PARTICIPATION MANAGEMENT: TOOLS FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

METHODOLOGY

HEIs as Innovative Triggers of Sustainable Development
in European Cities in Post Covid-19 era

heiSciti

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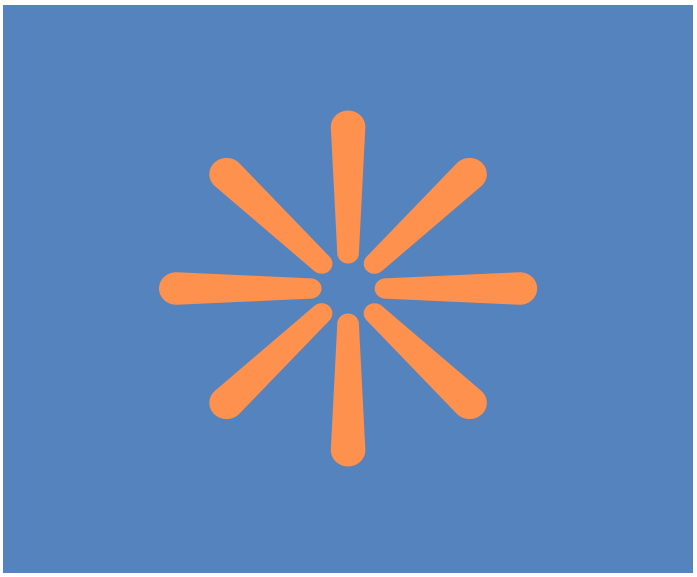
GLOSSARY

ATTITUDES

The learned predispositions or tendencies to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner toward a person, object, idea, or situation. They reflect an individual's feelings, beliefs, values, and mindset that influence their behavior and choices.



CASE STUDY

Is a detailed, in-depth analysis of a particular individual, group, event, or situation to explore and understand its complexities, causes, and outcomes within a real-life context. A case study typically involves examining a specific project, company, or scenario to identify best practices, challenges, lessons learned, and measurable results. It often includes qualitative and quantitative data, descriptions of the environment, context, and the actions taken.

CONSULTATION

In the study process it refers to time devoted to students' guidance, advice, or assistance from a lecturer or course facilitator/tutor. During a consultation, students can ask questions, seek clarification on confusing topics, receive feedback on their work, and discuss strategies to improve their understanding or performance.

COURSE

Is a structured unit of teaching on a particular subject, typically lasting one academic term. It is usually led by one or more instructors and involves a fixed schedule of lessons or classes. A course includes all the learning activities-such as lectures, assignments, and exams-designed to educate students about a specific topic or skill. A successfully completed course typically results in academic credit and sometimes a grade. Courses can be compulsory or elective and be a part of a broader academic program or degree. Essentially, A course is an organized educational experience in which students participate to gain knowledge or skills in a specific area.

GUIDELINES

an indication for local/regional authorities on how to work with citizens to respond to their needs and public institution which want to involve residents in urban change and often struggle with how to do so and how to convince citizens that their voice matters. The guidelines for local and regional authorities will be universally applicable, allowing all types of areas to use them to enhance communication with residents.

KNOWLEDGE

A collection of information, facts, skills, and understanding acquired through experience, education, or study. It represents the awareness or familiarity a person gains about a particular subject or the world in general. Knowledge enables individuals to interpret information, make decisions, solve problems, and apply what they have learned in various contexts.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Articulate the knowledge, skills, attitudes, or competencies a learner should demonstrate as a result of instruction, typically defined in behavioral terms for assessment purposes. They guide curriculum development, instruction, and evaluation by setting clear expectations for learner achievement.

LECTURE

A form of teaching or educational presentation in which a speaker, typically a university lecturer or visiting guest lecturer, shares knowledge and information on a specific topic or subject.

LECTURER

A person who presents different topics in a course, prepares and delivers lectures, facilitates discussions, and presents self-check tasks.

METHODOLOGY

Provides university lecturers with key aspects for course implementation, including goals and objectives, course content, assessment strategies, and resources.

METHODS

Refer to the systematic procedures, techniques, or processes used to plan, execute, monitor, and complete tasks/projects effectively.

PARTICIPATION MANAGEMENT

Refers to the process and practice of actively involving stakeholders or employees in decision-making, planning, execution, and problem-solving activities related to the project or organizational goals. It emphasizes sharing control and responsibility with those who are affected by or can influence the outcomes, fostering collaboration, ownership, and commitment. **(https://www.pm4dev.com/pm4dev-blog/entry/project-participation.html)**

PILOT

The activities which will showcase and promote three case studies from which other local and regional authorities, educators, and university lecturers can learn about what can be improved and how to work with citizens and authorities.

PRESENTATION

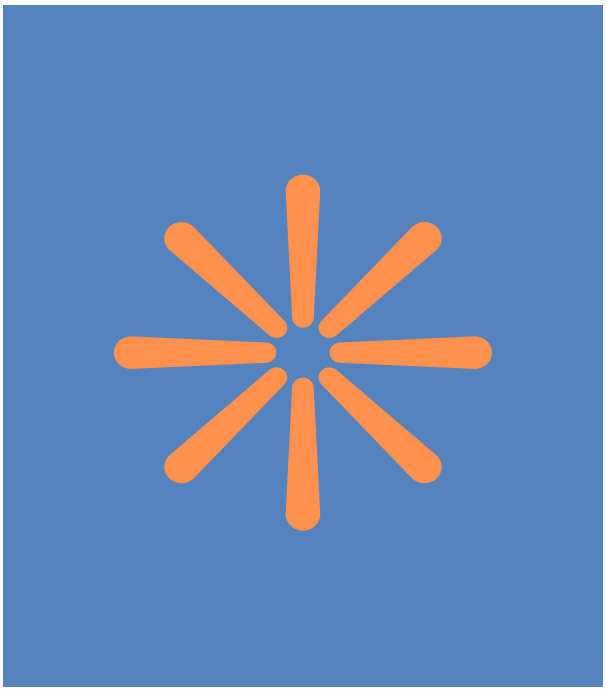
A presentation can take a free or structured oral form, highlighting the key aspects of the implemented project report or summary. It also includes a written document prepared by students participating in the course.
It provides an overview and explanations, addressing questions such as:

- What is the problem your project aims to solve, and why is it relevant or useful?
- How did you determine its causes and consequences?
- What inspired your project?
- How would it solve the problem?
- What steps would you take, and what actions result from it?
- What do you outline in your prototype, solution description, idea, or other project outcome?
- Which concepts and theories—both from this course and from other subjects studied this semester—do you connect with it?
- What methods did you try in class, and how did you apply them to the project?

The summary has no strict word limit.
Use APA style for citations, and include a reference list in the document.

PROJECT

Is a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result. It has a defined beginning and end, specific objectives, and usually involves coordinated activities and resources to achieve its goals. Projects are distinct from ongoing operations in that they are temporary and have unique outcomes (PMBOK Guide | Project Management Institute).



SKILLS

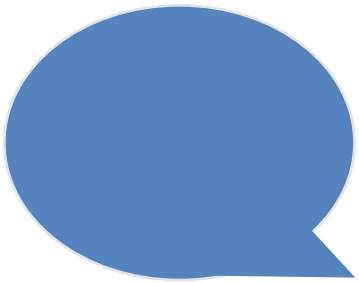
The abilities and competencies that enable a person to perform tasks or activities effectively and efficiently. They are typically developed through practice, training, and experience and involve the application of knowledge, techniques, and physical or mental capabilities to achieve specific outcomes.

SURVEY/QUESTIONNAIRE

After the pilot activities, a survey will be conducted among the involved students, citizens, local authorities, and stakeholders.

STUDENT

A person who has chosen to study this course.



SYLLABUS

An academic document that guides students in understanding what will be taught, what is expected of them, and how their progress will be evaluated throughout the course. It connects the course's learning outcomes with content and instructional activities, helping students organize their studies and remain informed about the course structure.

TOOLS

universal learning and teaching material which can be used by both teachers and students, local authorities, educators, NGOs, and anyone seeking to engage citizens in city development.

TUTOR/FACILITATOR

The person responsible for the course, who guides students, creates and grades assignments, and provides guidance and support to students, advising them on practical skills acquisition and organizational issues.

WORKSHOP

A structured, interactive session or meeting where students come together to discuss, learn, collaborate, or solve problems on a particular subject. Unlike lectures, workshops focus on active participation, hands-on activities, problem-solving, and producing a specific outcome, often guided by a facilitator. Workshops can cover any topic and are designed to engage participants in learning, idea exchange, and applying skills practically (Definition & Meaning | Dictionary.com).

INTRODUCTION

Communication between local authorities and citizens should take place across various fields, including the environment, inclusiveness, economics, education, technical aspects, infrastructure, and social support. Sustainable urban development relies on effective communication and shared values between both actors. Active citizen involvement and participation are essential for building inclusive and sustainable cities. Citizens must feel that their views matter; therefore, local authorities should not only consult decisions with them but also ask what needs to be changed, improved, and, most importantly, how to achieve it. Since citizens experience the city in their daily lives, they are best positioned to identify what should be improved to make the city more open, inclusive, and environmentally friendly.

Providing a universal methodology, practical tools, and policy guidelines for effective communication between citizens and local or regional authorities was the main output of the HEIsCITI project (KA220-HED-96EB51E1). The abbreviation HEIsCITI stands for "Higher Education Institutions as Innovative Triggers of Sustainable Development in European Cities in the Post-Covid-19 Era." The project aimed to influence urban policy and practice by improving the quality of collaboration between decision-makers and citizens. To this end, it focused on creating universal curricula designed to teach students how to effectively initiate, facilitate, and coordinate communication between citizens and local authorities.

METHODOLOGY (Curriculum)

The outcome is presented in this document. The methodology is universal and focused on soft skills, making it applicable to all universities regardless of specialization. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the importance of responsible citizenship and inclusive, sustainable urban development, as well as to foster and promote cooperation between stakeholders. This methodology addresses the new and complex demands of today's reality by developing skills and building competencies that are relevant to both local and global needs.

The process of creating the curriculum consisted of several phases: (1) conceptualizing the curriculum design, (2) developing the curriculum framework, (3) creating tools such as learning and teaching materials, (4) piloting and evaluating the curriculum, and (5) editing and finalizing the curriculum. The curriculum and tools were piloted in three European regions

Cieszyn (a city on the border between Poland and the Czech Republic),

Joniškis District (a Lithuanian district at Lithuanian-Latvian border with Latvian minority)

the Stuttgart region (one of the best European examples of integration activities with migrants and refugees).

The methodology has been developed and proven to prepare students for community engagement practice.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

The development of the methodology is based on the source titled "Training Tools for Curriculum Development: A Resource Pack" (2018), published by the International Bureau of Education (IBE), UNESCO. This document is intended to support specialists and professionals engaged in curriculum change, development, monitoring, and evaluation. The Resource Pack contributes to building capacities in the design, management, and implementation of quality-oriented curriculum processes and inclusive curricula. It is aimed at education decision-makers, educators, specialists, curriculum developers, evaluators, teacher trainers, supervisors, school principals, and teachers working on curriculum, learning, assessment, and related issues (p. 11).

The Resource Pack consists of eight modules that address the fundamental processes and stages which must be considered holistically to achieve a quality curriculum for all. These independent modules represent the dimensions of the curriculum "life cycle": (1) Policy dialogue and formulation; (2) Curriculum change; (3) Curriculum design; (4) System management and governance; (5) Development of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials; (6) Capacity development for curriculum implementation; (7) Processes of curriculum implementation; and (8) Student assessment and curriculum evaluation.

In particular, Module 3 – "Curriculum Design" – inspired the structure of the Methodology. Consequently, the curriculum includes the following components:

- Rationale – Why are students learning what they are learning?
- Goals and objectives – What are the goals, aims, and intended learning outcomes?
- Course content – What are students learning (e.g., competencies, knowledge, skills)?
- Instructional time – When are they learning?
- Teachers' role(s) – How are teachers guiding and facilitating the learning process?
- Assessment – How is learning measured and evaluated?

Tools

Including learning and teaching materials (What are students using to learn?) and learning activities (How are students learning?) – are described in the document titled "Active Participation Tools: A Handbook for Civic Engagement Facilitators."

1. Curriculum rationale

The term "citizen engagement" refers to activities that work collaboratively with and through groups of people to address issues affecting their social well-being (Woronkowicz, 2018). Citizen engagement in city development is crucial for fostering inclusive and sustainable urban development. Citizens must understand that their views matter to local authorities. Therefore, authorities should not only consult citizens on decisions but also ask them what needs to be changed, improved, and, most importantly, how to implement these changes. Since citizens experience the city daily, they are uniquely positioned to identify improvements that make the city more open, inclusive, and environmentally friendly.

In addition to promoting services that respond to citizens' needs, citizen engagement is regarded as a factor that maximizes the efficiency of public policy (Bensus, 2021; Lappas et al., 2022). Sustained involvement from diverse participants in community-led decision-making aligns with participatory processes that adhere to democratic standards (Yet et al., 2022). The overall purpose of citizen participation in city development is to enhance the quality and legitimacy of policy decisions and shift from a service-focused approach to a citizen-oriented approach (Ianniello et al., 2019).

However, creating equitable citizen participation processes—that is, establishing dialogue among heterogeneous stakeholders—is not always easy. Managing participatory processes often increases officials' workload and entails significant costs (Buckwalter, 2014). Additionally, officials may place little trust in the skills, intelligence, and experience of ordinary citizens. As Arnstein (1969) notes, "in most cases the have-nots really do perceive the powerful as a monolithic 'system,' and powerholders actually do view the have-nots as a sea of 'those people'" (p. 217).

Citizen involvement often focuses on the needs and goals of the party initiating participation rather than on the citizens themselves.

Encouraging participation through long-term "partnerships" with local community groups is therefore challenging. Such partnerships remain elusive unless partners are able to articulate, debate, and resolve their disagreements (Ianniello et al., 2019).

Universities can serve as a bridge between the needs of citizens and the objectives of local authorities, acting as a catalyst for innovation by aligning the expectations of both parties through shared values. By engaging in projects that address local challenges and involve students in purposeful activities, universities can play a unique role in developing solutions to current issues while preparing the next generation to contribute to strengthening community resilience.

Higher education institutions that promote students' social and civic responsibilities through community engagement contribute to the country's socio-economic development (Maistry & Thakrar, 2012, p. 65). At the same time, both students and faculty benefit from applying their knowledge and skills to real-world problems, which has been shown to positively impact academic performance, civic engagement, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and leadership capacity (Hahn et al., 2020),

Students should be educated and prepared to engage with communities. Community engagement is not limited to universities but also involves local communities. Through such engagement, local residents can articulate: the knowledge of what community issues exist, where they occur, when they are apparent, and potentially how they could be addressed, drawing on their lived experiences. These dimensions of knowledge are relevant to a university's goal of fostering sustainable development by addressing issues pertinent to the community (Mbah, 2019).

The course "Participation Management: Tools for Citizen Engagement and Community Empowerment," developed as part of the HEIsCITI project, will equip students from various disciplines with the skills to facilitate communication between citizens and local authorities. The course emphasizes inclusive civic engagement, with a focus on sustainable development and environmentally friendly solutions.

The course is designed to highlight the importance of bringing people together to learn about their community, teaching methods that enable engagement in problem-solving and actions that promote positive change. To enhance the quality of democratic debate on urban sustainability issues, the course emphasizes measuring and monitoring, integrating indicators into a holistic framework, and fostering collaboration between citizens and decision-makers.

By participating in this course, students will gain awareness of the importance of civic engagement and develop a sense of responsibility as citizens. They will also acquire knowledge and skills to facilitate communication and cooperation between citizens and local authorities in the context of sustainable urban development.

2. Course goals and objectives

The goal of the course is to teach students how to facilitate and coordinate communication between citizens and local authorities in order to promote inclusive and sustainable urban development in the post-Covid-19 era.

The main aim of the course is to sustain students' active involvement in community development by building partnerships among various stakeholders in community engagement. This, in turn, will influence urban policy and practice, moving towards a system that emphasizes shared decision-making through improved information, communication, and dialogue.

The objectives of the course are as follows:

defining the concept of community engagement

providing variability of tools to enable responsible participation in local contexts

guiding students in the process of designing and implementing projects or plans that address specific community needs

3. Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes indicate that students will gain knowledge as well as develop a range of skills, including research, specialized, social, and personal skills (see Table 1).

Table 1 Learning outcomes

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS			
	research	special	social	personal
Keywords: Citizen engagement	**Keywords:** Design-thinking Action research Case study	**Keywords:** Communication for citizen engagement	**Keywords:** Group cooperation; Collaborative conflict resolution; Problem solving	**Keywords:** Creativity, critical thinking, personal responsibility, individual duty
The student knows the main principles, forms, and issues of the participatory approach, and understands how to implement it.	The student can identify and formulate research problems, initiate and independently conduct media and communication research, apply scientific methods creatively, collect empirical data, and effectively manage time, human, and financial resources.	The student can analyze an organization's information environment, manage internal and external communication, build relations with audiences based on mutual understanding and cooperation, and prepare and implement communication strategies and public information programs.	The student knows the ethical principles of interpersonal, group, and public communication, can resolve problem situations, and assumes civic and social responsibility for the outcomes of their own and their team's activities, including his/her impact on public welfare and the environment.	The student can think analytically, strategically, and creatively, initiate and organize projects, and take responsibility for his/her actions.

Thus, students participating in the course will gain not only theoretical knowledge about citizen engagement and the tools used to encourage participation, but will also learn how to act as active participants. They will further develop their research, social, and personal skills.

Specialized skills are largely aligned with the study program. Subject-related competencies should be consistent with institutional curriculum content standards, which generally specify levels of quality or achievement. National content standards are often developed with input from professional associations specializing in specific subjects.

This is to emphasize that students from all types of specializations will learn:

- how to understand the needs of citizens
- how to meet the objectives of local authorities in creating sustainable and inclusive solutions for urban development
- how to understand the social context of abandoned areas
- how to be an active player in the city's development
- how to encourage citizens to be active
- what tools can be used to encourage citizens to participate in the city's development
- how can one react to the challenges of a turbulent environment
- the advantages of teamwork and the role of an innovative approach to the “wicked problems”.

Competency-based curricula emphasize the integration of learning areas by exploring transversal themes and connecting them to real-life challenges. Learners achieve specific minimum levels of competency at particular stages of education through targeted learning experiences. Competencies are assessed by evaluating the quality of performance in subject-specific tasks (see also the subchapter "Assessment Strategy" in this document, and the document titled Active Participation Tools: A Handbook for Civic Engagement Facilitators).

In the classical approach to knowledge transfer, students play a largely passive role, receiving information and integrating it into their existing knowledge. In the competency-based paradigm of a personal learning environment, students become active participants in acquiring and processing information and knowledge (Bratianu et al., 2020)

The course is driven primarily by a participatory endeavour that draws on ideas merging from all parties in ways and methods designed to address an array of issues. The benefits of such a participatory framework are underscored by Habermas's (1987) theory of communicative action, which amplified the need for communication to involve all interested persons, fostered by an atmosphere free from a centrally dominating influence.

The course can be described as a transdisciplinary teaching and learning experience based on collaborative pedagogy that builds on students' knowledge as a way of developing compassionate, socially engaged, critical, and responsible citizens. The course provides students a transdisciplinary experience, allowing them to engage with societal issues from different perspectives. Through knowledge co-creation, sharing, and assimilation, the framework of collaborative engagement can be beneficial in advancing, fostering, and realizing the interests of local partners and the community (Mbah, 2019).

Students play the role of community participation promoters. They facilitate the communication from residents to officials. They monitor the quality of the public space/issue, gather complaints and demands from residents, and visit community leaders. They also apply surveys to learn more about residents' opinions on possible changes before (and after) interventions are implemented. As a result, practicing planners are challenged with ways to authentically include youth voices in productive and non-tokenistic decision-making frameworks (Botchwey et al., 2019). By engaging students in collaborative projects with municipalities, the course can leverage their knowledge and skills to drive meaningful change and innovation.

4. Instructional time

The volume of the course (module) is 2 ECTS credits. The estimated student work volume is 27 hours per 1 ECTS credit, thus, the course workload equals 54 hours. However, the estimated student volume might be different in different institutions.

Different institutions may also have different implementation possibilities from integration into an existing larger credit amount course or as a separate micro-credential course, as a compulsory or elective course, taught to Bachelor's or Master's students.

Given the complexity of issues facing municipal administrations and the diverse needs of citizens, there is a rationale for focusing on advanced students at the master's level. These students typically possess more profound subject matter expertise and are better equipped to tackle complex challenges.

The working hours of a student on the course unit are classified into contact and self-study hours. The course unit might have 14 hours allocated to contact (lectures/seminars/ workshops/ labs) [scope of contact hours is 35 %], then 40 hours are allocated to independent work (Table 2). However, different institutions may also have different distributions of working hours for students.

Table 2 Students' workload (an example of the distribution of working hours)

The structure	Contact work hours	Self-study hours
Introduction to the course (aim, objectives, content, assessment strategy, resources)	**2**	
Theoretical part **(Municipality's policy context / The concept of citizen engagement (levels, forms, and methods; issues, guidelines) / Participatory tools** NB.The material for a theoretical input can be found in the document titled *Active Participation Tools: A Handbook for Civic Engagement Facilitators*	**6** (lectures/seminars/ workshops/labs)	**6**
Practical part **Challenge introduction – municipality case Engagement emerges in practice: participatory action research (project), including using participatory tools – independent student work**	**4** (consultations)	**30**
Presentation of participatory action research (project)	**2**	**4**
In total:	**14**	**40**
	54	

5. The structure of the course unit

The working hours of a student on the course unit are divided into contact and self-study hours (Table 2). Contact hours refer to teaching staff-guided activities, including lectures, seminars, workshops, laboratories, training exercises, knowledge checks, consultations, and similar. Contact work may also be conducted remotely using electronic study tools.

Self-study hours are devoted to independent study of additional materials and the completion of creative tasks. Students are provided with concentrated theoretical content, along with a comprehensive set of potential sources, templates, and tools for further study and knowledge expansion. In most individual tasks, students explore topics or processes of personal interest. By preparing and presenting the results of these tasks, students contribute to the development of the course content through the sharing of specialized knowledge.

A central feature of teaching the study subject is the close link between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Thus, the course is divided into two main parts. The first part - theoretical - is the part during which students are introduced to the implementation of the course, gain knowledge and skills related to participation for societal engagement, participatory approach. During the lectures, students acquire fundamental theoretical knowledge and understand the importance of a participatory approach. During the seminars/workshops/ labs/ consultations, students perform various tasks of discussing the topics/ searching for information, and analysing cases prepared by teachers.

The second part - the practical part aims at implementing students' participatory research projects. After receiving lessons, students begin the process of determining which aspect of the engagement policy or built environment they want to investigate. Student grouping for the onsite task (participatory research/project) is based on their interests. The group typically consists of 3-5 people. During participatory action research (project), students have the opportunity to use the acquired knowledge in practice. The independent work hours are dedicated to applying selected tools to create a participatory approach, to implementing the project. Each project will have a prepared scenario - a case study - to be solved. There are consultation hours also planned for the lecturer to discuss the project issues, indicate the applicable rules, and goals to be achieved. The finale will be a presentation of the results with a detailed description of the way to achieve them (report).

In addition, the municipality's characteristics, policy context are introduced to students (see the document titled "Guidelines and Policy Recommendations"). Through community empowerment tools, students advocate for improvements (see the document titled "Active Participation Tools: A Handbook for Civic Engagement Facilitator"). Their efforts imply: identification of goals, developing a work plan, identifying problems created by the built environment and/or the policies that govern their communities (collecting data), working to devise solution and proposals for improvement, presenting their vision (solution) to a local decision maker and the public, reflecting on next steps based on successes and challenges.

Overall, the curriculum provides students with unique opportunities to learn about their communities and engage with decision-makers. It empowers young people to assume leadership roles within their communities, offering suggestions and pathways to influence policy and environmental conditions.

6. Lecturer's role

The role of the educators goes far beyond the mere transfer of knowledge. They attach great importance to an open and interactive teaching culture in which the exchange between teachers and students, as well as among the students themselves, is promoted. Lecturer encourages active participation in the learning process and creates a supportive environment where questions can be asked openly, ideas discussed, and solutions worked out together. Students are supported to become active subjects in shaping their education, furthering their explorative approaches by building on their existing knowledge (Sernbo et al., 2024). Thus, lecturers act as mentors and coaches who support and promote students' individual development. They encourage critical thinking, creativity, independence, and initiative, and encourage students to realize their full potential (see the document titled "Active Participation Tools: A Handbook for Civic Engagement Facilitators"). It requires significant restraint and creative guidance on behalf of the educator involved for students to operate with agency and freedom.

Co-constructive pedagogy (Mathieson, S., 2014) is the overarching didactic aspiration for designing the course, as it is based on the interplay between the educator, students, and a representative of the municipality. The lecturer is responsible for making arrangements with representatives of municipality/decision makers who encourage and endorse student involvement; give explicit permission to work on a planning or design project, and advise during the process (if needed). In addition, goals must be consistently agreed upon for partnerships to bring benefits to all parties. Finally, city leaders make final judgments – there is no guarantee that students' ideas will be implemented. It requires leaders to acknowledge that intentional inclusion is crucial for true partnership to flourish.

A student-centred approach is applied in the study process. To motivate students and effectively involve them in the study process, a lot of attention is paid to enabling students to participate. Various study methods are used: inclusive lecture, discussion, case study, problem solving, brainstorming, etc. During the solution of the tasks, students can collaborate and discuss the choice of appropriate solutions. During discussions, students gain the ability to share knowledge, discuss constructively, and respond to comments.

Table 3 provides a list of possible lectures and seminars. All the materials created for the course (plans of lectures, scripts of seminars) are to be found in the document titled "Active Participation Tools: A Handbook for Civic Engagement Facilitators".

Table 3 Possible topics to be chosen and methods to be applied during contact hours

	TOPICS	Methods
LECTURES	Participation for societal engagement	Oral/ online lecture, participation game or case analysis, discussion, reflection, self-check tests
	The involvement of citizens in the municipalities' development – the case of revitalisation	Oral/ online lecture, participation game or case analysis, discussion, reflection, self-check tests
	Participation in practice – study case, tools, and methods	Oral/ online lecture, PPT presentation, Q&A, discussion
	Embracing Resilience: Innovating Participatory Methods in the Post-COVID Era	Oral/ online lecture, case analysis, discussion, reflection, Q&A,
	Beyond the canvas: First steps first on the path to innovation success	Oral/ online lecture, case analysis, discussion, reflection, Q&A,
	Participation Toolbox for Territorial Regeneration: The Case of Montagna Prossima	Oral/ online lecture, case analysis, discussion, reflection, Q&A,
SEMINARS / WORKSHOPS / LABS	Civic Engagement – how to identify target groups of stakeholders in social processes	Lecture, case studies, Q&A, mapping of stakeholders, discussion
	Non-governmental organisations as mediators in civic participation processes	Lecture, case studies, Q&A, mapping of relationships and activities supporting the proces of social participation, discussion
	Ethics, responsibility, social inclusion in decision-making processes	Lecture, case studies, Q&A, mapping challenges and opportunities, discussion
	Young people as co-creators of Smart Cities	Lecture, case studies, Q&A, active observation (a research walk), discussion
	Building a city's resilience to crises with the involvement of the local community	Lecture, case studies, Q&A, brainstorming to generate ideas for building urban resilience through youth engagement, discussion
	Revitalisation of degraded and abandoned urban areas through a particiatory approach	Lecture, case studies, Q&A, prototyping, discussion
	A city accessible to users of public spaces with special needs	Lecture, case studies, Q&A, creating an empathy map for persona with special needs, discussion
	Intergenerational cooperation in participatory activities	Lecture, case studies, discussion, Q&A, storytelling exercise

The course involves Project-based learning (PBL) and Design thinking approaches.

Project-based learning (PBL)

Is a learning approach that uses student-centered research procedures to create a product with connections to and applications in the real world. Essentially, PBL involves a complex task based on challenging questions or problems, where students are involved in designing, problem-solving, making decisions, and researching.

PBL supports constructivist learning theory by assisting students in developing strong comprehension through exploration (Saad & Zainudin, 2024). Instead of having students memorize new information, this approach encourages them to develop and analyze it. Knowledge is created by students themselves via active participation in the teaching and learning process. The PBL approach helps lower students' cognitive burden and improve their learning achievements. When putting together a project, students work as a team to exchange knowledge, inspire one another, respond to one another's feedback, aid in understanding, and learn from one another. Goup work also has a positive impact on students' self-esteem.

Project-based learning (PBL) has gained popularity recently as an educational strategy that promotes students' interest and cognitive development (Pan et al., 2022). Chiu (2020) contends that PBL can enhance higher-order thinking abilities rather than factual knowledge. Moreover, as acknowledged by Deep et al. (2019), even 13 soft skills can be developed and nurtured through the PBL approach, which are social, teamwork, problem-solving, soul management, ethics and morals, communication, continuous learning, leadership, crisis management, creative thinking and critical thinking, managing information and entrepreneurship. Students use two key twenty-first-century skills when participating in PBL, namely learning and innovation skills (critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, creativity, and innovation), as well as digital literacy skills (information literacy, media literacy, information, and communication) (Voinohovska et al., 2019).

Transforming students into active knowledge seekers and experiential learners driven by motivation and values requires from them a high level of engagement and a lot more effort (Bratianu et al., 2020). Design thinking is a core approach throughout the participatory research.

A good comprehensive definition of design thinking is provided by Linda Naiman:

„The design thinking is an iterative non-linear cycle which involves developing a deep understanding of customers' or users' unmet needs within the context of a particular situation, making sense of data and discovering insights, questioning assumptions, exploring different perspectives, reframing problems into opportunities, generating creative ideas, critiquing and choosing ideas, testing through prototyping and experimentation, refining solutions, and finally implementing your innovation"[1].

Design thinking approaches

Design thinking processes involve full cooperation with the end users - from the research phase, which allows the needs of people to be known, to the testing and feedback of designed solutions by them. The work takes place in interdisciplinary teams, using the workshop method, and the solutions invented at the end are tested and improved. Design thinking is a team process, co-designing solutions, involving the need not to adhere to ideas developed by an individual. It is a set of principles that, originating from the practice of designers, can now be applied in various areas of human activity - in the design of products, processes and services, but also in social change.

Design thinking is particularly valuable for understanding people's needs. Rodriguez and Jacoby pointed out that the comprehensive search for innovation through design is the best way for companies to be protected against "black swans" (Jacoby and Rodriguez, 2007). This concept also applies to the cities and citizens' lives, especially in the abandoned areas.

The term "design" must be however, understood as a process, in line with the concept of the Design Council, which defines "design" as a set of skills and a mindset combining critical thinking with creativity.

[1] Linda Naiman, Design Thinking as a Strategy for Innovation https://www.creativityatwork.com/design-thinking-strategy-for-innovation/

7. Assessment strategy

To ensure students' active involvement and their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, a cumulative assessment approach will be used. This procedure ensures that students are formatively assessed throughout the course, with a summative assessment conducted at the end. The cumulative grade is calculated as the average of the formative assessment grades and the final summative assessment grade. The types and weights (in percentage) of formative assessments are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 The elements of assessment

Assessment's elements	Weighting percentage	Period or date of assessment	Assessment criteria
Active participation during lectures/ seminars/workshops/ Labs	20	After lecture/ seminar/ workshops (theoretical input)	During contact hours, students are expected to participate actively by preparing for discussions, analyzing cases, and asking and answering questions. This active participation is acknowledged and encouraged through points, which contribute to the summative grade. Active participation may also be assessed according to criteria established by the lecturer for specific activities. After each lecture, students may also complete a self-check test prepared by the lecturer to ensure that the main concepts have been understood. These tests may include closed-ended and/ or open-ended questions
Presentation of participatory research (project)	70	During the session	Students prepare a presentation of their project, covering its essential aspects: relevance and aim, objectives, methods and process (stages), as well as results and recommendations. Assessment is conducted using a rubric-based approach. The suggested duration of each presentation is 20–30 minutes.
Reflection	10	To be collected during the semester	Students reflect on their entire learning experience, identifying personal strengths and challenges encountered. Reflection is conducted through four types: reflection-before-action, reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-beyond-action. Reflections are to be submitted in written form.

The largest portion of the final assessment (70%) is allocated to the presentation of the participatory research project. This reflects the substantial student workload for this task, with approximately 30 out of 54 hours dedicated to the project. Students are required to prepare a presentation of their projects, addressing the following elements:

- Relevance of the research
- Aim and objectives of the research
- Methods used for the research
- Process of the research
- Results of the research
- Recommendations

Rubric-based assessment is applied to assess students' presentations. The benefits of the method are such as:

- **Transparency -** expectations and assessment criteria are clear to students, helping them understand how their work will be judged.
- **Consistency and Objectivity –** grading is objective, ensuring that all students are assessed by the same standards.
- **Feedback –** students are provided with specific, actionable feedback, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

Suggested rubrics are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Rubric-based assessment for the project's presentation

Criteria	POINTS		
	2 (excellent)	1.5 (needs improvement)	1(poor)
Formulation of aim, objectives	Clear, achievable	Some statements are questionable	Unclear statements
Accuracy of research	Uses reliable tools, well-researched	Some tools are questionable	No credible tools
Description of process	Clear, well-structured	Some parts are unclear or rushed;	Unclear
Results and recommendations	Clear, well-structured	Some parts are unclear	Unclear
Delivery	Clear, well-structured, highly visually appealing	Some parts unclear or rushed; basic design	Disorganized and unclear; poor visuals

Twenty percent of the final assessment is allocated to performance during tests or other activities. A rubric-based assessment may be applied. The lecturer determines the content and format of these assessment.

Students are also motivated to reflect on their experience. Reflection is one more element of the final grade with a weight of 10 percent (Table 4). Reflection, or the ability to look at one's experience critically, analytically, and objectively as if from the outside, is an inseparable quality of professional competence in any specialised professional activity. Reflection is complementary in developing problem-solving and decision-making capacity, also in improving the efficiency of communication with a customer or a colleague (Adams et al., 2016). During the course, students are involved in a continuous reflection process. Thus, the students combined classroom work with independent work, the reflection is to help them not to lose sight of the design idea, the essence and flow of the principles of the design thinking process, to focus on the activities and to rethink them by constantly returning to them in the reflection process.

For the lecturer leading the course, it helps not to lose track of the dynamics of the group, to feel the mood of the group, and to deal with any uncertainties or even problems promptly. This leads to more focused attention on the learning process and a deeper analysis of the experience, insights, and conclusions for a more comprehensive implementation of the course and for professional growth.

The conceptual framework of reflection consists of four-dimensional components: reflection-before-action, reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-beyond--action. Reflection-before-action encourages learners to reflect prior to engaging in practical assignments. Reflection-on-action typically involves reflective tasks where students recount their experiences by 'reconstructing' them after the fact, rather than 'constructing' meaning in the moment. In contrast, reflection-in-action allows students to actively 'construct' their practice as it unfolds, enhancing real-time decision-making. Reflection-beyond-action, meanwhile, helps students connect their past and present experiences to guide and inform future actions (Edwards, 2017).

The framework for the assessment strategy is created from the standpoint of learners having to experience a transformative learning process. Transformative learning in this study is understood as ‘a process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open, permeable, and better validated’. This process begins with learners becoming consciously aware of their meaning perspectives (Fritz & Marchewka, 2024). Then, through participatory research and reflections, learners have the potential to gain the mindset and capacities.

It should be noted that the weighting of assessment components and the specific assessment elements may vary depending on the course type and are determined according to the examination regulations of the respective institution.

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