

## AUTHORS

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## INTRODUCTION

Individuals' dietary behaviour is concentrated on nutrient-poor food and beverages, which magnifies persisting health inequities, as vulnerable groups are more exposed to and susceptible for unhealthy food environments. Approaches addressing individual behaviour do not acknowledge the complex interplay of factors that are at the root of this dietary behaviour, creating the illusion that individuals are solely responsible. Participatory methods with citizens and stakeholders are key to create a comprehensive overview of and gain insight into the factors underlying this dietary behaviour.

## OBJECTIVE

This study aimed to identify **factors and underlying mechanisms** related to healthy dietary behaviour among people in vulnerable socio-economic situations in Gent, Belgium, and discuss leverage- and action-points to facilitate balanced diets.

## METHODOLOGY

**Three group model building sessions** were organized with:  
(1) professionals working on health and/or equity;  
(2) individuals from a vulnerable neighborhood;  
(3) the two groups combined.

The first two sessions were aimed at identifying factors that influence dietary behaviour and creating causal loop diagrams. The factors were clustered around common themes, laying down sub-systems within the diagram. The last session was focused on exploring leverage- and action-points to facilitate healthy dietary behaviour.

## RESULTS

**Seven sub-systems** were identified. The sub-systems cover the most important areas that form barriers towards healthy dietary behaviour. The factors were connected throughout the different sub-systems, as depicted in the section of the diagram. For example, the sub-system on the commercial environment (blue), is connected to psycho-social factors (yellow), and transport, logistics, and economy (green).

In total, **28 action-points** were formulated. For the stakeholders, this was mostly related to policy, food on offer, and increasing knowledge and skills. While for the citizens, they focused on access, promotions, and food choices. Both groups iterated the importance of community projects.



### 1. The commercial and physical environment

Price, accessibility



### 2. Transport, logistics, and economy

Financial situation, bulk



### 3. Food-related knowledge, choices, and skills

Convenience in preparation



### 4. Demographic factors

Family, living situation



### 5. Social and community assistance

Visibility of local initiatives



### 6. Psycho-social factors

Stress, norms and values



### 7. Policy and political influences

Curriculum, policy and politics

### Citizens

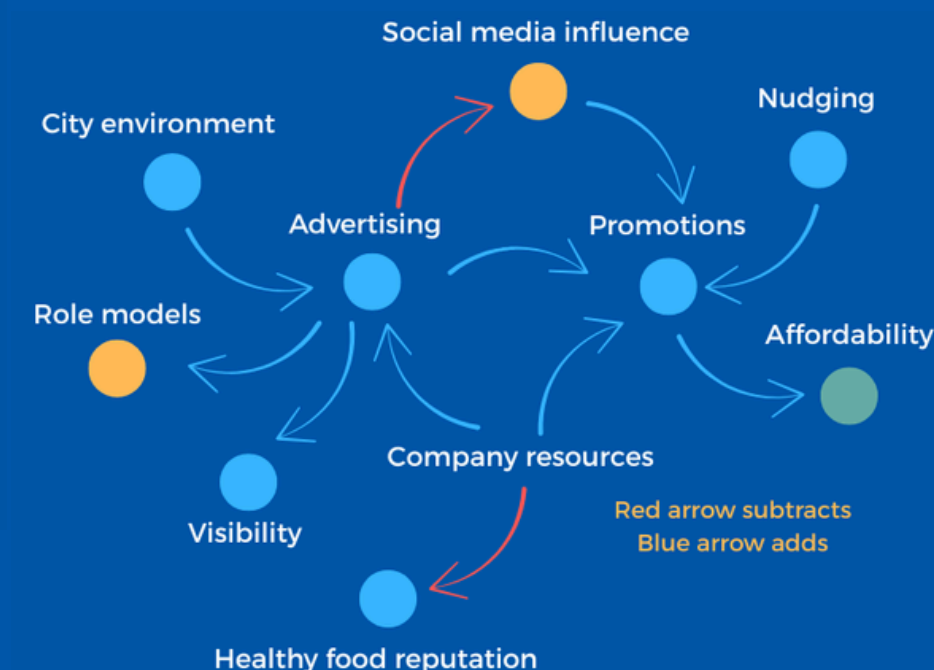
#### Promoting and increasing the solidarity society

More social restaurants, longer opening hours of initiatives, and promote cooking and coming together around meals.

### Stakeholders

#### City policy

Coordinating policies at city and local level, address advertising and food offer at events, and include healthy food provision in program proposals.



## CONCLUSION

The connection of the different sub-systems illustrated the inter-linkage of the factors that might lead to (un)healthy dietary behaviour. Individuals' behaviour is influenced by the interplay of political, psycho-social, financial, and commercial elements.

## Setting



Watersportbaan-Ekbergem, Ghent, Belgium



20% is 20-30 years

20% is 65+



27% social housing



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