

# LONG TERM ENGAGEMENT IN THE MUSEUM LAB



This zine was created for the **MuseumLAB** by a group of students of the MSc **Governance of Sustainability** at Leiden University:

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\*Drawing on cover created by Oumayra.



A collaboration between Leiden University and the MuseumLAB of Museon-Omniversum

MuseumLAB in Den Haag Zuidwest

**museon** **omniversum**  
WE ARE ONE PLANET



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## The story behind **MuseumLAB**

The Southwest of the Hague and its local community faces complex socio-economic challenges, such as poverty, chronic illness, social disconnection, and safety concerns. To address these challenges, The Hague municipality “has approached Museon-Omniversum as a cultural institution to contribute to the developments and quality of life in Southwest. The MuseumLAB in Het Zicht is the result of this!”. The creation of the MuseumLAB is also part of The Hague’s 20-year program ‘Southwest at its best’ focusing on key themes like education, employment, housing, safety, health, and social cohesion.

Driven by its commitment to support the Hague’s mission of improving the quality of life in the Southwest part of the city, the MuseumLAB seeks to play a pivotal role in this urban transformation process. They recognise the need for a more inclusive and dynamic approach, particularly in the realms of education, employment, and social cohesion. The museum envisions itself as a platform for promoting 21st-century skills and competencies among young people, including critical thinking, collaboration, and social justice.

Research has revealed that factors such as distance, (travel) costs, and cultural differences withhold residents from the Southwest to visit Museon-Omniversum. These social challenges drove the institution to place itself within the Southwest. Being part of an urban restructuring in Southwest, the institution is forced to rethink their museological and museographic principles, herein lies an opportunity to shape itself to better resonate with the neighbourhood it serves.

### **The problem + Transdisciplinarity**

Central to the MuseumLab’s mission is active interaction with Southwest within and outside of their workshops. *“The key challenge is building strong community connections, including engaging children aged 8-12 in environmentally relevant workshops and keeping them involved as they grow older”*. The institution recognises that teenagers, when left without engaging activities, may be more prone to engaging in unsupervised problematic behaviours, and sees this as an opportunity to spark interest in transdisciplinary skills, steering kids toward STEAM (science, engineering, the arts, and math) careers.

However, this is only possible with full engagement. In meeting with MuseumLAB they said “Hands on, head on, minds on,” highlighting how interactive activities at the museum will capture minds. Therefore, our primary concern is ensuring the long-term neighbourhood engagement of young people in the MuseumLAB.

### **The wickedness of the problem**

The overarching problem that the MuseumLAB is addressing can be classified as a wicked problem. The Southwest confronts multiple interconnected challenges and factors that affect the quality of living as previously mentioned. These issues often act as symptoms of one another, for instance how poverty can lead to more crime and therefore safety concerns.

### **What knowledge is needed?**

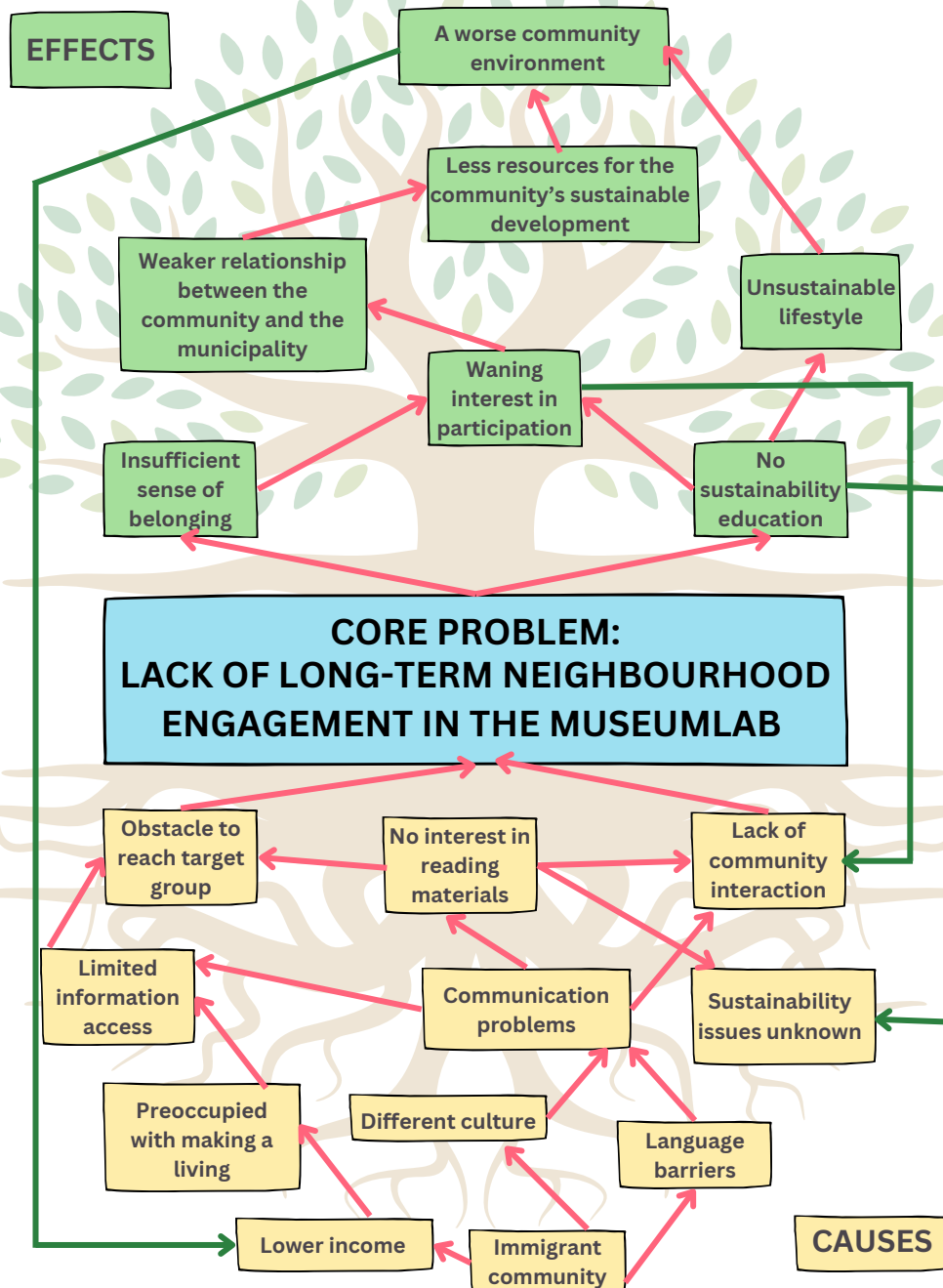
Attracting and maintaining strong connections with young people is key to the success of MuseumLAB. When working with children in The Hague Southwest, applying explicit knowledge from Western-oriented fields like developmental psychology may not be as effective as tapping into tacit knowledge forms.

The majority of school children in this area come from migrant families with different cultural backgrounds and behavior patterns. Hence those who work at the MuseumLAB emphasise “finding a new way to connect with people.” Rather than explicit knowledge, what will most resonate tacit knowledge referred to as “rules-regress” and “forms of life”.

To highly engage these young people and influence their families, it is important to understand both the commonalities and differences between cultures represented in the community. MuseumLAB needs to identify shared values and perspectives across backgrounds, while also appreciating unique norms, traditions, and ways of learning.

Only by building bridges between cultures through an education system cognizant of varied forms of tacit knowledge can MuseumLAB truly connect with and attract and retain attendance of young people. With insight into the community's cultural diversity, age-appropriate programming can be developed to appeal to all children in The Hague Southeast on a deeper level.

# Problem Tree



The MuseumLAB is successful in communicating their sustainable knowledge to younger school children. We witnessed this in person when we volunteered and talked to them. The older children, however, do not stay involved in the workshops. Some of them do return occasionally, but a lot of them do not return at all. This lack of long-term community engagement means that the MuseumLAB is not as integrated as possible.

Because of the nature of the community, with people from a lower socio-economic status and from backgrounds with different cultures and languages, it can be difficult to communicate. Because of the struggle for income and this communication barrier, the access to information is limited. This includes information about MuseumLAB activities, so the target group is not always reached. The communication problems also lead to lower interest in reading Dutch promotional materials, lower interaction with the community and less knowledge about sustainable issues and practices. All this leads to the core problem: The lack of long-term neighbourhood engagement in the MuseumLAB.

Because of this lack of engagement, only a small group of children know of the MuseumLAB and their activities and receive the sustainability education that they provide. The low engagement in general leads to an insufficient sense of belonging. Both of these consequences lead to lower enthusiasm for community participation, which results in even lower community interaction. As a result, the MuseumLAB is not able to fulfil its potential as a bridge between community and municipal government and other helping NGO's. The people do miss out on funds or other ways of support (for sustainable development), because they miss the available information. This, in combination with the more unsustainable lifestyle because of the missed sustainability education, leads to a worse community environment. Finally, this missed potential for a better community environment, does not improve the social and economic status of the community members.

This problem analysis is based on talks with MuseumLAB workshop participants, information provided by Museon-Omniversum, online searches about the neighbourhood and our own impressions from walking around in the area. Our problem analysis is schematically shown in a problem tree on the previous page: Causes in yellow, our core problem in blue and the consequences in green. The relations between these are shown with arrows, whereby green arrows stand for feedback loops (a consequence that makes a root cause more likely to occur).

# STAKEHOLDERS

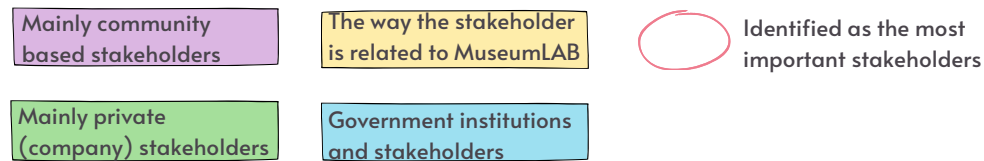
Stakeholder analysis is important for MuseumLAB, the community-based STEAM education program. It helps the workers to identify key stakeholders as well as their needs and interests, therefore facilitating collaborations, managing challenges, and eventually maximizing program impact and sustainability.

Through desktop research and various meetings with the workers of MuseumLAB, we have identified various stakeholders of the program as seen in the map. Their interconnections and the direction of resource flow are presented on the next page. We have used colours to identify different social categories.

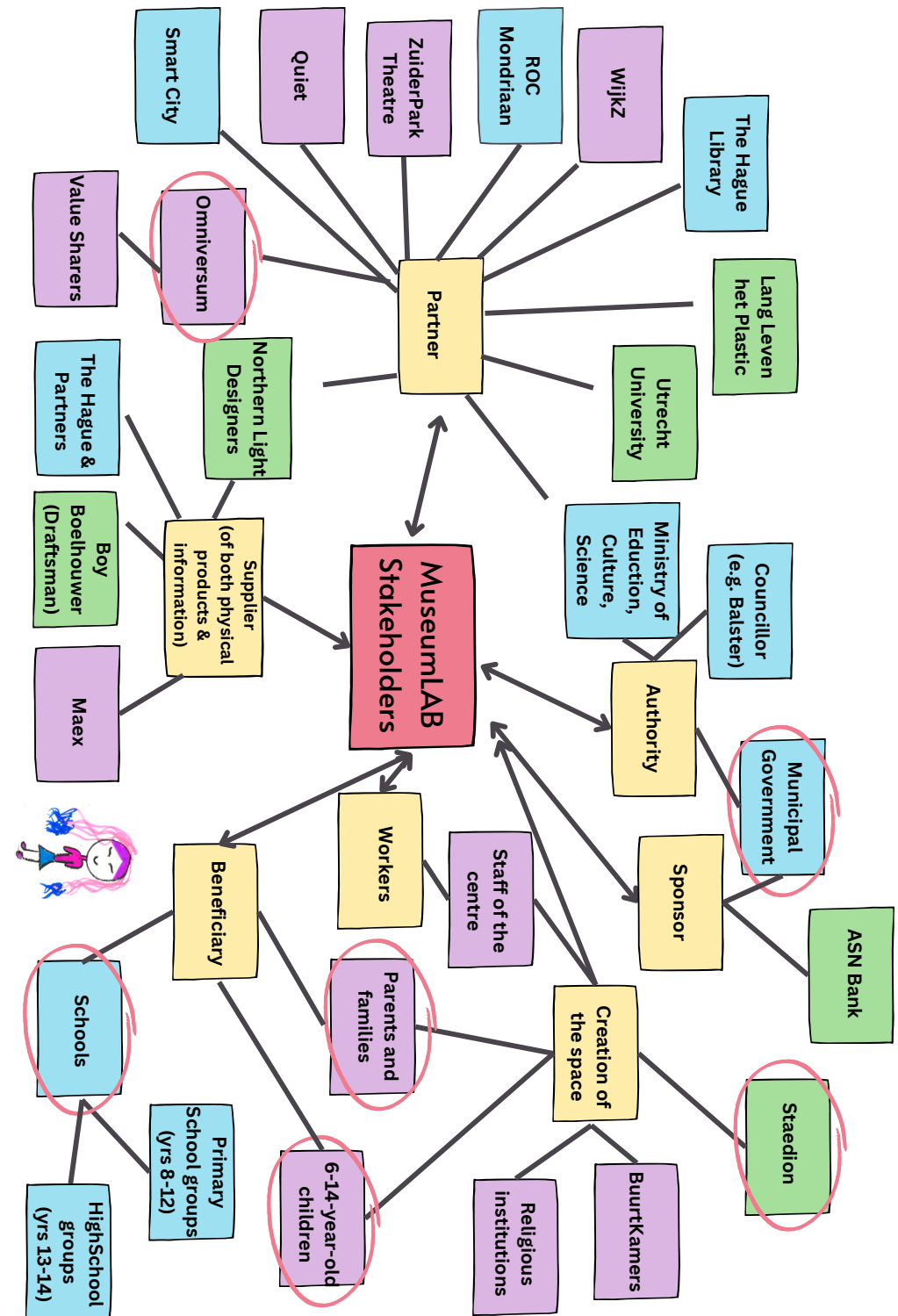
Blue represents stakeholders that are either Government institutions or stakeholders that are most related to the Government. Purple represents stakeholders that have a mainly community-based role, such as NGOs and community members. Under community-based stakeholders, we also highlighted religious institutions, as they are vital to spreading information within communities. Green represents mainly private stakeholders, whose company or role is mainly profit based. Finally, the yellow boxes demonstrate how different stakeholders are related to the MuseumLAB. Outside of the colour coding we also identified with a red circle what we think are the most important stakeholders.

We of course recognize that there is an overlap between all three social categories but have chosen the colour that best represents the stakeholder, such as being a partner, or a supplier of products or information.

## Stakeholder Map Legend



Turn the zine 90 degrees to check it out! →





**Project beneficiaries:** 6–14-year-old children living in the Hague Southwest are the beneficiaries and the most important stakeholders of MuseumLAB. MuseumLAB provides learning opportunities to the children, while children’s participation and input shape the effectiveness of MuseumLAB and point out the program’s direction to success. MuseumLAB also seeks to create awareness and provide information about sustainable practices to adults in the neighborhood by engaging parents in the workshops. By maintaining the relationship, MuseumLAB is able to impact the community by preparing the children for sustainable challenges and creating word-of-mouth advertisements.

**Community:** MuseumLAB serves as a platform for community engagement and connectivity, strengthening social ties and promoting a sense of belonging. The community supports the program through resources and suggestions for improvement. The neighbourhood is shaped by the housing company Staedion, which also helped create the space and hence is considered as one of the most crucial stakeholders.

**Authorities:** the municipality of The Hague and its councillors have played a crucial role in establishing MuseumLAB, sharing a common objective of enhancing the quality of life for citizens and fostering a sustainable community. Municipal decisions hold significant influence over the program. For example, the municipality's plan to attract more middle-class families to the area may impact the participants of MuseumLAB's activities, presenting new challenges.

**Workers:** workers in the MuseumLAB program hold the shared goal to support the development of the community. They collaborate on program delivery by providing feedback for program improvement and advocating for the program's impact.

**Partners:** partners who organize similar activities or are located in the same area share a common goal of promoting STEAM education or community development. By creating a network, MuseumLAB and its partners can benefit from shared resources and best practices, while enhancing the popularity and overall impact. Omniversum is of course key as it is the parent company of the MuseumLAB.

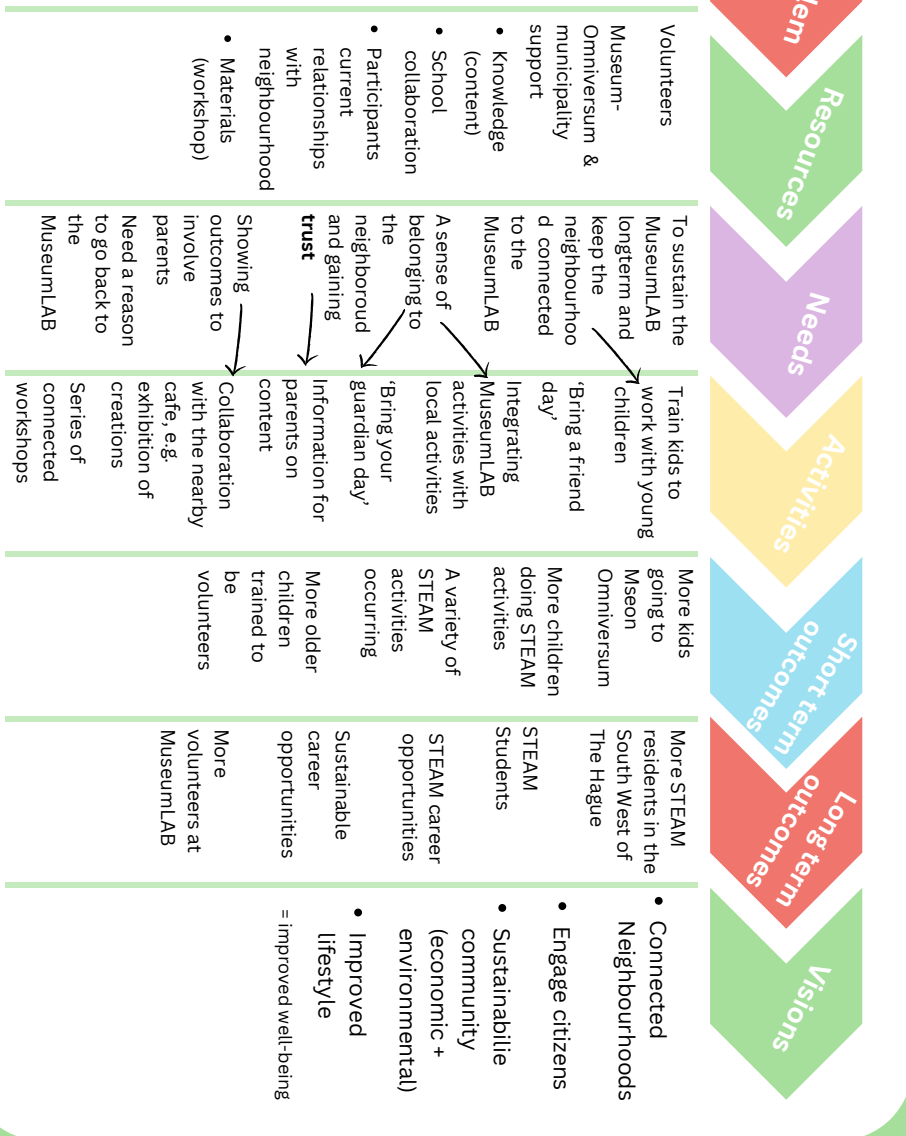
**Sponsors:** MuseumLAB developed a mutually beneficial relationship with its sponsors. They share the goal of sustainable development. Sponsors provide resources, especially financial support to the program, while the program promotes sponsors' contributions.

**Suppliers:** suppliers provide parts of materials for program activities, while the program relies on quality supplies to deliver engaging and hands-on learning experiences.

“We want to be relevant. We are finding new way to connect with people.”

# Theory of Change

Lack of long-term neighbourhood engagement in the MuseumLAB



## Core problem:

Central to the MuseumLAB's mission is active interaction with Southwest within and outside of their workshops. In this regard, MuseumLAB foresees the challenge of a lack of long-term neighbourhood engagement in the MuseumLAB. Our primary focus is on sparking the curiosity of young children and nurturing these connections as they mature.

## Resources:

MuseumLAB leverages a range of resources in their capacity to address this challenge. This includes volunteers and support from Museum-Omniversum and the municipality in terms of knowledge sharing, school collaborations, participants' existing relationships within the neighbourhood, and workshop materials.

## Needs:

In regard to sustaining MuseumLAB in the long term, fostering a sense of belonging and trust between the institution and the neighbourhood plays a central role. By showcasing the outcomes to involve parents and providing reasons for children to revisit the MuseumLAB, this sense of trust and sense of belonging can be generated.

## Activities:

To fill these needs, MuseumLAB can undertake various activities, such as training older children to work with younger ones for establishing long term relationships with both age groups. By organising a 'Bring a Friend Day', interest can be sparked for children who have not been in touch with MuseumLAB yet. This is promised to be an effective strategy: **"I came here for the first time today to join a friend" a participant said.** In addition, conducting a series of connected workshops can guarantee a reason for participants to revisit the MuseumLAB. Integrating MuseumLAB activities with local events, hosting a 'Bring Your Guardian Day', providing information to parents about workshop content and outcomes, and collaborating with nearby cafes to exhibit children's creations can further develop a deeper connection between the institution and the neighbourhood while sparking the interest of children and maybe even parents.

### Short term outcomes:

In the short term, the activities will lead to an increased number of children visiting the MuseumLAB and therefore Museon-Omniversum. Furthermore, more children will participate in STEAM activities, a broader range of STEAM activities will be provided, and a higher number of older children are trained to be volunteers.

### Long term outcomes:

Further in the future, the Southwest of The Hague will inhabit more STEAM residents, with more STEAM students and career opportunities, with a focus on sustainability in career opportunities. This also includes a growing number of volunteers at MuseumLAB.

### Visions/Impacts:

The ultimate impacts and visions central to this theory of change are connected neighbourhoods, engaged citizens, an economic and environmentally sustainable community, and an improved lifestyle that directly contributes to and improves well-being of the citizens of The Hague Southwest.



## Final Notes

The MuseumLAB is located in The Hague Southwest. The majority of inhabitants in this area are primarily immigrants whose cultural backgrounds differ from the mainstream Dutch culture. In the coming years, this area is being redeveloped, which means that a lot of housing is being rebuilt. The current inhabitants are offered a different home in another part of the city during the renovation time. After this, they are offered to move back into the area for their original rent. Staedion, the housing cooperation, noticed during previous projects that only 10% of the inhabitants return.

According to the municipal scheme, there will be more people with higher incomes moving into the area. This means that the coming years will see a lot of change in the composition of the neighbourhood, which will bring challenges to create and maintain the social connection not only among residents with diverse cultural backgrounds and income levels but also between MuseumLAB and the new inhabitants. At the same time, it has to be ensured that the children with less socio-economic opportunities are still involved. Having the entire community involved is what can guarantee the long-term sustainability of the programme.

Our vision for the MuseumLAB is an open and welcoming space that is connected to the neighbourhood, not only by location but also by the people who run the place. By doing this, the sustainability knowledge that is available will flow into the community in a natural, respectful, multidirectional and fun way. We hope that with the proposed model, the future of this area and of its inhabitants will be brighter, with a general lifestyle improvement.