VERTROUWEN BOUWEN

FROM SPACE TO PLACE AT KAMERRADE

TU Delft – AR0095
Social Inequality in the City, Diversity and Design

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Content

1. Introduction

This report presents the final outcomes of our design project for the course *Social Inequality, Diversity and Equality in the City* (AR0095), conducted in Spring 2025 at TU Delft. The course focuses on understanding how migration, diversity, and social inequality impact neighbourhoods and cities, and explores how urban policies and design can contribute to more inclusive, connected communities. The project applied these themes in a real-world context: the regeneration of the Marterrade area in The Hague Southwest.
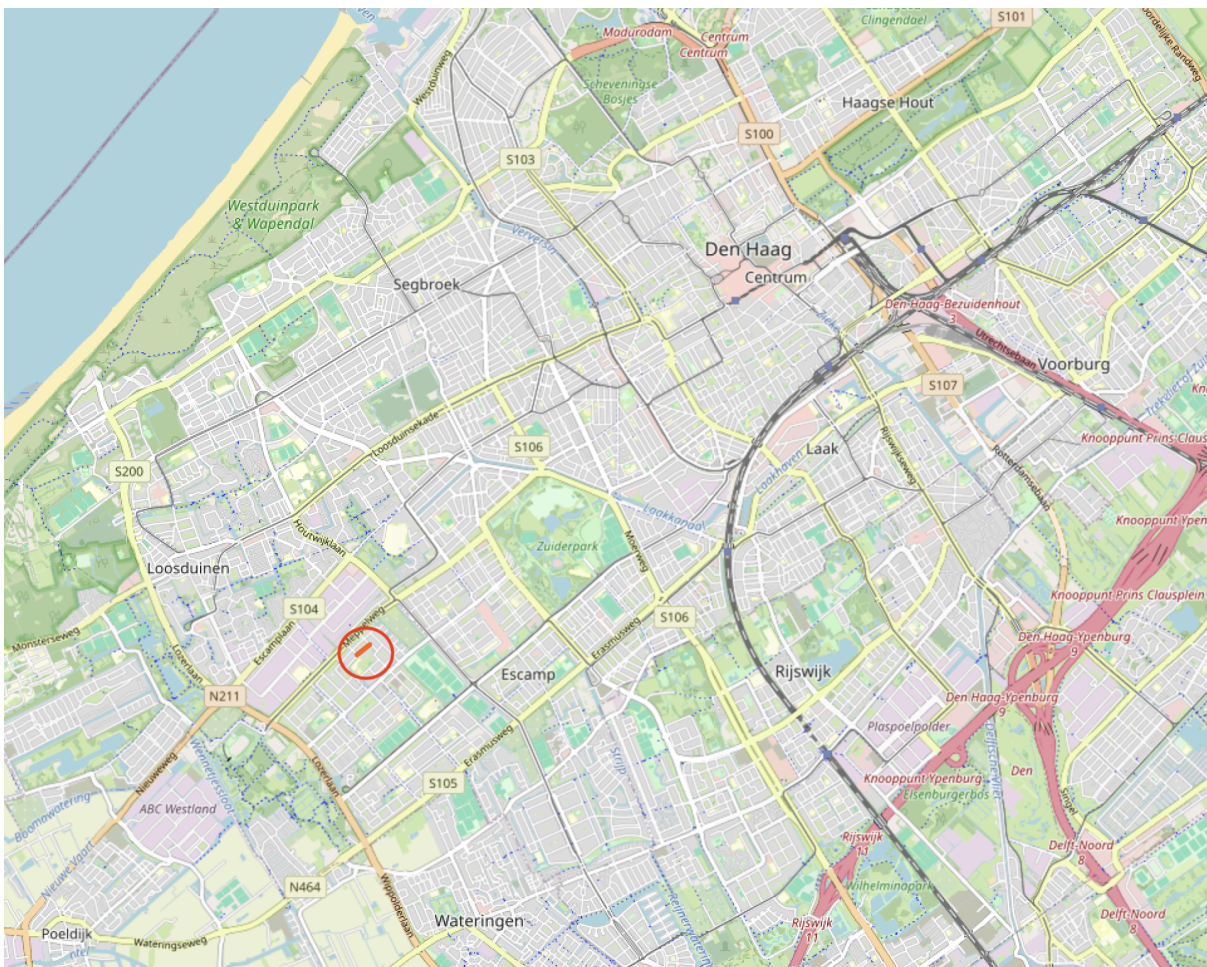
Figure 01: Area of Marterrade in Context, from openstreetmap,

The focus area, Marterrade, is a central street in the Raden neighbourhood - part of a post-war urban fabric currently facing complex social challenges. These include ageing housing stock, rising poverty, unemployment, educational disadvantage, and growing feelings of insecurity among residents. In response, the local housing association, Haag Wonen, along with public and private stakeholders, has initiated a more bottom-up, community-based regeneration programme. This initiative is part of the larger

20-year National Programme The Hague Southwest (NPZW), which aims to improve quality of life and wellbeing in the area.

At the heart of this initiative lies the Kamerrade, a recently reactivated community center that now functions as a social and cultural meeting point in the neighbourhood. Haag Wonen's vision is to transform this area – not only physically through new housing and greening interventions, but socially, by strengthening local networks and encouraging resident participation. The goal is to create a vibrant, safe, and inclusive neighbourhood, where residents feel ownership and connection to both place and each other.

The guiding research question for our group was: How can participatory design and placemaking contribute to building trust and social cohesion in the Marterrade neighbourhood, especially through spatial interventions around the Kamerrade?

To address this, we combined fieldwork, literature review, and stakeholder engagement across three co-creation sessions. Our interventions aim to catalyze small-scale change in both the physical and social environment, guided by the principles of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) and Design Justice. Each proposed intervention is grounded in a theory of change for sustainable social impact - beginning with the current reality and working toward the envisioned future. These theories of change provide a framework for analyzing available resources and identifying the collaborative efforts required from diverse stakeholders, offering researchers a structured path to define actionable steps toward the desired outcomes (GCIR, 2023).

This report documents our team's research and design process over the course of the project. It outlines our engagement with residents, our observations of the spatial and social context, and the resulting design interventions. A key theme that emerged throughout our work is the issue of trust - both among residents and between residents and institutions. This challenge surfaced strongly during the co-creation sessions and became central to our final proposal. Our design interventions focus on rebuilding and strengthening trust through socio-spatial strategies and active community involvement, aiming to foster long-term, meaningful change.

2. Engagement Strategies

To understand both the internal dynamics of the Kamerrade community center and the broader perspectives of residents in the Marterrade neighbourhood, we employed a variety of engagement strategies throughout the project. Each session built upon the previous one, allowing us to iteratively deepen our insights and adjust our methods accordingly.

In the first session, we focused on gathering individual perspectives through questionnaires and visual mapping, providing residents with multiple ways to express their views – ranging from written responses to drawings and value statements. The second session expanded our outreach: through semi-structured interviews, walk-and-talk conversations, and field observations, we engaged a broader demographic and included key local actors such as Haag Wonen staff and volunteers. Finally, the third session culminated in a hands-on co-creation workshop, where residents, students, and stakeholders collaboratively constructed flower boxes and engaged in participatory design activities.

Our methodological approach combined placemaking, participatory observation, co-creation, and asset mapping, grounded in the following theoretical frameworks:

- **Design Justice** (Costanza-Chock, 2020): prioritizing the needs and voices of marginalized and underrepresented users in the design process.

- **Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)** (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003): focusing on local strengths, talents, and existing social capital rather than deficits.

- **Placemaking** (Project for Public Spaces, 2009): enhancing the meaning, usability, and social function of public space through community participation.

Our strategies were continuously adapted based on demographic feedback and session outcomes – such as the limited age diversity in the first session – leading us to pursue more inclusive, informal, and context-sensitive forms of engagement in the subsequent sessions.

Overview of Engagement per Session:

- **Session 1**: Questionnaire and visual mapping activities

- **Session 2**: Semi-structured interviews (residents, staff, volunteers), walk-and-talks, site observation

- **Session 3**: Participatory building workshop ("Talking Table") and direct engagement through collaborative activities

This layered engagement strategy enabled us to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights, inform the design process iteratively, and build trust with residents over time.

2.1 Strategies Session One

2.1.1 Questionnaire

For the first co-creation session, our primary engagement strategy was a questionnaire (*Appendix I*) designed to allow residents to express their opinions through a variety of formats. This approach was chosen for several key reasons.

Firstly, due to language constraints – only one group member without Dutch proficiency was able to attend – it was essential to employ a low-threshold, self-explanatory method that could still yield meaningful insights. The questionnaire offered a simple yet effective way for residents to share their perspectives without the need for extensive facilitation or translation.

Secondly, the use of questionnaires is widely supported in the literature as a valid method in participatory urban design processes. They are particularly effective in capturing resident attitudes, perceived needs, and priorities within their living environment (Balram & Dragićević, 2005; Rad et al., 2019). Drawing on these sources, our questionnaire focused on three key themes: greening, safety, and design.

The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended items. Residents were asked to rate various aspects of their neighbourhood using a 1–10 scale, allowing us to assess the relative importance and satisfaction across different domains. In addition, visual prompts and space for drawings or comments were provided to accommodate diverse ways of expressing input, which proved especially useful given the elderly demographic of most participants.

This approach ensured that, even without extensive verbal interaction, we could collect a baseline understanding of community perspectives that informed our subsequent sessions. Additionally, the format allowed for passive participation: the questionnaire was later displayed at the Kamerrade, enabling residents to contribute their input at their own pace and convenience. This not only extended the reach of

our engagement but also respected the rhythms and routines of the local community, especially for those who may not have been present during the scheduled session.

2.1.2 Mapping

In addition to the questionnaire, we employed mapping as a complementary engagement strategy during the first co-creation session. This method invited residents to reflect spatially by identifying areas of concern or potential within their immediate surroundings and expressing ideas for improvement directly onto maps or images of the neighbourhood.

Mapping exercises are widely recognized in participatory urban design as effective tools for eliciting local knowledge and spatial preferences. Research shows that encouraging residents to visually communicate their ideas – by drawing, marking, or annotating maps – can reveal insights that are difficult to capture through text or verbal responses alone (e.g., Hou, 2010; Sandercock, 2003). These methods also support more inclusive participation, especially among those who may feel less confident in formal discussion settings.

The goal of our mapping strategy was to understand how residents perceive their environment and what they would change if given the opportunity. By grounding spatial feedback in lived experience, we aimed to generate data that could directly inform both design and planning phases.

2.2 Session Two Strategies

2.2.1 Observations & Imagination

Following the outcomes of the first co-creation session, our second-week engagement strategy centered on observation and imaginative exploration to better understand resident concerns – specifically around cleanliness, greening, and the social atmosphere of the neighbourhood.
We conducted unstructured observations throughout the public spaces surrounding the Kamerrade. Without a rigid framework or checklist, we aimed to remain open to the everyday rhythms, informal uses, and subtle tensions of the area. This allowed us to note how people moved through space, where interactions occurred – or failed to – and how physical features such as fences, litter, and benches shaped behavior and spatial perception. These observations helped us ground our later design interventions in the actual lived experience of the neighbourhood.

Our approach was inspired by the urban tactics of flânerie (Benjamin, 1999) and the dérive (Debord, 1956), both of which emphasize slow, reflective movement through the city. These methods encouraged us to drift through the area with heightened attentiveness, absorbing not only spatial configurations but also atmospheres, patterns of use, and moments of encounter or isolation. This open-ended mode of exploration helped uncover both problems and latent possibilities in the neighbourhood fabric.

In addition, we used imagination-based scenarios to mentally simulate the experience of different user groups – such as elderly residents, parents with children, or individuals with limited mobility. By imaginatively placing ourselves in their positions, we could assess how accessible, safe, or welcoming the spaces felt. This perspective-taking added depth to our spatial analysis and informed the inclusivity of our design proposals.

Our findings confirmed that social interaction – and its absence – was a key element shaping perceptions of the neighbourhood. Echoing Aelbrecht (2010), we observed that spatial design plays a pivotal role in either enabling or inhibiting social contact. This further reinforced our aim to develop interventions that foster trust through shared, visible, and inviting spaces.

2.2.2 Interviews

The limited demographic diversity of respondents in the first co-creation session prompted a revision of our engagement strategy in the second session. While input from residents is a cornerstone of participatory urban design, research highlights the importance of collecting diverse perspectives to avoid skewed conclusions (Faehnle et al., 2014). In our case, most participants in session one were over the age of 70, leading to a potential overrepresentation of older residents' needs and preferences.

To address this, we expanded our scope by conducting interviews not only with residents at the Kamerrade but also with those encountered outside the community center. We also included employees and volunteers working for Haag Wonen. This broader engagement allowed us to gather a more balanced and representative understanding of neighbourhood needs across different demographics and stakeholder roles.

2.2.2.1 Interviews with Residents and Employees

To build on the insights gathered from the initial questionnaire, we conducted both explanatory and exploratory interviews inside the Kamerrade. The explanatory interviews aimed to interpret and contextualize residents' responses to the survey – clarifying why certain topics (e.g. safety, cleanliness)

were seen as particularly important. This approach is consistent with best practices in urban research, where qualitative follow-ups are used to deepen understanding of quantitative findings (Næss, 2010).

Additionally, exploratory interviews with employees and volunteers provided further insight into the day-to-day functioning of the community center and its social role in the neighbourhood. These actors offered valuable perspectives on issues such as resident participation, trust in institutions, and perceived barriers to engagement – elements that might not surface through resident interviews alone.

2.2.3 Walk-and-talk with Residents

To increase demographic diversity, we conducted approximately fifteen interviews with residents in the surrounding area using a walk-and-talk method. This informal, mobile format allowed for more natural conversations in the context of the built environment. Walk-and-talk interviews are increasingly used in urban design research for their ability to surface experiential knowledge and site-specific feedback (Wijnowska-Heciak et al., 2018).

These interviews were conducted in Dutch, English, and Arabic, depending on the respondent's preference, and typically included residents between the ages of 30 and 60. This helped balance the age skew from the first session and brought in new perspectives – particularly from middle-aged adults and parents – on issues such as safety, mobility, and youth behavior in public space.

2.2.4 Conclusion of Co-Creation Session 2

In response to the demographic limitations observed in session one, the second co-creation session prioritized inclusivity by involving a wider range of stakeholders. By interviewing residents inside and outside the Kamerrade, as well as employees and volunteers, young and old, we were able to triangulate multiple viewpoints and reduce the risk of bias in our understanding of the neighbourhood.

This inclusive engagement strategy is aligned with urban design best practices, which emphasize the importance of capturing a broad spectrum of voices – especially in socially complex or diverse environments (Faehnle et al., 2014). Additionally, the combination of interviews with observations from the same session enabled us to validate patterns and detect contradictions between stated opinions and actual spatial behavior, strengthening the reliability of our findings.

2.3 Session Three Strategies

2.3.1 Active Participation

The third and final co-creation session at the Kamerrade focused on active participation through a hands-on building activity. Residents, Kamerrade staff, and students collaborated in the design and assembly of temporary plant boxes for the public square. This form of participation aimed to transform abstract ideas from previous sessions into tangible outcomes, while also fostering direct collaboration between diverse actors in the neighbourhood.

Active co-creation in public space is a widely acknowledged practice in urban design and community planning. It facilitates mutual learning, fosters local ownership, and strengthens social ties among participants (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). Through physical participation, residents are not only invited to voice their ideas but also to materially shape their environment - enhancing their sense of agency and stewardship. As Manzini (2015) emphasizes, such small-scale actions can serve as seeds of larger social innovation when embedded within community networks.

From a participatory design perspective, this session also functioned as a "design-in-use" moment - an opportunity for participants to test, adapt, and reflect on ideas as they were being implemented (Binder et al., 2011). Building the plant boxes together allowed space for informal conversation, intergenerational interaction, and spontaneous feedback on design choices.

While the co-creation format was highly effective in terms of engagement, it must be noted that the constraints of the course format - such as time and pre-defined deliverables - limited the inclusion of alternative or supplementary engagement strategies during this session. Nevertheless, the visible, physical nature of the activity attracted participation from a more diverse group of residents, including those who had not engaged in earlier sessions. This affirms the value of low-threshold, action-oriented participation in reaching broader audiences and initiating local change.

2.3.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation was used as a core method to gain deeper insight into the everyday experiences and social dynamics within the Kamerrade community center. This approach involved actively engaging in the same environment and activities as the residents – such as conversations, shared meals, and collaborative construction tasks – while simultaneously observing spatial behavior, social interactions, and participation patterns.

Widely applied in urban ethnography and community design research, participant observation allows researchers to move beyond surface-level understanding by experiencing the environment from the perspective of its users (Byrne, 2021). This immersive method gave us access to subtle social dynamics – such as tone of voice, group cohesion, or hesitation to participate – which would likely have remained invisible through interviews or surveys alone.

During these sessions, we identified generational differences in how and when residents chose to engage. Elderly participants were more inclined toward indoor and conversational formats, while younger individuals were drawn to active, hands-on outdoor involvement. Informal features like shared snacks or the presence of music consistently helped lower participation barriers and fostered a more relaxed atmosphere. These insights informed several aspects of our design proposal, particularly the incorporation of seating areas and low-threshold participatory elements in the public space.

Beyond data collection, participant observation also functioned as a trust-building tool. Our active presence helped signal commitment and sincerity, gradually making residents more comfortable with sharing their experiences and perspectives. As Manzini (2015) notes, sustained relational engagement is crucial for effective co-design in socially complex environments, where trust must be earned through action as well as dialogue.

3. Co-Creation Sessions Results

Over the course of the project, three co-creation sessions were held at the Kamerrade, involving residents from the Marterrade neighbourhood, staff from Haag Wonen and TU Delft, and students from different universities. While the primary aim of these sessions was to identify local concerns and needs through direct engagement, they became much more than mere data-gathering exercises. These gatherings served as critical touchpoints in the mutual learning process, helping us understand not only the physical environment but also the social dynamics that shape everyday life in the neighbourhood.

More importantly, these sessions functioned as the first steps toward building trust – a recurring theme identified by both residents and stakeholders as essential for any lasting transformation. Participatory design is most effective when residents feel seen, heard, and empowered. In this sense, each session became an opportunity to foster relationships, test engagement strategies, and iteratively co-create both ideas and community connections.

This chapter presents the key findings and reflections from each of the three sessions, showing how each encounter contributed to the shaping of our final design proposal.

3.1. First Co-Creation Session - Survey of Residents

The first co-creation session took place at the Kamerrade and was designed as an introductory encounter with the neighbourhood's residents. Due to limited Dutch proficiency within our group, only one non-Dutch-speaking student was able to attend, which led us to collaborate with another group that provided a Dutch-speaking delegate to help facilitate the session.

Participation was entirely voluntary, and aside from students and community supporters, residents were free to join without prior registration. To gather initial insights, our group prepared a questionnaire accompanied by visual prompts. These materials aimed to explore three core themes: resident demographics, perceptions of the current state of the Marterrade, and visions for the future of the neighbourhood.

On the day of the event, the majority of attendees were elderly residents. Rather than engaging directly with structured activities, most participants gravitated toward casual conversations with each other and with students. Materials from various groups were laid out on the tables, encouraging open interaction.

While students made active efforts to initiate dialogue, the language barrier made it difficult for our delegate to conduct in-depth discussions with the residents.

Despite this limitation, participants showed strong interest in completing the questionnaires, and their responses provided valuable baseline insights. To extend the data collection effort, we later displayed the questionnaire at the Kamerrade, allowing other visitors to respond over the following weeks. However, as the project progressed, our engagement approach evolved toward more interactive methods – such as interviews and walk-and-talk sessions – which ultimately proved more effective for collecting rich, qualitative data.

Figure 02: *The exterior and interior of Kamerrade*

3.1.1. Analysis of Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire responses collected during the first co-creation session reveal several recurring themes and preferences among participants. However, before interpreting these findings, it is important to acknowledge a clear demographic limitation: all respondents were above the age of 60, which inevitably shaped the outcomes. While this group offered valuable lived experience and insight into the area's evolution over time, the results carry an **age-related bias** and do not fully represent the diversity of the neighbourhood.

Mobility and Everyday Use of the Marterrade

Most participants reported walking as their primary mode of movement through the area, though many also made occasional use of cars, bicycles, or mobility scooters. These findings reflect a need for walkable infrastructure that accommodates varied physical capacities. Observationally, the area showed significant use of bicycles and cars, including parked vehicles near the Kamerrade. While not explicitly stated in the questionnaires, several participants raised informal concerns during conversation about the presence of fat bikes, particularly those ridden at high speeds by local teenagers – an issue that contributes to feelings of insecurity among older residents.

Desire for Calm and Clean Spaces

A dominant theme in the responses was a strong preference for calm, clean, and low-activity environments. Many participants expressed a desire for peaceful public spaces with minimal noise and disturbance. Rather than seeking increased social interaction or greening initiatives, respondents emphasized basic urban maintenance – such as more frequent trash collection, cigarette butt disposal, and better seating. These requests reflect a pragmatic orientation toward comfort and safety, rather than transformation or experimentation.

Interestingly, several residents stated that they had already "seen enough" greening projects and expressed fatigue toward repeated attempts at communal gardening or beautification. This feedback challenges common design assumptions that greening is universally desirable, especially when it entails community upkeep responsibilities.

Ambivalence Toward Community Gardening

Although most participants acknowledged the ecological value of community gardens and green space, many were reluctant to participate actively in their creation or maintenance. Some cited age and physical limitations, while others conveyed a general skepticism about the sustainability of such initiatives. This tension raises a crucial design question: Who is expected to take ownership of shared space improvements, and how can we ensure that interventions do not unintentionally burden those who are unable or unwilling to maintain them?

This reluctance also brings to light the issue of long-term stewardship. While co-creation often emphasizes community involvement, our findings highlight the need to critically assess assumptions about capacity, motivation, and responsibility – especially in contexts where aging populations may face physical or social constraints.

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"I like the way it is now. I don't want to do gardening – I'm too old for that."

(Resident, Kamerrade)

01 - Marterrade plein en binnentuinen
In deze eerste opdracht leren we graag meer over u, zodat we uw wensen beter kunnen begrijpen.
Plaats een sticker op de plek die voor u van toepassing is.

Hoelang woont u al in deze wijk?				Hoe beweegt u zich meestal door de wijk?			(meerdere opties aanvinken mag)
				lopend	in een rolstoel	met een kinderwagen	met een rollator of wandelstok
X		10 jaar (circled)		X ja X			X NEE
1 jaar	5 jaar	10 jaar	15 of meer	fiets X	auto	skateboard	anders, namelijk... scootmobiel
			50 jaar X→	ja			scootmobiel

Hoe oud bent u?

0 - 9	10 - 18	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 59	60 - 69	70 - 79	80 +
							X 79	80

01 - Marterrade plein en binnentuinen
In deze eerste first opdracht willlen we leren wie u bent, zodat we uw wensen voor de wijk beter begrijpen.
Beantwoord de volgende vragen, dat mag in woorden of met een tekening

Wat zijn uw wensen voor het plein en de binnentuinen ?	Welke problemen ervaart u op het plein en in de binnentuinen ?
terrace near KamerRade takken goed sluiken ja! Bomen ja!	Not enough bins → dirty nothing for cigarette ends honden poep rotzooi

01 - Marterrade plein en binnentuinen
Geef met een sticker aan of u het met de zinnen eens bent: de schaal loopt van 1 (= helemaal oneens) tot 10 (= helemaal eens)
De meeste zinnen gaan over het plein en de binnentuinen van de Marterrade.

	1	5	10
Er is genoeg groen.	ist voorjaar de planten find ik mooi genoeg	ϴ X X	X
Er zijn te veel auto`s.	X	X X X	X
Er zijn genoeg plekken om buiten te zitten.	X (square) X X	ja	X
Er is genoeg schaduw in de zomer.	ja	(X)	X X x X
Er zijn genoeg plekken om te spelen.	genoeg!		X X x X
Meer groen is het belangrijkste aandachtspunt.	ja X	X X	X
Het idee van een gemeenschappelijke moestuin spreekt me aan.	X X		x x
Het lijkt me leuk om zelf te tuinieren in de tuin.	X X X X		x
Ik vind het leuk om in deze wijk te leven.	ja	X X	X x x
Ik voel mij veilig in de wijk.	ja	X X X	X x x
Ik wil meer contacten in de wijk.	hier in de wijk ook X x X	X x	
Ik zou graag mijn tijd bijdragen om de buurt en het plein groener te maken.	X x x	X	x
De wijk is schoon.	niet	X X X	X
Ik voel mij thuis in de wijk.	geen tijd voor JA X x		x x x
Ik weet goed hoe en waar ik mijn afval kan scheiden.	to veel afval		X X X X x

Figure 03: *Filled out Questionnaire after Session One.*

3.1.2. Reflection of Mapping Results

As several groups included mapping as a key engagement strategy during the first co-creation session, we agreed to collaborate with Group 1, who kindly offered to facilitate the mapping exercise on our behalf – particularly due to the language limitations within our own group. Unfortunately, the method proved largely ineffective: none of the participating residents chose to engage with the mapping activity, and no meaningful results were produced or shared.

This outcome highlights a critical mismatch between the method and the demographic context. The elderly participants, who formed the majority of attendees, appeared reluctant to engage in abstract or unfamiliar tasks such as annotating maps. The passive setup and the lack of guided facilitation may also have contributed to the low engagement.

Rather than discarding the method entirely, this experience suggests a need to reframe and adapt mapping tools to better suit the comfort levels and capacities of the participants. Based on our observations and subsequent reflections, we recommend a conversation-based mapping approach, in which a Dutch-speaking facilitator engages residents in dialogue and translates spoken responses into mapped observations. This method could reduce cognitive barriers, feel more natural for participants, and foster a greater sense of shared authorship.

In short, this reflection emphasizes the importance of matching participatory methods to the communication preferences, cultural norms, and energy levels of different user groups – particularly in age-diverse or vulnerable communities. By doing so, the mapping process could evolve from a passive data collection tool into a more relational, inclusive form of spatial storytelling.

3.1.3. Conclusion

The first co-creation session at the Kamerrade offered an important initial point of contact with residents, though the participant group was limited in scope – all attendees were over the age of 60. Through the use of a questionnaire, we gathered valuable insights into residents' perceptions of the current conditions in the Marterrade, their everyday mobility, and their visions – or reservations – about neighbourhood change.

The results revealed a recurring theme: while many residents appreciated the idea of a cleaner and greener environment, there was little willingness to actively engage in gardening or maintenance efforts. This reluctance appeared to stem from physical limitations due to age, but also from a sense of fatigue with repeated greening initiatives that lacked long-term follow-through.

At the same time, participants expressed concerns about safety, particularly the disruptive presence of fast-moving fat bikes on the central square. This concern reflects both a spatial and social disconnect – where shared spaces are not perceived as inclusive or safe for more vulnerable users. A smaller number of participants expressed enthusiasm for planting and biodiversity improvements, though again, their role was envisioned more as passive beneficiaries rather than active co-creators.

Taken together, these findings suggest that future interventions should focus on:

- Low-maintenance design solutions
- Passive engagement opportunities
- Tangible improvements to safety and cleanliness

This session shaped our understanding of both the physical and psychological thresholds to participation – and set the stage for adapting our approach in subsequent sessions to reach a broader and more diverse group of residents.

3.2. Second Co-Creation Session - Interviews and Field Research in Marterrade

Two students from our group attended the second co-creation session at the Kamerrade community center in the Marterrade neighbourhood. Throughout the afternoon and evening, we engaged in four complementary research strategies to deepen our understanding of the local context:

- Interviews with residents (both inside and outside the Kamerrade)

- Interviews with employees and volunteers

- Observational walks through the neighbourhood

- Walk-and-talk interviews with residents

This section presents our findings and reflections from each method, followed by an integrated overview of challenges and potentials identified during the session.

3.2.1. Interviews with Residents

Inside the Kamerrade, the number of attending residents was small, and nearly all were elderly women. Despite the low turnout, the interviews offered intimate and emotionally resonant insights. One woman shared that Kamerrade finally gave her a place to connect: after over 20 years living in the same building, she only recently learned her neighbour's name – after meeting her at the center. Another resident said she enjoys speaking with students and young people, especially because her grandchildren live far away. Some participants expressed a desire to see more young people come to Kamerrade.

These personal stories were powerful, though concrete concerns were limited. In contrast, interviews conducted outside the center offered a more critical and diverse perspective. Conducted in Dutch, English, and Arabic, and often in collaboration with other students, these interviews included residents aged 30 – 60. Surprisingly, most interviewees expressed that there was enough green space, light, and public space in the neighbourhood.

However, one issue was repeatedly emphasized: teenagers on e-bikes. Residents described this group as a source of fear and conflict, citing high-speed riding near children and elderly people as a key reason for feeling unsafe. The presence of e-bikes was said to disrupt the park's intended use and create intergenerational tension.

Additional issues raised included:

- Littering and lack of waste bins, which residents feared could affect new greening initiatives.

- The square in front of Kamerrade, described as unattractive and underused, partly due to being in shade most of the day.

While many concerns were familiar, the interviews also helped to build trust and rapport with residents. Forming brief personal connections gave us deeper insights and showed participants that they were being listened to.

3.2.2. Interviews with Employees and Volunteers

A Haag Wonen staff member shared valuable insight into both long-term goals and practical limitations of the regeneration project. While the vision includes removing the fences around Kamerrade to improve openness and accessibility, growing safety concerns among residents have made this increasingly difficult. The community's tendency toward defensive architecture – gates, locks, surveillance – is both a cause and a symptom of widespread distrust within the neighbourhood.

Interestingly, this theme of distrust extended beyond security. The same staff member described competition and conflict among local artists, which has hindered efforts to launch an outdoor art exhibition in the square and other creative projects. These tensions delay projects and raise questions about how creative initiatives can truly be co-owned in fragmented communities.

A particularly inspiring initiative mentioned by a volunteer and another employee was Haag Wonen's time-trade housing strategy: offering two young, formerly unhoused men free apartments above Kamerrade in exchange for their volunteer work. The goal is to foster sustained local engagement and social responsibility. This is a unique and very effective example for how to bring life and commitment into a community as the lack of time for engagement is often a factor of failure when it comes to community building. While future studios may eventually replace this arrangement, Haag Wonen expressed a strong commitment to retaining this socially supportive model.

This interview highlighted the delicate balance Haag Wonen is attempting to strike: building a self-sustaining, economically viable community center that also remains inclusive and socially responsive.

3.2.3 Observational Walk Through the Marterrade

To complement interviews, we conducted several observational walks to identify visible challenges and latent opportunities in the spatial environment. The use of sketches and photos helped us document impressions and spot design-related issues that may otherwise have gone unnoticed.

For better orientation, the map below indicates where the photos from in the following sections were taken.
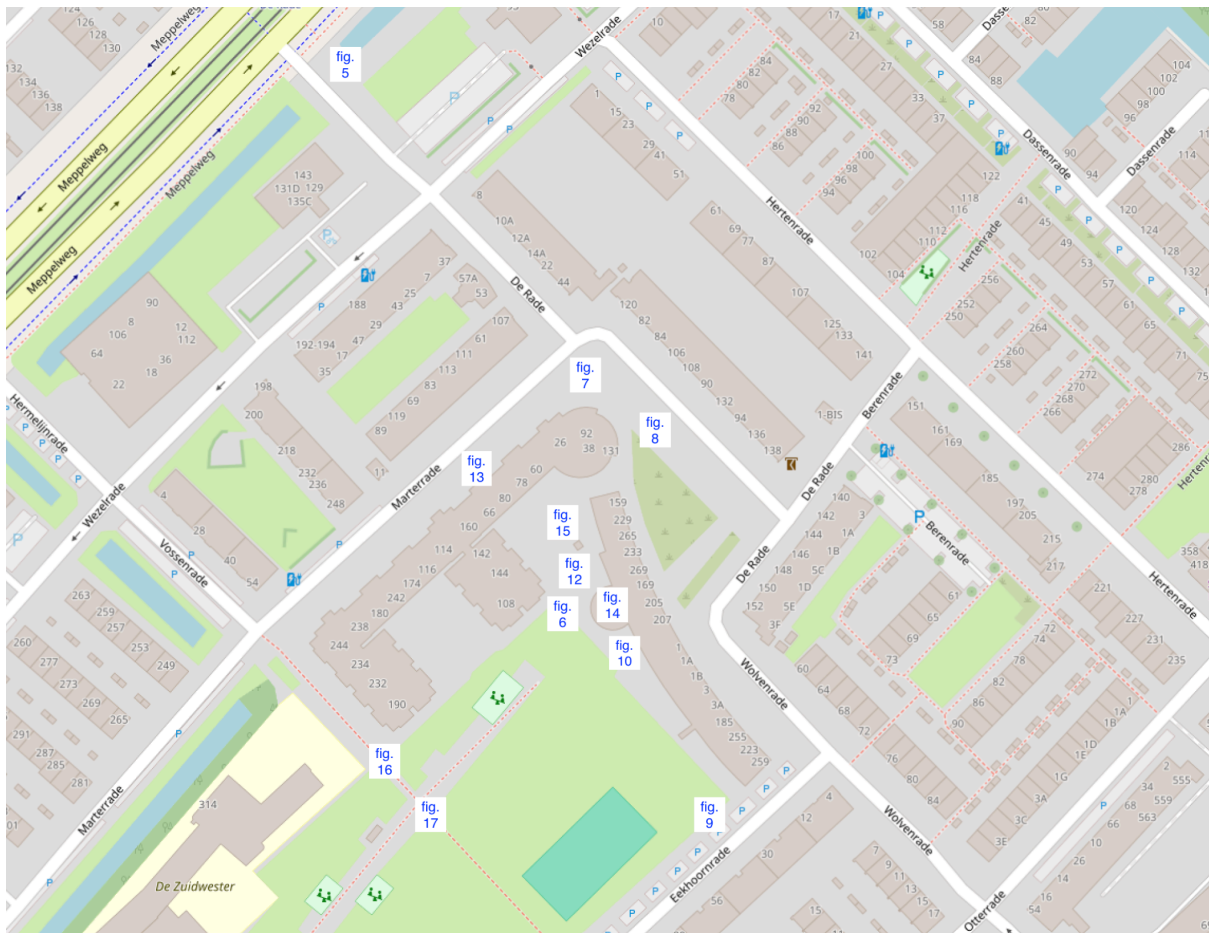
Figure 04: Photo Map of Kamerrade Area

3.2.3.1 Identified Challenges

a. Littering

Before the session started, we were walking through the neighborhood to get a first feel and observatory understanding of the area. What becomes directly evident when entering the Marterrade from the tram stop *De Rade* is the many rubbish elements in the green parts on the side of the street and around the waterbody. On our walk we came to find that the littering was very likely due to the lack of trash cans in the area. In the main area of the park alone our brief walk revealed only four trash cans, on the streets there were barely any.

Figure 05: Littering near the tram station De Rade   *Figure 06: Littering behind Kamerrade*

b. Lack of Visibility of Kamerrade

Continuing our walk we arrived at the Kamerrade which is indeed an outstanding building in the area, due to its height and form. However, it is not very recognizable as a center. There are no big outdoor signs visible from the accessing roads nor any outdoor seats, fairy lights or wimplets that would mark the area as special or communal.

Figure 07: The current facade of the Kamerrade

c. Inefficiently Used Space

The small green space with bushes and artworks does not accommodate social interactions. The round bench around the tree is uninviting as people sit back to back next to a row of parked cars and under a tree where birds' nest and poo. The fact that the front of the Kamerrade is not inviting people to stay, spend time there and engage in the space, may serve as one of the main reasons why the Kamerrade is not yet recognized as a center. There is a lot of literature and knowledge on what a "good square" consists of. While local context and adaptation has to be taken into account, Camillo Sitte's (1945) *The Art of Building Cities*, offers one such foundation for a good square which came to mind when walking the neighborhood of Marterrade. According to Sitte, the following principles could be beneficial to consider for the development of the Marterrade Square: Creating a room within the city (an intimate space that is framed to some extent), having a varied and not organic layout, focusing on viewpoints and perspectives (creating visually engaging sitting spots), incorporating natural elements, encouraging social interactions (through passive and active use), and providing a sense of drama and surprise (an element of discovery, play with light and shadow).

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Figure 08: The Marterrade side square

d. Defensive Architecture

Walking through the neighborhood creates a certain feeling of fear and distrust. This is evoked strongly by elements of defensive architecture such as fences, gates, roadblocks, parked cars and observable spaces.

Figure 09: Fences next to the park

Figure 10: Fences behind Kamerrade
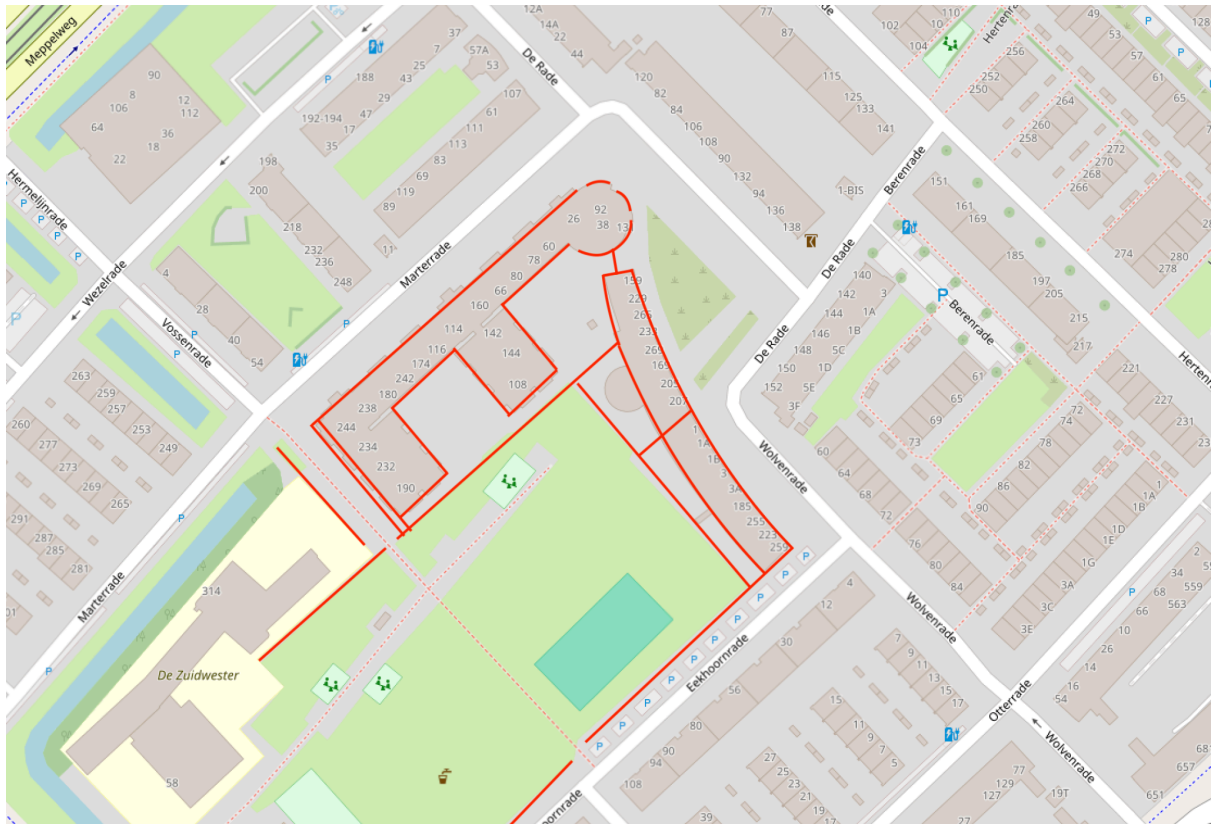
Figure 11: Map of the Rade buildings and the park, red lines show the fences and physical barriers. around Kamerrade

3.2.3.2. Identified Qualities and Passive Potential

a.   Location and Layout of the Kamerrade

The neighborhood has a unique potential, especially the Kamerrade. From the identified main square in front of the Kamerrade you could   potentially access the big park directly on the backside as a throughway, through the building and outside of the building. Strengthening this axis could   improve neighborhood connectivity and coherence a lot and create the desired visibility and usage of the Kamerade by different age groups.

Figure 12: The fence between the Kamerrade and the park

b. Neighbor with Garden

Just around the corner from Kamerrade entrance, about 100 meters, there is a neighbor who – judging by their garden – likes to garden. This could potentially be a knowledge resource in the neighborhood who might be willing to lead a gardening workshop or engage in volunteering work in the urban garden boxes.
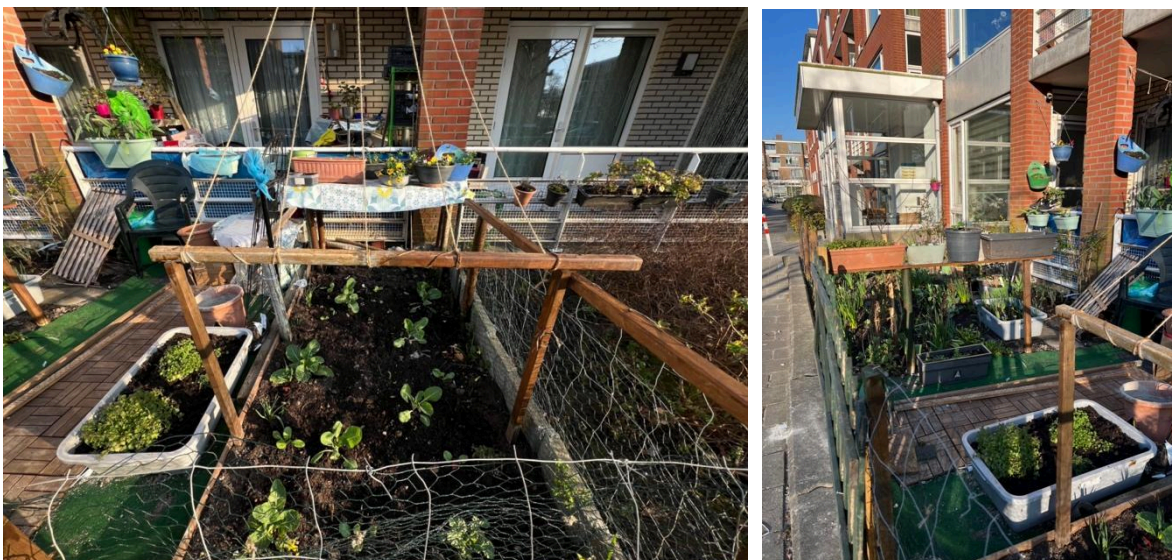
Figure 13: Private vegetable patch in the Marterrade

c. Storage Pavilion

On the ground floor of the adjacent building to the Kamerrade, there is a pavilion-like structure which is currently partially used as storage space (according to staff from Haag Wonen). This pavilion bears great potential as a communal outdoor space and should be considered in the further and long-term projecting of the neighborhood.

Figure 14: Storage pavilion

3.2.4 Walking and Talking with Residents

a. In and around Kamerrade Community Center with a Resident

One of the elderly women who lives adjacent to the Kamerrade, showed us to the backyard/courtyard of the Kamerrade and her house while the sun was still out a little bit. There are nice, seemingly quiet corners for the residents of the building to use. The area was on "the sunny side", thus creating a nice place to be all day long. However, the woman pointed out three issues: the noise of the kids in the adjacent park (especially the metal covered slide), the lack of shade in the summer, and the lack of sitting areas. When asked about the fence and gate, the woman acknowledged that it was not desirable, however it does enhance the feeling of safety for herself and other residents, for one from burglars, and for two from ride-through traffic.

Figure 15: The Kamerrade courtyard

b. Walk in the Park in the Dark with a Resident

One resident took us for a walk to the park in the dark after the session. She herself was in a wheel-assisted vehicle, which we noticed made it slightly more difficult to enter the park with the fence. (Photo below from the afternoon shows the entrance.) While this was not the main point to notice, it was nonetheless informative. As we arrived at the park, we all noticed how dark it was. The feeling of possibly not being seen by a scooter and being run over was strong and added to the general feeling of being unsafe in the dark – people could easily hide behind trees, the resident said.
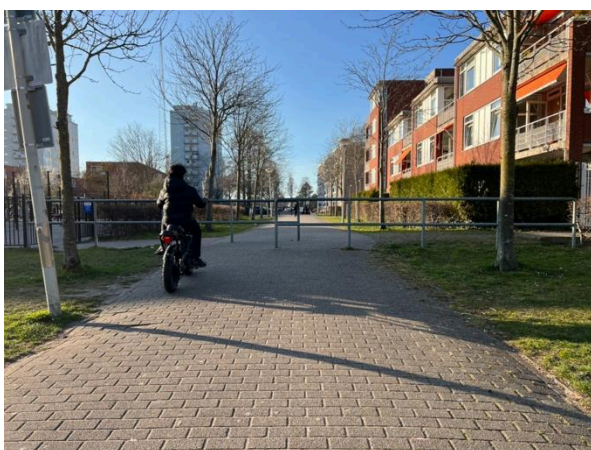
Figure 16: Fatbikes by park exit
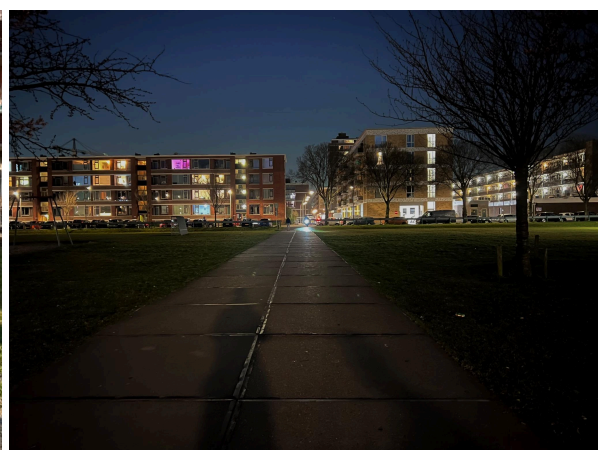
Figure 17: Park lighting at night

3.2.4. Overview of Results

The second co-creation session revealed a nuanced picture of the Marterrade neighbourhood, one shaped by both persistent challenges and underutilized opportunities. Through interviews, walk-and-talks, field observations, and conversations with various stakeholders, we identified a range of spatial and social dynamics that influence daily life in and around the Kamerrade.

The following two tables synthesize these findings. The first table highlights key challenges that emerged across age groups and interaction types, including spatial disconnection, safety concerns, and visible distrust between residents and institutions. Each issue is briefly described, along with potential design or engagement-based responses rooted in co-creation principles.

The second table outlines the latent potential within the neighbourhood – resources, practices, or spaces that could be mobilized to support regeneration. These include physical assets like the layout of the Kamerrade, social resources such as engaged residents, and cultural identities linked to creativity and art. Recognizing these as building blocks for future interventions is central to our asset-based approach.

Together, these tables informed the design strategies presented in Chapter 4, helping to prioritize interventions that are both locally relevant and socially responsive.

Identified Challenges	Description	Possible Responses
Lack of Visibility (and Use)	Kamerrade is not recognizable as a center, lacks visual or social signals	Signage, flags, lighting, seasonal decorations, programmed use of front square
Limited Social Interactions	Residents across age groups often experience isolation or lack of casual contact	Design for shared, low-threshold spaces and activities that encourage spontaneous interaction and presence
Safety (Fat Bikes)	Residents feel unsafe around teenagers on e-bikes	Traffic-calming spatial design, visibility, dedicated youth involvement
Littering	Few waste bins lead to improper waste disposal	Add waste bins in key areas, involve youth in awareness efforts
Distrust within Neighborhood and with Institutions	Evident in defensive architecture and lack of collaboration, disbelief in change	Build micro-connections through small shared projects and safe social spaces
Defensive Architecture	Fences, barriers, closed-off areas reinforce exclusion	Gradual removal or redesign; gates instead of fences, light-permeable enclosures
Inefficiently Used Space	Semi-public areas lack clear function or accessibility	Open artist's garden, add paths/seating, create an "artist's walk" to improve spatial flow and engagement

Table 1: Identified challenges during the co-creation sessions

Identified Potential	Description	Strengthening Possibility
Strategic Location and Layout of Kamerrade	Connects two major public zones	Create back entrance axis by opening up fences; spatial and visual flow-through
Gardening Residents	Possible local leader for greening efforts	Involve in co-creation workshops or informal mentoring, knowledge-sharing
Joy in Co-Creation	People are eager to engage when action is visible and hands-on	Expand action-based participatory design; small wins
Time-Trade System of Haag Wonen	Social integration through affordable, responsibility-based housing; time investment for community building available	Keep and expand model to support inclusive and active engagement
Courtyard Pavilion	Underused space with communal potential	Activate through design and programming (e.g., tool library, workshop space)
Creativity and Diversity	Mix of ages, backgrounds, talents in the neighbourhood	Design for flexible, multicultural interaction; support informal connectors
Artistic Identity of the Neighbourhood	Existing artworks and creative residents offer sense of identity	Build cohesion through artist trail, collaborative art, and place-based storytelling

Table 2: Identified potential during the co-creation sessions

3.3 Conclusion of Results

The second co-creation has been very enriching as many findings and assumptions from the first session have been confirmed and new concerns and potentials have been revealed. Especially highlighted during the second evening were the issues of littering, the issue of fat bikes and safety concerns, lighting in the park, noise of children in the adjacent buildings to the park, as well as defensive architectural elements as means to gain security and trust.

The interview with a staff member from Haag Wonen has brought a new depth to the discussion table as it seems that one of the underlying issues of the neighborhood development is a lack of trust. Now, the question – which we also discussed with certain other stakeholders throughout the evening – is how to build trust. Is it something that is given in advance, with a leap of faith, or does safety come first? While this question is very interesting and necessary to answer when going forward in the project development, it lies outside of the scope of this assignment to find a solution for it. However, we believe that creating more social interactions within the neighborhood can be a start and small-scale intervention in order to raise trust and connection within the neighborhood.

3.3. Third Co-Creation Session - Workshop of Making the "Talking Table"

The third co-creation session at the Marterrade marked a shift from dialogue and observation to active participation and hands-on implementation. Two students from our group attended the session, where proposals developed in earlier weeks were brought to life – most notably through the construction of a scale model of the neighbourhood, referred to as the "talking table," and the symbolic replacement of street tiles with duckweed tiles, a visual reference to greening and biodiversity.

The session combined multiple engagement strategies, with a focus on collaborative making and informal conversation. Residents were invited to contribute directly by helping construct the talking table outdoors, placing tiles in the courtyard, or engaging with students inside during the design of the architectural model. Participation was voluntary, low-threshold, and primarily physical outdoors – creating an open, welcoming atmosphere that encouraged curiosity and spontaneous interaction.

The project team was divided into working groups: construction, tile-setting, model-making, and communication. Each team had a specific focus, from hands-on tasks to engaging residents in discussion and encouraging participation. Our students were involved in the construction and model-making teams, while also gathering impressions from peers in other groups.

Unlike previous sessions, this event did not rely on structured interviews or questionnaires. Instead, informal, real-time engagement and observation provided insight into how residents interacted with the space, the activities, and each other. The session demonstrated the effectiveness of visible, outdoor co-creation in attracting more diverse groups – including younger residents – and highlighted the importance of the central courtyard and playground as key social anchors in the neighbourhood.

3.3.1. Findings from Observation

At the beginning of the session, the community center was relatively quiet, with only a few elderly residents present. However, as the outdoor construction activities began, more residents gradually joined. One of the most striking outcomes of the session was how active, visible participation proved far more effective in attracting a broader and more diverse group of residents than previous, dialogue-based methods. The energy and visibility of outdoor activity – students working, materials moving, tools being used – acted as a magnet, drawing in passersby and sparking curiosity.

Several elderly residents stopped to ask about the project, and students encouraged them to participate. Simple hands-on tasks, like sanding wooden components, seemed to create joy and a sense of involvement. One resident, for example, spent considerable time contributing to the construction and clearly took pride in participating physically rather than through conversation alone (*Figure 13*). This interaction reinforced a critical insight: community engagement doesn't always require structured dialogue – shared activity can serve as a powerful and inclusive form of connection. Participating in physical work fostered a sense of ownership and inclusion that verbal engagement alone may not have achieved.

Figure 18: *Residents, students and staff enageing during the third co-creation session*

Figure 19: *Residents, students and staff after the third co-creation session*

Another particularly encouraging development was the involvement of younger residents, especially teenagers. In previous sessions, this age group tended to avoid participation unless directly approached. This time, however, several teenagers joined in voluntarily. Two girls helped remove and replace street tiles with duckweed tiles, and others joined the construction team. One boy, initially hesitant, ended up staying for much of the evening, visibly gaining interest once his friends had left. A group of girls watched from a distance – curious, but hesitant to approach.

These observations suggest that visible, hands-on activities can lower participation thresholds for youth, yet peer pressure and uncertainty still play a role in shaping their willingness to engage. Some students were particularly effective in reaching out and creating a bridge between hesitant teenagers and the project. This highlighted the importance of trusted intermediaries or youth-facing figures at the Kamerrade who can act as connectors between young people and the broader community.

The session also demonstrated the importance of spontaneity and informal invitations in community engagement. Most participants who had not attended previous sessions were drawn in by the visible action and casual conversations – not by flyers or formal outreach by the Kamerrade team. This was true for both younger and older residents. While elderly residents were generally quicker to initiate conversation, the students' presence helped create a welcoming and open atmosphere, giving people a reason and an opportunity to interact.

Notably, participation from new visitors was largely limited to outdoor activities. The architectural model-making inside the Kamerrade drew only elderly residents – mainly those who were already familiar with the center or personally invited indoors. This suggests that the building itself may still present a psychological or social threshold for many, especially younger or less-connected residents.

Overall, the session emphasized the importance of low-threshold, visible, and outdoor activities in successfully engaging a more diverse cross-section of the neighbourhood. It demonstrated how spatial visibility, informal social cues, and embodied activity can together build bridges where formal engagement might fall short.

3.3.2. Findings from Activity Conversations

While the outdoor construction activities attracted broader participation, the architectural model-making inside the Kamerrade sparked more in-depth conversations about the neighbourhood. As students worked on designing the "talking table" scale model, they frequently asked visiting residents – mostly elderly – what physical elements they considered characteristic of the area. These interactions served as conversation starters and revealed several key insights into how different people perceive the neighbourhood.

First, a staff member from Schroeder Wijkbedrijf suggested including the tram line and the main street leading to the stop, as they form a key entry point into the neighbourhood. Interestingly, none of the elderly residents mentioned the tram as significant. This may reflect generational differences in mobility needs: older residents, many of whom no longer commute regularly, might not perceive public transit infrastructure as central to their daily experience.

Second, opinions on the playground near the courtyard were mixed. One resident, whose apartment overlooks the space, described it as a defining feature and accepted the associated noise as part of neighbourhood life. In contrast, three other elderly residents criticized the playground, referring to it as noisy and underused. One remarked that "only one person likes the playground," suggesting a perception of the space as more disruptive than beneficial. This highlights a recurring tension in urban design: spaces that support children's play may inadvertently cause friction with nearby residents – particularly when play areas are located near housing, as is currently the case in Marterrade.
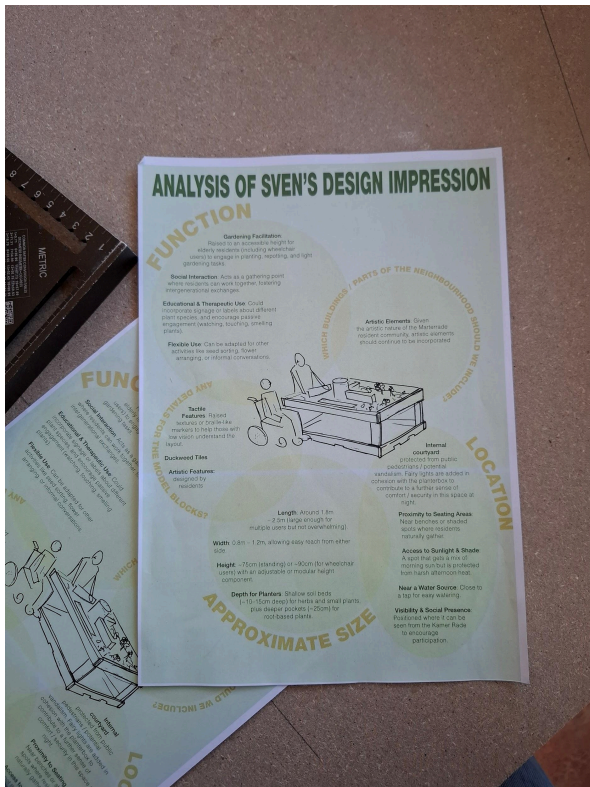
Figure 20: The design for the "talking table"

Figure 21: Students designing and discussing the elements to include in the architectural model

Third, when residents were shown the map for the model, discussion naturally shifted to the inner courtyard. Participants described it as a relaxing and familiar gathering place. Specific benches were mentioned by name – indicating not just functional use, but also a strong emotional connection to these micro-spaces. In contrast, no one brought up the front square or the park, suggesting that these spaces are either underused or not perceived as meaningful by this age group. This reflects both a lack of amenities in those areas and a spatial disconnect between older residents and other parts of the neighbourhood. Their responses imply that the front square is not currently fulfilling a social function, while the courtyard plays a central role in everyday social placemaking.

Lastly, a middle-aged participant – temporarily living in the area – offered a contrasting perspective. He mentioned having moved away from the Rade years ago, stating he would not return due to the area's lack of nature and green access. In his view, his new neighbourhood – with proximity to the beach and natural landscapes – offered a significantly higher quality of life. Interestingly, none of the long-term residents mentioned this as a concern. This contrast suggests that while existing residents may have adapted to the limited greenery, it could be a deciding factor for potential newcomers. If the municipality or housing providers aim to improve long-term liveability and attract a more diverse population, increasing accessible

and meaningful green space should be a serious consideration.

3.3.3 Conclusion

The third co-creation session confirmed the value of visible, hands-on participation in engaging a wider and more diverse group of residents. Compared to previous sessions, the informal, action-based setup attracted not only elderly participants but also curious teenagers – some of whom joined in for the first time.

Activities like building the "talking table" and installing duckweed tiles lowered barriers and created natural opportunities for interaction. Participation through doing, rather than talking, proved particularly effective in fostering connection and ownership.

Inside the Kamerrade, the model-making process encouraged deeper reflection among elderly residents, revealing what spaces they value and which ones remain disconnected from their daily lives. It also exposed generational tensions – especially around play, noise, and the design of shared spaces.

The session highlighted that accessible outdoor activities, supported by approachable facilitators, can bridge gaps between age groups, build trust, and activate underused areas. At the same time, it showed that certain spatial thresholds – like entering the Kamerrade – still exist, and that overcoming them will require continued, low-threshold engagement.

Overall, this session reminded us that design is not only about space, but about building relationships, and that small, participatory actions can spark larger shifts in how people relate to their neighbourhood.

4. Design Proposal and ToC Evaluation

This chapter presents the design proposal developed through our co-creation process, grounded in the experiences, needs, and ideas shared by residents and stakeholders. Initially, our focus was on greening as a tool to enhance social cohesion, drawing from previous proposals and common placemaking practices. However, as the sessions progressed, interviews, fieldwork, and observations revealed deeper and more urgent concerns: not just aesthetic or functional issues, but a persistent sense of social fragmentation and distrust.

This led us to reframe our design problem. What emerged as the most fundamental — and also most difficult — challenge was the erosion of trust: between residents, between generations, and between the community and institutions. Our proposal, therefore, shifts its aim toward rebuilding trust as a condition for any meaningful or lasting neighbourhood transformation.

The following design interventions are structured to do just that — restore trust through visible, small-scale, and participatory spatial change, centred around the Kamerrade and its surroundings.

4.1 Problem Statement

> *"How can participatory design and placemaking contribute to building trust and social cohesion in the Marterrade neighbourhood, especially through spatial interventions centering the Kamerrade?"*

The neighbourhood of Marterrade is marked by social disconnection and fragmentation. Residents and staff repeatedly described a lack of social coherence and interaction. This was further supported by the co-creation sessions, where the absence of intergenerational contact became especially clear.

Social fears — ranging from safety concerns to mistrust of others — are not only felt, but visibly encoded in the physical layout: fences, blocked passages, defensive architecture, and underused public spaces reflect and reinforce these dynamics.

Moreover, a history of unfulfilled promises and top-down projects has contributed to residents' skepticism toward institutional actors such as housing corporations and the municipality. This broken trust manifests in disengagement and apathy, creating a vicious cycle that stalls neighbourhood regeneration efforts.

Research shows that open, accessible public space can foster perceived safety and increase trust among residents, especially in diverse and multi-ethnic contexts (Zhang et al., 2022; Carmona et al., 2018). Even brief encounters, such as nods or greetings in shared spaces, have been found to strengthen social ties and improve neighbourhood cohesion.

These findings confirm that spatial design has the potential to serve as a foundation for social repair – but only when implemented carefully, incrementally, and in collaboration with those most affected.

4.2 Vision and Aim

"A neighbourhood built on trust, where safety and connection shape everyday life. A place where people feel at home at all times, coming together to share conversations, knowledge, and experiences. Marterrade is more than a place to live; it is a community where everyone belongs."

This vision captures the core ambition of our design: to make trust visible, tangible, and spatially embedded in everyday life. We believe that physical interventions can act as catalysts for social repair, shifting perceptions, reducing tension, and fostering a renewed sense of community ownership over time.

To translate this vision into practice, we have developed a four-phase placemaking strategy. Each phase builds on previous insights and is carefully designed to be feasible, inclusive, and trust-building. Together, these phases form an adaptive framework that can evolve with the community's needs, supporting a socio-spatial transition toward a more connected and resilient neighbourhood.

The next sections outline this strategy in detail, including the Theory of Change for each phase, mapping how specific interventions lead to short- and long-term outcomes.

4.3 Design Strategy and Theory of Change

To achieve the vision outlined earlier, we developed a four-phase placemaking strategy focused on rebuilding trust – both among residents and between the community and institutions. Phasing is critical: it allows trust to be cultivated incrementally, through visible, achievable steps. Rather than vague promises, each phase represents concrete action, demonstrating commitment and enabling residents to see real change unfold in their everyday environment.

While trust may seem like a primarily social issue, it is deeply connected to space. Social distrust is expressed spatially – through fences, empty squares, and lack of interaction. In turn, spatial interventions can foster social trust when designed and implemented with care. Our approach uses socio-spatial design as a tool to break cycles of disconnection, with the Kamerrade as a central anchor. As a site of community activity, it holds the potential to shift perceptions and catalyse interaction.

By placing trust at the core of the design strategy, we aim not just for aesthetic or functional improvements, but for a holistic transformation of the neighbourhood – toward a livelier, more inclusive, and more socially connected environment.

The four phases build on insights from co-creation sessions, fieldwork, and ongoing reflection. They begin with small-scale, highly visible interventions, and evolve toward long-term structural and symbolic change. Each phase is designed to be feasible, adaptive, and grounded in community capacity, making them persuasive to both residents and policymakers.

While the design proposal is focused on achieving the broader vision, it is equally important to recognize that unlocking the existing potential of the area is just as vital as addressing its challenges. Throughout all four phases, local resources – particularly community knowledge, skills, and energy – should be prioritized and leveraged wherever possible, in ways that are both sustainable and supportive of long-term wellbeing.

Together, the four phases offer not only a roadmap for change in the Marterrade, but a replicable framework that can grow over time – through additional activities, ideas, and evolving local leadership. Each section that follows concludes with a visual summary of its Theory of Change, outlining the pathway from action to impact.

BUILDING TRUST IN FOUR STEPS:

Phase 1
Increase Visibility of Kamerrade

Decorating and marking the entrance of the Kamerrade to attract more residents and visitors.

Phase 2
Moveable Planters for Kamerrade

Creating movable flowerboxes to enhance attractiveness, usability, and social interaction. Their mobility allows testing placement and popularity before installing permanent planters.

Phase3
Expansion in the Neighborhood

Scaling up and adapting planters to create lasting social spaces where needed in the neighborhood.

Phase 4
Connecting through Kamerrade

Adding gates to improve access from key neighborhood spots (e.g., park), enhancing Kamerade's connectivity and central role. Removing fences entirely where possible.

Main action points:
- adding signage
- hanging up pennants
- visible program chart
- opening up doors

Main action points:
- building planter boxes
- reclaiming square
- organizing events
- creating bins for area

Main action points:
- building permanent planters and benches
- organizing gardening workshops

Main action points:
- adding gates (to be closed at night)
- removing fences
- improving outdoor space

Timeframe: immediately	in 1 - 4 weeks	in 3 - 8 months	in 3 - 5 years
Cost: very cheap	low budget	low budget	medium budget
Feasibility: very easy	easy	doable	difficult
Impact: foundational	high	high	very high

Figure 22: Building Trust in Four Steps

Figure 23: Visual sketch of final design of the Marterrade square

4.3.1. Phase One – Increase Visibility of the Kamerrade

Figure 24: Phase One

The Kamerrade, despite its central location in the Marterrade, remains largely underused and under-recognised by residents. This became especially apparent during the third co-creation session, where outdoor activities visibly drew in a more diverse and spontaneous group of participants compared to earlier indoor events. Observations confirmed that while passersby engaged with exterior activities, many were still hesitant to enter the building.

To address this, the goal of Phase One is to enhance the visibility and approachability of the Kamerrade, turning it into a more recognisable, welcoming, and inviting place – both physically and symbolically – by strengthening what is there and working with local resources. The ultimate aim is to lower the threshold for interaction, fostering spontaneous encounters and encouraging residents to feel that the Kamerrade is open to all.

Proposed Interventions in Phase One

This phase consists of a series of low-budget, high-impact measures that can be implemented quickly and collaboratively. These include:

1. **Visual Activation of the Facade**

The front of the Kamerrade will be decorated with string lights, a prominent name sign, pennants, flowers, and potted plants. Created and installed together with local artists and residents, these elements will make the building more attractive and signal openness and activity, drawing in more residents – especially during evenings or in winter.

2. **Wayfinding Signage Across the Neighbourhood**

Simple, eye-level signs will be placed at key intersections and along pedestrian routes to guide residents toward the Kamerrade. These signs serve not only for orientation but as repeated visual cues that build familiarity and reduce perceived distance.

3. Information Board Outside

A board or screen with all activities and events taking palace at Kamerrade ist installed outside visibly.

4. **Creation of a "Soft Threshold" Outdoor Zone**

Chairs and tables will be added outside the Kamerrade, creating a transitional zone that allows residents to engage without entering the building. In addition, French doors will remain open during set hours, visually connecting the indoor and outdoor spaces. This encourages passive observation to become active participation.

5. **Regular Small-Scale Public Events**

Inspired by the success of the third co-creation session, this phase includes community-led micro-events – such as planting afternoons, informal performances, or seasonal gatherings. These activities will attract a mix of generations and demonstrate that the Kamerrade is an evolving social hub.

In the short term, these interventions are expected to:

- Improve awareness and visibility of the Kamerrade
- Increase casual visits and outdoor use of the square
- Reduce social and psychological barriers to entry
- Attract a more diverse group of users

In the long term, the Kamerrade can become a trusted, visible centre for community life, fostering repeated encounters, inclusive programming, and stronger ties between residents and institutions. Research shows that when community centres are poorly communicated or physically disconnected, levels of engagement and trust tend to drop (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012). Improving visibility and access can reverse this trend and help re-establish shared public space as a catalyst for community trust.

Theory of Change

In the following visualisation, the Theory of Change of Phase One is further explained:

ToC: Phase 1

Situation: The Kamerrade is not recognisable as a community centre, resulting in low foot traffic and few encounters between residents.
Vision: The building stands out and is visually appealing. By attracting different residents it sparks contact and ultimately trust.

Intervention	Input	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
1. Façade decoration and signage	• Materials (string lights, name sign, pennants, flower boxes, potted plants, eye-level signage) • Volunteers and local artists • Small budget	• Install lights, signage and decorations on the facade and throughout the neighbourhood	• More attractive and recognisable Kamerrade exterior • Communication board informs about future events	• Increased awareness of the Kamerrade • More visual appeal and curiosity • More visitors and participants at Kamerrade	• Kamerrade seen as an inviting neighbourhood hub • Social connections established
2. Creating a welcoming zone	• Furniture and materials (chairs, tables) • Kamerrade staff for opening doors • Volunteers	• Place chairs and tables in front; open French doors during specific hours	• A comfortable and accessible transition space between inside and outside	• Lower threshold for stopping by; more casual presence outside Kamerrade	• Greater participation in Kamerrade activities
3. Organising public events	• Event materials • Support from community organisers • Resident's involvement • Time and coordination	• Organise small-scale events on the square with initial help from organisers and later from residents	• Lively square that activates multiple generations and creates reasons to visit	• More foot traffic and diverse engagement with the square	• Strengthened social ties and trust across generations

Figure   25:   Theory of Change for Phase One

4.3.1.1 Critical Reflection

While visibility is essential, it must be paired with meaningful and inclusive activities to ensure participation. A more attractive facade alone may invite curiosity, but sustained engagement requires programming that resonates with a broad cross-section of the community.

Moreover, it is critical to ensure that residents are involved in both implementation and maintenance of these interventions. Only then can these changes generate the sense of ownership necessary for long-term trust-building. Visibility is not the final goal – but it is the first and necessary step toward creating a social anchor for the neighbourhood.

4.3.2 Phase Two: Moveable Raised Planters on Kamerrade Square

Timeframe:	in 1 – 4 weeks
Cost:	low budget
Feasibility:	easy
Impact:	high

Figure 26: Phase Two

Through numerous interviews and observations, a clear concern was presented for residents ranging in age from children to the elderly: teenagers riding on e-bikes at dangerous speeds through the park and across the Marterrade square. At the nearby park, there are large pathways in between the playgrounds and various green spaces, where both young children at the park and teenagers co-exist, resulting in dangerous situations in relation to riding e-bikes at high speeds. Such situations result in deep tensions,

which has resulted in a multitude of arguments and police complaints. In order to appease such tensions and create a safer, more pleasant space where residents of all ages feel comfortable spending time, the creation of temporary flower boxes placed in areas of high traffic could be a solution. These would be experimental movable raised planters that could be placed and moved on the most ideal spot allowing for some flexibility. More permanent constructions could be made in the longer term. They could be designed and built with local residents of all groups, in a co-creation session similar to the third co-creation session.

One of the most frequently raised concerns during interviews and observations – across all age groups – was the unsafe use of e-bikes and fat bikes, particularly by teenagers riding at high speeds through the park and across Kamerrade Square. The current layout, with wide pathways intersecting playgrounds and communal spaces, exacerbates the risk of collisions, especially for young children and elderly pedestrians. This issue has caused not only daily stress and tension but has also led to reported arguments and even police involvement.

To address this problem – while simultaneously reinforcing the Kamerrade's role as a social anchor – we propose the introduction of moveable raised planters. While these elements will function as natural speed-reducing obstacles, their deeper value lies in the reclaiming of space: by physically and symbolically encouraging people to linger, the planters help assert the square as a shared space for the community, not just a through-route for fast traffic. In this way, they serve as multi-dimensional socio-spatial tools, combining functionality with social activation.

The raised flower boxes will be strategically placed to disrupt long sightlines and reduce bike speeds, while still ensuring full accessibility for wheelchairs, mobility scooters, and strollers. Their movable nature allows for flexibility in placement, based on community feedback and testing. In the longer term (Phase Three), successful arrangements may evolve into permanent, co-designed installations that further enhance safety, aesthetics, and social use of the space.

Figure 27: Example of raised planters with integrated benches in Poznan, by Atelier Starzak Strebicki (Urbanist, n.d.)

Figure 28: Example of temporary raised planters with integrated benches at Broad Street, Oxford by Atkins Global and Milestone Infrastructure (Woodblocx Landscaping, 2022)

These interventions are not only practical but also contribute to visual enhancement and greening, replacing defensive architecture with inviting, human-scaled design. By enabling rest, casual conversation, and visibility, the planters help redefine the square as a space for all generations to coexist and connect.

Equally crucial is their use as co-creation tools. Drawing inspiration from the third co-creation session, we propose involving residents – from elderly neighbours to teenagers and parents – in the design, construction, and planting of the boxes. This participatory process fosters ownership, intergenerational trust, and local pride. A nearby school could support ongoing maintenance, applying principles of Asset-Based Community Development (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003) by tapping into local strengths and capacities.

To complement the greening effort, we also recommend placing durable waste bins around the square, especially near new seating and planter zones. Many residents cited littering as a major concern, often tied to the lack of bins. Well-placed, visible bins will improve hygiene, protect green spaces, and signal active care for the public realm. This subtle but important gesture reinforces institutional responsiveness and can strengthen trust in local governance and shared norms of upkeep.

Expected Outcomes

Short-term outcomes:

- Reduced biking speed and fewer pedestrian–bike conflicts
- More people lingering in the square
- Greater participation through hands-on activities
- Improved cleanliness and aesthetics

Long-term outcomes:

- Stronger intergenerational trust through shared projects
- Increased ownership of the public space
- Strengthened cooperation between residents, Haag Wonen, and local institutions
- Shift from defensive design to proactive, trust-based spatial practices

Theory of Change

In the following visualisation, the Theory of Change of Phase Two is further explained:

ToC: Phase 2

Situation: Speeding fatbikes reduce residents' sense of safety. Litter causes irritation and reduces neighbourhood attractiveness. These elements hinder residents' time spent in public outdoor areas and contribute to conflicts between residents.

Vision: A safe, clean neighbourhood. Inviting people outside sparks contact and ultimately trust. Increased institutional trust through quick implementation.

Intervention	Input	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
1. Moveable Raised Planters	• Materials (wood, plants) and tools • Volunteers and community members • Involvement of local schools, artists • Time and budget	• Co-designing with residents • Constructing planters • Testing and adjusting positions of planters • Find volunteer or pay gardener to maintain plants	• Temporary raised planters placed in strategic locations on Marterrade square • Green, visually attractive public space • Subtle roadblocks	• Co-creation and new public space encourages social interaction • More biodiversity • Increase in time spent outside • Increased safety due to speed reduction	• Increased social connectivity and friendships • Increased trust amongst residents • Increased trust to Haag Wonen as change becomes visible • Decrease of conflics
2. Waste Bins	• Durable bins • Coordination with municipality • Budget for purchase and maintenance • Local stakeholder support	• Purchasing, and placing bins • Ensuring clear signage • Coordinating regular waste collection	• Several visible and accessible bins near the square	• Reduction of littering and misuse of green space • Residents feel their concerns are addressed • Cleaner and more inviting public area	• Stronger shared responsibility for public space • Increased pride in neighbourhood's cleanliness • Reinforce trust in institutions

Figure 29:   Theory of Change for Phase Two

4.2.2.1 Critical Reflection

The success of this phase depends on balancing flexibility with durability. While movable planters allow experimentation, they also risk being shifted, ignored, or misused – especially if perceived as obstructive. Interviews revealed that some teenagers view the park as "their" space, and resistance to interventions is possible. To mitigate this, the planters should be heavy enough to prevent easy tampering, as demonstrated in the third co-creation session, yet mobile with tools when needed.

A further challenge lies in ongoing maintenance. While schools and residents may contribute, a clear agreement with Haag Wonen and the municipality will be essential – especially for regular bin emptying and seasonal planting upkeep. Without reliable follow-up, even well-intentioned interventions risk fading into neglect.

Ultimately, this phase goes beyond traffic calming. It introduces visible signs of care, enables participation, and demonstrates that community-led design can address real concerns while fostering a sense of shared space and mutual respect.

4.2.3 Phase Three: Expansion of Raised Planters and Benches in the Neighborhood
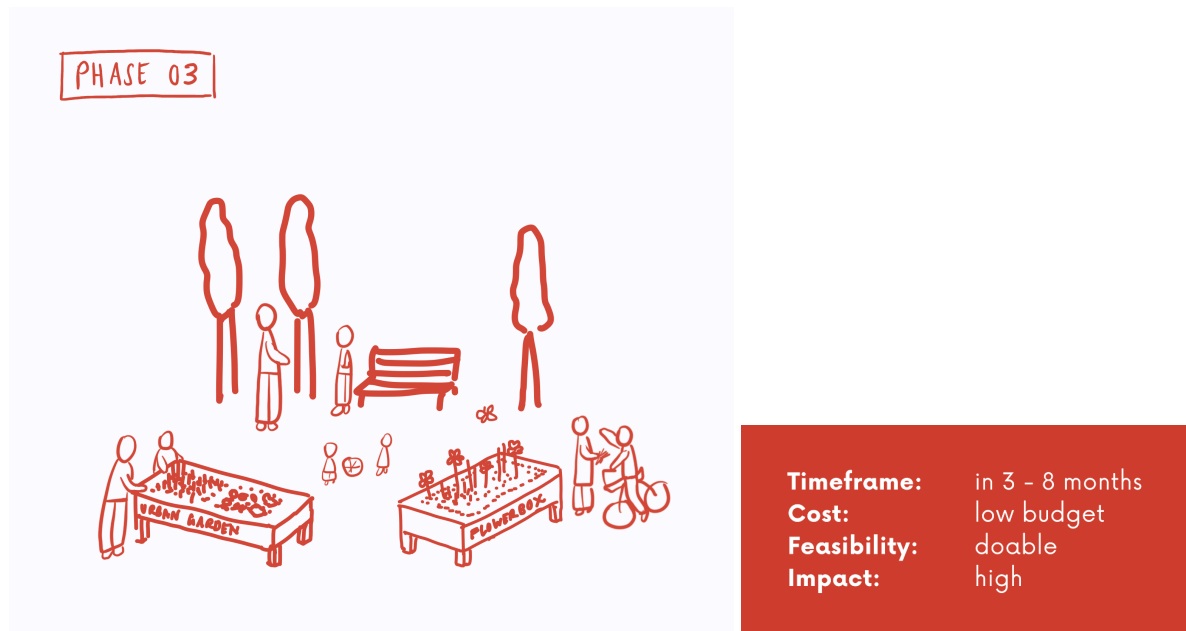
Figure 30: *Phase Three*

Planting Boxes

While the moveable planters introduced in Phase Two offered quick wins in terms of visibility, safety, and activation, they remain temporary and limited in scale. To build lasting social and ecological value, Phase Three shifts toward permanent greening infrastructure that supports trust, ownership, and long-term transformation of public space.

We propose converting the initial moveable planters into fixed installations, placed in strategic locations across Kamerrade Square. In addition, new permanent planter boxes will be co-created and installed in other key neighbourhood areas, such as along pedestrian routes or near playgrounds. These elements - ranging from flower beds and butterfly gardens to urban vegetable boxes - will help structure open space into micro social hubs, encouraging pause, interaction, and care.

Complementary forms of greenery, such as in-ground plantings, climbing plants, and perennial shrubs, will further enhance durability and minimise seasonal upkeep. By diversifying the types and locations of green infrastructure, we support both everyday social use and visual continuity across the neighbourhood.

To ensure long-term sustainability, this phase also introduces a shared maintenance model. A nearby primary school may be involved in regular planting and watering activities, embedding care into everyday education. Simultaneously, local artists and residents can co-create painted planter designs, enhancing a sense of identity and stewardship.

These activities align with broader urban design thinking, which emphasises that mutual trust is foundational: when designers and institutions demonstrate confidence in the community's capacity to co-create and maintain shared spaces, residents in turn develop greater trust in the process and its outcomes (Tonkiss, 2013; Manzini, 2015). The process of making and maintaining together becomes not just a strategy for beautification, but a socio-spatial practice of trust-building.

Figure 31: Raised planters with integrated benches at Alfred Place Gardens, London (LDA Design, 2023)

Benches

Walking tours and resident conversations revealed that many of the existing benches in the neighbourhood are poorly positioned and designed – often tucked into shaded, uninviting corners with limited visibility or comfort. One elderly resident shared that she rarely sat in the main square because the seating felt isolated and exposed, offering little sense of safety or social connection.

To address this, we propose relocating and adding benches in tandem with the raised planters and social greening strategies introduced in this phase. The new seating will be integrated into green pockets, supported by flowerbeds or planter boxes, creating inviting, sheltered micro-environments. These spaces offer residents comfortable places to pause, rest, and connect, making casual social interaction more likely.

Initial placements will be temporary and experimental, allowing users to test and give feedback on location, orientation, and use. Based on this input, benches can later be permanently anchored and embedded in durable, low-maintenance greenery such as raised beds or perennial plantings.

In the long term, improved bench placement is expected to increase spontaneous interactions among residents – especially among older adults, who may otherwise limit themselves to private courtyard spaces. As seating becomes more comfortable and inviting, new patterns of shared use and visibility will emerge, helping bridge generational and cultural gaps within the neighbourhood.

An added benefit is the informal social control benches help generate. By attracting more people to linger in outdoor spaces, the area becomes more active and visibly inhabited. This passive surveillance not only reduces anti-social behaviour, such as teenagers speeding through the square on fat bikes, but also reinforces a sense of shared responsibility and collective presence. In this way, benches – like the planters – function as part of a growing social infrastructure, fostering trust, safety, and belonging.

Theory of Change

In the following image, the Theory of Change of Phase Three is further explained:

ToC: Phase 3

Situation: The empty, uninviting square is a place of passage rather than leasure, resulting in few interactions between residents.
Vision: A greener, more attractive neighbourhood with opportunities for social interaction. This supports long-term trust between residents.

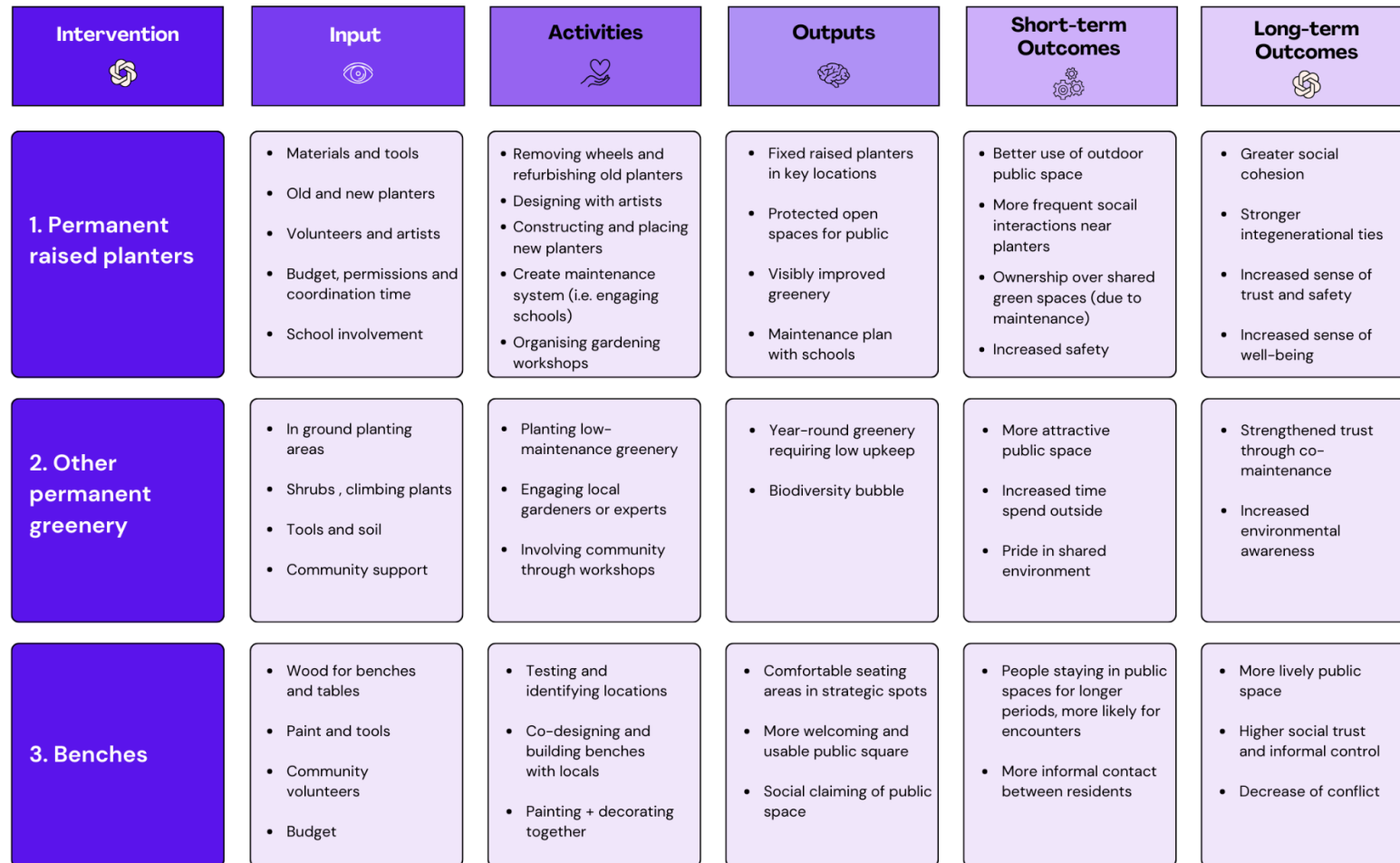| Intervention	Input	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
1. Permanent raised planters	• Materials and tools • Old and new planters • Volunteers and artists • Budget, permissions and coordination time • School involvement	• Removing wheels and refurbishing old planters • Designing with artists • Constructing and placing new planters • Create maintenance system (i.e. engaging schools) • Organising gardening workshops	• Fixed raised planters in key locations • Protected open spaces for public • Visibly improved greenery • Maintenance plan with schools	• Better use of outdoor public space • More frequent socail interactions near planters • Ownership over shared green spaces (due to maintenance) • Increased safety	• Greater social cohesion • Stronger integenerational ties • Increased sense of trust and safety • Increased sense of well-being
2. Other permanent greenery	• In ground planting areas • Shrubs , climbing plants • Tools and soil • Community support	• Planting low-maintenance greenery • Engaging local gardeners or experts • Involving community through workshops	• Year-round greenery requiring low upkeep • Biodiversity bubble	• More attractive public space • Increased time spend outside • Pride in shared environment	• Strengthened trust through co-maintenance • Increased environmental awareness
3. Benches	• Wood for benches and tables • Paint and tools • Community volunteers • Budget	• Testing and identifying locations • Co-designing and building benches with locals • Painting + decorating together	• Comfortable seating areas in strategic spots • More welcoming and usable public square • Social claiming of public space	• People staying in public spaces for longer periods, more likely for encounters • More informal contact between residents	• More lively public space • Higher social trust and informal control • Decrease of conflict

Figure   32:   Theory of Change for Phase Three

4.2.3.1 Critical Reflection

While the proposed Theory of Change offers significant potential to strengthen social trust in the neighbourhood, several critical challenges must be acknowledged to ensure long-term success.

A central issue lies in the sustainability of maintenance. While involving the nearby school in caring for planters during the academic year is promising, the question remains: who takes over during the summer months during school holidays, when plants require the most attention? Long-term success depends on a clearly defined and shared sense of ownership and accountability. This could include partnerships with active residents at the Kamerrade or a rotating schedule of volunteer groups, but must be formally agreed upon and coordinated.

Additionally, while the decision to test bench locations before final placement supports user-centred design, it also demands consistent communication and transparency with residents. Gathering meaningful feedback requires both time and facilitation, and any perception of tokenism could undermine the broader goal of trust-building.

The same applies to the trash bins introduced in Phase Two. For them to become lasting elements of public infrastructure, clear arrangements must be made with municipal services regarding regular emptying and upkeep. Without this, small interventions risk becoming symbols of neglect rather than care.

Despite these challenges, if thoughtfully managed, this phase has the potential to transform overlooked and fragmented areas into recognisable, meaningful community spaces. More than physical upgrades, the interventions proposed here contribute to the slow but vital process of making the public realm feel collectively owned and co-stewarded – a precondition for lasting cohesion and trust.

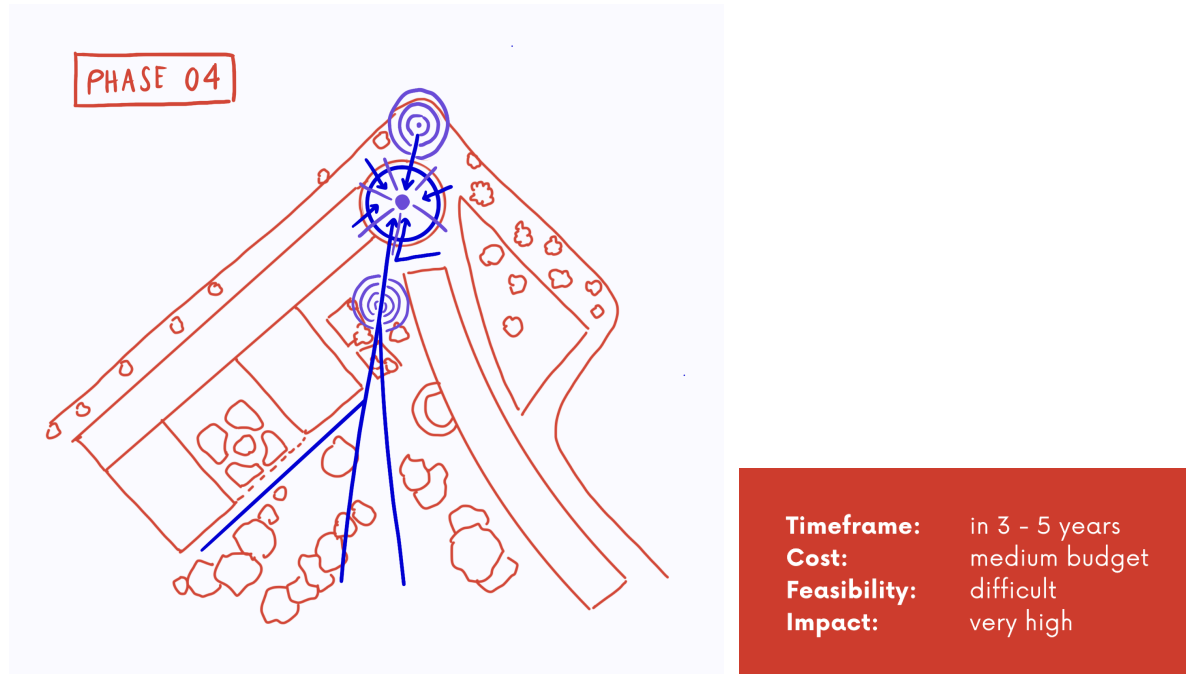## 4.2.4 Phase Four: Connecting the Kamerrade

Figure 33: *Phase Four*

Throughout the co-creation sessions, one theme consistently resurfaced: a deep-seated lack of trust within the Marterrade neighbourhood – between residents, across generations, and between the community and institutions. This social fragmentation is spatially mirrored by the area's physical layout: fences, closed-off paths, and defensive architecture that limit permeability and reinforce feelings of division.

Currently, permeability in the neighbourhood is low. To reach the park – an important social and recreational space, especially for children, teenagers, and families – residents must walk around entire blocks. This separation isolates valuable public spaces and diminishes the centrality and function of the Kamerrade.

To address this, Phase Four proposes a transformative shift: physically opening up the Kamerrade to reconnect it with its surroundings and redefine it as a true community centre. This vision, however, cannot be implemented in isolation. It relies on the social groundwork laid in Phases One through Three: increased interaction, improved perceived safety, and growing community ownership.

This final phase therefore represents the culmination of the design strategy, focusing on spatial reconnection to consolidate the trust built throughout earlier interventions. It includes:

- Removing or adapting existing fences – especially those blocking access to green areas or walking paths adjacent to the Kamerrade.

- Installing secure, time-sensitive gates in key locations, open during the day and closed at night, balancing openness with safety.

- Enhancing visual and physical continuity by aligning pathways, lighting, and signage to create natural, intuitive routes to and through the Kamerrade.

These interventions are not just infrastructural; they are symbolic acts of trust. They mark a shift from a neighbourhood designed for protection and separation, to one oriented toward connection, openness, and care.

If successfully implemented, Phase Four will enable the Kamerrade to function not only as a physical crossroads, but also as a social and symbolic centre – a place where people come together, rather than pass each other by.

Theory of Change

The following table further explains the Theory of Change of Phase Four:

ToC: Phase 4

Situation: Defensive architecture separates residents and signals distrust.
Vision: Removing and opening up fences facilitates interaction and visually signals trust. This supports long-term trust between residents.

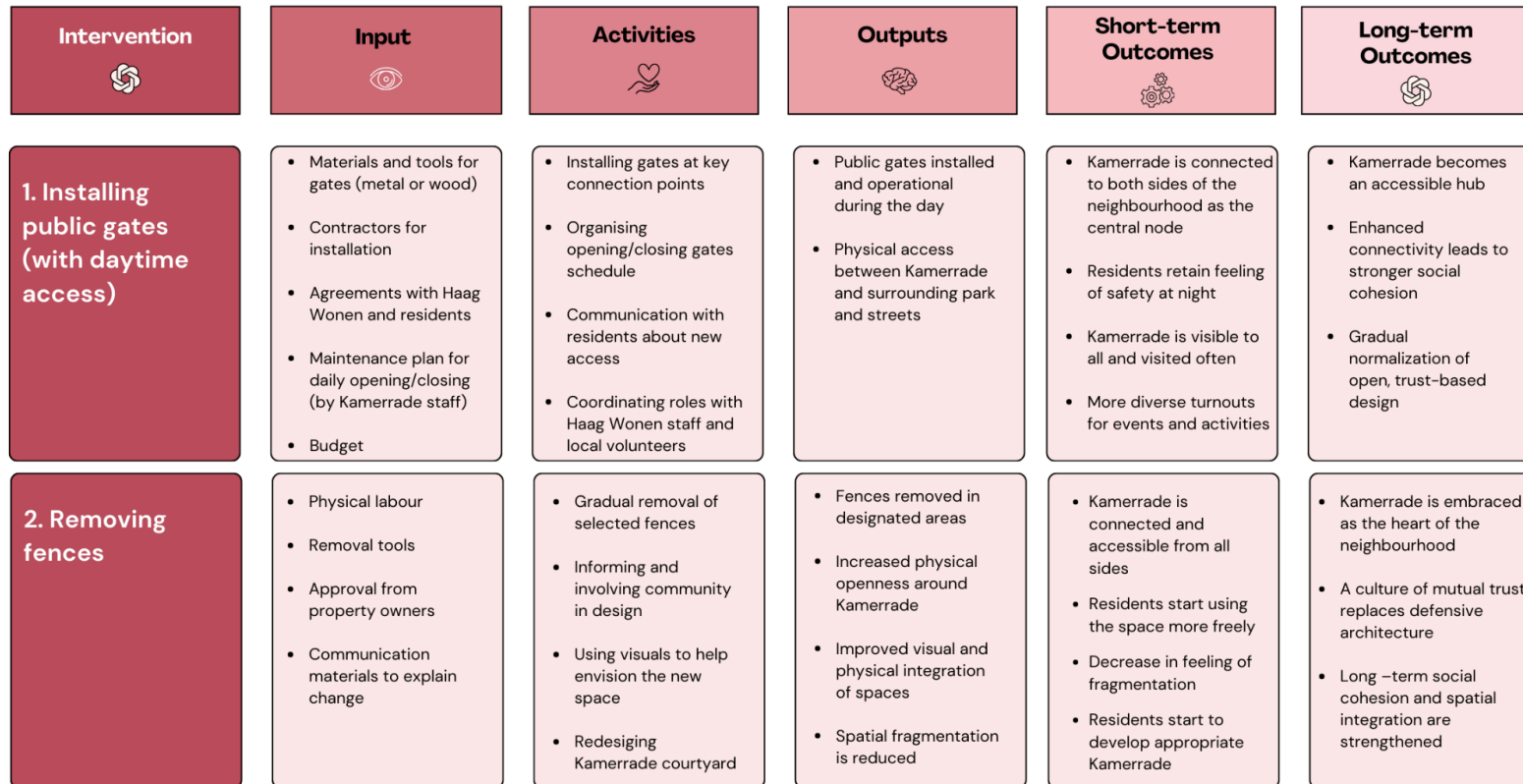| Intervention	Input	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
1. Installing public gates (with daytime access)	• Materials and tools for gates (metal or wood) • Contractors for installation • Agreements with Haag Wonen and residents • Maintenance plan for daily opening/closing (by Kamerrade staff) • Budget	• Installing gates at key connection points • Organising opening/closing gates schedule • Communication with residents about new access • Coordinating roles with Haag Wonen staff and local volunteers	• Public gates installed and operational during the day • Physical access between Kamerrade and surrounding park and streets	• Kamerrade is connected to both sides of the neighbourhood as the central node • Residents retain feeling of safety at night • Kamerrade is visible to all and visited often • More diverse turnouts for events and activities	• Kamerrade becomes an accessible hub • Enhanced connectivity leads to stronger social cohesion • Gradual normalization of open, trust-based design
2. Removing fences	• Physical labour • Removal tools • Approval from property owners • Communication materials to explain change	• Gradual removal of selected fences • Informing and involving community in design • Using visuals to help envision the new space • Redesiging Kamerrade courtyard	• Fences removed in designated areas • Increased physical openness around Kamerrade • Improved visual and physical integration of spaces • Spatial fragmentation is reduced	• Kamerrade is connected and accessible from all sides • Residents start using the space more freely • Decrease in feeling of fragmentation • Residents start to develop appropriate Kamerrade	• Kamerrade is embraced as the heart of the neighbourhood • A culture of mutual trust replaces defensive architecture • Long –term social cohesion and spatial integration are strengthened

Figure 34: Theory of Change for Phase Four

4.2.4.1 Critical Reflection

Phase Four presents the most ambitious and symbolically charged intervention in the strategy. Physically opening the Kamerrade to its surroundings not only improves connectivity but signals a fundamental shift in the neighbourhood's spatial language – from one of containment and control to one of openness and mutual trust.

However, this phase also involves several delicate challenges. For many residents, especially older ones, fences have come to represent safety and predictability. Their removal, even if partial or conditional, may provoke feelings of vulnerability or loss of control. This underscores the need for phased, consultative implementation, where residents are actively involved in deciding which barriers to remove, and under what conditions.

The installation of timed gates offers a transitional compromise, yet their management introduces new questions:

- Who opens and closes them?

- What happens if conflicts arise around usage?

- Who maintains the infrastructure long-term?

These issues highlight the importance of establishing clear governance agreements – potentially through co-management models involving Haag Wonen, local authorities, and community representatives. Such arrangements not only help with practical logistics but also embed the logic of shared responsibility that lies at the heart of the entire strategy.

Another concern is ensuring that the newly created access points are safe, well-lit, and actively used. Without complementary interventions – such as seating, signage, or small-scale programming – open routes may feel ambiguous or neglected. Spatial openness alone does not guarantee social inclusion; it must be actively curated and maintained.

Despite these risks, the potential impact of Phase Four is significant. It offers a visible and felt transformation of how space is used and valued. If the Kamerrade becomes truly permeable – physically and socially – it will stand as a symbol of renewed neighbourhood identity: not a building apart, but a centre of everyday life, trust, and shared future-making.

4.3 Preliminary design ideas

The final design proposal – centred on the theme of trust-building – emerged through an iterative, multi-week process of analysis, reflection, and co-creation. Each stage deepened our understanding of the neighbourhood's needs and informed the evolution from initial greening concepts to a broader socio-spatial design strategy. Below, we reflect on the development of our proposal across three distinct phases.

4.3.1 Week 1: Greening ideas based on external student proposal

In the first week of the Design Challenge, our team analysed existing proposals from students at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (Nieuwveld et al., 2024), supported by course lectures and the design brief. These plans focused on using greenery as a catalyst for social cohesion, proposing that shared gardens and green interventions could foster increased neighbourly contact.

From this, we developed a Theory of Change for three greening strategies:

1. Community gardens in the courtyard

2. Raised planters at the Marterrade square (with edible and ornamental plants)

3. Flowering shrubs and gardens in public areas

These strategies were deemed feasible based on expected inputs such as materials (wood, soil, plants), tools, community labour, and municipal coordination. Key activities would include communal construction and maintenance by residents. Crucially, sustaining the gardens over time would require collaboration and a clearly shared sense of responsibility.

We anticipated that these designs could positively influence social connectivity in several ways. In the short term, shared gardening would generate regular, informal contact and physical activity. Over time, this could reduce loneliness, particularly among older residents, while reinforcing a collective sense of ownership and belonging. These ideas are supported by research showing that community gardens foster dialogue and well-being, especially in low-income areas (Veen et al., 2015; Hassink, 2020; Gray et al., 2022).

However, in the first co-creation session, residents expressed low interest in gardening, citing physical effort and time constraints. As a result, while greening remained part of our final design proposal, it was reimagined using low-maintenance planting options supported by municipal services. Greenery became a supporting element, rather than the central strategy.

Figure 35: HHS students' design of raised community gardens in the inner courtyard (Nieuwveld et al., 2024)

Figure 36: HHS students' design of raised planters with benches at the public square (Nieuwveld et al., 2024)

Figure 37: HHS students' design of flowering shrubs in the inner courtyard

4.3.2 Week 2: Expanded greening ideas

In the second week, we translated initial feedback from residents into a broader placemaking approach. This included integrating greenery with public seating and social infrastructure to create inviting spaces for gathering and interaction, without requiring high levels of effort from residents.

One key idea was the expansion of raised planters beyond the Marterrade square – into back courtyards, walking paths, and overlooked green spaces. These planters would not only slow down fast-moving bikes but also enhance cleanliness, biodiversity, and visual quality. Their raised design directly addressed concerns about dog waste and accessibility.

Importantly, the planters were paired with benches to encourage interaction. These integrated seating elements would allow residents to rest, observe, and connect, strengthening the square's social function.

Maintenance would be kept light, with municipal support and volunteers recruited at community events. This approach responded to residents' feedback while still aligning with placemaking principles that emphasise low-threshold engagement (Project for Public Spaces, 2018).

Other placemaking ideas explored included:

● Vertical garden walls, offering low-maintenance greening and aesthetic upgrades to unattractive facades. These also support biodiversity, air quality, and stormwater management (Conejos et al., 2019; Gabel, 2024). However, due to unclear links to trust-building and challenges with windowed facades, this idea was not pursued in the final proposal.

- Wayfinding interventions, such as painted pathways, murals, and lighting to connect disconnected parts of the neighbourhood. These would guide residents intuitively toward the square, increasing its visibility and encouraging spontaneous encounters. This idea evolved into our Phase One strategy (Gibson, 2009).

4.3.3 Week 3: Designing connectivity

The second co-creation session marked a turning point in our design process. While previous ideas focused on greening and aesthetics, this phase highlighted the need to address spatial and social fragmentation more directly. Trust – not greenery – emerged as the central challenge.

Residents shared stories of disconnection, fear, and social distance – especially across age groups and cultural lines. This inspired a shift toward interventions that prioritise connectivity, permeability, and shared use, laying the groundwork for our final four-phase strategy.

Ideas developed during this week – such as opening up pathways, removing fences, and placing trust in residents to shape and maintain their spaces – became foundational to the proposal presented in this report. Since these concepts were fully integrated into Phases One through Four, they are not expanded upon here.

5. Reflection

Our group's journey through this design challenge was as much a learning process as it was a design process. Over the course of several weeks, we transitioned from abstract academic discussions about trust and social inequality to deeply grounded, place-specific design interventions rooted in the lived experiences of residents in the Marterrade neighbourhood. This reflection aims to highlight key learnings, challenges, and takeaways from our engagement.

5.1 From Greening to Trust

Initially, our approach focused heavily on greening as a method to enhance social cohesion, based on the design brief and previous student work. However, this assumption was quickly challenged. While greenery remains valuable, it became evident through interviews and observations that it was not a priority for most residents. More pressing were concerns related to safety, visibility, youth behaviour, and above all, a deep sense of distrust, both between residents and toward institutions.

This shift prompted a fundamental rethinking of our design objective. Rather than designing with greenery, we began designing through trust – with socio-spatial interventions serving as a means to re-establish social bonds and improve perceptions of safety, participation, and ownership.

5.2 The Role of Engagement

Our iterative engagement strategy – from questionnaires and interviews to co-creation and hands-on workshops – proved essential. Each method revealed different layers of the neighbourhood's social dynamics and helped us refine both our design approach and our interpersonal strategies.

We learned that informal, visible activities such as the outdoor building session in Week 3 were far more effective at attracting diverse residents than formal invitations or abstract mapping. These low-threshold moments of "doing together" created real opportunities for connection, especially across age groups.

Moreover, building rapport with residents over time – showing up consistently, listening, and following through – was key to gaining trust ourselves. This insight reinforced the need for long-term presence and relational design practices in community-based work.

5.3 Designing for Realism and Responsibility

One of our biggest challenges was balancing aspiration with feasibility. Many ideas – such as community gardens or removing fences – were exciting in theory, but would only succeed if grounded in existing capacities and responsibilities.

We had to grapple with difficult questions: Who will water the plants in summer? Who will open and close new gates? How do we ensure new benches and planters aren't misused or neglected? These are not just logistical concerns, but central design questions when working in socially complex environments.

This reflection taught us that building trust is not about doing more, but about doing with – with realism, respect, and shared responsibility.

5.4 Final Thoughts

Ultimately, this project highlighted the transformative potential of small, well-targeted interventions. It showed us that design is not simply about solving spatial problems, but about nurturing relationships – between people, and between people and place.

We came to understand trust not as a soft or secondary concern, but as a spatial and social foundation upon which neighbourhood life depends. If design is to be truly inclusive and just, it must be rooted in the rhythms, desires, and capacities of those who live with its outcomes every day.

This project challenged our assumptions, sharpened our tools, and deepened our understanding of what participatory, socially responsive urban design can look like in practice. It leaves us hopeful about the role of design in contributing – even modestly – to stronger, more caring urban communities.

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Appendix I. Questionnaire

01 - Marterrade plein en binnentuinen

In deze eerste opdracht leren we graag meer over u, zodat we uw wensen beter kunnen begrijpen.
Plaats een sticker op de plek die voor u van toepassing is.

Hoelang woont u al in deze wijk?

1 jaar   5 jaar   10 jaar   15 of meer

Hoe beweegt u zich meestal door de wijk? (meerdere opties aanvinken mag)

| lopend | in een rolstoel | met een kinderwagen | met een rollator of wandelstok |
| fiets | auto | skateboard | anders, namelijk... |

Hoe oud bent u?

0 - 9   10 - 18   18 - 24   25 - 34   35 - 44   45 - 59   60 - 69   70 - 79   80 +

O1 - Marterrade plein en binnentuinen

Geef met een sticker aan of u het met de zinnen eens bent: de schaal loopt van 1 (= helemaal oneens) tot 10 (= helemaal eens)

De meeste zinnen gaan over het plein en de binnentuinen van de Marterrade.

	1	5	10
Er is genoeg groen.			
Er zijn te veel auto`s.			
Er zijn genoeg plekken om buiten te zitten.			
Er is genoeg schaduw in de zomer.			
Er zijn genoeg plekken om te spelen.			
Meer groen is het belangrijkste aandachtspunt.			
Het idee van een gemeenschappelijke moestuin spreekt me aan.			
Het lijkt me leuk om zelf te tuinieren in de tuin.			
Ik vind het leuk om in deze wijk te leven.			
Ik voel mij veilig in de wijk.			
Ik wil meer contacten in de wijk.			
Ik zou graag mijn tijd bijdragen om de buurt en het plein groener te maken.			
De wijk is schoon.			
Ik voel mij thuis in de wijk.			
Ik weet goed hoe en waar ik mijn afval kan scheiden.			

01 - Marterrade plein en binnentuinen

In deze eerste first opdracht willlen we leren wie u bent, zodat we uw wensen voor de wijk beter begrijpen.
Beantwoord de volgende vragen, dat mag in woorden of met een tekening

Wat zijn uw wensen voor het plein en de binnentuinen ?

Welke problemen ervaart u op het plein en in de binnentuinen ?

TU Delft – AR0095
Dr. R.J. Kleinhans
Caroline Newton

Nadine Fankhauser
Taylor Gregory
Hyogo Koizumi
Alicia Schippers
Jet van Swinderen