Final Report

Comon project on Understandable Healthcare

COMON

Content

Foreword

Freddy Mortier
Program Director

The first Comon trajectory is almost completed, and the next one is slowly taking shape. When the partners of De Krook – the City of Ghent, imec, Ghent University, and De Krook Library – started Comon, there were some ambitious but still loosely defined ideas. The starting point was that the skills and knowledge of the Comon partners should be used for the benefit of the people of Ghent. Their experiences regarding yet-to-be-determined urban challenges needed to be collected and tested for their representativeness. Experts, citizens, students, and professionals from various relevant organizations and companies were to be brought together. Bridges needed to be built between their notoriously divergent ways of knowing, perceiving, and experiencing. Comon would also closely align with the policy plans of the city council of Ghent. And all these efforts were meant to result in the design of usable prototypes for citizens, preferably accessible to everyone through a genuine market offering.

This was quite a task: bringing together policy plans, science, technological innovation, fiction and non-fiction, design, and participatory methods in a targeted attempt to improve the well-being of the people of Ghent. So, there were indeed quite a few challenges. But we embraced them with pleasure. The topic of healthcare, specifically how to make it more understandable for patients, struck a chord with the people of Ghent. You can find the report on that below.

But what does all of this mean for Ghent? It would certainly be an exaggeration to say that Comon has sent a tremor through the proud city that every citizen has felt. However, the level of participation was high. That is evident from all the moments along the journey where the public was called upon an expert in health communication, addressed us, followed us, and pulled us along. More important than the magnitude of the effort is the depth of a versatile learning process that has taken place among all participants. IT and communication scientists are experts who speak a dialect that is no less sophisticated than that of (para)medics. But they, too, have touched the citizens and, more importantly, have been touched by them. Tools have been devised that will effectively help many patients and healthcare providers with the translation of care.

Ghent has the ambition to be a pioneer in innovation, digitalization, and entrepreneurship: all these elements are encompassed in the first Comon trajectory. The city administration not only inspired Comon with its strategic plans and provided financial support, but also involved some of its officials in defining the project itself. Let's not forget that the original purpose of De Krook – to achieve a close collaboration between its public shareholders – has been put back on track through Comon after years. The ambition to develop a 21st-century city library for the contemporary benefit and enjoyment of its users is also served. The other partners of De Krook have contributed their expertise in terms of public engagement. Moreover, the project was even coordinated with related efforts at the Flemish level. I would say it was a success, and next time will be even better.

About this Document

Pauline De Wolf
Program Coordinator

Almost two years ago, Comon was born, and we started the first thematic project: "The Future of Health." In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, we took on the challenge to start an organisation that mainly aimed at bringing people together. Fortunately, we were able to gradually escape the digital Zoom realms and introduce Ghent residents to each other. And how! Two years later, we look back on a successful and fascinating first project.

In this final report, you will find a description of the first Comon project based on an evaluation process conducted with internal and external stakeholders. We not only focus on the successes but also address the obstacles and the lessons we have learned from them. Our aim is to provide a clear picture of the past Comon project and, who knows, inspire you to collaborate with us or embark on similar methods, activities, or projects yourself.

In addition to the description of the activities and methods in this document, more extensive methodological and practical scripts are available for most Comon activities (only in Dutch). We are happy to provide these plans to anyone who wants to get started themselves. Are you interested in one of these scripts? Send an email to hallo@Comon.gent, and we will be happy to assist you.

1.0

About Comon

1.1 Context

Comon was established in 2021 by the City of Ghent, De Krook Library, imec, and Ghent University as an "open laboratory." At Comon, scientists and technologists collaborate with creative citizens of Ghent (and Ghent enthusiasts) to make Ghent an even better place. It is a space where thinkers and doers can come together around a shared challenge, creating room for experimentation and critical dialogue. By exploring together, bringing together unusual perspectives, and taking prompt action, we conceive and test human-centered technological solutions. Moreover, we experiment with methods and processes to achieve these goals. In short, Comon is a laboratory where we also experiment with the way we experiment.

Comon is pronounced as "Come on!" because we want to encourage Ghent residents to participate and join us in making the city even better.

1.2 Mission and Vision

Comon aims to improve life in Ghent by co-creating solutions for societal challenges with citizens, researchers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs, always leveraging technological and digital innovation. Comon welcomes anyone who wants to contribute constructively and sustainably to a better city. With Comon, you can help shape the future!

Comon is an initiative of the City of Ghent, imec, Ghent University, and De Krook Library. Comon often collaborates with Avansa regio Gent, Urgent.fm, and the BlueHealth Innovation Center. Comon focuses on topics that have sufficient support among these partners.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 Comon Objectives

Comon starts from **one overarching main objective**: to make life in Ghent better, together with citizens of Ghent, with technology as part of the solution. This is ambitious, which is why we have formulated 12 sub-objectives. Nine of them were already formulated at the start of Comon. Based on an evaluation workshop (see p.35), we updated the list and added three sub-objectives. After all, Comon is always evolving.

1. Comon innovates.

Comon fosters innovation at the intersection of technological expertise and societal challenges.

2. Comon listens.

Comon inspires and supports citizens of Ghent and Ghent enthusiasts in formulating current societal challenges for the city.

3. Comon creates.

Comon connects citizens, researchers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs to devise and create innovative technological solutions. Comon supports the implementation of these solutions.

4. Comon experiments and co-creates.

Comon experiments and co-creates with citizens, seeking valuable innovation for individuals and society. Comon creates a safe environment where it is okay to fail and try again.

5. Comon is always evolving.

Comon constantly questions its own methodology. Comon pioneers co-creation processes to transform knowledge into action, aiming for sustainable innovation driven by tangible societal needs.

6. Comon connects.

Comon fosters new and atypical collaborations between citizens, researchers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs. This strengthens the ecosystem of Ghent.

7. Comon reflects and debates

Comon encourages critical reflection and debate on societal challenges and technological solutions.

8. Comon empowers.

Comon engages in capacity building, empowering individuals and organizations by sharing acquired knowledge. This includes digital skills, entrepreneurial skills, maker skills, and methods for innovation, experimentation, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

9. Comon brings partners together.

Comon inspires and strengthens (fun!) collaboration and knowledge sharing among the partners in De Krook.

10. Comon makes knowledge visible and tangible.

Comon shares acquired knowledge with all involved stakeholders and interested citizens, researchers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs in a concrete, tangible, accessible, and shareable form that can also be consulted later on.

11. Comon gives a voice.

Comon gives a voice to citizens of Ghent and Ghent enthusiasts. This includes those who are not heard as often.

12. Comon catalyzes and accelerates collaboration and action.

Comon stimulates collaboration based on action and speed. It goes beyond thinking and talking. The focus is on doing things together, creating, and experimenting.

1.3.2 Objectives of Partner Organizations

Comon exists solely thanks to the support and commitment of the partner organizations. Comon aims to assist each partner in achieving their own objectives.

Initiating Partners

gent:

For the City of Ghent, Comon is an open laboratory to collaboratively design and test human-centered technological solutions with diverse partners. In this way, Comon strengthens innovation power in Ghent.

"Innovation is never limited to a laboratory or research institution. Listening, collaborating, and the drive to make something better are essential conditions for successful innovation. As a city, we want to be challenged through Comon to harness the power of co-creation and provide all residents of Ghent with the opportunity to be healthy and stay healthy."
- Mayor Mathias De Clercq

imec

As a world-renowned research center for nanoelectronics and digital technology, imec contributes to digital transformation and a better future. Imec focuses on significant societal challenges, utilizing expertise in technological innovation. Through Comon, imec bridges the gap with the public, citizens, and society at large, enabling the research center to stay attuned to people's concerns.

" We believe that the technological revolutions imec is working on can contribute to a healthier life. Citizens play a crucial role in this evolution. With an initiative like Comon, we can involve them in research from the outset, to achieve human centered innovation. "
- Roger Lemmens, imec (Director of Digital Technologies)

UNIVERSITEIT
GENT

Ghent University is one of the largest universities in Belgium. With the slogan 'Dare to Think,' Ghent University encourages critical examination of society. Comon provides a space for Ghent University members to engage in continuous dialogue across disciplines and faculties with entrepreneurs, policymakers, and citizens. Comon not only stimulates high-quality interdisciplinary research but also its valorization through sustainable technological and innovative solutions for societal challenges. Additionally, Ghent University experiments with activating and interdisciplinary teaching methods at Comon, preparing students to face real-world challenges and think outside the box.

"Digital technology can make people's lives healthier, happier, and safer... in short, better. Provided that technology serves people, not the other way around. At Ghent University, we believe that we can only achieve this by working together. Across the boundaries of (academic) disciplines. That's why we gladly support Comon."
- Piet Demeester, Ghent University-imec
(Head of imec-IDLab-Ghent and Ghent University Delta)

Imec-mict-UGent

The interdisciplinary research group Media, Innovation, and Communication Technologies (imec-mict-UGent) brings together expertise in communication sciences, psychology, sociology, engineering, and design. Mict explores the intersection of people and technology through fundamental research, state-of-the-art prototyping, and testing. Within Comon, mict researchers can share, apply, and deepen their expertise in innovation ecosystems, urban living labs, innovation management processes, rapid prototyping, and user-centric design.

> "Many collaborations limit themselves to a kind of talk shop. We investigate how we can transition from 'talking' to 'doing' more quickly. How can we transform knowledge into tangible products more efficiently? This is achievable within an urban living lab like Comon. Moreover, Comon allows us to experiment with the way we experiment. It serves as a laboratory where we can try out different methods."
> – Bas Baccarne, imec-mict-UGent

De Krook Library promotes "reading, learning, and living," broadening people's perspectives and enriching their lives. Comon's mission to make Ghent a better, more enjoyable, and wiser city aligns with De Krook Library's focus on knowledge, language, and stories that can help citizens in this endeavor. Additionally, Comon contributes to the transformation of a traditional library into a place of dialogue and collaboration. Together with Comon, De Krook Library also enhances citizens' technological skills or, at the very least, raises awareness of technological possibilities.

> "Technology is becoming more important in our lives. Some people find this enjoyable, others less so. But everyone will have to deal with it. As a library, we believe it's important to familiarize people with the possibilities and challenges so they can develop the skills to navigate the technological revolution."
> – Krist Biebauw, Director of De Krook Library

Collaborative Partners

Avansa regio Ghent is one of the thirteen Avansa organizations in Flanders that realize a wide range of educational activities, often in collaboration with other organizations. Avansa regio Gent aims to bring people together through public activities concerning societal challenges and involve them in debates on innovative solutions. They also aim to enhance people's digital skills. For Avansa regio Gent, Comon provides a platform to gather people around societal challenges and creates momentum for collaboration on specific topics.

Urgent.fm is the media lab of Ghent University, a prominent city radio station, and a reference in music and culture. Urgent.fm supports Comon in terms of audio technology, communication, and creativity. It builds bridges between Comon and its own radio and media operations. In radio specials and regular programming, Urgent.fm translates Comon's projects and research projects. The execution takes place on air, online, and

visually visible in De Krook. Furthermore, Urgent.fm collaborates with Comon to develop inventive side projects, ranging from large-scale unique art festivals to smaller creative interventions. Urgent.fm provides artistic, cultural, or auditory added value on various platforms.

BlueHealth Innovation Center

BlueHealth Innovation Center (BHIC) is a unique collaboration between local governments, companies, research centers, and healthcare institutions that share the same goal: to support the digital transformation in healthcare through digital innovation.

1.3.3 Support

During the first project, Comon received additional support (including financial support) from various partners. This allowed Comon to develop certain aspects of the project in a more thorough and high-quality manner. Comon thanks these partners for their trust and support.

King Baudouin Foundation (Fonds dr. Daniel De Coninck)

During the initial phase, Comon received financial support from the Fonds dr. Daniel De Coninck to establish an interaction and co-creation platform with citizens and patients regarding health literacy skills. This fund aims to improve the health and quality of life for individuals with healthcare or support needs in a home environment, as well as support healthcare and welfare professionals.

Comon also relied on the 8 effectiveness principles for Caring technology in the development of the project related to understandable care. These principles were developed by the Fonds dr. Daniel De Coninck and serve as a guideline for action in contexts where technology is used to enhance health, well-being, and quality of life in people's daily lives.

European Cultural Foundation

In its first operational year, Comon received financial support from the European Cultural Foundation (Europe Challenge for Libraries) to explore how a library can be developed into a place of co-creation with citizens around societal challenges. This aligns with the European Cultural Foundation's objective to promote the European sentiment by developing and supporting cultural initiatives.

City of Ghent Open Innovation Policy

The City of Ghent funded four microlabs and an extensive evaluation of the entire microlab operation within the framework of its open innovation policy. Rather than addressing problems solely with internal resources and solutions, the City of Ghent seeks innovative knowledge from both internal and external sources. The city shares its challenges with various stakeholders to find better solutions for Ghent. The city aims to be agile and develop with a human-centered approach, creating space for experimentation with potential solutions to societal challenges.

Leap Forward

Leap Forward is a strategic and technological consulting partner that offers a customized approach for a better user experience. Leap Forward supported Comon by providing experts in product and service design during co-creation sessions and the make-a-ton.

1.4 Approach

At Comon, we operate according to 10 clear principles that serve as a guideline for the entire project, including all its activities.

1.4.1 Clear Focus

Comon always starts from **one complex societal challenge**, a so-called wicked problem. This is a challenge that cannot be solved easily. We always choose a challenge that keeps citizens awake at night, and therefore has broad base of support. With a solution-oriented approach, Comon acts as the facilitator between the parties that can provide answers to that complex issue.

1.4.2 Step-by-step Approach

Comon follows an incremental approach to move from a societal challenge to tangible solutions. The approach is based on *design thinking*, where we first formulate challenges, then explore the problem, generate solutions, develop prototypes, and finally, make the solutions sustainable. Within each step, we base ourselves on the *double diamond* method of divergence and convergence. This means that in each step of the innovation process, we first explore and investigate broadly before making focused choices and taking action. We also make sure that each step is manageable and accessible, allowing individuals and organizations to easily engage. The outcome of each Comon project is not predetermined and may lead to unexpected added value.

1.4.3 Tangible Solutions

Coming up with ideas, discussing them, and brainstorming is one thing, but actually doing something with them is another. That's where we aim to make a difference. We make solutions **tangible and testable**.

1.4.4 Making Progress

If you have an opportunity, Comon can quickly meet with you to explore the possibilities. Comon is driven by a small team of enthusiasts who can rely on the knowledge, expertise, and resources of large organizations such as the City of Ghent, imec, Ghent University, De Krook Library, and Avansa regio Gent. As a result, Comon can **act swiftly** on various fronts, including organization, public engagement, communication, and more. A Comon project moves things forward.

1.4.5 Experimental Mindset

Creativity requires space and time, both practically and mentally. **Playfulness** and even **a little craziness** are two core elements of our work. Comon creates an environment where people feel comfortable and, above all, dare to experiment. It's a **safe space** for thinking, speaking up, and experimenting. It's a place where solutions or ideas can succeed but also fail. The self-reflection that comes from this is invaluable for the innovation process.

1.4.6 Citizen Participation

Comon starts bottom-up. Not only do we listen to citizens about the societal challenges that keep them awake at night, but we also work together with them to find solutions. Comon lowers the threshold and, through public engagement, focuses on empowering citizens. Comon brings out the **inventor in everyone**.

1.4.7 Collaboration

Comon encourages collaboration among the four major actors in the local innovation system: citizens, researchers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs. It is an atypical collaboration of people who wouldn't often meet otherwise. As a matchmaker, Comon creates inspiring environments where these individuals can meet and collaborate towards a common goal. As a knowledge broker, Comon ensures that these individuals understand each other. We reconcile academic knowledge from different disciplines with practical experience and expertise. In short, Comon succeeds in **establishing and strengthening collaboration** at the city level.

1.4.8 Physical Location

The physical anchoring of Comon in a building like De Krook offers two significant advantages. The partners of Comon encounter each other daily, which acts as a strong catalyst for collaboration. A place like De Krook also provides easy and quick access to a wide audience. Comon can build on the experience of partners who know how to successfully organize activities for a broad public.

1.4.9 Empowering Partners

Comon considers it important to be a catalyst for its partners and support them in excelling in their own domains. Comon serves as a tool for partners to **help achieve their own objectives.**

1.4.10 Broad Communication

Comon aims to reach as many people as possible, both to inform them and to give them a voice. That's why we keep our **communication accessible**. Comon also acts as a spokesperson between researchers, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and citizens

1.5 Governance and Staff

1.5.1 Governance

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors bears the strategic and financial responsibility for the operations of cv Waalse Krook, including the joint management of the building and the collaboration of the partners. The Board of Directors of De Krook, chaired by the alderman for culture, urban development, and spatial planning, Sami Souguir, is composed according to the shareholding of the initiating partners within cv Waalse Krook: City of Ghent, Province of East Flanders, imec, and Ghent University.

Management Committee (MCO)

The Management Committee is mandated by the Board of Directors of cv Waalse Krook to make operational decisions regarding the De Krook building and the operations of Comon. Each shareholder appoints one representative. In this role, the Management Committee contributes to decisions regarding the program of Comon.

Council of Elders (RdW)

The Council of Elders serves as the steering committee of Comon. It acts as the connecting body between Comon and the partner organizations, ensuring a swift flow of information. Additionally, the Council of Elders serves as an advisory board to the daily management. Their advice is binding.

Daily Management

The daily management of Comon consists of the program coordinator of Comon, the communication manager of Comon, and the coordinator of UGent Delta. When necessary, the team is supplemented with individuals appointed by the partners, whether remunerated or not. This allows Comon to benefit from the expertise of imec-mict-UGent and imec in terms of methodology and process architecture, as well as the expertise of De Krook Library and Avansa regio Gent in public engagement and information mediation.

1.5.2 Advisory Bodies

Communication Board

The Communication Board comprises the communication representatives of all partners: City of Ghent, imec, Ghent University, De Krook Library, Avansa regio Gent, and the program coordinator of Comon. The Communication Board is chaired by the communication manager of Comon.

1.5.3 Staff

Program Director

As the Program Director, Freddy Mortier helps position Comon within the Ghent ecosystem and creates new opportunities for Comon at the policy level.

Program Coordinator

As the coordinator of Comon, Pauline De Wolf organizes the daily management of Comon. She facilitates collaboration among the different partners, enabling the Comon operations. At the same time, she maintains an overview of the methodology, content, finances, and practical aspects of the project.

Coordinator of UGent Delta

As the impact coordinator of the interdisciplinary consortium UGent Delta, Jeroen Bourgonjon represents the voice of Ghent University in the daily management of Comon. His focus primarily lies on transdisciplinary collaboration, societal impact, and digital innovation.

Communication Manager

As the communication manager of Comon, Line Windey chairs the Communication Board of Comon. She focuses on transparent, accessible, and broad communication about the operations of Comon through Comon's communication channels and those of the partners.

Comon partner employees

In addition, Comon partners imec, Ghent University, De Krook Library, and Avansa regio Gent engage several of their employees to work part-time for Comon. Many employees from these organizations contribute to Comon for shorter or longer periods of time based on their own knowledge and expertise.

2.0

Theme
"Understandable Healthcare"

Comon works in thematic cycles, developing a customized project for each theme. In the first Comon project, we focused on the future of health. "How can we make Ghent a healthier city, with technology as part of the solution?" With this call, we kicked off the Comon project. Many citizens of Ghent and Ghent enthusiasts shared their challenges with us. Based on votes and reactions from the people of Ghent, an advisory committee selected one challenge to proceed with: "How can we make healthcare understandable for all citizens of Ghent?"

2.1 Help, I Don't Understand My Healthcare Provider

Many people encounter barriers in healthcare, and one significant obstacle is the understandability of care. Do healthcare providers and patients understand each other? Do patients comprehend their discharge letters from the hospital? And how can patients understand and express their symptoms if their command of Dutch is limited?

Miscommunication arises between healthcare providers and patients because they often use different terms and vocabulary. This miscommunication is at the root of many health problems, from delaying doctor visits to not taking medication, neglecting physical therapy exercises, or not knowing which healthcare provider to consult for specific issues.

2.2 Migraine Interpreted Differently in Every Culture

The idea behind this challenge came from Leyla Yüksel, a gynecologist from Ghent. She advocates for improving the quality of care by enabling doctors to make themselves better understood by their patients. "As a child, I knew I wanted to become a doctor. I come from a Turkish working-class family, and I was expected to pursue a career in dressmaking. Instead, I graduated as the first Turkish woman from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Antwerp. Growing up, I loved observing the relationship between patients and doctors in the waiting room," Leyla explains. Understandability is linked to the different contexts and cultures of individuals. For instance, certain matters or illnesses may be considered taboo in some cultures. "I often acted as an interpreter. Did you know that the interpretation of migraine varies across different cultures?"

2.3 Everyone Benefits

Digitalization can sometimes hinder understandability as well. For example, some older adults find it challenging to navigate the digital society. Ghent is a super-diverse city. If we want understandable care for everyone, we must consider factors such as origin, age, place of residence, home situation, hereditary conditions, and family environment. This will benefit every resident of Ghent.

3.0

Solution Trajectory

Comon aims to make the city even better, and to achieve this, we follow a step-by-step process in five phases. We call this the solution trajectory. In the first phase, we search for a societal challenge with broad support among the residents of Ghent. Where can our expertise make a difference? In the second phase, we explore the problem. Who experiences this problem? Who is already working on it? What existing solutions are there, and why are they not (sufficiently) effective? In the third phase, we generate innovative solutions. However, it doesn't stop at brainstorming. In the fourth phase, we translate those wild ideas into experiments, aiming for a lasting, positive impact. The fifth phase is dedicated to evaluating the entire trajectory and drawing lessons for the future.
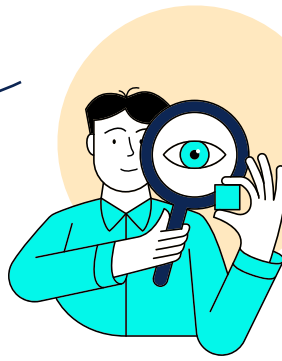
5 Phases

A healthy city is not built overnight.
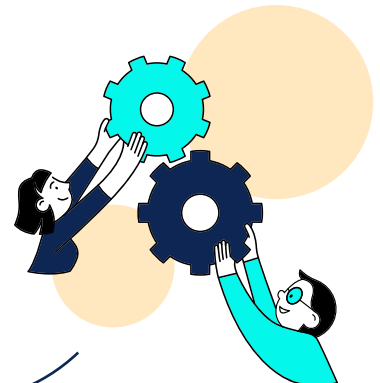That's why we opt for a step-by-step approach.

PHASE 1

**Collect
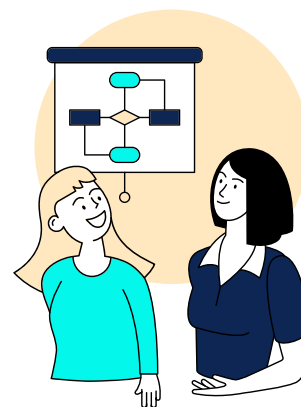Challenges**

PHASE 2
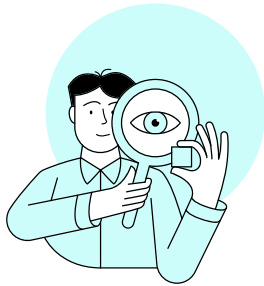
**Explore
Problems**

PHASE 3

**Brainstorm
Solutions**

PHASE 4

Experiment

PHASE 5

**Evaluate
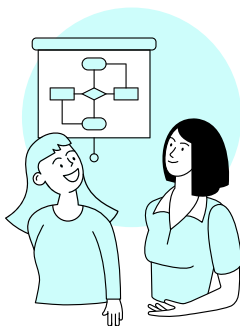and Learn**

PHASE 1

PHASE 2
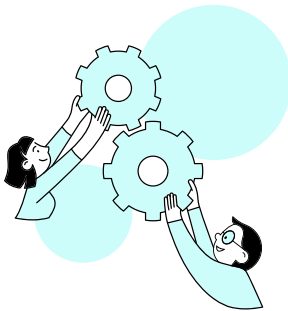
PHASE 3

PHASE 4

PHASE 5

3.1 Phase 1 – Collect Challenges

Phase 1a. Explore Challenges

Through discussion and brainstorming sessions, as well as numerous interviews, we gathered a series of health challenges that are of concern to the citizens of Ghent.

Brainstorming Sessions

The first Comon project focused on "the future of health," which is a very broad theme. As the initial step of the trajectory, we asked the people of Ghent to make choices: which challenges within the health theme concern them most? This question was discussed during three brainstorming sessions, each consisting of two parts: an inspirational part in which two health experts engaged in a discussion, and a brainstorming session in which participants themselves formulated health challenges. Each session began and ended with a quote from a story related to the theme of the evening, and selected by the staff of Library De Krook.

We organized three brainstorming sessions on the following topics

- How can we live to be 100 years old together? - Long and healthy living, how do we achieve that? With Tessa Kerre (hematologist, Ghent University Hospital and Ghent University) and Greet Cardon (movement scientist, Ghent University)
- That's what we call happiness - Living a healthy and happy life, how do we achieve that? With Piet Bracke (sociologist, Ghent University) and Susanne Op de Beeck (Flemish Patients' Platform)
- Well, what do you know? - What would you like to predict about your health? And what would you rather not? With Wouter Van Den Bosch (A.I. Health & Life Sciences, imec) and Sigrid Sterckx (Ethics, Ghent University)

It can be challenging to formulate personally relevant health challenges that are also socially relevant and can be addressed with the help of technology. Therefore, Comon provided **substantive support** by preceding each brainstorming session with a discussion between two health experts, focusing on the societal and technological aspects of health challenges. They explored factors that contribute to leading a healthy life, the impact of mental well-being on overall health, what can be measured (and known) about our health today, and how that opens doors to a healthier life.

During the interactive part of the workshop, Comon provided **methodological support** for formulating a challenge. Participants were tasked with formulating their challenge using "How can we"-statements. This formulation encourages constructive challenges that express an engagement. "How" emphasizes a curious and experimental mindset. "Can" prompts a constructive perspective. "We" stimulates collaboration.

The brainstorming sessions were **conducted digitally** during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite Comon's still relatively low profile at the time and the pandemic fatigue, many people found their way to Zoom. Using the Miro platform, participants could write their ideas on virtual post-it notes and cluster them. Despite thorough preparation, Miro created some barriers, and physical brainstorming sessions would have been more inclusive and likely yielded even higher-quality insights.

Interviews with Challengers

Through the brainstorming sessions and an online campaign featuring well-known citizens of Ghent, we reached many individuals. We offered individual support to those interested in developing and formulating their challenges. During interviews, we explored their motivations. What is their challenge? Why is it important to them? Which target group do they want to reach? The personal stories from the interviews served as the basis for the web platform where we collected all the challenges. Each challenge was accompanied by an explanatory interview and, whenever possible, a professional and playful studio photograph of the challenger. Ultimately, 39 citizens of Ghent formulated a challenge for a healthier city.

Conducting interviews was time-consuming, but the **importance of personal stories and portraits** cannot be underestimated. At Comon, what matters to the people of Ghent is our starting point. Every citizen is encouraged to make their voice heard. By working with stories, we create familiarity. This not only generates support for the challenge but also encourages other residents to formulate new challenges. Additionally, providing personal attention to the participants proved to be a significant motivator.

Furthermore, the interviews were crucial for **creating the right expectations** among all the challengers. Comon selects only one challenge to work on during the rest of the project. However, we don't want to leave the other challengers out in the cold. Therefore, we transfer the non-selected challenges to initiatives such as Call for Challenges (Ghent University) and 3ID Labs (Artevelde University of Applied Sciences). In addition, we strive to keep the other challengers involved in the rest of the Comon project. This is not always straightforward and requires an individual approach.

During this interview phase, we discovered the importance of approaching **key figures** in the city. They don't necessarily have to be well-known but should be able to provide insight into what matters in a specific neighborhood, community, or target group. Gynecologist Leyla Yüksel formulated a particularly powerful challenge based on her network within the Turkish community in Ghent and her work at General Hospital Sint-Lucas.

Phase 1b. Select a Challenge

During the brainstorming sessions and interviews, we collected a total of 39 challenges. Through a public vote campaign and an advisory committee, we chose one central challenge from them. The other challenges were made available to Ghent University and the Ghent colleges of applied sciences for community service learning purposes.

Public Vote Campaign

We published all the challenges on the Comon online platform. For one month, residents of Ghent had the opportunity to vote for their preferred challenges. In total, 489 voters cast 654 votes.

During the public vote campaign, we deliberately kept the participation threshold low for the citizens of Ghent. Everyone could **easily vote** on the website by liking a challenge or leaving a comment. Registration was required, but participants only needed to provide their email address. This allowed us to filter out duplicate votes effectively.

The public poll provided us with a good overview of the **support** for each challenge in a short period. Naturally, some challengers were skilled networkers who encouraged their network to vote for their challenge. There's nothing wrong with that; in fact, it's positive. However, we also wanted to ensure that other

challengers wouldn't miss out on opportunities. Therefore, in the future, we aim to collaborate more closely with district managers from the City of Ghent. They can help us create broader support.

Ultimately, the number of votes and comments for each challenge was taken into account as one of the criteria for selecting the central challenge for the rest of the Comon project.

Advisory Committee

Based on the public votes, ten challenges were selected. From those, an advisory committee made the final selection. The committee assessed the alignment between the challenges and the expertise of the partner organizations of Comon. Therefore, each partner organization could appoint one representative to the advisory committee. A good alignment increases the chances of developing a socially relevant solution to the challenge together.

The advisory committee evaluated the challenges based on the following criteria:

- How much support does this topic have? (as per the public vote)
- How urban is the challenge?
- How many people can we help?
- Does it match the existing expertise in De Krook?
- Can we achieve a meaningful solution with data and technology?
- Is the challenge sufficiently unique, innovative, or underrepresented?
- Does the potential impact of a possible solution justify the effort?
- What is the potential for conducting a meaningful experiment?
- Are there concrete possibilities to sustain a solution to the challenge?

Selecting a challenge that had both strong support from the people of Ghent and sufficient alignment with the expertise of the Comon partners proved to be a relevant exercise. By limiting the advisory committee's choice to the ten most popular challenges from the public vote, we avoided **tokenism**. We wanted to ensure that the voice of the public was genuinely heard and not completely rejected by experts. Our approach ensured the selection of a challenge that was relevant and where Comon could create sufficient impact and added value.

However, we could have conducted the exercise even more thoroughly. Most Comon partners are large organizations, making it challenging to obtain a comprehensive overview of all the knowledge and expertise available. In the future, we aim to conduct an analysis earlier in the trajectory to capture the current interests and activities of the partners related to the overarching theme. This **pre-phase** will enable us to build optimally on the existing knowledge within the partner organizations.

Central Challenge

Ultimately, **one central challenge** was chosen in consultation: "How can we make healthcare understandable for all citizens of Ghent?" The rest of the Comon project focused entirely on that challenge.

Community Service Learning Challenges

We offered all the challenges, including the non-selected ones, to various educational programs that emphasize *community service learning* within higher education institutions. In these courses, teachers work with their students on "real" socially relevant challenges. In some courses, students independently tackled a challenge without direct involvement from Comon. In other courses, we facilitated the dialogue between the challengers, teachers, and students.

Students from the Master's program in Communication Sciences (specialization: New Media and Society) at Ghent University worked on the central challenge, "How can we make healthcare understandable for all citizens of Ghent?" in the course **"Innovation Research: Challenges"** (supervisor: Ben Robaeyst). They conducted a points-of-pain analysis, devised solution concepts based on user input, and carried out co-creations and user tests to validate the concepts with users.

In the course **"User Centric Design"** (instructor: Bas Baccarne) in the Industrial Sciences program: Industrial Design at Ghent University, students also took on the central challenge. They developed and built prototypes of creative solutions for understandable healthcare, which they tested and adjusted based on user feedback.

In the course **"Innovation-Oriented and Strategic Design"** (instructor: Ellen De Vos) within the Industrial Sciences program: Industrial Design at Ghent University, students engaged with the central challenge. They created future scenarios of what understandable healthcare could look like in a few decades. They also developed futuristic prototypes aligned with those future scenarios.

Students enrolled in the **3ID LABS** program at Artevelde College of Applied Sciences worked collaboratively across disciplines to build and test prototypes of solutions for societal challenges. They worked on various non-selected challenges.

More than 180 students from the Communication program at Artevelde College of Applied Sciences participated in a five-day hackathon as part of the course **"Innovation and Ethics"** (supervisors: Marijke De Veirman and Jens Pas). This hackathon was a collaboration between Comon and Artevelde College of Applied Sciences. Student groups worked on different non-selected challenges. During the kick-off of the hackathon, we invited the challengers from Comon to explain their challenges. In the following days, the students developed solutions for those challenges and tested them with users, including during a large public event at De Krook.

Students from the Communication Management program at Artevelde College of Applied Sciences tackled the central challenge in the course "**Language of Education and Professional Language Acquisition"** (instructor: Els Uytterhoeven). These students, originally from Syria and Afghanistan, conducted interviews in their native languages with non-Dutch-speaking patients to discuss the prototypes developed during the Comon make-a-ton on understandable healthcare and gather feedback.

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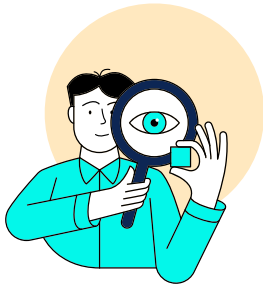
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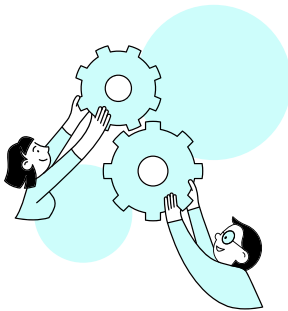
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3.2 Phase 2 – Explore Problems

Phase 2a. Map Problems

After selecting a central challenge, we explored the problem through roundtable discussions and interviews. Instead of traditional roundtable discussions, we brought all stakeholders together on liitle boats floating on the rivers of Ghent.
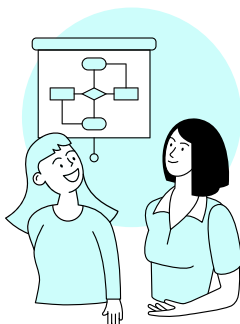
Matchmaking event - Introduction and brainstorming with stakeholders

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the theme, the workfield, underlying problems, and possibilities for collaboration, we gathered 45 individuals who work professionally in the field of understandable healthcare in Ghent, as researchers, policymakers, or practitioners. We also invited the challengers.

Since many participants were new to Comon, we provided an introductory session to explain the theme and the methodology. Then, we divided the participants into groups of eight and let them board the boats. Drifting on the rivers of Ghent, the participants got to know each other. A moderator facilitated the conversation on each boat. How do participants encounter the theme of understandability of healthcare? What sub-problems are associated with the challenge? What existing solutions are available? Are there target groups that are not yet being reached? And how can Comon make a difference?

We deliberately chose a **playful format**. Compared to traditional roundtable discussions, a matchmaking session on boats offered clear advantages. Participants shared an unusual experience, enabling them to establish not only professional connections but also personal relationships. Additionally, the experience lowered barriers and created a level playing field for all attendees.

All conversations were recorded, providing a **wealth of thematic information**. We gathered valuable insights and ideas through short interviews and portraits, which we shared on our website. However, in hindsight, we realized that we could have better processed the information internally before sharing it externally in the form of a publication. Not a scientific article, but rather a readable document, a special edition of a popular science magazine, or a small book.

This matchmaking event was also the moment when people's **commitment** became evident. It laid the foundation for the majority of successful collaborations within Comon. It was, for example, the occasion where researchers and entrepreneurs from the subsequent microlabs (see p.30) first met. Therefore, in future projects, we aim to meticulously prepare this step in collaboration with intermediary organizations that can identify interesting individuals.

In-depth interviews

To validate, deepen, and supplement the insights from the matchmaking event, we conducted 22 in-depth interviews with various experts.

At Comon, we aim to **recognize diverse forms of expertise** and connect them. Therefore, in this step, we interviewed experts with academic knowledge, practical knowledge, and experiential knowledge. In addition to prominent researchers and experiential experts, we also contacted seasoned healthcare providers such as general practitioners, nurses, and psychologists. This interdisciplinary approach provided a comprehensive view of understandability of healthcare, the problems caused by a lack of understandability, and the various factors that hinder understandable care.

The profound knowledge of the experts contrasted with the relative unfamiliarity of our interviewers. Although we were aware of the complexity of healthcare understandability and had prepared well, it was **challenging to thoroughly process the abundance of information from the interviews.** This signaled the need to involve individuals with domain knowledge on the topic more closely in the process.

This experience taught us that Comon needs to strike a balance between our roles as subject matter experts and process facilitators. Comon aims to catalyze innovation by developing solutions for societal challenges through short-term and atypical collaborations. Therefore, it is essential to quickly assess the **state of the art**. Such an analysis should be concise and powerful, enabling easy sharing with individuals in the subsequent steps of the project. However, concise and impactful communication should not compromise scientific accuracy.

Public engagement with a focus on experiential experts

While the matchmaking event and in-depth interviews primarily involved input from experts, we wanted to understand the experiences and perspectives of "ordinary" Ghent citizens through a series of public activities at De Krook. Simultaneously, we aimed to raise awareness of the theme of understandable care by facilitating discussions among people.

To facilitate the sharing of experiences by Ghent residents, we engaged **experienced process facilitators**. We organized philosophy cafés, moderated by professional philosophers, and dialogue tables, facilitated by experienced process facilitators from Avansa regio Gent, where participants engaged in conversations. Since we focused on healthcare understandability, we also organized some activities in **multiple languages** (Dutch, English, Turkish, and Arabic).

During the dialogue table **"Visiting the Doctor in Different Cultures"**, three healthcare providers shared their experiences of doctor visits in their respective cultures. Hasan Alkhalaf, Ebru Hacioglu, and Adja Fatou Touré provided unique insights into their personal experiences, which served as a starting point for discussing the question, "According to you, what should the ideal doctor visit look like?"

In the dialogue table **"A Doctor Becomes a Cancer Patient"**, general practitioner Rudy van Giel shared his own experience with cancer. He wrote a book about his personal journey, and he shared selected excerpts, presenting both perspectives: that of a healthcare provider and later, that of a patient.

Through four philosophy cafés, conducted in Dutch, English, Turkish, and Arabic, we explored the question **"How do we make healthcare understandable for everyone?"** We reached many non-Dutch-speaking residents of Ghent. This achievement would not have been possible without Amal vzw (previously known as IN-Gent vzw). In the future, we will continue to organize activities for specific target groups, potentially in collaboration with intermediary parties.

During the event **"Quotes: Immune to Cancer"**, Tessa Kerre (Ghent University Hospital and Ghent University) discussed her new book. She aimed to break the taboo surrounding cancer by offering a story of hope.

As a hematologist, she shared insights into her daily practice, demystifying the world of cancer research and explaining complex concepts such as immunotherapy in layman's terms. The book included testimonies from cancer patients and stories from the perspectives of patients and healthcare providers.

It is important to note that we **did not adequately incorporate the dialogue** that emerged during the public activities **into the subsequent stages of the project**. While we successfully facilitated conversations during the events themselves, we did not sufficiently sustain them beyond the activities. In future Comon projects, we will more effectively integrate participants' input into other project activities.

Phase 2b. Select Problems

### State of the art and further problem analysis

Using all the information from the previous phase, we formulated answers to the following questions: (a) What are the points of pain within the challenge? and (b) How is the challenge currently being addressed? This resulted in a points of pain analysis and a state of the art analysis, respectively.

We approached the analyses **pragmatically**, with the aim of shaping the further trajectory of the project. Therefore, we did not create extensive reports providing a comprehensive overview of all relevant information, obstacles, pitfalls, and existing solutions. Instead, we created accessible summaries in six blog posts on the Comon website, each addressing a specific sub-problem of understandable healthcare. These sub-problems are: (1) the use of excessive medical jargon, (2) time pressure on healthcare providers, leading to limited time for effective communication, (3) communication skills of healthcare providers, (4) cultural differences causing barriers, (5) low health literacy of patients, and (6) low digital skills of patients. All blog posts on these sub-problems are available on the **Comon website** (only in Dutch).

The emphasis in this phase is on summarizing all the information. It requires **striking a balance** between completeness and conciseness. On one hand, we want to provide participants in the rest of the Comon trajectory with as much information as possible, but on the other hand, we don't want to overwhelm them with lengthy reports. The goal is to enable people to participate in activities such as co-creation sessions, make-a-tons, or microlabs without extensive preparation. Finding the right format for such knowledge transfer is still a quest for us at the moment.

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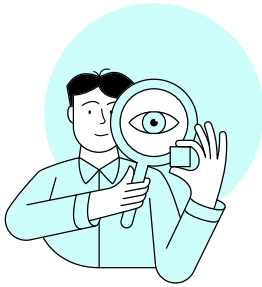
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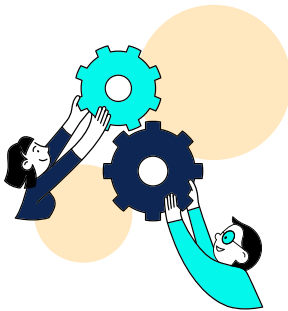
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3.3 Phase 3 – Brainstorm Solutions

Phase 3a. Creative Brainstorm

After a thorough problem analysis, we embarked on a search for solutions during co-creation workshops. The results were exhibited in De Krook and validated with citizens of Ghent during our "bakfietsweek" (cargo bike week).
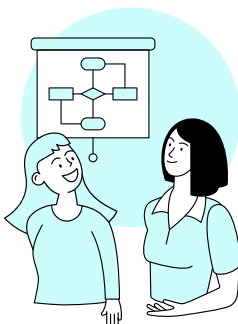
Co-creation Workshops

During three co-creation workshops, we brought together citizens, policymakers, and entrepreneurs to brainstorm ways to improve the understandability of healthcare. We guided all participants in quickly formulating solution ideas and making them tangible. The focus was not on generating realistic solutions. On the contrary, participants were encouraged to dream big and come up with futuristic solutions. The primary goal was to stimulate discussion, gain a better understanding of underlying problems, and explore possible directions for solutions.

This approach is also known as **"research through design"**. By allowing people to discuss utopian solutions, we gain insights into various aspects of a complex and future-oriented challenge, provided the process is well-guided. Therefore, we employed specific methodologies during the co-creation workshops, such as empathy exercises, the GPS method, COCD-box, and tech cards for inspiration. An illustrator brought all the utopian ideas to life through sketches.

A critical reflection is that we **did not involve academics** in this phase. We made this decision primarily for two reasons. First, in earlier stages of the Comon project, we noticed that some people in Ghent were less willing to express their opinions in the presence of experts. Second, we feared that academics would prefer to approach the debate from a factual perspective. We were mistaken, as it later became evident that academics would have gladly participated in these activities.

Nevertheless, the co-creation workshops yielded many fascinating insights. Leap Forward, a partner of Comon, developed nine sketches depicting solutions for improved understandability of healthcare.

"Bakfietsweek" (Cargo Bike Week)

We validated the nine hypothetical solution ideas during the "cargo bike week" with around a hundred citizens of Ghent at the main library De Krook and several neighborhood libraries. We provided a brief description of each solution idea and presented sketches of prototypes. Based on that, we engaged in semi-structured interviews with citizens of Ghent, asking them:

- Would you use the solution yourself?
- Do you think others would use the solution?
- Would you recommend the solution to others if it existed?
- Do you believe the solution improves the understandability of healthcare for you or others?
- What do you like (or dislike) about the solution?
- Do you have any ideas to improve the solution?

The value of the activity was primarily **communicative**. It helped us raise awareness of the theme within the Ghent ecosystem, reaching a target audience that we had difficulty reaching through online campaigns. However, in terms of content, the cargo bike days did not achieve their intended goals. A brief analysis of the data provided **few new insights**. In the future, we plan to conduct similar surveys through intermediary organizations.

Exhibition on Understandable Healthcare

During an exhibition open to the public, we highlighted the numerous solution ideas generated during the co-creation workshops. In De Krook, visitors had the opportunity to explore how innovative and technological solutions can contribute to the understandability of healthcare. They also encountered testimonials from patients and healthcare providers, collected during the previous phases through informal conversations and in-depth interviews. Additionally, visitors received book recommendations from the collection curators of Library De Krook on the topic of understandable healthcare.

To make the theme accessible to the exhibition visitors, we incorporated various **illustrations**. Firstly, the sketches depicting solution ideas played a significant role, as visitors found it challenging to visualize the innovative solutions otherwise. Secondly, we collaborated with illustrator Leonard Cools to create intimate drawings related to the sensitive topics raised by patients and healthcare providers. These drawings allowed us to focus on the individuals behind the stories without compromising their anonymity.

The exhibition at De Krook garnered significant attention for the topic of understandable healthcare. In addition to its visibility within the building, several press articles were published in media outlets such as HLN. Building upon this success, we aim to invest further in the exhibition **during subsequent phases** of the Comon project. This will enable us to showcase even more to the public, inspire visitors to develop their own ideas, recruit participants for future phases of the project, and **make the exhibition more visible beyond De Krook**, such as in other buildings of our partner organization.

Phase 3b. Select Solutions

Funnel Workshop

The results, insights, and solution ideas from the previous phases were presented to a group of experts during a funnel workshop. The intention was for them to select the sub-problems to work on further and identify which solution ideas had the greatest potential.

We asked the experts not only to **provide us with a clear understanding of what is technologically feasible but also of what is socially desirable**. Therefore, we engaged them in evaluating the proposed solution ideas based on insights gathered from our conversations with the citizens of Ghent, with the aim of formulating clear guidelines for further development of the solution ideas.

The funnel workshop partially missed its goal. **The engagement of the experts turned out to be greater than we had anticipated**. We intended to involve the experts briefly and have them assess the feasibility and desirability of certain solutions. However, the experts expressed their desire to actively participate in the co-creation process. In the next Comon trajectory, we will involve the experts more closely in the phase of generating solutions. At the same time, we will need to find an alternative for the selection phase to clearly delineate use cases.

Make-a-ton

During the holiday week of higher education institutions, we organized a make-a-ton open to all students in Ghent. During this five-day event, interdisciplinary groups of students worked on materializing the solution ideas generated throughout the Comon project. We immersed the students in an innovation process focused on understandable healthcare. On the final day of the make-a-ton, the students showcased their work to the public at De Krook, and a panel of experts judged the feasibility of all ideas and prototypes.

The make-a-ton lasted for five days, which is longer than a typical hackathon. This allowed students more time to explore the theme on the first day and get inspired by various experts and organizations in the field during practical visits. Additionally, it provided us with ample time to provide **intensive coaching** to students and focus on skills such as *design thinking, fast prototyping, business modeling*, and elevator pitching through various workshops. Furthermore, the make-a-ton was unique because it brought together students from different educational backgrounds (such as communication, occupational therapy, podiatry, physiotherapy, graphic design, and medicine) into teams.

The make-a-ton was a success. Students found it to be an **enriching week**, and professionals noted that this approach to knowledge sharing was refreshing and provided a unique opportunity for interdisciplinary student collaboration and preparation for the workforce. From a solution-oriented perspective, the make-a-ton was also successful, as two solution ideas were further developed in the subsequent phases of the Comon project.

However, we also identified areas for improvement. The make-a-ton required significant organizational effort. If we choose to have another five-day event in the future, we will need to (partially) rely on external parties who are willing to contribute to organizing parts of the trajectory. Another aspect to consider is attracting more students with technical backgrounds. Only this way can we create even more diverse teams. Finally, there was a lack of critical debate in this phase. In the future, we aim to incorporate certain methodologies to introduce ethical reflections during this stage.

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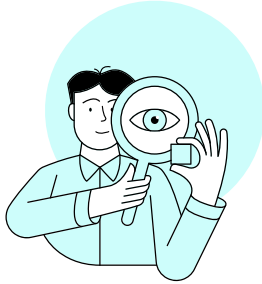
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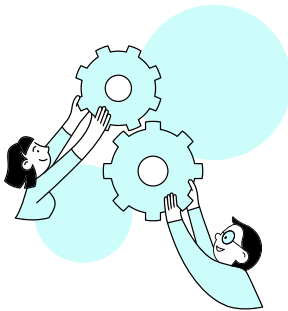
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3.4 Phase 4 – Experiment

Phase 4a. Experiment with Solutions

In this phase, we put the solution ideas into practice. We build working prototypes to test them in a real environment. We guide diverse teams in microlabs, provide them with resources to develop a prototype, and give them the opportunity to gather feedback during a public event.
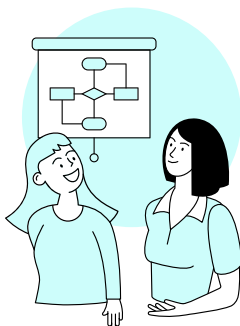
Microlabs

To develop concrete and tangible solutions within a short period, we employed the methodology of the microlabs. Teams, self-assembled and independently, submitted applications to participate in a microlab. They took ownership of a specific solution idea.

In the initial phase, several teams further developed the solution ideas from the make-a-ton. In the second phase, other teams proposed their own solution ideas. The objective was to develop tangible solutions, create a prototype, and test it during a public event.

To form high-performing teams, we organized a series of events. During a **matchmaking event**, we brought together interested citizens, researchers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs. Subsequently, interested teams presented their solution ideas to a Comon coach. Based on their feedback, they could refine their applications before the final submission.

Design Sprint

Ultimately, we selected four teams. Each team was given the opportunity to further develop their solution idea through a design sprint. In five steps and over five days, the participants created an initial prototype. On the first day, the team mapped out the underlying problem. On the second day, they brainstormed possible solutions. On the third day, they selected a solution and detailed it through a storyboard. On the fourth day, the team transformed the conceptual solution into an initial prototype. Finally, on the fifth day, the prototype was tested with six (or more) end-users. The outcome of the design sprint was a conceptually developed and tangible initial prototype.

In this phase, we **experimented with the traditional design sprint format** of Google Ventures, integrating several principles of Comon. For problem definition, we used the Innovatrix tool from imec and a service blueprint variant from imec-mict-UGent to gain a better understanding of the needs. We also arranged for participants to spend half a day engaging with experts from various disciplines, who could provide feedback on the teams' design processes. After each design sprint, the approach was evaluated and adjusted.

Overall, the design sprint was considered a success. By rapidly materializing participants' ideas, both internal and external reflections on important aspects of understandable healthcare were stimulated. Involving experts and external stakeholders proved to be highly beneficial. The teams' content knowledge was strengthened, fostering their enthusiasm for further innovation and entrepreneurship. However, in the future, we will make additional efforts to stimulate team **ownership and entrepreneurship** as much as possible.

Inventions

In total, we organized four microlabs focused on four concrete prototypes of solution ideas. Below is a brief description of each prototype.

Dolox - A smart watch to record your pain

What if there were a smart device that could register your pain and communicate it to the doctor at a later time? No more misunderstandings about a so-called "little ache," as it is not easy to express pain accurately, especially for older individuals. **Dolox** was primarily designed for them. It is a simple device with only two buttons. Patients indicate their pain level using a dial and capture it with the press of a button. Later, the doctor can access these data to propose personalized treatment based on precise information.

RingMe - A phone bot for non-native-speaking patients

What if there were an intelligent phone bot that calls patients in their native language before a doctor's visit? A bot that can ask a few preliminary questions and determine if an interpreter is needed during the consultation. **RingMe** enhances consultations by improving understanding between doctors and patients. Patients arrive better prepared for their appointments. Hospitals can save unnecessary costs when patients follow up on their appointments. Moreover, the patient feels heard and assisted. RingMe is primarily designed for the patient, demonstrating how one phone call can save lives.

Spexter - An app that translates your medical report into understandable explanations

With **Spexter**, a patient can scan complex medical documents and have them transformed into layman's terms. Medical reports from examinations or consultations are often written in difficult jargon, making them hard to understand for the average patient. Using the app's scanning function, patients can scan a paper or digital medical report by taking a photo. The app converts the text of the medical report into digital text. Patients can click on difficult words in the scanned text to read an explanation in understandable language.

MIA - A web tool to find personalized psychological help

Do you experience symptoms of burnout or depression? Do you need a psychiatrist or a psychologist? Which kind of therapy is best suited to your needs, and where can you find a suitable caregiver? Many people with psychological needs struggle with such doubts. As a result, they may not establish a connection with a caregiver and may switch from one caregiver to another, or worse, discontinue treatment. **MIA** aims to prevent this by asking a few simple questions. By answering these questions in a web tool, the list of contacts narrows down, leaving only relevant caregivers based on the individual's needs. In short, patients can find a psychological caregiver who suits them more quickly.

Procurement Resources

After the design sprint, each team received a prototyping budget of €12,000 to have a more advanced version of their prototype developed by an external company. This enabled the teams to test their solution idea in real contexts and move closer to a finished solution.

We supported the teams in creating a **request for proposal (RFP)** that precisely described what they wanted an external company to develop. This exercise was valuable as it forced the teams to think about their solution in concrete terms. The results of the design sprint proved particularly useful in creating a functional description of an advanced prototype.

We sent out all RFPs to a list of **developers in the Ghent ecosystem**. Ultimately, we awarded the contracts for each microlab to the developer with the best proposal. The collaboration with these companies (ENT Studios, Forcit and We Are) progressed smoothly for each microlab and resulted in working prototypes.

Providing prototyping budgets proved valuable for the teams. It is no coincidence that innovation accelerators emphasize the importance of a functioning prototype. One potential pitfall is that a working prototype creates **high expectations**. It is essential to consistently frame the distinction between a good prototype and a finished product when communicating with visitors, partners, and other interested parties.

Experiment Cafés

At the end of each microlab, Comon organized an accessible public activity in De Krook. The main focus of each "experiment café" was the presentation of the prototype. The experiment café was the occasion where the teams first showcased their inventions to the outside world. The goal? To receive feedback from stakeholders such as patients, healthcare providers, and technologists. Does the prototype work well? What expectations does it create? What can be improved? We also organized a number of awareness-raising and substantive activities related to the theme of each microlab, such as pain perception, multilingual care, finding personalized psychological help, and doctor's language.

At each experiment café, people could come and go as they pleased. All activities took place in the public spaces of De Krook. **We kept the threshold for participation as low as possible**. This allowed each microlab team to test their prototype with a broad audience. In turn, the general public gained insight into the process of innovation.

An important goal of each experiment café was to **bring together, activate, and maintain the Ghent ecosystem** surrounding understandable care. A tangible prototype provided an ideal starting point for conversation, just as personal stories offer a good point of connection. For this reason, during each experiment café, we organized at least one activity in which patients shared their personal experiences on stage. These stories increased relatability, lowered barriers, ensured that everyone felt involved, and brought the ecosystem closer together.

For the microlab teams, the experiment cafés provided **a stimulating space to present and test their prototypes.** It proved to be not only a good communication exercise, but the teams also gained valuable insights from conversations with visitors. The microlab teams reported that the enthusiastic reactions from visitors provided energy to further develop their prototypes.

During the **experiment café on pain perception**, participants could test the prototype of the Dolox microlab. Many participants were amazed by the possibilities of the smart pain registration watch. Participants could also engage with Het Connectief, who facilitated conversations in small groups based on literary excerpts about pain. The discussions revolved around the impact of living with chronic pain, exploring pain thresholds, and various forms of pain perception. On stage, individuals with lived experiences shared stories about the many invisible barriers in their lives with pain. And during a philosophical conversation, a moderator explored different perspectives on pain together with the participants.

In the **experiment café on multilingual care**, participants could test RingMe, a robot that calls patients in their own language prior to their doctor's visit. Additionally, multilingual facilitators engaged in conversations with participants, reading out thoughts in Dutch, Arabic, and Turkish. What resonated with the participants? The discussion continued at dialogue tables: How would healthcare in Ghent look if everyone received proper assistance in their own language? Finally, participants could visit the photo exhibition "Vlaamse klanken" by Shalan Alhamwy, discover a multilingual app for healthcare providers to communicate with non-native speakers, and listen to Het Vertellement: a multilingual "kamishibai" (story theater) with stories in different languages read by residents of Ghent in their mother language.

The **experiment café on the path to mental care** revolved around the MIA prototype, a web tool to find personalized psychological help. Participants could also borrow living books and listen to personal stories about mental care. They could share their own stories with Warme William, who roamed the event and asked passersby how they were doing. Another activity was the philosophy café, where a philosopher engaged with all interested individuals in a conversation about the question "Are you crazy?" Therapists and clients engaged in two panel discussions about their experiences with psychological counselling. For those interested, there was an immersion into literary and poetic fragments about mental vulnerability using silent disco headphones.

The **experiment café on doctor's language** also offered a varied program. Visitors could test the Spexter app, a functioning prototype that translates medical reports into understandable explanations, with a focus on cardiology. An Swerts gave a lecture about her children's series "Pleister," in which she makes medical terms understandable for children. There was also a panel discussion on patient-centered care, featuring Kirsten Colpaert, Stéphanie De Maesschalck, Krista Bracke, and Wim Van Roose, moderated by Lies Steppe. Continuous activities included consultations with a book doctor, a playful quiz about doctor's language by the theater company Productions & Zonen, and the opportunity to learn about Voice+, a voice amplifier for healthcare providers developed by NextGenics.

Phase 4b. Make Solutions Sustainable

Continuous support in prototype development

Throughout the microlabs, numerous questions arose from the microlab teams that did not fit into predefined activities. Questions about collaborations, additional subsidies or incubation programs, setting up user tests, intellectual property rights, entrepreneurship...

During the first Comon project, we dealt with such questions from the microlab teams on an ad hoc basis. The teams received **tailored support** and individual guidance in drafting test protocols, connections with relevant partners, referrals to funding channels, and assistance in drafting legal documents.

The continuous support for the teams was highly appreciated. However, it required a **significant effort** from Comon. Therefore, in a future Comon project, we aim to consolidate additional support in well-defined workshops and advisory moments. For more specialized questions, we intend to collaborate more closely with partners such as the BlueHealth Innovation Center and Durf Ondernemen (Ghent University). This will also improve the service provided to the teams.

Check-out workshop

At the end of the microlab, we organized a "check-out workshop." This half-day session involved exploring future opportunities and potential next steps with each team individually. What pitfalls might they encounter along the way? How can they set up a pilot study? And where can they turn for support in their entrepreneurship? The goal was to prepare the teams as best as possible for their own next steps.

The check-out workshop marked the **transition** for the teams from a period of intensive guidance by Comon to a period where Comon gradually phased out its support. Although the teams were still welcome to seek feedback and advice from Comon, it would now be based on their own request and initiative. Simultaneously, the teams received coaching from BlueHealth Innovation Center and Durf Ondernemen! (Ghent University). This ensured a smooth transition of the teams from Comon to more entrepreneurship-oriented organizations.

In the future, we aim to **involve organizations such as BlueHealth Innovation Center and Durf Ondernemen! (Ghent University) earlier and more closely in the organization of the microlabs.** We have noticed that the teams often have specific questions during the design sprints, in preparation for the RFP, and after the experiment cafés. While the Comon team succeeded in answering many of those questions, more experienced coaches in the field of start-up support can often provide more efficient answers.

PHASE 1
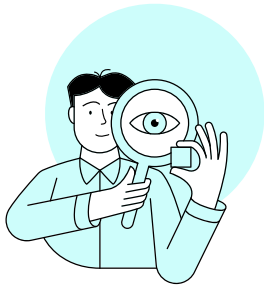
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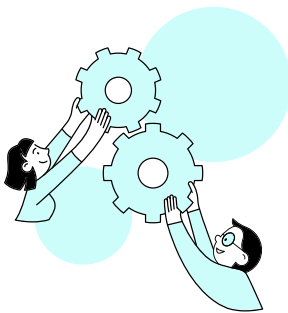
PHASE 3

PHASE 4

PHASE 5

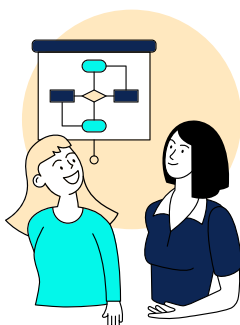# 3.5 Phase 5 – Evaluate and Learn

At the end of this Comon project, we conducted an evaluation to gain a clear overview of the value of the project. This provided us with the opportunity to refine certain aspects. In consultation with all partners, we formulated the following objectives for the evaluation:

- Mapping the methodology of Comon
- Enabling meaningful reuse of our methods, both internally and externally
- Explaining the benefits of participation for each partner
- Consolidating and strengthening the internal network
- Further substantiating our approach scientifically
- Sustaining the built ecosystem around understandable care
- Ensuring and enhancing funding

Phase 5a. Evaluation Workshops

During four workshops, we evaluated the objectives, approach, and operations of Comon. Each workshop lasted half a day. Most participants had previous experience with Comon, but for some, it was their first introduction.

Each workshop provided opportunities to delve into specific aspects of Comon's operations: objectives, methodology, various activities, and stakeholder management. The workshops resulted in an **update of the objectives**, many areas for **improvement in the solution trajectory, and considerations for the communication strategy.** To improve the comprehensability of this final report, we have **directly incorporated the insights** into the description of our objectives (see p. 9), the solution trajectory (see p. 18), and the communication strategy (see p. 39).

Phase 5b. Interviews

Tot slot voerden we ook 20 interviews uit bij een steekproef van alle stakeholders van Comon. Deelnemers werden via e-mail gecontacteerd met de vraag om deel te nemen. Vier ervaren onderzoekers gingen langs bij elk van de deelnemers voor een semigestructureerd interview. Alle interviews werden opgenomen, volledig uitgeschreven door een externe partij en nadien geanalyseerd door drie ervaren codeurs.

The interviews focused on **how Comon succeeds and might grow in creating added value** for the participants, partner organizations, and the people of Ghent in general.

The results of this interview study were compared and integrated with the insights from the workshops in Phase 5a. For an overview of the key findings, please refer to chapter 6.0 (see p. 41).

4.0

Public Trajectory

Parallel to the "solution trajectory" described above (see p.18), Comon collaborated with numerous partners to develop a "public trajectory" on understandable care. The focus was on capacity building and sensitization. We recognize that as Comon, we can only act as a catalyst for the many individuals and organizations already working every day to make Ghent even better. By strengthening this ecosystem and increasing support for their work, we enhance the chances of success for our joint project.

Together with our partners Avansa regio Gent, Urgent.fm, Ghent University Humanities Academy, and Artevelde College of Applied Sciences, we created a range of public-oriented activities. These activities aimed to sharpen the digital skills of citizens of Ghent, stimulate design thinking among students, strengthen public support, provide information to the audience, and foster critical reflection.

4.1 Sharpening Digital Skills

Less digitally skilled citizens of Ghent are an important target group for Comon. For them, we organized "digicafés": short workshops to teach technological skills. This is one of the objectives of Comon. The organization of these activities was facilitated by our partner Avansa regio Gent, which has a tradition of organizing digicafés.

During these digicafés, digital beginners learned how to search for and store their **personal data** (including health-related information) in a secure manner. They were introduced to digital tools such as Itsme, Mijn Burgerprofiel, and eBox. Additionally, they got acquainted with **reliable health-related apps and websites**. Which apps are worthwhile? Where can one find reliable health information? And how can one identify websites that offer fake health news?

4.2 Stimulating Design Thinking

Comon aims to increase the innovation potential in Ghent. We strongly believe in an approach based on design thinking (see p.13). Therefore, when Artevelde College of Applied Sciences approached us to collaborate on this objective, we did not hesitate. During a health-focused **make-a-ton**, over 180 students gave their best efforts to develop **innovative solutions** that can further enhance healthcare, utilizing communication and technology. In addition, we organized inspiring lectures, open to a broader audience.

Drawing from his experience in medical technology and digital innovation in healthcare, **Mario Huyghe** (CEO and founder of Ariom Healthcare Management & Innovation) shared insights on how innovation fundamentally transforms the applications and existing models of our healthcare systems. **Jens Bontinck** (Head of Labs, ML6) provided insights into the practical applications of artificial intelligence in communication and healthcare through a series of real-life examples.

Ghent residents had the opportunity to **explore new technologies** such as 3D printing, deepfake, augmented reality, virtual reality, and eye-tracking during the innovation floor at De Krook. They could also discover **innovative solutions** for the future of healthcare in Ghent during an experiment café.

4.3 Strengthening Support, Providing Information, and Fostering Critical Reflection

To put the theme of understandable healthcare on the agenda in Ghent, we organized a large festival at De Krook. We also supported several events organized by our partners.

"Dafalwadde" was a one-day festival focused on understandable healthcare. Visitors could borrow a living book, quietly enjoy a silent disco, entertain Jan Matthys (a well-known Ghent resident) with anecdotes from doctor visits, and treat themselves with an artwork from a vending machine.

Our healthcare stories are often deeply personal. During the **arts festival TUMULTINGENT**, people had the opportunity to confess a personal secret to artists at De Krook. They engaged in conversations, revealed what they wanted, and the artists used that as inspiration for their work.

In collaboration with the Ghent University Humanities Academy and Avansa regio Gent, we organized **discussion evenings where experts talked about caregiving and the role of literature**. Topics included grief, the impact of literature on healing, and culturally specific healthcare. The series featured speakers such as Peter Pype (Ghent University), Tessa Kerre (Ghent University), Aagje Swinnen (Maastricht University), Stéphanie De Maesschalk (Ghent University), Paul Verhaeghe (Ghent University), and author Erwin Mortier.

4.4 Evaluation of the Public Trajectory

Instead of hosting various small events and activities, we aim to move towards a smaller number of **larger events** in the future, where we can combine our efforts. Organizing public activities is quite time-consuming, especially for events with a limited number of participants. By consolidating our efforts, we ensure a higher return on investment.

In summary, we want to give certain public activities **a more central role in the "solution trajectory"** (see p.18). Firstly, this allows us to effectively incorporate everything that happens during the events, including all participant comments and insights, into the solution trajectory. Often, the smaller events have provided valuable information that we could have utilized further. Secondly, it clarifies to participants how these events fit within Comon's approach.

5.0

Communication

Throughout the Comon project, we provide **transparent and accessible communication**. This contributes to Comon's mission and the positioning of internal partners. The three main pillars of our communication are our societal mission, the potential of digital technology, and the importance of innovation.

5.1 Target audience

Our primary target audience is **citizens** - residents of Ghent and Ghent enthusiasts - followed by **professionals** within the ecosystem surrounding the chosen challenge, such as researchers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs. Central to our communication are the **stories of people.** We portray citizens, researchers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs as heroes. Ghent residents should be able to recognize themselves in the stories of these heroes, so that everyone feels addressed and welcome.

The underlying idea is that **anyone can be an inventor** at Comon. Everyone can contribute to making Ghent even better. Therefore, every communication includes an engaging call to action: share your challenge with us, brainstorm solutions together, experiment with us... Always in understandable language and with a tone of voice that is constructive, warm, and dynamic.

5.2 Most remarkable communication moments

The **most remarkable communication moments** during the first Comon project? We started with a brand new website in the Comon house style. To launch the first Comon project, we conducted an online **campaign with well-known residents of Ghent**. Nic Balthazar, Frederik Sioen, Pascale Platel, Christophe Vekeman, and others shared their challenges in the initial phase of the Comon project, inspiring and motivating other Ghent residents to do the same. Once the central challenge was chosen, we organized an **exhibition** at De Krook with more information and relevant testimonies. Throughout the entire Comon project, we received significant **press attention**. Radio2 conducted live radio broadcasts during the make-a-ton. Radio2, Radio Nostalgie, and NRJ conducted interviews about several prototypes from the microlabs. Press articles also appeared in various media outlets. Vrt.nws covered the make-a-ton, various prototypes from the microlabs, and the Mediawijs Award for Innovation. De Morgen mentioned MIA in an article. HLN covered the launch of Comon, the exhibition, the make-a-ton, and the prototypes of the microlabs. All press articles are avaible on the **Comon website** (only in Dutch).

5.3 Communication channels partners

Comon also utilized the communication channels of its partners. Interviews with Ghent residents involved in Comon (e.g., Leyla Yüksel and Dirk Martens) and announcements of Comon events were featured in the **Ghent City Magazine**. The online magazine **"Durf Denken"** from Ghent University featured interviews with Ghent University staff involved in Comon (e.g., Bas Baccarne and a Ghent University student who participated in the make-a-ton). **The Krook newspaper** included portraits of Ghent residents involved in Comon (e.g., Ercan Cesmeli and Marie Verougstraete). Urgent.fm conducted regular live radio broadcasts during Comon events, including during the make-a-ton.

Value Creation

In what ways does Comon create value for the people involved, the partners, the citizens of Ghent, and, by extension, the Ghent ecosystem surrounding healthcare? To answer that question, we analyzed the results of the evaluation workshops and stakeholder interviews. We carefully processed this data. What stands out is that many participants not only refer to Comon as a place for capacity building but often explicitly mention Comon as a source of meaning. Additionally, participants also provide suggestions for improving the operations of Comon.

6.1 Added value

1. Personal Development

Comon tackles complex challenges, requiring specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes from all participants. That's why Comon provides a safe environment for people to acquire knowledge and practice these skills. We also offer support and guidance. During the various workshops, participants are introduced to brainstorming and pitching methods and engage in exercises related to entrepreneurship. This allows individuals to fully develop themselves.

Some participants express that, thanks to their experience in the microlabs, they want to embark on entrepreneurship. Others share how they take the acquired knowledge and skills back to their own organizations. Still, others testify to the personal growth they experienced during the Comon project.

"I didn't go to college; I quit school at 15 and started working. I'm at the bottom of society because of my education level. Through Comon, I discovered that I have more to offer than I thought. For example, I would never have dared to speak for an audience. But at Comon, I tried it, because you made me feel comfortable, and because you really listened to me."
- Dirk Martens, chronic pain patient

"Personally, I found participating in Comon enriching. I'm someone who enjoys collaboration and looking beyond my own field. I always find it fascinating to see things from a different perspective and hear from others who are engaged in completely different areas, how they perceive and approach things. This has been personally enriching for me, and undoubtedly it will continue to be."
- Tessa Kerre, hematologist at Ghent University Hospital and Ghent University

"I found the make-a-ton setting very cool. Because of the support we received and because I believed in the idea, I wanted to participate in the microlab. You learn a tremendous amount. Even if you know nothing about business, how to pitch, or develop ideas... everything is explained to you. Thanks to the mix of people with different backgrounds, you gain a richer understanding. Truly fascinating."
- Maxim Desmet, student

2. Engaging Encounters

At Comon, you meet fascinating people. Comon provides access to a wide network of researchers, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and civil society organizations who may not frequently cross paths. Citizens are at the center of our work. Comon offers access to the general public, including groups that are sometimes hard to reach. This helps Comon foster a broader perspective beyond individual organizations. The diverse perspectives lead to broadening and deepening insights. Comon strengthens this effect by applying co-creative methods and integrating all perspectives into innovative solutions.

"It was great to get to know different people and organizations, to hear what they are engaged in, how that differs from Avansa. So, it was positive to establish those connections, to make those cross-overs with different organizations, and see how we can collaborate on one trajectory."
- Eva Rousselle, Avansa regio Gent

"Comon shows that there are alternative ways for multidisciplinary collaboration, apart from the more traditional ones. Comon clearly demonstrated that these alternative approaches can also work. Hopefully, this will resonate with the City of Ghent and the entrepreneurs in Ghent. This is not achieved with just one Comon project; it requires repetition."
- Wouter Van Den Bosch & Roger Lemmens, imec

"Comon brought together a lot of different people, sometimes making me wonder: where did they find all of them? Engaging encounters. Also, I'm amazed by the amount of expertise in Ghent. It has definitely expanded my network."
- Arantxa Wille, BlueHealth Innovation Center

3. Domain Expertise

At Comon, you gain new and surprising insights through interactions with people and organizations, by actively working with new technologies or by creating new things. The entire development process - from generating ideas to refining them into tangible prototypes - prompts questions and discussions. We approach these discussions critically and from various perspectives. The most fascinating insights arise when people from different backgrounds engage in conversation. Participants indicate that they found it valuable to acquire and share knowledge at Comon, and that they collectively developed new knowledge and insights.

"Comon is more than just exchanging knowledge. It's also about creating new knowledge. I observed this during the presentation of the make-a-ton. I was impressed. What we organize ourselves during the LISa Interprofessional Collaboration learning trajectory at Ghent University is limited to collaboration between students in healthcare and welfare education, where there's still much room for improvement in terms of collaboration between the healthcare and welfare sectors. But this mainly remains limited to the exchange of knowledge and insights within frameworks and paradigms that are variations of one another."
- Peter Pype, Ghent University

"Living Labs are a way to learn collectively. We experience that through Comon. It's important to capture those insights, such as knowledge about the methodology. That's how knowledge building happens."
- Tom Van Nieuwenhove, City of Ghent

4. Methodological Expertise

At Comon, we have methodological expertise on citizen participation, urban development, and digital innovation. Comon experiments with scientifically grounded and practically tested methods from imec-mict-UGent, imec, UGent Delta, and the City of Ghent. Comon can draw on years of expertise gained through smart city and urban living labs projects. One of the reasons for organizations to participate in Comon was to acquire methodological knowledge. Through Comon, we aim to share our approach and knowledge with these organizations.

"I also wanted to learn from you how to do this on a sufficiently large scale, making sure you have enough critical mass without it becoming too generalized and vague. The challenge for Comon at the start was to make the cases and challenges as tangible as possible, but not too tangible, to avoid it would become another 'Team Scheire.' And I think you succeeded in that. It's not about taking big social or societal leaps forward, but rather addressing micro-problems. It's the balance between being sufficiently, but not too general that I find interesting."
- Tom Braekeleirs, BlueHealth Innovation Center

"The methodological process of the entire project was interesting for Avansa. What became clear during the evaluation was the content of the different phases, how those phases interact, and who gets involved at what point. Also, the aspect of sustaining the process and the solutions, how that is being tackled. So, all those aspects: how does such a process proceed? How is sustainability addressed? When I first participated, I had never heard of a hackathon or maker skills, etc. All of these are things we are less familiar with or do not know at all. It was nice to see what exists and how it unfolds."

- Eva Rousselle, Avansa regio Gent

"Process management is crucial. I think your role in that aspect is essential because otherwise, you would initiate such a process, but it wouldn't be completed. I believe that the entire process management is just as important as the expertise itself. I see three parties coming together: the healthcare expertise, the process management, and the technologists from various disciplines. Creativity is also important. That's what motivated me as well: how can we be creative in this? You don't have to try to find the solution within your own means and comfort zone; you have to step out of that comfort zone for a while. This methodology of guidance and follow-up is a skill, and I found that very impressive. It's something worth sharing."

- Henk Maes, Head of Patient Guidance at General Hospital Sint-Lucas

"Through Comon, I acquired new knowledge. For example, how an innovation process works and how to go from a challenge to a tangible prototype. And everyone learns from each other."

- Dirk Martens, chronic pain patient

5. New Collaborations

Comon stimulates the initiation of new projects by attracting people and organizations with common goals. The connections established among individuals and organizations during the Comon project can form the foundation of future collaborations. At the same time, Comon provides an excellent platform for partners to highlight aspects such as citizen participation, innovation, and co-creation. Comon is a compelling example of how collaboration between urban actors can be realized. Many cities face this challenge today, even at an international level.

"Comon makes it easy for us to explain on a European level what the library is doing and why we are in a partnership with Ghent University and imec. This can be challenging to explain internationally, but through the Comon project, I was able to make it very tangible. It has helped us in terms of communication. Moreover, it has led us to join an Erasmus+ project with Aarhus and Lisbon. That's a direct positive effect of Comon."

- Krist Biebauw, Director of the De Krook Library

6. Fulfilling and Promoting Organizational Missions

Comon assists in realizing the missions and strategies of participating organizations. We realize that we can only act as a catalyst for all the forces within the Ghent ecosystem. If we want to create solutions for societal challenges together, we need knowledge and expertise from various sources. In return, we provide a meeting place for like-minded individuals to debate, guidance in organizing events, communication support, and access to hard-to-reach target groups.

"As a local government, we have extensive knowledge of, and a strong connection with the target group through our residential care centers and local service centers. That's absolutely our strength, but we ourselves lack tools in terms of technological solutions. That's why we need companies and innovation partners like imec to step in, along with research and data analysis from universities and colleges. Conversely, we find that companies highly value our input and our connection with the target group. They have innovative opportunities but find it challenging

"to access the target group. For us, it is crucial to get to know these partners to achieve a win-win situation based on our strengths. I find that win-win balance to be a very important element." -
- Els Lecompte, Director of Health and Care at the City of Ghent

"Thanks to Comon, we can involve citizens right from the start in imec's research on new technologies. This way, we create people-centric technological revolutions that make life healthier."
- Roger Lemmens, Director of Digital Technologies at imec

"The way students are involved is fantastic. I don't think I have ever seen so many students working on one theme during the presentation of the projects, enthusiastically exploring and searching. It wasn't just students from Ghent University but also from Artevelde College, for example. Everyone could participate, and they did. It also aligns with Ghent University's perspective on inquiry-based learning and new work methods we strive to implement in our institutions."
— Freddy Mortier, Ghent University

"We want newcomers to actively participate in everything happening in Ghent. We often encounter language barriers, which are sometimes insurmountable, but more often than not, they can be overcome. We focus on clear language and cultural sensitivity, which aligns perfectly with Comon's goals. We share similar objectives with Comon, which motivated us to participate and to spread the word among others."
— Désirée Derksen, Amal vzw

7. Societal agenda setting

Comon succeeds in sparking a debate on societal issues and inspiring people to take effective action themselves. We do this, on the one hand, by organizing public activities such as philosophical cafés or the boat event with experts. On the other hand, we do this by amplifying ideas and providing opportunities to further develop those ideas. Thanks to our accessible communication, we can make the theme of understandability of healthcare visible and inspire people.

"The boat event led to mutual enthusiasm. The exchange of ideas and discussions brought the project to life, creating a buzz around the theme of understandability of healthcare."
— Kathy Laroy, Ghent University

"The idea of understandability of healthcare was a dream theme because it resonates with everyone. Comon has put a lot of effort into how we can find something that appeals to citizens. I have done a lot of projects where the original objectives were lost during the course. With Comon, you address that problem in a concrete and targeted manner."
— Freddy Mortier, Ghent University

"Innovation is also about involves communicating and enspiring. This dynamic is clearly reflected in the videos, social media, and website of Comon, where you always get a nice overview of what's happening."
— Tom Van Nieuwenhove, Stad Gent

"I definitely think those information sessions were a very strong form of knowledge sharing. But of course, when something is being developed or when you have a chat with students presenting their prototypes at the prototype market, that is also knowledge sharing, and there is a large audience present. And then, of course, there are the experiment cafés, which are also a form of knowledge sharing."
— Tessa Kerre, Hematologist at Ghent University Hospital and Ghent University

8. Making Ghent an Even Better City

Comon aims to make the world a little better, starting with Ghent. People who participate in Comon share that social commitment. They want to address a societal problem, fight injustice, and make their fellow citizens happier. Comon provides opportunities to meet like-minded individuals and actively engage in that commitment.

"To me, Comon is a personal commitment. I have thrown myself into it with heart and soul, even after working hours. I want to work in-depth with the network and find solutions. Sooner rather than later."
— Henk Maes, Head of Patient Guidance at General Hospital Sint-Lucas

"I also found it to be a great initiative to involve the public, the citizens of Ghent. Not just asking, 'Who wants to participate?' or filling out a survey, but genuinely getting inspired by a lecture in those groups. I thought it was a great approach to delve deep and involve people. I didn't hesitate to participate."
— Tessa Kerre, hematologist at Ghent University Hospital and Ghent University

participate." - Tessa Kerre, hematologist at Ghent University Hospital and Ghent University
Quote: "It's a socially valuable theme, not purely commercial. And that represents a certain value, contributing to something like that. It's great that we were able to work on that together with the City of Ghent and Comon."
— Hans Bosmans, Leap Forward

"Avansa's starting point is working on societal challenges. Our entire reason of existence is that we want to build a better society and provide people with tools through content and various ways of work. We want to empower people to navigate society, critically question it. The fact that Comon starts from a topic that's present in society, something that requires attention, where improvement is possible — that's the main reason why we got involved and why it adds value for us."
— Eva Rousselle, Avansa regio Gent

9. Fun and Well-being

When people feel safe to try and fail, they dare to experiment with new things. It's an absolute requirement for innovation. And when they feel good, they reveal their best sides. That's our belief. That's why we pay attention to the well-being of all participants in every Comon activity. We create a positive, enjoyable atmosphere in which people can share their experiences, knowledge, and expertise optimally.

"Another unique added value was the approach with a pleasant, slightly unconventional touch. Involvement of people like Jan Matthys, activities like the 'living booth.' The circus-like atmosphere makes a dry subject rather pleasant, quirky, and fun."
— Wouter Van den Bosch, imec

"I found it overall enjoyable. Firstly, it was light-hearted, even though we were dealing with serious matters. It was explained in a good way. It was fun. At certain moments, it had to be serious, but the freedom and the setting were fantastic."
— Maxim Desmet, student

"I think Comon is an incredibly fun team. That's why I enjoy working on the project. It reminds me a bit of a start-up. You feel the entrepreneurial mindset. Just look at what Comon has achieved. Fantastic, isn't it?"
— Freddy Mortier, Ghent University

10. Real Solutions

At Comon, we go beyond just thinking and talking; we also allocate a budget to actually do things. We collectively come up with tangible solutions and create prototypes. This is highly valued by most participants. Not only because the proposed solutions can improve the lives of many people, such as patients and healthcare providers, but also because tangible solutions stimulate discussion and critical reflection. People can better imagine what innovative solutions have to offer when they can touch them and try them out, which ultimately enhances the innovation process.

"I believe there are excellent results. I thought the make-at-ton was fantastic. Actually making things tangible. All those incremental steps in the trajectory, some better than others, but they all add up. We achieved a beautiful materialization through that."
— Lieven De Marez, Research Director at imec-mict-UGent

"The reason I said 'yes' to this is because I truly feel that Comon is getting things moving. Something tangible is happening, solutions are being developed. It's time well invested."
— Tessa Kerre, hematologist at Ghent University Hospital and Ghent University

"Comon is small and agile. And that's quite funny, because the others are behemoths: the City of Ghent, imec, and Ghent University aren't small organizations that easily and flexibly maneuver through everything. Together, we have created a project that is fast and easily adaptable, flexibly adjusting to new opportunities that arise. That's something we should definitely take with us."
— Krist Biebauw, Director of the De Krook Library

6.2 Areas for improvement

The participants of the evaluation workshops and interviews also mention a number of areas for improvement. We list the most important points of attention and concrete suggestions.

1. Stakeholder Management

Comon has a large and diverse network of stakeholders. This is an advantage, but it also poses challenges. For instance, Comon must continue to invest in stakeholder management in order to **involve the right groups of people**. In the next Comon project, extra efforts will be needed to involve less vocal and/or vulnerable citizens of Ghent more closely, for example through neighborhood directors. However, we also want to better connect with creators with a technical or design background, and with policymakers from Ghent University and the City of Ghent. In addition, Comon must continue to **ensure that people remain involved** once they are on board. At the start of the next Comon project, it is therefore important to explore what the added value of each phase is for each stakeholder, using personas.

2. Information Management

During all stages of the Comon project, a lot of knowledge and insights are generated. **How can we collect, process, share, and use these insights in the next phases?** Thanks to interim reports – preferably in a digestible form – people who join in later phases can easily pick up the thread. A final report can ensure that no information is lost at the end of the project. Such a report should not only bring together domain knowledge but also provide insight into the innovation process.

3. Expectation Management

A Comon project lasts longer than a year and consists of many sub-activities. Therefore, we must **inform** the general public, the stakeholders, and all participants of activities well **about the status quo**. What are we doing right now and why? What is the bigger picture? How far along are we in the project? And what expectations do we (still) have? In the first Comon project, participants needed a clearer explanation of the content, the stakeholders, the purpose, and the expectations. What is expected of me after this event? How can I stay involved?

4. Pace

Things move forward at Comon. Therefore, the pace is quite high. First, we need to communicate clearly about this, so that stakeholders join with the right expectations. Second, we need to find ways to support stakeholders. **How do we ensure that everyone can keep up with the pace?** This is an important point of attention when shaping the next Comon project.

5. Ownership

Comon works on solutions for challenges in Ghent. However, Comon does not aspire to realize these solutions itself. Comon does not want to keep ownership over developed solutions, but wants to be a lever to give urban actors all possibilities to take up this ownership. That is also why our microlab teams receive all available intellectual property rights over the created solutions at the end of a microlab.

We can still grow in how we manage expectations around ownership and how we support urban actors. For example, will a company be formed? Will the solution be sold as a product, or is it intended to set up a non-profit organization? Or is it a good idea to first seek project financing to further develop the solution? These are questions that we certainly cannot all answer when an idea takes shape, but we, or our network, can provide more support to answer them during the process.
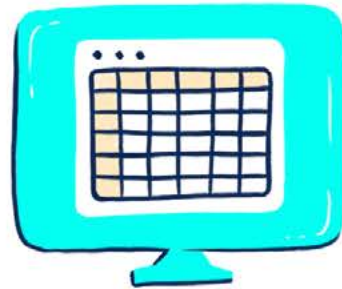
7.0

Comon in numbers

COMON IN NUMBERS

WEBSITE: 33.000 VISITORS

COMON TOGETHER, WE MAKE GHENT EVEN BETTER

DATABASE: 863 SUBSCRIBED CONTACTS

NEWSLETTER

MORE THAN 30 SENT

✉ = 10

43,69% OPEN

SOCIAL MEDIA: 1997 FOLLOWING

798 FOLLOWING

576 FOLLOWING

360 FOLLOWING

179 FOLLOWING

= 100

2 NOMINATIONS

apolitical
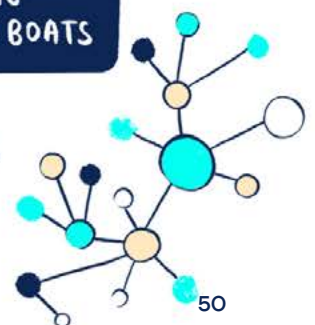
mediawijs   WON!

PROJECTACQUISITION: € 240.000

◯ = € 10.000

+ IN KIND CONTRIBUTION FROM OUR PARTNERS: INVALUABLE!

67 PARTNERS REACHED DURING THE MATCHMAKING EVENT ON BOATS

→ CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS, KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTIONS AND COMPANIES IN THE GHENT ECOSYSTEM

50

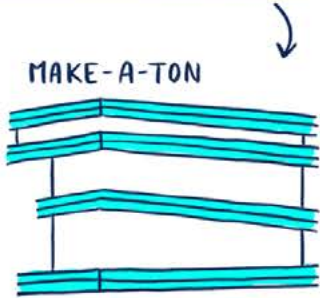**40 ACTIVITIES FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC: MORE THAN 1500 PARTICIPANTS**

= 100

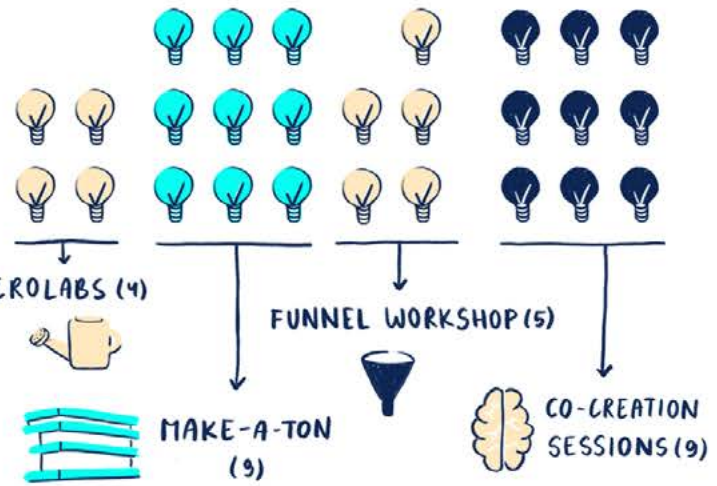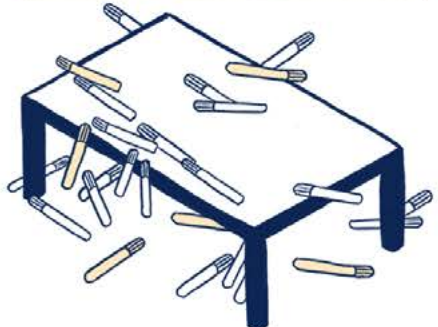**39 UNIQUE CHALLENGES**

654 VOTES

42 STUDENTS + 9 PROTOTYPES

MAKE-A-TON

27 SOLUTION-ORIENTED IDEAS DEVISED AND DEVELOPED

MICROLABS (4)

FUNNEL WORKSHOP (5)

MAKE-A-TON (9)

CO-CREATION SESSIONS (9)

4 MICROLABS

AND WHAT'S MORE...

COMON
26 WHITEBOARD MARKERS EMPTIED

= 1

2785 POST-ITS

= 100

1.582.947 CM DISTANCE COVERED ON BOATS

= 100.000

8.0

Conclusion

In this final report, we took you on a two-year journey that we made with Comon, in which experimentation and learning were central. A journey that started from the mission to bring together bright minds in our beloved Ghent, to let them discuss and especially to let them experiment. With a warm heart for the challenges we face in this city. But above all, with the eagerness (and a little crazyness) to tackle those problems. We could count on various forces, people with a passion for atypical collaborations and the desire to seek synergies. We want to emphasize the human aspect of such collaborations. Institutes and organizations have their importance, but it is the sparks between individuals that make the difference in this story. We believe we succeeded in creating an environment in which such collaborations could take root and where initiatives, ideas, and shared insights could grow and evolve.

We also see the way in which we do this as a process. A cycle of trying, reflecting, and improving. Following the Kaizen principle: after each cycle, we make improvements to the way we approach this next time. But also according to the principles of the reflective practitioner. We don't just tackle challenges hands-on, but we also try to abstract our actions. In this way, we try to separate sense from nonsense and unravel complex interactions. That's how we hope to contribute to a 'city methodology': an approach in which we implement principles from innovation management, pilot projects, and design thinking in the specific context of Ghent. However, the written methodology is by no means intended as a ready-made approach. On the contrary. This document is a snapshot of a process in development, where the starting points, the principles, and applied methods are only seen as attempts to create value within a complex environment where multiple urban actors meet- with different goals, different roles, and in various forms of interaction.

In addition to the development of the methodology, Comon also wants to contribute to urban transformation, to an alternative way of communicating or valorizing science, to support entrepreneurship, to give substance to the role of a city library, to bring people together, to sharpen digital skills, to make Ghent culture a critical, quirky, but also action-oriented and innovation-embracing culture. Therefore, consider this document as an extended hand. An extended hand to those who wish to contribute to that mission. An extended hand to the future, hoping that the first Comon project can be a stepping stone towards a sustainable operation that is increasingly successful in creating the value that we describe in this document.

If you find elements in this document that you consider valuable, we warmly invite you to steal them, transform them, and implement them in your own projects, processes, and collaborations.
See you tomorrow.

COMON

Want to participate?
Let us know!
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