

DESIGNING HUMAN / NON-HUMAN PUBLIC SPACES
FOR NEIGHBORHOOD RESILIENCE

Design Exploration #2: Participatory program 'Voor Jou, Voor Mij' in Osdorp

From Prevention to Resilience

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PARTNERS



Preface

This case study report describes one of three case studies conducted as part of the ZonMw project 'From Prevention to Resilience'. Each design case is described in a separate report, each of which can be found in the Publications section at: <http://resilientpublicspaces.nl/resources>. In each of the design cases a concept version of our design perspective Human/Non-human public spaces was implemented. At the time of the design cases, we still referred to this design perspective as the 'Design Framework for Neighbourhood Resilience'. Before reading one or more of the reports, it is useful to first get familiar with this initial concept version of our design perspective (available [here](#)). The three reports are an intermediate step towards a publication in a scientific journal, in which we analyze and discuss the three design cases together. For this reason, the reports should be considered detailed accounts of the design cases and findings, while not yet coming to general insights and conclusions.

Table of Contents

PREFACE	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
1. INTRODUCTION	6
2. DESIGN FRAMEWORK FOR NEIGHBORHOOD RESILIENCE	8
3. A PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PROGRAM BY DESIGN AGENCY <i>THE BEACH</i>	9
3.1 THE BEACH AND THE OSDORP NEIGHBORHOOD	9
3.2 THE BRIEF AND THE 'VOOR JOU VOOR MIJ' PROGRAM	9
4. APPROACH AND METHODS	10
4.1 CONVEYING THE FRAMEWORK	10
4.2 DATA COLLECTION.....	11
4.3 DATA ANALYSIS	11
5. FINDINGS	12
5.1 HOW WAS THE DESIGN FRAMEWORK USED?	12
5.2 HOW WAS THE FRAMEWORK VALUED?	13
5.3 HOW WERE THE TWO SIDES OF THE FRAMEWORK COMBINED?.....	14
5.4 WHAT ARE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK? WHAT MIGHT BE WAYS TO IMPROVE IT?.....	16
5.5 USE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE FIVE KEY CONCEPTS.....	16
5.5.1 <i>Agency</i>	16
5.5.2 <i>Connection</i>	18
5.5.3 <i>Diversity</i>	20
5.5.4 <i>Rhythm</i>	21
5.5.5 <i>Abilities</i>	21
5.6 DISCUSSION	23
5.6.1 <i>Lessons learned regarding the key concepts</i>	23
5.6.2 <i>Combining human and other-than-human perspectives</i>	24
5.6.3 <i>Improving the framework: Towards a version 2.0</i>	25

1. Introduction

Around the world, the Covid-19 crisis brought out renewed debates about the design of urban public spaces. Initially the focus lay on the design of interventions in public space that sought to prevent the further spreading of the virus. However, it didn't take long before cities also started to realize that well kept, green public spaces - especially at the neighborhood level - were also instrumental in coping with the crisis, as sites for - socially distanced - recreation, social encounter and (covid-related) care. So while public spaces may indeed be a hazard for contamination, they also contributed to the resilience of urban society in coping with the covid-crisis.

The research project From Prevention to Resilience aims to contribute to this debate and provide designers with a design perspective that can aid in designing public spaces such that they contribute to resilience at the neighborhood level. This perspective, initially called a framework, also aims to broaden the scope for public space design. We believe that public spaces can contribute to more resilient cities by strengthening not only human communities, but also non-human communities. And whereas urban designers, social policy makers, urban ecologists, and other professionals often work in different silo's of urban governance, we see opportunities for a more integrated approach in which designers start seeing both humans and non-humans as their 'clients' or 'users'.

Our position builds on the growing awareness that humans are interconnected and therefore, interdependent with the natural world around them, and proposes a nature-inclusive approach to building more resilient neighborhoods. Such an expanded scope is of importance in order to mitigate and respond to the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and future pandemics, but also recognizes and takes care of the non-human life that is present in urban ecosystems.

To test whether this is a viable approach, in the winter of 2021 and spring of 2022 we ran three design cases in which designers worked with our design perspective while tackling challenges in particular neighborhoods of the Amsterdam metropolitan area. The design perspective was at that point referred to as a framework, and a concept version was used with the title '*Design Framework for Neighbourhood Resilience*' (available [here](#)). The design cases were conducted in close collaboration with architecture center of Amsterdam Arcam, social design agency The Beach and the experience design department of architectural firm UNStudio, called UNSx, as well as with social housing organizations Eigenhaard and Rochdale. The goal of these design cases was to explore and evaluate

the framework in practice, seek insights to improve it, but also to gain a more general understanding of designing for neighborhood resilience and how to integrate human and other-than-human perspectives in such a process. Guiding questions were:

How do designers use and value the framework? How do they integrate it in their practice? Which aspects are fruitful, and which aren't?

How do designers appropriate the framework? Are they making adaptations to the framework, and if so, for what reasons?

How do design outcomes instantiate the (adapted) framework? What design strategies or other forms of intermediate-level knowledge can we derive from their concept designs and the descriptions of it?

How do designers combine human and non-human perspectives? What are challenges and opportunities when integrating the two perspectives?

2. Design Framework for Neighborhood Resilience

The Design Framework For Neighborhood Resilience was printed as a leporello leaflet (see Figure 1), which contained two sides. One side introduced the framework and the rationale behind it. In short, a focus on both human and non-human communities is argued to be relevant in the light of building more resilient neighborhoods and cities. These two communities are graphically separated as two sides of the framework. Subsequently, five concepts are introduced as important conditions for resilience to emerge in both human and non-human communities: agency, connection, diversity, rhythm, and abilities. Finally, a distinction is made between spatial and civic design, which can contribute to these conditions in distinct ways.

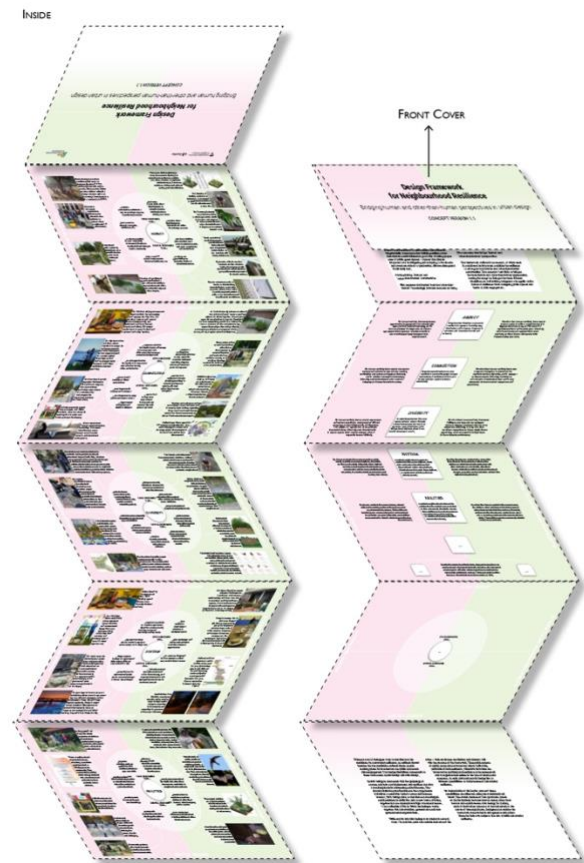


Figure 1: The Design Framework For Neighborhood Resilience was printed as a leporello leaflet

On the other side of the leporello leaflet, concrete design examples and strategies are used to give designers actionable insights in order to design for the five concepts, considering both human and non-human communities. Around each concept ideas are organized in four quadrants, based upon a human / non-human axis and a civic design / spatial design axis. For getting a better grasp of the *Design Framework for Neighbourhood Resilience* we encourage the reader to scan through the digital version that is available on our website (available [here](#)).

3. A participatory design program by design agency *The Beach*

3.1 The Beach and the Osdorp neighborhood

The Beach is a design firm for social and sustainable innovation, which they also refer to as 'sustainist design'. On their website they describe their way of working as follows:

"The Beach is a hub and a lab for sustainist design in Amsterdam. With people and organizations we create projects that make communities stronger. Values as sustainability, human scale and sharing are our compass. Designing new forms of relationships - creating new social structures - and doing research in underlying processes is the core of what we do."

The work of The Beach is locally situated, in the neighborhood of Osdorp, Amsterdam, where they are also located. Osdorp was mainly built between 1950 and 1960 as one of the Western Garden Towns of Amsterdam. Designed as a garden town located in the Nieuw-West suburb, Osdorp centre is just to the West of a vast green park, Sloterpark. Since 1990, part of Osdorp has been redeveloped through demolition and new construction, particularly of large apartment buildings, the majority hosting immigrant families from Morocco, Turkey and former Dutch colonies. The majority of the population has an average age which varies between 25 and 45 years old. The prevalence of local businesses, like small restaurants and shops, are run by immigrant families and offer goods of middle-eastern production. Although the population of Osdorp has been facing challenges (e.i. unemployment and crime) at a higher rate than the average Amsterdam municipal area, they share a feeling of pride in their neighbourhood, especially in the presence of vast green spaces.

3.2 The brief and the 'Voor Jou Voor Mij' program

In our collaboration with the Beach, we agreed that a program that they recently started would be a nice opportunity for both parties to learn from. The program, called 'Voor Jou Voor Mij' (VJVM, in English, For You For Me), exemplifies the way in which The Beach works and therefore was considered particularly valuable to learn from for the human side of our framework. Furthermore, much of the energy and resources of The Beach were already going into this program, meaning that The Beach could more easily focus their efforts as opposed to a situation in which they would start a new program from scratch. For our research, this also meant that chances were higher that we

could learn from actual practice, as the program was already started, and local residents were already engaged in the effort. With The Beach we agreed that they would attempt to apply our framework within the VJVM program, for which we made our research interests clear to them.

The VJVM program is participatory in nature and aims at the empowerment of local women from the Osdorp neighborhood. With guidance from The Beach, women are invited to try hands-on activities and develop skills to master them. The program offers a series of weekly ateliers to cook, weave, build wooden furniture, create beauty products and gardens together. The vision of VJVM is to work towards helping the participating women set up one or more business ventures based on the activities they take part in and the new skills they learn and further develop in the weekly ateliers. The process is iterative and consists in putting into practice knowledge and skills, creating new products and branding them together. The entrepreneurial goal is not the mere outcome of the project; the growth of the participant's skills, the connection they build as a group, and the shift in perspective of being independent of consumption are also considered valuable outcomes.

4. Approach and methods

The design framework was handed over to The Beach in a context that differs from the other cases. Here the framework played a role since the initial phases of the cases, whereas the project Voor Jou, Voor Mij already had a shape and a design process in motion; therefore, the framework got introduced to the team in a second moment.

4.1 Conveying the framework

To help the designers at The Beach to understand and appropriate the framework, the HvA team presented the tool and organised a sense making workshop with the team. During the two-hour online workshop, we presented and reflected on the different qualities of the framework, using a whiteboard on Miro. Three team members from the Beach joined this workshop. On the whiteboard, we created several frames that depicted the human- and non-human side of the framework, each with one of the concepts positioned in the middle. Several triggering questions were provided in the frame to get the participants starting to think about the concept and what it

means and requires for both human and non-human communities. After the session, the framework was handed over to the design team first in a digital version (PDF format). Halfway through the project, a printed version was provided.

4.2 Data collection

In order to document and reflect on the design process, the evolving participatory program VJVM, and the use of the framework, data was collected through note taking, interviews, a final presentation and final report.

For the note taking, one of the researchers from the HvA team closely followed the design process of The Beach in the field. Initial visits were made in November and December 2021 to get familiar with The Beach' way of working. From February to May 2022, the researcher was present one day a week, particularly at the days that the design team held meetings about the VJVM project or when particular events were organized. The researcher did observations, asked questions, and took notes during the day and turned these into a short digital report at the end of the day.

Two interviews were held in which the design team was asked to update the research team about the progress. Questions were aimed at getting a clear understanding of the VJVM program, the connections of the program with the framework, their use and valuation of the framework, as well as next steps. During these interviews two researchers were present. In a final presentation, The Beach presented their VJVM program to the three of the researchers. Questions similar to those during the interview were asked. The interviews were audio-recorded and the final presentation audio- and video-recorded.

The final report presented the VJVM program in its current state, and shared explicit reflections on how the program connects to the framework.

4.3 Data analysis

The interviews and presentation were transcribed, using automated transcription software. In general, the quality of the transcripts was sufficient for analysis, while in some cases minor corrections were made. The transcripts and final reports were analyzed, while digitized note-taking forms were used occasionally for recalling certain details. We used a digital whiteboard (Miro) to

visually organize our data. For each document, we lined out our key questions horizontally on the whiteboard. While going through the document, relevant quotations were identified with the key questions in mind, copy-pasted on digital post-its with a time stamp, and placed underneath one or more of the key questions. On the post-its, the researchers also added their interpretation of the quotations. On several occasions, the researchers gathered and shared their quotations and interpretations with one another, reaching consensus about the interpretation and making minor modifications. For each of the key questions, we summarized our findings based on the collected quotations. These summaries are written down in the Findings section below.

5. Findings

5.1 How was the design framework used?

The first impression of the framework by designers at the Beach was that the key qualities of the framework were familiar, and described to a great extent what the design agency was already doing. Indeed, in the VJVM program, the team was at that time already addressing the key qualities, although this was limited to the human side of the framework and different terminology was being used.

The Beach wanted to engage participants of the VJVM program with the framework, for reasons of transparency. Since the program engaged a diverse group of people from the neighborhood, including people not too familiar with the English language, The Beach expressed it was important to make the framework more understandable and accessible. Therefore, The Beach made a Dutch translation as well as turned the digital version of the framework they had at their disposal, into a physical board that was present in the space where many of the atelier activities took place: “This was a way to make it more explicit [...]. So you touch upon things. So we did a sort of simpler translation of everything. I think it can still use another level of simplification, but at least it's already in Dutch.”. The concepts of agency, connection, rhythm, diversity and abilities and some design strategies were translated with more straightforward words. For instance, the design strategy ‘organise participatory community activities to create, expand or maintain ecological corridors’ was translated into “groene ruimtes met elkaar verbinden, zodat planten en dieren zich kunnen verspreiden’ (i.e., ‘connecting green spaces with one another, so that plants and animals can

spread'). The framework's translation and physical exposure at The Beach working space facilitated interaction with it. One of the women expressed her impression of the framework stating that it is helpful to look at it regularly because it allows the group to understand and make sense of their work development. Additionally, the designers had the chance to brainstorm potential future ideas while looking at the design strategies. For example, some ideas are the reactivation of the garden in front of The Beach headquarters and creating green routes to connect the different gardens in the neighbourhood.

The framework was also perceived and used as a checklist. As one of the members of The Beach states during an interview: "To me, it [the framework] does feel a bit like a checklist. And that also comes with the implication that you need to check all the boxes." When the researchers explained that checking all the boxes was not the intention, the designer replied: "It becomes more valuable when you know that you don't have to check all of [the qualities of resilience]. You can, because then it's not a source of stress [...] but more a source of inspiration."

5.2 How was the framework valued?

After presenting and getting familiar with the framework, The Beach team associated the qualities of resilience from the social side with their work, stating: "Look, we actually already work like that. That was our conclusion when [the researcher] came up with that framework. The only thing is [...] that you become aware of the fact that you are working [like that]". In other words, the designers were able to relate to the concepts presented in the framework, which additionally, assisted them in being more aware and conscious of their way of working. This aspect is crucial for The Beach because: "sometimes it seems like we just do something... But of course, we don't, because we start with a plan and a program. But because we work so organically, you become aware of the steps by having a tool like the framework in front of you."

While The Beach was clearly familiar with the human side of the framework, the other-than-human perspective was unusual to them, but was also seen as having the potential to spark new ideas. For instance, aiming for the agency of local animals and plants is a design aspect that The Beach is interested in exploring further. The team was interested in the examples provided in the framework, in particular when looking at the concept of agency, which was perceived as more challenging to understand compared to other qualities of resilience, like connection. The examples were described

as inspiring and interesting, especially from an other-than-human perspective: “there are some very inspiring examples there. I was thinking: ‘Can we actually do this at The Beach?’ There's no project on agency from the non-human side. [...] And then in the context of VJVM, maybe that's something that we don't implement so explicitly, like in the Ministry of Multispecies [i.e., one of the examples in the framework]. Although it is something that could be implemented explicitly in other projects at The Beach. I think [the project] T-uit West might have fit in [with the other-than-human perspective] a little more because it had a more artistic approach involved.”

In order to facilitate the designers to implement new visions, the design strategies played an important role. The Beach described these strategies as 'less abstract than the qualities of resilience', and they can guide the designer in understanding how to execute the examples. Attention to the examples is fundamental since The Beach often seeks inspiration and strategies to make something concrete and tangible. However, design examples can be tricky, as a designer at The Beach explains: “it's important to make sure that [participants in our program] understand that these are just examples that we have found to inspire [them]. But it's not imperative to do it that way.”

5.3 How were the two sides of the framework combined?

Considering the human-centric approach that The Beach applies in their work, combining both the human and other-than-human sides of the framework was difficult for the designers. In their design decisions about the VJVM program, the designers did not integrate the human and the other-than-human residents' perspective as proposed in the framework. Emphasis was mostly on what the participants of the VJVM and the tea brand they were developing.

While other-than-humans were not explicitly considered as actors to design for or with, the design team did consider their project as a form of collaboration with nature, using natural ingredients for cooking or creating beauty products or including the use of particular plants for their gardening activities, such as rosemary or flax seeds. At the same time, the team seems to recognize the limited extent to which this was actual collaboration: “A blind spot we had overall, and in agency specifically, is the non-human side. We work in collaboration with nature - using natural ingredients and doing our own gardening, but this happens from a human-centric perspective. This partly comes from the people-focused way of working at The Beach.” Reflecting on this further, one

designer explains how there are human issues that are more urgent in their view, and which are prioritized: "We are not going to say [...] we have to be careful with this [ecological challenges] because the bats have to have a place. These people live in an environment with so much poverty. And bats?! 'My child has to eat!' Do you know what I mean? We have to be honest though because sometimes there are 'worm hotels', insect hotels, and then I think, yes, these people don't even have a place to sleep; one doesn't even have food."

In order to attempt to combine the two perspectives, the team had various discussions about applying the resilience qualities to other-than-humans. But The Beach recognizes these discussions were not always centered on other-than-humans: "[...] we had plenty of discussions about what plants can do for us; perhaps a way to reframe these discussions is what can plants do." The focus on plants can be explained by the expertise of one of the designers, who is also a herbalist by training: "So I work with a lot of plants. So we always connect to nature. We also got some great new ideas to give nature a more central place in the process."

One of the resilience qualities, rhythm, appeared to be fruitful for bridging human and other-than-human communities. The Beach reflected on how everybody is part of a seasonal rhythm which can support the connection between people and nature. One of the designers reflects on to what extent their current practices are in sync with nature: "we didn't quite hit the rhythm of nature yet. We started gardening a bit late in the year, so we'll have a hard time growing entirely new plants in the garden. [...] In designing the program for next year, we'll have to devote more attention to the seasons and how they affect us, humans."

Increasing the chances of including an other-than-human perspective, one of the team members suggested, is when activities take place outdoors: "We observed while running group activities outdoors that in order to increase the chances of including an other-than-human view, the activities should take place in an outdoor environment or green public space, where the possibilities to connect with nature are stronger." Another designer added, towards the end of the research, that there are certainly opportunities for bringing in other-than-human perspectives into such green outdoor activities. In later correspondence, this designer also indicated that in a new application for funding, they explicitly proposed to include other-than-humans in their proposal.

5.4 What are challenges of implementing the framework? What might be ways to improve it?

The terminology used in the framework was considered complicated and abstract, in particular, the five resilience qualities. As The Beach explains: "It's nice to have the concepts split and categorised in [the current] way, but it also makes it really hard because then you need five very exact words. And then sometimes those are words that aren't in everyday vocabulary, even for designers. Therefore, it can be difficult to relate to, especially for external participants, who are often not very literate, and might experience them as a barrier. A way to overcome language barriers could be to make abstract concepts more accessible and tangible with a more visual layout, like through scenarios or short visualised stories with symbols and icons".

Another challenge for implementing the framework was the fact that the ideas, wishes and concerns of the participating were the starting points for design. For example, if the women would not be interested in local insect- and plant-life, the program of activities is likely not to include these non-humans. As a result, the framework was perceived as restricting by the design team. The framework was also perceived as restricting in another way: it was perceived as a series of steps to follow, which is not in line with their organic and loose approach of The Beach.

5.5 Use and understanding of the five key concepts

5.5.1 Agency

Among all the framework concepts, agency is perhaps the most central in projects at The Beach, followed by connectedness and abilities. As one designer explains: "I think agency is something that is present in every project of The Beach already." Local people often initiate projects or are actively involved from an early stage, thereby also having a say in the focus of a project or program. In the case of Voor Jou, Voor Mij, this was the case in that participants from previous projects and activities joined the VJVM program in order to take their work, such as cooking and gardening, to a more professional level.

In line with the concept of agency, The Beach describes how it is important not to have pre-set goals in the program, and instead support participants in what they wish to do: "Participants can tell when you are working towards pre-set goals and they are just accessories to the process that leads to

those goals; real engagement comes from showing that we care about where they want to go enough to join them on their iterative journey.” We observed this happening, for instance, at the beginning of the project, particularly during the open day. The Beach used flyers as props to understand and collect peoples’ interests, preferences, willingness and availability to join the program. Some of the addressed questions were: ‘what are you good at?’, ‘Do you want to actively participate?’, ‘If yes, participate in what?’ At the same time, some of the designers were engaging with the participants, trying out different workshops and putting themselves at the same level as the community.

The Beach describes their projects as going through several phases -- ‘makership’, ‘mastership’ and ‘ownership’ -- which can be understood as related to agency, in particular the latter two. Mastership refers to “people within the programme [taking] on more specific roles based on their strengths. Over time this stage comes together with turning the existing activities into a (semi)commercial enterprise [that can function without support from The Beach], but this is not necessarily always the case.” Ownership is described as a phase in which “the participants increasingly give shape to the programme and the activities within it, based on their shared values. A key part of this is also branding and presenting yourself to the world, showing that you are proud of what you made and that you identify with the programme on a personal level.” Along the process, we witnessed these steps by seeing some women taking more space in some ateliers. For instance, one participant wanted to produce a line of beauty products similar to those she hand-made. This expression of mastership and first steps towards ownership happened thanks to the participant’s interest in the topic, knowledge acquired from previous experiences, willingness to share it with the group and eagerness to explore feasible business ideas. Somewhat contrasting, but still relevant in light of agency, is that many of the crafts introduced in the ateliers might be new to participants. In this case, engaging in new activities helped the women step out of their comfort zone, or in other words, to take steps they otherwise would not have. Finally, creating something just for themselves (beyond necessity) and presenting it to others allowed women to build self-esteem.

In their design process, The Beach aims to create opportunities for the participants to build confidence and awareness of their capacities, they explained. This process eventually evolves into the participants’ independence to master a skill and step out of The Beach’ familiar environment and supportive guidance. This last phase often gets achieved by turning an activity, like cooking, into

a (semi)commercial enterprise. For instance, the Wilde Chefs project started as group cooking activities ('makership'), and it evolved into regular weekly community dinners run by the women of Osdorp community ('mastership'). During the phase of 'ownership', the participants emancipate themselves. This happened during the branding workshop in Voor Jou, Voor Mij, especially when the group decided on their brand name. By proposing names in French, the participants realized that they also own this knowledge and could use it in alternative contexts. Awareness of their resources pushed them to develop self-esteem, gratification and confidence. It is by empowering the female community of the neighbourhood that The Beach attempts to strengthen the community as a whole. Since most of the participating women are also mothers, lessons of emancipation and confidence get transmitted to the young population too.

Building trust is essential to start a co-creation process, where participants are the centre of the decision-making. "Before you can have agency, you need to build trust and show that you are open to everything people want to do." When The Beach refers to agency, trust building is explained as a prerequisite. The method they use is to be present daily or regularly so the designers and the participants can get to know each other, develop a relationship and start building trust. This generally is time consuming. In the project Voor Jou, Voor Mij, the first two months of ateliers required patience and tenacity from The Beach team as the participants were not engaged with the program yet. In order to facilitate trust building, the team introduced the project and its objectives several times to new members and tried to create a welcoming, inclusive and safe atmosphere each time participants would gather; this requires subtle soft skills from the designers with much attention for individual women. Food was also an important way to bring the group together and interact; they introduced food and beverages, like coffee and tea, and they prepared the working tables with props and mood boards to inspire the participants and invite them to try things out freely.

5.5.2 Connection

For The Beach, connection is understood as sharing and meeting people. In Voor Jou, Voor Mij, "the importance of connection does not merely relate to how many people meet during the program but how well they get to know one another", as one of the designers says. Therefore, The Beach prefers referring to connection as building relationships. Through an iterative process of making and producing, The Beach facilitates encounters and the development of relationships. During the last

month of the case, we observed that the participants bonded more as a group and started sharing their skills and knowledge more openly with one another. For instance, some women proposed alternative techniques in the sewing atelier to weave a basket or sew a pouffe. This was made possible by creating space for the participants to sit together, present the day's achievements and give feedback to each other. In this way, connections and contributions among different ateliers were being made. For example, women created clothes during the sewing atelier that the cooking group would use; or the participants involved in gardening would grow herbs for the participants involved in cooking.

Since the participants joining the project Voor Jou, Voor Mij originated from different countries, language was sometimes a barrier to overcome in order to understand each other and connect as a group. Eventually, the diversities merged into a united group with women from the Middle East, Europe and South America. This was made possible by finding ways to communicate other than a commonly spoken language. For instance, the participants communicated their ideas through mood boards composed of colour pallets, images, herbal plants and other natural props and agreed as a group in joint decision-making. This activity was part of a branding workshop led by one of the women from the neighbourhood. In line with her graphic design skills and knowledge, she decided to contribute to the project, finding a solution to the language barrier and managing to connect with the rest of the group. As one of the designers described: " She does not speak the language, and she was also very shy because she cannot talk that well. But also all the other women don't talk much as well. So by using colours, materials and other props, they created a way to communicate and connect. So it works out very well, actually."

Another level of connection that surfaced during the VJVM program was the relation between the participants and the neighbourhood community. As The Beach explains, developing a relationship with the local environment is important: "[...] we actually want to connect with the neighborhood very much by bringing some softness and femininity to the neighborhood". For example, we observed that the neighbours became curious, expressed their interests in the activities, and sometimes joined the conversation, sharing their experiences or advice. This happened mostly when the participants worked in the garden or organized outdoor events.

A final way in which connection plays a role at The Beach relates to the natural world: “By working with the land, we get to know the natural environment better”, they explained. As decision-makers of the design process, the participants chose to include the garden plants native to their home countries but also from the area, thereby potentially supporting the local flora and fauna. According to The Beach, by participating in gardening activities the participants learn why land and environment are essential resources and connect with them to develop a feeling of belonging. On another level, connection was described as the connectivity of green space: an idea that The Beach wished to work on in the future, and which was inspired by the framework, was to create green ribbons connecting the small gardens of the neighbourhood and, ideally, of the whole city.

5.5.3 Diversity

In the project, diversity is understood in terms of culture, role and biodiversity. The first refers to the cultural backgrounds of the participants. The design process invites the participants to be open and acknowledge diverse opinions, tastes, languages and values. “You have the Moroccan group and then you have the South American and the Dutch.” This means that the group brings diversity in knowledge and skills. For instance, we observed that a group of older women often sit at one side of the working table and spend most of the time talking and that younger women sit at the opposite side, where most of the tools are located. Although less active in the production, the older group plays an important role in supporting and encouraging the younger women with compliments and positive comments.

Apart from the diverse cultures, diversity is also important in relation to leadership. As one designer explains “We found in different projects that having one leader can be a simple way to organise things but that it makes the organisation too inflexible. The fact that we have more and more diverse community leaders this time around makes the Natur(elle) brand a more resilient one.” As some participants show leadership, others play more of a follower role. For instance, one woman plays a leadership role in the cooking atelier. By taking the initiative, she proposed to try to cook healthier but at the same time affordable recipes. Other women who were new at The Beach followed her into this new direction.

Finally, from an other-than-human perspective, diversity was spoken of in terms of biodiversity. When The Beach team reflected on their work in the garden, they explain as follows: “we don’t use

synthetic pesticides, we plant a variety of plants that also contribute to the greater ecosystem, and we consider the value of weeds before we pull them all out of the ground and discard them.”

5.5.4 Rhythm

The Beach reflected on rhythm in terms of the project's tempo and the participants' availability and willingness to join the program. Rhythm was considered important by the designers, as it brings predictability to participants about when to participate. However, finding a rhythm for the program was difficult, “because a timeline most commonly comes from top-down management” and this, they said, contrasted with their own way of working, which was considered more bottom-up. During the early phase of the program, The Beach collected schedule preferences and shared a prospective agenda through a flyer with the premise of being flexible. The team and participants started with two weekly appointments, but because of The Beach' resources and availability, the program was redefined to one weekly appointment. After establishing the rhythm, the community participation and the logistics became more consistent. Rhythms will be disturbed every now and then, requiring flexibility. This was needed, for example, during the Ramadan period. In April, the appointments shifted one hour later to meet the majority's daily needs.

An alternative way The Beach understood rhythm was by referring to nature and its seasonality. The Beach reflected on how they did not adjust their activities well to the natural rhythm of the seasons: “Beginning to work in the garden only in May did not allow growing new plants. Then, the group decided to take care of and reuse the plants already available in the garden.”. For the coming year, The Beach is considering designing new programs that are more conscious of the impact of seasonality on the community.

5.5.5 Abilities

Abilities are central in the Voor Jou, Voor Mij program, in which developing skills and knowledge is one of the main objectives. As they state in one of the interviews: “The goals are mainly to teach the women. We sit down with the women to ensure they learn something different than they would normally learn. [...] It's mainly knowledge sharing. One has knowledge of spices, the other has knowledge of how to handle the sewing machine, and together we work on products.” Thus while The Beach creates a setting in which new knowledge and skills can be developed, participants also

share their existing skills and knowledge amongst each other. During the composting workshop, the designers explained, “a lot of women were talking about their childhood because they already know this [composting] process. But they were disconnected in Amsterdam because they are in the city. When we are talking about the use of composting and what to throw away, then they were thinking about their own youth and what they already know. Now they have to start again and learn the importance of this and the future”. Such familiarity helped the group start composting again and understand its ecological importance more easily. The Beach considers these existing abilities, or resourcefulness, as important: “Recognizing existing abilities is perhaps even more important than creating them out of thin air, as it puts more power in the hands of the participants themselves.”. Abilities were developed throughout the program through an iterative process of making. As the designers describe: “this iterative way of working may feel like it is slow and inefficient, but we found that effectiveness is more important to focus on than efficiency”. It is through making that the participants progressively get a better understanding of their final goal; therefore, effectiveness is more important than efficiency.

The Beach considers what the participants can and cannot do. For instance, as one designer reports: “One woman was kind of embarrassed and a bit down because she couldn’t read and write. And it was so clear that she could not enjoy the things that other women did, you know? She is a very hard worker, and we saw that she loved the books [that we have at The Beach], although she could not read them. And that was something that strikes us because we think she should be able to participate, as the others. So that’s something we also have to think [about]. They all have their own coping mechanisms, they have their own tricks to absorb the knowledge without reading and writing.” In addition, The Beach team used different types of visual props and practical tools to be inclusive to a wide range of participants.

Such props and tools were used throughout the VJVM program. During a branding workshop, it had a particularly engaging effect on the group. One of the participants with professional experience in graphic design prepared a workshop activity to establish the brand for the ateliers. She staged a series of card-stock samples with different colours and materials, herbs and flowers from the garden, and keywords printed on paper. The other women were invited to answer the guiding questions together, like: What does your product mean to you? What keywords do you associate with your product? Who is your client? What colours and materials are part of your product image?

And with the answers in mind and the available props, they individually created mood boards and managed to communicate their ideas.

'Makership', a concept used by The Beach to define the first phase of a design process, somewhat relates to the quality of abilities. As The Beach describes: "Makership is the stage where we make things together. This isn't just to produce, but also to learn from each other, establish shared values, and build trust among everyone involved". In Voor Jou, Voor Mij, being able to create your own products implies the possibility of shifting towards being less inclined towards consumerist tendencies, which is one of the project's objectives.

5.6 Discussion

5.6.1 Lessons learned regarding the key concepts

The concepts of resilience that most resonated with the Voor Jou, Voor Mij program were agency, in the first place, followed by connection and abilities. With regard to agency, giving space to local women to express and develop themselves is the program's primary objective. Connecting local women was also central to the program, mostly described in terms of relationship building. Finally, abilities is a central element in the making-oriented approach of the beach, in which participants develop new and share existing skills and knowledge that drives their project further. These activities, while oriented towards concrete product outcomes, served mainly as a means to support a process of building empowerment and relationships. By enabling participants to experience different hands-on ateliers, The Beach strives to give the participants agency and connect as a group.

In several ways, the VJVM program and The Beach' way of working enriched our understanding of the key concepts. In particular, we learned about the subtlety and nuance of how these qualities play out and interrelate over a period of months, among the community that gathered at The Beach. While agency is the primary objective of the program, connection and abilities appear to be the means toward that end. Connection was described as building relationships, and for this building trust was one of the first important ingredients. This was a subtle matter, involving creating the right atmosphere, giving individual women attention, creating a predictable rhythm for gathering and overcoming insecurities, such as those resulting from language barriers. With these conditions in

place, women would start expressing and developing themselves. Abilities were learned through making activities, but also through exchange among participants, as they engaged in these various activities. In particular existing abilities, building awareness and confidence in them, and sharing them were important for women to show agency.

What the above shows, is that resilience takes time and patience to emerge among a group of women involved in the same activities. What we did not get to witness in this research, is how these activities might evolve into something self-reliant, that doesn't need the support of The Beach anymore. With regard to the emerging leadership among the women, The Beach was hopeful; while in an earlier project a single leader emerged, making the initiative reliant on one individual, within the VJVM program leadership was more shared, which was considered to increase the chances of the initiative to move forward.

5.6.2 Combining human and other-than-human perspectives

In the project, Voor Jou, Voor Mij, The Beach attempted to include inputs from the framework by trying to appropriate it, getting inspired by it and iterating with it. When the team tried to combine the social and ecological sides of the framework, they encountered difficulties in coming up with integral design solutions that bridge the view of both human and other-than-human communities. They tried to include the ecological perspective thinking about other-than-humans not as residents but more by considering the usability of natural elements, such as plants, herbs or flowers, as props for the activities. They did not invite other-than-human residents to play an active or central role in the design process. We see three reasons why this happened, which we describe in more detail below: the program's objective, the urgency to address certain (human) challenges before others, and the familiarity with the human side of the framework.

Since the framework was put to use by The Beach when the Voor Jou, Voor Mij program when it was already in motion, the project already had defined its design objectives and approach at that stage: the aim was to support the local community of women to develop skills, connections, and shift their perspective towards doing things independently, and set up one or more business ventures based on the program of activities they participated in. In line with these objectives and The Beach co-creative work, the local women's involvement was at the center of the project. The program was thus human-centric, and pushing the needs and interests of the other-than-human residents as a

focal point did not align with the project's goals. Since the participants were considered the experts, they gained the role of designers and the power to decide which direction to take, most commonly in line with their interests and curiosity. Hence, the actual design team of The Beach had a more facilitative role, and the participants could shift the focus from one topic to another: the participants did not have a clear interest in nature, ecology or related disciplines, and for this reason the other-than-human side of the framework was not operationalized.

The second reason why The Beach did not combine human and other-than-human perspectives, was a perceived urgency to address social challenges before ecological ones. As the Osdorp neighborhood suffers from crime, insecurity, social exclusion or unemployment at a higher rate than the Amsterdam average, The Beach aims to improve the quality of life of this community. The team considered this situation as more urgent than non-human matters.

The final reason that it was challenging for The Beach to combine human and other-than-human perspectives was that the designers were simply more familiar with the human side of the framework. The designers had backgrounds in product design, humanities and the fine arts, and although one of the members also was a herbalist, this expertise was also human-centered. Natural elements, such as herbs, flowers and spices, became the central elements in design activities, mainly used as means for social activities.

To conclude expertise concerning other-than-humans was lacking, and combined with the program objectives and the sense of urgency to address social challenges, this expertise was also not brought in. The framework, even in this experimental research setting in which researchers played an encouraging role, did not persuade the design team to take steps towards integrating an other-than-human perspective with their current human-centered approach.

5.6.3 Improving the framework: Towards a version 2.0

Based on our findings and discussion, we propose to take along the following considerations for a version 2.0 of the framework:

- If the framework can bring value to a participatory design agency such as The Beach, this value ought to be clearer from the beginning. Why would a human-centered design agency,

which puts the needs and wishes of women in the neighborhood central, take an interest in an other-than-human perspective? What would the benefits of such a perspective be?

- The framework might benefit from more process-oriented suggestions. The Beach stresses the subtleties and nuances involved in working together with a group of local women over time, and we imagine these kinds of insights to be relevant for design agencies that do similar work.

