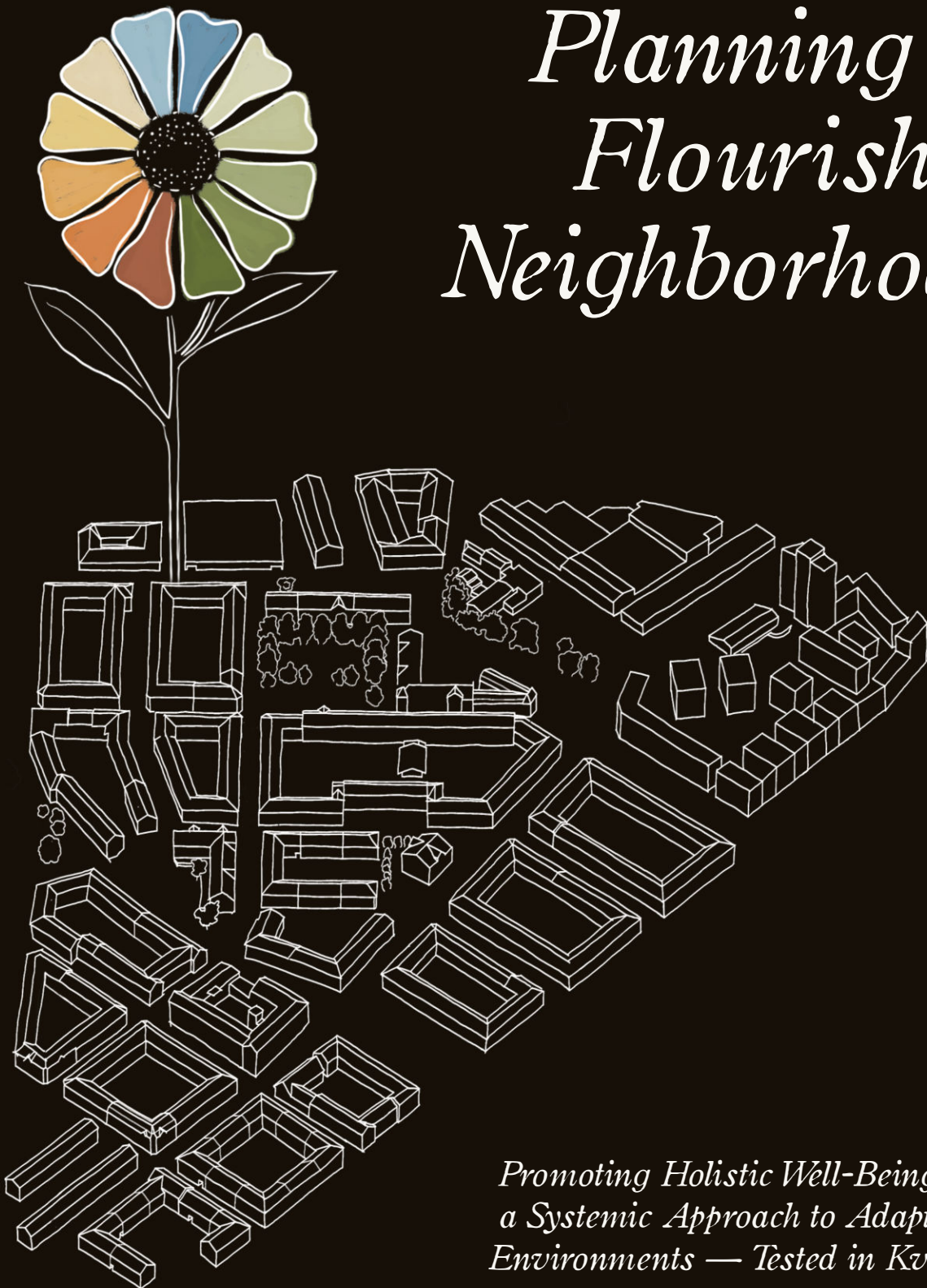


Planning for Flourishing Neighborhoods



*Promoting Holistic Well-Being Through
a Systemic Approach to Adapting Daily
Environments — Tested in Kvillestaden*

Mika Deitert / Thesis Spring 2025
Chalmers School of Architecture / Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering
Examiner: Joaquim Terraso / Supervisor: David Gough

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Mika Deitert
Master's Thesis Spring 2025

Urban and Rural Design and Planning
Chalmers School of Architecture
Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering
Masters Program: Architecture and Planning Beyond Sustainability

Examiner: Joaquim Terraso
Supervisor: David Gough

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CHALMERS
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Fig. 1.1: Concept Diagram for Planning Framework

That is Me

I aim to cultivate adaptive and diverse environments for both humans and non-humans – spaces that are more livable, equitable, resilient, productive, and sustainable. Extensive explorations during my master's at Chalmers led me to aspire to practice as a relationship builder and systems designer – working within the convergence of architecture, landscape design, and urbanism. This way of working enables the identification and realization of untapped and synergistic potentials across disciplines, backgrounds, and scales, thereby maximizing positive impacts for both society and the natural world.

Contact:

Mika Deitert
mika.deitert@gmail.com

Positioning

In a time of rising temperature, natural catastrophes, increasing inequality, and geopolitical conflict, moving toward cities and societies that are both resilient and in balance with natural systems requires nothing short of redefining our understanding of what makes a life worth living and reflecting that in the way we live, build, and govern.

ABSTRACT

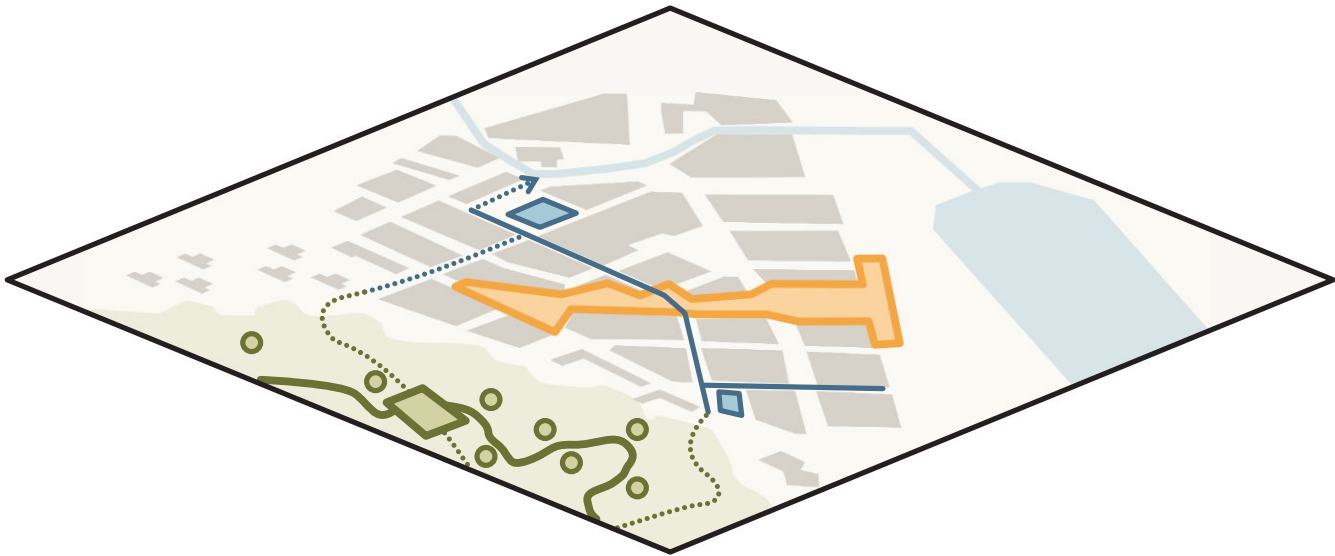
The multitude of global crises, such as environmental degradation, growing social inequalities, and geopolitical instability, threatens human lives and demands drastic changes to lived environments. Further, health experts emphasize the need for spatial planning to become key actors in preventative health as urban environments significantly restrict human health and well-being. Addressing these challenges, however, confronts planners with a wicked problem. Contemporary development often fails to address the systemic nature of these challenges – labeled “green and healthy” transformations risk perpetuating exclusionary patterns, rather than achieving equitable and meaningful improvements to the lived experience of urban inhabitants.

Drawing from a holistic understanding of well-being in the form of “flourishing,” this thesis aims to generate new insights into how planners can actively shape neighborhoods that promote healthier, happier, and more fulfilling ways of living, while enhancing social and ecological justice, using Kvillestaden as a case study.

The thesis’s theoretical work formulates flourishing as the central target for the sustainable development of lived environments and proposes a corresponding planning framework by drawing from planning concepts and references in health promotion. The practical work explores how to translate the concept of flourishing into holistic, equitable, and meaningful health impacts within a local context through a community-sensitive approach, using methods such as participatory design and prototyping.

This thesis contributes to the discourse on sustainable development and preventative health by showing that external and permanent spatial changes alone fall short in holistically promoting well-being, as well as reaching the audiences whose conditions for well-being are most inhibited. Instead, it highlights that planning must provide approaches and processes that support ongoing, citizen-led environmental adaptation. Finally, the work also reveals the limits of spatial planning in fostering flourishing neighborhoods if not supported by political and legislative efforts.

Fig. 2: Concept graphic of the proposed neighborhood transformation strategies



Keywords: Preventative Health Planning; Holistic Well-Being; Sustainable Development; Environmental Gentrification; Participatory Prototyping

Human Health	"A state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. "(WHO, 2021a, p.3)
Preventative Health	Aims to reduce health risks and avoid harm before it occurs.
Longevity	The capacity to live a long life — determined by environmental, lifestyle-related and internal conditions.
Well-Being	"The presence of positive emotions and moods, the absence of negative emotions, satisfaction with life, fulfillment, and positive functioning" (Bautista et al., 2023)
Health Promotion	Actively encouraging positive physical and mental health through supportive environments and lifestyles.
Positive Functioning	A person's capacity for self-actualization, which is fundamental to psychological well-being. It requires the promotion of autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, life purpose, environmental mastery, and positive relatedness. (Ryff, 2023)
Flourishing	An integrative definition of Well-Being that suggests that living healthily, happily and fulfilled requires enabling and promoting positive human functioning.
Exogenous	Influences on civil society deriving from external sources that are often imposed and institutionalized, such as city planning, private development, politics, or legislation.
Endogenous	Influences emerging from within civil society, often "derived from liberating processes" (Max-Neef et al., 1991, e.g. local grassroot initiatives.
Vulnerable Groups	Demographics that are disproportionally at risk of experiencing harm, disadvantage, and discrimination due to social, economic, and physical circumstances.
Daily Environments	Places where people spend most of their time — the home, the neighborhood, the daily travel routes or the workplace.
Prototyping	Understood not only as the temporary and adaptive testing of a physical interventions but also of social, cultural and ecological processes.

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Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION

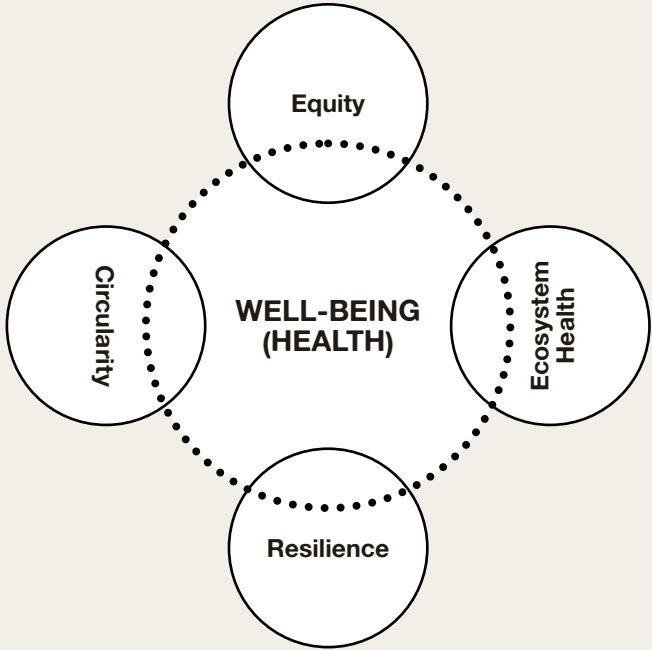


Fig. 3: Interconnectedness of Environmental Dimensions & Health

SCOPE

The thesis is situated within the broad discourse of human health, focusing more specifically on the role of the built environment in influencing lifestyles and well-being. Through both the theoretical work and the case study project, this thesis explores how planners can identify and implement meaningful and sensitive solutions for health improvements on a neighborhood scale. By bringing health to the center of sustainable development – in the form of promoting holistic well-being – this thesis argues that long-lasting and meaningful health improvements necessitate planners to identify synergic solutions that integrate health with circularity, ecology, resilience, and equity.

THE STATE OF HUMAN HEALTH

1 The multitude and magnitude of global challenges – such as climate change, biodiversity loss, global conflicts, and inequality – demand a rapid transformation of the built environment (BE) as well as our cultural and economic systems. As a result, pressing contemporary human health issues are often unintentionally overlooked. Today’s major health concerns – such as lifestyle-related, age-related, and noncommunicable diseases – are heavily shaped by environmental, cultural, and behavioral conditions. Yet in 2019, only 2.9% of EU public health spending was allocated to disease prevention (Eurostat, 2025), reflecting a disproportionate emphasis on detection and treatment. Beyond prevention, research on longevity hotspots suggests that urban lifestyles and environments may actually limit people’s ability to live longer, healthier, and more fulfilling lives.

Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular Diseases are considered the primary cause of death globally (32% of all global deaths), but most of them could be prevented by addressing behavioral and environmental risk factors according to the World-Health-Organization (2021).

Mental Health

Despite economic prosperity, mental disorders are becoming increasingly common in high-income countries:

“In 2021, the number of in-patient bed days for mental and behavioral disorders in the EU... was the largest number among all categories of diseases and conditions, ahead of diseases of the circulatory system.” (European Union, 2025).

“The prevalence of anxiety appears to increase with socioeconomic development (...) and urbanization.” (Javaid 2023, p.1). The amount of people dealing with anxiety has increased by 55% from 1990 to 2019.

Life Satisfaction

Unhappiness has been steadily increasing for the past decade and is at an all-time high according to Gallup’s negative experience index (2023)

Longevity

Recent history in Okinawa illustrates how today’s urban environments and ways of living tend to limit the human potential to live healthy, fulfilling lives:

Japan is the country with the highest life expectancy, yet the poorest prefecture, Okinawa, has been known for having the highest longevity indices in the country (Miyagi, 2003). However in recent history, declining life expectancies shows that “an influx of foreign influences, ranging from fast food to less exercise, the stress of modern life, as well as a loss of the traditional sense of ‘ikigai’ in younger people are all to blame” (Deutsche Welle, 2022).

Suggestions:

→ promoting neighborhood walkability; soft mobility; active movement; reducing harmful pollution

→ enabling closeness and accessibility to quality nature; activities fostering connectedness with nature (Mental Health Foundation, 2021)

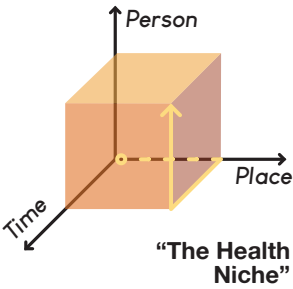


Fig. 4: Diagram illustrating Sarkar’s & Webster’s description of the “Health Niche” (2017, p.34)

Suggestions:

→ street level adaptations; green spaces; promote “Active Living” & “Healthy places”; reducing emissions, pollutants & waste generation; (Sarkar & Webster, 2017)

ENVIRONMENTS & HUMAN HEALTH

2 The urban environment is directly and indirectly linked to today’s major health challenges, as it shapes “lifestyles, health and well-being” (Sarkar & Webster, 2017, p. 33). Health experts stress the need for spatial planning to play an active role in preventative health, by designing and implementing healthier conditions, as well as fostering healthier ways of living on a neighborhood level.

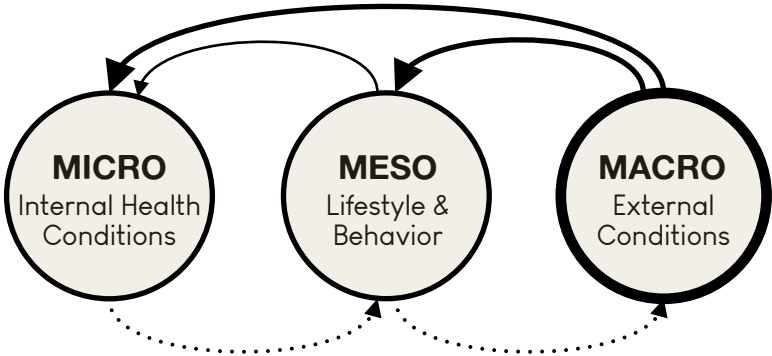


Fig. 5: Diagram visualizing how the external environment (Macro) influences individual lifestyle (Meso) and internal health (Micro)

The Constituents of the Human Health Status

According to Sarkar & Webster (2017), the health status of a person is the result of the interplay of various factors and processes that occur at different scales over time (p.34). The built, social, and natural environment (Macro) directly and indirectly influences human behaviors (Meso), as well as internal conditions (Micro). (Sarkar & Webster, 2017, p.34).

The Role of Spatial Planning

As “the built environment shapes, channels and moderates the distribution of social and natural environmental effects...” (Sarkar & Webster, 2017, p.34), spatial planning plays a key role in enabling healthier lives. “Health expenditures can be significantly minimized through the creation of healthy places and cities via health-specific land use allocation, design and planning integrated with transport planning” (p. 37).

Examples:

- 1. Enhancing the availability and quality of bicycle infrastructure (Environment) leads to behavioral changes, with more people choosing to use bicycles as their mode of transport (Behavior & Lifestyle). This shift indirectly promotes internal health improvements through increased physical activity.
- 2. Reducing car traffic within densely populated areas (Environment), directly reduces the risks of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases of the local population (Internal Conditions).

HUMAN HEALTH GLOBAL CHALLENGES

However, just as we should not see transformations for sustainability and resilience as being isolated from human health, the transformation of environments to be healthier needs to consider today's global challenges. Sarkar & Webster say, “Achieving healthy urban environments and sustainable development have been intrinsically interlinked” (2017)

Climate Change

“Climate change presents a *fundamental threat to human health*. It affects the physical environment as well as all aspects of both natural and human systems — including social and economic conditions and the functioning of health systems. It is therefore a threat multiplier, undermining and potentially reversing decades of health progress. (World-Health-Organization, 2023)

“Addressing climate change's health burden underscores the equity imperative: those most responsible for emissions should bear the highest mitigation and adaptation costs, emphasizing health equity and vulnerable group prioritization.” (World-Health-Organization, 2023)

Extreme Weather

“As climatic conditions change, more frequent and intensifying weather and climate events are observed, including storms, extreme heat, floods, droughts and wildfires. These weather and climate hazards affect health both directly and indirectly, increasing the risk of deaths, noncommunicable diseases, the emergence and spread of infectious diseases, and health emergencies.” (World-Health-Organization, 2023)

Biodiversity

“Biodiversity, the variability among living organisms from all sources, underpins all life on Earth...Healthy communities are sustained by well-functioning ecosystems, However, biodiversity loss is accelerating, ...threatening these vital services and exacerbating public health risks globally. “ (World-Health-Organization, 2025).

Context Related Suggestions:

→ “*accelerate mitigation actions that bring the greatest health gains*” (WHO, 2023)

→ *fostering circularity & renewable energy*

→ *slowing, capturing and cleaning of storm water, permeability of surfaces; reducing heat-island effects by expanding vegetation;*

→ *urban networks of ecological corridors; denser & diverse urban vegetation;*

TRANSFORMATION AND EQUITY

As the need for transformation and adaptation of our environments is evident, it can be easy to overlook the potential disruptive, negative and unwanted consequences of health implementation. Contemporary “healthy and green” development is often the cause of environmental gentrification. (Curran & Hamilton, 2018). Instead of providing health benefits to the populations most commonly exposed to least favorable conditions, it can amplify the stressors that are already resulting in the lower life expectancy of vulnerable communities.

Equity

“People with higher socioeconomic position in society have a greater array of life chances and more opportunities to lead a flourishing life. They also have better health. The two are linked: the more favored people are, socially and economically, the better their health.” (Marmot, 2010, pp.03, 37)

Environmental Gentrification

“the people who suffered the negative effects of environmental hazards and unequal access to environmental goods are the first to be displaced when environmental improvements are made”(Curran & Hamilton, 2018, p.2)

“It is not about short-changing communities, but about challenging the veneer of green that accompanies many projects with questionable ecological and social justice impacts, and looking for alternative, sometimes surprising, forms of greening.” (Curran & Hamilton, 2018, Abstract)

Context Related Suggestions:

→ *Approaches sensitive to and catered towards existing communities; Co-creation of spaces; alternative forms of greening;....*

PROMOTING LONG-LASTING WELL-BEING

Increasing shares of unhappiness, stress and mental disorders in high economic countries reveal that “no significant relationships between happiness and type of economic system are found” (Pryor, 2009). Consequently, experts increasingly highlight the need to actively promote well-being, instead merely aiming for the “absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 2021a, p.3). This thesis's theoretical chapter highlights the topic of well-being and the study of Longevity *Blue Zones*, which support Pryor's statement and highlight that many urban environments favor well-being based on maximizing temporary pleasure and comfort (*Hedonic Well-being*). This way of living contributes to urban diseases and reduced longevity. The chapter concludes that governments and planners should plan for the flourishing of people and communities by actively promoting dimensions of well-being that relate to the development of a sense of life fulfillment (*Eudaimonic Well-being*).

Toward planning for holistic neighborhood well-being

RESEARCH QUESTION

In the goal of creating environments that promote well-being for everyone, we are faced with a wicked problem. Planners need to find ways to address the multitude of contemporary, interconnected challenges while simultaneously finding innovative ways not to perpetuate exclusionary patterns.

How can urban planning and design actively promote lasting well-being in neighborhoods while ensuring social and ecological justice?

About This Thesis

DELIMITATION

Admittedly, those are some big challenges I've just laid out to address. To be clear, this thesis does not aim to propose a universal solution to the given problem — too many topics, approaches and interventions can only be explored at a surface level.

Instead, this thesis understands the conflict as a larger goal to work toward, and merely aims to generate learnings and reflections throughout an explorative process in both theory as well as case study. As both theory and neighborhood scale extensive contexts, this thesis' outcomes can merely be seen as early-stage concepts — they can and should be challenged, adapted or reiterated. The same can be said about the extent and quality to which methods were conducted, for example, the amount and diversity of stakeholders involved has been limited. Hence, the generated understanding as well as design proposals might present a distorted image of the neighborhood or even overlook key aspects.

AIMS

- 1 Identifying the prerequisites and promising synergic actions for improving the conditions for well-being holistically (Theory)
- 2 Understanding how to maximize the potential positive health impacts within a neighborhood in the scope of spatial planning while minimizing the risk of causing unwanted side effects and disruptions to a context's social-cultural fabric. (Process)
- 3 Generating both learnings for the general discourse as well as providing promising early-stage suggestions on how to improve conditions within the local context useful for city planners as well as locals. (Design & Reflection)

A Note about Policies:

Even though this thesis is highlighting the important role of spatial planning in translating and facilitating the needed adaptations of our environments, the crucial role of legislation and regulation can't be neglected as it can both hinder or enable planners' and local actors' ability to reach the desired outcomes. Taking the example of environmental gentrification: without policies limiting rent increases, the main beneficiaries of publicly-funded large-scale health transformation will be private housing owners, leaving economically vulnerable groups — the ones that theoretically benefit most from environmental improvement — to face increasing economic pressures or even displacement.

This thesis won't further explore the role and potentials of policy, however, the proposal of a larger neighborhood vision, (p.58) will be framed within an ideal future scenario in which policy makers enable planners and citizens to maximize neighborhood well-being while guaranteeing equity. The proposal of prototypical actions (p.62), on the other hand, acknowledges the current political framework and aims to establish the seeds for environmental improvements and a socially coherent neighborhood, while avoiding fueling existing economic pressures.

GENERAL APPROACH

My Agenda

In this thesis I assume my role as a planner for holistic neighborhood well-being, my 'agenda' is to maximize positive impacts within a case study and present a possible vision for the neighborhood as well as potential street scale interventions.

Explorative

As impact is my main goal, this thesis had to be initiated early within the problem definition (see illustration below). An explorative approach was used for both theory as well as the case study work to allow for the identification of unknown problems, potentials, and suitable methods.

Dialectical Process

The thesis was approached by using a dialectical process in developing theoretical and project work. For example, the proposed planning framework has co-evolved through iterations of theoretical and case study work.

Community Sensitive

In order to reach the desired impacts, the background research reveals that spatial planners should not aim for the environmental improvement of a place but instead for the environmental improvement for people. Adaptations of a place must reach existing audiences! That means the extent, type, and approach of intervention must be tailored to the local existing cultural-social fabric as well as be sensitive to ongoing and potential disruptive driving forces.

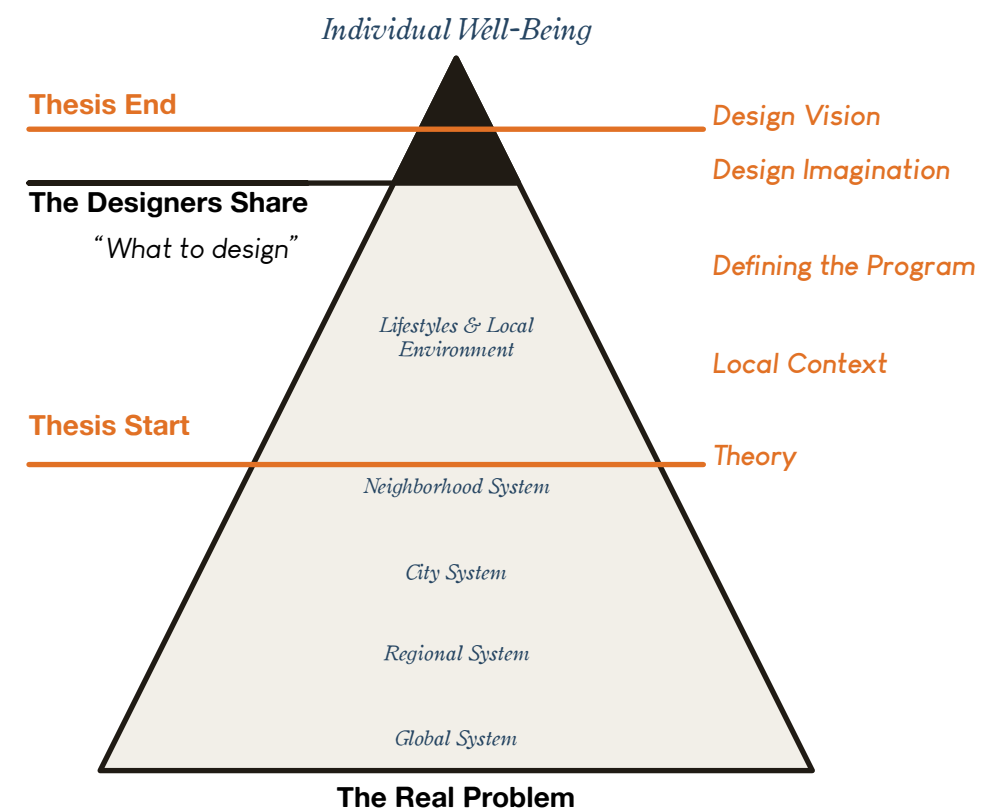


Fig 6: The thesis's process shaped to maximizing positive impacts. Graphic adapting Victor Papanek's "The Design Problem" (1971).

METHODS

Key methods were chosen to help guide the process as well as to tailor the design toward the local social, cultural, and spatial context. The use of these methods will be elaborated within their respective chapters.

THEORY

Systematic Framework Development

Early-stage research showed that contributions to the topic of planning for well-being especially in relation to life fulfillment were fragmented or potentially questionable. In order to better guide, ground, and evaluate the improvement planning process within the case study, the theoretical work concludes with the proposal of a conceptual planning framework (p.58) which has been informed by the analysis of various theoretical and practical concepts as well as the ongoing case study itself.

Literature Review

As a point of departure, I conducted a critical review of Dan Buettner’s work on Longevity Blue Zones. While his statements seem promising, the credibility of some of his claims can be questioned. Consequently, further research was necessary to better ground the proposals of this thesis.

CASE STUDY

Interviews

Various semi-structured interviews were conducted to generate in-depth insights into key topics while allowing space for the unpredictable.

Questionnaire

I developed and tested a questionnaire to generate targeted reflections within specific lifestyle-related and environmental dimensions of a persons well-being.

Mapping Game

To generate qualitative learnings on both context and proposed intervention programs, I developed a mapping game that could be played during workshops with local stakeholders.

Prototyping

Prototyping revealed itself as a crucial design method, as it enables both the initiation and testing of environmental improvement measures and their adaptive, incremental expansion and thus mitigating unwanted disruptions to the local socio-economic context.

THESIS PROCESS

Throughout the six stages the thesis went through various circles of exploration, reflection and iteration. The process diagram highlights the dialectical approach in which the development of theory and case study was informed by one another.

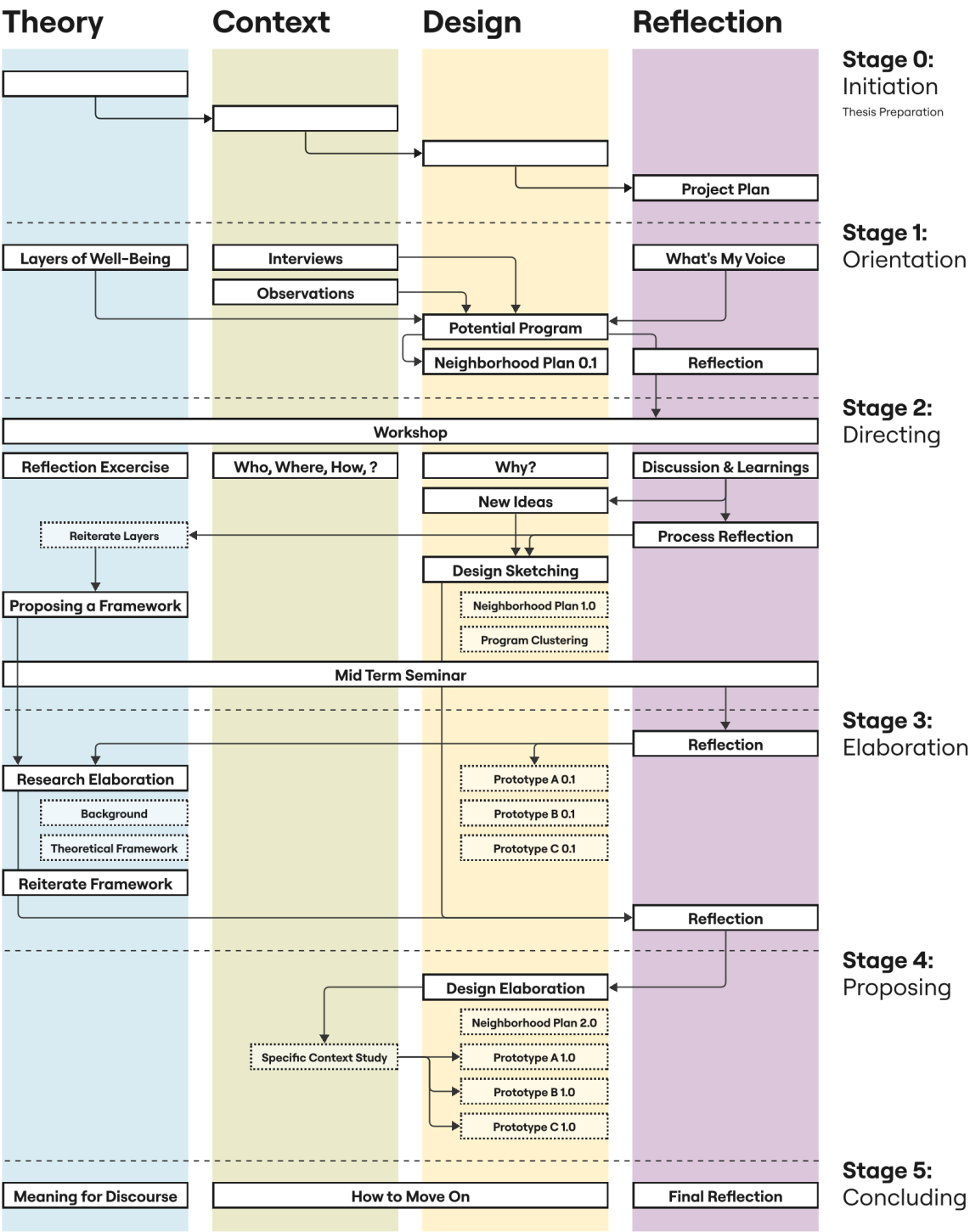


Fig. 5: Thesis Process Diagram

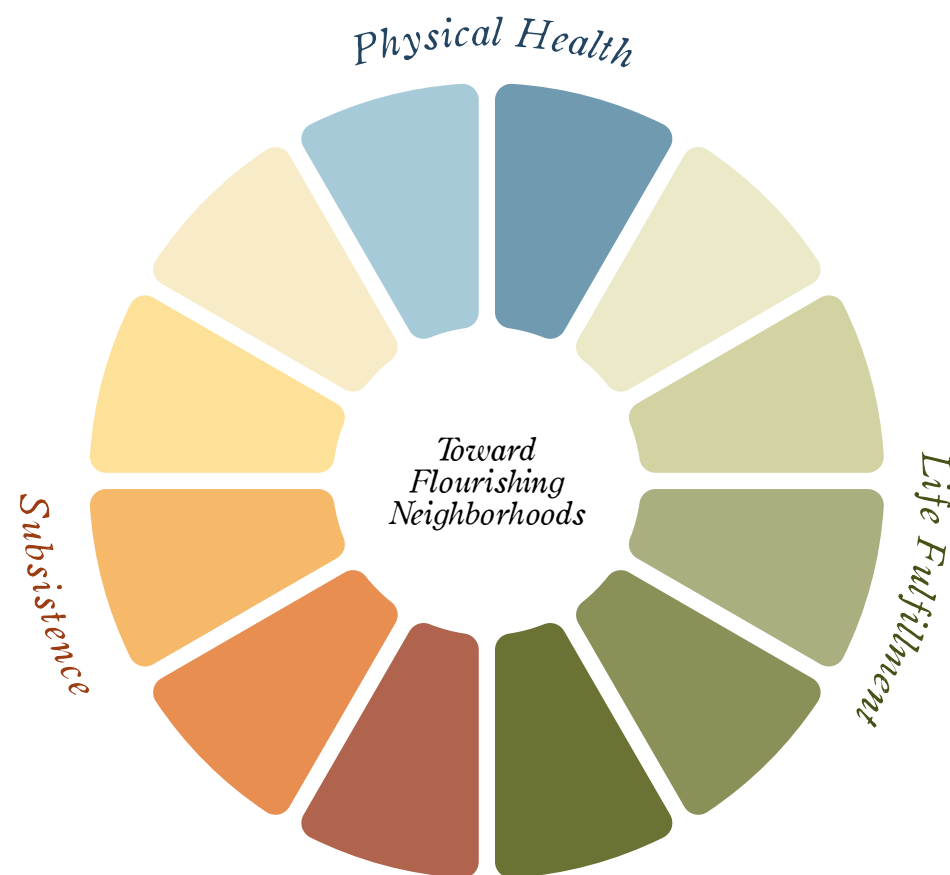


Fig. 1.2: Concept Diagram for Planning Framework

Fig. 8: Concept Diagram Holistic Well-Being

Chapter 2: PLANNING FOR WELL-BEING

My thesis question of how to shape daily environments that promote healthier lives has been sparked by Dan Buettner's promising statements in the series "Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones" (Buettner, 2023). This chapter starts with a critical examination of Buettner's claims and then seeks to ground these ideas in the field of mental health and the broader discourse on well-being. The findings suggest that planners need to adopt a holistic understanding of well-being — described by Keyes as "Flourishing" — and promote seemingly disconnected dimensions.

Further, the chapter connects these theoretical insights to the field of spatial planning by drawing from the existing contributions of *Human Scale Development* (Max-Neef et al., 1991), *Mental Health and Nature* (Mental Health Foundation, 2021), *Active Design* (Sport England, 2023) and *The Superblock Model* — to finally propose a conceptual planning framework for promoting well-being holistically within neighborhoods.

A Review of Longevity Blue Zones

LEARNING FROM THE LONGEST-LIVED

Imagine a world in which the people who live the longest and most fulfilling lives are not wealthy or follow any strict diets and workout routines. Instead, their longevity and well-being are the natural result of their local environment. When I watched the series “Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones” (Buettner, 2023), that was exactly the promise.

In the series, Dan Buettner explores regions, called longevity blue zones (LBZ), that have an extraordinarily high share of people that surpass the age of 100. Interestingly, all these regions* are remote locations, mostly unaffected by globalization, urbanization, technological advancements, and Western culture. Okinawa, for example, which has been known for its high share of centenarians, is Japan’s poorest prefecture. Because genetic influences only contribute to 20% of a person’s longevity, Buettner concludes their longevity must mainly be a direct result of their way of living and surrounding environment (Buettner, 2021).

But do we need to go back to traditional ways of living in remote landscapes to live longer, healthier, and happier? The series’ author disagrees and suggests a hopeful perspective. He and his team claim to have identified the shared environmental conditions and lifestyles among these regions that contribute to the longevity and well-being of their people. These “common denominators, they claim, could be the framework for enacting long-lasting health improvements in our urban environments. Instead of addressing health on an individual level, reaching meaningful and long-term impact for both individuals as well as communities requires a locally tailored system-scale approach through collective efforts by governments, spatial planners, companies, local organizations, and community groups and actors (Buettner, 2021).

The series concludes with a compelling statement from Buettner: “The things that make us live a longer and healthier life might be the ones that make life worth living” (2023). He suggests that long-lasting health should be seen as the consequence of an environment that nourishes fulfilling ways of living. Consequently, the promotion of well-being should be placed at the core of development efforts aimed at achieving long-term health improvements.

Is it Credible?

Diving deeper into the discourse surrounding Longevity Blue Zones (LBZ) suggests that Buettner’s claims, and the content on the Blue Zones LLC website, should be approached with caution. Buettner popularized the concept of LBZ through a 2005 *National Geographic* cover story and has since profited from its growing popularity, for example by publishing best-selling books and offering courses. He founded Blue Zones LLC, which he sold in 2020 to Adventist Health. The company facilitates health-focused transformations for municipalities, communities, and workplaces, but also heavily commercializes the growing association between the term “Blue Zones” and well-being by selling branded products and promoting wellness programs. While both Buettner and Blue Zones LLC claim substantial health and economic benefits from these initiatives, these outcomes remain unverified by independent sources.

While Buettner is often seen as the leading figure behind the concept of LBZ, his contributions are largely of journalistic nature and reliant on the close collaboration with demographer Michel Poulain. It was Poulain who confirmed the first area of extraordinary longevity in Sardinia. However, due to disagreements, relating to the trademarking and commercialization of *Blue Zones*®, their collaboration has ended (Amigo, 2024). Poulain has since continued his work independently, and as shown on his website, certified a fifth LBZ, Martinique, (Poulain, 2025).



Fig. 9+10: Photos I took in May 2022 of the town Seui within the Sardinian LBZ (Poulain, 2023b). Located on a steep hillside the narrow streets foster daily physical activity and social interaction with neighbors.

*Excluding the town Loma Linda U.S – “Buettner admits that he added Loma Linda to the 2005 *National Geographic* piece because his editor wanted a place in the U.S” (Amigo, 2024)

Suggestions:

→ *The 6 denominators for longevity could frame promising planning goals for well-being promotion:*

→ *Address change within daily environments (neighborhood/ workplace)*

→ *Reaching meaningful improvements requires multiscalar & multi-disciplinary approaches*

→ *Transformation should be community-led*

Common Denominators for Longevity

Both Buettner and Poulain suggest that the longevity of centenarians is the result of continuous support and the interplay of physiological, nutritional, social, and spiritual factors (Buettner & Skemp, 2016; Poulain, 2023). They identified the following common denominators of LBZs which may be used as broader design goals for planners to shape environments that promote well-being holistically:

1. **Moving Naturally** – physical movement throughout the day, an environment that nudges daily active movement
2. **Eating Wisely** – a balanced, regional, and primarily plant-based diet
3. **Positive Social Connections** – positive and meaningful connections with friends and family; time frequently spent together; intergenerational exchange;
4. **A sense of Life Purpose** – a motivating force that brings individuals a sense of life fulfillment: like living out one’s vocation; or practices of care and volunteering; spirituality
5. **Shifting Down** – plenty of sleep and rest; an environment of low stress
6. **Belong** – Sense of being rooted in a place, culture, and community; engagement and activities in the local community;

I would advise against using Buettner’s denominator ‘Wine at 5’ (Buettner & Skemp, 2016), and Poulain’s principal ‘Respect for the planet’ (Poulain, 2023) as reliable indicators for health and longevity. The World Health Organization “warns that even low levels of alcohol consumption can increase health risks” (Amigo, 2024), and Poulain’s current argumentation frames ecological benefits merely as a side effect of a regional and natural diet.

Improving Life-Expectancy in Urban Environments

Based on a claim that people spend 80% of their time within 5 miles of their homes (Buettner & Skemp, 2016), Buettner argues that intervention is most effective in people’s daily environments. He proposes a transformation strategy for the health improvement of such environments, named *Life Radius*®, which addresses change on 3 different layers:

Layer 1: Policy and Planning

Adapting the built environment to promote healthy activities and discourage unhealthy choices, through e.g. walkable & bikeable streets, improving parks and public spaces, and implementing municipal policies.

Layer 2: Places of Occupation

Engaging and supporting local businesses, schools, and organizations to provide healthier environments and healthier choices.

Layer 3: Social Programs

Activities and workshops to foster movement, social connections, and developing a sense of purpose, like community work and volunteering.

Buettner stresses the importance of a community-led and -run approach – instead of forcing people to change, the transformation needs to be based on the “will, and readiness to improve the health of a community...from within” (2021).

Buettner claims significant results from projects applying the strategy, both in terms of financial savings and increased population longevity. In Albert Lea, Minnesota, “After about a year and a half, there was a 3.2-year bump in life expectancy; the community lost a combined weight of 7280 pounds; and health care costs dropped by 40%” (Buettner & Skemp, 2016). The city of Fort Worth “is now saving about a quarter of a billion dollars a year in projected healthcare and productivity costs” (Buettner, 2021). Those findings, however, have not yet been independently reviewed and verified.

Discussion

How to Use

Buettner’s and *Blue Zones LLC*’s promises of increasing life expectancy and significant reductions of healthcare costs certainly sound compelling. However, caution is warranted when considering these concepts as a basis for planning healthier environments. The applied methods and resulting outcomes lack transparency and independent evaluations. Planners and Governments should reflect carefully on the implications of aligning with the *Blue Zones*® brand. While the *Life Radius*® could serve as an interesting source of inspiration, it currently remains insufficient as a solid foundation for evidence-based planning.

What I miss in the Discussion

The everyday practice of centenarians suggests a way of living that is in balance with their natural environment, a dimension that remains overlooked in the dominant narrative of Buettner relating to LBZ. What is the relationship between their way of living, which is ecologically sustainable, and their well-being, and how could we apply these lessons to our urban environments and ways of living? The discussion of equity in relation to LBZ and urban environments should also further be explored. Marmot’s reflection, “the more favored people are, socially and economically, the better their health” (Marmot, 2010, pp.03, 37), does not hold true in these regions and environments, revealing the crucial role of our environments (spatial, social, political, cultural, economic) in fueling or creating health inequalities.

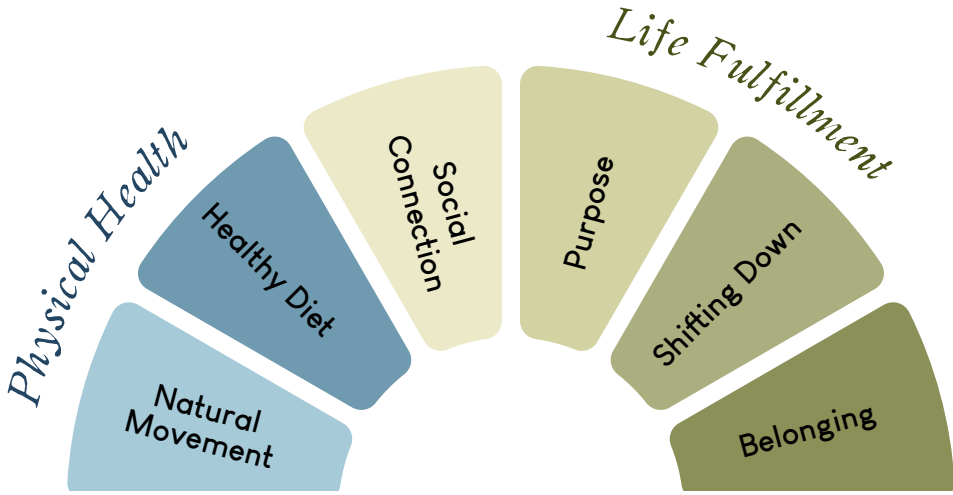
Drawing Conclusions

Reflecting on the implications of the study of LBZ, a key lesson, for both this thesis and the profession of planning, is that long-lasting health improvements depend on placing well-being at the core of transformative processes. Achieving this requires shared efforts between governments, planners, and communities and applying a systemic approach that addresses multiple scales as well as dimensions of well-being.

While commonly suggested changes like improving neighborhood walkability to promote physical health, designers must imagine complementary programs that foster social connection, rest, and a sense of purpose. These dimensions might require planners to look beyond merely changing the physical environment, to affect health and lifestyles and instead address lifestyles directly, in order to improve health and the environment.

In doing so, planners should not dictate but encourage healthier choices and ways of living – by empowering communities to adapt their daily life and environments. Design can play a powerful role in fostering well-being, particularly life fulfillment, by engaging the locals in the process of activating and evolving shared spaces – for example, through participatory processes and prototyping.

Fig. 11: Planning goals for long-term health promotion based on Buettner’s & Poulain’s common denominators for longevity



Final Reflection

Buettner’s approach of intensively studying the lives of centenarians highlights the longstanding tension in the study of well-being: whether to define its essence based on objective, measurable indicators or through subjective and immeasurable perceptions of the lived experience.

Despite the tension, Buettner’s message is more relevant than ever. The existence of LBZs demonstrates that our urban way of living can limit our chances of leading long and fulfilling lives – particularly for society’s most vulnerable groups.

Unfortunately, these zones are under threat from ever-expanding urbanization, as well as the influences of capitalism and Western culture (Buettner, 2023b; Ryall, 2022). Recent trends indicate that several of these regions are experiencing a decline in longevity (Amigo, 2024), and with this decline comes the loss of vital, tacit knowledge about environments and ways of living that support long-term health and well-being, while living in balance with natural systems.

Buettner reflects on recent developments in Nicoya and Okinawa:

“It breaks my heart to see how Nicoya is changing. You drive into town and the first thing you see is fast food restaurants... And this is replacing this genius way of life... Since I found this blue zone, it has shrunk to one-fifth of its original size and by some estimation the blue zone could be gone within a generation” (Buettner, 2023b)

“In Okinawa, it is even worse... it was known for producing the longest-lived, healthiest people in the history of humankind. But today... Okinawa now has the highest rate of obesity of any other area in Japan” (Buettner, 2023b)

In the face of today’s mayor challenges, perhaps the lives of centenarians in longevity blue zones can serve as a reminder to urban societies that shaping healthier, sustainable, and resilient environments must be guided by – and tailored to – the immeasurable, subjective, and intuitive nature of human life. Ignazio Amigo finishes his investigative article about the topic of LBZs and the work of Buettner and Poulain with a question he posed to Herminia, a centenarian from Galicia, in Spain: “What’s the secret of living a long life?” Her answer is simple and immediate: “Common sense” (Amigo, 2024).

→ *Expanding urbanization threatens LBZs and thus the knowledge of how to life long and fulfilling lives*

→ *Allow yourself to be guided by your intuition*

THE MENTAL HEALTH DISCOURSE

Verifying the Previous Perspective on Well-Being

Buettner and Poulain’s observation suggests that long-lasting health depends on the quality and non-hierarchical interplay of various well-being-promoting conditions. But is such an understanding reflected in the work of other accredited sources? And if well-being is so crucial for long-term health, should planners then place it at the core of health transformation?

The World Health Organization supports a holistic understanding of health – it is “A state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 2021a, p.3). Further, the WHO’s ‘Shanghai Declaration on Promoting Health’ specifically highlights the interdependent relationship between sustainable development and promoting well-being (World Health Organization, 2017). Finally, health promotion is defined by the WHO as “the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. To reach a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, an individual or group must be able to identify and to realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment... Therefore, health promotion is not just the responsibility of the health sector...” (World Health Organization, 2025a).

In 2022, the U.S. Surgeon General, the leading public health authority in the U.S., “released a new framework for mental health and well-being ...stating that it is ‘a critical priority for public health.’” (Bautista et al., 2023, p1)

Making Well-Being Tangible

There appears to be consensus that well-being is central to achieving long-term health – both for individuals and for society. However, as a term and as a goal, well-being remains somewhat ambiguous and open to interpretation, even within academic discourse. A comprehensive review comparing definitions of well-being (Bautista et al., 2023) supports my notion: “While aspects of well-being seem universal... results highlight the lack of consistent definitions of well-being” (p. 1). The authors conclude, “There is a need to provide consistent definitions and precise language when inferring well-being from results” (p. 9).

Between Happiness and Life Fulfillment

To understand how planners should define well-being, I dove deeper into the field of mental health. An attempt to situate the observed determinants of longevity within existing theories of well-being revealed two prominent models: *hedonism* and *eudaimonia*. While *hedonic* well-being refers to the experience of temporary satisfaction, comfort, or the absence of pain – outcomes that are often measurable – *eudaimonic* well-being relates to the subjective, often immeasurable nature of the lived experience, such as purpose, fulfillment or personal development. To describe well-being, scholars and practitioners outside the field of mental health tend to use terms like *happiness* or *life-satisfaction*, yet these terms are actually associated with a hedonic understanding. Defaulting to this characterization can fail to capture more holistic definitions of health and well-being, such as those emphasized by Buettner or the WHO.

Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

Today’s predominant system for measuring well-being remains *Subjective Well-Being* (SWB) by Diener & Lucas (1999). While its focus on life satisfaction, and the presence of positive and negative states supports measurability and comparability of data, it has faced substantial criticism. Ryff & Singer, argue that SWB fails to capture other essential aspects of human functioning that contribute to psychological wellness – and may even serve as “a fallible indicator of healthy living”(Ryan & Deci, 2001).

What is a fit
body and
mind if you
don’t actually
enjoy living?

→ Health = the presence of
holistic well-being

→ Well-Being should be at
the core of Health
Development

→ Health promotion
empowers — enabling self-
actualization

→ I need to define how I
am addressing well-being
and the dimensions used
for my design work.

→ See Figure 12

→ Hedonistic definitions
may fail to address essential
conditions for psychological
wellness

Fig. 12: Mapping Terminology
I mapped key theories and terms within the following Diagram to support both this thesis and the broader profession in using well-being-related terminology more consciously and precisely.



Psychological Well-Being (PWB)

In contrast to SWB, Carol D. Ryff advocates for a eudaimonic approach to define well-being. Her model, *Psychological Well-Being* (1989) – presents six distinct aspects of human actualization: autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, life purpose, mastery, and positive relatedness” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 146). Ryff highlights that positive psychological well-being is closely related to a longer life (Ryff, 2023, p.277), reduced risk of “numerous diseases” (Ryff, 2014, p.18), resilience in the face of adversity (Ryff, 2023, p.281) and improved recoveries from mental illness (Ryff, 2023, p. 282).

Ryff notes that systemic challenges limit psychological well-being, particularly for the most vulnerable populations. Consequently, improving PWB requires system-level interventions and the mitigation of socioeconomic inequalities (Ryff, 2023, p. 281). At the individual level, non-clinical activities – such as physical exercise, creative expression, volunteering, and religious participation – can support PWB. However, the latter may also “lower levels of autonomy” (Ryff, 2023, pp. 281, 284; Ryff, 2014, p. 10).

Integrative Perspectives

The *Self-Determination Theory* (SDT), developed by Ryan and Deci (1985), builds on Ryff’s model by suggesting that fulfilling the eudaimonic principles of human functioning leads to both PWB and SWB – in other words, to experiences of both fulfillment and happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 146).

Keyes’ *Mental Health Continuum* (2002) similarly operates in the space between hedonia and eudaimonia, defining well-being as the result of “positive feelings and positive functioning in life” (p. 207). From this integrative perspective, Keyes introduces the term languishing to describe the negative manifestation of well-being, and flourishing as the positive one.

CONCLUSION = A FLOURISHING LIFE

While each person’s path toward positive and lasting well-being is subjective, this thesis’s comparison of theories and terminology reveals a key insight: despite the dominance of Subjective Well-Being (SWB) perspectives, we must actively emphasize that living well – healthily, happily, and with a sense of fulfillment – requires enabling and promoting positive human functioning, or Psychological Well-Being (PWB). This thesis proposes using flourishing to describe the state of complete well-being, defined as “the presence of positive emotions and moods, the absence of negative emotions, satisfaction with life, fulfillment, and positive functioning” (Bautista et al., 2023) – as proposed by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

How to Promote Flourishing

HOW TO APPROACH PLANNING

The previous research helped clarify what definition of well-being planners should aim for, but how should they approach and implement transformative changes to improve well-being meaningfully and holistically? The development framework *Human Scale Development* (Max-Neef et al., 1991) and its concept of *synergic satisfiers* might be a vital first lead!

'Human Scale Development' – Max-Neef et al. (1991)

Max-Neef advocates for a paradigm shift in development centered around the satisfaction of fundamental human needs, which closely align with Ryff's 'Psychological Well-Being' and the emphasis of human functioning. Central to the book is the idea of nine human needs, which are fundamental, but whose actualization or "satisfaction" is culturally and environmentally specific. Contrasting popular models such as Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' (1943), Max-Neef demands moving toward a horizontal understanding of human needs. He adds, no need is more important than another (p.49), but severe deprivation in one area "may paralyze and overshadow" the relevance of other needs. Finally, he emphasizes that these needs must be understood not just as deprivations to be met, but also as potentials to be fulfilled, individually and collectively (p.49).

The need for a different approach to development

The book criticizes contemporary development for often following a linear, top-down approach to improving living environments – prioritizing existential deprivations (subsistence) through externally imposed solutions (exogenous satisfiers) (p.51). While such solutions often aim to improve health by promoting the accumulation of wealth, resources, or infrastructure, Max-Neef argues – drawing on Myrdal's theory of *circular cumulative causation* – that in practice, they frequently reinforce dependency and inequality (p.51). Ultimately, this traps people in a cycle that increasingly constrains the civil society of countries, regions and neighborhoods (p.51). Instead, he insists that planners and governments must address fundamental human needs systemically, "from the outset and throughout the entire process of development" – not just as a goal, but as "the motor of development itself" (p. 53).

Because the satisfaction of human needs is context specific, breaking the reinforcing cycles that restrict them, requires empowering local communities and individuals to engage in *endogenous* (locally emerging) processes that aim to improve local well-being (pp.57,58). *Human-scale development* defines a new critical role for governments and planners, one that finds ways to integrate engagements of "external promotion (by governments or planners) with internal initiatives (through local groups or individuals)." The engagement of local groups or individuals can only reach meaningful and lasting impacts, if empowered and nurtured by planners and politicians (p. 61). "We believe that regaining diversity is the best way to encourage the creative and synergic potential which exist s in every society" (p.38).

Enacting positive change:

The book highlights the potential of interventions which meet multiple needs at once (p. 34), called *synergic satisfiers*. Max-neef, suggests employing participatory methods that aim to collaboratively gain "in-depth insight into key problems that impede the actualization of fundamental human needs"(p. 39). Only by identifying, imagining, and implementing such *synergic satisfiers* can planners promote well-being holistically in the face of complex crises (pp. 2, 55–56)

Max-Neef's Fundamental Human Needs:

- (1) Subsistence
- (2) Protection
- (3) Affection
- (4) Understanding
- (5) Participation
- (6) Idleness
- (7) Creation
- (8) Identity
- (9) Freedom

→ Promote needs horizontally, no need is more important than another!

→ Linear development fails to reach desired impacts for civil society, and instead amplifies constraints to needs

→ Address needs systemically by supporting endogenous processes, enabled and promoted by sensitive exogenous intervention

→ Use Tools for analyzing local needs — a Questionnaire?

→ Identify & analyze synergic potentials of your early ideas

EXERCISE – MAPPING URBAN WELL-BEING

Max-Neef further highlighted the shortcomings of urban development in supporting well-being holistically. To explore how the urban environment relates to the previously established theories of well-being, I conducted a short mapping exercise.

Fig. 13: Short exercise mapping the urban environment in relation to theories of well-being



Reflection

There are many characteristics of the urban environment that merely cater toward satisfaction, comfort and pain avoidance, while the experience of these states is often directly linked to monetary exchanges. In such a system leaning toward hedonism, well-being seems to remain temporary and highly dependent on external sources, spare time and economic status. Further, falling below a certain threshold of income reduces the accessibility and exposure to times of happiness as well as reducing the capacity to 'function well' by increasing unhealthy and existential factors such as stress, lack of rest & social exchange.

PLANNING GUIDANCE AND REFERENCES

How can existing planning concepts guide us in designing cities that foster human flourishing?

Mental Health and Nature – Mental Health Foundation (2021)

The 'previous exercise highlighted the potential of nature to positively influence both hedonic and eudaimonic dimensions of well-being. The report *Nature (Mental Health Foundation, 2021)* explores being in nature benefits our mental health, but also how this ambiguous term needs to be interpreted by planners to realize its beneficial potentials in urban environments.

How does it affect us:

"Nature is an important need for many and vital in keeping us emotionally, psychologically and physically healthy" (p.2). Being in nature can makes us feel calm, joy and is linked to reduced anxiety and depression (p.5). Further it provides vital spaces of social encounter and connection (p.35).

Key Principles for Intervention:

- Nature must be of high quality – high variety of plant- and wildlife and "serene landscapes that feel calm and quiet" (p.6)
- Instead of visiting nature, it must be available in the everyday environments (p.42)
- Nature must be safe and accessible to all demographics, those groups that are most likely to have restricted access to qualitative green are also the ones "most at risk of mental health problems" (p.6)
- Promote nature "Connectedness". People with a strongly developed relationship with nature tend to be "happier and are more likely to be flourishing and functioning well psychologically" (p.13). "We need a society that facilitates regular and sustained engagement with nature within more biodiverse spaces to maintain population well-being and resilience" (p.41).

About Connectedness:

Studies show that "People's nature connectedness, rather than visits to nature, is key for feeling that life is worthwhile – nearly four times larger than the increase associated with socio-economic status" (p.14). Further it is linked to ways of living that are more ecologically compatible.

Potential Interventions:

Built interventions – Accessible, high-quality urban parks; Planting flowers and trees along streets; Recreating natural habitat alongside human development such as Green Corridors. (p.5)

Programs fostering Care for Nature – Gardening and environmental conservation, are linked to reduce mental disorders as well as strengthening "social contact and inclusion, as well as a sense of belonging and personal achievement" (p.38).

Promoting Connectedness – through early education and local activities and programs (planting, gardening). The report proposes a flexible design framework to strengthen *Connectedness* through 5 ways of engaging with nature – 1. Senses ; 2. Emotion; 3. Beauty; 4 Meaning; 5 Compassion

→ *The health benefits of nature greatly depend on how green areas are designed, implemented and activated – urban planning often fails to realize this potential!*

→ *High-quality nature, available locally and accessible to everyone*
→ *Promote a sense of connectedness to nature*

Active Design – Sport England (2023)

Recognizing that the design of everyday environments significantly influences physical activity, Sport England developed a framework to support planners, urban designers, and developers. This framework aims to guide the creation of 'active environments' that deliberately encourage all forms of physical activity – not just sports or formal exercise. Besides improving the physical and mental health of adults and children, Sport England claims, applying the proposed 10 principles of 'active design' can also foster sustainable, economic and equitable improvements in cities, towns and neighborhoods.

The Fundamental Design Principle

1. Activity For All: "All environments should support physical activity equitably across all ages, ethnicities, genders, and abilities..." (p.10). This requires approaches for analyses and design that exercises learning and listening from the local context. Active environments have to be safe places, offer a wide range of activities and are inclusive – by respecting that people experience spaces differently.

Category 1: Active Travel

2. Walkable, communities; 3. Providing connected active travel routes
4. Mixing uses & co-locating facilities

Category 2: Active, High-Quality Places & Spaces

5. Network of multi-functional open spaces 6. High-quality-streets & spaces
7. Providing active infrastructure – such as toilets, bike lockers, repair and maintenance, water, showers... 8. Active Buildings – inside and out

Category 3: Creating & Maintaining Activity

9. Maintaining, high-quality flexible spaces 10. Activating (unused) Spaces

Suggested Methods:

Workshops, interviews, observations, walking tours, mapping, surveys, activity days, exhibitions

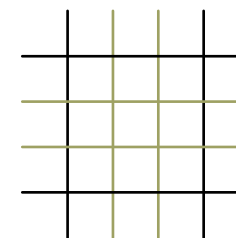


Fig. 14: Superblock Concept Diagram

The model "is particularly suitable for any urban area with a grid-like system & sufficient population and facility densities" (p.6)

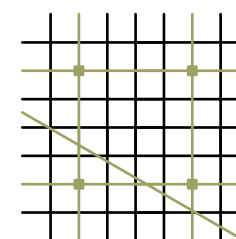


Fig. 15: Green Axis Concept Diagram

The Superblock Model – Barcelona

In May 2016, the Barcelonian government, paved the way for the broad implementation of a strategy called the 'Superblock'. It proposes the transformation of the city's public spaces – primarily streets – to address 1. air and noise pollution, 2. the urban heat island effect, 3. the lack of green spaces and 4. insufficient physical activity of urban inhabitants. Today the model has gained significant reputation internationally and studies show that the concept will be applicable at a large scale for many other cities (p.2). The evaluation of the first three Superblocks, implemented 2016–2019 revealed, "benefits in well-being and emotional health, better rest, less noise and air pollution and greater socialization. The areas became quieter, more comfortable and safer environments, which facilitated interaction between neighbors." (p.6)

The 'Superblock' establishes a new road hierarchy (see illustration), 2 out of every 3 streets restrict car accessibility to promote active mobility and incorporate green and meeting spaces. Interventions range from "increasing the tree cover and the vegetation, adopting sustainable urban drainage systems, limiting motorized traffic, and providing a safer and more comfortable environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and other social activities" (p.3) However, early implementations caused conflict with locals as well as gentrification, which is why "citizen consultation and participation became one of the key phases of the 'Superblock' implementation." (p.3) In other parts of the city the strategy was adapted due to constraints to a 'green axis' plan, focusing on a district wide network of green soft mobility corridors. While the implementation of the strategies is complex and slow (p.7) early evaluation suggest the strategy can lead to promising impacts, especially when upscaled.

Fig. 16: Synthesizing theory into a guiding framework

PLANNING FOR HUMAN FLOURISHING

The preceding theoretical explorations highlight the need for a new direction and way of working within urban planning. In the context of ongoing social and ecological crises, prioritizing human health may be fundamental to achieving sustainable development. The profession needs to move beyond linear approaches focused on deprivation and instead holistically foster a state of full well-being, both on an individual and societal level. The term flourishing can help frame this new direction, emphasizing that meaningful, lasting, and systemic impacts require the active promotion of eudaimonic dimensions – in particular, the full actualization of human functioning.

How to Approach Planning?

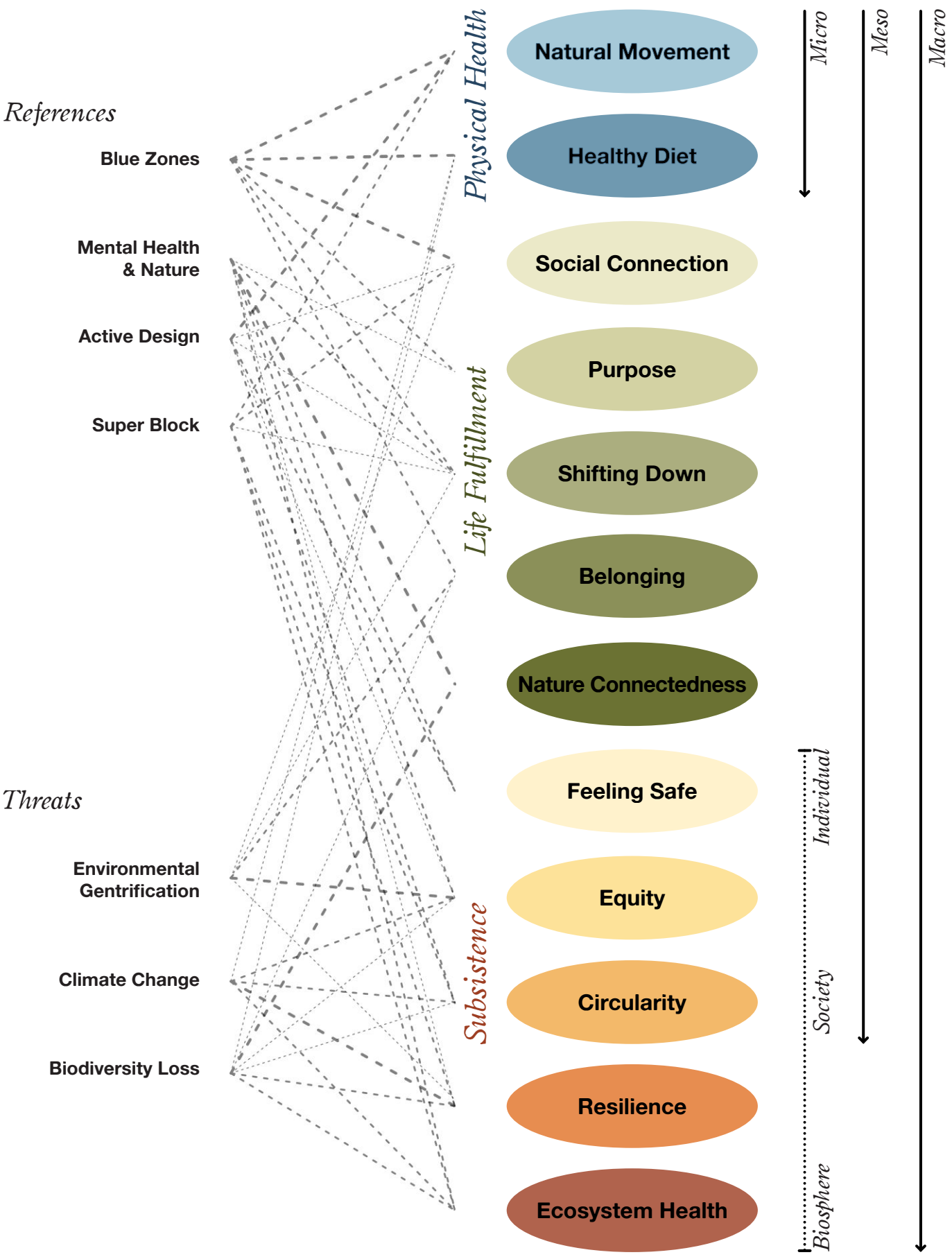
The success of environmental intervention for health improvement depends on the planner’s and designer’s approaches throughout the process.

- 1. To foster meaningful change, planners need to identify the underlying local and systemic forces that inhibit or disrupt human well-being and address them through synergic interventions – supporting multiple dimensions at once.
- 2. This way of working necessitates collaboration between disciplines, scales and especially with local communities. A tailored approach, integrating external intervention and the support of locally emerging processes enables, not only enables communities to shape their environments in line with their unique needs and cultural contexts, but it could also generate more meaningful and new benefits to local well-being.
- 3. Planners should aim beyond merely facilitating spatial change, as it will fall short in promoting well-being holistically, toward seeing their role in imagining processes, programs and activities that engage the local community and promote not only physical health but also human actualization.
- 4. While not explicitly covered in this theoretical chapter, the case study revealed the potential of prototyping as a design method – not only to enable incremental, sensitive, and adaptive transformation, but also to promote eudaimonic well-being through citizen involvement in the placemaking process itself.

PROPOSING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Initially inspired by the common denominators of *Longevity Blue Zones*, I conducted further research, which revealed a lack of guidance and references in urban planning for holistic approaches to health promotion. To guide, ground, and evaluate the transformation planning of the case study I started synthesizing the theoretical findings, which led to the development of the following conceptual framework called *Planning for Flourishing Neighborhoods*.

A flourishing neighborhood aspires toward 12 *Holistic Design Goals*, that relate to the dimensions of *physical health*, *life fulfillment*, and *subsistence*. 7 *Guiding Principles* help planners identify interventions that are more likely to result in desired systemic impacts, while minimizing the risk of disruptive side effects. Finally, the framework outlines an iterative planning process that builds on a locally rooted understanding of the context, to formulate an incremental and adaptive approach to neighborhood transformation.



Planning for
Flourishing
Neighborhoods

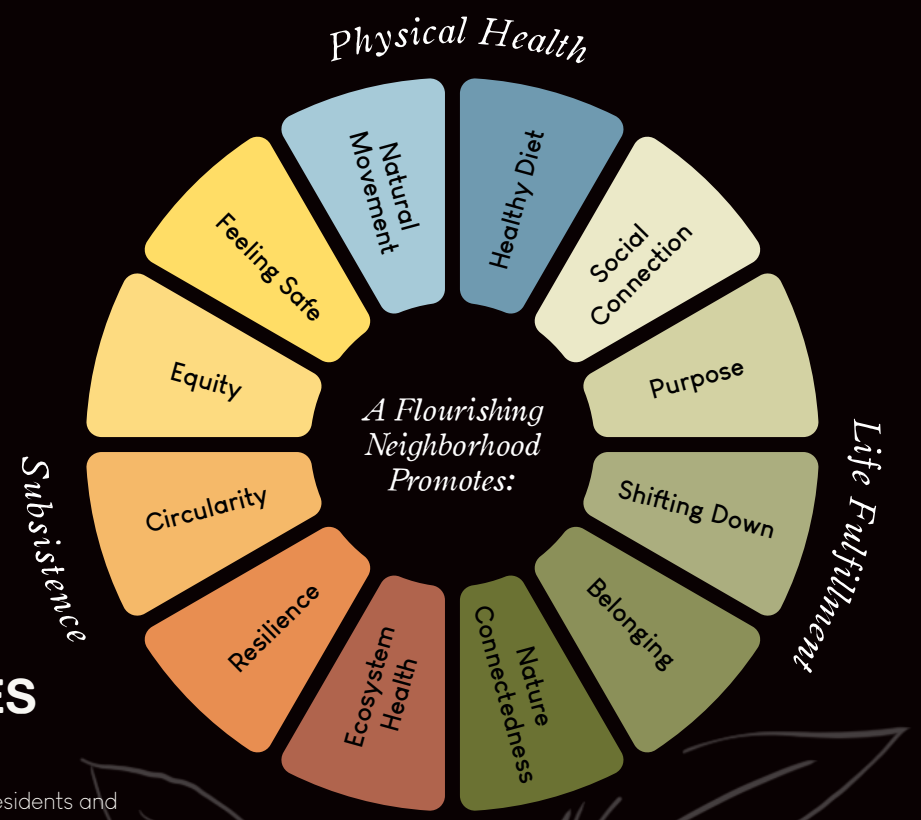


Fig. 17: Design Compass for Flourishing Neighborhoods

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Change From Within

Reach out to and build connections with local residents and actors to involve their voices throughout the process. Establish ongoing formats that nourish local initiatives for environmental improvements in the future.

Target Existing Audiences

The approach and extent of design solution must be tailored to reach existing audiences, specifically vulnerable groups, whose conditions for well-being are most restricted. Well-being transformation at a large scale is likely to result in severe constraints of well-being of vulnerable groups, if not prevented through legislative or institutional support.

Well-Being — For All!

Well-being improvements must be inclusive at their core by imagining how their design could cater to as wide of an audience as possible. While no single intervention can meet the needs of all demographics, offering a diverse range of programs increases the likelihood of reaching broader segments of the population — ensuring that there is something for everyone. Special care is needed in regard to vulnerable groups. The inclusion of their voices and needs throughout the process is crucial to reduce barriers and identify hidden side effects that could further restrict their already limited potential for well-being.

Well-Being — All the Time!

Well-being “is a resource for daily life” (WHO, 2021), hence, it must be nourished on a daily basis. Planners need to maximize the exposure of citizens to well-being promotion conditions, by locating interventions in their close environment. Further, special attention is needed to maintain the exposure to those environments during unfavorable times of day, seasons and weather conditions.

Connect & Educate Communities

Use the collaborative process of environmental adaptation as a platform to promote health awareness and knowledge on how to move toward a state of flourishing. Processes and interventions should foster community cohesion between the diverse backgrounds of neighborhood through opportunities for exchange and the development of shared identities.

Establish ‘Synergic Satisfiers’:

Identify and prioritize programs that generate the most synergic benefits — those that address multiple dimensions of well-being simultaneously or complement other interventions. This requires a thorough prior analysis of the local context, focusing on constraints and opportunities for human functioning and the 12 design goals. Employing methods for co-analysis, such as interviews, surveys or workshops are essential.

Promote Organic Change:

Interventions should promote lifestyle changes rather than imposing them. Employ an incremental and adaptive process that is sensitive to the existing realities within a community. (1) Start with simple temporary nudges or disincentives. (2) Test and evaluate actions on their real impacts and identify emerging problems and potentials. (3) Adapt and expand gradually based on local feedback and changes of needs to realize greater cultural shifts in the long term.

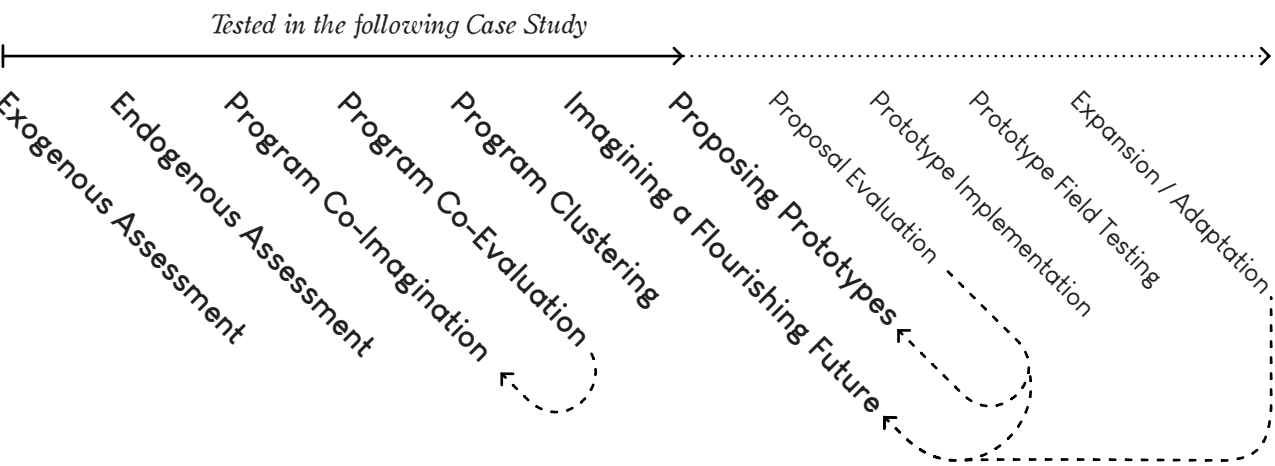
12 HOLISTIC DESIGN GOALS

Physical Health	Description	Potential Intervention
Active Movement	Foster natural movement , through adaptations to the neighborhood environment such as prioritizing soft mobility, but also programs and interventions that nudge physical activity .	– Walkable Neighborhoods – Encouraging Playfulness – Active Alternative Paths
Healthy Diet	Local environments can influence individual dietary choices. Strengthen relations between people and the foods they consume by — introducing local food production and food awareness programs.	– Edible Vegetation – Gardening – Local Food Markets – Community Cooking
Life Fulfillment		
Social Connection	Nourish frequency and quality of social encounters by improving the quality of public spaces and providing spaces and activities for various forms of interaction. Keep your loved ones close by fostering children- and age-friendly neighborhoods.	– Nudging Interaction – Meeting Places – Social Activities
Purpose	Promote the development of a sense of meaning in life or “Ikigai”. Establish environments and a diversity of programs for continued engagement that promote arts & craftsmanship, sport, education, nature stewardship or spirituality.	– Volunteering – Places to Explore & Learn – Gardening, Art, Crafting... – Places to Turn Inward
Shifting Down	Foster calm and relaxing urban environments by both mitigating environmental stress factors (sound & light pollution), as well as implementing programs and structures that promote a rest, and focused sensory experience to foster peace of mind.	– Restrict Car Traffic/Noise – Resting Places – Sensory Experiences – Accessing places of Nature
Belonging	Strengthen a sense of rootedness to a place, community and culture by implementing programs that nourish individual & local identity, lived heritage (past, today & future), and self- or community-representation.	– Represent Lived Heritage – New Cultures & Identity through Community Activities & Place-making
Nature Connectedness	Increase extent, accessibility and quality of green areas within daily environments . Further develop and strengthen relationships between citizens and nature through programs & activities to enhance nature’s positive impact on well-being.	– Stimulate Sensory Awareness in Nature – Gardening – Stewardship Activities
Subsistence		
Feeling Safe	Implement spatial changes and activities that improve spatial comfort and perceived safety , in special regard to vulnerable groups.	– Lighting, Greening – Openness & Protectedness – Ongoing Activities
Equity	Establish programs that build supportive networks and provide opportunities for social empowerment (representation, work, rehabilitation & education)	– Community Volunteering – Rehabilitation & Job Opportunities
Circularity	Strengthen neighborhood sustainability & self sufficiency by implementing structures & programs that promote a culture of sharing, repairing, re-purposing, and local resource production (food, water, etc.).	– Spaces to Share, Repair & Up-cycle – Resource Generation – Building from Waste
Resilience	Increase preparedness for extreme (weather) events by incorporating solutions that contribute to well-being during both its absence & presence. Strengthen individual and community well-being holistically to improve social resilience.	– Recreational Functions for Stormwater Management – Greening Neighborhoods – Play with Water
Ecosystem Health	Human life relies on a well-functioning ecosystem. Transformations and programs must harmonize with natural local and global natural systems. Foster co-habitation and a sense of care and stewardship for nature .	– Green Corridors – Biodiverse Green Spaces – Gardening

APPROACHING FIELD WORK

Proposing a Process

The following conceptual planning process has been informed by the case study work in Kvillestaden. Through a sequence of approaches and methods, it incorporates previously established guiding principles and goals to identify synergistic interventions while remaining sensitive to the local spatial, cultural, and demographic context. Although the process followed a logic of continuous approximation, it employed an iterative approach by implementing multiple cycles of evaluation. Despite a clear focus for each stage, it proved valuable to conduct complementary processes in parallel.



Due to the limitations of this thesis, the proposed process remains highly simplified. It does consider commonly applied formal strategies by the city, nor does it account for official regulations or guidelines. The same applies to the methods proposed and tested during the case study project.

Proposing 2 Methods

A broad range of viable methods that can be incorporated as part of neighborhood flourishing planning. To develop sensitive proposals to the social, cultural and economic fabric, participatory methods such as interviews, questionnaires, and workshops can be employed, these need to be planned and conducted carefully.

Although important, a theoretical elaboration on participatory design would be beyond the scope of this thesis – thereby I suggest seeking further guidance within the extensive contributions of experts and practitioners of the field.

Instead, the following page highlights two methods, which have been developed in preparation for a workshop conducted during the case study.

Neighborhood Well-being Questionnaire

→Check the Appendix for Outcomes and Reflections

Application:

Well-Being Assessment; Proposal Imagination; Prototype Testing;

Desired Outcomes:

The questionnaire fosters both qualitative and quantitative reflections on how lifestyle and their everyday environment contributes to a persons individual well-being.

How to Use:

First, the concept of holistic or flourishing well-being is introduced, highlighting how both environments and lifestyles shape individual well-being. Each participant receives a folded piece of paper. On the front side, they find an introduction to the 12 layers of flourishing along with short definitions on the back. Unfolding the paper once reveals the first round of reflection. Here, participants are asked to rate how their daily way of living influences their well-being in relation to each of the 12 layers, using a scale from 1 to 5. They are also encouraged to elaborate in writing, if they wish (8 min). A final unfolding reveals the second round of reflection. This time, the focus shifts to the local environment.

A Persona Mapping Game

→Check the Appendix Reflections on the Method

Application:

During Program Evaluation

Desired Outcomes:

The game fosters group discussions and individual reflections to generate qualitative feedback on early ideas for intervention. Further, it expands the planner's understanding of to the local context.

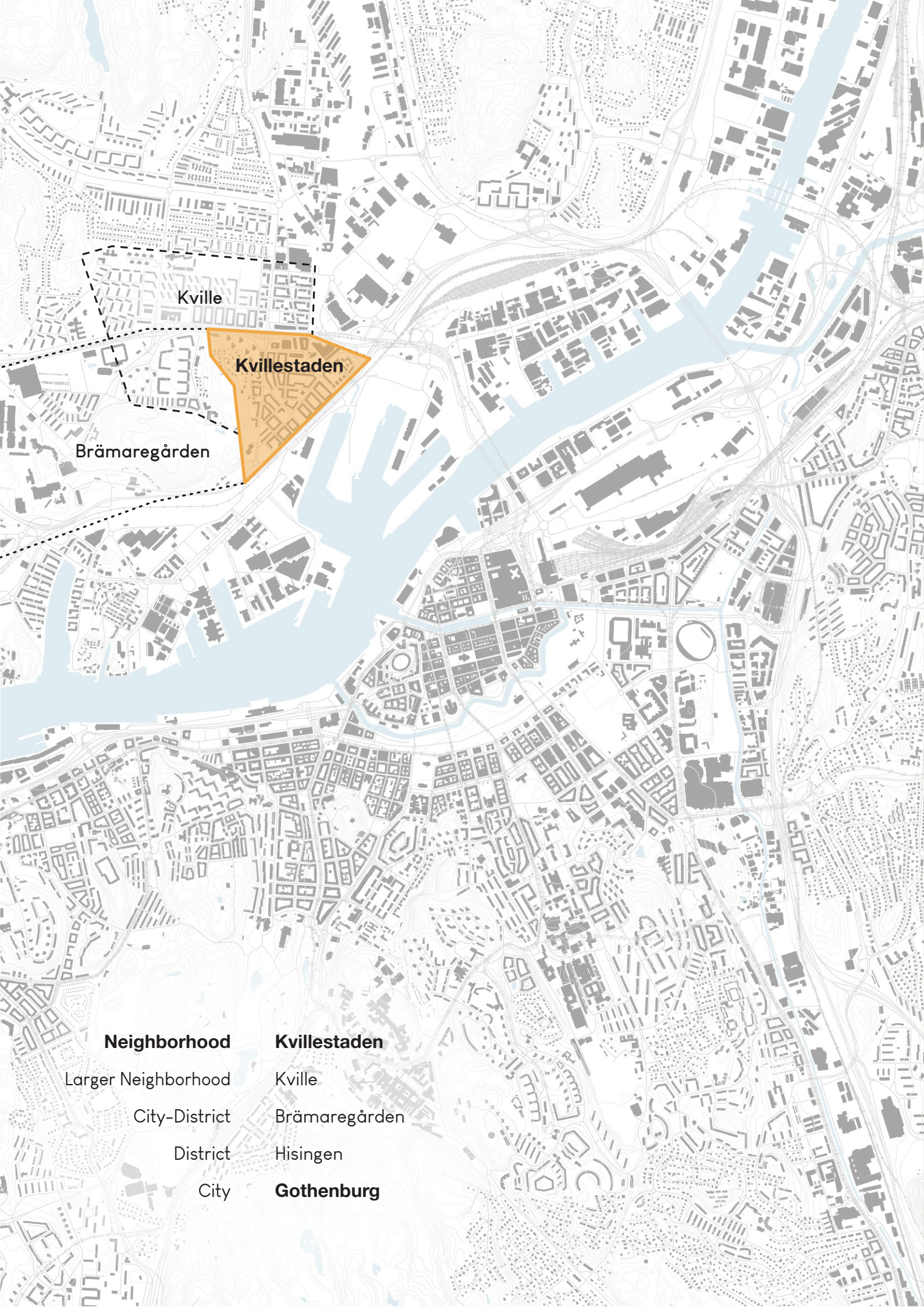
How to Play:

In the beginning, each member chooses a Persona Card to their interest. In disguise of a demand or statement of a fictional persona, the card familiarizes participants with a potential program and asks them to discuss in the group, whether and in which way it should be integrated. A map of the neighborhood at the center of the table is used a canvas to orient, communicate, take notes, and propose where and how interventions could be located. The moderator applies a hands-off approach, allowing participants to steer the discussions while occasionally stepping in to prompt reflection, raise critical questions, or introduce new perspectives. Depending on the amount of players and length of the discussions, the game will end after one or two rounds.

Fig. 18: Questionnaire used during the workshop, using an early version of the framework. It should be reiterated before its use!



Fig. 19: Mapping game in progress



Chapter 3:
APPROACHING KVILLESTADEN

Neighborhood	Kvillestaden
Larger Neighborhood	Kville
City-District	Brämaregården
District	Hisingen
City	Gothenburg

While my theoretical explorations on well-being helped define a new target for the adaption planning of urban environments, the case study work in Kvillestaden, Gothenburg, was necessary to understand how to translate these broad goals into sensitive solutions.

Kvillestaden is a dense, mixed-use working-class neighborhood, isolated between heavy transport infrastructure. It connects directly to the natural areas Ramberget and the river Kvillebäcken, but also experiences ongoing gentrification and environmental challenges, including high noise pollution and pluvial flood risks.

Phase 1: Exogenous Assessment

THE FIRST APPROACH

Location

The neighborhood is centrally located north of the Göta älv on Hisingen and framed by heavy infrastructure such as Lundbyleden and Hjalmar Brantingsplatsen, as well as the mountainside of Lilla Ramberget. Beyond these barriers, it connects to the districts of New Kville, Backaplan, Frihamnen and Lindholmen, all of which have been or will be subject to extensive redevelopment by the city and private developers.

History

Settlements at the mouth of Kvillebäcken into the Göta Älv predate the industrial expansion of Hisingens waterside, which devastated its once-vast and biodiverse marshlands — areas now known as Frihamnen and Ringön. The rapid emergence of maritime trade and factories necessitated large-scale developments to accommodate the growing industrial workforce. Albert Lilienberg, Gothenburg's City-engineer (1907-1927), proposed the redevelopment of Brämaregården, which to this day shapes the spatial fabric of the neighborhood. For most of the 20th century the neighborhood has been shaped by the lives of its industrial workers and factories, however due to the decline of industrial activity and the relocation of Gothenburg's harbors, the neighborhood is experiencing rapid social and cultural change.

Kvillestaden Today

The neighborhood's typical *Landshövdingehus* perimeter blocks accommodate a dense population as well as a wide range of small scale businesses. I have counted numerous restaurants, hair salons and corner stores, but also bars, cafes, and bakeries, and craft & art studios. Various actors are present in promoting well-being, such as various sport facilities and social or religious organizations.

Connectivity

Despite its central location, the neighborhood remains relatively isolated due to major traffic infrastructure such as Lundbyleden and Hjalmar Brantingsgatan, along with the natural barrier of Lilla Ramberget. Along its circumference of around 2.5 kilometers, there are only six points of entry/exit for pedestrians or cyclists, and four for motorized vehicles. Hjalmar Brantingsplatsen and Vågmästareplatsen provide strong public transport connections to the northern parts of the neighborhoods, but as the only nearby tram stops, access is more limited for residents living further south.

Pedestrian access to Frihamnen with its continuously improving recreational qualities is restricted. A single narrow pedestrian bridge crosses a cluster of transport infrastructure along Lundbyleden for about 75 meters. Furthermore, the lack of elevators or ramps hinders access for both cyclists and individuals with limited mobility. Despite ongoing development of a new tram line through Frihamnen, the current plans do not include considerations for new pedestrian crossings from Kvillestaden, or tram stops to improve the access to public transport for its southern residents.

Pollution

The surrounding transport infrastructure does not only pose physical barriers to residents and visitors. Judging by GIS maps by the *Gothenburg University, Institute of Medicine*, they are also a major source of noise pollution and air pollution (2025). While the newly developed buildings and associated open spaces in the north east are well-protected, most of the buildings and streets facing Lundbyleden are fully exposed to the highway's noise, as the current wooden fencing merely serves visual separation on a street level. The institute's map on air pollution shows significant reductions of air pollution over the past decades within the city, which makes it difficult to judge whether current emissions can still be considered a major health concern.

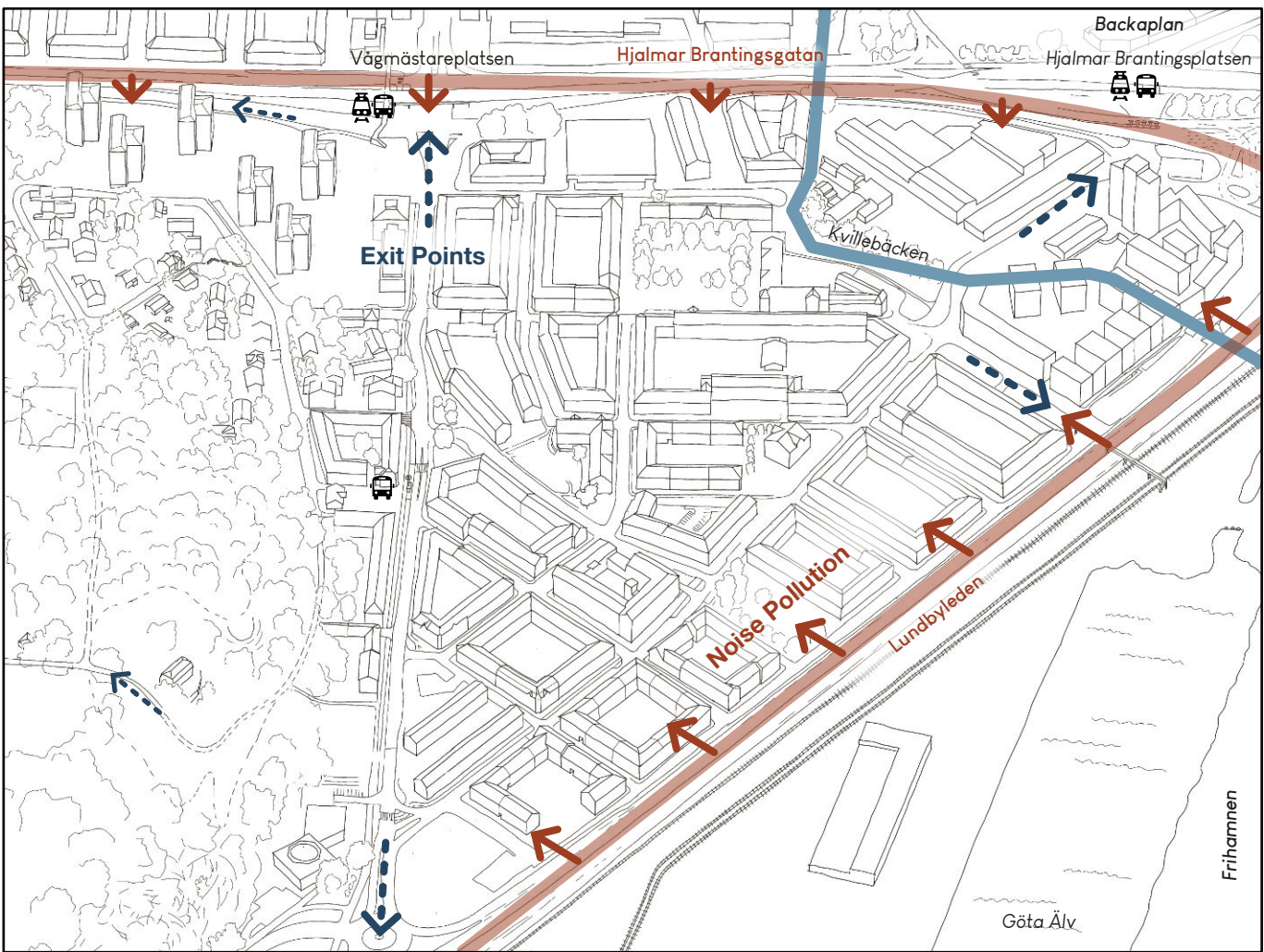


Fig. 21: The influence surrounding of large-scale infrastructure

Ecology

Kvillestaden is located in between two areas of high natural potential. Lilla and Stora Ramberget to the west provide high-quality natural habitat over an area of 38 hectares. The park lacks connections to other natural habitats, specifically to different qualities, such as ecotones along waterways. To the east the small river Kvillebäcken is close to reaching its end on the other side of Lundbyleden in the Göta Älv. Its embanked river edges provide recreational functions to residents, but lack high ecological quality. The heavy transport infrastructure isolating the neighborhood also impairs any ecological connections between the river’s ending and habitats upstream. While the river mouth of Kvillebäcken currently provides some ecological qualities, current proposals of infilling the entire *Lundby-basin* might reinforce any ecological barriers toward the Göta Älv.

Flood Risk

According to the city’s map *Vatten i Staden* (City of Gothenburg, 2015) the neighborhood of Kvillestaden is one of the residential areas of highest flood risk. Due to its terrain, low elevation and connection to both rivers, it is affected by the risk of all three types of flooding. Since tidal and river flooding require external barriers along waterways, pluvial flooding remains the most relevant risk to address within the neighborhood.

Demographics

GIS data shows a notably lower median income within the neighborhood compared to the national average. However, it has recently seen some increases, suggesting ongoing gentrification. New housing developments and the city’s plan to transform *Herkulesgatan* (City of Gothenburg, 2025), reveal growing exogenous interest in the area, both by the city and the private sector. There are significant income disparities which are connected to location, connectivity and exposure to traffic pollution. Between the well-connected and noise emission protected new development north east and the exposed apartments in *Neptunsgatan* there is a 45% difference from national median income (Hitta.se, 2025a,b).

A Future Situated within Extensive Re-Developments

The surrounding industrial areas that once provided most local residents with work are undergoing massive redevelopment. Being located in between the transformations of New Kville, Backaplan and Frihamnen, these developments could become significant external drivers for change within the neighborhood in the future – economically, socially, and culturally.

While current constraints such as limited connectivity, noise pollution, and flood risk are likely to be seen as “problems that need fixing,” it is important to question whether these barriers have in fact prevented common urban processes – such as centralization, homogenization, and densification – thereby helping to preserve the neighborhood’s unique qualities, including its cultural and demographic diversity and mix of small-scale businesses.

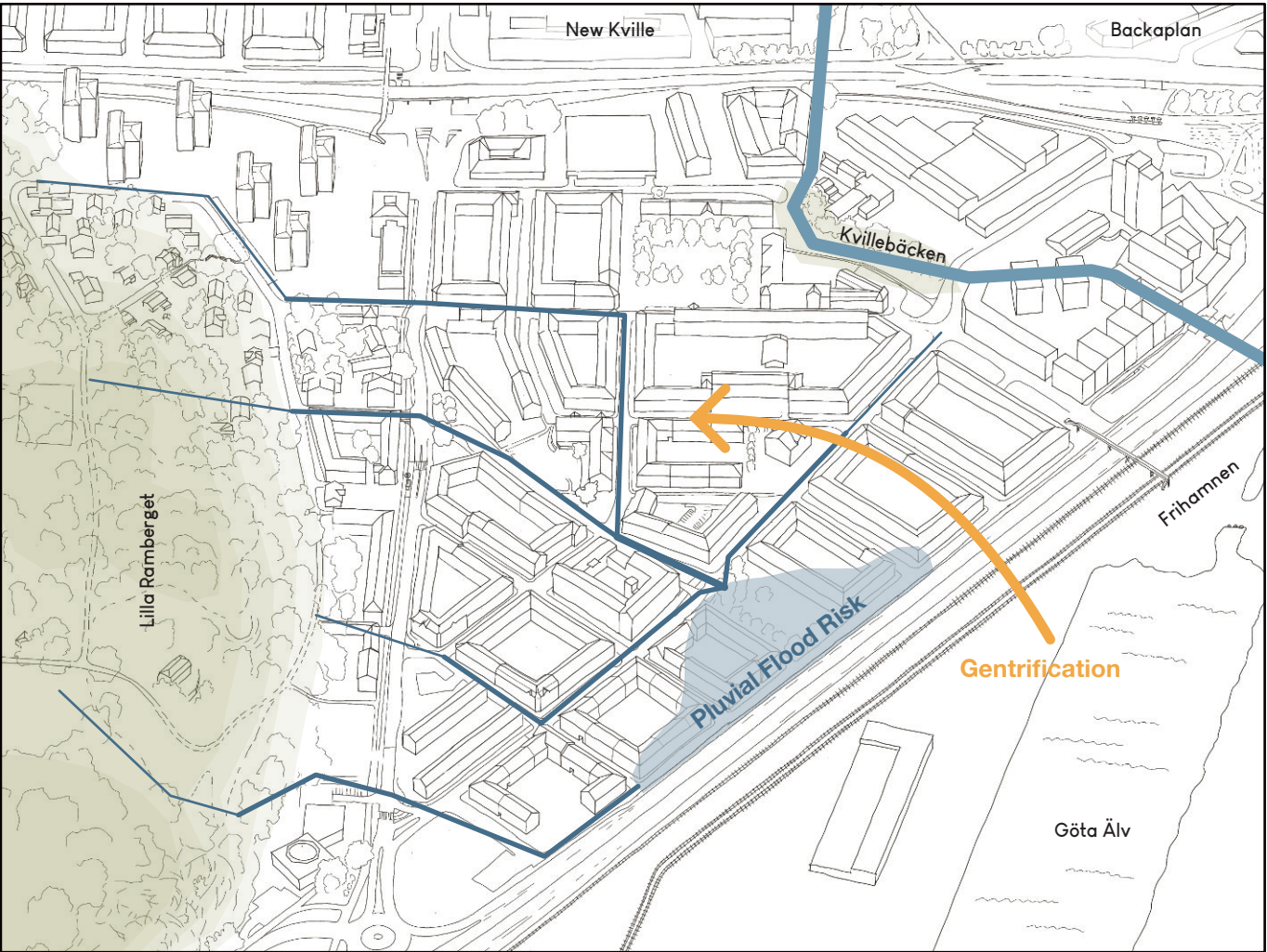


Fig. 22: Environmental and social influences

FOCUSING ON WHAT’S WITHIN

Addressing these constraints could ideally lead to valuable improvements for the neighborhood. However, resolving them could introduce significant uncertainties and potentially cause serious disruptions to the local social and cultural context – unless prevented through political or legislative efforts. Instead, aiming for meaningful health improvements today requires planners to approach change from within the neighborhood, rather than prioritizing typical exogenous interventions targeting the edge conditions or the public realm of a neighborhood to enhance connectivity and attractiveness.

Phase 2: Endogenous Assessment

LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

I conducted interviews, surveys and site observations, to build an extensive understanding of the specific local social, cultural and spatial context.

As mentioned, the extent and quality of the employed participatory methods were limited by the scope of the thesis. Consequently, integrating perspectives specifically from vulnerable groups and long-term residents proved difficult. The following work falls short in representing these perspectives appropriately, as it would have required further prior knowledge, connections and dedicated, highly sensitive approaches.

Interviews

The first and main contact was Vici, a locally engaged mother and child culture designer who moved to the neighborhood 12 years earlier. In addition, I conducted interviews with a cycling and sharing economy activist who runs a seasonal cafe and co-working space; an elderly long-time working-class resident; a pensioner who recently moved into the neighborhood; and last a local charity engaged in meal sharing and rehabilitation programs.

I approached each interview in a semi-structured way — asking a set of prepared guiding questions, while also leaving room for the unexpected. Some topics were, a personal introduction; reflections on the social, and spatial dimensions of the neighborhood; hopes and needs for change in the neighborhood; and receiving reflections on my early ideas for intervention.

Questionnaire

The previously introduced questionnaire (p. 27) was developed as an introduction exercise for the program evaluation workshop. It generated both qualitative and quantitative reflections about how local lifestyles and environments contribute to individual states of well-being.

→For detailed notes of the interviews check the appendix p. 7-18

→The outcomes are presented in the appendix p. 23f

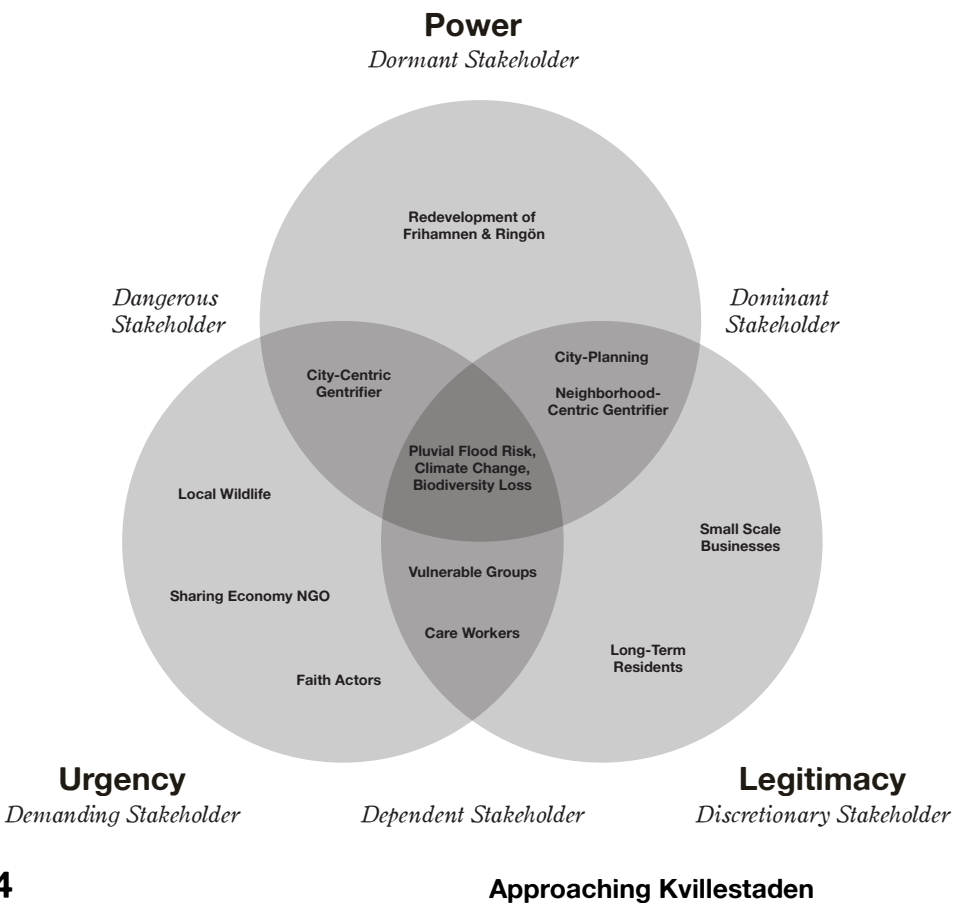


Fig. 23: Early-stage stakeholder Matrix

Working Class Heritage All comments are paraphrased!

I have lived more than 80 years in Kvillestaden and rarely left the area. I grew up poor but did not notice it because everyone around us was. With 15, I started working in a local factory until I retired. Everyone around here used to work in the factories or the harbor — now it feels strange that all factories have vanished. Today, I don't really know anyone in the area anymore. (Senior, long-term working class resident; interview Feb. 2025)

Growing up, the harbor was a playground. I used to always play with my friends in the docks of Lundbybassängen. We used to jump on the cargo trains to get to our school in Lindholmen. (Senior, long-term working class resident; interview Feb. 2025)

- 1. Extincting Industrial Working-Class Heritage

I have spent a lot of time in Kvillestaden when I was younger. The area used to be run down. In the evenings I had the feeling that it was not really safe here. (Friend of Resident; conversation, Feb. 2025)

- 1. Heavy Stigmatization

The Neighborhood Today All comments are paraphrased!

There are still people that have never crossed the river. I remember my parents warning me when I decided to move here (Resident, mother; conversation Feb. 2025)

Kvillestaden feels a little bit like a small town — I have everything I need, so I rarely leave the area. It reminds me of the town I grew up in. (Vici; resident, mother, designer; interview Dec. 2024)

Recently the area started to feel less safe to me, it seems like I see more and more people struggling with drug addiction. (Senior, long-term working class resident; interview Feb. 2025)

Most people are really nice and if you need help there is always someone who shows up. (Robin; activist & local business owner; interview Jan. 2025)

People seem nicer and more open here than in other parts of the city! Through my kids I am getting to know so many people. (Vici; resident, mother, designer; interview Dec. 2024)

I feel more comfortable here because it is more multicultural and I don't stand out. When I am in the city center it feels like there are only white and rich people. (Daphne; resident, mother, designer; workshop, Feb. 2025)

There seems to be not much exchange between groups or demographics, "Everybody does their own thing I guess" (Robin; activist & local business owner; interview Jan. 2025)

- 1. Town like feeling
- 2. Supportive Neighbors
- 3. Different Demographic needs & Presence
- 4. Social & Drug-use Problems

During the day most of the residents are working outside the neighborhood — the people I see passing by, during the day are pensioners or the economically struggling (Robin; activist & local business owner; interview Jan. 2025)

Individual Lifestyles & Well-Being The following texts present a condensed selection of comments to illustrate the diverse ways residents nourish their well-being.

I am a cycling and sharing economy activist and run a small local business. Besides riding my bike, I love to swim, sauna, take a bath or take a run to be in nature. I take fulfillment from my engaging in a non-profit organization. (Robin; activist & local business owner; Jan-Feb. 2025)

- 1. Physical Activity
- 2. Shifting-Down

Me and my wife moved here 4 years ago. I always need to have something to do. I play boules almost daily, head into the city to meet with friends and take long walks. My wife likes to meet friends in town and to go shopping. She doesn't have friends in the neighborhood. (Senior, resident in new development; interview Jan. 2025)

- 1. Physical Activity
- 2. Meeting Friends
- 3. Eating-Out & Shopping

I moved into the neighborhood a few years ago. I take joy from meaningful time spent with friends and neighbors. I love sharing meals and my Mediterranean diet keeps me healthy. I would like to spend more time in nature, but it requires deliberate effort. (Daphne; resident, mother, designer; Jan.-Feb 2025)

- 1. Meaningful connections
- 2. Healthy Diet

For a time in my life I struggled with addiction. During rehabilitation a local charity supported me which I am today an active part of. I take fulfillment and purpose from being there for, and helping others on their path to recovery. (Manager of local charity store; interview Feb. 2025)

- 1. Purpose from helping others

THE NEIGHBORHOOD & WELL-BEING

All following comments are paraphrased!

1 7 3

I don't spend much time being active outside or in nature because of the uncomfortable weather. (Daphne; questionnaire, Feb. 2025)

The Neighborhood is very car-centric, because of that it does not feel green and discourages being outside to relax or move. (Jakob; resident; workshop, Feb. 2025)

It is easy for people to feel alone, especially in the cold and dark winters, many people rely on their jobs to make friends, but for some it is difficult to make close connections. (Head of local charity store; interview Feb. 2025)

There are a lot of restaurants with unhealthy options. (Robin; questionnaire, Feb. 2025)

REFLECTION

Contrasting external stigmatization, the interviews highlight that the local community feels a strong sense of identity for the neighborhood. Despite environmental and safety concerns it is highly appreciated as a place to live by its residents. Kvillestaden's unique qualities, such as proximity to high-quality nature, caring and supportive residents, and streets and public spaces well-suited for promoting walkability, social connections and active movement, offer a promising foundation for establishing a well-being promoting neighborhood. Despite ongoing social change, my interviews suggest that there is potential even within the reality of gentrification. Many new residents, often part of the young creative class, have a neighborhood-centric perspective, valuing the existing spatial, social, and cultural qualities of the neighborhood. Quoting Curran and Hamilton on environmental gentrification, this reveals "the possibility of new positionalities and potentials for communities engaged in the work of environmental re-visioning. Gentrifiers with a city-centric perspective – who reside within the neighborhood for merely functional reasons – seem to remain a minority.

The previous analysis identified many promising areas of intervention, yet it also revealed conflicting ideas between residents on neighborhood improvements. For example, while some advocate for a more walkable and bike-friendly neighborhood, others stress the need for more parking spaces (City of Gothenburg, 2025). This suggests the need for incremental, transformative approaches that foster cultural change slowly and inclusively – through testing, evaluating, and adapting.

New Kville

12 1

The square was once considered unsafe, but since our group began playing boules there almost daily during COVID, it has become a more comfortable and welcoming space. (Local Seniors; conversation, Jan. 2025)

3

It is great, it is one of the favorite places for families and kids, especially during summer. (Vici, interview Dec. 2024)

7

Have you seen the marks on the trees, there live beavers. (Vici, interview Dec. 2024)

Backaplan

Hj. Brantingsplatsen

6

The new built area does not feel as part of the neighborhood, it is really closed off to the outside. (Vici, interview Dec. 2024)

7

I don't really spend time here because it is not really inviting. (Vici, interview Dec. 2024)

New Development

On Rehabilitation and Prevention

I think it is important to have people around you that are positive and good for you when you are starting to take back control of yourself again!

In order to improve the lives of people in the area a good mix is needed. It opens up new perspectives and creates new hopes and can nudge making small changes in one's way of living.

Give them "Love and kindness", "provide them security and trust"; make them feel welcome; allow people to develop a sense of belonging. (Manager & Head of local charity store; interview Feb. 2025)

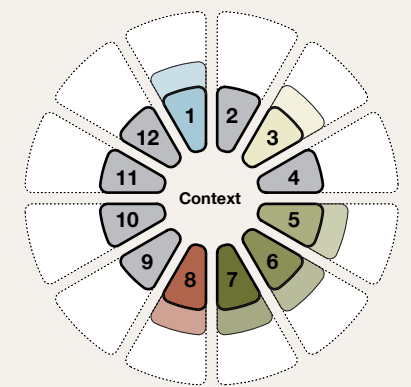


Fig. 24: Assessing how the existing neighborhood promotes well-being

IMPRESSIONS OF KEY TRANSECTS



Fig. 25: Photo taken on Tunnbindaregatan February 2025

Tunnbindaregatan
Tunnbindaregatan could be considered the “cozy street” of the neighborhood. Although it sees little car traffic, it is a frequently used connection for pedestrians, especially children, between Kvilletorget and Ramberget, where both the local school and preschool are located.



Fig. 26: Photo taken from Kvilletorget toward Tunnbindaregatan, February 2025

Neptungatan & Rörstrandsgatan
The neighborhood’s most avoided corridor is frequently flooded after heavy rainfalls and its deteriorating pedestrian pathway restricts walkability. The wooden fence toward Lundbyleden serves merely as a visual barrier – the traffic noise is intense.



Fig. 27+28: Photos of Neptungatan after heavier rain, February 2025



Fig 29: The final section Hisingsgatan toward the neighborhood park, February 2025

Hisingsgatan + Park
Hisingsgatan serves as a central entry and exit point for vehicles arriving from Vågmästareplatsen via Myntagatan. Its 12-meter width, sloped profile, and lack of safe pedestrian crossings encourage speeding, which presents a major safety concern, particularly for children, who are often hidden behind parked cars before crossing (Vici, Dec. 2024). As a result, the street and its traffic might contribute to a process of spatial and social division within the neighborhood.

The neighborhood park at the intersection of Hisingsgatan and Herkulesgatan is largely avoided by residents. In theory the park at the center of the neighborhood could meaningfully promote well-being – interviews with Dream Center highlighted its potential for group sports activities. In practice, however, several spatial features restrict this potential, leaving residents with feelings of spatial and social discomfort and vulnerability, especially at night. Several spatial factors limit this potential, including:

- High level of noise pollution from Lundbyleden, the adjacent highway
- Exposure to and enclosure by streets on three sides
- The park feels uninviting due to a lack of welcoming transitions from surrounding sidewalks

Streets During the Friday Prayer
Although the neighborhood’s streets remain relatively quiet for most of the week, the Friday prayer at noon in Gothenburg’s Moské, located at the southern end of the neighborhood, draws in worshipers from all over Gothenburg. Consequently, for a few hours every Friday most of the neighborhood’s streets will be fully occupied by parked cars.



Fig. 30: Hisingsgatan on a Friday during 12:00 pm, February 2025



Fig. 31: Southern access point to Ramberget, February 2025

Accessing The Natural Area

Walking up the steep path or stairs to enter the nearby natural area requires physical effort. On one hand this could be seen as beneficial to health by promoting physical movement, on the other it might discourage or inhibit some people from spending time in quality nature.

Both access points are similar in elevation, yet comments from residents highlight that only the sloped pathway encourages well-appreciated spontaneous interactions that emerge from a “shared struggle” (Vici, Dec. 2024; Daphne Feb. 2025). It seems that the stairs’ spatial characteristics inhibit similar spontaneous interactions.



Fig. 32: Northern access point to Ramberget, May 2025

Fig. 33: Mossy boulders on Lilla Ramberget, February 2025



Fig. 34: A small trail on Lilla Ramberget, February 2025

Lilla Ramberget

Unknown to anyone beyond Kville, Stora Ramberget’s smaller sister, Lilla Ramberget, provides a hidden natural paradise of moss-covered boulders, crooked trees, and views over the city. Although affected by noise pollution, it still offers high ecological value and opportunities for people to shift down and reconnect with nature.

Fig. 35: A hidden view over Gothenburg from Lilla Ramberget, May 2025



Chapter 3:
REIMAGINING KVILLESTADEN

Phase 3: Program Imagination

PROGRAM IDEAS FOR FLOURISHING

Building on the previously identified local constraints and potentials, this double page presents a broad range of potential intervention programs. Each program is presented as a persona card, which were discussed during the program evaluation workshop (p. 36 f).

Disclaimer

All personas used in this stakeholder game are fictional. They are inspired by findings from my research, analysis, interviews, and design imagination.

As these personas are primarily used to illustrate potential interventions in the neighborhood, they may contain stereotypes and lack the differentiation needed to fully capture the complexity and challenges of real people's daily lives.

The Ecologist 1

"Urbanization is threatening the lives and stability of our ecosystems. Cities need to be able to provide better conditions for non-human habitat."

Demand:

Propose actions, how residents and housing owners could **provide better conditions for other species?**

My dream is to have a library... with all the things you need. A library with the tools you need, but also with people with expertise that can help you out. (Robin; interview, Jan. 2025)

The Sharing Advocate

"Sharing is caring! One person's trash is another one's treasure! It is difficult to live more sustainably, being alone - it is much easier, doing so in a group and even more so if the local environment encourages such ways of living!"

Request:

How could the community give a 2nd life to unused & discarded things, to improve the neighborhoods circularity?

The Naturalist 1

"Spending time in and connecting with natural environments, by enjoying the views, touches, smells and sounds of nature can be highly beneficial for our mental health. Living in the city makes it difficult for many to access an environment that allows them to slow down and disconnect from the rush of our daily lives.

Request:

Propose the location of **a trail that highlights sensory experiences and connects to the natural environment**

The Water Manager

"Due to climate change, the risk of extreme rainfall is increasing. Kvillestaden is especially threatened! We need to slow down and capture the water before it reaches the lowest parts of the neighborhood!"

Demand:

Select streets and **open spaces that will be transformed to enable storm-water capturing.**

I would like to see more gardening, it is simple, but I think it helps connecting people (Robin; interview, Jan. 2025)

The Gardener 1

"I believe gardening can transform our neighborhood into a vibrant, green space. By creating communal gardening areas, we can grow seasonal and healthy produce, while promoting healthier lifestyles, and strengthen our community bonds."

Demand:

Propose how and where **gardening within the neighborhood** could be implemented.

Removing parking will disadvantage residents and small businesses in the area... better parking facilities are needed. (Comment on Placetoplan.se; City of Gothenburg, retrieved 2025)

Gothenburg's Moské

"We are worried that limiting the car accessibility and parking spaces, will make it more difficult for our mosque's members to go to the Friday prayer..."

Demand:

How could we **continue to enable the accessibility of the mosque** for its members?

The Community Chef

"The daily choices of food can have great impact on your health and well-being. Social cooking can be a great way to expand your perspectives while making new connections! It could help people to be more conscious of their dietary choices and therefore their well-being

Demand:

Should the neighborhood provide space for a **community kitchen?**



Fig. 36: Conceptual photo collage, imagining Tunnbindaregatan as a green-blue corridor, using Adobe Photoshop's Generative Fill (2025)

Family Parent 1

"I wish my children could use the streets to play and meet with other kids. Because of the cars this feels unsafe. Do all streets really have to be used by cars around here?"

Demand:

Decide on **streets that will have inhibited car accessibility!**

The streets should have a similar function of connecting neighbors. (Robin; interview, Jan. 2025)

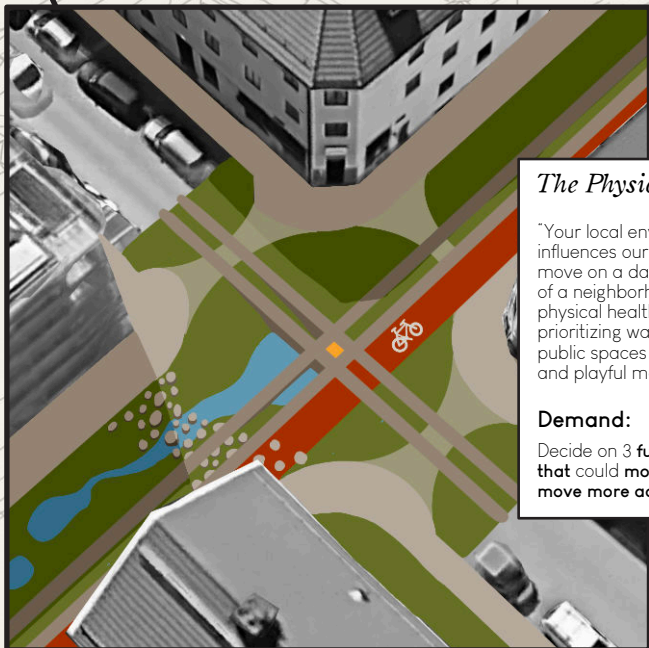


Fig. 38: A sketch imagining Tunnbindaregatan as a green blue active movement corridor - incorporating recreational, ecological, and stormwater management functions, while enabling emergency vehicle accessibility.

The Ecologist 2

"A crucial requirement for providing better conditions for other species, is to enable the migration between different types of habitat."

Demand:

The river edges of Kvillebacken need to be connected to the natural habitat of Ramberget by **implementing a green corridor**. Select a street that could be transformed to provide rich and diverse vegetation!



Fig. 37: Early imagination of river edges edges with increased ecological and recreational value. A collage using Adobe Generative Fill (2025).

It can be quite difficult for old people to get together places to meet and gather are missing. (Senior; new-resident; interview Jan. 2025)

The Community Builder

"Public spaces often look so boring and the same everywhere. Shouldn't we bring more color and playfulness into the places we pass on a daily basis and shouldn't we let the locals decide how these places should look & feel like?"

Demand:

Select or propose **interventions that bring life into public spaces** and strengthen a sense of local identity.

"more activity such as a playground or basketball/football area."; "Improve opportunities to socialize"; "More benches, sun loungers"; improve the outdoor gym. (Collection of comments on Placetoplan.se; City of Gothenburg, retrieved 2025)

The Physiotherapist 1

"Your local environment highly influences our decisions in how you move on a daily basis. Thus the design of a neighborhood direct affects the physical health of its resident. Beyond prioritizing walk ability, streets and public spaces should encourage active and playful movement - for all ages!"

Demand:

Decide on **3 functions** along used routes that could **motivate** you and others to **move more actively** on a daily basis?

The Retired Factory Worker

"I have lived here and worked in the local factories for most of my life. Gothenburg's prosperity originates from it's industrial past and the shoulders of industrial workers like me. New development somehow seems to try hiding or erasing the traces of our past to be seen as modern and sustainable"

Discuss:

Can public space and we, as a community, **honor the working-class heritage** that has defined our neighborhood for so long?

The Rehabilitating Craftsman

"After fighting a substance use disorder, I am trying to get back to a normal life. I am going through rehabilitation, but still have difficulty feeling as part of the neighborhood. I am quite capable working with wood and steel and would enjoy offering a helping hand or teaching you guys some tricks!"

Demand:

Discuss the potential for a new **community up-cycling workshop?**

"When I was younger there used to be plenty of youth clubs everywhere" their decrease is taking a toll on young people and society and increasing the likelihood they will end up in gangs or with drug problems. (Head of local charity store; interview Feb. 2025)

Phase 4: Program Evaluation

THE WORKSHOP

The workshop marked the final participatory exploration of this thesis project. Four participants joined the evening: Vici, a locally practicing child culture designer and mother, who also generously offered her studio as the venue; Daphne, a mother, practicing artist, and friend of Vici, originally from Greece but residing in Gothenburg for several years; Robin, one of the founders of Collaborative Economy Gothenburg, who runs a local co-working space and cafe, and is also a taxi driver and cycling activist; and Jacob, a friend of Robin, who has lived in Kvillestaden since 2019.

The four participants showed a strong sense of care for and identity with the neighborhood. Yet, due to their similar demographic background, the workshop's outcomes should be reflected critically, as vital voices were missing in the discussions. Nonetheless, each participant was able to bring a unique and valuable perspective to the table, leading differentiated discussions that helped ground and reframe this project's proposed programs.

The workshop was structured into three phases, an icebreaker, the questionnaire (individual exercise), and the persona mapping game (group exercise). More information and reflection on the methods applied can be found in the appendix.

The Persona Mapping Game

Despite the format's limitations – which meant it was not feasible to discuss all programs and their interplay – the evening provided valuable insights that helped inform the definition of three larger design goals and programs for neighborhood intervention.

→Check the appendix from p. 21 for detailed notes of the discussions!

Fig. 39: Photo of the table during the workshop, February 2025



General Process

(5 min per Card)

1st Why did you chose the card (individual) ?

2nd Discuss the questions on the back of the card.

3rd Always consider, how could this be related to other implemented actions?

4th Implement your decisions by filling out an action card and/ or draw on the map.

→ Next Persona Card

KEY OUTCOMES

1 – Tunnbindaregatan, a Playful, Green Community Corridor

In the discussion of cards such as *The Gardener*, *The Family Parent* or *The Ecologist 2* participants advocated for repurposing Tunnbindaregatan as a safe pedestrian street that incorporates play, active movement, gardening, and other recreational uses.

This change should entail both the restriction of access for cars and bicycles – Jacob reflected that any presence of cars might lead to people in streets feeling vulnerable or not entirely welcome. A similar notion was shared by Vici, a local mother, in relation to play and bicycle traffic. Given the street's current low levels of car traffic and parking use, and the well-developed cycling infrastructure on Myntgatan and Herkulesgatan the group agreed that a pedestrian centered transformation should be feasible.

Some of the workshop's most insightful ideas emerged during discussions on how such a transformation could be implemented. Vici raised personal concerns that large-scale changes might lead to increasing housing insecurity for renters. As a potential solution, the group envisioned a more temporary and less polished approach to intervention – one that relies on the ongoing engagement of residents rather than being permanently imposed from the outside. New usages for streets could be explored through short-term testing – Daphne referenced an initiative where parents regularly blocked a street for a few hours so children could play. "It doesn't necessarily need to be permanent – it can be a project for one summer. And then it ends, and through that, new projects come up" (Daphne, Feb. 2025). Vici added that, for now, the only thing the city needed to do was to temporarily remove car access to a section of the street, to let residents explore how to use it. "People could just bring things like furniture from the yards into the street" (Vici, Feb. 2025). Further suggestions were to let people place planting boxes and flower pots.

Aside from enabling residents to shape the use of streets – and despite the concern of increasing rents – the group also recognized the value in more long term interventions by the city. These included the implementation of ecological corridors through trees and other diverse vegetation, or the promotion of active movement through soft surfaces or playful, alternative paths. If the latter would be designed along the main walking routes without posing a detour, participants reflected, they could be an effective tool to also nudge adults to move more actively through the neighborhood (e.g. jumping, balancing). Robin proposed an integrative solution in which one half of a street's section is transformed to provide new ecological and recreational functions, while the other remains asphalted, to be used for adaptable programs shaped by the community.

Finally, participants acknowledged that while removing the accessibility for cars permanently would be beneficial, they emphasized it might require long-term compensatory measures, such as new parking options at the southern edge of the neighborhood, or the promotion of car sharing and pooling.

Fig. 40: Reference – a linear, active movement playground in Utby, Gothenburg. What if it would be applied along the pedestrian streets? Photo taken, May 2025.





Fig. 41: Photo taken during the workshop, February 2025

2 – Promoting Exposure to Nature

Discussions about the participants' daily lives in relation to physical activity and exposure to natural environments revealed an interesting issue: the steep incline leading to the valued natural area of Lilla Ramberget does indeed act as a barrier to some. Despite the area's proximity, accessing it requires deliberate effort, which prevents it from becoming part of residents' daily routines.

However, for those with an external reason to go — such as mothers walking their children to school — the walk, and the resulting time spent in nature, is experienced as a valuable contribution to their daily well-being. Vici, for instance, shared that although the walk home from school only takes seven minutes, it often turns into an hour-long journey, as she and her children enjoy exploring and playing in nature along the way. This highlights not only the need for interventions that reduce access barriers and create new incentives to visit Lilla Ramberget more frequently, but also the importance of establishing high-quality natural spaces and encouraging walkability within the neighborhood itself.

On Community Kitchens – Potentials & Constraints

The idea of a community kitchen resonated strongly with Daphne, who has several years of experience participating in such initiatives — first in Greece during the economic crisis, and later in London. She reflected: "I like living here, but sometimes I get quite frustrated because it is hard to meet new people, and people are quite introverted."

Community kitchens, she explained, help people get to know each other in a more organic and gentle way — the process of cooking together allows people to bond over shared activity and doing something meaningful for the community. Moreover, such programs can become an initiator for further involvement and engagement in community initiatives. The group adds, such a place should be visible and perceived as neutral ground. However, despite the potentials of community meal sharing, sustaining the space's function over time and maintaining an inclusive atmosphere presents a complex challenge — see appendix p. 26 for further reflections.

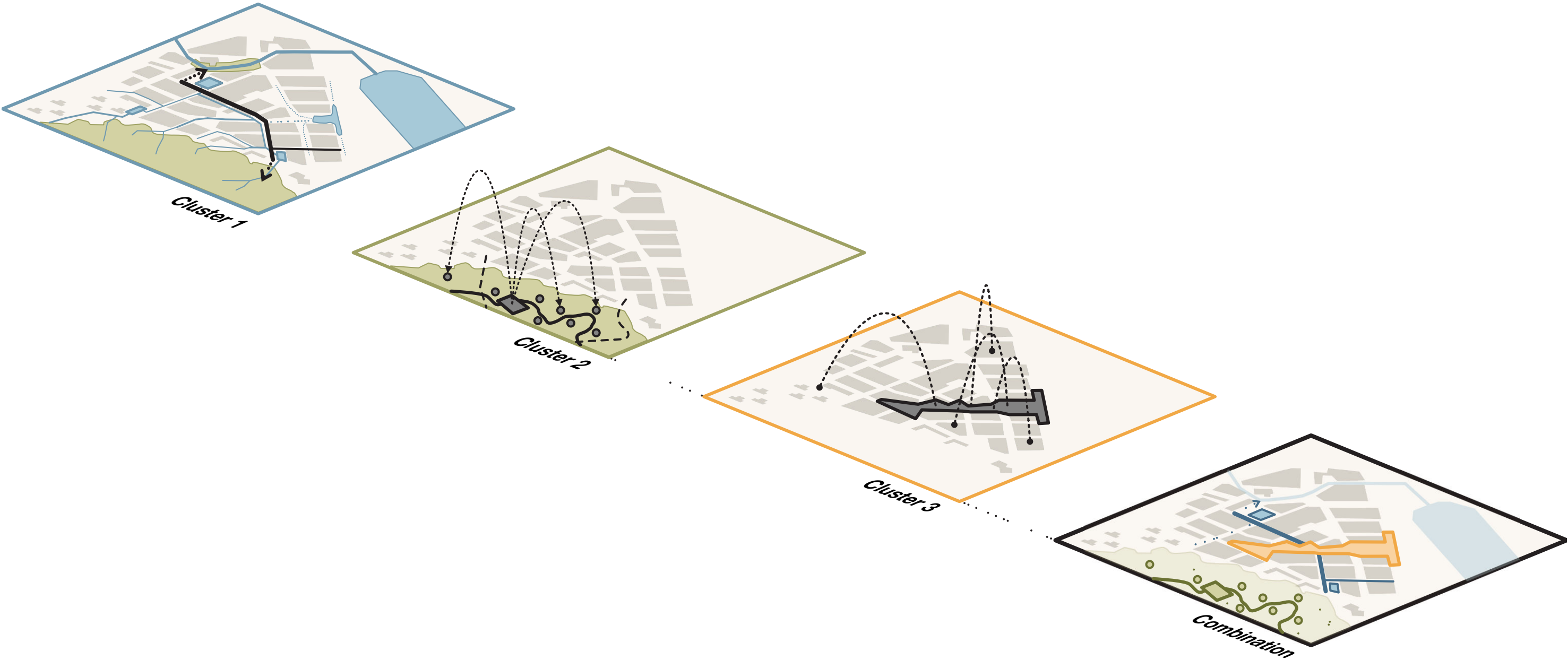
3 – Critical Reflection – Relocating the Perceived Heart of the Community

During the discussions, Robin noted that most residents rarely explore or spend time in areas of the neighborhood located south of their own homes. As people naturally accumulate toward the major public transport hubs, Kvilletorget tends to be perceived as the center of the neighborhood, despite its location at the northernmost edge. This perceived centrality is further reinforced through interventions by the city. For example, the Christmas lights are only installed along the northern stretch of Herkulesgatan, even though my analysis indicates that feelings of vulnerability and discomfort are particularly common in the southern areas, especially at night. This pattern was further reflected by the workshop's participants when asked to suggest locations for interventions or programs.

However, a crucial point was made during the discussion of community kitchens, when participants emphasized the need for a safe, accessible, and neutral space to enable meaningful community exchange and cohesion. I believe that Kvilletorget as the nexus opening toward the city at the edge of the neighborhood, might fall short of providing such a neutral space. It might be crucial ask: **Should planning efforts in Kvillestaden continue encourage urban centralization, thus potentially reinforcing local spatial segregation? Or should they actively aim to counteract, by implementing new programs and environmental transformation in the neighborhood's actual center.** By promoting equitable accessibility to both sides of the neighborhood — nudging the more privileged residents to go against their natural flow — planners could realize a more qualitative and welcoming meeting place for everyone in the local community.

CONCLUSION

The discussions highlighted the local interest in establishing community shaped and green pedestrian neighborhood streets. They point to a need for targeted interventions to encourage more frequent visits to the nearby natural area. Finally, they revealed a potential need to actively counteract existing patterns of centrality in order to mitigate spatial segregation and promote community cohesion.



3 CLUSTERS OF INTERVENTION

The three previously identified goals built the foundation for the project’s next phase “program clustering”. By proposing an integrative strategy within a key transect that combines spatial changes, programs and activities, Clusters address well-being meaningfully and holistically and act as catalysts for a flourishing neighborhood. However, the presented clusters won’t be able to respond to all identified needs or opportunities – targeted intervention or even the imagination of new clusters might be necessary.

Fig. 42: Graphic showing the 3 clusters & their synergic combination

CLUSTER 1

Cluster 1 fosters neighborhood walkability through the community-led transformation of low frequented neighborhood streets into pedestrian corridors that promote active movement. Additionally, they could establish vital ecological connections between Ramberget and Kvillebäcken, as well as mitigating pluvial flood risk through managing storm-water.

Pedestrian Corridors

The previous assessment highlighted the special potential of Tunnbindaregatan to become a pedestrian-only corridor. Participants' feedback highlighted the need for community-led, early stage testing. Additionally prioritizing pedestrians on Jägaregatan could establish better connections to the more vulnerable areas in the south. Finally, in case Neptungsgatan and Rörstrandsgatan receive a functional noise barrier, enhancing their pedestrian movement could be explored.

Connect Natural Ecosystems

To foster more biodiverse and resilient urban ecosystems Tunnbindaregatan could further incorporate ecological functions to connect the ecosystem of Ramberget and Kvillebäcken. To enhance the value of this connection for non-human species, it is essential to improve ecological conditions along the river edges of Kvillebäcken. Maximizing non-human migration and habitat, however, might require limiting the intensity to which the corridor is used by residents. Alternatively to establishing a second connection between the ecosystems on Neptungsgatan and Rörstrandsgatan that prioritizes non-humans could be explored in the future (for a conceptual proposal, see appendix p. 6).

Prevent Pluvial Flood

Along multiple flood streams, run-off water accumulates toward the lowest point of the neighborhood, the central neighborhood park. To address this severe pluvial flooding risk, measures must be taken further up, along these streams to capture, clean and remediate stormwater (a). These interventions would not only serve as first line of defense, but also offer new recreational and ecological values for the neighborhood. Any remaining spill over would then be collected and redistributed through Tunnbindaregatan (b) to the floodable recreational square at Kvilletorget (c). Testing this conceptual flood prevention strategy with the tool Scalgo.com shows significant reductions of floodwater accumulation* (2025). Finally, by employing ecological design principles, the rainwater within the neighborhood could become a driver for a changing landscape of play and recreation.

Synergic Programs:

Community testing; active movement trail; water play; meeting and resting places; light & art installations; street gallery for working-class-heritage...

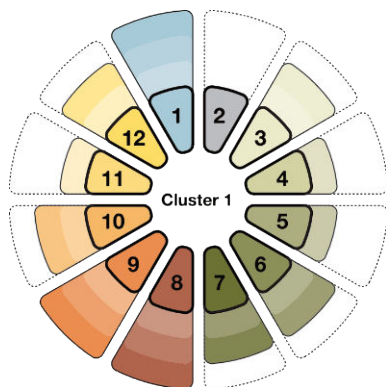


Fig. 45: Projecting the well-being impact of Cluster 1

Fig 43: 100 year rain scenario, visualized in Scalgo (2025) and aligned to predictions of Vatten I Staden (City of Gothenburg, 2015)

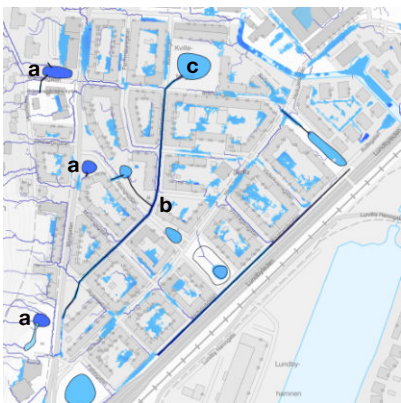
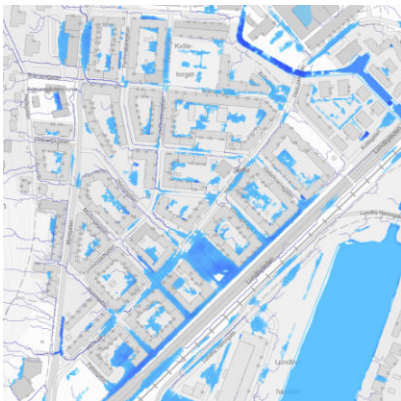
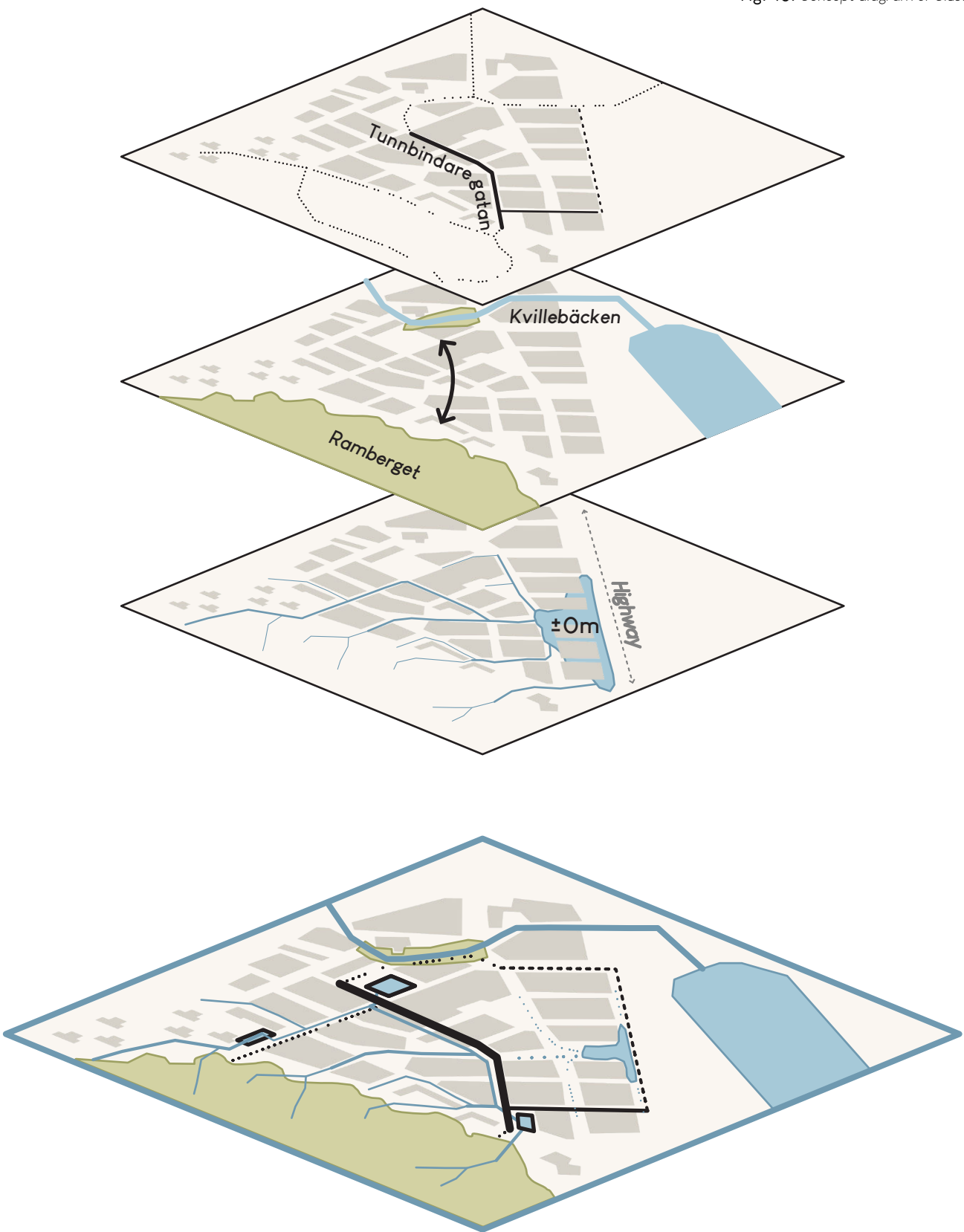


Fig 44: Testing my conceptual stormwater management strategy in a 100 year rain, using Scalgo's (2025) terrain modification toolbox. Results show a significantly reduced risk of flooding.

*The assumed stormwater capturing capacity of each intervention is likely overestimated, potentially exceeding what is feasible in practice.

Fig. 46: Concept diagram of Cluster 1



A GREEN-BLUE PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR

CLUSTER 2

Lilla Ramberget could play a vital role in promoting well-being for its adjacent neighborhoods. Through community-built sensory installations the second cluster aims to foster more frequent and conscious visits to the nearby natural area – nourishing a sense of connectedness to nature and encouraging moments of peace, reflection, and calm.

Installations Along a Trail

Leaving the asphalted path to follow a narrow trail reveals the mountains beautiful natural environment. By implementing small scale interventions alongside it, the environment’s health-promoting qualities – such as its calm, beauty, biodiversity and the stunning views over the city – could be emphasized. These interventions could be platforms, shelters, and sensory experiences. Their design and implementation should be informed by the involvement of the local community to foster a culture and identity among the residents that is rooted in experiencing and nourishing the well-being of the local natural environment.

Activate Ramberget’s Access Points

To encourage more residents to visit the natural area, it could be beneficial to improve the accessibility and quality of its two access points, for example by providing more opportunities to rest, interact and enjoy of surroundings along the way. Interventions that attract curiosity or incorporate play and sport could not only further increase frequency of visits but also amplify the physical health benefits of vertical movement in daily environments, as suggested in the studies on *Longevity Blue Zones*.

New Usages for the Derelict Pitch

Located centrally on Lilla Ramberget the approx. 50m x 35m large derelict gravel pitch remains unused – new usages should be explored. It could support the design and construction of community built spatial interventions along the trail and within the neighborhood as well as encourage neighborhood-scale circular economy, by potentially housing an upcycling, recycling and creative workshop for the surrounding neighborhoods, using five currently seemingly unused containers at the end of Keillerspark. Alternatively or complementary, it could incorporate a bicycle pump track together with an after-school youth center to foster physical activity as well as social safety and connections.

Synergic Programs:

Sensory experiences – drawing attention to touching, feeling, seeing, hearing, smelling of the natural elements; platforms and shelters to find rest throughout the seasons; signs for guided mindfulness exercises and education...

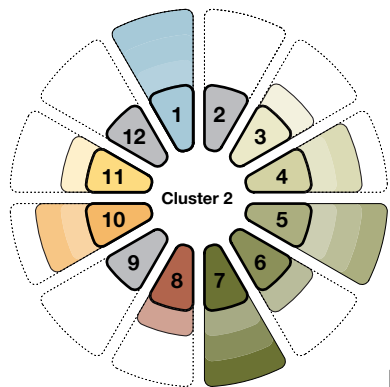
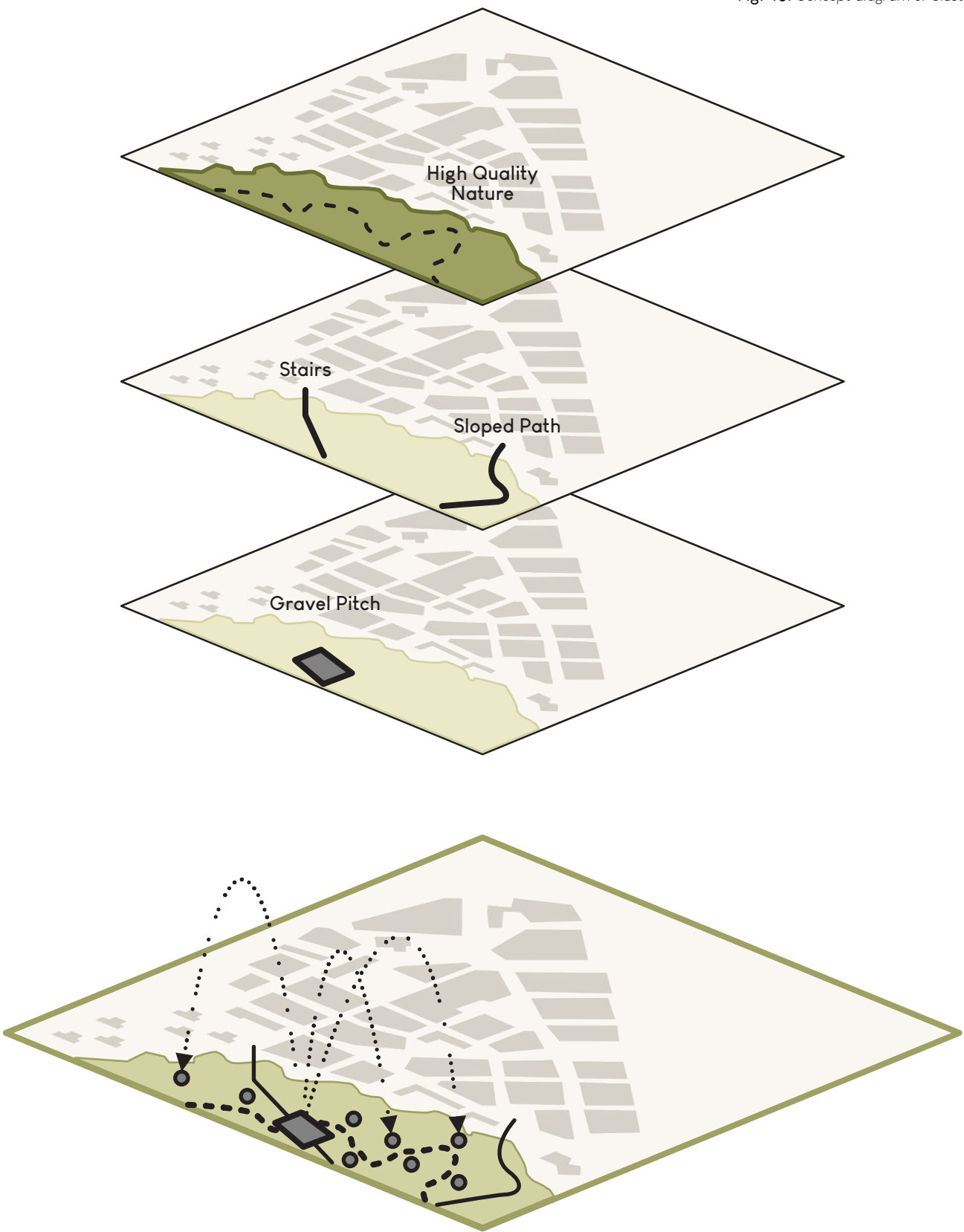


Fig. 47: Projecting the well-being impact of Cluster 2

Fig. 48: Concept diagram of Cluster 2



A COMMUNITY-BUILT SENSORY TRAIL

CLUSTER 3

Cluster 3 aims to establish a new heart for the community at the center of the neighborhood by transforming the 12m wide street Hisingsgatan into a narrower and safer one-way street – opening up new possibilities of shared activities, exchange and recreation.

Promoting Social Cohesion

The once heavily stigmatized neighborhood has become increasingly attractive as a place to live for students and young families. For now gentrification has led to a welcomed diverse mix of demographic backgrounds. However, new developments and environmental conditions are increasingly leading to the homogenization of smaller areas within the neighborhood – thus contributing to local social segregation and potentially the displacement of existing culture and identities. Because it will be difficult to prevent this dynamic, it is crucial for planners to instead promote opportunities for exchange and developing a shared sense of identities between the neighborhood’s gentrifiers, long-term residents and vulnerable groups.

From Separation to Connection

By spatially dividing the neighborhood into two parts, Hisingsgatan is a key factor for local segregation. The wide street and its slope encourage speeding thus creating a safety barrier between north and south. Transforming it into a one-way street, or perhaps one day removing car access entirely, enables the implementation of rich vegetation, places to meet and for shared activities and safer and more welcoming pedestrian pathways. Consequently, this would turn the inhibitor of community cohesion and well-being into a major promoter.

Mitigating Perceived Vulnerability

To address current safety concerns the transformation of Hisingsgatan should be paired with the revitalization of the neighborhood park. Furthermore, it is crucial to establish safe, seamless, and welcoming connections for pedestrians between the two.

Synergic Programs:

The transformation enables a multitude of new functions and activities for the community, becoming a catalyst for community cohesion and a flourishing neighborhood. These could be: group sports activities; places for social gathering; a sharing library; community gardening; community cooking...

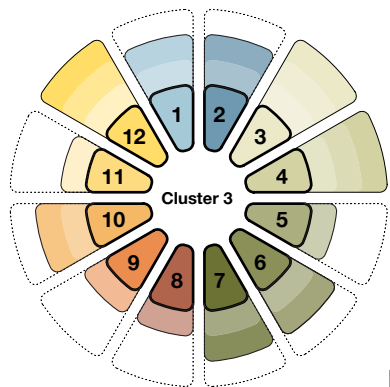
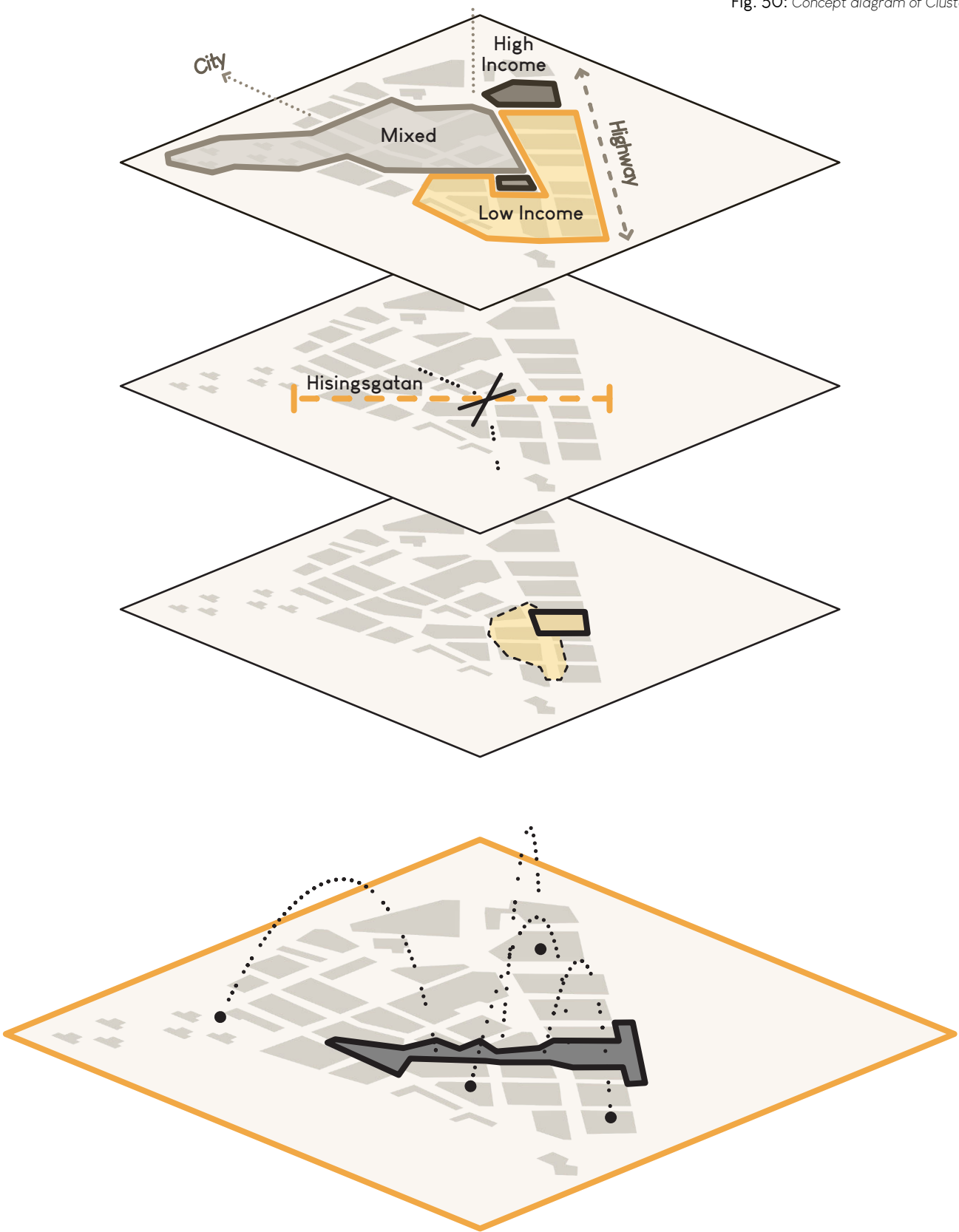


Fig. 49: Projecting the well-being impact of Cluster 3

Fig. 50: Concept diagram of Cluster 3



A NEW COMMUNAL HEART

Phase 6: Imagining a Flourishing Future

A Flourishing Kvillestaden

Building on previous work, this plan presents a speculative, yet grounded vision of how the integration of the clusters – together with other vital context-based interventions – could lead to a flourishing neighborhood. The plan envisions a network of safe, connected pedestrian pathways that offer a diverse range of experiences: spaces for social interaction, movement, self-expression, and relaxation. It demonstrates how walkability and equitable access to well-being-promoting environments can be enabled and distributed across the neighborhood. For a more detailed presentation of this plans elements, check page 1-6 of the appendix.

Fig 51: Conceptual vision of a flourishing Kvillestaden after heavy rain

While it would be desirable, a transformation of that scale today is likely to result in environmental gentrification.

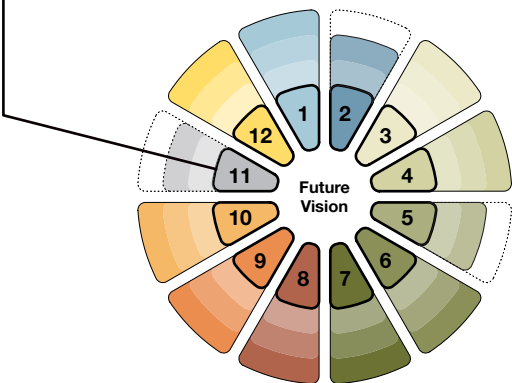
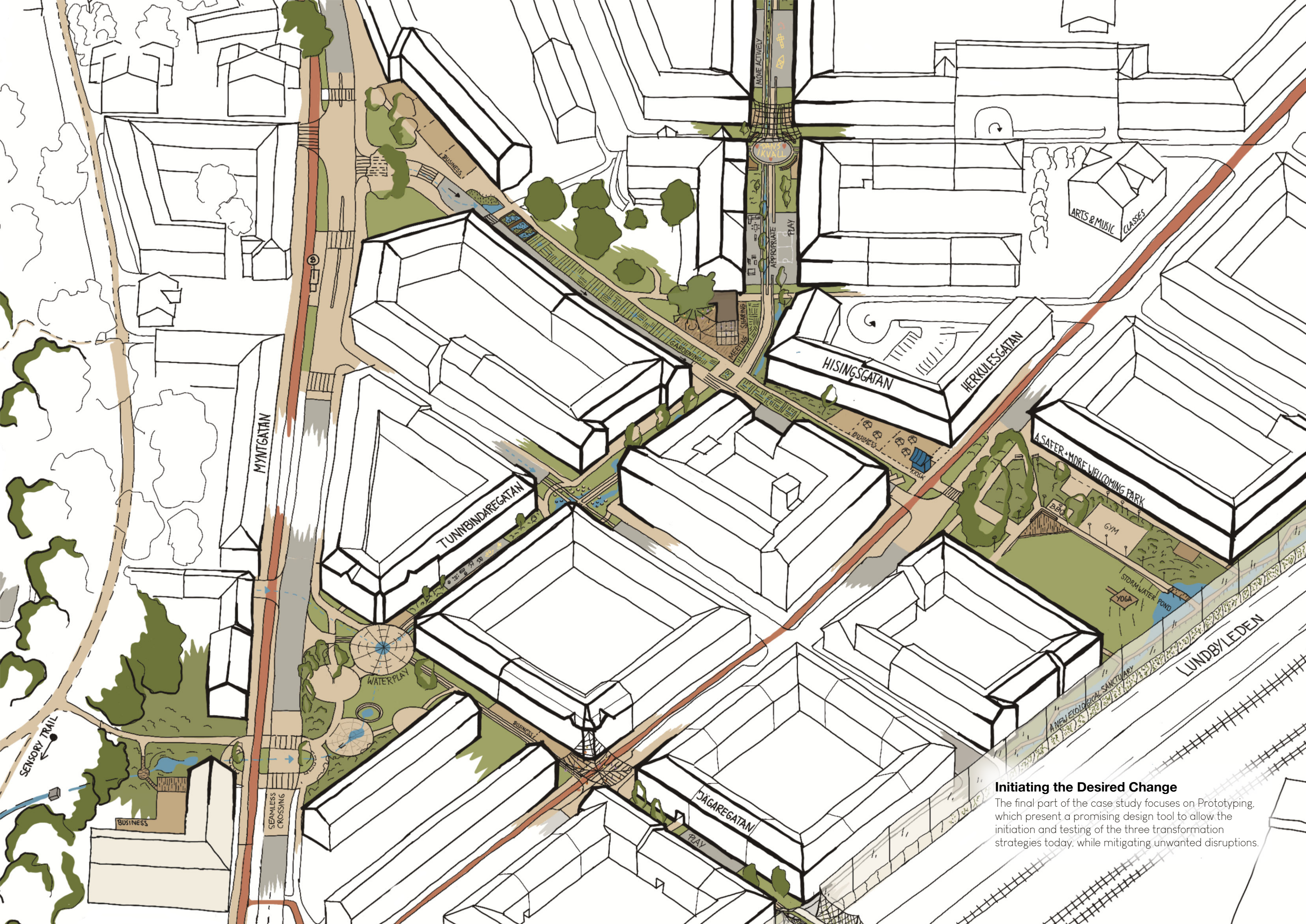


Fig. 52: Projecting well-being impact of the future vision





Initiating the Desired Change

The final part of the case study focuses on Prototyping, which present a promising design tool to allow the initiation and testing of the three transformation strategies today, while mitigating unwanted disruptions.

Phase 7: Prototyping

PROTOTYPING CLUSTER 1

Removing car access on a large scale is likely to significantly disrupt the current neighborhood system. This Prototype proposes a 3-year program, for citizen-led testing of local pedestrian streets supported by the city. This process facilitates change in more tailored and comfortable way and helps generate new valuable insights to inform long-term interventions.

The prototype suggests simple and non-permanent tools, such as traffic cones for zoning, chalk illustrations for imagining ideas on a 1:1 scale, or movable planters or benches to temporarily reclaim space for public use. This allows residents to explore and discuss questions such as “which street is suited and to what extent; in what ways could we use this space; how is it received by different demographics; how should we adapt?”

Pallets could play a special role in early-stage testing, as they are readily available, movable, and easily modified to accommodate various functions. Further, by enabling individuals to shape and use them to their own liking, the process could promote well-being through self-expression and a sense of purpose and spatial agency. To achieving long-term goals, ensuring inclusivity and diversity will be indispensable from the start, as they nourish cohesion, a shared sense of identity and incremental cultural change for the community at large. The initially limited pallets for example should be allocated equitably from the beginning to cultivate broader support and desire to participate among groups who might otherwise be inclined to resist, like potentially long-term residents or

car owners. Consequently, it is vital that the initiators also work toward identifying and reaching out to the voices which are underrepresented — support or guidance from the city or social workers would be beneficial.

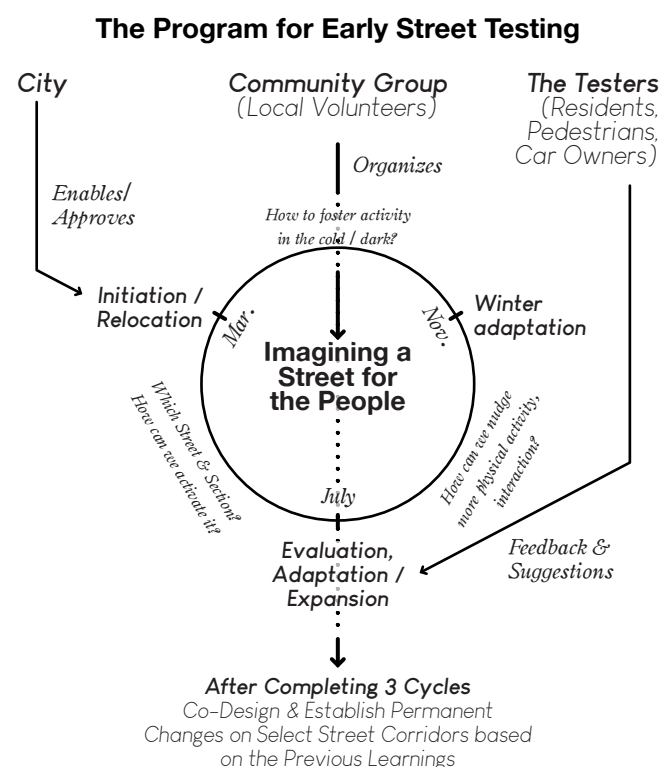


Fig. 53: Projecting the well-being impact of Prototype 1

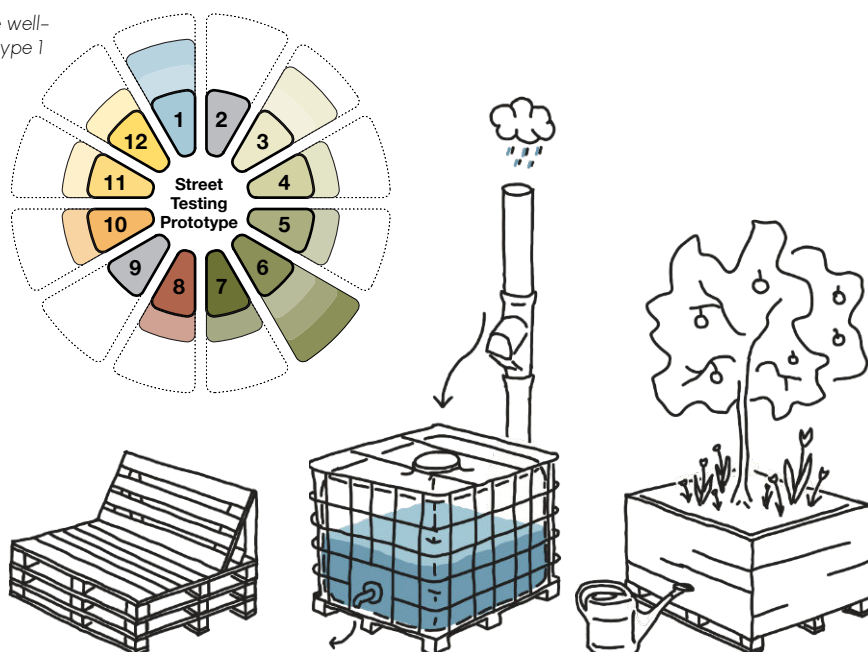


Fig 54: Simple tools for temporary testing

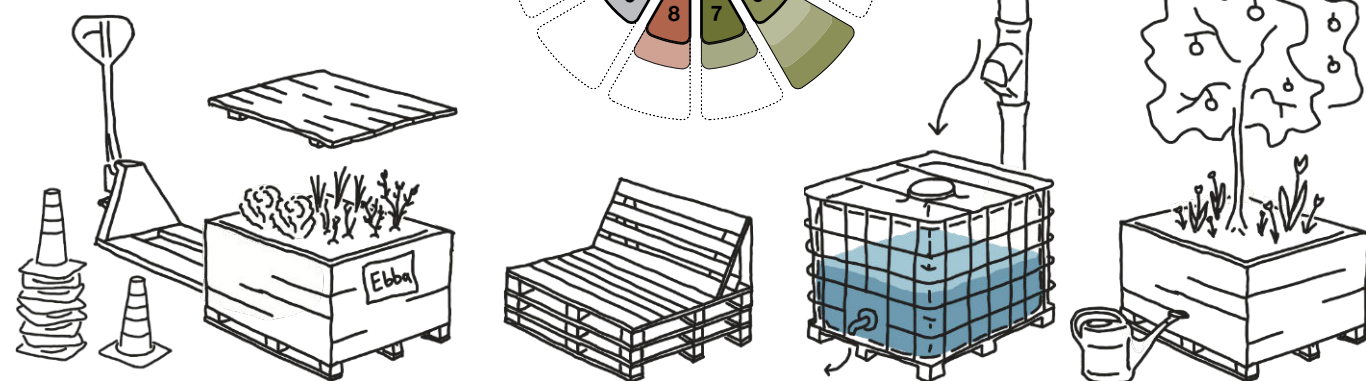


Fig 55: *Imagining early citizen-led testing of Tunnbindaregatan*



PROTOTYPING CLUSTER 2

Prototype two further explores how to encourage people to spend more time in natural environments and nourish connectedness to nature. It proposes recurring community design and upcycling workshops to initiate the implementation of community designed, and built installations along Lilla Ramberget's new sensory trail. The presented spatial interventions illustrate how to bring attention to the beauty of the existing natural environment or stimulate sensory experiences, and moments of calm – yet they are merely intended to serve as inspiration.

The co-design and co-build workshops provide purposeful and educational activities and promote nature connectedness, social exchange and a shared identity rooted in the local nature. As an environment of calm is both vital for human health, as well as for local wildlife, new functions should promote quiet and individual activity, rather than active social functions. To further minimize negative impacts on the local ecosystem, the structures should be designed to leave no trace, using upcycled natural materials that are assembled in an easily demountable or removable way. Finally, it is important to collaborate periodically with ecologists – both to guide the design and assess the impacts of the intervention, and to evaluate whether further expansion is feasible or if compensatory measures are needed that protect or strengthen the local habitat.

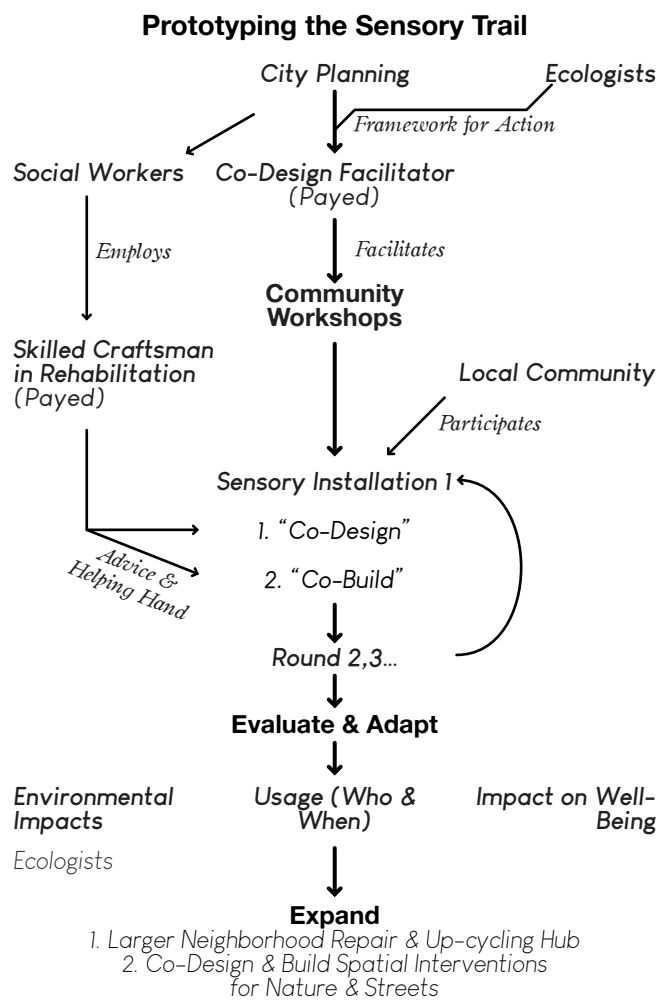


Fig 56: Sketch of a walk along the sensory trail

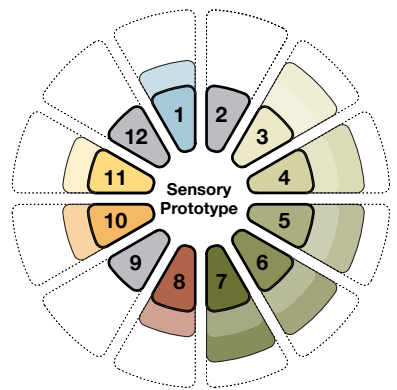
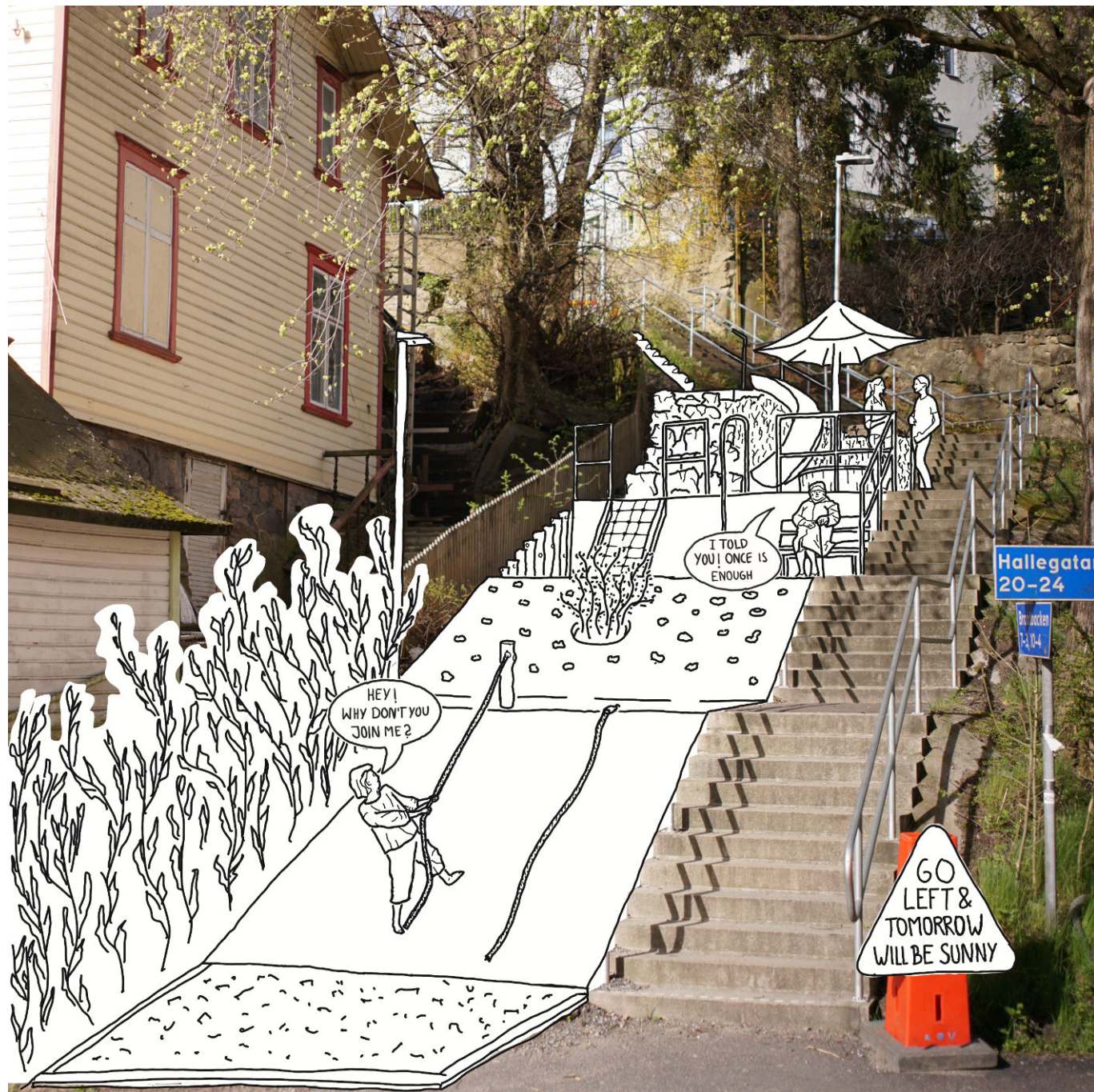


Fig. 57: Projecting the well-being impact of Prototype 2

Fig 58: Imagining a resting platform below a tree, framed by moss covered boulders





Vitalizing Lilla Ramberget's Access Points

In addition to establishing installations along the sensory trail it could be valuable to vitalize the northern access point to Lilla Ramberget. The sketch above proposes a playful and active alternative route up the small mountain by transforming the unused space along the existing staircase. This intervention would promote physical activity through play, foster social interaction, and invite more residents to visit the natural area.

Fig. 59: Imagining a vertical playground, with opportunities to meet and rest alongside the existing stairs to Lilla Ramberget



Fig. 60: Imagining a small weather and sound shelter that enhances visual and audible connection to nature – nourishing calm, reflection or spirituality.

PROTOTYPING CLUSTER 3

Currently, safety concerns and perceived discomfort limit the community driven testing of new usages for Hisingsgatan. Nonetheless, the initiation of the cluster to establish a new heart for community interaction and exchange could be initiated in other ways.

Required Action by the City

To alleviate these safety issues, the city needs to implement structural changes early on that initiate the re-prioritization of the street from a central access and exit point for motorized traffic to a slowed-down and one-way street, or even one day a car-free neighborhood park.

Vital actions could be:

- 1. Adapt the intersection Myntgatan x Herkulesgatan to allow cars to turn left (check out the sketch in appendix p. 6)
- 2. Create spatial and visual connections between Hisingsgatan and the adjacent neighborhood park (see "a future vision" p.67)

Safety through Activity – The Boules Effect

But could the issues of perceived safety be addressed today, from within the community to not only relying on external attention and intervention by the city?

My interviews revealed the potential of social activities as a simple but effective action to change the local perception of a place. According to a local group of retirees, people used to avoid Kvilleorget because it felt unsafe. However, since they began playing boules in the square almost daily in 2020, this perception has shifted. A local police officer once told them that their regular presence had contributed to a change in the square's atmosphere (Local senior, conversation, Jan. 2025). Today, the square is a well-appreciated place for young families to meet and interact (Vici, interview, Dec. 2024).

Maybe local organizations or individuals could replicate the phenomenon by deliberately organizing activities such as social gatherings or sports classes in areas perceived as less safe, counteracting ongoing safety concerns in the neighborhood today. The local park for example is well-suited for such events, as highlighted by the interview with the local charity Dream Center, yet they currently lack trained personnel to continue hosting fitness activities in it.

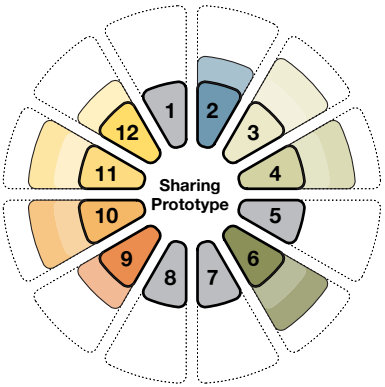
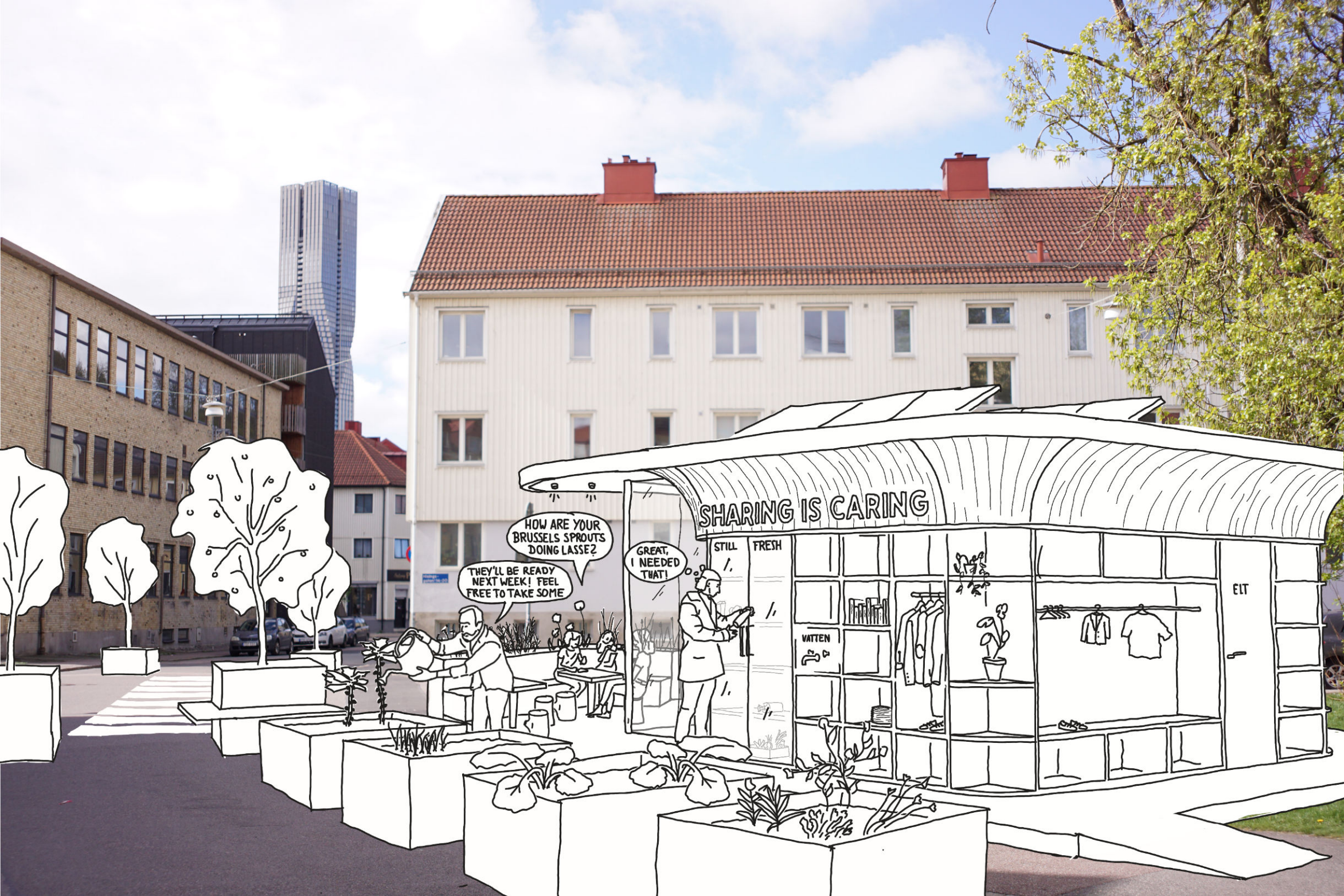


Fig. 62: Projecting the well-being impact of Prototype 3

A Central Point to Interact & Share

The illustration above, proposes the activation of the unused open space at the intersection of Tunnbindaregatan and Hisingsgatan at the center point of the neighborhood. By enveloping the existing electrical building in a facade of outward facing shelves, the structure nudges locals to connect through sharing and giving new life to unused items, rescued produce, or unwanted house plants.

Initiation

A preliminary DIY intervention could already be initiated today by residents, using unused and upcycled furniture to build a makeshift sharing wall. However,

employing architectural design could help foster a community-wide cultural shift toward collaborative exchange, by providing a stage to elevate the items unwanted by some but of value to others.

Elaboration

Local actors or the city could explore potentials of collaboration with the architecture department of Chalmers to have a student design competition in which residents are part of the jury, which could be followed up by a co-building program between students, local volunteers and hired local craftsmen.

Chapter 5:
DISCUSSION

Final Reflections

THE THESIS’S PROCESS

Fostering well-being while navigating through health-, climate-, social- and other crises, might be the critical challenge for today's societies and our profession.

While I initially imagined to focus on the design of a concrete proposal for the holistic pluvial flood adaptation of Kvillestaden, I quickly realized that guaranteeing socially sensitive solutions that realize meaningful systemic impacts required my work to shift toward an emphasis on research and process.

Combining topics as broad as well-being, neighborhood-scale transformation, and participatory design proved overwhelmingly ambitious at times. Nonetheless, the prospect of finding leads to help me and potentially others address the wicked problem facing our profession continued to motivate me throughout.

Reflecting on the outcomes of this semester’s work, I can indeed see that both my theoretical as well as my case study explorations revealed promising pathways, processes, approaches, and interventions useful for spatial planning. However, they also highlighted the profession’s limits and the need for greater interdisciplinary and inter-scalar collaboration to avoid potential pitfalls and overcome key barriers to promoting well-being holistically for both humans and the natural world.

PROJECT WORK IN KVILLESTADEN

By progressing through various stages of approximation, this case study aimed to maximize the positive and synergic impacts of the final proposals. However, the scale and scope of this thesis were clear limiting factors in how deeply each stage could be explored. Consequently, the quality of methods used, as well as the validity of the outcomes proposed must be critically evaluated by both local residents and planners.

This project should therefore be rather understood and used as a potential source of inspiration for future engagements toward realizing a future of flourishing in the neighborhood, as these require a more formalized and expanded reiteration of this project’s process and suggestions.

Nonetheless, the proposals for initiating and testing the clusters reveal opportunities for citizens to take action today by implementing small but meaningful spatial interventions. These could serve as the seeds for broader lifestyle shifts and citizen-led local environmental adaptations, or as ways for residents to express their ideas and make their voices heard by the city. Such interventions might include bottom-up actions such as reimagining street using using temporary street markings, engaging in guerrilla gardening, or placing temporary installations in underused public spaces (e.g. a sharing wall, fenced-off patches of wildflowers and grasses to prevent mowing, or movable structures on pallets such as benches or flower / gardening beds).

If community networks begin to emerge, it is essential that their efforts to reimagine and adapt public spaces are grounded in inclusion and altruism. This requires deliberate efforts in involving vulnerable and often unheard voices and fostering a welcoming culture that serves the entire neighborhood – not just its most favored individuals and places. These efforts however should not fall solely on citizens, but it requires the support and collaboration with other social actors and institutions.

Inspiration from Cagliari

Despite a highly different climate, the green streets in the old town of the south sardinian city Cagliari reveal how continuous citizen-led street greening can become an integral part of a streets atmosphere and identity.



Fig 63: Photo I’ve taken in May 2022 in Cagliari, Sardinia, IT.

A Potential Research Topic:
How can public space promote well-being during darkness, cold, wind or rain

Potential Further Research:
Can the proposed framework & design strategies be applied to other urban contexts?

Finally, it would have been valuable for this thesis to include a final round of co-evaluation – gathering feedback and suggestions on the proposals from residents and organizations, as well as city planners, social workers, ecologists and water managers. Although the thesis has concluded without that, I will gladly be available for any questions or discussions with local actors and professionals engaged in Kvillestaden or involved in planning for healthier neighborhoods.

Next Steps for Research and Practice

Guaranteeing the synergic and holistic impact of transformations requires further efforts made by planners, community-makers or other students to understand the needs and hopes of the diverse backgrounds present in the neighborhood. Additionally, specific approaches and interventions are needed that aim to mitigate health inequalities, it is essential to develop deeper knowledge of the local forces that constrain vulnerable groups, as well as the possibilities for improving their well-being.

A key learning of this thesis is that maximizing the exposure to healthy environments is essential for promoting stable, long-term well-being. However, in Nordic climates, strategies for promoting well-being that focus solely on greening and walkability are insufficient – especially during the autumn and winter months, when limited daylight and harsh weather discourage activity outside and working residents are only present during dark hours. Dedicated research and design work is needed to explore how public spaces, and nearby nature can continue to promote well-being under conditions of darkness, cold, wind, and rain.

Concerning Local City Planning

To fulfill its responsibility in preventative health management, the City of Gothenburg must adopt further policies, planning approaches and professional roles that promote conditions for flourishing for all its citizens. Within the neighborhood of Kvillestaden, this case study has explored how that responsibility could be realized through concrete planning approaches, processes, and spatial and programmatic interventions. Notable long-term proposals include refunctioning Tunnbindaregatan into a green pedestrian street that encourages active movement while also supporting necessary pluvial flood management; transforming Hisingsgatan into a central neighborhood street park that fosters community exchange and cohesion; and enhancing calm and connectedness to nature by establishing sensory trails throughout Lilla Ramberget’s high-quality natural environments.

While these proposals respond directly to Kvillestaden’s local context, the underlying methods and design strategies are not limited to this neighborhood. With minor adaptation, they can be applied to similar urban typologies in Gothenburg and beyond. Neighborhoods such as Gamlestaden, Bagaregården, Källtorp, and Majorna – each shaped by Albert Lilienberg’s urban design – share potentials for neighborhood walkability and greening based on community-driven placemaking, supported by the city.

ABOUT THE PROFESSION AT LARGE

While continuous community-led placemaking promises holistic well-being improvements, the reality of today’s high-stress, fast paced work culture means many residents may feel too exhausted or overwhelmed to participate in local initiatives, which can be both time and energy demanding. Without supportive structures, such initiatives risk participant fatigue and may become exclusionary or even intensify social tension — particularly between more privileged, often newer residents and more vulnerable or long-term residents. Planners and other professionals therefore could play a key role in facilitating processes that ensure they are inclusive, accessible and responsive to diverse community needs.

This thesis highlights the need for new roles in spatial planning, which promote holistic and long-lasting well-being (“flourishing”) in everyday environments. It suggests modes of working which are rooted in sustained engagement withing a neighborhood’s spatial, social, economic and cultural context, and aim to identify and realize synergetic potentials between locally emerging (endogenic) and external (exogenic) processes. Moreover, it highlights the need for cities and municipalities to create frameworks that enable and support citizen-led environmental initiatives and empower communities to actively participate in democratic placemaking.

Exploring how Gothenburg and other cities or municipalities could feasibly implement such processes and approaches, necessitates further work by scholars and governments. A promising reference could be Chile’s ‘Quiero Mi Barrio’ program, in which municipalities deploy multidisciplinary teams within vulnerable neighborhoods to establish and manage community-scale governance bodies — Neighbourhood Development Councils (NDCs) (Barrio, 2006). These councils, grounded in local democratic processes, promote environmental improvements and social integration, while collaborating closely with the regional Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

Potentials and Limits of the Proposed Framework

Today, planners and governments are challenged to simultaneously create healthier, more sustainable, resilient and equitable environments. Yet, translating those broad goals into concrete action often results in either paralysis or shortsighted intervention. Defining well-being as ‘flourishing’ offers a single integrated planning pathway that encompasses all these aspects. The proposed framework brings attention to dimensions of well-being that tend to be overlooked in the field of spatial planning. It supports the evaluation of both local constraints and potentials, as well as the systemic impacts of interventions on community and individual well-being. The compass defines 11 non-hierarchical transformation goals that guide planners in identifying effective strategies with holistic, positive outcomes. Its accompanying principles promote the application of approaches and methods that not only assure that promising ideas are translated into real and equitable improvements but also minimize the risk of unintended consequences.

That said, despite having iterated the framework several times throughout the process, it remains conceptual and should be critically reflected. The development of a framework was not an initial goal of this thesis. Rather, it emerged from the exploratory process and responded to the need to highlight synergetic relationships and ground seemingly disconnected proposals. Consequently, it lacks depth and clarity in how it could feasibly be applied in the profession. Further, as the dimensions and principles identified to be relevant for realizing long-term well-being within neighborhoods are broad, they leave a lot of room for subjective interpretation. In general, the attempt to categorize aspects of well-being for neighborhood transformation revealed its inherent ambiguity: for instance, should “connectedness

with nature”, as emphasized by the Mental Health Foundation, become its own dimension, or would it rather fit within “shifting down”, “ecosystem health” or even “purpose”? While the best way to categorize remains yet to be found, the current framework already helps revealing something important: there is more to preventative health planning than creating walkable, pollution free and green neighborhoods.

The Limits to Planning

Achieving environmental improvements without perpetuating gentrification revealed itself as only possible to some extent. The most impactful actions for promoting well-being — an effective sound barrier along Lundbylenden, implementing green blue storm-water management strategies, and transforming streets and courtyards into biodiverse recreational spaces — are in practice most likely going to increase existential stresses for those people whose well-being is already diminished by environmental conditions. further fueling health inequality and leading to displacement.

To ensure that environmental adaptation will result in meaningful health improvements for existing communities — especially for those demographics, whose health is currently most restricted environmental conditions — complementary political, and legislative efforts will be essential. Without affordable housing policies and milieu protection measures, publicly funded transformation might not lead to the expected savings in the public health sector but rather to increasing profits for housing owners and private investors.

Finally, contemporary top-down development falls short in addressing the complex challenges of our time, which necessitate extensive, highly adaptive, and context sensitive changes of the built environment. Consequently, cities must strengthen their citizens’ and neighborhood communities’ capacity to actively participate in processes of environmental adaptation. Beyond new roles and approaches in the field of planning, enhancing the adaptability and capacity for action of communities to shape their local environment, might also require new policies regarding income and work time, as well as dedicated institutional engagement to promote human functioning through education, physical and mental healthcare, and culture.

Potential Further Research:
How can cities learn and apply strategies from Chile’s “Quiero Mi Barrio” program?

Potential Further Research:
What policies could Gothenburg employ to support equitable & impactful holistic health promotion planning?

CONCLUSION

In creating healthier environments for everyone, we are faced with a wicked problem. Fostering long-lasting health improvements demands planners to take on an active role in promoting conditions for human flourishing. This necessitates a holistic perspective to the adaptation planning of daily environments which addresses the multitude of interconnected social and environmental challenges. Through research and design, this thesis revealed that there are indeed promising approaches and interventions that promote this holistic definition of well-being while being sensitive to existing and vulnerable populations. My case study demonstrates that meaningful, equitable, and holistic improvements to well-being can already be explored and implemented within today's societal context, through low-cost, low-risk, and non-disruptive approaches.

The method of prototyping revealed this thesis's key learning: In the goal of reaching neighborhood flourishing, prototypical programs of citizen-led and temporary environmental adaptation are not just a means to mitigate socio-economic disruptions, but they could be critical for promoting currently overlooked dimensions of well-being. Promoting the psychological well-being in urban environments to the fullest may require the empowerment of its citizens to exercise agency over their surroundings. People do not have to be victims of their environment if they are supported to shape and adapt it.

Consequently, realizing well-being should not be understood as a goal to be reached through spatial transformation, but rather as a process to be maintained. It is the responsibility of governments, cities, and planners to free citizens from environmental dependency by moving away from externally controlling human environments toward nudging, enabling, and nourishing local communities and individuals to practice the continuous adaptations of their local environments.

Achieving a state of flourishing at a 'grand' scale, however, requires a paradigm shift beyond the field of spatial planning and -design. In the words of Sarah Dooling on the challenge of realizing needed environmental transformations equitably: "It is a problem that points to the need to build diverse community economies in place, an effort that requires expansive vision and courage, and a refusal to endow capitalism with authority to resist change to its dominating place in society." (Curran & Hamilton, 2018, p.57).

While we are currently struggling to address the infinite complexity of today's interconnected challenges by which societies are becoming increasingly fragmented and paralyzed, the concept and terminology of flourishing as a underlying direction for sustainable development could help to reunify by painting a universal, graspable, and hopeful picture of the future:

Ecologically and socially sustainable societies are the ones that do not restrict human potentials or well-being but actually promote them to their fullest!

A Final Note...

This thesis process showed me that there are many ways we can begin planting the seeds of positive change in Kvillestaden, but also beyond. I want to encourage the residents of the neighborhood (and all of us!): Let's dare to imagine and discuss how our local environments could better support our own and others' well-being. Use the simple tools for testing I've proposed — or explore your own ideas. What matters most is simply getting started!

I believe the community of Kvillestaden has a unique potential to grow into an even more vibrant and active community — one that not only resists growing social and cultural pressures, but pushes toward sensitive, locally driven environmental change.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 6: Adaption of the diagram “The Design Problem”. Papanek, V. J. (1972). *Design for the real world*. Thames And Hudson.

Fig. 36: Photomontage using AI generated assests, Adobe Photoshop Generative Fill [Prompt: “replace the asphalt of the street with luscious meadows and small ponds. Show a wooden path leads throughout the meadow.”]. Feb. 2025.

Fig. 37: Photomontage using AI generated assests, Adobe Photoshop Generative Fill [Prompt 1: “remove the existing pathway by an elevated wooden path”; Prompt 2: “expand the river edges and add luscious reeds”] Feb. 2025.

Fig. 38: Background Image from Google LLC. (n.d.). [Aerial image of the crossing of Tunnbindaregatan and Madängsgatan]. Retrieved January 31, 2025, from <https://earth.google.com/>

Fig. 43: Flash flood simulation in Kvillestaden for a 5cm precipitation event, using: Scalgo Live. (2025). <https://scalgo.com/live/>

Fig. 43: Flash flood simulation in Kvillestaden with modified terrain for a 5cm precipitation event, using: Scalgo Live. (2025). <https://scalgo.com/live/>

All other images and graphic material have been created by the author.

Appendix:

A Flourishing Kvillestaden: Up Close

Kvillestaden After Rain	1
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A Flourishing Kvillestaden Up Close

KVILLESTADEN AFTER RAIN



Fig: Transforming an existing parking lot in the north west in to a biodiverse storm-water pond

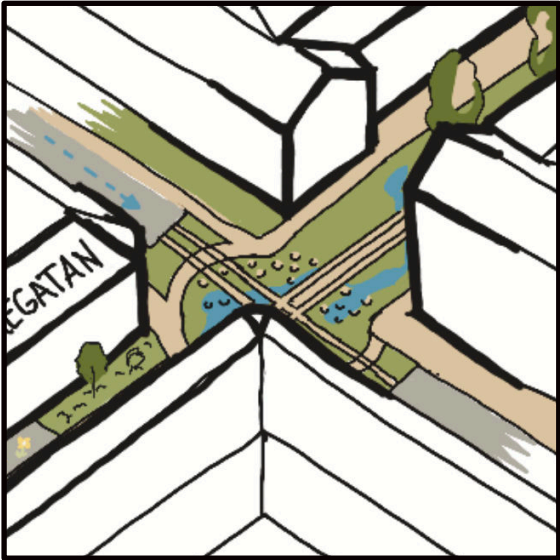


Fig: Rainwater transforms & nourishes the recreational corridor

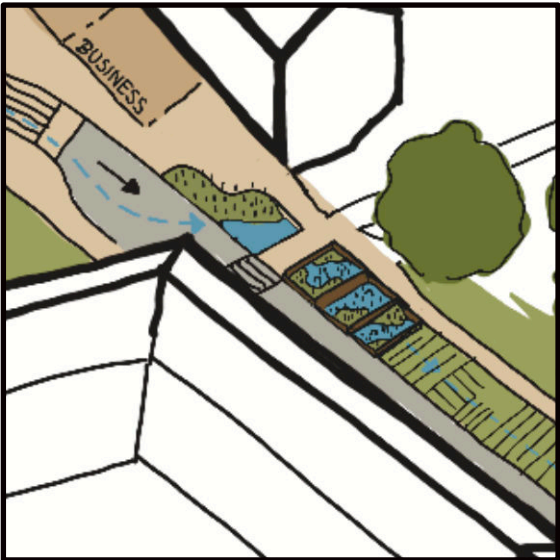


Fig: Cleaned & captured stormwater feeds the community garden



Fig: Using clean rainwater from Lilla Ramberget for water play



SAFE & SEAMLESS CROSSINGS

Fig: The community's new heart, at the intersection of Tunnbindaregatan and Hisingsgatan. Residents participate in sharing, community cooking, gardening, and recurring events.

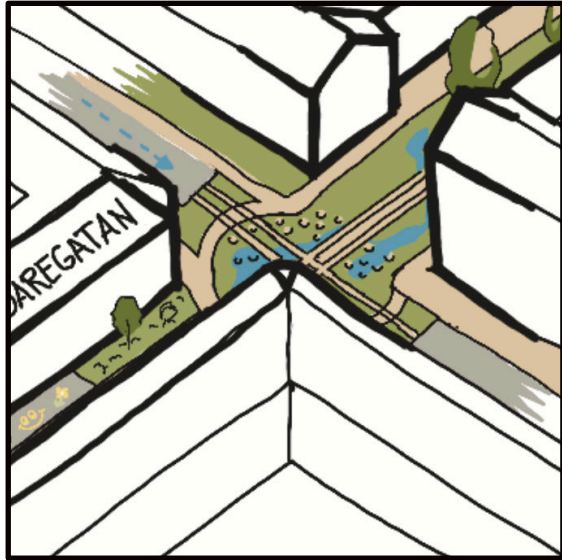
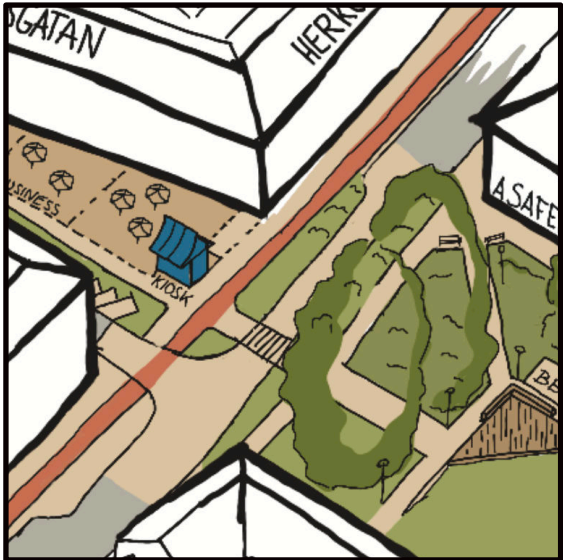
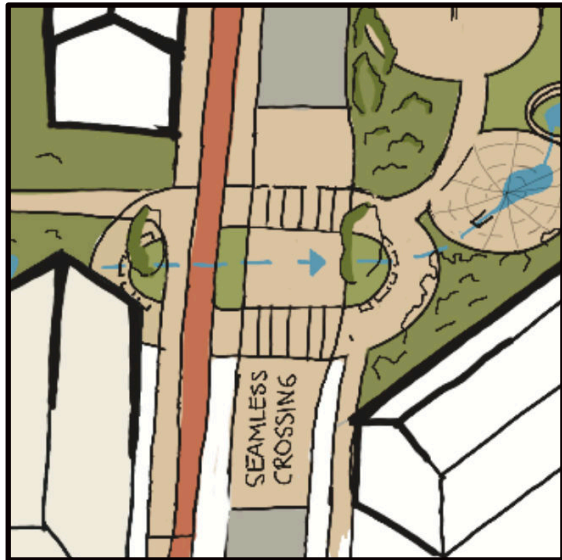
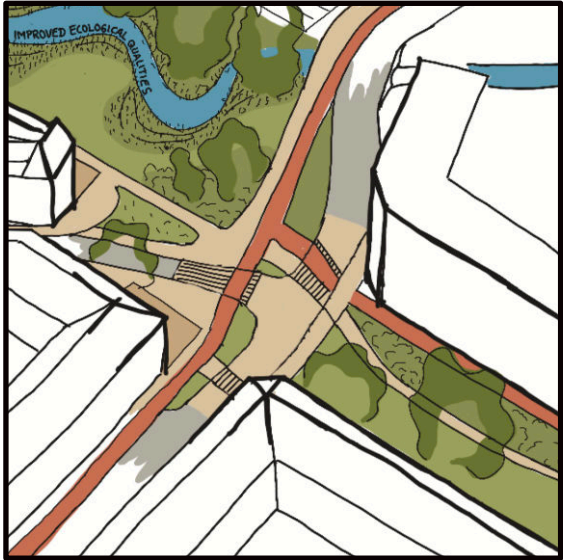
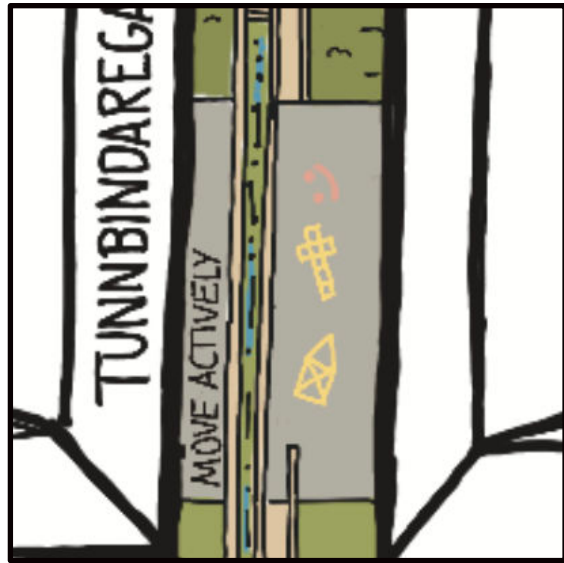


Fig: Nudging daily active movement by making the comfortable option the longest and the more physical one the shortest.





PEDESTRIAN CORRIDORS

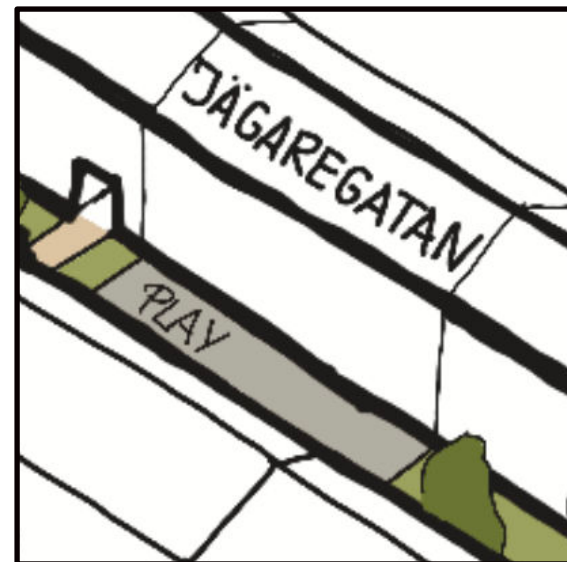
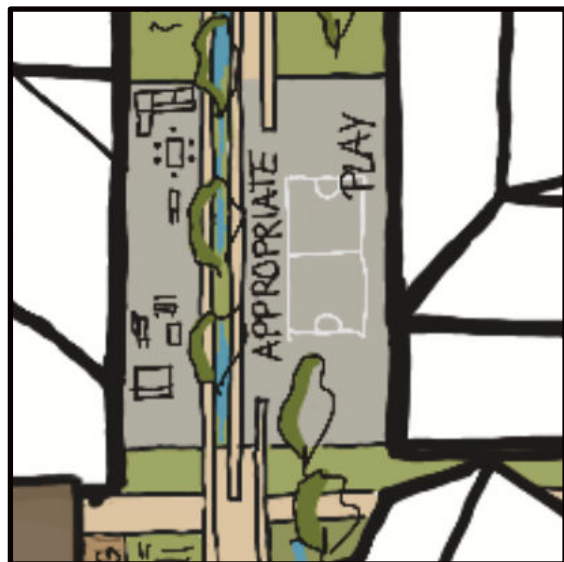
Fig: A mix of surfaces, allows diverse and qualitative new functions – leaving the asphalt in some areas to create safe and continuously changing zones of play or community appropriation. The along the gravel walking path, there are structures for alternative & physically active modes of movement.



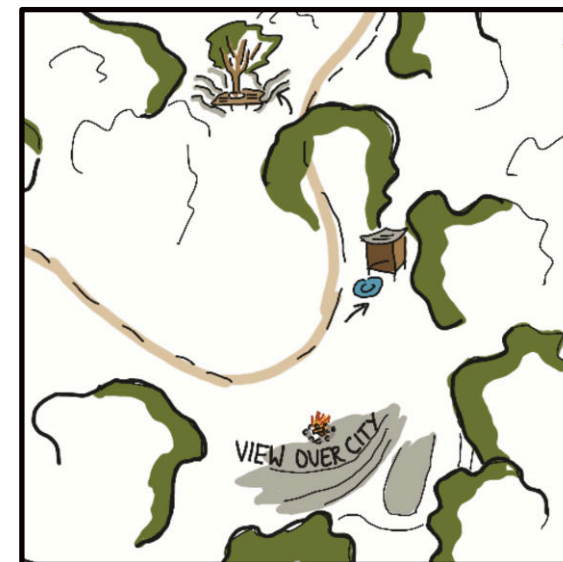
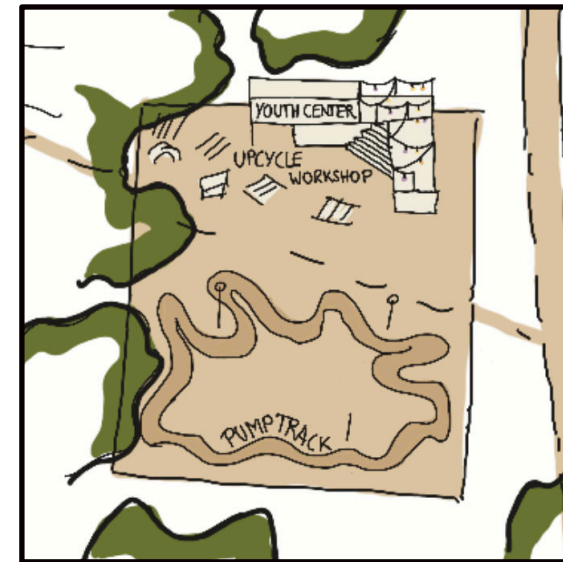
Fig: Reference – a linear, active movement playground in Utby, Gothenburg. What if it would be applied along the pedestrian streets? Photo taken, May 2025.



Fig: Reimagining the already cozy crossing Väderkvarnsgatan and Tunnbindaregatan as a warm meeting point and occasional events. Inspired by the “Dans på Bränno” incentivizing residents of all age to meet and dance could establish a new local tradition which could nourish social connection, physical activity and purpose. Dancing also provides warmth, making it suitable even in colder seasons.



LILLA RAMBERGET



DENSIFICATION

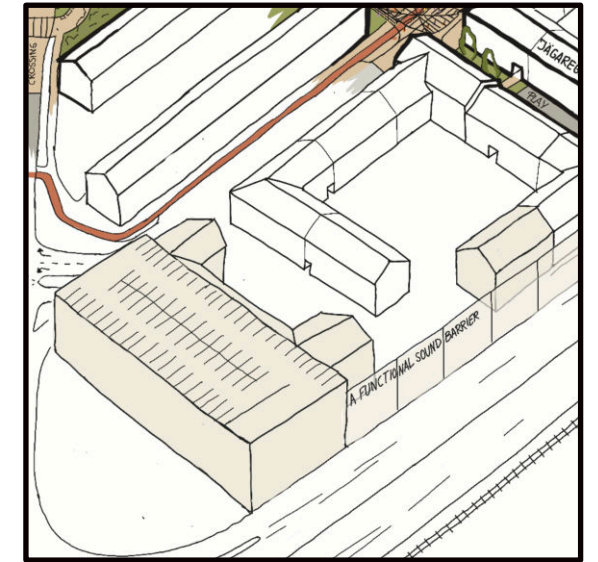


Fig: The removal of parking spaces in blue-green corridors might necessitate a parking building as a compensation. Locating it at the southern end of the neighborhood, it could help sheltering from traffic noise, and keeping car traffic within the neighborhood to a minimum. Combining it with new housing toward the north east, it could become invisible from within the neighborhood.

Fig: Imagining a new future for the derelict gravel pitch on Lilla Ramberget. Combining a youth center with, a pumptrack and community up-cycling workshop could foster positive social connection, physical activity, and purposeful engagement, not only for the local youth.

Fig: The new parking garage could allow for the transformation of the parking lot adjacent to Ramberget's southern access point. The proposed building integrates seamlessly within the neighborhood's typical perimeter block structure. By closing the block only toward the south, it invites the natural area to seamlessly transition into the neighborhood, while sheltering it from the noise of the highway.



CO-HABITATION & ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS

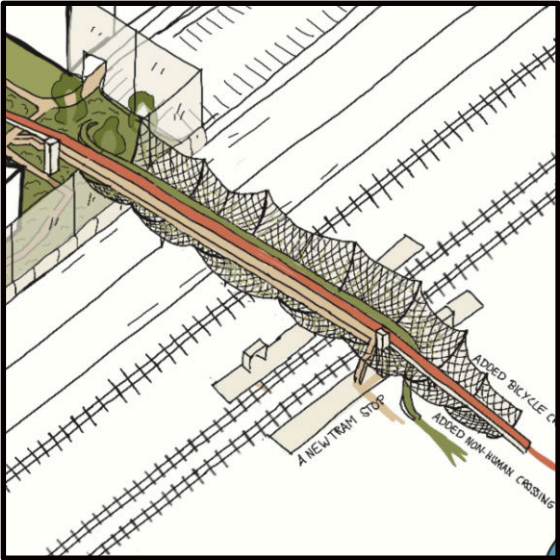
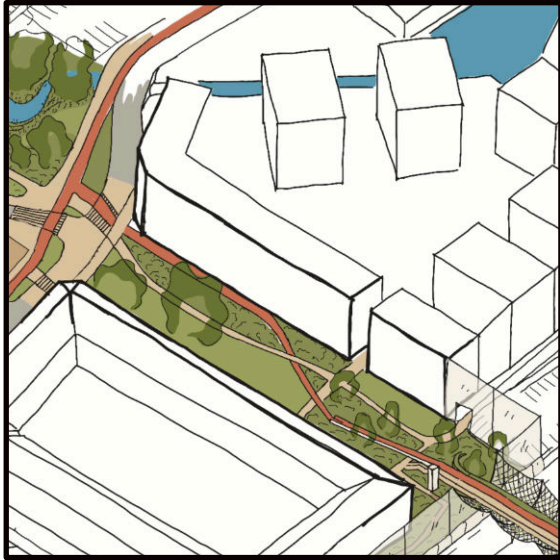


Fig: Inspired by B. Björksell's concept "Connecting Kvillebäcken" (2023) <https://mparcaud.wixsite.com/website-1/kvilleb%C3%A4cken>

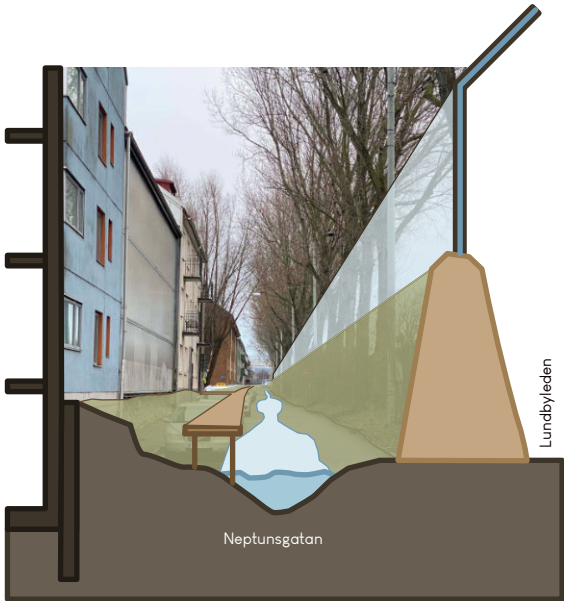
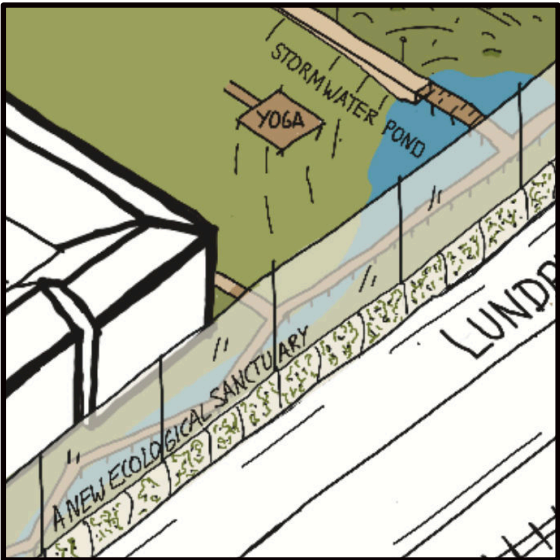


Fig: Possible Intervention

An Ecological Corridor & Sanctuary

The frequently flooded streets Neptungatan and Rörstrandsgatan are in a state of deterioration, and are avoided by pedestrians. The current wooden fence towards the highway Lundbyleden acts merely as a visual barrier – the traffic noise is intense here. Analysis suggests that the trees may need to be removed (Comment on Placetoplan.se: City of Gothenburg, retrieved 2025). In their place a noise barrier in the form of a free-standing living wall should be employed to improve the conditions for adjacent residents, pedestrians and non-humans. This intervention envisions a future where these streets become an floodable ecological sanctuary and calm recreational corridor.

COMPLEMENTARY ACTION

A left turn for Myntgatan onto Herkulesgatan

Reorganizing the intersection, enables not only the deprioritization of car traffic on Hisingsgatan, but also fewer and possibly safer bike and pedestrian crossings.



Fig: Existing street layout

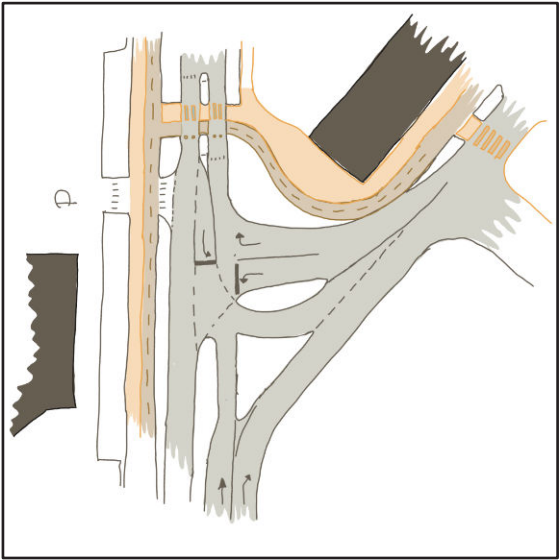


Fig: Concept of reorganized layout

Utopian exploration during thesis preparation course



INTERVIEWS

All comments that are not in quotation marks are paraphrased!

INTERVIEW 1	Vici Hofbauer, 13.12.24	<i>“A city that works for kids works for everyone”</i>
Introduction	Prior to my thesis work, I had no personal connection to the neighborhood. Maja, an artistic instructor, told me about a friend of hers who lives there. I reached out to Vici in December after the thesis preparation course to strengthen my understanding of the neighborhood from a local resident's perspective.	
Reflections	She seems to care a lot about the neighborhood and spends most of her time within and around Kvillestaden. She moved to the area mainly for its internal qualities, like the “small town feeling”. She seems to be engaged and interested in contributing to change that serves the community of the neighborhood at large.	
	The conversation with Vici grounded a lot of my previous assumptions and ideas generated during the master prep course and making of the project plan. Vici confirmed that the street of Tunnbindaregatan would be perfect for the proposal of a soft-mobility corridor. She added value to the discussion by addressing safety concerns for the kids moving though the area – shining a spotlight onto Hisingsgatan especially. It is highly interesting how the memories of hiking up to Rambergsskolan seem to prevail throughout generations. Her offering to use her studio for a workshop could be very relevant at one point within the thesis.	
Meeting Notes		
Kvilletorget	One of the favorite places for families and kids, especially during summer, “everyone goes there”	
Accessing Ramberget	Vici highlights walking up the steep path to the pre-school on ramberget can be a fun and social experience. The path is used daily by children and parents in the neighborhood to get to Rambergsskolan and the adjacent Preschool. The struggle of hiking up every day connects – “everyone is struggling together” and even elderly people who grew up here remember this experience from their childhood to this day. She mentions the path seems to be inaccessible to some, due to weather conditions and inclination, and can sometimes feel unsafe due to bicycles.	
The Natural Area	Many residents regularly go up the hill to access its “beautiful nature” already along the pathway up people have a view on “a beautiful waterfall”.	
Environmental Gentr.	She visited a project for work studies in Copenhagen: a park that connects throughout the whole city; “They put a lot of greenery there – and you can see how it now starts attract a lot of people from outside.”	
Demograpics	Gentrification is happening – “In a way I am a part of it” – but for now the neighborhood is quite mixed. A lot has happened the last 10 years – it used to be considered dangerous to walk through the streets. Several buildings are used by “socialkontoret” for people with special needs and problems. <i>Do you feel unsafe?</i> There are still “weird” things happening here / or “interesting” people but generally not so much. <i>Is the economic pressure increasing here?</i> “Yeah totally, they try to raise the rent a lot.” – recently by 5%. People like being in Kville and they will try changing apartments within Kville, “most people here vote left” except one area, the new development area.	

Housing	Most of the buildings are Landshövdingehus – they have the same floor plans and only 2 rooms and do not provide enough space for a family with several kids. So, families often end up moving up onto the backside of Rambegert, where the buildings accommodate apartments with more rooms. “Kville is more city life, up the hill is more nature.”
	The new built area does not feel as part of the neighborhood – “because of the architecture” it is really closed-off to the outside. Also, the new Building block within the neighborhood feels a bit similar, it is also really closed off. People that live there take the car inside and take the elevator up into the flat and you don’t need to see anyone.
Mobility	<i>Do people feel car-dependent here? “No,no,no!” I can get to Central Station in 15 min, you don't really need the car. There are safety concerns with several streets and crossings, especially for children. There are no safe crossings anywhere and barely any red lights. “I would love a Spielstraße” that would be great here (she is referring to common street zoning concept in Germany, which allows kids to play on the street by restricting car-access). Because Hisingsgatan is sloped, people go really fast down the road, which makes the crossings feel dangerous; the parked cars make it difficult seeing the cars coming. “The crossing at Jägaregatan is dangerous because you have to cross the street fast without any pedestrian crosswalk or stop light and then you end up right on the bicycle path. My kid and others have already collided with cyclists.”</i>
Idea: Restricting Cars	<i>Do you think it would be feasible to inhibit car access on streets of the neighborhood?</i> Many streets are not crucial in their current function, except the two main transportation axes Herkulesgatan and Myntgatan. The idea of a pedestrian centered street is really nice.
The Friday Prayer	People from all over the city come to the mosque for the Friday prayer, that’s the day when the streets here are really occupied. That’s also why there are so many hairdressers in the neighborhood.
	There is a highly interesting Facebook group in which members share and collect old Photos of Hisingen – supposedly there are many of Kvillestaden and its surroundings. https://www.facebook.com/groups/131049720417598

INTERVIEW 2	
Senior Living in New Development, 31.01.25	
Introduction	I wanted to understand the local conditions for well-being from the perspective of various demographics. I was especially curious to get insight into how local seniors practice a healthy and happy lifestyle in the neighborhood. I approached L. and his friends, while they were playing a round of boules on Kvilleorget during a slightly rainy and cold day at the end of January. He is part of a local group of seniors that meets almost daily on the square to play boule – no matter the weather or season. A few days later he and I arranged to meet up in a local restaurant for an interview.
	L. moved to the neighborhood 4 years ago and now lives in the new apartments built at the former porcelain factory. He is 74 years old and has worked all his life in a factory working as an engineer. When he was younger, he was a professional athlete – sport has always played a crucial role in his life.
Reflections	It seems like Lennarts has a city-centric perspective – he mentions the proximity to Hjalmar Brantingsplatsen and the great connectivity to the city as the main greatest benefit of living in the area. Even though he and his friends have been shaping the daily culture on Kvilleorget for the past years, it seems like beyond the square Lennart does not seem to specifically identify with the local neighborhood nor does he seem actively engaged in it or opinionated about it. However, it is inspirational how movement has continued to be a crucial part of his daily life to support his well-being – from being an Olympic athlete, to taking hours long walks and playing daily boules.
Meeting Notes	
The Boules Group	We are a group of 20 people, we have a Facebook site – sometimes we’re two, sometimes we’re 25. I started with Corona. <i>I am recalling what they told me on the first day I made contact with the group, because it could be a relevant point:</i> The square used to be considered unsafe and avoided by most because it was only used by people with drug problems, but ever since we started playing here on a daily basis people have started to feel more safe and comfortable around here. Even the police told us that it is great to have us around because we make the place feel safer for everyone.
Daily Life & Well-Being	<i>“I couldn’t sit at home all day watching TV. I need to go outside and get some fresh air.”</i> We need to have something to do. Before boule I always went onto long walks. When I retired, I started taking the tram or bus to unfamiliar places and just explored. My wife, likes to go out shopping in town and spending time with friends, she has no friends here in the neighborhood.
Living in Kvillestaden	<i>Why did you move here?</i> I was born in a small town and moved 1969 to Gothenburg. I moved here after I met my wife and we were looking for an apartment. <i>Why do you like the area?</i> Great connectivity, every bus or train passes through Hjalmar Brantingsplatsen and it is so close to the city. Everything you need is in Backaplan. If you want to go out for dinner the city center is close by. It is a very quiet and easy place. It is easy to live here.
Local Nature	I go up to Ramberget about 2–3 times a year to enjoy the view. <i>Is there anything that could motivate you to go up Ramberget also in the winter time?</i> <i>“I don’t think so”</i> . I don’t really spend time at Kvillebäcken’s because it is not really inviting.

Needed Change	<i>Anything you would like to have more here?</i> Places to meet and gather for older people, it can be quite difficult for old people to get together. I don’t know of any places here that are not connected to church.”
Idea: Restricting Cars	Yes, I would like that”. Gothenburg is a well-connected city and you can get almost anywhere you need quite well with public transport.

INTERVIEW 3	
Robin, 31.01.25	
Introduction	In my analysis I came across the Llama Lloyd cafe and co-working space on Tunnbindaregatan and got curious about their activistic positioning. I first met Robin, who is the head behind the both during an event of the Kollaborativ Ekonomi Göteborg at the Omställningslabbet in Frihamnen (21.01.25) about exchanging unused/ unwanted Christmas gifts, but only got to know each other briefly. On the day of the meeting, we met for lunch at a local restaurant and continued the conversation later in his co-working studio. While Robin is technically a local business owner, his approach and philosophy is like not representative of the other commercial stakeholders of the neighborhood. Rather, I approached him because of his local activistic engagement in for sustainable mobility and circular economy, hoping for new perspectives and ideas on how to solve local problems these dimensions.
	Robin is 43 years old and lived close to the neighborhood, around Wieselgrensplatsen for around 17 years. Because of his local business he knows the area quite well. His organization Llama Lloyd has a climate activist positioning and sees it as their mission to show people” how fun it is to ride a bike instead of sitting inside a car”. The cafe – only open in the summer months – serves fair trade cafe and vegan soup. As a second job, he drives the city taxi for disabled people. Robin has also helped initiate the NGO ”Kollaborativ Ekonomi Göteborg” which aims to expand alternative modes of exchange by connecting and expanding a network of sharing economy actors across Gothenburg. Finally, he co-moderates the local Facebook Group Nätverket Levande Kville, which has 3.6k members.
Key Take-Aways	(1) Streets should be used as a means for social interaction and exchange between the different blocks. (2) Gardening is considered as a powerful activity to initiate exchange between different groups and backgrounds. Daily functions on weekdays during the day could specifically cater to people that are unable to find or practice a job as well as seniors. (3) The neighborhood should facilitate functions that enable the sharing of unused items or even have library for tools and with people that can offer their expertise. (4) It is probably best to not propose opening up the neighborhoods courtyards to the larger community as a whole – it seems like people have a need for outside green spaces that remains private/intimate. (5) Robins reflections further confirmed the potential for transforming the street of Tunnbindaregatan to a walking corridor. I agree on the potential to use gardening as a tool to create new social connections between different demographics. The question of how to implement gardening remains – is there enough sun, would another location be preferable, should it be centralized or decentralized...

Meeting Notes	
About the Cafe	Open for spring and fall; He took over the cafe and co-working space in 2014 and renovated it. <i>How are you able to afford both the cafe and coworking place?</i> Since we renovated it, the rent is fairly low – I rent from two different landlords. I have a system where supporters of the cafe can donate some money during the off season in order to pay rent – in return they get some interesting stuff here and there.
Ethical Business	I source my coffee from a local roastery that has direct connections to the farms – by having no further middle men they can guarantee the fair pay and sustainable farming methods.
Daily Life & Well-Being	I love to go swimming, sauna, taking a bath, running. <i>Are you spiritual?</i> I am not religious, going for a run and being in nature might count as a spiritual practice.
Kollaborativ Ekonomi	We are working on a map for the city “the sharing economy...basically started with couch surfing and then we thought, how could we use the internet to share other things – you can share a lot of things”
Lifestyle	I think I have always done things a little bit differently.
Meaning of Place	“It is like a little town... you could just stay there if you wanted to. Most people are really nice and if you need help there is always someone who shows up.”
Seeking Nature	I always used to run in Hisingsparken which is further north, which I preferred for running over Ramberget. Now that I moved into the city center, a green area for running is the thing I miss most!.....
Local Demographics	<i>Is there strong exchange between area demographic backgrounds?</i> “Everybody does their own thing I guess”, it does not seem super diverse the area, it is still primarily white. I guess it is a little separated. During the day most of the residents are working and are out of the neighborhood – the people I see passing by, during the day are the ones that are economically struggling, because they don’t have a job, or the pensioners
How to Foster Exchange	Gardening, it is simple, but I think it helps connecting people – he references an interesting project in Biskopsgården called <i>Greens of Wheels</i> which upcycled a wooden cable drum into a movable planter. <i>Reflection – the people who are unable or with difficulty finding a job are the ones who could potentially participate most in activities such as gardening.</i>
Interaction Between Neighbors	<i>Do neighbors know each other and interact with each other more than in other parts of the city?</i> I think it happens within a block and within a building, because of the courtyards, but it does not happen across the streets. The courtyard is good for people in a house, but I think the streets in between buildings should have a similar function of connecting neighbors. For example, by gardening.
About Backyards	<i>Idea, how would people receive it if the courtyards became more accessible for the whole neighborhood to housing varying community functions?</i> I am not sure if it would be a good idea opening up the courtyards – that’s why I thought of using the streets instead. <i>I noticed skepticism toward that idea on his side.</i>

Reusing Streets	<i>I mentioned the idea of a green street without cars</i> – “I was actually thinking of gardening in the middle of the street”; “Tunnbindaregatan would be the first street I would change!”
Tools for Driving Cultural Change	Robin created a small illustrated pamphlet that raises awareness of the threat of cars to non-human life, which is called <i>Animals I killed with a car</i> . He mentions an ongoing activity of “Zine Swapping”. <i>Reflection: It seems like a cool way of communicating Ideas and raising awareness. Maybe I could create one to hand out to residents at the end of this thesis?</i>
Sharing & Reuse	There is no physical place supporting a sharing economy, but if I need something I will usually ask around in the local Facebook group (Nätverket Levande Kville). <i>“My dream is to have a library... with all the things you need. A tool library but it is also a place with people that can help you with things ”</i> "I guess the lama is sort of like that... But I don't have enough tools ", "In the end it should be run by the city, I can't afford to have the cafe open all the time, it is not profitable enough! There is a regular library in new Kville – but there should be one in every area. <i>We imagined together – there should be places where we allow our trash to spend some time for others to take a look and give a second life to items that would be otherwise wasted.</i>

CASUAL GROUP CONVERSATION

Lunch Conversation at Vici’s Studio, 06.02.25

Vici opened up her studio for friends and colleagues as a co-working space during the winter months — I was also invited to join. On that Thursday three friends of hers were around. During a lunch break, we sat together and ended up reflecting about the neighborhood.

Vici’s friends were Daphne, who later joined the workshop. She’s from Greece, and an artist and child culture designer. She, her husband and child(ren) live in one of the million home program housing blocks by Vågmästareplatsen. J., the second friend and mother, lives in the same building as Daphne. She works in building sustainability certification. H. left Gothenburg 20–15 years ago, but he recently moved back. He studied and practiced architecture.

Takeaways: Hisingen and Kvillestaden have been highly stigmatized areas in the past — from being perceived unsafe and dirty, the neighborhood’s connotation has been changing rapidly in the last 15 years.

There might be a cultural barrier inhibiting people’s likelihood to naturally engage in collaborative activity and community interaction. Instead of planning large scale or radical collaborative functions from the beginning it might be relevant to plan the expansion and intensification of collaborative functions over time — from planting the seed to gradually expanding and adding further functions towards a collaborative, circular and coherent neighborhood.

Do not propose interconnecting courtyards to incorporate larger community functions! Residents have a need for an intimate/sheltered outside space. Streets might be more naturally perceived as shared neighborhood community space. Instead, you can imagine how the courtyards could improve their quality as a sheltered private green space for the neighbors living within a block.

Meeting Notes

The paraphrased content is based on my recollection of the conversations

Safety, Stigmatization and a Neighborhood in Change

H: I spent a lot of time in Kvillestaden when I was younger, before I moved to Lund for a while That must be around 20 years ago, I was around 15. My friends and I used to come here a lot to play pool. The area used to be run down, in the evenings I had the feeling that it was not really safe here — but I was young and there was probably no more danger than in the city center back then. Today the area seems nice, the buildings are freshly painted, and things are more "orderly".

J: There still are many people that have never crossed the river. I remember my parents warning me when I decided to move here. It seems like the connotation of Hisingen is unsafe still prevails, though it is less.

Local Engagement

D: I don't think you can force community engagement, but you can nudge it.

Isolation Culture

D: I was at Swedish class, when the teacher told everyone, one should not bother the people in your surroundings, like asking the neighbor to borrow an egg. It really stuck negatively in my head. Shouldn't it be the opposite? Shouldn't we be less scared or judged when asking for or giving the people around you a favor and threatening them with kindness?

Architecture & Well-Being

Me: Do you think it is a cause of our urban way of living or is it rather a cultural one that is more widespread in Sweden?

J: I think it is more of a cultural one.

Reflection: We need to plant the seeds for a cultural shift where sharing and kindness for the people around you are embraced, many people might resist at first.

D: I think it is interesting to reflect on how much architecture and the access to the nature can affect you. All my life I have been used to have easy access to a backyard or courtyard to rest and enjoy the outside. Now that I live in one of the high apartment buildings by Vågmästareplatsen I don't have that anymore and that's something that still bothers me. The green spaces that surround the buildings don't seem to be able to replace that — not for me or for others, I don't really see people sitting in the grass here, having picnics etc. I also miss seeing far and seeing the sky from my living room, which is unfortunately inhibited by the neighboring building.

Backyards

Me: It seems like people here prefer to have an outside space that remains sheltered and intimate. I had an idea about opening up the courtyards for broader community function, would that make sense?

V: Yeah, they prefer not to have everyone be able to walk in there! The city actually attempted that with the new Kville development — but after around 2 years they closed off most of the backyards. I was joining a walk of the neighborhood's courtyards when they were still accessible to the public, as part of a friend's PHD thesis, and a question was asked 'are you allowed to be here?' The adults were saying yes — basing their answer on the knowledge that they are indeed allowed to access the space. The kids on the other hand responded 'no' they felt uncomfortable, they felt that they did not belong or were welcome here.



Fig: Photos I took of previously accessible courtyards in New Kville on 06.02.2025

Reflection: As mentioned previously I noticed a skepticism on Robin's side during the interview on 31.01. Vici reflection indeed confirms that my initial idea would not be suitable — people have a need for a more intimate outside space — opening up the courtyards would take away the feeling of safety and being sheltered.

INTERVIEW 4
(INDIRECT)

Conversation with a Long-Term Resident, 06.02.25

Vici previously mentioned her neighbor S. Who lived in Kville for the whole of his life. We invited him over for fika and he brought a photo album containing old images from the area. I hoped to learn more what it was like growing up fourties – a time when the area was defined by the industrial working class, accomodating factory and harbor workers. I wondered how he would reflect about the changing neighborhood and the disappearance of Gothenburg’s industry and industrial culture.

S. does not speak English, the conversation was mainly held between him and Vici – who was highly interested in the neighborhood’s past herself. Vici occasionally took the role as a translator, while I ended up being more a passive participant in the conversation. Occasionally, I asked questions related to the photos presented or current points of conversation. The interview’s outcomes strengthened my understanding of the historical context rather than reflecting deeply on the topic of well-being, space and potential interventions.

About S.

S. Has lived more than 80 years in Kvillestaden. He started working in a metal parts factory in Backaplan when he was 15 years old and worked there until he retired. He noted that he grew up in poor conditions, but was not aware of it because everyone in the area did. Sven said he rarely left the area, especially crossing the river.

Takeaways

Seeing the photos and hearing Svens childhood reflections, makes Kvillestadens' industrial heritage more tangible. Even though the fabric of the neighborhood has not changed much, so did the structures around it – surrounding infrastructures which were once soft and crossable have evolved into loud and impassable barriers; Surrounding Industrial areas are demolished to become modern housing quarters.

Personal Reflection

For decades, the hustle and bustle of factories within and around the neighborhood as well as adjacent harbor shaped the lives and culture of the area – as traces of this past are increasingly eradicated, we might risk not only forgetting about this past but also neglecting the efforts and lives lived of gothenburg’s industrial working class, whose hands have shaped the neighborhood and city as we know it today. Development or transformation should not aim to ‘clean up’, by eradicating its trances to the past – it should find ways in which an awareness of local heritage is maintained both strengthening a sense of identity/belonging as well as acknowledge the past efforts of generations of industrial workers.

Speaking to sven and seeing his images and the ones shared in the Facebook group “gamla foton från det Goda Hisinglandet”, I realize there is such a treasure of interesting stories and photos to be found in locas memories or photo albums – shouldn’t they become a stage?!



Meeting Notes

Childhood



“The Harbor was a playground. My friends and I used to always play in the docks of Lundbybassängen.”

How did you get over to the harbor? There was no crossing, we just walked over the train tracks, later we had to jump the fences.

In the open area at the end of Hisingsgatan me and my friends always played football.

We used to jump on and of the trains transporting cargo to get to our school in Lindholmen. We had both school here in the building which is now the Hisingens Kulturskola and in Lindholmen – the building does not exist anymore due to a fire.



Local Culture



Here is where BK Häcken first started – it was a group of friends playing in the backyard behind this building, the building in the far left used to be the post office.

Wikipedia: “The club was started by a group of 14- to 15-year-old youngsters who wanted not just to play football for fun but also to create an organisation and participate in the national league system. The Club was formally registered on 2 August 1940. It currently plays in Allsvenskan, the top tier of Swedish football.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BK_H%C3%A4cken; 02.2025)

Industrial Past



The small building in the middle used to be a textile factory. Within Kvillestaden there were smaller factories everywhere! – shows a leather factory on another image. **How does it feel that the traces of industries have vanished?** It feels strange...

A Changing Neighborhood

Does the area still feel like the Kvillestaden as you know it? Recently the area started to feel less safe to me, it seems like I see more and more people struggling with drug addiction. I don’t know anyone really in the area anymore. Besides one of my classmates I am the only one left – I am not sure whether he meant they left or passed away.

INTERVIEW 5	
Lina & Linda from Dream Store, 06.02.25	
Introduction	I felt it was important to at least attempt involving voices of or connected to dependent stakeholders. I researched online to find local actors that might be involved in care work with vulnerable groups and found out to a charity called <i>Dream Center</i> . I visited their second hand store, <i>Dream Store</i> , where I met Lina and arranged a meeting for the following day.
About Dream Store & Center	The “Dream Store”, was initiated to generate income to fund the charity work of the parent organization “Dream Center”, which started 5 years ago. As explained by Lina & Maria, the Dream Center is a socially focused organization aiming to help vulnerable people in Gothenburg “no matter which background or religion”, it is to be seen as separate from the Dream Center Church, which is its own entity. For now, both the dream center & church are an outpost of the Smyrna church and receive funding through it. In the last years the store has reshifted its focus from trying to generate funding for the charity work by selling used clothes and items, to providing opportunities for rehabilitation – be it work training after a longer sickness or community service (an alternatives for a prison sentence). Maria is the head of the dream store. Lina was first in contact with the dream center during her rehabilitation from a substance disorder after which she was asked to join – now she is one of the managers of the store. It is important to note that Lina and Maria are not trained professional social workers, their reflections and ideas are more grounded in personal experiences and beliefs rather than expert and theoretical knowledge. They don't claim to be and should not be seen as general experts in dealing with the related social issues.
Takeaways	The neighborhood is separated – The east side is more frequented and open to the city, it receives greater attention by the city. The west side, however, is perceived as more unsafe, particularly at night, where Herkulesgatan and Hisingsgatan meet. Maybe new group sports or activities for social gathering could be located the park to achieve a similar effect like the boules group on Kvilleorget. A mixed and diverse neighborhood has been mentioned as a positive aspect as it can provide people to see new perspectives and ways of being that can help nudge making small changes in one's life. Maybe ideas of mine such as gardening, a upcycling workshop or a community kitchen could connect with processes of rehabilitation – creating new social bonds and inviting vulnerable people into the a community. There is a need for a local youth center.
Meeting Notes	“To do something good in the neighborhood where we are” (Maria). The current approach is primarily giving out food. The organization provides free lunches every friday and Wednesday. “You don't have to be homeless to come here and eat – anyone could come.” People come from all over Gothenburg, and not just for the food, but also for the company! There’s often entertainment – people play music, read poetry, sometimes present a prayer. “We understand it makes a big difference for people to eat together – people can’t afford to go out, but here they have the possibility go eat and meet people every week.” Additionally, they established collaboration with different shops and companies to recover otherwise thrown away foods that are still edible and use a system of food cards to pick up packaged food to bring home.
Dream Center & Meal Sharing	

Dream Center & Rehabilitation	Selling second hand clothing to fund the work of the dream center, currently does not really working out as we hoped, because there are not enough people visiting. The shop is not very visible or might be avoided due to its location, limited opening hours and the assumed religious connection. This is why we focus on rehabilitation by “Giving people a chance again” toward a normal life – allowing “people to come and grow instead.”
Rehab & Social Env.	We provide opportunities and take care of people that have to do “work training” in order to officially join the job market, after they have unable after a long time of sickness and work together with Försäkringskassan & Arbetsförmedlingen. We help people to grow, get ready for the work life, as well as to evaluate the capacity at which one is capable of doing so. We also provide opportunities for people who serve a community sentence. People either work in the store or help the dream center with the preparation and serving of the food. <i>“I think it is so important to have people around you that are positive and good for you when you are starting to take control of yourself again!” So you can grow instead of being pulled back. I’ve been to rehab fighting a substance disorder, that’s where I met the lady who started this organization. When I finished, she asked me to join her and that’s how I started here, 5 years ago. That saved me! And that’s what we are trying to do with others” (Lina).</i> “Quite a lot of people here have come from drug problems that have now become leaders...Lina is now manager of the store.” (Maria)
Treating Struggle	<i>I asked a broad and difficult question – from your experiences, what environment, actions or behaviors are especially impactful in helping individuals in their daily lives that are struggling?</i> “Love!” (Lina) – “Love and kindness” (Maria) is the most important thing. Lina adds that some people might not be able yet to receive love but if you provide them with security and trust, they are often returning. Maria gives an example of a person returning after finishing the community sentence because he felt welcome in the community and sensed the care for each other. Maria says that they help people to feel a sense of belonging, to feel accepted for who they are and that they don’t have to change themselves too much in order to be accepted by others. She adds, one should work on oneself, but they don’t need to be the same as others – “you are different, but you are still okay” Two days a week the volunteers meet in a group where anyone is welcome to speak about their difficulties, to build trust and understanding that we one is not alone because all of them are facing some problems – it is a bit similar to an AA meeting. “Suddenly you understand, ah, this person has a problem, and the other person has a problem...we are actually very similar!” (Maria)
Social Needs	Maria: It is easy for people to feel alone, especially in the cold and dark winters, many people rely on their jobs to make friends, but for some it is difficult to make close connections.
Need for Youth Clubs	Maria: It seems like in the past 10 years all the youth clubs have started to close down. “When I was younger there used to be plenty of youth clubs everywhere”. We provide a small one here – you can just come and hang around here, make music in the studio. But as we are officially associated with a church, we are not allowed to advertise at schools or anything, which limits reach and the potential positive impact.

	(Maria) "Because otherwise where do you go as a young person? You either go home, or you go into town." – "Or you get caught by the gangs" (Lina). Youth clubs have been missing, and we can see that has not been good for society! "It should be necessary to have those places to just come and hang around!" (Maria)
Visibility	Lina: The point is to be visible for people in this area and let them know that they are welcome, because there might be a lot of people here that feel alone.
Safety	There is a lot happening here, especially in the night time. They broke into the mobile shop across the street so many times that they moved out again. A lot of drugs are going around, crime is happening and also fights. Around the corner there is a facility for harm reduction that addicts can turn to. We had people trying to break in twice. "I don't feel afraid", maybe because I am used to it (Maria) The influx of gentrifiers as well as the new built across the street has been positive. In order to improve the lives of people in the area a good mix is needed. By showing the whole society around us, it opens up new perspectives and creates new hopes and can nudge making small changes in one's way of living. The people that are moving in now help reduce the stigmatization of the area and that makes other people more likely to move into the area. <i>Me: Even though presented in a positive way, I believe there are limits. With increased external popularity, at one point the influx of newcomers may at one point lead to homogenization and potentially displacement of those struggling already.</i> A balance must be found – allowing a mix but also keeping the rent low. Lina mentioned a conflict with construction of the new church in Frihamnén that caused conflict or maybe displacement with the homeless shelter that was present. "Now they are going to take over our space?! – i hear people say that"
Heculesgatan	There were attempts by the city to improve the street. After the collection of feedback, they started to hang lights in the wintertime to make the street feel warmer, but they just did it in the eastern end of the street. Here where the area feels most unsafe there were none. They should have the lights throughout the streets (Maria). People come to visit the neighborhood mainly on the east end, on our end there is nothing going on. "It should be more like Haga or Linné" (Lina). There should be more benches and places to sit in the street, because now it is only a corridor for people to quickly pass through
Ramberget	We love the mountain, because it takes only a little time for us to get up there. We go up often during lunch time. Rambert is something really good for the area! (Maria)
Neighborhood park	The park is a perfect place for group sport activity. We haven't done it for a while, because we lack someone being able to guide activities such as these. It has the space you need and "not everyone is watching you all the time"! <i>Reflection: the first positive thing I have heard about the park! Maybe instead of a grand transformation we could reapply the boules group phenomenon – establishing a sense of safety through the frequent activity of local citizens – like evening sport classes, dance etc.!</i>

Religious Ties	Because we have the connection to the Smyrna church and receive money "society is scared we are trying to brainwash people" (Lina) "We are open to anyone, any background" "we don't have to be the same, we don't have to believe in the same!" (Lina) "We don't at all try to change or convert people!" (Lina). The connection to the church can sometimes cause conflict in trying to make the largest impact, especially in a society and city agencies that have become increasingly skeptical toward religion. The city and governments avoid enabling or supporting religious actors to provide care-work or community functions, as it is difficult for them to understand the intentions of different actors. And yes, there are some churches that have bad ones. (Lina) <i>Reflection: there seems to be a conflict: society and government agencies avoid religious actors, yet on an individual level one needs to acknowledge that religion plays a crucial role for the well-being of many people and maybe especially for people that struggle.</i>
Religion & Well-Being	<i>Through your experience, what do you think about the role of religion for well-being?</i> "When I am here and see what it (religion) does to people, it gives me a whole new perspective... Now I sort of know what god is to people. It is something you can hold on to. Say you don't have any hope left, you can grab it" I can see that I can do great things to people.(Lina) "I don't think it necessarily needs to be the Christian way, any religion can do good things for people"

WORKSHOP

METHOD

Reflecting the workshop – 20. Feb. 2025

Purpose

The workshop marks the transition between program exploration and program evaluation. Its main purpose is to generate both qualitative and quantitative outcomes by posing direct and open questions to be discussed with local experts. Building on the planner’s first iteration of context analysis and design program exploration, the workshop is aiming to, first, expand their understanding of the local’s individual experiences of well-being, related to lifestyle and context, second, to co-evaluate the planners early ideas of a design program and third to generate new promising programs.

Next to generating meaningful outcomes for the planners, the workshop further intends to broaden the participants' understanding of the various conflicting and synergizing driving forces that define a project of this scale, while also nudging changes of perspectives towards new ways of living in the neighborhood.

How to approach

The proposed workshop consists of two exercises: an individual reflection exercise relating to the theory of well-being and a mapping game workshop, to collectively evaluate and propose potential changes to the neighborhood. Invitation pamphlets are not only designed to generate curiosity, but also, to introduce potential participants to the theory of well-being as well as the desired design goal of the project. Before starting the exercises, it is recommended to plan time and methods to make participants feel comfortable – like sharing some food over casual conversations, an introduction rounds or/and an icebreaker.

PRACTICE

Introduction

Framed as an after-work mapping game workshop, the workshop was held on a Thursday evening with four participants and assisted by my friend and fellow student Tove. I sent direct invitations to my already established existing contacts, and as it became apparent that several were not able to attend, I posted an invitation a day before in a local Facebook forum.

WARM-UP

Icebreaker

A short discussion round getting to know each other and getting comfortable.

Prompt

As we get older it seems like we seem to lose our childish playfulness, especially when moving – are there still moments or activities where you become a bit more your inner child? When was that?

Responses

Vici: My kids have a great effect on me, they make me do things and see things in ways I usually wouldn’t anymore. Today we left the path to climb and play on the frozen waterfall. “Other parents were asking from the distance, can we help you?”

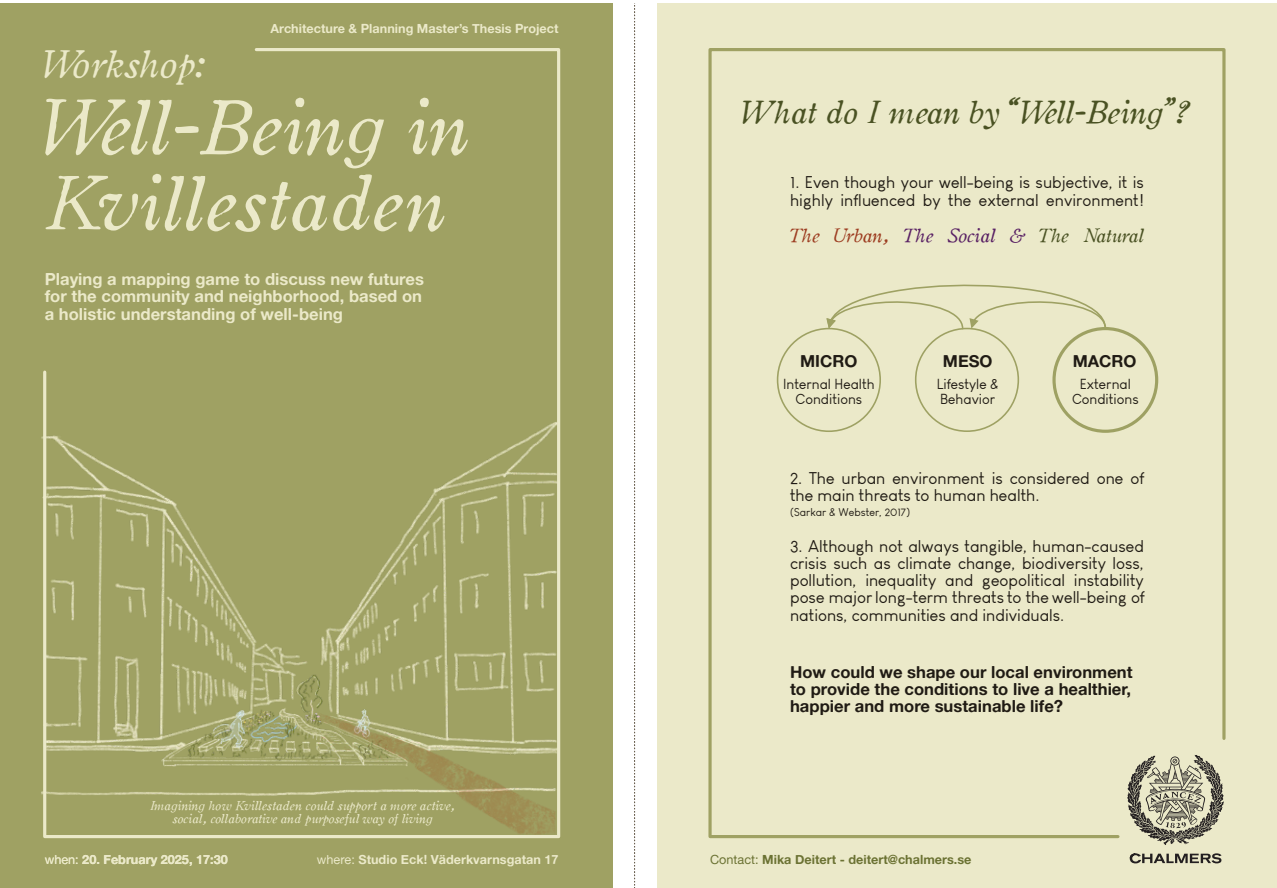
Me: “For me it is when sitting on a bicycle, I become a bit of a daredevil.” I also love sitting and swinging in those big swings, in which you can lay down in.

Daphne: “I am quite childish” I am usually childish with my daughter.

Jacob: Maybe when biking, or when being on an e-scooter.

Robin: I like exploring. When biking, I often take unknown paths to discover new places in the city I have not seen before.

Fig: Workshop Invitation Pamphlet



8 Dimensions of Well-Being

Happiness

Active Movement

Physical Health

Modes of transportation; physical exercise; play and games; social activities...

Healthy Diet

Physical Health

Diet choices; fresh or processed; cooking or eating out...

Social Connections

Mental Health

Meaningful connections; social exchange and activity...

Outlook

Mental Health

A sense of purpose; spirituality; contentment; meaningful activities or engagements

Connection to Nature

Mental Health

Seeking time in nature; accessibility & quality of local of nature; taking care of plants or a garden...

Safety

Financial Safety

Money- related stress (income, rents, inflation, market); job Safety...

Climate Change

Long term threat to well-being

Climate - anxiety; importance of sustainable lifestyle and choices; Worry of extreme weather events...

Biodiversity

Long term threat to well-being

Quality of support for non-human life; engagement in the protection or nurturing of the ecosystem

Personal Lifestyle: (5min)

Relevance in your daily life?

_/ 5

Local Environment: (5min)

How does(n't) the neighborhood support your well-being?

_/ 5

How difficult or easy do you find it to get through daily life?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

_/ 5

_/ 5

_/ 5

_/ 5

Fig: The workshops questionnaire, based on an early version of the well-being design goals

EXERCISE 1

Intention

Reflection of Method

Outcomes

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to for the evening to introduce people into dimensions of well-being that are then addressed in the second exercise. However, the resulting exercise turned out to be an effective tool to generate a sensitive and differentiated understanding of the social and spatial local context. I thus can and should also be already before a program evaluation workshop.

The explanation of the well-being dimensions needed further explanation – some were clearer in how they connect with well-being and lifestyle than others. I should consider reiterating the dimensions themselves as well as their given examples. Further it would be helpful to give more understandable instructions on how and what kind of answers to give.

How difficult or easy do you find it to get through daily life? (L = Difficult - R = Easy)

0	0	0	0	3	0	0
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Personal Lifestyle	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Student - Guldheden
Active Movement	4/5 walking up Ramberget	3/5	5/5 always cycling, running, taking unplanned paths	4/5 biking everywhere	4/5 walking + gym
Healthy Diet	3/5	5/5 mediterranean diet	3/5 (...can't read...), easy lunch	2/5	2/5 i care about my energy, not so much health - short term
Social Connections	5/5	5/5 friendship is important	4/5	3/5	5/5 very important, without connection everything else crumbles
Outlook	2/5 no time for hobbies - 5/5 Family!	5/5 connection with neighbors	3/5 work in non profit org	2/5	5/5 minecraft plants, small crafts, ambiguity
Connection To Nature	3/5	3/5 access to nature "consumer attitude"	3/5	2/5 gardening indoors	3/5 mostly houseplants
Financial Safety	3/5	3/5	4/5	1/5	4/5 safe now, but lots of stress for future
Climate Change	3/5	2/5 I am not worried	5/5	2/5	2/5 worry about it but not in regard of myself, just the world
Bio Diversity	-	2/5	2/5	2/5	4/5 worry a lot about this

#Ramberget #Friends #Cycling #Houseplants

Local Environment	Participant 1	Participant 3	Participant 3	Participant 4	Student - Guldheden
Active Movement	5/5 walking up Ramberget + Gym at Vågmästareplatsen	1/5 mainly because of the weather	4/5 good bike paths - too many motorways	2/5 car-heavy & traffic	5/5 very good!
Healthy Diet	3/5 a choice! Willys + Restaurants	4/5 I have access to the produce I like	2/5 a lot of restaurants with unhealthy food	3/5 ok supermarket	3/5 only grocery stores, nothing locally produced
Social Connections	5/5 Kville Network of Friends <3	3/5 there are some meaningful connections, but I want more	5/5 you always meet someone you know	2/5 rather central	5/5 high centrality, close to campus + friends
Outlook	5/5 friends i the area, always something to do	3/5 same as above	4/5	2/5	5/5 I have everything I need
Connection To Nature	5/5 park+woods+mount ains	1/5 because of the weather and personal housing situation (no view)	3/5 Keillers Park is close	1/5 grey-traffic & cars	4/5 could be more nature close, but good
Financial Safety	3/5 lucky to have apartment with ok costs	4/5 my boyfriends parents own the apartment	2/5 running my business	3/5	2/5 not many opportunities
Climate Change	3/5 worry of the wall up the slope collapsing	1/5 less worried than I was in Greece	4/5 having the cafe helps getting people to cycle more	1/5 built around cars huge roads	1/5 poor resilience in the building and neighborhood
Bio Diversity	-	2/5 I am not connected enough to nature here to notice anything	3/5 the new bike path on Myntgatan	1/5 same as above	2/5 not enough free nature, lots of cut grass

#Ramberget #Cycling #Local Social Network #Car-Centered #Weather

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Appendix

Documenting the Process: The Workshop

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EXERCISE 2	The Persona Mapping Game	
Purpose	Generate qualitative learnings on both the social-spatial context and receive feedback on my catalog of potential intervention programs.	
How	In disguise of a demand or statement of a fictional persona, participants are familiarized with a potential program and asked to discuss in a group whether and in which way it could be integrated. Abstracting the program through the use of personas, helps participants understand more easily why an action might be needed and how it could affect people. To help with the discussion a neighborhood map in the center of the table is used a free canvas to orient, communicate, take notes and propose where and how interventions could be located.	Discussions Every participant choose a card to their interest and a person was randomly selected to start. While some were still looking through the options others already had a interesting conversation. About Life in the Neighborhood <i>Robin about his favorite local art piece:</i> Someone who lives in Kville tracked their movement for 30 days with a GPS – the exhibited line drawing reveals that the person barely left the area. <i>Unfortunately, he does not remember the artists name.</i> <i>Vici follows up:</i> It is strange, the only time I had to go in the city recently was when I have to go to Stockholm, but “the central station isn’t far away” from here. You just go over the bridge, you don’t (like) have to enter Gothenburg.” Neighborhood Community Vici: The neighborhood is special because it houses many very different groups.
	<i>General Process</i> <i>(5 min per Card)</i> 1st Why did you chose the card (individual) ? 2nd Discuss the questions on the back of the card. 3rd Always consider, how could this be related to other implemented actions? 4th Implement your decisions by filling out an action card and/ or draw on the map. → Next Persona Card	CARD 1 Why this Card? Community Kitchens in Athens <i>Daphne:</i> It is helps make new and deep connections. “I like living here but sometimes I get quite frustrated, because it is hard to meet new people and people are quite introverted.” <i>D:</i> “When I lived in Athens, we had a neighborhood community kitchen, and I cooked there once a week... I went there to eat almost every day.” “It was during the economic crisis in Greece and the kitchen opened in response to some people actually not having enough food.” The rules we had: No racism, no sexism, no fascism – “apart from that, anything goes.” There was a special coexistence between people of different political parties and ages.
Reflecting the Method	<i>D: I liked the combination of individual and collective assignments. And I really liked the role play cards, I think it was a really smart way to stimulate ideas and discussions.</i> Was it good to branch out and only use the cards as a start for conversation? On one hand yes, there was valuable information in discussing the proposals more freely at the same time it feels like the qualitative outcomes were generated in different areas than intended. This is because the clearly guided structure for discussion provided by persona cards and instructions proved to be hard to follow strictly without disrupting the qualitative discussions or disengaging the participants – consequently I conducted a looser moderation of the discussion to allow space for the unpredicted. To refine the persona mapping game, it is yet unclear whether aiming for strict approach or lose approach will be better – probably it depends on the circumstances. <i>Should you aim for a strict vs loose approach:</i> Predefining which cards will be played, limiting the time per card or question, and forcing players to answer the question one by one the cards back. This might foster generating outcomes more reliably in targeted areas and preventing a tendency for discussions to get out of control. However, there is a risking that participants disengage or provide answers they personally don't align with, because they felt forced to make decisions or give input for the sake of playing the game. A loose approach enables the possibility to receive qualitative outcomes from participants that were not asked for. Further with a loose approach the game cards and questions can be in a less refined state in order to still generate meaningful outcomes. The strict approach on the other hand requires careful planning and formulation of the persona cards in order to successfully achieve a desired outcome while keeping the players engaged.	The Social Impact of Community Kitchens <i>D:</i> It was a really great way to connect with other people who are like minded, (who were left wing) and wanted to do community stuff in the neighborhood.” The kitchen became an initiator for further involvement and engagement in community work and programs – “Through that I became involved in lots of other neighborhood stuff, that I wouldn’t have if it wasn’t for this kitchen.” “I met one of my best friends there through cooking” – community kitchen is not just about making food, but it creates the perfect environment to build new social connections. Because of the activity, getting to know someone is more organic and gentle – the process of cooking together makes people bond over doing something meaningful for the community – conversing becomes less “awkward” and intense because it is just something that happens alongside the activity. Why Keeping it Running is Difficult <i>D:</i> The downside is, “It takes a lot of energy” – “after one year it closed” – “We decided to close it.” “In the beginning lots of people went there, it was quite diverse!” “As time went on it became less and fewer people running it.” Over time, it can happen that groups develop which are tighter connected and because of the already established bonds create an environment that is less welcoming for others or new people. For us, those who remained, we bonded tightly and became good friends”, and then we could've been guilty of what you said (Me) that we were unwelcoming” Prerequisites for Long-Term? <i>D:</i> “I don’t know what the answer is. “Financial compensation could be an option, but it can quickly conflict with the core purpose of the community kitchen – you pay the people that work in the community kitchen “but then that kind of defies the point and it gets into other territories”. In England, I was also part of a community kitchen, but because people work, they don’t have energy to engage frequently enough. In Order for it to work, it should be everyone’s kitchen..., it needs to be a neutral space!” But also, maybe participating in a community kitchen is not something for everyone! In everything I’ve been involved in, people get tired and then leave. But I don’t get tired.”

Limitations	<i>Do you thinking a kitchen is able to create connections between the different groups that are part of the neighborhood?</i> <i>Vici seems skeptical that a community kitchen could be the best way to connect the various different groups present in the neighborhood, be it religion, ethnicity, economic class, etc... it remains an unelaborated feeling she adds.</i>
How to Establish a Neutral Space	<i>Do you think it is a good idea to propose a new community kitchen, if there are existing facilities that serve a similar purpose, but for a more selected group, can Robin’s cafe be considered a community Kitchen?</i> <i>Note: Would it be possible for the dream center to serve food more publicly and locals that have a job just pay a voluntary amount? Would collaboration between local actors be possible – maybe they could share a public facility? A possible reference https://absaloncph.dk/en/</i> <i>Robin does not seem to consider it necessarily a community kitchen – he is the sole owner and person responsible for keeping it running. Yet he uses the cafe as a way to engage with a likeminded community that provides support for the continuation of the cafe. R: “The idea is similar, except that I do the cooking and it is the social thing that is important.” “It has been the same soup for ten years, it doesn’t really matter.”</i> <i>Note: I wonder, would he consider expanding the notion of the Llama Lloyd Cafe to be a community cafe in the long term? The location and his engagement and intentions would both provide promising conditions.</i>
The Neighborhood’s Perceived Center	<i>R: Everyone who lives east, never really goes towards the south east, people don’t tend to explore the areas of the neighborhood they don’t naturally pass by – for example for work errands or leisure.</i> <i>A Reflection: This pattern is then reflected by public interventions or programs. There are events happening throughout the year at Kvilletorget, the city places seasonal furniture and in the winter the east streets furthest east receive Christmas lights and decoration. This further exacerbates the existing spatial and socio-economic divide within the neighborhood, with public spaces being only cared for that are furthest away and maybe not on “neutral ground” for the residents living in the southern part of the neighborhood. The areas furthest away receive little attention and are now the ones feeling least safe. Maybe intervention should not just emphasize existing patterns but maybe aim to counteract the natural flow by attracting those people who live north-east to actively seek out activity or spaces in the southern parts of the neighborhood. → activate the center of the neighborhood, → nudge walkability throughout the neighborhood.</i>
Card 2:	Gardening & How to Repurpose Neighborhood Streets
Tunnbindaregatan	<i>R: I look at this street every day, and there is very little car traffic. There is no point of having cars here, it is a very wide street. What about putting planters in the middle of the streets here, letting people pass by? I would like to see people in the streets gardening. I think it would be the best street to start with.</i> <i>D: What if people would just put flowers and other things there, I wonder what would happen.</i>
Extent of Use-Change	<i>Me: To which extent to you think the change of use for the street would be desirable and feasible? – presenting the idea of going from Kvilletorget until Ramberget:</i>

What about Parking	<i>D: That would be amazing! V: If we were to have a green corridor all the way, it would eliminate the safety issues for crossing streets such as Hisingsgatan. D: Yeah, and cars could just go around instead. R: Something needs to be done at the point where the street meets Herkulesgatan, there is no pedestrian crossing.</i> <i>V: If we were to remove parking, we would probably need to provide more parking elsewhere. R: if you want to encourage people to not own cars there could be car pools (close to the motorway). → new proposal – parking garage with car sharing at the southern end of the neighborhood as a counter measure.</i>
How to Use such the Street	<i>V: I just want the kids to be able to play – a safe place. R: I think it would be great as a street for walking. Hisingsgatan and Herkulesgatan are already good for cyclists, especially passing through the neighborhood. V: As I have kids, cyclists can also be quite dangerous, so I like the idea of focusing the street on pedestrian use.</i>
PERSONA 3	How (not) to Bring Life into Public Spaces – Vici
Exogenous Intervention & Worry of Env. Gentrification	<i>V: I am getting a bit tired of Kville being a testing area. Because she lives in a rental apartment, she expresses a sense of discomfort related to environmental improvements, especially the ones aiming to make a space more attractive from an external perspective. On the other hand, she would like public spaces to be more lively. She worries that rents are increasing to a point where she can’t afford living here anymore. I don’t feel like I have housing security. I have lived here since 2012, it is where my kids were born and are growing up.</i>
How to Approach Env. Improvement	<i>D: Maybe the approach matters – what is nice for me, is maybe not nice for someone else. Maybe new usages can be a bit rougher and not so polished. She mentioned an example in Berlin Kreuzberg, where locals placed trailers on a public space for community functions (like for example cooking. “It doesn’t necessarily need to be permanent, it can be a project for one summer. And then it ends, and through that new projects come up.”</i> <i>V: “I would like to have a play street, just close the streets and see what is happening” do nothing more, and let locals explore how to use it. – Daphne mentions an initiative of parents blocking a street for 3 hours to let kids play and then leaving again. – V: “I don’t need something that is permanent”</i> <i>D: “People have to work together to make it happen” implying that the environmental change thus relies on the activity of the existing community, which is not the case for externally implemented spatial clean ups. V: “And people could just bring things like furniture from the yards into the street”</i>
→ Unpolished	
→ Impermanent	
→ An Endogenous Initiative	
CARD 4	Ecologist 2 & Green Corridors
Species Found in the Area	<i>V: Have you seen the marks on the trees at Kvillebäcken, there are beavers, I at first thought it was an artwork. D: There are Dragonflies up on the hill by the lake. J: The seagulls have their kids here, other than that I have not seen many. D: Over there, there often is a hare (pointing north-west in the neighborhood). R: I have seen deer up here. V: Plenty of birds and Squirrels.</i>

How to Establish Ecological Corridors	R: with trees for example we could make it pretty green. V & J: I think it could work together to some degree.
Favorite & Avoided Green Spaces	V: There is a beautiful waterfall. D: For me the woods up the stairs are the most beautiful parts. That is my satisfying nature experience. The worst is at the river-edge. There is a lot of rubbish, but it could be really nice there. I don't really feel inclined to sit there on the grass somehow.
What About the Beighborhood Park?	<i>Everyone reacts quickly!</i> D: I don't like it. J: Yeah Same! D: It feels a bit dodgy. D: When I first came here, I used to regularly take walks through the neighborhood. This street (lower part of Hisingsgatan and the park) always felt strange to me. and when I passed it, I felt relief for some reason. It doesn't feel unsafe there, but just like I should not stop here. I think it because there are not as many people there.
...and Herkulesgatan?	V: There is something with the housing there, the buildings are closed on the bottom floor – implying feeling of vulnerability . R: It is the only street that has car parking at only one side. D: Especially when you are walking at night, maybe it is also something with the lighting, but then we go back into the problem of gentrification again.
CARD 5	Incentivizing Movement
Accessing & Exploring Lilla Ramberget	V: I really enjoy bringing the kids to school every day. Because you get to walk through the nature every day. The slope is great. It's a collective thing and we walk up there daily and that somehow keeps us fit . There is always something to talk about. Saying to others "you go!" The shared struggle is building community . V: There is a small bridge over the small brook, which incentivizes people to take another path, especially the kids. Going to the waterfall like an adventure for them – because of that going home can take one hour, even though it would theoretically only take seven minutes. D: Our stairs are narrower than the path, so people just pass each other. But before we pass the beautiful nature, often my daughter takes an alternative path while I take the paved path home. I enjoy being in the woods. Being in the nature daily, hearing the birds, feels good for mental health somehow. And when we reach the top, we look at the beautiful view together. J: It is interesting – somehow, I don't spend much time there, because I often go out running or cycling and the slope is too steep. I sometimes go to the viewing point. <i>Reflection: The well-being of parents seems to benefit a lot from the nature. Because of their kids they are forced to pass through it daily. However, people who don't have an initial reason to head out might be less likely to spend time in the nature. → small features and alternative paths to enhance attraction.</i> There is a general consent is it would be fun to have some elements that encourage moving through the street more actively or playfully, BUT they should not feel like a detour, they should follow along the main movement routes! The incorporation of water for play or recreation is also very welcomed. R: Maybe, half the street could stay asphalted, allowing kids to play or use rollerblades, the other half could be green or gravel to allow people to run and not hurt their knees.
How to Nudge Movement Through Spatial Intervention	

Feel Free to Reach out!
mika.deitert@gmail.com