microMACRO

An Exploration of Regenerative
Placemaking with local communities
for transformative change

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By: Nafeha Khan   &   Rimaz Mohamed

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ABSTRACT

Cities are at the heart of many challenges we face today, but the solution to these problems also lies at the heart of the cities — the people who live in them.

Conventional understanding and applications of urban design, placemaking, and citizen engagement tend to fall short in addressing the complex needs of the people and the environment they live in. This project explores the blend of the two separate concepts of regenerative design and placemaking, which calls for paradigm shift in underlying narratives, to move away from linear and reductive interventions towards a systems-based, and foresight-embedded approach.

The research, rooted in Toronto, engages with current perspectives of people, the places they exist in, the problems surrounding them and the worldviews that drive them. The gathered insights help frame recommendations with focus on enhancing community engagement practices and to further define the concept of regenerative placemaking.

The Learnings gathered provide value to the realms of community engagement, participatory design, and collective foresight.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As immigrant students, we acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples which is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands. We understand that their history and culture are integral to the land that we live and study on.

As newcomers to this land, we commit to listening to and learning from Indigenous peoples and to building meaningful relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. We understand that we have a responsibility to work towards reconciliation and to contribute to creating a more just and equitable society for all.

We offer our sincere respect and gratitude to the Indigenous peoples who have lived on this land for thousands of years, and we honor their legacy and ongoing contributions to the city of Toronto.

About Land Acknowledgements:
https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement/

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Writing this acknowledgment has been a difficult task for us as if we start to talk about and thank every person, place and thing that supported this project — directly or indirectly — we would likely need to do another MRP (The REB Process seems exciting!).

Nonetheless, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Helen, our guiding north star throughout this project — for being a mentor, an advisor, and also a friend (and very patient).

Our special thanks to Michelle for supporting us in our journey and cheering us along the way.

A passionate shoutout to the City Streets team of Winter 2022 : Ashwini, Kendra, Manal, and Tanya, with whom our journey began

Many thanks to all our faculty and friends from OCAD U and the SFI Cohort.

DECLARATION

We hereby declare that we are the sole authors of this MRP. This is a true copy of the MRP, including any required final revisions, as accepted by our examiners.

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Nafeha Khan & Rimaz Mohamed

DEDICATION

To Mamma, Baba & Rohaim — thank you for
supporting me and my dreams

Nafeha Khan

DEDICATION

To my dearest parents, my brothers, my sister, and
my extended family, for their unconditional love
and support in helping me get to where I am.

To all my teachers, and friends who have
contributed in making me who I am today.

To all the people and places with whom I've shared
my existence with.

Rimaz Mohamed

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

GLOSSARY

Placemaking
The planning, design, management and programming of shared use spaces.

Systems Thinking / Systemic thinking
A way of making sense of the complexity of the world by looking at it in terms of wholes and relationships rather than by splitting it down into its parts.

Foresight
A practice through which one can explore plausible, alternative futures and identify the challenges and opportunities that may emerge. Foresight helps understand the forces shaping a system, how the system could evolve and what surprises could arise.

Regenerative Design
An approach that uses whole systems thinking to create resilient and equitable systems that integrate the needs of society with the integrity of nature.

Sustainability
Meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In addition to natural resources, we also need social and economic resources.

Crisis / Crises
Events such as war, economic decline, pandemic, extreme natural events that affect all countries in economic, social, cultural, political, and many other issues.

Top Down Approach
An approach to solving problems where an executive decision maker or other top person makes the decisions of how something should be done.

Bottom Up Approach
An approach to solving problemst, one that works from the grassroots—from a large number of people working together, causing a decision to arise from their joint involvement.

Participatory Design
An approach to design attempting to actively involve all stakeholders (e.g. employees, partners, customers, citizens, end users) in the design process to help ensure the result meets their needs.

Community Led Placemaking
A process that builds community connections and empowerment, through local people leading their own projects and activations.

Bio-regional
Territory whose limits are defined not by political boundaries, but by the geographical limits of human communities and ecological systems.

Paradigm
A standard, perspective, or set of ideas. A paradigm is a way of looking at something.

Worldview
A collection of attitudes, values, stories and expectations about the world around us, which inform our every thought and action.

Community Sensing
The concept of communities (or other groups of people) observing their environments and contributing information to form a body of knowledge around an issue.This is a collaborative process that informs, guides community action, and helps build a shared position around an issue.

Visioning
A process that gives residents, business owners, local institutions, and other stakeholders within a community the opportunity to express ideas about the future of their community. It reflects the community's goals and priorities and cultivates a sense of public ownership.

Sensemaking
The process by which people give meaning to experience.It creates shared awareness and understanding out of different individuals' perspectives and varied interests.

STEEP-V
A framework for simple scanning and external environment analysis using categories (Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political and Values) to classify information.

Cascading effects
An unforeseen chain of events that occurs when an event in a system has a negative impact on other, related systems.
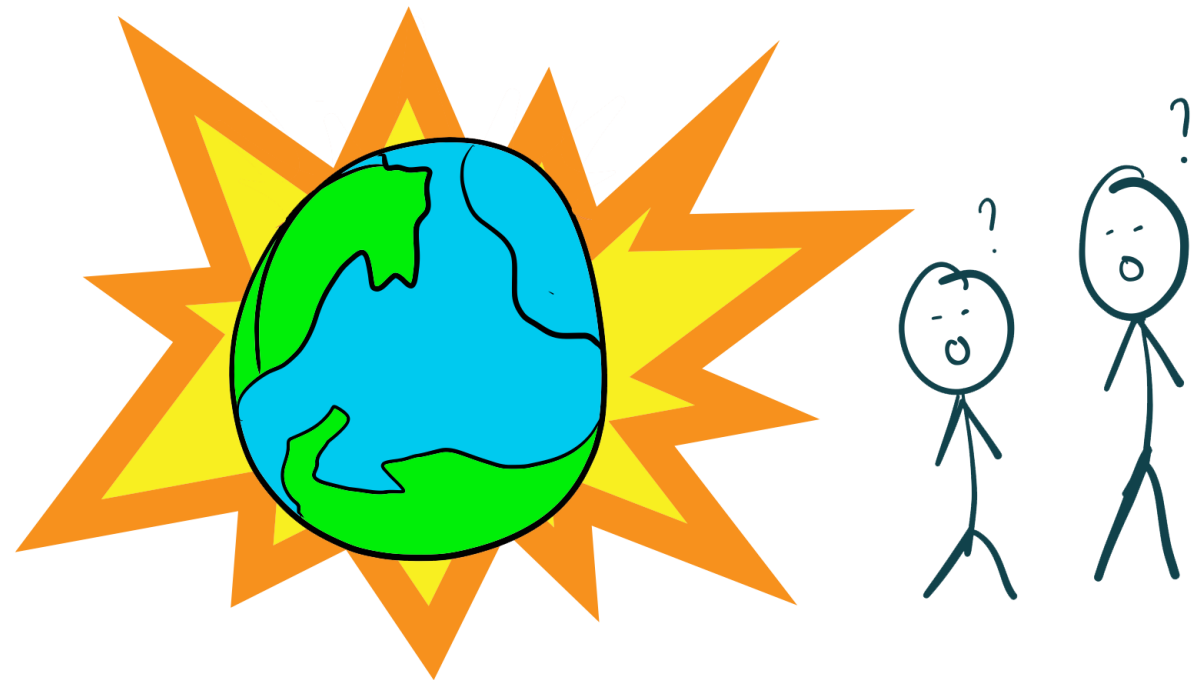
Neoliberalism
The extension of competitive markets into all areas of life, including the economy, politics and society.

0.THE ENDGAME

Why are we doing this?

DON'T PANIC

The story so far

During the winter of '22, as we individually navigated place and meaning in a new city, we discovered a common interest in understanding how cities work socially, for the people. This then developed into a project to understand the social system of city streets in Toronto. The project was part of the Understanding Systems course in the Strategic Foresight and Innovation program which consisted of the authors and four other team members, who were all new to Toronto. We, along with our team, all new to Toronto, saw, heard, and felt the city in terms of stakeholder relationships, power and influences. As we neared the end of the project, it became obvious to us the complex relationship between people and the places that they exist in.

We (The Authors) decided to continue the conversation and look further. What we observed was that engulfing these complex relationships is the alarming increase in the crises that we face and our hurried approaches to containing them. The hurried approaches in Toronto, further explored in this paper, are observed as highly reductive, conventional, linear, shortsighted, and intend to just break even. This led us to delve far out and discover alternative or parallel approaches in practice elsewhere.

Old dog, new tricks

In this search for alternatives, we discovered the concept of regenerative design and practice. With the interest of expanding and adding to the spirit of the Regenerative Futures program at Royal Society of Arts (RSA) in London, and similar entities, we wish to explore possibilities that will help places and communities to thrive together. Regenerative Futures looks at ways in which we can rethink our relationship with the planet and build a healthy ecosystem, as an interconnecting whole across the environment, society and economy (Warden, 2021). It is not a process but rather an emerging mindset that requires seeing the world as a living system, built around reciprocal and co-evolutionary relationships.

Notably, Daniel Wahl (2016) elaborates that regenerative paths are about building the individual & collective capacity of people in communities to humbly face an uncertain future by aligning with life's inherent impulse to regenerate, evolve and transform.

The starting line

Curious to find out more, we decided to dive deep and anchor it to the context of Toronto, which we are completely new to and have no prior understanding of since we are new to this city. We believe this will help us frame a distinct understanding of its local systems, its network of relationships, and the power dynamics that make it what it is.

The floating rock we exist in, the planet as we know it, is facing highly complex and emergent crises. The calls for action are to save the planet in one way or the other; we acknowledge that we are not here to do that, but we do see the benefit in starting with places first. Our project will therefore explore people, places, problems and paradigms (Without the Panic).

INTRODUCTION

What are some of the existing gaps in placemaking and How might we address them through concepts of regeneration and foresight?

A Crisis for me, and a crisis for you

The rapid growth of cities is pushing humanity into uncharted waters. For the first time in human history, more people live in cities than in rural areas or environments. This number is set to increase, as the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2018) projects that by 2050, 68% of the world's population will live in urban environments. This would have huge implications for the way we live and work, as well as how we understand, think about, and plan for the future.

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent escalations in international conflict bring to light the complex nature of the crises we face today (Sadler, 2022). Its cascading effects brought to light a large number of systemic risks that remain highly entangled. From supply chain delays to disruptions in financial, economic, and healthcare systems, the pandemic highlighted the tipping points of these systems. The COVID-19 pandemic also has exposed and increased the existing inequalities and disparities in many countries. (World Bank, 2022).

To describe it from a systems perspective, we are so highly connected, centralized, and dependent on each other that a problem in one corner of the planet has impacts in regions far far away.

What goes around, goes around

As the runaway effects of the global climate catastrophe continue to cripple our planet, it is important to note that these impacts extend far beyond the natural systems to our own physical, social, and emotional well-being as humans (Nightingale & Eriksen, 2022). It is essential that we recognize the urgency of this issue and take collective action toward mitigation

We admire the attitude of our ancestors who planted trees that they might never get to see fully grown in their lifetime but did it still with the intention to benefit their future generations. We must shift our perspective towards long-term thinking and embrace the ambiguous nature of the crises that are present today (Krznaric, 2020). Short-term thinking plagues our present and does not allow us to think beyond the now. We are unable to think about how our actions, intentional or ignorant, will impact generations to come. The future is uncertain but acknowledging and accepting the interconnected nature of our problems and finding the space for long-term thinking can help us take actions and movements that consider their impacts on the larger picture.

Closed for construction (Temporarily?)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. SDG 11 focuses on the importance of our cities and towns for achieving sustainable development.

Specifically, it is to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

A city like Toronto which comprises many, many places shared by different people, having varying worldviews dictating their relationship with their surroundings, could enable unique opportunities and also bring forward complex challenges. Navigating these opportunities, challenges, and worldviews could be key to thinking beyond the traditional dimensions of sustainability and bringing in other much-needed paradigm shifts to make it resilient and regenerative.

Places that reflect the needs and self-determination of different sets of people, while still being able to nurture a relationship with their surroundings and a sense of belonging, are essential to the growing population in multicultural cities (Ellery & Ellery, 2019). Placemaking is a process of developing places through the active participation of the citizens that conceive, perceive and live in that place. If effectively implemented, placemaking may be able to strengthen the community's ties to the places that are created and empower community members to take more active roles in managing and maintaining their environments and in thinking towards their future.

A place for me, and a place for you

We see that in order to make impactful change happen it is imperative to establish a sense of belonging and purpose within the people who will be impacted by the change.

Community Foundations of Canada (2019) defines belonging as simply being part of a collective "we." It is a two-way street: It is about communities sending signals of acceptance and inclusion, and about individuals cultivating their own connections to the community. A sense of belonging is important to build safe, vibrant communities, and it brings purpose to our lives.

Toronto: A work in progress

Prior to colonization, the landscapes of Tkaronto that make modern-day Toronto constituted several indigenous groups who nurtured a deep-rooted connection to the land and its natural systems. These connections informed their ways of life, spiritual practices, and social structures. Nejad et al. (2020) suggest that recently there is a notable increase in acknowledging this lost relationship with the natural systems and active efforts being made to nurture its reconnection.

A major milestone in modern-day Toronto's history of placemaking is the defining work of urban activist and people's advocate Jane Jacobs in the 1960s. Jacob's book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," took a critical jab at urban planning policies and practices that prioritized automobile traffic over pedestrian and community needs. Her visions for communities and cities laid out the foundational principles of modern urbanism, which included vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhoods with small blocks, diverse building types, and active street life.

Jacob's work and influence have paved the way for the practice of placemaking to be embedded in the various planning processes in the City of Toronto. Her work is cited as a source of inspiration and the success of her visions are used as leverage points to advocate for change in communities.

Building on Jacob's legacy, Artscape, a Toronto based creative non-profit, coined the term "creative placemaking" in 2006 to assert that there was a unique way in which arts, culture and creative pursuits could be leveraged to add transformative value to neighbourhoods. Artscape has undertaken several projects and established a creative placemaking lab that contributes to the creation of more playful, participatory, affordable and just cities.

In addition to non-profits, the City of Toronto also heavily utilises concepts of place-making as detailed in the planning document Toronto Complete Street Guidelines (2017). The City developed and is now implementing these guidelines to provide a holistic approach to how the city streets are designed ensuring that social, economic and environmental priorities are integrated with planning and design.

Toronto also boasts examples of successful community-driven bottom-up approaches to mobilise change (Bhatia, 2020). An architectural think-tank, archiTEXT, and a community organisation, East Scarborough Storefront, have sought to leverage design as a mechanism for inspiring participatory, cross-sectoral investment. They joined forces from 2008 through 2014 to coordinate grassroots groups, community-based organizations, funders, developers, employers, and governments at all levels in implementing holistic strategies for fostering community connections and inspiring neighbourhood improvements in Scarborough.The East Scarborough Storefront have since then played an active part in creating lasting civic structures through bottom-up design.

In more general terms, the current state of globalization and its accompanying crises, including financial and health-related issues, has left people in cities feeling overwhelmed and exhausted (Inayatullah, 2011). With a current context of rising inflation fueling the cost of living crisis, a health system burdened by the demands of the pandemic and exodus of medical professionals, erratic weather due to climate change, regaining agency and control over their communities is of utmost importance. Toronto finds itself in a unique position to take action towards building a city that goes beyond traditional worldviews and city practices to holistically realise inclusive visions for its people.

In the following study, we build our process and inquire further, drawing from a diverse range of sources. These include the evolution of the city, community-led participation, and efforts to drive meaningful placemaking in Toronto.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

Figure 1: Initial understanding of the micromacro process

Small and Big

To gain a deeper understanding and effectively engage with the domain of this project and its environment, it is necessary to adopt a multifaceted perspective that takes into account both the bigger picture and the smaller more intricate details within it. A perspective that encompasses a comprehensive understanding of the context, the people involved, the challenges they face and the way these challenges are perceived and approached. In order to achieve this, we have developed a lens that we call "MicroMacro". (Figure 1)
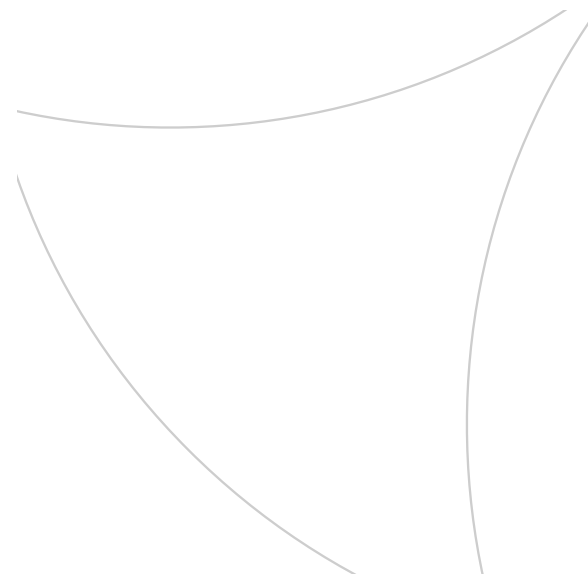
Problems and Paradigms

As the world mitigates the indifference to the climate crisis through short-term fixes and performative actions, a paradigm shift needs to occur to enable change where efforts are put into actions that produce long-term, effective outcomes. (Nyberg & Wright, 2016)

Individual action can only take us so far. There has begun a shift in understanding our problems from a reductionist and linear mindset to a nested and interconnected one. Ontological reductionism in many practices today stems from the inherent fear of complexity (Weir, 2010). This justifies the potential in reframing such complexity through a non-linear lens and enabling the shift from product building to capacity building to process building.

Places and People

The temporal relationships between humans and their immediate environment have been constantly evolving. Today the planet bears witness to the rise of mega-cities that have been reduced to entities of utilitarian purpose and financial value (Wirth, 1964). In the case of Toronto, there seems to be a fluctuating dynamic between the people and public spaces fueled by of community-driven placemaking movements and placewashing, which involves adoption of ideas that exclude the input of local communities they intend to serve. These tensions shed the light on larger problems that exist in the city with the neo-liberal agenda of profit over everything, taking precedence over climate justice and citizen-led advocacy.

Taking these core components we put them through Micro-Macro, a lens that encompasses both closed-in and zoomed-out perspectives of processes. This formed the guiding steps for the project that spread out into the next three sections, namely:
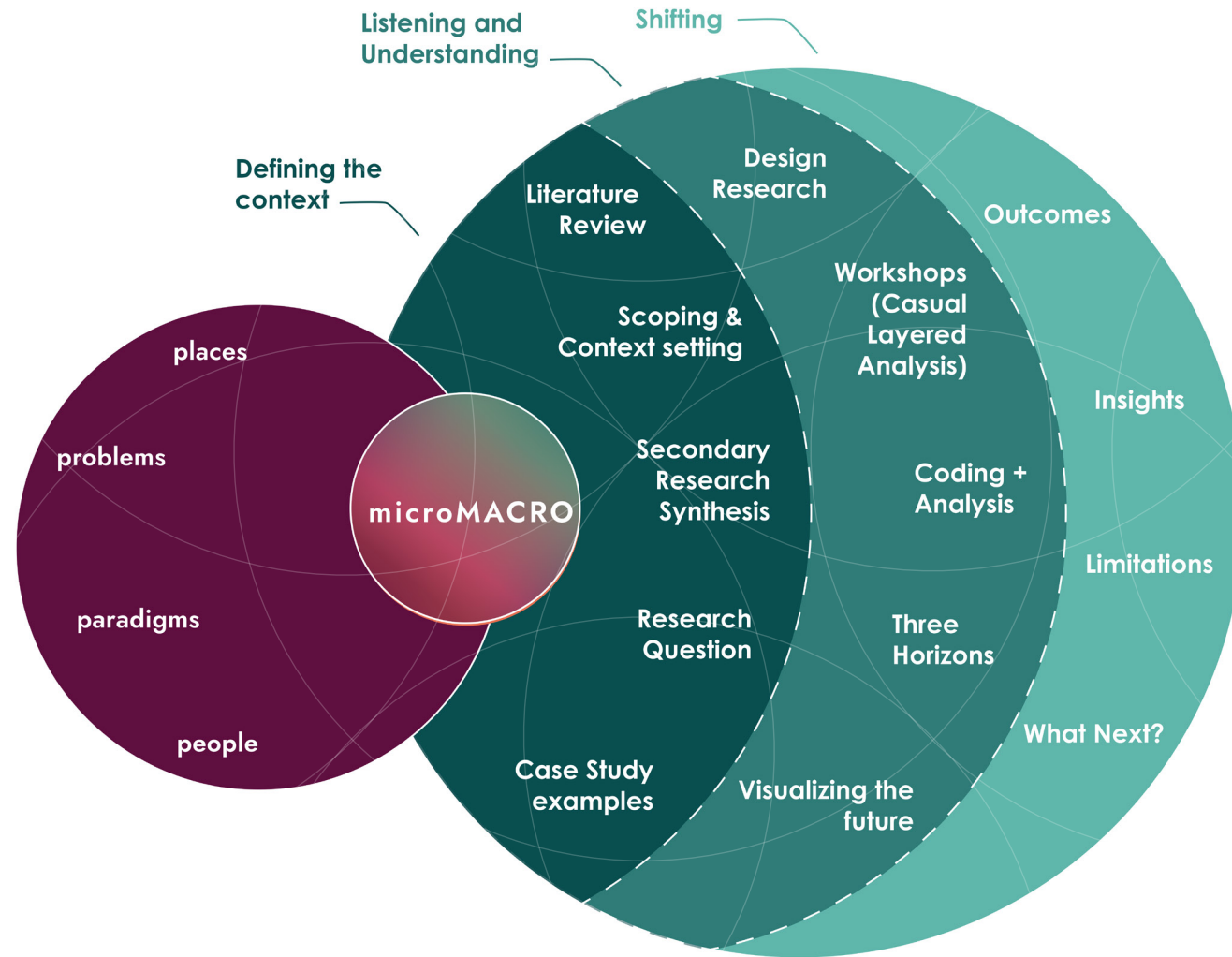
Figure 2: microMacro process expanded

Defining the context

We identified our domain area and primary definitions within it. Through a heavy exploration of the secondary research within the domain, we narrowed down our problem area and started to define the scoping boundaries.

Listening and Understanding

Here we sought to understand the ways in which people from various backgrounds view the problems around them and understand them. We crafted a primary research method that would help us listen to present perspectives and also hold space for envisioning the future. Once we collected the primary data, we synthesised their individual perspectives to form a larger understanding.

The process aligns the research as an exploratory and iterative journey with the flexibility to adapt and shift direction as needed. With the core considerations of places, people, problems and paradigms driving the project, we now began scoping out the domain, and its boundaries.

Shifting

Building on the data, information and knowledge that we gathered across the research project, we started recommending outcomes within the scope of our research. We also reflected back to find insights from the process and pave the way for the conversation to continue after.

1.OUR LOCAL PLANET

What do we have right now?

Earth

The blue marble
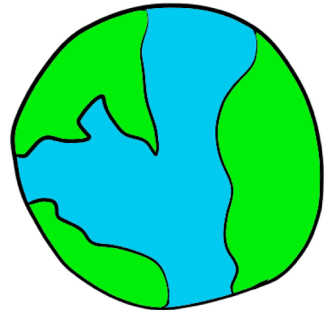
Floating rock
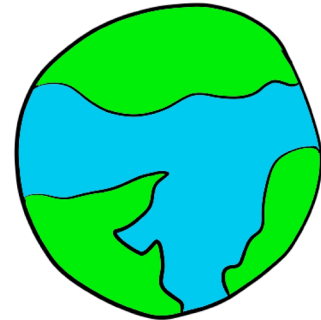
Home to the largest parking lot in the galaxy

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

How do we differentiate between the abundance of concepts, ideas, frameworks, and practices within the current domain?

Throughout the process of scoping and literature review, we discovered new words and methodologies consistently being developed to define and redefine pre-existing concepts. However, sometimes through misuse and overuse, these terms often lose their luster and get replaced with new words that are perceived to mean the same thing but are different in small ways (Bourke, 2011).

At this point in the project, we began to share a similar sentiment about the concepts of regenerative design and placemaking, as they seem to be newer words for existing ideas. In this context, regenerative design is an alternative concept to sustainability and placemaking as an umbrella term to signify creative, impactful and socially responsible urban design projects.

However, challenging the sentiment of how these concepts may stem from a common idea or be an oversimplification of an existing one, is the perspective that they can mean different things. The difference actually stems from them being responses to a changing environment and addressing existing gaps.

For instance the similarities between regenerative design and sustainability stem from the common idea of creating a better world for present and future generations. Chrisna Du Plessis (2022) emphasizes that they are, in fact, different design paradigms with different goals, practices and rules and that The confusion often comes in when sustainability is used as a catch-all concept and development idea.

In short, while sustainability is an essential starting point, we believe that regenerative design goes beyond by focusing on creating systems that create a positive impact, are adaptable, and are resilient.

To define our idea of regenerative placemaking, we analyzed existing terms, definitions, and practices, distilled their core ideas, and knit them into a meaningful concept. We have also included relevant concepts that are closely related to placemaking and regenerative design to further add depth to our understanding. We were not critically comparing the various definitions; rather we were looking at their core essence and stitching them into our idea of regenerative placemaking.

Existing Definitions:

Regenerative Placemaking

Definition #1 :
"Defined as a strategic process of (re)igniting people's relationship to socio-ecological systems through place-specific activations, Regenerative Placemaking harnesses the key strengths of regenerative development and placemaking practices." (Cho, 2021)

Core Ideas:
- (Re)igniting people's relationship to socio-ecological systems
- Place-specific activations
- Harnessing regenerative development
- Utilizing placemaking practices

Definition #2:
"We define regenerative placemaking as a strategic process of (re)igniting people's relationship to socio-ecological systems through place-specific temporary activations that act as a testing ground for long-term potential. At its best, regenerative placemaking can become a process by which people are activated as cultural and environmental stewards of place to engender ongoing systems healing."
(Hernandez-Santin et al., 2020)

Core Ideas:
- Temporary Activations
- Experimental
- Rejuvenation / Restoration
- Long-term
- Peoples relationship

Placemaking

Definition #1 :

"Placemaking is the process of building and nurturing this relationship between people and their environment. Through a broad focus on creating quality places, Placemaking builds the shared value, community capacity, and cross-sector collaboration that is the bedrock of resilient cities and thriving communities." (Kent, 2015)

Core Ideas:
- Relationship-building between people and their environment
- Creating quality places
- Building shared value
- Developing community capacity
- Encouraging cross-sector collaboration

Definition #2:

Project for Public Spaces (2015) defines placemaking as the act of strengthening the connection between people and place through the creation of public spaces that act as a center or focal point for the community

Core Ideas:
- Strengthening the connection between people and place
- Creation of public spaces
- Acting as a center or focal point
- Community

Definition #3 :

"Placemaking : Placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution "(Ellery & Ellery, 2019)

Core Ideas:
- Collaborative process
- Public realm
- Shared value
- Cultural and social identities

Regenerative Design

Definition #1 :

"Regenerative design uses whole systems thinking to create resilient and equitable systems that integrate the needs of society with the integrity of nature." (Lyle, 1994)

Core Ideas:
- Whole systems thinking
- Resilient systems
- Equitable systems
- Integration of society and nature

Definition #2 :
"Regenerative design is a principle that calls for products or services to contribute to systems that renew or replenish themselves. This ultimately means the materials and energy that go into a product or process can be reintroduced into the same process or system, requiring little to no inputs to maintain it. At the heart of regenerative design, there's a strong connection to the place in which a product or process is extracted, produced, used and disposed of at end of life."
(Mang & Haggard, 2016)

Core Ideas:
- Renewal/replenishment
- Closed-loop systems
- Place-based
- Sustainable production

Community Visioning

Definition #1 :

"Community visioning, is defined as: an inclusive and participatory process that brings together people from across the community and empowers marginalized groups to Contribute" (Newman & Jennings, 2008).

Core Ideas:
- Inclusive
- Participatory:
- Empowerment:
- Marginalized groups
- Community

Definition #2 :

"Citizen visioning is understood as a method through which citizens develop a shared vision of their preferred future as a community. "
(Rosa et al., 2021)

Core Ideas:
- Shared vision
- Future orientation
- Optimized daily life
- Participatory approach

Participatory Design

Definition #1 :

"Participatory design is a method to co-create, co-operate, and co-design. Participatory design is an approach where all the stakeholders i.e. employees, customers, end-users, partners, designers, and researchers are actively involved in the design process. Participatory Design exercises are used in a variety of fields, such as software and product design, architecture, and graphic design, among other disciplines." (Participatory Design in User Research, 2018)

Core Ideas:
- Co-creation
- Stakeholders
- Design process
- Interdisciplinary collaboration

Definition #2 :

  "Through such a process, a proactive confrontation between scientific and technological opportunities and social demand can be carried out and lead to a reconciliation between science and technology and the needs expressed by society in terms of environmental risk." (Faucheux & Hue, 2001)

Core Ideas:
- Participative foresight
- Experts' opinions
- Consultation of social demand
- Scientific and technological opportunities
- Reconciliation between science/technology and societal needs.

Participatory Foresight

Definition #1 :

  "Participatory Foresight: In this light, we define participatory foresight as activities that encourage expanding channels for citizen inputs, and integrating them into the final project results. Particularly given the critique that has been levied at "participation" in the contexts of development" (Rosa et al., 2021)

Core Ideas:
- Strengthening the connection between people and place
- Creation of public spaces
- Acting as a center or focal point
- Community

Sorting and refining core keywords based on similarities uncovered common themes such as collective agency, foresight, context-based methods, capacity building and shifting the way we see and understand things. Using these themes we further knit them meaningfully to build the following definition :

"Regenerative Placemaking is a context-based approach that intentionally designs a process to create capacity for places, activates agency for people, and fosters long-term thinking."
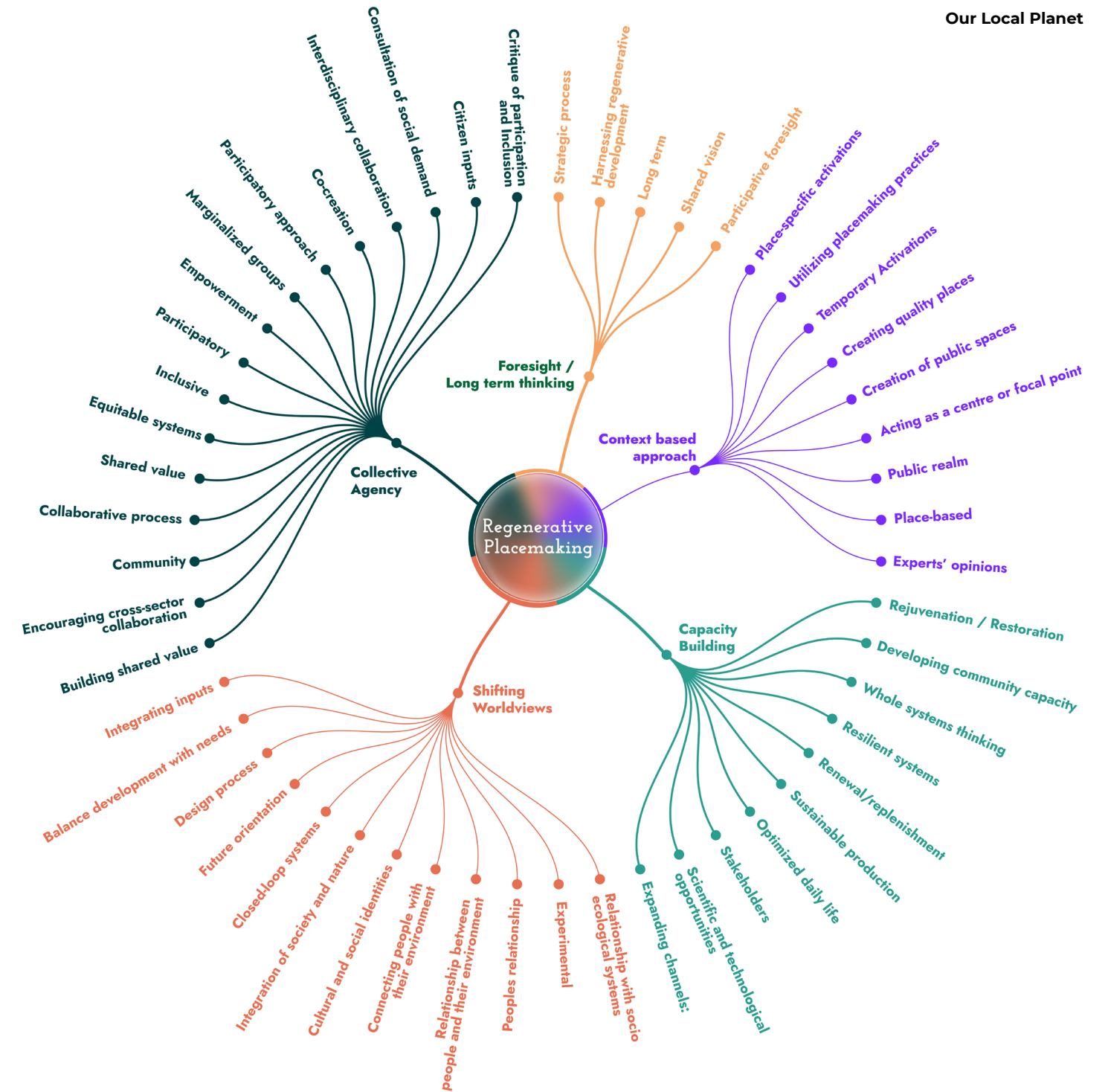

Figure 3: Defining Regenerative Placemaking

PRACTICES IN ACTION

To inquire further into present practices and projects revolving around placemaking and community engagement, we did a quick scan of conducted brief case studies. The intent of studying the case examples was to build a basic overview of projects within the domain.

Complete Streets Ottawa
2019 - Ongoing

Context

The City of Ottawa is one of the first Canadian cities to explicitly include the 15 Minute City in their planning documents. In their new Official Plan for 2021 they aim to elevate urban design, reduce car dependency, promote equity, as well as social and physical health, contribute to great placemaking and allow Ottawa to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change. In summary, the intention of the 15-minute neighbourhood concept is an important city-building initiative to help make Ottawa the most livable mid-size city in North America. (City of Ottawa, 2021).

Strategies Used

- Public Consultations via focus groups and surveys
- Assessment of current neighbourhoods and infrastructure
- Qualitative (built form, enjoyability index) and Quantitative (services and amenities, safety index) factors were considered

Intervention Space

- Policy Directions - the most significant policy directions for the new Official Plan covering the topics of growth, mobility, urban design, resiliency, and economy.
- Intensifying the growth of diverse, mixed-use buildings and neighbourhoods
- The growth management of current downtown neighbourhoods and attracting more businesses to "complete" them
- Increasing sidewalk/pedestrian networks to increase accessibility

- Inclusion of safety and enjoyability as key factors that contribute to the success of a 15 min city

Actors Involved

These internal stakeholders, plans, and programs included the following:
- Winter Maintenance Standards
- Safety and Well-Being Plan
- Integrated Neighbourhood Services Team
- Economic Development
- Ottawa Public Library
- Development Review branch
- Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan
- Urban Design Framework
- Transportation Master Plan
- Active Transportation Plan
- Urban Forest Management Plan
- Tree Planting Program Review
- Ottawa Public Health

Limitations

- Challenges to Analysis of suburban areas and areas that are away from the downtown core
- Challenges to implementing initiatives in suburban and rural areas away from downtown
- Navigating Winter Maintenance standards and protocols to ensure year-round access to amenities and services not limited to but including sidewalks
- Communicating and aligning with various stakeholders (City planners, transports, facilities and utility dept, and parks and rec)
- Zoning Laws and Permits

PRACTICES IN ACTION

sed on Dan's presentation, What
e do you think goes into an
lusive economic opportunity
n ?

Home ownership viability

Inclusive opportunities for all. There should be daycare and seniora considerations.

Affordable housing and doesn't displace existing residents

economic development and opportunities specific to youth 16 -29=

Young people need more jobs.

addresses poverty and food insecurity

Daycare

new local business development at local level

Community safety is important.

The development of a strong local chamber of commerce

The plan would t care of mental he This is not only treatment of thos who have mental health issues, bu prevention of the sources of the me health problems.

new local business development at local level

Nice parks and safety at parks is important.

The development of a strong local Chamber of Commerce.

Proper transportation system (address overcrowding, better access to getting a MetroCard)

clusive to f the people the area

Equal opportunities to employment

Hi to th in h

Jane-Finch Initiative - Virtual Visioning Workshop
2021 - Ongoing

opportunities employment growth

Context

   The JaneFinch Initiative aims to explore future planning prospects in the area and leverage integrated transit development. A visioning workshop was conducted with stakeholders to incorporate local voices and needs into the guiding principles for potential development in the area. According to the Jane Finch Centre (2021) the plan involved three goals:

1. Getting people involved,
2. Creating a plan to help the community grow and make money, and
3. Updating the rules for how land can be used in the area.

Strategies Used

- Virtual workshop
- Assessment of current situation
- Aspiration for the future
- Establishing guiding principles

Intervention Space

   Virtual Visioning workshop to take stock of existing elements and practices to preserve them for the future. Building a collective vision for the future and engaging in discussion about current developments in the neighbourhood. Topics explored were related to the community's future in terms of :

- Transportation,
- Public space,
- Housing,
- Community engagement.

Actors Involved

- Councillor
- City staff,
- Jane Finch Initiative staff
- Residents of area

Limitations

- Involvement of very limited stakeholders in terms of both quantity and diversity due to accessibility to digital technology for online workshops.
- Although the questions explored during the workshop explored diverse topics there was less room for further inquiry.
- A general pitfall of virtual workshops, the non-sensory experience limited the engagement of participants.

PRACTICES IN ACTION

People and Community Action / Berczy Park
2012

Context

Make a Place for People is a project based on the idea that community participation is key to the creation of vibrant and healthy public spaces. Berczy Park is a small green oasis located in the bustling St. Lawrence Market neighbourhood in downtown Toronto. Some people have referred to Berczy Park as a "jewel" or "oasis" in the heart of Toronto's dense urban centre. Unfortunately, the park isn't living up to its potential as a vibrant hub of healthy lifestyles and social interaction (880 Cities, 2012).

Initial Problem - Years of inadequate maintenance were evidenced by broken and derelict infrastructure. A lack of programming and activities does little to animate the park, especially in the winter months. Many local residents have expressed dismay over the general lack of attention and care given to this special little green space in one of Toronto's most iconic neighbourhoods.

Our focus for this case study is the intervention and activities that took place in 2012. Berczy Park has had various significant developments since 2012 that make it a lauded public space today. We choose to look at the 2012 intervention because of its emphasis on participatory design.

Strategies Used

- Building on existing strengths
- Engaging with the Community and including them in the planning, envisioning, and planning.
- Benchmarking with other examples from

Canada and around the world
- Inclusion of children, women and seniors as key members of the community (vulnerable) and using their input to build initiatives

Intervention Space

- Creating a Public Space Network by making the space connected to other nearby public spaces
- Increasing accessibility to the park as it is currently surrounded by traffic and is hard for pedestrians to reach
- Increasing community engagement activities by streamlining the programming calendar and investing in infrastructure

Actors Involved

- Berkczy Park community members (kids, adults, seniors, women)
- 8/80 cities
- Gehl Architects
- St. Lawrence BIA/ City of Toronto

Limitations

- Time-consuming activity
- Buy-in from decision and policy makers
- Too many ideas could be challenging to navigate and decide which key activities to prioritise
- Budget, funding, and resources dictate what initiative gets executed
- Various stakeholders involved in the planning and execution process could delay decision-making and action planning.

Learnings

While a brief overview of these practices may not be enough to draw definitive conclusions from, we are able to identify common characteristics that they share. These characteristics align closely to the concepts presented in the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation. These concepts (IAP2 International Federation, 2018) are arranged based on their increasing impact on decision-making :

• **Inform:** To provide the public with balanced, unbiased and objective information about the context
• **Consult**: To obtain feedback and analysis on decisions and proposals
• **Involve**: To work directly with the public to ensure they are understood and oriented
• **Collaborate**: To partner with the public in each aspect of the process and,
• **Empower**: To allow the public to make final decisions.

The key takeaways of these examples and the framework tell us the different ways to co-create with communities do exist and are practised widely. However, learning from the pitfalls of the above examples we see how well-intended practices often lose their impact to bureaucratic obstacles and lack of awareness by the public. There is potential in exploring approaches that incorporate public agency and empowerment which are easy to execute and consider people's perception of places and their relationship with them.

FRAMING AND RE-FRAMING

Framing

The brief case studies provide insight into the nature of challenges with placemaking and the practical implications of the solutions they aim to offer. While some projects excelled in stakeholder inclusion and long-term thinking, common obstacles were uncovered relating to temporary fixes, urgency, and the overall lack of a holistic perspective.

The projects focused on specific issues or interventions without considering the broader social, economic, and environmental contexts in which they operate. This narrow focus led to unintended consequences and missed opportunities to craft more holistic responses.

Two steps back, one step forward

The rapid nature of life today has us expecting urgency in thought and instantaneous action. Our crises are being responded to with urgent solutions often powered by worldviews that rely on empirical evidence and simplification (Wahl, 2016). This need to find solutions with a sense of urgency obscures potential overarching problems, and questions that require answering. For our responses to be holistic and cohesive, effort needs to be made in taking two steps back, understanding, defining and then reframing our questions that require answers.

We first conducted an environmental scan to uncover the complexity of the problems surrounding us. Conventionally, an environmental scan is a preliminary survey of external factors conducted to help discover and interpret factors that could impact future decisions in a strategic context. It is sometimes used interchangeably with the term horizon scanning which is also part of foresight practice to discover signals of change(Cuhls, 2020). However, in this project we aim to see how different factors are connected to each other beyond the specific domain of placemaking.

In order to counter our biases, we ensured that these factors and signals of change were collected from a wide range of sources using private browsing to block algorithmic bias. We then classified them under the STEEP-V categories(Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political and Values), which are broad categories used to classify information (Cairns, 2017).

Post-collection, we sorted the signals into groups based on similar domains.These included the housing crisis, climate change and its runaway effects, car-centric urbanism, the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic, and the positive impacts of participatory urbanism.

The next step involved mapping direct influences between the collected signals. If a signal had a direct impact or influence on another, we considered that as a connection. Through this process, we identified a complex web of problems spanning multiple domains.

The following map visually represents how the problems are connected and influence each other.

It helped uncover the entangled nature of the problems we face every day and recognizes the interconnectedness of social, economic, technological, political and environmental factors that sustain them.

(In the diagram, the inner circle consists of signals represented by the individual lines of text ending with a solid dot, the outer circle denotes thematic categories)
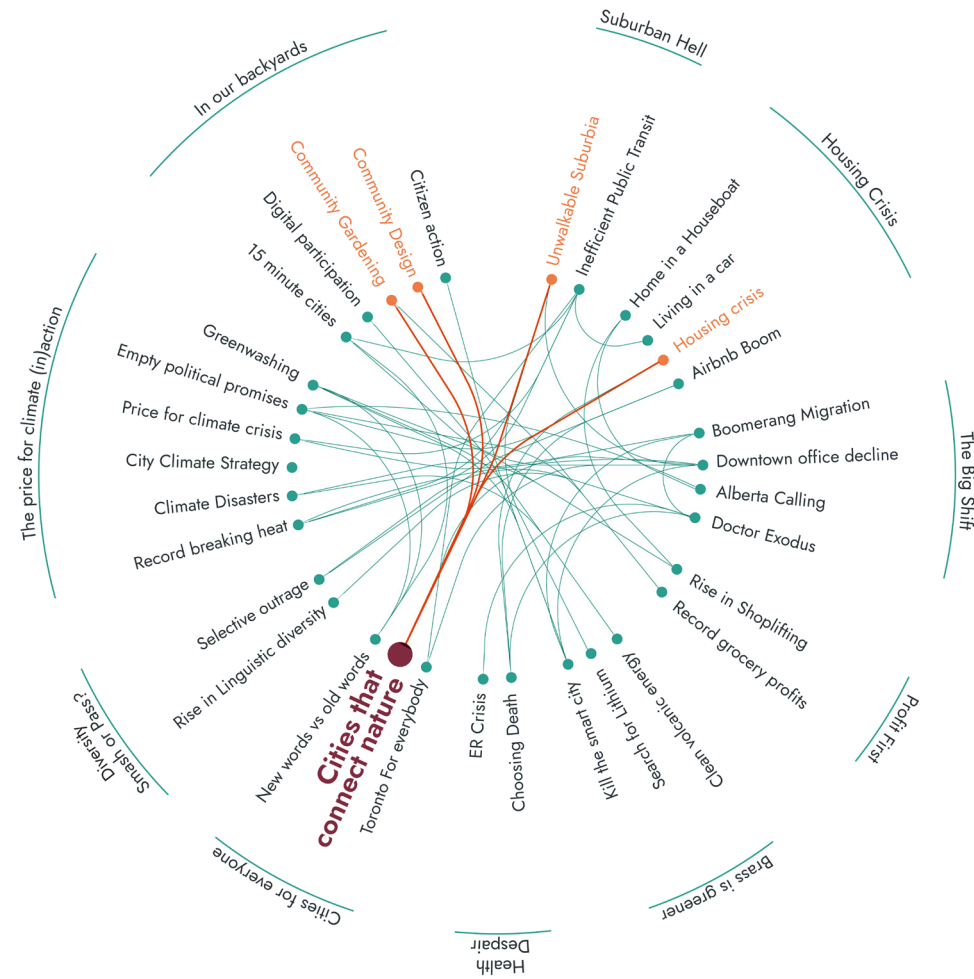

Figure 4: Interconnections of signals

Figure 5: Interconnections of signals: Cities that connect nature

Figure 6: Interconnections of signals: Exodus of doctors

Maybe, in my backyard

Through the rising demand for cities that connect nature and people, we were able to observe influential relationships to praxis in community design that encourages participation

and inclusion. Community-driven projects including community gardens, pave the way to the development of self-sufficient neighbourhoods that parallels the existing visions of suburbia.

Healthcare despair

We were able to further uncover influential relationships between the exodus of doctors from Toronto that is driving the shortage of healthcare professionals, which gradually

overwhelms the crisis in emergency rooms and the healthcare system as a whole. With the system struggling to meet the needs of a growing and diverse population, this crippling effect on the system further propagates outrage amongst sections of people against immigration.

Figure 7: Interconnections of signals: Greenwashing

Another shade of green

There seems to be a rise in the practice of greenwashing all around the world. It involves using performative and superficial actions and gestures towards sustainability and climate change rather than making substantive change.

Here we see its connections to inflation, reductive worldviews, the climate disaster, and the rise of buzzwords, along with successes and challenges related to the implementation of 15-minute cities.

Reframing

Through the entanglements observed above, we realised that to better tackle the problems that surround our places and people's crises, we needed to look at the different ways in which different people look at crises, understand them, and think about their future. In order to effectively do that, we required a deep dive into how people see the problems, and engage with the multiple layers enabling them.

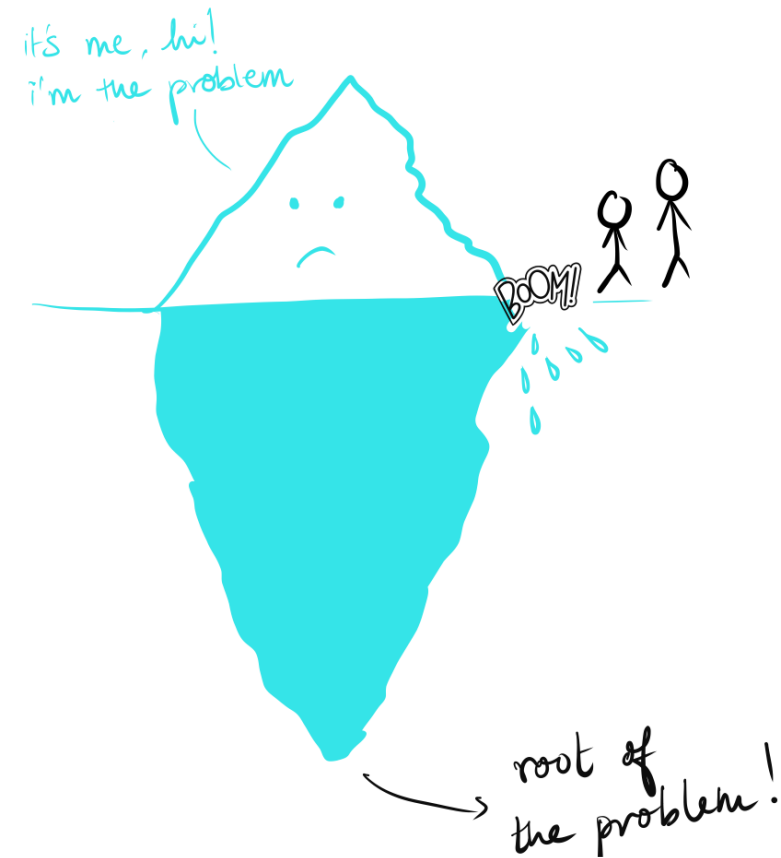We learn that our problems are complex and interconnected.
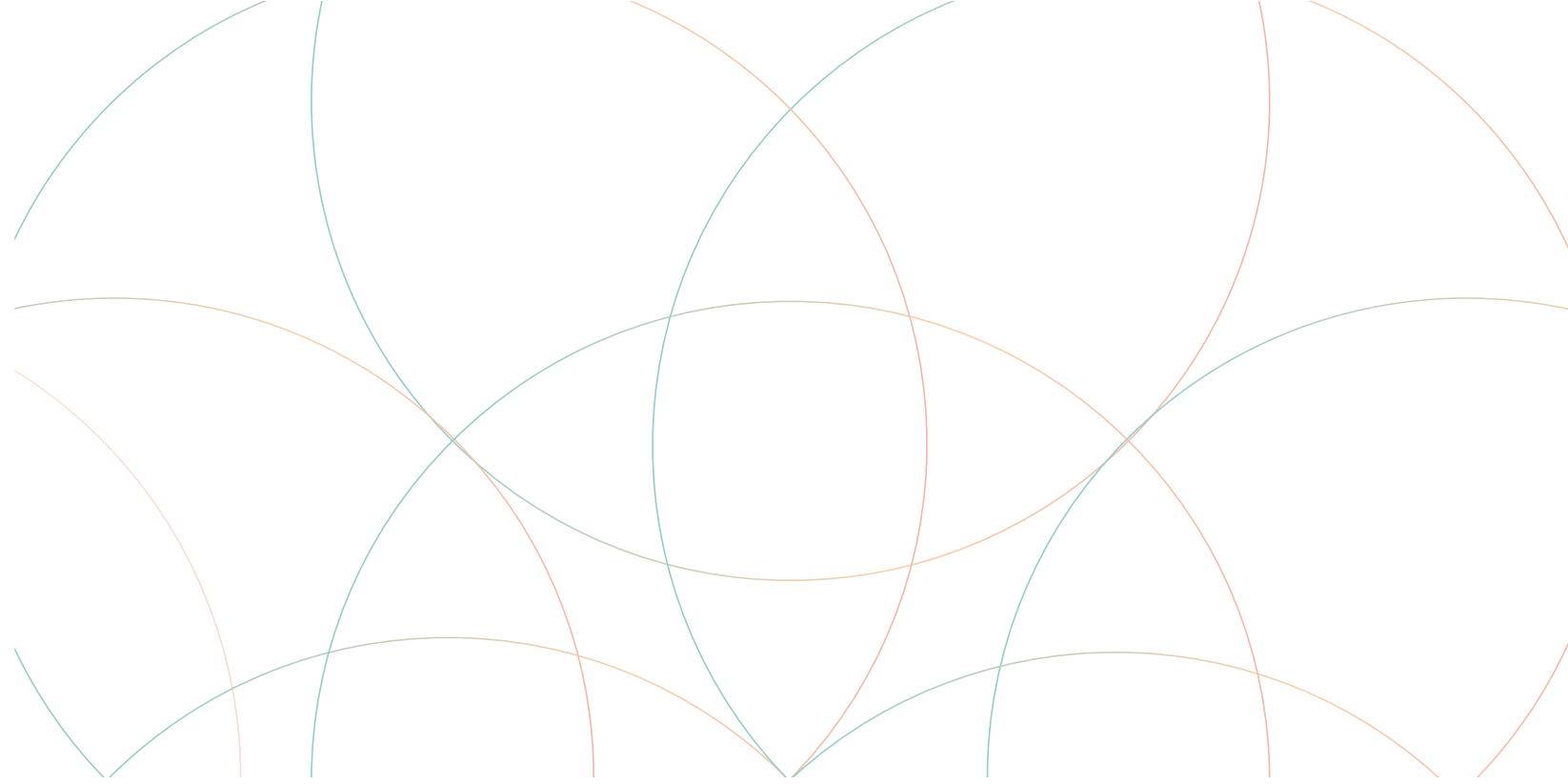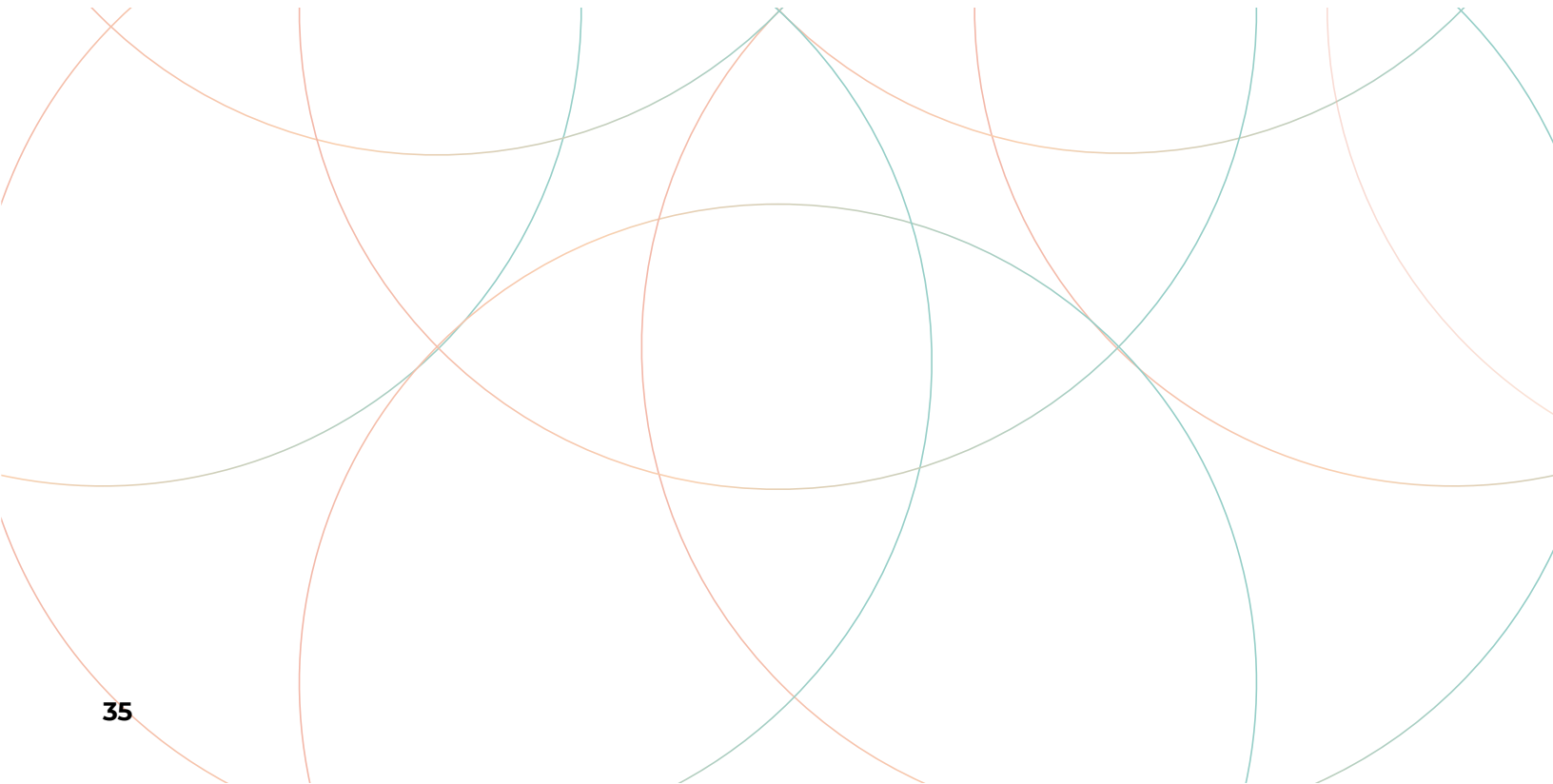
Now we hear what different people have to say about them

2.THE GOOD PLACE

What's coming? How do we understand it?

2.1.   DESIGN RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

DESIGN RESEARCH METHODOLGY

Our secondary research up to this point has helped us frame an understanding of the domain, some of the problems surrounding us, and the way the problems are entangled with each other. In order to apply our 'MicroMacro' lens of places, people, problems, and paradigms to the domain, we started building a methodology for our primary research. The following steps detail our methodology, in a sequential manner, starting from defining our objectives to collecting and synthesizing data to inform research outcomes.

Step 1: Formulating a methodology
- *What did we need to learn?*
- *How were we planning to do that?*

Step 2: Three Horizons
- *What framework did we intend to use?*
- *What were the different types of data we can get from it?*
- *How did we use it to form the building blocks of our methodology?*

Step 3: Casual Layered Analysis
- *How did we enrich the building blocks to give more context to the data?*
- *Why were we using the Causal Layered Analysis?*

Step 4: Asking Better Questions
- *How could we further enrich the building blocks to give more context to the data?*
- *Why were we seeking questions rather than answers from people?*

Step 5: Pictures from Tomorrow
- *Why did we want people to visually imagine their future?*
- *How did we generate these images?*

Step 6: Pilot and Recruitment
- *How did we test if the methodology works?*
- *What did we learn from the test?*
- *How did we approach people to participate?*

Step 7: Running the Workshops
- *How did we facilitate workshops?*

Step 8: Learnings
- *What did we learn from the workshops?*

Step 9: Coding Structure
- *How did we organise the data we collected?*

Step 10: Coding approach for Sections 1 & 2
- *How did we translate the qualitative data we collected into information?*
- *How did we engage with similarities?*

Step 11: Coding approach for Section 3
- *How did we translate the data into information?*
- *What were the different questions people asked?*
- *How did we interpret them?*

Step 12: Transitioning to the Three Horizons
- *How did we build a collective consensus of the information we gained from our participants?*
- *How did we translate that information into knowledge?*
- *Why and how were we going back to the 3 Horizons framework?*

Step 13: What did we find in H1 and H3
- *How did our participants collectively see, envision, and understand the present and the future?*

Step 14: Identify Pockets of the Future
- *What did we already have and what were identified as early indicators of the collective futures we have in Horizon 3?*

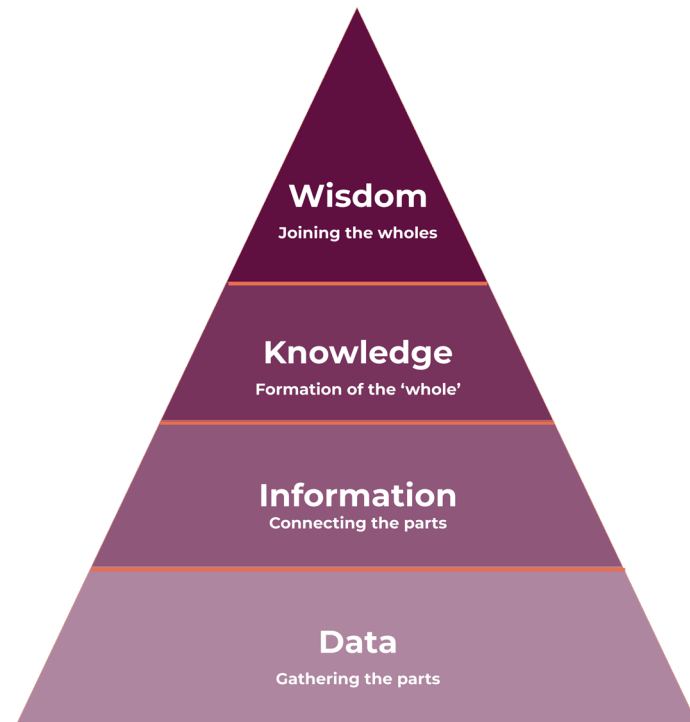**Step 15: What did H2 give us?**
- *What areas of inquiry did we uncover?*

Figure 8: DIKW Pyramid

STEP: 1

What did we need to learn?
How were we planning to do that?

Designing the workshop

Once the primary and secondary research questions were established. We took a step back to re-frame our understanding of the problem area.

The revised understanding of the problem area determined the information that would help define the pathways to help better explore the research area and questions. It was imperative that the data we collected include perspectives of a diverse set of people to get a broad sense of how they understand the present, envision a future, and work towards that envisioned future.

Formulating a Method (DIKW)

Our initial approach to primary research aimed to conduct expert interviews to drive our project. However, in due process, we realized that in order to scratch more than just surface-level perspectives, opinions, and views, we would require an alternative and a more engaging exercise with participants.

We worked on understanding the elements we would require from our primary research using the Data Information Knowledge and Wisdom (DIKW) hierarchy model, which is generally used to understand and structure the different mediums of output generated through research (Rowley, 2007). We understood that, for our intended level of inquiry, expert interviews and formal methods would not serve the level of engagement, interaction and visioning that our criteria demanded. This realization was followed by a highly iterative process that looked for research

methods that would allow us to explore various perspectives in an engaging manner but also provide us with rich insights with the limited time that we had.

Applying the 'MicroMacro' lens to our design methodology would require the primary data to be inclusive of places, different people, the problems around them, and the way they understand those problems. After gathering the data, we connected them and uncovered patterns that could translate into meaningful information. The information was then synthesized to form clusters of holistic knowledge, which were then joined together to constitute wisdom.

Adding the components of 'what's coming' and 'how do we get there', we can gain an understanding of the complex and interconnected world views held by different people, and the way they see the future.
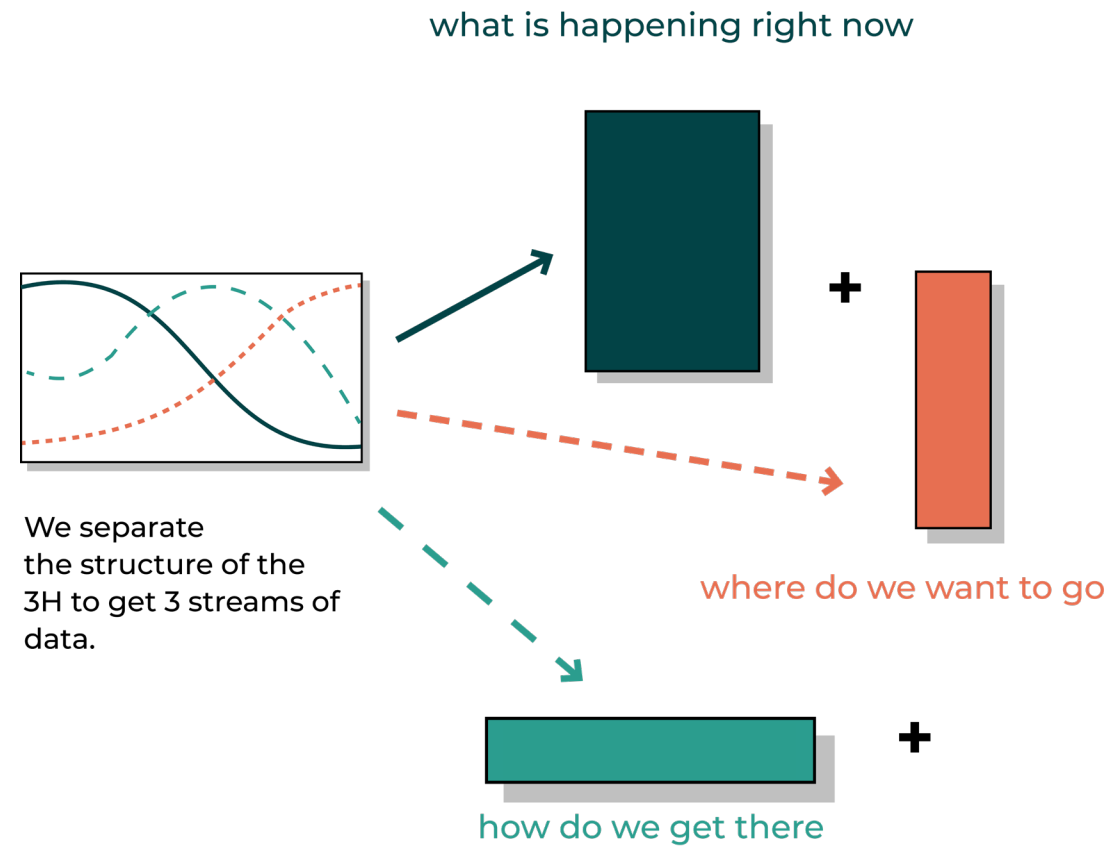
what is happening right now

We separate the structure of the 3H to get 3 streams of data.

where do we want to go

how do we get there

Figure 9: Using Three Horizons to form building blocks of the methodology

STEP: 2

What framework did we intend to use?
What were the different types of data we can get from it?
How did we use it to form the building blocks of our methodology?

Chasing Horizons

While scoping for potential ways to satisfy our DIKW objective, we re-discovered the Three Horizons framework (3H) and its various applications in workshop facilitation used for envisioning, scenario-making and planning. Put forward by Andrew Curry and Anthony Hodgson in 2008, the Three Horizons is a futures method that enables the assessment of a current state and a future possible state, and seeks to understand the dynamics of the transition between them. The three horizons describe three conditions of the same system over time against its fit with a changing external environment.
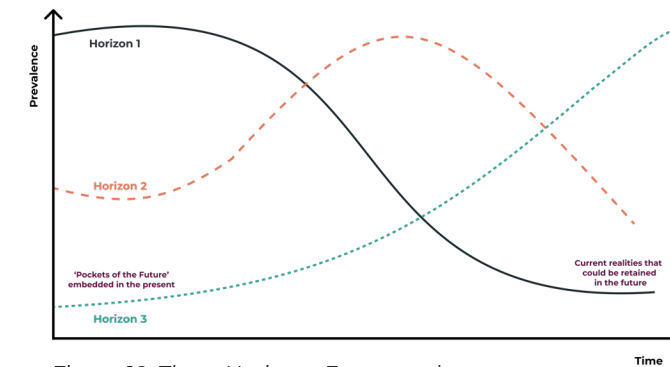

Figure 10: Three Horizons Framework

- **'1st Horizon':** the current prevailing system as it continues into the future, which loses "fit" over time as its external environment changes;

- **'3rd Horizon':** Ideas or arguments about the future of the system which are, at best, marginal in the present, but over time may have the potential to displace the world of the first horizon, because they represent a more effective response to the changes in the external environment.

- **2nd Horizon:** an intermediate space in which the first and third horizons collide. This is a space of transition which is typically unstable. It is characterised by clashes of values in which competing alternative paths to the future are proposed by actors.

Although the 3H is an excellent tool for foresight, we also believed it would serve as an excellent method to paint a complete picture of the system we are exploring.

We used the structure of the 3H to give us the building blocks of our methodology:
- understanding the present,
- envisioning the future, and
- thinking about how to get there.

We now consider applying the Causal Layered Analysis to the first two building blocks to answer the question "How are we understanding it?
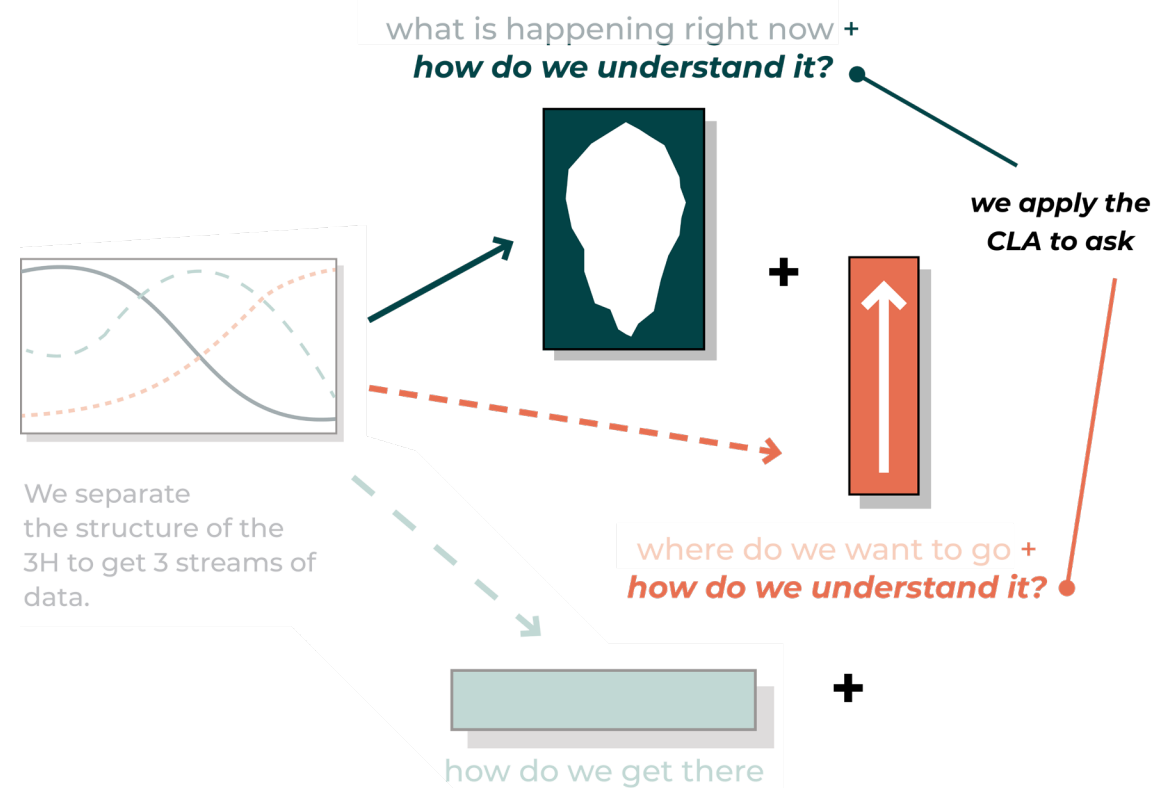
what is happening right now +
how do we understand it?

*we apply the
CLA to ask*

We separate
the structure of the
3H to get 3 streams of
data.

where do we want to go +
how do we understand it?

how do we get there

Figure 11: Applying the Causal Layered Analysis

STEP: 3

How did we enrich the building blocks to give more context to the data?
Why were we using the Causal Layered Analysis?

Navigating Icebergs

The Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) has furthered the understanding of the world around us. Developed by Sohail Inayutullah, the CLA consists of four levels: the litany, social causes, worldview (discourse) and metaphor (myth). The CLA makes use of the vertical approach, where one moves from the litany to myth and metaphor with the intention to uncover the insights that one may miss if they are just looking at the 'tip of the iceberg'.

what is
happening right now +
how do we understand it?

Start

Litany

Systems

Worldviews

Myth

Finish
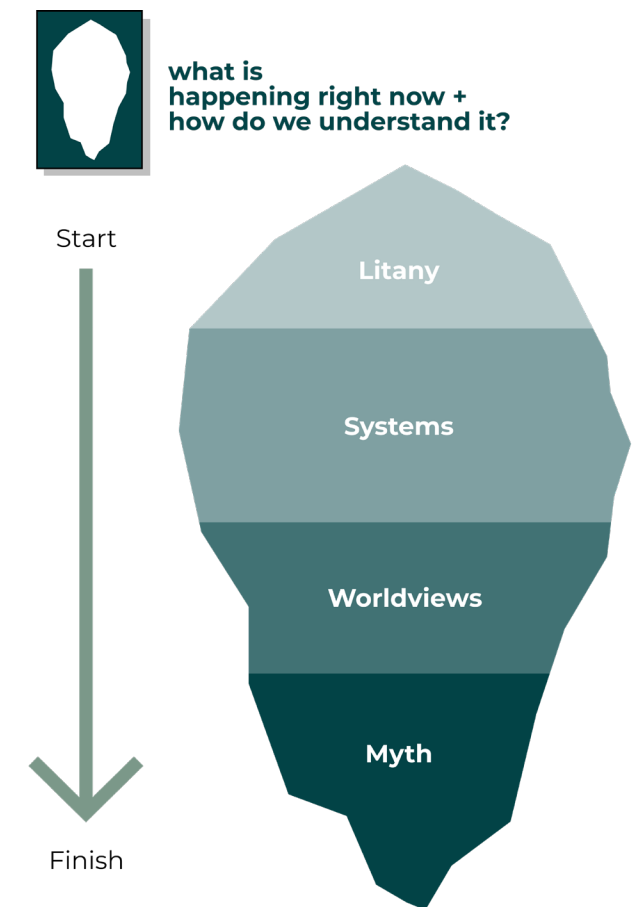
Figure 12: Causal Layered Analysis - Litany to Myth

The four layers of the CLA are levels of analysis that serve to enrich the insights uncovered in the previous layer.

- **Litany:** Current events that are prevalent and make up the view of reality, assumptions, and statements that can be verified

- **Causes**: a perspective on the litany, quantitative data and what factors re-inforce the current view of reality and its systemic structure

- **Worldviews**: ideologies, social process; with different levels that could be taken into account: stakeholder (interest of the actors), ideological (how the world is seen),
- civilisational (West, East, religious) and epistemic (modern, progress). Different levels will lead to different worldviews and can modify the litany. At this stage, one can explore how different discourses (the economic, the religious,and the cultural, for example) do more than cause or mediate the issue, but rather constitute it

- **Myth**: "unconscious emotive dimensions of the issue" - collective archetypes. A metaphor is a way to communicate simply the view about the reality described. This level provides an emotional experience to the worldview under inquiry
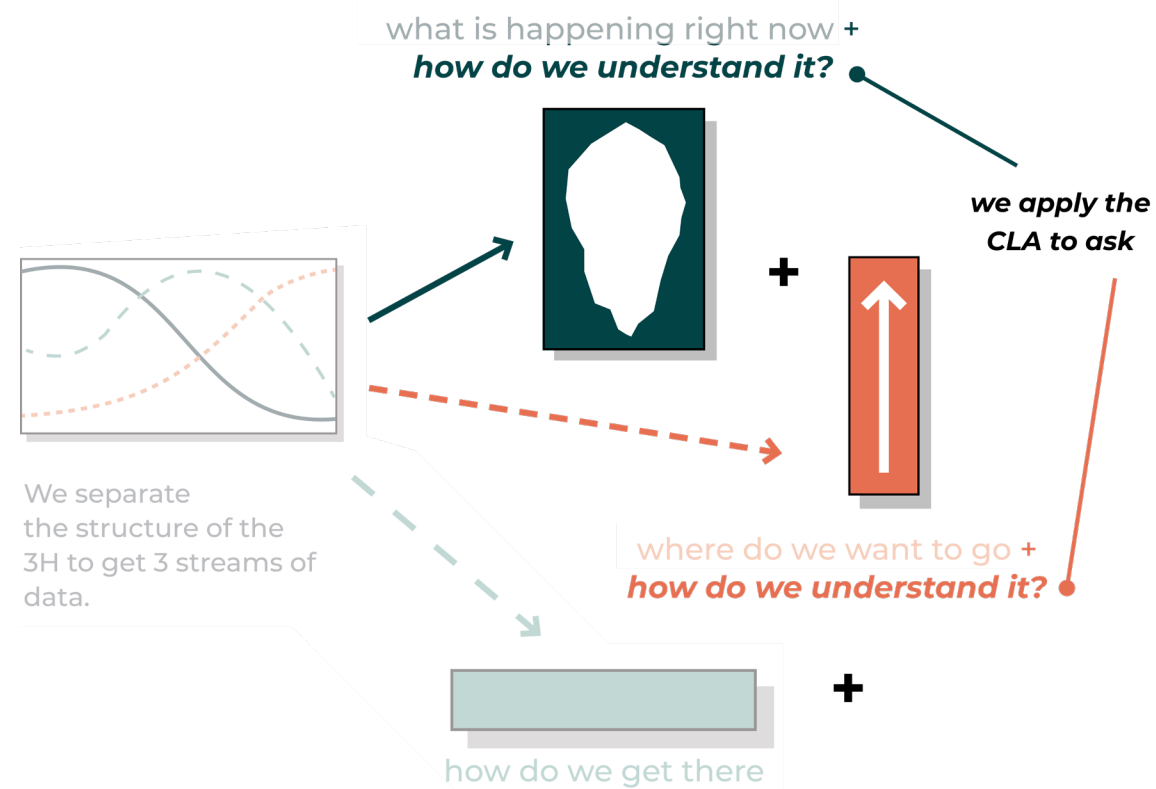
what is happening right now +
how do we understand it?

We separate
the structure of the
3H to get 3 streams of
data.

*we apply the
CLA to ask*

where do we want to go +
how do we understand it?

how do we get there

Figure 11: Applying the Causal Layered Analysis

STEP: 3

How did we enrich the building blocks to give more context to the data?
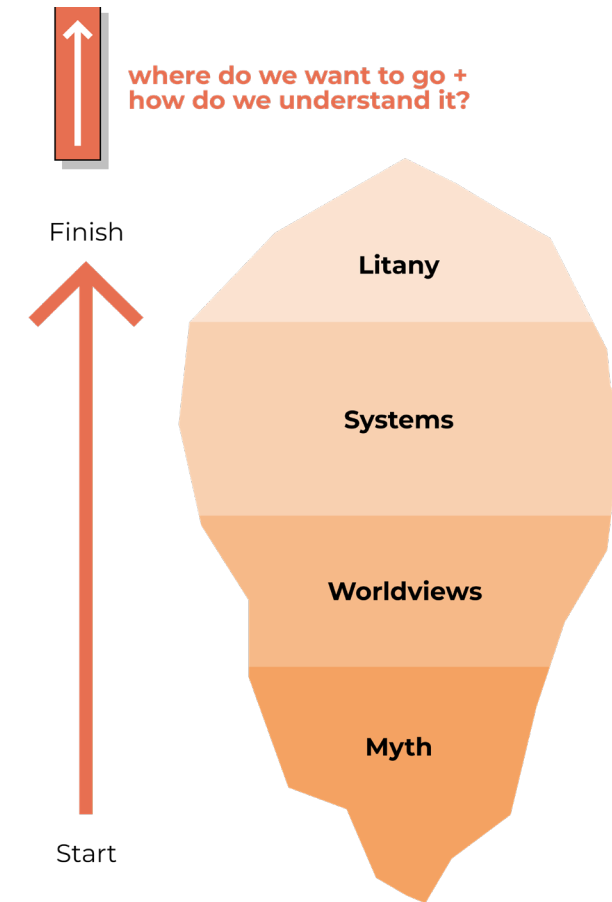Why were we using the Causal Layered Analysis?

where do we want to go +
how do we understand it?

Finish

Litany

Systems

Worldviews

Myth

Start

Figure 13: Causal Layered Analysis - Myth to Litany

The CLA can also be used to create alternate futures. This would involve starting at the bottom by crafting a metaphor that serves to be an alternate response to the current myth/metaphors and building the world up by then exploring alternate worldviews in the system that stem from the myth.

At this stage in the process, we started seeing a place for the method as a component for our primary research. The CLA is an excellent tool to understand current events in a deep manner but also help envision alternate realities. It is easily understandable by new audiences and provides structure to allow for deeper dialogue.

In a workshop setting, it also provides an inclusive space for the participants to dwell on their own perspectives of their reality.
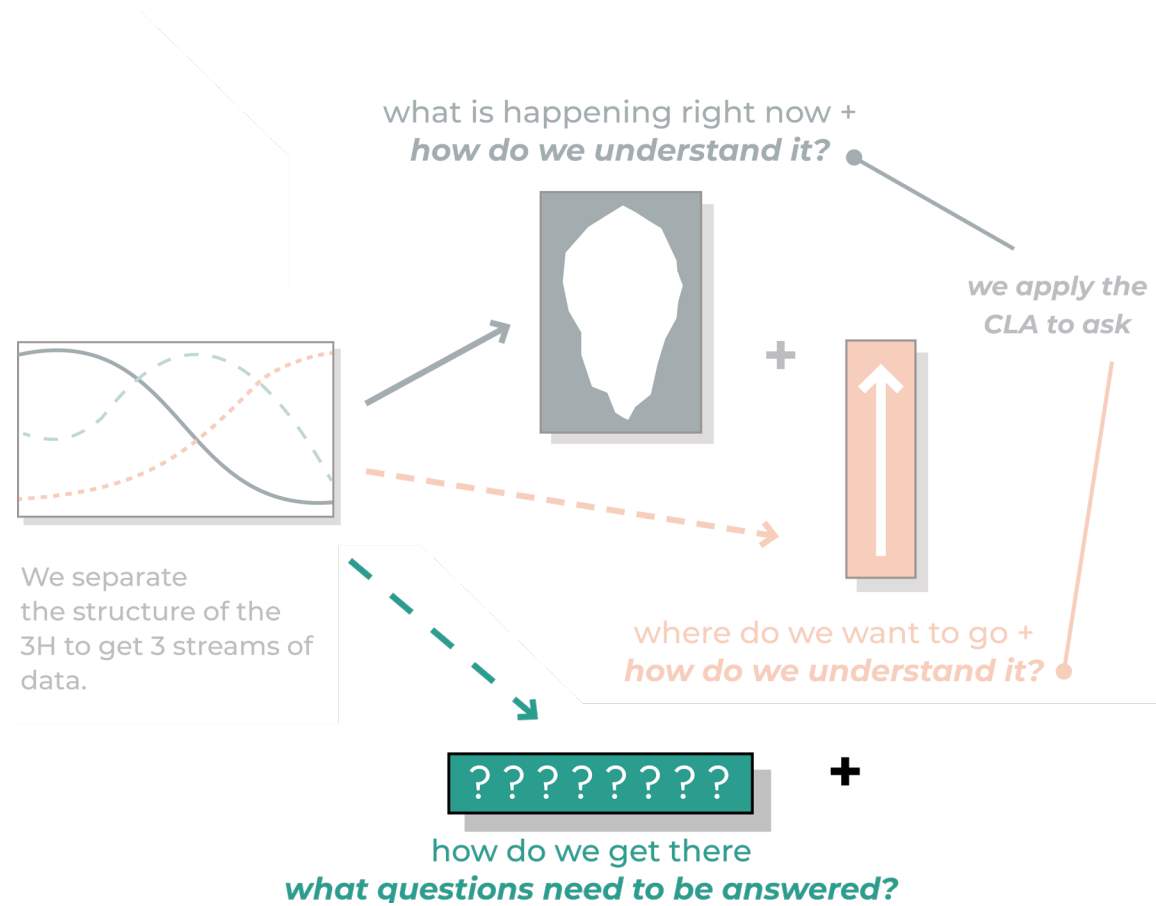
what is happening right now +
how do we understand it?

we apply the
CLA to ask

We separate
the structure of the
3H to get 3 streams of
data.

where do we want to go +
how do we understand it?

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? +

how do we get there
what questions need to be answered?

Figure 14: Asking Better Questions

STEP: 4

How could we further enrich the building blocks to give more context to the data?
Why were we seeking questions rather than answers from people?

Questions to get there

The first two building blocks intended to uncover how people look at the present, envision a future, and understand them both. The third building block as it is, looks to encourage answers to get to the envisioned future from the present. However, multiple times during our literature review we came across the importance of asking better questions instead of seeking answers. Notably, Wahl (2016) argues that:

Taking this into consideration, we decided to create a space in our workshop that allowed our participants to look at questions which might lead to their envisioned future, rather than answers to get us there.

" In a culture that demands definitive answers, questions seem to have only a transient significance; their purpose is to lead us to answers. But in the face of constant and rapid change and uncertainty, might not questions rather than answers offer a more appropriate compass? (p. 24) "

what is happening right now +
how do we understand it?

*we apply the
CLA to ask*

We separate
the structure of the
3H to get 3 streams of
data.

where do we want to go +
how do we understand it?

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

how do we get there
what questions need to be answered?

How are we visualizing it?

Figure 15: Pictures from Tomorrow

STEP: 5

Why did we want people to visually imagine their future?
How did we generate these images?

Pictures from tomorrow

We wanted to give space for participants to artistically describe a picture of the future they had in mind to gain insight into how they visually envisioned the future in the 3rd Horizon, leaving the workshop session on a positive note. To give us a glimpse of the future desired by them, we would then utilize the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Image Generation Model DALL-E 2 by OpenAI to generate images based on the prompts.

During the process of scoping out the ethical implications of using an AI Image generation platform, we discovered that the DALL-E 2 is one of the few platforms that is trained on images available in the public domain and obtained ethically. (This information is accurate at the time of writing)

This part of the workshop would be excluded from the coding process.

1. what is happening right now + how do we understand it?

2. where do we want to go + how do we understand it?

3. how do we get there + what questions need to be answered

4. how are we visualizing it?
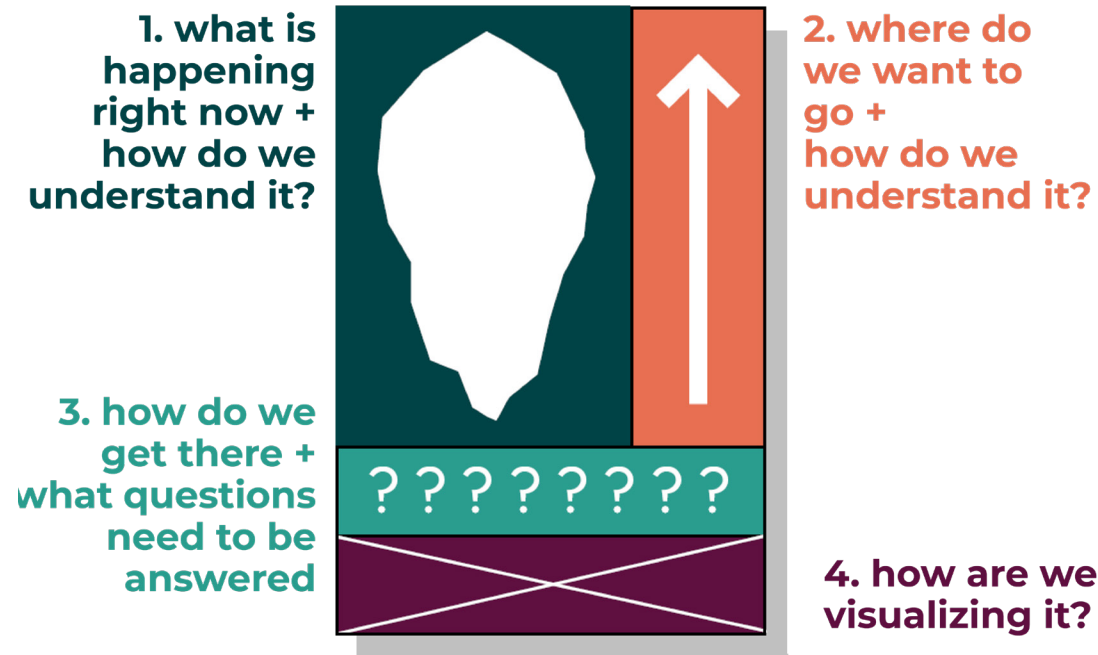
Figure 16: Elements of the Workshop session

STEP: 6

How did we test if the methodology works?
What did we learn from the test?
How did we approach people to participate?

Piloting the prototype

We created a structure of the CLA and adapted the various layers as areas of questioning by simplifying the language and vocabulary for each layer to ensure that our participants were able to grasp its concepts quickly.

We started building out a workshop format that could be delivered remotely while remaining engaging, and interactive for ourselves and the participants. We added certain generative elements to the workshop that would add to the discussion after using the CLA to unpack current realities.

In addition to preparing the workshop format, we also created supporting material for the workshop which included a script to support us as facilitators, digital collaboration MIRO boards for each participant, a pre-work document that included a background of the study and information about the CLA to familiarise the participants with the method.

In order to validate our work and see how the workshop would run, we ran trials with participants outside of the University community that were not familiar with the CLA method. This helped us tweak our workshop session to make the language more inclusive and simple. It also allowed us to see our own strengths as facilitators while running online sessions.

Piloting the prototype put us in a better position to start running the workshops with participants

Recruitment strategy

As we were finalising our method, we initially started our search for experts in placemaking in cities, regenerative cultures and transdisciplinary practitioners working within organisations or communities to bring change and awareness within their fields. We believed that their experiences in regenerative design, placemaking, citizen action, and city-building would be valuable to our study as they bring field insights that can help us discover varying perspectives and areas of inquiry.

We determined the eligibility of participants based on publicly available information which included reviews of professional backgrounds, published research and articles relevant to our study. Fifteen participants were shortlisted by us through publicly available information online. We connected with our participants through various public channels (Twitter, Instagram, and personal websites), and once we had confirmation, we sent them a formal invite to the study through email.
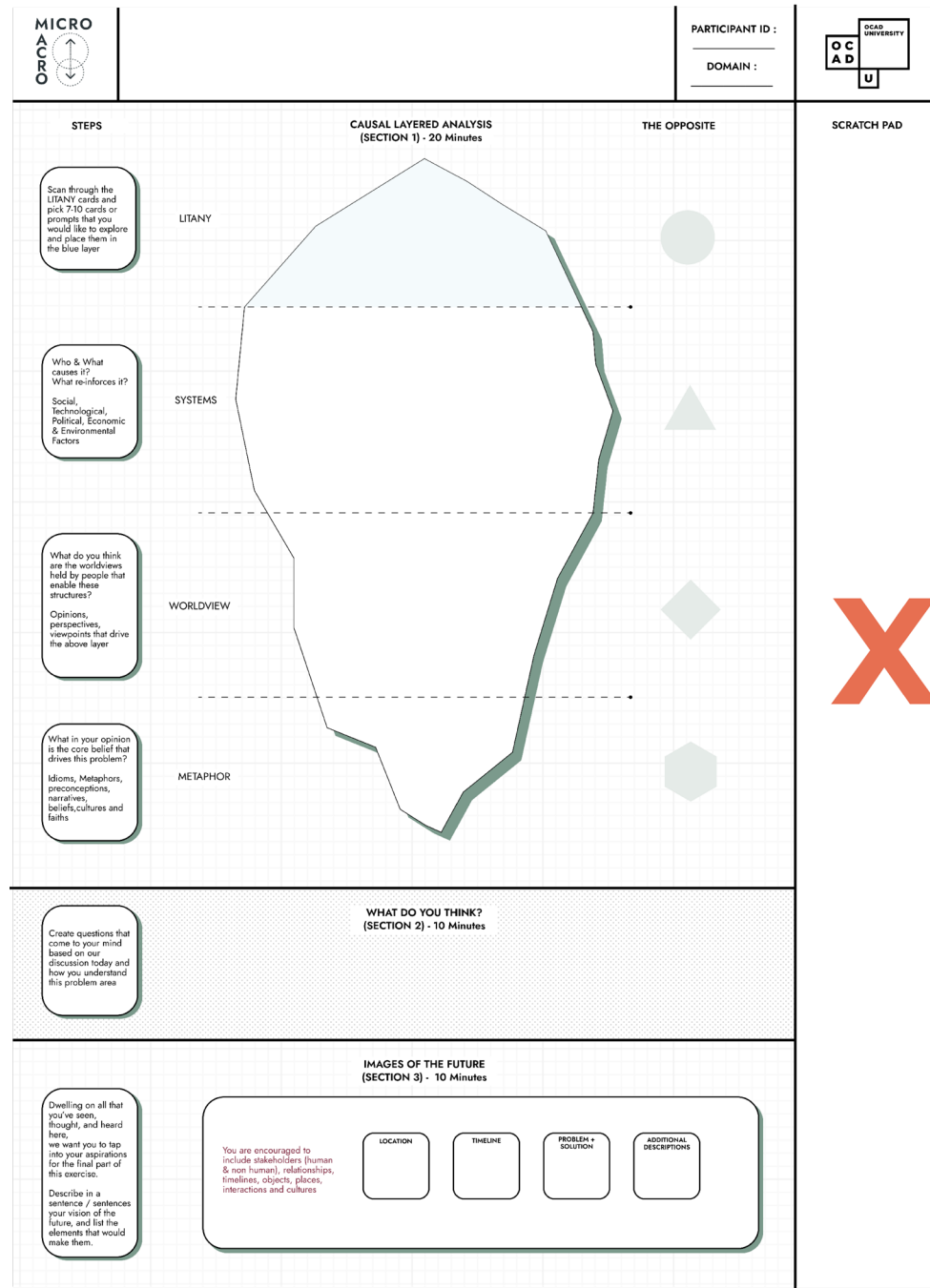
Figure 17: Worksheet used in the one-on-one session

18

thinkers, makers, doers & changemakers

X

15

30-60 minute sessions

STEP: 7

How did we facilitate workshops?

Running the sessions

We conducted our sessions over a period of 4 months from November 2022 to February 2023, meeting with 15 participants who graciously offered us their time and knowledge.

Each session was approximately 60-75 minutes long and was conducted via Microsoft Teams. After the introductions, we headed to MIRO where a whiteboard was set up with the worksheet where participants would be taken through a guided session exploring each section with the facilitator.

The worksheet had four sections and was crafted in a way so as to derive three outcomes and one additional section to exercise imagination

Section 1
*what is happening right now +
how do we understand it?*

This section of our session was to explore each participant's opinions and perceptions of the present. In order to provide a starting point for our participants, we had already pre-selected 25 signals of change. These signals were collected from our environment scan to understand the interconnected nature of the problems we face and served as the Litany layer for the workshop. In order to counter our biases, we ensured that these signals were collected from a wide range of sources using private browsing to block algorithmic bias. We also provided space for participants to come up with any additional ones that they found intriguing. We looked for signals that would paint a better picture of the system we are trying to understand. This was

done in order to give a provoking pool of signals that would help dig deeper when using the CLA. Participants had the choice to look at single signals in litanies or look at the litany layer as a whole when discussing the layers below it.

From the pre-selected 25 signals, each participant was given the time to have a quick glance and pick out 5 -7 events that they were interested in as litanies. The value of exploring different events was to explore its network of relationships and the power dynamics across different domains.

Once they populated the Litany layer in the worksheet, we built the "iceberg" with them layer by layer:

- **Layer 2:** Systems and structures (defining who and what causes the events? What power structures and influences reinforce them?),
- **Layer 3:** Worldviews and Paradigms (exploring the worldviews held by people that enable these systems and structures), and arriving at
- **Layer 4:** Myth and Metaphor (finding the core belief that drives the layers above that could be expressed via idioms, metaphors, preconceptions, narratives, beliefs, cultures and faiths).

Each participant was encouraged to engage in a dialogue with us and also make use of the sticky note tool on MIRO to document their thoughts and draw out their thinking.
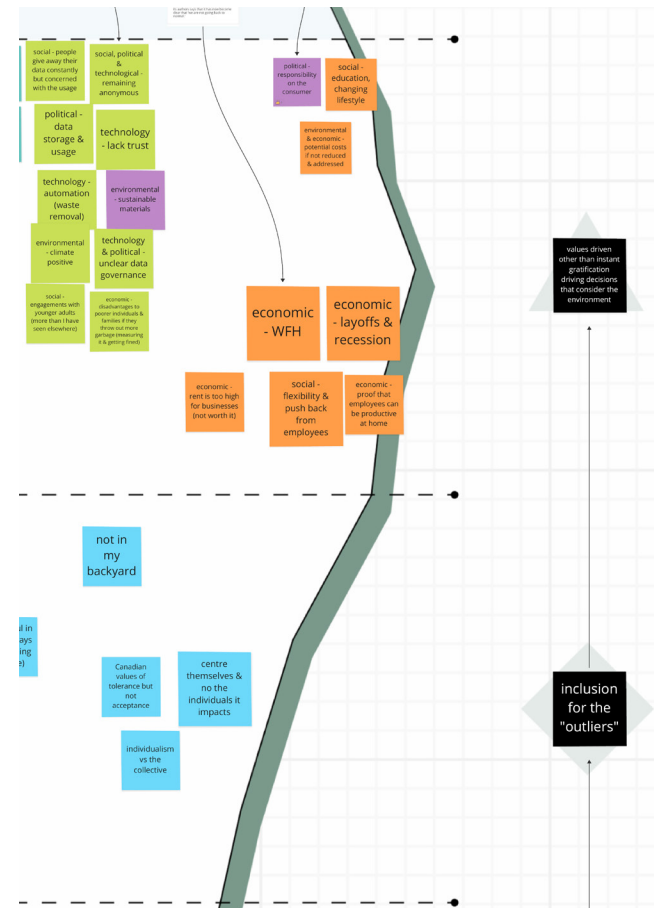
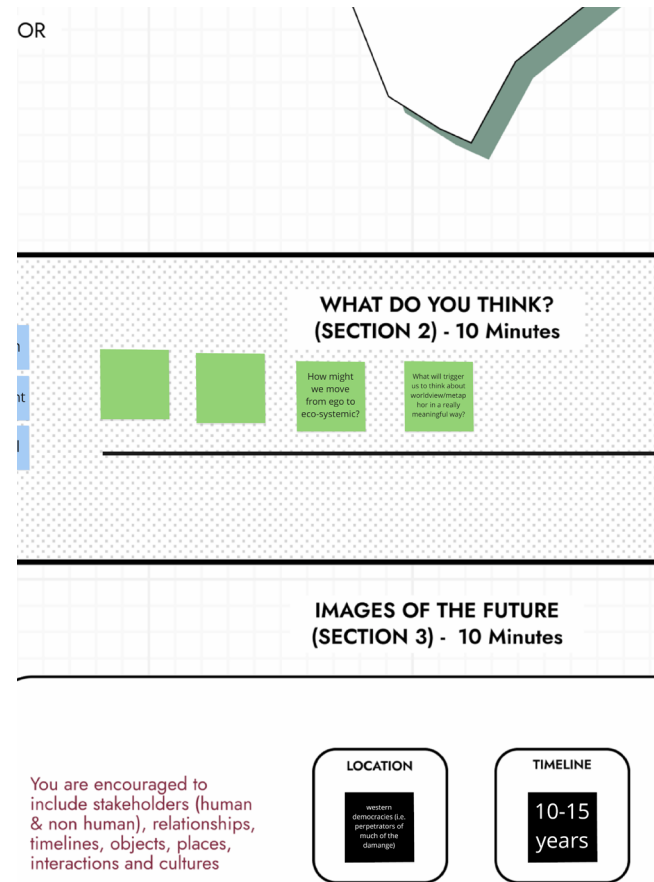*Figure 18: A completed CLA worksheet from the workshop*

Figure 19: A snapshot of a worksheet from the workshop

STEP: 7

How did we facilitate workshops?

Section 2
*where do we want to go +
how do we understand it?*

After finishing the CLA in section 1, we invited participants to generate an aspirational CLA, and was approached by going from the bottom up. We encouraged participants to craft a myth that would be the antithesis of the myth in the section 1 CLA, and build out an alternative CLA stemming from their desired myth. This section helped us see what each participant wishes for their aspirational world to be.

Section 3
*how do we get there +
what questions need to be answered?*

This section was created to give our participants space to think about the ways to reach their envisioned future. According to Wahl (2016) "Questions, more than answers are the pathway to collective wisdom"(p.23). Therefore, in this section of the workshop, we encouraged our participants to ask questions that would provide better pathways to build their desired future.

Section 4
how are we visualizing it?

This section was purely for visual envisioning. We asked the participants to list descriptive elements that would be prominent in their desired future.

The systems layer took the most time to complete. Participants found it quite easy to generate metaphors

Time constraints made this process a bit hasty and the overall consensus for the litany included today's headlines becoming the satire of the future.

Everyone was able to generate 2-3 questions that gave different pathways for further discussion

Many participants chose their hometowns to envision hopeful futures

Figure 20: Observations noted from the fifteen sessions

STEP: 8

What did we learn after finishing fifteen workshops?

Observations

Over the course of the workshop sessions, we observed that our participants spent the majority of the allocated time in the Systems layer of the CLA, as they consciously unpacked the influences of the signals from the Litany layer. It was also interesting to note that the Worldviews layer and Systems layer were often interchanged. Many participants found it quite easy to craft or suggest metaphors to explain the core understanding of their CLA.

The format of the session was well-received by both linear thinkers and those who preferred to explore different threads of thought. Our participants were comfortable going on tangents for each topic and enjoyed the process of digging deep to gain a better understanding of the subject matter.

Benefits

Using the CLA and adapting it as a facilitation tool created meaningful and engaging interactions in the limited time we had with our participants. It allowed for a deeper and wider probe of the litany, acknowledging how complexly connected today's problems are. It balanced out the present perspectives with the future and did not intend to look at absolute perfect solutions to wicked problems, but rather posed questions of how we can better understand them. The method was flexible enough to use either with litanies or a singular question as a starting point for the participants to contribute to the discussion

Limitations

Within the sessions, we noticed that visualizing a desired future took time, and due to the time limits, participants were forced to be hasty. Some participants found it difficult to see the difference between systems and worldviews, which was remedied by asking the participants probing questions instead of reading a description of the layer. Although a guiding primer was sent prior to the workshops, many participants were not able to review it before the session and wanted to explore certain issues within the Litany layer in detail before exploring the other layers. This method was more effective in a one-on-one session rather than a group session where the loudest voice may take precedence over others.
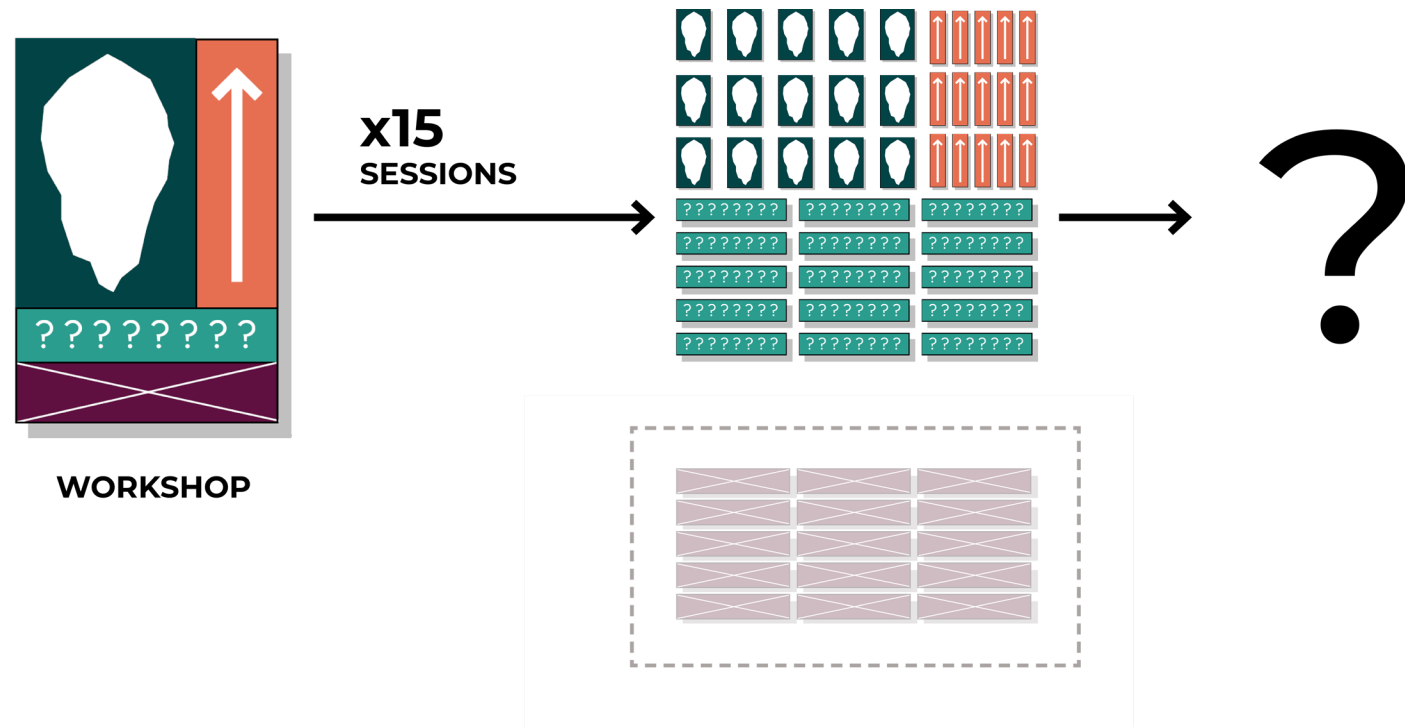
x15
SESSIONS

WORKSHOP

Figure 21: Coding and analysis process

STEP: 9

What did we learn after finishing fifteen workshops?

Setting up the structure

As our primary research was purely qualitative in nature, our data was received in the form of varying opinions, views, and perspectives across the fifteen workshops. In addition to the explicit data, tacit patterns of information were uncovered in the conversations with our participants, which required sensemaking.

In order to meaningfully analyse the data we had collected, we derived a process to ensure that we were able to identify and describe patterns and themes holistically. The coding and analysis process required us to go across the fifteen CLAs multiple times to look at each layer to clean up any redundancies and organise our data before we dove into the analysis.

After the source data was organised, we started coding the data in the worksheet by following the original classifications:

Sections 1 & 2: Responses that looked at the current state and desired state

Section 3: Questions and Inquiries inspired by the dialogue in sections 1 and 2

Section 4: Pictures of the future
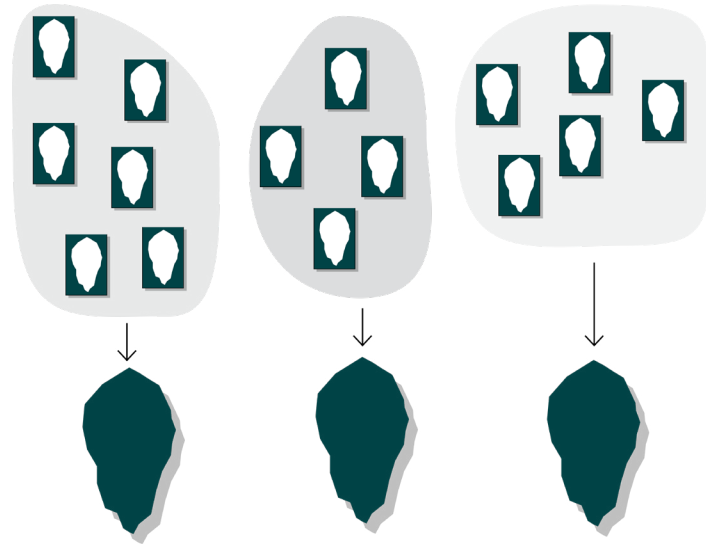
Figure 22: Clustering of CLA
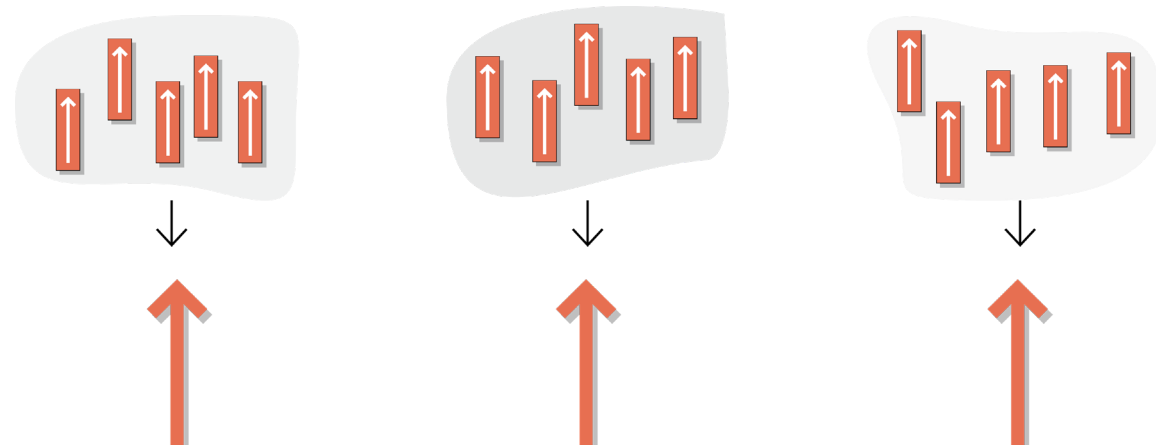
Figure 23: Clustering of Reverse CLA

Data coding approach for Sections 1 & 2

We started with sections 1 and 2 of the worksheet which explored the current system and the envisioned future in detail as our participants explored the layers of the CLA in the workshop. Here we set the 15 CLA responses and sorted them into three clusters by looking at myths and worldviews that were related to each other.
Each cluster had five icebergs grouped according to similar worldviews which started to reveal core beliefs and patterns of thinking held by the various actors in the current system and the envisioned future. Using this process, we identified three emerging themes in H1 and H3 each. We further explore these themes in Step 12.

STEP: 10

How did we translate the qualitative data we collected into information?
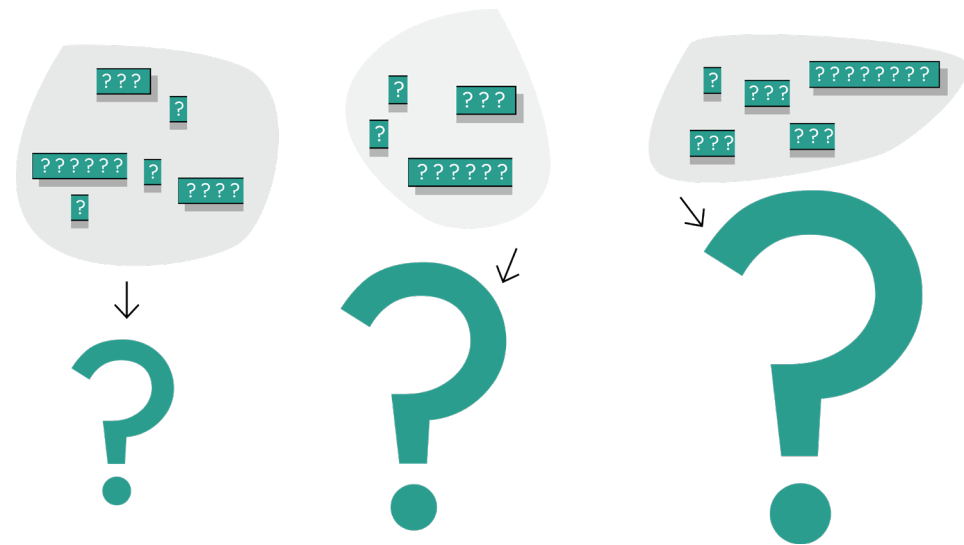How did we engage with similarities?

Figure 24: Clustering of questions

STEP: 11

How did we translate the data into information?
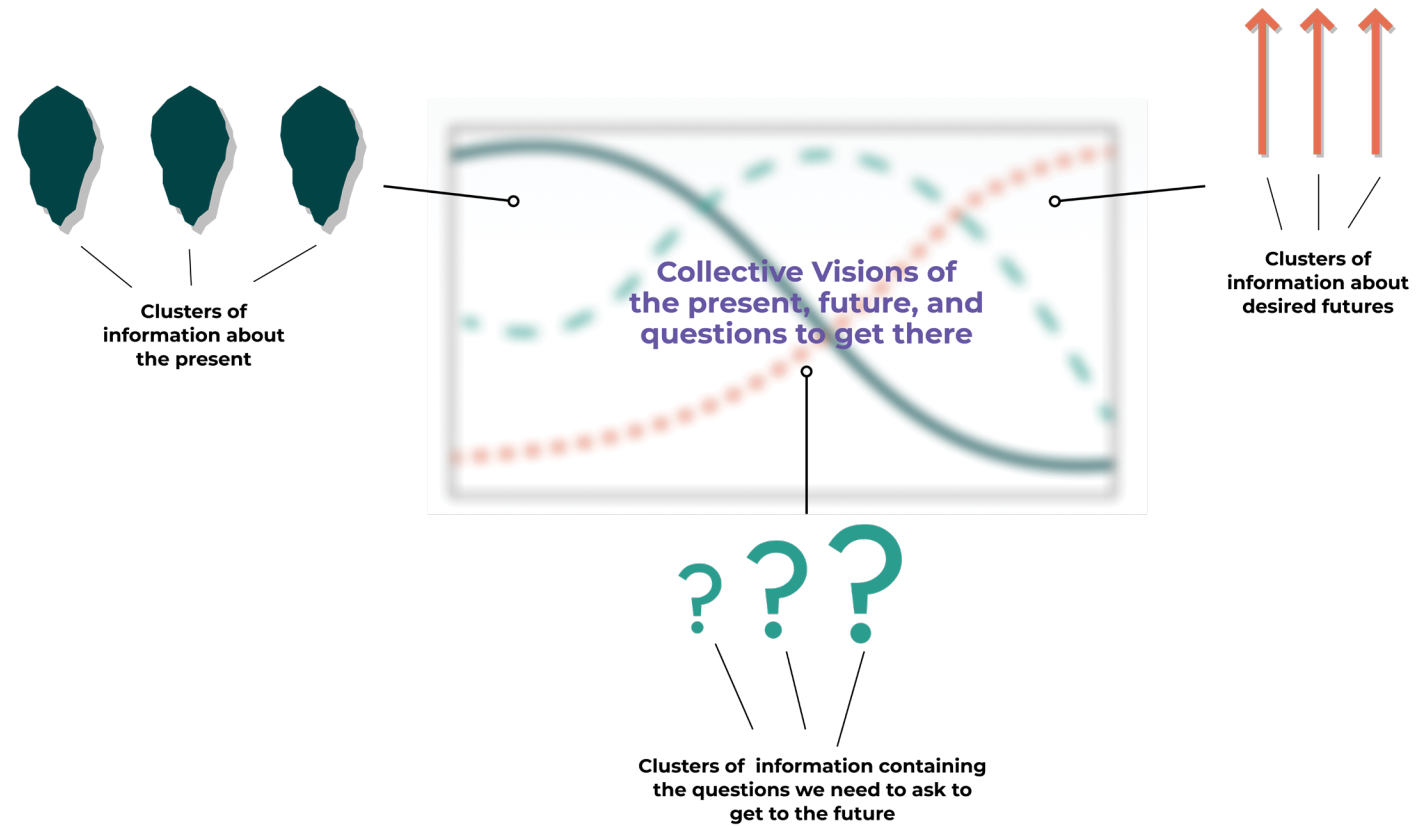What were the different questions people asked?
How did we interpret them?

Data coding approach for Section 3

Next, we moved on to section 3 of the worksheet where we collected broad questions from our participants. This section invited our participants to craft areas of inquiry that they think would lead to their desired futures, benefit the study, and our approach as researchers as we deepened the analysis.

We collected around thirty questions across fifteen workshop sessions.

Before we started to look at the emerging themes of inquiry, we sorted the thirty questions into three spheres of influence:

Individual: Here we see questions that can facilitate changes quickly and are looking at the problems with individual responsibility.
Collective: questions that explore problems at a community level.
Systemic: This cluster goes beyond the individualistic and community perspectives to ask questions about the various large-scale processes that can be embedded to bring change forward.

Once we defined these spheres of influence and sorted the questions within them accordingly, we were able to identify recurring themes within them. These themes helped us reaffirm our secondary research and provided guidance on the direction of this study and what would be a plausible area of recommendation. We define and explore these themes in Step 13.

Initial Insights

We had people from various educational backgrounds and people of varying age groups, working in public, private, and non-profit organizations participate in this study. Despite having the session with a diverse set of people with diverse litany outlines and different perspectives, it was surprising that the themes that emerged were quite related; they could be extrapolated to broader problem areas that are the root systemic issues of the problems that we face today. We observed recurring patterns throughout the sessions and our participants gave us a nuanced view of the issues within the system from their contextual perspective.

In the next step, we look at our findings of the emerging themes using the Three Horizons Framework.

Clusters of
information about
the present

**Collective Visions of
the present, future, and
questions to get there**

Clusters of
information about
desired futures

Clusters of information containing
the questions we need to ask to
get to the future

Figure 25: Transition to Three Horizons

STEP: 12

How did we build a collective consensus of the information we gained from our participants?

How did we translate that information into knowledge?

Why and how were we going back to the 3 Horizons framework?

Data coding approach for Section 3

The primary building blocks for the workshop were drawn from the structure of the 3 Horizons. Using the 3 building blocks, our participants produced data through the workshop in three streams: Perception of the present, Vision for the future, and Questions to help us get there. Within each stream, we grouped their responses based on similarities to give us clusters of data across different points in time. We then inserted these clusters into the three horizons framework to report our participants' clustered data across different points in time. This helped us combine clusters of information into collective visions.

We did this by placing the individual perceptions of the current state (H1), aspirations of the future state (H3), and questions to get there (H2) onto their respective horizons and further defining them.

Figure 26: Horizon 1

Horizon 1: Collective perception of the present

This horizon comprises three clusters that define our participants' collective perception of the present. Throughout the interviews, the worldview of the present pointed towards the realization that society is driven by the ultimate belief that an individual's needs are greater than of the collective.

Many of our participants expressed that the value of things is dictated by what power they bring and what profit they produce. There is also a dominant pessimistic belief that problems are not worth solving if they don't affect someone personally. We believe our participants had this position as they could have been influenced by dominant Western perspectives of capitalism and self-preservation.

STEP: 13

How did our participants collectively see, envision, and understand the present

LITANY

Climate change
Healthcare crisis
Toronto: the smart city?

SYSTEMS

Socio-political factors
driven by self-benefit

WORLDVIEWS

Personal autonomy and
growth at the expense of
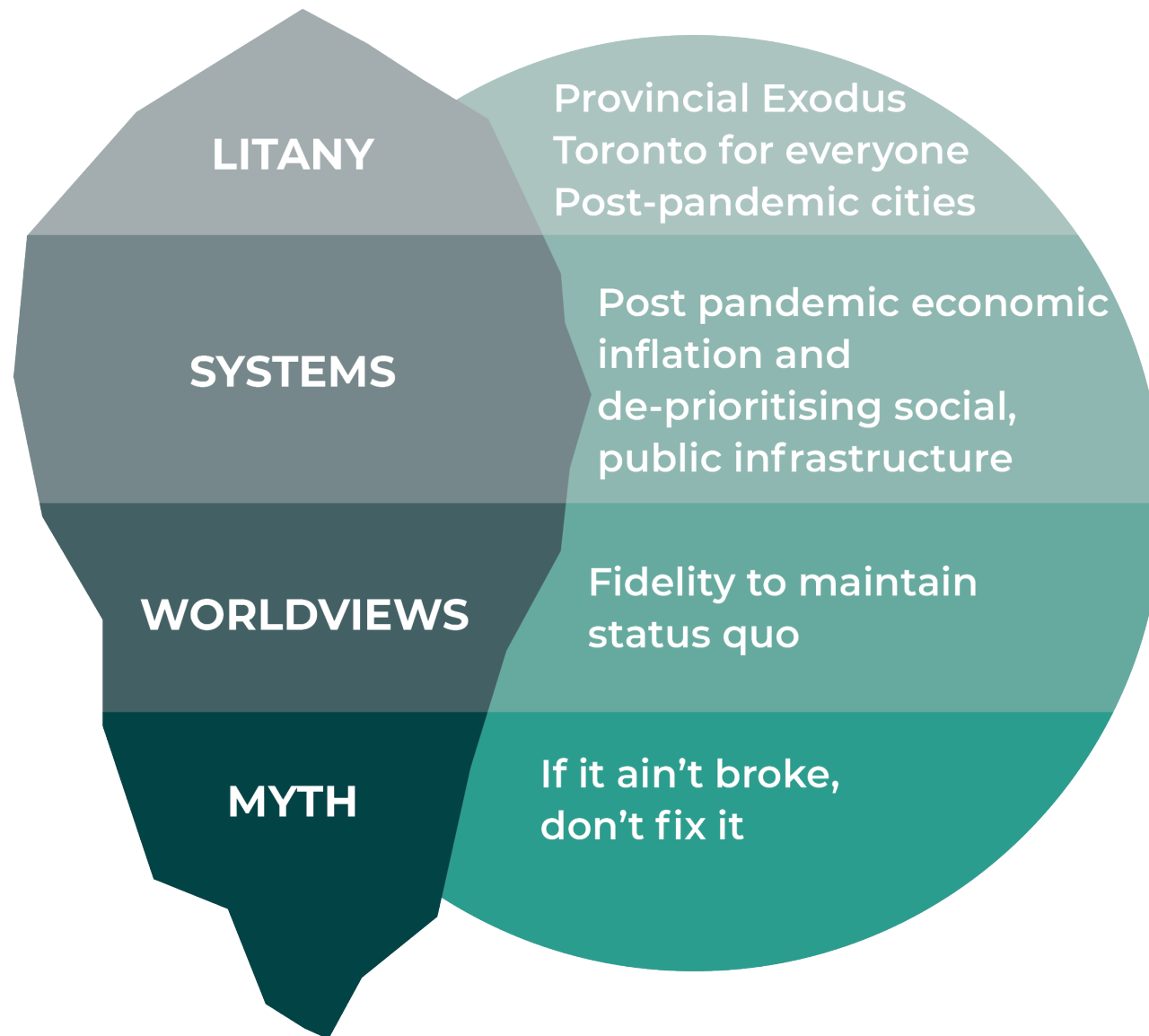others is normal

MYTH

Humans are above
everything else
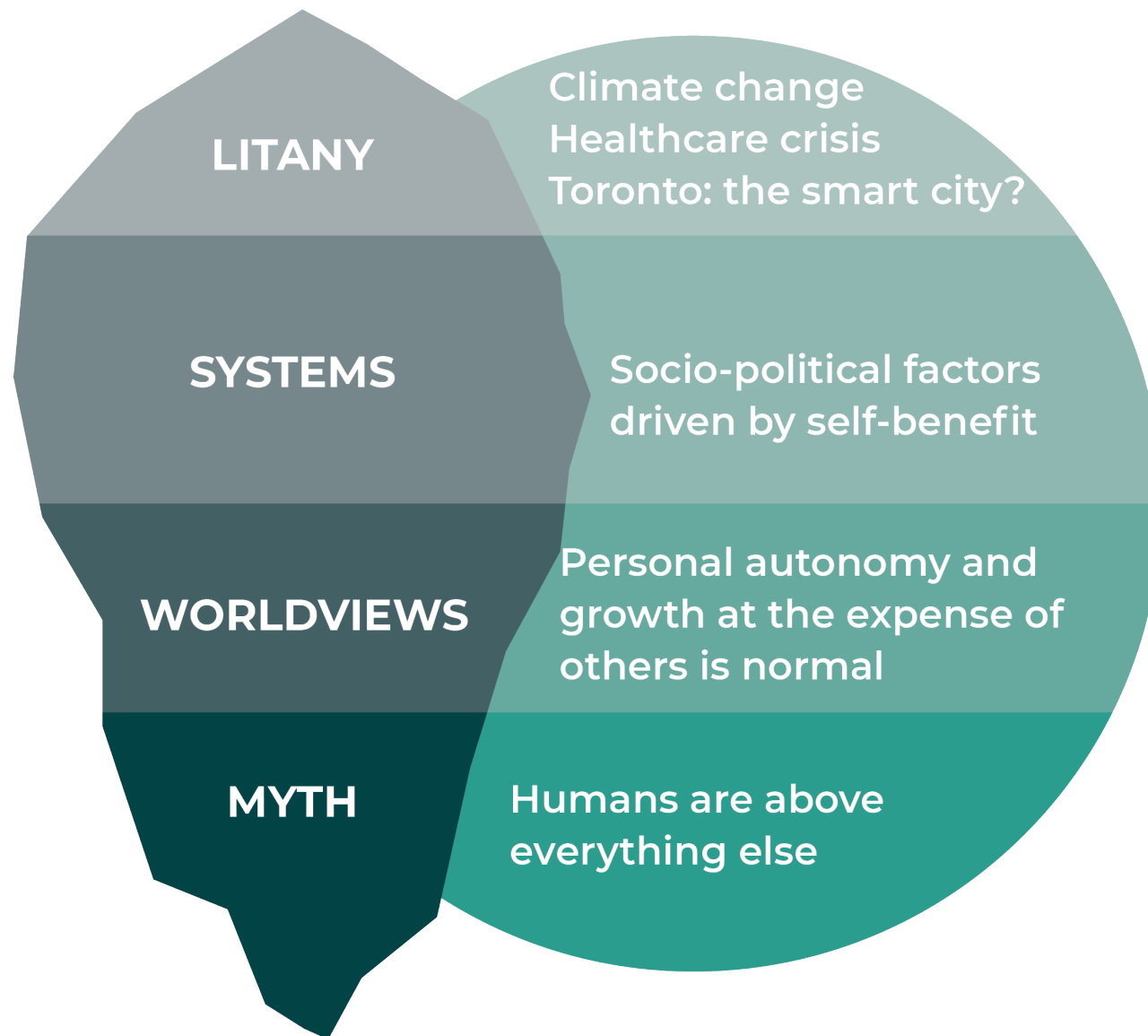
Figure 27: H1 Cluster 1 - All for one

STEP: 13

How did our participants collectively see, envision, and understand the present and future

H1 Cluster 1: All for one

Powered by control, individualistic ideals and a lack of empathy for others, this cluster of worldviews is reasoned by reductionist thought processes that tend to oversimplify the complex nature of living, as reflected by our participants. Separation of self from the other, individual agency, ultimate autonomy, ownership, and self-accomplishment at the cost of the greater good pave a dangerous precedent for a world without empathy. The act of not believing in something unless it is familiar to or experienced by oneself challenges the interconnected nature of existing.

In this cluster, we see that the emerging theme is that 'humans are above' any other entity and/or being. This is evident from the various deep myths that our participants arrived at emphasizing that the root of the current problems and pitfalls in the world lie in the deep thinking that we as humans believe that we are better than anyone else, and hence need to be prioritized more than the planet.

Key Worldviews:
- Western Philosophy and colonial mindsets
- Personal autonomy and economic growth
- Individual needs
- Culture of surveillance and professionalism/entitlement
- Neoliberalism
- The American Dream of sole ownership
- Reductionist views based largely on rationality and empirical evidence
- Technocentrism - Technology is the solution to everything
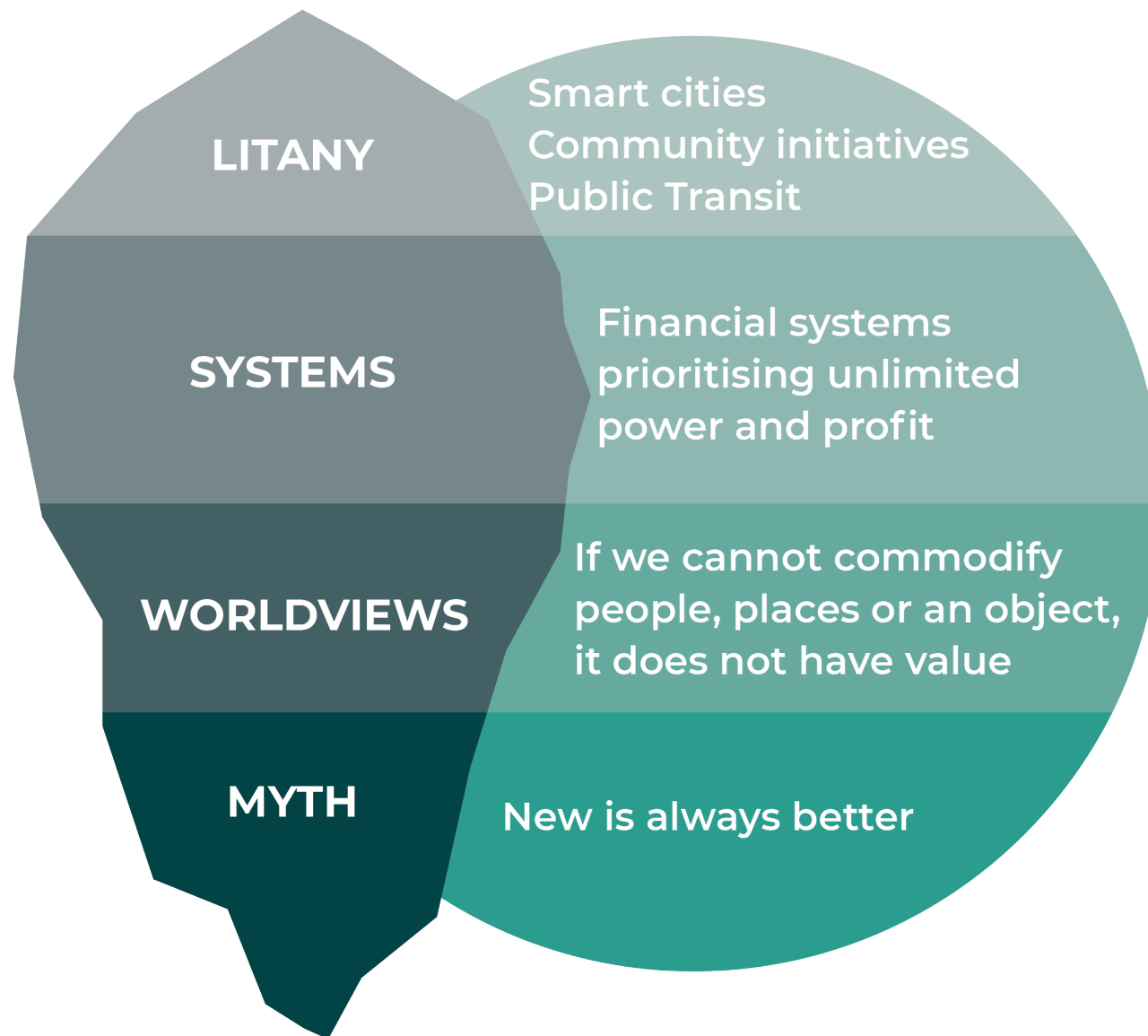
Figure 28: H1 Cluster 2 - Profiting from Power

LITANY

Smart cities
Community initiatives
Public Transit

SYSTEMS

Financial systems
prioritising unlimited
power and profit

WORLDVIEWS

If we cannot commodify
people, places or an object,
it does not have value

MYTH

New is always better

STEP: 13

How did our participants collectively see, envision, and understand the present and future

H1 Cluster 2: Profiting from Power

Powered by Western concepts of productivity, value and rapid development, this cluster of worldviews follows the reasoning that the end justifies the means. It imposes tangible value over intangible things. Our participants believed that this has enabled a culture of novelty and unchecked development is the solution to problems where the world constantly jumps to the next shiny solution. This has been supported by virtue signalling, imposing a monolithic sense of righteousness and performative actions.

Here our participants also reflected that they see that profits and capital gains trump the needs of the people, and certainly the capacity of the planet. Unlimited gains and the culture of human value being tied to productivity dictate the dominant worldviews in this cluster. The monetary value of a resource is prioritized and considered as a defining characteristic of the resource, rather than its benefit to people. Unlimited pursuit of profit seems to have blinded capitalistic systems from thinking about the long-term implications of their actions.

Key Worldviews:
- Death of experts and knowledge
- Neo-mania - the need to introduce new things rather than maintaining existing resources
- Sustainability is expensive
- Doom-erism
- A desire for Power and Need to stay in Power
- Value is the only form of profit
- Productivity dictates value
- Fear of the unknown
- We see the problem but we won't acknowledge it

LITANY

Provincial Exodus
Toronto for everyone
Post-pandemic cities

SYSTEMS

Post pandemic economic
inflation and
de-prioritising social,
public infrastructure

WORLDVIEWS

Fidelity to maintain
status quo

MYTH

If it ain't broke,
don't fix it

Figure 29: H1 Cluster 3 - Out of mind, out of sight
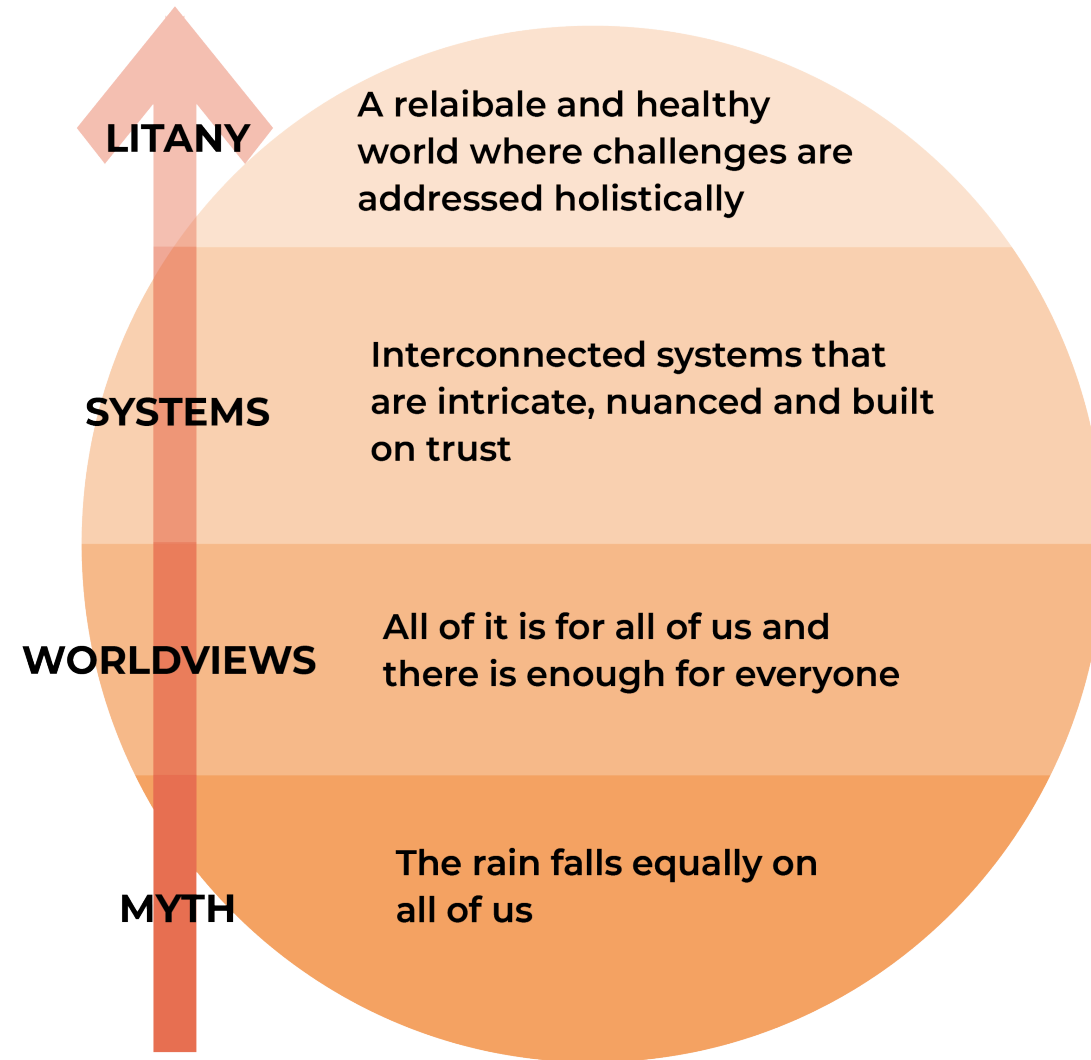
STEP: 13

How did our participants collectively see, envision, and understand the present and future

H1 Cluster 3: Out of Sight, Out of Mind

Propelled by short term thinking, instant gratification, and an all-or-nothing attitude, this cluster of worldviews follows the reasoning that as long as one is not affected by it, it doesn't matter. It is nurtured by powerlessness, mediocrity, and being a bystander. This has enabled a culture of letting things pass, lacking subjective empathy, and promoting nihilism.

This cluster brings to light the various thinking patterns and mental models, as mentioned by our participants, that people subscribe to which in turn influence the way communities, societies, and institutions think at large. The heart of the thinking lies in the sentiment 'not my problem', which in turn leads to inaction, apathy, and a general sense of self-interest over the problems a certain individual is not afflicted by themselves. These limiting beliefs pose a threat to collaborative structures and the ability to trust each other.

Key Worldviews:
- Canadian Values of Tolerance
- Varying perspectives of morality
- Self-interest - NIMBYism
- Mediocrity
- Limiting Beliefs
- Things take time, and we don't have enough time
- Trust in corporations as change-makers
- Black and White thinking
- Does it have to work for everyone?

Figure 30: Horizon 3

Horizon 1: Collective perception of the future

Horizon 3 encompasses three visions of desired futures crafted by our participants. Here the dominant worlds explored by them envision a world with the ideals of holistic, connected, and long-term development where every stakeholder matters.

This horizon builds a world on the strong, foundational belief amongst people that everything is interconnected and boasts the possibilities of transparency, reformed power hierarchies, bio-regional thinking, iteration, and generative development. These are key characteristics of the futures that the participants collectively imagine.

STEP: 13

How did our participants collectively see, envision, and understand the present and future

LITANY
A relaibale and healthy world where challenges are addressed holistically

SYSTEMS
Interconnected systems that are intricate, nuanced and built on trust

WORLDVIEWS
All of it is for all of us and there is enough for everyone

MYTH
The rain falls equally on all of us

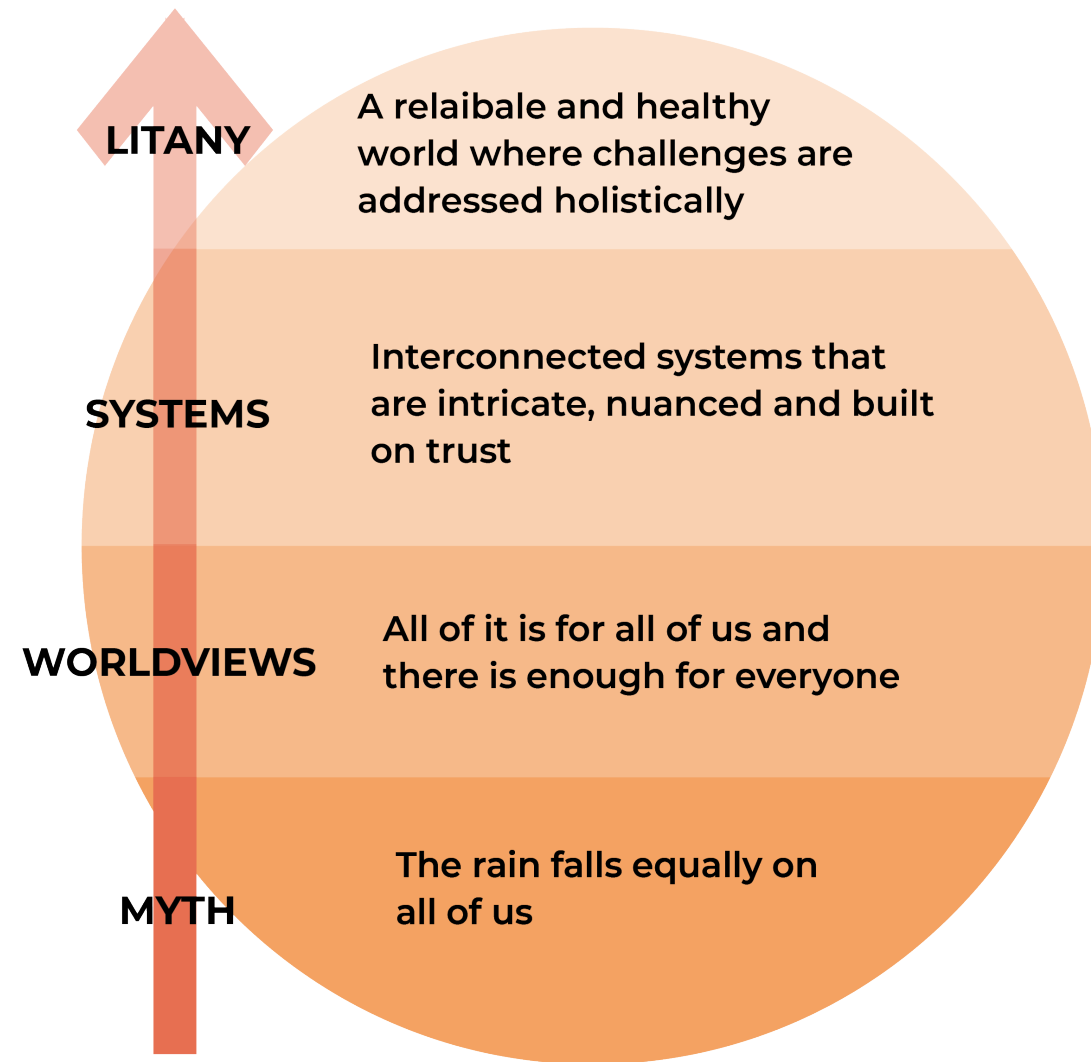*Figure 31: H3 Cluster 1 - Parts of a whole*

STEP: 13

How did our participants collectively see, envision, and understand the present and future

H3 Cluster 1 - Parts of a whole

Communal optimism, care and redefined connections between self and other is at the forefront of this envisioned future. Being a part of a whole is acknowledged and selfless ideals make up everyday existence. As we build up in this envisioned cluster, the theme of communal optimism and exploring traditionally non-western ideologies become the primary worldviews that help set up dominant systems.

Our participants mentioned that the ideas of gratitude, sharing, connection to body, and nature which seem novel to neo-liberalistic ideologies come to the forefront and facilitate the emergence of structures that look to support ALL its actors. They would be derived from the needs of the place they exist in rather than following archaic models of 'This is how it's supposed to be'.

Key Worldviews:
- Commons and Indigenous worldviews of gratitude and sharing
- Communal Optimism
- Connection to body, identity, and non-western histories and non-colonial practices
- Adapting and being resilient to the conditions around us

LITANY
A relaibale and healthy world where challenges are addressed holistically

SYSTEMS
Interconnected systems that are intricate, nuanced and built on trust

WORLDVIEWS
All of it is for all of us and there is enough for everyone

MYTH
The rain falls equally on all of us

Figure 32: H3 Cluster 2 - Together

H3 Cluster 2 - Together

Walls begin to break as the world begins to embrace the relationship between things that can and cannot be controlled. In this cluster of an envisioned future, we see themes of supporting the greater good come out on top. Our participants emphasize that the worldviews and systems here are built on trust, centring community, prioritizing people over profits, and accepting the notion that the things that are good for the many are good for the individual too. Humans and the natural world are not at war with each other, rather they exist in an equilibrium state. As a result of this, we see that trusting each other and prioritizing community and civic duty allow for social change to be facilitated via collaboration and holistic systemic structures.

Key Worldviews:
- Humans and nature are equally important
- People are more valuable than profits
- Globalist worldview as opposed to an individualistic worldview
- Social change can be led by anyone and happen anywhere as long as there is trust.
- Acknowledging that civic duties are as important as capital and political duties

STEP: 13

How did our participants collectively see, envision, and understand the present and future

H3 Cluster 3 - Seeds of Difference

Many worldviews that are strange in today's world form the core foundation of this envisioned state where they prove to be the seeds of change that can provide a meaningful life to ALL. Powered by the priorities that aim to eliminate poverty, and health disparities, through a systemic lens. As part of this envisioned future, our participants believe that the rights of non-human entities also gain importance. Reimagination of conventional ways of thinking and reasoning has pushed strides in commoning and shifting away from capitalist structures as the core economic system. Common people have highlighted worldviews that support complexity and deep human-nature relationships, such as systems thinking, Indigenous knowledge, and relational thinking. Lo-Fi alternatives have taken the front seat over heavy technological solutions.

Here our participants see 'alternate' ideas of power-sharing, intentional inclusivity and acceptance of the complex nature of the interconnected world around us. Embodying complexity can facilitate complex and simple thinking and allow for both approaches to co-exist rather than be at odds with each other. These worldviews then set up systems that consider the human impact on the climate and natural environment around us, the political and social structures that can bring impactful change and move away from incentives that only provide instant gratification over delayed gratification.

Key Worldviews:
- Power is shared by many
- Individual Responsibility to the Community
- Inclusion of outliers and anomalies
- Complexity is welcome and sought to be understood
- Simplicity can provide value
- Empathy-centred design

LITANY — A relaibale and healthy world where challenges are addressed holistically

SYSTEMS — Interconnected systems that are intricate, nuanced and built on trust

WORLDVIEWS — All of it is for all of us and there is enough for everyone

MYTH — The rain falls equally on all of us

Figure 33: H3 Cluster 3 - Seeds of Difference

STEP: 13

How did our participants collectively see, envision, and understand the present and future
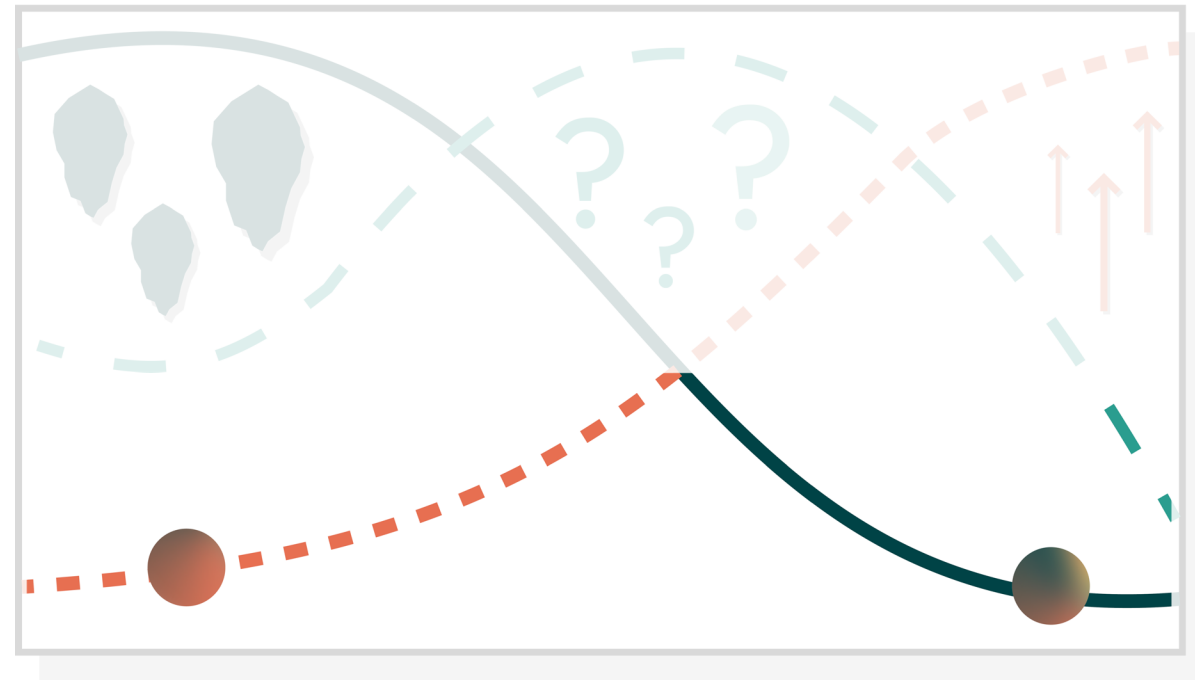
Figure 34: Pockets of Future and Current Realities

STEP:14

What did we already have and what were identified as early indicators of the collective futures we have in Horizon 3?

Here, now and then

The Three Horizons framework also includes two areas apart that enrich the understanding of the system in its current state and future state.
The first area is, 'Pockets of the future in the present' which looks at the evidence of the future that is subtly present in the current system. They are weak indicators of change.

The second area, 'Current realities that would benefit the future' encourages elements present in the current system to be retained across time and be beneficial to the future system.

Pockets of Future Found in the Present

While the envisioned futures in Horizon 3 present far-reaching yet familiar ideas, the seeds that could help grow into those futures already exist in the present. The ideas gaining global traction revolve around the central theme of inclusion, removing existing barriers to inclusion, and the post-pandemic acknowledgement that alternatives do exist and that we can do things differently. Rooting these early ideas in the present at their current momentum would be necessary for helping get us to our envisioned futures in Horizon 3

- Human-centred Design
- Re-thinking the 'normal'
- Globalist view of communities and societies
- Presence of Multiple Civic Systems
- Push towards easing structural barriers

Current realities that would benefit the future

The perspectives of our present condition in the first horizon acknowledge the problematic nature of our relationship with concepts of productivity, neoliberalism, and individualism. However, it also acknowledges parallel movements all around the world pushing for nature-based solutions, embracing diversity and multiplicity, practicing utopian ideals, and building resilience to climate change. These parallel realities in the present would be key in maintaining the consistent growth required to embark on a smooth journey to our envisioned futures.

- Push for nature-based solutions
- A shift away from exclusively consulting technical experts
- Adaptation and building resilience to climate change

Figure 35: Horizon 2

STEP:15

What were the collective questions that participants asked? How did we translate those into knowledge?

Questions to help us get there.

As we start to draw the bridge between our current realities and envisioned futures, we sought to ask questions that would be the areas of transformation connecting H1 and H3 together. Moving forward from the CLA in our sessions, we asked our participants to craft questions that could drive our discussion forward in a meaningful way. These areas of inquiry were defined from questions that we collected from our participants as they explored the gap between the present and the future they are hopeful for. Rich with thoughts and inspirations from the unpacking of our current realities, our participants flooded us with various questions that we then sorted into 3 clusters. These clusters are based on their spheres of influence:

Individual:
- How might we improve the engagement of individuals in communities?
- How might we nurture trust, transparency and value for individuals in a co-design process?

Collective:
- What can we do to inculcate empathy and foster togetherness within communities?
- How might we create Inclusive spaces for collaboration and dialogue?
- Where could we find a middle ground in community engagement practices?

Systemic:
- How do we meaningfully allow for long-term thinking, foresight and Re-imagination in the codesign process?
- What would collective well-being and connected thinking look like?

The questions uncover the broad challenges of creating inclusive and collaborative processes for better ways to understand and reimagine the places we live in.

They further explore the need for harnessing the energy of including the outliers, identifying power structures that conflict with shared goals, and finding common ground that aligns with the needs of more people. Along with this, the questions identify important drivers to enable this change that includes: transparency, trust, and collaboration to ensure everyone is heard, acknowledged, and seen in the decision-making process.

Overall, the broader question that encapsulates other questions and emerges from this horizon is: how may we create inclusive and collaborative processes for long-term, regenerative, urban development that prioritize the needs and goals of diverse communities, foster trust and transparency, and empower grassroots participation while navigating risk aversion and protecting people's interests?

One of our intents with the Three Horizons was to define and place the data across different points in time. More importantly, we wanted to use the refined questions in H2 to pave the way for the next steps in this research.

The exploration of the questions leads us to our recommendations.

3.SPACESHIP EARTH

What are we gonna' do about it?
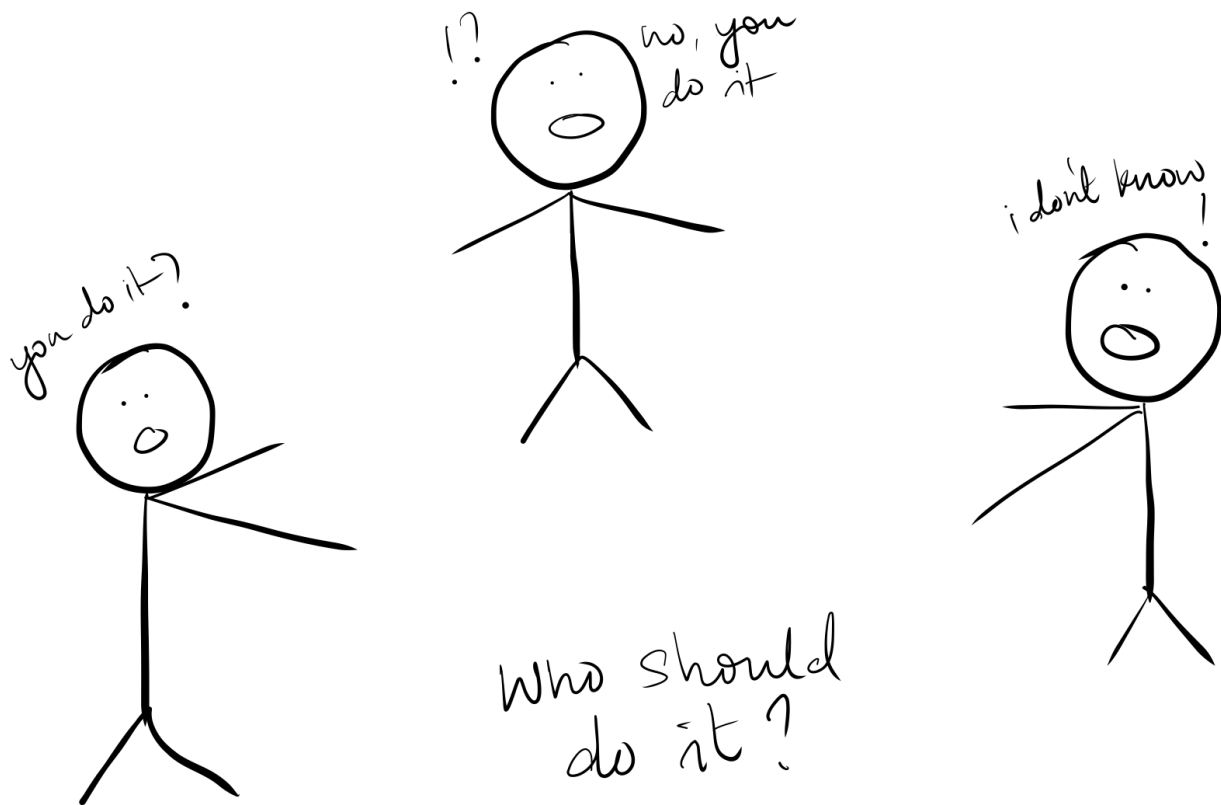
RECOMMENDATIONS

We need to think of planet earth as a spaceship. It is the only place that humans live. It is a spaceship that will not be resupplied, so we must work within the resources of the spaceship. crew members of this Spaceship Earth, a vessel we call home. (Fuller, 1969)

As we stand on the path that leads to a new horizon, the conversations made through the length of this project increasingly make it clear that we are all equal stakeholders in deciding the trajctory of our collective futures. A realization that recalls the spaceship earth metaphor presented by Buckminster Fuller 50 odd years ago

The same realization has led us to recognize the immense power and potential of collective intelligence and collective agency, defined by the ability of individuals and communities to come together to solve complex problems. But as we look ahead to the third horizon, the question that occupies our mind is 'What now?'

What now?

Building on our analysis of the primary research, and assimilation of knowledge from our secondary research, we began to observe prominent themes emerging from them that provide preliminary direction for the outcomes of the project.

Regenerative what?

We started our research project by seeking some of the existing gaps in placemaking and how we might address them through concepts of regeneration and foresight. As we made our way through the various interpretations of the concepts of placemaking, regenerative design, and participatory foresight among many others, it became clear to us that there are different perceptions of the same concepts that exist out there, and that we had to define our interpretation of it. Which lead us to our first recommendation of defining and framing the foundational principles behind Regenerative Placemaking.

How are we defining it?

We also came to learn through our environment scan that the problems that surround us are highly interconnected and are outside of the domain of placemaking itself. This highlights a need to look for approaches that are systemic.

We conducted our primary research with the intention to learn how different people in Toronto see, understand, envision and question the world around them. The seeing, understanding and

envisioning part of our methodology helped us contextualize, frame and establish where we are and where we want to go. The questions gave us starting points on how to get there. Some of the questions that emerged included exploring the ways we could improve the engagement of individuals in communities, what actions could be taken to nurture trust, transparency and value for individuals in a co-design process, and how we could encourage place awareness in community engagement practices.

This led us to craft our next recommendation that aims to look at enhancing community engagement practices to address the existing gaps in placemaking by weaving in the concepts of regenerative design, long-term thinking and continued collaboration.

A process from data to insights and recommendations

Horizon 3 — The aspired state

Horizon 1 — The current state

Horizon 2 — Transition state

Recurring themes in Horizon 2

Secondary Research

How do we bridge the gap between what we know is possible and what we are told is possible?

How do we harness the energy of everyone we work with?

Refined questions

How do we balance the wants / needs of the present vs the future ?

Principles of Regenerative Placemaking

Rethinking community engagement

Figure 36: Translating data into insights and recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Principles of Regenerative Placemaking

Bedoya (2019) elaborates that placemaking should be understood as a multifaceted process that includes social, cultural, and ecological dimensions. The extension of placemaking includes place-knowing, place-keeping, place-sharing, and place-feeling. Therefore we started building on these principles through a synthesis of knowledge acquired through the various conversations we've had through our primary research and those that we've come across in our secondary research.

We now went back to the questions from Horizon 2 with the intent of finding concepts and practices that would answer them. We looked for these concepts and practices from our secondary research to see how changemakers engaged with community and place-making, and arrived at a common understanding of what could comprise the foundational principles. It is important to have principles that align with the voices of the people who are working with the current problems that we see in implementing change. We do not intend for the principles to be an exhaustive list, but rather to evolve and adapt to context.
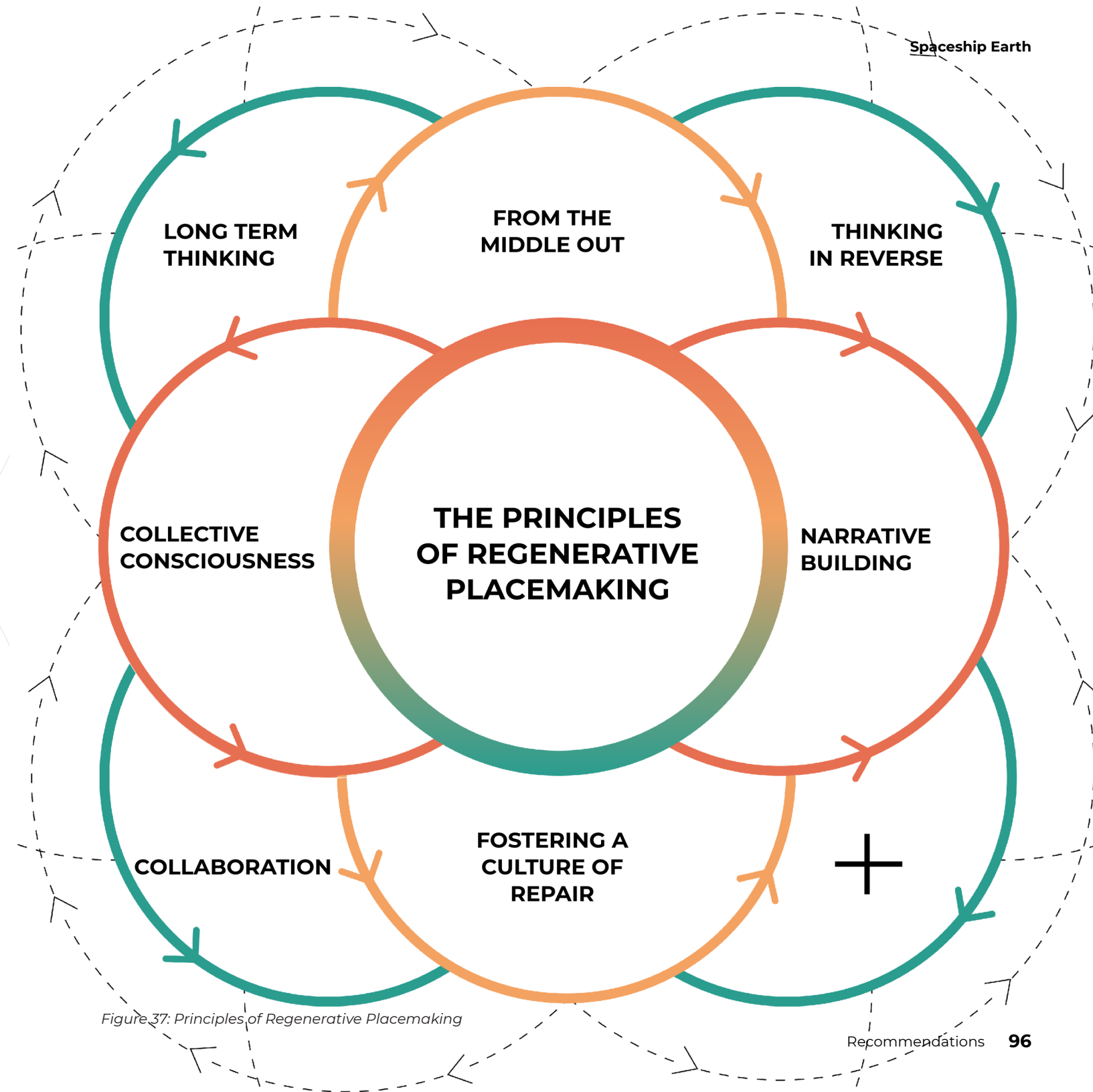
Figure 37: Principles of Regenerative Placemaking

Building a Narrative

Crafting narratives of a place is a suggested starting point of regenerative placemaking in practice (Wahl, 2016). It takes into account the complex elements that create and sustain a place. This involves weaving together both tangible and intangible qualities of a place to create a nuanced and layered understanding of its working, its identity and the people who inhabit it.

Collective consciousness

Reigniting the connection between people and the places they exist in, a collective consciousness is defined as a shared knowledge system inclusive of stakeholders, human and non-human (Regenerative Futures, 2023). Its core idea involves common and transparent access to information to alleviate the fear of the unknown which enhances the ability to make informed choices, take collective action, and drive positive social and environmental outcomes. A collective consciousness will allow communities to build long-term trust, feel valued, nurture exchange, and help leverage change.

From the Middle Out

Recognizing the interconnections and interdependencies between different parts of a system can identify leverage points that exist beyond traditional top-down and bottom-up methods. The core idea is to follow a systems-based approach to find leverage points that don't exist or can be overlooked at the top or the bottom. Approaching problem-solving from the middle out can uncover previously ignored perspectives, inspire action, and create meaningful change in multiple directions.

Culture of Repair / Deconstruction

Fostering a culture of repair proposes prioritizing the maintenance of existing resources rather than rushing to create something new. Here we highlight the importance of creatively using and managing existing resources and bringing forward better methods /ways of working that can utilize current resources and capabilities.

Instead of discarding current resources and creating something completely new from scratch, it encourages us to ask questions such as 'How can we creatively use what already exists? And even when we do intend to create something new, we proactively think about how it will be repaired and maintained in the future.

Collaboration

Seeking multiple perspectives and working together to embed those perspectives paves the way to create better outcomes for the community as no one individual or group has the whole picture (Ellery & Ellery, 2019). Including the many types of people that make up communities by actively involving them in planning can create spaces that are vibrant, and holistic, and represent all those who use them.

This collaborative engagement is highly iterative and makes way for the co-evolution of a place. It recognises that the needs of communities will change over time and is open to adapting to those changes.

Long-term Thinking

Embedding the principles of long-term thinking into the processes of planning and engagement will help anticipate future possibilities, opportunities, and challenges that may affect communities. Anticipatory long-term thinking will also provide the communities with the ability to engage with re-imagination and provide alternative suggestions for community development.

Thinking in Reverse

Working backwards from a goal or a desired outcome is vital in taking a regenerative approach, with the emphasis on it being a continuous and responsive process. Here we encourage collectively establishing a shared vision and tracing actions back from it to identify key tasks and variables to help reach that vision. Working backwards can provide a meaningful view of the process as it starts at the end rather than at the beginning. Thinking in reverse also reinforces long-term thinking and improves the view of challenges and opportunities faced on the way to achieve the vision and turn it into a reality.

The list goes on

As the eighth principle, we take cognisance of a key learning of our journey in this project so far, being the ever changing nature of things around us and having capacity to accommodate such changes. We propose a space for further expansion to the principles. We intend for this principle to be a starting point for people to use, adapt and iterate as the domain of Regenerative Placemaking evolves over time or according to context

We defined these principles keeping in mind that they would serve as a foundation for people and organizations interested in engaging with regenerative placemaking. We intend for the principles to serve as a list of considerations for placemaking projects, community engagement activities or to facilitate meaningful dialogue in civic conversations along with the other ways people think they could apply them.

We believe these principles would encapsulate the spirit of regenerative placemaking within the context of our project, and provide pathways for recommendations. We acknowledge that these principles do not necessarily provide a blueprint for regenerative placemaking but are rather a guide to help changemakers and practitioners move into spaces where they can have collaborative dialogues.

Recommendation 2:
Rethinking community engagement

Along with existing tools and frameworks at our disposal for community consultations and participatory design exercises, we believed it would be valuable to craft an exercise that harnesses the principles of regenerative placemaking and community participation. This exercise would utilize a qualitative, easy-to-execute approach to elevate community perspectives alongside those of "technical experts". The two major components of the proposed exercise are sensing and visioning. Where visioning is a common practice in community design (Rosa et al., 2021), we suggest the addition of sensing before visioning.

The 'Questions to get there' part (Horizon 2) of our primary research posed questions and areas of inquiry that could serve as pathways to desirable futures. At both the individual and collective levels, we noted prominent and repeating questions such as:

- How do we provide equal access to information for people?
- How can we empower the agency of individuals and groups of people to be able to make better decisions for themselves?
- How do we understand the needs of the present and balance it with that of the future?
- How might we harness the energy of everyone we work with?

We noted that they conveyed three major considerations:

- Harnessing power of the collective
- Knowledge and understanding of the environment around them
- Agency to the many to make better future decisions

Which also in part aligned with the definitions we set for regenerative placemaking.

In the search for ways to answer these questions, we stumbled upon the concept of citizen sensing (Coulson, Woods, & Making Sense EU, 2021) which was oriented towards participatory environmental monitoring, and geographical sensing. We discovered an intersection between this concept of citizen sensing relating to environmental monitoring practices and observational urbanism (Jacobs, 1992) relating to personal observations and experiences of urban spaces. We explore this intersection further as community sensing

SENSING
- Observing
- Documenting
- Mapping
- Capturing
- Asessing

VISIONING
- Aspiring
- Dreaming
- Goal Finding
- Ideating
- Planning
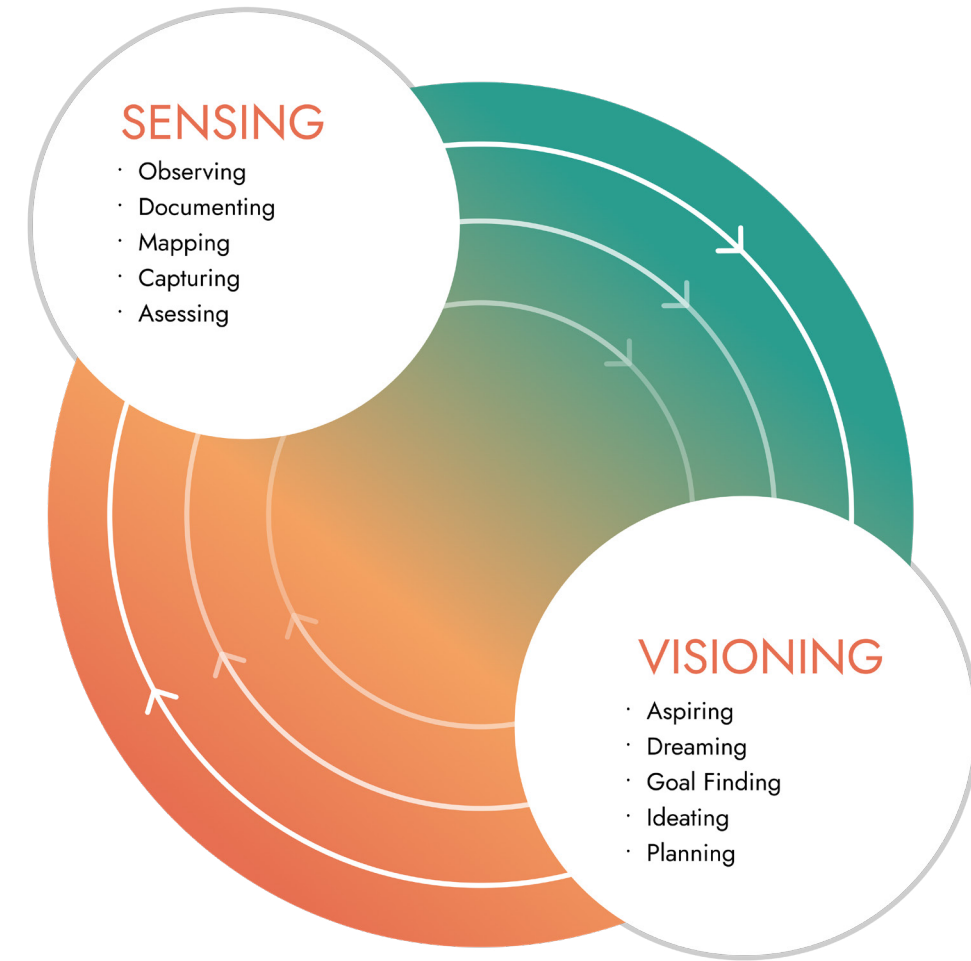
Figure 38: Components of Sensing and Visioning

Sensing

The sensing process involves the collection of information about a community's environment and infrastructure across various dimensions (social, cultural, environmental). It could include observing, mapping, documenting, capturing, and assessing the environment around them.

This approach can help participants get a better sense of their surroundings to understand what exists, how it works together as a system, and identify challenges and opportunities from the perspective of the community. By gathering data from the people who live in the community, we can ensure that the interventions are tailored to the unique needs and perspectives of that community.

Therefore the intent is to create a collaborative learning system that recognizes community members as experts in their own communities. This can lead to a shift in the value of co-production, moving from professionals working with communities to communities working with professionals (Goerner, 2007).

Visioning

The next step would then be to use the knowledge from the sensing exercise for visioning. Visioning is a common practice in community design that involves working with the community to develop a shared vision for their collective future (Rosa et al., 2021).

By engaging in a collaborative process that taps into collective aspirations, shared visions, and imaginations, we get to develop innovative intervention areas to address the challenges identified through community sensing. This process would help connect community needs with policy requirements and promote innovation systems that take the time to understand the diverse interests and intersections of multiple actors involved.

Community Sennsing + Visioning

The proposed process is built by taking best practices in community engagement and visioning (Rosa et al., 2021) by combining them with learnings from Making Sense EU's Citizen Sensing Toolkit (2019) that explored the successes of nine citizen sensing campaigns in the EU. We embedded to them the foundational principles of regenerative placemaking, the questions we started from, and a repository of tools that reflected the essence of the principles which could be used for community sensing and visioning.

Example of a proposed community sensing and visioning exercise.
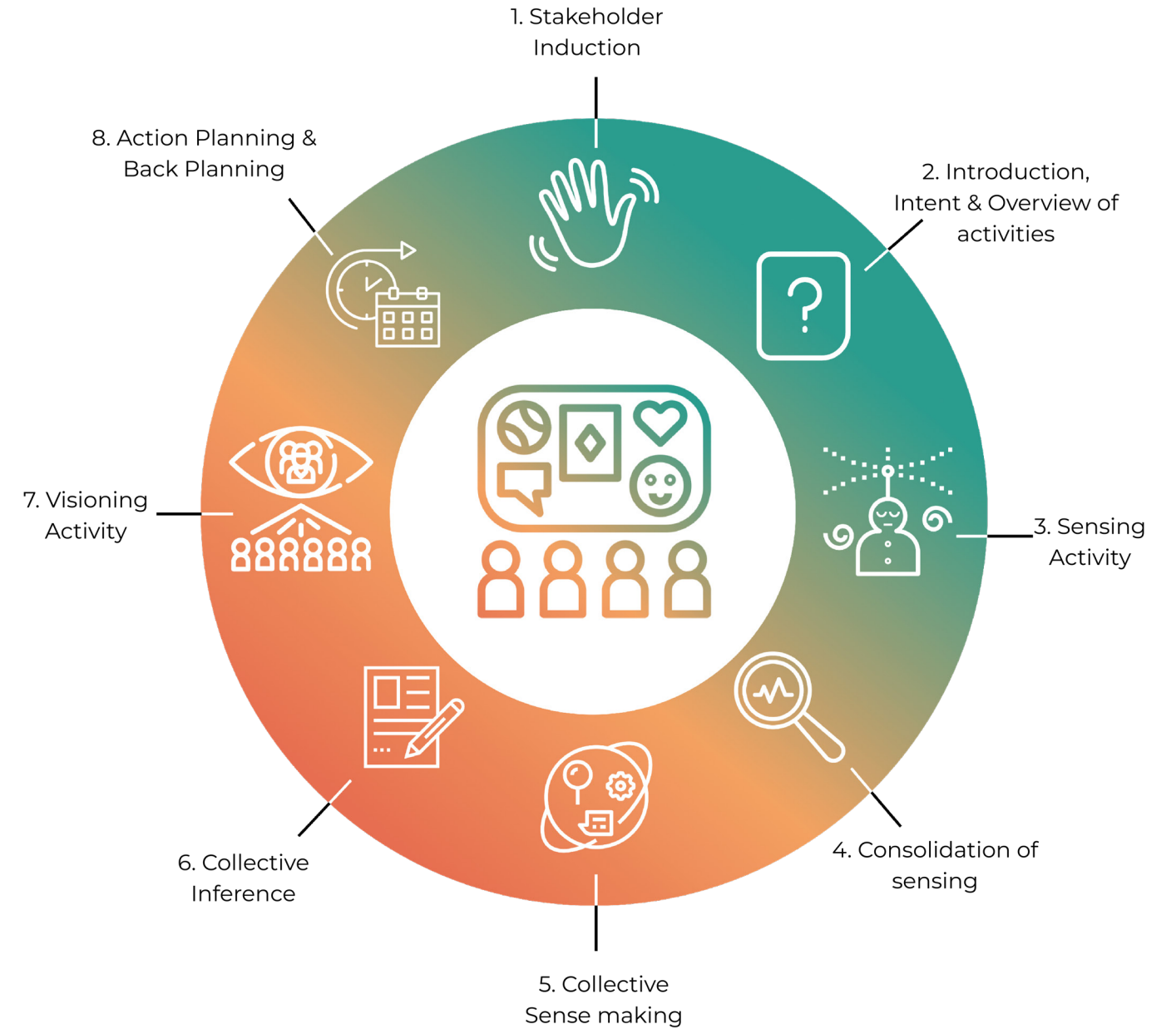
Figure 39: A quick guide to community sensing and visioning session
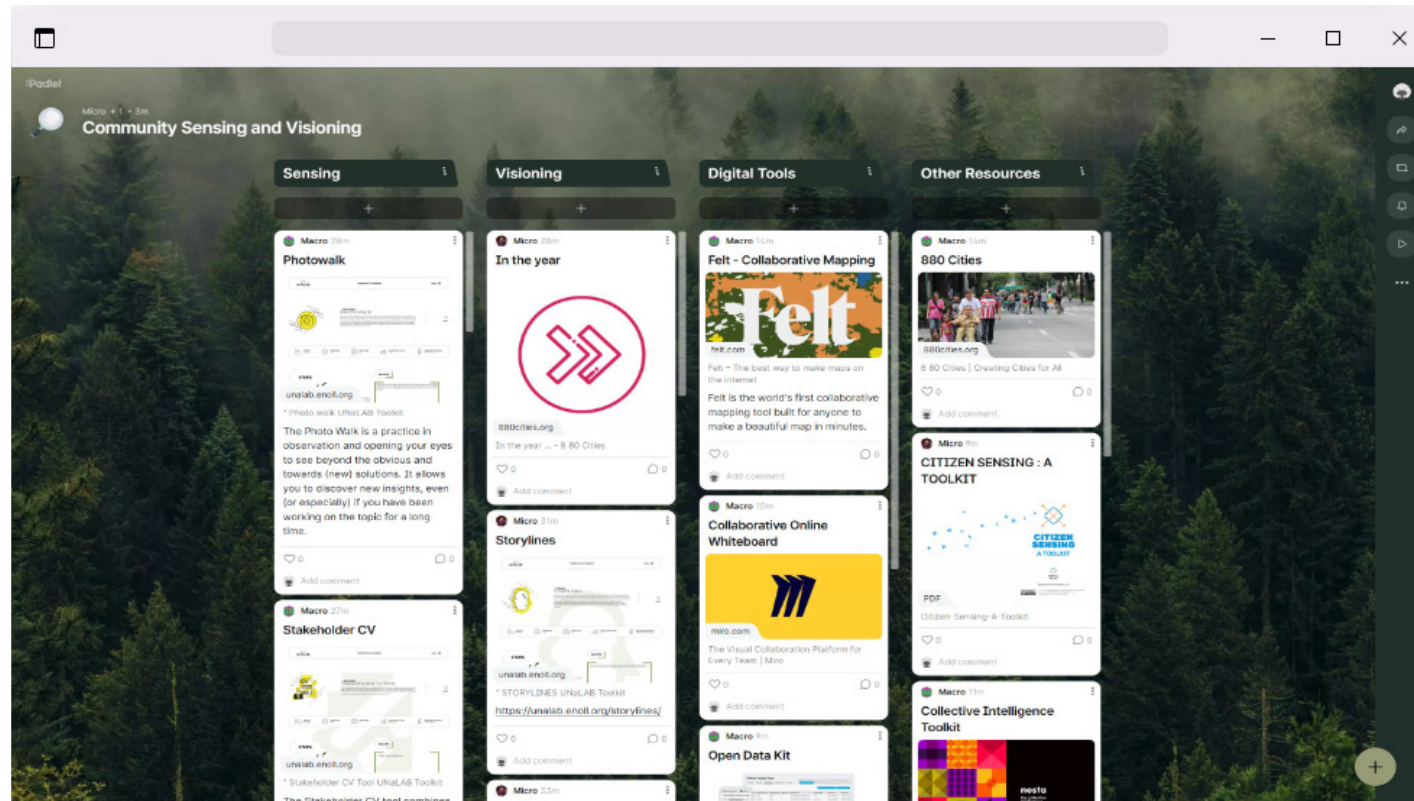
Figure 40: A padlet repository of tool and methods to aid community sensing and visioning

Online Repository

We propose an online repository to keep track of and co-create the ever growing list of tools, methods, and ways to facilitate community sensing and visioning sessions.

We hope for this to serve as a starting point for people interested in enhancing community engagement practices.

Link to resource - MicroMacro Repository
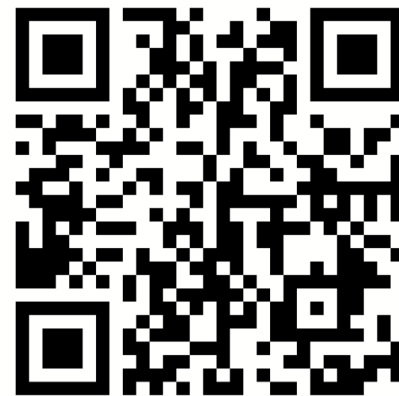
Scan QR Code or Click to access resource

Space for more

The addition of a community sensing component to conventional visioning and citizen consultations could help leverage the potential of a major resource any community has — the people that make it up. This collaborative sensing approach can help identify scope, capacity and distinct perspectives rooted in the needs of the stakeholders that it directly impacts.

As much as the process has been made flexible to adapt anywhere along the scale of heavily involved to a bare-bones approach, we are cognizant of the time, incentive and effort that is required by stakeholders in the process. From a research perspective, a key limitation is that we are not able to, within the scope of the project, pilot and test the proposal with stakeholders.

Overall, the incorporation of community sensing and visioning in placemaking methods offers great potential for building more inclusive and proactive communities. Despite the limitations, we believe that with continued collaboration and engagement, we can create meaningful change that benefits all members of the community - serving the needs of both present and future generations.

All while taking micro steps for macro change.

EVERYTHING IS ALRIGHT

Self Reflection

Reflecting back on our journey through this project, we are grateful to have been exposed to the wealth of experiences and insights provided to us. Combining our own personal experiences, from living in different parts of the world, and finding "place" in Toronto was highly enriching for both of us. Our experience working with each other allowed us to see the value of interdisciplinary collaboration when exploring complex problems.

Toronto's evolution expanded our view of the people, places, problems, and paradigms that the city holds. Perhaps the most gratifying aspect of the project was the people we met and how they perceived the city. Despite its problems, we found that many people cared deeply about the city and were working hard to make positive changes.

As much as we aimed to explore something radical and new at the beginning of the project, a significant reflection from the conversations with people through the course of the project is that it is as vital to expand existing conversations as it is to create something new.

Limitations

When we began scoping out this project, we were well aware of our minimal exposure and experience within the domain. For that reason, we framed the MRP not as an exploration into something new but as an exploration of the existing space to contribute with a different perspective. The emerging nature of the research domain limited our ability to draw from existing literature and discourse. We also acknowledge that our primary research has been informed by a small number of stakeholders both in quantity and diversity, which may have narrowed the direction of this project and its outcomes.

EVERYTHING IS ALRIGHT

Conclusion

Our journey over the course of the research led us down through various paths. As we wind up our journey, we bring with us some final thoughts that we would contribute.

Throughout our secondary and primary research attempts, one thing has remained constant – all of our problems are interconnected. As we try pull the thread of one challenge, it unravelled other challenges that exist along with it. We also uncovered, through conversations in our primary research, the need to have an understanding of the past and the future when working in the present.

The places of today and tomorrow play a critical role in ensuring our existence on this planet. Recent advancements in technology have propelled society to unimaginable levels of centralised decision making. Current practices of empirical reductionism and standardisation pave dangerous roads to a future that would reduce existence into numbers, controllable variables, and productive value. Toronto's early endeavours with people-led efforts and participatory design practices plant the possibility of alternative and meaningful ways of engaging with the environment around us but it becomes necessary to continuously learn, collaborate, amplify, and adapt to this changing environment.

This conversation is far from over. Change itself is an evolving and dynamic process, and with this research project, we intend to nudge the current conversations in the direction of changing conventional dialogues. As mentioned earlier in this report, Cities are at the heart of many challenges we face today, but the solution to these problems also lies at the heart of the cities—the people who live in them.

PARTING PROVOCATIONS

We would like to leave you with a collection of visions co-created with our workshop participants and DALL-E 2, an Artifical Intelligence Image Generation Platform.

We are grateful to our participants and the various depictions of the future they came up with. These images envision diverse interpretations of plausible futures. The visions of the futures here represent different shades of optimism and point towards realities that we might achieve soon, together.

Sometimes the future is closer than we think.

Participant 2
Location : Toronto

Participant 3
Location : St. Louis

Participant 4
Location : Toronto

Participant 5
Location : Mixed Urban

Participant 6
Location : Toronto

Participant 7
Location : Midtown, Toronto

Participant 8
Location: Toronto

Participant 9
Location: Lake Ontario

Participant 10
Location: Toronto

Participant 11
Location: Cityscape

Participant 12
Location : Toronto

Participant 13
Location: Downtown Toronto

Participant 14
Location : Toronto

Participant 15
Location : Toronto

Participant 16
Location : Cairo, Egypt

Participant 17
Location : Toronto

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Image Credits

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APPENDIX: A
LIST OF SIGNALS

Trend	Supporting Signals
The Brass is Green(er)?	• Old volcanoes, big energy (cbc.ca) • How a Quebec Lithium Mine May Help Make Electric Cars Affordable - The New York Times (nytimes.com) • Toronto wants to kill the smart city forever | MIT Technology Review
Profits over People vs Inflation	• Fed up with being unable to find a home, this B.C. man built a houseboat from recycling bins and road signs | CBC News • Priced out of Toronto's housing market? Alberta wants you to turn your eyes west | CBC News • NDP calling for probe of grocery store profits as food prices continue to rise | CBC News • Shoplifter Always Gets Little Adrenaline Rush After Stealing Basic Necessities For Family (theonion.com) (Satire)
Health-de-spair	• Is Choosing Medically Assisted Death Too Easy in Canada? - The New York Times (nytimes.com) • Emergency Rooms Across Canada Close Amid Nursing Shortage - The New York Times (nytimes.com)
Cities for everyone	• Toronto for Everyone – Can Gil Penalosa beat John Tory to be Toronto's next mayor? | The Star • Cities that connect people and nature are a post-pandemic priority, conference hears | Research and Innovation (europa.eu) • The City Sustainable, Resilient, Regenerative – A Rose by Any Other Name? | SpringerLink
The price for climate inaction	• Vancouver Moves to Sue Big Oil After Deadly Fires and Disastrous Floods - The New York Times (nytimes.com) • Leaders assure world they have climate change plan to save themselves and that's all - The Beaverton (Satire) • Toronto breaks 168-year-old weather record amid brutal heat wave (blogto.com) • 80s nostalgia peaks with return of hole in ozone layer - The Beaverton (Satire)

The big shift	• Priced out of Toronto's housing market? Alberta wants you to turn your eyes west | CBC News • Boomerang Migration: Will People Leaving the City Come Back? | CBRE • Return to the office? Toronto lags behind other North American cities | CTV News • Pandemic spurred exodus of Ontario family doctors, study indicates | CBC News
Housing Crisis -> Mobile Housing	• Airbnb Owner Outbid On House By Family That Just Going To Use It As A Home (theonion.com) (Satire) • Fed up with being unable to find a home, this B.C. man built a houseboat from recycling bins and road signs | CBC News • Can someone explain to me why I shouldn't live in my car? : PersonalFinanceCanada (reddit.com) • "Now that Canadian home prices have dropped, I can finally afford a house!" says maybe one person, maybe - The Beaverton (satire)
in OUR backyards	• Towards regenerative neighbourhoods: An international survey on urban strategies promoting the production of ecosystem services - ScienceDirect • 'Built from the internet up': assessing citizen participation in smart city planning through the case study of Quayside, Toronto | SpringerLink • Toronto wants to kill the smart city forever | MIT Technology Review • Enhancing urban nature and place-making in social housing through community gardening - ScienceDirect • How a community-led design initiative in Toronto is redefining neighborhood revitalization from the bottom-up (brookings.edu)
Climate (in)Action	• Climate change could cost Ontario extra $1.5B per year just to maintain transportation infrastructure: FAO | CBC News • GOLDSTEIN: Stop blaming climate change for government incompetence | Toronto Sun • Toronto breaks 168-year-old weather record amid brutal heat wave (blogto.com)
Suburban hell - A la CARte	• Fatima Syed on Twitter: "Last night, a bunch of astronomers and scientists were able to smash into an asteroid 7 million miles away. Meanwhile, I'm out here deeply struggling to travel barely 24 kilometres from Mississauga to Toronto using public transit. Commuting in a "post-pandemic" world sucks." / Twitter • Unwalkable suburbia

APPENDIX: B
WORKSHOP PRIMER

Tiny

Huge

MICROMACRO
places, people, problems, and paradigms

The places we share existence with,

Us,

our issues, and

the way we understand them
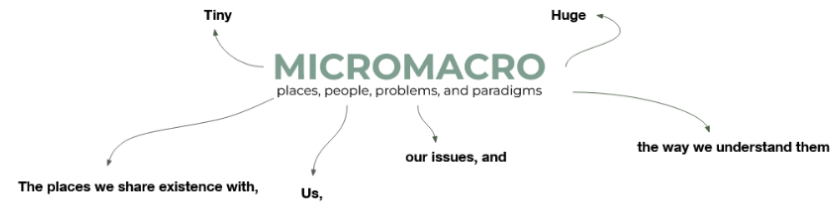
Exploring the futures of regenerative placemaking in the City of Toronto
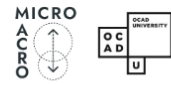
Who are we?

Nafeha

Nafeha's background is in design management, strategic communication, and facilitative leadership. Her curiosity about the futures of our world led her to OCAD

Rimaz

Rimaz comes from the world of architecture, urban planning and design, he is currently finding his pivot in the Strategic Foresight and Innovation

We both enjoy the shows Parks and Recreation, and The Office, which served as strong inspirations for this project and our collaborative partnership :)

What is Regenerative Placemaking?

Regenerative   +   Placemaking

Regenerative design
Regenerative design calls for a re-thinking of our relationship with the planet and to build healthy ecosystems, as an interconnecting whole across the environment, society and economy.

In our context, it invites us to pay more attention to design as a process of engagement with people and place, as a culturally creative conversation of how to create a regenerative human presence in that place.

People-led creative placemaking
Inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community.

Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value.

What is YOUR Role?

Expertise   +   Opinion

We are looking to tap into your insights that you have gathered in the field.

We acknowledge that you may not be directly working within the field of regenerative placemaking, but we want to get your broader perspective and knowledge!

As a practicing professional and human being, we are interested to understand your opinion and unpack your view of the world that surrounds you!

We are avid learners, and this process will help us uncover insights that we can further build our work upon :)

APPENDIX: B
WORKSHOP PRIMER

What will we do?

Interactive 1-on-1 Interview

- 15-20 min pre-work

- 60 minutes of an online interview in the structure of a workshop :)

We want to assure you that there in no wrong answer and that we are all here to learn from each other.

This is part of our design research process, and we'd love for you to be as comfortable as you can be :)

Questions?

Nafeha Khan, Graduate Student Researcher
nafehakhan@ocadu.ca

Rimaz Mohamed, Graduate Student Researcher
rimazm@ocadu.ca

This study is completely voluntary, there is no obligation to participate, and there are no consequences to you, or the study should you choose not to participate. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University [approval # 2022-76].

If you have questions about the study, please feel free to email me us. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study, please contact: research@ocadu.ca.

APPENDIX: C
PARTICIPANTS WORKSHEETS

Participant #1

Participant #2

Participant #3

Participant #4

Participant #5

Participant #6

Participant #7

Participant #8

Participant #9

Participant #10

Participant #11

Participant #12

Participant #13

Participant #14

Participant #15

*"Cities have the capability of providing
something for everybody, only because,
and only when,*

they are created by everybody."
— Jane Jacobs,