

# TOON in de buurt



OUR

ZINE

GROUP 3



# About



Toon is an artist collective situated in the Vrederust and Bouwlust neighbourhood in Den Haag Southwest. In collaboration with "Better Neighbourhood" or "De Betere Buurt" project (Staedion, Heijmans, and the municipality) they are restructuring the region in order to create a stronger, more socially cohesive neighbourhood. Our contact persons at Toon were Ruben Abels and Iris Vetter.

Since their inception in 2022, they have organised different projects and initiated residencies. The projects aim to achieve Toon's social sustainability goals, which are based on the socio-economic issues faced by the neighbourhood residents. Initiatives range from educational courses for children to community-building by hosting a pickling course. They are working together with artists and designers to creatively transform Den Haag Southwest.

Toon's mission focuses on the following belief: Culture influences neighbourhood, neighbourhood influences culture and culture help connect people and find their own identity.

Our team has different disciplinary backgrounds from which knowledge was used to address the problem.



Hey :)  
I am Caroline Schwarz. I studied Philosophy, Politics & Economics in Germany. In my free time I love to read, ~~cook~~ and bake.

Hello! I'm Remya Radhakrishnan. I studied BSc Governance, Economics & Development at LUC The Hague, with a minor in Sustainable Development. I love dancing, nature walks and reading.



Hi! I am Jasper Obbeek. I studied Natural science and innovation management at Utrecht universiteit. I love to play guitar and travel.

Hi there! I am Lianne Harmsen. I studied Liberal Arts and Sciences at Maastricht university college. I focussed on political science and sustainability. I love to travel, going on a run and reading.





# Problem Definition

## Challenges in Collaboration: The core problem Toon faces

*The core problem is that Toons' social sustainability initiatives are not perceived as valuable by their partner organisations.*

As the problem has clear roots, consequences, and possible solutions we believe this problem could not be described as a wicked problem. The problem has limited number of stakeholders, a central authority (the Betere Buurt) which can fix it and is a relatively structured.



## Unravelling the start of the problem: a clash of values and priorities

Firstly, the value system of Toon differs significantly from their most important partners. While Toon values the creation of social cohesion between the residents, the Betere Buurt, Buurtkeuken and other organisations are more concerned about renovating the neighbourhood. Initially, Ruben Abels believed that these organisations valued Toon's community-building initiatives at the start of their collaboration. However, in later stages of their collaboration, some of the organisations Toon worked with had profit-oriented goals which clashed with Toon's non-profit model of pursuing social cohesion and community networks. Thus, the difference in their value systems for example led to Staedion revoking funds which were supposed to aid Toon's activities. Toon has tried to express their value in the neighbourhood in monetary terms, but this was not sufficient to persuade Staedion, Heijmans and the municipality and other partner organisations.

Secondly, there is a mismatch in priorities between Toon and de Betere Buurt. The latter plans to restructure the neighbourhood by replacing old buildings with new, more expensive apartments. This will automatically raise the housing prices, which will negatively affect the residents, who largely come from low-income households. Given that Vrederust-Bouwlust is a less-wealthy area, rising prices would force current inhabitants to move. This would add to the socio-economic issues that already plague the residents, which Toon works towards in its social sustainability goals.

Toon believes more in open conversation to listen to the needs of the residents. Toon wants to reflect the needs of the people, and due to people feeling unsafe, experience financial difficulties, and experience high rates of health problems, a big renovation of the neighbourhood is not their main concern. This results in a mismatch in priorities, as Toon is more focused on social sustainability while the Betere Buurt is focussing on renovating and restructuring the neighbourhood as smoothly as possible.

The fact that Toon and the organisations of the Betere Buurt have different value systems and that Toon has different priorities to the Betere Buurt caused friction in their collaboration, which resulted in the core problem that Toon faces now.



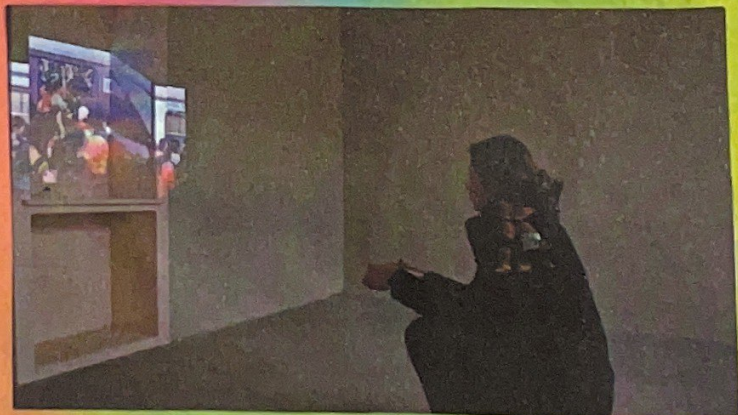
### From Colors to Constraints: The Dwindling Support for Toon's Vision

The core problem of Toon's social sustainability initiatives not being seen as valuable, results in a range of consequences.

Firstly, the biggest financial aiding partner Stedion has revoked their funding. Stedion helped realise Toon's initiatives through major investments. In October, they decided to discontinue these investments to Toon in favour of transferring funds to other organisations in the Hague. In addition, they want to continue restructuring the neighbourhood in collaboration with entrepreneurs. Ruben Abels mentions that the revoking of the fund will cause major problems for Toon, as they are crucially dependant on funding partners to be able to keep providing their initiatives to the residents.

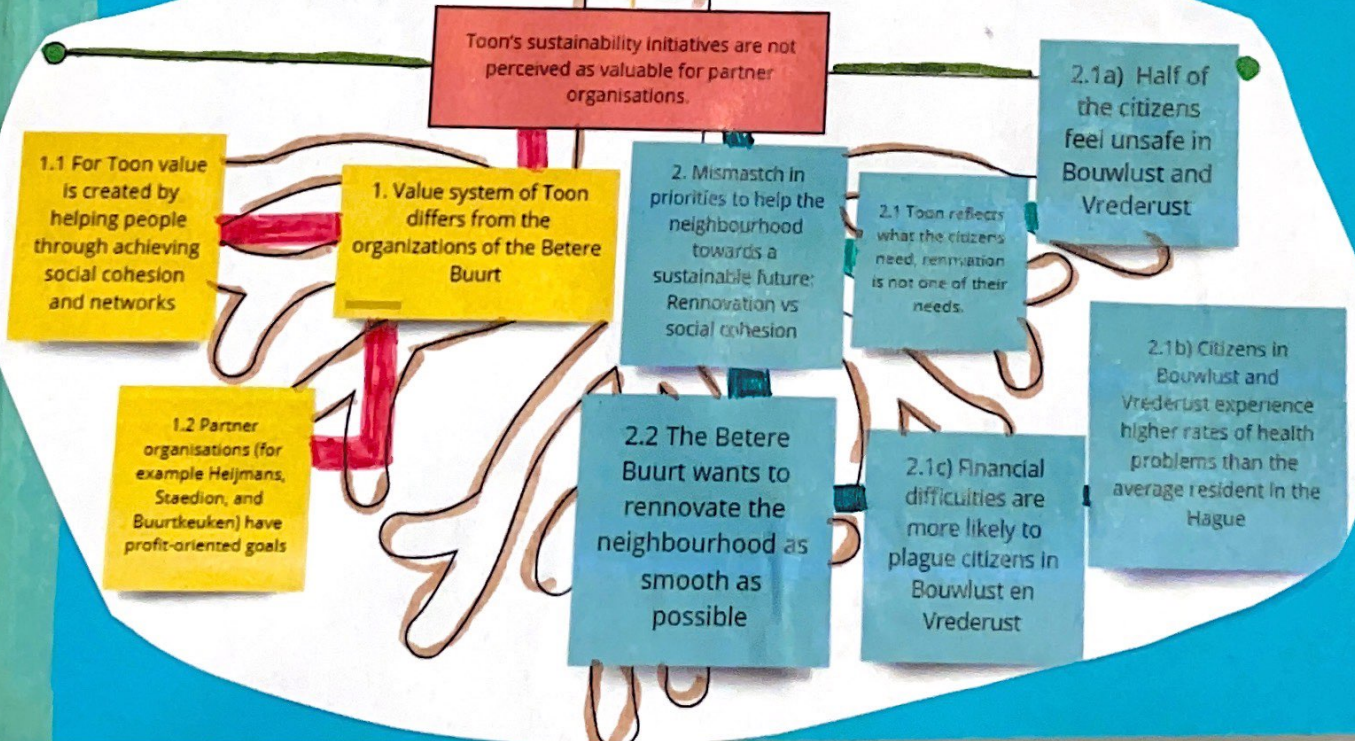
Secondly, organisations that used to collaborate with Toon have discontinued their partnerships. For example, long time partners such as Buurtkeuken – which used to provide material inputs to Toon - changed their ideology and currently wish to pursue a more profit-oriented business model. Given the mismatch with Toon's mission, the collaboration has discontinued. Spullenbak, another organisation that was an important source of second-hand materials, also no longer works with Toon. Thus, Toon has lost sources that provided cheap, mainly second-hand, materials that formerly made their projects sustainable to some extent. This also makes their resources more expensive, making it harder to provide cheap workshops and initiatives for the residents.

Losing both valuable partners – funding and collaborative partners - that provided material and monetary resources has had a significantly negative effect. Without their aid, the future of Toon is unclear, because of their financial situation. It would be difficult for the collective to continue operating without showing their economic value on top of their social value.





# Problem Tree!





# STAKEHOLDERS



## Artist Residencies

Visiting artist residencies who wish to contribute to Toon's social sustainability goals through art forms help by co-developing and carrying out community-building art projects.

## Neighbourhood Residents

Residents of the Vrederust and Bouwlast neighbourhood belong to low-income households and experience various socio-economic challenges that Toon wants to address, while strengthening community ties. Residents participate and/or help conduct activities.

## De Betere Buurt

Collaboration between the Hague municipality, Staedion and Heijmans to restructure the neighbourhood through expensive renovations that would raise housing prices. Staedion (housing association that rents out houses in the area) revoked funding that would have facilitated Toon's activities.

## Educational Institutions

Art academies

- Collaborations with lectorate of the Hogeschool van de Kunsten Utrecht, the lectorate of Minerva and St Joost Academy.
- Art staff and students participate in Toon's societal issues-related projects

## Community Organisations

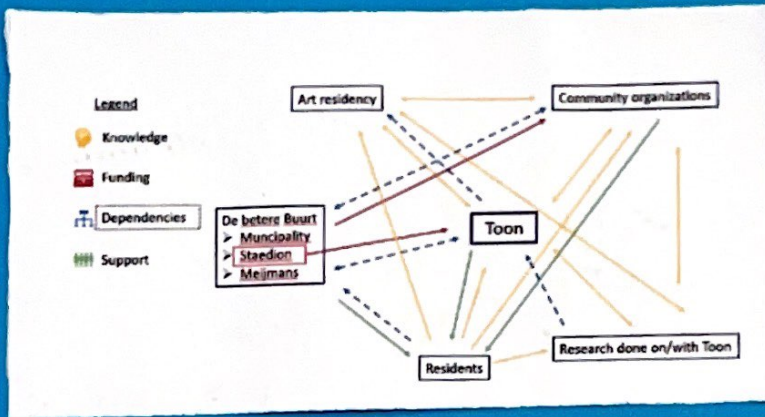
There are several community organisations in de Plint neighbourhood, which serve the community and tackle Toon's social sustainability goals in different ways. Two of them are former partners of Toon, whereas others serve as community-building social hubs or function as small-scale businesses.

- Museon Museum Lab: science and art workshops
- Made in Bouwlust: social enterprise focusing on circular product production
- Turks Museum Nederland: social hub focussing on migration
- Sam's Xarage: creative clothes-making hub
- Houtwerkplaats: mechanical woodworking tools business
- Recyclebaar Materialen Opslag MiB: secondhand construction market
- Sabra's bootcamp is health and sports-related social hub
- Spullenbak is a recycling drop-off location, former material input provider to Toon
- Buurtkeuken: former small eatery business transitioning to profit model
- Buurtcanvas: initiative that brings art and culture together
- Cultuurschakel: advisory organisation working on cultural inclusivity in schools





These actors are linked to each other in different ways. The following map illustrates these relationships:

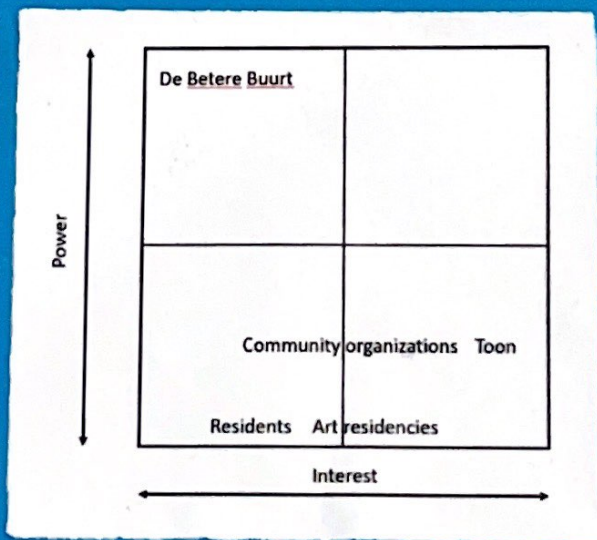


- **Knowledge** is exchanged between Toon and artists, knowledge is received by residents from Toon, artists and community organisations
- Toon and community organisations receive **financial** resources from De Betere Buurt
- Toon is **dependent** on De Betere Buurt and artist residencies

- Residents receive **support** from Toon, De Betere Buurt and community organisations

Toon has huge stake and interest in social sustainability, but is dependant on other actors for human, financial and material resources.

Low Power  
High Interest



Low to Moderate Power & Interest

High Influence  
Low Interest

De Betere Buurt has high funding power → high resources and capacity. They have more political power than other actors.

Social sustainability of the neighbourhood & Toon's perceived value is not a big priority for the art educational institutions, but they provide resources for Toon's activities. Residents have low to moderate interests, and limited resources and influential power.



# THEORY OF CHANGE

T.. II

## Value Clash: Toon's Quest for Social Impact amidst Profit-Driven Partnerships

As defined in the problem tree, the fundamental issue is that Toons' social sustainability initiatives are not being seen as valuable to partnering organizations. The collaboration of Betere Buurt aims to restructure the neighbourhood to ultimately gain more monetary value. In addition, the collaboration

of Betere Buurt and community partner organizations altered their ideology and now aspire to adopt a more profit-centric business model. Assigning monetary value to Toon's projects proves to be challenging due to the non-profit nature of the art collective, which makes it difficult for Toon's partners to appreciate the social value embedded in their initiatives.



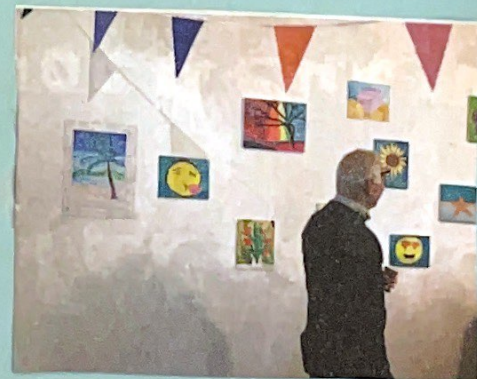
Having a different value system is a potential reason for Staedion to revoke funds previously granted to Toon and instead pursue collaborations with entrepreneurs. As a consequence, Toon's collaborations came to a halt, resulting in the depletion of material resources for their artistic projects and social initiatives. The loss of funding and material resources is posing a challenge to the future of Toon.

## Resourceful Connections: Toon's Network

Toon's extensive network is the most valuable resource of the organisation. Ruben Abels and Iris Vetter have a wide network of artists and designers. In addition, Toon's team has connections to research groups within established art institutes such as the Hogeschool van de Kunsten Utrecht (HKU) and Kunst Samenleving Minerva. Connections to these institutions and in the artist, community have proven to be useful in connecting artists and designers to projects in the neighbourhood. Next to that, Toon has a network of community organisations in the neighborhood. Through de Betere Buurt, Toon has connections to big housing corporations like Steadion and Heijmans and the municipality. These partners have proven to be useful in the past, serving as sources of financial support.

## Navigating Needs: Toon's Journey to Fill Resource Gaps and Foster Trust

As mentioned in the paragraph before, Toon needs to fill its resource gaps. Firstly, Toon is reliant on funding to continue its projects. Secondly, the material resource gap needs to be filled. Toon preferably needs donated material to proceed with its artistic projects. Lastly, Toon co-founder Ruben Abels considers time and trust as important needs. In order for the Betere Buurt to value the benefits of Toon's activities and their impact on social sustainability in the neighbourhood, Toon needs the trust of Staedion and Heijmans. Furthermore, residents, artists and other partners have to give up free time to join Toons' initiatives. Their





projects and initiatives usually take place after workday timings or during the weekends. This poses a time-related challenge that compromises participation.

### **An Array of Activities: Actions and Projects Toon Can Pursue**

In order to achieve Toon's goal of increasing its visibility and perceived value, Toon can pursue the following activities:

#### **1. Project development in collaboration with partner organizations**

Firstly, Toon should pursue partnerships to procure circular material inputs for its activities. It used to obtain material inputs for its art projects from Spullenbak and Buurtkeuken; the collaboration discontinued due to the latter organizations shifting to a more profit-based business model. Toon can explore opportunities to resume collaboration under these new circumstances. Alternatively, Toon can explore new partnerships with businesses such as Schroeder, which has six thrift shops in the Hague that can supply secondhand material.

Secondly, Toon can maintain and expand its collaborations with academic institutions. Apart from the current partners, it should consider collaborations with other major art institutions such as KABK (the Royal Academy of Art in the Hague); art and design students from esteemed institutions can participate in Toon's projects and also provide new perspectives for future ones. A wider network of artists from well-known institutions will also boost Toon's reputation among funding actors.

Thirdly, Toon should collaborate more closely with other businesses in the Plint. Several businesses work with certain themes of interest to the neighbourhood community; Toon can co-develop projects based on these themes respectively. Given the relevance of employment in a low-income neighbourhood, Toon can make use of Made in Bouwlust's social spaces for employment-related art projects.



#### **2. Online Media Strategy**

Firstly, Toon should improve its own website to boost its online presence. While Toon currently has a website, it can be re-designed and expanded to serve various functions: It can be used as a curated platform to showcase the art residencies' work in the form of an online gallery that visitors can browse through. Toon can promote and maintain a timeline of past, present and future events, including art events, workshops and exhibitions. A well-developed website that is easy to navigate through increases the chances of potential collaborators and other interested parties reaching out.

Secondly, Toon can expand its digital presence by creating a page on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. Social media is widely used among people irrespective of socio-economic backgrounds. Toon can do it either themselves or arrange for a volunteer to manage their social media profiles. LinkedIn would be useful to network with other businesses, potential funding partners, artists, etc. These platforms can be used to increasing visibility past, present and future projects, not only to update existing participants but to attract new people interested in joining. Links to these platforms should be integrated into the main website.

#### **3. Physical Media Strategy**

Since Toon's mission is centered around community-building and building networks, it is equally important to focus on traditional sources of media communication. Visual forms of media such as posters and flyers about bigger events – placed in strategic places in a given neighbourhood – can easily be noticed by residents, especially elderly people who use social media much less. Also a more





structured method of pursuing more dialogue is through setting up transparent, open and regular meetings with neighbourhood stakeholders. For example, Toon can collaborate with any neighbourhood associations to host a monthly 'Burendag' (Neighbour's Day), which is a common community event hosted in Dutch neighbourhoods.

#### 4. Selling Art and Products

The Toon founders shared that they attempted to sell their art and other products from their projects (to decrease the dependency on their funding provided by Steadion). However, since this is something, Toon is already trying to achieve, the aforementioned activities should result in them being able to sell their products.

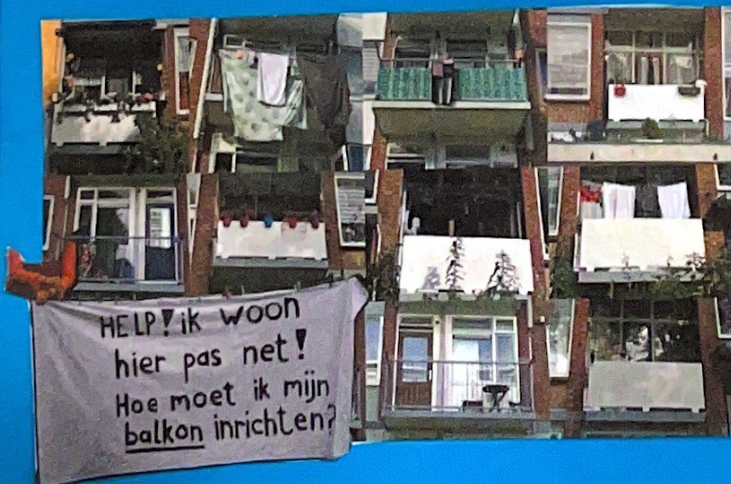
#### **Navigating Needs: Short term goals: Fills resource gaps and work on visibility and impact**

As aforementioned, Toon has different needs to fill its resource gaps and foster trust. Aside from funding what resources does Toon need and which actors can help them with that?

Toon uses many different materials for their projects - from groceries to paper to used pellets. As a non-profit organisation, are dependent on donations to get resources. However, these resources are scarce. One way of filling that gap is collaborating with community organisations in the neighbourhood. By working together, the organisations can share their resources and make use of their different basic equipment. For example, in return for being provided material input, the other community organisation can profit from Toon's resourceful network and design skills.

Shared projects could also lead to broader participation and therefore higher visibility of the social efforts all those organisations make in the neighbourhood. Additionally, Toon's social media and active physical communication strategies will enhance their visibility even more. More potential participants could be reached, which could lead to a bigger impact on individual residents, the environment, and the whole neighbourhood.

The enhanced visibility by Toon's new online and physical presence would not only attract more participants but could also help sell the products they create in collaboration with the residents, creating a small extra income for the inhabitants who devoted their time to make products and art with Toon. Since most of the earnings will go to the participants who made the products in collaboration with Toon, selling the art and products could not only show the participants the value of art but also help Toon to provide for the projects they want to produce in the future.





### Navigating Needs: Long term goals: enhancing trust, time and shared values

The improved visibility through physical and online platforms of Toon is needed in the long run if they want to keep improving their position in the neighbourhood. It will enhance the outreach of Toon, which will also create more involvement by residents, artists, and organisations, which means that their projects and initiatives will also have a bigger impact.

In the long run, when selling art and other products is a more stable occurrence it could improve their position towards Staedion, Heijmans and the municipality. Without making a profit themselves, Toon could then portray their economic worth to these organisations by showing Toon and the residents make some money from the projects.

This improved economic value will help with building trust with Heijmans, Staedion, the municipality and partnering organisations. The funds Toon needs could again be provided by, which helps Toon to trust them more. By showing the Betere Buurt that the projects and initiatives of Toon do have monetary value, it would improve Toon's position in the collaboration. Not only is trust on both sides of the collaboration needed, but they also go hand-in-hand.

The aforementioned collaborative projects educate the participants on the importance of working together for the same goal and help build shared values. That can for example prepare them better for the labor market which is one of Toon's goals as well. The same applies to shared values. Working together on different projects helps with bringing people together and building their own memories as a community. This will result in more active engagement from participants with Toon and its projects.

Another aspect is the time participants invest in collaborating with Toon. If participants know that their work is also valued by other people, this could drive them to see it as a more valuable way to spend their time.

When Toon does obtain the higher visibility, stable funds and gets more time to focus on their endeavors, it can be the right time to start the discourse on differences in values between them and partnering organisations. In clear communication with Staedion, Heijmans, municipality, and partnering community organisations Toon could show that their social projects do help create wealth in the neighbourhood.

### Conclusion

Toon's short- and long-term goals will help Staedion, Heijmans and the municipality understand that being a non-profit organisation does not mean that they cannot add value and that the residents of the neighbourhood southwest need more than just renovations. The enlarged network and more eager participation of artists, residents and other partnering organisations will show that non-profit organisations, like Toon, are important within the neighbourhood. Besides creating social cohesion, they will also raise awareness about the situation of the district. This could attract more organisations and artists to join Toon's endeavors in creating stronger social connections and networks in the neighbourhood.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q

HET HANDSCHRIJFTE

VAN DE BUURTE



**Cure Problem**

The Betere Buurt (a collaboration between Staedion, Heijmans and the municipality) who was funding Toon till October perceive the value of social sustainability different than Toon.

**Resources**

- Extensive resource network
- Existing partnerships with academic and art institutions

**Needs**

- Funding
- Time
- Materials
- Trust

**Activities**

**Collaborations**

- Collaborations to obtain material input
- Partnerships with art and academic institutions
- collaborations with community organisations in de Pijp

**Online Media**

- Improve website to promote past, present and future projects
- Create social media platform: Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn

**Physical Media**

- Visual media: Flyers, posters
- Public Art Installations
- Stakeholder Dialogue Platforms (eg. Buurextra)

**Selling art & products**

- Sell art & products in city centre

**Short-term advancements**

- Collaboration with other community organisations
- Social media and physical communication strategies
- Attraction of more participants
- Selling art and products

**Long-term advancements**

- Enhanced visibility of Toon
- Bigger impact and outreach
- Preparation for the labour market
- Economic value added by selling art and products
- Improved trust on all sides

Share values between Toon and partners of the Betere Buurt

**Vision**

Toon wants to help build a strong, cohesive and socially healthy neighbourhood community that is proud of its identity and shared vision.



# TOONS VISION

All the short- and long-term goals lead to Toons overall vision for the neighbourhood: They want to help build a strong, cohesive, and socially healthy neighbourhood community that is proud of its identity and shared vision. In this healthy community culture differences are getting talked about in an inclusive and democratic way. It stands on the principles of open communication, inclusivity, and heart.

## Reflection

We used a transdisciplinary approach to this project. We studied the data we obtained from the lens of each member's disciplinary background: governance, environment, political science, economics and philosophy. This helped us understand the different dimensions of Toon's problem, for example to analyse the residents' socio-economic challenges and the financial factor.

It was a unique learning experience to use a zine to present our project, which weaves in beautifully with Toon's art-based social projects. We took advantage of this art medium to create an engaging, visually attractive output that would effectively communicate our ideas.

However, we experienced several challenges that made it difficult to produce the output of these assignments.

x005A, we received a mix of information during each interaction with our organisation Toon. After the first meeting, the sheer volume of information made joint problem framing difficult. We were mainly able to only interact with one stakeholder, which limited our knowledge base. We attempted to reach out to other stakeholders, but our attempts were not fruitful and thus could not access those diverse views. To counter this problem, we made use of our connection with Mr. Abels and asked more diverse interview questions from different disciplinary perspectives (eg. economic, sociological view).

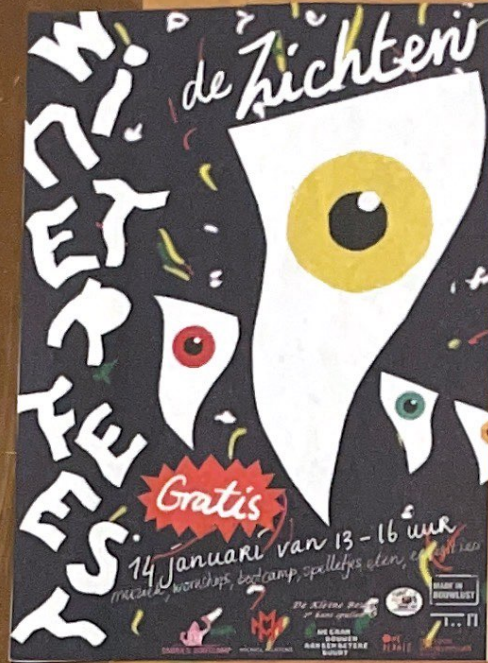
Secondly, we entered the project thinking we would have to focus on an environmental sustainability issue, whereas Toon deals with social sustainability. Although we had prepared questions to steer the conversation in the direction surrounding environmental sustainability, we noticed that this was not the main concern of Toon. While this delayed the framing of our core problem, we saw this as a learning opportunity to delve into social sustainability for a change. Eventually with our professors' guidance, we delved into social sustainability, as this was central to Toons' mission. We were then able to construct a fruitful final meeting resulting in the output of the theory of change, which eventually shaped our zine. Additionally, we found Theory of Change a very useful tool to analyse the information we obtained so far, and come up with activities and goals that would help achieve the vision of our organisation.

Thirdly, we were the smallest group of 4 people, which means each member had slightly higher workload than our colleagues. We overcame this obstacle by being in frequent communication, effectively delegating tasks and being empathetic to each other's schedules and capacity.

Overall, we persevered to the best of our ability and with whatever information we could obtain, used our creativity, analytical skills and knowledge from our different backgrounds to produce this output.



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toon, a canvas for dreams to  
ignite  
Empty spaces transform, bathed  
in artist' light  
In the quiet corners where  
creativity thrives  
They paint tomorrow with the  
hues of their lives.