens and stakeholders.

During the project, we traveled to Warsaw three times, spending a week there on each visit. Each trip required to be carefully prepared well in advance to keep travel and accommodation costs manageable, as we had no external funding and relied entirely on our own savings. We approached the project with a sense of mission, fully committed to making the most of these visits despite the logistical challenges.

Even though this choice certainly limited the potential impact of our work, we navigated these challenges by doing our best to gather insights, study and visit key locations, and demonstrate our ability to "work with people."

Even though proper co-design became impossible, partially for this reason, we were still able to successfully apply and develop the essential capabilities we had initially identified, using them to construct our personal project methodology through the Three-Phase Capability model.

This reflection bring us to the next chapter.

7.3 Reflections on the methodology

After reflecting on our project, it is time to take a more abstract perspective and examine our methodology. In particular, we aim to assess whether our methodology was effective, how it supported us, what aspects were less helpful, and how our design approach evolved throughout the process.

Regarding the methodological approach, there is little doubt that an actor-based method was the most suitable for addressing the challenges tackled in this project. We maintained this approach throughout the process, and it proved instrumental in guiding the design. In essence, our work leveraged people, stakeholders, and underutilised resources, bridging and recombining them in novel and better-designed ways.

We also remained true to our initial vision of exploring Service Design as design for services, viewing services as a form of infrastructure and maintaining a systemic perspective that incorporates plans for scaling deep over time.

The main issue, as previously mentioned, was that we were unable to conduct as many co-design sessions with citizens and stakeholders as initially planned, limiting our ability to collaboratively create the system we propose as a solution. Even though our work was based on research and built on opportunities identified with stakeholders, this remained one of the most challenging aspects of the project.

Fortunately, as discussed in Chapter 2.7, our methodology was designed to be evolving and reflective, which allowed us to realign our process effectively and make the most of the contextual opportunities available.

This still limited the full potential of applying the Service Master Planning approach, although its top-down component to stimulate bottom-up initiatives and the strategic mindset remained applicable.

Similarly, the use of the Double Diamond as a temporal framework was disrupted several times, mainly due to shifts in the project area and the fact that half of the project took place during the summer.

Compared to the other two frameworks, the one least affected by the challenges we faced was the Three-Phase Capabilities Model. We were able to follow it as a guiding reference, a kind of polar star, for the capabilities we aimed to activate throughout the project. By selecting appropriate tools, we remained consistent with the intended capabilities and successfully carried the project through to completion, having analyzed the context, designed, and represented our proposed solution.

We are also aware that many of the tools, methods, and frameworks we selected, particularly for the representation phase, would normally require co-design with stakeholders. However, as already discussed, this was not a feasible option in our case. For this reason, throughout the corresponding chapters, we explicitly mentioned that we would draw inspiration from these templates rather than follow them strictly. Despite this adaptation, we believe we were still able to extract significant value from them in achieving our main goal: effectively representing the proposed solution.

From our pragmatic perspective, this is ultimately what matters the most, adapting methods to the context rather than rigidly adhering to structures that do not align with the reality they should map.

Lastly, it is important to mention the Community-Centered Design approach. Although we studied this methodology and acknowledged its relevance in the literature review, we realized from the very beginning that it would not be feasible to fully apply it. The combination of distance from the project site and very tight deadlines made it impossible for us to properly engage and leverage local communities. For this reason, we decided not to include it in the methodology chapter.

8. Conclusion

The goal of this chapter is to conclude the master's thesis by reflecting on how Service Design contributed to addressing the brief, and to present the author's note, which includes the acknowledgements.

This chapter is divided into the following sections:

8.1 Closure

8.2 Authors' Note

8.1 Closure

This thesis explored how Service Design, through placemaking, can support youth engagement in Wawer. Using complementary research methods to gather extensive qualitative data, the study focused on understanding how Service Design can support and scale social innovation by fostering strong community involvement.

Through interviews with experts, institutions, and residents, as well as the application of a variety of service design tools, methods, and frameworks, we were able to explore and map the problem from multiple perspectives and levels, defining both the possibilities and limitations of our project. This comprehensive approach provided a deep understanding of Wawer's social environment and local dynamics.

The case study focused on empowering young residents, reinforcing their sense of belonging. Recognizing the complexity of the district's challenges, we structured our work around multiple goals across different horizons, balancing immediate, short-term interventions with medium- and long-term ambitions for systemic change. To begin, we concentrated on small-scale innovation in Falenica as a starting point for potential service scaling.

As part of this approach, we designed a workshop pretotype to assess the interest and commitment of local actors and young people in similar initiatives. Insights from this experiment informed the development of a three-horizon roadmap, with KPIs, and economic sustainability strategies to support systemic transformation and eventual scaling. While the project concludes with plans for further development, its complexity makes clear that significant time and resources will be required to not only implement but also evaluate its potential impact.

Ultimately, this work represents a first step toward broader conversations about how Service Design can drive institutional change, bridge gaps between citizens and city authorities, and foster stronger, more engaged communities over both the short and long term.

Future research could build on this foundation by further exploring how service design methodologies can strengthen community-led innovation, particularly in supporting youth engagement through placemaking. Examining how co-design processes evolve over time and how they contribute to lasting social impact could provide valuable insights into designing more resilient, participatory, and inclusive local systems.

8.2 Authors' Note

And so ends this wonderful journey of two years; on this page, we want to take a moment to thank those who, with their support, have made this experience particularly meaningful.

First and foremost, our families: this book is our way of thanking you for everything you have given us. With this work, we hope to repay at least in part the sacrifices you have made to allow us to reach this point.

We would also like to thank our partners, Iolanda and Patryk, for their emotional support and for helping us stay motivated during the most challenging moments.

A special thanks goes also to our colleagues and friends with whom we had the immense pleasure of sharing this journey. Their presence has been incredibly important and has significantly contributed to our satisfaction with this journey.

The supervision and guidance of Professor Nicola Morelli have been invaluable; he kindly agreed to serve as the advisor for this work, and we are deeply grateful for the enlightening lessons he delivered during his course.

We are grateful to all the people who kindly offered their help with this research. Alongside them, we thank all other figures, and mentors who have been a source of inspiration over the years and who, even unknowingly, have given us so much.

This book has been an extraordinary undertaking; we could not have even dreamed of finishing it without the help of the people mentioned above and many others who, even if not explicitly named, know they are part of this achievement.

Lastly, we would like to thank each other for the mutual support throughout this journey: for the time spent figuring out improbable ways to overcome obstacles and for the fun we shared while designing and creating together.

References

The goal of this chapter is to list all external references used in the preparation of this master's thesis, including the collection of figures, the bibliography, and the sitography.

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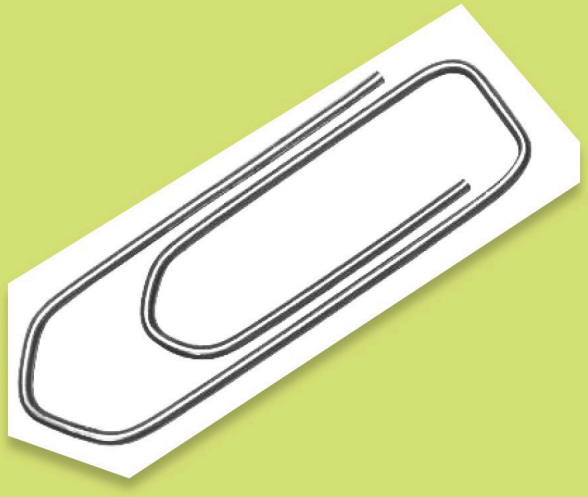
Appendix



The goal of this chapter is to list all important elements that, for narrative reasons, have been excluded from the main body of the thesis, as well as to include the declaration regarding the use of AI tools.

Declaration about the usage of AI tools

As none of the authors are native English speakers, we used a Large Language Model (AI tool) for proofreading and to ensure that the final text is clear and accurately written in English.

Interview script with Wawer resident #1

Hi, we are students from Aalborg University. We would like to conduct this interview in order to find out more about social engagement in Wawer. We know that Wawer is struggling with creating proper entertainment for young people and there is not much to do except going basically outside Wawer to Warsaw Center, that's why throughout this interview we want to understand the situation better and create a project that will revitalize this district.

- How old are you?
- Where do you leave?
- Tell me, how often do you meet with your friends outside home?
- Do you have specific places you like to go with them?
- Can you point them out on the map?
- Do you also have your own places in which you like to go alone?
- Would you be open to spontaneously join new activities?
- Are you more likely to choose an organized activity or do you tend to plan spontaneously? Is it possible to organize it at any time?
- Do you have any activities or hobbies you would like to start?
- Do you know any digital channels about events in the city?
- Are you part of groups on social media dedicated to your district for people around your age?
- Do you feel connected to your district? Can you see your future here?
- What do you enjoy the most here?
- What are you lacking of, in Wawer?
- Do you attend places like WCK or Kinokawiarnia?
- Do you know about their activities? Are you interested? Why yes/not?
- Would you like something to change in your district? If yes, what?
- Do you feel considered in the way the district is administered?
- Why did you move to Wawer?
- What is your opinion on:
- Culture House
- Kinokawiarnia
- Wawer council/Warsaw municipality
- Your neighbors

Interview script with Wawer resident #2

- What interest you the most in Wawer?
- What are you lacking of there?
- Where do you see potential (even the “not-used”) in Wawer?
- How do you feel Wawer differs from other Warsaw’s districts?
- You were telling me about your possible future collaboration with Kulturoteka, can you remind me about it?
- How did you get the idea?
- Why didn’t you make it yet?
- Is the project educational, community-based, entertaining - or in which way does it combine these elements?
- Are there examples of similar initiatives that inspire you?
- What do you want to bring from yourself to the project?
- What kind of exchange do you want to get in this project?
- What kind of form of the project you want to conduct? Is it supposed to be a series of meetings?
- What do you think about working on this project with Kinokawiarnia?
- Would you like to collaborate also with someone else?
- Have you started talking with Kulturoteka?
- What role is to be played by the Kulturoteka in the project? (e.g., providing a hall, promotion, co-organization)
- How much time you want to dedicate into it?
- If we would like to help you in what are you will be doing, would you be open for collaboration and possible propositions on what can we create together?
- What forms of support/organization would be most valuable to you? (e.g., know-how, space, contacts, promotion)
- Are you thinking of developing the project in the future (e.g., a festival, larger events, a network of meetings in different places)?
- To what target group you want to appeal by this project?

Interview script with Biblioteka Falenica #1

- What kind of events/activities do you organise? How often?
- Are all the events for free?
- How many people attend them on average? Are you satisfied with the amount?
- What age are the participants?
- What kind of events are the most popular? Can you say something about CyberWawer or Wawer Piknik?
- Do you have something specific for young people (teenagers, young adults, 16 to 30)?
- Is there anyone who is volunteering for you?
- Do you have an event that is special to your culture house, and unique in Warsaw?
- Are you planning anything at the moment?
- Do you invite any artists? Do you choose mainly local or famous guests?
- What are the biggest challenges when it comes to organising events?
- What hours are you open? Are you flexible?
- Do you see unexplored opportunities in your work? What would you like to change?
- What has been your biggest success in managing this community center?
- How do you come up with your ideas? How are you internally organised?
- Is it possible to propose activities and events? If yes, is it a structured process?
- Do you gather and analyse feedback from Falenica population?
- What are your communication and marketing channels?
- What is the internal organization of the library? What are the areas and who is responsible for what?
- Are you renting your place to association or social businesses? Which ones? How do you select them?
- Do you have partnerships? What kind and with who?
- How is the relationship between WCK Falenica and the Biblioteka Publiczna Dzielnicy Wawer?
- How is Wawer council/Warsaw Municipality helping you? (Resources – space, money) Are you satisfied with that?
- Do you have a Film Club? I found information that you had it and I'm not sure if it's still active.
- Building on that we are helping with the organization of an event, led by a Wawer citizen, with Kinokawiarnia for a two sessions workshop about amateurial filming around Wawer. It is for young people and we are also preparing the material and will ask to the promotion office if it possible to spred it.
  We were wondering if it was possible to involve also the library since it is very close and it could be a good opportunity to get youngster closer to Kulturoteka Falenica.

Interview script with Biblioteka Falenica #2

- What kind of events/activities do you organise? How often?
- Are all the events for free?
- How many people attend them on average? Are you satisfied with the amount?
- What age are the participants?
- What kind of events are the most popular?
- What are you organizing for young people? What is the age target?
- Is there anyone who is volunteering for you?
- Do you have an event that is special to your culture house, and unique in Warsaw?
- Are you planning anything at the moment?
- Do you invite any artists? Do you choose mainly local or famous guests?
- What are the biggest challenges when it comes to organising events?
- What hours are you open? Are you flexible?
- Do you see unexplored opportunities in your work? What would you like to change?
- What has been your biggest success in managing this community center?
- How do you come up with your ideas? How are you internally organised?
- Is it possible to propose activities and events? If yes, is it a structured process?
- Do you gather and analyse feedback from Falenica population?
- What are your communication and marketing channels?
- What is the internal organization of the library? What are the areas and who is responsible for what?
- Are you renting your place to association or social businesses? Which ones? How do you select them?
- Do you have partnerships? What kind and with who?
- How is the relationship between WCK Falenica and the Biblioteka Publiczna Dzielnicy Wawer?
- How is Wawer council/Warsaw Municipality helping you? (Resources – space, money) Are you satisfied with that?
- Do you have a Film Club? I found information that you had it and I'm not sure if it's still active.
- Building on that we are helping with the organization of an event, led by a Wawer citizen, with Kinokawiarnia for a two sessions workshop about amateurial filming around Wawer. It is for young people and we are also preparing the material and will ask to the promotion office if it possible to spred it.
  We were wondering if it was possible to involve also the library since it is very close and it could be a good opportunity to get youngster closer to Kulturoteka Falenica.

Interview script with Wawer District Council

Our goal is trying to stimulate advertise and make "organic" a place, or a series of places, in Wawer (with particular focus on Falenica); that work as a third place for young people to meet, organise and do activities they like.
From our research especially in the southern Wawer (and this is why we targeted Falenica) something is off in terms of entertainment and social gatherings.

- Do you have something like that going on?
- Would you be interested in participating in building such a place? Meaning we could need space to host activities/events to test our project, could you help us in finding this place?
- How much of influence do you have on WCK? Does every Filia has its own authority on space management and events planning? We are particularly considering Kulturoteka..
- Do you know resources that could be put in place to achieve this kind of goal?
- How do you decide what to prioritise and how to organise this kind of initiatives?
- We would like to know the proportion between the investments that are made by you to the citizen budget. How many inestments are made by you?
- What is the process of getting financed by you?
- How do you decide on who do you want to invest in? Basically where do you want to put money?
- What is your personal opinion? Is the budget from the Warsaw municipality for the citizen budget reasonable?
- We can see that a lot is targeted towards families with children, did you receive ideas targeting teenagers and young people?
- Do you think the council would be available in participating in a project trying to co-create a solution for this issue with different stakeholders? We are probing interest around this kind of initiatives in public institution (you), culture house (Kulturoteka), private company (Kinokawiarnia), private citizens wanting to build communities around specific interests of them.
- Do you think building such a service would benefit you and the image of Wawer you are trying to promote internally and externally?
- Tell me more about the activities in SPOT
- Who is in charge of SPOT?
- Do you think it can be organised in other parts of Wawer eg. Falenica?
- Which part of Wawer do you think requires special care?
- What is the business model of SPOT? Is it non-profit?
- How did you started SPOT?
- What is the attendance of young people?
- How often do they meet up?

Interview script with Kinokawiarnia

- What kind of events/activities do you organize?
- How often?
- How many people participate in them?
- What age are the participants?
- What hours are you open? Are you flexible?
- What are the biggest challenges in organizing events?
- Do you see any unexplored opportunities?
- Do people enjoy participating in the events you organize?
- Which events are most popular?
- What would you like to change?
- What has been your greatest success in managing the Cinema Caffe?
- What is your business model?
- How do you decide what movies to play?
- How are you internally organized?
- Do you have volunteers?
- Do you have anything special for young people (teens, young adults, 16 to 30)?
- How did you have this idea?
- How are you advertising it?
- How has the Cinema Caffe been doing recently? Have you seen any significant growth or development?
- If we were proposing you a specific event (tailored to you) for you to host would you be available in helping us?
- What would help you in expanding?
- Do you have partnerships? What kind and with who?
- Why, when going to a movie, is there only one hour to choose from during the day?
- I did a survey on Facebook about favorite places in Wawer. The people who answered were from different areas of Wawer and were mainly young people. Unfortunately, they didn't mention the Kinokawiarnia. Can you guess why?

Cultural Probes Instruction
Hey!

We've prepared a little adventure for you that will start with a notepad, a pen and your free time.

In the bag you received from us you will find a simple pen and a notepad provided by our special agent. What is your mission based on? Use them to jot down what your ordinary day in Wawer is like and describe your observations about the neighborhood when you're not at school or work. This is not a test, there are no wrong answers and you don't have to write an essay. Just be yourself.

Think of it as a personal diary of your free time that will help us understand what it's like to be a young person living in Wawer. Here's what we'd like you to try to make a note of each day:

- Where did you spend your time and what were you doing at the time?
- Were you alone or with friends/family?
- What did you feel at the time?
  - What did you enjoy?
  - Did you miss anything there?
  - Was there something frustrating for you?
- What reflections do you have about a place, thoughts - even this small one?

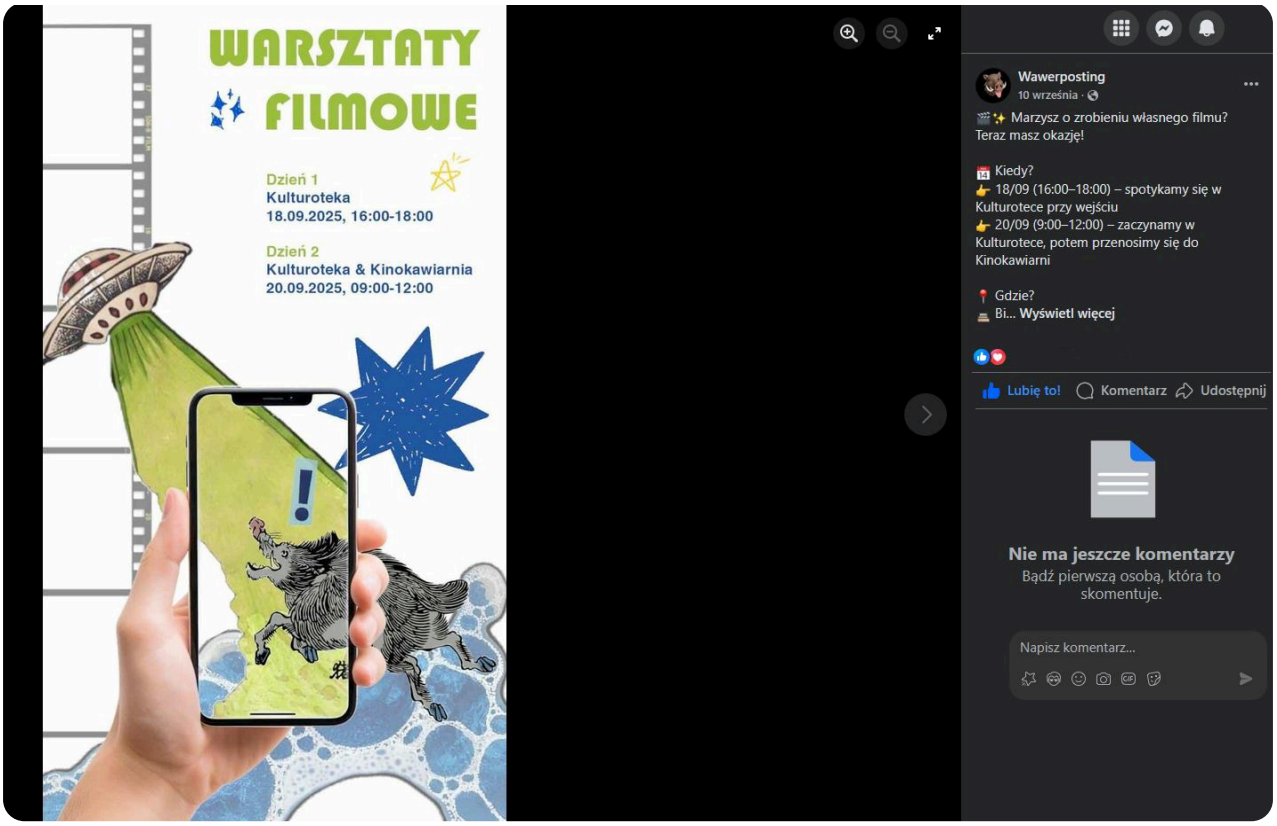
Optional, but allows you to have more fun: If something catches your eye, a cool place, a funny moment, something annoying or beautiful - take a photo and send it to us on the email given at the bottom of the instructions. The whole idea is simple: Show us your Wawer. The real one. The one that only people your age know. Collect notes for three weeks, and then make an appointment with us to turn in your notebook. We assure you that all information you give us will be fully anonymized and is only for analysis as part of your thesis. Please do not provide sensitive data (e.g. personal information) and protected data (e.g. passwords).

Are you in?

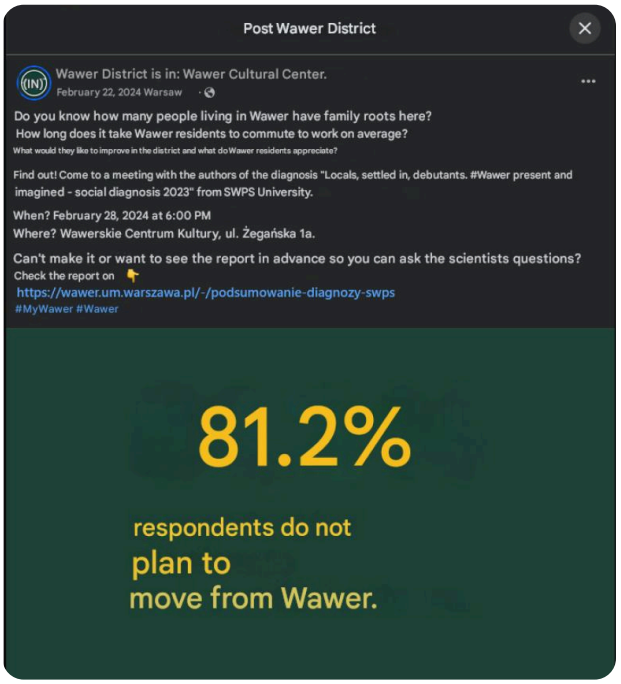
Get to it.

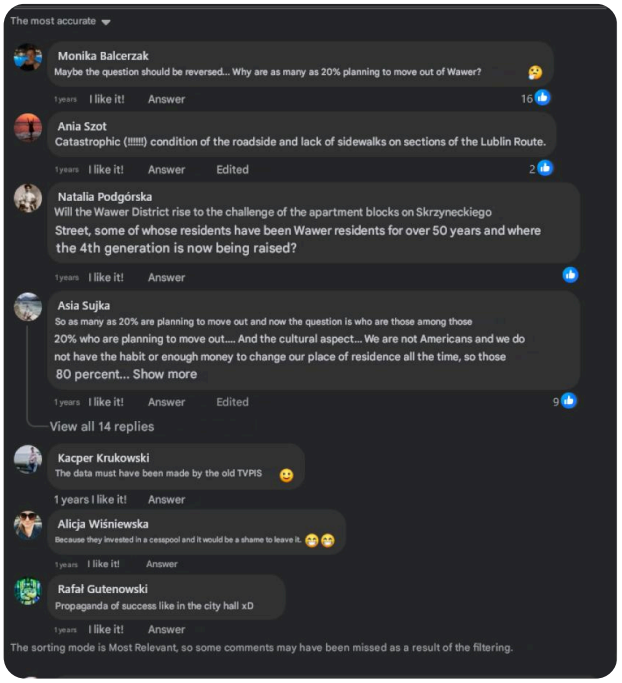
If you have more questions, please email us at:
look.we.are.on.a.mission.from.god@gmail.com

Promotion through the social media by Wawerposting and District Council



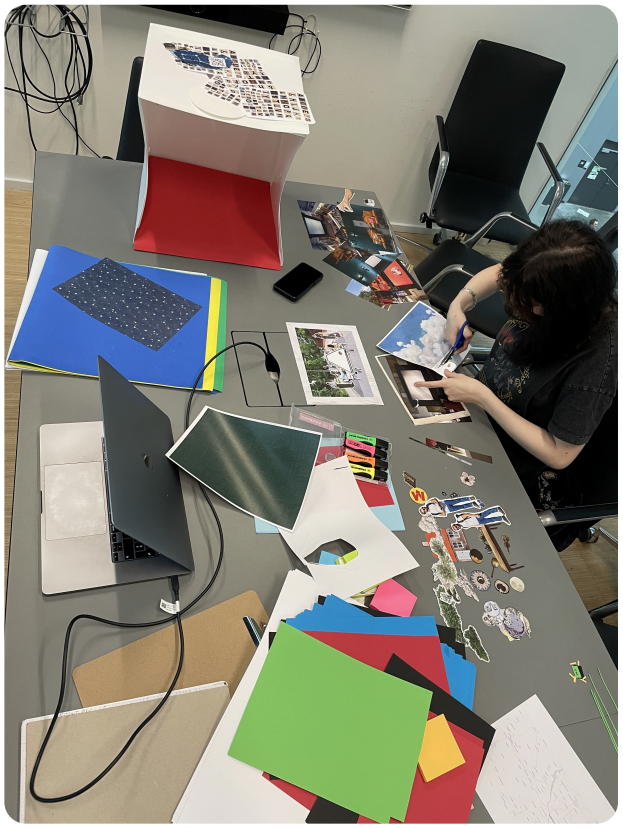
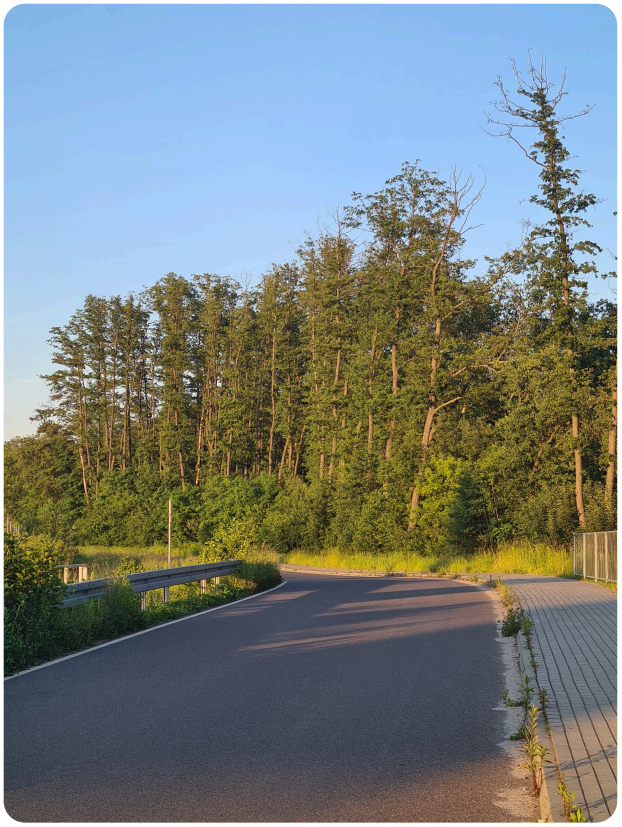
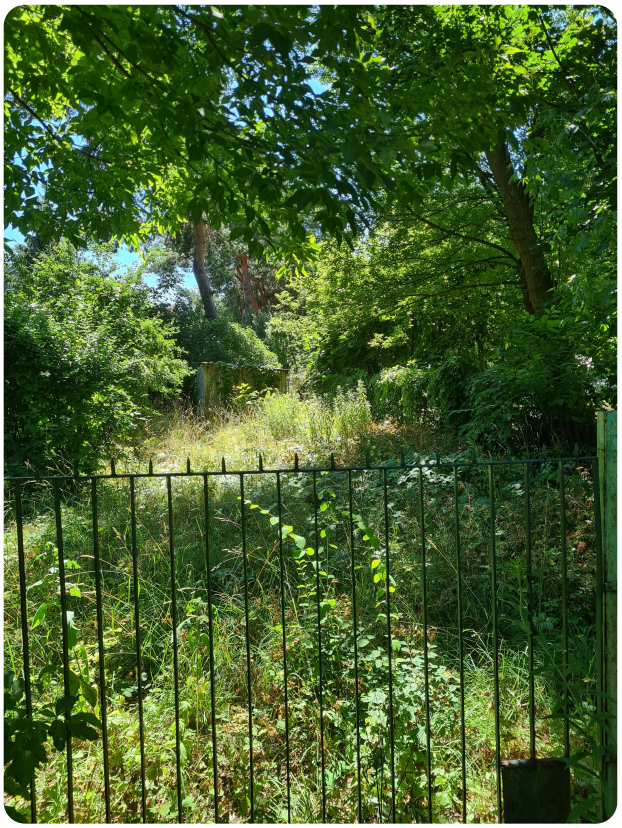
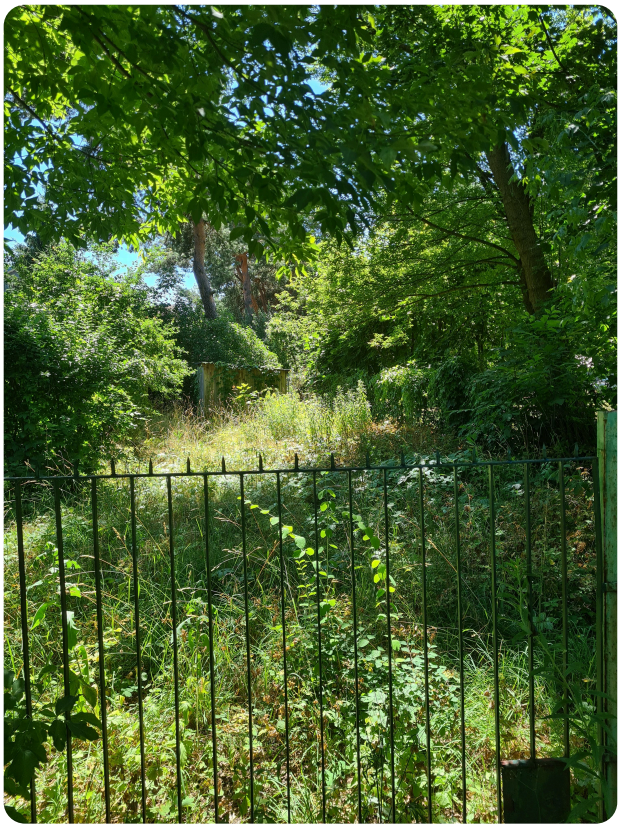
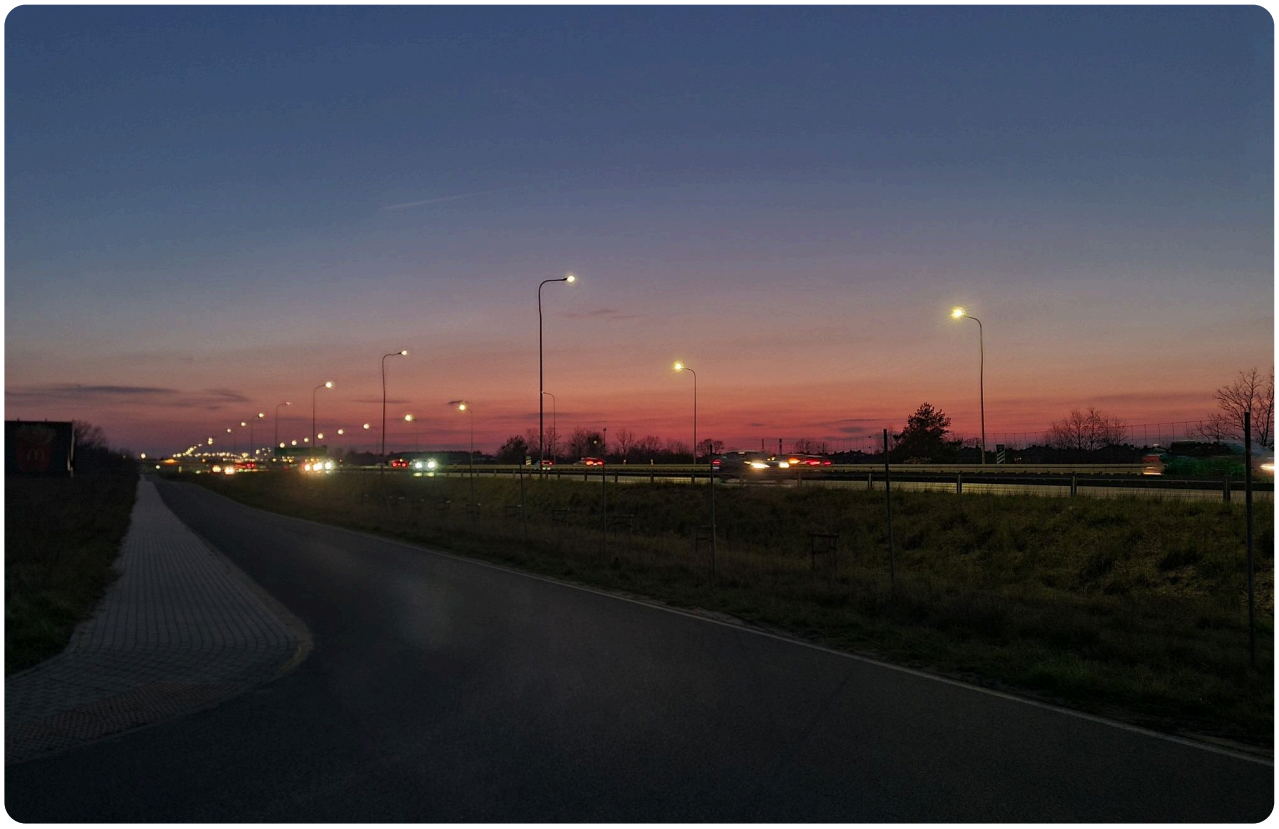
Report mentioned in chapter 3, secrion 3.3





Neon of a wild boar mentioned in chapter 3, secrion 3.3

Video making



Artur’s pictures for Mobile Probes