

PLACE EXPLORATION & SENSE MAKING

Gathering local knowledge

Once you co-design new interventions with the local community of a specific public area, you will need to dive into all the ins and outs of it! As a real explorer, you will have to use all your senses and ask relevant questions to get an understanding of the place and all its users.

You will gather valuable information during your place exploration while you observe, or when you have a conversation with local people or experience its green spaces. Sometimes it simply comes out of spending hours at a time in a space, we call that: “deep hanging out”. Not just once, but several times and at different times during the week.

In this toolkit you'll find several tools to help you explore a specific place with all its layers and make sense of all the gathered data.

From a regenerative placemaking perspective, we aim to (re)igniting people's relationship to socio-ecological systems through place-specific temporary leisure and tourism activations that act as a testing ground for long term potential (Hernandez-Santin et al, 2020).

Toolkit

Index

1. First Impressions

Leisure bingo

2. Kissing & pissing index

Miro board template of the index itself

Pissing left - Kissing right

3. What do users think, feel, say ?

Suggestions for interview questions and an impressions of the location

Short video - interviewing people

4. Mapping the place

Physical setting /green/blue/grey, benches, play objects

5. Past

Use of various sources

6. Background information

Glossary & sources



PLACE EXPLORATION & SENSE MAKING

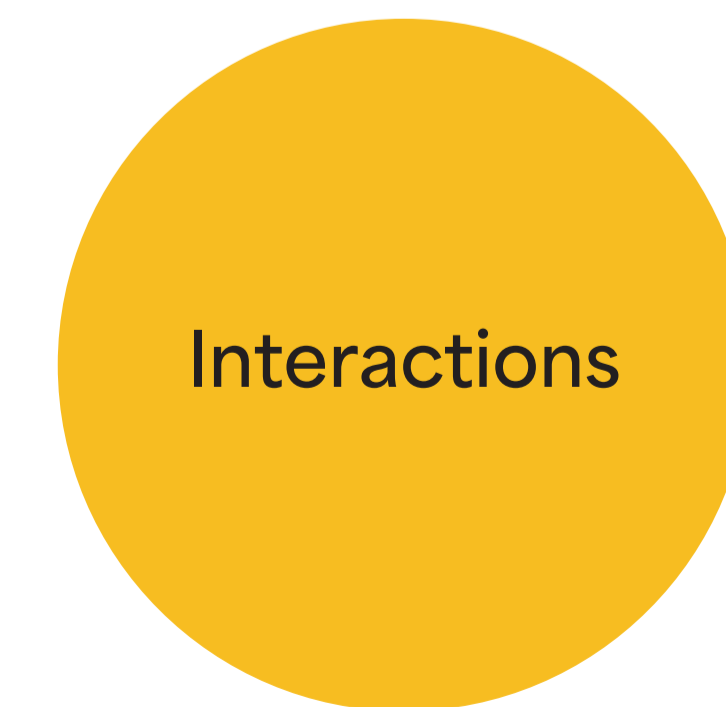
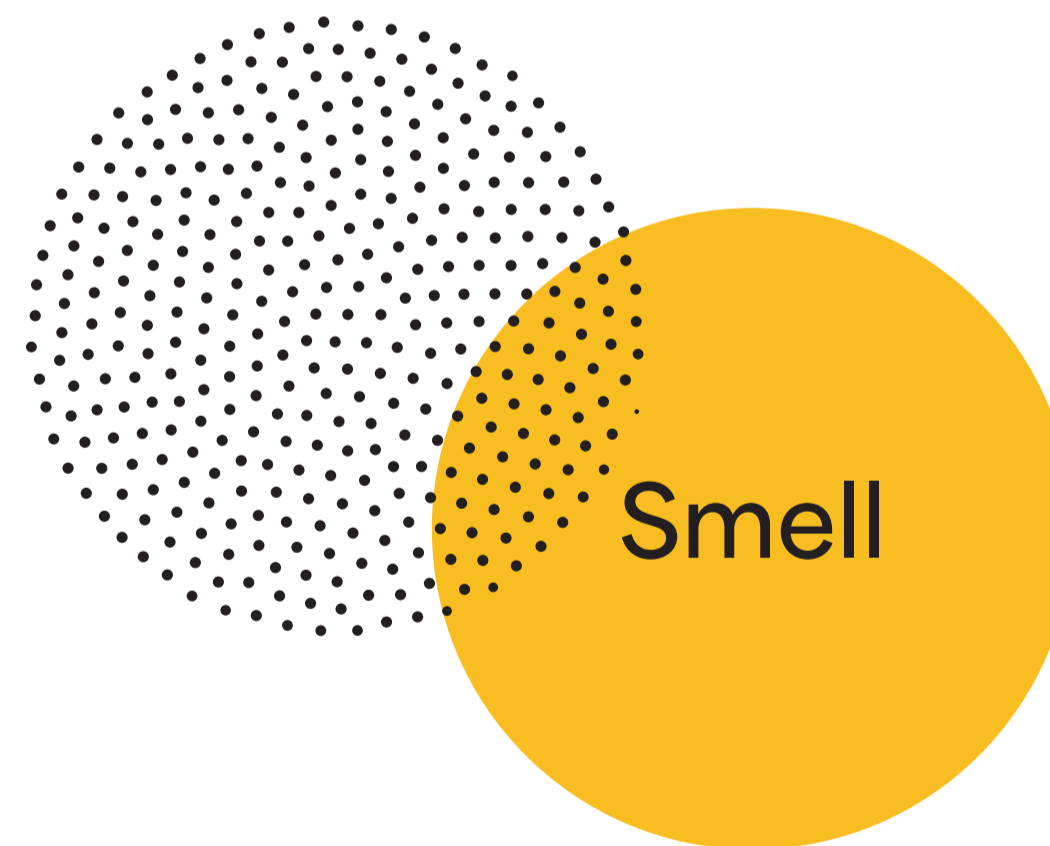
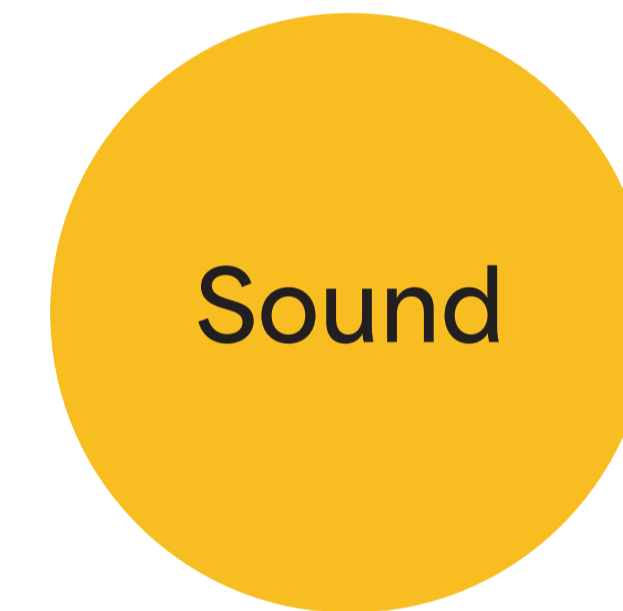
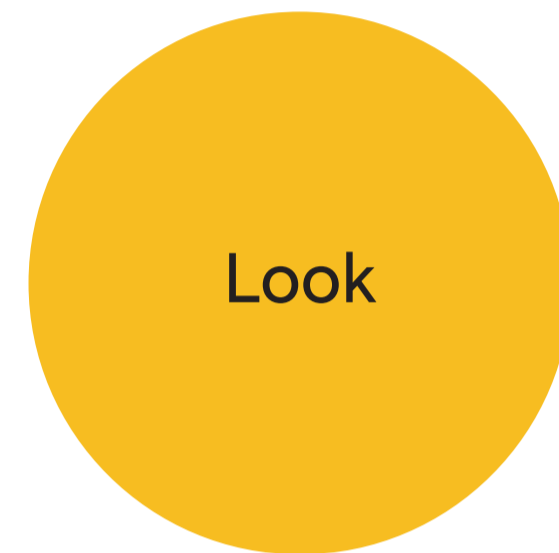
Go and explore

First impressions count, but they can change over time.

Make sure you capture your first impressions when you entered this place for the first time.

First impressions

Action Try to come up with words that fits the first look, smell, sound, interaction, feeling of this place

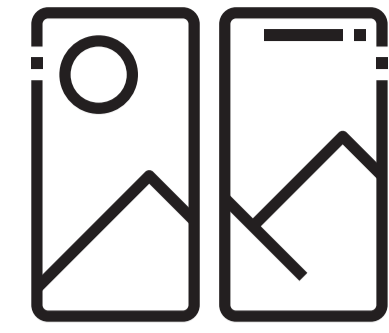


PLACE EXPLORATION & SENSE MAKING

Go and explore

The kissing & pissing index are funny indicators of (un)attractive places.

Walk around the area in duo's and take pictures. Are there any hidden treasures, where would you walk around?



Kissing & pissing index

Photo challenge

Action

Look closely and take pictures. Select 6 of the most relevant pictures and place them on the index.



Upload to Miro

Where might others choose a spot to pee?



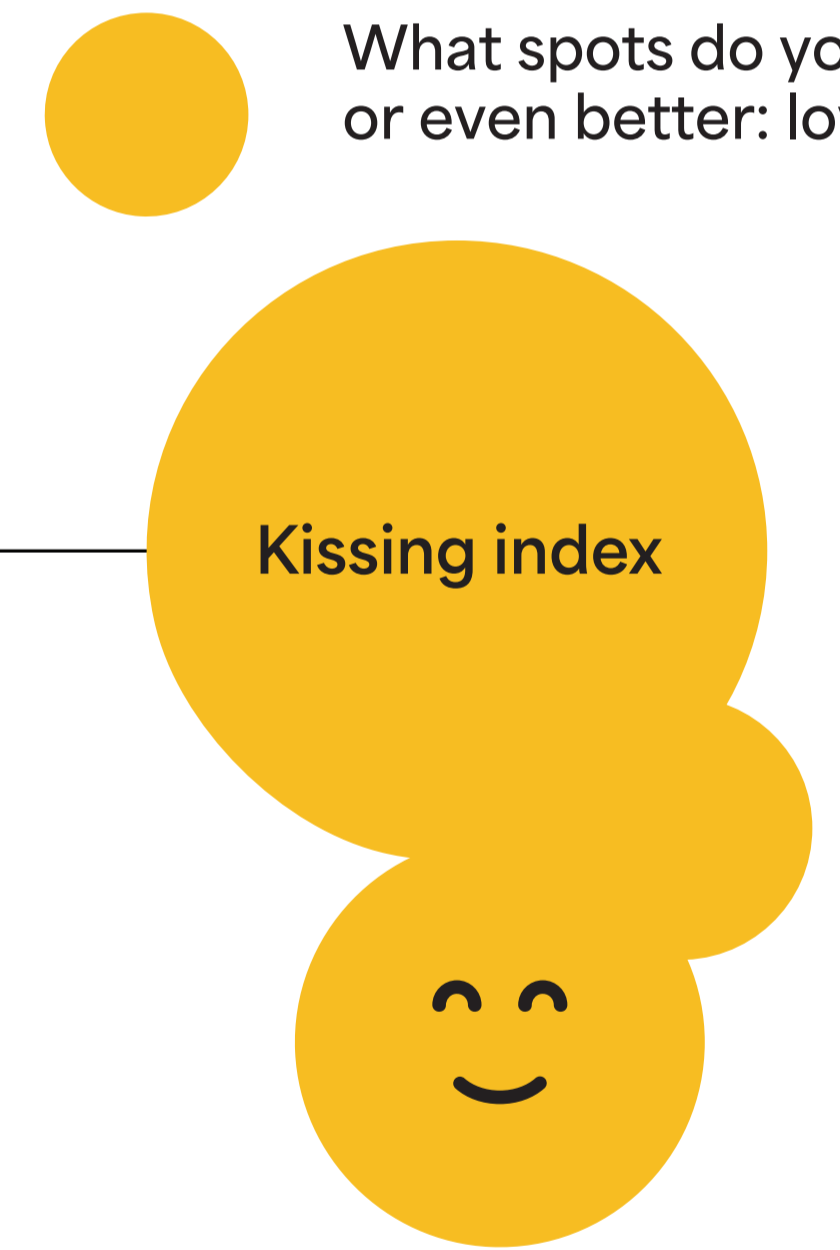
Pissing index

Top = tangible

Bottom = intangible

Where would lovers like to share a kiss?

What spots do you like or even better: love?



Kissing index



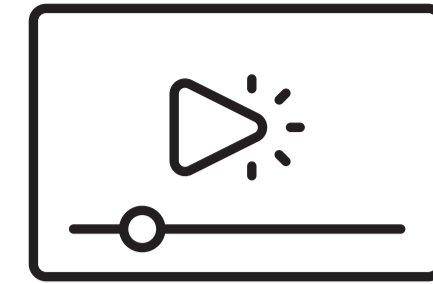
PLACE EXPLORATION & SENSE MAKING

Go and explore

Look at the people, the buildings, the nature (or lack there off), the mobility and ask different people what they like, love or hate about the place.

Make a short video as a group based on your exploration (approx. 3 minutes).

Try to combine images with and without people, different moments during the day or week and get some illustrative quotes of a variety of people who are willing to share their stories about the place. Some people don't want to be filmed in the face, if so, you can suggest to just audio tape what they are telling you. If you are able to: make subtitles in English, so we can all understand it.



What do users think, feel, say?

Video assignment



Action INTERVIEW SUGGESTIONS

What do you think about this place?

How would you describe this place in 3 words?

How do you feel about this place?

- Strongly Negative
- Somewhat Negative/Unpleasant
- Neutral
- Somewhat Positive/Pleasant
- Strongly Positive

What do you like most about this place?

What do you like least?

What would you like to do more often over here?

How would this place look like ideally?
(Potentiality scanning!)

Who knows everything of this place and do you recommend me to talk to?

How often do you visit this place?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Every few months
- I am a tourist

How do you use this place?

- Just passing through
- Work nearby
- Public Transit
- Shopping
- Hanging out
- Lunch
- Meeting with friends
- Other

On a scale of 1- 5 - How much do you like to be here?

(Don't like it at all) 0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 (very much)

PLACE EXPLORATION & SENSE MAKING

Go and explore

Explore the public spaces and the public life that takes place in them. Public life is the social activity that takes place in everyday public spaces. Map to better understand what's already happening in this place and what changes might provide an enhancement for this place. Research on current activities, target groups, visit frequency and times of use.

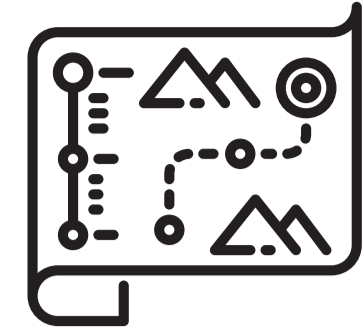
Walk through the area and take inventory of the various amenities and different elements using an area map.

Map the green areas; mark the spots where you find plants, trees, grass and other sorts of green and biodiversity.

Map the blue areas; mark the spots where you find (running) water, like a river, a ditch or a fountain.

Map the grey area's; think of the buildings, pavements, walls, parking plots.

Also, make an inventory of all physical features like picnic tables, benches, trash bins, bike parking, but also the playgrounds, playful objects, art, sport facilities etc. Add activities that are organized in this public place. Describe the type of activities, target groups, frequency and the times of use. What are the qualities and bottlenecks of this place?



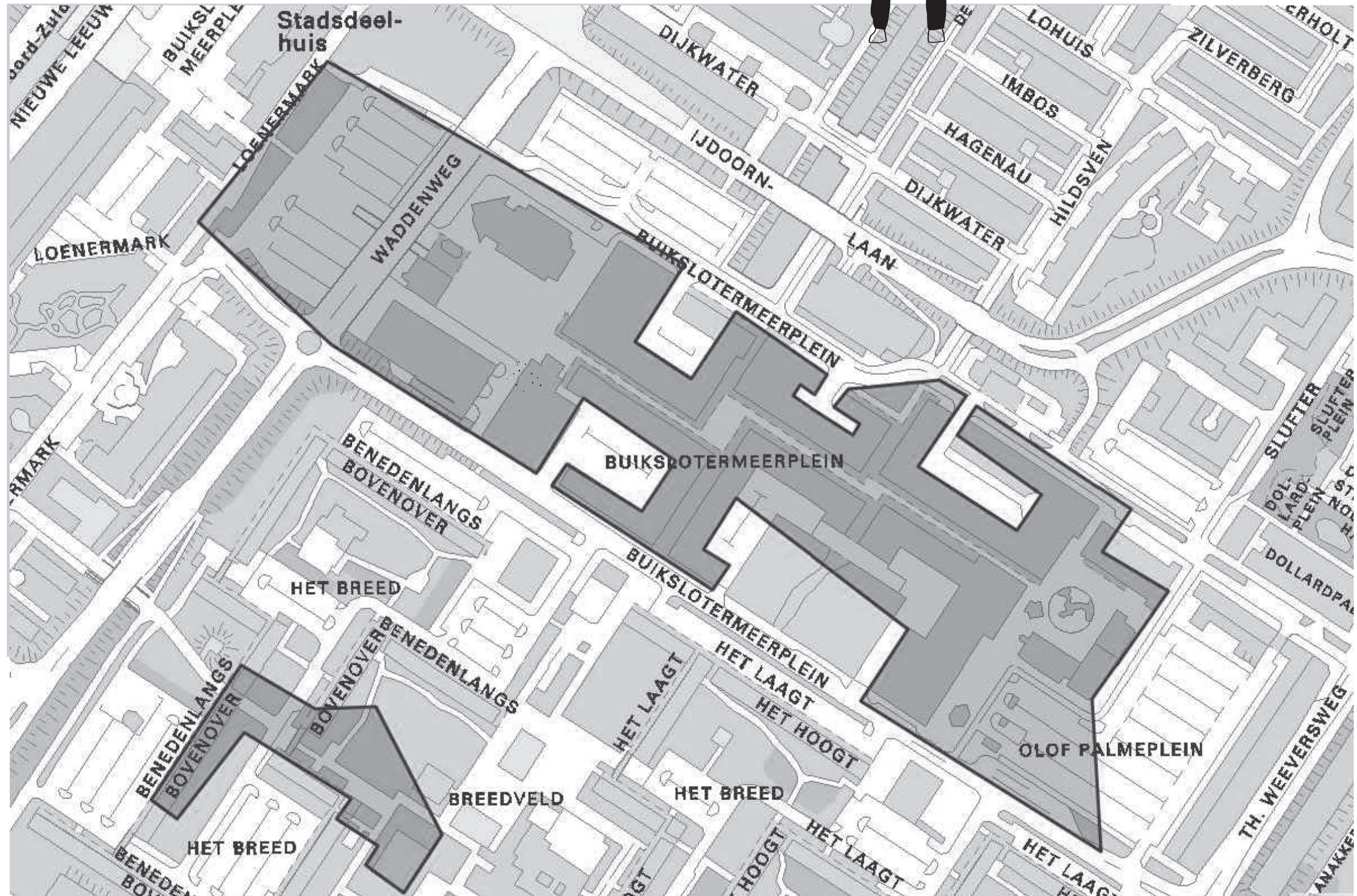
Mapping the place

Walk through the area

Action TAKE INVENTORY OF THE VARIOUS AMENITIES



Pro tip! Explore diverse perspectives: Young, old, residents, visitors, and even non-human viewpoints like a cleaner, Mayor, tourist, family, skateboarder, nature, and yourself.



Buikslotermeerplein



PLACE EXPLORATION & SENSE MAKING

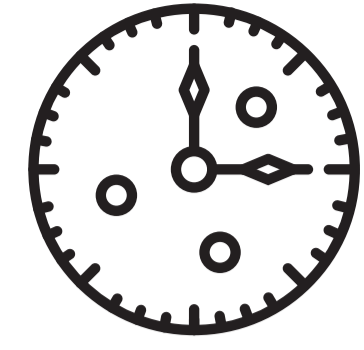
Go and explore

Place meanings are intertwined with place identity and how we see a place. Look at the past, what can you find out about this place in the archives, historical museum etc.? What do people tell you about the history of this place? What did they (dis)like?

Investigate the history of this place spanning intervals of 1, 10 and 100 years ago. Compare changes and continuities to uncover the area's historical transformation.

Look towards the future, what type of developments are planned for the next couples of years? Find the developments by the municipality.

Employ diverse research methods, including archival studies, historical museum and historical data analysis.



Historical exploration

Time perspective

Action

CREATE A TIMELINE, IN WHICH YOU INCLUDE PICTURES

TIMELINE

1924

2024

2050





Glossary

Background information & sources

PLACE

A particular space that has more or less clear physical boundaries, but also represents individual and collective layers of meaning.

EXPLORATION

An activity through which you want to find out things. It is like being an explorer who wants to discover a place. Use all your senses, talk with strangers and let them explain to you the ins and outs of this place. Take notes, make photos and even drawings if this helps you.

SENSEMAKING

There is no single agreed upon definition of sensemaking, but there is consensus that it is a process that allows people to understand ambiguous, equivocal or confusing issues or events. We consider sensemaking as an ongoing process, whilst working on complex challenges.

MAP

It is a tool specially constructed for the ULT-labs and contains indicators, questions and entry points in order to encourage your exploration capabilities. It is a dynamic tool, so we keep on enriching it. If you have any ideas for improvement, do let us know. Why? Three-staged lab rocket: You are invited to design a tourism and/or leisure concept for a particular place and create local value. In order to do so, you need to start with step 1: gaining local knowledge. Ask yourself questions like: what makes this place unique and what are its unique stories? Where lies any potential? Who is involved? What is needed and could be of value? This map will help you to do so as a starting point.

PAST - PRESENT- FUTURE

Places are constantly evolving, they are comparable to living systems that have their own rhythms and flows. Time-space correlations might be very relevant for you to consider. Urban places are mainly human-made constructions and designed by following certain ideas/visions about for instance: livelihood, quality of life and place, infrastructure and the availability of retail, work, art, schools, sports, etc.

Nature however, also plays a role, think for instance about the current Climate Change: urban planners are nowadays far more aware of building futureproof and green cities. We as urban experience designers see a growing role in using tourism and leisure as strategies for capacity, community building and identifying pathways towards a regenerative future. Try to find out what plans already have been developed for the place you are designing for.

WHAT MAKES A PLACE ATTRACTIVE?

Thriving, lively, joyful, green, diverse and open places are perceived as more attractive than cold, grey and isolated areas. We (non) humans need attractive places to experience a higher quality of life, places where we take our friends to or want to visit because there is so much to do! However, a lot of our public spaces aren't yet as such. Although every place is unique, there are some placemaking key principles we can address to. You might notice that stimulating leisure practices plays a main role in doing so.

The kissing and pissing index are funny indicators of (un)attractive places. Placemaking is a relatively recent term for describing a city making movement that focuses on the process of developing places through the active participation of the citizens that conceive, perceive and live in that place. It aims to create place attachment, positive outcomes in health, community participation, civic behaviour and perceptions of safety. Regenerative development focuses on the delivery and evolution of vital, viable and resilient places to support all human and non-human life. A central component is the notion of facilitating long term potential and adaptability of place (Hernandez-Satin, 2020).

OWNERSHIP, PERSPECTIVES AND PARTICIPATION

A very crucial phenomenon is to understand "who owns and co-designs this place". Is this done by only the happy few or a wide variety of representatives from the local community? Can one person or organisation decide what will (not) happen or is there an existing network that collaboratively wants to improve the place? The municipalities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam both stimulate participatory processes whilst creating the cities of today and tomorrow.

Try to indicate and stimulate (collective or community) ownership for and through your own designs. At the lab, we don't want to design one offs and therefore involve the local quadruple helix. Seek for a certain level of embeddedness and use co-design ways with existing local stakeholders: what or who is already there and might be able to grow further thanks to your design? Be aware of different perspectives: a teenager might have different wishes and needs than an entrepreneur, a tourist or a policymaker or even the only tree that stands in the middle of a square.

The lab will offer you a wide range of local stakeholders and a concrete challenge to work with. We will invite you to start working as a local "weaver".

INSPIRATION

Placemaking: www.pps.org, www.stipo.nl, regenerative placemaking will be elaborated on during expert sessions.

RESOURCES

<https://dezwijger.nl/project/wemakethe-city>

<https://www.socialpinpoint.com/blog/6-reasons-to-participate-community-engagement>

<https://www.amsterdam.nl/bestuur-organisatie/invloed/participatie>

<https://diopd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Samavati-2022-Happy-Public-Spaces.pdf>

<https://www.gehlpeople.com>