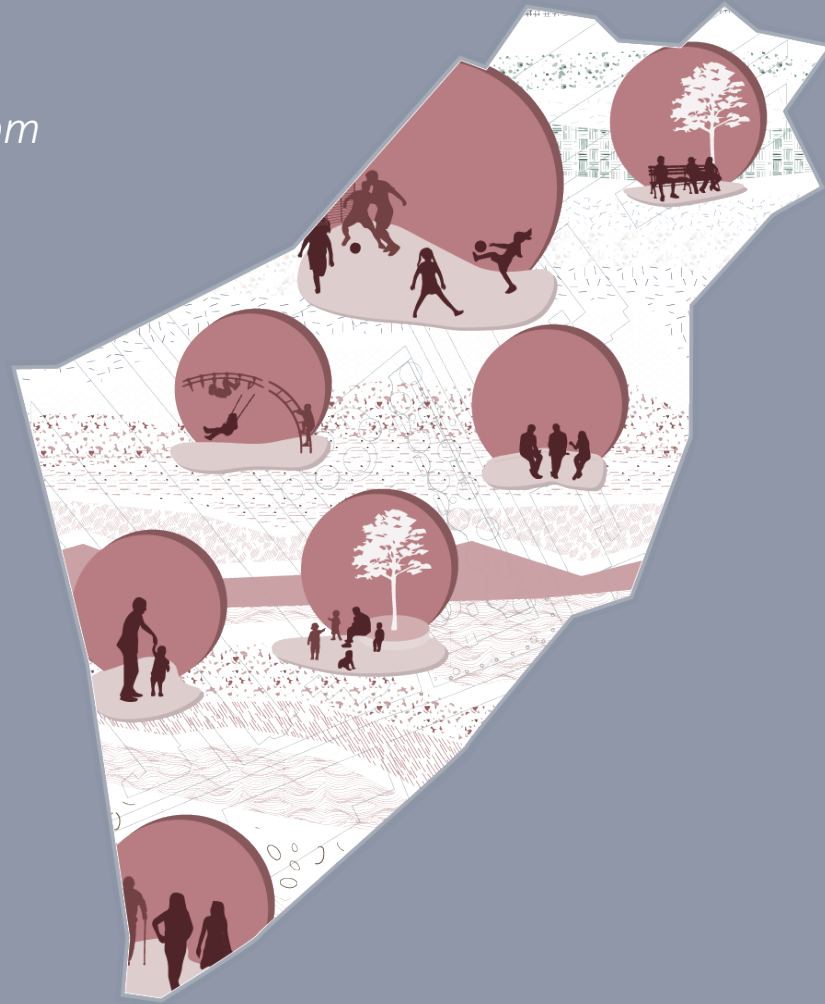


TAKE [A] PART

*Urban design of physical public spaces from
a social perspective*



TAKE [A] PART

Urban design of physical public spaces from a social perspective

SETTING THE SCENE

National Program of Liveability and Safety

- July 2022
- Social divides increased, reinforced by spatial divides
- Worsened by the pandemic
- Specifically in vulnerable urban areas
- Consequences for residents, city and society

Concerns!

SPATIAL TRANSITIONS

Multiple spatial transitions are required:

- Housing
- Energy
- Liveability

Need for strong, cooperative, solidary communities that trust each other and the government!

NATIONAL PROGRAMME

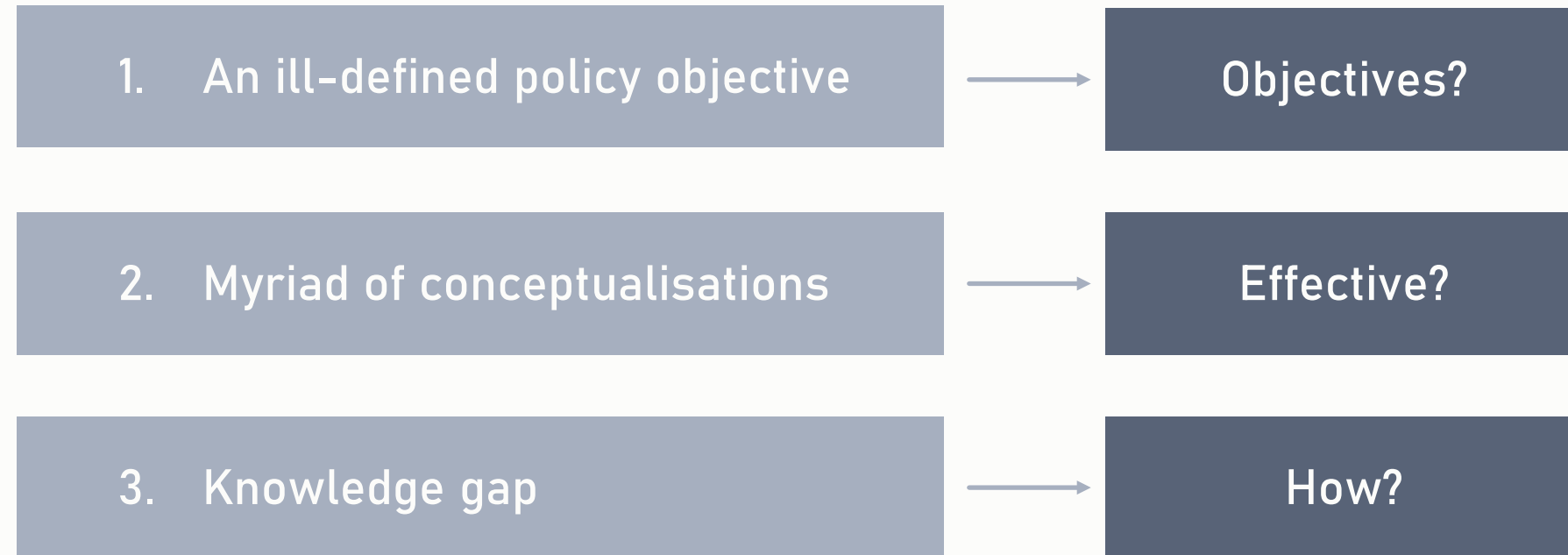
OBJECTIVES: Liveability, safety and social resilience

APPROACH: Long term, integrated, multidisciplinary

“Interventions in the spatial domain should positively contribute to policy objectives in social domain, and vice versa”

SOCIAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:
SOCIAL COHESION

CHALLENGES



To what extent could urban design interventions in physical public spaces of urban areas facilitate the formation of social cohesion?

RESEARCH APPROACH

1. What is social cohesion, and how does it relate to the spatial dimension?
2. How to **operationalise** this knowledge further into a **framework**, and provide tangible **design objectives** and **implementation guidelines**?
3. How would this framework be applied to a real-life environment to assess social cohesion?

PRESENTATION STRUCTURE

1. DEFINING SOCIAL COHESION
2. OPERATIONALISATION
3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK
4. OUTPUT
5. FRAMEWORK DEMONSTRATION
6. CONCLUSIONS

SECTION I | DEFINING SOCIAL COHESION

DEFINING SOCIAL COHESION

- It is a descriptive attribute of a social entity
- It indicates the quality of the social relations and the cooperation for the wellbeing of the entity
- Expressed through the attitudes and behaviours of the entity

ISSUES WITH SOCIAL COHESION

- Too little or too much
- Multi-dimensional: social cohesion on national, city and community level
- Myriad of conceptualisations but lack of agreement on definition and measurement

SOCIAL COHESION RADAR

DOMAIN

SOCIAL RELATIONS

CONNECTEDNESS

ORIENTATION TOWARDS
THE COMMON GOOD

DIMENSION

SOCIAL NETWORKS

TRUST IN PEOPLE

ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY

IDENTIFICATION

TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

PERCEPTION OF FAIRNESS

SOLIDARITY AND HELPFULNESS

RESPECT FOR SOCIAL RULES

(CIVIC) PARTICIPATION

SECTION II | OPERATIONALISATION

WHAT ARE THE DESIGN OBJECTIVES?

SOCIAL COHESION RADAR

- National level measurement
- Dimensions too limited

Spatial translation?

REQUIREMENTS & IDEAL SITUATION ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY LEVEL

DOMAIN

1

SOCIAL NETWORKS

REQUIREMENTS

- Repeated, positive social interactions
- Reciprocity
- Some shared norms and values
- Positive and trustworthy social relations

IDEAL SITUATION

Residents have (some) acquaintances, social relations and close ties among the local community

Residents have some neighbours/residents with whom they exchange support and/or resources, with practical things and/or emotional/social/informational issues

Neighbours/Residents socialise with each other, they enjoy (occasionally) spending time with each other

...

DESIGN OBJECTIVE

POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

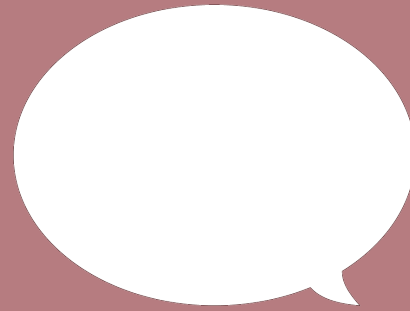
- Which occur regularly
- Over a long period of time
- In different social settings
- With different levels of familiarity
- Formal and informal
- Expectations are met or exceeded

are expected to contribute to dimensions of social cohesion

Events

Between strangers,
acquaintances, social relations,
formal figures

Contributes to social networks,
acceptance of diversity,
identification, solidarity,
participation



Ownership

Of a space, or the process of the
creation or maintenance of the space

Contributes to trust, identity,
solidarity, and/or norms

Greetings and/or small talk

Contribute to public familiarity,
social networks, norms



SECTION III | ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

HOW DOES THE ENVIRONMENT AFFECT SOCIAL INTERACTIONS?

SPATIAL TRANSITION

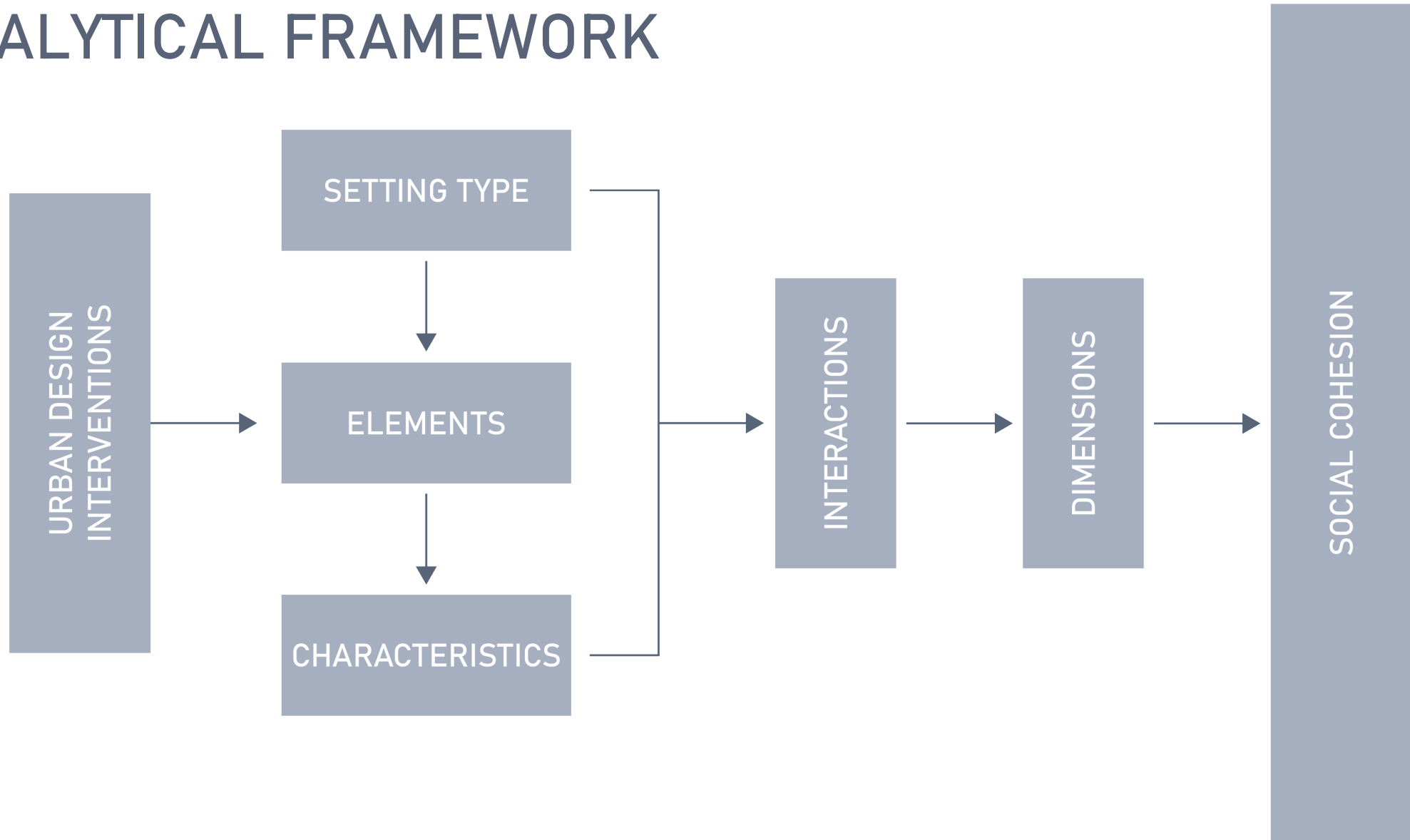
Social interactions do not happen in a vacuum

- Context: social, cultural, political, economic, historical, ecological
- Physical space: public spaces in the urban area

VARIABLES THAT INFLUENCE INTERACTIONS

- Context
- Behaviour setting
- Characteristics: connectivity, comfort, degree of personalisation, safety ...
- Elements: location, access, movement, furniture, management, programming ...

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK



SECTION IV | OUTPUTS

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK

1. Setting type: expectations for design and social cohesion potential
2. Structured spatial analysis of how the spatial elements could facilitate social interactions (via characteristics)
3. Which dimensions would be addressed?
4. Test and check hypotheses!
5. Improvements?

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK

Test and check hypotheses!

- Who makes use of the space
- Non-spatial issues?
- Social cohesion for which community?

BEHAVIOUR SETTINGS

Types of physical public spaces in Dutch urban areas with

- Expected interactions
- Between whom

PUBLIC BEHAVIOUR SETTINGS



RESIDENTIAL STREET

INTERACTIONS

Greetings and/or small talk | Resource exchange | Sharing of a space, tools, furniture | Socialising | Socialisation | Creation or improvement of a space | Necessary (routine) activities | Events | Ownership | Personalisation

WHO MAKES USE OF THE SETTING

Primarily residents (from the street)
Residents from the neighbourhood or block
Visitors



PLAY AREAS

INTERACTIONS

Greetings and/or small talk | Sharing of a space, tools, furniture | Socialising | Socialisation | Active leisure | Religious or cultural activities | Recreational activities | Events | Personalisation

WHO MAKES USE OF THE SETTING

Residents from the area, neighbourhood and/or block
Visitors

DESIGN INTERVENTIONS FOR SOCIAL COHESION

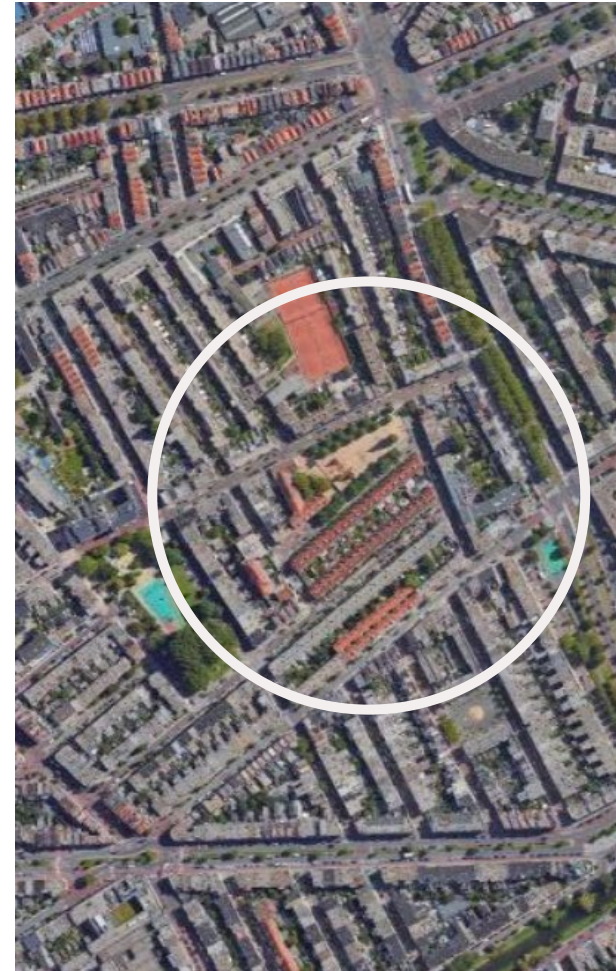
- Furniture
 - Location
 - Seating (single vs grouped)
 - Movable or fixed
 - Shading and shelter

SECTION V | FRAMEWORK DEMONSTRATION

DEMONSTRATION OF IMPLEMENTATION

The Hague: the most segregated city in the Netherlands, has a vulnerable urban area

- Kamerlingh Onnesplein in Valkenboskwartier





PLAY AREA

- Expected interactions: Active leisure, socialising, socialisation, sharing of a space/furniture, personalisation, recreational activities
- Safety, overview, play, seating, access

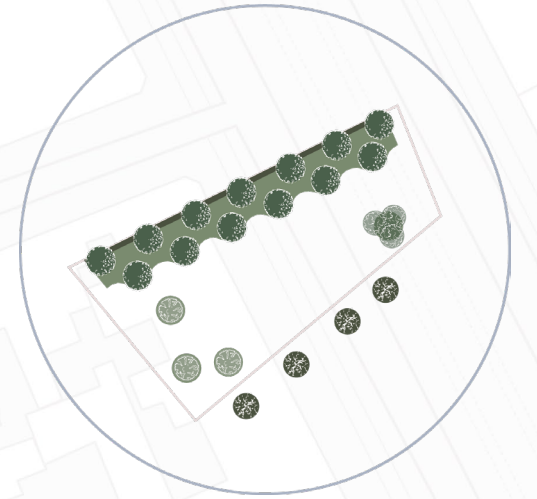
ANALYSIS



Access



Landscape



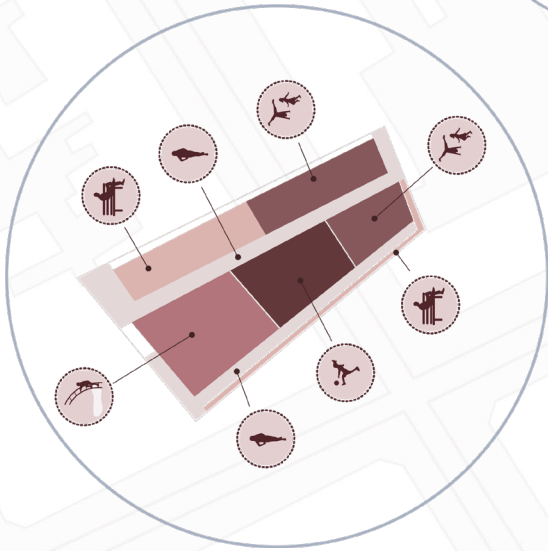
Use



Furniture



Safety



SOCIAL INTERACTIONS



Socialising



Recreational activities; Active leisure



Events



Sharing of a space, tools, furniture



Greetings and small talk; necessary activities



Socialisation

ANALYSIS FINDINGS

SOCIAL NETWORKS

TRUST IN PEOPLE

ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY

IDENTIFICATION

RESPECT FOR SOCIAL RULES

(CIVIC) PARTICIPATION

SECTION VI | CONCLUSION

To what extent could urban design interventions in physical public spaces of urban areas facilitate the formation of social cohesion?

1. What is social cohesion, and how does it relate to the spatial dimension?

Specific social interactions, facilitated by

- Design elements
- Characteristics through design elements

Affected by settings

2. How to operationalise this knowledge further into a framework, and provide tangible design objectives and implementation guidelines?

Analytical framework with

- Guidelines
- Design interventions

3. How would this framework be applied to a physical public setting to assess social cohesion?

Demonstration

LIMITATIONS

- Testing of the framework
- Proxies of urban design for social cohesion

CONTRIBUTION

- Structured spatial analysis for social cohesion potential
- Make explicit and specific
- Starting points for testing

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Peer review and testing of the framework
- Empirical testing of relative importance of design interventions on specific social interactions

THANK YOU FOR BEING [A] PART!

QUESTIONS?

“The ongoing process of developing wellbeing, sense of belonging, and voluntary social participation of the members of society, while developing communities that tolerate and promote a multiplicity of values and cultures, and granting at the same time equal rights and opportunities in society.”

(Fonseca et al., 2019, p. 16)

DOMAIN 2

IDENTIFICATION

- Positive, long term shared experiences,
- positive stable long lasting and significant relations formed through physical interactions in a specific space/spaces
- shared cultural expressions,
- shared values
- membership, ownership (of a place),
- freedom to express one's identity
- satisfaction with the environment,
- Shared experiences
- Shared language
- Shared narrative

Residents feel connected to the local community and the local area/block/neighbourhood/district

Residents feel as they belong to the local community and area

Residents are proud of their local community and of the area

Residents feel a sense of stewardship towards their environment

The needs of residents are satisfied within their neighbourhood

Residents feel safe in their local community and the area

Residents are satisfied with the quality of the environment

Residents partake in collective activities for the neighbourhood (community)

Residents spend time in their local area, and enjoy this

Residents organise activities within the area, either for themselves or for the local community

DOMAIN 3

SOLIDARITY AND HELPFULNESS

- Shared norms and values for cooperative and solidary behaviour
 - Collective identity
 - Shared purpose
 - Shared narratives
 - Shared interests
 - Examples of solidary actions
 - Opportunities for solidary actions
 - Monitoring and
- sanctioning of non-solidary behaviour
- Observability

Residents are involved with each other

Residents feel responsibility for the wellbeing of (the members of) their community

Residents offer help to each other/other people, without being asked

Residents engage in unpaid, voluntary community activities that benefit (parts of) the community

Residents engage in unpaid, voluntary social service activities that benefit (parts of) the community

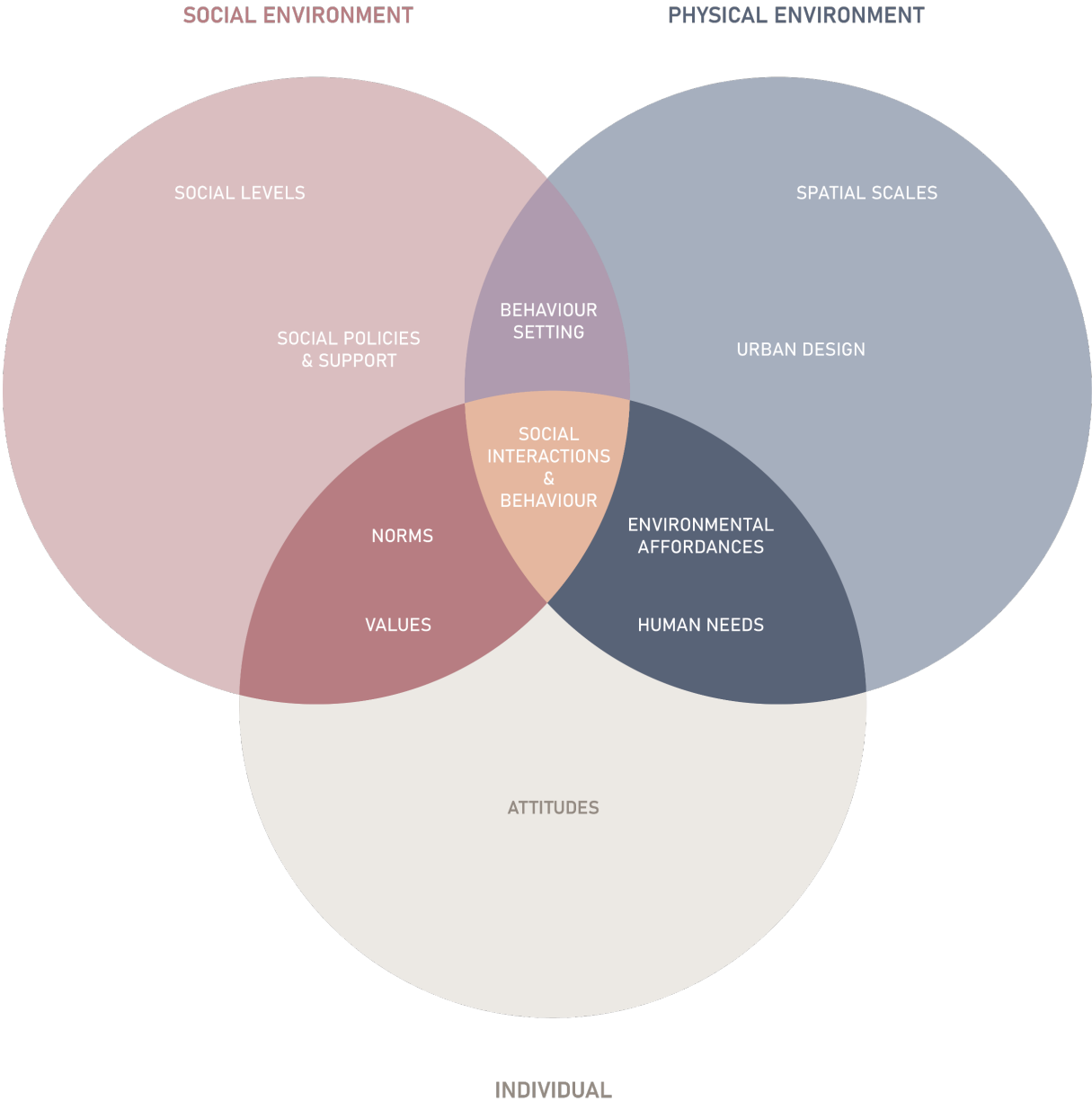
REQUIREMENTS

- Shared values and norms
- Shared experiences, practices, interests, aspects
- Positive interactions that occur repeatedly over a long period of time, in a variety of settings
- Example figures, policies, institutions and infrastructures in place to support and manage specific behaviour
- Competence, fairness, integrity etc from local government and public institutions
- Quality of the environment and services
- Informal management of behaviour

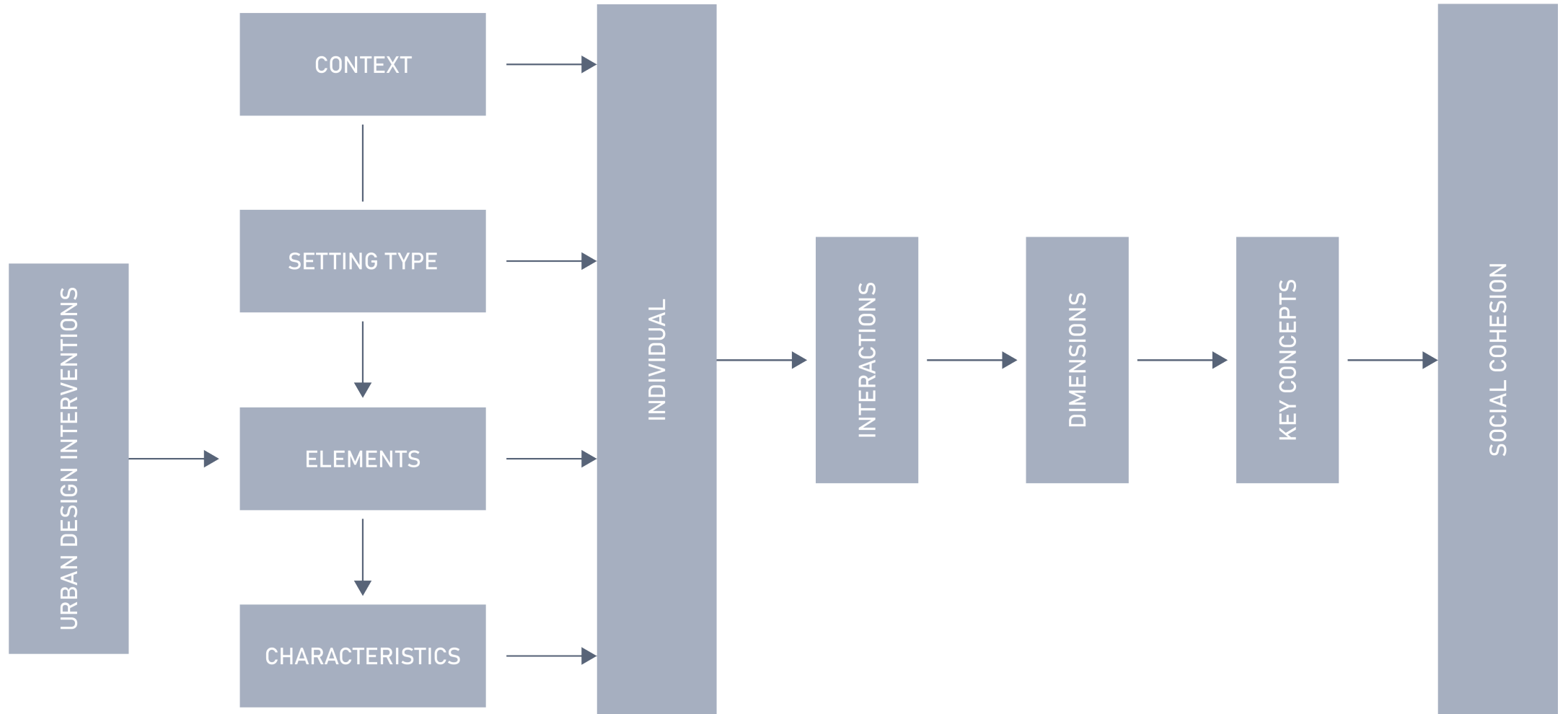
... AND HOW TO DESIGN FOR THIS?

- Context
- Behaviour setting
- Characteristics & Elements
- Affordances
- Human needs
- Publicness

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK



URBAN DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

What do we need for social interactions to occur:

1. People want to, and are able to, visit the space
2. People need to (be able to) spend time there so that they can partake in the specific social interactions
3. People need to be able to (and want to) return to the space throughout the day, seasons, and year

Areas of possible interventions

Depends on

- Publicness: accessible, inclusive, neutral, sociability
- Characteristics:
 - Connectivity to the greater network of public spaces and transportation
 - Comfort in climate, use and movement
 - Degree of personalisation (of use, movement, senses, personal space, climate)
 - Permeability of view and movement
 - Imageability of the space (historical, social, cultural)
 - A variety of uses, users, functions, material, landscaping
 - The robustness of the space, throughout the seasons and the years
 - The safety of a space
 - Attractiveness

Areas of possible interventions

A successful place for the facilitation of social cohesion is thus accessible and inclusive, well-connected to the larger network of public spaces and the transportation network, it is a safe and comfortable space that allows for personalisation, provides various options of uses and activities throughout the day, the seasons and the years, is easy to see and move through, has character, and is lively with other users

Areas of possible interventions

Depends on

- Elements:
- Location
- Access – the entrances to the space
- Movement - the access of traffic, the management of traffic and/or pedestrian movement, traffic safety measures, parking management
- Accessibility - physical, mental, social; of the space, of its services or destinations, of the use
- Boundaries - edges, facades, transition zone
- Landscape - vegetation, trees
- Climate - shelter, shade, sun, wind, rain water control, open water
- Furniture - seating, lighting, bins, tables, play equipment, public toilet, wifi points,
- Destinations - land use (residential, office, commercial, public), destinations and services (supermarket, shops, café, bank, community centre etc.)
- Volumes - height, distance
- Meaning - art, monuments, heritage
- Management - control of access, behaviour, maintenance, cleanliness
- Ownership - public, private, community
- Programming - events, vendors, artists
- Signage - routing, rules of behaviour, rules of access,